

“... SO YOU NEED NOT EVEN GO TO THE BALKANS
TO FIND IT.” OR: HOW MUCH OF A SLAV DRACULA
CAN HAVE?

Lewin, Glatz and the De-Slavicization of a Bohemian Vampire:
an Example of Modern-Time Reassessment of Myths and the Motifs behind it

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The present contribution deals with the oscillation of the vampire myth between popular fiction and ethnological science. Since the Middle Ages, the vampire had been considered pagan or plebeian. Towards the end of the 19th century, it became customary to look upon it as a veritable example of Slav cultural and national inferiority. Non-pejorative interpretations did not develop until the early 20th century, coincidental with the growing popularity of vampire stories in belletristic literature, theatre and the newly-invented movies. Thus, the vampire theme gradually lost its “Slavic” character.

The author examines the case of the Lewin “witch”, a vampire saga originating in the Bohemian-Silesian region and first appearing in book form probably in the 14th century. By a thorough analysis of its resonance in German scientific and mythological literature, the development described above is traced and allocated its proper place in the context of the national discourse of the time.