

Narrative Universals, Nationalism, and Sacrificial Terror: From *Nosferatu* to Nazism

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In recent years, it has been widely asserted that nationhood is a function of storytelling, that nation is inseparable from narration.¹ Unfortunately, the precise nature of this connection is rarely made clear. One problem is that the concept of narrative is often excessively vague. However, I believe that the fundamental insight is sound. Nationalist feeling is bound up with narrative structure in precise and consequential ways. Specifically, it is bound up with the universal prototypical narrative structures: heroic, romantic, and sacrificial tragi-comedy. In the following pages, I will consider an historically important case of the employment of nationalism: the sacrificial organization of German nationalism in the period between the two world wars. More exactly, after treating some more general issues, I will examine one exemplary instance of this employment, F. W. Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horror*, and its relation to the larger discourse that helped to foster the development of Nazism.

Prototypes and Patriotism

As I have argued in *The Mind and Its Stories*, there are three universal narrative prototypes: heroic, romantic, and sacrificial tragi-comedy.² The heroic prototype concerns political usurpation and foreign invasion. Romantic tragi-comedy takes up love and its conflicts with social conventions. The sacrificial structure begins with some communal sin, which is punished by communal devastation. The devastation may be reversed only through a communal sacrifice. Once the sacrifice is accomplished, the suffering ends.

Though the nationalistic uses of the heroic prototype are most obvious, the political operation of the sacrificial plot is in some ways more fascinating. This structure has contributed to the organization and orientation of modern political movements, from Padraic Pearse in Ireland to Mahatma Gandhi in India. Perhaps surprisingly, it was, I believe, the central narrative in Adolf Hitler's thought as well. Of course, there are differences. Among other things, Nazis were at one extreme in the development of sacrificial narratives through an exclusionary or purgative notion of national identity. In this view, the conflict between national identity and ethnic, racial, linguistic, and other identity categories should be resolved by alignment. The nation should be identical with the race, ethnicity, language community, and so forth. Gandhi was at the other extreme in his strongly incorporative attitude toward national identity. In this view, the national category should prevail over other identity categories, but it should do so through reconciling lower-level differences in national unity, rather than through excluding lower-level differences.

More precisely, in sacrificial tragi-comedy, the in-group is suffering some sort of devastation – prototypically, drought and famine (or, less often, epidemic disease). The devastation so exceeds normal principles that it requires a moral explanation. In other words, good times and bad times arise in the ordinary course of things. They can be accounted for by everyday causal principles. But utter ruin calls for something further, a sort of moral causality. The organization of values in the heroic plot places God on our side, as we battle an evil, perhaps

demonic enemy. Devastation suggests that we have been abandoned by God, that we are suffering divine punishment. This punishment is visited on us for some sin committed either collectively or by an individual who is representative of the group. The sin typically concerns eating or sexuality. In the fullest version, the sin was prompted by some tempter, usually identified with the spiritual opposite of God (e.g., Satan). In the nationalist version, the tempter is usually some enemy group and the sinner is commonly an (intentional or unintentional) collaborator. Since the devastation is a form of moral retribution for communal sins, the way to restore normalcy, and regain divine preference, is to do penance for those sins through some communal sacrifice. Commonly someone must die to prevent the death of the entire community. The story of the fall of humankind through Adam and Eve, then our eventual salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus, is an obvious case of this sort.

But just what constitutes the sacrifice? In particular, what determines the identity of the victim? There are two ways in which this may be approached. In one, the enemy is irrelevant to the sacrifice. After all, if God has withdrawn from our side, divine punishment is aimed at us, not at our enemy. Penance must be performed by the home society itself. But this still leaves the question of who should be sacrificed. There are two common responses. In one, the sacrificial victim is an innocent member of the in-group. The victim's innocence is what makes this a sacrifice. The other common response requires that everyone in the home society atone for the sin. In *The Mind and Its Stories*, I referred to this version generally as the 'pure' sacrificial plot. The two sub-types just mentioned might be termed the 'innocent victim' and 'collective self-punishment' variants.

The second approach to sacrifice is roughly the opposite. In this version, the sacrifice is, first of all, a retribution and an attempt to rid society of the guilty parties. In short, someone is sacrificed because he or she has sinned. The guilty perpetrators include one or more members of

the national in-group and tempters from some enemy out-group. Either might in principle be the primary sacrificial victims. However, this version invariably emphasizes that the origin of the guilt is in the acts of tempters. Indeed, in its most extreme form, the entire out-group may be seen as guilty and thus the sacrificial narrative may be bound up with genocide. In *The Mind and Its Stories*, I referred to this as the 'secularized' version of the sacrificial plot as it imitates normal processes of law in claiming to find and punish those who have committed the crimes. However, it is better referred to as 'purgative', for it is still based on ideas of moral causality and, in most cases, it shows little concern for due process, reasonable determination of guilt, or anything else we associate with a system of justice. This version in effect seeks to end devastation by sacrificing members of the out-group blamed for entering into and destroying the home society. Nazism is an obvious case. There are two subcategories of this approach as well. In one, the in-group collaborators are purged along with the out-group tempters. In the other, an innocent representative of the in-group atones for that collaboration by being sacrificed with the tempters.

Along with their basic plot structures, all three prototypical narratives involve implicit ethical principles. Heroic plots celebrate the martial virtues and social hierarchy. In contrast, romantic plots tend to oppose social hierarchy quite strongly. There are several strains in the ethics of sacrificial plots. For example, sacrificial stories often touch on the conflict between the consumption and preservation of nature. Perhaps more obviously, they treat the issue of obedience. Indeed, they do so more strictly than the heroic plots. In sacrificial narratives, disobeying God brings death, not only for oneself, but for much of one's society. What is crucial, however, is that the different ethical strains in the sacrificial structure have something in common, a fundamental moral valorization of self-denial. This self-denial focuses particularly on food and sexuality. The paradigmatic sins in the ethics of self-denial are unrestrained

consumption of food and enjoyment of sexual relations. The ethical ideal of this prototype is someone who has disciplined his or her body through severe restrictions on food and through the denial of sexual pleasure.

These prototypical structures do not arise and have their political effects randomly. Rather, different prototypes are triggered by specifiably different social conditions. Anything along the lines of an attack tends to trigger the heroic prototype. In contrast, the sacrificial structure tends to be activated by conditions of social devastation. This is particularly likely when nationalist ideas are connected with the prototypical cases of physical devastation – famine or drought. Thus, it is unsurprising that the sacrificial narrative has had such importance in Ireland and in India. In Ireland, for example, the Great Hunger or potato famine of the 1840s has remained the most salient exemplum of the devastation caused by British colonialism.

On the other hand, the triggering of these structures is not entirely a matter of the national condition. In keeping with the usual operation of human cognition, the three prototypes are themselves hierarchized, with a default that may be overridden in particular circumstances. That default prototype is heroic. So, everything else being equal, we tend to think of the nation in terms of a heroic narrative. It is only when that structure is contradicted by current conditions, or is self-consciously rejected, that one of the other structures comes into play. This is perhaps most clearly the case when the nation has been defeated in its heroic actions and has no hope of direct military supremacy – in other words, when it has been devastated by the enemy. In this case, there is a good chance that the sacrificial structure will supersede the heroic structure.

Finally, there is a third factor that affects the emplotment of nationalist feeling and action. Triggering of a narrative prototype is not only a matter of intrinsic hierarchy and the salient properties of one's social condition. Such triggering also results from a history of particular stories. Different narrative traditions may instantiate these prototypes in different proportions. The cumulative effect of a particular

history is to make some ways of emplotting events or construing characters more likely than others. (Technically, it alters relevant connection strengths and resting activation rates, thereby altering the likelihood of full activation for particular circuits that specify particular prototypes.) For example, such a history may stress sacrificial plots, making that prototype more salient than usual, perhaps even more salient than the heroic prototype. In addition, a history of particular stories may instantiate the prototypes in patterned ways, cumulatively defining a particular out-group, isolating it as uniquely significant, associating it with a recurring threat, and so forth. Over the last century, film has been particularly prominent in defining and developing such narratives, narratives that, as a group, may be highly consequential for our imagination (or ideology) of nationhood and our actions based on that imagination.

Accidental Stereotypes: A Note on the Hidden Politics of Our Lexical Networks

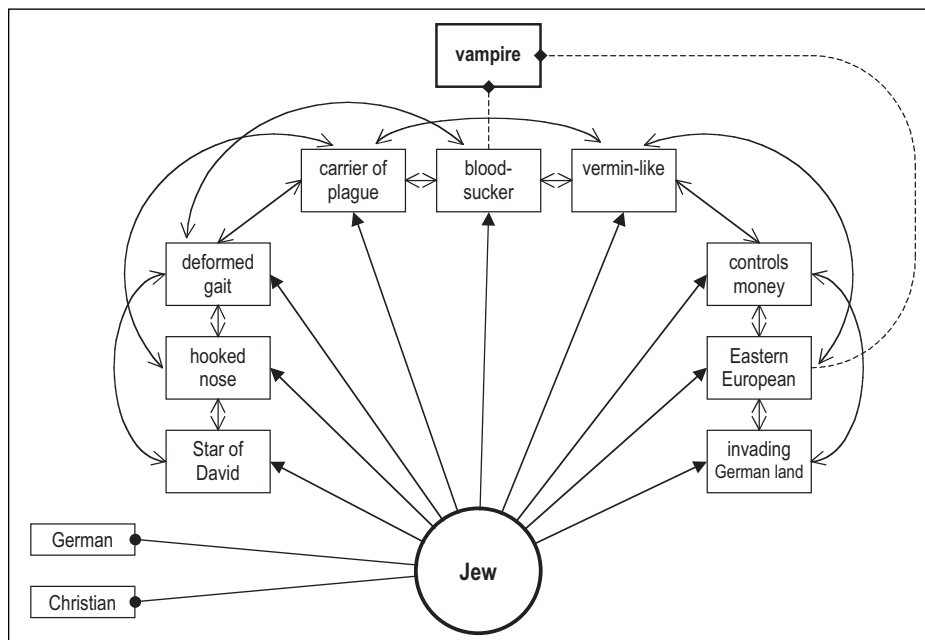
In the following pages, I will argue that F. W. Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu*, a *Symphony of Horror* was a narrative of this sort. In conjunction with other films, stories from novels and political speeches, anecdotes from ordinary speech, and so on, it helped to prepare the way for the purgative sacrificial nationalism that took on such virulent form in the Nazi period. It is important to stress that, in making this argument, I am not claiming that either Murnau or Henrik Galeen, the script writer, in any way intended the film as supporting Nazism or, more generally, a sacrificial emplotment of Germany's nationalism. The film, as I shall argue, manifests a sacrificial way of thinking about communal suffering and it implicitly links that suffering to Eastern European Jewry. In more narrowly cognitive terms, it presents the viewer with complexes of properties that would be likely to prime links between the sacrificial structure and stereotypes about Jews, as well as thoughts about infection, memories of national devastation, and so forth. The priming of these

links is allowed by the prior presence of the stereotypes, even in the minds of people who would reject the stereotypes self-consciously. (A stereotype we disavow nonetheless remains a structure in our cognition.) Moreover, as the plot works itself out, the priming of those links serves to increase their connection strength for many viewers. This, in turn, makes the interrelations more subjectively plausible, more acceptable and more accepted, more likely to guide thought and behaviour in the future. The period before the rise of Nazism was marked by many primings of just this sort. For example, Baxmann, drawing on a different theoretical terminology, notes that films in the twenties included 'an elaborate discourse on the body' with a 'character typology' that made use of a racist 'arsenal' of 'signs'.³ Collectively, these primings helped to prepare ordinary Germans for the Holocaust.

What I wish to emphasize here is that this process unfolds without any self-conscious plan. The development of these connectionist circuits, this specification of prototypes, occurs spontaneously, and it tends to be self-perpetuating. Existing prototypes (in this case, stereotypes), defined by high connection strengths among nodes (e.g., among the nodes for Jewish, Eastern European, and a range of particular physical features), lead writers and directors to choose the properties of characters (e.g., properties of their physical appearance) in certain ways. Not only is intent not required, in many cases the effect is facilitated by the absence of self-consciousness about the implicit links. Reflective awareness may lead to the rejection of spontaneous, stereotyped associations.⁴

In short, Murnau's and Galeen's self-conscious attitudes toward Jews or toward fascism are

• Figure 1: A modified and simplified connectionist model of an anti-Semitic lexical network.



The attribution 'Jew' spreads activation to 'Star of David', 'hooked nose', and so forth. (Spreading activation is represented by arrows with a solid, triangular end.) Simultaneously, it inhibits 'German' and 'Christian.' (Inhibition is represented by lines ending in solid circles.) The activation of the associated lexical items serves to facilitate their connections with one another and with 'Jew'. (Facilitated connections are partially marked by double-headed arrows.) Finally, these activated items prime other lexical items. For example 'blood-sucker' primes 'vampire'. (Priming is marked by dashed lines ending in a solid diamond.)

largely irrelevant to the following analysis. The important point here is that when they thought about communal suffering, what they came up with was a sacrificial structure that ultimately fit Nazi ideas quite well.

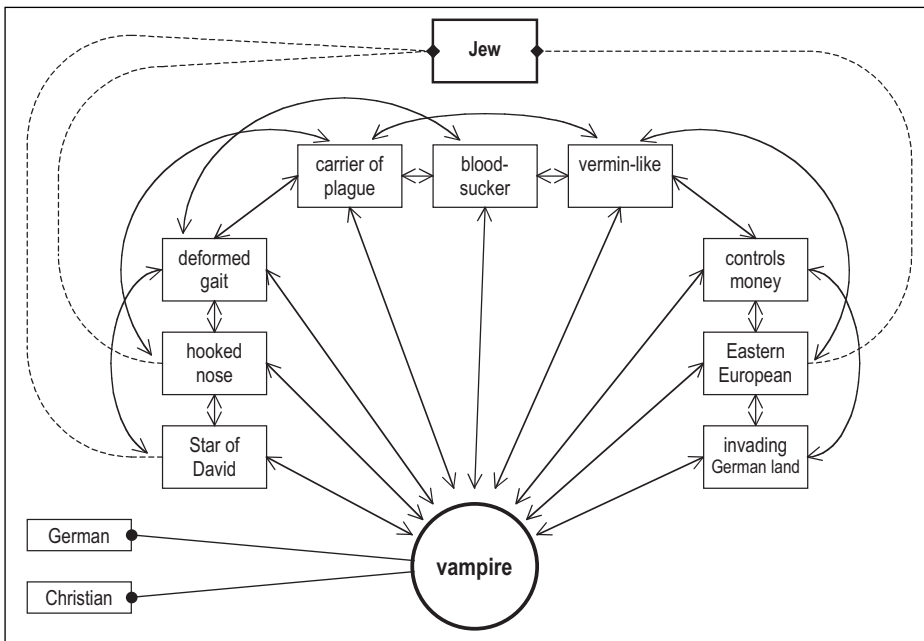
The Nation and its Vampires: Understanding *Nosferatu*

It is unsurprising that the story of a vampire could be recruited to sacrificial use. Anthony Masters has noted a general link between vampire legends and sacrifice, especially human sacrifice, and also with the sort of collective

suffering that gives rise to sacrifice.⁵ Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally explain that, 'When unparalleled and persistent tragedies occur in a specific village, or if there is a period of unprecedented drought . . . then inevitably the people suspect the presence of a vampire haunting the vicinity.'¹⁶ Moreover, the vampire fits well with the demonization of the out-group. For example, according to Florescu and McNally, 'Dracula' is Romanian for 'son of the devil' and 'the Dracula image has, from the outset, been connected with Satan.'¹⁷

Of course, *Nosferatu, a Symphony of Horror* makes its own particular use of vampire stories and

• Figure 2: A modified and simplified connectionist model of the associations fostered by *Nosferatu*.



The simultaneous activation of 'vampire', 'Star of David', 'hooked nose', and so forth, facilitates connections among these lexical items. (Facilitated connections are partially marked by double-headed arrows.) Simultaneously, it inhibits connections between 'vampire', 'German', and 'Christian'. (Inhibited connections are represented by lines ending in solid circles.) Finally, these activated items prime other lexical items. (Some possible cases of priming are marked by dashed lines ending in a solid diamond.) Connections constituting the (anti-Semitic) network activated by 'Jew' are facilitated at almost every point by the activations in *Nosferatu*. Moreover, 'Jew' is almost certainly primed for many viewers, at least via the more common stereotypical connections (e.g., 'hooked nose'). These primed connections may not be strong enough to achieve activation for 'Jew'. However, in conjunction with repeated associations from other areas of culture, the primings facilitate the connecting of the entire network with 'Jew'.

the sacrificial plot, and that is our concern here. In principle, the movie could have overturned these tendencies. In fact, it intensifies them.

The action of the film takes place in the 'Swedish port of Visborg'.⁸ I take it that Murnau and Galeen are referring to the Fortress of Visborg, one of the largest castles in Scandinavia. Technically, the town itself is not Visborg, but Visby.

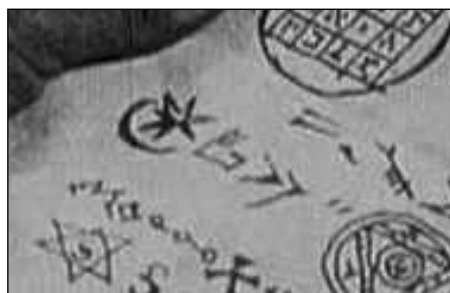
Visby may seem to be an odd choice, at least if the film is to carry a German nationalist interpretation. But, in fact, given the particular problems facing German nationalism after the First World War, the choice is ideal. Many Germans at the time felt that Germany was, in effect, dismembered. Simply put, too many Germans were living in non-German states. The initial rallying cry of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, published only a few years after this film appeared, was 'Common blood belongs in a common Reich.'⁹ Visby, though Swedish, had a significant German population (represented in the film) and a strong historical connection with Germany. In this respect, Visby is more relevant to the German nationalism of the period than some straightforwardly German town in Germany proper.

The film begins with a reference to a terrible plague that struck Visborg in 1838. This is, of course, just the sort of devastation that tends to trigger a sacrificial narrative. This too bears on German nationalism of the early 1920s, due to the devastation of the First World War and its immediate aftermath. Beyond the horrors of the combat outside the country, Roger Manvell explains that, for a time, Germany 'faced the serious possibility of civil war', thus horrors of combat *within* the country.¹⁰ 'Violence', Manvell states, 'was an everyday occurrence in the streets'. Then there was the decline in the economy. Consider one symptom of this decline – the value of the mark, which fell from '4 to the dollar to 130,000,000,000'. Perhaps most importantly, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch explains, during the war, the 'Allied food blockade' had resulted in a 'starving home front' with deaths comparable to those of combatants.¹¹ Beyond these material afflictions, Germans suffered an

acute sense of military despair. After the devastating end of the First World War, they had no reasonable hope of imagining their nationhood – and, with it, the end of their miseries – in heroic terms. Though hardly identical with the plague victims of Visborg, many Germans watching Murnau's film would undoubtedly have felt that their situation was not entirely unlike that of their fellow Germans three-quarters of a century earlier.

Following the opening reference to the plague, and to Nosferatu, the film presents us with some happy shots of the loving Hutter, with Thomas picking flowers for Ellen. The point of the sequence is, in part, to humanize these characters and to develop identification. It also establishes a norm of life in Visborg, to contrast with the time of the plague.

Subsequently, Hutter walks to his office, exchanging a few words with Professor Bulwer. Meanwhile, at work, Knock, a real estate agent, is scrutinizing a letter from Orlok. The letter is not written in any identifiable script and is clearly alien. It is a series of symbols, including alchemical images, emblems from the tarot, and, according to Bouvier and Leutrat, 'signs from the Hebrew tradition' including the Hebrew letters lamed and samek.¹² There is also a clear Star of David. Though not narrowly identifiable, the research of Sander Gilman suggests that the script has Jewish antecedents and therefore may prime the idea of the so-called 'secret' or 'hidden language of the Jews', at least for some



• Orlok's letter to Knock (detail). Note the Star of David in the bottom left corner and the circle at the top right with the table of symbols, including the Hebrew letter beth (ב) and perhaps other Hebrew letters (e.g. aleph א, gimmel ג, yod י) as well.

viewers.¹³ (It is perhaps worth noting that Galeen directly linked secret language with Jewish necromancy in *The Golem*, though Wegener did not choose to represent this in a peculiar script.) In any case, it serves to link Orlok with 'the Hebrew tradition'.

When Hutter enters, Knock explains that Orlok wishes to buy a home in Visborg. He will be Hutter's neighbor. Ultimately, it is Orlok's arrival in Visborg that brings the plague to that town. Thus it is the entry of the Eastern European alien – specifically, the alien who is associated with Jewish tradition – into the heart of one's 'home', the entry of this foreigner as one's 'neighbor', that leads to the destruction of the home society. The idea was commonplace. In the first volume of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler refers to what he considers only a first step in expelling 'the Jew', which is to say, 'the eternal blood-sucker' (i.e., vampire): 'In order at least to prevent the worst, one begins to take the soil out of his usurious hands by making the acquisition of soil legally impossible for him.' (MK 427) Thus Hitler urges a ban on precisely the sale of real estate undertaken by Knock and Hutter. In these passages, Hitler obviously draws on the standard anti-Semitic association of Jews with usury and thus with metaphorical 'blood sucking'. But the commonplaces of anti-Semitism have further connections with the film as well. Specifically, as Gilman points out, there was a 'traditional association . . . of the Jews as the "cause" of the Black Plague' (JB 221). This association seems to have inspired Hitler a few years later as well. Hitler repeatedly employed the metaphor of the plague to characterize the devastation of Germany after the end of the First World War, a devastation which, of course, he blamed on Jews (MK 76, 314, 327, 342). Indeed, at one point, he directly connects the 'plague' of social devastation with the 'blood-sucking tyranny' of Jews (MK 426).

But how are Germans guilty in this view? Why are they punished with the plague, and why is a sacrifice required of them? The explanation is explicit. Hutter agrees to a long journey in a land of 'ghosts' and 'phantoms' because he will make a great deal of money. It is, then, desire for wealth that seduces the otherwise decent

German to bring the foreigner into the homeland. This idea too was not uncommon. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler traces the decline of Germany back to a point where 'money became the god whom now everybody had to serve and to worship' (MK 316). This *hamartia* or tragic error is highlighted subsequently when the coachman refuses to bring Hutter into the 'land of the phantoms'. He explains that he would not do such a foolish thing 'even for a fortune'.

Departing for Transylvania to complete the fateful transaction, Hutter leaves Ellen in the care of their friends, the Hardings. At an inn on the way, he finds a copy of *The Book of Vampires*. Here, Nosferatu is represented as the offspring of the demon Belial. It is worth noting that the demonization of an enemy, though widespread, is more common with respect to some groups than others. In the west, Jews have been particularly likely to be imagined in Satanic ways. More exactly, as I argue in *The Culture of Conformism*, a limited number of cognitive models have been prominent in defining out-groups and organizing or rationalizing behaviour toward out-groups.¹⁴ The use of these models tends to follow fairly consistent patterns. For example, Africans have largely been assimilated to animals.¹⁵ In anti-Semitic writings, Jews have been routinely assimilated to devils.

Beyond setting out Nosferatu's ancestry, *The Book of Vampires* explains that humans often fail to recognize a danger sensed by animals. This is illustrated when a group of horses flees from the threatening evil to which Hutter responded with a carefree laugh. Even when Hutter looks out the window and sees the horses scattering, he fails to understand. Indeed, Hutter repeatedly responds with a smile or laughter to warnings of grave danger – for example, when the coachman refuses to take him further, or when he first discovers the marks of the vampire on his throat. This suggests a more general point – that basically good-hearted Germans have failed to comprehend the danger of welcoming the foreigner into their homeland. It is worth noting that this is not some peculiarity of Murnau's film. As Eric Hobsbawm has pointed out, the idea of 'innocence and simple-mindedness . . . readily

- Narrative Universals, Nationalism, and Sacrificial Terror



- Hutter's profile. Contrast Orlok's profile.



- Orlok's profile. Contrast Hutter's profile.



- Hutter and Orlok.

exploited by cunning foreigners' was incorporated into the German view of the German 'national character' and even represented in the national figure of the 'Deutsche Michel'.¹⁶ The idea turns up in Hitler's writings, as we shall see.

The next day, Hutter travels to Orlok's castle. Here, for the first time, we see Orlok. He is in every way foreign. His coat and especially his hat are strange. His physique is even odder than his clothing. His finger nails are absurdly long. Bouvier and Leutrat refer to them as 'asiatic' – clearly, they are intended to be Eastern in some way. (The 'Easternness' of Jews was an anti-Semitic commonplace; for example, Herder stated that, 'in Europe', Jews are 'an Asiatic folk foreign to our continent'.)¹⁷ He stands and walks in a peculiar manner; indeed, he contrasts strikingly with Hutter in both ways. In keeping with this, anti-Semitic commonplaces regarding the supposed misshapeness of Jews' feet and legs led to a stereotype of Jews as having a 'faulty gait' and 'pace', as Gilman explains (JB 39). Orlok's eyes fit the stereotype of the

'bulging . . . Jewish eye' as well (JB 69). Most strikingly, he has a huge hooked nose, emphasized at several points in the film through profile shots – here in contrast with a profile of Hutter. Whatever one makes of the other characteristics, the nose indicates that he is not simply foreign. He is the stereotype of a Jew. The feature is in part taken from the original novel, where it has been recognized as a sign of 'xenophobia over the influx of Eastern European Jews', as Barbara Belford puts it.¹⁸ Gilman explains that 'the nose came to be the sign of the pathological Jewish character', something that 'everyone at the close of the nineteenth century associated with the Jew's visibility'; especially 'in Germany it was the Jewish nose . . . that was the salient sign of difference' (JB 181, 219). Orlok must suggest the stereotyped Jew to any viewer familiar with that stereotype – including viewers who would never think of Orlok as literally Jewish. In other words, the portrayal of Orlok must prime this circuit; indeed, it must activate much of the circuit, re-enforcing the links that define it.¹⁹

In the following scenes, Orlok not only behaves in a bizarre fashion, but it becomes clear that he is sucking Hutter's blood while the latter sleeps. Yet Hutter continues ignorantly laughing at the danger – unable to recognize the threat even when it slaps him in the face, or rather bites him in the throat. He goes on to complete the sale. Hutter's collaboration with evil is due to ignorance, but it is a culpable ignorance. Soon all of Visborg will suffer for his error in introducing this alien into their community. It is only after the sin has been committed (in the



- Hutter, recovered from his metaphorical and literal fall, leaves the Christian care of the hospital. Note the prominent cross worn by the nun who was attending him.

signing of the contract) that Hutter comes to understand the true nature of Orlok.

Orlok packs up a half-dozen coffins, placing himself in one, and ships the lot to Visborg. The coffins are filled with earth. He will not set down his 'roots' in the new land, but will still remain rooted in the old soil – a common criticism of Jews.

Hutter escapes from Orlok's castle, only to find himself in a hospital, attended by a nun. Hutter's miraculous and hardly explained arrival in the hospital and the presence of the sister, wearing a large and visible crucifix, are clearly designed to stress that divine providence – specifically Christian providence – serves Hutter even when he has erred.

The next scene returns us to the coffins. We now discover that Orlok's soil is filled with rats. Here we have our first sign of the coming plague. Orlok's transportation of the plague is directly related to his status as an alien, for he brings the plague by carrying his 'alien land' along with him.

Professor Bulwer's lectures follow. He is treating different sorts of 'vampirism' in nature, such as that of carnivorous plants. The parallels do not appear to make a great deal of sense. However, their significance becomes clear in the following scene, when we find that Knock has lost his mind. Knock's madness is a form of regression to a primitive biological state. He spends his time catching flies in his fingers and eating them, iconically repeating the actions of

the carnivorous plant. The entire sequence calls to mind Nazi attempts to bolster the dehumanization of various undesirable groups by reference to often ludicrous biological and psychiatric pseudo-science. Indeed, Hitler was insistent on the necessity of treating such groups 'scientifically'.²⁰ Jews figured prominently in the resulting 'research', but so did the 'hereditarily ill', including the mentally ill. The point here is that, if Orlok is demonic, Knock is equally non-human. Murnau does not have Knock killed.

Nonetheless, this characterization feeds directly into the subsequent Nazi view that the mentally ill have regressed to a potentially dangerous sub-human condition and that, as such, they may, indeed must be, exterminated. In the case of Knock, the derangement also suggests that the real collaborators with the foreign bloodsuckers are degenerated madmen.

We now find Ellen seated on a park bench in what is evidently a seaside cemetery. The dunes around her are dotted with crosses, aptly suggesting her own connection with the cross of Jesus and with sacrificial death. (I believe I do not need to remind the reader of what group was blamed for the death of Jesus in anti-Semitic propaganda.) Ellen receives a letter from Hutter. After Ellen reads and embraces the letter, we shift back to the hospital, where Hutter is now well – presumably due to providence, the good offices of the nun, and the prayers of Ellen. Much of what follows simply indicates the parallel journeys of Hutter (traveling by land) and Orlok's ship, the *Empusa*. At one point, Knock picks a newspaper from the pocket of a



- Ellen, the future sacrificial victim, waits for Hutter among the crosses.

guard and reads about the progress of the plague, which has begun in 'Eastern Europe'. The victims all have the mark of a vampire bite on their throats. From this general report, we turn to the origins and development of the plague on board the Empusa.

Eventually, the idealized sacrificial figure, Ellen, realizes by spiritual intuition that Hutter is approaching. In the immediately following scene, her opposite, the mad collaborationist, Knock, realizes by a sort of demonic connection that Orlok has landed. When Hutter arrives, he rushes to join his wife. As Hutter holds Ellen, Orlok grasps his coffin. The opposition of life (the embrace of the married couple) and death (the embrace of the coffin) is clear. Profile shots emphasize Orlok's nose yet again. Watching the film after the Nazi period, it is difficult not to see the degenerate Eastern European Jew bringing death to the couple who (as Nazi propaganda tirelessly emphasized) should be creating new life for the fatherland.

Subsequent scenes involve the discovery that the Empusa has brought plague, and the spread of plague to the town.

Just after we see some doors in the town marked with a cross, and the beginning of a funeral procession, the scene shifts to Ellen. The conjunction is apt, repeating that of the seaside cemetery, for Ellen is, again, the Christ-like victim. The present scene begins the sequence of events that will lead to Ellen's self-sacrifice. Though she promised her husband that she would not read *The Book of Vampires*, she has been unable to 'resist temptation'. The phrasing is peculiar as it puts Ellen in the position of a disobedient Eve. But, far from leading to the Fall, this is precisely what undoes the Fall. It is Hutter's caution that is blameworthy, not her boldness. She reads that only 'a woman with a pure heart' can end the terror by willingly 'offer[ing] her blood to Nosferatu and keeping him by her side until the cock crows'.²¹ The image seems odd at first, for it suggests a sort of sexual self-abandonment to the enemy. But it is in fact the opposite of the sexual abandonment that is so often linked with the original sin of sacrificial tragedy-comedy. It is self-abandonment to

a sort of sacrificial anti-sexuality, a self-abandonment to horror and disgust, not desire.

We are next faced with a peculiar interlude in which Knock escapes from the asylum and runs through the streets, further exhibiting his madness and degeneracy (though in a rather more athletic way than one might have expected). Back home, Ellen is embroidering a cloth with the words, 'Ich liebe Dich.' Several things are interesting about this. First, it is in German, reminding us that the Hutterers are part of the German minority community in Visborg (or Visby) – thus part of greater Germany. (The text of the embroidery is visible in the scene itself, not merely in an intertitle.) Second, insofar as the message is addressed to her husband, it suggests that Ellen already knows that she is about to sacrifice herself. It is a sort of farewell. At the same time, it expresses the motivation for her sacrifice – love. That love links her once again with the Christian paradigm of self-sacrifice, Jesus, for she is manifesting the greatest love spoken of by Jesus, laying down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13). Here, the 'friends' are, first of all, Ellen's family. But they are also her community. As Gregory Waller points out, she 'acts because she sees, as we see, the effect of Nosferatu's presence' on her city.²² It is of course relevant that this scene of domestic (and, by implication, communal) devotion is intercut with Knock's antics. Knock and Ellen are, again, paired opposites – the insane collaborationist who destroys society and the inspired victim who redeems it.



• The city devastated by death, a particularly resonant image after a devastating war.

This leads to the final sequence in which Ellen sees Orlok looking out from his new home. Opening her window, she in effect invites him to come, as an unfaithful wife might invite her lover. In keeping with this motif, she sends her husband away. Again, however, this is not a matter of lust. It is, indeed, the opposite of lust, as we see from Ellen's look of horror. Through its pairing with adultery – perhaps the ultimate betrayal of one's home – we are able to see Ellen's action as the ultimate sacrifice for her home and, beyond that, for her homeland. As Ellen lies on her bed, Orlok embraces her, sinking his teeth into her neck. The cock crows. Orlok turns. In his cell, Knock calls out, but it is already too late. The sun has risen. Orlok tries to leave, but burns away into a few wisps of smoke, for vampires are killed by exposure to the sun. One is reminded of Hitler's characterization of Jews as 'that race which shuns the sunlight' (MK 116). Ellen sits up briefly, just long enough to realize that Orlok is dead and that her husband has returned. She collapses, dying in Hutter's arms. The film ends with the sacrificial delivery of the home society: 'And the miracle shall be told in truth. At that very hour the Great Death ceased and the shadow of the vampire vanished as if overcome by the victorious rays of the living sun.' The health, not only of the home, but of the entire homeland, all of Visborg, has been restored due to the self-sacrifice of one bold, loyal, and pure member of the home society and through the extermination of the demonic foreigner, the disease-bearing bloodsucker, who had managed to infiltrate that society. This was the very message of individual and collective, personal and national hope that so many suffering German people desired at the time. Unfortunately, it was a message of national hope enfolded in a tacitly xenophobic sacrificial narrative of just the sort that would help to produce such unmitigated terror in the next two decades.

It is worth recalling here that self-sacrifice was, in principle, no less central to Nazism than genocide. Leiser explains that 'dying for Germany' was 'a main theme of Nazi propaganda', including feature films.²³ In *Mein*

Kampf, Hitler insisted that all culture is dependent on the sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the community, that, indeed, this is 'the first prerequisite for any truly human culture' (MK 409). He particularly celebrated the 'will to sacrifice' that culminates in 'giving up one's own life for the existence of the community' (MK 410). Indeed, he went so far as to see this as the definitive Aryan trait. The Aryan, he maintained 'is greatest, not in his mental capacities', but in 'service of the community' (MK 408). Specifically, the 'will to sacrifice . . . his own life for others, is most powerfully developed in the Aryan' (MK 408–9). Most significantly, in the culminating chapter of the first volume of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler described just the sort of sacrifice that would restore greatness to the fallen Germany and the 'peoples oppressed by the Jew'. This statement applies equally to the end of *Nosferatu*. Specifically, Hitler claimed that 'With the death of the victim the vampire [*der Vampir*] will also die.' (MK 451)²⁴

It is also worth noting that the notorious Nazi propaganda feature film, *Jud Süß* (1940), is a sacrificial narrative with a plot in many ways very close to that of *Nosferatu*. Indeed, one could see *Jud Süß* as systematically transforming *Nosferatu* such that what is magical or metaphorical in the earlier film is given some literal correlate in the later film. Thus, the genre is changed from horror (with its elements of supernatural causality) to historical realism (i.e., a style which accounts for events by ordinary causal principles). Of course, *Jud Süß* is not a transformation of *Nosferatu* per se. However, it is a variation on the same structure that *Nosferatu* helped to particularize. Specifically, at the beginning of *Jud Süß*, Duke Karl Alexander, greedy for cash, agrees to allow one wealthy Jew, Süß, into his city. Thus we have our collaborationist, our tempter, and the initial crime for which the entire society will suffer. We also have our healthy German couple, Dorothea and Faber. Süß immediately establishes a connection with Dorothea, explaining to her that he has no homeland. Though he is not from Eastern Europe, the crucial point is that he is not truly German. Having established himself with

the Duke, Süß proceeds to fill the city with his fellow Jews, who pour through the town gates, not entirely unlike the vermin in *Nosferatu*. He also bleeds the people – in this case metaphorically, through taxation, rather than literally, through vampirism. Faber fears the worst, worrying that Germans are not smart enough to deal with Jews. Eventually, Süß coerces Dorothea to have sex with him. She surrenders herself in order to save the life of her husband. Afterward, she kills herself. Since this is not a mystical story, Dorothea's self-sacrifice does not directly save German society. However, it does inspire the people to rebellion. Roused by her death, they finally challenge the Duke, who suddenly dies, evidently from a heart attack. Süß is put on trial and executed. The Jews are evicted from the city. Though scarred by the initial sin and by the necessary sacrifice of the innocent Dorothea, the people can now regain their ordinary life.

Needless to say, there is a vast difference between Murnau's film and Nazi policies, or even such overtly hateful films as *Jud Süß*. Again, I am not blaming Murnau for the Third Reich. However, films such as *Nosferatu* – along with novels, plays, political speeches, ordinary discourse – helped to orient and specify the way German people thought about nationalism in the interwar years. Audience members necessarily linked the events and characters of the film with pre-existing prototypes (e.g., regarding Jews or immigration). Moreover, they tacitly drew these connections in the context of persistent anxieties regarding the devastation of their society, anxieties that were already likely to prime a sacrificial prototype. More exactly, the film serves to re-enforce a sense of connectedness among German communities in Germany and abroad; it links the danger of communal devastation with the infiltration of foreigners allowed by well-meaning, but rather dumb and somewhat money-hungry, Germans; it represents those foreigners as Eastern European and as writing in a hermetic script associated with the Hebrew tradition; it identifies the dangerous Eastern European as a particular physical type, prominently a type with 'asiatic' nails (as Bouvier

and Leutrat put it), bulging eyes, a problematic gait, and a long, hooked nose (the last three contributing importantly to physical stereotypes about Jews); it further identifies these foreigners as vampires or bloodsuckers (a literal identification, but one not lacking metaphorical implications, including commonplace anti-Semitic connections with Jews); it associates them with the devil, vermin, insanity, and plague (itself often blamed on Jews); and finally, through emplotment in a purgative sacrificial structure, it indicates the need for exterminating the dangerous foreigner, through self-sacrifice, based on (and thus justified by) purity and the love of one's home and homeland.²⁵

Notes

- 1 For example, see the essays in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- 2 Patrick Colm Hogan, *The Mind and Its Stories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 3 Inge Baxmann, 'Der Körper der Nation,' in François, Siegrist, and Vogel (eds), *Nation und Emotion* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995), p. 361 (my translation).
- 4 On bias correction, see Leonard Berkowitz, Sara Jaffee, Eunhyung Jo, and Martholomeu Troccoli, 'On the Correction of Feeling-Induced Judgmental Biases,' in Joseph Forgas (ed.), *Feeling and Thinking: The Role of Affect in Social Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), pp. 131–52.
- 5 Anthony Masters, *The Natural History of the Vampire* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1972), pp. 11–12, 14.
- 6 Radu Florescu and Raymond McNally, *Dracula* (New York: Hawthorn, 1973), p. 171.
- 7 *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 175.
- 8 M. Bouvier and J.-L. Leutrat, *Nosferatu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981), p. 299.
- 9 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, ed. and trans. John Chamberlain, et al. (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940), p. 3. Hereafter cited in the text as MK.
- 10 Roger Manvell, 'Introduction,' in *Masterworks of the German Cinema* (London: Lorrimer, 1973), p. 8.
- 11 Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat*, trans. Jefferson Chase (New York: Metropolitan, 2003), p. 235.
- 12 Bouvier and Leutrat, *Nosferatu*, p. 306. In the upper left of the front page of the letter, somewhat above the Star of David, there is a circle that contains a clear beth and perhaps other Hebrew letters (e.g., the letter above the beth may be an aleph).

- 13 On this 'hidden language', see Chapter 1 of Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991). Hereafter cited in the text as JB.
- 14 See my *The Culture of Conformism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 134–55.
- 15 This leads, for example, to Black/animal hybridizations in horror films, as discussed by Noël Carroll, *Engaging the Moving Image* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 88–107.
- 16 Eric Hobsbawm, 'Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914', in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 276.
- 17 Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 383.
- 18 Barbara Belford, *Bram Stoker* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1996), p. 228.
- 19 Some readers have been confused by this point. Specifically, they have asked if I am interpreting the film or discussing how German audiences interpreted the film. I am talking about German viewers. However, I am not saying anything about how they *interpreted* the film. For example, I am not claiming that any viewer thought Orlok was, literally, a Jew in the fictional world of the film. Rather, my claims concern lexical and mnemonic connections. My argument forms a sort of cognitivist parallel to Foucaultian discourse analysis. Such analysis places a particular work in a context of overlapping ideas and practices. The claim of such an analysis is that the entire discourse produces effects, not that individual viewers perform a discourse analysis, self-consciously linking the work at hand to the patterns of the encompassing discourse. *Nosferatu* contributed to the cognitive interconnection of Eastern European immigration, plague, particular physical features, blood sucking, and so forth. Given the usual operation of human cognition, the film could fail to interconnect these ideas only if viewers failed to understand the basic plot, not realizing that Orlok brought the plague, not recognizing Orlok as the one with the hooked nose, etc. In addition, given the close relation between Orlok and physical stereotypes for Jews, along with the associations between Jews and Eastern Europe, etc., it seems almost impossible – again, given ordinary principles of cognitive operation – that these properties would not have at least primed ideas about Jews. Note that such priming need not at all lead to self-conscious awareness, not to mind interpretive attribution.
- 20 See Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 40.
- 21 Bouvier and Leutrat, *Nosferatu*, p. 416.
- 22 Gregory Waller, *The Living and the Undead* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 190.
- 23 Erwin Leiser (dir.), *Germany, Awake!*, screenplay by Leiser, Leiser Production, 1968.
- 24 Also see Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (München: NSDAP, 1943), p. 358.
- 25 An earlier version of this essay was delivered as a plenary address at the 'Narration, Imagination, and Emotion in Moving Image Media' conference of the Center for Cognitive Studies of the Moving Image at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI, in July 2004. I am grateful to Carl Plantinga for inviting me to present this work. I am grateful to the participants for their comments and criticisms. Finally, I am grateful to the guest editors of this issue, Daniel Barratt and Jonathan Frome, for their very helpful suggestions for improving and clarifying the essay.