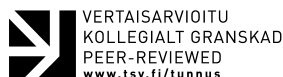


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There is More than Meets the Eye. Undead, Ghosts and Spirits in the *Decretum* of Burchard of Worms

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Abstract

The *Corrector*, that is, the nineteenth book of Burchard of Worms's *Decretum*, is widely recognized as one of the essential sources for the study of pagan survivals around the year 1000 A.D. in Germany – more specifically, in the Rhenish Hesse. The *Decretum* is in itself an important collection of canon law of its time, but the *Corrector* in particular has drawn the attention of scholars because of its peculiarities. Most interestingly, despite being partially based on previous penitentials and council canons, book nineteen of the *Decretum* was also partly written originally by the Bishop of Worms himself, and thus turns out to be a fundamental penitential text for the understanding of pagan survivals at the time and in the place of its composition. The source proves all the more useful for scholars interested in beliefs concerning death, the “undead”, and the likes, even though terminology can be deceptive: for this reason, modern and anachronistic taxonomies such as “ghost”, “undead”, “revenant”, etc. will be discarded, in favour of an emic approach which aims at respecting the text and imposing as fewer filters as possible. As a matter of fact, Burchard mentions many kinds of otherworldly entities which recall our modern notions of “ghosts”, “spirits” and “undead”, but often does not attach further details to identify them – either because he did not deem them worthy of his attention, or because he might have not known folk beliefs in detail. In any case, Burchard's Germany appears to be densely populated: people share their space with hordes of “spectres”, seem to be aware of it, and often believe to be able to join them. The aim of the present contribution is then to analyze those folk beliefs which involve otherworldly entities, in order to critically discuss

their characteristics and understand their implications among the people of Hesse around the year 1000. Attention will be specifically focused on the relationship between the living and the dead/undead, and will cast light on a series of related aspects such as: 1) the bias against women – who were held naturally predisposed to credulity; 2) positive/negative interactions between man and otherworldly entities; 3) attributes associated to said entities (persistent, wicked, benevolent/malevolent, etc.); 4) the fear of the darkness due to the supposed activity of evil spirits in the night hours; 5) the role of otherworldly entities at the service of the living; 6) the fear that the dead may rise again and harm the living.

Introduction

Burchard, Bishop of the city of Worms (in the Rhenish Hesse) at the beginning of the eleventh century, is arguably one of the best historical sources for the understanding of pagan survivals in his time (Gurevich 1990, 78 ff.; Meens 2014, 150–151). Burchard was elected bishop in 1000, and compiled an important collection of canon law (Hoffmann and Pokorny 1991, 165–276; Picasso, Piana and Motta 1986, 173–183) – known as *Decretum* – around the year 1008 (Kéry 1999, 133–155). A remarkably interesting part of the *Decretum* is book nineteen, entitled *Corrector* or *Medicus*, a penitential which casts light on popular religion and common errors and sins committed by the folk (Wasserschleben 1958; Schmitz 1958a; Vogel 1978, 88 ff.; Frantzen 1985, 40; Kottje 1985). It distinguishes itself from other similar works because it was in part originally written by Burchard himself. Indeed, Burchard did draw on older penitentials (dating back to as early as the seventh century) to address certain sins and their related penalties (Kottje 1982; Fournier 1983; Meens 1994, 11–72; Körntgen 2000), but he proved rather original, meticulous – and then credible – as for what concerned a number of non-Christian beliefs which were widespread among the folk in his diocese at that time (Hamilton 2001; Austin 2004; Meens 2014, 150–151). It is well known that Burchard's penitential was heavily based on the handbook for episcopal visitations composed by Regino of Prüm around 906 (structured as a questionnaire), even though it is fair to assume that specific portions of the *Corrector* stemmed from

actual observations of practices in – but not exclusively – the diocese of Worms (Körntgen 2006, 110). In fact, if Burchard embraced Regino’s method of directly questioning the penitent, he listed one hundred and ninety-four questions (some of which are not based on previous sources, apparently), whereas Regino had about forty. In this sense, this analysis endorses Alan Gurevich’s position (Gurevich 1990, 36–37) which, contrary to Dieter Harmening’s opinion (Harmening 1979), held that Burchard’s work was not a mere repetition of earlier penitential tradition, but rather represents a useful ethnographic sketch of contemporary popular beliefs. A partially obscure sketch, however. For instance, the very notion of “folk” is rather vague: Burchard occasionally makes social distinctions between poor, slaves, freemen and lords, but the vast majority of our examples will in fact address an indistinct audience of sinners (*fecisti, interfuisti, consensisti, credidisti...?*), with particular attention to women.

The source presents specific problems in itself. Migne’s edition (*Decretum* 1880) is not considered entirely reliable (Fransen 1977), and aside from Melchior von Neuss’ *Editio princeps* of the *Decretum* – dating to 1548, reprinted by Gérald Fransen and Theo Kölzer in 1992, but representing a minor branch of the manuscript tradition (Dusil and Hill 2017, 536) – no modern editions of the work are available. For this reason, this analysis has been based on Frankfurt, Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, MS Barth. 50: this and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MSS Pal. lat. 586 and 586, represent the earliest copies of the text, which were probably revised by Burchard himself (Hoffmann and Pokorny 1991, 29–39).

In particular, the present article aims at analyzing the historical evidence of folk beliefs in the existence of undead/revenenants/ghosts in Burchard’s Germany (and in the author’s sources, if that is the case), in order to understand what the religious and practical implications were for believing that mankind shared the world with numerous other entities of such kinds. The study will touch different aspects connected with this, such as: gender; cases of positive/negative interactions between the living and the dead/undead by means of sharing, exchanging, offering, and sacrificing food; attributes

associated to said entities; the fear of the darkness because of the supposed presence of evil spirits who wandered about in the night hours; the useful role of ghosts/undead/revenants in divinatory practices; and, finally, the fear that the dead may rise again and harm the living.

As immediately stated in the incipit, the *Corrector sive Medicus* was named after its specific function as cure for the sickness of souls. It was intended for priests, in order to teach them how to come to the aid of people (Meens 2014, 150), for – whether they were rich or poor, adults or children, sick or healthy, men or women – anybody could have been vulnerable to beliefs and practices that were condemned by the Church (Barth. 50, fol. 242ra). The work was then meant for a practical context of confession, but also for the training of young students (Hoffmann and Pokorny 1991, 68).

As useful as a written collection of sins and wrong behaviours is for modern scholars, however, the nineteenth book of the *Decretum* was a tricky instrument: in a rubric, Burchard himself recommended confessors to use the greatest discretion when questioning penitents, for speaking about, condemning and emphasizing certain non-Christian practices may have reinforced and publicized them (Barth. 50, fol. 258vb).¹ It is also to be borne in mind that the area to which Burchard was referring had been Christianized (if not Christianized again) about two hundred and fifty years earlier by the English missionary Boniface. Consequently, the beliefs and rituals described by Burchard survived the process of conversion ascribed to the so-called “apostle of Germany”, or sprouted after the second half of the eighth century.

The topic which will be addressed in the present contribution, the “undead”, has received remarkable attention by scholars – especially for what concerns the Old Norse area – and even more so in recent times, from historical, anthropological, and literary perspectives (e.g., Chadwick 1946; Ármann Jakobsson 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017; Bernstein 2009; Caciola 2005, 2016; Joynes 2001; Kanerva 2011; Keyworth 2007;

¹ “In istis om(n)ib(us) sup(ra)dictis debent sacerdotes magna(m) discretione(m) habere, ut discernant int(er) illu(m) qui publice peccavit et publice poenituit, et int(er) illu(m) qui absconse peccavit et sua sponte confessus est.”

Lecouteux 2011; Ogden 2002; Sävborg and Bek-Pedersen 2018; Schmitt 1998). Such brilliant contributions have done justice to aspects of our medieval past - the “supernatural”, the “paranormal” - which modern readers would be tempted to categorize as mere fiction, or as something standing outside humans’ society. As a matter of fact, they have allowed to develop a new understanding of the relationship between the living and the dead (and entities from the hereafter in general). The result of this has been a depiction of the past where said hemispheres were not as separated as we might have assumed, and where interactions between their respective “inhabitants” were frequent and even taken for granted, to a certain extent.

A major problem inherent in dealing with said matters is handling the concepts of “supernatural” and “paranormal” (and, consequently, the notions of “ghost”, “undead”, “revenant”, and the likes). There is little doubt that our modern understanding of said categories is likely to deceive us when we approach medieval sources. It has been argued that our current definition of “supernatural” emphasizes its existence outside of the natural world and the fact that it cannot be explained by means of references to “nature” (Mitchell 2009, 285-287). On the other hand, in medieval times such distinctions were heavily influenced by Christian intellectuals, who mainly distinguished between acts of God, acts of the Devil, and unexplained phenomena which did not fit in either category (Arngrímur Vídalín 2016, 9). A safer approach is to completely avoid anachronistic terminology, and respect that which is found in the sources: Burchard mentions entities of various kinds, such as *larvae demonum*, *spiritus*, *daemones* and more, which we will try to analyze avoiding modern taxonomies. What is sure, in our particular case, is that the belief in said entities was a sin, and led to penance. It will not always be possible to find precise definitions of what an entity was, or was supposed to be: either because Burchard did not consider such beliefs important enough, or because he himself may not have known much about them. As a whole, though, most of the entities described in the *Corrector* share some common ground: they often manifest physically and look like real human beings; they are active agents, sometimes

threatening and malicious; they can turn out to be useful for the living, if appropriately approached; and, from a Christian perspective, they are strictly connected with the Devil.

The Undead

Death: a Dangerous Boundary

Before touching the matter of undead entities, it is necessary to introduce that concerning death. A good portion of the *Corrector* is permeated with the idea of death as a territory contiguous to life: the boundary separating the two spaces is thin, and requires utmost care in order to avoid dangerous accidents. Actually, the very notion of “boundary” - as it is used here and in the following sections - needs to be briefly problematized. Indeed, our modern understanding of it does not necessarily match the way it was understood in the medieval past. More than a border or a fixed point, the line between life and death, and between the natural and the supernatural, should be understood as a “zone” (Bradford Smith 2013, 135), or - at best - a “porous” boundary (ibid., 136; see also Lecouteux 2003). These fluid frontiers had specific access points, natural (springs, rocks, forests) or artificial (crossroads, bridges, temples, sanctuaries, cemeteries). Crossing them could be dangerous, but the two hemispheres were contiguous and could intersect with each other (Lecouteux 2003, 26ff.; Pócs 2000, 17; Maraschi 2019). Scenes of contacts between entities from the world of the living and the world of the dead are anything but rare in medieval literary sources, for instance: they suggest that such (para)normal encounters (Maraschi 2019) could be friendly, or even profitable, but often implied a potential danger. Most importantly, literary and folkloric tradition from medieval times casts light on the belief that each person had spiritual or physical alter egos that could separate from their physical bodies during specific phases (sleep, trances, etc.) and access the otherworld (Bradford

Smith 2013, 138). As will be shown later, this aspect surfaces in Burchard's *Corrector* as well, to a certain extent.

The matter of death is first summoned by Burchard in Chapter 5, which consists of 194 *interrogationes* and can be considered 'the penitential proper' (Filotas 2005, 378). His concern regards the violation of graves with the intention of stealing the dead's clothes (Barth. 50, fol. 252ra),² which is severely punished with a two-year penance on the appointed fast days. Burchard does not explain what the function of the dead's clothes may have been, which suggests that the practice was condemned because it was sacrilegious and perhaps widespread. As will be shown later, however, dead men's belts were used to cause harm to other individuals, and the two practices may have been connected. Be that as it may, it is already clear that the grave and the dead were perceived to be located in a liminal "territory", which had important magico-religious implications and which thus could be misused in some way.

Furthermore, the matter of the desecration of graves is mentioned in the eleventh book of the *Decretum* as well (Barth. 50, foll. 195rb–196va), which in turn is based on canon 46 of the Council of Toledo of 633, in Visigothic Spain (Mansi 1764, x, 630).³ The canon addressed clerics involved in the destruction of sepulchers, an act of profanation which did not have any magical or superstitious connotation, but rather was aimed at the appropriation of stones (which could be re-used to build new churches, for example), and at the spoliation of grave sites of the élite and of the saints in order to pillage their precious content or covering (Effros 2001, 108–109).⁴

² "Violasti sepulchru(m), ita dico, du(m) aliq(u)e(m) videres sepelire et in nocte infringeres sepulchru(m) et tolleres vestim(en)ta ei(us)?"

³ "Si quis clericus in demolendis sepulcris fuerit deprehensus, quia facinus hoc pro sacrilegio legibus publicis sanguine vindicatur, oportet canonibus in tali scelere proditum clericatus ordine submoveri, et poenitentiae triennio deputari." The same practice is condemned by Regino of Prüm (*Libri duo de synodalibus causis et disciplinis ecclesiasticis* 1840, 1.304, 144).

⁴ The same matter is immediately addressed at the beginning of the *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum* (northern Gaul, half of the eighth century), which is believed to be strictly associated with the Frankish councils of 743 and 744 (Dierkens 1984, 24). There is no information about the nature of the profanation in the first article, whereas the second is more precise: "de sacrilegio super defunctos, id est dadsisas". The term *dadsisas* probably refers to funerary meals, libations and food offerings to idols, which Burchard mentions later and calls *idolothita* (Barth. 50, fol. 254va; the penance consisted of thirty days on bread and water). According to Burchard, such meals were consumed at particularly

Women and Nocturnal Spirits Wandering the Skies

Although not directly touching our macro-topic – the “undead” – these passages cast light on a fundamental link tying the living and the dead together, and on the problems connected with the said link, of course. There were numerous other ways in which the two hemispheres could come into contact, however, and for different reasons. Often, it was believed that women were particularly guilty in this sense: “Have you ever believed that there is a kind of woman”, Burchard asks, “who can do what certain women, deceived by the devil, claim they have to do by necessity or command...?” (Barth. 50, fol. 253ra).⁵ In Christian times, there developed a strong bias against women with regards to the practice of witchcraft (Bitel 2002; Maraschi 2019, and related bibliography), and Christian intellectuals frequently repeated that women were predisposed by nature to credulity and were vulnerable to the influence of demons (Caciola 2005, 21–22; 2016, 161). Here, Burchard refers to a well-known traditional belief – namely that in the Wild Hunt – in which the protagonist was a woman, and whose cult seems to have concerned women only (Ginzburg 1992; Walter 1997; Bernstein 2009; Lecouteux 2011). According to the bishop of Worms, they believed that on some nights the witch Holda flew about in the sky with a retinue of female *daemones* (namely, “demons transformed into the shape of women”): women themselves believed to take part in the cortège, riding various beasts. This “superstitious” belief must have concerned Burchard, since he established that the penance consisted in a one-year fast on the appointed fast days. Evidently, the issue was not to be overlooked: the belief in the nighttime ladies surfaced in Christian texts already in the sixth century, and was connected with a number of female figures such as

critical places (the graves of the dead, springs, trees, rocks, crossroads), often connected with the worshipping of pagan gods and non-Christian entities. The problem was already clearly identified in the sixth century by Martin of Braga (*De correctione rusticorum* 1950, 16), and was addressed by Burchard in the tenth book (Barth. 50, foll. 176rb–va). See Meslin 1969 and Filotas 2005, 145 ff.

⁵ “Credidisti ut aliq(ua) femina sit quae hoc facere possit q(uo)d quaedam, a diabolo deceptae, se affirmant necessario et ex p(rae)cepto facere debere, id (est) cu(m) daemone(m) turba in similitudine(m) mulieru(m) transformata, qua(m) vulgaris stulticia Holda(m) vocant, certis noctib(us) equitare debere sup(er) quasda(m) bestias, et in eo(rum) se consortio annumerata(m) e(ss)e? Si particeps fuisti illius incredulitatis, annu(m) unu(m) p(er) legitimas fer(ias) poenitere debes.” An earlier parallel is in Regino of Prüm (*Libri duo de synodalibus causis et disciplinis ecclesiasticis* 1840, 2.5, q. 45, 212).

Herodias, Diana, Perchta, Satia or Abundia. Besides, it was still in vogue in the thirteenth century (Lecouteux 2011, 11-16; Maraschi 2019, 275-276; Neyra 2017), when the nighttime ladies were believed to visit households and bestow wealth on them. This may well mean that the legend of the Wild Hunt was particularly widespread and appealing: on the other hand, it was only a part of a more complex system of rituals and beliefs, as will be shown later.

Given our aims, terminology is essential. Unfortunately, it is not clear how one should interpret the term *daemones*, here, for its meaning varies depending on the sources and often on the specific context. Bernadette Filotas has hesitatingly translated the word as “ghosts” (Filotas 2005, 76), even though a parallel between such “ghosts” and our general notion of the term seems to be far-fetched. Filotas’ translation makes sense at least from a “visual” perspective, though: the demons are “in the guise of women”, and thus look like human revenants. Burchard himself is rather vague about this aspect. The only distinction which is possible to make is one concerning gender: Burchard reckons that both men and women believed in Holda and her retinue, but only women believed that they personally joined the nocturnal *daemones*.

The belief in a retinue of nocturnal spirits led by a witch or a goddess recurs again later. This time, the cavalcade through the night sky is led by the pagan deity Diana (Barth. 50, foll. 253vb-254ra),⁶ and the role of the *daemones* is slightly clearer: “Have you believed or taken part in this kind of faithlessness that some impious women, turning back to Satan and seduced by the illusions and the phantasms of demons, believe and proclaim...?”, the question reads. The word *fantasma* (*phantasma*), “apparition”, of clear Greek origins, suggests that believers are convinced by entities of some kind, possibly demons in disguise: this trick has probably the purpose of deceiving women, of masking their own (i.e., the demons’) identity and of looking

⁶ “Credidisti aut particeps fuisti illius incredulitatis, q(ue) d quaeda(m) sceleratae mulieres retro post Satanam c(on)versae, daemonum inlusionib(us) et fantasmatisib(us) seductae, credunt et p(ro)fitent(ur) se nocturnis horis cu(m) Diana paganorum dea, et cu(m) innumera multitudine mulieru(m) equitare super quasda(m) bestias, et multa t(er)raru(m) spacia inte(m)pestae noctis silentio p(er)transire, eiusq(ue) iussionib(us) (ve)lut dominae oboedire, et certis noctib(us) ad eius servitiu(m) evocari? [...]”

appealing to them. As for the belief itself, it does not differ from that in Holda, essentially (Neyra 2017): certain women obeyed Diana as their mistress and mounted on the back of beasts through the night sky. Here, Burchard drew upon Regino of Prüm's collection of canons (*Libri duo de synodalibus causis et disciplinis ecclesiasticis* 1840, 2.371, 354–356), and included the passage earlier in his own *Decretum* as well (Barth. 50, foll. 172ra–172vb). Interestingly, though, in book ten⁷ he proves uncertain whether the female mistress was called Diana or Herodias (“cum Diana paganorum dea, vel cum Herodiade”): this suggests that the tradition was so popular that it developed into different sub-branches, at some point. Be that as it may, Burchard – following his source Regino – dwells on the theological implications of such a belief (Bellini 1998; Rampton 2007), and discusses their inner danger in detail. Said *fantasmata* (i.e., the devil) appear in the likeness of various people (“transformat se in diversarum personarum species atque similitudines”) and deceive the mind (“et mentem...deludens”), which in turn transmits the experience to the body (“infidelis mens haec non in animo, sed in corpore evenire opinatur”). They have corporeality (Caciola 2016, 113 ff.), unlike the phantasms described by St. Augustine as “spiritual images” (Schmitt 1998, 17–26), and are then a concrete danger for the living (i.e., for both the body and the soul). This nonetheless, Burchard held this superstitious belief worthy of no more than thirty days of penance, as in the case of idolothytes.⁸

Help from the Hereafter

In Burchard's Rhenish Hesse, the folk considered the hereafter a resource as well, for the dead could cover an important function for the community: that of diviners of the future. This positive interaction between the dead and the living found its ideal stage at

⁷ The main difference between the two references is the audiences respectively addressed: churchmen in book ten, sinners in book nineteen.

⁸ The night cortège led by Diana, Herodias or others was often associated with a custom (typical of women, according to various medieval Christian intellectuals, and probably practiced on New Year's Eve) of setting the table after dinner with food, drinks and three knives (more on this later). The intention was to curry favour with the “three sisters”, that is, the Parcae (Barth. 50, foll. 258vb–259ra). See Maraschi 2019, 275; Lecouteux 2011, 14–15; Rampton 2007, 29.

Yule-time (the winter solstice) and on New Year's Eve (the Kalends of January). Celebrations of the Kalends of January were harshly condemned by the Church, since they denied the Christian idea of renewal which coincided with Christmas (Meslin 1970, 109–112); the attempt to replace and Christianize them by establishing the Feast of the Circumcision of Christ did not prove very successful, though (Filotas 2005, 155; Grig 2017). On these days, in Germanic folklore, the Furious Host or army of the dead flew about the skies, received offerings of food and drink, and responded to the questions of the living about the coming year (Grundy 2014, 40ff.). This belief stemmed from the same root as that of the tradition of the Wild Hunt, and was massively widespread among the Germans. Traces of it are still perfectly trackable in the *Corrector*: “Have you observed the Kalends of January in the pagan fashion,” the penitential reads,

so that you did something more on that day because it was the new year than you would usually do before or after it, by which I mean to say that on that day have you either set your table with stones or food-offerings in your house [...], or have you sat on the roof of your house in the middle of a circle that you traced with your sword, in order for you to see and learn from there what will happen to you in the coming year? [...] If so, since you have abandoned God your creator and turned to idols and such vain things and have become an apostate, you should do penance for two years on the appointed fast days. (Barth. 50, foll. 252rb–252va).⁹

Hordes of spectres were thus believed to roam the skies at a key moment of the year: they could bring good news, wealth, abundance, or they could be vicious as otherworldly entities could often be (Maraschi 2019). Evidently, the rooftop represented a privileged and safe place from which to consult the entities (and symbolically not less important than crossroads), but only if protected by a magic circle.

⁹ “Observasti K(a)l(endas) Januarias ritu paganor(um), ut (ve)l aliqu(i)d plus faceres p(ro)pt(er) novu(m) annu(m) qua(m) antea, (ve)l p(ost) soleres facere, ita dico ut aut mensa(m) tua(m) cu(m) lapidib(us) (ve)l epulis in domo tua p(rae)parares eo te(m)pore, [...] aut sup(ra) tectu(m) domus tuae sederes, ense tuo circu(n)signatus, ut ibi videres et intellegeres q(ui)d tibi in sequenti anno futuro(m) esset? [...] Ideo, quia D(eu)m creatore(m) tuu(m) dereliquisti, et ad idola et ad illa vana te c(on)vertisti, et apostata effect(us) es, duos annos p(er) legitimas fer(ias) poeniteas.”

The same belief is more or less implicitly suggested in earlier Christian sources dating to the eighth century (Filotas 2005, 170–171, 218). Burchard punished them with two years of fast, for they dangerously perpetuated old pagan traditions which were wrong and – not secondarily – ostentatious as well.

As said, this belief was probably paralleled by that in the *tres sorores*, the *Parcae*, which led the folk to set again their tables after dinner with food and three knives in order to please them (Barth. 50, foll. 258vb–259ra):¹⁰ in return, the Sisters would bestow wealth and abundance of food on those who paid homage to them (Maraschi 2019, 275–276). Not only does Burchard hold that this belief is typical of women, but he also associates it with “quibusdam temporibus anni”, “certain times of the year” – which may well refer to New Year’s Eve. Interestingly, however, the penitential punishes this belief with “only” one year of fast, instead of two. This difference may have depended on the fact that the former belief was connected with more complex and flamboyant rituals, and that the belief in pre-Christian personifications of destiny (the *Parcae*) was less blasphemous than that in hordes of dead.

Nyctophobia

However problematic the interpretation of the entities mentioned in the *Corrector* may be, there is little doubt that the folk believed in their existence, perceived their presence, and that this affected their life. At times, the very presence of these beings in the world caused deep anxiety and forced people to find appropriate remedies.¹¹ This is the case of those entities which Burchard calls *spiritus immundi* (Barth. 50, foll. 258rb–258va),¹² in a passage which is original and does not depend on earlier sources.

¹⁰ “Fecisti ut quaedam(m) mulieres in quibusdam(m) temporibus(m) anni facere solent: ut in domo tua m(en)sam p(rae)parares, et tuos cibos, et potum(m) cum(m) tribus(m) cultellis super(ra) m(en)sam(m) poneres, ut si venissent tres illae sorores, quas antiqua(m) posteritas et antiqua(m) stulticia parcas nominavit, ibi reficerent(ur), et tulisti divinae pietati potestate(m) sua(m), et nomen(m) suum(m), et diabolo tradidisti, ita, dico, ut crederes illas quas tu dicis esse sorores, tibi posse, aut hic aut in futuro prodesse? Si fecisti, aut consensisti, unum(m) annum(m) p(er) legitimas fer(ias) poeniteas.”

¹¹ For a wider discussion of existential anxiety in medieval times, see Maraschi 2018b.

¹² “Credidisti quod quidam(m) credere solent? Dum(m) necesse habent ante lucem(m) aliorum(m) exire, non(a) audent, dicentes quod posterum(m) sit, et ante galli cantum(m) egredi non(a) liceat, et periculosum(m) sit eo quod immundi spiritus ante

These “unclean spirits” were believed to wander about among the living, and to be harmful to them especially until dawn, before the cock’s crowing.¹³ They apparently were feared so much that the people would not dare leave their houses until after the cock had crowed, even if urged by need. According to Burchard, it was believed that the *spiritus* could not be repelled by that which he defines *divina mens*, the “divine mind” which resided inside the faithful (i.e., by their Christian faith). Indeed, they were effectively neutralized only by the cock’s cry, which thus played a critical function in the ordering of things. Burchard did not take this belief very seriously, nor considered it an extremely reprehensible behaviour, for the penalty consisted of ten days on bread and water, even though it clearly clashed against Christian tenets. This nonetheless, the passage is particularly interesting for it makes reference to “impure spirits”, a clearer definition of which Burchard offers in the twentieth book of his *Decretum*, quoting Gregory the Great’s well-known commentary on Job (Barth. 50, fol. 296va): these were unclean spirits who “fell from the heavens” and “wander about between the sky and the earth”. However, no detailed explanation is given for what concerns the identity of such spirits: they may have been “demons, minor imps of the woods, souls wandering away from their body, or the ghosts of the unhallowed dead”, Bernadette Filotas has observed (Filotas 2005, 82). She has also suggested that the third option might have been possible due to the attested belief in the transmigration of souls between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth century, for an anonymous Carolingian sermon held that some people believed that spirits (*spiritus*) leaving the body of a man could enter that of another person (Levison 1976, 312).¹⁴ Due to this demonic possession, the possessed person would speak through the spirit.

gallicinu(m) plus ad nocendu(m) potestatis habeant, qua(m) post, et gallus suo cantu plus valeat eos repellere et sedare, qua(m) illa divina mens quae e(st) in homine sua fide et crucis signaculo? Si fecisti aut credidisti, x dies in pane et aq(ua) debes poenit(ere).”

¹³ About beliefs in the powers of the cock’s cry, which are already found in Prudentius, see Filotas 2005, 144; Boglioni 1985, 972–973.

¹⁴ “Et alia heresis est, quod stulti homines credunt, quod spiritus, cum de uno homine exit, in alium possit intrare, quod hoc omnino numquam potest fieri, nisi daemonis hoc faciunt et per ipsus homines locuntur.”

Other passages from the *Corrector* describe behaviours and powers which surely look familiar to our modern notion of “ghost” as incorporeal being. Among other beliefs ascribed to women, he inserts the following one:

Have you believed what many women turning back to Satan believe and maintain to be true: you believe that in the silence of a quiet night, as you are gathering in your bed with your husband lying at your bosom, you are physically capable of passing through closed doors and of travelling across the span of the earth with others deceived by a similar error? And of killing baptized people redeemed by Christ’s blood without using visible weapons and, after cooking their flesh, of eating it, and putting straw, wood, or something like this in place of their hearts, and, once you have eaten them, of bringing them back to life and of granting them a truce to live? If you have believed this, you should do penance for forty days, that is, a quarantine, on bread and water, with seven years of penance subsequently. (Barth. 50, fol. 260ra)¹⁵

Burchard’s details are all the more precious, for his only source seems to have been the tenth-century anonymous *Arundel penitential*¹⁶ (McNeill 1923; Boglioni 1991; Künzel 1992; Harmening 1997; Müller 2001; Austin 2009). In particular, the penitential reads: “If someone has believed that, in the stillness of a quiet night, he has been lifted up in the air by wicked women, he shall do penance for two years” (“Si quis in aere in quiete noctis silentio se a maleficis feminis sublevari crediderit, ii annos peniteat”, Schmitz 1958b, 460). The bishop of Worms reprises the time reference (the stillness of a quiet night), the cause (Satan, evil), the agents (women), and a generic attribute of their power (they lift up in the air). At the same time, he originally adds more information and changes the penalty, spreading it over a longer period of time, and showing that such a belief was to be severely punished. What is striking about

¹⁵ “Credidisti q(uo)d multae mulieres retro Satanan conversae credunt et affirmant veru(m) e(ss)e, ut credas in quietae noctis silentio cu(m) te collocaveris in lecto tuo, et marito tuo in sinu tuo iacente, te du(m) corporea sis ianuis clausis exire posse, et t(er)raru(m) spacia cu(m) aliis simili errore deceptis p(er)transire valere, et homines baptizatos, et Christi sanguine redemptos, sine armis visibilib(us) et int(er)ficere, et de coctis carnib(us) eor(um) vos comedere, et in loco cordis eor(um) stram(en) aut lignu(m), (ve)l aliq(uo)d hui(us)modi ponere, et com(m)estis, iteru(m) vivos facere, et inducias vivendi dare? Si credidisti xl dies, id est carrina(m) in pane et aq(ua) cum vii sequentib(us) annis poenit(eas).”

¹⁶ A particularly important source due to the fact that it features beliefs and practices without precedents in earlier penitentials, some of which Burchard reprised.

Burchard's description is that the corporeality of the women's bodies (Bellini 1998, 295-296) does not prevent them from passing through physical obstacles - in line with our modern idea of "ghost" - and the women apparently can gather together and travel long distances in a very short time; they are also able to perform actions which imply the ability to physically interact with the environment without using any tangible means to exert influence upon it. Furthermore, although positive examples of interactions between "ghosts" and human beings are quite numerous in late medieval literary texts - especially when the interaction takes place by means of sharing or offering food (Maraschi 2019) - in this case the protagonists seem to have ill intentions. They act as soldiers of the Devil, kill Christians without "visible weapons", and - most importantly - they are cannibals.¹⁷ More specifically: they eat Christians. On top of this, they resuscitate the dead bodies of their victims after replacing their hearts¹⁸ with fodder, presumably bringing them back to life in order to exert control over them.

Interestingly, this "error" is linked with a specific time: the night. This is not surprising, given the aforementioned beliefs in the presence of spirits wandering about in the darkness, or in the cortège of the night ladies. Furthermore, it has clear connections with the belief in the nocturnal Wild Hunt and in the so-called *chevauchée sur le bâton* or *gandreið* (Lecouteux 1998, 27, fn. 81; 2011). In fact, the following question in Burchard's *Corrector* reprises the same time-related expression ("in quietae noctis silentio"; Barth. 50, fol. 260rb), the same environmental characteristics ("clausis ianuis"), and describes a nocturnal battle between flying servants of the devil, of which women believe to be part. In any case, the Devil seems to have often hired women for most of his plots.

¹⁷ Cannibalism usually identified the enemy, the Other, the "barbarian", etc. See, for instance, Holden 2000, 16, about the literary representation of the Cyclops.

¹⁸ About the symbolic significance of the heart in ancient and medieval times, see Maraschi 2018a and related bibliography.

The Passage from This World to the Otherworld: Rituals and Precautions

Considering how threatening otherworldly entities could be, it is no wonder that great care was devoted to the critical journey of the deceased from the world of the living to the afterlife. At the time of Burchard, many pagan customs still addressed the fate of the bodies of the dead after their burial, and the bishop of Worms is an incredibly original source with regards to this aspect. In fact, he does not seem to draw upon any earlier penitential when he describes a funerary ritual which he thinks worthy of twenty days on bread and water for those who practiced it:

Have you done or approved of what some people do to a killed man, when he is buried? They put a certain ointment in his hand, as if his wound can be healed by this ointment after death, and they bury him in this way with the ointment. (Barth. 50, fol. 254vb)¹⁹

This practice had the purpose of healing the dead as they undertook their voyage to the Otherworld. What is interesting is that it also had a Christian counterpart – and, again, Burchard does not seem to draw on any earlier source. In this case, at the death of newborns who had been previously baptized, “some women” allegedly buried the children and put a wax paten with a Host in their right hands; in the left hands, they put a wax chalice with wine in it (Barth. 50, fol. 261rb).²⁰ Although it has been suggested that the latter practice had purely Christian features (Vogel 1974), the similarities are quite interesting, and Burchard condemns it as pagan. Interestingly, however, he considers it less worrisome than the former, and punished it with half the days of penance. Both practices had probably the same purposes (ensuring a safe journey to the afterlife), where the second may have represented a Christianized evolution of the first one. Their coexistence is striking, though, because they show how old traditions

¹⁹ “Fecisti aut c(on)sensisti q(uo)d quida(m) faciunt homini occiso, cu(m) sepelitur? Dabunt ei in manu(m) unguentu(m) q(uo)dda(m), quasi illo unguento post morte(m) vulnus sanari possit, et sic cu(m) unguento sepeliunt. Si fecisti, xx dies poenitas in pane et aq(ua).”

²⁰ “Fecisti q(uo)d quaeda(m) mulieres facere solent? Cu(m) infans novit(er) natus e(st), et statim baptizatus, et sic mortuus fuerit, du(m) sepeliunt eu(m), in dext(e)ra(m) manu(m) ponunt ei patena(m) cerea(m) cu(m) oblata, et in sinistra(m) manu(m) calice(m) cu(m) vino similit(er) cereu(m) ponunt ei, et sic eu(m) sepeliunt. Si fecisti, x dies in pane et aq(ua) poenitere debes.”

were preserved through the process of conversion: they did not disappear abruptly, but instead were fused with the new belief system – new terms were adopted to formulate the same sentence, metaphorically speaking. Often, the old and the new customs could also coexist for a certain period of time.

Problems would arise when newborns died before receiving Baptism, for it was believed that the souls of unbaptized children could visit and vex the living. Again, Burchard originally deals with this aspect, and associates the erroneous belief to “women inspired by the devil” (Barth. 50, fol. 260vb).²¹ From a conceptual standpoint, the main issue was to take care of the little souls which would not be allowed into Heaven and could not be buried in consecrated ground (Schmitt 1994, 14 ff.; see also Cumont 1949, 443), nor had yet an intermediate limbo to go to until the thirteenth century. The “error” sprouted exactly from the ambiguity of the children’s status after death: they did not belong to the world of the living, but they did not belong to God’s kingdom either. The devil would then deceive the mothers, and convince them that their children would rise from the dead, this time to harm them. This would lead women to “take the baby’s corpse, put it in a secret spot, and impale the little body with a pole”. The same belief is confirmed by the following *quaestio*, which examines a consequent circumstance: if a mother died as she was trying to give birth to her child, she was to be impaled into the ground with a stake and to be buried in the same grave with the child still in her womb (Barth. 50, fol. 260vb).²² In this way, the child – deprived of his/her abode in the afterlife – would be prevented from coming back from the world of the dead and harm the living (Gordon 2017, 109).

This superstitious belief must have looked despicable to Burchard, who punished it with a penance of two years on the appointed fast days (in line with the desecration of

²¹ “Fecisti q(uo)d quaed(am) mulieres instinctu diaboli facere solent? Cu(m) aliq(ui)s infans sine baptismo mortuus fuerit, tollunt cadaver parvuli, et ponunt in aliquo secreto loco, et palo corpusculu(m) eius transfigunt, dicentes, si sic non fecissent, q(uo)d infantulus surgeret, et multos laedere posset? Si fecisti, aut c(on)sensisti, aut credidisti, ii annos p(er) legitimas fer(ias)debes ponitere.”

²² “Fecisti q(uo)d quida(m) facere solent, diaboli audacia replete? Cum aliq(ua) femina parere debet, et n(on) potest, du(m) parere n(on) potest, in ipso dolore si mortem obierit, in ipso sepulchro matre(m) cu(m) infante palo in t(er)ra(m) transfigunt. Si fecisti (ve)l c(on)sensisti, ii annos p(er) legitimas fer(ias) debes poenitere.”

graves). The problem of the souls of unbaptized babies was perceived as real, probably since earlier times, due to a high child mortality rate. Indeed, in the tenth book of the *Decretum*, Burchard reprises canon 35 of the early fourth-century Council of Elvira (*Council of Elvira* 1963, 7-8), according to which women could not keep vigils in cemeteries “because often under the pretext of prayer and religion” they committed evil deeds in secret (Barth. 50, fol. 176ra).²³ In the canons of the Council of Elvira it is not explained what the problem was with women lingering at cemeteries at night, but one of the reasons may have been connected with the aforementioned ritual of impaling unbaptized babies in their graves so as to prevent their vicious souls from rising and harassing the living.²⁴

Be that as it may, there is little doubt that the living felt the need to protect themselves from the dead even when these were not perceived as dangerous. Earlier sources, such as the seventh-century *Penitentiale Theodori*, Regino of Prüm and the *Arundel Penitential*, already mentioned a series of practices having this exact purpose. One consisted in burning grain in the house where a corpse was lying, which the *Penitentiale Theodori* punished with five years of penitence, and thus considered extremely sacrilegious (Schmitz 1958a, 556). Burchard featured this practice in the *Corrector* (Barth. 50, fol. 254va-b),²⁵ but seems to have not taken it as serious, since he reduced the penalty to twenty days only. At the same time, he added a few other unprecedented ones. First he mentions the custom of tying a dead man’s belt in knots with the purpose of harming someone, a practice which falls within the category of sympathetic magic. In truth, Burchard mentions further folk beliefs in the magical powers connected with

²³ “Placuit p(ro)hiberi ne feminae in cimeterio p(er)vigilent, eo q(ue) d sepe sub obtentu orationis et religionis, latent(er) scelera co(m)mittant.”

²⁴ Bernadette Filotas adds that another problem was that human skulls were used in magical potions, as explained by Burchard himself. Women would burn human skulls and make curative potions with the ashes: “Fecisti q(ue) d quaeda(m) mulieres facere solent? Tollunt testa(m) hominis, et igni co(m)burent, et cinere(m) dant viris suis ad bibendu(m) p(ro) sanitate? Si fecisti, i ann(um) p(er) legitimas fer(ias) poen(iteas).” (Barth. 50, fol. 260va; Filotas 2005, 261). This practice was punished with one year of penance on the appointed fast days.

²⁵ “...incendisti grana ubi mortuus homo erat, (ve)l cingulu(m) mortui p(ro) da(m)no alicuius in nodos conligasti, (ve)l pectines quib(us) mulierculae lana(m) discerpere solent sup(ra) fumus co(m)plosisti, (ve)l quando efferebat(ur) fumus a domo, plastru(m) in duo dividisti, et fumus p(er) media(m) divisione(m) plastris asportare fecisti? Si fecisti, aut c(on)sentiens fuisti, xx dies in pane et aq(ua) poeniteas.”

ligaturae (“ligatures, knots”; Barth. 50, fol. 252va).²⁶ He says that men – namely, swineherds, oxherds, hunters and wicked men in general – sang chants over bread, herbs and ligatures at certain sacred places (trees, crossroads) in order to heal their animals or dogs, or to harm someone else’s. Compared to this custom, the use of knotting a dead man’s belt seems to have implied the use of a supernatural force surrounding the corpse, which could be used to harm other people.

Secondly, Burchard mentions the practice of clapping together the combs which women used to tease wool over a corpse, while this was still inside the house. The striking of combs may well be a reference to the magical powers associated with the weaving and spinning of wool (Grimm 1883, 1099), which he explains in an earlier passage. There, the bishop of Worms enigmatically suggests that women, when they started their weaving, used incantations to make sure that the work be done properly (Barth. 50, fol. 252va).²⁷ However, the purpose of clapping together the combs over the corpse is not explained: was it a way to protect the dead along its journey to the Otherworld, or a magical practice by which women drew upon the aforesaid force that supposedly surrounded the body in order to ensure good luck for the household?

Thirdly, a ritual was practiced after the body had been carried from the house by means of a cart, and consisted in splitting the cart into two halves. The body was to be carried just in the middle of the wagon, between the two parts. Again, the meaning of the ritual is obscure, and parallels are hardly traceable (Grimm 1883, 1144): this notwithstanding, one may assume that the space between the two halves represented a sacred liminal area “in the midst of which no cheating or juggling can subsist” (*ibidem*). In other words, placing the body in said specific area might have protected the dead

²⁶ “Fecisti ligaturas, et incantationes, et illas varias fascinationes quas nefarii homines, subulci, (ve)l bubulci, et int(er)du(m) venatores faciunt, du(m) dicunt diabolica carmina sup(er) pane(m) aut sup(er) herbas et sup(er) qu(a)eda(m) nefaria ligam(en)ta, et h(a)ec aut in arbore abscondunt, aut in bivio aut in trivio p(ro)iciunt, ut aut sua animalia (ve)l canes liberent a peste et a clade, et alterius p(er)dant? Si fecisti, ii annos p(er) legitimas fer(ias) poeniteas.”

²⁷ “Int(er)fuisti, aut consensisti vanitatib(us) quas mulieres exercent in suis laneficiis, in suis telis, quae cu(m) ordiunt(ur) telas suas, sperant se utru(m)q(ue) posse facere, cu(m) incantationib(us) et cu(m) aggressu illaru(m), ut et fila staminis, et subteminis in invicem ita co(m)misceant(ur), nisi his iteru(m) aliis diaboli incantationib(us) ec(on)tra subveniant, totu(m) pereat? Si int(er)fuisti, aut c(on)sensisti, xxx dies poenit(eas).” The passage is obscure, however, and scholars’ interpretations differ. See, for instance, Flint 1990, 227; Filotas 2005, 264.

from the living, or the living from the dead, by keeping the former and the latter separated from each other. Unfortunately, Burchard does not give abundant details about the meaning of practices of this kind. Was it because he himself was not aware of it, or because he did not care about the purposes of superstitious beliefs, which he deemed worth only twenty days of penance? Or, lastly, because he thought that many were familiar with it?

The answer to this question remains open. What, however, is fundamental about his contribution, is the fact that most of these are novelties (i.e., not mentioned in earlier penitentials), like the following one. As seen, the folk were rather concerned about ensuring the dead a safe journey to the afterlife, and - at the same time - they wanted to ensure themselves protection from the malicious spirits of the undead. In line with this, Burchard mentions one further complex ritual that was performed by women: when the body was still in the house, they filled a jug with water and brought it back to the house in silence; then, when the corpse was first lifted up to be carried away, they poured some of the water underneath the bier. Finally, while the body was being transferred outside of the house, the women had to make sure that the corpse be not lifted more than knee-high (Barth. 50, fol. 254vb).²⁸ In Burchard's view, this *vanitas* was not worth more than ten days of penance, but its meaning is quite hard to grasp since he - as usual - does not add any explanation. On top of this, there are no earlier sources which could help us to safely interpret it. At the very least, one should focus the attention on the expression *pro sanitate*, which Burchard uses in the case of healing potions made with charred human skulls, or earlier in the tenth book of the *Decretum* about the custom of putting sick children in the oven or on the rooftop to cure them. This may suggest that the ritual had protective purposes, and - again - it is not clear whether said protection was to be intended for the dead, for the living, or for both

²⁸ "Fecisti illas vanitates aut c(on)sensisti quas stultae mulieres facere solent, [quae], du(m) cadaver mortui hominis adhuc in domo iacet, currunt ad aqua(m), et adducunt tacite vas cu(m) aq(ua), et, cu(m) sublevat(ur) corpus mortui, eande(m) aqua(m) fundunt subtus feretru(m), et hoc observant, du(m) extra domu(m) asportat(ur) funus, [ut] n(on) altius qua(m) ad genua elevet(ur), et hoc faciunt p(ro) quada(m) sanitate? Si fecisti, aut c(on)sensisti, x dies debes poenitere in pane et aq(ua)."

(even if the latter option would totally make sense). What is sure is that the complex sequence of actions is particularly careful about liminalities, boundaries, and even measures: whatever their deeper meaning may have been it is clear that the departure of the dead from the world of the living implied that the corpse would cross a threshold, one which the living should respect and fear. At the same time, it suggests that the living were thought to be able to interact with the world of the dead, just as much as the dead were to affect the world of the living: continuity between the two hemispheres seems to have prevailed over discontinuity, in other words.

Conjuring up the dead

One further non-Christian practice is worth being discussed in the present paper, even though not mentioned in the *Corrector*. Burchard drew on an older Carolingian *Admonitio synodalis* of the year 813, and inserted it in the second book of the *Decretum* (Barth. 50, fol. 65ra-b) - thus implying that it was still relevant in his times and in his diocese. The *Admonitio* - which was also reprised by Regino of Prüm and Hincmar of Reims - addressed the behaviour of clerics on the occasion of commemorative banquets (Filotas 2005, 334). Namely, banquets arranged on the anniversary of a death, on the thirtieth or on the third day (Burchard added the seventh day as well), or banquets for the celebration of other occasions in general (Amiet 1964, 51).²⁹ As clear from the rubric introducing the chapter, Burchard's attention is mainly focused on drunkenness, and subsequently on entertainment and fun, in line with the typical attitude of early medieval Church towards excess and unbecoming behaviour during banquets (Maraschi 2018c, 2-3). But a further element - which the rubric seems to suggest was of secondary importance - was connected with this, especially

²⁹ "Nullus quando anniuersarium diem uel tricesimum aut tercium alicuius defuncti aut quacumque uocatione ad collectam presbiteri uenerint, se inebriare ullatenus presumat, nec precari in amore sanctorum uel ipsius anime bibere, aut alios ad bibendum cogere uel se aliena precatione ingurgitare nec ultra terciam uicem poculum sumere, nec plausus et risus inconditos et fabulas inanes ibi referre aut cantare presumat uel turpia ioca, fidibus uel urso uel ceruulo uel tornatricibus ante se facere permittat, nec laruas demonum, quas uulgo talamascas dicunt, ibi ante se ferri consentiat, quia hoc diabolicum est et a sacris canonibus prohibitum."

because such gatherings had the purpose of commemorating the dead: the custom of displaying masks representing “*laruas demonum, quas uulgo talamascae dicunt*”. The use of masks to represent the dead or demons was no novelty in popular culture (e.g., Lecouteux 2011, 177–179): Jacob Grimm highlighted the affinity between the terms *larva* and *lar*, noting that the *lares* (protective spirits of households) were held to be “souls of the departed ancestors” (Grimm 1883, 912). Quite interestingly, Church authorities felt the need to specify the vernacular Germanic word for *larvae demonum*, that is, *talamascae*, from which the later Italian *maschera*, French *masque*, etc. (Schmitt 1988, 206–230; 2001). The Christian Church reckoned that they dangerously annihilated the distance between the living and the dead, and associated them to diabolic inspiration (Napier 1986, 11).

But the problem had even deeper implications. The matter of the representation of otherworldly (i.e., non-human, no-more-human, or more-than-human) subjects was an essential dispute at the core of Christian and Islamic doctrines – the iconoclastic controversy (ca. 730–843) being one of the more notorious examples. The danger lied exactly in the fact that, by representing an animal, an individual, or a god, the depiction would *turn into* them, him or her. “In their associating the mask with the disguised and ghoulish *larvae*”, Napier states, “we observe, in addition, how medieval thinkers cemented, at least until the Renaissance, the idea that appearance had more to do with the dangers of ‘concrete persons transubstantiated’ than with ‘abstract personifications’” (ibid., 15). Thus, the *talamascae* mentioned by Burchard were not merely undignified for Christians on the basis of their link with pagan rituals, but, most importantly, they disturbed the dead and conjured them up, bringing them back to the world of the living. Needless to say, this was not only hardly advisable, but could disturb the ordering of things as God had planned it.

Concluding remarks

In the *Corrector*, there emerges a fundamental difference with our post-illuministic interpretation of reality: there was more than meets the eye (and the reference is not to subatomic particles or to dark matter). In his detailed depiction of medieval Western society, Jacques Le Goff wrote that three populations were believed to inhabit the world: men, angels, and demons (Le Goff 2008, 138). This was at least the representation of the world and of its peoples according to Honorius of Autun, who wrote his summa of medieval Christian theology known as *Elucidarium* at the end of the eleventh century. The work was not too distant in time from Burchard and, most interestingly, it was a Christian description of the beings – either human or not – populating the Earth: according to Honorius, man was constantly under a “double espionage” of angels and demons (ibid., p. 139). In his own small way, Burchard shows that the idea that otherworldly beings lived alongside man had been a common belief among the German folk as well, even though the folk did not necessarily associate them with angels or demons as Christian intellectuals did.

As has been noted earlier, the reliability of penitentials as sources for the study of actual practices and beliefs in a given area at a given time is not to be taken for granted. Nora Chadwick held that the sins featured in penitentials were merely abstract inventions made up in the cloister (Chadwick 1963, 148), whereas in Harmening’s view, the fact that penitentials drew heavily upon older council canons, attested that they cannot be taken as mirrors of the time and area in which they were produced (Harmening 1979 and 1997). However, one can hardly ignore the fact that – as also noted by Gurevich – a portion of the practices and beliefs included in the *Corrector* consists of original entries made by Burchard himself. This is especially true in reference to beliefs concerning the dead and the undead, for – as has been indicated case by case – they often seem to have no precedents in earlier sources. This, alongside references to folk terminology, is a fundamental *condicio sine qua non* that allows the

Corrector to be used as an ethno-historical source (Harmening 1997, 449; Künzel 1992).

Saying that the living were aware of sharing the earth with a host of other otherworldly entities is one thing, but one question needs to be asked: on the basis of our modern taxonomy, how “normal” or “paranormal” were the encounters between humans and otherworldly beings according to the *Corrector*? As I have recently tried to suggest, encounters between the living and the dead (or other otherworldly entities) were not necessarily characterized by “paranormal” or “supernatural” features (Maraschi 2019, 283–285). Even from his perspective as bishop and spiritual judge, Burchard corroborates this idea. For instance, he holds that the cortège of the nighttime ladies is formed of devils, but this is his own interpretation: the women who believed in the horde thought that it was an essentially human cohort, although with non-human characteristics. Furthermore, their leaders – whether Abunda, Satia, or others – were believed to bestow wealth on the households they visited, often in the form of abundance of food. From the same perspective, one may ask how “normal” a ritual was that of setting the table for the Parcae: it by no means implied magico-religious elements, but was rather based on the concept of hospitality (ibidem). This shows that people often resorted to “human” means of communication to establish a contact with the otherworldly (non-human or no-more-human) beings.

That said, the boundary was never put into question: it elicited respect, concern, care, caution, in both Burchard and the pagan folk – from different perspectives, of course. Women appear to have been particularly prey of – or acquainted with, depending on the side one takes – the powers of otherworldly entities. The women described by Burchard, through the filters of his Christian bias, believed to possess specific powers concerning the world of the dead and the boundary between that world and the world of the living. Interestingly, the connection between the feminine gender and death emerging in the *Corrector* matches very closely the relationship that was thought to bind women and the supernatural in the North in the same years (e.g., Icelandic *vǫlur*

and the practice of *seiðr*; Maraschi 2018a, 29–31). This detail – among others – suggests that the *Corrector* could deserve a better reputation than that of a sterile copy of earlier sources, or, even worse, of the product of the imagination of industrious monks. On the contrary, it seems to speak about the boundary between life and death as it was perceived at the beginning of the eleventh century, telling us that the said boundary was perceived in a way that was considerably different from the modern, secularized, scientific and medicalized view of the subject.

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Abstrakti: Enemmän kuin ensi näkemältä vaikuttaa: Epäkuolleet, kummitukset ja henget Burchard Wormsilaisen teoksessa *Decretum*

Corrector eli Burchard Wormsilaisen teoksen *Decretum* yhdeksästoista kirja on yksi merkittävimmistä lähteistä tutkittaessa Saksassa – tarkemmin sanottuna Reininmaan Hessenissä – vuoden 1000 tietämällä säilyneitä pakanallisia tapoja ja uskomuksia. *Decretum* on itsessään tärkeä oman aikansa kanonisen lain kokoelma, mutta *Corrector* erityisesti on kiinnittänyt tutkijoiden huomion sen erikoisuuksien vuoksi. Kiinnostavaa on varsinkin se, että vaikka *Decretumin* yhdeksästoista kirja perustuu osittain aikaisemmille penitentiaaleille ja konsiilien säädöksille, se oli myös osittain alkujaan Wormsin piispan itsensä kirjoittama. Siten teos osoittautuu perustavanlaatuisiksi tekstiksi, jonka avulla voidaan ymmärtää niitä pakanallisia piirteitä, jotka olivat säilyneet siinä ajassa ja paikassa, jossa teksti on kirjoitettu. Teksti on erityisen hyödyllinen tutkijoille, jotka ovat kiinnostuneita kuolemaan liittyvistä uskomuksista, kuten ”epäkuolleista” ja vastaavista, vaikkakin terminologia voi olla hämäävää: tästä johtuen tutkimuksessa ei käytetä moderneja ja anakronistisia taksonomioita, kuten ”haamu”, ”epäkuollut”, ”aave” ja niin edelleen. Sen sijaan suositetaan *emic*-lähestymistapaa, jossa pyrkimyksenä on aineiston kunnioittaminen ja erilaisten suodattimien asettaminen niin vähäisessä määrin kuin mahdollista.

Burchard mainitsee monenlaisia tuonpuoleisia entiteettejä, jotka muistuttavat moderneja mielikuvia ”haamuista”, ”hengistä” ja ”epäkuolleista”, mutta usein hän ei mainitse muita, niiden tunnistamista edesauttavia yksityiskohtia – joko koska hän ei katsonut niitä huomionsa arvoisina, tai koska hän ei tuntenut kansanuskomuksia yksityiskohtaisesti. Burchardin Saksa näytti kuitenkin olevan tiiviisti asutettu: ihmiset jakoivat tilansa ”kummituslaumojen” kanssa, näyttivät olevan tietoisia niistä, ja uskoivat usein voivansa liittyä niiden seuraan. Käsillä olevan tutkimuksen tavoitteena on analysoida niitä kansanuskomuksia, joihin liittyy tuonpuoleisia entiteettejä, mikä mahdollistaa näiden piirteiden kriittisen tarkastelun ja sen ymmärtämisen, millaisia merkityksiä näillä tuonpuoleisilla entiteeteillä Hessenin väestön keskuudessa oli vuoden 1000 tienoilla. Huomio kohdistuu erityisesti elävien ja kuolleiden/epäkuolleiden väliseen suhteeseen ja valottaa sellaisia teemaan liittyviä aiheita kuten 1) ennakkoasenteet naisia kohtaan – joita pidettiin luonnostaan alttiina taikauskolle; 2) ihmisen ja tuonpuoleisen entiteetin välinen myönteinen/kielteinen kanssakäyminen; 3) piirteet, joita näihin mainittuihin entiteetteihin yhdistettiin (sitkeä, häijy, hyväntahtoinen/pahantahtoinen, jne.); 4) pimeänpelko sen seurauksena, että pahojen henkien oletettiin olevan aktiivisia yöaikaan; 5) tuonpuoleisten entiteettien rooli elävien palveluksessa; 6) pelko siitä, että kuolleet voivat palata ja vahingoittaa eläviä.