

**A Vampire by Any Other Name**  
**Vampires, Werewolves, and Witches of the Slavs, Balkan Peoples and other Lands:**  
**A Linguistic and Cultural Adventure**

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### **The Vampire**

The suave, pale, bloodsucking vampire that is most familiar to us first burst onto the scene in the works of 19th century Western authors such as John Polidori's Vampyre (1819) or in the much better known Dracula (1897) by Bram Stoker. The folkloric vampire of the peoples of Eastern Europe differs quite a bit from this popular literary depiction. The Balkan and Carpathian beings featured in this exhibit form a complex of basically three major ghouls. These beings are common to the Slavs, and the non-Slavic Albanians, Romanians, Greeks, and Romanies (i.e. Gypsies). In some cases the names of these ghouls are synonymous, and in other cases there are fine distinctions between them or overlap in their characteristics.

Regrettably, the true origin of the name of the widely recognized word **vampire** is probably irretrievably lost in the mists of time. Linguists have puzzled over the origin of this word for more than a century, but without much success. This word, for a variety of historical linguistic reasons, cannot have ever been an originally Slavic word. Nevertheless, this word must have been borrowed from an unknown language very early, as all Slavic languages share very similar forms of the name, to mention a few (with many minor dialect variations): **vampir** (Croatian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slovenian), **upyr'**, **upir'** (Russian), **upiór** (Polish), **upír** (Czech and Slovak). The original pre-historical Slavic form was most like something like **(w)õpir** (the **õ** being a nasal vowel as in French *bon*), which would have naturally involved in **vampir** in the Balkan Slavic languages and forms such as **upír**, **upyr'** in the others.

The Albanian word corresponding most closely to the Slavic vampire is **lu(v)gat** (more below), however the Albanians also have the intriguing word **dhampir** (**dh** being pronounced like consonant in “the”), meaning “son of a vampire.” While perhaps a loan word from the Slavic languages, **dhampir** superficially seems to derive from Gheg dialect of Albanian **dhamb** “tooth” and **pir** “to drink, or suck.”

## The Werewolf

Unlike **vampire**, the term that corresponds to what we know as **werewolf** (which itself come from the Old English meaning “man wolf”), is not linguistically problematic in the Balkan languages. The Slavic name (with minor variations) **vukodlak, volkodlak, vurkolak** is formed from the roots **volk**, the common Slavic word for “wolf” and **dlak-**, an archaic Slavic word meaning “covering” or “hair.” The Albanian word **lvgat** or **lugat**, which really corresponded more closely in meaning to “vampire,” is thought to be a corruption of the Latin **lupus peccatus** or “sin wolf.” The Romanians use the word **vârcolac**, which is a loanword from Slavic, or **pricolici**, which appears to be possibly Slavic in origin, but has no known counterpart in the Slavic languages. In Romanian folklore the **vârcolac** seems to correspond most closely to the vampire, as does **strigoi** (see **Witches**), whereas the **pricolici** seems to have some of the more stereotypical features of the werewolf.

## The Witch

Our third being, the **witch**, in some contexts also overlaps with **vampire** in the Balkans and Carpathians. Among the Slavs, the **witch** (Russian **ved'ma** (*ведьма*), Serbian, Croatian **vještica**) will be familiar to us as the stereotypical practitioner of arcane magic. In fact, the root of the Slavic words for **witch, ved-**, means “to know,” as does the English root (cf. **wit**).

However among the non-Slavic Albanians and Romanian, the word that means **witch** overlaps considerably with the concept of **vampire**. A number of the non-Slavs as well as Slavs have a word for **witch/vampire** apparently originating from the Greek word **striks** (*στριξ*), meaning “screech owl” also borrowed by the Romans as **striga**, in the meaning of an evil spirit that howls in the night, or a vampire. **Strega** still means “witch” in Italian to this day. Polish has **strzyga**

(feminine) and **strzygoń** (masculine) for **vampire**, especially in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Dialects of Croatian and Slovenian have **štriga**. Romanian has the words **strigă** and **strigoi**. The Albanians also have a **witch/vampire** called **shtrigë**.

### **Vampire in Literature, Media, and Metaphor**

While the Vampire has become a staple in 20-21<sup>st</sup> century literature and media, it has also been belonged to a field of serious literary scholarship for the past hundred years. In addition the Vampire is often employed for purely metaphorical purposes

#### **Works Exhibited or Consulted**

*All items are located in Watson Library at the call number given unless otherwise indicated.*

Beresford, Matthew. *From Demons to Dracula: The Creation of the Modern Vampire Myth*. London: Reaktion, 2008. GR830.V3 B47 2008

In this engrossing work, Beresford chronicles the evolution of the folkloric vampire, going back to as far as Greek and Roman mythology, through the Balkans and Europe of the Middle Ages, to the Vampire of 19<sup>th</sup> century Gothic literature, and finally the contemporary vampire in works of authors such as Ann Rice and Elizabeth Kostova.

Bilibin, I.IA., artist. *Vasilisa Prekrasnaia*. Moscow: Goznak, 1976. PG3117 .V313 1976

**Baba-Yaga** is the most “beloved” witch of Slavic folklore. She was reputed to kidnap and eat small children and lived in a little wooden hut with chicken legs in lieu of stilts. Despite these ghoulish aspects of her personality, she was also sometimes sought out for her esoteric knowledge, a gift which is often seen in other other European witch tales.

*Blood Is the Life: Vampires in Literature*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1999. PS374.V35 B55 1999

*Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*. Philadelphia, Pa: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. PS374.v35 b58 1997

Bourgault du Coudray, Chantal. *Curse of the Werewolf: Fantasy, Horror and the Beast Within*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006. GR830.W4 D8 2006

Next to the **Vampire**, the **Werewolf** is undoubtedly the most beloved creature of the night, in both literature and cinema, but for some curious reason, humans seem to be able to identify a little more personally with the **Werewolf**. Bourgault du Coudray makes a convincing why this might be the case:

“The werewolf has given metaphorical expression to the tenacious concept of the ‘beast within’, and idea which has been supported by philosophical, religious, evolutionary, psychiatric and popular narratives in the Western world.”

Cassas, Luís Augusto. *O Vampiro Da Praia Grande: Poemas*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Imago, 2002. PQ9698.I3 A82255 2002

Dundes, Alan. *The Vampire: a casebook*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. GR830.V3 V33 1998

Contents: The history of the word vampire / Katharina M. Wilson -- The vampire in Roumania / Agnes Murgoci -- The Romanian folkloric vampire / Jan Louis Perkowski -- East European vampires / Felix Oinas -- In defense of vampires / John V.A. Fine, Jr. -- South Slavic countermeasures against vampires / Friedrich S. Krauss -- The killing of a vampire / Veselin Cajkanovič -- The Greek vampire : a study of cyclic symbolism in marriage and death / Juliette du Boulay -- Forensic pathology and the European vampire / Paul Barber -- Clinical vampirism : blending myth and reality / Philip D. Jaffé and Frank DiCataldo -- The vampire as bloodthirsty revenant : a psychoanalytic post mortem / Alan Dundes.

Durham, M. E. *High Albania*. Virago/Beacon travelers. Boston: Beacon Press, 1987. DR917 .D87 1987

Edith Durham (1863-1944), called “Queen of the Highlanders” by the Albanians, was a British writer who travelled extensively throughout Albania and Kosovo at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even at this late date, Durham recounts in High Albania the fervent belief in vampire-witches, or **Shtrigat**, among the highland Albanians. **Shtrigat** were

believed to suck the blood of children and bewitch grown folk. In many Balkan areas, the concept of vampire and witch overlap significantly.

Durham reports the belief that to safeguard against a bewitching becoming permanent, one must secretly follow the *shtrigë* at night. "If she has been sucking blood, she goes out stealthily to vomit it, where no one sees. You must scrape up some of the vomited blood on a silver coin, wrap it up and wear it always, and no Shtriga will have power over you."

Glover, David. *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996. PR6037.T617 Z67 1996

Graur, Alexandru. *Etimologii Românești*. București: Populare Romîne, 1963. PC763 .G7 1963

Grentz, Rudolf. "Archaeologische Vampirbefunde aus dem westslavischen Siedlungsgebiet." *Zeitschrift Für Ostforschung* 16 (1967): 255-265. DR1 .Z4, VOL. 16, PG. 255-265.

### The Curious Case of Peter Plogojovitz

In 1725 soon after the Austro-Hungarians had taken over Serbia from the Ottomans, an Austrian administrator was sent to the village of Kisolova (probably really Kislovo or Kisiljevo) to investigate reports of buried corpses being dug up and "re killed." Family members of one Peter Plogojovitz (probably correctly spelled Blagojević) were reported to have taken ill and died 40 days after his death. According the Serbian folk customs, 40 days was significantly the amount of time required to incubate a vampire.

The administrator, named Frombald, accompanied a local Orthodox priest to Blagojević's grave, where he was exumed and reported to be undecomposed, his hair and nails having grown, and was found to have fresh blood in his mouth.

Upon discovering the corpse in this condition, they did the only thing one can naturally do with a vampire: they drove a hawthorn stake through his heart and then burned the body. Reports of this case were to create a period of temporary „vampire panic“ in Europe.

Kuznetsov, Natalya. *Poedinok S Vampirom, Ili Voronezhskie Kanikuly*. Moskva: Vagrius, 2008. PG3492.58.U96 P64 2008

Levkievskaya, E. E. *V Krai Domovykh i Leshikh: Personazhi Russkikh Mifov*. Moskva: OGI, 2009. BL930 .L48 2009

The more common Russian version of the werewolf is called **oboroten'** ('one who changes'). The term corresponding to the Balkan term, **volkolak**, exists but is less common. It is often depicted, as can be expected, as a wolf-like creature of some sort. In the Russian tradition men can become werewolves of their own will, as well as against their wills, in which case, the term **volkolak** is in some areas more applicable.

As these illustrations show, the concept seems to range from something like a large shaggy, unkempt poodle, to a fire-breathing **Saint Christopher**, with horns on his head.

Likhachev, Dmitrii Sergeevich, trans. *Slovo O Polku Igoreve = The Lay of the Warfare Waged by Igor*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981. PG3300.S6 E57 1981

Some writers have seen a first written glimpse of the Slavic werewolf in the great Russian epic poem "Slovo o polku Igoreve" or "Tale of Igor's Campaign" written sometime in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Written in Old Russian, the tale recounts the tale of Prince Igor Sviatovich against the Polovtsians, a Turkic people in the Don region of Russia in 1185.

Regrettably this is most likely a mistranslation. In the several passages mentioning the word **vŭlk** "wolf", the more natural translation that fits the context is "like a wolf", i.e. "stealthfully," as correctly rendered in this translation by Dmitrii Lichachev.

McClelland, Bruce. *Slayers and their Vampires*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1006. GR830.V3 M23 2006

Contents: Introduction -- Back from the dead : monsters and violence -- Conversion in the Balkans : a thousand years of the vampire -- Scapegoats and demons : a thousand years of the vampire, continued -- Into the West : from folklore to literature -- Seers and slayers -- Seeing the dead -- The rational slayer -- From Vienna to London -- The slayer generation.

McNally, Raymond T. *In search of Dracula: a true history of Dracula and vampire legends*. Greenwich, Conn: New York Graphic Society, 1972.  
DR240 .M32 1972

No discussion of vampires is likely to forgo mentioning the historical Dracula, Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia (1431-1476) aka Vlad Țepeș (Vlad the Impaler). He was also sometimes known as Dracula, because of his association with the Order of the Dragon (Dracul meaning “the dragon” in Romanian).

Vlad was known for his fierce opposition to the Ottoman expansion into the Carpathians, and for his exceedingly cruel punishment of captured enemies. Nevertheless, during his life he was never associated with vampires. He only later became a literary inspiration for the 1897 novel. Dracula by Bram Stoker.

Molina-Foix, Vicente. *El Vampiro De La Calle Méjico*. Narrativas hispánicas 333. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 2002. PQ6663.O374 V36 2002

Olívar, Norberto José. *Un Vampiro En Maracaibo*. Caracas: Alfaguara/Santillana, 2008. PQ8550.25.L48 V35 2008

Overstreet, Deborah Wilson. *Not Your Mother's Vampire: Vampires in Young Adult Fiction*. Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2006. PS374.V35 O94 2006

Ovsec, Damjan. *Slovenska Mitologija in Verovanje*. Sopotja. Ljubljana: Domus, 1991. BL930 .O97 1991

Perhaps to the consternation of Stephanie Meyer’s Twilight fans, among the southern Slavs in the Balkans, the beings we know as vampires (**vampiri**) and werewolves (**vukodlaci**) are essentially one in the same creature. Their defining characteristics are being undead shape-shifters who drink blood from the living, although the **vukodlak** was sometimes also known to be distinctively covered in wolf’s hair, hence this word which means “wolf hair” or “wolf clothing.”

Vampirism supposedly affected those that had succumbed to a violent death or some natural catastrophe, such as plague. When they first left the grave, for a period they would live unbeknownst among their living

kin, stealthily drinking their blood, male vampires even occasionally siring children, and eventually turning their prey as well unless stopped.

Petrović, Sreten. *Mitologija Srba*. Niš: Prosveta, 1997. BL980.S6 M56 1997

The renowned Serbian philologist Vuk Karadžić (1787-1864) discusses in his ethnological works on the Serbs the concept of **vukodlak** (“werewolf” but for the South Slavs mostly synonymous with “vampire”). In this interesting passage he even refers to the creature as **vukodlak** “werewolf,” while using the verb **povampiriti se**, i.e. “to become a werewolf/vampire”, or “vampirizing.” He states:

“The **vukodlak** is a person, who according to folk beliefs, 40 days after death is invaded by a demonic spirit, bringing him back to life (i.e. vampirizing him). The **vukodlak** then leaves the grave at night and strangles people in their homes and drinks their blood. A honorable person cannot be vampirized unless a bird or some other kind of animal flies or jumps over his corpse. So the corpse must be protected so this does not occur. **Vukodlaks** usually appear in winter, from Christmas till Easter). As people begin dying in the village, the villagers begin to talk of there being a **vukodlak** in a grave, and try to discover who had been vampirized.”—translation G. Husic.

Polidori, John William. *Vampyre: A Tale*. 2nd ed. Paris: Published by Galignani, 1819. SPENCER RESEARCH LIBRARY B12159

Rybakov, Boris Aleksandrovich. *I A zychestvo Drevnikh Slavi a n*. Moskva: Izd-vo "Nauka", 1981. BL830 .R9 1994

Among the Eastern Slavs (the Russians, Ukrainian, and Belarusians) the earliest mention of the Eastern Slavic version of the word vampire, **upyr'** occurs in Church chronicles from the 1200s which criticize the continued paganistic practices of the Slavs. The **upyr'** is often placed aside a host of other supernatural creatures, often those associated with water. The **upyr'** is mentioned alongside the **bereginia**, a benevolent female spirit that inhabited riverbanks. The chronicles criticize the pagans for worshipping these deities.



Skal, David J. *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen*. 1st ed. New York: Faber and Faber, 2004. PR6037.T617 D787 2004

Stoian, Emil. *Vlad Ţepeş: Mit Şi Realitate Istorică*. Bucureşti: Albatros, 1989. DR240.5.V553 S75 1989

Turcios, Froylán. *El Vampiro*. 4th ed. Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Baktun Editorial, 1986. PQ7509.T8 V3 1986

Vaan, Michiel Arnoud Cor de. *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages*. Leiden Indo-European etymological dictionary series v. 7. Leiden: Brill, 2008. PA2518 .V33 2008

*Vampires of the Slavs*. Cambridge, Mass: Slavica Publishers, 1976. GR830.V3 V35

*Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*. London: Faber, 1991. PN6071.V3 V347 1991B

*Vasilisa Prekrasnai "a" = Vassilisa the Beautiful*. Moscow: Goznak, 1976. PG3117 .V313 1976

White, Luise. *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*. Studies on the history of society and culture 37. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Zapata, Luis. *Las Aventuras, Desventuras Y Sueños De Adonis García: El Vampiro De La Colonia Roma*. 2nd ed. Mexico, D. F: Editorial Grijalbo, 1979.

### **Videos Exhibited**

*Isle of the Dead ; Bedlam*. Warner Home Video, 2005. DVD PN1997 .A1 177 2005

Summary: A group of strangers are all quarantined inside the same house after an outbreak of the plague

*Jiang Shi Xian Sheng = Mr. Vampire*. Paragon Films Limited, 2004. DVD PN 1997 .J447182 1985

This Chinese cult comedy movie from Hong Kong presents a kind of vampire who emerges after the death of a recently deceased wealth man. Similar in many respects to representations of the “Western vampire”, these creatures, **jiangshi** (Mandarin), **geungsi** (Cantonese) arise after death, afflict the living, and can infect other humans with vampirism.

For Western viewers, the novel aspect of the Chinese vampire is that he hops!

*Nosferatu the Vampyre*. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2002. DVD PN1997 .N5642 1979

Released in 1979, Nosferatu, the Vampyre, set in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany and Transylvania (a province of Romania) was a remake of the 1922 German Dracula film Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens.

Summary: Jonathan Harker, against the wishes of his wife, departs on a journey over the Carpathian Mountains to arrange a real estate transaction for Count Dracula, with tragic results.

*Shadow of the Vampire*. Lions Gate Films Home Entertainment, 2008. DVDPN1997 .S3836242 2000

Summary: The German director F.W. Murnau hires Max Schreck, the "ultimate method actor," to play Count Orlock in his vampire masterpiece *Nosferatu*. In Murnau's quest for realism, the movie is filmed at night in Czechoslovakia and Schreck appears only in character and full makeup. As cast and crew begin to disappear, it seems that Murnau has made a devil's bargain with Schreck, whose performance is too authentic.

### ***Linguistics Resources Consulted***

Bańkowski, Andrzej. *Etymologiczny Słownik Języka Polskiego*. 1st ed. Warszawa: Wydawn. Nauk. PWN, 2000. PG6580 .B36 2000

Brückner, Aleksander. *Słownik Etymologiczny Języka Polskiego*. Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1970. PG6580 .B7 1970

Dal', Vladimir Ivanovich. *Tolkovyĭ Slovar' Zhivogo Velikorusskago Iazyka*. 3rd ed. S.-Peterburg: Izd. T-va M. O. Vol'f', 1903. PG2625 .D315

Etnografski muzej u Beogradu. *Glasnik Etnografskog Muzeja U Beogradu = Bulletin Du Musée Ethnographique De Beograd*. Beograd: Muzej, 1926. DR314.A1 B44

Karadžić, Vuk Stefanović. *Srpski Rječnik Istumačen Njemačkijem i Latinskijem Riječima*. 3rd ed. U Biogradu: U Stamparijia Kraljevine Srbije, 1898. PG1375 .K3 1898

———. *Vukovi Zapisi. Izbor iz dela*. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga, 1967. PG1209.K27 V8 1967

———. *Život I Običaji Naroda Srpskoga*. U Beču [Vienna]: A. Karacić, 1867. SPENCER RESEARCH LIBRARY KOWEY C5023

Kristoforidhi, Konstandin. *Lexikon Tes Alvanikes Glosses*. En Athenais: Typois P.D. Sakellariou, 1904. KU DOES NOT OWN

Lehr-Splawin'ski, Tadeusz. *Słownik Etymologiczny Języka Drzewian Polabskich*. 1st ed. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1962. PG7914 .L4 1962

Mann, Stuart E. *An Historical Albanian-English Dictionary*. London: Pub. for the British Council by Longmans, Green, 1948. PG9591 .M32

———. *An Indo-European Comparative Dictionary*. Hamburg: H. Buske, 1984. P725 .M36 1984

Orel, Vladimir E. *Albanian Etymological Dictionary*. Leiden: Brill, 1998. PG9583.5 .O74 1998

Preobrazhenskii, A. G. *Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language*. Columbia Slavic studies. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951. PG2580 .P7

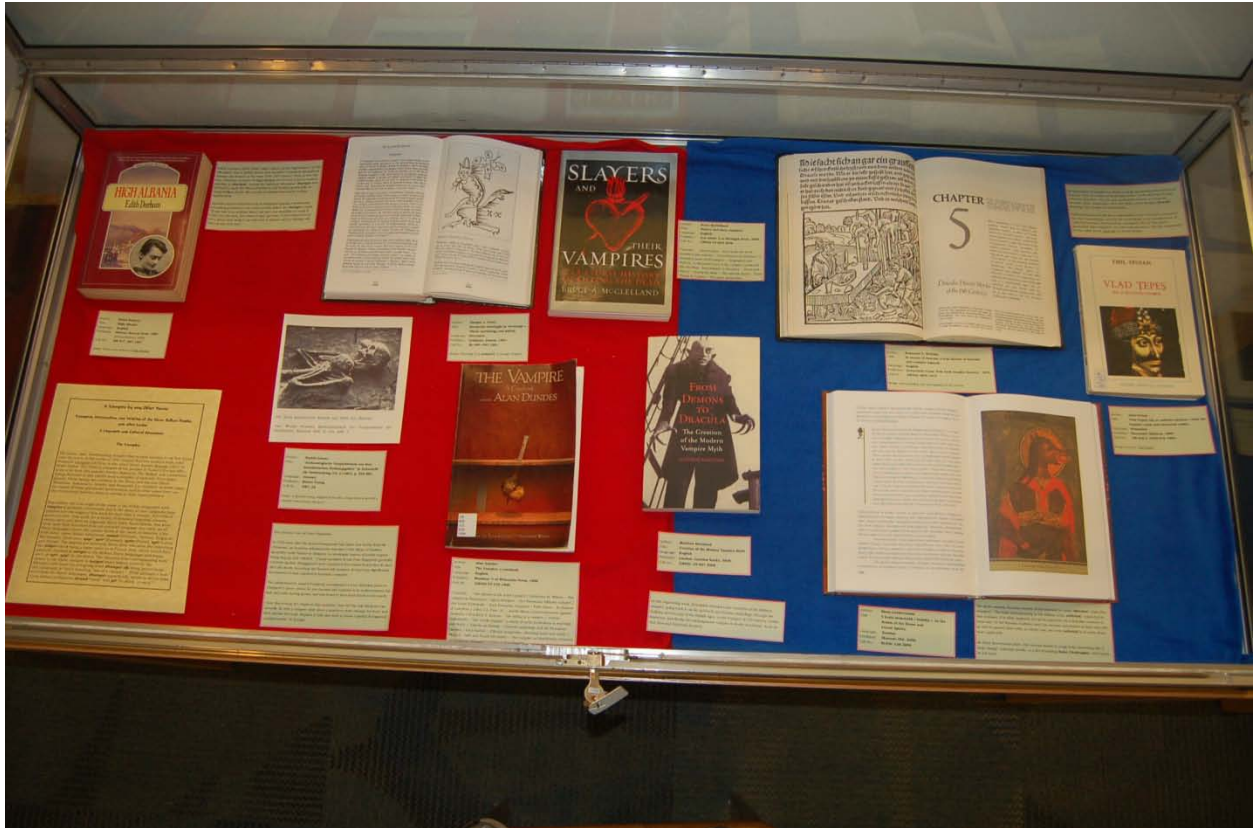
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Snoj, Marko. *Slovenski Etimološki Slovar*. 2nd ed. Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2003. PG1883 .S56 2003

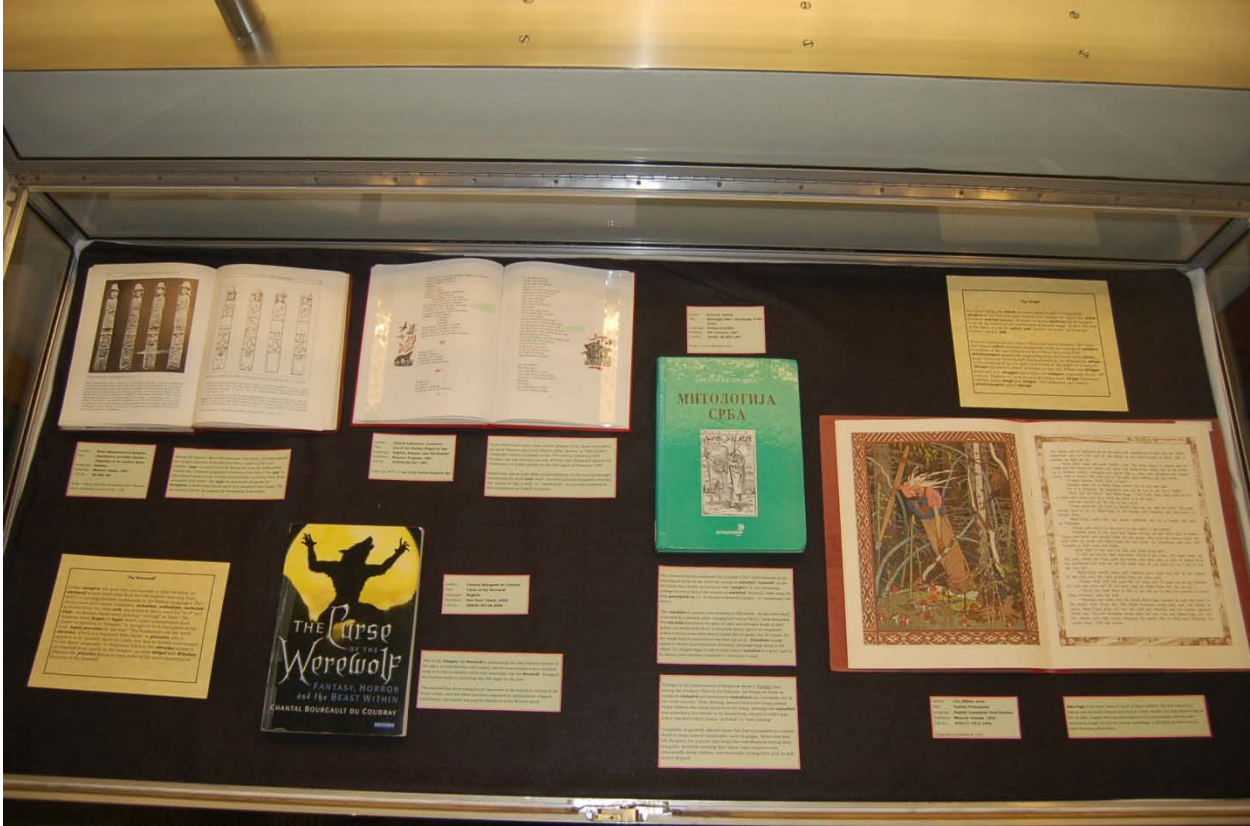
Vasmer, Max. *Etimologičeskii Slovar' Russkogo Iazyka: V Chetyrekh Tomakh*. 3rd ed. Sankt-Peterburg: Izd-vo "Azbuka", 1996. PG2580 .V316 1996

# Exhibit Images

## Case 1 (The Vampire)



Case 2 (The Werewolf and Witch)



# Case 3 (Vampire in Media and Metaphor)

