

**Háskóli Íslands**

**Hugvísindasvið**

**Viking and Mediaeval Norse Studies**

# **Dying to Become the Un-Dead**

*A Comparative Study Between the Icelandic Draugar and the  
Bulgarian Vampire*

Ritgerð til MA-prófs.

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## Abstract

Stories of revenants have been the topic of various fields of study. Mostly they are regarded as plot devices in literature or as one of the main representatives of the horror genre that exploits the primal fear which they represent. This thesis will compare two types of revenants: the Icelandic draugr and the Bulgarian вампир. Specific traits the two traditions have in common will be identified, such as their appearance, the apotropaic methods used to protect against them and the different ways they are disposed of. It will be suggested that the two traditions display similar beliefs: in death, the soul, the afterlife, as well as shared observations of the physiological processes in corpses. An attempt will be made to see whether these two societies – the Icelandic in the Middle Ages and the Bulgarian in more recent times – believed in similar supernatural phenomena.

Sögur af afturgöngum hafa komið við sögu í margvíslegum rannsóknum. Oftast er litið á þær sem lið í frásagnarflettu í bókmenntaverkum og sem einn helsta fulltrúa óhugnaðar í bókmenntum sem byggir á frumhræðslu sem afturgöngur standa fyrir. Í ritgerðinni verður gerður samanburður á tveimur tegundum afturgangna, íslenska drauginum og вампир frá Búlgaríu. Dregnir verða fram sameiginleg einkenni þessara fyrirbæra, svo sem útlit, hvernig verjast skal þeim og hvernig unnt er að losa sig við þær. Því verður haldið fram að í báðum hefðum komi fram svipaður hugmyndir um dauðann, sálina, líf eftir dauðann, auk sams konar vitneskja um líffræðileg ferli í líkinu eftir dauðann. Reynt verður að komast að því hvort samfélögin tvö – Ísland á miðöldum og Búlgaría á síðari öldum – deildu líkan átrúnað á yfirnáttúruleg fyrirbæri.

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*“This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine.”*

– William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

## Introduction

Revenants throughout the years have been examined from different points of view – cultural, medical, sociological, metaphysical and psychological. The different types of revenants have been the topic of these fields of study – specifically the vampires and their variations in different cultures and social groups. The vampire has been studied as a mass occurrence throughout time and space. What this thesis will try to add to this field of study is the comparison of two types of revenants – the draugr and the вампир, from two seemingly different cultures – the Icelandic and the Bulgarian, divided by time and, more importantly – space (3,692 km of it). This distance, however, might not have stopped the interactions of either of these cultural representatives. Thorough scholarly work has been done on the connections between the so-called Norse men and Russia and its origin, however, it might be plausible to suggest that there are some connections also between the Nordic tribes and the Bulgarian people. Before the states and the countries, which we know and recognize as the Eastern European countries and Russia, were established as such they were divided into different small fractions and tribes that were interacting with each other and contributing to their ideology and belief. Firstly, it may be beneficial to note that Old Great Bulgaria was established c.630-635, and after the invasion of the Khazars one part of the Bulgar tribes went north and settled between the rivers Volga and Kama around the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. When many of the Arabic geographers, especially Ibn Rustah and Ibn Fadlan, were reporting their accounts of interactions with the Rus, they were probably observing a cultural mix of Scandinavians, Slavs, Bulgars, Khazars, and many others.<sup>1</sup> We may infer from the *Russian Primary Chronicle* that Scandinavians were frequent visitors of the Slavs, not to mention the later interactions between the established Russia and Haraldr Harðráði.<sup>2</sup>

This thesis does not have as its focal point how frequent or important historically and politically these connections were, but to observe how deeply rooted they were and if there are any surviving similarities in the culture and belief system of both. It would be a Sisyphean labor if an attempt was made to examine every single detail of the two cultures and compare them separately. Therefore, this thesis will focus on one idea. It

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<sup>1</sup>Чевлев, В. "Топография Крепости Самара 1586-1706 гг., Этимология и Предшествующие Упоминания Топонима в Письменных Источниках. (Topography of the Samara Fortress, Etymology and Preceding Mention of the Toponym in the Written Sources)" <[www.academia.edu](http://www.academia.edu)>. (Retrieved, 2015).

<sup>2</sup>Nestor, Samuel H. Cross, and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor. *The Russian Primary Chronicle*. (Cambridge, Mass: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953).

will single out the myth of the vampire/draugr and make an attempt to see whether these two societies – the Icelandic and the Bulgarian – might have believed in a similar supernatural phenomenon. I will try to provide this topic with archaeological, medical, literary and particularized evidence to make a suggestion that these two examples could display links in world-views and a general understanding of the surrounding world, which are so embedded in both belief systems that they still exist and, to some extent, still represent the same ideas. I will make this attempt through examining the physical occurrences in the human body and the psychological issues that the two revenants might represent. Whether this thesis accomplishes its goal or not, it will still give enough reason for future scholarly work on this topic, which will help clarify to what extent the two social groups were in contact and whether one belief system has influenced the other and to what degree.

That being said, the similarities that may surface from this research may also be the product of a wider cultural background. I am not schooled enough to make any attempt to unearth what this background might have represented and for that reason I will leave this to future scholarly work. Moreover, the conclusions that might be observed during the course of the present research should be handled with care, keeping in mind that they are intended more as propositions than actual facts.

For this comparative study to be feasible one misconception should be dispelled before we plunge into comparing the two – the notion that vampires suck blood. One of the main reasons why this trait has been attributed to the vampire is because when putative revenants were dug up from their graves to ascertain the assumption, blood would be found on their mouths and nostrils. Modern medicine has explained why this occurs (it will be further discussed later). Moreover, pathologists have explained that, because of temperature or difference in how the decomposition proceeds in different environments, blood may (as with the vampire) or may not (as with the draugr) be found when a reputed revenant is dug up.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, this specific feature of the vampire should be disregarded for this and several other reasons. Firstly, because this thesis will aim to compare the two supernatural entities through the ideas they represent – life after death, specific fear, and different personifications of diseases – mental or physical. Secondly, blood is not as strongly bound to the myth in the initial older sources for the vampire. In them it feeds as much on the psyche as on physique – mental strength is sucked as much as blood. Lastly, it is certain that the European people had no

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<sup>3</sup>This will be discussed further on p.22.

information about vampire bats prior to the discovery of the New World. It is still debatable whether blood-sucking is a later development of the myth. The primary sources have shown us that this is highly plausible.

All of the primary sources used for examining both supernatural beings must and will be considered as folkloric literature. Fundamental similarities between the sagas and the folk-tales will be pointed out supporting the assumption that the analysed supernatural beings are in fact a folkloric phenomenon and the belief in them has been preserved through the centuries. This is done, because this thesis will try to discover firstly, whether connections might have been registered in regards to the cultural aspect, and more importantly, how profound they might have been. This is usually reflected in the folkloric tradition – a tradition that has been kept even to the present day.

I will generally divide this work into two main parts – the first will analyse the Bulgarian vampire, and the other the Icelandic draugr. The first part will be used as the foundation for comparison, whereas the second will be the completed comparison. Furthermore, because of this division the secondary scholarly work will be examined and acknowledged in the beginning of each chapter.

### **A Study Throughout the Decades**

In the present day a great number of definitions exist on what folklore is. The main concept is generally agreed upon – everything that has a distinct archaic origin. The term by which it is widely addressed, however, has been established much later. It was used for the first time in 1846 by William John Thoms in his column titled “Folk-Lore” for Charles Wentworth Dilke's magazine *Athenaeum*.<sup>4</sup> Thoms explains that for the creation of the term he used two Anglo-Saxon roots: *folc* – folk, people, and nation;<sup>5</sup> and *\*lore* (pp. from *leornian*) – knowledge, wisdom.<sup>6</sup> Even though he does not give a clear definition of the term, he broadly includes in it the experience and knowledge of a nation that is orally transmitted – manners, customs, songs, etc.<sup>7</sup> This is one of the reasons why I will consider the primary materials as folkloric and treat the matters of the *draugr* and *vamnup* as ones concerning folkloric characters. Before doing so it will

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<sup>4</sup>Ambrose Merton [pseudonym William J. Thoms]. “Folk-Lore.” *The Athenaeum* 982 (August, 1846). In Miller, Stephen. 2011. “The Athenæum: The Folklore Columns (1846–9).” *Folklore* 122, no. 3, 327-341. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 10, 2016).

<sup>5</sup>Hall, J. R. Clark. *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary for the Use of Students*. (Cambridge: University Press, 1916), p.108.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p.186.

<sup>7</sup>Todorova-Pirgova, Iveta Petkova. *Bayaniya i Magii / Traditional Healing Rituals and Magical Practices*. (Sofia: Akademichno Izdatelstvo "Prof.Marin Drinov," 2003), p.7.

be beneficial to try to answer the question of how folklore, mythology and legends came into existence.

Most, if not all, societies and belief systems have the idea that every living thing possesses a driving force, something that connects the corporeal to the indescribable phenomena. Later on this has developed into the idea of the soul. The concept of the existence of another world, be it of gods or other supernatural beings – dead people, harmful creatures, etc – also exists among many social groups.<sup>8</sup> In Eastern European tradition there is an understanding that the gods live in another world together with the forefathers, the personified diseases, and all other supernatural ideas that people believed in,<sup>9</sup> and which played a part in the everyday life and customs of the societies.

Furthermore, a need existed to explicate the problem of why a spirit vacated a body; what happened to it after the departure; what happened to the flesh after the spirit had left, and most importantly there was a necessity to justify where, why and how a society disposed of their dead. The vampire myth has been used as a tool to explain most of the phenomena relating to the after-death occurrences to both body and soul. The formation of a folk tradition usually depends mostly on the livelihood of a social group as well as the previously mentioned coexistence of the two belief systems, but also on the stages in the lives of people – birth, marriage and death. The folkloric person felt highly dependent on two basic factors – nature and fate.<sup>10</sup> In his inability to explain events and phenomena of life, he interpreted them as the result of the dealings of some higher powers.

Although we are looking at the ideas of life and death in pagan times, Christianity has played an essential part in the evolution of these beliefs. It should be noted that Bulgaria converted to Christianity very early – in 864 – 870,<sup>11</sup> and after the ninth century two religions coexisted in its lands. Most of the mythological motifs were preserved, and are still very much alive, in the villages in the mountain areas of the country, because the Orthodox Church did not set as its main goal the complete eradication of pre-Christian beliefs. The observation of the evolution of the whole

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<sup>8</sup>Burns, Thomas A. "Folkloristics: A Conception of Theory". *Western Folklore* 36 (2). Western States Folklore Society, (1977): 109–34. <<http://doi.org/10.2307/1498964>>, p.114.

<sup>9</sup>Todorova-Pirgova, 2003, p.31.

<sup>10</sup>I used the term 'folkloric person' as generalizations of the people who created and believed in the mythology and folklore.

<sup>11</sup>The first date reflects Khnyaz Boris I being baptised and beginning of converting the people, with the help of missionaries from both Constantinople and Rome. The second year marks the grant of a national independent church and the right to an Archbishop. [For further information see Angelov, Petar, Dimitar Sazdov, Ivan Stoianov, and Andrei Lazarov Pantev. *Istoriia na Bulgaria: 681-1944*, I. (Sofia: Sofi-R, 2003), 72.]

Bulgarian mythological and folkloric system is hindered by the fact that scholarly interest in it dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century,<sup>12</sup> although the traditions have been transmitted and preserved through the generations.

This applies to some extent to the Icelandic mythology. Iceland was also converted to Christianity early in its development ca.1000.<sup>13</sup> This is one of the reasons why great importance is attributed to the Icelandic sagas. They had been put in writing long after Christianity had been established. The sagas are a dualistic exemplar dealing with the identity, belief system, customs and faith of a society before and after Christianization. Torfi Tulinius explains that they portray the historical development in Iceland, a period when the society is going through a great transformation, “which entailed at least a challenge to identities if not their redefinition.”<sup>14</sup> However, this redefinition does not entail the replacement of the belief system, but the merging of old with new concepts. Moreover, myths, legends, beliefs and customs have the ability to evolve.<sup>15</sup> This derives mostly from the fact that they begin their existence by being transmitted orally. In this initial stage they have no standardized form. Furthermore, folklore is a mass occurrence and political, social, religious, ethnic or other boundaries can only hinder its distribution, but not stop it altogether. Therefore, accepting Christianity is not something that may abolish the mythology, it can only change it. This is what helps scholars trace the origins of customs and rituals in pre-Christian societies.

### Recognizing the Un-Dead

“*Alas, poor ghost!*”

– William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

The folkloric Eastern European vampire can be either gender, any age, is most likely from some small village, and appears rugged and with torn clothes.<sup>16</sup> As Paul Barber

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<sup>12</sup>During the 1820's Vuk Karadzic includes for the first time in a scholarly work a Bulgarian folk song. In 1829 Yuriy Venelin publishes the first of three volumes of *The Old and Today's Bulgarians in Their Political, Ethnographic, Historical and Religious Relations to the Russians* in Moscow. One of the most important Bulgarian scholarly work is that of the brothers Konstantin and Dimitar Miladinovi called “*Bulgarian Folk Songs*” published in 1861 in Zagreb. After this interest in Bulgarian scholars concerning the matter begins to grow.

<sup>13</sup>In her work Davidson exemplifies all the ways in which mythology was imbued in the identity and life of the medieval Icelanders, through archaeological and literary evidences. Davidson, Hilda Roderick Ellis. *The Road to Hell: A Study of the Conception of the Dead in Old Norse Literature*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

<sup>14</sup>Torfi, H. Tulinius “Revenants in Medieval Icelandic Literature”. In *Caietele Echinoc*, vol. 21, 11 (2011): 58-74, p.59.

<sup>15</sup>A simple example of this is Christmas, which the Christian church celebrates as the birth of Christ, but the custom derives from old pagan traditions, be it Scandinavian – Yule, or Bulgarian – Koleda, both of which are centered on the winter solstice.

<sup>16</sup>In this chapter 'vampire' refers to the Eastern European vampire, unless specifically indicated otherwise.

describes him: “a plump Slavic fellow with long fingernails and a stubbly beard, his mouth and left eye open, his face ruddy and swollen. He wears informal attire – in fact, a linen shroud – and he looks for all the world like a dishevelled peasant.”<sup>17</sup> Even though he may seem harmless at first glance to the folkloric person he was one of the most dreadful creatures, so much so, that he became one of the main characters in ballads and tales. Before we delve into the primary sources we must explicate who the vampires are and how they are recognized by the society as such.

In the Eastern European tradition there are innumerable signs that can identify the supposed vampire, nevertheless, they allow the following broad grouping: <sup>18</sup> (1) people who have suffered a cruel death and whose lives have been cut short; (2) People who have been evil during their life; (3) children conceived or born on certain days, or with a special birthmark, illegitimate children, etc.; (4) people can turn into vampires if something happens to them, or if they do something (if they are changed through a bite, curse, Evil Eye), etc.; (5) if the burial rite is incorrectly performed – this is probably the most prominent way to indicate if a person will turn into a vampire (most of the apotropaic rituals stem from this). Each group will be observed while considering the medieval understanding of the biological processes after death, of epidemics and the general belief system concerning life and death.

People whose lives have been cut short,<sup>19</sup> tend to be understood by their contemporaries as people who might want to come back to life. Other reasons are because they have more to do in the realm of the living or because they have someone they care about, who they do not want to leave yet. The premise that vampires visit their loved ones might have derived from this belief. Victims of plague, murder victims and suicides are generally buried in a different manner, thus making them more likely to come back – they are usually not buried on consecrated ground,<sup>20</sup> or even – for efficiency of time – they are placed in mass graves. This may lead to resentment in the soul, making it more likely to become a revenant. It is also possible that the societies from which this belief stems had certain knowledge that some illnesses are transmittable. It may not have been the way we understand contagion now, but more

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<sup>17</sup>Barber, Paul. *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p.2.

<sup>18</sup>Barber also has a similar, if not a more concise idea of this grouping. [Barber, 1988, p.29].

<sup>19</sup>Vakarelski, Christo. *Etnografija na Balgarija / Bulgarian Ethnography*. (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1977), p.590.

<sup>20</sup>Georgieva, Ivanichka. *Bulgarska Narodna Mitologija / Bulgarian National Mythology*. (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1993), p.198, where the author makes the conclusion that “in pre-Christian times there existed the custom to not bury the suicides and murder victims, but to appease them sacrifices were made” [My translation].

likely as death itself being contagious – death leads to death if the dead are not taken care of properly. An argument for this is the worldwide custom of breaking or burning the belongings of the deceased,<sup>21</sup> or as Barber says “disposing of the objects that have come into contact with the dead person.”<sup>22</sup> The motif of infection and contagion is deeply incorporated in the myth of the vampire, and, as we shall see further on, it might also be true for the Icelandic revenant.

The second group consists of people who, during their lives, were unpopular in their community. This is a motif that has inspired many myths and legends, folk-tales and fairy tales – the motif of the Other.<sup>23</sup> The thing that is different from us must be dangerous, we do not understand it, and thus it might harm us. The Other opposes the Us (the Self) by some criterion that the Us establish, making a clear dividing line between what is “acceptable” and what is not. This separation possibly expresses the deep fear of the unknown and unexplainable. It portrays the prejudicial mind-set of a society that has no understandings of diseases, be it either of mind<sup>24</sup> or body.<sup>25</sup> The only way to cope with this fear was to banish the Other from the social boundaries of the Us. The ostracism of the Other spurs the myth of vampires, ghosts, evil old women who eat children and so on. This isolation may happen while they are alive, or after their death. In the case of the folkloric vampire it happens both times. While they are alive the putative vampires tend to be outsiders – usually drunkards, quarrelsome people, witches or wizards,<sup>26</sup> people of different faith,<sup>27</sup> evildoers (robbers, prostitutes and other dishonourable people). Questioning the morality of this negative labelling and banishment of the unknown has led to the disappearance of such dreadful beings. Nevertheless, we should not ascribe every belief to a vague understanding of human anatomy or psyche. We could presume that most of these Others were suffering from illnesses that might prevent the normal process of decomposition, which could therefore affirm the speculation that the person in question really is a vampire.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>This custom has been practiced in England [Daniell, Christopher. *Death and Burial in Medieval England, 1066-1550*. (London: Routledge, 2003), p.150], in Scandinavia [for example the Gokstad ship, dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> c. [Davidson, 1968, p.19], and throughout Europe. At some point in its development it blended with the belief that by breaking the objects their spiritual form goes faster to the deceased.

<sup>22</sup>Barber, 1988, p.35.

<sup>23</sup>Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. *Monster Theory Reading Culture*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), e-book, location 104-117.

<sup>24</sup>Mentally ill people did not have the option of getting help.

<sup>25</sup>Deformities such as a hunch were a sign of either a pact with the devil, or a sign that the person in question is not pure, thus – bad.

<sup>26</sup>It should be noted that witches and wizards can either bring vampires to life or become vampires themselves.

<sup>27</sup>Barber, 1988, p.30.

<sup>28</sup>This will be further discussed on pp.24-25.

Another type of otherness reflects the labelling of children, depending on the time they were conceived, the time they were born, whether they are illegitimate, etc. People conceived or born during Christmas,<sup>29</sup> New Year, Easter or another holy period are considered to be more vulnerable to becoming a vampire. This belief stems from the understanding that these periods of time are pure and conceiving or giving birth on these holidays represents a sin greater than any other. This immediately results in the souls being stained and thus making it highly probable for the child to turn into a vampire.<sup>30</sup> The latter also applies to people who are illegitimate children, or are the children of illegitimate parents. This might be connected more directly to Christianity and the understanding that children conceived outside of holy matrimony are the product of evil and ungodly acts.

There is a lot written also about people who are the seventh child. Seven as a holy number is embedded in the belief system that spurs the myth of the vampire. It is the number connected to the creation of the world, but it is also the number associated with the deadly sins. The latter preoccupied the minds of superstitious people and resulted in fear of the number, as something divine, but also something noxious. From its duality emerged the idea that the seventh child<sup>31</sup> is an evil spawn and presumably has some powers and because of that they are usually thought to become witches, sorcerers, or other dualistic or chthonic beings, such as the vampire.

The latter relates to the general understanding of people born with a specific mark (most commonly a red birthmark, the shape can differ) or a defect<sup>32</sup> such as: an extra nipple, split lower lip, excessive body hair, children born with teeth, with no cartilage in the nose (these may also be werewolves according to Slavic mythology), tail-like extensions, with two hearts,<sup>33</sup> or newborns with the amniotic membrane still surrounding them.<sup>34</sup> Those people are considered either to be witches/sorcerers or pervious to becoming a vampire after death.

Apart from the above, a great deal of other events can happen to a dead body which may ensure it going through the process of vampirism. These include an animal

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<sup>29</sup>Especially in the so called “dirty days” - “мръсни дни” - in Slavic tradition, which last for twelve days from Christmas to the sixth of January. Mitseva, Evgeniya. *Nevidimi Noshtni Gosti / Invisible Nightly Guests*. (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1994).

<sup>30</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.93.

<sup>31</sup>Even more so this is relevant to the seventh son of the seventh son.

<sup>32</sup>Barber, 1988, pp.30-31, and Murgoci, Agnes. “The Vampire in Roumania”. In *The Vampire: A Casebook*, edited by Alan Dundes. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 12-34, pp.12-13.

<sup>33</sup>As are some cases concerning the Roumanian *strigoï*, Barber, 1988, p.31.

<sup>34</sup>Generally, it is regarded in Bulgaria and Russia that a baby born with the caul will have good luck in its life, and it seems this is also true for Iceland.

flying over the grave, an animal<sup>35</sup> jumping over the dead person, or over the grave (and in general if anything unusual happens on or around the grave); if something is passed over the body from person to person, if a corpse's mouth or eyes remain open, “if a person cuts himself in the graveyard during the night and bleeds on a grave,”<sup>36</sup> if a dead person’s face is reflected in a mirror.<sup>37</sup>

The latter one is tightly connected to the idea that physical damage could be inflicted to the soul while a person is still alive. A person's soul can be either their reflection or their shadow. There is the custom of “stealing” one's shadow, for different reasons, one of which, and the most well-known, is for the ritual “вграждане”<sup>38</sup> which means to immure someone in a building. The building is usually either a bridge or a holy temple. In the primary sources that happens in one of two ways. The first way is when a shadow is measured and then pinned with a needle or a nail to a wall of the building. The second is, much more gruesome and a type of sacrifice –the actual burying of a person inside a wall, or underneath the construction, usually while they are still alive. The soul then becomes the host of the construction, making it stronger and guarding it from natural disasters.

Many other events, related closely to Christianity, can happen to a person which may cause him to turn into a vampire. The most important of all of them is if children die before baptism. Other such events are if a person is anathematized by a priest, is cursed, a sinful priest says Mass, or if a godparent stumbles while saying the Creed at a child's baptism.<sup>39</sup>

The group concerning the burial and funerary rites is the most complex one. The burial rites of any society play an important part in the lives of the living. Sending your dead to their next life is an important part of the circle of life for people of every religion. It is one of the things that every society has taken great care of no matter what its customs are. Ensuring the safety of the deceased in their new abodes and their passage to that place is one that held great importance in both Icelandic and Bulgarian societies.<sup>40</sup> The rites are a promise of respect from the living to the dead but they also

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<sup>35</sup>Usually it is either a cat or a dog [Barber, 1988, p.33].

<sup>36</sup>Barber, 1988, p.36.

<sup>37</sup>This is connected to the idea that mirrors reflect the soul, but also capture it, also with the belief that the soul remains for a certain period of time around the body [Georgieva, 1993, p.196].

<sup>38</sup>Mitseva, 1994, p.24.

<sup>39</sup>Barber, 1988, p.36.

<sup>40</sup>The rituals of the folkloric person have a complex nature and diverse meaning. In general with these rites the person is hoping to affect nature and fate. They have two fundamental functions – apotropaic and multiplying. The first (on which we will be concentrating) aims at protection against any manifestation of evil. The second has as a purpose to magnify everything that may be good for the said person.

ensure that the dead will not come back to the world of the living, and will welcome the living when it is their time to go to the afterlife.<sup>41</sup> The afterlife is both the world of the future,<sup>42</sup> the place where all people go after this life, and the past – the world of the forefathers. Although our world and the other are clearly divided, the boundaries are often breached and a communication between the two can be established. There are specific places and times that are considered highly susceptible to such interactions – the liminal spatial and temporal localities that are apt to bring about this interplay.<sup>43</sup> An example of the spatial liminality is the place where the corporeal form of the ancestors rest.<sup>44</sup>

There are several types of funerary traditions well attested in archaeology: inhumation (chamber burials, ship burial),<sup>45</sup> mummification, sea burial,<sup>46</sup> and cremation. Every one of these represents a certain derivation of the understanding of what happens to the soul after death. Inhumation reflects the belief that a special resting place is created for the soul in the afterlife. This relates to the belief that the soul is in the plane of the living.<sup>47</sup> Mummification and preservation of the body is also connected to that same belief. Another conviction is that the soul moves vertically between the different planes after the body is buried. This stems from the idea that since the body goes underground, then the soul also moves downwards. However, the soul may go upwards to a plane which is positioned above, such as Heaven. Cremation, for example, has a

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<sup>41</sup>Davidson, 1968, p.96 and Todorova-Pirgova, 2003, p.31.

<sup>42</sup>Todorova-Pirgova, 2003, pp.31-32 and Turville-Petre, E.O.G, *Myth and Religion: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 273-274.

<sup>43</sup>One of these in Slavic mythology, Maslenitsa is a sun-festival, where the sun is personified by the ancient god Volos, and is a celebration of the imminent end of the winter. Festivals such as All Hallows Eve, Día de Muertos, the (Hungry) Ghost Festival in China, and any other holy period, are also thought to have a strong connection between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Most of these festivals are connected to the solstices and equinoxes. Other temporal liminalities can be observed: in the division of day and night, day being the time of the living, and night – the time of the non-living (they may be any kind of non-humans including gods); in the seasonal division – summer (“our” time) – winter (“their” time).

<sup>44</sup>Other instances, are usually connected with the individual and the places associated with him. For example a spacial liminality in the house is usually the place with the fireplace. There is archaeological evidence that the dead were buried underneath the fireplace (in the Balkans), [Naumov, Goce. “Housing the Dead: Burials Inside Houses and Vessels in the Neolithic Balkans”. *Cult in Context: Reconsidering Ritual in Archaeology*, edited by Barrowclough, David A., and Caroline Malone. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2007), 255-266].

<sup>45</sup>The placement of the corpse either directly in the earth or in a vessel, which is then buried in the ground, or in a certain building such as a pyramid or a crypt.

<sup>46</sup>Another type of deposition, though not in the ground, but in the sea, it still has the vertical orientation (see below).

<sup>47</sup>If we consider that the plane of the living is a flat ellipse, above it – the sky, below it – the ground, both of which are planes of the supernatural, the dead, etc, it gives us the two directions – a vertical and a horizontal. This cosmological interpretation has been known to humanity since the Middle Bronze Age from Babylonian and Assyrian sources [Wilson, Epiphanius. *Babylonian and Assyrian Literature: Comprising the Epic of Izdubar, Hymns, Tablets, and Cuneiform Inscriptions*. (Charleston, SC: BiblioBazaar, 2008). <<https://archive.org/details/babylonianassyri00wilsuoft>>].

vertical orientation.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, cremation has a purging effect both for the soul and the body. As we saw before, the notion of contamination and transmittable diseases was apparent. That being said, cremation was not as often practiced, mostly because it involved spending a lot of provisions, time and effort. Nevertheless, in the preserved literary accounts, concerning the vampire myth, cremation plays not only a very important apotropaic part, but it is also a primary way to kill a vampire.

As mentioned previously, the improper execution of the funerary rites is one of the ways to indicate if a person will turn into a vampire. So if none of the above mentioned practices were performed, and this happened quite often, the corpse would probably turn into a vampire. This also concerns customs such as washing the body properly and closing or opening the windows.<sup>49</sup> The corpse should not be left unattended until the burial; a nail or needle should be pierced somewhere in the body, mostly in the head or the stomach;<sup>50</sup> the corpse must be taken out of the house in a specific manner.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, the spirit should not be disturbed in any way that might lead it to stay in the world of the living. This requires a certain behaviour by the relatives and friends: they should not mourn the dead too loudly, for it may perturb the spirit, resulting in its need to remain on the plane of the living; all requests made by the dead person concerning his funeral must be executed – the clothes he wished to be buried in, objects of significance to the deceased to be laid with him; funerary meals should be given, often the favourite food of the departed. The funeral should have a proper service, carried out in a lamenting manner; a cross sign must be made on either the head or the whole body. Depending on the society and its own traditions these funerary rites vary.

If the dead is presumed to become a vampire he should be buried face down, or nailed to the coffin; his tongue should be cut, or a stone or a knife should be placed inside the mouth,<sup>52</sup> the mouth may also be tied shut; different types of seeds should be

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<sup>48</sup>Ibn Fadlan's report on the Rus ship burial on the Volga River in 922 is a direct reference to this. In it one of the natives explained why they burn their dead: "[...] whereas we burn them in the fire there and then, so that they enter Paradise immediately." [Montgomery, James E. "Ibn Fadlan and the Rusiyya". *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 3, 2000, 1-25, p.20].

<sup>49</sup>The first relates to the belief that an animal may fly over the body, the second – that the soul should not be trapped in the room.

<sup>50</sup>The entirety of the body must be disrupted, so that the soul can leave it.

<sup>51</sup>This is done so that if the revenant decides to come back to the house, he would be confused and would not find his way back in. Another variation of this custom is making a hole in one of the walls and taking out the body through it; or through a window, which is afterwards blocked up [Barber. 1988, p.58]. Later on in the chapter "The Icelandic Revenant" we will see that there are such examples in some of the sagas.

<sup>52</sup>This is done so that if the vampire would want to eat he would break his jaw or teeth, rendering him incapable to harm the living.

placed in the coffin, such as millet, oats, linen seeds or sand;<sup>53</sup> nets, stockings and other tangled objects are placed in the grave; (sharp) iron objects (sickles, knives, etc.); garlic and other malodorous herbs; highly flammable materials; thorny vines and prickles.

Thus far it has been considered who can turn into a vampire and how a vampire can be stopped from either completing his transformation or from harming his relatives and loved ones. This general examination of the Eastern European beliefs will help for the better understanding of the image of the *vamnip* and also for the *draugr* and the Icelandic myth concerning that supernatural being.

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<sup>53</sup>According to Barber, the vampire suffers from a sort of obsessive compulsive disorder and “he must collect the seeds one at a time,” and for that reason seeds are placed in the grave – he would be preoccupied and not go harm people [Barber, 1988, pp.47-48].

## The Bulgarian Vampire

### An Overview and Some Physiological Characteristics

The most widespread motifs in Bulgarian folklore are connected with the dead.<sup>54</sup> These are concerned with the interference of the dead in the world of the living, the rebirth of people in plants or animals, the resurrection of the dead, and the reinforcement of a building through burying a living person or his shadow in its foundations. The portrayal of the vampire in Bulgarian folkloric literature and oral tradition differs depending on the region in which the legend was spread.<sup>55</sup> The image is intertwined with several other demonic creatures – the *karakondzhul*, the werewolf, the bogeyman, the host ghost, the *navi*, the *yavina*, the *mora*. Moreover, the vampire goes through several stages of development. As Mitseva points out “one of the main methods to reconstruct the mythology is the study of demonology, because the beliefs in the demonic world are especially lasting and have been preserved until now,”<sup>56</sup> this is highly relevant to the character of the vampire.

In observing the *вампир* the same approach will be taken as in the previous chapter. The people who turn into *вампир* are essentially the same as the ones we already discussed, therefore they will not be examined further.<sup>57</sup>

The apotropaic practices of the Bulgarian society are in essence the same as those concerning the Eastern European vampire. However, there are other methods known in Bulgaria. One of them is the breaking of an egg at the place of death or on the head of the corpse.<sup>58</sup> In the Central Rhodopes iron objects are placed on top of the corpse; in the South-West - a fishing net.<sup>59</sup> In the grave a hawthorn (*swida sanguinea*) stake is placed, which has a threefold meaning. Firstly, if the corpse turns into a vampire

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<sup>54</sup>Aside from the motif of the vampire these include encounters with other mythological creatures such as mermaids, devils, *караконджули* (*karakondzhuls*), ghosts, etc. They are reported with the highest of authority and require an absolute trust in their truthfulness, although in reality they are merely the product of superstitions and ignorance, as well as hallucinations due to illnesses (such as meningitis). The term 'vampire' used from this point on will refer to the Bulgarian *вампир*, unless stated otherwise.

<sup>55</sup>There are also different names by which the vampire is called depending on the region – *upir*, *vüpir*, *lepir*, *drakus*, *ustrel*, and many others [Georgieva, 1993, p.196].

<sup>56</sup>Mitseva, 1994, p.8.

<sup>57</sup>It is worth mentioning that according to Mitseva “the character of the person is his demon [i.e. his ghost], everyone has his own specific demon.” [Mitseva, 1994, p.8] This may be one of the reasons why it is believed that evil people usually turn into vampires.

<sup>58</sup>The egg is observed as the unborn, the embryo to which, if need be, the souls should latch on to, and its breaking renders it of no use. Another variation is placing an iron object atop the place of death, given it is somewhere in the house, so that it can “revoke the evil spirit” and so that “death not return to the house” [Georgieva, 1993, p.198]. According to Vakarelski most of these rituals were widely preformed even at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. [Vakarelski, 1977, p.307].

<sup>59</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.197. Moreover, the tools with which the grave is dug are also left near [Vakarelski, 1977, p.307].

it can prick itself and die. Secondly, the hawthorn is broadly called “вапирче” – *vapirche* which is another name of the vampire. Thirdly, it is believed that in the period of forty days after death the soul can turn into small animals, mostly insects,<sup>60</sup> one of which is the *aporia cartaegei*, in Bulgarian “глогова пеперуда” - hawthorn butterfly.<sup>61</sup>

Archaeological evidence confirm the different apotropaic practices. For example at Perpericon, an ancient Thracian city in Bulgaria, a supposed vampire grave dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> c. was discovered. In it apotropaic items were found and the body had been treated as a vampire. As Barrowclough observes in his study of vampire burials “a heavy piece of ploughshare – an iron rod, used in a plough – [was] hammered through his chest.”<sup>62</sup> The left leg was removed, to make the vampire incapable of walking. In Sozopol, another such grave was found, where a “ploughshare-like object was driven through the left side of its [the corpse's] ribcage;”<sup>63</sup> but also another metal object was placed in his solar plexus. In Vratza in the grave of an elderly man “a processed white stone, deliberately placed over his heart” was found. Moreover, his feet were bound apparently with apotropaic purposes.<sup>64</sup> In a burial in Plovdiv a skeleton was uncovered with a brick fragment in his mouth and “a clay roofing tile over his head.” As the scholar explains this was practiced with “those believed most likely to rise as undead, such as plague victims.”<sup>65</sup> Nowadays such practices are less common except in some small villages, nevertheless, some of the apotropaic items are still included in the funeral custom. If cremation is the used funerary practice, such items are burned with the deceased.

Before examining the essence of the Bulgarian vampire his transformation and lifestyle must be observed. The causes of vampirism already discussed apply in full here. The most important of all that were considered are the ones concerning the soul and its remaining on earth for a specific period of time. It is believed that the soul remains in the plane of the living for forty days after departing from the body.<sup>66</sup> During

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<sup>60</sup>That is why it is forbidden to kill any living thing in that period.

<sup>61</sup>Barber, 1988, p.72 and Georgieva, 1993, p.198. Furthermore, one of the taboo names for the vampire slayer in the sources is “глог.”

<sup>62</sup>Barrowclough, D. *Time to Slay Vampire Burials? The Archaeological and Historical Evidence for Vampires in Europe*. First published: 19.10.2014. (Cambridge: Red Dagger Press).  
<[https://www.academia.edu/8854480/Time\\_to\\_Slay\\_Vampire\\_Burials\\_The\\_Archaeological\\_and\\_Historical\\_Evidence\\_for\\_Vampires\\_in\\_Europe](https://www.academia.edu/8854480/Time_to_Slay_Vampire_Burials_The_Archaeological_and_Historical_Evidence_for_Vampires_in_Europe)>.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid, p.2.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid, p.6. These practices are used to render the revenant incapable of getting up and walking again. Similar practices we will see performed to the Icelandic revenant.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid, p.7.

<sup>66</sup>Vakarelski, 1977, p.310. Moreover, according to Todorova-Pirgova there is a magical ritual that is still practiced, called “едномесече,” which is practiced to separate a recently (again in the span of forty days) deceased relative, whose soul might have attached itself to a relative, born in the same month or on the same day as the departed –the name literally means “one/same month.” [Todorova-Pirgova,

that time, through an event which happens to the body or its grave, it might go back inside the corpse and turn it into a vampire;<sup>67</sup> if that does not happen it goes peacefully to the afterlife. This forty-day period is also crucial to the vampire's development. According to the mythology a vampire goes through an evolution, which can be summed up in three stages.<sup>68</sup>

The first begins immediately after he is turned. During this phase he is just an apparition or a shadow, much like a ghost. He cannot be seen by everyone, can only do mischief and can be killed easily for he is still very fragile. Georgieva describes the vampire in this stage as “a shadow, as if the blowing wind [...] but can take the form or contour of an animal or a person.”<sup>69</sup> It is believed that in this initial phase the soul does not have the strength to bring up the body, therefore the corpse stays in the grave, but the soul, which is a vampire, roams around.<sup>70</sup> In this form it can only try to scare people, by making loud noises and trying to break small objects.<sup>71</sup> He cannot harm people but goes and drinks the blood of animals – mostly of the cattle.<sup>72</sup> However, in some regions it is believed that even if the vampirism has occurred the soul might keep quiet so that the people of the village would not go and kill it.<sup>73</sup> The latter belief is rare, because that would suggest a cognisance in the vampire during this first stage, when it is mostly described as absent-minded and very unintelligent,<sup>74</sup> only driven by a primal instinct to feed himself. Moreover, he is very likely to kill himself by accident - by pricking himself on the apotropaic items placed in the grave. For these reasons he needs to stay hidden during the day and on Saturdays, which is when people usually go to examine the body and (decide to) kill the vampire. Not much has been registered in the primary sources recorded in Mitseva's collection concerning this stage of development except for entry 63.<sup>75</sup> This leads to the conclusion that people were not as afraid of the vampire in this first stage of growth, mainly because he was easily recognized and not very hard to dispose of.

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2003, pp.263-284, 545].

<sup>67</sup>Barber, 1988, p.26. According to Kazimierz Moszyński [find in Georgieva, 1993, p.202] “the belief in the vampire has a twofold meaning” as a spirit/ghost of a dead person and as a living dead animated by its own soul or by an evil spirit.

<sup>68</sup>Mitseva, 1994, p.18 and Georgieva, 1993, p.199.

<sup>69</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.199 and Mitseva, 1994, p.108, here p.62-63. [See all the used texts in the Appendix].

<sup>70</sup>Though not specifically stated, this may lead to the conclusion that vampirism is an act of damnation of the soul, thus after becoming a vampire, even if not corporeal, the soul is still tainted.

<sup>71</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.199.

<sup>72</sup>Bulgarska akademiia na naukite i izkustvata (BAN) and institutu za folklor (BAN). *Sbornik na Narodnite Umortvorenii i Narodnopis / Collection of Folklore*, V. (Sofia: Darzhavna pechatnitsa, 1891), later abbreviated as SbNU, p.132, here p.76-78.

<sup>73</sup>Mitseva, 1994, pp.103–104, here p.58-59.

<sup>74</sup>SbNU, 1891, p.133, here p.76-78.

<sup>75</sup>Mitseva, 1994, pp.106–108, here p.59-64.

In the second stage he becomes corporeal although not quite as what we would imagine. The vampire in this phase is like a sack of human skin with no bones, but it can walk, transform itself into animals, and suck blood from people.<sup>76</sup> The word most commonly used to describe this vampire is a “мях.”<sup>77</sup> Georgieva depicts a vampire in this stage “as a bagpipe filled with blood and which can roll around like a ball”<sup>78</sup> but he is also portrayed as a human, but only made from skin and blood, instead of a nose he has a hole, his eyes are red, has no feet or hands and because of that he cannot go far. The vampire enters this stage after he “becomes stronger” which can either mean that he has sucked enough animal blood and now craves human, or that enough time has passed and the soul is strong enough to permanently inhabit the body.<sup>79</sup> From the primary sources it is not explained clearly whether it is one of the two or if both of them are consequential. Apparently the informants themselves did not have a clear concept of the stages, and the exact time when one ends and the other begins. One source says that, “after the ustrel [vampire] becomes stronger (which happens after it has drunk the blood of several animals – after ten days) it makes longer walks and, after it has sucked a whole herd of sheep or cows, stops going back to the grave.”<sup>80</sup> Clearly the informant did not know whether it was the sufficient amount of blood or the specific period of time that allowed the being to enter the second stage of its development. Moreover, other sources are vague or begin their narrative with the description of the vampire in one of these stages.<sup>81</sup> In this phase of growth the vampire is likely to harm people.<sup>82</sup> Although he has developed the power to transform himself into animals or other objects,<sup>83</sup> he is still easy to kill and quite unintelligent. Again, not much is recorded concerning the vampire in this stage, contrary to the next stage.

If the vampire is not identified as one and killed before the night of the fortieth day after the person has died,<sup>84</sup> he comes to his final transformation called

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<sup>76</sup>Sometimes this stage is divided into two, where in the second the vampire gains the ability to transform itself. Georgieva, 1993, p.199; Mitseva, 1994, p.18 and Barber, 1988, p.42.

<sup>77</sup>A proper translation in English would be either water-skin or wine-skin; an object made of animal skin that contains liquids [Mitseva, 1993, p.109, here p.63-64].

<sup>78</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.199.

<sup>79</sup>SbNU, 1891, p.132, here p.76-78.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid, p.132, here p.76-78.

<sup>81</sup>This relates to almost all of the entries in Mitseva's collection, 1994.

<sup>82</sup>Georgieva says that he presses on sleeping people, including travellers, and chokes them, but they do not see him, they only feel a great weight - “some subjective sensations, like shortness of breath, heaviness on the chest, nightmares and bad dreams were explained by the actions of a vampire.” This portrayal may lead us to the conclusion that the victim was actually experiencing a heart attack or a panic attack. Moreover, she states that “the psychological state and fear have a definite weight for the endurance of the myth [...] fear keeps the imagination alert.” [Georgieva, 1993, p.201].

<sup>83</sup>Such as an egg or a sphere [Mitseva, 1994, pp.105-106, here p.59-60].

<sup>84</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.199 and Mitseva, 1994, p.103, 105, here p.58-60.

“укоствяване”<sup>85</sup> in which he develops bones. At this point he becomes sentient - he is not just driven by instinct, and can talk. He is wiser, and starts to hide his identity, starts living with other people. He goes to a different village, starts working – usually as a merchant, a butcher or a barber,<sup>86</sup> and after a while even gets married and has children.<sup>87</sup> In this stage he becomes very strong and can kill people. Sometimes a whole pack of dogs is needed to kill him.<sup>88</sup>

At this point after the putative vampire is recognized it must be verified and the only way to do this is to find his grave and examine the body.<sup>89</sup> The grave itself might be disturbed – holes can be found on it, or it can be sunken in,<sup>90</sup> this means that “the dead person has become a vampire.”<sup>91</sup> In his grave a supposed vampire does not decompose and looks “merry”<sup>92</sup> - i.e. plump and reddish.

Decomposition is a complex process which still brings about awe to those uneducated in the matter and we now need to turn a critical eye towards it, to understand why the revenants are described with certain colorations or other specific characteristics. The decomposition goes through several stages, of which the first includes swelling and discolouration in the upper part of the corpse.<sup>93</sup> This is why the vampire is described as swollen, plump, and ruddy (the reddish-blue colour of the face appears if the body was laid face down, because the blood, due to gravity, seeps to the lowest parts and coagulates there).<sup>94</sup> According to Paul Barber alcoholics, who are more apt to becoming vampires, “often acquire a ruddy complexion from the distension of their capillaries by alcohol.”<sup>95</sup> A pale-whitish complexion sometimes replaces the florid

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<sup>85</sup>Literally translated – the act of developing bones. Other words for this transformation are употняване – to become sweaty; увампиряване – to become fully a vampire.

<sup>86</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.200.

<sup>87</sup>The belief in vampires being able to reproduce is very wide, mainly because these children usually become the most honoured and treasured vampire slayers, called глорове – a derivative of the hawthorn name [Georgieva, 1993, pp.199, 201]. However, some informants are unsure or have not heard of a vampire being able to have children [Mitseva, 1994, p.104, here p.58-59]. The vampire children are recognized by their snub nose/no nose, with a soft body – no bones, no nails, no hair, with flattened ears, they are very dirty and on their back they have a mark as if from a tail [Georgieva, 1993, p.199].

<sup>88</sup>Mitseva, 1994, p.108, here p.62-63.

<sup>89</sup>According to the previously discussed evidences the vampire stops dwelling in his grave in this phase of his development, but most of the primary sources claim that he still resides there. “According to folk belief the vampire lives in his grave. He leaves it only at night, after sunset until the first cock's crow [Georgieva, 1993, p.199].”

<sup>90</sup>Mitseva, 1994, p.108, here p.62-63, but also entry 85, p.125, which will not be translated.

<sup>91</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.199.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Barber, Paul. “Forensic Pathology and the European Vampire in the Vampire”. In *The Vampire: A Casebook*, edited by Alan Dundes. (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 109-142, p.115.

<sup>94</sup>A common practice is to bury the supposed vampire face down with the intention to confuse him.

<sup>95</sup>Barber, 1998, p.41. According to Dr Nikola Tepeliev this is a clear sign for heavy drinkers, but for the folkloric person, this is a clear sign that he is a vampire.

expression, for several reasons. Firstly, if the body is placed face up, however this can only be observed in the first few hours of death, and when ten-twelve hours have passed after death the whole body becomes bluish-purple.<sup>96</sup> Secondly, if the decomposition is postponed by various circumstances.<sup>97</sup> Lastly, this colouration is affected by poisoning.<sup>98</sup> This appearance helps the vampire to blend with normal people.

In the next stage of decomposition the micro-organisms give off gasses leading to bloating.<sup>99</sup> Due to the pressure, which arises from the accumulated gasses, the lungs discharge a blood-stained fluid from the mouth, which is generally interpreted as the vampire sucking blood.<sup>100</sup>

### A Singular Being Made from Multiple Others

There is a great misconception that the vampire is one specific creature. It is known that tradition and culture are in constant flux - they change, but more importantly they evolve. Iveta Todorova-Pirgova says in the preface of her work that the tradition of a society “mirrors many eras and is a testament of the belief and knowledge of past times.”<sup>101</sup> It is not surprising to find out that this is what happened to the vampire myth. The first trace of it in Bulgaria we find in a text dated approximately to 893, called “Словото на Тълкувателя,”<sup>102</sup> in which the Slavic mythology is explained – the pantheon of the gods, the belief system, etc. Most important to this study is the mention of the mythical creatures called “упири” *upirs*.<sup>103</sup> Those were one of the most feared beings, they were the evil forces that may cause any disturbance of the peace and well-being. The ancient Slavic people believed there were only two forces that ruled the world: Upirs – the evil – and their antipodes the Beregins (“берегини”) – the good. I will have neither the time nor the space to examine thoroughly this course of evolution

<sup>96</sup>This process is called hypostasis according to Dr Tepeliev. Due to it pathologists can determine the approximate time of death.

<sup>97</sup>Decomposition is affected by temperature, humidity, the access to oxygen, etc.

<sup>98</sup>According to Dr Tepeliev carbon monoxide and cyanide poisoning affect the spreading and absorption of the oxygen by the cells.

<sup>99</sup>Paul Barber made an important remark - babies tend to mummify easier, because “they have not acquired the intestinal flora that bring about decomposition.” [Barber, 1988, p.110].

<sup>100</sup>Barber, 1998, p.119.

<sup>101</sup>Todorova-Pirgova, 2003, p.9.

<sup>102</sup>“The Words of the Interpreter,” know from a Russian copy from the 11<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>103</sup>Kaloyanov, Ancho. *Starobulgarsko Ezichestvo / Old Bulgarian Heathenism*. (Veliko Tarnovo: Veliko Tarnovo University Press, 2002), p.195. Georgieva suggests that “according to some sources “упир” is changed to its derivative form “вампир” (recorded in a payer from the 17<sup>th</sup> c. [Georgieva, 1993, p.202]) around the 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> c. and in this form it is introduced to Western Europe in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> c. The initial form of the word is probably \**pir* – *swollen*. A form of it is preserved in the Old Bulgarian substantive *пиръ* – *feast, banquet*. [Стоянов Ст, Мирослав Янакиев, *Старобългарски език. Текстове и речник / Old Bulgarian Language. Texts and Dictionary*. (Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo, 1976). <[http://www.promacedonia.org/st\\_ja/gal/stojanov\\_janakiev\\_113.html](http://www.promacedonia.org/st_ja/gal/stojanov_janakiev_113.html)>, p.185].

of the myth. However, I shall discuss some of the other beings the Bulgarian vampire blends with.

Indeed, the vampire does incorporate other ghosts and ghouls and one of them is the *karakondzhul*.<sup>104</sup> The general understanding regarding this being is that the *karakondzhul* is of unknown origin, and that it is “an uncanny monster with anthropomorphic<sup>105</sup> or zoomorphic character – it can appear either as a voice, animal, human.”<sup>106</sup> It tends to lure and abduct people and subsequently kill them, and if it does not, those who have encountered the *karakondzhuls* get sick physically or experience a mental breakdown. The latter is observed often in the behaviour of victims of vampires. Moreover, the days between Christmas Eve and Epiphany, considered to have a high risk of people turning into vampires, are called “*karakondzhuls'* days,” as well as “dirty days.”<sup>107</sup> One account describes what may happen to children born on specific days – they turn into *karakondzhuls*, which is also a very common motif for the vampire's creation.<sup>108</sup> Frequently, the name of one being is ascribed to another which is the case with entry 32 in Mitseva's collection of folkloric tales.<sup>109</sup> Another common trait between the *karakondzhul* and the vampire is the changing of their physical appearance and voice.<sup>110</sup>

The term *vŭrkolak*, which denotes a werewolf in present Bulgarian language is used to mean a variation of the vampire. Georgieva says that in folk beliefs until the 19<sup>th</sup> c. the word was used to describe a type of vampire, who was different only by the means by which it was created.<sup>111</sup> Usually, *vŭrkolaks* are made from the blood of murdered people, or any unattended pool of blood as in entry 61 in Mitseva's collection.<sup>112</sup> Sometimes, however, a vampire is described, but named by the informant

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<sup>104</sup>Georgieva says that “by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> c. the idea of *karakondzhul* “*караконджул*” is vague and begins to mix with those of werewolves, vampires, gins and in general impure ghosts,” p.174.

<sup>105</sup>There is one persistent belief that the *karakondzhuls* are the spirits of pigs eaten on Christmas [Georgieva, 1993, p.174].

<sup>106</sup>Mitseva, 1994, p.18.

<sup>107</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.193 and Mitseva, 1994, p.75.

<sup>108</sup>Mitseva, 1994, pp.79–80, here p.56. Apparently in some cases the informants themselves say that they are unsure whether it is the *karakondzhul* or the vampire as is the case with entry 42 in Mitseva, here p.57-58.

<sup>109</sup>In that specific one the *karakondzhul* is called *samodiva*, which is another supernatural being, usually taking the shape of a beautiful, yet fearful woman [Mitseva, 1994, p.77]. From the text itself, however, it is clear that the specie described is a *karakondzhul*, because it transforms into a dog with a human head.

<sup>110</sup>Mitseva, 1994, p.80

<sup>111</sup>Georgieva, 1993, p.204.

<sup>112</sup>The informant says “from a drop of blood, for example in our village a murder happened and where the blood had flown and gathered” that became a vampire [Mitseva, 1994, p.105, 108; here p.59-60, 62-63].

as a vŭrkolak, as is the title of Mitseva's entry 83.<sup>113</sup>

Another being sometimes mixed with the vampire is the bogeyman (in Bulgarian *тaлaсъм* [talasŭm]). This supernatural creature is made from the sacrificial blood, it is not specified from what, given to a hidden treasure. Mitseva says that “according to beliefs the blood is the carrier of the soul; in this case the soul is expected to stay alive and guard the treasure by transforming into a bogeyman.”<sup>114</sup> The association that blood, equals soul, equals life is the same as the one concerning the vampire. The explanation of the consumption of blood is one of sustaining life.<sup>115</sup>

This custom of sacrificing a soul has a connection to the host ghost.<sup>116</sup> The people’s souls are sacrificed by being buried in a building. Usually they help around the household, keep the farm from harm, but when there is a person who is not from the family,<sup>117</sup> for example a guest, they try to scare, bother and sometimes hurt this person.<sup>118</sup> In entry 82, in which a drunkard son kills his father and buries him under the threshold of the inn they held, the father became a host ghost, but a vengeful one and would kill anyone who tried to stay there.<sup>119</sup> It is common for the vampire to help around the house or come back and predict things for his family and friends. In entry 66 a plŭtenik turns into a cat and while his wife sleeps chops firewood [presumably the vampire transforms into a humanoid while his wife sleeps, but we are not told of that], brings hay for the farm animals and so on. In entry 79 the father of the informant goes to her at night and tells her how to heal a sick cow. In entry 80 a dead brother comes in a dream and informs the dreamer she is pregnant, later on the brother comes again and asks of his sister to send him some items that he needs through a person who is to die the next day.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>Mitseva, 1994, p.124.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid, p.24; in entries 70 and 91 the vampire is called talasŭm, p.112, 133, here p.64-65, 71-73.

<sup>115</sup>However, as we have seen it is a very rare occurrence that the vampire in the stories literally sucks blood or bites. See note 82 here.

<sup>116</sup>See here p.15 on how a person becomes a host ghost.

<sup>117</sup>Such is the host described in entry 78 in Mitseva, who is said “to bring peace and prosperity to the household and that he protects the house from burning.” [Mitseva, 1994, pp.118-119, here p.66-67]. Furthermore, Georgieva explains that the host ghost of a new bride might follow her in the home of her husband and this results in problems because the two entities are incompatible. Therefore, the mother of the groom performs a special ritual just in front of the threshold of the house. All of this except the ritual is it similar to the *fylgja*, as it has been defined by Cleasby: “a ‘fetch,’ an appearance in the shape of an animal, a crescent, or the like *going before* a person [...]” [Cleasby, Richard, Guðbrandur Vigfússon, and George Webbe Dasent. *An Icelandic-English Dictionary, Based on the Ms. Collections of the Late Richard Cleasby Enl. and Completed by Gudbrand Vigfússon. With an Introd. and Life of Richard Cleasby by George Webbe Dasent.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874). <<http://ebooks.library.ualberta.ca/local/icelandicenglish00cleauoft>>, p.179].

<sup>118</sup>Mitseva, 1994, pp.117-118, here p.65-66.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid, pp.121-123, here p.68-71.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid, pp.109-110, 119-121, here p.63-64, 67-68.

The last subgroup or variation of the vampire is the navi. They are quite interesting in connection with the vampire as an explanation of diseases and mental illnesses. The navi generally refer to the infants who have become vampires, most commonly because they died without being baptised and they rarely refer to the mother who died during childbirth. The navi themselves terrorize their own mothers or other pregnant women, mothers and children.<sup>121</sup> They choke them or make them hang themselves. The navi suck the blood of their victims, which turn blue and with spots. According to Mitseva, the mother and the child after the delivery are in a state of an “unclean period.”<sup>122</sup> The dangers that threaten the child are: “vampires sucking its blood, after death – becoming a vampire.”<sup>123</sup> For that reason, when a child is born, apotropaic objects are placed in the room or around the crib. The navi usually have a general chicken-like appearance “with an unidentified shape.”<sup>124</sup> They come out when the weather is rainy and/or foggy. The women who have given birth should be watched over and protected at night until after the fortieth day of the birth. They should keep something made of iron nearby to ward off the navi.

The descriptions of the women, whether the vampires themselves or the navi's victims, look somewhat similar to the symptoms of post-partum depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder. Even the statement Mitseva makes in the footnote to entry 92, that the mothers tortured by the navi “usually either die or lose their minds,”<sup>125</sup> might suggest that the navi are the personification of a mental illness.

The navi are not the only ones who can cause mental illnesses. Vampires in general have the so-called Evil Eye, meaning they can curse their victims, render them incapable, and inflict psychological damage. Usually in Bulgarian folkloric tradition this sickness is called *ypoku* – Evil Eye. In Todorova-Pirgova's chapter concerning this illness it is stated that it is both caused by a vampire and the cause for vampirism, and that it mostly affects children.<sup>126</sup>

It may be concluded that the Bulgarian vampire is a controversial being capable of terrorizing the neighbourhood, but also a helpful family member, who decided to linger for the good of the household. It can change colour, but is usually either very pale in the face or blueish-black, however every time it is very big, swollen and heavy. It can either be a personification of a disease or the cause of it. It is generally thought of as

<sup>121</sup>Ibid, pp.136, 138-139 here p.73-74, 74-75.

<sup>122</sup>Referring to the “dirty days,” meaning they are in danger of evil powers to latch onto them.

<sup>123</sup>Mitseva, 1994, p.23.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid, p.137.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid, p.137.

<sup>126</sup>Todorova-Pirgova, 2003, p.119, Georgieva, 1993, p.119.

quite strong. The Bulgarian vampire can change its appearance and name, but in every instance it is still the worst enemy a simple peasant can have. He is, however, not the only one who strikes fear in the hearts of the common folk – the Icelandic revenant also has this ability. And his features will be examined in the following chapter.

## The Icelandic Revenant

### An Overview and Some Characteristics

Much has been said about the Icelandic revenant – be it named *draugr*, *aptrgangr*, *haugbúi*, *sending*, etc. These supernatural creatures have been used as literary tools for establishing social status,<sup>127</sup> a disequilibrium caused by paternal absence or other family dysfunction,<sup>128</sup> as well as representatives of a pre-Christian culture.<sup>129</sup> Few, however, have dug deeper into the psyche of the revenant and considered him a personification of a physical or mental disease.<sup>130</sup> Even less scholarly work has been done on the pathological significance of the revenant. Such identifications for a supernatural being are necessary, because, as history shows, revenants, ghosts and ghouls are usually connected, in the medieval mind, to some disease that has no medical explanation. This is what links all societies – such supernatural beings were used to “offer a way to talk about various issues that people in those [medieval] times found important and troubling, but could not necessarily discuss in any other way.”<sup>131</sup> The medieval person had little to no terminology or theoretics concerning his own psyche or physiology, but he did have an understanding on what was harming both mind and body, which was personified into those monsters, in this case specifically the revenant and his many names – *neamh mairbh*, *abhartach*, *dybbuk*, *zombi*, *jumbee*, *soucouyant (Loogaroo)*, *asanbosam*, *adze*, *peuchen*, *chupacabra*, *cihuateteo*, *vetala*, *bhoot*, *manananggal*, *Nachtzeher*, *Wiedergänger*, *druagr*, *upir*, *vampire*, etc. We have seen that the Bulgarian

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<sup>127</sup>Kanerva, Kirsi. “The Role of the Dead in Medieval Iceland: A Case Study of Eyrbyggja saga”. *Collegium Medievale* 24, (2011): 23-49.

<sup>128</sup>Torfi, H. Tulinius, 2011. Kanerva, 2011; Kanerva “Messages from the Otherworld – The Roles of the Dead in Medieval Iceland”. In *Deconstructing Death: Changing Cultures of Death, Dying, Bereavement and Care in the Nordic Countries*, edited by Michael Hviid Jacobsen. (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2013). Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2013, 111-130; Kanerva “Rituals for the Restless Dead: the Authority of the Deceased in Medieval Iceland”. In *Authorities in the Middle Ages. Influence, Legitimacy and Power in Medieval Society*, edited by Sini Kangas, Mia Korpiola, Tuija Aiononen, (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2013), 205-227.

<sup>129</sup>Ármann Jakobsson. “Vampires and Watchmen: Categorizing the Mediaeval Icelandic Undead”. *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 110, 3 (2011): 281-300, Ármann Jakobsson “The Fearless Vampire Killers: A Note About the Icelandic Draugr and Demonic Contamination in Grettis Saga”. *Folklore*, 120, 3 (2009): 307-316; Gunnell, Terry A. “Waking the Dead: Folk Legends Concerning Magicians and Walking Corpses in Iceland”. In *News from other Worlds: Studies in Nordic Folklore, Mythology and Culture (In Honour of John Lindow)*, edited by Merrill Kaplan and Timothy R. Tangherlini. Wildcat Canyon Advanced Seminars, Occasional Monograph Series, vol. 1 (Berkeley Los Angeles: North Pinehurst Press, 2012): 235-266; Lecouteux, Claude. *The Return of the Dead: Ghosts, Ancestors, and the Transparent Veil of the Pagan Mind*. (Rochester, Vt: Inner Traditions, 2009); Lecouteux, *Phantom Armies of the Night: The Wild Hunt and Ghostly Processions of the Undead*. (Rochester, Vt: Inner Traditions, 2011); Arngrímur Vídalín. *The Supernatural in Íslendingasögur: A Theoretical Approach to Definition and Analysis*. (Reykjavik: Tower Press, 2012); Davidson, H. R. E., 1968, Turville-Petre, E.O.G., 1964.

<sup>130</sup>Poole, Russell. *Myth, Psychology, and Society in Grettis saga*. *Alvíssmál* 11 (2004): 3-16. <<http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/englishpub/54>>; Ármann Jakobsson, 2009 and 2011.

<sup>131</sup>Kanerva, 2011, p.25.

vampire is a mixture of many entities and that he is mostly explained by some occurrences in the human body or psychological issues. This chapter will take up the task of examining the Icelandic revenant by applying the same principle.

Several examples from the Icelandic sagas will be observed – *Brennu-Njáls saga*,<sup>132</sup> *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*,<sup>133</sup> *Eyrbyggja saga*,<sup>134</sup> *Flóamanna saga*,<sup>135</sup> *Gísla saga Súrssonar*,<sup>136</sup> *Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*,<sup>137</sup> *Harðar saga Grímkelssonar eða Hólmverja saga*,<sup>138</sup> *Landnamabók*,<sup>139</sup> *Laxdæla saga*,<sup>140</sup> *Þorleifs þátr jarlsskálds*,<sup>141</sup> and other *Íslendingasögur*,<sup>142</sup> some from the *fornaldarsögur* will be considered,<sup>143</sup> and several from the *Íslenzkar Þjóðsögur og Æfintýri*.<sup>144</sup>

A general definition of what these Icelandic ghosts or supernatural beings are is needed at this point, but for the purpose of being clear I will call all types that will be defined either revenants or undead. Richard Cleasby defines the word *draugr* as “II. metaph. in prose (as it is now used), a ghost, spirit, esp. the dead inhabitant of a cairn was called draugr [...] a sluggard, a drone who walks about as a ghost.”<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, his definition for *afturgangr* is “a ghost, apparition, the French *revenant* [...]”;<sup>146</sup> for

<sup>132</sup>*Brennu-Njáls saga*. Íslenzk fornrit XII, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1954).

<sup>133</sup>*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*. Íslenzk fornrit II, edited by Sigurður Norðal. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1933).

<sup>134</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*. Íslenzk fornrit IV, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), 1-184.

<sup>135</sup>*Flóamanna saga*, in *Harðar saga*. Íslenzk fornrit XIII, edited by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1991), 229-327.

<sup>136</sup>*Gísla saga Súrssonar*, in *Vestfirðinga sögur*. Íslenzk fornrit VI, edited by Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1943), 1-118.

<sup>137</sup>*Grettis saga Ásmundarsonar*. Íslenzk fornrit VII, edited by Guðni Jónsson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2001).

<sup>138</sup>*Harðar saga Grímkelssonar eða Hólmverja saga*. Íslenzk fornrit XIII, edited by Þórhallur Vilmundarson ok Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1991).

<sup>139</sup>*Landnamabók*, Íslenzk fornrit I, edited by Jakob Benediktsson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1968).

<sup>140</sup>*Laxdæla saga*. Íslenzk fornrit V, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1934).

<sup>141</sup>*Þorleifs þátr jarlsskálds*, in *Eyfirðinga sögur*. Íslenzk fornrit IX, edited by Jónas Krísjánsón. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1956), 213-229.

<sup>142</sup>*Eiríks saga rauða*, in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Íslenzk fornrit IV, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), 192-237; *Grænlandinga saga* in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Íslenzk fornrit IV, edited by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1935), 238-269.

<sup>143</sup>*Hjálmpés saga ok Ölvis*. Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda IV, edited by Guðni Jónsson. (Akureyri: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1950), 177-243; *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans*. Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda I, edited by Guðni Jónsson, (Akureyri: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1981), 1-105; *Sturlaugu Saga Strafsama*. Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda III, edited by Guðni Jónsson. (Akureyri: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1959), 105-160; *Sörla þátr*. Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda I, edited by Guðni Jónsson. (Akureyri: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, 1981), 365-382.

<sup>144</sup>Jón Árnason, *Íslenzkar Þjóðsögur og Æfintýri* (later abbreviated as *ÍPÆ*), Leipzig, 1862.

<sup>145</sup>Cleasby, 1874, p.103.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid, p.23.

*uppvakníngr* - “m. a raised spirit [...]”<sup>147</sup> for *sendingr* - “f. a ghost raised and sent by a wizard to an enemy is called sending [...]”<sup>148</sup> Georgia Dunham Kelchner defines them by saying that the *draugr* is “thought of as having a continued existence as a unity of the body and the spirit. Primarily an inhabitant of his grave mound, he is also able to leave it, and thus preserve an effective relation with the living.”<sup>149</sup> Davidson says that the word *draugr* is “used for the animated corpse that comes forth from its grave-mound, or shows restlessness on the road to burial.”<sup>150</sup>

The difference between the *draugr* and *afturganga*, according to these definitions, is that the first is usually the inhabitant of a cairn or a mound,<sup>151</sup> whereas the second is just an apparition, which, we will see later, an *afturganga* is not. Both undead have risen on their own accord, and this is what makes them different from the *uppvakníngr* and *sendingr*, which are usually brought back to life by someone else.<sup>152</sup> Lecouteux calls the *uppvakníngr* the analogue of the zombie,<sup>153</sup> and in its essence it is, as well as the sending. However, the latter is associated with it being sent somewhere with some specific purpose, usually connected with physical interactions. In fact most of these undead have physical interactions with people.<sup>154</sup>

It can be concluded that the Icelandic revenant is quite complex and can represent a variety of supernatural beings and events, but in no way is it just a ghost; as Terry Gunnell remarks these 'apparitions' “would have had enormous trouble walking through walls without losing important parts of their anatomy.”<sup>155</sup> At this point we should turn to look at some specifics concerning the Icelandic undead, such as who turns into one and why, what precautionary methods are used against the revenants and how one disposes of them.

A classification, consisting of five groups observing the factors through which a vampire could be identified, was given previously.<sup>156</sup> Now it will be examined if these apply to the Icelandic revenant as well. According to the first group, people who have

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid, p.657.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid, p.523.

<sup>149</sup>Kelchner, Georgia Dunham. *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and Their Affinities in Folklore*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935), p.66.

<sup>150</sup>Davidson, 1968, p.80.

<sup>151</sup>For that specific supernatural there is another word commonly used – *haugbúi* – “a 'cairn-dweller,' a ghost,” Cleasby, 1874, p.241.

<sup>152</sup>Lecouteux calls the former 'true revenants' and the latter 'false revenants.' [Lecouteux, 2009, p.54, 75].

<sup>153</sup>Lecouteux, 2009, p.74. Ármann Jakobsson has categorized Frankenstein's monster as an *uppvakníngr* and Dracula as an *aftugangr*. [Ármann Jakobsson, 2011, p.299]

<sup>154</sup>With the exception of the *fylgja*, but it will be explicated later in this chapter that sometimes the *fylgja* is also corporeal and physically engaged in several narratives.

<sup>155</sup>Gunnell, 2012, p.237.

<sup>156</sup>See “Recognizing the Un-Dead.”

suffered a cruel death or whose lives have been cut short are prone to becoming undead. In the sagas cruel and unfortunate deaths are as common as there are dying people, however, it is the avenging of the death that plays a much greater role in becoming an undead. In *Brennu-Njáls saga* Gunnar, although appearing “kátr ok kveða í hauginum” and “kátligr ok með gleðimóti miklu,” from the verse he composes it becomes clear that he wants his son to avenge his death, and for that reason he remains in his mound.<sup>157</sup> Usually, such non-confrontational undead also want to make peace with their beloved and ease their pain as is the case with Þorsteinn Eiríksson, who “Mér er annt til þess, at segja Guðríði forlög sín, til þess at hon kunni þá betr andlátí mínu, því at ek er kominn til góðra hvíldarstaða”<sup>158</sup> and with Helgi in *Helgakvíða Hundingsbana II*.<sup>159</sup> They could also want to announce of their deaths as is the case with many a *fylgja*, but also with Þóroddr bóndi, when he appears at his funeral feast,<sup>160</sup> and in the folk-tale *Unnustinn*, where a boy, after dying, visits his beloved to let her know he is dead and offers help, but goes away when she refuses.<sup>161</sup>

There are other types of deaths that instigate vengefulness in the soul towards its killers such as Klaufi’s death, when he is betrayed by his wife, who conspires to kill him with the help of her brothers.<sup>162</sup> However, such vindictiveness is rarely retained and directed strictly towards the murderers, usually it spreads to anyone in the near vicinity of the undead.

Victims of an epidemic are also susceptible to becoming revenants. Patient zero in *Eyrbyggja saga* is Þórgunna who is displaying some symptoms of a disease that develops quickly from the first day she falls ill and “Eftir þetta meгнаðisk sóttin við Þórgunnu; lá hon eigi mörg dægr, áðr hon andaðisk.”<sup>163</sup> Moreover, Þórgunna might have known her disease is contagious, because she clearly stated what she wanted: “en rekkju

<sup>157</sup>*Brennu-Njáls saga*, p.192-193. Translation: “to be in high spirits and reciting verses in the mound,” “happy and had a very cheerful look.” [*The Complete Sagas of Icelanders III*, Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson Publishing, 1997, p.91].

<sup>158</sup>*Grænlendinga saga*, pp.259-260. Translation: “I want to tell Gudrid her fate, to make it easier for her to resign herself to my death, for I have gone to a good place.” [Kellogg, Robert, and Jane Smiley. *The Sagas of Icelanders: A Selection*. (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p.645].

<sup>159</sup>*Helgakvíða Hundingsbana* in *Eddukvæði II*, edited by Jónas Kristjánsson and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík, Hið Íslenska Fornritfélag, 2014), 270-283, p.281.

<sup>160</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, p.148, 150. In this episode Þóroddr is called an *aptrgangr*, and he is certainly not an apparition.

<sup>161</sup>*Unnustinn* in *ÍPÆ*, pp.231-232.

<sup>162</sup>*Svarfæla saga*, in *Eyfirðinga sögur*. Íslensk fornrit IX, edited by Jónas Kristjánsson. (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1956), p.174.

<sup>163</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, p.142. Translation: “After that, the illness took hold of Thorgunna, and she did not lie there many days before she died.” [Vésteinn Ólason, *Gisli Sursson's Saga and The Saga of the People of Eyri*, translators Martin Regal and Judy Quinn. (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p.169].

mína ok rekkjutjald vil ek láta brenna í eldi.”<sup>164</sup> Those are the only possessions she has used while sick and the only things she demands be burnt. It is not out of spite that she does not want to give them to Þuríðr, but because “at mér þykkir illt, at menn hljóti svá mikil þyngsl af mér, sem ek veit at verða mun, ef af er brugðit því, sem ek segi fyrir.”<sup>165</sup> Most scholars have taken these words to signify her later restlessness, but it can simply mean she knows her bedclothes will bring about misery and ill fortune - an epidemic. Þórgunna's transformation into an undead is, to my mind, the result of her soul being fearful for the well-being of the people at Fróðá, and of the uneasiness that she might be the cause of many deaths, which consequently she is: a shepherd, Þórir viðleggr, a farmhand, and several other died one after another “þar til er sex váru látnir,”<sup>166</sup> and later twelve more.

Other such examples are in both *Grænlendinga saga* - “Þat var snimma vetrar, at sótt kom í lið Þorsteins Eiríkssonar ok önduðusk þar margir förunautar hans”<sup>167</sup> and *Eíríks saga rauða* - “Þat gerðisk til tíðenda, at sótt kom í bæ þeira, er lítit var af vetri.”<sup>168</sup> In the first saga it is not specified who the first victim was, neither is an exact account of how many people had died given – apparently it included several of Þorsteinn's companions, Grímhildr and Þorsteinn himself. In the second, however, one person is singled out – Garðarr, because he was “ekki vinsæll maðr”<sup>169</sup> and then “Síðan var skammt at bíða, at hverr lézk at öðrum.”<sup>170</sup> It can clearly be seen that the symptoms of contagion had been known to the medieval Icelanders as was previously observed concerning the vampire myth. Apparently the undead from the Icelandic sagas were used to represent something similar to the transmittable diseases, with which the vampires in Bulgaria were explained.

Stating that Garðarr was an “unpopular man,” meaning that he was either quarrelsome or deviating from the norm, i.e. an outcast/outsider, puts him directly into another classification of people inclined to become revenants – those who have been evil, ill-tempered or pugnacious during their life, and people who can turn into berserks

<sup>164</sup>Ibid. Translation: “...my bed and my bedclothes to be burnt in a fire...” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.169].

<sup>165</sup>Ibid. Translation: “I’m saying this so insistently because I wouldn’t like it if, because of me, people became as badly afflicted as I know they will be if what I say is disregarded.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.169].

<sup>166</sup>Ibid, p.147. Translation: “until six people had died altogether.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p. 172]

<sup>167</sup>*Grænlendinga saga*, p.258. Translation: “It was early in the winter when the first of Thorstein Eiriksson's companions were stricken by illness and many of them died there.” [Kellogg and Smiley, p. 644].

<sup>168</sup>*Eíríks saga rauða*, p.214. Translation: “It then happened that sickness struck the farm shortly after the beginning of winter.” [Kellogg and Smiley, p.663].

<sup>169</sup>*Eíríks saga rauða*, p.214. Translation: “an unpopular man” [Kellogg and Smiley, p.663].

<sup>170</sup>Ibid. Translation: “It was not long until [the inhabitants caught the sickness], one after the other and died...” [Kellogg and Smiley, p.663].

– concerning the Icelandic sagas. A fine representative of this group is Skalla-Grímr Kveld-Úlfsson, who is said to have an overbearing character and is capable of turning into a berserk.<sup>171</sup> Therefore, when his father dies Egill makes the necessary preparations to the body to prevent his returning from the dead.<sup>172</sup> Fortunately Skalla-Grímr remains dead, although Torfi Tulinius has suggested that his ghost may have caused Böðvarr's death as a revenge "for [Egill] having been responsible for the death of his brother Þórólfr."<sup>173</sup>

Another troublesome character is Þórólfr bægifótr who was said to be "mesti ójafnaðarmaðr"<sup>174</sup> and when nearing the end of his life "Hann tók nú at eldask fast ok gerðisk illr ok æfr við ellina ok mjök ójafnaðarfullr."<sup>175</sup> And although he is not said to possess any supernatural abilities such as going into a berserk rage, he does somewhat predict his own restlessness to Snorri: "Þat er ok mest ván, at ek sækja þik eigi optar at málum, ok sofi yðr þó eigi öll vá heraðsmönnum."<sup>176</sup> Although his own fate is not clearly stated, it seems he does have some premonition that something supernatural might occur.

Both Skalla-Grímr and Þórólfr bægifótr have bad relationships with their sons, and both men try to inflict pain on them where it hurts the most. For Egill that is the pride he holds for his strength, so Skalla-Grímr almost kills him in a game, whereas Þórólfr tries to hurt his son's reputation, by going behind his back and conspiring with his worst enemy in a lawsuit against Arnkell. Moreover, both fathers have almost exactly the same experiences just before they die – each has an argument with his son. After that: "Skalla-Grímr kom heim um miðnætisskeið ok gekk þá til rúms síns ok lagðisk niðr í klæðum sínum; en um morguninn, er lýsti ok menn klæddusk, þá sat Skalla-Grímr fram á stökk ok var þá andaðr ok svá stirðr, at menn fengu hvergi rétt hann né hafit, ok var alls við leitat."<sup>177</sup> And Þórólfr: "Þórólfr bægifótr kom heim um kveldit ok mælti við engan mann; hann settisk niðr í öndvegi sitt ok mataðisk eigi um kveldit; sat hann þar eptir, er menn fóru at sofa. En um morguninn, er menn stóðu upp, sat

<sup>171</sup>*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, p.101.

<sup>172</sup>Those will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>173</sup>Torfi Tulinius. *The Enigma of Egill: The Saga, the Viking Poet, and Snorri Sturluson*. Translated by Victoria Cribb. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Library, 2014, p.117.

<sup>174</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, p.14. Translation: "a great troublemaker" [Vésteinn Ólason, p.79].

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid*, p.81. Translation: "He began to age quickly, growing more ill-natured, violent and unjust with the years." [Vésteinn Ólason, p.124].

<sup>176</sup>*Ibid*, p.87. Translation: "It is very likely that I won't often come to you with my problems, but there'll be other disasters to stop people in the neighbourhood from sleeping." [Vésteinn Ólason, p. 129].

<sup>177</sup>*Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, p.174. Translation: "Skallagrim came home in the middle of the night, went to his bed and lay down, still wearing his clothes. At daybreak next morning, when everybody was getting dressed, Skallagrim was dead, sitting on the edge of his bed, and so stiff that they could neither straighten him out nor lift him no matter how hard they tried." [Kellogg and Smiley, p.108].

Þórólfr þar enn ok var dauðr.”<sup>178</sup> It seems that if a person dies with a strong intent they are highly likely to come back to the plane of the living. This can also apply to Þórgunna and Klaufi, which we have already mentioned.

Usually the ones with such strong desire to accomplish something are wizards and witches. Several examples of people possessing magical powers will be mentioned throughout this chapter, but only one of those actually becomes a revenant - Þorgríma galdrakinn, who joins the host at Fróðá. Magic plays an important part in the creation of the undead and it goes one of two ways - either a magic wielding person becomes an undead because of his conspiracy with evil powers, or a magic wielding person invokes the dead to rise again. The latter is a motif used several times in sagas and legends, most often to revive whole armies, so that they can fight again. One example of such magic we find in *Sörla þáttur*, where it is said that the spell, cast by Freyja in the disguise of a forest witch, was so strong that “at þó at þeir klyfist í herðar niðr, þá stóðu þeir upp sem áðr ok börðust”<sup>179</sup> and also “því at vit erum orðnir fyrir svá miklum atkvæðum ok ánauðum ok okkrir menn, at vér berjumst bæði nætr ok daga, ok hefir þessu gengit marga mannsaldra, en Hildir Högnadóttir sitr ok sér upp á.”<sup>180</sup> Very similar to this excerpt is one in the story of the *Ófælni dreingurinn*,<sup>181</sup> where a boy finds twelve men dwelling in a cave that have to fight the same men over and over again and:

[...] þeir kváðust og enn verða þeim öllum efri á hverju kvöldi og fella þá. En nú brygði svo við, að fjandmenn sínir væru allir gengnir aftur að morgni og væru æfari og ákafari en þeir hefðu verið nokkru sinni áður, og mundu þeir án efa veita sér atför í hellinum, ef þeir væru ekki til taks á vígvellinum með sólu.<sup>182</sup>

The boy afterwards discovers that an elf-woman was using a magic spell and a potion to bring back the warriors.

Another such example is the case with Skuld in *Hrólfs saga kraka ok kapp*

<sup>178</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, pp.91-92. Translation: “Thorolf Lam-foot arrived home in the evening and did not speak to anyone. He sat down in his high seat and did not eat anything all evening. He sat there after everyone else had gone to bed. In the morning when they got up, Thorolf was still sitting there and he was dead.” [Vésteinn Ólason, 132-133].

<sup>179</sup>*Sörla þáttur*, pp.379-380. Translation: “...that even when they had cloven one another to the very shoulders, yet they started up as before and went on fighting.” [Nora Kershaw. *Stories and Ballads of the Far Past*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1921), p.55].

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid*, p.381. Translation: “for we and our men have been laid under such powerful and destructive spells that we go on fighting night and day; and this has continued for many generations, while Hild, the daughter of Hogni, sits and looks on.” [Kershaw, p.56].

<sup>181</sup>*Ófælni dreingurinn*, in *ÍPÆ*, 270-275.

<sup>182</sup>*Ibid*, p.274. Translation: “...they answered that they had over and over again fought, and overcome their enemies, but that though they killed them over-night they always came to life again before morning, and would come to the cave and slay them all in their beds if they were not up and ready on the field at sunrise.” [Translation from Jón Árnason, George E.J. Powell, and Eiríkur Magnússon, *Icelandic Legends*. (Felinfach: Llanerch, 1995), p.167].

*hans* in the chapter when Böðvarr bjarki fights against “Skuld’s army of zombies”: “Drjúgt er liðit Skuldar, ok grunan mik nú, at þeir dauði sveimi hér ok rísi upp aprtr ok berist í móti oss, ok mun þat verða torsótt at berjast við drauga [...]”<sup>183</sup> Such undead do not have the need or the intent to come back on their own; they usually crave for death, however, their will is not of relevance to the witches. That is why Lecouteux calls these types of undead false revenants.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, although in the first two examples they are not given a specific term, in the last example they are called draugar; all of them certainly fit perfectly in the category of *uppvakníngr*.

There are not many instances of children being turned into revenants worth mentioning here, except for two stories one of which is called *Írafells-Móri*.<sup>185</sup> It is interesting that the story is placed by Jón Árnason in the chapters on fylgja and Móri is also called “draugurinn,” he also fits the characteristics of a sending.<sup>186</sup> It seems that the draugr was a mixture, a blend of several different creatures, as much like the vampire. It seems the terms used for the supernatural beings are interchangeable.

What makes this undead so important for this research is that, unlike other revenants we have seen in Icelandic literature, this one is said to need food: “þurfti hann [...] mat sinn fullan,”<sup>187</sup> but also “hann þóttist líka þurfa að hvílast eins og hver annar.”<sup>188</sup> This is something very common for the Bulgarian vampire. As we have seen before the вампир can become a sort of full-fledged person after a certain amount of time passes after he transforms into a revenant, he can marry and have children, and more importantly he has physiological needs. In Móri’s story it is said he had these needs, because he was not quite dead when he was brought back and what is more – that needing food is something normal for all such revenants. What is even more interesting about this particular revenant is that he displays fear, and specifically has a dread of knives (“að Móri hefði ekki vogað að honum fyrir hnífs-oddunum”<sup>189</sup>) – something uncommon for other undead in Icelandic literature. This is much akin to the Bulgarian

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<sup>183</sup>*Hrólfs saga kraka ok kappá hans*, p.102. Translation: “Vast is the host of Skuld, and I suspect now that the dead move here and rise up again and fight us, and it won’t be easy to fight with zombies...” [*The Saga of Hrolf Kraki and His Champions*, trans. Peter Tunstall. <<http://www.northvegr.org/sagas%20and%20epics/legendary%20heroic%20and%20imaginative%20Osagas/old%20heithinn%20tales%20from%20the%20north/034.html>>].

<sup>184</sup>See note 161 here.

<sup>185</sup>*Írafells-Móri* in *ÍPÆ*, 378-388.

<sup>186</sup>*Ibid.* p.379. A magician brings him back to life and sends him on different errands such as harming specific people and their families for several generations.

<sup>187</sup>*Ibid.* Translation: “...he had to have his full share of food...” [Jón Árnason, May Hallmundsson, and Hallberg Hallmundsson. *Icelandic Folk and Fairy Tales*. (Reykjavik, Iceland: Iceland Review, 1987), p.57].

<sup>188</sup>*Ibid.* Translation: “he also had to rest like anybody else...” [*Icelandic Folk and Fairy Tales*, p.57].

<sup>189</sup>*Ibid.* p. 380. Translation: “...it was attributed to the fact that Rusti hadn’t dared come near him for fear of the knives.” [*Icelandic Folk and Fairy Tales*, p.57].

vampire, for it is emphasized that the latter is gravely afraid of iron objects.<sup>190</sup>

The second story is called “*Móður mín í kví, kví.*”<sup>191</sup> Even though the exposing of children was punishable by death and outlawry in Iceland it was common. This story portrays a mother leaving her child to die in the cold, after which it becomes a revenant. It is called *útburður* - a term used for children, who died unbaptized and had to be buried outside the churchyard.<sup>192</sup> This is one of the main causes for children turning into vampires – the *navi* – in the Bulgarian folklore. Moreover, as I have suggested, there are such instances, where a mother is haunted by the ghost of her child, whether the death is her fault or not, these can personify a post-partum depression or a post-traumatic stress disorder. I believe that in this specific case, even though the mother willingly chose to end the life of her child, the regrets and shock of her actions lead her to have psychological problems, which are portrayed in the story as a revenant.

Another group of people prone to becoming revenants are those whose funerary rites were incorrectly performed. There were many types of funerals and funerary customs in the pre-Christian Nordic society. In *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, for example, there are two kinds of rites. The first one is portrayed at Vésteinn's funeral, when Þorgrímur is preparing to “binda mönnum helskó, þá er þeir skulu ganga á til Valhalla.”<sup>193</sup> The second is at the funeral of Þorgrímur for whom a ship burial is made and: “leggja Þorgrím í skip.”<sup>194</sup> In *Ynglinga saga* a mound is prepared for king Yngvi and tribute is paid yearly to him.<sup>195</sup> King Haki, on the other hand, arranges a ship burial for himself: he puts weapons in it and makes it ready for sailing, then he makes a pyre in the ship. After that Haki lays upon the pyre when he was almost dead and the ship sailed out in the ocean.<sup>196</sup>

A myriad of examples of funeral feasts can be found throughout the sagas. They are intended to honour the memory of the dead, but as Ellis Davidson points out they are also for the living, for “it was at the feast that the son took over the inheritance of his father.”<sup>197</sup> I would suggest this is also true on another level – it is at the feast that the living can appease the dead and can ask for their support and good fortune. In the case

<sup>190</sup>See chapter on “the Bulgarian Vampire.”

<sup>191</sup>*ÍPÆ*, p.225.

<sup>192</sup>*ÍPÆ*, p.224, Jacqueline Simpson in *Icelandic Folktales and Legends*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), p.106.

<sup>193</sup>*Gísla saga Súrssonar*, p.45. Translation: “[...] to tie Hel-shoes to the men that they may wear them on their journey to Valhalla.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.22].

<sup>194</sup>*Ibid*, p.56. Translation: “laid Thorgrim out in a boat” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.30]

<sup>195</sup>*Ynglinga saga* in *Heimskringla*, Íslensk fornrit XXVI, edited by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson. (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska fornritfélag, 1941), 9-81, p.24.

<sup>196</sup>*Ibid*, p.45.

<sup>197</sup>Davidson, 1968, p.59.

of Þóroddr, when he returns to his funeral feast, to my mind, this means good luck because the dead would see the required preparations for their honouring are taken care of.

An example of obstructed funerary rites is the disregard of Þórgunna's funeral wishes, which were already discussed, but another significant event is mentioned which suggests her restlessness: "Líkit var sveipat líndúkum, en saumat eigi um ok síðan lagt í kistu."<sup>198</sup> A further example of neglected or plainly ignored funerary rites is that of Jón flak. Firstly, it is said that he is strange in mind<sup>199</sup> for which he is liable of becoming an undead, regarding the previously mentioned group. Secondly, he is not buried in the proper direction according to the Christian customs – east-west, but instead north-south. Yet another example of the grim outcomes of disrupting someone's resting place is told in *Ketill prestur í Húsavík*, where several coffins are dug up and burned to make room for new ones, which leads to the uprising of the undead.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, according to one custom the dead must be watched during the night until they are buried, especially when the corpse is that of a magician or another putative revenant.<sup>201</sup> According to the Bulgarian belief system this is done because the soul lingers on around the body for a certain period of time after death, therefore the vigil is held to prevent it from re-entering the corpse. I believe that a similar conviction is portrayed in the Icelandic literature.

So far many similarities between the Icelandic undead and the Bulgarian vampire have arisen concerning who turns into one and how and why this is done. Apparently the two belief systems have generally the same concepts for life after death with the exception of the numerous after worlds in the Icelandic mythology. Now it is time to examine further the apotropaics and the methods used to kill an Icelandic revenant and see whether they are again similar and in what ways. This will be the topic of the next chapter.

### How to Dispose of One's Revenants

Very often the prevention against and the disposing of a revenant are overlapping. With Skalla-Grímr, who was expected to become an undead, Egill takes several steps to stop

<sup>198</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, p.143. Translation: "The body was wrapped in a linen cloth without seams, and then it was laid in the coffin." [Vésteinn Ólason, p.170]

<sup>199</sup>*ÍPÆ*, p.233.

<sup>200</sup>*ÍPÆ*, p.237.

<sup>201</sup>See *Fáðu mér beinið mitt*, *Gunna* in *ÍPÆ*, 237-238. Lecouteux says a vigil "over the dead was held in the 12<sup>th</sup> c. to prevent a spirit from taking possession of the body of the deceased" (Lecouteux, 2009, p.63). By spirit he means any evil entity such as a Christian demon or devil, but not the corpse's soul.

this from happening. Firstly, because his father died in a sitting position Egill “tók í herðar Skalla-Grími ok kneikði hann aptr á bak.”<sup>202</sup> Apparently, there was an assumption that if a person dies sitting or a corpse is buried upright they might walk again because the stance indicates that the body is capable of moving.<sup>203</sup> This is quite logical since most apotropaics, concerning both the вампир and the draugr, are connected with impairing the corpse's ability to walk, bite or find its way back to his home. The latter we see again with Skalla-Grímr: Egill makes a hole in the wall and takes the corpse through there, so that it cannot find its way back inside the house. Furthermore, a “nábjargir” is performed on the body, where the nostrils, the eyes and the mouth are closed.<sup>204</sup> If this was a Bulgarian folk-tale I would suggest this is done to prevent the soul from entering the body again. According to the Icelandic belief system this is being done for same reason. What is more, Egill buries his father far away from any farmstead, so that if he eventually returns he would not be able to reach people and harm them. The same rituals, with a few exceptions, are performed on Þórólfr's body. Arnkell is not said to have straightened out his father's corpse, although much like Skalla-Grímr he dies sitting, nor is he said to have performed the same “nábjargir,” but he does break the wall behind his father and takes him out of the house from there.<sup>205</sup> Þórólfr may have risen again for several reasons: having a strong intent before dying, or because some funerary rituals were not performed, or simply because he wanted to spite both Snorri and Arnkell. Nevertheless, he becomes an undead and his son must now find a way to kill him.

Before we take a look at the methods that Arnkell uses, it will be worth observing Þórólfr's actions. First, it is said that “ok allt fé, þat er nær kom dys Þórólfs, ærðist ok æpði til bana,”<sup>206</sup> which indicates that he cannot go very far away from his mound, and can only harm the animals, and this is several months after his death. Next, some more months pass and in autumn Þórólfr kills a shepherd at Hvamm, revealing that he now has the power to walk further away from his resting place. After that “Ok er vetr kom, sýndisk Þórólfr opt heima á bænum ok sótti mest at húsfreyju [...] en henni sjálfri hélt við vitfíring,” and also later on “tók Þórólfr nú at ganga svá víða um dalinn,

<sup>202</sup>*Egils saga*, p.174. Translation: “Egil went through to the bench and stood behind Skallagrím, taking him by the shoulders and tugging him backwards.” [Kellogg and Smiley, p.108].

<sup>203</sup>Other such examples are Kárr in *Grettis saga*, p.58; Hrapp in *Laxdæla saga*, p.39.

<sup>204</sup>*Egils saga*, p.174.

<sup>205</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, p.92.

<sup>206</sup>*Ibid*, p.93. Translation: “...all the livestock which came anywhere near Thorolf's crain ran wild and bellowed themselves to death.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.133]

at hann eyddi alla bæi í dalnum.”<sup>207</sup> All these examples demonstrate that Þórólfr has a development much like the Bulgarian vampire; he evolves from a spirit-like creature that has little reach, to a fully corporeal, rational being that has the ability to roam free upon his own volition.

Similar is the case with Glámr, who first brings havoc “svá at margir fellu í óvit, ef sá hann, en sumir heldu eigi vitinu.” Then he starts “at ríða húsum,” and “gekk hann þá nálíga nætr ok daga.”<sup>208</sup> And only after that is he able to harm people, which indicates the growth of the revenant and his strengthening.

Another such instance is Þórgunna and her transformation into a seal.<sup>209</sup> I suggest this episode signifies some sort of evolution in the revenant, firstly because on her funeral day Þórgunna is still not corporeal, although there are indications she might come back to life with her corpse constantly falling off the horse. This may be a sign that her soul is trying enter the body, or she might have been trying to show the living that she is not pleased with the present state of things. Next, with her appearance in the kitchen she only uses her presence to scare people, but does not afflict physical or psychological damage to the inn-keeper, which suggests she is still not at full strength. Her appearance as the seal has been interpreted in many ways, but I agree with the statement that this is Þórgunna's fylgja. I would like, however, to take this one step further and suggest that this is the final stage of development of the revenant – i.e. she chooses this form through her own will. I expect she does that on the one hand because the seal was her spirit animal or her fylgja while she was still alive and on the other because she does much more physical and psychological damage in this form. Sometimes revenants choose to stay in the shape of an animal, although they are capable of remaining in human form, as we have seen with the vampire.<sup>210</sup>

After Þórólfr has already killed several people Arnkell decides to go and inspect his body, but even after that he simply decides to move it to another place, upon which he builds a high wall, and Þórólfr was quiet “meðan Arnkell lifði.”<sup>211</sup> After Arnkell's death, however, Þórólfr rises up again and this time his body is burnt to ashes. This does

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<sup>207</sup>Ibid. Translation: “Once winter came Thorolf often appeared on the farm, pursuing the mistress of the house most of all [...] it drove her out of her wits [...] Thorolf now began walking around the valley so widely that he devastated the farms.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.134].

<sup>208</sup>*Grettis saga*, p.113. Translation: “some people frightened at the sight of him, while others went out of their minds. [...] straddling the roof [...] his ghost roamed around by day and night.” [Scudder, Bernard, and Örnólfur Thorsson. *The Saga of Grettir the Strong*. (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p.78].

<sup>209</sup>Ibid, pp.95-96.

<sup>210</sup>Mitseva, 1994, pp.109-110, here p.63-64.

<sup>211</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, p.95. Translation: “as long as Arnkel lived.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.135].

not kill the revenant, because “Vindr var á hvass, ok fauk askan víða, þegar brenna tók, en þeirri ösku, er þeir máttu, sköruðu þeir á sjó út.”<sup>212</sup> Which means that not all of the ashes were gathered and those that remained were licked by a certain cow. According to the vampire myth if any small particle of his body remains he may be able to re-assemble himself. In this case the author of the saga apparently had a similar idea and resurrected Þórólfr through the motif of infection, i.e. the cow licked the ashes, got infected with ‘ghost sickness’ which is then transmitted to her calf Glæsir. It seems like a never ending story up until the point, when the bull commits suicide in a bog.<sup>213</sup> This entire tale is *en masse* a failed attempt to kill a revenant and it is only because of luck or fate that this episode has a happy ending.

Such measures can be seen in *Grettis saga* on two occasions. The first one is portrayed both after fighting with Kárr: “Grettir brá nú sverðinu Jökulsnaut ok hjó á hálsinn haugbúanum svá at af tók höfuðit. Setti hann þat við þjó honum,”<sup>214</sup> and after fighting with Glámr: “Brá hann þá saxinu ok hjó höfuð af Glámi ok setti þá við þjó honum.”<sup>215</sup> Cutting the head off of a revenant is a recurrent motif in the vampire myth and apparently it is one for the Icelandic undead also. Moreover, it has proven to be the most effective method of killing a revenant in Icelandic literature: Gestr cuts “höfuð af Raknari ok lagði þat við þjó honum,”<sup>216</sup> and in *Flóamanna saga* “Höggr Þorgils þá af honum höfuð.”<sup>217</sup>

This, however, is not the only way to dispose of an unwanted undead. Burning the corpse is also an effective method. While there are many examples in the sagas, several of which are connected with revenants, Icelanders rarely performed cremation according to archaeological evidence.<sup>218</sup> Grettir Ásmundarson is apparently aware of both these methods – the cutting of the head and the burning of the body. After he decapitates the revenant they “brenndu Glám at köldum kolum.”<sup>219</sup> Another example is

<sup>212</sup>Ibid, p.170. Translation: “The wind was strong and blew the ashes far and wide once the burning took off, but whatever ashes they could collect they scattered on the sea.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.189].

<sup>213</sup>Ibid, p.176.

<sup>214</sup>*Grettis saga*, p.58. Translation: “Then Grettir drew his sword, Jokul's gift, swung at the mound-dweller's neck and chopped off his head. He placed the head up against the mound-dweller's buttocks...” [Scudder, Örnólfur Thorsson, p.39].

<sup>215</sup>Ibid, p.122. Translation: “He drew his short-sword, chopped off Glam's head and placed it against the buttocks.” [Scudder, Örnólfur Thorsson, p.85].

<sup>216</sup>*Bárðar saga*, in *Harðar saga*, Íslenzk fornrit XIII, edited by Þórhallur Vilmundarson and Bjarni Vilhjálmsson. (Reykjavik: Hið Íslenzka Fornritfélag, 1991), 98-172, p.168. Translation: “Rankar's head and lays it against his buttocks.” [My translation].

<sup>217</sup>*Flóamanna saga*, p.255. Translation: “Thorgils cut off his head.” [*The Complete Sagas of Icelanders* III, p.281].

<sup>218</sup>For more information see Davidson, 1968, 7-16.

<sup>219</sup>*Grettis saga*, p.122. Translation: “They set to and burnt Glam to ashes.” [Scudder, Örnólfur Thorsson, p.85].

from *Laxdæla saga*: “Síðan lætr hann gera bál. Er Hrapp brenndr á báli ok er aska hans flutt á sjá út.”<sup>220</sup> Two are found in *Flóamanna saga*, one of which concerns the array of ghosts that Þorgils burned on the pyre<sup>221</sup> and the other concerning Gyða: “Síðan kasta þeir henni á bálið ok váru hjá, meðan hon brann.”<sup>222</sup>

Another way to ward off the undead is to beat them with an iron sledgehammer as is the case with Kjartan. The latter, together with Móri's distinct fear of iron, brings to mind the vampire's terror of iron objects. This was discussed in the chapter on the вампир and was supported by archaeological evidence. Very similar to the apotropaic practices in Bulgaria for vampires, which were meant to make the entity incapable of walking,<sup>223</sup> are those portrayed in the story called *Galdra-Brandur*. Near the end a woman was sewing shut a sorcerer's shroud, after a short dialogue with the undead she broke the needle in two and placed the two pieces in the revenant's feet.<sup>224</sup> Unfortunately there is not much evidence to support this specific connection between the Icelandic revenant and the Bulgarian vampire.

If all else fails with disposing of the undead one can always turn to a legal course of action which is what Kjartan does in *Eyrbyggja saga*. He expels the host of revenants by summoning them to a door-court at a pyre prepared for the dead “en sækja þá menn alla í dyradómi er aptur gengu.”<sup>225</sup> Also: “Síðan var nefndr duradómr ok sagðar fram sakar ok farít at öllum málum sem á þingadómum.”<sup>226</sup> Since a revenant must return from where he had left, such a door-court makes it much harder for the undead to make its way back.<sup>227</sup> The magical potential ascribed to the doors is also reflected in the ritual in Scandinavian ritual of the sworn brothers, where a door is prepared from lifting a patch of turf, thus creating the arch. After the doorway is created the sworn-brothers go underneath it and mix their blood. Keeping in mind that Ibn Fadlan presumably encountered not only Norse men but also Bulgars and Slavs, it could be that his account, concerning the door ritual, is relevant to this study. He reports that a servant girl chosen

<sup>220</sup>*Laxdæla saga*, p.69. Translation: “He then had a large bonfire prepared, and had Hrapp's body burned and his ashes taken out to sea.”[Kellogg and Smiley, p.317].

<sup>221</sup>*Flóamanna saga*, p.255.

<sup>222</sup>Ibid, p.256. Translation: “Then they threw her onto the pyre and stood nearby while she burned” [*The Complete Sagas of Icelanders III*, p.281].

<sup>223</sup>Georgieva explains that an iron object varying from a nail to a needle is placed in the corpse, usually in the right heel with the intention to disrupt the entirety of the skin “so that the devil cannot fill it.” [Georgieva, 1993, p.197].

<sup>224</sup>*ÍPÆ*, p.601.

<sup>225</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, p.151. Translation: “[...] and all the revenants prosecuted at a door court.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.174].

<sup>226</sup>Ibid, p.151. Translation: “A door court was held and charges were pronounced, with the whole procedure following that of a court at an assembly.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.176].

<sup>227</sup>Barber, 1988, p.58.

to be killed with her master is raised above a specially prepared door-frame several times.<sup>228</sup> This account, together with the other two discussed above, brings us back to the sacred and liminal understanding of the doors – the portals to other worlds, the worlds of the dead. The same proves true for the door-court, for it is viewed as a portal, a sacred space. Therefore, this ritual is also a sort of magical practice that banishes the undead to their designated worlds.

There are many other ways one can ward off revenants, but due to lack of space, we shall not dive much deeper. However, we now need to turn our critical gaze to the appearance of the Icelandic undead, which is described in a similar manner as Bulgarian. The depiction of the Icelandic undead is: “var hann þá enn ófúinn ok inn tröllsligsti at sjá; hann var blár sem hel ok digr sem naut;”<sup>229</sup> about Þórólfur, and “Hann var dauðr ok blár sem hel en digr sem naut”<sup>230</sup> for Glámr.

We have already discussed how and why a body can change colour after death. These specifics apply to the Icelandic revenant. They are anything but supernatural, and only a natural result of post-mortem processes. Several means of preserving the body intact after death were mentioned and one of these cases we see often throughout Scandinavia – the preservation of bodies exposed to peat bog acid, as in the case of the famous Tollund man dated from the Iron Age.<sup>231</sup> Regardless of whether or not the Icelanders knew about this sort of mummification it still reflects some kind of knowledge about the fact that the corpses may retain their human features, because in some of the cases of bog-bodies they were pinned down to the tree trunks in which they were arranged with a stake, or a number of branches or poles are placed on top of the corpse.<sup>232</sup> This is another distinguishable feature of the suspected vampire – he was often pinned down with nails or needles to the coffin to prevent it from getting out of the grave.

Another way to prevent an escape is weighing down the body, which we also see in some Icelandic sagas, when piles of stones are brought up on top of the grave. As is the case of Þorgrím’s burial, as seen previously. Furthermore, because it is sometimes

<sup>228</sup>*Ibn Fadlan and the Rusiyya*, 17-18.

<sup>229</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, pp.169-170. Translation: “[he was] still unrotted and monstrous to look at. He was as black as Hell and as huge as an ox.” [Vésteinn Ólason, p.189]; but also variations such as “en digr sem naut, blár sem hel” [*Sturlaug’s Saga Strafsama*, p.126] and “svartr ok digr sem naut” [*Hjálmbés saga ok Ölvis*, p.227]. It is interesting to note that *blár* means blueish-black, whereas *svartr* connotes only black, both of which are colours of decomposition we had previously discussed.

<sup>230</sup>*Grettis saga*, p.112.

<sup>231</sup>Barber explains that this preservation occurs due to the special “physical and biochemical make-up of the bog were preserved so well.”

<sup>232</sup>This, of course, has a reasonable explanation – super-buoyant corpses tend to float to the surface of the bog, thus needing something to ground them [Barber, 1988, 144-145].

impossible to dig into Icelandic soil, especially during winter, bodies may have been left in shallow graves. Because of these kinds of sloppy burials the corpses are exposed to colder temperatures which results in slower decay. An example of this is Glámr's burial, where he was so heavy that they finally “Létu þeir þá fyrir vinnast at færa hann til kirkju ok dysjuðu hann þar sem þá var hann kominn.”<sup>233</sup>

Another feature of the Icelandic revenants is that they can be heard speaking in their graves. This is attested by different sources one of which is Gunnar from *Brennu-Njáls saga* who recites poems. Another one is from *Landnamabók*, where it is said that Ásmundur was buried in a ship and poems could be heard from inside his mound<sup>234</sup> and, of course, in *Porleifs þátr* where Porleifr helps Hallbjörn with composing a poem.<sup>235</sup> This may well be explained by the fact that corpses can make noises, though limited. These sounds follow the progress of decomposition, in which bloating, due to accumulated gases, can cause the body to rupture.<sup>236</sup> As Barber says this bursting “is not necessarily sudden [...] it can be a prolonged event like the sound of the air escaping a tire,”<sup>237</sup> because of this the noises may be mistaken for speech. This also may be applied to the vampire.

Another highly important feature of the Icelandic undead is their Evil Eyes. This element of the revenants is very interesting because, as we have seen, the вампир also has a similar characteristic. The best example for this extraordinary trait is Glámr who says to Grettir: “Þá legg ek það á við þig at þessi augu séu þér jafnan fyrir sjónum sem ek ber eftir ok mun þér erfitt þykja einum at vera. Ok það mun þér til dauða draga.”<sup>238</sup> This instance of the “evil eye”, which is accompanied by deep fear, irritation and other behavioural deviations, might suggest that Grettir was suffering from some kind of a disease such as meningitis, the symptoms of which are confusion and irritation and which also has an effect on the behaviour and psychological state of the person.<sup>239</sup> There

<sup>233</sup>*Grettis saga*, pp.112-113. Translation: “They gave up trying to take him to the church and buried him in a shallow grave where he was.” [Scudder, Örnólfur Thorsson, p.78].

<sup>234</sup>*Landnamabók*, p.105.

<sup>235</sup>*Porleifs þátr jarlsskálds*, p.228, stanza 6.

<sup>236</sup>Barber, 1998, p.119.

<sup>237</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup>*Grettis saga*, p.121. Translation: “And this curse I lay on you: my eyes will always be before your sight and this will make you find it difficult to be alone. And this will lead to your death.” [Scudder, Örnólfur Thorsson, p.85].

<sup>239</sup>Dr Nikola Tepeliev states that this disease can cause “altered mental state, loss of cognitive function, personality changes” and permanent brain damage and nervous system disorder. Which is caused by *Haemophilus influenzae*, *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, etc. It is transmitted by prolonged contact with an infected person (Þórólfr) and spread through mucus, saliva or by sharing eating utensils. Moreover, all the people killed by Þórólfr might also be victims of this disease that he himself died from, which is also something associated with vampires. Nevertheless, not enough evidence is provided by the text, unlike what we have seen with Þórgunna, and an explanation, that his sudden death might be

are more examples that only allude to this Evil Eye, such as the case of Skalla-Grímr Kveld-Úlfsson, where Egill keeps away from his glance. Arnkell does precisely the same and covers his father's eyes and warns the other people not to walk in front of him. Both Skalla-Grímr and Þórólfr are assumed to possess the Evil Eye.<sup>240</sup> This is very similar to the procedures taken when witches and wizards are executed, where they are blindfolded or their head is covered, assuming that the Evil Eye will curse the executors, as with Katla in *Eyrbyggja saga* and Þorgrim nef in *Gísla saga*.<sup>241</sup> As we have previously seen the Evil Eye is strongly connected to the myth of the vampire. A person who is hexed could turn into one, or a person who is a vampire could hex someone – what in fictional vampires is interpreted as glamour. In either case there is a connection between the Evil Eye and becoming a revenant in both the Icelandic and Bulgarian literature, and what is more – between the two revenants and consequently – the two cultures.

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explained by either a heart attack or a highly infectious and rapidly spreading illness as the bacterial meningitis, is only an assumption.

<sup>240</sup>Turville-Petre, 269-270.

<sup>241</sup>*Eyrbyggja saga*, p.54 and *Gísla saga*, p.60.

## Conclusion

So far we have observed the two revenants in some detail. As we have seen from the evidence the similarities between the Icelandic undead and the Bulgarian vampires are clear. Moreover, both evoke fear of the unfathomable afterlife, be it a life in the Christian paradise, or Valhöll, Hel/Hell, or existence in a grave. The revenants might be considered on the whole as the representatives of the belief in a sort of reanimation in both societies.

We have seen that potential revenants may be disposed of in swamps, but this idea works in two directions. We may conclude from what we have seen, that the process of mummification and preservation plays a part in the idea of the afterlife and more specifically in the idea of resurrection and living in the designated place of rest. Therefore, a supposed vampire may be disposed of in a swamp, but also the swamp may be the place where the life of the undead continues. That also applies for tombs, graves or any other resting place, and that may be one of the reasons why representatives of both revenants are usually heard in their respective graves and grave-mounds.

Furthermore, the victims of the Icelandic draugr and the вампир are more likely to be either their close relatives, friends, or in general people from the same farmstead or village, as we have seen with all the examined draugar and with several of the вампири.

The revenants are an elaborate explanation of immortality that has its downsides, for it seems that such a return amplifies and disfigures the dead person's features. For example, if both revenants are bad people while they are alive, that intensifies after death, and if they were good people before death, then they are helpful revenants.

The two revenants appear to share many of the features through which they are recognized. The вампир originates from a person whose life has been cut short, mainly from someone who died from a disease. And we have seen this with several of the texts concerning the navi. This is also the case with Þórgunna and a few other revenants in the Icelandic literature. We have seen through several examples that both the draugr and the вампир could be men, women and children.

It seems that both the вампир and the draugr can either come about on their own accord, or be brought back to life by someone, such as a witch or wizard. Moreover, both revenants have a strong connection to magic-wielding people. The latter can turn into undead, or invoke them. The Evil Eye, which they both possess, could be considered a direct link between the undead and the magicians. As we have seen in both cases this Evil Eye is the cause for psychological diseases connected with revenants in

general. Examples for this were seen in entry 92 and in *Grettis saga*.

Both revenants have the ability to inflict physical and psychological damage. Victims of the вампир and the draugr are often beaten and killed, experience a mental breakdown, or have deep fear instilled in them. Two emphatic examples for this are the navis and Grettir, but all of the primary sources we have examined have this feature.

Both revenants are usually most active during winter and night time. This, as we have seen, is connected with the idea of the duality of the world and the division of it into “ours” and “theirs” – meaning the space and time of the living, and the other’s space and time. We have explicated the idea of liminality and duality to some length and it is now possible to make the conclusion that the night and winter time are the revenants’ domain.

The apotropaics and the means with which the вампир and the draugr are disposed of seem to be somewhat identical and we may conclude that :

1. The funerary rituals must be rigorously complied with for the two revenants.
2. Both can be kept from rising up by pinning their bodies to the grave, or the coffin, but also can be weighed down with stones or boulders.
3. Their ability to walk or bite could be impaired, through arranging the body in a specific position, nailing the feet, breaking the jaw, etc.
4. They can be prevented from coming to their home by taking them through an unconventional place in the building or by positioning the body face down.
5. They can be killed using different methods, but the most effective ones are chopping off the head (and placing it against the buttocks) and burning it. Staking is an innovation, however pricking the body was observed in both Bulgarian and Icelandic literature.
6. They can also be banished using either Christian or other rituals such as singing Mass, preparing a door-court, or something similar.

The appearance of the two revenants is also similar – they are either somewhat pale or bluish-black. We have seen that both complexions can be influenced by the process of decomposition. Moreover, the decay affects another characteristic of the undead – making them appear big, bloated or swollen.

While these similarities are not without importance, the most significant of all of them is the ideas, which appear to be akin, the two revenants represent – a life after

death, an explanation of a disease, and an explanation of the process of dying. All of these ideas we have considered at length in the course of this work, and now it is possible for us to make a suggestion that the ideology of these two societies is not as incomparable as it might seem at first glance.

This paper intended to see if there might be any connection or resemblance between these two types, not to prove they are one and the same. It had as its goal to simply propose that they are similar or maybe distant relatives. And from what has been said thus far a definite connection can be attested. Consequently it could be concluded that, whatever contact there had been between the Bulgarian and Icelandic cultures, a mark was left. A blending between the ideologies existed from very early on.

However, this blend may have been the result of an ideology that has existed long before the myths concerning the revenants came into being. I have not researched this idea at such great length to be competent enough to make any bold assumptions. I also refrained from making any concrete conclusions concerning the two societies at hand, without studying the societies in between and their contribution to the development of the broader ideologies.

Although this paper tried to answer how deeply rooted this blend was, this specific question still has room for more research. For example, this study only grazed the surface of the other supernatural beings that the vampire or the draugr may represent. Much more could be said concerning trolls, elves, talasŭms, werewolves, etc. in connection with the revenants and on their own. These are also personifications of specific fears, beliefs and diseases.

The historical development of the myths could be traced in greater length, but also archaeological evidence from a wider territory could be considered. Further investigation could be done on the burial practices of Bulgaria, and the beliefs that can be observed through them.

The magical practices of both societies could be considered in greater depth. It could be beneficial to a research such as the present if it was further observed how magic is connected to the existence of the вампир and the draugr. Psychological research on mental disorders that could be at the root of some of the myths, as was suggested in this paper, could be further elaborated. Pathology and general research on the processes that a body goes through, and how some myths can reflect them could also be further examined. Climate change and environmental situations should also be considered in connection with when and where the first instance of this myth had emerged. It would be significant not only in connection to the myth of the undead, but

also with other supernatural beings. However, this largely depends on whether the myth's roots could be traced.

All of these research topics could be greatly relevant to Scandinavian Studies. Whether or not they are undertaken with the same method of comparative examination of two cultures, they could result in new findings concerning the ideology, belief system and general understandings and lifestyle of the medieval Scandinavian inhabitant.

This thesis, however, has exhausted the resources that were available to it – time and space. The material that it tried to cover was wide and variable. And even though the task at hand seemed inexhaustible we still managed to make some clear conclusions. This paper hopefully opened up the doors for other similar works and has given suggestions as to how the field could expand and which other important topics could be researched.

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## Appendix

The translations given below have no literary ambition and are not intended for publication, they are simply intended as an aid to the reader. Moreover, not all of the tales were translated, because they were not as essential and also due to lack of space and time.

### Evgenia Mitseva's *Collection of Folktales*

#### №30. Karakondzhuls during the Dirty Days.

One time, my dad, while sleeping in his shed heard people coming. He told me that they were playing music, playing music and singing, dancing; playing, singing. They came in, where I [the informant starts speaking from her father's point of view] was, and one of them said:

- Let's wake him up!

Another one – playing a bagpipe – came around the fireplace and began to prepare the fire; he blew into it [to kindle it], he blew, blew. And I – my father says – three hundred and twenty (that means frightened – explains the informant). And if you scream at that point, you will die immediately, if you make a sound. The bagpiper lit up the fire and took off my shoes. He took them off, my shoes, and I stayed silent, I kept quiet, quiet and listened, but I didn't make one sound. And they danced and sang and had fun and they left through the gate, outside.”

Those walk during the dirty days, when pigs are slaughtered, on what people call dirty nights. During these nights people did not go about outside, didn't go out, they kept safe. But now those things are no more.

#### №32. A Dog with a Human Head.

My father went to graze the horses, with a friend of his, in the field at night. The moon was very beautiful, clear. My father was walking forward in a straight direction, and at one point he saw a dog coming from the farther end of the field, a dog – unusual, with a human head. “Ah, damn it!” Because he did not want it (if something happened to the horses) to be his mistake, he drew his gun and aimed at the animal that was approaching. And the animal, at that moment, whether it was because it put a spell on my father, or because my father got tired and sleepy, this is not clear, he fell asleep, his

gun fell down with the hammer pulled down. My dad – he was beaten to a pulp, ground down – his right side was all bloody, as if he was beaten by that animal. In the morning when he woke up, his companion saw the gun on the ground beside him with the hammer pulled down and said:

“Get up, it’s dawn, we have to get away! Why – he asked – is the hammer of your gun released?” My father answered: “I have no idea!” “How can that be..?” “Wait, - my dad said – I remember now. An animal came – he said – from the farther end, from the neighbouring field, it came towards us, with a human head. A human face, just a human face, but a dog.” “What are you saying?” “A dog, with a human face came – he explained – towards us, and at once I took out my revolver. Just to be safe I released the safety and pulled the hammer down – to be prepared. Very well, but I must have fallen asleep; what happened to me..? Argh, I’m dying...” “What’s wrong with you?” “It hurts, I can’t get up” “It seems – his friend says – that you are black all over, look – your arm is black, let me look at you.” He unbuttoned his clothes – his body was all black.

And then they went to a wise woman [a witch], from the district of Petrich, who was called Mara. She was a very powerful sorceress. She said: “Be glad that it didn’t strangle him, didn’t kill him. It battered him quite a lot – she said, - because he took out his gun, but be grateful that it didn’t kill him.” After that she healed him with her magic, however, he was very weak for three years after that. And that creature was a samodiva.

### **№35. Curing Children Born During Karakondzhuls Days.**

Kondzhours [another variation of karakondzhuls] days begin from Christmas day onwards and they last for twelve days. Children born during that time become kondzhurs and they run away with the kondzhurs.

If a child is born during that time [this is what you’ll have to do]: if it is cold, so cold that the river freezes over, then you will go and cut out a block of ice from the river. You will make a big hole in the middle of the ice block so big that you can thread the baby through it. After that you will take the baby and put it through the hole in the ice block three times and you will say this while you do it: “You will not be kondzhur on the mosque!” You will thread the child through and say this three times also: “People will not cry because of you!” And after you have done this the child will not become a kondzhur.

### **№36. Karakondzhul Disguises His Voice.**

There once was an old woman, she used to tell us this: “I was sleeping one time when someone said:

- Catherine, Catherine, hurry up, we have to go to the fields.

So I got up, that thing was not moving as a human, as if a fox it went before me while I walked after it and asked:

- Wait, wait, who are you, why did you call out for me?

- I won't wait, I am in a hurry.”

It said to her: “I'm in a hurry,” because they used to do that in those days. And the woman hurried after it, but when she got to the bridge said:

- God, this is not my friend Boba, this is the thing from the outside [the outwardly], and it lied to me. “And when I realized that I went back...”

She went back and told everything to her mother:

- And, mother, I did so. When that thing came to me and called me out I went after it. But when we neared the bridge I turned back. It was not my friend, it was the outwardly, the outwardly.

### **№42. A Person Saw a Woman in White.**

I had an uncle and when he was a bachelor he used to go to all the gatherings [mixers]. Once he was coming home from one such event and he saw a woman walking bear-footed through the thorns. She had on one of those old shirts, with those specific kinds of sleeves. She was walking through the thorns bear-footed and the thorns made this loud song: “Bang! Wham!” We were young at that time – maids, but whenever we went near that place we would cross ourselves [make the Christian cross for prayer].

He told us it was a woman, but was it a karakondzhul or a samodiva, he did not know. The samodivas braid the tails of the horses.

The karakondzhul and the plütenik we regard as the same thing, and the samodivas braid the horses' tails, I have seen them. The horses with the braided manes and tails, braided, even if you wanted to you could not unplait them. After a while the

samodivas unplait them themselves. They braid and unplait the tails all night.

So we asked our uncle:

- Was she a samodiva?
- A woman, a woman, white, with a babushka. When she stepped on the thorns it sounded as: “Wham! Bam!”

### **№59. The Concept of Vampires – I.**

A vampire comes from the blood of a dead person, over whom a cat jumped, a hen flew over, and something jumped over the body of the dead. And from then onwards, until the fortieth day after his death he is not there, but after the fortieth day he starts making himself known – he bangs on the roofs, knocks on the doors. The people go out, but don't see him, he is unseen, but they can feel him and start to be doubtful whether it is a vampire, whether one of the dead people had turned, because he was jumped over by some animal. That is why they would plant thorny vines around the house, for if the vampire came at night and succeeded in going over the wall [and the vines] he would bang on the doors. But if he pricks himself on a thorn, be it on the hand or the foot, he immediately falls down and dies- collapses on the ground in the form of a jelly mass made of blood. When they find it, people say that the vampire was eliminated... That was the way the people protected themselves against the vampires.

A vampire can acquire human features – a human face; he starts walking, talking as a person. He turns into other creatures too – a dog, cat, until he pricks himself and dies. It does not matter what form he is in when he pricks himself, when he dies – he collapses and dies.

It is said that the vampire cannot be seen by everyone. Those born on a certain day in a certain month, only they can see the vampire. The other people do not have the eye with which to see him, to find him. In the entire year there is only one day in one month, but I don't know which.

We haven't heard whether the vampire can make fruit [babies], children. The vampire is a dead person, who had been jumped over by an animal. He is referred to by two names – some call him a vampire, others call him talasŭm. In our village we call him vampire, but they are one and the same, not different.

Some people say interesting things, they say that when he is there, he can be seen, be spotted, as a shadow he passes by the road, around a certain place – a tree, around a rock; they see something moving, but it cannot be fixated. As if a shadow it moves [at the corner of the eye], in the guise of a person, in the shape of some other creature it will pass by, but people say it is a talasūm, vampire.

### **№60. The Concept of Vampires – II.**

Those kinds of things [vampires] appear before the fortieth day after death, after the fortieth - no more. Until the fortieth day. On that night before the fortieth day, before the first cock's crow, he has already returned to his grave and remains there. That same night people will take iron objects, they will make spikes and will go. They will go to the grave and stick them in the grave until it hits soil again. He bursts and thereafter cannot come out. After this the vampire dies. That is how you kill a vampire. And if the fortieth day passes, without this, people cannot kill him anymore. He rises up his body and lives among people. However, he makes mischief. Before the fortieth day he cannot bring up his body, only the soul raises. To prevent him from becoming a vampire people spike him. If not – anything they try is useless! Until the fortieth day the vampire, his soul walks; he can only make a clatter, a hullabaloo. Can't do anything. After the fortieth onwards he raises his body. The bones stay, but the vampire raises the skin. Then he does many evil things. And when people notice him, they try to catch and burn him. Otherwise – no! For example, he goes into a house, we have previously decided on which house. So he goes in the house and we light it, burn the house. He cannot run away through thorns, so we put thorns around the house; through the thorns – he would sting himself – he cannot run away – he bursts. When he bursts – he dies. Both ways kill him. So if he comes out of the threshold – he stings himself – bursts and again – he dies.

### **№61. A Vampire from Blood.**

This is just how it was passed down to us: a drop of blood. For example, in our village a murder happened and wherever the blood would flow – that thing turned into a vampire. There was another example - people experienced this. For example - my husband. We are now forty years old, and earlier we lived yonder, where you see that herd walking now. One time when my husband was a bachelor, he was coming back home at evening time and a woman came out in front of him – dressed in white clothes. So, that was around one o'clock, at night and he was walking home and at that moment a woman

stands at a corner in white attire and she pulled him... No, at first she disguised herself in a cat, a big tom-cat and he [the husband] took him and shoved him with his foot – kicked him. At that moment, when he kicked the cat, the woman in white came out and slapped him in the face – a smack.

- What did this cat do to you, that you kicked it?

- Well, - he says – he was in my way!

When she slapped him he got scared and in that moment she disappeared, so, the shadow, this woman, which appeared to him, disappeared. And, we had a certain grandma (all these things I'm telling you now – I know them from her), in the morning when he got up she told him:

- Vanyo, why is your cheek so red? – And the hand, the five fingers were imprinted.

- Why grandma – he says – what is on my cheek?

- Look in the mirror!

- Well – he says – last night, when I was walking home, an old woman slapped me, with white clothes she was – he says – and left me this slap on my cheek.

### **№62. Dzhadū.**

My grandmother used to tell me that you shouldn't go out at night on Wednesdays, because the dzhadū (spirits) come out. The ones who go outside on a Wednesday night – those ghosts go weaving on the village's looms – to mess up the yarn. And if you want to rid yourself of these ghosts, you shouldn't go outside on Wednesday nights.

A person, while he was walking at night through the village, saw that something was rolling as an egg. He took hold of the round object and pinned it on a spike of a fence. And what did they see the next morning – a person was staked on the spike. Well, these are stories. This is what has been passed down.

### **№63. A Vampire on the Oxen.**

The oxen started to die and to burst. Today – a healthy ox grazing, then tilts – dead. Gee! The householder gets up in the morning, finds the ox his nether [the belly] – raptured. And he wonders what to do, and the elders think about what should be done. [They call] from Frashtane, the Serres district, a vampirar [also called vampirdzhiya – a

vampire slayer]. He is born on a Saturday. His mother didn't look after him, neither did she warm his diapers, always kept him in the cold. And now he can see them [the vampires]. You cannot see him, me neither, but he can see the vampire, he can see him.

And the oxen truly die there, and we had four hundred heads of cattle in our village. All was husbandry. Two hundred houses there were, each with two oxen – four hundred oxen, apart from the cows.

And the elders got up, went, and brought the vampirar. They paid him only for what the trip thither would cost. But he carried a gun, a shotgun with pellets, it was Turkish times then. So he came and gave an order:

- You will lead the oxen out, every living creature that you have, be it cow, calf – all of it, to the pasture.

Outside [the village] there was a pasture, you see, from the village upwards.

- You will take the cattle on the pasture – and so he says. – You will hold them there!

And now he would start searching for him [the vampire]. With the gun in his hand he went and searched. He looked and walked, walked and walked around the cattle and he said:

- There he is – the vampire!

The vampire jumped from ox to ox, on their horns, on the oxen's spines, and then on a person, who couldn't see him.

- You, you there, come here! It's on you – the vampirar says.

He chases after him [after the vampire] but he runs, the vampire knows, you see, he is being watched and so he runs. And in the end, on the horn of one ox he stops – “BA-ANG!” –the slayer killed him [the vampire]. And the people saw – a frog's skin – black, bleeding. Then the slayer called the people:

- Come and see – he says – the vampire!

They see – a skin and black blood, gushed where it was killed. This they saw. And he then resumed looking at the cattle, found two more oxen dead.

- There are two more oxen – he says – strangled. Those will die – he says. – The others are fine.

“The vampire is – said the old people – when you cut off a head of a sheep, a goat, or whatever; cut it off and put it in a cold place, where flies won’t eat it, or other such insects, in that kind of place. And when it stays there for forty days and you go and look at it – it will be blinking, it would be able to see again.”

That is what they used to say and that is what I know.

[...]

But there is another way – that occurred often because it was in the mountains – from the blood. Somewhere some blood – you see rebels would hide in the mountains then – they would slaughter, butcher an animal there for food, you see, and they would slaughter [an animal/a person it is unclear]. And the blood clots, it stays there, piles up, remains there, and nothing eats it, and then it becomes a vampire.

#### **№64. A Vampire on a Grave.**

One time a person died. This happened in the village of Lilyanovo. His wife went to his grave to light a candle every day. Well, one day she saw a small hole on it. And she said:

- Ah! Come on! Some critter must have done this.

It was around three o’clock in the afternoon, maybe four, and she started picking up and gathering pebbles, she picked them up and filled the hole with them. Well, but it weren’t critters, you see, her husband it was, who had turned into a vampire and he went out, well his soul – it was out. And she did this several times – filling up the hole, and one time, while she was doing that, kneeling, suddenly something kicked her and grabbed her neck and choked her. However, further down across [the graveyard] there was a shepherd boy and his two dogs. And these dogs, they were able to sense this, and they leapt there, started jumping around the woman and tried to drag the vampire away from her. The shepherd looked at them and, because he could not see the vampire, thought they were attacking the woman. He then stroke the dogs, beat them, but could not take them away. Very well, they bit the vampire so much that they could now pull him away from her, and it sloshed at once on the grave – a pulp; and the woman said after that:

- I will never again come to your grave!

If it weren't for the dogs the woman would have died then and there, it would have strangled her.

### **№65. A Vampire – Saddle Maker.**

One day a saddle maker died and turned into a vampire, and now he would go in town, in Serres, to the market. There he would mend saddles.

A person from the same village recognized him and said:

- Listen, that's the dead guy – he says – that died not so long ago.
- Where?
- That's him – he said – the same, from our village, I know him. Now – he says – you will go to him as if you want him to fix your saddle, like so – he says – with the needle as if: “do this here, and that there...” – and try to prick him. He is a vampire – he says – a vampire.
- Bugger that!
- It is a vampire!

And the other person, the one from Vrankovo village, walks toward the vampire.

- Listen – he says – I want you to repair my saddle, right here – he says and he grabs the place, which needs mending – right here it gives the mule a wound, so fix it.
- Where again?
- Here, here...

And he then only pricked him with the needle – the only thing left was a pile of skin [the informant shows with her hands how big the pile was], everything in blood and pouring down.

And the vampire was finished.

### **№66. Plūtenik as a Tom-cat.**

Your grandma Pūrva used to tell me that there, in her village there was an old woman. Her husband died and left behind two children and his wife. They were poor people. He wasn't recognized as a vampire until the fortieth day and became a plūtenik [oplūtq – to obtain flesh, skin]. When they [vampires] become plūteniks, they can transform themselves into any kind of animals. And that one became a tom-cat. After that he went home at night. You see, he went inside and lay under the iron stove. This night like so,

the next – the same, and so on. The wife realized that it was her husband, and people said it was him.

One night she came home, but she was very poor, with two small children, and no flour, no firewood, anything! So she said this:

- Tsonko [the name of her husband]! Tsonko! Rest and lie there all cosy under the iron stove, while I have no wood, no flour, what are we to do?!

On the next morning, when she got up – what did she see! Flour and wood, the yard was full with wood! He prepared everything! The cattle had no hay – now the barn was full with hay! Where did it come from, what? That is what a grandma here used to tell, a neighbour.

And afterwards the wife kept Tsonko under the iron stove, and he lied there and listened to her.

#### **№70. A Cattleman and a Vampire.**

In the village of Levka there was one, he was a talasŭm, from Mladenovo, I think, I don't know, and one time he went to the cattleman. They knew each other from before. And, he turned himself into a dog and limping, limping – like this – and brought up one foot and the cattleman immediately took out the thorn from his foot. And looked at him – a dog! He was called grandpa Iliya, Iliya, took out his thorn. And on the other side – he turned into a person again, and he [the vampire] went to him. He said:

- Where are you going?
- I'm going to Svilengrad. Well, come to my house tonight!
- Very well, I'll come!

This said the dog and went wherever it goes. And that night old man Iliya came back to his wife (now this is certain – way down there, there is a watermill called “Old man Iliya's watermill”). The wife began complaining, saying:

- Now, when Iliya comes back and the children start drinking. Just one thing – she says – it does not take. The girl it wouldn't take, the boys it takes. [This part of the text is not very clear, but I presume that the wife was trying to convince Iliya that the man was a vampire and that he would take all her children except the girl, the reason, however is not known.]

And he says:

- Well, what should we do then? If you want we can kill him?
  - Let's kill him! Yes, we could.
  - You'll take the girl and go out. We'll throw gas on the corners of the house, or gasoline, and we'll light the house.
- So they went out, and the house was lit.
- A-a-argh, grandpa Iliya, Iliya, why didn't I think of eating you first!
- And that was it!

### **№76. A Vampire at Home.**

We made a deal to work on a house. Now, we were sleeping in another house, an old one, the same person was the owner, while we were working on the first house, which we would take down.

Now, we were working and in the evening, when it got dark, we went to the second house. There were fireplaces inside the rooms, we built a big fire and were sitting – the workers – they served us dinner. And at one time it started raining inside, we looked at our hands – blood. The walls, all over the room – pouring blood, a vampire had come and got inside and then he had splattered all over.

And we abandoned dinner and all – to the yard, there was water there. And again they brought us food outside. In the morning, when we woke up we saw everything splashed all over – the ceiling, the walls, our clothes... We washed ourselves. Then the district's administrator came by to see what had happened and whether it was true. After that he said, our gaffer, on whose house we were working, that there was a vampire in that house, but it was dead now.

### **№77. A Host Ghost.**

One time my father took a job as a farmhand in a certain house. He was a bachelor at that time. And he used to go to gatherings [mixers]. One time he was coming back. He lay down outside next to the house. He lay there and just as he was about to fall asleep, a thing came and jumped on his head. At that time he was used to carrying those "kalūchki" – the knives that they fastened on the side of their belts. And he took that kalūchka and swung it atop his head – to hit the thing. When he did that, the thing jumped to his feet. He swung again – it went on his head again, and at that moment the first cock crew and it ran away.

And my father got up, went to see the mistress and said: “Aunty, what was that thing this night? It squashed me to death.” She told him: “Kole [short from Nikolay], we keep that here. That is the host-ghost” – she said. “He walks in the yard kind and gentle.”

### **№78 A Host Ghost in a House.**

When I was around nine, maybe ten years old, our mothers and grandmothers used to go to the neighbours – relatives, which lived near us. They would go, eat and read. During those nights they would dedicate to the dead – so that they could rest peacefully in the other world – a memorial prayer, it is called mevlit. They went and, because our kin is big, gathered the children and left us at my uncle’s house. His and grandma’s houses used to share the same yard. Anyway, we were left alone – six-seven girls all-in-all, because the boys weren’t in the same house, they were somewhere else, grandpa – in the mosque, the dads – in the main room and we – alone there.

Now, we were getting sleepy, it was really late. I was with my aunt, my mother’s sister, but she was only seven years older than me. I basically grew up with her, so I told her we should go and sleep. Very well, so we went down, but before that we saw – someone was in the room – in grandma’s room. We thought that our big brothers want to scare us there, that they have disguised themselves as devils, as samodivas. So we went downstairs, my aunt and I, to the main entrance door, in the hallway. We started calling them by name – no one opened up. After that we went back to the room. As soon as we were back we locked ourselves upstairs – in my uncle’s house and we looked over at grandma’s room. And at one point an old man came out, with a beard, naked all over, with a bald head, and went out and threw some water in the roots of the plum. They used to have a very old plum tree in front of their house. So he threw the water, left the basin outside and went back inside. There were no lamps, but there was a strange light, there was no light-bulbs to shine, no electricity. The fireplace was lit, of course, inside, however, that person was completely illuminated, as if he himself was bright it seemed. And, he turned towards the stove, then towards the door, he was waving his hands, then he turned back to us, then turned again, he lit his pipe from the stove, he started smoking and then the light disappeared and the old man disappeared also.

When they returned from the mevlit, they called us and we told them about what happened. We all saw that thing, we told them, they did not believe us, and well they

thought we were lying. And then we asked one grandma, we told her about this and she said:

- This was the host-ghost of the house, who came to roam around.

It – their house – was very old, from a long time ago, it does not know its own years. That's what that grandma told us, that this was the host-ghost of the house. She died when she was ninety-two years old.

The host-ghost appears in old houses, where people are always praying, that's when these things come out. They come back, only with respect, in that house. And what's more, the grandma interpreted it as so – that in that house the people were good, therefore no harm would ever befall that family, it brought prosperity. It protected the house from fires and other such things.

#### **№79. Dream of a Dead Person.**

I have dreamt of him. My cow bore a calf but she had no milk to feed the young one. And it was bad outside – snow and rain. And I went to the barn and got sleepy. When I went in, there was a bench there, and lay on it and immediately fell asleep, but I could still hear everything. And my dad came to me and asked me:

- Vanke, what are you doing?

I said:

- Dad, well, our cow gave birth, but she has no milk.
- Take tepid water and dip the cow's udder and rub the milk veins. Then she'll start giving milk.

Then he turned and went through the door. When I got up I went into the main room, where the stove was. Because no one kept the fire kindled the water in the pot was lukewarm. I took the pot and went back to the barn. And my brother asked me:

- Where are you taking this pot?
- Because dad told me to rub the cow's udder – I said.

I was holding the pot and Ivancho [the brother] started rubbing the udder and the milk veins and all of her belly. This went on for a while and at one point the water turned white. The cow had milk again.

This I saw with my own two eyes. My father and my brother [Ivancho] taught me a lot about this.

### **№80. Dead Brother Foretells the Future in a Dream.**

I still remember my brother Lazar. Where we lived back then there was a pear and we had to walk around it to get to our house. When we had to prepare a memorial service for the twentieth day after his death my husband came home. And I had a dream... Well, at that time I still didn't know I was pregnant. Now, we had to go around the pear tree [in the dream], but there was an earthquake, so there was a pit. So my brother and I went down and I was walking to his right side and he grabbed my left shoulder and told me:

- Vanke, you will have a child, a boy.
- Where will this boy be?
- You will give birth to a boy.

That was several days after my husband came home. After that I gave birth to my son. I remember, because it was when my husband was a soldier in the military.

### **№81. A Request in a Dream.**

A woman was sitting near the stove and I was sitting in the bed and we were talking, but I got sleepy. I put my head on the pillow - I fell asleep. And my brother came to me, the same one – Lazar – and told me:

- Vanke, please send me leek and newspapers and also write me a letter to tell me where Mitko is (that was our brother who is now in Sofia). And I asked him:
- Brother mine, how?
- Through Parvan – Tsona's brother – he said.

And then he was gone. And when my husband's sister came home the church bell rang and I went outside. Tsona's brother used to work here – so I asked:

- Who died?
- My brother – Tsona said – at five o'clock this morning.

The same one that my brother told me.

### **№82. A Vampire in an Inn.**

There was a son who was very evil. The mother, you see, died and the son and the father were left on their own. The father was very rich. They lived in some town. So the son said to his father every day:

- Give me money, give me money!

The father gave and gave and gave, but in the end he ran out of money. When

the money ran out the father said:

- I have no money to give you, nothing!

The son said:

- Give me money or I'll kill you!

- Even if you kill me I have no money to give you. You ate them, drank them!

So the son killed his father and buried him in the lowest cellar under the threshold. When people went in and out of the cellar they crossed over him... It has been left from the olden days that when a dead person is jumped over or walked across he turns into a vampire. So the father became a vampire and started to scare people. You see, in our village there is a custom – a dead person is not to be left alone. Someone has to sit with him always, all night, if the dead person is not buried immediately. And people should not leave him alone because a cat might walk across him or jump across him or someone else...

So the father became a vampire. The council then confiscated the house and turned it into an apartment building, or something. It was a big house, as big as a hotel. So people stayed there, for the night, but at night the vampire would come out and scare them. What he did to them – choked them, ate them – they died. The next morning they would be found dead – the ones that had stayed during the night.

A boy from another town, from far away, he came to this town but it was late, so he looked for a place to spend the night. He was an orphan and was very poor. So people told him that there is a building, a house, but whoever went there to spend the night did not come back. He would die there.

- But why?

- We do not know what kills the people.

The boy said:

- Well, I will go, and whatever will be...

So the boy gathered his courage and went there. He picked room number one hundred twenty seventh. He settled in that room, started taking off his clothes, lay in the bed and started reading a paper. It was light. The lamp was on. At one time, was it twelve o'clock, or one...? (My grandma used to say which time, but I've forgotten...) The house started shaking: "Ba-am-m!" Three times. "Ba-am-m!" "Ba-am-m!" After that the boy heard footsteps coming up the stairs, because the stairs were wooden, you see... "Thump-thump!" And wherever the noise went the doors would open on their own: "Cli-ick! Thump-thump-cli-ick!" "Thump-thump – cli-ick!" The sound came

finally to his room, the door opened. He [the vampire] said:

- My son, what are you doing here?

The boy said:

- I came in this town late and I had nowhere to spend the night, that is why – he said – I came here. I am an orphan. And for you – he said – to kill me, why? Tell me – he asked – what are you, how did you come to be here? Nobody knows what you are!

- I've killed so many people – he answered – and no one had dared to ask me. Fine – he said – I will spare you and I will tell you my story tomorrow evening. Enough.

That was for several minutes. And again – “cli-ick”, the door closed and “thump-thump-click, thump-thump-click” – the footsteps were heard, the doors closing and opening, he walked along, and it started getting quiet... This boy lay down, he could not fall asleep until morning had come. He lay in the bed and thought what he should do. In the morning he went to the council and the people were baffled when they saw him alive.

- Oh dear, is this really you, how are you still alive, what is this?

- Well – he said – an awful monster, snarling, ugly! With a loud roaring voice! The whole building was shaking! Tomorrow night – he said – you will give me two guards.

They gave him two guards, and he went to the same room. One of the guards hid under the bed. If the vampire would pounce at him, they could do something! So the guards took position... The same thing happened. Came twelve o'clock and passed away, the building started shaking, and the noises began: “Ba-am-m”. The whole building rattled and then the footsteps were heard: “thump-thump-cli-ick, thump-thump-cli-ick”.

They came to his room. The door opened.

- My son! What are you doing here?

The boy said:

- Well, didn't you tell me that you are going to explain things to me, what you are, where you came from!

- Fine! I will tell you a great secret, but in return you will do something for me. – He said: - You will go to the town council tomorrow. You will demand they give you a priest and several other people. All of you will come here. I am the owner of this building. The host. I have only one son, he turned out to be a ne'er-do-well, a squanderer. He ate all my money, drank them. And when I finally didn't have any money to give him he shot me and buried me in the lowest cellar, under the threshold.

And then people walked across my body, and I, my soul is now fated to suffer. I turned into a vampire and have no peace, neither day, nor night... You will get the priest, get five-six people, you will make a coffin, and then all of you will come and dig up my bones. You will put them in the coffin, the priest will sing Mass for me and you will take me to the graveyard, and bury me like other people.

This is why Mass is sung for the dead – so they don't turn into vampires. Now people don't sing but read eulogies for the dead... Still someone secretly sings, secretly, you see.

So the boy did all of it... The council gave him a priest. Gave him the men with which he dug up the bones... And the vampire said:

- If you do me this request, all of my possessions I will leave to you. As if you were my own son. Free me from my sufferings.

The guards that were hidden wrote down all of that and brought it back to the council. The boy gathered everyone that was needed, paid for the service and for the men that dug up the body. He placed the bones in a coffin, brought them to the graveyard and buried them there. And after all of that was done, the house was left to the boy. The boy could still be alive, if he hasn't died.

#### **№91. A Talasūm Brother.**

There were a mother and a father. They lived peacefully, loved each other, they had a little baby boy. The mother died, so the father married again. They had another baby. The father had many horses and he used to send the older boy to tend after them, to take them grazing in the woods. However, at night the boy would return and the next morning when he went again – one horse each morning would die, go missing. They tried to figure out what was happening, but came to no conclusions. They would go and hide among the horses. One time the older boy said:

- I won't sleep tonight!

So he went outside and hid himself and watched to see what might be happening to the horses. And what he saw, his baby brother – the one in the crib, which was no more than two or three years old, would get out and go to a horse's leg and would drink its blood and the horse would fall and die. And then it would finish it. In the end three or

four horses remained and the older boy said:

- Dad, I found out why the horses are dying.
- Well then?
- Well this child, the young one, in the crib!

However, the father paid no heed. The older boy had now become of age and said:

- Listen, father, give me some money for my travels, I want to find my own way in life now; from now on you are on your own.

And the father was sad, but glad that his son had grown up and let him leave. When the boy was heading on his way he took in his pocket two cherries and then left. He walked for a long time and so decided to take a break and rest; he sat down and ate the two cherries and threw the central stones on the ground and continued on his way. He walked very far now – where exactly it's unknown, and he bargained there with a certain farmer to work for him for his keep. It so happened that he worked there for ten years. He became a bachelor, ready to get married, strong. The farmer, who he worked for, had a daughter. The old man loved the boy and so he told him:

- Listen, I will marry you to my daughter. I love you deeply!

The young man agreed to this, they married and began living together. Another ten years had passed after that, and the young man at that point deeply missed his family, his mother, father and his little brother so he said:

- I want to go in my home town, to visit my family – he asked his wife – will you let me go there?

She said:

- Yes.

So he took from the old man that horse – he was so fast, as if flying! He asked for that horse and he gave it to him. He put on the steed's feet such things so that when it was walking his footsteps would not be heard. He took the horse and gave a handkerchief to his wife and told her:

- My dear, I'm leaving. My home town is very far away. You should look at the kerchief from time to time. If you ever see it bloody, you will let loose the lions [they are called lions here – to emphasize on their strength, usually such dogs are born on Saturdays and those have the power to kill vampires], the dogs – they had those kinds of dogs, those big ones that are like lions, with the same strength – so that they can find me

and save me if I am in danger.

So he left. The wife did as she promised and took out the kerchief from time to time and looked at it. Meanwhile, when the young man reached his old village – nothing could be heard, nothing could be seen – everything was silent. He went, looked – no people, nothing! So he realized that maybe something bad had happened. He goes to his old house – nothing – no windows, no doors – dislodged; not a single soul, no dogs barking, no cocks crowing! He went to the gate – and he saw that he [his little brother] had become as big as a buffalo! He ate the whole village. In our village we call that talasūm, because he drinks the blood – of the cattle, the people, all: and he ate his mother, his father and the whole village. People, everything that was there he devoured! And he became so big that he could not go through the doors so he knocked them down.

When the young man saw this he decided to turn back, but his younger brother saw him and said:

- A-ah, big brother, come in! I recognized you, why do you want to turn back?

So the young man could no longer turn back and he went in with his horse. They shook hands.

- A-ah, big brother, you have a nice horse there, would you give it to me for a ride?

So he took the horse to ride him but he ate it and it died. And it happened now, awkward it became, so the younger brother decided that he would eat the young man, so he [the big brother] turned into a dove. And he flew into the skies and went thither where he ate the two cherries. They had now grown so big, huge trees and so the dove landed there to rest for a while.

But the talasūm ran after him and caught up with him and began digging with hands, feet – he was trying to run down the cherry tree, to catch him. He pushed down one of them, but the dove flew to the other. So the talasūm began digging at the other and he was just about to run it down and in that moment the wife took out the handkerchief and saw that the whole thing was bloody. So she immediately let loose the lions!

And the talasūm was just about to eat him when the lions came running and rescued him from his little brother.

...We were gathered – boys, girls, bachelors – single people – we gathered at my home. At one point I went outside and called out, and listened and said: “Should I go in and tell them, or should I not?” So I went back in and said:

- Get up, children, come and listen! Whether I am lying or whether I tell the truth.

And when they got up, the navis came out: “Meow! Vyaow, meow, vyaow! Ow-aw! Ow-aw!” And the shepherds with the logs that were still burning in the fire – came after them. They chased them. In the morning they got up and went to see if the sheep are still there. [...] One of the navis came by – fell. Fell and splattered himself – [..?] milk. It was a chick – naked [i.e. no feathers] wings, naked body, naked as a belly... Bare, bare as the stomach of the swine, from which once balls were made. And it had something like a beak, like a mouth.

I have seen them. They come at night, but splattered. We see them splattered where we find them. And this was so splattered and milky [?]...

They come about when it's rainy and foggy. When there is a fog, rain comes down and fog... They do harm on women, iff a woman is pregnant or has recently given birth. She should have people around her. They come to her, the navi, to her, for they can feel her. I wouldn't feel if that one came... It drinks the blood and the woman dies. And the woman turns blue. With spots. Yellow spots, red spots... And they would run away... Drink her blood and: “Vyaow, meow!” And they go thither. Run away. The same thing was told about Stoyna. I remember her. She gave birth and she was alone there in the hut. There were no people around her – mother, father, nobody was there. Until much later, and then, when they found her – spots all over – here, here, here [the informant shows on her body]... She suffered for a few days and then she died.

I went there the next morning, her father called me.

- Come, Mitra, and see – our Tonka [short from Stoyna] will die!

- Why?

- I don't know... This night – he says – I jumped outside and I heard – he says – the navi, it was meowing in Magda's garden, but I didn't think to go to Stoyna, but only went back – he says – to my home. So he went to bed. Then the navi drank the mother. Her blood they drank!

#### **№95. A Pregnant Woman and the Evil Spirits.**

The woman, when she gives birth, they [the mother and the child] are not to be left alone for either seven or forty days, they are guarded, so that no evil spirit would come to the mother. Because they are frequently attacked by such things as samodivas, daemons and devils. So people watch over her, they don't leave her alone. She must have an iron object, which would keep her safe against such evil spirits, samodivas, so that they don't find her, so that they don't do any harm to her, strangle her. Sometimes it happens that some of them [the mothers] hang themselves. That still happens nowadays to mothers who give birth for the first time.

### **№96. A Child Turned into a Vampire.**

A woman from Bozhentsi gave birth, her husband was a soldier. The child died and became a vampire, and then it turned into something, a dog, a cat, I don't know...

And the woman, the mother, would go and kneel at the fire to take care of it, and it [the dead child] would kneel next to her, she would go out, it would go after her... wherever she would go – it would go after her. Then it would go back and would go to the attic – in those days not a lot of houses had attics. She would sit at the fire and it would come down and sit next to her.

- Is that you, my child? – She asks.
- Goo-goo-gaa. Blu-blu – it would answer.

She would again ask:

- Is that you, my baby?
- Goo-goo-gaa-gaa...

The child had lived a while before it died.

One time she went and tied the ox's horns and as soon as she headed towards the tavern – she sees – the knots were undone. The next evening – the same, so she got scared for sleeping alone there, so she went to th????

## **SbNU, FROM THE BURGAS DISTRICT**

### **USTREL**

The villagers from Burgas and Malko Tarnovo believe in the existence of a monster called “ustrel” or “vampire”, for which different stories exist.

According to the tales of the villagers the ustrel is an invisible creature with little strength, with altering weight; he feeds exclusively on the blood of sheep, cows, sometimes on oxen, and when he grows and strengthens a bit – on people. During the day he lies, and at night he looks for food. On Saturdays he loses all of his strength and sleeps all day. He is afraid of the live fire and of the wolf, who could see him any time.

The ustrel comes from a Christian child that was born on a Saturday and after its birth died unbaptised. Nine days after its death the child is a complete ustrel, which makes a hole on the grave that is so big that it would go freely through it, and goes out to the world. It roams around all night in search for blood, but when day draws near, goes back in the grave where it stays until the next night. When it becomes stronger (which happens after it drinks the blood of several animals – after ten days) the ustrel can walk longer and when it finds a herd of sheep or cows, it stops going back to the grave. At that point it could stay between the horns of the cattle or between the hind legs of a cow.

The animals whose blood has been drunk by the ustrel die that same night. In the midst of the herd the ustrel starts drinking first the fattest cattle and after that moves along and when it has finished with the whole herd it moves to another and so on. The body of the dead animal is swollen in the morning, and when it has been skinned it can be clearly seen a big blue spot on the back, the sides and the belly, from where the blood has been sucked. The ustrel can drink the blood of one to five animals per night.

This monstrous creature can easily change its weight. For example, it could

hardly be sensed by the ram, between whose horns it remains all day, and during the night with his insurmountable heaviness he would press down on the bull, the latter which could not even slightly move, but could only roar once or twice horribly and ugly, after which it would die.

The time that has passed and the blood from all those animals would make the ustrel too brave and daring. It begins to transform in different animals as well as strange and unheard of species, and after that can become visible whenever it wants. It would frequently dare to attack people (first sleeping ones, after that awake), it would drink their blood from the neck and then kill them. After it had drunk the blood of his first human, it would be able to turn into a human.

Old man Racho from Vizitsa (Malko Tarnovo) was once coming back from the watermill. Because it had gotten dark on his way back, and the weather was warm, he wanted to sleep outside in the fresh air: he strayed ten feet of the road, spread his coat and fell asleep. Not far away from him a herd of cattle was lying, which at that time had started dying from the ustrel. In the middle of the night old man Racho felt that something was pressing onto him, but with such an extraordinary strength, because he couldn't even shout out. His left arm was spread on the grass beside him, old man Racho unconsciously flung it on top of himself and felt something soft – shaggy, which immediately jumped away and it became lighter to old man Racho. He leaped up and in front of him saw something round and furry, which rolled away. After some time he went to lie again, but could not fall asleep, he was very uneasy. It was not long after – two hours – when that same creature (with the same heaviness) pressed on his feet. Old man Racho leaped up again, but this time he could not see anything. He got up and went back to his village, where he told everything to the people.

One ustrel transformed himself into a lad, and fell in love with a maid and married her. She bore twins from him. The husband had the habit of going out for the whole night, and in the morning he would return with a bloody mouth. On Saturdays, he as well as the children, could not speak, neither could they move from their seats. One day the husband came back with a mouth full of blood and gave it to the children and with enormous thirst they drunk it all. The wife immediately realized what was going on and arranged for their killing during the next Saturday.

Two newlyweds, from which the husband was an ustrel, went with a car for a

visit in another village. On the road between the two villages they stopped to feed the oxen, at which point the husband strayed off into the woods and was gone out of sight. After a while a wolf came out, who ran towards the woman, jumped ferociously on top of her and ripped her clothes with his teeth. The woman started screaming, but no one heard her. After such a delight the beast left her and went back to the forest, while she ran back to her home. About a half an hour after that the husband came home too and she started telling him about what had happened still with the torn clothes on. The husband did not say anything, just smiled widely, and between his teeth a small piece of her petticoat. She immediately realized that he was the ustrel and the next Saturday she killed him.

One ustrel, transformed in a human, was too polite and too charming. He went from village to village and from wood to wood, and whoever he met he wanted to become sworn-brothers with him. That was a sign of courtesy in those days, which was why no one refused him. The ceremony was for the two to exchange their rings. No one suspected, however, that the rings given by the ustrel, were monstrous: when placed on the finger they became smaller and under no circumstances could they be taken off, which was a foreboding for bad things about to come to the sworn-brother. During the night when the ustrel would go out to seek blood, he would call in a human voice: “Hey!” And the ring on the finger of the nearest to the ustrel person would reply: “Hey!” The ustrel would turn in the direction of the answer, he would lie atop the person and suck his blood. One of the sworn-brothers, while he was sleeping one night, heard and recognized the voices of the ustrel and the ring. He jumped up and ran away in the opposite direction. However, the chaser did not stop running after him, because the ring would still answer whenever he would call: “Hey!” - “Hey!” There was no glimmer of hope for salvation for the chased, for the night was long, the ring would not come off and the vigour of the victim were just about to run out, because of an hour long chase. At last at a bridge over a river it occurred to the sworn-brother and he tore off his finger along with the ring and threw it in the river, and continued running on his own. The ustrel, because of the constant answers of the ring, threw himself in the river – and that was the end of him.

All animals, including humans, which have been conceived on a Saturday, can freely see the ustrel and can recognize it no matter what form it takes. - The wolves, because all of them are conceived on a Saturday, can see, recognize and attack it. The Saturday dogs would bark ferociously at the ustrel.