

THE WOLF

Canis lupus – Lac lupinum – the Grey Wolf

A Mythological and Comparative Study

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GODS OF THE WOLF

Odin

A god of many faces and functions, Odin shares with the Wolf a range of attributes, most importantly: wisdom, healing and magic.

Like its master, the Wolf is an archetype possessing many faces: those associated with Odin are beneficent and wholesome, but those imprinted by human projection are dark and destructive.

In numerological terms, the Wolf, being sacred to Odin and his constant companion, is a Nine animal, and, as is so often seen in the relationship between dog and human, shares characteristics with its master. This affords the homeopath valuable insights into the nature of the Wolf as remedy (Lac lupinum prepared from the milk of the grey wolf). Whereas myth is invariably at odds with reality, it is invariably in accordance with Reality.

The two wolves and two ravens always associated with Odin point to the Otherworldly, chthonic nature of the god and to an inherent duality in the god's attributes; a duality that he transcends while hanging on Yggdrasil. When compared with the Greek pantheon, Odin is seen to incorporate within his complexity the almighty, paternal majesty of Zeus; a Hermes-like ability to move effortlessly through all dimensions and serve as guide to departed souls (Mercurius/Wolf and Raven attributes); and the mysterious, enigmatic, ambivalence of Dionysos, a god whose rituals evoked altered states of consciousness and who suffered as humanity suffers and through suffering transcended mortality and achieved Divinity (Thuja/Wolf). Odin's martial aspect accords with the Roman vision of their God of War, Mars (Ferrum/Wolf), the spiritual protector and defender of Rome and the Roman state, rather than the bloodthirsty, warmongering, bully-boy of Olympus, the Greek God of War, Ares (Ferrum/Wolf). This brutal, destructive aspect is mirrored by Wotan, the Teutonic God of War.

Loki

But, in our quest to unearth the esoteric and mythological profile of the Wolf held in the collective unconscious of humanity, another larger-than-life character emerges from the Norse and Germanic unconscious to assist our understanding of the Wolf's dark side and its proximity to the Serpent (Lachesis).

In Norse mythology, the god Loki, is the very antithesis of Odin in nature – as immoral and reprobate as Odin is righteous and principled. He is Odin's shadow-self and his familiar is the Shadow-Wolf. A wily, malevolent, Lucifer-like figure, Loki owes allegiance to none other than himself.

Whereas, in terms of the psyche, Odin embodies the soul and the Spirit within the soul, Loki represents the intransigent, irresponsible, self-serving ego-self.



Figure 4.1 Woodcut style image of the Norse God Loki.

Although a nominal member of the Aesir, *he stands one apart, an outsider in the family of gods*, who ostracise, despise and execrate him. Loki, as independent, solitary and irreverent as he is perverse, is unperturbed by the condemnation of the gods and goddesses and derives great delight and satisfaction from mocking, deceiving and outwitting them. At heart, however, he is a coward, hence his sense of fun and mischief can turn malicious and hateful, especially in the face of unsullied beauty and virtue, as embodied in the Norse hero-god Baldr, the son of Odin and Frigg, whose death and detention in Hel, he callously and cunningly engineers. This ultimate offence brings down the combined wrath of his fellow gods upon him; he is captured, bound and condemned to perpetual torment.

Loki is variously regarded as a god or a giant (jötunn) and sometimes as both. This uncertainty is born out in his parentage, his father being the giant Fárbaúti ('Cruel Striker') and his mother Laufey, a goddess or a giantess or some other mysterious, creative being. The name Laufey would seem to refer to a 'tree', which in ancient Germanic tradition is significant, since trees, as in the cosmic example of Yggdrasil, were regarded as mystically fundamental to human destiny. This is a psychic concept that can only be fully comprehended in the light of the art and science of homeopathy, as evidenced in our contemplation of the Garden of Eden myth and the associated 'myths' of Camphor, Thuja, Mancinella and Ficus indica (*Healing the Soul Volume 2*).

Loki is a mercurial being, a shape-shifter and a sly, devious trickster. Like Odin, he is a god of many faces: in different myths assuming the form of a falcon, a mare, a seal, a fly or a salmon: evidence of the manifold nature of the Wolf, revealed also in the diversity of animals appearing in the dreams of Lac lupinum. He possesses a duplicitous and dual nature, sometimes seeming to act on behalf of his fellow gods, invariably with his own selfish agenda, and at other times behaving towards them in a despicable and underhand manner. Often, having caused a calamity, he only comes to the gods aid when threatened with severe punishment.

Aspects of his mercurial character are represented in the ominous nature of his three children born of the giantess Angrboda ('anguish-boding' or 'she who bodes anguish'): a dire brood that included a very odd daughter, and two sons, one a giant wolf and the other an enormous serpent.

Loki's brood

His daughter is named Hel. Like the Greek Hekate, she presides over the Underworld, known to the Norsemen as the Halls of Hel, where she receives

the dead into her keeping. This 'Hel' is located in Niflheim, the Norse underworld. The death-goddess is often depicted with one half of her body flesh-coloured and the other half bluish-black, as if mortifying. She appears stern and melancholic and is accompanied by her wolf-like hound Garmr: a bonding similar to that of Hekate and her hellhounds. Yet again, we are inescapably persuaded, even by a markedly patriarchal culture, that the underworld of the unconscious is a feminine domain, charged with the energy of a goddess.

Loki has two sons: the monstrous wolf Fenrir, embodying all that is evil and the other a huge serpent Jörmundgandr, so vast that he girdles the entire World and grasps his own tail to form an ouroboros. The brothers evidence yet another instance of the symbolic pairing of the Wolf and the Serpent. Being linked to their dread sister Hel, Goddess of the Underworld, they also signal the key importance of these archetypes in the deep unconscious: a pre-eminence that is reflected in dreams, fears and imaginings – the remarkable healing power of *Lac lupinum*, *Lac caninum* and the snake remedies – and the frequency with which they are called for in practice.

The attributes of these strange siblings indicate:

- The feminine nature of the deep unconscious.
- The archetypal importance of the Wolf and the Serpent in the dynamics of the psyche.
- The Wolf and the Serpent's affinity for the most obscure region of the personal unconscious: the Shadow and its abyss!

The binding of Fenrir

Fenrir (or Fenris) is the most infamous of all the wolves in Norse mythology. He is so huge and savage that the gods have bound him forever to prevent him wreaking universal havoc. He was the eldest child of Loki and the giantess Angrboda. Dire prophecies were made about the three children of Loki, as much on account of the nature of their mother ('she who bodes anguish') as on account of the nature of their father. The Aesir, the ruling gods of Asgard, anticipated that they would be a source of 'great mischief and disaster.' So, Odin threw Jörmundgandr into the ocean, where he encircled Midgard, the world of humankind, and he relegated Hel to the underworld of Niflheim. Fearing Fenrir most of all, the Aesir elected to take the wolf cub back to their stronghold Asgard, where they could keep a watchful eye on him. Only the god Tyr, the tireless upholder of justice, had the temerity to approach the savage beast to feed him.

Fenrir grew at an alarming rate and his ferocity kept pace with his enormous size. The gods soon realised that he would shortly be beyond their control and would have to be fettered. None of the gods, even Tyr, dared to try and restrain him. Therefore, they resolved to trick him. They made slighting remarks about his strength and when he took great umbrage at being thought weak, they challenged him to prove his might by breaking free from any chains they might secure him with. Eager to prove how immensely powerful he was, Fenrir agreed. No matter the fetters the gods forged, time and again, Fenrir snapped them with ease, as if they were spider's webs. There was only one remaining hope; the gods had to appeal to the dwarves of Svartalfheim, the most gifted and skilful artisans of the Cosmos, to forge a chain of miraculous strength. The dwarves set their minds to work and crafted a wondrously soft, supple, diaphanous cord wrought of a cat's footstep, the beard of a maiden, the roots of mountains, the breath of fish and the spittle of birds. Imponderables all – therefore, like homeopathy – stronger than strength! Gleipnir (*'open'*) was its name.

When the gods presented Fenrir with the challenge of freeing himself from the gossamer thin Gleipnir, he was not eager to continue with the contest. He did not think it a worthy test of his strength, and, being a wolf, he suspected some treachery. The gods smiled knowingly, one to another, and Fenrir, thinking they were mocking him and that they still doubted his strength, agreed to be bound; but on condition that one of the god's would place their hand in his jaws as a pledge of good faith. None of the gods were willing to do so, for trusting the strength of Gleipnir, they knew it would be to sacrifice a hand or break an oath. There the matter hung – as if for an age. At last, the courageous Tyr stepped forward and volunteered to do as Fenrir demanded, knowing that it would be for the good of the Creation. Then, the gods bound the wolf with Gleipnir and no matter how hard the frenzied Fenrir struggled; he could not break free from this slenderest of all restraints. In vengeful rage he bit off and swallowed Tyr's right hand. Even at this awful price, the gods were pleased with the outcome. They bore the captive Fenrir off to a secluded and desolate place and there bound him to a rock, where he remains to this very day.

Due to his ceaseless struggles against his bonds, a prodigious flow of saliva pours from Fenrir's jaws, forming a river, portentously named *'Expectation'* – a hearkening to what is to come! It is foretold that at Ragnarök – the Norse apocalypse at the end of the cosmic cycle – Loki and Fenrir will break their bonds and with the forces of chaos and evil will run riot and engage the gods in a final and decisive battle. Fenrir's offspring, the great wolves, Sköll (the one who mocks) and Hati (the one who hates), who persistently pursue the sun and the moon attempting to swallow them, and

achieve partial success at the eclipses, will finally succeed and plunge the world into primordial darkness. Out of the carnage, conflagration and final inundation at Ragnarök, we are assured that a new and fertile world will arise, repopulated by humankind and blessed by the return of the gods. This is not an idealistic, fanciful promise of an idyllic, heaven-on-earth scenario, but a prediction of cyclic closure followed by renewal: the involution of the Universe followed by its rebirth: the eternal, cosmic pulse known as a *kalpa* ('aeon') in Hindu cosmology.

Like all pivotal myths in all cultures, the binding of Fenrir has esoteric meaning. It must be contemplated as one would a dream. To do this is to slip from everyday rational mode into imaginative dream mode. From his conception, as child of Loki and Angrboda, it is apparent that the giant wolf, Fenrir, is the dark or Shadow Wolf that can be equated with the beast principle of the psyche. He is the most repressed part of the ego-self and the most dangerous psychologically. He grows at a fearful pace nourished by repressed and unresolved emotions, warped thinking and action and miasmatic disease. He will bite the hand that feeds him even when that hand stands for justice, integrity, honesty and loyalty, which are the noble attributes of the god Tyr. Try to bind him by opposition, discipline and resistance and he grows in strength fed by the attention and contention that give him existence. The chains forged by the gods are the many esoteric and psychological methods, techniques and systems developed to discipline the psyche and bring it to order. To these must added the psychotropic drugs of conventional medicine designed to shackle and repress every emotion that surfaces from the disturbed psyche. All in vain, Fenrir snaps them like so many cobwebs and twenty or more years later the same negative energies hold sway. Who are the dwarves other than those who are working with the infinitesimal, imponderables of homeopathy, which have the gossamer-like power, far stronger than strength, to bring the ego-self under the dominion of the soul, urging the psyche towards the War with the Wolf – the catharsis of Ragnarök!

Ragnarök

Archetypally and homeopathically, it is significant that it is the great wolf Fenrir, raised as a cub by Odin, who at doomsday will enter into combat with Allfather, seize him in his mighty jaws and swallow him. Fenrir, in turn, will be slain by Odin's son, Vidar, who will force apart the gaping jaws of the wolf and tear him asunder. At the onset of Ragnarök, Loki's bonds will part, setting him loose to join the fray. Fired with anger and vengeful

hate, Loki will fall upon his age-old enemy, the god Heimdallr, and each will cause the death of the other. The World Tree, Yggdrasil will shudder and groan. In the universal strife, the hellhound Garmr and the god Tyr, who lost his right hand during the binding of Fenrir, will confront and kill each other. The mighty god Thor, son of Odin, protector of the earth, will grapple with the giant serpent Jörmungandr in a titanic struggle that will result in triumph for the god, but cost his life. The final blow of his mighty hammer delivered, Thor will stride but nine steps before falling, fatally poisoned by the venom spewed upon him by the dying serpent. It will be the god Freyr's destiny to face the dreaded fire giant Surtr, hailing from Muspelheim in the extreme south: a land of heat and fire. In their violent and lengthy combat that will destroy them both, Surtr will wield his brightly burning sword, flinging fire far and wide, setting the nine worlds aflame: a vast conflagration that will raze everything before the earth sinks into the deep. The sun and stars will be extinguished and utter darkness will descend.

Only Yggdrasil, the immortal Cosmic Tree will still stand to preside over the next awakening, together with the god Vidar, the noble son of Odin, the wolf Vali, the evil son of Fenrir, and Lith and Lithrasir, first man and woman, protected and nurtured amongst the roots of the great tree awaiting cosmic rebirth.

The fratricidal strife of Ragnarök is starkly portrayed in the *Poetic Edda* poem – *Voluspa*:

Brothers will fight and kill each other,
 Sister's children will defy kinship.
 It is harsh in the world,
 Whoredom rife
 – An axe age, a sword age
 – Shields are riven
 – A wind age, a wolf age –
 Before the world goes headlong.
 No man will have mercy on another.¹

Ragnarök, the 'Twilight of the Gods', is an important event in the Norse canon and has been the subject of much scholarly debate and interpretation. Commentary can be given from various perspectives: a cosmic cataclysm, a nuclear holocaust, an Armageddon between the forces of good and evil, a 'day of reckoning' for humanity, but the myth can only be comprehended in the light of the archetypal content of the collective unconscious, which scripts the roles and provides the actors; the contention between soul and ego, which proffers the basic plot; and the individuation process of the psyche, which defines the mission of the hero. The nature of the

conflict and the kinship of the protagonists draws comparison with the *Bhagavad-Gita – The Song of God*: the Hindu scripture that records the dialogue between Prince Arjuna and his divine charioteer, Lord Krishna, as they survey the opposing forces of Duryodhana and the Pandavas arrayed for battle on the sacred field of Kurukshetra.² The spiritual discourse is a matchless exposition of Vedanta philosophy clearly defining the means by defining how the soul may overcome the ego-self and attain Self-realisation. The setting is apt, for although attaining the Self is a process of refinement and sublimation, not conflict – a dedicated ‘hanging in the Cosmic Tree’ with ardent resolve to achieve spiritual insight – nonetheless – as all, who have not yet hung there and attained the runes can attest – the struggle between the good and the bad within us is unremitting and with progress becomes evermore subtle and exacting. The foes – the soul and the ego-self – are blood brothers, locked in combat through many a lifetime – Cane and Abel, Loki and Odin. They denote the extreme duality of the psyche that must be resolved. It is the overarching Wolf and Serpent archetypes that best portray the entire spectrum of this duality within human nature: from the most exalted to the most base!

At the deepest level, Ragnarök does not pertain to a doomsday seizure, or apocolypse, but to the rites of passage of the soul in its quest for Self-attainment. It equates with ‘*the dark night of the soul*’ in which the tyranny of the ego-self is climactically challenged, the repressed power of the Shadow breaks its bonds and the ‘hosts’ of soul and ego-self engage in mortal combat, bringing ‘death’ and dissolution. The gods and the soul are immortal; their foe, the ego (and the senses), despite its monstrous might, ferocity and cunning, is a compensatory construct, a wolfish entity that will finally be torn apart and succumb.

It is the fire and floodwaters of the Shadow that will raze and cleanse the battlefield and bring resolution, unity, regeneration and individuation.

In the process of Self-realisation, the masculine principle must be withdrawn and subsumed within the feminine principle; a unification that is captured metaphorically in the image of the ravening wolves, Sköll and Hati, devouring first the sun (masculine) and then the moon (feminine).

Norse gods within the psyche

In the context of the psyche, who is Loki, who is Fenrir, who is Jörmungandr, who is Odin, who is Vidar and who is Heimdallr?

The shape-shifting, self-seeking, ambivalence of Loki, the Trickster, denotes him as the cowardly, perverse ego-self, characteristically paying

hypocritical lip service to the gods, from whom he otherwise stands apart, while pursuing his own nefarious objectives. His binding represents the repression of the ego-self by the superego and the mores of consensus morality and religious doctrine: a state of quasi rectitude that fosters hypocrisy, complacency and self-righteousness while harbouring the darkness of Wolf and Serpent. Bound, he is a clandestine, subversive force operating behind a false-front (*Sycosis* – Thuja) manipulating the soul to his own ends. Without his exposure as imposter and usurper in the realm of the psyche, there can be no contention and no resolution – no psychic Ragnarök!

Fenrir is the beast principle of the psyche that has its lair in the abyss of the Shadow. He is the oversized, mutant progeny of the ego-self, Loki: a distortion of repressed psychic energy. His bondage is illustrative of the fetters of repression, rejection, non-resolution and non-realisation with which the ego-self trammels the soul: constraints that continuously swell the content and power of the Shadow. The river of saliva pouring from Fenrir's gaping jaws is the ever-flowing tide of the Id, which cannot be stayed no matter what repressive forces the ego-self employs or chemical medicine devises. '*Expectancy*' is the ceaseless and insistent pressure towards expression exerted by the Id, which holds the surety that all that lies in the Shadow will one day break its bonds: Ragnarök must and will happen!

Jörmundgandr, *the ouroboros* (the snake devouring its own tail), portends the true nature of the cataclysmic psychic event depicted by Ragnarök: *Self-realisation, the soul's re-union with its Divinity*. This can only be achieved by the devouring (integration) of its own repressed opposite: the Shadow. Unconditional basic trust enables the soul to retrieve the runes – the divine aspects lost into the Shadow – and restore them to soul-consciousness. Jörmundgandr, *the Serpent archetype*, embodies the primordial serpent force of the primitive, instinctive animal will, a writhing, constricting power that must be subdued, channelled and sublimated as the soul traverses the hero's path towards Self-realisation. The Wolf and the Serpent stand together as the major archetypes that facilitate Self-realisation!

Odin – the Krishna, Buddha, or Christ within – is the Divinity at the core of the psyche, who lives out a transformation imperative for all. Inspired by unwavering, spiritual longing, he hangs on Yggdrasil, a sacrifice of himself to himself on behalf of all, willing the creation to yield its greatest mystery: the wisdom of the runes that imparts the basic trust needed to unmask the Trickster and release the power of the Shadow. It is he who at Ragnarök must face his age-old enemies Loki and Fenrir as Odin, Heimdallr or Vidar. Though he may falter, though he may fall, he will

prevail; and though Yggdrasil may shudder and groan, the psychic cycle will be consummated.

Wotan the dark Odin

Wotan is the pagan Teutonic counterpart of the Norse Odin, a far darker personage – more Saruman than Gandalf – a contrast that demonstrates the marked ambivalence of the Wolf-archetype, since it bears the stamp of both gods

Wotan was the chief divinity in the Teutonic pantheon: a warrior god and a Wolf-god, visualised riding into combat on the back of a giant wolf, surrounded by a ferocious wolf pack and accompanied by his Valkyries ('choosers of the slain') flying like demons above him *on nightmarish wolves* (although most artists incorrectly show them riding horses). These female spirits are agents of the Norns: the Goddesses of Destiny. They decide who shall fall in battle and who shall survive – ambivalent deities depicted as noble, loving and beautiful or as sinister, blood-lusting and crone-like. *Being creatures of carnage and creators of carrion, the Valkyries are invariably attended by ravens.*

Wotan possesses shamanic attributes. He is a Dionysian figure revered as the God of Frenzy and Lord of Ecstasy.

Richard Wagner gave this less than perfect god new life in his heroic, four-opera cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1853), works that appealed to the warped psyche of Adolf Hitler, providing him with powerfully orchestrated music, rich in leitmotif, ideal for rousing Teutonic pride and patriotic fervour while abdicating compunction and compassion. In 1936, Carl Jung wrote an essay, *Wotan*, in which he prophesied the return of the ancient god, re-activated "like a dormant volcano" from the collective unconscious of the German nation under the Nazi party, which was soon to lead it to a disastrous war. He saw the frenzy of Wotan manifest in the rabid ravings of Hitler, delivered whilst seemingly in a state of demonic possession.³

The 'frenzy' of Wotan is not only the *battle fury* of the Viking Berserks that rendered them invincible, but also *the passion of the creative mind*: of the poet, the artist and the musician (Odin's mead of poetry). In the pagan world, myths, heroic exploits and noble deeds were extolled by bards at the courts of kings and chieftains through the medium of poetry and song and re-enacted in dance. These were important vehicles of communication and knowledge just as the media are today. Wotan's frenzy was further expressed in the religious and magical fervour of his votaries, often assisted by chanting and dancing and the use of psychotropic substances and alcohol. The priests of Wotan were known to carry a leather pouch containing

hallucinogenic herbs used in the god's rituals to induce states of trance and to access hidden dimensions. Chief amongst these were deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*), poison apple (*Datura stramonium*) and black henbane (*Hyoscyamus niger*) plants esoterically linked to the Wolf and the disease it transmits – rabies! The use of psychotropic drugs and alcohol can lead to wantonness, licentiousness, promiscuity and sexual frenzy, all characteristics of Wotan worship and not foreign to his totem animal: the Wolf. Wotan embodies excess, hedonism and destruction, a blend that profiles Nazi Germany and reveals the underlying presence of the syco-syphilitic complex: a malevolent, miasmatic mix common to the Wolf and Serpent archetypes.

A psychic web is evident linking the dark aspect of the god, the Wolf, the Raven, the obscure levels of the unconscious, the *Solanaceae* family of plants and the beast element in the ego-disease of the soul. Conjure before the eye: the bound Fenrir in all his hideous aggression, his fiendish eyes reddened with gorged blood, his sharp, gleaming fangs bared in threat, thick ropes of saliva dripping from his snarling jaws – add the maniacal frenzy of Hitler – he, who called himself 'Wolf' – virulently projecting his rage, detestation and self-loathing upon his human scapegoats – and the image that resolves out of this miasma of hatefulness is that of rabies, a dreaded, infectious disease that afflicts wolves and their near relatives, particularly dogs, and often proves fatal to humans that have been bitten. Not by chance, the toxic *Solanaceae*, the nightshade plants used in the Wolf-god's shamanic rites, possess a critical relationship to rabies and rabies-like states in animals and humans; a relationship both curative and causative, as by cosmic law all such relationships are: *similia similibus curentur* – like will cure like! Rabies possesses a mystic and psychic relationship to all that is most hateful, destructive and corrupt in humanity.

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