Monsters and their lairs

It should not come as a surprise by now that monsters, villains and horror stories are not independent from the socio-cultural background surrounding them. Parting from Jeffrey Cohen’s monster theory in decoding human cultures1, the present paper is aiming to relate Pú Sōnglíng’s vampiric character in Shī biàn 屍變, published in 1766, to one of the earliest European examples of vampire literature, Ernst Benjamin Raupach’s Lass die Todten Ruhen, published in 1823. Despite the extensive research in Vampire Literature, and the academic engagement in finding an explanation for such a specific literary character, direct comparative studies between the European and the Chinese contexts are lacking.

While generally interpreted as vampire stories and collected within the pages of the modern vampire literature anthologies2, both Shī biàn 屍變 and Lass die Todten Ruhen build their narratives on the characteristics of a revenant - a resurrected corpse disturbing the society of the living. In addition, in both cases, the base plot is simple and easy to follow: the space of a dead young, married woman, is trespassed by male characters, who become her victim. The details, however, and the overall development of the accounts, are different. While in Raupach’s Lass die Todten Ruhen the revenant evolves into a blood-sucking monster with vampire characteristics, Pú Sōnglíng’s animated corpse remains within the tradition of the Jiāngshī (殭屍).

In addition to constituting the field’s first comparative reflection between the early German and Chinese vampire literature, the present paper will also underline the importance of translations in the construction of the genre. The main corpus of vampire literature is either written in English or known from its English translations. For both Shī biàn 屍變 and Lass die Todten Ruhen, publication and subsequent divulgation meant a deliberate addition of specific aesthetic details, intended to integrate the texts in an already established, Western vampire typology. With the help of a revamped English mistranslation, Raupach’s crude, sex-driven, Daughter of the Earth (Erdestöchter) has been bestowed with

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1 Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome (ed.). Monster Theory: Reading Culture. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996;
more noble characteristics, like those of Polidori’s lordly Vampyre (1819). In the same spirit, Pu Songling’s changing corpse (Shī biàn 屍變) is directly changed into a blood drinker corpse, by George Soulié in 1913. Visualized within the theoretical mark provided by Jeffrey Cohen, if the reconstruction of the vampire in different cultures and different contexts reflects the journey of a universal, quintessential monster, the text translations would represent its passports, its letters of recommendation.

From a structural point of view, after evaluating the differences between the original texts and their posterior English translations, the discussion will conclude with the possible interpretations of the vampire figure in the Chinese and German literatures. Taking into consideration the agency of the victims, the origin of the monstrous transformation and the manner of its attack, this paper underlines that Pú Sōnglíng’s changing corpse (Shī biàn 屍變), despite its erroneous English translation, should not be automatically regarded as a vampire but rather as a revenant, or as a zombie. This monster, by means of deliberate mistranslation, has only been repainted with a semblance of the European, gothic vampire. Paradoxically, this artificial process has both Orientalized the classical vampire, by displacing its context somewhere in the Far East, but also brought in a new type of revenant-creature, invested with a new, previously unknown morbidity. All things considered, the present paper should be taken as mere introduction to a denser, more extensive comparative study between Chinese and German literatures, unbiased by translations or sociological interpretations.

For the direct quotations for Pú Sōnglíng’s story, I used the 2000 Edition by Ren Duxing (任篤行), backed up by Zhang Youhe’s (張友鶴), “San hui ben” 1963 edition, and by another 1981 version3. In some cases, after the quotations, I have also included the pinyin, accompanied by an English translation. For the German material, I have used a digitalized copy of the 1823 Minerva magazine4 and compared it to the 1823 anonymous English translation, printed for W. Simpkin and R. Marshall in London5.

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Monsters and translation

Monster (n.) - from Old French, mostre “monster, monstrosity” (12c.), and directly from Latin monstrum “divine omen, portent, sign” a derivative of monere “to remind, bring to (one’s) recollection, instruct, teach,” from PIE *moneie- “to make think of, remind, to think”6

Without being bound by a permanent definition, monster stories and monstrous characters face a continuous reinterpretation and reconstruction, long after being created. By reading’s Shelley’s Frankenstein, a contemporary reader might get a glimpse of the dangers of biotechnology and DNA manipulation7. In the same spirit, the existence of vixens and Fox Spirits (狐狸精, Húlí jīng) in Chinese Literature might be interpreted within the spectrum of gender studies8 or as ecological metaphors9. Diachronically unrestrained, monsters not only reflect the social patterns of their creation, but also represent a dense, ambiguous cultural body, which does not simply bring past and present together, but destroys the boundary that demanded their twinned foreclosure10. However, without arguing against this notion of historical latency, the present paper will emphasize the importance of translations in monster theory, the topic of translation being only superficially touched upon in Cohen’s study, and only in strict relation to Indo-European etymology. In the introduction of Cohen’s book, the editor argues that a discourse extracting a transcultural, transtemporal phenomenon labeled “the vampire” is of rather limited utility, because even if vampiric figures are found almost worldwide, from ancient Egypt to modern Hollywood, each reappearance and its analysis is still bound in a double act of construction and

6 According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, available online at: https://www.etymonline.com/word/monster (8/19/2019);
10 Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome (ed.). Monster Theory: Reading Culture. Ibid., p. X;
The terms referring to monsters and anomalous appearances are problematic, especially when used in literary works, where every detail is interpreted and almost mystified. Within the Western context, as its etymological root indicates, the monsters teach, they instruct by revealing themselves in the unrevealed, but constant memory. Every monster apparition stands as a memory emphasizing a collective path, a collective space ringed by unknown wilderness and non-memory. In the Chinese context concerning the work of Pú Sōnglíng, the monstrous and the strange are also social necessities, integrated in the complex, sometimes contradictory concept of nature as Ziran 自然. In her work on Pú Sōnglíng, Judith Zeitlin mentions that the terms translatable as strange, Guài 怪, Yì 異 and Qí 奇, with flexible meaning, enlarge the spectrum of what one could regard as strange. Zeitlin argues that the broad definitions and meanings of strange simply end up making every monster undefinable.

Another comparable concern lies in a possible translation of the concept of monster itself. Without being too specific in their classification, in the canonical texts preceding Pú Sōnglíng, there is not always a clear taxonomy between the spirits, demons or apparitions bearing the radical Gui 鬼, such as Chi 魂, Mei 魅, Wang 魔, Liang 魃, (...). Later, the word Guàiwù 怪物 or “strange thing”, to use a literal translation, is more than sometimes used to encompass very different creatures. Anthony C. Yu also indicates the same complexity in studying anomalous elements in Chinese literature and offers as an example the word Yāo 妖 as an example for monster, fiend, weird, or abnormal, a term which could also be

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11 Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome (ed.). Monster Theory: Reading Culture. Ibid., pp.5-6;  
12 In order to keep the present paper within the limits of a conference presentation, I will only mention Barbara Brodman’s and James Doan’s The Universal Vampire. Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013 and Heide Crawford’s The Origin of the Literary Vampire. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. Both should be regarded as excellent works in the vampire literature scholarship, and both have inspired me to deepen my knowledge on the subject;  
14 To complicate matters further, they [Guài 怪, Yì 異, and Qí 奇] are often used synonymously, or defined in relation to each other, or made into compounds, all of which blur the distinctions between them and make fixed definitions difficult in Zeitlin, Judith T. Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Classical Chinese Tale. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997, p.5;  
combined with Guài 怪 and produce a Yāoguài 妖怪, something definable as a strange monster, a goblin, or as a demon\textsuperscript{16}.

**New names, old stories**

Though I lack the talent of Gan Bao, I too am fond of “seeking the spirits”; in disposition I resemble Su Shi, who enjoyed people telling ghost stories. What I have heard, I committed to paper, and so this collection came about. After some time, like-minded men from the four directions dispatched stories to me by post, and because things accrue to those who love them, what I had amassed grew even more plentiful.

(Liaozhai’s Own Record, *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1679 edition\textsuperscript{17}).

In terms of finding Pú Sōnglíng’s inspiration in writing the *Shī biàn* 歪變, it should be first underlined that the *Liaozhai zhiyi* (聊齋誌異) collection of stories was put together several decades after his death, which occurred in 1715. Moreover, its first publication in China was not the product of a single, concentrated editing effort. The manuscript circulated from a literato to another for several decades, and there was a snowballing effect: as a book or manuscript circulated, readers recorded their reactions all over its pages, even between the lines\textsuperscript{18}. This process continued up to 1766, when Bao Tingbo 鮑廷博 (1728-1814) and Zhao Qigao 趙起杲 (?? - 1766) published an edited collection, in what is now known as the Qingketing (青柯廳) edition\textsuperscript{19}. Scholars have remarked that these first editors also operated several changes to the collection, as did the following editors. The text we have today, therefore, has been repeatedly altered and amended, not only by editors but also, previously to 1766, by commentators and readers, who may or may not have shared Pu’s vision\textsuperscript{20}.


\textsuperscript{17} I have used Judith Zeitlin’s translation of the preface, without the inserted comments, in Zeitlin, Judith T. *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale*. Ibid. pp. 43-44;

\textsuperscript{18} Zeitlin, Judith T. Ibid. p.15;


Nevertheless, regardless of the edition he had access to, Herbert Giles’ 1880 translation into English respected both the plot and the main characteristics of Pú Sōnglíng’s short story. If present at all, any vampire elements should be directly related to the traditional image of the Jiāngshī (殭屍), a revenant-like figure which evolved only later into a monster with vampire characteristics. Unlike the Jiāngshī of the modern Hong Kong cinema\(^{21}\), these reanimated corpses would not suck blood\(^ {22}\), but rather hung onto the living or simply refused to lay still in their graves. Traditionally, in the Xiangxi province (湘西州) the reanimated corpse figure was also closely related to the corpse drivers - professionals who lead the dead back to their home provinces at night.

In this spirit, more than literature, the original story of Pú Sōnglíng could also be interpreted as a naturalistic depiction of social life. It reflects not only the superstitions related to the moment between death and funeral, but also underlines the commonality of having to wait, sometimes, for the right moment before the ultimate deposition. Either because of expecting a relative or an auspicious day for such an event, or simply due to the lack of money, unburied corpses were a frequent sight in the Qing Dynasty period. In addition, there is undoubtedly a political reading in the exterior appearance of the later, canonical Jiāngshī, who is commonly depicted as a Qing official, even though this social category only constituted the top 1% of the population.

Pú Sōnglíng’s Shī biàn 屍變 is not a lengthy story and, as mentioned, the relatively accurate 1880 translation of Herbert Giles offered the Western reader a genuine, accessible image of a Qing period reanimated corpse. In his selective translation of the Liáozhāi Zhìyì, (聊齋誌異), Herbert Giles presents the story as The Resuscitated Corpse, and the differences with the original text, although potentially significant, are very few. Nevertheless, numerous posterior Western anthologies preferred George Soulié’s 1913 interpretation titled The Corpse, The Blood-Drinker, which literally transforms the corpse into a blood-thirsty vampire.

\(^{21}\) Especially in the 1970’s and the 1980’s, films like A touch of Zen (1971), Encounters of the Spooky Kind (1980), or the 1985 Mr.Stiff Corpse, which is a direct remake of the same Shī biàn 屍變 short story, combine revenants, martial arts and classical vampire iconography;

\(^ {22}\) Jakob Maria de Groot, a contemporary of Herbert Giles who also translated several Zhiguai (志怪) and Chuanqi (傳奇) stories, in addition to giving an extensive credit to European influence, wrote in 1892 that tales about blood-sucking kiangshí have not been found by us in Chinese literature anterior to the eighteenth century. The same author considered Yuán Méi 袁枚 (1716-1797) the first author in Chinese literature to mention blood-sucking revenants. In De Groot, J.J.M. The Religious System of China. Vol.V, Book ii, p.745;
In addition to possible mistranslations or misinterpretations, the reason behind this transformation should also be related to the decisive changes in Vampire literature, which occurred between 1880 and 1913. Without even mentioning Bram Stoker’s publication of *Dracula* in 1897, the whole period is marked by an increased interest in both corpse reanimation and vampirism. After Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s lesbian vampire of *Carmilla*, published in 1871, the 1880s can be looked on today as the *beginning of supernatural fiction’s golden era*, with a noticeable *broadening of the vampire story’s scope*. To mention just a few examples which might have influenced George Soulié’s selection of words in translating *Shī biàn* 屍變, scholarship should take into consideration Karl Heinrich Ulrichs’ *Manor* (1884), where the corpse of a drowned sailor is brought to life and sucks the blood of its victims, as well as Guy de Maupassant’s *The Horla* (1886), which constructs its argument on the possibility of psychic vampirism - just like Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Parasite* (1894), Tolstoy’s *The Family of the Vourdalak*, finally published in 1884, or M.R. James collection of *Ghost Stories from an Antiquary* (1904).

Conclusively, in addition to the cultural conversion mentioned in the theoretical frame of Jeffrey Cohen, what decisively influenced Pú Sōnglíng’s reception in the West as (yet another) Vampire literature author, was the translation of *Shī biàn* 屍變 into English. The liberty of interpreting, or not, Pú Sōnglíng’s short description within the aesthetics of a more familiar, Gothic vampire has been directly suppressed by the voluntary transformation operated by George Soulié.

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Reconstruction and agency

The issue, nonetheless, does not stop with the sole mistranslation of the title. After analyzing the core elements of the story, it should become clearer that *Shī biàn* 屍變 is considerably different from the ordinary, European vampire literature, exemplified here by Benjamin Raupach’s *Lass die Todten Ruhen*. Its translations, however, gradually transformed the text by adapting it to the tastes of the Western reader of the time. Consequently, by referring to the differences between the 1766 *Shī biàn* 屍變 text and the translations of Herbert Giles (1880) and George Soulié (1913), the present paper argues that Pū Sōngling’s story should be translated within the context of Chinese literature, and not adorned with outside elements\(^\text{24}\). To interpret the corpse outside the tradition of the *Jiāngshī* (殭屍) might result in a different understanding of the author’s typical, almost pedagogical rhetoric (Fig. 1).

In addition to changing from one discourse to another, even within Chinese itself, highly talented writers like Pū Sōngling usually play with the strangeness of key-terms and build narratives based on the differences in meaning of specific words. In the preface of his work, the author projects himself as a receiver of the stories and the outline of the whole collection hints towards a self-integration within the literary tradition of the *Zhiguai* (志怪) and the *Chuanqi* (傳奇). The self-identification of the author with higher literary authorities of the *strange* brings together a well-established literary tradition and bizarre elements, like *ox-headed demons*\(^\text{25}\), ghosts and reanimated corpses.


\(^{25}\) The construction used by Pū Sōngling’s in his introduction, *Niúguǐ Shéshén* (牛鬼蛇神), literally meaning *ox-ghosts and serpent spirits*, is still generally used to refer to monsters, demons or forces of evil. Its source can be traced to the preface Du Mu wrote for the poet Li He, who even voluntarily took the name “Ghost of poetry” as one of his pseudonyms. Li He (李賀). *Li He Shiji* (李賀試集 - “Collected Poems of Li He”). Ed. Congqi (樂思奇). Beijing, 1984, p.356;
Title of the story | Victims within the narrative | The way in which the victims entered the situation | Origin of the transformation | Type of attack
---|---|---|---|---
屍變 Shī biàn | “四人” 26 (Sì rén)  
The four men insisted that the old man should find a place | Contained within the narrative | “連續吹數數始去” 28  
Repeatedly blowing air each of the victims | Breathing on the victims
The Resuscitated Corpse (1880) | Four strangers | The four men (...) urged him to take them in somehow | Contained within the narrative | Inside the narrative
The Corpse the Blood-Drinker (1913) | Three travelers | The merchants, disappointed (...) followed their landlord. | Outside the narrative | Sucking blood from the throat of the victims

Fig. 1. Textual comparison between the core elements of the story

In this spirit, as previously mentioned, Judith Zeitlin argues that in Pú Sōnglíng’s Liáozhāi zhì yì (聊齋誌異) the reader might encounter at least three terms for strange: Yi 異 (different, unusual), Guài 怪 (strange, monstrous) and Qí 奇 (strange, rare). As it could be deduced, out all three the Yi term appears the most, even in the title of the collection, and it is being largely used in connection to out-of-the-ordinary elements. Surprisingly, however, none of these terms are directly mentioned within the lines of Shī biàn 屍變. They only appear in the posterior translations of the text, and always as very easily interpretable. For example, Herbert Giles translates the initial term used for the victims “四人” (Sì rén, four men) directly as four strangers, and alters the perception of the original narrative. In other words, when referred to as strangers, these persons inevitably become the outside element to at least someone within the story, and their intrusion into the chamber of the dead girl should be inherently seen as an act of violence, a profanation. As a consequence, these strangers are attacked and die relatively quickly, but the text reveals an important idea that would persist throughout the stories involving undead characters, up until the contemporary media productions: (a) revenants, undead and zombies are triggered within the narrative, while the agency of vampires usually originates somewhere outside it.

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27 Ibid. p.6;  
28 Ibid. p.6;
This characteristic could be further followed in the translation of George Soulié, who interprets “人” as travelers, and who adds that the corpse was dead for six months but was waiting in a coffin for a favorable day to be fixed by the astrologers. It is implied, therefore, that within this period there might have been other victims, and that the initial transformation of the corpse remains outside the narrative, as an enigma both to the victims and to the reader. The vampirization process of the original Shī biàn 尸變, consequently, originates in this latent force, whose mystery and power precedes and is ignored by the harmless travelers.

Furthermore, unlike Herbert Giles’ strangers, who urged the innkeeper to take them in somehow, Soulié’s innocent travelers showed themselves disappointed and, somewhat unwillingly, followed their landlord in, constrained by the fact that it was too late to continue their way. At this point, it should be underlined that Pú Sōnglíng’s original text is very similar to Herbert Giles’ translation. In contrast to Soulié’s feeling of seduction, where three travelers were being led into a trap, there is a sense of determined (堅請, Jiān qǐng) insistency on the part of the “four persons”: they demand the innkeeper to come up with a solution. Consequently, before Soulié’s vampirization of the text, the space of the young, dead woman is seen as being brutally invaded by the four young men. Instead of respecting the distance and the basic social norms involving the situation of a young, married woman, whose husband was away, the men/strangers hurried in with importunity. As a general observation, it could be argued that in Pú Sōnglíng’s and Herbert Giles’ texts (b) the reanimated corpse only retaliated, as a consequence of having its space violated. Soulié’s 1913 translation changed the context and presented the three men as unknowing victims following their seducer.

Nevertheless, what decisively differentiates Soulié’s 1913 translation from Pú Sōnglíng’s text are the explicit mentions to vampire elements. Directly from the first paragraph, the readers are introduced to a specific aesthetic, completely absent from the original text, where the three travelers find themselves lost within a night [which] was slowly falling in the narrow valley, on a winding path, dangerously cut into a mountain. Furthermore, the description of the reanimated corpse, translated as apparition, leaves no room for

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29 For the quotations in this paper I have used the online text of Soulié, George (tr). Strange Stories from the Lodge of Leisures. Boston&New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913, available online at “Project Gutenberg”: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/37766/37766-h/37766-h.htm#THE_CORPSE_THE_BLOOD-DRINKER (8/21/2019);
30 Soulié, George (tr). Strange Stories from the Lodge of Leisures. Ibid.;
interpretation. In the moment of the attack, one of the travelers distinctly saw the pale figure, the eyes, from which a red flame was shining, and sharp teeth, half-exposed in a ferocious smile, which opened and shut by turns on the throat of the sleeper. This amount of detail builds up a different monster than Pú Sōnglíng’s corpse, which is only sketched as having a mild, golden face complexion (面淡金色, Miàn dàn jīnsè), partially covered by a newly silky headband (生絹抹額, Shēngjuànmǒé). In this aspect, Herbert Giles’ translation coincides again with the original text and (c) the revenants do not produce a complex set of physical or aesthetical attributes. Unlike the uncanniness of the literary vampire, who can sometimes pass as a normal individual in society, the strangeness of the reanimated corpse derives mainly from the very fact of coming alive after death.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenant in Pú Sōnglíng’s Shī biàn 戰變</th>
<th>Vampire in George Soulié’s translation The Corpse, The Blood Drinker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Triggered within the narrative, the revenant attacks particular persons;</td>
<td>(a) The initial trigger lies outside the narrative, the vampire attacks randomly;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Attack as a retaliation: the revenant had its space violated, first;</td>
<td>(b) The vampire lures his victims into its space in order to attack them;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Simple, sketched description of its features, with no narrative implications. Its sole presence constitutes an anomaly;</td>
<td>(c) Complex set of physical or aesthetical attributes, with direct consequences on the narrative;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(d) Does not bite, does not suck blood, it blows on the victim, almost like infecting it.</td>
<td>(d) It bites the throat of the victim and sucks its blood for nourishment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fig. 2. Main differences between Pú Sōnglíng’s revenant story and George Soulié’s translation into a vampire story**

In addition, it is essential to underline that the act of sucking blood is absent from both Shī biàn 戰變, and from The Resuscitated Corpse (1880). There is, undoubtedly, a kind of attack involving the mouth of the monster, but repeatedly blowing air (連續吹數數, Liánxù chuī shù shù) is almost the opposite of the act described by George Soulié: the specter (...) bending over the throat of the sleeper (...) was drinking in long draughts. (d) Biting the throat of the victim and sucking its blood for nourishment is a definitory characteristic pertaining to the vampire figure, absent from that of the reanimated corpse, or of the revenant. Moreover, George Soulié almost seems to tease both Pú Sōngling and Herbert Giles in a

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31 Soulié, George (tr). Strange Stories from the Lodge of Leisures. Ibid.;
sporty manner, underlining that the vampire only appeared to give [its victim] a long kiss. The truth of the blood-sucking act only came out later, after the vampire got closer. Then, from an advantageous position, the victim distinctly saw what occurred. This plot device, shifting from appeared to distinctly should not be ignored from the translation, as it goes together with an almost cinematographic set-up of presenting the vampire in a slow, progressive manner.

Benjamin Raupach’s Lass die Todten Ruhen

In continuation, by shortly comparing Pǔ Sōngling’s case of reinterpretation with that of Ernst Benjamin Raupach, the present paper will argue that adaptation and reconstruction are critical, universal tools in the development of the vampire literature genre. Falsely attributed to Ludwig von Tieck (1773-1853) by its English editors32, the first translation of Raupach’s Lasst die Todten ruhen! into English was published in 1823 as Wake not the Dead!33. Written sometime before 182234, the title of the original story is a direct reference to Gottfried Bürger’s poem, “Lenore”, published in 177435. This poem enjoyed a vast popularity and the “Laßt die Todten ruhen!” verse is part of a repetitive chorus, more than well-known in the literary circles. Nevertheless, this first translation into English welcomes the reader with a substantial critique of its style and aesthetic, both (dis)regarded as too direct.

32 Raupach’s authorship is supported by its previous inclusion in the magazine Minerva: Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1823. Without any mention of Ludwig von Tieck throughout the volume, “Laßt die Todten ruhen!” (Wake not the Dead!) is simply published as “ein Märchen von D. Ernst Raupach” (A fairy tale by D. Ernst Raupach). Available online at: https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433074934021 (8/22/2019); In addition, Raupach’s also appears in posterior German literary scholarship as the author of the short vampire story, in Goedeke, Karl. Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung aus den Quellen, Vol VIII; Dresden: Verlag von L. Ehlermann, 1905; entry #329. pp.646-669;
33 In Musäus, Johann Karl August, 1735-1787; La Motte-Fouqué, Friedrich Heinrich Karl, Freiherr de, 1777-1843; Tieck, Ludwig, 1773-1853. Popular Tales and Romances of the Northern Nations, in three volumes. London: Printed for W. Simkin and R. Marshall, 1823;
34 The Minerva: Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1823, vol. XV must have been published before the end of 1822, as it appears mentioned in the memories of the young poet Wilhelm Waiblinger (1804–1830), in September 1822. “Raupachs Lasst die Toten ruhen in der Minerva 1823 ist ein Gedicht voll üppiger Poesie. Der interessanteste Teil in der Lebensgeschichte eines jeden Menschen sind seine Liebschaften” (Raupachs „Wake not the Dead!” in the “Minerva 1823” is a story full of lush poetry. The most interesting part in the life story of every human being is his/her love affairs) in Waiblinger, Wilhelm Friedrich. König, Hans (ed.). Tagebücher, 1821-1826: Textkritische und Kommentierte Ausgabe in zwei Bänden. Stuttgart: Cota, 1993, p.765;
Stories of this kind form an important feature in the literature of the Germans, who seem to be the authenticated historians of Satan in all his varieties of name and attribute (...) It must however be allowed that, with the Germans, fancy has had too much sway, for it has seldom been under the guidance of sound taste, and the consequence is, that the multitude of their original fictions is disgraced by the most barbarous absurdities.

The opening of *Lasst die Todten ruhen* with an epigraph acts both as a warning and as prologue, foreseeing the events depicted in the narrative. It is an invitation to the reader to draw individual conclusions, but also acts as an introduction into the fantastic world of vampires, warlocks, ghosts and haunted castles. In terms of narrative techniques, it is very similar to the beginning of a dramatic play, and there is, undoubtedly, a very delicate combination of various literary modes of expression.

A significant difference would be that in the English version of the epigraph, the first verse is identical to the title of the whole story. In the German text, there is a certain distance between the title and its epigraph, and the name of the story does not directly appear in written form right from the beginning. This particularity, although small, underlines the existence of a premeditate process behind the translation, which gives the text both a specific musicality as well as a mysterious, mystic appeal.

In addition, within the same musical sphere, immediately after the epigraph, the narration begins with the voice of the male protagonist, Walter, grieving over the grave of Brunhilda, his dead lover. In this monologue, he addresses her directly, appealing to love and reason, as he would debate with a living human being. Although not completely changing the overall tone or the message of the lamentation, the subtle differences between the German and the English texts are undoubtedly pointing towards a flowery, more poetic reinterpretation.

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36 Musäus, Johann Karl August, 1735-1787; La Motte-Fouqué, Friedrich Heinrich Karl, Freiherr de, 1777-1843; Tieck, Ludwig, 1773-1853. Ibid. pp. v; ix;
37 “Wake not the Dead: - they bring but gloomy night...”, in Musäus, Johann Karl August, 1735-1787; La Motte-Fouqué, Friedrich Heinrich Karl, Freiherr de, 1777-1843; Tieck, Ludwig, 1773-1853. Popular Tales and Romances of the Northern Nations, in three volumes, Ibid. p.233;
**Lasst die Todten ruhen!**  
(1822)³⁸

Ist das Grab wärmer als das Bett unserer Liebe? Der Tod feuriger, als dein Freund? O fehre wieder, Geliebte! Fehre zurück an die sehnsuchtsvolle Brust!

**Direct translation**

Is the grave warmer than the bed of our love? The death more burning than your partner? O' come again, my love! Come back to my yearning breast!

**Wake not the Dead! (1823)³⁹**

Is the chamber of the grave a warmer bed than the couch of love? Is the spectre death more welcome to thy arms than thy enamoured consort? O return, my beloved, return once again to this anxious, disconsolate bosom!

In other instances, the English translation simply omits the recurrent sexual allusions present in the original text, and points the reader towards a more poetic, if not spiritual interpretation. In addition, the inclusion of Christian concepts, like the Creation or the divine passion instead of carnal, human love, although not completely unfamiliar to vampire literature, they are absent from this German text. The necrophiliac characteristics also, when not eliminated, are censored or sublimated into literature. The real implications of making love to a resurrected corpse, which draws the blood from the surrounding youth, might have struck the reader as overly direct and brutal - especially when we take into consideration that the initial target-public of the German version were females⁴⁰.

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³⁸ Cited from Raupach’s story in Minerva: Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1823, vol.XV, ibid., p. 38;
³⁹ Musäus, Johann Karl August, La Motte-Fouqué, Friedrich Heinrich Karl, Freiherr de; Tieck, Ludwig. Popular Tales and Romances of the Northern Nations, in three volumes. Ibid. p.234;
⁴⁰ In the preface of the Minerva: Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1823 the editor directly addressed the female readers (“Leserinnen”), dedicating the edition to them;
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Lasst die Todten ruhen! (1822)</strong>&lt;sup&gt;41&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th><strong>Direct translation</strong></th>
<th><strong>Wake not the Dead! (1823)</strong>&lt;sup&gt;43&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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<td>Und, am Morgen, wo in der Nacht der Mond durch den Schatten der Erde gegangen war, fand Walter von einem ungewöhnlich tiefen Schlaf erwachend, Brunhilden neben sich auf seinem Lager, sich selbst von ihrem Arm umschlungen, sein Haupt ruhend auf ihrer wollenden Brust. Der Mond ist voll, flüsterte sie dem Erwachenden zu, und ihr brennender Kuss drückte den Laut der Wonne in seine Brust zurück. Fest, wie zu ewiger Bereinigung, umschlang er die Beliebte, über deren Reize die Zeit keine Gewalt gehabt, feurig begegneten sich ihre Kusse, und ersticken die Seufzer der Luft, laut einander ihre Wonne verküssend, schlugen ihre Herzen in trauter Nahe. Doch als Walter sie tiefer verwickeln wollte in das Ness seiner Liebkosungen, drangte sie den Berlangenden von sich und entstieg dem Lager.</td>
<td>And in the morning, when the moon had passed through the shadow of the earth at night, Walter found himself awakening from an unusually deep sleep, Brunhilda beside him on his bed, himself unstrapped by her arm, resting fully on her wanting breast. “The moon is full”, she whispered to the awakener, and her burning kiss awakened the uproar of bliss back into his chest. Firmly, as if for an eternal rebalance, he embraced his lover, over whose charms time had no power. Their kisses fiercely met and smothered the sighs of the air. Loudly shedding their delight, their hearts beat close to one another. But when Walter wanted to entangle her deeper into the burning desire of his caresses, she forced her way out from him and stepped out of his bed.</td>
<td>But, on the night when the moon was arrived at the full, he hastened to Brunhilda, whom he found more lovely than she had ever appeared before. Fearing no obstacles to his transports, he embraced her with all the fervor of a deeply enamoured lover. Brunhilda, however, still refused to yield to his passion.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

(...)

O! wenn du das vermagst, und in der Brust ein Herz dir schlägt...<sup>42</sup>

(...)

Oh! If you realize that and if in your breast a heart is beating...

(...)

Oh! If thou art indeed able to affect that, if one throb of human feeling vibrates in your heart...<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Cited from Raupach’s story in *Minerva: Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1823*, vol.XV, ibid. Pp.53-54;
<sup>42</sup> Cited from Raupach’s story in *Minerva: Taschenbuch für das Jahr 1823*, vol.XV, ibid. p. 45;
<sup>43</sup> Musäus, Johann Karl August, La Motte-Fouqué, Friedrich Heinrich Karl, Freiherr de; Tieck, Ludwig. *Popular Tales and Romances of the Northern Nations, in three volumes*. Ibid. p.253;
<sup>44</sup> Musäus, Johann Karl August, La Motte-Fouqué, Friedrich Heinrich Karl, Freiherr de; Tieck, Ludwig. *Popular Tales and Romances of the Northern Nations, in three volumes*. Ibid. p.241.
Conclusions

As observed, Pú Sōnglíng’s misinterpretation is far from being an isolated case, and both the texts of Shī biàn 尸變 and *Lass die Todten Ruhen!* have been directly modified in order to harmonize with a generalized vampire aesthetic. In a very wide sense, they constitute opposing examples, but the dynamic behind their reinterpretation reveals a tendency towards a global uniformization of the literary taste. A commodified, ambient fear has reshaped the original characters of both narratives, simultaneously amplifying and restricting the monstrous elements.

On the one hand there is the bountiful enrichment of the Chinese, schematic text, with nocturnal elements, conventional *mise en scenes* and blood-sucking specters. On the other, the German original has been subtly repressed, and a sensual, terrific female revenant was wrapped with the delicate charms of a temptress. In Jeffrey Cohen’s terms, who argues that *the monster is a problem (...) a presence or an absence that unsettles what has been constructed to be received as natural, as human*[^45], the strange element has been shaped to become *culture*, by vampirizing it. Consequently, the western reader of the beginning of the 20th century was not persuaded to understand that Pú Sōnglíng schematic description is a refined blending between the traditional classical records, the *Zhiguai* (志怪) and the *Chuanqi* (傳奇) genres[^46]. By simply adapting it to something as familiar as a vampire, the *Shī biàn 尸變* automatically becomes imbricated in the construction of literature as known by the common, Western reader. In other words, by collapsing initial categories and cultural contexts, the English translations set the basis for posterior developments and for a uniform, universal vampire aesthetic.

[^45]: Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome (ed.). *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. Ibid. p. IX;
[^46]: On his part Pú Sōnglíng made a deliberate, somewhat bold move, in directly adopting the title “Historian of the Strange” (*Yishi shi* 异史氏), directly alluding to the renowned historian Sima Qian (司馬遷). Out of order occurrences, monsters, ghosts and particularly strange themes were widely recorded from the Han period up to Pú Sōnglíng’s time, using the canonical template of the established, classical records (*jing* 經).
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