Holy wrath

by Evropa Soberana

‘Furor teutonicus’ — a phrase by Roman chroniclers about the push of the Germans in combat.

‘A furore Normannorum libera nos, Domine’ — ‘From the fury of the Northmen deliver us, O Lord’, medieval prayer.

‘The number of boats grows. The endless stream of Vikings never ceases to increase. Everywhere Christians are victims of killings, fires and looting. The Vikings conquer everything on their path. Nobody can face them. They have taken Bordeaux, Périgord, Limoges, Angouleme and Toulouse. Angers, Tours and Orleans have been destroyed. A countless fleet sails the Seine up and evil dominates the country. Rouen has been deserted, looted and burned. Paris, Beauvais and Meaux have been conquered; the fortifications of Melun have been demolished; Chartres is occupied, Evreux and Bayeux sacked and many other besieged cities’ (monk Ermentarius of Noirmoutier, France, decade of 860).

The history of the Indo-European peoples teaches us that every great work comes, in its first wave, from the ‘authentic’ and uncontaminated barbarian and from the alliances of warriors or Männerbunden, who are the only ones capable of changing the world.
and time through direct action. This essay deals with the most remarkable representatives of the Indo-European barbarian and the alliances of warriors.

The sacred rage in the Indo-European tradition

Where did the legendary and furious force of those ancient Indo-Europeans, our ancestors, come from—so united with their gods and to Nature? In ancient times, there are numerous references to that force, which is described as a kind of fury, frenzy or rage. The divine wrath is a whole archetype: the Iranians called it *aeshma* and the Indo-Iranians, *ishmin*. In India, the *mada* was also described—the divine drunkenness produced by the mystical soma drink. In Greece we find the *menon* or *menis*, the passionate anger that only Achilles, the greatest warrior of all times, possessed.

Also from Greece comes the ‘divine fury of Dionysus’, which at first had to do with the glorification of the instincts related to the cult of ascending life. The *mania*, that is to say the outburst of the Dionysian fury, was said to take in a flight the possessed soul towards the Thracian Mountains, which represented a primitive, ancestral and barbaric Hellas. In the Celtic world we find the Irish hero Cú Chulainn from whom the *warp spasm* (‘spasm that deforms’, or spasm of fury) took over in moments of war, giving it a supernatural thrust. This, in short, tells us that the sacred anger was not exclusive Germanic patrimony, but comes from an even older source, and that in all the Indo-European peoples there were male circles that cultivated the strength given by the fury of combat.

The Germans, an Indo-European people from southern Scandinavia, were perhaps the last Europeans to openly cultivate the sacred anger in a tribal way. The divine wrath was not then a novel concept, nor something that has disappeared. When something sacred, a song, a landscape, a ceremony, a passion, a person, a situation, remind us of an inner instinct, what emerges is a very special type of feeling: the union of fury and joy, the feeling that makes the warriors of all times raise their arms to heaven and throw their screams to the wind; the Dionysian feeling that lies in music and songs, that makes us feel more alive and more powerful; the glorious feeling of honour, pride and contact with the Eternal, which accelerates our pulse and frightens the hell out from us; the feeling that we know that nobody but a European man can feel.
‘Burning souls’ Leon Degrelle called them. ‘Fire in the blood’ we could call it, as when sometimes we talk and our ‘blood boils’. It is the spiritual flame that opposes the advance of materialist and nihilistic ice, the ‘warlike ardour’ of which even today is sung in the anthem of the Infantry.

The role of the Berserkers in the Germanic world

The Berserkers are associated with Germanity, that is, the set of Germanic tribes. These include Scandinavians, Anglo-Saxons, Dutch and Germans. Those were times when the pre-Christian Vikings terrified a Europe castrated by Christianity, and in which the Roman Empire had disappeared. Generally, the Viking despised the Christian and the Christians feared the Viking. On one occasion the Vikings kidnapped a bishop. When they did not get a ransom for him, they killed him by hitting him with animal skulls. Those were souls still wild and uncontaminated, possessed by that brutal and forceful mentality so typical of Nature.

Among all these barbarians, the most faithful guardians of the sacred fury were the Berserkers. This word survived in the vocabulary of the nations that knew these men: in England, the word still designates a person of wild or untamed character, or a state of irrational anger. Berserk can be translated as ‘bear shirt’ or ‘shirtless’. It comes from the fact that the Berserkers fought dressed in bear skins, and sometimes half-naked or naked.

Among the ancients, every man was a warrior. He was not warring during all his life, but was called to it on turbulent occasions, while in peace he dedicated himself to his field work or domain. So it was throughout the ancient world except Egypt, Sparta, Rome, the Byzantine Empire and some other exceptions, which had ‘professional’ armies. In Germanity, however, there existed a curious caste, the artists of war, considered touched by the Divine.

Selected warriors lived in small communities, isolated from population centres and led by a priest of the cult of Odin / Woden / Wotan according to the region, a skald (bard), a gothi (druid), a vikti (master of the runes) or another type of shaman, wizard or tribal magician. They formed authentic sects in the Germanic world, part of the tradition of the männerbunden: the unions of men, alliances of warriors, military brotherhoods or, as the Romanian Mircea Eliade called them, ‘secret societies of men’.
In the families of the Germanic aristocracy, there was a tradition similar to that of the oracles in Greece: at the birth of the child, a priest performed a ritual through which one could glimpse his fate. We can assume that some of the most promising babies were offered by their parents to be raised in a ‘military’ community of this type. This would not take place right away, but at a slightly later age. At that age, the corresponding shaman would appear to take the child to his new life in the woods, where he would learn to acquire the instincts of the predator.

From childhood, the Berserkers were fitted on the neck an iron ring that is related to the Celtic torques and that would not be removed until killing their first victim. The type of instruction given to them is not completely known, but basically it would be a kind of military and ascetic camp in the Spartan style, in which they were taught how to handle themselves with weapons, in close combat and in life in Nature, in addition to acquiring hardness and resistance against all kinds of deprivation, within the framework of a hunter-gatherer life. They also learned tribal techniques and dances designed to generate large amounts of adrenaline. Over the years, they were building the body of the warrior, accustomed to fatigue, deprivation and suffering. All this conjugated with some unknown form of yoga. One of the skills they achieved through their mysterious asceticism was sitting on the snow during a snowstorm or blizzard, melting with their own inner heat the snow that fell on them. This advanced test takes place, even today, among some Tibetan lamas (the respiratory exercise they use to generate heat is called *tumo* or ‘fire in the belly’). And in the Celtic legends, one of the qualities attributed to the great heroes was to melt snow a hundred feet away (30 m) with their own body heat.

An interesting case, dating from Ireland in 700 BCE, is that of folk hero Cú Chulainn. Legend has it that, after a battle, Cú Chulainn returned to his village still in a frenzy of combat. His compatriots, fearing that he would kill the whole town, threw themselves on him and put him in a barrel of cold water. By the ardour of the hero, the water broke the wooden plates and the metal straps, and exploded the barrel into a thousand pieces, ‘like a nut breaks’. In the second barrel of cold water, Cú Chulainn produced large bubbles like fists. And in the third, he produced a boiling phenomenon where some men could bear to dip their hands but others not. This inevitably reminds us of the Greek Heracles, who had to rush to the waters of Thermopylae to
quench an attack of internal fire, turning the waters of the place into thermal springs.

Very young Berserkers received initiation in a cult that could be called the mysteries of Odin, the patron of these warriors. Berserkers were often called ‘men of Odin’ or ‘wolves of Odin’ for their predominant cult of this deity, called ‘father of all’ or ‘the strong one of above’. The Berserkers could therefore be described as sects of elite warriors, severely trained from childhood in the arts of struggle and inner alchemy, and initiated into a cult of Odin by some kind of extremely violent ritual.

Mircea Eliade specified that one did not get to be ‘berserk’ only by bravery, physical strength or hardness but also after a magic-religious experience that radically modified the young warrior’s way of being. He had to transmute his humanity through an access of aggressive and terrifying fury, which he assimilated from the enraged predators. ‘He warmed up’, continues Eliade, to an extreme degree, transported by a mysterious, inhuman and irresistible force: his combative impulse thus emerged from the depths of his being.

In combat, the Berserkers presented a terrifying aspect to their enemies. Dressed in bear or wolf skins (in which case they were called ulfbednar or ulfsark, ‘wolfskin’), naked or painted black, they threw themselves into the battle always in groups of twelve, shouting as if possessed, throwing foam by the mouth and being immune to the most terrible wounds. In the sixth chapter of the Ynglinga Saga people talk about them:

His [Odin’s] men rushed forwards without armour, were as mad as dogs or wolves, bit their shields, and were strong as

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1 The group of twelve men (plus the leader or protégé, the thirteenth) is a constant not only in various Indo-European mythologies but in the daily life of the Germans, and represents the select circle. Twelve were the men who were normally required to carry out a sacred mission. Twelve were the representatives of the Council among the Nordic peoples. Twelve were the sworn witnesses who appeared in certain cases of justice. Twelve were the representatives of a large group that were invited to a party. Twelve were the select gentlemen of the Arthurian round table, as well as twelve are the rays that depart from the central point in the archetypal symbol of the black sun. And, as we all know, twelve were the apostles of the Jewish plagiarism in the gospel story.
bears or wild bulls, and killed people at a blow, but neither fire
nor iron told upon themselves. These were called Berserker.

In the *Hrafnsmál*, the skaldic Torbjørn Hornklove describes
them in combat:

There the Berserkers shouted—the battle was
unleashed—, wolf skins howled wildly, spears whistled... wolf
skins, they were called. You see them act, the shields bloodied.
The swords roared when they reached combat. The wise king in
combat is protected by tough heroes who raise their shields.

The fantasy of horned helmets comes from a European black
legend. It was the Celts (and many medieval knights) who wore
helmets with horns, and often more as ceremonial ornaments than as
combat helmets.

The ‘berserkergang’ or possession

Before combat, the Berserkers entered together in a trance
called *berserkergang* or *berserkergang*. This trance was the process of
possession, for which not everyone was prepared, because their
energy could destroy the body of the profane. According to the
Scandinavian tradition, such a state of ecstasy began with a sinister
chill that ran through the body of the possessed and made his hair
raise on end and produce goosebumps. This was followed by
contraction of the muscles, a premonitory tremor, increased blood
pressure and tension, and a series of nervous tics in the face and neck.
Body temperature began to rise. The nasal fins dilated. The jaw
tightened and the mouth contracted in a psychotic grimace revealing
the teeth. Then came a disturbing gnashing of teeth. The face inflated
and changed colour, ending in a purple tone. They began to foam
through the mouth,² to growl, to shake, to roar and scream like wild
animals, to bite the edges of their shields, to beat their helmets and
shields with their weapons and to tear their clothes, invaded by a
fever that took possession of them and turned them into a beast, their
blind instrument.

² Foaming at the mouth may be related to the rage that possesses
the fanatical fighter transformed into battle. Interestingly, in certain battles
during the Spanish Civil War, many members of the Spanish Legion, visibly
fanaticised and altered by the brutality of the fighting and by their own
pseudo-mystical indoctrination, foamed at the mouth.
Witnessing such a transformation must have been something really alarming and anguishing, reminiscent of the most urgent panic. It was a full-fledged initiation transformation, and some have seen in it the origin of the legends of werewolves.

After this process, the Berserkers received the *Od* or *Odr* (called *Wut* in Germania and *Wod* in England), the inspiration that Odin granted to some warriors, initiates and poets, touching them with the tip of his spear Gognir (‘shuddering’). With it they became a furious whirlwind of blood and metal. The physical strength of the ‘inspired’ by *Od* fever increased in a superhuman and inexplicable way, and also increased their resistance, aggressiveness and combative fanaticism. The pain, the fear or the fatigue disappeared, and what replaced them was an intoxicating sensation of will, unstoppable power and desire to destroy, devastate, kill, annihilate and overthrow.

A good reference to the Celtic version of the berserkergang can be found in *Táin Bó Cúalnge*, which describes the transformation of the hero Cú Chulainn before the battles:

> Then contortion seized him. You would have thought that it was a hammering wherewith each little hair had been driven into his head, with the arising with which he arose. You would have thought there was a spark of fire on every single hair. He shut one of his eyes so that it was not wider than the eye of a needle. He opened the other so that it was as large as the mouth of a meadcup. He laid bare from his jawbone to his ear; he opened his mouth to his jaw so that his gullet was visible.

> The Berserkers went on to fight furiously without caring at all about their own lives or physical safety. Many preferred to carry a sword and an axe instead of a single weapon with the shield. In groups of twelve, they charged savagely against the enemy regardless of their numerical inferiority, and wounds that would kill anyone did not change them in the least. In cases of defence against overwhelming crowds, they formed an impenetrable circle from which they fought until the death of the last man.

> If we imagine the appearance of those men laden with muscles, veins, nerves and tendons, with their face twitching under the skin of the beast, the fanatical clear eyes opened like plates and shining with that *acies oculorum* that Julius Caesar and Tacitus noticed among the German warriors; the teeth clenched with fury and

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3 The latter-day Almogavars of the Kingdom of Aragon also had this custom.
foaming, splashed with enemy blood, we will instantly understand that those warriors had nothing to do with modern Western man. These Berserkers were of the same blood as many modern Europeans, but they were men who lived for war, while the middle Westerner of today is a soft effeminate who lives for peace and, in his nearsightedness, persists in believing that he knows everything about the world and life.

The Wot, Wod, Od or berserkergang was a terribly intense and violent trance, in which one completely lost control and reason, and in which the beast freed itself of its iron chains to vent its claustrophobia and to ride in glorious and unbridled freedom through the dark and blurred forest, without responsibilities, without ties, without limits and without laws. It was not just about letting the inner beast emerge, but letting itself be possessed by the absolute, external divinity. The body of the warrior, in the hands of these tempestuous forces, and totally disconnected from the rational mind, was a simple puppet that could barely cope with so much anger. Those affected could be fighting for hours in the most furious and fierce way without pausing a single moment. In fact, thanks to their brutal contribution, often the battles ended too soon and the Berserkers could not stop fighting, needing to vent their fury, running without stop to scream and unload their weapons against trees, rocks, animals or people, even coming to attack members of their own army (although apparently the Berserkers never attacked each other), since in such states they did not distinguish between friends and enemies.

However, when the berserkergang passed, they fell into a state of total weakness, in which they were unable to defend themselves or even stand. This hangover lasted several days, in which the warrior should stay in bed. According to the Scandinavian sagas, often their enemies took advantage to kill them at that time. Some Berserkers, without receiving any injury, fell dead after the battle for their superhuman effort: their bodies were not prepared to be instruments of divine fury—at least for such a long time. Life expectancy was probably shortened for many years after each ‘session’ of berserkergang.

Another quality that was attributed to the berserkergang possessed was the ‘disable the arms of the adversary’, which probably implied that the Berserkers were so fast, so invulnerable and inspired such terror in their enemies that they seemed to be paralysed with fear or that their blows were not effective. Also, it is very likely that the aura of anger from a charging group of Berserkers was ‘felt’ at a great
distance by enemy soldiers as if it was an expansive wave, as the Roman historian Tacitus wrote while speaking of a Germanic männerbund whose members were called Harii, a word that, among Iranians and Indo-Iranians, meant ‘blondes’ and which is related to the einherjar of Valhalla:

It will be enough to mention the most powerful, which are the Harii, the Helvecones, the Manimi, the Helisii and the Nahanarval... The Harii, besides being superior in strength to the tribes just enumerated, savage as they are, make the most of their natural ferocity by the help of art and opportunity. Their shields are black, their bodies dyed. They chose dark nights for battle, and, by the dread and gloomy aspect of their death-like host, strike terror into the foe, who can never confront their strange and almost infernal appearance. For in all battles it is the eye which is first vanquished. 4

We observe here the importance of the symbolism about the dark among these men. The night is essential in this symbolism because it symbolizes the dark age, this dark winter in which we were born for good or bad. The day, with the rays of the sun, the gold, is propitious for the will, for the courage, for the conscious struggle, to drive the spear into the enemy, to plunge the sword into the earth; in a word, to possess, to take over. The day represents the right hand; the order, the ritual and the ‘dry way’. The night, on the other hand, with its darkness, moon, stars, water and silver is more propitious to magic, to a certain chaos, to be allowed to be possessed, to raise arms to heaven instead of sinking them into the earth and therefore it is more related to the left hand and the ‘wet way’.

Since man is no longer a god, he must strive to become, at least, a blind instrument of the gods. For this, he must be emptied of all egocentric individuality in order to allow the divine outburst, that is, ‘to propitiate Odin to touch him with the tip of his spear’. And the first way to achieve this was through the establishment of severe discipline, asceticism and organisation. Let us remember, with respect to the importance of the night, that Adolf Hitler himself spoke in Mein Kampf about the difference of the effect of his speeches among the crowds in the morning and at night. For him, the afternoons, and especially the evenings, were the ideal moment to give a speech and to assert his magnetism. Let us also note that, in the SS, the predominant

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colours in the uniforms and in their symbolism were black and silver. Symbolically, they were covered by night with darkness, with thunder and with lunar and star light.

Whoever had once been possessed by the berserkergang was already marked with a lifetime sign. From then on, the trance not only came to be invoked before the fight, but could also fall on him suddenly in moments of peace and tranquillity, transforming him in a matter of seconds into a ball of hate, adrenaline and subhuman cries striving for destruction. Thus, *Egil’s Saga* describes how Egil’s father, a Berserker, suddenly suffered possession of the berserkergang while peacefully playing a ball game with his son and another small one. The warrior, horribly agitated and roaring like an animal, grabbed his son’s friend, lifted him into the air and slammed him to the ground with such force that he died instantly with all the bones of his body broken. Then he went to his own son, but he was saved by a maid who, in turn, fell dead before the possessed. In the sagas, the stories of Berserkers are dotted with tragedies in which the uncontrolled berserkergang turns against those closest to the possessed. If we had to find a Greek equivalent, we would have it in the figure of Hercules, who during an attack of anger killed his own wife Megara and the two children he had with her, which motivated his twelve tasks as penance to expiate his sin.

In the field of mythology we have many examples of the fury of the Berserkers. The *Saga of King Hrólf Kraki* speaks of the hero Berserker Bjarki, who fought for the king and who, in a battle, was transformed into a bear. This bear killed more enemies than the five select king champions. Arrows and weapons bounced off him, and he tore down men and horses from the forces of the enemy King Hjorvard; tore apart with his teeth and claws anything that stood in his way so that panic seized the enemy’s army, disintegrating their ranks chaotically. This legend, which is still a legend, represents the fame that the Berserkers of the North had acquired as small groups: through their bravery they were capable of deciding the outcome of a great battle.

*Interpretations of the holy wrath*

What is the explanation for these events, which far exceed the normal? How should we interpret the berserkergang? In our days, those who always look with resentful distrust at any manifestation of strength and health, are inclined to degrade it. For many of them the
Berserkers were simply communities of epileptics, schizophrenics and other mentally ill people.

This ridiculous explanation is altogether unsatisfactory, as epilepsy and schizophrenia are pathologies whose effects cannot be ‘programmed’ for a battle as the Berserkers did, and under epileptic or psychotic episodes it is impossible to perform valiant actions or show warlike heroism. An epileptic does more damage to himself by biting his tongue and falling to the ground than destroying the ranks of a large enemy army, and can be reduced by a single person. Others have suggested that, as in the movies, the Berserkers were alliances of individuals who had undergone genetic mutations, or the survivors of an old disappeared Germanic lineage, organised in the form of sectarian communities. Others even take into account the ‘shamanic’ explanation, according to which Berserkers were possessed by the totem spirit of a bear or a wolf.

As you can see, the reasons are as varied as the opinionated characters that advance such theories. The best-known explanation, however, is that these men fought drugged. According to this theory, the Berserkers ingested a fungus called *amanita muscaria* (a white-stem mushroom with a red cap and white spots, which abounds in the birch forests of northern Europe), or some concoction prepared with that mushroom. This has a high toxicity thanks to an alkaloid called muscarine, which completely alters consciousness and perception. Currently it has been classified as ‘poisonous’, given that in high doses it is deadly. The theory of the amanita muscaria was elaborated in 1784 by the Swedish professor Samuel Ödman (who learned about the use of the mushroom by Siberian shamans). It was considered plausible to a certain extent because the Germanic mythology explained that, from the mouth of Sleipnir—Odin’s horse, with eight legs—, it dripped a red foam that, when reaching the ground, became the mushroom. Other drug theories suggest beer with black henbane or bread or beer contaminated with rye ergot.

The theory of drugs is unconvincing, and the two previous facts (Siberian shamans and Odin’s horse) are the only evidence we have to corroborate this thesis. On the other hand, the simple ingestion of a drug does not guarantee by itself an outburst of devastation and warlike frenzy like that experienced by the Berserkers. If they actually ingested a drug, it would have been after a long and harsh ascetic and warlike preparation that would have made them resist the possession of the *Od*, with doses carefully thought for by true connoisseurs of their effects, and with rites designed to enhance
and channel certain aspects related to the substance. Equally unlikely is the theory that the berserkergang was triggered by a kind of ‘hypnotic programmer order’ that was stored in the subconscious through a violent and traumatic ritual initiation, automatically ‘activated’ by listening the noise of the weapons, the battle cries and the chants that invoked Odin’s fury; giving rise to the irresistible longing to be at the centre of the battle, where the fight was fiercer and the wrath more concentrated.

It is most likely that the berserkergang’s attainment techniques were psychological through hypnotic processes catalysed by powerful rituals, and surely amplified through tribal dances, movements, techniques and breathings capable of generating huge amounts of adrenaline in a short time. And if the drugs were really present, it would have been to facilitate possession, but in no case were they directly responsible for the incredible combative performance that was unleashed with it.

Substances released by drugs can be stimulated in the body through purification practices. In the initiatory traditions, when the man gets absolute control over his body, he can stimulate his organs and glands at will, releasing the substances he wants and causing the effects he wants, just knowing how to materialise the thought. Ideally, the drugs that are used come from our own interior, because they are already inside us—such as testosterone, adrenaline, dopamine, pheromones and endorphins. They only need a stimulus to free themselves.

The religious use of drugs appeared at a time when most people were no longer able to go into a trance naturally. And in any case the ingestion of drugs for religious purposes was carried out under strict control and ritualism, and on individuals physically, mentally and spiritually prepared to withstand their effects; everything watched over by the wise of the natural sciences, plants, animals and the Earth. During situations of great stress and violence, the body is disturbed. The pulse increases, the breathing accelerates and the adrenaline rises like a flame. A series of physiological responses take place that in themselves are neither good nor bad, but their nature will depend on the use made of them and the output that is given to them.

The conventional ‘chivalrous’ warriors tried to dominate the torrent of reactions and sensations that caused the combat so that, keeping their will above them, retained the ‘cold blood’ and consciousness intact. The Berserkers, on the other hand, seemed to do the opposite: they let themselves be carried away by the physical
reactions to the fight, so that they took possession of them and ended up into beasts that ‘saw everything red’. Out of them came a totally independent will of consciousness. Only the best were tough enough to really let themselves be carried away by the torrent of ferocity to release their impulses savagely, to lose control, to break all ties in order to allow the beast to ride free, to savour the deep and primitive pleasure of the butchery, bloodletting, slaughter, domination, possession and destruction; submerging all their being in absolute chaos and surviving to be able to tell about it—although it is very probable that afterwards they did not even clearly remember what happened.

Is all this a wild barbarism? Yes, but it is part of human nature, whether you like it or not. Turning our backs on those issues only serves to catch us off guard later. To ignore that we have an animal side is like mutilating the spirit and sabotaging the body. Conversely, to accept this and to master it is to reconcile ourselves with ourselves.

As for the clothing of symbolic animal skins, it obeys a shamanic, totemic and pagan tradition to the core, and we pay attention to this because it expresses a very important idea.

The wolf and the bear are signs of free masculinity—pure, wild, fertile and unrestrained. The skin of the bear or the wolf was achieved by fighting the animal in body-to-body combat and killing it. An initiatory test of the Berserkers as well as among some Celts was killing a boar. The Berserkers were thus suggested that they seized the totemic qualities inherent in the animal in question—bear or wolf—acquiring their strength and ferocity, possessing their qualities as if they had conquered for themselves, and adopting the skin of the vanquished beast as a symbol of this transformation. As a sign of prestige, many Berserkers added the word björn (bear) to their names, resulting in names such as Arinbjörn, Esbjörn, Gerbjörn, Gunbjörn or Thorbjörn. The wolf (proto-Germanic ulf) resulted in names like Adolf, Rudolf, Hrolf or Ingolf.

Mircea Eliade said regarding the appropriation of animal skins that the man became a Berserker after an initiation that specifically involved warrior tests. Thus, for example, among the Chatti, Tacitus tells us, the applicant did not cut his hair or his beard before killing an enemy. Among the Taifali, the young man had to shoot down a boar or a bear and among the Heruli it was necessary to fight without weapons. Through these tests, the applicant appropriated the form of being of the beast: he became a fearsome warrior insofar as he
behaved like a beast of prey. He transformed himself into an overman because he managed to assimilate the magical-religious force shared by the predators.

Once again, this will be seen as primitive and barbaric, but the Romans did it as well, as we can see in the standard bearers of the legions, which were covered with skins of wolves, bears or wild cats (as a Barbarian Indo-European people, the ancient peoples of the Italian peninsula, ancestors of Latins, should have had their own version of the ‘possessed warrior’). Also the Greek hero Heracles, after fighting a monstrous lion and killing him with his bare hands, put on his skin. The Irish Cú Chulainn killed a monstrous mastiff and took his place as guardian of Ulster. Siegfried, the hero of Germanism, bathed in the blood of the dragon Fafnir, killed by him, and with it he became almost invincible. In the mysteries of Mithras, a restricted military cult only for men and practiced by the legions of Rome, the initiates were covered in the blood of the sacrificed bull in a ceremony of high suggestive power.

In the same line of related examples, we have other cases that refer to ‘second skins’ and hardening baths: Achilles was bathed by his mother in the waters of the dark Styx River, which made him invulnerable. The Celtic goddess Ceridwen possessed a magical cauldron that gave health, strength and wisdom to all who bathed in it. Spartan mothers bathed their newborns in wine, because they thought that it hardened the hard and finished off the soft. The waters of the Ganges, even today, are considered healthy for the Hindus. The idea behind all these myths was that exposing oneself to destructive, telluric and dark forces would help to harden the ‘envelope’ of the initiate and protect him in the future against similar experiences in the field of death and suffering. All this symbolised, in addition, the struggle of the spirit to take control of the telluric beast, after which it was covered with the conquered; it entered the empty shell, possessed it, transformed it in its image and likeness and, at the same time, changed his personality for a different one, entering a new phase and also symbolising the transition to a new way of perceiving the environment and seeing things—a new skin, a new shell, a new shield--; the perception of the world through the senses of the beast; to take possession of matter and, from within, transform it into the image and likeness of the spirit.

This philosophy of possession is a characteristic feature of all initiatory warrior societies. As reminiscent of all these issues in the middle of the 19th century, the Imperial Hussars of the II Reich, heirs
of the elite warrior units of Germanism, sang: ‘We dressed in black / blood we bathed / with the Totenkopf in the helmet / Heil! / We are invincible!’

Those Berserkers who fought naked were related to the behaviour of the early Celts, who also did it (in fact, the figure of the ‘possessed warrior’ was also recurrent among the Celts). Their bodies, tanned from childhood, did not feel cold even if they were naked on the snow. As we have said, some of them also painted themselves in black, vindicating the dark and fiery side, typical of the ages in which light is harassed. We have already seen how the Roman Tacitus described the Harii who, painted and with black shields, launched themselves into combat with superhuman ferocity. For the ancient Indo-Iranians, the god Vishnu in the dark ages was dressed in dark armour to fight the demons, hiding to the world his luminous appearance. But at the dawn of the new golden age, he would strip off his black breastplate and the world would know his luminous inner aspect.

In Iran, the männerbund of the Mairya wore black armour and carried black flags. Symbolically, it was said that they killed the dragon, and usually they acted at night. The Cathars were dressed in long black robes, and their religious banners were black (some with a white Celtic cross inside). Also the SS dressed in black and wore black flags, in addition to the macabre Totenkopf which symbolised the domain of the darkness; of what belongs to the left hand, to the sinister side, fear, death and horror.

To dominate and to know the enemy is to dominate and know the bear, the wolf, the dragon, the bull or the totemic animal that the fighting man discovers in himself. To cover oneself with black is to cover oneself with the skin of the enemy beast, because darkness is the enemy—until it is dominated.

*The expansion of northern fury*

At a certain time in the High Middle Ages, at the end of the 8th century, the Scandinavian peoples embarked on a series of prolific expeditions. Some argue that this sudden blitzkrieg of the Vikings was due to overpopulation motivated by polygamy in a little fertile land. Others, such as Varg Vikernes, maintain that the Viking raids were a revenge against the Christian world after Bishop Boniface cut, in Saxony in the year 772, sacred forests and, particularly, the oak that the Saxons had consecrated to Donnar Oak—an ancient tree
venerated by all the Germanic peoples of the world, considered the terrestrial version of the Irminsul, the Axis of the World.

The image that folklore and Christian propaganda has given us of the Vikings must be corrected. The Church demonised the Vikings, depicting them as dirty barbarians with horns on their helmets, when, according to Chronica Joannis Wallingford authored by a monk, “The Danes, thanks to their habit of combing their hair every day, of bathing every Saturday and regularly changing their clothes, were able to undermine the virtue of married women and even seduce the daughters of nobles to be their mistresses”. We are talking about a time when Christianity had stigmatised hygiene as something sensual and ‘pagan’. The Arab historian Ibn Fadlan, ambassador of Baghdad to the Bulgarians of the Volga, says of the Vikings: ‘I have never seen physical specimens so perfect, tall as palm trees, blond and ruddy-skinned’. He adds that often they wore tattoos of vegetable designs from foot to neck, and that they were always armed with an axe, a sword and a knife.

The Vikings ended up being famous throughout Christendom, in the non-Christian East and in much of the Islamic world. The Arabs called them Mayus and the Khazars Rus (hence ‘Russia’). In most of Western Europe they were known as Normans: that is, men of the North.

Generally their way of acting was to set sail in large fleets, sack the coastal towns, establish coastal ‘operations centres’ to plan other incursions and navigate the great rivers to reach other inland cities (such as Pamplona, Seville or Paris). Their many feats are known, from the colonisation of Iceland, Greenland and America to the takeover of Seville from the Moors (year 844), its looting and residence for a whole week, including the founding of Russian cities such as Novgorod (862) and Kiev (864), as well as the first Russian state (Kievan Rus) and the site of Paris in 885.

911 was the year that the Danish Rollo received from the French king Charles the Simple the Duchy of Normandy to appease the Viking pillage, to which the whole of northern France was being subjected. (The Danish name of the king was Gang Hrolf, or ‘Ralph the Wayfarer’, as it was said to be too big for a horse to carry its weight.) In a solemn act of homage to King Charles, Rollo was informed that he should bow before him and kiss his feet. Scandalised and offended in his pride, he refused to humiliate himself in such a way, saying that ‘I will never bow down to anyone and I will never kiss anyone’s foot’. The adulatory bishops, however, insisted that
‘whoever receives such a gift has to kiss the king’s foot’. Thus cornered, Rollo ordered one of his warriors to carry out the act. He took the king’s foot and, standing erect, brought it to his mouth and kissed it, causing the king to fall backward, so that the whole present court laughed loudly. This anecdote shows the arrogant and proud side of the Vikings, still innocent and uncontaminated men by the servile mentality of civilised society.

But eventually these Vikings from Normandy were Christianised. They took root in France and ended up forgetting their Scandinavian roots. Their subsequent expansion took them to England, the Mediterranean, southern Italy (the Norman kingdom of Sicily) and even the East during the Crusades. Many Normans played an important role in the cavalry orders. For a time, the Vikings made England a Danish kingdom. The Anglo-Saxons under King Alfred the Great, Germanics like the Vikings, engaged with them in a war in which the Vikings were confined to the north of England, in a kingdom called Danelaw (‘Danish law’), where Nordic paganism ruled and where there was a wide colonisation by Viking families, to such an extent that they left many words in the English vocabulary. Some historians have called it the ‘other England’ parallel, the ‘Scandinavian England’. Here, the Vikings established a capital in Jorvik (York) and devoted themselves to rooting rather than looting, establishing farms, fields and trading centres.

Both the Vikings and the Normans fought over England. The war broke out when King Harold of England, Anglo-Saxon, had to face first with King Harald of Norway and then King William the Conqueror of Normandy, who fought for the throne. The Anglo-Saxons of Harold confronted the Norwegians of Harald Hardrada (the last Viking king ‘of the old school’) at the Battle of the Stamford Bridge. Having defeated Harald, the battered Anglo-Saxon troops of Harold moved some 360 kilometers from Yorkshire (north of England) to Sussex (south of England), where William awaited them with fresh Norman troops. Exhausted Anglo-Saxon troops clashed with the Normans in the famous Battle of Hastings (1066). For the lack of a good cavalry and because many left the security of the wall of shields and spears to persecute the Norman knights who retired to reload, the Anglo-Saxons lost. Harold died with his skull pierced by an arrow that entered his eye. It was a tragedy for England.

The ‘Normans’ (really Frenchified Danish) imported the French language, polluting the Anglo-Saxon and stripping it of its most Germanic resonances. French became the language of the new
Norman court, and the Anglo-Saxon—that is, Old English—the language of the commoners and the dispossessed aristocracy. England was also infected with the Eastern mentality. Its focus of attention and cultural relations went from Denmark, northern Germany and Scandinavia, to France and the Vatican, and in this sense there is no doubt that even a Viking triumph would have been better. The Normans imported, in addition, a feudal serfdom of Christian type (that made sense in places where the Germans constituted a minority aristocracy, but not in England, where most of the population was of Germanic origin), sweeping the old Saxon law, so hated by the Church, and that only remained in the county of Kent, which had been the place where the first Anglo-Saxons landed (specifically the Jutes, from Denmark) in the 5th century, and where the Anglo-Saxon Germanic tradition was perhaps stronger and more rooted. However, the Normans undoubtedly brought beneficial innovations: large stone castles with moats and the spirit of the new cavalry.

The Anglo-Saxons, in any case, were not going to resign themselves to that situation, and many of their aristocrats, leading their people, took part in a hidden resistance against the ‘Norman invasion’, which was nothing but a French invasion. The very legend of Robin Hood refers to the struggle between Anglo-Saxons and Normans, in which an Anglo-Saxon männerbund, headed by a Saxon nobleman, retires to the forest and carries out ‘guerrilla warfare’ against the occupation.

*   *   *

The Viking expansion was so immense that Buddha statuettes have been found in Scandinavian tombs. Not without well-founded reasons, some authors, such as the Frenchman Jacques de Mahieu, have placed the Vikings at the base of aristocracies in places as distant as Peru and Mexico, and hence the strange cases such as Quetzalcoatl, Kukulkan, Ullman or Viracocha, pre-Columbian gods with European features (such as the beard, white skin, light hair or blue eyes).

Of the Scandinavian nationalities, the Norwegians tended to explore Iceland, Greenland and America; the Danes were concentrated in England, Scotland, Germany, France and Ireland, and the Swedes devoted themselves above all to their adventures in the East, including Finland, Russia, wars against Khazars and Tartars and their exploits in the Islamic and Byzantine world.
Non-Vikings considered the Berserkers as the ultimate expression of the northern rage that spread like wildfire across Europe. The same archetypal image of the bloodthirsty Viking that fights half-naked and kills indiscriminately, corresponds more to the Berserker than to the ordinary Viking warrior. The fame and prestige of the Berserkers in the North were enormous. They were bodyguards in many royal courts, including that of King Harald ‘Beautiful Hair’ of Norway. King Hrolf Kaki of Denmark sent his twelve Berserkers to Adils of Sweden to help him in his war against Norway. After the Viking military campaigns, when casualties were counted, the military captains did not even bother to count the Berserkers, since they assumed they were invincible after uttering spells that made them invulnerable to iron and fire, or that they were capable to disable the enemy’s weapons with their eyes.

Such fame came to the East, in such a way that the Emperor Constantine of Byzantium—a powerful man with many means, and who wanted the best—hired a select personal guard that was composed exclusively of Swedish Berserkers. They were known as the ‘Varangian Guard’. (Over time, the guard would be so full of Anglo-Saxon warriors that it would become known as ‘English guard’.) As Constantine wrote, these men sometimes performed the ‘Gothic dance’, dressed in animal skins and totemic masks.

Scandinavian paganism had preserved healthy shamanism, deeply related to Nature and Asgard, the heaven of the gods. According to Germanic mythology, fallen Berserkers formed in the Valhalla Odin’s honour guard, so in their earthly life they tried to reflect and ‘train’ that vocation by protecting numerous kings whose power figure was associated with Odin.

The Varangian Guard became famous in a series of campaigns against the Muslims, in one of which the Varangians destroyed nothing more and nothing less than eighty cities. In each Viking army, the Berserkers formed a group of twelve men. The other warriors had great respect and fear, and tried to stay well away from them, because they saw them as dangerous, unstable and unpredictable. The Berserkers themselves were kept separate from the rest of the corresponding army, cultivating the ‘pathos of distance’.

*The twilight of the Berserkers*

The Berserkers, like all paganism, ended up falling into decay. At a given moment, probably with the advent of Christianity, the
esoteric religious leadership of Scandinavia received the *coup de grâce*: it 
disappeared and submerged itself in the dominant culture. All the 
Germanic religiosity and its external traditions fell without impulse or 
direction, divided and weak, functioning only by inertia.

Since then, we have tried to distinguish between two types of 
Berserkers: the heroic Berserker, a brave and loyal elite warrior in the 
service of a great king and the decadent Berserker, a wandering bandit 
given to theft, pillage, indiscriminate killings and rapes. This latter 
figure corresponds to gangs of criminals in Scandinavia, and its signs 
denote what happens when male impulses—which originate on the 
dark side and tend, in principle, to destruction—fall outside the 
control granted by discipline, asceticism and will.

This type of ‘Berserkers’ was described as terribly ugly, with 
deformed features, with only one eyebrow, dark eyes and black hair, 
having manic and psychopathic tendencies. Such criminals, coming 
from the lowest social strata of Scandinavia, wandered through the 
villages challenging little men to a duel. Since by rejecting the duel 
they would be considered cowards, the peasants accepted for honour 
and self-love, and generally fell dead under the arms of the bandit. He 
who was not a combatant of honour or a soldier was left with the 
lands of the unfortunate, his possessions, his house and his wife. In 
the sagas, often a noble warrior ended up killing the impostor, freeing 
the woman and marrying her. In the 11th century, duels and 
Berserkers were placed outside the law. In 1015, King Erik I ‘Bloody 
Axe’ of Norway made them illegal. Gragas, the medieval code of 
Icelandic laws, also condemned them to ostracism. In the 12th 
century these decadent Berserkers disappeared. Henceforth, the 
Church cultivated the belief that they were possessed by the devil.

A case worthy of study is that of King Harald Hardrada of 
Norway. It is an example of the Viking world and the importance of 
Berserkers in battles.

Unfairly, Harald Hardrada usually appears in history only as a 
Norwegian king who failed to conquer England. Harald, a blond giant 
over 2.10 metres, lived at a time when the Scandinavian kings were 
polishing the political and court arts to match their European 
counterparts, but he was still more in tune with the free Viking 
warriors of previous centuries. To this day, it seems a mystery to me 
why nobody has made a film about this man.

Harald Sigurdson was born in Norway in 1015. With fifteen 
years he participated in favour of King Olaf II in the battle of 
Stiklestad, against King Canute of Denmark (later also king of
England and Norway). In this battle, which coincided with a solar eclipse, Olaf’s army lost. Wounded, Harald managed to escape from Norway with warriors loyal to his lineage and, in exile, formed a gang of loyalists who had escaped from Norway after Olaf’s death. A year later, having Harald sixteen years old, he and his Norwegians crossed Finland and entered Russia, where they served the great Prince Yaroslav I the Wise as stormtroopers, where Harald was made general of Yaroslav’s armies. Two years later, the young Viking general was maintaining a loving relationship with Elisif (Isabel), the daughter of Yaroslav. When the prince, enraged, surprised the couple, Harald was forced to escape from Russia with his loyal gang, according to gossips, even raising his pants on the road.

With his men, Harald crossed Ukraine and the Black Sea and arrived at Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, where he enlisted in the Varangian Guard—the elite mercenary unit composed exclusively of Scandinavians. He became famous throughout the Mediterranean, earned the nickname *Bulgara brenmir* (‘Bulgar-burner’); triumphed in North Africa, Syria, Palestine, Jerusalem and Sicily, and amassed an immense personal fortune from looted booty. Over time, Harald was made the head of the Varangian Guard, admiral of the Byzantine fleet (the most powerful of the Mediterranean) and was given great autonomy to independently carry out attacks against the enemies of Byzantium. Far from his native Norway, Harald and his men had become the spoiled children of a great Mediterranean empire. In his day, the Byzantine chronicles referred to Harald as ‘son of a Varangian emperor’. He was in the service of the Byzantines until 1042, that is, until his twenty-seven years.

Harald left the Byzantine Empire with the promptness that had been usual in his travels. Crossing the Black Sea and Ukraine, he again passed through the Kiev court and took away his old love, the daughter of Yaroslav, with whom he married as they travelled north through Russia. In 1045, having thirty years, Harald, supported by his experienced warriors and as a military-political veteran with impressive wealth and an extensive network of contacts, re-conquered the Norwegian throne as Harald III Sigurdson, reigning it for twenty years and earning the nickname of Hardrada (‘tough sovereign’). However, it seems that all this life of great deeds had not satisfied the Viking.

In 1066 Harald set his sights on England, the land that had been the fate of numerous Nordic migrations since the 5th century.
He claimed the English throne, taking advantage of the fact that a Danish-English-Norwegian kingdom had existed in the past, and brought together 300 longships to face the Anglo-Saxon troops of King Harold. It was in this framework that the battle of the Stamford Bridge, in the north of England, took place. Harald died with his throat pierced by an arrow. When one of his men asked him if he was seriously injured, he replied, ‘It’s just a small arrow, but it’s doing its job’. He was fifty-one years old. Only ten percent of Norwegian soldiers survived the Battle of Stamford Bridge. The Anglo-Saxons allowed the last Vikings to set sail in their longships and return to Norway.

The year of Harald’s death in 1066 coincides with the advent of Christianity in the North, and is considered the end date of the Viking Age.

_Sprouts of sacred fury_

It cannot be said that the fire of the Nordic blood disappeared. The same century that the Berserkers disappeared began the rise of the cavalry orders: the new männerbunden of Europe. The great moments of glory enjoyed by Europe during the Middle Ages are due to them. Think of the Holy Empire, the Eastern Crusades, the Occitan civilization, the Spanish Reconquest, the Templars and the legends of the Grail. It can be said, however, that the most visible and obvious example of pagan fury had disappeared. What happened to the traditional religious leadership in Europe? It did not disappear, but submerged in the dominant culture. And from the dormant collective unconscious in European blood it managed numerous groups that were about to overthrow the power of the Church (remember the Catharism, the Templars and the Ghibellines).

The Holy Germanic-Roman Empire (the I Reich) was a great depository of the ancestral tradition. Their emperors (like the famous Frederick Barbarossa, or his grandson Frederick II), many of them educated from their childhood by orders of cavalry, were considered heretics, antipopes and antichrists by the Church, since the majority were directly involved in unchristian activities including looting of the Vatican, pacts with orders of cavalry on the margins of the Church and dealings with Islam. Emperor Charles V (King of Spain and the Holy Roman-Germanic Empire, and lord of half Europe, as well as vast territories overseas) also plundered the Vatican like his Visigoth ancestors more than a thousand years before, terrorizing the Pope as
if he was a vulgar outlaw. So perhaps we should ask ourselves how these men understood the Christian religion and the loyalty that they supposedly owed to the Church.

After the disastrous Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) the Holy Roman Empire fell definitively, being replaced by small and ridiculous bourgeois states, dedicated to the virulent persecution of heretics, burning and hanging the largest number of ‘witches’ in all of Europe, while the Turks overwhelmed the Balkans at will. Entire regions of Germany were depopulated by this paranoia. From this time also come the legends of werewolves, and in Germany many men were accused of being lycanthropes. Thousands were tortured and executed for it.

The fall of the Templars and the Holy Roman Empire marked a milestone: the mystical Middle Ages of castles and knights fell, and was replaced by the dirty era of famines, plagues, witch hunts, Puritanism, the Bible and religious fundamentalism. Also, the Infantry relieved the Cavalry as the dominant body in the battlefields, as is evident in the conquests of the Tercios (so similar in their organisation and mentality to the legions of Rome). Of the orders of chivalry, of medieval mysticism, of the feeling of dharma and of the traditional social order, there remained the Rosicrucians and the Masons. And both ended, in turn, infiltrated by the rise of the new commercial-financial caste, the bourgeoisie, as is especially clear in modern masonry.

In the 19th century, the religiosity of Germanism began to awaken again. Europe had discovered the wisdom of the East and many sacred texts had been translated, especially from Iran and India. German archaeologists unearthed Greek cities, temples and statues. Prussia appeared, bearer of a new imperialist idea. The Second Reich appeared and paganizing mystic groups emerged. And in the middle of the 20th century, the Renaissance exploded and manifested itself in the Third Reich. Adolf Hitler, whose very name means ‘noble wolf’, played in Europe a role similar to that of Lycurgus (whose name means ‘conductor of wolves’) played in Sparta. In the last days of the Third Reich, fanatical units of young guerrilla insurgents called *werwolf* (wolfmen) staged the last sacrifice to resist the occupation of Germany after the Second World War.
Germanism and the advent of Ragnarök

According to the concept of the ancient German pagans, the final storm, at the apex of the Ragnarök, will be a hunt against the forces of evil. Odin, brandishing his spear and riding his eight-legged horse, will descend on Earth. Thor, wielding his war hammer and mounted on his chariot pulled by goats, will appear in the sky roaring furiously and surrounded by lightning, causing an overwhelming roar. The Wildes Heer (furious horde), the Oskorei (army of thunder), the army of the fallen, will overwhelm the enemies of the gods, making the ground rumble with the hooves of their horses and the air with their battle cries. The shadowy Valkyries will ride serenely, paying attention to the development of the battles to choose the new fallen. The crows of Odin, their wolves and all kinds of supernatural beings, will proliferate in the thick of the sorcerous storm, shaking the forces of materialistic slavery, agonisingly shaking the souls of the enemies of the gods, and ominously collapsing the walls that separate the Earth from the Hereafter. All that was a metaphorical, symbolic and poetic explanation of the end of an era, when heaven finally becomes enraged and falls on Earth, and the apocalyptic combat of the superior against the inferior, the good against evil, is freed.

Perhaps one day, the forgetful apostles of financial civilisation and usury will once again know with horror the thirst for battle of European man, the foaming and anguished rage of the inspired warrior, the instinct of the worker, the conqueror, the pioneer, the explorer, the artist, the soldier, the lord and the destroyer that Europe carries in itself, and whose last example was perhaps, in distant days, the Scandinavian Berserker. These are the words of Heinrich Heine:

Christianity—and this is its fairest service—has to a certain degree moderated that brutal lust of battle, such as we find it among the ancient Germanic races, who fought, not to destroy, not yet to conquer, but merely from a fierce, demoniac love of battle itself; but it could not altogether eradicate it.

And when once that restraining talisman, the cross, is broken, then the smouldering ferocity of those ancient warriors will again blaze up; then will again be heard the deadly clang of that frantic Berserkir wrath, of which the Norse poets say and sing so much. The talisman is rotten with decay, and the day will surely come when it will crumble and fall. Then the ancient stone gods will arise from out the ashes of dismantled ruins, and rub the dust of a thousand years from their eyes; and finally Thor,
with his colossal hammer, will leap up, and with it shatter into fragments the Gothic Cathedrals.

And when ye hear the rumbling and the crumbling, take heed, ye neighbours of France, and meddle not with what we do in Germany. It might bring harm on you. Take heed not to kindle the fire; take heed not to quench it. Ye might easily burn your fingers in the flame.

Smile not at my advice as the counsel of a visionary warning you against Kantians, Fichteans, and natural philosophers. Scoff not at the dreamer who expects in the material world a revolution similar to that which has already taken place in the domains of thought. The thought goes before the deed, as the lightning precedes the thunder.

German thunder is certainly German, and is rather awkward, and it comes rolling along tardily; but come it surely will, and when ye once hear a crash the like of which in the world’s history was never heard before, then know that the German thunderbolt has reached its mark.

At this crash the eagles will fall dead in mid-air, and the lions in Afric’s most distant deserts will cower and sneak into their royal dens. A drama will be enacted in Germany in comparison with which the French Revolution will appear a harmless idyl. To be sure, matters are at present rather quiet, and if occasionally this one or the other rants and gesticulates somewhat violently, do not believe that these are the real actors. These are only little puppies, that run around in the empty arena, barking and snarling at one another, until the hour shall arrive when appear the gladiators, who are to battle unto death.

And that hour will come.  

Translated from “Soldados de la bestia: los bersekers y la expansión vikinga,” *Europa Sobenera*, May 4, 2013. Most images of the original essay have been omitted.

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5 Cited in *Heine’s Prose Writings* (Walter Scott, London, 1887, unpaged in the PDF available in the internet).