

**UNWOMANLY WOMEN, UNMANLY MEN AND DISINTEGRATING  
NATIONS IN BRAM STOKER'S *DRACULA*, STEFAN GRABIŃSKI'S  
*IN SARAH'S HOUSE* AND ALEKSEY KONSTANTINOVICH  
TOLSTOY'S *THE FAMILY OF THE VOURDALAK***

by

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## Abstract

This thesis examines fin-de-siècle incarnations of literary vampires in British, Polish and Russian texts. While Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has provided a theoretical model for the critical analysis of the vampire motifs, this thesis argues for further analysis and interpretation of vampire fiction in a broader European context. Hence, it demonstrates how vampire motifs function in Stefan Grabiński's *In Sarah's House* and Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy's *The Family of The Vourdalak* and relates them to Stoker's *Dracula*, arguing that in all three texts the vampire becomes a powerful metaphor for a border-crosser who violates the boundaries and thus disturbs the categories of human identity.

The first chapter of the thesis presents the roles that were ascribed to women in nineteenth-century Britain, Poland and Russia and demonstrates the extent to which women in these texts fit and depart from these roles. The second chapter of the thesis examines the imperfect masculinities of men who face the vampire-altered spaces of femininity. The final chapter of the thesis focuses on the vampire seen as an embodiment of a negative foreign influence that threatens national unity and integrity.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of the person who was, is, and will never cease to be the source of my inspiration and strength, my beloved grandfather, Eugeniusz Jurek.

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Finally I would like to express appreciation to my beloved husband Sławek who was always my support in the moments when I was losing my confidence. He is my best and constant friend and I am truly convinced that if it would not be for his love and support I would have never completed this project.

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## Conventions and Abbreviations

**References:** Modern Humanities Research Association.

**Spelling and Punctuation:** Spelling and punctuation contained in the translations of Stefan Grabiński's *In Sarah's House* by Wiesiek Powaga (2007) and Alexis Konstantinovich Tolstoy's *The Family of the Vourdalak* by Fedor Nikanov (1969) have been retained.

## Introduction

This thesis concerns vampires - the bloodthirsty revenants of the folk tales that by the end of the nineteenth century became one of the most appealing literary metaphors reflecting the rigid taboos of the period. Since the subject has already been extensively covered in both literary criticism and folklore studies, it might seem that there is little left to say.<sup>1</sup> However, this thesis allows the readers to look at fin-de-siècle literary vampires from a different, broader perspective.

First of all the thesis provides an analysis of texts which are either completely forgotten or very little known on British soil, that is, the Polish author Stefan Grabiński's *In Sarah's House* 1915 (published 1922) and Alexis Konstantinovich Tolstoy's Russian tale of *The Family of the Vourdalak* 1839 (published 1884). Simultaneously, it places them in the context of the extensive critical material available on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). The thesis presents and compares the ways in which the figure of the vampire was depicted and argues that in all these texts the vampire is fashioned as the border-crosser who directly or indirectly invades the seemingly well-defended territories of human identity. In my analysis the vampire appears as a hostile entity which penetrates the zones that both constitute and protect human identity that is human gender and nationality, and by doing so distorts them, thus contributing to the creation of their new forms which often seem perverse in relation to established norms.

What is more, the idea of the vampire as a creature powerful enough to undergo a relatively smooth transformation from the reanimated corpse of folk legends into an icon of contemporary popular culture constitutes a very interesting field for study. Vampires, unlike most other legendary creatures<sup>2</sup>, remain relevant despite the changing epochs. They seem to shape-shift endlessly to fit the frames and demands of the changing world. They have easily adapted in folklore consciousness but they have also, perhaps even more easily, fitted into the frames of

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<sup>1</sup>See for instance Ken Gelder, *Reading the Vampire* (London: Routledge, 1994); Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995); *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture* ed. Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Milly Williamson, *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005).

<sup>2</sup>For instance, hags, sea monsters, dwarves, nymphs, giants, nature, household and fate spirits.

literature and culture. Equipped with mutability which lets them reshape their material bodies and immune to the influence of passing time, literary vampires were and continue to be a strong influence on the human imagination. As Peter Day points out in his Introduction to *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*:

Vampires have proved to be incredibly adaptive survivors, flourishing in the media and thriving in the popular imagination of modern societies. Indeed, the very concept of the vampire appears to have the same power and longevity attributed to the legendary creature itself.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the vampire's existence is no longer limited to the printed text. The last two centuries have allowed vampires to enter the sphere of popular culture by the means of art, film, theatre, music, television, cartoons, computer games, advertisement and fashion and, therefore, contribute to the creation of what Alexandra Warwick calls the 'modern myth'.<sup>4</sup> As Warwick argues, the crucial point in the creation of literary vampires is the fact that they tend to reflect the horrors specific to a given culture, rather than explain and justify the universal nature of 'mankind's deepest fears'.<sup>5</sup> From this perspective the vampire acts as a manifestation of what certain people perceive as disturbing or alarming in a given cultural space and time. At the same time, the vampire, because of its shape-shifting abilities, can easily adapt to different cultural spaces and times. It can retain an innate ability to stimulate human imagination regardless of cultural background and simultaneously acquire new culturally determined meanings and interpretations:

The vampire's *nature* is fundamentally conservative – it never stops doing what it does; but *culturally*, this creature may be highly adaptable. Thus it can be made to appeal to or generate fundamental urges located somehow 'beyond' culture (desire, anxiety, fear), while simultaneously, it can stand for a range of meanings and positions *in* culture.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Peter Day, Introduction in *Vampires. Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, ed. by Peter Day (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006), p. ix.

<sup>4</sup>Alexandra Warwick, 'Vampires and the empire: fears and fictions of the 1890s' in *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 202-220 (p. 202).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>6</sup>Ken Gelder, *Reading the Vampire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 141.

Yet, this almost universal adaptivity of vampires might lead to the conclusion that there is very little, if any, difference between their various literary incarnations. Consequently, in many instances readers equate the idea of the vampire with Stoker's Count Dracula and his vampirised offspring and are not aware of the fact that vampiric motifs can be also found elsewhere, for instance, in Polish and Russian literature of the time.<sup>7</sup> The same trend is visible in the literary criticism that so far has focused its attention mainly on the potential meanings of the vampire motifs as presented in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* which, as Ken Gelder observes, because of its popularity among both readers and scholars has become one of the most intensively studied novels:

Few other novels have been read so industriously as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Indeed, a veritable 'academic industry' has built itself around this novel, growing exponentially in recent years and, in effect, canonising a popular novel which might otherwise have been dismissed as merely 'sensationalist'. To enable its canonisation [...] *Dracula* has become a highly productive piece of writing: or rather, it has become productive *through its consumption*.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, despite the fact that vampires are, as Nina Auerbach notes, prone to categorization based on the similarities between some of their features, the key to their longevity and adaptivity to changing cultural spaces lies precisely in the diversity their various incarnations represent:

An alien nocturnal species, sleeping in coffins, living in shadows, drinking our lives in secrecy, vampires are easy to stereotype, but it is their variety that makes them survivors.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the comprehensive comparative analysis of vampire motifs as presented in British, Polish and Russian narratives of the same period can make a significant contribution to the interpretation of fin-de-siècle vampire fiction, understood as a unique sub-genre of popular

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<sup>7</sup>Among Polish writers who applied the vampiric motifs in their writing we can list Adam Mickiewicz (*Dziady Part III*, 1832), Narcyza Żmichowska (*Poganka*, 1846), Władysław Reymont (*Wampir*, 1911) and among Russian writers Aleksandr Afanasiev (*Narodnyje russkije skazki*, 1855-1863), Nikolaj Gogol (*Viy*, 1835).

<sup>8</sup> Gelder, *Reading the Vampire*, p. 65.

<sup>9</sup>Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 1.

fiction. Each of the three texts that the thesis analyses fashions vampires differently, and by doing so embosses them with completely different and often very unexpected meanings. As a result, Grabiński's and Tolstoy's vampires may be superficially similar to Dracula but also in many ways negate the popular vampire image established by Stoker's vampire.

Vampires, as we know them today, are in the greater part the product of the late nineteenth century literature in which the elements of the folklore legend were inculcated with deeper psychological, social, political, religious and moral implications. Belief in the vampire defined as an evil spirit or corporal monster which torments the living by draining their vital energies can be found in the legends of various nations all over the world.<sup>10</sup> Importantly, the vampires, as they function in the present day Western imagination both in name and in their characteristic features, originate from the beliefs of the Slavs of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>11</sup> Yet studies of vampire motifs in literature and culture often seem to imply that the vampire is a unique product of the imagination of Western writers. Despite this critical tendency, the vampire traditionally associated by the Slavs with illness, weakness and death did not enter the Western world until the eighteenth century, when news of the gruesome procedures of decapitating and staking the supposedly reanimated corpses reached Western Europe.<sup>12</sup> In March 1755 Maria Theresa, Empress of the Habsburg empire, issued a decree which put an official ban on the executions of alleged vampires carried out by priests and folk people across her empire.<sup>13</sup> From that point on, the whole of Western Europe seemed to be obsessed with the idea of these bloodthirsty creatures which soon relocate from the folklore of Eastern and Central Europe into Western literature. Consequently, vampire motifs appeared in German Romantic poetry and were soon applied by British writers finding culmination in Stoker's famous *Dracula*.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Vampire-like creatures appear in the folk tales and mythologies of different nations. They are either feeding directly on the blood of the living or in the form of an evil spirits snatch or enter the bodies of the dead. Ancient Greek Empuza and Lamia, Babilonian Lilith, Japanese Keshu, Indian Baital or Maya Camazots are only a few examples of this widely-spread phenomenon.

<sup>11</sup>The etymology of the word "vampire" clearly suggest its Eastern European origin - Serbian *wampir*, Bulgarian *wampir*, Russian *upyr*, Polish *wampirz*, *upior*.

<sup>12</sup>In 1732 the word "vampire" appeared for the first time in English when newspapers' reports gave the account of the numerous cases of alleged vampirism in Eastern and Central Europe.

<sup>13</sup>Erberto Petoia, *Wampiry i Wilkołaki. Źródła, historia, legendy od antyku do współczesności. (Vampiri e lupi mannari. Le origini, la storia, le leggende di due tra le più inquietanti figure demoniache, dall'antichità classica ai nostri giorni.)*, trans. Aneta Pers, Jolanta Kornecka, Monika Małecka, Nicole Korzycka, Bogumiła Bielańska. (Kraków: Universitas, 2004), p. 35 (translation mine).

<sup>14</sup>Other texts that use vampire motives on the British ground include Byron's *Giaur* (1813), John William Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), James Malcolm Rymer's *Varney the Vampyre* (1845-47), and Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla* (1871).

Slavic folklore describes vampires as the spirits or animated corpses that return from their graves to disturb the peace of the living by sucking their blood or depriving them of some other important organs and by doing so increasing their own vital powers.<sup>15</sup> Such an image suggests that the folklore belief in the blood-thirsty vampires who feed on the living was a direct response to the uncertainties and fears that accompany the notion of human death. With the advent of Christian resurrection, the vampire of folklore represented the disturbing possibility of a mysterious after-life which was not only the perverse continuation of mortal life but which was literally sustained by the means of that mortal life. What is more, as Erberto Petoia points out, the vampire in folklore is often depicted as the one who in one or another way does not fit into the standards established by a given community:

The vampire in the folk tradition is often the one who died prematurely as a result of some violent death, or the person whose after-life existence is not the happy one, the one who is a witch or a sorcerer, a werewolf, a heretic, an illegitimate child born from the parents who are themselves both bastards, everyone who was killed by the vampire and all other kinds of the dregs of society.<sup>16</sup>

The vampire is therefore not only the projection of the fear of passing away and an uncertain after-life existence, but also of all that might be slipping out of the moral, religious or social frames and borders created by a given community. What is more, Claude Lecouteux in his *Histoire des Vampires* notes that the vampire, because of its unique nature which places it somewhere in between life and death, can be read as the most self-evident expression of invasion scares:

The vampire is a symbol of the invasion of death and the other world on the real world which he being a dead person should have left. This invasion takes place in a treacherous and brutal way, and for that reason the vampire incarnates the anxiety caused by the disturbed order...<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Petoia, *Wampiry i Wilkołaki*, p.186.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>17</sup>Claude Lecouteux, *Tajemnicza historia wampirów (Histoire des Vampires)*, trans. Beata Spieralska (Warszawa: Bellona, 2007), p. 9 (translation mine).

From this perspective the vampire of folklore is a vivid manifestation of the fear of disturbance in the order of the established limits and borders. It embodies the dangerous and disturbing possibility of a border-crosser whose actions are, contrary to human logic, not restricted by culturally-established boundaries. Thus, as a result of their capacity for reflecting human fears when transported to literature, the vampires of folklore start to function as 'meaning machines'<sup>18</sup> that endlessly uncover and reproduce concerns about the stability of the borders and boundaries that constitute human identity. Analysing late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century vampire literature in a broader, European, context seems therefore to be especially important.

Moreover, in the late nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century the symbolic meaning of the vampire as a border-crosser who problematizes human identity becomes more real than ever. The vampire is no longer an enigmatic legendary creature tormenting the innocent somewhere in the remote wilds of Europe, but a precisely defined literary villain who hunts at the very doorstep of readers' home. As Judith Halberstam aptly points out:

Gothic in the 1890s [...] takes place in the backstreets of London, in laboratories and asylums, in old abandoned houses and decaying city streets, in hospitals and bedrooms, in homes and gardens. The monster, such a narrative suggests, will find you in the intimacy of your own home; indeed, it will make your home its home (or you its home) and alter forever the comfort of domestic privacy. The monster peeps through the window, enters through the back door, and sits beside you in the parlor, the monster is always invited in but never asked to stay.<sup>19</sup>

The shift in the proximity of the vampire at the fin-de-siècle can be explained by the fact that the turn of the century in Europe was a time of strong concern about the stability of spaces and their borders. Frank Kermode has shown how existential anxieties are reflected in historical periods. In his work *The Sense of an Ending* he points out that the last decades of the nineteenth century were characterised by the sense of an 'apocalyptic feeling'<sup>20</sup> which resulted in such

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<sup>18</sup>Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), p. 21.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>20</sup>Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2000), p. 15.

diverse ideas as fin de siècle fears for stability of imperial power and decadence.<sup>21</sup> Thus, for instance, the sense of an apocalyptic ending accompanies tendencies in British imperial policy of the time which is often seen by historians as 'defensive', 'fearful' and 'preservationist'.<sup>22</sup> This particular mood of 'suspicion, intolerance and perceived vulnerability'<sup>23</sup> can be also sensed in continental Europe where what Robert Tombs calls an 'era of relative peace'<sup>24</sup> established by the rulings of the Treaty of Vienna in 1815 was coming to an end. In this atmosphere of rapid changes in social, economic, political and intellectual life, the question of the stability of traditionally- established borders became a major concern.

The turn of the nineteenth century is also, as Artur Hutnikiewicz points out, a time of flagrant contradictions which reflect the greatness and drawbacks of the period.<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, it is a time of unprecedented development and innovation, but on the other, it often evokes the feeling of being lost:

The fin-de-siècle world becomes the scene of a curious paradox: the growth in human material power, prosperity, domestic comfort and knowledge is more often accompanied by the mood of disappointment and spiritual scarcity.<sup>26</sup>

All these fears and uncertainties, the thesis argues, found their reflection in the figure of the vampire, which at the period became a potent symbol of disturbance and invasion.

In *Our Vampires, Ourselves* Nina Auerbach admits that national boundaries forced her to limit her research to vampire fiction written in English.<sup>27</sup> This thesis overcomes some of these limitations and presents the ways in which the vampire functions in both Eastern and Western European literature of the period. Since the analysis of fin-de-siècle vampire motifs seems to be incomplete without a reference to Stoker's vampire, 'the undead of the *fin de siècle*' as Elaine Showalter calls him,<sup>28</sup> the thesis examines two of the main traits of *Dracula's* criticism: that is

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Rebecca Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>24</sup>Robert Tombs, 'Politics', in *The Short Oxford History of Europe: The Nineteenth Century Europe 1789 – 1914*.ed. by T.C.W. Blanning (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 10-46 ( p. 45).

<sup>25</sup>Artur Hutnikiewicz, *Twórczość literacka Stefana Grabińskiego (1887-1936)* (Łódź: Państwowe Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1959), p.14.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup>Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Virago Press, 1999), p

gender inversion and late nineteenth-century invasion scares and looks at how they are presented in Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy's *The Family of the Vourdalak*, and Stefan Grabiński's *In Sarah's House*. It shows both the differences and similarities between the literary incarnations of vampires in the British, Polish, and Russian context and argues that at the time the vampire becomes a powerful metaphor that reflects the disturbed limits of human self-identification.

The structure of the thesis allows us to follow the spread of the vampire's corrupting influence from its first target - the female body - through the distorted spaces of masculinity to the frontiers of national identity. The first chapter of the thesis focuses on the woman and her femininity and argues that in these texts the vampire is the factor that exposes the artificiality of the roles and identities forced on women by nineteenth-century ideas of gender correctness. The second chapter of the thesis looks at those affected by changes within women: the men, who, when confronted with vampire-altered spaces of femininity, have to redefine their own masculinity. The final chapter of the thesis examines the vampire as the other, a foreigner who because of his or her racial and cultural difference threatens the stability of the national space he or she enters. In my analysis the vampire is presented as the metaphorical border- crosser – the one who transgresses the seemingly stable frontiers that define human identity.

Both the original Polish and Russian texts and their English translations have been referred to for the primary sources of this thesis. For quotations within the thesis, the following translations of Grabiński's and Tolstoy's texts have been used:

- Fedor Nikanov's translation of Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy's story "The Family of the Vourdalak" from: Alexis Tolstoy. *Vampires. Stories of the Supernatural*. trans. Fedor Nikanov (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1969).
- Wiesiek Powaga's translation of Stefan Grabiński's story "In Sarah's House" in: Wiesiek Powaga. *In Sarah's House. Stories by Stefan Grabiński*. (London: CBditions, 2007).

## Chapter One

### Unwomanly Women: Visions of Polluted Femininity

The vampire, equipped with what Franco Moretti defines as an 'identity of desire and fear', causes strong reactions like no other supernatural creature in literature because of its erotic appeal.<sup>29</sup> It juggles with human gender and by doing so not only threatens the established standards of femininity and masculinity but also offers totally new, unconventional and often very attractive gender affiliations. The imaginary correlating the vampire with fear of distorted human gender is especially vivid in late nineteenth and early twentieth century vampire fiction.

Undoubtedly, the best known and most well-researched vampire whose identity threatens established gender roles of the period is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.<sup>30</sup> Stoker's sexually aggressive women, passive and at times hysterical men, and vampire unstable in its gender identification point directly to the possibility of gender inversion - one of the most frightening scenarios that haunted Victorian imagination. In *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* Sally Ledger argues that it is not only the manifestations of sexually active women in Stoker's novel that put at risk the stability of the boundaries between genders. In Ledger's opinion, what poses a far greater threat to established sexual standards is the 'feminised' version of men presented in the novel.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, the central idea of Stoker's novel - the struggle of 'decent' British professionals and aristocrats with the evil forces embodied in the vampire - could be

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<sup>29</sup>Franco Moretti, 'Dialectic of Fear' in *Signs Taken for Wonders. On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London and New York: Verso, 2005), pp. 83-108 ( p. 100).

<sup>30</sup>See, for instance, Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', in Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (ed.), *Gothic. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies Vol. III Nineteenth Century Gothic: At Home with the Vampire* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 259- 86; Phyllis A. Roth, 'Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', in Nina Auerbach, David J. Skall (ed.) Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 411-21; Charles E Prescott, Grace A Giorgio, 'Vampiric Affinities: Mina Harker and the Paradox of Femininity in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 2, (2005), pp. 487-516; Talia Schaffer, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me": The Homoerotic history of *Dracula*' ,in Nina Auerbach, David J. Skall (ed.) Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 470-82; John Allen Stevenson, 'A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of *Dracula*', *PMLA*, 2 (1998), pp. 139-49.

<sup>31</sup>Sally Ledger, *The New Woman. Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 100.

read as a battle to defend the established boundaries of Victorian gender identities. In such an interpretation, the vampire becomes the catalyst for all the disturbing changes within the characters' gender identity. It is therefore the vampire who directly or indirectly generates these changes and whose presence serves to explain the uncontrolled outbreak of gender reversal in the characters' construction; the closer to the vampire Stoker's characters are, the more their gender is reversed.

Still, Count Dracula is not the only literary vampire whose proximity threatens the boundaries of established gender identities of the time. In both Grabiński's *In Sarah's House* and Tolstoy's *The Family of the Vourdalak* stereotypical standards of proper femininity and masculinity become dangerously altered by the vampire. All three texts were written in the same period and use the same vampire motif but they carry different messages and unmask different stereotypes connected with gender roles as defined in the period.

This chapter looks at the ways in which vampires reshape gender identities by inverting traditional gender roles. In my analysis the vampire is presented as a symbolic catalyst which triggers changes within a woman and her body and as a result not only rearranges the idea of familiar, protective, and submissive femininity but also questions the notion of a proper masculinity. I argue that the vampire in Stoker, Grabiński and Tolstoy is the factor which allows for the changes within characters' gender identity. In all these texts both men and women approach the vampire and by doing so free themselves from social restraints that defined their gender affiliation up to that point. Nevertheless, there are some significant differences in both the construction and choice of the characters who encounter vampires in these texts as well as in the ways in which their gender identities are disturbed. What is more, all three authors equip their vampires with a set of unique features and abilities which stress their separation from the established standards of gender 'correctness'. Therefore, each of the vampires can be read as a powerful metaphor reflecting fears connected with the violation of rigid taboos concerning gender identities in British, Polish, and Russian society of the time. Finally, each of the authors gives different reasons as to why their characters come into contact with the vampire, and they conclude their stories with very different consequences of these vampiric encounters; these are in turn reflected in the extent to which they allow for the changes within their characters' gender construction.

Hence the chapter will show how the metaphorical figure of the vampire exposes the

artificiality of the roles and identities enforced on women by nineteenth-century standards of gender correctness. The chapter argues that it is precisely the moment of the encounter with the vampire that is either the beginning or intensifier of changes within women and her body. At the same time, it stresses that it is the judging consciousness of the patriarchal society of the time that stigmatizes these changes as irrefutably negative.

The first section of the chapter provides an overview of the roles imposed on women in Britain, Poland and Russia in the period. It presents both standards of acceptable conduct for women in relation to behaviours that were at the time regarded as suspicious, immodest or destructive. The next section seeks to explore the women of Stoker's, Grabiński's and Tolstoy's narratives as those who continuously disturb the boundaries of gender correctness imposed upon them. It argues that all three male authors, regardless of national background, fashion woman and her body as a site of hidden pathological tendencies which either become apparent or intensify in the vampire's presence. The final section of the chapter focuses on the vampire's touch which constitutes the point of reference for the changes within gender identities of its victims. It locates the source of these changes in the moment of direct contact with the vampire and explores the extent to which the vampire is allowed to approach both men and women, and identifies the reasons why it cannot touch some of its potential victims.

### **Norms of Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Britain, Poland and Russia**

Barbara Creed argues that from a historical and cultural perspective the woman's body in general has been presented as a body in an extreme state.<sup>32</sup> Throughout the centuries numerous attempts to classify and understand the nature and anatomy of women produced theories which depicted them as inferior, incomplete or reversed versions of men. Whether functioning as man inverted in Galen's one sex body theory or the 'other' of the two-sex theory, the woman's body has always been a source of uncertainty and therefore produced a strong stimulus for the male imagination.<sup>33</sup> The construction of the difference between men and women based on

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<sup>32</sup>Barbara Creed, 'Lesbian Bodies. Tribades, tomboys and tarts.' in *Sexy Bodies. The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. by Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Probyn (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 86-103 (p. 101).

<sup>33</sup>Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1992) p. 236.

dichotomies such as active/passive, inside/outside, phallic/castrated, resulted in the need to establish clear gender roles which would help to allocate women their 'proper' place in social and family life.<sup>34</sup> As a result a set of artificial female roles, often based on the stereotype which portrayed woman as reliant upon man and therefore unable to function independently, was established. In most cases, supposed female vulnerability and instability was considered evidence and therefore sufficient reason to restrict or even deprive women of the freedom of choice to arrange their own lives. What is more, the roles that society imposed on women were not merely regulating women for their own sake. They were established to protect woman as the property of man. If a woman was kept within the boundaries of proper female roles she was less likely to attract the unwanted attention of other men and therefore weaken the position of her husband, father or brother in society.

Much has been written about the roles of upper class women in Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>35</sup> The period witnessed an unprecedented shift in attitudes towards women which resulted in the appearance of contradictory views on their role and position in British society. Traditionalists wanted to see women as devoted wives and mothers who should, for their own good, be kept in the closed spaces of their own homes. They believed that a woman should not pursue either education or a professional career and instead would find fulfilment in focusing on the role of an exemplary wife and mother. In order to find acceptance in the eyes of British patriarchal society of the period she was expected to follow the example of an ideal wife presented by Coventry Patmore in his influential poem *'The Angel in the House'* (1854). As a result, she became juxtaposed with the image of an angel. In this angelic version of herself she was meant to be submissive to her husband, graceful, protective, passive, powerless, sympathetic, and above all pure. As a result, the 'angel in the house' was defined by the boundaries which not only restricted her existence to the closed space of family life but also regulated the patterns of proper conduct which she had to follow.

However, by the late nineteenth century the ideal of the Victorian 'angel in the house' was threatened by the appearance of the New Woman. Aspiring to independence and self-realization through education and a professional career, she promoted a lifestyle that was completely

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<sup>34</sup>Annie Potts, *The Science/Fiction of Sex. Feminist deconstruction and the vocabularies of sex.* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002) p. 223.

<sup>35</sup>See Nina Auerbach *Woman and the Demon. Life of the Victorian Myth.* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), Sally Ledger, *The New Woman. Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle,* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997).

opposed to the one that was defining Victorian 'angels in the house'. Consequently, the New Woman met with an extremely negative response. Because of her independence and her break with Victorian social and moral conventions she was described by critics as a serious threat to the human race. In some cases the New Woman was aspiring to roles previously reserved for men and therefore she was regarded as one who usurps man's position. As such she was perceived as less feminine and more masculine. With her pursuit of knowledge and independent status in society the New Woman appeared to be 'too active' and therefore disturbingly masculine.

On British ground the debate on the contrasting concepts of the New Woman and the 'angel in the house' reflected the struggle of Victorian society to defend the established order within family and social life. Still, the debate on how a Victorian woman should be and what her role could be in society was limited to women of the upper social classes.

Concerns about the changing roles of women within family and society were also present in Poland at the same period, but here they were motivated differently and addressed to a broader social spectrum. Such an arrangement was motivated by the grave historical situation of the country.<sup>36</sup> As a result, as Aleksander Grella points out, in partitioned Poland the unifying feeling of hatred towards invaders weakened the established divisions between social classes and gave rise to a completely new social stratum.<sup>37</sup> It was this new 'patriotic intelligentsia' who not only campaigned for the common effort in regaining independence and promoted Polish tradition and culture but also made an attempt to define new, patriotically motivated, roles for Polish women.

Similarly to Victorians, nineteenth-century Poles argued that the most natural environment for a woman is her family. As Anna Żarnowska points out, a woman could be either a wife or a mother but in both of these roles she was to serve other members of the family.<sup>38</sup> However, Polish society, focused as it was on regaining independence, decided that it was not enough for a woman to be an exemplary wife and mother only for the sake of her own family. In partitioned Poland the family home became the last bastion of Polishness and the

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<sup>36</sup>The three subsequent partitions which took place between 1772 and 1795 divided the lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth between the Russian Empire, Kingdom of Prussia and Hapsburg Austria. As a result, the Polish state was politically nonexistent till 1918.

<sup>37</sup>Aleksander Grella, *Development of Class Structure in Eastern Europe: Poland and her Southern Neighbours* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 138.

<sup>38</sup>Anna Żarnowska, 'Codzienność i kultura: w kręgu rodziny i wśród innych' in *Kobieta i kultura życia codziennego. Wiek XIX i XX*. ed. by Anna Żarnowska and Andrzej Szwarz (Warszawa: Dig, 1997), pp. 17-28 ( p. 26).

woman's role was to save and maintain Polish tradition and language. Thus, focusing on the role of a housewife who runs her household in accordance with Polish tradition was regarded a praiseworthy deed, one that a patriotic woman should be proud of.

What is more, those in Polish society who supported the armed struggle for independence, as well as those who campaigned in favour of organic work, stressed the crucial importance of Polish women as mothers.<sup>39</sup> Thus the popular magazine *Bluszcz (Ivy)* (1865-1939) promoted, under the banner of the national struggle for independence, both the traditionalist and positivist views on the role of Polish women within their families. Consequently, defined as Mother Pole, a Polish woman was supposed to prove her patriotism through her submergence in family life. Mother Pole had to act according to the rules of Christian faith, be self-sacrificing and humble, and obediently stay in the shadow of her husband. She was seen as an ideal of motherhood whose role was to bear children and bring them up to be Polish patriots. Renata Bednarz-Grzybek analysing the portrayal of a model woman promoted in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Polish woman's press, points out that the most important characteristic of an exemplary wife and mother was her ability to sacrifice her own ambitions for the greater good of her nation.<sup>40</sup> She was meant to forget about her own needs and focus on the well-being and religious and cultural development of her family and at the same time promote tradition and national ethos. Mother Pole was almost a spiritual being who existed in separation from her own needs, rights or even physiology.<sup>41</sup>

Still, as Bednarz-Grzybek observes, from the 1880s *Bluszcz* changed its previous ideological course and started to opt for a certain level of women's emancipation.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, this demand was again dictated by the superior issue of national independence. At the same time, Polish women themselves made an attempt to redefine their role in society. They stressed the importance of creating new self-awareness among Polish women so that they

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<sup>39</sup>Organic work is a term which describes the ideology adopted by the nineteenth- century Polish positivists. It rejected the armed struggle for independence and instead postulated the common work of the whole nation in favour of the economic and cultural development of the partitioned state which in turn might lead to its unification and sovereignty.

<sup>40</sup>Renata Bednarz-Grzybek, *Emancypantka i patriotka. Wizerunek kobiety przełomu XIX i XX wieku w czasopiśmie Królestwa Polskiego*.(Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2010), p. 19.

<sup>41</sup>Anna Pekaniec, '(Nie)obecne. Ciało w polskich kobiecych autobiografiach od początku wieku XIX do wybuchu II wojny światowej', *Historia Pol(s)ki*, 1 (2009) <[http:// www.historiapolki.genderstudies.pl](http://www.historiapolki.genderstudies.pl)> [accessed 10 May 2013].

<sup>42</sup>Bednarz-Grzybek, *Emancypantka i patriotka*, p. 24.

could become consciously involved in the common national effort for regaining independence.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, certain roles and patterns of behaviour were imposed on women not only by men but also by other women. For instance, Polish suffragettes, unlike their British and American counterparts, did not claim men's position openly. Instead, they saw themselves in the role of exemplary housewives who would tidy up and organise the new Polish state as if it were their own home.<sup>44</sup> Convinced that supporting men rather than competing with them was the best way of claiming their position in independent Poland they promoted a set of values that a patriotic woman should possess.<sup>45</sup> First of all, the emancipated woman had to be practical. Therefore, the popular press stigmatized the ignorance, laziness, avarice, extravagance and susceptibility to foreign customs and fashion displayed by certain women (mainly those of the provincial landed gentry).<sup>46</sup> What is more, in accordance with the slogan of organic work, advocates of women's rights argued that only educated women could become actively involved in the reconstruction of partitioned Poland.<sup>47</sup> Eliza Orzeszkowa, one of the most influential Polish writers of the period wrote in a letter to one of her colleagues that uneducated, unemployed women who lived at the expense of others weakened not only their own families but also the whole nation.<sup>48</sup> In her opinion, only well prepared, sensible and hard-working women could be regarded as socially useful.

Despite all the demands for change, Polish women were still expected to retain their femininity. Even Polish suffragettes stressed that a woman, no matter what her field of activity is, should always remain delicate and feminine.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the Polish woman of the time was expected to be like a saint or a superhero. In order to be accepted by both men and women she

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<sup>43</sup>The idea of the correlation between the emancipation of women and the emancipation of the Polish nation was first drawn by women assembled around Narcyza Żmichowska and her feminist movement Entuzjastki and popularized in their journals *Pierwiosnek* (1838 – 1843), *Pielgrzym* (1842–1846) and *Przegląd Naukowy* (1842–1848). For more information on Emancypantki movement see *Muzeum Historii Kobiet* <<http://www.feminoteka.pl/muzeum>>.

<sup>44</sup>Agnieszka Mroziak, 'Równe ale różne. Polski ruch kobiecy przełomu XIX i XX wieku a kontekst europejski i światowy' <[http://www.feminoteka.pl/muzeum/readarticle.php?article\\_id=18](http://www.feminoteka.pl/muzeum/readarticle.php?article_id=18)> [accessed 10 May 2013].

<sup>45</sup>In fact, the tactics of Polish suffragettes worked. On 28 November 1918, just seventeen days after Poland regained its independence, Polish women received their voting rights which were later on approved by the state's constitution issued in March 1921.

<sup>46</sup>Andrzej Szwarz, 'Krytyka kobiecości czy próżniaczego stylu życia? Stare i nowe wzorce życia codziennego kobiet w publicystyce i literaturze pięknej epoki pozytywizmu.' in *Kobieta i kultura życia codziennego*, ed. by Anna Żarnowska and Andrzej Szwarz (Warszawa: Dig, 1997), pp. 297-307 (p. 298).

<sup>47</sup>Bednarz-Grzybek, *Emancypantka i patriotka*, p.19.

<sup>48</sup>Eliza Orzeszkowa to Teodor Tomasz Jeż, letter dated 4 May 1881, in *Dwugłos*, ed. by B. Świdorski, Warszawa 1937.

<sup>49</sup>Mroziak, 'Równe ale różne.'

had to manage being a mother, patriot and in many cases being also professionally or intellectually active. In addition to that, the ethos of self-sacrifice and devotion of Polish women was still *de rigueur*.

In nineteenth-century Russia it was a woman's social class that determined her perception and freedom of movement within society. Therefore, depending on her social status, a woman could either enjoy relative independence or be completely dependent on the community in which she lived. As a result, Russian society of the time did not see the need to define its expectations towards women in the form of any particular roles. Still, there existed a set of principles established by either tradition or religion which sanctioned the conduct of Russian women.

The teaching of the Orthodox Church postulated both separation of the spheres of men and women and the absolute power of a husband over his wife and family. Such arrangements were seen as a reflection of God's order and were especially clearly marked and observed in noble families.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, accounts given by travellers who visited Russia as late as the late eighteenth century mention that the position of women, even at the tsar's court, was very limited. In their diaries Russia is described as 'a backward country where a woman is completely dependent either on her father or husband and does not have the right to appear in public, let alone give even the slightest expression of her needs'.<sup>51</sup>

Still, this traditional order was soon challenged by the reforms initiated by Peter the Great (reigned 1689-1725). Aiming at bringing Russia closer to enlightened Europe, the reforms allowed him to strengthen the position of Russian upper class women who not only gained free access to social life but become powerful enough even to rule the Russian empire.<sup>52</sup> Even though the beginning of the nineteenth century marks the end of female political rule in Russia, most women from the top social classes remained actively involved in current affairs relating to their homeland and its people. They propagated Russian culture by supporting young Russian artists and writers and organising a circle of contacts determined not by wealth or birth but by

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<sup>50</sup>Karolina Mendrela, 'Kształtowanie się sytuacji kobiet w rosyjskim społeczeństwie', *Pisma Humanistyczne*, VII (2010), p. 197 <<http://www.rosja2010.us.edu.pl/images/pisma-humanistyczne-7-pdf>> [accessed 12 May 2013].

<sup>51</sup>Natalia Pushkareva, *Chastnaya zhizn ruskoy zhenshchiny vosemnadtsatovo veka* (Moscow: Lomonosov Publishing House, 2012), p. 5 (translation mine).

<sup>52</sup>Between 1725 and 1796 five women successfully ruled the Russian empire not only maintaining the prestige of the tsar's post but also strengthening the political and military importance of Russian empire in Europe. For more information on Russian female rulers see Simon Dixon *Catherine the Great* (New York: Ecco, 2009) and E.A. Razumovskaya, I.A. Neznamova *Zhenshchiny pravitel'nitsy Rossii* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Feniks, 2009).

intellect and talent.<sup>53</sup> What is more, as Natalia Pushkareva points out, Russian noble women more than once during the period showed how faithful and self-sacrificing they could be in times of national struggle.<sup>54</sup>

Nevertheless, the position of Russian upper class women stood in striking contrast with the situation of Russian lower class women. Especially in the peasant communities, a woman was still subject to the traditional code of conduct which postulated complete dependence not only upon her father or husband but also upon the community in which she lived. Although supposedly aimed at securing stability and protection, such arrangements in most cases led to actual abuse. Wendy Roslyn points out that in Russian peasant communities of the time, relations between men and women were purely patriarchal.<sup>55</sup> Among the peasantry it was the family and the community that determined the norms of accepted behaviour and continuously monitored its members in order to eliminate any possible deviations from these norms. What is more, traditional Russian views on the structure of the family promoted large extended families where many generations lived under one roof. In practice such a model of family life translated into complete dependence of young wives not only upon their husbands but also on their husbands' families. Even though the law that guaranteed freedom to serfs which was announced in 1861 allowed for certain shifts in society, traditional attitudes remained unchanged. As Roslyn notes, 'conduct of women remained subject to stringent community scrutiny and control'.<sup>56</sup> Despite significant social change, a woman was still considered the property of the community, who monitored her behaviour in order to find and eliminate signs of potential pathology.

Interestingly, in the Russian context the beauty of a woman was seen as a source of danger regardless of her social status. When analysing late eighteenth-century Russian standards of beauty as described in letters and memoirs of the time Natalia Pushkareva notes that the beauty of a woman was regarded a potential threat to the man who was to marry her because 'a woman who was too beautiful would become an object of attraction to other men, while one who was

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<sup>53</sup>Natalia Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History: from the Tenth to the Twentieth Century*, trans. Eve Levin (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999), p. 196.

<sup>54</sup>Many of them worked as nurses taking care of the wounded soldiers during the 1812 Crimean War. Still, the most vivid example of self-sacrifice of Russian noble women was displayed after the 1825 Decabrist trial when they chose to share the faith of their husbands and brothers sentenced to exile in Siberia.

<sup>55</sup>Wendy Roslyn and Alessandra Tosi, *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012), p. 26.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 26.

too ugly would repulse her husband and drive him to seek a prettier companion'.<sup>57</sup> As a result, Russian society of the time valued mediocrity. The ideal woman had only average beauty, and in addition an average income. Her average beauty would guarantee her fidelity and her modest income would confirm her dependence on her spouse. Not beautiful and not rich enough, she was believed to be easier to fit into Russian patriarchal society of the time.

Hence, the constructions of femininity offered to women by British, Polish and Russian society of the period either restrict or evaluate a woman and her conduct according to the standards established by the patriarchal consciousness. No matter if a woman is to fit into the role of a perfect Russian bride of average beauty and income, that of a Polish Mother Pole, or a British 'angel in the house', she is supposed to abide by the boundaries which are marked out by this authoritative consciousness.

### **Breaking Bad or Proving Bad? The Vampire Altered Spaces of Femininity**

With this in mind, it is possible to investigate the extent to which women in Grabiński's, Stoker's, and Tolstoy's texts follow the patterns of 'proper' femininity for their time and social context. My analysis focuses on the two main strands which relate to the construction of femininity in these texts. Firstly, it examines the ways in which women are perceived by men who encounter them. It shows how external beauty is seen to reflect disturbing internal tendencies that are either permanently inscribed in the personalities of these women or develop in them after the encounter with otherness embodied by the vampire. Secondly, it addresses the issue of motherhood, traditionally constructed as one of the most important aims of woman's existence, and presents either the complete negligence of maternal behaviours displayed by these women or deformed versions of their maternal instincts. I argue that it is precisely the woman who constitutes the medium through which unwanted tendencies reach and spread on the previously firmly established borders of the patriarchal order.

In her *Sexual/Textual Politics* Toril Moi argues that woman can be read as a marginal entity which generates opposed meanings:

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<sup>57</sup> Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, p. 164.

From a phallogocentric point of view, women will ... come to represent the necessary frontier between man and chaos; but because of their very marginality they will also seem to recede into and merge with the chaos of the outside.<sup>58</sup>

Woman and her femininity is therefore perceived not as an integral part of the sphere of the familiar but rather as its fragile and unstable border which needs to be permanently monitored. Hence, the restriction of women's abilities and needs prevents the fearful possibility of women acting independently and merging with the symbolic chaos of the outside. As a result, there is a constant need for a powerful tool which would not only monitor but also restrict women within the borders of the familiar. Analysing the relation between men and women in patriarchal society Sandra Bartky comes to the conclusion that 'a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women'.<sup>59</sup> Woman and her femininity is therefore permanently observed by man and judged according to the rules he establishes. What is more, the omnipresent male gaze is so influential that it becomes internalized by women who consequently start to effectively 'police themselves'. While it seems quite obvious that a woman deprived of male supervision will no longer feel obliged to fit into the frames established for her by the patriarchal order, there still exists the more disturbing possibility that she may create her own frames. Taking the position of the connoisseur previously reserved only for the male judging eye, she may try to establish her own order and force it on man and his masculinity.

## **Beautiful Monsters**

In all three texts the male gaze shapes the perspective that lets the readers see the heroines of these stories as either belonging to the sphere of the familiar or falling outside its borders. The stigmatizing influence of man's judging eye is especially apparent in the way the beauty of women in these texts is presented. As a result, the subjective male gaze establishes and evaluates standards of female beauty and by doing so limits woman and her body to certain boundaries. What is more, it is only men who represent a certain level of authority (either

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<sup>58</sup>Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (Routledge: London and New York, 2003), p. 166.

<sup>59</sup>Sandra Bartky, 'Foucault, femininity, and the modernization of patriarchal power.' in *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on resistance*, ed. by I. Diamond and L. Quinby (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), pp. 61-85 (p. 72).

patriarchal, spiritual or scientific) that are allowed to evaluate women in these texts. Thus, man's patriarchal eye as embodied in medical doctors, priestly characters, diplomats, fathers or eldest sons, decides what is acceptable in these women and what should be regarded as pathological.

Roger Scruton comes to the conclusion that beauty is a relative idea judged not on the basis of the actual qualities of a given object or person but the sentiments of the onlooker.<sup>60</sup> In such cases, descriptions of beauty (or ugliness) that refer to certain objects are projections of subjective emotions and opinions that are evoked by the qualities of these objects. In all the three texts that I analyse appearances count. To be precise, the appearances of the women count. Whether acting as the vampire's victims or being vampires themselves, women in Grabiński, Stoker and Tolstoy intrigue by their distinctive looks. Still, their beauty (or its lack) is always perceived as an indicator of potential pollution and as such is constantly analysed and evaluated by men.

In *Dracula* Stoker consistently stresses the importance of the monitoring male gaze by making sure that in most cases it is only men who are allowed to comment on the behaviour and appearance of women. Still, both Lucy and Mina get their chance to express their observations either about themselves or each other. In her diary Mina scrupulously notes all the changes to Lucy's behaviour and appearance that result from her encounter with Dracula. In her diary Mina describes both Lucy's growing restlessness (91, 92) and how she grows prettier with every day spent at the seaside (80, 82, 92, 108, 111, 115). But her account functions merely as evidence that proves what men conclude later on in regard to Lucy's strange illness. Mina's diary is therefore only a testimony of a witness devoid of any deeper insight or analysis. As a woman she can see the changes but she cannot judge them. For a short moment she becomes the observer but she is never allowed the position of a judge. Unlike Mina, Lucy manages to obtain the forbidden post of both observer and critic but only once and only for a very short period of time. In her letter to Mina Lucy mentions how she enjoys studying her own face in the mirror: 'Do you ever try to read your own face? I *do*, and I can tell you it is not a bad study, and gives you more trouble than you can well fancy if you have never tried it.'<sup>61</sup> The straightforwardness with which Lucy admits that her own appearance is interesting enough not only to be spotted but also to be studied marks her as falling outside the established standards

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<sup>60</sup>Roger Scruton, *Beauty: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5.

<sup>61</sup>Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Penguin Books: London, 1994), p. 72. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically.

and foreshadows her future fate of falling outside the borders of 'proper' femininity. In this short remark Lucy negates the idea of staying passive and actively takes the role of a viewer and judge usually reserved exclusively for men.

It may initially appear that Stoker makes a clear distinction between the sphere of controlled, safe femininity represented by young innocent English ladies and that of the monstrous uncontrolled femininity embodied in the vampirised women of Castle Dracula. But this line of distinction blurs in the way that the women function in the consciousness of the men who encounter them. Both Lucy and Mina are initially marginalised and receive proper attention only when they both fall victim to the vampire. Until that moment they are both labelled not as women, but as 'little girls' (262). In male perception they are still immature and as such, unlike the vampire women of Castle Dracula, do not evoke any strong emotions through their beauty. Instead, they are valued for their child-like innocence and honesty.<sup>62</sup> Still, although seemingly harmless in their infantile form, both of these women are in fact far more dangerous than one can suspect. Because their development is only partial, they are impossible to classify either as 'proper' or 'improper' as they might easily replace their maiden virtue with rampant sensuality. This anxiety concerning the unpredictability of undeveloped minds finds its reflection in late nineteenth-century science. In analysing discourses of degenerate femininity Rebecca Stott remarks that the physiological similarity of women and children was at the time regarded as a proof of their inferiority to men.<sup>63</sup> Stott notes that new scientific findings of the ,then popular disciplines of craniology, Darwinism, and criminology unanimously argued that certain characteristics common for women and children pointed directly to their atavism and regression. Therefore the crux of Stoker's novel lies not in the question whether Mina and Lucy will become degenerate but rather in the degree and timing of their inevitable decline.

In *Dracula*, meeting the vampire becomes the symbolic point of reference for all the alarming changes within both the external and internal construction of previously innocent women. From the moment of their encounter with the vampire they are perceived in a completely different way. Therefore, Lucy's and Mina's appearances start to matter only when

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<sup>62</sup>Quincey Morris calls Lucy 'honest-hearted' and 'brave' when she refuses his proposal admitting that she cares for another man (76), and the splendour of Mina's character is reflected in Van Helsing calling her a 'pearl among women' (261).

<sup>63</sup>Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale*, pp. 74-75.

they fall victim to the vampire. Once infected, Lucy and her looks attract more attention than ever. Now all the details in her appearance that were unnoticed before suddenly become visible, and widely commented upon. In his diary Doctor Seward, one of Lucy's former suitors, scrupulously notes all the changes that mark Lucy's infected body. But what strikes him most is the way Lucy's appearance reflects the progress of the 'disease' that transforms her into a completely different and unfamiliar creature:

Lucy was breathing somewhat stertorously, and her face was at its worst, for the open mouth showed the pale gums. Her teeth, in the dim, uncertain light, seemed longer and sharper than they had been in the morning. In particular, by some trick of the light, the canine teeth looked longer and sharper than the rest. (192)

In his descriptions of the infected Lucy, Seward applies a purely professional medical perspective. It seems that he no longer notices the girl he loves but rather a medical case, an infected body that has to be examined, described and classified. Seward's descriptions lack even the slightest emotional involvement. He looks at his beloved Lucy but all he sees is the pathology of her changing features. There is something disturbingly unfamiliar in the very process of change that Lucy undergoes and Seward's detailed descriptions of her metamorphosis clearly mark her as gradually receding from accepted standards of femininity. Still, Seward's focus on Lucy's pathological symptoms is not without a purpose. J.E. Chamberlin writes that 'cultural health during the last decades of the nineteenth century was most often measured by its evidence of disease'.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, Seward's attention to pathological detail in Lucy's vampirised state is a reflection of the tendency that Chamberlin defines as 'the natural instinct to turn to what is wrong in order to clarify'.<sup>65</sup> Thus, Seward writes about the characteristics of the infected body not so much to stress its degeneration but mainly to emphasize how it ought to be in its uninfected state. In other words, acknowledging the presence of the polluted woman proves the purity of those women who did not find themselves under the harmful influence of the vampire.

However, this rational perspective which makes it possible to separate the polluted from

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<sup>64</sup>J.E. Chamberlin, 'An Anatomy of Cultural Melancholy', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 42 (1981), 691-705 (p. 691).

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 691.

the pure is gone once Lucy is pronounced dead. Now her appearance no longer threatens with its pathological symptoms but instead evokes admiration. Again it is Seward who describes Lucy, now deceased:

There lay Lucy, seemingly just as we had seen her the night before the funeral. She was, if possible, more radiantly beautiful than ever; and I could not believe that she was dead. The lips were red, nay redder than before; and on the cheeks was a delicate bloom. (240)

Deceased Lucy is so remarkably beautiful that even the undertaker is bewitched by the fine features of her still body which he describes as 'a very beautiful corpse'(196). Analysing the ways in which Stoker fashions his heroines Christopher Craft comes to the conclusion that 'a woman is better still than mobile, better dead than sensual'.<sup>66</sup> Since, as we soon learn, Lucy is only supposedly dead, what really fixes her attractiveness and therefore acceptance in the eyes of men who watch her is her temporal stability. When immobilized on the threshold between mortal and vampire life Lucy appeals to the aesthetic tastes of men with much greater force than ever before. Therefore, what really makes her attractive is her position on the border between two opposed spheres. She is no longer pure but at the same time she is not yet completely polluted – she has left one sphere but she still awaits her entrance into the other. A similar evaluation applies to Mina whose beauty starts to matter only when she is immobilized on the border between humanity and vampirism.<sup>67</sup> When both these women reject their immobilization and wake up to their vampire lives they automatically lose their beauty and acceptance in the eyes of men who watch them. When Lucy becomes a vampire Seward describes her features as alarmingly provocative. She is no longer beautiful, she is diabolically voluptuous:

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<sup>66</sup>Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', in *Gothic. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies Vol. III Nineteenth Century Gothic: At Home with the Vampire*, ed. By Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 259- 86 (p. 274).

<sup>67</sup>Once infected Mina is described in Seward's diary as a 'sweet, sweet lady' of a 'radiant beauty' (367). Thus, Mina acquires the same qualities that were earlier on mentioned in the description of the supposedly deceased Lucy. 'Radiant beauty' is again mentioned in the description that Van Helsing gives of the fair vampire woman of the Castle Dracula (440).

My own heart grew cold as ice (...) as we recognized the features of Lucy Westenra. Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness was turned to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness. (252-253)

Similarly, once regained by means of staking, Lucy loses not only her voluptuousness but also her beauty. It seems that as soon as she re-enters the sphere of the familiar she no longer needs to be attractive. She is again described exclusively in terms of her moral values of purity and sweetness:

There in the coffin lay no longer the foul Thing that we had so dreaded and grown to hate that the work of her destruction was yielded as a privilege to the one best entitled to it, but Lucy as we had seen her in her life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity. (259-260)

Thus, in *Dracula* only those women who do not have a clearly defined affiliation either to the sphere of the familiar or the sphere of the other can be termed beautiful by the judging male eye. Still, their attractiveness is not necessarily determined by their fine features. What really makes them stand out both against the other women and their own pure and polluted incarnations is their transitional status.

In his short vampire story Grabiński focuses on one woman, the eponymous Sarah. But his Sarah Braga is anything but the conventional heroine of a Gothic story. She does not fall victim to the tyrannical man embodied by the vampire. Quite the opposite, she is of a vampiric nature herself. Still, her monstrosity is never apparent (as it is in case of *Dracula* and the women he infects) but only dimly signalled by some of her features. It is never obvious and as such can never be interpreted directly. The narrator of the story, a young physician who in an attempt to avenge the mysterious disappearance of one of his friends tries to uncover the truth about Sarah's nature, describes her in the following way:

The irregular features, wide fleshy lips, strongly developed nose – these did not produce the effect of beauty. And yet her face of dazzlingly white complexion, strongly contrasting with the fiery gaze of her smouldering black eyes, drew and captured one's attention with irresistible force. In fact, she had the directness and simplicity of a force of nature which, assured of its power, can dispense with accessories.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, unlike the vampirised women of Stoker's novel, Sarah does not repulse or frighten men. She seems to escape the conventional standards of beauty, yet she does not lose her attractiveness. Even though at this stage Vladek does not realise that Sarah is the vampire, he correctly senses that her looks cannot be judged according to the clichéd standards of human beauty. He remarks that 'to call her beautiful would be to focus on an aspect of her appearance from an entirely wrong perspective' (43). Indeed, Sarah lures men but not with the conventional beauty of an ordinary woman. She is the embodiment of the powerful forces of femininity and vampirism and the irregular features of her face only emphasize the complexity of her dangerous inner structure. It is as if the seemingly beautiful surface was constructed in such a way that it could easily but not so straightforwardly reflect the inner contamination. As a result Sarah's appearance is full of contradictions. Her features are described as evoking both admiration and fear. Her eyes are 'charming' but 'hellish' and her 'lofty torso' is contrasted with her 'virginally slim hips' (43).<sup>69</sup> It seems that Sarah is unable to take up a fixed position within any of the clearly defined aesthetic categories. She continuously shifts between the spheres of perfection and imperfection, beauty and monstrosity, purity and pollution as her appearance invariably reflects the mystery of her existence.

Indeed, the simplest way to classify Sarah is to call her a mystery. Her uncanny nature emanates with a force that it is easily sensed by the men who approach her. Vladek notices that Sarah's looks could be classified as a 'Sphinx like countenance' (48). They appear to be the same but there is always a slight change in them. On the symbolic level Sarah is not only a Sphinx because of the mystery of her face. Sarah's real danger is hidden in the mystery of her existence.

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<sup>68</sup>Stefan Grabiński, 'In Sarah's House' in *In Sarah's House. Stories by Stefan Grabiński*, trans. by Wiesiek Powaga, (London: CB editions, 2007), pp. 30-65 (p. 43). All subsequent references will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically.

<sup>69</sup>Sarah's virginally slim hips are especially misleading as we soon learn that her existence depends on sexual intercourse. Paradoxically she maintains virginal slenderness due to her rampant sexual appetite.

Stosławski, like her previous victims, failed to solve it and he paid for that with his life. Now his friend Vladek, in an attempt to avenge him, risks his own existence trying to solve Sarah's mystery.

The contradictory nature of Sarah's features is also emphasised by the fact that she acquires some of the characteristics of her victims. Vladek notices with anxiety that Sarah's face has 'a striking resemblance to Stosławski' (46). This observation is later on proved by the portraits of Sarah and her victims which hang in her salon:

In all her portraits Sarah looked the same age, as if she was painted at short intervals. Yet on each of them features of her face were slightly different and, what is more – bore uncanny resemblance to the features of the man directly beneath her. (48)

In a recent study of Grabiński's fiction both Krzysztof Grudnik and Adam Mazurkiewicz point out that by acquiring the features of her victims Sarah becomes their doppelgänger. Still, each of the critics explains this phenomenon in a different way. For Mazurkiewicz the bond that Sarah develops with her victims is that of the reciprocal nature.<sup>70</sup> They become both literally and metaphorically incorporated in the substance of her mysterious existence. Sarah prolongs her own life by feeding on men and therefore deprives them of their physical bodies but at the same time she allows them to live within her own body. As a result, each of Sarah's victims is reflected in her changing features and because of this reflection he metaphorically sustains his own life. Paradoxically, Sarah's victims live forever through her and by way of analogy she is continuously alive because of them. On the other hand, Krzysztof Grudnik points to a different aspect of Sarah's double existence, namely the fact that she is a doppelgänger who mirrors not a single person but all of her victims at once.<sup>71</sup> Vampiric Sarah acquires and blends the features of all the men she seduces. Her appearance is multi-layered as is her existence and because of this complexity she cannot be unambiguously interpreted by those who encounter her. What is more, Sarah is not only a double of her victims but also generates her own doubles. She collects

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<sup>70</sup> Adam Mazurkiewicz, 'Nowelistyka Stefana Grabińskiego wobec tradycji literatury grozy' in *Literaria Copernicana. Grabiński* ed. by A. Miancki; T. Pudłocki (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2013) 1(11)/20013, pp. 43-67 (p. 48).

<sup>71</sup> Krzysztof Grudnik, 'Tożsamość katoptryczna w nowelistyce Stefana Grabińskiego'; in *Literaria Copernicana. Grabiński* ed. by A. Miancki; T. Pudłocki (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2013) 1(11)/20013, pp. 69-101 (p. 81).

pictures of the men she destroyed but she also finds obvious pleasure in gathering her own images. Therefore above each of the portraits of her victims Sarah displays her own image as if to discover for herself the quality of her own changed features. Moreover, unlike Dracula Sarah collects mirrors. She has so many mirrors that even Vladek is surprised by her immense collection (59). Sarah's predilection for her own image can be read as one of the indicators of her narcissistic personality. She is a double of the men she seduces but she also continuously recreates her own doubles in her portraits and mirror reflections. She endlessly reflects both others and herself and forms the uncountable army of doubles which are different every single time one looks at them and therefore so difficult to detect and defeat.

What is more, the very fact that Sarah acquires the characteristics of her victims makes her an exceptional representative of the vampire kind. Unlike the vampires in Stoker's and Tolstoy's stories, Sarah does not mark her victims with her own features but instead becomes similar to them. While both Dracula and Gorcha mark their victims with their vampire characteristics, Sarah does not leave any traces of her monstrosity on men's bodies. Instead she cleverly incorporates her victims' human characteristics in order to conceal her vampire monstrosity. Sarah, just like Dracula, wants to be unnoticed in the human world but, unlike the Count, she uses supernatural means to carry out her plan. Dracula relies on rational methods to become similar to other people. Therefore, in a human manner he masters his language-learning skills and tries to find out as much as possible about the sphere at which he aims. But his choice of rational tactics is quite surprising when we take into consideration the fact that he is capable of using a wide spectrum of supernatural powers such as shape shifting and telepathy. Sarah, on the other hand, uses supernatural means to blend into the human world. And, judging from her medical card which Vladek discovers among the papers left by one of his former teacher Professor Žmuda, she is successful for a very long period of time.<sup>72</sup> Despite his adherence to rational methods, Dracula is detected within British borders and expelled from them within two months. Sarah chooses much more insidious tactics - she intends to remain unnoticed and successfully carries out her plan. She is the undistinguishable hostile element within the human space that destroys that space from within.

Still, Sarah's deceiving beauty is not everlasting. It can be easily destroyed by means of

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<sup>72</sup>Although Sarah looks as if she was in her thirties, the notes left by Žmuda indicate that she is at least in her eighties (39).

sexual abstinence. Just as Lucy loses her beauty when she is seduced by the vampire and then again when she is staked,<sup>73</sup> Sarah's features change when she is deprived of sexual intercourse:

After a year of our cohabitation Sarah began to age visibly. One day I noticed in her raven-black hair the first treacherous threads of silver. Then, in the corner of her mouth, a delicate network of lines. The lofty figure began to lose its suppleness, the breast ceased to flex its lissom line of a heaving wave. Sarah was withering, like a flower touched by the first chill of autumnal frost. (59)

In his study on the importance and meaning of sexual abstinence in medieval marriage Elliot Dyan points out that chastity was traditionally associated with female initiative and stood for woman's 'fight for physical autonomy and self-definition'.<sup>74</sup> However, in *In Sarah's House* the autonomy that Sarah gains as a result of her sexual abstinence acts against her. She seems to be simply unable to function without being intimately bonded to her male victim. Deprived of her unconventional nourishment Sarah, like a parasite detached from its host, faces inevitable extinction. She might have drained her victims of blood, flesh and life, but now she is drained of youth and beauty by the abstinence which is forced on her by a man.

In *The Family of the Vourdalak* Marquis d'Urfé, an elderly diplomat who recalls the love affairs of his stormy youth, tells the story of two women who had a profound impact on his life. The first one, the aristocratic Duchesse de Gramont, is reflected in the characteristics of the second, the humble peasant girl Zdenka. Although distanced by their social backgrounds, they both arouse the Marquis's passion with such strength that he cannot find 'peace either day or night'.<sup>75</sup> What is more, in d'Urfé's perception, they are identical in their looks:

In Zdenka's remarkable beauty I encountered the Duchesse de Gramont, the duchess transformed by pastoral garb and melodious foreign speech. The characteristic line both had on their foreheads was *coup de grâce*. (106)

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<sup>73</sup>Both Lucy's vampiric seduction and staking can be read as representations of sexual act. In 'Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror' Carol A. Senf compares the scene of Lucy's staking to the combined group rape. Her article is included in *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 9 (1979), pp. 160-170.

<sup>74</sup>Elliot Dyan, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 5.

<sup>75</sup>Alexis Tolstoy, 'The Family of the Vourdalak' in Alexis Tolstoy, *Vampires. Stories of the Supernatural* trans. by Fedor Nikanov (Hawthorn Books: New York, 1969), pp. 92-125, (p. 94). All subsequent references will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically.

Although at this stage of the story neither of these women is a vampire, they both have a distinguishing mark, the identical line imprinted on their foreheads. Although this characteristic mark points to their imperfection, it functions as a signal designed to attract men. Thus D'Urfé admits that this delicate line which 'did not seem appealing at first' (97) becomes irresistible when it is studied for a longer while.

Even though it is the Duchesse de Gramont who first captures d'Urfé's attention, she is never described in detail. Her first name is never mentioned and the only thing the Marquis vividly remembers about her is the characteristic faint line. Although d'Urfé admires the Duchess, he is never allowed to experience her beauty directly as he is always kept at a distance. Because of her prestigious social position the Duchess is simply out of his reach. Once rejected the Marquis focuses his attention on the first woman he encounters and immediately starts to equate her with the Duchesse. As a result, Zdenka unwillingly becomes the easily available substitute and double of Duchesse de Gramont. But Zdenka's construction as de Gramont's doppelgänger is very unusual. Analysing the creation of doubles in nineteenth-century Gothic fiction Catherine Spooner points out that 'a prevalent Gothic trope has been that in which one character 'steals' the identity of another or, alternatively, becomes trapped in an alien identity by wearing (or recreating) their clothes'.<sup>76</sup> In both cases, the one who acts as a doppelgänger is, either consciously or unconsciously, actively involved in copying the identity of other people. Tolstoy's Zdenka breaks with this convention. She becomes the double of the Duchesse but only because d'Urfé perceives her as such. Zdenka does not 'steal' de Gramont's identity and because she never meets her she is simply unable to copy either the way she dresses or the way she behaves. Therefore, in *The Family of the Vourdalak* it is the man who creates a double of the body of the woman who is out of his reach in the woman who is easily accessible. As a result, in d'Urfé's consciousness these two women become one: 'The vision of her became intertwined with my memories of the Duchesse de Gramont, and, in those two silhouettes, I saw one and the same person' (118).

Still, Zdenka's close resemblance to the Duchesse is only a fleeting impression - it lasts as long as she manages to resist d'Urfé's advances. When still out of Marquis's reach Zdenka is

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<sup>76</sup>Catherine Spooner, 'Cosmo-Gothic: The Double and the Single Woman' in *Women: a Cultural Review*, 12 (2010), pp. 292-305 (pp. 293-294).

described as 'a true Slavic beauty' (97). With her 'abundant blond hair' (97) and 'supple limbs' (97) she is 'an echo of Duchesse de Gramont' (110). But this ideal copy becomes radically transfigured the very moment d'Urfé touches her. Even though we learn that Zdenka, like the other villagers, became a 'cursed vourdalak' (96), her transformation begins the very moment she gives in to d'Urfé's advances. When the Marquis visits Zdenka's village for the second time, to his own surprise, he finds no trace of the former loveliness of Zdenka's features:

A wild frenzy distorted her features.... As she spoke, the change in her became gradually more and more distinct. Her eyes glinted boldly. Her movements challenged me provocatively. Indeed, she was emerging as someone quite unmaidenly, even wicked, completely different from the reserved young virgin of my memories. (119)

What is more, the bolder d'Urfé's advances are, the more monstrous Zdenka becomes. Even though she retains her attractiveness, her features no longer reflect virginal innocence but dangerous contamination. When sinking into the oblivion of Zdenka's passionate embraces d'Urfé notices that there is something terribly unsettling in her changed appearance:

I saw that her features, though beautiful, were imprinted with death, that her eyes were glazed and that her smile was convulsed with the agony of a condemned prisoner... I sensed in the room a putrid odor like some half-opened tomb. (122)

While it is quite obvious that Zdenka's transfiguration is closely related to her vampirisation, it primarily results from the fact that she fell victim to d'Urfé's sexual appetite. Zdenka loses her innocence to the vampire bite but she also loses it to the Marquis's touch. As a result in d'Urfé's consciousness she can no longer act as de Gramont's perfect double, even though he is the one who initiated her transformation. Therefore the attractiveness of women in *The Family of the Vourdalak* is determined by their approachability. Unlike Zdenka, who at the Marquis's touch transforms from beautiful maiden into monstrous vampire, the Duchesse de Gramont remains the incarnation of 'exquisite beauty' throughout the whole story. D'Urfé was never given a chance to touch her and as a result in his memory she never lost her fine features.

## Dysfunctional Mothers

Numerous studies on *Dracula* have shown that the proximity of the vampire deforms maternal instincts causing women to replace their innate affection towards children with open aggression and cruelty.<sup>77</sup> In Stoker's novel, vampirised women feed exclusively on children. Thus, vampire women of the Castle Dracula feast on a baby when denied Harker's blood and vampirised Lucy becomes a 'bloofer lady' (213) who snatches Hampstead's working-class children. Still, child-targeted aggression is not the only manifestation of dysfunctional motherhood in vampire fiction of the period. Distorted mothering in the texts that I analyse is manifested by those women who act (either consciously or unconsciously) to the disadvantage of their children as well as by those who completely reject maternal functions.

Even though it may initially appear that in *Dracula* the most perverted attitude towards children is displayed by the vampirised women who feed on them, Stoker draws an even more horrifying portrayal of a dysfunctional mother in Mrs Westenra. Though seemingly placed in the story's background and characterized as vulnerable due to her fatal heart condition, Lucy's mother always manages to act against her daughter. She is not present when Van Helsing examines Lucy, and she does not seem to be concerned with her daughter's worsening state:

She [Mrs Westenra] was alarmed, but not nearly so much as I expected to find her. ... even the terrible change in her daughter to whom she is so attached do not seem to reach her. (146-147)

What is more, she persistently disobeys Van Helsing's instructions. She removes the protective garlic flowers from Lucy's bedroom and opens the window, giving Dracula free access to Lucy's blood. She does not let her terrified daughter sleep in her bedroom at the night of Dracula's final attack and she tears the garlic wreath off Lucy's neck. Mrs Westenra's harmful influence symbolically continues even after her death when her dead body immobilizes Lucy,

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<sup>77</sup>See, for instance, Christopher Craft, "Kiss Me With Those Red Lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, in Fred Botting and Dale Townshend (ed.), *Gothic. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies Vol. III Nineteenth Century Gothic: At Home with the Vampire* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 259- 86; Carol A. Senf 'Dracula: Stoker's Response to the New Woman' in *Victorian Studies*, 1 (1982), 33-49; Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: medicine, masculinity and the gothic at the fin-de-siècle*, (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2004); Jennifer Wicke, 'Vampiric Typewriting: Dracula and Its Media', in *ELH*, 2 ( 1992), 467-493.

making her escape impossible. But, as Lucy's memorandum suggests, this toxic relation is reciprocal. Recalling the terrifying events of the last night of her mortal life, Lucy refers to her deceased mother as 'the dead' (175) as if she has already forgotten that the dead body that lies on her bed belongs to her mother. Lucy is therefore primarily terrified by the prospect of staying alone with the corpse and not upset by the fact that it is her mother who has passed away.

Still, as Andrew Smith points out, Stoker makes sure that motherhood is restored to its 'proper' form.<sup>78</sup> As a result, Mina's behaviour towards the men who, together with her husband, trace Dracula, is constructed as a projection of model maternal instincts. When comforting a mourning Arthur, Mina herself realises that:

We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked; I felt this big, sorrowing man's head resting on me, as though it were that of the baby that some day may lie on my bosom, and I stroked his hair as though he were my own child. (275)

But at the same time she confesses that she felt uneasy with the whole situation which in her view was 'strange' (275) - strange because of the maternal feelings she felt, we might add. At the end of the novel Mina's adherence to the standards of 'proper' femininity is rewarded by the birth of her son Quincey. But projected as a 'proper' woman and 'proper' mother, she is deprived of her voice, as it is Mina's husband who informs the reader how happy his wife is to be a mother. Even so, Mina's motherhood falls outside the established norms. Though the birth of her child on one hand confirms her status as a maternal figure, it simultaneously undermines it. Phyllis A. Roth suggests that on the symbolic level Mina's son unifies all the men after whom he was named as Mina's children.<sup>79</sup> But, as Rebecca Stott points out, both the men who fight Dracula and the vampire himself can also be read as Quincey Harker's fathers who, through the vampire-initiated flow of blood, all contribute to his creation.<sup>80</sup> In such interpretation, Mina's son becomes the tangible evidence of her 'imperfect' femininity which negates the established norms of Victorian correctness.

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<sup>78</sup> Andrew Smith, *Victorian Demons: medicine, masculinity and the gothic at the fin-de-siècle* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2004), p. 145.

<sup>79</sup> Phyllis A. Roth 'Suddenly Sexual Women in *Dracula*' in Bram Stoker *Dracula* ed. by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (W.W. Norton and Company: New York and London, 1997), pp.411-421 ( p. 417).

<sup>80</sup> Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale*, p. 78.

*Dracula* postulates 'perfect' motherhood but at the same time it clearly suggests that such motherhood is simply impossible to perform. After all, women in Stoker's novel fail in their maternal role either by displaying aggression towards children, acting against their own offspring or engaging in multiple relations which result in their children's unclear lineage.

In *The Family of the Vourdalak* there is only one maternal figure: Zdenka's sister-in-law. But this nameless woman, despite being a loyal wife and loving mother, fails as a 'proper' woman precisely because of her adherence to her maternal instincts. In Tolstoy's story children are the first to be infected with vampirism. Therefore, old Gorcha begins the vampirisation of his family by biting his two young grandsons. Although both boys undergo a transformation which makes them rise from their grave and quench their thirst with the blood of their relatives, their mother does not seem to notice this gruesome change and beyond all reason desperately clings to her maternal instincts:

One night, the little boy knocked at the house begging to be admitted, crying that he was cold. His foolish mother, though she herself had buried him that very day, was unable to summon the courage to send her son back to his grave. (116)

In Tolstoy's text, this blind adherence to maternal feelings, rather than being rewarded, is severely punished. As soon as the vampirised boy is admitted to the house he throws himself on his mother and drains her blood turning her into one of his own kind. But the disastrous consequences of blind maternal love are even more serious. Once infected, Zdenka's sister-in-law attacks her husband and infects him with vampirism which later on spreads to the whole family. What is more, once vampirised she replaces her maternal sensitivity with brutality and ruthlessness. As if copying the behaviour of her infected children, she transforms into a vicious monster ready to pursue human blood at any cost, including the well-being of her own sons. When together with the other members of her vampirised family she hunts down d'Urfé, she uses her children as bullets aimed at her escaping victim:

His [Gorcha's] daughter-in-law, who was dragging the two children, threw one of them to him. He caught it on the sharp point, then, operating the stake like a sling-shot, hurled the child at me. (124)

Zdenka's sister-in-law is so focused on satisfying her blood thirst that she remains passive even when one of her sons is crushed under the hooves of d'Urfé's horse (124).

Tolstoy's text suggests that the maternal instinct, although traditionally seen as noble, can as well be destructive. As an innate element of woman's nature, it shares her supposed primitiveness and, if uncontrolled, disturbs the norms of mutual relations within the family. Thus, in *The Family of the Vourdalak* the overprotectiveness of a mother not only harms her children but also indirectly leads to the decline of the whole family. The maternal instinct is therefore a dangerous force which escapes the frames of rational thinking and as such has to be continuously monitored. Only closely supervised mothering serves its functions and secures the correctness of family relations.

In Grabiński's story *In Sarah's House*, motherhood is rejected completely. Vampiric Sarah does not produce any offspring and she never expresses any interest in children at all. What is more, she does not attempt to multiply her own kind by infecting her victims. Although Sarah Braga establishes intimate relationships with many men, she remains childless. As she never alludes to either her desire or intention of becoming a mother, we may assume that Sarah's childlessness is a result of her voluntary choice and is an inherent part of her vampiric tactics. Still, as Maura Kelly argues, in the collective consciousness childlessness points to the 'deviant and stigmatizing identity' of a woman who cannot or decides not to have children.<sup>81</sup> Thus the medical records of Sarah's former physician Professor Żmuda describe her as a person displaying 'psychopathic tendencies with proclivity for sexual deviance [and] mental sadism' (39). Indeed, Sarah's sexual performance considerably deviates from the established standards - her victim lovers continuously penetrate her but they are unable to colonise her body by conceiving offspring. Sarah's body absorbs semen and, instead of creating new life, uses it to sustain its everlasting youth and beauty. As a result, Sarah manages to separate sex from reproduction and by doing so enacts a scenario unavailable for the women of the epoch where sex is not limited to procreation and serves to satisfy a wider range of woman's needs.

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<sup>81</sup> Maura Kelly, 'Women's Voluntary Childlessness: A Radical Rejection of Motherhood?', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 3/4 (2009), 157-172 ( p. 165).

## Touching the Vampire

In his pioneering article on the use of space in Gothic fiction Manuel Aguirre distinguishes a recurring pattern characteristic of this genre in which the human world of rational thinking and intelligible events is separated from the domain of the terrifying, chaotic supernatural by a threshold which, once crossed, allows for the interpenetration of these two contrasting spheres that constitutes the crux of Gothic plots.<sup>82</sup> In the case of the texts I analyse Aguirre's model can be applied in a broader context. While it is true that the characters of Stoker's, Tolstoy's and Grabiński's stories literally step into the world of the supernatural by entering vampires' abodes, they also immerse themselves in that sphere due to the vampire's touch. Even though the very presence of the vampire causes anxiety, it is precisely the vampire's touch that marks the beginning of drastic transformation of the human body and/or psyche. Therefore, the moment of direct contact with the vampire can be interpreted as a symbolic 'threshold of danger' between two contrasting spheres as it initiates the transition of those who either touch or are touched by the vampire between the categories of 'proper/pure' and 'improper/polluted'.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, although the vampire's touch can take many different forms, it invariably results in transformed gender identities for those who are under its influence. Just as the Borgo Pass marks the threshold of the supernatural in *Dracula*, the vampire's touch marks the departure from the established system of norms and values not only in Stoker's novel but also in Tolstoy's *The Family of the Vourdalak* and Grabiński's *In Sarah's House*. This section of the chapter elaborates on the forms, motives and implications of the vampire's touch presented in these texts and explores who can and cannot be touched by the vampire, and why.

Since the vampire is a predatory creature that sustains its own existence by drinking human blood, popular imagination usually locates the source of danger in a vampire's mouth which, as Christopher Craft notes, 'compels opposites and contrasts into a frightening unity'.<sup>84</sup> The touch of the vampire's mouth can therefore be interpreted as a perverted kiss which instead of the soothing softness of delicate lips offers the painful sharpness of a vampire's teeth and initiates the process of gender inversion. In this sense the vampire's bite radically reverses the

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<sup>82</sup>Manuel Aguirre, 'Geometries of Terror: Numinous Spaces in Gothic, Horror and Science Fiction', *Gothic Studies*, 2 (2008), 1-17 (p. 3).

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>84</sup> Craft, 'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips', p. 446.

meanings and functions of the kiss as perceived by late nineteenth-century mentality. In his book *The Kiss and its History*, written in 1901, Christopher Nyrop describes the kiss as the most important and meaningful gesture in human relations capable of conveying a message of genuine feelings.<sup>85</sup> Yet, in both Stoker's and Tolstoy's stories this traditional image of a kiss is severely distorted not only when it comes to the bite of the vampire but in relation to the kisses exchanged by ordinary mortals.

In his seminal article, Christopher Craft compares Dracula's bite to a reversed fairy-tale kiss which, instead of undoing the wicked spell and marking the beginning of a happy-ever-after, becomes the source of perceived wickedness which takes the shape of a sudden, uncontrolled outburst of female sexuality:

Dracula's authorizing kiss, like that of a demonic Prince Charming, triggers the release of this latent power and excites in these women a sexuality so mobile, so aggressive, that it thoroughly disrupts Van Helsing's compartmental conception of gender.<sup>86</sup>

From this perspective, Dracula's kiss is a means of awakening 'decent' English women to the dangerous freedom of expression which can lead to their independence and at the same time force men to rearrange their attitudes towards these 'suddenly sexual women' and, more importantly, towards themselves.<sup>87</sup> But Victorian society also saw the kisses of the unpolluted women as uncanny actions through which both physical and social boundaries are transgressed. Nyrop writes that 'man is the slave of the kiss' as 'by a kiss woman tames the fiercest man' and as a result 'man's will becomes as wax'.<sup>88</sup> Therefore, in the period the kiss of a woman in general reverses the 'normal' power structures allowing women to gain control over men. Consequently, Stoker makes sure that in his novel it is only men who initiate kisses. When Quincey Morris's proposal is rejected, he asks Lucy to grant him a kiss which will mark the beginning of their friendship (77). Still, this first kiss exchanged in the name of new friendship becomes Lucy's first step towards her transformed identity. Followed by several of Dracula's kisses, it stamps

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<sup>85</sup>Christopher Nyrop, *The Kiss and its History*, translated by William Frederick Harvey (London: Sands & Co, 1901), p. 79 [reprinted by Forgotten Books, 2012].

<sup>86</sup>Craft, 'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips', p. 272.

<sup>87</sup>Roth, 'Suddenly Sexual Women in *Dracula*', p. 411.

<sup>88</sup>Nyrop, *The Kiss and its History*, p. 40.

her with masculine straightforwardness. Now she is the one who asks for kisses, and whose appetite has to be restrained by Van Helsing's patriarchal authority. Lucy no longer waits passively to be kissed and in her new deformed voluptuous voice openly demands a kiss from her fiancé (194). But although men in *Dracula* are willing to give in to the vampire women's kisses, Stoker makes sure that this boundary is never crossed. Even though Lucy was promised to Arthur as his future wife and is now lying on her deathbed, the patriarchal power embodied in Van Helsing's authoritative behaviour and speech restrains the exchange of kisses between the engaged couple as he hinders Arthur from accepting Lucy's invitation to kiss her with the 'fury of strength' of 'a lion at bay' (194). Of course one can argue that such firmness of Van Helsing's actions can be explained by the fact that he already knows that kissing the vampire will result in transforming into one of these foul creatures. Yet, if that is the case, why does he finally allow the kiss? After all, although under the strict supervision of male guidance and its gaze, the kiss between Arthur and Lucy which was so fiercely fought against does take place. In this scene Van Helsing, acting like a priest during the wedding ceremony, decides not only when and how many times the couple can kiss but even points precisely to the spot on Lucy's body where Arthur's kiss should be placed: 'take her hand in yours, and kiss her on the forehead, and only once' (195). Therefore the proper kiss of the lover is replaced by the more parental gesture, which not only marks Lucy with pure, innocent affection but also confirms the stability of the borders of the traditionally established order represented and guarded by Van Helsing. Even though Lucy will eventually awaken to vampire life, this very kiss already marks her as one predestined to be restored to her 'pure' form by the means of the frontier-defensive rites of staking her body and cutting off her head.

In the case of Harker, who anticipates the forbidden pleasures of the 'voluptuous lips' of the vampire women in Castle Dracula, it is the Count himself who prevents the kiss (51). Therefore, Harker avoids the dangerous transgression offered by the vampire kiss not so much because he is a man but because he is under male surveillance and on a man's territory. Even though Castle Dracula and the Count himself are emanations of the chaotic supernatural, they still represent masculine power and as such have to supervise and restrict women's actions. Thus, in such circumstances the danger of the vampire women's kisses has to remain only a hypothetical option.

In *The Family of the Vourdalak* vampires feed exclusively on the blood of the members

of their own family. Thus, the vampiric epidemic initiated by Gorcha is passed from relative to relative no matter what sex and age they are. Therefore, since 'vourdalaks prefer to suck the blood of close relatives and friends' (96), it is surprising that the Marquise d'Urfé is so afraid of Gorcha's touch. Being neither a relative nor a close friend, d'Urfé is in fact the only person in Gorcha's house immune to his vampiric influence and ironically it is precisely d'Urfé's touch that in the first place initiates the transformation of Gorcha's daughter Zdenka depriving her of her maidenly and 'charming naiveté' (97). Thus, in Tolstoy's story it is the man and not the vampire who violates the border of the forbidden touch in his attempts to satisfy his sexual appetite. When the Marquis finds half-undressed Zdenka in her bedroom and tries to break her virginal resistance he promises to give his own blood and soul for one hour with her: 'I love you more than my own soul, more than my salvation. My life and blood are yours. Won't you give me but an hour?' (111) This scene echoes a scene from *Faust* where the soul becomes the token for youth.<sup>89</sup> But the price of d'Urfé's soul is even cheaper as he offers to give up his own salvation for mere bodily pleasures. As the devil comes back for Faust's soul, so is d'Urfé put back into Zdenka's arms. This time Zdenka is the one who asks for an hour during which she hopes to get back what he owes her. 'I love you more than my own soul, more than my salvation' she mocks d'Urfé's earlier confession and reminds him that 'You once told me that your life and blood were mine'(121). Now it is vampirised Zdenka who initiates physical contact despite d'Urfé's resistance. Zdenka overcomes limitations that restrict other vourdalaks and imitating d'Urfé's initial possessiveness bites the Marquis's neck. Still, according to d'Urfé, Zdenka's touch makes no impact: 'I had fallen into the power of my enemies. I might have become a vampire in turn. But Providence did not permit this, and I, mesdames, am not thirsty for your blood.' (125) Although Tolstoy does not give the readers any clues that would prove d'Urfé's words we can assume that he somehow avoids the transition offered by Zdenka's vampiric kiss. The Marquis's immunity to the vampire's touch can be explained by the fact that he himself is an emanation of the sphere of hostile otherness. Admittedly, d'Urfé does not develop a vampiric appetite for human blood but metaphorically he is constantly hungry for female bodies. Even though he does not transform women into blood-thirsty monsters, he preys on their innocence

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<sup>89</sup>Mephisto promises to be Faust's loyal servant and to fulfil all his wishes but he asks for his soul in return: 'I undertake to serve you *here* most faithfully, fulfil your every wish in every way, provided you will do the same for me when we meet over *there* one day.' Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1999), p. 51.

and awakens their sexuality. As a result, d'Urfé's touch is arguably more powerful and dangerous than that of any vampire in Tolstoy's story.

In Grabiński's story it is the vampiric woman who preys on men's bodies but her touch is far more sophisticated and destructive than that of Stoker's and Tolstoy's vampires as she literally drains her victims through the means of sexual intercourse. It seems that there are no limits that Sarah Braga cannot cross. She is penetrated but at the same time in some mysterious way she manages to penetrate the bodies of her lovers sucking out their life and strength. What is more, in her devious tactics Sarah does not initiate intercourse but passively awaits penetration to which men willingly consent. Thus, her femininity can be compared to a carnivorous plant that, as Annie Potts suggests, waits patiently till things come to her instead of her actively seeking them.<sup>90</sup> Sarah's orifice which lures men with the promise of warm softness turns out to be a vagina dentata - and it is the vagina dentata itself, not the mouth which Dracula substitutes for it.<sup>91</sup>

What is more, Sarah' touch is strongly addictive. Once the intimate relationship is initiated it cannot be stopped by any of the parties until the complete destruction of the victim. As a result, men are literally slaves to Sarah's touch and they are unable to free themselves from her vampiric grip. Stosławski describes the corrupting influence of his intimate relationship with Sarah in the following way:

[S]oon after that fatal intimacy, I knew she had possessed me utterly, that I had become a plaything in the hands of that demonic female. She knew that after the first intercourse I would be her prey which she would never let go. We developed a strange kind of liaison, based on some imperceptible bond, fetters which seem to grow around me tighter and tighter. (34)

What is most striking in Stosławski's account is the fact that he is conscious of both: the destructive power of Sarah's touch and his own part in the process of his annihilation. Stosławski knows that it was his willingness to give in to Sarah's allure that caused his decline: 'Had I refrained from intimate physical contact with her I would not have been in the state I'm in now...' (51) he answers when asked by his friend Vladek for the cause of his deteriorating

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<sup>90</sup> Potts, *The Science/Fiction of Sex*, p. 174.

<sup>91</sup> Craft, 'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips', p. 278.

condition. Therefore, the real weapon of Grabiński's vampire woman is in the first place the male sex drive of her victims. Sarah sets a clever trap that no man is capable of escaping as it is precisely men's 'natural, innate, unlearned biological urge that is vital to the continuation of the human species' that pushes them towards Sarah's dangerous supernatural body.<sup>92</sup> What is more, besides the portraits of her victims, Sarah does not leave any other traces of her vampiric acts. There are no bite marks and no corpses. Sarah's victims disappear completely, and the only thing that indicates that they used to exist is the slight resemblance to them that she bears in the features of her face.

Interestingly, even though the vampire touch should be deemed repulsive it offers a dose of unearthly delight which differs significantly from the pleasures derived from standard intimacy. David Punter notes that although Count Dracula can be read as an embodiment of sexual perversion, what his victims experience at the time when he places his mouth on their bodies is the unhealthy joy 'of a power unknown in conventional relationships'.<sup>93</sup> Thus Lucy, describing her sleep-walking encounters with Dracula, uses language that could easily describe moments of the most intense erotic pleasure:

[S]omething very sweet and very bitter all around me at once; and then I seemed sinking into deep green water, and there was a singing in my ears ... my soul seemed to go out from my body and float about the air. (121)

Lucy's ambivalent attitude towards the vampire's touch is also echoed in Stosławski's account of intimacy with Sarah Braga. Stosławski claims that his relationship with Sarah is based on fulfilling 'the wish of her passions, albeit with a dose of reluctance, and uneasiness', and describes his compulsory dependence on the allure of the vampiric woman as a kind of destructive obsession which cannot be overcome even by the most intense efforts of his will:

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<sup>92</sup> Potts, *The Science/Fiction of Sex*, p. 38.

<sup>93</sup> David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day. Volume 2: The Modern Gothic* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd, 1996), p. 19.

One beautiful day you run into an exceptional woman, sex incarnate, and from then on, from the first intercourse you have with her, you can't leave her. You hate her, you long to throw away the shackles but all your efforts are in vain. ... The woman turns into an evil idol, loathsome but no less desirable, to whom you have to succumb totally. (32-33)

Thus the moment of the intimacy with the vampire releases contradictory emotions. On the one hand, this mixture of conflicting feelings indicates how desperately the vampire's victims fear breaking the boundaries which restrain them but, on the other, it clearly states that the possibility of broken frontiers offers an attractive alternative which cannot be so easily rejected. The rational side of both Lucy and Stosławski declares that the intimacy with the vampire is evil but at the same time they, perhaps not so consciously, admit that they feel attracted towards this intimacy and its possible implications.

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The titles of Stoker's and Tolstoy's texts seem to suggest that it is the supernatural embodied in the vampire that constitutes their central idea. After all, it is Count Dracula and the vourdalak's vampirised family who greet readers on the cover pages of these stories. Still, it is the title of Grabiński's short story that best expresses the crux of late nineteenth and early twentieth century vampire fiction. Unlike the other authors, Grabiński does not catch the attention of his readers with a blood-thirsty monster but instead invites them to a seemingly safe and welcoming space of a woman's house and by doing so points directly to the source of the supposed pathology of social relations in the period. As the monstrosity of Grabiński's heroine results primarily from her severely distorted femininity which is only additionally emphasized by her vampiric nature, we can conclude that it is woman and her unstable femininity that is perceived as the major threat to the established standards of gender correctness at the time.

Still, as the chapter has shown, monstrous femininity, unleashed by and directly related to the vampire's presence, is central to all three texts. Grabiński, Stoker and Tolstoy create

striking visions of women who violate the boundaries that previously standardized and therefore restricted their femininity and by doing so reinforce a change within the attitudes of men who encounter them. At the same time, the common supernatural element present in all three texts, that is the vampire and all its uncanny attributes, is a point of reference towards changes in the gender construction of women as it is the woman and her body that directly correspond to the threat posed by the vampire. Women either fall victims to the vampire, are vampires themselves or turn into vampires in order to protect themselves from the unwanted influence of men. Even though they are condemned to extermination once they are identified as soulless predators thirsty for human blood, their monstrosity is often indicated even prior to the revelation of their vampiric identity. As a result, both the appearance and behaviour of Grabiński's, Stoker's and Tolstoy's heroines escape the established norms as the authors never allow them to be neither immaculately beautiful nor explicit in their actions. Women in *In Sarah's House*, *Dracula* and *The Family of the Vourdalak* are continuously shifting between what at the time is still acceptable and what is thought to deserve damnation; by doing so, they fulfil the most frightening scenario of the period, namely the vision of unstable femininity that not only transforms innocent women into dangerous unpredictable enemies of the patriarchal order but also acts upon the identity of men who try to protect this order. At the same time, the vampire in these texts is the factor which highlights hidden pathological tendencies within human nature (especially in women's nature) and allows for their expression which results in the shift of defined gender affiliations.

This chapter has shown how Grabiński, Stoker and Tolstoy fashion femininity as a site of hidden threat and pathology. The next chapter investigates how this supposedly dangerous, vampire-altered femininity undermines and distorts the gender identity of men, who in these texts either defend or fight against women.

## Chapter Two

### **Unmanly Men: Imperfect Masculinities of the Vampire Fighter**

Elaborating on gender inversion in *Dracula*, Christopher Craft summarizes the late-nineteenth century view on masculinity quoting a passage from John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies* (1865):

The man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, at the time man was perceived as the one entitled not only to enjoy the world freely, but to shape it accordingly to his own beliefs and needs. In contrast to women, men were seen as active inventors, decision-makers, and conquerors and, therefore, those holding absolute and apparently unshakeable power. Such attitudes towards men resulted from the culturally established conceptions of masculinity and femininity based on the difference in corporeality of men and women, which saw these two spheres as opposing. As Catherine Waldby explains:

The culture's privileging of masculinity means that the hegemonic bodily imago of masculinity conforms with his status as sovereign ego, the destroyer, and that of women with the correlative status of the one who is made to conform to this ego, the destroyed. The male body is understood as phallic and impenetrable, as a war-body simultaneously armed and armoured, equipped for victory. The female body is its opposite, permeable and receptive, able to absorb all this violence.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Craft, 'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips', p.261 after John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (London, New York: Dutton/Dent,1974), pp. 49-50.

<sup>95</sup>Catherine Waldby, 'Destruction: Boundary Erotics and Refigurations of the Heterosexual Male Body', in *The Strange Carnalities of Feminism*, ed. by Elizabeth Grosz and Elspeth Problyn, (London and NY: Routledge, 1996), pp. 266-277 (p. 268).

Just as the male body is constructed as 'simultaneously armed and armoured'<sup>96</sup>, a man should be constantly ready for both defence and attack. He ought to be strong enough to protect his dominions that is for instance, his position within the family or society, but at the same time he is expected to continuously conquer new territories no matter whether they take the form of a female body or a higher social status. Any departure from this traditional model casts one's masculinity as incomplete and therefore unreliable.

Yet, in the second half of the nineteenth century triggered and fuelled by the appearance of the New Woman, there arose the question of new standards of masculinity. Emancipated women not only called for equality of their rights and tried to convince men that they were their intellectual equals, but also, as Elaine Showalter points out, attempted to redefine masculinity.<sup>97</sup> In such an atmosphere, torn between traditionally established adherence to power and status and the demands of a changing society, the once stable category of masculinity become highly ambiguous. Consequently, being a man in the eyes of women no longer equalled being a man in the eyes of other men. Thus, the quality of one's masculinity had to be judged not only by women but most importantly by men themselves. As Annie Potts argues:

[M]asculinity is a homosocial performance, judged (or measured) for its degree of 'authenticity' – its accuracy – by other men. In this sense then, men are also subjected to certain trajectories of the male gaze.<sup>98</sup>

It may seem that, despite the changing attitudes and demands of the fin-de-siècle society, masculinity remained an impregnable fortress of the traditional order fortified and backed up by patriarchy. After all the image of strong and stable masculinity which can oppose and defeat even the most dangerous and/or perverse adversities is, at least in the surface layer of the plot, present in *Dracula* where 'men...escape vampire predations relatively lightly' which, in Anne Williams's opinion, 'implies that being male in itself provides a degree of immunity'.<sup>99</sup> A similar view of the novel's celebration of the established standards of masculinity, which ascribe the role of possessors to men and the role of possessed to women, is also shared by Cyndy

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<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>97</sup>Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p. 49.

<sup>98</sup>Potts, *The Science/Fiction of Sex*, p.125.

<sup>99</sup>Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1995), p. 62.

Hendershot who claims that 'the potential possession of Jonathan Harker is one of the taboos the novel does not break'.<sup>100</sup>

However, the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that even though the vampire fiction of the time to some extent promotes the image of a man as the one who opposes and eliminates the threat posed by the vampire, and thus defends not only humanity but also his own masculinity, it is also a medium through which tendencies of decline in traditionally defined masculinity are reflected. Alexandra Warwick points out that 'contact with male vampires 'feminizes' men; they become weak, pale, hysterical and ineffectual – impotent, in fact'.<sup>101</sup> What this chapter shows is that weakened masculinity in *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House* and *Family of the Vourdalak* is only partially an effect of the vampire's presence. The previous chapter analysed the vampire-altered spaces of femininity. This chapter looks at the actual recipients of changes within the women's gender identities, that is, men who because of these changes have to redefine their own identities. It argues that in these texts masculinity becomes either diminished or feminised when confronted not so much with the vampire but with the monstrous femininity his presence triggers. What is more, the chapter shows that the patriarchal authority embodied in the men who either fight the new gender order or try to escape from it cannot restore the boundaries of sexuality once disturbed.

The structure of the chapter reflects the ways in which in these texts femininity undermines masculinity and directions in which this challenged masculinity evolves. The first part of the chapter presents women as those who question or ridicule masculinity and therefore question its authenticity. The second part of the chapter demonstrates the means through which men attempt to cling to but in fact transgress their position as 'real men' through their relation to and abuse of power and the idea of male friendship. The final part of the chapter analyses deformed masculinities and their symptoms which are reflected in men's cruelty and madness.

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<sup>100</sup>Cyndy Hendershot, *The Animal Within: Masculinity and the Gothic* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 43.

<sup>101</sup>Warwick, 'Vampires and the empire', p. 204.

## Femininity that Questions and Overpowers Masculinity

Culturally established standards of gender correctness propagate relationships where woman is the one responsible for restraining man's passions. As Leah M. Wyman and George N. Dionisopoulos argue:

[Gendered ideology] underpins the belief that it is the social role of women to provide a calming effect on male behavior. This results in an expectation that a woman in an intimate heterosexual relationship should take on a kind of mothering role, limiting the threat posed by the man's essentially masculine nature.<sup>102</sup>

Therefore, this 'cultural myth', as Wyman and Dionisopoulos define it, suggests that men are entitled to certain impulses and women, acting as maternal comforters, should always be willing and ready to restrain them.<sup>103</sup> In conventional relationships man is the one who initiates, controls and models his behaviours in accordance with his passions and woman is the one who on the one hand surrenders herself to but at the same time suppresses these behaviours. Yet, this traditional arrangement loses its legitimacy when confronted with vampire-altered femininity.

Barbara Zwolińska points out that in intimate relationships it is the vampire woman who acts as a ringleader.<sup>104</sup> What is more, as if to work against her own weak feminine nature, she is always on the winning side – she initiates relations, controls their course and ends them accordingly to her own needs, most often with the annihilation of her male victims.<sup>105</sup> Consequently, vampiric Sarah of Grabiński's short story lures men into the trap of her predatory arms, entangling them into a relationship that invariably leads to their annihilation. Although she never drinks their blood, Sarah not only weakens her victims' vital powers but she destroys them completely. As a result, Stosławski loses not only his will and interest in the world around him, but literally starts to disappear. Vladek gives the following account of his friend's

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<sup>102</sup>Leah M. Wyman and George N. Dionisopoulos, 'Primal Urges and Civilised Sensibilities: The Rhetoric of Gendered Archetypes, Seduction and Resistance in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 27 (1999), 32-39 (p. 32).

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>104</sup>Barbara Zwolińska, *Wampiryzm w literaturze romantycznej i postromantycznej na przykładzie Opowieści Niesamowitych Edgara Allana Poe'go, Poganki Narcyzy Żmichowskiej oraz opowiadań Stefana Grabińskiego* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2002), p. 206.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

deteriorating state:

His body has undergone some terrifying process of reduction: the bone structure showed signs of atrophy; whole layers of tissue had disappeared; entire clusters of cells withered. His weight was that of a child; the iron hands of a scale showed a ridiculously small number. The man was vanishing before my very eyes! (41)

But the process of destruction does not limit itself to Stosławski's body. Quite the opposite: the external destruction is only a reflection of what is happening within Stosławski's mind. Indeed, the man vanishes in a deeper sense. Intercourse with the vampiric woman becomes Stosławski's narcotic which destroys not only his corporal body but also his free will:<sup>106</sup>

It's a kind of permanent state of hypnosis but without trance. I simply no longer can think of anything else, only her, and – what's more disgusting – sex with her, and all the details connected with it. I feel that it's all forced on me, against my will, and even against my natural desire. I've had women more beautiful and more attractive than her, and yet I always left them with a light heart and no regrets. Now I'm powerless. (32)

Stosławski becomes Sarah's slave and at the same time he is allowed to satisfy her passions as long as she wants this. When no longer needed he literally dematerializes and disappears within the monstrous interiors of Sarah's house.

Still, a woman does not necessarily have to be a vampire in order to undermine a man's position or spell his doom. In Tolstoy's story it is an ordinary mortal, the Duchesse de Gramont, who endlessly prolongs d'Urfé's sufferings by ignoring his courtship; by doing so she arouses his passion which in turn forces him to undertake a diplomatic mission in a foreign country where he falls victim to vampires (94). But it is not only d'Urfé's masculinity that is undermined in this story. With similar effectiveness Zdenka sabotages her older brother's orders and therefore his patriarchal position within the family by hiding the stake that George planned to drive through the heart of his vampirised father (113).

The most striking portrayal of femininity that negates masculinity appears in Stoker's

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

*Dracula* where the seemingly modest Victorian girl, Lucy Westenra, either openly ridicules or objectifies her future husband Arthur. Lucy gets three marriage proposals in one day. The number of proposals may seem unusual but what really surprises here is the way Lucy speaks about them. In a letter to her best friend Mina describing her impressions of this exceptional day, Lucy applies the language which clearly objectifies her suitors and calls them 'number one', 'number two' and 'number three' (73-74). Significantly Dr Seward is 'number one', while the one whom she chooses, Arthur, is branded as 'number three'. What is more, in Lucy's description Arthur turns out to be surprisingly weak in comparison to her other suitors. He does not tell stories like Morris does (74) and he has plenty of subjects to discuss not with Lucy but with her mother (71). In addition, Lucy openly confesses that she 'would worship the very ground [Morris] trod on' if she were free (77) and she feels 'so miserable' (74) because she has to reject both Seward's and Morris's proposals. Therefore, Lucy's choice of her future husband is disturbingly odd. Lucy decides to marry a man who in her own view apart from his noble birth, wealth and high social status, has hardly any positive features. Lucy's choice can be interpreted as an expression of her adjustment to Victorian standards which encouraged women to choose their life partners not on the basis of affectionate feelings but primarily on the basis of future benefits of marrying them. Lucy agrees to marry Arthur but at the same time she is unable to suppress the emotions which are evoked by the necessity of rejecting both Seward and Morris. In this context Lucy's confession that she 'love[s] [Arthur] more than ever' (131) sounds especially ironic.

Van Helsing tries to restore Arthur's importance by appointing him as the first donor for Lucy's transfusions (148-149). Still, his initial idea is to take blood either from his own or Seward's veins. Since Seward is young and healthy Van Helsing decides to appoint him as Lucy's first donor, mirroring Lucy's way of introducing her suitors where she calls Seward 'number one'. Although it is Arthur who in the end becomes the first to give Lucy his blood, his elevation is pure chance: he becomes Lucy's first donor only because he arrives at Hillingham unexpectedly. What is more, Seward notices that the amount of blood taken from Arthur's veins manages to weaken him badly but restores Lucy only partially:

[T]he loss of blood was telling on Arthur, strong man as he was. It gave me an idea of what a terrible strain Lucy's system must have undergone that what weakened Arthur only partially restored her. (150)

Lucy is affected to such an extent that no matter how much of Arthur's blood is transmitted into her veins she remains polluted. Thus, even replacing woman's vampire infected blood with the blood of a man cannot restore her previous 'pure' femininity. Although Arthur willingly sacrifices his own blood in an attempt to save Lucy, he is not powerful enough to do so. As a result, his masculinity is overpowered by Lucy's vampire-altered monstrous femininity.

### **The New Faces of Power**

One of the most important factors that is thought to shape the quality of masculinity is relation and proximity to power. Consequently, as Cyndy Hendershot points out, 'men are sexually attractive only when cast as masters'.<sup>107</sup> In *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House*, and *The Family of the Vourdalak*, the struggle for power is quite evident even though it takes different forms and has different motivations.

Although it may appear that the main idea of Stoker's novel is that of the vampire extending his monstrous power over new dominions and their inhabitants, Van Helsing's yearning for authority is disturbingly similar to that presented by Dracula.<sup>108</sup> From the very beginning of the story Van Helsing makes every effort to persuade his companions that it is Dracula and his offspring who distort traditional order. Van Helsing defines Dracula as 'a man-eater' (381) and persistently stresses his connection to infernal powers:

The Draculas were ... a great and noble race, though now and again were scions who were held by their coevals to have had dealings with the Evil One. They learned his secrets in the Scholomance, amongst the mountains over Lake Hermanstadt, where the devil claims the tenth scholar as his due. (288)

Through such claims Van Helsing projects himself as 'the protector of the patriarchal institutions he so emphatically represents and as the guarantor of the traditional dualisms his religion and

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<sup>107</sup>Hendershot, *The Animal Within*, p. 201.

<sup>108</sup>See: Rebecca Stott, *The fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale*; Victor Sage, *Horror fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

profession promote and authorize'.<sup>109</sup> Still, Van Helsing's actions are often of a transgressive nature themselves as he is obsessed with the idea of controlling and evaluating others. It is precisely this 'magician-priest'<sup>110</sup> who governs both the channel through which vampire disease spreads, that is, the flow of human blood, and the one through which it is tracked and eliminated, that is, the exchange of knowledge.

*Dracula* reveals the continuous struggle for knowledge between Van Helsing and other members of the Crew of Light as he persistently tries to keep it for himself. Van Helsing alone decides who deserves knowledge and when that knowledge should be revealed. Thus, he insists on keeping the contents of Lucy's papers secret (197) and he decides not to share the details of her treatment with her fiancé Arthur (145). He is also obviously annoyed when Quincey Morris acquires some of the information about Lucy's transfusions by accident (180).

At the same time, as if to eliminate possible negation or undermining of his methods, he convinces his companions that silence and obedience are these necessary factors that will allow them to defeat the vampire most effectively. 'We must obey, and silence is a part of obedience; and obedience is to bring you strong and well into loving arms that wait for you'(159) he cautions Lucy when she doubts and ridicules his methods, and he makes sure that those who disobey him will be punished.<sup>111</sup>

What is more, Van Helsing continuously competes for knowledge with Mina as she is the only one in the Crew of Light who craves it as much as he does. As many critics have argued Mina displays many characteristics of the emancipated woman and regards education one of her most important duties.<sup>112</sup> She is a schoolmistress who continually broadens her intellectual horizons either by practising shorthand (70) or reading contemporary philosophers (406). Still, despite her genuine interest in everything that is happening around her and which affects her life, she is consistently kept in ignorance. Mina is refused knowledge even though it is she who compiles the written proof of Dracula's predatory actions and it is she who has some of the most useful and logical ideas on how to trace the vampire. Van Helsing decides to cut Mina off from knowledge of Dracula's pursuit twice. In both cases he is wrong to do so. The first time he

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<sup>109</sup>Craft, 'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips', p. 269.

<sup>110</sup>Anne McWhir, 'Pollution and Redemption in *Dracula*', *Modern Language Studies*, 17 (1987), 31-40 (p. 37).

<sup>111</sup>Lucy's disobedience is punished with staking and Mina's with a red scar burned on her forehead.

<sup>112</sup>See, for instance, Jenifer Wicke, 'Vampiric typewriting: *Dracula* and its media' in *EHL*, 59 (1992), 467-493; Charles E. Prescott, Grace A. Giorgio, 'Vampiric affinities: Mina Harker and the paradox of femininity in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*' in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 33 (2005), 482-511.

refuses her knowledge, Mina becomes Dracula's victim; the second time she misleads the Crew in their pursuit of the vampire. But the most telling indication of Van Helsing's inability to restrain Mina's intellectual power is the scene in which during their first meeting she teases the Professor, showing him her shorthand diary:

I suppose it is some of the taste of the original apple that remains still in our mouths – so I handed him the shorthand diary. He took it...and said:-

'May I read it?'

'If you wish,' I answered as demurely as I could. He opened it, and for the instant his face fell. Then he stood up and bowed.

'Oh, you so clever woman!'(220)

Although a minute later Mina regrets her boldness and asks for forgiveness, the scene clearly demonstrates that she possesses the knowledge that Van Helsing, despite his professor's degree, is incapable of understanding.

While Van Helsing's persistence in knowledge control can be justified by the fact that he does not want any third parties to interfere in the Crew of Light's battle against the vampire, his almost obsessive attempts to control the flow of blood are more problematic as they disturbingly mirror the vampire's blood thirst. The image of a continuous struggle between the vampire who attempts to possess and Van Helsing who tries to protect human blood is one of the central ideas of Stoker's novel. Dennis J. McCarthy points out that on the symbolic level blood implicates power-related connotations.<sup>113</sup> McCarthy defines blood as "divine sanguinary substance" that can be identified with strength as it has the power of revivifying divinity.<sup>114</sup> Blood is therefore this precious substance which not only brings and sustains vital powers but most importantly is due exclusively to those holding privileged status. Therefore, mastering blood, or rather gaining the power of controlling its flow, indicates one's authority.

Initially it may appear that it is the Count who wants to control how the human blood flows. After all, it is he who, with particular delight, shed human blood even prior to becoming the Undead:

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<sup>113</sup>Dennis J. McCarthy, 'The symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 88 (1969), 166-176 (p. 166).

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

Who more gladly than we throughout the Four Nations received the "bloody sword"... who was it...who crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground! ... Was it not this Dracula ... who ... come again, and again, and again ... from the bloody field where his troops were being slaughtered... (41-42)

Still, it is not Dracula but Van Helsing who actually controls the flow of blood in the story. Van Helsing decides that the only means of saving Lucy's life is to carry out the 'ghastly operation'(180) of blood transfusions and it is he who chooses who can and who cannot be Lucy's donor. What is more, he is the one who determines how much blood will be taken and whose blood will fill Lucy's veins next. But it is not only the circulation of blood in Lucy's veins that Van Helsing controls. He also removes the blood clot that formed in Renfield's skull after Dracula's violent attack (330).

Van Helsing describes Dracula as the most dangerous enemy of humanity that has to be eliminated at any cost. Importantly, in his rhetoric he alludes to the highest purpose of the fight against the vampire. In his view, killing Dracula is the solemn duty that has to be performed in the name of God:

He that can smile at death ...; who can flourish in the midst of diseases that kill off whole peoples. Oh! If such an one was to come from God, and not the Devil, what a force for good might he not be in this old world of ours! (382)

Still, as Srdjan Smajić points out, Van Helsing's actions demonstrate that he is 'torn between repulsion and admiration for the Count'.<sup>115</sup> He calls Dracula 'brute, and more than brute' and adds that 'he is devil in callous, and the heart of him is not' (283) but at the same time he envies him his time-resistant power and energy.

Dracula's attractiveness reveals itself in the first place in the way he masters life and death. He becomes immortal by drinking human blood and he has the power of controlling human minds – something that Van Helsing so desperately wants to achieve for instance by controlling the exchange of knowledge. What is more, he is a shape-shifter who can easily acquire different identities. The Count can grow young and he is able to transform himself into animals and mist. Consequently, even though demonic, Dracula offers a very attractive alternative to standard

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<sup>115</sup>Srdjan Smajić, 'Dracula and duty', *Textual Practice*, 23 (2009), 49-71 (p. 60).

masculinity which guarantees not only a considerable amount of power but also freedom that is unattainable to ordinary mortals. In this respect Dracula is very close to the Romantic incarnation of Satan.

Peter A. Schock points out that starting with John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) Satan started to function as the embodiment of individualism and free will who knowingly opposes God and his injustices.<sup>116</sup> Thus, the Romantic Satan is a Promethean character who consciously rejects the omnipotent hegemony of Heaven:

Satan becomes the surrogate for the figure recreated in Romantic writing to mythicize the human struggle against various forms of oppression and limitation. In assuming this function, the aggressively active figure of Satan nearly displaces Prometheus as an image of the apotheosis of human desire.<sup>117</sup>

He rebels, but his rebellion is fully justified as he has been long oppressed by the cruelty of God and therefore he becomes the iconic figure of the epoch who compels genuine admiration. But fascination with Satan does not end in Romanticism and it is, as Lizzie White points out, still active in fin-de-siècle literature.<sup>118</sup>

Stoker's vampire resembles the Romantic Satan in many ways. He rebels against a God embodied in Christian symbolism<sup>119</sup> and just like Prometheus, offers an alternative form of life that opposes all of God's and nature's laws. Even Dracula's appearance corresponds to that of the decadent, dandy-like Satan of Oscar Wilde's *The Fisherman and His Soul*.<sup>120</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that Van Helsing, despite his anti-vampire propaganda, in many ways imitates Dracula's conduct. As Patrick O'Malley observes:

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<sup>116</sup>Peter A. Schock, *Romantic Satanism. Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley and Byron* (Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 39.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>118</sup>Lizzie White, 'Representations of the Devil in the Fin-de-Siècle Literature', *Literature Compass* 5 (2008), 1170-1178 (p. 1173).

<sup>119</sup>Dracula's rebellion against Christianity is shown in the novel in a very ambiguous way. While on the one hand he is repulsed by the Host and crosses, he can rest only in the consecrated soil of old chapels and graveyards.

<sup>120</sup>'A man dressed in a suit of black velvet, cut in the Spanish fashion. His face was strangely pale, but his lips were like a proud red flower'; Oscar Wilde, *Collected Works of Oscar Wilde* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), 273-299 (p.281).

Van Helsing can provide the weapons to ward off Dracula not so much because he represents an oppositional force – for example, the Christian power to defeat non-Christian evil – but first and foremost because he represents the same forces; his efficiency is not by contrary methods but by homoeopathy.<sup>121</sup>

Consequently, *Dracula* is a story of two factions competing with each other not so much because of their contradictory nature but because of their shared ambitions. Van Helsing's crusade against Dracula and his offspring is not a fight of Good against Evil but a desperate attempt to preserve his authority as a man. Dracula might be an 'old wily fox' but Van Helsing, as he himself assures us, is even more cunning: 'I too am wily and I think [Dracula's] mind in a little while.' (373)

Still, acquiring power status in the vampire's presence does not necessarily have to involve copying his or her possessiveness. Paradoxically, it may result from the complete denial and rejection of some of the traditionally established indicators of masculinity. Therefore, in *In Sarah's House* Vladék overpowers the vampiric woman because he manages to suppress his own erotic desire. The nineteenth-century gender codes ascribed to 'the more active male the right and responsibility of vigorous appetite, while requiring the passive female to 'suffer and be still'.<sup>122</sup> According to this rule, the man was the one entitled and expected to initiate and lead intimate relationships and the woman had to succumb readily and completely to his passions no matter if they were or were not in accordance with her own needs and desires. Consequently, the supposed superiority of the male sex drive established men as the ones holding unquestionable power. Yet, in Grabiński's story it is precisely the unrestrained male sex drive that deprives men of their power and pushes them straight into the deadly trap of the vampire's arms.

Vladék is well aware of the fact that it was Stosławski's immediate responsiveness to Sarah's erotic appeal that destroyed his friend and that the only means to defeat the vampiric woman is to restrain his own passion. Thus, from their very first meeting, Sarah and Vladék attempt to take control over each other engaging in a 'battle of wills' (43) in which they

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<sup>121</sup> Patrick O'Malley, *Catholicism, Sexual Deviance, and Victorian Gothic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p.163.

<sup>122</sup> Craft, 'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips', p. 261.

transgress established codes of male and female sexuality. Sarah attempts to win Vladék in a purely male fashion and he on his side tries to escape her advances using typically female tactics. Sexually-liberated Sarah touches Vladék in a way that 'makes him shudder' (48) and she tempts him not with her beauty or modesty but 'with the richness of erotic possibilities laying dormant in her'(49) that she so openly exposes to him. Still, Vladék, as if rejecting his own male activeness, pretends not to notice Sarah's advances. More than that, he defends himself against Sarah's possessiveness in a truly maidenly fashion 'carefully avoiding any form of intimacy' (56) and convincing both the readers and the vampire woman that he prefers the value of emotional bonds to the momentary joys of bodily pleasures: 'I value your love too highly, Sarah...to dare sully it with physical intercourse. I have placed you on too high a pedestal to touch you. I am loath to tarnish my ideal' (57).

What is more, Vladék soon realises that while Sarah's persistence in satisfying her unbridled sexual appetite is a tool that allows her to gain power over her victims, at the same time, when it is ineffective it can lead to her destruction:

I came to the conclusion that her incessant drive to have sex with me was not just a manifestation of her natural needs but that it had another, deeper source – perhaps it was a question of life and death. It was fatal to her that she had let herself surrender to momentary physical attraction towards me – fatal for a woman accustomed to victories, whom no man before had managed to resist. At the point of casting her net and capturing a specimen of the opposite sex there must have formed inside her a special connection to him. It created a relation potentially dangerous to both sides, but the vector of that danger depended solely on the behaviour of the man. If he succumbed and yielded to her sexual advances, Sarah had him in her power forever. But if he resisted and kept his distance the affair could have fatal consequences for her (58).

Vladék decides to reject the conventional masculine role of 'active possessor' and as a result, by means of his womanly passivity, he manages to gain absolute authority over the previously invincible vampiric woman: 'My strength grew by the day. My resistance fed into my power and steeled my unwavering will. Sarah Braga, the proud, royal Sarah, began to crawl at my feet' (58). Thus, in *In Sarah's House* it is not blind adherence to the established standards of male sexuality that grants power, but rather the ability to suppress one's urges. Vladék's intentional

rejection of the traditionally established codes of male activeness is therefore not so much a matter of denying his own masculinity (which when confronted with the vampire's threat appears to be disturbingly ineffective) as of complete elimination of the vampire.

In *The Family of the Vourdalak* Tolstoy depicts a fierce rivalry between George and his father Gorcha who both attempt to secure their position as head of a family. George persistently tries to strengthen his position first in Gorcha's absence and later on when his father comes back home as an alleged vampire. George is the only person in the household who cautiously respects his father's initial order to kill him if he happens to come back from his escapade against the Turks after the appointed time. Even though the time of Gorcha's return leaves doubts as to his potential vampirisation, George decides to act without any hesitation. Unlike his younger siblings Zdenka and Peter he is not afraid of his father's authority and he does not seem to be either frightened or depressed by the vision of driving a stake through his father's heart. What is more, from the very day of his departure to fight the Turks, Gorcha is perceived as an intruder in his own house and George makes every effort to remind his father that he is no longer regarded a full member of the family. His name is no longer uttered, nor is he still called a father or grandfather. Moreover, George, as if to stress that he definitively rejects his father's authority, calls him an 'old man'(99). Although after Gorcha's return from the mountains George tries to dress his father's wounds, he meets with and completely ignores his father's violent opposition. He disregards Gorcha's order to shoot the dog (101) and makes it clear to his wife and siblings that he will kill his father on the first favourable opportunity to arise (103). But despite all these manifestations of open distrust or even hatred, George, like no other member of the family mimics his father. The very names of father and son sound remarkably alike. What is more, George, just like Gorcha, frequently commands his family 'in a voice that left no room for contradiction (103) and, carrying out his father's earlier threat<sup>123</sup>, curses those who dared to disregard his orders and hid the stake that he planned to drive through Gorcha's heart: 'Where is that stake?... Let misery befall those who have hidden it, all the misery possible in one lifetime' (113).

Although initially George is the one who openly claims his father's position, in the final scenes of the story he not only mirrors Gorcha's conduct but becomes his ally against the

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<sup>123</sup>When asked by George to say grace at his return from the woods Gorcha threatens to curse the one who dares to order him: 'He doesn't dare give me orders. If he tries to force me, I will curse him.' (113)

Marquis d'Urfé when they both watch him in Zdenka's bedroom. Thus in Tolstoy's story the struggle for power between men is only temporary. Although George questions his father's authority, he soon applies Gorcha's conduct and rhetoric himself. Consequently, in Tolstoy's story there is no space for disobedience. Although the son initially negates his father's new identity, he soon acquires and copies it himself.

## Friends or Foes?

Although in *The Family of the Vourdalak* Tolstoy rejects the value of friendship focusing almost exclusively on the importance of family ties<sup>124</sup>, both Grabiński's and Stoker's narratives continuously emphasize the meaning of male friendship or rather male comradeship. In their informative article that elaborates on the forms of male friendship Robert A. Strikwerda and Larry May come to the conclusion that male relations are often based not on mutual interaction and understanding but on sharing similar experiences:

Male friendships often resemble the relationships between very young children who engage in "parallel play". These children want to be close to each other in the sandbox, for example, but they just move the sand around them without sharing or helping and *usually* without hurting each other. They don't really interact *with* each other; they merely play side-by-side.<sup>125</sup>

From this perspective, male friendship is not a space where exchange of thoughts builds emotional intimacy but a bond that allows men to jointly experience certain events and situations. As a result, male bonding does not correspond to friendship understood as a close relation based on 'regard for a particularized other', but to comradeship which involves group loyalty and respect towards certain type of people in certain situations.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Tolstoy uses the words relating to friendship only twice in his narration and in both cases he does so to stress the Marquise's position as a stranger within the circle of Gorcha's family. In the first instance Zdenka recognizes that d'Urfé's intentions are not innocent and exclaims trying to free herself from his passionate grip: 'You're not a friend to me, no, no, no.'(111). Later on George is only 'almost friendly' at the day of the Marquise's departure: 'George seemed almost friendly as he accompanied me to my room and shook my hand for the last time' (114).

<sup>125</sup>Robert A. Strikwerda, Larry May, 'Male Friendship and Intimacy' in *Hypatia*, 7 (1992), 110-125 (p. 112).

<sup>126</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 114.

Although in *Dracula* members of the Crew of Light ostensibly declare that they consider one another friends<sup>127</sup>, they are in fact united not by mutual devotion and understanding but by the fight against the vampire and all the actions, no matter how immoral they might be, that it involves. At the same time, there is no space for doubt in this relation. Thus, when Seward rebels against Van Helsing's idea to decapitate and stake his beloved Lucy's corpse, the Professor effectively dispels his doubts by justifying his intentions and pointing to his genuine concern for Seward's well-being as a result of their friendship:

Oh, my friend, why, think you, did I go so far round; why take so long to tell you so simple a thing? Was it because I hate you and have hated you all my life? Was it because I wished to give you pain? Was it that I wanted, now so late, revenge for that time when you saved my life, and from a fearful death? Ah no! (233)

In a similar manner he comforts Arthur saying that he 'must not be alone; for to be alone is to be full of fears and alarms' (191-192) and offers him his company at the vigil of Lucy's death. Yet, despite all these solemn declarations the relationship between men in *Dracula* lacks honesty as there is a secret that on the one hand unifies but on the other permanently separates them. Both Van Helsing and all three Lucy's suitors donate her blood (183) and as a result become as Christopher Craft argues her spouses/lovers.<sup>128</sup> As a result, although they join forces to eliminate Dracula's threat they constantly compete with one another. As Phyllis A. Roth points out 'the friendships of the novel mask a deep-seated rivalry and hostility'<sup>129</sup> that can be easily sensed whenever Lucy's transfusions are mentioned:

[W]e were standing beside Arthur, who, poor fellow, was speaking of his part in the operation where his blood had been transfused to his Lucy's veins; I could see Van Helsing's face grow white and purple by turns. Arthur was saying that he felt

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<sup>127</sup>Members of the Crew of Light consistently call themselves friends. Van Helsing calls Seward 'friend John' (149, 237) and Seward calls Van Helsing 'old friend and master'(137) Arthur is Seward's 'old friend' (135) and soon is called a friend by Van Helsing (255) Arthur regards Van Helsing a friend as well and lets him carry out Lucy's decapitation (254).

<sup>128</sup>Christopher Craft reads Lucy's transfusions as a substitute of penetration that aims at restoring to Lucy 'the stillness appropriate to [Van Helsing's] sense of her gender. See: Craft, 'Kiss me with those red lips': Gender and inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*' in *Gothic Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies. Volume III: Nineteenth-century Gothic: at Home with the Vampire*, ed. by Fred Botting and Dale Townshend, 250-286.

<sup>129</sup>Roth, 'Suddenly Sexual Women in *Dracula*', p. 415.

since then as if they two had been really married, and that she was his wife in the sight of God. None of us said a word of the other operations, and none of us ever shall. (209)

In this scene compassion for Arthur's loss appears to be only superficial. Van Helsing's face at the moment does express strong emotions but not necessarily those of sadness and compassion. It grows 'white and purple by turns' and may as well indicate anger or jealousy. The solidarity of silence of other men who witness the scene is also telling. They know well that Lucy's death was preceded by numerous transfusions of which they all were donors but they unanimously decide to keep this knowledge secret from Arthur. One can argue that this resolution may result from compassion for Arthur's loss and concern for his emotional state. Still, when we take into account the fact that a few pages later they convince Arthur to stake his fiancée's body, witness and even encourage him in this nerve-racking procedure, their friendly concern in this particular scene is at least ambiguous. They are therefore concerned about the consequences the revelation of the knowledge about Lucy's transfusions will primarily bring to themselves and not to Arthur. Consequently, they decide that the only evidence of their shared complicity in Lucy's transfusions, that is her body, has to be destroyed no matter how much sacrifice this act will involve from Lucy's fiancé and their friend Arthur. Therefore, what unifies men in *Dracula* is the task that they pledge to carry out and not the sincere emotional bond. They gather but only temporarily and only under the banner of 'our work' (260) to restore the order disturbed by the vampire's presence. Therefore, the 'chivalric male bonding'<sup>130</sup> in Stoker's novel is anything but true friendship. Although Van Helsing assures his companions that only closeness will give them power to overcome the vampire saying that they 'are all more strong together' (375), he does not intend any deeper relations. His Crew of Light is not a group of friends, it is an 'authorized fraternity'<sup>131</sup> that plays a 'chess game...for the sake of human souls' (303). Rather than friends they are comrades who join their forces and tolerate one another's presence only as long as their mission lasts. Once it is completed, they all go into different directions sharing common memories but not sincere friendship.<sup>132</sup>

In Grabiński's story the value of male friendship is also undermined. Although it is Vladek

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<sup>130</sup>Craft, 'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips', p. 281.

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>132</sup>In the novel's final scene each of the members of the Crew of Life are separated. Morris is dead, Holmwood and Seward are married, and it is only Van Helsing and the Harkers who still keep in touch.

who notices Stosławski's poor condition and decides to uncover and eliminate its source, his actions often deny his claims that he has 'done it out of friendship' (37). From the very beginning of the story Vladek does not seem to take his friend's state seriously and attributes it to the hectic lifestyle of the single man that Stosławski leads:

'Well, Casimir – I wagged my finger at him jokingly – 'you have too much fun. Women, huh? Too many, my dear, too many. You have to take it easy now. You can't go on like this.' (31)

What is more, even before he decides to use hypnotic suggestion to persuade his friend to visit him again (37), Vladek is convinced that Stosławski 'had no will to resist' (41) his wishes. Once aware of the destructive influence that the vampiric Sarah has on his friend's physical and mental health, Vladek's attitude towards Stosławski becomes even more ambiguous. On the one hand he declares that he will avenge his friend (51), but on the other with deliberation he leaves Stosławski in Sarah's 'care' for the whole three weeks (50) during which he transforms into, as Vladek himself calls him, a 'human scrap' (53). What is more, being himself a medical doctor he remarkably easily decides that Stosławski's life cannot be saved:

The man was lost for this world, and beyond any hope of help... I made up my mind. In the possibility of saving Stosławski I lost faith completely – his sickness assumed such a pathological form that he had long passed the point of return. (51)

After this diagnosis Vladek makes his final attempt to save Stosławski from Sarah's burning villa (54) but it is already too late to help him. As if adjusting to his friend's conviction, Stosławski dematerializes: his pathological body cannot be saved. Thus, in Grabiński's story male friendship is very imperfect. Vladek lets down his friend first doubting and ridiculing the cause of his change and then consciously exposing him to Sarah's vampiric influence.

## **Pathological Masculinities: Cruelty and Madness**

Despite the fact that men in *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House* and *The Family of the Vourdalak* try to prove how real and 'proper' their masculinity is, either by blind adherence to power status or by emphasizing the role of male friendship, in fact, many of their actions have an opposite effect from what they intend. As a result, instead of proving their masculinity they transgress it either by displaying abnormal cruelty or sinking into madness.

Initially, it might seem that it is the vampire together with his blood-drinking habit that incarnates cruelty in these texts. Still, men who oppose the vampire are often equally and in some cases even more brutal than the vampire him or herself. Thus, in Tolstoy's story George, a caring father, brutally slaps his son when he mentions his grandfather (99) and in Grabiński's narrative Vladek, a seemingly calm and well-behaved doctor, violently drags Sarah out of her bedroom despite her screams and determined resistance (64). Yet, the most striking scene depicting men's cruelty is presented in Stoker's *Dracula* where, as Valerie Pedlar notes, medical scientists risk human cruelty not so much to rescue humanity as to prove their own masculine authority.<sup>133</sup>

After discovering that it is the vampirised Lucy that feeds on Hampstead children Van Helsing decides that the only way to rescue her soul from the eternal damnation is to mutilate her body. Shocking as his idea might initially be for his companions, they all soon consent and take part in the ghastly procedure of staking and decapitating Lucy's corpse:

Arthur took the stake and the hammer, and when once his mind was set on action his hands never trembled nor even quivered. Van Helsing opened his missal and began to read, and Quincey and I followed as well as we could. Arthur placed the point over the heart, and as I looked I could see its dint in the white flesh. Then he struck with all his might.

The Thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and

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<sup>133</sup>Valerie Pedlar, *The Most 'Dreadful Visitation': Male Madness in Victorian Fiction* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), p. 143.

deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled  
and spurted up around it. (258-259)

In this scene Stoker conveyed a very clear message: anyone who dares question male authority will be severely punished. Lucy rejected patriarchal authority - she became an ally of the vampire and in the face of such gross disobedience she has to face appropriate consequences. What is more, as Lucy's crime was not an ordinary one, her punishment has to be special as well. As Carol A. Senf points out, the scene of Lucy's staking 'resembles nothing so much as the combined group rape and murder of an unconscious woman.'<sup>134</sup> Indeed, the amount of energy that Arthur who carries out the staking, his companions who watch and assist it, and Stoker himself who describes it, put into the scene is overwhelming. It seems that Lucy's staking is no longer an act of mercy that will save her soul but rather a source of some perverse pleasure for those who carry it out. Thus, the well-bred medical doctors and gentlemen seem to forget themselves in the violence and start to resemble bloody butchers. They are no longer the guardians of law and order but its keen destroyers:

[E]ven if Dracula is responsible for all the Evil of which he is accused, he is tried, convicted, and sentenced by men (including two lawyers) who give him no opportunity to explain his actions and who repeatedly violate the laws which they profess to be defending.<sup>135</sup>

But violence is neither the only nor the worst expression of pathological masculinity in these texts. The far more threatening vision is that of insanity that concerns men in both *Dracula* and *In Sarah's House*.<sup>136</sup> In '*The Most Dreadful Visitation*': *Male Madness in Victorian Fiction* Valerie Pedlar defines madness as 'an alien state of mind...that denotes a dissonance between the individual and society'.<sup>137</sup> Importantly, as Pedlar notes, in the fin-de-siècle madness results from the 'failure to establish a manly identity'.<sup>138</sup> In other words, madness is a distinct symptom

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<sup>134</sup>Carol A. Senf, '*Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror*' in Bram Stoker *Dracula*, ed. by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (New York, London: W.W. Norton, 1997), pp. 421-431 (p. 429).

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., p. 425.

<sup>136</sup>Tolstoy does not break the convention and ascribes insanity to women as it is only Zdenka who goes mad after d'Urfé's departure (116).

<sup>137</sup>Pedlar, *The Most 'Dreadful Vision'*, p. 1.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

of imperfect masculinity.

In Grabiński's story it is the vampiric woman who is diagnosed by the eminent professor of neurology (Vladek's late master) as mentally unstable. According to Żmuda's diagnosis Sarah Braga displays 'psychopathic tendencies with proclivity for sexual deviance, mental sadism' (39). Still, despite this firm diagnosis, when it comes to the intimate relationships that she establishes with men, it is Sarah who retains sanity. After engaging in a love affair with her it is not only Stosławski's body that undergoes a horrifying change. The dematerialization of his body is accompanied by his visible mental decline. Vladek notices that the friend who had previously been 'happy-go-lucky' (30) changes beyond recognition under Sarah's influence. He no longer participates in animated discussions with his fellow doctors as he used to do (30) and Vladek is put off by his 'odd air of detachment, so incongruous with his former cheer'. (30) Stosławski himself admits after Vladek's examination that he suffers 'sexual obsession' (32) that not only devastates his physical body but also deprives him of the ability of rational thinking and interacting with other people:

Nothing interests me any more, I don't give a damn about anything... My relationship with the outside world grows tenuous by the day, as if I'm spiralling out of orbit, suspended between heaven and earth. I'm still aware of it, but who knows what it'll be like in a few weeks' time? (35)

This state of mental instability only deepens as the relationship continues. Soon Stosławski's face, as Vladek notices, is 'to the world like a mask, totally indifferent to its affairs whose complexity had evaporated in the heat of some powerful but mysterious process of oversimplification'(41). Stosławski seems to be imprisoned not only in Sarah's villa but most importantly in his own world created by his insane mind. At one of their last meetings Vladek describes Stosławski in a way that aligns him with the inhabitants of a mental asylum:

Stosławski was a terrifying sight. He stood by the window staring blankly ahead, fingering with his right hand the tassels of the portière. He didn't recognize me, perhaps didn't even see me.

Around his face played a faint smile; his flabby, paper-white lips moved feebly, whispering something to himself. I came up to him, listening intently. (51)

Yet, Stosławski's state suggests something more than the usual nervous breakdown caused by the intensity of a relationship with the wrong woman. It is, as he himself claims when still able to judge his situation 'something else altogether. Something our psychiatrists haven't even dreamed of'(35). Stosławski's physical and mental decline indicates that he undergoes a process of a complete regression. As if against Darwin's theories of evolution Stosławski's body and mind gradually degenerate. The cells of his body disappear, independent rational thinking and interest in the surrounding world are gone as well. Stosławski slowly dissolves until he disappears completely. Thus, madness in Grabiński's texts signals the possibility of a far more dangerous change. Men are at the time endangered by the prospect of losing their mental autonomy and as a result becoming an extinct breed. Pedlar notes that 'Madness is seen as a threat to masculinity because it leads to a diminution of autonomy'<sup>139</sup>, and Stosławski's fate clearly illustrates Pedlar's theory. He becomes mad, loses his authority as a man and as a result finishes his earthly life ceasing to exist altogether in the interiors of Sarah's villa.

In *Dracula* madness is presented as the inevitable consequence of the vampire's presence. Thus, as Scott Brewster argues: 'Vampirism and madness are inseparable in the text: both states invite and resist the same methods of investigation, and both produce disturbing and narcotic experiences'.<sup>140</sup> Still, only one character is openly called a madman in the novel. Renfield, one of the patients of Doctor Seward's mental asylum is described as a zoophagus – a maniac obsessed with devouring living creatures: 'what he desires is to absorb as many lives as he can, and he has laid himself out to achieve it in a cumulative way' (90). But Renfield who 'has afforded [Seward] a study of much interest' (78) and who he tenderly calls his 'own pet lunatic' (229) is not an ordinary case. Renfield displays symptoms that clearly suggest that he is mad. He consumes living creatures convinced that their vital powers will sustain his own eternal life (87) and suffers from religious mania that at times makes him regard himself superior to Seward and will, in Seward's opinion, lead him to 'think that he himself is God' (124). What is more, Renfield's obsession leads him to perform a homicidal attack on Seward:

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<sup>139</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>140</sup>Scott Brewster, 'Seeing Things: Gothic and the Madness of Interpretation' in *Companion to the Gothic* ed. By David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 281-292 (p. 289).

Suddenly the door was burst open, and in rushed my patient, with his face distorted with passion.... He had a dinner-knife in his hand...He was too quick and too strong for me...for before I could get my balance he had struck at me and cut my left wrist rather severely... When the attendants rushed in, and we turned our attention to him, his employment positively sickened me. He was lying on his belly on the floor licking up, like a dog, the blood which had fallen from my wounded wrist... repeating over and over again: 'The blood is the life! The blood is the life!' (171)

Doctor Seward desperately tries to understand the mechanism of Renfield's illness. He meticulously notes all the symptoms of Renfield's madness and comes to the conclusion that Renfield's behaviour cannot be classified as explicitly insane as he continuously amazes both Seward and Van Helsing with the clarity of his thinking. Renfield is able to reason well (90) and to Seward's surprise he can talk 'elemental philosophy' (279). Even Van Helsing addresses him as an equal (293). Renfield is therefore disturbingly different from Seward's other patients as his madness cannot be easily classified according to Victorian standards which saw the inmates of mental asylums 'as criminals, lower-class 'idiots' or economic victims'.<sup>141</sup> In fact, Renfield's supposed insanity is not the symptom of his weakened psyche or nervous breakdown but the side effect of his link to the vampire that makes him reject what is 'normal' and act in accordance with Dracula's logic. As a result, Renfield's mind follows a cyclical pattern of spells of exceptional brightness and alarming mental decline. What is more, as vampires of folklore whose existence depends on the moon's phases<sup>142</sup>, Renfield's mind seems to succumb to the influence of the sun as his 'paroxysms come on at high noon and at sunset' (143). Valerie Pedlar argues that it is precisely Renfield's madness that makes it possible for Dracula to make an ally of him.<sup>143</sup> I would suggest that his supposed insanity is not the cause but the effect of his pact with the vampire. Renfield is not a lunatic detached from reality but rather a 'professional madman'<sup>144</sup> capable of right judgements and conscious of his own condition. Although Renfield cannot act freely he is well aware of the fact that he is under Dracula's influence. 'I am not my own master' (294) he explains when asking Seward for his permission to let him leave the

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>142</sup>Maria Janion, *Wampir: Biografia Symboliczna* (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria, 2002), p. 135.

<sup>143</sup>Pedlar, *The Most 'Dreadful Vision'*, p. 143.

<sup>144</sup>Brewster, 'Seeing Things', p. 289.

asylum. Renfield's madness is therefore not so much a condition resulting from his psychic vulnerability but a colourful uniform that he wears while in Dracula's service.

While Renfield's state can be explained by Dracula's influence the irrational behaviours of other men in the novel are far more problematic. Both Harker and Seward display alarming behaviours that make them stand out from the rest of the novel's characters. Harker suffers from bad dreams on his way to Castle Dracula (10) and Seward overcomes his struggles to fall asleep with the use of chloral, 'the modern Morpheus' (125) as he himself calls the drug. But this anxiety that keeps them awake at night soon translates into more serious symptoms. Seward starts to suffer from 'numbness which marks cerebral exhaustion'(153) and suspects that his mental powers recede. 'I am beginning to wonder if my long habit of life amongst the insane is beginning to tell upon my own brain' (164) he records in his diary when he finds it impossible to understand the mystery of Lucy's strange condition. Harker in turn suffers 'violent brain fever' (122) after his escape from Castle Dracula and remains weak and vulnerable for a very long period of time. What is more, as if put back to a childish phase, he demands Mina's constant care and support. Thus, just like a terrified child he hides and falls asleep in Mina's arms after seeing the rejuvenated Dracula in London (208). In this scene Harker, in a rather unmanly manner, instead of acting remains passive and seeks shelter in woman's arms. The same passiveness paralyzes him again when his wife falls a victim to Dracula.<sup>145</sup>

What is more, both Harker and Seward attempt to preserve their sanity by an almost obsessive habit of keeping a constant record of their own thoughts and actions. Harker confesses that writing a diary is a form of therapy that lets him avoid madness: 'As I must do something or go mad, I write this diary' (344). Thus, writing or recording a diary becomes for both Harker and Seward 'a means of exerting some control in circumstances that highlight their vulnerability'.<sup>146</sup> Since they are both unable to change reality they find it comforting to depict its cruelty on paper or wax cylinder. But this seemingly therapeutic activity can lead to even greater loss of control over the situation as 'writing is a problematic means of preserving sanity in the novel, since it must reproduce the irrational events it records'.<sup>147</sup> As a result, both Harker and Seward rather than curing their symptoms in fact intensify them by means of writing and recording; consequently they lose some of their masculinity along with their sanity.

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<sup>145</sup>Harker is in a stupor at the scene of Mina's seduction (336).

<sup>146</sup>Pedlar, *The Most 'Dreadful Thing'*, p. 143.

<sup>147</sup>Brewster, 'Seeing Things', p. 288.

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The presence of the vampire triggers changes within the women and as a consequence undermines the authority of men who come into contact with the vampire-altered spaces of femininity. Thus, in *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House*, and *The Family of the Vourdalak* men are forced to continuously defend but at the same time redefine their masculinities. Whether confronted with the vampire woman herself (Sarah Braga), women that were infected with vampirism (Mina, Lucy) or mortal women who question the authority of men (the Duchesse de Gramont, Zdenka), men in these texts face the necessity of proving that they are still powerful men despite the obvious negation of their position that they meet with.

As a result, men engage themselves in a battle that aims not so much at the elimination of the vampire but on the elimination of his or her influence that is manifested in the altered femininity of the women who they defend or fight with but also in their own unstable masculinities. In Stoker's *Dracula* Professor Van Helsing compares the fight against the vampire to the game of chess (179). Yet, when we take into consideration the risk that men in these texts take to eliminate the vampire and all the consequences of vampiric activities, their struggle is nothing like the game of logic, composure and patience of which Van Helsing speaks. I would suggest that men in *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House* and *The Family of the Vourdalak* play a different and far more risky kind of game - they have to gamble what they have and more importantly who they are to retain their gender identity.

By their almost desperate adherence to power and status and continuous emphasizing of the value of male bonding, these men fight not only for sustaining the idea of 'proper' passive femininity but most importantly for retaining their own masculinity. In this unequal game they have to bet all they have. However, no matter if they agree or refuse to join the game the world of values which they promote is irretrievably lost because of the ways the vampire alters and rearranges the spaces of human gender identity.

## Chapter Three

### **Declining nations: When the Foreign Swallows the Familiar**

In her influential article 'Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*' Judith Halberstam defines Stoker's vampire as 'otherness itself'.<sup>148</sup> Indeed, Count Dracula represents all that was strange, unfamiliar, and foreign to late nineteenth-century British society. Still, while it is true that Dracula's otherness is multidimensional as it reflects itself, for instance, in the vampire's unstable gender and religious affiliation, it primarily results from the fact that he represents a foreign race. Therefore, what most stigmatizes Dracula as the monstrous other, is the way in which his foreignness is constructed. In other words, Dracula is the monstrous other precisely because he is the monstrous foreigner. Still, Dracula is not the only vampire whose otherness is built on the basis of his/her foreignness. Both Grabiński and Tolstoy either stress the importance of the foreign origin of their vampires to the environment in which they operate or link the vampire-related passages of their narratives with the episodes which refer to negative foreign influences. Although the motives and patterns of behaviour of Grabinski's, Tolstoy's and Stoker's vampires differ in many aspects, they all, because of their close bond with the foreign, are perceived as a dangerous threat to national unity. This chapter argues that all three authors fashioned their vampires as others, strangers who because of their foreignness fall outside the frames created by a given nation and as a result become situated in opposition to that nation and cast as its most dangerous enemies. The chapter traces the ways in which the foreignness of the vampire constructs his otherness and how this otherness in turn contrasts with what in these texts represents the familiar.

Since the focus of the chapter is on the creation of foreignness as a constituent of otherness, I will now concentrate on the meanings attached to the concept of otherness and the other and their opposition to and influence on the familiar. In 'Approaching the Other as Other' Luce Irigaray points out that it is the way in which a given community perceives the stranger that

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<sup>148</sup>Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, p. 249.

marks him as the other:

[W]e avoid the problem of meeting with the stranger, with the other. We avoid letting ourselves be moved, questioned, modified, enriched by the other as such. We do not look for a way of cohabitation or coexistence between subjects of different but equivalent worth.<sup>149</sup>

In Irigaray's interpretation it is the effect of the familiar that displays a communal desire to preserve its homogeneous structure that reinforces a rejection of all things unfamiliar. As a result, the familiar rejects the possibility of equality of the stranger, the foreigner and marks him as the other. It creates the boundary which cannot be crossed. Consequently, otherness is not a natural quality of a given person or object but the product of prejudice, fear and ignorance of a certain group in relation to that person or object: 'archetypes of Otherness ... are culturally constructed and acquired. There is no natural Otherness, but only that which is made – fabricated'.<sup>150</sup>

What is more, the other is always left on the opposite side of the boundary, and as the familiar rejects the possibility of accepting him within its limits it casts him instead as potentially dangerous. Thus the exclusion of the other implies assigning it with certain, invariably negative meanings. As Rebecca Stott points out:

Evil ... is always relative to each culture, or stage of culture. It is constructed as Other. It is all that is outside, taboo, and marks the limits, the frontiers, of what is socially and culturally acceptable: that which lies within the circle.<sup>151</sup>

This particular mood of prejudice and distrust towards everything that opposes the familiar is easily sensed in *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House* and *The Family of the Vourdalak* where vampires serve to represent the most extreme form of the other. Importantly, their otherness is always multidimensional as it is reflected in their gender, religious, cultural, racial and moral difference. Still, no matter how complex the otherness of the vampires in Stoker's, Grabiński's

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<sup>149</sup>Luce Irigaray, 'Approaching the Other as Other' in *Luce Irigaray – Key Writings* ed. By Luce Irigaray (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 24-25.

<sup>150</sup>Stott, *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale*, p. 42.

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

and Tolstoy's texts is, it primarily stems from one crucial characteristic that they all share: their foreignness. In all three texts vampires are presented as foreigners to those who encounter and try to escape from or eliminate them. As such, just by their mere presence, they threaten the uniformity of the so far stable world of their opponents. They are strangers and because of that all their qualities, beliefs and behaviours have to be stigmatised as representations of the monstrous other and consequently rejected. What this chapter shows is that the multidimensional otherness of the vampires in Stoker's, Grabiński's and Tolstoy's texts is in the first place the result and product of their foreignness. They are others because they are strangers to those who oppose them and not because otherness is their inborn characteristic.

Since the vampires' monstrous otherness in these texts is in the first place built on the basis of their national difference, we need to consider the importance and meaning of the concepts of nation and nationality. Undoubtedly, nationality is one of the most important factors which shapes human identity. Analysing Homi Bhabha's discussion on the meaning of nations, Sally R. Munt writes that the idea of a nation represents 'a projected yearning for a perfectly consolidated self, paradoxically beyond the self.'<sup>152</sup> From this perspective nation is the representation of the human desire for a perfect integrity. This idea of a nation reinforces the establishment of its clearly marked boundaries which would protect its homogeneous structure:

Any thought of nationhood implies the construction of a bounded space, a place with borders and frontiers to enclose, and, of course, exclude, containing a centre and margins. These borders are better perceived as permeable boundaries which permit communication with, and sometimes infusion by, the Other. The nation must have something to delineate itself against: meaning is created by a process of differentiation, and 'nation' as a concept contains its own deconstruction, as those boundaries bleed.<sup>153</sup>

What is more, a perfectly consolidated nation demands the absolute unity of those who create its body. Only such unity will let those who constitute the nation feel secure within its limits. At the same time, the integrity of the nation often reinforces rejection of all that is diverse or foreign. The foreign threatens the desired stability of the nation, bringing the disturbing

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<sup>152</sup>Sally R. Munt, 'Sister in exile. The Lesbian Nation' in *New Frontiers of Space, Bodies and Gender* ed. by Rosa Ainley (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 3 – 19 (p. 6).

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

feeling of the unknown and reinforces rearrangement within the so far homogeneous structure of the familiar. Consequently, the possibility of a change within the nation brings the possibility of a change within the self. If the nation can undergo uncontrolled metamorphosis due to its contact with the foreign, the self is even more endangered. Thus, the foreign changes the nation but it as well redefines the self. The chapter argues that vampires, seen as the dangerous others, threaten not only the body of the nation but also, perhaps even more importantly, the interior integrity of the self.

In my analysis I focus on the two main trails which accompany the vampires' foreignness in *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House* and *The Family of the Vourdalak*, namely the relation of the vampire with the East and the idea of sexual conquest which for vampire fiction of the period corresponds directly with that of national conquest. The chapter shows how in these texts the vampire becomes an embodiment of the fears connected to and produced by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century nationalism.

The idea which is present in all these three texts is that of protecting racial or national purity and integrity by avoiding intercourse with the other and therefore proving loyal to one's own group. When analysing nineteenth-century practices of national endogamy Alexander Maxwell comes to the conclusion that during the "long nineteenth century" competition between men for women was often linked to nationalistic ideology which called for preserving the homogeneous structure of the community by limiting the choice of sexual partners exclusively to members of one's own national or racial group.<sup>154</sup> Thus, the structure of the chapter reflects not only the three different perspectives which characterize the otherness of Grabinski's, Tolstoy's and Stoker's vampires but also the stages of their sexual conquest which can be interpreted as stages of interracial sexual competition.

The first part of the chapter focuses on Count Dracula, the vampire seen as the dangerous foreigner who tries to enter unnoticed and blend into British society. His actions are read as a projection of fears connected with the vision of the reversed colonisation, which aims at creating a new foreign race within the boundaries of an already existing nation. The second part of the chapter presents Grabiński's Sarah Braga as a foreigner whose sole aim is the destruction of the nation. Unlike Count Dracula, who mixes his own blood with the blood of the British,

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<sup>154</sup>Alexander Maxwell, 'National Endogamy and Double Standards: Sexuality and Nationalism in East-Central Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century', *Journal of Social History*, 41 (2007), 413-433 (p. 413).

Sarah Braga focuses on the methodical elimination of the male members of the Polish nation within whose boundaries she hunts. The last part of the chapter depicts vampirism as the otherness that protects from negative foreign influences. In *The Family of the Vourdalak* Tolstoy juxtaposes the closed circle of Gorcha's vampirised family with the sexual threat posed by the stranger embodied in Marquis d'Urfé and by doing so suggests that, when confronted with the foreign, vampirism appears to be the lesser evil.

### **When the Conqueror is Conquered: Reverse Colonisation in *Dracula***

In his seminal article 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonisation' Stephen Arata reads Stoker's vampires as a projection of late nineteenth-century fears connected with the decline of the British Empire:

Stoker ... transforms the materials of the vampire myth, making them bear the weight of the culture's fears over its declining status. The appearance of the vampires becomes the sign of profound trouble. With vampirism marking the intersection of racial strife, political upheaval, and the fall of empire, *Dracula*'s move to London indicates that Great Britain, rather than the Carpathians, is now the scene of these connected struggles.<sup>155</sup>

Arata's reading of Stoker's novel depicts *Dracula* as the conqueror, the warrior who directs his imperialistic ambitions towards Britain, the country which up to this point was itself conquering other nations. What is more, such an interpretation of the novel casts Stoker's vampire as a determined, target-focused and persistent enemy who does not merely seek to make Britain one of his dominions, but attempts to gradually annihilate the British nation by replacing its blood with his own. *Dracula* is dangerous to the stability of the British nation not only because Britain at the time seems to be weakened, but also because *Dracula* is, as Van Helsing persuasively explains, not a conventional enemy:

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<sup>155</sup>Stephen Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonisation' in Bram Stoker *Dracula* ed. by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), pp. 462-470 (p. 465).

This vampire which is amongst us is of himself so strong in person as twenty men; he is of cunning more than mortal, for his cunning be the growth of ages; he have still the aids of necromancy, which is, as his etymology imply, the divination by the dead, and all the dead that he can come nigh to are for him at command; he is brute, and more than brute; he is devil in callous, and the heart of him is not; he can, within his range, direct the elements, the storm, the fog, the thunder, he can, within limitations, appear at will when, and where, and in any of the forms that are to him; he can, within his range, direct the elements: the storm, the fog, the thunder; he can command all the meaner things: the rat, and the owl, and the bat - the moth, and the fox, and the wolf; he can grow and become small; and he can at times vanish and come unknown. (283)

Despite Van Helsing's obvious references to Dracula's supernatural abilities his otherness is also deeply rooted in the fact that he embodies all that was at the time regarded as threatening to the stability of imperial Britain. Thus, one of the most distinctive traits in fashioning Dracula as the monstrous other is his relationship with the East. Arata points out that the "Eastern Question" was central to British foreign policy in the 1880s and '90s.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, *Dracula* like British foreign policy seems to be obsessed with the East which in the novel is presented as an unpredictable, uncontrollable, multicultural flood which attempts to destroy the clearly established divisions of the civilised Western world. Clearly, Count Dracula can be read as a powerful and condensed metaphor of the East with all its peculiar customs, beliefs and dangerous diversity. He is Eastern European, Szekely, whose blood is a mixture of 'the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship'(41).<sup>157</sup>

But it is not only the Count who in Harker's eyes is monstrously different. In his diary Harker devotes a lot of attention to Dracula's homeland Transylvania. From the very beginning he describes the country with evident prejudice. Initially, it seems that Harker is only an ignorant tourist on a business trip. But after a closer look it turns out that he is at the same time a very

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<sup>156</sup>Ibid., p. 462.

<sup>157</sup>Dracula's otherness does not limit itself to his diverse, Eastern European origin. He is the other in every possible aspect. Because of his specific "diet" he never eats or drinks in Harker's presence. He does not smoke. To Harker's great astonishment he does not keep any servants and there are many other 'odd deficiencies' in his castle.(29-30) It appears that the Count despises all the developments of the civilised Western world. After all Harker's journal depicts only these aspects of Dracula's behaviour which mark him as totally opposite to the Western gentleman.

willing and scrupulous observer and critic of everything that is not Western, or rather, not British. Even though Dracula openly states that Transylvania is totally opposed to England, saying that 'We are in Transylvania; and Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you many strange things'(32), Harker is still unable to accept what Transylvania has to offer him. But Harker's prejudice is not simply personal. After all, what kind of impression one should have about Transylvania when the only information that the British Museum offers on this country is as follows

[T]he district ... is in the extreme east of the country, just on the borders of three states, Transylvania, Moldavia, and Bukovina, in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe. (9-10)

Harker's ignorance and prejudice with regard to Dracula's homeland is shared by Professor Van Helsing who warns his companions against this land, which in his description appears to be more like hell than a foreign country:

The very place where he have been alive, Un-Dead for all these centuries, is full of strangeness of the geological and chemical world. There are deep caverns and fissures that reach none know whither. There have been volcanoes, some of whose openings still send out waters of strange properties, and gases that kill or make to vivify. (380)

Van Helsing's tone of superstitious prejudice is repeated in Harker's journal. Harker is suspicious about everything Transylvanian - the people, the food, the trains. Everything that he sees on his way to Castle Dracula, no matter how picturesque it might be, always has some more or less obvious fault. Quite significantly, Harker either openly criticizes, ridicules or underestimates all that is new to him in Dracula's land and as a result familiarizes the other by comparing it to what is regarded unsophisticated or of a low standard in his own country. Thus, for Harker, even the opportunity of tasting foreign cuisine has certain, explicit associations.<sup>158</sup>

But it is not only Transylvania's cultural difference that shocks and irritates him. What

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<sup>158</sup>Harker compares Transylvanian dish to *cat's meat* – cheap pet food sold in Britain before the variety of dog's food was introduced: 'I dined on what they call 'robber steak' – bits of bacon, onion, and beef, seasoned with red pepper, and (stung) on sticks and roasted over the fire, in the simple style of the London cat's meat!(14).

Harker finds really difficult to accept is the county's racial diversity. It is precisely that diversity that makes Dracula's homeland so monstrous in his eyes. In 'An intertext that counts? Dracula, The Woman in White, and Victorian Imaginations of the Foreign Other' Katrien Bollen and Raphael Ingelbien stress the importance of *Dracula's* continuous reference to 'a clash between Western development and Eastern backwardness' which is reflected in the way Stoker presents the Transylvanian population.<sup>159</sup> Thus, on his way to Castle Dracula, Harker meets many different people who because of their colourful attire and odd behaviour remind him of some extraordinary, almost fairy tale characters transported to Transylvania directly from legends or stage performances: 'On the stage they would be set down at once as some old Oriental band of brigands.' (11) he writes in his diary after seeing a group of peasants at one of the many rail stations he passes during his journey. Therefore, as Ken Gelder remarks, to the late nineteenth-century British citizen who travels to the East, diversity is what threatens him most:

Diversity means instability: it invites contestation: identities become confused: one can no longer tell 'who was who'. In short, diversity means the *loss* of one's nationality – hardly appropriate for an imperialist ideology which depends upon a stable identification between nation and self.<sup>160</sup>

The only person in Stoker's novel who is capable of estimating the diverse beauty of Transylvania is one of Dracula's victims, Mina Harker. Unlike her husband, Mina is simply bewitched by the beauty of the Transylvanian landscape. From her perspective 'the country is lovely, and most interesting' (247).<sup>161</sup> At the same time Mina wonders how pleasurable it would be to visit the country 'under different conditions' (247).<sup>162</sup> The conditions she thinks of are travelling alone without the supervision of the suspicious Western gentlemen. But her dream of enjoying Transylvania on her own never comes true. Mina comes back to Dracula's homeland once again but only when the Count is destroyed and once again she is not allowed to go there alone as she returns to Transylvania with the person who so openly rejects the country - her

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<sup>159</sup>Katrien Bollen and Raphael Ingelbien, 'An Intertext that Counts? Dracula, The Woman in White, and Victorian Imaginations of the Foreign Other', *English Studies*, 90 (2009), 403-420 (p. 415).

<sup>160</sup>Ibid., Gelder, p. 11- 12.

<sup>161</sup>Mina admires Transylvania despite the fact that it is the homeland of the other who infected her with his blood – perhaps she is able to do so just because this foreign blood still flows in her veins.

<sup>162</sup>This time she is accompanied to Transylvania by the Crew of Light which aims at Dracula's destruction and Mina's protection but simultaneously embodies Western civilisation.

prejudiced husband Jonathan Harker.

What is more, the East embodied both in the Count and his homeland is not only strange and suspicious; it is also perverse and corrupt. When tracking Dracula back to his castle Harker seems to be almost grateful that Transylvania is a country where one does not always have to act within the frames of law and honesty. 'Thank God! This is the country where bribery can do anything' (397) Harker exclaims when he manages to get information about the Count using means considered completely inappropriate for a British gentleman.

East and West are in Stoker's novel so different that the movement from one sphere to another can be experienced almost physically. At the very beginning of the novel Jonathan Harker notes in his journal the disturbing feeling which accompanies his departure from Western civilisation into the mysterious East (9).<sup>163</sup>

Although it appears that the Count embodies all that is opposed to the standards of the civilised Western world, as the narrative develops he seems to become more and more connected to that world. On the one hand Dracula represents Eastern backwardness and barbarism but on the other he is precisely Western or even British in his imperialism. Therefore, Count Dracula, just like Transylvania, can be interpreted as a symbolic point in which East and West meet. Despite his eastern origin and habits Stoker's vampire shows a certain level of interest in and adherence to the West. First of all, Dracula is intelligent and predisposed to learning. Even though Van Helsing tries to diminish his abilities in the eyes of the Crew of Light, he does so only because he knows how clever and skilful an opponent Dracula is. The Count sets himself for the invasion of Britain with a well-established and carefully-arranged plan. He makes sure that all the legal matters connected with his relocation to England are sorted out and he leaves Harker under 'the impression that he would have made a wonderful solicitor' (44).<sup>164</sup> In addition, Dracula's meticulous plan of invasion takes into account all aspects of the civilised world: legal arrangements, property management, shipping earth boxes, use of money and, most importantly, the mastery of a foreign language.

Dracula knows well that only the mastery of English will give him the freedom of

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<sup>163</sup>But leaving one sphere and entering the other has here a deeper sense. It appears that the closer to the Count and therefore to the East the Crew of Light comes the more 'uncivilised' it becomes. Starting with the forged death certificates of both Lucy and her mother, desecrating Lucy's tomb and corpse, and finally breaking into the Count's Piccadilly house, the gentlemen seem to lose their Western good manners and moral principles completely.

<sup>164</sup>Just as he is always hungry for fresh blood, Dracula is also always hungry for new knowledge. Dracula is a keen reader. His well-equipped library impresses Harker as much as his lack of servants (30).

movement within the British society that he so desires:

Well I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not – and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stops if he sees me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, to say, "Ha, ha! A stranger!" I have been so long master that I would be master still – or at least that none other should be master of me. (31)

Therefore, Dracula plans to use his language fluency as his most effective camouflage, which will let him fulfil his imperialistic plans unnoticed. Yet, such attitude stresses Dracula's position as the unsafe foreigner. Benedict Anderson notes that one of the most important factors in establishing national unities is language unity.<sup>165</sup> Fluency of language is therefore the necessary factor which lets the foreigner blend into the familiar. Dracula already knows much about England and its culture. He is also familiar with written English. The only thing which he still needs to practice, with Harker's help, in order to become indistinguishable within British society is his spoken English. Dracula is not the only foreigner in the novel who enters the borders of Britain but he is the only one who successfully masters the language. Van Helsing's broken English that Jennifer Wicke describes as 'the most amazing word salad put on the page'<sup>166</sup> and Morris's American slang easily distinguish them as strangers. As a result, unlike Dracula, they both can be classified as safe foreigners due to their imperfect English.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, they are welcome within the borders of the British nation simply because they are unable to blend completely into that nation. Even though Van Helsing studied in London (139) and is familiar with British culture he will be always different from Britons themselves because of the way he speaks and paradoxically because of that difference he can be classified more as familiar than foreign. Even Van Helsing's surname suggests his familiarity as its second part is, as John Paul

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<sup>165</sup>Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 68.

<sup>166</sup>Jennifer Wicke, 'Vampiric Typewriting: Dracula and Its Media', *ELH*, 50 (1992), 467-493 (p. 489).

<sup>167</sup>Katrien Bollen and Raphael Ingelbien point out that it is precisely the imperfect, often ludicrous language of the foreigners in *Dracula* and *The Woman in White* that makes them "good" foreigners. See Katrien Bollen and Raphael Ingelbien, 'An Intertext that Counts? Dracula, The Woman in White, and Victorian Imaginations of the Foreign Other', *English Studies*, 90 (2009), 403-420 (p. 412).

Riquelme notes, an anagram for "English".<sup>168</sup>

On the other hand, Christine Ferguson explains the different levels of English fluency of *Dracula's* characters in a completely different way. In her interpretation, the level of their language fluency marks their adherence either to the sphere of the living or to the sphere of the undead.<sup>169</sup> Thus she claims that Dracula's persistence in mastering English reflects his yearning for the linguistic purity of a dead language, while the diversity of dialects and sociolects of those who oppose him represents the dynamics of a constantly evolving spoken language. However, the fact that Dracula aims exactly at the mastery of spoken English undermines Ferguson's interpretation. The Count already knows the written static form of the language and what he aims at is fluency in its spoken active form. Unlike the other characters of Stoker's novel who mostly write or record the language, Dracula wants to use it in dynamic spoken form.

Dracula's aim is to transport and implant his diversity within the boundaries of the British nation. Still, his imperialism is far more sophisticated than it may initially appear. Dracula does not intend to use the tactics of conventional warfare; he does not intend to fight the British openly. Quite the opposite, his conquest is a conquest of the body politic by means of conquering female bodies. Dracula infects his female victims with his foreign blood and by doing so makes them unfamiliar and dangerous to the men of the nation. As David Punter describes Dracula's cunning plan: 'The dominion of the sword is replaced by the more naked yet more subtle dominion of the tooth.'<sup>170</sup> What Dracula aims at is the replacement of British blood with his Eastern blood. Significantly he infects only women as they are mothers of new generations. Dracula takes away their British blood and gives instead his own blood (Mina) or leaves space for any other foreign blood (Lucy takes the blood not only from her beloved Arthur but also from Van Helsing and Morris who are both foreigners). He will only start the process by infecting British women and then let the plan work for itself. The British nation will be infected with Eastern blood which will be passed unnoticed from infected mothers onto their offspring. The ending of the novel suggests that Dracula was killed and his plans spoiled. But in fact his plans are more fulfilled than ever in the body of a child that is born from the infected blood of Mina. In little Quincey the mixture of Dracula's blood is alive and so is the Count. The

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 412.

<sup>169</sup> Christine Ferguson, 'Nonstandard Language and the Cultural Stakes of Stoker's *Dracula*', *EHL*, 71 (2004), 229-249 (p. 241).

<sup>170</sup> Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, p. 18.

fact that Harker kills the vampire with a conventional weapon does not change anything. Dracula's invasion is unconventional and a mere knife cannot stop it. His death is only a surface death as his blood flows in the veins of Harker's child. The novel ends but its ending suggests that Dracula's conquest has just begun.

### **From Seduction to Extermination: Sexual Threat in *In Sarah's House***

Since at the time when the action of Grabiński's story takes place Poland had already experienced the invasion of foreign forces, the author warns against a different scenario of the nation's decline than the one presented in *Dracula*.<sup>171</sup> Grabiński's vampire operates in a state that has already ceased to exist and the threat she poses is that of the destruction of the national identity of the Poles who, despite being deprived of the independence of their homeland, managed to sustain their language and culture. Vampiric Sarah can therefore be interpreted as the hostile foreign element within the nation who aims at destroying the last bastions of Polish identity embodied in the figures of young, well-educated male professionals.

The very name of Grabiński's vampire reveals her ambiguous, foreign status. Her first name which from Hebrew translates as "princess"<sup>172</sup> together with her second name Braga which is simultaneously the name of one of the world's oldest Christian archdioceses,<sup>173</sup> casts Sarah as a very mysterious foreigner who combines and blurs not only many different national but also religious and cultural backgrounds. Clearly, Sarah is primarily foreign because of her diverse racial origin. Stosławski describes her as 'a very peculiar racial mix':

She's a Protestant. Her family have all died out. Based on the scant information she's offered me I've come to the conclusion that in her veins flows the blood of Castilian nobleman, with a later admixture of Germanic element. (36)

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<sup>171</sup>Partitions of Poland which took place between 1772 and 1795 caused the complete destruction of the Polish state. Polish lands were invaded and as a result shared between Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and Habsburg Austria. Poland managed to regain its independence only after the Treaty of Versailles in 1918.

<sup>172</sup>David Pickering, *Dictionary of First Names* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), p. 233.

<sup>173</sup>*Medieval Iberia. An Encyclopaedia* ed. by E. Michael Gerli Abington (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 181-182.

Sarah's enigmatic identity is additionally emphasized by the fact that throughout the whole narration she remains an unsolved mystery to those who become her lovers. Sarah Braga easily gets into intimate relationships with men offering them the 'knowledge of erotic art of all kinds where sexual perversity vied with sheer lewdness'(49) but at the same time she does not give them much information about herself. The only thing that men remember about Sarah is her exotic beauty, which makes her stand out from the majority of Polish society. Yet, despite her characteristically foreign features, Sarah manages to operate unnoticed for a relatively long time. Such freedom of Sarah's movements can be explained by the extraordinary situation of the country which at the time did not formally exist. Polish lands under partitions become the space that invited and promoted foreignness and diversity which was still visible in Poland after the regaining of independence in 1918. In 1923 in his 'Poland and the Problem of National Minorities' Roman Dybolski related the situation of the multinational population of newly independent Poland. According to his information Poland at the time was a country where national minorities were established as a significant part of the population. The rearrangements of the borders forced by the Treaty of Versailles created a situation in which many people become citizens of the countries in which their nation constituted a minority. According to Dybolski's report, in the independent Polish State after 1918 national minorities enjoyed a considerable level of independence and liberty and were guaranteed full religious freedom.<sup>174</sup> Dybolski lists a number of different nations which make up the population of the newly founded Polish state. The largest minorities - Germans, White Russians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Jews - constituted such diversity within the Polish borders that it was easy to go unnoticed within their limits. In such an ethnically diverse environment Sarah's exotic beauty does not attract any particular attention. In fact, her foreignness does not cast her as the other but lets her easily blend into the multicultural communities that inhabit partitioned Poland and carry on her predatory actions. What is more, because of her complex national and religious foreignness, Sarah can be interpreted as an embodiment of all these foreign influences which either directly or indirectly contributed to or were unaffected by the loss of independence by the Polish state.<sup>175</sup>

Sarah Braga is a foreigner who functions within Polish society and, significantly, she

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<sup>174</sup>Roman Dybolski, 'Poland and the problem of national minorities', *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*, 2 (1923), 179-200 (p. 193).

<sup>175</sup>Grabiński's vampire woman is a mixture of many different ethnical and religious traditions. Still, she is particularly related to those foreign influences that were blamed either for contributing to Poland's decline directly (Jews, Germans) or for turning a blind eye to the country's grave situation (the Protestant West).

seeks only Polish partners. This particular interest in men who are not members of her own nation casts Sarah as one who breaks with the established conventions of endogamy of the time which encouraged national women to find a partner of the same nationality.<sup>176</sup> But Sarah's exogamy is so excessive that it also prevents her partners from fulfilling their patriotic duty. Alexander Maxwell points out that: 'patriotic men would be able to nationalize foreign women: sexual conquests were also national conquests.'<sup>177</sup> However, none of Sarah's partners is capable of making her Polish. Even though Sarah gets into relationships with Polish men she does not attempt to acquire any of their culture. More than that, she does not even intend to implant in her victims some of her own customs. She does not suck their blood and she does not offer them her own in exchange. Instead she entangles them in a relationship based on sexual vampirism - she takes their semen but she does not reproduce, she does not give birth to any children. The semen is wasted, as are the men who get into a relationship with the vampiric woman.

Therefore Sarah is also foreign because she is a 'sexual other'. Grabiński's vampiric woman represents a morality that is completely opposed to that promoted at the time by the Polish press. Magdalena Cwetsch-Wyszomirska points out that at the beginning of the twentieth century Polish journalism supported by medical authorities initiated a campaign which aimed at establishing moral standards of sexual life and propagated purity of sexual morals as means of guarding the nation against the spread of venereal disease.<sup>178</sup> 'Purity of thoughts, feelings and deeds, [...] chastity of life' were seen as Cwetsch-Wyszomirska notes as remedies which could not only stop the spread of syphilis but also lead to the rebirth of the whole nation.<sup>179</sup> Sarah's sexuality opposes these standards completely. Grabiński's vampiric woman seduces Polish men and like venereal disease eliminates them one after another. Sarah not only rejects chastity but sees it as a form of perversion.<sup>180</sup> She openly breaches and as a result destroys the moral standards of the whole nation. Despite being a woman, she, in a rather unwomanly fashion, does not care about love as a spiritual feeling but is obsessed exclusively with its perverse physical forms:

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<sup>176</sup>Maxwell, 'National Endogamy and Double Standards', p. 413.

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

<sup>178</sup>Magdalena Cwetsch-Wyszomirska, "'W drodze ku „małżeństwu doskonałemu". Małżeństwo na początku wieku XX w świetle „Czystości" i „Kosmetyki", in *Kobieta i małżeństwo. Społeczno-kulturowe aspekty seksualności. Wiek XIX i XX*, ed. by Anna Żarnowska and Andrzej Szwarz (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo DIG, 2012), pp. 43-53 (p. 45-46).

<sup>179</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>180</sup>When Vladek on purpose rejects Sarah's advances she openly calls him a 'vile pervert!'(64).

Before long we were engaged on the topic always favoured by women – love. From the start, Sarah assumed the passionate tone, tending to focus on extreme cases bordering on pathology. She seemed to possess an expert knowledge of erotic art of all kinds where sexual perversity vied with sheer lewdness. (49)

Sarah's mind focuses exclusively on the images of sex and sadism and therefore represents a form of mental atavism. Consequently, Sarah's foreign sexuality opposes the moral standards of the time as it offers perverse bodily pleasures leading to the annihilation of her partners. What is more, unlike Dracula, Sarah does not reproduce. She is not interested in creating a new race within the Polish nation. The only thing she aims at is the annihilation of men through the use of perverse sexuality. To make things worse, Sarah's perversity is contagious. The deeper into his relationship with Sarah Stosławski sinks the more obsessed he seems to be. During one of their last meetings Vladek notices that the only thing his friend is still able to think of is sexual perversity:

His voice was soft, barely audible, but I managed to catch some words. They were only few and he repeated them incessantly, like an automaton – they were all filthy, cruel, caressing words... (51)

Sarah's collection of portraits shows what type of men she prefers. She always looks for the best ones – they have to be young, strong, and preferably well-educated. Significantly, Sarah eliminates only men of a higher social status. By contrast, men of the lower classes are safe from her destructive powers and can even become faithful partners in her murderous actions. For instant, Sarah's servant seems to be quite content seeing Stosławski's worsening state:

[T]he flunkey greeted my companion with a deep bow yet with a smile of contemptuous mockery on his lips; on me he looked as on an intruder who could be unceremoniously ejected. (42)

This male servant, clean shaven and dressed in a uniform, is similar to a soldier who faithfully but at the same time blindly serves his vampiric mistress. He is most probably aware of Sarah's plans and actions but he does not react. Even though he is male himself, he does not

sympathize with Sarah's victims. He does not try to rescue them, neither does he notify the authorities about Sarah's murderous practices. He stays faithful to his mistress and rather than sympathize with Sarah's victims he mocks their tragedy. But it is not only Sarah's flunky who does not care about the men who disappear within the monstrous interiors of Villa Tophana. Society seems not to notice the disappearance of its members either. It is only when Vladek becomes worried about his friend's worsening state that Sarah's crimes are discovered. Yet Vladek still has to fight Sarah on his own. And in doing so he has to prove the strength of his moral principles by refraining from physical contact with the vampiric woman. Sarah is the 'adversary who should not be taken lightly'(51) and Vladek realizes that the only way to overcome the power of this monstrous woman is to overcome his own desires and weaknesses. Even though he is physically attracted to Sarah he overcomes his desires and stays faithful to his moral principles. He survives only because he does not mingle with the other, and he proves that the other when rejected and left outside can be successfully destroyed.

The story also reveals that Sarah has a particular, but as it later turns out fatal, interest in medical doctors. All three men who play a significant role in discovering Sarah's secrets are doctors. Professor Żmuda provides the first written record of Sarah's symptoms, Stosławski becomes her first victim who reveals the negative influence that Sarah has on his personality and health, and Vladek is the first one who decides to fight Sarah and manages to eliminate her completely. The fact that it is medicine that overpowers the vampiric woman in Grabiński's text is not accidental. As Keely Stauter-Halsted explains, in partitioned Poland medical doctors played an important role as those who uncovered and handled pathological tendencies within society, 'functioning at once as liaisons of the ruling state and as advocates of the subject Polish population'.<sup>181</sup> It was doctors' regulatory gaze that at the time of the outbreak of 'venereal plague' in Polish lands at the beginning of the twentieth century identified fallen women as the cause of the syphilis epidemic and called for sexual purity as a means of protecting not only individuals but also the nation:

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<sup>181</sup>Keely Stauter-Halsted, 'The Physician and the Fallen Woman: Medicalizing Prostitution in the Polish Lands', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 20 (2011), 270-290 (p. 273).

Polish-speaking medical authorities engaged in extended discussions about how to remedy the prostitution "plague" with an eye to reforming the nation itself. They set out to rid Polish territory of unsightly and embarrassing dissolute women on display in city centres, concerned that these women might tarnish the international image of the Polish nation'.<sup>182</sup>

As Stauter-Halsted points out, changed sexual behaviour was regarded as a necessary sacrifice required for the "regeneration of our society" and the "love of our nation".<sup>183</sup> It was therefore the power of medicine that at the time was believed strong enough not only to overcome the direct effects of the venereal disease that ravaged the Polish population but also, and most importantly, to purify and strengthen the image of the nation as a whole. Vampiric Sarah, just like the 'venereal plague', decimates Polish men and just like this plague she is identified and eliminated by the doctors.

Another indicator of Sarah's otherness is the foreignness of the setting in which she seduces men. Significantly, the setting of Sarah's hunt is always the salon of her suburban house, the Villa Tophana. In partitioned Poland the salon played a vital role in sustaining Polish language and culture. It was a secure informal space where intellectuals met to discuss literature, art and politics and as such became a symbol of patriotic resistance. Hostesses of the salons often became the supporters of national charities, art and literature. These were mostly the salons of the upper-middle class located in the cities. But beside those patriotic salons there were also those which propagated gossip and frivolous entertainment. As Andrzej Szwarc points out:

The favourite subject of the criticism, produced both by the positivist writers and their conservative opponents, was the aristocratic, landowning or – perhaps even to a greater extent – the salon that imitated the bourgeois one. It was said to favour the forming of a type of a woman who lives only for fun, leading the men on and drawing their attention away from more serious jobs, an intriguer bored with life, hypochondriac, unwitting proponent of the foreign social manner and French language.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>183</sup>Ibid., after *Czystość*, no.6 (1905): 66, no. 9 (1905): 81-82.

<sup>184</sup>Szwarc, 'Krytyka kobiecości...', p. 299.

Sarah's house is nothing like those traditional Polish houses where the patriotic ethos was sustained and her salon is definitely not the one where national subjects are discussed. It is designed as a space which caters for perverse entertainment. It is a trap that lures with its rich, exotic Eastern decorations but at the same time hides the true face of its demonic hostess. The interiors of Sarah's salon that Vladek notices - 'walls covered with silky textile the colour of terracotta', 'exotic plants set in large silver urns', 'Turkish-style ottomans, tabourets, 'long-piled carpets (44-45) - visibly relate it to Eastern chambers. With all its softness and warmth of colours it is more like some exotic bedroom than like a decent living room. What is more, Sarah's relationship with the East is not only reflected in the interiors of her salon. During one of the evenings Sarah chooses to play from all the possible repertoire the dance of the whirling dervishes, the melody which accompanies the meditations and prayers of the members of one of the Muslim sects (53). Sarah's salon is the precise place where the seduction of her victims takes place. Only once tangled into vampire's demonic arms men are allowed into Sarah's bedroom which in this monstrous house serves as a death chamber where they end their earthly existence.

Still, it is not only Sarah's salon that is steeped with mystery and danger. The whole Villa Tophana is one big trap. The very name of Sarah's house indicates danger and it could be read in two ways. Firstly, the name of Sarah's villa echoes that of one of the historic districts of Istanbul, Turkey. The district is the city's oldest industrial zone Tophane-iAmire where the Artillery Corps used to have their headquarters.<sup>185</sup> Indeed, the Villa Tophana is itself a specific kind of armoury hidden in the most familiar environment of suburban Polanka. Nobody expects that this ordinary-looking villa hidden in a vast garden houses a most splendid but at the same time extremely dangerous weapon embodied in the figure of the vampiric woman – Sarah Braga. The other explanation relates the name of Sarah's villa to the name of the seventeenth-century Italian professional poisoner Giulia Toffana who was famous for selling poison to women who wanted to murder their husbands. Her poison, Aqua Tophana, was said to have killed at least six hundred men in Rome alone and was a deadly mixture of arsenic, belladonna, and lead which looked and tasted like ordinary water.<sup>186</sup> Sarah, just like Aqua Tophana, on the first glance

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<sup>185</sup>John Freely. *Istanbul: The Imperial City* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 258.

<sup>186</sup>David Stuart. *Dangerous Garden* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2004), p. 118.

looks innocent and harmless. Yet, she is a deadly woman who quenches men's erotic thirst but at the same time poisons their souls and bodies.

Barbara Zwolińska points out that vampires' dwellings share the characteristic of negating the meaning and arrangements of human abodes.<sup>187</sup> No matter if the vampire inhabits a coffin, dilapidated castle, or a well-kept and richly furnished suburban villa, his/her dwelling always retains an atmosphere of mystery, disgust, perversion or hidden danger. The vampire's home is in Zwolińska's words an 'anti-home',<sup>188</sup> a space that reflects the real nature of its inhabitant. Sarah's villa, which mixes exotic furnishings with the familiar suburban location is clearly an example of such 'anti-home'. It is more like some mysterious theatrical setting similar to both a hotel and a brothel, than like a home.<sup>189</sup>

### **The Lesser Evil: Vampirism as a Safer Alternative to Foreign Otherness in *The Family of the Vourdalak***

In *The Family of the Vourdalak* Tolstoy creates and contradicts two types of otherness. On the one hand, there is the supernatural otherness of the vampirised members of Gorcha's family and on the other that which is embodied in the figure of the Marquis d'Urfé, a foreigner who visits Gorcha's home. Although it may initially appear that it is Gorcha's vampirism that constitutes the most serious threat to the integrity of his family, it soon appears that it in fact acts as an antidote which protects it from the hostile otherness represented by the Marquis d'Urfé.

D'Urfé is not only a foreigner - he is a stranger in constant movement. When we meet him for the first time he is 'an elderly émigré' (93) residing in Vienna. Later on we find out that he was staying for a longer period of time in Warsaw, Poland where he learned to speak Polish (95). During a relatively short period of time he also visits Serbia and Moldavia (94-95). Thus, d'Urfé's self-evident predilection for national diversity which is reflected in the ease with which he adapts to foreign languages and cultures indicates that he does not feel strongly attached to his homeland. It seems that he either does not want to or is unable to settle in one fixed location.

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<sup>187</sup> Zwolińska, *Wampiryzm w literaturze romantycznej...*, p. 176.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p 177.

As a result, he is presented as a 'madman' (94) whose decisions, no matter how absurd they may appear, are irreversible. D'Urfé is therefore a wanderer in constant movement who unlike classic literary wanderer figures does not seem to mind his restless way of life.<sup>190</sup> In fact, his continuous journey instead of making him weary, revitalises his vital energies with endless possibilities for satisfying his sexual appetite, as what interests the Marquis most in all the countries he visits are women.

From the very beginning of the story d'Urfé is characterized as one who breaches moral conventions. He is a dangerous foreign seducer who seems to collect love affairs like travel souvenirs. D'Urfé becomes easily attracted to women but, more importantly, he forgets about his lovers with even greater ease. At the beginning of his story he tells about his passion for the Duchess de Gramont (94). A few pages later he is desperately in love with the Slavic beauty Zdenka (106) only to soon forget about her and fall into the arms of the wife of the Moldavian nobleman (115). Even though d'Urfé does not destroy women literally, he makes them transgress the boundaries of sexual propriety. Significantly, he is much bolder in his advances when it comes to women of a different nationality than his own. After all, the only offence that he dares to commit against the virtue of the Duchesse de Gramont, who is not only the object of his passionate affection but also his fellow compatriot, is an innocently misplaced kiss.<sup>191</sup> Still, this, as he himself calls it, 'gallantry' (95) of d'Urfé's manners is completely gone when it comes to women of a foreign origin. Thus, he rather unscrupulously enters Zdenka's bedroom and holds her in his arms despite her visible opposition and with a similar boldness he boasts about his love affair with a married woman justifying it in the following way:

[R]eared according to French gallantry and ruled by the Gallic blood in my veins, I, of course, could not refuse this lady's flattering approaches. Moreover, considering that I was the French representative at the court of her husband, I regarded it my singular duty to satisfy the desires of the seigneur's noble wife. As you can see, mesdames, I always put the interests of my country above all else...  
(115)

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<sup>190</sup>For more information on the Gothic wanderer figure see Tyler R. Tichelaar, *The Gothic Wanderer: From Transgression to Redemption; Gothic Literature from 1794-Present* (London: Modern History Press, 2012) and Cheryl Holland, *Golems, Vampires and Wanderers. Essays in Gothic Fiction* (lulu.com, 2012).

<sup>191</sup>During their last meeting before d'Urfé's departure on a diplomatic mission to Moldavia the Duchesse de Gramont gives him a small cross as a reminder of their friendship. Still, instead of showing respect to the sacred object by kissing it, d'Urfé kisses the hand of the woman who handles him the cross (95).

Although ironic, the above quotation suggests that d'Urfé sees seducing women he meets during his European escapades almost as a patriotic duty. He gives in to their charm not so much because they are exceptionally attractive but because he perceives them as a means through which he can achieve his diplomatic goals. What is more, just like Sarah Braga of Grabiński's short story, the Marquis d'Urfé does not have the slightest intention of implanting some of his own culture in his foreign lovers. He seduces them and then leaves them marked only with a moral stain and with no visible traces of his native culture. D'Urfé is therefore like a vampire who comes to feed on the innocence and faithfulness of the women he meets during his travels all around Europe.

D'Urfé's vampire-like conduct is also reflected in the fact that he, just like Dracula, cannot enter his victims' home freely. 'Enter. Enter, foreigner' (95) encourages George when d'Urfé hesitates at the doorstep. When analysing Dracula's paradoxical (when we take into consideration his supernatural powers) inability to enter the dwellings of his victims freely, Carol A. Senf comes to the conclusion that the vampire is capable only of affecting these people who voluntarily agree to his influence:

Dracula's behavior confirms that he is an internal, not an external threat. Although perfectly capable of using superior strength when he must defend himself, he usually employs seduction, relying on the others' desires to emulate his freedom from external constraints: ... desires of all the characters to overcome the restraints placed on them by their religion and their law.<sup>192</sup>

Just as Renfield invites Dracula to Seward's mental asylum in the hope of gaining immortality, George lets the stranger enter his family home because he wants to seize his father's patriarchal power.

After his return from the mountains Gorcha soon realizes that he is no longer perceived as familiar by his own family. Even his once faithful dog does not recognize him any more (101). Gorcha's return only compounds George's mistrust. Still, what George does not realise at that point is that the otherness offered by his father is far less dangerous than the one offered by the Marquis d'Urfé. If at the beginning of the story George trusts d'Urfé more than he trusts

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<sup>192</sup>Senf, '*Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror*', p. 427.

his vampirised father, he soon realises that d'Urfé can be far more dangerous than he initially seemed to be. What is more, George has to face a bitter truth – there is no other choice than to let the otherness into his home. Whether it would be the otherness represented by the foreigner or by his own vampirised father, it will dramatically change the way his family functions.

Gorcha, unlike George, is more cautious about the strangers who may potentially threaten the safety of his family. After all, he becomes a vampire after his encounter with the hostile foreigners – the Turkish bandits who torment the whole village and its inhabitants. Even though Gorcha manages to kill Ali-Beg, he comes back home as a changed person. It seems that he acquired some of the cruelty of the Turks he was fighting with. Gorcha brings home Ali-Beg's head and hangs it over the door of his house (102) as a trophy which signals clearly that the negative foreign influences will not be tolerated there. What is more, Gorcha is exceptionally distrustful towards d'Urfé – the stranger who was so willingly accepted by George. He repeatedly watches the Marquis in his sleep (104, 107) and during the whole narrative he does not exchange even a word with him even though he is a guest in his house.

Still, Tolstoy leaves his readers in doubt as to the direct cause of Gorcha's transformation. Gorcha's vampirism may be the result of his armed clash with the Turks but it may also be the factor which protected him from their daggers. While it is true that Gorcha returns as a vampire and infects his whole family, it is precisely this very vampirism that protects Gorcha's relatives from the harmful foreign influence embodied in the Marquis d'Urfé. Just as Gorcha's vampirism helps him eliminate Turkish bandits, so the vampirism of his family protects his daughter Zdenka from d'Urfé's sexual banditry. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that Gorcha does not become an ordinary vampire. Gorcha transforms into a *vourdalak* and *vourdalaks* according to local legends are a very peculiar breed within vampire lore. As d'Urfé explains:

[T]he *vourdalaks* ... are, according to local opinion in Slavic nations, dead bodies that rise from graves in order to suck blood from the living. Although their habits are similar to vampires of other countries, *vourdalaks* prefer to suck the blood of close relatives and friends, who die and become vampires also. (96)

Although George stands in opposition to the otherness represented by his father until the very moment of his own vampirisation, he gradually becomes more and more watchful of d'Urfé's advances to his sister Zdenka. As a result, it is soon both Gorcha and George that

closely monitor d'Urfé's actions. It is therefore both father and son who catch d'Urfé on an attempt to seduce Zdenka:

I stood before her bewildered, when unexpectedly she pointed toward the window, shivering. There was Gorcha peering at us. A heavy arm grabbed my shoulder. I turned around. It was George. (112)

When caught red-handed, d'Urfé automatically points to the window where Gorcha stands as if intentionally distracting George's attention from what had really happened and explains his presence in Zdenka's bedroom by saying that he entered the room in order to warn Zdenka against her father (112). By giving such an explanation d'Urfé attempts to prove his innocence and show that it is Gorcha who really threatens George's family. While at the time when they first watch the couple Gorcha and George are still in opposition to each other, they are soon united not only by the shared concern for Zdenka's virtue but more importantly by vampirism. When Gorcha and George watch the couple for the second time they are both vourdalaks:

My gaze passed for a second across the window where Gorcha was leaning on a bloody stake, peering at me with the eyes of a hyena. In the other window stood George, looking exactly like his father. They were both following my movements closely. (122)

Still, this time it is only d'Urfé who is under surveillance. Zdenka, now marked with vampirism, is safe from Marquis' advances and does not need to be monitored any more.

Hence, George becomes utterly convinced of the threat d'Urfé's otherness poses only when he himself becomes a vourdalak. George tells d'Urfé to leave his house only after he comes back from chasing his vampirised father into the woods in an attempt to stake his heart. Still, when saying his goodbyes to d'Urfé George no longer seems to be his old composed self. He shudders and his teeth chatter 'as if from the cold'(114). Even though the monk from the nearby Monastery of Our Lady under the Oak later on relates to d'Urfé the whole chain of events that lead to Gorcha's family's vampirisation and claims that it was George's wife who infected him with this terrible disease, we may suspect that George is already infected at the day of d'Urfé's departure.

Gorcha's family's vampirism can be therefore read as a shield that protects its members (and particularly Zdenka) from the sexual threat represented by the dangerous foreigner embodied in the Marquis d'Urfé. D'Urfé is unable to break the defence Zdenka's vampirism offers. It is much stronger than his own predatory nature as it is shared by all the members of Gorcha's family. D'Urfé cannot pass his foreign otherness to Gorcha's daughter, but at the same time Zdenka can easily pass her vampire otherness to d'Urfé. In such circumstances, the Marquis has no other option than to give up his advances and run for his life. But in the final scene of d'Urfé's story despite his desperate efforts to escape Zdenka's arms, she manages to bite the Marquis' neck. And although D'Urfé proudly declares to his listeners that he is 'not thirsty for ... blood' (125), his declaration seems to be untrue not so much because he was bitten by a vampirised woman but because he retained his dangerous vampire-like seductiveness.

\* \* \*

Regardless of whether the vampire openly aims at a nation's conquest by the means of infecting it with his contaminated blood as Count Dracula does, or like Grabiński's Sarah Braga operates within a nation methodically eliminating its members and therefore aiming at its complete annihilation, he or she can be quite clearly interpreted as an accurate representation of the fears connected with the negative influence of the foreign, the other that threatens the integrity and unity of the nation. Yet, as the chapter has shown, the otherness represented by the vampire can as well function as a safe alternative which protects against unwanted external influences. In Tolstoy's *The Family of the Vourdalak* vampirism not only saves Zdenka from becoming d'Urfé's sexual prey and eliminates the foreigner from the family circle, but it also allows for the reestablishment of the disturbed bonds between members of Gorcha's family.

Although each of the authors fashioned the otherness of their vampires differently, they all in more or less obvious ways used it to demonstrate how dangerous the influence of the other could be. Thus, the atmosphere of obvious distrust or even hostility towards everything that represents the other, as well as concerns for the internal integrity of the nation and the self, are clearly marked in all three texts.

Vampires in Grabiński's, Stoker's and Tolstoy's stories are either foreigners themselves

(Count Dracula, Sarah Braga) or fight the foreign using their vampire qualities as a shield that protects them from unwanted external influence (Marquis d'Urfé). As a result, each of the texts alludes to the cultural difference of the one who is perceived as foreign, reflected in Dracula's Eastern origin, Sarah's mysterious connection to many different and often contradictory racial, cultural and religious backgrounds, and d'Urfé's unquenched, vampiric sexual desires. Still, although the means through which the foreign affects the familiar in these three texts significantly differ, it invariably negates the arrangements of the familiar and tries to establish its own order on its territory. Thus, Count Dracula infects British women with his foreign blood and by doing so initiates the appearance of a new race within the British borders, Sarah Braga adapts her suburban villa to serve as a space that caters for perverse bodily pleasures but at the same time literally consumes those who cross its threshold and the Marquise d'Urfé makes his predatory advances to the defenceless Zdenka making use of the temporarily disturbed relations in Gorcha's family. It is therefore multidimensional foreignness that brings disturbance in these texts and threatens the previously stable spaces of the familiar.

What is more, it is this very foreignness that in the first place constructs the monstrous otherness of the stranger in *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House* and *The Family of the Vourdalak*. Count Dracula, Sarah Braga and the Marquise d'Urfé are perceived as a threat not so much because they have supernatural powers (Dracula, Sarah Braga) or are seducers (Sarah Braga, Marquise d'Urfé) but because their customs and behaviour are contrary to the norms established by the familiar.

## Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to add further dimension and scope to the understanding of vampire motifs as presented in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century vampire fiction, understood as a unique sub-genre of Gothic fiction. The thesis has introduced and focused on the interpretation of possible meanings of vampires in British, Polish and Russian texts of the period. Through the examination of different incarnations of literary vampires as presented in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Stefan Grabiński's *In Sarah's House* and Alexis Konstantinovich Tolstoy's *The Family of the Vourdalak*, the thesis has demonstrated that at the time the vampire became a powerful symbol capable of reflecting fin-de-siècle fears and taboos. The three texts examined in this thesis engage with the legendary vampire and equip it with a set of features that allow it to function as an apt metaphor of a border-crosser who, because of its constant movement, brings disturbance to the established frontiers of human identity. What is more, the thesis has shown that the vampire could both embody distorted gender and national identities and function as a catalyst generating changes within human identities. However, although the vampires of Stoker's, Grabiński's and Tolstoy's stories correspond to shared fin-de-siècle concerns regarding the stability of human identity, they are distinctly different in many aspects. The thesis has demonstrated the ways in which similar meanings are conveyed through alternative means. It has also argued that the vampires presented in these texts represent diversity rather than uniformity; consequently, the implications of their vampiric actions are very different.

My research has shown how in *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House*, and *The Family of the Vourdalak* these differences can be seen in the vampires' motives, methods and scope. Thus, in Stoker's novel the vampire is a male who targets women with the aim of establishing his own dominion within the borders of the British nation. Although Stoker makes sure that his vampire infects only women, his presence also affects men who when confronted with the vampire-altered spaces of femininity appear to lose their previously stable masculinity. Unlike *Dracula*, Grabiński's vampire is a woman who skilfully blends into the diverse Polish society and successfully eliminates its male members. Vampiric Sarah Braga neither drinks her victims' blood nor infects them with her own polluted blood but instead annihilates them completely

making their minds regress and their bodies gradually dematerialize. But as Tolstoy's story shows, vampirism can also become an alternative to hostile foreign otherness. In *The Family of the Vourdalak* vampirism is not only passed exclusively to the members of Gorcha's family, but it also unifies them and allows them to oppose the sexual threat posed to Zdenka by the Marquise d'Urfé.

Moreover, the three authors demonstrate that the implications of fighting or falling prey to the vampire vary. Thus, although in all three stories the vampire is described by his or her opponents as an explicitly hostile and dangerous element that has to be eliminated or avoided by all means, he or she is also, to varying extents, mirrored by them. As a result, those who fight vampires often mimic their cruelty, while a vampire's victims often share in his or her distorted gender.

Thus the three texts analysed in this thesis engage with the vampire, but equip their monsters with very different meanings. This suggests that at the time the idea of the vampire was flexible enough not only to appeal to but also to encapsulate many different cultural spaces. Inevitably both readers and critics have equated the vampire mainly with Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as the cult vampire text of the fin-de-siècle, but this thesis has introduced other vampire texts, either completely forgotten or unknown in the present day Western world. These texts were not only published around the same time Stoker's most famous novel emerged, they also share in Stoker's innovative approach to the vampire as a metaphor capable of conveying various and often very controversial meanings. As a result, this study has broadened the scope of fin-de-siècle vampire fiction studies and allows for greater resonance and understanding of the vampire motifs as presented not only in British but also in Polish and Russian texts of the time.

The first chapter of the thesis has analysed the ways in which the vampire's presence in Stoker's, Grabiński's and Tolstoy's texts rearranges nineteenth-century standards of femininity. In all three texts it is the vampire whose proximity either initiates or intensifies changes within the gender construction of women who start to negate the roles defined for them by patriarchal society. Thus, the vampire not only alters femininity but also allows women to see the artificiality of the roles imposed on them by nineteenth-century standards of gender correctness. At the same time, the chapter has shown that it is the male judging eye that stigmatises vampire-altered spaces of femininity reflected in women's appearance and behaviour, as irrefutably

negative. Monstrous femininity is therefore unleashed by and directly related to the vampire's presence. As a result, woman and her body become a site of hidden pathological tendencies that not only negate the idea of 'proper' femininity but also threaten the standards of masculinity. The chapter has argued that the vampire, and more precisely his or her touch is the factor which causes changes within the construction of femininity, but it is the patriarchal eye that marks these changes as negative.

This section has also demonstrated the different forms that vampire-altered femininity takes in these texts. It has focused on the category of woman's beauty and her maternal role and argued that when under the vampire's influence both categories become severely distorted. As a result, the beauty of the women in Stoker's, Grabiński's and Tolstoy's texts is neither perfect nor permanent. It is only a misleading outer layer that on the one hand covers inner contamination but on the other discretely reveals it to those who come into contact with these women. Each of the women who come into contact with the vampire has some more or less obvious flaw that prevents the men who describe these women from classifying their looks as explicitly beautiful. Moreover, as Stoker's *Dracula* implies, absolute beauty is unattainable for both 'pure' and vampirised women; a woman can be called beautiful only when she is temporarily immobilized, on the border of these two spheres, and therefore accessible neither to men nor to the vampire. Another indicator of vampire-altered femininity in *Dracula*, *In Sarah's House* and *The Family of the Vourdalak* is the negation or pathologisation of the maternal instincts displayed by the women in these texts. No matter whether they feed on children, act to the disadvantage of their offspring or consciously reject maternal functions, women of Stoker's, Grabiński's and Tolstoy's stories openly spurn the role of a mother which at the period was regarded one of the prime duties and pleasures of a 'proper' woman's life. Therefore, by rejecting or transgressing their maternal role women in these texts in fact reject the system of values propagated by British, Polish and Russian patriarchal society of the time.

At the same time, although in each of these texts signs of imperfect femininity in women are visible even prior to their encounter with the vampire, the chapter has shown that it is precisely at the moment of direct contact with the vampire that the unwanted tendencies in character's gender construction are intensified. In each of these texts, whether it takes the form of a perverted vampire kiss, embrace or sexual intercourse, the vampire touch releases strong, often surprising, but in all cases unwanted emotions and invariably leads to the negative

consequences for those who experience it. The vampire touch frees those who are touched from social, moral and cultural restraints but at the same time invariably leads to their gradual regression from the established standards of gender correctness and consequently to their exclusion from the circle of 'proper' gender identities. Thus, those who were touched by the vampire (or touched him or her themselves) have to face punishment which in these texts takes many different forms, from Lucy's staking in Stoker's *Dracula* to the complete dematerialization of Stosławski's body in Grabiński's *In Sarah's House*.

The second chapter of the thesis has demonstrated how vampire-altered femininity acts upon and rearranges the apparently stable category of nineteenth-century masculinity. In all three texts, a woman is the medium through which unwanted tendencies reach and spread. Thus, Stoker, Grabiński and Tolstoy present a severely distorted femininity through women who either question or ridicule men and their masculinity. At the same time, the signs of monstrous femininity are often visible prior to the revelation of vampiric identity: every time they question, contradict or reject the authority of men. As a result, men in these texts start to lose their established function as those in society who hold power and status. In an often desperate attempt to regain their lost position they start to manifest symptoms and behaviours which in fact undermine their status to an even greater extent. They abuse the power they possess and despite their declarations of the value of friendship use even this relationship to achieve their personal goals and prove their own superiority. Yet, despite these attempts to preserve their supposedly stable masculinities they all, to varying extents, fail in doing so. Thus all the three texts present visions of severely distorted pathological masculinity that results in men's mental instability and 'dishonourable' actions. Whether it is through the obsessive habit of recording not only their own thoughts but also all the events and details of the surrounding world (Harker, Seward), the conscious rejection of male activeness in an intimate relationship (Vladek), or the continuous struggle for and abuse of power (Van Helsing, George), it invariably indicates that the imperfect masculinity in these texts can be even more dangerous than vampire-altered femininity.

As masculinity becomes highly ambiguous in the presence of vampire-altered femininity it has to be supervised and judged by other men in much the same way as is the behaviour and appearance of women. Therefore, as the chapter has shown, Stoker's, Grabiński's and Tolstoy's stories reveal how unstable the category of masculinity is at the fin-de-siècle. Each of the three authors creates a man who despite his determination is too weak to oppose the influence the

vampire has on women and who is consequently unable to restore the previous order of submissive women and powerful men.

The final chapter of the thesis has demonstrated how the vampire's presence threatens the categories of national unity and integrity. In all three texts the authors either place the source of the direct threat in the vampire's foreignness or relate the passages of their stories to negative foreign influence; as a result they demonstrate that it is the foreign that endangers human identity most. Chapter Three has shown how the foreignness of the vampire (*Dracula*, *In Sarah's House*) but also the foreignness of those who come into contact with the vampire (*The Family of the Vourdalak*) threatens the idea of national unity and integrity. Thus, the vampire in these texts is the other because he or she is the foreigner in the first place. Although the foreignness in each of these texts takes different forms, (Count Dracula's Eastern European origin, Sarah Braga's multiracial and multicultural background, the Marquise d'Urfé's foreign, almost vampiric sexual appetite), it invariably undermines the integrity of the familiar at whose borders it aims.

What is more, hostile foreignness in these texts is reflected in two main ways: the unrestrained sexual appetite of the foreigners, and their connection with the East. In each of these texts the foreign attacks the borders of the familiar by means of his or her sexuality, but with a different aim and using different methods. In Stoker's *Dracula* and in Grabiński's *In Sarah's House* it is the vampire that embodies hostile foreignness and who seduces either women or men of the nation, attempting its pollution by foreign vampire blood or its complete annihilation. Yet, paradoxically, when confronted with the foreign, vampirism can, as Tolstoy's story shows, be a safer option. Thus, in *The Family of the Vourdalak* it is the foreignness of the Marquis d'Urfé and not the otherness offered by the vampire that threatens the integrity and unity of the sphere of the familiar represented by Gorcha's family. What is more, each of the texts depicts the East and its cultural difference as a source of supposed danger that can destroy the arrangements of the civilised Western world. Although each of the authors represent countries which geographically are located in different parts of Europe (western Britain, central-European Poland and Eastern Russia) they all warn against the threat that comes from the East, reflected in Count Dracula's Eastern-European origin, the typically eastern interiors of Sarah Braga's villa and Turkish bandits that torment Gorcha's village in Tolstoy's story.

Overall, the thesis has argued that at the fin-de-siècle it is the vampire or rather its close

proximity to people that causes unwanted changes in the structure of human identity. Of course, literary vampires of the period do suck blood and do kill their victims but what is really important in the creation of vampires in Stoker's, Grabiński's, and Tolstoy's stories is the fact that they interfere with the boundaries which limit and define late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century identities. Count Dracula, Sarah Braga and Gorcha's vampirised family cross the borders of gender correctness and national unity, and so do the mortals who encounter them in these texts.

The result of this study suggests that there is still more to be learned about the incarnations of the vampire in fin-de-siècle literature. This thesis has targeted analysis and comparison of the vampire motifs as presented in texts by authors who are not generally known, with the exception of Stoker. The investigation of Grabiński's and Tolstoy's texts has drawn on concepts developed in the criticism of *Dracula*, but developed and applied it to these largely unstudied texts; research on Grabiński's and Tolstoy's literary work both in their native countries and abroad is still very limited. Given the restraints of time and words, I have focused on the relationship Stoker's, Grabiński's and Tolstoy's vampires have with the distorted spaces of human identity, but there remain other equally interesting aspects of these texts that suggest a productive field for future study. Examples include the way in which these texts depict religion, and how they create innovative Gothic settings.

What is more, at a time when studies of Gothic literature have become an important element of literary research, the work of both Grabiński and Tolstoy is worth rediscovering. While Tolstoy limited his work to a few Gothic stories which date back to the first half of the nineteenth century, Grabiński's legacy provides a whole range of short stories and novels which depict the supernatural and macabre in all its possible forms and meanings. Further analysis of the work of both Grabiński and Tolstoy can contribute to a better understanding of the supernatural, and complement existing knowledge about its various representations and meanings in nineteenth-century literature in a broader European context.

Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio point out that monsters and especially vampires will never lose their relevance:

Because monsters are always the constitutive outside of normality, the scapegoats constructed of society's devouring anxieties, they can never safely be tucked away. Revenants always return because the "human" is always a category under reconstruction, and the outside must be constantly re-articulated so the inside can imagine itself as stable, viable, natural.<sup>193</sup>

Therefore, since one's identity as a human can never be permanently defined there remains a space for uncertainty that can be filled with creatures that emerge from and feed on human fear and instability. Vampires, as one of the most easily-recognisable products of fin-de-siècle literature, fit this void as no other monsters do, and thus play a key role in British, Polish and Russian texts of the period.

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<sup>193</sup>Charles E. Prescott, Grace A. Giorgio, 'Vampiric affinities: Mina Harker and the paradox of femininity in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33 (2005), pp. 487-516 (p. 507).

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