

Doubt and diagnosis:

Medical experts and the returning dead of the southern Habsburg borderland (1718-1766)

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Abstract

The dissertation interprets the vampire as a case of extraordinary knowledge production on the margins of the known world. I directed the focus at experts entrusted to apply their specialized knowledge on diagnosing the vampiric attack and on regulating the unruly dead. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, these experts served various social groups: local communities, administrative-judicial structures, aristocratic circles, the republic of letters and aulic political spheres. Thus, historical sources produced on vampires unveil actors, interests and intense negotiations about what is 'normal' death and decay, about who is an expert, and what is proof. I argue that knowledge production is social, political, and bears the mark of the environment where it was produced.

The doctoral research reconstructed the biography of a text, a forensic comparative autopsy report that Habsburg medical experts prepared on supposed vampires in 1732. As a first step, I placed this report back into its historical context, the southern Habsburg borderland, using the revenant infestations of the Moravian-Silesian border region as a comparative case-study. Based on archival research and a systematization of published sources, the research shows that the revenant-problem was more widespread than previously thought. In both regions local communities managed to 'enchant' the secular and ecclesiastical authorities and enforce their interests, but the institutions came up with two different theoretical frameworks to accommodate local experiences. The research demonstrates that the southern borderland's public hygiene-centred environment fostered empirical knowledge production through practices of investigation and documentation.

Focus is then shifted to noble and learned circles. While the report was a curio item and was used as a test-case for natural philosophical and theological polemics, it also led the learned onto the untrodden path of empirical research on human bodily decay. At a time when the possibility of corporeal supernatural activity was less and less *in vogue*, but the prestige of empirical experiments was rising, a forensic report proving the living dead was both attractive and repulsive. The vampire was an opportunity to discuss the evidentiary value of historical tradition, judicial decisions and naturalist observations and of personal and communal experience *vis-à-vis* each other. I suggest that since there were several acceptable ways explaining the harmful dead, the deepest cutting criticism was not based on ontology, but on a distrust in historical examples and a judicial-medical case-by-case deconstruction of evidence and expertise.

Finally, the research suggests that even though vampirism at an administrative level was a problem of disciplining unruly subjects, the projects aimed driving back the practice of mass revenant executions in the 1750s came not only from the Viennese centre but also from local levels, where fashioning oneself as an expert on vampirism could be used to build social capital. I also argue that Queen Maria Theresa's legislation against revenant executions was a centralizing measure, much more so than a secularizing one and that giving expertise on vampires had political dimensions and that the learned experts needed to close ranks at the face of challenges to their authority.

Acknowledgements

Enduring a close-up view of the ups and downs of a PhD research is not exactly a cakewalk and is only possible for real-life heroes; my wife, Kateryna Kolesnyk is the strongest of them. Whether the writing process was taking place in a stuffy e-gaming internet café in Indonesia, right in the middle of the Orthodox New Year's festive table in Ukraine, or two thousand kilometres away from her, she never failed to support me with the frankest criticism, creative, flexible thinking and unshakeable trust. I cannot express gratefulness eloquently enough to my family either. My parents, Flórián Mézes and Katalin Gulyás not only provided the necessary stable background, emotional goading and occasional *gulyás* soup, but also improved the dissertation with their professional experience in editing and graphic design. My sister, Dorottya Mézes, whose little children are more than a handful, nevertheless constantly found the time to inspire me with her interest in the cultural history of curiosities.

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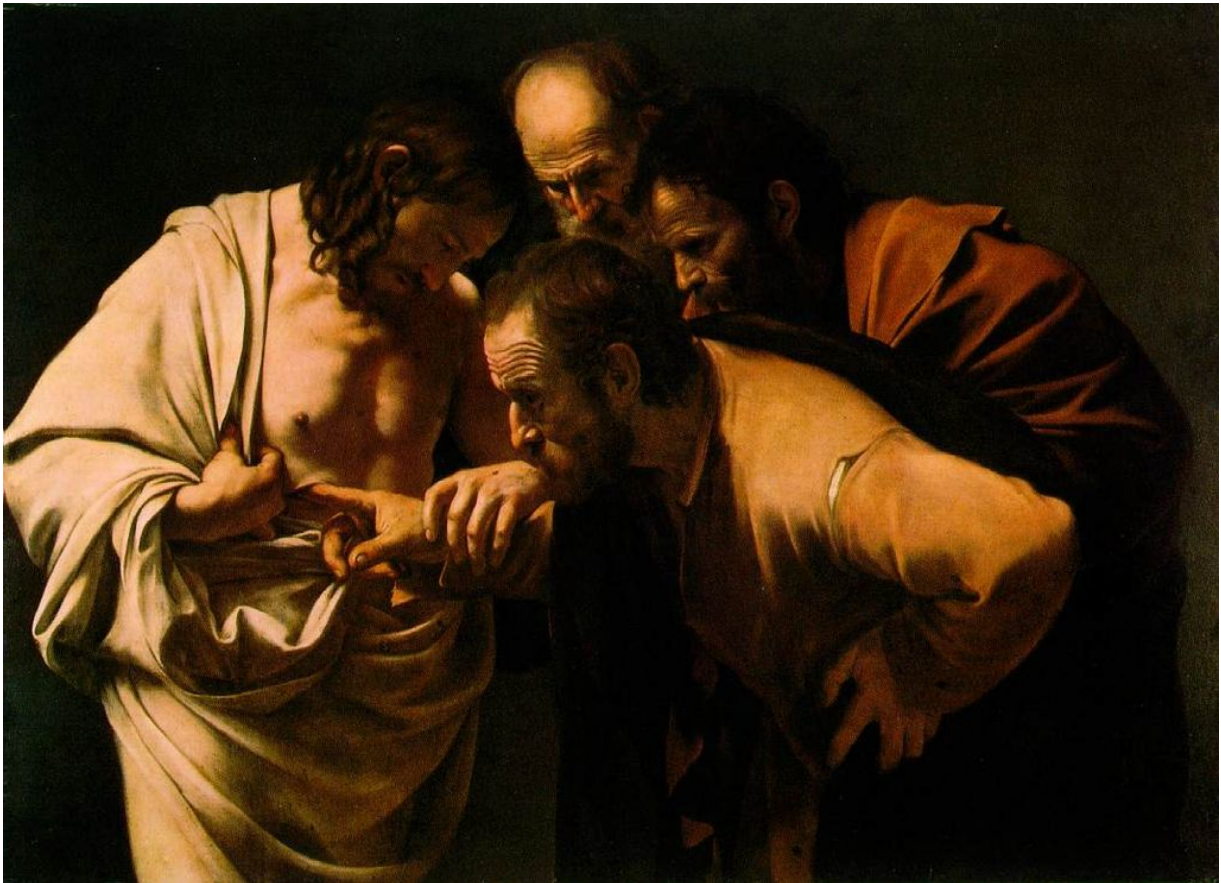
To all the deceased revenants and experts of the eighteenth century.

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Introduction



1 Caravaggio: The incredulity of Saint Thomas (ca 1601-1602)

‘O! homo, disce mori!’

Christian Wagner (1672)

1. The vampire-problem

In a tiny Serbian military settlement, three German surgeons are busy systematically dissecting corpses and are puzzling their wits trying to figure out a riddle. The riddle is this: There are a dozen corpses laid out on the ground in the cemetery. They have all spent several months, up to a year buried in the ground, but only half of them are in a decayed state, as normal, well-behaving corpses should be. The other half are unusual: they look fresh and content, have a rosy skin, with healthy-looking internal organs, even traces of bright red blood trickling from their lips.

Meanwhile, an Orthodox priest and soldiers in uniforms are trying to keep an agitated crowd of villagers at bay. They are agitated, because they know what the surgeons do not: the undecayed corpses, who once used to be fellow villagers, friends, lovers and relatives, were killed by vampires, and are now vampires themselves. Vampires, who are intent on wiping out the whole village in a few months, unless stopped: they need to burn.

As cheesy as it may sound, this scene was not taken from a nineteenth-century Gothic novel but was part of reality in the southernmost corner of the Habsburg Monarchy, in the province of Serbia, the homeland of a specific kind of returning dead, the vampire. It was these settings from which in 1732 this folkloric creature started out on its swift conquest of European imagination, and for a brief moment, got into the spotlight of early-eighteenth-century European newsagents, book publishers, learned circles and salons of the nobility. Throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, various historical actors ranging from contagion physicians through administrative officials to university professors engaged with the vampire, and the sources generated by this manifold attention enable us to use the history of the vampire as a test case revealing the complex relations between science, politics and culture in the early eighteenth century.

The history of vampires is the history of knowledge production on the borders of the natural world. It is about historical actors engaging in negotiations of knowledge claims. The theoretical and empirical attempts at assigning meaning to and thereby controlling the vampiric corpse generated controversies over reality. The clashes of interests and mental

worlds about nondecaying corpses and about their ability to pose danger to humankind ended up in the creation of texts, concepts and data. Moving across various centres and levels of knowledge production, the vampire's body became a site of a series of power struggles, and for each actor it was construed as a different problem. It was a life or death question in local communities, an administrative problem for secular and clerical authorities and an opportunity to reinvigorate already existing natural philosophical – theological polemics within the republic of letters. The power struggles had practical consequences as the knowledge produced informed imperial policymaking seeped back into local social practice and thinking through the increasing interventions of Enlightened central state administration.

The dissertation aims at understanding what expertise and trustworthy evidence meant for the various historical actors engaging with the problem of vampires. There are two thematic focal points: the execution of revenants on-site, as a social practice and the learned, theoretical discussions trying to make sense of it. I trace the folkloric traditions and practices of two geopolitical areas of the Habsburg Monarchy, where dealing with revenants became politically charged problems during the first half of the eighteenth century. Even though the folkloric creatures themselves had basic similarities between each other, the contexts within which they became understood were very different. On the southern borderland, in Serbia and the Banat of Temesvár the *upir* and the *moroi* emerged as a threat to the economy, public health and social order of a newly colonized land inhabited by an Orthodox population. By contrast, on the Moravian-Silesian border area, infestations of multiplying revenants challenged the Catholic bishopric's control over a population recently converted from Protestantism.

Next to the discussion of the ways in which revenants were dealt with on-site in the two regions, the dissertation also delineates how evidence about the existence of vampires passed through various networks and channels and was discussed in Western learned circles. The focus is the eastern German Protestant circles of republic of letters, where the figure of the vampire caused the most disturbance. The vampire scandal was a direct challenge to medical-naturalist and ecclesiastical attempts at drawing an ever-clearer boundary between life and death, between body and soul and between evil and good, because it obstinately occupied a middle ground in between. Apart from inspiring content-related debates, the newly found evidence on vampires also gave an opportunity for contributors to negotiate disciplinary

boundaries, to define what is scientific and what is not and to debate the trustworthiness of empirical and written evidence.

The dissertation answers calls in recent secondary literature to clarify medicine's role in processes of disenchantment,¹ challenging overly simplistic narratives which evaluate the eighteenth-century history of the vampire as a swift and loud triumph of Enlightened medicine over ignorance and superstition. Such approaches disregard the multiplicity of voices that surfaced at the time by singling out those that match our current expectations about the borders of reality and downplaying the role of those that do not. Relying on seminal work in the sociology and history of science,² the present work zooms in on the junctures where opinions and interests about vampires clashed, so that we can gain a more realistic picture of how diagnoses were negotiated and see the multiplicity of alternative realities which were available for the actors. The doctoral research also contributes to the mapping of eighteenth-century sites of knowledge production: several spheres that were crucial in bringing about empiricist attitudes in the era have so far been overlooked by historical research because they were outside academic and university frameworks, the traditional foci of the history of science.³ The dissertation specifically speaks to the understanding of forensics as a place where medicine was forging its professional self-image and where medical knowledge, evidence and expertise were put out to the open and were contested.⁴ Finally, recognising that vampire-studies has so far mostly been relying on published sources, my research deliberately targeted archival sources as well in an attempt at extending our knowledge of how the theory and practice of dealing with vampires at local levels as well as behind the scenes of elevated learned debates.

¹ Peter Elmer, 'Witchcraft and Medicine', in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 561-574.

² David Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery* (Chicago, 1991); Lorraine Daston, 'Science Studies and the History of Science', *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 798-813.

³ Elaine Leong and Alisha Rankin, 'Testing Drugs and Trying Cures: Experiment and Medicine in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 91, no. 2 (2017): 157-82.

⁴ Silvia De Renzi, 'Medical Expertise, Bodies, and the Law in Early Modern Courts', *Isis* 98, no. 2 (2007): 315-322.

A short chronology of the emergence of the vampire

The figure of the vampire entered modern European thought through the Habsburg administration of the southern borderland in the first half of the eighteenth century. It was a 1725 official report published in the newspaper *Wienerisches Diarium* that made the ‘vampire’ (spelled ‘*Vampyr*’) known to the public.⁵ The report was sent by the cameral provisor of the Ram-Gradiska district (named after the two district centres Ram and Gradiska, today’s Ram and Veliko Gradiste)⁶ in Habsburg Serbia to the Vienna administration about the strange events in the village of Kisilova (today Kisiljevo). Peter Plogojowitz, a Rascian⁷ peasant, returned from the dead and kept tormenting people at night by lying on their chests and sucking their blood, in the end killing nine within a week. The local community requested Johann Frombald, the provisor of Ram-Gradiska district, to visit the village accompanied by an Orthodox priest and to give permission to exhume Plogojowitz. Frombald consented and to his surprise, the ten-week-old corpse looked fresh: hair, beard and nails had grown, new skin was seen growing under the separating old, and fresh blood was flowing from his orifices. Based on these signs, he was pronounced to be a ‘*Vampyr*’. Locals drove a stake through his heart and saw a copious amount of blood flowing from the wound, as well as other ‘wild signs’ which the provisor did not deem decorous to disclose. He was visibly concerned about having legitimized the rite with his presence and asked his superiors to blame all possible mistakes on the excited mob, for they had threatened him that they leave the village if they were not granted permission.

The case that catapulted the vampire towards world fame was that of Arnout Pavle, a *hayduk* from the village of Medvedia (today Medvedja) in the southernmost corner of Habsburg Serbia. The story started in 1727, when Pavle fell off a hay wagon and broke his neck. During his lifetime he used to say that he would surely become a vampire, since he had been plagued by one in Ottoman lands and could only avoid being killed by eating from the soil of its grave. This however also meant that he would inevitably turn into a vampire after his death. He indeed returned from the grave, sucking blood and killing several people. The villagers

⁵ Anon., ‘Copia eines Schreibens aus dem Gradisker District in Ungarn’, *Wienerisches Diarium*, 21 July 1725.

⁶ Throughout the dissertation I keep the spelling of proper nouns (personal and place names) as they appear in the sources used, with a number of notable exceptions. More on this, see the end of the Introduction.

⁷ The word ‘Rascian’, in German ‘Räzisch’ was a term used in contemporary sources to denote a mostly Orthodox, Slavic population of the borderland. It can roughly be equated with ‘Serbian’.

unearthed him as well as his victims and found many of them to be vampires. They were staked, burnt at the stake and the ashes were thrown back into the grave. The procedure however was not thorough enough: the vampires attacked cattle as well, and anyone eating from their meat later on was doomed to become a revenant. This way, four years later seventeen people died after a rapid illness, complaining that certain dead villagers had tormented them.

The district captain sent Glaser, the physician of the quarantine station of Baragin (today Paraćin), with several military officers to the village to investigate the situation. Glaser examined the sick and decided that they were suffering from tertian and quartan fever. He also had the bodies exhumed and noted that several corpses had become vampires ('*vervampyret*') or were 'suspicious'. Not willing to make the decision, he had the corpses reburied and sent a report to Belgrade, the provincial centre. The vice governor sent a commission of three military surgeons and several officers to Medvedia. Led by regiment surgeon Johann Flückinger, the surgeons exhumed fifteen corpses, dissected them and confirmed Glaser's report: they found ten corpses in a vampire state ('*im Vampirstande*'); these bodies were decapitated by local Gypsies,⁸ burnt at the stake and the ashes were thrown into the Morava river. The surgical commission in an orderly fashion prepared a forensic autopsy report, a *visum et repertum* about the dissections and submitted it to the military command in Belgrade.

The reports about the Kisilova and Medvedia cases served as basic sources of later learned discussions on vampirism and had a considerable effect on the development of the vampire-figure in European thought. Moreover, several elements found in these cases, such as the bloody-mouthed, seemingly fresh corpse, the terrified local community threatening to leave the village and the indecisive authorities are recurring features in other cases of the era as well. The forensic report on the Medvedia vampires quickly started spreading through personal networks, and quickly reached the highest circles. Glaser's father for instance published a letter about his son's experiences in the natural philosophy journal *Commercium*

⁸ For the frequent application of Gypsies as vampire hunters see: Elvira Bijedić, 'Vampirismus auf dem Balkan zur Zeit der osmanischen Herrschaft' (MA Facharbeit, Heidelberg, Universität Heidelberg, 2001); For the vampire beliefs of Balkan Gypsies see: T. P. Vukanović, 'The Vampire in the Belief and Customs of the Gypsies in the Province of Kosovo-Metohija, Stari Ras and Novopazarski Sandžak, Yugoslavia (Part III.)', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 37, no. 1-2. (1958): 21-31.

Litterarium, provoking a year-long debate on the pages of the periodical, and von Kottowitz, and ensign of the imperial army stationed in Belgrade at the time, sent a copy of the report to a university professor in Leipzig asking his opinion as to whether there were ‘sympathetic, devilish or astral spirit-related’ effects working in the background. Another copy was spread by the provincial governor of Serbia, Charles Alexander, prince of Württemberg (1684-1737), who presented it in the Prussian court during his visit to Berlin. Meanwhile, the reports were published in pamphlets, treatises and university dissertations.⁹

The issue excited the imagination of scholars, natural philosophers, physicians, jurists and theologians as well,¹⁰ one of the most notable contributors among whom was Dom Augustin Calmet, a French Benedictine abbot, whose 1746 *Traité sur les apparitions de esprits et sur les vampires* became a bestseller in the topic and had several editions in several languages. Even Pope Benedict XIV mentioned vampires in his *De servorum Dei beatificatione* of 1743, in relation to the lack of decomposition of saintly cadavers, and stated that vampirism was only a superstition born out of fear and ignorance.¹¹ The vampire conquered the popular imagination as well and its literary formulation also began.¹² During this process, several elements were incorporated into its image which were alien to the original Rascian creature. These included similar beliefs of other geographic areas, returning dead from ancient literature, and fear of premature burial or bats among others.

⁹ See the two reports, alongside several smaller documents in: ‘Documents of the Medvedia vampire case’, 1732. OESTA / FHKA / Hoffinanz Ungarn, r.Nr. 654, fols. 1131-1144., and Sanitätsakten, r.Nr. 1., fols 1-4.; [currently in the special collection: Vampir Akten – Teil 2.] The reports are published in: Klaus Hamberger, ed., *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791* (Wien: Turia & Kant, 1992), 46-54.; For introductions to the learned debate on vampirism see among others: Dieter Harmening, *Der Anfang von Dracula – Zur Geschichte der Geschichten* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1983); László András Magyar, ‘Orvosi vita a magyarországi vámpírokról 1732-1756’, *Századok* 133, no. 3 (1999): 1247–57; Gábor Klaniczay, ‘Historische Hintergründe: Der Aufstieg der Vampire im Habsburgerreich des 18. Jahrhunderts.’, in *Poetische Wiedergänger: Deutschsprachige Vampirismus-Diskurse vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart.*, ed. Julia Bertschik and Christa Tuczay (Tübingen: Francke, 2004), 83-112.

¹⁰ Fernando Vidal, ‘Extraordinary Bodies and the Physicotheological Imagination’, in *The Faces of Nature in Enlightenment Europe*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Gianna Pomata (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts, 2003), 61–96; David Keyworth, ‘The Aetiology of Vampires and Revenants: Theological Debate and Popular Belief’, *Journal of Religious History* 34, no. 2 (June 2010): 158–73; Francesco Paolo De Ceglia, ‘The Archbishop’s Vampires. Giuseppe Davanzati’s Dissertation and the Reaction of “Scientific” Italian Catholicism to the “Moravian Events”’, *Archives Internationales d’Histoire des Sciences* 61, no. 166–167 (2011): 487–510.

¹¹ Benedictus XIV Papa, *De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione. Liber quartus & ultimus, pars prima.* (Patavia: Typis Seminarii, apud Joannem Manfré, 1743), 198-199.; Benedictus XIV Papa, *Dissertationes in omni doctrinae genere selectissimae ex quatuor ejusdem auctoris de canonizatione sanctorum libris extractae. [...] Volumen tertium continens tractatum de miraculis.* (Venetia: Joannes Baptista Aleritius Hier. Fil., 1752).

¹² Maria Janion, *A Vámpír: Szimbolikus biográfia* (Budapest: Európa, 2006).

While the figure of the vampire was being constructed and reconstructed at various levels of European thought, it remained a matter of life and death in various regions of the Habsburg Monarchy. As it will be shown below, in two areas of the empire, namely in the Banat of Temesvár on the southern borderland and in the Moravian bishopric north of Olomouc, mass executions of the dead were common practice at the time. In the Banat, inhabited mostly by Wallachian¹³ and Rascian Orthodox population, a game-changer event happened in 1753, when the Habsburg provincial administration sent out a three-member commission consisting of the province's chief physician Pál Ádám Kőműves, surgeon Georg Tallar and a cleric to investigate a particularly devastating revenant epidemic. Tallar's summary report, the *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* is one of the most detailed first-hand reports ever written on the revenants of the southern borderland, which was nevertheless only published thirty years later.¹⁴ The work considers the execution of the dead as a superstitious measure and advises the medical enlightening of the population.

Meanwhile, the Moravian bishopric also witnessed frequent anti-revenant measures of a massive scale, but the Habsburg imperial administration did not take a firm stance on the question until early 1755, when a case caused a scandal in Vienna circles. In the village of Frei Hermersdorf (today Velké Heraltice, Czech Republic) the local council had 29 corpses disinterred and 19 of them burnt for the crime of '*magia posthuma*', that is, posthumous bewitchment. The process was especially gruesome, for relatives of the convicted corpses were forced to drag the corpses through a hole carved into the wall of the cemetery using a hook and a rope. News of these events motivated the Viennese court to take steps, for this time it was not a remote Serbian village, but the heart of the empire, and the 'executions' were approved by the Catholic bishop of Olomouc.

¹³ The word 'Wallachian', in contemporary German 'Wallachisch' was an expression with a complicated history, and in the environment of the Banat meant an Orthodox population who spoke Wallachian, a language, which roughly equates to Romanian.

¹⁴ Tallar, Georg. 'Visum repertum anatomico chyrurgicum, oder unterhänigst gehorsamster summarischer Bericht. Von und über die so genannte Vampir oder Blutsauger; wallachischer Sprache Moroi genant', 1753. OESTA / FHKA / Banater Akten, r. Nr. 53, fols. 1–22. [currently in the special collection: Vampir Akten – Teil 1.]; Georg Tallar, *Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder gründlicher Bericht von den sogenannten Blutsäugern, Vampier, oder in der Wallachischen Sprache Moroi in der Wallachen, Siebenbürgen und Banat, welchen eine eigens dahin abgeordnete Untersuchungskommission der Löbl. k. k. Administration im Jahre 1756 erstattet hat.* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1784).

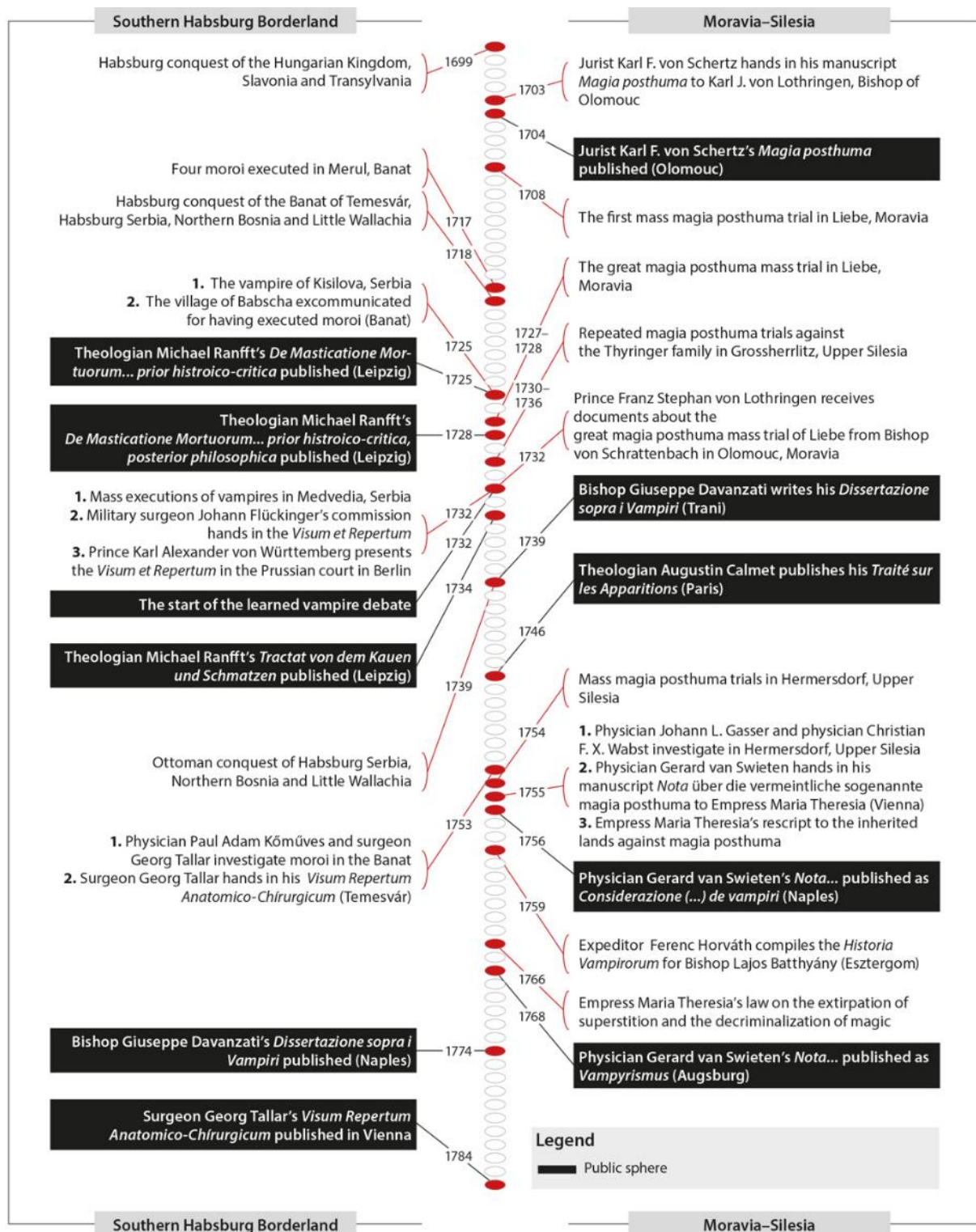
Queen Maria Theresa (Holy Roman Empress 1745-1765, Queen of Bohemia, Hungary and Croatia 1740-1780) sent the highest ranked commission ever to investigate vampires to the village: professor of anatomy Johann Lorenz Gasser (1723-1765) and military chief physician Christian Franz Xaver Wabst with a suitable entourage. Though the suspected vampire corpses had already been burnt by the time they arrived, the doctors decided that the lack of decomposition was due to natural causes, while the vampire sickness was a combination of a natural illness causing chest-pains and the superstitious fears of the populace. The court in turn decided to deploy Jesuit missionaries and medical experts to fight the sickness with medications and to enlighten the people. Meanwhile, Gerard van Swieten (1700-1772), court physician and head of the empire's medical system (*protomedicus*) handed in a bilingual manuscript treatise for the Queen about the case under the title, *Remarques sur le Vampirisme de Sylésie de l'an 1755 / Nota über die vermeintliche sogenannte magia posthuma*. The treatise pronounces the practice of corpse executions a product of a fearful, undereducated imagination aided by a similarly superstitious clergy. The court decided to publish the work in German, Italian as well as in Latin.¹⁵

The Frei Hermersdorf scandal also prompted Maria Theresa to issue an anti-superstition rescript on 1st March which ordered the Catholic Church of the Habsburg inherited lands to report all supernatural phenomena (witchcraft, ghosts, treasure hunting and demonic possession) to the secular authorities, which in turn had to involve investigation of the case by a medical expert.¹⁶ From 1755 onwards the empress engaged in repeated legislation for the decriminalization of magic and a general fight against superstition. The 1st March rescript became integrated as a section into the queen's famous 1766 act, the *Lex caesaro-regia ad extirpandam superstitionem* which practically ended witchcraft persecutions in the Habsburg Monarchy by ordering all courts to send any accusations of magic to Vienna.¹⁷

¹⁵ Gerard Van Swieten, 'Remarques sur le Vampirisme de Sylésie de l'an 1755' (1755), Codex Vindobonensis 7237 P.I.n. 18, fols. 1–14., Österreichische Nationalbibliothek; Gerard Van Swieten, 'Vampirismus von Herrn Baron Gerhard Van-Swieten verfasst, aus dem Französischen ins Deutsche übersetzt, und als Anhang der Abhandlung des Daseyns der Gespenster beige drucket', in *Abhandlung des Daseyns der Gespenster, nebst einem Anhang vom Vampirismus*, by Andreas Ulrich Mayer (Augsburg, 1768), 1-23.; Franciscus Xaver Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, vol. 1 (Buda: Typis Caesareo-Regiae Scientiarum Universitatis, 1852), 725-737.

¹⁶ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 85-86.

¹⁷ The 1755 rescript is Paragraph 16, but the original introductory references to Moravian returning dead were deleted. Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, 1852, 1:776-785.



2: Timeline of important events connected to vampirism.

Left column: the southern Habsburg borderland.

Right column: the Moravian-Silesian border region.

Highlighted in black: seminal publications that can be linked to either of these areas.

Geographic and temporal framework

The curve of the dissertation's narrative then leads from the vampire as a practical problem of administration and disciplining to an object of curiosity and a learned research topic, then back to being an administrative problem. Accordingly, the dissertation has three main levels of inquiry. First, the grassroots level of interactions between administrative structures and local populations, which is investigated in two main geographical focus areas: the southern borderland, especially two of its provinces, Habsburg Serbia with its *upirs* and the Banat with its *moroi* and the Moravian-Silesian border area with its revenants. Second, an intermediary level considers the networks through which information about revenants spread in eighteenth-century Europe with special emphasis on the roles two German princes, Charles Alexander of Württemberg (1684 – 1737), the governor of Serbia and Francis Stephen of Lorraine (1708-1765, duke of Lorraine, Bar and Teschen and future Holy Roman Emperor) played in shaping the figure of the vampire. The third level of inquiry is the republic of letters, more specifically two of its spheres: the mostly Protestant circles of the eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Viennese court.

Histories of vampirism usually focus on two clusters of events, in 1732 and 1755, as it was these two years when the vampire caused larger stirs in the public sphere. The dissertation's temporal frames encompass these events and in order to be able to show the problem of dealing with revenants as a social practice, it ranges from the late seventeenth century till roughly 1766, when Queen Maria Theresa's law regulated the practice at an imperial level for the first time. The late seventeenth century is the time when the Habsburg Monarchy was reconquering the southern borderland from the Ottoman Empire, facing local practices against revenants for the first time. It is also the time when on the Silesian-Moravian border next to the long-established practice of executing single revenants, the first signs of mass executions of the dead surface in historical sources.

The structure of the dissertation

The dissertation by and large follows a chronological order starting from the late seventeenth century and arriving at the 1760s by the end. The chapters trace the various sites of knowledge

production on vampirism during this time period. Following a discussion of concepts and approaches that seemed especially relevant for the aims of the research, Chapter I serves as a survey of the meanings, theories and practices related to distinguishing and treating abnormal corpses especially within learned circles of the early modern era. Natural philosophical, legal and moral-theological attitudes to bodily decay and the possibility of the dead harming the living will be discussed.

Chapter II and III shift the focus from the learned world to the practical treatment of the harmful dead in two of the core areas where mass executions of the dead were a common practice in the early eighteenth century: the southern Habsburg borderland and the Moravian-Silesian border area. Apart from giving an overview of the known cases of revenant executions in the two regions, these chapters focus on negotiations of evidence and expertise, which informed the social practice as well as the knowledge produced on the abnormal dead. Both chapters investigate the question until 1732, when the Flückinger commission's autopsy report of the Medvedia vampires launched the learned vampire debate.

Chapter IV deals with the networks that helped to broker the reports on vampirism across geopolitical and social distances in 1732. Special emphasis is laid on the role these networks and in particular, two aristocrats played in the distribution of and lending credibility to the administrative reports on the harmful dead. Chapter V delineates how the learned treated the first-hand reports on vampirism, how they challenged or accepted them as evidence of extraordinary phenomena and how they reinterpreted the evidence in their own terms.

Chapter VI and VII revisit the administrative layer in order to investigate the treatment of vampirism after the learned debate of 1732 in the two focus areas of the research. Both chapters end with analysing the activities of two medical commissions which investigated vampirism on-site during the 1750s and the written reports they prepared. The Viennese court's direct intervention into the management of revenants in 1755/1766 receive special attention, after which the dissertation ends with the conclusions.

2. Concepts and approaches

Experience, belief, doubt

The long way that the figure of the vampire made from being a threatening part of reality to be a movie star today naturally means that it got heavily transformed in the process: the vampiric bite, the fear of sunlight and silver, the aristocratic demeanour, the eternal life are only some of the main characteristics that identify a vampire today but which were not part of the 'real' vampire of the eighteenth century. Research into its history therefore is like gradually peeling off features as we are reaching back in time and space towards the experience of people for whom it posed a lethal danger. The main epistemological problem here is that the actual holders of such experiences can only be read through several filters, which are more or less alien to these ideas: clerical and secular structures, legal and medical investigations trying to comprehend and / or police these experiences.

It is usually cognitive studies of religion that take on themselves an experience-centred approach, and usually set out from the problem of how to explain the ubiquity of certain



3: John Henry Fuseli: *The Nightmare* (1781)

religious ideas and experiences. The studies argue that the dominant factor in their continued (re-)emergence across cultures is the common cognitive make-up of the human body. Anthropologist David J. Hufford studied such an experience, namely night terrors: waking up at night, feeling a pressure on the chest, suffocation, fear and the feeling of a presence in the room. This cluster of experiences is extremely widespread and has had various names in history, such as nightmare, hag-riding, incubus, in current medical parlance sleeping paralysis and surfaces in eighteenth century descriptions of attacks by the returning dead as well. Hufford revealed that almost one third of university students (his target group) have had at least once such an experience, even though they had no idea what it was called. Hufford delivered the convincing argument that certain experiences at a sensory level are comparable across cultures, even if they vary in certain details.¹⁸

In a similar vein, Edward Bever, historian of early modern witchcraft has recently argued for cognitive realism in witchcraft studies, meaning that many of the experiences related by witches and their victims in early modern Duchy of Württemberg region are so similar to magical experiences described by anthropologists elsewhere in the world because the human mind reacts the same way to similar psychosocial situations.¹⁹ Cognitive anthropologist Pascal Boyer argued for an evolutionary view of ideas about the supernatural according to which there are universal cognitive factors in the human mind which determine what kinds of religious ideas survive in the long run and which ones get filtered out and disappear.²⁰ Just like past efforts of the psychoanalytical school as exemplified by the historical writings of Sigmund Freud or Erik H. Erikson,²¹ these recent attempts of the application of cognitive studies to the history of religion are also met with strong scepticism by most historians due to two considerations: first, the epistemological gap separating researcher and historical actor's experiences and second, the overly deterministic attitude of such studies downplaying the influence that political, social and cultural factors exert on religious experiences. At best, these

¹⁸ David J. Hufford, *The Terror That Comes in the Night: An Experience-Centered Study of Supernatural Assault Traditions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).

¹⁹ Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

²⁰ Pascal Boyer, *Religion Explained - The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *Leonardo Da Vinci: A Psychosexual Study of an Infantile Reminiscence* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1916); Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1958).

theories are granted the ability to offer possible scenarios which however are impossible to substantiate in the given historical cases.

Even though the real experiences of individual historical actors remain inaccessible, where cognitive theories may be of help is to give us a more flexible and dynamic conceptualization of how experiences result in utterances, actions and hence in historical sources. An inspiring take-away from the evolutionary view of the supernatural is that at any given time, a multitude of ideas, experiences and practices related to the supernatural are generated in people's minds and these elements need to go through competition and obstacles in order to be accepted by others and hence to provoke action. Cognitive factors in my view are only one category among social, political and cultural ones, which together co-construct experiences, that are in turn also continually reconstructed through reflexion, social interactions and communicative situations.

A parallel recent trend in anthropological literature is the deconstruction of 'belief' and the shifting of focus on 'reflexivity' and 'doubt'. This direction of research challenges the view that premodern people's ideas about the supernatural seem incoherent and illogical to us, because they lack(ed) the regular reflection provided by written culture. For it is the reflection during repeated attempts at putting things into language, that systematizes experiences and ideas, which subsequently can be challenged and doubted, in the end leading to scepticism. By contrast, new studies point out the ways in which premodern people reflect(ed) on, re-enact(ed) and doubt(ed) elements of their tradition.

The 2002 special issue of *Social Anthropology* collected studies that discuss the role of reflexivity in a religious context, underlining that people participating in rituals are far from attributing collective, shared meanings and from undergoing the same experiences during these practices.²² In a similar vein, anthropologist Ágnes Hesz, when writing about attitudes to the dead in a contemporary Transylvanian village explains that villagers reflect a lot in a variety of situations on concepts of the supernatural, and that these reflections maintain doubt and uncertainty towards these ideas. In her experience, conceptions about the dead do not exist as firmly set beliefs in people's minds. A given person's utterances about whether

²² Christian Kordt Højbjerg, 'Religious Reflexivity. Essays on Attitudes to Religious Ideas and Practice', *Social Anthropology* 10, no. 1 (2002): 4.

the dead can come back to harm the living for instance is often incoherent or outright contradictory depending on the communicative context in which the topic comes up: the informant might be overtly denying the existence of such phenomena when talking to an anthropologist and fearing to be judged superstitious, while having a totally opposing view when it comes to carrying out preventive measures against revenants or discussing the matter during night-time vigils by the biers of dead relatives.²³

These caveats we can glean from cognitive and anthropological literature allows us to free historical actor's experiences from the uniform view forced on them by the power structures that generated the sources we read. It helps to explain why the 'vampire cases' related by historical sources contain such diverse experiences and practices. For instance, the night terrors described by Hufford were in the eighteenth century only one among several other experiences mentioned by victims of the returning dead, such as daytime apparitions of animals, strange noises in the house, dining together and having sexual intercourse with dead relatives for example. Practices also showed a much greater variety than the well-known staking of the dangerous corpse, and could involve benedictions and exorcisms instead; meanwhile, dead bodies could be executed for a variety of reasons apart from causing posthumous attacks, for example as a punishment for crimes committed during lifetime.

Ghosts, revenants, vampires

The dissertation focuses on specific kinds of harmful dead, notably those, whose activities were thought to be linked to a physical human corpse, as opposed to for example body-less souls from Purgatory, treasure-guarding ghosts or raging spirit hordes riding in storms of the *Wütendes Heer*-type. In the text, I call these corpse-bound undead 'revenants' or 'returning dead', expressions which were not really present in eighteenth-century parlance, and hence seemed to be neutral enough to serve as cross-cultural umbrella terms. The specificities of the revenant ideas in early modern learned thinking (Chapter I.2.), the southern Habsburg borderland (Chapter II.2.) and the Moravian-Silesian border (Chapter III.1.) will be detailed in

²³ Ágnes Hesz, 'Hit, kétely és bizonyágkeresés - A halál utáni léttel kapcsolatos elképzelések Gyimesben', in *Az elkerülhetetlen. Vallásantropológiai Tanulmányok Vargyas Gábor Tiszteletére.*, ed. Ildikó Landgraf and Zoltán Nagy (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2012), 71-92.

due course, but it is worth noting ahead, that revenants were known in the German sources of the southern borderland, mostly as *'Blutsauger'* [bloodsucker] and *'Vampir'* [vampire], in the Banat also as *'Moroi'*, while on the Moravian-Silesian border the Latin and German sources used *'Gespenst'* / *'spectrum'* [ghost] or *'(Polter-)Geist'* [spirit]. Given that these terms were constructions emanating from the interactions between local populations and the governing authorities, whenever I use them in the text below, I will understand them in this, constructed sense, not as a faithful description of local experiences.

The terms 'vampire' and 'vampirism' are especially heavily loaded constructs, as in the eighteenth century they absorbed into themselves an especially great variety of revenant experiences and ideas from various historical eras and cultures. Whenever I use 'vampire' in the text, I understand it as the specific construct that was generated by German authorities in the early eighteenth century, on the southern borderland and was elaborated on by learned circles in the 1730s. In this sense, 'vampires' are returning dead who plague the living in various ways, often by sucking their blood. The condition of being a vampire is contagious and can pass from person to person in several ways (see Chapter II.3.), but primarily through being attacked by a vampire. 'Vampirism' denoted already in the eighteenth century a whole complex of ideas and practices centred around the figure of the vampire and also involved the 'vampire sickness' caused by the vampiric attacks, a rapidly progressing affliction resulting in a general withering away of the victim and characterised by stomach and chest pains. It also included the annihilation of the corpse of the attacking vampire as a cure to the sickness. Mirroring the concept of 'vampirism', I coined the clumsy expression 'revenantism', which is supposed to denote ideas and practices related to revenants in a broad sense.

Superstition

Superstition (*superstitio*, *Aberglaube*) has been an instrumental concept for Western civilization in general,²⁴ and in discussions about revenants in particular. The word

²⁴ See general overviews as well as theoretical considerations in Michael D. Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006); and: Eva Kreissl, ed., *Kulturtechnik Aberglaube: Zwischen Aufklärung und Spiritualität. Strategien zur Rationalisierung des Zufalls* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013); For the Middle Ages see especially: Dieter Harmening, *Superstitio: Überlieferungs- und theoriegeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur kirchlich-theologischen*

superstitiosus itself, stems from Roman Latin *super* "above" + *stare* "to stand", a compound without a generally accepted theory to explain its original meaning. Nevertheless, already in Antiquity it has assumed the meaning of a divinatory practice that is 'not ours' (from a pagan Roman perspective) and hence is condemnable. It has been used as a *Kampffidee*, a term of attribution, a powerful tool of othering ever since. As such, it is always a symptom of the interlocutor who deploys it and is incomprehensible in its absence. If the negative connotations to superstition have been a historical constant, whether the practices or ideas referred to as such were thought of as illicit but efficient, or to the contrary, entirely superfluous was subject to negotiations. Throughout the early modern period, actors have used the word in both senses.

Martin Scharfe has recently suggested a fresh understanding of superstition as cultural technology (*Kulturtechnik*), aimed at taking control over the inhuman forces of the world. In this sense it is not qualitatively different from what we understand today as science and technology, for they all have the same goal.²⁵ Understanding superstition as a tool to exert power over one's immediate surroundings is particularly illuminating in understanding why during the eighteenth century, historic churches as well as secular representatives of the Enlightenment persecuted superstition with equal zeal instead of simply ignoring it as inefficient practice. For the enlightened, it represented a rival technology to rule the world: even if erroneous and despicable, it was given the respect of a formidable foe. For the churches, it was a rival belief, one that was all the more dangerous as it promised to tap on and manipulate powerful forces of the more immediate surroundings of a person, as opposed to the official stances of institutionalized religion, which supported a more distant, more indirect location of power.

Aberglaubensliteratur des Mittelalters (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag GmbH & Co KG, 1979); For the eighteenth century: Martin Pott, *Aufklärung und Aberglaube - Die deutsche Frühaufklärung im Spiegel ihrer Aberglaubenskritik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1992); and: Péter Tóth G., 'The Decriminalization of Magic and the Fight Against Superstition in Hungary and Transylvania, 1740–1848', in *Witchcraft and Demonology in Hungary and Transylvania*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 291–317.; and: Ambrus Miskolczy, *Felvilágosodás és babonáság - Erdélyi néphidelem-gyűjtés 1789–90-ben* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2016).

²⁵ Martin Scharfe, 'Wider-Glaube - Zum kulturellen Doppelcharakter der Superstition, und: Superstition als Gebärde einer rationalen Tendenz in der Kultur', in *Kulturtechnik Aberglaube: Zwischen Aufklärung und Spiritualität. Strategien zur Rationalisierung des Zufalls.*, ed. Eva Kreissl (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2013), 107–24.

Borderland and contact zone

Larry Wolff's remarks about how Westerners invented an Eastern Europe for themselves, is undoubtedly relevant for the history of vampirism as well. Even though Wolff does not discuss vampires *per se*, the way Western writers claimed the right to anatomize, historicize and explain diseases thought of as endemic to this region, such as the *plica polonica*²⁶ can be seamlessly applied to the way vampires were discussed in contemporary European writings.²⁷ Based on Gábor Klaniczay's research, Roy Porter also remarked that vampirism was a perfect excuse to talk about the need to civilize the empire's inner savages,²⁸ and Jutta Nowosadtko interpreted vampirism as a phenomenon of occupation in that it was the occupying administrative structure of the Habsburg Monarchy in the southern borderland which provided the channels for the first cases of revenants to become known.²⁹

As important as it is to recognize these agendas, such a view in itself renders the 'invented ones' inert and powerless, which in the case of the vampire's habitat, the border region between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires was not true. The nature of this area had a lasting impact on knowledge produced there, and in this sense, William O'Reilly's argument to use the term 'borderland' for this region is highly instructive.³⁰ While elaborations on Jackson Turner's concept of the American 'frontier' usually entail a diametrically opposed conflict between civilization expanding on the territory of barbarism, O'Reilly relies on Mary

²⁶ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 29-31.

²⁷ See for instance the description of vampirism in: Alberto Fortis, *Travels into Dalmatia Containing General Observations on the Natural History of That Country and the Neighbouring Islands, the Natural Productions, Arts, Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants* (London: J. Robson, 1778), 61-62.; Ignaz von Born, *Briefe über mineralogische Gegenstände, auf seiner Reise durch das Temeswarer Bannat, Siebenbürgen, Ober- Und Nieder-Ungarn* (Frankfurt, Leipzig: Johann Jacob Ferber, 1774), 14-15.

²⁸ Gábor Klaniczay, 'The Decline of Witches and the Rise of Vampires under the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy', in *The Uses of Supernatural Power: The Transformation of Popular Religion in Medieval and Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Karen Margolis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 168-89; Roy Porter, 'Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment, Romantic and Liberal Thought', in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), 214-216.

²⁹ Jutta Nowosadtko, 'Der „Vampyrus Serviensis“ Und Sein Habitat: Impressionen von der Österreichischen Militärgrenze', *Militär und Gesellschaft in der frühen Neuzeit* 8, no. 2 (2004): 151-168.

³⁰ William O'Reilly, 'Fredrick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis, Orientalism, and the Austrian Militärgrenze', *Journal of Austrian-American History* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1-30.

Louise Pratt's idea of the 'contact zone' to understand 'borderland' as a space where inhabitants had to be

*'complicit in transnational social, economic, and cultural systems, which rendered residents of the frontier neither fully "us" nor fully "them" in the eyes of the imperial center'*³¹

This does not mean that one should forget about power relations, on the contrary: Pratt's contact zones are far from being places of a harmonious egalitarian coexistence, they are

*'social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.'*³²

Pratt underlines that adopting the views of the power structure (in our case, the Habsburg administration) striving to control the contact zone will make us blind to the special characteristics of the zone. Viewed from the side of power, the contact zone will always appear to be chaotic and anomalous, and so do the artistic and knowledge products stemming from that zone. Pratt's example is an early seventeenth-century manuscript chronicle, which both in its illustrations and in its text displays a mixed Quechua and Spanish influence. In Pratt's view, when talking about such products of contact zones, one has to discard the rigid understanding of two cultures, two communities clashing. These products should be seen as 'heterogenous on the reception end as well as the production end: it will read very differently to people in different positions in the contact zone'.³³ Born out of power-laden negotiations of the southern Habsburg borderland between the Catholic Viennese administration and local Orthodox communities, the vampire was a typical contact zone product: heterogenous and ambiguous.

Disenchantments and enlightenments

Research into vampirism can show us in what way medical reports on the returning dead can contribute to our understanding of medicalization and disenchantment in eighteenth-century

³¹ O'Reilly, 29.

³² Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', *Profession*, 1991, 34.

³³ Pratt, 36-37.

Habsburg Monarchy. The Weberian concept of disenchantment as basic trait of modernity has come under criticism in recent decades, and scholars often prefer to be more cautious and talk about 'disenchantments' in the plural.³⁴ The term I believe is still useful not as a reference to a long-term linear process, but to denote smaller-scale declines in particular aspects of the supernatural's activity in the physical world. Thinking in terms of disenchantments allows us to tease out which exact belief went into decline within which communities and this way perhaps get closer to finding the causes behind such processes.

In a seventeenth-eighteenth-century Western European context, disenchantment usually refers to the decline of witchcraft prosecutions and of certain forms of Baroque piety. In the case of witchcraft, the Whiggish idea (stemming from the era of Enlightenment itself), that it was the progress of natural philosophy and medicine that brought about the decline has become untenable in the past decades.³⁵ The main counterargument is chronological: in the West, the spread of new science among learned elites came about during the early Enlightenment (late seventeenth - early eighteenth century), already after the number of trials started to decrease in most countries. Further, it has also been pointed out that at the individual level, philosophical skepticism was most often not based on science but rather on religion: it was a change of ideas about what demons are capable of in this world that was in the background. It became less conceivable for instance that God would actually allow humans to have the powers attributed to witches; at the same time, it still remained conceivable that demons do have those powers, an idea that explains the continued presence of demonic possession cases even when witchcraft trials started to ebb. In more current research on the decline of witchcraft prosecutions, the causes are sought more in a stricter central control over local justice in some cases, while emphasizing the practical experiences of local magistrates and their difficulty in proving supernatural crimes on the other. Further, current research also underlines the changes towards a more rigorous legal procedure requiring harder evidence of supernatural activity. The new questions therefore are rather, what brought about this change in religious mentality, if it was not science? Why did hitherto convincing ideas lose credibility and why did others rise to take their place?

³⁴ Richard Jenkins, 'Disenchantment, Enchantment and Re-Enchantment: Max Weber at the Millennium', *Max Weber Studies* 1 (2000): 11-32.

³⁵ Brian P. Levack, 'The Decline and End of Witchcraft Prosecutions', in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe. The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), 1-94.

Such changes of mentality have recently been pointed out within the Catholic Church's attitude to its own healing practices as well. At the official level, already from the Tridentine Council (1545–63) onwards, there seems to have been a gradual curbing of the wide-ranging benediction-arsenal at the disposal of the medieval priests in their fight against the devil's this-worldly activity.³⁶ Though semi-authorized and indexed benediction manuals remained to enjoy a constant popularity, in high church circles there was an increasing distrust towards the efficacy of rituals that had an overly medieval-magical taste. Another change was the slow disappearance of largescale public exorcisms from the end of the seventeenth century onwards. This did not necessarily mean a decline in cases of possession in general, more that exorcisms became a private matter between the exorcist and the possessed.³⁷ Finally, the strongest expressions of caution towards older beliefs in the supernatural's physical activity manifested itself in the 1740's-60's writings of a reform movement within the Church, termed by some as the Catholic Enlightenment.³⁸ Pope Benedict XIV.'s *De servorum Dei beatificatione* for instance set stricter standards of evidence for beatification and canonization trials relying heavily on medical expertise, while Ludovico Muratori's writings on magic and witchcraft proposed that most witches were in fact sick women in need of medical care.

Historians of the decline of witchcraft trials in Eastern Europe pose somewhat different questions than their colleagues researching the West. The peculiarity of the Habsburg case is that here, the last great wave of prosecutions happened as late as the first half of the eighteenth century, and that the 'decline' was more a break than a gradual ebb. While prosecutions largely stopped in the Austrian half by the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the Hungarian Kingdom the last large wave was still happening in the 1730-40s. The stopping of witchcraft trials is thus associated with the absolutist Habsburg rule of the second half of the eighteenth century, when the state started pursuing projects comparable in their goals to those recognized as 'enlightened'. Maria Theresa's reforms of the decriminalization of magic, the reform of the penal code, the regulation and bureaucratization of public

³⁶ Dániel Bárh, *Benedikció és exorcizmus a kora újkori Magyarországon* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2010).

³⁷ Sarah Ferber, 'Demonic Possession, Exorcism and Witchcraft', in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 575-592.

³⁸ Ulrich L. Lehner, *The Catholic Enlightenment - The Forgotten History of a Global Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

healthcare and education during the 1750s-1770s,³⁹ as well as Joseph II's orders for the abolishment of serfdom and religious tolerance are some of the projects that earned the term 'absolutist enlightenment' for the era.

In order to break out of the paradigm of belatedness, scholars of Eastern Europe tend to define Enlightenment in more moderate, inclusive terms than the radical representatives whom Jonathan Israel singled out as having had the greatest influence on the birth of modernity.⁴⁰ Scholars studying the Holy Roman Empire term the first decades of the eighteenth century as Early Enlightenment, characterized by a *ratio moderata*, a preference of practically-minded reasoning, a kind of golden mean between atheism and superstition.⁴¹ Discussing the applicability of 'Enlightenment' on the Habsburg Monarchy, László Kontler has suggested that next to assessing the roles a handful of heroes exerted on the intellectual life of Europe, research also needs to turn to the moderate 'rank-and-file' of the Enlightenment. These bureaucrats, noblemen and clergymen may have been less radical, less modern than the heroes of the pantheon, but shared certain common values across geopolitical divides. In this sense:

*'Enlightenment may have been many things to many people, but to all of them it was to discover hitherto unknown, and to examine and systematize already known facts and truths about man's physical and social-moral environment, to communicate them to (and about them with) their fellow human beings in order to test them and fully to assess their import—all of this with the ultimate goal of improving the environment which was the object of their inquiry. To put it simply, this was a pursuit of happiness: material and, no less important, spiritual well-being and satisfaction for themselves and others, the one being inseparable from the other.'*⁴²

Seeing the various enlightenments united by such core interests, there is a further possibility to look for agendas prefiguring the state-led projects of the second half of the century in

³⁹ Tóth G., 'The Decriminalization of Magic and the Fight Against Superstition in Hungary and Transylvania, 1740–1848'; Ágnes Várkonyi, 'Connections between the Cessation of Witch Trials and the Transformation of the Social Structure Related to Medicine', *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 37, no. 1–4 (1991): 425–477.

⁴⁰ Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment - Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴¹ Pott, *Aufklärung und Aberglaube - Die deutsche Frühaufklärung im Spiegel ihrer Aberglaubenskritik*, 231.

⁴² László Kontler, 'Introduction: The Enlightenment in Central Europe?', in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945). I: Late Enlightenment – Emergence of the Modern National Idea*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopecek (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 34–35.

earlier decades. Already R. J. W. Evans has located channels of what he termed ‘proto-Enlightenment’ in the personal and official networks of the members of the imperial bureaucracy, as well as in campaigns for cultural renewal among the local nations.⁴³ As it will be shown below, the governmental projects characteristic of the southern Habsburg borderland in the first half of the eighteenth century can also be interpreted as sites of experimental modernizing projects.

Governance and social disciplining

As much as the Enlightenment was about making knowledge comparable and public, it was also about controlling knowledge and about increasing institutional monitoring of and intervention into people’s lives. In this sense it can be understood as a continuation of seventeenth-century projects of confessionalization in the ecclesiastical and cameralism in the secular sphere. Institutional interventions in all ages strive for clearer categorization and systematization in order to make things easier to control, to be able to assign responsibilities to people in an efficient way. What can be seen in the early eighteenth century in the Habsburg Monarchy was an increasing application of cameralist ideas, followed by an absolutist enlightenment governance in the second half, which was even more bent on bureaucratization and centralization, by creating a strongly hierarchic infrastructure not only in governance, but also in the fields of public health and education among others. Revenants as well as their executioners can be seen as unruly subjects, whose disciplining formed part of more general state measures to gain control over people.⁴⁴

⁴³ R.J.W. Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs. Essays on Central Europe, c.1683-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 36-55.

⁴⁴ Daniel Arlaud, ‘Vampire, Aufklärung und Staat: Eine militärmedizinische Mission in Ungarn, 1755–1756’, in *Gespenster und Politik*, ed. Claire Gantet and Fabrice d.’Almeida (Berlin: Wilhelm Fink, 2007), 134-135.; Stéphanie Danneberg, ‘„Vampire sind äußerst unordentliche Untertanen“. Überlegungen zur Funktion und Instrumentalisierung des Vampirphänomens’, *Zeitschrift Für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde* 2 (2012): 177–92; Peter Bräunline, ‘The Frightening Borderlands of Enlightenment: The Vampire Problem’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 43, no. 3 (2012): 710–719.

Medicalization and Expertise

While secondary literature no longer singles out changes in natural philosophy and medicine as direct causes of disenchantment, it remains clear that the new mentality put a greater trust into these disciplines and that it relied on natural explanations of strange phenomena to counter supernatural ones. Roy Porter termed the 18th century a time of the appropriation of abnormal diseases and behaviour by the medical gaze.⁴⁵ This incorporation of the rare, the peculiar into the proper field of medicine raises the question, how these disciplines could live up to the expectations. Physicians and surgeons had been passing opinions on strange cases earlier as well, but did any significant changes happen in medical explanations, in medical knowledge of the workings of the human body that would explain the phenomena, the afflictions that up to that point had been many times considered to be not natural by medical experts? Such questions are remarkably poorly researched, which is why Peter Elmer has recently called for detailed case studies of physicians and their way of discerning natural and unnatural afflictions.⁴⁶

The concept of ‘medicalization’ denotes the rise in the authority given to medical explanations and in the reliance on institutionally trained medical personnel as opposed to local sources of expertise, a process that started in the 18th century and arches centuries up to today.⁴⁷ In the Habsburg Monarchy, medicalization was part of a large-scale campaign aimed at reforming public hygiene from the early 1740’s onwards.⁴⁸ Some of these governmental measures aimed at improving hygienic conditions in cemeteries or prisons for example. Others were meant to regulate, formalize and centralize medical practice. From 1752, all counties were ordered to employ a physician, who had medical as well as administrative duties, such as overseeing medical practitioners in the county or treating the poor free of charge. From 1754, all doctors practicing within the empire had to have a doctoral degree, which had to be approved by the Vienna University’s medical faculty if it was received outside the empire. Midwives had to gain a license from the county physicians, and surgeons could not practice without an exam taken

⁴⁵ Porter, ‘Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment, Romantic and Liberal Thought’.

⁴⁶ Elmer, ‘Witchcraft and Medicine’.

⁴⁷ Lilla Krász, “‘A mesterség szolgálatában’: Felvilágosodás és “orvosi tudományok” a 18. századi Magyarországon”, *Századok* 139, no. 5 (2005): 1065–1104.

⁴⁸ Várkonyi, ‘Connections between the Cessation of Witch Trials and the Transformation of the Social Structure Related to Medicine’, 462–463.

in Vienna. According to a regulation in 1765, all lay healers (i.e. those, who practiced without a license) were prohibited from practicing at pains of expulsion or imprisonment. The most significant document summarizing these regulations was the *Generale Normativum in Re Sanitatis*, issued in 1770, which formalized the education, the licensing and the practice of medical practitioners (physicians, surgeons, apothecaries and midwives). As Lilla Krász, historian of enlightenment medicine observed, the eighteenth century was ‘decisive in establishing physicians’ authority’ across Europe.⁴⁹ At the same time, one ought to take certain caveats into consideration. First, while it seems obvious that the 18th century saw an increased professionalization process, in fact, much of the reforms remained on paper throughout the century, and the authority and social prestige of licensed medical practitioners was also building up only slowly.

In being able to give a confident, ‘objective’ diagnosis⁵⁰ to one’s best abilities, it is often thought instrumental to have a strong professional backing, so that one’s judgement is less dependent on the client and on the circumstances of diagnosing. ‘Professionalization’ is a term that denotes the development of such a backing. Even though it is mostly used in a nineteenth-century setting, Lilla Krász and Thomas Bromann among others have located medical professionalization’s roots in the learned medicine of the German-speaking world of the 1750s.⁵¹ Bromann gave the following set of criteria for an occupation to become a profession: (1) specialized and advanced education, (2) a code of conduct or ethics, (3) competency tests leading to licensing, (4) high social prestige in comparison to manual labor, (5) monopolization of the market in services, and (6) considerable autonomy in conduct of professional affairs and (7) the claim that their education presents a coherent body of theoretical doctrine that they apply in their work. While the Enlightened absolutist reforms in the Habsburg Monarchy in the second half of the eighteenth century indeed aimed at achieving such criteria, some of

⁴⁹ Lilla Krász, ‘Quackery versus Professionalism? Characters, Places and Media of Medical Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Hungary.’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 43 (2012): 200.

⁵⁰ I am aware of the fact that ‘diagnosis’ in medical history is a later, nineteenth-century development, and that before that the analysis of observable signs to uncover hidden causes in medicine was called ‘semiotics’. However, the latter expression got so much intertwined since then with linguistics, that it would be confusing to use it. I am using diagnosis only out of convenience. Volker Hess, ‘Medical Semiotics in the 18th Century: A Theory of Practice?’, *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics* 19, no. 3 (1 June 1998): 203–13.

⁵¹ Thomas Broman, ‘Rethinking Professionalization: Theory, Practice, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century German Medicine’, *The Journal of Modern History* 67, no. 4 (1995): 835–72; Krász, ‘Quackery versus Professionalism? Characters, Places and Media of Medical Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Hungary.’

the roots of these reforms can be pushed a little bit back further in time, and linked to the Habsburg borderland's medical system. It is instructive in this sense, that Gianna Pomata singled out a further driving force of professionalization in the shift in power relations between patient and physician. In her examined case of Bologna physicians this was brought about by the shift from payment based the successful outcome of cures to a payment contract.

⁵² Though in the Habsburg case such contracts are not yet known, the borderland state structure's medical professionals did get paid on a regular and a mission-basis (remunerations), not based on how successful they were in curing local people's ailments.

At the same time, Based on the considerations put forward recently by Eric Ash, ⁵³ I understand 'expert' as a function, a role in which someone appears, not as a permanent category: it is not a rival to occupation or profession. The role of the expert is lodged between a second person/institution and an object of expertise: experts in short are entrusted to deploy their specialized knowledge in the service of another person/body that wishes to extend its control over a target (which can be many things, for example a person's body, a group of people, natural resources, knowledge production sites, physical territories, inanimate objects etc.). This way a physician may act as a practitioner when healing a patient and as an expert once asked by the monarch to advise on how to improve the public health of the population. Two further considerations need to be mentioned: in the early modern era, expertise is largely unregulated by formal credentialing, and hence is especially highly negotiable and controversial. Second, similar debates appear in the era about practical or theoretical expertise is superior. These debates surface in the history of vampirism as well.

Vampirism had its own, peculiar place in the processes of medicalization and disenchantment, for it became formulated at the crux of governmental policies and agendas not relating to witchcraft. It was no accident that the vampire cases of the southern Habsburg borderland alarmed the local administration. The military frontier had been created not only against the Ottomans, but also against epidemics, most prominently the plague.⁵⁴ The threat of epidemics arriving through the military and commercial routes of the Balkans was constant. It was the

⁵² Gianna Pomata, *Contracting a Cure: Patients, Healers, and the Law in Early Modern Bologna* (Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

⁵³ Eric H. Ash, 'Introduction: Expertise and the Early Modern State', *Osiris* 25, no. 1 (2010): 1-24.

⁵⁴ Erna Lesky, 'Die österreichische Pestfront an der k. k. Militärgrenze.', *Saeculum. Jahrbuch für Universalgeschichte* 8 (1957): 86-88.

duty of the civil or military administrative bodies of the borderland to gather information about, investigate and contain epidemics and halt their spread towards the heart of the empire. Since cases of vampirism usually involved sudden, numerous deaths within a community, they demanded the attention of local medical and administrative personnel.

At the same time, practices related to vampirism also frustrated another facet of the overarching public hygiene project, namely the increasing regulation of cemeteries and dealings with the dead. While seventeenth-century plague ordinances already made serious steps in this direction, these only applied to plague-stricken times. By contrast, especially during the latter third of the eighteenth century, the disciplining of cemeteries gained momentum. Cemeteries were moved from churchyards outside the settlements, legislation was passed on the required depths of graves, and certain cultural habits involving physical contact with the dead became prohibited. It was as part of such regulations that in 1784 Joseph II warned the Orthodox Church to take a greater part in the fight against vampirism.⁵⁵

Knowledge production and experimenting

Literature on the social construction of science published in the past decades emphasizes the importance of not taking processes such as medicalization for granted but to problematize them.⁵⁶ Knowledge production is never happening in a vacuum but is always co-constructed with society and is intertwined with politics and power relations. Historical actors themselves were often trying hard to draw very clear boundaries between fields of authority among disciplines and between what is a valid way of producing knowledge and what is not.⁵⁷ The symmetry principle elaborated by sociologist of science David Bloor is very helpful in handling such competitive knowledge claims especially when it comes to an obscure, prejudice-laden

⁵⁵ Franciscus Xaver Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, vol. 3 (Buda: Typis Caesareo-Regiae Scientiarum Universitatis, 1853), 122. 'Sepulturae et superstitio de sanguisugis Gr.R.n.U.: Cum consuetudo: mortuos in aperta tumba sepeliendi adhuc in aliquibus locis vigeat, Constitutiones normales, ne in morbis contagionem minantibus demortui in in apertis tumbis circumferantur, denuo publicandae; ac Clerus Graeci Ritus non Uniti, Populi spirituali curae suae concrediti animos a superstitione circa: sanguisugas – Wampier dictos, quibus ultima fata suorum adscribere solent, etiamnum, ut refertur vigente, avertere connitantur.'

⁵⁶ Jan Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge. Constructivism and the History of Science with a New Preface*. (Chicago, 2005); Daston, 'Science Studies and the History of Science'; Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

⁵⁷ Thomas F. Gieryn, 'Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists', *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 6 (1983): 781–95.

subject as vampirism.⁵⁸ According to Bloor, though it might seem like a necessity that science arrived at the claims accepted as true today, nothing is self-explanatory. The perceived truth-content of given statements made by historical actors should not figure in our explanations of why they came out triumphant as opposed to other, rival claims of the time; in this sense, we need to treat these claims equally (hence ‘symmetry’). Such an approach helps us to take into consideration the multiplicity of voices that surfaced at any given time. All knowledge claims need work to become accepted: there have been very fruitful attempts at analyzing what proponents of a certain idea had to do in order to get their explanation accepted by a given community. During negotiations of knowledge, a crucial step in winning other social groups over is the realization that they have differing interests, and hence the message to be communicated needs to be adequately ‘translated’.⁵⁹

A story about medical proof, evidence, and death can tell us more about the history of experiment and its relation to the history of medicine as well. Ian Maclean understood the emphasis on empirical evidence in 16th-century law and medicine to have presaged the experimental philosophy of the seventeenth century.⁶⁰ Elaine Leong and Alisha Rankin in the recent thematic issue of the *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* seek ‘to integrate the history of medicine more firmly into the early history of experiment.’⁶¹ In this sense, while it is clear that the application of systematic experiments in medicine mostly starts in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they aim to trace a tradition of concerted efforts at empirical knowledge gathering before this time. Such attempts deal with repeated tests on snake venom, or sixteenth century deliberate trials of poisons and antidotes on animals and convicted criminals, as well as testing the purported blood miracles in early eighteenth-century Naples, during which the several centuries-old, pulverized blood of martyrs would purportedly liquefy on certain dates of the calendar.⁶² In addition, legal medicine, has recently

⁵⁸ Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery*.

⁵⁹ Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (Harvard University Press, 1993); Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*; Michael Callon, ‘Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Briec Bay’, in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, ed. J. Law (London: Routledge, 1986), 196-223.

⁶⁰ Ian Maclean, ‘Evidence, Logic, the Rule and the Exception in Renaissance Law and Medicine’, *Early Science and Medicine* 5, no. 3 (2000): 227–256.

⁶¹ Leong and Rankin, ‘Testing Drugs and Trying Cures’.

⁶² Alisha Rankin, ‘On Anecdote and Antidotes: Poison Trials in Sixteenth-Century Europe’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 91, no. 2 (2017): 274–302; Jutta Schickore, *About Method: Experimenters, Snake Venom, and the History of Writing Scientifically* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Francesco Paolo De Ceglia, ‘Playing

also been recognised as a crucial sphere of knowledge production.⁶³ At court, surgeons and physicians appearing as forensic experts routinely presented natural and medical knowledge to be contested and engaged in epistemological debates on the production of empirical evidence and fought challenges to expertise. The medical experts diagnosing and reporting on vampires and other kinds of revenants were engaging in exactly these kinds of activities.

God: Testing, Modeling, and Imitating Blood Miracles in Eighteenth-Century Europe', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 91, no. 2 (2017): 391–419.

⁶³ Renzi, 'Medical Expertise, Bodies, and the Law in Early Modern Courts'; Esther Fischer-Homberg, *Medizin vor Gericht: Gerichtsmedizin von der Renaissance bis zur Aufklärung* (Bern: Huber, 1983); Catherine Crawford, 'Legalizing Medicine: Early Modern Legal Systems and the Growth of Medico-Legal Knowledge', in *Legal Medicine in History*, ed. Michael Clark and Catherine Crawford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 89–116.

3. Sources

Archival and published sources

Given that the dissertation follows the reports about vampires through various levels of the Habsburg Monarchy, and beyond, it relies on a variety of archival and printed sources. Often, I was very grateful to be able to rely on transcripts and published versions of archival materials. At the same time, much of the source base on the administrative treatment of the vampire problem relies on hitherto unknown or little-known documents. In order to gain a closer look at the ground level, where local communities interacted with the local administrative bodies, the archival materials of the provincial and imperial centres were consulted. A main problem in this field was that these collections have often been reorganized, moved, disposed of or lost during the past centuries. In fact, documents relating to the everyday lives of the subjected populations especially suffered a negative treatment as opposed to the central administration's downward-directed orders and their internal communication. In general, while the documents relating to vampire cases themselves often became discarded over time, their abundant traces remained in the provincial register and protocol books, which were keeping track of all issues dealt with by the provincial administration.

The documents pertaining to the administration and life in the Habsburg Banat are scattered across several archives. Of these I had the possibility to research in the State Archives of Timișoara, which housed certain peculiar materials relating to revenants as well as to the medical system of the province. Most of these documents were preserved as individual documents, ripped out of their contexts, as apparently much of the material was either destroyed or transported away from the archives. The archives houses goods from various authorities of the Banat. The section on the provincial administration (*TM-F-00302: Administrația Provincială Imperială – Regală a Banatului, 1754-1777*) has a few remaining protocol books on criminal cases that happened in the 1770s, and among these, the book on year 1775, contains the case of the revenant execution of lehsvin (today Izvin, Romania).⁶⁴

⁶⁴ 'Criminal protocols', 1775. SJTAN / TM-F-00302: Administrația Provincială Imperială – Regală a Banatului, 1754-1777, 16. Protocollum Criminalis 1775 January – June. 31r.

Documents created by the province's military command are found in the section *TM-F-00001: Comandamentul General Banăţean*, which contains for instance Belgrade physician Haack's letter about a strange case of *magnetismus mumialis*.⁶⁵ The section of the Banat's mining centre in Oravicabánya (today Oraviţa), *TM-F-00130: Direcţia Montanistica Bănăţeană – Oraviţa (1725-1878)* provided further documents about surgeon Georg Tallar's biography as a mining physician in the district of Karánsebes around 1760.⁶⁶ Finally, within the document collection of the Banat Museum (*TM-F-00117 Colecţia de documente Muzeul Banatului (1353-1948)*), one finds a curious document written in 1784 in Cyrillic alphabet in Romanian language, by the bishop of Varset, who addresses the local clergy about the need to police vampirism.⁶⁷

It was in the Hungarian National Archives and the Vienna State Archives that I found most of the documents relevant to vampirism on the southern borderland. The Vienna Archives' section on the Aulic Treasury's documents has a convenient thematic collection of the longest narrative sources on the Serbian, Transylvanian and Banatian vampire lore (*Sammlung Vampir Akten (1732-1756)*).⁶⁸ The collection has two subsections. *Vampir Akten 1* contains two clusters of documents, both relating to the same 1753 revenant-investigation in the Habsburg Banat (Chapter VI.2.).⁶⁹ *Vampir Akten 2* consists of the documents of the 1732 Medvedia vampire case of Habsburg Serbia (Chapter II.3.)⁷⁰ and the 1753 revenant investigations in Kapnikbánya (today Cavnic), Transylvania.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Haack, 'Coerem magnetismi naturalis, sympathetico mumialis', 10 March 1728, SJTAN, TM-F-00001: Comandamentul General Banăţean (1772-1918), Pachetul 2/12., Serviciul Judeţean Timiş al Arhivelor Naţionale, Timişoara.

⁶⁶ 'Documents of the Oravitza Mining Directorate', 1725-1878. SJTAN / TM-F-00130: Direcţia Montanistica Bănăţeană – Oraviţa (1725-1878), 134, 145, 153.

⁶⁷ 'Collection of the Banat Museum', 1353-1948. SJTAN / TM-F-00117: Colecţia de documente Muzeul Banatului (1353-1948), 206.

⁶⁸ 'Vampir Akten - Teil 1', 1753. OESTA / FHKA / Sonderbestände / Sammlungen / Kuriosa / Vampir Akten 1 = Banater Akten r. Nr. 37, fols. 91-94.; Banater Akten, r.Nr. 53, fols. 1-22.; 'Vampir Akten - Teil 2', 1732, 1753. OESTA / FHKA / Sonderbestände / Sammlungen / Kuriosa / Vampir Akten 2 = Hoffinanz Ungarn, r.Nr. 654, fols. 1131-1136, 1142-1143.; Sanitätsakten, r.Nr. 1., fols 1-4.; Münz- und Bergwesen, r.Nr. 90., fols 1-22.

⁶⁹ 'Documents on Kőműves's investigations', 1753. OESTA-FHKA / Banater Akten r. Nr. 37, fols. 91-94. [currently in the special collection: Vampir Akten – Teil 1.]; Tallar, Georg. 'Visum repertum anatomico chyrgicum, oder unterhänigst gehorsamster summarischer Bericht. Von und über die so genannte Vampir oder Blutsauger; wallachischer Sprache Moroi genant', 1753. OESTA / FHKA / Banater Akten, r. Nr. 53, fols. 1-22. [currently in the special collection: Vampir Akten – Teil 1.]

⁷⁰ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1732. OESTA / FHKA / Hoffinanz Ungarn, r.Nr. 654, fols. 1131-1144., and Sanitätsakten, r.Nr. 1., fols 1-4. [currently in the special collection: Vampir Akten – Teil 2.]

⁷¹ 'Documents of the Kapnik revenant case', 1753. OESTA-FHKA Münz- und Bergwesen, r.Nr. 90. fols 1-22. [currently in the special collection: Vampir Akten – Teil 2.]

While other sections of the Vienna archives, which I have consulted did not provide substantial information on vampirism, they did house detailed documentation on the military, medical and internal politics of the southern borderland, as well as on its relation to the Viennese centre, which helped to conceptualize the historical context. In this sense especially valuable sources are the sanitary journals of the Pancsova (today Pančevo) quarantine station (1754-57) in the section on the sanitary reports of the Temesvár provincial administration (*Sanitätsberichte der Temesvarer Administration*).⁷² The director of the station had to hand in a journal every month in which he was supposed to file all notable events happening at the station, which makes these rarely researched documents a rich source of information on how the medical-military system of the borderland functioned on an everyday basis.

The Hungarian National Archives in Budapest also houses a large collection of protocol books and documents produced by the Banat provincial administration in Temesvár, the section *E 303: Landesadministration Banat*. The materials include official reports, sanitary, administrative, ecclesiastical and political documents. Apart from giving an overview of the matters with which the provincial administration had to deal with, it also contains novel information on cases of revenants. These entries can be found in several types of sources: documents themselves (1716-1770),⁷³ for example provisor Johann Rácz's 1725 letter;⁷⁴ disposal lists, which contain concise summaries of those documents which had been assigned to be discarded (1716-60);⁷⁵ protocol registers, that is, short notes on incoming and outgoing documents;⁷⁶ index books to the protocol registers;⁷⁷ and reference books which were meant to facilitate orientation within the material.⁷⁸ Lajos Baróti has published a portion of the vampire-related entries in some of these sources at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁷⁹ In addition, The Hungarian National Archives also houses some of the protocol notes of the

⁷² 'Sanitary reports of the Temesvár administration', 1752-1755. OESTA / FHKA / Neue Hofkammer / Ungarisches Kammerale / Banater Akten 123 - Sanitätsberichte der Temesvarer Administration.

⁷³ 'Documents of the Banat provincial administration', 1716-1770. MNL-OL / E 303: Landesadministration Banat, Bundles 1-13, 53-64.

⁷⁴ 'Letter by district provisor Johann Rácz', 1725. MNL-OL / E 303: Landesadministration Banat, Bundle 9. 5r-7v.

⁷⁵ 'List of documents to be discarded', 1716-1770. MNL-OL / E 303: Landesadministration Banat, Volumes 14-27, 48-57.

⁷⁶ 'Protocol registers', 1754-1770. MNL-OL / E 303: Landesadministration Banat, Volumes 65-80.

⁷⁷ 'Index books to the protocol registers', 1754-1778. MNL-OL / E 303: Landesadministration Banat, Volumes 81-96, 187-194.

⁷⁸ 'Out-of-use reference books of the provincial administration' 1716-54. MNL-OL / E 303: Landesadministration Banat, Volumes 28-44.

⁷⁹ Lajos Baróti, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Vampyrismus in Südungarn', *Ethnologische Mitteilungen aus Ungarn* 3, no. 9-10. (1893): 219-221.

Vienna-seated aulic sanitary commission (in the section *A 109: Protocolla Commissionis Sanitatis*), which was created to oversee the defence against the great 1738 plague, and then remained the healthcare system's highest organ after that. The commission discussed the 1738 vampire case involving Johann Mayr district official and the surgeon named Uran.⁸⁰

In terms of the Moravian-Silesian material, it was not the secular but the ecclesiastical authorities who were mostly dealing with the revenant question. The Troppau division of the Olomouc Episcopal Archives, and within it, the section on the Olomouc Archbishopric Consistory's materials (*Arcibiskupská konsistoř Olomouc, signatura C13*) contains three boxes of documents (reports, attestations, requests and correspondence) about the returning dead within the territory of the bishopric.⁸¹ Among these, there is about sixty pages of documentation generated by the episcopal commission's investigation of the 1755 Frei Hermersdorf revenant scandal. This rich material has only recently been discovered by Czech scholars and provides invaluable insights into the detailed workings and developments of the anti-revenant measures in the region. Apart from this legal documentation, the parish death registers for the 1704-1784 period (available online)⁸² also provide information on the returning dead, as the parish priests were noting down unusual events that happened to the cadavers in the registers.

It is thanks to Katalin Pataki (who drew my attention to the documents), that the material on the Frei Hermersdorf case has been complemented by a fantastic, hitherto unknown find in the '*Politica*'-section of the *Batthyány-Collection* in the Esztergom Archiepiscopal Archives and Library. The bundle of manuscripts first of all consists of a bound book titled *Historia vampirorum, qui in Silesia Anno 1755 fuisse credebantur*⁸³ which was completed on 12th May 1759 in Pozsony, at the request of count József Batthyány (1727 – 1799), bishop of Transylvania, later cardinal and archbishop of Kalocsa. The compiler was Ferenc Horváth,

⁸⁰ 'Protocols of the Aulic Sanitary Commission', 1738-1751. MNL-OL / A 109: Protocolla Commissionis Sanitatis, Bundle 1. 487v-488v, 497v and 504r-505r.

⁸¹ 'Documents Relating to the Frei Hermersdorf Magia posthuma Case', 1754, Fond Arcibiskupská konsistoř Olomouc / signatura C13 / inventární číslo 2278, 2279, 2280 / karton 1, 2, 3., Zemský archiv v Opavě, pobočka Olomouc.

⁸² 'Catholic Parish Register 1704-1736, Velké Heraltice', J IX 5., Regional Archives in Opava, accessed 8 June 2019, <http://digi.archives.cz/da/>; 'Catholic Parish Register 1737-1784, Velké Heraltice', n.d., J IX 8, 785, Regional Archives in Opava, <http://digi.archives.cz/da/>.

⁸³ Ferenc Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum, qui in Silesia anno 1755 fuisse credebantur' (1759), Batthyány-Gyűjtemény / Cat VIII. Politica / Tit. X. Politicae ordinationes, 281. doboz, 1-93., Esztergomi Főszékesegyházi Könyvtár és Levéltár, Esztergom.

expeditor to bishop Batthyány's father, Hungarian palatine Lajos Batthyány (1696 – 1765). The book contains three manuscript copies: 1) the fifty-page long protocol notes of the Wabst-Gasser Commission's investigations in Frei Hermersdorf, 2) a manuscript copy of Joseph Pitton de Tournefort's 1700 narrative on a Greek returning dead, a 'vroucolakas'⁸⁴ and 3) a German copy of van Swieten's 1755 handwritten advice to Maria Theresa about the Frei Hermersdorf case, the original of which is kept in Vienna, in the Austrian National Library.⁸⁵ Apart from the *Historia vampirorum*, the bundle contains two more items, another copy of the Wabst-Gasser protocols and a copy of Marquis D'Argens's commentary on the 1732 Medvedia vampire case.⁸⁶ The complex analysis of the whole compilation process lies outside the scope of the present dissertation and is done as a separate project. Nevertheless, the book proved to be crucial for Chapter VII, as it contains the only known extant copy of the Wabst-Gasser commission's official report on the Frei Hermersdorf case.

The learned contributions to the vampire debate required a different approach, as many of the sources were published, and most were accessible online, thanks to the recent upswing in digitization projects led by the *Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum (MDZ)*, the *Bibliotheksverbund Bayern (BVB)* and *Google Books* among others. The more obscure texts and journal articles had to be found or requested from libraries and archives, such as the Austrian National Library in Vienna, The Berlin State Library, the Warburg Library in London, or even the Cornell University Library in Ithaca (NY). A major task in this respect was the creation of a (still expanding) database of learned texts about vampires, which at present contains about 40 standalone treatises entirely or partially dealing with vampirism published in the time period between 1725 and 1760. These texts are complemented by articles and reviews published in journals and newspapers, a collection which (so far) consists of more than 150 items published between 1725 and 1740 in 35 journals. There still are a couple of important texts, which we only know from citations in other treatises, but the whereabouts of which are unknown, such as von Stein's *Unverlorenes Licht*.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d'un voyage du Levant* (Amsterdam, 1718), sec. 3.

⁸⁵ Van Swieten, 'Remarques sur le vampyrisme de Sylésie de l'an 1755'.

⁸⁶ Jean-Baptiste Boyer D'Argens, *Lettres juives ou correspondance philosophique, historique et critique, entre un juif voyageur à Paris & ses correspondans en divers endroits*, vol. 5 (Amsterdam: Paul Gautier, 1737), sec. 125.

⁸⁷ Otto von Graben zum Stein, *Unverlorenes Licht und Recht derer Todten unter den Lebendigen, oder gründlicher Beweis der Erscheinung der Todten unter den Lebendigen, und Was jene vor ein Recht in der obern Welt über diese noch haben können, untersucht in Ereignung der vorfallenden Vampyren, oder so genannten Blut = Saugern im Königreich Servien und andern Orten in diesen und vorigen Zeiten* ([unknown], 1732).

However, one of the most valuable additions to the source basis of the learned debate on vampirism was a manuscript material, found thanks to a visit to the Berlin Archives of the Prussian Academy of Sciences. This archive keeps a bundle of extraordinarily interesting documents in the '*Specialia*'-section of the academy's 'scientific treatises'. They are notes and letters which shed light on the behind-the-scene negotiations of those members of the academy, who had the task to evaluate the Flückinger-commission's 1732 autopsy report on vampirism.⁸⁸

Transcription

Given the geographical frames of the dissertation, most of the proper names including places and people's names were extant in the era in several versions. The problem is especially poignant when it comes to local Hungarian, Wallachian, Rascian village names, which the occupying German administration transcribed in several different versions. In transcribing the names, I followed two general rules. Larger settlements, such as provincial and district centres, on the territories that before the Ottoman conquest used to belong to the Hungarian Kingdom, will be referred to with their Hungarian name, as in the case of Temesvár (today Timișoara), Pancsova (today Pančevo) or Pétervárad (today Petrovaradin), as these names are customarily referred to in Hungarian scholarship as such. When it comes to smaller settlements in these areas, as well as all settlements on the territories that had not belonged to the Hungarian Kingdom before the Ottoman conquest, I chose the most usual spelling used by the new German administration, as in Wermesch (today Vermeș) or Medvedia (today Medveđa). In all cases, at the first mention of any given settlement, I gave the current official name in parenthesis, while the locations of revenant cases are all marked with their current names in the appendix.

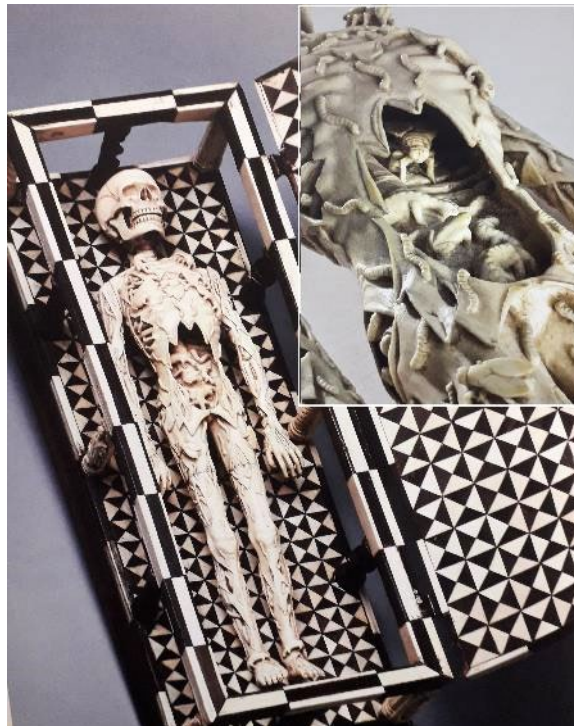
When it came to terms for ethnic groups, I applied 'Rascian' to denote the mostly Orthodox, Slavic population of the southern borderland who can roughly be equated with today's Serbs. The term Rascian is the English translation of the German 'Räzisch', which was used in

⁸⁸ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 1732, Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften 1700-1811 - Wissenschaftliche Verhandlungen - Specialia I-V-24, 1r-21r., Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin.

historical sources when referring to the population of Habsburg Serbia and the Banat of Temesvár. However, when I refer to Serbia as a place of origin, such as ‘the Serbian vampire reports’ I used ‘Serbian’, because the province itself was known as ‘Servien’, i.e. Serbia in the era. ‘Wallachian’ (in historical German sources ‘Wallachisch’) was an expression with a complicated history, as it could refer to a variety of ethnic groups on the Habsburg-Ottoman border region. In the environment of the Banat, Transylvania and Wallachia however, it meant an Orthodox population who spoke the Romance Wallachian language, the ancestor to today’s Romanian.

In the transcription of personal names, for those personalities, who came to be well-known in Anglo-Saxon scholarship (such as better-known bishops, princes, governors, scholars, scientists or military commanders) appear in the dissertation with their anglicized name, such as Prince Charles Alexander of Württemberg for example. At the same time, historical actors, whose names are not current in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, such as Bishop Wolfgang Hannibal von Schrattenbach were retained in their original form. Even less-known people, such as the Rascian hajduk, Arnout Pavle, whose only appearance is often found in a single or few archival documents will also be referred to in the way their name is written in the German sources. However, just like in the case of the village names, one should keep in mind that these germanised names were only faulty transcriptions of the names in which these people were known in their own village for instance. I kept the German names even if the original name might be guessed with some level of certainty, for instance in the case of the infamous Rascian vampire Peter Plogojowitz, who was probably called something like Petar Blagojević. The only exceptions to this rule were minor actors of a Hungarian origin, who are known in Hungarian scholarship under their Hungarian names, such as physician Pál Ádám Kőműves.

I. Normal and abnormal dead in early modern thinking



4 Ivory memento mori figure in a wooden coffin (Western Switzerland, ca 1520)

‘For when a man shall die, he shall inherit serpents, and beasts, and worms.’

/Sirach 10:13/

A common experience of the imperial administration of the southern Habsburg borderland and many of the learned who in 1732 started vigorously discussing vampires was the novelty and strangeness of the matter. The sudden spotlight which vampirism received in the 1730s can efface the fact that it tapped into extant discussions of various topics that had already excited people before the excitement concerning vampires. As it will be shown in Chapter V in more detail, these topics occupied a wide palette and included the workings of poisons, the generation and behaviour of insects, the powers of superstition, mind-body relations, the customs and beliefs of 'the other', the role of experiments in the sciences and the powers of the devil in the physical world among others.

There were nevertheless two narrower question-clusters at the heart of the vampire-issue which other topics orbited. First: Where is the line between the animate and the inanimate, between life and death and specifically between a normal and an abnormal corpse? Second: Is there a link connecting the dead to the living and can the former cause harm to the latter through any natural or non-natural means? This chapter delineates some of the ways in which these questions emerged in early modern thinking.

I.1. Meanings of death and decay

The cultures of death and dying and especially the ways in which the boundary between life and death was construed throughout history has recently received heightened scholarly attention.⁸⁹ The transition from life through dying to death and bodily decay could be shaped in various ways, some supposing a sudden break, while others allowing for in-between, transitory states. The sources on how people of the past understood death are fragmentary, but it is clear that many factors were influencing the experiences of the dying person and of the surrounding community as well. In any given instance various people and groups could invest thoroughly different emotional, social, cultural interests into the very same person's death. In addition, surviving pre-Christian concepts, antique philosophical and pagan religious ideas, as well as the repeated attempts by various secular and clerical institutions and disciplines (such as law, medicine, or theology) to police the transition from being to non-being all contributed to a wide palette of related ideas, practices and beliefs. In spite of the all-time diversity of ideas and experiences, it is possible to locate certain general shifts of attitudes.

Musing on the differences between early medieval and modern attitudes to death and dying, Caroline Walker Bynum pointed out that the meaning of death heavily hinges on the extent to which the body is considered a crucial part of the self.⁹⁰ Even though various Christian groups throughout history could have markedly different attitudes to the body, it is probably safe to say that all of these attitudes reflected on an inherent tension within Christian teaching: on the one hand, the transitory, material body was a complete opposite to the immortal, immaterial soul, as well as a constant source of temptation, threatening the soul

⁸⁹ For recent collections of studies on the definition of death throughout European history see: Francesco Paolo De Ceglia, ed., *Storia della definizione di morte* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2014); Thomas Schlich and Claudia Wiesemann, eds., *Hirntod - Zur Kulturgeschichte der Todesfeststellung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015); On medieval attitudes to death see the recent works by: Romedio Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter: Einbalsamierung, Verbrennung und die Kulturelle Konstruktion des Toten Körpers*, *Mittelalter-Forschungen* 48 (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2014); and: Nancy Mandeville Caciola, *Afterlives: The Return of the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); On early modern discussions see among others: Claudio Milanesi, *Mort apparente, mort imparfaite. Médecine et mentalités au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Payot, 1991); On modern problems of drawing a boundary between life and death see: Dick Teresi, *The Undead: Organ Harvesting, the Ice-Water Test, Beating-Heart Cadavers - How Medicine Is Blurring the Line between Life and Death* (New York: Pantheon, 2012).

⁹⁰ Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Death and Resurrection in the Middle Ages: Some Modern Implications', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 142, no. 4 (1998): 589–96.

with eternal damnation. On the other hand, it was divine creation, in the image of God and was not simply a shell for the immortal soul, but formed a unity with it, the two engaging in constant interaction throughout life. As a consequence, death was an act of violence, a tearing away of the soul from its material home.⁹¹ In this sense, the body had a formative role not only during lifetime, but also in dying. Bynum described death in the Middle Ages as being very much ‘personal’, an experience to a large extent owned and orchestrated by the dying person him/herself in which the bodily sufferings of agony were integral to personhood and to the person’s afterlife. She contrasted this personalized attitude with modernity, in which the dying person and the tighter community handed over the control of the body to specialists, such as medical experts and state officials.

At the same time, the personalized, emotion-filled attitude to one’s own dead has always been balanced by the fact that the lifeless corpse was a threat, a source of disease. Analysing early modern Parisian attitudes to the dead body, Vanessa Harding has shown that the natural progress of decay itself was a universal, de-personalizing process, which was then reinforced by efforts on the sides of authorities, churches and other institutions to further efface the personhood of the corpse. Such efforts could take effect especially if the dead and their family did not have enough social capital to counter it: the poor, the outcast, the unbaptized, the criminal corpse was often buried without ceremony, in mass graves. By contrast, those who had social and financial power could prolong their and their kin’s personal memory and physical existence in several ways, such as through embalming the dead body or placing it in a metal coffin, or by erecting grave memorials, and writing epitaphs for instance.⁹²

The contrast between the soul continuing its eternal life, while the body became lifeless matter given over to decay was mitigated by the fact that decay was not necessarily seen as the final state of the body. Rabbinic Judaism and early Christian Church fathers maintained the idea of bodily resurrection, that is, that the soul would regain its body after Judgement Day. From the fourteenth century, mainstream theology increasingly imagined resurrection in a spiritual sense, in which it was only the soul that would be reborn. Nevertheless, the idea of bodily resurrection lingered on as a powerful mental image in European culture for a long

⁹¹ Caciola, *Afterlives*, 38-43.

⁹² Vanessa Harding, ‘Whose Body? A Study of Attitudes towards the Dead Body in Early Modern Paris’, in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 170–87.

time.⁹³ Apart from the shift to the resurrection of the soul, the fourteenth century brought about another important change in learned attitudes to death: the beginning of the medicalization and solidification of the life-death border.

Signa mortis – The practice of establishing death

Where exactly the boundary between the states of being alive and being dead is, has been subject to continuous negotiations, and Nancy Mandeville Caciola detected a shift that took place in the thirteenth-fourteenth century in this sense. In earlier centuries, argues Caciola, the learned were more prone to allow for overlaps and transitory states between life and death. It was for instance more widely held, that people could in certain cases die, remain dead for days and then revive, coming back into their bodies and relating their experiences. By contrast, by the end of the Middle Ages, medicine extended its sphere of authority over death and ‘construed life and death as wholly incommensurate, dichotomous states with no overlaps and no third terms’ whereby ‘death become clarified, defined, and medicalized’.⁹⁴

The process of drawing a rigid, medicalized border between life and death in fact was far from over in the fourteenth century, but Caciola convincingly argues that it was first around that time that physicians started to write more extensively about the difficulties of diagnosing death and differentiating it from other, similar seeming states.⁹⁵ Before that, medical literature on death concerned itself with the signs of death (*signa mortis*) rather in the sense of predictive signs, not as post-factum ones. In Caciola’s view, this is because in the early Middle Ages physicians were mostly called not to establish death that happened, but to prevent it. The predictive signs of death were based on a Hippocratic tradition and circulated widely within and outside the learned medical world, in popular culture as well. In a fourteenth-century preacher’s handbook from England for instance, it reads:

*‘When the head trembles
And the lips turn pale
And the nose sharpens*

⁹³ Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

⁹⁴ Caciola, *Afterlives*, 72.

⁹⁵ Caciola, 88.

And the sinews stiffen
And the breast shudders
And the breath is wanting
And the teeth chatter
And the throat rattles
And the soul has gone out
Then the body is nothing but a lump.
Soon it will stink so badly
*That the soul will be completely forgotten.'*⁹⁶

Naturally, even if medical works did not concern themselves much with post-factum signs of death until the fourteenth century, there often emerged a practical need to decide whether a given person was dead or not, whether they should be buried or not. The ways to establish death partially derived from the predictive signs of death, and by the fourteenth century usually involved the persistent presence of certain symptoms: the body was senseless and void of motion, was a 'lump' as the above verse put it; the breathing and the heartbeat stopped, as a consequence of which the body became cold and the features sharpened; the lips (and the skin in general) were pale (*pallor mortis*) and the sinews were stiff (*rigor mortis*). In addition, it was also sometimes noted that in a more advanced state of death, the lower sections of the body showed a purple/dark discolouration of the skin (*livor mortis*), which modern medicine explains by the pooling of bodily fluids following the stoppage of the blood circulation.⁹⁷

After the fourteenth century, a second wave in the increasing medicalization of the life-death boundary took momentum in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries.⁹⁸ Physicians and surgeons were writing more and more about the possible loss of heartbeat and breathing in conditions involving strong seizures, such as hysteria, epilepsy as well as in fainting and people saved from drowning. The increasing abundance of this kind of literature was reinforced by the more and more frequent presence of medical experts in legal cases. While within the Roman-canon legal system medical experts had been invited to trials from medieval times onwards, one can

⁹⁶ Caciola, 84.

⁹⁷ Caciola, 103.

⁹⁸ Martina Kessel, 'Die Angst vor dem Scheintod im 18. Jahrhundert. Körper und Seele zwischen Religion, Magie und Wissenschaft', in *Hirntod - Zur Kulturgeschichte der Todesfeststellung*, ed. Thomas Schlich and Claudia Wiesemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015), 136.; Maria Pia Donato, 'La morte repentina, tra dubbi diagnostici e speranze di rianimazione (Secc. XVII-XVIII)', in *Storia della definizione di morte*, ed. Francesco Paolo De Ceglia (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2014), 199-214.

detect a rising reliance on their expertise and a proliferation of medico-legal treatises during the late sixteenth-seventeenth centuries.⁹⁹ These treatises often contained discussions on determining the causes of death, as well as on death by drowning and suffocation being particularly hard to distinguish from comatose states.

A prime example of this legal-medical tradition was Paolo Zacchia (1584-1659), the leading forensic physician of the seventeenth century, who emphasized the difficulty of diagnosing death in case of intact bodies, that is, those which did not show outward signs of the cause of death, such as wounds or disease symptoms. Zacchia had been trained in both medicine and law, was personal physician to Popes Innocent X (1644 – 1655) and Alexander VII (1655 – 1667) and was head of the medical system in the Papal States. He summarized his experiences as a medical expert in trials, especially in beatification trials in the nine-volume *Quaestiones medico-legales*. The work was first published between 1621-1651 and stayed in use as a basic reference work of forensic medicine well into the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁰

A common argument found throughout the medieval and early modern discussions on diagnosing death was that due to the unreliability of the signs of death, the single incontrovertible proof was putrefaction. A long tradition of authors from Avicenna through thirteenth and fourteenth century medical writers to Zacchia and (as it will be shown in Chapter VII), even late eighteenth century authors shared this opinion and as a practical advice suggested to always wait three days before burying someone.¹⁰¹ Zacchia explained that even though the onset of putrefaction depended on many things (among them environmental factors and the bodily constitution of the person), the beginning of putrefaction generally began after three days, as this was the time during which the natural heat of the body would be able to resist the processes of decay (more on this see below).¹⁰²

The usual advice to wait three days before burial was nevertheless problematic in several instances, for example during epidemics or in the case of bodies to be dissected for

⁹⁹ Crawford, 'Legalizing Medicine: Early Modern Legal Systems and the Growth of Medico-Legal Knowledge'.

¹⁰⁰ Some of its numerous editions are: Paolo Zacchia, *Quaestiones medico-legales*, 9 vols (Rome, 1621); Paolo Zacchia, *Quaestiones medico-legales* (Avenione: Ioannis Piot, 1655); Paolo Zacchia, *Quaestiones medico-legales* (Nürnberg, 1726).

¹⁰¹ Caciola, *Afterlives*, 88.; Kessel, 'Die Angst vor dem Scheintod im 18. Jahrhundert', 141.; Daniel Schäfer, 'Todesfeststellung Im Mittelalter', in *Hirntod - Zur Kulturgeschichte der Todesfeststellung*, ed. Thomas Schlich and Claudia Wiesemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2015), 104-105.

¹⁰² Zacchia, *Quaestiones medico-legales*, 1655, 238.; Donato, 'La Morte Repentina, Tra Dubbi Diagnostici e Speranze Di Rianimazione (Secc. XVII-XVIII)', 202.

pedagogical purposes. When the plague hit a locality, the corpses were seen as just as dangerous sources of the disease as the living sick people, and it was imperative to bury or burn them as soon as possible. In addition, from the fifteenth century onwards more and more medical faculties were in a growing need of fresh corpses to be dissected. The dissection could not wait till the bodies started to putrefy, as this would have compromised the texture, colour and nature of the organs and body parts. As a consequence, horrific stories about people being thrown into mass graves or being dissected alive were circulating throughout the early modern era, contributing to the discourse of apparent death.

The 1740s witnessed yet another boom in the medical literature on apparent death. The proliferation of treatises reiterating the difficulties of pronouncing an intact body as dead was initiated by the dissertations of two French physicians, Jacques Bénigne Winslow (1669-1760) and his student, Jacques-Jean Bruhier (1685-1756), who were partially inspired by French debates in the 1740s on vampirism.¹⁰³ In the wake of these discussions, general fears of being buried alive were heightened in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries and Martina Kessel also detected an increasing medico-legalization of the transitional period between death and burial,¹⁰⁴ which came under the view of state efforts at medical policing especially in German-speaking lands from the 1760s onwards. These measures aimed at regulating the necessary procedures and experts of the diagnosis of death, of transporting the corpse to the church and then to the cemetery, of the depth of the graves and the location of cemeteries among others (see Chapter VII).

The debate about vampires that burst out in 1732 in this sense was only one of the many stages in a centuries-long medical discourse on transitory states between life and death. The discourse involved textual debates as well as practices and measures; medicine, often in conjunction with the state (in the form of legal and policing activities) made repeated attempts at the medicalization and disciplining of the life-death border. In their explanations of the conditions of dying and decay, the medical personnel had to rely on theories that in

¹⁰³ On the French debate see especially: Milanesi, *Mort apparente, mort Imparfaite. Médecine et mentalités au XVIIIe siècle*; On the reception of apparent death literature in the Hungarian Kingdom, see: Ildikó Horányi, 'Tetszhalottak, élve eltemetettek – Esetleírások a magyarországi tetszhalál-irodalom alapján', *Kharón* 1, no. 1 (1997): 1-26.

¹⁰⁴ Kessel, 'Die Angst vor dem Scheintod im 18. Jahrhundert', 145-150.

many ways belonged more to natural philosophy than to medicine, as they concerned not health and disease, the two conditions of the living human being, but lifeless matter.

The natural philosophy of death and decay

If the usual practical signs of death did not change much throughout the centuries, there was more movement in the theory of death; in fact, the discrepancy between relatively unchanging practice and constantly shifting theory was characteristic of early modern medicine in general.¹⁰⁵ Death and putrefaction in early modern natural philosophy was often conceptualized within the frames of the so-called body-spirit-soul problem. The question had been centuries-old and concerned the constitutive parts of the human being. It especially targeted the question of how to conceive of the interaction between an immortal and immaterial soul and a mortal, material body. The qualitative difference between the two needed explanations of how the senses, movements, emotions work as well as what happens upon birth and death when the two gain or lose their connection. As such, the body-spirit-soul controversy had direct relevance for the construction of normal and abnormal dead and was an important reason why the autopsy report on the Serbian vampires excited the learned in 1732.

The iatrochemical view of death and putrefaction

Basic views of death that dominated the seventeenth century and remained influential at several universities well into the eighteenth century were founded on a combination of Aristotelian basics and a chemical view of the workings of the body and the world. Scholarship relying on these ideas is usually referred to as *iatrochemistry* (chemical medicine) and went back to the works of Paracelsus (1493-1541) and Jan Baptist van Helmont (1580-1644), both

¹⁰⁵ On the constancy of medical therapy as opposed to the frequent changes in medical theory before the nineteenth century, see among others: Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Roger French, *Medicine before Science: The Business of Medicine from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

of whom dealt with both alchemy and medicine.¹⁰⁶ Even though the various authors differed in the details of their views, the iatrochemical tradition in general adopted and modified Aristotle's threefold division of the soul into *anima vegetativa* (responsible for the maintenance of life, growth, nutrition and generation), *anima sensitiva* (the faculty of senses and perception), and *anima rationalis* (the thinking – feeling mind).

Most authors combined these Aristotelian basics with Paracelsus's theory of the three parts (*hypothesis de tribus partibus*), which supposed a tripartite division of the human being into body, soul and spirit, a system which did not map seamlessly onto the Aristotelian *animae*. After death, each part was supposed to go back to whence it came from: the soul (eventually) to God, the body to the earth, the spirit to the air. The soul assumed the characteristics of the Aristotelian *anima sensitiva* and *rationalis*, while the spirit, often referred to as 'astral spirit' (*Astralgeist*), was to some extent equated with the *anima vegetativa*. The soul was immaterial and immortal, but the spirit, a kind of thin vapour was material, even though of a much subtler substance than bodily fluids for example, and it also lived longer than the body itself. In the Paracelsian view, spirits permeated the whole world: the spheres, minerals, plants, the human body all had spirits in them, and were in connection with each other. Ultimately, they all originated from the stars, which is why they had an astral nature, hence the name. Within the human body, the spirit's function was being an airy medium able to connect and ensure communication between the material body and the immaterial soul. The stomach fermented the spirits inherent in food and the liver transformed them into spirits in the blood, which was responsible for the power of vitality, of making the body resist death. It was also spirits that transported sensations and movement in the nerves.

Some of Paracelsus's ideas became gradually rejected by later iatrochemists, he held for example that there existed human-like corporeal beings which possessed a body and a spirit but had no soul, such as *gnomes*, *pygmies*, *nymphs*, *sylphs*, *undines*, *vulcanians*, and *salamanders*.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, his chemical view of the functioning of the body, and his experiments on the chemical reactions in nature gained wide acceptance, even if those

¹⁰⁶ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 23–24; 32; Thomas M. Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2016), 130.

¹⁰⁷ Koen Vermeir, 'Vampires as Creatures of the Imagination: Theories of Body, Soul and Imagination in Early Modern Vampire Tracts (1659–1755)', in *Diseases of the Imagination and Imaginary Disease in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Yasmin Annabel Haskell (Turnout: Brepols Publishers, 2011), 353.

subscribing to them would not call themselves 'Paracelsians'. A broadly defined iatrochemical tradition remained the most influential view in medicine until the eighteenth century. These physicians would usually not doubt the existence of the third part but sometimes debated its powers within and outside the body, and beyond death. As late as the early eighteenth century, his chemical theories were held in great respect by Hermann Boerhaave (1668-1738), chemist and physician at the University of Leiden, a highly influential systematiser of medical knowledge of his age.

In early modern medicine, health and disease, death and putrefaction all resulted from complex interplays between the human body and its environment.¹⁰⁸ Many of these interactions were not mechanic ones, but were based on the characteristics, the nature of things. Natural philosophy classified animate as well as inanimate 'things' in the world (including planets, minerals, bodily fluids, gender, age groups, organs, seasons etc.) based on their 'nature', which was a combination of humidity and temperature: either dry or wet and either hot or cold. Some, such as the basic elements had an ultimate nature: fire was hot and dry, air was hot and wet, water was cold and wet, and earth was cold and dry. Most things in the world, however, were of a composite nature, like organs and the human body itself, as they were made up of a mixture of smaller units of various natures. As a result of the natures of the various parts, the composite body would then assume a cumulative hot/cold and dry/wet character.

The healthy living body was thought of as being in a state of balance: each person had an individual proportion of the four bodily humours (blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile); the spirits and organs were working in harmony; the inside of the body was in a constant interaction with the outside environment. The interaction happened through the orifices and the pores of the skin: food and air had to come in, while harmful substances generated in the body had to leave the body freely, otherwise it would cause problems. Disease in this sense happened if the inner balance got upset. This could happen in many ways: for example, eating too much of the same kind of food would produce too much of the same kind of humour (too much cold and wet-natured food like cabbage could produce too much phlegm, the cold and wet natured humour; fear could block the pores and the harmful vapours could not leave and

¹⁰⁸ On the fundamental ideas of early modern medicine see for instance: French, *Medicine before Science*.

would start to rot inside; or the outside cold could upset the healthy warm temperature inside. The understanding of disease as individualized inner imbalance instead of an entity was mainstream in the era, and there were only a few alternative theories, such as that of Paracelsus, who thought of diseases as star-born entities, but these did not gain a wide acceptance.¹⁰⁹

In the iatrochemical tradition, the decomposition of the body could start once both the soul and the spirit left the body, which then became unable to resist the influences of the environment. When it came to the details of conceptualizing putrefaction, Aristotle, and in particular, his *Meteorologica* was the basic point of reference.¹¹⁰ Decay set in once the environment managed to subdue the inner nature of the body, thereby causing changes inside. In Aristotle's rendering, this mastering was described as heat entering and leaving the body and meant that decay would start if the surrounding air's heat was warmer than the innate temperature of a cold (dead) body.¹¹¹ In the iatrochemical tradition, however, the mastering was often also described as invasion, as the influx of divisive substances called *menstrua*. These menstrua were not only present in the soil, but everywhere in the environment, and miasmas can also be thought of as a particularly destructive kind of menstruum affecting not the dead but the living.

In contrast to the invasion-model of putrefaction, iatrochemist and cameralist thinker Johann Joachim Becher (1635-1682), proposed a slightly different and influential view, arguing that putrefaction was an integral part of the healthy, normal functioning of the whole human body, not just of the stomach.¹¹² In Becher's view, decay started once certain effects, which could be internal imbalances as well as external invasions, liberated the inherent putrefying particles in the body which were otherwise bound inside fluids. When these particles got freed, they started to spread within the body in the form of putrefying vapours.

¹⁰⁹ Contagious diseases were an exception and required a special explanation in the humoral system. More on this see Chapter II.3.

¹¹⁰ Bradford A. Bouley, *Pious Postmortems: Anatomy, Sanctity, and the Catholic Church in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 78.; Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, English Translation by H.D.P. Lee (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1952).

¹¹¹ 'Decay is the destruction of a moist body's own natural heat by heat external to it, that is, the heat of its environment.' Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, 295.

¹¹² Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant - Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Leamington Spa, Hamburg & New York: Berg Publishers, 1986), 16-17.

Putrefaction was always accompanied by moisture and heat, because the body's innate natural heat and wetness was slowly evaporating. This way, even though decay produced heat and moisture, in fact it was a process of cooling and drying out: as Aristotle put it, 'everything that decays gets drier'.¹¹³ Decomposition itself was most explained as a type of *fermentatio*, a transformation of bodily fluids based on a dynamic of acids and bases until their *resolutio*, that is, their breaking down into the four basic elements. This process was essentially the same as what was happening to food in the stomach. The stomach as a natural locus of putrefaction also explained why corpse decay apparently exerted the swiftest and strongest effect in the abdominal area. The iconographic trope of portraying corpses with holes instead of the abdomen [see Fig?], also reinforced the abdomen as the prime seat of decay.

Mechanical and animist elaborations on the iatrochemical view

The late-seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries witnessed controversies that took place on a more-or-less common iatrochemical ground but featured strongly opposing views when it came to body-soul relations.¹¹⁴ Physicians and natural philosophers who followed René Descartes's (1596 - 1650) dictum about the duality of body and soul were often labelled 'Cartesian' or 'iatromechanical' and in German lands included mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) at Leipzig and later physician Friedrich Hoffman (1660-1742) and philosopher Christian Wolff (1679 – 1754) at the University of Halle. Cartesians denied the possibility of interactions between body and soul as between two qualitatively different entities, and thus also denied the existence of a mediating third part, the astral spirit. This did not necessarily mean that they denied the existence of bodily spirits, but they thought of them simply as tiny particles, and did not ascribe to them any special ontological status, nor the belonging to some universal world spirit. They explained the body as functioning like a clockwork, based on strictly mechanical processes that could happen only through physical contact between particles. The various parts, blood particles, lymphs and vital spirits had been set to motion by God and moved in harmony with the soul (*harmonia praestabilita*) but practically autonomously, uninfluenced by it.

¹¹³ Aristotle, *Meteorologica*, 295.

¹¹⁴ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 26–28.

Chemist and physician Georg Ernst Stahl (1660-1734) at the young Prussian university of Halle (founded in 1694) was one of the most influential critics of the Cartesian view in the early eighteenth century. His approach, termed today as ‘psychovitalism’ or ‘animism’ was not entirely novel, as it relied on a longer tradition of animist physiology. Stahl rejected the Cartesian view of the body as a machine, which he saw as deterministic and thought of the human being as an organic unit, in which the body’s workings were inseparably linked to the soul (*anima sive natura*).¹¹⁵ The soul in this view assumed the body-maintenance function of the Aristotelian vital force as well, and (in a way echoing Becher’s views), Stahl maintained that the human body in itself was void of life and would putrefy right away were it not for the soul, that kept it in motion and hence from decay; the definition of life then was ‘non-death’.¹¹⁶ This also meant that Stahl eliminated the Aristotelian vital force as a concept from the theoretical toolkit as unnecessary. Instead of a dualism of body and soul, Stahleans often incorporated Paracelsus’s *hypothesis de tribus partibus* and maintained the existence of the third part called *astral body* or *astral spirit*.¹¹⁷

As it often happens with medical and natural philosophical controversies, the body-spirit-soul debates also came with a substantial moral-religious baggage. While the debates involved a much wider community and various voices, the most spectacular clashes were those between Leibniz and Stahl¹¹⁸ and then at the University of Halle itself, between Stahl on the one hand and Friedrich Hoffman and Christian Wolff on the other.¹¹⁹ Though these debates are often construed as driven by Stahl’s known sympathies for Pietism, and the arguments often indeed assumed religious hues, the Cartesian / animist labels cannot be directly associated with religious fervour on the one hand and materialism on the other.¹²⁰ The real source of conflicts

¹¹⁵ Joanna Geyer-Kordesch, ‘Georg Ernst Stahl’s Radical Pietist Medicine and Its Influence on the German Enlightenment’, in *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 67–87; And see her monograph in German: Joanna Geyer-Kordesch, *Pietismus, Medizin und Aufklärung in Preußen im 18. Jahrhundert - Das Leben und Werk Georg Ernst Stahls* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000).

¹¹⁶ Francesco Paolo De Ceglia, ‘Hoffmann and Stahl. Documents and Reflections on the Dispute’, *History of Universities* 22, no. 1 (2007): 121-122.

¹¹⁷ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 32.

¹¹⁸ François Duchesneau and Justin E. H. Smith, eds., *The Leibniz-Stahl Controversy* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2016).

¹¹⁹ Lester S. King, ‘Stahl and Hoffmann: A Study in Eighteenth Century Animism’, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 19, no. 2 (1964): 118–130; De Ceglia, ‘Hoffmann and Stahl. Documents and Reflections on the Dispute’; And see his recent monograph on the topic in Italian: Francesco P. De Ceglia, *I fari di Halle. Georg Ernst Stahl, Friedrich Hoffmann e la medicina europea del primo Settecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

¹²⁰ De Ceglia, ‘Hoffmann and Stahl. Documents and Reflections on the Dispute’, 121.

often seems to have been struggles for prestige and power within the learned and wider political community, not ideology. Also, Hoffman himself was a Pietist and Stahl's animist theory earned sympathy across theological strands, not only among Pietists, but also for orthodox Lutheran theologians outside Prussia, in Leipzig and Jena, and later for Catholic authors as well. It is true that many saw the Cartesian dualist view as bordering on materialism and felt that it threatened the basic Christian ideas concerning the unity of and interrelations between the created body and the divine soul. However, the debates themselves often were not directly concerned with body-soul interactions, and debaters often resorted to arguments traditionally assigned to either the mechanical or the animist side irrespective of their own Cartesian or animist sympathies. This meant that in practice discussants would accuse each other back and forth with either enthusiasm and bigotry or materialism and atheism.

Within the discourse on diagnosing death, a major theoretical and practical problem engaging learned and illiterate actors alike was distinguishing strange, abnormal corpses from normal ones. Just as in the case of the body-soul controversy, the continued efforts at the medicalization of death did not mean that the dead body or putrefaction itself became stripped of their moral-religious significance. The two aspects were not mutually exclusive, and corpses in different physical conditions were be imbued with different personal, medical and religious meanings.

Normal corpses and the morale of decay

The orderly scenario of decay which progressively reduced the human corpse to skeletal remains and then to dust had an important and lasting moral message in Christian tradition: it proved the ultimate value difference between the eternal, immortal soul and its temporary, material abode.¹²¹ By the early sixteenth century, the decaying corpse developed into an artistic genre of its own, the *memento mori*. These artworks usually portrayed corpses or body parts in an advanced stage of putrefaction, with a gaping hole at the abdominal cavity, often surrounded or filled by animals which were thought to be linked to decay: insects, toads, lizards and snakes most of all [see Fig?-ivory]. These animals were for a long time thought to get spontaneously generated from decay, an idea that stuck long with European culture even if Francesco Redi's experimental disproving of the phenomenon in 1668 gradually gained acceptance among learned circles.¹²² Even as spontaneous generation was slowly going out of fashion, many naturalists maintained well into the eighteenth century that these animals, among them snakes feed on and live in corpses. The most elaborate visualizations of the fate of the human body can be linked to a Catholic environment, and Protestants often explicitly disapproved of the distasteful and (in their view) almost idolatrous portrayal of human corpses. Nevertheless, the moral message of bodily death and the contempt for the material body was shared by Protestants alike, only it was rather expressed through textual, not visual medium.¹²³



5: Epitaph of Wolfgang von Schleinitz, Church of Saint Afra (Meissen, 1520s)

The story of Wolfgang von Schleinitz (d. 1523), a German nobleman called will suffice to illustrate the basic role of *memento mori*. The story is especially relevant, as during the 1732

¹²¹ Caciola, *Afterlives*, 71-72.

¹²² Francesco Redi, *Esperienze intorno alla generazione degl'insetti* (Firenze, 1668).

¹²³ Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of the Western Guilt Culture, 13th -18th Centuries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 505-522.

vampire debate, certain authors used it as the normal, regular counterpoint to the disorderly state of vampiric corpses.¹²⁴ According to the narrative, von Schleinitz was an especially handsome man, who close to his death decided to have a special memorial made for himself: he ordered that one year after his burial, his grave should be opened and a sculptor should make an exact copy of the very state in which his corpse would be at that point of time, in order to show the abhorrent transformation his once admired body went through as warning sign to people not to fall for vanities of the flesh. The procedure was carried out as he had wished and the resulting epitaph of his decaying corpse surrounded by snakes is still extant in the crypt of the Church of Saint Afra in Meissen, Germany.

While engravings and statues in the tradition of memento mori were rife already in the sixteenth century, the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries saw a heightened interest in the topic especially in Catholic lands, and the artists paid an increasing attention to anatomical realism. One of the most celebrated figures of this change was Gaetano Giulio Zumbo (1656-1701).¹²⁵ The Sicilian-born Zumbo never received formal education in art and probably only a marginal one in anatomy: he first studied to become a cleric, but then displayed such talent in wax sculpting that Cosimo III de' Medici (1642 –1723), Grand Duke of Tuscany became his patron in Florence. During his years in Florence he was commissioned several wax models and installations blending painting and sculpture known as *teatrinos* (little theatres), all of which had a moral-religious message. In 1695 Zumbo left Florence and teamed up with Guillaume Desnoues chief surgeon of Genova (ca 1650 – ca 1735), who had been interested in preserving anatomical samples through wax injections for pedagogical reasons. Desnoues realized, that in spite of the wax, the samples often still decayed partially. The cooperation between Desnues and Zumbo involved the former making anatomical preparations and Zumbo sculpting copies of them entirely made of coloured wax.¹²⁶ Having gained fame with his wax work, Zumbo was then invited to France, where he not only functioned as an artist, but received a royal privilege for the exclusive manufacturing of

¹²⁴ Michael Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1734), 65-66.

¹²⁵ R.W. Lightbown, 'Gaetano Giulio Zumbo - I: The Florentine Period', *The Burlington Magazine* 106, no. 740 (1964): 488-496.; R.W. Lightbown, 'Gaetano Giulio Zumbo - II: Genoa and France', *The Burlington Magazine* 106, no. 741 (1964): 563-567.; Liliane Ehrhart, 'Microcosme et immersion: Les teatrini de Gaetano Giulio Zumbo', *Culture & Musées. Muséologie et Recherches sur la Culture*, no. 32 (2018): 53-79.

¹²⁶ Andrew Cunningham, *The Anatomist Anatomis'd: An Experimental Discipline in Enlightenment Europe* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2010), 247.

anatomical wax models. In both Genova and Paris, he gave regular university lectures on anatomy and wax modelling.

Much of Zumbo's work circles around the topic of death and decay, and there are several teatrinos with minutely detailed corpse figures in them. These teatrinos include for example *The Corruption I - The Triumph of Time*, *The Corruption II - The Sepulchre*, *The Pestilence* and *The Syphilis*, and they feature corpses in various states of putrefaction.¹²⁷ The role of these artworks apart from conveying the moral message of memento mori was being displayed in chambers of curiosities in princely courts. However, Zumbo's most famous work apparently used to be the teatrino titled *The Corruption (La Corruzione)*, which consisted of five corpses organized to display the decomposition in progressive stages. It was described by an observer in the nineteenth century as 'five figures: a dying man, a dead body, a slightly corrupt and a half-corrupt cadaver, and an entirely putrefied corpse eaten by worms.'¹²⁸ This particular teatrino's current whereabouts is unknown, but a recently re-discovered wax installation in the Museum Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence is strikingly similar.¹²⁹ This one also consists of five corpses displaying the steps of decay: a child, a man, a woman and two skeletal remains (see below).

¹²⁷ These works are held currently in The Museum of Natural History La Specola (Florence) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (London).

¹²⁸ F. de Boni, *Biografia degli artisti ovvero dizionario della vita e delle opere dei pittori, degli scultori, degli intagliatori, dei tipografi e dei musici di ogni nazione*. (Venice: Andrea Santini e Figlio, 1852), 1109.

¹²⁹ Laura Speranza, *"Mirabili orrori" cere inedite di Gaetano Giulio Zumbo dopo il restauro* (Firenze: Opificio delle Pietre Dure, 2010), <http://www.opificiodellepietredure.it/index.php?it/438/cere-inedite-di-gaetano-giulio-zumbo>.



6 Cadavers in progressive states of decomposition in a recently rediscovered, untitled wax teatrino by Gaetano Zumbo (1680s-1690s, Florence)

The decomposition of cadavers in Zumbo's work exemplify the usual, normal, one can say, virtuous process of decay, which all regular corpses should go through. The bodies progress from 1) the pale (pallor mortis) but whole recently dead through 2) bodies with a dark discolouration, then 3) corpse with open abdominal cavity, flesh peeling off and maggots and rats feeding on it to 4) and 5), the final stages of skeletal remains. The visceral, horrific impression that the naturalism of Zumbo's teatrinos made on spectators of the time was remarked by several witnesses, among them Marquis de Sade (1740 – 1814), according to whom



7 Wax cadaver, Southern Germany (eighteenth century)

*'So powerful is the impression produced by this masterpiece that even as you gaze at it your other senses are played upon, moans audible, you wrinkle your nose as if you could detect the evil odours of mortality.'*¹³⁰

The memento mori tradition continued well into the eighteenth century, the anatomically less precise, lower quality wax cadaver on (Figure 7) from the eighteenth century for instance suggests that such figures were accessible not only for the wealthiest groups of society. In addition, there were public spaces as well, dedicated to memento mori. Especially impressive are the very elaborately designed crypts and ossuaries of the late seventeenth-early eighteenth century, in which human remains were arranged into ornamental designs and



8 Crypt of the Capuchin monks in the Church of Our Lady of Conception (Rome, eighteenth-nineteenth centuries)

objects, such as candle holders, chandeliers and coat of arms for instance. These displays also included full-bodied mummified and skeletal remains of monks and members of the nobility, as well as monumental installations compiled of bones of hundreds of bodies, often those of plague victims. The Capuchin monks were at the vanguard of this

¹³⁰ Cited by: Jane Eade, 'The Theatre of Death', *Oxford Art Journal* 36, no. 1 (2013): 109.

movement with displays of hundreds of mummified bodies and bone-crypts using remains of tens of thousands of people, as exemplified even today for instance in the *Holy Cross Church* of Brno, and the *Church of Our Lady of the Conception* in Rome.¹³¹

Abnormal corpses and the refusal to decay

If decaying and mummified corpses (both of which were understood in natural philosophy as forms of drying out) were the norm, moist, fresh-looking ones of a healthy colour that seemed 'as if alive' counted as extraordinary, as abnormal. The question that physicians and natural philosophers faced was how exactly to interpret such unusual bodies. In doing so, they could rely on the tripartite division of all phenomena in the world into natural, preternatural and supernatural ones, a natural philosophical system that was used since the Middle Ages. In this interpretation, 'natural' meant 'normal', as in 'according to the usual course of nature', whereas 'preternatural' stood for phenomena which were somehow unusual, exceptional, strange or abnormal, but were still in accordance with the general logic of universal nature. Phenomena in this category were called wondrous or marvellous (*mira*) but could well have entirely natural causes; this was also the border of demonic and magical activity: no demon or magician, in fact, no one but God himself could transcend the border of the preternatural and do supernatural phenomena, which were defined as going counter to nature's laws.¹³² Such phenomena were legitimately called miraculous (*miracula*). When it came to decay, based on the natural philosophical theory of putrefaction, the delay of decay could happen in case something shielded the body from the menstrua trying to invade the corpse. During lifetime, the healthy body did this job by itself, but certain natural, preternatural and supernatural factors could perform the same after death as well.

There were a number of causes that could explain the lack of putrefaction, which by the early Modern Era could already rely on a long-established tradition. In accordance with the mainstream theory of putrefaction, cold environment could delay or stop decay entirely. The same was true of air-tight places, where the environment's menstrua could not get to the

¹³¹ Paul Koudounaris, *The Empire of Death: A Cultural History of Ossuaries and Charnel Houses* (Thames & Hudson, 2011).

¹³² Maclean, 'Evidence, Logic, the Rule and the Exception in Renaissance Law and Medicine', 232-233.

corpse, a situation that could happen in soil rich in clay, which formed a kind of barrier around the cadaver shielding it from air. The nature of the death also played a role: it was widely held, both in popular and learned circles that those who died a sudden death (*mors improvisa*) will remain intact for a longer time, because the suddenness of the departure of the soul could leave behind a more active vegetative spirit in the body.¹³³ This way, the idea that sudden, untimely death causes unnatural happenings to the corpse had a double backing in natural philosophy and in popular emotional-moral attitudes, which held that dying too soon and unprepared was a ‘bad death’.

While writing about how to distinguish miraculously undecayed corpses from natural ones, in the mid-1620s Paolo Zacchia explained that first of all, a corpse can be considered ‘incorruptible’ only if all its members, including the internal organs look entirely life-like, wet and fleshy as in living people; mummified, desiccated and skeletal mortal remains did not qualify.¹³⁴ He also added, that several phenomena frequently seen as wondrous, or possibly miraculous, such as bleeding, moving and warm corpses, those found with an erect penis or with nail grown were in fact ordinary, natural signs and could be explained by a continuation of the flowing of bodily humours. In line with his above-cited opinion that the only sure sign of death is putrefaction, Zacchia placed emphasis on olfactory evidence: once a corpse became cold, it was supposed to start smelling bad rapidly, usually within three days. If instead a corpse that had not been embalmed smelled sweet, it could be seen as a sign of sanctity.

Zacchia stated that in a normal scenario, the pace of putrefaction depended on the nature of the body (its weight, sex, and cause of death) as well as on the climatic environment, though how exactly these factors influenced rotting is not detailed in the text. The natural, non-artificial factors impeding decay contained for instance burial in airtight conditions, when a particularly dense soil impeded the air’s access to the corpse, and this way prevented the menstrea from invading the body.¹³⁵ Similarly, in a cold environment, decay was generally thought to progress slower, or stop entirely, because the outside air was colder than the temperature of the dead body, and hence could not master it. In a similar fashion, extremely hot bodies would also not decay, as the outside heat would again be lower than what that of

¹³³ See especially: Caciola, *Afterlives*, 232-234.

¹³⁴ Zacchia, *Quaestiones medico-legales*, 1655, 238.

¹³⁵ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 24-25.

the body in question. Decay could also be resisted if the properties of the body and the environment matched and neutralised each other: this could happen for example in case a body of a moist nature was buried in a watery, or a dry one in an air-permeable soil. Those physicians and philosophers, who believed in the existence of a third part could also argue that the spirit could occasionally stay behind after the departure of the soul and continue its maintenance function. More traditional Aristotelians could maintain the same, only based on vital power that remained in the corpse after death.

Without elaborating much on the question, Zacchia also warned physicians attesting in beatification trials to pay attention to the preserving effects of embalming, as the various substances smeared on the skin could block the influx of menstrua, thereby artificially delaying decay. There were in fact several professionals in the era, who were interested in the topic, specifically in relation to preserving anatomical samples for pedagogical purposes. Parallel to the rise of anatomy's prestige over the sixteenth century, various procedures of wet and dry preparations and techniques of embalming were invented. Lodewijk de Bils (1624-1671) of Amsterdam for example is known to have come up with the idea of preserving anatomical samples in a jar filled with alcohol in the mid-seventeenth century, a method subsequently taken over by Robert Boyle (1627–1691). The period between 1650 and 1750 was the prime period of wax injections, a technique in which hot wax was injected into organs and body parts, in the hope of stopping them from decay. This technique discarded as inefficient by Gaetano Zumbo and Guillaume Desnues, was later on perfected by the Amsterdam anatomist Frederik Ruysch (1638 – 1731), whose wax injections were especially well known in the late seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries for they 'seemed to defeat death'.¹³⁶

When it came to supernatural agency, Zacchia differentiated between the two moral extremes. For one, citing Jesuit demonologist Martin Delrio (1551-1608), he affirmed that demonic activity could imitate or manipulate natural factors to achieve wondrous effects of bodily incorruptibility.¹³⁷ On the other hand, divine intervention could also make bodies entirely incorruptible even without any reliance on natural processes. Incorruptibility in this latter case was seen as a promise made by God of immortality and resurrection and hence

¹³⁶ Dániel Margócsy, 'A Museum of Wonders or a Cemetery of Corpses? The Commercial Exchange of Anatomical Collections in Early Modern Netherlands', in *Silent Messengers: The Circulation of Material Objects of Knowledge in the Early Modern Low Countries*, ed. Sven Dupré and Christoph Lüthy (Berlin: LIT, 2011), 185–216.

¹³⁷ Zacchia, *Quaestiones medico-legales*, 1655, 237.

was thought to be granted only the extremely virtuous, as a mark of sainthood. Incorruptibility and a sweet odor (of the incorrupt corpse or even of properly decayed skeletal relics) were occasional marks of saints and understood as ‘an indicator of their continuing vitality beyond the threshold of death’¹³⁸ since the Middle Ages, but became especially frequent after the Reformation, as Protestants denied the possibility that human bodies can be conduits of the divine.

Distinguishing between demonically and divinely incorrupt bodies was in fact not an easy task. Bradford A. Bouley in his discussion of saintly incorruptibility cites several clerical sources as well as Venetian witchcraft trials to the effect that a fast bodily corruption was understood as a sign of a sinfully led life, which this way can be juxtaposed with the virtuousness of saints leading as a reward to incorruptibility.¹³⁹ The picture however was in fact more complicated for several reasons; first, most saints decayed in a regular fashion and incorruptibility was a sign only in a minority of cases. Second, as Zacchia’s opinion suggests, the sinful could also achieve incorruptibility through demonic activity. The difference between demonically and divinely incorrupt bodies was the presence of the good smell and circumstantial evidence, that is, the person had to have been known to have led a saintly life, performed other miracles such as healings and in general, the incorruptibility had to deliver a good moral message, which in the case of incorrupt sinners would hardly be the case. The duality of both demonic and divine causes of incorruptibility were present not only in Catholicism, but also in the Eastern Orthodox tradition. As it will be detailed below, Orthodox theology maintained that demonically possessed, excommunicated and saintly bodies could all appear to be incorrupt.

Even though Zacchia’s text was perhaps the most detailed discussion of the phenomenon of incorruptibility available to seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century readers, it is remarkable that he did not provide a very systematic, practical guide to future forensic experts. He did not list signs and stages of decay and did not elaborate on how exactly the pace of putrefaction depended on the nature of the body (its weight, sex, and cause of death) and on the climatic environment. Bouley delivered the powerful argument that theoretical works, such as Zacchia’s in practice left a lot of room for negotiating under what conditions a given corpse counted as abnormal. One of the most telling examples Bouley gives concerns

¹³⁸ Caciola, *Afterlives*, 37.

¹³⁹ Bouley, *Pious Postmortems: Anatomy, Sanctity, and the Catholic Church in Early Modern Europe*, 72-73.

the 1727 case of Gregorio Barbarigo's cadaver, which was examined by leading anatomist Giovanni Battista Morgagni (1682 – 1771), eminent physician Antonio Vallisneri (1661 –1730) and two surgeons as invited forensic experts in Barbarigo's canonization trial.¹⁴⁰ Valisneri in his private correspondence confessed to Lodovico Antonio Muratori (1672 –1750), a leading figure of Catholic Enlightenment, that he actually did not find the corpse in such a good condition but he was being pressured by the clergy to give a positive evaluation and did not want to lose their trust; in the end Valisneri described the corpse as wondrous, but refrained from stating whether it was miraculous or not, saying that it was not in his ability to decide.

Those few canonization trials, where incorruptibility came up as a possible sign provided singular opportunities to medical experts to empirically look inside a human cadaver that had already spent months or on most cases, years underground (most often in a crypt). The physicians often not only observed, but also tested the bodies by feeling their texture, carried out partial autopsies, touched the internal organs of the corpses and assessed the smells coming from the bodies. Empiricism this way became central in seventeenth-century sanctity trials.¹⁴¹ While the history of early modern empirical knowledge on human corpse decay has to my knowledge not yet been written, the available evidence suggests that opportunities similar to those offered by canonization trials were extremely infrequent and erratic.

Empirical knowledge of corpse decay

Zacchia's work aside, a usual characteristic of the contributors to the theory of human putrefaction is that in terms empirical evidence they had to rely on singular, often accidental observations, usually made not by themselves, but by others and reported in journals, periodicals or cited in authoritative books. These examples involve for instance re-openings of noble families' crypts upon the death of a family member which exposed certain old corpses, and accidental findings of bodies in marshy areas or during building reconstructions.

References to deliberate, systematic tests on the course of human decay seem to be entirely absent in early modern literature. Today's scientists, mostly forensic experts have so-called

¹⁴⁰ Bouley, 89.

¹⁴¹ Bouley, 77.

'body farms' at their disposal, institutions which for the first time appeared in the 1970s within university frames in the US. These enclosed areas are situated in a natural environment, like forests, where human and animal cadavers are placed so that researchers can observe and experiment on the putrefaction processes under various environmental circumstances. That seventeenth- and eighteenth-century actors had no such institutions at hand is well-known, but the question still arises, that if the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were hallmarked by a growing respect for experimental results in natural philosophy, why was human bodily decay never targeted by such research? Also, who had the chance to gather first-hand information on what bodies exactly look like at various stages of decay? Did anyone make attempts at a systematic testing of decay in general? These questions are not as anachronistic as they may sound at first: as it will be shown in Chapter V, the lack of relevant empirical research into putrefaction was commented upon by several discussants of the vampire debate.

During epidemics, grave diggers, municipal officials and medical personnel must have seen hundreds of bodies when re-opening the mass graves into which they were piling plague victims. The translocations of already buried bodies into another place also gave sporadic opportunities to make observations on the states of the corpses. Such an event is depicted on



9 Premonstratensian abbot Bilgeri in 1389 exhumed and translocated the bodies of those knights who had fallen in the battle of Näfels a year before (Chronicle of Christoph Silberrysen, abbot of Wetting, 1576)

an engraving from a sixteenth-century chronicle on the deeds of Abbot Bilgeri, who in 1389 wanted to grant the knights fallen in battle a proper Christian burial.¹⁴² After exhuming the bodies, he had them transported on wagons to the cemetery of the Premonstratensian monastery. Through the collection of bodies of virtuous knights, whose corpses were also decaying in an orderly, so-to-speak ‘virtuous’ fashion, and through their transportation into the field of authority of the monastery, the abbot undoubtedly also managed to raise the prestige of the monastery.

The steadily rising prestige of the experimental discipline of anatomy within medicine as well as more generally in the republic of letters is known to have posed a growing need for corpses to be dissected for pedagogical-demonstrative as well as research purposes during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, a prime condition for bodies to be anatomized was that they needed to be relatively fresh, for a decayed corpse would too much distort the characteristics of the living bodily composition. Stopping the process of decay artificially, that is, technologies of embalming, of making anatomical preparations and other preserving methods was an area where first-hand knowledge on decay could have been gained in a systematic fashion.¹⁴⁴ Those dealing with these techniques (such as the above-mentioned Bils, Zumbo, Desnoues or Ruysch) must have had a more extensive knowledge of putrefaction than their fellow anatomists and physiologists, but to my knowledge, no publications have followed from these enterprises detailing the possible conclusions on how decay progresses in the human body.

Some of the leading physicians openly reflected on the lack of empirical knowledge on decay phenomena. Hermann Boerhaave, in his 1732 *Elementa Chemiae* for instance remarked that

*‘chemistry itself is greatly defective in an experimental history of general fermentation, separatory and combinatory, in subjects of all three kingdoms; a history of putrefaction, rancidness, mustiness, mouldiness, glews, mucilages and a thousand things of the like general nature.’*¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Peter Jezler, ed., *Himmel, Hölle, Fegefeuer - Das Jenseits im Mittelalter* (Verlag Neuer Zürcher Zeitung, n.d.), fig. 86.

¹⁴³ Cunningham, *The Anatomist Anatomis’d*.

¹⁴⁴ Cunningham, 231-251.

¹⁴⁵ See Boerhaave’s ‘An essay for the farther advancement of Chemistry’ in: Hermann Boerhaave, *A New Method of Chemistry; Including the History, Theory and Practice of the Art*, trans. Peter Shaw, vol. 2 (London: T. and T. Longman, 1753), 354.

Empirical knowledge of human corpse decay was particularly scarce, even as late as 1750, when the opening of a family crypt in Devonshire (Britain) revealed a hundred-year old undecayed corpse. The cadaver was dissected by a surgeon and was found almost intact. The case resulted in several sources discussing the current state of knowledge on human decay and the factors that might hinder it. Reports appeared in the *Philosophical Transactions* in London, in 1751,¹⁴⁶ as well as in stand-alone publications. The discussion was not confined to Britain, as Gerard van Swieten (1700-1772), head of the medical system of the Habsburg Monarchy was also aware of it and cited it in his 1755 treatise on the Moravian-Silesian returning dead (see Chapter VII). It is worth taking a closer look at the case of the so-called Staverton Body, because it sheds light on the moral and philosophical obstacles in front of early modern research into corpse decay.

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The Staverton Body and the growing interest in putrefaction

The Staverton Body was found in 1750 in Devonshire, England. The case caused much excitement in local communities in Devonshire as well as in the republic of letters at the time. The case can conveniently be reconstructed based on the correspondence between the physicians and surgeons who had examined the corpse. Their letters were reprinted in the 1753 issue of the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society in London. Simon Worth had died in 1669, and his body was found 81 years later, during the re-opening of his family vault in the church of Staverton. The state of the body was surprisingly life-like. In the dissecting surgeon Nicholas Tripe's assessment:

'it was found as perfect in all its parts as if but just interred. The whole body was plump and full; the skin white, soft, smooth and elastic; the hair strong, and the limbs nearly as flexible as when living.

A winding sheet, which was as firm as if but just applied, enclosed it from head to foot; and two coarse linen cloths, dipped in a blackish substance like pitch,¹⁴⁷ infolded the winding-sheet. The body thus protected was placed in an oaken coffin,

¹⁴⁶ Charles Hutton, George Shaw, and Richard Pearson, eds., *The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, from Their Commencement in 1665 to the Year 1800.*, vol. 10 (London: C. and R. Baldwin, 1809), 202–3.

¹⁴⁷ Pitch is a resinous substance akin to tar.

*on which, as it was always covered with water, was found a large stone and a log of wood, probably to keep it at the bottom.*¹⁴⁸

The body became an instant news item in the neighbourhood not the least because Worth's wife and child were also entombed in the same vault but were found in an entirely decayed state. This setting was very similar to the experiences of vampire hunters opening graves in Eastern Europe. People started frequenting the vault to witness the marvel, and rumour began to circulate that Worth must have been a Roman Catholic, and that the lack of corruption was because he was a saint. Many visitors were not content with simply watching: as the surgeon remarked, someone, while getting into the vault stepped on the corpse's face, thereby deforming the nose and knocking out a few teeth. People also started tearing off parts of the linen and the tarred cloth 'in order, as the different motives of curiosity or superstition prevailed, to be preserved as relics, or to commemorate so remarkable an event'.¹⁴⁹

While the sources are silent about further popular explanations of the phenomenon, it is not altogether far-fetched to conjecture that some people thought that Mr. Worth might as well be a revenant, especially given the log and the stone found on top of the coffin. Tripe suggested that they were necessary to stop the coffin from floating on water, because the vault, normally dry in the summer filled up with water each winter. However, the idea that the weighing down was aimed at keeping the corpse inside must have surfaced at least in some visitor's minds. This pre-emptive method of stopping a dead from returning to life is known to have been widespread across medieval and early modern Europe.

When the news about the body started circulating, the first reaction of the learned was disbelief.¹⁵⁰ It was not until surgeon Nicholas Tripe examined the body two months following its discovery that the learned started taking the news seriously.¹⁵¹ Interestingly, the dissection

¹⁴⁸ Huxham John and Tripe Nicholas, 'XXXVII. Extracts of Several Letters from John Huxham, M.D. of Plymouth, F.R.S. and Mr. Tripe, Surgeon, at Ashburton in Devonshire, Concerning a Body Found in a Vault in the Church of Staverton in That County: Communicated by Thomas Stack, M.D. F.R.S', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 47 (1753): 254.

¹⁴⁹ Huxham John and Tripe Nicholas, 254, 262.

¹⁵⁰ 'this extraordinary Effect, which appeared very wonderful to them at first, and did not meet with a very early Credit in the Republic of Medicine.' James Kirkpatrick, *Some Reflections on the Causes and Circumstances, That May Retard or Prevent the Putrefaction of Dead Bodies, Occasioned by an Account of a Body Found Entire and Imputrid at Staverton in Devonshire, Eighty-One Years after Interment*. (London, 1751), iv.

¹⁵¹ See his autopsy report in: Huxham John and Tripe Nicholas, 'XXXVII. Extracts of Several Letters from John Huxham, M.D. of Plymouth, F.R.S. and Mr. Tripe, Surgeon, at Ashburton in Devonshire, Concerning a Body Found in a Vault in the Church of Staverton in That County', 256-263.

was carried out in public, and Tripe grudgingly explains that he had to contend himself with dissecting and examining only the larger organs and parts of the body, 'as I was surrounded and pressed by near a hundred people, during the whole time of dissection.' Certain parts of the body were decayed, such as the tongue or were blackened and dry like the muscles of the abdomen, but the internal organs in general looked fresh, although often somewhat compressed and occasionally lacking the lively red colour. The heart and aortas were in an entirely natural state, and the lungs were also in most part 'of a redder complexion, lax spongy texture, soft and compressible'. One lobe of the liver was pale brown, dry and shrunk, while the other 'preserved its natural dusky red colour, softness and extension'. The surgeon made incisions on the buttocks, which uncovered full, red, elastic muscles. The hair and beard were long, strong and black, while the nails reached about one centimetre beyond the fingers and toes, suggesting posthumous growth. That the surgeon did not mention the presence of a foul stench in his report either means that there was none, or perhaps more likely, that it was there, but the surgeon thought it too obvious and natural to mention.

Surgeon Tripe did not yield to the pressure of the surrounding 'audience' and explained the preservation of the body with the combined natural effect of the tarred cloth and the coffin's underwater placement. In his view, the tarred cloth shielded the corpse from accessing air, which would have started the putrefying process. In turn, the water kept the tar moist, flexible and hence active. Not all learned physicians agreed with this explanation. A treatise written on the Staverton Body by Dr. James Kirkpatrick in 1751 is a little booklet containing the letter of an anonymous eyewitness about the corpse and Kirkpatrick's natural philosophical musings about the possible causes of the lack of putrefaction.¹⁵² Kirkpatrick rejected the explanation of the tar on the account that tar is not known to be a preserving substance. He instead argued that the antiseptic influence of the permanent cool temperature in the vault was responsible for the phenomenon. He makes no attempt at explaining why, in contrast, the wife's and the child's bodies got putrefied in the same vault.

Kirkpatrick's treatise openly reflects on the lack of knowledge related to the dynamics of putrefaction. What is more, he felt the need to defend himself for daring to write about such

¹⁵² Kirkpatrick, *Some Reflections on the Causes and Circumstances, That May Retard or Prevent the Putrefaction of Dead Bodies, Occasioned by an Account of a Body Found Entire and Imputrid at Staverton in Devonshire, Eighty-One Years after Interment.*

an ‘abstruse and uncommon a subject’, because he knows well that such an inquiry ‘seems a matter rather of great and general curiosity, than of any particular salutary use’. The anonymous writer of the letter Kirkpatrick attached to his treatise, undoubtedly also a surgeon or a physician agrees with the generally frivolous nature of such inquiries:

‘For my part, I look upon the art of preserving an inanimate carcass from corruption, as unworthy our application or study, any farther than such knowledge may be of use for the preservation of the living.’¹⁵³

This comment is all the more strange in the light of the several centuries-long tradition of the art of preserving anatomical samples in European medicine. It seems that in spite of its important role in medical pedagogy, researching and experimenting on decay was considered at the time by many as lowly. The accusation inquiries into this field faced is that they got tempted by the marvellous, which brings with itself enthusiasm and worst of all, credulity. This is the sin with which Kirkpatrick accuses German jurist Heinrich Kornmann (1579 – 1628), author of the seventeenth-century bestseller *On the miracles of the dead*,¹⁵⁴ and is also the reason why he condemns believers in ‘mumial medicine’, that is, preparations made of human body parts, most often blood or skull bones (to be discussed below). All these intense emotions were positioned opposite the calm, systematic method of true natural philosophy. The taint of carrying out a frivolous inquiry made the early commentators on the Staverton body shy away from openly commenting, so as not to ‘trouble the Public with any reflections on it’. Others have taken pre-emptive measures to protect their good name, presumably from being ridiculed by fellow gentlemen. The author of the above-cited letter published anonymously, while the first surgeon who examined the body later on stopped responding to letters asking for more details and was unwilling to send his findings to Kirkpatrick.

It was against these strongly discouraging currents that Kirkpatrick ventured a modest contribution, claiming that perhaps grains of valuable information might actually surface from dealing with the topic, and that one should not shy away from studying phenomena whose causes are hidden:

‘while we guard assiduously against every delusion, which superstition embraces, or imposture would propagate, we should not forget that unbelief may be

¹⁵³ Kirkpatrick, x.

¹⁵⁴ Heinrich Kornmann, *De miraculis mortuorum* ([Frankfurt am Main]: Porsius, 1610).

*sometimes as unphilosophical and indolent as credulity itself, by branding with impossibility such Facts, as are only very difficult to investigate to their causes'*¹⁵⁵

He explained the lack of putrefaction was caused by a combination of several factors. The tar cloth deterred insects and maggots but did nothing more to preserve the body. The real job was done by the constant, moderate cold temperature of the vault coupled with the coffin's position under water, which closed the air out. His ending words spur further research into these matters claiming that

*'the vast Incognita beneath us is not less spacious, and must be more wonderful than that on our surface'*¹⁵⁶

*

Moral inhibitions against the frivolous nature of researching human corpse decay were strong, but to some extent a similar attitude can be detected towards experimental research of animal decay as well. In the early eighteenth century a series of British experimenters started dealing with uncovering the chemical characteristics of putrefying organic matter, especially the nature of gases produced in the process. Stephen Hales (1677–1761), a clergyman interested in zoology and botany for instance designed devices in the 1720s with which he was measuring the amount of air produced by rotting pig and sheep blood, fat, apples and vinegar.¹⁵⁷ Navy physician John Pringle (1707-1782) in the 1750s was engaged in similar tests.¹⁵⁸

Nevertheless, the first, extensive effort at a systematic, experimental research into animal decay was carried out by Marie Geneviève Thiroux d'Arconville (1720-1805), a French aristocratic lady, who in 1766 published an anonymous treatise titled *Essay to serve the history of putrefaction*.¹⁵⁹ In the work she detailed her findings which were based on more than 300 experiments she had carried out over a period of five years in a forest, where she was observing how various raw meats (mostly beef), eggs and vegetables left in various states went through the process of decay. Her aim was to figure out ways to completely stop organic

¹⁵⁵ Kirkpatrick, *Some Reflections on the Causes and Circumstances, That May Retard or Prevent the Putrefaction of Dead Bodies, Occasioned by an Account of a Body Found Entire and Imputrid at Staverton in Devonshire, Eighty-One Years after Interment.*, 34.

¹⁵⁶ Kirkpatrick, 35.

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Hales, *Vegetable Staticks* (London, 1727), 287.

¹⁵⁸ John Pringle, 'Some Experiments on Substances Resisting Putrefaction' 46 (1750): secs 495, 496.

¹⁵⁹ Marie d'Arconville, *Essai pour servir à l'histoire de la putréfaction* (Paris, 1766); Marc André Bernier and Marie-Laure Girou Swiderski, eds., *Madame d'Arconville, moraliste et chimiste au siècle des Lumières. Études et Textes Inédits*. (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2016).

matter from rotting. She made detailed notes about the colour, texture, smell and phenomena related to the decay, as well as about the climactic conditions, which she suspected were crucial influencing factors. For example:

'On the 25 April 1761, temp 9°.

Wind very strong from the N[orth]. Sky quite clear.

I put the same quantity of beef in two ounces of ordinary water, in which I had dissolved one drachm of Glauber's salt. I was in Paris at the time.

On the 28th, the temperature was exactly the same as on the 25th, I found the liquid a little cloudy underneath and greenish on top. It was starting to smell a little; the meat was white and soft, and its knit was becoming soft.

On the 29th, temp 9°.

The wind N[orth]-N[orth]-E[ast], much cloud, the weather quite chilly.

*The liquid was red and very cloudy, a thin greasy film covered its surface, the smell was very putrid, and the meat limp. I threw it away.'*¹⁶⁰

The book met a mixed reception, learned physicians and natural philosophers often praised it for the well-organized experiments, at the same time being astonished by the disgusting, malodourous nature of the enterprise.



10 Dr. Schnabel, plague physician from Rome (Paul Fürst, 1656)

D'Arconville's empirical research into decay was not only problematic in terms of sensibilities, but was also thought to be dangerous, as foul smells were seen as carriers of disease.¹⁶¹ The putrefying particles in smell could act as miasmas, which once having entered the body could start a putrefying disease from within. Given the link between putrefaction in nature and putrefying diseases, such as plague or syphilis, doctors were exposed to dangers of getting sick from the foul smells exuded by patients. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century depictions of physicians abound in details of the ways in which they tried

¹⁶⁰ Cited by: Andrew W. Sparling, 'Putrefaction in the Laboratory: How an Eighteenth-Century Experimentalist Refashioned Himself as an Homme Des Lettres', in *Vom Individuum Zur Person: Neue Konzepte Im Spannungsfeld von Autobiographietheorie Und Selbstzeugnisforschung*, ed. Gabriele Jancke and Claudia Ulbrich, Querelles – Jahrbuch Für Frauen- Und Geschlechterforschung 10 (Wallstein Verlag, 2005), 176-177.

¹⁶¹ For a comprehensive treatment of the various meanings associated with smell, see: Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant - Odor and the French Social Imagination*.

to protect themselves from the everyday hazards their work involved. The well-known image of *Dr. Schnabel*, a protective mask worn by plague physicians seems to have originated in the 1630s. The beaks of the masks were supposedly filled with herbs and other fragrant materials believed to dispel the dangerous foul smells.¹⁶² During the eighteenth century, physicians were also increasingly portrayed as wielding walking sticks the knobs of which were similarly filled with herbs intended for sniffing, as exemplified by William Hogarth's satirical drawing from the 1730s.

The sense of smell (next to vision and taste) served as a crucial diagnostic tool for early modern physicians and played a particularly important role in diagnosing death. It was not by accident that it is singled out in the above-quoted fourteenth-century English verse on the sings of death, by Zacchia in his dissertations on saintly incorruptibility, by Marquis de Sade reflecting on Zumbo's teatrinos, as well as by French experimentalist d'Arconville. Carcass stench was a recurring and practically singular diagnostic sign of putrefaction and hence of death.



11 Detail of William Hogarth's *The company of undertakers* (London, 1736)

Summary

When the vampiric corpse entered European imagination in the 1720s-1730s, it tapped into several sensibilities, moral and philosophical considerations about what it meant to be fully dead and what a 'normal' corpse should look, smell and feel like. Throughout the early modern period, the principles of certifying death remained fairly stable, in the sense that even though many authors remarked the difficulties of diagnosing death in intact bodies, putrefaction remained the single incontrovertible proof. At the same time, empirical research into how human putrefaction actually progressed remained occasional, autopsies were rare, and apparently happened rather outside university frames, as parts of legal trials (as in the case of

¹⁶² Christine M. Boeckl, *Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology*, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies, 53. (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2000), 27.

Zacchia's experiences), urged by princely curiosity (as in Zumbo's work) or actions of popular interest (like in the case of the Staverton body).

The theory of putrefaction throughout the era involved a complex interplay between the characteristics of the cadaver and the environment and was understood either as the latter's intrusion into the former, or the liberation of putrefying particles already part of the healthy living body. The possible factors inhibiting the progress of decay were many, but due to the lack of systematic descriptions of the stages and signs of decay and of how bodies of various natures interacted with different environmental factors meant that much space was left for negotiations.

The seventeenth-eighteenth centuries witnessed several processes targeting a medicalization of the life-death border. The increasing prestige of and hence need for empirical research, the growing interest in putrefaction and the more and more widespread reliance of the state on medical experts in both legal trials and policy-making efforts in combination produced more and more texts and practices which contributed to the medical interest in the dead. Meanwhile, moral-religious attitudes kept heavily informing not only learned thinking about the dead, but also research into corpse decay, rendering such efforts to a great extent frivolous and indecent. The tension between moral sentiments and the medicalizing drive created a fertile ground for the comparative autopsy reports on the Serbian vampires.

I.2. Variations on the harmful dead

A second cluster of problems which the vampire reports directly addressed was the existence of links between the living and the dead and the possibility of these links transmitting harm. Ideas and practices related to the harmful dead in Europe had already had a long history before the rise of the vampire and were grounded on the understanding that the living and the dead formed a single community together;¹⁶³ as Natalie Zemon Davis eloquently put it in her classical study, the dead were an ‘age-group’ in premodern communities.¹⁶⁴ Leading Hungarian anthropologist Éva Pócs argued that this mentality dates back to pre-Christian times and therefore even in the early modern era, under the layer of the Christian tripartite worldview of hell, this world and heaven, there had constantly been a more ancient, powerful dual division: the world of the living and the dead.¹⁶⁵ The settlement of the living and the cemetery of the dead in this sense were not only mirrors of each other but were connected by many ties.

In describing the nature of these ties, many researchers talk about the ‘economy’ of the living and the dead, as relations were often based on mutual exchange and reciprocity, where debts on both sides had to be paid, otherwise problems would occur.¹⁶⁶ Examples of such reciprocal relations are numerous throughout the history of Christian Europe. Pope Gregory the Great (540 – 604), for instance (going against Saint Augustine’s denial of ghosts), famously supported the idea of the apparition of the dead in the physical world as well as the possibility of the

¹⁶³ Anthony Perron, ‘The Medieval Cemetery as Ecclesiastical Community: Regulation, Conflict, and Expulsion, 1000-1215’, in *Dealing With The Dead - Mortality and Community in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Thea Tomaini, Explorations in Medieval Culture 5 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 253–73.

¹⁶⁴ Natalie Zemon Davis, ‘Ghosts, Kin, and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France’, *Daedalus* 106, no. 2 (1977): 87–114.

¹⁶⁵ The realm of the dead in Pócs’s view also involved spirits and demons, as creatures of an essentially dead nature. Éva Pócs, ‘Megszálló halottak – Halotti megszállottság’, in *Lélek, halál, túlvilág. Vallásethnológiai fogalmak tudományos megközelítésben.*, ed. Éva Pócs, Tanulmányok a Transzcendensről, 2. (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2001), 121-139.; Éva Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead* (Budapest & Ithaca: Central European University Press, 1998); For a complex treatment of pagan and Christian ideas about the returning dead see: Claude Lecouteux, *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*. (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2009).

¹⁶⁶ Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall, ‘Introduction: Placing the Dead in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe’, in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1–16; For the economy of relationships between the living and the dead in a contemporary Transylvanian village see: Ágnes Hesz, *Élők, holtak és adósságok - A halottak szerepe egy erdélyi falu társadalmában*, Kultúrák Keresztútján 16 (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2012).

living helping the sufferings of dead souls through prayer.¹⁶⁷ Several medieval monastic communities expected saints to take care of the community in return for the worship, and in case misfortunes befell them, they publicly humiliated the saints' relics for not having done their share of the contract.¹⁶⁸ In Catholicism, apart from saint's relics, the idea of Purgatory also provided a constant source of interactions with the souls of the dead, who could help the living but were also in need of help themselves.

Crucial aspects of these relations, such as the existence of Purgatory, the efficacy of praying for the souls of the dead and their appearance in this world were flatly denied by Protestant denominations, which in practice meant giving up on several ways to cope with the fear of death and the fear of the dead.¹⁶⁹ At the same time, one can also trace continuities, as Protestantism did maintain the central idea of community, of a common belonging to a Christian *corpus mysticum* that transcended the living-dead border.¹⁷⁰ In addition, people's beliefs, hopes and fears towards their dead often remained strong in spite of theological shifts, and several historians have pointed out that Protestant churches were forced to adapt their theologies to these needs. In Bruce Gordon's formulation, many Protestant thinkers had 'to forge acceptable solutions to perplexing pastoral problems' and thus adapted angels and spirits instead of souls as mediators and helpers and considered them as real and integral parts of the living community.¹⁷¹

It is important to underline these deeply rooted human-human relations as sources of ghost- and revenant experiences, for they apparently form a deep structure under or parallel to demonic explanations. The history of the harmful dead in Europe became almost inextricably linked with the history of the Christian devil, as there were repeated attempts by the various

¹⁶⁷ See relevant excerpts in: Scott G. Bruce, ed., *The Penguin Book of the Undead: Fifteen Hundred Years of Supernatural Encounters* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 49-92.

¹⁶⁸ Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 95-124.

¹⁶⁹ Andrew Spicer, "'Rest of Their Bones': Fear of Death and Reformed Burial Practices", in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, ed. William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 167-83.

¹⁷⁰ S. Amanda Eurich, 'Between the Living and the Dead: Preserving Confessional Identity and Community in Early Modern France', in *Defining Community in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Michael J. Halvorson and Karen E. Spierling (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2008), 43-62.

¹⁷¹ Bruce Gordon, 'Malevolent Ghosts and Ministering Angels: Apparitions and Pastoral Care in the Swiss Reformation', in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 87-109; See also recent work by: Charlotte-Rose Millar, 'Ghosts in Post-Reformation England' (University of Cambridge, Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities - Research Seminar, Cambridge, 5 February 2018).

churches to ascribe many strange phenomena to the devil as opposed to more popular explanations often of a pagan origin. Nevertheless, anthropological and historical scholarship has shown that the idea that the dead can return because they have some unfinished business or remain tied to the world of the living through strong emotions are found cross-culturally and in all historical eras. These narratives and experiences express deeply seated anxieties about an unfulfilled fate, which was caused by a sudden death (*mors improvisa* in medieval terminology), to which the person was not able to prepare for.¹⁷² Interestingly, these anxieties on certain occasions can get extended even to objects, that had an unfulfilled fate. T.P. Vukanović for instance recorded Kosovo Gypsy folkloric concepts in the twentieth century about vegetables, mostly pumpkins and melons that had not been consumed as well as about agricultural instruments like yoke ropes that had not been used for a long time. These objects were thought to become bloodsucking entities coming back as if from their dead states to pester people at night until they are destroyed.¹⁷³

Trying to give an overview of the attitudes of the silent masses, the illiterate early moderners to the harmful dead raises the usual problem of the learned filter, of having to read sources generated by the learned about the non-learned. In this situation, history writing often relies on archaeology and anthropology to complement the missing data. While these two disciplines might provide instructive information, there are important *caveats*. The idea that certain measures have to be taken against the malicious dead is universally widespread across cultures. Skulls severed after death and placed in between the feet, remains of stakes in the chest, corpses placed on their stomachs, limbs tied together and stones wedged into the mouths of bodies have been found in archaeological finds in diverse parts of Europe, dating to various ages of history,¹⁷⁴ and written historical evidence as well as modern folkloric

¹⁷² Caciola, *Afterlives*, 61, 129, 232-234.

¹⁷³ Vukanović, 'The Vampire in the Belief and Customs of the Gypsies in the Province of Kosovo-Metohija, Stari Ras and Novopazarski Sandžak, Yugoslavia (Part III.)', 26-27.

¹⁷⁴ Andrew Reynolds, *Anglo-Saxon Deviant Burial Customs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); The difficulties of interpreting archaeological finds is emphasised among others by David Barrowclough, *Time to Slay Vampire Burials? The Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Vampires in Europe.*, [Published Online] (Cambridge: Red Dagger Press, 2014), who cites numerous examples from the early Middle Ages to the eighteenth century. For early medieval Slavic examples see: Zdeňka Krumphanzlová, 'K otázce vampyrismu na slovanských pohřebištích', *Památky Archeologické* 52, no. 2 (1961): 544-549.; Zdeňka Krumphanzlová, 'Der Ritus der slawischen Skelettfriedhöfe der mittleren und jüngeren Burgwallzeit in Böhmen', *Památky Archeologické* 57, no. 1 (1966): 277-327.; For medieval and early modern Polish examples see: Leszek Gardeła and Kamil Kajkowski, 'Vampires, Criminals or Slaves? Reinterpreting "Deviant Burials" in Early Medieval Poland.', *World Archaeology* 45, no. 5 (2013): 780-96; Tracy K. Betsinger and Amy B. Scott, 'Governing from the Grave: Vampire Burials and Social Order in Post-Medieval Poland.', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 24, no. 3 (2014): 467-76; Nineteenth-

practice also attest to the existence of these practices.¹⁷⁵ Archaeologists nevertheless usually caution against drawing hasty conclusions: possible alternative explanations include homicide, posthumous judicial punishment of criminals and grave robbery. The contemporary anthropological literature on various types of malicious dead and their related folkloric beings is vast.¹⁷⁶ Creatures however have been known under various names in different areas and through history they have often undergone changes which are very difficult to trace due to the lack of sources. This makes the association of modern folk beliefs with early modern ones problematic.

Bearing this in mind, in this subchapter I discuss various early modern aetiologies of harm carried out by (or through) the dead and concentrate primarily on learned theoretical and legal concepts that provided legitimized frameworks for dealing with such harmful dead. I think of these frameworks as consisting of vehicles and channels. The former denotes the final entity carrying the harmful effect itself: occult qualities, airy spirits or poisons for instance. These vehicles were basically the *causa efficiens* of harm. By channel I mean the *causa occasionalis*, the series of causal links involving conditions and entities that together formed a channel directing the harm from the corpse to the victim. As an example, the bad morals of a village community may have angered God, who would allow the devil to spread the plague. In this framework, the plague's natural putrid vapours would be the vehicle, the efficient cause, while the devil, God and the bad morals formed the channel, the chain of occasional causes.

century New England cases are described by: Michael E. Bell, 'Vampires and Death in New England, 1784 to 1892', *Anthropology and Humanism* 31, no. 2 (2006): 124–40.

¹⁷⁵ Karen Lambrecht cites a number of such sources in her study on the Silesian returning dead Karen Lambrecht, 'Wiedergänger und Vampire in Ostmitteleuropa – Posthume Verbrennung statt Hexenverfolgung?', *Jahrbuch für Deutsche und Osteuropäische Volkskunde* 37 (1994): 53–54.; Georg Tallar also found most of these measures among the Wallachians of the eighteenth century: Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 13r.

¹⁷⁶ See among others: Agnes Murgoci, 'The Vampire in Roumania', *Folklore* 37 (1926): 320–49; Harry A. Senn, *Were-Wolf and Vampire in Romania* (New York, 1982); Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial and Death – Folklore and Reality* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1988); Carla Corradi-Musi, *Vampiri europei e vampiri dell'area sciamanica* (Catanzaro: Soveria Mannelli, 1995); Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead*; Pócs, 'Megszálló Halottak – Halotti Megszállottság'; Éva Pócs, 'Démoni megszállottság és ördögűzés közép-kelet-európai népi hiedelemrendszerekben', in *Demonológia és boszorkányság Európában*, ed. Éva Pócs (Budapest, Pécs: L' Harmattan – PTE Néprajz Tanszék, 2001), 137–198.; and for a concise but thorough overview see especially: Peter Mario Kreuter, *Der Vampirglaube in Südosteuropa: Studien zur Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion. Rumänien und der Balkanraum* (Berlin: Weidler, 2001), 45–67.

Special attention is devoted to possible links between the abnormally incorrupt corpse and the dangers it was thought to cause. I only venture guesses at relevant non-educated ideas in the following chapters, where the narrower geographical and temporal scope, as well as the availability of sources make such an approach more feasible.

Epidemics and the corpse as a source of pollution

Before moving on to the harm abnormal corpses were thought to be capable of, a reminder is in place, that regularly decaying cadavers also posed a lethal threat. The clouds of miasmatic putrefying vapours came partially from corpses, and though they were not thought to have intention or direction, this could in fact be given to them with a bit of outside help. The decaying carcass was a dangerous substance and poisoners, witches, demons and God himself were all able to deploy it as a biological weapon. Fear of the so-called ‘death-spreaders’ was for instance widespread in certain parts of sixteenth-seventeenth-century Europe; these criminals were thought to be plague workers, who in order to prolong their well-paid jobs would spread the plague on purpose. They were accused of collecting and cooking putrefying body parts, removing the fat and mixing it with the secretions of pustules from plague victims. They would then smear this concoction on windowsills, doorposts and other objects so that by touching them people would contract the plague.¹⁷⁷

Since the only efficient method of countering plague epidemics proved to be the enforcing of strict quarantine measures, the state infrastructure itself often was accused of killing healthy people by closing them inside quarantined houses with the dying and the dead plague victims. In order to prevent this, people would sometimes try to conceal that their relative died of the plague and bury them secretly, which was (if found out) strictly punished. Even though claims of the devastating effects of the plague on the fabric of European society and mentality as proposed by Jean Delumeau¹⁷⁸ have been mitigated in recent secondary literature, it is still arguable that the epidemic necessitated mobilization, centrally coordinated measures, fear management and in general, the state/medical establishment’s brutal intrusion into the

¹⁷⁷ William G. Naphy, ‘Plague-Spreading and a Magisterially Controlled Fear’, in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, ed. William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 28–43.

¹⁷⁸ Delumeau, *Sin and Fear*.

private sphere:¹⁷⁹ certain traditional burial practices, like vigil and kissing the dead were banned during plague times, and the dead were taken away from their family and buried into mass graves. Doing away with the dangerous plague dead became a practicing field for centralized and rationalized policing measures, which culminated in the Habsburg Monarchy's series of plague ordinances and the land quarantine of the early eighteenth century.¹⁸⁰

Sinful and incorruptible: The evil dead

In the High Middle Ages, two traditions that historically had different roots slowly converged as secular and clerical authorities developed a framework within which the unusual dead could be interpreted and dealt with. These two traditions were the necessity to destroy the corpse and memory of grave sinners on the one hand and the construction of the unusually incorrupt corpse as a possible vessel for evil machinations on the other. Their combination resulted in a negative mirror image of the incorruptible saint: the figure of the evil, incorruptible dead, who had to be executed for the malicious activity to stop.

Executing cadavers

The Middle Ages witnessed the gradual development of the idea that people had to answer for the condemnable actions they had committed during their lifetime even if they were dead already. This applied especially to serious sins and crimes and could result in the posthumous execution of the corpse. If a grave sinner managed to avoid being found out and tried properly at court during lifetime, but their sins came to light after the person's death, then the punishment had to be carried out posthumously. According to canon law, the mortal remains of heretics, the excommunicated, suicides and other serious sinners simply did not deserve the holy ground of the cemetery and hence had to be removed from it. Dyan Elliott has termed this practice 'negative translation' mirroring the revered exhumation and translation

¹⁷⁹ William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts, eds., *Fear in Early Modern Society* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1997); Ann G. Carmichael, 'Contagion Theory and Contagion Practice in Fifteenth-Century Milan', *Renaissance Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (1991): 213–56.

¹⁸⁰ More on this see: Chapter II.

(translocation) of saintly relics from their graves.¹⁸¹ The body of a grave sinner was essentially pollution in the sense anthropologist Mary Douglas used it, something unclean in a clean space,¹⁸² and the removal and destruction of its body was both a warning gesture towards the living and an attempt at the eradication of its memory; the latter attempt, as Elliot remarked often backfired and in fact contributed to the longevity of the person's (in)fame.

It was especially during the twelfth-thirteenth centuries that canon law regulations and practices of corpse exhumations and burnings were on the increase in Europe.¹⁸³ Pope Gregory IX's (1227 – 1241) canon law collection, the *Liber Extra* contains several relevant sections against the excommunicated and the heretics.¹⁸⁴ In the section on graveyards, (Liber III. Titulus XXVIII), it is stated that excommunicated people's mortal remains cannot stay in the cemetery but have to be exhumed and thrown out. Further, in the section on heretics (Liber V. Titulus VII, which is the same as the infamous *Excommunicamus* chapter of the IV. Lateran Council decrees), it is stated that convicted heretics need to be handed over to the secular court, which should carry out the death penalty through burning.

The drive to do justice even after the perpetrator's death permeated secular law as well, which contained similar regulations against those convicted posthumously for capital crimes. For instance, as late as 1661, following the fall of the Protectorate, Oliver Cromwell's (1599-1658) corpse was exhumed, convicted for treason and beheaded publicly. Punishing and humiliating a corpse before or after burial was in fact a common practice, sometimes sanctioned officially, other times as a result of vigilante action. As Vanessa Harding pointed out, in relation to the early modern period, it was especially the bodies of criminals, suicides, religious minorities, unbaptized children, plague victims, (often poor) hospital patients who tended to undergo such anti-rituals.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Dyan Elliott, 'Violence against the Dead: The Negative Translation and Damnatio Memoriae in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 92, no. 4 (2017): 1020–55.

¹⁸² Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger - An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London & New York: Routledge, 1984). See the application of her theory on the 19th-century Prussian returning dead in: Robert E. Alvis, 'Hallowed Ground, Contagious Corpses, and the Moral Economy of the Graveyard in Early Nineteenth-Century Prussia', *The Journal of Religion* 84, no. 2 (2004): 234–55.

¹⁸³ On the gradual evolution of negative translation, see especially: Elliott, 'Violence against the Dead'; as well as relevant sections in: Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter*; Caciola, *Afterlives*.

¹⁸⁴ Aemilius Friedberg, *Corpus iuris canonici - Editio lipsiensis secunda*, vol. 2 (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1955), 553., 787.; Franz Schmalzgrueber, *Jus ecclesiasticum universum brevi methodo ad discentium utilitatem explicatum, seu lucubrationes canonicae*, vol. 3 (Naples, 1738), 335.

¹⁸⁵ Harding, 'Whose Body? A Study of Attitudes towards the Dead Body in Early Modern Paris', 174-176.

Importantly, many of the posthumous executions throughout the medieval and early modern periods did not involve either posthumous harmful activity or an unusually incorruptible corpse. It was simply a punishment for past actions and an example set for the living. The executions however did inform dealings with the unruly, harmful dead as well. Cromwell's execution for instance is cited by Karl Ferdinand von Schertz, jurist and advisor to the bishop of Olomouc in his treatise *Magia posthuma* on the returning dead of the Moravian—Silesian borderland (Chapter III).¹⁸⁶ Von Schertz uses the example to buttress his point that evil people, such as the regicidal Lord Protector used to be, must be duly punished.

The possessed corpse

Demonic possession has been a constant in the history of Christianity since its very inception, and unlike witchcraft, almost all denominations maintain its current existence in the world.¹⁸⁷ A reason for its tenacity in mainstream theologies is that it has very strong Scriptural backing in Christ's exorcisms, as described for instance in Matthew 8:28-34, 15:21-28 and 17:14-21 or Luke 11:14-20. Giving an overview of the multifaceted history of possession and exorcism in Europe lies outside the scope of the present dissertation, but a few relevant remarks need to be made.¹⁸⁸ The devil's ultimate aim has always been to gain human souls by tossing them

¹⁸⁶ Karl Ferdinand von Schertz, 'Juridicum pro et contra seu unus aliquis casus juridicus isque singularior *Magia posthuma* suspendo nonnulli iudicio discussus', 1703, 22v., Moravian Library, Brno, <http://www.digitalniknihovna.cz/mzk/uuid/uuid:9c566c75-2612-4eec-9bfb-19694cf50c9b>.

¹⁸⁷ A notable exception is the Anglican Church, the official stance of which since the seventeenth century is that demonic possession and exorcism are miracles and since (in line with the usual Protestant claim) the age of miracles was over by the early Middle Ages, possession phenomena cannot occur anymore. See: Michael MacDonald, ed., *Witchcraft and Hysteria in Elizabethan London: Edward Jorden and the Mary Glover Case* (London & New York: Routledge, 1991); Philip C. Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and Their Cultural Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁸⁸ The literature on demonic possession is vast. Some of the major works are: T.K. Oesterreich, *Possession: Demoniacal & Other among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Modern Times* (Secaucus, New Jersey: The Citadel Press, 1974); Paul S. Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974); D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); Giovanni Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Exorcism and Enlightenment: Johann Joseph Gassner and the Demons of Eighteenth-Century Germany*, First Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Hans de Waardt, ed., *Dämonische Besessenheit: Zur Interpretation eines kulturhistorischen Phänomens*, Hexenforschung 9 (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2005); Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Nancy Mandeville Caciola and Moshe Sluhovsky, 'Spiritual Physiologies: The Discernment of Spirits in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–48; And see the recent state-of-the-art article by: Ferber, 'Demonic Possession, Exorcism and Witchcraft'.

into fear, desperation and sin. Demonic possession was an extreme weapon in his arsenal to torture the body and the soul in order to achieve this aim. In this sense, theologians throughout the ages tended to distinguish between two kinds, or (often) stages of possession. *Obsessio* or *circumpossessio* happened when living beings were tempted or tortured by demons from the outside or when physical spaces and objects were occupied or haunted by them. Such afflictions often worsened and developed into *possessio*, in which demons literally entered and took control over a living being's body (animals and people alike).

The symptoms of possession were greatly variable and were also interlinked with the possessed person's attitude to his/her own sins. The levitating, convulsing demoniac speaking in tongues was only the tip of the iceberg, as the symptoms of possession have in practice always occupied a much wider palette. Often, even in its worst expression, possession manifested only in unusual pains, sudden sicknesses or aversion to holy objects among others.¹⁸⁹ In fact, one could be possessed even without outward bodily symptoms: grave sinners (heretics, witches etc.) from a theological point of view were thought of as being in a constant state of possession, under complete power of the devil. Since their souls were also submerged in sin, there was no conflict, no struggle between the occupying demonic entity and their soul. Symptoms of intense struggle, expressed in body language through convulsions, vomiting, pain and shouting usually became manifest only once the soul wished to repent and get rid of the demon(s), who in return fought to maintain their power over the person by torturing the body and scaring, tempting the soul. Of course, not only grave sinners, but average people and even the virtuous could also undergo possession (the latter as a further test of their faith), but no one was entirely without sins, and sins were seen as the blemishes on human soul that served as the easiest entry points for the devil to take over the person.

Unlike witchcraft, possession was thought of as an affliction that needed cure, not punishment. The remedies for possession occupied a wide scale, in line with the severity of the case. Catholics had a much larger arsenal (benedictions, holy objects, formulas and exorcism rituals) than Protestants, and the latter would criticize the former for their (in their eyes) superstitious usage of objects and their exaggerated emphasis on the powers of the

¹⁸⁹ On this see especially: Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit*.

exorcizing priest in forcing conjuring demons. Instead, they would call their own ritual 'dispossession', which (in theory at least) did not involve a single priest as a healing hero, but common fasting and prayer sessions by the whole community.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, all denominations agreed that a crucial prerequisite of cure was that the afflicted person him/herself had to sincerely repent their sins, fast and pray hard so that God (the only one, who actually had the power to liberate the possessed) would finally end the possession. Most Protestant would nevertheless

The symptoms, characteristics and treatment of demonic possession have gone through several attempts at institutional regulation. The Catholic Church made repeated attempts during the early modern era at creating an officially sanctioned canon of benediction and exorcism formulas and manuals for example,¹⁹¹ and the Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) and the subsequent issuing of the *Rituale Romanum* in 1614 made steps at limiting the true symptoms of possession to the supernatural ones: the speaking of tongues, superhuman strength and the knowledge of secrets. As it often happens to regulations, their effect on practice was uneven, in many places remained on paper. Eric Midelfort and Dániel Báth for instance have shown that as late as the eighteenth century, star exorcists, such as Johann Gassner in Germany and Petrus Szmendrovich in the Hungarian Kingdom have deployed exorcism for a huge variety of ailments, not at all limited to those that displayed the supernatural symptoms.



12 Hungarian King Saint Ladislaus attacked by a possessed corpse - Anjou Legendary (ca 1330)

¹⁹⁰ Almond, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern England: Contemporary Texts and Their Cultural Contexts*.

¹⁹¹ Báth, *Benedikció és exorcizmus a kora újkor Magyarországon*.

If there was a relative agreement about the possibility of demonic possession throughout the ages, when it came to the possibility of the devil possessing human cadavers, opinions tended to differ more, not the least because such instances are not mentioned in the Bible. As a prerequisite for possession, a useable, functioning corpse was needed. As shown above, already in the Middle Ages it was always acknowledged that the lack of putrefaction in corpses could have many causes, including entirely natural ones, for instance the characteristics of the soil. At the same time, whatever the reasons for the preservation of the body, it was also agreed that the fresh-looking, moist corpses retained the mechanical mobility of their fluids and hence their functionality. Such corpses could then serve as vessels to be filled by spiritual entities, be they demons, the Holy Ghost or the soul of a person, and be animated by them.¹⁹² Exactly such a scene is depicted in the so-called Hungarian Anjou Legendary, an illuminated depiction of Biblical scenes as well as the lives of saints made in Italy in the fourteenth century. One of the stories concerns Hungarian King Saint Ladislaus (1046-1095), who is attacked while praying in a church by a corpse wielding its own bier. The king responds to this physical attack by picking up the cross from the altar, apparently as a move of exorcism upon which a demon leaves the corpse, which collapses inert, albeit somewhat desiccated on the ground.¹⁹³

As far as the reasons for possessing a corpse are concerned, morals again could play an important role, because sins committed during lifetime could in general increase the risks for a person to become an unruly dead and carry out various strange, possibly harmful acts. Lesser sinners' souls could in the Catholic tradition come back from Purgatory haunting and scaring their families, though their ultimate aim was to relate their sufferings and ask for help for themselves and to set an example for people. As mentioned above, grave sinners were exposed already in their lifetime to demonic possession, and their corpses were also thought to be more likely to be possessed by the devil. Accordingly, measures to be deployed countering the harmful activities of the unruly dead were in line with the severity of the case: these measures ranged from using blessed objects for protection through requesting priests to carry out benedictions and exorcisms on the house (the location of the haunting) to exhuming and destroying the corpse. Throughout the early modern period we see applications

¹⁹² Caciola, *Afterlives*; Schmitz-Esser, *Der Leichnam im Mittelalter*, 431-470.

¹⁹³ The original is found today in: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Roma. Vat.lat.8541 f. 81v. See its published version in: Béla Zsolt Szakács, *The Visual World of the Hungarian Angevin Legendary*, Central European Cultural Heritage 1 (Budapest: CEU Press, 2015).

of these methods, and more often than not, cases progress gradually through all these stages before the most radical method of exhumation and execution is deployed.

The links between the lack of putrefaction, sin and the unruly dead that had existed already in the Middle Ages were reiterated by several Catholic authors in the seventeenth century. In Paolo Zacchia's view, a corpse can be considered 'incorruptible' only if all its members (including the internal organs) look entirely life-like, wet and fleshy as in living people, and that this kind of wet incorruptibility may have several causes: entirely natural ones, sainthood, the work of the devil or post-mortem punishment for the sins committed during life.¹⁹⁴ Markanstadt physician Philipp Rohr also concluded in 1679 that Satan may animate and ambulate corpses through possession.¹⁹⁵ Travelers and missionaries, who met other cultures' beliefs in revenants also echoed the same ideas. The Jesuit Francois Richard, in his 1657 travel narrative about the Greek island of Santorini, has a section on the local beliefs in the revenants (called *vroucolacas*),¹⁹⁶ and repeats that the souls of lesser sinners might come back from Purgatory to give testimony about their sufferings, but graver sinners' corpses are exposed to attacks from demons and witches, who could possess these bodies in order to cause fear among people. In his view, such corpses were exposed to possession only as long as they were not entirely decayed to dry bones. Another Jesuit missionary to Santorini, Robert Saulger, in his 1698 *Histoire nouvelle des anciens ducs et autres souverains de l'Archipel*¹⁹⁷ discusses the same belief and thinks that once the heart is removed from the corpse, it is no longer suitable to be possessed and re-animated by demons.

As it will be detailed in Chapter III, Karl Ferdinand von Schertz, jurist and advisor to the bishop of Olomouc proposed a curious, possession-based explanation to a particular kind of revenant, the multiplying ghosts of the Moravian-Silesian borderland as late as 1703. Von Schertz's idea of *magia posthuma* (that is, posthumous bewitchment) conceptualized the possibility that a witch's corpse, still owned, practically possessed by the devil may have the power to further possess any freshly died human body which was left uninhabited by the soul, regardless of the

¹⁹⁴ J.S.W. Helt, 'The "Dead Who Walk": Materiality, Liminality and the Supernatural World in Francois Richard's "Of False Revenants"', *Mortality* 5, no. 1 (2000): 15.; Zacchia, *Quaestiones medico-legales*, 1655, 238.

¹⁹⁵ Martin Böhm, *Die drey grossen Landtplagen. Krieg, Tewrung, Pestilenz* (Wittenberg, 1601); Philipp Rohr, *Dissertatio historico-philosophica de masticatione mortuorum* (Leipzig, 1679).

¹⁹⁶ Francois Richard, *Un relation de ce qui s' est passe a Sant-Erini* (Paris: Sebastian & Gabriel Cramoisy, 1657), 208-227.; Helt, 'The "Dead Who Walk"'.
¹⁹⁷ Robert Saulger, *Histoire nouvelle des anciens ducs et autres souverains de l'Archipel* (Paris: Etienne Michallet, 1698).

virtuous or sinful nature of the person. The newly possessed corpses would themselves become revenants capable of spreading the malice further until annihilated.¹⁹⁸

The question whether executing a possessed corpse was tricky. On the one hand, possession required blessings and exorcism, not destruction: the body was just the vehicle, the *causa efficiens*, it was the devil, the *causa occasionalis* that had to be removed. On the other hand, it was possible to argue, in line with the above-cited Jesuits, that if all other methods fail, the execution of the corpse might actually help, as that way the devil would remain without a puppet. A question, which emerges of course, is what would stop the devil from possessing another corpse right away. As it will be shown in the following chapters, several actors were forced to enter into this problematic question and come up with a solution.

The growing doubts in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries about the powers of the devil in the physical world mostly emerged in relation to witchcraft but had relevance for demonic possession as well. That inanimate things, including objects and bodily humours, vapours as well as animals were subject to the devil's powers was widely accepted across denominations. There were very few materialists like Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) who denied the existence of spiritual entities in general. And neither were there too many strict Cartesian dualists, who denied interactions between body and soul based on the qualitative difference between spiritual and material entities. Such radical opinions were voiced by Baruch Spinoza 1632 –1677) and Balthasar Bekker (1634 –1698)¹⁹⁹ for instance. They claimed that the Scriptural mentions of possession should be taken metaphorically, not literally. Staunch Spinozists as a result would also deny that human corpses could be possessed and animated by demons. More mainstream Protestant authors referred to Providence and held that even though the devil did have powers over the living being, his powers ceased after death, as he had no stakes anymore in the person, whose soul already was separated from the body. It was of course still possible to argue that the devil might possess a corpse only to get to the living people, to scare them, and thus turn them away from God.

¹⁹⁸ Karl Ferdinand von Schertz, *Magia posthuma per iudicium illud pro & contra suspensio nonnullibi iudicio investigata* (Olmütz: Ignatius Rosenburg, 1704).

¹⁹⁹ For the ideas of radical witchcraft-sceptics see: Israel, *Radical Enlightenment - Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, 380.

The dead witch

The late fifteenth-century saw the formulation of the concept of demonic witchcraft as a covenant with the devil and thus as a form of heresy; this momentum in European intellectual history was a game changer in late medieval-early modern attitudes to the spirit world as well as to the harmful dead.²⁰⁰ The witch-hunts that followed in the wake of this new concept had their most intensive period in Western Europe during the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, while in Eastern Europe rather in the seventeenth-early eighteenth centuries.²⁰¹ Witches chiefly earned their powers from the devil, who was seen as a most skilful natural philosopher and physicians, who through his immense knowledge of the natural world could work wonderful (preternatural) effects. This also meant that the harmful things witches performed, such as causing afflictions to man and cattle, hailstorms and epidemics in a demonological sense did not come from their own skill or powers but were loans from the devil in exchange for their souls.

The idea that a witch might continue doing *maleficium* or other forms of harm, such as causing plague and other epidemics even after death was especially present in certain parts of early

²⁰⁰ Some of the most influential works of the literature on the history of witchcraft are: Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Carlo Ginzburg, *The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Gábor Klaniczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power: The Transformation of Popular Religion in Medieval and Early-Modern Europe* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990); Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (London: Longman, 1993); Norman Rufus Colin Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians Inmedieval Christendom*, revised ed (London: Pimlico, 1993); Wolfgang Behringer, *Witches and Witch-Hunts: A Global History*, Themes in History (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004); Lyndal Roper, *Witch Craze: Terror and Fantasy in Baroque Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); For a collection of studies see the six-volume series *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, and specifically for the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era: Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 3: The Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 4: The Period of the Witch Trials* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, eds., *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 5: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998); And see the state-of-the-art collection of essays in: Brian P. Levack, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, Oxford Handbooks Online (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁰¹ For the Eastern European history of witchcraft, see the relevant studies in: Klaniczay, *The Uses of Supernatural Power*; Bengt Ankarloo, Gustav Henningsen, and Gábor Klaniczay, eds., *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Levack, *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*; Gábor Klaniczay and Éva Pócs, eds., *Witchcraft and Demonology in Hungary and Transylvania* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); As well as the monographs by: Éva Pócs, *Fairies and Witches at the Boundary of South-Eastern and Central Europe* (Helsinki, 1989); Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia*, 1 edition (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Kateryna Dysa, *Witchcraft Trials and Beyond-Volhynia, Podolia and Ruthenia, 17th and 18th Centuries* (New York: Central European University Press, 2011); Valerie A. Kivelson, *Desperate Magic, The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

modern Europe. These corpses were also always incorrupt ones, as their ability to cause epidemics was linked to their continued vitality, their refusal to die and decay properly. Various sources from the area known as *Germania Slavica*, on the eastern border of the Holy Roman Empire tell of the shroud-eater, or chewing dead (denoted in later, nineteenth-century terminology as *Nachzehrer*), a corpse, who kept chewing the shroud or its own body in the grave, thereby causing epidemics. The chewing dead had to be executed for the epidemic to stop.²⁰² Similar ideas were also widespread in Eastern Europe, for example in relation to the Wallachian *moroi* and *strigoi*, a witch who after his/her death would become an epidemic-bringing undead.²⁰³ These revenants probably used to form a separate category of harmful entities before, but during the early modern era, repeated efforts on the side of authorities were forcing them (with more or less success) into the category of witchcraft. The epidemic-causing chewing dead with or without a background in witchcraft were mentioned in chronicles, local histories, travel accounts, treatises of natural philosophy, both in Protestant and Catholic circles.²⁰⁴ The genres, which in the seventeenth-century specifically concerned themselves with unusual states and phenomena related to corpses, were the *miracula mortuorum* (miracles of the dead) works, while the *masticatio mortuorum* (the chewing of the dead) literature was more specialized on the chewing dead.²⁰⁵ The explanations offered in these works differed: some relied on witchcraft and the devil, others remained on a fully natural basis and resorted to particles of the decaying bodies escaping from the graves and either causing large-scale clouds of miasmas, or targeted particular living beings through natural magical or other means.

Importantly, this idea had already been formulated in the highly influential 1487 demonological handbook, the *Malleus Maleficarum*. The book relates the story of an undead

²⁰² Thomas Schürmann, *Nachzehrerglauben in Mitteleuropa* (N.G. Elwert, 1990).

²⁰³ On this see Chapter II, as well as: Murgoci, 'The Vampire in Roumania'; Mircea Eliade, 'Some Observations on European Witchcraft', *History of Religions* 14, no. 3 (1975): 158.

²⁰⁴ Apart from those to be mentioned below, see also: Hercules Saxonia, *Opera practica* (Patavia, 1682); Erasmus Francisi, *Höllischer Protheus* (Nürnberg, 1690); Wenceslaus Hajek, *Böhmische Chronik* (Nürnberg: Balthasar Joachim Endter, 1697); Jerzy Gengell, *Eversio atheismi* (Braunsberg, 1716); Gabriel Rzacynski, *Historia naturalis curiosa regni Poloniae* (Sandomierz, 1721); Mátyás Bél, *Hungariae antiquae et novae prodromus* (Nürnberg, 1723).

²⁰⁵ Kornmann, *De miraculis mortuorum*; Christian Friedrich Garmann, *De miraculis mortuorum libri tres* (Dresden & Leipzig: J.C. Zimmermann, 1670); Rohr, *Dissertatio historico-philosophica de masticatione mortuorum*; Zacharias Grappius, *Dissertatio de judaeorum et muhammedanorum chibbut hakkebber, i.e. Percussion sepulchrali, vulgo von denen Schlägen im Grabe* (Rostock, 1699); Philipp Grosgebauer, *Schediasmate de esu mortuorum*, 1708.

witch, who was allegedly causing a plague epidemic by chewing at its shroud in the grave. The corpse of the witch was tried and beheaded by the town magistrates; the authors added that the plague was a punishment of the innocent by God, because the magistrates had failed to convict the witch during her lifetime.²⁰⁶ It is also visible from this case that the concept of witchcraft was being extended to kinds of unruly dead who had earlier not always qualified as witches. It is remarkable that the *Malleus Maleficarum*, advocating a strong corporeality of the devil and the demonic origins of the witches' powers enjoyed a second wave of popularity: between 1576 and 1670, during which time it appeared in 16 new editions, and according to estimates, the printshops of Paris, Lyon, Venice, Frankfurt and Nürnberg circulated it in 30-50.000 copies.²⁰⁷ Towards the end of the century, certain aspects of this corporeality, among them, the flight to the sabbath, the copulation with and conception by the devil, the metamorphosis into animals were increasingly questioned.

This opinion was reiterated in one of the classics of seventeenth-century *miracula mortuorum* literature, Friedrich Garmann's treatise. Garmann explained that the scary sounds of chewing and fearsome apparitions around the graves are in fact the devil's trickery to plant fear into people's heart this way tossing them into superstition, while the plague is divine punishment because the authorities failed to prosecute the witch in her lifetime.²⁰⁸ IN his view, witches were granted power to cause all sorts of epidemics in their lifetime, for example by pouring poison into wells and streams or smearing doors, windowsills with powders and smears, called by Seneca in his *De Ira* as '*pestilentia manu facta*'. Once dead, however, they were unable to do so, because as an Italian proverb held, 'a dead animal has no venom' (*Morta la bestia, morta il veleno*). However, given that God wanted witches to be prosecuted and executed in their lifetime, in case this had not been done, and a witch was given a Christian burial, God could send the plague as a punishment of the authorities for not having done their job well. If

²⁰⁶ Christopher S. Mackay, ed., *The Hammer of Witches - A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 237.

²⁰⁷ Johann Weyer, *Witches, Devils, and Doctors in the Renaissance: Johann Weyer, De Praestigiis Daemonum*, trans. John Shea (Binghamton: Mrts, 1991); André Schnyder, 'Der Malleus Maleficarum: Fragen und Beobachtungen zu seiner Druckgeschichte sowie zur Rezeption bei Bodin, Binsfeld und Delrio', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 74 (1992): 325–64.

²⁰⁸ Anon., *Visum et repertum, über die so genannten Vampirs, oder Blut-Aussauger, so zu Medvegia in Servien, an der türkischen Granitz, den 7. Januarii 1732. Geschehen. Nebst einem Anhang von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern* (Nürnberg: J.A. Schmidt, 1732), 38-45.; Silvio Benetello and Bernd Herrmann, eds., *Christian Friedrich Garmann: De miraculis mortuorum - Über die wunder [Dinge] der Toten.*, Facsimile der Originalausgabe von 1670 mit Übersetzung und Nachwort der Herausgeber (Göttingen: Universitätsdrucke Göttingen, 2003), 40-41.

‘clear judicial evidence and conviction of [the corpse] having been a witch’ was found, the corpse had to be exhumed and either burnt or buried outside the cemetery.

In practice it was probably often ambiguous whether a given dead witch was executed because it was thought to have been causing the plague through its own abilities, or in order to appease God for not having killed her while alive. In these cases, the vehicle as well as the channel of harm could have been different for the different participants of the given cases; the result, however, was the same, satisfying both frameworks. Since witchcraft came to be defined as heresy and since the above-mentioned *Liber Extra*’s decrees remained authoritative sources of legal practice against heretics throughout the early modern era, witches’ bodies, regardless of their post-mortem harmful activity had to be exhumed and burnt because of their grave sin. The decrees were referred to during trials against dead witches as late as the eighteenth century. In a 1729 witchcraft trial in Szeged (Hungarian Kingdom), for instance, several dead, who were decided to have been witches were burnt, even though there were no testimonies about any damage they did after their death.²⁰⁹

By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, more and more learned had doubts about certain corporeal aspects of the power of the devil, and the trials against witches were also on the decline in Western Europe.²¹⁰ It was less and less fashionable to think for instance that the devil could turn into animals or could beget children with humans. This was a redefinition of the concept of the devil, not an erasure of its existence and powers, as less corporeal effects for most people remained entirely possible, apart from the followers of the above-mentioned Balthasar Bekker. After all, the prosecution of witches was stopped in the Prussian Kingdom and the Habsburg Monarchy only in 1728, and 1766 respectively. Importantly, both legislations acknowledged the existence of harmful magic and demonic powers in the physical world but were arguing that it was extremely rare and that courts involving medical experts should first exclude all possible natural causes.

²⁰⁹ For the application of the *Liber extra* in a trial involving a dead witch in Hungary in 1729, see: Gergely Brandl and Péter Tóth G., eds., *Szegedi boszorkányperek 1726-1744, A magyarországi boszorkányság forrásai* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2016), 240.

²¹⁰ On this see the recent summary studies by: Levack, ‘The Decline and End of Witchcraft Prosecutions’, 1999; Brian P. Levack, ‘The Decline and End of Witchcraft Prosecutions’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 429–48; And specifically for the Habsburg Monarchy: Klaniczay, ‘The Decline of Witches and the Rise of Vampires under the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy’; Péter Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*, Vallásantropológiai Tanulmányok Közép-Kelet Európából, 8. (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, [In Press]).

The first third of the eighteenth century in the Holy Roman Empire for example saw a heated debate exactly about the physical powers of the devil, a debate that centred at the University of Halle and started with jurist and philosopher Christian Thomasius's (1655-1728) lecture *De crimine magiae* of 1701, in which he denied the corporeality of the devil, limited his powers to spiritual temptations and denied any physical effects. His outraged opponents accused him of not believing in the devil at all. Thomasius did not deny the possibility of magicians manipulating hidden powers of nature to cause harm and neither did he deny the existence of ghostly phenomena, which he ascribed to the activity of a Paracelsian astral spirit.²¹¹ He focused much of his criticism on the legal difficulties of proving witchcraft and the large numbers of innocent people who can get convicted until a real magician was caught.²¹² Pietists occupied a different position, as they maintained, that the devil was a working force in the world, however, in contrast to other, more mainstream Protestant strands argued that these workings cannot be fought with physical means: the persecution and execution of witches was not supported, only spiritual means were allowed: repentance, fasting, prayer and leading a virtuous life were valid ways to counter the Devil's influence.²¹³

In response, leading physicians of the time belonging to various natural philosophical schools sought to rebut Thomasius's views. The Cartesian iatromechanist Friedrich Hoffmann (1660–1742) and the Stahlean vitalist Michael Alberti (1682-1757), both of them at the University of Halle, published treatises in the 1720's confirming the physical powers of the devil.²¹⁴ A treatise of a similar stance was published in Leipzig by the iatrochemist, Boerhaave-disciple Anton De Haen, head of the Vienna clinic as late as 1774: *De magia liber*.²¹⁵ All three physician-giants spoke up against the overly corporeal conceptualizations of demonic power (as argued by the *Malleus Maleficarum* for instance), and the legal injustices that might affect the innocently accused people, but strongly defended the devil's physical presence and activity in the world, his ability to cause diseases for instance.

²¹¹ See below.

²¹² Pott, *Aufklärung und Aberglaube - Die deutsche Frühaufklärung im Spiegel ihrer Aberglaubenskritik*, 78-126.

²¹³ Pott, 231.

²¹⁴ Pott, 357-395.

²¹⁵ Anton De Haen, *De magia liber* (Leipzig, 1774).

The decline of witches and the rise of vampires

The decline of witch prosecutions in the end of the seventeenth century and the subsequent rise to fame of the vampire in the eighteenth prompted several scholars to contemplate the possible reasons behind this apparent consecutiveness.²¹⁶ One of the first historians to hint at this 'seasonality' was Karl Berger, who at the turn of the twentieth century was writing about Moravian and Silesian witchcraft. Berger's delineated how the decline of witch persecutions in the end of the seventeenth century went parallel to the increase in the number of tried and executed dead witches. By the eighteenth century, when witch trials had already become scarce, more and more non-witch unruly dead came to be executed. In Berger's view, this shift happened because of crude financial reasons: local authorities realized that trying and convicting a dead person is much easier, as there is much less interrogation, confession involved, and hence is much cheaper.

In 1987 Gábor Klaniczay expounded a related but different theory. His first core argument concerned publicity, and stated that the public interest in vampires of Serbia in the 1730's and the Moravian returning dead of 1755 had an immense impact on European imagination, eclipsing the figure of the witch that used to fascinate people before. Klaniczay's second argument concerned legislation and pointed out that it was the 1755 revenant scandal of Frei Hermersdorf that in the end prompted the imperial court to issue legislation ending the witch persecutions in the Habsburg Monarchy. Karen Lambrecht elaborated chiefly on Berger's argument about the shift in persecution patterns in Moravia and Silesia, claiming that revenants emerged for the community and the local authorities as alternative scapegoats to witches. She repeated Berger's claim that the figure of the eighteenth-century non-witch revenant grew out of the image of the dead witch through a gradual peeling off of elements of witchcraft beginning in the early seventeenth century. In support, based on published sources, Lambrecht collected roughly 30 cases of revenant executions that had happened in Moravia-Silesia between 1337 and 1717. She noted that the frequency of corpse executions

²¹⁶ Karl Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren', *Zeitschrift des Vereines für die Geschichte Mährens und Schlesiens* 8, no. 1-2. (1904): 203.; Gábor Klaniczay, 'Decline of Witches and Rise of Vampires in 18th-Century Habsburg Monarchy', *Ethnologia Europaea* 17 (1987): 165–80; See its reprinted version in: Klaniczay, 'The Decline of Witches and the Rise of Vampires under the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy'; Lambrecht, 'Wiedergänger und Vampire in Ostmitteleuropa – Posthume Verbrennung statt Hexenverfolgung?'; Jan Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', in *Z dob prvních letů na Košťeti*, ed. Josef Bezděčka, Rudolf Zuber, and Jan Bombera (Moravský Beroun, 2000), 38-55.

was slim until the 1650s, when it suddenly boomed: half of all the cases she found happened between 1650 and 1717.

Many of the elements of these succession-theories hold up. It is no question for example that witchcraft persecutions started ebbing towards the late eighteenth century, and it is also certain that publicity-wise vampirism got more attention in the eighteenth century than witchcraft, while the reverse is true of the seventeenth century. That the 1755 Frei Hermersdorf scandal inspired anti-witchcraft legislation is also without a doubt, though following Ágnes Várkonyi's insight, one needs to add the important role of a 1758 Croatian witchcraft case that also had formative effect on subsequent imperial legislation towards the decriminalization of magic.²¹⁷ As it will be shown in Chapters II and III below, the present state of research also seems to suggest that mass executions of the dead indeed first happened in the early eighteenth century.

The claim locating the roots of revenant executions in the persecution of dead witches however is problematic, and evidence suggests a parallel development of witchcraft and revenantism as opposed to a consecutive one. First, while published cases are indeed useful, without a thoroughgoing archival research we cannot possibly gauge the real number of revenant cases. Such archival research has not yet been done, and it is realistic to suppose that regional and ecclesiastical archives still hold many unknown sources on revenant executions. Second, even among the published sources, one can find ones that pre-date the 1650s and are not included in Lambrecht's list: in 1610 in Weigelsdorf, or in 1635 in Sternberg, Moravia (today Šternberk),²¹⁸ and Berger lists half a dozen more instances dating before 1620 in which local communities were pressing for the execution of a revenant, local authorities conducted an investigation, but in the end acquitted the corpse.²¹⁹ Further, as it will be discussed in Chapter III, during the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries many of the revenant cases did not show any indications whatsoever of witchcraft, but seem to be much more related to the tradition of revenants with unfulfilled fates, reaching back to pre-early modern

²¹⁷ Várkonyi, 'Connections between the Cessation of Witch Trials and the Transformation of the Social Structure Related to Medicine'.

²¹⁸ Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyr glauben in Nordmähren', 205.; Eduard Hawelka, 'Die Gerichtsbarkeit der Stadt Sternberg (1381-1754) Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Verhältnisses zum Olmützer Oberhofe und zur Prager Appellationskammer', *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereines für die Geschichte Mährens und Schlesiens* 3 (1899): 281-282.

²¹⁹ Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyr glauben in Nordmähren', 205-206.

times. As Winfried Irgang has suggested, revenant executions probably had a long, well-established and constant history initially completely separate from witchcraft, and the two traditions evolved separately until in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries during the great witch hunts they intertwined with each other (in some cases at least), and then distanced again by the eighteenth.²²⁰ Excising witches from the community of the living and excising the unruly dead from the community of the dead in this sense should be seen as parallel phenomena.

Deadly souls, spirits and demons

Apart from the demonically possessed corpses and dead witches, European culture provided a third framework for the unruly dead: ghostly phenomena.²²¹ The typical attacks involved objects moving by themselves, strange voices, noises and smells, fearsome apparitions and often escalated to physical aggression, like throwing things around and beating people up. The activity was often confined to a given space or a given time. There were several possible explanations to these phenomena, ranging from demonic activity through souls returning from Purgatory to spirit-based hauntings. Even though these events often were not necessarily connected to a physical corpse, the theological and natural philosophical explanations about how they brought about the effects ascribed to them greatly influenced the eighteenth-century discussions of vampirism.

²²⁰ Winfried Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg', in *Von Akkon bis Wien: Studien zur Deutschordensgeschichte vom 13. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert - Festschrift zum 90. Geburtstag von Althochmeister P. Dr. Marian Tumler O.T. am 21. Oktober 1977*, ed. Udo Arnold (Marburg: Elwert, 1978), 269-270.

²²¹ See among others: Jean Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Claire Gantet and Fabrice d'Almeida, eds., *Gespenster Und Politik: 16. bis 21. Jahrhundert* (München: Fink, 2007); Owen Davies, *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Yvonne Wübben, *Gespenster und Gelehrte: Die ästhetische Lehrprose G.F. Meiers (1718-1777)* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2007); Bruce, *The Penguin Book of the Undead: Fifteen Hundred Years of Supernatural Encounters*.

Suffering souls and spitting demons

There were substantial denominational differences in dealing with apparitions of the dead. Catholic tradition is rife with narratives of sinners' souls that came back to the physical world, at first scaring people, then relating their fates and admonishing people to repent their sins. A very typical story is the one that happened in 1641, in Pozsony (today Bratislava) for example. The white-robed soul of János Klement, a former was pestering maids of the house, scaring people with noises and flashes of light, as well as leaving burning marks of his hand on various objects. These marks were circulated as hard evidence (*corpus delicti*) in journals, prints and pamphlets and spoke to a rising seventeenth-century need for hard



13 Charred hand-mark left by the soul of János Klement, judge of Pozsony (1641)

evidence in building credibility for knowledge claims. In the end, he disclosed that he needed to repent for his sins, as he had committed murder. He told people to use the money he gained from the murder to build a pieta statue on the town square, this way alleviating his sufferings in Purgatory. Once this was done, the hauntings ceased.²²²

Another example, from France describes a rather unusual conception of the relations between the soul (the immortal, immaterial God-given entity) and the spirit (the airy but material third part). A Catholic barrister at the High Court of Paris called Marigner analysed news about Polish returning dead who cause epidemics and suck blood from the living in 1694 based on this idea. He proposed that just like kobolds, geniis and familiar spirits, vampires also could be souls condemned to limbo, whose form and activity depends on the punishment they were sentenced to in Purgatory. He argued that the returning dead were in fact souls unable to break away from the body, because during their lifetime, they carried such a sinful and base

²²² Péter Tóth G., 'Tárgyak, férgék, démonok. Társadalmi válságtünetek és démonológiai diagnózisok a kora újkori Magyarországon', *Korall* 35 (2009): 5-42.; András Koltai, 'Szellemek és piaristák: Harmadik típusú találkozások a 17. század végén', in *Hitre - tudásra: A piaristák és a magyar művelődés*, ed. András Koltai, vol. 1. (Budapesti Történeti Múzeum, 2017), 387-404.

life that their third part, the Paracelsian astral spirit turned more corporeal than it usually is and attaching itself to the soul, tied it to the body.²²³

Protestants denied the existence of Purgatory, and therefore rejected the possibility of a 'revenant soul'. They mostly ascribed ghostly phenomena to the devil, an explanation which was available to Catholics as well. Martin Luther, in his *Table Talks* described how a village minister in Thurgau was night by night plagued by an invisible 'Poltergeist', which was breaking pots, throwing them at the minister meanwhile audibly laughing. Luther understood the phenomenon as the devil's attempts at tempting the righteous.²²⁴ During the sixteenth century this theological change resulted in several hybrid narratives created in a Protestant environment where it is unclear whether the entity causing the problems is the devil, a human soul or something else. Such a hybrid narrative is for instance the eyewitness account of the strange happenings in the village of Ördöngösfüzes (today Fizeşu Gherlii), a Calvinist village in Transylvania. In the 1587 case an invisible entity was throwing objects in the house of a Protestant minister, spitting people in the face and beating them up; the narrative refers to the creature as 'satan'. However, as the Calvinist ministers started interrogating the entity, it confessed that he was the soul of a sinful man, who lived in a nearby village, and in the end, another twist came: as the dialogue below suggests, the soul told the ministers that actually the person was not dead yet:

– I was thrown in between sharp blades and am burning in fire day and night because I have sinned.

– Where do you live?

– In Alör [a nearby village, today Urişor].

– Are you alive?

– I am.

– Where is your body?

– God only knows.

[The ministers then tried to compel him to appear in a bodily form.]

– God will not allow me to appear in body. If only he did!

²²³ Later, in 1725, the possibility that vampires were akin to kobolds was also raised (and rejected) by one of the discussants of the vampire debate, theologian and history writer Michael Ranfft. Vermeir, 'Vampires as Creatures of the Imagination: Theories of Body, Soul and Imagination in Early Modern Vampire Tracts (1659–1755)', 353, 359.

²²⁴ Martin Luther, *Colloquia oder Tischreden Doctor. Martini Lutheri: So Er in Vielen Jaren, Die Zeit Seines Lebens, Gegen Gelehrten Leuthen, Auch Frembden Gesten Und Seinen Tischgesellen Geführet...* (Frankfurt am Main: Johann Feyerabend, 1593), 205.

– *Go away, satan, and don't come back!*'

The narrative explained that the person was agonizing on his deathbed at that very moment, but gave no explicit explanation as to how exactly a dying person's soul/spirit could leave the body and appear in a nearby village.²²⁵ These theologically unclear ideas, at least at the official level, were cleared up by the seventeenth century.

Spirit attacks and dangerous imaginations

It is safe to assume that the demonic explanation of ghostly phenomena in many cases was deficient, as victims often experienced them as very closely related to a recently died friend or relative of theirs, not to an impersonal demonic being. The importance of emotional ties between the living and the dead meant a constancy across theological breaks, to which the churches had to come up with solutions.²²⁶ A both theologically and experientially satisfying answer to this need was assigning the ghostly phenomena to the physical body itself, specifically to its vaporous exhalations, the spirits. This framework was available to all denominations, but was especially attractive for Protestants, who could resort to it as an alternative to the also personal, but theologically unavailable returning of souls. In addition, towards the end of the seventeenth century, as it was becoming more and more a sign of bad taste to think with witches and overly corporeal demons, the spirit-based explanations offered an attractive, natural alternative.

The spirit-based frameworks show an extreme diversity and it is useful to structure them based on the vehicle and channel of harm. What is common in all these theories is that the vehicle is some form of airy substance consisting of particles that emanates from the corpse. Various authors call them vapours (*Ausdünstungen*), effluvia, spirit (*Geist*) or astral spirit. That such substances indeed emerge from corpses no one denied in the era, but there were heated debates about their characteristics and powers. Thanks to its longer lifespan than the body, the spirit could continue its possibly harmful functioning even after the departure of the soul, but there was a problem: the spirit was just matter (even if a very subtle one), not a demon

²²⁵ Lajos Dézsi, 'Ördögi kísértet- és lélekjárás 1587-ben', *Ethnographia* 39, no. 1 (1928): 213–20; See the analysis of the story within a broader discussion of demonic afflictions by: Tóth G., 'Tárgyak, férgek, démonok', 14.

²²⁶ Millar, 'Ghosts in Post-Reformation England'; See a similar argument about the Swiss Reformation in: Gordon, 'Malevolent Ghosts and Ministering Angels: Apparitions and Pastoral Care in the Swiss Reformation'.

or a soul, and so it had to be explained how could the apparitions intentionally seek out and target people at a distance. The vehicle needed a channel.

The problem of *action at a distance* had a long history and stemmed probably from mundane observations such as the Moon's effect on the tide, the magnet's attraction of iron or the flames of two candles attracting each other when put close enough. The question was, how do the two entities affect each other if there was no visible contact between them. People would also eagerly discuss such phenomena as the efficacy of cruentation (that is the idea that a murder victim's wound starts bleeding at the presence of the murderer),²²⁷ the weapon salve (a healing technique according to which medications applied to the weapon which causes the wound would take effect on the wound itself),²²⁸ electricity, mesmerism,²²⁹ the premonition of animals and the like.

As Silvia Parigi pointed out, in the action at a distance debate, we can place Renaissance natural magicians, Paracelsians and Neo-platonists at one extreme, such as Jean Baptiste van Helmont (1579 – 1644), Robert Fludd (1574 – 1637), and Henry More (1614–1687), according to whom in certain cases no contact was needed at all. Everything in the world was inherently connected by occult (in the sense of hidden from the senses) and manifest (heat, wetness, colour etc.) qualities and these matching or opposing qualities in two entities might attract (sympathy) or repel (antipathy) each other.²³⁰ This way, the Moon would attract the waters because they shared an inner quality, an inner nature. The other extreme was occupied by Cartesians, who maintained that no effect was possible in the physical world without contacts between a large number of particles. They supposed that the voids between objects (be they books or planets) were densely filled with particles, that could transmit movement through contact and hence action. Finally, there was a third framework, which supposed a constant sphere of vapours or spirits surrounding all entities in the world. Within the boundaries of these spheres, affects could take place. In this sense, proponents of this idea were in between

²²⁷ Robert P. Brittain, 'Cruentation in Legal Medicine and in Literature', *Medical History* 9, no. 1 (January 1965): 82–88.

²²⁸ Wolf-Dieter Müller-Jahncke, 'Magische Medizin bei Paracelsus und den Paracelsisten: Die Waffensalbe', in *Resultate und Desiderate der Paracelsus-Forschung*, ed. Peter Dilg and Hartmut Rudolph, *Sudhoffs Archiv - Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftsgeschichte - Beihefte* 31 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1993), 43–56.

²²⁹ Simon Schaffer, 'The Astrological Roots of Mesmerism', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 41, no. 2 (2010): 158–68.

²³⁰ Silvia Parigi, 'Effluvia, Action at a Distance, and the Challenge of the Third Causal Model', *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 29, no. 4 (2015): 351–68.

Cartesians and the sympathy-based people by supposing a particle-based action at a limited distance. Parigi names Girolamo Fracastoro (c.1476/8 – 1553), Daniel Sennert (1572 – 1637) and Robert Boyle (1627 – 1691) as representatives.

This threefold distinction is nevertheless artificial, as many scholars are difficult to place. Giambattista della Porta (1535 – 1615) for instance devoted long sections of his *Natural Magick* to sympathies and occult qualities, but explained the evil eye in a very much vapour-based way: a melancholy tempered person may manage to imprint certain harmful intentions and directions on the melancholy, black-bile-filled vapours (spirits) generated naturally by his/her body.²³¹ These spirits might then leave the body through the eyes and attaching themselves to the target of hatred could make them sick. Not only hatred and envy, but other strong emotions and intentions could also be explained through this mechanism, such as lovesickness, in which case it was the sanguine spirits produced by the person in love that would be exuded through the eyes and make the desired person lovesick.

Coming back to the harmful dead, Cartesians could readily accept that vapours seep through the soil of the grave and manifest the corpses' outer form basically levitating above the grave, and that this vapour can work as a miasma: if someone comes there and inhales it, will get sick. However, such a vapour would only have a form, but no will, intention or even direction of movement. Since ghostly experiences typically involved the apparition seeking out the victim, not the other way around, this explanation was problematic. Sympathies as channels could work, but they still needed some kind of affinity, a basis for attraction between the vapour and the target. As it will be shown below, it was sometimes found in blood relations, emotions or other forms of close connection. Finally, there were several astral spirit-theorists, who supported a kind of limited sphere of action for the vapours and most often posited imagination as the channel that gave the vaporous spirits an intention.

The powers of the imagination constituted a topic of especially heated discussions at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²³² Over the course of the early eighteenth century one can trace a gradual disarmament of the imagination, as in treatises up to the early eighteenth century, imagination was often accepted to affect others even at a distance, but

²³¹ Johann Baptista della Porta, *Natural Magick* (London: Thomas Young & Samuel Speed, 1658), 229-232.

²³² Yasmin Annabel Haskell, ed., *Diseases of the Imagination and Imaginary Disease in the Early Modern Period* (Turnout: Brepols Publishers, 2011).

by the 1730s imagination was gradually limited to have power only over one's own body, and by the 1750s it mostly played the role of projecting untrue images while the real causes of death were rather sought for in physical entities.²³³ That the imagination had powers over the body was widely accepted since antiquity, the usually circulating examples being the pregnant woman's ability to impress an image on the growing foetus: being scared for example of a wolf while pregnant could result in her imagination imprinting (as on a malleable, soft material) the image on the foetus, who could then be born hairy. Combined however with the vaporous exhalations of the body, the dying person's imagination could serve as a channel imprinting intentions on the malleable, soft vapours of the spirit, which could then perform these intentions (just as during lifetime it got used to performing the tasks given to it by the soul) within a limited distance and even after death, since it lived longer than the body.

Many spirit-based authors explained ghostly phenomena this way, such as German Lutheran theologian Jakob Böhme (1575 – 1624), the witchcraft-sceptic Christian Thomasius, who preferred naturalistic explanations to seeing the devil everywhere, as well as his student in Halle, natural philosopher Johannes Andreas Rüdiger (1673 –1731).²³⁴ In England the spirit-based naturalist explanations were the subject of the debate between Puritan clergyman Joseph Glanvill (1636 – 1680), and Anglican schoolmaster and polemicist John Webster (1611–1682).²³⁵ Glanvill developed a mixed framework, in which witches and demons would use spirits as vehicles. His opponent, Webster on the other hand was sceptical of witchcraft, but subscribed to the powers of the astral spirit and maintained for example that a murder victim's last intense horror can be imprinted by his imagination on the spirit, which then can appear in a visible form to spectators, often helping in the identification of the murderer.²³⁶ Thomasius followed the English debate and sided with Webster, agreeing with him so much that he even translated and published Webster's treatise in German in 1719.²³⁷ The astral

²³³ Vermeir, 'Vampires as Creatures of the Imagination: Theories of Body, Soul and Imagination in Early Modern Vampire Tracts (1659–1755)'.

²³⁴ Wübben, *Gesperster und Gelehrte: Die ästhetische Lehrprose G.F. Meiers (1718-1777)*, 21-29.

²³⁵ Thomas Harmon Jobe, 'The Devil in Restoration Science: The Glanvill-Webster Witchcraft Debate', *Isis* 72, no. 3 (1981): 342–56; Julie A. Davies, 'Poisonous Vapours: Joseph Glanvill's Science of Witchcraft', *Intellectual History Review* 22, no. 2 (2012): 163–79; Jo Bath and John Newton, "'Sensible Proof of Spirits": Ghost Belief during the Later Seventeenth Century', *Folklore* 117, no. 1 (2006): 1-14.

²³⁶ Davies, *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts*, 110.

²³⁷ John Webster, *Untersuchung der Vermeinten und sogenannten Hexereyen*, trans. Christian Thomasius (Halle, 1719).

spirit-based framework remained fashionable especially among Pietists in the Holy Roman Empire well into the eighteenth century (see Chapter V).

Deadly mumia

There was a special framework, closely related to third-part-based explanations, which was however used especially by Paracelsian sympathy-based authors: *mumial magnetism* (*magnetismus mumialis*).

Throughout the early modern era, in the iatrochemical tradition of medicine ‘mummy’ (or ‘*mumia*’) not only meant the powder ground from (real or forged) Egyptian mummies used for medical purposes. It also meant a powerful concoction of vital spirits prepared from fresh human body parts, such as skull bones or blood. There were several recipes aimed at different purposes, the mummy prepared from executed young, healthy men’s blood for example had the reputation of strong healing powers. As pointed out above, the idea that blood harboured the vital spirits or powers of the human body was mainstream in early modern medicine, but the capturing of this vitality required alchemical skills. Several authors posited further, that

the *mumia* can be used to achieve effects across distances and used the technical term *mumial magnetism* to denote the phenomenon. In this context, magnetism simply signified a sympathy-based attractive power acting at a distance. Mumial magnetism then, was attraction based on the vital spirits of the human body.²³⁸ While the term ‘magnetism’ itself was rising in popularity, talking about ‘sympathies’ and the ‘astral spirit’ were slowly becoming



14 Apothecary vessel containing mummy powder, Hamburg Museum

²³⁸ Richard Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires - The History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians* (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 38–66; 188–194.

outdated, even if the process they described was in essence the very same, spirit/vapor-based explanation of extra-bodily harm.

The literature on mumial magnetism often recited the same celebrated empirical examples to support its efficacy, and many of them were connected to the threshold between life and death. Some of the examples served to prove that a continued connection exists between a person and their blood, even if the latter is removed from the body. This connection could be used for healing purposes, such as in the case of the weapon salve. This therapeutic method involved medication applied to the bloody weapon that had caused a wound earlier, and the sustained bond between the blood and the person, the cure would take effect on the wound itself, even at a distance.²³⁹ Another kind of use for this occult connection was health indication: one of the classics of the seventeenth-century literature on the wonders of the dead, Heinrich Kornmann's 1610 *On the miracles of the dead* explains for instance that if one distils a spirit from a person's blood combined with wine, this spirit can be lit and will burn until the said person is alive, but will suddenly get extinguished as soon as he dies.²⁴⁰

One of the most often cited sources of mumial medicine was Jan Baptist van Helmont (1580-1644), a major figure of iatrochemistry from the Spanish Low Countries, who maintained that there remained a connection between the mumial ferment and the person whose mumia it was. In his posthumously published work on the 'magnetic cure of wounds', van Helmont described several experiments and examples, which became often referred to in later works on actions at a distance. A famous one concerned a prosthetic nose created from a donor's skin, which was sewn on a man's face in order to replace his own, which had been lost in a fight (probably a duel):

'This one experiment, of all others, cannot but be free from all suspect of imposture, and illusion of the Devil. A certain inhabitant of Brussels, in a combat had his nose mowed off, addressed himself to Tagliacozzus, a famous surgeon, living at Bononia [Bologna], that he might procure a new one; and when he feared the incision of his own arm, he hired a Porter to admit it, out of whose arm, having first given the reward agreed upon, at length he dig'd [grafted] a new nose. About thirteen months after his return to his own country, on a sudden the ingrafted nose grew cold, putrefied, and within few days, dropped off. To those of his friends, that

²³⁹ Müller-Jahncke, 'Magische Medizin Bei Paracelsus Und Den Paracelsisten: Die Waffensalbe'.

²⁴⁰ Kornmann, *De miraculis mortuorum*, pt. 5. chapter 23.

were curious in the exploration of the cause of this unexpected misfortune, it was discovered, that the Porter expired, near about the same punctilio of time, wherein the nose grew frigid and cadaverous. There are at Brussels yet surviving, some of good repute, that were eyewitnesses of these occurrences. Is not this magnetism of manifest affinity with mummy, whereby the nose, enjoying, by title and right of inoculation, a community of life, sense and vegetation, for so many months, on a sudden mortified on the other side of the Alpes? I pray, what is there in this of Superstition? What of attent and exalted Imagination?’²⁴¹

Importantly, mumial spirits of blood relatives were also linked by attraction, and they could transmit harmful effects. In a further story by van Helmont, a certain noble woman’s gout would violently start to worsen each time she sat in a certain chair of the house. The said chair used to belong to her brother, who had been dead for many years, and who incidentally had also been severely tortured by the gout. However, in case any third person having the gout sat into the chair, they would *not* have these fits at all:

‘the mummy of her [the noble woman’s] dead brother deservedly rendered the chair suspected of contagion; which penetrating through all her clothes, did to the sister only, and not to any other podagric [gout-afflicted] person, excite those frequent refluxes and paroxysms, which otherwise had slept, and not invaded her. The cause truly was the magnetism of the brother’s mummy, infected with a podagric miasma or tincture, effluxed from him, and impressed upon the chair, determinately operating on the uterine mummy of the sister; and that a long tract of time after his funeral. I beseech you, what can you discover in this of any implicit compact, with our grand adversary Satan?’²⁴²

In van Helmont’s view, the mumia could get infused with poisons and dangerous miasmas, which could stay active even years after the person’s death. As it will be shown in the following chapters, this idea was very much around when the vampire discussions started in the early eighteenth century.

²⁴¹ Jean Baptiste van Helmont, *A Ternary of Paradoxes. The Magnetick Cure of Wounds. Nativity of Tartar in Wine. Image of God in Man.*, trans. Walter Charleton (London: James Flesher, 1650), 13-14. [Italics mine - Á.M.].

²⁴² Helmont, 17. [Italics mine - Á.M.].

Experiments and evidencing

The mumial magnetism-debate also attested to the growing tension between growing expectations of seventeenth-century natural philosophy to provide reliable experimental and experiential proof of phenomena on the one hand, and the difficulty of doing experiments on preternatural phenomena in the other. Francis Bacon in his 1605 *Advancement of Learning* had outlined a knowledge production project in which observation and experiment would tower over the authority of respected past authors and texts. In Book II, Chapter 2, he explained that this agenda also involved writing a new history of the preternatural ('History of Nature in its erring and varying') as well as a history of the arts ('History of Nature altered or wrought'), that is, nature artificially forced to do things through experiments. Bacon thought of these two histories as having been insufficiently studied as opposed to the third kind of natural history, that of nature in its common, regular course. The project Bacon proposed took superstition seriously in the sense that he expected real results from carrying out naturalist experiments on phenomena believed to be occult and demonic:

*'Neither am I of opinion, in this history of marvels, that superstitious narrations of sorceries, witchcrafts, dreams, divinations, and the like, where there is an assurance and clear evidence of the fact, be altogether excluded. For it is not yet known in what cases and how far effects attributed to superstition do participate of natural causes; and, therefore, howsoever the practice of such things is to be condemned, yet from the speculation and consideration of them light may be taken, not only for the discerning of the offences, but for the further disclosing of Nature.'*²⁴³

At the same time, Steven Shapin and Simon Schaeffer have shown that the repetition of non-first-hand experiences and empirical tests attested to by certain anonymous but socially high-standing witnesses was an enduring practice in early modern science even among authors committed to the rising reliance on empirical testing from the late sixteenth century onwards.²⁴⁴ This treatment of evidence was especially true when it came to preternatural phenomena, which in spite of Bacon's enthusiasm, were very difficult if not impossible to replicate as experiments. Martha R. Baldwin for example noted such standards of evidence in

²⁴³ Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, ed. Joseph Devey, A Library of Universal Literature in Four Parts, 1. (New York: P.F. Collier and Son, 1901), 94-98.

²⁴⁴ Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*.

the literature on seventeenth-century plague-amulets, which were thought to work based on attractive powers between the amulet and plague miasmas.²⁴⁵ The amulets this way would absorb the harmful miasmas, thereby saving the person from inhaling them.

Those writing on mumial magnetism were usually also not citing their own experimental results, but examples and experiences of other, trustworthy people, that is, gentlemen and aristocrats. Van Helmont for instance had not witnessed the cases he described, and so the credibility of the stories rested on the trustworthiness either of those who suffered the event or of those reporting it. In the case of the nose, these trustworthy people were the famed Bolognese surgeon Gaspare Tagliacozzi (1545 – 1599); certain inhabitants of Brussels ‘of good repute’, who were eyewitnesses of the artificial nose putrefying; and certain curious friends of the victim, who somehow found out that the original owner of the skin died in Bologna exactly at the same time as the nose decayed in Brussels. In the case of the contagious chair, all we know is that the events happened in a noble environment.

Not everyone trusted the evidence in support of mumial magnetism, but importantly, they themselves also relied on other trustworthy, but anonymous people’s counterevidence, not on their own experience. For example, physician and Leopoldina-member Friedrich Christian Garmann, in his *On the miracles of the dead in three books* of 1670 challenged van Helmont and Kormann as well. He questioned the credibility of their examples by stating that apothecaries’ daily experience disproves mumial magnetism: the mumial ferment of a person’s blood kept in a glass flask will not change colour or texture according to the health of the person. He also added that it was difficult to imagine that magnetic actions could take place across such distances as involved in the narratives, for everyone knows that even bad weather impedes dogs’ wonderful senses of smell and that even the loadstone’s magnetism is obstructed by garlic smeared on its surface.²⁴⁶

The reference to magnets losing their attractive powers because of garlic was an enduring idea stemming probably from a misreading of Plutarch’s and Pliny’s discussion of the

²⁴⁵ Martha R. Baldwin, ‘Toads and Plague: Amulet Therapy in Seventeenth-Century Medicine’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 67, no. 2 (1993): 227–47.

²⁴⁶ Garmann, *De miraculis mortuorum libri tres*; See its recent critical edition in: Benetello and Herrmann, *Christian Friedrich Garmann: De miraculis mortuorum - Über die wunder [Dinge] der Toten.*, 85–87.

characteristics of the magnet.²⁴⁷ The effect survived well into the early eighteenth century: Zedler's *Universallexikon* of the early eighteenth century still noted that this effect needs to be subjected to experimental testing, in spite of the fact that reputable empiricist authors, such as Girolamo Cardano and Francis Bacon maintained that no matter how hard they tried, the magnet-blocking effects of garlic could not be reproduced. Sanders argued that the tenacity of the garlic effect can partly be explained by the fact that it made a lot of sense in the sympathy-antipathy-based early modern medical-natural philosophical worldview. More often than not, the image was not the focus of scientific research *per se* but was evoked only as a well-established analogy of other attraction-related phenomena, be they planetary or emotional attractions. Accordingly, it was most often quoted in order to evoke antipathies, that certain substances have opposing qualities, while others have attracting, sympathetic ones. Peculiarly, in Garmann's argumentation, the cause of the magnet's loss of powers is due to the particles of garlic forming an obstacle, a kind of wall between the attracted substances.

Summary

We hardly have access to what illiterate early moderners experienced and thought about the harmful dead, but might suppose a highly personalized, community-based relationship between the living and the dead, in which debts had to be paid to avoid trouble. With time, several learned ideas got layered on this relationship as institutions struggled to create legitimate frameworks within which the unruly dead could be dealt with. The Middle Ages forged (possibly strengthened) links between the necessity to excise grave sinners from the community of the dead on the one hand and the unusually incorrupt corpse as a possible vessel for evil machinations on the other. The late fifteenth century's construction of witchcraft as heresy and the emerging witch craze placed a further layer on the harmful dead, in which it was probably often unclear, whose power was the harm exactly: the witch's, the devil's or God's. Towards the decline of the witch prosecutions, the place of possessing demons and witches was increasingly challenged by less corporeal natural explanations of a

²⁴⁷ Christoph Sander, 'Magnets and Garlic: An Enduring Antipathy in Early-Modern Science', *Intellectual History Review*, 18 September 2019, 1–38.

spirit-based harm that could reach the victims through various channels of action at a distance.

The treatment of the problem caused by the unruly dead differed based on the framework: the possessed dead had to be exorcised, but ultimately there were arguments for a physical annihilation as well. By contrast, the execution of dead witches had full legitimacy, even if there was absolutely no posthumous harm done. In practice it was probably often somewhat unclear, how exactly the execution affected the cause of the harm. For Catholics, there were souls from Purgatory to think with, in whose case amendments of past wrongs had to be performed, and the corpse was irrelevant. Regardless of denominations, the spirit-based natural explanation was available, and in fact made a strong case for the removal of the body, to which the spirit was linked to.

Concluding remarks

The eighteenth-century figure of the vampire seamlessly unified in itself the deadly harmful activity, the abnormality of a corpse resisting death and the necessity of annihilating its body. The present chapter sought to delineate that these elements in fact had their own separate traditions in medieval and early modern learned thinking, and they did not necessarily intersect. There were various frameworks devised to understand experiences related to the unruly dead, and in some of them the lack of decay was absent: the miasma-exuding plague cadavers were decaying in an orderly fashion, while the fiery souls returning from Purgatory had no important relationship with their body. Also, just because a cadaver was incorrupt, it did not necessarily draw an accusation and execution: it was known that normal natural, preternatural and divine causes might also make a body incorrupt. At the same time, Christian morality provided a link between the separate traditions. The decaying body carried the important moral message of the transience of physical existence, and in this sense the incorrupt body was unruly. Either saintly or evil, but certainly abnormal. In addition, the medieval idea that the devil can only possess functioning, incorrupt, and not decaying or desiccated corpses reinforced the negative connotations.

In practice, the normality of a given corpse was always subject to negotiations, but there were some inherently uncertain areas already at the theoretical level, within the natural philosophical and theological explanatory frameworks provided by the learned world. Despite centuries of discussions on diagnosing death, the only sure sign that someone was entirely dead was putrefaction; but what exactly were the signs of putrefaction? The process of decomposition was thought of as the highly individual result of an interplay between the specific characteristics of the given body and those of its environment. Were not the signs of putrefaction also supposed to differ then from case to case? As it has been shown, these questions received no detailed treatment in relevant literature but were crucial for those medical experts, who had to pronounce a judgement on a given corpse. There were shaky areas from a theological point of view as well: can we execute a possessed corpse? Can dead witches cause a plague, or is it divine?

During the seventeenth century, empirical evidence, if possible even experimenting was increasingly becoming an expected element in various fields of the learned world in order to

achieve credibility: in natural philosophy, in canonization trials as well as documenting visits of the souls from Purgatory, or cases of witchcraft and apparitions. In addition, medicine was increasingly building up its status as an expert of preternatural phenomena. These shifts in knowledge production caused tensions in the field of research on corpse decay and on the activity of the harmful dead: complying to the empiricist expectations posed serious practical problems as well as challenges to moral values and sensibilities.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, basic features, which had formed integral parts of earlier revenant attacks were gradually being questioned. The corporeality of spiritual entities, and their ability to act on the physical world was slowly getting limited, and with it, the likelihood of demonically possessed corpses. At the same time, previously established phenomena of a sympathy-based action at a distance was drawn under suspicion, while others were gaining wider support, such as the spirit-based explanations of ghostly phenomena, which was made more attractive as it was theologically neutral, as well as less corporeal than possessed corpses for instance.

In 1732, the vampire autopsy report spoke to most of these seventeenth-century changes and tensions while being contradictory in itself: the vampire-killing ritual's strong carnality was combined with an almost invisible way of causing harm. The timing was ideal in the sense that these features were not entirely discredited and discarded so that it still was possible to maintain them for some. The vampire also had novel features, such as bloodsucking and the idea of the contagious nature of the condition. As it will be shown in the following chapters, this element was a significant digression from traditional early modern frameworks for the harmful dead, even those that could spread plague epidemics. The thought that even innocent people's corpses can be transformed into evil revenants was highly unsettling and resulted in corpse executions of a much larger scale than ever before.

II. Revenants of the southern Habsburg borderland (1718-1732)



15 The discovery of a revenant overseen by an Orthodox priest
(Engraving by Conrad Ermisch /1855 – 1888/)

‘... it rose; a subtle, sickish, almost luminous vapour which as it hung trembling in the dampness seemed to develop vague and shocking suggestions of form, gradually trailing off into nebulous decay’

H.P. Lovecraft: *The shunned house* (1924)

In January 1732, a German aristocrat presented a curious document to the Prussian Academy of Sciences in Berlin: a forensic autopsy report on vampires. This move was a crucial step in planting this hitherto unknown Rascian folkloric creature into the European imagination. The aristocrat was Charles Alexander, prince of Württemberg (1684-1737), governor of Habsburg Serbia, a province on the southern border of the Habsburg Monarchy. This chapter is grounded on the premise that the particular social-cultural and political relations in force at a given territory leave an imprint on the knowledge produced in that territory. The province of Habsburg Serbia, and in general the southern borderland had several distinctive features that set it apart from other regions of the empire, and that turned out instrumental in the way the figure of the vampire was constructed. The chapter is aimed at understanding how this crucial moment in the history of European culture came to pass and develops three main points.

First, that prince Prince Charles Alexander's interest in vampires started much earlier than 1732. In his capacity as president of the provincial administration of Habsburg Serbia, he authorized several investigations and received reports about various revenant cases in the province before those relating to the infamous case of the vampires of Medvedia in 1732. In addition, as owner of the Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment, he was notified about revenant cases met by his regiment, even when the said regiment was stationed outside Serbia. Finally, his interest in strange death-related phenomena was known by a local network of notable personalities, such as Belgrade military physician Haack, who could provide him with reports about such events even if they happened outside Serbia.

Second, the province of Serbia was a habitat of multiple revenant experiences, and the vampire, the bloodsucking corpse whose condition is contagious, as it became formulated in the European imagination, was only one of this wide palette and was itself heavily shaped by the political-administrative circumstances of the southern Habsburg borderland. The reports about revenants in the province bear marks typical of colonial contact zones, such as cultural and political conflicts between the invading civilian and military administration and local communities. There are also marks specific to the Habsburg borderland, resulting mostly from the provincial administration's heightened sensitivity to population movements and epidemics.

Third, the document that Prince Charles Alexander presented in Berlin was not only a forensic autopsy report but incidentally also the first comparative dissection report on corpse decay

ever made. It was a remarkable piece of writing that ventured into the uncharted area of human bodily putrefaction, as learned medicine and natural philosophy began empirical research into the question only in the second half of the eighteenth century. The fact that this unique insight into such an obscure matter was provided by military surgeons and not by university professors was the result of the borderland's administrative duty to find out the sources of mass deaths combined with Prince Charles Alexander's curiosity for the returning dead.

II.1. Governance and knowledge production on the borderland

Conquests and patchy borders

The scenery for the emergence of the vampire in Habsburg and subsequently Western European imagination was a war-torn, contested region, which in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries witnessed repeated wars and went through substantial territorial changes.²⁴⁸ The Great Turkish War (1684-1699) led by the Holy League resulted in the reconquest of the large central territory of the Hungarian Kingdom, Transylvania, part of Croatia and part of Slavonia from the Ottoman Empire. The territorial gains (see map below) were established in the 1699 Treaty of Karlóca (today Sremski Karlovci, Serbia).

The court's treatment of the newly acquired territories (the so-called *Neoacquistica*), which used to belong to the Hungarian Kingdom before the Ottoman conquest was met with strong resistance among parts of the Hungarian Kingdom's nobility. The Habsburg court set up a special collegial body consisting of delegates from the Aulic Treasury and the Aulic War Council in Vienna,²⁴⁹ which was entrusted with the task of (re-)organizing property and administrative relations in these areas. In terms of landownership, claimants were required to present written documentation to the commission certifying that they used to own a given piece of land. As this was very often impossible, the commission became a major source of grievances for the nobility of the Hungarian Kingdom.

Another conflict emerged from the Hungarian Kingdom's injured territorial integrity: the court decided to create a special frontier region along the southern border of the newly gained territories which would be governed directly from Vienna and would serve as a barrier towards the Ottoman Empire. In order to achieve this, Slavonia (between the Sava and Drava rivers) and strips of land along the Tisza and Maros rivers were not reincorporated into the

²⁴⁸ On the general relations between the various parts of the Habsburg Monarchy in the early eighteenth century see among others: Charles Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy (1618-1815)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs. Essays on Central Europe, c.1683-1867*.

²⁴⁹ The name of this body changed several times from the initial 'Neoacquistica Commissio'.

Hungarian Kingdom, which they used to belong to, but were assigned under central Viennese control. This centrally governed area will be referred to in the followings as ‘the southern borderland’, the territory of which changed several times due to the Ottoman wars of the early eighteenth century.



16 The growth of the Habsburg dominions. The three territories of special interest are the Banat of Temesvár, Serbia and Little Wallachia (or Banat of Craiova).

The map is somewhat imprecise, for it does not indicate that Northern Bosnia was a separate entity and that the eastern part of Serbia in fact belonged to the Banat of Temesvár (see a more precise rendering on the map below, Figure 17).

Parts of the prevailing southern borderland (roughly its southernmost strips) were turned into militarized zones, which I will refer to as ‘the military frontier’. The exact relations between the military frontier areas and the larger borderland were different in each section of the borderland, nevertheless, the main characteristics of the military frontier were only variations on the original concept of the military frontier (*Militärgrenze*, *Konfin*, *Voina Krajina*), which was created during the sixteenth century wars against the Ottoman Empire. During these wars, the Habsburg government gradually removed two areas from the authority of the Croatian ban, which later came to be referred to as the Varasd and Karlstadt Generalcies. The

generalcies were directly governed by a separate War Council seated first in Graz, and later by the Aulic War Council in Vienna. Their population was granted special privileges, which were formulated in several versions, most notably in the so-called *Statuta Valachorum* of 1630.²⁵⁰ According to this document, the frontiersmen received plots of land as a feudum, which was free of taxes, but in return for which they had to do military service (even in campaigns in foreign lands) from the age of 17 years up, and they had to take care of their own vestiges and weapons. Those communities living right on the border additionally received a regular sum on money for border watch, while those in the inner parts did not, but had the obligation to answer calls into arms anytime and immediately. Frontiersmen were obliged to do battle service for free for 14 days on this side of the border, and for 8 days in external campaigns, after which periods they could receive the regular trooper's payment.

Hungarian resentments towards the Habsburg government's policies in the reconquered lands eventually contributed to the outbreak of the Rákóczi Rebellion and Freedom Fight (1703-1711), a prolonged war between the pro-Habsburg forces and Ferenc Rákóczi's followers. The court's distrust in Hungarian loyalty to the dynasty meant that after the freedom fight's suppression, the southern borderland assumed an additional role, namely serving as a loyal base and military force that would not only keep the Ottomans in check but the Hungarian Kingdom as well. In order to ensure this, throughout the early eighteenth century, the Habsburg court discouraged Hungarians' settlement in the borderland and sought to maintain its direct control over it.

The centrally administered southern borderland area grew substantially after the 1716-1718 Austrian-Ottoman war which ended with the Treaty of Pozsarevác (today Požarevac, Serbia). The Habsburg Monarchy gained two regions which had belonged to the Hungarian Kingdom before the Ottoman occupation: the remaining part of Slavonia and the Banat of Temesvár. In addition, three further territories were conquered that had not been part of the Hungarian Kingdom before: a thin strip of Northern Bosnia, the province of Serbia, and Little Wallachia. None of the territories gained in 1718 were reincorporated into the Hungarian crown, which

²⁵⁰ For recent overviews of the conditions on the military frontier see: Wendy Bracewell, 'The Historiography of the Triplex Continuum: Conflict and Community on a Triple Frontier, 1521-1881', in *Frontiers and the Writing of History, 1500-1850*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Eßer (Hannover-Laatzten: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2006), 211-228.; and: William O'Reilly, 'Border, Buffer and Bulwark. The Historiography of the Military Frontier, 1521-1881', in *Frontiers and the Writing of History, 1500-1850*, ed. Steven G. Ellis and Raingard Eßer (Hannover-Laatzten: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2006), 229-244.

meant that from 1718 on, the centrally governed southern borderland consisted of parts of Croatia, Slavonia, Northern Bosnia, Serbia, the Banat of Temesvár (together with the strips of land on the outer side of its western and northern borders) and Little Wallachia (see map below, Figure 17). This situation soon changed however, as after the 1737-1739 Austrian-Ottoman War (closed by the Treaty of Belgrade), Northern Bosnia, Serbia and Little Wallachia were reconquered by the Ottomans. Out of the gains of the 1718 peace treaty only Slavonia and the Banat of Temesvár remained in the hands of the Habsburgs. These imperial borders remained stable for the century to come.

The administration of the southern borderland was in the hands of two Viennese bodies, the Aulic Treasury and the Aulic War Council, whose interest were not always in harmony with each other. The exact way fields of authority were divided between these two bodies differed from section to section. Slavonia for instance, was divided already in the end of the seventeenth century in to a civilian northern and a militarized southern strip. The southern part was made into a military frontier under complete military administration overseen by the War Council. The northern strip was not part of the military frontier but was also not reincorporated into the Hungarian Kingdom until 1744. Instead, it had a civilian government and was directly governed by the Treasury.²⁵¹

In contrast to Slavonia, the provinces of Serbia and the Banat were not divided into a civilian and a military strip, and at the highest level were overseen jointly by the Treasury and the War Council. In provinces, civilian districts were created with civilian district officials (cameral provisors) at their heads. The provincial government was in the hands of a governor aided by a provincial council. The councils contained both military and civilian delegates (representing the interests of the War Council and the Treasury respectively) but as the governor was always a military commander throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, the provincial administration was dominated by the military's interests.

²⁵¹ Kurt Wessely, *Die österreichische Militärgrenze. Rechtstellung, Aufgaben, Bevölkerung. Sonderausdruck aus Volkstum zwischen Moldau Etsch und Donau*. (Wien, Stuttgart: Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970); Kurt Wessely, 'The Development of the Hungarian Military Frontier until the Middle of the Eighteenth Century', *Austrian History Yearbook* 9 (1973): 55–110.



17: The main sections of the southern borderland, with the military frontier areas marked light blue (1718-1739)

Throughout Serbia, wedged into the civilian districts, militarized settlements were also created, with especial density in the southern Serbian districts, but unlike in Slavonia, they did not form a continuous strip of land. The population of these villages consisted of frontiersmen, who answered not to the civilian provisors, but to the army. In 1728, the roughly 2400 frontiersmen of Serbia occupied more than 90 military settlements in the province. They had to man the ten ramparts and 70 watch posts (so-called *Tschardak* houses) along the Ottoman border, as well as oversee certain major fortified towns and protect main inner routes from bandits (for example between Belgrade and Baragin).²⁵² In the Banat, the districts initially did not contain any military settlements, the Tisza and Maros frontiers were situated on the outer sides of the province to the west and north.²⁵³ With the loss of Serbia in 1738, however, the need emerged to create a proper military frontier along the Banat's southern edge. Accordingly, the Tisza and Maros frontiers were disbanded in 1746 and the frontier population was pressed to relocate to the southern districts. The official royal decree that separated the Banat into the northern civilian and the southern militarized districts (in a similar fashion to

²⁵² Johann Langer, 'Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung 1717-1739', *Mitteilungen des K.K. Kriegs-Archivs. Neue Folge*. III. (1889): 220.

²⁵³ Wessely, 'The Development of the Hungarian Military Frontier until the Middle of the Eighteenth Century', 85-87.

what Slavonia looked like between 1699 and 1744) is dated 1751, but the creation of the frontier was very slow and apparently it was not until 1764 that a proper military frontier was formed.

The constant territorial changes throughout 1699-1739 and the parallel, often competing military and civilian administrative structures resulted in a borderland that was fuzzy and patchy even at the territorial level. This was exacerbated by areas which the War Council managed to maintain as military frontiers even though due to territorial changes they actually lost their practical significance. The Slavonian military frontier along the river Sava for instance had been created in the late seventeenth century but became superfluous when in 1718 the border moved further south. Nevertheless, it was never officially abolished, and the 1739 loss of Serbia and Northern Bosnia made the existence of the Slavonian military frontier fully justified again. In a similar fashion, the Tisza and Maros military frontiers bordering the Banat of Temesvár had been created following the 1699 treaty, however, they lost their significance with the 1718 territorial gains. Frontiersmen (supported by the War Council) nevertheless were insisting so much on keeping their privileges that their dissolution only took place during the 1740s-1750s.

Governance and the people

Since the territories of the southern borderland were not reincorporated into the Hungarian crown, and the old property structure of landownership was thus eliminated, central power had direct access to the population, and could use the area as an experimental field for more efficient, systematized policies that would rationalize governance, facilitate central control and secure economic and demographic blossoming.

The theoretical foundations of the governmental policies applied in the borderland were rooted in the German school of cameralism. Based to some extent on French mercantilist ideas, this school emphasised the role of the economy and more specifically the treasury (hence the name cameral) in developing an efficient state government. The importance of raising the incomes of the royal treasury by ensuring efficient tax collection, exploiting natural resources (most importantly mining) and reaching a positive balance in trade as well as

supporting urban industry and the need to reconstruct the economy and population of post-war territories were core cameralist programs devised to improve the situation in the Holy Roman Empire after the Thirty-Years' War (1618-1648). Transmitted by German émigrés in Vienna, such as Wilhelm von Schröder (1640-88), Johann Joachim Becher (1635-82), Ludwig Hörnigk (1600 – 1667) and Philipp Hörnigk (1640-1714), the applicability of these ideas on the newly conquered lands devastated by the Ottoman wars gained popularity within Austrian cameral circles.²⁵⁴

The Banat and Serbia were the prime experimental fields of a rationalized governance and repopulation policies. Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663-1736), the field marshal of the Habsburg army conquering the southern borderland from the Ottomans in 1716-1718, had very clear ideas about how to make the newly conquered regions into prosperous Habsburg crown lands and in his capacity as president of the Aulic War Council (1703–1736) he had all the means to see these plans through.²⁵⁵ The Banat was the first to be organized, Count Claude Florimond de Mercy, civilian and military governor of the province between 1717 - 1734 was the main agent.²⁵⁶ He oversaw the organisation of the districts-system, positioned Germans to the administrative positions and devoted great energies to seeing cameralist projects through. Serbia soon followed suit, its organization copied that of the Banat, and governor Charles Alexander, prince of Württemberg made Serbia into a locus of an absolutistic experiment.²⁵⁷

Prince Charles Alexander's career had been steadily rising as a military commander before he attained the governorship of Serbia. He had managed to protract the defence of the town of Landau against the French in 1713, thereby winning the imperial army's general commander,

²⁵⁴ Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy (1618-1815)*, 93.

²⁵⁵ William O'Reilly, 'Divide et Impera: Race, Ethnicity and Administration in Early 18th-Century Habsburg Hungary', in *Racial Discrimination and Ethnicity in European History*, ed. Guðmundur Hálfðanarson (Pisa: PLUS, Università di Pisa, 2003), 80-81.

²⁵⁶ For a detailed discussion of the general circumstances in the Banat and the province's structure of governance see: Josef Kallbrunner, *Das Kaiserliche Banat 1. Einrichtung und Entwicklung des Banats bis 1739* (München: Verlag des Südostdeutschen Kulturwerks, 1958); For the Banat as an experimental field of governance see: László Marjanucz, 'A Temesi Bánság, mint modernizációs kísérleti telep, 1716-1778', in *Társadalomtudományi gondolatok a harmadik évezred elején*, ed. János Tibor Karlovitz (Komárno: International Research Institute, 2013), 216-222.; And more recently: László Marjanucz, *A Temesi Bánság vázlatos történeti útja 1716–1848: Osztrák tartományból magyar megyék* (Makó: Makó Múzeumért és Kultúráért Alapítvány, 2017); For a special emphasis on population politics in the Banat see: O'Reilly, 'Divide et Impera: Race, Ethnicity and Administration in Early 18th-Century Habsburg Hungary'.

²⁵⁷ Langer, 'Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung 1717-1739'; And recently with special emphasis on the Serbian governorship as a practicing scene for Prince Charles Alexander's absolutist reforms: Joachim Brüser, *Herzog Karl Alexander von Württemberg und die Landschaft (1733 bis 1737) - Katholische Konfession, Kaisertraue und Absolutismus* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2010), 75-89.

Prince Eugene of Savoy's (1663 – 1736) favour. Subsequently, he joined Prince Eugene of Savoy in the Austro-Turkish War against the Ottomans in 1716-1718, during which the provinces of the Habsburg Banat and Habsburg Serbia were conquered.²⁵⁸ During these campaigns, Prince Charles Alexander's reputation and responsibilities were steadily broadening. He commanded his own infantry regiment (No. 17), the Alexander Württemberg Regiment, consisting of 3 battalions at first. During the triumphant battle of Pétervárad (today Petrovaradin, Serbia) in August 1716, he already commanded six battalions. In the siege of Újpalánka, he commanded the main, central wing of the army, including companies from other regiments as well.²⁵⁹ In October, he already led thirty battalions with which he laid siege to and captured the fortress of Temesvár. In 1717 he was already commanding general (*Generalfeldmarschall*) at the successful siege of Belgrade. Due to his successes, in 1719 was named governor of Belgrade and from 1720 president of the newly created provincial administration of Serbia, a title he retained until 1733.

Table 1: The number of inhabited and deserted settlements in Serbia

| Province | District | Inhabited settlements (1718) | Deserted settlements (1718) | Ratio of deserted settlements (1718) |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Banat (East Serbia) | Majdanpek | 10 | - | 0% |
| | Homolje | 10 | - | 0% |
| | Boretsch | 15 | - | 0% |
| | Kljutsch | 14 | 7 | 33% |
| | Kraina | 20 | 11 | 35% |
| | Krivina | 13 | 11 | 45% |
| Serbia | Resava | 16 | 54 | 77% |
| | Baragin | 9 | 14 | 61% |
| | Jagodina | 17 | 19 | 53% |
| | Kragujevac | 38 | 56 | 60% |
| | Stolatsch | 1 | 1 | 50% |
| | Valjevo | 126 | - | 0% |
| | Krupa | 10 | - | 0% |
| | Loznica | 4 | - | 0% |
| | Sabatsch | 74 | 4 | 0% |
| SUM | all districts above | 377 | 177 | 28% |

²⁵⁸ Rochus W. T. H. Ferdinand von Liliencron, *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie*, vol. 15 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1882), 366-372.

²⁵⁹ See for instance: Ludwig Matuschka, *Feldzüge des Prinzen Eugen von Savoyen - Der Türken-Krieg 1716-18. Feldzug 1716.*, vol. 16. (Wien: Verlag des K. und K. Generalstabes, 1891), 250.

A precondition for the cameralist project of rationalizing governance and economy on the borderland was a sufficient number of settlers to populate the region, many areas of which were deserted because of the wars. The court was enticing settlers to the borderland by offering them privileges as well as land. The urban centres attracted a thin layer of German, Italian and Spanish settlers, but they were vastly outnumbered by the mostly Orthodox population. It was a colonized area, and as such, a natural contact zone between different cultures. In fact, it was special even as a colonized space, because the Orthodox population was not always native to the particular settlements they came to inhabit but arrived from various other areas of the Habsburg-Ottoman border zone. Based on a survey that the new Habsburg administration carried out in Serbia, we can gain a picture of the extent of population replacement. The table shows that it were especially the southern districts of Serbia (Resava, Baragin, Jagodina and Kragujevac) and the southern districts of Eastern Serbia (Kljutsch, Kraina, Krivina) that were most affected by desertion in 1718.²⁶⁰ These areas were especially likely to harbour both ‘indigenous’ population elements (that is, people who had been living in the given village already during Ottoman times), and relative newcomers as well. This situation was especially characteristic of the militarized areas: in an order of 1728 aimed at regulating the military frontier’s population, Prince Charles Alexander forbade people from civilian (cameral) territories of the borderland to move to the frontier and become frontiersmen; recruitment was only allowed to happen from across the Ottoman border.²⁶¹ This policy further contributed to a constant influx of settlers of various cultural, ethnic and linguistic identities from Ottoman Rumelia.

Populating the borderland and creating a transparent, centralized power-infrastructure was a common goal of both the Treasury and the War Council, their interests however collided when it came to negotiating the exact parameters of the settlers’ privileges and the size of the military frontier within the borderland area. The primary concern of the War Council was manning the military frontier by creating a sizeable local militia, whose life-long military services would be required in return for land and privileges rather than for salary only, as in the case of the regular imperial army. The War Council would rather maintain the

²⁶⁰ Langer, ‘Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung 1717-1739’, 192.

²⁶¹ Langer, 220.

frontiersmen's lands wholly or partially exempt from the usual taxes, fees and services of serfdom, than risk their emigration from the land. By contrast, the Treasury, as the single landowner in the region was pressing for the reduction of the size of the military frontier and the curbing of the privileges of the borderland population. The Treasury needed the incomes of the land and the people in the form of taxes, shares of the produced goods, a well-functioning commerce and the exploitation of the land's resources, most importantly the mountains and rivers of Serbia and the Banat which harboured various sorts of metal ore, such as copper, lead, silver and gold.²⁶² As a consequence of the differing interests of the War Council and the Treasury, the territories which were under the supervision of the former generally had more privileges, had to pay less or no tax at all, which meant that these were often more attractive for settlers.

The various sections of the borderland may have been organized in a systematic, transparent way, but the fact that the sections had differing settling conditions and privileges made it very difficult for the administration to keep people permanently settled. It often happened that once the obligations were raised or the privileges curbed in a given area, people would simply move to a neighbouring area with better conditions. Prince Charles Alexander's above-cited 1728 recruitment-regulation prohibiting cameral subjects to join the military frontier in Serbia was also aimed at stopping the constant flux of people within the borderland. Since the movements happened not only within the imperial borders, but also across it, these particularly mobile settlers can be characterised as trans-imperial subjects in the sense E. Natalie Rothman used the term:²⁶³ their lives often involved moving between provinces within empires and across the new imperial borders.

The coexistence of military and civilian population was not smooth. The relationship between the two spheres was wrought with conflicts: civilian population often complained about frontiersmen having much better settling and living conditions, receiving unfair benefits, encroaching on the rights of civilians, and committing violence against them.²⁶⁴ According to

²⁶² Langer, 198.; Kallbrunner, *Das Kaiserliche Banat 1. Einrichtung und Entwicklung des Banats bis 1739*; Rudolf Gräf, 'Die Entwicklung des Südbanater Industriegebiets.', in *Das Banat als kulturelles Interferenzgebiet. Traditionen und Perspektiven.*, ed. Horst Förstler and Horst Fassel (Tübingen: Institut für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde, 1997), 79-85.

²⁶³ E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca, N.Y. ; London: Cornell University Press, 2012).

²⁶⁴ Langer, 'Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung 1717-1739', 199, 218-219.

the complaints of cameral districts, even after the official dissolution of a given military frontier area, its population often still acted as if they still had their privileges and continued to behave like frontiersmen even if they migrated elsewhere, into other provinces or districts. The names used to denote frontiersmen of the borderland also attest to this ambivalent between the civilian administration / population and the militia. Cognates of the '*pandur*' in Croatia and Slavonia and '*hajduk*' in Serbia and later in the Banat often had shades of meaning related to banditry all around the Habsburg-Russian-Ottoman borderland.²⁶⁵ The latter term, probably originating from the Hungarian '*hajdú*', privileged shepherding irregular foot soldiers in the Hungarian Kingdom and Transylvania became generic in Habsburg official documents in the eastern half of the empire and referred to any irregular troops who served on some special legal basis, usually those who had to perform military service in return for land to settle on.

In the end, officials of the military and civilian imperial administration who were supposed to observe and carry out the central cameralist political agendas had several factors impeding their work. The mobility and privileges of the settling Orthodox population, the patchy borderland territory and the Habsburg needs to populate the border in combination gave substantial leverage to the local communities when they had to enforce their interests. The population which the officials had to govern, and discipline spoke different languages, had their own, borderland-specific lifestyle, their own trusted leaders and could always threaten by leaving the settlement and moving elsewhere. These conditions made a lasting imprint on the various kinds of knowledge produced in the area.

Medical policing and knowledge production on the borderland

The specificity of the borderland was a paradoxical combination of a particularly centralised, systematized state infrastructure trying to govern a population that in fact had strong powers to enforce its own interests against these policies. This situation was mirrored in the sphere of knowledge production as well, and in particular, in the field of medicine. Cameralism, as

²⁶⁵ Cognates of hajduk can be found with similar meanings in several languages, e.g.: Hungarian '*hajdú*' which is thought to have originated from the verb '*hajtani*', meaning 'to shepherd [animals]'. Russian '*гайдук*' [*gajduk*] meaning outlaw, rebel against the Ottomans; and Ottoman Turkish '*haydut*' meaning robber, bandit. Gábor Zaicz, ed., *Etimológiai szótár - Magyar szavak és toldalékok eredete*, A Magyar Nyelv Kézikönyvei, 12. (Budapest: Tinta, 2006), 261.

represented by Ludwig Hörnigk (*Politia medica*, 1638), and his son, Philipp Wilhelm Hörnigk (*Österreich über alles, wann es nur will*, 1684) and Johann Joachim Becher (*Politischer Diskurs*, 1668) had medicine at its very core fields of import. All three men were physicians as much as jurists and political thinkers, and as Sonia Horn has convincingly argued, the coupling of medicine with law (later on referred to as *Medizinische Polizey* or medical policing) created a particularly successful and efficient policy of governance. Their theories about how to organize an ideally governed, medical system apparently came from practical experiences with the fifteenth-seventeenth century unification of the Vienna medical faculty's sphere of authority as an over-regional power structure. It was these practice-based theories that got applied back to practice in the southern Habsburg borderland as a perfect test-space, decades before the wide-scale reforms of the 1750s-1770s, which secondary literature usually recognises as 'enlightened'.²⁶⁶ The experiences the Habsburg administration gained from governance on the borderland eventually fed back to theoreticians like Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717 – 1771), Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732-1817; *Grundsätze der Polizei, Handlung und Finanz*, 1765-1776) and Johann Peter Frank (1745 – 1821; *System einer vollständigen medicinischen Polizei*, 1779), inspiring the absolutist enlightenment measures in the Habsburg Monarchy and Prussia as well.

The Habsburg borderland hence is often cited as a prime successful model of the emanation of medical knowledge and policies of public hygiene from the centre in Vienna towards the periphery, the borderland. The state structures erected from scratch involved substantial medical personnel and infrastructure. First, each cameral district had its own district surgeons, while the provincial centres had a *protomedicus*, a physician overseeing the medical system of the whole province. Second, all the regiments stationed in the provinces had their own military surgeons and physicians. Third, given the central importance of the mining industry for the court, the mining business (*Münz-und Bergwesen*) was overseen by a separate commission, with regional headquarters in Oravitza in the Banat, again supplied with huge medical personnel. And finally, the military frontier also functioned as a plague cordon: apart

²⁶⁶ Sonia Horn, 'Geschichte(n) von Gesundheit und Krankheit Zwischen Kameralismus und Medizinischer Polizey - Forschungsdesiderata für Österreich und Ungarn in der frühen Neuzeit', in *Europa, Ungarn - Heute und Morgen*, ed. Ferenc Glatz, Begegnungen - Schriftenreihe des Europa Institutes Budapest, 19. (Budapest: Europa Institut Budapest, 2003), 227-245.; Sonia Horn, 'A Model for All? Healthcare and the State in 18th Century Habsburg Inherited Countries', in *The Price of Life. Welfare Systems, Social Nets and Economic Growth*, ed. Laurinda Abreu and Patrice Bourdelais (Lisboa: Colibri, 2007), 303-315.

from its military significance (which gradually diminished as the century progressed), the frontier's infrastructure served the crucial medical purpose of monitoring traffic across the border and deploying strict quarantine measures in plague times to stop the spread of the frequent epidemics from the Ottoman lands into the heart of the empire.²⁶⁷ The infrastructure involved in this activity was a hybrid military-medical network consisting of border guards and watch posts impeding traffic across the green border, quarantine stations with medical personnel (contagion surgeons, physicians and helpers) positioned at major roads leading into the Habsburg Monarchy.

The defence line of quarantine stations was gradually created throughout the early eighteenth century. The early quarantine stations established from around 1710 on were primitive wooden huts all along the frontier, for example in Rakovica (today Croatia) in the Karlstadt frontier; Kostainica (today Kostajnica on the Croatian-Bosnian border) in the Banal frontier; and Brod (today Bród on the Croatian-Bosnian border) in the Sava frontier. After the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718, the new quarantine stations of Baragin (today Paraćin, Serbia) and Slatina (today Romania)²⁶⁸ were assigned the task of controlling traffic flowing through Habsburg Serbia and Little Wallachia respectively.²⁶⁹

With its diagnostic and purification procedures, the quarantine station is clearly an administrative, policing institution. The procedure those entering the quarantine station had to undergo can be seen as an extreme form of external social disciplining.²⁷⁰ In this confined, controlled space, incoming people and merchandise were practically rendered powerless: stripped of almost all autonomy, they were exposed to the medical gaze, classified, segregated and purified. The stripping can be taken quite literally: people had to get naked, show themselves to the quarantine surgeon, who was looking for symptoms of plague on their body. Clothes instantly had to be purified (smoked most often), while people themselves were divided into groups of seemingly healthy, suspicious and sick. The first group was sent to quarantine houses, while the latter two were taken to the lazaret. It is not clearly known

²⁶⁷ Lesky, 'Die österreichische Pestfront an der k. k. Militärgrenze.'

²⁶⁸ Not to be confused with today's Slatina-Timiş in the Banat.

²⁶⁹ František Vaniček, *Spezialgeschichte der Militärgrenze*, vol. 1 (Wien, 1875), 405.; Lesky, 'Die österreichische Pestfront an der k. k. Militärgrenze.', 86-88.

²⁷⁰ Ádám Mézes, 'Quarantine Stations as Hubs of Imperial Medicine and Administration – Sanitary Journals from Pancsova, 1754-57' (Intertwined Enlightenments - Studies of Science and Empire in the Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian Realms during the Eighteenth-Century, Central European University, 2016).

whether any attempts at curing or researching the disease were made, but it probably mostly consisted of letting nature run its course. Meanwhile, private letters were opened and merchandise was stripped of its packaging. Paper, ropes or leather were considered to be major materials to absorb and carry the plague poison, therefore they had to be smoked, washed or boiled instantly. The merchandise itself was also classified according to susceptibility of carrying plague particles and purified accordingly. People were considered clean if they survived the quarantine time (from 21 up to 84 days) without symptoms. All in all, it was a shocking intrusion into the life of the individual, lasting for a long time, costing a lot (incomers had to pay both for their catering, and the costs of purification) and on top of this, it was also dangerous.

The medical personnel employed by the borderland's administration received payment not based on their healing success, like private physician would, but as a regular allowance, complemented by remunerations for extra missions in which they were deployed as experts. This steady financial backing that they received from the Vienna administration, and not from the population was supposed to give them a higher prestige, a confidence in themselves as well as loyalty to their institutional backing. Many criteria of professionalization are missing in the case of this borderland medical personnel, such as competency tests leading to licensing or autonomy in the conduct of their professional affairs.²⁷¹ Nevertheless, Adopting Gianna Pomata's view, financial independence from the subjects to be cured can be understood as an early move towards professionalisation.²⁷² In theory, this criterion was supposed to tilt the physician-patient relationship towards the former, but in practice, as I will show below, it did not necessarily work.

The medical personnel of the districts, the towns, the army, the mining centres and the quarantine stations, apart from their functions of disciplining local population and channelling central policies also functioned as collectors and generators of sanitary-related information within and across the imperial border. They were creators of new data and knowledge for a better understanding of the natural world. They were producing a substantial amount of written documentation. First of all, they were obliged to write regular reports (*Bericht*) on the

²⁷¹ Broman, 'Rethinking Professionalization: Theory, Practice, and Professional Ideology in Eighteenth-Century German Medicine'.

²⁷² Pomata, *Contracting a Cure: Patients, Healers, and the Law in Early Modern Bologna*.

medicine-related situation in their fields of authority. The quarantine stations were especially crucial in this sense as they had to document the traffic flowing through them as well as information that reached to them through a network of quarantine stations, civilian travellers and paid agents across the border about threats of epidemics.²⁷³

Second, the medical personnel also functioned as a taskforce of experts which could be deployed when necessary and they had to compile thorough reports on their experiences within these ad-hoc missions and commissions. The topics of interest not only concerned the plague but other endemic and epidemic diseases, mining sickness as well as health problems related to the substantial marshlands present in the land. The Banat of Temesvár for instance earned the name ‘grave of the Germans’ due to the high mortality rates among German settlers.²⁷⁴ Since diseases could hit the neuralgic points of the cameralist state project, it was vital to create a well-functioning medical infrastructure. In addition, they also wrote about mass attacks of the infamous blood-sucking killer ‘Kollumbacz flies’, the healing qualities of mineral waters, for instance in the Mehadia spa, as well as legal documentation: autopsy reports (*visum repertum*), expert testimonies (*attestatum*) and witness accounts (*protocollum*) on cases of strange diseases, murders and suicides.

In the process of generating the written material, the various civilian and military surgeons and physicians collected, sifted, exchanged and transmitted the received sanitary-related information. During these procedures, the information was organised and changed: the kind of knowledge produced was mixed with economic, political and military interests, and was serving practical, administrative purposes. The results of their activity resulted in policies made and seeped into the broader learned world as well. Today these documents are found in abundance among archival materials of the mining industry,²⁷⁵ of the military and civilian

²⁷³ See this argument in more detail in Chapter VI.

²⁷⁴ The ratio of baptisms and deaths among Germans of Temesvár was indeed dire: between 1726 and 1735, there were 1365 births and 4891 deaths, while in the years 1746-55 this ratio is 1670 to 3954. These numbers are especially striking since they relate to plague-free times. Johann Heinrich Schwicker, *Geschichte des Temeser Banats. Historische Bilder und Skizzen* (Grosz-Becskerek: Verlag von Fr. P. Bettelheim, 1861), 317.; Anton Peter Petri, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Heilwesens im Banat* (Marquartstein: Breit, 1988), 45-46.

²⁷⁵ For example: ‘Documents of the Oravitza Mining Directorate’

administrations of Belgrade²⁷⁶ and Temesvár,²⁷⁷ of the quarantine stations themselves,²⁷⁸ and in the collections of the Viennese sanitary, military and neoacquistica commissions.²⁷⁹

Summary

The conquest of the southern borderland from the Ottomans, and the central decision to make it into a territory of a special status allowed for a unique situation in which the new administration could experiment on a more rationalized government without being obstructed by traditional legal and landownership-relations. In spite of the central power's direct access to the population, the patchiness of the borderland, the privileges granted to the settler population and the administration's constant need for settlers in a hostile natural, sanitary, martial and criminal environment gave the settling subjects much leverage.

The borderland was a contact-zone, where the provincial administration was lodged in between the Viennese court and the Orthodox settler population and was slowly becoming the 'other' for both sides. Medical personnel specifically were unusually abundantly present in the region and because of their seminal role in epidemic control could become influential social and political actors. As much as they were channelling central policies, they were also becoming experts of local medical relations, environmental conditions, flora and fauna as well as culture and customs, and hence could step up as producers and organizers of new knowledge. In the following subchapters vampirism will be analysed as a special case of this knowledge-production activity.

²⁷⁶ 'Documents of the Belgrade provincial administration', 1718-1739. OESTA-KA / Territorialkommanden / Administration Belgrad; 'Belgrade provincial administration – documents', 1719-41. MNL-OL / E 303: Landesadministration Banat, Bundle 12.

²⁷⁷ 'Documents of the Banat provincial administration'; 'Military High Command, Temesvár', 1739-1849. OESTA-KA / Territorialkommanden / Generalkommando Temesvár

²⁷⁸ 'Documents of the Banat provincial administration', Bundle 11.

²⁷⁹ 'Documents of the Neoacquistica Subdelegation', 1703-1740. OESTA-KA / Zentralstellen / (Militär-)Hofkommissionen / Neoacquistische Subdelegation; 'Documents of the Aulic Sanitary Commission', 1606-1775. OESTA-KA / Zentralstellen / (Militär-)Hofkommissionen / Sanitätshofkommission; 'Sanitary reports of the Temesvár administration'; 'Sanitary documents', 1730-1762. OESTA-FHKA / Neue Hofkammer / Ungarisches Kammerale / Kommissionen und Sonderbestände / Sanitätsakten; 'Reports of sanitary commissions', 1770-79. MNL-OL / E 303: Landesadministration Banat, Bundle 169.

II.2. Revenants in the Banat, Slavonia and Serbia (1718-32)

Histories of vampirism often focus the analysis on the celebrated cases of the 1725 Kisilova and 1732 Medvedia cases, which is perfectly legitimate, given the wide-scale public attention they received already in the eighteenth century, but it can obscure the variety of revenant ideas and practices that were present on the southern borderland. The present subchapter seeks to balance this bias. Following reflections on the Orthodox standpoints to revenantism, and a short terminological discussion, I move on to analyse the cases which are known so far from the southern borderland between 1717 and 1732: two in Slavonia, ten in Serbia and six in the Banat. The infamous case of the Medvedia vampires of 1732 will be dealt with in a separate subchapter with respect to its formative role on the figure of the vampire. The cases were gathered from a variety of sources, some of them archival administrative, others second-hand published sources from the eighteenth century. This means that overlaps between narratives are possible but unknown due to lack of further substantiating archival research: all-in-all, eight of the cases have so far been verified through archival documents. Because of this, in the unsubstantiated cases I will devote special attention to checking the narratives as much as possible against known historical data.

Eastern Orthodoxy and the revenants

When the settlers of the southern borderland got under the authority of the Habsburg administration, they already had previous experiences and practices related to the execution of the dead. They were used to Ottoman-style governance, and now they were supposed to accommodate to the Habsburg way. The difference between the two in fact was not huge, at least in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Based on the scarce available material in secondary literature about the Ottoman authorities' attitude to revenant beliefs,²⁸⁰ it seems that in general they had a *laissez faire* position. In one instance, dated 1662, in the occupied

²⁸⁰ Markus Köhbach, 'Ein Fall von Vampirismus bei den Osmanen', *Balkan Studies* 20 (1979): 83-90.; Bijedić, 'Vampirismus auf dem Balkan zur Zeit der osmanischen Herrschaft'; Marinos Sariyannis, 'Of Ottoman Ghosts, Vampires and Sorcerers: An Old Discussion Disinterred', *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013): 83-117.

town of Gyöngyös, Northern Hungary, the Turkish judge (kadi) authorized the execution of a dead woman accused of witchcraft adding the justification, that in fact it does not matter what Christians do to their corpses, they will all go to Hell anyway.²⁸¹ The prime interest of Ottoman authorities apparently was the gathering of taxes and not so much the policing of their subjects.

When the newcomer Habsburg administration arrived at the southern borderland, they quickly realized that there were competing power structures for the control of the population. As Jakob von Alter, a cameral inspector bitterly mentioned in his report to the Aulic Treasury in 1724,

*‘the inhabitants are very superstitious, think of their metropolitans as demigods and so far, prefer the Turkish yoke to Christian governance’.*²⁸²

The revenant cases in this sense were born out of the experiences of the invading imperial army’s soldiers and the civilian bureaucrats in the alien lands of Slavonia, Serbia and the Banat. While Jutta Nowosadtko was certainly right to term vampirism as a phenomenon of occupation,²⁸³ it can just as much be seen as a phenomenon of subversion.

The Orthodox Church had serious stakes in revenant executions, and not only because the cemeteries from where the dead had to be exhumed belonged to their authority. As Ioannis Zelepos has recently shown, the church was endorsing the existence of revenants well until the 1780s, even used them as propaganda tools against the Roman Catholic Church.²⁸⁴ Orthodox demonology occupied a position similar to the sin-based-possession concept of the medieval western church (Chapter I.2.). A revenant was a corpse, who (due to the sins committed by the person) was excommunicated by an Orthodox pope, and hence his soul could not leave the body: it was held there by the devil, which resulted in the lack of putrefaction. Through the anathema, the corpse was sentenced not to decay and to do harm

²⁸¹ István Sugár, *Bűbájosok, ördögösök, boszorkányok Heves és Külső Szolnok vármegyékben* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1987), 23.

²⁸² Langer, ‘Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung 1717-1739’, 194-195.

²⁸³ Nowosadtko, ‘Der „Vampyrus Serviensis“ und sein Habitat: Impressionen von der Österreichischen Militärgrenze’; See also: Arlaud, ‘Vampire, Aufklärung und Staat: Eine militärmedizinische Mission in Ungarn, 1755–1756’; and: Bräunline, ‘The Frightening Borderlands of Enlightenment: The Vampire Problem’.

²⁸⁴ Ioannis Zelepos, ‘Vampirglaube und orthodoxe Kirche im osmanischen Südosteuropa. Ein Fallbeispiel für die Ambivalenzen vorsäkularer Rationalisierungsprozesse.’, in *Das osmanische Europa - Methoden und Perspektiven der Frühneuzeitforschung zu Südosteuropa*, ed. Andreas Helmedach et al. (Leipzig: Eudora Verlag, 2013), 363-380.

until given absolution and/or being executed. The undecayed corpses were also presented as proofs of the miraculous powers of the Orthodox clergy and faith.

The attitudes of the Orthodox clergy and the beliefs of Orthodox populations of the Balkan Peninsula were commented upon by Western writers as well throughout the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in travel narratives and theological discussions, none of which forgot to point out how superstitious and ignorant Orthodoxy was.²⁸⁵ This idea became a set cultural *topos* in Western imaginations of the East and was repeated over and over again.²⁸⁶ The 1730s debate on vampirism in this sense fit snugly into a long tradition of anti-Orthodox sentiments in the West.

The condemnation of the Orthodox clergy and religion as superstitious did not prevent some of the commentators (especially Catholics) from endorsing some facets of local revenant ideas, for example that demonic possession could be behind the harmful activities of incorruptible corpses. For example, in 1679, the Jesuit missionary Paul Ricaut (1629 – 1700) narrated the story of an excommunicated sinner on the Isle of Milo in Ottoman Greece, which he had heard from the local priest named Sofronio, who had overseen the case. According to the priest, when the sinner died, he was buried outside the cemetery, without any ceremonies. Burying grave sinners outside holy ground was usual practice throughout the Christian world and was called ass-burial (*sepultura asini*).²⁸⁷ However, apparitions started pestering people soon after, and the villagers opened the grave finding the body to be rosy and fresh. They wrote a request to Constantinople, to the patriarch, so that he would lift the

²⁸⁵ Richard, *Un relation de ce qui s' est passe a Sant-Erini*, 208–27; Thévenot, *Relations de divers voyages curieux: Qui n'ont point esté publiées, est qu'on a traduit or tiré des originaux des voyageurs François, Espagnols, Allemands, Portugais, Anglois, Hollandois, Persans, Arabes & autres Orientaux*, 5 vols (Paris, 1663); Paul Ricaut, *The Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches* (London, 1679); Saulger, *Histoire nouvelle des anciens ducs et autres souverains de l'archipel*, 255–256.; Tournefort, *Relation d' un voyage du Levant*, 53–55; Johannes Michael Heineccius, *Dissertatio theologica de absolutione mortuorum* (Helmstad, 1709), 10–13; Born, *Briefe über mineralogische Gegenstände, auf seiner Reise durch das Temeswarer Bannat, Siebenbürgen, Ober- und Nieder-Ungarn*, 14–15; Fortis, *Travels into Dalmatia Containing General Observations on the Natural History of That Country and the Neighbouring Islands, the Natural Productions, Arts, Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants*, 61–62.

²⁸⁶ See for instance: Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, 322.; And highly inspiring combination of this othering work with the uncanny fears of the returning of a repressed European past by: Álvaro García Marín, 'Haunted Communities: The Greek Vampire or the Uncanny at the Core of Nation Construction', in *Monstrosity from the inside Out*, ed. Teresa Cutler-Broyles and Marko Teodorski (Freeland: Brill, 2014), 107–42.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Book of Jeremiah (22, 19): 'He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.'

anathema, and until then transported the corpse into the church, and were holding constant masses and prayers. Then, as the priest related:

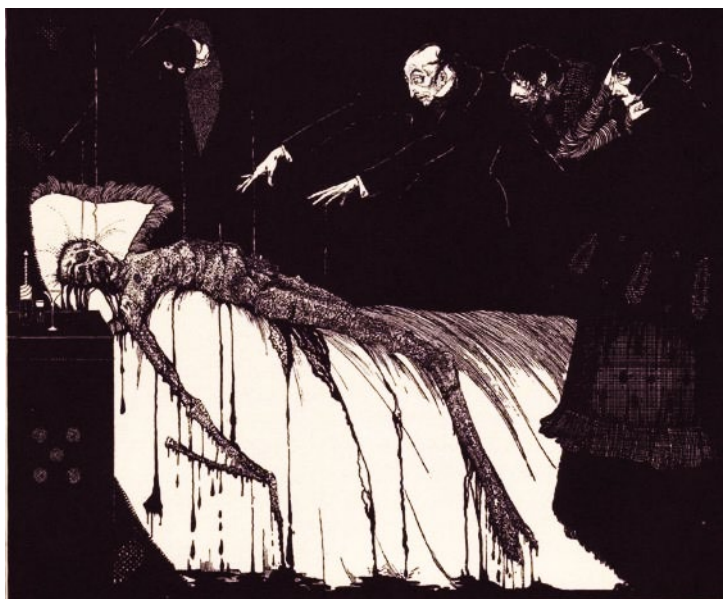
'When one day after many prayers, supplications and offerings (as this Sofronio attested to me with many protestations) and whilst he himself was performing divine service, on a sudden was heard a rumbling noise in the coffin of the dead party, to the fear and astonishment of all persons then present; which when they had opened, they found the body consumed and dissolved as far into its first principles of earth, as if it had been seven years interred. The hour and minute of this dissolution was immediately noted and precisely observed, which being compared with the date of the patriarchs release, when it was signed at Constantinople, it was found exactly to agree with that moment in which the body returned to its ashes.

*This story I should not have judged worth relating, but that I heard it from the mouth of a grave person, who says, that his own eyes were witnesses thereof; and though notwithstanding I esteem it a matter not assured enough to be believed by me, yet let it serve to evidence the esteem they entertain of the validity and force of excommunication.'*²⁸⁸

Solfronio, as well as Ricaut sought to provide as much evidence as possible to substantiate the credibility to the story: the eyewitness's learnedness and moral stature was naturally a necessity in the learned world in general, while the confirmation of two related events happening at the very same time across a distance was a returning trope in demonological as well as action at a distance literature. Cases of *mumial magnetism* are especially rife in such events, such as Van Helmont's story about the nose prosthetic that died together with its former owner (Chapter I) and the Pétervárad mumial magnetism case (see below) also share this element. The specific image of the suddenly decomposing corpse was a lasting motif, one

²⁸⁸ Ricaut, *The Present State of the Greek and Armenian Churches*, 279-283.

of the most known representations of which came two hundred years later, also involving action at a distance. The protagonist of Edgar Allan Poe's 1845 controversial short story, *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*,²⁸⁹ is a dying man who was suspended in hypnosis at the moment of his death by a mesmerist. The body remained undecayed for seven months and people could communicate with



18 The sudden decomposition of M. Valdemar's body after the lifting of the mesmeric hypnosis which was cast on him at the moment of his death (Harry Clarke, 1919)

the dead person until the lifting of the hypnosis, when the corpse suddenly decomposed before the spectators' eyes. Poe wrote the story as a conscious hoax to make it seem as if it was a factual, scientific report of a real event.²⁹⁰

Solfronio's seamless narrative served to buttress the official Orthodox clerical standpoint on excommunication, but the efforts of the clergy to force this excommunication-based framework on local experiences, as it will be shown below, was often met with resistance on the part of the local population.

Upir, moroi or bloodsucker?

There are a number of expressions used in the sources to denote the experience of the revenant attack. The etymology of the Serbian term '*vampir*' is contested and is usually traced back either to Slavic or Turkic-through-Slavic origins and would mean 'non-flier' or 'witch' respectively.²⁹¹ Based on the few sources so far known to secondary literature, the term

²⁸⁹ Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar', *Broadway Journal*, 20 December 1845.

²⁹⁰ Adam Frank, 'Valdemar's Tongue, Poe's Telegraphy', *English Literary History* 72, no. 3 (2005): 635–62; John Tresch, "'Matter No More': Edgar Allan Poe and the Paradoxes of Materialism", *Critical Inquiry* 42 (2016): 865–98.

²⁹¹ Kreuter, *Der Vampirglaube in Südosteuropa: Studien zur Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion. Rumänien und der Balkanraum*, 68–69.

‘*vampir*’ was strongly present among the Rascians of the eighteenth century. As will be shown below, the creature which it denoted was a corpse that came back to harm the living and that had to be executed for the problems to cease. The name or its cognates today are attested all across Eastern, Western and Southern Slavic folklore, and are present in especially diverse forms in Bulgarian.²⁹²

In Poland, ‘*upior*’ was a corpse reanimated, basically possessed, by an evil spirit; the term is still there in contemporary Polish and Ukrainian folklore.²⁹³ Further, even though their repercussions were much smaller in scale as compared to that of the reports on the Serbian vampire, reports on the Polish *upior* reached European publicity much earlier. A 1693 edition of the French gazette *Mercure Gallant* brought news from the Russian Empire about ‘*oupires*’: corpses (or demons that take up the shape of corpses), who torment the living, mostly their own family, and suck their blood until they die.²⁹⁴ In his 1721 *Historia Naturalis Curiosa Regni Poloniae*, the Jesuit Gabriel Rzaczynski also reported about the Polish belief in the ‘*upier*’ or female ‘*upierzycza*’, who in his interpretation were blood-sucking dead witches. Printed in the Russian Empire in Latin his text reached western audiences as well.²⁹⁵

In Russia, there may have existed the creature ‘*upyr*’ in medieval times, but it has disappeared by today and the malicious dead are called ‘*eretik*’ (i.e. heretic), which can be either corpses or the ghosts of dead sorcerers who take up the shape of or possess actual corpses; they devour people and cause all sorts of harm.²⁹⁶ Interestingly enough, in Serbian it became marginalized during the nineteenth century in favour of ‘*vukodlak*’, a term originally denoting a werewolf, i.e. a living person who would periodically transform into a wolf and would mostly attack cattle. In 1820, under the Serbian prince Miloš Obrenović, measures were still taken

²⁹² Kreuter, 69.; Alexandr N. Afanas’ev, ‘Poetic Views of the Slavs Regarding Nature’, in *Vampires of the Slavs*, ed. Jan L. Perkowski (Cambridge: Slavica Publishers, 1976), 163, 165.

²⁹³ Betsinger and Scott, ‘Governing from the Grave: Vampire Burials and Social Order in Post-Medieval Poland.’, 469.

²⁹⁴ David Keyworth, ‘Was the Vampire of the Eighteenth Century a Unique Type of Undead-Corpse?’, *Folklore* 117 (2006): 251.

²⁹⁵ Lambrecht, ‘Wiedergänger und Vampire in Ostmitteleuropa – Posthume Verbrennung statt Hexenverfolgung?’, 52.

²⁹⁶ Kazimierz Moszyński, ‘Slavic Folk Culture’, in *Vampires of the Slavs*, ed. Jan L. Perkowski (Cambridge: Slavica Publishers, 1976), 185.; Felix Oinas, ‘East European Vampires’, in *The Vampire – A Casebook*, ed. Alan Dundes (Madison, London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 52.

against vampire finders called '*vampirdžije*'. However, in the middle of the nineteenth century the ethnographer Vuk Karadžić had already referred to the returning dead as '*vukodlak*'.²⁹⁷

In Romanian, the term 'vampire' has apparently never existed. Instead, people talked about the '*strigoi*' or '*moroi*' and their female equivalents '*strigoica*' and '*moroica*'. However, most eighteenth-century sources call them vampires, for the German language adopted the Serbian name first and used it for the Romanian (in contemporary terms Wallachian) creature as well. The two creatures are very similar, although today's folklorists distinguish between two related meanings of the *moroi*, the first of which was not part of the make-up of the Rascian vampire. If used for a live person, *moroi* today means 'witch' or 'wizard'; if on a dead person, it means a malignant, blood-sucking revenant. At the same time, just as in Serbian, its dead meaning became eclipsed by the '*vârcolac*', originally denoting a werewolf.²⁹⁸

The history of the terms *moroi* and *vampir* are indicative of the intimate relations between witch, werewolf and the returning dead. Across cultures, the returning dead usually come into existence from those who had something unclean or strange about their birth, life or death. For instance, they were born in a caul or with a tail, lived an unclean life or died unbaptised, were murdered, committed suicide, or if some animal jumped through their corpse.²⁹⁹ The witch and the werewolf fit into this pattern due to their abnormal lifestyle and body-soul relations, which can easily be imagined to continue even beyond the grave.³⁰⁰ The concept, today inextricable from the modern image of the vampire, is its generation through contagion: those bitten by a vampire will themselves necessarily become one after death. While according to Peter Kreuter this idea is not attested in south-east European folklore,³⁰¹ in

²⁹⁷ John V.A. Jr. Fine, 'In Defense of Vampires', in *The Vampire – A Casebook*, ed. Alan Dundes (Madison, London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 57-59.

²⁹⁸ Murgoci, 'The Vampire in Roumania'; Senn, *Were-Wolf and Vampire in Romania*.

²⁹⁹ Kreuter, *Der Vampirglaube in Südosteuropa: Studien zur Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion. Rumänien und der Balkanraum*, 32-37.

³⁰⁰ Pócs, *Between the Living and the Dead*.

³⁰¹ Kreuter, *Der Vampirglaube in Südosteuropa: Studien zur Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion. Rumänien und der Balkanraum*, 33.; By contrast, Afanas'ev claimed that it is part of Serbian folklore. Afanas'ev, 'Poetic Views of the Slavs Regarding Nature', 162.



19: The known locations of revenant phenomena (marked red) on the southern borderland (1717-1732)

eighteenth-century documents about Rascian and Wallachian revenants, it figures emphatically. The ways in which the vampire and the *moroi* do harm show great variety, as do the rites to counter them. Usually their activities involve physical harassment, torturing, pressing on the chest, strangling, sexual intercourse or bloodsucking. Kreuter rightly points out that the sucking is actually rather a taking away of the life force, without biting or puncturing the skin.³⁰²

The first German reports about vampire/*moroi* cases in the 1720s and 1730s either prefer the name ‘Bloodsucker’ or some version of ‘*Vampir*’, most often also remarking the sucking of blood as a feature. In the German administration of the Banat, ‘*Blutsauger*’ was the most frequently used term: the first instance of ‘*wampir*’ dates to 1738,³⁰³ while in the protocol

³⁰² Kreuter, *Der Vampirglaube in Südosteuropa: Studien zur Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion. Rumänien und der Balkanraum*, 170; At the same time, exceptions can be found. In Kashubian tales, there is a puncture on the chest or the nipple of the victim of a vampire (‘*veshchij*’). Afanas’ev, ‘Poetic Views of the Slavs Regarding Nature’, 163.; The Russian ‘*eretik*’ devours the victims, while in Silesian folklore certain corpses (the *Nachzehrer*) chew at their shrouds or at their own body and this way cause sicknesses and epidemics without leaving their graves. Schürmann, *Nachzehrer glauben in Mitteleuropa*; Lambrecht, ‘Wiedergänger und Vampire in Ostmitteleuropa – Posthume Verbrennung statt Hexenverfolgung?’

³⁰³ ‘Protocols of the Aulic Sanitary Commission’, Bundle 1., 487v-488v and 497v and 504r-505r. The case is cited by: Gyula Magyary-Kossa, *Magyar orvosi emlékek: Értekezések a magyar orvostörténelem köréből*, vol. 2 (Budapest: Magyar Orvosi Könyvkiadó Társulat, 1929), 86. However, Magyary mistakenly identifies Johann Mayr as a surgeon.

books, this date is 1743, and even then it was used in a secondary explanation to 'bloodsucker'.³⁰⁴ In Habsburg Serbia the report of the 1725 Kisilova case mentioned the sucking of blood but gave only the name '*Vampyr*'.³⁰⁵ The reports relating to the 1732 Medvedia case³⁰⁶ use both terms. This indicates that bloodsucking was an integral part of local cultures, even though (as Kreuter suggests) it might have been over-emphasised in the reports by the German officials, who became fascinated with this specific aspect. Finally, the first known instance of the term '*moroi*' comes in Georg Tallar's 1753 work to be discussed in Chapter VI.³⁰⁷

Moroi in the Banat of Temesvár before 1732

The first known revenant case in the province actually precedes the establishment of the provincial administration and dates to 1717 November, that is, it happened while the military operations of the Austrian-Ottoman war were still going on. In Merul, the later Karánsebes District (today Măru, Romania) 80 people died after a sickness involving redness of face and seeing apparitions. Victims said that 'their souls are tormented, because witches and wizards are roaming about in the area'. A black horse was used to identify the graves of the harmful dead, and four corpses were executed by beheading and burning.³⁰⁸ The usage of the black horse in Wallachian areas is substantiated by later sources as well, surgeon Georg Tallar's in his 1753 work on the moroi of the Banat for instance explains that the horse is led into the cemetery to the grave of suspected revenants, and in case it is unwilling to step across the grave, a revenant is to be found there.³⁰⁹ The words 'witch' and 'wizard' were in all likelihood

³⁰⁴ Lajos Baróti, ed., *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, vol. 2 (Temesvár: Csanád-Egyházmegye Nyomdája, 1902), 150.

³⁰⁵ The only known extant manuscript copy: Johann Frombald, 'Copia des vom Herrn Frombald kayserlichen cameral Provisore...' (1725), Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv - Turcica I/191, fols. 25-26., Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Wien; One of the first printed versions: 'Copia eines Schreibens', *Wienerisches Diarium*, 1725; Reprinted recently in: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 43-45.

³⁰⁶ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case'; The two reports are reprinted in: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 46-54.

³⁰⁷ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht'.

³⁰⁸ Anon., 'Ex historia vampyrorum', *Commercium Litterarium ad Rei Medicae et Scientiae Naturalis Incrementum Institutum.*, no. 19. (7 May 1732): 147.

³⁰⁹ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 5v, 17r.; Augustin Calmet, *Gelehrte Verhandlung der Materie von den Erscheinungen der Geister, und der Vampire in Ungarn, Mähren, Etc.*, vol. 2 (Augsburg, 1751), 56-59.

translations of 'moroi' and 'moroica', possibly of 'strigoi' and 'strigoica', as these could have denoted back then as they do in nowadays' Romanian folklore both a living witch or its dead, demonic form.

The Merul case is not yet attested by archival sources, However, if it proves to be an authentic depiction of the events, it is a noteworthy case for it shows that already in the very first year of the Habsburg administration, settlers entertained the idea that there can be more revenants causing the strange affliction. In this they were different from the usual scenario of the plague-causing chewing dead in Germania Slavica.

Once the Banat provincial authority was set up, it started documenting the administrative problems of the province, and thus the index and protocol books can help us reconstruct the situation of revenants as well. The sources provide short descriptions of the documents that were dealt with, and though the documents themselves have mostly been lost, these descriptions are superb sources of Banatian everyday life,³¹⁰ and in particular of the heterogeneity of practices and ideas related to dealing with revenants in the era. Between 1718, when the Banat was regained from the Ottomans, and 1766, the year of the publication of the *Lex caesaro-regia*, the protocol books list about thirty cases which altogether claimed a minimum of 230 victims.³¹¹ Looking at the map of the early cases of moroi attacks before 1732, it is apparent, that the district of Lugos-Facset was especially beset by the affliction, a whole series of villages got affected, newer and newer cases kept popping up in the 1720s.

The case in the village of Herinbiesch (today Herendesti) in spring 1725 attests to the close connection between witchcraft and vampirism, at the same time, it betrays the general perplexity on the part of the officials. Johann Rác de Mehedia, the district provisor of Lugos-Facset received news of the possible harmful activities of a dead witch and was ordered by the provincial administration to investigate the matter:

³¹⁰ 'List of documents to be discarded'; Protocol registers'; 'Index books to the protocol registers'; 'Out-of-use reference books of the provincial administration'; See also: Baróti, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Vampirismus in Südungarn'.

³¹¹ The number is in reality much higher: out of the 31 reports, 15 do not mention the number of victims; these cases I counted as 1 or 2 victims. Furthermore, these cases are only those mentioned in the protocol books and do not include those which escaped the attention of the authorities or those that remained at the local level and were not reported to the provincial administration.

*'Upon order by the Praiseworthy Imperial Administration,³¹² I sent the notary (Gegenschreiber) to Herinbiesch to have the grave of a magician (Zauberer) who fell under suspicion opened. He found that the same dead person was fresh and undecayed, and even held the right hand lifted to his mouth, his head was turned towards the right side and there was blood under the head. This way, since the body was lying in the earth for more than three months, there could be no other supposition, but that this must be a bloodsucker (Bluthsaugerer [sic!]). Therefore, I am humbly awaiting an order from the praiseworthy imperial administration, as to what should be done now to the body, because it is lying in an open grave with guards set around it.'*³¹³

It is noteworthy that given the three months that the corpse spent underground, the provisor saw it proven that the corpse had to be a 'bloodsucker'. He did not use a local term, but rather a description of the activity, which means he had to be informed about these local ideas. The other term used for the corpse is 'magician', and it is unclear where did this information come from: did locals hold him in such a repute already during his lifetime, or did it emerge in their thoughts after his death, or was it Rácz who interpreted the situation as witchcraft? After all, this was probably a framework he was familiar with. The lifting of the hand to the mouth might also be an indication that Rácz thought the corpse was chewing at its hand like a *Nachzehrer*. Setting guards around the corpse and leaving the grave open was a brave decision, as one can imagine the unbearable tensions in the village at the presence of a disinterred *moroica*.

The administrators were gradually learning into the diagnosis and practice of revenant executions. In 1726, when news of a revenant from another village reached Rácz, he was a little more confident than in the Herinbiesch case: he informed the administration that locals had exhumed an old woman suspected of bloodsucking, and that he, based on the recognisable signs, had permitted the decapitation of the body. However, now he wanted to know whether he could allow the burning of the body as well?³¹⁴ It seems that in these early years the provincial administration was willing to permit such anti-vampire measures.

³¹² I.e., the Temesvár Provincial Administration.

³¹³ Luckily, the letter is preserved ('Letter by district provisor Johann Rácz'). See also: Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:135. Even though provisors seem to have been mostly of German origins, it is possible that Joannes Rácz de Mehedia was Rascian. However, based solely on his name, one must be cautious in drawing such a conclusion.

³¹⁴ Baróti, 2:136.

Two further cases offer insight into the struggles for power over the revenant's body between the population and the Orthodox clergy. Both cases relate the same situation: the cameral district provisor is unsure and expects advice from the provincial administration about what to do, as a whole village was excommunicated by the protopope for having executed vampires without permission. The two villages involved are both situated in the Lugos - Facset District: Babscha (today Babșa, Romania) in 1725 and Gruin (today Gruni, Romania) in 1729.³¹⁵ The excommunication of a whole village naturally could only have worsened the situation: those dying under anathema, being denied the proper funerary ritual, were destined to become revenants. The severity of the measure shows how intensely the clergy wanted to control the flock. Unfortunately, we cannot see into the conflicts between the two, we cannot know why the settlers chose not to involve the clergy in the ritual. Possibly, just as in the case of the Kisilova vampire, anxieties rose so high that they had no patience to wait for a slow institutional reaction and felt compelled to take matters in their own hands. In the end, the provincial administration had to intervene into the conflict, and sent the district provisor to negotiate the revocation of the anathema. The newcomer in the vampire-situation, the Habsburg administration could step up as a mediator in the conflict.

Vampiric snakes and deadly magnetism in Slavonia

Vampiric snakes near Pozsega, Slavonia (1721 / 1730)

At present, there are two known cases from Slavonia, and the first one was a two-wave revenant infestation in a village near Pozsega (today Požega, Croatia). The narrative about the case is second hand, published in journals within the frames of the 1732 learned debate on vampires, and supposedly comes from a trustworthy eyewitness account. This source is valuable for it attests to the inability of Habsburg officials to understand the working logics of local ideas and delivers a generally confused rendering of the matter. The anonymous relation was published in spring 1732 in three journals. The Regensburg-based *Kurtz-gefasster historischer Nachrichten* and the Frankfurt-am-Main-seated *Relationis historicae* were both journals specialized in collecting remarkable and memorable events, while the Nürnberg-

³¹⁵ Baróti, 2:135, 140.

based *Commercium Litterarium* was a general scientific journal aimed at the learned audience of the university town of Nürnberg's.³¹⁶ The *Commercium* reprinted the Regensburg journal's version in Latin among its series of articles on vampires. Unfortunately, none of the journals disclosed the identity of the informant.

According to the story, around 1730, a commission involving a military surgeon from the Jung-Deun Infantry Regiment and a Turkish doctor of medicine set out from Pozsega to investigate the suspicious death of the whole family of a pandur (a militiaman, the Slavonian version of Rascian hajduks) in a small village. Upon arrival, locals explained to the commission that problems started when a calf was bitten to death by a 'vampire', which also sucked its blood out. The journal article at this point explains that a 'vampire' is a local kind of snake. The carcass, the story goes, was later found by the pandur, who brought it home, cooked it and ate it with his family. Within a short time, all four of them died. Locals now were afraid that the snakes would find these corpses looking for nourishment and then would come to attack the living as well. They also disclosed that in 1721 the village had already been afflicted by vampires that attacked people. Because of this, they urged the commissioners to unearth the four members of the pandur family. The bodies had only spent 20 days underground and were found in a life-like state. The commission allowed locals to have the corpses staked, burnt and the ashes thrown back into the grave. The author of the article put forward the theory that some form of a snake epidemic must have been responsible for the deaths, in which venomous snakes bit and sucked at the living and the dead alike.

The narrative has an unusually confusing storyline. It is entirely unclear, which information stemmed from whom. Who identified vampires as snakes: was it locals, the commissioners, the journal's informant or the journal's editor? Are we talking about animal snakes, or human revenants taking the shape of snakes? What was the relation between the 1721 attacks and the 1730 death of the family? Would the same snakes that killed the calf seek out the human corpses? And why would they then attack the living as well? Until archival documents are found about the events, these questions have to remain unanswered, but the confusing

³¹⁶ Anon., 'Zwölffter Haupt-titul. Von denckwürdig und seltsamen Begebenheiten', *Relationis Historicae Semestralis Autumnalis Continuatio. Jacobi Franci Historische Beschreibung Der Denckwürdigsten Geschichten...*, Autumn 1732, 113; Anon., 'Erläuterung von denen Begebenheiten derer Vampyr oder blutsaugenden Schlangen', *Kurtz-Gefasster Historischer Nachrichten zum Behuf der Neuern Europäischen Begebenheiten* XI. (March 1732): 176; Anon., 'Ex historia vampyrorum', 146-147.

nature of the narrative in itself shows that the German journal author and/or the imperial military commissioners had troubles understanding the causal relations and logics behind local belief. It seems certain that the threat these vampiric snakes posed affected many people, it was some sort of an infestation, but the details of the spread of this infestation are entirely unclear.

Even though so far, no archival records have been found of the case, it can fairly seamlessly be situated into the area's administrative situation in the 1720s-1730s. Pozsega itself had been reconquered from the Ottomans in 1691 together with much of Slavonia. Within the province, Pozsega belonged to the northern strip of Slavonia (Figure 19), an area that had a special status. Strictly speaking, it was not part of the military frontier (overseen by the Viennese Aulic War Council) but was also not reincorporated into the Hungarian Kingdom until 1744. Instead, it had a civilian government and was directly governed by the Aulic Treasury in Vienna. Its inhabitants were not frontiersmen and had no military duties, but did have to take part in fortification works.³¹⁷ It is possible that the Jung-Daun Infantry Regiment was stationed in Pozsega at the time, though Alphons von Wrede in his history of the Habsburg army noted that the regiment in the 1730s was mostly stationed in Hungary,³¹⁸ a reference that might include Slavonia. That the Jung-Daun Regiment would be stationed in a civilian town, such as Pozsega is not impossible to imagine, for Pozsega was the closest major town to the Sava Military Frontier, one of the major sections of the frontier established following the 1699 Treaty of Karlóca (today Sremski Karlovci, Serbia). In fact, the Sava Frontier itself was governed from a civilian Slavonian town, that of Eszék (today Osijek, Croatia).

The fact that a military regiment investigated the case instead of a civilian commission indicates that the events must have taken place in military territory, probably in one of the pandur villages of the Sava Frontier, not far south of Pozsega. During the time of the events in 1721 / 1730, the Sava Frontier was in an in-between status: with the Treaty of Pozsarevác (today Požarevac, Serbia) in 1718 the Habsburg Monarchy's border was pushed further south,

³¹⁷ Wessely, *Die österreichische Militärgrenze. Rechtstellung, Aufgaben, Bevölkerung. Sonderausdruck aus Volkstum zwischen Moldau Etsch und Donau.*; Wessely, 'The Development of the Hungarian Military Frontier until the Middle of the Eighteenth Century'; See the map in: Bálint Hóman and Gyula Szekfű, *Magyar történet*, Online Edition (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1928), chap. A közjogi kompromisszum, <https://mek.oszk.hu/00900/00940/html/>.

³¹⁸ Later on named De Vaux Infantry Regiment (Nr. 45.) Alphons von Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht von 1618 bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, Supplement zu den Mittheilungen des k. und k. Kriegs-Archivs (Wien: L.W. Seidel & Sohn, 1898), 245.

and the new, Serbian military frontier was established. This move essentially rendered the Slavonian Military Frontier superfluous, nevertheless, it was not officially abolished, even though Hungarian landlords were exerting increased pressure for Slavonia's reincorporation into the Hungarian Kingdom. Finally, after the loss of Habsburg Serbia in the 1737-1739 war, the Treaty of Belgrade again made the existence of the Slavonian Military Frontier fully justified, and it remained the Empire's border for the coming century.

Perhaps the most curious element of the story is the presence of a Turkish physician in the commission: that officials of the borderland's Habsburg administration were forced to rely on expertise given by 'others' in the sense of cultural, religious others is a recurring motif in the vampire-stories of the region. In all likelihood, the person mentioned in the narrative was not Turkish in the sense of Muslim Turkish, in the era the label 'Turkish' was often applied to Orthodox Balkan people: Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, who came from beyond the border. The 1718 Treaty of Pozsarevác supported the flow of such 'Turkish' merchants into the Habsburg Monarchy, for it gave substantially preferable customs tax rates to them. Many came to live for some time, even settle in the borderland.³¹⁹ It is possible that the Turkish doctor was such a settler. The military frontier, after all, only functioned as a closed wall during plague times, otherwise it allowed the flow of goods, people, information, and in this particular case, vampire-related expertise. It is not far-fetched to suppose that this person was included in the commission because of his earlier experiences with revenants in the Ottoman Empire, where (as it has been indicated above) authorities had also been dealing with revenants for a long time.

Deadly magnetism within a family of Pétervárad, Slavonia (1728)

While the Sava Military Frontier witnessed the tragic death of a whole pandur family because of vampiric snakes, a family in Pétervárad (today Petrovaradin, Serbia), the centre of the Danube Military Frontier in East Slavonia was the victim of another curious deadly affliction. This time it was a physician in Pétervárad, who witnessed the case in 1728 and sent an account about it to military physician ('physicus castrensis') Haack in Belgrade.³²⁰ Haack in turn retold

³¹⁹ Hóman and Szekfű, *Magyar történet*, chap. Az új népesség. Gazdasági és nemzetiség viszonyok.

³²⁰ Attempts at finding out more about his biography have unfortunately so far been unsuccessful.

the story in a letter (our only extant source of the events) to an unnamed imperial count (*Reichsgraf*) and general commander (*Generalfeldmarschall*).³²¹ As the letter is today found in the Timișoara National Archives, and the rest of it discusses the position of a surgeon in Pancsova, a district centre in the southern edge of the Banat, the addressee in all likelihood was Count Florimund de Mercy, governor of the Banat and imperial general commander since 1723. Haack also intimated to de Mercy, that he intended to send the relation for an opinion to the Leopoldina, a leading scientific academy in the Holy Roman Empire. There is no evidence that he had actually done so, or that the Leopoldina reacted to it in any way.

The case described by Haack concerned an imperial military officer named Vogel and his family in Pétervárad. According to the letter, Vogel and his eight-year-old son not only had a very close, loving relationship but ‘physiognomically’ they also looked extremely alike, as if the son was a copy of the father. The father at one point fell terminally ill and was treated in a secluded room of the house. Meanwhile, the boy was extremely anxious and after crying out ‘My father is certainly dying now, and I must follow him soon’, fell on a bed and after a couple of hours died at exactly the same time when his father also passed away. Meanwhile, a surgeon was performing bloodletting on the mother in a third room. Even though she did not know anything about the boy’s condition, as she was fainting from the blood loss, she suddenly cried out ‘Oh, Jesus, my son is dying as well!’. The narrative, echoing witchcraft trials, demonic possession cases and saint’s lives, utilizes the element of the knowledge of secrets, when people gain knowledge of events through preternatural means, not through their usual senses. In this case, familial ties made it possible for the son and the mother to know exactly when death will set in, what is more, they were so strong that the death of the father dragged the child into the grave as well. After describing the events, Haack termed the case *magnetismus naturalis mumialis*.

Even though the Pétervárad case did not involve vampires or revenants, it is significant for two reasons. For one, it shows that close emotional and / or familial ties were thought by average people as well as by certain physicians to be channels of death. The links binding lovers, relatives, or by extension, anyone who have strong emotional (possibly even negative) relationships can be so strong, that they remain active even across the boundary of death.

³²¹ Haack, ‘Coerem magnetismi naturalis, sympathetico mumialis’.

This is one of the central elements in revenant-experiences as well. As it will be shown below, even if revenant cases spiralled out of control and engulfed whole communities, the first victims more often than not were people with strong ties between them. This feature was noticed and commented upon by the learned discussants of vampirism as well and was one of the ways in which even within the frames of the early German Enlightenment, vampiric murder could be conceived of as real.

The second reason why the letter is important is that it shows that in his capacity as Belgrade military physician, Haack functioned as a provider of strange death-related phenomena to the provincial governors of the borderland. The military physician was knowledgeable in the topic of unusual deaths, which is indicated by two technical terms we know he was familiar with: 'magnetismus mumialis' and 'magia posthuma'. The latter meant 'magic from beyond the grave' and denoted the harmful effects certain corpses might exert on the living. As it will be detailed below (Chapter IV.1.), Haack was a corresponding partner of Georg Ernst Stahl, the renowned animist physician in Berlin. In a 1732 letter, which Haack wrote to Stahl about the Medvedia vampires, he labelled the vampire case as 'magia posthuma'.³²² This is significant because it was unusual to use the term in reference to the southern vampires of the southern borderland. Instead, the expression comes up in historical documents in a Moravian-Silesian context and was specifically made known through a classic work on Moravian revenants, the *Magia posthuma*, published in 1704 by Karl Ferdinand von Schertz, lawyer and advisor to the Bishop of Olomouc in Moravia, Cardinal von Schrattenbach.³²³ That Haack used *magia posthuma* to denote the Serbian vampire cases supplies further evidence that he was knowledgeable on the topic of revenants and as military physician of Belgrade, he must have discussed unusual death-related phenomena with Prince Charles Alexander as well. By this time Habsburg Serbia has already witnessed the Kisilova vampire case of 1725 (see below), about which Prince Charles Alexander has already submitted an investigation report. The governor's interest in strange death-related phenomena must have been growing already in the 1720s, years before he was informed about the vampires of Medvedia in 1732.

³²² 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 5r-v.

³²³ Schertz, *Magia posthuma*.

As explained in Chapter I, the expression *magnetismus mumialis* was often used in the iatrochemical tradition of early modern medicine. Throughout the early modern era, mummy (or mumia) was a powerful concoction of vital spirits prepared from fresh human body parts, such as skull bones or blood, and mumial magnetism was attraction at a distance based on the vital spirits of the human body.³²⁴ Mumia could get infused with poisons and dangerous miasmas, which could stay active even years after the person's death.³²⁵ In this respect, Haack's Pétervárad example suggests two things. First, that in the mother's case, the shared mumia in their blood made her able to sense the death of her child. Second, the shared mumia combined with the unusually close connection and outward resemblance between father and son transmitted the poisonous / harmful particles of the dying father as well and resulted in a deadly attraction.

The bloodsuckers of Serbia

The lone vampire of Kisilova, Serbia (1725)

Three years before the Pétervárad incident, the civilian cameral provisor of the Ram-Gradiska district in the northern border of Habsburg Serbia, named Johann Frombald had a first-hand contact with a revenant. In the winter of 1724/5, Frombald sent a report to the Vienna imperial administration about the strange events that happened in Kisilova (today Kisiljevo, Serbia), a tiny Rascian village on the right bank of the Danube, close to Újpalánka (today Banatska Palanka, Serbia).³²⁶ In the village, nine people died within a week following a 24-hour disease, during which they complained that Peter Plogojowitz, a dead fellow villager came to them in their sleep and tormented them by lying on their chests and sucking their blood. The local community requested provisor Frombald to visit the village accompanied by an Orthodox

³²⁴ Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires - The History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians*, 38–66; 188–194.

³²⁵ Helmont, *A Ternary of Paradoxes. The Magnetick Cure of Wounds. Nativity of Tartar in Wine. Image of God in Man.*, 17.

³²⁶ As I have shown elsewhere, secondary literature often misplaces Kisilova to the Slavonian district of Gradisca. Ádám Mézes, 'Insecure Boundaries: Medical Experts and the Returning Dead on the Southern Habsburg Borderland' (MA Thesis, Budapest, Central European University, 2013), 29.; The source of the mistake apparently is the French journal *Mercure Historique et Politique*'s article on the case in its 1736 edition. Jean Rousset de Missy, ed., *Mercure historique et politique... pour le mois de juillet 1736.*, vol. 101 (A La Haye: Henri Schburléer, 1736), 403–411.

priest and to give permission to exhume Plogojowitz. By the time Frombald arrived, Plogojowitz's body was already disinterred; the provisor was surprised, because the ten-week-old corpse had no corpse-smell and looked fresh: hair, beard and nails had grown, new skin was seen growing under the separating old, and fresh blood was seen in his mouth, which everyone agreed was the blood he had sucked out of his victims. Based on these signs, he was pronounced to be a 'Vampyr' by locals; they drove a stake through his heart and Frombald saw a copious amount of blood flowing from the orifices and the wound, as well as other 'wild signs' which the provisor did not deem decorous to disclose, which in all likelihood meant the erection of the corpse's penis. Concerned about having legitimized the rite with his presence he asked his superiors to blame all possible mistakes on the excited mob, for they had threatened him that they would leave the village were they not granted permission.³²⁷

Frombald was unable to gain the permission of the provincial government and the lack of this administrative backup decreased his authority and his confidence to influence the turn of events as well. He failed to take control of the situation and instead of conducting a proper criminal procedure, he handed over the development of the case from accusation through proving to sentence entirely to the local community. At the same time, of course, he legitimized it with his presence. Fearing the possible consequences from his superiors, Frombald wrote his report in a highly defensive tone, presenting himself more powerless than he actually was. Furthermore, it was also probably this fear of being condemned for his actions that made him send his report not to Belgrade, but straight to Vienna. It is likely that he was trying to gain their sympathy in case the provincial administration would reprimand him. As it will be shown in the fourth chapter, at the exact same year, in 1725, another district provisor named Johann Rácz, in the neighbouring province of the Banat was much better able to maintain his control over the process. He not only managed to get his notary be present at and document the exhumation of a revenant, but by positioning guards next to the corpse, he could also win time to request and gain permission from the Banat provincial administration

³²⁷ Frombald, 'Copia des vom Herrn Frombald kayserlichen cameral Provisore...' Our only data on the dating of the events to the winter of 1724-1725 is the fact that the copy of the report is filed in the archives under the documents relating to January-February 1725. The report was published in the main Vienna newspaper as well: Anon., 'Copia eines Schreibens aus dem Gradisker District in Ungarn'; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 43–45.

for the executions.³²⁸ It is possible that in Frombald's village the situation was more tense and critical, and it is obvious that district officials were under pressure from two sides: the local community and the imperial administration.

Frombald's inertness (or at least his narrative about being forced to be inert by locals) also meant that an important part of the evidence he reported was second-hand. Nowhere in the report does he mention having talked to those victims of Plojowicz who were still alive. Whether there were actually none alive at the time he arrived or he was too much carried by the events as I suggest here, the result is the same: he could not report first-hand experiences of the vampire sickness. In his description of the disease he relied on the information transmitted to him through the village delegation. What we get to know is that Plojowicz died in an unfortunate but natural way while 9 villagers, old and young alike died afterwards in 8 days following a short, 24-hour disease. No symptoms are described, except for one: that the sick complained of Plojowicz attacking them in their dreams, lying on their chest and torturing them. Frombald this way gave a description of the affliction that mirrored local priorities and supported its local interpretation. Further, he makes no mention in the report about which of the nine people who died had these dreams, and which did not. The provisor did not bring a physician or surgeon with him to the site, perhaps because of a lack of medical personnel in Gradiska,³²⁹ or his hasty leave to Kisilova. The lack of medical personnel present at the investigations further contributed to the narrowing down of possible interpretations to that proposed by the villagers.

At the request of the delegation however, Frombald did bring the Orthodox pope of Gradiska with himself, a move that brought in another actor who had more experience in dealing with revenant cases than Habsburg officials. As detailed above, the Orthodox Church's understanding of vampirism was that the excommunicated sinners' corpses became possessed by the devil and would not let the soul leave. Such a body would not decay and would cause harm to the community until absolved. This idea was not entirely harmonious with local interpretations which were probably much more diverse: the other revenant cases

³²⁸ See chapter IV: Disciplining and deciphering the moroi of the Habsburg Banat (1718-55) below. See the provisor's letter: 'Letter by district provisor Johann Rác'. See also: Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:135.

³²⁹ A survey in 1723 for instance found no physicians or apothecaries in Belgrade, the provincial centre, only two surgeons. Langer, 'Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung 1717-1739', 212.

discussed in this chapter clearly show that there several more ways to become a revenant apart from being excommunicated by the Church. The clerical authorities however were trying to force their own interpretation on local communities, and as it happened in the case of the village of Gruin in the Banat (see above), if a community carried out revenant executions without church authorization, consequences were dire: the pope could excommunicate the whole village, which in turn meant that anyone dying during that time was destined to return as a vampire. The intolerance of arbitrary actions while supporting properly authorized cases then, was a characteristic of the Orthodox Church as much as that of the provincial Habsburg administration.

As district provisor, Frombald had to act as a judge and decide whether there was reason to have Plogojowitz's cadaver executed. We cannot be sure how versed Frombald and in general, the provisors were in law, especially in such an arcane section of it. In theory, Frombald was supposed to collect very clear proofs to allow a conviction, and legal theory distinguished between full proof, half-proof and lesser evidence. Capital punishment could only be imposed with full proof, which was to be achieved either by two reliable eyewitnesses or a confession. The two-witness standard in fact had Scriptural backing as well, in 2 Cor 13:1., according to which:

'In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.'

As Catherine Crawford explained, one reliable witness counted as half-proof, while 'less reliable types of evidence, such as the testimony of women, children and paupers, and various indications (*indicia*) such as physiognomy, common repute and circumstantial evidence, were held to provide lesser fractions of proof which might, in combination, amount to a half-proof.'

³³⁰ Half proof would warrant torture, which had the potential to extort a confession, that is, full proof. In practice, judges often did not entirely comply with these standards and circumvented the problem by relying on exceptional punishment (*poena extraordinaria*), according to which even half proofs could warrant a non-capital punishment, such as banishment.

When applied to the case of Plogojowitz, however, these standards become problematic. In general, it must have been somewhat unclear whether executing the dead counts as capital

³³⁰ Crawford, 'Legalizing Medicine: Early Modern Legal Systems and the Growth of Medico-Legal Knowledge', 96.

punishment or not. The case would necessitate full proof only if the answer is yes; if no, then perhaps less than half proof might also do. Also, confession in a conventional sense was impossible, given that the suspect was dead. As the Medvedia vampire case shows (see next subchapter), in theory it was possible to gather testimonies about the culprit having confessed during their lifetime that they would become a vampire after their death. In the Kisilova case however, this element did not come up. Finally, Frombald tried to gather witness accounts, the most valuable of which would have been those recorded directly from the mouths of the victims. However, Frombald received most of the accounts of attacks only second-hand, since most (if not all) the victims were dead already.

The fact that the victims named Plogojowitz's apparition as the cause of their sufferings was classical spectral evidence, a type of proof which had been repeatedly used and accepted in the witchcraft trials of the early modern period.³³¹ The rising sceptical judicial tradition involving Christian Thomasius at the University of Halle among others, had been voicing doubts about accepting spectral evidence since the beginning of the century. At the same time, their opinion was far from widely accepted and the practice in the Habsburg Monarchy was different: the third greatest wave of witch persecutions in the Hungarian Kingdom was going on at exactly the same time as the Kisilova vampire case.³³² If he was familiar with witch trials, Frombald may have recognised Plogojowitz's returning as spectral evidence. At the same time, the victims' experiences mostly happened at night, when they were asleep, an aspect that substantially weakened their evidentiary nature. Though unclear from the report, Plogojowitz's wife may have been one of those who were awake when she saw the spectre of her husband come back and ask for his shoes. This might have rung a bell to the provisor, as the dead relative returning home and continuing his everyday habits was a usual narrative element in ghost stories all over Europe.

Apart from the witness accounts there was one more evidence at Frombald's disposal: a *corpus delicti*, the uncorrupted corpse of the culprit. Even in the notoriously secret crime of

³³¹ Brian P. Levack, 'Witchcraft and the Law', in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 468–84.

³³² Gábor Klaniczay, 'Boszorkányhit, boszorkányvád, boszorkányüldözés a 16–18. században'. *Ethnographia* 97 (1986): 257–295.

witchcraft, in which accusations rarely offered physical evidence,³³³ and the accusation rested on the witness accounts and the confession of the culprit, there were methods to gather lesser value physical evidence directly from the body of the suspect. Prosecutors were often looking for the devil's mark, an insensitive spot on the skin. At this point, Frombald's inertness became visible again: the corpse had already been disinterred by the time he arrived. What's more, the delegation told Frombald *ahead* what the sure signs of a vampire are: the uncorrupted body, old skin and nails peeling off while new, fresh ones growing underneath, hair and beard growing. They prepared him, made him susceptible to what he was going to see. In addition to the predicted signs, Frombald remarked that he felt no foul smell. We cannot be sure whether Frombald had ever heard of such corpses (be they natural or those of ghosts, witches, *Nachzehrers* or else), but he added that he was surprised to see the body in an uncorrupted state, thereby insinuating that something was indeed not right with it. In fact, he might have understood this lack of decay as a confession.

Frombald's report was tainted with local power relations, fears and biases of the actors of the southern Habsburg borderland. Firstly, the people who are present at the criminal process of investigating a vampire case naturally have a chance to influence the way questions are posed, as well as the way the gathering and the interpretation of proofs is going on. In this respect, it is noteworthy that Frombald did not bring medical experts with him, but he did bring an Orthodox pope. He further diminished his own power to influence the flow of events by not getting an authorisation from the provincial administration. Second, as a consequence, his report relied mostly on second-hand testimonies given not by victims of Plojowitz, but by the village delegation. His only first-hand evidence was the corpse, whose state to his surprise corresponded to what had been predicted by the delegation. In the end, he was not able to oversee the exhumation, nor to stop locals from executing the corpse, who this way burnt the only existing hard evidence to ashes. Frombald legitimized the locals' criminal procedure by his presence and wrote a report to which he added his signature together with all the weight of his position as an administrative official.

³³³ Péter Tóth G., 'A Boszorkányok hagyatéka - A tárgyi bizonyíték és a (mágikus) bűnjel a magyarországi boszorkányperekben', in *Tárgy, jel, jelentés: 'Tárgy és folklór' konferencia Vaján, 2005. október 7-9-én*, ed. Éva Pócs (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2008), 209-280.

The report reached the imperial administration probably already in early 1725, and there was silence until mid-summer that year. For some reason, the case leaked out of the imperial administration and got reprinted in the 21st July 1725 issue of the Viennese newspaper *Wienerisches Diarium*.³³⁴ A number of European journals reprinted it subsequently, and it was mentioned in a treatise that appeared in Leipzig the same year, but in general the report did not cause much public stir.³³⁵ The treatise, written by a Lutheran pastor, Michael Ranfft, was about the phenomenon of *masticatio mortuorum*, that is, the chewing of the dead, a belief that certain corpses chew their shrouds or their own limbs in the grave thereby causing plague.³³⁶ Frombald's report only started to receive heightened public attention when the report about the Medvedia vampires outed in 1732.

Within administrative circles however, the case did have repercussions, and prince governor Charles Alexander also got involved in the matter. As it has been suggested elsewhere,³³⁷ Frombald had originally sent his report not to the Belgrade provincial administration, but straight to the Neoacquistica Commissio in Vienna. In all likelihood, it was a conscious decision on his part to avoid the provincial level: he was trying to secure Viennese support in case the provincial level condemned him for not having secured permission from Belgrade to authorize the corpse execution. Apparently, it was the publication of the report on 21st July in the Viennese newspaper that prompted an administrative investigation: on 25th July the Aulic War Council ordered Prince Charles Alexander to look into the matter. It was not the last time that the threat of a public scandal about the administrative practices on the borderland prompted investigations into the revenant-policing measures. Prince Charles Alexander handed in his report on 2nd August 1725, even though this second investigation probably did not have anything substantial to analyse, since the culprit corpse and evidence had already been burnt to ashes months earlier. It is unfortunate, that the report itself was disposed of from the archives and is probably lost for ever.

³³⁴ Anon., 'Copia eines Schreibens aus dem Gradisker District in Ungarn'.

³³⁵ Michael Ranfft, *De masticatione mortuorum in tumultis, oder von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern* (Leipzig: A. Martinus, 1728). The journals reprinting the report are for instance the *Bresslausche Sammlungen*, the *Holsteinischen Gazetten* and the *Hamburgische Correspondenten*.

³³⁶ Schürmann, *Nachzehrer glauben in Mitteleuropa*.

³³⁷ Aribert Schroeder, *Vampirismus - Seine Entwicklung von Thema zum Motiv* (Frankfurt am Main: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1973), 41, 44-45.; Kreuter, *Der Vampirglaube in Südosteuropa: Studien zur Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion. Rumänien und der Balkanraum*, 83.; Mézes, 'Insecure Boundaries', 29-30.

Count Cabrera's familial revenants, somewhere on the southern borderland (1716-1730)

Prince Charles Alexander may have known of three further revenant cases that happened on the southern border between 1716 and 1730. The information on the cases comes from Augustin Calmet, whose informant heard it from a certain count referred to as 'Comte de Cabrerass', a captain in the 'Alandetti Infantry Regiment'.³³⁸ The count (whose name, as it will be detailed below, was in fact Cabrera) had investigated at least one of the three mentioned revenant cases in person, all of which were situated 'on the Hungarian border'. Even though it is not easy to identify the protagonists, the location and timing of the events, the story itself in all probability rests on real experiences of the invading imperial army's soldiers in the alien lands of Slavonia, Serbia and the Banat.

The first story's protagonist is an imperial soldier billeted in one of the houses of the local community. The soldier was having a meal in the company of his host, when suddenly a man entered the room and sat down to dine with the family, who became visibly frightened at the sight. The soldier did not understand what was so scary about this, but in a few days the host suddenly died, and the family members disclosed to the soldier that the man he had seen entering the room was the host's father, dead for more than ten years. They also intimated that the dead father's appearance 'presaged and caused' the host's death. The soldier reported the matter to his regiment's commander, and captain Cabrera was sent with a commission consisting of military officers, military surgeons and an auditor to investigate the matter. Each regiment had an auditor, who was not only responsible for dealing with all the legal matters related to the members of the regiment, but also for collecting and noting down the notable events relating to the history of the regiment.³³⁹ The commission heard witnesses who confirmed the soldier's report, after which the commissioners had the father's grave opened and found the corpse as if alive, with its blood as that of a living person. Captain Cabrera had its head chopped off and the body was placed back into the grave.

³³⁸ Augustin Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions des esprits et sur les vampires, ou les revenans de Hongrie, de Moravie Etc.* (Paris, 1746), 275-278.; Calmet, *Gelehrte Verhandlung*, 2:30-32.

³³⁹ Alphons von Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht von 1618 bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1, Supplement zu den Mittheilungen des k. und k. Kriegs-Archivs (Wien: L.W. Seidel & Sohn, 1898), 40.

Two more cases were related by captain Cabrera to Calmet's informant, but it is unclear from the text whether the count was present at these as well, or whether he only heard them from someone else.³⁴⁰ One story involved a man who had been dead for more than thirty years, but came back to visit his family three times, always during mealtimes: he attacked his brother, his son and a household servant, all of whom died on the spot. After hearing the accusations, the commissioner had the body disinterred and finding the sign of fluid blood present in the corpse, ordered a large nail to be put through the forehead of the corpse, and to put it back into the grave. The third case involved a corpse which had spent sixteen years underground before killing two of its own sons through bloodsucking. The commissioner had the corpse burnt at the stake, and reported it to the general command, which notified the emperor's court, which in turn ordered an investigation to be carried out by military officers, judges, physicians and surgeons in order to find out the extraordinary causes behind the events.

Given that the story was related only third hand, we cannot be sure about the nature of the original local revenant experiences, but in the shape they were described by Calmet they had a number of specific characteristics that were in line with the medieval and early modern European concepts about the returning dead. Neither of the three revenants were seen to be contagious: even though they killed several people, their victims were not exhumed and checked for possible symptoms of revenantism. As a relatively unusual feature as compared to Western models, the revenant attack consisted of bloodsucking through the neck. This is the first clear mention of linking the bloodsucking with the neck: several other cases, such as the 1730 Kuklina revenants related by ensign von Kottowitz or the Medvedia vampires of 1732 also involved indications to this effect, such as a red / blue mark on the victim's neck, but in those cases it is unclear whether it was interpreted as having been caused by strangulation or by bloodsucking. Two of Cabrera's stories follow a usual narrative cliché about the returning dead, in which dead relatives come back to their family and resume their daily business as if they were still alive, such as eating and sleeping with their spouses.³⁴¹ This feature reinforced the idea that familial, or rather close connections can serve as potentially dangerous links

³⁴⁰ These two stories are introduced by the note that 'He [the count] shared further information about other similar revenants', but when describing them, the head of these investigations is called 'the commissioner', not 'the count'. Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions*, 277.

³⁴¹ Cf. for instance the 1718 Kasperek case, where the ghost dined with and impregnated his widow: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 62.

between the living and the dead. And finally, the three cases ended with three different kinds of executions: beheading, piercing a nail through the skull and burning. This variability points at the flexibility of practices in relation to the returning dead.

Localizing Cabrera's cases

Cabrera's narrative is important as it suggests Prince Charles Alexander's knowledge of early vampire cases before the infamous 1732 Medvedia one, but since Augustin Calmet was accused even by his contemporaries of dealing with his sources too light-handedly,³⁴² it is worth checking in detail, to what extent the circumstances of the story add up with historical data. For one, the note that the Viennese imperial court debated the case could not yet be verified, I have not found any traces whatsoever of this. The source of this information might have been Calmet himself, who (as it will be detailed below) mistakenly thought that Cabrera's story is the same as the 1732 Medvedia vampire case. Apart from this, several details about Calmet's relation are supported by historical records. It is certain, that the Alandetti Regiment is a misspelling for Alcaudetti which in turn is an Italianised spelling of the originally Spanish Habsburg Alcaudete Regiment.

There were two infantry regiments created during the War of the Spanish Succession, which in 1713 were transferred to Hungary and were deployed in the Austrian-Ottoman War of 1716-1718: the Alcaudete and the Ahumada Infantry Regiments. These units arrived from Buda to the southern Hungarian battle scene in 1716 and participated in the major stages of the war, such as the 1716 battle of Pétervárad, and the sieges of Temesvár and Belgrade in 1716 and 1717 respectively. Following the 1718 Treaty of Passarowitz, the regiments were stationed in Serbia and the Banat between 1718-1721. In 1721, the two regiments were merged as Alcaudete Infantry Regiment. The same year, the Alcaudete were being quartered for the winter in Eszék, Slavonia.³⁴³ Between 1721-1736 the merged regiment was stationed

³⁴² Stéphane Van Damme, 'Legitimizing Natural History of Superstitions: Historicizing, Documenting and Politicizing the Haunting Geographies of Europe' (Ghostly Europe /16th-18th centuries/: Knowledge production and cultural anxieties, Firenze, European University Institute, 2014).

³⁴³ Zoltán Fallenbüchl, 'Spanyolok Magyarországon a 18. században', *Századok* 111., no. 6. (1977): 1198.

mostly in the Banat, and afterwards in Transylvania and Slavonia between 1736-1755.³⁴⁴ What complicates the matter further is that different units of the regiment were sometimes stationed in different places, for example, around 1728, a couple of units of the Alcaudete Regiment were stationed in Belgrade and were assigned as artillery-service units.³⁴⁵

As far as the possible location of the story is concerned, Calmet positioned the village to ‘the Hungarian border’, but did not specify which border exactly, and some researchers assume it was not the southern border, but the northern one, between the Hungarian Kingdom and Moravia. The 1751 German translation of Calmet’s work suggested that the events happened in a village called ‘*Haidamac*’, however, in the original 1746 French version this word does not seem to refer to a place, but to inhabitants: *hajduks*, the border guarding peasants of the frontier. Compare the two versions:

„Als vor ungefehr fünfzehn Jahren ein Soldat zu Haidamac, auf denen Gräntzen von Ungarn einquartirt ware...”

and

‘Il y a environ quinze ans qu’un soldat étant en garnison chez un Paysan Haidamaque frontiere de Hongrie...’³⁴⁶

Why Calmet chose to use the particular version ‘*Haidamaque*’ of the word hajduk is unclear, because even though it was a cognate of ‘hajduk’, the expression ‘*haydamak*’, was used mostly in Polish sources to denote members of a series of peasant uprisings on the right bank of the Dnieper. The choice may have been unclear for the abbot himself as well, but he seems to have understood it as interchangeable with the Rascian hajduk (‘*Heiduke*’ in the French text). In his description of the infamous 1732 Rascian Medvedia vampire case of Arnout Pavle (to be discussed below), Calmet gave the following footnote to the word ‘*Heiduke*’:

³⁴⁴ The Alcaudete Regiment was renamed at the end of the eighteenth century as 48th Infantry Regiment Schmidtfeld. Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht von 1618 bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 1898, 2:190–91, 222–223.

³⁴⁵ Langer, ‘Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung 1717-1739’, 211.; Before military reforms took place in the middle of the century, infantry regiments were required to give about 100 soldiers each to serve artillery regiments in moving the cannons about. István Nagy-L., *A császári-királyi hadsereg, 1765-1815 - Szervezettörténet és létszámviszonyok* (Pápa: Gróf Esterházy Károly Múzeum, 2013), 47, 220.

³⁴⁶ Calmet, *Gelehrte Verhandlung*, 2:30.; Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions*, 275-276. Italics mine - Á.M.

‘Cette Histoire est apparemment la même que celle que nous avons vue ci-devant sous le nom de Haidamleloque arrivée vers l’an 1729, ou 1730.’³⁴⁷

The ‘Haidamleloque’ story that arrived in 1729 or 1730 is undoubtedly a reference to the Cabrera-story, and thus, apparently, Calmet thought that that story was the same as the Medvedia one. It is safe to assume that for Calmet *Haidamaque* and *Haidamleloque* were not place names, simply interchangeable versions of *Heiduque*, i.e. hajduk frontiersmen.

All this nit-picking about hajduks is necessary because as it has been mentioned above, various cognates of the word were widespread in and around the Carpathian basin, from Silesia through Transylvania to Serbia. Since in Calmet’s text, the Cabrera-story precedes a revenant case from Moravia, Christian D’Elvert, writer of a monograph on magic and witchcraft in Moravia assumed that Calmet’s ‘Haidamac’ is a misspelling of Hodonin (today Hodonín, Czech Republic).³⁴⁸ Hodonin and Holics (today Holíč, Slovakia) were two towns forming a border crossing on the Moravian-Hungarian border. D’ Elvert based his opinion on J.E. Horky’s work, who published a number of Moravian magia posthuma cases in his weekly paper, the *Brünner Wochenblatt* in 1824. Horky, however, did not give any reasons why he assumed the story had taken place in Hodonin.³⁴⁹

Given the available evidence, in my opinion the localization to the southern borderland is fairly certain and is supported by the fact that, as detailed above, the Alcaudete Regiment during the 1720’s-1750’s was usually stationed on the Southern Habsburg borderland: Slavonia, Serbia, the Banat and Transylvania. Further, given that the death of the billeted soldiers’ host was dealt with entirely within a military administration, involving a military judge (the auditor), and no district provisor was involved in the matter, it indeed had to happen (as Calmet suggested) in one of the military frontier’s hajduk villages, which narrows the matter down to Slavonia, Serbia and the Banat, because at this time the Transylvanian military frontier had not been created yet.

³⁴⁷ Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions*, 280. Italics mine - Á.M.

³⁴⁸ Ferdinand Bischof and Christian d’Elvert, *Zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Zauberer, Hexen und Vampyre in Mähren und Österreichische Schlesien*, Schriften der Historisch-Statistischen Section der k.k. Mährischen Schlesischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung des Ackerbaues, der Natur- und Landeskunde 12 (Brünn: Rudolf Robrer’s Erben, 1859), 161.; Based on D’Elvert’s work, the misplacement of the case to the Hungarian-Moravian border is perpetuated in secondary literature as well. Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 60.

³⁴⁹ J.E. Horky, ‘Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre’, *Brünner Wochenblatt zur Beförderung der Vaterlandskunde, zur Belehrung und Unterhaltung*, no. 96–99 (1824): 394.

Whether Prince Charles Alexander had knowledge of the cases is uncertain, but possible. Already in 1716 at the siege of Újpalánka, Charles Alexander commanded a company of the Alcaudete Regiment.³⁵⁰ From 1717 on, he was general commander of the army, and from 1720 on was president of the Provincial Administration of Habsburg Serbia. If the case happened in Habsburg Serbia after that time, Prince Charles Alexander had to be informed about the matters, if on the other hand in Slavonia or the Banat, then perhaps not. In Calmet's rendering of the story, it was the regiment's commander who ordered Cabrera to investigate the vampire case, and we can name the possible options for his identity based on Alfons Wrede's above-cited data on the regiment's history. At any given time, regiments had an owner and a commander. The two regiments' owners were Count Antonio Alcaudete and Count Juan Ahumada y Cardenas respectively, but the commanders changed frequently. Until the merging, the Alcaudete Regiment was commanded by its owner, Count Alcaudete (1713-1716), then by D'Orbea (1716-1720) and finally by Vicomte de Torres (1720-1721).³⁵¹ After the 1721 merging, the commanders were Count Alcaudete (1721-1722) again, then Marquis Bartholomäus Valparaíso (1722-1727) and Count Escotti (1727-1739).

In terms of the identity of Calmet's main informant, 'Comte de Cabrerass', two countdoms of origin have been proposed, both of which are known to have given several military officers to the Habsburg army during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the counts of Caprara in Bologna and the counts of Cabrera in Valencia. Hamberger suggested the former and mentioned in support that a General Caprara was commander in chief of an important fortress on the southern Habsburg frontier, the Warasdiner fortress (today Varaždin, Croatia) at the beginning of the 18th century.³⁵² This is a reference to Aeneas Sylvius Count of Caprara, colonel of the Wend (i.e. Slovenian) military border, but he died as early as 1701.³⁵³ Another Aeneas Count of Caprara was commander of the Alcaudete Infantry Regiment, but only as late as 1773.³⁵⁴ Because of the time frames, neither of these Caprara commanders could have been identical to Calmet's 'Cabrerass'.

³⁵⁰ Matuschka, *Feldzüge des Prinzen Eugen von Savoyen - Der Türken-Krieg 1716-18. Feldzug 1716.*, 16.:250.

³⁵¹ Until the merging of the two regiments, the commanders of the Ahumada Regiment were the owner Count Juan Ahumada (1713-1716), and Villanova (1716-1721).

³⁵² Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 60.

³⁵³ Géza Pálffy, 'Kerületi és végvidéki főkapitányok és főkapitány-helyettesek Magyarországon a 16–17. században', *Történelmi Szemle*, no. 2. (1997): 257-288.

³⁵⁴ Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht von 1618 bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 1898, 2:222.

The most plausible identification so far has been put forward by Javier Arries, who proposed Don Juan Gil de Cabrera y Perellós from Valencia, who served as captain in the Ahumada Regiment during the 1716-1718 Austrian-Ottoman war.³⁵⁵ As Arries pointed it out, given that the Ahumada was merged into the Alcaudete Regiment only in 1721, and Cabrera is referred to by Calmet as a captain of the Alcaudete, not of the Ahumada Regiment, it is likely that the revenant cases happened sometime between 1721 and 1730. At the same time, we cannot exclude the possibility that the cases actually happened earlier, and Cabrera is referred to as captain in the Alcaudete Regiment simply because he was holding that position at the time he was telling the story in 1730 to Calmet's informant, not at the time the investigations happened. Because of this, at present we can only be certain that the three cases happened sometime between 1716 (the time that the Spanish regiments left Buda for the war against the Ottomans) and 1730, when Cabrera talked to Calmet's informant.

Apart from the regiment's and the captain's name, there is a further detail in Calmet's relation that seems to tie in with other historical evidence. The discussion during which count Cabrera told Calmet's informant about the case purportedly took place in 1730 in Freiburg im Breisgau, a town in the Duchy of Württemberg, near the French border. Why count Cabrera was staying in Württemberg is unclear: he might have been on his way home from the southern Habsburg border to Spain through the Duchy of Württemberg, perhaps already as a veteran. However, as indicated by Peter H. Wilson in his monograph on the same duchy, in exactly 1730, the Alcaudete Regiment was on its way crossing through the eastern part of the Duchy of Württemberg.³⁵⁶ In all likelihood, this was a replacement unit consisting of new recruits for the regiment, and Cabrera's presence in Württemberg might have been related to this movement of units. It is known that upon their arrival to the southern Hungarian battle scene in 1716, the Spanish regiments had been badly in need of replenishment, for they only had around 1500 men each, which was substantially less than for instance the newly created Alt-Württemberg Infantry Regiment's 2300 soldiers.³⁵⁷ Given the loss of the Spanish dominions

³⁵⁵ Javier Arries, 'El comte de Cabrera. Un caçador de vampirs valencià a l'Hongria del segle XVIII', *L'Upir*, no. 3 (2009): 4–49; Another Cabrera fought in the Great Turkish War of 1683-1699: Juan Tomás Enriquez de Cabrera, count of Melgara. See: Pietro Del Negro, 'Luigi Ferdinando Marsili e le armes savantes nell' Europa tra sei e settecento', in *La politica, la scienza, le armi. Luigi Ferdinando Marsili e la costruzione della frontiera dell'impero e dell'Europa*, ed. Raffaella Gherardi (Bologna: CLUEB, 2010), 113.

³⁵⁶ Peter Hamish Wilson, *War, State and Society in Württemberg, 1677-1793* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 148.

³⁵⁷ Matuschka, *Feldzüge des Prinzen Eugen von Savoyen - Der Türken-Krieg 1716-18. Feldzug 1716.*, 16.:62.

to the French in the War of Spanish Succession, the new recruits had to be mustered somewhere else, according to Alfons Wrede's above-cited work, from Milan. However, the fact that in 1721, the Ahumada and the Alcaudete regiments were merged suggests that they were still suffering from replenishment problems, and the soldiers passing through Württemberg in 1730 could have been a detachment of additional new recruits from one of the German princedoms.

The canine and carnal vampires of Kuklina, Serbia (1730)

Provisor Frombald and Captain Cabrera learnt about revenant attacks as eyewitnesses, so-to-speak, straight from the source, but clearly many German settlers, soldiers and civil officials only heard stories and rumours about the unruly dead. Undoubtedly, the first-hand relations circulated in several versions through various official and personal channels of the occupying Habsburg power. An ensign of the Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment stationed in Belgrade named von Kottowitz retold two such hearsay-stories in a letter he wrote to an unknown professor at the University of Leipzig in 1732. The original letter has not been found yet, but its text was published in several learned vampire treatises of the 1732 vampire debate.³⁵⁸

Apart from the Medvedia vampires' case, von Kottowitz heard two other revenant stories, both of which happened in hajduk villages of the military frontier, not in civilian areas. The first one had taken place not far from Medvedia, in another little military settlement called Kucklina (today Kukljin, on the bank of the Morava). The relation is about two brothers, who were plagued by a vampire. Once, as they were sleeping in the same room, one of them woke up suddenly and saw a dog that opened the door to their hut. He screamed at it, and it ran away. However, soon after, a red spot appeared under his brother's right ear (where the vampire sucked at him – added von Kottowitz). The brother died within three days. The second story concerns a woman, whose husband, a hajduk died one day. The next day after the burial,

³⁵⁸ Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern* (Leipzig: August Martini, 1732), 16-18.; Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren oder so genannten Blut-saugern, wobey zugleich die Frage, ob es möglich daß verstorbene Menschen wieder kommen, denen Lebendigen durch Aussaugung des Bluts den Tod zuwege bringen, und dadurch gantze Dörffer an Menschen und Vieh ruiniren können?* (Leipzig, 1732), 15-16.; Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 176-179.; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 56-57.

he returned from the grave and slept with his wife. The woman reported the dead husband's visit to the hajduk unit's lieutenant (the so-called 'hadnak') officer and related that the intercourse was as usual, but that his husband's seed was cold. Nevertheless, she became pregnant and in due course gave a monstrous still birth, which 'looked like a lump of flesh without limbs and which on the third day became entirely wrinkled together, like a sausage'.

The two stories related by von Kottowitz illustrate well that Habsburg officers moulded several folkloric creatures together in their attempts at trying to interpret local experiences. Even though the ensign understood both night-time visitors (the dog and the dead husband) as vampires, it is very much possible that locals in fact saw it differently and linked the events to different creatures. The appearance of a dog in a house, and a death following it may have been a living witch for instance, who simply appeared in the shape of a dog, but it also could have been one of the portent-apparitions announcing death to a family, similar to the banshees in Anglo-Saxon folklore. The husband returning home to sleep with his wife fits in to the category of the familial revenant unable to break away from his beloved ones, but also may have been seen as the devil taking up the shape of the dead husband. It is in fact very much reminiscent of stories in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, and many later Western reports about sexual encounters with the devil, which are also often described as cold, and which also sometimes result in monstrous births. These doubts about the exact identity of the malicious entities in these stories is further reinforced by the fact that the ensign the did not disclose any details about how locals or the army dealt with these cases, and we do not know if exhumations actually followed them or not. Exhumations, after all were only necessary in case revenants were involved: countering demons and witches was a different business.

Even though further biographical data about ensign von Kottowitz is at present not available, we do know that his regiment's name (Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment) was a reference to the fact that prince governor Charles Alexander was its owner from 1703 until he left Serbia in 1733 in order to assume his position as Duke of Württemberg back home in Stuttgart. The regiment was stationed between 1722 - 1737 mostly in the Banat,³⁵⁹ but just like the Alcaudete Infantry Regiment, several of its units were stationed in Belgrade as artillery service units. They were responsible for doing heavy physical work around the artillery

³⁵⁹ The regiment was later named Infanterieregiment No. 17. Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht von 1618 bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 1898, 1:232-239.

cannons, and they occupied no less than 90 houses in Belgrade in 1728.³⁶⁰ It is likely, that von Kottowitz was the ensign of this artillery-service unit. Since the stories happened in Serbia and were circulating in Belgrade where the ensign was stationed, Prince Charles Alexander again could have also heard about them, but this cannot be verified.

Württemberg's personal involvement in two vampire cases before 1733

Prince Charles Alexander has already taken part in the investigation of the Kisilova case in 1725 and was probably informed about the Pétervárad mumial magnetism case of 1728 and possibly others discussed above. In addition, there are two more, second-hand relations of cases which claim his personal role in launching the investigations. Both cases involve investigative commissions dispatched from the prince's own Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment, to which ensign Kottowitz also belonged to.

Augustin Calmet, the Benedictine abbot, who published Captain Cabrera's relations is the source of a further vampire case, which – according to the abbot's informant

– Prince Charles Alexander personally investigated. The informant was a certain L. von Beloz, grenadier captain (*Grenadierhauptman*) of the Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment. Von Beloz entrusted his letter in which he described the story to Ferdinand de Saint-Urbain (1658-1738), court architect of the princely court of Lorraine to deliver it to Calmet.³⁶¹



20 Soldiers barging in on an executed vampire (Illustration from the penny dreadful series, Varney, the Vampyre /1845-1847/)

³⁶⁰ Langer, 'Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung 1717-1739', 211.; On the usage of infantry units in artillery regiments see: Nagy-L., *A császári-királyi hadsereg, 1765-1815 - Szervezettörténet és létszámviszonyok*, 47, 220.

³⁶¹ Calmet, *Gelehrte Verhandlung*, 2:51-54. This story is not there in the 1746 first French edition, only in the 1751 German one.

Von Beloz repeatedly underlined the indisputable veracity of the events. First of all, he vouched 'on his own honour that what is related about the vampires in judicial and printed documents in the newspapers across Europe cannot be more truthful and more certain'. He stated that he witnessed the case himself and he even possessed some documentation about it, even if not at his person at that given moment. Since he did not have these documents at hand, he could not give a precise date, or indeed location for the events in his letter. However, he wrote that it was Emperor Charles VI himself who entrusted Prince Charles Alexander to send a delegation of judicial officials, military officers and the general auditor of the province from Belgrade to investigate the case. Von Beloz further assured Calmet that the delegation's members were highly reasonable, honourable, respectable and knowledgeable people. They were accompanied by a unit of 24 soldiers led by a grenadier lieutenant of the Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment, and the prince himself also wanted to witness the case. Finally, he added that the case was known across the country and could be testified to by more than a thousand witnesses.

The relation itself concerned a vampire who had been dead for many years and was causing harm to his own family. Within fifteen days, the vampire killed one of his brothers and three of his grandchildren and had sucked the blood already twice of his only remaining granddaughter. Upon the arrival of the commission, the granddaughter was in a miserable, weak state from the violence of the attacks. The delegation went at night to the cemetery and saw an apparition (*Schein*) above the vampire's grave that resembled a lamp but was not as radiant. Upon opening the grave, the corpse looked alive, his heart was beating, but the limbs were not soft or flexible. The corpse was staked with a metal spear, upon which some white matter combined with blood flowed out. The commissioners felt no bad stench at all. They beheaded the body with an axe, and more blood and more white matter flowed out. Finally, they threw the body back into the grave and poured quicklime over it. From that hour on, the granddaughter was feeling better, but a blue spot remained at the place where the vampire sucked blood from her.

Von Beloz also intimated details about the special characteristics of vampires. For instance, that they 'generally only attack their own relatives', and that vampires do not stick to a single place of bloodsucking on the body, they do it sometimes here, sometimes there.

There are several questions that remain open: If the governor indeed was present at the investigations, why did he not present those reports as well during his visit to Berlin? Is it because they happened in the thin time period between his return home from Berlin in 1732 and his leaving of Serbia for ever in 1733? Or was his personal involvement made up? Perhaps even more shaky is the evidence about the other Serbian case in which Prince Charles Alexander was supposed to have personally taken part.

The incredulity of a military surgeon - Radojevo, 1732

Finally, there is yet another surgical report about vampires, which often goes unmentioned in secondary literature on vampirism because its provenance is somewhat dubious. If proven to be real, the report is notable for an especially clear presentation of the process in which members of the occupying Habsburg power's personnel got converted to local beliefs in vampirism. What raises doubts about the veracity of the report is that its only source is a work by Robert Ambelain (1907 – 1997), author of numerous historical and practical books on occultism and astrology, who himself was involved in various esoteric communities. In his historical books Ambelain usually relied extensively on historical documents and in this case claims to have transcribed the original report in an unnamed archive from the dossier of the village of Radojevo. Even though no one has so far been able to locate the said document, archival research into vampirism is at present far from complete. As Ambelain's book itself is difficult to come by, I provide below a translation of the report hoping that in the future its veracity will be checked against archival sources.

The report, concerning the vampires of the village of Radojevo is dated October 1732 and was supposedly submitted to the Belgrade Military High Command by a certain Jozef Faredi-Tamarzski, surgeon-major of the Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment, the same regiment³⁶² where Kottowitz and L. von Beloz were serving.

'Deposition of surgeon-major Jozsef Faredi-Tamarzski, before the Military Commission of Belgrade, October 1732.

On the orders of the Imperial Commission presided by His Serene Highness the Most Revered Prince of Württemberg, and by the appointment of the Colonel

³⁶² Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht von 1618 bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 1898, 1:232-239.

Commandant of the said Regiment, I went to the village of Radojevo in July to investigate the deaths of eleven people. The deaths occurred during the months of January and February, and the peasants attributed them to a vampire named Miloch.

I first questioned the biro of the village, who declared that he agreed with the opinion of the inhabitants. Then I questioned five notable inhabitants, who assured that no one doubted that it indeed was a vampire.

After having tried in vain to make them realize the impossibility of such a thing, that God could not have given such power to the devil, the said people retorted that the devil was not in the bodies of the said vampires, but that they themselves during their lifetime were his servants and have made a pact with him, which is why the devil as a reward did not make them putrefy.

After hearing these notables, I thought I would do well to allow the exhumation of the said suspects, to convince them of their mistake. The first was the said Miloch. Miloch was about fifty years old at his death. He had always had a reputation of being a bit of a wizard. During his lifetime he possessed a bird he taught to speak. For years he had a captured wolf that he had domesticated. No one knows how his death happened, according to his wife it was without an apparent illness. He has been buried since the summer of last year. So about fifteen months.

I had the grave opened. Men from the village of Radojevo removed the earth and the bark plate covering the body. The corpse was found absolutely intact in the grave, the eyes were still wide open, although his widow claims to have closed them at the time. This was confirmed by the woman Tiéna, washerwoman of the dead in the village. The limbs were without stiffness, the body of the said Miloch was lean and muscular. What has prevented me from convincing the villagers of Radojevo is that blood was flowing gently, but abundantly and unceasingly, from the open mouth of the said Miloch, the teeth were stained with it, and the nostrils as well. The body was almost naked in the grave, the bark plate beneath the body was found soaked with blood, and the earth from the bottom of the grave as well. At the insistence of the inhabitants of Radojevo, I had to give the order to stake him through the heart before closing the grave. Realizing that they also intended to burn it when I left, I had lime poured all over the body.

I questioned the families of the eleven people who had died suspiciously. They fell ill without a reason, claiming that they had been attacked at night by the said Miloch, who was trying, they said, to strangle them. According to their relatives, they remained as a result of this in a permanent feverish state. They did not eat and so to speak did not drink. Most of them died within eight to ten days. They presented all the symptoms of a progressive weakening. Nocturnal delirium in the early days. Particularly violent phases towards the end of each night. On some of the deceased, members of the family observed light blue markings down the

throat. These the villagers of Radojevo attributed to the attacks of the vampire Miloch.

I opened the graves of these eleven people. They were buried for about six months. Of the eleven, we found eight of them decayed as they should be normally. Out of the other three, a woman was in a preserved state, which obviously was surprising, given the time of burial. She seemed to be asleep, as a live person. The other two, a man and a woman, seemed to be already less so, for perfectly preserved as they were, the limbs were rigid, while the first woman was perfectly flexible.

Nevertheless, all three of them seemed suspicious to me, especially since the first woman, with her open mouth depressed by the pang of anxiety, was found with blood on her teeth and in her mouth. In addition, blood pools were found under her in the grave. This woman died about thirty years old according to the peasants of Radojevo. The other woman was a young girl, nineteen years old at the most. The man was about thirty-five years old.

In the face of these troubling findings, I believed myself entitled to allow the inhabitants of Radojevo to use the spear and lime as well. The village did not seem to be entirely calm. They claimed that the authorities were not interested in their fate, the cremation of the suspect corpses not having been granted.

Filed under oath today. Military Commission of Belgrade, October 1732.

Transcribed by us, notary of the said.

Illegible.’³⁶³

There are a number of expressions in the text, which strike the reader as unusual when compared to verified vampire-reports of the age. First, the surgeon mentions twice in the text that blood was seen on the teeth of vampiric corpses. The singling out of the teeth is strange, since the report already mentioned that their mouths were full of blood, and it is difficult to understand why the surgeon would see it necessary to make remarks on the teeth in particular. Indeed, all other contemporary reports simply observe the blood in the mouth, and nowhere do they make notes on the teeth. This is because the idea of the vampiric bite was a later addition to the figure of the vampire: in its eighteenth-century borderland environment the vampires were thought to drain the blood and life forces of the victims without wounds.

Second, the idea that corpses would not rot because in their lifetime they had made ‘a pact with the devil’, who ‘as a reward’ would stop their bodies from putrefaction sounds out of place, as the lack of rotting in witches’ corpses for instance was usually either seen as a

³⁶³ Robert Ambelain, *Le vampirisme: De la légende au réel* (Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1977), 165-170. [My translation - Á.M.].

symptom and/or a precondition for demonic possession, not a reward. Third, the surgeon's explicit reflections on his own cognitive processes, such as his initial views about vampirism being 'impossible' has a particularly modern ring to it, just like expressions like the 'domesticated' wolf. Finally, the term 'biro', if indeed written like that in the original source is somewhat alien in the Serbian context, as it is Hungarian for 'judge'; at the same time, its cognates were taken over in contemporary Latin and certain Slavic languages as well.³⁶⁴

In the end, we cannot be sure whether Ambelain simply modernized the text in his translation, modified the original, or made it all up. Running a quick fact-check on the report also does not yield conclusive evidence. According to the report, Prince Charles Alexander personally ordered the investigation of the case in July 1732, at which time he indeed was in Belgrade, already having returned from his visit to Berlin in June the latest.³⁶⁵ Since the surgeon supposedly handed in the report to Belgrade, the most likely location of Radojevo would be somewhere in Habsburg Serbia. However, eighteenth-century maps and secondary literature's settlement-lists show no such or similarly named settlements in the province.³⁶⁶ Instead, there are two possible locations in the neighbouring province of the Banat, where in fact the Alexander Württemberg Regiment was billeted in peacetime, apart from those units that were stationed in Belgrade, as detailed above. A village today called Radojevo (Romania) lies not far from Temesvár to the west, but in the eighteenth century, the place's name was not Radojevo, but Peterda or Clary/Klári.³⁶⁷

A perhaps more plausible location could be Radojewaz (today Radujevac, Serbia), a settlement in the easternmost corner of Serbia, on the border with Wallachia. The village was situated in the Krivina district, one of those seven Eastern Serbian districts which administratively belonged to the Banat, and were hence overseen not by Belgrade, but by Temesvár. The protocol books of the Temesvár provincial administration contain no mention of the case. In the end, there are two possible scenarios (aside the option that Ambelain forged the document). The events might have taken place in a village called Radojevo in Habsburg Serbia,

³⁶⁴ Zaicz, *Etimológiai szótár - Magyar szavak és toldalékok eredete*.

³⁶⁵ Prince Charles Alexander wrote a letter on 11th June from Belgrade to his brother. Paul Sauer, *Ein kaiserlicher General auf dem württembergischen Herzogsthron: Herzog Carl Alexander von Württemberg, 1684-1737* (Filderstadt: Markstein, 2006), 188.

³⁶⁶ Langer, 'Serbien unter der kaiserlichen Regierung 1717-1739'.

³⁶⁷ Pál Engel, *A temesvári és moldovai szandzsák törökkori települései (1554-1579)*, Dél-Alföldi Évszázadok, 8. (Szeged: Csongrád Megyei Levéltár, 1996), 106.

which was so small that it was not displayed on contemporary maps. Or the settlement was situated in the Banat, in which case the report was sent to Belgrade instead of Temesvár, because the matter was understood as an internal issue of the regiment. The regiment's owner, Prince Charles Alexander and its commander, Leopold Count of Salm-Salm³⁶⁸, were responsible for the judicial matters related to their regiment, and in this capacity, they may have ordered the investigation. Either way, the original report first ought to be found in the archives, before it could be accepted as a historical source.

Summary

The overview of the known revenant cases of the southern borderland before 1732 allows us to draw conclusions about four important problem clusters. First, they amply show that in these early decades, the Habsburg military and civilian administration was far from confident in handling vampirism, and that, just like the Orthodox church, they allowed the executions of corpses as long as they were notified ahead of the planned procedure. The district provisors and military officers were baffled and most often seem to have been carried by the flow of events. It were other authorities, other experts who drove the investigations, such Orthodox priests a 'Turkish' physician and most importantly, knowledgeable local people, who, at least in these early cases remain invisible in the sources, but whose presence we can conjecture from the illicit, arbitrary executions they carried out, thereby angering the Orthodox Church. They were the ones, who suggested special ways to gather evidence, such as leading a black horse into the cemetery, they interpreted the resulting data and suggested, as well as carried out the rituals. Surgeons and officials were present and lent their authority to the procedures, but in all likelihood were mostly learning about a phenomenon they had not known before, at least not in this form.

The second point concerns evidence. The *corpus delicti*, that is, the physical evidence that could be gathered during the investigations falls in line with the almost universal characteristics of unruly corpses. the primary signs, which are present in most cases is the presence of fluid blood somewhere within or without the body and apparent liveliness of the

³⁶⁸ Graf Leopold Salm-Salm Obristlieutenant-Obrist (1722-1734) Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht von 1618 bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 1898, 1:234.

corpse. A secondary sign, which only surfaced in certain cases was the spot on the neck. Counting in the Medvedia case to be discussed below, this sign came up in four instances: Cabrera's and von Beloz's investigations (both of them related by Augustin Calmet), and in the Kuklina case told by Kottowitz. Finally, there were unusual signs as well, which only come up in singular cases: if the lack of carcass smell and the erection of the penis (Kisilova), and the flexibility of limbs instead of rigor mortis (von Beloz and Radojevo), the palpitation of the heart (von Beloz) and the openness of the eyes (Radojevo). Apart from the *corpus delicti*, the main evidence came from the witness accounts which sometimes involved spectral evidence, the visible apparition of the vampire.

Third, it is obvious that the Habsburg administration had to handle a large diversity of folkloric ideas and experiences in the pre-Medvedia cases. That revenant attacks follow familial ties is remarked in several sources (Pozsega, Kisilova, Cabrera, Kuklina, von Beloz), but most of the cases did not involve the contagious nature of the revenant condition. This idea only came up in the Pozsega and the Radojevo cases, and possibly in Merul, even though there we do not know whether the four executed corpses were thought to have been parts of some sort of witches' covenant, or whether there was only one original moroi, who turned innocent victims into dangerous moroi. Further, in the events related by von Beloz, only the suspected grandfather is exhumed, the victims whom he had killed were not checked for signs of vampirism. The scale of exhumations was apparently not a strict rule but depended on local dynamics of fear and power.

Finally, personal and official connections crisscrossing the borderland transmitted revenant-related information. It is unknown, to what extent Count de Mercy, governor of the Banat was interested in vampirism, but both his and Prince Charles Alexander's province was rife in revenant cases, and Belgrade military physician Haack definitely thought he would be interested in mumial magnetism. That a military physician in Serbia informs the governor of the Banat about a curious case that happened in Slavonia shows that the top layer of the borderland's administration was sharing experiences of occupation, and of strange events with each other. In the gathering of these experiences, they could rely on the medical, military and civilian infrastructures of occupation and policing. In particular, the Serbian governor's own regiment, the Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment's personnel seems to have been involved in several revenant investigations: ensign von Kottowitz, grenadier captain von Beloz and (if we can believe Ambelain), regiment surgeon Faredi-Tamarzski all belonged to

this regiment. As it will be noted below, ensign von Lindenfels and lieutenant Büttner, two military officers, who were members of the detachment investigating the Medvedia vampires in 1732 also were serving in the same regiment.

II.3. Vampire contagion as a forensic fact: The vampires of Medvedia (1727/1732)

As the previous subchapter has shown, by 1732, the administrative structure of the southern borderland, as well as its Viennese headquarters had ample possibility to familiarize themselves with local revenant beliefs. Gradually a legitimate practice was formed based on which the harmful dead could be examined and executed if necessary. Even though documentation about these cases had been circulating within the administrative structures, and provisor Frombald's report even got published, none of these cases caused any substantial stir in learned circles. A completely different reaction followed in the wake of the vampire case that happened in the winter of 1731/1732, in the village of Medvedia (today Medveđa), a hajduk military settlement on the very southern edge of Habsburg Serbia.

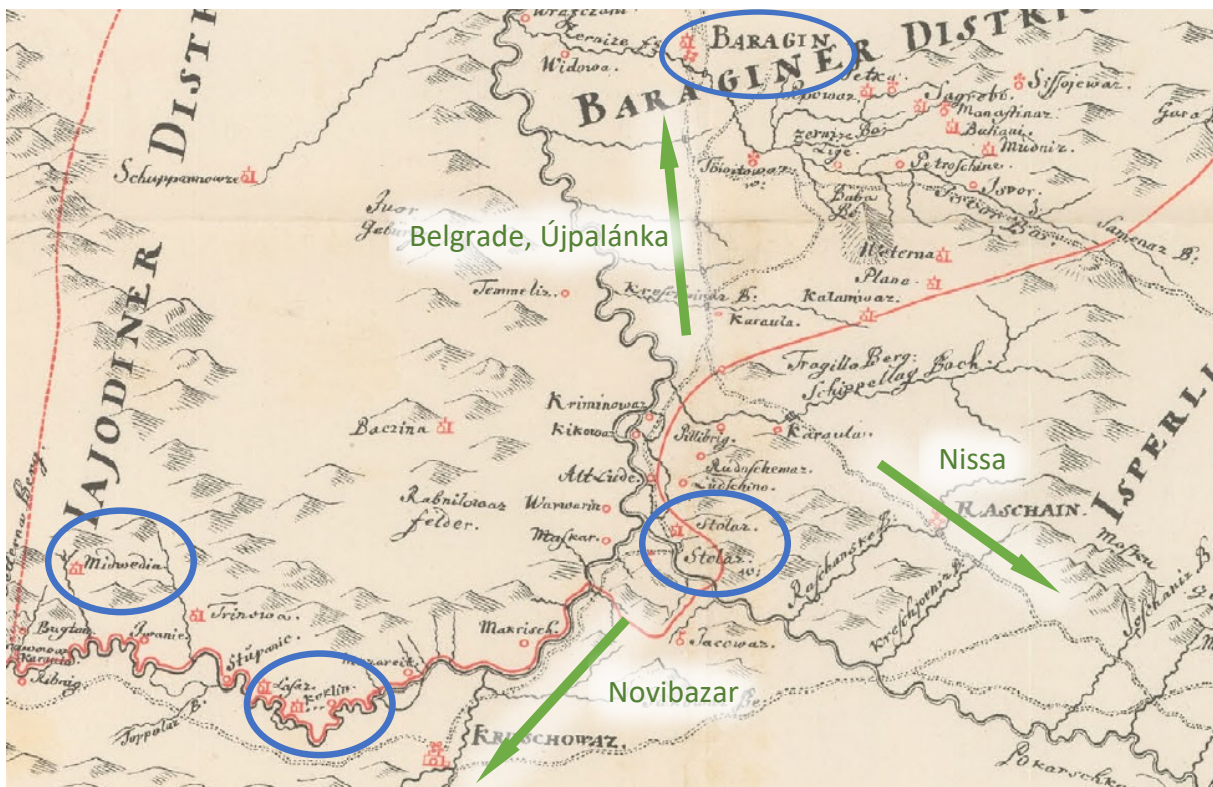
This subchapter concentrates on the official documentation generated about the case and interprets it as a piece of knowledge that was produced in the tension field between the village community and the Habsburg provincial administration's agents. The main questions are: how was the information generated, who were the actors and what were their considerations? What were the characteristics of the end results, the official reports? What did they add to extant knowledge about corpse decay and to ideas about the harmful dead?

Observations by quarantine physician Glaser

Unrest in the village of Medvedia started in October-November 1731, when a series of deaths shook the village. Given that the problem concerned a hajduk village, the entire investigation was handled within military frames. Taking note of the deaths, and probably suspecting an epidemic, the military commander of the district centre in Jagodina (today Jagodina), lieutenant-colonel Schnezzer put together a commission, which consisted of Glaser, the 'imperial quarantine physician' (*Physicus Contumaciae Caesarea*) of the quarantine station of Baragin (today Paraćin), and several military officers, among them the military commander

(Führer) of Kragobaz (today probably Kragujevac) and corporals from Stallada (today Stalać), the settlement to which Medvedia's hajduks were probably subordinated to. The commission had to travel to the village to investigate the situation.³⁶⁹

The mobilization of the quarantine physician attests to the sensitivity of the military frontier and plague cordon to suspicions of epidemic outbreaks, but the location of the case was especially precarious: two major trade routes, the one coming from Novibazar (today Novi Pazar), and the other from Nissa (today Niš) met in this area. The route then continued north through Baragin to Morava (today Čuprija), where it divided, one road leading towards Pest through Belgrade and the other towards Temesvár through Újpalánka. An epidemic hitting such a major trade route juncture could have dire consequences: if the routes are not closed, the disease will spread towards the heart of the monarchy; if quarantine measures are levied, commerce will suffer huge deficiencies. The disease had to be contained as fast as possible to the village.



21 The vicinity of Medvedia (lower left corner) on the southern border (red line) of Habsburg Serbia

³⁶⁹ It is from Glaser's report and vice-governor Anton Otto Botta d'Adorno's (1688 - 1774) letter that we know of the details of the dispatch. See these two sources in: 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case'; Hamberger published Glaser's report in: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 46-49.

Glaser as head physician of the Baragin quarantine station was responsible for overseeing the sanitary situation of the entire province of Habsburg Serbia, as well as the territories beyond the Ottoman border. This is because the network of stations at the time of the case consisted only of Rakovica (today Croatia) overseeing the Karlstadt frontier; Kostainica (today Kostajnica on the Croatian-Bosnian border) in the Banal frontier; Brod (today Bród on the Croatian-Bosnian border) in the Sava frontier, Baragin (today Paraćin, Serbia) in Habsburg Serbia and Slatina (today Romania) responsible for Little Wallachia.³⁷⁰

Upon arrival, Glaser examined the sick, because his main task was diagnosing the nature of the disease, specifically whether it was contagious or not; his medical expertise, however, was seriously challenged by local experts. Glaser at first decided that the sick were suffering from non-contagious tertian and quartan fevers, side pains, chest aches, all caused by the strict pre-Christmas fasting habits of Orthodox subjects. Locals, however, offered a different diagnosis: an epidemic of vampires. They located the source of the affliction in two women:

‘There used to be two women in the village, who in their lifetime had themselves vampirized (haben sich vervampyret), and after their death will themselves become vampires, and will vampirize (vervampyren) yet others.’³⁷¹

It is unclear whether locals used the term ‘vampirize’, or Glaser coined it. It is also a question whether this aetiology was there in its particular form in Rascian folk belief, or Glaser imposed his own medical thinking on what people were telling him (in all likelihood) through an interpreter. It is perhaps safest to say that this is how Glaser understood what locals had in mind. It is nevertheless certain that the root of the expression he adapted from local vocabulary and instead of deploying his own, Latin-based Western medical vocabulary, kept using this Serbian word as a diagnostic category throughout his report. One can only conjecture, whether a kind of psychological need motivated Glaser to adopt a name, a label to the affliction: as David Gentilcore has suggested, giving names to unknown threats and fears is the first step towards taming it, giving one options to counter it.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Slatina in Wallachia is not to be confused with today’s Slatina-Timiş in the Banat. On the system of quarantine stations on the military frontier see: Vaniček, *Spezialgeschichte der Militärgrenze*, 1:405.; Lesky, ‘Die österreichische Pestfront an der k. k. Militärgrenze.’, 86-88.

³⁷¹ ‘Documents of the Medvedia vampire case’, 1134v.

³⁷² David Gentilcore, ‘The Fear of Disease and the Disease of Fear’, in *Fear in Early Modern Society*, ed. William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 184–208.

And *vampirization* as a syndrome truly was peculiar. As the villagers explained Glaser, the two women, named Miliza and Stanno in fact died out of natural causes two months before the investigation, it is just that they had been vampirized years earlier. Miliza had eaten from the flesh of a lamb in Ottoman lands that had previously been attacked by vampires. Stanno also became vampirized on the other side of the border, but in a different way: in order to protect herself from vampires, she had smeared herself with a vampire's blood. Even though this way she could avoid being killed by vampires, she destined herself to become a vampire after her death. What is more, as she had the condition in herself, her future children were also destined to become vampires: Stanno died in childbirth in 1731, and Glaser was told that her (stillborn) child was also to become a vampire, just like his mother.³⁷³

Based on these stories Glaser could gather at least four ways of becoming vampirized: 1) being attacked by a vampire 2) eating from vampirized animals 3) smearing vampire blood on oneself 4) being born to a vampirized mother. In the first case, death would follow in days after the attack. In the latter three cases, however, the vampirized condition could lay dormant for an indefinite amount of time from the time of contracting the contagion until death, when it activated and turned the victim into a vampire.

The local diagnosis then was contagion, and Glaser, as a quarantine physician had to be knowledgeable in contagion theory. In early modern medicine, contagions (*contagion*; Latin: *contingere* – to touch) were the kinds of diseases which could spread by physical contact from one person to the other.³⁷⁴ Rabies, plague, elephantiasis, syphilis and a number of other diseases have been known to spread this way most of them since antiquity. In the mainstream humoral pathological view, which understood diseases as individual imbalances of the humours, contagion was somewhat difficult to explain due to the visible communication of the affliction. Even though the various authors used different metaphors and terms to describe contagion theory, content-wise they were remarkable similar. Contagion was thought to consist of especially potent, putrefying vapours, particles or humours. Contagion was always putrefaction and since poisons (*Gift*) were also thought of as putrefying

³⁷³ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1135r.

³⁷⁴ Vivian Nutton, 'The Seeds of Disease: An Explanation of Contagion and Infection from the Greeks to the Renaissance.', *Medical History* 27, no. 1 (1983): 1–34; Carmichael, 'Contagion Theory and Contagion Practice in Fifteenth-Century Milan'; Frederick W. Gibbs, *Poison, Medicine, and Disease in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Routledge, 2018).

substances, from the sixteenth century on, most authors understood contagion as a kind of poison. Italian physician Girolamo Fracastoro (1478 - 1553) is often singled out as having presaged the modern view of germ theory by imagining contagious diseases as consisting of invisibly tiny living seeds (*semina*). As Vivian Nutton has shown, his explanation in fact was in line with previous tradition: in spite of calling them seeds, their behaviour was in all respects the same as that of putrefying particles in the mainstream view. Perhaps the real difference between contagion theories was whether they allowed action at a distance, or how they explained it: through sympathies not requiring contact or through vapours, spirits travelling at short distances, channelled by the imagination for example (see Chapter 1.2.).

At an individual level, the exhalations and humoral secretions of the sick could be inhaled or touched by surrounding people, and once having entered the human body through the orifices or through the pores of the skin, they started putrefaction inside. They could also get stuck to objects or get vaporized into the air and thus travel distances. Large-scale epidemics, such as the plague were understood as consequences of *miasmas*, that is, clouds of putrefying vapours that emanated from huge pools of decaying matter: the decomposing animals at the bottom of the sea or in animal burial pits, from swamps and caverns, from the gut of the earth that opened up for instance because of earthquakes, or, notably arising from decaying human cadavers buried in too shallow graves, open mass graves or unburied victims of the plague or of battles.

If Glaser wanted to fit the local explanation of vampirization into early modern contagion theory, perhaps the closest example would have been rabies, called hydrophobia in the era. It was a contagious disease, of which was known that the symptoms of the disease often started months, years or decades after the bite by the mad dog, and vampirization in some cases also exhibited a similarly delayed effect.³⁷⁵ The delay in rabies was explained the same way throughout the century, by Fracastoro in the sixteenth as much as by Giuseppe Frari (1738 - 1801) in the eighteenth century by the poison of the dog having a particularly heavy, viscous nature, which progressed through the blood vessels towards the brain only very slowly. The closer the bite to the head, the faster the sooner the effects became visible. Rabies was a close

³⁷⁵ Vincent DiMarco, *The Bearer of Crazy and Venomous Fangs: Popular Myths and Learned Delusions Regarding the Bite of the Mad Dog* (iUniverse, 2014), 216–18; Anton Krnić, 'Giuseppe and Aloysius Frari's Works on Rabies and History of Frari Medical Family of Šibenik, Dalmatia', *Croatian Medical Journal* 48, no. 3 (2007): 378–90.

explanation also because the ingestion or envenomation of poisons was often thought to be able to communicate the nature of the host: the rabid person became aggressive and bit people because the contagious bite had communicated the dog's nature to the victim. Vampirization was similar in this sense as well. There was, however, one major difference from the functioning of rabies: vampirisation took effect only after death.

Glaser's usage of the term 'vampirize' is the first known instance of a diagnosis of a *contagious* form of revenantism. No revenant, suffering soul, dead witch, ghost, or spirit was thought of being able to do that. Unlike *Nachzehrers*, the revenants called vampires did not simply spread death and cause plague epidemics: they could spread their own condition as well. This combination of elements made the vampire a novel framework, which was both similar to and different from the existing natural and supernatural frameworks discussed in Chapter I. Though the returning dead in general have been recognised by Sigmund Freud as sources of the uncanny (*unheimlich*),³⁷⁶ we can say that the vampire was especially so, as it was uncanny both as a medical condition and as a revenant idea.

By his own admission, Glaser at first did not want to accept the local diagnosis and supported by the military officers he did his best to talk some sense into the villagers, in vain. They were so much gripped by fear that:

*'[The villagers] said that before they let themselves be killed this way, they would rather settle somewhere else. Two or three houses get together for the night some people sleep, while the others keep watch. And the deaths will not cease until the praiseworthy administration resolves on and carries out the execution on the said vampires.'*³⁷⁷

The threat to move away touched at a neuralgic point of the borderland's general lack of settlers, and it worked on Glaser as well. The physician agreed to carry out the exhumations that locals requested, but (as he explained in the report) in order to establish the truth behind their accusations.

³⁷⁶ 'Many people experience the feeling [of the uncanny] in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts.' Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 17 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953), 241-243.; Marín, 'Haunted Communities: The Greek Vampire or the Uncanny at the Core of Nation Construction'.

³⁷⁷ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1134v.

Upon examining the ten cadavers, he became perplexed, as the evidence supported the local diagnosis of vampirization. While several of the corpses were decaying in an orderly fashion, some of them looked fresh. In his report, Glaser described all the bodies, some of them in a single line, while others in greater detail. He again adopted local vocabulary and placed the bodies along an axis of the state of decay as ‘vampire’, ‘very suspicious’, ‘half-suspicious’ and ‘decayed’. Below, I provide the full translation of Glaser’s description of Miliza’s corpse, who was one of the two arch-vampires. I maintained the structure of the original text, in which following the name, the text is not organized into sections, but flows continuously.

‘A woman named Miliza.

Vampire (Vampjër). Age 50, lay for 7 weeks. Came over from the Turkish side six years ago and settled down in Metwett. Always lived in a neighbourly way, she was never known to have believed or engaged in anything diabolical. However, she told the neighbours that in the Turkish land she had eaten of two lambs, which had been killed by vampires (Vampjës), and therefore, when she would die, she herself would also become a vampire. It was this utterance, on which the common folk based their steadfast opinion. I have also really seen such a person. And because she [Miliza] was known to have had a dry, haggard bodily constitution, was of old age and lay buried for 7 weeks without any garb, directly in the moist soil, she should have already been half-decayed. Nevertheless, she still had her mouth open, light, fresh blood was flowing out of her nose and mouth, her body was puffed-up high (hoch aufgeblasen), and was suffused with blood, which appeared to be suspicious even for me. And these people cannot be wrong, [because] by contrast, after the opening of some other graves, [in which the cadavers] were of a younger age, used to have a more fatty constitution during life, and died of a shorter and easier sickness than those old people, [the younger bodies] were decayed, just like a regular corpse (rechtmässigen Leichnamb) is supposed to.’³⁷⁸

This rich description allows valuable insights into how Glaser was trying and failing to fit vampirization into frameworks known to him. The remark on the lack of known prehistory of diabolical practices means that Glaser tried to collect testimonies of witchcraft, as that at least would have explained Miliza’s posthumous harmful activity. Because of the lack of such information, however, he had to discard this option.

Glaser also tried to explain the lack of decay as a result of natural processes, but he ran into a major problem. As explained above in Chapter I, putrefaction was understood as the

³⁷⁸ ‘Documents of the Medvedia vampire case’, 1134v.

environment's nature subduing that of the corpse, which required *opposing* factors. The environment had to be warmer than the body and had to be of an opposing nature in terms of humidity: moist natured corpses would decay slower in a wet environment, while dry bodies decayed slower in dryer, air-permeable surroundings. In the case of the purported vampires, Glaser observed exactly the opposite: the soil was of a moist nature, but still, the fatty, young people decayed much faster, while the dry-natured Miliza did not, even though she spent much longer time underground. It was wintertime, which meant that the cold would naturally delay putrefaction, but the example of the properly decaying corpses showed that the temperature was mild enough for putrefaction to start. It was known that air-tight conditions and barriers between the body and the soil could also delay putrefaction, but in this case, the bodies apparently were not placed in coffins, or even wrapped into shrouds: they were directly in contact with the soil. And finally, the more sudden the death, the greater the chance was, that some vital spirits remained in the body, which could delay putrefaction (Chapter I.1.); by contrast, Glaser found exactly those bodies to be properly corrupt, which died of a short disease.

All these discrepancies perplexed Glaser so much, that he returned to the problem at the end of the report. He stated that villagers posed him the question: Why did exactly those people decay entirely in a proper way (*gänzlich, wie sich es gehöret verweesen seyn*) who used to be 'stronger, more corpulent, of a younger age and were fresher, and died of a simpler and shorter disease' (which meant that the disease did not dry them out), and who spent shorter time in the very same soil? Glaser had no answer, and again admitted in the report:

*'Which reasoning (Raison) does not seem to be incorrect.'*³⁷⁹

As Glaser's original mandate was to investigate if an epidemic was involved, he was not (or did not feel) authorized to allow the executions, and had the corpses reburied. At the same time, he recommended the military command to comply with the villagers' request and submitted his report to Jagodina, which Schnezzer forwarded to the Belgrade headquarters.

³⁷⁹ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1135v.

Autopsies by regiment surgeon Johann Flückinger's commission

Prince Charles Alexander at the time was not in Belgrade but back home in the Duchy of Württemberg, which is why it was vice governor Marquis Anton Otto Botta d'Adorno's (1688 - 1774) who had to take action. In response to Glaser's report, he dispatched a sizeable and high-ranking commission to the village, led by Johann Flückinger, the regiment surgeon of the Fürstenbusch Infantry Regiment.³⁸⁰ The regiment surgeon was a very high position, it means he was the head surgeon of the whole regiment. Flückinger was aided by two other military surgeons, Johann Friedrich Baumgarten, from same regiment and Siegele from the Marulli Regiment, the commander of which was vice-governor d'Adorno.³⁸¹ The three surgeons were accompanied by military officers senior lieutenant Büttner and ensign J.H. von Lindenfels, both of them from the governor's own Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment. On their way to the village, they picked up the senior officers of the Stallada frontier company, captain Gorschik, the lieutenant (*hadnack*) and the ensign (*barjactar*). Our main source of their activity is the autopsy report (*Visum et repertum*) which they prepared as a result of their investigations.³⁸²

The commission arrived on 7th January, almost four weeks after Glaser's visit, and considering the tensions Glaser mentioned, it was a huge feat of self-discipline that all this time the villagers refrained from taking vigilante action. The commission's mandate was to carry out a thorough investigation of the whole matter, and they started by hearing witnesses. Based on the testimonies they reconstructed an even more elaborate vampirization-aetiology: a two-wave epidemic. Villagers related that back in 1727, Arnout Pavle, a hajduk from the village, fell off a hay wagon and broke his neck.

During his lifetime, Arnaut Pavle used to say that he would surely become a vampire after his death, since he had been plagued by one in Cossowa (probably a reference to a village in today's Kosovo), in Ottoman Serbia. Several researchers have noted that there seems to be a

³⁸⁰ Infanterieregiment No. 35, founded in 1683, also called 'Böhmisches Infanterie-Regiment' and 'Württemberg zu Fuss'. At the time was commanded by Daniel von Fürstenbusch. Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht von 1618 bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 1898, 1:366-367.

³⁸¹ The regiment was founded in 1709, its owner was Francesco Cavaliere Marulli, while its commander at the time of the Medvedia vampire case was Botta d'Adorno. Wrede, *Geschichte der k. und k. Wehrmacht von 1618 bis zum Ende des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 1898, 2:193, 221.

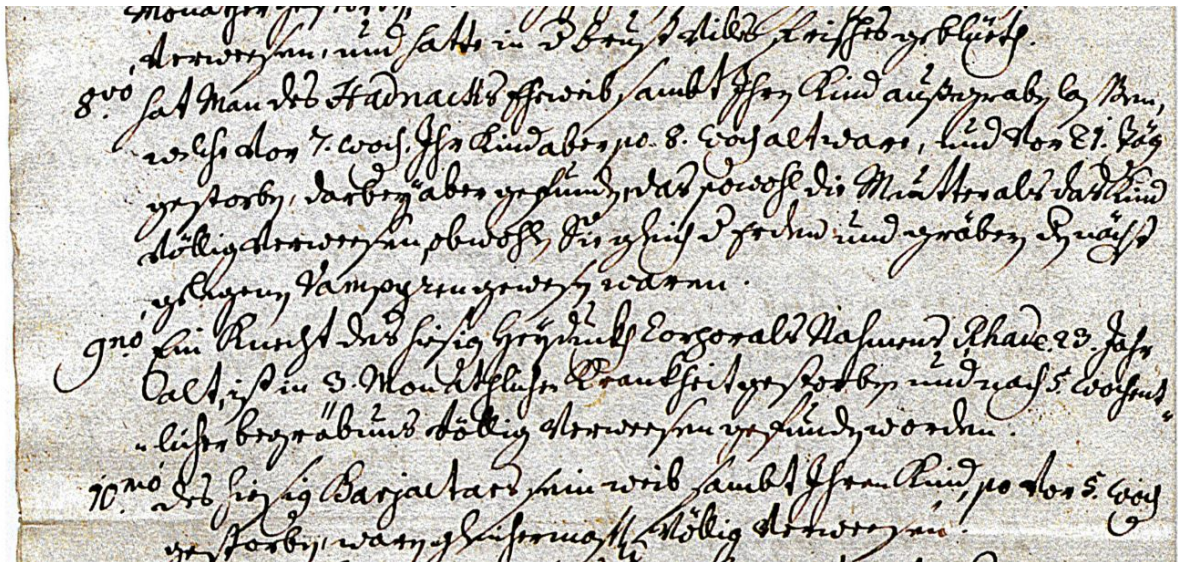
³⁸² 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1138r-1141v.; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 49-54.

foreign element in vampire-narratives, as Miliza, Stanno and Pavle all said that they had been vampirized in Ottoman lands.³⁸³ It can be conjectured that Pavle's name 'Arnaut' comes from the Ottoman Turkish ارنأود (*arnavut*), meaning 'an Albanian', a word used in reference to mostly Albanian-speaking irregular soldiers serving in the Ottoman army. Just in the case of witchcraft, being a newcomer to a village might have heightened the chances of getting accused of the crime,³⁸⁴ but it certainly was not the only scenario. On the southern borderland it especially seems problematic, as many of the villages probably were settled entirely with newcomers. In addition, having contracted the vampire-condition 'in Ottoman territory' does not say much, as only 14 years before the Medvedia case, the whole region was still part of the Ottoman Empire.

Pavle could only avoid being killed by eating from the soil of the vampire's grave. Just as in the case of smearing oneself with the blood of the vampire, this also meant that he would inevitably turn into a vampire after his death. Following his prosaic accident with the hay wagon, Pavle indeed returned from the grave, sucking blood and killing several people. The villagers unearthed him, as well as his victims and found four of them to be vampires based on the same symptoms as was usual in all revenant cases. They were staked, burnt and the ashes were thrown back into the grave. The procedure however was not thorough enough: the vampires had attacked sheep as well, and anyone eating from their meat got vampirized. This is the part of the story which Glaser also recorded. Miliza had eaten of the vampirized lamb meat, and hence when five years later she died, she started killing people. Stanno, who as Glaser mentioned, had also been vampirized, died of childbirth, and the two women started massacring the villagers. Seventeen villagers fell victim, dying after a rapidly progressing illness and complaining that certain dead villagers were tormenting them at night.

³⁸³ Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 120; Peter Mario Kreuter, 'Der Vampir, ein Fremder? Ethnische Minderheiten im Vampirglauben Südosteuropas', *KakanienRevisited*, 20 February 2003, <http://www.kakanien-revisited.at/beitr/fallstudie/PKreuter1.pdf>.

³⁸⁴ This might have also been the case in Moravia, with the Seitendorf-based Thyringer family in 1730 – 1736. See Chapter VII.1.



22: Excerpt from the *Visum et Repertum*'s list of dissected corpses

Having finished the hearing of witnesses, the surgeons ordered the exhumation of 15 corpses who had died in the previous 3 months and systematically conducted autopsies on them, recording their name, age, time of death and state of decay, while going into details describing the state in internal organs only in the case of the undecayed corpses. Flückinger's report does not seem to have any recognisable order in the series of corpse-descriptions, it is not based on their state or their time of death. Probably the corpse descriptions followed the order of the exhumations. Flückinger examined all the corpses exhumed by Glaser except for the 3 whom the latter deemed to be decaying normally. It was either the community who did not tell him to exhume these three, or he knew based on Glaser's report that they were in a normal state. The two reports are consistent in the sense that all the five corpses deemed to be vampires by Glaser were also reported to be 'in a vampire state' (*im Vampyrenstande*) by Flückinger's commission. This is remarkable, for it means the corpses did not change much during the four weeks between the two visits.

The title of the report is *Visum et Repertum* ('seen and discovered'), which is the usual contemporary term for forensic autopsy reports carried out within the frames of judicial trials. The autopsies were usually carried out by surgeons, not by physicians, because traditionally it was the former's duty to perform the manual operations, while physicians would be equipped with the theoretical knowledge in order to interpret the findings of the surgeons. In practice, physicians were most often too rare to be consulted, and both the observation and the interpretation of signs in legal cases was carried out by surgeons. Accordingly, the Flückinger commission's report also contains a mixture of observation and interpretation.

The autopsy report itself gives a very much ordered impression because it presents the fifteen exhumed corpses in the form of a numbered list. Within each number, the text flows continuously, but always following the same structure: name, age, time of death, cause of death, the state of the corpse. There are thirteen entries, out of which two women's entry contain the additional description of their little child.

- 1) A woman named Stana, 20 years old, died 2 months ago after a three-day sickness, who during her lifetime had said that she had smeared herself with the blood of a vampire, and therefore both she and her child must become vampires
 - a. entirely complete and undecayed
 - b. in the pectoral cavity (*cavitate pectoris*) some fresh extravascular blood
 - c. the arteries and veins next to the ventricles of the heart were not ('as they should be') filled with coagulated blood
 - d. the entire entrails, including the lungs, the liver, the stomach, the spleen and the intestines were quite fresh, just like in a healthy person
 - e. the uterus was however quite big, very inflamed on the outside, because the placenta and the lochia remained inside, and was putrefied
 - f. the skin on the hands and the feet together with the old nails fell off by themselves, and fresh, lively skin and new nails appeared underneath
- 2) a woman named Miliza, around 60 years old, died after a three-month sickness, and was buried 90 days ago
 - a. in the chest there was a lot of liquid blood, the entrails were, just like in the former case, in a good state
 - b. the hajduks standing around during the dissection were amazed because she did not use to be so fat and complete in her lifetime as she appeared now, she used to be thin and desiccated all her life, which means she became this fat in the grave
 - c. according to locals, she was the starter of the current vampires, because she ate from the meat of the sheep that the earlier vampires had killed
- 3) an eight-day-old child, who spent 90 days in the grave
 - a. in a similar fashion in a vampire state
- 4) the son of a hajduk, called Milloe, 16 years old, spent 9 weeks in the grave and died after a three-day sickness
 - a. found in the same state as the other vampires
- 5) Joachim, also son of a hajduk, 17 years old, died after a three-days disease, was buried for 8 weeks and 4 days
 - a. was found during the dissection in the same state
- 6) a woman named Ruscha, died after a ten-day sickness, was buried for 6 weeks

- a. also lots of fresh blood not only in the chest, but also in the lower ventricle of the heart
 - b. the same was found in her child, who was 18 days old and died 5 weeks ago
- 7) nothing less was found in the case of a girl, ten years of age, who died 2 months ago
 - a. in the above-detailed state, quite complete and undecayed, with lots of fresh blood in the chest
- 8) the hadnak's wife with her child, the former died 7 weeks ago, the 8-weeks-old child died 21 days ago
 - a. both the mother and the child were entirely putrefied, even though they were buried in the same soil and grave as the vampires lying next to them
- 9) the servant of the local hajduk corporal called Rhade, 23 years old, died of a 3-months-sickness, buried for 5-weeks
 - a. entirely putrefied
- 10) the wife of the local barjaktar together with her child, died 5 weeks ago
 - a. were similarly entirely putrefied
- 11) Staniko, a hajduk, 60 years old, died 6 weeks ago
 - a. I found much fresh blood in the chest and the stomach, just like by the others, the whole body was in the often-mentioned vampire-state
- 12) Miloe, a hajduk, 25 years old, buried 6 weeks ago
 - a. found in the above-mentioned vampire-state
- 13) Stanoicka, the wife of a hajduk, 20 years old, died after a three-day sickness, buried 18 days ago
 - a. during the dissection I found that her face looked quite red and lively colour,
 - b. was apparently tortured at the throat at midnight by the hajduk's son Miloe; under the right ear a blue patch suffused with blood the size of a finger was visible
 - c. as she was lifted from the grave, a quantity of fresh blood flowed from her nose
 - d. during the dissection I found the often mentioned fresh, balsamic blood not only in the chest cavity but also in the ventricles of the heart
 - e. the entrails were found in a healthy and good state
 - f. the lower skin of the whole corpse, together with the nails on the hands and feet were equally quite fresh

The first impression one gets by looking at the manuscript itself is its organized nature which visually lends itself for a comparison of the thirteen/fifteen cadavers; in this sense, the comparative nature of the dissections tapped into an increasing interest among pathologists of the era in making large-scale, quantitative comparisons of the corpses of people who died of the same disease. For the sake of clarity, in the rendering of the dissection results above, I have ordered the various observations about each corpse into subpoints, which may falsely

give an even more ordered impression to the report. In the original text, the subpoints are also separated from each other, though simply by semicolons, not by new paragraphs. This in fact was usual practice even among giants of the field, as it can be seen from Figure 23.³⁸⁵

8. MULIEREM stultam, annos natam ad quadraginta, angina sustulerat. CADAVER in Gymnasium illatum est ante medium Februarium A. 1719. cum publice Anatomem docerem. Cum ad ea quæ vellem, minime esset idoneum propterea quia non ita multis a morte horis abdominis muscoli, jam virebant, neque intestina, quæ distenta erant, inflammatione omnino carebant; vix utero inspecto, cujus parvitas indicio fuit, nunquam mulierem peperisse, idem confirman-
tibus mammis, quæ, etsi lactei feri aliquid habebant, tamen ipsæ quoque per-
parvæ erant; nihil in iis angustiis temporis, nisi Cerebrum, dissecandum susce-
pi. Quod non fecus ac paulo ante in Lanio, prædurum inventum est.

9. FEMINA altera, quam anno superiore peperisse constabat, neque eo fa-
norem esse factam, per vias, ut antea, nisi quis prohiberet, discurrere perge-
bat, nemini, quod scire potuerim, nocens. Ante novem ferme annos insanire
cœperat ob occisum pridie quam nuberet, quem amabat, virum. Tandem a
thoracis inflammatione confecta est, ineunte Decembri A. 1725. CAPUT dum-
taxat dissectui. Sub tenui meninge aqua erat non sine aereis hic illic bullis: quas
& alicubi in quibusdam vasculis confertissimas vidi, ut hæc replerent. Nulla
vero aqua in ventriculis Lateralibus: in quibus vasa, & Plexus rubebant. Basi
Pinealis glandulæ antè adhærebat pauca materia ex albo subflava, quæ ag-
geries calculorum videbatur; sed tactu explorata, neque calculosa inventa est,
& vix subdura. Cerebrum assulatim secando, medullarem substantiam non adeo
candidam animadverti; subfusca enim erat, idque hic fortasse ob sanguifera
vascula pleniora; nam quo longius a corticali substantia descendebam, eo mi-

23 Detail from Morgagni's *Of the seats and causes of diseases, Epistola anatomico-medica VIII. – De mania, melancholia & hydrophobia verba fiunt.*

Giovanni Battista Morgagni (1682 - 1771) devoted his life to dissecting cadavers, diligently observing and documenting his experiences, which in the end culminated in the publication of this 1761 monumental work, *Of the seats and causes of diseases investigated through anatomy*.³⁸⁶ The work relied on what we would call today comparative pathology and which contributed to the lasting shift of emphasis in pathology about the seats of disease from fluids to organs. Morgagni noted in the preface to his work, that even though there had been some precursors to such comparative dissection analyses, for instance Swiss anatomist Théophile Bonet's (1620 – 1689) *The Cemetery, or, anatomy practiced from corpses dead of disease*,³⁸⁷ those were compilations of other people's dissection experiences, and were hence imprecise and misleading.

³⁸⁵ Giambattista Morgagni, *De sedibus et causis morborum per anatomen indagatis libri quinque.*, vol. 1 (Ebrodun, 1779), 108.

³⁸⁶ Giambattista Morgagni, *De sedibus, et causis morborum per anatomen indagatis* (Venice, 1761).

³⁸⁷ Théophile Bonet, *Sepulchretum: Sive anatomia practica ex cadaveribus morbo denatis* (Genf, 1679).

Naturally, regiment surgeon Flückinger's *Visum et Repertum* is not comparable in its scale, precision or learning to Morgagni's work. No doubt, had Morgagni read the *Visum et Repertum* (which he might as well have), he would have dismissed it as imprecise and dilettante. The surgeons' knowledge of anatomy was scarce by the standards of the time, their descriptions of the organs short and superficial, which is not to be marvelled at, as it was not straightforward for surgeons to have a detailed knowledge of anatomy. Sonia Horn noted for example that even though the need for the establishment of an anatomical theatre at the University of Vienna's medical faculty (which was overseeing the education of surgeons as well) was repeatedly voiced in the eighteenth century, a proper anatomical theatre was established only in 1754.³⁸⁸ Those who studied abroad (in Padua, Leiden or Halle for instance) could have had more hands-on experience.

What no surgeon, no matter how learned could have had extensive experience with, is several weeks/months-old corpses, and the Flückinger report was cutting edge in this sense as well. As detailed in Chapter I.1., even though there was a rising interest in the eighteenth century in putrefaction, and specifically in observations on the progress of decay, an empirical inquiry, in which human corpses would be exhumed and dissected in order to figure out differences in their states of decay was unimaginable in contemporary learned medicine and natural philosophy. Such a research would have been thought of back then, as well as for a very long time afterwards, as a frivolous, futile activity, which was morally at best questionable. It was the administrative infrastructure geared towards forensics and public hygiene that could legitimize and launch such an inquiry and to produce such practical, empirical knowledge. It is difficult to say, whether these processes in any way informed the surgeons' work, but in a similar fashion to Madame d'Arconville's experiments on decaying meat, it certainly made their comparative, organized dissection observations on human corpse decay both horrifying and challenging in the eyes of certain physicians and natural philosophers.

If it was clear, what Morgagni was looking for (the causes of death) in his comparative dissections, the same is not true of Flückinger's investigations: it is never overtly stated in the report, what exactly they were looking for. Normally, forensic autopsies were conducted in order to determine the cause of death: surgeons were looking for wounds and signs of lethal

³⁸⁸ Sonia Horn, 'Vom Leichenöffnen... Beobachtungen zum Umgang mit anatomischen und pathologischen Sektionen in Wien vor 1800', *Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift* 116, no. 23 (2004): 801.

diseases. Even though Flückinger often mentioned what locals said about the cause of death (three-day sickness, six-month sickness etc.), he never evaluated these attributed causes. In his description of the state of the corpses, it is only twice that he reported something that might be directly linked to a cause of death, though he does not make the connection explicitly. In the case of the young woman named Stanacka, the surgeon recorded a blue, blood-suffused mark the size of a finger on her neck. During her sickness, Stanacka had complained that she was being strangled by a young hajduk-turned-vampire, named Milloe. In Stana's dissection Flückinger remarked that all organs in the body were whole and looked healthy except for the womb which was inflamed, contained the placenta and was in decay. It is not said overtly but we know from Glaser's report that she died in childbirth. That none of the corpse-descriptions contain any reference to open wounds or bite-marks underlines the theory that the element of the vampiric bite in current popular culture was a later addition to the figure of the vampire.³⁸⁹ The folkloric vampire was draining the victim's life and blood without wounds or punctures on the skin.

One might conjecture that the surgeons were looking to determine whether the body was alive or not. As detailed in Chapter I.1., there was no unanimously accepted list of the sure signs of death, and surgeons as well as physicians often warned about the hazy boundaries between life and death. If a surgeon was to determine death, there were a couple of signs that he was looking for. The stopping of movement, sensitivity, vital functions (stoppage of heartbeat and breathing), pallor mortis, rigor mortis etc. The carcass stench was one of the surest ones, but strangely enough, Flückinger did not record or mention the lack or presence of any of these signs. Interestingly, we do not even get a remark on the stench. Apparently, he was not looking for signs of death.

What Flückinger and his two assistant surgeons seem to have been interested in was recording the stages of decay. The report gave descriptions of several corpses from the same soil in different stages of decay.³⁹⁰ The regiment surgeon's dissections were confined to the chest-stomach area, the seat of the vital functions, of circulation, breathing and nutrition. There is not a single mention of the state of the brain, which at the time was considered to be the seat

³⁸⁹ This theory has been aptly remarked by: Kreuter, *Der Vampirglaube in Südosteuropa: Studien zur Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion. Rumänien und der Balkanraum* The first interpretation of bloodsucking as a physical act of biting comes up in the learned vampire debate of the 1730s-1740s to be detailed in Chapter V.

³⁹⁰ See Chapters I.1. and V.3.

of the animal functions (movement, thinking, feeling, imagination etc.). Flückinger remarked the signs that pointed towards a continued functioning of the vital-nutritive functions. Bodily growth was one: hair, new skin and nails under the old one that was peeling off.

Perhaps the most frequently remarked sign of revenants, not only on the southern borderland, but in general was the presence of light, fresh, liquid blood. Flückinger's surgical commission found liquid vascular and extravascular blood in various parts of the chest, which they suggested was strange, for it should have coagulated. Liquidity points towards life, mobility and an ability to perform the vital functions. Blood in the mouth and in the stomach is also noted in two cases: both suggest that the body was feeding on blood. This fascination with the feeding function still operating was emphatic in the learned debates as well. The German name of vampires 'blood sucker' (*Blutsauger*) also points in the direction that feeding was one of the most interesting features of vampires. In fact, it was usual for dissecting surgeons and physicians to focus on fluids in the corpse, as disease and health were both understood almost universally as a result of a balance of fluids.³⁹¹ Life in general was thought of as being maintained by the constant movements of highly mobile fluids in the body. Death was supposed to make the fluids stop from motion and coagulate. The physical movements of, as well as the chemical processes going on within organic fluids were a major focus of experimental natural philosophy at the time. Stephen Hales, a British clergyman, was researching fluids in vegetables and animals in the 1720s-1730s and had a special interest in the changes decay brought to organic matter: he devised several experiments to measure the exact amount of gases generated while sheep blood was decaying for example. His judgement of the role of fluids in the body was widely accepted at the time of the vampire debate:

*'the preservation of their vegetable life is promoted and maintained, as in animals, by the plentiful and regular motion of their fluids, which are the vehicles ordained by nature, to carry proper nutriment to every part,'*³⁹²

Apart from the fluids, Flückinger's dissections also concentrated on the internal organs, and their untouched state was striking for the surgeons, they remarked on all the entrails: the heart, the arteries, the lungs, the liver, the stomach, the spleen, the intestines and the uterus

³⁹¹ Horn, 'Vom Leichenöffnen... Beobachtungen zum Umgang mit anatomischen und pathologischen Sektionen in Wien vor 1800', 800.

³⁹² Hales, *Vegetable Statics*, 2-3.

as well. The interest in the abdominal cavity is explained by the fact that it was known to be the area, which was supposed to fall to putrefaction the earliest, as it was moist and fatty. *Memento mori* representations also portrayed corpses with an open cavity because of this (Figure 4 above). The fact that the surgeons paid attention to both liquids and organs might attest to the increasing shift in contemporary medicine from humoral pathology to organ-based pathology.

The surgeons were very diligent in recording the colour, texture, state of the bodies, but they have not ventured far-reaching conclusions. Unlike Glaser, they have not remarked on the discrepancies between conventional natural philosophical knowledge on putrefaction on the one hand and their experiences on the other. Significantly, they recorded that Miliza used to be of a desiccated complexion in her lifetime but did not point out that as such she should have decayed faster in the moist soil than the fat, corpulent corpses, which were entirely decayed. It is possible that they lacked the theoretical knowledge university-trained physicians like Glaser had. The fact that they failed to record this discrepancy had consequences, because later on only the *Visum et Repertum* got published, Glaser's report did not. This way, the learned debaters hardly addressed the very problem which convinced Glaser that there was something preter- or supernatural natural going on.

Unsurprisingly, there are clues indicating that the autopsies were strongly influenced by local power dynamics. While relating Miliza's autopsy, Flückinger remarks that locals exclaimed when they saw how bloated she became, even though she used to be skinny and barren all her life. This they interpreted as a sign of having grown fat in the grave on the blood of her victims. What is remarkable is that this means they were present during the autopsies, and at this point one might recall surgeon Nicholas Tripe's annoyance at the same situation while he was working on the autopsy of the Staverton body in 1750 (Chapter I.1.). The procedure of the dissection was not done in a confined space supervised only by medical personnel: locals could also influence the interpretation of signs. Knowing this, one may question whether it is by accident that out of the fifteen dissected corpses the five which were deemed to be decaying in an orderly fashion all belonged to the household of the village's officers: the lieutenant (*hadnak*)'s wife and child, the ensign (*barjaktar*)'s wife and child and the corporal's servant. At the same time, the remaining ten were relatives of ordinary frontiersmen and were

identified as vampires. This is all the more suspicious, since Flückinger did not provide a detailed description of what the normally decaying five corpses exactly looked like.

Just like Glaser, the Flückinger-commission also adopted local vocabulary, denoting the undecayed corpses as vampires, and based on the dissections and yielding to the pressure of the local community, Flückinger authorized the execution ritual. The bodies deemed to be in a vampire-state were decapitated by local Gypsies, burnt at the stake and the ashes were thrown into the Morava river. The thoroughness of the ritual suggests an intense fear of pollution, as not even the ashes were allowed to stay in the vicinity of the village, as well as an aim at the total annihilation of the cadavers.

The military-forensic framework within which the commission carried out the investigations and the executions gave full support to their actions and exhibited trust in their expert diagnosis. Botta d'Adorno in his letter of 26th January 1732 to the Viennese Aulic War Council lauded them for the 'hardships they endured and the extraordinary efforts they made' and requested the council to give monetary compensation to the surgeons.³⁹³ The War Council on 11th February forwarded the request to the Aulic Treasury, underlining that the three surgeons should not only be recompensed for their travel expenses, 'but also for the many hardships they endured during the exhumation, the examination and the burning of the corpses that were found to be suspicious'.³⁹⁴ The Treasury in turn (as usual) was making problems, and on 29th February ordered the provincial government of Serbia, to calculate the exact costs the surgeons had to spend and to detail exactly how many days they spent with the mission. The same order also talks about vampires as tentative reality referring to them as 'those so-called vampires or bloodsuckers, [whose presence is] fairly strongly felt there, in Serbia'.³⁹⁵ As it will be pointed out in Chapter VI, six years later, in 1738 near Újpalánka, similar actions resulted in serious consequences for the surgeon who allowed the execution ritual during a plague epidemic.

³⁹³ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1132r-v.

³⁹⁴ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1142r.

³⁹⁵ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1131r-v.

Summary

Quarantine physician Glaser's report was seminal, because it described what the physician understood as a contagious kind of revenantism: the victims of vampires are likely to become vampires themselves. The multiple ways in which a person could get *vampirized* did not map fully onto any natural or supernatural framework that he could have known. Glaser ventured two alternative frameworks, but both of them failed at the face of his experiences. The first, witchcraft-based explanation was unsupported by witness accounts about the culprits' pre-history. The second one, based on natural causes could not explain why the moist soil did not corrupt Miliza's dry-natured cadaver, while it entirely putrefied those of fatter, moister, younger bodies in a much shorter time. His perplexity moved him to get convinced by (in his eyes certainly) superstitious, Orthodox peasants and succumb to their expertise. The fact that he surrendered his Latin-based medical vocabulary for the sake of a Serbian one was indicative of this move. The report is also the first document that describes the motif of presaging one's future destiny as a vampire. This element comes up in several later instances (Chapter VII.1.) and makes one wonder, to what extent was being a vampire shameful and to what extent was it potential for gaining social capital. It is often forgotten that Glaser's report practically marked out the direction of investigation for Flückinger's surgical commission: the latter arrived on site already with a physician's unusual diagnosis in hand.

Both Glaser and Flückinger's commission worked in a legal-forensic framework, the main role of which was governance and disciplining, but they were also producing new knowledge on bodily decay. Read together, the two reports gave empirical proof that the conventional natural philosophical theory about the dynamics of putrefaction was wrong. What they found was exactly the opposite: corpses, such as Miliza's dry body surrounded by an opposite-natured, moist soil did not result in fast decay as it was predicted by theory. Fatter, more moist-natured bodies in fact decayed in a much shorter time than these. Importantly however, this point was visible only for the provincial administration, who had access to both Glaser's and Flückinger's report: the former's report explicitly reflecting on the discrepancy never got published.

That the surgeons opened the abdominal cavity and found intact internal organs was also a novelty, as this was the area which was supposed to decay the fastest. The surgeons also

created a new (albeit short-lived) medical diagnosis: vampirism, which its peculiar syndrome, multiple aetiologies and resembling contagious, poison-based diseases. Even though it goes unmentioned in the reports, rabies was probably the most similar affliction because of the long incubation period and the transferability of the aggressive condition. Nevertheless, vampirism's effect only took place after death. In fact, after any kind of death, be it a vampiric attack, natural death or in Arnont Pavle's case, a banal accident. Even though the surgical commission hesitated to accept the local explanation, they did adopt local terminology and authorized the ritual.

When understood as a piece of knowledge production, the *Visum et Repertum* has two outstanding elements: first, that the dissections concerned human bodily decay and second, that the dissections were done with comparative aims, involving a large number of bodies. Interest in both areas was on the rise at the time, which means that leading natural philosophers and physicians in Western Europe and military surgeons on the southernmost corner of Habsburg Serbia engaged in very similar topics, even if their reasons to do so were different. Flückinger's activity was not natural philosophical research but a forensic one, born out of a practical pressure to make sense of the situation and to be able to give an expert opinion for further judicial action. At the same time, the desire to know what was going on must have been present also, and it is interesting to think of the possible influence Prince Charles Alexander's known interest in vampirism as a curiosity could have exerted on the decision to have the vampires dissected.

There were many forms of the unruly dead under many names on the southern borderland, but, the medical reports picked out only one of them, and shaped it in a way that was probably already different from what villagers had in mind. The reports provided official evidence for the provincial administration to support the existence of this, newly crafted creature, the vampire, and this was the figure that subsequently passed into the learned world only to get reshaped again and again. This history of translations from local fears to highbrow treatises, indicates a reciprocal relationship between popular culture and medicine on drawing the boundary of death.

Concluding remarks

The early decades of the eighteenth century on the southern borderland witnessed the enchantment of the Habsburg occupying administration's personnel by the figure of the vampire, which this way was (re-)born as a typical contact-zone product. The military, civilian and medical officials were touched by the Orthodox settler's culture and social practices. Through the years, they grew to accept the expertise of 'the other' and developed a symbiosis in which revenant executions were allowed to happen as long as they were duly requested, were overseen and documented by the authorities. Details of the cognitive process in which the occupying power's agents lose trust in their own explanations and need to embrace those provided by a generally despised, heretical and superstitious Orthodox population can be traced in the way contagion physician Glaser (and if we can trust Ambelain's source, surgeon Faredi-Tamarzski) openly reflected on their inability to come up with a fully convincing explanation to what they saw.

However, it was not only the lower levels of administration who got caught up in the attraction zone of the bloodsucker, the highest levels also gave their blessings to the rituals and throughout the years, some of them, like Prince Charles Alexander developed an interest in the question. As Chapters IV and V show, this interest heavily contributed to the success of the *Visum et Repertum* in circles outside Habsburg Serbia.

The Habsburg borderland, and especially the military frontier is often construed as being only at the recipient end of knowledge emanating from Vienna and as a locus of the application of policies. The understanding of the borderland as a contact zone nevertheless allows us to have a more complex view of the interactions in the region and to recognise it as a site of the production of knowledge claims as well. The inhabitants of the borderland, Habsburg officials, military officers, frontiersmen and various settlers can be seen as 'neither fully "us" nor fully "them" in the eyes of the imperial center'.³⁹⁶ They were able to successfully argue for their own expertise in local matters and produce knowledge in the shape of official reports and documents which bore all the marks of a contact zone product on them.

³⁹⁶ O'Reilly, 'Fredrick Jackson Turner's Frontier Thesis, Orientalism, and the Austrian Militärgrenze'; Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone'.

Because of the large-scale autonomies, privileges and the specific borderland situation described above, local communities could in fact present and enforce their own knowledge, their own expertise on the agents of the imperial administration. Local communities had their own knowledgeable people, their own experts. This resulted in a situation where the agents of Viennese policies in fact found themselves to be in minority, having difficulties countering the powerful knowledge-claims of the Orthodox settlers. Understanding the local populations of the Habsburg borderland as active participants in knowledge production contributes to similar claims already made about colonial spaces outside Europe.³⁹⁷ The contact between different cultures of knowledge on the borderland also underlines the relevance of the so-called symmetry principle elaborated by sociologist of science David Bloor in his Strong Programme, according to which a knowledge claim does not become successful because of being inherently more logical than other, competing ones: all knowledge claims need substantial work and translation efforts in order to become accepted by other social groups.³⁹⁸

The understanding of the borderland as a site of knowledge production amends the unidirectional ‘Viennese centre structures the peripheral borderland’-paradigm in three crucial aspects. First, it is true that the borderland did not have major learned centres, academies, universities, journals, that is, the sites traditionally associated with knowledge production and systematization. Nevertheless, exactly such kind of work was done in its own, administrative/military centres, quarantine stations and mining centres among others.³⁹⁹ This was aided by a well-organized infrastructure that facilitated and encouraged the collection and spread of information. The culture of documentation, of carrying out surveys and of reporting was an inbuilt characteristic of the borderland’s administration and functioned as a small-scale Republic of Letters, in which there was a lively flow of documents generated at the local, district- and provincial level towards Viennese officials and back. These circumstances

³⁹⁷ Kapil Raj, *Relocating Modern Science. Circulation and the Construction of Scientific Knowledge in South Asia and Europe. Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

³⁹⁸ On the Strong Programme see: Bloor, *Knowledge and Social Imagery*; On the idea of translation see especially: Callon, ‘Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay’.

³⁹⁹ See the 2012 special issue ‘Centre and Periphery in the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg “Medical Empire”’ of the journal *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*: E. C. Spray, ‘Introduction: Centre and Periphery in the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg “Medical Empire”’, *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 43, no. 3 (2012); Bräunline, ‘The Frightening Borderlands of Enlightenment: The Vampire Problem’; Krász, ‘Quackery versus Professionalism? Characters, Places and Media of Medical Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Hungary.’

in turn made local imperial servants experts on their own, slowly becoming more knowledgeable in local borderland-relations than their superiors in Vienna.

While the expectations to produce empirically based, systematized knowledge is usually associated with scientific societies especially in the British empiricist tradition of natural philosophy, recently it has increasingly been pointed out that there were in fact several other locations where experiments and trials often related to the sphere of medicine were carried out in a systematic fashion, such as princely courts, administrative structures and the military.⁴⁰⁰ Given that the knowledge produced within the Habsburg state infrastructure of the borderland was in the service of crucial state projects such as population resources, mining, and public hygiene, there was a constant pressure for empiricism and efficiency. It was crucial to collect reliable information, analyse it, shape it into structured, practical, hands-on knowledge already on-site, so that policies, actions could follow in their wake.

These modifications to traditional models of knowledge production also put the concept of 'enlightenment' into a different perspective. In the medical history of the Habsburg Monarchy, 'enlightenment' usually starts with the 1745 arrival of Gerard van Swieten, Dutch physician and science-organizer to Vienna, who in his capacity as court advisor and imperial *protomedicus* brought about a large-scale reform from 1749 onwards targeted at uniformization, centralization and bureaucratization of the Habsburg Monarchy's medical world. While it is undeniable that from 1749 on transformative changes took place, the example of the southern borderland's medical system provides an earlier example of a knowledge-policing project comparable in its methods to that initiated by van Swieten. The fact that the locus of this project was the very borders of not only the Habsburg Monarchy but of Christendom further underlines the need for a more complex view of the emergence of mentalities, policies and knowledge production methods we recognise as modern.

⁴⁰⁰ See especially the 2017 special issue of the journal *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*: Leong and Rankin, 'Testing Drugs and Trying Cures'; Rankin, 'On Anecdote and Antidotes'; De Ceglia, 'Playing God'; Schickore, *About Method*.

III. Revenant infestations on the Moravian-Silesian border before 1732



24 Detail from Agostino Veneziano's *The Carcass* (ca 1520)

‘[...] that famous Hobbes’s opinion that “there are no ghosts” is not true.

If Hobbes was alive, I would ask him to come to our region where he would surely forget his Calvinist subtleties, and his own rebellious spirit would get convinced by very different kinds of spirits.’

(Karl F. von Schertz: *Magia posthuma*. 1703, Olomouc)

Historical narratives of vampirism often devote more attention to the vampires of Habsburg Serbia than to other regions' revenant ideas, because it was the autopsy report of the Medvedia vampires that launched a wide public interest in the topic. However, other regions were also producing official reports about mass-scale revenant executions, which were sometimes even more extensive than those on the Serbian vampires; still, they did not trigger a comparably wide-ranging reaction. I would argue that the relative lack of impact other regions' revenants made is telling, and one should concentrate as much on the 'Why?'-s as on the 'Why not?'-s. Before tracing the fate of the Flückinger commission's *Visum et Repertum* further, in the present chapter I analyze the practices of evidencing and negotiating expertise on the example of the Moravian – Silesian border area in comparison to the southern borderland.

A comparative approach to the two regions' revenant-policies is even more relevant, since their history in 1732 intertwined in several senses. In the wake of 1732, the Serbian vampire as imagined in European culture absorbed many other revenant figures into itself, and the Moravian-Silesian revenant was no exception. In addition, it was this region that in the 1750s produced the scandal which finally moved the Viennese court to take action against the executions of the dead throughout the empire.

The present chapter has two main focal points: first, tracing how *magia posthuma* as a peculiar framework of an infestation of possessed corpses became construed during the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries. And second, describing how this negotiation process involved clashes of expertise and differing interpretations of what constitutes evidence, as a result of which gravediggers' competence came to eclipse all other sources of expertise and experience.

III.1. The revenant attacks of the seventeenth century

In order to set up the Moravian-Silesian border area as a comparative example, the first step was to create a chronological inventory of known revenant cases, so that patterns and developments could be recognised in a diachronic way. In practice, this meant the compilation of data from secondary literature as well as published archival sources (see the list of known cases with short descriptions in the Appendix). The original sources had been parish chronicles, parish death registers, investigation protocols and correspondence between authorities, but most of these sources were published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by local historians of Silesia and Moravia.⁴⁰¹ These texts are all the more valuable, since much of the original archival good has disappeared or got destroyed since then. Most subsequent scholarship relies on these basic source publications, but recent Czech scholarship has made extremely exciting progress in unearthing new archival sources. Jan Bombera, Monika Slezáková and Giuseppe Maiello have published or summarized several such novel sources, which keeps hopes alive that there is even more to be found in archival stacks.⁴⁰²

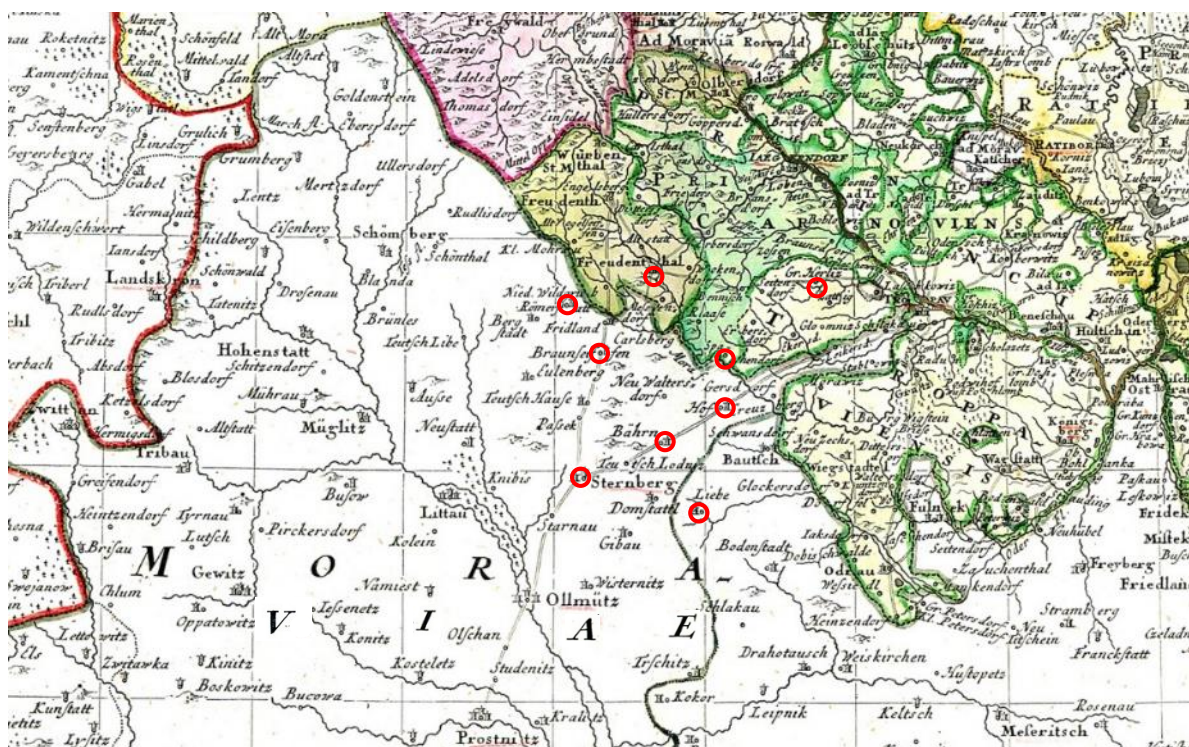
The various sources relate the cases in very different styles. The driest are the concise entries in parish registers of deaths. These usually only remark that a certain corpse was suspicious and was executed. The reports of commissions investigating cases of revenants exhibit a substantial work of conceptualization but are still mostly descriptions of witness accounts and examinations of corpses. Parish and town chronicles usually contain the most embellished, already folktale-ish narratives of the cases, often written years or decades after the actual event.

⁴⁰¹ Horky, 'Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre'; Puchar, 'Hexen-Prozesse im Nördlichen Mähren', *Notizenblatt des Vereines für die Geschichte Mährens und Schlesiens*, no. 6 (1857): 47-48.; Bischof and d'Elvert, *Zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Zauberer, Hexen und Vampyre in Mähren und Österreichische Schlesien*; Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren'; Josef Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', *Freudenthaler Ländchen* 1, no. 12 (1921): 95-97.

⁴⁰² Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku'; Monika Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti - Poslední velký případ vampyristu na Moravsko-Slezském pomezí' (Brno, Masaryk University, 2013); Giuseppe Maiello, ed., *Vampyrismus a magia posthuma - Vampyrismus v kulturních dějinách Evropy a magia posthuma Karla Ferdinanda Schertze (První novodobé uydání)* (Prague: Nakladatelství Epoque, 2014).

The habitat: Mountains and confessions

The geographic scope of the chapter is the mountainous border area between Northern Moravia (the region around Römerstadt, Bärn and Liebe) and the southern dominions of Upper Silesia (the Principedoms of Troppau and Jägerndorf and Freudenthal Dominion), roughly along the two banks of the Moravice river (see map, Figure 25). While cases of returning dead surfaced all across Europe at the time, based on existing secondary literature it seems that it was only this area where mass-scale revenant executions happened. A word of *caveat* is necessary here, because local archives in all likelihood still hold descriptions of revenant cases in other areas as well, and more in-depth archival research is necessary to ascertain just how widespread the idea that a revenant can spread its own unholy condition onto other people was in Central Europe. One of the difficulties that has hindered research is the scattered nature of sources, which in turn is a consequence of the history of the area. Silesia was divided into several tiny principedoms, which at the same time belonged to three different bishoprics: Breslau in Silesia, Olomouc in Moravia and Krakow in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In addition, the bishoprics owned several areas as private property, where they exerted their judicial rights as secular landowners. In addition, much of Silesia was annexed by the Prussian



25: Local administrative centres of the border region between Moravia (blank) and Upper Silesia (coloured areas) that were producing sources on the revenants of surrounding settlements during the late 17th and early eighteenth centuries

Kingdom in 1742, which means that the sources and secondary literature about the everyday life of the area is scattered across current state borders. The cases discussed in the present chapter all come from the sphere of ecclesiastical authority of the Olomouc bishopric, but it is not imaginable that the other two bishoprics were also facing similar problems at the time.

Historically, Moravia (*Markgrafschaft Mähren*) had been a margravate, that is, a military border province, but by the early modern era, the circumstances were very different from those on the southern military frontier. It was not a borderland of a special status anymore, but was fully integrated into Habsburg inherited lands, governed by a civilian administration, with all the intermediate land-ownership relations that were completely missing in the south. Further, the administration of revenants was carried out jointly by the secular and the ecclesiastical power, but in this relation, the Olomouc episcopal see was the driving force. The episcopal territory transgressed secular borders, and reached over to Silesia, this way created space that could become more unified from the point of view of dealing with revenants.

Religious relations and the intellectual theories influencing governance were also different, as here, it was not a cameralist medical-military administration that was trying to keep Orthodox experiences at bay. Instead, it was the Catholic Church working on gaining a firmer grip over a mixed-denomination area, which became forcibly converted to Catholicism following the 1620 defeat of the Bohemian Revolt. Even though conventionally Bohemia was seen as the place where a strong confessionalization project took hold, recent scholarship has shown that Moravia was also affected, much more so than Silesia, where the Lutheran element remained strong.⁴⁰³ The policing of revenants within the Olomouc bishopric therefore need to be understood within the frames of a broader (re-)Catholisation and confessionalization project, which in Bohemia and Moravia can be termed 'State-confessionalization', since it was led by the Habsburg state, which at the same time was building out its own dynastic power structure in the inherited lands through the Catholic confessionalization.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰³ Stefan Plaggenborg, 'Konfessionalisierung in Osteuropa im 17. Jahrhundert. Zur Reichweite eines Forschungskonzeptes', *Bohemia* 44, no. 1 (2003): 6-7.; Thomas Winkelbauer, 'Grundherrschaft, Sozialdisziplinierung und Konfessionalisierung in Böhmen, Mähren und Österreich unter der Enns im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert', in *Konfessionalisierung in Osteuropa. Wirkungen des Religiösen Wandels im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert in Staat, Gesellschaft und Kultur*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke and Arno Strohmeyer (Stuttgart, 1999), 307-338.

⁴⁰⁴ Norbert Conrads, *Schlesien in der Frühmoderne: Zur politischen und geistigen Kultur eines habsburgischen Landes* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2009), 1-175.

Throughout the chapter, special emphasis will be placed on the geographic and mental landscapes of revenant cases. As it will be shown below, contemporaries entertained the idea that witchcraft, and especially the returning dead were widespread in the northern mountainous areas of Moravia, much more so than on the flatlands south of them. Research remains inconclusive about the exact origins of the belief in revenant infestations, but based on the current state of relevant literature, we only find instances of this belief along the Carpathian Ridge from the southern Habsburg borderland through Transylvania to the Moravian-Silesian border area. This apparent geographic location coincides with the migration route of Wallachian shepherding groups along the ridges of the Carpathian Mountains, from Wallachia (the area south of the Southern Carpathians, but north of the Danube) through Transylvania and the Tatra Mountains to Moravia during the later Middle Ages. Wallachians are thought to have arrived in Moravia sometime in the sixteenth century.⁴⁰⁵

Ethnographic literature often reflects on the ability of mountainous terrains to create folkloric enclaves where the various governing and civilizing projects emanating from nearby city centres have difficulties taking effect. In such remote places, older beliefs can be preserved and can survive longer than on flatlands. There are two small areas in the southeastern corner of Moravia and Silesia, where some of the mountain shepherding groups were able to maintain a distinct identity, customs, beliefs and language up to this day. The inhabitants of Moravian Wallachia (around the towns of Vsetín, Valašské Meziříčí and Rožnov pod Radhoštěm) speak a dialect of Czech language with a set of Romance lexicon. This area is situated about 60 kilometers southeast of the core region from which we have sources on revenant infestations. As it will be discussed below, a chronicle from Römerstadt (today Rýmařov) relates of several stories from the 1720s where in order to do away with the revenants of the town, people invited an expert from Valašské Meziříčí. On the above map, Römerstadt is marked by a red circle across Freudenthal (today Bruntál), while Valašské Meziříčí is located in the lower right corner, labelled as Meseritsch.

The other small area, in the southeastern corner of Silesia, around the towns of Cieszyn and Skoczów in the eighteenth century was referred to as Teschen Wallachians and is today inhabited by the Cieszyn Wallachians. This population also used to be shepherding groups but

⁴⁰⁵ Tamás Hoffmann, *Európai parasztok: A munka*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Osiris, 1998), 337-338.

are not thought to be ethnically related to Wallachians, but to Poles. In a description from 1769, we read about them that ‘The locals speak part German, part Polish. In the mountains Wallachians live, who serve as Heyducks.’⁴⁰⁶ As it has been described in chapter 2, the term ‘Wallachian’ in Habsburg territories was applied to a wide range of mostly shepherding ethnic groups, whose common characteristic was that in return for serving as irregular soldiers, they were allowed to settle with considerable autonomy under ‘Wallachian Rights’, originally created for Croatian border guards. In the whole Carpathian area, the irregular soldiers these multi-ethnic ‘Wallachians’ gave to the army were labelled with various versions of the word Hajduc (‘hajdú’ in Hungary and Transylvania, ‘haidamak’ in Galicia and the Germanized ‘Heiduck’ in Serbia and Silesia).⁴⁰⁷

Far-reaching conclusions cannot be drawn from this scattered data, but, as a hypothesis it might at least suggests a link between beliefs in multiplying revenants and ‘Wallachian’ transhumant shepherding groups of a mixed ethnicity. It can also be assumed that the mountainous terrain had a role in generating or at least in preserving whatever beliefs these migrating groups had. Future research into archival materials about revenant beliefs along the Carpathian Ridge and outside it (for instance about Polish and Russian frameworks of the returning dead) ought to shed light on the viability of this hypothesis.

Breslau town physician Martin Weinreich’s revenants (1590s)

The late sixteenth-early seventeenth-century cases of revenants from Moravia-Silesia show a variety of revenant frameworks, and the monopoly of the dead-witch scenario (Chapter I.2.) as supposed by certain researchers is difficult to substantiate in the lack of an appropriately sizeable corpus of case descriptions.⁴⁰⁸ In fact, there are several indications that point to the surviving ties of the early modern Moravian-Silesian revenants to a more universal concept

⁴⁰⁶ Anton Friedrich Büsching, *Neue Erdbeschreibung - Sechster Theil, welcher vom Deutschen Reich das Königreich Böhmen, das Herzogthum Schlesien, die Graffschaft Glatz, Mähren, Lausitz, den Österreichischen und Burgundischen Kreis, mit den Einverleibten Ländern enthält.*, vol. 6. (Schaffhausen: Benedict Hurter, 1769), 264.

⁴⁰⁷ The Hungarian word ‘hajdú’ is thought to have originated from the verb ‘hajtani’, meaning ‘to shepherd [animals]’. Its cognates can be found with similar meanings in other languages as well, e.g.: Russian ‘гайдук’ [gajduk] meaning Balkans freedomfighter, rebel against the Ottomans; and Ottoman Turkish ‘haydut’ meaning robber, bandit. Zaicz, *Etimológiai szótár - Magyar szavak és toldalékok eredete*, 261.

⁴⁰⁸ See Chapter I.2. Berger, ‘Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren’; Lambrecht, ‘Wiedergänger und Vampire in Ostmitteleuropa – Posthume Verbrennung statt Hexenverfolgung?’

about the non-witch returning dead who come back to life because they had some unfinished business in this world. These revenants, who are sometimes invisible, at other times appear in a spiritual form and at yet others come back in flesh-and-blood, express deeply seated anxieties about an unfulfilled fate (Chapter 1.2.). It was these experiences that clerical and secular authorities tried to re-interpret (with varying success), by resorting to the sin-based-narrative during the Middle Ages and the witchcraft-based narrative in the Early Modern Period.

These harmful activities attributed to revenants indeed very much map onto the activities of living witches. The ghosts pester (*infestatio*) or scare (*beängstigen*) people, they cause objects to move, make strange sounds, appear visually in various shapes (animals, hazy fogs or human figures), and often also commit physical attacks on cattle and humans, cause pressure on the chest and suffocation. At the same time, most often, there is no mention of the revenants' activity being witchcraft or magic (*Hexerei, Zaubererei, Magia* etc.). Neither do the sources identify them as having been witches in their lifetime; instead, their abnormal nature is proven based on witness accounts of their posthumous activity as hostile ghosts (*Poltergeist, spectrum, Gespenst*). Finally, as it will be shown below, while witches most often belong to a different household, a different part of the settlement or possibly to another settlement altogether, the revenant's activities often first manifest in their own houses, only then spanning out to that of their relatives, their neighbours and then to the whole community. The focal point of their activity thus often remains tied to their own house throughout, so much so that in the end, many of their personal objects need to be burnt together with their corpses. These arguments suggest that it is worth considering Winfried Irgang's opinion, according to which witchcraft and revenantism were concepts developing rather in a parallel, than a consecutive fashion.⁴⁰⁹ On the other hand, because of the lack of archival research on fifteenth-sixteenth century cases much future research is still needed.

The term *infestatio* is very often used in the sources, as in '*de spectro infestabatur*' [infested by ghosts] for instance, and I chose to translate it as *infestation*. In theory, it could be translated as 'infection' as well, because it was used in the era to describe epidemics as well. Nevertheless, I find this translation problematic, because it gives a falsely medical, contagion-

⁴⁰⁹ Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg', 269-270.

related connotation to the concept. In its original meaning, Latin *infestatio* simply means a swarming of harmful, annoying entities (such as fleas or rats for instance) in a given spatial location, or a continued, pestering attack on someone. The threats of plague epidemics, and the cleansing measures involved in defense against it, such as the burning of clothes, wares and houses that got into contact with the epidemic must have made a very strong and lasting impact in the mental worlds of European population. Undoubtedly, as Péter Tóth G. has rightly suggested, this could have served for many a link between the contagion spread by plague victims and the pollution that the harmful dead can cause in the fabric of the community and the holy ground of the cemetery.⁴¹⁰ This way, the difference between the two meanings of *infestatio* occasionally got blurred, and overlapped in the era, but unless otherwise indicated by the sources, I find it safer to translate it as ‘to infest’, because it has to be kept in mind that the environment from which the Moravian-Silesian revenant infestation emerged was not at all as medicalized as the birthplace of the Serbian vampire.

Two stories from the 1590’s, both of them related by Martin Weinreich, town physician and teacher at the Elisabeth-Gymnasium in Breslau serve as a starting point to illustrate these points.⁴¹¹ Weinreich related these stories as a first-hand witness in the preface to his edition of Pico della Mirandola’s 1523 work, the *Strix*. Both stories subsequently became molded into the eighteenth-century learned vampire debate as core stories about vampires and both stories fall into the category of the non-witch undead, whose unfulfilled fates (due to suicide and accidental death respectively) would not let them rest in the grave. Even though both events took place in a Protestant environment, the appearance of the ghosts and the execution of the bodies have a remarkably Catholic hue. As indicated in Chapter I.2., this feature might be understood as a consequence of the early transitory period in Protestantism, when the official, solely devil-based explanations have not solidified yet.

The first narrative is a typical example of the grave sinner’s posthumous punishment. The protagonist is a shoemaker from Breslau, a town that had an overwhelming majority of Protestants at the time. The shoemaker committed suicide in 1591, but the widow concealed

⁴¹⁰ Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*.

⁴¹¹ Gianfrancesco Pico Della Mirandola, *Johannes Francisci Pici Mirandulae domini concordiaequae comitis strix sive de ludificatione daemonum dialogi tres*, ed. Martin Weinreich (Strasbourg: Karl Weinreich, 1612); Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 64-73.; Stephen Gordon, ‘Emotional Practice and Bodily Performance in Early Modern Vampire Literature’, *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 6, no. 1 (2017): 109.

the fact and had him buried with a regular church burial. However, after the funeral, the shoemaker's ghost (*spectrum*) came back to strangle and torture people in their sleep (*ephialtes*), and was seen roaming around the streets, day and night. In the end, the shoemaker had to be exhumed; his body looked bloated, new skin was seen under the old one peeling off. Consequently, he was beheaded, burnt at the stake and the ashes were thrown into the river.

The other story comes from Upper Silesia, from the town of Bennisch (today Horní Benešov), which at the time belonged to the Jägerndorf Principedom owned by the Protestant Hohenzollern dynasty and was undergoing a transition to Protestantism. The protagonist of the story is the town mayor named Johann Kunze, who died in a horse-riding accident in 1592. After the burial, strange noises started in his house, scaring the widow. Later on, other people also started complaining of night-time pressures (*incubus*) and nightmares (*ephialtes*). Kunze even visited his widow in her bed and tried to entice his son to follow him to the grave. He was also sucking at cattle, making them sick and was disturbing even the minister's family with exuding a sickly stench. In search for the culprit corpse, the minister, with the permission of the secular authorities had many dead relatives of the Kunze family exhumed. Masons broke a hole into the wall of the church where the mayor was entombed, and the corpse was removed from the church. Unlike all other corpses of the Kunze family, Johann Kunze's body did not show signs of decay. The corpse was therefore hacked into pieces, burnt, and the ashes were poured into the river. The problems, however, did not end there, because soon after, a woman died in the Kunze family, and a 'Poltergeist' kept disturbing the family for a month, until her body was also exhumed and burnt.

Kunze's story serves as the earliest known example of the idea that the revenant condition can spread from one corpse to another. In Kunze's case, the nature of this multiplication of revenants seems to be a sort of family/household curse, which passed from the mayor to the woman in an unspecified way. This element is already problematic from the point of view of a sin-based clerical framework, because here innocent people not only become victims of the harmful activities of the dead (such as in the case of the plague-causing dead witch in the *Malleus Maleficarum*) but display the same symptoms and become revenants themselves. Kunze's case sheds a faint light on the strong ties between household members which in folkloric thought remain active even after death. Importantly, the case comes from the

Northern Moravian-Upper Silesian border area, which in the very beginning of the eighteenth century would become a core region of revenant infestation cases. However, as it will be shown below, so far secondary literature has not uncovered a single case of revenant multiplication from the seventeenth century that would serve as a link between Kunze and the great revenant infestations of the early eighteenth century. Future archival research should verify whether such cases happened in the seventeenth century or not and prove or disprove the above-ventured hypothesis about the origins of the revenant infestation-concept in transhumant Wallachian shepherding groups.

Revenants across the confessional break

Despite the Thirty-Years' War (1618-48) and the commencing Habsburg Catholicization of Bohemia and Moravia after the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620, the revenant cases show remarkably constant features across this threshold, as well as across the Moravian-Silesian border. The lack of putrefaction and the liveliness of the unruly corpses is described in ways fitting into the templates found already in medieval sources. Liquid blood is a frequent sign, found either through incisions made on the corpse, as in a 1596 case from Arnsdorf (today Arnoltice) in Moravia,⁴¹² or, for instance in a 1651 case in Freudenthal (today Bruntál), it is copious amounts of blood flowing from the beheaded corpse.⁴¹³

Very often, the bodies were not even buried yet when the suspicion arose: in case the corpse failed to show rigor mortis, and the limbs remained flexible, it was taken as a warning sign, but did not necessarily end in hauntings or execution. In 1606, again in Arnsdorf, the death of a certain Jacob Schrot caused unrest, because the parish priest noticed that his arms were not in rigor mortis. They called the judge to examine the body, but since no one knew anything 'suspicious' about this person, he was buried with the usual ceremonies.⁴¹⁴ Almost a century later, also on the Moravian side a similar case had a different result. In Zechau (today Těchanov), in June 1690 a woman was burnt because even after having spent four weeks on

⁴¹² Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren', 205-206.

⁴¹³ Friedrich Lucae, *Schlesiens curiose Denckwürdigkeiten oder vollkommene Chronica von Ober- Und Nieder-Schlesien*, vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main, 1689), 2233.; Bischof and d'Elvert, *Zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Zauberer, Hexen und Vampyre in Mähren und Österreichische Schlesien*, 154.

⁴¹⁴ Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren', 206.

the brier, she did not show signs of rigor mortis and was therefore ‘identified as a ghost’ (*als Gespenst bemerkt*).⁴¹⁵ The term ghost was used to denote a corporeal revenant, and the lack of rigor mortis was still considered to be evidence for revenantism. In this sense, there is a great gap between learned medicine and judicial practice, because the lack of rigor mortis was widely known to be only a usual, but not definitive phenomenon after death.

It is clear from the case descriptions that the person’s conduct in life was a factor to be considered during the negotiations about revenantism. The word ‘suspicious’ often comes up, but its exact meaning is often unclear: it may be a reference to witchcraft but could be anything indicating a sinful or unfinished life. The parish death register of Bärn for example tells of two cases in Moravia, one in 1662 in Bärn (today Moravský Beroun), the other in 1667 in Siebenhöfen (today Sedm Dvůrů): the latter note simply mentions that there were ‘reasonable doubts’ about the corpse and the former explains that there were certain signs that made the widower suspicious (*suspecta*) of his late wife.⁴¹⁶

There are several cases, which indicate a confessional tension between Catholic and the Protestant villagers. In 1666 and 1667, in the Moravian villages of Dittersdorf (today Děčichov nad Bystřicí) and Andersdorf (today Ondrášov) two Lutheran dead came under the suspicion of causing ghost infestations.⁴¹⁷ In several further cases, villagers wished to stop burials from taking place, which possibly betrays fears of the polluting presence of corpses that belonged to opposing confessions around the village. Even though Lutherans and Catholics were buried in separate cemeteries, the tensions during lifetime that possibly manifested in confessional guise could have continued after death as well.

When it comes to describing the posthumous activities, descriptions practically never mention witchcraft, instead, we hear about poltergeists and ghosts. The entry to a certain woman named Paurin in the Bärn parish death register of 1600 remarks: ‘NB: She was not a decent person (*eine richtige Person*), because since her death a ghost (*Gespenst*) started causing a lot of trouble and damage to body and cattle, and afterwards (Thank God) became silent.’⁴¹⁸ This remark is valuable, because it shows that cases of the restless dead did not always end up in

⁴¹⁵ Horky, ‘Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre’, 391.

⁴¹⁶ Horky, 391.

⁴¹⁷ Horky, 391.

⁴¹⁸ Berger, ‘Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren’, 205.

exhumations and executions: there were several stages through which the cases could progress, only the most radical of which was execution. It also indicates that the activities of the restless dead were much more frequent in the era than what we see in the sources, because most of the less severe stages were probably simply not recorded.

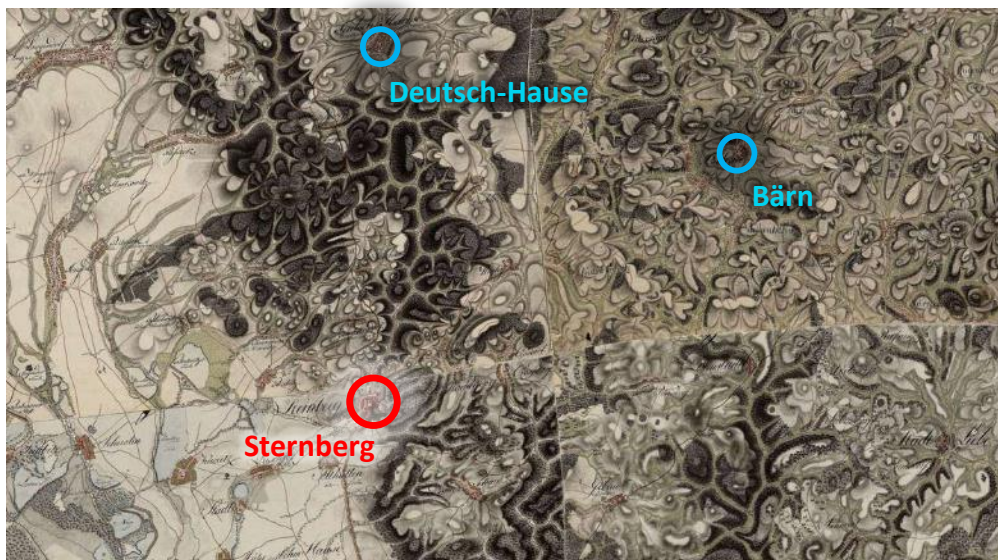
Importantly, while the sources often mention the vexing entities in the plural, the known seventeenth-century investigations always locate only one single corpse responsible, and never result in multiple executions. This was the case in Upper Silesia, for instance, when poltergeists attacked and killed cows in 1642 in the village of Tielendorf (today Tylov),⁴¹⁹ and when ghosts (*Gespenster*) were vexing townsfolk at night in the above-mentioned 1651 Freudenthal case. In 1666 and 1667, the Moravian villagers of Dittersdorf (today Dětrichov nad Bystřicí) and Andersdorf (today Ondrášov), were attacked by a single ghost (*a spectro infestabatur*) in the former case, but by several ghosts in the latter (*ob infestationem a spectris*); however, in the end, in both cases only one corpse was executed.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg'.

⁴²⁰ Horky, 'Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre', 391.

The season of the gravedigger: Economies of expertise

While the available sources most often do not disclose information about the dynamics of collecting evidence and identifying the culprit corpses, an interesting document from 1635 offers insight into the question. It is a detailed remuneration request (see Appendix) detailing the expenses of discovering, convicting and executing a revenant in the fortified town of Sternberg (today Šternberk), Moravia.⁴²¹ The accusations were centred on a certain Martin Nedal's widow, also known as Kotschin, who in the 11 weeks following her death was 'running around', was pressing and scaring people at night and making noises in houses (*in Häusern gepolttert*). The case created substantial mobilization on the part of the authorities. The legal



26 The vicinity of Sternberg at the edge of the mountains (Josephinische Landesaufnahme 1764-1768)

procedure was authorized by the Imperial Judge of Olomouc, a relatively recent position at the time, instituted after the suppression of the Bohemian Revolt in 1620. The Imperial Judge was nominated by the emperor, had authority to oversee all matters handled by the town magistrate and as such was an efficient agent of Catholicization. Further, since Kotschin was entombed in the Augustinian Monastery of Sternberg, consent was requested also from the provost of the monastery, who apparently was residing in Waischowitz (today Výšovice, Prostějov District, south of Olomouc) at the time.

⁴²¹ Hawelka, 'Die Gerichtsbarkeit der Stadt Sternberg (1381-1754) mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Verhältnisses zum Olmützer Oberhofe und zur Prager Appellationskammer', 281-282.; Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren', 205.

Even though Sternberg was the centre and largest town of the Sternberg Dominion, local authorities did not carry out the investigation on their own: they had to invite experts from outside town to help them out. Five people, three from Deutsch-Hause (today Huzová) and two from Bärn were invited to join the court and carry out the formal examination and discovery (*rechtbilliger Besichtigung und Erkenntnis*) of the revenant. While Bärn belonged to the Sternberg Dominion, Deutsch-Hause did not: the small settlement was the property of the Bishop of Olomouc.⁴²² The presence of these five outsiders in Sternberg indicates that they were invited because they were knowledgeable in revenant-cases. Berger even suggests that there was a flatland-versus-mountains opposition in the sense that revenant cases were mostly characteristic of the mountainous areas, and Sternberg, situated exactly at the edge of the flatland, at the foot of the mountains had less experience in such matters as compared to Bärn and Deutsch-Hause.

⁴²² Franz Joseph Schwoy, *Topographie vom Markgrafthum Mähren* (Wien: Joseph Hraschanzky, 1793), 149; 450-451.

Remuneration request from 1635, from Sternberg for the identification of a revenant⁴²³

‘Description and specification of the travel-, judicial and criminal procedural expenses paid because of the widow of the late Martin Nedal, otherwise known as Kotschin of the Langgasse, who, in the 11 weeks following her death was very much running around, was pressing and scaring people at night, again and again making noises in houses (in Häusern gepoltert), and therefore after a legal investigation was executed publicly by fire in Sternberg, on the 17th of September, 1635.

Since on the 10th September Matheus Schindler, Hans Poltzer and George Rother from Deutsch-Hause and Cristoph Schürmeißel and Hans Schuch from Bärn were sent for in writing so that they would carry out the formal examination and discovery (rechtbilliger Besichtigung und Erkenntnis) of the above mentioned Kotschin, and since they stayed here for 2 days and had to be catered for, the following sums were spent:

| | | |
|--|-------|--------------------|
| For travel to [Deutsch-]Hause | 5gr | 1 d ⁴²⁴ |
| One courier’s fee to [Deutsch-]Hause and two to Bärn | 11 gr | 1 d |
| Courier’s fee to the Imperial Judge ⁴²⁵ for a consent from Olomouc | 3 gr | 3 d |
| Travel to Waischowitz to the prelates ⁴²⁶ | 12 gr | 6 d |
| For fumigation against the foul smell | 4 gr | 2 d |
| For the written report of this procedure | 1 fl | |
| For candles for the watchmen | 1 fl | 8 gr |
| Masons for breaking a hole and rebuilding it in the cloister’s wall (Kreuzgang) through which the ghost (Gespenst) was dragged out | | 15 gr |
| For 1 fire poker and plough (Art) | | 15 gr |
| For 1 ladder | 20 gr | 4 d |
| For 1 straw bundle | 7 gr | |
| For 2 wooden planks | 5 gr | 1 d |
| For 4 wooden rods | 3 gr | 3 d |
| For 1 sled | 15 gr | |
| For 2 ropes, 6 yokes and 8 cords | 1 gr | |
| For 1 iron axe (Hau) and a new shovel | 15 gr | |
| For the exhumation, incision (Anritz) and inspection | 1 fl | |
| For the executioner to burn the body | 8 fl | |

All these expenses (not counting the several night watches, which the citizens had to perform) added together in money, which her [Kotschin’s] son, Caspar Schupan was ordered to pay:

29 fl 20 gr 5 d’

⁴²³ From the Black Book of Sternberg. See: Hawelka, ‘Die Gerichtsbarkeit der Stadt Sternberg (1381-1754) mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Verhältnisses zum Olmützer Oberhofe und zur Prager Appellationskammer’, 181–82.

⁴²⁴ fl = Gulden; gr = Groschen; d = Pfennig; 1 fl = 16 gr = 192 d

⁴²⁵ The *‘Kaiserrichter’* (Lat. *praeses judiciorum ab imperatore constitutus*), was part of the city magistrate in royal cities of Bohemia and Moravia, and took heed that nothing would be decided against imperial interests. Johann Hübner, *Reales Staats- Zeitungs- und Conversations-Lexicon* (Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Gleditsch, 1744), 998.

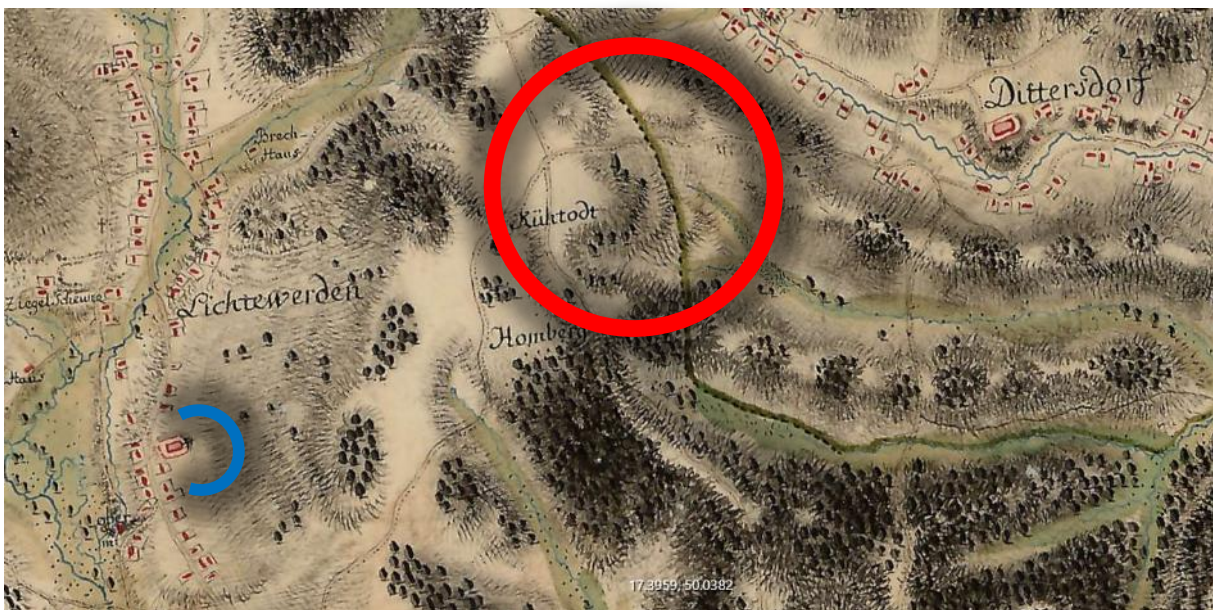
⁴²⁶ Possibly a reference to the provost of the Augustinian Monastery of Sternberg, who might have been residing in Waischowitz at the time.

The details that emerge from the document reveal that the experts conducted a several-day-long procedure. First, masons were ordered to break a hole into ‘the wall of the cloister through which the ghost was dragged out’. Notably, the word ‘ghost’ was not only understood as an airy, spiritual entity, but was the term used for the very material revenant corpse itself. After the exhumation, watchmen were guarding the revenant day and night, and the number of candles they used must have been huge, as this item is one of the largest sums in the list. The examination of the body involved making incisions on it, to test if it was bleeding. Presumably, the test had a positive result, and the body looked life-like. However, the inclusion of ‘fumigation to counter the foul smell’ into the list shows that the corpse did have a stench, but it was not held to be counterevidence. As discussed earlier, corpses did not have to be entirely fresh to be susceptible to revenantism: it was enough to be partially functioning. An indication that the procedure had a quasi-ritualistic scenario is that the request contains several tools and instruments: a shovel, an axe, a fire poker, a plough as well as several pieces of wood and ropes. All of these items must have been at disposal in the town in great numbers, and yet, the commissioners were using new ones. This indicates that the procedure required new, unused tools, which were purchased / manufactured for this single purpose and which (as later case descriptions suggest) were destroyed after the investigation ended, together with the revenant. Kotschin was convicted, and her corpse was executed publicly by fire, an act carried out by an executioner.

The expenses of the whole legal procedure, including the fees of the experts, the masons, the couriers and the executioner, all the instruments, and travel expenses, as well as the writing up of the report amounted to almost 30 guldens, all of which had to be paid by Kotschin’s son. The sum was large by the standards of the time: a doorkeeper’s monthly salary serving in the residence of Prince Lichtenstein, Governor of Bohemia and Moravia at the time was 96 guldens, a loaf of bread costed around 1d, while the payment for day labour in the fields was around 6d.⁴²⁷ This shows that the families were held responsible for the revenant’s activities and having a revenant in the family was a great shame.

⁴²⁷ Christian d’Elvert, *Zur österreichischen Verwaltungsgeschichte, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die böhmischen Länder*, Schriften der Historisch-Statistischen Section der k.k. Mährischen Schlesischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung des Ackerbaues, der Natur- und Landeskunde, 24. (Brünn: Verlag der Historisch-Statistischen Section, 1880), 427.

Another revenant case that happened 40 years later, this time across the Moravice river, in Upper Silesia betrays the continued, desperate need for experts knowledgeable in identifying and killing revenants. Christof Englisch from Lichtewerden (today Světlá Hora), a village belonging to Freudenthal died in 1674.⁴²⁸ Soon after, his fellow villagers started experiencing nighttime disturbances: they were scared and plagued (*geängstiget und geplaget*) by a ghost or poltergeist (*Gespent oder Poltergeist*). The pious means (probably blessed objects) which they were using to ward off these attacks were of no use, and in the end, they were even afraid to let their dead be buried in the same cemetery where Englisch was lying. At length, the community requested the Olomouc episcopal consistory to help deal with the affliction (*die Übel*). The consistory ordered the Freudenthal dean Eberhard Cronenberger to investigate the issue. The dean carried out witness hearings about the nighttime attacks and about the life of the deceased. According to some, Englisch had not led an entirely praiseworthy life (*in seinen Lebzeiten nicht all zu eines löbliches Verhaltens gewesen*).



27 The vicinity of Lichtewerden: the cemetery (marked blue) and the probable location of the execution of Englisch's cadaver (marked red) (Josephinische Landesaufnahme, 1764-1768)

The witness accounts were enough to base a suspicion against Englisch, which the dean sought to verify by having the body exhumed and examined. The corpse which by that time had allegedly spent 27 weeks underground was checked by the Freudenthal gravedigger, who however refused to touch the body with his hands. Therefore, he fastened an iron blade (*ein eisernes Hackel*, which might mean anything from an axe, a shovel, a hoe etc.) at the end of a

⁴²⁸ A. Schmidt, 'Ein Dokument zur Geschichte der schlesische Hexenprozesse', *Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kulturgeschichte Österreichisch-Schlesiens* 2 (1907): 193-194.

long rod and standing this way afar (probably reaching down into the grave), made incisions on the body. The incisions yielded no blood, and so the commission was perplexed what to do, as the results of the examination did not seem to confirm the suspicion.

The community decided to invite another, more knowledgeable expert, the gravedigger of Fridland (today Břidličná). Fridland was a town smaller than Freudenthal, and lay further to the south, already across the Moravian border. This means, that yet again, as in the Sternberg case an expert was invited from beyond the secular borders of the dominion, in this case even beyond the border of the province of Silesia. This practice was of course facilitated by the fact that the whole region belonged to the Bishopric of Olomouc, which in this sense functioned as a channel of expertise. The gravedigger from Fridland simply jumped down into the grave, turned the corpse over manually and made incisions on its back with an iron instrument resembling a sickle (*einer eisernen Graß-Sichel gleich*), from which incisions fresh blood flowed and the flesh was lively red, free of maggots.

Based on the evidence, the dean decided that the body was not worthy of staying in holy ground. On 28th November, in the presence of several clerical and secular authorities, armed watchmen and a large crowd of people, the gravediggers lifted the corpse out of the grave and threw it over the cemetery wall, thus giving it over to the secular authority, which condemned it to be burnt at the stake. The Freudenthal executioner carried the corpse from the cemetery (marked blue on the map) on a sled out to the so-called Foxstone (*Fuchsstein*), on the border between Lichtewerden and Dittersdorf (today Děčichovice). In this no-man's land (somewhere within the area marked red on the map) the body was burnt to ashes together with the coffin, the bier and all the instruments used during the exhumation. The executioner buried the ashes in a pit dug for the purpose, while he poured the unearthed soil from the grave into a nearby stream. The empty grave was filled up with stones, so that no one could ever be buried there.

The investigation against Christof Englisch shows that the future expert authority in revenant cases, the Olomouc episcopal consistory at this early stage was not yet entirely confident in handling the matter. In general, the fact that authorities in larger towns, like Sternberg and Freudenthal had to resort to revenant experts from much smaller settlements, like Deutsch-Hause and Fridland, outside the borders of their own dominion suggests that the procedure and the ideas about revenants were not yet routinized and solidified. The theological

framework described earlier also had to be thwarted in practice to meet the expectations and experiences of the local community. First, in theory, only grave sinners' corpses were to be evicted from the cemetery, and they were the ones who had a greater chance to be possessed by the devil as well. That Englisch led a 'not entirely praiseworthy' life hardly qualifies as a grave sin, at least there are no accusations of severe sins like witchcraft, heresy, murder or suicide mentioned. The investigation was instead focused on Englisch's posthumous activities and the 'unworthiness' of his life seems tacked on. Second, the first attempt at drawing liquid blood from the incisions did not yield the expected result, and instead of understanding it as evidence of innocence, they invited a second opinion, which betrays a strong pressure exerted by parts of the local community on the dean leading the investigation.

It is not straightforward how the various actors interpreted the fact that people were afraid to place their dead in the same ground where Englisch's corpse was buried. From a theological point of view, Englisch ruined the holiness of the cemetery, which then could disturb the peace of newly buried, innocent people, possibly turning them into revenants. The idea of a defiled holy ground in need of purification was in line with Catholic theology, after all, the same was to be done in case blood was spilled on church grounds. However, there was something more to the folkloric idea of the revenant, that stretched the clerical framework a little. Just like in Kotschin's 1635 case, Christof Englisch's corpse did not only pollute the holy soil but all the objects that came into contact with him. The meticulous, almost maniacal annihilation of instruments, brier and soil of the grave, as well as the blocking of the grave with stones all attest to intense fears of these objects polluted with evil. Perhaps similar ideas led to the 1592 double execution of Johann Kunze and his maid. The development of this pollution-idea into the massive revenant infestations of the eighteenth century, it seems, unfolded slowly during the end of the seventeenth century, assuming a more and more concrete form.

At this stage, it was not only the episcopal consistory that got involved into the gradual systematization of revenants. It was probably the case of Christof Englisch that motivated the reigning Grand Master of the Teutonic Order (also Governor of the Hungarian Kingdom), Johann Caspar von Ampringen to request in 1675 an investigation into the legal validity of the execution of the dead. Freudenthal belonged at the time to the Teutonic Order and the Grand Master ordered the collection of detailed information gathered from experienced clerical and secular people on the execution of corpses, because he thought the procedure

was not lawful (*rechtsbenüßig*), and wanted to get it checked within the order, and at various universities as well.⁴²⁹ Unfortunately, it is unknown whether Ampringen indeed made these steps, but it certainly shows that towards the end of the seventeenth century, secular and clerical authorities felt a need to gain a clearer theoretical understanding of revenantism.

Two cases that happened thirty years later indicate that the gravediggers of Fridland managed to maintain their fame as experts since Christof Englisch's 1674 burning, and that the price of expertise was rising when it came to finding and exterminating revenants. In 1698, a certain Anna Alraun's corpse was burnt in Fridland, and her sons requested the costs they were forced to pay to be decreased from 64 guildens to 43 guildens. They were also requesting that half of this would be paid by the dominion's budget, while the 36 gulden-worth of loss in 'church objects', such as the shroud was paid by the Fridland community.⁴³⁰ This means that, compared to the 29 guildens in 1635, the price of a revenant execution procedure rose threefold. Another revenant case in 1700 in Lobnig (today Lomnice), also involved the Fridland grave digger, who explained to locals, that even though the revenant he was dealing with might seem like rough, he himself would most probably be even worse after his death.⁴³¹ Whether gallows humour or sincere belief, this and the previous case show that more and more was at stake in revenant cases and it was becoming a huge financial burden for the communities on the one hand, and a lucrative business for the experts on the other.

Summary

The social practice of doing away with revenants on the Moravian-Silesian borderland in the seventeenth century shows strikingly even characteristics across the 1620 confessional break and the increasing Catholicisation. The cases feature a variety of revenant frameworks, of which the dead witch was just one of the possibilities. There are indications of remnant ideas about returning dead with an unfulfilled fate, as well as of familial/household curses. In addition, cases came up in which people were pressing for the destruction of objects, tools and even

⁴²⁹ Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg'.

⁴³⁰ Irgang.

⁴³¹ Irgang, 268.

the soil with which the revenants came into contact with, in order to avoid further problems. These elements suggest an underlying folk-idea of polluting revenants, which through the seventeenth century seems to have unfolded slowly into a more and more concrete form the early eighteenth-century revenant infestations.

III.2. Killing angels: Revenant infestations in the early eighteenth century

Numerous further revenant cases happened on both sides of the Moravian-Silesian border (notably around Freudenthal, Römerstadt and Fridland), between 1674 and 1701, but they all conformed to the so-far described features of single executions (Appendix). These cases could fit into the canon law tradition of having to remove grave sinners and witches from holy ground and either giving them an ass-burial or executing them, depending on the severity of their sins, and the severity of the unrest they were causing as ghosts.

However, a series of multiple revenant cases in 1701-1703 in the town of Liebe (today Libavá) finally triggered the Olomouc episcopal consistory to revise the traditional frameworks of revenantism and come up with a new one that could accommodate the idea of multiplying revenants as well. Systematizing efforts in general often seem to have been motivated by big or scandalous revenant cases: the Freudenthal cases in the 1670s, and the 1755 Frei Hermersdorf case also had such effects on Grand Master von Ampringen and on the Viennese court respectively.

Revenant panics around Liebe (1701-1703)

The events that happened in 1701 and 1703 in and around the town of Liebe (today Libavá) caused a radical change in the handling of revenant cases on the Moravian-Silesian border. Detailed sources of these events have been published by Jan Bombera, in a thorough article, which is little-known in scholarship outside the Czech Republic.⁴³² Since I have not had the chance to consult the original documents yet, in order to analyze the concept of the multiplication of revenants, in the followings I will heavily rely on Bombera's article.

⁴³² Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku'.

The town of Liebe and many little settlements belonging to it were sites of almost constant revenant panics in the first three decades of the eighteenth century.⁴³³ Apart from Kremsier (today Kroměříž) and Bautsch (today Budišov nad Budišovkou), Liebe was one of the three centres of the so-called Kremsier Dominion, a collection of lands belonging directly to the bishop of Olomouc. It is crucial that the cases happened in the dominion belonging directly to the bishop, for these cases were the ones that trained the bishopric and made it into an expert in handling and to a great extent, orchestrating mass executions of revenants. In the solidification of the practice of mass revenant executions in the Moravian diocese, the Olomouc bishoprics of Charles Joseph John Anthony Ignace Felix of Lorraine (1680-1715; bishop 1698-1711)⁴³⁴ and his successor, Wolfgang Hannibal von Schrattenbach (1660-1738, bishop 1711-1738) were instrumental.



28 The vicinity of Schmeil: the location of the mill of Schmeil (marked red) was one of the places of ass-burials in the era (Josephinische Landesaufnahme, 1764-1768)

Between the 18th and 30th April 1701, three, related corpse exhumations took place in Liebe and Dittersdorf, a village south of Liebe (today uninhabited Čermná).⁴³⁵ The first one involved

⁴³³ Much of the area south of Libavá was transformed in 1946 into a 240 km² closed military training ground, and the villages where incidentally many of the revenant cases had happened are today within this zone and are uninhabited, such as Schmeil (today Smilov), Waltersdorf (today Velká Střelná), Dittersdorf (today Čermná) or Krigsdorf (the foot of the Kamenná hill by the Mlýnský Potok).

⁴³⁴ Bishop Charles III. of Lorraine was son of Charles V., titular duke of Lorraine and Bar (1675-1690), the so-called 'duke without a duchy'.

⁴³⁵ Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 40-41.

a woman originally from Herlsdorf (today Heroltovice), who had been buried in the cemetery of Liebe. She was exhumed 3 weeks after the burial for the suspicion of having attacked people and cattle. The signs of lack of putrefaction were found on her body, but instead of an execution, she was given a so-called ass-burial (*sepultura asini*), a term used for burials without a civilized ritual, outside the holy ground of the cemetery, usually at the margins of the settlement. This type of burial was regular punishment throughout early modern Europe for grave sinners, such as murderers and suicides, and was based on the instructions in the Book of Jeremiah (22, 19):

*'He shall be buried with the burial of an ass,
drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.'*

One location for the ass-burial in the area around Liebe was next to the mill of Schmeil (today Smilov, south of Libavá). The burial however seems not to have ended the hauntings and after a week, a 4-year-old child was also dug up in the cemetery and was given an ass-burial in the same place. Yet another week passed, and a 1-week-old child's corpse was exhumed, and this time burnt at the border of the villages of Dittersdorf and Waltersdorf (today Velká Střelná). Even though the exhumations did not happen on the same day, their proximity in time and space suggests that they were linked and all three were desperate attempts at solving the unrest in the local communities.

Two years later, the village of Waltersdorf witnessed the first known case on the Moravian-Silesian border, where not one, but two revenants were executed on the very same day. In February 1703, a commission from the village requested the Liebe town council to act against an old woman, who started pressing people and troubling cattle already on the next day after her funeral. The villagers presented the testimonies of twenty people, including the local priest, who confirmed that the deceased woman appeared '*visibiliter et personaliter*'. However, meanwhile a 14-day-old child died and even though was not buried yet, started displaying the signs of revenantism: the body did not show rigor mortis and looked lively. The villagers asked for permission to open the dead woman's grave and examine both corpses. The investigation was led by the dean of Bautsch, in the name of the Olomouc episcopal consistory, since the body was located in the cemetery. The woman was found with open eyes, smiling and having entirely flexible limbs. The incisions yielded a little blood. As a consequence, both bodies were given over to the secular arm to be burnt. After the execution,

however, the problems did not cease; in the meantime, a third person, a servant girl also got infected, and the same signs were seen on her body (probably the lack of rigor mortis), and therefore her corpse was also burned.⁴³⁶

Events such as the Waltersdorf one were problematic, for they indicated a serious gap in the prevailing theological explanation of how and why revenantism occurred. The idea that desecrated cemetery ground caused those buried there to become revenants themselves was insufficient, because certain corpses had absolutely no contact with the soil of the cemetery, and still, they contracted the revenant condition, while still lying on the bier. Apparently, there were more and more such cases in the bishopric of Olomouc and it is known that sometime before 1703, on one single occasion, no less than fifty small children were exhumed and burnt for the suspicion of being ghosts.⁴³⁷

After such a mass execution, which (to our knowledge) was the very first one in the region (and possibly in Europe in general), the bishop, Charles III. of Lorraine (bishop: 1695–1711) did what was most logical: he turned to Rome for advice. This information comes from a certain de Vassimont, treasury advisor to the bishop's brother, Leopold, Duke of Lorraine (duke: 1690–1729). Von Vasimont informed Dom Augustin Calmet, the writer of a celebrated treatise on vampires and ghosts, that when he was sent to Moravia by the duke in the early 1700s, he heard a great deal of talk about the dead returning to life and visiting their acquaintances. He also told Calmet that even though the bishop requested instructions in the matter from the Pope, he received none.⁴³⁸ Bishop Charles III. of Lorraine, however, did not give up, and decided on having the topic researched. He instructed his secret advisor, jurist Karl Ferdinand von Schertz (d. 1724) to write a recommendation on how to proceed judicially in cases of the returning dead.

Karl F. von Schertz and the hybrid framework of *magia posthuma* (1703)

Von Schertz took the job seriously, and handed in his manuscript treatise the same year, in 1703, titled *Juridicum pro et Contra Seu Unus Aliquis Casus Juridicus Isque Singularior Magia*

⁴³⁶ Bombera, 40–41.

⁴³⁷ Schertz, 'Juridicum pro et contra', 25r–v. [unpaginated].

⁴³⁸ Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions*, 270.; Calmet, *Gelehrte Verhandlung*, 2:25–26.

Posthuma Suspendo Nonnullibi Judicio Discussus.⁴³⁹ The book was published in 1704 in Olomouc under the title *Magia Posthuma per Juridicium Illud pro & Contra Suspendo Nonnullibi Judicio Investigata* in short, *Magia Posthuma*.⁴⁴⁰ The whereabouts of von Schertz's work was for a long time unknown, but recently it surfaced again, and historian Giuseppe Maiello published it with a Czech translation. What is more, the Moravian Library in Brno recently published a scanned copy of its earlier manuscript version online. A thorough comparative analysis of the manuscript and the print version is outside the scope of the present dissertation, and so I shall concentrate only on what is most immediately important for the present research: the construction of the revenant infestation.

In the work, von Schertz summarized previous experience on the returning dead and thereby codified and systematized several aspects that before have been more subject to negotiation. He listed the usual signs (such as lack of rigor mortis, lively colour, lack of decay and maggots), but remarked that the corpse stench is nevertheless there. He enumerated the usual symptoms of the attacks as well: scary apparitions, causing restlessness to people and animals, nighttime attacks with chest pressure and a general rampage. He also stated that the revenant-problem is most often encountered in the mountainous areas of Silesia and Moravia.⁴⁴¹

The affliction

The framework which von Schertz created and called *magia posthuma* was a hybrid, demonologically unclear system, put together from elements of witchcraft, demonic possession and the curious popular element of 'blowing' (*anblasen*). The explanation involved an initial dead arch-witch, who could then turn the newly dead bodies into ghosts just like him/herself through blowing at them:

⁴³⁹ Schertz, 'Juridicum pro et contra'.

⁴⁴⁰ Schertz, *Magia posthuma*; See its modern edition in Czech in: Maiello, *Vampyrismus a magia posthuma - Vampyrismus v kulturních dějinách Evropy a magia posthuma Karla Ferdinanda Schertze (První novodobé vydání)*.

⁴⁴¹ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 79.

'if the Sorceress (Maevia)⁴⁴² had not been burned, even greater evil could follow. Anyone who newly dies after her and is buried in the same cemetery must also become a ghost (spectrum), and the malevolent rage will be strengthened, as is witnessed by experience from many places: common people believe that the first ghost (Gespenst) can blow at (anblaßen) other dead bodies buried later on.⁴⁴³ [...] after such a blowing (afflatus), they all become rampant [...] Also, surprisingly, even innocent dead infants become rampant and their corpses must be burned. In one such place they had to burn about fifty dead at the border, without any suspicion of magic during their lifetime [...] All this because they had not burnt the body of the first ghost (spectrum).⁴⁴⁴

Von Schertz located the source of the core element of 'blowing' from popular culture, and the expression had several resonances at the time. For one, it was a recognized magical practice of healing and harming. Martin Luther in his 577th table talk explains that the devil has power over the human body and is able to change and corrupt the human body with his breath.⁴⁴⁵ The corruption of the body was in line with the medical thinking of the era, as the spirits in breath may enter a human body through any of its openings (pores included) and just like any other airy spirit material (such as miasmas or foul smells) can start a putrefaction of the bodily humours inside the body. During witchcraft trials, witches through the power of the devil were also able to cause harm through blowing. In a 1681 witchcraft trial from Ullersdorf (today Velké Losiny) in Moravia, the accusation stated that the witches

'had commerce with Satan, worshipped the same with mad and shameful words, and harmed their fellow men in many ways, even shot the landlord with devilish blowing'⁴⁴⁶

It is unclear what the effect of the witches' blowing exactly was in this case, because the 'shot' may mean two things. The witches could have caused lumbago (*Hexenschuss*) to the landlord,

⁴⁴² 'Maevia' - Sir George Mackenzie of Rosehaugh published an important speech in defence of a witch, to whom he gave the fictionalised name 'Maevia' in *his Pleadings in Some Remarkable Cases before the Supreme Courts of Scotland, since the year 1661* (1673), ch. 16.

⁴⁴³ This is a German sentence interjected into the otherwise Latin text, and reads: 'Der gemeine Mann glaubt, es pflüge das erste Gespenst, die andere Todte nachbegrabene Körper anblaßen.'

⁴⁴⁴ Schertz, 'Juridicum pro et contra', 24v-25v. [unpaginated].

⁴⁴⁵ 'corpora nostra sunt subiecta Diabolo, ille potest ea mutare et corrumpere [suo] afflatu' Karl Drescher and Ernst Kroker, eds., *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Tischreden.*, vol. 1. (Weimar: Hof-Buchdruckerei, 1912), 265.

⁴⁴⁶ '...sich mit den Sathan vermischet, denselben mit narrisch - auch schandlichen worthen angebetet, und denen neben menschen mit vielen geschadet, ja sogar ihrige Erbherrschafft mit teüfflichen anblasen erschossen.' Bischof and d'Elvert, *Zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Zauberer, Hexen und Vampyre in Mähren und Österreichische Schlesien*, 84.

or they might have shot certain objects into his body (such as coal, hair, needles, eggshells etc.), which in legal terms was called *materialia iniecta*.⁴⁴⁷ Either way, the blowing was a way to cause harm from a distance.

It is not difficult to see the link between blowing air and the wind's ability to propel objects across distances. For example, an accused witch in Hungary in 1755 confessed:

*'... Midwife Czifra taught me that whatever I blow at three times, it would fly away instantly... so, whatever I blow at, will run and fly away instantly'*⁴⁴⁸

The Moravian ghosts' blowing at inanimate corpses, and thereby making them come back to life and move around in peoples' houses is (at least at a metaphorical level), a very similar idea to this Hungarian witch's abilities.

In the popular mindset, the harming power of blowing was mirrored in its power to heal. Adam von Lebenwaldt, physician in Styria in the seventeenth century, mentioned that witches and magicians can harm people and cattle through looking at, blowing at or touching them, but also discussed that people do many superstitious things that have no natural or supernatural power in order to cure diseases, such as touching, blowing at or applying certain things on the body. Interestingly, he remarked that the average people use the expression 'to worship' (*anbetten*) to mean 'to blow at'.⁴⁴⁹ Since the blowing out of air through the mouth was also the way how speech works, saying and blowing were tightly linked concepts, and thus 'blowing out' could might as well mean to perform an incantation or utter a verbal curse. This overlap of meanings is exemplified not only by the Styrian case of using 'to worship' to mean 'to blow out air'. In a pious work from 1633, Satan's temptation of Eve to eat from the forbidden fruit is described as a 'devilish blowing' (*teuffliche Anblasen*).⁴⁵⁰ It was not only Satan, who used blowing to work extraordinary effects, the creation of man also entailed this element:

⁴⁴⁷ Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*, 406.; Tóth G., 'Tárgyak, férgek, démonok'.

⁴⁴⁸ Károly Laufenauer, *Előadások az idegélet világából* (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Természettudományi Társulat, 1899), 234.

⁴⁴⁹ 'wunderliche Sprüche aimblich oder öffentlich vorbringt / mit anrühren, anblasen (welches das gemeine Volk anbetten nennet) oder sonst etwas appliciret, welches kein natürliche oder übernatürliche Kraft hat' Cited in: Elfriede Grabner, 'Ein Steirischer Arzt des 17. Jahrhunderts als Quelle für die magischen Praktiken seiner Zeit', in *Kulturtechnik Aberglaube: Zwischen Aufklärung und Spiritualität. Strategien zur Rationalisierung des Zufalls.*, ed. Eva Kreissl (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 205-206.

⁴⁵⁰ Johann Caspar, *Riesen-Sprung des grossen Sohns des Allerhöchsten* (Bamberg: Johann Elias Höfling, 1633), 23.

*'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;
and man became a living soul.'*

(Gen 2:7, King James Version)

*'Und Gott der HERR machte den Menschen aus einem Erdenkloß,
und blies ihm ein den lebendigen Odem in seine Nase.*

Und also ward der Mensch eine lebendige Seele.'

(Mose 2:7, Luther Bibel)

Yet another resonating concept, which eventually became crucial in the Moravian case of multiplying revenants is the expression-pair *insufflatio* and *exsufflatio* as used in the Catholic rite of baptism. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem had formulated the concept and the ritual practice in the 4th century, but it remained in official use until 1962 as an optional element during the minor exorcism part of baptism. The ritual involved the casting out of the devil through its out-breathing (*exsufflatio*) by the child, and the subsequent in-breathing (*insufflatio*) of the Holy Spirit. The insufflation-part was often reinforced by the priest literally blowing air at the child's face.⁴⁵¹ Numerous sources describe this element. The often-cited dogmatic work falsely attributed to Saint Augustine, the *De Ecclesiasticis Dogmatibus* makes a direct link between the priest's *exsufflatio* and the forcing of the unclean spirit to leave,⁴⁵² while the *Malleus Maleficarum* adds that the exhaling should be done towards the west:

*'The rite of exorcism holds that in the case of baptizing people there should, first, be an exhaling to the west and a renunciation, second, a raising of the hands towards heaven accompanied by the Holy Confession of the Faith...'*⁴⁵³

Von Schertz created a concept, *magia posthuma*, which was unclear in demonological terms and encompassed both *maleficium* and possession, and both perpetrators and victims. Von Schertz made no attempt at disclosing how exactly he conceived of the spread of the revenant condition through blowing: was it the devil or the spirit/soul of the person that blew at other corpses, was it possession, bewitchment or possession-through-bewitchment? It is logical that

⁴⁵¹ Joseph P. Laycock, ed., *Spirit Possession around the World: Possession, Communion, and Demon Expulsion across Cultures* (Santa Barbara & Denver: ABC-CLIO, 2015), 35.

⁴⁵² 'Cum sive parvuli, sive iuvenes ad regenerationis veniunt sacramentum, non prius fontem vitae adeant, quam exorcismis et exsufflationibus clericorum spiritus ab eis immundus abigatur.' Gennadius Massiliensis, *Liber de ecclesiasticis dogmatibus* (Hamburg, 1614), 17.

⁴⁵³ Mackay, *The Hammer of Witches - A Complete Translation of the Malleus Maleficarum*, 451.

the devil held the first revenant (the so-to-speak arch-revenant) in his claws, since he / she used to be a witch. But what about the subsequent, innocent corpses who became victims, and then perpetrators? Given that the soul has already departed from the bodies, it seems unlikely that the corpses of innocents were understood from a theological point of view as having turned witches: for how could a soulless object form a pact with the devil?

Instead of *insufflatio* or *exsufflatio*, that is, 'breathing in' and 'breathing out', in his treatise, von Schertz only mentioned *afflatio* and its popular German form '*Anblasen*', both of which rather meant 'blowing at sg.']. Subsequent descriptions of multiplying revenants in Moravia, such as the episcopal commission's reports of the 1728 great revenant panic of Liebe (to be discussed below) nevertheless adopted *insufflatio* to denote the spread of revenants. This expression indicates, that in the eyes of the episcopal consistory in Olomouc, the malevolent corpses, just like the newborn babies were possessed by the devil. That possession was an integral part of the scenario is also indicated by the fact that the corpses of the innocents assumed the same characteristics as the arch-revenant *and became able to spread the revenant condition themselves*. As long as there remained even a single possessed corpse, the devil could anytime start a new infestation of possessions. At the same time, at the outset of each such infestation there was always an arch-witch, and therefore, the spread of unruly corpses qualified also as magic, carried out by the devil.

Though left unsaid in the work, the possessing activity of the devil was not bound to the cemetery: any soulless corpse was suitable to be blown at and get possessed, whether buried or still lying on the brier. Numerous later cases attest that recently died people's bodies became targeted by *magia posthuma*, even though they were not even buried yet. This is important, because the Moravian revenants this way departed from the medieval concept of the polluted cemetery ground. The soil they touched (especially where their corpses lay) was still seen as corrupted and dangerous, but it was not only the soil that could convey the revenant condition: the devil could plant it into any soulless body.

The defense

Given that *magia posthuma* incorporated the element of demonic possession as well, von Schertz recommended not to burn the bodies first, but to try to apply exorcism on them.⁴⁵⁴ If it did not work, however, there was no other way, but to burn all the bodies, not just that of the arch-witch, because even the possessed/bewitched innocents can spread their condition further. The need to execute the corpse of this particular, multiplying revenant posed a serious moral-theological difficulty. That the soul and body of a sinner/witch was under the power of the devil was obvious. Once the witch died, the soul left the body and went to Purgatory, but the devil could still maintain power over her corpse and do wonders with it. As we have seen, canon law allowed the exhumation and execution of a sinner's corpse, but importantly not as a way to stop the hauntings but as punishment. After all, as von Schertz mused, 'fire cannot do harm to spirits',⁴⁵⁵ and spirits could be countered only by spiritual means: benediction and exorcism.

Popular demands and the clerically sanctioned practice were in harmony only as long as there was only one single sinner, one single ghost. Problems started once the revenant condition spread to people who were not sinners / witches in their lifetime, among them new-born children. One might argue that since the souls of the innocent dead had already left the body, their bodies might be available to be possessed. But in this case, the execution as punishment of the corpse had absolutely no legal and moral backing. While the community wanted the unruly dead (even if they were innocent in their lifetime) to be done away with, the church had no demonological-legal backing to do this. The cases of revenant infestations open a view at a discrepancy between popular and learned concepts. In the popular mindset, death was a process and the revenant that did the haunting was probably not so much a demon but was still some form of the person who had died. This was very difficult to reconcile with theological concepts of the afterlife and the sharp break of death brought about by the departure of the soul.

Von Schertz openly acknowledged that it was problematic to execute innocents (children especially) but invoked experience as the main argument for allowing the executions to

⁴⁵⁴ Schertz, 'Juridicum pro et contra', 14r-v. [unpaginated].

⁴⁵⁵ 'nihil in spiritus potest Elementum Ignis' Schertz, 27r.

achieve the greater good. He remarked several times, that no matter how surprising and unclear the phenomenon was, experience related by credible sources proved that burning served as a cure. In addition, he invoked a canon law section (Reg. 23, 6) to back up this practice, which stated that ‘even if a certain crime cannot be proven, the punishment can be carried out if there are good reasons to do so’.⁴⁵⁶ The good reason in this case was the need to end the spread of evil, which according to experience could only be achieved by burning the revenants. Von Schertz’s trust in experience made him challenge Thomas Hobbes, who had famously denied the existence of ghosts and who had already been dead for more than twenty years at the time. In von Schertz’s view, if Hobbes were alive, he should come to Moravia and the ghosts would instantly scare all the rebellious, Calvinist subtleties out of him.⁴⁵⁷

The high tide of mass executions (1704-1726)

The role of von Schertz and his *Magia Posthuma* is difficult to overestimate. It canonized the identifying signs and activities of the possessed corpse, as well as systematized the steps of the legal procedure, which had to involve witness accounts sworn by oath, an examination of the corpse through incisions and the giving over of the convicted bodies to the secular arm. What had earlier been ghosts and poltergeists coupled with faint ideas of pollution and the desecration of holy ground, now became defined as artificial magic, as possession through witchcraft and denoted as *magia posthuma*, bewitchment from beyond the grave. As soon as this theological-legal framework was created, it started to function as a stable channel for the fears and anxieties of local communities, and it instantly gave way to massive revenant panics and mass executions. The infamous 1755 Frei Hermersdorf case to be discussed in the next chapter was only the last, and not even the worst episode in this series.

As shown in the chronology (see Appendix), after the 1704 publication of the work, cases started pouring in from Liebe every year, and the obsession with destroying every last piece

⁴⁵⁶ ‘ex causa, etsi non subsit culpa, potest quis puniri’ Schertz, 25v-26r.

⁴⁵⁷ ‘Qui idem casus una[m] demonstrat non veram esse illam sententiam famosissimi /utroque sensu/ Hobbezy: non dari ulla spectra, imprecari Hobbezio, ut si etiam dum viveret, in oras nostras veniret; nullus ambigo, dediceret suam subtilitatem Calvinisticam dedocerent illum, & suum contradictionis spiritum, aly spiritus.’ Schertz, 26r-v. [unpaginated].

of the contamination spurred more and more unusual actions. The first case happened already in 1705, in Schmeil, when after a legal procedure exactly as described in von Schertz's work, two corpses were executed. In the following year von Schertz personally intervened into an ongoing revenant case in Liebe ordering the town council to carry out a thorough investigation. The following, 1707 case from Gundersdorf (today Guntramovice, north of Liebe) started with investigations against Anna Klementová, who had died earlier that year. The priest started the investigations and collected sworn testimonies, had the body exhumed, examined and executed in an orderly fashion. However, the miller's child died, and nighttime attacks (notably stone throwing) started again, this time in the priest's house as well. Rumour was spreading that the execution had not been thorough enough, and Klementová's bones were not completely burnt by the fire, and were still able to infect new dead bodies with revenantism. As a response to repeated requests, the episcopal consistory ordered her bones to be burnt completely and to scatter the ashes. They also added that in case the riots did not cease, the body of the child should also be exhumed, and the result reported back to the consistory.⁴⁵⁸

As mentioned above, von Schertz already in 1703 had knowledge of a case (so far unknown from archival sources), in which fifty children revenants were burnt. After this event, the first known series of mass executions of revenants happened in the spring of 1708, when no less than 43 corpses were executed.⁴⁵⁹ The revenant infestation was triggered in the Liebe cemetery by the exhumation on 30th April of an old woman's body, who had died a year earlier. Since she was identified as a revenant, 33 corpses were exhumed in various cemeteries in and around Liebe, notably in Herlsdorf, in Altwasser (today Stará Voda), and in Krigsdorf (today uninhabited land at the foot of the Kamenná Hill). Presumably all those were exhumed who had died since the woman's death a year earlier, and thus were susceptible to be reanimated by the devil's breath. Those bodies found not decayed properly were burnt by the mill near Schmeil (at the location of earlier ass burials), the dirt was dug up from the graves and thrown into the river, while the graves themselves were filled with stones. In May, four further children's corpses were burnt in the forest outside Liebe and six other corpses were buried outside the cemetery in quicklime. This latter method of destroying a corpse was gaining

⁴⁵⁸ Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 40-41.

⁴⁵⁹ Bombera, 41-42.

popularity in the whole Moravian-Silesian border region at the beginning of the eighteenth century: revenants in Freudenthal, in Upper Silesia were also more and more often executed this way, because (according to Irgang), it was a much cheaper solution than burning.⁴⁶⁰

Even though the next great revenant panic took place only in 1727, the decade before that also teems with smaller and bigger-scale revenant cases (see Appendix). Requests for investigations kept pouring in to the episcopal consistory in Olomuc from Troppau and Freudenthal in Upper Silesia, as well as from Moravia (Römerstadt, Hof, Bärn and Liebe among others). Meanwhile, Bishop Charles III. of Lorraine decided to leave his position in 1711 and the era of his successor, Wolfgang Hannibal von Schrattenbach (1711-38) did not cause any stir whatsoever in the continued flow of revenant reports. I would like to single out one case from this period. It is interesting because the sources allow us to trace how the stories about the revenants became reshaped through time and constant retelling. The parish death register of Hof (today Dvorce) in Moravia contains the following concise entry on 20th January 1714, the day Rosina Heinrich Kleinsorg (36), the widow of a beltmaker (*Riemermeister*) died:

‘Upon order by the most revered Consistory, this person was dug up because of ghostly tumults, which seriously affected three citizens, and the body was buried outside the walls of the cemetery, however, since the problems did not cease, the executioner hacked her head, hands and feet off and burnt her at the stake together with all her belongings.’⁴⁶¹

The story is retold in a later, late-eighteenth-century parish chronicle from Römerstadt (a town not far from Hof). It was written by a person who was recalling events that had happened during the lifetime of his grandfather, and the story is already embellished with folk motifs. According to this version of the story, a poor woman, called Niekisch Riemerin (her real name, ‘Kleinsorg’ was lost and the profession of her husband took its place) made a pact with the devil in her lifetime, and after her death came back as a ghost. She was especially damaging fruits and bakery products. People first accused two rich peasants from Christdorf (today Křišťanovice), but upon opening their grave, they were found decaying in an orderly fashion.

⁴⁶⁰ Irgang, ‘Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg’.

⁴⁶¹ Puchar, ‘Hexen-Prozesse im Nördlichen Mähren’, 47.

The ghost started an infestation by blowing at (*anblasen*) the graves of the innocent children in the children's cemetery (*Engelsplatz*) and drove them at night like animals in front of her. These children were often seen weeping on windowsills until dawn came. In order to find out if this is true, people threw ashes on the road in front of the children's cemetery and next morning were astonished to find children's footprints of various sizes in the ashes. The next step in the investigation was to dig up the children's cemetery to find if a child witch or a baby baptized in the name of the devil lies there. In the end, they started digging up the adults' cemetery as well and found Riemerin's grave. As the grave diggers opened it, she was howling and snarling at them. One of the grave diggers was not knowledgeable enough and did not know the protective incantation to be used in such cases, and got his neck broken by the ghost, so that he *almost* died. In the end, the townspeople called for an executioner from Wallachisch Meseritsch (today Valašské Meziříčí) at the expense of the town to get the body transported to the border of the town and get it burnt. The town threw a huge feast with beer, white bread and cheese, but the ghost (still lying on the cart waiting to be transported to the execution place) spoiled much of the food. The body was quartered and put on the stake to burn, but one quarter was all the time rolling off of the stake. Because of this, the executioner sent a boy to the house of the deceased to bring all objects in the house that move by themselves. The boy did bring a spinning wheel for instance, that was spinning by itself. As the body and the objects were burning, three crows appeared and flew away cawing from the fire.⁴⁶²

This rich story places a huge emphasis on experts and their techniques. First of all, the horrible fate of the gravedigger who was not knowledgeable enough shows the respect people had for those doing away with the revenants disturbing them. Second, the idea to place ashes on the ground to capture the traces of the ghosts was a usual folk technique to identify a great variety of creatures. And third, the expert executioner, who finally solved the problem was called from an enormous distance in local terms, from the centre of Moravian Wallachia, Wallachisch Meseritsch (today Valašské Meziříčí), about 80 kms southwest of Hof. As we saw in earlier cases, it happened very often that an expert came from outside the affected settlement, but in reality, it was always within a manageable distance. The author of the Römerstadt parish chronicle, however, considered this area, known as Moravian Wallachia to ethnographers as a source of experts in revenants. He mentions two other cases that allegedly happened in the

⁴⁶² Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren', 217-219.

1720's in the Römerstadt area that a mysterious expert in returning dead came from this area: in the first one it was 'an alchemist from Wallachisch Meseritsch', the second time, a 'veteran soldier from Wallachia'.

Why the author of the chronicle singled out exactly Moravian Wallachia as being very knowledgeable in revenants is unclear, though it might have to do something with the migration of Wallachian shepherding groups along the ridges of the Carpathians from Wallachia through Transylvania, to Moravia where they arrived in the sixteenth century.⁴⁶³ It is known that many of these groups, largely thanks to the mountainous terrain were able to maintain a distinct identity and language much longer than those who stayed on the flatlands. It is not unthinkable that the idea of multiplying revenants was linked to the folklore of these transhumant shepherding cultures, and this is why seemingly we only find instances of this idea along the Carpathian Ridge from the southern Habsburg borderland through Transylvania to the Moravian-Silesian border area.

The element of inviting a private entrepreneur, a kind of famed revenant hunter to deal with the problem and organizing a feast to celebrate his success sounds at first to be yet another figment of folk-imagination; but even these aspects turn out to be realistic. Bishop von Schrattenbach wrote a letter dated 1719 November 18th to the Bautsch town council about the burning of a revenant in Schönwald, Moravia (today Podlesí nad Odrou) a year before. Schrattenbach wrote that the widow of the executed Michael Schmid could not pay the costs of the investigation, because it amounted to more than 63 guildens, plus 7 guildens to the parish priest. As a consequence, the widow was forced to leave her village and became a beggar with her children. The bishop thought these costs were simply unfair. The detailed list of expenses is luckily again at our disposal (see below), and as it turns out, the Schönwald council did not hire an official executioner, but invited two knowledgeable (*die Kenschaft haben*) gravediggers from Liebe, each of whom received no less than 6 guildens for their expertise. The bishop was furious that the council relied on these private revenant-hunters to carry out the deed and ordered the town council that from now on they should exclusively rely on the services of the official Kremsier⁴⁶⁴ executioner.⁴⁶⁵ The remunerations list also

⁴⁶³ Hoffmann, *Európai parasztok: A munka*, 1:337-338.

⁴⁶⁴ Kremsier (today Kroměříž) about 40 kms southeast of Olomouc was the seat of the Kremsier Dominion (together with Bautsch and Liebe), under direct control of the bishops of Olomouc.

⁴⁶⁵ Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren', 220.

contains 3 guldens-worth of beer, wine and brandy for the same price, then 1 gulden-worth of pork, half a gulden-worth of sausage and home-baked bread at the cost of 1 gulden. These sums are enormous, too much to have been spent on catering the invited experts solely, and point to the fact that revenant-killing feasts with the participation of the whole village were indeed held in the era.

The remuneration request for the examination and execution of a revenant
4th November 1718, Schönwald⁴⁶⁶

| | | |
|---|----------------------|-------|
| 'Three knowledgeable gravediggers: | | |
| two from Liebe | 12 fl ⁴⁶⁷ | |
| Schönwald gravedigger | 6 fl | 15 kr |
| three couriers | 2 fl | 18 kr |
| lime | 1 fl | 18 kr |
| the man to drive [a cart probably] | | 48 kr |
| the mason | | 21 kr |
| for various expenses | | 12 kr |
| for one helper | | 18 kr |
| three pounds of butter was paid | | 12 kr |
| to differentiate the appearances | | 36 kr |
| Paul Mader for 5 ½ klafter ⁴⁶⁸ of wood | 2 fl | 45 kr |
| for ropes and strings | | 15 kr |
| for various materials | | 6 kr |
| for one straw bundle | 1 fl | 30 kr |
| for beer | 3 fl | |
| for two 10-eimer and one 5-eimer bucket | 3 fl | |
| for wine and brandy | 3 fl | 21 kr |
| for pork meat | 1 fl | 25 kr |
| for five home-baked bread | 1 fl | |
| for sausage | | 28 kr |
| for snake grass herb (<i>Dowack</i>) | | 17 kr |
| for wood and its preparation | | 36 kr |
| for the expenses of lifting wood | | 42 kr |
| three boxes of brick | 1 fl | 39 kr |
| four klafter ½ firewood | 2 fl | 15 kr |
| for the revered deacon as Discretion Fee | 3 fl | |
| for the Olomouc consistory's members as Discretion Fee | 1 fl | |
| for Tobias Kluger and the town notary who travelled | | |
| to Olomouc because of the case of Michael Schmid from Schönwald | 4 fl | |
| for Friedrich Stubel's courier fee | | 7 kr' |

⁴⁶⁶ Berger, 220-221.

⁴⁶⁷ kr = Kreuzer; 1 fl = 60 kr; 1 loaf of bread: ¼ kr, agricultural day labour: 1 ½ kr

⁴⁶⁸ 1 klafter = cca 1.8 m

The idea of pollution is very strongly present in this folktale-ish version of the story, and as the parish register and earlier cases also testify, the need to destroy absolutely everything that came into contact with the revenant was indeed very strong in the mental world of the local population. The revenant managed to pollute, bewitch, or in a medical vocabulary, infect some of her own personal belongings as well, which then had to be burnt to avoid the outbreak of a new infestation.

It is noteworthy in this respect that Horky (and based on him, much of the secondary literature) mistakenly claims that already in 1725, the Olomouc bishopric's clergy were familiar with the concept of the 'vampire' and its medical, contagion-based framework.⁴⁶⁹ According to him, the Bärn parish death register contains an entry about 48-year-old Anna Bergin, who had died in Bärn, had no rest in the grave, and was burnt at the stake. When describing the case, Horky claimed that the parish register contains the following note to the description of the case:

'Vampertione infecta'

However, after consulting the original parish registers, Niels K. Petersen has shown⁴⁷⁰ that in fact there is no such expression there; it was an erroneous insertion by Horky or his undisclosed source.

A further addition to the folkloric ideas about the spread of revenantism is the note that people were looking for *'a child baptized in the name of the devil'* in the cemetery. This is an insinuation that insufflating the devil into a child was also possible during baptism. The prominent role insufflation, an originally ritual element of baptism plays in the revenant cases of the Moravian-Silesian border area might have been reinforced by the religious conflicts of the seventeenth century. The forced Catholicization could have resulted in anxieties about the righteousness of the priests, and a distrust in their rituals. Children baptized by evil priests-witches were considered to be witches themselves, and after their deaths capable of starting a revenant infestation of possessed corpses. The same Römerstadt chronicle relates that in the 1670s in Ullersdorf and Schönberg many children were burnt alive for witchcraft. Priests

⁴⁶⁹ Horky, 'Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre', 394.; Bischof and d'Elvert, *Zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Zauberer, Hexen und Vampyre in Mähren und Österreichische Schlesien*, 156.; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 78.

⁴⁷⁰ Niels K. Petersen, 'Vampertione Infecta', *Magia posthuma* (blog), 11 December 2011, <http://magiaposthuma.blogspot.com/2011/12/vampertione-infecta.html>.

were also no exception: Johann Pabst, parish priest in Römerstadt, had to run away when rumours started to circulate in 1686 that he was a witch. The rumour came when another cleric, Dean Lautner from Schönberg was accused of witchcraft and for baptizing children in the name of the devil, and he named Pabst as a member of the witches' gathering.⁴⁷¹

Summary

The first two decades of the eighteenth century witnessed a turning point in the dealings with revenants on the Moravian-Silesian border. Seeking to find a demonological/judicial explanation to common experiences which suggested that revenants were able to multiply, Bishop Charles III. of Lorraine turned to Rome for advice. Apparently, he did not receive an answer, and the task of researching the possibility of executing the corpses of innocent people who turned into revenants was given to advisor and jurist Fark Ferdinand von Schertz. His 1703 work, the *Magia posthuma* created a hybrid framework for such practices. Relying on the popular idea of blowing, his version of revenant infestation was a demonologically unclear conceptualization of a dead arch-witch being able to spread its unholy condition to the corpses of the innocent dead, who in turn become able to spread the condition further. There are several indications that the dynamics of the spread was imagined as a series of demonic possessions.

The creation of the framework of *magia posthuma* through blowing instantly had its effects felt: the first mass executions happened in the area around Liebe and targeted dozens of dead children as well. The greatest panic, however, came already after von Schertz's death, a case which was first to involve a new actor in the revenant-business: the medical expert.

⁴⁷¹ Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyrglauben in Nordmähren', 213.

III.3. Enter medicine: The great revenant infestation of Liebe (1726-1728)

On the southern Habsburg borderland, due to their crucial role in the plague cordon, surgeons were present as actors in revenant cases from the earliest times on, even if they had a difficult time asserting themselves as experts. By contrast, surgeons and physician were visibly missing from the history of revenants in the Moravian-Silesian border; instead, through centuries of revenant cases, gravediggers were able to build up a reputation of expertise on corpse decay. In the greatest revenant panic of the time, the 1726-1728 Liebe trials all in all around 80 corpses, among mostly children were executed. The investigation involved two doctors and several surgeons from Olomouc, and the concept of *insufflatio* was discussed for the first time negotiated between clerical and medical personnel. In describing the events, I again rely mostly on Jan Bombera's above-cited article.⁴⁷²

The events unfolded after witness accounts from Schmeil in December 1726 - January 1727 about nighttime disturbances following the death of a woman. The symptoms were pressure on the chest and neck, feeling of bites, and the touch of cold hands, hearing sounds and seeing flames. The episcopal consistory ordered Zeno, dean of Bautsch to investigate the matter together with the Liebe parish priest, to collect sworn witness accounts and look for the usual signs. It is obvious from the procedure that by this time the revenant hunting was a routinized, well-established procedure running smoothly. On 19th February 1727 another court hearing was conducted, this time in Liebe, because the infestation spread from Schmeil into the town of Liebe as well. People testified about pressure, scratching noises, opening doors, animals and human figures appearing and disappearing. In April Dean Zeno conducted yet another series of hearings in both settlements which the originators, the chief revenants were named: an old woman in Schmeil and Georg Poltzer (72) in Liebe. Based on the hearings, 60 children, 11 women and 2 men (all of whom had died between August 1726 and February 1727) from

⁴⁷² Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 43-48.

Liebe, Schmeil, Herlsdorf, Altwasser, Nürnberg (today Norberčan), Reissendorf (today Trhavice), Údolná (Keprtovice) and Krigsdorf⁴⁷³ were executed.

The ever-rising number of children being executed for revenantism in the 1720's was disturbing even for bishop von Schrattenbach himself. Meanwhile, the infestation kept spreading to other villages in the area, and Dean Zeno could hardly keep up with the requests for finding and killing revenants, such as Christian Siegmund, a Gypsy from Sternberg (today Šternberk), who had been found dead in the fields near Schönwald, Moravia, with a suspicious English doctor's medical book in his pocket.

Demons against incubi, experience against expertise

It was Marta Kleinová from Neudorf, Moravia (today Nové Oldřůvky), whose case finally triggered the episcopal consistory to involve medical experts in the investigations. Kleinová died on 16th September and the nighttime attacks started right after her death, resulting in a series of court hearings and medical examinations throughout September-December the same year, also led by Dean Zeno. Von Schrattenbach probably felt things were getting out of hand and even informed the Holy Office, requesting advice. On 23rd November the consistory asked the Olomouc physician, Dr. Jan Corvin to give medical advice while briefing him about the consistory's standpoint (based on von Schertz's work) in the issue:

*'This posthumous magic can hardly be anything else but a covenant with the devil, whose power and action on the corpse of a dead man causes such oppressions and distress to humans and cattle and will not cease to exist until such a body is completely burned. Such bodies usually have unnatural signs, and if they are in the graveyard, they infect the dead bodies of adults and children with insufflation, and they do the same thing.'*⁴⁷⁴

Doctor Corvin examined two corpses, those of Kleinová and a child. In his opinion, there were no unnatural signs on Kleinová's corpse: all parts of the body were flexible, intact, but there was not a drop of fresh blood in it. The incisions on the child's body yielded only some 'dead

⁴⁷³ Accidentally misplaced by Bombera as Vojnovic near Freudenthal (today Bruntál). The misunderstanding is because Vojnovic or Valšov also used to be called Krigsdorf, just like the since then uninhabited settlement at the foot of the Kamenná Hill, west of Liebe.

⁴⁷⁴ Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 45-48.

blood'. In line with several later authors contributing to the 1732 vampire debate, Corvin explained the nighttime attacks with the incubus disease, an affliction that roughly translates to sleep paralysis in modern medicine.

The doctor's opinion was by and large rejected not only by Dean Zeno, but also by Pfaffenzeller, a commissioner from the consistory, whose duty was to maintain episcopal control over the procedure. Pfaffenzeller stated that experience had to be given priority over medical theory: no matter what the physicians thought, experience proved that in the case of nighttime attacks the only solution that really helped was the discovery and execution of undecayed corpses. Pfaffenzeller also noted that the incubus explanation for the nighttime attacks was insufficient, because it was strange that in such a big area people would get the very same incubus disease at the very same time: incubus was not known to be contagious. Shifting emphasis from the corpses, Pfaffenzeller concentrated rather on the witness hearings, which he criticized in several reports for being incomplete, unclear and unreliable. He advised that further, more thorough hearings were to be conducted and gave standards to be followed. He suggested that many of the experiences might have happened in a dream, and so it had to be ascertained properly whether the witness was sleeping or not during the experience. Further, he opined that wives and other household members should not be allowed to testify against a husband, father, and householder, because such testimony did not count.

At the same time, Pfaffenzeller also suggested to collect detailed reports about the suspicious corpses: it should be known whether the dead had truly repented before they died; it should also be properly reported on which part of the corpse the signs appeared, and where blood flowed from. He further suggested that the deceased should not be buried before the third day after death, so that physical changes could occur, that a body examination could be carried out. All this he suggested in order to prevent the insufflation of innocent children. As he pointed out, the parish of Liebe had several cemeteries, and least the dying children should be protected from insufflation of the dead and be transported elsewhere. Finally, he recommended wearing a scapular at all times, because witchcraft has no power over those who wear it.

In the end, Pfaffenzeller advised Dean Zeno to place the two corpses back into the grave and cover them with quicklime and clay until the witness hearings were conducted. The dean,

however, answered that the community did not want the temporary burial to take place, and in the end the consistory had to agree to the execution of the two corpses in late December. This, however, did not solve the problem because the infestation continued in another village, in Schmeil, where the community requested the consistory to have Catherina Sendler (died 27th November 1727) exhumed because villagers were suffering from nighttime attacks, and the dogs behaved in an uneasy way like never before.⁴⁷⁵

Gathering reliable evidence: The experimental revenant-crypt

In response, the consistory ordered several witness hearings during December-January and sent doctors Jan Corvin and Josef Benedict Kuhn (Olomouc city head physician) with surgeon Franz Neunachbar to Schmeil to join Liebe parish priest Partsch and Dean Zeno of Bautsch on site to investigate whether the disease known as incubus could affect so many people of different ages at the same time, could engender such fantasies as testified to and could last for such a long time (several months).

The surgeon's testimony dated 6th January 1728 states that the skin colour was not similar to that of other corpses, that he found light red nails on the hands, and a little blood appeared after the incisions. He, however, stated that judging whether this was natural went beyond his profession. Dr. Jan Corvin's opinion dated 8th January reported that he found the body of a sixty-year-old woman in decay, the lips were somewhat red, the body had the colour typical of corpses except for the lips, which were light red, a phenomenon he explained with scurvy. He added that the limbs were flexible, but that the lack of rigor mortis was often observed on the dead: he himself has seen such a phenomenon during the plague epidemic of 1715. Further, the blood yielded from incisions was not fresh at all. He maintained his diagnosis of incubus and explained it by the specific mountain-diet: heavy meals, too much milk, cheese, and bread. It was especially in the winter that the disease manifested itself, because then people sat at home without work, which affected their digestion.

The most extensive report was delivered to the consistory on 12th January 1728 by the first city sworn physician Josef Benedikt Kuhn, who came up with a strikingly down-to-earth idea:

⁴⁷⁵ Bombera, 50-51.

the creation of an experimental crypt for suspected revenants, so that such bodies could be conveniently removed and examined if necessary. The reason for such an establishment was to gather harder evidence than what the trial provided. He listed the unusual signs he found, such as the red lips, red tissue under the nails and the blood flowing from the incisions but considered them to be entirely natural. He did not reject the possibility that demonic influence could cause revenantism but stated that much more convincing evidence would be needed to accept these particular cases as beyond nature. He gave a short chemical and historical discussion of the question and explained the partial lack of decay with chemical processes. He also maintained that the night-time attacks were incubus disease caused by a bad diet. However, when it came to the question whether innocent, baptised children can be insufflated, and whether they should be exhumed and burned for the greater good he did not want to voice an opinion: this was for the theologians to decide.

The dean and the parish priest submitted their own reports on 12th January arguing that no one really knew the real causes behind this affliction, but that years of experience still showed that the burning of the corpses was the only efficient remedy. The consistory in the end supported the natural explanation and ordered the parish priest to bury the two bodies in the cemetery, and to convince his parishioners to stop applying for corpse executions, and instead to try to seek spiritual help in times of difficulties. The consistory did a last check on the parish in March 1728, and the priest replied that the nighttime attacks ceased after the proper ecclesiastical burial.

Even though by the end of the great 1726-1728 revenant infestation, the consistory seems to have taken a moderate attitude towards the question and seems to have heard the opinions of the doctors, this did not mean that the executions stopped. As the doctors themselves explained, the possibility of an infestation of demonically possessed corpses was there, it is just that each case had to be examined thoroughly. This way the executions continued under the consistory's supervision in the dominion of Groß Herrlitz (in Troppau, Upper Silesia) and in Bärn in Moravia as well. In the latter town, in 1731 the commission had 9 bodies, including 7 children burnt because of a revenant infestation.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁶ Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*, 685-686.; Van Swieten, 'Vampyrismus', 19.

Summary

The town of Liebe, which has become an epicenter of revenant infestations in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, witnessed the greatest revenant panic of the area, possibly of whole Europe. The targets of anti-revenant rituals were again mostly the corpses of small children. Given that the arch-witch could possess any dead body through blowing at it, and because child mortality was high throughout the premodern period, this over-representation of small children among the victims of executions is in fact logical. Nevertheless, the mass execution of innocent children generated doubts even in the episcopal consistory, as it was so very far from the well-established church tradition of excising sinners from the community of the living as well as the dead.

The great Liebe revenant infestation was outstanding not only in its scale but also in the sense that it involved medical experts (as far as is known) for the first time. The medical discussion centered around the natural disease of the *incubus*, which was known to be stemming from ill-ingested food, which could cause suffocation-feeling and chest pains. The symptoms fit nicely the oppression-feeling (known in today's medical terms as sleeping paralysis) of nighttime attacks by ghosts, but it was hardly known to be lethal, and it was also difficult to explain why it would affect so many people of different ages at the same time. The negotiations of expertise between the dean Zeno and the medical experts circled around the value of medical theory: the dean was not alone with his opinion that experience has a higher evidentiary value than theory. Since it has been proven by experience that executing the dead often helps the living and ends the affliction, it was almost irrelevant, whether a satisfactory theoretical framework was provided or not.

At the same time, a practical sense was not missing from the medical experts either. Though they consistently opted for a naturalistic explanation, they did not deny the possibility of revenant infestation through blowing. They did press, however, for a more thorough and strict proving process and surgeon Kuhn even suggested the building of an experimental revenant crypt, into which the suspicious dead could be placed, for easier access and observation. It was also indicative, that the medical experts shied away from advising on the legitimacy of executing innocent children's corpses, even though the consistory evidently was not expecting them to give a canon law argument or a theological discussion. Likely, they wanted to hear

naturalistic reasons, for example harmful third part/spirit-related phenomena which could warrant an execution. Italian surgeon Valisnieri was faced with a very similar conundrum in the very same year (Chapter I.1.). He was supposed to give a medical opinion on the miraculous nature of Gregorio Barbarigo's incorrupt cadaver, but just like the Moravian medical experts, he also shied away from giving an answer to a question which was probably too loaded to deal with.

Concluding remarks

The aim of this chapter was to describe the Moravian-Silesian border area's *magia posthuma* as a comparative example to the *vampirization* of the southern Habsburg borderland. The southern and the Moravian-Silesian frameworks both developed as a result of negotiations between illiterate communities and the administrative institutions trying to control local experiences. They both managed to accommodate the idea that revenants can spread their own unholy condition, and this way provided legitimate channels for the practice of mass exhumations and executions. Both afflictions shared the especially frightening and morally puzzling aspect that even innocent people could turn into harmful undead. In the Moravian-Silesian case, this often spiraled out of hand and resulted in the mass execution of small children's corpses from the Cemetery of Angels. In both regions, one can presume that the experiences and ideas of the population were much more diverse, but the institutionally created frameworks singled out one of them and tried to tweak them in a way that they would become more in line with their own considerations.

There were however important differences, which stemmed largely from the very different administrative structures and power relations involved. The internal dynamics of the frameworks, that is, the vehicles and channels of the postmortem harm were different. In the Moravian-Silesian example, the transformation into a malicious revenant happened not through nighttime attacks or a communication of some sort of contagion while alive but was contracted *after death* through being blown at by another revenant. This framework involved a dead arch-witch, who could turn any freshly died corpse into a creature similar to itself, investing it with its own powers of being able to spread the revenant-condition. The concept of insufflation and the spread of the condition suggest the involvement of demonic possession. Apparently, this idea of revenant infestations through blowing stemmed from local communities, in which revenants were already thought of as being able to pollute people as well as objects. This framework, then was very different from the southern vampirization, a very much medicalized idea of a revenant condition as a kind of poison or contagion communicated during lifetime and having a long incubation period, only becoming active after death.

The systematization of the concept of *magia posthuma*, the reinforcement of a canon of proofs to look for, as well as the solidification of the necessary stages of a proper legal investigation were developing hand in hand. The decisive step in this process was von

Schertz's work, the *Magia posthuma* in 1703 and the experiences of the mass infestations of revenants during the bishoprics of Charles III. of Lorraine and von Schrattenbach in the first two decades of the eighteenth century. The procedure itself was overseen by the Olomouc episcopal consistory, which acted through ad-hoc commissions on site. The commissions were usually led by the dean of the nearest big town. The procedure involved the collection of sworn oaths of posthumous harm, the exhumation and/or examination of the body, the making of incisions to check for fluid, fresh blood. If found suspicious, the body was handed over to the secular court, which ordered the ass burial or execution of the corpse at the border of the community, in the no-man's land. The annihilation often extended to all objects the revenant came into contact with: personal belongings, as well as the tools deployed during the procedure.

The specific expertise of identifying revenants during the entire period was in the hands of gravediggers, who arguably had a much wider experience in what corpses of various ages should look like. Many gravediggers and private revenant hunters managed to gain fame and capitalize on the process. Around 1700, the Fridland gravediggers, while by the 1720's the Liebe gravediggers achieved a wider recognition for being knowledgeable in revenant cases. In addition, people from Wallachia were also reported in certain sources of being versed in the practice of identifying and exterminating revenants. The remuneration requests for the procedures show a steady rise in prices and level of elaboration of the ritual.

In stark contrast to the southern borderland, medical expertise was hardly consulted, and the first known case where they were present was the great Liebe panic of 1726-1728. Just like quarantine physician Glaser at first, the Liebe medical experts also diagnosed a non-contagious, diet-related disease behind the deaths. They insisted on the collection of much more convincing evidence than what the episcopal commissioners had been relying on before, because most of the signs they saw on the exhumed corpses could have come from natural causes. In Glaser's case it was a medical argument about the dynamics of putrefaction that convinced him to embrace the local framework. By contrast, in Moravia-Silesia, medical expertise in general was challenged by experience. It was difficult to argue against the common experience of the bishopric consistory that doing away with the revenant corpses stopped the affliction in the villages, which is why the practice of mass revenant executions based on *magia posthuma* accusations did not stop.

IV. Brokering and collecting the macabre: Networks of interest in vampirism



29 The vampire bat and the wild cat in an illustrated journal for children (1795)

‘Curiosity is but Vanity; for the most part we desire to know only that we may discourse: One would never go to Sea not to say nothing of it’

Blaise Pascal: *Pensées* (1660)

The unruly dead might have been an inner problem of governance for clerical, secular and military structures in various regions of the Habsburg Monarchy, but news and reports about them reached much wider circles. As the information in textual and oral communication left the administrative structures, it necessarily went through processes of translation in which it was moulded and changed, accommodating to the interests of various recipient circles. The local communities and officials of the administrative structures had very specific practical needs: they had to know whether the dead can kill the living, especially whether this can cause some sort of epidemic or infestation in which they could possibly lose dozens of subjects in weeks, and whether the ritual proposed by local experts to execute them is an efficient way to stop the affliction. The officials were dealing with these questions to the best of their capabilities, but some have made efforts of outreach towards learned circles for advice: in the previous chapter it has already been shown that Johann Caspar von Ampringen, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order wanted to contact universities in 1675, while Charles III. of Lorraine, bishop of Olomuc turned to Rome for help sometime before 1703.

The current chapter details how certain people acted as brokers of the knowledge produced about the southern borderland's vampires, and focuses on the question of how this translating, brokering activity (or the lack of it) influenced the credibility and spreading of the first-hand reports on vampirism into learned and less learned European circles. The premise is that the source and 'packaging' of the information was as important as its contents.

IV.1. The trails of the Serbian vampire reports

Provisor Frombald's report was published without commentary in the 21st July 1725 issue of the Vienna daily newspaper *Wienerisches Diarium*,⁴⁷⁷ but it did not cause much stir in learned circles. A number of European journals reprinted it, and it was mentioned in a treatise that appeared in Leipzig the same year.⁴⁷⁸ The treatise, written by a Lutheran pastor, Michael Ranfft, was about the phenomenon of *masticatio mortuorum*, that is, the chewing of the dead, a belief that certain corpses chew their shrouds or their own limbs in the grave thereby causing plague.⁴⁷⁹ The relative lack of public interest in the case is in my opinion was a result of several factors. First, content-wise the report did not bring anything different from the already existing European traditions of the epidemic-causing restless dead apart from the explicit mention of the bloodsucking. Second, even though it was an official report, it was not a medical product and lacked the Flückinger report's detailed, comparative pathological approach. And finally, it also lacked the personal brokering which the *Visum et Repertum* received from such a high-standing personality as Charles Alexander, prince of Württemberg.

The Visum et Repertum(s)

After the Flückinger commission's report about the vampire case of Medvedia was finished, it entered the usual way into Habsburg imperial bureaucracy, but unlike several other revenant reports (both earlier and later), this one did not remain within the system: it broke out into a much wider public. Even though Prince Charles Alexander's role was seminal in gathering and spreading information on Serbian vampires, the Medvedia case inspired others in Belgrade as well to reach out for advice from the republic of letters.

The report itself left Belgrade in at least three copies right at the beginning of the story in late January 1732. Serbia's vice-governor in Belgrade, Botta d'Adorno, submitted a copy of the *Visum et Repertum*, together with Glaser's report to the Aulic Treasury in Vienna on the very

⁴⁷⁷ Anon., 'Copia eines Schreibens aus dem Gradisker District in Ungarn'.

⁴⁷⁸ Ranfft, *De masticatione mortuorum in tumulis, oder von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*. The journals reprinting the report are for instance the *Bresslauische Sammlungen*, the *Holsteinischen Gazetten* and the *Hamburgische Correspondenten*.

⁴⁷⁹ Schürmann, *Nachzehrerglauben in Mitteleuropa*.

same day it was finished, on 26th January.⁴⁸⁰ It seems however, that the report did not stay within the chambers of the collegial body governing the Neoacquistica but was also communicated to Emperor Charles VI. himself. On 5th March, the Vienna correspondent of the Leipzig newspaper, the *Leipziger Post-Zeitungen* (from 1734 on called *Leipziger Zeitungen*) sent the intelligence that the emperor himself received notice of the vampire case and ordered copies of the report to be sent to various universities for opinion, as well as to the current president of the Leopoldina, the physician Johann Jacob Baier (president 1730-35) in Altdorf.⁴⁸¹ Given that this is the only source we have about the emperor's involvement, it is unclear to what extent it is true,⁴⁸² but according to the Viennese newspaper *Wienerisches Diarium's* reports, the emperor was residing in Vienna all the way through during the early months of 1732⁴⁸³. Therefore, he could have been informed about the vampire case in person anytime during one of the regular meetings of his secret council. It is certain, however that Baier never published anything under his own name about vampirism. It is similarly unclear whether Glaser's report was also copied and sent to the emperor or not, but given the fact that it never surfaced in the learned vampire debate as a source, it is likely, that it did not make it out of the bureaucracy's system and got buried in the archives for centuries.

Once the reports arrived in Vienna, handwritten copies were made and started spreading through private and official channels as well. Ambassadors and correspondents of newspapers and journals were definitely involved, the French ambassador De Bussy in Vienna for instance sent a copy of both reports home to Paris already on the 13th February,⁴⁸⁴ and the Hague-seated French journal *Le Glaneur* published it (with several spelling mistakes) already in its 3rd March issue.⁴⁸⁵ While Vienna did function as a main distributing centre of copies, it is remarkable how little echoes the vampire-business had in the learned circles of Vienna itself, as compared to the abundant debates in eastern German lands of the Holy Roman Empire. So far, the only known public treatment of the topic in 1732 was a rhetorical contest held at the

⁴⁸⁰ See d'Adorno's letter to the Treasury: "Documents of the Medvedia vampire case", 1132-1133.; See the dating of the Visum et repertum: 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1140.

⁴⁸¹ Anon., 'Wien Den 5. Mart. 1732.', *Leipziger Post-Zeitungen*, 1732, 174.

⁴⁸² To this date, I have not been able to locate the relevant copies of the *Leipziger Post-Zeitungen*. The only library holding copies for 1732 is the Sächsische Landesbibliothek - Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek in Dresden; Eph.hist.171-1732.

⁴⁸³ *Wienerisches Diarium* (1732 January – April)

⁴⁸⁴ Schroeder, *Vampirismus - Seine Entwicklung von Thema zum Motiv*, 60-61.

⁴⁸⁵ Anon., 'Question physique sur une espèce de prodige duement attesté', *Le Glaneur Historique, Moral, Littéraire, Galant, et Calottin* 2, no. 18 (3 March 1732): [unpaginated].

University of Vienna in November 1732. The report had to be debated by two Masters' students representing two extreme positions in the debate. One of them had to argue for the demonic explanation, the other for entirely natural causes.⁴⁸⁶

The fate of a second Belgrade copy of the *Visum et Repertum* shows that the excitement about the vampires of Medvedia in all likelihood engulfed the provincial centre, Belgrade as well, as the returning commissioners probably told everyone about what they saw. A copy of the report was somehow obtained by a junior rank military officer in Belgrade, who attached it to a letter he sent to a physician in Leipzig, already on 26th January. This officer was Siegfried Alexander von Kottowitz, an ensign at the Alexander Württemberg Infantry Regiment, which Lieutenant Büttner and Ensign von Lindenfelß (two of the witnesses who testified to the reliability of the *Visum et Repertum*) also belonged to. It is unclear whether Kottowitz was present at the exhumations in Medvedia, or just heard the story from his fellows who returned to Belgrade after the mission. In his letter, Kottowitz added what he had heard about the vampires of Kucklina (detailed in the previous chapter) and turned to the physician, reporting that

*'Since people around here made a tremendous wonder out of this, I am most humbly begging for Your opinion whether this was a sympathy-, devilish or astral spirit-related event'*⁴⁸⁷

Kottowitz listed three possible explanations to the phenomena, the natural magical, the demonic and the so-called third-part, which I will discuss later in detail, but it is important to point out that all three presuppose that there indeed was a connection between the undecayed corpses and the deaths; the possibility that the two events were unrelated did not come up in the letter. The original letter's whereabouts is unknown, and its text is known only because it made a limited career in the vampire debate, as it was published word-by-word in three treatises, all of which appeared in Leipzig: in the anonymous *Actenmäßige*, and in Putoneus' and Ranfft's works.

The addressee's identity is uncertain, and so is the question whether this person has perhaps written one of the many anonymous or pseudonym treatises and articles. Much of secondary

⁴⁸⁶ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 206-214.

⁴⁸⁷ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 176-178.; Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern*, 16-18.; Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 15-16.

literature holds that the letter was sent to Michael Ernst Ettmüller, professor of anatomy, physiology and pathology at the University of Leipzig, who was also serving as director of the Leopoldina's journal, the *Ephemerides*⁴⁸⁸ between 1730 and 1732.⁴⁸⁹ In the source material however, there is no reference to Ettmüller, all the treatises that mention Kottowitz's letter label the addressee as 'a well-known doctor of medicine in Leipzig'. Until further sources surface, the identity of the addressee should be left undecided. It is certain that just like the Leopoldina's president, J. J. Baier, Ettmüller also never voiced any opinion publicly on vampirism under his own name, and neither was any mention made in the 1733 volume of the *Ephemerides* about vampirism.

Meanwhile, the contagion physician Glaser, after having returned either to Baragin or to Belgrade has also leaked information about the Medvedia vampires, to his father, Johann Friedrich Glaser, a physician in Vienna, who in turn spread the word to another university centre, Nürnberg. On 13th February the father wrote a short communication to Johann Christoph Götz (1688-1733), the editor of the Nürnberg-based learned journal *Commercium Litterarium* about his son's experiences with the mysterious 'magical affliction'.⁴⁹⁰ I will get back to this magical diagnosis in the third subchapter, but for the time being it is noteworthy that while Glaser had only cautiously reflected on the strangeness of the phenomena and cautiously accepted that something was going on, his father already communicated the story to the learned public as a magical disease. This communication was published on 12th March and launched a year-long intense debate on the pages of the journal. Already the second vampire-themed entry in the *Commercium Litterarium*, in its 19th March issue was the Latin translation of the *Visum et Repertum*, which the journal obtained from an undisclosed source.⁴⁹¹ The journal this way contributed to getting the case known outside the German-speaking academia. Glaser's father's letter was subsequently taken over and reprinted as part

⁴⁸⁸ The journal's title kept changing throughout the years since its foundation in 1670. At the time its title was: *Acta Physico-Medica Academiae Caesareae Leopoldino-Carolinae Naturae Curiosorum Exhibentia Ephemerides sive Observationes Historias et Experimenta*. After its first and second volume in 1727 and 1730, the third volume appeared in 1733, the fourth in 1737, the fifth in 1740.

⁴⁸⁹ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 55-57.; Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 121.

⁴⁹⁰ Johann Friedrich Glaser, 'Ex litteris D.D. Joh. Frid. Glaseri an D. D. Goetziu Vienna a.d. 13. Febr.', *Commercium Litterarium ad Rei Medicae et Scientiae Naturalis Incrementum Institutum.*, no. 11 (12 March 1732): 82-84.

⁴⁹¹ 'Plurimorum iam ingenia exercuit...', *Commercium Litterarium ad Rei Medicae et Scientiae Naturalis Incrementum Institutum.*, no. 18 (30 April 1732): 138-144.

of a nearly 100-page study on various forms of ghosts and revenants in the 1733 volume of the *Geistliche Fama*, a radical Pietist periodical.⁴⁹²

While it is interesting that in Serbia so many people engaged in finding an answer to the riddle of vampirism, it is equally interesting to note that Belgrade's own chief military physician, von Haack apparently did not. Haack was the very person, who (as detailed in the previous chapter) in 1728 had communicated the Slavonian Pétervárad case of *magnetismus mumialis* to the *Leopoldina*, to Count de Mercy and probably to Prince Charles Alexander as well. Given the inherent similarity between the two phenomena, one would think that he must have been involved in the 1732 vampire case as well. On 19th June 1732, that is, several months after the vampire reports started causing excitement among the learned, Haack sent a letter from Belgrade to Stahl, expressing his regret that this lowly superstition started spreading from his field of jurisdiction.⁴⁹³ The letter was an answer to an unknown letter by Stahl which probably suggested Haack's involvement in and responsibility for the vampire scandal. Haack used a defensive tone and explained that he had absolutely nothing to do with it and that the members of the Flückinger commission were acting entirely without his knowledge or authorization. If not an outright lie, this claim sounds like an overstatement, given the intense correspondence between Glaser, Flückinger and vice-governor d'Adrono about the Medvedia vampire case. The reason behind his denial is that while he had not been ashamed to communicate the case of *magnetismus mumialis*, the scandal caused by the vampires probably made him fear that his association with the topic might damage his name in the learned community.

Apart from the networks of the learned community, the news about vampires also spread thanks to the involvement of German nobility. The roles of two important Habsburg nobles deserve a closer look, for both of whom became involved in the information-flow of revenantism: Prince Charles Alexander, the governor of Serbia and Francis Stephen, Duke of Lorraine, Bar and Teschen, heir to the Holy Roman Empire's throne. The two men were important figures on the chess-board of Emperor Charles VI.'s politics, and in early 1732 a

⁴⁹² Johann Samuel Carl, ed., 'Vorrede. Von Kennzeichen der Wahrheit, auch im Historischen', *Geistliche Fama: mittheilend einige neuere Nachrichten von göttlichen Erweckungen / Wegen / Führungen / und Gerichten*. 1, no. 8. (1733): 25-26.

⁴⁹³ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 5r-v.

confluence of political interests brought both of them to Berlin, the Prussian capital (see the two princes' travel itineraries on the map below). During the weeks that they spent in each other's company in February-March 1732, they had the chance to share information about the kinds of returning dead present in the regions they ruled over. For Prince Charles Alexander (as detailed in the previous chapter) vampirism had presented itself as a practical matter of governance and got him more or less directly involved in several vampire cases in Serbia already before 1732. Duke Francis Stephen of Lorraine was new to the Serbian problem at the time of their meeting in 1732 but might have been familiar with *magia posthuma* beliefs in the bishopric of Moravia through his uncle, who had been Bishop of Moravia. In addition, within a few weeks after learning about the *Visum et Repertum* from Prince Charles Alexander, Francis Stephen received official reports about contemporary large-scale *magia posthuma* panics on the border of Silesia and Moravia. He had to realize that he might have to face very similar problems in his small Upper Silesian principedom of Teschen as Prince Charles Alexander had in Serbia. In order to gain a better understanding of the two princes' involvement, I will briefly describe what is known of their travels.

IV.2. Prince Charles Alexander of Württemberg and Duke Francis Stephen of Lorraine visit Berlin

Sometime in late January, possibly also on the 26th, vice-governor d'Adorno sent a copy of Flückinger's report from Belgrade to Prince Charles Alexander personally, who at the time was not in Vienna, but at home in his Winnental family residence near Stuttgart with his pregnant wife.⁴⁹⁴ His stay in Württemberg served to strengthen his position as heir to the Württemberg throne currently occupied by his cousin, Duke Eberhard Louis (1677-1733). From the point of view of Emperor Charles VI., it was crucial to get Prince Charles Alexander, a Catholic and strong supporter of the emperor to inherit the throne of the Duchy of Württemberg, which up to that point had been Lutheran. Especially so, since Eberhard Louis had been playing a double game in diplomacy, keeping good relations with the emperor, while at the same time negotiating with France and Prussia. Not long before, in May 1731, he had renewed his negotiations with Prussia and had even spent several weeks as a guest of the Prussian king in Berlin.⁴⁹⁵ Given that the Württemberg Lutheran nobility was very much against Charles Alexander, and Eberhard Louis's health was slowly falling, the Serbian governor had all the reasons to come back in person to the duchy in the end of 1731.⁴⁹⁶

On 23rd November 1731 Duke Eberhard Louis's only son, Frederick Louis died of consumption, which made Charles Alexander the only strong candidate as heir. On the 2nd and 8th of December, Prince Charles Alexander took part in the first two steps of Frederick Louis's three-stage burial ritual, during which out of preservative reasons first only his intestines were buried in the family crypt and then his embalmed body was placed into the crypt in a coffin. During these two steps only the princely family was present.⁴⁹⁷ The third step of the burial was the public, ceremonious funeral as late as 1st March 1732, and Charles Alexander was not present, because he had already left Stuttgart by then. On 21st January Charles Alexander's

⁴⁹⁴ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 176.

⁴⁹⁵ Brüser, *Herzog Karl Alexander von Württemberg und die Landschaft (1733 bis 1737) - Katholische Konfession, Kaisertraue und Absolutismus*, 144.; Paul Sauer, *Musen, Machtspiel und Mätressen: Eberhard Ludwig – Württembergischer Herzog und Gründer Ludwigsburgs* (Tübingen: Silberburg-Verlag, 2008), 170.

⁴⁹⁶ Sauer, *Ein kaiserlicher General auf dem württembergischen Herzogsthron*, 162-163.

⁴⁹⁷ Sauer, *Musen, Machtspiel und Mätressen: Eberhard Ludwig – Württembergischer Herzog und Gründer Ludwigsburgs*, 233.; Volker Press, 'Die Herzöge von Württemberg, der Kaiser und das Reich', in *900 Jahre Haus Württemberg. Leben und Leistung für Land und Volk*, ed. Robert Uhland (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1985).

son, Friedrich Eugen was born in Stuttgart and on 11th February Eberhard Louis finished his last will, which made Charles Alexander the official heir to the Duchy of Württemberg.⁴⁹⁸

Charles Alexander probably waited until his son and heir, Friedrich Eugene was born, and then he embarked on a journey to establish his position as future heir to the Württemberg throne in German courts of the empire, for which reason he travelled from Stuttgart to Berlin. His precise itinerary is at present unknown, but on 16th February, he was already in Prussia, in Potsdam.⁴⁹⁹ On his way from Stuttgart to Potsdam he probably passed through Ansbach or Würzburg and then Saxony. As it was usual for travelling members of the nobility, Prince Charles Alexander must have been lodging at princely courts on his way and joined various social events. This meant that, as the anonymous writer of a contemporary vampire treatise noted, 'His Highness most graciously communicated [the reports] here and there'⁵⁰⁰ on his way in several places.

He presumably passed through the important learned centres of Leipzig and Nuremberg,⁵⁰¹ the two towns that received the first news about the Medvedia vampires roughly around the same time Prince Charles Alexander was passing through them: Kottowitz's letter was sent to Leipzig on 26th January, while Götz received Glaser's father's letter on the 13th February. During the course of 1732, the overwhelming majority of treatises on the topic were published in Leipzig, but Nuremberg and Weimar also contributed several texts. One of the first published versions of the report (which subsequently got quoted in several treatises was printed in Nuremberg and had the simple title *Visum et Repertum* and apart from the report also contained a summary version of Garmann's seventeenth-century treatise on the chewing dead.⁵⁰² The town anyways was a centre for vampire-research, because it was the seat of the journal *Commercium Litterarium* and this its editors Trew and Goetz resided there. The two editors managed a large correspondence network collecting many opinions about the vampire-question. They selected some and published them in the journal.

⁴⁹⁸ Wilson, *War, State and Society in Württemberg, 1677-1793*, 165.

⁴⁹⁹ Carl von Duncker, 'Der Besuch des Herzogs von Lothringen in Berlin und die Verlobung des Kronprinzen Friedrich (1732)', in *Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-Historischen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 141. (Wien: Adolf Holzhausen, 1899), 19.

⁵⁰⁰ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation von denen sich neuer Dinge in Servien erzeugenden Blutsaugern oder Vampyrs aus authentischen Nachrichten und philosophischen Reflexionen* (Leipzig, 1732), 16.

⁵⁰¹ Schroeder, *Vampirismus - Seine Entwicklung von Thema zum Motiv*, 63-64.

⁵⁰² Anon., *Visum et repertum, über die so genannten Vampirs*.

Weimar, Nuremberg and Leipzig became centres of the 1732 vampire debate not only because they were learned centres, but because of the local nobility's interest in vampirism as an item of curiosity: the nobility had a crucial role in knowledge production. Prince Charles Alexander's possible visit to some of these courts, his presence, and the authentic copy of the *Visum et Repertum* he had with him gave additional credibility and push to the vampire's rise to fame. Most learned texts on vampirism got published in Leipzig, belonging to the territory of the Electorate of Saxony, but many of the known authors themselves came from various small principalities in the Weimar-Saxony region. They can be connected to high-ranking noble patrons, about whom it is often explicitly known that they entrusted the scholars with the task of explaining vampirism.

As far as the Electorate of Saxony is concerned, apart from the requests sent by ensign Kottowitz and Emperor Charles VI. to Leipzig, Prince-Elector Frederick Augustus I. (1694–1733) must have also done his share in mobilizing the learned circles of his territory. His personal physician, Johann Georg Kramer certainly contributed to the debate with an article titled *Cogitationes de Vampyris Serviensibus* in the September 10th issue of the Nürnberg-based journal *Commercium Litterarium*.⁵⁰³ Another author (probably a Lutheran theologian), who was writing under the pseudonym Eudoxus in the Leipzig-seated mainstream Lutheran journal *Auserlesene Theologische Bibliothek* was given the task of writing about vampires 'from a higher place',⁵⁰⁴ which, given the Leipzig seat of the journal, also might be a reference to the Prince-Elector's court.

Johann Christoph Harenberg, a teacher and rector of a school in the small principality of Saxony-Meiningen west of the Electorate of Saxony described the efficiency with which noble patrons pressured the learned to give their opinion. Harenberg finished his book in September 1732 on the order of a certain high-ranking person, who (based on the dedicatory letter) probably was Elisabeth Ernestine Antoinette, Duchess of Saxony-Meiningen and abbess of the school of Gandersheim, where Harenberg was teaching:

⁵⁰³ Johann Georg Kramer, 'Cogitationes de vampyris serviensibus', *Commercium Litterarium ad Rei Medicae et Scientiae Naturalis Incrementum Institutum*, no. 37. (10 September 1732): 291-293.

⁵⁰⁴ Eudoxus, 'Bericht von einigen Schriften, die Vampyren betreffend', *Auserlesene Theologische Bibliothek* 62. (1732): 143.

*'The reports on vampires were send to me as soon as they became known by a very high and princely personality, who partly allowed me, partly ordered me to disclose my humble opinion about the causes of such wonderful workings.'*⁵⁰⁵

Another principedom in Saxony, Saxe-Weimar apparently produced two learned texts on the topic. Johann Christoph Fritsch was personal physician to the duke of Saxe-Weimar, Ernst August I (1728-48), and co-wrote a vampire treatise with another Weimar-based physician, Johann Ernst Stahl.⁵⁰⁶ Also resident in Saxe-Weimar, Christian Friedrich Demel(ius) was a pastor's son from Oldisleben, himself a cleric and 'informator in the service of a noble person',⁵⁰⁷ possibly also of Ernst August I and published a little booklet in Weimar explaining vampirism as a natural magical effect of sympathies.⁵⁰⁸

The anonymous author behind the pseudonym W.S.G.E. can be linked to the major Prussian university town of Halle, bordering the Electorate of Saxony, and he made an unmistakeable reference to the nobility as his intended audience:

*'[The treatise] is not reasoned in accordance with strict methodological rules; it was written in a popular fashion following the tastes of certain people, who do not want to get exhausted by subtle demonstrations.'*⁵⁰⁹

The identity of the author W.S.G.E. is unclear, based on his style of writing Ranfft was sure that he was a physician in Halle, while Harenberg simply noted that he must have been a learned, widely read man, equally experienced in philosophy, medicine and theology.⁵¹⁰

However, not every contributor was happy about the popular curiosity-driven research. As it will be discussed later, curiosity was often seen by the learned as a dangerous road to enthusiasm and lack of sober judgement. Putoneus started his treatise by sarcastically

⁵⁰⁵ Johann Christoph Harenberg, *Vernünfftige und christliche Gedancken über die Vampirs oder Bluthsaugende Todten* (Wolfenbüttel, 1733), 12.

⁵⁰⁶ Anon., *Eines weimarischen Medici mutmassliche Gedancken von denen Vampyren, oder sogenannten Blutsaugern, welchen zuletzt das Gutachten der Königl. Preußischen Societät derer Wissentschafften, von gedachten Vampyren, mit beygefüget ist* (Leipzig: Michael Blochbergern, 1732); For the identification of the anonymous authors of the treatise as Fritsch and Stahl, see: Anon., '[Review of] Eines weimarischen Medici', *Commercium Litterarium ad Rei Medicae et Scientiae Naturalis Incrementum Institutum.*, no. 32. (6 August 1732): 254.

⁵⁰⁷ Eudoxus, 'Bericht von einigen Schriften, die Vampyren betreffend', 149.

⁵⁰⁸ Christoph Friedrich Demelius, *Philosophischer Versuch ob nicht die merckwürdige Begebenheit der Blutsauger oder Vampyren aus den principiis naturae hergeleitet wurden könne* (Weimar, 1732); See its transcribed modern edition in: Abraham Silberschmidt and Irina Silberschmidt, eds., *Von den Blutsaugenden Toden, oder philosophische Schriften der Aufklärung zum Vampirismus* (Nürnberg: Hexenmond-Verlag, 2006), 115-123.

⁵⁰⁹ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation*, 100.

⁵¹⁰ Harenberg, *Vernünfftige und christliche Gedancken über die Vampirs oder Bluthsaugende Todten*, 13.; Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 230.

commenting on the thirst for novelties and curiosities which the editors of newspapers strove so diligently to satisfy:

‘The human curiosity always [striving] to hear and learn something new and different is insatiable. For many years now the world stage has been offering nothing but peace, which is why when asked “What good news do you have?”, the patrons of newspapers have been forced to answer with a disdainful “Nothing”. However, not long ago the world got to know that the dead are waking up again, are killing the living and look almost as if they were alive in their graves, and so, people got something new to give to the book printers, giving them the opportunity to investigate whether these things are women’s tales, stories of the bards or truthful accounts.’⁵¹¹

Even if most vampire-related writings were intended at a more general audience, certain treatises and articles were obviously meant to be read only within the learned community. There is a plethora of journal articles and university dissertations written in Latin, making the texts less accessible for the average nobility or the general public.⁵¹² Others, while written in German, stroke a more insider-tone by calling those asking for their opinion their friends and using a dry, concise style.⁵¹³

While in his excellent work on the media-history of vampirism, Aribert Schroeder assumed that Prince Charles Alexander and Francis Stephen, Duke of Lorraine were engaged in a common tour of German princely courts,⁵¹⁴ the two princes’ common travels was actually restricted to Potsdam (where they met on 23rd February) and Berlin, where they arrived together to meet the Prussian king, Frederick William I. (1713 – 1740) three days later (see map). Duke Francis Stephen was coming back from his visit to the Netherlands and England. His way back from Rotterdam (where he arrived in December 1731) to Vienna was a diplomatic tour planned and overseen by the emperor, and had to involve only Braunschweig, Berlin and Breslau. Braunschweig was a crucial stop (Francis Stephen spent almost three weeks there in late January-early February), because Elisabeth Catherine, princess of Braunschweig-Bevern’s hand was the object of much diplomatic intrigue. King Frederick

⁵¹¹ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 2.

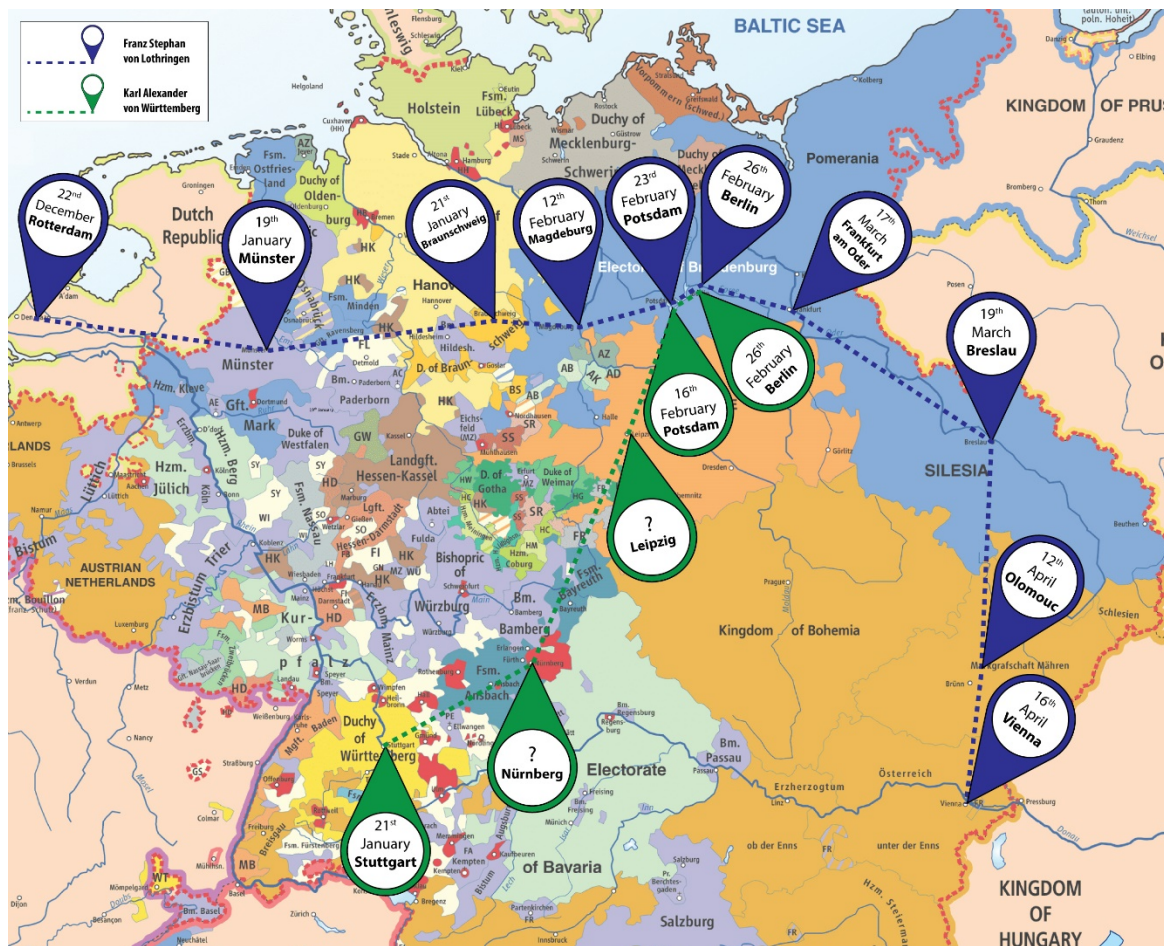
⁵¹² See Appendix for the list of learned treatises, university dissertations and journal articles on vampirism.

⁵¹³ Gottlob Heinrich Vogt, *Kurtzes Bedencken von denen acten-maeßigen Relationen wegen derer Vampiren* (Leipzig, Göttingen: August Martini, 1732), 2.; Anon., *Schreiben eines guten Freundes an einen andern guten Freund, die Vampyren betreffend de dato 26. martii 1732; samt einer Beylage fernerer Gutachtens*. ([S.l.], 1732).

⁵¹⁴ Schroeder, *Vampirismus - Seine Entwicklung von Thema zum Motiv*, 63.

William I. wanted his son to marry her, while the queen Sophia Dorothea of Hannover had a different bride-to-be, an English princess in mind for her son. Francis Stephen was asked to act as an intermediary for the Prussian prince and ask for Elisabeth-Catherine's hand.⁵¹⁵ On 11th February Duke Francis Stephen set out from Braunschweig to Potsdam and then Berlin together with the whole princely family of Braunschweig-Bevern. Prince Charles Alexander joined them in Potsdam and they all arrived to Berlin on the 26th February.

Prince Charles Alexander and Duke Francis Stephen stayed in Berlin between 26th February and 15th March as guests of the king, during which time Prince Charles Alexander had ample opportunities to spread the report and the news about vampirism in various learned and noble circles. The princes attended several Prussian military demonstrations, took part in dinners, balls, hunts and visited the sights, such as the stable, the pharmacy, the *Wunderkammer* or



30: The travel itineraries of Francis Stephen, duke of Lorraine (blue) and Charles Alexander, prince of Württemberg (green) in early 1732. The map portrays the geopolitical situation in 1789; at the time of the princes' travels Silesia belonged to the Habsburg Monarchy.

⁵¹⁵ Duncker, 'Der Besuch des Herzogs von Lothringen in Berlin und die Verlobung des Kronprinzen Friedrich (1732)', 25-26.

the library. While the princely visit had important political stakes, it was equally important for the princes to make an impression as entertaining and good conversants in Berlin circles. It is for instance underlined by correspondent-descriptions of their stay, that the king developed a great liking for Duke Francis Stephen because he was an erudite and witty conversation partner.⁵¹⁶ A common topic of interest for the king and Prince Charles Alexander was warfare, but apparently, the prince also used the *Visum et Repertum* to build social capital. He presented the autopsy report to the king already in the very first days of his stay in Berlin, and a copy still exists in the Archives of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences.⁵¹⁷ The king in turn passed the matter over to the Prussian Academy, ordering them to issue an official statement about it before the two princes leave the city.

As it will be detailed in the following subchapter, the academics started discussing the report already on 1st March, and the *Opinion of the Royal Prussian Society of Sciences about the vampires or bloodsuckers*⁵¹⁸ was ready on the 8th March. The academy's *Opinion* was circulated early on through private correspondence networks and greatly shaped the vampire debate in the German learned world during the course of the following years. Fritsch, the above-mentioned personal physician to the duke of Saxe-Weimar for instance received the text of the *Opinion* this way,⁵¹⁹ and subsequently largely based his own arguments on it as well as reprinting it in his own treatise. The text was published word-to-word in several other texts as well,⁵²⁰ this way assuming a position similar to Kottowitz's letter or the original reports by Frombald and Flückinger. It also exerted influence on Berlin intellectual life, for (as it will be detailed in Chapter V) Georg Ernst Stahl contacted Belgrade military physician von Haack to gather further information about the Medvedia vampire case.

⁵¹⁶ Duncker, 26-31.

⁵¹⁷ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 9r-13v.

⁵¹⁸ 'Gutachten der Königlich Preußischen Societät derer Wissenschaften von denen Vampyren oder Blut-Aussaugern'. See the manuscript in: 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 2-3rv, 20-21rv.; Published in: Anon., *Eines weimarischen Medici mutmassliche Gedancken*, 75-80.; Eudoxus, 'Nachlese von den Schriften wegen der Vampyren', *Ausergelesene Theologische Bibliothek* 69. (1733): 872-877.; Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 286-291.; More recently published for example in: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 111-114.

⁵¹⁹ See his letter to Goetz about the circumstances of writing his treatise in: Anon., '[Review of] Eines weimarischen Medici'.

⁵²⁰ Anon., *Eines weimarischen Medici mutmassliche Gedancken*; Eudoxus, 'Bericht von einigen Schriften, die Vampyren betreffend'; Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*.

IV.3. Duke Francis Stephen of Lorraine visits the Moravian returning dead

After leaving Berlin, Francis Stephen, probably armed with a copy of the Prussian Academy's *Opinion* took a route through another core area of contemporary revenant panics: Silesia and Moravia. He was travelling through Breslau and Olomouc to Vienna to meet the emperor. Prince Charles Alexander and the princes of Braunschweig-Bevern were still accompanying Francis Stephen in Dahlwitz, a town about 10 kms outside Berlin, on the eastward road towards Breslau.⁵²¹ This however was most probably only a gesture of courtesy, and I suspect that they returned to Berlin after Francis Stephen left Dahlwitz, because they disappear from the descriptions of Francis Stephen's further travels. Prince Charles Alexander at some point went back to Stuttgart, because at the beginning of the spa-season, that is, in late spring-early summer he already showed up with his family in Bad-Wildbad, a spa-town west of Stuttgart, and on 11th June he was already back in his post in Belgrade.⁵²² Duke Francis Stephen reached the Prussian-Habsburg border at Frankfurt am Oder on 17th March and arrived to Breslau two days later. The several-week-long visit in Breslau was necessary because (since his father's death in 1729), Francis Stephen was not only Duke of Lorraine and Bar, but that of Teschen as well, a small principedom in Upper Silesia, on the border of Moravia. Because of this, the princes of Lorraine had the right to take part at the princely diet (*Fürstentag*) in Breslau, Silesia.⁵²³ Francis Stephen however stayed all the way through in Breslau, and never travelled to Teschen, as it was deemed too dangerous because of banditry.⁵²⁴

On the 2nd April Francis Stephen continued his trip from Breslau to Olomouc, crossing the Upper Silesian-Moravian border through Neisse (today Nysa) and Sternberg (today Šternberk).⁵²⁵ His route took him near and through some of the locations where revenant executions were regularly happening during the early decades of the 18th century:

⁵²¹ Duncker, 'Der Besuch des Herzogs von Lothringen in Berlin und die Verlobung des Kronprinzen Friedrich (1732)', 32-33.

⁵²² He met Joseph Süß-Oppenhaimer (1698-1738) during this stay in Bad-Wildbad, whom he appointed as his financial advisor the same year. Manfred Zimmermann, *Joseph Süß Oppenheimer, ein Finanzmann des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Rieger'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1874), 21.; Prince Charles Alexander wrote a letter on 11th June from Belgrade to his brother. Sauer, *Ein kaiserlicher General auf dem württembergischen Herzogsthron*, 188.

⁵²³ Conrads, *Schlesien in der Frühmoderne: Zur politischen und geistigen Kultur eines Habsburgischen Landes*, 167.

⁵²⁴ Conrads, 168.

⁵²⁵ 'Aus Teutschland - Breslau 2. April', *Wienerisches Diarium*, 9 April 1732, 7.

Freudenthal, Fridland and Sternberg among others (see the Moravian-Silesian borderland's revenant cases in the Appendix). Just a year before, on 23rd April 1731 nine corpses (among them seven children) were burnt in Bärn (today Moravský Beroun), a town close to Sternberg, because they were 'infected by a vampire'.⁵²⁶ On 12th April Francis Stephen arrived to Olomouc, and celebrated Easter there, holding audiences for people, as well as visiting the Premonstratensian monastery on Heiligenberg (today Svatý Kopeček), a famous pilgrimage site.⁵²⁷ Duke Francis Stephen finally arrived in Vienna on 16th April.⁵²⁸

Duke Francis Stephen's stay in Olomouc is significant because he undoubtedly also met the bishop of Olomouc, Wolfgang Hannibal von Schrattenbach (1660-1738, bishop 1711-1738), who had been having problems dealing with revenant panics engulfing the Moravian-Silesian border region for already thirty years. Francis Stephen's secret advisor and secretary, Baron François Joseph Toussaint (1689-1762), who was member of the duke's numerous travelling entourage,⁵²⁹ later disclosed that the duke, during his travels in 1732 received legal documents about Moravian magia posthuma cases.⁵³⁰ He must have received them from the circle of Bishop von Schrattenbach, and one can only imagine the exciting conversation the bishop and the princes had comparing the Serbian and the Moravian-Silesian experiences about the returning dead.

In fact, in all likelihood Duke Francis Stephen had already known something about local revenant beliefs. Duke Francis Stephen's uncle, Charles Joseph John Anthony Ignace Felix of Lorraine (1680-1715)⁵³¹ had been bishop of Olomouc (in which capacity he was also known as Charles III. of Lorraine, 1698-1711) right before von Schrattenbach, at a time when (as it will

⁵²⁶ 'man dafür hielt, daß sie ein Vampyre angesteckt hätte' The source of this information is Gerard van Swieten, in his 1753 treatise on vampirism, by which time the originally Serbian term 'vampire' came to denote a wide range of returning dead, among them Moravian revenants as well. Van Swieten, 'Vampirismus', 19.; Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*, 685-686.

⁵²⁷ 'Aus Teutschland - Ollmütz in Mähren 12. April', *Wienerisches Diarium*, 19 April 1732, 5.

⁵²⁸ 'Wien 19. Aprilis / 1732', *Wienerisches Diarium*, 19 April 1732, 6.

⁵²⁹ Duncker, 'Der Besuch des Herzogs von Lothringen in Berlin und die Verlobung des Kronprinzen Friedrich (1732)', 4.

⁵³⁰ Calmet, *Gelehrte Verhandlung*, 2:225-226. Toussaint mentioned this information to Augustin Calmet only on 3rd August 1746, which is why it is not there in the first (1746) edition of the work. Schroeder had doubts about the veracity of the story, but he was unaware of the large-scale revenant panics going at the time in Moravia. In the light of this evidence, Calmet's intelligence is entirely plausible. Schroeder, *Vampirismus - Seine Entwicklung von Thema zum Motiv*, 59-61.; Hamberger, probably for a similar reason mistakenly supposes that the reports handed over to Duke Francis Stephen were Glaser's and Flückinger's reports about Medvedia, not about Moravian cases. Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 81-82.

⁵³¹ Bishop Charles III. of Lorraine was son of Charles V., duke of Lorraine and Bar (1675-1690), the so-called 'duke without a duchy'.

be shown in the next chapter), the very first magia posthuma revenant mass executions happened in the region. It was also bishop Charles III. of Lorraine, who commissioned the definitive legal text on magia posthuma, written by Ferdinand von Schertz in 1703.⁵³² During this presumed meeting between Francis Stephen and von Schrattenbach, fresh experiences from Serbia and Moravia were juxtaposed in a noble-semi-learned environment for the first time.

The documents Duke Francis Stephen received from the bishop must have pertained to the 1727-1728 great revenant panic of the dominion Liebe (today Libavá), during which the Olomouc episcopal consistory's commission had around eighty corpses (among them dozens of children) burnt at the stake after a several-stage investigation involving medical experts.⁵³³ This was the biggest-scale revenant execution in the bishopric, and apparently its documentation was handed over not only to Francis Stephen. The French journal *Le Glaneur Historique* contains an interesting entry from 17th March 1732, that is, before Francis Stephen arrived in Breslau (19th March) and Olomouc (2nd April), and thus before he himself received the same documents. According to this entry, the town of Liebe compiled a bundle of documents on the revenant panic and submitted it for inspection to several academies and universities:

*'The matter [vampirism] deserves to be cleared up; and we shall not fail to convey, without delay, the judgment of some clever physicians on this Vampirism. In the meantime, we will add another example of this prodigious [blood]sucking. It is written now from Olmütz [sic!], in Moravia, that of late in Stadlieb [sic!], a little town belonging to Cardinal Schrottembach [sic!], several persons were attacked by this evil ['mal'], and corpses were found full of blood, with the same symptoms which we have seen with the Heyduques. The town administrators and magistrates have had proper minutes drawn up, and sent them to the academies and universities, whose decision is awaited with impatience.'*⁵³⁴

In light of the apparent existence of these two copies of the official Liebe trial documentation, it is highly suspicious that none of the known treatises or articles on vampirism analyze or even mention this extremely important case. The Liebe event was not only better documented

⁵³² Schertz, 'Juridicum pro et contra'.

⁵³³ Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 43-48.

⁵³⁴ Anon., 'Question physique sur une espèce de prodige duement attesté'; Stefan Hock, *Die Vampyrsagen und ihre Verwertung in der deutschen Literatur* (Berlin: A. Duncker, 1900), 40.

than the Serbian Medvedia case, but was much more shocking as well, especially since it happened in Catholic lands, not in Orthodox ones. The utter silence about it is probably an indication that the documents never reached the academies and universities, and never got out of the hands of Francis Stephen's circle either. If we consider that Viennese newspapers, journals and book publishers, as well as the central government remained unusually silent about the Medvedia case, it is possible that the Liebe trials were denied publicity on purpose. The Habsburg Monarchy was already embarrassed about the gory Serbian vampire executions, and there was absolutely no need for another, much bigger scandal, this time involving a noble Catholic bishop in the heart of the inherited Habsburg lands.

While sources about the Liebe trials disappeared, a much less significant account of Silesian revenants did make its way into the blood circuits of the learned world. The very same time Francis Stephen was discussing vampires and *magia posthuma* with von Schrattenbach in Olomouc, Johann Jakob Geelhausen (1692-1737), professor of medicine at the Karl University of Prague and fresh member of the Prussian Academy of Sciences wrote a letter on the 9th April to the *Commercium Litterarium* about revenant beliefs in the village of Hotzenplotz (today Osoblaha), Principedom of Jägerndorf in Upper Silesia.⁵³⁵ These revenants come back to their family, eat and drink with them, sleep with their wives, jump on the backs of strangers passing through the village and chase dogs away. The affected village belonged to the very same Moravian-Silesian border area where the revenant cases detailed in the last chapter took place. In his letter, Geelhausen also shared the discussions he had about vampires with physician-philosopher Johann Andreas Segner (1704 –1777), physician in Pressburg (today Bratislava) who at the time was doing his masters' degree in medicine in Jena. Finally, he also claimed that he has sent the vampire reports to universities in Leipzig, Halle and Jena asking them for an opinion, and personally contacted Johann Jacob Baier, the president of the Leopoldina and Johann Heinrich Schulze (1687-1744), professor of medicine in Altdorf (from 1732 in Halle) as well.

If news about the Liebe revenant panic did not get out into the open, twenty years later the very same Moravian-Silesian border area produced a scandal that politicians were not able to contain: the Frei-Hermerdorf case of 1754/1755, when Duke Francis Stephen already was Holy

⁵³⁵ 'Plurimorum iam ingenia exercuit...', 139-141.; Partially reprinted in: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 76–77, 116-119.

Roman Emperor. The returning dead of Frei Hermersdorf motivated Emperor Francis I.'s wife, Queen Maria Theresa to extend tight central Vienna control over the population's practices and beliefs about how to deal with the harmful dead and issue the very first central Viennese regulation of the matter.

The topic apparently kept haunting Prince Charles Alexander as well. A year after his trip to Berlin, on 31st October 1733 Duke Eberhard Louis died and Prince Charles Alexander assumed the title of Duke of Württemberg, never to return to Serbia. His secret advisor and personal physician⁵³⁶ Georg Bernhard Bilfinger (1693 – 1750) however wrote a learned treatise about the vampire topic, in which he questioned the possibility of drawing conclusions based on the scarce evidence available. The work was published only in 1742, five years after the duke's death, as an attachment to a series of dissertations Bilfinger had written during his stay at the Saint Petersburg Academy in 1725-31.⁵³⁷ Its coupling with these early dissertations might indicate that Bilfinger wrote the vampire treatise sometime during the 1730's, while Prince Charles Alexander was still alive. Bilfinger was preacher, engineer (called mathematician in the era), natural philosopher, orientalist, professor of philosophy, mathematics and theology at the universities of Halle and Tübingen.

⁵³⁶ Schroeder, *Vampirismus - Seine Entwicklung von Thema zum Motiv*, 63.

⁵³⁷ Georg Bernhard Bilfinger, 'Disquisitio de vampyris', in *Elementa physices, accedunt ejusdem meditationes mathematico-physicae, in commentariis Acad. Sient. Imper. Petropolit. obviae cum disquisitione de vampyris*, by Georg Bernhard Bilfinger (Leipzig, 1742), 258-272.; Hock, *Die Vampyrsagen und ihre Verwertung in der deutschen Literatur*, 53.

Concluding remarks

In Chapter II, I have argued that the *Visum et Repertum*, as a specific product of the southern borderland tapped into very topical interests of natural philosophy and medicine in comparative pathology and organic decay. I also suggested that this must have been a major factor in its success, because earlier reports were not able to inspire such an excitement. In the present chapter, I sought to add that another major factor in this buzz around the report was that its credibility, already strengthened by its forensic appeal was boosted a great deal by the social-professional standing of the people who were brokering it. For example, that quarantine physician Glaser's father was also a physician must have been instrumental in him being able to start a year-long natural philosophical discussion on the pages of the *Commercium Litterarium*.

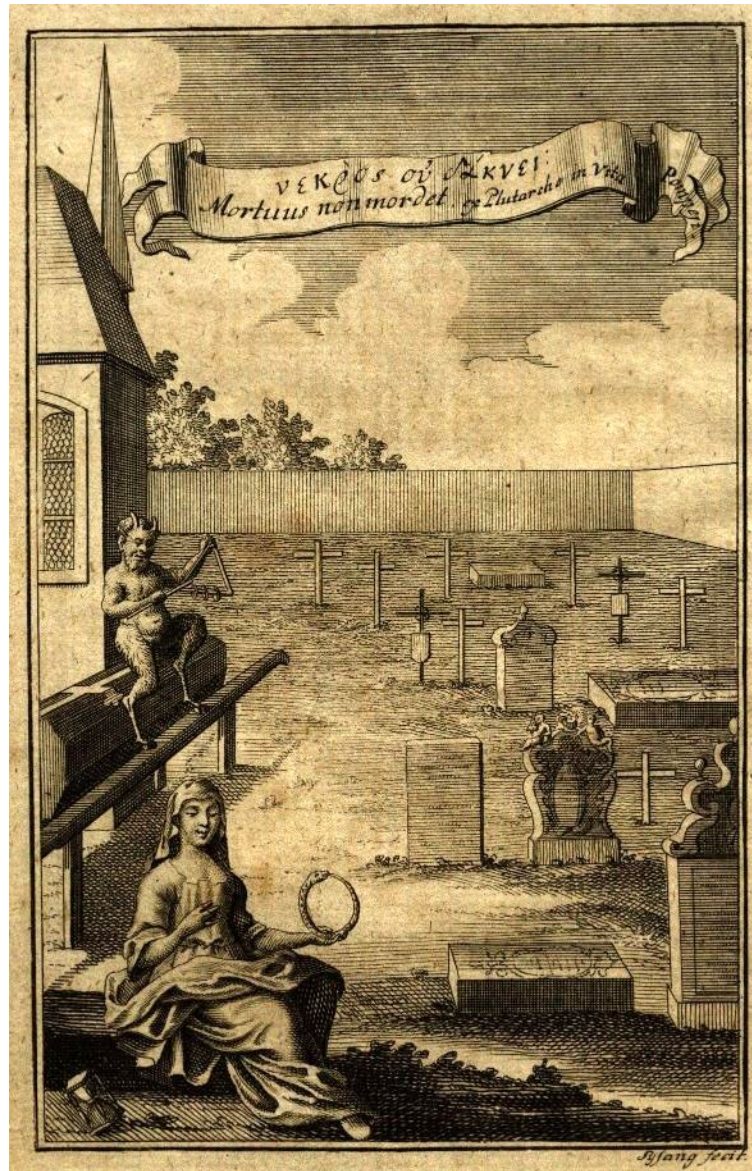
The most powerful broker of the report nevertheless was governor Prince Charles Alexander himself, whose interest in revenant phenomena spurred him to spread copies of the report on his way from Stuttgart to Berlin. It is not easy to guess what exactly his aim was with spreading the *Visum et Repertum*. Did naturalist curiosity motivate him? Or was he looking for advice in a policing problem? Was he using the report to build social capital, by becoming the centre of attention in aristocratic salons? It is certain, that it was in his interest to impress, he had to confirm his claim to the Württemberg throne in elite society of the Holy Roman Empire. He could use the *Visum et Repertum* to achieve this aim by providing a topic for witty conversations. As a side effect, his noble stature and position as an imperial governor invested the report with credibility. Other aristocrats in Saxony and Weimar played an instrumental role in spurring their learned court protégées directly to write about vampirism.

Duke Francis Stephen played an opposite role. As suggested in Chapter III, the history of the Serbian and the Moravian-Silesian revenants intertwined in 1732, already through the itineraries of the two princes. Having met in Berlin, Francis Stephen witnessed the whole drama of the rise of the vampire report, its submission to the Prussian Academy of Sciences and their devastating opinion, which dismissed it as a product of superstitious ignorance and fear (Chapter V.1.). The academy prepared their opinion specifically so that Francis Stephen could take it with himself to Vienna. This way, Francis Stephen arrived in Moravia after having witnessed the public humiliation of the *Visum et repertum* by a Protestant academy, in a

Protestant Kingdom. When he received the documentation on the horrific revenant infestation of Liebe, and the execution of dozens of little children's corpses orchestrated by the Olomouc Bishopric, he had no choice but to get it suppressed. For Prince Charles Alexander, Flückinger's report was a crutch to achieve his regional-level political goals. For Francis Stephen, the silencing of the Liebe documentation was of a much greater interest: neither the empire, nor the Catholic faith needed another scandal, another reason for Protestants to ridicule the Catholic Habsburg Monarchy as a hotbed of superstition and barbarism.

The possibility of being labelled superstitious was a major fear factor in circles of the early Enlightenment, and despite its forensic factual appeal, the *Visum et Repertum* reeked of superstition. If one did not want to lose face in this era, he had to balance skilfully between the two extremes of believing too much (superstition) and believing too little (atheism). Many of the learned received the task to evaluate the evidentiary value of the *Visum et Repertum* and decide whether it was a 'sympathy-, devilish or astral-spirit related' phenomenon. They all knew very well, that publishing their opinion publicly means reaching into a jar of spiders.

V. The signs of vampirism as a scholarly topic in the 1730s



31 Frontispiece from Michael Ranfft's treatise on vampirism (1734)

‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.’
2 Cor 13:1.

The outreach towards the learned gave rise to more than forty treatises and countless journal articles, recensions and opinion pieces during the 1730s only. Some were sought out by people directly involved in controlling the vampire problem, such as ensign Kottowitz or Prince Charles Alexander. Others were ordered to formulate an opinion by their noble patrons in order to satisfy their thirst for curiosities on the one hand and calm their fears of becoming victims of vampires on the other. Yet others were answering inquiries from within the learned community. The contributors to this corpus of vampire-literature were mostly confined to the Eastern, Protestant learned world of the Holy Roman Empire and involved jurists, theologians, physicians and teachers among others. The discussants had different attitudes as to what constitutes expertise, credibility, proof and used the vampire to discuss certain topical matters while pushing various professional, religious and political agendas.

The present chapter it investigates two main questions. First, what answers did they give to the question which officials on the ground level were most interested in, namely to the possibility of the dead lethally harming the living and to the executions of the dead as a solution for certain afflictions? Second, how did the learned discussants evaluate the available evidence on vampirism, and what kinds of standards of proof did they rely on during the debate?

The chapter cannot endeavour to give a detailed analysis of the debate, which consists of more than 200 shorter and longer contributions only in the first half of the eighteenth century. I instead applied a shifting scope of analysis. The first subchapter is a zoom-in on how one of the most authoritative learned opinions on vampirism, the Prussian Academy's standpoint was created and delineates the factors that gave the text its uniquely modern hue. The second subchapter's scope is broad and delivers an overview of the theoretical frameworks which some of the major contributors to the debate crafted in order to explain the strange affliction that beset Medvedia, in particular the apparently contagious nature of the vampiric condition. Without going into the intellectual, personal, professional and political tension fields within which each author was writing, my sole aim is to present a palette of explanations. The third subchapter delves into the discussants' epistemological musings on credibility and evidence, which an official forensic autopsy report apparently proving the existence of vampires inspired. The two main foci of the subchapter are 1) the possibilities of gaining empirical, experimental knowledge of vampires and 2) a comparison of the Halle-inspired, opposing

views of vampire-sceptic physician-lawyer-engineer Johann C. Meining, and the radical Pietist journal *Geisliche Fama* run by physicians Johann Samuel Carl and Johann Konrad Dippel.

A jar of spiders

The learned who decided to engage in the debate were very much aware that by embarking on a vampire treatise, they were exposing themselves to vitriolic criticism from many sides. Perhaps the most devoted learned researchers of vampirism, Lutheran deacon and history writer Michael Ranfft (1700-1774) addressed the issue openly. Ranfft lived his life in the vicinity of Leipzig, he was schooled in Chemnitz, then received his degrees at the University of Leipzig in philosophy and the liberal arts, and during the vampire debate was serving as a deacon in Nebra in Saxony-Anhalt, and died as the parish priest of Großstechau in Thuringia, his hometown.⁵³⁸ Ranfft was a prolific author, as already in 1741 his oeuvre included more than twenty publications and a dozen others in preparation. He has authored several volumes on the history of the University of Leipzig and numerous pieces on the current deeds, genealogy and history of contemporary aristocratic families. He is nevertheless mostly remembered for his lasting interest in revenants. Inspired by Frombald's 1725 vampire report from Kisilova, he published two dissertations in Latin, a historical and a natural philosophical one on the phenomenon he called the chewing dead.⁵³⁹ Then, in 1734 he re-published his earlier two dissertations in German, complemented by reflections on Flückinger's *Visum et Reptum* and a survey of the learned vampire debate of 1732.⁵⁴⁰ Finally, he was also preparing one more work, which apparently remained in manuscript form on how spirits can affect the human soul, a question central to the body-soul-spirit controversy as well as to Ranfft's construction of the vampire problem.⁵⁴¹ As it will be detailed below, Ranfft maintained that the dead indeed may be able to kill the living, as strong emotions felt for a person upon death

⁵³⁸ Rochus W. T. H. Ferdinand von Liliencron, ed., *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 27 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1888), 228-229., <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd136016456.html#adbcontent>.

⁵³⁹ Michael Ranfft, *De masticatione mortuorum in tumulis* (Leipzig, 1725); Ranfft, *De masticatione mortuorum in tumulis, oder von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*.

⁵⁴⁰ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*.

⁵⁴¹ The work was titled 'Besondere Gedancken von der Gemeinschaft der Geister mit der menschlichen Seele' *Grosses vollständiges universal Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, vol. 30 (Leipzig, Halle: Johann Heinrich Zedler, 1741), 800-802.

can imprint a murderous intent on the spirit, which, using the close connection the two people had in their lifetime as a map, can seek out and kill the target of said intentions.

Ranfft was very open about the stigmatization that one risked with a research topic on the undead, which was a way for him to try to defend himself against such accusations. One had to manoeuvre carefully between the Scylla of believing too little and the Charybdis of believing too much. As Martin Pott pointed out, the self-identification of the early Enlightenment in this German environment can be best characterised by keeping a middle way between atheism and superstition.⁵⁴² Ranfft lamented that dealing seriously with revenants harboured the danger of being pronounced superstitious which in the republic of letters was one of the worst punishments, involving serious damage to one's name.⁵⁴³ On the other hand, questioning supernatural involvement in the case might easily draw accusations of heresy, of downplaying the powers of demons and ultimately of God in the world.⁵⁴⁴ Finally, resorting to occult explanations could easily incur the accusation of lazy philosophy, of magic (a term increasingly becoming synonymous with superstition), of being a Paracelsian Spagist or alchemist.

Other authors of the debate also remarked on the hate-filled public sphere. The writer of an anonymous treatise started his discussion by remarking on the waves of hate one had to face when embarking upon the question of revenants;⁵⁴⁵ and he indeed did not avoid the calling of names: a journal review labelled him a 'Popist',⁵⁴⁶ a serious swearword in the Protestant environment of the East-German learned world, while Michael Ranfft simply dismissed him 'an alchemist'. The author writing under the pseudonym W.S.G.E. reflected that the vampire topic appeared in discussions in only two functions: spreading fear among people and acting as the Golden Apple of Discord.⁵⁴⁷

These theological tensions and opposing religious sensibilities naturally were a constant in early Enlightenment Europe, but the topic of vampirism was especially suitable to activate them: regardless of their particular opinion on the harmful dead, the vampire treatises never forgot to emphasise how superstitious and ignorant Rascian hajduks were. In this they could

⁵⁴² Pott, *Aufklärung und Aberglaube - Die deutsche Frühaufklärung im Spiegel ihrer Aberglaubenskritik*.

⁵⁴³ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 20.

⁵⁴⁴ Ranfft, 21.

⁵⁴⁵ Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern*, 3-5.

⁵⁴⁶ Eudoxus, 'Nachlese von den Schriften wegen der Vampyren', 871.

⁵⁴⁷ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation*, 16.

rely on the long-standing tradition of literature written by travellers and missionaries from the seventeenth century through the eighteenth castigating the Orthodox Church for promoting and maintaining superstitious fears (Chapter II.2.). The vampire treatises simply adopted this language, as it was a necessity to distance themselves from this world. As it will be shown below, while doing so, the Protestant writers often conflated this with another *topos*, namely the superstition of the Catholic Church, which they associated with the occupying Habsburg state administration. The constant repetition of the superstitious nature of the environment from which the reports emerged was necessary, because giving the vampire topic enough credit to analyse it seriously had the potential to transfer the stigma of superstition from the topic to the author.

Seen from this angle, it is no wonder that a salient characteristic of the debate is that practically no high-standing scholars engaged publicly in the debate. Georg Ernst Stahl also always remained in the background, but did keep a finger on the issue, because he was writing private letters to Belgrade chief physician Haack about it, who in turn also distanced himself from the matter (Chapter IV.1.). Neither did the Leopoldina's director and president, Baier and Ettmüller engage openly. Many treatises were anonymous or pseudonyms, though at least two of the discussants, Eudoxus and Putoneus used a pseudonym which they had already repeatedly used before and would continue to use after the vampire discussion as well; this suggests that at least part of their audience probably knew their secret identity.⁵⁴⁸ Neither Johann Christoph Fritsch, nor Johann Ernst Stahl gave their names to the vampire treatise they have co-written, but they were uncovered by a journal article in the *Commercium Litterarium*.⁵⁴⁹ W.S.G.E. expressed his initial wish to remain silent '*Si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses!*',⁵⁵⁰ but having been forced by a noble patron, he had to engage. Other contributors may have chosen anonymity, because at some institutions, the open disputes between professors of the same academy / university were simply prohibited. The professors circumvented the problem by writing under pseudonyms, anonymously or publishing under

⁵⁴⁸ Eudoxus, 'Bericht von einigen Schriften, die Vampyren betreffend'; Eudoxus, 'Anhang zu dem Artickel von den Schriften wegen der Vampyren', *Ausgerlesene Theologische Bibliothek* 62. (1732): 208-210.; Eudoxus, 'Nachlese von den Schriften wegen der Vampyren'; Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*.

⁵⁴⁹ Anon., 'Ut absolvamus, quam spec. XXX. p. 238. Abrupimus, illam anonymi explicationem phenomeni...', *Commercium Litterarium ad Rei Medicae et Scientiae Naturalis Incrementum Institutum.*, no. 32. (6 August 1732): 254.

⁵⁵⁰ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation*, 17.

the names of their students; naturally, the opponents most often knew exactly, who was hiding behind the fake names.⁵⁵¹

It is even more remarkable that although several universities received direct inquiries from the Teutonic Order's High Master Armpringen (about Frudenthal revenants in 1675), from emperor Charles VI (about Medvedia in 1732), and from the town of Liebe (about *magia posthuma* also in 1732), none of them answered publicly. As far as it is known, no official statement was made by universities or academies except the Sorbonne about a Polish case of *oupiers* in 1693 and the Prussian Academy in 1732. As it will be shown below, even the Prussian Academy's statement was much less an expression of scientific curiosity than a reluctant compliance to the king's pressure.

⁵⁵¹ De Ceglia, 'Hoffmann and Stahl. Documents and Reflections on the Dispute', 101.

V.1. Vampires under the gaze of the Prussian Academy of Sciences

The time Prince Charles Alexander showed up with the *Visum et Repertum* in Berlin is generally considered to have been a low point in the history of the Prussian Academy of Sciences.⁵⁵² Adolf Harnack, the academy's early twentieth-century historian termed it 'the darkest era of the academy'.⁵⁵³ The reigning king of Prussia, 'the soldier king' Frederick William I. (1713-1740), had an unconcealed contempt towards traditional bookish university learning and respected only those disciplines that had a direct practical use, such as surgery, chemistry or engineering. As a sign of his contempt, the king consecutively named two of his court jesters as president and vice-president of the academy. Jacob Paul von Gundling was appointed to the position of presidency in 1718 and held it until his death in 1731. Apart from his duties as master of ceremonies and the entertainment of the king with witty stories, Gundling was nevertheless a noted historian of his time and his efforts at developing the academy were appreciated even by his later critics. The academy however was going through a gradual downturn: the publication of its esteemed journal, the *Miscellanea* was stopped between 1727 and 1733, and it had no president between Gundling's death in 1731 and the appointment of Daniel Ernst Jablonski in 1733. It was during this hiatus time in 1732 that the king appointed his second court jester, Otto von Graben zum Stein (1690 - 1756) as vice-president of the academy, a position he held until 1740. The appointment was received by general resentment on the part of the academy membership, because von Stein, a converted monk, historian and collector of ghost stories had never been a member of the academy and was in general not taken seriously by the Berlin learned community.

The circumstances in which the academy found itself in 1732 left an imprint on the whole process of giving their opinion on vampirism. The gesture that Frederick William assigned them the task of dealing with the gory topic of the bloodsucking dead was most probably

⁵⁵² The academy was founded under the name of *Kurfürstlich Brandenburgische Societät der Wissenschaften* in 1700, and the name was changed already next year to *Königlich Preußische Sozietät der Wissenschaften*, which in turn was changed in 1743 to *Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Out of convenience, in the followings, I will refer to the establishment as 'the academy' or 'Prussian Academy of Sciences'.

⁵⁵³ Adolf Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Erster Band: Von der Gründung bis zum Tode Friedrichs des Grossen*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1900), 233.

meant as a tongue-in-cheek mockery of the establishment.⁵⁵⁴ The Prussian king decided in advance that vampirism was just a superstition and because of this, the academy was not in a position to consider the report seriously. If they did, this would have given ammunition for the king for ridiculing the institution even more. The danger of being labelled superstitious was common to any endeavour seeking to address the returning dead in a learned format, but this danger was even more acute due to the particular situation in which the Prussian Academy of Sciences was in 1732.

The politics of science: The theologian, the anatomist and the zoologist discuss vampires

Even though King Frederick-William I. entrusted the freshly appointed court jester and vice-president von Stein to investigate the veracity of the Flückinger report, the task was instantly taken over by the academy's most influential member, 72-year-old Daniel Ernst Jablonski (1660-1741). His father, a minister of the Bohemian Brethren (Unitas Fratrum) and son-in-law to Jan Amos Comenius (1692-1670, bishop of the brethren) was forced to leave Bohemia in 1627 because of the Habsburg Catholicization measures following the suppression of the Bohemian Revolt. Daniel Ernst Jablonski studied Latin, Hebrew and theology in Frankfurt-am-Oder and in Oxford and became a widely respected authority in Oriental and Jewish ancient history as well as Old Slavic Church history. He was elected member of the Royal Society of London and maintained a large correspondence network. The exiled members of the Bohemian Brethren formed communities outside the Habsburg Monarchy and Jablonski became bishop of their Polish branch. As a theologian, Jablonski had Irenic views and was working on the unification of the Protestant strands of Christianity against the Roman Catholic Church.⁵⁵⁵ This project received a strong political backing. The two important dynasties of the houses of Brandenburg and of Hannover were Calvinists and Lutherans respectively, and the settlement of their religious divergence was of utmost importance especially since the end of the seventeenth century, when the Protestant Prince Electors of Saxony converted to

⁵⁵⁴ Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 126-127.

⁵⁵⁵ Hartmut Rudolph, 'Daniel Ernst Jablonski: Ein Brückenbauer im Europa der frühen Neuzeit', *Lexicon Philosophicum: International Journal for the History of Texts and Ideas* 5 (2017): 73.

Catholicism. This conversion substantially weakened the Protestant position within the Holy Roman Empire. Jablonski served the house of Brandenburg as a Calvinist court preacher in Königsberg and was subsequently invited to Berlin by the king, retaining his position of court preacher to the Prussian kings.

Apart from functioning as a bridge between Calvinism and Lutheranism, Jablonski also sought to combine humanist erudition with the new sciences and argued for a middle way between Pietist piety on the one hand and the early Enlightenment on the other. As a person of a Protestant humanist education, he supported the idea of going back to the original sources. Accordingly, during his lifetime he oversaw several source editions, for instance a Hebrew Bible, the Anglican Book of Common Prayer in German or Comenius's collected works. At the same time, he also owned a copy of the Latin translation of Francis Bacon's collected works (1694, Leipzig) and published a Latin translation of theologian and philologist Richard Bentley's *'The folly and unreasonableness of atheism'* (*Stultitia et irrationabilitas Atheismi* 1696). This collection of sermons was written at the honour of the late naturalist Robert Boyle and set out to prove the harmony of science and religion based on Newton's *Principia*. In order to understand Bentley's references to physics and mathematics, Jablonski took classes in algebra and natural philosophy from Gabriel Naudé and Etienne Chauvin. In the preface Jablonski maintained that good philosophers are always good theologians as well, while atheists are always sloppy philosophers and Sophists.⁵⁵⁶

Although Jablonski excelled as a science-organizer and co-founded the *Prussian Academy* with Leibniz in 1700, he was far from being an unconditional believer in scientific progress. He strongly rejected the attempts at a rational explanation of belief, a feature that made him esteem late-medieval mysticism, such as the writings of fifteenth-century Augustine canon regular, Thomas von Kempen, and made him lean towards the Pietism of his time. He was friends with Philipp Jacob Spener and corresponded with A.H. Francke, and agreed with them that science has to be subordinated to theology and any use in knowledge should be useful from a moral-theological point of view as well.⁵⁵⁷ Echoing Thomas Von Kempen, Jablonski stated that the overzealous lust for knowledge led people into doubts, distress and deception,

⁵⁵⁶ Albert de Lange, 'Wissenschaftsoptimismus und Demutsfrömmigkeit. Daniel Ernst Jablonskis "Mittelweg" im Zeichen von Frühaufklärung und Pietismus.', in *Brückenschläge: Daniel Ernst Jablonski im Europa der Frühaufklärung*, ed. Joachim Bahlcke (Döbel, 2010), 250–67.

⁵⁵⁷ Lange, 263-264.

and in fact much of the knowledge the various disciplines hoard up was useless for the benefit of the soul.⁵⁵⁸ At the same time, he had strong reservations against Pietistic zeal, which could result in intolerance, something entirely against his Irenic sensibilities.

His ideas were put to the test in 1723, when the famed mathematician, theologian and professor at the university of Halle, Christian Wolff was accused by Pietist circles of atheism and was expelled by royal decree from Halle. Jablonski was member of two mitigating and investigating committees, in 1723 and in 1736, both of which set out to assess Wolff's teachings. During these negotiations, Jablonski's stance is not entirely known, but was probably on Wolff's side, whom he understood as a Boyle-type Christian naturalist.

In dealing with the vampire issue, Jablonski took full control, first by handpicking the people who were given a chance to voice their opinion on the matter. Although according to the king's order, each of the four departments should have discussed the vampire matter, Jablonski did not carry this out.⁵⁵⁹ As head of the Oriental and Ecclesiastical History and Philology department of the academy, Jablonski discussed the matter with two men only: Augustin Buddeus (1695-1753), director of the Medical-Physical department and Johann Leonhard Frisch (1666-1743), the head of the German History and Philology department.⁵⁶⁰ Half-brother of the well-known Lutheran theologian Johann Franz Buddeus, Augustin Buddeus had studied medicine in Jena, Halle and finally in Leiden, where he was a student of Hermann Boerhaave, a giant in the field of iatrochemical medicine at the time, who also carried out the systematization of medical education in Leiden, and authored university textbooks in medicine that remained in use for a century. Buddeus became an anatomist in Berlin, was elected member of the Leopoldina and the Prussian Academy and was one of the personal physicians and court advisors (Hofrat) to Frederick-William. Johann Leonhard Frisch was a stable member of the Academy and had written historical and linguistic works, such as a comprehensive German-French dictionary, while at the same time being a noted zoologist

⁵⁵⁸ Lange, 266.

⁵⁵⁹ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 7r.

⁵⁶⁰ The documents relating to their discussion containing several further documents illuminating the circumstances of the discussion are today to be found in the Archives of the Prussian Academy of Sciences. 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger'.

specializing in insects. Buddeus and Frisch apparently worked in close connection and were engaged in naturalist experiments together.⁵⁶¹

Jablonski's second move was the decision not to invite the fourth department head to the discussion, Alphonse des Vignoles (1649-1744), the director of the Mathematical department. In his view, mathematics (which in the era rather meant mathematics applied to engineering tasks) had nothing to do with vampires and the director anyways did not speak German.⁵⁶² The argumentation is somewhat suspicious for two reasons. First, des Vignoles had left France at the age of 37 and by 1732 had spent forty-six years in German territory, meanwhile having written a history of Brandenburg based on a large corpus of archival sources. His German language competence might not have been at a native level, but he surely would have had no problem discussing matters with the other directors. Second, most members of the academy were engaged in several different disciplines and were members of more than one department at once. This was true of des Vignoles as well, who was also member of the German Historical and Philological department and was not only a mathematician but a theologian, preacher of the French exile community in Berlin, historian, astronomer and author of a work on the Chinese and Egyptian calendars as well.

The exclusion of des Vignoles might have had something to do with an inner rift between two fractions of the academy. One group consisted of mostly German chemists and physicians, who were supported by the practical-minded king and who belonged to the circles of Georg Ernst Stahl. The other group contained mostly French scholars, who functioned as house tutors of the royal family and were supported by the queen.⁵⁶³ Some of the main figures of the medical group were Stahl's protegee, chemist and court apothecary Caspar Neumann (1683-1737) and Johann Theodor Eller (1689-1760), a chemist, military physician and personal physician to king Frederick-William. In 1725, Stahl and Eller authored a medical edict for the foundation of a well-funded anatomical and surgical education in Prussia, including state

⁵⁶¹ Johann Leonhard Frisch, *Beschreibung von allerley Insecten in Teutschland, nebst Anmerkungen und nöthigen Abbildungen von diesem kriechenden und fliegenden inländischen Gewürme*, vol. 9, 13 vols (Berlin: Christoph Gottlieb Nicolai, 1730) In the dedicatory letter to the volume, Buddeus is referred to 'als einem Hochgültigen Zeugen allerley Versuchs so unter seiner Direction in diesem Stück, bisher bey Gelegenheit öffentlich vorgelegt worden'.

⁵⁶² 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 7r.

⁵⁶³ For the opposing fractions see: Harnack, *Geschichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. Erster Band: Von der Gründung bis zum Tode Friedrichs des Grossen*, 1:237-238.

examinations and necessary permissions of practicing physicians and other medical practitioners. Together with surgeon and military physician Gabriel Senff (died 1738), Eller was head of the public clinic, the Charité in Berlin since its foundation in 1727. The hospital was a centre of clinical bedside medicine, a huge aid in the practical education of university students in medicine. Apart from Neumann and Eller, Johann Heinrich Pott (1692-1777) also belonged to Stahl's circle; he was a chemist and physician, who had originally studied theology in Halle, then switched to chemistry and medicine under Stahl and Hoffmann. Ernst Konrad Holzendorff (1711-1756) was also involved in this group; he was a military surgeon and personal surgeon to Frederick-William, a reformer of military lazarettes, and founder of the anatomical theatre of the academy.

The other group of literati were comprised of French members of the academy, many of whom were employed as librarians or tutors to the royal family, and in contrast to the opposing group, were mostly engaged in theology, history and/or mathematics, such as Étienne Chauvin (1640-1725), theologian and Cartesian philosopher or Isaac de Beausobre (1659-1738) pastor of the French immigrant community in Berlin and historian of Manicheism. The latter was not formally member of the academy but was a respected participant in the intellectual circles of Berlin. Among the further regular academy members we find Simon Pelloutier (1694-1757), theologian and historian of antiquity, Maturin Veyssière de La Croze (1661-1739), an orientalist, as well as the Naudés, father and son, both of them mathematicians: Philipp Naudé the elder (1654-1729) and Philipp Naudé the younger (1684 - 1745). Finally, Jacques Égide Duhan de Jandun (1685-1746) was secret advisor, tutor and librarian and was an honorary member.⁵⁶⁴

Despite having an ethnic trait, the debate between the two groups got thematised along the lines of the utility of disciplines: the physicians accused the literati that their endeavours were useless and impractical. In this sense, the theologian Jablonski also belonged to the undervalued group of literati, while Frisch acted as a bridge: being a naturalist and linguist at the same time, as well as fluent in French, he was trying to mitigate the conflict. The opposition between the fractions is relevant for the vampire discussion, because in an atmosphere, where state support was turning increasingly away from the studies of the mind

⁵⁶⁴ For the members of the academy see: Werner Hartkopf, *Die Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften: Ihre Mitglieder und Preisträger 1700-1900* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1992).

(*Gesiteswissenschaften*), Jablonski must have realized the importance of proving that the academy was prepared to give a practical assessment that relied on clear reasoning and the intimate knowledge of how nature works. There was no need to involve des Vignoles, whose mathematical skills in calendar calculation and astronomy were hardly relevant, while his experience in theology and history would have tilted the balance from the studies of nature towards the studies of the mind, which was already represented by the theologian Jablonski himself. Under the given science-political circumstances it was the medical-naturalist input offered by Buddeus and Frisch, that was most badly needed.

While Jablonski named Buddeus and Frisch as the chosen ones to discuss vampirism as early as 1st March, the actual meeting apparently took place only on the 7th March, the handwritten version of the *Opinion* being finished on the 8th and finally issued on the 11th, a fairly rushed schedule, because, as Jablonski noted, Duke Francis Stephen was about to leave Berlin, and the opinion had to be ready before that. Francis Stephen left Berlin, and took a copy of the *Opinion*, and probably a copy of the *Visum et repertum* with himself on his travel to Silesia and Moravia, which (as pointed out above), gave him opportunity to show and discuss the vampire matter with Cardinal von Scrattenbach, bishop of Moravia.

The archives of the academy fortunately preserved several manuscript documents that bear witness to the process of the preparation of the *Opinion*, including a copy of the *Visum et Repertum*, an almost clean copy of the *Opinion*, a series of anonymous notes to the discussion, procedural notes and a letter written in June 1732 by the Belgrade head military physician von Haack. One of the most intriguing documents in the bundle is the notes about the three men's discussion on vampires (out of convenience referred to henceforth as the *Notes*). The text is written in a single handwriting, but contains various medical, chemical, theological and legal considerations. Even though in certain cases we can make educated guesses, generally it is unknown which thought belonged to which person. The most possible candidate for the authorship of the *Notes* is Jablonski himself, given that no one else has an undersigned document in the bundle apart from him and Lüder Cöper, the academy's adjunct secretary.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁵ At this point it is uncertain, who took the notes, whether it was one of the three directors or someone else, but the handwriting resembles that of Jablonski much more so, than that of adjunct secretary Lüder Cöper. Compare their handwritings on: 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 1r.

Historical and theological argumentation

A comparison of the manuscript *Notes* of the discussion and the end-product, the printed *Opinion* reveals that the iatrochemical circle's pressure left a mark on the written products of the three academic's discussion on vampires.⁵⁶⁶ First, the *Notes* gives a less coherent, less self-assured picture of the problem in contrast to the *Opinion*. Second, the printed *Opinion* was written after an intense filtering work, during which several ideas and arguments that surface in the *Notes* were left out. Indeed, what makes the published *Opinion* so familiar to modern readers and at the same time so unique among the learned texts on vampirism of the age is that demonological and historical evidence and argumentation is completely absent in it. As a consequence, the text is entirely based on a legal and medical-naturalist approach which points out the deficiencies of the witness hearings from a legal perspective and gives a medical-naturalist explanation of the condition the exhumed corpses.

The *Notes* starts with a paragraph that expresses uncertainty about how to interpret the vampire phenomenon, an ambiguity that in the printed *Opinion* got changed to utter confidence in the ability of the sciences to explain it. The first paragraph of the *Notes* reads:

*'In relation to the matter of the vampires, we find no examples neither in Holy Scripture, nor in long-term experience, based on which we could make a judgement about the inspection [the Visum et Repertum] in an unbiased way. Because of this, the evaluation of the foreign report and experience must be left undecided and be placed among those things, the natural causes of which have not yet been researched well enough.'*⁵⁶⁷

In the *Notes*, the joint lack of historical evidence and available proper naturalist research into vampirism is used to argue for the impossibility of adjudicating the matter. By contrast, in the printed version, the comment about the missing naturalist research simply got deleted while the lack of earlier historical evidence was used to underpin the improbability of the existence of vampirism:

⁵⁶⁶ See the notes on the discussion in: 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 8r-v; 15r-v.

⁵⁶⁷ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 8r.

*'... a difference has to be made between 1) those Facts that the commissioners gathered from other people and 2) those facts that the said commissioners observed, saw, examined and described with all circumstances [...]
Otherwise it is known, that the apparition of these bloodsuckers, and what they actually are is not proven in anyway and we possess no traces of it neither in history nor in our or other Lutheran lands, except that every now and then in past times there were tales about the swallowing of the shroud and the chewing in the graves, but investigation found these to be untrue ('unrichtig') and were deemed to be harmful delusions and superstitions. In relation to the second point though, we will let the commissioners' investigation rest in its own value, but we cannot leave it unnoticed that the so-called Stana [...] having been buried at the beginning of the winter could stay undecayed...' ⁵⁶⁸*

The text from here on goes on to argue that the uncedayed state of the corpses pronounced to be vampires can be explained by natural causes.

There were several interests pushing for the elimination of naturalist uncertainty and the complete disregard of earlier historical evidence. First, Jablonski probably wished to cater for the tastes of the king and his medical circle. Second, given that the statement was aimed at publication, the authors must have felt a need to communicate the state-of-the-art stance more unequivocally, concealing any inner doubts. As it will be shown in Chapter VII, the same attitude can be detected in Gerard van Swieten's treatment of the topic in 1755. Finally, a further contributing factor could have been Jablonski's distrust in evidence given by non-Protestant strands of Christianity. The exclusion of des Vignoles and thus the French input into the discussion already resulted in the absence of the experience that French learned circles had gained from reports about Polish cases of ghosts and revenants often referred to as *upiers* and *upieryczas*. It was mostly Jesuit missionaries in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries who communicated these cases to French scholars, in 1693 even prompting Sorbonne University to an opinion about the matter.⁵⁶⁹ These recent discussions might have been known in the French emigrant community in Berlin, which however did not get the chance to contribute them to the evaluation of the Flückinger report.

The *Notes* contains repeated comments by one of the discussants condemning the Roman Catholic Church for its cynical support of the false belief in Purgatory and the chewing of the

⁵⁶⁸ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 112.

⁵⁶⁹ Calmet, *Gelehrte Verhandlung*, 2:233-240.

dead, all this in order to make people rely on the services of the Catholic clergy. The author of these comments was most probably Jablonski himself, given that his family history had been overshadowed by Catholic persecution. Jablonski, a specialist in Old Slavic Church history had to know that the Rascians, about whom the Flückinger report was written belonged to the Orthodox Church, and therefore this comment must have been a reference to the earlier historical examples coming from Catholic countries on various forms of the returning dead. In the end, the Orthodox clergy is also held responsible for being similarly cynical in their lust for power:

‘The bloodthirst is characteristic only of the dead of the Roman religion, but since it is there among the Orthodox as well, who do not believe in Purgatory, the clergy has a different interest, which is strengthening their authority in excommunication.’⁵⁷⁰

Apart from the Orthodox theology’s teachings about the incorruptibility of the excommunicated corpses, the *Notes* also mention the belief that the chewing dead (or Nachzehrers) are thought to bring their whole family into the grave, references that betray a detailed familiarity with the pre-history of revenants. This kind of information in other contemporary, similarly Protestant learned texts on vampirism was used to deliberate the possible dynamics of the spread of death through familial ties or divine action. This potential however was left unexplored by Jablonski and even its mentioning got deleted in the print version. The parts openly attacking Catholicism might have been removed so that they would not offend the two princes, Francis Stephen and Charles Alexander, both of whom were Catholics. The Orthodox clerical attitude to excommunication however was so relevant, that it is tempting to understand its elimination as a gesture towards the new science’s distrust of non-first-hand empirical evidence.

The last sentence of the *Notes*, a demonological deliberation on the possibility of devilish machinations also did not make it into the print version:

⁵⁷⁰ ‘Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger’, 15r.

*'In case God allowed such things to happen [bloodsucking corpses], these would have to be placed among those things, which are labelled in Holy Scripture as strong delusions.'*⁵⁷¹

This sentence might again have been a contribution by Jablonski, whose expression 'strong delusions' ('kräftige Irrthümer') was a reference to 2 Thess 2:11-12, a Biblical section about the coming of the Antichrist who at the End of the World will be spreading deception and lies in order to make people believe false truths:

*'And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:
That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.'*

Jablonski's theological education told him that the devil's activity in the physical world always had to be taken into consideration as a possibility, but in the end was not fit to be included in the *Opinion*, probably in order to avoid even the slightest shade of superstition, of seeing demons where there are none. This move again is unique among the contemporary learned treatises on vampirism, be they Protestant or Catholic: the devil's illusions were always acknowledged, even if only as a possibility.

Legal and medical-naturalist argumentation

What *did* get included into the *Opinion* is the very clear legally minded separation of pieces of information into two groups: those gathered first-hand by the Flückinger commission and those collected only second-hand. In terms of the first category, that is, the witness accounts, both texts emphasize the lack of hard evidence: no revenant was caught in the very act of leaving or coming back to the cemetery and no disturbance in the grave's soil was found that would have indicated a corporeal crawling-out and crawling-back of the revenant each night. Further, whatever the witnesses claimed they saw or felt is discredited as being based on suppositions, while the only actual sighting of a vampire, testified by Stanoicka, who saw the

⁵⁷¹ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 15v.

dead Millove's shape appear should be left out of account because it was a woman who saw it. Stanoicka's testimony

*'should not be paid attention to, because such women, when they are of a melancholy complexion, are able to imagine fearsome visions at night both in their dreams and in general'*⁵⁷²

The only certain evidence in the matter is that among the many exhumed corpses some were partly not decayed, even though they spent more time in the grave than other corpses, that did decay. Both the *Notes* and the *Opinion* give a series of natural causes that in general might retard or hasten putrefaction without arguing for one or the other in the particular case of the Medvedia vampires. The *Notes* gives a list of six medical-naturalist causes, probably gathered from Buddeus and Frisch about why certain bodies decay slower than others:⁵⁷³

- 1) maggots can consume a corpse very quickly
- 2) decay is age-dependent, for instance new-born babies decay slower
- 3) there are certain diseases that make the body rot faster⁵⁷⁴
- 4) fat people do not decay as fast as skinny people
- 5) certain foods give a fatty and balsamic quality to the flesh making it last longer without decay
- 6) in certain soils the dead decompose faster than in others

Points 4) and 5), according to which fatter bodies were supposed to decay slower than slim ones are a simplified version of the conventional theory of putrefaction which took into consideration the opposing or matching natures of the corpse and the environment (Chapter I.1.). Quarantine physician Glaser was also an adherent to this theory, and this is exactly why he was so surprised to see the desiccated Miliza less decayed than fatter people's corpses that had spent much shorter time in the grave. Since Glaser's report never reached learned circles, the problem that *on site* was so striking never got addressed either.

In fact, in the printed *Opinion*, the whole matter of fat and decay was dropped, together with the quality of the soil and the maggots:

⁵⁷² Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 113.; The manuscript *Notes* also contains a sentence to this effect mentioning that the visions could have been caused by a mind confused by sickness, 'especially in the case of women'. 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 15v.

⁵⁷³ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 8r-v.

⁵⁷⁴ The diseases that cause a quicker progress of decay are the putrefying diseases such as plague or syphilis.

*'... whatever is written about the undecayed corpses can have their natural causes, since due to the kind and nature of the disease and of the body itself, the time of the year, the age of the body etc. one body may become subjected to putrefaction earlier or later than others'*⁵⁷⁵

In the *Notes*, the six points above are given one sentence each, with one exception: the very first one, a highly original and at the same time out-of-place narrative about the gruesome life cycle of carrion flies and their maggots closed inside the coffin:

*'When a person dies in a season when the flies are still around in the air, then these flies land and lay their eggs on all openings of the body, on the mouth, the nose, the eyes and ears. In a few hours, these eggs turn into maggots, because they are often alive already in the eggs. In five or six days the maggot becomes as big as it can be, and turns back into a fly, which, being closed into the coffin, finds others of its own kind and lays eggs [which in turn] become fresh maggots. This way the corpse gets so badly consumed in a short time, that nothing remains but bones.'*⁵⁷⁶

This unusually detailed description of the flies is odd considering its relative unimportance as compared to the other factors mentioned in the list, but becomes understandable considering Johann Frisch's other field of expertise apart from the history of languages: insects. Between 1721 and 1738, he was regularly publishing the 13 volumes of his magnum opus, the *Description of the Insects of Germany*, an illustrated work on various species, their behaviour, life cycle and description. In volume 7 of 1728 Frisch wrote extensively about the life cycle and appearance of the large carrion fly (*Große Aas-Fliege*, which later in Carl von Linné's system received the name *Musca carnaria vulgaris*). The description has several expressions (which I marked by underlining) which are echoed in the 1732 *Notes* about vampires and point at a direct connection between them.

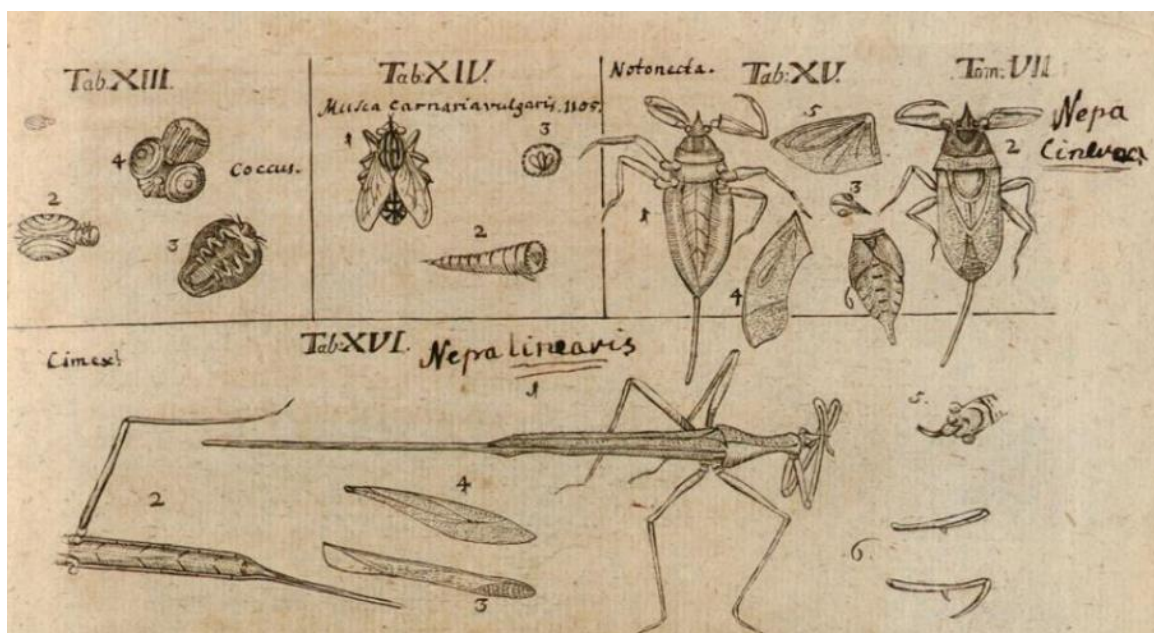
As Frisch writes, the large carrion flies

'are generally called filth-flies (Schmeitz-Fliegen), because they lay their eggs on any kind of flesh that started even a little bit to get old and putrefy. This is why people call such insects filth (or vermin), even the butterflies are called Schmetterling because of this. [...] They have red eyes and a white head with a black stripe stretching along the middle until the neck. [...]

⁵⁷⁵ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 113.

⁵⁷⁶ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 8r Italics mine - Á.M.

When the female is unable to lay her eggs soon enough, she carries them with herself until they come to life. Once I found such a fly on a piece of decaying flesh and pressed it a little, upon which the maggots crawled swarming out of their birthplace. As soon as they were out, they started to gnaw on the small sack or eggshell, each one on its own, and then started right-away to lick and chew on the decayed meat and became as big as they can be within two days. [...] As they grew up, to be precise, after four days, each one of them crawled away from the meat, hid in a corner, and made a barrel-shaped Aureliam or transformation-shell around themselves. Even though it was already September, they crawled out very soon afterwards as flies and started to search in a humming swarm for food and for their own kind.⁵⁷⁷



32 The large carrion fly and its maggot (Tab. XIV.) and other insects depicted in Frisch's *Beschreibung von Allerley Insecten in Teutschland* (Berlin, 1728).

In volume 10, which came out exactly in the year of the vampire debate, in 1732, Frisch returned to the topic of the flies. On account of a recent publication of Francesco Redi's *Experiments on the Generation of Insects*⁵⁷⁸ of 1668, Frisch gave a short summary of the work and singled out that according to Redi, the foul smell of maggot-infested flesh is caused by the smell of the excrements of the maggots.⁵⁷⁹ In the same volume, he described a small-sized

⁵⁷⁷ Johann Leonhard Frisch, *Beschreibung von allerley Insecten in Teutschland, nebst Anmerkungen und nöthigen Abbildungen von diesem kriechenden und fliegenden inländischen Gewürme*, vol. 7 (Berlin: Christoph Gottlieb Nicolai, 1728), 21-22. Italics mine - Á.M.

⁵⁷⁸ Redi, *Esperienze intorno alla generazione degl'insetti*.

⁵⁷⁹ Johann Leonhard Frisch, *Beschreibung von allerley Insecten in Teutschland, nebst Anmerkungen und nöthigen Abbildungen von diesem kriechenden und fliegenden inländischen Gewürme*, vol. 10, 13 vols (Berlin: Christoph Gottlieb Nicolai, 1732) Preface (unpaginated).

species of carrion fly and related that '[... Once] this insect laid her eggs on a big wood-bug, which I wanted to keep, and in a short time, 50 such flies came out of it.'⁵⁸⁰

The vampire topic gave possibility for the three discussants to present their own agendas: just like anti-Catholicism was important for Jablonski, Frisch and Buddeus laid claims about the relevance of naturalist-anatomical research and carrying out one's own experiments. When discussing the scream let out by some of the vampires upon staking, both the *Notes* and the *Opinion* explain the sound by air trapped in the aortas and the cavities of the heart which is squeezed out by the pressure of the stake.⁵⁸¹ The *Notes* further interjects an experiment with animals, namely that the same happens to birds that one kills: upon pressing their sides, they will also let out a scream. The supposition, surprising for modern readers, that air would be contained in the heart instead of the lungs was in line with contemporary medical theory according to which blood contained the airy life spirits that make the body function.

A contribution found only in the *Notes* was probably delivered by Buddeus, who criticised the faulty logic of vampire-belief from an anatomical perspective. The question he posed was whether in case the vampire did the bloodsucking with its mouth, where were the wounds from which the blood was extracted, and why did the blood end up in the vampire's chest and not in its stomach?⁵⁸² The *Opinion* adds two further elements to how one should read the signs on the corpses without elaborating on the exact physiological dynamics. The 'seeming fatness' of Miliza's corpse is explained as a natural consequence of decay, while the growth of hair and nails is also pronounced to be nothing miraculous, because under a certain constellation of factors it can happen in a natural way as well.

A fascination with the very carnal nature of the subject material is common to both naturalist-anatomist hands-on experiments and the legal conceptualization of vampirism. The three discussants understood vampirism in an entirely corporeal way: the revenant had to leave the grave in its physical body, and therefore could not have been invisible, while the blood had to be sucked out through open wounds and swallowed, like human beings do. In the eyes of the

⁵⁸⁰ Frisch, 10:8-9.

⁵⁸¹ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 15r.; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 112.

⁵⁸² 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 15r.

three men, only this way did the gory execution of the vampiric corpses make sense. The *Notes* mention that

*'The fact that people held the body to be guilty is visible from the slaughterous execution, which did not follow the criminal law code at all. It was so gruesome, that following an unfounded investigation people abused the body but held the soul to be damned as well.'*⁵⁸³

The Prussian Academy's treatment of the topic effaced the subtleties and ambiguities of the folkloric vampire, which was both corporeal and non-corporeal, sometimes visible, sometimes invisible, or appearing in non-human shapes, and could drain one's health and blood without causing an open wound. Such a constellation of features would only have been explainable through demonic activity, through witchcraft, which, interestingly did not even come up in the *Notes*. It did surface in the *Opinion*, only to be discarded instantly based on a lack of substantiating evidence:

'Finally, in particular it should be mentioned that the present accusation of vampirism (Vampyrerschaft) was only levied against the poor and people abused the dead in their graves and treated them as witches (Maleficanten), without having carried out a thorough investigation and discussion beforehand (which at least to our knowledge had not happened).

*Under these circumstances we think that one should treat this matter carefully and at present it cannot be believed that such a [blood]sucking would be carried out by the dead bodies, and that they would be able to reproduce their own quality through sucking [blood], or through the consuming of the blood or the soil of the grave where they lay. It is even less believable that people would be able to use the execution of the dead as an efficient remedy.'*⁵⁸⁴

In a similar way to the Glaser- and the Flückinger commission, the scholars of the Prussian Academy were also unable to come to terms with the half-corporeal, half incorporeal nature of vampirism and could not force the lack of witchcraft accusation and the contagious nature of the vampiric condition into their existing mental categories. This anomalous nature of vampirism stirred the imaginations of the learned even if most would have agreed to the superstitious nature of the phenomenon. An additional factor that poked the interest of

⁵⁸³ 'Acta betreffend den vom König angeforderten Bericht wegen der sogenannten Vampire oder Blutaussauger', 15r.

⁵⁸⁴ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 114.

especially the medical-naturalist circles was the discrepancy in the paces of decay the various corpses showed. Even though the natural philosophy of the time had a number of ready answers to this phenomenon, the exact mechanics through which the nature of disease, the nature of the body or its age contributed to the slower or faster process of decay was still a matter of deliberation, and it did excite many of the later contributors to the learned vampire debate. For many, the evaluation in the beginning of the *Notes* about the lack of naturalist research into the causes of the vampire phenomenon did ring true, even later during the 1750's.

Summary

Prince Charles Alexander offered up the *Visum et Repertum* and by extension, the Habsburg borderland's administration to be tested by the learned world of the Holy Roman Empire. The first major test was the Berlin-based Prussian Academy, which in the end dismissed the report as ignorant, imprecise and superstitious. This opinion, however, was itself a product the specific science-political relations of the Prussian capital. The soldier king Frederick William I supported practical disciplines, such as (iatro-)chemistry, surgery and engineering and had an overt contempt towards the *Geisteswissenschaften*, traditional university learning and the academy in particular. Apparently, he made the institution discuss the vampire report as a mocking gesture. Under such conditions, the academy could not allow itself to be stained with the stigma of superstition, which precluded taking the report under serious consideration.

As it turns out from the academy's archival materials, Daniel E. Jablonski orchestrated the discussion as well as the formulation of the official opinion by handpicking the members with whom he discussed the report, anatomist Augustin Buddeus and naturalist Johann Leonhard Frisch, and leaving out all other members, including the academy's vice-president, the ghost-believer Otto von Graben zum Stein. A comparison of the manuscript *Notes* of the discussion and the end-product, the printed *Opinion* reveals that originally, the discussants were less confident and recognised both the historical novelty of the concept of contagious vampirism and the lack of relevant natural philosophical research into corpse decay.

The printed version by contrast was coherent and self-assured which was achieved by the dismissal of historical and theological evidence and argumentation as such. This move meant the exclusion of the very argument that other learned people, such as Karl F. von Schertz recognised as the most compelling evidence in support of the reality of vampirism: the experience of the efficacy of the execution ritual in countering the affliction. The *Opinion* instead consisted of a legal criticism of the witness accounts and the presentation of a naturalist explanation to the lack of corpse decay based on traditional putrefaction theory. In this latter respect, the fact that Glaser's report was not available to the academics created a rift between the evidence visible to the borderland's administration and to the learned world. The discrepancy between experience and the traditional theory of putrefaction, which puzzled contagion physician Glaser had no chance to surface in the discussion.

V.2. Mors in distans: The transferability of death

The present subchapter applies a broad scope of research and maps the major possible theoretical frameworks the learned came up with to explain the specificities of the vampiric affliction on the one hand and the legitimacy of corpse executions on the other. The main interest is to find out, to what extent the discussants had to modify the explanations readily available to them in the era (as described in Chapter I).

For those surgeons, military officers, clergymen and state administrators who had to deal with revenant cases *on site*, the problem presented itself in a single cluster of three elements: 1) people were dying of an affliction, 2) were accusing dead fellow villagers for this and 3) found corpses in the cemetery that unlike others, refused to decay in a proper fashion. These three main elements were based on three different experiences that local hajduks went through: *the feeling* of the affliction accompanied by night-time attacks, *the fact* of deaths happening in the village, and *the sight* of the strangely incorrupt state of certain corpses. Locals provided a single cause that managed to link and explain all three elements: vampires. Rhetorically, this was a strong position, acknowledged even by the medical experts Glaser and the military surgeons, who were faced the problem on-site. For locals, administrators and medical experts, the main task was to find a practical solution to the problem, which would satisfy both sides.

By contrast, for the learned, who had no direct, first-hand access to any of these elements, the task was to provide a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon. Unless one thought that the whole vampire report was a fraud or was fictitious (as some of the discussants did), they had to come up with an answer more compelling than that of the hajduks. Accepting the hajduk's framework of vampirization was out of question, as the 'vampire' was a *non-ens*, an alien expression that had to be tamed and translated into concepts that were meaningful for the early Enlightenment environment of the Holy Roman Empire.

What made this problem challenging and interesting is that the figure of the vampire was an uncanny compound: it had both known and novel elements. The lack of corpse putrefaction was known and well-discussed before as well, the idea of a bloodsucking revenant had medieval precursors, and there were also accounts of blood that appeared in the mouths and coffins of certain early modern revenants. The idea that contagion can start from a revenant was also known. However, the spreading of the revenant-condition was entirely new. Because

of this, the learned could rely on earlier discussions about various forms of the returning dead only to a limited extent. This meant that they had to creatively combine, occasionally bend available mono- and multicausal frameworks.

Despite the highly theoretical nature of the learned discussion, it has to be kept in mind, that the theoretical considerations had practical implications as well, for they ultimately determined whether the execution of the dead should be allowed or not. This was the most important question for locals as well as for those officials who took part in controlling vampire beliefs *on site*. It is important to keep practical considerations in mind, because the theoretical debates had the potential to slowly feed back into administrative practice through high-level policymaking.

I structured the various frameworks offered by the discussants based on whether they thought the dead could harm the living or not. Within the frameworks I will pay attention to what the vehicles (the *causa efficiens*) and channels (the *causa occasionalis*) of the harmful effect were. The vehicles and channels of vampirism can be set on a scale ranging from immaterial actors (God, demons or the human soul) through semi-material ones (like spirits, vapours and occult forces) to very material particles, bodily humours and animals. The corporeality of actors was an important axis structuring the debate, as it put constraints on the possible actions they could carry out.

Frameworks of wonder

In theory, finding the most probable explanation to vampirism involved the enumeration of possible options, and the elimination of the ones that did not fit. The discussants proposed various lists of possibilities, but in essence, they were the same as those discussed in Chapter I. Ensign Kottowitz for instance listed three possible explanations: sympathies, demonic action and astral spirit-related phenomena. This suggests that he had no doubts that there was indeed some sort of link between the undecayed corpses and the deaths. The anonymous author of the *Documentary and Thorough Account* added a fourth standpoint, namely

doubting the veracity of the event itself.⁵⁸⁵ All of them were monocausal explanations. Fritsch and Stahl, authors of the *Eines Weimarischen Medici* already discussed eight possibilities:⁵⁸⁶

- 1) divine miracle
- 2) demonic action
- 3) middle spirits' action
- 4) souls of the dead
- 5) astral spirit (the third part)
- 6) anima vegetativa and sympathies
- 7) insect/snake bite
- 8) regular natural disease

It should be visible from these three examples that finding an explanation involved an intense discernment work of causes, which in practice had to start by ruling out the natural ones. As Leipzig physician Johann C. Meinig (writing under the pseudonym Putoneus) put it:

*'As long as one can deduce an effect from natural causes, one must not resort to the supernatural (übernatürliche).'*⁵⁸⁷

This tenet was repeated by several contributors regardless of their affiliations but checking a phenomenon against all the natural causes had an obvious obstacle: no one knew all of them. Naturalists would know many of the regular laws governing nature, but as one exhausted the everyday, well-known explanations and got closer and closer to the margins of natural knowledge, unusual phenomena started to multiply. First, there were occult phenomena, the effects of which one could perceive but there was no explanation for how they actually worked: magnetism, moon-tide relations, premonition of animals, effects of poisons and antidotes, the weapon-salve, cruentation etc. These phenomena had mostly been known since ancient times and their causation still remained hidden. Second, there were entirely new phenomena, whose workings had to be incorporated into the existing frameworks, such as the healing qualities of newly discovered New-World plants. By the same token, discussants had to take into consideration the possibility (at least in theory), that vampirism was a real, but hitherto undiscovered phenomenon, natural or otherwise.

The insufficient knowledge of naturalists about the workings of nature caused a serious philosophical problem: there existed a grey zone of phenomena (in Michael Ranfft's

⁵⁸⁵ Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern*, 6-7.

⁵⁸⁶ Anon., *Eines weimarischen Medici mutmassliche Gedancken*, 16-31.

⁵⁸⁷ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 26.

formulation, a *terra incognita* of natural philosophy)⁵⁸⁸ that was beyond current naturalist knowledge but was within the actual borders of nature. In Meinig's (Putoneus) view, it was only the average, uneducated people, who believed that everything exceeding their knowledge of the world must necessarily have a supernatural cause. By contrast, the learned were more cautious because they knew that God created the world in a way that people could never possibly uncover all its secrets:

*'Because if an event really is a miracle (Wunderwerk),⁵⁸⁹ then in it the order of nature has to be upset. But who would be able to determine completely and satisfactorily what the order and borders of nature are?'*⁵⁹⁰

From the point of view of natural philosophy, this was an insurmountable obstacle: solely based on an investigation of the natural philosophical aspects of a given strange phenomenon, it was impossible to discern supernatural causation from a natural but unknown one.

In practice, the discernment started from examining regular natural explanations, and one of the main difficulties of interpreting the vampiric affliction was that the symptoms described in the report did not map easily onto any single known usual disease; instead, it seemed to be a combination of several.⁵⁹¹ In general, afflictions exhibiting symptom-clusters of an especially irregular, inconsistent nature, were recognised in the medical thinking of the era as indications of an unnatural, possibly demonic influence.⁵⁹² Symptoms of nausea, tiredness, headaches, shivers and weak pulse recorded by the officials pointed towards intermittent fevers. This is the diagnosis Glaser arrived at, supposing tertian and quartan fever depending on whether the paroxysm came every 3 or 4 days. However, the other cluster of symptoms of fear in the heart, difficult breathing and the blue colouration of the skin point towards the incubus (*ephialtes*, *asthma nocturnum*), a natural disease that was thought to cause a disturbance of

⁵⁸⁸ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 8, 12.

⁵⁸⁹ Putoneus's terminology is somewhat confusing, because when using a German vocabulary he does not clearly differentiate between miracles and marvels. Apparently, when he writes 'Wunderwerk' he means divine miracle (*miracula divina*), while the acts of the devil are labelled 'Teufelwerk', which corresponds to demonic marvels (*mira diabolica*).

⁵⁹⁰ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 17.

⁵⁹¹ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 10–12.

⁵⁹² Vermeir, 'Vampires as Creatures of the Imagination: Theories of Body, Soul and Imagination in Early Modern Vampire Tracts (1659–1755)', 354; Lester S. King, 'Some Basic Explanations of Disease: An Historian's Viewpoint', in *Evaluation and Explanation in the Biomedical Sciences: Proceedings of the First Trans-Disciplinary Symposium on Philosophy and Medicine Held at Galveston, May 9-11, 1974*, ed. H. Tristram Jr. Engelhardt and Stuart F. Spicker (Dordrecht, Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1975), 11–28.

the vital spirits in the nerves. It was classified usually as a convulsive disease caused by a spasm of the diaphragm nerves in the stomach. A further problem was that neither tertian / quartan fevers, nor the incubus were understood to be contagious, and the latter was not known to be lethal.

Theology could help narrow the causes down from the other end of the natural-supernatural spectrum. Although the rules of discerning divine and demonic causes behind preternatural phenomena were heavily influenced by religious convictions, most authors across confessions maintained that the moral consequences (whether the given event had an edifying or a destructive moral effect) could be used as indicators. The Orthodox Church maintained that God disclosed and punished the horrible nature of sin by not allowing the bodies of the excommunicated to decay. By contrast, among the (mostly Protestant) German discussants, very few attributed the phenomenon of revenants to divine intervention, because there was seemingly no morally positive outcome in the matter. The anonymous publisher of the *Visum et Repertum* was basically alone with his opinion based on Garmann's 1670 work that the deaths were caused by a plague that God sent on the village in order to punish them for having buried a witch's corpse in holy ground.⁵⁹³ Michael Ranfft went about the problem by acknowledging that God could punish sinners with many things, even death, but maintaining that direct divine interventions were either miracles of teaching or miracles of providence. The former were supposed to reinforce divine truth, a kind of miracle that according to Protestants had already ceased, while the latter always involved a person saved directly from the jaws of death in a wonderful way.⁵⁹⁴

For Catholics, the possibility had to be considered that the soul suffering in Purgatory comes back to haunt the living. Marigner, Lord of Plessis, Ruel, and Billoüard, a French commentator on the returning dead at the end of the seventeenth century hypothesised for instance that the souls of sinners might remain too much attached to the spirits and hence to the matter of the body, unable to break free, and had to continue suffering in the grave as part of its punishment in Purgatory.⁵⁹⁵ In Protestant theology however, the soul was denied the possibility to stay on earth after death. The palette of the supernatural world was firmly set

⁵⁹³ Anon., *Visum et repertum, über die so genannten Vampirs*, 44.

⁵⁹⁴ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 30-33.

⁵⁹⁵ Vermeir, 'Vampires as Creatures of the Imagination: Theories of Body, Soul and Imagination in Early Modern Vampire Tracts (1659–1755)'.

down in Scripture, and it did not include corpses walking the earth and spreading their own condition by sucking the blood of the living. The closest solution to the vampire as a separate supernatural creature was the *Actenmässige's* identification of vampires as a form of Paracelsian middle spirits, but these were understood by most discussants as different shapes the devil took on itself.

Across the centuries, the devil had always been allowed to act solely through natural means and could not perform anything that went contrary to the order of nature. This power was granted only to God himself and signified the theologically clear dividing line between divine miracles and demonic marvels, the latter of which belonged not to the 'supernatural' but to the 'preternatural' category: unusual, rare and strange events, which were against the usual operations of nature but were not contrary to its laws. Inherited from early demonological attitudes to discernment, it was mainstream to argue that even though demons could act only through natural means (for instance causing natural diseases), there had to be something unnatural in the symptoms: their inexplicable suddenness, or their lack of response to natural treatment for instance. Unnatural was often applied to denote a phenomenon that did not go against the laws of general nature but did go against the nature, i.e., the normal abilities, characteristics of a given natural entity, object or phenomenon. For instance, the 1614 *Rituale Romanum* posited that the only true signs of demonic possession were superhuman strength, knowledge of secret things and the speaking in tongues. In practice, the borders of the natural, the preternatural, the unnatural and the supernatural were not neat at all, and not only because of a 'sloppy' usage of the terms.

When it came to circumscribing the borders of demonic influence in the vampire debate, mainstream Lutherans granted as an axiom limited powers to the devil in the physical world: divine Providence would not allow too much power to harm people. Ranfft used this axiom to rule out demonic influence in the case of the chewing dead.⁵⁹⁶ The devil's powers in the physical world were limited, but not discarded. It was a matter of debate whether death was somehow a limit to the devil's powers over the human body or not. While the human being was alive, the devil was generally seen as being able to act only on the spirits of the body, not on its solids and humours, or only in as much as these contained spirits. Hoffmann for example

⁵⁹⁶ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 33-39.

was sceptical of most witchcraft cases,⁵⁹⁷ but supported the existence of demonic diseases, illusions and possession.⁵⁹⁸ This way the devil, and by extension, witches and magicians could undoubtedly damage the health and integrity of the human body, but they could never kill. Given that the chewing dead was all about a series of deaths, it seemed unlikely for Ranfft for example to ascribe it to demonic powers.

Meinig (Putoneus) expressed the same opinion against the involvement of the devil in vampirism (in Ranfft's view he was simply plagiarising him), but in several important details went against Ranfft's arguments, without bothering to engage with them. For one, Meinig claimed that even though the devil can by no means be a *causa efficiens* of death, he could easily be *causa occasionalis*, that is, the devil could for instance scare people so much through apparitions that they die of fear.⁵⁹⁹ It remains unexplained how this indirect murder can be harmonized with God's providence. In the case of vampirism, he ruled out the possibility of demonic indirect causality by stating that no person in a sane mind gave testimony of apparitions that could have caused fear and death to the villagers. Even though some Rascians did give testimonies about apparitions, these were discarded by Meinig as the products of unstable female minds. The argumentation he put forward understood apparitions as manifestations in the physical world, something which Ranfft did not entirely agree with.

In fact, Ranfft's second argument against demonic involvement was exactly that revenants were too corporeal, while the devil was only able to create illusions that were not so much corporeal. To illuminate this point, he drew a contrast between ghosts and revenants. Apparitions and poltergeists were in fact not real, but illusions planted by the devil directly into the minds of certain people, because of which they were imperceptible to others. In spite of the incompatibility of Meinig's and Ranfft's ideas, neither of the two authors picked an argument with the other over this point. Ranfft acknowledged that on certain occasions the devil could manipulate matter in the physical world as well, but only in a very limited way. For instance, the demonic illusion of a levitating object or person could easily be dispelled by directing light at it:

⁵⁹⁷ Joanna Geyer-Kordesch, 'Whose Enlightenment? Medicine, Witchcraft, Melancholia and Pathology', in *New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic and Demonology. Volume 6: Witchcraft in the Modern World*, ed. Brian P. Levack (New York, London: Routledge, 2002), 131–47.

⁵⁹⁸ King, 'Some Basic Explanations of Disease: An Historian's Viewpoint'.

⁵⁹⁹ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 27.

*'It is true that sometimes the apparition enters through the person's outer senses, in particular in case the spirit lifts a body into the air, which is only an appearance of a body. In this case however it is always so that if one comes closer to it with a light, it disappears by itself.'*⁶⁰⁰

In the end, much of the discussion centred on the area extending across the border between regular nature and preter-nature, while the occasional causes were either natural or demonic. As philosophically speaking there was no possibility to prove with hundred percent certainty where vampirism belonged to, other circumstances had to be taken into account in order to exclude this or that explanation or at least to make one or another interpretation more probable.

Morta la bestia, morto il veleno: The disempowered dead

In a similar fashion to the Prussian Academy's *Opinion*, some of the authors severed the link between the Medvedia undecayed corpses and the deaths that happened in the village.

The hajduk plague by a good friend

The anonymous physician, who wrote the *Letter from a good friend*⁶⁰¹ relied on a combination of natural and demonic causation. He underlined that there certainly were aspects to the case that pointed at some extraordinary, wonderful workings, not only the lack of decay and growth of long-buried corpses: the fact that locals knew ahead what condition the vampire will be in, that the condition spreads fast and is deadly in a short time and that the only remedy is the execution of corpses. In his view, the core of the problem was some form of an epidemic of an unknown origin, akin to the plague, for which reason he labelled it the 'hajduk plague'. The effects and spread of the disease would be strengthened by superstition and fear, just like in the case of the regular plague.

⁶⁰⁰ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 35.

⁶⁰¹ Anon., *Schreiben eines guten Freundes an einen andern guten Freund, die Vampyren betreffend de dato 26. martii 1732; samt einer Beylage fernerer Gutachtens*.

The link the anonymous author made between fear and the spread of the epidemic was a relatively well-entrenched explanation at the time, whose effects were accepted by most scholars, even if certain authors (like Michael Ranfft for example)⁶⁰² questioned its central role. The physiological explanation was that fear closed the pores of the skin, thereby impeding the disposal of harmful vapours and humours from the body in a natural way. Closing down the borders of the body once in the inside a decaying process started meant a swift deterioration of the person's condition. In doctoral theses defended at the university of Halle in the 1720's, the discussants stated that smallpox and measles could be caused by fear or the sight of another patient, but not plague. However, fear had a crucial role in dying of plague once the patient already had it.⁶⁰³ In 1722, Christian Sigismund Finger wrote that fear (*Furcht, timor*) made not only the soul, but also the Nature (= Stahl's *anima*) uncertain in its unconscious actions (of dividing and excreting miasma) and thereby prevented the expulsion of the disease-matter; fright (*Schreck, terror*) increased the tension of the fibers of the skin and the subcutaneous tissue and thereby blocked the excretory pathways (here we see F. Hoffmann's influence). Finger criticised the usual quarantine measures deployed by authorities as aggravating the plague through fear. In his MD thesis of 1735, Christian Ludwig Moegling of Tübingen listed fright as the third causal factor of plague, besides corruption of the air and contagion.

In the eyes of the anonymous author of the *Letter from a good friend*, there were certain combinations of actions and effects, however, that pointed to extraordinary forces at work:

*'... the eating of an animal that had been attacked by vampires, smearing oneself with the soil and the blood of a vampire, its beheading and burning etc., the effects of these [actions] should be derived rather from superstition through bewildered imagination or from the forces of Satanic temptations than from the ordinary laws of nature.'*⁶⁰⁴

His strong belief in the powers of a deranged imagination, made the author subscribe to the execution of the dead as well, because he saw it as a potentially efficient cure to the epidemic through a kind of placebo-effect. This is the same argument as that given by Ranfft, who ,

⁶⁰² Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 210.

⁶⁰³ Huldrych M. Koelbing, Urs B. Birchler, and Peter Arnold, 'Die Auswirkungen von Angst und Schreck auf Pest und Pestbekämpfung nach zwei Pestschriften des 18. Jahrhunderts', *Gesnerus* 36, no. 1–2 (1979): 116–26.

⁶⁰⁴ Anon., *Schreiben eines guten Freundes an einen andern guten Freund, die Vampyren betreffend de dato 26. martii 1732; samt einer Beylage fernerer Gutachtens.*, 7.

when emphasising the powers of the imagination thought it was plausible that if people indeed smeared themselves with the vampire's blood and ate from its grave actually got cured from the affliction.⁶⁰⁵ The writer of the *Letter from a good friend* linked the known cases of the chewing dead in Poland with the Serbian vampires, and stated that since the execution of corpses makes the living less scared, this will be an efficient weapon against the epidemic:

*'That the hajduks imagine so many oddities on the one hand pains me, because in times of epidemics, fear is dangerous; on the other hand, it makes me glad, because the trust they put in the beheading and burning of vampire bodies makes them resist the epidemic, the strength of which diminishes after this and finishes its course.'*⁶⁰⁶

The anonymous author of the *Letter from a good friend* saw many of the signs commonly understood as proofs of the harmful effects of the dead to have natural causes. The scream the Kisilova vampire let out while being staked, was explained (just like in the Prussian academics' work) as the escaping of air trapped in the chest, only the author did not use poking dead birds as an analogy, but grapes, which when squeezed let out a noise. Another sign was the dark mark that appeared on the neck of one of the victims in the Medvedia case, right after having dreamt that a vampire was strangling her. The author devoted a long section musing about the powers of the imagination in dreams, sketching possible scenarios of how this could have happened. One option is that the disease attacked the chest and the throat first, and this experience (*Erfahrung*), made her dream about strangulation, to which experience tales about vampires later on gave a convenient explanation. The other scenario is that the dream originally was about a vampire pressing her, and the experience was so intense that it woke her up. In both cases the marks on the neck were the physical effects of her imagination. Finally, he entirely discards the notion of the chewing of the dead, on two very practical grounds: 1) a corpse that has swallowed the shroud is unable to produce munching sounds which can only be created by two lips meeting, not by a lip meeting a piece of cloth and 2) even if we suppose that the corpse was munching, it is impossible that such a sound would be loud enough to be audible above ground.

⁶⁰⁵ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 182, 186.

⁶⁰⁶ Anon., *Schreiben eines guten Freundes an einen andern guten Freund, die Vampyren betreffend de dato 26. martii 1732; samt einer Beylage fernerer Gutachtens.*, 7.

Contagion and incubus by the Prussian Academy's halo

There were two treatises, which were most closely inspired by the Prussian Academy's *Opinion*, a text which they both reprinted as an attachment to their works. One of them was titled *Peculiar news about the vampires* and was written by lawyer-mathematician(engineer)-physician Johann Christoph Meinig (d.1740), who worked in Leipzig but had close ties to the Prussian University of Halle, where he had earned his medical degree in 1715.⁶⁰⁷ He was writing under the pseudonym Putoneus. The other treatise titled *Putative thoughts of a physician from Weimar about the vampires* was written anonymously, and was in fact co-written by two physicians, Johann Christoph Fritsch and Johann Ernst Stahl.⁶⁰⁸ The latter writer duo was identified behind the anonym treatise of the Weimar physician by the editor of the journal *Commercium Litterarium*, who gave a review of the work.⁶⁰⁹ The two authors in turn identified Meinig behind the pseudonym Putoneus in their treatise.⁶¹⁰

Both treatises refused to bring the devil into the picture and maintained that the vampire sickness that killed so many people was some kind of unidentifiable contagious malign fever which was joined by incubus symptoms.⁶¹¹ They followed the Prussian academic's opinion that there was no causal link leading from the undecayed corpses towards the deaths. This, however, did not mean that there was no link the other way around: all three texts maintained that the nature of the fever in which people died could have contributed to their lack of decay. It remained unexplained whether they thought that all the people who died of the same disease remained undecayed and the decayed corpses died of a different reason; or, alternatively, whether most people in the village died of the same disease, it is just that the differences in their bodily constitutions caused their differing states of decay.

In Fritsch and Stahl's understanding, the spreading of the malign fever from person to person was facilitated by family members and neighbours attending to the sick and thus breathing in the *nocia effluvia* emanating from sick people. In addition, the effects of the disease were

⁶⁰⁷ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*.

⁶⁰⁸ Anon., *Eines weimarischen Medici mutmassliche Gedancken*.

⁶⁰⁹ Anon., '[Review of] *Eines weimarischen Medici*', 254.

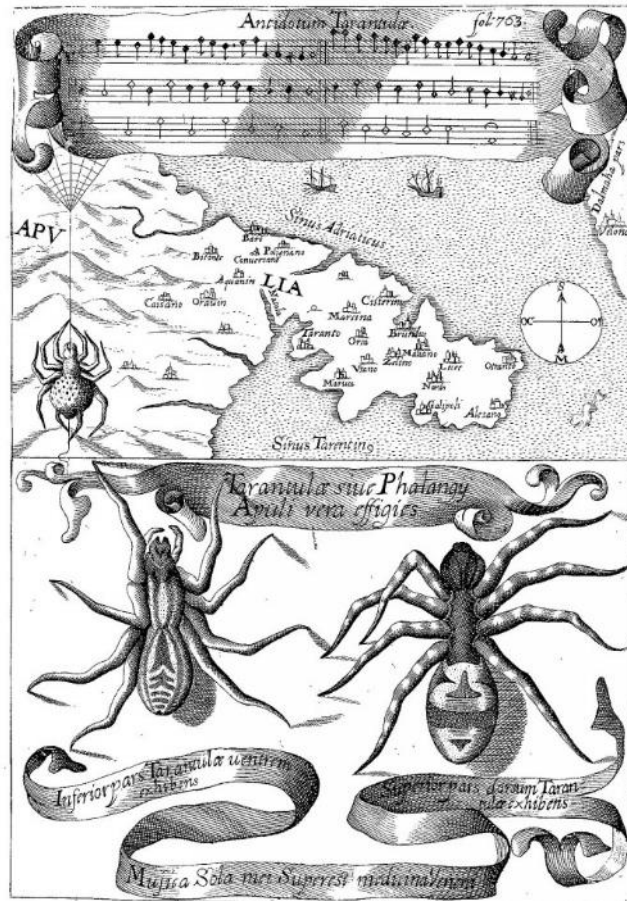
⁶¹⁰ Anon., *Eines weimarischen Medici mutmassliche Gedancken*, 43.

⁶¹¹ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*; Anon., *Eines weimarischen Medici mutmassliche Gedancken*, 37, 40-42.

made worse by their fear of vampires, a product of a fearful and insane imagination: fear blocked the pores of the sick and kept the unclean particles inside the body. As far as the occasional cause of the disease was concerned, the authors distinguished the two cases. In 1725 in Kisilova it was the legendarily bad Hungarian, marshy environment and the bad diet that caused the malign fever epidemic. This statement was basically a mainstream explanation of contagious diseases in the early modern era, which held that that epidemics may arise from rotting matter: bottom of the sea, depths of caves, battlefields and carcass pits and cemeteries. In this sense, the human body may become miasmatic, disease-causing

vapour, as well, but Fritsch and Stahl did not mention this and held the marshlands responsible. By contrast, the two physicians maintained that in the 1732 Medvedia case, the epidemic started from the woman, who ate of the flesh of a sick calf, which had died of an unknown disease or poisoning.

Meinig only focused on the Medvedia case and described a very similar idea about some form of poison which killed the cattle and subsequently, as people ate of the meat, it affected their imagination, making them imagine that vampires were attacking them. He supposed that the poison must have been similar to the kind of venom rabid dogs and tarantula spiders have, both of which make people get into a frenzy of a deranged imagination.⁶¹²



33 The musical notes to be played and danced to as an antidote to the bite of the tarantula spider in Athanasius Kircher's *Magnes* (1654)

⁶¹² Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 33–34, 38–39.

Contagious incubus by Johann C. Stock

Meinig's and Fritsch&Stahl's treatises both rejected the idea expounded by physician Johann Christian Stock, who understood the disease to be a specific, epidemic variation of the well-known incubus disease, during which humours and vapours generated within the body cause a suffocation and pressure-feeling on the chest and throat-area, while oppressing the imagination as well, this way causing fearsome visions.⁶¹³ The reason Stock's theory was rejected is that incubus itself was never known to be either fatal or contagious in nature, and they felt *incubus epidemica* was too much of a stretch.

Venomous snakes by the Relationis Historicae

The similarity of the violent frenzy following the bites of certain animals and the perceived attacks of vampires made several authors consider animals to be behind the vampire epidemic. One of the most direct explanations of the vampire epidemic with snake bites comes from the *Relationis Historicae*, a periodical which collected memorable and strange historical events.⁶¹⁴ The anonymous article relied on the first-hand experience of a certain trustworthy person, probably a member of the Jung-Daun regiment, stationed in Pozsega in Slavonia. He was apparently a member of a commission or rather one of the commanders of the regiment investigating a vampire case in a village near Pozsega. As described in Chapter II, this case was also a two-wave vampire epidemic, just like the one in Medvedia and started with a calf bitten and its blood sucked out by a vampire, which the anonymous informant identified as a local kind of snake. The corpse of the calf was found and cooked by a pandur, who then ate it with the family, all four of whom died in a short time. Locals disclosed that in 1721 vampires had already attacked people and urged the commissioners to unearth the four members of the family, who had only spent 20 days underground, and have them staked, burnt and the ashes thrown back into the grave. Locals were afraid that the snakes would find these corpses looking for nourishment and then would come to attack the living as well. The

⁶¹³ Johann Christian Stock, *Dissertatio physica de cadaveribus sanguisugis, von denen so genannten Vampyren oder Menschengaugern* (Leutenberg-Schwarzenburg, 1732).

⁶¹⁴ Anon., 'Zwölffter Haupt-titul. Von denckwürdig und seltsamen Begebenheiten'.

somewhat hazy storyline is another example of Habsburg officials trying and failing to understand the element of spreading in the dynamics of vampirism.



34: Detail of a leaflet from ca 1550, from Dilling

Based on this relation by the informant, the editor of the journal put forward the theory that it was some form of snake epidemic, where venomous snakes bit and sucked at the living and the dead, cattle and humans alike. That snakes eat corpses and suck blood was widely held by contemporary naturalists as well, and their central role in memento mori-descriptions has already been pointed out in Chapter I. That snakes would take abode inside corpses was accepted knowledge, Michael Ranfft used this idea to explain how come the chewing dead are often found swallowing their shrouds: it was snakes living in and consuming the corpse that crawled up through the throat and pulled the shroud in through the mouth.⁶¹⁵ That there can be some sort of a snake epidemic definitely was imaginable 200 years before, in the 1550s when the Hungarian town of Szikszó (Zichsa) was struck by a viper epidemic.⁶¹⁶ The vipers

⁶¹⁵ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, paras 36-43.

⁶¹⁶ Magyary-Kossa, *Magyar orvosi emlékek: Értekezések a magyar orvostörténelem köréből*, 2:108-109.

there however, were not attacking people from the outside, but were crawling out through their mouth from the inside, killing them in the process.

Mortuus mordet – murderous corpses

A second group of authors subscribed to the idea that the dead hajduks could have killed their fellow villagers from beyond the grave but differed substantially in the exact mechanics of this deadly connection.

Divine wrath by the Visum et Repertum's editor in Nürnberg

One of the first printed versions of the *Visum et Repertum* was published anonymously in Nuremberg, and the author sought to simply apply the epidemic-causing dead witch scenario without changes onto vampirism.⁶¹⁷ In the booklet, the short discussion following the *Visum et Repertum*, titled *Attachment about the munching and chewing of corpses in the grave*, is in most part an abridged version of Book I., Chapter 3. of Garmann's 1670 treatise on the same topic, complemented with further examples. The explanation was entirely based on Garmann and was the same as that given by the *Malleus Maleficarum* two hundred years before (see Chapter I). The scary sounds of chewing and fearsome apparitions around the graves were understood as the devil's trickery to plant fear into people's heart this way tossing them into superstition. The plague was not the work of witches, who could only cause harm in their lifetime ('a dead animal has no venom' - *Morta la bestia, morta il veleno*), but divine punishment because the authorities failed to prosecute the witch in her lifetime. The witches' corpse had to be exhumed and either burnt or buried outside the cemetery.⁶¹⁸ Importantly, the suggestion to burn the witches' corpse was not in order to stop the affliction, but as a punishment for the witches' sins. As it has been shown in Chapter I and III, this attitude had backing in both secular and ecclesiastical law: those who managed to avoid punishment during their lifetime were not worthy of a Christian, honourable burial and had to be removed from there

⁶¹⁷ Anon., *Visum et repertum, über die so genannten Vampirs*.

⁶¹⁸ Anon., 38-45.; Benetello and Herrmann, *Christian Friedrich Garmann: De miraculis mortuorum - Über die wunder [Dinge] der Toten.*, 40-41.

Given that the author based his discussion on the chewing dead literature, he rendered it practically useless for vampirism: the explanation of divine plague did not explain why victims of that plague would themselves become revenants. This framework only worked in the *Nachzehrer*/dead-witch-scenario, where it was enough to do away with the arch-witch to stop the affliction.

Plants infected by poisonous cadavers by Harenberg

Johann Christoph Harenberg,⁶¹⁹ a teacher in Gandersheim and in Braunschweig, published several works on vampires and ghosts.⁶²⁰ In 1753, together with Johann Friedrich Weitenkampf a philosopher from Königsberg they put together an explanation that in many ways resembled the putrefaction-based miasma theories widely accepted at the time, but gave it a twist in order to fit the evidence about vampires.⁶²¹ They argued that the most natural and reasonable possibility was that the deaths were caused by a contagious disease that got people into seeming death. It was Arnout Pavle who started the epidemic by eating from the poisoned soil of the grave and smeared himself with the corpse's poisoned blood. Later on, animals also ate from the infected ('*von den Ausdünstungen und subtilhauchenden Gift inficiert*') grass growing on the corpses' graves. In the end, the epidemic got stopped because the burning of the corpses stopped the vapours from rising and this way the cause of the epidemic was eliminated. It was known from plague times that making huge fires dissolved, separated, consumed the poisonous vapours.

In this view, the apparently contagious nature of the vampiric affliction could be explained by the constant reproduction of the deadly cycle: poisoned cadavers, poisoned plants, poisoned animals, poisoned living, poisoned cadavers. It was a logical conclusion that the poisoned cadavers had to be destroyed in order to break the cycle.

⁶¹⁹ Anja Lauper, 'Die "Phantastische Seuche". Johann Christoph Harenbergs Theoretisierung der vampiristischen Einbildungskraft', in *Dracula unbound. Kulturwissenschaftliche Lektüren des Vampirs*, ed. Christian Begemann, Britta Herrmann, and Harald Neumeyer (Berlin, Wien, 2008), 51–73.

⁶²⁰ Harenberg, *Vernünfftige und christliche Gedancken über die Vampirs oder Bluthsaugende Todten*; Johann Christoph Harenberg, *Wahrhafte Geschichte von Erscheinung Eines Verstorbenen in Braunschweig: Nebst Denen von Diesem Gespenste Gesamleten Nachrichten*. (Braunschweig, 1748); Johann Friedrich Weitenkampf and Johann Christoph Harenberg, *Johann Friederich Weitenkamps ... Gedanken über wichtige Wahrheiten aus der Vernunft und Religion* (Braunschweig, 1753).

⁶²¹ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 142–43.

Mumial poison by Gottlob H. Vogt

Gottlob Heinrich Vogt, a physician in Leipzig wrote a reaction to the Pietist *Documentary and Thorough Account's* proposition (see below) that the vampiric effects were caused by murderous astral spirits. The work is titled *Concise thoughts on the Documentary and Thorough Account about the vampires*.⁶²² In his view, which already contemporaries labelled as hazy, the real culprit was a contagious poison akin to that of rabid dogs, tarantulas or poisonous worms and snakes. Vogt made much of von Kottowitz's story about the vampire coming to torment the two brothers in the shape of a dog, which indicates that he thought the poison may have originated from some kind of animal. The poison in time would cause a kind of aggressive frenzy possibly involving actual bites. The poison in the end caused death as well as the lack of corruption of the cadaver.

This poison would be communicated from a dead person to a living one through a mumial connection which had been established between them during their lifetime. The Paracelsian concept of the *mumia* as a carrier of poison (as detailed in Chapter I.2.), meant a connection between two people's life spirits; the connection could ensure effects between the two people at a distance or even across the boundary of death. Vogt's mumial poison was in all likelihood a very similar idea to Belgrade military physician Haack's *magnetismus mumialis*, which concerned a family in Pétervárad, a fortified town in Slavonia, where father and son were so similar and so close to each other that as the former was dying, the connection between them dragged the son to the grave as well (Chapter II).⁶²³ Vogt brought up the analogy of the 'inclination of the minds between two people far from each other', the idea that people can affect each other's minds and emotions from a distance. He likened this effect to how animals can feel weather change ahead.⁶²⁴ It is certain, that in Vogt's view the extraction of blood in the form of life spirits from the victims could actually also have happened in the vampire cases through this sympathetic mumial connection. In support, he mentioned an unreferenced

⁶²² Vogt, *Kurtzes Bedencken von denen acten-maeßigen Relationen wegen derer Vampiren*.

⁶²³ Haack, 'Coerem magnetismi naturalis, sympathetico mumialis', 73r-76v.

⁶²⁴ Vogt, *Kurtzes Bedencken von denen acten-maeßigen Relationen wegen derer Vampiren*, 5r.

recent story of a woman, who was observed to be sweating blood, which purportedly also was drawn out of her through a sympathetic effect.⁶²⁵

Vogt's understanding of *mumia* as a sympathy-based connection, which could carry poisons was orthodox in the Paracelsian tradition, which however was already going out of fashion by the early eighteenth century. It is somewhat unclear how he understood the vampiric condition's contagious nature. What he meant was possibly that the same poison could wander from a dead person to a living one, killing that person and then moving on to yet another living person, with whom the second victim shared his own *mumia* during lifetime. Given that *mumia* in the traditional sense was based on blood connections, it is unclear how this framework would be able to explain the spread of vampirism outside blood relations, which in the Medvedia case evidently happened.

Lowly morals and wrathful spirits by Michael Ranfft and the Pietists

Several authors based their framework on the harmful activity of the third part. Apparently, it was especially popular among Pietist writer, but Michael Ranfft, a mainstream Lutheran also relied on this framework. However, just because the authors agreed on the identity of the vehicle of harm, did not mean that they agreed on the channel as well, or that they did not criticise each other.

Dangerous emotions by Michael Ranfft

Michael Ranfft, the deacon of Nebra also explained vampirism with the spirit and argued that tight connections between people can serve as channels of the harmful spirits of the dead. Not only the relatives and friends of the deceased can be targeted this way, but anyone, who right before the person's death had a tight connection (*eine grosse Gemeinschaft*) with him/her.⁶²⁶ This connection can be strong emotions, such as hate or passion-filled intentions. The exact mechanism is that upon dying, the person's imagination can imprint and corrupt effluvia of the body (also termed as vapour, force (*Kraft*) and idea (*Idee*)), which this way can take up a visible shape (*Vorstellungen, Erscheinungen und Bilder*) and is able to leave the

⁶²⁵ Vogt, 7r-v.

⁶²⁶ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 82, 153.

corpse.⁶²⁷ The corrupted vapours find their target through the mediation of the World Spirit, which connects all spiritual beings and substances in the world. and will strive for something similar, something analogous to themselves.

As the basis of all diseases of the imagination is intention and reception between bodies, the corrupted vapours imprinted with intentions is only one of the two necessary conditions of the harm taking effect: there has to be a recipient open to attracting the vapours exuded by the corpse. Though even innocent people can become murderers if in their last moments they imprint very strong passions on the spirits, in general, those in whom the soul is weaker, i.e., sinners and superstitious people are those, in whom the magical powers of the imagination are the strongest, and who are most likely to cause trouble after their death.⁶²⁸

In terms of curing the affliction, the practically-minded deacon advised pre-emptive, as well as post-factum solutions. First of all, all superstitious practices should be discarded and people should strive to get the dying person to reconcile with the living, make him forget all adversities, this way his imagination would not be able to work on the living. If this was not successful, and the affliction would start, the victim should try not to worry a lot about it, because all strong emotions are nutrition for the magical workings of the imagination. If this self-disciplining method also fails, then, and only then the corpse can be exhumed and destroyed.⁶²⁹

Ranfft was aware that his explanation was not the most up to date:

*'Given that spirits (Geister) are not fashionable anymore in philosophy, people also do not value those workings in nature, which are either derived from spirits or are linked to bodies (Körper), but are described or presented in a way that sounds spirit-like.'*⁶³⁰

Indeed, his treatise was mockingly criticized, not by other, mainstream Lutheran authors, but interestingly from the radical side, by the physician writing under the pseudonym W.S.G.E., who pronounced that Ranfft's book was the bigot work of a theologian trying to meddle in philosophy, who is interpreting Scripture too rigidly.⁶³¹ It has to be kept in mind that W.S.G.E.'s

⁶²⁷ Ranfft, 142–44, 148, 152–153.

⁶²⁸ Ranfft, 136–37, 146.

⁶²⁹ Ranfft, 156–57, 161.

⁶³⁰ Ranfft, 162.

⁶³¹ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation*, 47.

explanation to vampirism was an even more traditionalist than Ranfft's third-part idea: possession of corpses by the devil as a punishment for the superstitious, sinful life. As Michael Pickering has shown, W.S.G.E. was in fact pursuing a Pietist agenda in the sense that his proposed cure was directed at the moral development of people as a protection from harm.⁶³²

Dangerous ideas by the *Documentary and Thorough Account*

Other Pietists, however, explained vampirism in very similar terms as Ranfft did. The author of the *Documentary and Thorough Account* and the anonymous author of the *Geistliche Fama* were pursuing a Pietist agenda relied on the so-called third part or astral spirit theory in order to do this. The idea to link astral spirits to vampires in fact was first brought up by ensign von Kottowitz in his letter to the unknown Leipzig professor, and his letter became a major source and reference point for those seeking to argue for a spirit-related explanation to vampirism, as he told a story where a woman's dead husband came back from the dead and had intercourse with her, even impregnated her. For later Pietist discussants, the 'haunting' described by Kottowitz followed the ties between wife and husband: we don't know if these ties involved hatred, guilt or love or whether in fact, the woman was indifferent, but the story itself was fashioned already at the local level as witnessing strong bonds between them.

Kottowitz's letter was reprinted in the anonymous *Documentary and Thorough Account about the Vampires or Man-suckers*, the treatise that put forward the theory of astral-spirit related imprinting in the most detailed fashion.⁶³³ The author was a Leipzig professor and grudgingly reflected on what Ranfft also mentioned, namely that if anyone mentioned the third part (the astral spirit) in a learned environment, other scholars would instantly stigmatize him as a Papist (a Catholic), which is probably the reason why he wrote anonymously. Michael Pickering analysed the treatise to argue that references to the third part, the spirit was going out of fashion in the early German Enlightenment and that the real dividing line in the vampirism debate was not the physiological debates of the body-soul controversy, but

⁶³² Michael Pickering, 'The Significance of Diabolic Power in the Articulation of a Pietist Agenda in the Vampire "Debate", 1732-35', in *A World Enchanted: Magic and the Margins*, ed. Julie Davies and Michael Pickering (Parkville: Vic Melbourne Historical Journal Collective, 2014).

⁶³³ Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern*.

mainstream Lutherans against Pietists and Theosophers.⁶³⁴ Religious conviction naturally heavily influenced one's interpretation of vampirism, the toolkit with which one had to substantiate the arguments however was largely common: a toolkit of Protestant theology, medicine, physiology and emotions. This meant that even non-Pietists, such as Ranfft also could argue on a third-part basis.

The anonymous author's opinion about vampirism was the same as Ranfft's, it is just that the 'idea' imprinted on the dead person's spirit was not hatred or love, but that the person would become a vampire and will suck blood (i.e. spirit) from people, and this is what indeed happened. It is remarkable that (just like Ranfft), the *Documentary's* author also used the word 'idea' to describe the thing that was imprinted on the spirit, which added a kind of goal-orientedness, less linked to emotions than to a rational mind. The imprinted idea was only one necessary condition, while the other was that the living person's spirit needed to entice the dead person's spirit to itself, which happened between people who used to have strong commerce with each other during life. The sucking out of spirits was also deemed to be plausible and to those, who denied that spirits could be sucked out, he answered with a quote from Scripture: Job 6:4: '*For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.*' Finally, the author stated that executing the vampiric body might help ending the vampire epidemic. Once the body was destroyed, the house of the spirit was also destroyed, and the spirit decayed as well.

Wrathful ghosts by the *Geistliche Fama*

The *Geistliche Fama* gave the same monocausal explanation of vampirism based on Pietist ghost-studies, as the previous author of the *Documentary and Through Account*.⁶³⁵ He positioned himself between Popism (believing everything) and Bekker-style atheism (believing

⁶³⁴ Michael Pickering, 'Constructing the Vampire: Spirit Agency in the Construction of the Vampire in the Anonymous Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern (1732)', in *Unnatural Reproductions and Monstrosity: The Birth of the Monster in Literature, Film, and Media*, ed. Andrea Wood and Brandy Schillace (New York: Amherst, 2014), 69–88.

⁶³⁵ Johann Samuel Carl, ed., 'Abhandlung 2. Der Todten essen und trincken, oder von Vampyr's.', *Geistliche Fama: Mittheilend einige neuere Nachrichten von göttlichen Erweckungen / Wegen / Führungen / und Gerichten*. 1, no. 8. (1733): 37-39.

nothing), while distinguishing his views from Lutheranism and Calvinism as well. First of all, he stated that the bodies of those, who died a sudden death (*mors improvisa*), where the soul was suddenly, aggressively separated from the body decayed slower. As another side-effect, they died without sincerely atoning for their vain desires, and these desires did not get purged.⁶³⁶ Hence, the person's last desires remained there with the body in an 'astral-animal spirit' form that assumed an ideal (i.e. apparent, not real) bodily shape. The spirit would keep following that desire (be it greed, hate, love etc) as if it was some kind of hunger or thirst, entirely uncontrolled by reason and the soul.⁶³⁷

The author posited the existence of a variety of such spirits, some less, others more dangerous, depending on how much they were filled with murderous passions. There were for instance the apparitions guarding their treasure, who were driven by envy. A more dangerous threat was posed by the *Wilde Jagd's* angry ghosts. The tradition of the *Wütendes Heer* or *Wilde Jagd* had variations across European folklores and involved night-time flights of large groups of raging spirits, often armed with weapons, who brought destruction on their way.⁶³⁸ Their driving force in the *Gesitliche Fama's* view was wrath. The spirits' activity in general would consist of seeking lust and fear and could cause death by scaring people and by sucking out the life spirit. That the vampire-problem was so disastrously fatal is understandable in the author's view because it was linked to hajduk-areas, which were 'full of highwaymen, murderers, Gypsies, wizards etc.'⁶³⁹ The haunting could continue until their shell (the body), which gives these spirits a home, was destroyed.⁶⁴⁰

Possession through an epidemic of sin by W.S.G.E.

Another author, writing under the pseudonym W.S.G.E. in his *A Curious and Very Wonderful Account* diagnosed vampirism as the demonic possession of corpses.⁶⁴¹ The author, whom

⁶³⁶ Carl, 32.

⁶³⁷ Carl, 28-29.

⁶³⁸ Karl Meisen, *Die Sagen von wütenden Heer und wilden Jäger* (Münster, 1935); Niko Kuret, 'Die Zwölften und das wilde Heer in den Ostalpen', *Alpes Orientales* 7 (1975): 80–92; Éva Pócs, 'Kereszeteletlenek, zivatardémonok és az ördög', in *Népi vallásosság a Kárpát-Medencében III.*, ed. Mária L. Imre (Pécs, 2000), 45-57.

⁶³⁹ Carl, 'Abhandlung 2. Der Todten essen und trincken, oder von Vampyrs.', 30.

⁶⁴⁰ Carl, 30.

⁶⁴¹ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation*.

Ranfft suspected to be a physician from Halle⁶⁴² probably was a Pietist,⁶⁴³ possibly a *Theosopher*, for he quoted the above-discussed *Geistliche Fama*. The *treatise* rejected people who all the time referred to the powers of the imagination. The guilt-sadness-melancholy-death scenario, because this auto-suggestive imagination-chain was insufficient in explaining the epidemic proportions. It also did not explain the deaths of tiny children and old hags, who could not have been entangled in love relations that would have inspired guilt or sadness in them. He accused others of excessive naturalism, Balthasar Bekker-inspired devil-denial and idolatry of the imagination.

He ultimately located the devil as the culprit, who possessed corpses. W.S.G.E. argued that if the devil could have power over the living body, all the more power did he have on the corpse in order to scare the remaining living. The devil attacked these remote Serbian areas because the more remote, the less educated, the more superstitious a community was, the better playground it was for the devil. He called the phenomenon epidemic soul-contagion (*epidemische Seelen-Seuche*), because it was the sinners whom the devil targeted most of all. Destroying the corpses was horrible but could actually work as a solution, because God only gave permission to the devil to use that particular body (probably also linked to its sinful life, for the devil dwelled in physical and moral corruption) and thus would not necessarily allow him to possess another corpse. The devil possessing a corpse was a fairly archaic stance in a Protestant learned environment, and out of the theories reviewed so far, this sounded like the most out-of-place in the 1730's in the Holy Roman Empire. The mainstream Lutheran attitude at the time held that thanks to divine Providence, the devil's powers ceased upon death.

What of German vampires?

If indeed there were ways in which those Serbian corpses could kill the living and possibly turn them into vampires, then there was a fairly disturbing but logical consequence to consider. Is it possible that good Protestant members of German high society could also become victims

⁶⁴² Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 254.

⁶⁴³ Pickering, 'The Significance of Diabolic Power in the Articulation of a Pietist Agenda in the Vampire "Debate", 1732-35'.

to this strange epidemic? Some of the explanations to the vampiric affliction entailed that German urban dwellers were not safe from Serbian vampire attacks: devilish influence, malevolent imagination/spirits, the mummial poison and the extra-bodily powers of emotions *could* function as channels of death in a 1730's German noble and university environment as well. While the vampire stories were certainly a mix of entertainment and curiosity, and curiosity is the greatest enemy of fear, a hint of fear is still detectable.

In his treatise, W.S.G.E. mentioned the anxious questions he kept receiving about the reality of the danger of vampiric attacks:

'Anxious women begged me for the love of God to tell them whether these appalling visitors, and horrible vampires would come to us as well?'

As cited above, he also mentioned that the vampire topic appeared in discussions in two functions: spreading fear among people and being the Golden Apple of Discord.⁶⁴⁴ He also openly posed the question whether the Germans were in danger, too, and though he underlined that so far the phenomenon was confined to the borders, he added that since the devil was behind the phenomenon, one could never be entirely safe. The manuscript *Notes* of the three Prussian academics, Jablonski, Frisch and Buddeus as a thought experiment also targeted this anxiety whether vampirism could somehow spread to the high classes as well and concluded that everyone should relay, because so far it has always remained among the poor and undereducated.

That at least part of high society was afraid of vampires, or of becoming a vampire was also indicated by Demelius, a cleric in Saxe-Weimar, who ended his short discussion by praying to God that he would

*'protect us from all such aberrations of nature in life, as well as grant our bodies in death a gentle rest in the ground.'*⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁴ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation*, 16.

⁶⁴⁵ Silberschmidt and Silberschmidt, *Von den blutsaugenden Toten, oder philosophische Schriften der Aufklärung zum Vampirismus*, 123.

Summary

Regardless of the framework they were proposing, all contributors agreed that the environment from which the *Visum et Rerptum* came was ignorant and superstitious. This did not mean however, that they could easily explain the contents recorded in the report. Vampirism was an interesting challenge for them to exercise their views on various topics from body-spirit-soul relations to theological matters. The vampiric affliction was especially challenging because of the element of the contagious quality of the condition and because of the asymptomatic syndrome which the victims exhibited.

Facing the unusual vampiric syndrome, authors, who wished to sever the link between the dead and the living had several options: 1) posit a hitherto unknown disease, such as the hajduk plague; 2) suppose the synchronic presence of several existing diseases, such as the incubus and quartan and tertian malign fevers; 3) bend existing pathologies, as in the case of the *incubus epidemica*; 4) shift the explanation from the field of medicine to the animal world, as in the case of the snake epidemic.

The other group, who did (at least partially) blame the harmful effects on the dead also had to work hard if they wanted to explain the contagiousness of the vampiric condition. Not all of them wanted to, of course: the editor of the first printed version of the *Visum et Repertum* did not make this effort and did not comment on the discrepancies between the traditional epidemic-causing dead witch scenario and the report. There were contributors who were looking for poisons circulating between the dead and the living: some imagined a mumial sympathy channelling it from the dead to the living, while others constructed a food chain with plants and domestic animals as intermediaries of the poison. There were several authors, and not only Pietists, who relied on spirit imprinting, and came up with different channels. In one formulation, it was the very last emotion upon death which would get imprinted on the spirit, which killing the target would inflict a similarly grave emotional impact on him/her, who would then continue the harm. Another option was to suppose that it was the idea of becoming a vampire that would get engraved deeply on to the spirit, and in this case the multiplication of vampires was not imagined as a sequence, but as an endemic, where common ideas and fears would affect many people simultaneously. That many authors relied

on the third part is probably because this framework needed the least amount of tinkering for it to be adapted to vampirism.

Lowly morals became instrumental element in the channel of the harmful effect especially in the spirit-based explanations, because even though even innocent people could become killer spirits most frequently it were those in whom the soul was weaker: in sinners and superstitious people the rational, Christian soul would have difficulties controlling the powers of the imagination. While Protestant German contributors thought of themselves as morally and intellectually higher than Orthodox Rascians, all the frameworks allowing links between the dead and the living had the potential to raise anxieties about a vampiric epidemic in the Holy Roman Empire.

Perhaps surprisingly, apart from the authors influenced by the Prussian Academy, all authors agreed that the execution of cadavers could have a therapeutic effect. In the case of spirit-, mumial sympathy-, and poison-based theories it was logical that the destruction of the source of the harmful matter/substance would end the problem. In the case of the demonic possession epidemic, the hope that God only gave permission for the devil to possess certain corpses and not others suggested that it was worth trying to annihilate the possessed dead, even if destroying the demon itself was impossible. In the scenario of God being angered by a non-convicted witch, the execution only of one corpse was warranted, which had been at the crux of the problem on Moravian-Silesian border as well (Chapter III).

Significantly, however, the execution could be warranted even within frameworks that rejected the idea of the harmful dead: 1) if venomous snakes indeed lived inside and fed on cadavers, the destruction of the body would kill the snakes as well and 2) even if the disease was a natural epidemic, the decreasing of fear and terror could warrant the execution of the dead for the sake of the living, as a kind of placebo effect.

V.3. Corpus delicti: Proving vampires

The clamorous entry of the *Visum et Repertum* into learned circles served as an inspiration to reconsider existing frameworks of the harmful dead, at the same time, the participants of the debate themselves had no first-hand experience with vampires, and apart from a few notable exceptions, they did not seem to be enthusiastic about remedying this situation. This attitude in turn raised questions about the general reliability and credibility of historical tradition. The problem of textual versus empirical evidence had already been being discussed in several disciplines from Bible scholarship through anatomy to alchemy-chemistry and often appeared as a controversy between the ancients and the moderns. The comparative anatomical approach in addition, intrigued those interested in the natural philosophy of putrefaction and drew attention to the lack of relevant empirical evidence in the field. Finally, since Flückinger's report presented the vampire as a forensic fact, it also raised questions about the nature of evidence in ecclesiastical and secular law and how it compared to evidence in natural philosophy.

Following brief preliminary remarks on the difficulties of gathering evidence, this subchapter presents the novel and creative vampire research projects which were put forward by certain practical-minded learned discussants, and which involved a variety of chemical, anatomical and ethnographic experiments and observations. The second section by contrast presents the debates that emerged around trusting textual evidence: historical tradition and second-hand reports. First, I analyse two extreme points of view, namely, Johann C. Mening (alias Putoneus) who was inspired by the Prussian Academy, and the radical Pietist *Gesitliche Fama*. Second, the evidentiary value of the *Visum et Repertum* will be compared to that of earlier reports.

Negotiating evidence

There were five new documents about the figure of the vampire that stirred up the still water of early modern learned revenant discourse: Frombald's 1725 report, Glaser's report, the Flückinger-commission's *Visum et Repertum*, ensign Kottowitz's letter and Glaser's father's letter. Even though it left Belgrade and Vienna as well, Glaser's report was somehow lost in translation and apparently never made it to publicity. The two letters mostly only served as

additional information for certain authors and had a substantially lower credibility than the two official reports, not the least because in contrast to those, they provided data only second-hand. Out of Frombald's and Flückinger's reports, the latter was the main focus of interest: it was more detailed, it was attested by no less than five commissioners, it was supported by Prince Charles Alexander's personality and finally, it combined a legal and a medical approach. Its official nature lent it credibility, the comparative dissections were of interest for naturalists, while the folkloric content incited theologians and historians. This constellation gave the learned a lot to talk about.

Those who in the end ventured to publish an opinion had to position themselves within several charged polemics of the time: the religio-political strife between the various confessions of the Holy Roman Empire, the (at least at a rhetorical level) omnipresent opposition between 'ancients' and 'moderns', as well as debates within their own tighter disciplines and institutional communities. The unusual corpse was a discourse that spanned several disciplinary fields: theology, medicine/natural philosophy, law and history. Many contemporary authors recognised this, and regardless of their own affiliations, mobilized evidence and arguments offered by different disciplines. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, establishing methods of trustworthy observation and reconsidering the trust put into historical tradition (the *fides historica*) was a topical issue for several disciplines.

In history writing, working out better methods to glean truth from the sources was of special interest, and the matter surfaced with especial acuteness in discussions about the application of historical criticism to dogmatic tradition.⁶⁴⁶ In theology, the early modern demonological genre of the discernment of spirits was developing in the eighteenth century into a natural history of superstition, in which credible observations were of paramount importance.⁶⁴⁷ Archaeology was also getting more and more into the spotlight as it was digging into Biblical times.

⁶⁴⁶ Walter Sparr, 'Von der „fides Historica“ zur „historischen Religion“ die zweideutigkeit des Geschichtsbewußtseins der theologischen Aufklärung', *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 8, no. 3 (1985): 147-160.; Anthony Grafton, 'The Identities of History in Early Modern Europe: Prelude to a Study of the Artes Historicae', in *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 2005), 41-74.

⁶⁴⁷ Van Damme, 'Legitimizing Natural History of Superstitions: Historicizing, Documenting and Politicizing the Haunting Geographies of Europe'.

In medicine and natural philosophy, the rise in the value of chemical and physiological experimental evidence on the one hand and astronomical, zoological, botanical observations on the other as opposed to textual authority spurred discussions on the proper documentation of observations and experiments. In law, stricter and stricter standards of witnessing were deployed as people with conflicts of interests were excluded from testifying, and the value of sworn witnessing was on the decrease as opposed to the rise of expert evidencing and physical proof in trials.⁶⁴⁸ In general, standards of reliable and truthful documentation, representation and illustration were being worked out so that the depicted objects would appear in a more and more detached, less and less artistic way, peeling off details considered unimportant.

These interests and anxieties of the various disciplines about finding reliable evidence were touched by the report on Serbian vampires. Those who engaged with the incoming accounts on vampires had to subject them to tests of trustworthiness. This process ideally involved three important steps. First, the veracity of the report had to be verified, because if the report is fictitious, there is nothing to talk about. Second, following the sober attitude of the Prussian academics, facts had to be freed from interpretation in order to have an unbiased look at the empirical information. And third, explanation(s) had to be found to the facts, that would satisfyingly account for the observations. In practice, there were obvious difficulties: the lack of contact with the original authors and witnesses of the report, and the differences in the ontological-theological frameworks of the various authors.

Establishing the report's veracity could have required the discussants to go on site to Serbia and carry out their own observations, to talk to members of the commission and the local administration. Since they did not have the means, authority and willingness to do this, the veracity to a large extent hinged on trust. Prince Charles Alexander's social standing of course lent an enormous boost to the credibility of the report, but there still were some learned, who thought it was fictitious. Collecting and relying on second-hand observations had centuries-old traditions among natural philosophers. However, in the context of the early Enlightenment

⁶⁴⁸ Brian P. Levack, 'Witchcraft and the Law', in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 468–84.

debates about the value of empirical evidence, observations on such a novel, wondrous phenomenon, made the document's trustworthiness an especially acute problem.

In case the report's veracity was accepted, the authors had to draw the line between the surgical commission's sensory experiences and the various layers of interpretation attached to them. This posed serious difficulties even while analysing the forensic descriptions of the corpses, because many participants suspected that the surgeons got under the influence of local fears and superstitions, and this distorted their observations. The peeling off of interpretation was even more difficult when it came to the vampire disease and the witness accounts of night-time vampire attacks, because the discussants had no means to check whether the witnesses really experienced what they say they did, whether they imagined it or were simply lying about it.

Experimenting on vampires

Already in his two dissertations about the chewing dead, occasioned by Frombald's 1725 vampire report, Michael Ranfft reflected on the major epistemological problem most learned debaters faced: they themselves had never actually seen revenants or unusual dead of any kind, and they were forced to rely on examples at second hand.⁶⁴⁹ The three scholars of the Prussian Academy in their manuscript *Notes* likewise addressed the same problem by stating that the natural causes of the vampire-experience had not yet been researched well enough. In the 1734 version of his text, as a comment on the surfacing of the Flückinger-commission's report, Ranfft openly addressed the problem that the contemporary learned community would not respect treatises that were not founded on empirical data:

*'I can easily understand why, in the eyes of the learned dealing with such matters [the returning dead] counts as bad taste. Today's world requires pure sensory experiments and mathematical demonstrations. Given that these cannot be carried out when one treats such a subtle matter, which is tied to clearly hidden things, people do not hold it in any particular esteem.'*⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁹ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 20, 23–25, 151.

⁶⁵⁰ Ranfft, 162.

Still, on one occasion, Ranfft himself showed his familiarity with this empiricist requirement by mentioning a way to test the devil's powers, even though it is unclear whether he himself carried it out, or just learned about it from someone. When stating that the devil only has limited power to manipulate matter in the physical world, he gave the example of the demonic illusion of levitating objects and people, an apparition which could easily be dispelled by directing light at it:

*'It is true that sometimes the apparition enters through the person's outer senses, in particular in case the spirit lifts a body into the air, which is only an appearance of a body. In this case however it is always so, that if one comes closer to it with a light, it disappears by itself.'*⁶⁵¹

Sensory experiments on occult workings were supported by a long tradition of natural magicians as well as empiricist natural philosophers. The attracting power of the loadstone or the Moon were repeatable and observable forces, and in the seventeenth century several occult phenomena were given a mainstream natural explanation with the help of empiricism, such as Francesco Redi's experiments in the 1660s disproving spontaneous generation.⁶⁵² Experiments on demonic influence were also conceivable, the early modern demonological texts are rich in such tests. Such was the trope often cited in the witchcraft-sceptic tradition about the experiment with the witches' flight, in which a judge or a priest observed as the witch, who claimed that she would be flying to the sabbath simply collapsed on the floor unconscious instead of going anywhere.⁶⁵³ Witchcraft trials and cases of demonic possession also gave occasion to carry out tests to discern possible supernatural involvement, such as searching for the devil's mark on the bodies of accused witches at court proceedings or addressing questions in Latin to demoniacs.

The Baconian empiricist trend in natural philosophy was strongest in Britain and the Dutch Republic, but it had its own, less radical variant in the eighteenth-century German early Enlightenment as well.⁶⁵⁴ The importance of observation and experiment was acknowledged and mathematical calculation (championed by Kepler, Galilei and Newton among others) was similarly encouraged. The division of philosophy from theology was supported, but it was

⁶⁵¹ Ranfft, 35.

⁶⁵² Redi, *Esperienze intorno alla generazione degl'insetti*.

⁶⁵³ Julian Goodare, *The European Witch-Hunt* (London & New York: Routledge, 2016), 73.

⁶⁵⁴ Lange, 'Wissenschaftsoptimismus und Demutsfrömmigkeit. Daniel Ernst Jablonskis "Mittelweg" im Zeichen von Frühaufklärung und Pietismus.'

emphasised not to understand reason to be superior to belief. A further aspect important from the perspective of the vampire discussions was setting this-worldly happiness as an aim of its own right, that is, not as a means to achieve otherworldly benefits. It was often maintained that God's aim was *Glückseligkeit*, and the duty of natural philosophy and theology was to support this aim. It followed that the sciences should be useful (*nützlich*) in the sense of serving the general development of humankind towards happiness. This ideology is a key to understand why the moderate Enlightenment did not endorse *l'art pour l'art* scientific research, such as inquiring into the dynamics of human bodily putrefaction. While knowledge about the living and diseased body had a very clear utility, corpse decay did not promise any direct gains in the achievement of happiness. At the rhetorical level there was a rift between the extremes of materialism (Spinozism, atheism) and animism, as well as between humanist-erudition and empirical knowledge production, but in practice, most scholars saw themselves as being in between.

In the vampire debate the empiricist pressure Michael Ranfft was talking about is in fact not easily identifiable. While all discussants cite observations of undecayed bodies and unusual events related to human corpses, experimental results are largely missing. The in-text references to experiments in general are fairly scarce, though some of the authors do cite works containing naturalist experiments by Leuwenhoek and chemical-chemist ones by Daniel Sennert, Robert Fludd or Paracelsus in order to bolster their natural philosophical arguments.⁶⁵⁵

The epistemological difficulty of not having revenants at hand in Ranfft's view had an important consequence: it was impossible to prove what the true causes behind the particular Kisilova and Medvedia revenant cases were. The best one hope for is assessing possibilities, that is, whether such and such a causation could *in theory* have happened or not. The aim of his treatise hence was only to prove the existence of the phenomenon (that there can be a connection between the deaths and the non-rotting corpses), and to venture hypotheses about its possible causes.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁵ Kramer, 'Cogitationes de vampyris serviensibus'; Anon., 'Ut absolvamus, quam spec. XXX. p. 238. Abrupimus, illam anonymi explicationem phenomeni...'; A detailed description of Robert Fludd's experiments is given in: Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern*, 27-29.

⁶⁵⁶ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 151.

It was the conflict between two of the discussants, the Lutheran deacon Michael Ranfft and an anonymous physician writing under the pseudonym W.S.G.E. that got thematized along the lines of modern empiricism versus traditional bookish learning. W.S.G.E. is one of the few participants of the debate whose treatise contained references to authors of the British empiricist tradition like John Locke and Robert Boyle and to the demon-sceptic Thomas Hobbes.⁶⁵⁷ He criticized Ranfft's 1728 dissertation as the unfortunate result of a theologian trying to write philosophy, deploying Scriptural locations and theological arguments in a bigot way.⁶⁵⁸ Ranfft countered in his 1734 treatise by labelling W.S.G.E. an empiricist, a cheap quack who scorned all theory and being ignorant of the forces of nature based everything on experience.⁶⁵⁹ Based on his style of writing, Ranfft supposed that W.S.G.E. was a physician from Halle. In this sense, the conflict between the two represented the opposition between their institutional backgrounds and their target audiences' tastes: the University of Leipzig (where Ranfft defended his dissertation) had a more traditional attitude, whereas the young Prussian university's spirit was more committed to modern, often radical reform ideas.

Among the discussants it was only a select few who came up with actual tests to be carried out on the supposed vampires. Johann Harenberg, rector of a school in Saxony-Meiningen formulated brief pieces of advice in this direction. He called for a detailed description of the vampire disease, a suggestion that surfaced in almost all the treatises. As pointed out in Chapter II, Flückinger's report did not contain much information about the disease because it had already been detailed by quarantine physician Glaser. Harenberg in addition advised to place the corpses identified as vampires into the open air and monitor if they decayed or not. In contrast with the author of the *Letter from a good friend* cited below, Harenberg would prohibit people from smearing themselves with the vampire's blood 'just to stay on the safe side' and he would also ban people from consuming overdosed amounts of opium and tales about vampires in order to see if they get cured this way or not.⁶⁶⁰

It was one of the earliest printed reactions to the Flückinger report, the anonymous *Letter from a good friend* that developed a full-scale experimental research project on vampires.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁷ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation*, 59, 71, 87, 116.

⁶⁵⁸ W.S.G.E., 47.

⁶⁵⁹ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 234.

⁶⁶⁰ Harenberg, *Vernünftige und christliche Gedancken über die Vampirs oder Bluthsaugende Todten*, 116.

⁶⁶¹ Anon., *Schreiben eines guten Freundes an einen andern guten Freund, die Vampyren betreffend de dato 26. martii 1732; samt einer Beylage fernerer Gutachtens.*, 8.; Anon., 'Epistola ab amico ad amicum de vampyris',

The author was a physician and stated right at the outset, that at this point he did not see reasons to suppose witchcraft was involved in the matter, but constantly commented on the need for more information. He understood the affliction as a natural epidemic, whose devastating nature was strengthened by the powers of the fearful, superstitious imagination of the local population. As a very practical-minded author, he suggested simple experiments akin to those proposed by surgeons and physicians working Banat on site in Moravia and the, such as surgeon Benedict Kuhn's idea of establishing a revenant crypt in 1727 (Chapter III.3.) or surgeon Georg Tallar's experiments in the 1750s (Chapter VI.2.). The holistic nature of the research program took the affliction seriously and involved anatomy, chemistry and ethnography as well. The *Letter from a good friend* presented the project's aims in eight points:

- 1) gather details about Rascian burial customs, the presence or absence of a coffin, the depth of the grave etc.
- 2) exhume corpses not suspected of vampirism and examine them for signs of decay
- 3) exhume 'real vampires' (*würkliche Vampyren*) leave them unburied and check if they decay over time
 - a. this way people could easily help themselves to the blood of the vampire and to the soil of its grave they need for healing purposes
 - b. trick locals into believing that the vampire was burnt and see if they get cured
- 4) examine the vampire corpses and check their stomach and chest cavity to see where the blood broke through the tissue
- 5) describe the disease thoroughly
- 6) conduct a full anatomical dissection (*anatomica sectio*), not just a body opening (*extispicium*)
- 7) carry out a chemical analysis of the vampire's blood (*per reagentia & analysie*)
- 8) collect historical examples to understand
 - a. whether it is true that only Rascians are afflicted?
 - b. how often do such epidemics (*Seuche*) occur?
 - c. whether cattle can also be vampires of other cattle, or only human vampires can attack cattle?
 - d. whether this epidemic is so frequent, that the new vampires always emerge (*erstehen*) from a previous wave of vampires?
 - e. whether there are any other ways of becoming a vampire? If not, then one could just execute all corpses in the cemetery and solve the vampire-problem for ever.

Much of the project entails naturalist-medical experiments and observation. Suggestions 4, 5 and 6 are medical ones relying on anatomy and the semiology of disease symptoms. The full anatomical dissection is proposed to especially focus at the digestive tract, probably in order to determine how did the fresh blood get into the corpse of the vampire. In this sense the suggestion to dissect the cavities is very similar: it had to be ascertained whether or not the blood got there by breaking through some inner tissue or from the outside.

Other tests (numbers 2 and 3) aim at testing the logics of local belief and the possible role of imagination. The chemical analysis of the blood shows familiarity with current trends in iatrochemistry and is especially interesting because the author himself was admittedly ignorant in chemistry. It is noteworthy how much trust the author puts into the efficiency of local healing methods. He readily accepts that the eating of soil and the smearing of blood as well as the beheading of vampires are possibly efficient cures to the affliction. This is because he strongly believed in the powers of imagination in both causing and curing afflictions, what today we would call placebo-effect.

Another part of the project (points 1 and 8) targets ethnographic and historical information, a suggestion which shows that most authors, even physicians assigned an important role to historical examples. His thorough commitment to finding a solution to the problem is shown by his wish to fully understand local beliefs about vampiric cattle and ways to become a vampire. Even though the author cites Erasmus Francisi, the *Böhmische Chronik* and Garmann in the beginning of his text, he proposes to gather more descriptions of vampiric epidemics for comparative purposes. The author of the *Letter from a good friend* received an answer to this part of his call from the editor of the journal *Commercium Litterarium* where the Latin translation of his letter was published on 28th May. The journal editor interjected into his text a reference to an earlier vampire-themed article in the journal, which described the unfortunate events in Merul, in the Wallachian part of the Banat, where in 1717-1718 a similar affliction killed no less than eighty people.⁶⁶² The editor this way meant to indicate that apparently not only Rascians, but Wallachians were also affected by the mysterious affliction.

The anonymous author of the *Letter from a good friend* had a practice-oriented mindset, but still thought it was important to collect earlier accounts, which is an attitude markedly

⁶⁶² Anon., 'Epistola ab amico ad amicum de vampyris', 176.

different from that of the physician-jurist Meining (Putoneus) for instance. Putoneus also wished that certain experienced physicians would properly investigate the vampire matter but was much more confident in the outcome. Such a hypothetical investigation carried out by physicians would bring a very much desired end to the whole issue by proving what (in his view) was already known: that there was nothing in the vampire business that could not be explained by natural causes.⁶⁶³

The author writing as W.S.G.E. represented a third approach to the vampire problem, namely a demonic possession of corpses, but he was also concerned with the little knowledge the learned had of the circumstances. He proposed further vampire-research especially into the moral state of Rascian population, as this was what was luring the devil to those remote lands in order to wreak havoc among the dead and the living.⁶⁶⁴ The research was supposed to focus on the following questions. First, the spiritual state of locals: were they Orthodox, Muslim or Catholic? Did their priests study philosophy? Did they die in strong emotions? In anger? Did only relatives, enemies or loved ones become vampires? And importantly:

'In what kind of spiritual (Gemüt), mental (Bewandtniss), emotional (Affect), hateful, inimical or unforgiving state did they die? [...] And what kinds of people become vampires, only relatives, or enemies as well? The pious or the sinful? Or is there any difference in that?'

Fides historica: Experiences at second hand

Given their lack of direct experience with any kind of unusual dead, the learned had to juxtapose the fresh reports about the Serbian vampire with a large corpus of earlier accounts about the dead who refused to decay for some reason. This corpus involved various forms and genres: ancient, medieval and early modern, religious texts, historical chronicles, natural histories, private communications, observations, travel narratives, legal documents, collections about the marvels of the dead and about historical curiosities and many others. The cited texts can be placed on a spectrum of directness, in which at one end there were accounts generated by the very person who carried the observation out, while at the other

⁶⁶³ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 48.

⁶⁶⁴ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation*.

end we find texts that were so far from the original empirical source that they were practically only tropes. Contemporary debates about the trustworthiness of empirical and historical observations made the authors' choices of which source to rely on a polemical decision.

On the one hand, most participants of the vampire debate valued first-hand reports, as these promised direct information on the state of the corpses. Whenever they relied on a first-hand account, they would usually emphasise its credibility, especially so if they knew the source of the information personally or if this source was a respectable person. On the other hand, this did not mean that they would necessarily reject citing non-first-hand reports, or that they would always try to go *ad fontes* as much as possible. The overwhelming majority of cited accounts in fact came from a handful of collections of already second- or third-hand reports, such as the books on the unusual dead by Kornmann, Garmann, Rohr or other collections of wonderful events, like Zeiler's work.⁶⁶⁵ The evaluation of these books was a matter of contention.

The accounts of unusual dead referenced in the vampire treatises belonged to two main groups that cut through genres and historical eras: 1) undecayed bodies without revenant ideas attached to them and 2) undecayed bodies which were unearthed because of a local community's suspicion of revenantism. Curiously, the discussants' attitude to these two kinds of observations was very different. Usually, number 1) was respected and quoted without an analysis of trustworthiness by everyone, while number 2) was more often subjected to credibility-checks and especially among physicians often questioned.

By and large, choosing accounts depended on how well the given account served the author's agenda. They were looking for good narratives that would illustrate their point and it did not really matter whether the account was first or second hand, whether it was recent or old or whether the observation happened in the context of a revenant execution or not. As an illustration of the extent to which the various authors' agendas influenced their treatment of

⁶⁶⁵ Kornmann, *De miraculis mortuorum*; Garmann, *De miraculis mortuorum libri tres*; Rohr, *Dissertatio historico-philosophica de masticatione mortuorum*; Martin Zeiler, *Theatrum Tragicum oder des Herrn Franzen, von Rosset wunderliche und traurige Geschichte* (Tübingen, 1628).

reports, I will compare the attitudes of two discussants: the Halle-trained physician and lawyer Putoneus and the anonymous author of the radical Pietist journal, the *Geistliche Fama*.⁶⁶⁶

The devil in the detail? Putoneus and the Geistliche Fama

Johann Christoph Meinig (d.1740) was lawyer and mathematician (i.e. engineer) in Leipzig. He published several works under the pseudonym Putoneus, such as a 67-volume legal advice series, a treatise on artillery technology and a description of a certain kind of sea-worms doing great damage to dams in the Netherlands.⁶⁶⁷ Apart from law and engineering, he was also knowledgeable in medicine, since he earned his first degree in medicine at the University of Halle in 1715. His connections to the reform university of Halle are indicated by his vampire treatise's heavy reliance on the Prussian Academy's *Opinion*.

For Putoneus, the evaluation of all first-hand accounts had to be based on a proper legal-historical investigation of all circumstances in order to rule out the known natural and human factors that could distort the truth.⁶⁶⁸ Most importantly, the witnesses had to be investigated for credibility: their social standing, gender, age and religious affiliation. Putoneus at this point did not detail their values in terms of credibility, but later on it becomes obvious that the lower the social standing and the older the person is, the less credibility can one lend to their word, while non-Protestants and women are in general not very trustworthy. In addition, several further aspects needed to be checked, which Putoneus denoted in legal Latin terms: the place (*ratione loci*), the time (*temporis*), and the people to whom the event happened (*personarium*), as well as the possible interests of the parties involved. All this was needed, he explained, because even one thousand witnesses, who swore that they saw something unnatural could be mistaken.

⁶⁶⁶ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*; Carl, 'Abhandlung 2. Der Todten essen und trincken, oder von Vampyrs.'

⁶⁶⁷ Putoneus, *Grund-lehren der Artillerie, in welchen, nach der heut zu Tage üblichen attaque derer Festungen, das Geschütze als Stücke Mörser und Petarden nicht allein auf das gründlichste Beschrieben, sondern auch deren Nutzen und Gebrauch klärlich gezeuget wird* (Leipzig, Frankfurt, 1723); Putoneus, *Enunciata et consilia juris unterschiedener Rechts-gelehrten, berühmter Facultaeten und Schöppenstühle*, vol. 53, 67 vols (Leipzig: Heinsius, 1732).

⁶⁶⁸ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 18.

As an example of a proper investigation, Putoneus gave a several-pages-long description about the debunking of a fraudulent demoniac woman, who had spent huge efforts trying to convince people of her bewitchment and possession. The woman at first managed to trick the local court investigating her, consisting of a priest, several court members, a notary and a surgeon, but was found to be a fraud after an imperial commission examined her. They found out that she was sticking needles, nails, pieces of hair, fur and rags into parts of her body and into her wounds in order to make them seem as if they were planted or shot there by witches and/or demons. She was also found to have been scratching lime from the walls and putting it into her mouth in order to make it foam. And finally, that she had been exercising hard to be able to raise herself in bed as if she was lifted by unseen spirits.⁶⁶⁹ The trials were staged by the commission members, who did various tests on her, such as placing her on the floor, instead of the bed, thereby showing that her wondrous rising was only possible if she was able to steady her feet against the foot of the bed. One of the commissioners stuck nails into his own arm without consequences to show that she herself could have done the same.

When applying these criteria of a thorough investigation to the vampire reports (which he called ‘relations’ and ‘histories’), Putoneus concluded that it cast doubt on the whole story and made the ‘fides historica’ suspicious.⁶⁷⁰ In this particular sentence, he was primarily referring to the *Visum et Repertum*’s lack of credibility, but if one looks at his work in its entirety, it becomes strikingly visible that Putoneus did not cite a single historical account in which a corpse was exhumed because of an accusation of revenantism. The complete disregard of revenant-related historical tradition is followed, just like in the case of the three Prussian academics (Jablonski, Frisch and Buddeus), by an exclusive focus on legal-medical criticism and explanation of the vampire phenomenon. It is likely that Meinig’s reasons for not reciting such examples was similar to that of the Prussian academics: he was afraid that by repeating them he would inadvertently have perpetuated superstition and risked being labelled superstitious himself. Twenty years later, a French cleric, and author of a definitive vampire treatise, Augustin Calmet was accused of the same mistake.⁶⁷¹

⁶⁶⁹ Putoneus, 18-22.

⁶⁷⁰ Putoneus, 22-25.

⁶⁷¹ Van Damme, ‘Legitimizing Natural History of Superstitions: Historicizing, Documenting and Politicizing the Haunting Geographies of Europe’.

Meinig's only references to previous observations of undecayed corpses are about cases where the bodies were not suspected of revenantism.⁶⁷² These references he actually plagiarized from Michael Ranfft's 1728 philosophical dissertation and accepted all of them as truthful without even the slightest attempt at source criticism. Following an ancient example derived from Plutarch come the wonderfully well-preserved corpses of two prominent Catholic figures, Pope Boniface VIII and Emperor Charles V. Carrying out a strict scrutiny of the possible interests involved in the creation of these accounts would likely have resonated in Meinig's intended Protestant audience. The complete disregard of historical accounts of revenants and the unconditional acceptance of these accounts of undecayed but innocent corpses in fact contradicts the strict legal-historical examination which according to Meinig all historical accounts should be subjected to.

In his criticism of the *Visum et Repertum*'s trustworthiness, even though unreferenced, Meinig's text again extensively relied on the Prussian Academy's *Opinion*.⁶⁷³ He stated that the only thing the Flückinger commission could verify with certainty was that certain corpses did not decay as much as others. Meinig maintained that most of the witness accounts in the vampire case came from sick women, whose testimony was hence suspicious and in general, the witness accounts could be cast aside as a product of the imagination of superstitious, Rascian women and their priests, whose direct interest was to fashion phenomena as having a demonic or dead soul-related cause in order to build them as proofs of the existence of Purgatory. This conflation of Catholic and Orthodox theology is indicative because, as it has already been shown, in the *Notes* Jablonski was still aware of the lack of Purgatory in Eastern Orthodox theology, but in the printed *Opinion* this nuance got blurred, and finally in Putoneus' interpretation was entirely lost: the Orthodox became equated with Catholics. This was subsequently taken over by the reviewers of the work, for example by Eudoxus, an author in the mainstream Lutheran journal, the *Auserlesene Theologische Bibliothek*, who underlined that Putoneus held the Catholic clergy responsible for hindering the investigation of the true causes because it was in their interest to keep people superstitious.⁶⁷⁴ Meinig finally added

⁶⁷² Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 42–44, 47–48.

⁶⁷³ Putoneus, 22–25.

⁶⁷⁴ Eudoxus, 'Bericht von einigen Schriften, die Vampyren betreffend', 148.

that a trustworthy testimony could only have been made by an experienced physician, who would have investigated and reported properly on the affliction.

The *fides historica* is deployed in a very different light by the radical Pietist periodical, the *Geistliche Fama* in its discussion of ghosts, vampires and the returning dead. The journal was edited by two physicians: Johann Konrad Dippel (1673 – 1734), anatomist and alchemist who was not only in search for the transmutation of gold but was also engaged in experiments aimed at manufacturing a mumia-based elixir of life from human cadavers. Towards the end of his life, he was aide din the edition of the periodical by Johann Samuel Carl (1677 - 1757) a physician, who studied under iatromechanist Friedrich Hoffman and animist Georg E. Stahl at the University of Halle, earning his degree in 1715.

The introduction to the lengthy discussion on vampires states that it is only historical examples that can shed light on the truth at the core of human experiences, which stays constant in spite of changing details. As explained by the anonymous author (who probably was either Dippel or Carl), that just as each individual person's senses and judgement can fail and are unreliable, so are philosophical schools and theological opinions.⁶⁷⁵ They come and go like trends in fashion, while the divine and natural laws actually remain unchanged. Natural philosophers and theologians in their attempts at finding the infallible signs of truth cast doubt on all examples and let their lives crumble away in useless opinion-based debates instead of experiencing and enjoying God's visible and invisible works. When it comes to explaining ghosts for instance:

*'Papists take falsehoods to be true only so that they can reinforce the church's interest in Purgatory. Lutherans ascribe almost everything to the trickery of the devil. Calvinists want to ridicule everything that the populace believes in as a product of an erring imagination, and therefore in the Netherlands there are no ghosts like in Catholic places.'*⁶⁷⁶

The individual sensory and ideological biases of any given observer distort that person's description of the observed event itself. Because of this, seekers of truth should be familiar

⁶⁷⁵ Carl, 'Vorrede. Von Kennzeichen der Wahrheit, auch im Historischen', 1-10.

⁶⁷⁶ Carl, 5.

with the examples the *fides historica* offers, so that they can peel off all the theological and philosophical prejudices, until

‘only the true, unbiased purity is brought to the surface, so that the matter would gleam and make an impression in its bare purity’,

which also means that circumstances and details are not that important:

*‘It would be greatly foolish to deny a story, only because it is deficient in some of its minor circumstances, or which (unlike another person) I myself have not witnessed with my own eyes and ears’*⁶⁷⁷

Peeling these layers off, however, is not easy, and one first of all must subject the examples to the tripartite touchstone of *revelation, reason and experience*, which the faculties of *faith, intellect and outer senses* respectively are able to comprehend. The anonymous author states that all three confirm that ghosts and revenants exist,⁶⁷⁸ but even if they are unavailable, there is a deeper world beyond faith, intellect and the outer senses, and one can always resort to this further touchstone of truth, namely:

*‘the sensitive feeling of the receptive, inner spirit-sense (Geistes-Sinne), with which infants of grace become able to see, hear and touch, without (but not against) the three above-mentioned touchstones, [and distinguish] light and pretence, day and night, spirit and flesh, truth and lie etc. in each and every phenomenon (Vorwurf).’*⁶⁷⁹

How exactly this inner sense should be applied to other people’s first-hand accounts of ghostly and revenant phenomena is somewhat unclear, but it is enabled by the common spiritual nature of apparitions and this inner faculty. Ghosts are understood in the text as spiritual manifestations of certain strong desires people had upon dying, and this way they can be directly subjected to the observer’s own inner spirit. Truth is established through an inner experience, not through reasoning, or indeed not even through outer sensual information.

Armed with these heuristic tools, the author could ignore many of the corporeality questions bothering several other discussants.⁶⁸⁰ The physicians Fritsch and Stahl for instance sought to undermine the idea of bloodsucking by pointing out that there were no bite marks or wounds

⁶⁷⁷ Carl, 7.

⁶⁷⁸ Carl, 6.

⁶⁷⁹ Carl, 9.

⁶⁸⁰ Carl, ‘Abhandlung 2. Der Todten essen und trincken, oder von Vampyrs.’, 38-39.

on the victims through which the blood could have been extracted.⁶⁸¹ By contrast, in the eyes of the author in the *Geistliche Fama*, it was not a crucial question, only a less important detail whether the vampire sucked the material blood out, or only the spirits of the blood. Jablonski, Frisch and Buddeus saw the lack of disturbance in the soil of the grave as a certain sign that the corpse had not left the grave. The Pietist journal's author however conceived of the vampire as an astral-animal spirit that assumed only an apparent, an 'ideal body', not a fully material one, and hence could entirely evade the problem.

While the *Geistliche Fama's* anonymous author was somewhat radical in his relaxed attitude to historical evidence, several other, more mainstream authors seem to have relied on a similar assumption that so many people could not possibly have been mistaken, only implicitly. They would list examples, even if the source of the accounts could not be properly verified, and often would not evaluate them in terms of trustworthiness.

Species facti: the Visum et Repertum vis-à-vis earlier accounts

The fact that the *Visum et Repertum* was recent, first-hand and was an official product of a combined medical and legal approach all added to its credibility and made it surpass all the other vampire-accounts circulating in the debate: Frombald's report from 1725 and Glaser's father's and ensign Kottowitz's letters. Apart from Glaser's father's letter, they were all undersigned by military and state officials with titles, which gave them a particularly official air. The factual nature of the Frombald and Flückinger reports was further reinforced by their dry, concise tone listing names and dates, and hence in the vampire debate they were habitually referred to as 'documentary and thorough accounts', 'documentary reports' or '*species facti*'. The Flückinger commission's report received the title '*Visum et Repertum*', which originally was simply its genre of an autopsy report.

⁶⁸¹ Anon., *Eines weimarischen Medici mutmassliche Gedancken*, 33.

The documentary nature of the texts lent credibility not only to the commissioners' sensory experiences and observations, but to the local interpretation as well, even if the commissioners had worded doubts about it. A reason of this is that the original reports themselves had not separated the layers of observation and interpretation: the Flückinger commission for instance described the corpses' undecayed state as being in a 'vampire state'. As described above, Jablonski, Frisch and

Buddeus pointed out this overlap of layers and tried to separate them in their *Opinion*, but not all learned authors thought this was necessary or carried it out in a determined fashion.

Presenting legal-forensic cases, for example gruesome murders through official legal and medical documents with special attention to factual details like places, dates, people etc. was a popular genre at the time and indulged in the very same vocabulary of reporting, documenting, of files and facts.⁶⁸² The esteem in which the learned held these legal documents did not mean that they themselves were similarly precise about the factual information contained in the reports. One of the first Leipzig publications of the documents for instance falsely included ensign Kottowitz's signature as an author of the *Visum et Repertum*,⁶⁸³ a mistake which J.C. Meinig (Putoneus) replicated when reprinting the document in his own treatise.⁶⁸⁴

While most contributors to the 1732 debate accepted the *Visum et Repertum* as a real document, there were a few voices entirely questioning its veracity. An anonymous 'learned physician', correspondent of the journal *Commercium Litterarium* early on in the debate, on

Nach geschehener Visitation sind denen
sämtlichen Vampiren die Köpffe herunter
geschlagen und samt denen Körpern völlig
verbrennet, die Asche davon in das Wasser
geworffen, die verwesete Leiber aber, wieder
in das Grab gelegt worden.

Actum ut supra.

Ca. Freyh. von Kottwitz

Büchner
Granad. Oberstleut.
Löbl. Pr. Alex. Reg.

Fähnbl. von Alexander.

Johann Flückinger

Reg. Feldscheer Löbl. Baron Furstenbachl. Reg.
An

35: The mistaken inclusion of Kottowitz as author of the *Visum et Repertum* in the anonymous *Actenmäßige und Umständliche Relation* (p. 15.)

⁶⁸² See for instance: Anon., *Umständliche, doch in möglichster kurtze verfassete acten-mässige Relation, von der, an dem Verwalter, Daniel Müller, auf dem adelichen Hause Werburg, der Familie von Münch gehörig, in der Graffschafft Ravensberg belegen, in der Nacht vom 5. auf den 6. Dec. 1726. vorgegangenen grausamen Mordthat Und Beraubung*. (Bielefeld: Justus Nicolaus Süvern, 1728); Johann Christoph Fritsch, *Seltsame Jedoch wahrhaftige theologische, juristische, medicinische und physicalische Geschichte: So wohl aus alten als neuen Zeiten, worüber der Theologus, Jure-consultus und Medico-physicus sein Urtheil eröffnet; aus den Original-acten mit Fleiß extrahiret, zu mehreren Erleuterung mit kurtzen Anmerckungen versehen und eines jeden vernünftigen Gedancken überlassen*, 5 vols (Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Braun, 1734).

⁶⁸³ Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern*, 15.

⁶⁸⁴ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 14.

31st March speculated that the report might have simply been a plagiarized version of Francisi's *Höllischer Proteus*.⁶⁸⁵ Ranfft also commented on people's initial disbelief in the reports and even suggested that the fact that his first dissertation occasioned by the 1725 Frombald report incited zero reactions in the learned community is because people thought the report itself was fictional.⁶⁸⁶ Keeping in mind Ranfft's general bitterness about not being accepted and credited openly by the learned community for his works on vampirism, scholars' initial disbelief nevertheless sounds realistic. Several authors remarked that the situation in the beginning of 1732 was very similar: some people doubted that the reports were real at all.⁶⁸⁷

At the other end of the spectrum of trust, we find several contributors who praised the *Visum et Repertum* as an exceptionally well-attested document. The physician author of the *Letter from a good friend* stated that it was something different as compared to earlier fables and reports about revenants: there were too many specific details, too many witnesses included.⁶⁸⁸ Eudoxus in the *Auserlesene Theologische Bibliothek* claimed that he had no doubts about the reliability of the report, even if certain things were added to the truth, because of 'the imperial order to have it investigated, the names of the authorized officials and witnesses and the sending of the report to the Nürnberg academy [the Leopoldina]'.⁶⁸⁹ The French newspaper *Le Glaneur* in its edition of 3rd March called the Medvedia vampire case 'a doubly attested' marvel, and entirely trusted the officers' unbiased investigation and description, because they had no interest in misrepresenting truth.⁶⁹⁰

The group of authors, who can more or less directly be related to a Pietist standpoint all considered the report to be very trustworthy. As suggested by Michael Pickering, the physician writing under the pseudonym W.S.G.E. was pursuing a Pietist agenda in his vampire treatise and expressed trust in the reports by referring to them as 'authentic news' and as 'Facti Species', while not going into any detailed discussion of their reliability.⁶⁹¹ The anonymous

⁶⁸⁵ 'Plurimorum iam ingenia exercuit...', 143-144.

⁶⁸⁶ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 163.

⁶⁸⁷ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 3.; Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampyren oder Menschen-saugern*, 7.

⁶⁸⁸ Anon., *Schreiben eines guten Freundes an einen andern guten Freund, die Vampyren betreffend de dato 26. martii 1732; samt einer Beylage fernerer Gutachtens.*, 4.

⁶⁸⁹ Eudoxus, 'Bericht von einigen Schriften, die Vampyren betreffend'.

⁶⁹⁰ Anon., 'Question physique sur une espèce de prodige duement attesté'.

⁶⁹¹ W.S.G.E., *Curieuse und sehr wunderbarliche Relation*.

author of the *Documentary and Thorough Account* castigated those, who questioned the veracity of all historical accounts, just because some of those accounts proved to be fraudulent.⁶⁹² This statement was a jab at authors like J.C. Meinig, who, as detailed above, was sceptical about the *fides historica* of revenants. After having reprinted the Flückinger commission's report, the anonymous author did away with the question of trustworthiness in two sentences:

*'In the mouth of three witnesses truth is established. Therefore, this historical account will safely be believed until more and better witnesses prove it to be unfounded.'*⁶⁹³

By 'three mouths' the author meant the three officers, who signed the Flückinger commission's report: Flückinger, Büttner and Kottowitz, though as mentioned above, the latter's addition to the commissioners was a mistake, while three of the real commissioners (Siegele, Baumgärtner and Lindenfelß) were left out. The reliance on three witnesses was in fact a customary practice at the time: contracts and testaments were often attested by three witnesses, an idea that had scriptural backing as well in 2 Cor 13:1:

'In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established'.

As it might be expected based on its relaxed attitude to the *fides historica*, the Pietist journal *Geistliche Fama's* discussion of the returning dead was singular in its treatment of the documentary evidence as well. The one document the author chose to reprint in his treatise was not the *Visum et Repertum*, but Glaser's father's letter to the journal *Commercium Litterarium*. In fact however, the document given is a conflation of the two documents with additions by the anonymous author's own thoughts, but put into Glaser's father's mouth.⁶⁹⁴ His general agenda was to prove that certain corpses can kill the living in case the person died a sudden death and was not able to renounce his earthly desires and sins. These desires in turn manifested in a spiritual form and targeted their objects. It was this sin-based narrative that the author sought to strengthen by his creative refashioning of the two documents and by making Glaser's father close his letter with the interpretation of vampirism as a divine sign

⁶⁹² Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern*, 7.

⁶⁹³ Anon., 16.

⁶⁹⁴ Carl, 'Abhandlung 2. Der Todten essen und trincken, oder von Vampyrs.', 25-26.

aimed at making people realize how sinful the world was (the whole world is a bloodsucker) and people hand each other over to the executioner.

Michael Ranfft also approached the vampire-problem from a theological (though mainstream Lutheran) background but had a different attitude to the reports. In his first two dissertations, he assigned a special place to Frombald's 1725 official report among the examples and accepted it without discussing the possible circumstances that might have deducted from its evidentiary nature. In fact, he held it in such esteem that he understood it as *the* definitive description of the phenomenon he called the chewing dead, which, as it has been mentioned above, in his view meant the occult natural means through which the dead could kill the living. Even if a certain feature of the activity of the undead were mentioned in many historical sources, Ranfft always checked them against the Frombald report and used the latter to discredit them.⁶⁹⁵ It is based on the authoritative example of the report that he argued against the theories that the harmful undead always make a chewing sound in the grave and that they always swallow their shroud, indeed that the harm done would be carried out through the swallowing and chewing at the shroud. In a similar vein, when discussing the theory that revenants cause plague, Ranfft relied on the Frombald report, which did not mention such an effect, and pronounced the theory to be mistaken.

In relation to the 1732 vampire documents however, Ranfft was more cautious. Even though he used ensign Kottowitz's letter for thought experiments, he stated that 'one should not hold the ensign's whole relation not much better than a women's tale', because he was relying entirely on hearsay.⁶⁹⁶ Echoing the Prussian academic's opinion, Ranfft also stated that the Flückinger commission's surgical examination proved nothing more than that certain corpses remained more fresh in the grave than others. But drawing the conclusion that these bodies would torture, kill and drain people from their blood was entirely false: local people were so much grounded in their superstition that 'it made them deaf and blind'.⁶⁹⁷ Interestingly, Ranfft did not reject all aspects of local interpretation this violently, he was selective in which elements of the witness accounts to trust. For example, he thought there was insufficient proof to the idea that cattle were killed by the same affliction as the people, but never

⁶⁹⁵ Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 43, 53, 75.

⁶⁹⁶ Ranfft, 193.

⁶⁹⁷ Ranfft, 192.

doubted that people indeed smeared themselves with the vampire's blood and ate from its grave, and neither did he question that it actually worked as a cure to the affliction.⁶⁹⁸ In this his argumentation resembled to that of the anonymous author of the *Letter from a good friend*, who expounded the same theory. Ranfft's explanation of the vampire phenomenon was based on the power of human imagination that can not only carry out deadly effects on the person himself, but on others at a distance as well and can continue to do so even after death. Killing cattle simply did would not make sense in this narrative and was hence discarded as a fable. By contrast, even admittedly superstitious healing methods could actually be effective through the power of the imagination, a process we would call placebo-effect.

Ranfft's doubts about certain elements contained in the witness accounts directs attention to the question of just how trustworthy the evidence yielded by legal investigations was. A major drawback was that legal investigations were very much reliant on witness accounts, and in the particular case of vampirism, these testimonies came from people who were superstitious, undereducated and heretical in the eyes of the discussants. This, in the eyes of many learned discussants, stood in sharp contrast to natural philosophical evidencing and demonstrations. We could recall at this point Ranfft's bitter remark about the impossibility of carrying out naturalist experiments and mathematical demonstrations about the vampire topic. The conflict between law and philosophy was later on formulated eloquently by Augustin Calmet, the French Benedictine abbot of Senones monastery in the Principedom of Lorraine and Bar. In his 1746 *Treatise on apparitions* the abbot tackled the question whether there is a difference between legal and natural philosophical evidence:

'There are two different means of destroying the opinion of these pretended revenants, and showing the impossibility of effects, which are made to produce corpses entirely deprived of sentiment. The first is to explain all the prodigies of Vampirism through physical causes; the second is to totally deny the truth of these stories; and this last option is undoubtedly the most certain and the wisest. But as there are people to whom the authority of a certificate given by people in office appears to be an obvious demonstration of the reality of the most absurd tale, before showing how little we must trust all the formalities of justice in matters

⁶⁹⁸ Ranfft, 182, 186.

*which concern only philosophy, I will suppose for a time that several people really did die of the evil which is called vampirism’.*⁶⁹⁹

In the years following the publication of the work, Calmet got into a debate with Lenglet du Fresnoy, and one of the cornerstones of their debate was exactly the nature of evidence to be trusted. In the end, Lenglet accused Calmet exactly of spreading superstition by hoarding together legal and historical accounts that were not properly subjected to checks of reliability.

In the German debate, the conflict between law and philosophy did not manifest with such clarity, but many discussants formulated doubts about the witness-hearing part of the report and condemned the commissioners’ inadequacy and their falling for the testimonies. Johann Harenberg, the rector of the Gandersheim school for example thought that the report was too gullible in that the surgeons believed too much of the local interpretation.⁷⁰⁰ In the traditional early modern hierarchy of medical men, surgeons in general had a lower standing as surgery was a manual art, not science, like medicine. It was exactly during the eighteenth century that through the gradual rise of respect given to anatomy and pathology, surgery was also elevated back into university studies, a process which was not smooth, causing clashes of interest and professional envy between physicians and surgeons.

The three Prussian academics’ lamentation in the *Opinion* that no experienced physician was present at the investigations implied that the university-trained physician, who was equipped with the necessary theoretical and anatomical knowledge would have given a much better expert testimony than the lowly surgeons. This opinion was repeated in the two treatises most closely inspired by the Prussian *Opinion*, J.C. Meinig’s (Putoneus) and Fritsch & Stahl’s works as well.⁷⁰¹ Contagion physician Glaser’s report would have been an interesting addition to the debate, had it accessed the learned circles, especially since he gave a double judgement by diagnosing the disease as tertian- and quartan fever, while at the same time expressing his bafflement at the state of the corpses.

⁶⁹⁹ Cited by: Van Damme, ‘Legitimizing Natural History of Superstitions: Historicizing, Documenting and Politicizing the Haunting Geographies of Europe’.

⁷⁰⁰ Harenberg, *Vernünfftige und christliche Gedancken über die Vampirs oder Bluthsaugende Todten*, 117.

⁷⁰¹ Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 24.; Anon., *Eines weimarischen Medici mutmassliche Gedancken*, 31.

The anonymous author of a short article in the journal *Relationis Historicae* also implied that there were more trustworthy people out there, whose accounts should be accepted as more trustworthy than that of the surgeons and military officers:

*'If all the circumstances spreading about the so-called vampires or bloodsuckers are true, then this matter indeed belongs to the notable and rare events. However, the issue has a very different outlook once we read the report of a trustworthy man, who speaks based on his own experience about the vampires...'*⁷⁰²

The author then goes on to share the Possega vampire story (See Chapter II.2.), which was communicated to him personally by an informant, who was there in Possega at the time. Given that the Flückinger commission's members were also present at the investigation of the Medvedia vampires, in the author's view there was something more important than first-hand experience. He probably meant that it was the education and/or social standing of the informant that made him more trustworthy than the surgeons. He was probably talking about a noble person, likely the commander of the Jung-Daun Regiment, or another high-ranking member of the local civil or military hierarchy. On the other hand, the informant gave a naturalistic explanation to vampirism (he identified it as envenomation by a local snake species), with which the journal article's author readily agreed, and this could have contributed to the informant's trustworthy appeal.

Summary

The *Visum et Repertum* raised questions about the credibility of empirical and textual evidence. This problem had already been being discussed in several disciplines. While several authors remarked the lack of proper empirical evidence about vampires, certain authors proposed ways to amend this problem by subjecting vampire belief to further testing. The author of the *Letter from a good friend* devised a particularly pragmatic natural philosophical and historical vampire research project *à la* Francis Bacon.

The discussants' attitudes to second-hand reports and historical tradition varied. The Prussian Academy and the two treatises belonging to its halo deployed a meticulous analysis of details,

⁷⁰² Anon., 'Zwölffter Haupt-titul. Von denckwürdig und seltsamen Begebenheiten'.

a critical approach to the vampire report, which involved 1) discrediting most of historical evidence for being compromised by superstition 2) disregarding witness accounts for the same reason 3) undercutting the surgical-official expert opinion on account of a lack of knowledge and 4) relegating the remaining evidence to natural philosophers. Just like episcopal commissioner Pfaffenzeller and the medical experts in Moravia (Chapter III.3.), these authors emphasised the importance of stricter judicial witness hearings.

A completely opposite attitude is visible in the case of the Pietist journal *Gesitliche Fama's* treatment of *fides historica*. In the authors view, details only make people blind to reality, because ideological, theological and personal sensory biases always guarantee that individual experiences and accounts of those experiences will be very much individualized representations. The author proposes a form of historical criticism to strip away changing details and recognize the historically unchanging core of truth, which is experience. In practice, getting to this core does not only involve the application of reason, but faith and revelation also can have their role; in the end, all three can be overridden by an even more powerful, if somewhat esoteric heuristic tool: sensing truth with the soul. This lenient attitude to historical detail resulted in a highly imprecise rendering of the official vampire reports, which he merged and reshaping in his own way.

Most contributors criticized the *Visum et Repertum* as imprecise and deficient in detail, but it was still the most highly respected among all the other reports of 1725/32 and within historical tradition in general. This respect partly had to do with Prince Charles Alexander's authority, but also with the fact that its medical autopsies were a novel approach to revenants, yielding novel insights. Beyond Flückinger's report, the choice of historical accounts to be included in a treatise depended on how well the given account served the author's agenda. Authors were looking for good narratives that would illustrate their point and they rarely subjected these narratives to source criticism.

Concluding remarks

The early Protestant Enlightenment in the Holy Roman Empire has defined itself as a golden mean, a calm, practical-minded reasoning (*ratio moderata*) avoiding the two extremes of atheism and superstition.⁷⁰³ This attitude in practice endowed these two concepts with power and engendered strong anxieties about them, because being classified within the scientific community even only temporarily as a superstitious Popist or an atheist Spinozist had the potential to seriously damage one's reputation and threaten his livelihood. Nevertheless, there were certain kinds of topics, that could tempt the moderate researcher to venture off the path towards the extremes. For one, research without clear pragmatic use could be labelled as idle curiosity, as a morally condemnable, frivolous inquiry. Such a topic was human corpse decay, as Sir James Kirkpatrick has remarked in his 1751 treatise on the Staverton body (Chapter I.1.). A second kind of dangerous topic was the strange, the preternatural, because such events were by definition rare, happened irregularly and did not lend themselves easily for research. Drawing conclusions based on individual, sporadic observations, could easily make the scholar look gullible, which in turn equalled superstition. Possibilities of cadavers exerting harm on the living at a distance was exactly such a topic. Elevating these into subjects of serious scholarly inquiry was dangerous, as they could taint the writer with the stigmas associated with them. As if certain topics were contagious.

Vampirism united both kinds of topics, as it concerned human corpse decay as well as preternatural harm from beyond the grave. In order to safeguard themselves against the dangers, many learned chose not to engage with the topic of vampirism at all, or at least not to disclose their real names if they did. For those who engaged, it was almost compulsory to denounce the environment, from which the reports came from as superstitious in order to distance themselves from it and to assert their own superiority. This latter technique in the case of vampirism often involved the conflation of the Catholic (Habsburg) and Orthodox (Serb) denominations and theological tenets (such as the existence of Purgatory) and relegating both the governor and the governed, the occupier and the occupied into the realm of ignorance, fear, gullibility and superstition (Chapter II.2., V.1.). The repetition of the conventional tropes of the superstitious Orthodox and Catholic churches in relation to

⁷⁰³ Pott, *Aufklärung und Aberglaube - Die deutsche Frühaufklärung im Spiegel ihrer Aberglaubenskritik*, 231.

vampirism has been understood by Gábor Klaniczay, and based on him, by Roy Porter and Peter Bräunline as a gesture of othering Europe's inner savages, and as a call for the Enlightened project of civilizing them.⁷⁰⁴

Through the *Visum et Repertum*, however, the vampire, a product of the superstitious East for the first time in history appeared in the guise of a forensic medical fact. As such, it was both known and unknown, both ancient and modern, a combination which threatened with the occupation of the civilized, the orderly by the savage and the extreme. Within the Protestant early Enlightenment's self-image, the crucial contrast with the Catholic medieval past relied exactly on the same dichotomy, and so the surfacing of the *Visum et Repertum* exhausts the Freudian concept of the uncanny: the unexpected appearance of an unknown element in a cluster of known things, a combination which causes the return of a repressed, primitive feeling thought to have been banished to the past.⁷⁰⁵ In this sense, the questions posed to scholars in the 1730s about whether the vampires could infect German lands as well marked a second uncanny discourse after the seventeenth-century discussions of Greek revenant beliefs as analysed by Álvaro García Marín.⁷⁰⁶

Empirical endeavours were gaining more and more credence and respect during the eighteenth century in various disciplines, but in case directed at the wrong topic, they could do even more damage to one's reputation than purely theoretical ventures, because experimenting involved a much closer, physical contact with the dangerous topic. Endeavours in the Baconian tradition of experimenting on the preternatural, such as the research project offered by the author of the *Letter from a good friend* by the early eighteenth century had too much in common with projects judged by mainstream early enlighteners as extreme, such as the collections of ghost experiences by Joseph Glanvill, Otto von Graben zum Stein, the *Geistliche Fama*, or Augustin Calmet. All these authors emphasized the need to collect empirical experiences of ghosts and/or revenants but ended up being accused of gullibly hoarding up unverified cases and perpetuating superstition. This perceived overlap of the two

⁷⁰⁴ Klaniczay, 'The Decline of Witches and the Rise of Vampires under the Eighteenth-Century Habsburg Monarchy'; Porter, 'Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenment, Romantic and Liberal Thought', 214-216.; Bräunline, 'The Frightening Borderlands of Enlightenment: The Vampire Problem'.

⁷⁰⁵ Freud, 'The Uncanny', 241-242.

⁷⁰⁶ Marín, 'Haunted Communities: The Greek Vampire or the Uncanny at the Core of Nation Construction'.

traditions might be one of the reasons why so few scholars put together practical research suggestions on vampirism in the 1730s.

Similar uneasiness can be detected in the field of medical expertise: while the reliance on medical expertise was on the increase in the era,⁷⁰⁷ the legitimacy and autonomy given to experts in adjudicating cases was not straightforward at all. Various interest groups tried to influence, to pressurize experts so that they give an opinion that is in line with their own views. Stages of expertise were spheres laden with tension, and in order to counter the attempts of outside interest groups at controlling them, the expert community had to close ranks, and as Steve Hilgartner has pointed out in relation to modern expert testimonies and reports, they had to present a unified voice by being silent about inner controversies.⁷⁰⁸ Medical experts throughout the early modern period had to struggle to resist the institutional attempts at controlling them. Jablonski apparently was entirely conscious of the fact that they were fighting for their own legitimacy when the Prussian Academy was pressured by the king to investigate the vampire report (Chapter V.1.). He chose to efface the inner uncertainties visible in the manuscript *Notes* about the possibility of giving an informed opinion on the *Visum et Reprtum*, and instead opted for displaying a confident, unified stance. As Bradford A. Bouley showed in relation to surgeon Valisnieri's 1727 expert opinion in a canonization trial (Chapter I.1.),⁷⁰⁹ and as it was mentioned above about the 1726-1728 Liebe revenant panic (Chapter II.3.), the church also often tried to push the medical experts, who rather than losing face, refused to pronounce clear-cut opinions on the natural-supernatural border. In the 1732 Medvedia case (Chapter II.3.) and surgeon Tripe's 1751 dissection of the Staverton body (Chapter I.1.), it was the local community, or a crowd of commoners which was trying to lead the experts towards a desirable diagnosis: in the former case successfully, in the latter not.

The Flückinger-report provided enough challenge and excitement at the theoretical level as well. The report seemed to prove the novel constellation of a contagious kind of revenantism, the explanation of which necessitated a creative application of available frameworks. Many authors bent and modified extant ideas. In spite of narratives of vampirism that portray the

⁷⁰⁷ Renzi, 'Medical Expertise, Bodies, and the Law in Early Modern Courts'; Fischer-Homberg, *Medizin vor Gericht: Gerichtsmedizin von der Renaissance bis zur Aufklärung*; Crawford, 'Legalizing Medicine: Early Modern Legal Systems and the Growth of Medico-Legal Knowledge'.

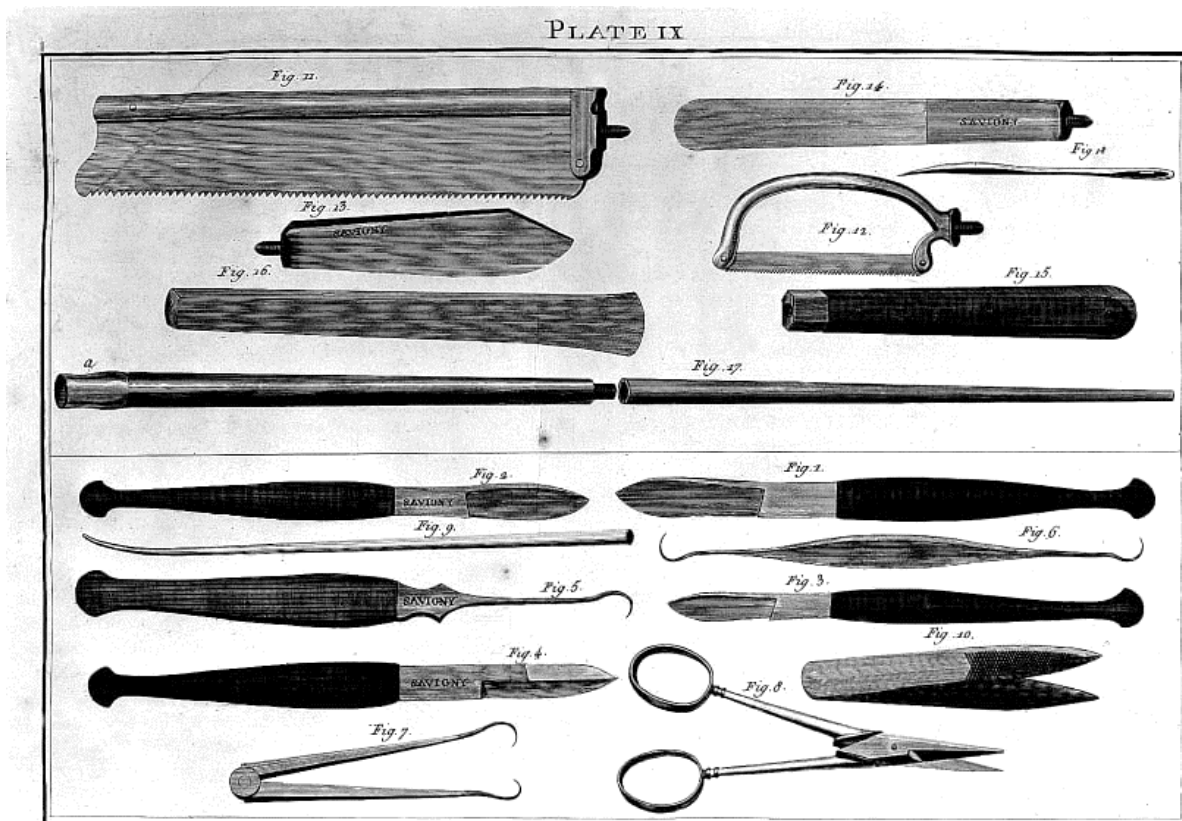
⁷⁰⁸ Steve Hilgartner, *Science on Stage: Expert Power and Politics?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 52.

⁷⁰⁹ Bouley, *Pious Postmortems: Anatomy, Sanctity, and the Catholic Church in Early Modern Europe*.

1730s debate as a straight triumph of modern science, in fact there were several theoretical options available for those who sought to argue for the existence of the vampiric effect: mumial sympathy, cadaver poison, emotion/idea-led spirits and possession epidemics akin to von Schertz' *magia posthuma*. It is especially striking that the execution of the dead was supported by the majority of discussants, even by some of those, who did not allow for the existence of the harmful dead.

The approach that most resembles that which would be followed by the 1750s Habsburg enlightened absolutist government (Chapter VII), was the Prussian Academy and the two treatises belonging to its halo: those by Meinig and by Fritsch & Stahl. The utter disregard of *fides historica* on account of the impossibility to prove cases in hindsight was in fact part of a broader enlightened toolkit, which sought to make even more clear conceptual distinctions, even more clear disciplinary boundaries, creating even more clear, functional representations of problems, which lost the 'useless' 'unimportant' noise that used to surround them: the anatomical drawings slowly lose their artistic props and gestures, illustrations of archaeological findings loose the scenery and people. This attitude to zoom-in on details and decide problems on case-by-case basis was resisted in the eighteenth century by Pietist authors, such as the physician editors of the *Geistliche Fama*, which maintained that details were unimportant, as the sheer amount of accounts in historical tradition had much greater evidentiary value.

VI. Disciplining and deciphering the *moroi* of the Habsburg Banat (1732-66)



36 Engraving of instruments used for dissection (1798)

‘In Transylvania and Wallachia, I already let such [vampire] blood stay for a whole night and even longer, but I could not keep it for very long, because it soon became divided into a dark brown earthen matter and murky water’

Georg Tallar: *Visum Repertum* (Temesvár, 1753)

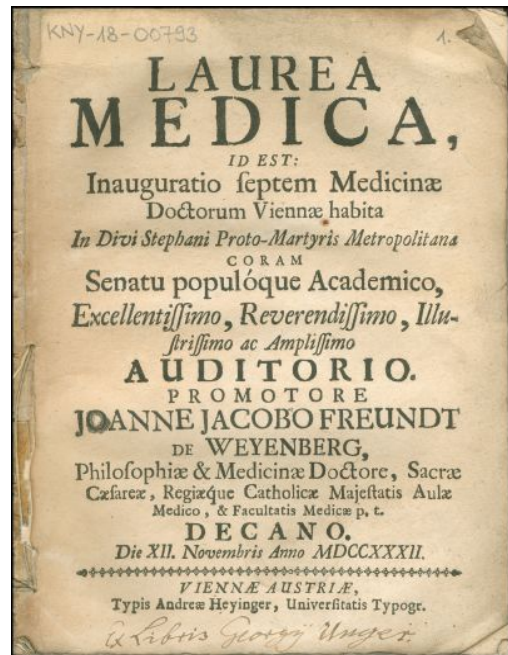
After having given a large incentive to the learned vampire debate through his visit to Berlin, Prince Charles Alexander returned home to Stuttgart, and in July 1732 was already back in Belgrade. He did not stay there long, and left Serbia in 1733 to assume the throne of the Duchy of Württemberg, where he died in 1737. He never returned to Serbia and fortunately did not witness as in 1738 the Ottoman Empire reconquered the whole province, the organization of which he had been working on so diligently. The southern borderland's territory got substantially curbed, and the new border stretched along the southern edge of Slavonia, the Banat and Transylvania. Meanwhile, the high tide of the learned debate on vampires peaked in 1732, and even though it did not die out, it was going on with much lower intensity in the following years. The focal points of the debate moved from the Holy Roman Empire to the Italian states and the French Kingdom.

Strikingly enough, the learned and high administrative circles of the Habsburg Monarchy, the very place where the vampire reports stemmed from stayed remarkably silent. Even though a bulky collection of documents on the Moravian Liebe mass revenant executions landed in the hands of Duke Francis Stephen, the future emperor apparently made no efforts to disclose it or have it investigated. While the Western journals and magazines were rife in reports, reviews and discussions on vampires, the Viennese publicity did not report on them, not even the *Wienerisches Diarium*, which had published Frombald's 1725 report on the Kisilova case.

To the best of our knowledge, there were no standalone publications on the topic either, apart from two short Latin rhetorical orations which were delivered by two newly laureated doctors

of medicine, Hentschel and Hirsch at the University of Vienna on 12th November 1732.⁷¹⁰ The task of the two doctors was to represent the two extremes of the discussion on vampires: demonic magic on the one hand (Hentschel) and iatrochemical natural causation (Hirsch) on the other. The texts are highly embellished with rhetorical formulas, and according to Klaus Hamberger, can be seen almost as caricatures of the positions.

In their treatment of the *fides historica*, the two works indeed appear as polarized versions of a radical Pietist and a devout follower of the Prussian Academy's approach. While Hentschel's texts



37 Title page of the print based on the laurea medica ceremony of physicians Hentschel and Hirsch

contains an impressive amount of historical and Biblical examples, Hirsch does not cite a single one of them, instead only quoting physiological and natural philosophical works. The former did not go into the details of the vampire report at all (as if it was not important), while the latter collecting the symptom-descriptions from the three cases of Kisilova, Kucklina and Medvedia, this way zooming in on the details of the affliction. Hentschel positioned himself as a defender of faith against Van Dale- and Bekker-style atheism, and then refuted two rival frameworks: her discarded imagination in this particular case as imaginary diseases, unlike vampirism can be treated by tricking the mind into thinking it was healthy by denouncing sympathies and antipathies as superstition. He took the report (which he accessed from the Aulic War Council) as a faithful representation of reality and stated that all the natural explanations were too weak to exert such effects, therefore it either was a divine or a demonic wonder. Hirsch by contrast explained the affliction as an unidentified contagious fever, which was caused by the unfavourable air of the overly cold nights of the Hungarian Kingdom. He also explained that hypothermia could easily create fear and depression within a generally superstitious population.

⁷¹⁰ Johannes Jacobus Freundt de Weyenberg, *Laurea medica, id est inauguratio septem medicinae doctorum Viennae habita* (Wien: Andreas Heyinger, 1732), <http://data.onb.ac.at/rep/10B3B5AE> OENB - Sammlung von Handschriften und alten Drucken, 70.C.98; Excerpts in: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 206-214.

Even if the two texts were rhetorical, exaggerated positions, it is remarkable that apparently as late as November 1732, there was no feeling of consensus among the learned on how to understand vampirism. Hentschel in the beginning of his speech also reflected on the still ongoing animosity surrounding the discussion (Chapter V).:

‘The assessment of vampirism by the leading philosophers, doctors and theologians is still pending. So, what can I say? Since I as a philosopher I am of the lowest rank, as a medical doctor was just born today, and have never been a theologian, I am pendulating between canonization and stoning.’⁷¹¹

The laureate performance aside, the apparent lack of public reactions to the vampire case might be explained by the court wishing to avoid any further scandals and possibly directly suppressed or banned the publication of news on the topic. Whether this indeed was the case, however, remains to be seen, as so-far no archival document substantiating such an open action on censorship has been found.

Queen Maria Theresa’s ascension to the throne in 1740 and especially the Dutch physician Gerard van Swieten’s arrival at the Viennese court in 1745 mark the gradual commencement of bureaucratizing, centralizing imperial reforms in the Habsburg Monarchy, but meanwhile, the revenants of the southern Habsburg borderland and the Moravian-Silesian border continued their unrest. The present and the next chapter shift the focus back to the administrative level and examine the handling of *moroi* and *magia posthuma* cases in the province of the Banat and the Bishopric of Olomouc respectively.

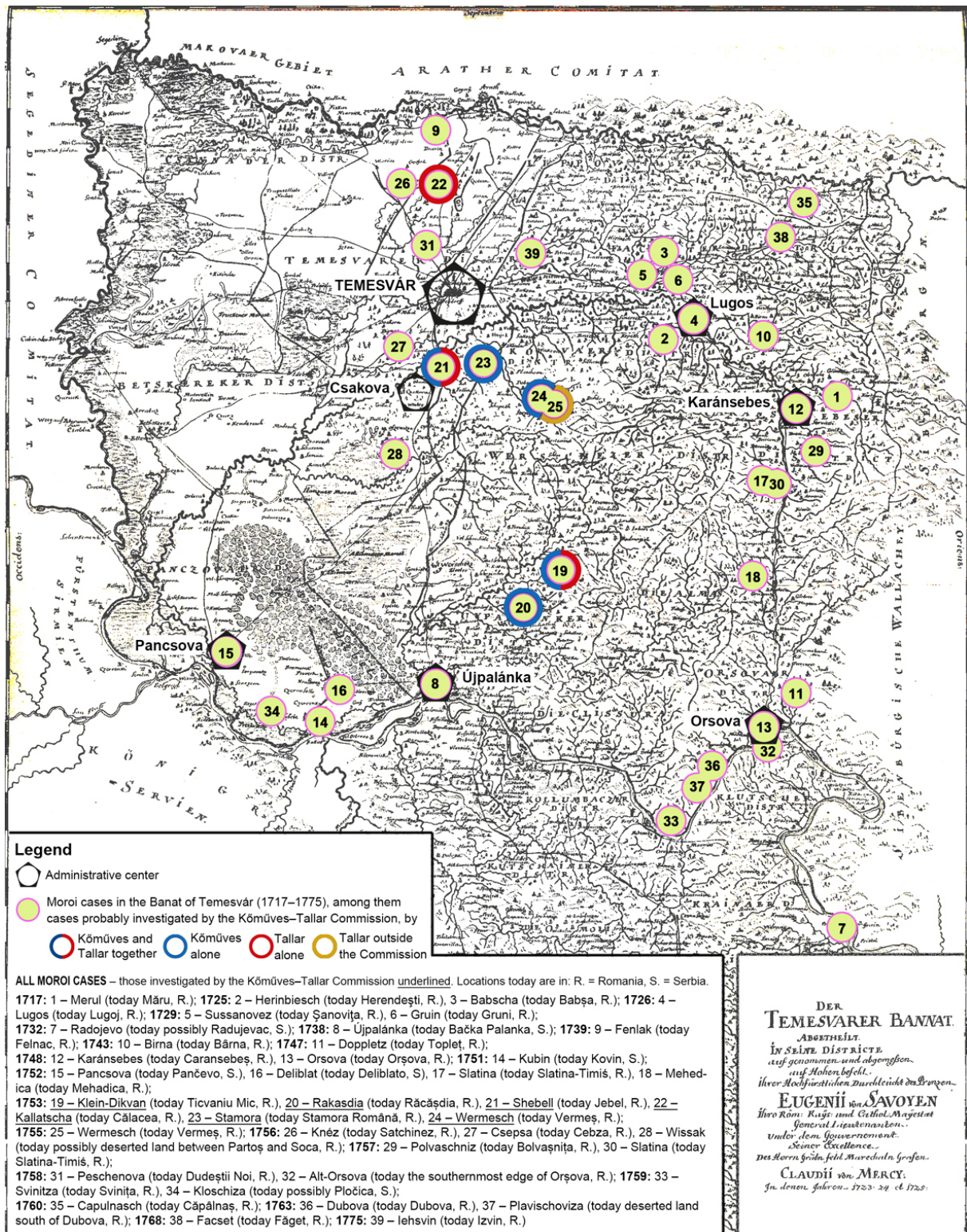
Before 1732, the southern borderland’s administrative personnel were introduced to local practices and ideas about revenants, and largely accepted local experts and evidence-gathering methods. The chapter also seeks to position the regulating efforts visible at the provincial-level of the Banat vis-à-vis the paradigm of enlightened reforms. The aim is to locate changes in the way the execution of *moroi* was handled, and to understand who could make successful claims of expertise on revenants.

⁷¹¹ Weyenberg, *Laurea medica, id est inauguratio septem medicinae doctorum Viennae habita*, 20.

VI.1. Disciplining the *moroi*: Revenants in the Banat (1732-1753)

The officials of the provincial administration were diligently filing their reports into the protocol books on the revenants executed in the Banat. Based on this, an overview of the time period 1717 – 1766, yields almost forty cases which happened in the province (see map below, Figure 38). The number of registered cases was on the increase: in the twenty years after 1738 (the loss of Serbia), twice as many cases were registered in the Banat as in the twenty years before that. The real number of cases in fact must have been higher, as one can suspect that not all revenant-hunts were announced to the authorities.

Geographic clusters also become visible: many cases happened in the central districts around the provincial capital Temesvár in the districts of Temesvár, Csáková and Versec. In the east, three clusters are visible: one in the district of Lugos, another in that of Karánsebes and a third one in the southeast, in Orsova. On the south, the districts of Pancsova and Újpalánka both witnessed a number of cases. What really stands out is that in the eastern and north-eastern districts bordering the Hungarian counties there are absolutely no registered cases. True enough, these areas are flatlands, and much of them were covered in marshes at the time, but the absolute lack of cases still requires further research. A further take-away from the cartographic representation is that *moroi* executions seem to have been mostly rural phenomena: the only larger settlements where executions happened were Versec, Lugos and in Facset. As regards the other provincial centres (Karánsebes, Orsova, Újpalánka and Pancsova), where the map signals *moroi* cases, these did not actually happen in the centres themselves, but in one of the villages of the district; I chose to indicate them in the district-centre, because their exact location cannot be known from the sources (see Appendix for comparison).



38: The known revenant cases in the Banat (1717-1775) positioned on the 1725 map of the region commissioned by the provincial governor, Count Florimond de Mercy.

Insubordination and the greater good

Augustin Calmet, who collected several private letters about cases on the southern borderland relates a story based on a case that went unreported.⁷¹² Given that the story involves a cavalry unit, the case probably dates from sometime after the loss of Serbia, as it was only then that a military frontier was created on the southern edge of the Banat. The case was published in the first edition of Calmet's work in 1746, so it had to happen sometime in the 1730s-1740s. The case is undated and is not located either, therefore in the lack of concrete information, it is impossible at present to run even the slightest fact check on it. At present we need to be content with Calmet's assurance that, as usual, his informant was a 'respectable person', a minor cavalry officer of the rank of cornet.

The cornet was billeted in the Banat with his company of mounted soldiers at a time, when many of the soldiers got sick, and two of the horsemen died. At the time of the events, in the absence of his superiors the cornet was the highest-ranking soldier of the company, and thus was responsible for handling the problem. Luckily for him, one of his corporals knew what to do: they brought out a black horse, had a virgin boy sit on its back and led the horse to the cemetery, where they carried out the identification ritual as in the 1717 Merul moroi case (Chapter II). They exhumed the corpse whose grave the horse refused to step across and executed it. After that, the sick soldiers suddenly got better. However, as it turns out, the corporal carried out the ritual without the cornet's consent and knowledge. Though the cornet resented this insubordination, he did not punish the corporal because he wanted to avoid scandals.

Given this element of insubordination, the specific ritual involving the black horse, and the fact that the cornet did not know about the ways to deal with moroi-caused afflictions, it seems that much of the company (the corporal included) consisted of Orthodox frontiersmen subordinated to German officers. This aspect further reinforces the theory that the events did not concern a unit of the imperial regular army, but a mounted frontiersmen-division. The self-assured, subversive actions of the subordinated settler population as well as the

⁷¹² Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions*, 300-303.; Calmet, *Gelehrte Verhandlung*, 2:56-59.

inability, or more precisely, the reluctance of the military to control the events as long as there was no scandal describes a situation typical of the borderland.

The great plague and Viennese intervention (1738)

The experience that the affliction perceived by locals as moroi-attacks ceases, as if cured by the execution of the dead is a crucial element in another curious case which happened in an unknown village of the Újpalánka district, and involves the direct intervention of a Viennese aulic commission into the events for the first time. The events unfolded in the wake of the Austrian-Ottoman War of 1737-1738, during which the southern territories of the borderland were lost. Even more devastating than the war itself, the military movements disrupted the functioning of the plague cordon, and a large wave of plague epidemic swept across the borderland and spread to Pest and to Vienna. The great plague of 1738 prompted the Viennese court to set up a special commission, the Aulic Sanitary Commission, which would oversee the defensive measures against the plague. It would remain a permanent institution after the ebb of the epidemic and become a main infrastructure of the medical policing and centralizing reforms of the second half of the eighteenth century. Among the protocol books of the commission, we can find a curious case description.

In his report to the sanitary commission about the plague-situation in his district, provisor Johann Mayr related that in a village of his district five corpses were exhumed and burnt, and that the procedure was authorized by a man named Uran. Mayr added, that after the executions, the deaths stopped in the village, and therefore it was unclear whether the plague or vampires were in the background. The Viennese commission, however, did not have doubts. For believing the 'superstition of vampires', and for allowing corpses to be unearthed in plague-stricken times, thereby endangering public health, they ordered Uran to be taken by pandurs to the plague lazaret of Temesvár, where as a punishment he had to serve without salary until the epidemic ended.⁷¹³

⁷¹³ 'Protocols of the Aulic Sanitary Commission', Bundle 1., 487v-488v and 497v and 504r-505r. The case is cited by: Magyary-Kossa, *Magyar orvosi emlékek: Értekezések a magyar orvostörténelem köréből*, 2:86. However, Magyary mistakenly identifies Johann Mayr as a surgeon.

Since Uran was sentenced to serve in a plague hospital, it is very likely that he was a surgeon, who might have been accustomed to the status quo on the borderland according to which revenant executions were permissible if overseen by the authorities. The difference in attitudes between the Viennese commission and the local level became blatant due to the direct intervention of the special sanitary commission in provincial matters.

Increasing district-level control over *moroi* executions

That during these decades the outcome of properly requested *moroi* executions could have any ending is shown by two cases, where it is known that medical personnel were present, and yet, the two experts arrived at opposing diagnoses.⁷¹⁴ A medical examination carried out in Birna (today Bârna, Romania), in the Lugos and Facset District in 1743 decided that locals were wrong to assume that vampires were behind the disease. By contrast, in 1751, in Kubin (today Kovin, Serbia), a village of the district of Pancsova, a bloodsucker was torturing people at night so much, that they wanted to leave the village. Because of this,

‘the body of the accused Marinko Kalanitt was exhumed and in the presence of the community and officers was examined by physicians, and was found full of fresh blood’

In order to calm down the community, the body was burnt.

In April 1748, the protopope residing in Karánsebes participated in a concerted effort to control *moroi* executions. Problems started in December 1747 in the village of Doppletz (today Topleț, Romania) of the Orsova district, where in the course of a single month 23 people died. As a response people executed eleven corpses *without the permission of the church*.⁷¹⁵ The corpses had been unearthed, some of them burnt at the stake, others scalded with boiling water and then reburied. The Karánsebes protopope angered by the vigilante action excommunicated the whole village in April 1748, after which the Orsova district provisor

⁷¹⁴ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:150.; Lajos Baróti, ed., *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, vol. 1 (Temesvár: Csanád-Egyházmegye Nyomdája, 1896), 379.

⁷¹⁵ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:206, 262-264.

banned the exhumation and execution of corpses in the whole district in a circular letter and summoned the perpetrators to court.

In the 1750s, the Viennese court initiated a series of administrative changes and policing measures in the Banat, which went parallel with a tightening administrative control over moroi executions in the province. The changes in administration started with the death of the president of the Banatean Aulic Deputation, Franz von Kollowrat.⁷¹⁶ As a first step, the military-dominated mixed administration of the Banat was exchanged for an entirely civilian one in 1751, while at the same time, the southern strips of the districts of Pancsova, Újpalánka and Orsova were turned into a military frontier. The new cameral administration (which nevertheless was still headed by its former military commander, Field Marshal Franz Anton Pontz von Engelshofen (1692 – 1761)) had to deal with four cases of vampirism within a short time.⁷¹⁷ As mentioned above, the Pancsova district council authorized the burning of the Kubin vampires in 1751.

A year later, in 1752, in the same district inhabitants of the now military hajduk-village of Deliblat (today Deliblato, Serbia) unearthed four corpses, cooked their excised hearts and carried out ‘various superstitious procedures’ with them. The news reached the military command which informed the district provisor as well, who added that the rite was performed without the knowledge of the authorities, and that the perpetrators will be proceeded against. In the same year, villagers of Slatina (today Slatina-Timiş, Romania), in the district of Karánsebes disinterred four corpses, removed their intestines and then reburied them.⁷¹⁸ The district council and the Orthodox church denounced the case and stated that the actions had been carried out in the face of their strictest prohibition. Finally, at the end of 1752, news arrived from Mehedica in the Orsova district that locals thought that thirty-four people had been killed by vampires. Though the outcome of the case is unknown, probably no permission was granted due to the above-mentioned district prohibition of 1748.

⁷¹⁶ Marjanucz, ‘A Temesi Bánság, mint modernizációs kísérleti telep, 1716-1778’, 219.

⁷¹⁷ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1896, 1:379, 381.; Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:209, 273.

⁷¹⁸ Those plagued by vampires sometimes smeared themselves with the ‘blood’ of the unearthed corpse, or ate from the soil of its grave. (Tallar 1753, 6v; Hamberger 1992, 50.) Whether the heart and intestines were used in a similar way, or destroyed through a further rite, is unknown. Tallar, ‘Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht’, 6v.; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 50.

It seems that towards the late 1740s - early 1750s, more and more cases were condemned by the authorities. Nevertheless, the 1751 event in Kubin and such references as 'without the knowledge of the authorities' suggest that it was most of all the arbitrarily performed acts that were denounced. It was still possible to justify the rite if it was carried out with official supervision. Regional differences may also be discerned: in the districts of Orsova and Karánsebes there seems to have been a stricter rejection of the rites, while at the other end of the Banat, in Pancsova, the authorities were more prone to authorizing the rituals.

Summary

The working relationship about doing away with the unruly dead which had been forged already in the early 1720s between the borderland's administration and the Orthodox settlers continued to function, and there was a wide space for the various actors taking part in vampire cases to manoeuvre local power dynamics. The general social-political conditions which in the early decades of the eighteenth century characterised the southern borderland were still valid in the 1730s-1750s and contributed to the maintenance of the practice. With each new case, the practice probably got more and more normalized, and provisors had several additional reasons supporting the authorization. The need to calm the local community was still a priority, as the Banat was continuously suffering from a lack of settlers. In addition, in spite of the 1738 decision of the Sanitary Commission to punish Uran, there was no central guideline or official advice given, which would have restricted the provincial and district administration in adjudicating the cases. His punishment was anyways rather connected to the especially sensitive time of the great plague of 1738.

Finally, across the northern and eastern borders of the Banat, the third great wave of witchcraft persecutions had been going on for some time in the Hungarian Kingdom in Szeged and Arad among others. In a 1729 witch trial in Szeged, dead witches were executed without a suspicion of posthumous harmful activity, while in the town of Szék, in Transylvania for instance in 1723, a dead woman was accused of witchcraft, upon which the town council had the body exhumed. Since it was decaying in an orderly fashion, they reburied it and dropped

the charges.⁷¹⁹ Even if on the southern borderland the revenant cases often did not involve witches, news about executions of dead witches from other areas of the monarchy could have added to seeing the ritual as normal.

At the same time, the adjudication of vampire cases started to change towards a more dismissive stance already before major administrative changes started to happen in the province around 1751. The campaign against corpse executions in the Karnánsebes and Orsova districts and the resulting 1748 district ban testify that the attitude to the question started to change in certain parts of the province.

⁷¹⁹ Brandl and Tóth G., *Szegedi boszorkányperek 1726-1744*, 240; András Kiss, *Boszorkányok, kuruzslók, szalmakoszorús paráznák* (Kolozsvár: Kriterion, 2004), 161-164.; On witchcraft persecutions in Hungary see: Gábor Klaniczay, 'Boszorkányhit, boszorkányvád, boszorkányüldözés a 16–18. században', *Ethnographia* 97 (1986): 257-295.

VI.2. Deciphering the *moroi*: The Kőmúves-Tallar Commission (1753)

This chapter is devoted to the activity of a historical actor, who (unlike those in the previous subchapter) became a celebrated personality in histories of vampirism. The German surgeon, Georg Tallar (d. 1762), is noted for having written the most detailed first-hand medical treatise on vampirism, the *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum*. The work was based on his experiences with *moroi* cases in the Banat and its completion was roughly contemporaneous with the Viennese central attack on *magia posthuma* beliefs (Chapter VII.2.), which was led by the Dutch chief physician (*protomedicus*) of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Dutch Gerard van Swieten (1700-1772). Due to this synchronicity, the exact relations between the two projects often get blurred in secondary literature. The present chapter is an attempt at placing Tallar's work back into its historical context with the help of archival materials, and at reassessing his role in the history of vampirism.

The centre-periphery, West-East direction of the spread of medicalization, enlightenment and social disciplining is a powerful and tenable model in the case of the Habsburg Monarchy. However, it has the potential to eclipse local relations and render them inert and insignificant. In this sense, the way Georg Tallar is presented in secondary literature on vampirism is indicative. Tallar is frequently seen as a direct instrument in the hands of the Vienna administration, or more specifically of van Swieten, who allegedly ordered him to carry out enlightenment in practice. Sometimes, he is presented as part of a military-medical mission initiated by van Swieten, who supposedly would have written his own work on vampirism⁷²⁰ based on the Tallar's treatise on Wallachian *moroi* beliefs.⁷²¹ A blatant problem here is that the van Swieten's treatise makes no reference whatsoever to Wallachian beliefs. Others suppose that Tallar was 'deployed' by Vienna as a second step after the 1755 Frei Hermersdorf *magia posthuma* scandal, and was sent to the Banat to apply Maria Theresa's enlightenment

⁷²⁰ Titled *Vampyrismus*, see Chapter VII.2..

⁷²¹ Arlaud, 'Vampire, Aufklärung und Staat: Eine militärmedizinische Mission in Ungarn, 1755–1756'.

project in practice.⁷²² In this case it went unnoticed that Tallar himself wrote that he had conducted his investigations in 1753, two years before Frei Hermersdorf.

The description of this bluntly subordinated relationship between the Dutch protomedicus and the German surgeon is also true of the way their manuscript treatises on vampirism are dealt with. Van Swieten's and Tallar's works are frequently evoked together as major achievements of medical enlightenment, and while in terms of impact, the protomedicus's work was far more influential,⁷²³ Tallar's work is singled out rather for its empirical foundations.⁷²⁴ Echoing Gábor Klaniczay's early study, it is lauded for being the most detailed fieldwork-based study on vampirism of the time, and several authors also praise him for his unparalleled interest in Wallachian culture and folklore.⁷²⁵ While this presentation by and large is fairly accurate, a chronological primacy is mistakenly also granted to van Swieten's work. Secondary literature dates the *Vampyrismus* to 1755, while Tallar's *Visum repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* supposedly followed a year later; by contrast, as it will be shown below, archival records indicate that the *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* has so far been falsely dated to 1756 and was in fact written in 1753, which nuances the centre-periphery picture to some extent.

In general, there is considerable confusion about even the most basic circumstances of Tallar's work, and this confusion is symptomatic of secondary literature's obliviousness of local relations. Tallar is variously referred to as Hungarian, German or Austrian, barber surgeon, regimental surgeon or physician, his work having been written at a variety of dates between 1755 and 1766, and his direct employer being Maria Theresa, van Swieten, the Habsburg army

⁷²² Danneberg, '„Vampire sind äußerst unordentliche Untertanen“. Überlegungen zur Funktion und Instrumentalisierung des Vampirphänomens', 183-184.; Bräunline, 'The Frightening Borderlands of Enlightenment: The Vampire Problem', 716.; Miskolczy, *Felvilágosodás és babonáság - Erdélyi néphidelemgyűjtés 1789-90-ben*, 74.

⁷²³ Van Swieten's *Vampyrismus* was already being widely propagated and published in several languages in the 1750s and 1760s, while Tallar's *Visum repertum* was only published once, as late as 1784.

⁷²⁴ Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 31.; Kreuter, *Der Vampirglaube in Südosteuropa: Studien zur Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion. Rumänien und der Balkanraum*, 93.

⁷²⁵ Gábor Klaniczay, 'The Decline of Witches and Rise of Vampires in 18th-Century Habsburg Monarchy', in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Daniel Oldridge (London: Routledge, 2002), 394.; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 31.; László András Magyar, 'Über die Siebenbürgische Vampirkrankheit. Ein Bericht des deutschen Chirurgen Georg Tallar aus dem Jahre 1755', *Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde*, no. 25 (2002): 161-64; Kreuter, *Der Vampirglaube in Südosteuropa: Studien zur Genese, Bedeutung und Funktion. Rumänien und der Balkanraum*, 93.; Constantin Rauer, 'Von der Aufklärung des Vampirismus zum Vampirismus der Aufklärung: Eine west-östliche Debatte zwischen Einst und Heute', *Ethica* 7, no. 1 (2008): 91-92.

or the Banat administration. I suggest that the attractiveness of the centre-periphery model distorts the picture of the exact workings of medicalization, enlightenment and related processes: it fails to give attention and agency either to Tallar himself, or to the local, provincial administration of the Banat. In order to remedy this situation, one has to examine the original environment of the work more closely.

The Kőműves-Tallar Commission: The physician, the surgeon and the cleric

In 1753, the Banat provincial administration set up a three-member committee in order to investigate the *moroi*-caused affliction. The main source about the activities of the commission is Georg Tallar's *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum*, in the preface of which the German surgeon mentions that the commission consisted of himself, the provincial physician of the Banat, and a theologian (probably meaning a cleric).⁷²⁶ The Banat health care system was presided over by a single provincial physician, and in 1753 this position was held by the Hungarian-born Transylvanian doctor, Pál Ádám Kőműves (referred to in the German texts as Paul Adam Kömovesch / Kömövesch or Kömöves).⁷²⁷

The novel theory I propose here, namely that Tallar and Kőműves were members of the very same vampire-investigating commission allows us to connect a source to Tallar's vampire hunt, which in secondary literature has so far been considered as separate: the documentation pertaining to Kőműves's expenses which emerged during his investigations.⁷²⁸ The other member of the commission, the cleric, is unfortunately as yet unknown.

⁷²⁶ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 3r. 'Welche vermög einer von Löbl. Kayserl. Königl. Banatischen Landes Administration ergangenen hohen Verordnung, durch die diesfals abgeschicket Inquisitions Commission, bestehend aus einem Theologo, Cameral und Provincial Physico, dann einem Chyrurgo'.

⁷²⁷ Petri, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Heilwesens im Banat*, 152, 157-158. Pál Ádám Kőműves was born in 1719 in Transylvania (in Széplak, Kolozs county or possibly Küküllő-Széplak, Maros county) and received his doctorate at Vienna University in 1752. Next year he was already nominated to be the provincial physician of the Banat. His rapid career however ended there. Though he requested dislocation from the Banat in 1771 (referring to bad health and the unwholesome air of the region), the treasury only fulfilled his request six years later. He moved to Sopron, then to Vienna and finally to Pozsony (today Bratislava), where he died in 1793.

⁷²⁸ 'Documents on Kőműves's investigations', 1753. OESTA-FHKA / Banater Akten r. Nr. 37, fols. 91-94. [currently in the special collection: Vampir Akten – Teil 1.]The documentation consists of the request (dated 23.03.1753) which the Banat provincial administration sent to Vienna asking the ratification of the leasing of the Billiet estate to Kőműves to cover his expenses, and the decision (dated 05.04.1753) of the Vienna cameral authorities signed by the queen. The request is reprinted in: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 85-86.

Theoretically, he might even have been an Orthodox priest, but this is highly unlikely, since Tallar's report has a strong anti-Orthodox edge. Most possibly he was a Catholic priest, or (given the lofty expression '*Theologo*'), a monk: both Jesuits and Franciscans had a friary in Temesvár at the time.

According to Tallar, the commission's duties were twofold: to examine the sick and, if possible, cure them, and to exhume the dead and dissect those which were identified by locals as vampires. It is very likely that the administration sought to take a stance on the question of vampirism based on the work of the commission. The presence of the provincial physician and the fact that unlike earlier commissions, this one had the duty of investigating several villages, not just one, point in this direction. The inclusion of the cleric may further suggest that the administration was not sure whether natural or supernatural causes were in the background.

What secondary literature knows about Tallar's life comes from the introduction he wrote to his treatise. He completed his studies in surgery in Mainz and Strasbourg, where he attended the Salzmänn College, a high-quality medical academy, where around the time Tallar must have studied there, students were taught theory as well as practice and were supposed to visit dissections four times a week, an unusually high number of dissections in the era.⁷²⁹ After finishing his studies, he served as a military surgeon in various wars against the French and the Ottomans: his army service included the Jung Wallis Infantry Regiment (led by Ferdinand von Geyer) in Transylvania in the mid-1720s; the Vetterani Cuirassier Regiment in Wallachia at the end of the 1720s and he also serves under J.G. Christian Lobkowitz in Transylvania at the end of the 1730s.⁷³⁰

It was during these latter campaigns that he witnessed vampire killings four times, which also means that the frequent claim in secondary literature that he had been investigating vampires for decades is therefore an exaggeration. Twice he was there at the executions only 'coincidentally' and was solely an observer; twice however he also dissected the supposed vampires.⁷³¹ In 1728, stationed in Wallachia with the Vetterani Regiment, he performed a

⁷²⁹ Tricia Close Koenig, 'Betwixt and between. Production and Commodification of Knowledge in a Medical School Pathological Anatomy Laboratory in Strasbourg (Mid-19th Century to 1939).' (PhD Dissertation, Strasbourg, Université de Strasbourg, 2011), 53.

⁷³⁰ Given that in the mid-1720s he was already serving as a military surgeon, he probably had finished his studies around 1720, and hence was possibly born sometime around 1690-1700. Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 2v. On his post-1753 life and death, see below (Chapter VI.3.).

⁷³¹ Tallar, 4v, 16r-v.

dissection, but he discloses no further information on this case. Four years before that, the captain of the Transylvanian castle of Déva, a certain Major Quirin von Pökerer, commissioned him to open up a corpse held by locals to be a bloodsucker. The captain wanted to obtain the magical herbs in its stomach with which Satan was able to bring corpses to life; he explained that he wanted to do 'various wonderful things with it'. As Tallar noted tauntingly, instead of herbs, the major had to be content with an unbearable stench emanating from the corpse. After the military, he served as a civilian surgeon in various positions: lazarets, spitals and finally in the town of Szabadka (today's Subotica, Serbia). Here, however he was dismissed from his position after a year and became impoverished.

Tallar was still living in Szabadka when he was contracted by the Banat Provincial Administration to join the vampire-investigating commission,⁷³² which apparently was set up based on a local, provincial initiative to take control over *moroi* executions. This theory is supported by the fact that no central official written request came from Vienna for the setting up of the commission: such a request would have been indicated in the protocol books of the administration. Further, his inclusion into the moroi-investigating commission led by the provincial protomedicus Kőműves was also not documented in the protocol books of the administration, even though they minutely documented each filling in of provincial medical positions, including Tallar's own start as district surgeon of Karánsebes in 1754. These clues suggest that Tallar was contacted based on local initiative, probably through personal connections. Personal networks across the borderland served also as channels of transmitting revenant-related information (Chapter II), and it is plausible that Tallar had the reputation of being knowledgeable in the matter and was recommended by someone for the task. Of course, we should not underestimate the role of non-written, oral communication of power, and I cannot exclude the possibility that setting up the commission was suggested in the form of an oral conversation by an envoy, an administrator, or other Viennese agent, who travelled to the Banat. But until further sources suggesting this scenario surface, we can conclude that officially it was not a Viennese project, but a local, provincial one.

⁷³² In an index book entry about Tallar's monetary compensation for having completed his investigations dated 03.24.1753, he is still referred to as 'Tallar Chyrurgo von Theresiopl'. Theresiopolis was the German name for Szabadka. 'Out-of-use reference books of the provincial administration', Volume 43., (unpaginated) 'Tallar'-entry. See also the preamble to his treatise, where he mentions that he was staying in Szabadka before being contacted by the Banat provincial administration.

The mining industry in danger

The administration certainly needed an expert in vampirism, for in January 1753 the district provisor of Újpalánka sent a letter to Temesvár requesting action because in the adjoining villages of Klein Dikvan and Rakasdia (today Ticvaniu Mic and Răcășdia, Romania) no less than fifty people's deaths had been attributed by locals to vampires.⁷³³ It is quite possible that this was the news that prompted the administration to set up the commission, not least because it touched upon a highly sensitive point. Stéphanie Danneberg rightly suggested that vampirism had financial relevance for Vienna:⁷³⁴ this is exactly how Tallar explained the gravity of the matter. According to the surgeon, at least one hundred taxpayers were lost annually due to this 'vampire'-sickness across the empire.⁷³⁵ Danneberg further pointed out that the Banat was especially precious for the Habsburg administration because of its mines. While if we look at the map of moroi cases in the province, many cases happened far from any mining centres, Klein Dikvan and Rakasdia are situated at the feet of the ore-mountains, only 7 and 12 kilometres away from the Banat's mining centre, Oravitz (today's Oravița). The two villages were probably linked to the town, with several ties: villagers could work in the mining facilities, while the surrounding fields would most certainly supply the mining towns with food. Deaths in this sensitive region might well have alarmed the provincial authorities.

Epidemics that emerged in the vicinity of mining centres could result in a quarantine that would totally paralyze production and commerce. Basically, it was in the interest of the mining town to investigate the issue as soon as possible and convince the authorities that there was no longer any need for quarantine. This is exactly what was happening in the same year in the Transylvanian mining town of Kapnikbánya (today Cavnic). There, the town administration was happy to send a circular letter to the surrounding towns, stating that there was no need to maintain the quarantine, for the deaths had not been caused by an epidemic, but only by the returning dead. These were duly exhumed, subjected to a medical examination which

⁷³³ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:50.

⁷³⁴ Danneberg, '„Vampire sind äußerst unordentliche Untertanen“. Überlegungen zur Funktion und Instrumentalisierung des Vampirphänomens', 186.

⁷³⁵ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chyurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 4v.

confirmed one of them to be a bloodsucker and finally was burnt at the stake in the middle of the town square.⁷³⁶

Tallar was aware of the importance of his work for the mining industry, since both the dedicatory letter and the epilogue are rife with mining-related metaphors.⁷³⁷ In the former section, he likens his own fortunate acceptance into the service of the provincial administration to that of the mineral stone, which is accidentally washed into the way of the chemist, who, cleaning it, finds it useful. In the ending paragraph, he likens vampirism to cobalt. The metaphor is very apt for two reasons. As in the way ignorant people can mistake cobalt for precious ore, so can one confuse natural and supernatural causes; also, both can result in sickness and eventual death. The miner's sickness linked to cobalt had been known for a long time, but the discovery of the metal itself, and its poisonous arsenic-content was the recent work of the Swedish mining specialist Georg Brandt. While he had already referred to cobalt in 1735, he explained it in detail only in his 1748 article in the journal of the Royal Scientific Society of Uppsala.⁷³⁸ Tallar's metaphor was therefore not only apt but very topical as well.

The Commission: Itinerary and documents

The reconstruction of the vampire commission's itinerary is not easy, for the members did not always stick together (Figure 38). According to Tallar, they first visited Klein Dikvan in the south (Újpalánka district), then on the way back to Temesvár they investigated in Schebell (Csákova d., today Jebel, Romania), and lastly he went alone north of Temesvár, to Kallacsa (today Călăcea, Romania).⁷³⁹ Interestingly, he does not mention Rakasdia at all; it is possible that the members parted ways and Kőműves went there by himself. Kőműves's remunerations petition claims that the doctor investigated several villages (no place names are listed) and that he faced the superstitious mob all alone, an exaggeration in the light of Tallar's assertions. After

⁷³⁶ 'Documents of the Kapnik revenant case'; Partially reprinted in: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 88-92.

⁷³⁷ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 2r, 20r.

⁷³⁸ Georg Brandt, 'Dissertatio de semimetallis', *Acta Literaria et Scientiarum Sveciae* 4 (1735): 1-10.; Georg Brandt, 'Cobalti nova species examinata et descripta', *Acta Regiae Societatis Scientiarum Upsaliensis* 1, no. 3 (1748): 33-41.

⁷³⁹ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 3r, 19r.

Schebell, Kőműves must have stayed south of Temesvár and visited moroi cases in Stamora (today Stamora Română, Romania) and Vermes (today Vermeș, Romania), at least these are the places from which news about vampire killings arrived in Temesvár in January-March, 1753.⁷⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Tallar went up north to investigate the disease afflicting the village of Kallacsa; he repeatedly remarked that he was alone there, working only with the community leader (*knies*) and a council member.⁷⁴¹

Tallar was writing weekly reports during his work in the commission, which makes it clear why the title of his treatise includes 'Summary Report'.⁷⁴² According to the protocol books, weekly medical reports from Kallacsa indeed arrive in Temesvár from 1st February to 6th March, when the sickness finally stopped.⁷⁴³ The commission's work was finished by the end of March, in line with the usual seasonal pattern of vampire cases in the Banat centring on the winter. The provincial administration handed in Kőműves's and Tallar's remuneration petitions to the treasury dated 23rd and 24th March. The surviving entry about Tallar's petition explains that Tallar deserves the daily fees for his work in the 'Kallacsa Commission' and is referred to as a 'surgeon from Theresiopolis [Szabadka]'.⁷⁴⁴ This suggests that he was contracted solely for the vampire commission and was not given a stable provincial job. As indicated above, Kőműves's petition is preserved and states that he handed in a report on his findings. Unfortunately, neither Tallar's weekly reports, nor the doctor's report have been found in archives so far, and whether the anonymous cleric also wrote a report is an even greater mystery.

⁷⁴⁰ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1896, 1:486.

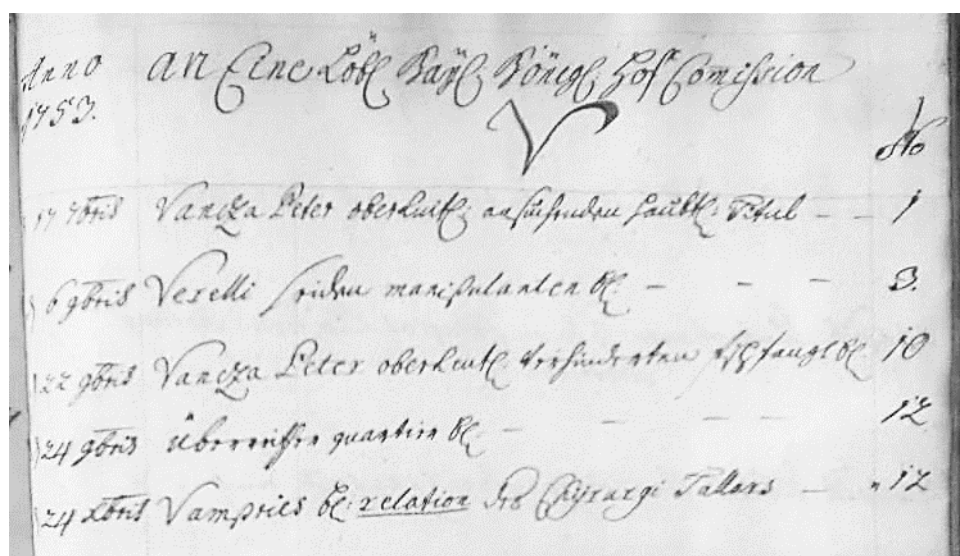
⁷⁴¹ 'Sie haben zu Kallatsa wohin ich mit dem Oberknies samt einem Beamten zu erst nachgesehen so aber alleine verordnet ware [...]' and 'Observatio 8na: bey allen diesen Kranken, welche uns bey dieser Visitation, auch mihr zu Kallatsa seind zu handen gekommen [...]' (italics mine) Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chyurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 6v, 19r.

⁷⁴² Tallar, 11v.

⁷⁴³ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1896, 1:436, 438. None of the entries gives a name for the author of these reports; the first entry mentions the district surgeon of Temeswar. It might be possible that the district surgeon was Tallar himself, but until further sources emerge, the position Tallar held during his investigations remains unclear.

⁷⁴⁴ Tallar Chyrurgo von Theresiopl wegen der Galacser commission die diurna zu bezahlen. 1753, Marz. 24. Cameral Zahl Amt'. 'Out-of-use reference books of the provincial administration', Volume 43. (unpaginated) see entry: 'Tallar'.

What we do know however, is that the provincial administration handed over surgeon Tallar's 'Relation about vampires' to a court commission on 24th December 1753.⁷⁴⁵ In all likelihood, the *Relation* is in fact the *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* and the dating of Tallar's work to 1756 in current secondary literature is mistaken. Nothing is mentioned in the protocol books of later years (including those of 1756) about Tallar or anyone else handing in a report or treatise on vampires. The sole source of the 1756 dating in fact is Johann Georg Mößle, a well-known Vienna publisher, who edited and printed Tallar's work in 1784.⁷⁴⁶ Where Mößle found the information on the dating is unclear, and I suggest is a mistake. The *Visum Repertum* was written and handed in over the Christmas of 1753.



39 Entry in the protocol book of the provincial administration about surgeon Georg Tallar's relation about vampires being handed in to an aulic commission on 24th December 1753 (bottom line).

The timing of the handing in of the report is synchronous with major changes in the province, and therefore we can suspect a strong central influence in it. On 28th November 1753, Field Marshal Franz Anton Pontz von Engelshofen (1692 – 1761), the earlier military and civilian governor of the Banat was sent into retirement and was substituted by the first real civilian governor, the Spanish nobleman Francesco Villana-Perlas de Rialpo (1704 – 1773). At the same time, starting from September 1753, a court advisor, Ignaz Kempf von Angret was leading a

⁷⁴⁵ This information is there in several archival sources: 'Out-of-use reference books of the provincial administration', Volume 43., (unpaginated), see entries: 'Tallar' and 'Wampirs'; 'Out-of-use reference books of the provincial administration', Volume 41., (unpaginated) see entry to the date: 1753.12.24.

⁷⁴⁶ The *Visum Repertum*'s manuscript version consists of two separate parts: the treatise itself and the two leaves covering it, which have been written by another hand. This cover (Tallar 1753, 1r-v, 22r-v.) contains the editorial preface of the 1784 printed version (Tallar 1784, A2-A4), where Mößle notes that the original work was written in 1756. Based on the date in the preface, a third hand (probably an archivist) wrote a note on the cover page saying 'Zur Ungarischen Geschichte An: 1756'.

special aulic court commission in the Banat whose duty was to conduct an overall visitation and assessment of the political and economic situation of the province. It is possible that when the above-cited protocol books mention court commission, they mean the Kempf-commission. At the same time, from January 1753 onwards, the Banat administration was also obliged to send in all sanitary-related reports to two governing commissions seated in Vienna: the Aulic Sanitary Commission (raised to the level of an Aulic Deputation (*Hofdeputation*) in 1753) which oversaw the sanitary issues of the whole empire and to the Aulic Banatean-Illirian Deputation that was responsible for issues relating to the Rascian and Wallachian peoples of the southern borderlands.⁷⁴⁷ Until further sources emerge, one can only guess which of the three commissions received Tallar's report.

Importantly, there is no indication that Tallar had a stable position in the Banat at the time. Even though there are no explicit documents ordering Tallar to write the report, and the formulation in his preamble that he was 'somewhat confusing' in his weekly reports, which is why he decided to write the summary report suggests that he saw an opportunity for getting out of his desperate situation in Szabadka. As it turns out from later documents, he had a wife, and must have needed money badly. It is safest to assume that he saw the opportunity in the administrative changes, and used the summary report to fashion himself as a useful agent of enlightenment, a knowledgeable borderland person, who was not as superstitious as some district surgeons who allowed the *moroi* executions. Indeed, Tallar's service did not go unrewarded: on 22nd April 1754, four months after the handing in of the report, he was nominated to be the district surgeon of Karánsebes, a position he retained until his death in 1762.⁷⁴⁸

⁷⁴⁷ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1896, 1:122.

⁷⁴⁸ 'Out-of-use reference books of the provincial administration', Volume 41., (unpaginated) see entry to the date: 1754.04.22.; for his death see: 'Protocol registers', Volume 71., 351v. The entry is dated 1762.12.04. Tallar was also assigned to serve as the quarantine surgeon of Cossova in 1756. See: 'Protocol registers', Volume 65., 224. He left a widow behind, who died in 1771 ('Index books to the protocol registers', volume 187, see entry: 'Tallarin'). Anton Petri lists Tallar among the district surgeons of Caransebes, but under a mistaken name as 'Georg Tabar' Petri, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Heilwesens im Banat*, 108.

The *Visum Repertum*: Medicine, culture and demonology

In spite of its title, Tallar's work is not a *visum repertum*, that is, not a forensic report. The description of the dissections is less detailed than it should be, given the standards of the time.⁷⁴⁹ The descriptions of the dissections here only serve as arguments in an overarching natural explanation of the phenomenon of vampirism. The work therefore is an empirically based medical treatise. It is neatly structured with explanatory marginal notes and without mistakes or corrections; it is possible that Tallar eventually intended it for publication. He even refers to the 'censors' who would read the text;⁷⁵⁰ these might be actual censors or the physicians / officials who would judge his arguments. At the same time, the *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* does not meet the level of contemporary treatises in at least one aspect: the lack of references. In the whole course of the work, Tallar makes only two cursory references, one to van Swieten's commentaries on Boerhaave's *Aphorisms* and one to Malpighi.⁷⁵¹ This blatant lack of references can be explained by the shortness of the time in which Tallar had to compile his treatise and by the fact that he was probably unemployed in Szabadka while writing it and simply did not have access to such works.

The treatise seeks to answer the two questions posed to the Kőműves-Tallar Commission: what caused the mysterious vampire sickness and the supposed vampires' lack of bodily decomposition? Tallar approached the questions on several levels. First, he gave a medical/naturalistic explanation for the phenomena. Second, as opposed to most writers (including van Swieten), he was not satisfied with giving an alternative, medical explanation: he also sought to test and refute Wallachian folkloric ideas about the workings of the demonic world. Finally, he also engaged in moral/demonological discussions about the possibility of satanic influence. These several levels earned him the respect of the provincial administration as well as that of today's scholarship.

⁷⁴⁹ Compare for instance with the autopsy report about the Habsburg Serbian vampires. Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 46-54.

⁷⁵⁰ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 8v, 20r.

⁷⁵¹ Tallar, 7v, 16v.

Medicine and gastronomy

Tallar determined that there was no connection between the vampire sickness and the undecomposed state of certain corpses: he explained them with reference to unrelated natural causes. His first-hand knowledge of the phenomenon and sensitivity to local problems shows itself in the fact that, uniquely among contemporary writers on vampirism (including van Swieten himself), he addressed the most baffling aspect of vampirism: why do certain corpses start to decompose earlier than others *buried at the same time*? His answer is that in general, decomposition had not commenced because the cold winter soil and the dry air within the coffins had conserved the bodies and the difference in decomposition was due to the different bodily composure people have. Those of sanguine temperament have an abundance of blood, and since blood contains salt, their bodies are conserved longer than those of other temperaments.⁷⁵² This is why sanguine corpses were identified as vampires by locals.

He framed the problem of the vampire sickness by stating that among all the peoples of the Banat it was only Wallachians who suffered from this affliction: German or Rascian settlers, or foreign soldiers never did.⁷⁵³ The sickness had two major causes. First, the combination of strict Orthodox fasting habits with poor Wallachian cuisine. They ate too many vegetables of a cold and wet nature: raw onions, garlic, radish, carrots and sour cabbage. The cold phlegm these create in the stomach can rot and make people weakened by the zealous fasting period before winter sick, eventually killing them. The Rascians presented an anomaly, since they also fasted the same way and ate the same type of food, and still, according to Tallar, they never got plagued by vampires. This is an awkward statement in the light of the multiple sources attesting to Rascian vampirism. The fact that Tallar did not realize this not only meant that he had not spent much time among Rascians, but also that he had not heard about the vampires of Habsburg Serbia, and that the whole vampire-discourse of the 1730s and 40s had escaped him. This again puts him in a different light than his usual portrayal of a persistent investigator of vampires. Tallar's solution to the anomaly is that Rascians are saved by the large amount of hot paprika they use in their cuisine: it neutralizes the cold-natured food they eat.

⁷⁵² Tallar, 15r-v, 17r-19v.

⁷⁵³ Tallar, 4r-5v, 19r.

The other major cause of the sickness was the belief that victims of a vampire can only escape immediate death if they smear themselves abundantly with the vampire's blood, that is, the decaying fluids that flow from corpses. This practice multiplied deaths.⁷⁵⁴ By pronouncing the practice of blood smearing to be dangerous, he gave a powerful reason for the authorities not to allow vampire-killing rites to be carried out, not even in the presence of officials. On the other hand, Tallar stated that the locals' fear of the dead was extremely strong, and that therefore simply banning the practice could not be successful. Emphasis had to be laid on medical enlightenment and the spread of the use of medicaments as well.⁷⁵⁵ By presenting the issue in this way, he skilfully managed to substantiate the utility of his own profession.

Folklore dissected

Tallar also presented himself as a connoisseur and critical analyst of Wallachian culture; he stated that without such knowledge, one could not understand the core of the vampire problem.⁷⁵⁶ He was proud of his first-hand experiences with Wallachians, emphasising that he had known two of the vampires in person while they were still alive. Furthermore, he underlined that he spoke the Wallachian and Hungarian languages fluently, and therefore needed no interpreters. These skills helped him to approach the problem in a direct way.

He subjected local conceptions about vampirism to logical and physical testing, thereby refuting them. In relation to the vampire sickness, he argued that the sick could not have been plagued by bloodsuckers, because if something was indeed sucking their blood, they would have died because of the bloodletting he performed on them; on the contrary, they had been cured. He also tested some of the folkloric ideas related to the corpses. According to locals, a vampire was only in his grave on Saturdays, but Tallar had 'vampires' exhumed on other days, and they were always there. Another belief held that one could not lead a black mare across a vampire's grave. Upon trying, he concluded that the horse at first did not want to step over any of the graves (in his opinion because the graves were high and because it felt the smell of corpses), but after a little goading, it stepped over all the graves regardless of the inhabitant's

⁷⁵⁴ Tallar, 6v, 13r.

⁷⁵⁵ Tallar, 4r-v.

⁷⁵⁶ Tallar, 5r, 10r, 19r-v.

nature. On another occasion, he collected the blood found in a vampire's mouth into a small glass and let it stand for a night. The blood separated into two components: a thin, brownish liquid and a brownish residue, and stank horribly. Based on the putrid stench he concluded that this liquid could not possibly sustain any kind of life. Finally, in Klein Dikvan he also had the opportunity to meet a 'living blood sucker', who allegedly had already died twice before and had not eaten or drunk anything for two years. After a two-hour examination (the exact method of which Tallar unfortunately did not disclose), he determined that the person was a fraud.⁷⁵⁷ This peculiar character probably was a witch or werewolf.

As mentioned above, Tallar actually had a prehistory in strange experiments. Back in 1724, while he was serving in the Habsburg army as a military surgeon, the captain of the Transylvanian castle of Déva, Major Quirin von Pökerer, commissioned him to open up a corpse held by locals to be a bloodsucker. The captain wanted to obtain the magical herbs in its stomach with which Satan is able to bring corpses to life; he explained that he wanted to do 'various wonderful things with it'. As Tallar notes tauntingly, instead of herbs, the major had to be content with an unbearable stench emanating from the corpse.

Though Tallar considered all practices carried out against the corpses useless, he described them. He distinguished the Banatian and the Wallachian rites. In the former province, the decapitated corpse was reburied in some places, while in others it was burnt. In Wallachia, the corpse was taken out of the village on a cart, decapitated, a stone pressed into its mouth, scalded with hot wine, the heart pierced with a stake and left to be preyed upon by birds and dogs⁷⁵⁸. In the Wallachian case, Tallar probably conflated several alternative practices, while it is notable that we have sources attesting to scalding from the Banat as well.⁷⁵⁹

Tallar was eager to scrutinize other folkloric creatures as well: he collected six other supernatural disease-explanations and ranked them according to the efficacy of their local cures.⁷⁶⁰ The beautiful (*die Schöne*) were groups of witches who cursed the houses which obstructed the route of their night-time flights.⁷⁶¹ Such houses either had to have a horse's or

⁷⁵⁷ For these tests see: Tallar 1753, 15r (bloodletting), 5v, 17r (the black mare), 16r (the blood test), 19v (the living bloodsucker).

⁷⁵⁸ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 13r.

⁷⁵⁹ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:206, 262-264.

⁷⁶⁰ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 11r-13v.

⁷⁶¹ For a complex treatment of the belief in Central and South-East European folklore see: Pócs, *Fairies and Witches at the Boundary of South-Eastern and Central Europe*.

oxen's head nailed above the door⁷⁶² or had to be demolished and rebuilt elsewhere. If the curse took effect, the patient's sickness was long; wise women were called, who would cast tin into a bowl of water and count the pieces into which it disintegrated, equating it with the number of afflictions the victim had; at other times they would mix all sorts of 'absurd things' and either smear the patient with the mixture or feed it to him or her. They also used incantations, which Tallar did not want to reproduce in the text, partly because they were so foolish and partly because wise women liked to collect them and build them into their repertoire, which Tallar presumably wanted to avoid. He considered all these anti-'beautiful' measures to be totally inefficient.

Two other techniques were similarly useless and even dangerous in his opinion. The flying dragon called 'smehu' could tread on people, or even have intercourse with them in the way a succubus or accubus [sic] demon would.⁷⁶³ Such patients according to Tallar were suffering from epilepsy, feverish diseases and hallucinations. The treatment was to shoot an unloaded pistol next to the head of the patient, which in the opinion of the surgeon would only result in convulsions and trembling. Tallar noted that it was difficult to convince Orthodox priests to come and administer the last sacrament to such patients. Another ailment, the witch's binding, referred to when a magical knot ('*coagulum*') in the vicinity of a person was pulled tight, causing the person to become lame and crooked. In order to deal with this, the victim had to lie on their back on a trough, smeared with oil, the legs tied tight and the body thus stretched. In Tallar's view, the real cause of this condition was fatty clogging in the arteries of the limbs, and that the curative procedure was more harmful than useful.

There were certain treatments, however, which could even be beneficial. Wallachians believed that their enemies could put tiny magical objects into their drinking water, which they would swallow and then fall sick. Tallar supposed this was some sort of love magic and decided that among local cures involving the drinking of honeyed wine or honeyed brandy, the first one could sometimes really work. It was mostly during fasting seasons that the people

⁷⁶² Interestingly, Mátyás Bél in his 1735-42 description of Hungary advises similar measures (the hanging of a decaying horse head on the wall) to get rid of bedbugs. Imre Wellmann, *Magyarország népének élete 1730 táján* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 1984), 177.

⁷⁶³ Éva Pócs discusses belief in the so-called 'lidérc', the Hungarian name for these creatures among Hungarian-speaking Catholics in a Romanian village in Transylvania. See: Éva Pócs, 'We, Too, Have Seen a Great Miracle': Conversations and Narratives on the Supernatural Among Hungarian-Speaking Catholics in a Romanian Village.', in *Vernacular Religion in Everyday Life. Expressions of Belief*, ed. Mario Bowman and Ülo Valk (London & New York: Routledge, 2012), 246-280.

frequently ailed from colicky stomach aches, which according to them were caused by the sinking of their hearts. The cure consisted of drinking oil from church lamps, which could be efficient if they vomited beforehand. Finally, they thought that certain harmful tumours could develop in their lungs, liver and throat, which they called '*schui*'.⁷⁶⁴ Tallar diagnosed this as quinsy. The Wallachian barber in this case would lay the patient on his back, with his legs pointing towards the sun, and then, using an unsophisticated hook manufactured by Gypsies, he would reach into the throat, and cut out the tonsils with a sharp breadknife. Tallar determined that while the procedure could cause copious bleeding, it could be successful, and in the case of sanguine patients, even beneficial. For others, however, it could cause death within 2-3 years, and in this case not even the Wallachian panacea, cabbage soup could help - Tallar noted biliously.

Morals and the devil

Even though Tallar dismissed all of these Wallachian folkloric creatures as imaginary, he could not do so when he came to the possibility of satanic activity. To be more precise, taking the workings of the devil into consideration was a moral and professional requirement throughout the century (Chapters V, VII). Van Swieten hastened to admit this before going on to debunk the belief in vampirism as ignorant superstition, and Maria Theresa's 1766 *Lex Caesaro-regia* also considered real demonic magic as an existing category to be distinguished from natural causes and fraud. Further, Anton De Haen, the head of the Vienna clinic and pioneer of bedside practice for students of medicine, wrote a whole book on magic in 1774, in which he affirmed the ability of the devil to influence bodily workings. Finally, Sámuel Rácz, the physiology professor of the university of Buda, included the existence of ghosts, devilish magic, demonic possession and divine miracles into his 1794 university textbook on forensic medicine, but warned students that in most cases the causes were natural.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶⁴ For the widespread name for this disease among both Romanians and Hungarians see among others: Aurél Vajkai, *Népi orvoslás a Borsavölgyében* (Kolozsvár, 1943), 110-111.

⁷⁶⁵ Van Swieten, 'Vampyrismus', para. 1.; Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, 1852, 1:784.; De Haen, *De magia liber*; Sámuel Rácz, *A borbélyi tanításoknak második darabja a törvényes orvosi tudományról, és az orvosi politziáról* (Pest: Trattner, 1794), 139, 144, 147-150.

Tallar addressed a peculiar moral problem about vampire sickness at the beginning and end of the treatise. Why does Satan torment Wallachians, who are so zealous in fasting? And why are the German and foreign soldiers left unharmed, if it is precisely they who occasionally commit bloodthirsty acts? In spite of the pun on words, this was a real moral dilemma about the motivations behind divine punishment and reward. While posing this question Tallar inserted a somewhat hazy idea into the text about Satan's this-worldly activity. As he wrote, it would be strange to suppose that Satan distinguished between people on a 'political' (i.e. ethnic Wallachian vs non-Wallachian) basis. And even if we would grant this, Tallar goes on, it would make utterly no sense why Satan continued this distinction after death as well.⁷⁶⁶ While it is not easy to interpret this section, it seems that what he is saying is that to suppose that Satan reanimates only Wallachian corpses because they are Wallachians, goes against the usual way Satan operates: after all, being an instrument of God, he should make his choices based on the moral qualities of people, not their ethnicity.

With an interesting rhetorical move, Tallar asks for the reader's patience and leaves the dilemma unresolved until the very end of the text. Here, he comes back to the issue and gives the following explanation:

*'Since the question about the unharmed soldiers and Germans which was posed in the introduction has not been answered satisfactorily, it should be added that the soldiers and the Germans, through their faith, their pastors and through Christian learning are already ripped out of the unhealthy desert of Satanic slavery and faulty superstition in their youths, and are planted into the beloved Land, namely into the healthy garden of knowledge full of herbs, and they laugh at the idle fables and the harms of those corpses; they entrust themselves to the incomprehensibly wonderful aids of their Saviour, and remain uninjured, and even if some of them are gullible, their pastors are apt to teach them.'*⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁶ Tallar 1753, 4r. 'Was mag es aber wohl vor eine Beschaffenheit haben, dass die zwahr nur im Fasten so Exemplarische Wallachen von dießem übel so oft und so häufig hin gerißen werden; dahin gegen das Militare Welches doch jederzeit fast mitten unter ihnen Bequartieret, von dem Sattan (wann er jadoch an dießer Menschen freßerey theil haben soll) ganz ohn angefochten, ja ohne ein einziges Exempel zu haben schaadloss gelaßen wird; Wer wollte da nicht schier auf die gedanken verfallen, der Sattan mieße diesfals nebst so vihlen ihme schon zu geeigneten Qualitäten, auch wohl dabey einen Statisten agiren, und sich des Attributi der politic Bedienen; Wann er aber solches in puncto der Krankheit auch thäte, so wüßte ich doch nicht Was er nach dem Tot vor eine Reflection zu machen hette, da sollte wohl billig aller Respect Cessiren; und Wann mann die sache recht Betrachtet so sind sie ja wo es die Noht erfordert, recht zu dem Bluth durst gewidmet.'

⁷⁶⁷ Tallar 1753, 19v: 'Wann die frage in dem vorbericht von dem unbeschädigten Militari und denen Teitschen nicht genugsam beantwortet, so füge hinzu das das Militare, durch den glauben und ihre sehl sorger, samt deren teitschen, schon in der jugend durch christen Lehr, aus der irr-aberglaube- und unkraut vollen Wüsten der

The answer to the dilemma is that Germans and foreigners had a good Christian (i.e. non-Orthodox) education and therefore are impervious to superstitious fables with which Satan could tempt them to make them fear the returning dead.⁷⁶⁸ A further interesting aspect of the above quote is its language: it differs markedly from the simple and technical medical discourse of the core text. In fact, it resembles a sermon, crammed with intense expressions and biblical images about Satan's desert (Mt 4:1-11) and the seeds from the sower's parable (Mt 13:1-42). The importance of pastoral work is emphasised at a similar section in the beginning of the text as well. Without well-educated priests, Wallachian children learn all sorts of superstitious things from their mothers and from Orthodox monks (*kalugers*). This way, they lose their belief in God and can easily fall into the trap of Satan like a fly in the spider web or the reed which the wind bends in all directions at its liking.⁷⁶⁹ Seen in its entirety, this idea involves the moral judgement that Orthodox people in their ignorance of true religion are worse Christians, are more sinful and hence are deservedly tormented by satanic fears and visions.

Finally, there is a point in the text where Tallar actually enters demonological reflections. He writes about the small, round holes found in the soil of the graves which hosted supposed vampires. According to locals, these were the holes through which vampires left their graves at night. Tallar argues however that the holes were in fact the results of a burial rite, where men stabbed the grave with their sticks in order to prevent the dead from returning. After this, he adds the following:

*'Were Satan able to condense the body so much that it would be able to fit through such a small hole, at the same time not so much that it could penetrate through the loose texture of the soil, then even a single, strong downpour would be able to impede the devilish machination in fitting through the hole.'*⁷⁷⁰

Sattanischen Slavery ausgerißen und in das gelobte Land, nemblich in den heilsamen Kreuter vollen garten der erkantniß vest, gepflanzet, verlachen das nichts Kommende fablern und schaden deren toten, und verlaßen sich auf die unbegreiflich wundervolle hülfsmittel ihres heilands, und bleiben unbeschadigt, und wann schon viele darueber einfältige, so seind ihre sehl sorger sie zu Lehren Aptirt.'

⁷⁶⁸ Interestingly, whether we look at the medical/gastronomical or the moral explanation of vampirism, the Rascians are anomalies for both. While solving the first with the paprika idea, Tallar is unable to come up with a moral explanation for why they are not tormented by Satan the same way Wallachians are.

⁷⁶⁹ Tallar, 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht', 3v.

⁷⁷⁰ Tallar 1753, 14v: 'Solte aber Sattan den Körper so Compact Condensiren, das er zu einem kleinen runden loch herauß mieße und nicht auch so Extenuiren kennen, das er durch die sehr weite poros der erden herauß penetriren kinne, so möchte ihm wohl ein einziger starker Plazregen durch zu flößung des Loches das künstliche handwerk verbieten.'

In the *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum*, these are the only points at which the medical/cultural discussion is interrupted with moral/demonological lines of thinking, which by and large do not fit smoothly into the general argumentation of the text. While the core text bases the explanation of the vampire disease on cultural/ethnic grounds, namely into Wallachian gastronomy and the blood smearing practice, the moral discussion goes against it and claims that it would be foolish to think that Satan discriminates on political/ethnic grounds. This and the difference in language make these few instances easily noticeable. In fact, one might even wonder whether these places were really Tallar's idea, or perhaps the suggestions of the unknown cleric.

After having examined vampirism based on these three levels, the medical, the folkloric and the moral, Tallar was able to draw his conclusion about the matter: in his opinion, there was nothing divine, satanic, magical or even particularly wonderfully natural about the vampire sickness or the corpses of supposed vampires. At the same time, he felt it necessary to yield the ultimate judgement on the issue (especially on Satan's possible involvement) to those whom this decision belonged to.⁷⁷¹

Summary

At the beginning of 1753, a moroi epidemic with an unusually high mortality rate affected Klein Dikvan and Rakasdia, a neuralgic area of the provincial mining industry. As a reaction, the Banat provincial administration set up a commission consisting of surgeon Georg Tallar, protomedicus Pál Ádám Kőműves and a cleric in order to carry out investigations in several villages. His inclusion into the commission probably rested on his fame as an expert in vampirism. Tallar compiled the *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* at the end of the same year for the provincial administration, which was undergoing major structural changes initiated from Vienna as well as thorough survey led by aulic commissioner Kempf.

⁷⁷¹ Tallar 1753, 20r: 'Weilen ich aber mit gewissen nicht ein einzige Spuhr weder einer Himmlisch noch einer Sattanischen erscheinung, weder sonst in der natur der sache segründete artificiente, Magische, prater natürliche operation bey denen kranken so wohl als bey der Toten gefunden habe, so über gebe [ich] es schuldiger maßen denen jenigen, deren es zu Dejudicieren gehört.' In a similar vein see: 8v: 'oder ob der Sattan bey dießer krankheit das Dominium führe, will der mahlen nicht in meinem gewalt, sondern bey denen Herrn Censoribus Decidiret zu werden geruhen.'

At the time of the writing of the treatise, it was crucial for Tallar to convince the authorities about his medical skills, his enlightened attitude to superstition as well as his extensive knowledge of Wallachian culture and life. The work he handed in was much more a first-hand experience-based medical treatise than an autopsy report, as the title suggest. In it, Tallar put forward a combined naturalistic-moralistic, explanation for the *moroi* epidemics, which rested on dietary specificities as well as on the superstitious nature of the local population, which attracted demonic activity. Crucially, he also sought to underpin his expertise by presenting the results of a series of experiments and tests he had carried out on various aspects of local folklore and popular medicine. In doing so, he was very much reminiscent of Francis Bacon's preternatural-testing project as well as of the anonymous author of the *Letter from a good friend* (Chapter V). His expertise earned the respect of the administration, which nominated him to become district- and mining surgeon in 1754, in which capacity he died in 1762.

VI.3. Doubting the moroi: Revenants in the Banat after 1753

The present subchapter sheds light on moroi-related practices in the Banat in the wake of the Tallar-Kőműves Commission's work and the administrative reorganization of the Banat into a civilian province. The assessment of the commission's impact is not an easy task, because even though it was not valid for the Banat, the 1755 central order against *magia posthuma* (Chapter VII) came only a year after the completion of Tallar's *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum*.

Before discussing the known cases in the Banat after 1753, I devote a concise description of the cross-imperial information grid that the Banat quarantine stations of the 1750s have been managing. This network with their practices of information-gathering also played a role in transmitting revenant-related data from Ottoman lands into the Habsburg Monarchy. The last section of the subchapter takes a brief look at Josephine policies in relation to *moroi* in the Banat.

Foreign revenants: Quarantine stations as hubs of vampire-related information

As it has been indicated in Chapter II.1., the quarantine stations' personnel were a crucial element in the plague cordon of the borderland, as they were supposed to be the sensitive nerve endings of the whole medical-military structure aimed at nipping epidemic outbreaks in the bud. In order to carry out this task, it was of vital necessity to be extremely well-informed and alert all the time. This is why they reacted instantly to vampire cases as well. Quarantine physician Glaser's role had been instrumental in creating the unnatural medical diagnosis of vampirism (Chapter II.3.): it was his report that first underlined that locals were not illogical in their belief in vampires, and it was based on his report that the Serbian vice-governor sent out the Flückinger-commission, which arrived on-site already with the premise that a physician found something unusual there. Quarantine surgeons and physicians played a similar role in the Banat.

Following the great plague of 1738 and the loss of Northern Bosnia, Serbia and Wallachia the same year, new quarantine stations were set up along the new border, and the old-new plague cordon started functioning already in the 1740s. The most important station was Semlin (today Zemun, Serbia). Situated across Ottoman-ruled Belgrade, in the easternmost corner of the Slavonian frontier, it was guarding the main Constantinople-Belgrade-Vienna trade route. Towards the west, along the Slavonian frontier Mitrowitz (today Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia), Brod and Alt-Gradiska (today Gradiška on the Croatian-Bosnian border)⁷⁷² were the quarantine stations. East of Semlin, the Banat's southern frontier was overseen in the beginning by two stations: Pancsova (today Pančevo, Serbia) and Orsova (today Orșova, Romania), but the gap between them was filled up in 1751 by two others in Kubin (today Kovin, Serbia) and Újpalánka (today Banatska Palanka, in Serbia). Eastward, the cordon continued along the borders of Transylvania (today Romania) and stations were founded at the major crossing points across the Carpathian ridge, for example in Vulkán (today Vulcan), Vöröstorony (Turnu Roșu), Töröcsvár (Bran), Tömös (Pasul Predeal), Ojtoz (Oituz) and Gyimesbükk (Ghimeș-Făget). These stations were not permanent until 1765 in the sense that they only enforced quarantine measures in plague-threatened times.⁷⁷³

As discussed in Chapter II, quarantine stations were institutions of policing as well as of knowledge production and based on the official sanitary journals of the quarantine station of Pancsova in 1754-1757,⁷⁷⁴ we also receive a glance at their role in transmitting revenant-related information. The sanitary journals are an outstanding source for understanding these roles as the station's personnel had to file in information on all trespassing traffic, noteworthy events, news, reconstructions and requests. They provide insights into the workings of the station, and importantly, into the networks of information that they managed.

One of the most valuable features of the journals is perhaps the entries about the creation and functioning of an intelligence-network that Paitsch, the quarantine director created in order to gain up-to-date and trustworthy information on possible sources of contagion in Ottoman lands. Since in this era (that is, before 1765), quarantine measures were only instituted in case there was a threat of epidemic from the Ottoman part, it was crucial for the

⁷⁷² Not to be confused with today's Veliko Gradište in Serbia.

⁷⁷³ Vaniček, *Spezialgeschichte der Militärgrenze*, 1:405.; Lesky, 'Die österreichische Pestfront an der k. k. Militärgrenze.', 86-88.

⁷⁷⁴ 'Sanitary reports of the Temesvár administration'

director to know when such a threat emerged well before it would reach the station itself in order to advise the administration to order the quarantine to work.

Paitsch himself was only slowly gathering the know-how of running the information-gathering business. At first, he was simply routinely questioning everyone (travellers, merchants, soldiers etc.) passing through the station about the sanitary situation on their way, but the problem with such information of course was that these observations were not entirely reliable. He notes several times that the information he received from travellers and merchants, what his own interpreter, other quarantine stations or the provincial administration itself told him contradict each other.⁷⁷⁵ A decision to levy the quarantine had detrimental effects on commerce, therefore reasons to do so had to be very well-grounded; the same being true for lifting the quarantine.

As a more active step, Paitsch started to pay informants (*Kundschafter*) whom he sent solely for the purpose of gathering information. There were several problems, however. First, he did not have enough money to pay for their travels and had to add some of his private money.⁷⁷⁶ Second, unless given enough money, the informants would simply go a couple of miles south of the border, sit down in the first pub and eat and drink until the money lasted, then come back and make a fake report based what they had heard from passers-by.⁷⁷⁷ That these agents did not feel urged to go and investigate epidemics is of course understandable: they ran a great risk of contracting the disease themselves. Paitsch also explained that it did not turn out to be a good idea to send informants to Ottoman lands with the sole purpose of monitoring epidemics, for people at marketplaces and towns did not like such vagabonds who did not seem to have any regular business in the place, and did not buy anything just walked around and asked questions.

A further problem was that there was an ever-present language gap between Paitsch and the sources of information, and all information he reported had gone through not only multiple people but multiple languages as well. The value of the interpreter is emphasised several times, once for instance a merchant arrived bringing 40 bales of cordovan leather; he said that he and the leather were from Widin. The station's interpreter however informed Paitsch that

⁷⁷⁵ 'Sanitary reports of the Temesvár administration' 176r, 178r-179r, 191v, 251r.

⁷⁷⁶ 'Sanitary reports of the Temesvár administration' 155r, 175v

⁷⁷⁷ 'Sanitary reports of the Temesvár administration' 190v-191v

this was a lie: he recognised (probably from the merchant's accent) that the latter was in fact from Krajova in Little Wallachia. Given that there was a plague epidemic at that time in that region and since leather was seen as a most susceptible material for transmitting plague poison, Paitsch simply rejected accepting the merchant into his station.⁷⁷⁸

His distance from the source of information finally motivated Paitsch to cross the border and find a fixer for himself. He went to the village of Krozka and contracted a certain Greek called George Bullia, to be his main agent. He vouched for his righteousness and trustworthiness in front of the administration and announced that he contracted him with drafting and managing informants on that side of the border. Not only did he ask for money from the administration to fund Bullia's activity, but he also tried repeatedly to negotiate a private affair of his with the administration:⁷⁷⁹ Bullia owned a wine cellar in Habsburg territory, in Pancsova but could not manage this property from the other side. Paitsch asked the administration to issue a permit for Bullia for him to be able to run his business.

The sanitary journals can also be seen as scientific knowledge products, whose trustworthiness rested on a reliable network of informants, and they were producing such authenticated knowledge about revenants as well.⁷⁸⁰ In April 1756, Bullia reported that a Turkish merchant told him that in Nissa some 200 people had died because of vampires, and that a woman from Sofia was called according to whose instructions 4 corpses were executed. Bullia sent his agent, Nicola Bulliovith to Nissa, who confirmed the news in the following month. In June the same year Bullia again reported on hundreds of sudden deaths, this time from Mavro, a settlement in Greece. The case is reported in the provincial administration's protocol books as well.⁷⁸¹ Bullia's agent, a commander called János Kirkovith reported that several corpses were disinterred and burnt, upon which the deaths ceased. Paitsch chose to file in the journal what locals thought about vampires and even substantiated it with a lineage of 'trustworthy' observers: commander Kirkovith, agent Bulliovith and above all George Bullia. Paitsch did not make any comment on the news about the massive vampire epidemic, simply retold what locals said and even added that after the killings, the disease stopped; Paitsch this

⁷⁷⁸ 'Sanitary reports of the Temesvár administration' 195r

⁷⁷⁹ 'Sanitary reports of the Temesvár administration' 191r, 195v.

⁷⁸⁰ 'Sanitary reports of the Temesvár administration' 229r, 230r, 238v-239r, 245r-v.

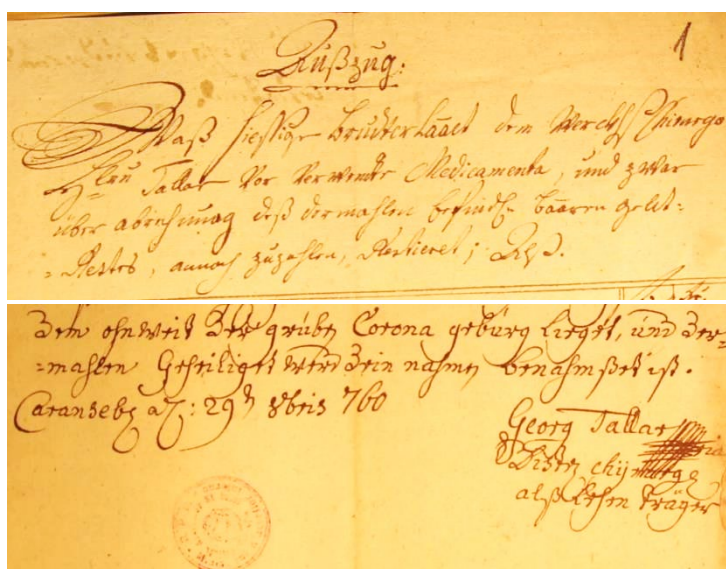
⁷⁸¹ 'Protocol registers', Volume 65. (year 1756).

way gave his authority to the story. This argument was also how the cornet in Calmet's story and surgeon Uran had justified the authorization of the revenants in 1738.

Paitsch was relocated to the Mehadia quarantine station from where he sent similar, uncommented reports about the fact that locals think bloodsuckers are afflicting their village, only this time these news were about vampires within the borders of the Banat. In 1758 in Alt-Orsova (today the southernmost edge of Orșova, Romania) and in 1759 Svinitza, Orsova District (today Svinița, Romania).⁷⁸²

Domestic revenants: The *moroi* driven underground

Meanwhile, back in Temesvár, news about revenants kept flowing in from various parts of the province. According to the testimony of the provincial protocol books (see map /Figure 38/ and Appendix), only between 1753 and 1763, thirteen cases were recorded in the provincial centre. Georg Tallar, probably as a reward for his services in the Tallar-Kőműves commission was



40 Georg Tallar's signature on a letter he wrote as the district surgeon of Karánsebes to the provincial administration in 1760 (below), and a reference to him as mining surgeon from the same year (above)

appointed district surgeon of Karánsebes on 22nd April 1754, a position he kept until his death in 1762. In certain documents, for example a medication-account dated 20th October 1760, he also appears as a mining surgeon (*Werckhs-Chirurg*, see picture below).⁷⁸³ In these capacities, Tallar had the chance to carry out the medical-enlightening mission he proposed as a solution to the *moroi* problem in his treatise. Indeed, there were several *moroi* cases happening during his service. The first known news in the province about vampirism after

⁷⁸² 'Protocol registers', Volume 67. (year 1758); 'Protocol registers', Volume 68. (year 1759).

⁷⁸³ 'Documents of the Oravitza Mining Directorate', 1760/134, 135.

1753 came in 1755, from the very same village of Wermesch in the district of Csákova,⁷⁸⁴ which in 1753 had already been investigated by the Kőműves - Tallar Commission. Even though Tallar was the surgeon of the Karánsebes district, and therefore did not have authority in Csákova, they called for him to investigate the case. This attests to his skill in fashioning himself as a vampire-expert and capitalizing on it.

1755 was the year of the appearance of Maria Theresa's 1st March rescript against *magia posthuma* in Moravia-Silesia, and though it might have had an indirect effect on dealing with *moroi* in the Banat, a detail that often goes unnoticed in secondary literature is that the rescript was not valid for the borderland, as it was sent to

*'All royal representations in the whole Bohemian and Austrian Hereditary Lands'.*⁷⁸⁵

Even though the Banat was governed as a hereditary land, at this time it did not belong either to the Austrian or the Bohemian hereditary lands, it was a little piece of crown land on of its own right.⁷⁸⁶ The court actions in 1755 were all confined to the Moravian-Silesian lands. The question remains whether van Swieten's *Vampyrismus* reached the Banat in some form, but the role of the Kőműves-Tallar commission in inspiring the dismissive provincial attitude visible in the *moroi* cases after 1753 cannot be underestimated.

In the year 1756, three different villages were afflicted, and though the outcomes of the cases are unknown, it is noteworthy that in the summer of 1756 the villagers of Csepsa (today Cebza, Romania) were still making a formal appeal to the administration for a permission to disinter suspected corpses. This means they still had hope to get the said permission. The practice of officially requesting *moroi* executions probably faded fast. The following year, the communities of Polvaschniza and Slatina (today Bolvaşniţa and Slatina-Timiş, Romania) were condemned for arbitrarily performing the violent practice. Tallar must have been involved in the cases, since the two villages belonged to his district of Karánsebes.

⁷⁸⁴ The only source pertaining to this case is an index book entry about Tallar's remunerations petition for his expenses. 'Index books to the protocol registers', Volume 81. (unpaginated) See entry: 'Tallar'.

⁷⁸⁵ Konstantin Franz Florian Anton von Kauz, *De cultibus magicis eorumque perpetuo ad ecclesiam et rempublicam habitu libri duo* (Wien, 1767), 373.

⁷⁸⁶ László Marjanucz, 'Beiträge zur Banatpolitik des Staatsrates am Anfang der 1770er Jahre', *Chronica* 1 (2001): 100.

The official reactions are known in two further cases as well, and the perpetrators were punished in the same way, by physical labour. In 1758 in Peschenova (today Dudeștii Noi, Romania), they were condemned to eight days of trench work, while inhabitants of the village of Kloschiza (today perhaps Pločica, Serbia) in 1759 were sentenced to fourteen days of labour.⁷⁸⁷ Following several further moroi cases, an entry ten years later, dated 1768 from Facset (today Făget, Romania), the centre of the district of the same name contains the very first adjudication of the belief in moroi as a 'superstition', not counting the Aulic Sanitary Commission's protocol book entry of 1738:

*'The district administration reports about the burial of the three corpses which were dug up because of the superstition of bloodsuckers.'*⁷⁸⁸

The sentencing of perpetrators to hard labour and the denouncing of the belief as superstition attest to a shift in the borderland's balance: it suggests a more unified approach to the question and means that the provincial administration decided to take matters more firmly in their hands. The first phase in the borderland's history of dealing with moroi came to an end, and just as in the whole Habsburg Monarchy, in the Banat as well the central authorities started to assert their powers much more strongly at the expense of local agency. These projects reached the Banat starting from 1753 onwards, but the inner, provincial attempts at a stricter control over moroi cases should not be underestimated.

In the 1758 Peschenova case, apart from punishing the perpetrators, the provincial administration also ordered a cameral physician to travel to the village with medications. Apart from Tallar's statement in his *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* that the population needs medical attention and medications, this is the first clear indication that the provincial administration started to value trained medical experts more than local moroi-experts. In bringing this shift, Tallar, thanks to his self-fashioning detailed in the previous section, played a great role.

After ascending to the throne, Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II (1765-1790) embarked on a journey to personally visit some of the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy, and as in Spring 1768

⁷⁸⁷ 'Protocol registers' Volume 65., 303r; 'Protocol registers' Volume 67., 58v.; 'Protocol registers' Volume 66., 305.f.; 'Protocol registers' Volume 68., 194v.; 'Protocol registers' Volume 77., 75v.

⁷⁸⁸ 'Protocol registers' Volume 77. (year 1768).

he was travelling in the Banat,⁷⁸⁹ he was probably informed about the customs of moroi-executions as well. In fact, not long before the emperor's visit, the provincial administration received news from the above-cited case of moroi in Facset (today Făget, Romania), in which the district provisor reported the reburial of the three corpses which were dug up 'because of the superstition of bloodsuckers'.⁷⁹⁰

Though between 1759 and 1769 the provincial administration reported four cases of moroi executions, the practice was in all likelihood slowly driven underground. This disappearance from the official field of vision was mirrored in the protocol books as well, as the word 'bloodsucker' and 'vampire' itself also disappeared as a standalone category of 'things'. Up until the late 1760s, incoming information on revenants were filed under these headings, but after that they can be found under different headings, such as sacrilege. The 1775 case of the lehsvin (today Izvin, Romania) vampires in the Temesvár District can be found among the criminal records of banditry and smuggling as a case of the burning of a cross. The Temesvár district administration reported that

*'Pau Schura, Mihael Olaru, and his wife Anna Thodor believing that they were sucked by bloodsuckers or so-called vampires burnt a cross and dug up three people, cut out their hearts out and burnt them.'*⁷⁹¹

The provincial administration ordered a thorough investigation involving the local pope, the *knes* and people who are knowledgeable in such matters and requested a report about it.

A glance into Josephinism

The administrative reorganisation of the Banat at the beginning of the 1750s in fact was just a small facet of a much greater wave of all-encompassing reforms initiated by the Viennese court, which gained momentum especially in the 1760s-1770s and is broadly recognised as

⁷⁸⁹ Krisztina Kulcsár, 'The Travels of Joseph II in Hungary, Transylvania, Slavonia and the Banat of Temesvar, 1768–1773', in *Intellectual and Political Elites of the Enlightenment*, ed. Tatiana V. Artemyeva and Mikhail I. Mikeshin, Studies across Disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences 16 (Helsinki: Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, n.d.), 52.

⁷⁹⁰ 'Protocol registers' Volume 77. (year 1768).

⁷⁹¹ 'Criminal protocols', 31.r.

the gradual building up of enlightened absolutism.⁷⁹² Keeping a general ‘happiness’ or ‘common good’ on its banners, the reforms in practice had a strong centralizing and Germanizing nature, and were aimed at rationalizing and bureaucratizing governance in various fields of life. Major systematizing and standardizing efforts happened in the areas of education, medicine, law and governance. Within medicine, increasing efforts at creating infrastructures of public health, spreading enlightening literature and the initiation of licencing procedures for medical professionals commenced as the state was seeking to reach deeper into people’s lives as well as gradually eliminating or weakening intermediate power structures.

The detailed analysis of the exact relations between these reforms and the practice and theory of revenant executions lies outside the scope of the present dissertation, but a number of insights are worth noting. First, the reforms directly affected the adjudication of witchcraft and revenantism as well, an aspect which will be dealt with in the next chapter. Second, also within the wider reforms, repeated attempts were made at the disciplining of cemeteries and death-related customs. Cemeteries were moved from churchyards outside the settlements, legislation was passed on the required depths of graves, and certain cultural habits involving physical contact with the dead became prohibited. And third, Joseph II had repeated efforts at controlling the churches, among others, the Orthodox Church as well. Vampirism was at the crux of these two projects.

In 1778, the Banat (apart from the military frontier on its southern strip), was reincorporated into the Hungarian Kingdom, and together with the territory came the moroi affliction, which still did not cease to be a problem. In 1778 and in 1784, the Viennese court exhorted the Orthodox metropolitan of Versec (today Vršac) in the Banat that those who died in a contagious disease must be buried in closed coffins, and that they should take a more active part in fighting the superstition of vampirism:

⁷⁹² For general overviews of the reforms see among others: Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy (1618-1815)*; Evans, *Austria, Hungary, and the Habsburgs. Essays on Central Europe, c.1683-1867*; For discussions of the medicine- and burial-related reforms see for example: Várkonyi, ‘Connections between the Cessation of Witch Trials and the Transformation of the Social Structure Related to Medicine’; Horányi, ‘Tetszhalottak, élve eltemetettek – Esetleírások a magyarországi tetszhalál-irodalom alapján’; Krász, “‘A mesterség szolgálatában’: Felvilágosodás és “orvosi tudományok” a 18. századi Magyarországon’; Václav Grubhoffer, ‘Fear of Seeming Death in Eighteenth-Century Europe’, in *Death in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: The Material and Spiritual Conditions of the Culture of Death*, ed. Albrecht Classen, Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 16 (Berlin, Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2016), 491–518.

'the clergy is warned once more with force that they should prohibit the superstition of vampirism, to which people attribute the death of their neighbours all the time'.⁷⁹³

Joseph II's attempts at controlling vampirism through the Orthodox Church however were subverted. The metropolitan of Versec indeed issued a circular letter on 27th June 1784 to the deacons and priests about the emperor's order, but its text was modified slightly in order to fit the borderland's environment better. According to the text,

'The dead who died of the plague or other contagious diseases, or who have some life left in their body after the departure of the soul, and who with their eyes scare the people, must be locked in a coffin and under no circumstances should they be transported in an open coffin to the church, or from the church to the grave.'⁷⁹⁴

The interjections of the italicized parts into the text partially transformed the original intentions of the emperor and included the possibility that certain corpses may retain life in them even after the soul has left them. The reference to scaring with the eyes is less clear, it might simply mean a distorted fact, which would be unpleasant to behold, but it also might mean fascination, that is, a kind of evil eye-based bewitchment. The relations between court and Orthodox Church continued to be tense, and Joseph II's 1784 law was reinforced by the publication in the same year of Georg Tallar's *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* in Vienna, a text, which (as shown above) had a strong anti-Orthodox edge heavily criticizing the clergy's role in perpetuating the superstition of vampirism and in not giving proper Christian education to the flock, who in this way become exposed to demonic temptations and apparitions much more.

⁷⁹³ Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, 1853, 3:122. 'Sepulturae et superstitio de sanguisugis Gr.R.n.U.: Cum consuetudo: mortuos in aperta tumba sepeliendi adhuc in aliquibus locis vigeat, Constitutiones normales, ne in morbis contagionem minantibus demortui in in apertis tumbis circumferantur, denuo publicandae; ac Clerus Graeci Ritus non Uniti, Populi spirituali curae suae concrediti animos a superstitione circa: sanguisugas – Wampier dictos, quibus ultima fata suorum adscribere solent, etiamnum, ut refertur vigente, avertere connitantur.'

⁷⁹⁴ 'Collection of the Banat Museum', 206. [Italics mine – Á.M.] I am grateful for Levente Nagy at the Department of Romance Studies at Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest) for his translation of the text, which is written in Cyrillic script in Romanian language.

Tallar's *Visum Repertum* printed (1784)

The *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* lay dormant in Vienna for three decades, and as far as is known, had no effect whatsoever on either van Swieten's *Vampyrismus* or the Habsburg laws directed at the fight against superstition and the decriminalization of magic. The treatise re-emerged however, in 1784, when Johann Georg Mößle, the Viennese publisher came across the work, in his own words 'by chance'.⁷⁹⁵ One can only wonder how he could chance upon a thirty-year-old Banatian treatise which probably had been stacked among innumerable other documents of the Habsburg administration. In his own words, Mößle decided to publish it for two reasons. First, because Tallar had shed light on a topic that used to be very popular but still remained a mystery. And second, because such a story was worth remembering. Mößle's publishing house indeed sought to satisfy the wider public's thirst for curiosities: people could hear for instance about the 1683 siege of Vienna, the life of Mohamed or the Styrian Robinson Crusoe's travels to South America.⁷⁹⁶ A treatise about vampirism fit into this repertoire perfectly: what at the local level was a matter of life and death, in Vienna was not more than one among the many juicy, exciting tabloid news items.

At the same time, Mößle's coincidence-story is put into perspective by considering that his publishing house was very diligent in publishing books that served the enlightened absolutist government's agendas or channelled them to the public. Among these one can find legal collections and handbooks, such as Joseph Kropatschek's illustrious, multi-volume collection of laws issued under Maria Theresa and Joseph II.⁷⁹⁷ Books relating to religion are also common: royal religion-related decrees, the collection of Tridentine reforms and an anti-superstition treatise that was published just the year before the *Visum Repertum Anatomico-*

⁷⁹⁵ Tallar, *Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder Gründlicher Bericht*, 7.

⁷⁹⁶ Christian Wilhelm Huhn, *Raritäten oder umständliche Beschreibung, was anno 1683 vor, bey, und in der denkwürdigen türkischen Belagerung Wien, vom 7. Julii bis 12. September täglich vorgelaufen*. (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1783); Joseph Müller, *Der steyerische Robinson oder Reisen und besondere merkwürdige Begebenheiten des Joseph Müller an den brasilianischen Küsten von Amerika*. (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1791); Anon., *Leben und Geschichte Mohammeds: Enthaltend einen vollständigen Abriß der Gründung und Fortpflanzung der von ihm ausgedachten Religion, seiner Kriege und der merkwürdigsten dabey sich ereigneten Vorfällenheiten*. (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1788).

⁷⁹⁷ Joseph Kropatschek, *Sammlung aller k.k. verordnungen und Gesetze vom Jahre 1740. bis 1780... Band III. (1755-1759)*, vol. 3, 8 vols (Wien, 1786); Anon., *Von dem Verfahren wider Kriminalverbrecher: Ein Handbuch für Bannrichter, Landgerichtsverwalter und alle die sich in den k. k. Staaten mit der Ausübung der Kriminalgerichtsbarkeit beschäftigen* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1790); Carl Anton von Martini, *Des Freyherrn Karl von Martini [...]. Allgemeines Recht der Staaten: Zum Gebrauch der öffentlichen Vorlesungen in den k. k. Staaten*. (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1799).

Chyurgicum.⁷⁹⁸ Several other (in a loose sense) enlightening books found their publisher in Mößle: handbooks on what one should think about religion, freemasonry or merchants for instance.⁷⁹⁹ Further, many of the success-stories of the enlightenment are also to be found on the list, like publications about the skill and achievements of surgery and chemical medicine.⁸⁰⁰

Tallar's treatise is in line with these agendas; furthermore, it might even be supposed that it was topical to some extent in 1784, at least in the eyes of the Josephine government. In the same year, on 2nd November 1784, a rescript was issued addressed to the Orthodox Church in which the king warned the clergy to stop the practice of open coffin burials in times of plague, and to take a greater part in the fight against the belief in vampirism. This rescript is part of a more general series of measures Joseph II took to regulate issues around burial and death.⁸⁰¹ Perhaps someone in court circles remembered Tallar's work, the anti-Orthodox edge of which might have contributed to its publication at this late point in time.

The printed version follows the manuscript faithfully, which makes the few changes remarkable. The printed edition does not include Tallar's dedicatory letter in which he expressed his gratitude to the provincial administration for contracting him. The last paragraph of the treatise was also cut, where he again thanked the provincial government's

⁷⁹⁸ Anton Ferdinand von Geissau, *Des heiligen allgemeinen Kirchenraths zu Trient: Schlüsse und Glaubensregeln welche die katholische Lehre betreffend* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1786); Johann Schwerdling, *Practische Anwendung aller k. k. Verordnungen in gesitlichen Sachen [...] Vom Antritte der Regierung Weiland Marien Theresien, bis zum Tode Weiland Joseph II. nähmlich vom Jahre 1740 bis 1790* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1789); Johann Nepomuk-Kreil Bartholotti, *Streitschrift wider die verschiedenen Gattungen des Aberglaubens: Gesammelt aus den görzischen Diktaten* (Wien, 1783).

⁷⁹⁹ Reiner Meisel, *Was ist von der Religion, und von den Pflichten gegen Gott &c. zu halten?* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1783); J. Sommfels, *Was ist vom Bürger, jungen Künstler und Kaufmann zu halten?* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1783); Anon., *Die Freymäurer nach ihren verschiedenen Absichten im hellen Lichte dargestellt* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1793).

⁸⁰⁰ Joseph Jakob Plenk, *Der Wundarzneykunst Doktors [...] Lehre von den Augenkrankheiten* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1799); Giovanni Antonio Scopoli, *Der Weltweisheit und Arzneykunst Doktors [...] Anfangsgründe der Chemie: Zum Gebrauche seiner Vorlesungen* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1786).

⁸⁰¹ Joseph Kropatschek, ed., *Handbuch aller unter der Regierung des Kaisers Joseph des II. für die K. K. Erbländer ergangenen Verordnungen und Gesetze in einer sistematischen Verbindung* (Wien: Johann Georg Mößle, 1790), 530-580.; For the rescript on vampirism see: Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, 1853, 3:122. 'Sepulturae et superstitio de sanguisugis Gr.R.n.U.: Cum consuetudo: mortuos in aperta tumba sepeliendi adhuc in aliquibus locis vigeat, Constitutiones normales, ne in morbis contagionem minantibus demortui in in apertis tumbis circumferantur, denuo publicandae; ac Clerus Graeci Ritus non Uniti, Populi spirituali curae suae concrediti animos a superstitione circa: sanguisugas – Wampier dictos, quibus ultima fata suorum adscribere solent, etiamnum, ut refertur vigente, avertere connitantur.'

trust. In this way, Tallar's mining metaphors linking his treatise to the mining industry were also lost. The first paragraph after the dedicatory letter was excised; here Tallar wrote about the vampire commission, its members and duties. Finally, the title of the work was modified from 'summary report', which only made sense in relation to Tallar's earlier, weekly reports, to 'thorough report'.⁸⁰² In this way the printed edition lifted the text out of its original environment and placed at a more general level of the enlightened fight against disease and superstition. It had been shown in the previous subchapter that Tallar as an external expert was balancing between local communities and the provincial administration, and even though saw local communities as superstitious, he did take their beliefs and practices seriously enough to test them and disprove them. His in-between position was blurred in the print version and changed to a much simpler narrative of an imperial agent enlightening the ignorant populace.

The editor – probably in order to make the treatise easier to read – substituted Tallar's mostly Latin-based technical vocabulary with expressive German wording. This is how for instance 'horrend' and 'peristaltisch' became 'abscheulich' and 'wurmähnlich', while a '*Sanguinaeus Temperament*' was changed into '*Blutreicher Beschaffenheit*', and '*Vehemente Convulsiones*' and '*formula decantationum*' were translated into '*heftigste Zückungen*' and '*Seegensprechung*'. All in all, the editor was cautious not to modify the original meaning of the expressions.

There was a topic however, where substantial changes were made. As discussed above, somewhat incongruous with the core medical/gastronomic argumentation, there was a moral/demonological discourse that came up only a few times in the text. The editor cut, modified, or rewrote something in all of these instances. In general, he preserved the moral part of the discussion, but deleted those parts where the manuscript became too much entangled into reflections about Satan's behaviour. The demonological discussion about the holes on the graves was entirely cut, and the same happened to the question of Satan's political bias before and beyond the grave.⁸⁰³ The way the part about the good Christian education of soldiers was modified is especially interesting. The print has a simpler vocabulary

⁸⁰² 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder *gründlicher Bericht* [...]' as opposed to the 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder Unterhänigst gehorsamster *summarischer Bericht* [...]' of 1753.

⁸⁰³ Compare: Tallar 1753, 14v, 4r. and Tallar 1784, 63, 12-13.

that took away much of the sermon-like style so salient in the original text.⁸⁰⁴ Finally, a small but telling deletion was made in the medical discussion as well: Tallar quoted the Bible only once, at a place where he was describing the veins and how their malfunction may cause death. Here he added a reference to Ecclesiastes 12:6, which describes death as ‘the silver cord is snapped, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is shattered at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern’ This biblical location had been quoted in medical literature several times due to its resonance with William Harvey’s discovery of the circulatory system and its collapse.⁸⁰⁵ The editor however deemed it unsuitable and cut it.

The modifications made to the *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum* attest to a shift in mentality: parts of Tallar’s argumentation were simply deemed to be unfit for the milieu of Vienna in the 1780s. His argumentation about Satan’s activity, the sermon-like metaphors and biblical references were probably deemed to be overly Baroque. The editor paid attention to retaining the anti-Orthodox edge of the treatise and their contrast with good Christian education. The moral discourse’s contemplations about sin, Satan and vampire disease became more moderate, more presentable and more similar to the core text. Based solely on the printed edition, Tallar’s image is a shade more secular, more enlightened and less sensitive to demonological issues than the original.

The editor was not entirely successful in bringing Tallar’s work up to date. Some reviews of the time praised him or rendered his arguments without comment.⁸⁰⁶ Zacharias Gottlieb Hußty (1754 - 1803), the prestigious author of a book on public health, appreciated Tallar for his first-hand awareness of the question, but he deemed his reasoning to be of no consequence, non-medical and full of obscure hypotheses that taste of the old world.⁸⁰⁷ He

⁸⁰⁴ Compare: Tallar 1753, 19v. (cited above) and Tallar 1784, 83: ‘[...] so füge ich noch hinzu, daß die Soldaten und Deutsche durch den Glauben und getreuen Unterricht ihrer Seelsorger schon von Jugend auf wider die List des Satans und der Irr- und Aberglauben abgehärtet, und in dem heilsamen Kreuter Garten der Erkenntniß fest gepflanzt worden. Sie verlachen alle Märchen, unter was für einen Schein sie sich immer vorstellen, verlassen sich bloß auf die wundervolle Güte ihres Heilandes und bleiben unbeschädigt.’

⁸⁰⁵ Eric S. Christianson, *The Ecclesiastes through the Centuries* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2007), 229-230.

⁸⁰⁶ Anon., ‘Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum [Review]’, *Realzeitung für das Jahr 1784 (Wien)*, 1784, 101-106.; Johann Dionis, *Lexikon der K.K. Medizinalgeseze* (Prag, 1790), 214-220.; Cited by: Niels K. Petersen, ‘A Surgeon’s Eyewitness Accounts from Transylvania and Wallachia’, 2013, http://magiaposthuma.blogspot.com/2013_09_01_archive.html.

⁸⁰⁷ Zacharias Gottlieb Hußty, *Diskurs über die medizinische Polizei*, vol. 1 (Pressburg & Leipzig, 1786), 157-165. ‘sein Raisonement ist zu unmedizinisch, mit dunkeln, und nach der Vorwelt schmeckenden Hypothesen zu verwebt, als daß es brauchbar sein könnte.’

received a particularly vitriolic criticism in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*. The anonymous reviewer set the tone by stating that Tallar did not have any command either of the subject matter or of the language. After presenting the main argument about the gastronomical/fasting-related origins of the disease, the reviewer finished Tallar off with a devastating last line:

*'The rest is wretched reasoning and true nonsense, that tastes of the bloodletting flask.'*⁸⁰⁸

This mocking reference draws an analogy between the symbolic attribute of the surgeon who (as opposed to the physician) got his hands dirty through his profession, and the superstitious belief in blood-drinking vampires. In essence, Tallar was relegated to the ignorant, nonsensical and gullible culture he saw himself to be enlightening.

Summary

The Kőműves-Tallar Commission's work did not result in a decrease in the intensity of moroi cases, as reports about villages struck by the affliction kept pouring in from various districts. In addition, the quarantine stations were also channelling news and narratives about revenant cases from across and within the border. The information grid, which quarantine physician Paitsch erected was aimed at collecting verified information the credibility of which rested on a sequence of trustworthy informants, a system which invested news about vampires with credit as well. Within the province, the practice of corpse executions was becoming less tolerated, there were more and more entries on punishments for the ritual. The symbiosis between provincial administration and local communities, which had been forged in the 1720s was changing, and the practice of *moroi* hunting was more and more driven underground. By the 1770s it also disappeared as a topic on its own right from the provincial protocol books and was banished to the pages of criminal procedures.

Meanwhile, the projects of enlightened absolutism were gaining momentum in the whole monarchy, and the control of vampirism lay at the crux of projects of anti-superstition

⁸⁰⁸ Anon., 'Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum [Review]', *Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek* 1765-96 65, no. 1 (1786): 103.

measures, public hygiene, cemetery regulation and the disciplining of the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox clergy had an ambiguous attitude to the question, and as attested by the letter of the metropolitan of Versec, they were occasionally tweaking, subverting Viennese efforts. The publication of Tallar's treatise in 1784 is also to be interpreted within the frames of these agendas; the editor made lasting changes to the manuscript: elevated text out of its original environment to a more general plane of enlightenment, updated the vocabulary, and made it more presentable for Viennese tastes of the 1780s by cutting the parts where Tallar ventured too deep into demonological musings. In spite of the editor's and ultimately, the author's efforts, the work received received vitriolic criticisms, among others by the leading figure of medical policing in the monarchy, Zacharias Gottlieb Hußty.

Concluding remarks

The centre-periphery model in the case of the Habsburg Monarchy has an overwhelming appeal in historiography, and for a good reason. It undoubtedly is useful as an analytical tool to analyse the enlightened absolutistic aims and plans of the Viennese government in the second half of the century to rule the land and the people. At the same time, it is crucial to analyse the extent to which these wide-ranging and bold reform plans were implemented. In this sense, the borderland was a special case. First, as argued in Chapter II, here very similar centralizing-rationalizing efforts started already after the region's reconquest from the Ottomans in the beginning of the century. Second, from then on, the provincial government and the local communities slowly created a typical contact zone environment, within which the provincial level had its own agency, an agency that was grounded on intimate knowledge of and hard-earned expertise in the specific relations of the region.

As a specific example of this process, the vampire and moroi executions were carried out as a joint effort throughout the borderland, and though Serbia was lost in 1738, based on the example of the Banat, this symbiosis could be followed up from the start till its decline, which commenced in the late 1740s. The management of the unruly dead involved the clashes of several sources of expertise, and in contrast to what a mechanically deployed centre-periphery model would predict, credibility and efficiency of expertise did not map onto the hierarchy of the state infrastructure. It was the (unfortunately) mostly invisible local experts who taught the provincial agents how to deal with the undead, while the top-layer central expertise was entirely silent. Apart from Uran's 1738 punishment for digging up and executing corpses in plague times, they did not engage in revenant-management, and neither the 1732 outreach (most prominently by Prince Charles Alexander) nor the 1730s loud debate spurred them to action. Of course, the learned world anyways mostly confined its interests (pace *good friend*) onto theoretical aspects of the question. The provincial level was left alone with the problem.

It is within these frames that the Kőműves-Tallar Commission's activity assumes a more complete meaning than the one conventionally assigned to it, namely, acting as a mechanic implementer of central ideas. Narratives that present Tallar as the agent of a Viennese military-medical mission need amendment. Such a presentation is certainly right in the sense

that the whole concept of the borderland was created as a centralized cameralist project, with a high level of medicalization and rationalized governance and Tallar as a military surgeon and then a surgeon in lazarets on the borderland was part of these projects. Further, his expertise was contracted at a time when Vienna started to tighten its grip on the Banat through a series of administrative changes, surveys and bureaucratic reorganizations. Finally, Georg Tallar indeed fashioned himself as an ideal agent of enlightenment with an expertise of borderland relations: knowing the languages, being familiar with the culture, at the same time having the necessary Western education and the mentality of an enlightener.

However, in the process of the medicalization of the vampire, and in particular, in initiating the setting up of the 1753 Kőmúves-Tallar Commission, more agency has to be given to the provincial than to the Viennese level. The campaign against corpse executions in the Karnánsebes and Orsova districts and the resulting district ban of 1748 preceded the administrative changes in the Banat and the general upswing towards enlightened absolutism. Apparently, no one ordered the administration to set the commission up, or to hire Tallar. He was a typical manifestation of the contact zone expert: he had a backing in cutting edge education from the Salzmann college, had the 'right' mindset about the need to enlighten the ignorant, superstitious locals, but he was also close to the ground through his language skills and knowledge of local customs. Remarkably though, in spite of his skills, he did not know what probably everyone else in the West knew: Rascians are equally afflicted by vampirism.

But Tallar saw expertise only as a tool, an opportunity to achieve more. With the *Visum Reptum Anatmico-Chirurgicum*, he was aiming high: 1) in spite of being a surgeon he decided to write a medical treatise, which normally only physicians were supposed to write 2) he undoubtedly meant his treatise to be published 3) his repertoire of expertise included an experimental mindset, very much reminiscent of the Baconian project. Even though the vitriolic reviews came only in the 1780s, the utter silence with which the Viennese circles greeted his text in 1753 is telling: he was too much a product of the borderland, his persona got infected with his own research topic, just like it was the basic anxiety of many learned contributors to the vampire debate. What was extremely valuable and rewarded handsomely at the provincial administrative level, was ignored, even looked down upon in Vienna.

The advantage of looking for traces of vampirism in archival materials (and combining them with published sources) is perhaps the most visible in the case of the Banat. The discovery of

novel details yield not negligible modifications to overarching theories and analytical concepts, while at the same time marking out new avenues of research. Such details are for instance: the linking of Kőműves' and Tallar's investigations; the corrected dating of the *Visum Repertum* to 1753, which this way precedes van Swieten's campaign against *magia posthuma*; the creation of a chronological database as well as a geographical mapping of moroi cases; the inclusion of the anonymous theologian in the Kőműves-Tallar Commission. First, further archival research is needed into episcopal archives to uncover the Catholic Church's and monastic orders' role in dealing with vampirism. Such an approach promises a more complete view of how the borderland was dealing with preter- and supernatural problems, and extant pieces of the puzzle, such as the story of Rochus Szmendrovich (1727-1782), the (in)famous exorcist of Sombor⁸⁰⁹ could be linked to each other. Second, certain patterns already emerge from the collected data: the moroi cases in the Banat had four geographical clusters: the central districts around Temesvár, Lugos-Facset in the north-east, Karánsebes and Orsova in the east and Újpalánka-Pancsova in the south. The complete absence of cases in the west and north-east is only partially explained by the marshy flatland-nature of the area and requires further research that transcends the Banat-Hungarian Kingdom border. Third, even though the moroi cases gradually disappeared from the provincial administration's central protocols in the 1760s-1770s, the practice undoubtedly did not disappear from reality; the question therefore remains, how did the moroi problem develop after the revenant executions were forced underground? Similar recent efforts in witchcraft-scholarship⁸¹⁰ offer an inspiring comparative example.

⁸⁰⁹ Dániel Bárh, *The Exorcist of Sombor: The Mentality of an Eighteenth-Century Franciscan Friar*, Microhistories (London & New York: Routledge, 2020).

⁸¹⁰ Owen Davies and Willem de Blécourt, eds., *Beyond the Witch Trials: Witchcraft and Magic in Enlightenemnt Europe* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2004); Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*.

VII. Endgame: *Magia posthuma* and the Viennese court (1732-1766)



41 Gerard van Swieten immersed in his botanical studies

"My darling, my darling, I see it alright,
'Tis the aged grey willows deceiving thy sight."

Johann W. von Goethe: *Der Erlkönig* (1782)

Following its rapid rise to fame in 1732, the Serbian vampire already embarked on its latest metamorphosis, as the first known literary mention, the poem *Der Vampir* was published in 1748.⁸¹¹ Meanwhile, the other multiplying revenant, the Moravian-Silesian ghost remained (or rather was retained) in silence; not for long. *Magia posthuma* made it to the headlines in 1755, and in Habsburg circles caused a much greater scandal than the Medvedia case. At the time of this second revenant scandal, the Habsburg Monarchy was ruled by Queen Maria Theresa (1740-1780), while her husband was Holy Roman Emperor Francis I. (1745-1765), the very same person, who as Francis Stephen, Duke of Lorraine had been instrumental in stifling the possible repercussions the great revenant infestation of Liebe.

After decades of continued practice of mass executions of the dead, the 1754-1755 Frei Hermersdorf (today Svobodné Heřmanice) revenant infestation finally set the imperial administration into motion: the queen issued a rescript to the Bohemian and Austrian hereditary lands that took the revenant-investigations under state control. In order to understand whence this move came from, this chapter first outlines what is known about revenant infestations after the 1732 learned debate on vampirism. Then, I discuss the Frei Hermersdorf *magia posthuma* case and the subsequent enlightening campaign orchestrated by the monarchy's *protomedicus*, Gerard van Swieten (1700-1772).

VII.1. Revenants on the Moravian-Silesian border (1732-1755)

As shown in Chapters II.2. and IV.3., the Moravian-Silesian revenant infestations and the Serbian vampire epidemics already made conceptual contact in learned circles in 1732. The first administrative usage of the word '*Vampir*' in Moravia-Silesia however came with the 1755 Frei Hermersdorf case and is found in the protocol book of the Gasser-Wabst Commission to be discussed in the following chapter.

This is to say, that while the learned were grappling with the topic of vampirism, business was going on as usual on the Moravian-Silesian border. Revenants were being executed on a regular basis until 1738 (see Appendix) and known cases for this period mostly come from the

⁸¹¹ Heinrich August Ossenfelder, 'Der Vampir', *Der Naturforscher, eine Physikalische Wochenschrift* 48 (1748): 380–81.

dominion of Freudenthal and the Troppau Princedom in Upper Silesia, more precisely from the very surroundings of Frei Hermersdorf.



42 The map of the vicinity of Frei Hermersdorf (circled red) with the seat of the princedom in Troppau (marked blue to the right), lodged between Moravia (south) and the Jägerndorf Princedom (north)

The series of cases contain a remarkable instance of a long-lasting family curse of revenantism that spans the period between 1730 and 1736. During this time no less than four revenants from the Seitendorf-based Thyringer family were executed one after the other, each set about 1 year apart from the next one.⁸¹² The idea that revenantism could spread through familial ties had surfaced as early as 1592, in the case of Johann Kunze of Bennisch (today Horní Benešov; Chapter III.1.), a town not far from Seitendorf (today Horní Životice), just across the Troppau-Jägerndorf border (see map on Figure 42). A further case of a similar family curse was recorded also from Seitendorf, from 1723-1724, when in a row three deceased members of the Pfleger family were investigated for *magia posthuma*.⁸¹³ How this family curse was explained from a theological perspective is unfortunately unknown; it certainly was not an easy task, since the insufflation-based contagion devised by von Schertz was insufficient to account for the spread of revenantism among the living.

That the idea of the family revenant-curse was disturbing for contemporaries as well is shown by the fact that on 3rd March 1740 the highest secular authority in Silesia and Moravia, the

⁸¹² Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 56-57.; Monika Slezáková, 'Vampirismus a jeho projevy na Severní Moravě a ve Slezsku v 17. a 18. století' (Brno, Masaryk University, 2011), 35-36., https://is.muni.cz/th/y7q8r/Bakalarska_prace.pdf.

⁸¹³ Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', 96.

Breslau royal council ordered the governor of Troppau to write a report on the Thyringer witches of the Groß Herrlitz Dominion (to which Seitendorf belonged to). Unfortunately, no information is available about the further fate of the case only that the task of the compilation of the report was handed over to the Groß Herrlitz judge.⁸¹⁴

One of the most striking features of the known cases of revenants in the Moravian-Silesian border area is that the sources fall silent after 1738. The last known case before the 1755 mass executions of Frei Hermersdorf is the burning of the body of Rosina Heintzin (56) in Groß Herrlitz (today Velké Heraltice) on 3rd October 1738.⁸¹⁵ The Groß Herrlitz parish registers, which contain several such entries until 1738 mention nothing from then onwards, not even the Frei Hermersdorf burnings. At the same time, exhumations for other, also forensic purposes are diligently entered, such as Anna Catharina Raschin's exhumation, who had been shot dead by a bullet in 1761, or the examination of a captain's corpse in 1762 by the secular authorities.⁸¹⁶

It would be counterintuitive to suppose that locals suddenly stopped delivering accusations of *magia posthuma* in 1738 and only resumed it in 1755: in all likelihood, the sources fell silent for a reason. It is possible that Bishop von Schrattenbach's death in 1738 had something to do with this, as he had been a major factor in the development of *magia posthuma* in the bishopric. At the same time, it might have been a result of the above-mentioned 1740 investigation by the Breslau royal council that suppressed cases of *magia posthuma* for these two decades, though Breslau, together with most of Silesia was annexed by the Prussian Kingdom in 1742 and hence lost authority in Moravia and Upper Silesia, which remained with the Habsburg Monarchy.

What is certain is that neither the known sources nor relevant secondary literature knows of revenant cases in the bishopric of Olomouc during the bishopric of Jakob Ernst von Liechtenstein-Kastelkorn (1738–1745). It seems that his successor, Ferdinand Julius von Troyer, royal secret councillor and bishop of Olomouc (1745–58) faced the Frei Hermersdorf revenant infestation after a two-decade lull. This silence, however, did not make the machinery in any way rusty: the procedure against the Frei Hermersdorf revenants went as smooth and steady as any time before the 1740s.

⁸¹⁴ Zukał, 97.

⁸¹⁵ 'Catholic Parish Register 1737-1784, Velké Heraltice', 8v.

⁸¹⁶ 'Catholic Parish Register 1737-1784, Velké Heraltice', 69v. 75r.

VII.2. The revenant infestation of Frei Hermersdorf (1753-1755)

On 31st January 1755, in the village of Frei Hermersdorf (today Svobodné Heřmanice), an episcopal commission from Olomouc and the secular court of the Dominion of Groß Herrlitz (today Velké Heraltice) had 29 corpses disinterred and 19 of them burnt for the crime of '*magia posthuma*', that is, posthumous bewitchment. In contrast to earlier revenant infestations, the Viennese court this time reacted swiftly, and Queen Maria Theresa ordered two high-ranking physicians to go on site and investigate, what had happened. On 12th February, the two commissioners already arrived in Troppau, the centre of the principedom, which Frei Hermersdorf belonged to; there they were joined by local dignitaries and formed a sizeable commission which reached Frei Hermersdorf the same day. The commission reviewed the earlier investigations' documentation, heard witnesses, examined corpses, and decided that the earlier commissions committed a mistake, for the lack of decomposition was due to natural causes, while the vampire sickness was a combination of a natural illness causing chest-pains and the superstitious fears of the populace.

The Viennese commission put together a large bundle of documents consisting of the investigation reports of the earlier commissions, surgical attestations, official letters from commission members and from the community, and added their own report on the hearings of witnesses and their own autopsy reports. The whole bundle was then sent to Vienna. Here, it was first probably processed by Gerard van Swieten, court physician and *protomedicus* (the head of the empire's medical system), who based on the report wrote a manuscript treatise for the Queen advising her about the Frei Hermersdorf case, based on which the empress engaged in repeated legislation against superstition as well as towards the decriminalization of magic throughout the 1750s-1760s.

Given the large-scale mobilisation this case triggered, the case of Frei Hermersdorf received much scholarly attention, but has so-far been discussed mostly based on second-hand sources, such as van Swieten's *Remarques*, and the Queen's laws. As recent research has found out however, the detailed protocol books and reports of the commissions are also extant in archives today. The episcopal commission's documents are currently located in the Olomouc branch of the Regional Archives of Opava, in the Czech Republic, and have been

analysed by a number of Czech scholars, most thoroughly in an MA thesis by Monika Slezáková.⁸¹⁷ Slezáková has found a further version of the episcopal documents in the Moravian Regional Archives in Brno, which likely is a copy of the originals in Olomouc; the texts are essentially identical except for minor deviations.⁸¹⁸

Even though the Viennese commission's original report probably perished together with all the materials of the *Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus* in the 1927 fire of the Palace of Justice in Vienna,⁸¹⁹ at least one copy has survived, and is kept today in Esztergom, Hungary. In 1759, Ferenc Horváth, expeditor of József Batthyány, the Hungarian palatine copied the report. The protocols were bound into a book format together with Joseph Pitton de Tournefort's letter about the Greek broucolakas and the first version of van Swieten's *Remarques*. The bound book, titled *Historia vampirorum*, is currently held in the Library and Archives of the Archbishopric of Esztergom in Hungary.⁸²⁰ According to its dedicatory letter, the book was compiled at the request of the newly appointed bishop of Transylvania, Lajos Batthyány, nephew of the palatine. The fact that the protocols of the various commissions have been copied might point at a wider manuscript-format circulation of these documents.

Based on the investigation protocols of the episcopal and the Viennese commissions it is possible to reconstruct the events in a greater detail, and to see how the two commissions could arrive at the exact opposite opinion about the deaths in Frei Hermersdorf. In the following description of the events I will heavily rely on Slezáková's excellent thesis for the episcopal commission's activity, complementing the data where necessary with my own. As for the investigations of the Viennese commission, I will rely on the protocol book's only known extant copy from Esztergom.

⁸¹⁷ Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti'; Branislav Martinek, 'K otázce tzv. posmrtné magie na panství Velké Heraldice v 18. století.', in *Sborník Bruntálského Muzea*, ed. Tomáš Niesner, Petr Vojtal, and Kateřina Košnovská-Járková (Bruntál: Muzeum v Bruntále, 2001), 37-42.; Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku'; 'Documents Relating to the Frei Hermersdorf Magia posthuma Case'.

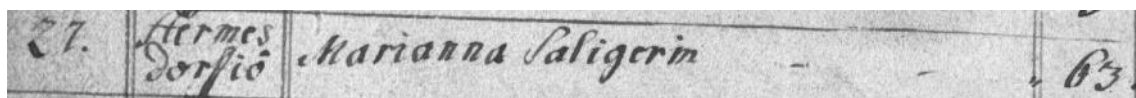
⁸¹⁸ 'Copy of the Documents Relating to the Frei Hermersdorf Magia posthuma Case', 1754, Moravské místodržitelství - patenty / značka B17 / signatura 39 / karton 215., Moravský zemský archiv v Brně; Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti', 103.

⁸¹⁹ Jakob Seidl, 'Das Brandunglück im Österreichischen Staats-archiv des Innern und der Justiz', *Archivalische Zeitschrift* 37 (1928): 184-91.

⁸²⁰ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum'. I would like to thank Katalin Pataki for having drawn my attention to this wonderful source material.

The episcopal investigations: Father Zeche

On the dawn of 31st January 1755, the Olomouc episcopal and the Troppau secular courts jointly had 19 corpses executed for the crime of *magia posthuma*. The executions were supposed to put an end to the series of misfortunes that had been affecting the village of Frei Hermersdorf for a year. The cause of the strange events was associated by most witnesses with the death of Marianna Saligerin, a village healer, who had died on 27th August 1753, more than a year before the court proceedings. Since her death, 28 people died in the village (see the graph below, Figure 44),⁸²¹ on average 2-3 every month, with an especially bad period in spring 1754, when the community had to bury 11 people. During the following summer and autumn, however, the frequency of deaths visibly ebbed, and between July and September 1754 only one person died.



43 Marianna Saligerin's name in the parish death register of Groß Herrlitz

Considering this tendency, it is curious, that it was exactly then, in September 1754, that the problem started to quickly escalate from the village level to that of the Groß Herrlitz Dominon and then to the level of the Olomouc Bishopric.⁸²² On 23rd September Groß Herrlitz judge Ignaz Sebastian Dvorsky wrote a letter to Johann Metzner, the parish priest of Groß Herrlitz (and thus of Frei Hermersdorf as well) urging him to contact the episcopal consistory and to request an investigation of the affliction that centred on Frei Hermersdorf but affected several neighbouring villages as well. The problem consisted of incessant night-time attacks many villagers had been subject to roughly since June 1754. The same day, Father Metzner indeed wrote a letter to the episcopal consistory, whose first answer was to get the affected houses blessed, which was essentially a minor form of exorcism used to purify spaces and objects and was usual practice against demonic *circumpossession*.⁸²³ The consistory also advised Father Metzner to distribute holy objects among the community to further strengthen their protection. Metzner however must have been subjected to considerable pressure from the part of the community, because already at this point he was dissatisfied with these remedies

⁸²¹ The data was derived from: 'Catholic Parish Register 1737-1784, Velké Heraldice'.

⁸²² Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti', 73.

⁸²³ Báth, *Benedikció és exorcizmus a kora újkori Magyarországon*.

This turn of events later on angered the royal court in Vienna so much that it costed Dworsky one year of his salary. Whether the principedom's administration indeed had a slow reaction time is unclear, but tradition certainly supported the episcopal choice. It has been shown in the previous chapter that the Olomouc bishopric had dealt with several *magia posthuma* cases in the decades preceding Frei Hermersdorf.

On 30th November, a delegation from Frei Hermersdorf, headed by the village judge Paul Saliger and consisting of municipal elders Frantz Richter and Georg König, personally addressed the episcopal consistory in Olomouc to request the *magia posthuma* investigation.⁸²⁶ They also presented the testimonies of 13 witnesses, who described the above-mentioned night-time attacks spanning the months between June and November 1754. The accounts mostly involved poltergeist phenomena (strange noises, moving objects in the house), apparitions (most often in an animal shape, sometimes as a shapeless smoke or a human face) and the usual symptoms of night terror (paralysis, pressure on the chest, suffocation and intense fear).

The symptoms of the affliction, then, were very similar to those experienced by victims of vampire / moroi attacks in Habsburg Serbia and the Banat, but (at least in Frei Hermersdorf, in the July-November 1754 period) did not result in deaths. A further difference is that the deaths concentrated on the spring season, as opposed to the usual winter-timing of deaths in the revenant cases of the southern Habsburg borderland. It is possible, that the villagers of Frei Hermersdorf were afraid that the night-time attacks would become worse and worse, eventually leading to a massive amount of deaths, and wanted to prevent this scenario. Importantly, at this point no-one accused Marianna Saligerin directly. Out of the 13 initial witnesses 10 remained constant during the two episcopal investigations that followed the request. A comparison of the witnesses interrogated by the various commissions is provided below (see table), based on a combination of Slezáková's lists of the witnesses of the episcopal commissions and the Gasser-Wabst Protocol's witness interrogations.⁸²⁷

The bishopric of Olomouc finally responded to the request and on 13th December 1754 sent its first commission to the village, which consisted of the dean of Bautsch (today Budišov nad

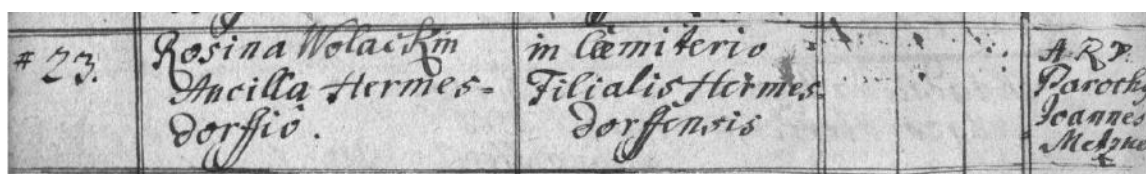
⁸²⁶ Slezáková, 74.

⁸²⁷ Slezáková, 75-77.; Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 15-35.

Budišovkou), Joseph Schnerich and Franz Hans Zeche, priest of Bennisch (today Horní Benešov).⁸²⁸ Bautsch is about 20 kms south of Frei Hermersdorf, while Bennisch is the closest big town, about 5 kms north-west. Bennisch belonged to the neighbouring Principedom of Jägerndorf, while Bautsch was in Moravia. This way, neither of the two episcopal investigators came from the dominion which Frei Hermersdorf belonged to, because the episcopal jurisdiction overlapped secular borders.

The Schnerich-Zeche commission heard 14 witnesses and collected more detailed descriptions of the night-time attacks. Slezáková underlines the sober attitude of the commissioners, who were trying to explain the experiences with natural causes and were attempting to convince the witnesses that in fact, they were only dreaming the attacks. In their final report, the commissioners noted that people were stubborn, and would not accept a natural explanation, and also mentioned that the deaths of healthy people did lend some credibility to the case. The witnesses in the end finally swore to the truth of their testimonies by oath.

After the departure of the commissioners, the night terrors continued and on 23rd December 1754 apparently resulted in the death of a 38-year-old maidservant, Rosina Wolackin, who was the first victim since September (see the graph of deaths above). The name 'Wolackin' might point at a distant Wallachian ancestry. In this sense, it is important, that secondary literature uses the name 'Polackin', and supposes a Polish ancestry, because this is what van Swieten erroneously wrote in his manuscript treatise. However, both the parish registers and the Viennese Commission's protocol book spell the name as 'Wolackin'.



45 Rosina Wolackin's name in the Groß Herrlitz parish death register of 1754

The episcopal consistory sent a second commission to the village, which held witness hearings between 15th and 17th January 1755,⁸²⁹ and collected information on Marianna Saligerin's possible background in witchcraft. In the commission, Dean Schnerich was replaced by pastor Joseph Saliger, who together with Frantz Hans Zeche interrogated sixteen witnesses. Apart

⁸²⁸ Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti', 77-78.

⁸²⁹ Slezáková, 81-83.

from the usual night-time attacks, several witnesses gave testimony to suspicious healing practices Marianna Saligerin used to do in her lifetime. Joannes Kaszt related a story that happened 8 years before, when she cured him of his colic through ordering him to send her four coins tied into his own shirt. She sent medicine in response and the man got cured. Rosina Saligerin testified that 20 years before, Marianna Saligerin revealed a thief by looking into a mirror, and that the thief got ill, and after refusing to confess to the theft, he died. Samuel Koschatzke claimed that 14 years before, he was being treated by Marianna Saligerin, who wondrously predicted the exact date of his healing. Finally, Michael Gebauer 31 years before lost some money, and Marianna told him where he would find it, and so he did. The knowledge of secrets and the ability to make people sick and heal wondrously were usual accusations against witches in the era, but even according to the standards of the time, are fairly weak evidence.

It is apparent that many people from the Saliger family got involved in the case, and Slezáková supposes⁸³⁰ that the driving force behind the whole case was a conflict between the families of the two Saliger brothers, Wenzel (Marianna's husband) and Paul (the village judge, Rosina's husband). Thomas Bohn in addition assumes that the name 'Saligerin' refers to an origin from the Alps,⁸³¹ and the Berlin-based *Vossische Zeitung's* contemporaneous description of the case (see below, Chapter VII.3.) also refers to Marianna Saligerin as 'a doctor from Tirol (*Tyroler Doctorin*)'. One should nevertheless be careful with drawing such conclusions, because having a name that refers to a foreign origin does not necessarily mean that villagers also saw the person as such; the Saliger family was definitely well-established in and around Frei Hermersdorf. Further, it is unclear where the Berlin newspaper received its information, because the Gasser-Wabst protocol does not mention anything about Saligerin's possible outsider position or indeed her having come from the Austrian region of Tirol.

⁸³⁰ Slezáková, 85.

⁸³¹ Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 144.

Table 2: Witnesses testifying at the various stages of the investigation⁸³²

| Village delegation's request to the Episcopal Consistory 30 th November 1754 | The Zeche-Schnerich 1 st Episcopal Commission 13 th December 1754 | The Zeche-Saliger 2 nd Episcopal Commission 15–17 th January 1755 | The Gasser-Wabst Viennese Commission 12-14 th February 1755 |
|---|---|---|--|
| Anna Kattrina Luxin (23) | Anna Kattrina Luxin (23) | Anna Kattrina Luxin (23) | |
| Anna Maria Saligerin (36) | Anna Maria Saligerin (36) | Anna Maria Saligerin (36) | |
| Anna Rosina Behnelin (17) | Anna Rosina Behnelin (17) | Anna Rosina Behnelin (17) | |
| Elisabetha Königin (48) | Elisabetha Königin (48) | Elisabetha Königin (48) | |
| Georg Bartel (20) | Georg Bartel (20) | Georg Bartel (20) | |
| Joseph Bartel (17) | Joseph Bartel (17) | Joseph Bartel (17) | |
| Marina Blashkin (50) | Marina Blashkin (50) | Marina Blashkin (50) | |
| Magdalena Peshkin (40) | Magdalena Peshkin (40) | | |
| Franz Peickert (48) | Franz Peickert (48) | Franz Peickert (48) | Franz Peickert (40) |
| Florian Marckes (22) | Florian Marckes (22) | Florian Marckes (22) | Florian Marckes (24) |
| Hans Marckes (28) | | | |
| | Susanna Marckesin (28) | | |
| Frantz Gudrich (-) | | | |
| | Hans Gudrich (-) | | |
| | Christoph Ledel (54) | | |
| | Wenzel Stoppel (24) | Wenzel Stoppel (24) | Wenzel Stoppel (24) |
| | | Anna Lisa Kolbin (19) | |
| | | Joannes Kaszt (43) | |
| | | Michael Gebauer (53) | |
| | | Samuel Koschatzke (52) | |
| | | Rosina Saligerin (38) | Rosina Saligerin (-) |
| | | | Christoph Saliger (25) |
| | | | Maria Saligerin (24) |
| | | | Anna Saligerin (17) |
| | | | Leopold Saliger (20) |
| | | | Josef Saliger (16) |
| | | | Anton Michelman (24) |
| | | | Anton Kolb (24) |
| | | | Johann Raab (43) |
| | | | Christoph Schwartz (36) |
| | | | Anton Hampel (64) |
| | | | Anna Maria Beyerlin (50) |

⁸³² Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti', 75-77.; Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 15-35.

After the witness hearings, probably on 17th January, the Zeche-Saliger commission ordered the exhumation and medical examination of 29 corpses from the Frei Hermersdorf village cemetery (marked blue on the map, see below Figure 46).

A comparison of the protocol books and the parish registers of deaths in the village⁸³³ reveal that during the judicial process *each and every person* was exhumed who died in the time period between Marianna Saliger's and Rosina Wolackin's deaths. This means that in line with the framework of the *magia posthuma*-based revenant infestation (Chapter III.2.), the episcopal commission did not target particular corpses, who were suspicious based on the testimonies, but disinterred all of them, because anyone could have turned into a revenant, and the commission wanted to do a thorough job.

The witness accounts mentioned witchcraft exclusively against Marianna Saligerin, not against others, which again is in line with the tradition of *magia posthuma*, in which only the arch-witch had to be a grave sinner, the rest of the multiplying revenants were average people. This element has to be emphasized, because it shows a different attitude as compared to the usual returning dead of the German-speaking world (*Wiedergänger*, ghosts and the epidemic-causing *Nachzehrers*), who were not thought of being able to transfer their own unnatural condition to others. This feature of the returning dead of the Moravian-Silesian border area make them faintly related to the contagious revenants of the southern borderland, the Rascian vampires and the Wallachian moroi.

⁸³³ 'Catholic Parish Register 1737-1784, Velké Heraldice', 40–44.

| Table 3: State of the corpses convicted for magia posthuma by the Zeche-Saliger Commission, and the causes of death added by the Gasser-Wabst Commission ⁸³⁴ | | | | |
|---|--------------|--|--|---|
| Date of death | | Name, Age, Origin of Family | Cause of death according to the Gasser-Wabst Commission, 1755 February 12-14. | State of corpses upon exhumation by the Zeche-Saliger Commission, 1755 January 17. |
| 1753 | August 27. | Marianna Saligerin, 63, Frei Hermersdorf | She had been coughing up blood for 9 month and was wasting away, and so died probably of consumption (Schwindsucht) . | signs of decay, tissue preserved on the left side and above the breast on the right side, no bleeding |
| | September 5. | Rosina Zipsin, 23, Frei Hermersdorf | During the burial of Marianna Saligerin, she was scared by a dog so much that she got convulsions (die Fraß) and died of fantasy (Fantasey) in 8 days. | thighs preserved, no bleeding |
| | October 3. | Jakob Novack, 60, Brattersdorf | At first, he got the Saint Anthony's fire (Rothlauf) on his foot, which then moved onto his back, causing a big tumour and he died in 8 days. | hands and left calf preserved, no bleeding |
| | October 4. | Anna Catharina (Rosina) Schnärchin, 3, Brattersdorf | She caught the smallpox (Blattern) , and her tonsils got swollen on the 14th day, and after one and a half years of struggling, she died. | preserved |
| | October 25. | Matheus Launer, 77, Brattersdorf | old age | preserved |
| | November 2. | Rosina Zwinerlin, 78, Frei Hermersdorf | According to all available indications died of consumption (Schwindsucht) and old age. | thighs preserved, no bleeding |
| | November 17. | Jakob Schebesta, 59, Frei Hermersdorf | According to all relations, he died of angina (Angina) in the 14th day of his disease. | right thigh preserved, bleeding from the knee |
| | December 17. | Wentzel Schelder, 45, Brattersdorf | He was epileptic (Epilepticus) , got attacked 7 times by a strong inflammation of the intestines (Entzündung des Intestini) and was dead within an hour. | preserved tissue and bleeding |
| 1754 | January 15. | Elisabetha Luxin, 56, Frei Hermersdorf | A strong pain in the side (Seitenstecken) , in which she died after 6 days. | thighs preserved, bleeding |
| | January 26. | Johann Fuchs, 65, Frei Hermersdorf | Had been suffering for many years of coughing blood , which ended in a long-lasting, hectic deterioration, until he got a shock on his chest (Stoß auf die Brust) and died on the 9th or 10th day. | hands preserved, no bleeding |
| | March 2. | Marina Steinerin, 62, Frei Hermersdorf | Died of a pain in the side (Seitenstecken) on the 7th day. | thighs preserved |
| | March 3. | Maria Theresia (Michael) Schelderin, 7, Frei Hermersdorf | After an attack of convulsions (Fraß) died in 8 days. | well-preserved shoulder |
| | March 4. | Johann Gebauer, 19, Frei Hermersdorf | Had an attack of convulsions (Fraß) , died in 8 days. | - |
| | March 21. | Dorothea Leschakin, 60, Brattersdorf | Had been suffering of consumption (schwindsüchtig) for 8 years, had been constantly coughing up pus because of which she had to stay in bed and died without any further events. | right shoulder and thigh preserved |
| | March 23. | Magdalena Kreyselin, 64, Brattersdorf | Died in 5 days of a hot fever (hitziges Fieber) but was conscious all the way through and stayed constantly in bed till the end. | right thigh fleshy |
| | March 25. | Johann (Georgy) Schelder, 1, Brattersdorf | He got tumour (Parotides) during a malign fever (febris maligna) and died within a few days in convulsions (Fraß) . | right leg partially preserved |
| | April 16. | Johann Zopp, 62, Brattersdorf | His sickness started with a cold (Frost) , upon which in two hours a strong pain came under the floating ribs on the right side, suffered of great anxiety after a numbness of his tongue (Trunkenheit der Zunge) ; on the third day went out to the fresh air, and fainted, but came to and was brought to bed; he was longing for a pie and did not want to eat anything else, before the rooster crows, at which time he ate the pie and said that he would die before dawn, and died on the fifth day in full consciousness. | left thigh preserved and fleshy |
| | April 27. | Matheus Kobelovsky, 67, Brattersdorf | Wasted due to old age. | preserved tissue |
| | December 22. | Rosina Wolackin, 55, Frei Hermersdorf | She had a stroke (von den Schlag gerührt) , to which her short neck must have contributed a great deal. | preserved body without signs of decay, flexible limbs and bleeding |

⁸³⁴ Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti', 89-90.; Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 37-44.

The examination of the 29 bodies was carried out in the presence of the commission, by two medical experts from Bennisch, Johann Tobias Vogel, and Johann Peter Wolff. Interestingly, the episcopal and the Gasser-Wabst commission's protocols record different professions to Vogel and Wolff. According to Slezáková, the episcopal protocols labelled Vogel as surgeon and Wolff as a physician,⁸³⁵ but the Gasser-Wabst protocol labels them as civic barbers,⁸³⁶ which is a huge difference in terms of experience and education. The examination on the one hand noted and described the outside state of the bodies and distinguished between less and more decayed ones. As a next step, Tobias Loppich, coal burner from Wüstdittelsdorf (Karlsberg Herrschaft, Fürst Liechtenstein) made incisions on the suspicious bodies. Bleeding from the wounds was taken as proof of *magia posthuma*. The witness accounts and the medical examination's result together proved to be enough for the Zeche-Saliger commission to convict 19 out of the disinterred corpses for the crime of *magia posthuma*.

If we look at the descriptions Vogel and Wolff gave of the bodies (see table above), it becomes clear, that only those corpses were pronounced to be innocent, which were entirely decayed. Those, that had even as little parts as the hands or parts of the legs were in the end all convicted, regardless of the result of the incisions made by Loppich. In fact, most of those who died in 1753 did not bleed upon the incisions, but were still pronounced to be revenants. It seems that the results of this test resembling *cruentation* was only of secondary importance as compared to the lack of decay in at least some of the body parts.

Once the episcopal verdict was passed, the case had to be handed over to the secular authority, because, just like in case of witchcraft trials, the punishment had to be carried out by the secular arm. The results of the witness hearings and the medical examination have been sent to the Troppau Landesältesten Amt on 18th January.⁸³⁷ This was apparently the first time that the principedom's administration received official documentation relating to the Frei Hermersdorf case. Their response at this point of research is unknown, but seemingly was supportive, since on 23rd January the Groß Herrlitz secular court was requested to come on site, review the evidence and decide on the fate of the convicted corpses. The Groß Herrlitz secular court consisted of 12 people representing the individual municipalities and authorities

⁸³⁵ Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti', 89-90.

⁸³⁶ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 5.

⁸³⁷ Horváth, 52.

of the dominion of Groß Herrlitz. Among its members were Isidor Urban, judge of Boydensdorf, Ignaz Kallerth, magistrate from Ekersdorf, Joseph Weiss, magistrate, Andreas Bartel, judge of Erbersdorf, Carl Joseph Czerny and Ignaz Sebastian Dvorsky, judges from Groß Herrlitz.

The final decision was made on the 30th January 1755 within the frames of a highly ritualized spectacle.⁸³⁸ The members of the Groß Herrlitz court sat down at a table on the clearing to the west of the cemetery, while watchmen were positioned in two rows, forming a corridor that led from the desk of the court to the cemetery wall. The episcopal commission was meanwhile inside the cemetery and read out the verdict. Based on old custom, the relatives of each convicted dead person had to fasten metal hooks (made specifically for this occasion by the Frei Hermersdorf blacksmith) into the corpse and drag it out of cemetery, so that it is placed it in front of the secular court for inspection. It was however not through the gate that the bodies were pulled out, but through a hole broken into the cemetery wall. As the Gasser-Wabst protocol book explains, this is because the convicted corpse is not only unworthy of the holy soil of the cemetery but also of the gate that 'normal' dead use. Undoubtedly, this was a custom forcing the family to take public responsibility for the crimes committed by their dead relative. Having a revenant in the family was dangerous to the whole community and therefore was shameful. It is interesting to note here that (as discussed above) both canon law and some of the learned debaters of vampirism in the 1730's put the blame on the local clerical authorities for revenant cases. After all, they were the ones, who were unable to identify and duly punish the witches while they were still alive: it was because of their lack of zeal that a witch escaped justice and was now desecrating holy ground and massacring parishioners. The custom described in the protocol book on the other hand reveals that the family itself was the first line of defence against revenants.

Further remnants of the idea of the responsibility of the family for its own dead can be found in numerous descriptions of vampirism including Arnout Pavle's story (Chapter II.3.), the *Vossische Zeitung's* relation of the Frei Hermersdorf trial (see below, Chapter VII.2.) where the future revenant warns the family that he / she would surely become a vampire, and therefore,

⁸³⁸ Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti', 92-93.

in order to prevent the havoc, they should behead him / her right after death. Alberto Fortis (1741–1803), a Venetian naturalist travelling in Dalmatia also mentioned the same:

*'There are even instances of Morlacchi, who imagining that they may possibly thirst for children's blood after death, intreat their heirs, and sometimes oblige them to promise to treat them as vampires when they die.'*⁸³⁹

In these almost folktale-ish stories the family fails to act, because they love their deceased relative too much, and as a consequence, hell breaks loose in the community. These stories and social practices served to police individual emotions for the benefit of the community, and are in line with the idea of crying the dead back, that is, the fear that if someone is unable to let go of grief, the intense emotion will not let the dead cross into the other world.

The particular case of the Frei Hermersdorf revenants however also shows that in reality customs are often challenged, even overridden by local power dynamics. Nine out of the 19 dead convicted for *magia posthuma* came from Brattersdorf (today Bratřikovice), the neighbouring village to the south-east. Even though these people lived in and belonged to the Frei Hermersdorf parish, their relatives were still living in Brattersdorf. The owner of this village was the Countess Hoditz⁸⁴⁰ and she forbade her villagers to touch any of the corpses: it was only the gravediggers who were allowed to do so. This meant that it was impossible to force the relatives to carry out the ritual: they got away by paying the gravedigger to drag the corpses out of the cemetery. The other anomaly was related to Marianna Saligerin, whose sons (who were heard as witnesses during the commission's investigations as well) at first refused to participate in the procedure, and thus had to be forced to do so by the watchmen.

After reviewing the evidence, the secular court agreed with the decision of the episcopal commission and passed its verdict to have the 19 revenants burnt at the stake.⁸⁴¹ Together with the bodies, the shrouds, the coffin, the cross and the soil of the graves also had to be burnt, which, from a dogmatic point of view was as an act of incising the unworthy, heretical elements from the holy ground of the cemetery. At the same time, for the community, it also

⁸³⁹ Fortis, *Travels into Dalmatia Containing General Observations on the Natural History of That Country and the Neighbouring Islands, the Natural Productions, Arts, Manners and Customs of the Inhabitants*, 61-62.

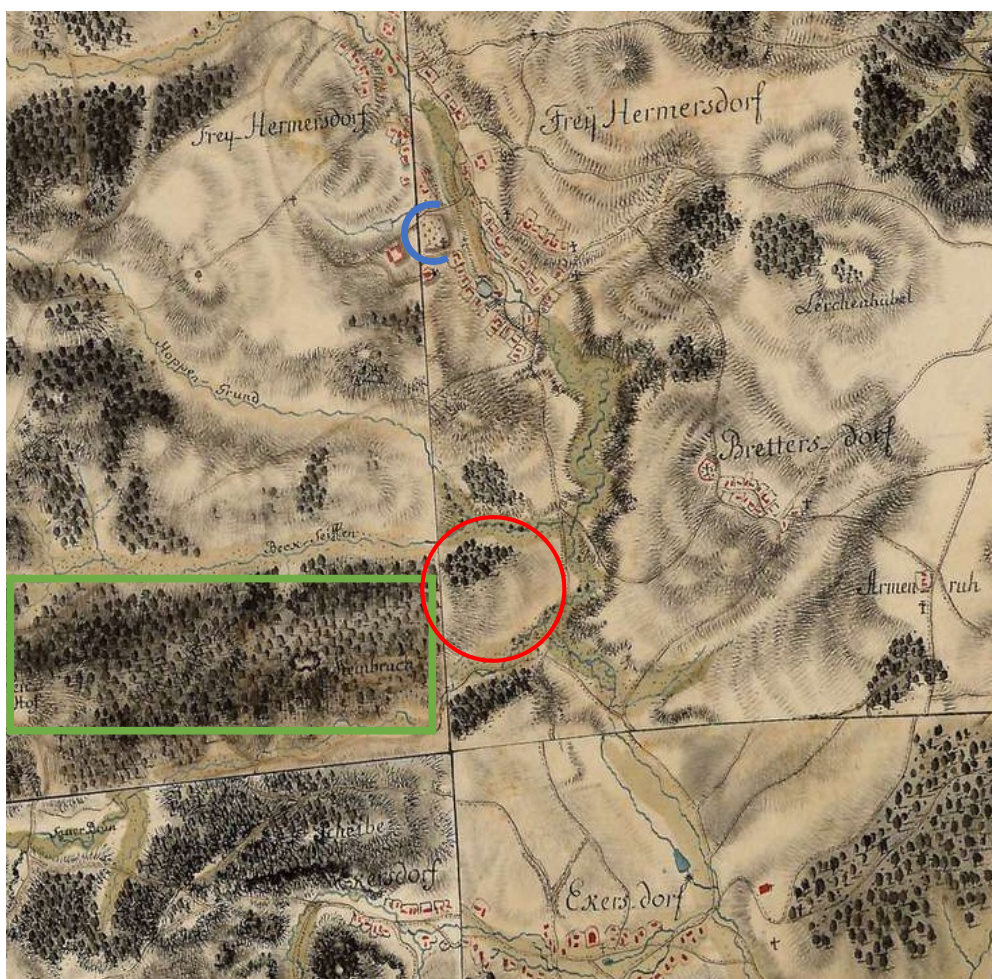
⁸⁴⁰ The Hoditz family's central lands lay about 50 kilometres north of Brattersdorf, around the town of Hotzenplotz (today Osoblaha), in the Dominion of Rosswald, an area that formed an enclave in Upper Silesia, because it belonged to Moravia.

⁸⁴¹ The description of the event comes from: Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 53-55.

must have had a role of getting rid of all the possibly dangerous remnants of the pollution. At dawn 31st January, the corpses were loaded on a cart, and the executioner (who had been escorted there from his home in Seitendorf, the neighbouring village to the north) took them to the place where executions in the village usually were carried out. The carts were accompanied by 120 armed men, probably in order to prevent any riotous behaviour on the part of the villagers.

Three stakes were set up and were burning all day, in the beginning watched by a great crowd, which (according to the Gasser-Wabst commission's protocols) dispersed quickly due to the unbearable stench. The executioner came back next morning, sifted the ashes through, collected the bones that survived and burnt these to ashes as well, finally burying the ashes in an unknown place, the protocols give no indication, where. They certainly were not allowed to be buried back in the cemetery, or anywhere close to the village, due to the intense fear of any remaining body parts or objects relating to the dangerous corpses. This fear made people in Römerstadt in 1720 and in Medvedia in 1732 throw the ashes of revenants into a river, so that they are carried away far. In the Frei Hermersdorf case, the burial place might have been there, at the place of execution, which was practically a no-man's land between the villages.

As far as the exact location of the executions is concerned, the protocol book writes that the stakes were set up at the very border of the village (just like in 1720, in Römerstadt), between the Frei Hermersdorf communal forest and the fields of Ekersdorf (today Jakartovice), the neighbouring village to the south. A 1931 local history article stated that the place of the executions in the woods was still called Witch's Plains (Hexenplan), as a remembrance to the events of 1755.⁸⁴² Looking at the 1764 Josephinische Landesaufnahme map (see below), we can make a fairly educated guess at the location of the place. The forested area marked with a green rectangle is labelled 'communal' on a later, nineteenth-century cadastral map of the area. The forest's western half, roughly until the rocky outcrop (marked 'Steinbruch') belonged to Frei Hermersdorf, while the eastern part reaching until the Frei Hermersdorf stream (today Heřmanický-potok) belonged to Ekersdorf. In all likelihood, the executions took place somewhere here, in this borderland area, possibly on the little clearing at the forest's eastern edge, marked with a red circle. That clearing lies exactly between the Frei Hermersdorf



46 Map showing the probable location of the executions

⁸⁴² Anon., 'Der Hexenplan zu Freihermersdorf', *Freudenthaler Ländchen* 11, no. 12 (1931): 94-95.

communal forest and the Eckersdorf fields, and importantly, there is a path leading there from Frei Hermersdorf, which was necessary for the carts loaded with bodies to get there from the cemetery (marked blue).

As it happened, the executions did not provide a closure to the events. On the one hand, information about the case reached Vienna circles within a week after the executions and set the imperial administration's machine to work. On the other hand, the unrest in the village also continued: people kept suffering of night-time attacks and apparitions throughout February 1755. We don't know how the villagers explained this, but earlier revenant cases showed that it was not easy to get rid of the affliction because there were many ways in which the revenants could pollute animals and inanimate objects as well. In Medvedia, Serbian vampires infected cattle, which this way became contagious themselves.

Dworsky had mentioned at the beginning of the case that neighbouring villages also started suffering from night-time attacks. Given the practice of intermarrying between the neighbouring villages, one can imagine a scenario, in which a person living in Seitendorf for instance is killed by one of his Frei Hermersdorf relatives, who had become a revenant. In this case, the new victim, buried in the Seitendorf cemetery would form a new focus of infestation. Such scenarios had already happened in the beginning of the century (Chapter III.1.).

Making things right – the Gasser-Wabst Commission

'Contact van Swieten and find a surgeon, who [...] would be able to convince those superstitious people of the truth',⁸⁴³

gave queen Maria Theresa the order on 8th February 1755 to Count Friedrich Wilhelm von Haugwitz, president of the governing body of the Austrian and Bohemian lands, the *Directorium in Publicis et Cameralibus*. The court apparently decided right at the beginning that the events in Frei Hermersdorf were based on superstition. This means that whatever 'the truth' might be, it certainly cannot have involved any form of *actio in distans* (be that

⁸⁴³ Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, 1852, 1:722.

natural magical, demonic or else) through which the dead could harm the living, the kind of explanation that used to be taken seriously in the 1732 learned debate.

The queen was convinced that the villagers and the episcopal commission were wrong, even if the real causes behind the phenomena were unclear. That the causes were unclear is visible in the order she gave next day to the Bohemian-Silesian administration,⁸⁴⁴ informing them that she is sending two commissioners, who

'will not simply examine the unearthed bodies, but will also thoroughly investigate all possible circumstances, and accordingly file an autopsy report (visum et repertum); and in addition have to perform everything that will allow naturalists (die Naturkundige) to assess what the true explanation is, so that they can inform the world about it.'

Further, they will inquire

'How and why, when and whom did the so-called vampires or bloodsuckers trouble? In what shape did they appear? How could such a thing appear to be credible for those plagued and for other local people?'

The commissioners, then, had a threefold task: judiciary (hearing witnesses and examining corpses), scientific (collecting data for further natural philosophical analysis) and pedagogical-policy related (collecting information on why people believe in this superstition and enlightening them).

Though the Queen asked for a surgeon to conduct the investigation, van Swieten chose the 32-year-old anatomy professor of the University of Vienna, Johann Lorenz Gasser (1723-1765) for the task. Gasser was one of van Swieten's proteges, who purportedly was such a stellar student, that van Swieten and Anton de Haen had awarded him the medical degree and the professorship without an exam.⁸⁴⁵ Gasser was joined by military chief-physician (*protomedicus*) Christian Franz Xaver Wabst.⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴⁴ Linzbauer, 1:722.

⁸⁴⁵ Werner E. Gerabek et al., eds., *Enzyklopädie Medizingeschichte*, vol. 1 (Berlin & New York: de Gruyter, 2005), 460.

⁸⁴⁶ Wabst wrote a treatise on the chemical nature of mercury in 1754, and in 1760 was knighted 'von Leidenfeld' for his services, see: Johann Georg Megerle von Mühlfeld, *Österreichisches Adels-lexikon des achtzehnten und neunzehnten Jahrhunderts: Enthaltend alle von 1701 bis 1820 von den souveränen Österreichs wegen ihrer Verdienste um den Kaiserstaat in die verschiedenen Grade des Deutsch-erbländischen oder Reichs-adels erhobenen Personen* (Wien: Mörscher und Jasper, 1822), 151.; Christian Xaver Wabst, *De hydrargyro tentamen physico-chemico-medicum* (Wien: Trattner, 1754). I was not able to find out his date of birth and death.

As the earlier cases in Serbia and the Banat showed, investigative commissions often were unable to take or maintain full control over local powers. The first test in this sense for Gasser and Wabst was their arrival on the 12th February in Troppau, the seat of the Troppau Princedom. The commissioners met several local dignitaries: the Troppau town administrator and country elder Franz Ignaz von Görlich,⁸⁴⁷ royal executive commissioner (*Königl: Execut: Commissario*) Franz Leopold Rössner and country dragoon (*Landdragoner*) Franz Dittrich. The behaviour of these dignitaries is unknown, but, as it was indicated above, it is known from the protocol that the Troppau administration had been informed about the legal procedure already on 18th January, almost two weeks before the executions took place. If this is true, facing the Viennese commissioners, they must have felt at least a little uncomfortable.

There cannot have been long discussions nevertheless, because the commissioners, complemented by von Görlich, Rössner and Dittrich, left for Frei Hermersdorf already on the same day. In Frei Hermersdorf, they were received by some of the magistrates, who had played a role in the earlier investigations: episcopal commissioner and parish priest of Bennisch Franz Johann Zeche and members of the Groß Herrlitz secular court: the Groß Herrlitz judge (jurisdictionarius) Franz Sebastian Dworsky, and sworn royal council advocate (*beschworne Königl: Amts Advocat*) Carl Joseph Czerny. Dworsky, Czerny and Zeche had all reasons to be anxious, for they were responsible for the legal procedures that became subject to investigation with the arrival of the commissioners. Gasser and Wabst collected the documents produced by the earlier commissions and questioned them about their role in the executions.

The questioning was aimed at undermining the evidence they relied on and sought to demonstrate to them that they have made a mistake. Particularly interesting is the back and forth between Father Zeche and the commissioners.⁸⁴⁸ Wabst and Gasser wanted to know, on what grounds did the episcopal commission carry out the exhumation and the incisions on the corpses and why they thought it was a proof of *magia posthuma*.

⁸⁴⁷ Von Görlich was ‚Landesältester‘, which can roughly be translated as district administrator, who was elected by the local estates and confirmed by the government; this position also entailed being the chairman of the local municipal council, and being head of local administrative and financial affairs. Von Görlich’s noble title was imperial knight (Reichsritter). *Meyers Konversations-lexikon*, 4th ed., vol. 10 (Wien, Leipzig: Verlag des Bibliographischen Instituts, 1885), 445.; Johann Georg Megerle von Mühlfeld, *Ergänzungsband zu dem österreichischen Adels-lexikon des achtzehnten und neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Wien: Mörscher und Jasper, 1824), 146.

⁸⁴⁸ See the transcript of the argument in: Slezáková, ‘Soumrak pověřivosti’, 100.

Apparently, they also did not understand why the episcopal commission handed the convicted corpses over to the secular court for the execution. Zeche said the test was carried out based on episcopal decree and that they were relying on long-term experience.

It is somewhat curious that Zeche did not back the procedure up with canon law decrees. In 1729, during the great Szeged witchcraft trials in Hungary, a very similar confrontation occurred between the Szeged town magistrate and King Charles VI.'s court.⁸⁴⁹ The town magistrate had several corpses executed; in that case there was no talk about posthumous magic, the execution was based on testimonies that they used to be witches in their lifetime. When the king was inquiring about the legal basis of the corpse executions, the magistrate answered by citing canon law decrees from Pope Gregory IX.'s *Liber Extra* against the excommunicated and the heretics. In the section on graveyards, (Liber III. Titulus XXVIII), it is stated that excommunicated people's mortal remains cannot stay in the cemetery, have to be exhumed and thrown out. Further, in the section on heretics (Liber V. Titulus VII, which is the same as the infamous *Excommunicamus* chapter of the IV. Lateran Council decrees), it is stated that convicted heretics need to be handed over to the secular court, which should carry out the death penalty through burning.⁸⁵⁰ These arguments would have worked for Father Zeche as well, had he used them. This way however, the conflict between him and the Gasser-Wabst commission got formulated not along the lines of canon versus secular law, but common versus written law.

Zeche's ultimate argument in support of the executions was that according to common law, the individual's rights are always subjected to those of the community. And in this particular case, the community's interest was peace, and calming the people down could only have been achieved through carrying out the executions. Many officials and surgeons (Frombald, Johann Rácz, Flückinger's commission) who had participated in earlier cases of vampirism in various parts of the Habsburg Monarchy have also voiced similar opinions to Father Zeche. For them, calming the community down was a priority,

⁸⁴⁹ Brandl and Tóth G., *Szegedi boszorkányperek 1726-1744*, 240.

⁸⁵⁰ Schmalzgrueber, *Jus ecclesiasticum universum brevi methodo ad discentium utilitatem explicatum, seu lucubrationes canonicae*, 3:335.; Friedberg, *Corpus iuris canonici - Editio lipsiensis secunda*, 2:553, 787.

even if the incriminating evidence was not hundred percent certain. Executing several corpses will do damage to the peace of the cemetery ground and to the reputation of the affected families, but it also solves the anxieties and fears of the community. This explanation, as we will see proved to be insufficient for Viennese sensibilities of the 1750's. In their eyes, appearing to be superstitious (that is, carrying out superfluous actions), and grossly indecent, indecorous at the same time was so bad, that they rather went into the much longer, much more bumpy road of instilling their own sensibilities on people, the enlightenment project.

Wabst and Gasser asked whether Father Zeche considered the findings of the exhumations and the incisions a proof of supernatural influence. The priest declined discussing matters of natural philosophy and said that this should be decided by the present investigation. The origins of the practice of making incisions on the corpses as a test of *magia posthuma* is unclear, but it is similar to another customary judicial practice, *cruentation*. During *cruentation*, the murder suspect was led close to the victim's corpse, which would start bleeding to show that the murderer was near. This practice, as we have seen earlier, was being intensely negotiated in the early 18th century by several learned scholars, among them Pietist theologian Johann Zopf, and Michael Alberti renown physician in Halle,⁸⁵¹ both of whom became more or less directly involved in the great vampire debate of 1732. The growing central attempts at controlling customary law in the seventeenth and 18th centuries had other battlefields as well, such as the custom of the bathing of witches as a test of innocence.⁸⁵²

Father Zeche was reproached also because according to the commission, the protocols contained mostly hearsay information, not eyewitness accounts. The priest answered that he agrees that eyewitnesses are better than hearsay, after all, not even an apostle should be trusted based solely on blind faith: visible evidence and clear argumentation are also needed. This curious remark brings to mind the Pentecost story about the incredulity of Saint Thomas. The commissioners did not record their answer to this statement, the questioning ended.

⁸⁵¹ Brittain, 'Cruentation in Legal Medicine and in Literature'.

⁸⁵² Brandl and Tóth G., *Szegedi boszorkányperek 1726-1744*, 240.; Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*.

After Father Zeche, the next targets of the commission were the two barbers from Bennisch, Tobias Vogel and Johann Peter Wolff.⁸⁵³ The barbers were asked, on whose authority did they arrive to carry out the examinations; the barbers responded that they had received orders from Father Zeche, who in turn testified that he had received no explicit order from the bishop to do this, but carried it out on his own accord.

The second set of questions was aimed at the barbers' knowledge of anatomy and left them humiliated and ridiculed by the end. The questioning started by the intimidating question whether they trusted themselves enough to take on such a job and to take responsibility for that. The barbers answered, 'Why not?'. Gasser and Wabst then went on to prove how undereducated they were: they were asked whether they had ever taken part in an anatomical demonstration. Vogel and Wolff answered they had not, but they still knew how the human body is built up. At this point the protocol stops listing the questions and answers, and simply gives the following summary: during the questioning the barbers proved to be very undereducated, and in the end all they could answer to the particular physiology-related questions was that that they did read and know things about medicine, but now they somehow forgot everything.

The next step in trying to convince the barbers and members of earlier commissions was to prove that nothing extraordinary was going on with the exhumed bodies. A major obstacle in this attempt was that the convicted bodies had already been burnt, and all they had was the barber's concise report about each body's outward appearance (see tables above). The commissioners first questioned the barbers about their testimony. Their answers (at least as recorded by Gasser and Wabst) were vague and insecure, fitting their subordinate and already humiliated position. It is worth quoting the questions and *answers* word-by-word:

- What did you mean by 'life-like' (lebhaft)
 - *(couldn't answer.)*
- Are life-like parts of a dead body the same as those of a living person?
 - *No.*
- And what is the difference?
 - *(couldn't answer.)*
- What do you understand by decay?
 - *When something is not as raw.*

⁸⁵³ For the questioning of the barbers, see: Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 8-12.

- How big was the raw, life-like flesh on the right side of Marianna Saligerin's body?
 - *(couldn't determine the size.)*
- How big was the raw, life-like flesh on the left side?
 - *From the key bone till the breast.*
- Was the skin also life-like in the case of this person?
 - *No. Neither was it such in the case of other victims.*
- [...]
- What did you mean by 'leg'?
 - *(couldn't answer, just pointed to the shin area)*
- How deep did you cut?
 - *Always until the bone.*
- Was the flesh always equally raw and life-like regardless of the person and the part of the leg?
 - *(Couldn't answer, it was different.)*
- When you cut into Jacob Schebesta's leg, what was the blood like when it flowed out?
 - *Fluid, light red, two fingers much.*
- Did it have a foul smell?
 - *No, it was impossible to tell because of the other foul smells.*
- When you cut Wenzel Schölder's left arm, how much blood came out?
 - *Even less than by the previous ones [...]*
- How much?
 - *Around one spoonful.*
- What did you mean by flexibility of the limbs?
 - *The legs were connected with the nerves and were movable.'*

With this, the questioning of the barbers ended, but the commissioners were not content taking their diagnosis of *magia posthuma* apart, they also sought to give an alternative diagnosis. To this end, they tried to figure out what diseases the convicted people died in. Their aim was to prove that no preternatural feature was present in their deaths, and thereby to exclude the possibility of death through bewitchment (see the causes of deaths in the table above). In accordance, Wabst and Gasser were only interested in the deaths of the revenants and did not ask about the non-revenants. The commissioners gathered information from friends and relatives of the executed corpses. The diagnosis they recorded in the protocol is a mix of what the relatives said and the interpretation of the commissioners: often it's symptomatic description (gained from the relatives), while other times it includes medical terminology (added by the commissioners).⁸⁵⁴

⁸⁵⁴ Horváth, 24-28.

In both the Serbian and the Frei Hermersdorf cases the witnesses described relatively similar symptoms of night terrors, with partial paralysis, suffocation, chest pains and fear. However, while in Serbia, the victims purportedly died of this condition within 2-3 days, in Frei Hermersdorf the witness accounts were not about those people's experiences, who had actually died. They were the experiences of the people since the large-scale death rate ebbed in early summer 1754. Whether those, who had died also experienced these usual symptoms of night-time attacks is unknown, villagers might have forgotten about it, or the commissioners might have filtered out such information and concentrated on the more recognisable disease symptoms. This way, out of the 19 revenants, five were recorded to have died of some sort of convulsions (*die Fraß*), four of consumption and two of intense side pains. While all these symptoms bear some resemblance to the symptoms of night terror, the protocols give no indication as to how villagers connected, made sense of the deaths of these people: there is absolutely no talk about dead lovers, friends or relatives appearing at night trying to kill people. The Gasser-Wabst commission took the presence of known natural disease symptoms (coughing blood, having convulsions etc.) as a proof of a natural cause of death and consequently as a proof of a natural state in the grave.

Even though the questioning of the barbers was over, they were ordered to stay till the next day, to attend as the commissioners review the bodies that had not been burnt, i.e. the ten non-revenant corpses.⁸⁵⁵ The reason for them to stay was not to help out, but, as the commissioners noted, so that they would get even more convinced of their own simplicity and lack of knowledge. It was meant to be a demonstrative, pedagogical act. The aim of the inspection was to find parts of the bodies, which escaped putrefaction and could thus serve as proof that even the corpses pronounced to be innocent displayed features of the supposed *magia posthuma*. As it is visible from the table below, all ten corpses were in a general state of putrefaction. Most of them were completely decayed, just as the barbers had stated, but some of them contained more or less well-preserved organs. Anna Weysin's heart and thigh muscles for example were preserved, but Johann Schelder's body was especially suitable to buttress their argument. Upon opening the body, muscles, membranes and the main aorta were all found to be looking in a fairly good condition, what's more, there was even some liquid blood in the blood vessels around the heart.

⁸⁵⁵ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 38-41.

Table 4: State of the corpses pronounced innocent in magia posthuma as seen by the two commissions⁸⁵⁶

| Date of death | | Name, Age, Origin of Family | State of corpse as seen by the Zeche-Saliger Commission, 1755 January 17. | State of corpse as seen by the Gasser-Wabst Commission, 1755 February 12-14. |
|---------------|---------------|--|---|--|
| 1753 | August 27. | Susanna (Henrik) Frantzin, 0, Frei Hermersdorf | completely decayed | Completely decayed, even the legs are fallen apart |
| | September 9. | Johann Plitzner, 0, Brattersdorf | decayed | All intestines are putrefied, the skull bone is dissolved into incoherence, the vertebrae are apart, in the upper parts of the thighs a thick, solid mass is visible, under which dark stripes show the places where the muscles, which have already disappeared, used to cling to the bone. |
| | November 1. | Marianna (Johann) Launerin, 0, Brattersdorf | completely decayed | The whole infant is putrefied, not even the bones are holding together anymore. |
| 1754 | February 04. | Johann Schelder, 69, Frei Hermersdorf | completely decayed | The deep back muscles, the mediastinum, the back side of the pleural membrane and the aorta from its arch till the iliac bifurcation all looked fairly good, except for the colour which was unlike they normally have right after death. The liver was partly putrefied, the bigger blood vessels were visible. The peritoneal membrane, where it covers the upper part of the pelvis and the small intestine looked relatively good, hardly putrefied. The heart however was bluish and a little putrefied, the blood vessels were visible especially on its outer surface, and when they were cut open, blood flowed from them. The heart however was empty, preserved columns and tendons were visible, which apart from their colour, were all right. Practically all the other parts of the body were totally putrefied, down to the bones, which however were still held together by tendons. |
| | February 21. | Anna Weysin, 40, Brattersdorf | decayed | The whole corpse is putrefied, apart from the heart, most of which was still preserved, but on the inside already was blue; the pelvic bone and the skin did not dissolve into putrid fluids; the flesh inside was of the same [bluish] colour, but the thigh muscle on the outside, where it descends to the greater trochanter [of the thigh bone] is well visible with preserved, red fibres. |
| | March 6. | Josef Gebauer, 21, Frei Hermersdorf | decayed | In this corpse everything became putrid down to the bones, except the muscles around the shoulders and the thighs, which got desiccated. Most of the liver seemed to be putrid, the bigger blood vessels were visible. The empty ascending blood vessel at the first and second lumbar vertebrae is in good condition, and contained a little blood, which was dark red and semi-liquid. The tendons between the vertebrae are in a good condition. |
| | March 21. | Josef (Fabian) Launer, 0, Brattersdorf | decayed | The whole infant is putrefied, not even the bones are holding together anymore. |
| | April 25. | Frantz (Christofer) Matzner, 0, Frei Hermersdorf | decayed | Completely decayed |
| | June 9. | Johann (Georgy) Benedict, 1, Frei Hermersdorf | decayed | The infant, apart from the putrid intestines, was entirely desiccated, the muscles got contracted, the fatty tissue solidified. |
| | September 13. | Marina Saligerin, 65, Frei Hermersdorf | decayed | Completely decayed |

⁸⁵⁶ Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti', 89-90.; Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 37-38.

The episcopal commission had convicted many corpses that only had certain parts of their bodies preserved, such as hands and thighs. In this light, Gasser and Wabst may have made their point in the eyes of the barbers and commissioners by pointing at the preserved internal organs. On the other hand, the barbers had not opened the bodies, but were judging them based on their external outlook, which, even according to the Viennese commissioners were that of general putrefaction. Wanting to strengthen their argument, Gasser and Wabst went one step further and had three further corpses exhumed, who had died before Marianna Saligerin and thus had not been targeted by the episcopal investigation. As they explained in the protocol, they wanted to use these three bodies as a control group to prove that even these corpses had certain preserved parts on their bodies. As is shown in the table below, the bodies were in such a state that it was very difficult to find anything preserved there. Georg Saliger's thigh muscles were still red though, and Johann Anton Rapp's liver was still whole, even if diseased and 'degenerated'.

| Table 5: The state of the three control corpses exhumed by the Gasser-Wabst Commission and their causes of death ⁸⁵⁷ | | | | |
|---|------------|---|--|---|
| Date of death | | Name, Age, Origin of Family | Cause of death according to the Gasser-Wabst Commission | State of corpse according to the Gasser-Wabst Commission |
| 1753 | July 28. | Johann Georg Heintz, 30, Frei Hermersdorf | died of a wasting (Abzehrung) that ensued from an abscess (Aposthemate) under the left hip | The whole corpse, to the bones decayed into putrefied liquid, the only exception was a large tumour that reached to the middle of the thigh, and was filled with solidified, dry, fatty matter. |
| | August 11. | Georg Saliger, 59, Frei Hermersdorf | lung disease (Lungsucht) | In the opened chest of this corpse the left lung was contracted into a small clog, the right lung was intact, but desiccated. The peritoneum membrane was not decayed at the place where it touched the sacrum; the rest of the intestines were putrefied. In the left thigh, the internal and external muscles were a little putrefied, but still dry and red; the right thigh is in good condition, but was only covered by tissue: when we cut this open, there was nothing under it, everything that was supposed to be under it, disappeared. |
| | August 23. | Johann Anton Rapp, 19, Brattersdorf | - | Almost all the corpse got consumed, of the intestines nothing was visible, only the liver, which had been diseased and enlarged even before he died. The liver's substance was entirely degenerate, solid and fatty; when it was cut open, this degeneration was observed everywhere, nothing was visible from the bigger blood vessels, apart from the inner side, where the stems of the ascending blood vessels started. Inside the stems, pale red, truly liquid drops of blood were found. The bones were still holding together, otherwise nothing. |

⁸⁵⁷ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 42-43.

Importantly, unlike Glaser and the Flückinger Commission twenty years before in Serbia, Gasser and Wabst did not adopt local terminology to describe the states of the corpses. They maintained their medical terminology. What's more, even though the whole protocol is in German, and even though they started the description of the bodies in German, during the description of Johann Schelder's body, the description slowly slipped into Latin, and from then on, it continued to be exclusively Latin:

*,4o der Joannes Schilder, 69 Jahr Alt, den 4tn Febr. 1754 gestorben.
4o Bey diesen wahren die Musculi Ilutcei Sacro Lumbalis der longissimus Dorsi das mediastinum der hintern Theil der Pleura Aorta incipiendo a curvatura, usque ad divisionem in Illiacas, ganz gut aussen daß die jenige Farbe nicht mehr vorhanden wäre, welche gleich nach dem Todte da zu sein pflleget. Praterrea Hepar quidem semi putrefactum erat, vasatamen majora adhuc conspicua. Peritoneum ea parte qua Posteriozem Pelveos partem invasituti et pars intestini recti utcunque comparebant, incorrupta cellutosa...'*⁸⁵⁸

The commissioners must have felt natural and more comfortable using the usual language of medical science and could thereby also strengthen their belief in their own authority. The impact of the local, agitated psychological situation on the external experts should not be underestimated, and experts could only maintain their status as experts if they kept as much of their usual practices, language and devices as they could. Using medical Latin and recording the findings of the autopsies in a meticulously organised manner all belonged to this arsenal of the medical expert.

Unfortunately, we cannot judge how much credence the barbers lent to the Gasser-Wabst Commission's arguments and authority. On the one hand, they had never seen an anatomical dissection before, and so the physicians' dissections might have been quite a spectacle for them. On the other hand, if we want to be mean, what they proved is that even the nine corpses pronounced to be innocent should have been burnt, for they also were not entirely putrefied. At the same time, if everyone is a revenant, then no one is. This argument had already surfaced in several large-scale witchcraft panics of the seventeenth century: when witchcraft-accusations started spinning out of control, and even the most pious people were

⁸⁵⁸ Horváth, 37-38.

brought to trial, many judges felt the futility of the situation and the impossibility of proving the secret crime of witchcraft.⁸⁵⁹

After having destroyed the status of local experts (episcopal commissioner Zeche and barbers Vogel and Wolff) through questioning, Gasser and Wabst turned their attention to the witnesses (see table above to compare the witnesses of the various commissions). Interestingly, hardly any witnesses who had testified in the earlier hearings were asked by the Gasser-Wabst Commission: of the 21 people who had testified before at least once at the episcopal hearings, the Viennese commissioners summoned only four, at the same time calling in 11 new witnesses to testify, who had not been heard before. This is probably because they already had the earlier testimonies in writing and were anyways looking for different information. They were only interested in two questions: 1) whether the night-time attacks really continued after the executions and 2) whether anyone knew anything suspicious about Marianna Saligerin.

The first group of witnesses (Wenzel Stoppel, Anton Kolb, Franz Peickert, Anna Maria Beyerlin, Anton Hampel, Christoph Saliger, Maria Saligerin, Christoph Schwartz, Anna Saligerin and Florian Marcus)⁸⁶⁰ gave testimonies about continued fearsome apparitions of animals and night terrors in February, but as before, without any concrete feature that would link the experience with one or another concrete person. The commissioners were probably getting more and more impatient with the endless row of stories about scary pigs and dogs appearing in places where they shouldn't be. These testimonies, that made sense for the villagers were meaningless for the commissioners, who wanted to hear spectral evidence of witches. In their mental framework this was the only way the dead could harm the living. In the end, the protocol finishes the hearing of witnesses with the frustrated statement that no true reason for the events could be gathered from the testimonies.

The second question of interest for Gasser and Wabst was Marianna Saligerin, the only convicted person who had at least a little notoriety of having been a witch. To find out more about her, they asked her three sons, who, during the execution process had refused to perform the ritual of dragging their mother out of the cemetery.⁸⁶¹ All three told the

⁸⁵⁹ Levack, 'Witchcraft and the Law', 2013.

⁸⁶⁰ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 13-24.

⁸⁶¹ Horváth, 28-33.

commissioners that Saligerin was only doing natural medicine from herbs and some innocent quackery with a mirror and a book. These two objects have been handed in to the commission for inspection but did not result in any serious consideration of witchcraft.

The Gasser-Wabst protocol ended with a detailed summary of the judicial steps through which the Frei Hermersdorf vampire case had arrived at the executions on 31st of January. This was necessary in order to reconstruct who was responsible for the events and at what stages were the biggest mistakes committed. Even though the commissioners state at the very end of the report, that the protocol is a simple *species facti* and does not wish to draw any conclusions or suggestions for later action, much of the coming immediate action could be guessed from the general tone and tendency of the work.

Summary

The present subchapter's aim was to give a description of the details of the Frei Hermersdorf *magia posthuma* trial, a case which had a seminal role in shaping the history of vampirism, but the details of which are little-known in scholarship outside the Czech Republic. The recently discovered sources of the episcopal and the Viennese commission's reports and protocols, provide invaluable insights in the actual workings of the *magia posthuma* procedures as well as of the activity of the Gasser-Wabst physician duo as experts in the service of the enlightened state.

The mass executions of Frei Hermersdorf fell in line with earlier large-scale revenant executions on the Moravian-Silesian border. The episcopal consistory handled the case with confidence based on the practices that had been formulated at the beginning of the century. The steps of the procedure went according to tradition: the clerical commission held several consecutive hearings and collected sworn oaths about the night-time attacks, the arch-witch got slowly identified and testimonies were collected about her life. They sought to ward the evil off by various methods, only the most radical of which were the exhumations and executions in the end. As the last big revenant infestation in Liebo in the 1720's already foreshadowed, while gravediggers still played a role in the case it was medical personnel, two barbers who took their place as revenant experts. The extradition procedure from the

cemetery to the secular arm and the executions themselves also went on according to tradition.

The chief evidence in favour of the executions was the constant, unceasing unrest and night-time attacks suffered by the community and collected in the witness accounts. The exhumations yielded further confirmation, but in contrast to the Arnout Pavle case, here it was enough if even a small part of the corpse looked intact in order to qualify as a threat. Naturally, what counts as 'intact' was highly negotiable, and local power dynamics also fed into the process. However, the memories of large panics in the region (Chapter III), had the potential to engendered a kind fixation on destroying each and every corpse and object which had even the slightest chance of having been polluted by the demons. Under such anxieties, the category of 'suspiciously intact' kept stretching and invading the area of the 'normal'.

Given the several earlier instances of unproblematic revenant mass executions, the clerical and secular commissioners, who took part in the Frei Hermersdorf case must have been surprised to see the intense mobilisation their actions triggered and as the Viennese Commission arrived to investigate and condemn their actions. The commission led by doctors Gasser and Wabst was put together by Gerard van Swieten, who made sure they set out with a sceptical attitude. They collected all possible written evidence from the episcopal procedure and went on to systematically review and discredit the experts, as well as to undermine the validity of the evidence.

Since they had no chance to dissect revenants, their argument was based on proving that local beliefs were illogical. The exhumation of a control group of corpses was a kind of task that reminds one of the vampire research project of the *Letter from a good friend* and the one carried out by Georg Tallar. At the same time, the chief target of the Viennese commissioners was the witness accounts and expert testimonies. The fact that they collected all the documents pertaining to the judicial pre-history of the case and their zoom-in on every detail of the case was an exemplary effort and echoed the Prussian Academy's legal-naturalist attitudes to vampirism.

VII.3. Gerard van Swieten's *Remarques* and Maria Theresa's revenant rescript, 1755

The ripples of Frei Hermersdorf created went well beyond the borders of the dominion of Groß-Herrlitz. The present subchapter details how the imperial machine that was set in motion and produced a wide-scale enlightening project aimed at convincing people of their superstition, at centralizing control over practices related to supernatural afflictions, as well as at the circulation of texts that on account of the Frei Hermersdorf case lauded the triumph of reason over ignorance and of central expertise over local. Following a discussion of van Swieten's treatise on *magia posthuma*, I move on to the short- and long-term policing and knowledge production efforts of the Viennese court to finally subdue lower level sources of authority and expertise.

Based on the Gasser-Wabst report, Gerard van Swieten wrote a manuscript treatise entitled *Remarques sur le Vampirisme de Sylésie de l'an 1755* in the form of a recommendation to the empress.⁸⁶² The manuscript is bilingual, containing the text in French and in German, translated by Antoine Hiltenprand, titled *Nota über die Vermeintliche sogenannte Magia posthuma*. Besides van Swieten's treatise, the manuscript also contains the extract of Joseph Pitton de Tournefort's 1718 *Relation d'un voyage du Levant*, a work in which the author, a botanist traveler relates the measures taken against a Greek 'vroucolacas' (that is, a returning dead) which he witnessed in 1701.⁸⁶³ Another manuscript version, undoubtedly a copy of Hiltenprand's German translation is found in the 1759 *Historia vampirorum* compiled by Ferenc Horváth for Bishop Lajos Batthyány.⁸⁶⁴ This version is also accompanied by a manuscript copy of Tournefort's work, as well as a copy of the Gasser-Wabst Commission's final report.

⁸⁶² Van Swieten, 'Remarques sur le vampyrisme de Sylésie de l'an 1755'.

⁸⁶³ Tournefort, *Relation d'un voyage du Levant*, 53-55.; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 66-71.

⁸⁶⁴ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 71-93.

It is unclear when exactly van Swieten handed in his treatise to the queen, but it must have happened between February 14 when the commissioners submitted in their report and March 17, when the treatise is already being referred to in the protocols of a governmental meeting. Given the entire lack of citations in the work, which points at a hasty job, it is possible that it was ready already by the end of February.

The work was translated from French to Italian by Giuseppe Valeriano Vannetti, embellished with detailed notes and published as early as already in 1756.⁸⁶⁵ Though no copy is known to exist of this edition, it was re-published in 1787 together with Vannetti's dedicatory letter of 1756.⁸⁶⁶ It was also Vannetti's 1756 Italian edition that was translated, together with its notes, into German, complemented by a preface and published in 1768 under the title *Vampyrismus*, as an appendix to the Bavarian priest Andreas Ulrich Mayer's *Abhandlung des Daseyns der Gespenster*.⁸⁶⁷ In the German-speaking world, this became the most accessible and most widely circulating version of the text. The short treatise gained considerable fame as the definitive medical treatise ending the scientific interest in vampirism once and for all.

Van Swieten's manuscript *Nota über die vermeintliche sogenannte Magia Posthuma*

Van Swieten's short treatise is not so much a natural philosophical work disproving the existence of vampires, but a systematic deconstruction of the Frei Hermersdorf legal procedure and of the evidence and expertise it relied on very much relying on the findings of the Gasser-Wabst commission. Van Swieten's treatise, as well as the imperial legislation that followed in its wake were conservative about the existence of magic and demonic activity in the world. Just like in the case of his medical reforms, van Swieten was no radical innovator when it came to medical and demonological theory either. Even though he was probably familiar with their work, van Swieten was not a follower of Balthasar Bekker or Christian

⁸⁶⁵ Piero Violante, *Gerhard van Swieten: Vampyrismus*. (Palermo: S.F. Flaccovio Editore, 1988), 57-58.

⁸⁶⁶ Gerard Van Swieten, *Considerazione intorno alla pretesa magia postuma per servire alla storia de' vampiri*, trans. Giuseppe Valeriano Vannetti (Naples: Giuseppe Maria Porcelli, 1787); See its modern edition by: Violante, *Gerhard van Swieten: Vampyrismus*.

⁸⁶⁷ Van Swieten, 'Vampyrismus'; Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, 1852, 1:725-737.

Thomasius, who denied the possibility of demonic effects on the material world.⁸⁶⁸ Instead, he invoked the Holy Scripture and Ecclesiastical History in general, which together ‘can convince even the most incredulous person’ that God could grant power to the devil to work wonderful effects on the human body.⁸⁶⁹ In fact, this standpoint was so orthodox, that it was shared by the medical faculty at the university of Buda as late as 1794, when Sámuel Rác wrote his university textbook on forensic medicine. Rác stated that surgeons should take heed not to be credulous, but should also know that ghosts, devilish magic, demonic possession and divine miracles do occur rarely (see below).⁸⁷⁰ In van Swieten’s view, the possibility of demonic wonders was not at question, the aim was rather: 1) to prove that in a given case such a wonder really took place, and 2) to prove that that case was really beyond the forces of natural causes.⁸⁷¹ The first condition is a reference to credible witnessing and a proper (probably written) reporting of an event, while the second is a matter of natural philosophical deliberation. In relation to the second, he evoked eclipses, electrical, optical and gunpowder-related phenomena to argue that the advancement of arts and sciences had gradually diminished the number of wonderful events in the world. He expressed confidence that *magia posthuma* was yet another example of this process.

The fides historica - vampires, witches, magia posthuma

In his treatment of the *fides historica* (Chapter V.1.,3.) van Swieten occupied a similar stance to the Prussian Academics, and instead of delving much on the prehistory of the question, zoomed in on the details of the case at hand. He did not reference or even mention any of the learned authors and theories that had surfaced in the 1730’s debate on the Serbian vampires. In this sense consulting only the printed versions of his text is misleading, because those contain the historical footnotes added later by Vannetti. Together with the learned authors, van Swieten also disregarded all earlier surgical first-hand reports whether they supported the

⁸⁶⁸ For the ideas of radical witchcraft-sceptics see: Israel, *Radical Enlightenment - Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*, 380.; For the availability of Bekker’s work in the Vienna Court Library see: Gábor Klaniczay, ‘Gerard van Swieten und die Anfänge des Kampfes gegen Aberglauben in der Habsburg-Monarchie’, *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 34, no. 2-3. (1988): 242.

⁸⁶⁹ Van Swieten, ‘Vampyrismus’, 7-8.

⁸⁷⁰ Rác, *A borbélyi tanításoknak második darabja a törvényes orvosi tudományról, és az orvosi politziáról*, 139, 144, 147-150.

⁸⁷¹ Van Swieten, ‘Vampyrismus’, 9.

existence of vampires or not. As mentioned above, three military surgeons attested to the strange phenomena they saw in 1732 in Medvedia. Van Swieten passed over these reports and stated that he did not have enough information to judge these cases, at the same time insinuating that as opposed to the physicians of the Frei Hermersdorf case, the military surgeons in Serbia did not ‘see clear’ and were not able to provide unbiased reports.⁸⁷²

At the same time, van Swieten did adopt the term of Serbian origins, the *Vampir* and used it to refer to the revenants of Frei Hermersdorf, while perceptively remarking that unlike the Serbian vampires, ‘our local vampires’ did not suck blood and he also remarked that in the Serbian case, contagion was contracted while alive, not after being buried.⁸⁷³ Surgeon Georg Tallar’s extensive work on the moroi of the Banat is not even mentioned by van Swieten, even though it had been submitted to the medical commission in Vienna only a year earlier. Van Swieten must have known about Tallar’s work in his capacity as the head of the medical administration as well as head librarian at the time. It is indicative that when it came to first-hand reports, he disregarded surgical ones, while trusting that prepared by the two physicians in Frei Hermersdorf. As suggested in Chapter VI.3., this might be a consequence of a strong boundary work which physicians were exerting against surgeons, who in their opinion should not meddle in matters that belong to the expertise of physicians.

An important initial step in van Swieten’s argumentation was the formulation of *magia posthuma* entirely within the frames of witchcraft. It has been shown in Chapters III and VII.1., that the Olomouc episcopal see had reinterpreted popular ideas about revenantism during the late seventeenth- early eighteenth-centuries and developed the specific concept of *magia posthuma*. This ecclesiastical formulation involved an arch-sinner (most often an arch-witch), who after his/her death started an infestation of demonically possessed corpses that could target anyone, who died subsequently in the vicinity, turning them into ghosts (‘*Gespenst*’, ‘*Poltergeist*’, ‘*spectrum*’) as well. In von Schertz’s original formulation, the distinction had still been made between the arch culprit, who was usually referred to as a witch, or as the ghost of a witch on the one hand and the innocent returning dead on the other, referred to as

⁸⁷² Van Swieten, 11. ‘Da ich aber nicht von allen Umständen Nachricht habe, so will ich mich nur damit begnügen [...], welche erst vor kurzer Zeit durch Leute untersucht worden, welche von keinem Vorurtheile eingenommen sind, sondern klar sehen, und sich nicht leicht hinter das Licht führen lassen.’.

⁸⁷³ ‘unser lands-Vampyren’ Horváth, ‘Historia vampirorum’, 83.; In the printed version simply ‘unsere Vampyren’. See: Van Swieten, ‘Vampirismus’, 12.

ghosts. As van Swieten was reconstructing the ideas of the Olomouc episcopal see, he dropped the element of demonic possession through insufflation and switched the terminology entirely from ‘ghost’ to ‘vampire (*Vampyr*)’, ‘witch (*Hexe*)’ and ‘magician (*Zauberer*)’.⁸⁷⁴ When explaining what – according to him – the episcopal see and the locals believed about vampires, he used the word ‘magician’ and ‘witch’ for the innocent revenants as well:

*‘...people who led a pious life and had the misfortune to be buried in a cemetery, where earlier a supposed witch had been buried, will be recognised as witches and magicians’*⁸⁷⁵

This almost imperceptible shift of interpretation formulated *magia posthuma* as simply a dead version of something already known from early modern demonological literature: a witch who aims to spread evil through initiating others into witchcraft. This also meant that van Swieten became able to hold the commissioners accountable for not complying with the theory of witchcraft and the standards of witchcraft trials. This move also made sure that those condemning excesses committed during witchcraft trials would be similarly sceptical of *magia posthuma* as well. Finally, the re-interpretation of the relatively ‘novel’ phenomenon with something as age-old as witchcraft could also cool down the possible natural philosophical interest in the phenomenon.

Deconstructing evidence and expertise

Van Swieten analysed the witness accounts about the night-time attacks from the point of view of a trial against a living witch and proved them to be deficient. He pointed out that the witness accounts failed to link the attacks to a concrete person: there were no sightings of full-bodied apparitions of the dead, only invisible or animal-shaped ones. He deems it illogical that ‘there is not the slightest connection between the cause and the alleged effect’.⁸⁷⁶ He further points out that most testimonies were experienced in bed, thereby insinuating that people might have been simply dreaming.

⁸⁷⁴ He used the word ‘Gespens’ only once in his text, and even then, in a general sense: ‘A dog, a cat, especially if they are black and are seen at night will be taken to be the devil or a ghost’ Van Swieten, ‘Vampirismus’, 20.

⁸⁷⁵ ‘...Menschen, welche ein untadelhaftes Leben geführt, und nur das Unglück gehabt haben, daß man sie auf einem Freudhof erst eingegraben, nachdem schon vorher eine angegebene Hexe allda zu Grabe gebracht worden! man erklärt sie für Hexen und Zauberer’ Van Swieten, 22.

⁸⁷⁶ Van Swieten, 20.

In general, he dismisses the witness accounts and cuts the description short stating that he would be ashamed to repeat all the superstitious nonsense people have.⁸⁷⁷ Keeping a distance from village beliefs was crucial in the self-representation of a learned gentleman: as we saw in Chapter VI.3., one of Georg Tallar's mistakes was exactly that he took the Wallachian superstitions too seriously.

Evidence collected about crimes that the arch-witch, Marianna Saligerin committed during her lifetime was also insufficient, as it did not contain testimonies of actual harm done, or of activities that were suspicious enough. The only person claimed to have been bewitched was examined by Gasser and Wabst and was diagnosed as suffering from a serious but natural disease, *colica pictorum*. Saligerin's healing procedures were deemed by van Swieten to be harmless and draws attention to the lack of tests of witchcraft (probably the devil's mark-trial).⁸⁷⁸ Saligerin is portrayed as an ignorant but harmless quack, a pious, innocent lady who always sought the betterment of his fellow villagers, who, however, returned the favour by sacrilegiously violating her grave, corpse and memory.⁸⁷⁹

The only evidence accepted as factual was the lack of decay in certain bodies, but in this area van Swieten sought to systematically discredit the expertise given by various local experts and questioned their ability to interpret the facts properly. This strong boundary work was in line with van Swieten's policies as the *protomedicus* of the monarchy, as he sought to demarcate official medicine (trained and state-authorized physicians, surgeons and midwives) from popular medical practitioners, who were this way relegated to the condemned category of 'quackery'.⁸⁸⁰ First, there is the executioner, traditionally also a medical practitioner. Executioners had to be experienced in the workings of the human body, since during tortures it required skill to know how to inflict pain for the longest possible time without actually killing the person. The executioner in this case testified that the corpse was strange, and that fresh blood flowed from its mouth. Van Swieten dismissed this testimony by saying that he must be very skilled in his own craft but ignorant in medicine. Relying on the Gasser-Wabst protocols, he reproached the executioner for exaggerating the quantity of blood that flowed from the

⁸⁷⁷ Van Swieten, 20.

⁸⁷⁸ 'Wo sind die Proben, daß sie eine Hexe gewesen?' Van Swieten, 20.; The manuscript version does not contain this question. Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 89-90.

⁸⁷⁹ Van Swieten, 'Vampirismus', 20-21.

⁸⁸⁰ Krász, 'Quackery versus Professionalism? Characters, Places and Media of Medical Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Hungary.'

wounds. Next, there were two barbers, also medical practitioners who testified for the unusual state of the bodies. The physician pronounced that they had never ever seen a corpse in their life and that they were ignorant about the workings of the human body.

When it came to explaining the real reasons behind the differences in corpse decay, van Swieten ran into a problem: the lack of relevant empirical research into the matter, which in the era was being commented upon by several naturalists and physicians interested in putrefaction (Chapter I). The lack of available empirical research for van Swieten meant that he was forced to list examples of embalmed and mummified corpses, admittedly neither of which corresponded to the situation in Frei Hermersdorf. After referring to a grave digger, who assured him that certain corpses become entirely dried out, and undecayed in the grave, he himself acknowledged that:

'I know very well, that people alleged that the body of a vampire not only remains without decay but retains its flesh in its freshness and the limbs retain their flexibility.'

After citing his own experience with the corpses of two princesses who were exactly in that state, he is forced to admit that:

'True enough, they had been embalmed.'

Nevertheless, van Swieten assured the reader (that is, first of all Maria Theresa), that medicine had all the necessary answers to the phenomenon, and in support cited the only treatise openly quoted in the text, English physician James Kirkpatrick's work on the Staverton Body (see Chapter I). Even though Kirkpatrick's take at the issue was exactly that the process of bodily putrefaction was a 'vast incognita'⁸⁸¹ for natural philosophy, van Swieten effaced the doubts and internal problems research into the lack of corpse decay faced in order to present a confident natural alternative to *magia posthuma*. In this, the Dutch *protomedicus* mirrored Daniel E. Jablonski's treatment of the problem of having to present an expert opinion on a shaky topic (Chapter V).

⁸⁸¹ Kirkpatrick, *Some Reflections on the Causes and Circumstances, That May Retard or Prevent the Putrefaction of Dead Bodies, Occasioned by an Account of a Body Found Entire and Imputrid at Staverton in Devonshire, Eighty-One Years after Interment.*, 35.

While both Kirkpatrick and van Swieten dealt in considerable length with the factors that may retard putrefaction, interestingly, neither of them addressed openly the question, how come that out of corpses positioned in the same circumstances: in terms of soil, temperature, air etc, only some certain corpses decay while others do not. The only individual-specific factor they mention is the nature of the disease the person died of. This is a reference to putrefying diseases, such as syphilis or malign fevers, but no attempt is made in either Kirkpatrick's or van Swieten's case to discuss in detail what diseases may retard putrefaction, and more importantly, whether such a disease was present in the particular case they were investigating. In this situation, the Gasser-Wabst commission and thus van Swieten resorted to the creative solution of turning the argument around and point out that even the corpses pronounced to be decaying and hence not in a revenant state contained certain undecayed parts. Van Swieten was able to state that this way

'They [the Commissioners] managed to establish that the two ignorant barbers had lied.'

The main target of the treatise, just like that of the preceding investigation was the Olomouc episcopal see. While the ignorance and superstition of average villagers was lamented upon, it was taken for granted. As opposed to this, the clerical authority carried the whole responsibility for the executions. Interestingly, van Swieten did not mention the role the secular authorities of Groß-Herrlitz, and possibly Troppau played in the case. The consequences of this are very transparent in the imperial court's actions following the report, which were aimed at effectively changing the sensibilities of people as well as to remove the stain the Empire's name received in the wider European learned community.

The reasons to control the practice

The justifications van Swieten gives as to why the queen should discipline the practice of revenant executions is that they cause chaos and disorder. He is outraged at the lack of written legal backing to both the theory and the practice. First, he pushes back against the very core of the *magia posthuma* revenant framework, namely, the idea that even innocent people's cadavers can become harmful dead. The *protomedicus* states that the digging up of corpses,

the disturbance of the peace of the cemetery is sacrilege, the execution of the corpses of people who had been innocent in their lifetime was not only morally condemnable but had absolutely no legal backing either. As shown earlier, while such a treatment of sinners (especially witches) did have support in canon law, there was practically no support for its expansion to the victims of witchcraft as well. Even von Schertz could only venture an admittedly weak argument about the possibility to carry out punishment even if the crime had not been proven, in case there were good reasons (e.g. the common good) to do so (Chapter III.3.). Based on an interesting merging of information from the southern borderland and the Gasser & Wabst protocol, van Swieten reported that the executions cause fear, chaos and disorder especially since they are not based on well-delineated written laws:

‘Where are the laws that would legitimize such a statement [that the innocent can also become revenants]? They admit that there are no such laws, and by contrast they rely in a fairly cold-blooded way on: ‘well, this is the custom’.

And what a multitude of misfortunes follow in its wake? Many poor sick people and women, who were ready to give birth run away and meet their deaths on the streets. At least they can be consoled by the fact that they will not be able to endure such a shame after their deaths.

The inhabitants, permeated by constant fear, are ready to leave house and yard and move to a different place. In one word, everything is in disorder.’⁸⁸²

The consequences for the family, which was seen at the local level as the first bulwark against the spread of the revenant infestation were indeed dire, both morally and financially (Chapter III). At the same time, van Swieten does not seem to grant that the accusations themselves were not orchestrated from above, but stemmed from below, from other parts of the same community, sometimes, as in the Frei Hermersdorf case, from *within* the family. The practice that at the local level was meant as a fear-management technique, as a way to counter the already existing chaos that had already been caused by ghostly attacks is construed in van Swieten’s formulation as a source of chaos. He takes the argument Rascian inhabitants gave *for* the execution (leaving the village) and turns it around into an argument *against* the practice. The movement of people, lack of written law as opposed to local, experience-based practice all signify one thing for van Swieten and for the court: lack of control. His abhorrence

⁸⁸² Van Swieten, ‘Vampyrismus’, 22-23.

towards executing the corpses of innocent people is indicated by the furious tone he uses to describe this aspect of the case:

*'... that the Episcopal Consistory would allow and authorize such monstrous abuses that directly oppose reason, is beyond my understanding, and makes me so furious that I feel compelled to lay down the quill'*⁸⁸³

Punishing and policing

On March 1, 1755 Maria Theresa issued a rescript directed at all the representative bodies of the hereditary lands of Austria and Bohemia, in which she ordered the Catholic Church to henceforth report all supernatural phenomena, including witchcraft, ghosts, treasure hunting and demonic possession to the secular authorities:⁸⁸⁴

'...our most gracious order is that henceforth in all these cases the clergy cannot proceed without the agreement of the political, but if such a case of a ghost, witchcraft, treasure hunting or a purportedly demoniac possession happens, the former should always right away report to the political authority, so that this could investigate the case with the involvement of a reasonable physician, and it has to be seen whether and if yes, what kind of fraud is concealed underneath, and how the fraudulent person should be punished'

at the end of the rescript it is added that:

'the case always has to be reported to the political authority and a thorough investigation has to be done, about which then de casu in casum the report has to be handed in to Us.'

What instantly should be visible is that, contrary to how it is often referenced in secondary literature, it is not a ban on revenant executions, it is an attempt to tighten control over them.

The wording of the legislation openly named the Catholic clergy as culprits in the superstitious practices and gives the rescript the appeal of a clear laicizing measure; this

⁸⁸³ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 93.; Van Swieten, 'Vampirismus', 23.

⁸⁸⁴ I have not been able to locate the original rescript; its earliest rendering is in: Kauz, *De cultibus magicis eorumque perpetuo ad ecclesiam et rempublicam habitu libri duo*, 373-374.; Kropatschek, *Sammlung aller k.k. Verordnungen und Gesetze vom Jahre 1740. bis 1780... Band III. (1755-1759)*, 3:172-173.; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 85-86.

is however misleading. First, that the church has to give over the investigation of the case to the secular arm definitely decreased its control over the events, but it should not be forgotten that, as it has been shown above, the episcopal see had always had to involve the secular arm into the process, in Frei Hermersdorf the secular judges of the dominion for instance were actively involved in the case throughout. Second, the rescript also advises pastoral instruction on the matter, and (as mentioned below) within the frames of her broader revenant-project the queen entrusted Jesuit missionaries to enlighten the population. In the light of these caveats, it is clear that 'secularization' can only be very cautiously applicable here.

Lesser medical experts, had also been present at a higher frequency since the early 1720s, but the instruction prescribing the presence of a university-trained physician (if observed) also brought a moderate change, because the only physician we have knowledge of having testified in a revenant case in the region was Jan Corvin during the great Liebe revenant infestation.

In contrast to these smaller changes, the crucial step was the last part of the measure according to which even if the secular court investigates the case and it seems that indeed revenants are behind the problem, the investigation reports have to be sent *in casu*, that is, *during* the judicial trial to the queen herself. This means that in practice, the Vienna royal court extended its power over the process of the case, and without its consent, no conviction could be made. This centralizing measure was not only harmonious with the Gasser-Wabst commission's aims at destroying local level expertise, but also with van Swieten's larger role as an advisor in medical policing at the Viennese court. Sonia Horn has pointed out that the Dutch *protomedicus* was not so much a reformer in terms of medical theory or even therapy, but rather a science-organiser, who used administrative measures to rationalize, centralize and bureaucratize medicine, this way ensuring better central control.⁸⁸⁵ In a similar fashion to van Swieten's *Vampyrismus* which maintains the devil's powers in the physical world, the 1st March rescript is similarly less bold in terms of content: it was not inspired by a

⁸⁸⁵ Sonia Horn, 'Die Konstruktion von Tradition und Innovation in der Wiener Medizingeschichtsschreibung des späten 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts' (Sciences between tradition and innovation - Historical perspectives, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 2019).

radical Bekker-style scepticism in the physicality of the devil, but was much more a step to take away agency from local, regional, episcopal levels of decision making and jurisdiction.

No less interesting is the justification of the rescript:

‘it is not only that many of our lands’ inhabitants are so gullible, that they think that those, who appear in their dreams or imagination or are faked to appear by other, fraudulent people are ghosts and witchcraft; they also instantly believe those, who pretend to be possessed, but also, these people are often supported in their gullibility by prejudiced clerics, as it lastly happened in our Moravian Margravate of Moravia [...] and especially since these [cases] most often conceal superstition and fraud, and since such sinful abuses in our states henceforth will not be allowed in any way’

The repeated reference in the text to fraud imply that the queen suspected malevolent interests behind the executions and considered local communities to be mere passive victims in the hands of scams and frauds, and van Swieten took the same stance in his treatise written on the occasion of the case. Based on the protocols of the Gasser-Wabst commission and earlier cases detailed above (Chapter III) this was however a stretch: the accusations started from within the community and were very much driven by tensions inside it. Apart from fraud, superstition was the main other sin that had to be punished, which was a problem not only because it caused fear and hence disorder among the people, but it also involved a kind of local expertise that rivalled that of the officially supported medical personnel. In all aspects, the 1755 March 1st rescript attests to an intense clash between local and central level of authority and expertise.

The empress also saw to it, that the consequences of the investigation would be felt at the local level as well. On the March 17 meeting of the *Directorium in publicis et cameralibus*, the governing body of the Austrian and Bohemian lands, they discussed the Gasser-Wabst report in detail and devised a *par excellence* enlightening project. Jesuit missionaries and medical experts were to be deployed to fight the sickness with medications and to enlighten the people.⁸⁸⁶ At the meeting, the queen already referred to van Swieten’s work. In accordance with the plans, in April 1755, the Queen sent two

⁸⁸⁶ The protocols of the collegial body discussing the two physicians’ report were published in: Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, 1852, 1:722-725.

Jesuits from Troppau, Ignatz Zinner and Martin Baroch to Frei Hermersdorf.⁸⁸⁷ Their duty was agitation among the local population and spending the night in the houses, where the night attacks reportedly continued. Zinner returned to Troppau on 21st April and Baroch followed on 13th May.

In addition, punishment for the mismanagement of the Frei Hermersdorf case was also in order. The Olomouc bishop Ferdinand Julius von Troyer (1745-1758) was reproached and ordered to pay back to the Silesian royal representation the 222 guldens which he had been given to cover the remunerations of the episcopal commission members and experts.⁸⁸⁸ The Queen also threatened Troyer that unless he followed the orders, he would quickly fall out of royal favour. Dworsky and Cerny, the two Groß Herrlitz judges were to pay a fine the amount of their one-year salary and 100 guldens respectively, because as learned men, they should have known better. Interestingly, there is no word of anyone from the Troppau administration having been reproached, even though they were aware of the procedures.

From 1755 onwards the empress engaged in repeated legislation for the decriminalization of magic and a general fight against superstition. In 1756, the empress issued a rescript to the Hungarian authorities stating that all cases involving an accusation of magic and a decision on torture or death penalty had to be sent to Vienna for supervision. Two years later, the rescript was modified to be valid for all accusations of magic. The authorities were reluctant to comply, but the number of pardons started to rise in the period. This centralizing-bureaucratizing agenda went hand in hand with the wide-scale medicalization campaign aimed at reforming public hygiene from the early 1740s onwards.⁸⁸⁹

Later on, the 1755 March 1. rescript became integrated almost word-by-word as a section into the queen's famous 1766 act, the *Lex Caesaro-regia (Royal-imperial act extirpating superstition and rationally adjudicating the crime of magic and prophesying)*.⁸⁹⁰ The 1755 rescript is paragraph 16 of the new law, but the original introductory references to Moravian

⁸⁸⁷ Slezáková, 'Soumrak pověřivosti', 113.

⁸⁸⁸ Slezáková, 109.

⁸⁸⁹ Várkonyi, 'Connections between the Cessation of Witch Trials and the Transformation of the Social Structure Related to Medicine', 462-463.; Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*.

⁸⁹⁰ Linzbauer, *Codex sanitario-medicinalis Hungariae*, 1853, 3:776-785.

returning dead⁸⁹¹ were deleted. The 1766 law practically ended witchcraft persecutions in the Habsburg Monarchy by ordering all courts to send any accusations of magic to Vienna. The law contained four possible categories of accusations of magic: mistaken accusation, the accused is a medical case, the accused is guilty of blasphemy or sacrilege and finally, real magic. The novelty of the law was the introduction of the second category that explicitly rendered a big proportion of accused witches into the scope of the authority of medicine. Furthermore, decisions involving the category of real magic became the sole authority of the empress herself. The law was codified in 1770 into the empire's new overarching criminal constitution, the *Constitutio Criminalis Theresiana*, which made the whole judicial procedure including standards of evidence more rigorous than before.⁸⁹² Even though the possibility of real magic was not denied, it was so difficult to reach a sentence, that these measures in effect stopped the witch hunts in the Habsburg Monarchy.⁸⁹³

Apart from the official, centrally governed projects of policing the unruly dead, such attempts have emerged from very different environments as well. In 1759, the newly appointed bishop of Transylvania, József Batthyány (1727 – 1799), nephew of the Hungarian palatine Lajos Batthyány (1696 – 1765), requested a book on vampirism from the palatine's expeditor, Ferenc Horváth. Horváth did his job and bound into a book three copies: the Gasser-Wabst protocols, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort's letter about the Greek *broucolakas* and the first version of van Swieten's *Remarques* in German. The bound book, titled *Historia vampirorum*.⁸⁹⁴ The reason behind the request is not disclosed in the source, and the whole issue requires further thorough research, which however go beyond the scope of the present dissertation. Nevertheless, one might conjecture, that József Batthyány bishop of Transylvania might have suspected to run into revenant problems as bishop of Transylvania and wanted to be informed in the matter. The existence of the *Historia vampirorum* proves that the documentation on the Frei Hermersdorf case had various manuscript textual lives and could exert intellectual influence in various fora.

⁸⁹¹ Interestingly, the text of the rescript refers to the Frei Hermersdorf case as if it belonged to Moravia, whereas in reality it was part of Upper Silesian Principedom of Troppau. The ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Olomouc bishopric overreached the Moravian border and encompassed Upper Silesian parishes as well.

⁸⁹² Tóth G., 'The Decriminalization of Magic and the Fight Against Superstition in Hungary and Transylvania, 1740–1848'.

⁸⁹³ Klaniczay, 'Boszorkányhit, boszorkányvád, boszorkányüldözés a 16–18. században'.

⁸⁹⁴ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum'. I would like to thank Katalin Pataki for having drawn my attention to this wonderful source material.

Publication and education

The central government also realized the need to disseminate the message of how one should think about and govern vampires. The 1750s-1760s witnessed the seeping down of such information into published works on medical policing, university textbooks and popular medical enlightening books. The need to discipline information was necessary, since hostile political interests have also been at work, trying to smear the Habsburg Monarchy's name with the stain of superstition. The Viennese government had to distance itself from the practices carried out within its own borders.

The news about the Frei Hermersdorf executions reached a wider public when the *Berlinische Privilegirte* (or *Vossische*) *Zeitung* published a report of the case in its 3rd April issue, and cited a Silesian correspondent as its source, who gave the information to the newspaper as early as 16th March.⁸⁹⁵ In its 8th May issue the paper also reported on the activities of the Gasser-Wabst commission. The newspaper, at the instigation of the Prussian court had already been pushing an anti-Habsburg propaganda since the Silesian wars, and the scandal involving a Catholic bishopric fell in line with this agenda.⁸⁹⁶

The Prussian newspaper's report was embellished with elements that had not been there in the investigative reports, for example the heart-breaking story of Marianna Saligerin, who according to the article tried to convince her husband to behead her corpse after her death, because surely, she would become a revenant. In this rendering of the story, the husband was unable to carry out the deed and hence was responsible for the revenant infestation in the village. We have seen above (Chapter VII.2.), that the foretelling of revenantism was a possible element in reality as well, but at least based on the protocols, this is not attested in the legal documentation on Saligerin's case.

⁸⁹⁵ Eberhard Buchner, *Das Neueste von gestern: Kulturgeschichtlich interessante Dokumente aus alten deutschen Zeitungen*, vol. 3 (A. Langen, 1911), 66-68.

⁸⁹⁶ Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 145-147.; Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*, 78–79.

Van Swieten's Vampirismus printed (1756, 1768)

An important project, also decided on at the 1755 March 17th meeting of the supreme Habsburg governing body, the *Directorium in publicis et cameralibus*, was aimed at the more general learned and administrative public: van Swieten's *Remarques* had to be translated and published in several languages. The aim was undoubtedly the defence of the Monarchy's reputation which received a blow due to the scandal. The short treatise was indeed published and gained considerable fame as the definitive medical treatise ending the scientific interest in vampirism once and for all.

The very first print edition of 1756 in Italian by Vannetti was already equipped with citations and a preface that anchored van Swieten's work very firmly in the works of the Catholic Enlightenment of the time.⁸⁹⁷ The embracing of theology as authority is especially conspicuous in the footnotes added by Vannetti to the *Vampirismus*. The 1755 manuscript did not have footnotes, and in a sense what we have here is a slightly subverted version of the Dutch physician's original work. The footnotes are dominated by clerical authors: Johann Christoph Harenberg's *Philosophical and Christian thoughts about vampires* and the works of the two French abbots Calmet and Langlet, but the 'immortal Muratori' a major figure of Catholic Enlightenment and Pope Benedict XIV himself also figure.⁸⁹⁸

The work's most well-known version in the German-speaking world appeared in 1768 as an appendix to a treatise against ghosts written by a Catholic priest, Andreas Ulrich Mayer.⁸⁹⁹ Mayer had already written an anonymous tract against the persecution of witches in 1767,⁹⁰⁰ and based his skepticism of ghosts mostly on theological and historical grounds and in this sense, van Swieten's treatise functions as a medical backup for his argument. An especially strong one at that, for Mayer uses van Swieten's credentials to boost up his own authority. As one can read in the introduction to the *Vampirismus*, it was written by 'one of the most well-known men of Europe, by Herr Baron Gerhard van Switen, first personal physician of Her

⁸⁹⁷ Violante, *Gerhard van Swieten: Vampirismus.*, 57-58.

⁸⁹⁸ Keyworth, 'The Aetiology of Vampires and Revenants'.

⁸⁹⁹ Andreas Ulrich Mayer, *Abhandlung des Daseyns der Gespenster, nebst einem Anhang vom Vampirismus* (Augsburg, 1768).

⁹⁰⁰ F.N. Blocksberger, *Sendschreiben (6 an Der Zahl) an den P. Ugnellus März über seine Vertheidigung wider die schwulstige Vertheidigung der betrügenden Zauberey und Hexerey* (Augsburg, 1767); Rochus W. T. H. Ferdinand von Liliencron, ed., *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 52 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1906), 273-275., <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz59449.html#adbcontent>.

Imperial Majesty, back then *aulic librarian*...' The italicized parts are some of the reference points that were supposed to lend credibility and prestige to one's persona. The usage of van Swieten's name and fame is especially remarkable since Mayer's treatise is anonymous. There is no indication about the identity of the author either on the cover or in the inside of the work. In his tract on witches, Mayer used a pseudonym 'F. N. Blocksberger, Benefiziat zu T.' That Mayer had to fear disclosing his identity shows the controversial nature of his argument. The Bavarian priest's disbelief in the existence of witchcraft and ghosts was more radical than the sentiments entertained by Maria Theresa's court.

The introduction to the *Vampyrismus*, which was added in Mayer's edition of the treatise abounds in references to another source of authority. This is the positioning of both authors within a general Learned Republic. It was this community of readers, to which van Swieten, Mayer and other authors could appeal, and which served as both an audience and a source of legitimacy. It is this community that is juxtaposed to the 'ignorants, the barbarian, malicious' uneducated mob, which (as it will be shown), not only included peasants but a large number of medical practitioners as well. Mayer is 'the learned author' of the treatise, while the 'learned translator' of van Swieten's work is also mentioned as well as 'the Learned', who will be familiarized with the treatise. Finally, it is the lack of 'learned patriots' in Bayern that is a lamentable situation.⁹⁰¹ The list could be continued, the repetitiveness of the reference to this readers' community creates the strongest sense of where the authors belong, where they gain their authority from.

Vampirism in medical literature

The standpoint elaborated by van Swieten made its way into several medical publications, partially on central agenda, partially because it from the beginning was thematized as a story of the enlightened medicine defeating and spectacularly disproving a gruesome superstition. To put it simply, it was a good story. It was repeated early on in Latin specialized works on magic and the powers of the devil such as the *De cultibus magicis*,⁹⁰² by history writer Konstantin Anton von Kauz (1735 - 1797), but many versions reached much wider audiences.

⁹⁰¹ Van Swieten, 'Vampyrismus', 1-2.

⁹⁰² Kauz, *De cultibus magicis eorumque perpetuo ad ecclesiam et rempublicam habitu libri duo*, 133–34, 193-197.

Without going into details, from the point of view of the present research, it should suffice to point out that this good story got into a variety of medical literature, targeted at different social groups from the average (but literate) person through university students to policy makers.

Claudio Milanesi has argued that the French debate on vampirism has informed the increase in apparent death literature in the 1740s,⁹⁰³ and treatises on apparent death contain discussions of vampirism as a misguided thought across Europe. It reached the Hungarian Kingdom as well.⁹⁰⁴ István Mátyus (1725 - 1802), a Transylvanian doctor, who had been educated in Göttingen, for instance used the vampire story in his 1762 *Diaetetica*, a book meant for the medical enlightening of the population on a healthy lifestyle. For Mátyus, vampirism served to illustrate the difficulties of defining what life is and how it can be distinguished from death: vampirism comes after a survey of apparent death caused by hysteria, hypochondria, drowning, hanging, aneurysm and hot-natured diseases. The conclusion Mátyus draws about defining death is that one has to wait 48 hours before burial, there is no other way to be sure. Vampirism at the same time supports medicine's superiority in explaining physiological phenomena:

'It is an idle superstition that those dead, whose blood is found to be in a fluid and warm condition and whose cheeks are reddish are only pretending to be dead, and at night come out of the grave from underground and kills men and children agonizing in certain hot contagious afflictions, and would be feeding on their blood.

These people in reality surely are dead, the fluidity and warmth of their blood, and the redness of cheeks is because they had a healthy, sanguine temperament and died very suddenly, of a hot-natured disease, which would not let the blood to coagulate. Their bodies in the cold winter were fast buried in a cool, clayish soil, which stopped them from putrefaction until the warmth of the spring warmed the soil up. This is also the reason why such people coming back from the grave, or as the Greek call them vampyrius are never found in summer or autumn. From all this it is visible that giving a true description of life and death is not as easy as some would think. A person can be considered to be alive until he is in such a state that

⁹⁰³ Milanesi, *Mort apparente, mort Imparfaite. Médecine et mentalités au XVIIIe siècle*, 67.

⁹⁰⁴ Horányi, 'Tetszhalottak, élve eltemetettek – Esetleírások a magyarországi tetszhalál-irodalom alapján'.

*in him the body to the mind and the mind to the body can be or is of service even if only partially.*⁹⁰⁵

As is visible, Mátyus gave a summary of the very same traditional naturalist causes if the delay of putrefaction that remained unchanged since at least the Middle Ages: sudden death, cold environment, and airtight clayish soil, and there is no mention about the discrepancies that puzzled medical experts dealing with the problem on-site, such as Glaser and Flückinger. Medicine closed ranks and propagated the simple version of the story.

Zacharias Gottlieb Hußty (1754 – 1803), physician of Pressburg (today Bratislava) was one of the chief authorities on medical policing, and in his summary work on the topic devoted a long section to vampirism.⁹⁰⁶ Having published the book in 1784, he devoted much of the section to reviewing and dismissing Tallar's work as useless and unmedical (Chapter VI.3.). Hußty uses the topic of vampirism to buttress the legitimacy of his own field of interest, medical policing as a means to enforce enlightenment on the population. He even makes the surprising remark on the success policing achieved in fighting vampirism:

*'The consequences of this madness on the population have always been detrimental, however, in our lands the policing measures (die Polizey), partly through teaching, partly through means of coercion have pushed it back so much, that it came to a stop, though here and there its remnants do scramble out from under the ashes, especially in the Wallachian parts'*⁹⁰⁷

At the end of the century, Sámuel Rác (1744-1807), the physiology professor of the university of Buda in his university textbook for future surgeons devoted much space to vampirism, within the frames of both medical policing and forensic medicine. Rác was born in Transylvania, Gyulafehérvár (today Bălgrad) to a Calvinist Szekler family, but converted to Catholicism early on and studied theology and law at the University of Vienna as a Jesuit novice, after which his interests turned to medicine and graduates under Anton de Haen in the Vienna University.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁵ István Mátyus, *Diaetetica, az az: A jó életnek és egészség megtartásának módját fundamentumosan elő-adó könyv*, vol. 1 (Kolozsvár: Páldi, 1762), 12-13.

⁹⁰⁶ Hußty, *Diskurs über die medizinische Polizey*, 1:157-165.

⁹⁰⁷ Hußty, 1:164.

⁹⁰⁸ Emil Schulteis, 'Fiziológiai irodalmunk kezdete – Rác Sámuel' (n.d.), http://www.orvostortenet.hu/tankonyvek/tk-05/pdf/4.2/01_09_schulteis_racz_samuel.pdf; Pál Kótay, 'Rác Sámuel', in *Erdélyi Csillagok* (Csíkszereda: Pro-Print, 1998); György Gortvay, *Az újabbkori magyar orvosi művelődés és egészségügy története*, vol. 1 (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1953), 168.

The problem of the returning dead comes up three times in Rácz's textbook on forensic medicine. First, when he discusses that the smell of decay in certain instances can become visible: sometimes the particles of carrion stench emanating from corpses not buried deep enough seep through the ground and getting mixed with certain natural or artificial (natural magical) smokes, it makes the shape of the corpse visible above ground tricking people into thinking that the dead return to life.⁹⁰⁹ Second, among the royal orders relating to medical policing which he transcribes, there is a rescript dated 1784 by Joseph II. which advises members of the Orthodox clergy to fight the superstition of vampirism.⁹¹⁰

Third, he also devotes a longer section to the physician's duties when asked to examine cases of revenants. The examination of corpses accused of vampirism is presented as a possible task for forensic physicians, and Rácz warns that though vampirism is considered to be a fable, it is not the duty of physicians to debate whether spectres and ghosts exist in general. Echoing Jablonski as much as van Swieten, he states that as experts, surgeons' task is rather to investigate particular cases if they are real or not. This of course means that the working assumption is that such apparitions do exist.⁹¹¹ He is equally cautious about other phenomena of the supernatural: he does not dismiss the possibility of magic brought about with the help of the devil, demonic possession and miracles but thinks that most of the times, such events turn out to be frauds, whose unveiling is the duty of the medical expert.⁹¹²

While Rácz warns students, that certain signs people associate with revenants are in fact natural, he leaves the question of the existence of the harmful dead open. He underlines that seeing blood in the mouths of corpses can be normal in hot and rotten sicknesses.⁹¹³ Seeing the dead leave the cemetery can also happen naturally, as occasionally the smell of decay is so heavy, that it can become visible. Rácz then gives an account about how sometimes the particles of carrion stench emanating from corpses not buried deep enough seep through the ground and getting mixed with certain natural or artificial (natural magical) vapours, it makes the shape of the corpse visible above ground tricking people into thinking that the dead return

⁹⁰⁹ Rácz, *A borbélyi tanításoknak második darabja a törvényes orvosi tudományról, és az orvosi politziáról*, 158-159.

⁹¹⁰ Rácz, 250.

⁹¹¹ Rácz, 147-150.

⁹¹² Rácz, 139, 144, 150.

⁹¹³ Rácz, 148.

to life.⁹¹⁴ Unfortunately he does not elaborate on what these vapours are capable of, but based only on these sentences, it seems he might have thought it possible that such vapours can do harm to the living.

The definitive role of smell is very strong in Rácz's discourse, for in his view, out of the five outer senses, smelling makes the deepest effect on the soul, for it is able to conjure up the strongest feelings such as hate or adoration.⁹¹⁵ Smell is also the single most important proof of death and decay.

When discussing the difficulties of diagnosing death and decay, we can actually detect some development as compared to the age-old lists of the signs of decay. Many of the signs he lists as a sure sign of decay were seen by the surgeons dissecting vampires as a sign of the lack of it, most notably, the separation of the skin and the bloating of the body. For Rácz, the criteria which all need to be present at once for a corpse to be counted as rotten are:⁹¹⁶

- blisters filled with earth-coloured liquid on the skin
- upper skin easily separating from lower skin
- tin-coloured skin, nails and testicles
- airy bloating of the body
- carrion stench

Out of these criteria two were in fact more definitive than the others, for in another section, where he talks about autopsies of new-born babies, he gives only two of these signs which if appearing together make rottenness certain:⁹¹⁷

- upper skin separates from lower skin
- carrion stench

Nevertheless, in his instruction for civil authorities, in line with the medieval tradition, everything boils down into only one criterion: if no medical personnel are around, civil authorities must not bury the corpse until the carrion stench is felt.⁹¹⁸

⁹¹⁴ Rácz, 158-159.

⁹¹⁵ Sámuel Rácz, *A Physiologiának rövid sommája* (Pest: Patzkó, 1789), 111-112.

⁹¹⁶ Rácz, *A borbélyi tanításoknak második darabja a törvényes orvosi tudományról, és az orvosi politziáról*, 7-8.

⁹¹⁷ Rácz, *A borbélyi tanításoknak második darabja a törvényes orvosi tudományról, és az orvosi politziáról*, 48.

⁹¹⁸ Rácz, 167.

Summary

Just like in cases shown in earlier chapters, the stage where van Swieten had to give his medical expert opinion on *magia posthuma* was under strong political pressure. Informed by the findings of the Gasser-Wabst commission, van Swieten aimed at a systematic deconstruction of the Frei Hermersdorf legal procedure and of the evidence and expertise it relied on. Instead of delving much on the prehistory of revenantism, he zoomed in on the details of the case at hand, in a very similar vein to what the Prussian Academics and Putoneus had proposed back in 1732. As another important move, he assured Maria Theresa, that medicine had all the necessary answers to the phenomenon, and thereby effaced the doubts and internal problems research into the lack of corpse decay faced.

On March 1, 1755 Maria Theresa issued a rescript directed at all the representative bodies of the hereditary lands of Austria and Bohemia, in which she sought to control the procedure of prosecuting revenants. The significant part of this piece of legislation was that the investigations, which were supposed to involve a physician as well, had to hand in all the documentation to the Viennese court for evaluation. This was a clear step towards taking agency away from the local level and placing it in the hands of the central government, a project, which was strengthened in the legislation (1756, 1766) that followed in the coming years. Equally important was the fact that apart from normative legislation, on the 17th March meeting of the *Directorium in publicis et cameralibus*, the Viennese court devised a full-scale enlightening project that was supposed to involve Jesuit missionaries and medical experts to fight the sickness with medications and to enlighten the people. It was also at this meeting that they decided on the dissemination of van Swieten's work.

The knowledge produced about *magia posthuma* within the frames of the Gasser-Wabst commission, and then by van Swieten's systematizing effort was spreading in the Habsburg Monarchy in the shape of a good story about the triumph of modern enlightened medicine over darkness and superstition. At the same time, as late as the end of the eighteenth century, the Vienna-trained professor of medicine, Sámuel Rác could maintain in his textbook for future surgeons that ghosts, demonic possession, demonic magic and natural magic all exist, and therefore, the theoretical possibility of the dead harming the living was still there. It is just that the discussion throughout the century increasingly shifted from theoretical debates to a case-by-case evaluation of the question.

Concluding remarks

Chapters III and VII have shown that history of *magia posthuma* on the Moravian-Silesian border in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries involved repeated efforts on the side of the village community, the church, the secular courts and eventually the state to discipline the unruly dead. Stopping cases from spiralling out of control into panics was a common goal,⁹¹⁹ which at the same time means, that the different management techniques the different actors proposed were rival systems.⁹²⁰ The rivalry between local techniques and state techniques was dormant until the 1755 Frei Hermersdorf case, when it suddenly surfaced with acute intensity.

The revenant execution and the shame that the revenant's family had to endure were justified at the local level by the family being the first defence system, responsible for its own dead, and expected to deploy preventive as well as post factum measures of stopping the dead from returning. The church also offered a number of measures, such as celebrating masses, performing benedictions and exorcisms, or allowing individual executions to calm down the population down. However, the organizing and rationalizing efforts that the church initiated in the wake of revenant infestations could only have a calming effect on the short run. In the long run, the reconceptualizing work could do more harm than it prevented, as the hybrid theoretical framework of *magia posthuma* which the church had created at the beginning of the century served as a legitimized channel for repeated panics, and solidified the procedure, established a tradition.

Several studies detail how, regardless of the historical period, big scandals and mass excitements involving extreme emotions (be they enthusiasm, or fear) irritate secular as well as ecclesiastical institutions, because they threaten with the loss of control.⁹²¹ At the same time, in the Moravian-Silesian case, the first half of the eighteenth century was beset by constant revenant executions, in which dozens of corpses were killed, but the state did not react. It was only in 1755, at a time when the Habsburg court started pursuing the first steps

⁹¹⁹ Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*.

⁹²⁰ Scharfe, 'Wider-Glaube - Zum kulturellen Doppelcharakter der Superstition, und: Superstition als Gebärde einer rationalen Tendenz in der Kultur'.

⁹²¹ Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist*; Midelfort, *Exorcism and Enlightenment*; Bárány, *The Exorcist of Sombor: The Mentality of an Eighteenth-Century Franciscan Friar*.

of the highly centralizing measures of enlightened absolutism that these large-scale executions were noticed as a problem: a problem of the lack of control.

The Frei Hermersdorf *magia posthuma* case, and the mobilization of the Viennese court it triggered has conventionally been understood as a prime example of disenchantment and secularization. The scenario of the events indeed offers itself to such an interpretation, because it was the Bishopric of Olomouc, which, unchallenged, for decades had been allowing and to some extent orchestrating the revenant executions in the area. And indeed it was a layman, the physician Gerard van Swieten, who conducted a revision of the episcopal investigation, condemned the Catholic Church for irresponsibly letting vent to the murderous fears of a superstitious populace, and it was him, who gave a naturalistic explanation to the events in one of the bestsellers of the learned vampire literature. And finally, the wording of the secular laws that eventually disciplined the practice of revenant executions was outrightly accusing the church with mismanagement and inadequacy and was ordering the church to pass on the possible cases with supernatural afflictions to the secular arm, who was supposed to investigate with the involvement of a physician.

When taking a closer look at the details of the events, however, the story seems much more complicated. First, the long history of *magia posthuma* cases show, that the secular court had always been present at the events. Often, it was secular judges who sought out the episcopal consistory for help; it was also always a secular court, that passed the final verdict of the executions, the episcopal commission had no authority to order and carry out executions. Second, as part of its enlightening project, the court not only ordered the deployment of physicians, but of Jesuit missionaries as well. And finally, van Swieten may have been critical of witch- and revenant trials, but his criticism was not based on a limited conceptualization of the powers of the devil in the physical world, but on the inadequacy and superficiality of the legal investigation, the weakness of proofs and witness accounts. Az Sámuel Rác's example indicated, the reality of ghosts, witches and demons was not questioned at a theoretical level throughout the century.

An alternative explanation seems more in line with general efforts of the Habsburg state in the 1750s, and specifically linked to van Swieten's science-organization activity in the field of

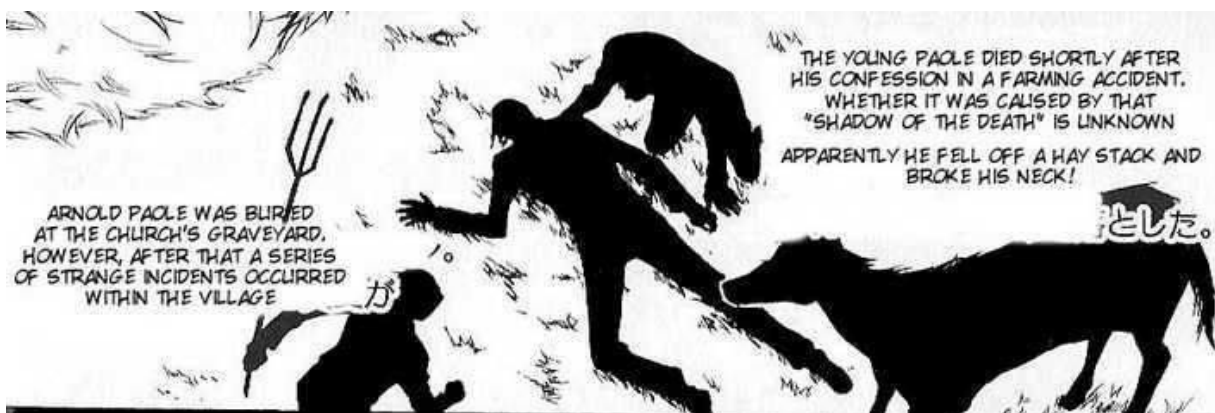
medicine:⁹²² throughout the middle of the eighteenth century, the state was working on the creation of a more efficient central control over certain core facets of life, such as public health or education. Ultimately resting on the realization that the population is a natural resource for the state, the weakness of central state control over the population was seen as problematic and had to be amended. The aim was strengthening the channels through which central agendas could penetrate to the local level. This meant the building up strictly hierarchized and centralized infrastructures consisting of institutions, personnel and standardized procedures.⁹²³ In the particular case of *magia posthuma*, one of the crucial elements of the anti-revenant project in this sense was requesting the documentation of cases of supernatural afflictions to be sent to Vienna, thereby ripping them out of their local relations. It was very different to give a witness account in one's own village and far away, in a lofty courtroom in the capital.

The conflict then was much less along the lines of secular versus clerical, or enchantment versus disenchantment, but about maintaining (or in the case of revenant executions, *creating*) central state control over the chaos-management techniques through both judicial and legislative means as opposed to customary law. This conflict was based on the tension between local levels of agency and the intrusion of central power into fields which traditionally belonged to local authority. This is why the Gasser-Wabst commission was coming down so hard upon local experts. Naturally, it often happened, that the state was trying to extend its power over areas that used to belong to the church; in these cases, the centralization also went hand-in-hand with laicization, but it was rather a side-effect of the need for more direct access to resources, most prominently the population.

⁹²² Horn, 'Die Konstruktion von Tradition und Innovation in der Wiener Medizingeschichtsschreibung des späten 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts'.

⁹²³ Michael Mann, 'The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results', *European Journal of Sociology* 25, no. 2 (1984).

Conclusions



47 Detail from Nanae Chrono's manga, *Vassalord 2*, chapter4: Arnold Paole and the Shadow of Death (2007)

‘What's done in the dark will be brought to the light’

Johnny Cash

1. The many-faced revenant

Translations

Throughout the dissertation I have been using the word ‘revenant’ as an alternative to a variety of concepts, from ghosts and dead witches through *Nachzehrers* and possessed corpses to *upirs* and *moroi*. This was a conscious decision, that comes from the realization that these words themselves are products of systematizing efforts on the part of various historical actors, institutions and communities. I needed a relatively neutral term that is not so much bound to given cultures and historical periods, but which does convey the general idea that certain harms people suffer in this world stem from special kinds of dead, who do not behave as the regular dead should. This definition was broad enough to encompass the various creatures that surfaced in the sources I consulted, at the same time could capture the element that I think was stable across the cases: that the appearance of a revenant signified a fracture in the equilibrium of the community of the dead and the living.

Historians are constantly being painfully reminded, that it is impossible to access the experiences people of the past had: it is not only that people already systematize their experiences as they think and talk about them (something which anthropologists often remark at), but in addition, whatever they experienced, thought, said and did arrives to us through written sources which themselves were attempts at translating these utterances into information that was meaningful for the author of the document, or (very often) for the person who was meant to read that given document. Good translation does not simply involve expressing a message using concepts that the other person readily understands, but it also means formulating the message in a way that takes into consideration that other person’s priorities and interests.⁹²⁴ As an example, Glaser translated *upir* into medical terms, as a form of revenant contagion, while also remarking that settlers might run away (a serious loss to the military frontier’s personnel) if not allowed to execute the vampires. In this sense, translation is never an innocent communication technique, but an aggressive imposition of order, laden with interests.

⁹²⁴ Callon, ‘Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay’.

I tried to show in the dissertation that the history of the ‘vampire’ can be understood as a series of (mis)translations, and argued that we can gain meaningful insights about the translator and the translated people once we zoom in on the junctures where the translation itself was happening. Such junctures were instances when revenants disturbed the peace of a community, and luckily for us, many of these cases produced sources testifying to the translation work that had been done, such as official reports, trial records, learned treatises and laws. Some of the most well-documented junctures are the birth of von Schertz’s *Magia posthuma* in 1703, the great revenant infestation of Liebe in 1726-1728, the 1732 Medvedia case, the investigations of the Kőműves-Tallar commission in 1753, and the 1755 Frei Hermersdorf *magia posthuma* case. Many of these cases also happened to be the ones that made substantial changes in the way revenants were dealt with in a particular area, while others did not. For example, the Flückinger report had a lasting influence on the figure of the vampire in European imagination, but only confirmed or reinforced a practice of corpse executions that the southern borderland’s administration had already been supporting for many years.

Revenant-frameworks

The creation of a chronology of cases, which I provide in the Appendix shows that the ‘revenant problem’ was much larger than previously assumed. Only based on the hitherto uncovered sources, during the roughly fifty years investigated here (ca 1718-1765), several hundreds of deaths were attributed by locals to revenants in provinces across the Habsburg Monarchy. The list in reality is much longer, as secular and church archives probably house many more cases that are so far unknown to historical research.

Revenant cases always involved negotiations, often clashes between various ‘revenant frameworks’, which the historical actors tried to force on the others through an intensive translation work. I classified these frameworks based on what the direct cause (the vehicle) of harm was and what gave direction (channel) to the harm leading from the dead to the living person. In these frameworks the question of sin and innocence played a crucial role. In the eighteenth century, many cases still featured a very old, possibly universal revenant framework, the *mort improvisa* tradition, according to which people dying an untimely and

sudden death, their unfulfilled fate will bind them to the world of the living, which in certain formulations also meant that their cadavers would retain a fraction of life in them. Importantly, these revenants were not understood as sinners or evil people: they had been normal, average people in their life, who nevertheless could not leave the physical world, and were now causing damage and harm.

The medieval Church provided a different framework, a sin-based one, which did not map easily on the popular conceptions. According to the ecclesiastical narrative, lesser sinners' souls could come back from Purgatory, while grave sinners, having been in the complete power of the devil would remain so after death as well, and the devil could do wonders even to their corpses. Such harmful corpses were also sometimes seen as being demonically possessed, or especially frequently from the fifteenth century on, as dead witches. Both of these were only slight modifications of the sinner-revenant framework. The revenant ideas of Eastern Christianity still need much research (especially when it comes to the actual social practice, not theory), but it is clear that the Orthodox church also supported a sin-based narrative, in which grave sinners, who were excommunicated got possessed, and the devil would not let their souls leave the body.

Parallel to and often intertwined with the theological-demonological frameworks, natural philosophical explanations were also available. These did not involve immaterial entities, such as supernatural beings or the human soul. Based on poisons conducted by sympathies between a shared *mumia* of people, or emotions/ideas/intentions imprinted on an airy physiological part of the body, such as the third part (astral spirit) or bodily vapours, the human body was granted the power of effecting harm on the living. These explanations did not necessitate any relation to sin.

Multiplying revenants

The dissertation focused on those instances, where revenants started to multiply. Such a multiplication, during which large numbers of normal people (that is, not grave sinners) would turn into harmful dead posed a serious challenge to the extant traditional frameworks, especially for the sinner-based explanations.

If we look at the extant sources on large-scale revenant infestations resulting in mass executions of the dead, we find a surprising chronological and geographic condensation. Based on the secondary literature and archival source material that I have reviewed within the frames of the present research, two patterns became visible. First, there is a complete lack of mass executions outside the two focus areas of the dissertation, the Moravian-Silesian border and the southern Habsburg borderland. Second, within these two areas, no such cases happened before the eighteenth century. There are two exceptions. One concerns thirteenth-century Icelandic sagas, in which certain *draugrs* (revenants), are described as not only killing people, but turning them into revenants as well in order to form an undead army of them which they could then deploy against the living.⁹²⁵ However, we have no information about whether this idea was ever linked to actual social practice. The other exception is the 1592 Bennisch case in Upper Silesia, in which a man and a household servant became revenants one after the other, and both of them were executed (Chapter III.1.), which suggests a form of spread of the revenant condition. Nevertheless, theoretically at least, this could still have been explained within the extant frameworks by supposing that they committed grave sins together, for example were both witches.

Given that even the current PhD research has uncovered dozens of cases which have been unknown or forgotten by historical research, it is possible, that both the geographic and the temporal condensation can be extended or amended. At the same time, it is indicative, that secondary literature has already known about these two focal areas of revenant infestations, even if the real extent of the problem has been unfolding only recently, through reinvigorated archival research. In order to settle the question, comparative archival research targeting the pre-eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, Poland or Lower Silesia would especially be desirable.

A related question is whether the apparent rise in mass executions during the eighteenth century originated from below or from above, from popular or from learned circles. A similar question about the origins of the witch hunts has been puzzling researchers, and there, the consensus seems to be that it was a combination of both. Witch trials most often started from popular accusations, it is just that certain learned developments, for instance the

⁹²⁵ Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 36-38.

systematization and codification diabolic witchcraft as heresy provided legitimized channels for local accusations and tensions to take effect,⁹²⁶ and especially to broaden out into large-scale trials against a supposed witches' sect.

There certainly are indications that local communities in the two regions sometimes saw the unruly dead as sources of some form of pollution, and that they were actively pressuring the authorities to perform the multiple exhumations and executions. Even before the systematization of the concept of *magia posthuma* by von Schertz, in Moravian-Silesian cases some revenants (such as Christof Englisch in 1674) were burnt together with the soil of their grave and everything they came into contact with, and that people were afraid to bury their dead into a cemetery which was harbouring a suspected revenant. These fears had the potential to spin out into a revenant infestation, but (at least in the reviewed material) did not do so until the early eighteenth century. On the southern borderland, and in the Banat especially, several sources mention multiple executions from as early as 1717, that is, well before the Habsburg authorities could have made an impact on local concepts for example by the erection of the plague cordon. This suggests that popular culture on the southern borderland probably also contained ideas and fears about multiplying revenants. These fears might have even been catered to by Ottoman authorities, it is just that these sources have not surfaced yet in the research known to me. We cannot be sure however, what these ideas exactly looked like. Were they based on some form of contact-based magic? Or was it similar to some kind of poison or animal's venom transmitted by attacks? Or was it inspired by the visible spread of plague from person to person, as Péter Tóth G. has supposed?⁹²⁷ One thing is certain: once a mass execution struck a given area, it could serve as precedence and give possibility for people to learn into the fear of multiplying revenants and into the practice of mass executions.⁹²⁸

On the other hand, based on the collection of revenant cases (Appendix), it is evident that the two focus regions also harboured revenant ideas that did *not* come with a fear of the revenant condition being contagious. It is often forgotten even in secondary literature for example, that

⁹²⁶ Edward Bever, 'Popular Witch Beliefs and Magical Practices', in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 50–69.

⁹²⁷ Tóth G., *Boszorkánypánik és babonatéboly*, 75.

⁹²⁸ On how people learn new ideas about witchcraft, see for example: Robin Briggs, 'Witchcraft and the Local Communities: The Rhine-Moselle Region', in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, ed. Brian P. Levack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 199–217.

provisor Frombald's report of the 1725 Kisilova case does not mention any other revenants than Peter Plogojwitz, even though he was supposed to have killed several villagers. The same is true of several cases on the Moravian-Silesian border. It was the 1732 learned debate's translation work, which blurred the boundary between the contagious vampires of Medvedia and the Kisilova revenant, and in general, between the usual single, epidemic-causing revenants and multiplying ones. While searching for historical sources on the idea of the Medvedia vampirization, they hoarded up a huge body of revenant literature, thereby translating the figure of the vampire into something much broader than how Glaser and Flückinger understood it, not to mention how local Rascians could have understood it.

As compared to popular concepts, it is easier to trace the development of those learned frameworks which were able to accommodate mass revenant infestations. In the early eighteenth-century authorities in both regions created such novel frameworks, which in Moravia-Silesia undoubtedly contributed to the increased frequency of cases. Even before the eighteenth century, the idea could have been around that cemetery ground becomes desecrated by a revenant/witch/heretic buried in it and henceforth will not be able to protect the peace of the other dead from demonic attacks. This idea however had limited explanatory power, as certain people in Moravia became revenants already on the bier, before even having come into contact with cemetery soil. A more accommodating framework was systematized by Karl F. von Schertz in 1703, in whose rendering *magia posthuma* was a hybrid framework involving an arch-witch who caused an infestation of ghosts by possessing/bewitching innocent people's corpses through blowing (*anblaßen*) at them, and hence making them capable of doing the same to other cadavers. We can again only guess the extent to which his translation of the concept of *anblaßen* distorted popular ideas.

On the southern border, the large-scale executions of the dead had been recorded from as early on as the 1717 Merul case in the Banat. The first translation effort, of which we have longer documentation was quarantine physician Glaser's 1732 report on the Medvedia vampires. Glaser's framework of vampirization (*vervampyren*) could also explain how even innocent people could become revenants. Unlike *magia posthuma*, this one had a markedly medical hue, which I argued was a consequence of the borderland's role as a plague cordon. This system supposed that the condition of 'being vampirized' was communicated not after death, but during lifetime, by eating from vampirized animals, the grave of a vampire,

smearing vampiric blood on oneself or being attacked by a vampire. This condition exerted its effect upon death: the person became a vampire capable of vampirizing others. The difference between *magia posthuma*'s post-death activization and the vampiric contagion's spread during lifetime was remarked later by Gerard van Swieten as well.

The learned debaters also had troubles reconciling the spread of the revenant condition with the given frameworks, and importantly had only a limited number of sources at their disposal which described multiplying revenants. Frombald's report narrated a usual, single-revenant event, and it was only the sources about the Medvedia case that talked about the contagiousness of the vampiric condition. The massive documentation of the Moravian-Silesian border area's revenant infestations of the first three decades of the eighteenth century, partially thanks to Duke Francis Stephen, did not make an impact on the East-German learned world, and apparently had no influence on the vampire debate. The countless historical examples from ancient through medieval to early modern times they did reference contained no examples of multiplying revenants, largely because most often they simply took over the same literature as the one that had been repeatedly quoted in the seventeenth-century *masticatio mortuorum* literature, a non-contagious form of revenantism. In this sense it is also astonishing that not even von Shertz's Latin book came up in the discussion, even though it described something similar to the southern idea of vampirization.

Several of the learned discussants, especially the ones belonging to the halo of the Prussian Academy of Sciences denied that in the Medvedia case there would be any connection between the dead and the living, this way circumventing the problem of having to explain the contagiousness of a revenant. Those who did maintain this connection exhibited very creative translation efforts, such as W.S.G.E.'s demonic possession epidemic, or Harenberg's deadly cycle involving plants and domestic animals as intermediaries of a lethal poison that had emanated from the dead. Spirit imprinting was especially able to accommodate the contagion idea, as the imprinted spirits of a revenant could kill and cause a similar imprinting event on the victim's spirit. In this sense it is no wonder that these explanations were popular even outside Pietist circles.

2. Disciplining the vampire

In traditional histories of vampirism, the rapid rise of the vampire is often narrated together with its rapid fall: the 1732 medical debate is understood to have taken a sceptical stance towards the superstition of vampirism, a thread that is seen to have continued in the sporadic vampire treatises of the late 1730s and the 1740s. The final blow of disenchantment and secularization in this narrative came in 1755, orchestrated by the Dutch Gerard van Swieten, who imported the sceptical, enlightened mentality of the Dutch Republic into the Habsburg Monarchy. He inspired the 1755 March 1st rescript, which took away the authority over vampires from the church and placed it securely into the hands of the state. In his treatise, he normalized the vampiric corpse's lack of decay and medicalized the victim's symptoms. And finally, he sought to it, that these measures would take effect and ordered Georg Tallar to investigate in the Banat and to write his *Visum Repertum Anatomico-Chirurgicum*.

The present dissertation proposes several adjustments to this story.

Disenchantment and enchantment in theory

The application of secularization theory has received much criticism in the past decades mostly directed at its aspirations of being an overarching, linear theory of civilizational development leading from religious superstition to secular reason.⁹²⁹ While such a simplistic formulation of linear description cannot be maintained, and a more complex, cyclical or intertwined developmental model is needed to better describe long-term changes, one still needs to recur to concepts that can be applied to more precisely limited changes in the conceptualizations of the relation between the natural and the supernatural and between ecclesiastical and secular institutions. In order to avoid the baggage coming with secularization, the concept *laicization* could be used,⁹³⁰ to denote the taking over of a given

⁹²⁹ See among others: Philip S. Gorski, 'Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ca. 1300 to 1700', *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): 138–67; Jonathan Sheehan, 'Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay', *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (1 October 2003): 1061–80.

⁹³⁰ Dale K. Van Kley, 'Christianity as Casualty and Chrysalis of Modernity: The Problem of Dechristianization in the French Revolution', *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 4 (1 October 2003): 1081–1104.

filed of authority by a secular from a religious institution. When it comes to intellectual ideas, disenchantment is a term similarly loaded, but I again applied on a more delimited scale, has great explanatory power, as it grasps a core element of European culture, especially since the early modern period: the delight in demystifying phenomena.⁹³¹ In the present context, I use it to mean that the explanatory framework for a given phenomenon or experience is being shifted from one that includes either as its vehicle or as its channel a supernatural (that is, immaterial) entity to one that does not. Meanwhile, I maintain that disenchantment has never taken over entirely, the opposite kind of delight, that of enchantment is also always present.

Secondary literature still owes a comprehensive evaluation of the learned vampire debate from the point of view of enchantment and disenchantment, a task which is formidable given the size, the multi-language and multi-disciplinary nature of the corpus.⁹³² At a very basic level, one has to take care to precisely delineate which of the debate's aspects are meant. Religious polemics naturally should not be confused with anti-religiosity: it is fair to say for example that the 1732 Protestant texts harboured anti-Catholic and anti-Orthodox sentiments, sometimes even conflating the two. The 1750's Catholic treatises can also be described as severely anti-Orthodox, and to some extent even anticlerical. Neither clusters of texts were, however, anti-religious or even solely oriented at laicization and disenchantment.

It is also clear, that it the single consensus among the debaters, with which most contributors would have agreed, was that one should be pushing back against a perceived extremism of both religious fanaticism and materialism. It was compulsory to be pinpoint that the environment from which the Flückinger report came from was extremely superstitious and ignorant, and that the devil cannot be thought of as being behind each and every strange happening. At the same time, it was equally necessary to state that the devil, ghosts and witchcraft do exist, and that one cannot possibly rely all the time on the powers of the body

⁹³¹ Herbert De Vriese, 'The Charm of Disenchantment: A Quest for the Intellectual Attraction of Secularization Theory', *Sophia* 49, no. 3 (1 September 2010): 407–28.

⁹³² Some of the best summaries and in-depth analyses are: Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*; Magyar, 'Orvosi vita a magyarországi vámpírokról 1732-1756'; Vermeir, 'Vampires as Creatures of the Imagination: Theories of Body, Soul and Imagination in Early Modern Vampire Tracts (1659–1755)'; De Ceglia, 'The Archbishop's Vampires. Giuseppe Davanzati's Dissertation and the Reaction of "Scientific" Italian Catholicism to the "Moravian Events"'; Pickering, 'The Significance of Diabolic Power in the Articulation of a Pietist Agenda in the Vampire "Debate", 1732-35'; Pickering, 'Constructing the Vampire: Spirit Agency in the Construction of the Vampire in the Anonymous Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern (1732)'; Gordon, 'Emotional Practice and Bodily Performance in Early Modern Vampire Literature'.

to explain unusual phenomena. In this sense, most authors engaged in a project of joint disenchantment and enchantment, fighting for a middle way. Importantly, they deployed the very same arsenal: disenchantment and enchantment shared the techniques of mockery and importantly a disempowering, a 'reduction of powers'.⁹³³ This is to say, that the activity of the supernatural or natural entities is gradually pushed back: in the long-term history of vampirism, the powers of both the devil and the human body were pushed back against. The devil was granted less and less powers over the physical world, was thought to be capable of less and less corporeal actions. Meanwhile, the powers of the human imagination and of the spirit were also slowly reduced (though only after the 1730s) to be efficient only within the bounds of the body, not outside it, even though the rise in mesmerism towards the end of the century can be seen as a continued empowering of this bodily force.

The vampire debate in general was not circling around ontological questions, about what exists and what does not. All the contributors in 1732 were either mainstream Lutherans or Pietists and were working with almost the same elements of reality: demons, the human spirit, vapours and the imagination. This way, even if some contributors made fun of others, who resorted to the devil in their explanation of vampirism, it was not because in a Bekkerian mode they denied its powers in the physical world. In a similar vein, some discussants made fun of others, who resorted to the powers of the imagination, but this did not necessarily mean that they themselves denied those powers. The same applied to the Catholic Habsburg Monarchy, where the events moved back to in the 1750s: all the major contributors to the vampiric discussion in the second half of the century, such as Georg Tallar, Gerard van Swieten, Anton De Haen or Sámuel Rácz have maintained the existence of demonic and natural magic, possession and spirits. This being said, it is also clear that the contributors who argued that the dead not only can but probably did kill the living in the Medvedia case relied on natural vehicles of harm (poisons, vapours and spirits), it is just that many included the devil into the channel.

⁹³³ Vermeir, 'Vampires as Creatures of the Imagination: Theories of Body, Soul and Imagination in Early Modern Vampire Tracts (1659–1755)'.

Centralization and laicization in practice

One of the most exiting questions is where exactly did processes of disenchantment and laicization in the social practice of revenant executions arise from? In a similar fashion to recent witchcraft research's consensus on the decline of the witch hunts,⁹³⁴ I maintain that such measures could arise from various sources and changed from place to place. It was not always a straightforward top-down process. We need to look at the two focal regions separately.

On the southern borderland, the present research lost sight of Serbia after its Ottoman conquest in 1738, but the Banat cases show that the 1730s learned debate was by no means a break. The almost complete silence of Viennese publicity about the Medvedia case apparently successfully blocked the impact at the provincial levels as well, so much so that Georg Tallar, who was serving as a military surgeon in the Habsburg army during the learned debate had absolutely not knowledge neither of the debate, nor of the case itself apparently: had he known about it, he would not have maintained that the vampire sickness affected only Wallachians, while Rascians were immune to it due to the abundant consumption of hot pepper. In fact, even if some of the treatises reached the Habsburg Monarchy, their lack of impact on practice is not that surprising, as the group of learned, who thought that the execution could actually help was large: not only those agreed to it who subscribed to the idea that the dead harmed the living, but also some of those whose did not, the author of the letter of a good friend supported execution as a placebo to help cure the living.

Until changes started happening from the 1740s, local communities were repeatedly able to exert successful pressure on the clerical and secular power structures, prompting them to change their own explanatory frameworks (see Glaser and Flückinger) to accommodate local experiences. I consider this a major feat of successful translation and enchantment of the Habsburg administration, and even though it can be maintained that vampirism was a phenomenon of occupation,⁹³⁵ it was just as much one of subversion. The outcome and adjudication of the cases depended largely on the power dynamics between district

⁹³⁴ Levack, 'The Decline and End of Witchcraft Prosecutions', 2013.

⁹³⁵ Nowosadtko, 'Der „vampyrus serviensis“ und sein Habitat: Impressionen von der österreichischen Militärgrenze'; Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 17-20.

authorities, the Orthodox church and the local community. The provinces were diligently sending the remuneration requests for the medical experts involved in revenant executions and the court diligently paid them without making any trouble. The only exception was the 1738 case near Újpalánka, during which Uran allowed the execution of five corpses during the plague epidemic. During this early phase, the matter of contention between local communities, the secular administration and the Orthodox Church was about who had control over the vampire's body. The attempts of the provincial administration to appease the Orthodox Church and make it revoke the mass anathemas it had levied on whole villages cannot be interpreted as a disenchantment or laicization process: the two institutions shared the idea that the vampiric body was harmful, and managed the situation hand-in-hand.

The main takeaway from the situation on the borderland is that the systematizing attempts at controlling vampirism arose out of a pressing, provincial need, not as a direct project from above. This local, provincial level should be appreciated more, agency given back to the actors to gain a more nuanced picture of how processes of disenchantment and medicalization worked. The first changes in the adjudication of revenant executions on the southern borderland came from the local level. Our first source is the 1740 district prohibition issued in Orsova, which apparently was consequence of yet another conundrum in which the Orthodox pope excommunicated a whole village for illicit moroi killings. We cannot be sure where the incentive stemmed from, but it was not a provincial or Vienna-level instruction. Given that district provisors were never high-ranking or noble people, it would be especially interesting to discover further sources on this step, perhaps in Orthodox episcopal archives.

The important turning was 1753, when probably as a provincial-level initiative, the Temesvár administration set up the Kőműves-Tallar Commission, consisting of the new provincial physician of the Banat, Dr. Pál Ádám Kőműves, the experienced German surgeon Johann Georg Tallar and the anonymous cleric. Their investigations in several villages probably helped the administration to formulate a stance towards vampire cases. In the manuscript version of the *Visum Repertum*, written at the end of 1753 he considered demonic influence, but only to refute it, and proposed a naturalistic explanation to both the lack of decomposition of the vampire corpses and to the vampire sickness, which can be interpreted as a clear sign of disenchantment. He also provided a good reason (the practice of blood-smearing) for prohibiting vampire-killing rites in the province. The queen's 1755 March 1st rescript in all

likelihood had no effect on the adjudication of revenant cases, as it pertained only to the Bohemian and Austrian hereditary lands.

The situation on the Moravian-Silesian border present a riddle. Until 1738, we can detect no change, the prosecution of revenants was as intensive as before 1732, and was based on the successful pressure local communities managed to exert on the Catholic Church, forcing it to bend its demonological ideas to fit local experiences. This translation process was a clash between two rival enchanted frameworks. However, in 1738, there is a sudden fifteen-years gap, after which the prosecution comes back in the 1755 Frei Hermersdorf case, as if unchanged, deploying the same mechanics, same procedures as before. The reasons for this gap remain unclear begging further research. It may be a bias or a lacuna in the sources, it might have been influenced by the Troppau investigation into the Thyringer revenant cases, or possibly a learned influence by the new bishop, Jakob Ernst von Liechtenstein-Kastelkorn.

In relation to the Moravian-Silesian border, my main argument is that the steps made by the Habsburg court were not really about disenchantment or indeed about laicization, but first and foremost, it was centralization aimed taking away local-level authority and expertise. Laicization (the shifting of the investigative process from ecclesiastical hands into secular ones) and disenchantment (revenant cases were more and more explained as natural) were rather side-effects of this main aim. As both the queen's and van Swieten's text showed, their main issue with revenant executions was the disorder, the frauds and the lack of control over practices based not on written laws but on local experiences of the kind that the court officials did not share. It was a strengthening of channels through which central authorities could reach into people's lives. It was the building of this infrastructural power⁹³⁶ in the second half of the eighteenth century that would become able to efficiently transmit whatever agendas the central government had in mind. In essence, these measures together with the other steps at building up from the 1750s onwards were tools and techniques to ensure that a minority's mentality could efficiently be spread over the majority's mentality, a main feature of the Enlightenment.

⁹³⁶ Mann, 'The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results'.

3. Getting your hands dirty

Vampirism was a problem of discernment between the normal and the abnormal corpse and between the natural and the preter-/supernatural harm. Because of this, knowledge, expertise and evidence figure prominently throughout its history.

The rise of the medical expert

The vampire expert was someone entrusted to deploy specialized knowledge in the service of another person/body that wished to extend its control over the vampire's body.⁹³⁷ Since expert opinion-giving is always laden with interests, their status as experts itself was also being negotiated each time they accepted the call to investigate a given case. Various interest groups, the church, various fractions of the local community, some for others against the execution of a revenant, the state all tried to exert pressure on the experts, and this could have various consequences. Through their expert report, the Prussian Academics in 1732 had to counter the king's contempt towards them, and Jablonski did his best to close ranks and present the academy as a source of reliable, useful and up-to-date knowledge.⁹³⁸ By contrast, the barbers Vogel and Wolff performed the necessary incision in the 1755 Frei Hermersdorf case and offered the expert opinion needed to get most of the bodies convicted. Once the Gasser-Wabst commission came on-site, however, their expertise was publicly destroyed and humiliated. Being knowledgeable and being an expert was not the same. Glaser, for example was an expert of from the point of view of the Belgrade administration, but failed as a knowledgeable person in relation to vampires: he adopted a local, alien diagnosis, Nevertheless, this did not mean that he failed as an expert: through the report admitting the strange state of the corpses, he contributed to the final execution of the culprits to the common satisfaction of the local community and his superiors.

⁹³⁷ Ash, 'Introduction: Expertise and the Early Modern State'.

⁹³⁸ Hilgartner, *Science on Stage: Expert Power and Politics?*, 52.

In terms of expertise, there is a striking difference between the two geographic foci of the research. The state's reliance on medical experts was an important facet of the experiment in rationalized governance on the southern borderland already from its inception. The figure of the expert was central for these state projects: they united in themselves several crucial roles: 1) information gathering through research and investigation (*Untersuchung*), 2) the organization of the gathered knowledge into structured written documentation, 3) based on this advising policies 4) applying the central policies in practice. The expert was not meant to be an objective outsider standing above interests, but an agent of extending control over a target. And control of vampirism in this sense involved the steering of problems according to the interests of the borderland, which all the way through till the 1740s involved the cooperation and authorization of vampire executions. Georg Tallar's successful provincial-level career is the story of a *par excellence* vampire expert. He could fashion himself so well that he managed to stabilize his dire financial position before his work in the vampire commission.

By contrast, on the Moravian-Silesian border expertise was in the hands of gravediggers, who slowly taught the episcopal consistory the business of recognising and executing revenants. We do not see official medical personnel present until the great revenant infestation of Liebe, where their expertise is flatly questioned by the episcopal commissioners. The discussion between them in which Dean Zeno maintains that medical theory cannot be superior to actual experience is a motif characteristic of the whole history of vampirism. Here the situation changed in 1755, as the beginning steps of enlightened absolutism started to build a grip over non-central expertise that was meant to be much tighter than the policies deployed on the southern borderland in the first half of the century. From the point of view of the court, it became increasingly vital that the expert does not get stained by local interests and remains detached from messy local relations: when Maria Theresa wrote that the secular courts should investigate cases of suspected supernatural activity with the involvement of a 'reasonable' physician, she exactly meant that that expert's source of authority and confidence should be invested onto him from outside local relations, from the infrastructural channel linking him through the state-controlled and -approved university education to the Viennese court. This is partly the reason why Georg Tallar, whose expertise (the language skills, the personal

connections to locals and his head-on experiments on folklore) was so much appreciated at the provincial level, was ignored and later on, at the full height of absolutist enlightened reforms in the 1780s was discarded by some as a useless product of a superstitious, ignorant culture.

A motif recurring in the history of both vampirism and *magia posthuma* is that often the expert invited to evaluate the situation was an outsider. In a way it is natural, as the expert has to be an outsider to the particular case in which his/her expertise is needed, so that he/she is not too much bogged down into local relations and can act as a judge. In small cases, the expert can come from relatively close by, but if a problem, in our case a revenant infestation engulfs a whole settlement, then experts need to come from outside the community. In the end of the seventeenth century the Fridland gravediggers managed to establish themselves as experts, while in 1719 in Freudenthal, a Wallachian alchemist solved the revenant problem. The Gypsies in the Medvedia case, who were referred to in text as 'local' can probably also be seen as to some extent coming from the fringes of the community. Georg Tallar was also invited into the Banat from the town of Szabadka. Nowhere is the reliance on a detached medical expert more poignant than in Maria Theresa's 1755 rescript, which posits the involvement of a university-trained physicians. Given that it was unlikely that in any of the small villages beset by *magia posthuma* physicians would be available, such an expert by default had to be an outsider.

Empirical vampire studies

The question of the relations between empirical and theoretical knowledge on vampirism and what were the spheres within which the former emerged has so far largely been overlooked by secondary literature, which rather analysed the learned debates from the point of view of the explanations the learned give and how they fit into various intellectual currents of the time. In addressing the topic, I relied on recent research aiming at a more dynamic view of knowledge production, which emphasizes the deficiencies of a rigid center/production – periphery/reception model. Various studies have shown that the same place or area could

serve as a centre in one aspect and a periphery at another.⁹³⁹ Understanding the southern borderland as an experimental space in rationalized governance⁹⁴⁰ provides a framework also for analyzing it as a site of knowledge production. I argued that in spite of the strong cameralist state agendas, it was not simply a passive recipient of policing but a centre for knowledge production especially on epidemic-related phenomena. Vampirism got into the field of vision of the plague cordon because of its contagious nature and brought with itself a novel field of knowledge: corpse decay.

I argued that it was provincial-level administrative and forensic considerations that inspired empirical, comparative observations, dissections and experiments on bodily decay, a venture that by far preceded similar attempts by learned medicine and natural philosophy. The medical personnel of the borderland embarked on these endeavours because they were pressed to come up fast with a diagnosis that could be used to decide whether the situation posed danger to the aspects of the borderland, which were highly sensitive for Habsburg state building: it was a military frontier, a plague cordon, a centre for the mining industry as well as a major gate for transimperial commerce. The emphasis of the borderland's administration on investigation (*Untersuchung*) in order to gain information that could be turned into policies (as exemplified especially in the quarantine station's reporting and information network) necessitated a meticulous documentation of problems. The closely related fields of medical policing and forensic medicine have recently been singled out as crucial spheres of the construction of the concept of death in the eighteenth century.⁹⁴¹

At a time when experimental and empirical evidence in natural philosophy and medicine was gaining prestige, but research into human putrefaction discouraged by utilitarian and moral considerations and sensibilities, these agents of the borderland had to cross these boundaries and conduct autopsies on vampires. The 'extraordinary hardships' that according to vice-governor Botta d'Adorno the surgeons had to endure indicate the unusual nature of their investigations. I argued that this both horrid and novel autopsy report substantially contributed to the interest granted to it within learned circles. That no similar empirically

⁹³⁹ Leong and Rankin, 'Testing Drugs and Trying Cures'.

⁹⁴⁰ Horn, 'Geschichte(n) von Gesundheit und Krankheit zwischen Kameralismus und medizinischer Polizey - Forschungsdesiderata für Österreich und Ungarn in der frühen Neuzeit'; Marjanucz, 'A Temesi Bánság, mint modernizációs kísérleti telep, 1716-1778'.

⁹⁴¹ De Ceglia, *Storia della definizione di morte*.

based investigations on human corpse decay were available to the discussants, they had the possibility to reflect on the roles of experience/experiment and theory in natural philosophy.

Even though several contributors commented on the necessity of an empirical approach in natural philosophy, only a few risked proposing a pragmatic, hands-on approach through which the perceived evidentiary deficiencies of the report could be amended. The *Letter from a good friend* was especially inspired to come up with a combined experimental-historical vampire-research project, which (unlike most learned treatises) came close to giving a practical answer to the uncertainties of the borderland administration. A contributing factor to this distancing was that the superstitious nature of the environment which tainted the *Visum et Repertum* was in a way contagious and taking it overly seriously, submerging too deep into local culture, like Georg Tallar did, was not worth the trouble.

Carrying out tests and experiments naturally presupposes physical closeness to the problem, and importantly, a large variety of experts from the lowliest to the highest-ranking ones became involved in running tests on the vampiric affliction. Apart from Flückinger's military surgical commission's autopsies, the Moravian gravediggers were making incisions throughout the period, town surgeon Benedikt Kuhn in 1728 advised the creation of special revenant crypts for observation purposes, the mining surgeons in Kapnik in 1753 dissected, just like anatomy professor Gasser and military physician Wabst in 1755, and Jesuit missionaries Ignatz Zinner and Martin Baroch spent several nights in the houses of afflicted villagers in Frei Hermersdorf. It was nevertheless Georg Tallar, who in 1753 performed the most diverse kinds of tests on folklore as well as autopsies on vampires, an activity that helped him fashion himself as an expert in the eyes of the provincial administration, but did not earn him respect in the Viennese medical community of the 1780s. The dissections and tests made on vampiric and non-vampiric corpses carried out by these experts can be situated within the early history of comparative, empirical trials, and their significance is that they contributed to death and more precisely, bodily decay being defined as a natural phenomenon, which can be examined and experimented on by medical experts without the moral-religious constraints.

Searching for evidence

I have already suggested above that the discourse of vampirism in the eighteenth century was not really about ontology. The question was not ‘do vampires exist?’, but ‘how do we know if in this particular case the dead killed the living?’ Given that there were several available revenant frameworks, it was mainly an exercise in epistemology, and this is not only true of the learned debate. The main charm of the vampire discourse was that it integrated legal investigation (*Untersuchung*), historical and naturalist research (*Forschung*) and medical semiotics (*Semiotica*)⁹⁴² and resonated with several other enterprises (such as archaeology⁹⁴³ and the mining industry⁹⁴⁴ for instance), which were all intent on uncovering hidden secrets by reading observable signs (*signum*, *Zeichen*). Reading the archival documents and printed sources produced by the vampire discourse, it is impossible not to notice how ubiquitous these expressions were in the texts.⁹⁴⁵

The regular negotiations between local communities and power structures in both Moravia-Silesia and the southern borderland distilled communal experience into custom, solidifying the investigative procedure of collecting evidence and standardizing the necessary proofs. Certain smaller differences aside, these aspects were the same in both regions, in fact, they were probably the same across all European revenant cultures of the time. The three main stages of the revenant investigation (and the resulting three clusters of evidence to be uncovered) were 1) the witness accounts (accounts of visions, symptoms of the attacks), 2) reconstructing the provenance of the affliction (in Moravia finding the arch-witch, in the south tracing the origins of the contagion) and 3) the cathartic opening of the graves in search for the signs of revenantism on the cadaver.

The three stages had medical, legal and historical/naturalist resonances, which poses a curious question about the relations between fear and curiosity. From a medical and a legal point of view, these unruly corpses were dangerous, and though the sources are silent about this, they

⁹⁴² Hess, ‘Medical Semiotics in the 18th Century’.

⁹⁴³ On the relations between archaeology and vampirism see: Marín, ‘Haunted Communities: The Greek Vampire or the Uncanny at the Core of Nation Construction’.

⁹⁴⁴ This connection was suggested by Georg Tallar as well. See Chapter VI.2. Tallar, ‘Visum repertum anatomico-chirurgicum, oder [...] summarischer Bericht’.

⁹⁴⁵ A quick word-search on Ranfft’s treatise yields 40 instances of the word *Untersuchung*, 50 of *Zeichen* and 12 cognates of *forschen* Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*.

had to pose some form of danger to the experts who were trying to decipher them. The reluctance of the Freudenthal gravedigger to touch and examine Christof English's corpse, as well as the almost maniacal annihilation of the tools that came into contact with a revenant certainly point in this direction. But what about the outsider experts? Did they feel the threat? The question is especially relevant in the case of the Flückinger- and the Kőműves-Tallar commissions, who have taken the revenant investigation procedure one step further, by adding a fourth step: opening the revenant corpse and peering into its inner secrets (*visum et repertum* – seen and discovered).

Needless to say, in order to gather these three/four clusters of evidence, one had to go *on site*. Any other epistemological technique could only possibly yield less certain proofs. The majority of those taking part in the revenant discourse could not resort to these immediate ways of proving, and instead had to rely on second-hand relations, the veracity of which could be dubious. There were two main ways to approach this problem. First, one could choose two-three very credible relations, with an immaculate pedigree of provenance, consisting of trustworthy informants. This technique had several manifestations in the era, quarantine director Paitsch for example devoted huge efforts to creating such an informant-chain, but Glaser's father also underlined that 1) he himself was a physician and 2) his son was also a physician 3) having seen the vampires first-hand. The Flückinger-commission's *Visum et Repertum* also had a very strong pedigree consisting of the military investigation, vice-governor Botta d'Adorno and Prince Charles Alexander. Contemporaries have realized this, which is why the report's veracity (a few opinions aside) was never questioned, and neither was the truthfulness of the surgeons' observations. Instead, many learned debaters took issue with the lack of detailed witness accounts and descriptions of the victims' symptoms.

The second approach to second-hand evidence was collecting lots of not-so-credible accounts. This kind of hoarding of historical evidence had resonances in natural history and as reflected on by the author of the article in the Pietist *Geistliche Fama*, rested on the conviction that even if some of the accounts turned out to be erroneous, imprecise or fraudulent, all of them cannot be. The logic of 'so many people cannot be wrong' was a recurring argument in the ghost-literature of the time and was complemented occasionally by a scepticism towards historical details: since details can be modified by the individual person's sensory and

political/ideological biases, it is useless to concentrate on them and try to verify them; what is important is what is common in a large corpus of relations.

As noted by Stéphane van Damme in his discussion of the 1740s French vampire debate, the collecting of large numbers of semi-verified accounts relied on a long tradition of a ‘natural history of superstition’ but came under criticism exactly in the eighteenth century for having a sloppy epistemological approach.⁹⁴⁶ Across denominations, in the 1730s and 1750s, several authors mounted their rejection of the idea of vampirization and *magia posthuma* on a stripping of the first-hand reports of their historical baggage and then moving on to analyse the case from a strict legal perspective, usually discrediting the expertise that testified in support of the diagnosis, and pointing out the deficiencies in the collection of witness accounts. This approach that disregarded earlier similar accounts of revenantism was rare in the 1732 learned debate, most contributors (regardless of their occupation) felt the need to start their treatises with a historical overview. Two notable representatives of the anti-historical approach are the Prussian Academy’s *Opinion* and lawyer-physician Putoneus (J.C. Meinig)’s work. In the 1750s, we find the same attitude in the treatise written by Gerard van Swieten, who announced that he did not have enough information on the 1732 Medvedia case to be able to adjudicate it.

Discarding the *fides historica* in favour of a strictly case-by-case legal-medical approach within theoretical vampire debates was paralleled in the practical sphere by the Gasser-Wabst Commission’s scorn for the Olomouc Bishopric’s justification of revenant executions based on custom. At both theoretical and practical levels, the Viennese court of the 1750s promoted the removal of the most substantial evidence that had been underpinning revenant encounters for hundreds of years: communal experience.

⁹⁴⁶ Van Damme, ‘Legitimizing Natural History of Superstitions: Historicizing, Documenting and Politicizing the Haunting Geographies of Europe’; See also: David Allen, ‘Opposing Enlightenment: Reverend Charles Peter’s Reading on the Natural History of Religion’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 2 (2005): 301–21; Martin Muslow, ‘Antiquarianism and Idolatry: The Historia of Religions in the Seventeenth Century’, in *Historia. Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Gianna Pomata and Nancy G. Siraisi (Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 2005), 181–210.

Postscript

Destroying the corpse of the unruly dead has always served the purpose of excising the person from the community and erasing them completely from memory. Enlightened scholars and policymakers were similarly trying to normalize the vampire as a regular corpse no different from the Habsburg Monarchy's millions of other, nameless dead.

As it happened, these attempts have achieved a contrary result: all the average people's names and memory has disappeared through time, but the vampires live on. For instance, even though he was burnt to ashes almost three hundred years ago, Arnout Pavle managed to revive, this time in Japan, in his own chapter of the manga comic *Vassalord* by Nanae Chrono, titled: *Arnold Paole and the Shadow of Death*.

Appendix

1. Revenant cases on the southern Habsburg borderland (1717-1775)

Unknown section of the southern borderland

between 1716 and 1730: a hajduk village

- a hajduk is killed by his dead father; count Cabrera investigates the case with military surgeons, the culprit is executed⁹⁴⁷

before 1731, unknown place

- a dead man kills his brother and three of his grandchildren; executed by the a delegation of judicial officials and military officers; related by L. von Beloz⁹⁴⁸

unknown time, unknown place

- a man who had been dead for thirty years returns and kills three of his household members; the commissioner has the culprit executed; case related by count Cabrera⁹⁴⁹

unknown time, unknown place

- a dead man killed two of his sons through bloodsucking; the commissioner has the culprit executed, the report about the case is sent to the emperor; case related by count Cabrera⁹⁵⁰

unknown time, unknown place

- a woman's dead husband, a hajduk comes back from the dead, sleeps with her and gets her pregnant; the woman gives a monstrous birth; related by ensign von Kottowitz⁹⁵¹

⁹⁴⁷ Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions*, 275-278.

⁹⁴⁸ Calmet, *Gelehrte Verhandlung*, 2:51-54. This story is not there in the 1746 first French edition, only in the 1751 German one.

⁹⁴⁹ Calmet, *Traité sur les apparitions*, 275-278.

⁹⁵⁰ Calmet, 275-278.

⁹⁵¹ Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern*, 16-18.; Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 15-16.; Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 176-179.; Hamberger, *Mortuus non mordet: Dokumente zum Vampirismus 1689-1791*, 56-57.

Slavonia

1721: village near Pozsega (today Požega, Croatia)

- first wave: villagers afflicted by vampires⁹⁵²

1728: Pétervárad (today Petrovaradin, Serbia)

- military physician Haack reports a case of *magnetismus mumialis* related by a physician in Pétervárad; military officer Vogel was dying and dragged his son with himself to death⁹⁵³

1730: village near Pozsega (today Požega, Croatia)

- second wave: a pandur and his family die after having eaten of a calf that had been killed by a vampire; case investigated by a military surgeon and a Turkish doctor; the cadavers are executed⁹⁵⁴

Serbia (1718 – 1739)

1725: Kisilova (today Kisiljevo, Serbia)

- provisor Frombald and an Orthodox priest investigate the case of Peter Plogojowitz, who was accused of killing several villagers; the culprit is exhumed and executed⁹⁵⁵

ca 1727 Medvedia (today Medveđa, Serbia)

- first wave: Arnout Pavle, a hajduk dies of an accident and then returns as a vampire, kills several people; villagers exhume him and his victims, execute four of them; Pavle had been vampirized in his lifetime by vampires in Cossowa, and ate from their grave to avoid being killed⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵² Anon., 'Zwölffter Haupt-titul. Von denckwürdig und seltsamen Begebenheiten'; Anon., 'Erläuterung von denen Begebenheiten derer Vampyrer oder blutsaugenden Schlangen'; Anon., 'Ex historia vampyrorum', 146-147.

⁹⁵³ Haack, 'Coerem magnetismi naturalis, sympathetico mumialis'.

⁹⁵⁴ Anon., 'Zwölffter Haupt-titul. Von denckwürdig und seltsamen Begebenheiten'; Anon., 'Erläuterung von denen Begebenheiten derer Vampyrer oder blutsaugenden Schlangen'; Anon., 'Ex historia vampyrorum', 146-147.

⁹⁵⁵ Frombald, 'Copia des vom Herrn Frombald kayserlichen cameral Provisore...' Our only data on the dating of the events to the winter of 1724-1725 is the fact that the copy of the report is filed in the archives under the documents relating to January-February 1725. The report was published in the main Vienna newspaper as well: Anon., 'Copia eines Schreibens aus dem Gradisker District in Ungarn'.

⁹⁵⁶ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case'

ca 1730 Kuklina (today Kukljin, Serbia)

- a vampire in the shape of a dog appears to two brothers, one of them dies in three days; case relate by ensign von Kottowitz⁹⁵⁷

1732 Medvedia (today Medveđa, Serbia)

- second wave: two women, Miliza and Stana return as vampires after their death and kill several people; both of them were had already been vampirized during their lifetime: Miliza had eaten of the meat of a calf that had been attacked by vampires, Stana had smeared herself with a vampire's blood to avoid being killed by one; Flückinger's military surgical commission has ten culprit corpses executed⁹⁵⁸

Banat of Temesvár (1717 - 1775)**1717 November: Merul, Karánsebes District (today Măru, Romania)**

- 80 people died after a sickness involving redness of face and visions; victims say 'their souls are tormented, because witches and wizards are roaming about in the area'; black horse used to identify the harmful dead, 4 corpses executed by beheading and burning⁹⁵⁹

1725 March-April: Herinbiesch, Lugos - Facset District (today Herendești, Romania)

- The provincial administration orders district provisor Rácz to have the suspicious witch exhumed, examined and in case she is proven to be a bloodsucker, executed.⁹⁶⁰

1725.08.01.: Babscha, Lugos - Facset District (today Babșa, Romania)

⁹⁵⁷ Anon., *Acten-mäßige und umständliche Relation von denen Vampiren oder Menschen-saugern*, 16-18.; Putoneus, *Besondere Nachricht, von denen Vampyren*, 15-16.; Ranfft, *Tractat von dem Kauen und Schmatzen der Todten in Gräbern*, 176-179.

⁹⁵⁸ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case'

⁹⁵⁹ Anon., 'Ex historia vampyrorum', 147.

⁹⁶⁰ 'Letter by district provisor Johann Rácz'. See also: Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:135.

- District provisor Buchleitner needs advice on how to deal with the village of Babscha, which was excommunicated by the bishop for having burnt bloodsuckers.⁹⁶¹

1726.01.24.: Lugos, Lugos - Facset District (today Lugoj, Romania)

- District provisor Rácz reports that he allowed an old woman to be exhumed, who was recognised as a bloodsucker, and because of having caused the deaths of many people in Lugos, was beheaded, and now needs to be burnt.⁹⁶²

1729 December- 1730 January: Sussanovez and Gruin, Lugos - Facset District (today Șanovița and Gruni, Romania)

- The provincial administration informs the district administration that in relation to the bloodsuckers found in Sussanovez the necessary steps should be made. The district provisor asks what to do about the excommunication of the community of Gruin.⁹⁶³

1732 July: Radojevo, possibly Krivina District (today Radujevac, Serbia)

- In July 1732, military surgeon Jozsef Faredi-Tamarzski, under orders from Prince Charles Alexander, was sent to the village of Radojevo to investigate vampires. He examined a dozen corpses and authorized the execution of several corpses. Made his report to the Belgrade Military Commission; the case has a dubious provenance⁹⁶⁴

1738 November: Újpalánka District (today Bačka Palanka, Serbia)

- District provisor Johann Mayr reports that a surgeon named Uran authorized the exhumation and the execution of five corpses in a village; the deaths stopped afterwards, this way it is unclear whether the executions worked or not. The Aulic Sanitary Commission sentenced Uran for unpaid service at the Temesvár plague lazaret until the plague epidemic ceased.⁹⁶⁵

1739 June: Fenlak, Temesvár District (today Felnac, Romania)

- During the plague epidemic people were digging in the plague cemetery, probably in order to find the bloodsuckers causing the plague.⁹⁶⁶

⁹⁶¹ Baróti, 2:135.

⁹⁶² Baróti, 2:136.

⁹⁶³ Baróti, 2:140.

⁹⁶⁴ Ambelain, *Le vampirisme: De la légende au réel*, 165-170.

⁹⁶⁵ 'Protocols of the Aulic Sanitary Commission' Bundle 1., 487v–488v and 497v, 504r–505r.

⁹⁶⁶ Erich Lammert, 'Die Krankheit mit denen Beülen 1.', *Neuer Weg*, 30 September 1978; Erich Lammert, 'Die Krankheit mit denen Beülen 2.', *Neuer Weg*, 14 October 1978 The case is also mentioned in the Temesvár provincial administration's documentation as an epidemic. See: 'List of documents to be discarded', volume 23., entries 159-162.

1743.09.03.: Birna, Lugos and Facset District (today Bârna, Romania)

- The district provisor hands in a medical attestation proving that the Birna community was wrongfully accusing bloodsuckers or vampires.⁹⁶⁷

1747.12.05.: Doppletz, Orsova District (today Topleț, Romania)

- The district provisor reports that in Doppletz during a single month 23 people died and that the cause of these deaths is ascribed to the bloodsuckers. In April 1748 the Karánsebes protopope excommunicated the village. In June 1748 those who committed the exhumation and execution of the corpses were cited to court.⁹⁶⁸

1748.05.12.: Karánsebes District (today Caransebeș, Romania)

- The protopope of Karánsebes claims that he excommunicated local inhabitants for without the knowledge of the Church they exhumed eleven corpses, which they saw as bloodsuckers, and partly burnt, partly scalded them with boiling water, and then reburied them.⁹⁶⁹

1748.05.16.: Orsova District (today Orșova, Romania)

- The district provisor reports that the exhumation and burning of corpses in order to stop the murder lust of alleged bloodsuckers is banned in the whole district through a circular.⁹⁷⁰

1751.02.26.: Kubin, Pancsova District (today Kovin, Serbia)

- The district provisor reports that in the village of Kubin a bloodsucker was torturing people at night so much, that they wanted to leave the village, and because of this the body of the accused Marinko Kalanitt was exhumed and in the presence of the community and officers was examined by physicians, and was found full of fresh blood; in order to calm the community down, the body was burnt.⁹⁷¹

1752.01.28.: Pancsova District (today Pančevo, Serbia)

- Oberst Simbischen reports that certain inhabitants of the district dug up several corpses at night, cut out their hearts, cooked them and used them against diseases.⁹⁷²

1752.02.06.: Deliblat, Pancsova District (today Deliblato, Serbia)

⁹⁶⁷ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:150.

⁹⁶⁸ Baróti, 2:262, 263, 264.

⁹⁶⁹ Baróti, 2:206.

⁹⁷⁰ Baróti, 2:264.

⁹⁷¹ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1896, 1:379.

⁹⁷² Baróti, 1:361.

- The provincial administration informs the district administration that based on a report handed in to the Military Command, certain inhabitants of Deliblat dug up four corpses thinking that they were vampires, cooked their hearts and performed various superstitious measures; this case, which was not authorized by the administration will be handed over to the district administration and those who committed the act will be adjudicated.⁹⁷³

1752.02.20.: Slatina, Karánsebes District (today Slatina-Timiş, Romania)

- The district administration reports that certain inhabitants of Slatina dug up four corpses of both genders from the cemetery, cut their entrails out and reburied them. This was prohibited under the strictest punishment by both the administration and the Church.⁹⁷⁴

1752.09.26.: Mehedica, Orsova District (today Mehadica, Romania)

- The district administration reports that in the village of Mehedica since two months 34 people died and the locals unanimously believe that the cause of this great dying is the murder lust of bloodsuckers.⁹⁷⁵

1753.01.11. Klein Dikvan and Rakasdia, Újpalánka District (today Ticvaniu Mic and Răcăşdia, Romania)

- The district provisor reports that in Klein Dikvan 30, in Rakasdia 20 people died in a short time supposedly because vampires are roaming about and is requesting advice on how to proceed.⁹⁷⁶

1753.01.22.: Shebell, Csakova District (today Jebel, Romania)

- The provincial administration orders the district administration to hold those three people under arrest for 14 days, who without the knowledge of the administration exhumed and burnt two men's and a woman's corpse.⁹⁷⁷

1753 February – March: Kallatscha, Temesvár District (today Călăcea, Romania)

- The provincial administration orders the district surgeon to go to Kallatscha in order to investigate the local disease. The district administration reports that the disease gave rise to a superstition, and hands in a medical examination. The provincial administration orders that the two inhabitants of Kallatscha, who were arrested because burning the corpse of a stillborn child should be set free.⁹⁷⁸

⁹⁷³ Baróti, 1:381.

⁹⁷⁴ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1902, 2:209.

⁹⁷⁵ Baróti, 2:273.

⁹⁷⁶ Baróti, 2:50.

⁹⁷⁷ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1896, 1:485.

⁹⁷⁸ Baróti, 1:436, 438.

1753.02.07.: Stamora, Csákova District (today Stamora Română, Romania)

- The district administration reports that the knes of Stamora reported that the so-called vampires appeared in the village. The district surgeon Paul Franz Capaun reports that between October 1752 and November 1753 14 men, 4 women and 21 children died in the contagious hot fever.⁹⁷⁹

1753.02.13.: Wermesch, Csákova District (today Vermeș, Romania)

- The district administration reports that in the village of Wermesch the vampires are apparently roaming about.⁹⁸⁰

1755: Wermesch, Csákova District (today Vermeș, Romania)

- Georg Tallar district surgeon of the Karánsebes District requests his remuneration for the vampires he investigated in Wermesch.⁹⁸¹

1756.03.27.: Knéz, Temesvar District (today Satchinez, Romania)

- The district administration reports that within 10 days 30 people died in the village of Knéz. The inhabitants have the strong suspicion that the deaths are caused by one or more vampires.⁹⁸²

1756.08.15.: Csepsa, Csakova District (today Cebza, Romania)

- The district administration reports that in Csepsa 6 people died within 2 weeks, and that locals request the exhumation of a certain person, whom they consider to be a bloodsucker.⁹⁸³

1756.05.05.: Wissak, Csákova District (today possibly deserted land between Partoș and Soca, Romania)⁹⁸⁴

- The district administration reports about the exhumation of a corpse in the village of Wissak.⁹⁸⁵

1757.09.02/07.: Polvaschniz and Slatina, Karánsebes District (today Bolvașnița and Slatina-Timiș, Romania)

⁹⁷⁹ Baróti, 1:486.; Lajos Baróti, ed., *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, vol. 3 (Temesvár: Csanád-Egyházmegye Nyomdája, 1904), 625.

⁹⁸⁰ Baróti, *Adattár Délmagyarország XVIII. századi történetéhez*, 1896, 1:486.

⁹⁸¹ 'Index books to the protocol registers', Volume 81. (year 1755).

⁹⁸² Nicolaus Equiamicus, *Vampire: Von damals bis(s) Heute* (U Books, 2010), 109.

⁹⁸³ 'Protocol registers', Volume 65. (year 1756).

⁹⁸⁴ Between Partoș and Soca in the eighteenth century there used to be a village called Visád (Hungarian), Wischad (German), which later on became deserted. Engel, *A temesvári és moldovai szandzsák törökkori települései (1554-1579)*, 148.

⁹⁸⁵ 'Protocol registers', Volume 65. (year 1756).

- The district administration reports that the communities of Polvaschniz and Slatina dug up some corpses which they considered to be bloodsuckers, and violently executed them.⁹⁸⁶

1758 February – March: Alt-Peschenova, Csanád District (today Dudeștii Noi, Romania)

- The district administration reports that because of the disease in Alt-Peschenova local inhabitants dug up three corpses, examined them and reburied them. The provincial administration orders Joachim Groß, provincial and cameral physician to go to the village with medications and orders that Jovan Malta, Ratka Belin, Racz Sebastian und Pavlie Salman should be punished with 8 days of fortification work for having dug up bloodsuckers.⁹⁸⁷

1758.02.15.: Alt-Orsova, Orsova District (today the southernmost edge of Orșova, Romania)

- The quarantine director of Mehadia, named Faitsch reports about the bloodsuckers in Alt-Orsova.⁹⁸⁸

1759.03.03.: Svinitza, Orsova (– Clissura) District (today Svinița, Romania)

- The quarantine director of Mehadia reports that in Svinitza many people died, and the cause apparently is the bloodsuckers.⁹⁸⁹

1759.03.21.: Kloschiza, Pancsova District (today perhaps Pločica, Serbia)

- The district administration reports that Stojan Stanischa, and Sava Stojanovich dug up and burnt a vampire in the village of Kloschiza. They were sentenced to 14 days of work.⁹⁹⁰

1760 January- February: Capulnasch, Lippa District (today Căpâlnaș, Romania)

- The district administration reports about the investigation about inhabitants of Capulnasch who dug up certain dead people.⁹⁹¹

1763.02.16.: Dubova and Plavischoviza, Orsova District (today Dubova and deserted land south of Dubova, Romania)

⁹⁸⁶ 'Protocol registers' Volume 66. (year 1757).

⁹⁸⁷ 'Protocol registers' Volume 67. (year 1758).

⁹⁸⁸ 'Protocol registers' Volume 67. (year 1758).

⁹⁸⁹ 'Protocol registers' Volume 68. (year 1759).

⁹⁹⁰ 'Protocol registers' Volume 68. (year 1759).

⁹⁹¹ 'Protocol registers' Volume 69. (year 1760).

- The district administration reports about the disease and the corpses dug up in the villages of Plavischoviza and Dubova.⁹⁹²

1768 February - April: Facset, Lugos and Facset District (today Făget, Romania)

- The district administration reports about the burial of the three corpses which were dug up because of the superstition of bloodsuckers.⁹⁹³

1775.07.14.: Iehsvin, Temesvár District (today Izvin, Romania)

- The district administration reports that Pau Schura, Mihael Olaru, and his wife Anna Thodor believing that they were sucked by bloodsuckers or so-called vampires burnt a cross and dug up three people, cut out their hearts out and burnt them. The provincial administration orders a thorough investigation involving the local pope, the knes and people who are knowledgeable in such matters and requests a report about it.⁹⁹⁴

⁹⁹² 'Protocol registers' Volume 72. (year 1763).

⁹⁹³ 'Protocol registers' Volume 77. (year 1768).

⁹⁹⁴ 'Criminal protocols', 31.r.

2. Revenant cases on the Moravian-Silesian border area (1635 – 1755)

1591 Breslau, Silesia (today Wrocław)

- a shoemaker committed suicide, but the widow concealed the fact and had him buried with a regular church burial; after the funeral, the shoemaker's ghost started causing nighttime attacks, roaming around the streets day and night; exhumed and executed⁹⁹⁵

1592 Bennisch, Jägerndorf, Upper Silesia (today Horní Benešov)

- town mayor Johann Kunze, causes nighttime attacks, Poltergeist phenomena in his house, appeared to the widow and attacks cattle; several members of the Kunze family exhumed, Kunze executed; soon another family member died, the woman was also executed⁹⁹⁶

1635, Sternberg, Moravia (today Šternberk)

- detailed remuneration request for the identification and execution of a corpse; entry in the *Black Book of Sternberg*⁹⁹⁷

1642-1732: Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Bruntál)

- 30 known cases of magia posthuma exhumations in the dominion⁹⁹⁸
- see below

1642, Tillendorf, Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Tylov):

- two cows are attacked and killed by Poltergeists⁹⁹⁹

1651, Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Bruntál)

- ghosts were vexing people at night, and as a response, the authority exhumed one suspicious corpse and had it beheaded, upon which copious blood flowed from the wound¹⁰⁰⁰

1662.09.13. Bärn, Moravia (today Moravský Beroun)

⁹⁹⁵ Mirandola, *Johannes Francisi pici mirandulae domini concordiaeque somitis strix sive de ludificatione daemonum dialogi tres*; Cited by: Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 65-66.

⁹⁹⁶ Mirandola, *Johannes Francisi pici mirandulae domini concordiaeque somitis strix sive de ludificatione daemonum dialogi tres*; Cited by: Bohn, *Der Vampir. Ein europäischer Mythos*, 68-71.

⁹⁹⁷ Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyr glauben in Nordmähren', 205.; Hawelka, 'Die Gerichtsbarkeit der Stadt Sternberg (1381-1754) mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Verhältnisses zum Olmützer Oberhofe und zur Prager Appellationskammer', 281-282.

⁹⁹⁸ Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg'.

⁹⁹⁹ Irgang.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Lucae, *Schlesiens curiose Denckwürdigkeiten oder vollkommene Chronica von Ober- und Nieder-Schlesien*, 3:2233.; Bischof and d'Elvert, *Zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Zauberer, Hexen und Vampyre in Mähren und Österreichische Schlesien*, 154.

- Catharina Bartholomei Richter was buried outside the holy ground of the cemetery, because the body did not show rigor mortis, and other strange signs also made her suspicious in the eyes of the husband¹⁰⁰¹

1666.01.20. Dittersdorf Moravia (today Dětrichov nad Bystřicí)

- Balthasar Seidler, a Lutheran man of 48 was buried in the cemetery of Dittersdorf, the villagers suffered from ghost infestations¹⁰⁰²

1667.02.15. Andersdorf, Moravia (today Ondrášov)

- the Lutheran Barbara Wagnerin exhumed because of ghost infestations¹⁰⁰³

1667.02.26. Siebenhöfen, Moravia (today Sedm Dvorů)

- Johannes Michaelis Resch removed from the cemetery based on a strong suspicion¹⁰⁰⁴

1674 November 28, Lichtewerden, Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Světlá Hora)

- Christoff Englisch's corpse exhumed, checked by grave diggers for signs, thrown over the cemetery wall and burnt together with soil and instruments to ashes, grave filled with stones; from a parish chronicle¹⁰⁰⁵

1685-6 Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Bruntál)

- magia posthuma exhumations¹⁰⁰⁶

1685 January Friedland, Moravia (today Bridlicna)

- an old woman after her death started 'like the living devil' roaming about, crying, drumming, dancing and torturing people day and night until her corpse was exhumed and burnt; from the Römerstadt (today Rýmařov) chronicle¹⁰⁰⁷

1689.02.21.: Bärn, Moravia (today Moravský Beroun)

- Anna Heintzin was roaming around after her burial¹⁰⁰⁸

1690 June Zechau, Moravia (today uninhabited land west of near Téchanov)

- a woman was burnt because even after having spent four weeks on the brier, she did not show signs of *rigor mortis* and was identified as a ghost (*als Gespenst bemerkt*).¹⁰⁰⁹

1697 Friedland, Moravia (today Bridlicna)

- an old woman's body was exhumed and burnt, because she was scaring (*beängstiget*) people at night¹⁰¹⁰

¹⁰⁰¹ Horky, 'Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre', 391.

¹⁰⁰² Horky, 391.

¹⁰⁰³ Horky, 391.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Horky, 391.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Schmidt, 'Ein Dokument zur Geschichte der Schlesische Hexenprozesse'.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg'.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Horky, 'Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre', 391-392.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Horky, 391.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Horky, 391-92; 394.

¹⁰¹⁰ Horky, 391-392.

1698 Nieder-Wildgrub, Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Václavov u Bruntálu)

- exhumations¹⁰¹¹

1698 Friedland, Moravia (today Bridlicna) and Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Bruntál)

- Anna Alraun's body burnt¹⁰¹²

1700, Lobnig and Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Lomnice, Bruntál District)

- revenant investigation¹⁰¹³

1701 18th April Liebe, Moravia (today Libavá)

- a woman from Herlsdorf (today Heroltovice) exhumed 3 weeks after burial suspected of having attacked people and cattle; given *sepultura asini* by the Makl mill near Schmeil (today Smilov, south of Libavá), without a civilized burial ritual.¹⁰¹⁴

1701 24th April Liebe, Moravia (today Libavá)

- a 4-year-old child was dug up and buried in *sepultura asini*¹⁰¹⁵

1701 30th April Dittersdorf, Moravia (south of Liebe, today uninhabited Čermná)

- a 1 week-old child's corpse burnt at the border of the village, near Waltersdorf (today Velká Střelná)¹⁰¹⁶

before 1703: [unknown location]:

- mass revenant infestation: fifty cadavers of children are burnt for the suspicion of being ghosts¹⁰¹⁷

1703 13th February Waltersdorf, Moravia (today Velká Střelná)

- a dead woman appeared "visibiliter et personaliter"; exhumed, found with open eyes, smiling lips, flexible limbs, and a little blood flowing from the cuts made on her body; together with two further bodies burnt¹⁰¹⁸

1705 27th February, Schmeil, Moravia (today Smilov, south of Libavá)

- Michael Kratschmer's old wife exhumed for nighttime attacks on people and animals, pressing them as a heavy piece of wood, a heavy bag, as a gray man; executed together with another corpse¹⁰¹⁹

1706 7th January Liebe, Moravia (today Libavá)

¹⁰¹¹ Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg'.

¹⁰¹² Irgang.

¹⁰¹³ Irgang, 268.

¹⁰¹⁴ Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 40-41.

¹⁰¹⁵ Bombera, 40-41.

¹⁰¹⁶ Bombera, 40-41.

¹⁰¹⁷ Schertz, 'Juridicum pro et contra', 25r-v. [unpaginated].

¹⁰¹⁸ Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 40-41.

¹⁰¹⁹ Bombera, 40-41.

- the bishop's secret advisor, K.F. Schertz wrote to the Liebe town council about Jakob Abeske, a shepherd who returned after death as a ghost. Schertz warned the council to carry out a thorough investigation into the case. Documents are missing¹⁰²⁰

1707 27th May, Gundersdorf, Moravia (today Guntramovice, north of Libavá)

- investigations against Anna Klementová, and the miller's child; the former is executed¹⁰²¹

1708, Liebe, Moravia (today Libavá)

- mass-scale revenant infestation, around forty corpses burnt¹⁰²²

1708 July 6, Erbersdorf, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Staré Heřminovy)

- Dorothea Marxin's corpse burnt; he had been buried April 31st against the villagers' will.¹⁰²³

1709 September 24 Reimswaldau, Lower Silesia (today Rybnica Leśna)

- judge Georg Eichner's corpse is beheaded, head placed in between the feet and buried in the forest at the border of the village after as several-stage episcopal investigation of night-time attacks involving a 'knowledgeable' grave digger from Wernersdorf (today Vernéřovice).¹⁰²⁴

1711 June 11, Zattig, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Sádek)

- Eva Radlen's corpse burnt¹⁰²⁵

1714 30th April, Altwasser, Moravia (today Stará Voda, northeast of Libavá)

- a villager who had returned after 6 years of wandering died. The Altwasser villagers and the Piarists did not want him to get buried in the Altwasser cemetery, but on 6th May 50-60 people led by a commission and a Liebe priest came to Altwasser, broke the cemetery gate to enforce the funeral. Village elders demanded an inspection of the body, which was carried out and the body was found to be in order and was buried. However, nighttime attacks started and on 11th May, a commission of Altwasser inhabitants swore by oath in Liebe that the nighttime attacks started and the same day two bodies were exhumed and burnt at the border of the village on wood and straw provided by the community.¹⁰²⁶

1714 January 20th, Hof, Moravia (today Dvorce)

- Rosina Heinrich Kleinsorg exhumed and buried outside the cemetery for causing ghostly rampage, the problems continue, exhumed again, head, legs and arms cut off, burnt at the stake; from the parish register of Hof¹⁰²⁷

¹⁰²⁰ Bombera, 40-41.

¹⁰²¹ Bombera, 40-41.

¹⁰²² Bombera, 41-42.

¹⁰²³ Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', 96.

¹⁰²⁴ H. Palm, 'Exempel, wie Man zu verfahren hat, wenn ein Verstorbenen im Dorfe spukt', *Rübezahl. Der Schlesischen Provinzialblätter - Neue Folge* 7, no. 1 (1868): 26-28.

¹⁰²⁵ Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', 96.

¹⁰²⁶ Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 41-42.

¹⁰²⁷ Puchar, 'Hexen-Prozesse im Nördlichen Mähren', 47.

- The story is retold in a later, late-eighteenth-century chronicle from Römerstadt, already embellished with folk motifs.¹⁰²⁸

1717 Liebe, Moravia (today Libavá)

- the parish priest asks for advice from the consistory on a magia posthuma case¹⁰²⁹

1718 November 4, Schönwald, Moravia (today Podlasí)

- Bishop von Schrattenbach's letter (1719 November 18th) to the Bautsch town council about the burning of a revenant at Schönwald (today Podlasí) a year before¹⁰³⁰

1719 Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Bruntál)

- several people leave the town after the suicide of Rosina Pförtner, who had earlier killed her baby. She would appear to those people from whom she received the most good things and would treat them and their possessions the worst. She would appear in fearsome shapes and make fearsome noises, hangs a horse upside down on a tree. The town called an alchemist from Wallachisch Meseritsch (today Valašské Meziříčí), who banished the ghost, for which he received a fee and a horse.¹⁰³¹

1720 January 9th, Römerstadt, Moravia (today Rýmařov)

- A woman named Koberin died 10 years after her husband's death; lack of rigor mortis, a gravedigger makes incisions on the body yielding copious amounts of blood; corpse quartered, burnt at the stake and the ashes transported to the border of the village, behind the Hüttenwald and were thrown into the Mora river (today Moravice)¹⁰³²

1723 May 10, Seitendorf, Groß Herrlitz, Troppau, Upper Silesia (today Horní Životice)

- Dorothea Lichtblauin exhumed, certain signs found thrown over the cemetery wall, given over to the secular arm¹⁰³³

1723 Nov 23, Seitendorf, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Horní Životice)

- Johann Pflieger investigated for magia posthuma¹⁰³⁴

1724 Dec 14, Seitendorf, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Horní Životice)

- Martin Pflieger investigated for magia posthuma¹⁰³⁵

1725.02.28., Bärn, Moravia (today Moravský Beroun)

¹⁰²⁸ Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyr glauben in Nordmähren', 217-219.

¹⁰²⁹ Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 41-42.

¹⁰³⁰ Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyr glauben in Nordmähren', 220.

¹⁰³¹ Berger, 216-217.; Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg'.

¹⁰³² Horky, 'Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre', 392.; Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyr glauben in Nordmähren', 214.

¹⁰³³ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 56-57.; Van Swieten, 'Vampyrismus', 19.; Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', 96.

¹⁰³⁴ Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', 96. Van Swieten, 'Vampyrismus', 18-19.

¹⁰³⁵ Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', 96. Van Swieten, 'Vampyrismus', 18-19.

- Anna Bergin had no rest in the grave and was burnt¹⁰³⁶

1725, Eckersdorf, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Jakartovice)

- Katharina Benel investigated for magia posthuma¹⁰³⁷

1727-1728 Dominion of Liebe, Moravia

- the great revenant infestation of Liebe, ca 80 corpses burnt in many villages during a several-stage investigation by the episcopal consistory involving medical experts¹⁰³⁸

1728. 06.25 Boidensdorf, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Bohdanovice)

- Heinrich Klement causes nighttime disturbances, burnt¹⁰³⁹

1729-? Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Velké Heraltice)

- *within a few years* around 30 people, children as well as adult corpses have been executed for magia posthuma; information from handwritten Latin chronicle by Groß Herrlitz parish priest Hermann Josef Wrtilek (1729-1752)¹⁰⁴⁰
- probably a reference to the cases below

1730.09.11., Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Velké Heraltice)

- trial against Rosina Laugerin (maiden name: Thyringerin) from Seitendorf¹⁰⁴¹

1731.04.23 Bärn, Moravia (today Moravský Beroun)

- 9 bodies burned (7 children) because they got infested by ghosts¹⁰⁴²

1732 Neu-Vogelseifen, Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Nová Rudná)

- people refuse to let Andreas Lindner be buried in holy ground, because he refused to accept the last sacrament; checked for signs and though no affliction was caused by the corpse, executed¹⁰⁴³

1732.06.13., Seitendorf, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Horní Životice)

- magia posthuma trial against George Thyringer¹⁰⁴⁴

1733.03.20., Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Velké Heraltice)

- magia posthuma trial against Anna Frantzin from Boidensdorff¹⁰⁴⁵

1734, Kutzendorf, Moravia (today Moravskoslezský Kočov)

¹⁰³⁶ Horky, 'Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre', 394.; Bischof and d'Elvert, *Zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Zauberer, Hexen und Vampyre in Mähren und Österreichische Schlesien*, 156.

¹⁰³⁷ Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', 96.

¹⁰³⁸ Bombera, 'Posmrtná magie na Libavsku', 43-48.

¹⁰³⁹ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 56-57.; Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', 96.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Zukal, 'Magia posthuma auf der Herrschaft Groß-Herrlitz im 18. Jahrhundert', 97.

¹⁰⁴¹ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 56-57.; Slezáková, 'Vampirismus a jeho projevy na Severní Moravě a ve Slezsku v 17. a 18. století', 35-36.

¹⁰⁴² Van Swieten, 'Vampirismus', 19.

¹⁰⁴³ Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg'.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 56-57.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Horváth, 56-57.

- Elisabeth Hitschigin had flexible limbs after death, burnt¹⁰⁴⁶

1735.05.07., Seitendorff, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Horní Životice)

- magia posthuma trial against Catharina Thyringerin¹⁰⁴⁷

1736.06.06., Boidensdorff, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Bohdanovice)

- magia posthuma trial against Mathes Tyringer¹⁰⁴⁸

1736 June 19, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Velké Heraltice)

- Magdalena Nowackin suspected for magia posthuma and night-time attacks (infestationes nocturnas) exhumed and given over to the secular arm¹⁰⁴⁹

1736 July 18, Klein Herrlitz, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Malé Heraltice)

- Catharina Losertin suspected of magia posthuma, suspended and buried at the borders¹⁰⁵⁰

1736.06.26., Hartau (today uninhabited Moravská Harta, part of Mödlitz (today Medlice)

- magia posthuma trial against Johann Jacobs from Boidensdorff¹⁰⁵¹

1736 December 31, Klein Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Malé Heraltice)

- Anna Hübnerin (57) died and was suspected of magia posthuma, burnt¹⁰⁵²

1737 January 22, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Velké Heraltice)

- Maria Radlin from Zattig has flexible limbs after death and was causing trouble to neighbours, burnt.¹⁰⁵³

1737.03.02., Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Velké Heraltice)

- magia posthuma trial against Catharina Langerin from Zattig (Sádek)¹⁰⁵⁴

1737 March 7, Frei Hermersdorf, Upper Silesia (today Svobodné Heřmanice)

- Rosina Scholtzin burnt for magia posthuma¹⁰⁵⁵

1737 December, Dittersdorf, Moravia (north of Bährn, today Dětrichov nad Bystřicí)

- two corpses accused of causing unrest, both of them burnt¹⁰⁵⁶

1738 April 16 Braunseifen, Freudenthal, Upper Silesia (today Ryžoviště)

¹⁰⁴⁶ Slezáková, 'Vampyrismus a jeho projevy na Severní Moravě a ve Slezsku v 17. a 18. století', 37.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 56-57.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Horváth, 56-57.

¹⁰⁴⁹ 'Catholic Parish Register 1704-1736, Velké Heraltice', 160r.

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¹⁰⁵¹ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 56-57.

¹⁰⁵² 'Catholic Parish Register 1704-1736, Velké Heraltice', 160r.

¹⁰⁵³ 'Catholic Parish Register 1737-1784, Velké Heraltice', 1r.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum', 56-57.

¹⁰⁵⁵ 'Catholic Parish Register 1737-1784, Velké Heraltice', 1v.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Horky, 'Fragmentarische Nachrichten über die Vampyre', 394; Bischof and d'Elvert, *Zur Geschichte des Glaubens an Zauberer, Hexen und Vampyre in Mähren und Österreichische Schlesien*, 154.

- Joseph Franz Handwiger, judge of Lobnig to be buried, but his relatives fear that he wouldn't have rest, because in the cemetery there already is a witch buried, therefore they bury Handwiger in Braunseifen ¹⁰⁵⁷

1738 October 3, Groß Herrlitz, Upper Silesia (today Velké Heraltice)

- Rosina Heintzin (56) suspected of magia posthuma and burnt ¹⁰⁵⁸

1754-1755 Frei Hermersdorf, Upper Silesia (today Svobodné Heřmanice)

- revenant infestation: the episcopal commission and the secular court of Groß Herrlitz exhumes 29 corpses and has 19 of them burnt for the crime of 'magia posthuma' ¹⁰⁵⁹

¹⁰⁵⁷ Berger, 'Zum Hexen- und Vampyr glauben in Nordmähren', 212.; Irgang, 'Die Stellung des Deutschen Ordens zum Aberglauben am Beispiel der Herrschaften Freudenthal und Eulenberg'.

¹⁰⁵⁸ 'Catholic Parish Register 1737-1784, Velké Heraltice', 8v.

¹⁰⁵⁹ 'Documents Relating to the Frei Hermersdorf Magia posthuma Case'; Horváth, 'Historia vampirorum'.

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Abbreviations

ABBAW: Archiv der Berlin-Brandenburgischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Jägerstraße 22/23, 10117, Berlin, Germany)

- PAW: Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften

EFKL: Esztergomi Főszékesegyházi Könyvtár és Levéltár (Pázmány Péter u. 2, 2500, Esztergom, Hungary)

MNL-OL: Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, Országos Levéltár (Bécsikapu tér 2-4, 1014, Budapest, Hungary)

MZAB: Moravský Zemský Archiv v Brně (Palachovo nám. 1, 625 00, Brno-Starý Lískovec, Czech Republic)

MZK: Moravská Zemská Knihovna (Kounicova 65a, 601 87, Brno-střed, Czech Republic)

OESTA: Österreichisches Staatsarchiv

- FHKA: Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv (Nottendorfer Gasse 2, 1030, Vienna, Austria)
- HHSA: Haus- Hof- und Staatsarchiv (Minoritenplatz 1, 1010, Wien, Austria)
- KA: Kriegsarchiv (Nottendorfer Gasse 2, 1030, Vienna, Austria)

OENB: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Josefsplatz 1, 1015, Vienna, Austria)

SJTAN: Serviciul Județean Timiș al Arhivelor Naționale (str. Andrei Mocioni 8, 300038, Timisoara, Romania)

ZAO: Zemský archiv v Opavě (Sněmovní 1, 746 22, Opava, Czech Republic)

ZAO-PO: Zemský archiv v Opavě - Pobočka Olomouc (U Husova sboru 10, 779 00, Olomouc, Czech Republic)

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¹⁰⁶⁶ 'Documents of the Medvedia vampire case', 1139v.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Morgagni, *De sedibus et causis morborum per anatomen indagatis libri quinque.*, 1:108.

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