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The Fall of Tyr, the Fall of Justice:
A Reflection of Society
in the Germanic Religious System

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Abstract

Most scholars agree that Tyr is a faded, fallen god by the time of the Norse Period and that previously, he was very prominent within the Germanic Religious System – perhaps even the central figure in the pantheon. His fall from popularity and fading of function are a reflection on society – he was no longer needed in the same capacity as his function lost meaning to those who once believed in him.

My research on the Germanic Religious System is a reanalysis based on six points of reference: Proto-Indo-

European (PIE) reconstruction (includes non-PIE influences), name etymologies, socio-cultural interpretations (Durkheimian theories), functional system theory (includes the role of the cult, parallelisms, functionalism, etc.), historical memory (Jungian theories) and the order/chaos paradigm. Primary utilizing the first four points, Tyr can be traced back to his position among the PIE – that being Marija Gimbutas's *god of the shining sun* and Georges Dumézil's *god of sovereignty: justice and order*. Looking from that point in time onward, one can parallel Tyr's development, rise and decline as a development in the concepts of order, peace, justice and contracts in Germanic society. The development is clearly the same, where the religious significance follows the social change – a pattern detailed by sociologist Emile Durkheim.

This paper will briefly describe the methodology to my approach as it applies to Tyr and then examine in greater depth the parallel developments between Tyr and early Germanic society.

1.0 Introduction

Most scholars agree that Tyr is a faded, fallen god by the time of the Norse Period and that previously, he was very prominent within the Germanic Religious System – perhaps even the central figure in the pantheon. His fall from popularity and fading of function are a reflection on society – he was no longer needed in the same capacity as his function lost meaning to those who once believed in him.

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2.0 Methods

2.1 Assumptions

My method makes some basic assumptions, which based on both historical similarities in other religions, archeological evidence and textual evidence support. These are:

- localized religion, cult based
- “agnostic”
- existence of “parallelisms”
- cycle of chaos-order-conflict-aftermath/chaos-ultimate order
- Neither Good nor Evil, rather Forces of Chaos vs. Forces of Order

These will be discussed point by point.

2.1.1 Localized Religion, Cult based

The Germanic Religious System is just that, a system of beliefs loosely connected by commonalities but localized to meet the needs of each community, farmstead and individual. Cults were the primary basis for temporarily codifying the

religion, but this codification often led to one of three events: retention (i.e., stories, gods, etc. are passed on to the next generation, community, village, etc.); loss (i.e., stories, gods, etc. are lost due to drop in popularity, function, destruction of cult, etc.); and creation of a “parallelism”, see 2.1.3. The fact that the cult plays this role explains the amount of variability, why there is no codified unification and the superficially contradictorily looking parallelisms.

2.1.2 “Agnosticism”

Hilda Ellis-Davidson and others scholars have claimed a level of agnosticism within Germanic society, that when the crops went bad or sickness was rampant or war existed, then the gods were of

importance, but in times of peace, excess and good crops, the gods were easily forgotten (although graves were blessed with more artefacts). This is not to state that members of society – especially the upper class – were not heavily involved in the religion on a constant basis. The majority of society was indifferent the majority of the time, but those in positions of power and influence were the key practitioners of the religion itself.

An agnostic people would also be more interested in the world at present than some hopes for an afterlife: This is a theme reflected throughout the stories of the period.

2.1.3 “Parallelisms”

When one examines how the dead were treated, there are two strange scenarios: They were treated as if they would remain near and among their relatives – a belief marked by ancestor worship – and as if they went to one of the other worlds, namely Niflheim or one of the halls of Asgard. How could they be going to both places at the same time? The answer can quite simply be none other than explained as another case of parallelism – beliefs can contradict one and other without problem. Because the two originated in different cults and were retained, they migrated and blended at points. In this case, it is my opinion that the belief that the dead stayed among the

living is an aspect of the Old European religion, while the concept of the other world is Proto-Indo-European.

Balder's death is another good example of this, as after he dies, his return is only possible by him leaving the other world and returning to Asgard. He does not remain among the gods in another form.

2.1.4 Cycle of Chaos-Order-Conflict- Aftermath/Chaos-Ultimate Order

This cycle is an outline of the religion as a whole. In the beginning, there is fire and ice and all is no chaos. Odin and his brothers create order by killing Ymir, which of course will eventually led to

conflict, chaos (destruction of the worlds) and a new order. This pattern is also evident in many stories about Odin and Loki, both of whom tread the line between makers of order and creators of chaos.

2.1.5 Neither Good nor Evil, rather Forces of Chaos vs. Forces of Order

Instead of looking through Judeo-Christian ideologies of good and evil, one must examine the underlying principles that are in conflict. Some beings create chaos, disorder or other disruption, such as giants, monsters and dwarves, while others, such as gods, humans and elves, strive towards the creation of order.

Odin and Loki do both, and they are considered “demons of emotion”, this concept is not essential for my arguments about Tyr, so they will not be discussed.

2.2 Points of Reference

2.2.1 Proto-Indo-European (PIE) reconstruction (includes non-PIE influences)

Marija Gimbutas and Georges Dumézil have recreated the PIE pantheon with different emphases. Dumézil compares societal structures, while Gimbutas examines archaeological and cultural evidence. Dumézil places the gods into three tiers, based on social class and function, while Gimbutas generalizes about PIE gods.

Dumézil's work is often represented in a diagram such as the one below.

1. gods of sovereignty— justice/order (Tyr) [Forseti] and magic (Odin)
2. warrior gods— [let this include hunting gods] (Thor) [Heimdall] [Ull, Magni, Modi, etc.]
3. food production (fertility, wealth, etc.)— (Njord, Frey, Freya) [Balder?, Sif?, Frigg]

(Adapted from Polomé, 1989, p. 56.)¹

Gimbutas's work yields the following table.

<p><u>The God of the Shining Sky</u></p> <p>Year god, inseparable from the sun – new, young, mature – and the changing seasons, appearing in different shapes in</p>
--

¹ Note: the square brackets are my own insertions.

each season. In spring and summer aspects, he is a young and beautiful god dressed as a king. Creator of vegetation, birds and domestic animals. Epiphanies: white horse, birch.

Weapons: dagger, sword, halberd. Guardian of contracts.

God of peace and friendship.

Thunder-god

Inseminator of the Earth. God of Justice². Adversary of the God of Death and the Underworld with whom he fights incessantly with his arrows or axes. Imagined as a middle-aged red-bearded man. Epiphanies: bull and he-goat, oak tree, rowan. Weapons: axe, bow and arrow.

God of Death and Underworld

Cruel and angry god of death imagined as an old man or a dark god. Creator of ugly animals and birds of prey, coniferous trees and roots. Animals [Epiphanies]: stallion and bear. The usual epiphany in fight with [the] Thunder-god: monstrous serpent hiding in water. Weapons: spear, loop of cord for hanging. God of Contracts.

Satellites:

Moon God

The night sky aspect of the God of the Shining Sky. Warrior.

² In the sense of equality or fairness, not judicial justice.

The Twins

Horses or anthropomorphic.

Sun Maiden

Daughter of the Sun God, heavenly bride.

Dawn:

Beauty, goddess of love. Epiphanies: mare and cow.

Brother/servant of the Dawn

Herder of cows.

Heavenly Smith

Hammers a new sun.

(Adapted from “Functions and images of [the] Proto-Indo-European gods and goddesses based on comparative Indo-European mythology and archaeological finds of the 4th – 2nd millennia BC[E].” 1997, p. 348)

2.2.2 Name etymologies

Use of name etymologies to help identify functions and roots of gods have oft been cited but used in much detail.

2.2.3 Socio-Cultural Interpretations (Durkheimian theories)

A religion is merely a manifested reflection of a given society - reflecting the society as a whole as the French sociologist Emilé Durkheim's³ research on the basic elements of religions has clearly shown in more primitive religions; he concluded that

³ Outlined in his The Elementary Forms of religious Life (1910).

religions constitute a moral system and a cosmology as well as a history.

Seeing ancient religions as narratives that use symbolic language to describe a given culture's proposed origin of the culture's universe and assumptions has been a long-standing view in the study of these religions. During the early modern period, scholars turned to the older Indo-European religions as intellectual and cultural resources; they viewed Indo-European religions as a form of human expression and perception as important as the rational grasp of reality.

Many scholars have also correlated language with religion. German scholar Friedrich Max Müller⁴ viewed “mythic” religions as an aspect of the historical development of language. He believed that in the Vedic texts of ancient India, the gods do not represent beings but are products of an attempt to give expression to natural phenomena. French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss⁵ saw ancient religions as special cases of linguistic usage, levels beyond both surface narrative and underlying structure. He discovered certain clusters of

⁴ Outlined in his Introduction to the Science of Religion (1870).

⁵ Outlined in his La Fonction symbolique: essais d'anthropologie (reprinted 1970).

relationships that, although expressed in the narrative and dramatic content, obey the systematic order of the language's structure.

In other words, understanding the true nature and roots of a given religion requires nothing more than understanding the cultural norms, values and aspirations of a given society as well as its understanding of its own historical unfolding and roots and its linguistic developments.

2.2.4 Functional System Theory

This combines the assumptions made in 2.1 and allows them to interact with each other.

2.2.5 Historical Memory (Jungian theories)

One can use Jungian theory to expand the scope of this method. Historical memory – as I will refer to such – is a form of memory which is inherit to all individuals of a given culture but is present to various degrees within each individual; it is often still exists even when a given culture has undergone drastic changes. There are prolonged echoes of the past so inherit in one's being that it is often overlooked. In areas such as art, literature, architecture and superstitions, the old religious and cultural patterns are retained even if their means and purposes have been lost.

This process is comparable to the way in which medieval legends are produced: fact to embellished fact to removed embellished fact and so on.

2.2.6 The Order/Chaos Paradigm

This paradigm examines and explains interaction between forces of order, forces of chaos and demons of emotion. As there is no interaction between such discussed with regards to Tyr's development, no further details are needed.

3.0 Applying Point 2 to Tyr: Tyr's Roots, Functions and his Rise and Fall

Tyr: *Tiwaz (Gmc)- Tiu/Zio (OHG)- Ty/Ti/Tiw

(OE)- Tyr (ON)

Tyr's name comes from the Germanic *Tiwaz ("god") and is related to other ruling gods such as the Greek Zeus, Latin deus and Sanskrit Dyaus and is reflected in the Old Norse tivar ("gods" only attested as a plural). He was identified as the Germanic equivalent of Mars (which is further supported by the loan translation for Tuesday). The west Norse tradition records Tyr only as a faded god of war, whose functions seem to have been overtaken by others. The plethora of place-names indicates that Tyr was a god with a once powerful cult and suggest that he played an important role in the religion's

earlier period. Nineteenth-century scholars often assumed that Odin was a later import because of this, but this thought is rather unlikely as Odin is too embedded in the Germanic world to have been imported.

In the structure of the Proto-Indo-European system, he sits alongside Odin on the first tier as the god of judicial sovereignty and order. His role is even further marked by the fact that he sacrificed his right hand – the oath swearing hand – when the gods tricked and fettered the Fenris wolf (the wolf had demanded that one of gods place one of their hands in his mouth as a guarantee that the chain was breakable and that the act was not a trick, Tyr was

the only willing to do so). As Dumézil [1948] suggests, the sacrifice had to be made, as the gods have lied to the wolf, an act unbecoming of a god of justice. Polomé [1989] adds that his perjury⁶ is also justified as it shows a higher loyalty to the group. Polomé and Dumézil agree that this is also Tyr's fall from grace as it marks the end of "true law" in the Germanic world and as Dumézil puts it "what [this] divine society has gained in effectiveness, it has lost in moral and mystical power" (from Polomé 1989).

⁶ In many cultures, the loss of the right hand was the punishment for the crime of perjury (Simek 1984).

While it is only Snorri, who tells how Tyr lost his hand or arm, older kennings show that this was a widespread belief. Dumézil has pointed out a parallel story in Roman legend as well as other one-armed gods in the Irish Nuadu and the Indian Surya, but neither of the gods just named lost their hands or arms in a pledge.

Snorri calls him Odin's son, but the *Hymiskvi* names his father as the giant Hymir. Tyr position warrants an equal genealogy to Odin's, as Snorri may just be adding him to the long list of the sons of Odin in order to have Odin have a more important role and have him be subordinate to Odin.

While Odin has his dark side, Tyr is a noble and brave god. It is believed that not only was he a sky god but also a god of day or light. The t-rune is named after him, which attests to his other attributes: courage and strength. The *Sigrdrifumal* suggests that his weapon was the sword, which would not be the weapon of a common warrior but rather a king which further attests his place in the Proto-Indo-European first tier of gods.

Tyr has often been called “the god of Thing or council”, namely because of the rune stone referring to the god *Mars Thingus* in Roman controlled areas of the Germanic world. This must be seen as a

natural extension of his original function as god of justice and order.

It seems that Tyr, much like Odin, is both second (warrior) and first tier-like, but as Odin is a priestly-warrior figure, Tyr is a warrior-king. It seems that by the late period, the west Norse tradition can only recall him as a god of war, as Snorri describes him. It is fairly clear that Odin took over most of Tyr's kingly functions at some point, and it is this that is reflected in the source materials.

Saxo tells of Odin's rule in Asgard being interrupted twice: first, because of the behaviour of his wife; and the second time, because he himself broke the sanctity of marriage. His replacements

during these times were Mithothyn (cf. ON *mjotu_r* “he who metes out”), a ruler who promotes a more systematic organisation of order unlike Odin’s more autocratic and less predictable order, and Ollerus (= Ull “royal glory”, whose function among the *Æsir* is a revival of Tyr’s – interestingly enough, their names appear in geographically complementary distribution with one and other). As it is not understandable that Odin’s routine breach of the contract of marriage would warrant any particular punishment and that Frigg as the matron of marriage and symbol of ideal family values would make such a harmful breach of her roles, one must understand this as Saxo’s attempt to make sense that Asgard was likely ruled by Tyr,

who functions as a god of justice and order in Dumézil's Proto-Indo-European template, before Odin absorbed his role. The second account must be understood as a revival of Tyr's function through Ull.

Tyr is a god whose attributes have melted away as society became increasingly lawless. He is the warrior-king who tries to keep peace with his words as well as his sword, but in the end fails to do so, as the weakening of his cult over the pre-Christian period demonstrates. As Odin and other gods have taken on his functions, he fades more and more into the obscure role of "god of war" which so many of the gods function to some extent as. Tyr's once importance is not forgotten as Snorri constantly

names him as one of the more important of the Æsir, and the many place names that bear his name as a tribute to his cult. With all of his abilities, one would expect that he was at worst the head of the council meetings of the Æsir as well as perhaps their chief when Odin was their magician, but no sources exist to confirm such thought.

One can however with what information does exist think of Tyr as the Germanic version of the Proto-Indo-European god of the shining sky, and consider that Forseti and, to a much less extent Ull, is a later attempt at reviving his role. From this it is easy to understand how Tyr becomes a god of war: In a warrior society, the highest god must be that of war.

4.0 Tyr's Fall as a Reflection of Society

Thinking of Tyr's decline in a Durkheimian sense, his loss or shift of function, subordination of roles and loss of his right hand/forearm, one must consider that what is happening to Tyr is simply a reflection of what is going on in society at large.

4.1 Tyr's Function Declines

In a society where lawlessness is becoming increasingly the norm and raiding and looting are a part of the everyday world, a god of justice and order is not fulfilling his duties. With this societal break down comes the beginning of the Christianization of

the Anglo-Saxons, southern and central Germans and the Viking Age. The chaos that ensues could look like the beginning of the Ragnarok and the total breakdown of everything else. The power gap that this left allowed Odin to rise to prominence – as he was the next closest god in terms of hierarchical sovereignty.

4.2 Tyr's Fading Away

His reassignment as Odin's son and subordinate, clearly display a god in his last days. At the Ragnarok, he does not even fight the foe that would be expected but rather a more obscure monster – almost as to simply fill in a blank spot.

5.0 Conclusions

This brief examination of Tyr displays his once importance, his fading and phasing out because of the loss of function as reflected in society at large and his representations. In less than 10 centuries, Tyr faded from primary to obscure deity, leaving little data on him and allowing for much speculation.

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Wake not the Dead!:
An Analysis Implementing Lacan's
Interpretations of the "Other" in
Representations of the Vampire in
German Literature from 1463-1800

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Abstract:

The vampire is a symbol of fear and superstitious paranoia, yet the vampire is essentially a manifestation of mankind's perspective on the unknown or the other. According to the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), "there are three primary ways in which an individual can relate to or regard the 'other:' the other as the enemy, the other as a mystery needing to be unmasked and the other as the key to

pleasure” (Bowie 1991). In relation to German vampire literature, the vampire takes on the role of the prescribed “other,” and emulates throughout the Middle Ages, Enlightenment and Romantic period these three definitions.

The vampire is a creature whose transcendent appearance has occurred in the form of literature since the time of antiquity. It has become a symbol of fear and superstitious paranoia, yet the vampire is essentially a manifestation of mankind’s perspective on the unknown or the other. According to the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan (1901-1981),¹ there are three primary ways in which an individual can relate to or regard the “other:” the other as the enemy, the other as a mystery needing to be unmasked and the other as the key to pleasure. In

¹ M. Bowie, *Lacan* (Massachusetts, 1991)

relation to vampire literature, the vampire takes on the role of the prescribed “other,” and emulates throughout the course of history these three definitions. The first forms of vampire literature produced in the German language were expressions of the “other” as a fearful, dangerous enemy. With the dawning of the German Enlightenment, the vampire appears in several German dissertations as a great mystery that must be solved. Finally, the presentation of the vampire in German literature culminates in the Age of German Romanticism, when the vampire develops into an alter ego, namely a representation of societies repressed desires.

The Earliest Germanic Vampire Literature 1463 - 1700: Vlad Dracula

One of the earliest depictions of the vampire in German writing occurred in the mid-fifteenth century in newspaper reports and chapbooks² featuring descriptions of the horrific acts of the Prince of Walachia, named Vlad Dracula and nicknamed Vlad _epe_ (Vlad the Impaler). These reports not only demonized Dracula³ and made references to his vampirism, but due to the propaganda-like nature of

² “A small book or pamphlet containing poems, ballads, stories, or tracts” in *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* (10th ed., 2001). Also see L. Rickels, *The Vampire Lectures* (Minneapolis, 1999), p. 11.

³ “Dracula is portrayed as a demented psychopath, a sadist, a gruesome murderer, a masochist” in R. Florescu, *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces* (Boston, 1989), p. 196.

these documents, they also produced in the Germans a xenophobic reaction to people from the east. Germans,⁴ who read about the evils incurred upon their people by the eastern Prince, quickly developed a hatred of the non-German “other.” Jacques Lacan describes this perspective of the other as, “if phantasy turns toward cruelty and death, we may imagine ourselves as the givers or receivers of a perfect pain. That is to say phantasy creates for us a dream of identity” (Bowie, 177-178). For the Germans reading about the occurrences in the east, this newly developed hatred of the “other” served, through the realm of literature, as a vehicle to bring about a

⁴At this point in history the term “German” refers to members of the Heiligen Römischen Reiches Deutscher Nation. See W. Koepke, *Die Deutschen, Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Orlando, 1971), p.45.

resurgence of nationalist identity via sympathy and compassion with the struggle of the German victim against a common Eastern enemy.

The first mention of vampirism in association with Dracula appears in Michael Beheim's poem, *Story of a Bloodthirsty Madman Called Dracula of Wallachia* (1463),⁵ which is described in Radu Florescu's *Dracula, Prince of Many Faces* (1989) as:

Dracula was seated at a table having his meal; he seemed to enjoy the gruesome scenario of his butchers

⁵ Beheim's poem was probably written at the Holy Roman Emperor's court at Wiener Neustadt in 1463. To collect realistic information, Beheim interviewed a monk, Brother Jacob, who was a refugee from Wallachia and had seen Dracula's cruelty firsthand. It is likely, however, that Beheim deliberately distorted Jacob's original German text for dramatic effect (Ibid, pp. 195, 201).

cutting off the limbs of many of his victims. Beheim tells us the additional detail that the prince “dipped his bread in the blood of the victims.”⁶ The stage was thus set for Dracula’s later reputation as a blood drinker or vampire. (Florescu 120)

To understand why this graphic material would appeal to an audience consisting of the elite and monks and finally to the general German public, it is important to understand that this literature is an

⁶ Blood is usually the second term linked with vampirism, the first being dead or undead, but the importance of blood as a source of vitality for the vampire is always stressed, “Blood has always been held to possess supernatural and mystical qualities, as it is the keeper and giver of life” M. Bunson, *The Vampire Encyclopedia* (New York, 1993), p. 28. Dracula seems to be the embodiment of a vampire according to Jan Perkowski’s definition of an East European vampire, “a being which derives sustenance from a victim, who is weakened by the experience. The sustenance can be physical or emotional in nature” Jan Perkowski, *Vampires of the Slavs* (Cambridge, 1976), p.136.

expression of the political and religious controversies of the time.

From 1458 to 1460 Dracula engaged in a full fledged attack, or an all but undeclared war, against the Germans in Transylvania. These so called “terror raids” were inspired by a long history of political and social unrest.⁷ During the raids he reportedly burned

⁷ “After the invasions of the Mongols, the Hungarian kings completed their conquest of Transylvania and they encouraged Germans to resettle and rebuilt the land. By the end of the thirteen century these Catholic settlers held positions as upper-middle class members of society, forming a prosperous trade route linking the east and the west. Meanwhile the Romanians, who shared their native tongue and Orthodox religion with Dracula, lived as impoverished serfs.” This no doubt aroused in Dracula feelings of inadequacy, jealousy, and hatred of the Germans. “The political climate remained peaceful until shortly before the death of Ladislas V, who was the king of Hungary and was supported by the Germans in Transylvania since he was a member of the Habsburg family. Dracula switched his allegiance from Ladislas V, whom he initially supported, to

entire cities, killing all the inhabitants and impaled or boiled alive 600 merchants. Such scenes were witnessed by a small group of German Catholic monks who were fortunate enough to escape from their monasteries, which had been reduced to ashes. These monks brought with them to the west what in essence became the first Dracula “horror stories”, which were retold to poets, like Beheim, who recorded them in various formats.

Michael Szilágy, a Hunyadi, whom the Germans considered aliens, thus Dracula became the enemy of the German Transylvanian towns,” thus making the feelings of hatred Dracula held for the Germans mutual. “Next, Dracula successfully dismembered the German merchants by blocking their trade routes and forcing them to sell their goods solely to Wallachian merchants at a fraction of the price. Initially the Germans ignored his rules, which accounted for the fury and enormity of Dracula’s terror raids on the German territories from 1458 to 1460” (Florescu, 108-124).

On the religious sphere, these works helped to strengthen the monks' vehement belief that their religion was the true, just religion which was going through a period of tribulation in the form of an evil figure, Dracula, who was attempting to squash Catholicism.⁸ There was a great deal of tension brewing between the Catholic Germans and the Orthodox Romanians. Dracula attempted to terrorize and eventually destroy the Catholic institutions and confiscate their wealth, which resulted in the

⁸ Such an idea of a figure in league with the Devil to destroy Catholicism was not uncommon to German literature at this time, it was a theory, in fact, that was publicized to justify the witch hunts. The text *Malleus Maleficarum* (c.1487), by the former professors of Theology, Inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger, was also primarily prompted by a fear of a great conspiracy of female witches in league with the Devil to destroy Christianity. See Rev. Montague Summers in H. Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum* (New York, 1970), p. xxxix.

massacre of countless individuals.⁹ Those victimized individuals who escaped and returned to the west held a rather biased view regarding Dracula and his Orthodox religion. They were thoroughly convinced that they had fled from the clutches of a satanic madman and what was essentially produced in the literature and reports was, justified or not, hate-bred propaganda.

With the advent of Johann Gutenberg's printing press in 1450,¹⁰ the Dracula story not only made the cover page in the news and became progressively popular, but was accompanied by artwork. Now, even the illiterate could be visually

⁹ See Florescu, pp. 195-206 for a brief history of the German's religious situation in Transylvania.

¹⁰ The Great Idea Finder, *Printing Press* (2004).

mesmerized by the astonishing reports. These also depicted Dracula as a blood-thirsty monster, and the most frequently reprinted woodcut captures the essence of the cannibalistic Beheim quote:

Dracula is enjoying a meal while butchered bodies, which resemble the food on his plate, piled up on his dinner table, as seen in the figure below.



The woodcuts that appeared in the chapbooks were accompanied with quotes in old German which blatantly stated that this barbaric tartar should be abhorred for such deeds, “An gar ein graussemliche erschrockenliche hystoriem, von dem wilden wütrich

Dracole weyde Wie er die leüt gespist hat und gepraten.”¹¹ It is important to note that the word “wütrich” (currently spelled wüterich) used to describe Dracula means tartar,¹² which makes explicit the xenophobic tendencies of the Germans reporting on Dracula and those telling his story. Dracula was by no means a “tartar” in the ethnic sense, he spent most of his adult life waging war against the Turks, but to the Germans his true nationality was irrelevant; he was neither Germanic nor Catholic and therefore belonged to what was quickly becoming the barbarous east. In *The*

¹¹ Quote and image from G. Ronay, *The Truth about Dracula* (New York, 1972), p. 77.

¹² “A member of any of the Turkic and Mongolian peoples of central Asia who invaded western Asia and eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, also a person regarded as ferocious or violent” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*).

Vampire Lectures Laurence Rickels mentions this growing fear of the East (Dracula as the epitome of feared individual) by those in the West (Germans):

It is the East that threatens to attack the West; it is not we who are actively colonizing (and in effect cannibalizing) the East: it is the East that is packed with the animals and subhumans whose drive Westward we must stop in our tracks back East. The threat, embodied, as vampirism, always comes from the East. (Rickels, p.12)

Throughout the remainder of the fifteenth century the stories of Dracula's cruelty continued to fascinate and horrify readers. Germany continued to produce new editions of the original Beheim poem. In the sixteenth century Dracula did not figure in major works of literature, but his story was inserted

in anonymous German novelettes such as *Fortunatus* (1509), Valentin Schumann's *Nachtbüchlein* (1599) and in the satiric poem *Flöhaz, Weiber Traz*, by Johann Fischart (1573), in which Dracula is briefly dismissed as embodying the spirit of evil.¹³

Although the undercurrents of the vampire threat continued to make waves throughout Germany, during the Middle Ages the focus on vampires faded into the background as the hunt for a newer and closer occult figure began, namely the witch persecutions,¹⁴ which hit Germany the hardest

¹³ Florescu, p. 204.

¹⁴ This phenomenon reinforces Lacan's theory of the "other" as invoking a fantasy of cruelty and death. We may imagine ourselves as the givers or receivers of a perfect pain. Thus creating a communal identity of good Christians contributing to the destruction of witchcraft, an evil force or "other" out to destroy Christianity. See footnote 3.

between the late sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century.¹⁵ This coincided with another major event which brought a halt to German literary production, the Thirty Years War.¹⁶ Not until the middle of the eighteenth century did the vampire begin to reappear in German literature. “This came during the time of secularization, the beginning of the modern age, the time when the university as we know it here and now – the institution- was invented” (Rickels 11).

¹⁵ B. Levack, *The Witch-hunt in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, 1995), p. ix. See also Rickels, “In the Middle Ages witches and sorcerers largely took the vampires place. In the Renaissance, witches and heretics were the most popular stars of persecutory attention” p. 10.

¹⁶ Germany suffered an enormous population loss during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). See T. Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760-1860* (Cambridge, 2002), p. I.

German Vampire Literature in the Age of Enlightenment

At first it may appear anachronistic that vampire literature would flourish during the German Enlightenment (1720-1780s),¹⁷ when thoughts focused primarily on reason and rationality. However, when comparing the eighteenth century presence of vampires in literary spheres with the vampire's first appearance in 1463, it becomes apparent that the literature was inspired and developed in a revolutionary time of political and

¹⁷ The German Enlightenment, which was inspired by English writers such as John Locke and David Hume evolved from a society which was becoming increasingly dependant on science, rationality and independent thought. It can also be viewed as a time when the focus was placed on the individual for ethical responsibilities, rather than the church. See K. Vivian, *A Concise History of German Literature to 1900* (Columbia, SC, 1992), p.123-125.

social change. This period also produced a metamorphosis in the attitudes of individuals regarding their approach to the “other.” In this modern, enlightened setting the view of the “other” can best be described as:

“The Other” propels, where nature, instinct and nervous excitation do not. It is that which always insinuates itself between the individual and the objects of “his” desire; which traverses those objects and makes them unstable; and which makes desire insatiable by continuously moving its target.¹⁸ Thus, the “other” or “object of desire” during the German Enlightenment becomes the inexplicable. During this time two major trends appear in German

¹⁸ See M. Bowie, p. 83.

writing: this first type uses the existence of God as an “object of desire.” In order to prove God’s existence, the writers use documented incidents of vampirism, to prove that inexplicable or supernatural creatures exist; therefore God must exist as well. The second form of literature attempts to explain the inexplicable through logic. It is at this time that the vampire reemerges as one of the many forms of “others.” Functioning as “objects of desire,” vampires remain “others” until their existence can be confirmed. It is in this manner that the vampire remains the perpetual “other” or “object of desire” which all intellectuals desperately seek to rationalize.

Several forms of vampire writings published directly prior to the German Enlightenment were prompted by a need to reaffirm belief in the spiritual

world, and vampires became the vehicle to express a phenomenon that simply wasn't explicable without the presence of God. As precursors to the Enlightenment, these works demonstrate the authors' awareness of a growing sense of doubt among the community regarding God's existence. One of the clearest examples of this type of literature comes from the Cambridge Platonist Henry More in his work *An Antidote against Atheism: or, An Appeal to the Natural Faculties of the Mind of Man, whether there be not a God* (1653).¹⁹ He relates the story of

¹⁹ "In these writings, More elaborated a philosophy of spirit which explained all the phenomena of mind and of the physical world as the activity of spiritual substance controlling inert matter. More conceived of both spirit and body as spatially extended, but defined spiritual substance as the obverse of material extension: where body is inert and solid, but divisible;

two men in Silesia in 1591,²⁰ one man committed suicide and the other confessed that he had committed unpardonable sins after he was knocked unconscious in an accident with his horse. They reportedly returned as vampires after death to torment their families,²¹ thus communicating a sense of divine intervention. God permitted the dead to rise as punishment for sins on earth. The incident was documented and proven (through eye witness accounts) and yet there was no rational explanation

spirit is active and penetrable, but indivisible.” See Hutton, Sarah, “The Cambridge Platonists” (2001).

²⁰ Which became part of Austria in the sixteenth century, and this incident was therefore known to German authors. See L. Bielecki “Silesia” (Poland, 2001).

²¹ See M. Summers, *The Vampire in Europe* (New York: 1962), pp. 133-142.

for this type of event, other than that it was inexplicable without the intervention of God.

If God would permit the dead to rise, then it follows that God could also contribute to the vampire's destruction. The German writer, Johann Weikhard Valvasor, documented the necessary involvement of religion in extinguishing the life of a vampire. In Valvasor's *Die Ehre des Hertzogthums Crain* (Nürnberg, 1689) he related the story of a peasant who returned from the grave to feast on the blood of the living and rape the local widows, "weil dieser Georg oder Giure Grando, allbereit viele Ihrer Nachbarn gefressen hette dazu die Witwe²² alle

²² From a psychological perspective, Freud would view this occurrence of widows believing they are being raped by a vampire as a projected fear, "fear of retribution or punishment

Naechte ueberwaeltigte und beschlieffe.”²³ The only way to bring the vampire’s lusty nightly outings to a halt was by invoking the power of God in the form of a prayer said over the corpse, “Raise thine eyes and look upon Jesus Christ who hath redeemed us from the pains of hell by His most Holy Passion and His precious Death upon the Rood” (Summers, *The Vampire in Europe*, 156). Valvasor and More both exemplify Lacan’s definition of the “other” as the unattainable, they attempt to prove the existence of

brought to us by an internalized parent (here husband) who we once wished dead. This is a death we cannot ignore, the death of the other, and like mourning or melancholia, vampirism always emerges displaced with regard to the others death: the dead or missing other” (Rickels, 5-6).

²³ Johann Weikhard Valvasor’s, *Die Ehre des Hertzogthums Crain* (Nürnberg, 1689) Vol. XI, p. 317-319 in R. Brautigam, *Shroudeater* (Amsterdam, 2004).

God through the existence of vampires, but since the existence of vampires hasn't been proven further than by a few eye witness accounts

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related by Germans, who couldn't understand the language of those relating the stories to them,²⁴ they also have failed to strike Lacan's "continuously moving target."

Contrary to More and Valvasor's works, most of the German authors dealing with the topic of vampirism seemed so inspired by the modern ideas

²⁴ These accounts would, in fact, need to be "eye" witness as the in area, around Laubach, from which the bulk of these stories originate from, "the Bulk of the People there speak *Carniolian*, or *Sclavonian*, Tongue, and have some Customs peculiar to themselves" (Summers, *The Vampire in Europe*, 159). With such a language barrier involved the validity of the reports and documents become questionable.

of rationality and science; that they struggled to find logical explanations for unfounded occurrences and document them as scientifically as they could, without necessarily using God as a motivating or contributing factor. One of the earliest of these types of enlightened documents came from Christian Thomasius, who in 1688 used rationality to argue against occult figures, here witches.²⁵ Philip Rohr was so determined to clarify the inexplicable nature of vampires that he organized a meeting in Leipzig where the brightest scholars came together and attempted to rationalize the rumors of vampirism.

²⁵ “In 1688 Christian Thomasius first used the German language for university lectures. His practicality and commitment to reason were evident in his campaign against witch hunts” (Vivian 124).

These writings were published in the treaty *De masticatione mortuorum* (Leipzig, 1679):

Those who have written of the history of funeral rites have not neglected to record that bodies have appeared to have devoured the grave clothes in which they were wound. Some learned men have ascribed this phenomenon to natural causes which are not clearly known to us; whilst others have explained it by assuming that there are animals which glut upon corpses. This seemed to be a fit subject which might be treated in a formal disputation, all the rules and regulations being duly observed, in order that we might arrive at the best explanation and elucidate the matter.²⁶ (Summers, *The Vampire in Europe*, 178-179)

²⁶ The matter that Philip Rohr was trying to elucidate was the conception that, “If cloth touches the mouth of the corpse, the corpse is apt to chew on it, thereby bringing about the death of the friends and relatives of the deceased through an agency that is never explained. So, what was being observed? They were

Unfortunately, due to the rarity of this tract, it is difficult to assess the extent to which these scholars answered the pertinent questions surrounding vampirism. It is doubtful however, that this question of the dead devouring their shrouds was sufficiently answered in this tract, given that this issue continued to be discussed in literature, particularly in Karl Bartsch's, *Sagen, Märchen, und Gebräuche aus Meklenburg* (Vienna, 1879).²⁷ It is interesting to note that Philip Rohr's tract focuses on key principles

observing the effect of capillary attraction on the shroud." See P. Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death* (New Haven, 1988), p. 115.

²⁷ "Bartsch was observing the effect of capillary attraction on the shroud. The moisture would presumably cause the shroud to be plastered against the mouth, so that it would adhere to the mouth as it dried." See K. Bartsch in P. Barber, p. 216.

of the Enlightenment: the attempt to explain the incomprehensible²⁸ by addressing the issue in a formal, civilized, and scholarly manner; and the use of the word “elucidate” which was essential to all enlightened thinking, the idea that every mystery can be understood in worldly terms. Following in the footsteps of Rohr, in the 1730s²⁹ several German scholars produced similar monographs and academics dissertations,³⁰ all of which attempt to

²⁸ Again here as Lacan’s desired, inexplicable “Other.”

²⁹ Many tracts evolved after the 1718 Treaty of Passarowitz, which gave the Banat and Oltenia (Wallachia and Serbia, where most of the vampire stories originated) to the Habsburg Empire, at this time German’s began entering the territory and documenting what they saw. See L. Mellish, “Summary History of Wallachia” (2003).

³⁰ Several of the tracts published after Rohr’s work are: 1728 Michael Ranftius *De masticatione mortuorum in tumulis liber* (Leipzig, 1728), John Christian Stock, *Dissertatio de*

clarify the mystery of the vampire as the “other.”

The tracts consequently fall short of their target, which leads vampire literature in a new direction for the successive, major literary movement, Romanticism.

cadaveribus sanguisugis (Jena, 1732), *Relation von den Vampyren oder Menschengaugern* (Leipzig, 1732), *Relation von denen in Servien sich erzeugenden Blutsaugern* (1732), *Besondere Nachricht von denen vampyren oder sogenannten Blut-Saugern* (1732), *Uisus et repertus über die sogenannten Vampyren* (Nürnberg, 1732), John Christian Rohlius and John Hertelius, *Dissertatio de hominibus post mortem sanguisugis, uulgo dictis Uampyrea* (Leipzig, 1732), John Henry Zopfius and Francis van Dalen, *Dissertatio de Uampyris Seruiensibus* (Halle, 1733), Michael Ranftius, *Tractatus von dem Kauen und Schatzen der Toten in Gräbern, worin die wahre Beschaffenheit der Hungarischen Vampyrs oder Blut-Sauger gezeigt, auch alle von dieser Materie bisher edirten Schriften recensiret werden* (Leipzig, 1734), and John Christian Harenberg, *Von Vampyren* (1739). See M. Summers, *Vampire in Europe*, pp. 132-133.

Vampire Literature in German Romanticism

The dawning of inspired Romanticism spawned from the period of rational German Enlightenment.³¹ While the dates of German Romanticism are contestable,³² the characteristics

³¹ “Die Romantik stand im Gegensatz zum beschränkten Bürgertum und der Auffassung der Aufklärung, dass der Mensch mit seinem Verstand die Welt erfassen kann” (Koepke, 84). The Romantic coincided with Classicism and can be seen similar to the literature of the Sturm und Drang, only slightly less emphatic, as the Romantic writers were inspired by the writers of this period, such as Goethe and Schiller, who seem to transcend all categories and are characterized as Classic, Sturm und Drang and early Romantic. See K. Vivian, chapters 6-8.

³² It is difficult to pinpoint the exact dates of German Romanticism; according to Ralph Tymms, author of *German Romantic Literature* (London, 1955) the Romantic period falls between 1790 and 1830, but it has also been argued that German Romanticism began as early as 1750. “Romanticism (literature), a movement in the literature of virtually every country of Europe, the United States, and Latin America that lasted from about 1750 to about 1870, characterized by reliance on the imagination and subjectivity of approach, freedom of

which determine what can be categorized as Romantic literature are significantly more unwavering. Ralph Tymms describes it as a:

deliberate turning-away from everyday reality in favor of an idyllic dream, it is a characteristic retreat into an ideal state of affairs of the authors own imagining, which he associated with the world of medieval Christendom.³³

thought and expression, and an idealization of nature.” See Tracing Board, “Romanticism” (2004).

³³ See R. Tymms, *German Romantic Literature* (London, 1955), p. 1. Romanticism also developed in a time societal turmoil, “the early Romantic period thus coincides with what is often called the ‘age of revolutions’--including, of course, the American (1776) and the French (1789) revolutions--an age of upheavals in political, economic, and social traditions, the age which witnessed the initial transformations of the Industrial Revolution.” See L. Melani, *A Guide to the Study of Literature* (2001). Thus, authors were inspired to recollect a more positive period in time and glorify it as their ideal. It was an insignificant detail to the Romantics that Medieval Christendom

Lacan would categorize this trend in regard to the other as: “fantasy. Imagine an ideal counterpart, and represent the Other as holding the key to our felicity, or as embodying in his or her own person the pleasures we seek” (Lacan, 177). Thus the “other” in vampire literature becomes an object of passion, fantasy, and unconscious desire: essentially an alter-ego or Doppelgänger who is free from societal constraints or expectations. The vampire persists as an object of fear, both for its moral corruption³⁴ and non-Christian associations, yet in Romantic literature

wasn't perfect; it was their duty to use their powers of imagination (as opposed to reason) to make it utopian.

³⁴ Initially vampires became such due to moral “transgressions” committed while living. See Ronay, 17.

“fear” transfigures into an emotion that is thrilling, scintillating and desirable.³⁵

In 1748 Heinrich August Ossenfelder wrote “Der Vampir,”³⁶ the first modern vampire poem. The poem reveals societal fears regarding religious and moral corruption. Ossenfelder set the stage for future use of vampires as representations of the “other” as non-Christian religions, which posed a threat to Christianity.³⁷ The poem describes a young Christian girl following her mother’s religious

³⁵ “For Freud, morbid dread always signifies repressed sexual wishes. The vampire is a kind of phantom projection produced by the medium’s desire to be possessed, controlled, vampirized” (Rickels, 19).

³⁶ Ossenfelder, Heinrich August, “Der Vampir” in *Der Naturforscher* (Leipzig, 1748): pp. 380-381.

³⁷ “References to the girl’s Christian beliefs and the vampire lover’s opposed philosophies implied that the worlds they represented were in deadly competition.” (Ronay, 39).

beliefs, “Mein liebes Mägdchen glaubet, Beständig steif und feste, An die gegebenen Lehren, Der immer frommen Mutter; Nun warte nur Christianchen” (Ossenfelder, 1-4,8), yet she still falls prey to the advances of the vampire, thus implying she may have been weak in her convictions. Ossenfelder also introduces the traditional folklore associated with the vampire into the fictional setting. He juxtaposes the descriptions of the folkloric vampire as a threatening blood sucker with the images of the sensual nature of the vampire and the sexual repression of the victim:³⁸

³⁸ “The nightmare has been received as a visitation by some spirit with is associated with issues of sexual repression and release” (Rickels, 7).

Und wenn du sanfte schlummerst, Von deinen schönen
Wangen, Den frischen Purpur saugen.³⁹ Alsdenn wirst
du erschrecken,⁴⁰ Wenn ich dich werde küssen,⁴¹ Und
matt in meine Arme, Gleich einer Toten sinkest“
(Ossenfelder, 13-17, 20-21).

³⁹ In J. Zopfius' dissertation, *Dissertatio de Uampyris Seruiensibus* (Halle, 1733), he describes vampires as, "Vampires attack people sleeping in their beds, suck out all their blood from their bodies and destroy them" (Summers, *The Vampire. His Kith and Kin*, 1).

⁴⁰ See footnote 34, referring once more to Freudian psychology of fear as secret desire.

⁴¹ "One of the powerful elements in the allure of the undead, is the combining of the sensuality of death, and the wild casting of inhibitions and restraining moralities. The vampire in fiction and folklore possess a definite capacity to elicit sexual responses from enemies and victims alike." See M. Bunson, *The Vampire Encyclopedia* (New York, 1993), p. 237.

The murder is depicted as a love scene, the vampire comes in while she's sleeping and literally kisses her to death.

The next influential vampire poem was Gottfried August Bürger's "Lenore" (1773), which was published in the *Gottinger Musenalmanach*. This poem is similar to Ossenfelder's in its underlying social critique and issue of sexual transgression. In "Lenore" the social critique works on two levels; Bürger incorporates both the fear of the "other" as eastern and as the feared religion of the time, Protestantism. As the poem opens, troops are marching home from Prague where they fought with King Friedrich's army, and in the midst of onlookers awaiting the return of loved ones, Lenore is searching for her lover, Wilhelm, "Er war mit König Friedrichs

Macht, Gezogen in die Prager Schlacht” (Bürger 5-6). It is not surprising that Wilhelm doesn’t return, since he was fighting for the enemy, or “other” meaning Bohemians and Protestants.⁴² Lenore automatically rejects her Catholicism, and when her mother attempts to console her through prayer, she discovers it is too late: Lenore has abandoned her religion and declares the only heaven available to her is in death, as Wilhelm, not God, is her savior, “Bei Wilhelm nur wohnt Seligkeit, Wo Wilhelm fehlt, brennt Hölle! Lisch aus, mein Licht! Auf ewig aus!”

⁴² The Thirty Years War was precipitated when Friedrich V. (a Protestant) was crowned king of Bohemia in 1619, rather than Ferdinand II, who was the rightful successor in the line of Catholic Habsburgs. A year after his coronation his troops were defeated in the battle of the White Mountain in Prague by Johann Tserclaes Tilly, a Bavarian general. See Koepke, 60.

(Bürger, stanza 9).⁴³ She has essentially made desire and sexual attraction her priority over her worship of God. That night as Lenore lies down to sleep she hears Wilhelm's voice through her window. He tells her to hurry as they need to rush off to their honeymoon suite. Unable to resist temptation Lenore leaps onto the back of his horse and they begin flying over the sleeping city. At the end of each stanza the lines repeat, "Der volle Mond schien helle, Wie ritten die Toten so schnelle!" indicating Wilhelm's vampirism; as he has become part of the undead, driven by sexual drives. In the end Lenore is punished for her haphazard attitude toward religion

⁴³ In stating "Mein Licht auf ewig aus" Lenore is essentially hoping for her own death. Suicide was another criterion for becoming a vampire. See Rickels, 2-4.

and morality: she is essentially scared to death when the vampire, Wilhelm, removes his cloak and becomes death itself, “Sein Körper zum Gerippe, Mit Stundenglas und Hippe. Lenorens Herz, mit Beben, Rang zwischen Tod und Leben” (Bürger stanzas 31-32).

In 1797 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote his ballad “Die Braut von Korinth,” which was inspired by the story recorded by Phlegon Aelius von Tralles in *The Book of Wonders* in the second century, and was collected and published in 1666 under the title *Anthropodemus plutonicus - Eine Weltbeschreibung von allerley wunderbaren*

Menschen.⁴⁴ Whereas most Romantic authors focused on the Middles Ages for inspiration and retreat, Goethe viewed Greek antiquity as the ideal.⁴⁵ Contrary to the other German poems, Goethe's ballad focuses on a female vampire; he was likely inspired by the mythology of Greece and applied the prototype of a lamia.⁴⁶ Thematically Goethe's poem

⁴⁴ Goethe's poem was first published by Schiller in *Musen-Almanach für das Jahr 1798*. See A. Lenz "Goethe: „Die Braut von Korinth"- Ein mitfühlendes Vampirmädchen" (Erlangen, 2004).

⁴⁵ "Goethe approached the notion of 'classicality' as an evocative ideal attached to the model of ancient Greek culture, as an aesthetic means to transcending the limitations of his place and time" (Vivian, 165).

⁴⁶ "Goethes ureigene Vampirgestalt, die nicht den gängigen Vorstellungen des 18. Jahrhunderts entsprach, entstand wahrscheinlich in Anlehnung seiner klassischen Studien. Er traf hierbei wohl auf die griechischen Lamien, „[...] den weiblichen Vampir der Antike, aus dem Umfeld der Hekate" (Lenz, 3.1). "Lamia is a kind of female vampire, generally held

is reminiscent of the other poems discussed: it deals with both issues of religion and immoral sexual desire. The poem begins with a young man traveling to Korinth to meet his promised bride, he is a bit nervous about how the Christian family will react to him, a heathen, “Er ist noch ein Heide mit den Seinen, Und sie sind schon Christen und getauft” (Goethe, 10-11). Thus Goethe is introducing the inevitable culture clash that his own society was not devoid of: Goethe is writing only ten years after Kant’s declaration that nothing is certain and we cannot know anything.⁴⁷ True to tradition, the poem

to be stunningly attractive and highly dangerous to males and children. A lamia can also be used to refer to any female bloodsucker” (Bunson, 150).

⁴⁷ In 1781 Immanuel Kant wrote the *Critique of Pure Reason* which claimed, “we simply cannot know anything about things-

ends with the ultimate destruction of the heathen, unable to resist the sexual temptation of the vampire and the vampire herself, who is also driven by sexual impulse from her solitary grave, implying she is an “other” alienated from society, in a metaphorical nunnery “Bin ich, rief sie aus, so fremd im Hause, Ach, so halt man mich in meiner Klause!” (Goethe, 36-38). In the end the lovers are consumed in the fire of their desire and condemnation.

In c.1800 Ludwig Tieck wrote the novella “The Bride of the Grave,”⁴⁸ which implemented Goethe’s character of the female vampire. Although

in-themselves; apart from what we discover in possible experience and what can be demonstrated by the methods of transcendental philosophy” (Pinkard, 40).

⁴⁸ In P. Haining, ed. *Great Tales of Terror from Europe and America Gothic Stories of Horror and Romance 1765-1840* (London, 1972).

this work lacks the social commentary of the others,⁴⁹ it deals most specifically with the issue of the “other” as irresistible, deadly sexual desire. The novella deals with the main character, Walter’s, inability to accept the death of his first wife, Brunhilda. Although he remarries and could have a perfect life at home, Walter is fixated on the “other,” Brunhilda. In a desperate attempt to curb his desire

⁴⁹ While most of the vampire works have criticized or commented on the societal conditions from which they developed, this work most depicts Tieck’s unfaltering Romanticism, meaning his devotion to expressing pure emotion, and the emotion that consumed him on a daily basis was fear. As a child Tieck was obsessed with Schauerromane and had in youth a preoccupation with the barrenness of life and fascination with death. Later in life Tieck continued to believe in the supernatural and philosophized that the real and the marvelous only differ in degrees of frequency. See J. Trainer *Ludwig Tieck from Gothic to Romantic* (London, 1964), pp 46-47, 69.

he invokes the power of a necromancer to raise Brunhilda from the grave. His drive to obtain the fantasy of the “other” leads to the destruction of his family, as the lamia-type Brunhilda thirsts for blood and quenches it on Walter’s children. Walter continues to desire the “other” after this occurrence; his new wife, Swanhilda, leaves him and he finds a new lover, who resembles her physically. When he moves to embrace her on their wedding night, she turns into a serpent and devours him. Thus, Walter is also punished for his attempt to possess the fantasy “other,” rather than accept the reality of his situation.

It is interesting to note that just as reference to the vampire gains prevalence in other areas of Europe, the vampire virtually vanishes from German literature. In England, John Polidori aroused interest

in the vampire when he published his short story, *The Vampyre*, in Colburn's April 1819 issue of *New Monthly Magazine*. The work was immediately translated into French and German, and was even presented in numerous theatrical versions in Paris.⁵⁰ When viewed in respect to the countless vampire stories written around this time in England and France,⁵¹ the disappearance of the vampire in German literature seems puzzling. This disparity has its roots in Germany's political and social turmoil.

⁵⁰ See E. Bleiler *Three Gothic Novels* (New York, 1966) p. xxxviii.

⁵¹ J.R. Planché translates Nodier's *Le Vampire, The Vampire Bride, or The Tenant of the Tomb* by George Blink, *Varney the Vampire, Carmilla* by LeFanu, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Alexandre Dumas's *Balsamo the Magician*, and Bulwer Lytton's *The Haunted and the Haunters* and *A Strange Story*. Ibid, p. xxxix.

Politically, Germany remained shaken in the aftermath of the French Revolution, which brought an end to the Holy Roman Empire. As a repercussion, Germany became fragmented: existing as a conglomerate of several hundred principalities. The shift in class structure due to the impact of the Industrial Revolution caused a need for development on political, social and economic spheres.⁵² It is within this context that not only issues of German socio-political identity were pushed to the forefront, but that concerns regarding personal self-reflection and analysis resurfaced and took priority over the issue of the other: the vampire.

⁵² See Vivian, 225-226.

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Meanings in the Death of Balder

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Abstract:

Without question, one of the most perplexing stories of the Germanic Religious System to decipher is that of Balder's death. What little remains of the god is the time shortly before his death and the developments that arise because of such. His death marks the beginning of the Ragnarok and is an event Snorri Sturluson describes as “the greatest misfortune ever to befall gods and men”.

This paper examines the three main sources that describe the events leading to and following Balder's death, the major scholar of the past and applies a new approach to the Germanic Religious System in general to the stories of Balder. This approach is part a new methodology involving six main points of reference: Proto-Indo-European (PIE) reconstruction (as well as non-PIE influences), name etymologies, historical memory (Jungian theories), socio-cultural interpretations (Durkheimian theories), system theory (includes the role of the cult, parallelisms, functionalism, etc.) and the order/chaos paradigm. Using each of these points of reference at first separately and then combining them, this paper will shed new light on this multilayered story.

Balder – Baldur, Baldr (ON) –
Balder (OE, OHG, etc.)

Without question, one of the most perplexing stories to decipher is that of Balder's death. Although what little remains of the god, it is the time shortly before his death that have been best preserved. Snorri describes the whole event as ‘the greatest misfortune ever to befall gods and men’.

Even though the story is only found in Scandinavia, the model (brothers killing each other by accident) is in a number of other Germanic tales – namely among them *Beowulf*, and the model of the invulnerable god killed by a blind god is also found in the Indian religion (Dumézil 1959). This pushes the story much further back in time.

Balder's name, which is found throughout the Germanic world, is etymologically unclear.

Suggestions have been made for his name to mean “the shining one”, ON *baldr*, OHG bald “bold” and PIE **bhel-* “white”, and some have attempted to link it to the Old English *bealdor* “lord”, but these are weak at best. Balder seems more likely to be a link back to the Proto-Indo-European god of the shining sky's aspects of light and pureness – aspects lost by a faded Tyr or Odin.

There are really three stories that tell of Balder's death: Snorri's, Saxo's and the west Norse poetic sources. The latter ones differ from Snorri in one respect: Did Hod act alone? Saxo, on the other hand, is way out in the realm of Christianised folklore, but his account yields one interesting

contrasts that must be considered. His death is also mentioned in the (German) Second Merseburg Charm.

Balder is the brother of Hod, and one could even go as far as to state that they are like opposite twins. This notion of being the twin children of Odin and Frigg is further compounded in the opposite natures of Hod and Balder: Hod is the ugly, blind god of darkness and winter, while Balder is the beautiful, brightly shining god of light and of either blossoming spring or mid-summer. It is interesting to note how they are an idealised set of brothers: Balder represents all that is pure and good, while Hod is quite literally blind to his responsibilities.

It would be an error not to understand much of the details of the Balder story as later

Christianisation. Snorri paints Balder as a very Christ-like figure, who dies and returns to life (which is not the case), while displaying a Cain-Abel like set of brothers. But the story itself cannot be purely of Christian origin as it has some parallel to the story of Achilles, other parallels in the Indo-European daughter religions and appears in the kennings of the west Norse poetry.

Snorri writes that Balder had some terrible dreams that threatened his life and that when he told the Æsir these dreams, they decided to seek protection for Balder ‘from every kind of peril’. Frigg, being the motherly figure that she is, goes out and asks all kinds of creatures and things not to harm Balder. Afterwards and to test whether or not this had worked, the Æsir amused themselves by

throwing darts at, striking and throwing stones at Balder.

‘No matter what was done’, the Æsir were not able to hurt Balder, and ‘everyone thought that a fine thing’. Loki however was annoyed at all of this sport, and he went disguised as a woman to visit Frigg. Frigg asked this woman if she knew what the Æsir were doing at the assembly. She answered that they were all throwing things at Balder, moreover that he was not being hurt. Frigg remarked that "neither weapons nor trees will injure Balder; I have taken an oath from them all". The woman asked if everything had sworn an oath to spare Balder. Frigg replied that mistletoe took no oath from it because she thought it too young. Thereupon the woman disappeared.

Loki took hold of the mistletoe, pulled it up and went to the assembly. Now Hod, standing on the outer edge of the circle of men throwing things at Balder, was asked by Loki why he was not throwing darts at Balder. Hod answered that he was blind and therefore unable to aim any weapon. Then Loki armed Hod with a shoot of mistletoe and showed him where Balder was standing. Hod took the mistletoe and aimed at Balder as directed by Loki. The dart went right through him, and he fell dead to the ground.

Interestingly enough, mistletoe is in fact very toxic, and the berries are poisonous. Again, the story works a little educational lesson into itself. The mistletoe was shot like a projectile, so one must understand it as either a spear- or javelin-like object

or as an arrow. The former is more favourable as Snorri does not describe any type of bow. Snorri's story continues with an account of Balder's funeral: 'The Æsir, in shock of this matter despite the fact that it was predestined, could not take vengeance in Balder's sanctuary. The Æsir wept, mourned and grieved. Odin, understanding the true nature of this loss to the gods, was the most saddened of the gods. When the gods had recovered from the shock, Frigg asked which of the Æsir would ride to Hel to try to find Balder, and offer Hel a ransom if she would allow Balder to return. Hermod, one of Odin's sons, volunteered and took Sleipnir and galloped away towards Hel. The Æsir took Balder's body and carried it down to the sea to Balder's ship, Ringhorn. The gods built Balder's funeral pyre on it, but they

could not move it at all, so they sent for the giantess Hyrrokkin (ON “the one who has withered from fire”). She came riding on a wolf with vipers for reins; four berserks tried to guard it, but they were unable to and struck it down. Then Hyrrokkin with the first shove launched it in such a way that the rollers burst into flame and the whole world trembled. Then Balder's body was carried out onto the ship, and when his wife Nanna saw that, her heart broke from grief and she died. She was carried on to the pyre, and it was set alight. All sorts of people came to this cremation.’ Snorri describes the procession in much detail: ‘First and foremost, Odin, accompanied by Frigg and his valkyries and ravens. Frey drove in a chariot drawn his the boar. Heimdall rode his horse, and Freyja was driving her cats. A

great crowd of giants came too. Odin laid on the pyre the gold ring, which is called Draupnir, which afterwards every ninth night dropped from it eight rings of equal value. Balder's horse with all its harness was led to the pyre.' The details that Snorri proves must be considered a model of how this type of burial was done. It is interesting to note how Balder is already in Hel before his body is sent there – again a support for the Germanic notation of spirit. Snorri then describes Hermod's ride to Hel and how Hel seeks the grief of all beings as a ransom for Balder, a ransom which all things other than Loki disguised as Thokk pays. For these two crimes Loki is punished – he is bound in chains until Ragnarok, when he breaks free. Balder's death is also avenged by Vali, who kills Hod when he is only one day old.

Some scholars have linked this story to a shamanistic ritual, where a fertility god dies and is reborn (i.e., Balder dies and is reborn as Vali).

Saxo turns this story into the rivalry between two men over the woman Nanna (who is Balder's wife in the west Norse tradition). His story tells of how Balder, who is described a whining semi-god, tries to win the hand of the mortal Nanna, with whom he was fallen in love with after seeing her bath, but has to contend with the mortal Hod, who is Nanna's "foster-brother" and husband. Despite being warned by the Norns, who appear as a mystical group of women not to attack Balder because no mere weapons can harm him, he obtains a magical sword and eventually slays Balder, but only after several battles involves Danish and Swedish armies. Of this

account, the only part that one can use for analysis is the fact that there existed a rivalry between Balder and Hod. This seems to be the only part of the actual story that could have been retained, but it is a part that is absent in Snorri's account.

The scattered poetic sources describe in less detail much of the same story, but the name Hod as the lone perpetrator of the crime, not as a tool of Loki's mischief. They describe the vengeance taken against Hod as Snorri does, but mention nothing of Loki. Further kennings name Hod as Balder's killer.

G. Neckel (1920)¹ thinks of Balder as a late edition to the Germanic gods and connects him to gods of the Near East such as Orpheus and Adonis.

¹ From Turville-Petre 1964.

These are fertility gods that die with the winter and are reborn in the spring. Their deaths were violent and during their youth, and their return from the other world was marked with much celebration. F.R. Schröder (1941)², who connects Balder to **bal-ora-m* and a fertility god, has drawn scholars to relate Balder to the Finnish Lemminkäinen, who like Balder is killed by a blind man with a shaft and returns to life, but the stories of these two gods seem only to have superficial connections. Turville-Petre suggests that Odin is actually Hod (one of the kennings refers to Odin actually being blind: Helblindi), and that he slough Balder, just as he

² From Turville-Petre 1964.

slough many of his other favourites. All of these thoughts are, in my view, stretches of the truth.

Balder is a fertility god of spring/summer killed by the winter. This is not a ritual that is repeated as in some other religions³, as the gods do not expect his return, as de Vries, Frazer, Ebenbauer and others have suggested. His death is a signal of the beginning of the end as one should understand that it is the long winter (i.e., the winter's defeat of the spring and summer) that marks the coming of Ragnarok.

Another subtext that many scholars – most notably de Vries – read here is that Balder's death

³ That is to state that Balder would be killed every winter and reborn every spring as fertility gods are in some religions.

takes place during what could be a rite of passage⁴, and that Vali is the rebirth of the boyish Balder into a man. Here again, one finds a model built into the story (i.e., like Balder's funeral, this can be seen as an idealistic model of the event), but it would be a shortcoming to make the connection between Balder and Vali as Balder is in Hel and shall return after the Ragnarok. Although it is possible that at some point that this was trying to be expressed, it cannot be clearly deduced as such.

It would not be out of the realm of thought to conclude that Balder and Hod are in fact extensions of the Proto-Indo-European Twins with some trait influence from the Proto-Indo-European Thunder-

⁴ That would be that the Æsir are throwing things at Balder to test his ability to withstand pain.

God (namely the warrior aspect) and the Proto-Indo-European God of the Shining Sky (namely the seasonal aspects). If they are the divine twins, they were then driven into the background with the emergence of Frey and Freya into the Germanic world. Hengist and Horsa, the twins that lead the Angles into England in the Anglo-Saxon religious tradition, have been linked to the Proto-Indo-European twins because of their relation to the horse (NHG Hengst, Eng. horse); this would be the Angle version of Balder and Hod.

Hod and Balder both return to positions of power after Ragnarok, perhaps signalling a return to normalised weather patterns and thus a return to order.

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