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## UNCANNY STYRIA

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### S u m m a r y

The nineteenth century in the West was a period of intellectual and artistic fascination with the East, both distant and near: Asian and Eastern European. One of the regions that attracted the interest of Western Europeans was Styria, situated on the border separating Austria from Hungary and the Balkans, that is, the West from the East.

Borderland cultural phenomena stimulate the imagination as much as exotic phenomena. Both disturb with their hybrid character, which results from the mixing of elements from familiar and alien cultures. With their duality and ambiguity, borderlands are the source of the uncanny, which in the Western literature of the nineteenth century became the basic ingredient of the Western image of the Styrian lands.

Uncanny Styria was discovered by Basil Hall, a Scottish traveler who reported the impressions of his stay in this region in his 1830s travelogue *Schloss Hainfeld; or, a Winter in Lower Styria*. In the second half of the century, two Irishmen wrote about the uncanny Styrian borderland: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and Bram Stoker. Both associated Styria with vampirism: the former in the 1870s novella *Carmilla*, the latter in the 1890s short story *Dracula's Guest*.

The central thread that runs through all three texts is the decline of Styrian nobility. From Hall, it prompts expression of melancholy regret, accompanied by a sense of strangeness. In his work, the erosion of the culture of the nobility results from Styria's isolated location in the borderlands, as well as the destructive influences of modernity. Le Fanu balances the regret with horror, related to a different interpretation of decline as cultural regression. In Stoker's story, the terror intensifies with the sense that the regression that affects the province of Styria could extend to Western Europe.

## NIESAMOWITA STYRIA

### S t r e s z c z e n i e

Wiek XIX to na Zachodzie okres intelektualnej i artystycznej fascynacji Wschodem, zarówno tym dalekim (azjatyckim), jak i bliskim (wschodnioeuropejskim). Jednym z regionów, które cieszą się wówczas zainteresowaniem Zachodnioeuropejczyków, jest Styria, która leży na granicy oddzielającej Austrię od Węgier i Bałkanów, czyli Zachód od Wschodu.

Graniczne zjawiska kulturowe pobudzają wyobraźnię równie mocno co zjawiska egzotyczne. Niepokoją swoją hybrydycznością, która wynika z wymieszania pierwiastków kultury swojskiej i obcej. Graniczność z jej dwoistością i dwuznacznością stanowi źródło niesamowitości, która w zachodniej literaturze XIX wieku staje się podstawowym składnikiem zachodniego wyobrażenia styryjskiej krainy.

Niesamowitą Styrię odkrywa szkocki podróżnik Basil Hall, który w latach trzydziestych XIX wieku spisuje wrażenia z pobytu w tym regionie w podrózpisie *Schloss Hainfeld; or, a winter in Lower Styria*. W drugiej połowie rzeszonego stulecia niesamowitością pogranicza styryjskiego zajmują się dwaj Irlandczycy – Sheridan Le Fanu i Bram Stoker. Obydwaj kojarzą omawianą przestrzeń ze zjawiskiem wampiryzmu: pierwszy z nich w noweli *Carmilla* z lat siedemdziesiątych, drugi – w opowiadaniu *Dracula's guest* z lat dziewięćdziesiątych.

Wątkiem centralnym, który się przewija przez wymienione teksty, jest upadek styryjskiej szlachty. Hall wyraża z tego powodu melancholijny żal, któremu towarzyszy poczucie dziwności. Erozja kultury szlacheckiej wynika w jego utworze z granicznego i wyizolowanego położenia Styrii, a także destrukcyjnego wpływu nowoczesności. Le Fanu żal równoważy grozą związaną z odmienną interpretacją erozji, która oznacza regres kulturowy. W opowiadaniu Stokera groza nasila się w związku z przecuciem, że wspomniany regres, który dotyka europejskiej prowincji, jaką jest Styria, mógłby rozszerzyć się na Europę Zachodnią.

The journey to an exotic country has been one of the most attractive themes in the European literature since its ancient beginnings. Some writers tell stories about imaginary lands, others visit distant places and report them in travelogues. This fascination with geographical and cultural exoticism intensified in the second half of the eighteenth century and persisted in the nineteenth century. At that time, it was rooted in the Enlightenment drive to develop a better knowledge of the world's diversity, then in the Romantic delight in otherness, which allowed people to free themselves from the restrictive standards of modern civilization. As Zdeněk Hrbata and Martin Procházka note, in those days information about exotic lands was mostly provided by British and French explorers. These travelers visited the Oriental countries and America, as well as the less-known regions of Europe, among which Italy and Spain were initially the most popular.<sup>1</sup>

Eastern Europe also attracted the attention of Western travelers and writers, although this geographical and cultural term was not yet in use.<sup>2</sup> Eastern Europe was a part of the broader East, whose boundaries in the Romantic imagination were not precisely defined. This is how Maria Piwińska defines this issue:

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<sup>1</sup> Zdeněk Hrbata, Martin Procházka, *Romantismus a romantismy. Pojmy, proudy, kontexty* (Praha: Karolinum, 2005), 76–109.

<sup>2</sup> The concepts of Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and Central Europe came into use in the twentieth century, when the continent's political and geographical divisions from the First and Second World War became more acute. Although these divisions appeared earlier, beginning with the first half of the nineteenth century and in relation to the development of a new European order after the fall of Napoleon and the growing political significance of Russia.

Therefore, the Romantic East had many forms. Also geographically. Sometimes it was located in Spain, sometimes in India, sometimes in the Crimea or in Germany, although it was fundamentally modeled on the Arab countries. Wherever these lands lay, you rode East to reach them, sinfully and symbolically.<sup>3</sup>

According to Mike Phillips, the image of Eastern Europe in the English-language literature of the nineteenth century was influenced by the legend of George Byron, who traveled to Albania and Greece in the first half of the century. Moreover, these expeditions were politically motivated as Byron supported the Greek anti-Ottoman uprising, and they were reflected in his literary works. At the end of the nineteenth century, Byron's vision of Eastern Europe was ultimately embodied in the novel *Dracula* (1897) by the Irishman Bram Stoker. This image prevailed in the West throughout the twentieth century, partly because it was often adapted in popular films.<sup>4</sup>

In Stoker's vision, the east of Europe is underdeveloped and, culturally, not fully European, because it was not sufficiently civilized and armed with the achievements of the Enlightenment. Only some of the eastern territories located in Central Europe like Bohemia were considered to be partly Europeanized at the time. These countries formed a broad cultural border between the West and the East, which then was identical to the limits of German culture's influence. German culture was to be a kind of bulwark of the enlightened European civilization.

In the nineteenth century, Eastern Europe was fairly reachable thanks to the development of the railway. As a result, this region became an increasingly common destination of romantic expeditions, although not all of its corners enjoyed the same popularity among Westerners, as this depended mainly on their remoteness and transport links. Many Western travelers only reached as far as the Eastern borderlands. These comprised the eastern border of the German cultural circle, and thus the areas where German culture permeated with other, predominantly Slavic culture.

One of these areas was Styria, inhabited by Germans and Slovenians. Today, the northern part of Styria belongs to Austria and the southern to Slovenia. From the thirteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century, Styria was the property of the Habsburg family and one of the bases for the Habsburg monarchy. In those days, beyond the eastern border of Styria was the Kingdom of Hungary (which included Croatia), since the sixteenth century part of the Habsburg empire with considerable separateness.

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<sup>3</sup> Maria Piwińska, *Zle wychowanie* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2005), 312. All quotations from languages other than English were translated by the author of the article.

<sup>4</sup> Mike Phillips, "Narratives of Desire – a Writer's Statement," in *Facing the East in the West. Images of Eastern Europe in British literature, film and culture*, eds. Barbara Korte, Eva Ulrike Pirker, Sissy Helff (Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, 2010), 43.

In the sixteenth century, after conquering the Balkans, the Ottoman Turks occupied a large part of Hungary, including the capital of Buda. In the Western eyes, the Kingdom of Hungary then became an area of conflict between civilized (Christian) Europe and barbaric (Muslim) Asia, which now extended over the Balkans. Styria lies at the forefront of this unstable territory. In the nineteenth century, the Ottomans were no longer in Hungary – driven out in the early eighteenth century – and were gradually withdrawing from the Balkans, although they still controlled a large part of the area. However, the centuries-long Turkish occupation of the region made a permanent impression on its culture. That is why contemporary Western Europeans invariably regarded Styria as a borderland separating civilized Europe from the backward, half-Asian Balkans.

Styria thus had the status of a triple-border territory. Some of its inhabitants were Slovenian, Croatia extended south-east of the Styrian border, while Hungarians were then considered as exotic as the Slavs. That is, Styria bordered the Slavic lands, Hungary, and – through Croatia – the Balkans; therefore, indirectly Asia, which in the then was to begin in the Balkans. The perception of Styria as a borderland region was also determined by its separation from Western Europe by the Alps. Because of this, not many western Europeans ventured there. Styria was for them one of the unknown corners of the Habsburg empire.

The most comprehensive literary text devoted to this land originated under the pen of the Scottish traveler Basil Hall, *Schloss Hainfeld; or, a Winter in Lower Styria* (1836).<sup>5</sup> It is a Romantic travelogue, recording the writer's memories of his stay in the Styrian countryside, in the eponymous castle and its surroundings, that is, in the area south-east of Graz, near today's Austrian-Hungarian and Austrian-Slovenian borders. Hall traveled to the castle at the invitation of its owner – Countess Purgstall – who also originated from Scotland. She had married an Austrian aristocrat and inherited Hainfeld after his death along with the surrounding estates.

Hall stayed in Styria between September 1834 and March 1835. At first, the writer's attention was drawn to the countess' eccentricity. The most evident manifestation of this was an iron coffin, which the woman kept in the castle. The coffin was made of iron because the countess – a Protestant by religion – did not want her remains to touch the Catholic Styrian soil after her death. Countess Purgstall represents the model of a unique and lonely figure typical of Romanticism (her only son died shortly after her husband), condemned to live

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<sup>5</sup> At the time, Styria is also mentioned by Western guidebooks covering Central Europe. A good example is Johann Georg Kohl's five-volume German guide *Hundert Tage auf Reisen in den österreichischen Staaten* (1842). Kohl covers Styria in the fifth volume. An abridged version of this guide was published a year later in English translation as *Austria. Vienna, Prague, Hungary, Bohemia, and the Danube; Galicia, Styria, Moravia, Bukovina, and the Military Frontier* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1843).

for the memories of the glorious past. The Romantic description of the castle's owner also included her chronic illness, which eventually led to her death.

In the subsequent chapters of the travelogue, Hall described the various components of the Styrian countryside, starting with the Hainfeld Castle and including details of its furnishings. It was a Renaissance building, courtly and designed for comfortable living. The Scottish traveler also visited two other castles nearby, empty and neglected, which had once belonged to the Purgstall family. The first of them, the Gothic Riegersburg, reminds Hall of the Edinburgh Castle. This comparison ennobles the Styrian building; monumental and located on a high rock. The following legend evidences Riegerburg's impressive appearance: when the Turks had invaded the Austrian lands in the past, the castle had made such an impression on them that they had not dared to attack it. This legend enhanced Styria's status, presenting it as part of the ancient bulwark of Christianity. Hall is also impressed by the Gothic Gleichenberg Castle, even though it was falling into disrepair faster than Riegersburg Castle. Hall presents all three Styrian castles against the background of the surrounding nature.

A castle integrated with the landscape is an iconic image in the Romantic historical prose, which praises the pre-modern times that had passed forever. In Hall's travelogue, the main feature of these castles is their spaciousness and rich furnishings which, however, comes with a sense of emptiness, because the buildings are hardly inhabited. They are remnants of a noble tradition, which is not as vigorous as it once was but left an indelible mark on the Styrian landscape. As Zdeněk Hrbata would say, they were both the monuments and the tombs of that tradition.<sup>6</sup>

Besides the castles, the Scottish traveler visited nearby cities: the capital of Styria (Graz) and Marburg (Maribor), the largest city of Upper Styria; although he describes these places superficially. Hall also mentions Laibach (Ljubljana) located in Kraina, adjacent to Styria, by citing the myth of Jason and the Argonauts who allegedly stayed there for some time. Hall devotes more attention to Styrian nature dominated by the Alps than to the cities, although he does not write at great length about the mountains. Hall's travelogue only marginally belongs to the trend of the affirmation of the Alps, initiated in the Enlightenment and continued by the Romantics. For the Romantics, according to Jacek Woźniakowski, the Alps were mountains which "could impress the imagination with their tremendous size, because it was generally affected by huge things; they could also surprise with new views; and even if somebody was insensitive to these attributes, the terror that they could evoke, could perhaps turn for

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<sup>6</sup> Zdeněk Hrbata, "Hrady a jejich zříceniny," in Daniela Hodrová, Zdeněk Hrbata, Marie Kubínová, Vladimír Macura, *Poetika míst. Kapitoly z literární tematologie* (Praha: H&H, 1997), 28, 31; Zdeněk Hrbata, *Romantismus a Čechy. Témata a symboly v literárních a kulturních souvislostech* (Jinočany: H&H, 1999), 34, 35, 40.

a careful traveler into an enjoyable experience of agreeable horror.”<sup>7</sup> Such were the reactions evoked by the Swiss Alps. Hall was the first traveler-writer who directed his attention to the Styrian Alps.

In Hall’s text, Styria is characterized by picturesque wild nature that surrounds the monuments of old and the dying noble culture exemplified by depopulating castles. Deprived of the possibility of close and invigorating contact with the Western world due to its geographical isolation, Styrian culture deteriorated; not to mention that it declined also under the pressure of historical change. The decline of the house of Purgstall was also facilitated by modern barbarism, that is, the Napoleonic wars in which Count Purgstall died; in 1811, in French captivity, when his health deteriorated. The proximity of culturally different, half-barbarian Hungarians also did not help to sustain the traditional culture of the nobility.

The proximity of the Hungarian border (three hours by carriage from Hainfeld Castle) was one of the biggest attractions for the Scottish author. Hall traveled to the other side of the border, where he witnessed the exotic, to him, Hungarian customs. Hall presents Hungarians as a nation subject to cultural regression. Many Hungarian aristocrats abandoned the lifestyle of the nobility and were involved in mundane occupations. According to Hall, Hungarian peasants are also bad as they are capable of rebellion so could be dangerous. Hall recounts a story he heard about rebellious peasants hanged in the north of Hungary, near the border with Poland; though unconsciously, Hall most likely writes about Slovaks who were then treated by both Hungarians and Western Europeans as Hungarian Highlanders, not as a separate nation.

Hall describes Hungarian culture as partially backward and degenerated, but also exotic and interesting, to contrast it with German culture that reminds him of Anglo-Saxon culture and, thus, is to present a traditionally high level of civilization. To confirm his opinions, Hall references the names of eminent German writers, such as Gottfried August Bürger and Friedrich Schiller, whom he considers equal to Walter Scott. Moreover, German customs mostly corresponded to Anglo-Saxon customs. However, Hall has some reservations (especially concerning the standard of accommodation in Austria), which are to demonstrate – despite everything else – a cultural backwardness of the Germans in relation to the Anglo-Saxons. Such comments befit Hall’s tendency to constantly compare different aspects of Styrian culture with Western European culture.

Interestingly, Hall does not mention the Styrian Slavs (Slovenes) who then mostly belonged to the lower social class. This lack testifies not so much to Hall’s knowledge – that he only received from observation and information from the Countess – but of the attitude of the Styrian Germans toward the Slovenes.

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<sup>7</sup> Jacek Woźniakowski, “Góry niewzruszone. O różnych wyobrażeniach przyrody w dziejach nowożytnej kultury europejskiej,” in idem, *Pisma wybrane*, vol. 2 (Kraków: Universitas, 2011), 209.

Apparently, the Styrian Germans did not treat the Slovenes as a different ethnic group, but as peasants who used a Slavic dialect between themselves and otherwise were not culturally different from the German-speaking population. We may assume that the Countess' remark about the mentality of the local peasants referred to the Slovenes: "The people resemble their oxen – they are diligent and docile."<sup>8</sup>

Hall concludes his notes about Styria with the news of the death and funeral of the Countess of Purgstall, although he devotes the last chapter qua epilogue to something else, namely the former friendship of the Countess with Walter Scott. In this way, the writer elevates the status of his hostess, presenting her as an heiress of a great cultural tradition. The reference to Scott signifies a return to undisputed, timeless values. It is also an expression of faith in a tradition that is dying in the Styrian countryside, but in its bastion – the British Isles – remains alive.

The characteristic emotion that runs through the entirety of Hall's story is the melancholy associated with the transience of nobility's culture. In this case, transience means not so much the disintegration of nobility's culture but the loss of its former role. Such an understanding of melancholy is proposed by Wojciech Bałus, who claims that people feel melancholy when the world around them begins to lose its meaning and becomes more and more undefined and undifferentiated.<sup>9</sup> In Hall's work, this process appears irreversible, and such that could only be passively observed, which is what Countess Purgstall is doing, while her melancholic mood influences Hall. This is how he writes about the Riegensburg Castle:

The most melancholy thing of all in such places, is the cold air of desolation which reigns in the empty halls, the total want of use for the magnificent apartments, and the mixture of splendour and shabbiness, of past wealth and present poverty, which implies that the abode has changed from high hands to low ones.<sup>10</sup>

The melancholic sense of loss is connected with the conviction that – according to Bałus – "the shattered world cannot be rebuilt in the same shape."<sup>11</sup> But melancholy also brings a certain pleasure that results from the distance people acquire toward the reality that is losing its meaning. Bałus explains that this distance can have a metaphysical dimension: "separation puts the world at a remove and allows it to be stripped of hierarchical order, giving a certain insight into the metaphysical depth of being, into the fact that things are not what they externally appear."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Basil Hall, *Schloss Hainfeld; or, a Winter in Lower Styria* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1836), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Wojciech Bałus, "Melancholia a nihilism," *Znak*, no. 6 (1994): 68–70.

<sup>10</sup> Basil Hall, op. cit., 54.

<sup>11</sup> Wojciech Bałus, op. cit., 74.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, 71.

Therefore, melancholy contains a longing for a world of higher values, for a meaning that remains hidden.<sup>13</sup>

In Hall's work, melancholy accompanies the experience of strangeness caused by the alienation of the local culture of the nobility from the Western European civilization. The feeling of strangeness is the reaction to the uncanny, which – according to its most widespread and generalized understanding derived from Freudian psychoanalysis – means the blurring of the difference between what is familiar and what is alien.<sup>14</sup> In other words, what is familiar is culturally tamed, while the alien describes the most primitive aspects of nature, independent of cultural control, thus excluded by culture from human consciousness, though not from life in general. Hence, the alien returns at times of weakening control, disturbing the familiar order. This moment is the quintessence of the uncanny. The most obvious example of this phenomenon is the dead human body, that is the body that nature took over, partly pulling it out from the cultural context of its previous existence.

In Hall's work, Styria appears as superficially familiar because it is rooted in Western tradition. At the same time, it acquires alien features in relation to its liminal cultural location. The impression of the strangeness of this area is enhanced by the coexistence of spatial and temporal liminality. In Hall's travelogue, Styrian culture exists between its glorious past and a decrepit present. The times of nobility's glory already passed, but modernity has not yet arrived in this forgotten backwater. Besides, Hall does not view modernity as positive. He only mentions its destructive manifestations, such as the Napoleonic wars or the crisis of the feudal caste society in Hungary.

"Carmilla" (1871–1872)<sup>15</sup> by the Irish writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu is another English-language work devoted to the image of Styria as a space of the uncanny, although it represents a different literary genre than Hall's text. Le Fanu's is a vampire story, which affects the way in which the Styrian cultural area is presented. Moreover, Le Fanu's Gothic novella appeared thirty years after Hall's travelogue. However, the former grows out of the same romantic interest in the less known corners of Europe. Besides aesthetic differences and similarities between the two works, we should also remember Matthew Gibson's assumption that it was probably the reading of the aforementioned travelogue that inspired Le Fanu to set the story in Styria, which he never visited.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, 73.

<sup>14</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Niesamowite," in idem, *Dziela*, vol. III: *Pisma psychologiczne*, trans. Robert Reszke (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo KR, 1997), 233–262.

<sup>15</sup> First published in four consecutive issues (December 1871–March 1872) of the monthly *The Dark Blue*. Shortly thereafter, "Carmilla" appeared in Sheridan Le Fanu's collection of five stories *In a Glass Darkly* (1872).

<sup>16</sup> Matthew Gibson, *Dracula and the Eastern question: British and French Vampire Narratives of the Nineteenth-Century Near East* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 58.



Le Fanu's image of Styria agrees with Hall's vision. Le Fanu created a picture of an underpopulated, wild, and picturesque land. The life continues in the local castle and its surroundings in close proximity to the disintegration of nearby castle ruins, abandoned village, and decaying cemetery. However, Le Fanu intensifies the uncanny evoked by the Styrian countryside by transforming the strangeness, which in Hall's text results from the progressive decline of the local culture, into horror personified by the vampire – the eponymous Carmilla – who preys on young girls. Vampirism is a symbiosis of contradictory qualities, above all vitality and deadness, but also – in the Romantic version – of aristocratism and primitivism, which in Le Fanu's novella becomes the strongest expression of the disturbance in the separation between the familiar and the alien.

Le Fanu emphasizes the borderland (liminal) nature of Styria to a greater extent than Hall, by defining it in different cultural terms. In Hall's travelogue, Styria's definitely belongs to the German culture, whereas Le Fanu includes it in a wider context of vampirism as a phenomenon originating from Eastern Europe: "You have heard, no doubt, of the appalling superstition that prevails in Upper and Lower Styria, in Moravia, Silesia, in Turkish Serbia, in Poland, even in Russia; the superstition, so we must call it, of the Vampire."<sup>17</sup>

Like Hall, Le Fanu outlines the social structure of the Styrian population by devoting most attention to nobility. Both writers describe the region from a perspective of English-language aristocrats; the main characters of the discussed works originate from the British Isles. Apart from Hall as the narrator, there is also his Scottish compatriot – the Countess of Purgstall – while in "Carmilla" the main character and the narrator is Laura, whose father was an Englishman while her mother a German woman from Styria.

In Le Fanu's work, the cosmopolitan character of the nobility is more prominent. Laura's castle is also inhabited by a French governess and a Swiss nanny, while the people surrounding Carmilla include a black woman. In this way, Le Fanu emphasizes the distance between the characters and the space around them. The space has not been fully tamed by the characters, which magnifies the threat that enters the castle from that space. Understandably, near the castle live German-speaking Styrians, but the story also mentions a hunchbacked magician who speaks only a little German and French, which would suggest that he is neither a Styrian German nor well-educated, thus may be of Slovenian origin.

Unlike Hall, Le Fanu does not specify the exact location of the events. Graz is the only name of an existing place used in Le Fanu story. It is known that Laura's castle is ten miles from Graz. Other local names, such as the Karnstein Castle or the Drunstall guest house, have no equivalents on the map and perhaps were invented by Le Fanu.

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<sup>17</sup> Sheridan Le Fanu, "Carmilla," in *Carmilla by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. A Critical Edition*, ed. Kathleen Costello-Sullivan (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 91.

Why did Le Fanu set his vampire tale in Styria and not another region of Europe? It is not just a question of the supposed influence of Hall's travelogue. Since the eighteenth century, the opinion that the belief in vampirism was a phenomenon typical of Eastern Europe had been developing in the West. From the Western point of view, both Central Europe and the Balkans belonged to Eastern Europe. This belief was adopted by the Romantics.

Vesna Goldsworthy points out that Gothic prose, including vampire stories, usually occurs in a liminal space, where the culturally familiar meets the alien. That is why the storylines of Gothic tales usually unfold in backward regions of Europe or in European borderlands. According to Goldsworthy, Le Fanu also followed the liminality principle when choosing Austria – a relatively familiar region from the western point of view – and specifically Styria, a relatively poor and sparsely populated borderland and gateway to the Balkans.<sup>18</sup>

Liminal space is more disturbing than completely alien space because the foreignness of the latter is clearly differentiated from the familiar and as such does not directly threaten our sense of identity, while liminality has a hybrid character – partly familiar, partly alien – and thus makes us question the integrity of identity. In the Romantic vision, the vampire is a hybrid phenomenon by its very nature: both human and animal, aristocratic and primitive; therefore, it fits well in the liminal space; it is its product.

In the first Romantic vampire stories like Johann Wolfgang Goethe's ballad "Die Braut von Korinth" (The Bride from Corinth; 1798) and John Polidori's story "The Vampyre" (1819),<sup>19</sup> the liminal space is Greece, which exists between the Christian and Muslim worlds, between the ancient past and the modern present. However, subsequent authors of horror fiction look for new locations for their stories. Styria works in this role because of its location on the border between the West and the East and as a region unknown in the West because of its remoteness; as it is cut off from the West by the Alps.

According to Matthew Gibson, "Carmilla" might have also been set in Styria because of the internal division of the Habsburg monarchy that happened at the time, which resulted in the creation of Austria-Hungary. That division occurred in 1867, that is, just a few years before Le Fanu's work. Gibson suspects that this political event that created anxiety in the West about the stability of Central Europe could have worried Le Fanu and drew his attention to the region. Moreover, Gibson argues that Vampirism in "Carmilla" is to be

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<sup>18</sup> Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1998), 76.

<sup>19</sup> The poem *Vampire* (*Der Vampir*, 1748) by Heinrich August Ossenfelder is considered to be the first literary work devoted to vampirism. In this work, the belief in vampires is allusively attributed to Hungarians. The vampire motif also episodically occurs in George Byron's poem *The Giaour* (1813), set in Greece.

a symbolic expression of this instability and testifies to the reactionary political views of the writer.<sup>20</sup>

Carmilla enters into lesbian relationships with girls in the neighborhood to feed on their blood.<sup>21</sup> Stephen Arata believes that her vampiric tendencies illustrate the aristocratic decadence that consists of increasingly sensual and consumerist attitude to life.<sup>22</sup> However, one can view the vampire's behavior differently by noticing in it not a manifestation of aristocracy but, on the contrary, its denial, related to the influence of modernity that corrupts the culture of the nobility. From this perspective, Carmilla is a modern emancipated woman who contests the foundations of nobility's order: patriarchy, conservatism, religion. Her predatory insidious behavior is anti-cultural. In this interpretation, modernity does not signify cultural progress but regression, which consists in a return to the original, natural impulses. Vampirism symbolizes modern barbarism hidden under the mask of liberalism.

Thus, Carmilla the vampire foretells the cultural degeneration of the nobility, which in modern times must fight for survival, which requires it to be more aggressive and adapt to modern rules instituted by lower social classes. In such conditions, the noble blood gets corrupted, which in Le Fanu's novel means its mixing with the vampire blood, barbaric due to its partly non-human origin. This mixing prolongs the aristocrats' life since Carmilla died prematurely but can come back to life as a vampire and live forever. However, it simultaneously destroys traditional virtues as vampirism turns Carmilla into a predator, for whom satisfying her hunger is the most important goal.

Such a vision of the nobility is not new in Western literature. Carol A. Senf remarks that the characters in traditional Gothic novels are often aristocrats who evoke terror. They appear this way because at beginning in the 18th century they began losing their long-standing role in the society. That is, the nobility no longer defends the society in wars and crises but – as a relic of feudalism – poses a threat to the modern social order. Hence why, in the nineteenth century, the nobility appears doomed to extinction and predatory.<sup>23</sup>

Thanks to Le Fanu's novel, Styria briefly had the chance to gain the status that Transylvania has today: to be considered the homeland of vampirism. However, that did not happen, because in 1897 Bram Stoker published the most famous among the vampire novels: *Dracula*. However, "Carmilla" remains a part of the vampire fiction canon. Under its influence, Stoker initially intended

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Gibson, op. cit., 44.

<sup>21</sup> The lesbian motif in *Carmilla* is described in more detail by Maria Janion, *Wampir. Biografia symboliczna* (Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2004), 184–189.

<sup>22</sup> Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Identity and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 114.

<sup>23</sup> Carol A. Senf, *Bram Stoker* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 80.

to set the events of *Dracula* in Styria, as evidenced by the corrections in the manuscript of the novel.<sup>24</sup> However, Stoker changed his original intent after he decided that Transylvania would be a more attractive location for Dracula's castle.

Stoker's previous interest in Styria is also evidenced by his story "Dracula's Guest," published two years after the writer's death – in 1914 – in a collection of three short stories *Dracula's Guest and Other Weird Stories*. The story was created in the 1890s. Scholars of Stoker's work claim that the piece originated as the initial section of *Dracula*, removed later by the author during editing.<sup>25</sup>

"Dracula's Guest" tells the story of a journey by *Dracula's* protagonist, Jonathan Harker, from Munich to an abandoned nearby village, where he finds himself in a cemetery on Walpurgis Night. There, Harker comes across the tomb of Countess Dolingen of Graz. The rest of the text has a phantasmagoric character. The weather gets worse, a blizzard blows, and it seems to Harker that the countess comes out of her tomb. Then, he is attacked by a wolf (a werewolf?), which is eventually scared off by soldiers who arrive at the cemetery.

The Styrian motif in this story boils down to the vampire countess who, for reasons unknown, was buried far away from her native lands. Stoker's creation of such character – just like Le Fanu's earlier Carmilla – expresses the fear about nobility's degeneration in modern times. In both works, the regression of the noble culture is also expressed more literally: by associating the vampire aristocrat with an animal. Carmilla can turn into a cat, countess Dolingen – into a wolf.

Stoker places Styria at a farther distance from the West than Le Fanu. The former does not even call Styria by its name. It is only referenced by the name of its capital: Graz. Apart from that, it remains an undefined region. The vampire who originated from Styria appears in Bavaria. In this way, the significance of the border separating the civilized West from the barbarous East appears weakened. Vampirism that originated from the East now penetrates the West, causing its estrangement. In connection with such an approach to the uncanny, another concern can be noticed in the examined story, one that Stoker expresses more clearly in *Dracula*: the fear of an influx of emigrants from Eastern Europe to the West and the resulting threat to the identity of the Western culture. In *Dracula*, this fear is illustrated by the Transylvanian vampire traveling to London in an attempt to settle and prey on the English.

The central thread that runs through all three texts is the decline of the Styrian nobility. From Hall, it evokes an expression of melancholic regret underlined

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<sup>24</sup> Bram Stoker, *Bram Stoker's Notes for Dracula: A Facsimile Edition*, eds. Robert Eighteen-Bisang, Elizabeth Miller (Jefferson–London: McFareland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008), 4, 15, 17, 29, 31, 33, 277, 318, 319.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, 278.

with a sense of strangeness. In Hall's work, the erosion of the nobility culture results from Styria's isolated location in the borderlands, as well as the destructive influence of modernity. Le Fanu balances the regret with horror related to a different interpretation of decline, which is not to mean death but the regression of culture. In Stoker's story, the terror intensifies with the sense that the regression affecting the European province of Styria could extend to Western Europe. The seriousness of this foreboding is evidenced in "Dracula's Guest" by the fact that – unlike in "Carmilla" – it is not a group of aristocrats that fight the vampire but soldiers.

According to the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny, applied in the cultural context, such description of the condition of the Styrian nobility could be interpreted as a reflection of collective fears that arose in Western Europeans in response to the nineteenth-century modernization of social life, including the middle classes assuming political power that previously belonged to the nobility; not to mention a response to geopolitical changes, especially in Eastern Europe. The negative effects of these phenomena appear in the above works as if they only affected Eastern Europe. Psychoanalysis suggests that these phenomena are repressed in literary fiction, pushed out from the West to the East in order to relieve the fear among Western readers. However, the fear is slightly different in each of the analyzed texts. Hall is afraid of the nobility losing its power while Stoker fears the return of the fallen nobility to power in a world already ruled by the middle class. Le Fanu occupies an intermediate position: in his story, the nobility overcomes the degeneration of its environment by the advent of modernity.

Styria's status changes in these works in parallel with the change in the attitudes towards the problem of the position of the nobility in the modern world. It ceases to be a subject of a melancholy reflection, underlined by a sense of strangeness, as it is in Hall's travelogue, and becomes a source of horror, as in the stories by Le Fanu and Stoker. Thus, Styria is removed from the West and adjoined to the East, where the opposition between barbarism and nobility transforms into an equivalence of these qualities<sup>26</sup> – symbolically expressed by vampirism.

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<sup>26</sup> Aristocracy is also set aside barbarism in Matthew Arnold's 1869 *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*. Arnold devotes the essay to the condition of nineteenth-century English society. However, the comparison between aristocrats and barbarians proposed by Arnold is neutral and, in some contexts, even positive. Arnold understands barbarity as the culture of the nobility, derived from the culture of the barbarians who brought down the Roman Empire. Therefore, Arnold's barbarity means traditional elitism that stands out against the background of the culture of two other, lower social classes of the nineteenth century: the bourgeoisie (whose representatives Arnold calls "philistines") and the commoners. Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy. An Essay in Political and Social Criticism* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1869), 93–125.

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