Dracula: Si(g)ns of the Fathers

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Dracula, as everyone seems to know, is a vampire, a black-caped creature of the night who lives by sucking human blood. Vampires sleep in their coffins all day and at night may transform themselves into bats or wolves. They have no reflection in a mirror. They abhor sunshine, garlic, and the cross. At death the vampire's prey (usually a beautiful young woman) becomes one of these "Un-Dead." Only the fatal wooden stake driven through the heart deprives the vampire of eternal life.[1]

This popular lore is derived from Bram Stoker's novel (1897), though today many people unacquainted with *Dracula* are familiar with the "nature" and "habits" of the vampire. He lives on as well in the Un-death of scholarly discourse. Commentary on *Dracula*, now voluminous and diverse, speculates upon the historical, psychoanalytic, and social dimensions of Stoker's story, as well as its relation to myth, folklore, theology, and politics.[2]

Only the vampire-hunter's odd, heterogeneous tools have not been much explicated. Stoker's Van Helsing mentions a plethora of possible vampire preventatives, including the rosary, a branch of the flowering wild rose, and the Host, as well as the three that have survived in the popular myth. Garlic, the crucifix, and the stake are indelible components of popular vampire lore, yet the explanations offered for their power have been unsatisfying, even circular. James Twitchell, an exemplary and influential reader of the novel, writes that garlic is effective because it is a common folklore preventative against vampires and that the cross is powerful because *Dracula* is "an elaborate allegory for the transubstantiation of evil."[3] In *The Living and the Undead*, Gregory A. Waller recognizes the importance of the weapons and notes that they include "a natural herb, a talisman, and a forged weapon,"[4] but even this orderly classification is not very illuminating, for it remains within the terms of Stoker's fiction and his metaphysics.

What is implied by the vampire's aversion to these objects? I suggest

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that it is intimately related to the tale's power as a public nightmare. The vampire hunter's tools are "signs of the fathers," symbols of patriarchal culture and its founding, forgotten terror—fear of Mother Nature, red in tooth and claw.

1

In the past two decades, Freud has become the indispensable authority for reading *Dracula*, a violent and sexual fantasy.[5] "This is a story of incest, of the primal horde, and of the establishment of social and sexual taboos," writes Twitchell, articulating the widely accepted view that *Dracula* is an oedipal drama of the sons' struggle with their father for control of the women, a conflict Freud imagined as the primitive origin of culture.[6] Waller writes that the life-and-death struggle between human and vampire always concerns "the necessity for collective actions, and the possibility that the living can create a new community."[7] The death of the patriarchal Dracula, Waller declares, is a necessary and creative violence: "What is at stake is nothing less than the social, sexual, and spiritual future of mankind. . . . from the dust of the King-Vampire and the blood of the primal tyrant comes the restoration or the creation of a new patriarchy based on the family and on God the Father."[8] Freudians have also emphasized the symbolic identity of blood and semen in understanding the vampire. Pursuing the implications of this premise, Christopher Craft argues that the exchange of blood, particularly the serial transfusions, reveals unconscious homosexual desire: "Men touching women touch each other, and desire discovers itself to be more fluid than the Crew of Light would consciously allow."[9]

The Freudian reading of *Dracula* is undeniably powerful, a convincing account of the novel's structure and manifest ideology. And yet Dracula is not only a powerful Father. As numerous critics have also observed, Dracula is the "other" of the horror plot, the monster that must be destroyed. He is, indeed, Transylvanian, not English; aristocratic, not bourgeois; Un-dead, not living. In contrast to Van Helsing and his band of enlightened scientific rationalists, Dracula is a creature of the dark, of madness, and of ancient superstition. Most surprisingly, however, he is also associated with that most powerful and persistent "Other" of Western culture, the female.

Since Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953), the mostly unconscious force of this construct has been an important theme of feminist analysis. To the patriarchal imagination, "the female" is bloody, irrational, soulless, almost uncontrollable—very much like the vampire.[10] In an unemphatic but undeniable pattern of allusions, Stoker himself links the monster with examples of female power and perversity.

Dracula arrives in England on a ship called the *Demeter* and departs on one called the *Czarina Catherine*. His most horrific manifestations occur in the light of the full moon—archetypally female—and like the moon goddess Artemis, Lady of the Wild Things, he wields control over beasts and may raise a storm at will. The vampire Lucy's brow is compared to "the coils of Medusa's snakes" (chap. 16),[11] and Devendra P. Varma notes that Dracula shares many attributes of Kali, the Hindu Terrible Mother who drinks the blood of her victims.[12]

This affinity between Dracula and "the female" has been widely noted. In *Dracula Was a Woman: In Search of the Blood Countess of Transylvania*, Raymond MacNally describes the career of Elizabeth Bathory (who bathed in blood to preserve her beauty) and includes a chapter detailing the cultural affinities between the vampire and the "female."[13] This point is also made by Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove, who argue that the horror of the vampire is an unconscious expression of a pervasive cultural horror of menstrual blood.[14]

Feminist critics have found the novel significant as a revelation both of Victorian sexual mores (Weissman, Demetrakopuolos), and, as Carol Senf argues, of Stoker's own ambivalence toward the "new woman."[15] Dracula not only prefers female victims but also threatens the cultural definition of "woman" and "mother." "The vampire women in *Dracula* represent the worst nightmare and dearest fantasy of the Victorian male: the pure girl turned sexually ravenous beast," comments Gail B. Griffin, who argues that when Lucy throws her infant victim to the ground, the horror of Dracula is evident: "Dracula has so completely polluted her femininity that she has lost all maternal feeling."[16] Phyllis Roth comments that "the duplication of characters and structure . . . betrays an identification with Dracula and a fantasy of matricide underlying the more obvious patriarchal wishes."[17]

Thus the critical literature proposes a paradoxical reading of Dracula the monster. His power is "masculine," but it is power wielded on behalf of what culture calls "female"—darkness, madness, and blood. Craft argues that this ambivalence signals that the text's deepest anxiety is a fear of "gender dissolution." At the level of plot, Craft's reading is subtle and persuasive, and I would not deny that the male enterprise of vampire-conquest implies "gender and inversion." I propose, however, that in the context of the Dracula "myth" (the elements of Stoker's story that reappear in other versions), the confusion of "male" and "female" has a different meaning.

If *Dracula* were a dream instead of a novel, the analyst might conclude with some confidence that "Dracula," manifestly the father, latently represents the female as imaged by Western patriarchy. (In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud writes that "reversal"—the appearance of a

female as a male entity, for example—is one of the most common functions for the dream work.)[18] We shall probably never discover whether Stoker was aware of his monster's female dimensions, and if he was, what he made of them.[19] But the source of his creature's uncanny power lies in this disguise of the female by the male, and the satisfaction of the novel's resolution is the conquest of this Terrible Other. *Dracula* recapitulates in the gothic mode one of patriarchy's favorite stories. It is inherent in the legend of St. George, undoubtedly Stoker's conscious paradigm, and it is hidden as well in the Freudian oedipal plot that has provided so compelling a model for critics.

2

Evidence that Dracula represents the female principle masked and hidden by a Terrible Father is manifest in "his" effect on other characters. Proximity to the vampire exaggerates the character's "female" characteristics. Male characters revert to "feminine" helplessness while female ones become predatory—a subversion of those "natural" sex roles on which patriarchal society is founded. Renfield is intermittently afflicted with hysterical madness, that "female malady," while Jonathan in Castle Dracula is ironically placed in the feminine role of gothic heroine (which includes his conventional journal-keeping behavior). The language describing his near-seduction by the female vampires would be appropriate in a "bodice-ripper": "I lay quiet, looking out under my eyelashes in delightful anticipation. . . . I closed my eyes in languorous ecstasy and waited—waited with a beating heart" (chap. 3). As a vampire, the already feminine Lucy becomes an aggressive femme fatale. She speaks in a "soft, voluptuous voice, such as I [Seward] had never heard from her lips—'Arthur! Oh, my love, I am so glad you have come! Kiss me! Kiss me!" (chap. 12).

Men, however, escape vampire predations relatively lightly, which implies that being male in itself provides a degree of immunity. Jonathan succumbs to a brain fever after his ordeal, as if his masculine reason were temporarily disordered by the experience. Renfield, emblem of "consuming passion," is finally killed by Dracula, but does not join the Un-dead, while Lucy, whose sleepwalking implies that the "female," the irrational, is most powerful in her, pays for "salvation" with her life. Mina of the "man's brain" is an uncooperative, but ultimately helpless victim. Of her first encounter with Dracula, she says, "I lay still and endured, that was all" (a formulation irresistibly recalling the Victorian mother's advice to her daughter on her wedding night, "Lie still and think of England"). But even she cannot free herself from the vampire without the aid of five men, which hints at the anxious inequity of the conflict.

The destruction of the vampire Lucy (far more difficult and traumatic than that of Dracula himself) implies that the conquest is, unconsciously at least, the imposition of a masculine "truth" whose signs are close to the sins of rape and murder. Ironically, Van Helsing understood Lucy's vampire condition at her death, but failed to do what was necessary before burial, to "cut off her head and take out her heart" (chap. 13). Because of his failure to perform such preventive mutilation, the men must rescue her from her "fate worse than death" (which is Un-death, apparently). In Van Helsing's mind, her destruction is clearly a metaphorical consummation of marriage, for he insists that Lucy's fiancé, Arthur, drive the stake. Placing the point "over the white flesh," he begins to hammer:

> the thing in the coffin writhed, and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut and the mouth was smeared with crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor . . . driving deeper the mercy-bearing stake. His face was set, and high duty seemed to shine through it. . . .
>
> And then the writhing and quivering became less. . . . Finally it lay still. (chap. 16)

Afterward, Arthur "reeled and would have fallen. . . . The great drops of sweat sprang from his forehead, and his breath came in broken gasps." (In contrast, Dracula is neatly dispatched by "the sweep and flash of Jonathan's great knife" and "Mr. Morris's bowie knife plunged into the heart," chap. 27.) Although Arthur's act of "love" with the "mercy-bearing stake" is at least as suggestive of brutal rape as of marital consummation, its final result is significantly rewarding. At last the body resumes the appearance of "Lucy as we had seen her in life. True that there were . . . traces of care and pain and waste; but these were dear to us, for they marked her truth to *what we knew*" (emphasis added). Better that a woman be a pure, dead virgin, better that she lose her head.and her heart than to remain a seductive, "voluptuous wanton," a "foul thing for all eternity." The greatest danger of the vampire, Van Helsing says, is not a matter of "mere life and death. It is that we become as him" (chap. 28).

The unpleasant implication here is that in the pursuit of masculine "high duty," any consequence for the woman is justified. The men take it for granted that the female is an "other" to be possessed, protected, rescued—and destroyed, if need be—in marriage. As Lucy's fate suggests, these men are fighting not to rescue the particular woman so much as to impose their ideal of what a woman should be—"virtuous,"

that is, submissive to a higher, "male" principle. (As the etymology of the word declares, and the plot of *Dracula* implies, a "virtuous" woman is one who is as much like a man as possible.)

Lucy, the novel assures us, is better off dead. And Mina's salvation is affirmed in life when she gives birth to a baby who quasi-miraculously replaces Quincey Morris, sacrificed in the struggle. (The child is not, of course, a daughter.) This is the book's final sign that it was all worthwhile. Yet motherhood, praised and affirmed by the novel's manifest structure and statement, is also most ambiguously linked with impurity, death, and vampire evil.

Incongruous and puzzling allusions to motherhood abound in the novel. When an old woman offers Jonathan Harker a rosary before he leaves for Castle Dracula, she insists that he take it "for your mother's sake." The female vampires in Castle Dracula are content to leave Jonathan in exchange for the child that Dracula brings them. Lucy associates the light gleaming on the windows of St. Mary's Church with Dracula's "red eyes." Curiously indeed, Lucy's mother, although well-meaning, disastrously causes her daughter's death. Lucy is asleep wreathed in the garlic flowers that Van Helsing has arranged, like Ophelia's "virgin crants and maiden strewments," as she herself remarks (chap. 11). (We note that the flowers are efficacious here, not the bulbs of garlic used in vampire movies.) Mrs. Westenra, dying of "heart trouble," removes them. The next morning, Van Helsing exclaims: "This poor mother, all unknowing and all for the good as she think does such thing as lose her daughter body and soul. . . . [*sic*] Oh, how we are beset! How are all the powers of the devils against us!" (chap. 11). As a very young vampire, Lucy enacts a dreadful parody of motherhood; Seward and Van Helsing glimpse her carrying a child in her arms, children now being her only prey.

This last incident might merely imply (as Gail Griffin argues) that the female vampire's tendency to prey upon children is Stoker's deliberate example of egregious depravity; such a choice is consistent with Victorian idealizing of motherhood as the highest female role. But this theory does not account for all the allusions to maternity. Some suggest that the presence of Dracula has a disturbing effect on motherly behavior (as when Mrs. Westenra "de-flowers" her own daughter). Others are more obscure. Although the rosary, symbol of the Holy Mother, is a logical vampire deterrent, the gleam of red, whether it comes from Dracula's eyes or St. Mary's church window, is to Lucy disturbingly the same. (Indeed, we are not told whether the saint is the Madonna or Mary Magdalene.) Two other incidents in which we see Mina assuming a maternal role extend and elaborate these ambiguities.

Early in the novel, Mina goes out at midnight to rescue the sleepwalking

Lucy and to bring her home. She wraps the girl in a shawl and gives her her own shoes. Lucy takes them "with the obedience of a child": "When we got to the churchyard [Mina says] where there was a puddle of water . . . I daubed my feet with mud . . . so that as we went home, no one, in case we should meet anyone, should notice my bare feet" (chap. 10). This rather labored statement is remarkable in several ways. First, it is Mina acting as a mother who is "soiled" by the experience, whom we see has "feet of clay"; it would seem more fitting that Lucy, now already in Dracula's power, should be so marked. We are supposed to admire Mina's motherly conscientiousness; yet as a result of playing the "highest," "best" female part, she becomes "dirty." Metaphorically, the passage declares the proximity of the human mother and Mother Earth. But there is an additional complication. Mina's muddy feet are a direct result of her internalized concern with respectability, "propriety." Most interesting of all, she finds the mud readily available in the churchyard.

Or consider another significant instance when Mina plays mother. After Lucy's death, she comforts the forlorn Arthur. Attempting to speak of his dead fiancée, he begins to weep. Mina says, "I suppose there is something in a woman's nature that makes a man free to break down before her and express his feelings on the tender or emotional side without feeling it derogatory to his manhood." As she speaks kindly to him, "he grew quite hysterical, and raising his open hands, beat his palms together in a perfect agony of grief. I felt an infinite pity for him and opened my arms unthinkingly. With a sob he laid his head on my shoulder and cried like a wearied child." Mina then comments, "We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother spirit is invoked. . . . I never thought . . . how strange it was" (chap. 17).

On each of these occasions, the maternal impulse leads the conventional Mina to violate social expectations—walking barefoot in the moonlight, embracing her dead friend's husband-to-be. In these instances the concrete level of the narrative seems most at odds with the novel's manifest ethos. Mina's "feet of clay" are incongruent with Van Helsing's rhetoric, his description of her as "one of God's women, fashioned to show us . . . that there is a heaven we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth" (chap. 14). In the incident with Arthur Holmwood, maternal power uneasily accompanies masculine disintegration: Arthur "breaks down" into "hysterical" (womanish) and "childlike" sobbing. The power of the mother is thus analogous to the vampire's; each diverts the "civilized" human being away from the "proper" mode of behavior.

This parallel and the various other ambiguities make sense only within the context of patriarchal premises about women and sexuality. These

include the concept of "propriety" and the double standard, with its division of women into the good and the fallen (or, as Victorian imagery has it, the angel and the devil). But motherhood is an anomalous condition (like the vampire's "Un-death"), denoting a state not accounted for by the cultural classification of women as either virgins or whores according to their sexual experience. Giving birth is the one female function that society cannot entirely sublimate or deny, though patriarchies have traditionally repressed this truth by strict regulation of the conditions under which maternal power may be exerted. ("Propriety" is akin to "property.")

"Good" women become mothers only within a patriarchal marriage, but their power, *Dracula* seems to say, remains disturbing and potentially subversive. Society's restrictions of the mother are legitimated by appeal to Christian metaphysics, which privileges spirit over matter (*mater*) and lauds the miracle of virgin birth as its highest mystery. At the unconscious level, however, an irreconcilable conflict remains, and any human motherhood is dubiously mired in materiality. (This seems to be the emblematic significance of Mina's muddy feet, and the fact that the mud comes from the churchyard unconsciously expresses the source of this judgment.) If "mother" equals "female" equals "nature," as it does within the patriarchal system, then the mother remains suspect because she participates in the power of nature, that nonrational and omnipotent "other" that no culture can order or control. Fear of the mother is the novel's—and the culture's—heart of darkness.

An episode in chapter 20, which is sometimes called its "primal scene," confirms this identification. Seward describes the horrifying sight of Dracula forcing Mina to drink his blood while Jonathan sleeps on the bed beside them:

> With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension: his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down in his bosom. Her white night-dress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare chest which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink.

This is the only occasion when Dracula is directly observed as predator. It reverses several expectations about vampires created by Stoker himself, as if to suggest that reversal is the hermeneutic key to the narrative. Here the patriarch of the vampires appears as a bloody Madonna (with "torn-open dress"),[20] forcing the adult woman to "nurse." Ordinarily, vampires suck the blood of their victims, rather than the opposite. Yet in

either instance, the vampire reproduces himself—the victim becomes his "child," herself a potential vampire. The association of mother's milk with blood is ancient, even archetypal,[21] and the narrator's simile about the kitten implies that the connection is not far from Stoker's mind. Finally, that the scene occurs in the presence of the helpless, unconscious husband merely accentuates the nightmare truth of patriarchal impotence: in *Dracula* the *mother* is the "other."

Thus textual configurations of gender and sexuality imply that Van Helsing and his band of four-and-one-half men (the half being Mina's rational self) are struggling against the most powerful "other" of all—mindless, soulless "nature red in tooth and claw," the archetypal "Terrible Mother." What they are fighting *for* is, ironically, also what they are fighting *against* because even the most "virtuous" of human women must betray the cause in spite of themselves. (If the maiden is to be worth rescuing, she must become a mother, but when she becomes a mother, she invites the enemy Death into the house of culture.) In this context the notion of "control of the women" takes on another meaning. *Dracula* hints that women must be controlled because they represent and embody the energy, power, and life of nature that it is culture's paradoxical necessity to control. Stoker's assumption that garlic *flowers* repel the vampire is emblematic of this paradox. In nature, flowers are sexual; in culture they are symbols of feminine purity, fragility, and mortality. According to Bram Dijkstra, the dead (or mad) woman surrounded by flowers was a favorite icon in nineteenth-century painting; apparently the female as natural victim, "a cut flower among the flowers" was peculiarly popular. (Stoker's image of the dead Lucy in her coffin among "a wilderness of beautiful white flowers" [chap. 13] is thus conventional, virtually a visual cliché.)[22]

In *Dracula* the struggle between man and vampire is temporarily successful, partly because the real purpose of the battle remains unconscious. As *Dracula* shows, culture's only recourse is ideological manipulation and limited, specific action: according to a poignant aside, Van Helsing's mad wife is kept permanently in an asylum (chap. 13). The death of Lucy is a tragic and finite victory. Mina's restoration to virtue effaces her disturbing propensities. Dracula succumbs to the stake, but like the natural generative forces that he represents, he lies in an unquiet grave.

3

The vampire in Stoker's novel is perfectly consistent with the concepts of patriarchal dualism, its dialectic of spirit and matter, male and female, life and death. Materiality binds humanity to matter and hence to death; in giving birth, the mother also inevitably confers death, becomes in a

sense the vampire of her own child. The term "Un-Death" is therefore necessary to describe vampire existence without the positive connotations of "life." Vampire "life" is a physical state unhallowed by any infusion of spirit or soul, hence the vampire's lack of a reflection in a mirror.[23] We see also why Dracula should be so bound to his coffins of earth, and why he "materializes" from dust and is transformed to dust if destroyed. We see why the cross, the rosary, and the Host repel the vampire, for they symbolize the transcendence of natural generation. And we see why blood is so potent and so complex a symbol in this myth, at once literal and metaphorical, sacred and profane.[24]

Earlier, I suggested that a persuasive interpretation of the Dracula myth should account for all the narrative functions. If we accept the possibility that the conflict between human and vampire is tacitly a struggle between a reigning patriarchal culture and an ancient female nature, then the weapons effective against the vampire should be signs of the fathers. And so they are. The phallic significance of the stake is clear in this context, while the requirement that it be wooden may suggest a form of homeopathic magic. The cross, supreme sign of Christian patriarchy, is most powerful because it symbolizes the possibility of a birth transcending the life/death cycles of the natural order—the horizontal, female "earth" plane is transfixed by the "celestial" male vertical. Significantly, in Stoker's novel, these weapons are wielded by *Abraham* Van Helsing, whose first name means "father of many" and who is assisted by Arthur Holmwood, *Lord God*alming. In addition, the Host, which Van Helsing uses on occasion to "sterilise" the coffins of earth, is the wafer consecrated according to the Roman Catholic ritual, thus embodying the "real presence" of the Son and symbolizing the possibility that spirit may redeem matter/*mater*.

The power of garlic is perhaps the most puzzling weapon in Van Helsing's arsenal, and the one which critics have been most at a loss to explain satisfactorily. The smell of garlic is, of course, notoriously unerotic, and some critics have speculated that the herb's reputation in folk medicine as a "blood thinner" might account for its effectiveness against the vampire. But there are other, more immediate associations in the context of this reading. In ancient times garlic was widely regarded as inimical to the Mother Goddess. (Furthermore, the word "garlic" is derived from two Indo-European roots meaning "spear-leek"—hence it is, like the stake, phallic.) According to *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, "Garlic and garlic-eaters were taboo in Greco-Roman temples of the Mother of the Gods," and according to Pliny, garlic "keeps off serpents . . . by its smell."[25] Folklore records traditions of using garlic to placate the Death Goddess, or to protect oneself from her. Garlic was once left at the crossroads overnight to

provide a "supper for Hecate," whom Neumann describes as "the snake-entwined goddess of ghosts and the dead."[26] It was also considered efficacious against the Neriades, destructive sirenlike creatures who worshiped a snake god.[27] The most famous example, however, occurs in *The Odyssey*, Book 10, on the island of Circe, whose wine turned men into swine, also a kind of "Un-Death." The god Hermes tells Odysseus how to defend himself against this fatal woman. He plucks a "magic plant"—a *molü* in the language of the gods." (The natural, as opposed to mythical identity of *Molü* or moly is wild garlic, according to the *OED*.)[28] Hermes tells Odysseus to approach Circe holding the plant before him: "This great herb with holy force / Will keep your mind and senses clear." He also instructs Odysseus to draw his sword before her, which will "make her cower and yield her bed—a pleasure you must not decline." By means of "her own lust," then, the hero conquers the witch, and male order is imposed. Once she submits, Circe's power over those she has transformed ends, just as killing the vampire releases his victims. And in fact, the episode of Odysseus and Circe is fundamentally parallel to that between Arthur and Lucy in the tomb. In Homer, the man controls the woman by means of the phallic symbol/weapon, the sword, and sexual intercourse. In Stoker, the two means of control are conflated into one—driving the phallic stake is metaphorically a sexual conquest. In each the "lustful" female is defeated supposedly on her own terms, within the realm of sexuality, where she must yield to superior masculine power . . . or violence.

4

To summarize: in Stoker's novel, the "other" or "it" named "Dracula" is unconsciously assigned the same space that patriarchal cultures have traditionally allotted to "the female"—the realm of darkness, blood, madness, of matter without spirit, of body without soul, of birth, and generation, and death. And that "it" or "other" is controlled by tools that represent the resources of patriarchy. One question remains to be answered: Why should the repressed mother be experienced as an evil, threatening father?

Although a biographical critic would have much to say about the way Stoker's own psyche may have facilitated this arrangement, such analysis is not my purpose here.[29] We need not search for personal neuroses, for this conquest of the disguised mother is one of patriarchy's favorite stories; it is hidden in the legend of St. George and in the myth of Oedipus as well.[30] The serpent, symbol of wisdom and rebirth, was revered in pre-patriarchal religions as a female force, a pervasive symbol of the Mother Goddess. (This association clarifies Pliny's declaration

about the efficacy of garlic against serpents.) In worshiping the three aspects of the Goddess as virgin, mother, and crone (or waxing, full, and waning moon), these religions accepted death as well as birth as a manifestation of the divine—hence the presence of death goddesses like Hecate and the vampire Lamia.

According to such scholars as Joseph Campbell and Merlin Stone, the rise of patriarchal religions is marked by tales of heroes associated with sunlight conquering serpents or dragons of darkness. (Indeed, the serpent in Eden is a similar revision, "diabolic" because it is a creature of the supplanted Mother.)[31] From the anxious perspective of a patriarchal and spirit-centered theology, death (the end of consciousness) is the greatest "evil," a reality to be denied at all costs. Thus, when the hero "rescues" the maiden from the dragon, he separates the virginal, and hence least "female" aspect of the female from the "monstrous" implications of her own nature, the terrifying dragon of death. He separates the potential mother, necessary for the survival of his culture, from the death that inevitably follows any birth. Like *Dracula*, such myths declare that by means of male intervention the tragedy of female nature may be "re-pressed" into a divine comedy of the father's triumph.

The myth of Oedipus, which was so powerful to Freud (and, as Peter Rudnytsky has argued, to the nineteenth century at large), also tells of the encounter between a mortal man and a female serpentlike creature, the Sphinx. The scholar J. J. Bachofen, author of *Mutterrecht*, writes that the Sphinx is "an embodiment of tellurian motherhood, the feminine right of the earth in its dark aspect as the inexorable law of death." He concludes that in causing her death, Oedipus made possible a new, dignified role for women in marriage and is thus worthy of reverence as "her benefactor, her redeemer."[32] Freud, however, in making this myth a central metaphor for his theories about the growth of the son, or of civilization (in *Totem and Taboo*), ignored (repressed?) the role of the mother in this story. (He remarks that he does not know how the myths of the mother goddess are relevant to his scheme.)[33] Freud also believed that psychoanalysis furnished the grounds of a rescue fantasy; he thought of himself as the "liberator" of women imprisoned by hysteria, defeated by life.[34]

Feminist readers of Freud have commented on this repression. The mother's absence is evident in Freud's individual analyses, such as the Dora case, and in his pronouncements about that "dark continent," female sexuality. He takes at face value Dora's rejection of her mother, who was obviously problematic to his patient. As the authors of an essay published in 1983 ask, "Is there not a structural parallel between Freud's complacency on this point and the eclipsing of the mother in the theory of the Oedipus complex . . . ?

> Freud found aggressive wishes directed toward the father intolerable; in fact, he viewed parricide as the necessary evil upon which civilization was founded. But did he not find intolerable the very notion of aggressive wishes toward the mother? . . . is it not . . . useful to see this blindness in so astute an analyst as the manifestation in him of a perversion—the repression of the mother—which lies at the root of Western civilization itself?[35]

In a short book on this repression of the mother, *Le corps-à-corps avec la mère*, Luce Irigaray writes, "When Freud described and theorized, notably in *Totem and Taboo*, the murder of the father as foundation of the primal horde, he forgot a more archaic murder, that of the woman/mother, necessitated by the establishment of patriarchal order." This murder, she argues, is represented in the story of Clytemnestra, who, avenging the daughter sacrificed to political expediency is herself murdered, by her own son for daring to kill the father. Yet Orestes, though pursued by the Furies, ultimately escapes punishment and female madness.

In a passage particularly relevant to *Dracula*, Irigaray comments that this murder "pays off in the impunity of sons, in the burial of women's madness—or the burial of madness in women—and in our access to the image of the virgin goddess who obeys the law of the father."[36] It is of course Athena who renders the judgment that matricide is not so terrible a crime. Athena not only has a "man's brain," like Mina Harker, but is born of the man's brain, which is perhaps to say that she is merely a fantasy—patriarchy's dream woman who always sees things from man's perspective.

The habit of interpreting *Dracula* in light of Freud's oedipal theory (as a story about conflict between fathers and sons) might be seen as exemplifying a kind of literary "countertransference." According to Freud, this phenomenon occurs when, due to his own unconscious assumptions, the analyst fails to see (and hence to interpret) some part of the analytic material. The legend of St. George, *Dracula*, and Freudian oedipal theory are parallel in taking for granted certain patriarchal premises. They all assume that heroic activity is the province of men, that the work of culture is a male enterprise, a violent struggle against an (always monstrous) "other." Important conflicts occur between fathers and sons, or at least between male entities. Thus, they are equally blind to intimations of maternal, rather than paternal, power. But as we have seen, when readers no longer entirely share this patriarchal perspective, the stories begin to suggest other, yet similar, unconscious meanings: the dragon is also the Mother Goddess; fear of the father masks fear of the mother; Dracula has uncanny affinities with a bloody, threatening Mother Nature.

Thus, I agree that *Dracula* is about the origins of culture, as the traditional Freudian critics have argued, but as it confirms the patriarchal myth of culture, it also undermines it, revealing the anxieties—even terrors—that follow from specifically patriarchal premises about the relation of culture and nature.[37]

The idea that the oedipal complex in fact screens a deeper terror of the mother is not subject to proof, though my reading of *Dracula* may be most significant as a contribution to the debate. Nineteenth-century readers tended to agree that Oedipus's violence led to progress and development, whether the gain was seen in terms of Freud's psychic autonomy, Hegel's higher self-consciousness, or Bachofen's patriarchy. In a phallocentric culture, such growth necessarily involves separation from the mother and all regarded as female; the male child, as Nancy Chodorow demonstrates, defines himself by emphasizing his differences from the mother, establishing, quite possibly, the root of the nature/culture, other/I dualism informing patriarchal conceptions of reality. At the same time, however, "he projects his own fears and desires onto the mother, whose behavior he then gives that much more significance and weight."[38] Nor does the little boy leave the preoedipal mother entirely behind. As a result of his early experiences with woman as sole caretaker, "Mother" remains in the unconscious as an omnipotent, magical, and by no means wholly benevolent power. As Dorothy Dinnerstein argues in *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* (1976), woman also remains as the unconscious symbol of nature—the source of life, but also of death, a fountain of nurture and a vampire mouth always threatening to devour.[39]

This developmental pattern is relevant to *Dracula* in two ways. It explains the novel's (and culture's) functional splitting of women into "good" and "bad" and the consequent need to "rescue" the maiden from the monster—as well as explaining the efficacy of symbols of the Virgin against the vampire. Second, it supplies a motive for that repression through reversal, the childish declaration that the frightening "other" is not "mother" at all, but "father," who is, at least, of the same sex, potentially an equal, potentially to be overcome. Furthermore, what is possible about the structure of terror within the individual psyche may hold true for culture at large.

Stoker's horror story enacts the concepts that such writers as Cixous and Clément have presented in different form—such as patriarchy's tendency to define as "evil" that which ambiguously defies the neat symmetries of cultural systems, its tendency to lay the duty of that disturbance on woman, who must then equally serve as sacrificial victim to that order. Women, they write,

> are allied with what is regular, according to the rules, since they are wives and mothers, and allied as well with those natural disturbances, their regular periods, which are the epitome of paradox, order and disorder. It is precisely in this natural periodicity that fear, terror, that which is offside in the symbolic system will lodge itself.[40]

As we have seen, the vampire, representative of chaos, of all that is anticulture, is curiously orderly as well. Julia Kristeva suggests that in our culture, "It is . . . not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection [her term for horror, revulsion], but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with good conscience."[41] Might one also add the vampire? Significantly, Kristeva argues that "abjection" springs from unconscious responses to the preoedipal mother.

Patriarchy values symmetry very highly indeed; it may, in fact, be its founding concept.[42] However painful and threatening the oedipal situation may be, it is nevertheless reassuring in its symmetry, its implied equality between combatants. The conflict of male antagonists (son and father, St. George and dragon, Van Helsing and Dracula) is comfortingly unambiguous in contrast to that with the undisguised (m)other—the indeterminate combat with a hydra-headed monster, or else merely, "confused alarms of struggle and flight / Where ignorant armies clash by night."

The reasons why Victorian patriarchy may have needed its reassuring fictions are too complicated to enumerate here, but they no doubt include changes in the political and social status of women, ambivalent reactions shown by faith in progress and the fear of change, and the dreadful suspicion that nature does not bear the signs of God the Father after all. Like all powerful nightmares, *Dracula* permits the dreamer to face, and at the same time to deny, the terrors lurking in the unconscious. The horror of *Dracula* is the horror of a culture sensing its own limitations, man's impotence before the universe.

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NOTES

1. I "collected" this version of the Dracula tale in an entirely unscientific survey of three graduate students in English, fifteen English majors enrolled in summer school, nineteen freshmen taking English 101, and six English faculty members.

Of my informants, three had actually read Stoker's novel. A version of this essay was read at the 1985 Modern Language Association Convention.

2. Clive Leatherdale's *Dracula: The Novel and the Legend* (Wellingborough, Eng.: Aquarian Press, 1985) offers a comprehensive survey of these topics. James Twitchell's two books, *The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in English Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981), and *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), also contain significant information about the vampire in literature and popular culture. Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally's *In Search of Dracula* (Greenwich, Conn.: N.Y. Graphic Society, 1972) gives an account of Vlad Tepes, Stoker's historical model. Margaret Carter's *Dracula: The Vampire and the Critics* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988) collects major recent essays. Rosemary Jann explores the ambivalent authority of science in the narrative: "Stoker's apparent defiance of rationalism cannot escape from collaboration with it" ("Saved by Science? The Mixed Messages of Stoker's *Dracula*," *TSLL* 31.2 [1989]: 273–287, esp. 273).

3. Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures*, 108.

4. Gregory A. Waller, *The Living and the Undead: From Stoker's "Dracula" to Romero's "Dawn of the Dead"* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 3.

5. Major contributors to the psychoanalytic tradition include Ernest Jones, *On the Nightmare* (1931; rpt. New York: Liveright, 1971); C. F. Bentley, "The Monster in the Bedroom: Sexual Symbolism in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Literature and Psychology* 22 (1972): 27–34; Joseph Bierman, "*Dracula*: Prolonged Childhood Illness and the Oral Triad," *American Imago* 29 (1972): 186–98; Phyllis A. Roth, *Bram Stoker*, Twayne English Authors Series (Boston: Twayne, 1982); Twitchell, *The Living Dead*; Richard Astle, "Dracula as Totemic Monster: Lacan, Freud, Oedipus, and History," *Sub-Stance* 25 (1980): 98–105. William Veeder's unpublished paper, "Dracula and the Mothers," read at the 1986 MLA Convention, also explores the psychosexual implications of motherhood in the novel.

6. Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures*, 127.

7. Waller, 15.

8. Ibid., 66.

9. Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Stoker's *Dracula*," *Representations* 8 (1984): 128.

10. Several commonplaces that emerge from the feminist analysis of woman as other are fundamental to this paper, including the notion that women are closer to nature than men, that they are more carnal, less spiritual, and less rational. The relation between patriarchal notions of "proper" and "feminine" behavior and the concept of women as property are also inherent. The supposed link between the female and the demonic is also widely recorded, characteristically in the witch hunter's catalog, the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1484). I am particularly indebted in this essay to Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément's *The Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing, Theory and History of Literature 24 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), and to Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). For influential exposition of the cultural links between woman and nature, see Sherry Ortner's essay, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Women, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford

University Press, 1974), and Susan Griffin's *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978). Eva Fige's *Patriarchal Attitudes* (1970; rpt. New York: Persea Books, 1986) also provides a lively survey of misogynistic fantasies.

11. Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897; New York: Dell, 1978); all references are to this edition.

12. Devendra P. Varma, Introduction to *Varney the Vampire; or, The Feast of Blood* by Thomas Peckett Prest (New York: Arno, 1972), xv.

13. Raymond McNally, *Dracula Was a Woman: In Search of the Blood Countess of Transylvania* (London: Hale, 1984).

14. Penelope Shuttle and Peter Redgrove, *The Wise Wound: Eve's Curse and Everywoman* (New York: Richard Marek, 1978).

15. Carol A. Senf, "*Dracula*: Stoker's Response to the New Woman," *Victorian Studies* 26 (Autumn 1982): 33–50. Other critics who examine the novel's embodiment of Victorian clichés about woman's psychological and social characteristics include Judith Weissman, "Women and Vampires: *Dracula* as a Victorian Novel," *Midwest Quarterly* 18 (1970): 392–405; Stephanie Demetrakopoulos, "Feminism, Sex Role Exchanges, and Other Subliminal Fantasies in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 2 (1977): 104–13; and Nina Auerbach's comments on the novel in *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

16. Gail B. Griffin, "'Your Girls That You Love Are Mine': *Dracula* and the Victorian Male Sexual Imagination," *International Journal of Women's Studies* 3 (1980): 460.

17. Roth, 115.

18. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. A. A. Brill (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 362.

19. We do have some pertinent information about Stoker's choices that may have bearing on this issue. Stoker's two most immediate literary models in English, Coleridge's Geraldine and LeFanu's Carmilla are both feature female vampires. Stoker drafted an episode in which Harker encounters a female vampire before reaching Transylvania, but chose to publish it separately as the story "Dracula's Guest." These examples suggest a desire to disassociate the vampire from the female. Yet Stoker also chose the name *Demeter* for Dracula's ship, changing the actual ship's name *Dimitry* (Joseph Bierman, "The Genesis and Dating of *Dracula* from Stoker's Working Notes," *Notes and Queries* 24 [1977]: 39–41). It is easy, however, to think of other possible reasons for all these changes. Stoker's choice of a male vampire might spring from a desire to avoid too close an imitation of his precursors. The episode published as "Dracula's Guest" undoubtedly slowed down the action and mitigated the suspense of the novel. The name "Dimitry" might easily have been confused with the word "dimity"—a delicate fabric frequently worn by Victorian ladies. Certainly the model of St. George also reflects the probably unconscious assumption that the exploits of heroes are most worthy when they conquer male villains. Meanwhile, Stoker also read about the historical tyrant Vlad Tepes, whose cognomen Drakula (dragon) perhaps inevitably suggested, as a structural model, the legend of St. George, England's national hero.

20. Stoker of course uses "dress" as a general term, though the word's connotations of female apparel are telling here.

21. Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Bollingen Series 47 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1955), 46.

22. Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 43.

23. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray comments on the Neoplatonic tradition that regards matter as "most plausibly called a non-being." Matter is *Une mère de glace* (a sea/mother of ice/mirror). If real being is spirit, matter/*mater* is nothing; hence, the vampire, as figure for nature as terrible mother, has no reflection in the mirror (168).

24. The ambiguity of blood is suggested in Van Helsing's comic paraphrase of the ship captain's words: "The captain swore polyglot with bloom and with blood" (chap. 22). The suppressed profanity "bloody" is ironic here, for it is supposedly a corruption of "By our Lady." Renfield's quotation of Leviticus, "The blood is the life," emphasizes the vampire's ironic undermining of Christian symbolism: Leviticus speaks of literal blood, a type fulfilled in the New Testament where the Father's sacrifice of the Son obliterates the ties of earthly, natural blood. "The blood is the life" is exactly true of vampire existence and more true of the human than patriarchal civilization cares to admit.

25. Leonard Wolf, *The Annotated Dracula* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1975), 123; Barbara G. Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 337.

26. Neumann, 43.

27. Lloyd Harris, *The Book of Garlic* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), 22.

28. "Moly" appears to have an identity both as a mythical herb with black roots and white leaves and as wild garlic (liliaceous genus *Allium*, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C. T. Onions et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979). In his note on garlic in *The Annotated Dracula*, Leonard Wolf lists a number of examples from the ancient world that link garlic either with the sacred ("The Egyptians had so high a regard for garlic that they employed it when taking an oath") or with evil (it was widely regarded as a protection against witches)—an ambivalence which would be quite consistent with its unconscious associations with a forgotten Mother Goddess.

29. This association of the female and the horrible is by no means peculiar to *Dracula*: it is a commonplace, an identification with important implications for any theory of the gothic. As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: Women Writers and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) demonstrate, the maternal and the horrible are closely linked in *Frankenstein*. The explicitly female "other" was also familiar in late Victorian fantasy (i.e., Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, Rider Haggard's *She*, LeFanu's "Carmilla," and Stoker's own *Lair of the White Worm*).

30. Others include the Babylonian sun-hero Marduk, who slew the serpent Tiamat; the Canaanite Baal and the serpent Lotan; Indra and the Goddess Danu; in Greek mythology: Zeus and Typhon, Apollo and Python (son of Gaia, Earth); Hercules and the serpent Ladon, also son of Gaia. The medieval story of St.

Patrick's driving the serpents from Ireland may record another mythic parallel, according to Merlin Stone in her book, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 67–68.

31. Joseph Campbell, *Primitive Mythology*, vol. 1 of *The Masks of God*, 4 vols. (New York: Viking, 1955–68), 1:70; Stone, *When God Was a Woman*.

32. Peter Rudnysky, *Freud and Oedipus* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 189.

33. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950; rpt. New York: Norton, n.d.), 149.

34. Toril Moi, "Representations of Patriarchy: Sexuality and Epistemology in Freud's Dora," in *In Dora's Case: Freud-Hysteria-Feminism*, ed. Charles Bernheimer and Claire Kahane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 192.

35. Jerre Collins et al., "Questioning the Unconscious: The Dora Archive," in Bernheimer and Kahane, 251.

36. Luce Irigaray, *Le corps-a-corps avec la mère* (Montreal: Editions de la pleine lune, 1983), 35.

37. From this perspective, the vampire's parodic relation to Christinity more deeply threatens Christianity's (or any patriarchal culture's) very notion of the symbolic, for the vampire denies all symbolism in presenting an alternate system, a "religion" in which real blood replaces symbolic wine, in which "eternal life" is merely physical.

38. Nancy Chororow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 105.

39. Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

40. Cixous and Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*, 8.

41. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.

42. One mark of patriarchal culture is the notion that reality is organized around binary pairs, such as the system Aristotle quotes in *Metaphysics* A_3: male/female; limit/unlimited; odd/even; one/plurality; right/left; square/oblong; at rest/moving; straight/curved; light/darkness; good/evil (Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980], 2–3). Cixous offers her own variations on the structure in attempting to define culture's answer to What is woman?: Activity/passivity; Sun/Moon; Culture/Nature; Day/Night; Father/Mother; Head/Heart; Intelligible/Palpable; Logos/Pathos (63). Clearly Stoker's vampire belongs in the second column, with the female "line of evil."