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**“Come Away, O Human Child”: The Role of Folkloric Children in
Nineteenth-Century British and Russian Literature**

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Nineteenth-Century British and Russian Literature**

by

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Dissertation

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Dedication

To my parents, Konstantin and Lyudmila Trenochnikov

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“Come Away, O Human Child”: The Role of Folkloric Children in Nineteenth-Century British and Russian Literature

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2015

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Cultural production in nineteenth-century Britain and Russia was characterized by two important phenomena that affected the literary sphere and visual arts – a burgeoning interest in folklore and a perception of childhood as a privileged space. In my dissertation, I explore how these two spheres converged in the figure of the folkloric child. I also uncover the semiotic dimensions of the binary oppositions intrinsic to the discourse of supernatural children, such as human – monster, child – non-child, cultural insider – Other. In my comparative analysis of supernatural children in Russian and English folklore, I focus on two main categories of supernatural children – unbaptized spirits and fairy changelings – and note the various affective responses they invoke in the bearers of culture. Narratives that focus on unbaptized children are characterized by a sense of communal guilt, whereas in changeling tales, interactions between the human world and the Otherworld are characterized by battles for resources in a contested semiotic space.

In the second half of my dissertation, I show how supernatural children influenced prominent literary texts of the nineteenth century. Analyzing the influence of folkloric children on Russian literature, I examine the works of Fedor Dostoevskii and Fedor

Sologub, two major writers with shared interest both in uncanny children and in folklore. In their writings, the folkloric child signifies the cultural anxieties specific to nineteenth-century Russia, from commodification of traditional culture to encroaching westernization and loss of spiritual identity. For comparison, I turn to an analysis of the changeling myth in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. These two novels actively use motifs from the lore of changelings to develop the theme of colonialism and its influence on the lives of the colonized or peripheral Others. The study of Otherness that constitutes the body of this dissertation is informed by Yuri Lotman's theory of semiotic core/periphery, as well as by Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection and J.J. Cohen's examination of monstrosity and its cultural significance.

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Introduction

Nineteenth-century Britain and Russia witnessed the emergence of two phenomena that affected the literary sphere as well as the popular imagination – a burgeoning interest in folklore and a perception of childhood as a privileged sphere, endowed with redemptive properties. Both phenomena were fueled by nostalgia for a natural, restorative space that could be equated with the world of the folk or with an idealized vision of childhood. When the Romantic appreciation for the sublime, unconquered nature clashed in Britain with the legacy of the Enlightenment in the form of rapid industrialization and urbanization, this nostalgia intensified. Although Russia, with its vast peasant population, did not experience such a distinct break from traditional culture, and *dvoeverie* was alive and well even in the nineteenth century, Slavophile circles were concerned with what they perceived to be a growing westernization and loss of traditional Russian values, most notably, *sobornost*¹. In *On Longing*, Susan Stewart argues that nostalgia is a social disease, and desire, as its major symptom and propelling force, always looks toward the future-past, “both engendering and transcending the relation between materiality and meaning” (ix – x). The temporal and spatial orientation of nineteenth-century nostalgia lent itself to the possibility of re-enchanting the

¹ The doctrine of *sobornost* was first introduced by the nineteenth-century Slavophile philosopher Aleksei Khomiakov. Although *sobornost* was originally an ecclesiastic term, referring to the unity of all believers in the mystic body of Christ, Khomiakov extended it to secular community, provided it is united by Christian values, ethical norms, and mutual love. An example of *sobornost* was the traditional peasant commune (*mir*), which the Slavophile treated as an embodiment of collective values, counterpoised to the extreme individualism of the west (Rosenthal 147; Hamburg 45 – 48).

increasingly fragmentary modernity by paying special attention to the spheres of folklore and childhood. As a result, the cultural production of the time was characterized by an explosion of ethnographic writing and a proliferation of literature for and about children.

In my dissertation, I explore how the nineteenth-century preoccupation with folklore and childhood converged in the figure of the supernatural child, firmly grounded in folklore yet appearing as an important player in the literary scene. Specifically, I conduct a comparative analysis of the English and Russian lore of supernatural children and, on the basis of these observations, explore what attracted nineteenth-century writers to these beliefs; how the appropriation of folkloric tropes influenced the structure of literary works; and what culturally-specific plots evolved from their folkloric origins. By choosing for my analysis the two countries as geographically distant as Britain and Russia, I hope to trace the representations of supernatural children from east to west, across a wide spectrum of folkloric traditions, and thus present a more holistic overview of folk beliefs about children. Moreover, the analysis of these two distinct semiotic spheres brings into focus the borderline area, Ukraine and Poland, where, as I will argue, we notice a greater hybridization of folk beliefs about supernatural children, namely, changelings.

In my analysis, I attempt to uncover the semiotic dimensions of the binary oppositions intrinsic to the discourse of supernatural children, such as human – monster, child – non-child, cultural insider – Other. The study of Otherness that constitutes the body of this dissertation is informed by Yuri Lotman's theory of semiotic core/periphery,

as well as by Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection as a cultural sorting mechanism that constructs boundaries around the cultural core and expels from it all that “disturbs identity, system, order”(4). Within the overarching category of Otherness, my study of supernatural children as monsters follows the analytical guidelines summarized in J.J. Cohen's article “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” which posits monstrosity as an indicator of cultural fears and anxieties, projected onto the image of the alien.

To determine the significance of the discourse of supernatural children to the British and Russian literary production of the nineteenth century, it is necessary to contextualize it and, furthermore, treat it as a nodal point of two larger cultural phenomena that I have mentioned above – the proliferation of folkloric research and the preoccupation with childhood that, in tandem, brought to the cultural foreground the figure of the supernatural child. The nostalgia for the folk ways that permeated Victorian England vivifies Raymond Williams' comparison of nostalgic perspective with a moving escalator, which carries us further and further from the “good ol’ days” as we unravel history in order to find them (9 – 11). However, as Williams asserts in the opening paragraphs of *The Country and the City*, the countryside has historically been interpreted not only as an organic, refreshing, and redemptive space but also as “a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation” (1). This dual perspective on the periphery and, by extension, folklore as its product, influenced ethnographic research in Britain as well as in Russia. While scholarly interest in folklore was valorized in nineteenth-century Britain, any actual susceptibility to superstition earned ridicule. This is particularly true

for the first decades of the nineteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution was driving urban and rural areas further apart, although plenty of overlap still existed. In particular, servants acted as mediators between the cultural core and the periphery, and this proximity to “low culture” disturbed educators, including Maria Edgeworth and Mary Wollstonecraft². For example, Edgeworth's writings on education reveal her bias against the inclusion of fairy tales in reading curricula for children, because such tales stimulate the imagination without simultaneously affecting sentiment (*Practical Education* 250). The goal of the folklore collectors of that period was not only to preserve the vestiges of ancient superstition but to decry their falsehood. Ethnographers strived to codify what they considered to be the “crude” oral tradition and thus alienate it from its bearers who, once separated from their cultural poesis, could then rediscover it in printed form and gain a new, more critical view of the same superstitions that they had, until that time, taken for granted. In anticipation of an enlightened future, the famous folklore collector Thomas Crofton Croker described his project of gathering Irish folk tales as a cultural hybridization that would bring peripheral Ireland closer to the hegemonic English culture: “When rational education shall be diffused among the misguided peasantry of Ireland, the belief in such supernatural beings must disappear in that country, as it has done in England, and these “shadowy tribes” will live only in books” (362).

² It is worth noting that in imperial Russia, the role of servants in transmitting folklore was evaluated differently. As Andrew Wachtel argues, the nineteenth-century myth of gentry childhood always included the nanny, a woman of the people depicted as a “source of folk wisdom and wholesome goodness” rather than a source of contamination (106). Through the agency of nannies, the Russian gentry childhood, be it actual or mythologized, absorbed folklore and established a new kind of fairy tale with its own set of stock characters – kind parents and faithful serfs.

The role that Victorian ethnographic research played in the politics of internal colonialism brings Nancy Armstrong to the conclusion that “the wholesale transformation of indigenous culture into information that could be distributed on a mass basis created an entirely new world of primitive people, places, and things in relation to which members of the literate elite were positioned as observers” (248). Even more poignantly, Renato Rosaldo describes Victorian nostalgia for the pristine folk culture, as it stood at the time of its encounter with the colonizer, “an imperialist nostalgia,” its hypocrisy offset by the fact that the “agents of colonialism long for the very forms of life that they intentionally altered or destroyed”³ (69).

Later, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the perspective of folkloric research undergoes a transformation, as more folklorists attempt to use their research for the purpose of decolonization. Most notably, folk beliefs are celebrated in the works of ethnographers who espoused theosophical beliefs, like the Anglo-Irish poet and folklorist W.B. Yeats or the American anthropologist Walter Evans-Wentz. Unlike their predecessors, who treated folklore as a rapidly disappearing form of cultural production, these folklorists viewed it as a salient phenomenon in the Irish countryside and, Yeats, especially, praised it as a legitimate basis for cultural identity. Instead of tying Irish folklore to a larger mythological context, Yeats searches for the quintessential “Irishness,” which he envisions as concrete and graspable. While disparaging Croker for

³ Even though Rosaldo discusses “imperialist nostalgia” primarily in relation to the colonization of the Third World countries, I believe that it is equally applicable to domestic colonialism and the view of Ireland as the Other in relation to England.

his “humorization” of fairy tales and praising--yet ultimately rejecting--Lady Wilde's conception of the “dreaming Celt,” he nonetheless believes in the existence of a “national spirit” (6-7)⁴. In *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries*, Evans-Wentz highlights the reality or even hyper-reality of peasants in contrast to city dwellers, whom he criticizes for their alienation from nature and consequently from self:

The great majority of men in cities are apt to pride themselves on their own exemption from 'superstition', and to smile pityingly at the poor countrymen and countrywomen who believe in fairies. But when they do so they forget that, with all their own admirable progress in material invention, with all the far-reaching data of their acquired science, with all the vast extent of their commercial and economic conquests, they themselves have ceased to be natural. (xxxiii)

Despite the relatively late emergence of Russian ethnography⁵, Russian folkloric research caught up to European trends in the nineteenth century and resulted in the production of such major collections of folk texts as Alexander Afanas'ev's *Russian Folk Tales* (*Narodnye russkie skazki*), published in eight volumes between 1855 and 1863. Following the success of the multivolume edition, Afanas'ev's *Russian Folk Legends* (*Narodnye russkie legendy*) appeared in 1859, and *Russian Secret Tales* (*Russkie*

⁴ In his search for national identity through rediscovery of native folklore, Yeats is indebted to the theories of Johann Gottfried Herder that were widely disseminated in Europe in the nineteenth-century. In *Yeats, Shakespeare, and Irish Cultural Nationalism*, Oliver Hennessey traces the ideas of the Irish revivalists, including Yeats, back to Herder (7 – 8); the same connection is further explored by Barry Sheils in his article “‘Dark Cognition’: W.B. Yeats, J.G. Herder and the Imperfection of Tradition” (*Irish Studies Review* 20.1): 299-321.

⁵ James Riordan blames the delay in the Russian study of folk tales on “the dead hand of Church censorship” (221) but neglects to mention that in post-Petrine Russia, censorship was associated not as much with the ecclesiastic as with the state control of literature. Moreover, Riordan's haphazard chronology of folklore studies in Russia omits the eighteenth century, which yielded several important folklore collections, including Kirsha Danilov's *The Ancient Russian Poems* (*Drevnie russkie stikhotvorenia*, compiled in the mid eighteenth century, published in 1804) and Mikhail Chulkov's *The Alphabet of Russian Superstitions* (*Abevega russkikh sueverii*, 1786).

zavetnye skazki) – in 1872⁶. Other notable examples of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russian ethnography include Fedor Buslaev's *Historical Sketches of Russian Folklore and Art (Istoricheskie ocherki russkoi narodnoi slovesnosti i iskusstva*, 1861); Mikhail Zabylin's *Russian People: Their Customs, Rituals, Lore, Superstition, and Poetry (Russkii narod: ego obychai, obriady, predania, sueveria i poezia*, 1880); and Maksimov's 1903 study of “the unclean force.” Moreover, through the works of Nikolai Gogol, Russian readers acquired a taste for Ukrainian folklore. In the second part of the nineteenth century, the lore of the periphery spread to the cultural core by means of numerous publications that examined various aspects of Ukrainian life – food-ways, marriage and funeral customs, folk medicine, etc. Among such ethnographic studies are Markevich's comprehensive *Customs, Beliefs, Cuisine, and Drinks of the Little Russians (Obychai, poveria, kukhnia i napitki malorossiian*, 1860); Dragomanov's *Little Russian Folk Legends and Tales (Malorusskie narodnye predania i rasskazy*, 1876); and Chubinskii's four volumes of Ukrainian folklore (1872 – 1878).

Like their Victorian counterparts, Russian ethnographers had mixed feelings about their research and its role in contemporary culture. The predominant school of thought, originated by the Grimms, was the so-called “mythological school,” which counted among its followers such outstanding folklorists as Aleksandr Afanas'ev and

⁶ The fate of these two folklore collections illustrates the dire conditions under which Russian folklorists had to labor. In 1860, the police raided Afanas'ev's apartment and the printing house that published *Russian Folk Legends*, an anthology that was considered immoral and blasphemous by church authorities. After the second edition was confiscated and burned, the embittered Afanas'ev traveled abroad, taking with him the manuscript of the *Secret Tales*. These bawdy tales were published posthumously in Geneva (Riordan 222 – 223; Haney 31).

Fedor Buslaev (Haney xxxi). They shared the Grimms' theory that folktales, especially wondertales, were derived from myths and reflected ancient beliefs about geographical and meteorological phenomena⁷. Although the views of the “mythological school” have long since been disparaged, the school was recognized for its historical context, as it encouraged a comparative analysis of folklore and, in a sense, defended folk beliefs by positing them as a valid object of academic inquiry. At the same time, while Russian folklore was upheld as a scholarly discipline, it was censured as an epistemological model that still shaped the belief system and life style of a certain segment of the population. If anything, an attachment to folk beliefs revealed to ethnographers the deplorable lack of education among the peasantry of Russia and Ukraine. The view of folklore as productive for some purposes yet injurious for others is tersely expressed in the introduction to Zabylin's collection of folk beliefs. After lamenting the fact that folklore is underrepresented in academic curricula, Zabylin offers to fill in the gaps he sees, and his project aims at enlightenment rather than mere education. By studying the origins of superstitious beliefs and examining their penetration into the psyche, the ethnographer hopes to achieve “the purification of our life from the strange customs and removal of prejudices”⁸ (ii). Nonetheless, Slavophile writers like Fedor Dostoevskii sought in their native folklore the quintessential Russianness that could resist the

⁷ Afanas'ev indebtedness to the “mythological school,” which lay the foundation of his study *The Poetic Views of the Slavs on Nature (Poeticheskie vozzrenia slavian na prirodu, 1869)*, prompts Jack Haney to call him not only Russia's equivalent of the Grimms but also “the Russians' Sir James Frazer of *The Golden Bough*” (xxxii).

⁸ Reading these lines, one is reminded of the famous “séance of black magic with its exposure” in Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*.

encroachment of westernization. For Dostoevskii, the beliefs in Mother Damp Earth and folk Christianity, as in Grushenka's fable about an onion, have the capacity to redeem souls that have been stained by western nihilism and restore a community to the state of *sobornost*.

The heightened interest in childhood, characteristic of nineteenth-century Russia and Britain, was as rife with contradictions as the obsession with folklore and its preservation in printed media⁹. The legal status of children became a universal concern, which led to a series of legislative measures that defined the boundaries of childhood and regulated children's rights and responsibilities. In Victorian England, progressive laws such as the Mines Act (1842) and Chimney Sweepers' Act (1875)¹⁰ singled out children from the larger category of the working class by restricting child labor, while the Education Act (1870) set the foundations for mass elementary schooling in England and Wales. Campaigns against the sexual exploitation of children also yielded significant

⁹ The concept of childhood as a historically, culturally, and socially determined construction, as opposed to a natural and instinctive state, has been a source of heated scholarly debates since the 1960s, with the publication of Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood*. Aries designated childhood as a recent development, arguing that the current western concept of parent-child relationships did not exist in the Middle Ages. Instead, the material reality of the medieval world loosened the emotional bond between parents and children (411). In *Foundations of Psychohistory*, Lloyd De Mause went one step further and proclaimed parental affection to be an exclusive characteristic of the modern-day family. He reconceptualized the history of childhood as the history of child abuse, famously stating that "the further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused" (1). As expected, these claims stirred opposition in scholarly circles. Among other matters, the opponents of Aries attacked his analysis of children in visual arts, refuting his arguments that children were deliberately represented as "little adults" and instead pointing to such factors as artistic technique or even the proficiency of the artists. In the 1980s, the history of childhood was subject to another revision, leading to the consensus that love and affection had always been a vital part of family relations (Cunningham 2). Eventually the arguments of Aries and his critics were synthesized, whereby modern historians of childhood agree that parents have always been emotionally attached to their offspring but also recognize an evolution in child-rearing practices.

¹⁰ It superseded a similar act of 1840 that attempted to limit child labor but was never fully enforced.

results: in 1875, Parliament raised the age of consent for girls from 12 to 13; and in 1885, William Stead's crusade against juvenile prostitution resulted in the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which established the age of consent for girls at 16¹¹. Until the 1860s, similar welfare efforts in imperial Russia were complicated by the presence of serfdom, which put child serfs at greater risk for illiteracy and abuse. Elementary education for child serfs was available inconsistently, dependent primarily on the good will of landlords and factory owners¹². However, the abolition of serfdom in 1861 ushered in an era of Great Reforms that, among other initiatives, gave the lower classes access to education. In 1864, the Ministry of Education adopted a Public School Statute that set the grounds for developing a system of national schools to educate the newly freed population (Ziegler 54). Additionally, the laws of 1882, 1884, and 1885 regulated child labor in private factories, although they did not address the working conditions of the minors employed in agriculture, domestic service, or workshops (Gorshkov 148). Nevertheless, in both Russia and Britain, child labor and child abuse were no longer taken for granted, as they violated the now normative paradigm of childhood as a privileged category.

¹¹ In a series of sensationalist articles united under the title *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon*, the evangelical journalist William Stead depicted the horrors of the London underworld and the ubiquity of child prostitution. Campaigning for justice, he conducted a controversial experiment that involved purchasing an English girl with the alleged purpose of selling her to a Continental brothel. For a comprehensive analysis of child sexual abuse in Victorian England and campaigns for raising the age of consent, see Louise Jackson's *Child Sexual Abuse in Victorian England*. London, New York: Routledge, 2000.

¹² For an extensive analysis of the education of working-class children in imperial Russia, see Boris Gorshkov's *Russia's Factory Children: State, Society, and Law, 1800-1917* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009): 128 – 174.

Commenting on Victorian perceptions of childhood, James Kincaid contends, “A child is not, in itself, anything. Any image, body, or being we can hollow out, purify, exalt, abuse and locate sneakily in a field of desire will do for us as a ‘child’” (5). Throughout nineteenth-century British and Russian history, a variety of different images was fitted into what Kincaid calls “child as perceptual frame” (62). One such frame, which eventually grew to include children from all social classes, was the view of childhood as a distinct space of innocence. According to Philippe Aries, the Romantic child replaced the “miniature adult” in the eighteenth century as the dominant representation of the child, while the nineteenth century witnessed a further solidification of the image of a child as an innocent in need of special protection¹³. As Hugh Cunningham argues, towards the end of the nineteenth century “within middle-class circles, the sense that childhood was properly the happiest time of life was emerging in its fullest vigour; to many the adult world seemed increasingly distasteful and threatening, and the ideal existence came to be thought of as the life of a child sheltered within a garden” (134). With certain reservations, Cunningham's conclusions can be applied to the Russian gentry and the middle class, which, although nascent, was gaining prominence in the second half of the century. In this privileged milieu, children were spared the harsh realities of industrial and agricultural labor and, therefore, could enjoy

¹³ Countering the view of nineteenth-century childhood as a monolithic concept, Kincaid identifies several fetishized representations of children, including the angelically pure “gentle child” and the “naughty child,” instrumental for re-enacting the fantasy of resentment and nostalgia (217 - 248). His third category, the elusive children who cannot be either cuddled or disciplined, does not undermine the other two but likewise titillates the fantasies of child-lovers (277).

the pleasures of modern childhood. Andrew Wachtel traces the myth of the happy Russian childhood to Leo Tolstoy's novella *Childhood* (*Detstvo*, 1852), a seminal work of fiction later imitated or deconstructed by Russian writers. According to Wachtel, “If there is a single overarching message in *Childhood*, it is that childhood is an essentially happy period. This does not exclude unhappy moments, of course, but the overall impression is and – Tolstoy implies – should be one of joyous innocence” (44).

The idealization of childhood, however, demanded to be reaffirmed by the presence of Otherness. Thus, in British and Russian literature, a crowd of aberrant, precocious, and transgressive oafs serves as a foil to the angelic host of innocent beings. Because folklore was so widely proliferated and served as a repository of Otherness, it is not surprising that folkloric figures, plots, and motifs were borrowed by authors to underscore the traits of the “unnatural” children whose abnormality punctured the newly developed paradigm of childhood. The conflation of fetishized folklore with fetishized childhood in turn facilitated the transition from children as consumers of folklore to children as folkloric figures.

However, as I will attempt to show in my dissertation, British and Russian folk traditions supplied dissimilar images of supernatural Otherness that gave rise to culturally specific discourses. Thus, the British discourse of monstrous children was predominantly informed by the folkloric figure of a changeling, an ugly and malicious fairy substituted for a human child. According to Carole Silver, “In actuality even more than in fiction, changelings – that is, children perceived as abnormal and who are surreptitiously

substituted for normal ones – were very much a part of the Victorian world” (59). These changelings appeared not only in fairy tale collections and other works of fiction but also in popular journalism and scientific debates on race and degeneration. In some cases, as in Dickens’ *Dombey and Son*, “unnatural” children are explicitly referred to as changelings, while other authors, such as the Brontës and Thomas Hardy, capitalize on this folkloric trope in more subtle, yet no less poignant ways. In contrast to works published in Britain at the time, the development of such master symbols as the changeling was impossible in nineteenth-century Russia due to the astounding variety of child monsters in Russian folklore. Instead of focusing on a totalizing image of Otherness, Russian writers could pick and choose more diverse folkloric figures from the ranks of domestic and nature spirits that in totality constitute the so-called “unclean force” (*nechistaia sila*). For instance, to dramatize the conflict of between the superego and the id in the psyche of a child, Vladimir Odoesvskii centers his plot on the unbaptized spirit *igosha*, whereas Fedor Sologub resorts to the lore of *leshi*, the wood spirit. But, like all monsters in J.J. Cohen's sense, supernatural children in English and Russian literature represent something greater than themselves; in fact, their meaning exceeds even the boundaries of the nineteenth-century discourse of childhood. Transposed from folklore into literature, they preserve their original connotations and serve as a nexus of two semiotic spaces: the core and the periphery, the home and the anti-home, the civilization and the Otherworld. This is why, as I will demonstrate, the

presence of folkloric children in literary texts produces discourses that allow us to reflect on the semiotic processes in a particular culture.

Academic interest in two major nineteenth-century phenomena, the rampant collection of folklore and the emergence of a new concept of childhood, has produced a plethora of excellent scholarship, including studies that survey these topics in conjunction. In addition to such foundational yet highly contested studies as Philippe Aries' *Centuries of Childhood* (1960), several recent books explore the construction of childhood in Victorian England specifically. Most notable are Laura Berry's *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel* (1999), Judith Plotz's *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (2001), Joseph Zornado's *Inventing the Child: Culture, Ideology, and the Story of Childhood* (2001), and Marilyn Brown's *Picturing Children: Constructions of Childhood between Rousseau and Freud* (2002). Particularly informative for my project is Berry's study that traces the literary channeling of "social dilemmas" by juxtaposing novels in which children play a significant role with historical documents from the Victorian era. Hugh Cunningham's *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (1991) and Troy Boone's *Youth of Darkest England: Working-class Children at the Heart of Victorian Empire* (2004) examine how the children of the poor were singled out from the overarching discourse of childhood and transformed into a spectacle by middle-class philanthropy. The fetishization and commodification of the Victorian childhood is thoroughly analyzed in such studies as James Kincaid's *Child-loving: the Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (1992) and

Catherine Robson's *Men in Wonderland: the Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentlemen* (2001). In his insightful work, Kincaid applies a Foucauldian analysis of discursive power to the Victorian obsession with child sexuality and child abuse. According to Kincaid, criticism of child molestation held voyeuristic value, allowing “normal” adults to indulge in the fantasies of child abuse while preserving their sense of self-righteousness. Following a similar analytical trajectory, Robson’s book explores the idealization of female children in the works of major Victorian authors, including Dickens, Carroll, and Ruskin.

Compared to the abundance of research on Victorian childhood, historical studies of Russian childhood, at least those produced in the West, yield rather modest results. A notable study in this field is Andrew Wachtel's *The Battle for Childhood: Creation of a Russian Myth* (1990), which analyzes how such literary works as Leo Tolstoy's *Childhood* (1852) and Sergei Aksakov's *The Childhood Years of Bagrov Grandson* (1858) shaped the genre of pseudo-autobiography and created the myth of a happy gentry childhood. An important contribution to the field of childhood and labor history, Boris Gorshkov's *Russia's Factory Children: State, Society, and Law, 1800 – 1917* (2009) provides a comprehensive overview of the position of working-class and serf children in imperial Russia and traces the changing attitudes towards child labor throughout the nineteenth century. Although not a historical study, Susanne Fusso's *Discovering Sexuality in Dostoevsky* (2006) touches upon the fetishization of children in nineteenth-century Russia. Moreover, the addendum includes the translated transcript of the

infamous Kronenberg trial¹⁴ – an important historical document that illustrates the attitudes towards child abuse among Dostoevskii's contemporaries.

It would be redundant to mention all folkloric studies that have informed my project, especially because many of them, the nineteenth-century ones as well as more recent studies, will be discussed further in this dissertation. However, I am greatly indebted to the works of Katherine Briggs for my understanding of English folklore and the Victorian discourse centered on folk beliefs and superstitions. In the pages of this dissertation, Briggs' name will appear as frequently as the name of Linda Ivanits, whose efforts have made Russian folklore much more accessible to English speakers. In addition to her seminal work *Russian Folk Belief* (1989), which systematizes the diverse beliefs of Russian folklore, Ivanits' articles set an example for the analysis of folkloric tropes in the works of Fedor Dostoevskii and Fedor Sologub. A more recent publication in the field of Slavic folklore studies, W.F. Ryan's *The Bathhouse at Midnight* (1999), complements Ivanits' research by summarizing and analyzing Russian beliefs in folk magic and divination. The collection of essays *Russian Literature and Its Demons* (2000, ed. Pamela Davidson) incorporates research in folk demonology and literary analyses of these

¹⁴ In 1876, Stanislaw Kronenberg, an ex-military officer, was charged with physical abuse of his illegitimate daughter Maria. The trial, which resulted in Kronberg's acquittal, stirred Russian society, as it turned a private domestic matter, the corporal punishment of a child, into a public spectacle. For Dostoevskii, the Kronenberg trial turned out to be the nexus of his major concerns, which included the victimization of children; the opposition of Western and Russian mentalities—this epitomized by Kronenberg and the Russian servants who reported him to police; and the injustice of the contemporary legal system. Dostoevskii incorporated the description of the brutal punishment into Ivan Karamazov's accusatory speech and used Spasovich, the defense attorney at the trial, as a prototype for Fetiukovich, the equivocating lawyer in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Moreover, he planned to reconstruct the Kronenberg affair in his unwritten novel *Fathers and Sons*, along with other cases of child abuse that he had previously described in *The Diary of a Writer* (Fridlender 426).

folkloric tropes; notably, Faith Wigzell's article "The Russian Folk Devil and His Literary Reflections" traces the representation of the "unclean force" from the sphere of folklore to nineteenth-century literature.

For a theoretical framework in folklore studies, a helpful source is Alan Dundes' *The Meaning of Folklore* (2007), a collection of essays on various folkloric topics, including the relationship between folklore and various forms of cultural production, including literature. Equally useful, although restricted to the study of monstrosity, are the works of J.J. Cohen, in particular, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and The Middle Ages* (1999) and his article "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996). In his surveys of monstrosity, Cohen uses postcolonial theory to assess the construction of Otherness in the Middle Ages and beyond. Moving to the analysis of changeling myth in Victorian literature, it is necessary to mention the essay collection *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays* (1991, ed. Narvaez), which surveys the belief in changelings from various points of view – literary, socio-historical, and even medical. A similar multidisciplinary approach is characteristic of Carole Silver's insightful study *Strange and Secret People: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* (1998), which examines the Victorian preoccupation with folklore, in particular, with changelings.

Although my project derives its analytical focus from the above-mentioned scholarship, its uniqueness lies in the fact that it conducts a comparative interdisciplinary analysis of supernatural children in folklore and literature by using nineteenth-century Britain and Russia as case studies. Studying these folkloric traditions side by side, my

dissertation traces the encoding of supernatural children from folklore to literature in order to determine how, in each case, folkloric tropes are used to produce different discourses that reflect the semiotic processes of Russian and British cultures. Moreover, it fills critical lacunae in Russian studies by carrying out a systematic analysis of lower mythology¹⁵ and its literary reflections. Compared to other areas of Russian folklore such as demonology, oral epics (*byliny*), or folk Christianity, lower mythology, which incorporates beliefs in house and nature spirits, has been grossly underanalyzed. In contrast to the supernatural children of Russian folklore, the changeling myth has attracted plenty of scholarly interest, yet its analytical potential has not been exhausted. In my dissertation, I will attempt to study beliefs in changelings through the lens of both Lotman's semiotic theory and post-colonial theory. I chose to position the changeling myth on the nexus of these two theoretical approaches, because it captures the uneasy relationship of the periphery to the semiotic core, which can be extrapolated to the colonial context and interpreted as the hegemonic culture's attempt to fit different categories of Others into the subject position of a changeling.

In the first and second chapters, I trace the discourse of supernatural and uncanny children from its beginnings in folklore to its subsequent appropriation and reconstitution in the sphere of high culture. In the first chapter, I look at Western European folklore (mostly English folklore with occasional forays into Germany and Scandinavia), and in

¹⁵ Although the term “lower mythology” seems to imply some kind of hierarchical relationship among different mythological strata, I am using it merely as a convenient designation for the beliefs about the “unclean force,” similarly to Linda Ivanits in *Russian Folk Belief*.

the second – at Slavic folklore (Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Polish). In each chapter, I examine the importance of baptism as a quintessential ritual that establishes one's cultural identity, not only specifically Christian but also communal. Failure to receive this sacrament automatically disenfranchised children, transforming them into Others by default, through no transgression on their own part. The liminal status of unbaptized children was mirrored in burial practices, sanctioned by the Anglican and Russian Orthodox Churches alike, and in their postmortem fate as captured in folklore where, in Cohen's terms, they were relegated to the “visible edge of [the] hermeneutic circle itself” (7). Likewise, the absence of baptism exposed children to a different type of supernatural harm, rendering them susceptible to supernatural abduction and exchange. Comparing these two categories of supernatural Others – unbaptized children and fairy changelings – I note the various affective responses that they invoke and different trajectories of wish fulfillment, which, as Bettelheim asserts, is ingrained in folktales (36). The narratives that focus on unbaptized children are characterized by a sense of communal guilt and offer a possibility for redemption. On the contrary, in changeling tales, the interaction between the human world and the Otherworld is staged as a cultural clash, while the cradle becomes the master symbol of legitimate access to resources.

In the third chapter, I examine the treatment of supernatural children in the writings of Fedor Dostoevskii and Fedor Sologub, two major writers with shared interest both in uncanny children and in folklore. My objective is to trace the evolution of supernatural children in Dostoevskii's novels from Nelli in *The Insulted and Humiliated*,

a novel where Gothic strain is especially noticeable, to the uncanny female children found in Svidrigailov's dream in *Crime and Punishment*. Nelli exemplifies hybridity both as a character of mixed heritage and as an example of Dostoevskii's narrative technique, a blend of English Gothic and Russian folkloric influences. An amalgamation of discrepant tropes, she fails to contribute to the narrative tension that Dostoevskii will master once he starts utilizing Russian folklore more consciously. In his representation of the girls from Svidrigailov's dream, Dostoevskii draws on the myth of *rusalki*, coalescing in his narrative two ontological models present in Russian folklore – *rusalki* as suicides and as unbaptized children who perished through the agency of their mothers. By purposefully infusing his text with folkloric allusions, Dostoevskii creates within his ostensibly realistic novel a unique narrative space where the laws of realism are temporarily suspended and folklore reigns supreme. As a parallel to Dostoevskii's treatment of supernatural children, I will survey similar representations in Fedor Sologub's short stories. A master of the fantastic, Sologub artfully blends the supernatural and the mundane, the stifling atmosphere of provincial towns and the eeriness of folk superstition. I will study Sologub's indebtedness to folklore with a focus on the most controversial aspect of his creative legacy - violence and abuse in child-adult relationships.

In my fourth chapter, I return to nineteenth-century English literature and analyze the changeling myth in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. These two novels actively use motifs from the lore of changelings to develop

the theme of colonialism, be it international or domestic, and its influence on the lives of the colonized or peripheral Others. Both authors skillfully narrate the displacement and self-alienation resulting from one's subject position of a changeling, crafted and forced onto the individual by the dominant culture. The internalization of this subject position with its adverse connotations prompts the characters to enact different folkloric scenarios, from usurpation of property, as in Heathcliff's case, to Little Father Time's murder of his half-siblings followed by his suicide. Whereas Hardy focuses predominantly on the changeling myth in his representation of Little Father Time and Jude Fawley, Emily Brontë takes a more holistic approach to folklore and pays attention not only to the fairy changeling but also to the victim of supernatural abduction. Through the exploration of abduction and substitution narratives, Brontë effectively de-essentializes the seemingly ontological subject positions of changeling/child and reveals their potential for hybridization that would create what Bhabha calls the "Third Space."

Chapter One: Supernatural Children in English Folklore

In the opening lines of his seminal book *The Universe of Mind*, Yuri Lotman defines the intricate relationship of tradition and contemporaneity in the following terms: “[T]exts which form part of 'tradition' are not for their part inert ones: when they come into the context of 'contemporaneity' they 'come to life' revealing their previously concealed meaning-potential” (71). Thus, the process of encoding or decoding, when the elements of meaning pass from one semiotic space to another, rather than being reduced to appropriation becomes “organic interaction, of a dialogue, in the course of which each of the participants transforms the other and are themselves transformed under the action of the other” (71). In this and the next chapter, I rely on Yuri Lotman's methodology to trace the discourse of supernatural and uncanny children from its beginnings in folklore to its subsequent encoding into nineteenth-century folklore collections. To create a comprehensive overview of the childhood related lore, I examine the images of Otherness against the backdrop of the predominant religious doctrines, folk customs and practices, and material conditions in the nineteenth-century Britain and Russian Empire. In doing so, I veer away from constructing a hierarchical relationship between high and low culture, or church rites and folk customs, or even the treatment of the same themes by the educated ethnographers and their informants. My goal is to put the texts into dialogue, in which each interlocutor interprets folkloric motifs in a culturally meaningful way.

Originating in the same catastrophic misfortune, the absence of baptism, the discourse of supernatural children bifurcates into two epistemologically distinct strains of representations – uncanny yet sympathetic Others and those embodying Kristeva's notion of abject as “vortex of summons and repulsion” (1). In English folklore, the first, relatively oblique category incorporates the souls of unchristened children, whereas the second category consists of the changelings, or fairies surreptitiously substituted for human children. What prompted me to incorporate the unchristened children into my analysis, instead of focusing on the changeling as a master symbol of the Victorian uncanny, was my comparative analysis of the childhood-related lore in English and Russian culture. At the initial stages of my research, I was ready to disregard the lore of unchristened children as irrelevant for my analysis. It is the changeling, after all, that enters triumphantly into English literature, disguised as a street urchin, or an abused orphan, or a precocious child. As far as Russian folklore was concerned, I anticipated an opposite problem and was ready to mine folkloric texts in a hope to find but a handful of references to changelings. After all, Linda Ivanits mentions them only in passing and at one point confusingly applies this term to an unrelated category of supernatural beings – the shapeshifters (101 - 102).

But the holistic analysis on the nineteenth-century folkloric collections yielded unexpected results. When exploring Russian folklore and, more so, the folklore from the western boundaries of the Russian Empire, I came across a plethora of stories about the entities that fully coincided with the changelings as conceptualized in English or

Scandinavian folklore. Their literary influence, although noticeable, remained limited compared to that of the other members of the unclean force – for example, rusalki. Nevertheless, these discoveries encouraged me to broaden the scope of my inquiry and to compliment the comparative analysis across cultures by a more accentuated study of the childhood-related lore within each culture. With a new research question in mind, I re-examined English folkloric texts and arrived at the conclusion that the two categories of supernatural children were, after all, not that dissimilar; and, like in Slavic folklore, they were closely related to baptism or rather lack thereof. I argue that in the discourse of supernatural children, which stems from folklore and acquires new dimensions in the sphere of high culture, the elements that dominated the semantic field should be studied alongside the “outcasts” that were present in one semiotic sphere but failed to be fully enciphered into another. It is important to understand how certain meaningful elements accrued new connotations or changed axiological valence during the “organic interaction” among texts. It is of no less importance, though, to explore why the same elements had a limited influence on literary production of one culture yet proliferated in another. By looking at the representations of supernatural children that did or did not migrate from folklore into literature, it is possible to uncover and evaluate the cultural dynamics or, in J.J. Cohen's terms, to understand the culture through the monsters it produces (*Monster Culture* 4).

Category I: Unbaptized Children

The view of infant baptism as a prerequisite of salvation was ingrained in the Catholic doctrine and exerted influence on the theology of the Church of England. According to the Catholic theology, because of the original sin, the inherent flaw in human nature, no child was perceived as essentially innocent and deserving God's grace. Within this religious framework, the infants who died before receiving baptism were assigned a rather insipid existence in "limbus puerorum," located in the upper tiers of Hell (O'Connor 67). The term "Limbo," derived from Latin word "border" or "fringe," represents what Cohen calls "the visible edge of hermeneutic circle itself" where the monsters may be found (7). Much as the theologians tried to mitigate the postmortem existence of the innocent babes, these lost souls, like much like monsters, posed an axiological conundrum: because they committed neither a mortal sin nor peccadillo, they could not be assigned, respectively, to Hell proper or to Purgatory, yet Heaven was entirely out of their reach. Obviously, those were not the children whom Christ summoned to come unto him. In *Summa Theologica*, St. Thomas Aquinas makes a distinction between the two types of Limbo - "limbo of the fathers" (e.g. the patriarchs who died before Christ) and "limbo of the children." Both locales are distinguished from Purgatory, from the nether regions of Hell, and from each other - the former abode occupies the privileged position above the latter. Although both fathers and unbaptized children suffer from "the delay of glory," or separation from God's presence, the fate of the children is worse, for "they have no hope of the blessed life" (Aquinas 2822). Unlike the Biblical patriarchs freed by Christ during the Harrowing of Hell, the unbaptized

children are subject to eternal punishment, because the original sin is aggravated by the lack of sacrament.

In Post-Reformation England, the concept of Limbo, along with Purgatory, was rejected by the theologians as lacking scriptural foundation (Cressy 386). Nonetheless, the Church's position on the afterlife of unbaptized children remained for the most part unaltered: they were relegated to the state of non-belonging. Treated in the same fashion as suicides and excommunicates, the unbaptized were denied the office of burial¹⁶. As Sarah Tarlow points out, “The theologically liminal state of these infant souls was mirrored in the geographical liminality of their bodies” (45). Unbaptized children could not be buried in consecrated ground, that is, in the cemeteries or parts of cemeteries controlled by the Anglican Church. Alternative arrangements had to be made, including interment in the unpopular north side of cemeteries, in the disused graveyards, or in places altogether lacking Christian associations – under bushes, in ditches, at the seashore¹⁷.

The ambiguity of the afterlife reserved for unbaptized infants, along with the sense of communal guilt for depriving them of Heaven, was further elaborated in

¹⁶ The summary of regulations related to the burial of the unbaptized is listed in *Baker's Law Relating to Burials*, p. 3.

¹⁷ The substantive analysis of alternative burial sites for unbaptized children may be found in Daniell's *Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066 – 1550*. As Daniell indicates, the exclusion of unbaptized children for Christian burial grounds was meant to be complete, as in enclosing cemeteries in order to prevent the clandestine and unsanctioned burial of the undesirables (117). In the Catholic Ireland, the ineligible infants were laid to rest in the special burial places known as *cill*, *cillin*, *killeen*, and *seanchill*. The beliefs and practices related to *cillini* are extensively discussed by Sarah Tarlow (45 – 48) and Anne O'Connor (73 – 78).

folklore. Prior to baptism, the child was thought to be a “little pagan” who, in case of untimely demise, would be transformed into a supernatural entity¹⁸. The designations of these beings, as well as their characteristics and favorite haunts, vary from region to region. In Scotland, for instance, the spirits of unchristened children were known as “tarans” and associated with the woods; in the West Country, they assumed the form of a moth and were called “pisgies,” while in other English shires they were known as “spunkies” and “pinkets”. (Spence 230; Macpherson 114; Briggs, *The Fairies in Tradition* 63). There is also evidence that these apparitions were identified as the “will-o’-the-wisp,” overwriting its more popular explanations, such as the wicked soul banned from both Heaven and Hell¹⁹ (O’Connor 87). At the core of these diverse representations lies the notion of liminality, as the spirits balance on the fragile border between the civilization and the Otherworld. Their state of existence is incoherence itself. Evanescent (fluttering, flickering) yet permanently locked in the liminal space, they, as the true monsters in Cohen’s sense of the word, resist all attempts to incorporate them into a

¹⁸ Interestingly, the Anglican doctrine singled out a particular group of “little pagans” who were not held accountable for their lack of baptism – the Holy Innocents, or the infants of Bethlehem slain by the order of King Herod (Matthew 2:16-18). As Cecelia Jones explains to her young readers in the 1882 edition of *Saints of the Prayer Book*, “And because these little ones died for Jesus’ sake, because they laid down their innocent lives without a struggle, they were deemed worthy to receive a glorious crown, and the Church places them in the third order of Martyrdom – that in deed, but not in will” (22). From this description emerges the image of the Holy Innocents as a multiplicity of proto-Christ figures, by whose blood, in a peculiar reversal of dogma, Christ himself was saved. In face of such grand sacrifice, the omission of baptism may be glossed over, and the flock of “little pagans” - safely and soundly incorporated into the ranks of saints. Nonetheless, the Holy Innocents did not fare so well in the space of folklore whereby their feast day (December 28) was considered to be the unluckiest day of the year, when all endeavors were sure to go awry (Chamber, *Book of Days* 776).

¹⁹ For the list of legends explaining the origins of the wandering lights, see the article “Ignis Fatuus” in Katherine Briggs *An Encyclopedia of Fairies*.

coherent epistemological or taxonomic system (*Monster Theory* 6). Such intrinsic instability presents a challenge that must be resolved by the community that engendered them.

A reliable method of treating the object that cannot be assimilated is expulsion. As Kristeva summarizes the interplay of interest and disgust in relation to the abject, “Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects” (1). However, what causes abjection, at least in its most basic form, is the impurity of the object - “an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung” (Kristeva 2). Loathing is preconditioned by a sensory reaction, the touch, smell, or sight of something that threatens the normative system. But when we approach the subject of unbaptized ghosts, the limits of abjection become tangible. How is it possible to abject something as insubstantial as a flickering light or disembodied voice? And, if the violent reaction of repulsion were to occur, what would be its vector? Where would the object be banished if, as the folklore stipulates, the state of in-betweenness is its final destination? Thus, the disembodied unbaptized children fail to constitute the abject precisely because they lack a physical dimension. Unlike the changelings, which will be discussed later in this chapter, or the fully corporeal “griesly ghost” of English ballads²⁰, the “tarans” and “pinkies” neither frighten nor fascinate. Yet they hover at the borders of semiosphere and, as a folkloric phenomenon, must be encoded into the semiotic space in one way or the other.

²⁰ Here I am referring to the ghost from the ballad “King Henry” (Child 32), but the tendency to represent ghosts as revenants rather than incorporeal spirits is common for the whole corpus of English ballads. For a discussion of ghosts in English ballads, see Charles Wimberly *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads*, p. 225 – 269 (“The Ballad Ghost”).

Although Limbo was originally conceptualized as a merciful alternative to Hell, in folklore the postmortem existence of unbaptized children is painted in somber tones, as the state of endless restlessness and anguish. Great emphasis is put on the sounds by which such tormented souls may be recognized. “Often on calm nights, those who had ears to hear heard the wailing of the spirits of unchristened bairns among the trees and dells,” James Napier notes casually (43.) The audible presence of the unbaptized souls exemplifies Freud's definition of the uncanny as “something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed” (*The Uncanny* 148). Much as the culture tries to suppress its guilt, the shrieks of the forsaken children stir the communal conscience, since it was the neglect of the adults that put the infant souls in danger. Through the mechanism of repression these guilt-laden representations are expelled to the cultural periphery, yet the uncanny never lies still or, as Cohen puts it, “the monster always escapes” (4). However, if in this case abjection is not an option, and the uncanny breaks from the tenets of repression, what discourse does the Other produce? What cultural use does it serve? And how does the culture encode it into the semiotic sphere? In order to assess the semiotic dimensions of the discourse of unbaptized children, it would be useful to start at the guilt-generating event – the failure to baptize a child. As I will attempt to show, the baptism has connotations that are not restricted to the sphere of theology but extend into folklore. Rather than a monolithic rite, performed exclusively in a church and by a clergyman, baptism may be viewed as a set of practices that could be carried out by different actors and in a variety of contexts.

In Britain, the baptism of newborns was usually performed within a few weeks after the delivery²¹. Considering the cultural significance of this sacrament, the failure to baptize a child appears to be an act of gross negligence. What aggravates this neglect, turning it from carelessness into crime, is the availability of alternative rites that could be relied upon in the case when a child was too sick to be taken to the church. One such option was a private baptism at home. *The Book of Common Prayer* allowed the ministers to perform baptism at the parishioner's house but warned them against abusing this practice. Following a private baptism, it was not necessary to baptize the child again; however, if the child survived, it was to be taken to church and presented before the congregation a full-fledged member of the Christian brotherhood. Another possible route was the so-called lay baptism. If the newborn's life was in immediate danger, christening could be conducted by a midwife or a family member in lieu of an ordained clergyman. Not only did the canon law of the Anglican Church permit this rite; it explicitly authorized the lay parishioners to carry it out and redeem the infant's soul:

Women, when their time of child bearing is near at hand, shall have water ready for baptizing the child in case of necessity (g).
For cases of necessity, the priests on Sundays shall frequently instruct their parishioners in the form of baptism (h).
Which form shall be thus: I crysten the in the name of the Fader, and of the Sone, and of the Holy Goste (i).
Infants baptized by laymen or women (in imminent danger of death) shall not be baptized again: and the priest shall afterwards supply the rest (k).
If a child shall be baptized by a lay person at home by reason of necessity, the water (for the reverence of baptism) shall be either poured into the fire,

²¹ As stipulated in *The Book of Common Prayer*, “The Curates of every Parish shall often admonish the people, that they defer not the Baptism of their Children longer than the first or second Sunday next after their birth” (175, “The Ministrations of Private Baptism of Children in Houses”).

or carried to the church to be put in the font; and the vessel shall be burnt, or applied to the uses of the church (l). (Burn 113)

Yet the explicit authorization present in the ecclesiastical law by no means ascertained the theological validity of lay baptism. If anything, it provided the grounds for debate. In spite of the formal approval by the Church, for centuries the theologians had been breaking spears over the validity of lay baptism²². Should the lay baptism be followed by a formal church procedure, at the risk of anabaptism? And precisely what constitutes the necessity that endows the half-literate midwife with priestly powers? To clarify this murky area, *The Book of Common Prayer* demanded of the ministers to examine the circumstances of the lay baptism and pose the following questions to the parents: “By whom was this Child baptized? Who was present when the Child was baptized? (...) With what matter was this Child baptized? With what words was this Child baptized?” (176). When in doubt, the clergyman pronounced the formula: “If thou be not baptized already, I baptize thee” (qtd in Cressy, 121).

In addition to doctrinal concerns, the Anglican clergy had another reason to mistrust lay baptism. This domestic ritual undermined their authority and put them in competition with other community leaders, such as the midwives or sectarian ministers. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Thomas Hardy vivifies the competition between the individual and the unyielding church authorities over the exclusive right to redeem souls.

²² For a comprehensive view of such debates in Post-Reformation England, see David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (121 – 123).

For the fear that her illegitimate child will be assigned to “the nethermost corner of hell,” Tess performs private baptism and in doing so assumes “a touch of dignity (...) almost regal,” while her siblings are acting as sacristans (124). The vicar, however, is hesitant to accept this makeshift baptism as a proper Christian sacrament: “Having the natural feelings of a tradesman at finding that a job he should have been called in for had been unskilfully botched by his customers among themselves, he was disposed to say no” (126). Not until he hears Tess' expostulation, angry and desperate at once, does he sanction the burial of the child in the graveyard adjacent to the church. And even then the child is buried at night and in a “shabby corner of God's allotment” where suicides and unbaptized babies find their resting place (127). Hardy's dramatization of frictions around the uncertain status of lay baptism is steeped in Victorian melodrama, but it is not far-fetched. The evidence from the ecclesiastical courts makes it clear that the clergymen would occasionally forbid proper Christian burial of infants, if in doubt of the validity of their lay baptism²³.

The doctrinal ambiguity of lay baptism found its reflection in folk belief, and, as Cressy points out, “in some circles, as late as the nineteenth century, the survivors of emergency baptism were considered to be only half-baptized”²⁴ (121). Nonetheless, the

²³ For example, in 1841, Reverend Thomas Escott, the vicar of Gedney, Lincolnshire, was brought to Arches Court of Canterbury after forbidding the burial of Elizabeth Ann Cliff, an infant baptized by a Wesleyan Methodist minister. After reviewing the circumstances of the case, the Court concluded that Escott overstepped his authority and suspended him from service for three months. Further details of the court proceedings may be found in *A full report of the case of Mastin v. Escott, May 8th, 1841*.

²⁴ It would be fair to note that private baptism by a clergyman could be also viewed as a partial sacrament. In *Sketches by Boz*, the curate “got out of bed at half-past twelve o'clock one winter's night, to half-baptise a washerwoman's child in a slop-basin” (10).

existence of such ritual endowed its practitioners with the sense of power, as well as with solace, for, after all, the child's passage into heaven would be ensured. Moreover, certain elements of lay baptism fit quite comfortably into the system of superstitions from the British Isles. Like the ecclesiastical law, the folk superstitions treated baptismal water with reverence, reinterpreting it as a magical potion of sorts. In Scotland, baptismal water could be poured below the foundation of the house for good luck or drunk in order to strengthen memory; while in Gloucester it was customary to wash the mouth of a child with sanctified water as a countermeasure against toothache (Gregor 12; Roud, *Monday Child* 80). By extension, the ceremony of lay baptism accrued connotations that would render it a useful remedy for supernatural trauma. The formulations learned by rote could be uttered in a different, more ambiguous context and be directed towards the liminal beings – the unbaptized children.

According to the lore, the release of the ghostly child from the state of non-belonging was secured by re-incorporating it into the Christian flock through a ritual resembling the lay baptism. The rupture that tore it apart from the community could be closed, the gaping wound – healed, and the symbolic order – restored. Instead of abjection, an opposite reaction, that of inclusion, would insure the wholeness of the community and the stability of its border. But before it becomes an object of charity rather than loathing, an unbaptized ghost must be wrenched from the dichotomy of child – non-child and identified as an infant. Following such identification it may be

enciphered into the semiotic sphere under a different designation. In other words, to become “one of us” a ghost was to receive a Christian name.

In the folk superstitions surrounding baptism, the naming of a child is inflated with meaning to the point that it overshadows the essential Christian purpose of the rite – the salvation itself. Walter Gregor's collection *Notes on the Folk-lore of the North-East of Scotland* abounds in references to naming practices: “It [the child] could not be called by its name till after it was baptised. It was unlawful to pronounce the name, and no one would have dared to ask it. At baptism the name was commonly written on a slip of paper, which was handed to the minister” (Gregor 11). Similar anxieties and beliefs were widespread in other regions of the British Isles²⁵. By receiving a name, the child crossed the threshold from non-being into the communal life and became a valid signifier in the semantic field. It is not surprising that folk tradition omits other rites that accompany lay baptism, reducing it to the act of naming: the stock formula (“I christen thee...”) becomes a metonymy of the ritual, whereas the baptismal medium, the source of so much anxiety in the ecclesiastical law, may be omitted altogether.

For the stories of redemption through quasi-baptism, we must turn to the folklore of the Isle of Man, where they figure prominently, as O'Connor suggests, perhaps due to the influence of Scandinavian folklore (104). Agnes Herbert's collection of Manx lore,

²⁵ For an extensive discussion of English naming customs, see Steve Roud's *Monday's Child is Fair of Face: And Other Traditional Beliefs about Babies and Motherhood* (96 – 104.)

published in 1909, includes a variant of the popular legend, in which an old man encounters a supernatural child:

[H]e heard a soft low wailing, piteously insistent, coming from the shadowy graveyard. As he drew nearer and nearer, the trailing gentle murmur took voice and words, the sad grieving lament of an unchristened infant: “Lhiannoo dyn ennym me! Lhiannoo dyn ennym me! (A child without name am I! A child without name am I!)

The old man paused by the wall, and looking up towards the old kirk, with its white bell-turret outlined in the moonlight, he said clearly, and very tenderly: “My she gilley eu, ta mee bashtey eu Juan, as my she inneen eu ta me bashtey eu Joney” (If thou art a boy I christen thee John, and if thou art a girl I christen thee Joney.)

With a happy sigh, like the wind sinking to rest, the little ghost lay content and at peace. (185)

The legend exemplifies the redemption of the lost soul through the agency of an individual who utilized the communally sanctioned ritual. Particularly notable in Herbert's version is the recasting of the folk narrative along the lines of melodrama, whereby the text is interspersed with the epithets that are absent in other recordings of the same legend²⁶: “gentle murmur,” “sad grieving lament,” “very tenderly.” The sentimentalization of the folk legend achieves several axiological goals. It is not coincidental that the old man makes an eye contact with a church structure prior to the act of naming. In doing so, he asks for authorization of what otherwise may be construed as tampering with the sacred. The symbolic blessing that he thus receives legitimizes everything that follows.

²⁶ For example, in Charles Roeder's variant quoted by Anne O'Connor (p. 104).

Even more importantly, Herbert's account illustrates the conflation of fairies and children, for, as Susan Stewart asserts, "by the Victorian Age, the domestication of the fairy is complete and the English fairy becomes inextricably linked to the enduring creation of the Victorian fantastic: the fairylike child" (113). On the level of the text, the redemption begins before the baptismal formula is pronounced. It occurs at the moment when the choice of overtly sentimental language opens up a new discursive sphere, that of childhood as an organic space of innocence that merits special protection from the harshness of the adult world. To complete the picture, the ghost self-identifies as a child, albeit without a name. We also find out that it is a good, well-behaved child, much like a Little Lord Fauntleroy in disembodied form: after receiving the gift of salvation, it thanks its redeemer with a grateful noise.

As a child and, more importantly, a neglected child, it may be safely and soundly encoded into the same semiotic space where *Oliver Twist*, *Little Marchioness*, or even Henry Mayhew's watercress girl already dwell. In that sense, its appeal for a name is not much different from Oliver's proverbial request "Please, sir, I want some more." Meanwhile, the old man fulfills the function of a Dickensian benefactor who is sincere, albeit eccentric acts of kindness the author contrasts with the stony-hearted system of organized charity. The lore of unbaptized children easily yields itself to such sentimentalization: a disembodied symbol, a voice rather than a physical presence, the child may be enciphered at the narrator's discretion. At the same time, the complex set failures that brought forth the uncanny child, from the initial act of negligence to the

inadequacy of ecclesiastical law in regards to burials, is deflated by a single utterance. The baptismal formula that sets the ghost free thus obliterates the symptom without disrupting the mechanism that produces monstrosity. Chillingly, the act of redemption harkens to Foucault's observation that coercive power may masquerade as knowledge or, in this case, as humanitarianism. Although it ostensibly incorporates the little outcast into Christian fellowship, the lay baptism/naming ritual serves the purpose of silencing the child - and with it the communal conscience.

Category II: Changelings

Baptism in folk beliefs served as a nexus for two types of supernatural motifs with its crucial significance for spiritual and even physical well-being of the child²⁷. On one hand, as shown above, due to the lack of sacrament the child could, as Spence indicates, “join the ranks of the fairies” (230). It is not coincidental that in Ireland unbaptized children were frequently buried in the places associated with fairies (O'Connor 73). The transformation into a fairy was complete though by no means irreversible, as evident from the power of the naming ritual to set the soul free. The legends falling under the second category draw a different connection between unbaptized children and fairies, casting the former as the likely victims of the latter. Describing the period from birth to baptism as a “social imbalance,” Ann Skjelbred explicates it as “an imbalance between

²⁷ Edwin Sidney Hartland notes the belief that sickly children convalesce after receiving baptism (94).

humanity and the dominating supranormal powers (the fairies), potential harm being directed towards the potential for procreation” (216). Here the danger to procreation is related to the fairy theft of human children. All over the British Isles, Western Europe, and Eastern Europe, we find the legends of changelings, or fairies substituted for human children. Even if the legend does not directly identify the stolen child as unbaptized, its vulnerable status is implied, at least in the stories that focus on the puerile victims of kidnapping²⁸.

The scholars of folklore tend to shift their focus to the more colorful elements of the changeling stories: the unnatural appearance and aberrant behavior of the fairy substitute, as well as the means of its exorcism. However, the events preceding the exchange, albeit occupying a modest space in the narrative, are crucial for understanding the significance of changeling stories for the communities that produce them and, subsequently, for the middle-class writers reinterpreting folkloric plots.

A wide array of rituals was used to protect the newborn in the uneasy period between birth and christening, when the child was most susceptible to supernatural perils. Some of these rituals made use of Christian objects, as in keeping an open Bible next to the bedstead or waving it three times over the child (Hartland 95; Graham 192). Lewis

²⁸ The nineteenth-century folklore collectors, as well as the contemporary folklore scholars, make a distinction between the juvenile and adult victims of fairy kidnapping. Although the number of changeling stories that involve infants is disproportionately large, the older children or adolescents occasionally attract the interest of the fairy folk. In J.F. Campbell's story "The Smith and the Fairies," the smith from Islay not only banishes the changeling but ventures into the fairy hill where his teenage son is held captive. This tale, however, conflates the changeling lore (the brewery of eggshells, exorcism by fire) with the motifs related to the rescue of the adults (entering the fairy demesne, as in the ballad "King Orfeo," and engaging in direct confrontation with the fairies, as in "Tam Lin"). Perhaps, it is the older age of the child that necessitates the use of these distinct motifs to complete the story.

Spence makes a mention of “saining,” which was carried out soon after childbirth and involved carrying a lighted candle three times around the mother and the infant; placing a Bible, bread, and cheese under the pillow; and invoking God's blessings. A preliminary baptism of sorts, “saining” did not bestow the same protection as the church ritual, yet it was believed to avert the harm of the elves and fairies (230). Other methods, as Hartland puts it, displayed “[h]eathenism naked and unblushing” (96). To confuse the fairies, immediately after birth the infant was swaddled in the clothes of the opposite sex, or an item of the father's clothes was flung over the cradle to keep the fairies at bay (Roud, *Penguin Guide* 19; Hartland 98). Any object made of cold iron or steel could be hung or laid crosswise over the cradle, including scissors, pins, needles, pokers, or thongs. This way the potency of iron, the traditional antidote against the fairy folk, was fortified by the shape of the cross.

Not only the unbaptized children, but also the newly delivered mothers occupied the perilous space of liminality. In Britain, as well as in the Scandinavian countries, soon after giving birth women were expected to undergo “churcing.” This ceremony required the mother to come to her parish church in order to praise God for her safe delivery and to receive a special blessing. The scriptural foundation for churcing may be found in Leviticus 12:2-8, which specifies the number of days that a newly delivered mother remains unclean and describes the sacrifice necessary for her purification. In her analysis of impurity in Biblical texts, Kristeva singles out the passage from Leviticus to analyze how “maternal, feminine impurity and defilement” constitutes the abject, from which the

male child may be violently separated by means of circumcision (99 – 100). In spite of its strong Biblical associations with pollution, in the Church of England the meaning of this ceremony was restricted to thanksgiving for the narrow escape from death, as evidenced by the opening prayer: “Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his goodness to give you safe deliverance, and hath preserved you in the great danger of Child-birth; you shall therefore say hearty thanks unto God” (205).” And, in Cressy's reading of Post-Reformation English sources, churching emerges as a social event and an opportunity for merry-making in a peer group rather than a misogynist instrument for denigrating women (Cressy 199). But the Biblical fear of contamination, including the prohibition to touch any “hallowed thing,” remained relatively intact in English and especially Scottish folklore. Prior to churching, a woman was viewed as a source of pollution and outward danger. Henderson states that “it was very “uncannie” for her to enter any other house before she goes to church” (16). Here the designation of the woman's behavior as “uncannie” fully coincides with Freud's term, for after childbearing the mother indeed was viewed as a liminal being, positioned on the border of life and death, bringing an innocent child into the world yet herself steeped in filth.

“If the watching-women neglected these precautions, the mother or child or both were spirited away to the fairy bower,” observes Evans-Wentz, connecting the fairy kidnapping directly to the neglect of the folk countermeasures (87). Considering the importance of the protective rituals and the relative ease of their execution, it would be worthwhile to trace them in the changeling narratives. In the lore of unchristened infants,

the community receives the blame for failing to perform the essential ritual, and the value of this ritual is simultaneously affirmed. Similarly, the changeling narrative has the potential of turning into a cautionary tale of parental neglect. Where were the parents when the child was snatched by the fairies? What stopped them from resorting to the common protective measures? In short, who is to blame?

The efficacy of the countermeasures against fairies is attested by the stories that praise the ingenuity of parents who forestalled the kidnapping. In one such story, the father drives the fairy assailant away with a hot poker (Spence 232). In several other accounts, the mother's timely blessing forces the fairies to drop her child and flee (Hartland 105, 107; Sikes 62; Spence 238). But in the majority of changeling stories, the folk countermeasures do not figure at all. Contrary to expectations, the parents are not held accountable for the disappearance of their child, which is presented uncritically, as a catastrophic event beyond human control. In the tale "The Young Piper," Croker contrasts the changeling with his good-looking and adroit brothers, yet offers no explanation for its appearance in a model peasant family (47-48). The second changeling tale in Croker's collection, the iconic "Brewery of Egg-shells," contains no back story whatsoever, its emphasis being entirely on the exorcism of the fairy pretender (65 – 71). If the tale ventures an explanation, it may elaborate on the cunning of the fairies whose stratagems involve applying force to the parents (Spence 235) or decoying them with a false alarm (Scott 176). The tales of this category make it clear that the parents are no

match for the guile of the fairies and, therefore, should not be blamed for the loss of their child.

In a significant number of tales, the exchange occurs at the time of agricultural works, when a baby was most likely to be left unsupervised (Croker 77; Evans-Wentz 111, 143; Ashliman, *Fairy Lore* 80 - 81). A typical account from Croker's collection sets the stage for the exchange as follows:

One day in harvest time she [the mother] went with several more to help in binding up the wheat, and left her child, which she was nursing, in a corner of the field, quite safe, as she thought, wrapped up in her cloak. When she had finished her work, she returned where the child was, but in place of her own child she found a thing in the cloak that was not half the size. (77)

The method of protecting the child, haphazard as it may seem, nonetheless shows an earnest effort on the mother's part and, more importantly, resembles the ritual of wrapping the newborn in the parents' clothes. The agricultural labor that precipitates the exchange is unavoidable in the context of the rural Ireland. By the same token, the exchange seems to be concomitant with other typical female chores, for example, laundry (Bray 176), washing the dishes (Ashliman, *Fairy Lore* 81) or “indispensable business” that compels the otherwise cautious mother to visit her neighbors (Sikes 59). In the German story “The Rye-Mother,” which may be reinterpreted as a social critique, the exchange results from the avarice of the landowner who forces a nursing mother to work in the field (Ashliman, *Fairy Lore* 80).

By setting the protection of the child beyond the mother's control, the changeling stories of this category disrupt the “cause-and-effect” plot of a typical cautionary tale,

where the violation of a cultural norm is punished accordingly. The randomness of the exchange instills the sense of dread in the intended audience, yet, surprisingly, it resolves the tension that builds up towards the end of the tale, when the exorcism of the changeling finally takes place. As Ashliman reports in his article “Changelings,” these beliefs have been historically used as a justification for abuse or murder of malformed children. In mapping superstition onto historical reality, Lloyd DeMause goes even further by claiming that any child, not necessary malformed, could be viewed as a fairy doppelganger, “The child in the past was so charged with projections that he was often in danger of being considered a changeling if he cried too much or was otherwise too demanding” (10). However, the mother's helplessness in the face of supernatural malice qualifies the tale as an account of neglect that escalated into abuse. Instead, the blame is externalized and projected unto the monsters, thus granting the community the *carte blanche* to use whatever means necessary to resist their encroachment.

If any caregiver is scapegoated for enabling the exchange, it is not the mother, but the nurse. In *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, Walter Scott mentions an incident when a child was taken after being put to nurse in the country and, in another account, shows how the nurse's inebriation prevented her from stopping the fairy theft (173, 176). However, the representation of nurses in the eighteenth and nineteenth century English culture is so problematic that it requires further analysis. In spite of her place at the nucleus of the culture and her role in initiating her young charges into the cultural norms, the nurse became a source of endless anxieties stemming from her humble origins and her

immediate contact with the periphery. Transitioning from peasant culture into the very heart of middle-class domesticity, the nurse contaminated the latter with her superstitious beliefs and practices. As I will argue in the fourth chapter, the nurse was more likely to be interpreted as being in cabal with the monsters rather than in opposition to them.

To summarize what has been said above, I would argue the methods for preventing fairy theft, numerous as they are in folklore, constitute a separate semantic sphere that has virtually no overlap with the changeling lore. Even though in folklore anthologies the protective measures appear side by side with the changeling lore, such proximity is misleading. It would seem as if the changeling lore is oblivious of the remedies against fairy harm. Likewise, the parents are not indicted for their failure to apply folk wisdom *prior* to the exchange. The tension in the narrative is therefore shifted from the shortcomings of the parents, or the community at large, to the conflict with the Other and the urge to expel it beyond the borders of the semiosphere. Moreover, as Skjelbred asserts, in Scandinavia even baptism was no safeguard against fairy theft, as it was common for the people to suspect the exchange long after their children were christened (221). The analysis of changeling lore leads Skjelbred to conclusion that “[t]he folklore of the changeling illustrates that it is not the Christian values or heathen versus Christian that are at stake, but a question of being human or not” (222). To this argument I would add that the changeling lore to utilizes the dichotomy of human – non-human to address such culturally significant matters, as the hegemony over the contested semiotic

space, as well as distribution of resources within that space and one's legitimate or illicit access to them.

In *An Encyclopedia of Fairies*, Katherine Briggs lists the following types of changelings that may be found in folktales: a stock of wood charmed into looking like a child²⁹; a sickly fairy child; and the most common substitute – an old, wizened fairy that is no longer useful in a fairy tribe (70). The variety of forms that the changeling assumes attests to its dangerous hybridity and resistance to classification, harkening to Cohen's "Thesis III: The Monster is the Harbinger of Category Crisis." Addressing the incomprehensibility of the monstrous persona, Cohen refers to monsters as "disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration" (*Monster Culture* 6). Thus, a changeling may be animate or inanimate, old or young, monstrous in the most obvious sense or deceptively normal, yet none of these characteristics are tantamount to a comprehensive, clearly delineated object. Nonetheless, the emphasis on its physicality sets it apart from the unchristened ghost. The changeling legends are peppered with references to the abnormal physical features of the alleged fairies, their aberrant behavioral patterns, and stunted growth. To analyze how and why the changelings and unbaptized children, although related to the same catastrophic lack, are encoded differently in folklore and from thence in literature, it

²⁹ The stock was also a common substitute when the adult women were stolen to serve as nurses in Fairyland (Briggs, *The Vanishing People* 93; Spence 241).

is necessary to take a closer look at the physical and behavioral characteristics of the former.

In Stith Thompson's *Folklore Index*, the following motif covers the appearance of the changeling: "F321.1.2.1. Changeling has abnormal features or growth. Limbs grow too rapidly, head is too big, or he is slow to learn to walk, or the like." An example of the grotesque, the changeling's body is visualized as a conglomeration of oddly-shaped and incompatible parts. Folklore makes it clear that a changeling is an evil doppelganger of a child, a twisted mirror image, embodiment of everything that a healthy child is not. The most obvious demarcation line is its diminutive size, which is usually the first abnormality that the parents notice after the exchange (Croker 77; Hartland 113). Other characteristics include its disproportionate limbs or head (Sikes 56; Hartland 108); stunted growth (Sikes 60); physical deformities (Evans-Wentz 198); mental disability, whereby a changeling is referred to as "idiot" (Sikes 56; Keightley 166); or general ugliness. With very few exceptions³⁰, the changeling narratives concur on the latter point. To be classified as a changeling, the infant has to be thoroughly loathsome. Its physical repugnance precipitates abjection, the violent disassociation from the object that is realized through the chillingly cruel methods of exorcising the changeling. We can safely assume that the changeling lore follows Eve Sedgwick's lead in treating paranoid inquiry as "one kind of cognitive/affective theoretical practices among other, alternative kinds"

³⁰ One such rare exception was mentioned by George Waldron in *The History and Description of the Isle of Man* (1744) and widely disseminated in folklore anthologies. An alleged changeling was described as a thing of beauty: "Nothing under heaven could have a more beautiful face" (qtd in Hartland 108).

(126). Indeed, paranoid inquiry is the main hermeneutic mode in the legends of this type. A replica of panoptic culture, the changeling narrative subjects the monster to endless scrutiny, each turn of hermeneutic circle revealing the new sources of anxiety. Whereas the lore of unbaptized children downplays the sight in favor of the sound, the changeling myth is all about the gaze. The ugliness of the changeling is accentuated and described in minute details: the color of skin and hair is carefully noted; the limbs are sized; and deformities cataloged. Resultant from this scrutiny is Kristeva's "vortex of summons and repulsion," where the subject is at once sickened and mesmerized by the object.

A lavishly bizarre description of a changeling may be found in the tale "The Young Piper" from Thomas Crofter Croker's collection of Irish folklore. A paragon of paranoid inquiry, this passage features a sum total of changeling characteristics, thinly spread in other stories of this type. The reputed changeling, a monstrous aberration in otherwise decent peasant family, is described as follows:

[H]e was the most miserable, ugly, ill-conditioned brat that ever God put life into: he was so ill-thriven, that he was not able to stand alone, or to leave his cradle; he had long, shaggy, matted, curled hair, as black as any raven; his face was of a greenish yellow colour; his eyes were like two burning coals, and were forever moving in his head, as if they had the perpetual motion. Before he was a twelvemonth old, he had a mouth full of great teeth; his hands were like kites' claws, and his legs where no thicker than the handle of a whip, and about as straight as a reaping hook: to make the matter worse, he had the gut of a cormorant, and the whinge, and the yelp, and the screech, and the yowl, was never out of his mouth.
(47 - 48)

Within this brief passage, Croker manages to touch upon all major properties of a fairy interloper. Some of the epithets ("miserable," "ill-conditioned") reflect the value

judgment on the narrator's part, while others tap into racial characteristics (“curled hair, as black as any raven”). The changeling's complexion alludes to the special status of color green in English folklore. As Briggs points out, “Green is generally acknowledged to be the fairy colour, particularly in Celtic countries” (*AEOFT* 108); hence, the prohibition of wearing green bridal gowns for the fear of offending the fairies. Moreover, the two most famous fairy waifs, allegedly discovered in Suffolk and brought up by locals, were known as “The Green Children,” “for the whole surface of their skin was tinged of a green color”³¹ (Keightley 281). The perpetual motion of the changeling's eyes is set in grim juxtaposition with his inability to move, which stems from the deformity of his limbs. It is, however, the mouth that creates the sense of real threat.

Discussing the carnival culture, Susan Stewart asserts that “[t]he grotesque body, as a form of the gigantic, is a body of parts. Those productive and reproductive organs which are its focus come to live an independent life of their own. The parading of the grotesque is often the isolation and display of the exaggerated part” (105). By extension, Stewart's argument may be applied to the folkloric changeling who, notwithstanding its diminutive size, epitomizes the grotesque. In “The Young Piper,” the changeling's mouth accrues three different dimensions of Otherness: the unnatural growth of teeth, suspicious voracity, and, finally, eerie vocalization. To offset the monstrosity of the mouth,

³¹ The account of the Green Children was given by Ralph of Coggeshall and William of Newbridge, the latter dating the events to King Stephen's reign (Briggs, *AEOFT* 200 – 201). Remarkably, the reputed female fairy, who survived her brother and turned to be “loose and wanton in her conduct,” lost her peculiar skin color after becoming accustomed to human food (Keightley 282). Although the account of the Green Children does not fully adhere to the changeling myth, as no substitution was made, it nonetheless contains certain elements characteristic of a changeling story – namely, the consumption of food/resources.

animalistic terms are utilized: the changeling has “a gut of cormorant,” and, rather than cry, he yelps/screeches/yowls. Ostensibly, the changeling is equated with its mouth, just like a medieval giant, an epitome of gluttony, was equated with its maw (Cohen, *Of Giants* 67, 105). Another part that is synecdochically related to the changelings is the limb. The withered, crooked limbs of a changeling signify its most crucial characteristic – inability to grow, to move, and, ultimately, to progress and become a productive member of the community. Combined with its voracious appetite, the inertia of the changeling threatens to undermine the traditional agricultural economy, where certain investment of labor is expected from every community member, including children.

The mouth and the limbs as the sites of monstrosity engender the corresponding alien behaviors. The immobile limbs reinforce the duplicity of the changeling as an elder pretending to be a child. On one hand, the paralysis of the fairy interloper is a common trope in folklore (Evans-Wentz 128; Croker 47 – 48). Remarkably, the main reason why Waldron's beautiful changeling was designated as such was the child's paralysis, whereby “he was so far from being able to walk, or stand, that he could not so much as move any one joint” (Harland 108). Inasmuch as some texts take the changeling's immobility at its face value, others decry it as a yet another fairy trick, aimed at getting the resources without performing any household chores. Without adult supervision, a changeling may run, dance, or play musical instruments. J.G. Campbell mentions the changeling's “fondness for music and its power of dancing” (qtd in Spence 232). In “The Young Piper,” the sinister protagonist grabs his bagpipes and, in perfect possession of his limbs,

leaps from the bridge into the river (Croker 59). The Scandinavian tale from Keightley's collection blatantly indites the changeling of deceit: "The changeling behaved in a very strange and uncommon manner, for when there was no one in the place, he was in great spirits, ran up the walls like a cat, sat under the roof, and shouted and bawled away lustily; but sat dozing at the end of the table when anyone was in the room with him" (125). Such feigned paralysis with intermittent bouts of activity not only highlights the changeling's Otherness but also attest to its supernatural cunning. As an invader of the domestic space, the changeling uses its disability strategically, as a means towards an end. Unlike an unbaptized ghost, a flickering blurb of pathos, or even a guileless human child, the changeling is enciphered in folklore as an invader fully conscious of its malice, an interloper, a rival.

Another set of cultural anxieties revolve around the changeling's mouth. In and of itself, the mouth may be considered a liminal space. Susan Stewart mentions the lips, along with other apertures and orifices, among the zones of human body that Lacan designated as "erotogenic." In Lacan's terms, erotogenic zones are equated with liminality, as they differentiate the body from the bodily functions and thus constitute the notion of self. Hence, as Stewart asserts, "[t]hose products which cross such boundaries thereby become products of great cultural attention" (104) and, to add Kristeva's argument, constitute the abject. The changeling myth preserves Lacan's focus on the aperture as an object of scrutiny that produces anomalous product. The impostor's mouth becomes a source of sinister or threatening behavior. Croker notes the changeling's sharp

teeth (48); Sikes comments on its propensity to bite and terrorize its mother (56); and the changeling's incessant whining becomes a commonplace in all tales of this type. Worse still is the changeling's unbridled appetite that is inevitable overtaxes the peasant household. With morbid fascination the narrators observe how the changeling gulps the food without ever being sated. In an oft-quoted passage, Martin Luther writes about the twelve-year-old changeling from Dessau who “did nothing but feed, and would eat as much as two clowns or threshers were able to eat” (Hartland 109). The juxtaposition of the unproductive consumer and the laborers would not be lost on Luther's audience. Similar drain of resources, consumption for the sake of consumption, is evidenced in Keightley's account of a Scandinavian changeling who “was able to eat as much as any four, and never cared what it was that was set before him; but though he regarded not the quality of the food, in quantity he was never satisfied, and gave excessive annoyance to everyone in the house” (125). It is not coincidental that the quality of food is contrasted with quantity: unable to derive pleasure from taste, the changeling emerges as an indifferent abyss that negates other semiotic dimensions of nutrition (e.g. as a source of pleasure or symbolic communion) and treats food as fodder.

As a creature of the Otherworld, the changeling belongs to the sphere that Yuri Lotman sets in opposition to the center of the semiosphere: “If the inner world reproduces the cosmos, then what is on the other side represents chaos, the anti-world, unstructured chthonic space, inhabited by monsters, infernal powers or people associated with them” (*Universe* 140). Lotman defines the anti-world by resorting to such binary oppositions as

space vs. anti-space and behavior vs. anti-behavior. According to his theory, each action of the cultural outsiders reveals their affinity with the anti-world: thus, a robber lives in an anti-home (forest), stays active in the anti-time (at night), and exhibits anti-behavior (e.g. swears indecently) (*Universe* 141). Nonetheless, the semiotic space, which Lotman views not as an occluded sphere but as a place transected by boundaries, may at times legitimize anti-behavior. As an example, Lotman refers to the pagan practices, such as Christmas divination, that, although incorrect from the standpoint of Orthodox Church, were encoded in Russian culture (*Semiotics* 9).

Lotman's concept of the anti-world and corresponding anti-behavior may be legitimately applied to the changeling narratives from the Western Europe. Acting contrary to nature, a changeling epitomizes Lotman's anti-behavior. Perhaps, the most obvious example of this axiological reversal is revealed in Luther's account: "When any evil happened in the house, then it [the changeling from Dessau] laughed and was joyful; but when all went well, then it cried and was very sad" (Hartland 109). Other characteristics of a changeling – incessant wailing, insatiable appetite, and preternatural cunning – also amount to anti-behavior, as they pervert the image of an ideal child³². In relation to the plot development, the changeling's anti-behavior justifies the anti-behavior

³² Occasionally we may find references to the changeling's "superhuman power of work," as in the story of the changeling who performed various household chores (Hartland 112). In the accounts like this, the changeling's behavior does not constitute anti-behavior, but, rare as they are, such stories clearly conflate the changeling with the fairy helpers, such as brownies, and thus deviate considerably from the typical changeling narrative.

of the bereaved parents, thus precipitating the climax in which the changeling is banished from the semiotic space.

The changeling may be identified as such after its monstrosity exceeds all reasonable limits. To find it out, a consultation with a helper may be necessary. In folktales, the helper may be the community as a whole (Croker 48); an elder or wise man/woman (Croker 66, 77; Sikes 60, 61; Keightley 126; Spence 238); a representative of religious authorities, including clergy, from a priest to Virgin Mary herself (Spence 239; Henderson 189; Hartland 109; Sikes 58); and itinerant or liminal figures, such as smiths, soldiers, tailors, smugglers, etc. (Keightley 166; Hartland 111; Spence 238). Once the suspicions have been raised, the supernatural identity of a changeling is ascertained by means of a test, commonly known as “The Brewery of Eggshells.” During this test, a parent or helper engages in anti-behavior, performing an act that goes against practicality and defies common sense. This motif provides the room for variation. The egg-shells³³ may be boiled in a pot (Croker 68); or, on the contrary, used as containers for boiling water (Keightley 126; Spence 247); or even emptied and placed in a row to resemble milk pans (Scott 174; Keightley 473). The egg-shells could be replaced with shells of shell-fish (Hartland 114) or even omitted altogether, as in the case when a servant

³³ In the folklore of the British Isles, egg-shells were related to fairies in a yet another way. According to superstition, fairies could use them as boats; therefore, it was prudent to crush the shell after eating an egg (Wilde 102). This belief could partially account for the appearance of “The Brewery of Egg-shells.” It is more likely, however, that the egg-shells were viewed as readily available yet uncommon containers for food.

surprised the changeling by making a black pudding of pig's hide and bristle (Keightley 126).

Most obviously, these actions, whether or not they involve eggs, are united by their absurdity, which closely matches the state of affairs in the household. This, however, is not the only layer of meaning. No less significant is the waste of food resources that accompanies these trials. In Croker's tale "The Brewery of Egg-shells," excess signaled by the helper's advice "then get a dozen new laid eggs, break them, and keep the shells, but throw away the rest" (68). By the same token, to mingle hair and hide into black pudding means to spoil the whole batch. Inasmuch as it relates the fairy's anti-behavior to excessive consumption, the changeling lore encourages a similarly wasteful anti-behavior of the human characters. The consumption and, by extension, the illicit access to resources emerges as part and parcel of the changeling myth. And, when the myth itself gets encoded into literature, this integral semiotic dimension creates tension in the host text, as I will argue in the third chapter.

Sensitive to any food-related abnormality, the changeling cannot fail to comment on the breakage of semantic code. "The brewery of egg-shells" inevitably provokes its anti-behavior, whereby it is compelled to reveal its true age. Overwhelmed by the strange happenings and caught off guard, the changeling speaks coherently, a yet another unnatural act produced by its monstrous mouth. In Croker's account, the changeling exclaims: "I'm fifteen hundred years in the world, and I never saw a brewery of egg-shells before!" (70). Another typical confession involves the changeling's self-

identification with a forest, a liminal landmark that highlights the fairy's Otherness- e.g., “I have seen the forest of Ardennes burnt seven times, but I never saw so many pots boil” (Hartland 115).

The self-denunciation of the changeling is followed by actual exorcism, which may be realized through a variety of methods. Surprisingly, not all of them involve physical harm to the interloper. In several versions of the changeling myth, the exchange is reversed by treating the fairy well. Anna Bray writes about the woman who took good care of the substitute, “which so pleased the pixy mother, that sometime after she returned the stolen child, who was ever after very lucky” (176 – 177). A Hessian legend recounted in Keightley's collection mentions that the child was restored after the mother breastfed the changeling: here food resources are once again referenced, for the fairies are clearly after the “ennobling human milk” (Keightley 228). Humane treatment of the fairy harkens back to the lore of unchristened children who may be rescued from liminality by an act of Christian charity. But, in case of the changeling, benevolence does not amount to naturalization. Rather than accepting the fairy into the community, the mother reflects on the fate of her real child who is held hostage in the Otherworld. At the end, the return of the child is inevitable, and the child's good health validates the mother's strategy.

The threat of harm without real damage to the changeling may be singled out into a category of its own. The violence is hinted at but never fully realized. The purpose of such intimidation is to induce the fairies to restore the child by metonymically referring to the punishment that awaits their kinsman, should they fail to comply. In some

instances, chopping a block of wood under the changeling signaled the treat of dismemberment; throwing iron next to the changeling was meant to frighten it; and, predominantly in Wales, salt was heated on a shovel as a foreshadowing of the changeling's fate (Hartland 120, 126, 123). The most common threat involves burning, as in the account quoted by Keightley:

The mother (...) heated the fire oven as hot as possible. The maid, as instructed, asked her why she did it. "To burn my child in it to death," was the reply. When the question had been put and answered three times, she placed the child on the peel, and was shoving it into the oven, when the Troll-woman came in a great fright with the real child. (126)

The preparations for exorcism, featuring the three-fold repetition common in fairy tales, constitute the ritualistic display of violence that Michel Foucault conceptualizes in *Discipline and Punish*. As the actors in "the theatre of punishment," the mother and maid follow the script, which involves the verbalization of the sentence and demonstration of the instruments of torture. This is an elaborate prelude to what may potentially turn from mockery into murder. And, as if tracing Foucault's trajectory of the decline of theatrical penalty, the narrative brings the spectacle to a halt. Theatricality overburdens the narrative on textual as well as meta-textual level. The Troll-woman hastens to disrupt the spectacle, at which point the readers, no doubt, breathe a sigh of relief. It is not coincidental, perhaps, that the Troll-woman rebukes the mother by saying: "There's your child for you. I have treated it better than you treated mine" (Keightley 126). In a reversal of roles, the mother assumes the persona of an evil-doer, her ability to "discipline and punish" exceeding that of the magical Other.

Actual physical abuse was viewed as the last resort of banishing the changeling and restoring the child. Western European folklore includes a well-stocked inventory of techniques used for such exorcism. Popular methods form an extensive list: abandonment of the changeling in liminal places, such as crossroads, seashore, or locales allegedly haunted by fairies (Henderson 189; Spence 240, 248; Hartland 127); burning in the fire/hearth/oven or holding on a shovel over the fire (Sikes 57; Hartland 120 - 121; Gregor 9; Croker 49; Spence 237); drowning (Sikes 57; Evans-Wentz 111 – 112; Spence 237, 239); bathing in or ingestion of a solution made of foxgloves, a plant commonly associated with the fairies (Sikes 57; Spence 231, 250); flogging with rods or nettle (Sikes 57, 59; Hartland 119); and leaving on a dunghill (Hartland 118; Scott 174; Spence 241). Some types of harm seem to possess a symbolic dimension (purification by fire, baptism by water), but they are equally likely to be the amplification of the common household practices: corporal punishment turns into flogging with nettles, leaving the infant unattended – into exposure or throwing the changeling, whereby it is equated with the abject – the waste, the excrement.

On the level of plot, the overt violence of exorcism parallels the impetus to jettison and radically exclude the abject. The intensity of reaction coincides with Kristeva visceral description of food loathing: “[S]huttering violence of a convulsion that, to be sure, is inscribed in a symbolic system, but in which, without either wanting or being able to become integrated in order to answer to it, it reacts, it abreacts. It abjects” (3). In other words, the semiotic space of the text experiences the changeling, with its outwardly

monstrous physicality, as an indigestible object - and expurgates it much like a body would purge itself through vomiting. The anti-behavior of the parents, which in other contexts would have been censured, here is sanctioned as a correct way of treating the Other. The happy resolution, when the child is finally returned, further justifies the exorcism.

However, the violence that is imbedded in the changeling myth, normalized as it may be within the semantic boundaries of the text, changes its valence when surveyed through the axiological lens of the receiving culture. Besides simply retelling the tales, the nineteenth-century collectors of folklore inevitably identified the elements that resisted enciphering and required special treatment. Physical abuse of the changeling is one such stumbling block. In relating it, the narrator oscillates between logos and ethos, between the faithful rendition of the source and the urge to pass judgment from the standpoint of cultural superiority. A master of ironic detachment, Thomas Croker foregrounds the quaintness of Irish customs, for which tendency Yeats later brings him to task³⁴. Erasing the border between folkloric and legal discourses on child abuse, Walter Scott questions whether such an experiment as the immolation of the changeling, “could now be made without the animadversion of the law” (173). Similarly, Hartland juxtaposes the folkloric treatment of the changeling with the cases of child abuse, in which the child was identified as a fairy Other:

³⁴ Commenting on the efforts of the earlier collectors of Irish folklore, Yeats notes: “Croker and Lover, full of the ideas of harum-scarum Irish gentility, saw everything humorised” (xv).

Frightful as this cruelty would seem to every one if perpetrated on the mother's own offspring, it was regarded with equanimity as applied to a goblin; and it is not more frightful than what has been actually perpetrated on young children, and that within a very few years, under the belief that they were beings of a different race. (121)

It is noteworthy that Hartland is referring to a specific case of child abuse reported in *The Daily Telegraph*: in 1884, two females from Clonmel, Ireland, mistreated a three-year-old boy under the assumption that he was a changeling. In accordance with changeling lore, the child was laid on a shovel and kept over the fire, from which he sustained severe burns (Hartland 121 – 122; Silver 59 - 61). This incident was widely reported throughout Britain as a yet another example of Irish susceptibility to superstition. By choosing to cite this particular case³⁵, Harland ostensibly locates the Otherness in the periphery and, true the spirit of the age, criticizes the Irish for their adherence to the antiquated customs. According to Carole Silver, the reports like this educated the Victorian readers of the changeling lore while bolstering their feelings of cultural superiority (67). An opposite approach may be found in Sikes' survey of the magical Wales: the folklorist exonerates the Welsh by drawing attention to the universality of infanticide, which, “like murder, is of no country” (57).

However, it may be observed that the folklore collectors, who, unlike Croker, do not “humorise” their texts, are unanimous in repudiation of the parent's anti-behavior. The tendency to intersperse folkloric material with criticism of cruel practices becomes

³⁵ Carole Silver cites two similar cases from Wales that occurred in the 1840's and 1850's (63). But in Victorian rhetoric Wales, remote as it was, did not occupy the same subaltern position as Ireland.

particularly noticeable in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the concerns for child welfare extended to all classes. In the rhetoric of the folklore collectors, the locus of abjection is radically shifted from the monstrous child to the criminal parent. For, as Kristeva surmises, “[i]t is not lack of cleanliness that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. (...) [A] terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you” (4). “A parent who tortures his or her child” seems like a logical continuation of this semantic chain. To enable this conclusion, though, there must be a rupture between the folk epistemology and the rationalistic worldview inherited from the Enlightenment, the system of knowledge that abjures superstition and equates the changeling with the child rather than the Other.

When delineating the process of semiotic recognition of the elements that get encoded into the semiosphere, Lotman introduces the concept of “primary encoding.” In the course of primary encoding, the elements are sorted in accordance with their importance for the modeling system: the relevant elements are brought to the foreground and proliferated, whereas those perceived as meaningless are cast aside. As Lotman posits, “The first and most important act of any semiotic modelling of culture is to pick out the layer of culturally relevant phenomena in the surrounding world. (...) This primary encoding may be realized by identifying real-life situations with mythological ones, and real people with the people of myth and ritual” (Universe 58). The examples of primary code include etiquette, historical narrative, and especially theater, which Lotman

analyzes extensively as a mechanism of parceling the dynamic reality into segments (Universe 58 – 59). As applied to the enciphering of changeling myth in Victorian culture, Lotman's theory allows us to identify the folklore collections as the loci of primary encoding. After being transformed in the rhetorical crucible of Victorian ethnography, the folk narratives acquired new axiological dimensions. Retold and re-evaluated, they became more palatable to the educated readership. But to reach that stage, their significant (and signifying) elements had to be rearranged in order to facilitate their entry into the new cultural context.

As I have mentioned above, the strategies for encoding the changeling myth included the use of irony as a shield from the gruesome subject matter, as well as grafting the folk narrative onto the discourse of child abuse, which was speedily becoming a ubiquitous concern in the context of Victorian re-conceptualization of childhood. In a similar vein, the newspaper reports of such notorious incidents, as the mutilation of reported changeling in Clonmel in 1884 or burning of Bridget Cleary in 1896³⁶, served as a mediating link between the spheres of folklore and middle-class culture. In reporting the cases, the journalists contaminated the folk narratives with external opinions. At the same time, through the newspaper articles the changeling myth was migrating from the periphery to the nucleus of Victorian middle-class culture. A pater familias, for whom folk tales may be nothing but “bah and humbug,” would learn about changeling lore

³⁶ For more details on the murder of Bridget Cleary see Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story*.

while reading *The Daily Telegraph* over his morning cup of tea. His wife, an angel in the house, would find in the same article the confirmation of her anxieties, for, according to Carole Silver, in the course of the nineteenth century “the fear of losing a child to alien powers seems to have spread from rural folk and the unlettered working classes to the more affluent” (71).

Once thrust into middle-class culture, the changeling becomes a phenomenon that requires interpretation, re-valuation, and appropriation – that is, encoding into the new semiotic space. This secondary encoding will be occurring in such spheres as literature, visual arts, and later, cinema. In the third chapter, I will attempt to analyze how, depending on the elements that come into focus, the encoding of the changeling myth in the nineteenth-century literature of Western Europe accommodates two-fold interpretation - sympathy towards the changeling as an abused child and abjection of the changeling as an invader of the semiotic nucleus.

Conclusions

In the folklore of the British Isles, the children who are ostensibly identified as supernatural or uncanny fall into two broad categories: the spirits of unbaptized children who are doomed to eternal liminality and the changelings, usually the older members of fairy tribe, that are substituted for human children. Should we visualize these two categories as the circles of Venn's diagram, we would notice that they share a common

core – the lack of baptism as the token of cultural authentication. From thence, however, these categories diverge, and the discrepancies in their semiotic dimensions influence their encoding into the semiotic space of the nineteenth-century middle-class culture.

Unbaptized children constitute the uncanny inasmuch as they signify the communal guilt. On one hand, the guilt may result from the failure of the community to perform the essential and, surprisingly, easily executable rite of baptism. On the other, the preoccupation with ghosts of the unbaptized uncovers the inadequacy of the church-sanctioned burial practices and reveals the concern for the welfare of children well before the time when, according to Philippe Aries, the childhood was discovered. The method of redeeming the infant ghosts mirrors the practice of lay baptism and as such fosters the fantasy of salvation through individual agency. Yet inasmuch as the lore of unbaptized children parallels such significant concerns of the nineteenth century, as the juxtaposition of private and institutionalized charity, in the overarching discourse of supernatural children the unbaptized spirits play but a minor role. In search for a plausible explanation, we may turn to Kristeva's argument that abjection presupposes a loathsome object, which is violently repulsed in order to construct the subject and affirm the security of its borders. Although unbaptized children are relegated to the margins of the cultural space, their liminality does not fully coincide with Kristeva's notion of the abject. Diminutive in size and vague in meaning, manifesting themselves only through their piteous cries, they lack the physical dimension that produces loathing. In other words, their bodies are not corporeal enough to constitute what J.J. Cohen calls “the cultural body” of a monster

(*Monster Culture* 4). Unable to fully signify, they end up among the elements that, according to Lotman, recede “to the background in face of their irrelevance in the given modelling system” (*Universe* 58).

On the contrary, the changelings emerge in the nineteenth-century England as the master symbol in the discourse of supernatural and uncanny children. The physical characteristics of the changelings illustrate Cohen's view of monsters as “disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration” (*Monster Culture* 6). However, the totality of their physical and behavioral characteristics constitutes a recognizable image of Otherness, which, owing to its outward repugnance, falls under Kristeva's definition of the abject. Hence, the impetus of the narrative to reverse the exchange and exorcise the changeling by whatever means possible. Certain physical features of a changeling, such as its mouth and withered limbs, serve as the distinctive loci of monstrosity that originate corresponding types of anti-behavior: the unproductive consumption that drains the resources of the hosts and parasitism under the guise of disability. Ostensibly, both types of anti-behavior revolve around the access to resources. The dichotomy of legitimate versus illicit access to resources is so ingrained in the changeling myth that it arranges the narrative sequence as a conflict in the culturally contested space. In this instance of cultural clash, the invader is exposed by means of a test, which is synecdochically related to the overarching theme of resources (“the brewery of egg-shells”), and expelled beyond the borders of the semiosphere. In the changeling narratives, the Otherness of the changeling and its anti-

behavior fully justify the anti-behavior of the parents, which may include a wide range of abusive practices directed against the interloper. The resolution of the conflict, when the human child is restored, attests to the efficacy of such practices. In Lotman's terms, this example could be interpreted as one of those contexts when anti-behavior is legitimized as a correct behavior (*Semiotics* 9, 21). But the valence of anti-behavior changes dramatically when the changeling myth undergoes primary encoding into the nineteenth-century folklore collections. Inasmuch as they correctly relate the structure of the changeling myth, the folklorists cannot abstain from evaluating it. As a result of such re-evaluation, the narrative acquires the axiological dimensions that facilitate its entry into the value system of the middle-class readership. Transposed to the new semantic field, the changeling myth may accommodate two distinctive readings: the identification of the changelings with the marginalized and disenfranchised children, which sustains the fantasy of their redemption; and the focus on the original conflict – the struggle for resources, whereby the banishing of the invader remains a prerequisite for the happy resolution of the story.

Chapter Two: Supernatural Children in Slavic Folklore

As evident from the study of the unbaptized children in Western European folklore, the whole strata of folk beliefs surrounding baptism is grounded in the presence of the liminal, borderline, “neither heaven nor hell” place where the infant spirits are contained and from whence they may be released through the intercession of the community members who perform the naming ritual modeled of the church ceremonies. That liminal space that the unchristened infants occupy in folklore reflects the influence of the Catholic doctrine of Limbo, or the special compartment in the upper tiers of Hell where the infant souls languish in the absence of either torment or grace. The belief of Limbo was reflected in the actual burial practices of the unbaptized (e.g. outside of the hallowed ground) that also helped to crystallize the folkloric vision of the afterlife reserved for these unfortunates. However, before a similar model may be applied to Russian folklore, it is necessary to address the binary model of Russian culture, which becomes the object of Yuri Lotman's study in his article “The Role of Dual Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture (Up to the End of the Eighteenth Century).” Juxtaposing Russian medieval culture to that of the contemporaneous Catholic West, Lotman identifies in the latter three zones of the afterlife – paradise, hell, and purgatory (*Semiotics* 4). While heaven and hell represent the polar codification of behaviors as “definitely holy” and “definitely sinful,” purgatory encompasses a wide range of neutral behaviors. According to Lotman, this neutral, semantically unmarked space in the Western European culture boosted the development of non-ecclesiastic state institutions

by fostering humanistic ideas. With time, the neutral axiological sphere was normalized, while the highly semiotized “holy” top and “sinful” bottom were pushed away into the fringes of the semiosphere, taking the position of cultural anomalies (*Semiotics* 4 – 5).

When addressing the axiological landscape of the medieval Russia, Lotman explicitly denies the presence of any neutral zone that would correspond to the Catholic belief in purgatory. In the oft-quoted passage, he states: “The Russian medieval system was constructed on a marked dualism. (...) the Russian system divides life beyond the grave into heaven and hell. There is no provision for an intermediate zone. And correspondingly, behavior in this life is either sinful or holy” (*Semiotics* 4). Lotman's irreconcilable opposition of medieval cultures, captured in Russian binary and Western ternary vision of the afterlife, did not pass without criticism. In her article “Loman's Other: Estrangement and Ethics in *Culture and Explosion*,” Amy Madelker questions Lotman's accuracy in rendering either the Orthodox or the Catholic theological concepts. Pointing out the iconographic evidence, the works of the early fathers, and such apocryphal texts as “The Journey of the Mother of God through the Torments,” Madelker makes an argument for the existence of at least vague concept of purgatory in the belief system of Russian Orthodox Church (65, 78).

Concurring with Madelker, I would argue that in his discussion of the cultural spaces Lotman did not take into account, or perhaps deemed unimportant, the sphere of folk beliefs, in which theological tenets were processed with the subsequent re-encoding into culture. While the Otherworld of Russian folklore can hardly be called axiologically

neutral, considering its persistent association with filth, it nonetheless presents a salient alternative to the sacred sphere of heaven and the unholy sphere of hell. It is my belief that the notion of hybridity must be introduced into Lotman's restrictive binary of "sacred" and "unholy" in order to produce a more comprehensive overview of Russian culture. Hybridity becomes especially important when the object of study is the monstrous Other that, as J.J. Cohen argues, escapes the tenets of taxonomy and overrides binary oppositions. Peculiarly, Lotman himself identifies and describes hybrid locales while ostensibly equating them with the "unholy." Such is the case with the bath-house which Lotman groups together with other sacred pagan structures that were demonized in the Christian period. A meeting point for devils and sorcerers, the bath-house (*bania*) was also a place where one could perform fortune-telling, magical healing, and divination (*Semiotics* 8). Furthermore, Lotman uncovers another ritualistic use of the bath-house: "[...] the marriage ritual whereby bathing rites are no less obligatory than the church ceremony: the one complements the other" (*Semiotics* 9). Strangely absent from his survey is the use of the bath-house for delivery of children, which was a common practice in Russia, if only for the lack of a better maternity ward (Ryan 52). In Russian folklore, as noticeable even in Lotman's description, the bath-house emerges as a space where such binaries as cleanliness and filth, or procreation and death, or even Christian and pagan beliefs, are reconciled without any epistemological anxiety, and their coexistence is taken for granted. Liminal as it may be, this hybrid place does not fully coincide with either the semiotized top or the bottom of Lotman's binary model. In his attempt to account for

this discrepancy, Lotman maintains that certain places and times legitimize blasphemous actions, such as divination; however, in his terms, such legitimation still amounts to the mechanistic switching between the categories of “holy” and “unholy” rather than to the acceptance of a hybrid semiotic space that encompasses folk beliefs and blends them with Christian practices.

The significance of pagan beliefs in Russian culture was such that it led to the development of the term *dvoeverie* (double faith), which denotes the interweaving of pre-Christian and Christian beliefs (Ivanits 4). Explaining the prevalence of superstition in Russian culture, Linda Ivanits draws attention to the cultural and geographic isolation of Russian peasants. In contrast to the Western Europe, Russia did not experience the Reformation and with it the purging of the ancient superstitions (4). In the eighteenth century, the reforms of Peter the Great reshaped the cultural landscape of Russia, creating the gap between the Western-oriented nobility and the masses of peasants that adhered to the beliefs of their forefathers. The prevalence of superstition interfered with Peter's campaign for Westernization of Russian, and measures were taken to eradicate the alternative beliefs: thus, the ecclesiastic authorities were charged with investigation of “false and invented miracles,” cases of the shrieking sickness (кликунство) and other such “fictions” (Cracraft 290 – 293). Predictably, these measures yielded no considerable results other than the demonization of Peter in the folk imagination, particularly so in the Old Believer communities, and the popular view of him as the Antichrist (Davidson 145). The system of folk belief sustained no damage and prevailed well into the twentieth

century³⁷.

Integral to Russian *dvoeverie* is the belief in the “unclean force” (*nechistaia sila*), a diverse category that incorporates a wide range of domestic and nature spirits. Even though the devils, witches, and other malevolent beings figure prominently in so-called “lower mythology” of Russia, the “unclean force” as a whole cannot be marked as “unholy” or “demonic” and thus set in opposition to Lotman's concept of the “holy.” To the eighteenth-century peasant, a water-spirit from the mill pond was not what the Prince of Darkness was to a theologian. Even the folk devils differ from their theological counterparts in their appearance and tendency to play tricks on people rather than inspire lust and seduce (Wigzell 67). The distinction between the spirits of the “lower mythology” and Christian demons is best captured in the etiological legend from Tula province. After Satan's defeat, “[t]he devils began to fall from heaven to earth: some into the water, some into the forest, some in other places... And from them originated the “unclean force” on earth: devils (jokers), fiery serpents, *vodianye*, *leshie*³⁸, and others” (Ivanits 134). Driven away from heaven, the rebellious angels fall, but not low enough: instead of reaching hell, they populate the liminal zones and bring into the world a variety

³⁷ Several studies address the resilience of folk beliefs in the Soviet and contemporary Russia. For instance, the collection of essays *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, which includes chapters by such scholars of Russian folklore as Ivanits and Ryan, provides an overview of pagan remnants in Russian literature and culture of the twentieth century. Galina Lindquist's ethnography *Conjuring Hope: Healing and Magic in Contemporary Russia* makes a convincing argument for the survival of magical thinking and folk healing practices in post-Soviet Russia. Focusing on specific regions, Elizabeth Warner's case study “Russian Peasant Beliefs and Practices concerning Death and the Supernatural Collected in Novosokol'niki Region, Pskov Province, Russia, 1995” and Irina Golovakha-Hicks' “Demonology in Contemporary Ukraine: Folklore or ‘Postfolklore’?” likewise highlight the continuity of folk beliefs and contribute to our understanding of *dvoeverie* in Soviet and post-Soviet context.

³⁸ *Vodyanye* – water spirits, *leshye* – wood spirits.

of folk spirits, some more benign than others. Indeed, the members of the “unclean force” manifest a whole spectrum of behaviors, from unabashedly evil to nurturing: while the former called for protection, the latter could be fostered by means of gifts, like a bowl of porridge left for *domovoi*. This heterogeneity in relationship with the Otherworld, whereby the incantations and gifts were customized for the individual entities, further challenges the monochromatic view of Russian culture as polarized into two occluded spheres, the holy (good, correct) and the unholy (evil, incorrect). If we were to treat the folk cosmology as manifestation of the unholy, the intricate system of signs and modalities would be flattened, deflated, stripped of its ability to signify. A more sensitive (and sensible) approach to Russian folk beliefs would be to view them as constituting a meaningful system of knowledge that reflects the analytical skills, as well as creativity of its adepts and allows them to hypothesize, interpret, and exchange relevant information about the surrounding world.

The precise nature of *dvoeverie* has been a source of scholarly debates. Among the deniers of *dvoeverie* as viable theology was Dmitry Likhachev who stated that, “In general there cannot be any *dvoeverie*: either there is one faith, or no faith” (qtd in Riasanovsky 28). While refusing to admit that paganism constituted a full-fledged faith in Christian Russia, Likhachev acknowledged the fusion of desemantized pagan elements with Christian system of belief and their endurance in culture³⁹ (Rock 109). Without

³⁹ The controversy surrounding the concept of *dvoeverie* in Russian and Western scholarship is discussed in Stella Rock's study *Popular Religion in Russia: 'Double Belief' and the Making of the Academic Myth* (London: Routledge, 2007).

attempting to establish a hierarchy of beliefs, I would argue that the mixture of pagan and Christian beliefs, which Likhachev at least recognizes, constitutes a distinct semantic sphere in which ideas undergo interpretation and new meanings are generated. Its importance for Russian culture is such that it should not be overlooked as merely a set of quaint beliefs that were either subsumed under the category of “demonic” or survived by virtue of having been grafted onto the mainstream Christianity.

The analysis of the supernatural children in the nineteenth-century Russian culture would require at least three tiers of interpretation: 1) the discourse on the unbaptized children developed in the Orthodox theology; 2) the transformation and hybridization of these views in folklore; and 3) the encoding of the resultant folk images into the ethnographic studies and literary works. As I will attempt to show, the treatment of the unbaptized children in Russian folklore reflects the semantic complexity intrinsic to the “unclean force” as a whole. Whether the unbaptized child will be demonized or pitied depends on the context, including the circumstances of its death and its position as an insider/Other. The changeling myth, which in the Western European folklore is centered on the conflict over limited resources (mostly, food), is also hybridized and in some instances reinterpreted along the lines of salvation rather than violence.

Unbaptized Children in Russian Orthodox Belief

In Russian Orthodox Church, thrice submerging the child into water and invoking

the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit conducted baptism. As Sergei Bulgakov explains, because baptism symbolizes spiritual birth, which, like any other birth, occurs just once, it cannot be repeated (194). The importance of baptism was such that the priest, through whose negligence a child died unbaptized, was subject to disciplinary action and demotion (Zabelin 143). In the sphere of canon law, the procedure of baptism was surrounded by numerous rules and guidelines that regulated its every detail, from the purity of baptismal water to the qualifications of the godparents⁴⁰. At the same time, the nineteenth-century manuals for clergy, such as Zabelin's *Prava i obiazannosti presviterov* (*The Rights and Responsibilities of Priests*), made a distinction between regular proceedings and extreme cases when many of the rules could be foregone. If the infant's life was in danger, the priest was allowed to perform baptism at home instead of in the church and could substitute sprinkling with water for the doctrinally sound submersion (Zabelin 147). The failure to baptize a child had dire consequences, legal as well as spiritual. Stillborn, unbaptized, or improperly baptized children were categorized together with suicides, and their burial in the hallowed ground was prohibited (Bulgakov 233).

To protect the child's soul and ensure his or her place among the Christians, lay baptism was practiced. When the priest was unavailable, any Orthodox Christian, be it a man or a woman, could conduct baptism by thrice submerging the child into water and

⁴⁰ The correct, uninterrupted performance of baptism was a real concern to the church authorities and the superstitious laymen, as evidenced by the seventeenth-century text *The Tale of the Demoniac Solomonia*. In this account of the demonic possession and miraculous exorcism, the priest's daughter Solomonia suffers from unceasing attacks by demons, which kidnap and impregnate her. As St. Theodora explains to Solomonia in her dream, the cause of her misfortunes is that she was baptized by the drunken priest who failed to perform half the holy baptism and thus exposed her to demonic harm (Morris 55).

uttering the simple formula: “I baptize the servant of God [the child's name] in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”⁴¹ (Zabelin 144). It was the duty of the parish priest to educate his congregation, especially midwives, about the proper mode of conducting lay baptism. Even if the standard formula was replaced with a different prayer, the lay baptism was considered valid, and there was no need to repeat it in the church (Zabelin 144, 145). The only exceptions were the situations when a layperson conducted the sacrament “because of frivolity, disrespect towards the ecclesiastic authorities, or other such wicked reasons” (Zabelin 144). If these “usurpers of God’s grace conducted baptism” it was deemed illegitimate by the Church and had to be repeated.

A haunting account of lay baptism may be found in Efrosin'ia Kersnovskaya's visual memoir of her imprisonment in Stalin's camps⁴². Although written in the 1960's, well outside of the period with which this dissertation is concerned, an episode from Kersnovskaia's memoir is worth mentioning here, if only because it is written in the vein of Dostoevsky's quest for spirituality among the criminals in exile. Moreover, it reflects the axiological dimensions of lay baptism and how an Orthodox believer in a thought process rife with uncertainty decodes them. In her memoir, Kersnovskaia recounts how a fellow prisoner who, in spite of her self-professed atheism, asks Kersnovskaia to baptize

⁴¹ Unless otherwise noted, translations from Russian into English are mine.

⁴² Fully digitized memoir of Efrosin'ia Kersnovskaia *Skol'ko stoit chelovek (How Much is a Man Worth)* has been uploaded on a specially designed website <http://www.gulag.su/project/>. The episode with lay baptism appears in Album 6, accompanied by Illustration 7 (Notebook 6, Illustration 6). The text is available at <http://www.gulag.su/copybook/index.php?eng=&page=6&list=4#1>

the newborn of their acquaintance. At first, Kersnovskaia finds this idea amusing: she will have to perform the role of a priest! Although she reminds herself that *in articulae mortis* any person capable of reciting “Credo,” women included, can perform baptism, she feels unease about dabbling in the church ritual. Pressed by her fellow inmates and her own conscience, she agrees to proceed. The poignancy of the scene is underscored by the scarcity of accoutrements: a candle in a bottle and a dish filled water for a baptismal font. After sanctifying the water with a tiny cross (ironically, donated by her atheist friend), Kersnovskaia recites her prayers, while the fellow prisoners, one after another, are kneeling down around her. Vaguely recalling the procedure, Kersnovskaia draws the sign of the cross on the infant's forehead, chest, loins, palms, and feet, using water in lieu of myrrh, and then sprinkles him while pronouncing the standard baptismal formula. For Kersnovskaia, it is important to distance herself from her experience, to curtail her agency as a performer of the ritual, lest she be taken for an impostor. With appropriate humility, she presents herself as nothing but an instrument in the hands of God: “[...] I had a feeling that all this was done not by me, but the power from above was guiding me” (“[...] у меня было ощущение, что все это делаю не я, а сила, которая выше меня и мною руководит”). Once the ritual is finished, its validity is affirmed by a small miracle, as the sickly child finally starts crying and sucking his mother's breast. In the scene worthy of Dostoevsky's quill, Kersnovskaia describes the profound impact of the ritual on the minds of the uncouth female criminals, who repeat it by dabbing the heads of their infants with the “holy water.” The miraculous recovery of the child, as well as the

conversion of the diehard thieves, dispels Kersnovskaia's doubts over her authority in conducting the baptism. Kersnovksya's reactions, from the initial amusement to caution and the necessity to qualify her agency, reflect the uncertain status of lay baptism in the value system of the Orthodox believers. Yet it is the very liminality of lay baptism and its inextricable associations with death that facilitates its encoding into folklore as a magical rite effective for pacifying the unquiet ghosts.

The notion of liminality lies at the center of the Orthodox discourse on the unbaptized infants and the possibility of their salvation. In accordance to the Canon 124 of the Council of Carthage (397), which laid the foundations of Orthodox canon law, those who denied the presence of the original sin in newborns or the necessity of their baptism “for the forgiveness of sins” were subject to anathema. Macarius the Great, the fourth century Coptic hermit venerated in Russian Orthodox Church, wrote that if an infant died in his mother's womb, he was doomed to “move from death to death, from darkness to darkness” (*Dobrotoliubie* 270). His contemporary St. Gregory the Theologian expressed a less somber view, arguing that the unbaptized children

[...] не будут у праведного Судии ни прославлены, ни наказаны, потому что, хотя не запечатлены, однако же не худы, и больше сами потерпели, нежели сделали вреда. Ибо не всякий недостойный наказания, достоин уже и чести; равно как не всякий, недостойный чести, достоин уже наказания. (*O zagrobnoi uchasti mladentsev*)

[...] will be neither glorified nor punished by the righteous Judge, for although they have not been sealed, they have done nothing wicked and have experienced more suffering than did harm. Yet not everyone undeserving of a punishment deserves a reward; likewise, not everyone undeserving of a reward deserves a punishment.

A similar sentiment is canonized in the passage from the *Lenten Triodion*, read on the Saturday of Apokreos, which states: “One should know that the baptized infants will enjoy the bliss after their death, but the infants unenlightened [by baptism] and pagan will reach neither the bliss nor hell” (“Ведати же и сие подобает, яко крещеннии младенцы пищи наслаждаются, непросвещеннии же и язычестии, ниже в пищу, ниже в геенну пойдут”). From this line of argument, which dominates the Russian Orthodox theology, we can single out two key elements that will be encoded into folklore and influence the perception of the unbaptized children. Firstly, the nebulous view of the afterlife is reserved for the unbaptized, its uncertainty offset by the absence of purgatory in Russian Orthodox theology. Despite Macarius' cautious attempts to distinguish “the degrees, differences, and measures” in hell his theology does not produce a concept defined as clearly and methodically as Augustine's Limbo (*Dobrotoliubie* 275). This ambiguity creates an epistemological trap. On the other hand, insofar as the fate of the unbaptized is concerned, Orthodox theologians concur in their unwillingness to relegate the infant souls to eternal damnation yet can offer no tangible alternative except for that vague “neither... nor.” As Andrew Louth clarifies, “[...] the idea of an intermediate *state*, neither heaven nor hell, seems generally to be assumed in Orthodox belief about the afterlife, though to think of this state as a *place*, comparable with heaven and hell, is unusual” (155). On the other hand, Russian folklore is prepared to tackle this uneasy question precisely because it embraces the in-betweenness and conceptualizes liminality in spatial terms, as forests, bogs, millponds, etc. Quite without problem, the spirits of the unbaptized join the ranks

of the “unclean force.” In the process of encoding, they are not only assigned certain liminal habitats but oftentimes merge with other folk spirits that are associated with the same places.

Secondly, the hard dogma of the original sin is tempered by mercy, as the church fathers feel genuine sympathy for the unbaptized. Not only did these children die prematurely, but also through no fault of their own, they were severed from God's grace and Christian brotherhood. Abandoning the conventional theology in favor of pure compassion, the nineteenth-century theologian St. Theophan the Recluse goes as far as ranking all children, baptized and unbaptized alike, among angels:

А дети – все ангелы Божии суть. Не крещеных, как и всех вне веры сущих, надо предоставлять Божию милосердию. Они не пасынки и не падчерицы Богу. Потому Он знает, что и как в отношении к ним учредить. Путей Божиих бездна! (Feofan Zatvornik 155)

And the children are all God's angels. Those who are unbaptized, along with those who live outside of faith, should be left to God's mercy. They are not God's stepsons and stepdaughters, and therefore He knows what and how to decide in their regard. There is a multitude of the ways of God!

Despite the absence of purgatory and limbo, the Orthodox believers have always been encouraged to connect to the departed souls through prayer during the church service or in private (Bulgakov 234; Louth 155). Along with the suicides, the unbaptized infants could not be prayed for during the liturgy, as technically they were not considered to be members of Orthodox Church (Bulgakov 234). To soften the strict regulations, domestic

prayer was not only allowed but also encouraged⁴³. The significance of prayer as a way of connecting with the departed and influencing their well-being in the afterlife found its reflection in folk belief. Indeed, folkloric enchantments and incantations commonly feature references to God, Virgin Mary and the saints, so the difference between the domestic, private prayer and an incantation against toothache seems rather slight. This once again problematizes the relation of folklore to the semanticized top and bottom in Lotman's binary model of culture, for the incantation (or prayer used as an incantation) does not fit into either of the two categories. As magic, the church cannot sanction it, yet it does not appeal to the demonic forces and in its form, content, and purpose fully adheres to Christian ideals of piety. As I discuss below, Russian folklore prescribes prayer and acts of penance as the appropriate methods for redeeming certain categories of the unbaptized spirits, as well as the children kidnapped by supernatural forces.

Categories of supernatural children in Russian folklore and their reflection in literature

⁴³ Modern collections of Orthodox prayers often reprint two prayers composed by the nineteenth-century Orthodox clergymen. Both focus specifically on miscarriage or stillbirth rather than death of an unbaptized infant. A shorter prayer allegedly authored by the hieromonk Arseny of Afon puts an emphasis on the mother's suffering: "Lord, have mercy on your children who have perished in my womb! For the sake of my faith and tears and your mercy, Lord, do not deny to them your divine light! Amen" (*Istseliaiushchie molitvy* 256). In contrast, metropolitan Grigory of Novgorod and Saint-Petersburg lists the main causes that lead to the death of the unbaptized and expresses hope that they will receive their baptism directly from God: "Remember, kind Lord, the souls of your departed servants – the babes who accidentally died in the wombs of their Orthodox mothers from unknown actions, difficult delivery, or indiscretion and therefore did not receive the holy sacrament of baptism! Baptize them, Lord, in your goodness and save them through your infinite mercy. Amen" (*Istseliaiushchie molitvy* 256).

The representation of the unbaptized spirits and related types of supernatural children in Russian folklore lacks cohesion, a tendency that characterizes the category of *nechistaia sila* as a whole. As the ethnographic study *Narodnaia demonologia Poles'ia* indicates, the hybridization of the unbaptized spirits in Slavic tradition loosens their associations with childhood per se, whereby the unbaptized become a “mythological basis” that gives rise to a separate class of creatures that are only phylogenetically related to children (225). Here lies an important distinction from the English tradition. As I have described in the previous chapter, the unbaptized spirits of the English folklore are identified primarily as children, their vulnerable position invoking boundless sympathy. Locked in their intransient state, they are doomed to the eternal unrest unless released through the naming ritual. However, in Slavic tradition, an unchristened infant may shed its connections with childhood by turning into a little monster or even a monstrous adult.

My inquiry here, as elsewhere, is inspired and informed by J.J. Cohen's assessment of monsters' significance in cultural studies: “These monsters ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place. They ask us to re-evaluate our cultural assumptions about race, gender, sexuality, our perception of difference, our tolerance towards its expression. They ask us why we have created them” (*Monster Culture* 20). Following Cohen's guidelines, I will attempt to describe the folkloric personages and, more importantly, to analyze how and why they were encoded into the nineteenth-century literature of the Russian Empire.

Spirits of unbaptized children

The spirits of unbaptized children form a distinct subcategory within the larger category of unbaptized children in Russian folklore. Most prominently they figure in the folklore of Polesye, a vast region that extends over the northeastern side of Poland, south Belarus and north Ukraine, ending in the southwestern corner of Russia. Described by means of circumlocution (e.g. “the soul that was not baptized”), these entities lack designation as well as a concrete guise. Invisible to the human eye, they reveal their presence through pitiful cries and, like English pinkets or Scottish tarans, haunt the desolate places where they were buried (Vinogradova 226). In the same region, we find other identifications of the unbaptized children: as a whirlwind, shooting star, screech owl, or even an angel, the latter originating from the folk belief that until the age of seven children bear no sin (Vinogradova 226, 227).

Once the spirit has identified itself through its mournful cries, a quasi-baptism may be performed, and the standard naming formula pronounced: “I baptize thee as [male name] or [female name] in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Snegirev 173; Zabylin 64). In a simpler version, Christian references were altogether omitted: “If you are a boy, be [male name], and if a girl, be [female name]” (Vinogradova 227). The typical name pairs were “Ivan/Maria” in Russia and Ukraine or, more symbolically, “Adam/Eva” in Belorussia. Depending on the geographical region, the motif of baptizing the ghostly infant may acquire additional details. Fairly common are

the references to a certain time period after which salvation was no longer possible. In the Ukrainian tradition, after seven years the unchristened souls thrice beg for baptism and, should anyone respond to their plea, may be admitted to heaven as angels; otherwise, they would go to hell as demons (Zabylin 64). The cross as a metonymy for baptism also appears in Belorussian texts of this type. Unbaptized children may “beg for a crucifix,” so any cross, even hastily made of straw, may put their soul at rest (Barsov 219); another method of redeeming a restless soul involves giving a certain number of crosses to the living children (Vinogradova 227). The rite of lay baptism in certain Slavic traditions could be conducted on a corpse, albeit in direct violation of Canon 26 of the Council of Carthage⁴⁴. Thus, in Belorussia, the midwife or parents would bathe the dead infant with water and assign it a name, so as to save its spirit from causing harm in the afterlife (Vinogradova 227).

Due to their nebulous form and limited capacity for signification, the unbaptized spirits had little influence on the nineteenth-century Russian literature. Nonetheless, in Nikolai Gogol's short story “A Terrible Vengeance,” they open the pageant of the supernatural beings who become active during the twilight: “[...] unbaptized infants claw at the trees and clutch at the branches; sobbing and laughing, they hover over the road and the expanses of nettles” (*The Complete Tales* 165 – 166). Yet, as evident from Gogol's description, the unbaptized infants manifest themselves as chaotic energy and

⁴⁴ The Canon 26 dealt with the bodies of the deceased: administering communion to the dead was forbidden and likewise the baptism of the corpses which may occur through the “ignorance of the priests.”

nothing else, which is why it would be a daunting task to structure a plot around such a vague nucleus.

Smothered children

Many folkloric sources provide elaborate descriptions of the so called “приспанные дети,” or children accidentally suffocated by their sleeping mothers. These folk stories arose from the material conditions in the peasant communities, where mothers, due to overcrowding or for the sake of convenience, would take their infants to bed rather than leave them in a cradle. One may wonder whether SIDS⁴⁵ was at least partially accountable for the deaths that would be otherwise explained by suffocation. However, the folk narratives of this type heap blame for the demise of the newborn entirely on the mother. In the late eighteenth-century anthology of superstitions *Abevega*, condemnation is embedded in the very definition of this phenomenon: “[...] carefree, and therefore soundly sleeping, or drunk women in their sleep oftentimes overlay their infants” (“[...] беспечные, а оттого крепко спящие, или пьяные женщины часто сонные придавливают младенцев”) (Chulkov 197). A more lenient, yet rather fatalistic approach was to treat the smothering of children as manifestation of fate or one's lot in

⁴⁵ Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) has other folkloric implications. For instance, it gave rise to the lore of witch-vampire *striga* who, according to Romanian and Albanian beliefs, preys on sleeping infants. For more information on *striga* and other malevolent spirits associated with SIDS, see Jenni Kuuliala's chapter “Baptism and the Interaction with Supernatural Creatures in Medieval Europe” in *The Visual Culture of Baptism in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Fonts, Settings, and Beliefs* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2013).

life⁴⁶: if something is bound to happen, it will happen, and nothing can be done to prevent it. A popular account relates the story of a hapless peasant woman who suffocated all her children except for one daughter. For the fear of accidentally killing the girl, the woman would never sleep next to her until she came of age. After her wedding, the daughter paid a visit to her mother who proposed to sleep together. Of course, that very night the woman suffocated her last living child (*Zhivaia starina*, 1897, 1, 371). In Russian folklore, the souls of the suffocated children were grouped together with the unchristened ghosts, as smothering usually occurred within the early days of the child's life, when the mother was still getting used to her role as a caregiver. Depending on the regional variant of this motif, it is believed that the smothered children were taken by the devils or *domovoi* or at the very least barred from heaven (Chulkov 197; Afanasiev, PV, V.3, 314; *Zhivaia starina*, 1897, 1, 371; *Zhivaia starina*, 1889, 2, 233).

Under the laws of the Russian Empire, accidental smothering of a child was not criminalized. If the mother's behavior raised no red flags, and infanticide was not suspected, the infant could be buried without forensic examination, but the mother had to undergo church penance (Zabelin 290). In folk tradition, the notion of penance was taken to the extreme. To redeem her sin and save the soul of her child, the guilty mother was supposed to perform an expiating ritual⁴⁷, which involved spending three successive

⁴⁶ In Russian tradition, fate or lot is called *dolia* (доля).

⁴⁷ In its basic form, it resembles similar rites in which the performer, protected by a magical circle, perseveres in the presence of the “unclean force.” For more examples of such rituals, valorized in Gogol’s short story “Vii,” see W.F. Ryan *The Bathhouse at Midnight* (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999) 44 – 46.

nights in a church while standing in a protective chalk circle. The sources specify that a priest must draw the circle, although it is unclear to which extent the clergy was involved in this ritual (if it was in fact practiced) (Ryan 46). During each night, the mother would witness the devils that at first show her the child, then pinch and beat it and, during the third trial, torture it mercilessly. Should she withstand these visions of terror, her child would be redeemed (Chulkov 197). In another example of narrative intensification, the child at first appears half black and half white, then with a black head, and, finally, Virgin Mary herself brings it out “all white and light” before taking it to heaven (*Zhivaia starina*, 1889, 2, 233).

The legends of the smothered children figure prominently in the fiction of Vladimir Dal, the celebrated Russian lexicographer and folklore collector. In his novella “Pavel Alekseevich Igrivii”, published in 1847 in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, Dal' dramatizes the story of a peasant girl Masha. As a favorite housemaid of a young landlady, Masha receives a remarkable education, but in a dramatic reversal of fortune ends up married to a ruffian. After her rowdy husband is sent away as a conscript, Masha is left alone with an infant whom she always keeps by her side. Ironically, parental love proves fatal, and Masha accidentally smothers her child. In his attempt to challenge the negative image of an involuntary murderess, Dal' draws attention to the extenuating circumstances, which in this case include grief over the loss of husband and attachment to the child, albeit taken to the extreme. Unlike Chulkov's culprits, Masha is neither drunken nor carefree but hardworking, kind, and humble – a model of Orthodox womanhood.

The same integrity is intrinsic to Daria, the heroine of the short story “Nevesta s ploshchadi” (“A Bride from the Square”), which first appeared in *Russkaya beseda* in 1857. A comely and good-natured village lass, Daria is forced into a miserable marriage. Veering away from the model of long-suffering femininity, Dal' praises Daria for her attempts to resist domestic abuse and take control of her life. But Daria's fragile peace abruptly comes to an end when she overlays her three-day-old child. Dal's description of the community's response to Daria's crime reveals his familiarity with the lore of supernatural children, as he enumerates the most common motifs:

[...] Богдашка этот — как называют всякого младенца до крестин — не крещен на беду, и что нельзя хоронить его на святой земле, на кладбище, а надо хоронить без попа и за оградой; что матери не видать его и на том свете, что это еще и не человек, и Бог еще не вложил в него душу, потому де что в нем нет еще ни креста, ни печати дара Духа Святого, и проч. (Dal', V 5, 123)

[...] that Bogdashka⁴⁸, as any infant is called up until the christening, unfortunately has not been baptized, so he must not be buried in the hallowed ground, at the cemetery, but instead should be buried without a priest and outside the graveyard fence; that the mother will not see him even in the afterlife, that he is not yet a man and God has not put the soul into him, for there is neither cross on him nor the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit and etc.

When the half-crazed village biddy starts wailing for the child, her neighbors quickly reprimand her. In Lotman's terms, this interaction illustrates how keening, a normative practice in a different context, may be interpreted as an anti-behavior when an unbaptized child is involved. However, as Dal' the narrator extricates himself from the network of

⁴⁸ Diminutive of Bogdan, literally “God given.”

folk beliefs and takes a critical stance towards superstition, the old woman's anti-behavior serves an unexpected source of comic relief. Her punchline “D'you mean, it shouldn't be done?” (“А что, нешто не надо?”) will be repeated at the end of the story, also at the most inopportune moment.

For Dal', like for his contemporary writers and ethnographers, the encoding of folk motifs into fiction becomes an axiological rather than mimetic process. While outwardly striving for authenticity, he inevitably launches a sorting mechanism that would admit certain motifs into the literary text and cast aside others. In this encoding process, the lore of the smothered children is separated into semantic layers with different axiological valence, only some of which are fit for literary appropriation. This tendency becomes clear once we juxtapose Dal's verbatim rendition of certain folk beliefs with his stubborn omission of the expiation rite. Without mother's penance, the typical plot of the folk narrative appears truncated; therefore, other literary devices must be used to propel the narrative to a cathartic resolution. In the spirit of the age, Dal distances himself from the superstitious beliefs. Sympathy, which in folk stories is reserved exclusively for the supernatural child, in his fiction is showered on the mother. In both stories, the community does not castigate the murderess but extends its benevolence towards her. Offered another chance at parenthood, Masha becomes a nurse and thus a proxy mother to the lovely children of the charitable landlord. Daria's road to redemption is much more dramatic. After her husband makes a careless comment about their deceased child, she stabs him to death. For her crime Daria is sentenced to public flogging – an ordeal akin to

the prolonged torture by demons that an infanticide would undergo in a folk narrative. However, Dal' spares his heroine this torment, just like he rescues her from the traditional act of penance. But the consistency with the folkloric paradigm is maintained by resolving the conflict with the help of an obscure folk custom: a female criminal sentenced to flogging may be forgiven, should a man take her for his bride on the brink of her execution. When a rescuer steps forward, the whole community, including the judges and the executioner, is overjoyed on Daria's behalf. The crime of child murder is soon forgiven, and Daria becomes an epitome of everything that a wife and daughter should be in a peasant community. When forced to choose between melodramatic and supernatural resolution, Dal' casts his vote in favor of the former.

Igosha.

Although related to *domovoi* (the house-spirit), *igosha* is a distinctive folkloric creature that has the strong associations with the lore of the unbaptized. In the oft-quoted passage, Afanas'ev describes it as “a freak without arms or legs that was born and died unchristened” (*Poeticheskie vozzreniia* 339). An invisible spirit, *igosha* plays pranks on people if they refuse to honor him by leaving an extra spoon or piece of bread at the table or throwing him a hat or mittens from the window (*Poeticheskie vozzreniia* 339). In her interpretation of this legend, Sharapova ties the absence of limbs to the larger tradition of representing the unclean spirits with physical imperfections, as lame, one-eyed, etc.

Likewise, the physical appearance of *igosha* may signal his stunted development, portraying him as embryo rather than a full-bodied infant (Sharapova 267).

Such a minor folk spirit as *igosha*, perhaps, would have never found a place in Russian literature had it not been rescued from obscurity by Vladimir Odoevskii⁴⁹. A master of Gothic prose, Odoevskii epitomizes the tendency of Russian gothic tradition to take advantage of the locally available folkloric material in addition to the borrowed Western tropes. As Neil Cornwell asserts while tracing the evolution of gothic narrative, “The eastward spread, however, soon mingled with kindred local currents and a process of cross-fertilization ensued, embracing structure, style, themes and common sources” (*The Gothic-Fantastic* 5). This combination of gothic tropes and native Slavic motifs serves as the basis for the short story “Igosha,” which was included into the collection *Piostrye skazki* (*Variegated Tales*), published in 1833⁵⁰. The plot is centered on the relationship of a young protagonist and his imaginary friend *igosha*. The story takes place in a cozy, snow-swept manor house, yet the homely location abounds in gothic tropes. Two key gothic elements, coercion and incarceration, are realized through the actions of the father who, for all his benevolence, punishes his son first by putting him in the corner, then by tying him to a chair and, finally, by locking the boy in an empty room. Generic as it may seem, this gothic plot is “russified” by the addition of the ostensibly Russian folk

⁴⁹ Alexei Nikolaevich Tolstoy was most likely indebted to Odoevskii, when he included *igosha* into his short story “Kikimora” (published in 1910 in the collection *The Tales of the Magpie*). In Tolstoy's story, *igoshi* are described as the children of *kikimora* whom she feeds with dogberries. As such, they add nothing to the story except for a touch of local color.

⁵⁰ With his typical aversion for the fantastic, Belinsky called this story “totally incomprehensible” (Cornwell, *Odoevsky*, 42).

spirit.

The opening lines of “Igosha” capture the theme that will be thoroughly developed throughout the narrative – the inability of the narrator to categorize, or even verbalize, the incongruous monster. *Igosha* is introduced into the plot by means of a paradox, as someone deprived of limbs yet fully capable of locomotion:

Я сидел с нянюшкой в детской; на полу разостлан был ковер, на ковре игрушки, а между игрушками -- я; вдруг дверь отворилась, а никто не вошел. Я посмотрел, подождал -- все нет никого.
- Нянюшка! нянюшка! Кто дверь отворил?
- Безрукий, безногий дверь отворил, дитячко! Вот безрукий, безногий и запал мне на мысль.
- Что за безрукий, безногий такой, нянюшка?
- Ну, да так -- известно, что, - отвечала нянюшка, безрукий, безногий.
(91 – 92)

I was sitting with my nanny in the nursery; the carpet was spread on the floor, the toys were on the carpet, and I was in-between the toys; suddenly the door opened, but no-one walked in. I looked and waited, yet there was nobody.
“Nanny, dear nanny! Who opened the door?”
“The armless and legless one opened the door, my child.”
So I could not stop thinking about the armless and legless.
“Who is that armless and legless one, nanny?”
“Well, for sure, it's known who he is,” answered my nanny. “The armless and the legless one.”

What seems confounding to the young member of the gentry is dismissed as irrelevant by his nurse who, as a peasant woman, fully concurs with J.J. Cohen's opinion that the monster “escapes easy categorization” (*Monster Culture* 6). The ability of the limbless spirit to open doors does not raise her eyebrows. Rather than being treated as unnatural, it is viewed as marvelous and therefore appropriate for the otherworldly creature. The boy's struggle to attain meaning is stymied by the nurse's apparent lack of comprehension. To

her young charge who has already developed a penchant for classification, the euphemistic reference to the creature simply cannot suffice. The nurse, however, can offer him nothing but circumlocution.

The ban on uttering the name of a folk spirit is ingrained in folklore, Slavic and Western European alike. Yet Odoevskii's short story adds another shade of meaning to this cultural prohibition. By resorting to circumlocution, the nurse is tapping into an "open secret," as she at once reveals and conceals the information. In her commentary of Eve Sedgwick's concept of an "open secret," Anne-Lise François defines it as "essentially preventative or conservative means of communication that reveals to insiders what it simultaneously hides from outsiders or, more specifically, protects them from what they do not wish to know, from what it is in their power to ignore" (1). Although Sedgwick was applying her concept specifically to the verbalization of mutiny in Melville's *Billy Budd*, it is equally applicable to that *sapienti sat* moment when the discourse is comprehended by the insiders and dismissed as incomprehensible by the outsiders. In Odoevskii's story, the nurse ostensibly protects herself from uttering the name that, due to the folkloric conflation of the signifier and signified, may immediately summon the creature. However, she is also shielding her young master from the secret that is not properly his and therefore can do him no good. Indicative of an open secret, the phrase "it's known, what it is" ("известно, что") establishes a hierarchy of knowledge, separating those initiated in the secret from the ignorant ones. And precisely because the boy fails to identify "the armless and legless one," he is not entitled to any further

explanations.

Ironically, the young protagonist learns the creature's proper name from his father, an educated member of Russian gentry. Accounting for the troubles he had on his way, the father casually drops the name “Igosha,” which leads to another round of questions. Since *igosha* occupies an obscure place in Russian folklore, it is not surprising that the lady of the house has not heard of him. To answer the wife's questions, the father narrates his encounter with the coachmen who, following the folk custom, left an extra spoon and piece of bread at the table. These gifts were intended for “such a fine fellow who does not like to be slighted” (“молодец, который обид не любит”). Another open secret is hinted at, yet the *barin* is determined to get down to the heart of the matter. Eventually, the coachmen divulge the name of the creature. In the spirit of dualism inherent in Slavic folklore, *igosha* is described as a protective spirit, a *domovoi* of sorts, who may assist with household chores but who is prone to anger at the slightest provocation. In order to appease him, it is necessary to leave an extra spoon at the table and utter an additional blessing in church.

A supernatural child with propensity for violence, *igosha* is nonetheless treated differently from a changeling. Unlike a fairy invader, he originates from within, as a malformed peasant infant who died before baptism, so his place in the domestic sphere remains uncontested. Exorcism is clearly out of the question. To interact with *igosha* in a culturally meaningful way means to appease him. A guardian of values in J.J. Cohen's sense, the monster hereby teaches the peasants the importance of *caritas*, an essential

element in Russian Orthodox tradition. Feeding the hungry, clothing the beggar, blessing the child, attending to the needs of one's neighbor – all these caritative acts coincide with the ritualistic behaviors necessary for appeasing the monster. Like “The Wee One” from Mitya Karamazov's dream, *igosha* posits himself as an object of charity and brotherly love, although resorting to punitive tactics in order to achieve his goals. In an ironic Durkheimian twist, the unclean brings the community in contact with the axiological aspects of the sacred, as it enforces certain culturally meaningful rites.

Bemused by the coachmen's tales, the father, unbeknownst to himself, invites *igosha* to his own household by enticing the spirit with the offerings of fine living. Although spoken in jest, his invitation serves as a binding contract, particularly because it resembles a standard formula used for transferring *domovoi* from the old house to the new one. Migrating from one semiotic space to another, the folkloric trope changes its valence and acquires new signifying potential. Sensitive to the levels of signification, Odoevskii carefully differentiates between the marvelous and the uncanny. In the peasant world, the folk spirit is taken at its face value, as unproblematic manifestation of the marvelous. Encapsulated in an open secret, the monster may be referred to non-verbally, with a shrug or a sideways glance – well, you know, *that one*. Because his origins are well understood, and his existence corresponds to the recognizable paradigm of unbaptized children, the question “Who is the armless and legless one?” becomes redundant. Much more important is what he does. Yet, as Odoevskii quickly points out, within the sphere of the high culture *Igosha* loses his function of uniting the community

by means of shared rituals. The fissure between the peasantry and the nobility in the post-Petrine Russia was such that would preclude the straightforward rendition of this myth in a new setting. As Yuri Lotman famously asserts, “[...] a member of Russian nobility of Peter's time and after was like a foreigner in his own country: even when fully grown up he had to learn artificially what people usually absorb in early childhood by direct experience” (*Semiotics* 232).

While Lotman refers primarily to manners and modes of behavior, the same can be said about one's alienation from folklore. After a certain hesitation, which Todorov defines as constituting the fantastic, the adult members of the gentry would inevitably choose the uncanny over the marvelous (Todorov 41). The child protagonist, however, opts out for the marvelous and embraces the supernatural explanation of the encountered phenomenon. As Marietta Turyan points out in her biography of Odoevskii, “[the writer] explores the hiding-places of his own childhood consciousness, reproducing the psychologically complex structure of the interaction between the world of the child and the adult person. In the imagination of the young character, *igosha* becomes the real participant of his games and pranks” (229). But the child's capacity for wonder is temporal and evanescent. Eventually he will also choose the uncanny, the choice that signals transition into adulthood as well as indoctrination into the high culture, where the creatures of folklore have neither a place nor function. Before then, however, the boy has to face his own Otherness embodied by *igosha*.

Its fragmentariness being so extreme, *igosha* is hard to describe at first. Posing a

linguistic challenge in addition to the epistemological one, the monster successfully escapes from the tenets of language. Upon encountering *igosha*, the boy struggles with his inability to verbalize the monster whose incongruity shatters any attempt at categorization⁵¹. An oxymoron is unavoidable: at first, the narrator states that the legless creature walked but immediately corrects himself, saying that it actually jumped:

[...] ко мне в комнату вошел, припрыгивая, маленький человечек в крестьянской рубашке, подстриженный в кружок; глаза у него горели, как угольки, и голова на шейке у него беспрестанно вертелась; с самого первого взгляда я заметил в нем что-то странное, посмотрел на него пристальнее и увидел, что у бедняжки не было ни рук, ни ног, а прыгал он всем туловищем. (95)

[...] a tiny man in a peasant shirt, his hair trimmed in a circle, walked, hopping, into my room; his eyes were burning like coals, and his head was constantly spinning on his little neck; from the very first glance I noticed something odd and, upon looking harder, noticed that the poor thing had neither arms nor legs and was jumping with its full body.

The absence of limbs is not the only oddity in *igosha*'s appearance. Later it is mentioned that *igosha* alternates between a high-pitched voice, like that of a little child, and the deep bass of an adult. More importantly, the boy does not perceive the creature as merely a monstrous child. Equally important is *igosha*'s identification with a peasant, like the fairy tale “little mouzhik the size of a nail” (“мужичок с ноготок”). The typical peasant garb and haircut look rather bizarre on a misshapen child, but to the narrator they are

⁵¹ The incongruity of the monster poses a challenge to the illustrator as well. In the first edition of *Variiegated Tales* (1833), the challenge of representing something unrepresentable is circumvented: *igosha* is drawn simply as a boy's head with two gloves for his limbs and a boot for a hat. The armless and legless stump of a body is not pictured at all.

inseparable from the folk myth as such. In the child's mind, the folk myth is encoded primarily as the myth of the folk, that is, of the peasants with their full array of attributes. Previously the peasant world has been embodied by the boy's serf nanny and hinted at, rather condescendingly, by his enlightened father, yet even these scanty seeds germinate in his consciousness until they blossom into full-scale fascination. If anything occupies the position of Freudian uncanny, it is not the dead child per se, but the milieu that engendered it. As the uncanny, the mysterious peasant world makes its way into the shrouded, protected space of the nursery: it allures and entices the little gentleman with behaviors that are anything but genteel.

The monster's misshapen body does not invoke either fear or revulsion. Rather than the abject, *igosha* constitutes the object of compassion; twice the boy expresses pity for the monster and even refers to him by a peculiar diminutive “жалкинький” (“a pitiful little thing”). Cognizant of the folklore's psychological dimension, Odoevskii identifies the small child with the miniature fairy, much like the Victorians would do years later⁵². Prior to *igosha*'s appearance, the narrator saw himself reflected in his toys. Hence, the peculiar turn of phrase “the toys were on the carpet, and I was in-between them” - another signifier in a semantic field, a toy among toys. Later, when the father brings more toys from the town, the nanny uses this opportunity to impress upon the boy a variety of prohibitions: “Don't break them, don't smash them, play with them just a little bit.” The

⁵² Susan Stewart elaborates on this juxtaposition in *On Longing* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984) 112 – 113.

prohibition of touching the toys, lest he destroys them, symbolically cuts off the boy's ability to make use of his hands, which in turn fortifies his self-identification with the armless ghost. Once such identification occurs, expressed most vividly by the boy's pity for his double, the ego and id are torn asunder, and the conflict ensues. *Igosha* becomes the Lord of Misrule, much like Karlsson-on-the-Roof from Astrid Lindgren's eponymous series. He starts by smashing the boy's collection of toys, symbolically propelling him from the stage of infancy onward, and proceeds to destroy his nurse's personal belongings. The absence of hands does not deter him; when necessary, he uses teeth. All the while *igosha* explains his violent outbreaks as a way of drawing attention to his needs: if the boy's father hired him as a servant, he should provide him with clothes and shoes. Rather ineffectively, the boy tries to negotiate between the insatiable id and the superego epitomized by his father, whose benevolence would only go so far. Although the boy upbraids his imaginary friend, there is an unmistakable jouissance, the destructive indulgence in violating the household rules.

The duality of the child and the monstrous Other in Odoevskii's "Igosha" harkens back to the fairy tale plots in which one of the two siblings is turned into an animal, while the other remains human. Analyzing the Grimm's tale "Brother and Sister," Bruno Bettelheim identifies the brother, who turns into a fawn, with the self-ingratiating id and his patient sister – with the ego and superego. The ultimate goal of the fairy tale is to harmonize the split psyche, but "until we have achieved full personality integration, our id (our instinctual pressures, our animal nature) lives in uneasy peace with our ego (our

rationality)” (81). In light of Bettelheim's psychoanalysis, “Igosha” may be interpreted as a tale of self-realization, whereby the protagonist learns to facilitate between the disparate desires of his id and superego. Yet in Freud's terms, this process of maturation closely corresponds to the phallic stage when the young boys develop the fear of castration. Freud links the fear of castration to the Oedipal desire of becoming the phallus of one's mother and fulfilling her needs in their totality. Due to the father's intervention, such desire may never be fully realized, and the boys must submit to the symbolic castration by giving up their claims to being the mother's phallus (Mitchell 201; *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 22). Symbolic castration in Freud's terms is more akin to self-castration, as it is the son that relinquishes his desires for the fear of violence from his father. In Odoevskii's short story, the boy's relationship with his biological mother bears no significance on the plot. Much more important is his attachment to his peasant nanny, a maternal figure that both nurtures the boy and enforces the father's law of endless prohibition. Inasmuch as the Oedipal conflict is reduced to the boy's struggle with jouissance, the threat of castration permeates this unmistakably gothic plot. Thus, *igosha's* fragmented body provides a powerful image of dismemberment. As an epitome of unruly desire, it stands for the phallus: even the shape of a trunk with a head and no limbs is unmistakably phallic. Unable to control *igosha's* behavior, the boy realizes that the only way of avoiding further punishment is by disassociating himself from monster: in other words, by giving up his unruly phallus and accepting the Law of the Father. Before the boy expels *igosha* – his evil double and the embodiment of id, - the folk spirit

has the last word.

- Ах, ты неблагодарный, - закричал Игоша густым басом, - я ли тебе не служу, - прибавил он тоненьким голоском, я тебе и игрушки ломаю, и нянюшкины чайники бью, и в угол не пускаю и веревки развязываю. (102)

“Why, you ungrateful one!” cried out Igosha in his deep voice. “Do I not serve you?” he added in a squeaky voice. “I break your toys for you, I smash the nanny's teapots, I keep you from standing in the corner and untie your ropes!”

Offended by ingratitude, *igosha* abandons the household, deciding instead to haunt the German doctor who, perhaps as an allusion to the demonic status of Germans in Russian folklore, may show more appreciation for *igosha's* services. Soon after *igosha's* disappearance, the boy's anger once more gives way to pity, as the ego begins to mourn for the subdued id and all that it stands for⁵³. When he reworked the story in 1844, Odoevsky added a paragraph, in which the adult narrator recounts and rationalizes his experience as “a play of imagination” (Cornwell, *Odoevsky*, 42 – 43). An educated member of the nobility, he now decidedly opts out for the uncanny rather than marvelous. However, he admits that the vision of the strange creature still haunts him during the transition from sleep to wakefulness “when the soul returns from some other world where it lived and acted upon some laws unknown here, but which she has not yet forgotten” (“когда душа возвращается из какого-то иного мира, в котором она жила и действовала по законам, нам здесь неизвестным, и еще не успела забыть о них”)

⁵³ For an overview of Odoevskii's ideas on child psychology, see Chapter Four in Neil Cornwell's biographical study *The Life, Times, and Milieu of V.F. Odoevsky, 1804-1869*. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1986).

(103).

Kikimora.

In *Russian Folk Belief*, Ivanits rounds up the discrepant traits of *kikimora* to produce a coherent image of a malevolent domestic spirit: “In some regions the *kikimora* or *shishimora*, a minor female spirit, was thought to be the wife of the *domovoi*, although elsewhere this personage was thought to exist in its own right. [...] The *kikimora*, too, was envisioned anthropomorphically, as a woman dressed in a traditional Russian costume, but with long flowing hair and no headdress” (57). The Otherness of *kikimora* is immediately revealed through her loose hair, incongruous with the traditional female costume that should be accompanied by braids and a headscarf. Defining *kikimora*'s traits, Ivanits appoints *kikimora* as an oracle, foreboding disasters, and as an overseer of female chores and crafts – spinning, needlework, and tending to the domestic fowl. Any needlework that has not been blessed with a sign of the cross and put away neatly would become *kikimora*'s rightful spoils (57). It is tempting to use Ivanits' concise definition of *kikimora* as a working theory because it puts a check mark next to all universal characteristics of *kikimora* – a female spirit firmly embedded in the domestic sphere. But to do justice to the folkloric sources, it would be important if not to summarize, then at least to acknowledge the astounding variety of representations even of this minor spirit.

Like other entities of Russian folklore, *kikimora* fits into J.J. Cohen's concept of a

monster that stubbornly resists categorization. Any attempt to pin down any of its characteristics ends up in a catalog of mutually contradictory items. In the folk tradition, *kikimora* assumes many guises and may appear not only as a female spirit in traditional costume but also as a dark-haired and pale-faced maiden, a hunchbacked hag dressed in rags, or as an animal (Maksimov 64; Sharapova 279; Nikitina 45). In Sakharov's *Skazaniia russkogo naroda*, she is described as a diminutive creature that, for all its mischief, invokes pity rather than fear: “So thin, oh, so black is that *kikimora*; and its head is itsy-bitsy, the size of a little thimble, and its body may be mistaken for a straw”) (“Тонешенька, чернешенька та Кикимора; а голова-то у ней малым-малешенька с наперсточек, а туловища не спознать с соломиной”) (37). The string of diminutives allows the listener to envision *kikimora* as a child-like creature, if not outright as a child, but his assumption will be challenged by the malevolent actions of *kikimora* whom Sakharov's informant treats as an agent of sorcerers and witches (37-38). Because it is typical for Russian folklore to arrange spirits into the familiar domestic hierarchy, as being married to each other and managing the household together, so *kikimora* is oftentimes said to be the wife of *domovoi*, the most well-known and persevering character of Russian folklore. *Kikimora's* proximity to *domovoi* leads to their conflation, which is preconditioned by similarity of their harmful behaviors and shared habitats (both are said to favor the oven, cellars, and garrets) (Nikitina 47). More common still is the designation of *kikimora* as an invisible spirit akin to poltergeist (Sharapova 279; Chulkov 218; Zabylin 248). *Kikimora's* invisibility, as well as her restlessness, harkens back to the

lore of the unbaptized infants who are commonly described as disembodied voices; however, her household activity, including spinning, clearly reflects her status as a monstrous adult. According to folk calendar, *kikimora* is most active during Yuletide, when the noise that she makes may foretell the change of fortunes (Ivanits 57; Sharapova 279 – 280). Overall, the behavior of *kikimora* is consistently hostile and includes bullying of children and harm done to the cattle and domestic fowl (Sharapova 280; Nikitina 46).

The exorcism of *kikimora* was notoriously difficult. The fairy stone (a stone with a natural hole, or “куриный бог in Russian”) was used as a protective charm: by hanging it inside the house or in a barn the peasants attempted to keep away not only *kikimora*, but also other evil spirits (Sharapova 280). If *kikimora* was planted into the house by means of a doll, the discovery and removal of the magical object would solve the problem. In other cases, various rituals could be used, from consecration of the house by a priest to magical rites that involved recitation of spells like “Oh you, house *kikimora*, leave this poor wretch's house at once, or they will flog you with red hot rods, burn you with scorching fire and pour black tar over you” (“Ах, ты гой еси, кикимора домовая, выходи из горюнина дома скорее, а не то задерут тебя калеными прутьями, сожгут огнем-полымем и черной смолой зальют”) (Sharapova 280).

The origins of *kikimora* are as ambiguous as its appearance or *modus operandi*. Relying on etymological analysis, the nineteenth-century ethnographers attempted to relate *kikimora* to *mora*, a Slavic malevolent entity, or even to Greek chimera, whereby

the appellation “*kikimora*” apparently resulted from reduplication⁵⁴. Folk sources reveal an even greater discord of opinions. While some trace *kikimora* to the unbaptized children that assume monstrous form, others identify them as children kidnapped by the “unclean force,” as the progeny of women and fire serpents⁵⁵ or even as spirits left behind the oven by vengeful oven-builders (Shaparova 279; Sakharov 36; Dal' 339). One of the earliest collections of Russian folklore, Mikhail Chulkov's *Abevega russkikh sueverii* makes no mention of the unbaptized children:

Кикимры суть женщины унесенные во младенчестве чертями и посаженные на несколько лет колдунами к кому-нибудь в дом, которые бывают невидимы, однако иные из них с хозяевами говорят и обыкновенно по ночам прядут, и хотя никакого вреда не делают, но наводят великий страх своим неугомонством. (218)

Kikimry [sic] are the women who in their infancy were carried away by the devils and whom the sorcerers placed for several years into someone's house; they may be invisible but some of them talk to their hosts and usually spin at the night time and, even though they do no harm, they bring terror because of their restlessness.

Writing in the second half of the nineteenth century, the celebrated Russian ethnographer Mikhail Zabylin updates Chulkov's definition by inserting the reference to the lack of baptism as a way of explaining how children fall prey to the “unclean force”: “Nowadays kikimry or kikimory are said to be the unbaptized daughters or the daughters cursed in their infancy by their mothers, who are taken away by the devils and placed into

⁵⁴ For the comparative analysis of the stem “mor” in the context of mythology, see Shepping, *Mify slavianskogo iazychestva* (Moscow: V. Gotie, 1849) 30 – 32.

⁵⁵ In Russian folklore, a fire serpent is a type of demon lover that engages in sexual intercourse with lonely women, oftentimes assuming the guise of their missing husband. The legends of fire serpents’ function as cautionary tales that proscribe miscegenation, as such unions unfailingly produce monstrous offspring (Sharapova 259).

someone's house by the sorcerers” (“Ныне кикимрами или кикиморами называют некрещенных, или проклятых во младенчестве матерями дочерей, которых уносят черти, а колдуны сажают их к кому-нибудь в дом”) (248). However, Zabylin's attempt to clarify *kikimora*'s pedigree and to fit her into some sort of taxonomy is counterpoised to the erasure of *kikimora*'s traits from folk memory and merging to this character with *domovoi*, as described by Maksimov (qtd in Ivanits 57). The excess of representation in *kikimora*'s myth ostensibly pulverizes its meaning, so it is not surprising that in 1898 an informant, when asked about her origins, replied: “From whence she comes into being I don't know, but he who brings her forth surely knows” (“Из чего она существует я не знаю, а кто приносит, тот уж знает”) (*Zhivaia starina*, 1898, 70). A shrug in this case would be the most honest answer.

When examining the use of *kikimora* lore in literature, one is faced with a question of how to conceptualize something that can be anything. What types of plot would this folk character complement? And, more importantly, what elements of the myth would or would not make it into the narrative? Clearly, any attempt to incorporate *kikimora* lore in all its multiplicity would turn a literary text into a conglomeration of random motifs. A notable example of encoding *kikimora* into a nineteenth-century work of fiction occurs in Orest Somov's eponymous short story, written in 1829 and published in *Severnye tsvety* one year later. Structured as a frame narrative, “Kikimora” dramatizes the dialog between a superstitious coachman and an educated *barin* who challenges the veracity of everything he hears. As Faith Wigzell observes, “Even at the height of fashion

for tales about folk belief, authors felt obliged to distance themselves by debunking folk demons” (72 – 73).

At the center of the narrative lies the representation of *kikimora* as an ambivalent creature, which may perform good deeds but, when provoked, turns to vengeance. The Panteleevs, a model peasant family, are known for their good conduct as well as their wealth. Their streak of luck has started after the birth of little Varya, the granddaughter to the head of the household. It seems as if an invisible force is taking care of the girl, combing her hair and washing the dirt of her face. The sounds of spinning are heard at night, and by the morning the amount of the yarn redoubles – all the telltale signs of *kikimora* activity. By casting *kikimora* in the role of a magical helper, Somov does not necessarily digress from tradition; such references, rare as they are, do occur in folk sources. For instance, the peasants of Vologda region believed that *kikimora* lulls little children to sleep, washes dishes, and raises the dough for the pies (Maksimov 66). Grounded in folk tradition is the image of *kikimora* as a large cat, which is how she reveals herself to Varya – the only person who can actually see her. With the use of these recognizable traits, Somov sketches a believable depiction of a domestic folk spirit, which, due to its origins as an unbaptized or cursed infant, befriends the youngest child of the family. Unlike Odoevskii's *Igoshka*, who from the onset releases the boy's suppressed aggression, *kikimora* as Varya's double is more akin to *superego*. If anything, the diligent, hard-working *kikimora* serves as a role model to Varya, and even her invisibility may be perhaps encoded as humility expected from a peasant woman: the results of her labor are

visible, but the female agency that produced them is obfuscated.

However, the equilibrium of the domestic and supernatural can only forward the plot so far. Similar to Odoevskii, but perhaps less consciously, Somov stages the conflict resultant from the rupture of superego and id. Somov's perspective, however, is different; instead of aspiring towards psychological veracity, he chooses a different path and explores the cultural dimensions of the confrontation between the familiar and domestic on one hand and the alien on the other. In this regard, “Kikimora” bears similarity to a typical changeling narrative, in which the plot is propelled by the impetus to get rid of the supernatural invader at any cost. Once the Panteleevs understand what sort of creature they are dealing with, they decide to get rid of the *kikimora*: “[...] even though they have seen no evil from her but only good, as pious people they would suffer no unclean force in their house” (“[...] хотя не видели от нее никакого зла, а все только доброе, однако же, как люди набожные не хотели терпеть у себя в дому никакой нечисти”) (219). The monstrous Other produces unconditional abjection. All the good fortune that *kikimora* brings to the household is negated by her totalizing characteristic as “unclean.” Despite her close-knit associations with domesticity, Russian folklore accommodates the treatment of *kikimora* as an invader from outside, not dissimilar to a fairy changeling. After all, she may be planted in a household by demons or sorcerers. As the grandmother later complains, “The ill-wishers out of envy must have put the wretched *Kikimora* into our house” (“Посадили к нам, зная недобрые люди из зависти, окаянную Кикимору”) (223).

To complement his theme with a fairy tale structure, Somov identifies three helpers who can assist the Panteleevs with their predicament. The first helper whom they consult, the village priest, refuses to pander to the superstitious beliefs (thus earning the praise of educated listener and, by extension, the author himself). After the priest turns them away, the Panteleevs seek help from the steward of the manor, a German and therefore a demonic figure in his own right. The steward contaminates the semiotic space of the village with his prattle about men on goat legs, headless ghouls, and other creatures not indigenous to Russian folklore. Yet his drunken reveries earn him the reputation of the exorcist par excellence. His comical exorcism involves drinking copious amounts of alcohol and spitting what's left around the room, which angers *kikimora* and turns her into a malevolent poltergeist. Instead of performing chores, she now holds the family in constant terror. The author makes it clear that the error lies not in exorcism per se, but in the mismatch of cultural codes resultant from the poor choice of exorcist. As a cultural Other, the German steward is entirely unfit to deal with the native Russian spirit.

As it happens in fairy tales, the third attempt proves successful. Taking pity on the Panteleevs, the wandering beggar woman explains how to rid the house of the supernatural pest. The ritual involves a sequence of actions that defy common sense – e.g., yoking together a horse and a cow, riding a sleigh in summer, sweeping all corners with an old broom, etc. Much like “The Brewery of Eggshells” motif in the changeling myth, these nonsensical actions are meant to confuse the supernatural invader. At the same time, their palpable, recognizable absurdity in fact affirms the normative value

system. The subversion of normalcy and common sense captured in this ritual bears resemblance to Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque, but like carnival, has its temporal as well as contextual limitations. In the face of a threat to the semiotic space, its internal cohesion and the soundness of its borders, an anti-behavior may be launched under the assumption that it would stop as soon as the threat disappears.

Before the Panteleevs succeed in driving away *kikimora*, she commits one final act of malice by forcing little Varya to jump off the roof. Bedazzled, with a frozen gaze, the girl behaves as if possessed by *kikimora*. Like in Odoevskii's "Igosha," the child self-identifies with the mischievous monster but must disassociate from it in order to make a transition to the next stage of life. Varya's attempted suicide demonstrates the dangers of succumbing to the influence of id, which leads the girl to the fall, physical as well as symbolic. But unlike the nameless protagonist of "Igosha," who has to make a choice between the superego and id, Varya lacks such agency. Entirely devoid of subjectivity, she cannot act herself but only be acted upon by the *kikimora* – first with kindness, then with hostility. By curtailing the child's agency, Somov deflates the psychological potential of his story and reduces it to a *bylichka*⁵⁶ within the frame narrative. Once the *kikimora* is removed from the household, the same wise woman cures Varya, and the girl makes a complete recovery. In the conclusion, the educated listener attempts to rationalize this supernatural episode: after all, no one has actually seen *kikimora*, so the whole story is nothing but the village tittle-tattle. Odoevskii lets *igosha* into inner

⁵⁶ *Bylichka* is a Russian term for a memorat, or a narrative relating personal experience.

sanctum of the manor house – the nursery, but Somov keeps *kikimora* where it belongs – in the peasant hut. Instead of exploring the psychological or narrative potential of this motif, he takes pains to reproduce it with ethnographic accuracy only to debunk it in the very end.

Rusalka

While the term “mermaid” is commonly translated into Russian as “*rusalka*,”⁵⁷ back-translation is impossible in this case, as the Slavic concept of *rusalka* has but a little semantic overlap with the Western European image of a water maiden – hence, the necessity of the gloss. In Russian folklore, the visual representation of *rusalki* is incredibly diverse, as these entities may assume the form of beautiful young women with long flowing tresses, ugly hags, or small children (Ivanits 75 – 77; Shaparova 454 – 455). Such discrepancies were significantly influenced by the geographic region: the Southern Slavs and the Ukrainians took a lighter view of *rusalki*, picturing them as frolicking maidens who lure the young men with their songs and dances. Their northern counterparts, - loathsome hags with disheveled hair, - in appearance and traits resembled *leshachikhi*, the female forest-spirits (Ivanits 76; Shaparova 454). Furthermore, as Ivanits points out, “In addition to the inconsistencies in the external representation of the image, a good deal of controversy surrounds such issues as the spirit's proper habitat, its name,

⁵⁷ For example, Andersen's “Little Mermaid” becomes “Русалочка” (Rusalochka) in Russian translation.

and its precise significance in the Rusal'naya Week celebrations of the late spring" (77). Unlike the Western European mermaids, *rusalki* are not restricted in their choice of habitat: indeed, the most famous *rusalka* of all Russian literature is sitting on the branch of the green oak by Lukomorie. Their persistent association with the bodies of water (in particular, with the mill ponds) instead of stabilizing this image hybridizes it even further. In Russian folklore, water possessed baptismal and healing properties, but the distinction between the "living" and the "dead" water was always present, while the lakes and bogs, along with other natural crevasses, were thought to be haunted by demons. In the case of *rusalki*, water takes on sinister overtones. What unites the discrepant representations of the *rusalki* is the motif of bad death by water: seduced maidens drown themselves only to be reborn as *rusalki*, and the unbaptized children turn into *mavki* – a subcategory within the larger group of water-spirits (Zabylin 64; Nikiforskii 85 – 86; Snegirev 172 – 173; Markevich 8). The cycle of death is perpetuated when the *rusalki*, whose activity peaks at the Trinity week, lure people into water and drown them. Nonetheless, water is equally endowed with the generative potential, if only because it transforms the human beings "into something rich and strange." The life-giving capacity of water here borders on oxymoron. Instead of purifying the body, water renders it monstrous and unclean, adjoining the drowned human to the ranks of *nechistaia sila*.

The semiotic disruption is visually encoded in the appearance of the *rusalka* with her loose hair and white smock or nude body instead of a proper peasant woman's attire. However, the border between culture and Otherworld remains fluid: like other monsters

that originate from the unbaptized infants, *rusalki* create an epistemological challenge of determining whether they should be treated as Others or as redeemable cultural insiders. When does the monstrosity become too much? And when is it not enough to fully sever the ties with culture? Like *igosha* or the smothered children, the *rusalki* invoke pity rather than abjection; therefore, their exorcism is based upon the acts of charity instead of violence. A common motif involves the baptism of the *rusalka* or *mavka* who beg for the cross during the Trinity week (Zabylin 64; Snegirev 173). Another way of pacifying the *rusalka* was to cover her with a piece of cloth, as described in an article from *Zhivaia starina* (1907):

There is a belief that on the Trinity week naked women and children roam the forests. When meeting them, one must throw over them a kerchief or a rag of any kind or, if one has nothing at all, at least tear off a sleeve and toss it to the *rusalki*: otherwise, death is imminent. As a proof, they tell the story of a man who met naked children in the forest and wanted to kill them, but as soon as he raised his hand, he convulsed and died on the spot. The belief about the *rusalki*'s children, naked, pitiful, wailing, is quite popular. Fekla Markovna, the peasant woman of Dan'kovo village, related to me the following: "I was driving across the forest with my father, and as we were going by a large fir-tree, we heard a pitiful wail, as if little children were sobbing. My father whispered into my ear: "These are the *rusalki*'s children crying!" We covered a spot by the fir tree with a little kerchief, and the wailing ceased." (346)

This narrative illustrates the predominant Russian sentiment towards the unbaptized children who, despite their status of supernatural Others, demand *caritas* for the community that engendered and disowned them. Extending sympathy towards the monster becomes an imperative, a cultural norm the violation of which constitutes an anti-behavior and is duly punished by death. The gift of clothes parallels the offerings

that *igosha* extorts from his community. And, considering the thriftiness of the peasant economy, even a kerchief left in the forest becomes a luxurious gift, symbolic of the “broad Russian soul” that spares nothing for the needy. Ultimately, it is charity, not fear that mediates the interaction between the community and the liminal beings.

Downplaying the monstrous nature of the *rusalki*, this account focuses the readers' attention on their inherent vulnerability. The melodramatic epithets “naked” and “pitiful,” repeated twice, invoke the image of a shivering little body, which must be covered, so that the beholder may breathe out with relief. Whether it functions as a shroud or swaddling clothes, the gift of a kerchief obliterates the communal guilt by concealing the body of the monstrous child. Out of sight, out of mind. Once her body is covered, the *rusalka* is pacified, but so is the communal conscience. More importantly, the clothes function as a marker of civilization and, when introduced into the new semantic space, “reshuffle” the signs, rendering the monstrous body culturally appropriate. To paraphrase Susan Stewart’s assessment of ornament in bourgeois realism, in folklore clothes do not merely dress the subject but define the subject; the same applies to the object (28). Like lay baptism or the naming ritual, the symbolic act of clothing incorporates the monster into the culture, but in doing so erases its signifying capacity until nothing is left of it. For an unbaptized child, whose essence is captured in its voice, the stifling of the pitiful wails signifies the loss of any presence. Thus, pacifying the monster by means of charity is as effective as any of the cruel countermeasures from the changeling myth. The distinction lies entirely in the axiological modality of the act, which in turn is determined by the

encoding of the supernatural child into the semiosphere - as an object of pity or a source of abjection, as a wronged insider or an invader from beyond.

For centuries *rusalki* have beguiled the peasant communities as well as the Russian literati with an eye for the romantic and gothic. It is hard to find a nineteenth-century Russian writer who showed no interest whatsoever towards the tragic water maidens. The notable appearances of *rusalki* in Russian literature include Alexander Pushkin's unfinished poetic drama⁵⁸, which Alexander Dargomyzhsky later expanded into an opera *Rusalka* (composed 1848 – 1855; during premiered in 1856). Pushkin was working on this drama, written in blank verse, in 1828 through 1832 and in all likelihood intended to include it into *The Little Tragedies*. At the same time he was composing “Prince Janusz,” a literary hoax that he presented as a translation and included into his cycle of poems *The Songs of the Western Slavs* (*Pesni zapadnykh slavian*) along with his translations from Prosper Mérimée's *La Guzla* and adaptations of Serbian folk songs. The plot of “Rusalka” and “Prince Janusz” is remarkably similar, as they both narrate the romance of a highborn man and a commoner whom he forsakes to marry a princess. After the seduced and abandoned girl drowns herself, she is transformed into a powerful water-spirit with a domain of her own. While in the Otherworld, the rusalka gives birth to a girl whom she would later use to lure her father to water. Although both poetic works lack the ending, it is possible to suggest that Pushkin intended to end them with the drowning of

⁵⁸ The title “Rusalka” was assigned to this fragment by the editorial committee of *Sovremennik*, when it was published after Pushkin's death in 1837 (Bondi 320).

the seducer, which is how Dargomyzhsky finishes his opera⁵⁹. The daughter of the rusalka, a monstrous child for all her comeliness, is instrumental in bringing her father's demise. In “Prince Janusz,” the little rusalka nicknamed Vodiannitsa catches the bridle of her father's horse, as it lowers its head to drink, and hangs on it “like a fish caught on the fishing rod” (“как на уде пойманная рыбка”)(287). Uncertain who or what is before him, the prince inquires about the nature of the creature:

Расскажи, какое ты творенье:
Женщина ль тебя породила,
Иль богом проклятая Вила? (287)

Tell me, what sort of creation are you:
Did a woman give birth to you
Or was it a Vila accursed of God?

This moment of initial non-recognition, of epistemological uncertainty governed by Derrida's law of *différence*, is transposed into the literary text together with the folkloric monster that embodies the categorical chaos. The failure to discern the true nature of the object of one's gaze marks the beginning of an interaction with the monstrous child, be it a *rusalka* or a changeling. Is it a human or non-human? A child or an aged impostor? Just what exactly is it?

The same categorical uncertainty permeates the A. N. Tolstoy's short story “Rusalka,” included in his 1910 collection *The Tales of a Magpie (Soroch'i skazki)*.

⁵⁹ As a source for both fragments, Alexander Pushkin used the popular comic opera *The Rusalka of Dnieper (Dnieprovskaya rusalka)*, which was a reworking of Ferninand Kauer's and Karl Friedrich Hensler's opera *Das Donauweibchen* (1798). Pushkin's indebtedness to his contemporary operas on the subject of *rusalki* is discussed in Inna Bulkina's article “Dneprosvskie rusalki' i 'Kievskie bogatyri'. II” (*Pushkinskie chtenia v Tartu 4: Pushkinskaia epokha: Problemy refleksii i kommentaria: Materialy mezhduнародnoi konferentsii*. Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2007) 214 – 237.

Playing with his readers' expectations, Alexey Tolstoy alludes to the popular fairy tale motifs but takes his plot in a different direction. The tale begins with the scene that seems to be borrowed from the famous fairy tale of Emelya and the pike: the old man breaks a hole in ice to catch fish but instead finds a *rusalka* entangled in his net. At first, he mistakes her for a large fish and only at home recognizes his catch as a sleeping *rusalka*. Following the folkloric guidelines, he shows mercy towards the childlike creature, arranges the bed for her, and covers her up. As soon as the *rusalka* wakes up, she starts making preposterous demands. Desperate to please her, the old man sells his sheep to buy her sweetmeats, takes apart the roof to provide her with sunlight and, finally, kills his cat that was mistrustful of the fairy invader. All the way through the end, the plot of Tolstoy's story oscillates between essentially two motifs: D731 (Disenchantment by obedience and kindness) and J445.2. (Foolish marriage of an old man and young girl). The instability at the core of the plot is linked to the ambiguity of the *rusalka's* representation, whereby it is unclear whether she acts as a capricious slip of a girl or a calculating invader whose aim is to beggar her host. The *différence* is too fluid to be pinned down, and the reader is caught in the vortex of interpretations until the climax of the story, when the *rusalka* sinks her teeth into the old man's heart, defines her as a malevolent monster.

Changelings

The changeling lore within the larger field of Slavic folklore is significantly

influenced by the geographical location. The further we move to the south-western borders of the Russian Empire, the more frequent is the occurrence of changeling narratives and the greater is their similarity to the changeling lore of Scandinavia, Germany, or the British Isles. The familiar structural elements of the Western European changeling myth (the supernatural exchange followed by the exposure of the changeling and its exorcism) are more likely to be found in Ukrainian and Polish sources. On the contrary, Russian texts show considerable deviation in terms of plot structure as well as the emotional core of the changeling myth. Instead of lumping together these two folkloric traditions, it would be more productive to study them separately, when necessary acknowledging the semantic overlap.

In folkloric traditions of the Slavic countries, the list of the supernatural creatures that take interest in children is vast. Russian sources single out the following culprits: the devils (Nikitina 358 – 359); *leshi*, or wood-spirit (Afanas'ev, PV 311; Nikiforskii 70; Chubinskii 75 – 76); *vodianoi*, or water-spirit (Chulkov 68; Afanas'ev 310 - 312); and *bannik*, the spirit of the bathhouse (Afanas'ev 310). Occasionally Russian sources mention a mysterious elder, possibly a sorcerer, who carries away the cursed children (Zabylin 249). Most commonly, though, it is the *leshi* that tends to substitute his spawn for human children. According to Nikiforskii, when *leshi* and his wife want to rid themselves of their gluttonous oaf, they swap it with a baby who immediately is turned into a *leshi*. Meanwhile, the ugly changeling resides in the human family but after reaching adolescence escapes back into the wild. For all of his human upbringing, he

retains the traits of a *leshi*, including the ability to shape-shift. However, some *leshi* changelings continue to reward their foster parents with gifts or even money (70).

The diversity of supernatural kidnapers sets the Slavic changeling lore apart from the Western European tradition. For instance, English sources may blame child theft on the trooping fairies or those residing in fairy forts, but such behavior would be entirely uncommon for household spirits (e.g. brownie) or water spirits (selkie, kelpie, etc.) In Russian folklore, the traits, behavioral patterns, and tale roles are more easily transferable from one character to another. The function remains constant, but to which entity it will be assigned depends on the regional traditions or even the individual belief system of the informant. Notwithstanding the identity of the kidnapper, the accounts of child theft or substitution are united by one crucial characteristic that preconditions the structure and focus of the narrative. For children to be taken away, their caregivers must first curse them⁶⁰. In doing so, the parent symbolically reassigns the child to the “unclean force” by uttering (or rather blurting) the formula “May so-and-so take you!” Any child was susceptible to the parental curse, including those still in their mother's womb (Shaparova 437). Interestingly, in the Russian spiritual poem “The Farewell of the Soul to the Body” (“Rasstavanie dushi s telom”), quoted by Georgy Fedotov, the generic sinful soul treats the cursing of her child on par with other maternal sins that are condemned by Christian and folk tradition alike:

Смалешеньку дитя своего проклинывала,

⁶⁰ In her encyclopedia *Russkaia demonologia (Russian Demonology)*, Alla Nikitina groups this motif together with the motif of unwittingly promising a child to devil (S211 in Stith Thompson's Index).

Во белых во грудях его засыпывала,
В утробе младенца запарчивала. (76)

When he was little, I used to curse my child,
I used to smother him in my white breasts,
I used to spoil the babe in my womb.

A mother's curse, the overlaying of infants, and abortion that imperils their souls, are all responsible for the appearance of supernatural children whose monstrosity at once codifies the terrible sin that engendered them and is canceled out by it. Russian folklore reiterates the view of the church fathers that the children, although tainted by the original sin, deserve a lesser punishment than the adults – in this case, the mothers who foolishly curse their offspring.

This initial act of carelessness or malice shapes the plot in a way that drastically distinguishes Russian changeling narratives from those found in Ukraine, Poland, or the rest of the Western Europe⁶¹. As I have argued in the previous chapter, in a changeling narrative found in Western European, the parents are unlikely to be criticized for their child's disappearance. The events preceding the substitution occupy like narrative space or may be omitted altogether, and the presence of the changeling is taken for granted.

Contrary to that, the changeling myth in Russian folklore reflects the doctrine of sin and

⁶¹ This is not to say, however, that the motif of hastily wishing one's child away does not occur in other Slavic folkloric traditions. For example, in Czech folklore, *polednice*, or the female personification of noon and sunstroke, is often referenced in the narratives of this type (Afanas'ev 311). Famously, Karol Erben collection of adapted folk ballads *Kytice* features a ballad "Polednice," which narrates how a tired and overstressed mother threatens her bawling child with *polednice*: "Pojd' si proň, ty polednice, pojd', vem si ho, zlostníka!" ("Come hither, come, *polednice*, and take that wicked child")(Erben 40). Once invoked, the noon-spirit arrives and, impervious to the invocations of God and the saints, demands the child. The ballad ends with the vision of the swooning mother with the suffocated baby in her arms. The reader is left to ponder whether it was the *polednice* that took the child's soul or whether his deranged mother murdered him.

atonement, integral to Orthodox Christian belief. By the same token, the main conflict is not resolved through the banishment of the changeling: in many accounts, the changeling disappears on its own (Afanas'ev 311; Maksimov 22). Much more important is the return of the stolen child, who all the while is kept as a servant in the *leshi* household, or planted as *kikimora* into someone's house, or roams invisible in search of food that has not been properly blessed⁶² (Shaparova 438). The child and the changeling occupy separate planes, and the well-being of one does not depend on the treatment of the other. To bring back the child, different measures were necessary, those that constituted proper Christian behavior as opposed to the violent, abusive anti-behavior. Thus, the removal of the curse was usually accomplished through prayer, acts of penance by the careless parent, holding a church service for the lost children or, if the children presented themselves, by throwing a cross over them (Afanas'ev; Shaparova 438).

In Ukrainian and Polish sources, among the supernatural characters responsible for the exchange are the devils (Chulkov 248; Maksimov 21 – 22; Chubinskii V 1, 130): witches (Grinchenko 160), and *boginki*⁶³. The latter are described as hideous females with shaggy hair, sharp claws, and low hanging breasts. *Boginki* specialize in child theft

⁶² The apocrypha describe a much gloomier afterlife reserved for the victims of parental curse. In “The Journey of the Mother of God through the Torments” (“Khozhdenie Bogoroditsy po mukam”), Virgin Mary comes across the fiery river in which men and women are submerged – some up to their waist, others up to their throat, and yet other up to their crown. As Michael explains to his mistress, these people have been cursed by their fathers and mothers and now receive their punishment in hell (Tikhonravov 24). However, these are all adults, and it is implied that they have deserved the parental curse with the accompanying punishment.

⁶³ Not to be confused with the Russian word for goddess - “богиня.” Occasionally, Polish sources refer to them also as “mamuny” (e.g. Pelka 150 – 151).

and, perversely, may assume the guise of infants to suck the breasts of women (as well as men) (Sharapova 105; Chubinskii V 1, 194; Udziela 409 – 437). *The Encyclopedic Dictionary of Brokhaus and Efron* (1897) defines the changeling as follows: “*Odmina*, according to Little Russian folk beliefs, is a child substituted by a demon or a witch. A loud, thin, or ugly child may be considered O. There is a story of how a mother, following the advices of the wise women, took O. to a waste heap and started flogging him with a broom. A witch brought back the kidnapped child and took her own. In order to prevent the theft of a child, the Little Russian [*malorossy*] burn a candle at night starting at the birth of the child and up until its christening. The same beliefs occur among the Great Russian, Poles, Czechs, Latvians and many other nations” (741). Schematic as it may be, this definition summarizes the key beliefs surrounding the changeling lore of the Slavic countries. In addition to *одмина*, other Ukrainian appellations for a changeling include *одмінок*, *одмінник*, *відминник*; in Russian sources, it is referred to as *подменьш*, *оммен*, *обмен*, *обменок*, *обменьш*, all derived from the stem “мен” that denotes “change.”⁶⁴

The physical description of a changeling and its behavioral characteristics are overall consistent with English and Scandinavian folk beliefs. Approaching the changeling myth from the Ukrainian side, Chubinskii remarks that “*Odminok* has the following distinctive features: tiny head, long ears, thin legs, large belly; he is sick all the

⁶⁴ In *Russian Folk Belief*, Linda Ivanits incorrectly applies the term “changeling” to *oboroten'*, or shapeshifter (101, 102, 106).

time, does not grow till age seven and is so voracious that it can never be completely sated; and if one leaves any food in a pot and gets out of the house, the *odminok* will devour everything and break the pot” (V 1, 195). Other common characteristics include voracious appetite (Chubinskii V 1, 193 – 194; Nikiforskii 70); stunted growth (Chubinskii V 1, 193 – 194); incessant screams (Afanas'ev 312); precocious development (Chubinskii V 1, 194); and unrestrained movement when no observers are present (Chubinskii V 4, 6). Seweryn Udziela's study of Polish folk beliefs along the right bank of the Vistula contains detailed description of *boginki* and their children. According to Udziela, *odmieniec* is smaller than a human baby, gaunt and sickly, with a large bald head; it is known for its terrible temper, loud cries and insatiable appetite for any type of food, including lizards and frogs (412). Similar to English tradition, a stock may be left in place of a kidnapped child (Grinchenko 98; Afanas'ev 312), or the changeling may dwindle into a piece of charred wood (Maksimov 22).

Whenever the exorcism of the changeling receives a mention, it is remarkably similar to the strategies used in the Western European folklore. The most common method involved laying the changeling on the waste heap and flogging it with birch, inducing the demonic kidnapper to take pity on its child. In Chubinskii's account, the expostulation of *boginka* is not much different from that of an English fairy or Scandinavian *huldra*: “Here is your baby; you are tormenting my child but I am doing no harm to yours – look how clean and pretty it is” (“[Н]а тобі твою дитину; ты на мою збыткуєшся, а я твій ніц не кажу, дивись яка вона гарна та чиста”) (V 1, 195).

Udziela reports similar beliefs in Poland: loving and caring mothers, boginki never beat their children and would not suffer to see them beaten (419 - 421). More humane practices could be resorted to, as in balancing the changeling on the broom and chopping the wood under it (Afanas'ev PV 313) or beating the dirt around the changeling (Pelka 151). Although drowning is occasionally mentioned (Chubinskii V 1, 194), none of the major nineteenth-century anthologies of Russian and Ukrainian folklore that I studied describe the burning of the changeling – a ubiquitous threat in Irish or Scottish accounts. “The Brewery of Eggshells” motif is uncommon; however, Udziela mentions a similar method with walnut shells in lieu of eggshells (434). A more usual way of denouncing the changeling is through observation: in several accounts, the peasant woman surreptitiously observes how a changeling ransacks the house for food and comments on its quality (Udziela 434 – 435).

With its prevalence in Polish folklore, the changeling myth could exerted influence over the works of fiction, including Maria Konopnicka's novel *O krasnoludkach i sierotce Marysi* (1896)⁶⁵. A popular example of Polish children's literature, it features a straightforward rendition of changeling myth. All major elements are in place: the ugliness and voracity of the changeling; its tendency to forage for food in the mother's absence; the recognition of the changeling through observation; chastisement of the changeling and its abandonment on the pile of rubbish; and, finally,

⁶⁵ Kate Zuk-Skarszewska's translation of the novel as published in English in 1929 under the title *The Brownie Scouts*.

the reversal of the exchange. At the same time, Konopnicka uses the fairy tale structure to channel the values different from those found in changeling lore. For once, the fairy exchange in Konopnicka's novel results directly from the mother's negligence: a gossip and slattern, she spends time at her neighbors' instead of taking care of her own household. As evident from the stories reprinted by Udziela and later Leonard Pelka, in Poland, like in the British Isles, the changeling usually appears "just because." Thus, the question "Why is it here?" is replaced by another concern: "How to get rid of it?" Yet such randomness poses a challenge to any writer working on a morality tale. Dissatisfied with the folkloric "why" and "how," Konopnicka treats the changeling myth as a type of cautionary tale, whereby the monsters, like the magical social workers, remove the child from the unhealthy environment. The most problematic aspect of the changeling myth, the exorcism by violence, is also read against the grain. Much like the Victorian collectors of folk tales, Konopnicka refuses to accept the violence at its face value, as a correct way of expelling the fairy. The author's censure of abuse is captured in the dialogue of the cruel mother and the sympathetic observer who begs her to stop chastisement of the child, no matter whether it is human or not. For the author, like for her proxy in the novel, the cultural status of the changeling is secondary to his capacity for feeling pain- hence, the need for mercy. Later the same charitable widow picks up the changeling from the dung hill, feeds him, and shades him from the sun – the acts that ingratiate her and her daughter Marysia with the fairies.

Henryk Sienkiewicz's short story "Janko the Musician" ("Janko Muzykant"),

published in 1878, offers a more subtle and psychologically complex rendition of the changeling myth. The story opens with the birth of Janko, who is so sickly that the female neighbor hastens to perform lay baptism. By inserting this reference, Sienkiewicz foreshadows the role of the folk motifs in the development of the plot. Rather than protecting him from the supernatural harm, the lay baptism highlights Janko's Otherness. Against all odds, the boy survives but, like a changeling, remains sickly. Sienkiewicz creates a double semantic frame, whereby Janko simultaneously occupies the human and supernatural world, his appearance fully corresponding to that of a changeling and a malnourished peasant child – thin body, swollen stomach, and large eyes “staring into some unmeasurable distance.” His embittered mother “perhaps loved him in her own way, but used to beat him often and call him a “changeling” (“może go tam i kochała po swojemu, ale była dość często i zwykle nazywała “odmieńcem”)(5). When Janko is put to work as a shepherd, he develops an extraordinary sensitivity to music. Like a real fairy, he is attuned to nature and detects music in each and every surrounding sound. What most fascinates him is the sound of the violin. Half-crazed with desire, he decides to steal the violin from the manor house but gets caught red-handed and is sentenced to flogging. The severe chastisement results in Janko's death. In a final melodramatic scene, the dying boy asks whether God will give him a real violin, and his mother confirms his request.

Janko's love of music connects Sienkiewicz's story to the Western European lore, in which the ability to play a musical instrument is a common attribute of a changeling. Despite the lack of such references in Polish folklore, it is possible to speculate the

Sienkiewicz was familiar with them due to the wide circulation of European folk tales in the second half of the nineteenth century. Similarly, Janko's punishment resembles a typical mode of exorcising a changeling and as such proves successful: the little musician leaves the world for good. In comparing the abused child to a changeling, Sienkiewicz taps into the overarching discourse on child labor and follows the path paved by Charles Dickens and his contemporaries. Like the Little Marchioness in "The Old Curiosity Shop" or the watercress girl in Henry Mayhew's "London Labor and London Poor," Janko is rendered unchildlike by the dire socio-economic conditions that affect his body and mind. Starved and overworked, he no longer resembles a child, dwindling into the odd shape of an aged fairy. When applied to the discourse on child labor, the changeling myth becomes a powerful instrument of social criticism, which, of course, entails reading it against the grain. The plight of the changeling, identified as an abused child, becomes the centerpiece of the story, while the cultural conflict ingrained in this myth is downplayed. However, the changeling myth can ultimately sustain both interpretations. Whether it is encoded into English, Polish or Russian literature, the changeling myth can signify abuse, thus invoking pity for the child-changeling, or the struggle for resources in a culturally contested space.

The conflict between the changeling on one hand and the close-knit peasant community on the other becomes the main theme of Nadezhda Teffi's short story "Vurdalak," published in the collection "Ved'ma" (Berlin: Petropolis, 1936). Although written well beyond the nineteenth century, it merits a closer look as one of the few texts

authored by Russian writers that focus specifically on the changeling myth. In her typical ironic manner, Teffi creates the space at once magical and mundane, where priests, vampires, and folk spirits coexists as naturally as in Gogol's "Evenings in the Farmstead near Dikanka." Describing the nameless maid-of-all-works in the priest's household, the young narrator accentuates the familiar landmarks of folkloric terrain:

Баба, мол, слыхала, как на болоте плачут некрещенные младенцы, баба знала, что у нашей горничной Корнельки "под сподницей рыбий хвост", баба видела, как за старой мельницей какой-то зеленый шишкун лапой гром ловил и под себя прятал. (215)

The bidy had heard how the unbaptized babies wail in the bogs; the bidy knew that our maid Kornelka had "a fish's tail under her shift"; the bidy had seen a green imp behind the old mill, who was scooping the thunder with his paw and hiding it under his behind.

Later the superstitious rustic becomes the herald of higher truth, as she predicts the monstrous birth of the priest's son. From the moment he appears in the narrative, the infant, christened Avenir, exhibits a wide range of changeling traits. A preternaturally clever child, he starts talking immediately after his birth, reenacting "The Brewery of Eggshells": "He only speaks when no-one hears him. The bidy has overheard him talking. His little voice is oh so thin, like that of a mosquito. "It's time to start the fire," he says, "I so so-o-old"" ("Говорит только когда никто его не слышит. Баба подслушала, как он говорил. Голосок такой тоненький-тоненький, как у комарика. "Пора, говорит, печку топить, мне хо-о-олодно") (215). Likewise, his physical description incorporates the quintessential changeling deformities that are exaggerated to the point that he resembles a Kafkesque insect rather than a human child: "He was exceedingly

ugly. A real spider! His belly was bloated, and his arms and legs were thin, long, and would protrude and retract all the time, so that it seemed as though he had at least three pairs of limbs” (“Безобразен он был потрясающе. Совсем паук! Живот вздутый, руки-ноги тонкие, длинные и все время выпячиваются и втягиваются, так что казалось, будто этих рук и ног по крайней мере пары три”) (216). His “almost bloody” red hair and “disproportionally large” toes connect him to the image of the pagan soldier flogging Christ on the fresco inside the village church.

The vampiric *modus operandi* of the child is revealed when the priest's brother-in-law Galaktion pays a visit to the village. The brother, an ex-seminarist and “the shame and terror of the family,” is a marginalized figure similar to Khoma Brut, the dissipated priest-in-training from “Viy.” At the same time, Teffi relates him to a yet another Gogol's creation – the demonic glutton Patsyuk who charms the dumplings to jump from the plate straight into his mouth. Like Patsyuk, Galaktion reveals his epic appetite when he drinks the milk of four cows – a type of harm usually done by witches. Each visit of the profligate is staged as an economic disaster, a catastrophe that upturns the familiar course of life, much like the appearance of a changeling would threaten the welfare of a peasant family – all wails and no work.

After outlining the two monstrous figures, the uncle and the nephew, Teffi sets them into conflict. When the proud parents present their unlovely progeny to the visitor,

the boy scratches Galaktion and bites him on the neck. “A real *vurdalak*⁶⁶!” comes the response, connecting the dots between the two distinct but not dissimilar entities of Russian folklore. Since the attack of the baby vampire, the uncle grows feebler day after day, while the child thrives, as if invigorated by a sudden surge of life force. Like a Slavic vampire, ruddy and bloated with blood, the boy not only grows but expands: “[...] he eats less, but grows fatter. His cheeks filled up and bloated, his limbs grew stronger” (“[...] ест меньше, а толстеет. Щеки налились, раздулись, руки-ноги окрепли”) (220). Upon the advice of a village sorceress, the nurse uses garlic as the ultimate vampire repellent. By threatening the changeling/*vurdalak* with a bulb of garlic, she reverses the spell, bringing forth the recovery of Galaktion and the demise of the uncanny child. As he leaves the household, the uncle approaches the cradle and taunts the boy by alluding to his act of psychic vampirism: “Well, well,” he said, “Have you taken much? You have taken a fig, my dear brother!” (“- Что, - сказал, - много взял? Шиш взял, братец ты мой!”) (221).

In her version of the changeling myth, Teffi supplements the familiar motifs with

⁶⁶ The choice of the word “*vurdalak*” as a designation for a vampire adds a veneer of irony to Teffi’s story due to the rich literary history of this term. This word was most likely coined by Pushkin in his translation of the ballads “Marko Yakubovich” and “*Vurdalak*” from Prosper Mérimée’s *La Guzla*. In his commentary, Pushkin notes: “*Vurdalaki, vudkodlaki, upyri* are the dead who leave their graves and suck the blood of the living” (V.2, 425). Mérimée uses the word “*brucolaque*,” and, in order to preserve the “local color” of the original, Pushkin came up with the word that resonates with the similarly sounding Russian terms for a werewolf (“*volkodlak*,” “*volkolak*,” “*volkudlak*,”) or Romanian “*varcolac*,” a wolf-like creature, which devours moon and sun during eclipses (Murgoci 13). Although we find “*vurdalak*” in *Brockhaus-Efron Dictionary* as a designation both for a werewolf and a vampire, this record of usage, as well as Tolstoy’s novel *The Family of Vurdalak*, most likely results from Pushkin’s coinage, which was already assimilated in the language. By choosing “*vurdalak*” over a more common “*upyr*,” Teffi opens up a meta-discourse on the literary adaptations of vampire lore, tapping into the textual space mined by Pushkin and A.K. Tolstoy.

those borrowed from the Slavic lore of vampires. However, at the heart of the story lies the irreconcilable Otherness of the changeling as a non-child. A forerunner of consumerist culture, Avenir the changeling embodies mindless consumerism, the devouring of resources that do not propel any kind of qualitative development. Ironically, the insatiable appetite of the changeling harkens back to the communion scene in the beginning of the story. In what seems like a Malthusian nightmare, the parishioners shove each other aside, as they make their way to the chalice, while the priest bellows: “Watch your step, ye goats! Do you think the Lord can feed you all at once? Line up!” (“Куда прете, козлища! Разве может Господь всех вас сразу напитать! Становитесь в очередь!”) (213). Teffi promptly clarifies the reciprocal nature of communion. In exchange for the sacraments, the congregation treats the clergyman to the locally produced food, which gets encoded as a proper religious sacrifice: three loaves of bread, a roasted chicken as an ironic substitute of burnt offerings, and the favorite Ukrainian delicacy – lard, here reverently marked with the sign of the cross. During the service these delicious oblations are displayed before the altar, directly in front of the village adulteresses who have to kneel in atonement for their sins.

From the narrative's preoccupation with food emerge such dichotomies as abundance – scarcity, availability – limited access, and, most importantly, legitimacy – transgression. The priest guards the blood of Christ from the swinish multitude. The slatterns are taunted by the vision of cornucopia of which they cannot partake. The wayward brother upsets the balance, transforming the excess (four cows!) into lack. As

the discourse of food engulfs the narrative space, the cultural interactions are reconstituted along the lines of consumption and exchange of edible resources. A life-giving substance, milk becomes conflated with the communion wine and its illegitimate consumption poses threat to the interloper. Upon hearing that her delirious brother was cursing her son, the priest's wife remarks, "The milk must have gone to his head" ("Это ему молоко в голову бросилось") (219). Excessive imbibing of milk is posited as a natural, albeit uninspiring, cause of Galaktion's sudden malady.

In relation to the resources, the changeling fulfills the function of policing the normative borders, emerging as Cohen's "vehicle of prohibition" in the most literal sense. When he enervates his uncle, he metes out the punishment of the same degree and kind. However, the outward monstrosity of the changeling precludes him from being valorized as a protector of the household. Analyzing Yuri Lotman's treatment of anomalous behaviors, Julie Buckler juxtaposes eccentricity with strangeness, concluding: "The term *eccentric* complements its synonym *strange* (derived from extraneous, meaning "from the outside"). While eccentricity's defining gesture is a movement away from the cultural center, strangeness invades from the outside" (302). A full-fledged eccentric, Galaktion is merely a cultural insider gone astray, and his uncodified behavior defies the values of his host culture without ever threatening them. On the contrary, the changeling is strange, a force from the outside that ruptures the center of the semiosphere. The eccentric departs and may be called back; the stranger intrudes and must be expelled in order to preserve the community intact. In the end of the story, Teffi reveals how, in a formidable feat of

scapegoating, the changeling's monstrosity is amplified to an improbable degree, absorbing a whole range of transgressive acts, including the uncle's misdeed:

Впоследствии, несколько лет спустя, услышала я деревенскую легенду о страшном поповиче, который был мал как котенок, а ночью вылезал из люльки, вырастал “аж до потолка”, четырех коров высасывал (вон оно как переметнулось!) и кто по пути попадетя - насмерть загрызал. А пришел из Киева ученый дядька, спасенной жизни. Он вурдалака отчитал и душеньку его ослобонил. (222)

Several years later, I heard a village legend about the terrible priest's son who was as small as a kitten and at night would crawl out of his cradle, grew in size “till he hit the ceiling,” would suck four cows dry (so, that's how the story got reversed!) and would bite to death anyone who happened to cross his path. Then a learned fellow came from Kiev, a man of blessed life. He said prayers over the *vurdalak* and freed his soul.

Thus, in the struggle for resources, the least monstrous competitor emerges victorious.

Conclusions

Similar to nineteenth-century Britain, the narratives of supernatural children had a considerable influence on Russian literature in this period. However, a closer analysis of Slavic folklore reveals a drastically different concept of the unbaptized and supernatural children that inevitably influenced literary production. While in Victorian works of fiction the changeling emerged as the master symbol of unnatural childhood, Russian folk tradition, and subsequently Russian literature, lacks that totalizing image due to the astounding diversity of forms that supernatural children assume in Russian folklore. Moreover, in English and to a greater extent Western European folklore baptism serves a

nexus of two strains of representations – that of the unbaptized spirits and the changelings that may be substituted for unbaptized children; nonetheless, these two categories occupy separate semantic fields and do not overlap. On the contrary, a greater hybridization is characteristic of Russian folklore. Thus, a single entity, like the *kikimora*, may be interpreted as an unbaptized infant, a human child kidnapped by the unclean forces, or even as a demonic hybrid planted into a human household with the purpose of wreaking havoc. The excess of representation does not dilute theoretical focus but loosens it in what seems to be a productive way. Instead of presenting one monolithic, totalizing vision of a supernatural child, Russian folklore offers a broad spectrum of representations from which writers can pick and choose motifs to match their creative task.

Another prominent feature of Russian and, in general, Slavic folklore of supernatural children is the tension between abjection of the monster and sympathy towards it, the latter sentiment oftentimes prevailing over the former. In the spirit of dualism, the same folkloric personage, for example, *rusalka* may appear terrifying or pitiful depending on the context. Therefore, instead of feeling the instinctual abjection towards the monster, the bearer of culture must necessarily analyze the context of the interaction and based on this analysis resort to the appropriate strategy of dealing with the Other. The sympathy towards the monster may take the form of ritualized charitable actions (feeding and clothing it); the performance of *caritas* affirms the essential values embedded in Orthodox Christian beliefs and gives cohesion to the society that strongly identifies with such beliefs.

A different type of catastrophe that breeds monsters further emphasizes the need for sympathy. Russian folklore persistently traces the origins of supernatural children to the parental curse. Unpremeditated as it may be, the verbalization of abjection, as in offering one's son or daughter to the "unclean force," exposes the child to the supernatural influence that may transform it into a monster. In folk narratives, the parental curse serves as a source of plot tension, which must be resolved to restore order in the semiotic space. To remove the parental curse or reduce other types of harm done to a child, either the ecclesiastic rituals (lay baptism, prayer for the dead, liturgy, vigil in a church) were prescribed, or the syncretic folk rites that evolved from church ceremonies (the naming ritual, various incantations). However, the typical changeling narratives also appear in Slavic folklore, mostly in Ukraine and Poland. When these narratives get encoded into literature, for example, in Nadezhda Teffi's short story "Vurdalak," they carry along the essential conflict of the changeling narrative – the access to resources and banishment of the monstrous invader beyond the border of the semiosphere.

Chapter Three: Supernatural Children in the Works of Fedor Dostoevskii and Fedor Sologub

The names Fedor Dostoevskii and Fedor Sologub are often linked due to their recurring interest in the theme of childhood and its uneasy relationship with the adult world. Evaluating the abundant references to children in Dostoevskii's works, William Rowe subdivides his young characters into two distinct, but not mutually exclusive, categories: children as victims and children as adults (viii). The first category usually gets the spotlight, as evident from the opening passage of the entry "Children" in *The Dostoevsky Encyclopedia*: "Children - their psychology, their joys and sufferings, their status as angels of innocence and charm or victims of adult malice or thoughtlessness – figure prominently in Dostoevsky's works" (59). At the same time, not all children in Dostoevskii's novels fit into the nineteenth-century conception of childhood as an organic realm infused with innocence and endowed with redemptive properties. While in Dostoevskii's dichotomy of children and adults the latter most commonly victimize the former, in several cases the power dynamics are reversed, so that the child-victim herself turns into a victimizer. In Dostoevskii's works, childhood appears not only a biological state but also as a spiritual quality. Although children are incapable of evil, the harmful influences of grown-ups may corrupt them and turn them into little monsters rather than "angels of innocence."

Fedor Sologub closely follows Dostoevskii's footsteps. Inheriting from Dostoevskii his fascination with childhood, in particular, with the plight of abused children in the world of *poshlost*, Sologub imbues the accounts of their suffering with his typical decadent overtones. Although Stanley Rabinowitz connects Sologub's characters, created during his decadent-symbolist period of 1894 – 1898, “to a Rousseauistically inspired state of pastoral innocence” (*Literary Children* 19), his vision of childhood appears to be consistently morbid throughout his productive years. The intensity of violence can fluctuate, and sentimental relief is occasionally afforded to the reader, yet the underlying gloom of the subject matter remains intact.

The two writers' interest in childhood goes hand in hand with the attention they paid to Russian folklore and their willingness to incorporate folkloric elements into their works. These two tendencies are not coincidental, as the discourses on the status of children in nineteenth-century Russia coincided with the upheaval of ethnographic studies and proliferation of folklore collections. As childhood was increasingly seen by their middle-class contemporaries as a protected space to which all children are entitled, their social background notwithstanding, it overlapped with nostalgia for the world of the folk, its simplicity, inherent innocence, and connection to nature.

Dostoevskii's contact with his native folklore originated in his early childhood, when his family resided in their Moscow apartment next to the Mariinskii Hospital for the Poor. The peasant maids, permanently residing with the family, as well as the wet nurses, who paid an occasional visit from the village, introduced little Fedia to the songs,

tales, and superstitions of the folk. In the doctor's apartment, like in a peasant izba, the belief in the unclean force was very much alive: thus, the housekeeper Alena Frolovna would oftentimes complain that a *domovoi* was strangling her in her sleep (*Doestoevsky and the Russian People* 9). But Dostoevskii soon came to know the darker side of the peasant community. In 1839, his father was allegedly murdered by the serfs of Darovoe village, and the echo of this terrible incident haunted the writer and his siblings for years. During his Siberian exile in 1850 - 1859, he witnessed the cruelty and low morality of the uneducated classes, later relating his first-hand observations in *The House of the Dead*. Yet instead of demoralizing the writer, his imprisonment turned out to be a cathartic experience. In the Siberian crucible, his religious and political views underwent a drastic transformation, and the former lukewarm Westernizer turned into a staunch Slavophile. He became fascinated with the idea of spiritual brotherhood, the roots of which he saw not only in Christianity, but also in folk beliefs. As Ivanits points out,

Alongside the rethinking of his Siberian experience, the writer acquired a deep appreciation for the religious ideals of the *narod* as expressed in folklore. In the great novels that followed he embedded references to oral narratives and songs in the text as a way of introducing the people's voice into the debate between socialism and Christianity. (*Doestoevsky and the Russian People* 38)

Fedor Sologub (Teternikov) had no such life-changing experience. Brought up by an abusive mother who served as a cook for a gentry family in Saint-Petersburg, he was destined for an even drearier life as a teacher in provincial Russia. There he had his fill of folk superstitions, which tend to crop up among his outwardly realistic portrayals of provincial environment. His prospects brightened in 1892, when he received a teaching

appointment in Saint Petersburg and now had easier access to literary journals. It was in one of these journals, *Voprosy zhizni* that his famous novel *The Petty Demon* first appeared in print in 1905. Despite its rather modest debut, it earned Sologub all-Russian acclaim two years later, after it was published as a separate book. *The Petty Demon* abounds in references to folk beliefs, but, unlike Dostoevskii, Sologub was not at all enchanted with the idea of *sobornost*. His interest in the supernatural and the demonic is a logical outcome of his decadent distrust of life, which he calls “a buxom and ruddy wench” (II: 443). While conducting research for *The Petty Demon*, the writer went as far as to study the medicinal and harmful plants used in witchcraft; thus, references to plants in the novel are loaded with symbolic meaning derived from Russian folklore (Pavlova 315 – 316). Maximilian Voloshin hit the mark when he called his colleague “a clever and unkind sorcerer” (IV: 646). Despite Sologub's forays into Western demonology, he is largely indebted to Russian lower mythology, from which he borrows characters, motifs, and plots. According to T. Ventslova, the main characters of *The Petty Demon* correlate to recognizable demonic figures, and L. Evdokimova traces the title of the novel specifically to Russian folk beliefs about the devil (qtd in Pavlova 271). Owing to his fundamental understanding of folklore, Sologub is able to create demonic creatures such as *nedotykomka* – an evil dust bunny that has no equivalent in folklore but, as Pavlova notes, fits seamlessly into Russian folk demonology (272).

In this chapter, I attempt to demonstrate how and why the two writers use the tropes of Russian lower mythology in their representation of child-adult relationships.

Faithful to folk traditions, both Dostoevskii and Sologub focus on the parental curse as the main damaging force that renders children monstrous. But although they both superimpose a folkloric matrix onto their plots, they choose different prototypes for their uncanny characters. The choice of the folkloric entity with which the character will be associated is determined not only by plot requirements, but largely by the writer's artistic vision and his individual correlation of childhood with folklore. Specifically, I will focus on the role that nature spirits play in the depiction of child abuse in Dostoevskii's novels and Sologub's short stories. As I will argue, in his first major Post-Siberian novel *The Insulted and Humiliated*, Dostoevskii makes an earnest attempt to use folkloric elements in developing the character of Nelli. A young girl of English heritage, she is usually traced back to the saintly Nell from Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop*, but she also shares certain traits with demonic children from Russian folklore. In his next novel, *Crime and Punishment*, references to Russian folklore are more consistent and overt, adding poignancy to the encounter of Svidrigailov, the debauched Westernizer, with what seems like a Russian *rusalka*. While Dostoevskii explores the narrative potential of *rusalki* lore, Sologub turns to *leshi*, the spirit of the forest, as a metonymy for nature. In his short stories "Zhalo smerti" and "Elkich," the writer ponders such questions as children's close ties to nature and the implication of this connection for their ability to function in mundane space. In one of his best stories, "Cherviak," he uses the lore of *leshi* to emphasize the cultural and psychological Otherness of Wanda, a Polish girl immersed in the world of banality and falsehood.

Gothic and folkloric influences in *The Insulted and Humiliated*

The influence of Charles Dickens on the works of Dostoevskii has been thoroughly researched by Russian and Western literary scholars, who have noted the writers' similarities in addressing the theme of childhood. As Futrell indicates,

This veneration of children seems to be a fundamental bond between Dickens and Dostoevskii, a reverberant note of compassion to which the latter was responsive: a response perhaps sharpened by a far profounder awareness of the dark places of the human heart. (116)

Russian readers began acquiring a taste for Dickens in 1838, largely because of his translations by the prolific and at times excessively creative Irinarkh Vvedenskii. By the time of Dostoevskii's arrest in 1849, Dickens had become a household name. The literary critic Belinskii claimed that everyone in Russia was familiar with *Nicholas Nickelby*, *Oliver Twist*, *Barnaby Rudge*, and *The Old Curiosity Shop* (Futrell 86). Among the admirers of Dickens was Dostoevskii, who casually referred to "Dickensian charm" in his 1847 article. While imprisoned in Omsk, Dostoevskii found consolation in *David Copperfield* and *The Pickwick Papers*. "The ridiculousness" of Mr. Pickwick resonated with his personal views on the fate of a little man; as he wrote to S.A. Ivanova in 1868, "The arousal of compassion is the secret of humor" (XV: 344) Reading Dickens also encouraged him to dwell on more pragmatic questions. On June 1, 1857, during his stay in Semipalatinsk, he consulted with E.I. Iakushkin about the possibility of publishing a manuscript "the size of Dickens' novels" in *Vestnik* (XV: 175). In November of the same

year, he informed his brother Mikhail about his plans to write “a novel about Saint Petersburg life similar to *The Poor Folks* (but the idea is even better than *The Poor Folks*)” (XV: 177). The novel in question, in all likelihood, was *The Insulted and Humiliated*, as he started working on it upon his return to the capital in the summer of 1860. There are no direct indications that Dostoevskii was familiar with *The Old Curiosity Shop* prior to writing *The Insulted and Humiliated*, unless we put our faith in Belinskii's sweeping generalization. However, plenty of circumstantial evidence may be gleaned from textual analysis.

The first reference that ties Dostoevskii to *The Old Curiosity Shop* occurs in his wife's diary on May 27, 1867, when the couple was residing in Dresden. Anna notes: “Then we went to the Library where Fedor had got, the day before, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, but the young man had given him by mistake for the second volume, the first volume of *David Copperfield*” (qtd in Futrell 87). The annoying mistake was obviously corrected, as evident from Dostoevskii's familiarity with the novel. His 1873 article “Apropos of the Exhibition,” included into *The Diary of a Writer*, commends Dickens for creating “Pickwick, Oliver Twist, and grandfather and granddaughter in the novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*” (XII: 89). The English novel receives even more attention in *The Adolescent*. In a sudden surge of emotion, Andreev confesses to the protagonist Dolgorukii his admiration for the little Dickensian heroine. He describes how Nell, an ideal of innocence, stands on the steps of the cathedral and contemplates the mystery of creation. “А тут, подле нее, на ступеньках, сумасшедший этот старик, дед, глядит на

нее остановившимся взглядом” (“And there, next to her on the steps, this mad old man, the grandfather, stares at her with a fixed gaze”)(VIII: 567; *The Adolescent* 438).

Although Nelli in *The Insulted and Humiliated* is more inclined to brooding than to peaceful contemplation, her grandfather's fixed gaze fully matches the description from *The Adolescent*.

Comparing the two novels side by side, N.M. Lary suggests that Dostoevskii took some of his phrasing directly from *The Old Curiosity Shop*, which makes a strong case for his familiarity with Dickens' novel (46). The similar circumstances of the two heroines are also striking: “Both the Nellies want to be independent of other men, except for what they can get by begging”⁶⁷ (46). The money in their possession is soon seized by their grandfathers. Even though Jeremiah Smith, Nelli's grandfather, is a much more sinister character, he does not fare much better – for example, he also takes away his grandchild's meager savings. Because Nelli was so willing to repay any act of charity with work, Lary compares her to a yet another character of *The Old Curiosity Shop* - the Little Marchioness who cared for Dick Swiveller during his illness (47). With their deaths, both heroines redeem their surrounding society. In the case of Nelli, her suffering shows the old Ikhmenev how harshly he was treating his daughter Natasha. The wayward daughter is forgiven, order is restored, and the whole family is united around Nelli's deathbed.

⁶⁷ Nonetheless, other literary critics, including Viacheslav Ivanov and Mochul'skii, made an equally strong case for Goethe's *Mignon* as a prototype of Nelli. For a summary of their arguments, see Michael Futrell, “Dostoevskii and Dickens” in *Dostoevskii and Britain*. (Oxford: Berg, 1995): 96-97.

The role that the girl plays in the reconciliation of the Ikhmenev family allows Lary to conclude: “Nelli is a figure symbolizing man's need for the ideal; when she imagines she cannot find it in society, she escapes; but she can help to reconcile mankind” (47). However, I would contest the unproblematic view of Nelli as a Romantic heroine on her quest for the ideal. From the moment of her appearance in the novel (or, perhaps, even prior to that), Nelli infects the narrative with unease, challenging cultural values instead of affirming them. Her presence stirs up a crisis of categories. A monstrous child, she constantly subverts the narrator's assumptions about childhood and, on a broader scale, about Christian community as well. Unlike the Dickensian Nell, a little Victorian stoic in a world of trouble, Nelli is utterly unpredictable. With her masochistic egotism, she rejects kindness and revels in hardship. After narrowly escaping sexual abuse, she creates contexts in which she may run the risk of victimization and almost forces herself on the narrator Ivan.

In her perceptive analysis of eroticism in *The Insulted and Humiliated*, Susan Fusso identifies Nelli as a source of tension in the novel. While Ivan's feelings for Natasha Ikhmeneva lack a sexual component, his interactions with Nelli are rife with erotic overtones. “The secrets and, one could argue, the sense of erotic power, are all concentrated in the narrator's relationship with Nelli. This sexual undercurrent, however, remains below the level of the narrator's consciousness and must be detected by the reader” (Fusso 18). This sexual undercurrent that Fusso delineates matches the Freudian definition of the uncanny as something that has been estranged through the process of

repression but resurfaces, rupturing the established order of meaning. The uncanny, stemming from Nelli's sexual precocity, contributes to the plot structuration, arranging the sequence of events in a particular way: Ivan notices Nelli's aberrant behavior – looks for ways to help Nelli – and fails. Thus, the plot revolves in circles, each turn more emotionally charged than the one before, until Nelli challenges the cyclical structure by means of her seemingly irrational escape from Ivan's apartment.

In addition to the erotic undercurrent that undeniably plays a role in the plot machinery, two more sources of influence may be identified: Gothic and folkloric traditions directly related to Nelli's monstrosity. A hybrid of English and Russian heritage, Nelli functions as a hub of these undercurrents, her incoherent behavior foregrounding their uneasy coexistence in *The Insulted and Humiliated*. The borrowed Gothic and native Russian influences do not intermingle in this text, which, according to Joseph Frank, “emerged from the tradition of melodrama and ultimately from the Gothic novel of the eighteenth century”⁶⁸. The discordant personality of Nelli epitomizes these structural flaws. Positioned on the nexus of two mutually exclusive semiotic spaces, she does not fit into either one. Her escape from Ivan is not so much motivated by her disillusionment with society, as by her essential liminality, which Nelli herself recognizes and accepts. And even though her death is instrumental in deflating the main conflict of

⁶⁸ Joseph Frank calls attention to other flaws, such as “a disturbing clash between a plot machinery motivated by a love intrigue and a pattern of relationship with ideological implications; these exist side by side without being integrated and in fact work at cross-purposes” (*The Miraculous Years* 96 - 97).

the novel, it does nothing to eliminate her own monstrosity. In the face of approaching death, she still burns with hatred for her own father, villainous as he may be.

It is not coincidental that Dostoevskii endowed the monstrous child with an English pedigree. One of his earliest encounters with the Western Gothic tradition was through the novels of Ann Radcliffe. Recollecting his early years, even before he learned to read, Dostoevskii notes: “I would listen open-mouthed and transfixed with elation and terror as my parents read at bedtime the novels of Ann Radcliffe, as a result of which I would later dream the most delirious and feverish dreams” (qtd in Leatherbarrow 3). Thus, beginning in his formative years, the link between English culture and Gothic tales of terror was forged. Whether he describes the ghostly old Englishmen or the rakish Prince Valkovskii, Dostoevskii channels these childhood associations, inspired by Radcliffe's novels. Additionally, Robin Mueller connects the Gothic streak in Dostoevskii's works to such English novels as Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (140). Although there is no place for monasteries and castles in Dostoevskii's urbanscapes, his own repertoire of Gothic tropes – coffin-like apartments, dark stairwells, pavements lit by the feverish light of streetlamps – bears the stamp of Radcliffe and Lewis. The “Englishness” of Nelli and her grandfather is conveyed through the liberal use of Gothic motifs. Indeed, Ivan's first encounter with the grandfather and the grandchild are staged as nightmares, perhaps not much different from the “delirious and feverish dreams” that haunted the young Dostoevskii.

However, Gothic influence only partially accounts for Nelli's monstrosity. Her hamartia should be sought elsewhere – in Dostoevskii's attitude towards the British nation as a whole. According to Leatherbarrow, he relied on “the comforting abstractions offered by familiar cultural stereotypes,” (3) and these stereotypes had developed before his first and only visit to England in the summer of 1862. He would later admit in *The Diary of a Writer* for November 1877 that certain preconceived notions of the British are ingrained in Russian culture: “[W]e have been accustomed from childhood to believe that every Englishman is a queer fish and an eccentric” (qtd in Leatherbarrow 4). Because of this assumption, one would be inclined to forgive the British citizen who, according to the anecdote cited by Dostoevskii, behaved disrespectfully towards his highborn Russian hosts. But the writer saw this anecdote in a different light. At the time when Britain supported Turkey and, by extension, Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria, Dostoevskii was disinclined to see the Englishmen as either funny or naïve. To challenge this condescending view, he resorted to a different stereotype – the proverbial British pride: “This is English haughtiness, and not just simple haughtiness, but the kind that poses an arrogant challenge” (qtd in Leatherbarrow 5).

I believe that this stereotype can be backdated. When Dostoevskii traveled to Britain a year after *The Insulted and Humiliated* had been written, he had already been well-equipped with stereotypes of British haughtiness and extreme individualism. He developed the vision of “Baal” before setting foot in London, and his gaze was specially tuned to see the traces of the capitalist Apocalypse. English society seemed to him an

antithesis of *sobornost*. Instead of coexisting harmoniously, the English struggled to reconcile their “all-Western individuality” with the necessity of forming a community “in one ant hill.” “The all-Western individuality” (“всеобщезападное личное начало”) is another word for “pride,” which, as Dostoevskii saw it, lay at the root of all evil. The pride of the nation bore responsibility for the sufferings of the multitudes of workers. The pride of the commoners severed the human bond between them, inducing them to get drunk “without mirth” and “in odd silence.” And the pride of the clergy, well-content with their benefices, prevented them from reaching out to the poor. Like a prophet of old, Dostoevskii castigated the British for their satanic individualism:

If only you had seen how proud is the spirit which has created this colossal backdrop and how certain he is of his victory and triumph, then you would have shuddered for his pride, persistence and blindness, and also for those over whom this proud spirit hovers and reigns. (IV: 417)

Such were the conclusions that resulted from the eight days that the writer spent in London, where he had to rely on his powers of observation rather than an ability to communicate with the locals⁶⁹. Clearly, he has preconceived notions of the English that were confirmed during his trip to London.

At the time when Dostoevskii was writing *The Insulated and Humiliated*, at least two stereotypes of the British had already crystallized in his mind: firstly, their connection to the Gothic literary tradition with its associated horrors; and, secondly, their

⁶⁹ Dostoevskii's lack of familiarity with the English culture lead him to misunderstandings. As Joseph Frank suggests, he mistook the early volunteers of the Salvation Army for Catholic missionaries and used this opportunity to launch his usual vitriolic criticism of the Catholic Church (*The Stir of Liberation* 188).

pride that, as Dostoevskii would later argue, had a harrowing effect on their own community, as well as on their international relations with Russia. Both stereotypes affected his characterization of Jeremiah Smith and Nelli in *The Insulted and Humiliated*. Briefly described, the story of the grandfather and his granddaughter looks as follows. Jeremiah Smith, an English factory owner in Saint Petersburg, has a daughter from his Russian wife. His demise starts when he engages in business with Prince Valkovskii. To cheat his partner, the unscrupulous prince seduces his daughter who in turn steals certain important documents from her father. Now bankrupted, Smith curses his child. Meanwhile, Valkovskii travels to Europe with the seduced girl and her German admirer. As befitting a Gothic villain, he abandons his mistress when she is about to give birth to their daughter. The fruit of this liaison is Nelli, a child of mixed heritage who spends her early years in Europe. After the faithful German dies, Nelli's mother takes her back to Russia in hopes of reconciling with Smith. But the old man, now living in despicable poverty, still bears a grudge against her. His own afflictions have not softened his pride, and he refuses to forgive his prodigal daughter even when she is on her deathbed. His relationship with his grandchild, however, is somewhat different. Smith receives charity from Nelli, who takes care of his apartment and brings him food, but he also reaches out to the girl, sharing his books with her and occasionally buying her treats. Yet his embittered pride prevents him from showing real love for Nelli. When asked whether her grandfather loved her, Nelli replies: “Нет, не любил... Он был злой” (“No, he did not love me... He was wicked”) (IV: 161; *ТИАИ* 184). In the character of Jeremiah Smith,

Dostoevskii amplifies the two stereotypes so as to turn the old man into a Gothic pastiche. With his unnatural thinness (“as if only skin was glued on his bones”), his vacant stare, his deathly complexion, and his mechanical gait, the elderly Smith resembles a revenant fresh from the vault. Quite appropriately, he is accompanied by a familiar – an old emaciated dog, his own likeness. To add another mystical touch, Dostoevskii describes how the old man passes away soon after his dog drops dead, as if they were somehow connected spiritually.

Among Dostoevskii's borrowings from the British Gothic novel, Mueller lists the following: overemphasized sensibility; blend of the beautiful and the terrible; “the depiction of anxiety with no possibility of escape” that is “expressed by a breaking down of categories”; coexistence of humor and supernatural horror; and deliberate mystification on the narrator's part (141 – 149). Dostoevskii, as Mueller argues, raises these stock Gothic features to new heights and uses them to describe modern man's predicament as opposed to merely frightening the readers (140). But this is hardly the case with *The Insulted and Humiliated*. Here Dostoevskii is only beginning to experiment with Gothic plot machinery, so it remains relatively intact, taken at face value and not fully integrated into the structure of the novel – hence, its incongruity.

One of the most prominent Gothic elements of the novel is its heavy reliance on premonitions, associated with the two English characters. Before his encounter with the old Englishman, Ivan notes: “Я очень хорошо помню, что сердце мое сжалось от какого-то неприятнейшего ощущения и я сам не мог решить, какого рода было это

ощущение” (“I remember quite well that I felt an unpleasant sensation clutch at my heart, and I could not myself name what that sensation was”) (IV: 6; *ТИАН* 10). Unlike a momentary anxiety attack resulting from illness, the premonition (предчувствие) continues to structure the narrative. As a plot device, it fulfills several functions. It marks the narrative as ostensibly Gothic, preparing the reader for the gradual introduction of other stock themes and characters such as star-crossed lovers, villainous aristocrats, and family secrets. Unlike conventional realism, it also posits a different epistemology by suggesting an alternative route for transmission of knowledge, a route that relies not on one’s cognitive skills or interpretive abilities but instead on the immediate, almost magical reception of information. Finally, it provides an easy, albeit contrived solution to establishing interpersonal connections among the characters. Reliance on premonition eliminates the need to detail Ivan's search for the old Englishman after he leaves the German coffee house. All Ivan needs to do is explain: “Что-то подтолкнуло меня, что старик непременно повернул сюда” (“Something told me that the old man must have turned in there”) (IV: 13; *ТИАН* 17). In a Gothic narrative, that “something” is enough to validate the character's course of actions and, more importantly, the author's narrational strategy. This shortcut is fully consistent with the conventions of the genre.

After Smith's death, Ivan moves into his gloomy apartment and symbolically inherits the little ghost that haunts the place. Ivan's first meeting with Nelli is also governed by premonitions. Her approach, even before she appears on the threshold, is enveloped in what Ivan calls “mysterious horror.” Describing his augury, he calls it

“тяжелая, мучительная боязнь чего-то... непостигаемого и несуществующего в порядке вещей” (“an oppressive, agonizing state of terror of something... which passes all understanding and is outside the natural order of things”) (IV: 52; *ТИАИ* 61-62). These sensations belong to the realm of Gothic sensibilities, yet their object is phenomenal: Ivan fears that Smith's ghost, fully corporeal, will appear in his room and shake with laughter.

The build-up of terror erupts when the door starts slowly opening:

[В]друг на пороге явилось какое-то странное существо; чьи-то глаза, сколько я мог различить в темноте, разглядывали меня пристально и упорно... К величайшему моему ужасу, я увидел, что это ребенок, девочка, и если б это был даже сам Смит, то и он бы, может быть, не так испугал меня, как это странное, неожиданное появление незнакомого ребенка в моей комнате в такой час и в такое время. (IV: 53)

[S]uddenly a strange being appeared in the doorway; somebody's eyes, as far as I could make out in the dark, were scrutinizing me steadily and intently... To my intense horror I saw it was a child, a little girl, and even if it had been Smith himself he would not have frightened me as much perhaps as this strange and unexpected apparition of an unknown child in my room at such an hour and at such a moment. (*ТИАИ* 62-63).

The terror in the scene arises from Ivan's thwarted expectations, whereby the phantom of the old man, for which he has mentally prepared himself, is supplanted by a child. The repetition of the word “strange” (странное), which defines both the child and its unexpected appearance, taps into Freud's concept of something familiar appearing strange. Thus, from the very beginning, Ivan's encounter with Nelli is enveloped in the atmosphere of eeriness. A monster in J.J. Cohen's terms, Nelli violates every cultural norm by challenging Ivan's domestic and personal boundaries. Everything is wrong with their encounter, from the timing of her visit to her unsolicited contact across the divide of

gender and age. And the fact that the “strange being” turns out to be a girl of flesh and blood does not make her less monstrous. Set in place at this very moment, Nelli's monstrosity will never be fully deflated. In the course of the narrative, it becomes obvious that Nelli is indeed an extension of the elderly Smith, whose vacant place in the plot she comes to occupy. Like Smith, Nelli possesses the ability to evoke premonitions. When she leaves the apartment, Ivan, as before, relies on his clairvoyance in order to find her: “[В]друг меня как будто подтолкнуло, что здесь, в сенях, кто-то был и прятался от меня” (“I suddenly felt something prompting me that there was someone in the passage here, hiding from me” (IV: 54; *ТИАИ* 64). The adverb “вдруг” (“suddenly”), which recurs in their subsequent interactions, lends the narrative a sense of immediacy and irrationality. The bond between the subject and the Gothic object defies logic. Later in the novel, when Ivan searches for the little escapee, his clearly stated wish to find her immediately points him in the right direction.

The fantastic space that surrounds Nelli can be best understood by comparison with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of character zones “formed from the fragments of the characters' speech, from various forms of hidden transmission of someone else's word, from scattered words and saying belonging to someone else's speech, from those invasions into authorial speech of others' expressive indicators (ellipsis, questions, exclamations)” (*Bakhtinian Thought* 210). According to Bakhtin, a character zone is the field of action for the character's voice, which encroaches upon the authorial voice and contributes to the heteroglossia of the novel. From the linguistic plane, the influence of

the character zone extends into the semantic dimension of the text. At least, this is the case with the semantic zone that is formed around Nelli, from whence the supernatural themes seep into the fabric of the novel. In other words, Nelli's semantic character zone is wide enough to make the narrative receptive to other manifestations of the supernatural, including clairvoyance.

The monstrous child enters the text, a throng of Gothic tropes at her heels, and destabilizes the pre-established system of meaning. Now anything can happen. It is worth noting that in Radcliffe's novels, premonitions can be misleading. In *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily's melancholy forebodings that “in her fancy, seemed to announce the death of Valancourt” (503) are disconnected from reality. What seems like Emily's intuition is soon to be decried as paranoia, and the apparent omens of death are nothing but fears of an overly sensitive maiden. But Dostoevskii takes a different route. In *The Insulted and Humiliated*, there is a continuity between the premonitions, whether verbalized orally or to oneself, and the turns of the narrative. Even in this early novel, Dostoevskii's concept of the fantastic is slanted towards folklore, which is preoccupied with the ability of words to create reality.

Another Gothic theme recurring in Dostoevskii's works is the description of beauty and horror that “often coalesce in the same image” (Mueller 141). This is true for Nelli's visual representation, as well as for her psychological portrait. When they meet next time, now in broad daylight, Ivan once again calls the girl “creature”:

[Т]рудно было встретить более странное, более оригинальное существо, по крайней мере по наружности. Маленькая, с

сверкающими, черными, какими-то нерусскими глазами, с густейшими черными включенными волосами и с загадочным, немым и упорным взглядом, она могла остановить внимание даже всякого прохожего на улице. (IV: 107)

[I]t would be difficult to find a creature stranger or more original – in appearance, at least. Small of stature, with flashing black eyes, which looked somehow foreign⁷⁰, with a mass of thick, disheveled black hair, and a mute, fixed, enigmatic gaze, she would have attracted the notice if anyone who passed her in the street” (ТИАИ 125).

The Otherness of the girl is underscored by her “non-Russian” eyes whose unyielding gaze reminds the reader of Smith's fixed stare. At the same time, Nelli's Otherness is not limited to her status as a cultural outsider, born and brought up in the spiritual wasteland of Europe. It is the same Otherness that causes Baba Yaga to exclaim “I can sense a Russian spirit!” (“Русским духом пахнет!”) and thus reveal herself as a member of the unclean force. Dostoevskii uses several techniques to convey Nelli's supernatural qualities. Like a demonic entity, she is associated with the liminal spaces (thresholds and bridges) and liminal times (twilight). Her strange, wild eyes invoke the folk belief in the evil eye (сглаз). These markers of monstrosity, however, are not distinctively Russian and can easily occur in a Western Gothic novel. But Nelli's uniqueness – as a character and as a plot device – lies primarily in her hybridity, the combination of Gothic and folkloric features that account for her internal contradictions. Had Nelli been described in generic Gothic terms, her semantic ambiguity would have been undermined and would have failed to create the tension between rejection and compassion, typical for

⁷⁰ Literally “non-Russian” in the original.

Dostoevskii's works. Therefore, Dostoevskii complements her description with references to Russian lower mythology.

After Ivan follows Nelli to her lodgings, he has a chance to meet her landlady, Mrs. Bubnova, whose red face and blood-shot eyes liken her to a vampire. As we learn later, Bubnova is a procuress and plans to sell the twelve year old Nelli to the pedophile Arkhipov. Fearful that Nelli will thwart this arrangement, Bubnova closely monitors her behavior and cruelly beats the girl if she is away for a long time. In her diatribe, peppered with colloquialisms and notoriously hard to translate, Bubnova touches upon several folkloric tropes. Similar to Ivan, the landlady relates to Nelli through premonitions: “Сердце мое чувствовало, что улизнет, когда посылала” (“My heart told me she'd slip off when I sent her out”) (IV: 113; *ТИАИ* 131) Bubnova's speech illustrates Bakhtin's concept of double-voiced discourse, which “serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author” (Bakhtinian Thought 218). Coming from a bawd who feigns charity, these words sound highly ironic, but despite their obvious irony they address Nelli's supernatural qualities. The lengthy stream of curses contains specific words that connect Nelli to the unclean force: “кровопивица” - “bloodsucker”, “гниль болотная” - “swamp rot”, “шиш” - “*shish/fig*”, “сатана” - “Satan,” “чертенок” - “imp.” As common in Dostoevskii's works, the word is smarter than its speaker. At any given point, Bubnova's utterances reflect back on her and reveal her hypocrisy, but they also function as truth statements about Nelli.

By calling the girl “swamp rot,” Bubnova touches upon the belief that swamps are the habitats of demons. The word “шиш” (*shish*) also has interesting folkloric connotations. Vladimir Dal's *Dictionary of Russian Language* lists several definitions for this word, of which only “a fig” is remembered nowadays. One of these definitions, however, is explicitly related to the sphere of folklore: “Shish, or *shishiga*, *shishigan* - the unclean one, Satan, demon; an evil *kikimora* or *domovoi*, the unclean force that is usually placed in a drying barn; a *domovoi* of the drying barn” (676). Her Gothic identity already established, Nelli is all of a sudden cast in the role of a native Russian household spirit. But this association is not all that far-fetched. Nelli's appearance – strange eyes, yellowish complexion, and the rags she wears for her clothes - invites this comparison with the unclean force. She sports an unmistakable sign of monstrosity – the disheveled loose hair, an attribute of any female monster from *kikimora* to *rusalka*. Her actions, whether positive or negative, also can be interpreted along the lines of typical *domovoi* behavior. Housework plays an important role in Nelli's characterization. While residing with Bubnova, she washes floors and, as her mistress claims, derives unnatural pleasure from her toil. When Ivan takes the girl into his apartment, she busies herself with chores, like a good *domovoi*. But when her erotic feelings for Ivan intensify and find no outlet, Nelli, like a provoked *kikimora*, turns to destruction and breaks Ivan's cup.

Another association of Nelli's with the Russian unclean force also occurs in conjunction with Bubnova and her evil scheme. At the moment she is rescued from the pedophile, Nelli resembles a *rusalka*: “бледная, с помутившимися глазами, в белом

кисейном, но совершенно измятом и изорванном платье, с расчесанными, но разбившимися, как бы в борьбе, волосами” (“with a bloodless face and dazed eyes, in a white muslin dress, crumpled and torn, and with her hair, which had been carefully arranged, now tousled as in a struggle”) (IV:134; *ТИАИ* 156). The passing reference to *rusalki* does not play a significant role in the characterization of Nelli. However, as I will show later, in *Crime and Punishment* the *rusalka* emerges as the master symbol in Dostoevskii's discourse on supernatural children.

While the Gothic undercurrent in *The Insulted and Humiliated* shapes the narrative primarily by means of premonitions, the influence of Russian folklore makes itself present through the recurring theme of parental curse. Like in folk narratives, the parental curse functions as a robust plot device, creating the conflict and leading to its resolution (or to the negative outcome, should it remain unresolved). Nelli's extreme victimization is revealed through the presence of not only one, but two curses. Most obviously, she bears the brunt of her grandfather's curse, even though it was aimed at her mother. As her mother told her, “[Э]то твой дедушка, Нелли, а я виновата перед ним, вот он и проклял меня, за это меня теперь бог и наказывает” (“That's your grandfather, Nellie, and I sinned against him; that's why he cursed me, and God is punishing me for it now”) (IV: 300; *ТИАИ* 343). But another curse, a more subtle one, also weighs upon Nelli. In her dying words, her mother urges the girl to stay poor and beg for alms: “[С]ама сказала мне: будь бедная и лучше милостыню проси, чем...” (“[S]he told me herself: 'Be poor and beg in the streets rather than...'”) (IV: 267; *ТИАИ*

305). It is not hard to guess what is obscured by that final ellipsis. Nelli's mother doesn't want her daughter either to ask Prince Valkovskii for help or to walk the streets. But in the fantastic space of the novel, her mother's warning constitutes the self-fulfilling prophecy, which is another word for a curse. The word “бедная” (“poor”) fulfills the double intention of Dostoevskii's heteroglossia because it is synonymous with “destitute” as well as “miserable”. Whatever its purpose may be, the mother's utterance has the same power in the novel that it would in folk accounts: it commits the child to a life of sorrow.

The plot line involving the Smiths parallels that of the Ikhmentevs, whose family integrity is imperiled by the parental curse. Natasha, the daughter of Nikolai and Anna Ikhmentev, runs away from her parents with Aliosha, the immature son of Prince Valkovskii. The story of betrayal and ruin repeats itself: Ikhmentev is engaged in a lawsuit with Valkovskii, and Natasha's elopement with the son of his enemy cuts him to the quick. His wife is afraid that he may vent his anger by cursing Natasha. In her concerns, she voices the folkloric view that a cursed person is forsaken by God. And this is exactly what happens. Beyond himself with anger, Nikolai steps on Natasha's portrait and curses her forever. At this point, the validity of the fantastic in the novel has been firmly established through the presence of Nelli. Despite the urban setting, folk beliefs hold sway of the plot, and suddenly the parental curse becomes a universal concern. Even the half-wit Aliosha is worried that his westernized father might curse him for disobedience. Inasmuch as the parental curse encompasses other negative outcomes of a family conflict, including disinheritance, it is firmly rooted in the folkloric substratum, in

the undeniable belief that an utterance has a bearing on reality. Once verbalized, the curse begins to infect the fabric of the novel, superseding other modes of interpersonal communication. It corrupts the spiritual reciprocity, intrinsic to the concept of *sobornost*, and the exchange of words turns into an exchange of curses. When Natasha learns of her father's curse, she curses him back. The circle of corruption widens, as she targets not only her father, but also her sympathetic mother and even her friend and champion Ivan: “Опять утешать пришел меня, уговаривать, чтоб я шла к отцу, который меня бросил и проклял... Я сама прокливаю их!” (“You've come to comfort me again, to persuade me to go back to my father, who cast me off and cursed me... I curse them myself!”) (IV: 289; *ТИАИ* 330-331).

Because of their dialogic properties, the words have the power to corrupt and to purify, to condemn and to redeem. With that in mind, Ivan comes up with a plan to use Nelli's personal story in order to influence Ikhmenev's feelings and persuade him to take back his curse. Ivan's relationship to Nelli opens up a metafictional dimension in *The Insulted and Humiliated*. As a writer whose first novel closely resembles Dostoevskii's *The Poor Folks*, Ivan is positioned within the novel and outside of its limits, as an external observer conscious of the plot machinery at work. As the author's proxy, Ivan possesses enough ironic detachment to juxtapose the two curses and realize how Nelli's story may be used as a meta-narrative that would give Ikhmenev the opportunity to reflect on his actions. He explains to Anna Ikhmeneva that the story of an orphan, whose mother was cursed by her own father, might soften Ikhmenev's heart. This strategy

proves successful. While Nelli narrates her story, Ikhmenev is thrust into the subject position of the Other, which proves too much for him and his wife – precisely because they are *not* English. The *différence*, subtle in the beginning of the novel, now overtaxes the sensibilities of the Russian couple. Their reaction to Nelli's curse is affective, cathartic, proceeding from an excess of feeling rather than rational thought. “As if inspired,” Anna swears to become Nelli's new mother, and Nikolai rushes to his daughter Natasha, with whom he has a passionate, tear-soaked reunion. Amazed at his own cruelty, Ikhmentev also blames the object of the curse for believing in its actuality, as if the power of the curse were derived from the intersection of agencies: he who curses and she who receives the curse must both believe in its power to make it real.

Я отверг тебя, я проклинал тебя, слышишь, Наташа, я проклинал тебя, – и я мог это сделать!.. А ты, а ты, Наташа: и могла ты поверить, что я тебя проклял! И поверила – ведь поверила! Не надо было верить! (IV: 312)

I cast you off, I cursed you; do you hear me, Natasha, I cursed you! And I was capable of that!.. And you, you, Natasha, could you believe that I had cursed you! You did believe it, yes, you did! You shouldn't have believed it! (TIAH 356 - 357)

It is certainly tempting to interpret this scene as the deflation of terror typical in a Gothic novel, when a decomposing corpse turns out to be a wax *memento mori* effigy. But Dostoevskii does not lampoon the folk belief in the omnipotence of the parental curse. Instead, he shifts the focus to forgiveness as a way to alleviate it. The relief of the curse coincides with the release of emotions. The affective relationship with the object is essential to the virtuous Russian landlord Ikhmentev – but not to the English capitalist

Smith. Therefore, Natasha has a chance of being redeemed from the parental curse. Nelli has no such opportunity.

As a supernatural child, Nelli invites charity. Because she is dressed in rags, to treat her in a culturally meaningful way would require clothing her. This is what other folkloric children, like *rusalka* or *igosha*, expect and demand. And this is exactly what Ivan does. He rescues her from her *bête noir* Bubnova; he feeds and clothes her; he consoles her in any way he can. But his charitable acts are met with growing hostility, as if Nelli deliberately re-routes their relationship into a different plane. Susan Fusso uncovers the pervasive eroticism of their interaction and calls attention to Nelli's carnal proclivities, inherited from her debauched father Prince Valkovskii. Compassion is by no means the only bond between the narrator and his little protégé, and “[a]gain and again it is Nelli who initiates physical contact with Ivan” (Fusso 21). However, I will argue that the mismatch of cultural codes is equally responsible for Nelli's inability to forge connections with Ivan or his friends. Caught in the vice of hybridity, Nelli cannot become a full-fledged member of the Russian community because of her Englishness, which is concentrated in one dominant character trait – her pride. That foreign haughtiness, stark against the backdrop of dire poverty, alters her whole being: the narrator mentions that her mouth was marked by “some kind of proud, bold wrinkle,” and that there was “some kind of strange pride” in her gaze. Although initially she gives her name to Ivan as “Elena,” later, when he gets to know her better, she asks him to call her by the English diminutive “Nelli.” Like the magical creature Rumpelstiltskin, she reveals to him her true

name, the one that coincides with her real identity. And her real identity is just that – as non-Russian as her eyes.

In his attempts to determine why Nelli refuses to accept charity, Ivan comes up with a peculiar oxymoron “эгоизм страдания” (“the egotism of suffering”). What is a better way to pinpoint her devastating duality? As a Russian, she has an inclination towards suffering, yet her suffering, inseparable from pride, brings her neither redemption nor relief. Instrumental as she may be for restoring wholeness to the Ikhmentev family, her personal curse, the one that turned her into a monster, is never removed. If anything, it is proliferated. In defiance of all Orthodox norms, and contrary to the folk narratives centered on a curse, Nelli refuses to forgive her father. Her dying wish is to notify Prince Valkovskii of her curse, which reiterates the curse of her mother:

Скажи ему тоже, что я Евангелие недавно читала. Там сказано: прощайте всем врагам своим. Ну, так я это читала, а его все-таки не простила, потому что когда мамаша умирала и еще могла говорить, то последнее, что она сказала, было: «Проклинаю его», ну так и я его проклинаяю, не за себя, а за мамашу проклинаяю. (IV: 337)

Tell him too that I have been reading the Gospel lately. It says there we must forgive all our enemies. Well, I've read that, but I've not forgiven him all the same; for when Mamma was dying and could still talk, the last thing she said was: 'I curse him.' And so I curse him too, not on my account, but on Mamma's. (TIAH 384)

The flowers that Ikhmentev brings into her room cannot soften her embittered heart, and, as Ivan notes, she dies “unforgiving” (“непримиренная”) (IV: 338). In spite of the melodramatic denouement, when Natasha reveals her affection for Ivan as they return from Nelli's funeral, it is obvious that the monstrous child died a bad death.

Rusalki* lore in *Crime and Punishment

The theme of the “insulted” female child, as Susan Fusso points out, continues in Dostoevskii's next major novel *Crime and Punishment*, in which the pedophile Svidrigailov is accused to raping an adolescent girl who committed suicide as a result of this trauma. Before his own suicide, Svidrigailov has two dream encounters with the girls, one of whom reminds him of his victim, while the other, a five-year-old, terrifies him with her precocity. The third-person narration in *Crime and Punishment*, as opposed to the more intimate first-person narration in *The Insulted and Humiliated*, distances the writer from the disturbing subject matter, but “[i]t is clear, however, that Dostoevskii is returning purposefully to the themes he raised vaguely in *The Insulted and Injured*, trying to find the appropriated artistic means for dealing with them” (Fusso 23). As I will proceed to argue, what unites the monstrous children in *The Insulted and Humiliated* and *Crime and Punishment* is not only their inherent eroticism, but also their supernatural status derived from Russian folklore. However, in *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevskii more consciously and meaningfully capitalizes on folkloric material, choosing one particular creature – the *rusalka* – to serve as a symbol of sexual abuse and victimization of children. In the fantastic space constructed by means of folkloric references, Svidrigailov's crimes against children tap into the larger problem of his disconnectedness from his native culture, which, as Ivanits indicates in *Dostoevsky and the Russian People*,

overlaps with the folkloric concept of the Mother Damp Earth (52). By firmly grounding the representation of supernatural children in folklore, Dostoevskii avoids the mismatch of cultural codes that ultimately weakens the plot of *The Insulted and Humiliated*.

Svidrigailov is justly considered one of the most complex and interesting of Dostoevskii's antiheroes. By consensus, scholars of Dostoevskii view him as Raskolnikov's double and an antithesis to Sonya Marmelodova with her deep religious convictions. A “nihilist in the realm of sensuality,” in Philip Rahv's words, Svidrigailov rejects all Christian dogma but dabbles in metaphysics. He professes his belief in ghosts, claiming that they reveal themselves in the liminal time of illness, when one is particularly prone to contacts with the Otherworld. His beliefs, however, are disconnected from both the Orthodox faith and native folklore. Referring to his attitude towards the afterlife, Ivanits notes that his “tone in describing ghosts... is diametrically opposed to that recorded in ethnographic accounts and legend” (“Suicide and Folk Beliefs” 143). When Svidrigailov speculates about the afterlife, which he imagines as a bathhouse with spiders in every corner, he fails to recognize the fact that his spiritual death has already imprisoned him there. As Ivanits points out, Svidrigailov's suicide makes him a prime candidate for the role of *bannik*, the malicious spirit of the bathhouse (*Dostoevsky and the Russian People* 51-52). And, because of his enmity with the Mother Damp Earth, the redemptive medium of Russian folklore, Svidrigailov forfeits his chance of salvation – the same chance that Raskolnikov eventually grasps. Hardly containing his fascination with Svidrigailov, Harold Bloom states that he “runs away from Dostoevsky's ferocious

ideology, and indeed runs out of the book” (6). This statement can be countered by a Bakhtinian reading of Dostoevskii's novels “as a great dialogue, but one where the author acts as organizer and participant in the dialogue without retaining for himself the final word” (Bakhtin 72). In Part Six of *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevskii sets in dialogue the nihilistic worldview of Svidrigailov with the microcosm of Russian folklore. Thus, it is not Dostoevskii's stern ideology that drives Svidrigailov to his fate, but folklore itself, after Svidrigailov loses his side of the argument.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud represents dreams as a dynamic process that elaborates into the dramatic form the subject's preexisting unconscious desires. He concludes that “[t]he dream thus shows the real, if not the entire nature of man, and is a means of making the hidden psychic life accessible to our understanding” (60). In addition to the dreams of real persons, Freud addresses the “artificial dreams” constructed in literary works, whose symbolism bears similarity to the ways in which real dreams are assembled. Dreams play a crucial role in *Crime and Punishment*. They allow the characters to reflect back on their past and serve as the foreshadowing of future events, as in Raskolnikov's dream of the horse being beaten to death. Both functions correspond with the role that dreams play in Russian traditional culture.

Endowed with prophetic power, dreams were often used for divination purposes. One of the famous literary examples of dream divination, directly modeled off of folk practices, occurs in Chapter V of Alexander Pushkin's novel in verse *Eugene Onegin*. Tatiana Larina, a young lady of the provincial gentry, decides to perform divination

during Sviatki, the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany specifically devoted to magical purposes. In preparation for her prophetic dream, Tatiana performs certain rites: she orders a table to be set for two in the bathhouse, takes off her silken belt before going to sleep, and puts a mirror under her pillow. As Lotman clarifies in his commentary to *Eugene Onegin*, dream divination was considered to be a dangerous act that involved communication with the unclean force (*Kommentarii* 652). The removal of her belt, which stands for the cross worn around her neck, exposes Tatiana to demonic influence. Within the narrative structure, the sequence of magical actions marks the border of the meta-space where Russian folklore reigns supreme. By performing her rites, Tatiana escapes from her mundane existence – and from the ostensibly realistic canvas of the novel. Her efforts are justly rewarded. In her dream, she finds herself in a fairy tale setting, spying on the feast of demons. Later she finds out that her dream was indeed prophetic (вещий), as it foretold the impending duel between Onegin and Lenskii. The correct performance of the divination ritual yields a valid, albeit undesirable result.

A similar process may be observed in Part Six of *Crime and Punishment*, where the folkloric markers increase in number, undermining the realism of the novel. Unlike Tatiana, Svidrigailov does not engage in divination on his own accord, but the sum total of his actions causes him to have a prophetic dream. To understand where his fault lies, it is necessary to trace the influence of the dream's context on its content. An elaborate summary of folk beliefs in regards to dreams was published in *Zhivaia starina* in 1891.

One of the passages connects prophetic dreams, as well as nightmares, to the workings of the unclean force:

The content of such dreams usually involves something seductive and sinful. Thus, old men dream of the amorous adventures of their youth. Sometimes devils themselves appear in those dreams. People attribute such dreams to a person's having failed to pray to God before going to sleep, or having not prayed fervently enough and thus having let the devil overtake him. There are, however, cases when prayers are of no use, for example, when a man falls asleep in the abode of the unclean force (e.g. in the sorcerer's house), or without a cross on his neck, or after uttering the devil's name at night.... The dreams that are invoked for the purposes of divination are also blamed on the devil's actions. Therefore those who engage in divination almost never pray to God before going to sleep. (IV (1891): 209)

It seems as if Svidrigailov is putting a check mark next to each of these cultural prohibitions. After leaving the house of his adolescent bride, Svidrigailov crosses a bridge, thus symbolically entering the liminal space, and walks along the river. Soon he notices an inn built of darkened wood, that bears uncanny similarity to a bathhouse – the quintessential dwelling place of the unclean force. It is there that he decides to stay for the night. After a failed attempt at pandering, the porter leads him to a coffin-like room. As Svidrigailov lies down, he feels the onset of fever, which, as he specified earlier, makes one susceptible to seeing ghosts. In his thoughts, he half-jokingly summons his wife whom he allegedly murdered⁷¹ but quickly admits that she will not come. Then he utters the devil's name as many as four times, a terrible carelessness according to folk belief. Slowly drifting off to sleep, he begins to hallucinate; he feels something scurrying

⁷¹ Ivanits argues that Svidrigailov's wife, a skilled fortuneteller, would be viewed as a witch who belongs with the unclean dead ("Suicide and Folk Beliefs" 143). This clearly intensifies the supernatural component of the novel.

beneath his clothes—a mouse, perhaps, as the place is crawling with them. In Russian tradition, seeing a mouse in a dream was considered a particularly sinister omen⁷². It serves as the final folkloric marker that opens up a new modality, the fantastic contained within the liminal space of a dream, at once frightening and prophetic. Svidrigailov, however, fails to recognize what trouble he has brought upon himself. Unlike the thoroughly Russian Tatiana Larina, whose knowledge of divination reveals her kinship with the people, Svidrigailov has abjured the Mother Damp Earth. But the rules of Russian folklore, by which the occluded fantastic space is governed, apply to him as well. In fact, he resembles one of those bureaucrats from *The Master and Margarita* who fall prey to Woland's crew after blurting “May the devil take me!”

Even though his dreams are demonically inspired, Svidrigailov does not see the devil – that character is left in store for another nihilist, Ivan Karamazov. Choosing from the rich array of unclean spirits, Dostoevskii stages Svidrigailov's conflict with the most appropriate folkloric creature – the *rusalki*. As I have described in Chapter 2, *rusalki* were the drowned maidens, unbaptized children, or victims of a parental curse who would seek revenge on any person who wandered into their haunts. In his first dream, he finds himself in an idyllic country cottage “arranged in English style” - perhaps, a reference back to Nelli, the uncanny half-English, half-Russian child. In Freudian terms,

⁷² Because of their ability to spoil food and household objects, mice accrued sinister connotations. Any type of activity by a mouse was considered a bad omen.. In particular, if mice got into one's clothes, it foretold great misfortune, and if they nibbled on it, it meant death (Ryan 128). Any of Dostoevskii's contemporaries who were well-versed in folk superstition would have recognized the foreshadowing of Svidrigailov's imminent death.

the cottage with its luxurious staircase symbolically represents the sexual act and the blooming flowers surrounding it – virginity. As Svidrigailov is walking up the stairs, he is fascinated by “the bouquets of white and tender narcissus, in jars of water on the windowsills, bending on long, bright green, fleshy stems, with their heavy, sweet smell” (CP 507). This erotically charged image, which synthesizes the notions of narcissism and physicality, is devoid of sexual aggression, as narcissism is by its very nature autoerotic and does not seek an external victim. The colors are serene, and the flowers are bending low as opposed to standing erect. But the plot tension starts to build up once the time of year is mentioned. It is Trinity (Pentecost), an important day in the folk calendar, when houses were decorated with flowers and tree branches, and the floors strewn with fresh grass (Shaparova 508). It was also the time when *rusalki* were the most active. Depending on the region, the week preceding or following Trinity was called “Rusalnaia.” During that time, people had to be on their guard and watch out for *rusalki*, but Svidrigailov disregards the cultural warnings and prohibitions. He keeps on walking.

In the vaulted hall the body of a young girl is laid in state: she is dressed in a white tulle gown, a traditional funereal attire for a virgin, and bedecked with flowers. Her hair is wet, as if her body has just been removed from the water – an unmistakable image of a *rusalka*. To this description Dostoevskii adds another somber touch: “Строгий и уже окостенелый профиль ее лица был тоже как бы выточен из мрамора, но улыбка на бледных губах ее была полна какой-то недетской, беспредельной скорби и великой жалобы” (“The stern and already stiff profile of her face also seemed carved

from marble, but the smile on her pale lips was full of some unchildlike, boundless grief and great complaint”) (V: 479; CP 507). The peculiar epithet “unchildlike” (недетской) indicates the double loss of the suicide, who experienced the loss of innocence and thus, symbolically, a spiritual death before her physical death. No icons or candles, the typical attributes of an Orthodox wake, surround the coffin. Up until this point Svidrigailov's progress to the coffin has been characterized by a significant degree of ambiguity: Dostoevskii meticulously describes the surroundings of the cottage without revealing his character's relationship to the dead girl. Owing to his technique of slowly narrowing the perspective from the broad landscape to the smile on the girl's frozen face, the narrative taps into the fairy-tale motif of a prince approaching the coffin of his (seemingly) dead beloved, as in Pushkin's *The Tale of the Sleeping Princess and the Seven Knights*. To clarify the situation, Dostoevskii inserts the authorial point of view into the flow of free indirect speech. In this angry outbreak, uncharacteristic of his polyphonic structure, Dostoevskii identifies the girl as Svidrigailov's victim⁷³. She committed suicide because

⁷³ Svidrigailov's involvement in the death of the girl is problematized by the fact that it is never openly admitted in the novel. Vilifying him to the Raskolnikovs, Luzhin mentions the niece of Svidrigailov's landlady, a deaf and dumb girl of fourteen or fifteen whom the libertine “cruelly insulted.” She later hangs herself in the attic. However, the girl in Svidrigailov's first dream committed suicide by drowning. Several explanations may be offered for this discrepancy. It is possible that Luzhin resorts to hearsay and does not know the exact cause of the girl's death (he admits that it was a murky affair) (V: 281). It is equally possible that more than one girl took her life after being raped by Svidrigailov. This can also be an example of authorial forgetfulness, as in changing the name of the youngest Marmeladov daughter from Lida in the beginning of the novel to Lenia in the end. However, in his notebooks, Dostoevskii reveals the exact nature of Svidrigailov's sexual offenses that are only hinted at in the novel: “He says about the landlady that the daughter was raped and drowned, but he doesn't say who did it. Later it becomes clear that it was he” (Wasiolek 196). Even though this segment of the plot was reworked (for instance, the girl became the landlady's niece, not her daughter), its influence is noticeable in the final version of the novel. Rape and murder by drowning definitely precondition a young female to become a *rusalka*.

of the offense that “horrified and astonished this young child's consciousness, that had covered her angelically pure soul with undeserved shame, and torn from her a last cry of despair, not heeded but insolently defiled in the black night” (*CP* 507).

The sorrowful smile of the suicide will be transformed into a lewd grin in Svidrigailov's succeeding dreamlike encounter with a five-year-old girl. After waking up from his first dream (or so it seems to him), Svidrigailov walks out into the passage, where he finds a cringing little child. Apparently, she has broken a cup and is hiding from her mother who would surely give her a thrashing. The juxtaposition of the two girls reveals striking similarities, even though the second child is much younger. Both girls look pale and haggard. Like *rusalki*, both are connected to water: the hair of the first girl is wet, while the second is soaked through: “Дырявые башмачонки ее, на босу ногу, были так мокры, как будто всю ночь пролежали в луже” (“The torn little shoes on her bare feet were as wet as if they had lain all night in a puddle”) (V: 482; *CP* 509). The characteristics hinted at in the first case are amplified in the second, creating a grotesque image of the uncanny child.

The supernatural effect in Svidrigailov's second dream is achieved by alluding to the conventional features of revenants in folklore and literature. Like Ivan at his first meeting with Nelli, Svidrigailov cannot immediately discern whether the little girl is a human being. He sees her as “какой-то странный предмет, что-то будто бы живое” (“some strange object, something as if alive”) (V: 481; *CP* 508). Her gender is not immediately identifiable: Dostoevskii initially refers to her in masculine gender

(“предмет” - “an object”), then in neuter (“что-то живое” - “something alive”).

Linguistic ambiguity contributes to the uncanny, almost surreal atmosphere. The author hints that the girl may be dead or undead by developing parallels with the young suicide. The visual descriptions form pairs: the face of the first girl is stiff (“окостенелый профиль”), the other is stiff with cold (“окостенела”); the first has pale lips, the second – a pale face. The references to the deathly pallor and skeleton-like features (“кости” in “окостенелый”) invoke the motif of the undead, popular in Slavic folklore.

Overwhelmed by a sudden rush of pity, Svidrigailov takes the foundling into his room and – the readers cringe – undresses her. But the pedophile rejects the opportunity for sexual predation, instead covering the girl with a blanket: “Раздев, он положил ее на постель, накрыл и закутал совсем с головой в одеяло” (“After undressing her, he placed her on the bed, covered her, and wrapped her up completely, head and all, in the blanket”) (V: 481; CP 509). The ambiguity of this scene sustains two interpretations, both grounded in the lore of *rusalki*. First, unbeknownst to himself, Svidrigailov is performing a charitable act in order to pacify an unquiet *rusalka* child. As I have discussed in Chapter 2, the symbolic clothing of a *rusalka* was performed in order to stop her mournful cries. In *Crime and Punishment*, clothes are constantly exchanged among the characters as a way of showing their spiritual unity, their *sobornost*. At least for a moment, Svidrigailov becomes a part of Russian spiritual brotherhood by taking responsibility of the “Wee One,” even if it is a supernatural child.

Yet a more sinister interpretation comes to mind. As he covers the girl with the blanket, he symbolically buries her, just like a murdered child is buried, later to rise as a restless spirit. His act resounds with the *rusalki*'s plaintive cry: "My mother gave birth to me and lay me unbaptized in my grave!" (Zabylin 61). While the girl is clearly described as a victim of her mother's malice, which accounts for her supernatural status, Svidrigailov is also indicted, if only because he lays her in a symbolic grave. At this point in the narrative, his gender identification is also jeopardized, as he gets conflated with the folkloric figure of a bad mother. After he "exhumes" the girl by lifting up the blanket, he discovers a startling change: her pallor has given way to vulgar ruddiness, her passivity – to lascivious gestures. She is laughing, while the first girl wept. The reversal of power dynamics between the victim and the victimizer causes Svidrigailov to remark: "Что-то бесконечно безобразное и оскорбительное было в этом смехе, в этих глазах, во всей этой мерзости в лице ребенка"⁷⁴ ("There is something infinitely hideous and insulting in this laughter, in these eyes, in all this vileness in the face of a child") (V: 482; CP 509). The addition of horror into the mixture of emotions contributes to the role reversal, whereby the precocious girl is seen not only as sexually promiscuous, but also as a threatening entity.

Fantastic elements aside, Dostoevskii's description of the corrupt five-year-old

⁷⁴ Svidrigailov's reaction to the active agency of the child victim, who is supposed to be a passive sufferer, is similar to Stavrogin's disgust once Matryosha starts kissing him in return: "Я чуть не встал и не ушел - так это было мне неприятно в таком крошечном ребенке - от жалости. Но я преодолел внезапное чувство моего страха и остался" ("I almost got up and left – so unpleasant it was in such a tiny child – out of pity. But I overcame the sudden sensation of my fear and stayed.") (VII: 646; *Demons* 696).

resounds with his contemporary accounts of child prostitution. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the issue of child prostitution turned into a cause célèbre. Prostitution was seen as a social disease, symptomatic of such problems as crowded living conditions among the urban poor, lack of public education, and a decline in morals. When addressing the issue of child prostitution, nineteenth-century writers often represent underage prostitutes as monstrous hybrids of childish appearance and adult shrewdness – in fact, as fairy changelings. Vsevolod Krestovskii, whose novel *The Slums of Petersburg* is thematically close to Dostoevskii's works but lacks their psychological depth, describes a young prostitute nicknamed “Rat” among his portraits of Petersburg criminal types. This child of the streets steals, begs, and sells herself for a bowl of soup. Recollecting her appearance, the writer points out that she looked preternaturally aged and decrepit. The facial expression of the juvenile prostitute fascinates him:

(...) наглым, вызывающим бесстыдством подернуты углы этих сжатых и сухо воспаленных детских губок ... И здесь уже разврат успел наложить свое неизгладимое клеймо на это детское личико, которое можно бы было назвать прекрасным, если бы не это выражение. (Krestovskii 322)

(...) what insolent, defiant lewdness lurks in the corners of these childish lips, chapped and shut tight ... The ineffaceable brand of depravity is already upon this childish face, which could be deemed beautiful but for this expression.

Similarly, the physiognomy of the girl in Svidrigailov's dream attests to her fallen state:

“что-то нахальное, вызывающее светится в этом совсем не детском лице; это разврат, это лицо камелии, нахальное лицо продажной камелии из француженок”

(“something insolent, defiant shines in this completely unchildlike face; it is depravity, it

is the face of a scarlet woman, the insolent face of a woman for sale, of the French sort”) (V: 482; CP 509). At another instance Krestovskii observes Rat gulping vodka, which in turn relates to Dostoevskii's suggestion that the five-year-old girl may be drunk. The major discrepancy between these two accounts lies in the fact that Krestovskii views Rat as a native product of the noxious Saint Petersburg environment, while Dostoevskii invokes the image of Otherness. The supernatural status of a *rusalka* is varnished with another layer of alienation, as Svidrigailov compares the girl to a French courtesan⁷⁵. The socio-historical aspect of Svidrigailov's second dream is closely connected to its psychological dimension. As George Rousseau argues, “In child prostitution, it was often claimed, children had learned to become consummate manipulators, malingerers and con artists, who could extract whatever they wanted – so cunning was their savvy from destitution and homelessness” (11). In Svidrigailov's case, the sexualized child is not only a manipulator, but a seductress. Once again, he misreads the cultural code and seeks the source of monstrosity elsewhere, oblivious to the fact that he may be dealing with a native monster. The powers of seduction are one of *rusalka*'s common attributes, along with the eerie laughter that Svidrigailov decodes as blatantly perverse. Perhaps, he is lucky that he did not get tickled to death – a usual type of harm done by the *rusalki*.

The dramatic transformation of the second girl after her symbolic burial also bears a similarity to vampire narratives. According to Slavic folklore, vampires upon

⁷⁵ This scene from “Crime and Punishment” became a recognizable point of reference in pre-revolutionary accounts of child prostitution. For example, the popular journalist Vlad Doroshevich cites it in his 1905 article about underage prostitutes, referring to his ten-year-old interviewee who “calmly says the things that make a worldly-wise man blush” (241).

exhumation have ruddy faces and lips smeared with blood (Shaparova 135). These key characteristics are present in the description of the second girl - “алые губки” and “краска уже разлилась по ее бледным щечкам” (“scarlet lips” and “color had already spread over her pale cheeks”). These vampiric traits come into focus if we juxtapose Dostoevskii's text with the celebrated nineteenth-century horror story – Nikolai Gogol's “Viy.” In the beginning of “Viy,” the seminary student Khoma Brut is hag-ridden in the literary sense of the word. After the hallucinatory ride permeated with erotic imagery, the protagonist manages to throw the witch off his back and bludgeon her to death. But his troubles continue when he is summoned to read prayers over her corpse for three nights in a row. Each night the undead witch rises from her coffin and searches for her murderer. To protect himself, Khoma Brut draws a chalk circle around the lectern⁷⁶. For two nights, the power of the magic circle keeps the witch at bay, but during the third night, when the terrifying creature Viy comes to her aid, the demons destroy Khoma.

Upon comparison, the two texts bear striking similarity. With growing apprehension, Svidrigailov observes the changed facial expression of the girl:

Алые губки точно горят, пышут; но что это? Ему вдруг показалось, что длинные черные ресницы ее как будто вздрагивают и мигают, как бы приподнимаются, и из-под них выглядывает лукавый, острый, какой-то недетски-подмигивающий глазок, точно девочка не спит и притворяется. Да, так и есть: ее губки раздвигаются в улыбку... Но вот она уже совсем поворачивается к нему всем пылающим личиком, простирает руки... “А, проклятая”! - вскричал в ужасе Свидригайлов, заноса над ней руку... (V: 482).

⁷⁶ Drawing a magical circle on the ground was also used for protection against *rusalki* who could not step over its boundaries and catch the person within (Grinchenko, *Iz ust naroda* 117).

Her scarlet lips were as if burning, as if aflame – but what is it? It suddenly seemed to him as if her long black eyelashes were fluttering and blinking, as if they were opening, and a coy, sharp eye, winking somehow in an unchildlike way, were peeping out from under them, as if the girl were not asleep but pretending. Yes, so it is: her lips are expanding into a smile... But now she has fully turned her whole burning face to him, she reaches her arms out... “Ah, cursed one!” Svidrigailov cried out in horror, raising his hand over her... (CP 509)

The imagery in this passage is vivid and voluptuous. The seemingly child-like features of the girl, emphasized through the use of the diminutive suffixes “-ок” and “-ик,” are contrasted with her unnatural mimics and gestures. The epithet “проклятая” is another example of Dostoevskii's heteroglossia. Peculiar in its ambiguity, the word splits into a homonymic pair – “прокляТая” and “прОклятая.” If the stress falls on the second syllable, “проклятая” simply means “damn” or “blasted,” the epithets that convey annoyance more than horror. Following this notion, Svidrigailov's exclamation could be translated as “You little wretch!” However, his shock would be more consistent with the second word in the pair – “прОклятая.” When the first syllable is stressed, the word means “cursed,” signifying the parental curse, a powerful mechanism for destroying the child's soul and turning her into an unclean spirit.

By being “the cursed one,” the girl is likened to the witch in “Viy.” When the unlucky student mumbles his prayers in the deserted church, he cannot help admiring the dead woman:

Она лежала как живая. Чело, прекрасное, нежное, как снег, как серебро, казалось, мыслило; брови - ночь среди солнечного дня, тонкие, ровные, горделиво приподнялись над закрытыми глазами, а ресницы, упавшие стрелами на щеки, пылавшие жаром тайных желаний; уста - рубины, готовые усмехнуться... “Ведьма!” вскрикнул

ОН НЕ СВОИМ ГОЛОСОМ, ОТВЕЛ ГЛАЗА В СТОРОНУ, ПОБЛЕДНЕЛ ВЕСЬ И СТАЛ ЧИТАТЬ СВОИ МОЛИТВЫ. (Viу 199)

She lay there as if alive. He brow, beautiful, tender, like snow, like silver, seemed thoughtful; her eyebrows – night amid a sunny day, thin, regular – rose proudly over her closed eyes, and her eyelashes, falling pointy on her cheeks, burned with the heat of hidden desires; her mouth – rubies about to smile... “The witch!” he cried out in a voice not his own, looked away, turned pale, and began reading his prayers. (*Collected Tales* 175 -176)

Later Gogol describes how the witch stretches her arms and searches for Khoma, just like the girl who wants to embrace Svidrigailov. Other similarities between the two descriptions include beautiful eyelashes about to flutter and red lips ready to smirk. Both female shapeshifters only pretend to be sleeping; their masquerade creates the atmosphere of suspense, later adopted in horror movies, when the corpse suddenly opens its eyes. Waiting for them to reveal their falsehood, both men break down psychologically and curse their seductresses. Svidrigailov resorts to violence, but Khoma Brut is past that: he has already learned that if he destroys the witch, she will come after him in a different guise.

The supernatural, sexually promiscuous females precipitate the men's deaths by undermining their belief system. Once Khoma Brut loses his faith in the power of the magic circle, or perhaps Christian faith in general, he cannot resist the unclean spirits whom the witch summons. Similarly, Svidrigailov is overpowered by his internal demons. After being rejected by Dunia Raskolnikova, whom he also calls “a child,” Svidrigailov is faced with his disconnectedness from Russian culture, and his spiritual corruption as manifested through his dreams. Death is the only escape from the nightmare

he himself created. In *Dostoevsky and Suicide*, Shneidman sees Svidrigailov's suicide as a price one has to pay for ignoring moral human values and seeking “a meaning in life outside the Christian principles of the Russian Church” (44). But insensitivity to the precepts of native folklore results in the same fate.

***Leshi* lore in Sologub's “Zhalo smerti” and “Elkich”**

While the supernatural children in *The Insulted and Injured* and *Crime and Punishment* are restricted to bleak urban environments, Fedor Sologub explores the connection between childhood and nature, treating these two categories as an inseparable whole. To Stanley Rabinowitz, Sologub's fusion of childhood and nature represents a Platonic ideal, perfect in its innocence and immutability. As such, it is juxtaposed with the world of banality inhabited by adults. In the stories centered specifically on the theme of child-nature interactions, Rabinowitz traces “Sologub's steady movement away from the 'here' to the comforting enchantments of the 'there'” and furthermore notes: “Much of the action is restricted to gardens, forests, parks, and the like – all of which represent microcosms or earthly remnants of this divine beauty; outside of these areas the Sologubian child cannot survive” (*Sologub's Literary Children* 36).

Ironically, within the realm of nature the Sologubian child has an equally low chance of survival. Like the mysterious Pied Piper, nature lures children from a drab and monotonous civilization, but the result is the ultimate, irrevocable escape. It can hardly be

deemed Romantic, but neither is it a Darwian universe “red in tooth and claw.” Rather, it is the nature of the folktale, mysterious and threatening. According to Yuri Lotman,

Among the universal themes of world folklore an important opposition is that of 'home' to 'forest' ('home' being the place which is one's own, a place of safety, culture and divine protection, while 'forest' is somewhere alien, where the Devil dwells, a place of temporary death and to go there is the equivalent to a journey to the afterlife). Archaic models of this opposition have persisted and been productive even in the modern period. (*Universe* 185)

The binary opposition of home – forest figures prominently in the Russian lore of supernatural children. Along with other malicious entities, from Baba Yaga to *leshi*, unbaptized souls occupy the liminal space of the forest, from whence they can be redeemed and reassigned to heaven – but not brought home. And once the borderline is crossed from beyond, as in the case of *leshi* changelings, sympathy for the supernatural child evaporates, replaced by the urge to defend “home” against the invasion of “forest/anti-home.”

It is clear that Sologub understands the folkloric connotations of the forest. As it beguiles his juvenile characters, nature offers them an escape from the fetters of the adult world that destroys them in body and soul. But such escape is possible only through death. Although he utilizes the recognizable fairy-tale motifs, Sologub's stories lack the happy resolution preconditioned by the hero's journey to and from the Otherworld. After the hero passes beyond the border, there is no turning back, and a temporary death in the forest turns into an actual physical demise. If there is a reason for optimism, it lies in

unity with nature. The forest is not only a medium of the hero's transformation but the ultimate goal of his quest.

A stark example of equating nature with enchantment and death occurs in the short story “Zemle zemnoe,” which may be translated as “Earthly Back to Earth.” One need go no further than the title to note Sologub's penchant for wordplay. By paraphrasing the famous line from Genesis 3:19⁷⁷ Sologub explores the semantic dimensions of the word “earth.” It is not immediately clear whether he equates the “earth” with nature or with the profane world, which is set in opposition to noumenal realm of nature. Or is he merely referring to the soil that engulfed the protagonist's dead mother? In Sologub's textual universe, where, as Harriet Hustis notes, words can easily become divorced from their referents (636), any of these choices are possible – or none of the above. The ambiguity of the title is reflected in the young hero's quest for self-discovery. Sasha is described as a seer, and intent gazing is his favorite mode of exploring the outer world. Harmless as it may seem, staring becomes a risky, almost self-destructive act once the context of “home” is substituted with “forest.” The descriptions of nature are semantically marked with folkloric referents: thus, the sun is described as a coiled fire serpent, and the grass rustles with snake-like sound. As Liudmila Kleiman points out, in “Zemle zemnoe” nature easily assumes demonic properties. It has its own

⁷⁷ In the Church Slavonic translation of “dust you are and to dust you will return,” the word “earth” is used instead of dust”: “земля еси и в землю отыдеши,” as quoted by Sologub in “Zemle zemnoe” (I: 465). These lines form a part of the *ikos* “Сам Един еси Безсмертный” (“You alone are immortal”), which is sung at Orthodox burial services. Unlike the Book of Common Prayer, in which the phrase “earth to earth” is accompanied by “ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” Orthodox burial services do not include the two additional references to mortality. This sole reference fortifies the semantic correlation of the earth to death.

mysteries that it jealously guards from the outsiders; and, more importantly, it has “lichina” and “lik”⁷⁸ - the mask that hides its true nature and may be pondered but never understood (111).

To stare at nature is to open oneself to supernatural harm. A similar mishap is dramatized in Nikolai Gogol's “Viy,” where Khoma Brut loses his magical protection by stealing a glance at the monster. When Sasha confesses to his nurse Lepestinia that nature stares back at him with its ubiquitous eyes, the old woman explains:

Безглазая засматривается... Поберегайся, голубчик: приглянулся ты ей, курносой... Глаза, вишь ли, у тебя, - глаза нехорошие... Глаза-то у тебя смотрят, куда не надо, видят, что негоже. Что закрыто, на то негоже смотреть. Курносая не любит, кто за ней подсматривает. Поберегайся, миленький, как бы она тебя не призарила. (I: 466)

The eyeless one is feast her eyes on you... Be on your guard, my dove: she, the snubbed-nosed, put her eye on you... It's all because of your eyes, your mean eyes... Your eyes look where they shouldn't and see what they shouldn't. What is closed is not befitting to look at. The snubbed-nosed doesn't like it when someone oversees her. Be on your guard, dearie, or else she may set her eyes on you.

Interspersed with euphemisms and oxymorons, their conversation mirrors the catechism in the beginning of Odoevskii's “Igoshka,” when the curious boy questions his nanny about “the armless and legless one.” Like in Odoevskii's story, the old peasant woman is wary of the unclean force, which fascinates her young charge. Sologub goes as far as to equate nature as a whole with the demonic and deadly force seeking to destroy those who

⁷⁸ In his essay on icons “Iconostasis,” Pavel Florenskii categorizes three types of representation from the distinct ontological realms: *лицо* (litso – face or countenance), *лик* (lik – a theological term which refers to the true and sacred self), and *личина* (lichina – mask or false semblance) (Cassedy 100).

pry into its secrets. In doing so, he reaffirms his decadent leanings and likewise creates a vision consistent with the folkloric concept of “forest.”

In the end of “Zemle zemnoe,” Sasha stares at the water, contemplating suicide, but in an unexpected move, the author spares his life. Overtaken by “mysterious fear,” the boy walks away from the river to follow his nurse “towards the earthly life, on the languorous and mortal way” (I: 488). Not so optimistic is the fate of little Seriozha from “K zvezdam” (“To the Stars”). The boy succumbs to the summons of the stars and dies in the garden, while his family is soundly asleep at home. As Seriozha is dying – from heart attack, should we opt out for a realistic explanation, - his unity with nature is emphasized by his animalistic cry, “loud and shrill, like the screechy cry of a night bird” (I: 426).

In “Zemle zemnoe” and “K zvezdam,” the boys are portrayed as misfits who seek in nature what they cannot find at home – unconditional acceptance, an outlet for their energy, including sadistic impulses, and the key to the mysteries of the universe. As Rabinowitz observes, “Prevalent in the Sologubian child is the intuition that one's earthly self or earthly existence is the incorrect and improper one. Yet the corollary to this belief – that there is a right self or mode of being – exists equally strongly in these characters' consciousness” (24). If the children are externally related to the forest, they long for it as for something forbidden, even deadly, but irresistibly seductive. The forest, or nature by extension, becomes their grave in the same sense that a coffin is an anti-home to a living person yet home to a revenant – vampire, *upir*, or *eretitsa*. But even the grave is not as constraining as the world of *poshlost* from which they make their escape.

On the contrary, the forest is home to ostensibly supernatural children, whom Sologub equates with *leshi*. Such is the boy Vania in “Zhalo smerti,” published in *Novy put’* in 1903. The title and epigraph of “Zhalo smerti” (“The Sting of Death”) are taken from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (15:56). The biblical reference (“The sting of death is sin”) sets the tone for the story that deals with the corruption of the soul. In addition to the numerous biblical allusions⁷⁹, Sologub's short story contains several important folkloric elements. The story dramatizes the unlikely friendship of two boys living in their dachas not far from the forest. The boys seem to be antipodes of each other. Kolia Glebov, who lives with his single mother, is a sweet and friendly child. But his character changes for the worse, when Kolya falls under the spell of Vania Zelenev who teaches him to smoke, drink wine, and, most likely, masturbate. After one of their revelries in the forest, Kolia returns home drunk, causing his mother to complain to Vania's parents. Reacting to her complaint, Vania's father mercilessly thrashes the boy who now harbors thoughts of drowning Kolia. The more he broods on death, the more appealing it seems to him, so in the end he decides to commit suicide together with his friend. Both boys die by jumping off the precipice near which they used to play⁸⁰.

⁷⁹ For the discussion of biblical allusions in “Zhalo smerti,” see Linda Ivanits “Biblical Imagery in Sologub’s Short Stories: ‘Barancik,’ ‘Zalo Smerti,’ and ‘Pretvorivsaja Vodu v Vino.’” *Russian Literature L* (2001): 125-140.

⁸⁰ Margarita Pavlova refers to Saltykov-Shchedrin's short story “Kolia i Vania” as a potential source for “Zhalo smerti” (196). In this story from 1863, two serf boys kill themselves by cutting their throats in a ravine. They want to escape the cruelty of their mistress who threatens them with corporal punishment. What distinguishes “Kolia i Vania” from “Zhalo smerti” is the serf boys' belief in a kind God who awaits them in heaven. On the contrary, Vania from “Zhalo smerti” professes overt nihilist views.

As noted by Sologub's contemporary critics and literary scholars, Vania is unambiguously described as a demonic entity. His face is asymmetrical and of greenish tint, with a tuft of hair over his right brow – one of those deformities that point to the unclean force. And, just like the folk devil, he is constantly making faces. Vania's eyes hold in terror all his neighbors who fear that he will cast an evil eye on their children. Linda Ivanits observes that his surname *Zelenev* underscores his association with the color green – the color of death and the Otherworld (“Biblical Imagery” 130). Additionally, Vania is identified with two folkloric creatures – *rusalka* and *leshi*. He laughs, like a *rusalka*, and drowns his victim, and, like a *leshi*, he spends most of his time in the forest. Vania sees neither beauty nor poetry in nature. To him, the forest is nothing but a medium for channeling his darker desires, a liminal space that accommodates all sorts of mischief. Recreating a fairy-tale scenario, he lures the gullible Kolia into the forest and puts him through trials.

In his analysis of the forest imagery in European folk tales, Bruno Bettelheim describes it as the world of our unconscious: “The forest... symbolizes the place in which inner darkness is confronted and worked through; where uncertainty is resolved about who one is; and where one begins to understand who one wants to be” (93). To traverse the impenetrable wilderness is to take a journey through the unconscious with the goal of developing one's humanity. All challenges and threats of the supernatural forest dwellers are geared towards this goal. But Vania's trials are of a different sort. Instead of strengthening Kolia, they have a debilitating effect on his body and mind. Unlike the

Grimms' "Two Brothers," whom Bettelheim cites as his example, Vania and Kolia get lost in their unconscious and never achieve maturation.

Vania's hybridity, which encompasses child/adult and human/animalistic features, results not only from his ontological Otherness but also from the noxious influence of his parents. Defending his story from the opprobrium of literary critics, Sologub calls Vania corrupted yet innocent deep in his heart (Pavlova 197). As in folk narratives, the parental curse destroys the ontological innocence of the boy, turning him into a little monster. Vania's father is described as "a lawyer by profession and a swine by nature," which allows Margarita Pavlova to trace his pedigree to the possessed pigs from the biblical parable. Everything about him – his thoughts, his voice, his ring, and his scarf pin – are fake. Indeed, he is the epitome of *poshlost*. He corrupts his son by encouraging him to smoke and drink. Social Darwinism that Vania's father professes ("Might equals right") distorts the boy's worldview, leading him to believe that "A man is a wolf to a man." After routine beatings, the boy finds solace in the forest, which mirrors his internal darkness. Although Kolia's mother is not an abuser, she prefers amateur theatrics to spending time with her son. Thus, the parental curse is expressed through physical violence, as well as the indifference of the parents; in either case, they expel their children from the sphere of their interests - wish them away. The forsaken children dream of the Otherworld where there are no thrashings and insults, and where absolute freedom results from the total absence of corporeality.

As Kolia's demonic doppelganger, Vania Zelenev closely resembles Odoevskii's Igosha. Ivanits observes that Kolia feels pity towards his friend when he is hungry or gets thrashed, and the word “zhalost” (“pity”) counterpoises the phonetically similar “zhalo” (“sting”) in the title (“Biblical Imagery” 131). In Odoevskii's story, the armless and legless creature invokes pity in the young protagonist who refers to it by a peculiar diminutive “zhalkin'kii” (“the little pitiful one”). Like Igosha, Vania incites Kolia to violate the rules set out for the good little boys. He even throws Kolia's new shoes into the brook, so that his barefooted friend may become closer to nature and, in Sologub's semiotic space, to death. This act invokes Igosha's incessant demands for clothes and shoes that were thrown to him through the window. Once the boys get drunk on Madeira, they start acting like two young *leshi*, reveling in misrule.

Дикие шалости внушала им их буйная веселость. Они ломали деревья, царапали друг друга, и все их движения были неожиданны и нелепы, и в глазах у них было туманно, несвязно и смешно. (I: 584)

Their boisterous gaiety encouraged their wild pranks. They broke saplings and scratched each other; their movements were unexpected and awkward, and to them everything looked foggy, incoherent, and amusing.

As I have argued in Chapter 2, the unbaptized spirit Igosha with his destructive tendencies stands for the id, which the protagonist must sacrifice as a part of an Oedipal conflict. By expelling Igosha, the boy symbolically castrates himself, turning into a docile, rational member of the Russian gentry. However, the typical Oedipal scenario is stymied by Sologub's identification of superego with a different kind of death – the life-

in-death existence in the world of banality. To internalize the law of the father is to die spiritually, and being lost in the forest of unconscious is certainly preferable to this fate.

In his interpretation of “Zhalo smerti,” Rabinowitz reads the boys' suicide through the lens of Schopenhauer's teachings about the withdrawal from the world of evil. Death becomes “an escape from the bondage of earthly suffering to a changeless state, free from the laws of physical reality and necessity” (*Sologub's Literary Children* 46). There is, however, nothing glorious in the boys' death. Adjectives such as “heavy,” “cold,” “pitiful,” “dark,” and “dead” create an atmosphere of gloom in the final paragraphs. The boys' escape from the flawed world into the noumenal realm affords no relief to the readers. Rather, the death scene bears the stamp of folkloric inevitability: there is no escape from the parental curse except through prayer and acts of charity, but in Sologub's universe both are in short supply.

The influence of “Igoshka” connects “Zhalo smerti” to “Elkich,” another of Sologub's short stories that capitalize on the lore of *leshi*. Written after the Revolution of 1905, “Elkich” flawlessly blends folklore with social critique. The story takes place around Christmas time. Vera Alekseevna is awakened by the plaintive voice of her son Sima. In his strange song-incantation, the boy is trying to pacify *elkich*, the spirit of the fur tree, who was forcefully taken into the city apartment along with his tree. Sima's mother would hear no such nonsense. She asks her older son Dima, a pudgy teenager, to talk Sima out of his fancies, but apparently Dima also believes in *elkich*. Sima appeals to his eldest brother Kira, a student involved with the revolutionaries. Although Kira

attributes the little boy's beliefs to his overindulgence in “fantastic fiction,” he juxtaposes the chopping of a fur tree with the violence that the state does to an individual. At night, Sima hears the *elkich* again and tries to convince him not to bemoan the loss of his forest home. After all, people in the city are also good. In return, *elkich offers* to show Sima what people are really like. The next morning, he incites Sima to run away from his German governess and leads him towards the demonstration. The boy is killed when the first shots are fired at the crowd.

Although the word “*elkich*” is coined by Sologub, the creature clearly resembles a *leshi*. In Sima's words, he is the size of a newborn's finger, green, rough-skinned, and smells of tar. Like a pine cone, he is metonymically connected to his tree. The diminutive size of *elkich* harkens to the *leshi*'s ability to change its size, becoming taller than trees or smaller than grass (Shaparova 322). Talking about *elkich*, whose mournful sighs ring in his ears, Sima bursts with pity. The string of diminutives that he uses connects *elkich* to Igosha: “маленький,” “зелененький,” and “шершавенький” (II: 292). Dispossessed his tree, *leshi* is indeed a pitiful creature.

According to Ivanits, the displacement of *Elkich* taps into the folkloric accounts of spirits, such as *domovoi*, pining after their lost homes (“Sologub's Fantastic Creatures” 82). But the *leshi*'s loss is also indicative of a rupture in the cultural code. Not only has an individual tree been destroyed, but nature as a whole has begun to erode under the influence of rapid urbanization and growth of capitalistic consumption. The cultural trauma stems from the commodification of the natural objects “that exist for themselves.”

By siding with the *leshi*, Sologub shows the introduction of Christmas trees as a yet another attack of *poshlost* on nature. It is important to recall that the tradition itself is not indigenous to Russia. Up until the middle of the nineteenth century, only German emigrants used to put up Christmas trees; later the quaint German custom spread through the upper and middle classes but did not affect the Russian peasantry⁸¹. In vain Sima points out the festive decorations on the fir tree⁸². For all its glitter, the Christmas tree is nothing but a bourgeois fetish. In a similar way, individuals are objectified by the state. Sima's elder brother Kira draws an analogy between the commodification of the tree and the reduction of the subjects to their utilitarian functions in society:

Ну и вот, приходят агенты власти, и берут тебя, и ведут, куда ты не хочешь, и заставляют делать то, что не свойственно твоей натуре. Ты говоришь: я для себя вырос. Тебе отвечают: нет, брат, шалишь, ты вырос церкви и отечеству всему на пользу, а раз на пользу, то мы тебя и используем. (II: 295)

So then the agents of the authorities come and take you; they lead you where you don't want to go and make you do things that are against your nature. You tell them: I grew up for myself. They reply: stop fooling around, brother; you grew up to be useful to the church and your fatherland, and if you are to be useful, we are going to use you.

Sima's response to his brother is worthy of Ivan Karamazov: “Если надо заставлять и мучить, то я не хочу” (“If it is necessary to coerce and torture, then I don't want it”).

⁸¹ For a cultural analysis of Christmas trees in Russia, see Salnikova *Istorija elochnoi igruski, ili kak nariazhali sovetskuiu elku*. (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2011).

⁸² A potential source for Sima's description of the Christmas tree is the poem “В лесу родилась елочка” (“A fir tree was born in the forest”), composed by Raisa Kudasheva and published in 1903, in the children's magazine “Maliutka.” Set to music by Leonid Bekman in 1905, it subsequently became the most popular New Year song in the USSR.

Like Igosha or Vania Zelenev, *elkich* encourages the boy to engage in harmful behaviors that jeopardize his relationship with his father - in this case, represented by the coercive state apparatuses. However, *elkich* represents a different version of the id, not rebellious but wounded, damaged. The cultural and environmental drama is recast in psychosexual terms as an Oedipal conflict, and the *leshi's* loss of his fir tree prefigures the symbolic castration that is looming before the boy. By maintaining a double focus on the cultural and individual drama, Sologub identifies his character first with the mourning subject and then with the object of his loss. As opposed to “Zemle zemnoe” and “Zhalo smerti,” in which the locus of monstrosity was the eyes, in “Elkich” the uncanny manifests itself through the voice. In the opening paragraph, Sima's presence is conveyed by his eerie voice that frightens his mother. The quality of his voice is captured by the diminutive “тоненький,” which at once signifies “little” and “thin.” The same epithet is used for the voices of *elkich* and the house spirits. The latter treat Sima as one of their own, prophesying that he will never grow up but will go and live with them. This sinister promise echoes the accounts of child-snatching by the unclean force: as Ivanits notes, if Sima had a Russian nanny instead of a German governess, she would have warned him not to trust *leshi* (“Sologub's Fantastic Creatures” 83). However, Sima already belongs to the Otherworld and, like the fairy, cannot help but bemoan the destruction of the forest. At the moment of his death, the fairy child becomes one with the object of his longing:

Страшный треск пронизал, казалось, все его тело. Земля заколебалась, поднялась, камни под снегом холодной мостовой прижались к Симочкину лицу. Короткий миг было очень больно. И

потом стало легко и приятно. Раскинув на снегу маленькие,
помертвелые руки, Сима шепнул:
-Елkich миленький.
И затих. (Volume 2 298)

It seemed as if a terrible crackle pierced his whole body. The earth quaked and rose up, and the cold, snow-covered cobblestones pressed against Simochka's face. For a brief moment he felt a lot of pain. Then all was light and pleasant. Spreading his little dead arms on the snow, Sima whispered: "Dear Elkich."
Then he was quiet.

By carefully choosing his imagery, Sologub juxtaposes Sima's death with chopping down a tree. The crackle of the firearms resounds with the sound of an ax, and the fallen object hits the ground. With his arms thrown aside, Sima's body assumes the shape of a fir tree. Even if the uncanny child is unable to resist the law of the father, his death at least unmasks the violence that, in Foucault's terms, the state enacts directly on the body of the subject to assert its power.

***Leshi* lore in "Cherviak"**

The short story "Cherviak" ("The Worm"), first published in *Teni* in 1896, is considered to be one of Sologub's finest works⁸³. It is also a prime example of the use of folklore both for the purpose of social commentary and as a psychoanalytic tool. Wanda,

⁸³ Sologub's contemporaries had a mixed reaction to "Cherviak," as well as other stories of the same period. The popular critic Volynskii charged Sologub with an excessive coarseness of language that undermined the psychological depth of the story, mediocre at best (312 – 313). Grouping Sologub together with Zinaida Gippius, Skabichevskii berated both decadents for the psychopathic tendencies of their characters: however, while Gippius writes primarily about adults, Sologub's characters "lose their mind in childhood and never reach adulthood" (587).

the young heroine in the story, leaves her forest home to attend school in a stagnant provincial town. There she boards with the Rubanosovs – the harsh master of the house, his spiteful wife, and the wife's sister Zhenia. Although the Rubanosovs have other young lodgers, Wanda is singled out because of her Polish heritage. In the beginning of the story, Wanda breaks Rubanosov's favorite cup, a domestic misdeed that harkens back to *The Insulted and Humiliated*, as well as to Svidrigailov's second dream in *Crime and Punishment*. Angry at the girl, Rubanosov threatens her with a worm that will crawl into her mouth while she sleeps. As the fear of the worm turns into an obsession, Wanda starts to believe that the worm has indeed entered her body. In sheer desperation, she writes to her family, telling them of her predicament and begging to be taken home. But the letter is intercepted, and Wanda is doomed to waste away in the hostile environment of the Rubanosovs' house. At the end of the story, she is so disfigured by the disease - most likely, consumption - that her incoherent words instill fear in those around her.

As the Other, Wanda is placed in double jeopardy. She is a cultural outsider, a Polish girl in a predominantly Russian community. Even her name sounds ridiculous to the girls in her school: to taunt her, they slur it as “ванная” - “bathroom.” In spite of the animosity that surrounds her, Wanda tries her best to naturalize, as evident from the fact that she takes “Divine Law” together with the Orthodox students⁸⁴. Of all her lessons, she

⁸⁴ In areas with significant religious diversity, the schools (гимназии) tried to accommodate the needs of their multi-faith students. The famous children's writer Alexandra Brushtein, born in 1884 in Vilnius (then Wilno), describes how in her school the Orthodox students took “Divine Law” classes from an Orthodox priest, while the Catholics were provided Polish priests. Lutherans, Muslims, and Jews, including the author, were grouped under the umbrella term of “inoslavnye” (heterodox) and required to attend Bible classes together with the Catholics (277). A Catholic priest was readily available in large towns such as

finds it to be the hardest, partially because it requires memorization by rote but also, as I will discuss later, because Wanda is represented as a *leshi* changeling. The alien religion plays a nasty trick on the girl. After reciting her lesson word for word, she receives a good grade from the priest. This rare stroke of luck spurs a joyful frenzy that results in her transgression – the breaking of the cup.

In addition to being a cultural outcast, Wanda is also a supernatural Other⁸⁵. As discussed in Chapter 2, tales of *leshi* children being planted in human households abound in Russian folklore, so it is not surprising that the Rubanosovs view Wanda as an evil, perverse changeling. Anna Rubanosova, a school-teacher by profession, constantly complains of her lodgers, especially of Wanda: “И в гимназии-то вы надоели до смерти, да и тут с вами возись” (“Even in school you annoy me to death, and here I have to deal with you again” (IV: 385). Inciting her husband to discipline Wanda, Rubanosova mentions the girl's destructiveness. Similarly, a folkloric changeling has the habit of breaking dishes after consuming food. In the eye of a human beholder, Wanda is nothing but a stupid and vicious *leshi* who repays kindness with acts of malice.

The punishment that Rubanosov chooses for her – whipping – resounds with the traditional methods of exorcising a changeling. If the changeling is flogged hard enough, the fairy folk will take it back and return the stolen human child. The Rubanosovs want to

Vilnius, located on what was formerly Polish territory, but would be hard to come by in the Russian provinces, where the action of “Cherviak” unfolds. Thus, to spare themselves extra trouble, the school authorities could force a Polish girl to attend an Orthodox version of “Divine Law.”

⁸⁵ Interestingly, in Nadezhda Teffi's short story “Leshachikha,” the young countess whom the villagers consider to be an evil wood spirit is also Polish.

do just that – to beat the wild, joyful spirit out of Wanda until she turns into a semblance of the insipid Zhenia. To them, that's what it means to be human. It is common for the critics of Sologub to focus on the introduction of the worm as an initiation ritual (Rabinowitz 37). However, I would argue that the initiation ritual is the attempted whipping from which Wanda escapes. After the girl evades the coercive law of the father, thus failing to be incorporated into the Rubanosovs' version of culture, she is symbolically destroyed by means of the worm.

In the opening lines of the story, Wanda is described as a “swarthy and tall girl of about twelve” (I: 384). Her dark complexion sets her apart from the rest of the girls, but no less important is her age. Folkloric sources concur that *leshi* changelings tend to live with their human family up until the age of eleven, when they return to the forest (Nikiforskii 70; Afanas'ev 312). Moreover, Afanas'iev specifies that if the changeling remains in the community, it becomes “a terrible sorcerer and destroyer of human souls” (312). Like a true *leshi* changeling, Wanda dreams of returning to her forest home and reuniting with her family. Here Sologub masterfully differentiates home from anti-home. Wanda is trapped in the world of *poshlost*, her situation mirroring the captivity of human children in the Otherworld. The home of the Rubanosovs is portrayed as *unheimlich* – unhomely – uncanny. Everything in it is odd and out of place.

Стены покрыты некрасивыми темными обоями; на них грубо наляпаны лиловые цветы, с краской, наложенной мимо тех мест, где ей следовало быть. Обои наклеены кой-как, и узоры не сходятся... Железные кровати тоже, кажется Ванде, пахнут чем-то неприятным и печальным, острогом или больницей. (I: 394)

The walls were covered with an unattractive, dark wallpaper; it had crudely botched violet flowers on it, with the color applied hit or miss. The wallpaper was pasted on sloppily, and the pattern did not join properly... The iron beds also seemed to Wanda to smell of something unpleasant and sad, like a jail or a hospital. (*The Kiss of the Unborn* 41)

Treating the apartment as the anti-Eden, Laursen comments, “These walls are a product of the city, which in Sologub's work is the height of artifice. With their sloppily applied flowers, they are a perversion of true nature, of the garden from which Wanda is excluded” (506). Wanda perceives her surroundings as a chaos of signifiers that parodies the noumenal realm of nature much like Zhenia's travesty mocks Wanda's frenetic spinning. When *poshlost* enters the sphere of mimesis, the result is a mismatch of expression and content, here signified by the excessive sloppiness of the wallpaper. The adverb “кой-как,” which can be translated as “hit or miss” or “haphazardly,” is also used to describe Wanda's answers in school: “отвечала, если спрашивали, кой-как, на 'тройку’” (“if asked, she would answer haphazardly, and get a C”). Constantly distracted by thoughts of home, Wanda does not put much effort into her studies and slides by in the haphazard world. It is, in fact, a well-prepared lesson that eventually gets her in trouble.

Juxtaposed with the forest as the archetypal anti-home, home accrues demonic connotations. In their seminal article “On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture,” Yuri Lotman and Boris Uspenskii posit two typological models of culture based on its orientation towards expression or content. In differentiating between the two models, they pay particular attention to the notion of “correctness.” In a content-oriented culture, which regards the relation between the signifier and the signified as arbitrary, an incorrect

designation is perceived as an error in a system of rules. That error can be disregarded because in the grand scheme of things, the correctness of form does not modify the content. For example, distortion can make a work of art flawed and unsatisfactory, but not demonic. On the contrary, an expression-oriented culture replaces the dichotomy “organized – nonorganized” with “correct – incorrect” or even “true – false.” The breakage of cultural codes produces the content that is rendered not only unsuitable but outright evil: “An incorrect designation can be identified with a different content (but not with none!), that is, with different information and not with a distortion in the information” (219). For the examples of the “correct – incorrect” dichotomy, Lotman and Uspenskii delve into the culture of the Old Believers: during Patriarch Nikon's reforms, the spelling of Christ's name was changed from “Isus” to “Iisus,” but to the Old Believers it signified the name of the Antichrist (220).

The semiotic orientation toward expression is not limited to religious communities. Russian folklore can be considered a type of culture in its own right because it functions as a dynamic system, in which the signs are interrelated with each other and with the system as a whole. Moreover, in magic systems, the signifier and signified maintain a mimetic, not arbitrary, relationship. A name directly corresponds to the one being named, as in “Speak of the devil, and he will appear.” Analogously, a person's name can be used in magic rituals with the goal of influencing his or her behavior – for example, inspiring love or causing sickness. By deliberately warping the expression, the practitioner of magic tries to cause harm: reading “Our Father” backwards

serves as a classic example. Not only verbal, but physical expression signals the demonic. Physical defects (lameness, blindness in one eye) or animalistic features (tail, hooves) mark the unclean creatures – devils, witches, and vampires - who otherwise look normal.

Steeped in folkloric traditions, Sologub's "Cherviak" taps into the dichotomy of "correct – incorrect/demonic." The material realm of the apartment consists of incorrect forms: mismatched wallpaper with crudely printed flowers, a ceiling plastered with paper, and wardrobes made of rotten wood, with doors that were not fit properly. One content is replaced with another, home with the anti-home. Appropriately, the uncanny space is inhabited by demonic beings. Each member of the Rubanosov household has a disfiguring mark: the witch-like Anna sports yellow fangs; her sister Zhenia, the witch's familiar, has the large lips of a toad; while Vladimir's crooked legs and red face invoke images of devils and vampires. Their pronounced monstrosity overcasts Wanda's Otherness. Although portrayed as a creature of the forest, she is the least monstrous of all and thus entitled to the undivided sympathy of the reader.

"Как волка ни корми, а он все в лес смотрит" ("However much you feed a wolf, it looks towards the forest"), comments Anna Rubanosova when Wanda escapes from her punishment. As typical for Sologub's use of idiomatic language, the proverb at once captures Wanda's nostalgia for her lost home and foreshadows the intensification of her longing. In her daydreams, the forest is described as everything that the Rubanosov's apartment is not, a correct world in touch with the divine. Laursen calls it "a pre-Fall Eden where humankind is still one with God" (506). Forest imagery is invoked three

times, in accordance with folklore, and each time Sologub's descriptions of nature convey a sense of pristine beauty. Liudmila Kleimain juxtaposes the static city imagery with the dynamic vision of the sleigh ride developed by means of alliteration and assonance (113). In the beginning of the story, Wanda tries to recapture the sensation of a sleigh ride by running and laughing, but in the anti-home her behavior is considered transgressive, and repercussions are soon to follow.

Wanda's boisterous behavior also corresponds to the image of *leshi*. After she receives a good grade, she runs noisily through the rooms, shoving her girlfriends and roaring with laughter. Hard as Anna tries to hush her down, Wanda cannot contain her robust joy. She is very loud, and so is her father whose manly voice resounds beneath the pines. Loud vocalization, particularly booming laughter, is a common attribute of a *leshi*. According to folk beliefs, a *leshi* roars with laughter, whistles, and imitates the sounds of birds and animals (Shaparova 322). "Reinforced by ecclesiastical disapproval of secular enjoyment and levity, the view that laughter was demonically inspired and, in general, impermissible is one strand in folk belief," explains Faith Wigzell (69). In "Cherviak," Sologub delimits two types of laughter – Wanda's joyful, innocent laughter and the mocking laughter of her persecutors. Even if both types of laughter are supernaturally inspired, the second is considered demonic, while the first is not. When Zhenia, her back hunched, makes a travesty of Wanda's movements, the girl's natural grace deteriorates into a caricature. By the same token, in the crucible of the flawed mimesis, the joyful laughter turns into its antithesis – mockery. Initially the girls are "infected" with Wanda's

gaiety, but the verb “to infect” is repeated in a different context. Sasha, a girl “prone to laughter,” mocks Wanda after her fall from grace and “infects” the rest of the girls with *Schadenfreude*. Anticipating Wanda's punishment, Sasha can barely contain her laughter and calls her unfortunate friend “puss in boots.” At first, other girls are upset by Sasha's excessive levity, but after Rubanosov threatens Wanda with a worm, the whole household unites in merriment. A laughingstock at home and at school, Wanda feels completely forlorn. Not only her graceful movements, but her laughter is perverted and stolen from her, as if by magic.

The man who laughs the loudest is Wanda's nemesis Vladimir Rubanosov, an aggressive boor capable of hitting a girl with a whip or pushing a woman into the snow. Bow-legged and red-haired, with little metal eyes and rotten teeth, Rubanosov cuts out a perfect demonic figure. The same abnormalities characterize a *koldun* prone to hexing those around him. Particularly notable is Rubanosov's heavy cane made from circles of birch bark fitted on a steel rod. Rubanosov's cane symbolizes the staff with which the sorcerers are commonly portrayed, like the *volkhv* in Vasnetsov's illustration to Pushkin's *The Song of the Wise Oleg*. This combination of natural and artificial elements in the cane produces a frightful hybrid, another sign of incorrectness in the Rubanosovs' world.

By contrasting the changeling child with the monstrous adult, Sologub explores the semantic dimensions of the parental curse. Because adults control the language, children are left with no other choice but to accept whatever designation is given to them. In his somber interpretation of native folklore, Sologub describes how parents or

guardians *in loco parentis* have the power to destroy a child's life through their words. The main vector of wish fulfillment, realized through parental curse, is towards death. In Sologub's first published novel *Tiazhelie sny* (*The Heavy Dreams*), the protagonist Login pays a visit to Dubitskii, the local Marshal of the Nobility. To impress his guest with the discipline of his children, the ex-officer summons them to the drawing room and gives them a series of commands, which they fulfill with unquestioning submission⁸⁶. As soon as they stand at attention, the father orders them “Умирай!” (“Start dying!”), so all six youngsters drop on the floor and imitate death throes. At the sound of the next command “Умри!” (“Die!”) they shut their eyes and lie “perfectly still, stretched out, like corpses” (I: 93). Login is horrified at what he has seen, but Dubitskii assures him that, if ordered, the children will eat each other and not leave any bones.

For the children of Dubitskii, their father's command is so overpowering that it constitutes a physical reality. This is typical for Sologub's textual universe, where seemingly meaningless or even silly utterances function as spells⁸⁷. Linda Ivanits comments that in *The Petty Demon* “[w]ords tend to lose their value as a means of exchanging ideas, and... often acquire magical significance” (qtd in Harriet Hustis 636).

⁸⁶ In his article “Fedor Sologub and His Nineteenth-Century Russian Antecedents,” Stanley Rabinowitz calls this scene “purely Gogolian in absurdity” (331).

⁸⁷ Ryan mentions that *slovo* (word) was used as a synonym of *zagovor* (spell) (166). Sologub was clearly aware of the magical connotation of *slovo* and used it in this sense. For example, his poem “Nedotykomka contains the following appeal: Недотыкомку серую / Отгони ты волшебными чарами, / Или наотмашь, что ли, ударами, / Или словом заветным каким” (Scare away the gray nedotykomka / With magical charms, / Or with backhand strokes, / Or with some secret word) (II: 600). It is also worth noting that backhand strokes were used for destroying witches and sorcerers (Ivanits, *Russian Folk Belief* 107). This shows just how familiar Sologub was with the methods of hexing and healing.

This is true for all of Sologub's works. In “Belaia sobaka” (“The White Dog”), a young seamstress compares her supervisor to a dog, which causes the woman to internalize this designation. At night, she apparently shapeshifts into a dog and gets shot. An even more elaborate scenario unfolds in “Priatki” (“Hide-and-seek”). Noting that the mistress of the house enjoys playing hide-and-seek with her little daughter, the cook claims that it is a bad omen: “If you hide too much, you will hide for good.” Although she invents this portent on the spot, her faith in it grows the more she repeats it. Later the nurse informs her mistress of this augury, adding a few details of her own. Once the mother, against all odds, comes to believe in the omen, the fate of her daughter is sealed, and the girl dies. After the spell was uttered and accepted by everyone as the truth, it became the truth. In fact, it became folklore.

The power of words, which paradoxically arises from their meaninglessness, gives adults ample opportunity to lay a curse on their children. When Wanda refuses to submit to chastisement (and thus pass her initiation rite), Rubanosov invokes a worm to come and take the girl from within. Rubanosov's curse goes beyond the rash “May the so-and-so take you,” with which peasant mothers imperiled their offspring. His words are malicious in a precise and deliberate way:

Я знаю, что с тобой сделать. Вот погоди, уже ночью, как только ты заснешь, заползет тебе червяк в глотку. Слышишь, курицына дочка, червяк!.. Вползет червяк прямо в глотку, ясен колпак! Так по языку и поползет. Он тебе все чрево расколупает. Он тебя засосет, миляга! (I: 392 – 393)

I know what to do with you. Just wait until tonight, when you are about to fall asleep. I'll slip a worm down your throat. Do you hear, you goose – a

worm!.. The worm will crawl right down your throat, you nitwit! It will crawl right along your tongue. It will scratch your whole insides raw. It will swallow you up, my dear! (*The Kiss of the Unborn* 39)

As Rubanosov is muttering his threats, in Wanda's eyes he looks like a sorcerer chanting spells. This is a correct assumption. In all of Sologub's stories, as in folk narratives about hexing, one cannot be paranoid enough. Although Rubanosov's string of curses lacks the structure of a typical *zagovor* (invocation of a higher power, reference to a distant magical locale, or an ending formula), it is similar to a *zagovor* because it creates a future-tense narrative with a desirable outcome. Similar to a *koldun*, Rubanosov lists the actions in a sequence, using concrete and graphic imagery. Earlier Rubanosov's plans for the evening were described by means of an idiom “заморить червячка” (“to stay one's hunger” - literally, “to kill a little worm”). Now he transfers that symbolic worm to Wanda⁸⁸. The word “червяк” (“worm”) has a materiality of its own. As Wanda rolls the word on her tongue, breaking it into syllables and sounds, its ending feels like something cold and slippery, like the worm itself. That night Wanda experiences a sensory hallucination: it feels as if something is crawling along her tongue, and then she swallows it. The frightened girl awakens the whole household with her mad shrieks “The worm! The worm!”⁸⁹ Since then she cannot get rid of the sensation that the worm is living in her body and sucking on her heart.

⁸⁸ Ivanits specifies that spells were commonly sent “in the wind” and connects to this practice the references to the “merciless wind” in “Cherviak” (“Sologub's Fantastic Creatures” 87).

⁸⁹ The reference to Wanda's shrieks is not coincidental. Her hysterical screams, shivers, and mad gaze remind the reader of *klikushestvo*, or the shrieking sickness – a women's disease attributed to sorcery (Ivanits, *Russian Folk Belief* 106 – 107).

The folkloric motifs of a parasite living in one's body are so ubiquitous that Stith Thompson lists them under the category "B784. Animal lives in person's stomach." The usual suspects are frogs, toads, and snakes, but worms are occasionally mentioned. The animals can be swallowed with water or crawl into the mouth of a sleeping person, whereupon they start multiplying at an alarming rate. Other narratives make a specific reference to a hex by means of which a parasite is introduced into the stomach⁹⁰. A famous literary rendition of this motif is Alexander Pushkin's translation "Feodor and Elena," included into his collected translations *The Songs of the Western Slavs*⁹¹. While her husband, Feodor, is away, Elena is sexually harassed by the old Stamati. Offended by her rejection, Stamati consults with "a Jewish evildoer," and together they perform a magic ritual with a toad, inducing it to drink its own blood and then lick a plum. After Elena eats the plum, she feels as if a snake is stirring in her stomach. Her belly starts to swell, and the neighbors gossip that she must be great with child. In a year, Feodor returns back to his village and finds his wife looking very much pregnant. Elena explains

⁹⁰ During the notorious witch trial of 1770, several male and female peasants from Iarenskii uезд were charged with sorcery. Among other things, they were accused of spoiling people by sending worms "on the wind," so that the parasites might lodge themselves in the body. After several rounds of torture, the accused confessed their crimes and were brought before the consistory in Velikii Ustiug, which found them guilty as charged. Later the case reached the Senate. Expressing their indignation at the superstitious practices of the province, the senators acquitted the defendants and ordered the flogging of their accusers (*Vestnik Evropy* V (1868): 657 – 658). However, even the educated members of Russian society at least considered the possibility of spoiling. Andrei Bolotov, a famous eighteenth-century agriculturist, in his vast memoir mentions the case of a peasant woman who complained that a *koldun* had placed a toad into her stomach. Initially Bolotov dismissed her story as a superstitious reverie and attributed her bloated stomach to natural causes. However, when administered an emetic, she vomited a living toad. After examining its anatomy, Bolotov concluded that it had lived in the woman's stomach for a long time, which caused its blindness and the atrophy of its rear legs. He could find no rational explanation for this incident (Bolotov 706 – 711).

⁹¹ "Feodor and Elena" is a poetic translation of Prosper Mérimée's short prosaic text "La Belle Hélène." As common for all his translations in "The Songs of Western Slavs," Pushkin uses the three-ictus taktovik prevalent in Russian folk poetry.

that she was “spoiled by evil people,” but, in a fit of fury, Feodor decapitates her. He then decides to cut open her belly and remove the child. Feodor's plan is to find out whom the bastard boy resembles once he grows up. Instead of a child, he finds a black toad. Repentant, Feodor kisses Elena's severed head, and her lips repeat that she was spoiled by means of the toad. Following her confession, Feodor murders both villains and orders a funeral service for his innocent wife.

One should keep in mind that “Feodor and Elena” is a translation of Prosper Mérimée's prose narrative tenuously related to Slavic folklore. Nonetheless, it captures several Slavic folk motifs that are later explored by Sologub in “Cherviak.” Hexing is staged as a conflict of genders, whereby the two male sorcerers put a spell on a female. This is a typical situation in Russian accounts of witchcraft that tend to feature a male sorcerer (*koldun*) who spoils a young woman, oftentimes a bride, and turns her into a *klikusha*⁹². The type of harm that Stamati inflicts on Elena signals his displaced sexual aggression: as she rejects his advances, he symbolically impregnates her by means of contagious magic. Analogously, the introduction of the worm in “Cherviak” stands as a metaphor for sexual abuse. Others of Rubanosov's phallic attributes, such as his cane and his whip, prefigure the worm, which is described in unmistakably sexualized terms, as an erect penis searching for intact spots to violate:

⁹² As opposed to Western European folklore that identified witches as female and persecuted them accordingly, there is a greater gender equality in the Russian accounts of witchcraft. Moreover, as Valerie Kivelson noted in her research of Russian witch trials, the males comprised the majority of accused witches. For an elaborate discussion of Russian witch trials at their hiatus, see Valerie Kivelson “Through the Prism of Witchcraft: Gender and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Muscovy” in *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

Ванда ясно представляла своего мучителя. Прежде он был тоненький, серенький, со слабыми челюстями; он едва двигался и не умел присасываться. Но вот он отогрелся, окреп, - теперь он красный, тучный, он беспрерывно жует и неутомимо движется, отыскивая еще неизранные места в сердце. (I: 404)

Wanda imagined her tormentor clearly. Before, it had been thin, greyish, with weak jaws; it barely moved and could not hold on by suction. But by now it has warmed itself and become stronger: it is red now, and corpulent; it chews unceasingly and moves tirelessly, seeking out still other uninjured places in her heart. (*The Kiss of the Unborn* 52)

The worm-penis constitutes the abject, something that disgusts the subject, causing a violent physical reaction of shudder and the need to purge it from the body. As Wanda finds herself in the anti-home, surrounded by the evil doubles of her parents, the Oedipal drama repeats itself. But since the penis invokes only fear and disgust, in Freudian terms, the conflict cannot be resolved by replacing the penis envy with the desire to have a child⁹³. Like in “Feodor and Elena,” unnatural impregnation can result only in monstrous birth. No resolution for the Oedipal conflict is offered, and Wanda is left with the only option – to recoil from the source of abjection.

No efficient counter-charm is mentioned in “Feodor and Elena,” in which the innocent heroine is first slandered by her neighbors and then murdered by her irascible husband. Other accounts of supernatural impregnation are more generous towards the victim. The heroine of the famous seventeenth-century text *The Tale of the Demoniak*

⁹³ Responding to Freud's concept of penis envy as a hallmark of the Oedipal complex in girls, Karen Hornby treated it as a mechanism that helps to suppress the little girl's fear of penetration by the large penis of her father (Berger 5). Indeed, Hornby's hypothesis would be more elucidating for analyzing the fear of penetration permeating “Cherviak.”

Solomonía suffers from repeated attacks by demons. Among other harmful acts, they plant one of their kin into her womb, causing *Solomonía* to shriek with pain as the creature is gnawing on her left side (Morris 55 – 56). Fortunately, *Solomonía* is incorporated into her religious community. When her relatives bring her to Ustiug, she receives help not only from the local clergy but also from St. John, St. Prokopy, and the Mother of God herself! The saints promptly come to her aid and, having opened her womb, drive out a host of demons whom they pierce with pokers (Morris 60). Following this miracle, *Solomonía*'s health is fully restored. As Ivanits points out, the sign of the cross and prayer are time-approved means for repelling the unclean force, so it is not surprising that Wanda resorts to them in order to dispel her hex (“Sologub's Fantasy Creatures” 86). But her Otherness once again works against her. When the girl prays, she feels that the higher powers take no interest in her, and the angels will not descend to comfort her. Unlike *Solomonía*, Wanda lacks the immediate support of her native community. People around her respond to her suffering either with derisive laughter or with half-hearted pity but never with genuine sympathy. There is no feeling of *sobornost* in “Cherviak.” If anything breaches the gap between the individuals, it is the opportunity to collectively mock the Other. However, as a *leshi* changeling, Wanda may not even be entitled to the grace of God and Christian fellowship. Her feeling of absolute loneliness prefigures the disappointed mumbling of *elkich*, torn from his forest and brought to the anti-home. The *leshi* cannot thrive outside of its familiar environment.

After Anna Rubanosova intercepts her letter, in which she begs to be taken home, Wanda loses all hope. She slowly wastes away in her room, sensing some presence behind her but afraid to look back. No longer believing in angels, she expects no deliverance from the worm. In the end, we find her prostrate on the bed, evidently dying from consumption. Morbid even by Sologub's generous standards, the ending of "Cherviak" has attracted much scholarly interest. Paradoxically, Rabinowitz sees it in positive terms, as Wanda's ultimate success in warding off the evils of the adult world and recapturing the comforts of her forest existence. Symbolic of her absolute refusal to enter the world of adults, Wanda's death seems like victory (*Sologub's Literary Children* 37). Countering Rabinowitz's misplaced optimism, Laursen argues against Wanda's triumph over the phenomenal world, which had replaced her noumenal sensations with vicious words: "She is poisoned by phenomenal banality, and death is merely the natural effect of this poison" (512). Similarly, Ivanits equates the evil spell that drained Wanda's life with adulthood and its concomitant corruption ("Sologub's Fantastic Creatures" 88).

Concurring with Laursen and Ivanits in their pessimistic reading of the story, I want to draw attention to Wanda's final transfiguration:

Жестокая улыбка искажала ее рот, - он от страшной худобы лица перестал плотно закрываться. Хриплым голосом лепетала она бессвязные, нелепые слова. Ванда уже не боялась этих чужих людей, - им было страшно слышать ее злые речи. Ванда знала, что погибает. (I: 406)

A cruel smile distorted her mouth; because of the terrible thinness of her face it no longer closed tightly. She murmured disjointed, incoherent words in a hoarse voice. Wanda no longer feared these strangers; it

terrified them to hear her malicious words. Wanda knew she was dying.
(*The Kiss of the Unborn* 55)

It seems that in describing Wanda's newly-acquired monstrosity, Sologub, like Dostoevskii before him, alludes to Gogol's short story "Viy," which can be viewed as a repository of images and motifs, useable in any narrative that dramatizes an individual's interaction with the supernatural. During the second night of Khoma Brut's vigil in the church, the witch engages him in a spell-casting competition, responding to his prayers with the incantations of her own:

Глухо стала ворчать она и начала выговаривать мертвыми устами страшные слова; хрипло всхлипывали они, как клокотанье кипящей смолы. Что значили они, того не мог бы сказать он, но что-то страшное в них заключалось. Философ в страхе понял, что она творила заклинания. (*Viy* 210)

She was growling hollowly and began to utter dreadful words with her dead lips; they spluttered hoarsely, like the gurgling of boiling pitch. He could not have said what they meant, but something dreadful was contained in them. The philosopher fearfully realized that she was reciting incantations. (*Collected Tales* 186)

In both passages, the locus of monstrosity is the mouth from whence incantations proceed. Elaborating upon Gogol's description, Sologub inserts a clarification at once physiological and supernatural: the mouth of the dying girl does not close anymore, so there is no end to her dreadful words. The exorbitance of Gogol's similes ("words like the gurgling of tar") is deflated in "Cherviak," but the emphasis on their frightening incoherence remains intact. Wanda's dying words are encoded as incorrect and therefore evil, terrifying. The form of the word in this expression-oriented, magical culture has a direct bearing on its content, so Wanda's delirious muttering becomes akin to spell-

casting. As she is lingering in that liminal space between life and death, she is transformed into a hybrid of supernatural child and monstrous adult, an entity typical of Russian folklore. Like Gogol's witch or the *kikimora* from Somov's story, Wanda poses a threat to those around her. It is mentioned that her words frighten the Rubanosovs. Perhaps, they have a reason to be afraid.

Conclusion

In addition to biblical allusions or references to larger folkloric concepts such as the Mother Damp Earth, Fedor Dostoevskii and Fedor Sologub use themes, motifs, and characters from lower Russian mythology to address the theme of childhood and its relation to the adult world. In his first major post-Siberian novel *The Insulted and Humiliated*, Dostoevskii narrates the story of a young girl, Nelli, whose uncanniness arises from her affinity with the Gothic tradition and her association with the Russian unclean force. Her hybridity renders her unable to partake in *sobornost*, the spiritual network of Russian people. Dostoevskii's attempts to reconcile the Gothic influence with the native folkloric tradition results in a self-contradictory character, at odds with the author's overarching theme of Christian charity. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevskii draws on the lore of *rusalki* to make a case against child abuse and to show the results of the antihero's disconnectedness from his native culture. The use of recognizable folkloric

markers allows the author to successfully carve a space for the fantastic within the ostensibly realistic fabric of the novel.

In his short stories “Zhalo smerti,” “Elkich,” and “Cherviak,” Fedor Sologub uses the lore of *leshi* to dramatize the clash of childhood with the world of *poshlost* and consumerism. By identifying children with wood spirits, Sologub connects childhood to nature, which in his terms should be interpreted as the world of the unconscious rather than the Romantic space of innocence and peace.

Due to their familiarity with Russian folklore, Dostoevskii and Sologub borrow tropes directly from the folk tradition. However, they also refer to Nikolai Gogol's “Viy,” a quintessential nineteenth-century horror story that illustrates the successful application of folklore for the purposes of social critique and psychological analysis. Overall, the influence of the lower Russian mythology on the works of the major Russian writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century attests to its generative potential for literary production, which is usually overshadowed by the more prominent and better researched examples of Russian folklore, such as *byliny*, spiritual songs, or folk demonology.

Chapter Four: Changeling Lore in the Works of Emily Brontë and Thomas Hardy

As I have shown in Chapter 3, Fedor Dostoevskii and Fedor Sologub use the tropes of supernatural children from their native folklore to address the specific problems in the Russian Empire of the nineteenth – early twentieth century, ranging from westernization and disconnect from “The Mother Damp Earth” to the uneasy position of the peripheral Others (the Poles) in the imperial context. In this chapter, I return to English folklore in order to conduct a similar analysis of the two English writers who are known for their interest in native folklore – Emily Brontë and Thomas Hardy. In *Wuthering Heights* and *Jude the Obscure*, we find two notable examples of structuring the narrative along the lines of the changeling myth, which dominated the nineteenth-century British discourse on supernatural children. In my analysis, I am going to explore how the two authors use the motifs and structure of the changeling myth to dramatize the main theme of their novels: displacement and self-alienation created by hegemonic patriarchal and colonial culture. As a guard of borders in J.J. Cohen's sense, the changeling reflects the concerns over commingling of separate semiotic spaces, which disrupts the lines of inheritance and rights of ownership. Rather than treating it as a vignette, adding local flavor to the novels set in the quaint Yorkshire or provincial Wessex, I maintain that the changeling myth has a direct bearing on the structure of both novels and, moreover, that the authors skillfully use it to show how the constructed subject position of a changeling, once internalized, affects the cultural identity of the

characters. Because of their accentuated reading of the folkloric concept, Brontë and Hardy complicate the notions of legitimacy and ultimately denaturalize the ontological inferiority of the Other.

The Function of Folklore in *Wuthering Heights*

The folkloric influences in *Wuthering Heights* have attracted much scholarly attention. Surprisingly, Katherine Briggs, one of the leading experts in English folklore and superstition, fails to recognize Brontë's use of supernatural elements. As she writes, "In *Wuthering Heights* we have Catherine's ghost subjectively experienced by Heathcliff. All the atmosphere of folk legend broods over the Brontë books, but it is nowhere overtly expressed" ("FINCEL" 202). Subsequent studies have revealed that *Wuthering Heights* abounds in folkloric material, which is not only overtly expressed but also serves as a way of establishing one's identity and credence. Jacqueline Simpson argues for the centrality of folklore in the works of the Brontë sisters and points out that in *Wuthering Heights* only the most superstitious characters invoke authorial sympathy. In contrast to the snobbish Lockwood, "Catherine and Heathcliff show themselves in the crises of their lives to be passionate and wholehearted believers in ghosts and omens" (51). A similar argument is expressed in Paula Krebs' "Folklore, Fear, and the Feminine: Ghosts and Old Wives' Tales in *Wuthering Heights*". By juxtaposing Lockwood as a southern gentleman and Nelly Dean as the "old wife" from the north, Krebs analyzes how the novel

effectively rejects the internal colonization of the English folklorists. In Krebs' reading, Emily Brontë differs from Victorian ethnographers in her unwillingness to stigmatize superstitious beliefs and their adepts. Contrary to predominant rationalistic thought, she validates superstition as a legitimate epistemological frame. With her insider knowledge, Nelly Dean wrenches hermeneutic power from Lockwood, who without her help would have been lost in the chaos of names, pedigrees, and channels of affection between the characters. Through its ability to uncover the truth, folklore in Krebs' interpretation embodies Freudian uncanny which “reveals middle-class English culture's repressed, unwanted links with the cultures of those who were living artifacts of a British cultural past” (42). Krebs' study of hermeneutic tension between the educated classes and the bearers of folklore is to a great extent informed by Nancy Armstrong's insightful article “Emily's Ghost: The Cultural Politics of Victorian Fiction, Folklore, and Photography” that deals with the novel's reflection of the remapping that “divided the British Isles into a modern literate urban core and... a celtic or ethnic periphery” (245). In her semiotic analysis of regional politics, Armstrong focuses on the commodification of traditional culture through tourism and ethnographic research. Both tendencies are epitomized by Lockwood's attempts to categorize the semantic space of *Wuthering Heights* according to his own terms. But, as Armstrong points out, Lockwood's interpretive shortcomings reveal the inadequacy of taxonomy imposed by the dominant core on its “unenlightened” periphery. In face of this intense semiotic struggle, Brontë's validation of folk beliefs tips the scale in favor of traditional culture and thus challenges the existing cultural

hegemony.

Traditional ballads present another analytical angle for surveying the supernatural elements in *Wuthering Heights*. Sheila Smith sees in the novel the reflection of the ballad's habitual treatment of the supernatural, including the encounters with revenants or demon lovers. A much more extensive analysis of the novel's indebtedness to oral tradition may be found in Susan Stewart's 2004 article "The Ballad in *Wuthering Heights*." Apart from recapitulating ballad tropes and motifs, Stewart mines for the more fundamental similarities between the novel and its folkloric sources. For instance, she successfully connects Brontë's technique of narrating time to the "leaping and lingering" of a folk ballad (177, 186). By studying Brontë's novel as a continuation of the ballad tradition, Stewart relates some of its problematic features, such as the outbreaks of violence and incestuous overtones, to ballad plot as "a claustrophobic space of incest, sexual confrontation, violence, and traumatic encounter" (177).

Considering the meticulous research of folkloric elements in *Wuthering Heights*, the lack of attention paid to the changeling myth stands out as a surprising omission. Stewart mentions in passing that Heathcliff, the mysterious child brought home by Mr. Earnshaw, is "most strongly associated with the changeling tradition" (182). In his 1974 article "*Wuthering Heights*: The Question of Unquiet Slumbers," Peter Grudin looks primarily at Heathcliff's identification as a demon lover but digresses to acknowledge his similarities to another folkloric figure. According to Grudin, changeling lore "could be a source for Heathcliff's usurpation of the Earnshaws' property. That a changeling is

traditionally a fairy or elfin child can account, on one level, for Heathcliff's mysterious, almost magical, enrichment and cultivation during his three-year absence” (390). The supernatural Otherness of Heathcliff prompts Grudin to look for other folkloric associations, namely, the fairy gold, but the primary concern of the changeling myth, the struggle for resources in a culturally contested space, does not grab the researcher's attention.

Paradoxically, in the novel, Heathcliff is never explicitly named a changeling, even though by weaving a net of folkloric referents around him, Brontë conveys his potentially supernatural origins. The word “changeling” twice emerges in the text, but on both occasions it refers to somebody else. Lockwood applies it to Catherine's ghost, and Nelly to Linton, Heathcliff's invalid son. As the research summarized above reveals Brontë's intimate familiarity with English folklore, it is unlikely that she would have used such a loaded term randomly, in disconnect from the semantic field where it belongs. Inasmuch as Heathcliff wins the competition for the title of supreme usurper, he is by far not the only changeling in the novel. The designation of Catherine⁹⁴ as a changeling has not been entirely lost on scholars of the novel. In *Strange and Secret People*, Carol Silver starts her chapter on the Victorian obsession with changelings by quoting Lockwood's exclamation “a changeling – wicked little soul!” To Silver, it is indicative of “a fantastic anxiety peculiar to the period” (59). Like her academic predecessors, Silver is quite

⁹⁴ Following the established naming tradition, I will use the name “Catherine” for the original, the first Catherine and “Cathy” - for her daughter.

willing to rank Heathcliff among Victorian changelings, but she stops short of treating Catherine as an evil fairy. In Silver's terms, the designation of Catherine as a changeling reveals more about Victorian paranoia than about Catherine as a character: "Even Catherine Earnshaw, who is not, as we shall see, a true changeling, came under suspicion" (60).

But what does it take to become a "true" changeling? That depends on what aspect of the myth is drawn into focus: whether it is the loathsome appearance of the changeling, its aberrant behavior, or its function in the plot. Silver's chapter is largely concerned with the external traits that make changelings noticeable in Victorian literature, but another approach is also possible. In this chapter, I want to switch to a different interpretive frame and look at the changeling's function in the plot, which, in no lesser degree than its abnormal appearance, accounts for its perception as a threatening Other. The Proppian reduction of the changeling to its function in the narrative significantly enlarges the field of analysis without undermining the main conflict of the changeling myth: the struggle for legitimacy and resources. On this broader scale of Otherness, not only Paul Dombey, Jenny Wren, or Little Marchioness would be identified as changelings but also Horace Skimpole because he sponges on Mr. Jarndyce by feigning innocence and because Edith Summerson tries to trick him into revealing his adult shrewdness. As applied to *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine may not qualify as a changeling due to her normal physique yet falls into this category on the basis of her age-inappropriate behavior.

To clarify what it means to be a changeling in *Wuthering Heights*, it would be useful to start with definitions. Should we open any encyclopedia of English folklore, a changeling would be defined as a fairy substituted for a human child. Undoubtedly, Emily Brontë was familiar with this lore from the tales of her nanny Tabitha Ackroyd, as well as from publications in the contemporary press. But the word itself produces multiple meanings, some of which were absent from folkloric collections but still circulated in literary works. *The Oxford English Dictionary* lists the definitions of the word “changeling” in the following order:

1. One given to change; a fickle or inconstant person; a waverer, turncoat, renegade. *arch.*
2. A person or thing (surreptitiously) put in exchange for another. *Obs.* (exc. as in A. 3).
3. *spec.* A child secretly substituted for another in infancy; esp. a child (usually stupid or ugly) supposed to have been left by fairies in exchange for one stolen. (In quot. 1600 applied to the child taken, not to that left.)
4. A half-witted person, idiot, imbecile. *arch.*
5. The rhetorical figure *Hypallage*. *Obs.*

Interestingly, the folkloric definition is not listed as the primary meaning of this word. Instead, the list starts with “turncoat” and “renegade.” In the first half of the nineteenth century, the word “changeling” was still used in this sense, as evidenced, among other instances, by in S.T. Coleridge’s play *Zapolya* (1815), in which the alleged traitor is addressed as “infamous changeling” (99), or Thomas Cooper’s “Chartist epic” *The Purgatory of Suicides* (1845), which classes changelings/renegades together with other enemies of freedom: “O! not by changeling, tyrant, tool, or knave / Thy march, blest Liberty! can now be stayed” (307). It would seem that Brontë touches upon these

connotations, as she routinely casts her characters in the role of renegades: Heathcliff as a servant who ruins his benefactor's son, and Catherine as a false lover. When other characters are accused of treachery, these accusations are also interwoven with folkloric references. Catherine curses at Nelly for siding with Edgar and exclaims: "Nelly has played traitor...You witch! So you do seek elf-bolts to hurt us!" (160). In her own time, Nelly accuses Linton Heathcliff of luring his bride-to-be Cathy into a trap. At this moment, she calls him a "pitiful changeling" (335). Prior to Nelly's harangue, Linton has begged for Cathy's forgiveness and confessed that he was a traitor.

Even more important for the plot is the application of the world "changeling" to the stolen child instead of the fairy impostor. As an example of this rather uncommon usage, *The Oxford English Dictionary* cites Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Act II, Scene I, Puck reveals that Titania "as her attendant hath / A lovely boy, stolen from an Indian king; / She never had so sweet a changeling" (154). The confusion that the human changeling creates in the fairy community parallels the catastrophic introduction of a fairy changeling into a human household. But, unlike a fairy changeling, the Indian prince constitutes an object of desire rather than abjection, which leads to a conflict between Titania and Oberon over their new plaything⁹⁵. We are left to ponder whether the imaginary pedigree that Nelly crafts for Heathcliff - "your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen" (71) - harkens back to Shakespeare's Indian

⁹⁵ For the discussion of race and colonialism in the early modern England as related to the Indian changeling in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see Margo Hendricks "'Obscured by Dreams': Race, Empire, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 47.1 (1996): 37-60.

changeling trapped in the Otherworld. For a child born in the colonies, the harsh and brooding English north might seem as *unheimlich* as the Faery.

It is my belief that the various connotations of the word “changeling” have a bearing on the narrative structure of *Wuthering Heights*. In my subsequent analysis, I will attempt to show how Brontë’s holistic approach to changeling myth has influenced the plot of her novel in such a way that Heathcliff and Catherine can interchangeably occupy two subject positions: that of a fairy substitute and a prisoner in the Otherworld. These subject positions, into which the characters are lured or thrust by force, mold – and maul – their personalities. Whether they internalize this subject position or rebel against it, they face the same choice that a colonized person faces in the process of hybridization. In her deconstruction of the binary opposition of changeling/child, Brontë makes a move towards creating a more heterogeneous identity that incorporates the two designations but is not ontologically derived from either one of them. The space of the novel which accommodates these multifaceted identities invites comparison with Homi Bhabha’s concept of the “third” or “in-between” space where new meanings are coined in the process of hybridization. As Bhabha asserts, the liminal, ambivalent space “opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (5).

Heathcliff as a changeling/child

Heathcliff's introduction to the Earnshaw household functions as catastrophic event, starting a series of displacements that dominate the narrative up until his permanent removal from the semiotic space. As Drew Lamonica puts it, "This transgression by the Earnshaw father – overstepping the limits of his natural family by "giving birth" to a child – initiates the novel's pattern of patriarchal assertions of power through the manipulation of family structures" (97). Inasmuch as Earnshaw's actions impact his family in a painfully tangible way, they are infused with fairy-tale motifs that set the tone for the rest of the narrative. Before his fateful journey to Liverpool, Mr. Earnshaw assumes the persona of the merchant from "The Beauty and the Beast," as he questions his children about the gifts they want to receive. Breaking the stereotype of the docile fairy-tale maiden, Catherine has nothing to do with roses and instead asks for a whip. According to Gilbert and Gubar, her request represents "a powerless younger daughter's yearning for power" (264). Offset by his sister's struggle for mastery, Hindley indeed seems to betray "an almost decadent lack of virile purpose" when he asks for a fiddle⁹⁶ (Gilbert and Gubar 264). Hindley's hopes are thwarted when his fiddle arrives piecemeal, but Catherine's wish is realized in accordance with the fairy-tale plot: like her counterpart, she is brought face to face with the Beast.

Each sentence intensifies the uncanny atmosphere, as we learn that Mr. Earnshaw

⁹⁶ On the other hand, Barre Toelken observes that in oral tradition the fiddle image often, though not always, carried an erotic subtext and could metonymically refer to a sexual act (7-11). If we were to rely on Brontë's familiarity with English ballads, including such nuances, then Hindley's request for a fiddle would betray his assertion of masculinity and desire for phallic dominance. Of course, much could be made of the fact that his phallic symbol is shattered by Heathcliff.

returned home at the liminal time, an hour till midnight, and was “nearly killed” by his epic quest, in the course of which he had to carry the bundled-up child. The process of Heathcliff's construction as a changeling begins as soon as he is revealed before the suspicious eyes of the Earnshaws. Even his benefactor admits that the child is “as dark almost as if it came from the devil” (45). More vividly, Nelly's choice of the pronoun “it” denaturalizes the little stranger, calling into question his origins, gender, and even status as a human being. Although the child is no longer an infant or a toddler, it is immediately assumed that the little alien is unbaptized; otherwise he would have looked less savage. Until baptism, that ultimate act of cultural integration, the child must remain a non-entity, an “it.” The similarities with the changeling myth are established through the child's alien appearance, but even more so by the feelings that he evokes in the spectators:

We crowded round, and over Miss Cathy's head I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk: indeed, its face looked older than Catherine's; yet when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand. I was frightened, and Mrs. Earnshaw was ready to fling it out of doors: she did fly up, asking how he could fashion to bring that gipsy brat into the house, when they had their own bairns to feed and fend for? (45-46)

Like a mother in a changeling tale, Mrs. Earnshaw sees in the “gipsy brat” an interloper determined to rob her children of their property. Her reaction to the stranger is that of an intense disgust: she wants to throw him out, so that he does not pollute the familiar domestic space with his foreign presence. Similarly, in a changeling story, the need to exorcise a changeling justifies its violent treatment, which includes not only physical abuse but also exposure and abandonment in liminal places. For a while, Nelly fully

agrees with her mistress' impulse of casting out the changeling. She is also determined to re-enact the folk tale scenario, if not in its original brutal form, then at least in a softer version. Like the rest of the household, Nelly rebels against the master's wish to place the changeling into the same bed, the symbolic cradle, with his own children, so she puts "it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone in the morning" (47). Her expectations fail: the fairies do not come to collect their kinsman. Instead, like a true changeling who creeps rather than walks, the boy makes his way to Earnshaw's door where the master eventually finds him. For her act of disobedience Nelly is punished by temporary expulsion from the house. Read through the lens of changeling myth, her banishment symbolizes the changeling's ability to eject the real children from their rightful place.

Nelly's passive aggressive confrontation with Earnshaw points out to the novel's important digression from changeling lore. In typical stories, the father's role is almost negligible compared to that of the mother or the nurse as mother's proxy. As I have argued in the Chapter 1, the nurse is most likely to be held accountable for the misfortune of substitution. In *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, Walter Scott references several cases when the nurse's ineptitude or alcoholism lead to the supernatural exchange of children. When the changeling myth was encoded from the sphere of folklore into literature, the suspicious attitude towards the nurse as a borderline, almost folkloric figure intensified, now fanned by middle-class anxiety over the corruption that servants may

bring into the nursery⁹⁷. Re-conceptualized as a liminal entity in relation to the dominant cultural core, the nurse becomes conflated with the creatures of the Otherworld that swap the good English babies for their perverse imps. As negative connotations accreted, not only the negligence of the nurse but also her premeditated actions were blamed for the appearance of changelings. Hence, the popularity of “switched at nurse” motifs in the nineteenth-century English literature. This motif shapes the plot of Mary Lamb's short story “The Changeling,” included into the collection *Mrs. Leicester's School* (1808). Hired to tend to the baronet's newborn child, the wet nurse surreptitiously exchanges the little lady for her own daughter Ann. When her foster daughter grows up, the nurse discloses to her this secret in exchange for her silence. But the girl confides with the heroine who, after learning that she is not her parents' daughter, decides to set the matters right. Like Hamlet, she dramatizes the crime in a theatrical performance, which draws the confession from the nurse. The seemingly happy ending of the story – the pardon granted to the nurse and her daughter's permission to get a middle-class education – is overcast by the heroine's feeling of remorse for her mother's wickedness. As she admits in the beginning of the story,

Alas! I am a changeling, substituted by my mother for the heiress of the Lesley family. It was for my sake she did this naughty deed; yet, since the truth has been known, it seems to me as if I had been the only sufferer by it; remembering no time when I was not Harriet Lesley, it seems as if the change had taken from me my birthright. (50)

⁹⁷ Commenting on Maria Edgeworth negative attitude towards the interaction between servants and children, Teresa Michals draws an insightful comparison: “In the early-nineteenth-century progressive writing on education, servants are the equivalent of television or the Internet in the educational writing today – an alien influence in the heart of a middle-class home, teaching idleness and extravagance instead of diligence and intellectual ambition, the original Bad Toy” (35).

Maria Edgeworth, an Anglo-Irish writer and pedagogue, narrates a similar exchange in her novel *Ennui* (1809). The Irish nurse Ellinor, who bears strong resemblance to a witch or banshee, switches the lord's son with her own baby; later her revelation causes the protagonist's "civil death" as the Lord of Glenthorn and his re-birth as Christian O'Donoghoe. The reversal of fortunes and identities proves salutary to the protagonist, as it finally puts him in touch with his authentic self.

The comparison with Lamb's "Changeling" and Edgeworth's *Ennui* foregrounds the gender incongruity in the changeling narrative embedded in *Wuthering Heights*. Although Nelly Dean is not yet a nurse at the time of Heathcliff's appearance, her subsequent status as a nurse to Hareton and Cathy engulfs any other identity: even Lockwood relates to her as a sick child to his nanny when he pesters her with his requests for more stories. Yet Nelly Dean, the likeliest candidate to produce a changeling, is not implicated in Heathcliff's appearance. Instead, the *pater familias* transplants the alien child into his household and, more importantly, succeeds in turning his ward into a real changeling. He christens the boy "Heathcliff" after his dead son (perhaps, a firstborn) and indulges him at the expense of Hindley who grows up loathing the invader. Not only the fact of Heathcliff's presence in the household but also the preference given to him by Mr. Earnshaw breeds the animosity between the boys: "[T]he young master had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges"(48). For whatever reason, Mr. Earnshaw constructs the subject position of a changeling for his protégé, redistributing the resources from his

position of patriarchal superiority and pitting his biological and foster sons against each other.

The involvement of the father in the changeling conflict which he himself initiates is best understood through juxtaposition of folklore with natural history, another repository of tropes that Brontë actively explores. When Lockwood asks Nelly to clarify Heathcliff's pedigree, she responds with: "It's a cuckoo's, sir—I know all about it: except where he was born, and who were his parents, and how he got his money at first. And Hareton has been cast out like an unfledged dunnock!"(43). Without directly calling Heathcliff a changeling, the author conveys this idea by invoking the metaphor commonly used in the ornithological works of the day for describing cuckoo's behavior. Significantly, the authors of natural history books unite in criticizing the hedge-sparrow (dunnock in Yorkshire dialect) for its involvement in the desolation of its own nest. While the cuckoo and its nestling are the obvious culprits in this displacement crisis, the recipient of the changeling is portrayed as their partner in crime because of its perverse tendency to lavish resources on the invader. *Goldsmith Natural History* calls the cuckoo nestling "an ill-looking changeling," but spends more time berating the hedge-sparrow's poor judgment. Its inability to tell friend from foe is represented as a moral flaw, if not a eugenic crime, for the "foolish bird" feeds up "an enemy to her race, and one of the most destructive robbers of her future progeny" (111). In Bewick's *History of British Birds*,

which the Brontës read voraciously⁹⁸, the behavior of the parent hedge-sparrow is also described as odd to say the least. Once the cuckoo's egg has been deposited into the nest, the hedge-sparrow pushes out or damages some of her own eggs but never the foreign object, a behavior that the observer finds remarkable. After the cuckoo hatches, it continues to shove its rivals out of the nest until it “remains in full possession of the nest, and is the sole object of the future care of her foster parent” (106). Writing in the pre-Malthusian and pre-Darwinian context, Bewick refers to this competition as “seemingly unnatural” but later admits that a cuckoo nestling is naturally equipped for disposing of the newly hatched birds (106 - 107). Thus, although Nelly accuses Heathcliff of robbing Hareton of his estate, which is conflated with the hedge-sparrow's nest, the roots of this particular displacement lie in Mr. Earnshaw's initiation of the changeling conflict that slowly corrupts the semiotic space of the novel. In a sense, Mr. Earnshaw performs the function of both the cuckoo and the hedge-sparrow, as he brings the future usurper into his own household and alienates his elder son by making the foster child the center of his attention. The apparent randomness of his actions strikes at the heart of British legal system, violating and, more importantly, de-essentializing the laws of primogeniture. It also sets the pattern for the rest of the novel, where both Hindley and Heathcliff try their hand at reshuffling families by fiat, in complete disregard of legal codes or moral laws.

⁹⁸ Mr. Brontë owned the 1816 edition of Bewick's two-volume *History of British Birds*, from which his children copied numerous illustrations. As Christine Alexander suggests, Bewick's book with “its ability to elicit an emotional and imaginative response” had a profound effect not only on the drawing technique of the Brontës, but also on their literary works (13). For example, Bewick's engravings stimulate the imagination of the young Jane Eyre and instill in her the gothic fantasies of solitary churchyards, shipwrecks, and “marine phantoms” (3).

Heathcliff's subject position of a changeling is directly related to other possible identities that set him apart from the residents of Wuthering Heights and the Lintons' estate Thrushcross Grange. Although it is notoriously difficult to pin-point Heathcliff's racial identity, in a variety of scholarly works he has been identified as a gypsy, a slave brought to Liverpool on a merchant ship, or a disenfranchised Irishman⁹⁹. As Abby Bardi suggests, "It is perhaps more accurate to refer to Heathcliff's ethnicity not as ambiguous, but as multiple: he is marked by a variety of identities, all of which cohere in his otherness" (177). In J.J. Cohen's terms, Heathcliff's hybrid identity corresponds to the notion of the monster as a harbinger of category crisis that "resists any classification built

⁹⁹ Strong interpretive cases have been made for each of these identities. On the basis of the textual evidence, it is easy to conceptualized Heathcliff as a gypsy, as the novel abounds in such references. Upon his first encounter with his landlord, Lockwood calls him "dark-skinned gipsy in aspect" (6). Similarly, the residents of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange unanimously interpret his dark complexion as a certain sign of gypsy identity: Mrs. Earnshaw is disgusted by the "gipsy brat"; Hindley, when ceding him the colt, throws at him the word "Gipsy" like a curse; by the same token, Joseph calls him "flaysome divil of a gipsy"; Mrs. Linton is concerned that Catherine is "scouring the country with a gipsy"; Edgar Linton scornfully refers to him "the gipsy – the ploughboy"; and to Isabella he resembles the son of the fortune-teller who stole her pet pheasant (46, 49, 108, 62, 117, 62). Heathcliff's gypsy identity in the context of the nineteenth-century stereotypes of the Romani is discussed in great detail in Abby Bardi's article "Gypsies' and Property in British Literature." While acknowledging the ambiguity of Heathcliff's racial characterization, Susan Meyer identifies him as a victim of slave trade and connects the racial politics in the novel with the infamous Triangular trade. In Meyer's argument, it is no coincidental that Earnshaw finds Heathcliff in Liverpool, England's largest slave-trading port with active slave auctions. Heathcliff's darker skin (Mr. Linton remarks that he may be a "little Lascar, or and American or Spanish castaway"), as well as Mr. Earnshaw's inquiry about his owner, point out to his identity as an ex-slave who, according to Meyer, enacts the worst nightmare of any imperial power – the reversed imperialism (112). As for Heathcliff's cruelty in achieving his goal, Meyer admits that his "actions hideously mimic the ugly brutality of British imperialism" (116). To Terry Eagleton, Heathcliff's dark complexion does not seem to be a token of colonial identity, as "[i]t is hard to know how black he is, or rather how much of the blackness is pigmentation and how much of it is grime and bile" (3). Eagleton, like Winifred Gerin before him, connects Heathcliff to the Irish immigrants who flocked into England as a result of the potato famine in the late 1840's. During his trip to Liverpool in August 1845, Branwell Brontë in all likelihood saw the starving Irish and related his vision to his sister who was about to start writing *Wuthering Heights* (Eagleton 3; Gerin 226). Elsie Michie reconciles the representation of Heathcliff as a black man and as Irish. According to her, the Victorians tended to link the Irish, described in simian terms, "to the same kind of racial stereotypes that were being used to describe blacks" (126).

on hierarchy or a merely binary opposition, demanding instead a “system” allowing polyphony, mixed response (difference in sameness, repulsion in attraction), and resistance to integration” (*MC* 7). But despite the obvious impossibility of stratifying Heathcliff's intermingled identities, it is worth noting that his three possible ethnicities have pronounced folkloric connotations that connect them to the changeling myth, as at least in its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century interpretation. The Irish, for example, had a two-fold association with fairy lore. On one hand, the belief in folk superstition was generally perceived as a sign of Hibernian backwardness, implying that the Irish could not manage their own affairs, like children or doting elders, in other words, the two age extremes that would find fairy tales credible and attractive. As Josephine McDonagh points out in *Child Murder and British Culture*, even later in the nineteenth century, folkloric beliefs were used in arguments for supervising the Irish; otherwise, these “superstitious people” would start killing off their own babes, mistaking them for fairy changelings (189). On the other hand, the Irish were singled out as the living incarnation of the changeling myth: “Irish immigrants were also seen as a population of changelings, the wizened and ugly babies left by the fairies in the place of healthy English children” (McDonagh 188).

Likewise, the stereotype of the Romani as fortune-tellers and thieves was deeply entrenched in the culture of Victorian England. Alongside horse-stealing, their alleged crimes included theft of children. As Sally Mitchell points out, their sinister reputation was reflected in numerous literary works, from Gothic novels to penny dreadfuls, and

even though later in the century the gypsy figure was increasingly romanticized, the lore of child theft remained unchanged (347). While the stories of child snatching without any substitution were particularly common, the possibility that the kidnappers could leave behind a changeling also haunted impressionable minds. For example, in George Eliot's "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" (1857), the exoticism of Caterina Sarti, a girl of Italian heritage brought up in an English manor, is highlighted by her description as "dark and tiny, like a gypsy changeling" (106). In addition to being stereotyped as generic witches and fortunetellers, gypsies in British culture were often conflated with fairies per se. In traditional ballads that deal with seduction, gypsies and fairies can interchangeably perform the function of seducers who lure women away from hearth and home. In her search for the origins of "The Gypsy Laddie," Judith Ann Knoblock comes to conclusion that "the immediate ancestor" of this ballad is none other than "King Orfeo," which narrates the fairy abduction of King Orfeo's wife (37). Even without evaluating the thrust of Knoblocks argument, namely, that "The Gypsy Laddie" is a seventeenth-century parody of "King Orfeo", it is possible to apply her insights to the analysis of folklore in *Wuthering Heights*. Heathcliff's gypsy identity is synchronized with his subject position of supernatural Other to produce the image of dangerous racialized sexuality that poses a threat to the dominant heteronormativity. As Susan Stewart notes, "Heathcliff is at once both demon lover and gypsy laddie; in his relation with Catherine we see the fierceness of the ballad concept of demonic attachment; in his relation with Isabella we see him in the role of rogue abductor" (182).

The racial dimension of the changeling myth was amplified by Victorian adepts of the “kidnap theory” who saw in changeling tales the reflection of historical clashes between “primitive” inhabitants of the British Isles and Celtic or Saxon settlers. It was inferred that the former stole the healthy infants of the latter to improve their racial stock and left their sickly progeny in place of the abducted children (Silver 73). But the racialization of changeling lore is not a unique nineteenth-century phenomenon. Before the hiatus of Victorian ethnography, racial and supernatural Otherness went hand in hand, as evidenced, for example, by Henry Fuseli's painting “The Changeling” (1780). On the left side of the canvas, a fairy with bulging eyes and flowing hair is absconding through the window with a baby in her arms. A bent old woman, usually identified as a nurse, sleeps in the right corner. Her immobile, strangely relaxed frame counterpoises the mad flurry of the fairy whose wing-like cape glistens in the moonlight. The pairing of the fairy and the nurse, albeit hinged upon contrast, reflects the folkloric anxiety over the role of nurses in supernatural substitution. Clearly, the misfortune struck because of the nurse's negligence. In the center of the painting, a female figure in blue dress and white headdress recoils from the cradle, as she lifts its cover only to see a changeling where a child should be. Unmistakably a racial caricature, the changeling is depicted with dark skin color, black eyes, knob of a nose, and thick lips stretched in a stupid grin. Despite the title, the changeling is not the centerpiece of the painting. The cradle with its monstrous occupant is pushed slightly to the right, while the exact center of the drawing is marked by the brightest round spot – the bare breast of the woman (the mother? the wet

nurse?) on which the changeling's stare is fixed. The erotic undercurrent of this spectacle, with the swaddled fairy resembling a phallus, connects “The Changeling” to Fuseli's masterpiece “The Nightmare” which features a heavily racialized imp perched on the breast of the slumbering maiden. Such similitude is not coincidental, as Fuseli was working on both paintings at the same time (Frayling 11). But what is particularly striking about Fuseli's racialized depiction of the changeling is his own views on child-related folklore. In his commentary on Rousseau's *Emile* (published in 1767), the artist decried the changeling superstitions as vestiges of popery, for “whatever a boy or girl proved haggard, 'twas a changeling, an abortion, substituted by an incubus; and sometimes a tender religious mother would carry her offspring to the next bridge, to know whether it was a goblin she was going to suckle, or her own child” (qtd in Frayling 17). In spite of his critique of changeling lore as a type of sanctioned infanticide, twice as pernicious because of its association with the Catholic past, Fuseli is willing to capitalize on it, provided it stands as a metaphor of sexual threat posed by racial Others. The same concerns are dramatized in *Wuthering Heights*, when Hindley and Edgar Linton take efforts to keep Heathcliff out of their respective houses and separate him from Catherine. As a fairy/racial changeling, Heathcliff is under constant suspicion as a usurper of cradles and abductor of women, the subject position that he internalizes and takes to extreme.

Mr. Earnshaw's death marks the dramatic reversal of Heathcliff's fortunes in *Wuthering Heights*. When Hindley gains control over the household, he compensates for his previous degradation by taking the house entirely for himself and his wife. Even

Nelly and old Joseph are ordered to quarter themselves in the back-kitchen and stay away from the master's personal parlour. As for the changeling, he must be denounced as an impostor and expelled from the domestic circle: "He drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead; compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm" (57). Sending Heathcliff outdoors means more than demoting him to the position of a field hand. In the universe governed by the dichotomy of home/anti-home, to be in signifies salvation, and to be out - damnation. Sometimes being out is tantamount to death, as in the case of Lockwood's prospect of freezing in the moors. "I don't care - I will get in!" - insists Lockwood, making his way into the inhospitable manor, and the echo of his words resounds in the ghost's pathetic cries: "Let me in - let me in!" (32) Using banishment as an instrument of social control, Hindley constantly sends Heathcliff and Catherine away "from the sitting-room, for making a noise, or a light offence of the kind" (58). Later, when Catherine reaches marriageable age, he resorts to banishment to separate Heathcliff from his former playmate. In the Linton household, banishment serves as a racially determined sorting mechanism, whereby Miss Earnshaw, dirty and ragged as she may look, is treated to food and warmth, while the "little Lascar" is turned out of the house. Although Lotman's binary model of home/anti-home is not fixed in Brontë's novel but launched contextually, in the situation of Heathcliff's expulsion both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange function as home. Their antithesis are the moors - the freezing, snow-covered and rain-soaked, dismal Otherworld. With these connotations in

mind, Hindley and the Lintons send Heathcliff to that liminal location. As a racial and supernatural Other, he is entitled only to the place of liminality.

Because of the abuse he experiences in the hands of Hindley, Heathcliff grows more and more like the changeling, a repugnant creature known for its antisocial behavior. Nelly blames the hard work and lack of education for the new traits that the teenaged Heathcliff develops – his “inward and outward repulsiveness,” “slouching gait,” “ignoble look,” and “almost idiotic excess of unsociable moroseness” (84 – 85).

Paradoxically, because Heathcliff is subjected to abuse and scorn as a changeling, his suffering invokes so much sympathy that it switches the axiological valence of his supernatural projection from negative to positive. As the novel progresses, he approaches the subject position of a stolen child held prisoner in the hostile, incomprehensible world of fairies. Heathcliff's identification as a stolen child culminates at the moment when he finally recognizes his Otherness which in the past has been ameliorated by his egalitarian relationship with Catherine. The sudden awareness of himself as a person of color leads him to perceive his surroundings as an anti-home, an environment where he will never be accepted for who he is. His self-alienation grows, as he compares himself with the young squire Edgar Linton: “I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!.. I must wish for Edgar Linton's great blue eyes and even forehead... I do—and that won't help me to them” (70 – 71).

Overtaken by compassion, Nelly creates for him a comforting version of family romance, in which his origins are noble rather than demonic:

You're fit for a prince in disguise. Who knows but your father was Emperor of China, and your mother an Indian queen, each of them able to buy up, with one week's income, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange together? And you were kidnapped by wicked sailors and brought to England. Were I in your place, I would frame high notions of my birth; and the thoughts of what I was should give me courage and dignity to support the oppressions of a little farmer! (71)

In Elsie Michie's interpretation, Nelly's treats his blackness as a fetish, which is not qualitatively different from the phobia that it produces in Hindley and Edgar. Moreover, "this family romance takes an imperialist or racist form; Nelly can fantasize that Heathcliff has elevated origins only after she has conceived of him as of a different race, only after she has thought of him as a "regular black"" (134). I concur with Michie in seeing Nelly's fantasy as affirming, not challenging the imperialistic agenda. Even when Nelly conceptualize Heathcliff as a sympathetic Other, she inevitably exoticizes him and stresses his cultural exteriority. No matter how hard she looks, her gaze will never penetrate past his skin color. Nevertheless, I would argue that Nelly's view of Heathcliff as a stolen child has its merit for decolonization, as it points out to the constructedness of the subject positions that can be produced within the colonial discourse. Hindley's view of Heathcliff as a dangerous fairy is not privileged over Nelly's perception of him as a stolen child. Through Heathcliff's juxtaposition with the Indian prince from *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, Brontë finds a yet another possibility for interpreting changeling myth as a narrative of colonial displacement.

For a short while, Heathcliff seems to be empowered by this newfangled genealogy, as he "gradually lost his frown and began to look quite pleasant" (71).

Unfortunately, his pleasure is short-lived. A few paragraphs down, Hindley hints at his stereotypical gypsy proclivities by implying that he will be “stealing the fruit, if left alone with them a minute,” while Edgar calls his hair “a colt's mane” (72). The power to categorize and to name, with which the two landowners are endowed, erases Nelly's attempts to invent a different, more positive identity for Heathcliff. But, even as a glimpse, the possibility of seeing Heathcliff as someone other than changeling still exists. As I will argue below, the same hybrid identification of changeling/child is developed to the fullest in the character of Catherine Earnshaw.

Catherine as a changeling/child

Catherine first appears before the reader as a text. The variations of the same name scribbled on the window ledge conjure up her ghost: “a glare of white letters started from the dark as vivid as spectres – the air swarmed with Catherines” (25). Before her ghost appears, Catherine has taken hold of Lockwood's imagination by means of her name, which marks the old-fashioned closet bed as her own. Without Lockwood's realization, the conflict over the culturally marked space has already started, except that he, a self-aggrandizing intruder, is unwilling to recognize the limits of his entitlement. Hiding in the closet with the window set in, he flips through the New Testament, also inscribed with Catherine's name and, owing to the dearth of paper, blasphemously used as her diary. After getting a taste of her uncanny world, so alien to the educated southerner,

Lockwood experiences two unquiet dreams, in both of which his autonomy comes under threat¹⁰⁰. In his first dream, he is assailed by the parishioners of Reverend Jabez Branderham, whose name he spotted on one of the book-covers; in his second, he assumes the role of an assailant as he comes face to face with what seems like a child's ghost hovering on the other side of the window. As he pushes his hand through the window pane to stop “the teasing sound” of a fir branch,

my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand! The intense horror of nightmare came over me: I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed, ‘Let me in—let me in!’ ‘Who are you?’ I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself. ‘Catherine Linton,’ it replied, shiveringly (why did I think of Linton? I had read Earnshaw twenty times for Linton)—‘I’m come home: I’d lost my way on the moor!’ As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child’s face looking through the window. (32)

What happens next is considered by many to be the cruelest scene in the book: “I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes” (32). The extraordinary cruelty of Lockwood's attempt to sever the child's hand has been analyzed by generations of literary scholars. Dorothy Ghent sees in Lockwood's dream the manifestation of the powers of darkness that cannot be shut out because they exist not only beyond the windowpane, but in his own psyche (190). With the same focus on Lockwood's self-enclosure, Nancy Armstrong adds that

¹⁰⁰ The disconnect from his native culture, revealed through the medium of a dream, invites the comparison of Lockwood's experience with Svidrigailov's dreams in *Crime and Punishment*, which I discuss in the previous chapter. In both instances, the appearance of the supernatural female child rouses in the men a violent impulse to protect the borders of their cultural identity against the outbreak of the uncanny and primitive: Svidrigailov raises his hand to strike the *rusalka*, and Lockwood nearly saws off the little ghost's hand.

“Lockwood's dream represents two kinds of violence, the violence of enclosing consciousness and confining it to the body, on the one hand, and the violence of violating this kind of self-enclosure on the other” (255). By vehemently protecting his personal borders, Lockwood severs “the bond of common humanity,” so his violence becomes more visceral than the subtle violence of the phantom child who “allows the dead to permeate the place, the book, and the name (255). I agree with Armstrong's assessment of Lockwood's nightmare as ultimately uncovering “the peripheral territory within the educated mind” (256), as well as with Krebs' connection of the novel's folkloric elements, including this one, with Freud's uncanny, for in them, “as in the uncanny, a cultural past resurfaces in psyches in which the primitive had been deeply buried” (42). Upset by the invasion of folklore into the internal space of his dream, Lockwood vents his frustration by obsessively referring to folkloric creatures: ghosts, goblins, fiends, changelings as if in attempt to externalize them through speech, to talk them out of himself. As an educated gentleman, he is not supposed to believe in “the ghoulies, and ghosties, and long-leggedy beasties,” but for a while he does, and the unexpected encounter with Otherness strikes at the foundation of his identity. At least temporarily, Lockwood forfeits what Edward Said aptly calls the “flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationship with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand” (*Orientalism* 7). Through his encounter with the ghost, Lockwood is traumatized into feeling and thinking like a “primitive.”

Much can be made of the fact that Catherine's ghost appears to Lockwood in the

guise of a child. As we learn later in the novel, Catherine's biological age at the time of her death puts her well beyond the boundaries of childhood, so Lockwood's assumption that she may be “a changeling – wicked little soul” (34) rings true. The adult's masquerade as a child is indeed a cornerstone of changeling myth. Catherine's behavior during the window scene conforms to the folkloric trope of a fairy invader determined to get into the domestic space by simulating helplessness¹⁰¹. This is certainly the interpretive spin that Lockwood puts on her actions, when he first calls her “creature” (32) and then “the little fiend” (34). Even though Catherine's gender is easily determinable, and she in fact gives him her name, Lockwood persists in referring to her as “it,”¹⁰² the same pronoun that emphasized Heathcliff's supernatural Otherness when he was introduced to the Earnshaws. Superstitious beliefs emerge from the onlooker's psyche not as single spies but in conjunction with other beliefs, as an intricate network of motifs, plots, and prescribed actions. It is not enough for Lockwood to identify the creature as a changeling; he completes the folk tale plot by resorting to any means possible, trickery as well as violence, to repel the liminal being from the locus of domesticity. In his version of changeling myth, Lockwood sees himself in the role of the real child who cannot co-exist in the same place with the invader. The irony of this

¹⁰¹ However, Catherine's apparition at the window sustains a different interpretation – that of a human changeling trapped in the Otherworld. Susan Stewart cites an account from Grant Stewart's 1823 book *The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland*, in which a girl was captured by the fairies, but after her parents cast out the fairy substitute, she returned to them at night and appeared outside of the window (182).

¹⁰² Krebs reads Lockwood's struggle with the ghostly Catherine as a sexual assault because he quite literally makes her bleed on his bedclothes. His use of the pronoun “it” instead of “she” allows him to conceal the erotic nature of his attack (182).

assumption is glaring because he is surrounded with Catherine's names that mark the contested place as hers. Notified of the incident, Heathcliff turns the trespasser out of the room (“But away with you!”) and passionately summons Catherine back, but to no avail. Significantly, Catherine’s status as a changeling strengthens her mimetic connection to Heathcliff, who was identified as a supernatural Other by the Earnshaws. It is even possible to say that Lockwood's judgment of Catherine prefigures her memorable assertion “I am Heathcliff.”

Scared out of his (rational) wits, Lockwood constructs a changeling identity for the stranger on the spot, but his conjecture is not necessarily incorrect, as for the first time his hermeneutic code is in synch with that of Nelly Dean. Rather than an offhanded remark, the word “changeling” possesses a Bakhtinian double-voiced quality because it unites two distinct voices, Lockwood's and Nelly's, in an internal dialog. As Morson and Emerson clarify about Bakhtin's double-voiced discourse, “agreement, no less than disagreement, is a dialogic relation” (151). For all his hermeneutic shortcomings, Lockwood finally makes a correct judgment, which is soon to be affirmed by Nelly's accounts of Catherine's age-inappropriate behavior. Catherine's changeling-like traits tap into the discourse on age inversion in Victorian culture, which Claudia Nelson explores in great depth in *Precocious Children and Childish Adults*. Analyzing the dichotomy childlike-childish, which influenced the axiological dimension of this discourse, Nelson comes to conclusion that the former category was associated with “altruism and purity,” while the latter with “egotism and criminality, particularly sexual criminality” (8).

Nelson's analysis, insightful as it is, at times can be so gender-segregated that it lapses into an almost reductionist classification. Thus, she applies the “childlike-childish” model specifically to men who, should they fall into the second category, become “monsters of selfishness and consequently damage the lives of those closest to them” (53). As to the “arrested child-woman,” Nelson emphasizes her status predominantly as an art object and argues that female stasis was much more naturalized in Victorian literature, “rendering the arrested child-woman potentially less disturbing than her male counterpart” (9). The cultural acceptance of a childish woman rested on her position as an object of male gaze, “the magnet for the gaze” as Nelson puts it (78).

Wuthering Heights challenges this paradigm, as not only the men (Lockwood, Heathcliff, or Edgar Linton) turn Catherine into their spectacle; just as frequently she becomes the object of the probing, occasionally sympathetic but mostly critical gaze of the female servant Nelly Dean. Despite her underprivileged position, Nelly wields the power to interpret and ascribe meaning to Catherine's actions, to facilitate her meetings with Heathcliff or to prevent them. Unlike the male observers, she is unwilling to dismiss Catherine's age inversion as a typical feminine flaw. Even as a child, Catherine struck the young maid as unnatural due to her excessive naughtiness: “She had ways with her such as I never saw a child take up before” (52). In Nelly's view, Catherine never fully matures but exhibits more signs of boundless childish selfishness. Occasionally Nelly admits to misreading Catherine's behavior. When the girl sits down to supper right after Heathcliff's flogging, Nelly calls her “an unfeeling child” (74), but corrects herself when she notices

how Catherine struggles to suppress tears. But more often than not, Nelly narrates Catherine's antics as immature to the point of embarrassment. "She beat Hareton, or any child, at a good passionate fit of crying," observes Nelly on one such occasion (105). Explaining why Catherine "dropped down on her knees by a chair, and set to weeping in serious earnest," Nelly tells the bewildered Edgar: "Miss is dreadfully wayward, sir... As bad as any marred child: you'd better be riding home, or else she will be sick, only to grieve us" (90). From her point of view, Catherine's tears and sobs form a part of strategy "to grieve" the rest of the household. Instead of invoking sympathy, the wailing is perceived as source of annoyance, much like the changeling's incessant vocalization in the folk tale. The inappropriateness of Catherine's behavior is foregrounded by her violence against the real child, her nephew Hareton, whom she once shook "till the poor child waxed livid" (89).

Nowhere else does her childishness become more prominent than in the episode when Catherine destroys her pillow:

A minute previously she was violent; now, supported on one arm, and not noticing my refusal to obey her, she seemed to find childish diversion in pulling the feathers from the rents she had just made, and ranging them on the sheet according to their different species: her mind had strayed to other associations...

"Give over with that baby-work!" I interrupted, dragging the pillow away, and turning the holes towards the mattress, for she was removing its contents by handfuls. "Lie down and shut your eyes: you're wandering. There's a mess! The down is flying about like snow." (152)

This scene is critically important on many levels, not the least because it reveals the structural complexity of the novel, as it foreshadows the event that is yet to occur

chronologically but has already taken place in the narrative sequence. The repetition of the word “wandering,” the flying down as a metaphor of snow-storm, and reflection of a ghostly face, which leads Catherine to conclude that the room is haunted, - all these textual markers prefigure the haunting in Chapter 3. Seeing the mess Catherine has made, Nelly is put off by her “childish diversion.” Troublesome and useless, Catherine's “baby-work”¹⁰³ is contrasted with the servant’s adult task of cleaning up the room. Increasingly vexed by her lady's immaturity, Nelly later tells Edgar: “Far better that she should be dead, than lingering a burden and a misery-maker to all about her” (202). Thus, Catherine's identification as a changeling, an unproductive, troublesome, and wasteful addition to the household, is just as totalizing as Heathcliff's scapegoating. Both Lockwood and Nelly seek in folklore the hermeneutic tools necessary for dealing with the traumatic experience, in one way or the other centered on Catherine. The cultural outsider draws attention to her attempted invasion from the liminal to the domestic space, and Nelly, local through and through, views Catherine as an adult trying the tricks of a child. Even though Nelly's words do not come close to the cruelty of Lockwood's exorcism, they are motivated by the same impulse to get rid of the troublemaker.

The episode with the pillow functions as a nexus of two interpretive frames related to the changeling myth. Resisting the subject position created for her by Nelly,

¹⁰³ Stevie Davies reads Catherine's “baby-work” as a subversive behavior, characterized by “an urge toward a fundamental and radical order, which underlies the common “civilized” order and deeply criticizes it” (120). By sorting out the feathers mixed in the pillow, Catherine invents a hybrid classification system, which is different from any established taxonomy because all its categories are related either to folklore or to her own destiny (122 – 123).

Catherine narrates her experience as that of the stolen child: “I see in you, Nelly,” she continued dreamily, ‘an aged woman: you have grey hair and bent shoulders. This bed is the fairy cave under Penistone Crag, and you are gathering elf-bolts¹⁰⁴ to hurt our heifers; pretending, while I am near, that they are only locks of wool” (153). Catherine’s self-assessment as a victim of fairy abduction is crucial for understanding Brontë’s nuanced application of English folklore for the critique of patriarchal power that severely curtails female freedom¹⁰⁵. From the cursory look, Catherine’s fantasies about Thrushcross Grange as a supernatural abode and Nelly as a fairy accomplice appear to be completely unfounded. Compared to the rowdy inmates of *Wuthering Heights*, the Lintons seem like paragons of decorum and domestic bliss. However, a closer analysis reveals their similarity to fairies as conceptualized in English folklore.

When the young Heathcliff and Catherine trespass on Mr. Linton’s land and peep through the window, they see a resplendent, fairy-tale world of shimmering gold and silver¹⁰⁶. Analyzing the trope of windows in *Wuthering Heights*, Dorothy Ghent states

¹⁰⁴ Shooting people or animals with their darts is one of the favorite activities of English and Scottish fairies. According to Kirk, the elves fed off the vital substance of the cattle that they had shot (Spence 172). For an extensive discussion of fairy archery, see *Lewis Spence’s The Fairy Tradition in Britain* (London: Rider, 1948): 172 – 175.

¹⁰⁵ Beth Torgerson offers an insightful interpretation of gender dynamics in *Wuthering Heights* as seen through folkloric lens. According to her argument, Brontë uncovers how the patriarchal system of dispossession creates two disparate subject positions, whereby men are transformed into vampires, and women – into ghosts after their energy and resources have been completely drained.

¹⁰⁶ The fairy residence as a trap for the spectator’s gaze is featured in English folklore, but one of its most vivid portrayals is captured in the Middle English narrative poem “Sir Orfeo.” It was widely circulated in Brontë’s time in its verse form and prose retelling. This poem is a likely source for the ballad “King Orfeo,” in turn related to “The Gypsy Laddie,” which was discussed above. Drawing on the mythological material, “Sir Orfeo” retells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, here represented by Orfeo, the king of Tracyens, and his wife Meroudys. After his wife was abducted by the fairy king, who replaces Pluto of the original myth, Orfeo goes on a quest to rescue his beloved. After ten years of privations, he finds Meroudys guarded by her captors and follows them through the cleft in the rock to the fairy castle: “Amidde the lond a castel he

that “[t]he windowpane is the medium, treacherously transparent, separating the “inside” from the “outside,” the “human” from the alien and terrible “other”” (190 – 191). But who is the alien in this scene? To Heathcliff, the little pampered Lintons embody the contemptible Otherness. Their petty quarrel over a dog serves as a reality check, proving that even this smug world is not free from strife. The Linton's magnificent manor turns out to be a witch's gingerbread house. Here Heathcliff for the first time feels the crushing weight of racial prejudice, as in Mr. Linton's view his physiognomy alone warrants a death sentence. Heathcliff recoils, but Catherine is seduced by the security, the hospitality, the *normalcy* of Thrushcross Grange. When she stares at the Otherworld, it gazes back at her. Further scrutiny discovers a little lady posing as a waif, a member of landowning class whose privileged identity cannot be obscured by any amount of dirt and grime. Tattercoats, Donkeyskin, Cap-o'-Rushes – sooner or later the rugs reveal the princess. Recognized as “one of us,” Catherine is invited into the domestic space from which her companion will necessarily be banished. Catherine's reception in Thrushcross Grange merits a closer analysis:

Then the woman-servant brought a basin of warm water, and washed her feet; and Mr. Linton mixed a tumbler of negus, and Isabella emptied a plateful of cakes into her lap, and Edgar stood gaping at a distance. Afterwards, they dried and combed her beautiful hair, and gave her a pair

sighe, / Riche and real, and wonder heighe; / Al the utmast wal / Was clere and schine as cristal” (Laing 73). The crystal walls of the castle have the same panoptical quality as the window in the Lintons' manor, as they transfix the gaze with the display of riches they contain: “Within ther wer wide wones, / Al of precious stones; / The werst piler on to biholde / Was al of burnist gold” (Laing 74). But this opulence is all make-believe: when Sir Orfeo walks inside, he sees the mangled bodies of human captives imprisoned by the fairies. Much to his credit, he succeeds where his prototype failed and rescue his wife from the fairy king. But in Brontë's interpretation, Catherine's abduction is permanent and cannot be reversed even by such a champion as Heathcliff.

of enormous slippers, and wheeled her to the fire. (63)

Quite astutely, Dorothy Ghent assigns to these acts of hospitality a folkloric significance, which leads her to identify Catherine as a changeling/stolen child: “The motifs are limpid as those of fairy tale, where the changeling in the otherworld is held there mysteriously by bathing and by strange new food he is given” (191). The reference to “a plateful of cakes” is particularly telling, as it harkens back to the prohibition against eating fairy food. According to English folklore, by offering their human guests food and drink, fairies entrap them in the Otherworld: once the person has tasted fairy food, there is no way back (Spence 187; Hartland 339).

When Catherine returns home after her five-week stay with the Lintons, her body and mind bear the signs of the dominant culture into which she has been indoctrinated. “I should scarcely have known you: you look like a lady now,” exclaims Hindley, as he beholds his much altered sister. Everything is new about Catherine: her gown, her hairdo, her manners and even her skin color “wonderfully whitened with doing nothing and staying indoors” (66). Changed beyond recognition, she appears to be under the effect of fairy glamour, which Katherine Briggs defines as “a mesmerism or enchantment cast over the senses, so that things were perceived or not perceived as the enchanter wished” (*AEOF* 191). It is the same kind of enchantment that causes the fairy midwife to admire the interior of her patient's home until she smears her eye with the magic ointment. Then she starts seeing things as they really are – the damp cave, heap of leaves for a bed, ugly

oafs instead of bonny children¹⁰⁷. The glamour affects not only Catherine's complexion, which now conforms to the feminine ideal, but the wholeness of her psyche. Caught in the process of hybridization, Catherine has to negotiate between her now discordant identities and re-evaluate her relationships with others based on the new system of white normativity. As a result, she is reluctant to shake hands with her former friend: "She gazed concernedly at the dusky fingers she held in her own, and also at her dress; which she feared had gained no embellishment from its contact with his" (67). Although Heathcliff retorts that he will be as dirty as he pleases, his fingers are not properly described as dirty. They are dusky, "somewhat black or dark in colour; dark-coloured; darkish," according to *The Oxford English Dictionary*. It is not the actual dirt, but the racially marked skin color that is perceived as contagious at the moment of Catherine's hesitation.

The multiple connotations of glamour that permeate the novel fortify the central theme of duplication and duality. Quoting Walter Scott, James Soderholm explains that the ability to cast spells and create illusions was commonly associated with the gypsies (1-2). Directly related to *Wuthering Heights* is the mention of the love charm in the ballad "The Gypsy Laddie" where the gypsies "coost the glammer o'er" the high-born lady who

¹⁰⁷ That the Brontës were familiar with the folkloric concept of glamour is evident from the direct reference to it in *Jane Eyre*. Upon hearing that Jane finds his house to be "a splendid mansion," Rochester contradicts her by saying: "The glamour of inexperience is over your eyes... and you see it through a charmed medium: you cannot discern that the gilding is slime and the silk draperies cobwebs; that the marble is sordid slate, and the polished woods mere refuse chips and scaly bark" (83). The folkloric tropes he uses are borrowed straight from the tales of fairy midwives. Although Emily Brontë does not ever use the word "glamour" in her novel, she overtly describes its effect when Catherine accuses Nelly of lying that her elf-bolts are locks of wool.

then absconds with them, leaving behind her husband and all her wealth. Brontë uses this motif from “The Gypsy Laddie” to narrate Isabella's elopement with Heathcliff: because of its intensity, Isabella's passion for the man whom she once ostracized seems to be a result of his “glamer.” Heathcliff, however, is not the only man accused of dabbling in love magic. Similar characterization applies to Edgar who, from Catherine's point of view, has entrapped her in his fairy cave under the watchful eye of his female accomplice. The word “glamour” sustains this interpretation, as it refers not only to the “primitive” magic of gypsies and fairies but also to the ability of the educated men to manipulate language. As Campbell clarifies its etymology,

It was borrowed from Old French *grammaire*, itself from Latin *grammatica*, ultimately derived from Greek *gramma* 'letter, written mark'... In the Middle Ages, it came to mean chiefly the study of or knowledge of Latin and hence came also to be synonymous with learning in general, the knowledge peculiar to the learned classes. (4)

The glamour of the written word is strongly associated with Edgar Linton, whose tactics of passive resistance are set in contrast with Heathcliff's frontal assault. Accustomed to the free expression of feelings, Catherine is troubled by Edgar's penchant for withdrawal. “What in the name of all that feels has he to do with *books*, when I am dying?” she exclaims when Edgar retreats to the library after his confrontation with Heathcliff (150). Although Catherine's words expose her attention-seeking, they are not entirely divorced from the truth, for in a matter of months she dies during childbirth, her labor aggravated by self-starvation. Earlier in the novel, Nelly also has touched upon the destructive potential of Edgar's reticence: “[H]e possessed the power to depart as much as a cat

possesses the power to leave a mouse half killed, or a bird half eaten” (90). Though not as overtly violent as Heathcliff, Edgar relies on the negative power of the written word to exert control over those around him, from Catherine to his sister Isabella with whom he severs all communication¹⁰⁸. Gilbert and Gubar directly relate Edgar's status as a patriarch to his linguistic dominance, stating that his mastery is contained in his books and legal documents “by which patriarchal culture is transmitted from one generation to the next” (282). As seen through Catherine's eyes, Edgar Linton appears to be a sorcerer, a man of the book. After Heathcliff's clash with Edgar, Catherine feels entirely drained by “Edgar being cruelly provoking” and experiences some sort of paralysis:

[U]tter blackness overwhelmed me, and I fell on the floor. I couldn't explain to Edgar how certain I felt of having a fit, or going raging mad, if he persisted in teasing me! I had no command of tongue, or brain, and he did not guess my agony, perhaps: it barely left me sense to try to escape from him and his voice. (155)

Importantly, Catherine's condition is consistent with a common folkloric malady known as a “fairy stroke,” which included such symptoms as paralysis, seizures, and loss of speech (Spence 175; Briggs *AEOF* 385-386). Although Catherine does not directly accuse Edgar of cursing her, it can be inferred from her speech by taking into account her reliance on folkloric hermeneutics. After all, she charges Nelly, Edgar's alleged accomplice, with seeking elf-bolts to hurt their heifers – an activity that falls into the same category of fairy harm. More importantly, it was believed that fairy stroke could

¹⁰⁸ On the contrary, Susan Meyer suggests that Heathcliff, even as a possessor of *Wuthering Heights*, achieves only negative linguistic power, as he puts a check on Edgar's linguistic superiority and burns Cathy's books but never gains the full control over language. He inhabits the space inscribed by various names, none of which is properly his, including the name that he bears.

result in appearance of a changeling: the victim of the stroke would be replaced by what Kirk calls “a lingering substituted image” (Briggs AEOF 385).

Catherine's view of Edgar as her fairy captor and Thrushcross Grange as a fairy cave further complicates the dichotomy of home/anti-home in the semiotic space of the novel. In contrast to Lockwood, who decidedly perceives Wuthering Heights as an anti-home, Catherine comes to view the cozy Thrushcross Grange as *unheimlich*. Like a captive in the Fairy land, she dreams of her escape. “I thought I was at home,” she tells Nelly, drawing a line between Thrushcross Grange and her idea of a real home. The objects and sounds that appear sinister to Lockwood entice Catherine with their familiarity: “Oh, if I were but in my own bed in the old house... and that wind sounding in the firs by the lattice” (154). In her delirium, she begs Nelly to open the window, an act which symbolically ruptures her enclosure and brings her some relief. Her subsequent utterances solidify the connection of Edgar's estate to the folkloric Fairy land. Catherine's account of her marriage to Edgar is rife with the language of coercion, as she was “wrenched from the Heights” and “converted at a stroke into Mrs. Linton” (156). Her question “Why am I so changed?” once again invokes the lore of abduction and substitution. In folkloric accounts of abduction, a fairy pretender or even a stock could be left in the capture person's place. It is likely that Brontë alludes to these folk stories to reveal the extent of Catherine's self-alienation, whereby she no longer feels like herself, but as a strange creature or a lifeless piece of wood.

Discovering that her isolation lasted only from Monday evening till Thursday

night, Catherine is genuinely surprised: ““What! of the same week?.. Only that brief time?.. Well, it seems a weary number of hours”” (155). Later she mentions that “the whole last seven years of my life grew a blank” (155). Not coincidentally, Lockwood notes the same oddity about the flow of time in *Wuthering Heights*: “Not three o'clock yet! I could have taken oath it had been six. Time stagnates here” (35). Together with glamour, the abnormal flow of time is a crucial characteristic of Fairy land in accounts of abduction and captivity. According to these stories, the temporal dimension of the human world and Otherworld are discrepant, so a few minutes spent dancing in a fairy circle amount to decades, if not centuries in real time. Both Catherine and Lockwood notice that their internal clocks are out of synch in their respective versions of anti-home. It feels that outside – at home, in the real world – time flows much faster, whereas in the anti-home its slowness impairs their ability to think and act. The trope of entrapment in the Fairyland, with its abnormal flow of time, connects Catherine to Glenthorn, the Irish changeling in Maria Edgeworth's *Ennui*. Although he is introduced to the readers as a high-born drone, Glenthorn's passivity results from his position as an ontological outsider, a natural Irishman displaced into the artificial world of British aristocracy. By describing his intellect and feelings as “dormant” (225, 321), Glenthorn recognizes his unnatural state, yet his half-hearted attempts to cure this condition miss the aim. What he needs is a complete, non-negotiable exchange of subject positions along the lines of the changeling myth. Once he restores order by returning all his earthly possessions to their rightful owner, the real Lord Glenthorn, he is free to pursue his happiness under his new

identity as “C. O'Donoghoe, Esq.” Like Glenthorn, Catherine gains self-awareness by realizing her state of not belonging, but here their similarities end. As a woman in patriarchal milieu, Catherine lacks the same freedom of negotiating for a more desirable subject position, nor can she stop the process of hybridization that has fused her original identity with those imposed on her: “the wife of a stranger,” “exile,” and “outcast” (156). The law of *couverture*, which has dissolved her legal status and property rights, is as efficient as fairy magic in keeping her prisoner in her husband's estates. Thus, her epiphany brings her no relief, as it gives her no options of restoring her shattered self.

In the same emotionally charged scene, her alienated self takes the role of the uncanny, as she mistakes for a ghost her own reflection in the mirror¹⁰⁹:

“Don't you see that face?” she inquired, gazing earnestly at the mirror. And say what I could, I was incapable of making her comprehend it to be her own; so I rose and covered it with a shawl. “It's behind there still!” she pursued, anxiously. “And it stirred. Who is it? I hope it will not come out when you are gone! Oh! Nelly, the room is haunted! I'm afraid of being alone!” (153).

Catherine's reaction to her mirror image reminds us of the passage in “The Uncanny,” when Freud writes of accidentally mistaking his own reflection for an intruder whose appearance he found “thoroughly unpleasant”. As Freud suggests, the animosity towards the mirror double might be “a vestige of the archaic reaction to the 'double' as something

¹⁰⁹ Jane Eyre also sees the glimpses of uncanny in her own reflection after she has been locked in the dreadful Red Room. Glancing at the mirror, she notices that “the strange little figure there gazing at me... had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travelers” (6). Like in Catherine's case, Jane experience of self-alienation appears to be an immediate result of her physical isolation, although it is of course grounded in her marginal position in Mrs. Reed's family.

uncanny”¹¹⁰ (162). But the mildness of Freud's reaction, which differs from abjection or terror, offsets Catherine's hysterics at encountering her ghostly mirror image. To Freud, the unanticipated experience of self as a stranger is neither catastrophic nor revelatory, but Catherine's experience of the uncanny threatens to disintegrate her psyche, as it vivifies her loss of self. “Changed” into a strange creature, she recoils from its visual manifestation. Importantly, in English folklore the encounter with one's ghostly double, known as a fetch, foretells approaching death¹¹¹. By coming face to face with her doppelganger, Catherine finally realizes the scope of her dispossession, psychic as well as legal, and this anagnorisis precipitates her decline.

Through the metaphorical violence of her fairy abduction, Catherine's story dovetails into Heathcliff's real and concrete experience of enslavement, uprooting, and re-integration into his colonizer's culture. The plurality of identities that Heathcliff and Catherine hold has the potential for creating what Bhabha calls “Third Space,” “which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (55). Disrupting the dichotomies imposed by the dominant culture, this space of intersubjective ambivalence can generate

¹¹⁰ In her commentary on the train incident, Avery Gordon directly connects Freud's notion of the uncanny to the colonialism “that partially underwrites his taste for the specter of the primitive thinking inhabiting his civilized mind” (54). In this sense, Freud's experience may be positioned on the same axis as Lockwood's encounter with the uncanny child/changeling, which reveals the gentleman's repressed primitive beliefs.

¹¹¹ Chapter 11 includes a similar reference, when Nelly is terrified by what seems like Hindley's double, albeit looking much younger. Nonetheless, this encounter has no dire consequences for anyone because apparently she has mistaken Hareton for the young Hindley.

new meanings and synthesize discrepancies. However, no such synthesis is available to Catherine and Heathcliff, as they never fully harmonize their changeling/child identities and achieve that “in-between” state that could heal the split in their psyche. There is nothing restorative, generative about the subject positions that delimit their individual freedom. Heathcliff the changeling appropriates the possessions of others and actively participates in the politics of disempowerment. Catherine the stolen child pines for home, unable to establish any meaningful relationships in the noxious environment of the anti-home. It is ultimately impossible for the characters to derive anything constructive from positions that were never meant to be empowering. Thus, instead of subverting or negating these restricting identities, Catherine and Heathcliff retaliate by taking them to the extreme. Blown out of proportion, Heathcliff's identity as a changeling and Catherine's as a fairy prisoner terrify their oppressors, not in the least because they unmask and put on display the machinations of power that pass off oppression as domesticity and concern for family integrity.

Other characters as changelings or fairy captives

The duality of Catherine's and Heathcliff's subject positions has a greater implications for the novel. Sending ripples through the narrative fabric, the changeling myth creates a series of displacements, as other characters also assume the characteristics of these folkloric figures. In her analysis of Heathcliff's mimetic violence, Susan Meyer's

sees in it a terrifying reversal of imperialistic politics in which the oppressed turns into a subjugator (112). This conclusion is equally applicable to the folkloric politics reflected in the novel. After internalizing his role as a supernatural invader, Heathcliff takes it to the extreme. It would almost seem as if he is driven by repetition compulsion to reproduce his trauma, when he projects his subject position unto others and increases the number of changelings in the novel.

Catherine's abduction and imprisonment is mirrored in Isabella who falls prey to the glamour of "the gypsy laddie." To convey Isabella's position as a changeling and a fairy prisoner, Brontë relies on the same strategies that she used for Catherine. In both cases, age inversion comes into play. Catherine accuses Isabella of immaturity and points out that she and her brother deserve "a smart chastisement" like "spoiled children" (121 - 122). Heathcliff voices the same view, when he calls his young wife "child" (189). Although Nelly objects to Catherine's opinion of the Lintons as immature weaklings, she cannot help but note Isabella's childish appearance, when the latter comes to Thrushcross Grange after her escape from Heathcliff. Nelly observes "the girlish dress she commonly wore, befitting her age more than her position" and her wet hair "streamed on her shoulders" - a hairstyle befitting a little girl rather than a married gentry woman (211). The deep wound under one ear completes the spectacle of an abused child. Altogether, Isabella's child-like appearance impresses Nelly so much that calls her "miss" instead of "ma'am" or "Mrs. Heathcliff," as if Isabella indeed were a young unmarried girl (213).

Similar to Catherine, Isabella sees in herself a fairy captive rather than a

changeling. *Wuthering Heights* appears to her as an anti-home, where everything is dim, dusty, and damaged, and where she is held prisoner by her cruel husband, “a monster, and not a human being” (188). By now Heathcliff has become quite comfortable within the boundaries of the fairy/gypsy identity that the dominant culture has crafted for him. Performing his supernatural Otherness, he explains his elopement with Isabella as a type of supernatural exchange: “He told me of Catherine’s illness, and accused my brother of causing it promising that I should be Edgar’s proxy in suffering, till he could get hold of him” (180). Likewise, in certain changeling stories, the well-being of the stolen child may depend on the kind treatment of the changeling by his human foster parents¹¹². When Catherine's death disrupts this equation, Isabella loses her mimetic value, which is why this time she is allowed to run away (evidently, Heathcliff has once prevented her escape attempt). The direct parallels between Catherine's and Isabella's stories create a totalizing picture of female subjection. In relation to their experience of captivity, *Thrushcross Grange* and *Wuthering Heights* are not polarized as home - anti-home but represent two equally sinister landmarks on the same semiotic map.

If, according to Wordsworth, “the Child is father of the Man,” whom does the changeling father? What monstrous offspring does he produce? Linton, the son of Heathcliff and Isabella, does not inherit his father's racialized complexion or his fierce temper. There is something incestuous in Nelly's description of Linton as a “pale,

¹¹² The famous literary rendition of this motif is Selma Lagerlof's short story “The Changeling,” in which the stolen boy physically experiences everything that happens to the troll child.

delicate, effeminate boy, who might have been taken for my master's younger brother so strong was the resemblance” (247). Isabella's miraculous ability to beget a purebred Linton, as if without any Heathcliff's aid whatsoever, rivals Mr. Earnshaw's symbolic “delivery” of his foster son whom he unwraps from his cloak. Put off by Linton's appearance, Heathcliff exclaims: “Where is my share in thee, puling chicken?” (257). His remark can be viewed as indicating his doubts over Linton's paternity. In this case, the boy would assume the role of an impostor, an illegitimate child passing off for an heir. This, however, is not his only connection to the changeling myth. In contrast to Heathcliff, whose status as a changeling derives primarily from racial discrimination, Linton represents a rather straightforward literary appropriation of the folkloric creature. He would have been a perfect fit for Carole Silver's chapter on “true” changelings, as he is characterized by their stereotypical immobility and excessive vocalization. Nelly notes that his “looks and movements were very languid, and his form extremely slight” (267). Her account of Linton exemplifies the perverse antics of a changeling: “We were recalled by a scream. Linton had slid from his seat on to the hearthstone, and lay writhing in the mere perverseness of an indulged plague of a child, determined to be as grievous and harassing as it can” (297). In keeping with changeling lore, the servants in Wuthering Heights see Linton as a liability because he consumes resources but produces no value in return. The housekeeper of Wuthering Heights complains of Linton's appetite for “sweets and dainties” and “always milk, milk forever,” while the rest of the household must be content with meager meals (261). Linton's fondness for warmth, whereby he spends his

days by the hearth, also seems to be derived from folklore. A source of sustenance, the hearth stands for the center of the semiotic space, and the access to it is a privilege, not a right – in Linton’s case, entirely undeserved. But his proximity to the hearth carries an additional, much more sinister connotation, as in folklore a fairy impostor can be tossed into the hearth as a means of his exorcism. After Linton has lured Cathy into a trap set up by his father, Nelly for the first time directly calls him a “changeling” (of course, under the circumstances the meaning of the word overlaps with that of a “traitor, renegade”). She threatens Linton with boxing his ears and believes that he deserves a whipping “for his dastardly puling tricks” (335). Linton's unnatural behavior encourages Nelly to interact with him, as if he were a wicked fairy and not a young master.

In the subsequent chapters, Linton's changeling persona completely engulfs whatever is left of his individuality. Coming to inquire after Cathy, who was forced into marriage with her cousin, Nelly is disgusted to find Linton even more unnatural than before, as if his contrived marriage blew out of proportion his uncanny traits. “Linton lay on the settle, sole tenant, sucking a stick of sugar-candy, and pursuing my movements with apathetic eyes... He sucked on like an innocent” (343). His range of changeling characteristics now encompasses greed because Linton is eager to put his hands on Cathy's property, if only through the mediation of his omnipotent father. As he speaks of Thrushcross Grange, “It isn't hers. It's mine: papa says everything she has is mine” (345). Not content with owning her house, Linton demands every single thing in her possession, including the locket with the portraits of her parents. When Cathy pushes him away, he,

like a true changeling, frightens her with his shriek (345).

Even though Linton's perversity seems inherent, his subject position is artificially constructed by Heathcliff as a part of his revenge plot. In pursuit of his goal, Heathcliff with full cognizance re-enacts the changeling myth by thrusting his worthless son into the symbolic cradle, as this act would inevitably disenfranchise Hindley's son. Comparing Linton to Hareton, Heathcliff relishes his plan precisely because it goes against nature: "Mine has nothing valuable about it; yet I shall have the merit of making it go as far as such poor stuff can go. His had first-rate qualities, and they are lost: rendered worse than unavailing" (270). As he re-enacts the folkloric psychodrama, now with a new cast of characters, Heathcliff steps into the role of Mr. Earnshaw, the benevolent despot who, without any hesitation, dabbled in the matters of legitimacy. Heathcliff merely amplifies Mr. Earnshaw's scenario and in doing so uncovers its constructedness. It proceeds from his actions that anyone can be deligitimized, reduced to servitude, and cast in the role of either a changeling or displaced child. Heathcliff's treatment of Hareton, whom he deprives of education, parallels his own brutalization in the hands of Hindley. Neither Hindley's son nor the waif from Liverpool started as monsters, but the hard labor and abuse destroyed their childlikeness. As Nelly speaks in defense of Cathy's cousin, "Had you been brought up in his circumstances, would you be less rude? He was as quick and as intelligent a child as ever you were" (308). The folkloric references add depth to the venerable "nature vs. nurture" argument. In narrating substitutions, Brontë skillfully juxtaposes the supernatural power of fairies with the equally elusive colonial and

patriarchal power that obscures, transforms, and commodifies identities. It is only fitting that one of the euphemisms for fairies in English folklore is “the gentry.”

The other folkloric scenario that Heathcliff initiates, that of supernatural abduction, repeats Catherine's symbolic imprisonment in Thrushcross Grange, except that in Cathy's case *Wuthering Heights* serves as an embodiment of the Otherworld. The common thread in the two abduction narratives concerns the novel's geography, whereby the physical landscape turns into semiotic terrain and acquires folkloric connotations. One such semantically loaded landmark is the Fairy Cave under Penistone Crag. Catherine compares her bed in Thrushcross Grange to the same mysterious locale that later sparks her daughter's interest. The road to the Fairy Cave runs through Heathcliff's lands, where Cathy meets her cousin Hareton and eventually her uncle Heathcliff. During her first meeting with Heathcliff, Cathy is accused of trespassing and poaching, much like her mother when she strayed into Thrushcross Grange. Using his fairy guile, Heathcliff entices Cathy to visit him with a promise of “a kind welcome” but shares with Nelly his plans for entrapping Cathy in marriage with his son (264). At length he acts out his plan by using his son Linton as a bait. As Susan Stewart points out, Heathcliff's offer “You shall have tea before you go home” taps into the fairy strategy of feeding their food to humans in order to trap them in the Otherworld (183). However, Cathy's refusal to partake of the meal does not forestall her imprisonment, as Heathcliff boxes her ears and

locks her up anyway. Only after she is married to Linton¹¹³, Heathcliff lets her visit her dying father. His permission further develops the narrative arc borrowed from “The Beauty and the Beast,” the tale that spurred into action Heathcliff's appearance in *Wuthering Heights* and his romantic relationship with Catherine. In “Beauty and the Beast,” the heroine receives a similar permission from her captor and, like Cathy, feels obliged to return to him. In Cathy's case, she simply has nowhere else to go, as there is no place left that she can call her own.

Nonetheless, the new generation of Earnshaws and Lintons finally reaches Bhabha's Third Space by embracing their hybridity and establishing meaningful relationships with others. Both Hareton and Cathy synthesize the identities of changeling/child. Hareton is a disenfranchised heir who, nonetheless, was rendered monstrous through repeated abuse. His rough upbringing impairs his social skills, but it does not prevent him from connecting to Cathy by means of reciprocity rather than violence. Even his gift of “a fine crooked-legged terrier whelp,” as he makes amends for the damage done to Cathy's dogs, shows his earnest attempt to step out of the vicious circle of retaliation that has dominated the semantic space of the novel. Although Cathy's folkloric parallel is a captive maiden, she is repeatedly called a “fairy” and a “witch”; moreover, she makes a spectacle of her malefic powers when she threatens to model Joseph in wax and clay (19). The process of hybridization that Cathy undergoes affects

¹¹³ Cathy's marriage with Linton is contracted with multiple violations of the Marriage Act of 1753, as no banns were published nor the marriage license obtained; and even though both parties are under the age of 21, the consent of the second parent was not received.

every aspect of her personality, including her speech which soaks in the dialect: instead of “tired” she now says “stalled” (369). The Third Space, which Bhabha calls the “space of translation” and “neither the one nor the other” (37), is less restrictive than the dichotomies of the dominant culture, yet it is also rife with painful contradictions, as the process of negotiation is much more complicated than negation. Cathy constantly runs the risk of imbalance, whereby one of her identities would engulf the other, thus turning her into an oppressor or a victim. After her passionate speech, in which she tells Heathcliff that nobody will ever love him, Nelly observes that she “seemed to have made up her mind to enter into the spirit of her future family, and draw pleasure from the griefs of her enemies” (354). The dangers of mimetic violence lie in the fact that by standing up to Heathcliff she can be transformed into another Heathcliff. But despite her bitterness, Cathy seeks constructive solutions for healing the same psychic split that drove her mother to death. In doing so, she carves out the in-between space where the extremes are harmonized. Thus, with Hareton's assistance, she attempts to “cross-pollinate” the occluded worlds of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange by planting the vegetation from Grange in the garden of Heathcliff's abode. This endeavor provokes Heathcliff's anger yet strengthens the alliance between Cathy and Hareton.

The relative harmony that Cathy and Hareton achieve comes into stark contrast with Heathcliff's inability to break free from his calcified identity as a changeling, inescapable due to its racial connotations. He admits to Nelly that his plan to destroy the Earnshaws and Lintons came to naught because he “lost the faculty of enjoying their

destruction” (397). The young people's persistent desire for happiness reminds him of his relationship with Catherine and makes him seek the same hybrid space of unity with his beloved, which in his case is achievable only after death. In keeping with the fairy tale structure, Heathcliff's death falls under Tolkien's definition of “eucatastrophe” as the “sudden joyous “turn”” of a story that, nonetheless, “does not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure; the possibility of this is necessary to the joy of deliverance” (68). On his return to Wuthering Heights after a prolonged absence, Lockwood notices that the doors and lattices are now open, as if inviting in the guests. Once the changeling has disappeared, there is no more need for paranoid protection of the contested space. Nothing constrains Cathy and Hareton who can now enjoy their spatial and intellectual freedom, being able to move between the houses or indulge in reading which was previously forbidden to them. Symbolically, they reset the timeline of the novel. Like in a fairy tale, where a third wish undoes the previous two and returns the events to their starting point, Hareton is equated with his relative of the same name, who built Wuthering Heights in 1500, while Cathy is soon to become Catherine Earnshaw. It would seem that they are bound for the “happily ever after,” now that the villain is gone. But the changeling myth in *Wuthering Heights* not only provides for the happy ending but also qualifies it. By mapping folkloric politics unto colonial discourse, Brontë effectively shows that the violence in the novel is not restricted to the changeling figure and thus will not dissolve with his disappearance. Rather, it emanates from the cultural core that, by virtue of its linguistic dominance, can impose its classification system on the peripheral

and marginal groups. And because these subject positions are readily available for anyone deemed the Other, more changelings and fairy captives are going to appear.

The Changeling Myth in *Jude the Obscure*

Ever since the creation of *Jude the Obscure*, Little Father Time, the most uncanny of Thomas Hardy's characters, has puzzled critics, mostly because his strangeness qualifies the realistic mode of the novel. Even the sympathetic contemporary readers were troubled by the excessive violence of the double murder/suicide scene, for, as Havelock Ellis stated, “a much less serious catastrophe would surely have sufficed” to make an impression on the characters (qtd in Nemesvari 181). Other scholars of the novel outright dismiss Little Father Time as Hardy’s artistic failure. Robert Robinson berates Hardy for “imposing schematized idea onto a character” who “exists in the novel so obviously to embody this extreme of evolutionary pessimism that he fails so badly as a fictional creation” (135). Noting how this monstrous boy disrupts the boundaries of realism, Sally Shuttleworth calls him “less a child than a walking symbol” (138). On the other end of critical spectrum, attempts have been made to recover the narrative value of Little Father Time by re-evaluating his role in the structure of the novel. Andrew Radford defends Hardy’s combination of realism and symbolism by arguing that “this disturbing collision of disparate literary modes expresses Hardy’s pervasive sense of things falling apart” (201). The boy's final act, almost nonsensical in its cruelty, appears to Donald

Stone as the only logical solution for the problem of homelessness that plagues Hardy's characters. Furthermore, Little Father Time's relation to the genre of Bildungsroman provides grounds for fruitful analysis. The characters' failure in all their endeavors allows Peter Arnds to define *Jude* as an Antibildungsroman, while Alex Moffett sees in Little Father Time the ultimate disruption of the genre, "an embodiment of an eternal synchrony, one that denies all change and consequently all memory" (98). The boy's supernatural traits have found their reflection in the studies that seek to discover his parallels in the classical mythology and Christian tradition. In his insightful article "Saturn in Wessex," Lawrence Clipper discusses the mythological underpinnings of *Jude the Obscure* and treats Little Father Time as an incarnation of Chronos, a palimpsestal figure incorporating both the Greek god of time and Roman Saturn. With his focus on Christian symbolism, Norman Holland draws an analogy between Little Father Time's suicide and the scene of crucifixion, whereby the two unnamed children "fill out this tableau" as the thieves; the sign "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum" turns into the boy's pathetic death note; and Sue through her sorrow is connected to Mary weeping at the cross (53).

The hybridity of the problematic character, rooted in his incongruous age and dubious status the community, also invites comparison with a folkloric changeling. As I will attempt to show, the analysis of Little Father Time through the prism of folklore unlocks a yet another level of intersubjective complexity in Hardy's novel and accounts for what many appear as a structural flaw – the double murder followed by the child's

suicide¹¹⁴. By building his work on the premises of his native folklore, Hardy, like Emily Brontë before him, creates a narrative of displacement and self-alienation, but with greater attention given to the internal colonialism that regulates the access of peripheral subjects to the semiotic center. The defense of that symbolic cradles against the encroachment of imposters from beyond, here represented by the “superfluous” Jude and Father Time, overlaps with the folkloric imperative to get rid of the supernatural Other. When this imperative gets internalized by the alleged changeling, it turns into a manifestation of the death drive which causes him to effectively remove himself from the semiotic space.

It would be redundant to particularize Thomas Hardy’s investment in English folklore. After all, his accuracy in depictions of local customs and dialects was for the longest time upheld as the pinnacle of his artistic genius. The contemporary critics lauded Hardy as the champion of the vanishing folk culture and its interpreter to the middle class audience (Zeitler 2 – 6). Accustomed to Hardy’s alleged verisimilitude, they were all the more disappointed with *Jude the Obscure*, where the concrete references to folk customs seem virtually absent (Zeitler 122; Radford 201). Severed from their rural

¹¹⁴ It is also necessary to acknowledge other interpretations of this touchy subject. Thus, Josephine McDonagh treats the novel's climax as Hardy’s indictment of Malthusian logic that informed the nineteenth-century eugenics. This logic was accountable for the division of child murder into atavistic, committed by the lower classes, and progressive, akin to a sacrifice for the sake of better future. Child murder in *Jude the Obscure*, as McDonagh sees it, is alternative to both models and amounts to “a profoundly nihilistic gesture that evacuates the motif of child murder of all the manifest meanings that it has accreted over the history of its usages” (182). As opposed to McDonagh, Sally Shuttleworth argues that Hardy’s views on child suicide were consistent with those expressed by his contemporary psychiatrists. Among other reasons, including excessive education, Victorian psychiatrists listed inherited melancholy as a prevalent cause of this unnatural act (141, 143).

community, Hardy's characters wander from one urban setting to another in a meaningless repetition of suffering. But inconspicuous as they may be, folkloric references are nonetheless present in Hardy's last Wessex novel, and, as I will try to prove, the author's unswerving interest in folklore motivated him to conceptualize Little Father Time as a changeling.

Little Father Time's credentials as a fairy are established before his forlorn journey from London to Aldbrickham's station, in the course of which Hardy elaborates on his supernatural qualities. The day before his arrival, Jude and Sue receive a letter from Jude's ex-wife Arabella who for the first time mentions her son born in Australia. In a cuckoo act, she foists the child on the struggling couple, as her present husband "might think him in the way" (300). The dubious parentage of the nameless child underscores his associations with the folkloric figure. Although Arabella tries to convince Jude that the child is lawfully his, neither her solemn oath nor her preventative harangue against any naysayers fully confirm Jude's paternity. Earlier in the novel, she feigned pregnancy to lure the gullible Jude into wedlock, so it is hardly surprising that after reading her letter he still has his reservations. Even as he argues for taking in the child, he is not at all certain that the child is his:

"What a view of life he must have, mine or not mine!.. I must say that, if I were better off, I should not stop for a moment to think whose he might be. I...The beggarly question of parentage—what is it, after all? What does it matter, when you come to think of it, whether a child is yours by blood or not?" (301)

The novel never fully dispels this ambiguity. Upon meeting the boy, Sue bursts out "I see

you in him!” and rues that the other half of him reminds her of Arabella (305). Yet nowhere in the text does he get called “Jude's boy,” whereas his identification as “Arabella's boy” occurs three times, most notably, when he is juxtaposed to Jude and Sue's children, as in “their smallest child in Jude's arms, Sue leading her little girl, and Arabella's boy walking thoughtfully and silently beside them” (355-356). Despite his similarity to Jude, which I will discuss later, Little Father Time is very much “Arabella's boy,” born in the periphery and propelled to the semiotic core by his scheming mother.

In her discussion of the fairy bride trope in the Victorian fiction, Carole Silver identifies the ethereal Sue Bridehead as a “swan maiden in both her traits and actions,” who grants her love to the protagonist yet abandons him by the end (101). I would argue that Arabella Dunn is equally endowed with folkloric connotations. When she captures Jude's attention by throwing a pig's penis at him, her trick seems like a type contagious magic or even a variation of fairy archery, like the fairy stroke referenced in *Wuthering Heights*. Indeed, after being hit by this unusual “elf-bolt,” Jude seems changed. As if under the influence of love magic, he abandons his studies in pursuit of Arabella, the most unsuitable bride one can imagine! Herself a monstrous figure, Arabella is described as a “complete and substantial female animal” (37) and consistently likened to pigs, except for the episode of pig killing, when her brutality causes Jude to identify himself with the suffering beast. Her unabashed sexuality accounts for her animalistic traits, but it is all the more threatening because Arabella launches it strategically, with full cognizance of its effect on the men around her. Unlike Sue, whose terror of intercourse with

Phyllotson makes her jump from the window, Arabella is sensuous as well as shrewd. Although she seems to be equated with her erotically charged body, she maintains enough critical distance to see it as a tool for advancing her goals, from ensnaring Jude to hatching an egg between her breasts. Thus, she is not only a brutish animal but also a Circe-like figure who turns men into her cattle.

A skilled practitioner of love magic, Arabella is also well-versed in glamour. In Hardy's novel, the notion of glamour is different from *Wuthering Heights* where it is associated mostly with Edgar's power over written word or with Heathcliff's gypsy charms. Divested from its associations with literacy, glamour in *Jude the Obscure* signifies the supernatural ability to make things look better than in reality. Arabella's capacity for glamour ranges from her seemingly innocent "accomplishment" of faking dimples to the shock she gives Jude on their wedding night, when she removes her artificial braid. For all its comic triviality, this incident is dramatized as a small-scale catastrophe, the first sign of alienation between the newlyweds:

A little chill overspread him at her first unrobing. A long tail of hair, which Arabella wore twisted up in an enormous knob at the back of her head, was deliberately unfastened, stroked out, and hung upon the looking-glass which he had bought her.

"What—it wasn't your own?" he said, with a sudden distaste for her.
"Oh no—it never is nowadays with the better class." (58)

In this scene, Jude encounters his suppressed anxieties and desires that in conjunction constitute the uncanny. First and foremost, he is perturbed by the unexpected surge of artificiality, which thwarts his views of his wife as a creature of nature. The snake-like form of the braid reinforces Arabella's connection to folklore by invoking the lore of half-

women and half-serpents. It is not coincidental that Hardy uses “tail of hair” as a synonym for “braid,” as it connects Arabella to such legendary enchantresses as Lamia, often portrayed with her snake skin on her lap, or even the fay Melusine, whose hidden deformity was unexpectedly discovered by her husband¹¹⁵. The trope of fairy bride, as applied to Arabella, emphasizes her skills at seduction and glamour, as well as her waywardness, for the marriages between human men and fays are doomed from the start. Moreover, Arabella's retort reveals her preternatural perception: as if able to read her husband's mind, she mocks his own aspirations towards greatness. To work his way up the social ladder, Jude has subjected himself to years of hard labor and grueling studies, but, in Arabella's mind, a chignon is all it takes to become “the better class.”

Son of the fairy enchantress, “Arabella's boy” is overtly described as a supernatural Other. Although not exactly ugly, this “small, pale child” appears to be out of place “in the gloom of a third-class carriage” (302). Even the ticket tucked in the band of his hat and the key suspended from his neck, harmless in themselves, seem like some ambiguous symbols pointing out to the child's supernatural origins – perhaps, the

¹¹⁵ The story of Melusine, which Briggs views as the French romance version of Lamia, is particularly applicable for analysis of Jude's marriage to Arabella. A victim of her mother's curse, Melusine periodically turned into a snake from waist downwards. Before her marriage to Raymond of Poitou, she made an agreement with him that he would never see her on a Saturday, the day when she suffered her metamorphosis. Although the spouses were very much in love and enjoyed Melusine's fairy wealth, their marriage was far from ideal, as all their children were born with deformities. Suspicious that the children may not be his, Raymond broke his promise and spied upon his wife on a Saturday, seeing that she emerged from her bath one half a serpent. Even though he was determined to keep the secret, at length the truth was revealed. Importantly, the revelation came about after one of their sons murdered his brother. When Melusine came to comfort her grieving husband, he blamed her for their misfortune and called her a snake. Following his verbal attack, Melusine jumped from the window and vanished in the thin air, but her ghost returned to haunt the lord of Castle Lusignan (Briggs 286 – 287). Hardy's novel captures at least some particulars of Melusine's story, including her serpent tail and her fratricidal progeny.

substitutes of Father Time's scythe and hourglass¹¹⁶. In particular, the string around his neck foreshadows the deadly noose that will end his life, as if the boy comes to Aldbrickham carrying his own death sentence. When finally deposited on the platform, he “fell into a steady mechanical creep which had in it an impersonal quality—the movement of the wave, or of the breeze, or of the cloud” (304). The uncanny effect is realized here by fusing such binary opposition as artificial – natural. Inasmuch as the boy's movement resembles the mechanical, depersonalized movement of the train from which he has just alighted, it is compared to the types of repeated motion found in nature. The hybridity produced by this description connects Little Father Time to the folkloric changeling who incorporates the same combination of natural and artificial traits. As a fairy, an invader from beyond, he is inseparable from nature and, in some tales, identifies his age by referring to a natural landmarks, such as an ancient forest. Nonetheless, he is a creature of artifice and artificiality, someone who appropriates the other's identity and abandons his natural environment to savour the fruit of civilization. Another inherent contradiction that brings Little Father Time closer to a changeling is the age discrepancy. The incongruous age of the changeling becomes the pinnacle of his artificiality. Famously, Little Father Time is described as “Age masquerading as Juvenility, and doing it so badly that his real self showed through crevices” (218). The very notion of

¹¹⁶ Hardy re-creates the boy's description in the poem “Midnight on the Great Western”: “In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy, / And the roof-lamp's oily flame / Played down on his listless form and face, / Bewrapt past knowing to what he was going, / Or whence he came. / In the band of his hat the journeying boy / Had a ticket stuck; and a string / Around his neck bore the key of his box, / That twinkled gleams of the lamp's sad beams / Like a living thing” (*Selected Poems* 136).

masquerade goes hand in hand with a changeling's strategy of pretense, useful for obtaining sustenance and care to which the fairy otherwise would have no claim. Almost immediately Little Father Time is introduced to the reader as a supernatural impostor who inherited his mother's aptitude for creating illusions. Through the word "crevices" Hardy conjures the vision of the child's face as a mask that covers up something uncanny and sinister, something wicked. Even the sympathetic Sue notes that his face is like "the tragic mask of Melpomene" (307).

The tension created by the discrepancy between the real and feigned age connects the boy's representation as a changeling to his more obvious association with Time personified. In his article "Saturn in Wessex: The Role of Little Father Time," Lawrence Clipper provides an extensive analysis of the mythological parallels to Hardy's character. Tracing the evolution of the personification of Time, Clipper points out that, in the classical Greek period, Time was represented as a winged boy, much like a Cupid. However, due to a confusion between two similarly sounding words – chronos (the Greek word for "time") and Kronos (the ancient Titan, an equivalent of Roman Saturn) – "the Roman mythologists puzzling over the Greek texts mistakenly began to attribute Saturn's qualities to that of Time" (38). When the two mythological figures merged, Time/Chronos appropriated Saturn's old age and malefic qualities, which resulted in the emergence of the iconic representation of Father Time as an old bearded man armed with a scythe and hourglass. According to Clipper, the dual identification of Time as Chronos (child) and Kronos (child-devouring elder) informed Hardy's characterization of Little

Father Time and had a considerable influence on the novel's plot.

I would argue, however, that the representation of Father Time as it was conceived in the antiquity and elaborated in the Middle Ages is not the only source of visual imagery that influenced the depiction of "Arabella's boy." To connect Little Father Time to Chronos, we need to search for the missing link in Victorian mass-produced media. As Samuel Macey posits in *Patriarchs of Time*, by the Victorian period Father Time has shed his more sinister connotations and was successfully repackaged for middle class consumption (63 – 64). Which is more, he turned into a stock figure of New Year cards as a gentle grandfather cradling his charming grandson, the New Year. But for his attributes – a pair of wings, a toga or monastic robe, and ubiquitous scythe and hourglass, - Chronos would have been virtually indistinguishable from Father Christmas whose jolly demeanor he now shared. From the destroyer and devourer of children, he turned into their protector. For example, the book cover of *Old Father Time and His Twelve Children*, the 1890 collection of short stories and poems, portrays him an indulgent middle-class grandpapa cooing over his brood of grandchildren. Gone is the hourglass, and the scythe is turned away, as not to cut the boisterous toddlers. No longer seen as a source of threat, Father Time's deadly instruments become playthings, so it is not uncommon to see the New Year holding his hourglass like a rattle or using it as a footstool.

As Clipper asserts, Jude's demise is brought about by his excessive rationality, which prevents him from recognizing the workings of pagan powers in the modern

Christian context and the “signs of Saturn's pernicious influence” on his personal affairs (42). But in my view, the saturnine qualities of Little Father Time have a significance beyond the frame of the plot, if only because through them Hardy uncovers the palimpsestal quality of the Victorian pastiche. “[A]n enslaved and dwarfed Divinity” (303), Little Father Time is, of course, an imperfect copy of Saturn. He shares his flawed mimesis with the plaster statuettes of Venus and Apollo, “reduced copies of ancient marbles,” that Sue buys from a peddler. Nonetheless, he exhibits the titan's antagonism towards children (as it turns out, himself including) when he performs his final act of murder and suicide. Layer by layer, Hardy scrapes off banality from the all too familiar and deceptively comforting image, until the gaudy New Year postcard reveals Saturn as Goya saw him – with bulging eyes, mouth too full to close, convulsed hands tearing at the torso of a child.

That chthonic darkness of Saturn stares through the crevices of Little Father Time's mask, but the same can be said about the boy's folkloric projection, which has an equal potential for conveying violence. In his somber interpretation of folklore, Hardy infuses the changeling myth with references to death, adding an extra layer of morbidity to the changeling traits, pernicious in themselves. One such trait, grounded in folklore yet amplified by Hardy, is the changeling's gaze. When the author first introduces his character on the train to Aldbrickham, he notes the boy's “large, frightened eyes” that show no interest in his surroundings. Jude and Sue also pay attention to the unusual quality of the child's gaze: “Him they found to be in the habit of sitting silent, his quaint

and weird face set, and his eyes resting on things they did not see in the substantial world” (307). The boy’s supposed ability to see the otherworldly objects corresponds to the folkloric concept of the Second Sight. According to Evans-Wentz, those endowed with the Second Sight may peek into the supernatural realm and see the fairies, otherwise hidden from common mortals. (91) Through their symbolic visions, the seers could allegedly forecast death, their own as well as the death of others. Constantly haunted by deathly omens, many of them wished to be relieved of such a cumbersome gift (Roud, *The Penguin Guide* 397 – 398). In a similar manner, Little Father Time sees the approaching death no matter where he looks, a predicament that prevents him from enjoying the simple pleasures of life. Unlike Jude and Sue, he cannot even appreciate the beauty of flowers because “they'd be all withered in a few days!” (326). One of his most stable characteristics, his supernatural gaze lingers even after his death: while his murdered half-siblings had their eyes closed, “his glazed eyes were slanted into the room”¹¹⁷ (369).

Hardy's rendition of the changeling myth captures not only the changeling traits (supernatural origins, age reversal, impaired or unusual locomotion, strange eyes) but also the specific structure of this tale. In keeping with the typical changeling plot, Little Father Time appears unexpectedly and eagerly occupies the subject position of a child, as evident by his addressing Sue “Mother.” Before meeting him, Sue pities the child

¹¹⁷ Different textual versions are more direct about the uncanny quality of his eyes in the death scene. For example, in the chapter published in *Harper's Monthly* in September 1895, instead of “slanted” his eyes are described as “staring” (593).

“wanted by nobody” (301), but upon his arrival, she can hardly conceal her disappointment. The child’s natural resemblance to both his biological parents seems to her a frightening kind of hybridity, an unnatural amalgamation of Jude’s desirable features with repugnant Arabella’s traits. Likewise, in English and Irish changeling tales, the mother usually notices that something is amiss: the sight of a wizened oaf in lieu of her rosy-cheeked baby horrifies her profoundly (e.g. Croker 28 - 29). While Sue is far from mistreating her stepson, her questions to Little Father Time hark to a more benign strategy of tricking the changeling into revealing his true nature. As we learn later, Arabella’s parents, with whom the boy resided in Australia, “encoded” him as a supernatural being by giving him such an eerie nickname. After they have fitted him into the subject position of a changeling, they abjected their grandchild:

“Little Father Time is what they always called me. It is a nickname; because I look so aged, they say.”
“And you talk so, too,” said Sue tenderly. “It is strange, Jude, that these preternaturally old boys almost always come from new countries. But what were you christened?”
“I never was.”
“Why was that?”
“Because, if I died in damnation, ’twould save the expense of a Christian funeral.” (307)

Sue’s remark, good-natured as it may be, reveals similar recoil from the uncanny. Like his callous grandparents, she immediately constructs the boy as the Other - if not a supernatural being, then at least a foreigner whose geographic origins override his English heritage. Indeed, the boy lives up to his new-fangled supernatural reputation and thwarts Sue’s inquiry of his Christian name. Names, secret or euphemistic, play a crucial

role in fairy tales. The supernatural creatures oftentimes conceal their personal names because, when discovered, the names may be used for establishing control over their referents. On the other hand, people may euphemistically refer to fairies, as to avoid summoning them. In Hardy's novel, however, Little Father Time truly has no name because he has never been baptized. Obviously, the omission of a crucial Christian sacrament points out to the coarseness and ignorance of his guardians who would rather jeopardize the boy's soul than spend extra on his funeral. Even more importantly, though, the absence of a baptismal name reflects the beliefs about the gloomy fate of the unbaptized children, which I describe in great detail in Chapter 1. By his misfortune of being unbaptized, Little Father Time receives a double designation as a neglected child and as creature positioned outside of Christendom, someone (or something?) unhallowed.

As I have argued in the beginning of this chapter, ingrained in the changeling myth is the dichotomy of a fairy invader-stolen child. This binary model is particularly applicable to the texts that center on the themes of displacement, self-alienation, and struggle in the culturally contested space. But in *Jude the Obscure*, the jeopardy of structuring the plot along the lines of a changeling tale lies in its overly literal appropriation, whereby the main conflict runs the danger of being reduced to sibling rivalry between "Arabella's boy" and Sue's biological children. The sole focus on sibling feud with the ensuing fratricide would diminish the generative potential and signifying capacity of the changeling myth. As he incorporated folkloric structure into his novel, Hardy made certain narrative choices, some more successful than others. To foreground

these choices, it would be useful to compare two variants of the novel¹¹⁸: the 1895 edition by Osgood, McIlvane and Co., which was soon after republished by Harper & Brothers; and the serial published in American and European editions of *Harper's Monthly* from December 1894 to November 1894¹¹⁹.

By general consensus, the serial story in *Harper's* is considered the weakest of all Jude's textual variants. As Hardy admitted in the preface to the first edition, “the magazine version was, for various reasons, abridged and modified in some degree” (qtd in Chase 116). This is quite an understatement. To indulge the tastes of his middle-class readership on both shores of the Atlantic, Hardy had to revise or remove the majority of scenes that were in anyway tainted by erotic connotations. The result of these revisions, as Slack observes, was the appearance of the novel “in such a watered-down state that the anti-Victorian elements in the story were almost all washed away” (262). Predictably, the erasure of almost all risqué elements resulted in a string of non-sequiturs. In order to somehow reconcile them with rest of the plot, the author had to come up with contrived, if not outright ludicrous explanations. Particularly detrimental for the plot was the cleaning up of all references to Sue's and Jude's sexual life after her escape from

¹¹⁸ The discrepancies between the serial and book versions were meticulously systematized by Mary Ellen Chase in her 1927 study *Thomas Hardy from Serial to Novel*. Another notable attempt at comparative analysis of textual variants is Robert Slack's article “The Text of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*,” which discusses Hardy's revisions for the 1903 “New Edition” of *Jude* by Macmillan and Co. The main focus of the article is the bowdlerization of Arabella's sexuality in the 1903 edition. Similar analytical angle may be found in James Harding's “The Signification of Arabella's Missile,” where the famous pizzle-throwing scene is traced from edition to edition.

¹¹⁹ From December 1894 to January 1895, it came out under the title of *The Simpletons*. Starting in January 1895, the title was changed to *Hearts Insurgent*.

Phillotson. Based on the sanitized version, one can infer that the couple lived in an immaculate chastity, like a brother and sister. In turn, their sexless union created a major problem for the narrative development: how to bring the plot to its climax, realized through the murder of children, if the said children cannot be produced by means of abstinence? As a remedy, Hardy replaced the nameless boy and girl from the original version with a single boy whom, as Sue tells Arabella at Kennetbridge fair, she adopted because his “parents died and left him at mercy of the world” (qtd in Chase 155). This explanation astonishes Mary Chase, as well as any other fan of logic: “Three more years of living together and yet apart, and an *adopted* child!”(155)

The substitution of two biological children for one adopted affects not only the theme of marriage and sexuality, crucial for Hardy's last novel. More specifically, it tampers with the rendition of changeling conflict by positing the adopted boy as an unnecessary double of Little Father Time. The juxtaposition of the two adopted sons produces a facile reading of folklore, whereby Little Time's final act can be read as a straightforward, albeit self-cancelling dispatch of the rival. Thus, the climax in the serialized story appears even more lurid, as it lacks sufficient motivation. Sue's conversation with the boy, when he gets startled by the news of her pregnancy, is omitted in the magazine version, as it would have compromised her alleged chastity. But without this conversation, it is unclear what drove Little Time to carry out his murderous plan; unless, of course, we overemphasize his supernatural persona at the expense of the novel's psychological dimension.

The comparison of the novel with the serialized version reveals the soundness of Hardy's original narrative strategy of, firstly, exploring the theme of sexuality to its fullest and, secondly, of veering away from the literal rendition of changeling myth. The presence of the two half-siblings, a boy and a girl, re-routes the changeling conflict into a different plane. I believe that there is a reason why the murdered children are not given a name or even a hint of character. Devoid of any inherent meaning, these empty signs become the avatars of Jude and Sue, so that the violence done to them would be synecdochically aimed at their referents. However, I would hesitate to interpret the children's murder as a straightforward manifestation of Little Time's Oedipal hatred for his father, if only because the interpolation of the changeling myth accommodates an equally valid yet more nuanced explanation. In my opinion, the death drive in the novel coincides with the folkloric impetus to exorcise the changeling. Because both Jude and his son consider themselves superfluous, they attempt to quit the semiotic space where they do not belong, an escape that may be realized only through self-annihilation. Jude is swayed by death drive when he attempts suicide by walking on ice, but nothing comes of this attempt. Little Time merely augments his father's desire for death, killing himself and his half-siblings who through their total desemantization are equated with their parents. In treating both Little Time and Jude as two variations of the same changeling myth, I concur with Alex Moffett who asserts that Little Time is not a supplement to Jude but his "ultimate magnification" that "personifies an extreme version of Jude's mishmash of childhood and maturity" (97). The age reversal integral to the Victorian interpretation of

changeling myth can work both ways, incorporating the childish adults and the prematurely aged children, whose precociousness results from the life of hardship. In a sense, Hardy adheres to the same equation that we have observed in *Wuthering Heights*: if the child is father of the man, then the changeling is the father of another monster. In addition to age inversion, Jude and Little Time share other motifs of the changeling myth – the attempted encroachment from the periphery to the center; illicit access to resources; and the abjection of the outsider, here taking the form of self-abjection.

Hardy describes Jude the boy as “a thoughtful child's who has felt the pricks of life somewhat before his time” (5). Despite his bouts of optimism, ever since his childhood Jude has seen himself as an ultimate outsider, never finding a community where he truly belongs. His aged aunt Drusilla, who has to raise him after the death of his parents, sees him as a burden and wishes him out of this world: “It would ha' been a blessing if Goddy-mighty had took thee too, wi' thy mother and father, poor useless boy!” (7). Like in Slavic folklore which I discuss in Chapters 2 and 3, her pitiless words perform the function of a curse, sowing in Jude's psyche the seeds of self-alienation that will germinate in the course of the novel. However, it would be incorrect to suggest that Jude's inability to fit in results solely from of his treatment as a misfit. In some regard, his superfluousness seems to be ontological, reinforced by the authorial point of view. As opposed to Father Time with his “mechanical creep,” Jude is not unnatural but excessively natural, his primary allegiance being to the animal kingdom. The little Jude avoids stepping on worms, as powerless as himself, and angers his employer by feeding

the birds he is supposed to scare away from the field: “They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world which did not want them” (9). As Hardy clarifies, “This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again” (12). For all its dark irony, this statement accurately summarizes Jude's biography, from his early troubles in Marygreen to his death in Christminster, its forlornness offset by the universal jubilation.

Considered a changeling from his early age, Jude takes this designation one step further, as he re-enacts a folk-tale scenario of colonization: from the peripheral Marygreen, where all traces of history have been erased, he moves to Christminster, the symbolic cradle of education and culture. Significantly, Edward Said compares Jude to another famous changeling, Kipling's Kim, on the basis of their problematic identity and unusual pedigree, as “neither is like “normal” boys, whose parents and family assure a smooth passage through life” (*Culture and Imperialism* 156). Nonetheless, Said stops at acknowledging the different paths that the boys take from a similar starting point: as a white sahib among Indians, Kim rises to glory, whereas Jude never escapes his status of “social non-entity” (*Culture and Imperialism* 157). I would argue, though, that Jude's problem is not exhausted by the fact that he is “at odds with his environment” as a “minimally gifted rural English boy who is interested more in Greek than in farming” (*Culture and Imperialism* 156). As opposed to Kim, through whom Kipling develops an ugly duckling fantasy in a colonial setting, Jude is directly affected by internal

colonialism that upholds the view of the provincials as the primitive Others. His quest for improving his social position fits flawlessly into the Bildungsroman tradition, yet in the semiotic space of the novel it is treated as the changeling's invasion into the cultural core. This illicit act is repudiated by the communities on both sides of the semiotic border – those that proliferate the domestic colonialism and those that internalize it. “Such places be not for such as you—only for them with plenty o' money,” comments one of the villagers upon learning that Jude has not yet joined a university (120). The same anxiety about border-crossing is echoed in the answer that Jude receives from the master of Biblioll College, who admonishes him to stick to his own trade. Christminster proves as inhospitable to Jude as Marygreen. Instead of flourishing there as a swan, an equal among his intellectual peers, Jude finds himself in the role of the ugly duckling no matter where he goes.

Following the tendency towards amplification, Little Time's journey from Australia to England is shown as an extreme version of Jude's relocation¹²⁰. Peter Arnds notes the correspondence of the spacial and temporal elements in the boy's travel, stating that

In the nineteenth century such countries as America and Australia were still at the beginning of their own history, while the great waves of European immigrants at the end of that century took their own long history with them. Born in Australia, Time bears on his face the marks of the immigrant's European past, combining in himself the youth of his

¹²⁰ Commenting on the treatment of colonialism in Hardy's works, Adam Gussow comes up with an interesting analogy: “Hardy's depiction of Greater Wessex reflects the more general historical displacement of Dorset's rural population from the land – a displacement which helps explain the spiritual kinship between his fictionalised country-folk and the similarly uprooted Australian Aborigenes” (qtd in Bownas 27).

birthplace with the old age of his cultural heritage (232)

Little Time's arrival in England is emblematic of failure, as it attests to his mother's thwarted hopes of settling in the new country and his grandparents' inability to provide for another dependent. The Dunns fail at their colonial project, much like Jude loses his struggle against domestic colonialism. In his dirge over the boy's body, Hardy portrays it as a vessel for all mistakes accumulated by his parents and caregivers: "On that little shape had converged all the inauspiciousness and shadow which had darkened the first union of Jude, and all the accidents, mistakes, fears, errors of the last. He was their nodal point, their focus, their expression in a single term" (371). The identification of Little Time as a symbol of futility occurs at the level of the plot, but it is also forms a part of the boy's identity. Jude's exclamation "I'm an outsider till the end of my days!" (361) sets the tone for Sue's pivotal conversation with her foster son when she, deluded by his precocity, confides in him like in "an aged friend" (367). In a series of embittered statements, Little Time reveals his self-perception as a burden on his family, a view that grief-stricken Sue does not dare to dispute: "I oughtn't to have come to 'ee—that's the real truth! I troubled 'em in Australia, and I trouble folk here. I wish I hadn't been born!" (367). When Sue tells him that another baby is on the way, Little Time retorts with "Oh God, Mother, you've never a-sent for another," as if the child's transition from non-being to being were similar to his own journey from Australia to Wessex. The folkloric violence against the supernatural children is mirrored in the actions of the adult characters who, whether overly or subconsciously, repulse the changelings. Sue's absent-minded replies

fan her stepson's determination to commit suicide. This becomes obvious, when she answers his question "It would be better to be out o' the world than in it, wouldn't it?" by sighing, "It would almost, dear" (367).

Once Little Father Time has been constructed as a changeling on narrative and intersubjective level, he can be symbolically exorcised, removed from the textual space. In folklore, the disappearance of the changeling is followed by the restoration of the abducted child, but the clash of the fairy tale trope with the fin-de-siècle pessimism problematizes the outcome of exorcism. The stolen child, the natural antipode of the changeling, is nowhere to be seen. In fact, any child, even the one yet unborn, is viewed as a changeling simply because it adds to the troubles of its parents. Thus, the telos of the changeling's removal becomes self-contained: the changeling must disappear because he is unwanted, not because someone better will come in his stead. Like Kristeva's abject, Jude and Little Father are purged in order to restore the semiotic wholeness of the internal colonialism whose integrity they undermine. This Otherness gets encoded in Little Father Time's death note "Done because we are too menny" (266). The bizarre spelling of the last word incorporates both "many" and "men,"¹²¹ while the pronoun "we" encompasses not only the dead children but also their parents. Because there are too many of us. Because we are too menny, too much like men – that is, because we exist. Quoting the

¹²¹ Walter Gordon offers another interpretation of this cryptic word, which he connects to the writing that appeared on the wall at time of Belshazzar's feast. According to Gordon, "The authoritative translation of the Aramaic word *mene* indicates that it was a specific omen: "God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end," a prediction which was as true for Jude Fawley as it was for Belshazzar" (299).

doctor, Jude speculates that his son's suicide may be a harbinger of the “universal wish not to live” (371). A changeling begotten by the era of pessimism, Little Father Time is exorcised in an equally pessimistic way. And, as a parodic homage to the fairy tale ending, his death reinforces the social order maintained by the dominant culture. The legitimacy is at least temporarily restored, as Sue returns to her wedded husband Phillotson, while Jude reunites with his lawful wife Arabella. Paraphrasing Sue’s hysterical speech to Phillotson, we should be glad – almost.

Conclusions

The changeling myth plays a crucial role in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jude the Obscure*, where it is used to convey the shattering of identities in the colonial context, whether it involves the displacement of colonized subjects or the separation of the “primitive” periphery from the cultural core. In her holistic approach to folklore, Emily Brontë incorporates into her novel the stories of fairy substitutes as well as human captives in the Otherworld and shows how the characters can interchangeably occupy both subject positions, crafted for them by the hegemonic culture. The subject positions of changeling/child are denaturalized precisely because of their contextual, rather than ontological and essential, relation to the subject. On the other hand, the hybridity of the changeling/child identity has a potential of creating what Homi Bhabha calls the “Third Space” in which new meanings can be coined and negotiated. Whereas *Wuthering*

Heights creates and deconstructs the dichotomies of changeling-child, in the pessimistic world of *Jude the Obscure* there are no children but only changelings. Both Jude and Little Father Time enact the changeling scenario of invasion into the semiotic core and, like their folkloric counterparts, experience abjection. The imperative to exorcise the changeling, generated by the dominant culture and internalized by the “superfluous” characters, results in the controversial climax of the novel, when Little Father Time kills his half-siblings and takes his own life.

Conclusions

In my dissertation, I have argued that the process of signification, as applied to the two central nineteenth-century foci, or the converging spheres of folklore and childhood, was ostensibly an axiological process and reflected on the culture's self-consciousness. The tension between the nostalgia for the folk way, which boosted ethnographic research, and the inability of the modern educated subject to embrace superstition, caught the attention of nineteenth-century British and Russian writers. Now brought directly to the semiotic core, published in hefty volumes and discussed in popular magazines, folktales inevitably influenced the literary works of the day. However, their influence was far greater than adding *couleur locale* to the narratives that unfolded in the countryside or involved the peripheral characters – Irish tenants, Ukrainian peasants, Russian serf nannies. As they migrated from one semiotic medium to another, folkloric elements did not lose their signifying capacity. Because each of these elements is a signifier in an intricate matrix of meanings, to incorporate one of them into a literary text means to acknowledge the epistemology inherited from the traditional culture. Those “primitive” beliefs crop out in literature as Freudian uncanny, something that was obscured through the mechanisms of repression yet found its way to the surface of consciousness – cultural as well as individual. Moreover, by studying folkloric material, the nineteenth-century writers came face to face with the mechanisms of internal colonialism that eradicated the traditional practices, while ostensibly preserving them in printed media, from

ethnographic collections to postcards of the quaint-looking rustics. Rife with contradictions, the status of folklore within the colonial framework inevitably gives food for thought, if not outright encourages social critique. Through their assessment of folklore's relation to the cultural core, Russian and British authors produced a variety of discourses, some of which I attempted to analyze in this dissertation.

The comparative analysis of Russian and English folk beliefs about supernatural children brought to light several important phenomena that could be overlooked in a study focused on a single national body of folklore. Originating in the same catastrophic misfortune, the absence of baptism as a crucial token of communal membership, the discourse of supernatural children in both folkloric traditions bifurcates into two epistemologically distinct strains of representations: the uncanny yet sympathetic others and the invaders that threaten cultural integrity. In English folklore, the first category incorporates the oblique images of unbaptized children, whereas in Russian tradition it is populated by more of a diverse array of entities, from unchristened infants to children taken by “the unclean force”. The second category consists of changelings, or fairies substituted for human children. As I have argued, these two categories elicit different affective and axiological responses from the bearers of culture. In the never-ending semiotic process, the narratives of the unnatural, supernatural, and uncanny children are constantly customized and reconstituted. Certain representations are pulled to the center of cultural anxieties and inflated with new meaning; meanwhile, others are decaying in the periphery until they all but lose their ability to signify. Reflexively, by scrutinizing the

semiotic modalities of these representations, it is possible to uncover and evaluate culture as, in Lotman's terms, “non-hereditary collective memory of prescriptions and prohibitions” (*Binary Models* 1).

In the course of my analysis, I noted that the two categories of supernatural children, the unbaptized spirits and the changelings, exerted a disproportionate influence on cultural and literary production in the nineteenth-century Britain and Russia. As I have argued, in British culture, the lore of the unbaptized spirits remained rather obscure, whereas the changeling became a master symbol of abnormal childhood. It was readily available for denoting Otherness in a variety of contexts, from troubled family relationships to socio-economic conditions that render children precocious or even colonial displacement that leads to self-alienation. However, instead of treating the encoding of folkloric elements into literature as gentrification, I see in it as an example of Bakhtinian dialog. As I have attempted to show, whenever the changeling myth was incorporated into a literary work, its structural elements, such as the conflict over resources or the violent exorcism of changeling, could not be erased or glossed over. Instead, they functioned as an argument in a dialog, posing a challenge and eliciting a response from the authors as well as their readership.

On the contrary, the beliefs about unbaptized children and victims of parental curse play a greater role in Russian folkloric tradition. According to Russian folklore, children can join the “unclean force” as a result of the malicious act of adults – e.g. parental curse or unpremeditated murder. Unlike the changelings who are expelled by

means of abuse, the unbaptized and stolen children may be redeemed through an act of expiation performed by the parent or another community member. I have argued that the folkloric focus on curse and redemption determined the narrative development of the literary texts that incorporated the lore of supernatural children – for example, Odoevskii's short story "Igosha" or Dostoevskii's *The Insulted and Humiliated*.

When initially I started researching supernatural children, I was convinced that changelings are either not indigenous to Slavic folklore or their presence is so minor that it may be safely overlooked. With these factors in mind, I was prepared to look elsewhere for the literary transformations of folkloric children. However, while reading the nineteenth-century collections of Slavic superstitions, I found plenty of references to changelings (подменыши, обменыши). The stories of changelings that looked and behaved like their Western European counterparts were particularly common in the western regions of the nineteenth-century Russian Empire, that is, in Ukraine, Belorussia, and especially Poland. My study of Polish literary works, superficial as it was, revealed the overt (as in Konopnicka's novella) and more subtle (as in Sienkiewicz's short story) references to changelings. Moreover, Nadezhda Teffi's short story "Vurdalak," set in the old world Ukraine, blends the changeling myth with vampire lore in the best tradition of Gogolian fantastic. Moreover, in Russian folklore proper, I also came across the stories of substitution. As opposed to English folklore, where the exchange is performed by fairies, Russian folklore lacks such a hybrid yet clearly defined category, so abduction and substitution is blamed on a multitude of entities, from the devil to wood spirits. And, as

distinct from English folklore, the prerequisite for the exchange is usually the parental curse.

Thus, I see two possible routes for further analysis of Russian changeling lore: to analyze it within the framework of beliefs about parental curse and redemption; or to expand the scope of analysis and situate Russian changeling lore in larger semantic field of Slavic beliefs about supernatural abduction and exchange. Furthermore, my analysis reveals that the changeling beliefs at the frontier of Russian Empire have been undertheorized. A logical continuation of this project would be the examination of supernatural children in Ukrainian and Polish folklore and analysis of these beliefs not only in the national literatures but also in Russian texts that focus on the dialog between the cultural core and periphery.

The study of children as Others, which shapes the core of my dissertation, can set grounds for further semiotic analysis of Otherness in the contemporary globalized context. In particular, it would be productive to trace the trajectory of influence that connects traditional folkloric beliefs to the modern day cinema by using the nineteenth-century literature as a mediator. The active incorporation of folkloric tropes into the nineteenth-century works of fiction sheds light on the contemporary fascination with fantasy on one hand and use of monstrosity as a cultural sorting mechanism on the other. Along with the vampire and werewolf, a changeling has remained an active player in the global arena of Otherness. The image of a changeling, which is constructed, infused with negative connotations, and then exorcized, can be surveyed through the lens of Lee

Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism. In his insightful study *No Future*, Edelman examines how the image of the fetishized Child is strategically launched to disenfranchise queer adults whose lifestyle allegedly threatens its well-being.

That Child, immured in an innocence seen as continuously under siege, condenses a fantasy of vulnerability to the queerness of queer sexualities precisely insofar as that Child enshrines, in its form as sublimation, the very value for which queerness regularly finds itself condemned: an insistence on sameness that intends to restore an Imaginary past. (21)

A purely idealistic pastiche, Edelman's Child bears no connection to the living children because the mindset that engenders it denies the very possibility of children's growing up into queer adults (Edelman 11). Inherited from the Victorian era, this simulacrum of normalcy is still used to marginalize the children that break from the happy-go-lucky paradigm of childhood. As I have shown in my analysis of *Wuthering Heights* and *Jude the Obscure*, in the colonial context, virtually anybody can be re-conceptualized as a changeling because the hegemonic culture reserves the right to categorize the peripheral and colonized subjects. Similarly, the designation of a child as a changeling is a notorious phenomenon in our contemporary culture. We see this type of Othering in the US-made film "The Orphan," which reveals anxieties over international adoption, as well as in the self-identification of Russian homosexual teenagers as "404 Children," "not found" in Putin's Russia.

But inasmuch as folklore supplies the tropes of Otherness to the high culture, it holds the key to their deconstruction. In fact, the idealized Child functions as a folkloric changeling, since it obscures the real children – rebellious and troubled, living in poverty,

disabled, HIV-positive, queer – and severs their connection to childhood. And the cultural analysis of supernatural children will be inexhaustible as long as we continue to respond to the beckoning of Yeats' fairies:

Come away, O human child!
To the waters and the wild
With a faery, hand in hand,
For the world's more full of weeping than you can understand (*Yeats' Poetry 9*).

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