

THE CREATION OF THE MONSTROUS OTHER THROUGH METAMORPHOSIS

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## Dissertation Abstract

Pelin Batu, "The Creation of the Monstrous Other through Metamorphosis"

Every age and culture has created its own Others, some in the form of monsters who mirror not only our archetypal fears but our contemporary anxieties. Metamorphosis always involves otherizing and certain monsters are engendered through metamorphosis. It is these that I have chosen to work on in the light of mythography and contemporary literary theory. In this dissertation I analyze four narratives which focus on monstrous "others" and explore the relationship between these "others" and the societies that breed them.

Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* and Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* are read as the rewriting of mythic stories in which metamorphosis is brought about by the father.

Stoker's *Dracula* and Wilde's *A Picture of Dorian Gray* on the other hand are two monstrous Others with protean genders echoing ancient myths of metamorphosing vampires and evil personified.

Keywords: metamorphosis, the Other, mythology, scapegoats, fathers and sons, evil, beauty.

## Tez Özeti

Pelin Batu, “Metamorfoz yoluyla Canavarlaşmış Ötekinin Yaradılışı”

Her çağ ve kültür kendi ötekilerini yaratmıştır, bunların bir kısmı da canavarlaştırılmıştır. Bu yaratıklar sadece toplumun arketip olarak nitelendireceğimiz korkularını değil, kendi zamanlarının korku ve endişelerini yansıtır. Başkalaşım, her daim ötekileştirir ve kimi canavarlar da metamorfoz yoluyla yaratılırlar. Bu tezin konusu yukarıda bahsi geçen başkalaşmış ötekilerdir. Mitografi ve çağdaş edebiyat kuramı ışığında incelenen dört anlatının tümü canavarlaştırılmış ötekiler ve onlarla toplum arasındaki ilişki üzerine odaklanmaktadır.

Shelley’nin *Frankenstein; ya da Modern Prometheus* ve Kafka’nın *Dönüşüm* adlı eserleri baba figürü eliyle başkalaşım geçiren oğullar türlerindeki mitolojik öykülerin yeniden yazımı olarak ele alınmıştır.

Stoker’ın *Dracula*’sı ve Wilde’ın *Dorian Gray’in Portresi* ise kadim mitolojilerdeki metamorfoza uğrayan vampirler ve somutlaşmış kötülüğü yansıtan değişken, kaygan toplumsal cinsiyetlere sahip canavarlaşmış ötekiler olarak tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Metamorfoz, Öteki, mitoloji, günahkeçisi, babalar ve oğullar, kötülük, güzellik.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*There are monsters of the prowl whose form changes with the history of knowledge.*

Foucault

The subjects of “metamorphosis” and “mythology” are perfectly suited for each other because at the heart of mythology lies the idea of change; mythology exists through the principle of repetition, recycling and rewriting stories of old to fit the qualms and preoccupations of the new. This dissertation attempts to read myths of transformation in four works of nineteenth and early twentieth-century literature. I begin with a selective survey of the mythologies originating in the Mediterranean basin in order to highlight stories of metamorphosis in which the protagonists are subjected to change, turning them into the “others” of society. I then pinpoint certain recurring themes in literary history which not only repeat basic aspects of metamorphosis especially as a means of “othering” as seen in ancient mythologies, but which also reflect the point of view of their own time and place. In my main chapters I discuss Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Oscar Wilde’s *A Picture of Dorian Gray* and Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, which have at their core transformation myths. In this dissertation I shall make use not only of mythographers, literary scholars, anthropologists and folklorists but of Freud, Lacan, Levinas and others who have in their turn used mythology in buttressing their theories.

Metamorphosis is widespread in the mythologies of all cultures. From the wall engravings in *Trois Frères* to the earliest gods of the Egyptians, from Babylonian lore to Greek legends and the Bible, transformation has been writ and interpreted abundantly. Since world mythology is loaded with many forms of metamorphosis, I shall attempt to focus on a particular kind of transformation; a change that otherizes the protagonist or prey. Though the grand theories of the past century are oftentimes looked upon with reservation and the structuralist attempts of scholars like Lévi-Strauss are passed over as “by nature generalist, universalizing, and ahistorical,”<sup>1</sup> we do need to take traditional myth criticism into account (Wiseman 18). Myths are ever-present in the works of many modern, postmodern and contemporary fabulists, writers and poets. We still come across new versions of recurring themes in mythology such as that of the resurrected hero, fire-theft, or the descent to the land of the dead. It is therefore strange that the literary world, rampant with works of recycled, reinterpreted myths, has no new form of mythography. Anthropologists and ethnologists are still producing tables of recurring stories in various cultures, but these oftentimes do not cross over to the realm of literary criticism. Unless the link to an ancient myth is blatantly obvious, works are hardly read by correlating them to ancient myths, and since mythography is oftentimes seen as a spent-science, interpreting texts in the light of past myths is often regarded as a futile endeavour. Myths, by nature, are subject to change, metamorphosing according to the changes in the societies that produce them. The constant reappearance of certain themes makes it necessary that a new form of criticism, a non-generalizing mythography be written so as

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<sup>1</sup> The quote is attributed to Jaan Puhvel, professor of Classics and Indo-European Studies at the University of California.



to understand and differentiate new myths and new fictions, focusing on both the “unchangeliness” and novel nuances of later fictions which employ myth.

The approach towards myths of metamorphosis has changed over time. Mythology first seemed to answer the basic question of “why,” hence, stories of transformation often tended to be aetiological wherein the existence of a being or thing was explained via a story of metamorphosis. In Assyro-Babylonian mythology for instance, the birth of man comes in the form of an aetiological tale. Ninurta blesses stones, and they become first men. The good stones (like lapis lazuli) are transformed into good men, while ordinary stones remain as the inanimate objects that they are. The fickle, passionate, greedy gods exercise metamorphosis to either reward or take vengeance upon the world. In the abjection of their protagonists, these myths can be read as works of “discipline and punish.” Leonard Barkan has pointed out that metamorphic tales always predicate a moralistic tone (Barkan 3). Thus, in many a metamorphic tale, transformations are actually exercised as punishments, thereby serving as cautionary tales.

Mythology has also served as history. Mythographers from the earliest times have interpreted ancient mythologies not only as a series of aetiological or moralistic tales but as a series of euhemeristic writings, that is to say, as distorted or “metamorphosed” histories of actual events. Following Euhemerus (c.320 B.C.), historians such as Herodotus and Prodicus claimed that mythologies of shape-shifting immortals and metamorphosing mortals were actually based on histories that took on supernatural overtones over time. The rationalization of ancient mythologies continued with Cicero, who repeated Euhemerus’ thesis in his work *De Natura Deorum* where myths were

interpreted not only as distorted versions of historical facts but were seen as expressions of moral and philosophical ideas where the gods themselves were allegories (Seznec 4). The impact of Cicero's *Sacred History* was so profound that this form of mythography became a tradition at the beginning of the Christian era and continued to influence mythographers throughout the Middle Ages. It should come as no surprise that Euhemerus' writings were one of the first books to be translated from Greek into Latin. Thus, in his work *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius (c.263-339 A.D.) wrote that the Babylonian god Baal was the first king of the Assyrians who lived during the time of the war between the Giants and Titans while Paulus Orosius declared that "those whom the pagans claim to be gods were once mere men" (Seznec 14).

It should also be noted that the euhemeristic reading of mythologies in the Middle Ages and Renaissance served to draw links between contending rulers or persons of import and deities, basing genealogies of families upon the heroes of Troy and Greece. Jabopo da Bergamo's *Supplementum Chronicarum* drew the pedigree of the Gods while Ronsard composed *Franciade* for Charles IX in an attempt to tie the king's line to important figures of antiquity (Seznec 21-4). Plato's condemnation in *The Republic* of those who took poetic myth literally and utilized mythologies to buttress their arguments makes sense when one surveys how mythology has been utilized by poets and historians. Metamorphosis plays into the lineages of kings which are often tied not only to gods but to certain beasts. The descent from a line of eagles, or the raising of founders by she-wolves is a repeated story in the mythologies of many nations.

The euhemeristic and allegorical approach was translated into different forms in the early modern era. Scholars first started collecting metamorphosis stories from

different cultures. For example, in 1786 Mellman started to catalogue transformations into categories while later mythographers such as Kern, Weicker, Boetticher and Mannhardt attempted systematic readings of world mythology in order to explain the origin of transformations (Irving 2). With the birth of anthropology, concepts such as totemism, animism and fetishism were laced into scholarly studies of mythology, oftentimes reading metamorphosis as an allegory of ritualistic practices. One of the foremost advocates of animism, E.B. Tylor interpreted mythology as the study of man who attributed souls to the inanimate, thus creating their gods in an attempt to understand the nature of things. Though the myth-ritual theory first propounded by William Robertson Smith is largely discredited today,<sup>2</sup> the idea that myths stem from rituals that have long been forgotten has been reworked by later writers. The seeds of ritual theory can be traced in the writings of Frazer, Jung and René Girard when they deal with myths.

Another approach to mythography came from the philologist and Orientalist Friedrich Max Müller. Müller stipulated that mythology is “a disease of language.” According to Müller, deities were words which came into existence in order to express abstract ideas, and in time were “transformed” into imaginary gods and goddesses. Müller traced the etymologies of the names of deities in order to explain how certain adjectives were converted into gods. Thus, the Indo-European word “dyaus” that means “radiance” became the root for words such as “deus” “theos” “deva” and “zeus.” Müller’s scheme would influence the Nietzsche of *Twilight of the Idols* and *Anti-Christ*, explaining

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<sup>2</sup> Irving goes on to discredit the proponents of Ritual Theory such as J.Fontenrose: *The Ritual Theory of Myth*, G.S. Kirk: *The Nature of Greek Myths* and W.Burkert: *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*. He disproves animal cult theories pertaining to Callisto and Io for lack of evidence to claim that these mythological figures arose from animal cults.

how we have created illusionary concepts of beings such as God, thereby emasculating Man into that which is weak, dependent, and easily manipulated.

In the twentieth century, the systematic studies of mythology of the nineteenth century were subjugated to all-encompassing “grand” readings. Frazer laid the basis for archetypal literary criticism with *The Golden Bough*. Following Jung’s theory of universal archetypes, Campbell constructed his monomyth in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, while Claude Lévi-Strauss focused on a different aspect of Jung’s Universal Subconscious, interpreting myths as a pattern of the mind. In 1934, Maud Bodkin published *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*, applying Jungian theories to works of literature. This was followed by Northrop Frye whose *Anatomy of Criticism* expounded on Jung’s and Frazer’s analyses of mythology, focusing on the function and effect of archetypes in literary texts. In short, mythography in the twentieth century became an endeavour which compared and contrasted the religions of ancient cultures, thereby producing great schemes and tables that linked the gods and goddesses of numerous cultures to one another via their ritualistic practices. All these monotypic archetypal readings of world mythology are important when it comes to metamorphosis, because what they do is point to repeated themes and universal recurrences of otherizations via transformation, an ancient theme such as the priest of an orchard guarding his golden bough is linked to the sympathetic magic of the Maori, or a Sumerian story such as that of Utnapishtum is read in the light of Biblical studies. Thus, the twentieth century approach to mythography enables the reader to form links between previously unrelated world mythologies. Today, such grand theories replete with generalizations and hypotheses beyond proof need to be

read with reservation, as Wittgenstein has done, but they have indeed paved the way to interpreting literature mythographically.<sup>3</sup>

While theorists have expounded on the “other,” one hardly comes across works that focus on the metamorphosed protagonists that have been turned into “others.” Kearney has pointed out that although the notion of defining the Other in relation to the Same can be traced to Parmenides and Plato, the enigma of the “other” has mostly been ignored by the mainstream metaphysical tradition until the Others resurfaced in the western culture as strangers, gods and monsters (Kearney 7). I believe theories about the “other” can shed light on myths of transformation, thereby opening the way to new readings of myths and literary texts. By reading ancient metamorphosed protagonists in the light of studies on the Other, we can come to see our own monsters better.

A standard dictionary describes the word “other” as that which is distinct from, different from, or opposite from something or oneself. A precursory etymological inspection into the history of the word reveals a philosophy that will be repeatedly problematized by linguists, psychoanalysts, and philosophers alike, for it is thought that the word is derived from the word *an-tero*, a variant of *al-tero* meaning “the other of the two.” From this Proto Indo-European ancestor tongue, a hypothetical reconstructed language from about 5,500 years ago, it is said that Old English and German derived the

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<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein’s polemic against Frazer and his likes point to their over-generalizing, provincial approaches to myth in his *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough*: “What a narrow spiritual life on Frazer’s part! As a result: how impossible it was for him to conceive of a life different from that of the England of his time! Frazer cannot imagine a priest who is not basically a present-day English parson with the same stupidity and dullness...One sees how misleading Frazer’s explanations are-I believe- by noting that one could very easily invent primitive practices oneself, and it would be pure luck if they were not actually found somewhere” (*Philosophical Occasions* 125-7).

word “other,” amalgamating it with the Latin word for “second”: here was born the word *oper* (meaning, the second of the two), the direct antecedent of the word “other.”<sup>4</sup> From the start, the word “other” suggests a duality then- for, if there is an insinuation that the “other” is the second of two, then we could as well be invited into the realm of simulacras and doppelgangers. More importantly, the etymology also opens ground for philosophical investigation into the self. With the explanation of the word, we are invited to query into the nature of the self and into that of its counterpart, its other- thus giving rising to age-old questions posited by Hegel, Fichte and other phenomenologists as to whether the existence of the other defines the self or whether it is the self, the *I* that gives rise to an other. The word and world of the Other, as we shall see, leads the way to master-slave dialectics, psychoanalytic polemics and eschatological queries.

Levinas’ statement that “the face of the Other is perhaps the very beginning of philosophy” is no hyperbole, for a survey of philosophy from the Milesian School onwards will reveal how central the idea of “the other” was, if primarily to explain and understand life and consciousness itself (Levinas, *Entre Nous* 103). The question of the “other” has been probed since the foundation of analytic thought because philosophers were faced with the problem of the other in the attempt to explain the self. Anaximander, claimed to be the “prophet of Kant and Laplace in cosmogony, and of Lamarck and Darwin in biology,” formulated a theory that cosmic matter consists of *Apeiron*, or that which is infinite and boundless; a belief that would later be tied to the idea of the eternal other, or the unreachable lack that was the other, brought to the foreground by Kant, Hegel, Freud, Levinas, and Lacan among others (Eastman 701; Sahakian 2). Parmenides

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<sup>4</sup> The above information comes from the Oxford Etymology Dictionary.

posited that every idea has its corresponding object in the external world, therefore no object that is inconceivable could exist, a question that would resonate in the works of many a Solipsist, and in the writing of Heidegger and Sartre (Sahakian 9).

Having hypostatized that the self exists only by being recognized by the “other” in his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel had actually turned the other into a mirror image of the self, since the self according to him, did not recognize the Other as essentially real, but that which allowed the self to see itself. Unlike Hobbes, Locke and Kant, Hegel holds that an individual consciousness apart from the absolute is impossible.<sup>5</sup> “Everything that exists stands in correlation, and this correlation is the veritable nature of every existence” (Kain 4). It follows that we cannot understand anything about a certain thing unless we understand its relation to all other things. In bringing the concept of “the other” into question, Hegel is in fact doing away with the Kantian model of the self. Accordingly, Kant’s explanation of two types of self (transcendental self and the flux of the empirical self) are passed over as constructs by Hegel who proposes that there are two forms of consciousness; that which is unchangeable, projected as God, and the other, which is a changeable, self-bewildering flux. “Consciousness thinks it is freeing itself from itself to get to an other. This other, however, is just as much consciousness’s own essence” (Kain 59). By interrelating the concept of “change” to the concept of “self and the other,” Hegel seems to suggest that in the realm of the second form of consciousness, the self and “the other” are de facto linked to the concept of “metamorphosis.”

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<sup>5</sup>The absolute is defined as something that transcends, a thing in itself, a God, beyond all finite things.

Hegel's understanding of the Other is interesting in its juxtaposition with the self since this line of thought leads to his supposition that "the other" is not genuinely "the other" (R.R. Williams 1). This point is particularly important in the light of my argument because all the metamorphosed protagonists analyzed in this dissertation, famous "monsters" of European literature, can be offhandedly called Others, whereas, the fact that they reflect their respective societies, the way their monstrosities oftentimes mirror the hypocrisies and ugliness of those around them, brings into question who is actually "the other." The self-reflexivity between monsters and their makers points to the inherent relation between the self and the "other." Sartre has stated that the Other is an indispensable mediator between "myself and me. I am ashamed of myself as *I appear to the Other*" (Sartre 222). Thus, in tagging "others" one ought to bring into question the taggers.

The Other, according to Hegel does not have an independent status. The central concept of Hegel's Geist emerges as a result of reciprocal recognition (R.R. Williams 2). Thus, one wonders whether one needs the other so as to achieve the status of "self." This, in itself says much as to the status of "the other." Hegel certainly underlines the role of "the other" since without it, the self cannot be constituted. Fichte had posited that the ego is absolute; Hegel points to the process of self-abandonment and finding oneself through the other (R.R. Williams 4). What happens when the Other is a monster? What kind of a self is constituted by being juxtaposed against the demonic, monstrous Other? Each monster of each age corresponds to an "other" within us, but we never acknowledge that monster within us, as Kearney claims. (Kearney 5). Thus our subliminal creatures and scapegoats sculpted out of the very anxieties of the self are all the more otherized and



abjected. The further they are, the better. When identity is created by stigmatizing the others as Others, these outsiders, foreigners, aliens, monsters become the natural adversaries that threaten the self; thus they need to be cleansed or removed, lest they jeopardize the “unity” of the self.

Levinas, like Hegel had prioritized the role of the Other in relation to the self. In a Hegelian vein, it is the relationship between beings, between the self and the other that opens the way to being. But the relation to the other does not constitute ontology. According to Levinas, “the other is the only being whose negation can be declared only as total: a murder. The other is the only being I can want to kill” (Levinas, *Entre Nous* 9). This murderous relationship with “the other” is a feature that comes to the forefront in the works I have analyzed. All “the others” in my dissertation are indeed engaged in a war against those who want and/or need to have them removed out of the picture. Since the monster oftentimes functions as “an alterego, as an alluring projection of an Other self,” it can be said that this war is simultaneously waged against those dangerous elements within society (Cohen 17).

Another way of interpreting the Other is through abjection. Is the abject always an Other? Is that which is on the periphery de facto considered to be both Other and abject? Kristeva depicts abjection as a fear of “otherness,” be this an item of food or filth. It is a primordial force arising from the body of the mother and the self (*Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* 2). The “others” I shall discuss are horrified by their transformations, thereby also becoming abject. Bernstein holds that “abjection is a social and dialogic category, and its expression is always governed by the mapping of prior literary and cultural models. Abjection is only felt in conversation with another...” (Bernstein 29). I

find that this understanding of the abject is compatible with Hegel's master-slave/ self-other dialectic. It is only through comparison that one can be defined. According to Bernstein, it is the abject hero who mimics the monster and attempts to seduce someone from a radically different social or moral sphere into a real dialogue. (Bernstein 31). But in the case of the novels I analyze, it is oftentimes the monsters who are "othered" and "abjected" by their families or societies and not the other way round. Many of these monsters attempt to engage in dialogue, attempt to seep into the normative existence of their own others and in so doing are further established as abject.

Of course, this juxtaposition between the subject and abject brings into question what is actually normal. Does that which is not Other constitute a unified, "normal" self? This in turn upsets the security of the fort that is supposed to be the self. "The more closely one observes the freakishly Other, the more persistently one is reminded of the cost of normality- the pressure of repressed urges, the fragility of the façade of civilization" (Heard 35). In all the works that are explored in my dissertation, one of the roles of "the other" is to show how the ills of society that represses and forces certain models upon its individual members bring about such an abjection. As has been noted, the Other serves as a mirror but in this case it also functions as living proof as to how society creates its monsters, be it by repression of its oddities or by the deification of its beautiful. Since "one of the political and radical strategies of less conventional horror is to highlight this abjection and question it by exposing its origins in definitions of self," one can make use of teratology or the study of monstrosities, to probe questions as to the self (Wisker 218).

Our fascination with the Other is not simply because they provide a contrast, a wall to bounce off and understand ourselves- or in fact to ‘make’ ourselves. Stallybrass and White state that we have a “psychological dependence upon [those who are] rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level. It is for this reason that what is *socially* peripheral is so frequently *symbolically* central”<sup>6</sup> (Bernstein 9). The monsters that have invaded books and films may hit the chord of our death instincts; our attraction to the lurid, frightful Other may be connected to our intrinsic Girardian violence forever at war with the sacred. The fact remains that we are constantly fabricating new Others who mirror our changing anxieties. Whether they are turned into scapegoats as in *Dracula* or Byronic heroes such as Dorian Gray, they keep reflecting the societies they are born out of.

In her innovative work on early modern monsters, Hanafi Zakiya defines monsters as “what we are not” in a world where the sacred gives way to the secularized after the scientific revolution. According to Zakiya each age produces its own monsters. In the seventeenth century it was the white magic from natural forces vs. black magic that came from diabolical aid which created monsters: “This distinction was never more crucial than in the art of making monsters, both organically produced hybrids and mechanical simulacra” (Zakiya 55). When the human body started to be interpreted as a machine, new monsters were born. This is how the sacred gave way to machine-monsters, when the body starts being problematized. We shall see how one such monster is conceived in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

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<sup>6</sup> From their book *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, p5.

Cohen argues that the monster is best understood as the embodiment of difference, “a breaker of category, and a resistant Other known only through the process of movement” (Cohen x). In his seven theses on the monster, he holds that the monster always escapes because its threat is its propensity to shift (Cohen 5). Hence, monsters keep reappearing as a double act of construction and reconstitution. Like Kristeva’s “boomerang, a vortex of summons,” the monster is always back because it allows for the formation of all kinds of identities, be it personal, national, sexual or cultural (Cohen 20). It is also the harbinger of a category crisis, appearing at times of chaos as a kind of third term, thereby bringing into question the binary way of thinking (Cohen 7). All the monsters of this dissertation mirror the crises of their societies, a Europe on the cusp of modernity, clashing with their respective “others.” They are not created *ex nihilo*, for though they represent the dialectical Other and the beyond, they originate from within. Sculpted out of dead body parts, Frankenstein’s son is turned into a monster out of his father’s anxieties and fears. Dracula is not perceived as a monster in his own homeland but upon taking residence in London as a strange aristocrat. Dorian’s monstrosity is born within himself and is only visible to himself. Gregor Samsa is the modern alienated man metamorphosed into an insect. Cohen holds that every monster is a double narrative, thus, his creation serves to show what cultural uses it serves. Lycaon is a warning against stepping outside the boundary, for example. Thus, the monster’s destructiveness is really a deconstructiveness. This is indeed the return of the repressed. Linked with the forbidden, we distrust and loathe our monsters while at the same time envying their freedom and their sublime despair. Bakhtin has pointed out that culture transfers all that is viewed as undesirable into the body of the monster, thus, as scapegoats, they purge,

while simultaneously mirroring our secret desires (Cohen 17-18). Monstrous Others consequently open the way to reading culture, its fears and sublimations, its permissions and prohibitions.

It is no coincidence that monstrous Others oftentimes undergo metamorphosis or exercise metamorphic powers. In every existent mythology gods have used their transformative powers to change some into “others” as a form of punishment, or so as to offer a sort of relief, as in Daphne’s case. “Yet the seductive invitation of metamorphosis- of turning into something other- has continued to suffuse fantasies of identity, on the one hand holding out a way of escape from humanity, on the other annihilating the self...Metamorphosis is possibly the most inventive and rewarding manoeuvre that can be made in the face of fear: to change into a beast, to turn the monster into a person can effectively reverse the process of demonization and correspondingly place the terror in a different perspective” (Warner 263). The subject of metamorphosis compliments issues of identity because it is one of the few direct ways in which a protagonist can be otherized. Unless an abject hero or Other is born so, and that is hardly ever the case, it is more often an act of transformation that turns them into monsters.

There are many ways to interpret the Other, as many a thinker has demonstrated. In the following chapters I shall sketch how different Others underwent change, first as metamorphosed victims of mythology, then as fathers, sons and lovers. Mostly doomed to their solitude, these “others” make one question the nature of the Other. We shall see how deities exercise their punitive powers by metamorphosing proud, sinful, boasting humans into an Other: an “other” that was considered an Other for a certain civilization, be it a monster or beast, a brook or tree. The transformation of a character into a beast

was, for Greeks, an otherization in itself. Likewise, though the transformation into trees, rocks or stars may not be considered an otherization for our culture, it needs be kept in mind that in the pre-Kepler anthropo-centric universe, anything that was inhuman could be considered a degradation, hence, could be considered under the category of Other. In the chapters that follow, we will witness the Others so often addressed by Levinas, Blanchot and Lacan: these Others will be sons to their fathers/ fathers to their sons with their oftentimes non-existent, pedestalled or monstrous lovers, wherein who the actual Other is will to be brought into question.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I propose to survey the mythology of the ancient Mediterranean basin, focusing on stories of change into “the other” where we shall see how certain myths of Sumer metamorphose into Classical legends, Biblical stories, and how elements of Egyptian lore find their way into the literatures of early European civilization. In the second chapter, I shall concentrate on a particular kind of otherizing metamorphosis which comes about between fathers and sons. The tension between the father and son is an ancient theme resonating in the earliest myths as well as in Biblical stories. The bloody transformation that is often brought about due to this brand of “anxiety of influence” is echoed in the works of many a modern literary work from the gothic world of Dr. Frankenstein to the suffocating space of Gregor Samsa. The duos in *Frankenstein* and *Metamorphosis* complement each other in numerous ways; in analyzing the otherizing aspect of father-son relationships in the said works, I find certain similar themes that had hitherto gone unnoticed. In the third chapter, I turn to another Gothic landscape that is riddled with all sorts of different anxieties; here I shall read Dracula’s metamorphosis as he assumes the role of the mother-monster, among other

things. The theme of protean gender after all stands out in mythologies of metamorphosis; here it is highlighted in the amorphous character of Dracula. Stoker also toys with the idea of gender reversal when it comes to his other characters. In the last part of this chapter I turn to another protagonist of a protean nature, a dandy Narcissus who metamorphoses himself into his “other,” an individual who turns transformation into a theatrical game. In Wilde’s *Picture of Dorian Gray* I shall venture to analyze how a mythological story metamorphoses itself and raises questions as to the self. Dorian Gray’s world of appearances and mirror images closes the dissertation on otherizing metamorphosis because it ultimately does what metamorphosis, and works dealing with metamorphosis do: like Dorian’s picture, they reflect the sins and passions of one’s times, the changing attitudes towards life and death, love and hate. Through Dorian’s metamorphosis, we are made to question the force of aesthetics, where art becomes a kind of mirror, but that which is only visible to its writer.

Literatures are created out of life’s enduring cycles, fathers to be fought and removed, ladies of a certain age, slain. They correspond too with our own stories: peel away their magical realities, costumes and histories, and this is the very story of mankind. Familiar *lusus naturae* and “others” of society keep making an appearance, provoking our fears and passions, or tempting us with immortality. All the monsters of this dissertation are especially significant today when vampires, werewolves and mechanical monsters frequently materialize in works of literature and cinema, and where numerous versions of Dorian, lost in the narcissistic bliss of the age, keep showing themselves in different mediums. Our monsters are ourselves, thus, we can spy in them not only our primordial anxieties, but also as harbingers of central qualms of their times.

## CHAPTER II

### OTHERING THROUGH METAMORPHOSIS IN MYTHOLOGY AND LITERATURE

*Change and decay in all around I  
see; O Thou, who changest not, abide  
with me.*

Henry Francis Lyte: "Abide with me"

*As I walk through the slow galleries/I grow to feel with a kind of holy dread  
That I am that other, I am the dead,/And the steps I make are also his.*

*Which of us two is writing now these lines/About a plural I and a single gloom?  
What does it matter what word is my name/If the curse is indivisibly the same?*

Borges: "Poem about Gifts"

In this chapter, I shall present a brief history of metamorphic stories of the Mediterranean basin where protagonists are turned into "the other." But first, a general survey and some tentative answers about the subject are in order. If metamorphosis was the one constant theme woven into the stories of oracles and shamans, minstrels and bards, was it because of the "change and decay all around" that they saw, observing it in the leaf turning vermilion, the pubescent ephebe and dying king? Dirges and requiems of the mourners, celebratory songs of budding civilizations embraced change as one of their most central subject. How come, this ubiquitous phenomenon, this all too common subject became one of the main forms of punishment by the gods? Was this a protest against the modus operandi of existence, the terrible recognition of mortality translated as such? Was it a mimicry of mother nature, churning and turning all that came into its way? When Plato finally created his ideal republic, castigating and casting out the poets, he modelled his



stern gods out of unchanging rocks, castrating their transformative powers: “Is not the best always least liable to change or alteration by an external cause?...Every god is as perfect and as good as possible, and remains in his own form without variation for ever” (Plato 119). Perhaps his was a retort to the fickle deities of liquid minds: change, deified by Heraklitan philosophers and debunked by Parmenides and his idealist followers, became a recurring punishment, sometimes affording a fortunate escape to a fleeing nymph, oftentimes incurred so as to debase the victim and turn him/her into an Other. Or perhaps it has always been a protest against “old December’s bareness” (Shakespeare 1416). To my mind, punitive transformation, exercised by gods, became a theme, subject and literary trope because it helped explain life and death, aetiologically and otherwise. Another function was to draw a distinction, a hierarchy between gods and men; they could change us, we could only be subjects of their transformative powers. And change could be terrible; what better way to manifest the ways of ineffable forces than have gods metamorphosing the world according to their volatile passions and whims?

That metamorphosis was frequently a punishment is evident from the numerous myths we encounter. There are also many archetypal stories wherein metamorphosis plays a role in bringing about the birth of certain monsters. One need not be a proponent of monomyths to see how the creation myths, anthropomorphic deities, tree and flood stories of Mesopotamia will later be worked into the mythologies of the Greeks, Romans, and monotheistic religions: thus this survey begins with Mesopotamian mythology, that is to say Sumerian, Assyria-Babylonian and Akkadian myths.

Compared to Egyptian and Greek mythology, metamorphosis does not figure as prominently in Mesopotamian mythology. Our direct sources as to Mesopotamian

religion beside the cuneiform tablets, some of which are still not translated, are Herodotus, the Old Testament, Eusebius, Syncellus and Diodorus (Morris 1). Certain features of the Assyro-Babylonian creation myth contain differing forms of transformation, such as the metamorphosis of Tiamet who represents the salt water of the sea. Having lost her war against Marduk, her body which is described as a “monstrous corpse” is transformed “like a fish into its two parts,” that is to say, the earth and heavens (Graves 54). This is the first instance in a creation myth where the body is likened to an “other,” a monstrous corpse that is metamorphosed so as to create the world (Campbell *Masks* 85).<sup>7</sup>

The creation of man is also based on a metamorphosis story of (w)holes and others. Body parts transforming into significant “others,” the generic Adam and Eve story, can be traced to the story of Enki in Sumerian mythology. As with the biblical story, Enki’s rib is transformed:

*Ninhursag*: "My brother what hurts thee?"

*Enki*: "My side hurts me."

*Ninhursag*: "To the goddess Dazimua I give birth for thee."

*Ninhursag*: "My brother what hurts thee?"

*Enki*: "My rib hurts me." (Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* 58)

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell points to the similarities between the Sumerian/Babylonian mother monster epic of creation and the Old Testament. *Tiamat* is related etymologically to the Hebrew term *tehom* (the deep) of the second verse of Genesis. Furthermore, Marduk’s spreading out of the mother-body as a roof to separate land from the waters is echoed in Genesis 1:7.: “Elohim made the firmament and separated the waters that were under the firmament from those that were above the firmament.” In *A History of God* Armstrong points out that the myth of Marduk and Tiamat has influenced the people of Canaan, and so they adopted it in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. in the story of Baal-Habad. (10)

Kramer suggests that the passage in Genesis 2:21-24 where Eve, "the mother of all living" is fashioned from Adam's rib may be an echo of this Sumerian pun.<sup>8</sup> So, we have here the story of man's creation metamorphosed from the story of a hurting rib healed by a goddess to the story of the transformation of the rib, turning Eve into the "other" of Adam. This is our first inkling of creating new life out of body parts as does Doctor Frankenstein millennia later.

The first known example of divine metamorphosis occurs in one of the adventures of Enlil (later known as Marduk), the king of the gods (Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* 63).<sup>9</sup> The Sumerian myth recounts the story of the god of gods who is banished to the underworld. There he transforms into three creatures of the underworld in order to rape Ninlil, the object of his desire. It is by becoming these creatures, the gatekeeper, the man of the netherworld river, and the ferryman that Enki possesses Ninlil, thereby impregnating her with three netherworld deities as substitutes of Sin. We shall see later how this theme is similar to Dracula, who changes himself into different forces of nature so as to possess Lucy, and in turn transform her into a creature of the night.

Various scholars have found hints of transformation into "the other" in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. *Gilgamesh*, a thousand years older than the *Iliad* and two thousand years before the Bible, is about the historical king Gilgamesh who reigned in the city of Uruk

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that the Sumerian word for "rib" is ti. The goddess created for healing Enki's rib is therefore called Nin-ti, "the lady of the rib." It should further be pointed out that the Sumerian word ti also means "to make live." Thus, the name Nin-ti also means "the lady who makes live." According to Kramer, "the lady of the rib" came to be identified with "the lady who makes live" through a play on words. (The Sumerians: Their History, Culture, and Character 149) However, the Hebrew word for "rib" has nothing to do with "ti."

<sup>9</sup> Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* 63: "If rightly interpreted this poem furnishes us with the first known example of the metamorphosis of a god."

in about 2750 B.C. and his friend Enkidu (Mitchell 1). The epic contains certain passages which can be interpreted as a story of metamorphosis and the creation of an Other.<sup>10</sup>

These tablets present two men who appear to be binary opposites of each other; Gilgamesh, the city dweller known for his wisdom and Enkidu, the hairy and feral creature bred in the wilderness, who vaguely recall to us Dr. Frankenstein and the monster. These two protagonists are actually mirrors of each other. It is stated in the text that the goddess Aruru creates Enkidu as a counterpart, and perhaps an “other” to Gilgamesh (Campbell, *Masks* 87). They equal each other in strength and drive, their only difference is that one comes from nature, the other from nurture.

Now go and create  
a double for Gilgamesh, his second self  
a man who equals his strength and courage,  
a man who equals his stormy heart.  
Create a new hero, let them balance each other  
Perfectly, so that Uruk has peace.” (Campbell, *Masks* 11)

We can infer from this passage that Enkidu becomes a kind of doppelganger to Gilgamesh, a double who mirrors him in power and passion. Maier has pointed out that both Gilgamesh and Enkidu are liminal characters who undergo metamorphosis (Maier 126). Gilgamesh is two-thirds divine and one third human. He is a king who acts in an un-kinglike manner who is humanized by Enkidu, a liminal character and bestial outsider who is introduced to the ways of the city and into civilization by the harlot sent by the

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<sup>10</sup> The tablets, some of which are broken, create gaps in the narrative. They are dated to 2150-200 B.C. and translated from Sumerian to Babylonian. The early Akkadian version from 1700 or 1800 B.C. consisting of 12 tablets constitute the standard version of the euhemeristic tale.

gods<sup>11</sup> (Campbell, *Masks* 89). Enkidu takes on a different appearance and becomes fit to descend to Uruk in order to engage his like in physical strength and heroic attributes. In the end, we have an Enkidu whose death makes him human and a Gilgamesh who is reminded of his one-third humanity through the latter's death. Thus in the crux of the story lies transformation; both Gilgamesh and Enkidu undergo metamorphosis but they are not turned into "others;" they are one another's other.<sup>12</sup> (Mondi 146).

Sumerian mythology and literature was translated and adopted by the Babylonians, in the same manner as the Romans adopted and elaborated upon Greek lore. The stories of gods and demi-gods such as Gilgamesh were enmeshed into the religion and rituals of Babylon, and reworked into later sources such as the Bible. An example of an early shift from Sumero-Babylonian to Aramaic can be seen in the story of Enkidu's metamorphosis. His transformation from bestial to human is reversed in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, the famous Neo-Babylonian King (605 B.C.-562B.C.), who turns into a beast according to the Fourth book of Daniel. Henze points out that Enkidu's humanization and Nebuchadnezzar's animalization bear striking parallels in their detailed accounts of the wild man (Henze 205). According to the Biblical account, King Nebuchadnezzar, the conqueror of Jerusalem and the alleged builder of the Gardens of Babylon, is turned into a beast, that is, an "other" who has to live in the wilderness for seven years as punishment for his ungratefulness. Scholars such as Montgomery deduce

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<sup>11</sup> The Enkidu/harlot encounter is a reduction of the old myth of Inanna and her son/spouse Damuzi-Tammuz according to Campbell.

<sup>12</sup> In *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, we encounter otherizing metamorphosis when Inanna/Ishtar transforms her lovers into "a bird endlessly bewailing a broken wing, a lion cast into "seven pits and seven," a stallion bridling under the whip, a shepherd-turned wolf bitten by his own dog, and conjecturally, a mole" (Mondi 146).

that a link between the epic of Gilgamesh and Daniel exists not only because of the similarities between the two stories, but due to the Babylonian setting of the story and the linguistic borrowing of Akkadian and Persian words in the Biblical text. Thus, this reversed episode of metamorphosis in the Judaic text may be seen as a “blatant sarcasm in the biblical narrative of using a central piece of Babylonian mythology to ridicule the most awe-inspiring of all heathen monarchs, King Nebuchadnezzar” (Henze 206).

The earliest vampires or vampiric creatures, some of the oldest Others who brought about transformation, can be found in Summerian, Akkadian and Babylonian mythology. The Edimmu or Etimmu, for instance, were troubled souls who wandered the earth searching for victims whose veins they sucked (Brown, Cave, and Doyle 110). The ancient Greeks adopted the Edimmu as Empusa, a demon’s spirit that entered bodies. Russell points out that Mesopotamian demonology had enormous influence on Hebrew and Christian ideas of evil and the devil. Among the most terrible of these demons was Lilitu or Ardat Lili, the prototype of the Biblical Lilith of Isaiah 34. The first known reference to one of the first female demon-goddesses in history is made in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* where she is depicted as taking up residence in Inanna’s sacred tree of life. After conquering the monstrous snake, Gilgamesh frightened Lilitu back to the wastelands (McLeod 3).<sup>13</sup> Some legends suggest that that her offspring are the first vampires. “Lilitu was a frigid, barren, husbandless “maid of desolation” who roamed the night attacking men as a succubus or drinking their blood. Lubartu, carrying a serpent in

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<sup>13</sup> “The link between the beautiful temptress Lilitu and the monstrous serpent coiled through the ailing tree in the sacred grove may well be associated with the story of the temptation of Adam and Eve in Eden. In some early stories Lilitu was blended with a particularly malevolent Mesopotamian blood-drinking and death-dealing demon called Lamashtu” (McLeod 3).

each hand and often accompanied by a dog or pig, attacked children, mothers, and nurses. Usually the demons were grotesque, appearing as ugly animals or as misshapen humans with partly animal forms” (Russell 92). A later reincarnation of Lilith was Lamia, a beautiful woman who consorted with men with the intention of drinking their blood. “The word lamia was also used to describe grotesque women whose lower bodies were shaped like animals, often scaly serpents” (Russell 111). In *A Thousand and One Nights*, dated before the first millennium, we come across female demons who wandered cemeteries to feast on the blood of the dead. All of these female demonic beings, most of them originally human, were dreaded “others” who were and are still reincarnated as protean Others in works such as *Dracula* or *Dorian Gray*. That vampires appear in many culture’s mythologies and literatures is indicative of their important roles as scapegoats and Others. “Vampires in literature have commonly been used as cultural indices. Whatever is feared and perhaps rather desired by humans is transferred in the literary vampire as invader of property and body space” (Wisker 221).

In Assyro-Babylonian mythology, certain deities such as the blue-bearded Sin, the god of moon and night, undergo transformations regularly; however, the concept of changing oneself or another into a beast, the ultimate “other” of humankind, was not as common as in Egyptian or the later Greek and Roman mythology. The most consistent example of metamorphosing as a form of punishment comes from Inanna/Ishtar. She regularly transforms her lovers into beasts when they displease her. Knowing the fates of these unfortunate creatures, Gilgamesh rejects Ishtar’s advances, declaring: “Me, too, wilt thou now love- and like them transform” (Graves 71). Her metamorphosis of Dammuzy/Tammuz served as a model for the future Artemis/Diana-Actaeon story where

the young hunter is punished by being turned into a wolf or stag, depending on the Mesopotamian and Greek and Roman version, to be hunted down and torn apart by his own dogs:

Then thou didst love the keeper of the herd,  
Who ash-cakes ever did heap up for thee,  
Daily slaughtered kids for thee;  
Yet thou smotest him, turning him into a wolf,  
So that his own herd boys drive him off,  
And his own dogs bite his thighs. (Speiser 51)

The various Mesopotamian creation myths and deities were to be incorporated into Egyptian and Greek religion. Graves has pointed out that the earliest Egyptian gods (from mid 4th Millennium B.C.E) came in the form of animals or fetishes. But in time, these animal deities gradually gave way to gods in human form although the animal head, horns or vestigial ears remained (Graves 10).<sup>14</sup> The first Egyptian deity according to the Heliopolitan creation myth and Pyramid texts was Atum (or Atem/Tem/Temu) whose name translates as “the complete one” according to most Egyptologists. His tears of joy were transformed into the human race and he himself took the form of the snake or eel, signifying the beginning and the end, the positive and negative forces of chaos (Pinch 111).

Hohne points out that snake symbolism plays an important part in Egyptian mythology. “The snake devouring its tail appears in virtually every ancient culture and symbolizes the journey of life where the new continuously emerges from the old.” (Hohne 52-3). But this snake symbolism has evolved from representing change and health (Atum as the creator of all beings to the staff of Caduceus as the emblem of

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<sup>14</sup> From the second century onward divine types remained fixed.



physicians) to representing evil in new patriarchal cultures (Hohne 53).<sup>15</sup> They are significant for us because the snake, which became the symbol of a demonic “other,” the representation of evil in contrast to God, an “other” of god, to speak in Biblical terms, had originally been the symbol of metamorphosis in Egyptian mythology. It needs be pointed out however that not all reptilian deities signified change in the rejuvenating and nourishing ways of Atum. Apep (or Apepi/Apophis), represented as a gigantic snake, crocodile or alternately a dragon, was seen as the greatest enemy of Atum-Ra, the bringer of light. This evil reptile deity was the personification of darkness and chaos, the other of Atum-Ra (Müller 166).<sup>16</sup> Since snakes, with the shedding of their skin, denoted metamorphosis in nature in the most direct way, that which was beneficent was explained by the good snake Atum while that which was destructive and frightening was attributed to the evil snake Apep (Pinch 198-200).<sup>17</sup> Classical Greek writers who observed and wrote about Egyptian religion sometimes noted sarcastically that a species of animal could be cursed and persecuted in one nome and held to be sacred in a neighbouring nome (Müller 168). Snakes also made a prominent appearance in Greek and Roman culture where they were seen as the symbol of transformation, oftentimes depicted as

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<sup>15</sup> “Snake symbolism has undergone a different type of metamorphosis. Our ancient stories reflect the ways we once celebrated terrestrial phenomena. Over time, the snake would come to lose the transformative inspiration of its ancient heritage. As new symbolism was re-packaged for mass consumption, these older, yet more powerful symbols became evil. We can see the enormous power of the snake worshipping cults, along with the fertility goddesses of antiquity in the way both were castigated by the emerging patriarchal sects” (Hohne 53).

<sup>16</sup> Despite the alternating positive and negative nature of serpents in their mythology, these creatures that represented metamorphosis were objects of especial awe in Egypt. In fact, the serpent was the general hieroglyph used for “goddess” (Müller 166).

<sup>17</sup> Good examples of such sarcasm can be seen in many Roman works. Notably, Juvenal, who had once remarked: “Who does not know what kind of monsters Egypt insanelly worships?” (G. Massey 4).

mediators between life and death. Hence, the snake was essential for the cult of Asclepius, who in turn worked to heal, dabbling in matters of life and death (Gilhus 108). For Hermes Trismegistus, the supposed author of the Hermetic corpus, most likely an Egyptian priest in Hellenized Egypt, the serpent represented the vivifying power of god (Deane 60).

The constant reappearance of certain animals in the mythologies of the world is often linked to the phenomenon of metamorphosis, and this has lent itself to many a psychoanalytic reading. Certain critics have even held that the preoccupation with animals has buttressed the belief in metamorphosis:

It is also possible that an analogy between the habits of certain animals and those of human beings, in life or after death, may have aided the belief in metamorphosis. Thus, where ghosts of men are believed to return to the house in which they lived and which is also the haunt of such animals as snakes or rats, it is easy to imagine that these are forms of the dead man. This is the case in Zululand with the snake. Night-roaming animals like the cat, tiger, or wolf might be identified, as they were, with witches, who also roamed in darkness. (Hastings 594)

Stories of metamorphosis tend to bring out the dark side of the protagonist who falls into “otherness” by taking the form of nocturnal beasts on the whims of puerile deities, or as a punishment. Thus the snakes, rodents and wolves associated with vampiric creatures which come to the forefront in Romantic literature are all related to various myths of metamorphosis.

The Hebrew bible pits a number of “good” animals against “the unclean.” The list of “unclean” beasts in Leviticus include birds such as ravens, vultures and herons and crawlers such as lizards, rats or chameleons (Oxford Study Bible 11:29, 41-46). These

animals represent both the “other” of humankind and of “good” animals.<sup>18</sup> Zeus has to defeat the serpentine monster Typhon to bring an end to chaos. Thor likewise kills the dragon-serpent Jörmungand. In Medieval Christian iconography, the snake or dragon came to personify the Devil, an example of which can be seen in the legend of Saint George. In the West dragons and serpents have come to represent the enemy as a destructive force of nature, and they need to be slain by the hero, the reincarnation of the mythic deities. Thus the hero tames nature and metaphorically brings the end of Winter (Absalon & Canard 40).

The Egyptian pantheon is full of examples of metamorphosing deities from Khepri (scarab) who is turned into the rising sun Horus (the falcon whose one eye is the sun and the other, the moon), to the jackal headed Anubis who opened the roads of the underworld to the dead and presided over embalmment; to Thoth (ibis or baboon), the lunar god who resurrected Osiris and protected Horus: the examples are manifold. The most significant metamorphosis story into an “other” in Egyptian mythology is the story of Osiris. The original myth states that the red haired deity Seth was jealous of his brother Osiris, the king of the gods. So he devised a scheme to do away with him. According to the earliest tradition, Seth slew Osiris as the latter was hunting gazelles (Müller 114). According to the later version of the story recounted by Plutarch and others, Seth throws a party and places a wooden sarcophagus made to Osiris’ measurements and challenges

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<sup>18</sup> There are eleven terms for serpents in the Old Testament and four Greek terms in the New Testament. “Nearly every reference states or implies poisonous qualities, and in no case is there any hint that a snake can be harmless” (Bromiley 41). In Genesis, it is the serpent who beguiles Eve which results in Man’s expulsion from Eden. In Revelation 12:9, Satan is identified as “that ancient serpent, who led the whole world astray, whose name is the Devil, or Satan.” (*The Oxford Study Bible* 1566). In the Old Testament, there are also a number of references to pagan creation myths that feature a struggle between Yahweh and a giant serpent or sea monster Leviathan.

everyone to try to fit inside. Once the unknowing Osiris is in, Seth seals the coffin and dismembers him into fourteen parts which he scatters across Egypt. Osiris, having been interned in the waters of the Nile, is transformed from a crowned deity into a black or green skinned crocodile-god of the netherworld, suggesting putrefaction and decay (Pinch 178). It is he who is chosen to succeed his father the sun god Geb and as the new god in his underworld kingdom. Osiris exclaims: "I am the crocodile in the form of a man" (G. Massey 13).<sup>19</sup> The story of Osiris' slaughter and piecing together was later adapted by the Greeks. According to one version of the Dionysos myth, he is attacked and cut into bits by the Titans, and pieced together by his mother Persephone (Doyle 34).

Greek and its derivative Roman mythology are replete with a rich array of metamorphosing heroes and heroines, hitherto unseen in the literatures and religions of the world if for the sheer number of works concerned with the subject of metamorphosis. Since the Greeks offered an aetiological explanation for the existence of many a river or tree, a star or city via a story of metamorphosis, it would exceed the purposes of this dissertation to catalogue their take on each kind of metamorphosis.<sup>20</sup> It needs be pointed out however that only in the works of Latin poets such as Ovid, Boios, Nicander, Theodorus, Parthenius, Didymarchus, Antigonos, and Antoninus Liberalis does the

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<sup>19</sup> From *The Book of the Dead*.

<sup>20</sup> Such catalogues abound, and there have been, for more than a hundred years, systematic attempts to explain the origin of transformation in Greek and Roman mythology, especially in the works of German scholars. For further reading see W. Bubble, *De Metamorphosis Graecorum Capita Selecta* (1913); O. Kern, *Metamorphose in Religion und Dichtung der Antike* (1930); G. Weicker, *Der Seelenvogel*, C. Boetticher: *Der Baum Cultus der Hellenen* (1896); W. Mannhardt, *Wald und Feldkulte* (1875-77); W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie, Verwandlungen* (1937).

reflex of explaining the existence of a present landmark or creature aetiologically come to the forefront (Irving 20).

There are, of course, a vast number of Greek and Roman examples of metamorphosis into the Other, mostly as a punishment for exhibiting insolence or hubris against the gods. It has been claimed however that stories of metamorphosis are largely an invention of Hellenistic poets, and did not appear before the Alexandrian period. (Irving 7). According to Irving, there are three stages of metamorphosis in the history of Greek mythology. In the first stage there is Homer, in whose work transformation does not figure prominently. But when it does, there are two types of metamorphosis: it is either worked by magicians or it comes in the form of a punishment by the gods (Irving 16-17). The second stage of metamorphic myths comes with the Hesiodic poets, where transformation becomes a more popular subject. In the Hesiodic model, the pattern of transformation is also that of crime and punishment where punishment comes in the form of a degrading transformation once a god has been insulted (Irving 13). Lastly, we encounter metamorphosis in the tragedies. Here, transformation is seen as a compromise with harsher reality, hence it usually offers an escape for the metamorphosed protagonists.<sup>21</sup>

If we are to outline the Othering metamorphic examples from Greek mythology, we need to start with Homer and Hesiod since they were the primary shapers, if not originators, of the oral tradition in Greek religion (Burkert 10-53). We see the use of magic in Homer's story of Circe. In the *Odyssey*, she is described as a witch surrounded

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<sup>21</sup> Irving points out that there are six metamorphosis stories in Aeschylus, five in Sophocles, eleven in Euripides.

by wolves and lions that had once been men she bewitched and transformed with her potions, cloistered in a house in the middle of bushes and trees. When Odysseus' sailors enter her house with the shining doors, they immediately start gorging themselves with the "cheese and meal and pale honey mixt with Pramneian wine" which Circe has drugged (*The Odyssey* 117). They are turned into pigs. It is significant that pigs appear and reappear in stories connected with goddesses who sacrifice the male, so as to reaffirm their powers. As in the case of Tammuz who was gored to death by Ishtar's wild pig, or Adonis who was torn apart by Aphrodite's boar, the animal of choice is the pig, the preferred sacrificial animal of the Goddess (Yarnall 46). Although Yarnall stresses the point that these gluttonous sailors are not her cast-off lovers, like the lions and wolves about her, other scholars note Homer's insistence that she is a goddess which connects her with the goddess-centered religions wherein the primordial feminine power makes manifest the inferiority of the male (Yarnall 21). In turn, Odysseus sets out to re-transform them to their human forms, aided by Hermes. The ensuing struggle is studded with phallic images, zeroing in on "manning" and "unmanning" in differing ways:

"As soon as Circe gives you a tap with her long rod, draw your sword at once and rush upon her as if you meant to kill her. She will be terrified, and will invite you to lie with her...tell her to swear the most solemn oath...or else when you are stript she may unman you and make you a weakling." (*The Odyssey* 118).

Gabriel Germain has viewed the transformation of sailors as a ritual of initiation wherein they die to their old natures and are reborn, thanks to Circe, the priestess, while Yarnall points out that the metamorphosis is an immolation rather than an initiation (Yarnall 47). In either case, Circe is linked to ancient goddesses through her transforming of men into beasts. She is also said to be responsible for the metamorphosis of Scylla, her rival against Glaucus. Here, Circe mixes her magic herbs at the fountain the unfortunate

maiden is bathing, whereupon she transforms Scylla into a hideous monster with six dogs growing from her groin. Another version of Scylla's transformation is that the jealous Aphrodite persuades Circe to metamorphose the girl into a sea monster since Poseidon had fancied her (Grimal 414).

The second kind of transformation that is seen in the works of Homer comes in the form of metamorphosis as punishment. In Book XII of the *Odyssey*, Poseidon turns the ship of the Phaeacians into stone, as a warning. Another petrification story occurs in the *Iliad* where Niobe's neighbours are turned into stone for the wrongs they have committed against the gods, and in Book II of the *Iliad* where Zeus changes a snake into stone.

Another physical transformation occurs in the second half of the *Odyssey*. In the dramatic reunion between father and son, Odysseus undergoes physical metamorphosis from a beggar to a god-like creature that leaves his son Telemachus in awe: "You look different now, stranger, from what you were before; your clothes are changed, your colour is not the same; Surely you are one of the gods who rule the broad heavens!" (*Odyssey* 184). Athena has increased Odysseus's stature and youthfulness and darkened his skin and beard. This episode has been linked to the biblical story of Christ's transfiguration where "his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became a brilliant white" (Oxford Study Bible 1286). The gospels use the verb *metamorphoo* to describe his transformation where it is said his face shines like the sun before his followers. "Both myths highlight a change in the king's bodily form" before their real or metaphorical sons (Louden 265).

As to Homer's reticence in using the theme of metamorphosis, it has been posited that metamorphosis represents a way out of the natural order, whereas the Homeric world is characterized by a rigid differentiation between categories of existence where there is no room for ambiguity (Irving 10-11). Nevertheless in Homer we can distinguish between magical metamorphosis and an ethical metamorphosis, for even if the ethics of Greek deities does not correspond to our understanding of ethics, they do exercise a kind of justice, different from the dark practices of Circe. Like the dangerous beasts she has transformed, she is both of nature and above-nature. As such, she seems to represent the in-between state where reality and sur-reality, where natural and un-natural meet.

In the works of Hesiod the theme of metamorphosis is abundantly used starting with his creation cosmology.<sup>22</sup> It will be seen that "others" could even be created from spilt blood in Greek mythology. According to Hesiod's Succession Myth, all the monstrous "others" spring from Uranus' black blood flowing after being castrated by his son Cronus.<sup>23</sup> These "others" include the Erinyes whom the Romans dubbed "furies," as well as giants and ash tree nymphs that go by the name of Meliae who belong to the oldest generation of divinities in the Hellenic pantheon (Grimal 151). Gaia (earth) tired of child bearing "created the element of grey adamant, and made a great reaping hook, and showed it to her children" (Hesiod 8). Only her son Cronus undertook the task, castrating

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<sup>22</sup> I have chosen the conventional chronology (i.e. as Homer being the earlier poet) but some have held that Hesiod was the senior. As early as 2 B.C. Lucius Accius claimed that Hesiod's work preceded that of Homer's based on the argument that certain Homeric assumptions predicated Hesiodic revelation (Woodard 83).

<sup>23</sup> The *Kingship of Heaven*, a Hittite text deciphered in 1946, contains the figure of Kumarbi, a Hurrian god who, like Cronus, castrated his father Anu (by biting off his genitals) thereby spitting out three new gods. Another parallel can be drawn with the Babylonian poem of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. (*Enuma Elis*). There are vast similarities between these stories, as has been pointed out by Kirk in *Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures*, 214-20.



his father with the sickle his mother provides, and casting off his testicles into the sea. Thus, Uranus' blood is transformed into monsters. The Erinyes would appear in Homeric epics as avengers of crime, including the offence of pride, as taunters of Agamemnon's family after the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and cursers of Oedipus (Grimal 171, 281).<sup>24</sup>

The creation of another kind of monster, that is man-certainly an "Other" for the gods- is also accounted for through a story of metamorphosis. According to one tradition, Prometheus' tears were said to have transformed into the body of the first man (Graves 93). Another story has it that Prometheus' son Deucalion (the Greek counterpart of Utnapishtim and the Biblical Noah and his wife) was responsible for the creation of Man. Being the only survivors of the deluge, Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha were told to veil their heads, remove the girdles of their robes and cast behind them the bones of their first ancestors. They solved the mystery by throwing stones, Gaea or earth being their first ancestor, upon the ground they walked on. Thus, according to Ovid, "We trace a stony heritage of being" (Ovid 41).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The Erinyes are also responsible for driving Orestes and Alcmaeon into madness for having murdered their mothers. The Erinyes became an expression of Hellenic order against anarchy, and would reappear in the depths of Tartarus in *The Aeneid*, as punishers of the dead, terrifying all with their whips and snaky heads. The Giants wreaked havoc in their own ways, both on earth and in the heavens; the Gigantomachy, or the revolt of Giants against Gods, was a favourite theme in the plastic arts of the Classical period. As for the Meliads, the infamous race of bronze age people known for their warlike demeanour, are said to have sprung from ash trees.

<sup>25</sup> It needs be pointed out that there exist many variants of canonical texts such as the *Theogony*, as is evidenced in the works of mystery cults examined by Burkert in his *Ancient Mystery Cults* or in the Orphic theogony. (Burkert 10-53). As late as the 1<sup>st</sup> Century B.C. the playwright Siculus pointed out how Greek myth was a multi-faceted, multivalent and fluid phenomenon, wherein stories themselves were constantly metamorphosing. Siculus says: "But as a rule the ancient myths (palaious muthous) are not found to yield a simple and consistent story, so that nobody need wonder if details of my recession cannot be reconciled with those given by every poet and historian" (Woodard 1). For instance, there are existing versions of the Odysseus story where

Besides the transformations seen in the creation myths above, there are thirteen other metamorphosis stories in the works of Hesiod. It will be recalled how we encounter only a few examples of the “crime and punishment” type of transformation in Homer. With Hesiod, “transformation as punishment” becomes a pattern, setting the stage for the rest of the Hesiodic poets and Roman poets such as Ovid. Actaeon, Callisto, Battos and Lycaon are all turned to beasts, suffering a transformation for having insulted a major god. (Irving 13). On the other hand, gods sometimes take pity on a victim and bring about bestial transformation as salvation. Io, Ceyx and Alcyone are good examples.

Hesiod influenced many a Latin poet with his tales of metamorphosis and his anti-heroes. His shape-shifting Periclymenus and the chase of Europa by Zeus were also reworked by many Roman authors all the way down to Ovid (Schroeder 288). Another influence was Pindar (ca. 522-443 B.C.E), one of the most important lyric poets of the Greek canon, whose retelling of ancient stories brought to the forefront the uncertainties of man’s existence where gods reigned; hence, the moralistic tone that had been used by Hesiod found a new expression with Pindar (Conway 192). This is important in the light of metamorphosis stories since transformation came to be treated as a form of punishment more so than as an aetiological explanation by the followers of Hesiod and Pindar.

Greek tragedy is another important source of inspiration and imitation for the metamorphosis stories of the Romans. Irving draws the conclusion that whereas transformation in Hesiod takes the form of a simple manifestation of a god’s lust and

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Penelope is unfaithful to her husband, fornicating with metamorphosing deities, but the popular version of her as the model of a faithful, patient wife is the one that has survived.

power, the Greek playwrights focus on the role of transformation as an expression of internal disruption and disorder by underlining the grotesque and primitive aspect of transformation in their tragedies. “The brutal lust displayed by Zeus on the other” in the story of Io for example stresses how her transformation becomes “a visible sign and grotesque intensification of the character’s suffering” (Conway 13). It can be said that the tragic poets alluded to metamorphosis myths to comment on societal norms, addressing certain taboos so as to contrast good against evil, right against wrong. Thus we see that the moralistic aspect of metamorphosis stories manifests itself openly for the first time in the Greek tragedies.

Metamorphosis becomes a major subject matter and trope only in the hands of the Roman poets. The second century (B.C.) poet Boios, Theodorus, Parthenius, Didymarchus and Antigonus all have collections of metamorphosis. Antoninus Liberalis published a papyrus dictionary of metamorphosis around the second or third Century A.D. (Conway 20). Gaius Julius Hyginus (64 B.C.- 17A.D.) relates some three hundred myths, constructing alternative genealogies and stories in his *Fabulae*, little of which has survived to this day. However, the ultimate metamorphosis compendium belongs to one poet Ovid, who catalogues some two hundred and fifty transformation stories in his *Metamorphosis*. Ovid’s most important source, the Greek poet Nicander, most probably a second century priest of Apollo of Claros, creates a universe of primitive and mysterious deities, aetiologically explaining the existence of things through metamorphosis. Many of his stories are re-workings of themes and tales seen in Hesiod or Nicander, but with Ovid is born a “moral symbolism,” where transformation is openly practised as a form of punishment and carries ethical overtones (Conway 30). Hence Battos, who is said to have

committed the sin of perjury in Nicander, is seen to be petrified in Ovid. This is a detail that does not exist in Nicander. Likewise, Nicander focuses on the change in the name of Lycia and the cult of Apollo, but Ovid zeroes in on the punishment of the Lydian herdsmen, who, in his version, are turned into frogs for not allowing Leto to wash her children in the river. Ovid even turns trees into moralists; in his Messapian shepherd story, Nicander's mysterious trees are transformed into moaning trees, since they retain the *acerbitas* of sinner's (human) speech. Thus, it can be said that in Ovid's moral framework, the guilt-ridden character of the "metamorphosed other" is all the more underlined.

Indeed, tales of transformation have essentially been interpreted as moralistic by scholars like Barkin, and in no other text does this come to the foreground as it does in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. It needs to be emphasized that being transformed into an animal was in most cases seen as a punishment and an otherization all the way down to Kafka's Gregor Samsa. Gilhus states that, "it was seen as a disadvantage for a human being to be turned into a beast... When a human being is changed into an animal, it is a move downwards in the hierarchy of being. It also seems to be the case that when animals are described in connection with a metamorphosis or a transmigration of souls, they are seen as creatures that are less complex than humans" (Gilhus 91).

In Ovid, otherizations oftentimes come from vengeful goddesses. We find Io, a beautiful maiden turned into a milk-white cow by Jove, so as to save her from Juno's jealous anger. Commenting on the pathos of Io's bovine metamorphosis Skulsky notes that such a stress on Ovid's part connotes a deep alienation from the self resulting from the sudden deformity. The victims' horror in the face of their transformation is

exacerbated when they attempt to reveal their real persons behind their bestial forms, leading to what in modern terms would be an identity crisis, again as in the case of Kafka's Gregor Samsa.

Another target of Juno's rage in Ovid is Callisto. Unlike Hesiod's version, in Ovid's retelling of the story, Callisto remains conscious of her metamorphosed state, like Gregor, thus fearing all the other bears and wolves about her: "she forgot her beastlike being and trembled as she looked at other bears" (Gilnus 71). As in the case of Io who is startled by her own voice, the essence of Callisto's misfortune lies in the fact that she is not an aetiological case but an example of double mistaken identity. She is first taken to be a bear, when she is in fact a nymph in the appearance of a bear, then shot by her own son, having been taken for a beast. Skulsky has viewed the stories of both Io and Callisto as antitragedies since the "liturgical duties of recognition and purgation are mischievously neglected" as would befit tragedy. He considers these particular transformations of Ovid as a "clever cartooning" whose objective is to bring forth a "deep alienation resulting from a sudden and thoroughgoing deformity" (Skulsky 30).

Juno's transformative punishments can at times be categorized as tragic. Her vengeance upon the House of Cadmus does indeed make "a monument of savagery" as Ovid claims (Ovid 127). First, Ino is violently petrified while her women are turned into seabirds, then the father and mother are turned into serpents:

As he spoke/ He grew reptilian features everywhere:/ His skin turned hard and  
scales swarmed over it.../He fell flat downward to the earth-/...And tears poured  
from his all too human face; /"Dear wife, O miserable wife, come near me;/While

something of myself is left to call you,/Before the serpent swallows all of  
me/...though he had more to say, his tongue had split; His words were sounds that  
hissed among tall grasses...(Ovid 128).

In Diodorus Siculus' mythical history *Bibliotheca Historica*, Lamia is portrayed as a beautiful Libyan who has an affair with Zeus, bearing his children. The enraged Juno kills the children, thus driving Lamia mad. She starts gorging on her own children, her face transformed into a hideous monster, and in some versions, portrayed as a reptile from the waist down (Siculus 20.41.3-6). Plutarch informs us that Lamia was a queen of Lybia, who out of rage for the loss of her own children started devouring other's children whence she was called Lamia, from the Phoenician word 'to devour,' *lahama*. Plutarch also stated that it was Siculus who pointed out that Lamia became a bugbear to children (Plutarch 219).

Transgression is another theme that brings about punitive transformation into an "other." Gods or goddesses have been enraged when their secret abodes are spied upon or their sacred temples are desecrated or soiled by mortals. The most famous example is the myth Medusa. She had already made her appearance in the *Odyssey* and in the verses of Hesiod, Pindar, Apollodorus, Apollonius and Siculus, but in Ovid she takes on a whole other meaning. In *The Metamorphoses*, her story is preceded by that of Cadmus, who actually wishes to be transformed; he is thus turned into a serpent, "who grew reptilian features everywhere...his tongue had split; his words were sounds that hissed among tall grasses" (Ovid 128). Ovid carries the snake theme, aforementioned symbol of transformation (and/or) evil, over to the Medusa story. Unlike some of his predecessors, Ovid depicts her as a beautiful maiden with glorious hair who is transformed into a

monster because she has been raped in the temple of Minerva (Athena). “Shocking the nerves of Jove’s pure daughter,” she is changed by the goddess into a snake-headed monster as a warning for her carelessness, while there is no mention of the rapist (Ovid 135). Medusa is not only the victim of metamorphosis but her punishment is contagious, for all who behold her are turned into stone. Unlike Apollonius’ version where her black blood kept poisoning those who came into contact with it Ovid explains that once she is decapitated by Perseus, sweet ferns and seaweed in gravelled sand are turned into precious coral when the severed head is placed upon them (Ovid 133). Countless critics have analyzed the case of Medusa; her “phallic” snaky hair, her gaze and punishment have inspired many psychoanalytical and feminist interpretations.<sup>26</sup>

Asclepius, the God of healing, secures blood from her left and right sides. With one he slays, with the other he heals or brings back to life. This means she holds within her a double force, good and an evil coexist within her like Kali, the womb and tomb of the world according to Campbell (Campbell *Masks* 54). Thus, some monsters are not simply black or white, they symbolize the coming together of binary oppositions. They are certainly ostracised and otherized; but oftentimes, they also function to point out our own otherness.

Actaeon’s transformation into a stag torn apart by his own dogs is another example of punitive metamorphosis due to what a goddess deems as transgression. Paralleling the *Gilgamesh* version of Ishtar turning a youth into a stag, this is another

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<sup>26</sup> Medusa’s decapitated head of snakes that has been famously interpreted by Freud and Barthes as a sign of castration. Her “death by reflection,” that has been read as the realization and horror of seeing her own mirror stage by Lacan, points to the interlocked relationship between the onlooker and the object of the gaze wherein the onlooker metamorphoses the object.

story of hunter turned prey by an incensed goddess. Having strayed off his course, he has stumbled upon the Diana's sacred grove. As with Io who vainly tried to explain herself with her moos, Actaeon's groans cannot reveal his true identity to his own dogs. "Under the image of the false deer" (Ovid 92), Actaeon's metamorphosis turns him into an other, even to himself: "along with a travesty of speech that serves only to condemn him, like the Homeric victims, to the status of an anomalous object, a metaphysical castaway in a class by itself" (Skulsky 29). Such cases of metamorphosis sometimes create tragic heroes out of characters who are neither human nor beast, they are the true "others." Otis has pointed to this aspect of such characters: "The essence of Actaeon's tragedy is that he combines an animal form with a human mind...He tries to communicate his identity to his dogs...and thereby only intensifies the agony of his terrible death" (Otis 136). Diana's punishment may seem harsh since "Ovid insists that the transgression that caused his relegation was no more than an *error*..." (Desmond 62). This is one of the many instances in Ovid where the ethical standing of the gods (and by extension, sovereigns) is brought into question.

Gods also metamorphose mortals into degraded forms when mortals are ungrateful or selfish, exacting revenge by exercising their transformative powers. One such example is Leto (Latona), who wanted a drink of water from a pond in Lycia. Her babies Apollo and Artemis in her arms, the goddess earnestly implored the denizens of that little town in Asia Minor to allow her to quench her thirst and wash her children. Having been met with curses and abuse, the goddess turned Lycians into frogs (Ovid 173). The birth of such "disreputable" beasts, insects and vermin are oftentimes explained by such stories. Ovid reveals the aetiology of lizards with the story of an impudent boy



poking fun at the goddess Demeter for drinking too much barley water. Demeter immediately turns him into a lizard, throwing the dregs of barley at his face, which explains the spots of the lizard (Ovid 152). A foolish, vain group of sisters are transformed into crows, the inhospitable Lycaon who tries to kill Zeus (Jove) is turned into a wolf “that resembles his restless self,” and the mischievous red-haired Galanthis is punished by being metamorphosed into a weasel for having laughed at the goddess Lucina.<sup>27</sup>

What all these degrading transformations end up doing to the victims is sealing them off from humanity. As animals, they mimic their former human selves, their characters have not changed, yet, they can no longer communicate with either gods, humans, or animals. Skulsky adds that Ovid’s transformations usually lead to a solitary confinement of the victims (as is the case with Baucis and Philemon) or to a mindless imitation of rapport (as in the story of Ceyx and Alcyone) (Skulsky 31).

Another form that metamorphosis takes is the transformation undergone by those who exhibit hubris. In the Ovidian cycle, the stories of Arachne, Niobe, and Gerana are the primary examples of characters who meet their metamorphic Nemesis for pride.<sup>28</sup> In each of these moral tales, the protagonists have defied the gods in some way. By immodestly claiming that she owes her talent to none but herself, Arachne, a talented weaver and embroiderer challenges the very goddess of weaving, Athena, to a weaving contest. Having lost, she hangs herself and is transformed by Athena into a spider. Some

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<sup>27</sup> All the above metamorphoses are from Ovid.

<sup>28</sup> There are many moralistic tales against hubris, but in most cases, the proud character, such as Marsyas who challenges Apollo, is usually punished by being destroyed, not transformed.

critics have interpreted her transformation as paradoxical, since she keeps defying the gods, albeit in her spider form:

Furthermore, although the woman pays for the price of her hubris, Ovid suggests that even in her transformed state as a lowly spider she retains a symbolic defiance. For, by harking back to Leuconoe's narrative, the poet associates the spider's web not only with the artful cunning of Vulcan's trap [reminding the reader that even a god must pay for adultery]. The spider's web in this poem is thus a paradoxical symbol, representing harmony through its symmetry but closely connected to females who represent centrifugal forces undermining traditional social norms (Pavlock 6).

The continued defiance of the metamorphosed protagonist brings forth the question whether Barkan's thesis that "all metamorphic tales are moralistic" is justifiable. Ovid scholars such as Sara Mack all agree that the punishments incurred in the *Metamorphosis* are accentuated so as to make a lesson out of these tales. If Ovid meant to "teach," as Irving holds, then "heroic" fallen-protagonists such as Arachne need to be brought into question. Her continued defiance seems to prove that her pride is justified. Then again Ovid's portrayal is anything but flattering, before and after the transformation. Arachne keeps weaving, albeit as a spider, but there is not a moment of remorse. A metamorphosis to a lower life form has been brought about, but Ovid's ambivalence as to her fallen state makes it questionable whether Irving's moralistic thesis holds. Since scholars such as Horace Gregory, one of Ovid's translators, claim that Ovid actually lacks religious and moral intent, the purpose of "purposeful punishment via metamorphosis" remains open to debate (Ovid xii).

Another example of arrogant pride being punished with transformation is the pygmy Gerana. Hera metamorphoses her into a crane for having claimed she is more beautiful than the goddess, but this is not the end of her suffering. The former pygmy

tries to join her son Mopsus, but Juno has turned pygmies against cranes, so she can never approach the home of her beloved son. Both of these punishments are clearly moralistic in tone. The metamorphosis is brought about so as to make examples against hubris towards the gods. Niobe's tears keep falling as long as the river runs, Gerana keeps fluttering about, never reaching her intended destination.

Pride need not always come in the form of hubris of course. Narcissus for example, is readily punished for having been extremely proud of his beauty. Though Dorian Gray's predecessor Narcissus does not challenge any deities to a beauty contest, Ovid's description establishes his god-like beauty with hair "divine/as Bacchus' hair, as bright Apollo's," but it is his coldness towards others such as Echo which catches the attention of Nemesis who makes Narcissus fall in love with his own image (Ovid 98). Lost in his own beauty, himself "the worshipper and the worshipped," Narcissus is drowned in his own reflection, so much so that his body vanishes, to be metamorphosed into a white-gold flower. It has also been pointed out that along with characters such as Phaethon and Pentheus, Narcissus' punishment was accorded not solely for his "narcissistic pride" but because his non-productive, celibate ways were antithetical to the Roman ideals of reaching adult (male) sexuality; thus they are set up also as models of the Roman Other, deserving punishment for having defied the natural order (Boyle 366).

It follows that various Roman societal taboos and perversions find punishment in differing metamorphic ways. Some are penalized for sins in the family; one such example is the story of Tereus, who raped his wife Procne's sister Philomela, then cut out her tongue and hid her from the world so that his secret would not be discovered. It is only via Philomela's tapestry that her miserable situation is disclosed to her sister, whose lips

“closed with grief,” also fell silent. Yet another dreadful breach of family morality occurs when the wronged sisters murder Procne’s own son Itys and serve him to his father Tereus. As a result, Procne and Philomela are transformed into the nightingale and swallow, respectively, no longer silent. And even their plumage is aetiologically explained: “such birds have stains of murder on their breasts/ in flickering drops of blood among their feathers” (Ovid 182). Tereus, his son’s “sad tomb,” is metamorphosed into a vengeful “red-eyed plover” (Ovid 182).<sup>29</sup> Thus, at the end, the whole family is punished and othered for their perversities. Ovid’s version differs slightly from Apollodorus’ and Hyginus’ Tereus/Philomela/Procne story, although it too ends with the transformation of the protagonists into birds. It has been suggested that Ovid is once again taking a political stance by criticising censorship and silencing, having been punished with censorship and exile himself (Simpson 215).

Another “perverse and criminal” familial metamorphosis can be found in the incestuous story of Myrrha or alternately, Smyrna (Irving 276). In Panyassis’ version, Aphrodite punishes Myrrha for not having honoured her by causing her to nurture a passion for her own father.<sup>30</sup> Ovid, an avid researcher of earlier metamorphoses catalogues, turns his Myrrha into a critique of society, thereby “serving discursive purposes and eliciting political judgements” (Boyle 368). Myrrha desires her father and justifies her lust by pointing out that this (incest) is “nature’s law” in other animals. The desperate Myrrha attempts suicide because of the impossibility of the situation, and her

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<sup>29</sup> In other translations, Tereus is transformed into a hoopoe.

<sup>30</sup> (Irving 274). Irving lists the differing versions from Hesiod, Antoninus who probably relied on Nicander’s version, Theodorus’ *Metamorphoses*, and Cinna who is said to have influenced Ovid.

maid, like Juliet's nanny, schemes a tryst so that the daughter can lie with the father, left in ignorance of her identity. Needless to say, when her father Cinyras eventually discovers the truth, he attempts to kill her. The pregnant and fugitive Myrrha, fleeing from country to country begs the gods to save her by transforming her into a "thing that neither lives nor dies" (Ovid 288). She is thus metamorphosed into a tree, out of which Adonis is born (Irving 276).

Though Ovid obviously does not condone her unnatural passion, his version is different from Panyassis' myth. Barkan has pointed out that by focusing on such examples of endogamy, Ovid makes an example of human experience that is "blurred and as a result the individual is left completely unprotected" (Barkan 63). Some critics such as Ribichini have noted the Oriental elements in Myrrha's story, interpreting Ovid as an early "Orientalist" in that he projects Greek beliefs about the Orient, in terms of incest and magical trees (Irving 276).

One cannot speak of punitive metamorphosis without mentioning Dike (or the Roman Justitia), the goddess of justice. It can be said that Ovid was problematizing the Greek understanding of dike by presenting such an derogatory picture of the fickle gods. It has already been suggested that his harsh depiction of certain transformation stories was a political statement against the ruling monarchy who sent him to exile. By extension, it can be said that he was bringing into question the rulers' understanding of justice. I believe Ovid also underlines the futility of controlling certain passions. Moreover, he was drawing attention to the hand of justice, whose fairness he has previously debunked.

As mentioned earlier, there are certain kinds of transformation that are brought about so as to afford escape to the protagonist, though the change inevitably results in othering. The most famous example of such a change is the story of Daphne's transformation. Being chased by Apollo, she asks a god to come to her rescue, whereupon her "white thighs embraced by climbing bark/Her white arm branches, her fair head swaying/In a cloud of leaves" (Ovid 46). She is instantly saved by being turned into a laurel tree. As in many other Ovidian tales, there is a different agenda here besides the surface aetiology of the laurel. According to Boyle, Apollo's failed attempt at raping an unwilling girl does not cast an admirable glow upon the house of Augustus, the king who had sent Ovid into exile. Apollo after all, is the principle deity whose symbolic laurels Augustus used to adorn his triumphs with (Boyle 368).<sup>31</sup> Politically motivated or otherwise, what we witness in such metamorphic stories is that change need not always come as a punishment. Being turned into an evergreen and hence metaphorically immortal tree or star is a transformation "devoutly to be wished" in comparison to being raped and ravaged. Sex changes as in the case of Iphis are also non-punitive transformations that are bestowed upon the oppressed by thoughtful gods so as to deem the inherent confusion about sexual orientation obsolete.

It is said that Ovid's innovation is his claim that the prime metamorphosis is of myth itself (Boyle 358). Ovid was reworking mythological themes, thereby transforming them as he saw fit. Not only are the transformation stories metamorphosed but the whole

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<sup>31</sup> There are apparently numerous examples of such politically motivated moves wherein Ovid constructs false genealogies of the house of Augustus and repeatedly casts a disparaging light upon Jupiter, the king's mirror in Olympus, uncharacteristically proclaiming his victims' innocence, as can be seen in his version of the Ganemede and Callisto.

style is metamorphic, “slipping out of one genre or mood into another...[embracing] a range of modes including elegy, panegyric, history and philosophy.” Thus, Ovid’s transformations have been interpreted as conceits by Dr. Johnson, where the metamorphosis is described as metaphor made flesh (S.A. Brown 2). It comes as no surprise then, that despite the numerous catalogues of metamorphosis that have been written by Pindar, Apollodorus, Hyginus, Lucan and Horace, Ovid emerges as the most prominent influence in terms of transformation stories in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. His poetry that has given voice to the anguish of metamorphosed protagonists has been an inspiration not only to earlier poets but also to many a twentieth-century poet from Yeats, Pound and H.D to Ted Hughes.

The other important Latin writer with his own *Metamorphoses* that needs be noted in passing is Lucius Apuleius (c. 124- 180 A.D.E). The only Latin “picaresque novel” to have survived in its entirety, Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* (referred to as *Asinus Aureus* or *The Golden Ass* by St. Augustine in *City of God*) narrates the story of one Lucius in this early Bildungsroman. Lucius’ transformation serves “as an example of the punishment of curiosity by metamorphosis”<sup>32</sup> for, in Book III he ends up transforming himself into an ass while attempting to emulate a witch who transformed herself into a bird (Apuleius viii). Through his peregrinations we witness how he is changed from a curious scamp to an ass to a religious convert to the cult of Isis.

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<sup>32</sup> Apuleius makes his first open reference to Ovid in Book II, where Lucius sees a statue of Actaeon and the scene mirrors Ovid’s description of Actaeon’s metamorphosis; Lucius’ fate is thus tied to Actaeon’s transformation.

The book is written in a bawdy, mock-heroic style wherein comic and satirical elements are brought to the forefront, and the fact that our protagonist is a rather naughty, probing character turned priest is telling.<sup>33</sup> This last transformation has been compared to a voluntary death; the ultimate metamorphosis, where “the very act of surrender to her [the goddess] is celebrated as a simulacrum of voluntary death” (Apuleius xiv-xvi), remind us of Gregor Samsa’s voluntary death as well as that of Dorian Gray.

It can be said that in the history of literature, the theme of metamorphosis reached a zenith with the Romans. The apex of European metamorphosis stories can be found in Greek and Roman mythology since Greeks developed a keen interest in collecting, documenting and interpreting the important literary works of the past from the fourth century B.C.E on (J.M. Hall 237). This means that all the aforementioned myths of change and changelings of ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean were recycled and reinterpreted first by poets and philosophers, then embellished by the Romans. Christianity resuscitated some earlier myths and consequently some infamous “others” in Biblical stories such as that of Adam and Eve. Adam changes his identity and it is said to be the shadow or dreaming counterpart of the one he had before: “The Classical parallel to the Adam story, as several Renaissance mythographers noted, is the story of Narcissus, where we also have a real man and a shadow” (Frye, *Secular Scripture* 108). The archetypal story of a hero’s descent, a repetition of the Tiamat story in Jonah, or Jesus’

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<sup>33</sup> The fact that he is converted to a priest of a goddess is significant in more ways than one. Greek civilization had turned the pre-existing matriarchy into a patriarchal state. By the time Apuleius started writing the *The Golden Ass* however, the feminine was brought into the light, as was the case Virgil’s Dido and Aeneas, where female principles were introduced into literature.<sup>33</sup> Thus, the central figure of Isis here, an “other” certainly in the Greek pantheon, is important to stress in that she was an all-powerful “foreign” goddess that the protagonist aspired to worship.



descent into hell, or Sodom and Gomorrah are other Biblical stories that feature otherizing metamorphosis. These, and the myriad of interpretations and commentary of earlier Latin texts form the bulk of material where metamorphosis and its Others come to the foreground throughout the Middle Ages. Medieval scholarship had evidently taken note of Ovid, for Castiglioni's research shows that from 1050 to 1600 there were about six hundred manuscripts with commentaries and introductions to Ovid (Coulson 32). Throughout the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era, Ovid's tales of transformation are reworked and re-contextualized. Pierre Bersuire's mythography *Ovidius Moralizatus* (1390) and the fourteenth century *Ovide Moralisé* were monumental in lending Ovid's transformations a scriptural meaning. Diffused amongst epics and songs throughout the Middle Ages, we come across Ovidian transformation stories and their "others" in the Chansons de Geste in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Bérout makes reference to Midas's story in *Tristan* (1306-1350), and Christine de Pizan (1364-c. 1430) uses Ovid's Iphis and Tiresias in accounting for her own transformation from a woman to a man in her prologue to *Avision-Christine*.

There are a number of valuable studies that register Ovidian influences in metamorphic tales and fables during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.<sup>34</sup> Notable examples of metamorphosis stories with their transformed "others" include Gower and his *Confessio Amantis* (1390), Petrarch (1304-1374) who builds his *Secretum* upon Ovid's "Narcissus" and makes ample use of the latter's Actaeon story in his *Canzoniere*,

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<sup>34</sup> Among countless examples include works such as *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Eds. Alison Keith and Stephen Rupp); *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Ed. Charles Martindale); *The Metamorphosis of Ovid: From Chaucer to Ted Hughes* by Sarah Annes Brown.

as does Ben Jonson in his play *Cynthia's Revels* (1600-1601). In Rabelais' mock-epic *Pantagruel* (1532) we come across two kinds of metamorphosis: eating medlars, people are transformed to misshapen entities and we see the birth of pygmies out of Pantagruel's farts. We come across metamorphosing witches in Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) where "Ovidian works and works of demonology explicitly address the fear of the instability of the (usually female) body through figurations and/or analyses of metamorphosis" (Fox 165). Another famous author of the occult, Agrippa, wrote in his *De Incertitudine* (1526) that the way he was treated by courts resulted in his metamorphosis into a barking and biting dog. We also come across differing versions of mythological witches such as Ariosto's Alcina, Tasso's Armida and Trissino's Acratia, with powers to metamorphose others or themselves. Gongora's *Soledades* (1613) are framed by two Ovidian stories of rape and metamorphosis: those of Europa and Persephone, in his own narrative on envy and greed are much in line with Ovid. In Lope de Vega's *Circe* (1623) Odysseus asks Circe to change him into "a new form, a Platonic swan" (Yarnall 158). Calderon has written two plays on Circe. His Circe, like Dracula, can summon mists, earthquakes and lightning, and like Ariosto's Alcina can turn humans into animals, plants and trees. Yarnall holds that Calderon's most original contribution to the Circe myth is his depiction of how Circe and Odysseus mirror each other (Yarnall 159). Another important example from this period is Théodore-Agrippa d'Aubigné's epic poem *Les Tragiques* (1616) which is "a world of transformation and metamorphosis" onto itself.

For examples of metamorphosis in Medieval English literature, we must turn to the works of Chaucer who makes a countless number of references to Greek and Roman

mythology. From one of his earliest poems in the *Book of the Duchess*, where he cites the story of Ceys and Alcyone, also used by Gower, to his versions of Procne, Apollo and Daphne myths in *Troilus and Criseyde*, there are numerous stories of metamorphosis in Chaucer's works. What I find striking is his use of Ovid's otherized women, enchantresses and witches such as Medea and Circe that keep reappearing in his works (Duval 31).<sup>35</sup> He uses Ariadne's story of abandonment twice in *The House of Fame and Legend of Good Women* (Shannon 70) and turns Ovid's terrible Medea into a "soft and yielding" (Shannon 216) creature wronged by Jason. His Wife of Bath recounts the story of the "Loathly Lady," who transforms into a beautiful maiden.

Northrop Frye points out that it is usually in descent narratives that we come across a kind of degrading metamorphosis, "the freezing of something human and conscious into an animal or plant or inanimate object" (Frye, *Secular Scripture* 140). Conversely, he places *The Golden Ass* and the aforementioned tale by the Wife of Bath under the category of ascent narratives where metamorphosis transforms the Other back into human form, often in an ameliorated state. Thus, Lucius, once an "other" becomes a priest of Isis while the old hag is now a woman of beauty. Just as he paints some ancient enchantresses in a favourable light, Chaucer makes the Wife of Bath pervert the story of Midas, possibly because of her irritation with her fifth husband. Unlike Ovid, The Wife

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<sup>35</sup> Witches like Medea and Circe are frequently used subjects in Renaissance literature. Duval points out that "the well-known metamorphosis of Odysseus's hapless companions into pigs after drinking the baneful potion offered by Circe was allegorized in the Renaissance, as it had been in Antiquity, as signifying the degradation (the "bestialization") of human nature brought about by vice. Most often Circe was interpreted as the *meretrix*, her potion as the sin of fornication, and the herb that allowed Odysseus to escape his companions' fate as prudence. See Horace, Epistles 1.2.23-26, Heraclitus, *Allegoriae Homeri* 72.1-3; Du Bellay, *Regrets* 88 & 130. "Epicurian pig" was a stock formula in the Renaissance applied not so much to seekers of sensual pleasure as to "atheists"" (Duval 31).

also gives Io both a voice and will, and in her prologue, and makes Argus an agent of the jealous husband, not of Juno. There are numerous other references to Ovid in *The Canterbury Tales*, including the story of Daphne and Actaeon in “The Knight’s Tale,” Pygmalion in “The Physician’s Tale,” Niobe and Amphion and Pyramus and Thisbe in “The Merchant’s Tale,” Ekko and Narcissus in “The Franklin’s Tale,” story of the raven and Phythion in “The Manciple’s Tale.” In all these tales, we see how Chaucer uses old myths of transformation in different contexts and for purposes quite different from previous writers. In this way we see how ancient myths are metamorphosed, reflecting the anxieties and sensibilities of the times.

Shakespeare, like Chaucer, makes ample use of Ovidian and various other Latin metamorphosis stories. There are many scholarly works that have drawn parallels between old myths and Shakespeare’s transformed/transforming heroes and heroines.<sup>36</sup> Be it in his poems, *Venus and Adonis* (where the stories of Myrrha and Cinyras stand out) and *Rape of Lucrece*, or in his plays, we come across metamorphosed or chang(l)ing protagonists often in a metaphorical, non-physical sense. Bates notes that Shakespeare reverses Ovid in tragedy, whereas he “lets his characters off the hook” in his comedies (Bate 119). The examples are countless from the Orphic Philomel, whose tragedy makes “song out of dismemberment” in *Cymbeline* to Bottom, where we encounter a transformation that takes place on stage (Bate 111). Shakespeare makes reference to many metamorphosed heroes without including them in the dramatic action. We see that

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<sup>36</sup>Noteworthy examples include Jonathan Bates’ *Shakespeare and Ovid*; Charles and Michelle Martindale’s *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity*; Albert Booth Taylor’s *Shakespeare’s Ovid: The Metamorphoses in Plays and Poems*. Elizabeth Truax discusses nine plays where we encounter Ovidian metamorphosis in *Metamorphosis in Shakespeare’s Plays*.

Narcissus and Actaeon appear in his sonnets and plays; re-enactments of Bacchic frenzy are laced into some plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where metamorphosis is practiced in a Plautine manner, comic and parable-esque. Some critics go as far as to interpret the emergence of Ariel from a cloven pine as a derivation of the Adonis story. In most of Shakespeare's work, he often alludes to Ovidian transformation in the speeches of his characters but other than Bottom, the plays do not have characters who metamorphose into "others."

Besides Chaucer and Shakespeare, metamorphosis and transformed "others" appear frequently in folklore and fairy tales during the Middle Ages and the early modern era. In the twelfth century Marie de France produced her *Lais* where we are introduced to characters such as Bisclavret transforming into a wolf, thereby being ostracized by society. We know from histories of sixteenth-century Europe how lupine terror shook Europe. A lurid 1519 pamphlet describes how a man who went by the name of Peter Stubbe changed from man to wolf and rampaged the countryside, making prey whoever crossed its path (Brown, Cave and Doyle 70). Another notable monstrous transformation story in 1393 features Mélusine, a woman who turns out to be half-snake. Jean d'Arras' *Roman de Mélusine* recounts the story of a devoted wife whose only condition is to be left alone when she is taking her bath. When her husband peeks, the enchantment is broken and Mélusine is transformed from her serpentine state to a flying monster. "Mélusine's monstrous body signals a recognition of an unassailable kind of difference- which is partly sexual difference, certainly, the unknown and terrifying "secrets" of female sexuality and power of transmission. It is also cultural difference- Mélusine is, of course, a foreigner. Mélusine is the figure of these kinds of otherness, and also of a more

absolute otherness- the otherness embodied in the human/animal divide, or the figure of the monstrous hybrid” (Frangos 88).

Another Renaissance writer who has amply laced themes of metamorphosis into his work is Edmund Spenser (1552-1599). In *The Faerie Queen* we have Proteus, “ambiguously symbolizing mutability in both moral and physical nature” and the ever-changing Adonis. The shape-shifters Archimago, Duessa, Malengin who actually undergo physical change manifest the “protean nature of evil” and in the Fradubio episode (I ii) we encounter a “degenerative transformation” into vegetal or animal forms. In *The Faerie Queen* Spenser makes many references to Ovidian witches and fallen heroes. His Busirane and Acrasia echo the story of Arachne and Circe and his Faunus recalls to us the story of Actaeon. It has been pointed out that there is a Christian agenda behind Spenser’s preoccupation with the subject of metamorphosis where “moral allegory and the mutability theme suggest that for Spenser metamorphosis is a sign of the Fall” (Chaudhuri 471).

If we are to speak of Christianized metamorphosis and its Others, we will have to enter the hells of Dante and Milton where physical metamorphosis is oftentimes exercised as a form of punishment. In the “*Inferno*,” Dante’s sinners undergo a series of horrific Ovidian metamorphoses. Lucan and Ovid’s “one-way” transformations are multiplied where, for example Vanni Fucci is changed into ash and back into human form, and thieves are constantly transformed into snakes and other slimy breeds of unknown creatures. Dante otherizes them into forms befitting their sins: “For every sinner in Hell has undergone a deformation, a disordering movement away from form, which unbalances the vital relationship between body and soul that had made him or her

human (Ginsberg 115). There are many forms of transformation both in Dante and Milton, both of whose masterpieces are “moral” poems, where Satan is the “most protean figure” (Kilgour 272). Samuel notes the similarity between Dante’s frozen Lucifer and Milton’s Satan, turned into a serpentine form in Book X of *Paradise Lost*, in that he represents the “parody of the unmoved mover” (Samuel 126). Kilgour had pointed out that in Milton’s heaven, there is movement and change whereas he associates evil with stagnation and stasis, an allegorical figure of sorts, blocking change (Kilgour 277). Here, Eve is repeatedly compared to Ovidian figures while Satan’s fall is associated with Narcissus (Kilgour 272). Stuck in their respective lakes, Dante’s and Milton’s fallen angels of light are decidedly amphibious, and this in-between state of Lucifer/Satan, reminds us of Ovid’s characters stuck in “moments of indeterminacy and shapelessness” as Solodow has noted (Kilgour 277). “A monstrous serpent on his belly prone,” Milton’s Satan “comes clearly under the definition of the Devil archetype...[Milton] reveals the great author of discord, naming him “serpent”, and piling around him terms of reprobation, ‘seduced’, ‘foul’, ‘infernal’” (Milton 418, Bodkin 232).<sup>37</sup> As shall be seen in the following chapters Frankenstein’s monster and Dracula are likened to Miltonic Satan who has become the model of otherized evil.

One cannot speak of metamorphosis without touching upon the fairy tales of the early modern period. Giambattista Basile’s *Pentameron* published between 1634 and 1636 featured such characters as the goat-faced girl, the snake and the she-bear, all turned

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<sup>37</sup> Once again, in accordance with Christian symbolism, the serpent comes to the forefront. Bodkin goes on to point out that: “The serpent image- standing at once for sexuality and for the horror that both the actual serpent and sexuality uncontrolled have inspired in generations of men- seems to have become in Milton’s mind the focus of intense emotion, which his poetic handling of the symbol communicates to us.” (Bodkin 236)

into “others” punitively or in order to escape certain threats. Basile’s works were important sources for later compilers of tales such as the Brothers Grimm and Charles Perrault. It has been pointed out that it was primarily Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* that permeated the German *Märchen* and German Romanticism, especially when it came to transformation stories (Gallagher 273). The devil and his/her derivatives with their transformative powers and arch-rebels were cast in differing roles in these stories. “From Cain, that ‘Satan clad in human flesh,’ we therefore pass to Satan *in propria persona*, a major figure in Gothic and fairytale alike, who in the form of the increasingly internalized demonic Other will lead us to the Fall and thence to transgression as such” (Bridgwater 36).<sup>38</sup>

While metamorphosis is a popular theme in Renaissance literature,<sup>39</sup> a survey of metamorphosis and its Others in the age of Enlightenment proves to be a taxing endeavour. After the generous use of Ovidian sources in the Middle ages and the early modern era, metamorphosis seems to fall out of fashion till the early 1800s. A notable exception in English literature is Dryden’s *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700) where we encounter translations of and additions to Homer, Ovid and Chaucer, among others. By dramatizing the precariousness of the self and individual subject, Dryden brings into question the notion of boundaries between the self and its Other (Hammond 149). But on the whole, there is hardly any major work in English literature except Pope’s “Rape of

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<sup>38</sup>Bridgwater makes a reference to M.Rudwin’s *The Devil in Legend and Literature* 305 in the above quote.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Lodge’s *Scilla’s Metamorphosis* (1589); Thomas Heywood’s *Oenone and Paris* (1594); Michael Drayton’s *Endymion and Phoebe: Idea’s Latmus* (1595); John Weever’s *Faunus and Melliflora* (1600); Francis Beaumont’s *Salmacis and Hermaphroditis* (1602) are all works inspired by Ovidian *Metamorphoses* (from Siobhan Keenan, *Renaissance Literature*).



the Lock” (1712) that takes up the subject of metamorphosis for about a hundred years. I believe the lack of fantastic elements and metamorphic Others of the Augustan age can be related to the Scientific Revolution, the new mindset that was born as a consequence of Copernican decentralization and Newtonian physics which resulted in a mechanistic view of the workings of the universe. H.P. Lovecraft holds that the upper classes were losing faith in the supernatural and indulging in a period of classical rationalism, thus even in such odd stories as Defoe’s *Apparition of Mrs. Veal* which relates the story of a dead woman’s spectral visit to a distant friend, there is a “homely” tone (Lovecraft 24). The changed view of evil also has an impact. Since writers such as Defoe, Richardson, Fielding and Smollet “expressed an aggressively secular, outward-looking view of evil,” their protagonists were oftentimes rogue-heroes who unmasked folly and vice, but did not undergo transformation into an Other (Reddin 12).

In France, on the other hand, we come across new versions of earlier metamorphosis myths, such as in Rousseau’s *Narcissus, or the Self-Admirer* (1752) and his narcissistic *Pygmalion* (1762) which later reappears in Shaw’s play of the same name. In these years, we see that metamorphosis is oftentimes treated as the facilitator of the ultimate change that is death. This treatment of metamorphosis can be seen in many scholarly and theological treatises and in one of the first science-fiction works, Voltaire’s *Micromégas* (1752) (Fowlie 13).<sup>40</sup> Later, in a characteristic Enlightenment spirit, Diderot touches upon the evolutionary aspects of metamorphosis, furbishing it with all manner of monsters in his philosophical dialogues *Le Rêve de d’Alembert* (1830). Though

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<sup>40</sup> Here, death is explained as such to the denizens of faraway planets: “When a man has to return his body to the elements, and to reanimate nature under another form- this is called dying- when that moment of metamorphosis has come, to have lived for an eternity or to have lived for a day, are precisely the same thing.”

philosophers dwell on the subject of metamorphosis, like Erasmus who had questioned the moral implications of transformation, there is little literary material on metamorphosed monsters or Others until the emergence of Gothic fiction and Romanticism.

Most critics hold that Gothic literature begins with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Indeed, many elements of the genre are set with this novel: the dictatorial patriarchal father figure, the outsider surrogate son, the innocent maiden, slain. But no physical metamorphosis takes place. Instead, characters undergo deep psychological changes of heart, driven to madness, hallucination, becoming their own Others. Poe's various protagonists, Maupassant's *La Horla* (1887) and Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (who hears voices and kills his wife and children as a sacrifice in *Weiland; or the Transformation* (1798)) are such examples. Many Others in Gothic literature come in the form of outsiders who enter the scene, almost like the *deus ex machina* of the Greeks. "The concept of otherness underlies Gothicism as a structural myth, in which the supernatural or alien outsider menaces the patriarchal family...[this can be a] flying Dutchman, the Wandering Jew, the femme fatale, werewolves, the dybbuk, and Faust" (Snodgrass 330, 267).

In Gothic and Romance fiction, we will come across certain archetypal figures such as the man who sells his soul to the devil, and the menacing femme fatale or corpse bride. In many of these works, we see different forms of metamorphosis, where devils come in the form of disguised dogs or characters undergo deep changes thereby becoming their own others. In Goethe's *Tales of Transformation*, we see how he brings

the subject of transformative love to the foreground.<sup>41</sup> “If an individual “identifies so completely with the ‘other’ that this other can be neither represented or remembered...If I am you or he is she, then you, she, ‘the other’ cannot be recalled. Or “known.” The knowledge most worth having obliterates the separations on which relational knowledge depends” (Dye 247). It is said Goethe was highly influenced by his readings on alchemy and the occult (Goethe introduction i) while his scientific studies on the metamorphosis of plants and animals owe a debt not only to Darwin but to Ovid (Gallagher 52). Like Goethe, Schiller’s early poetry and *Anthologie auf das Jahr 1782* is full of Ovidian allusions. E.T.A Hoffman is another contemporary of Goethe who dabbled in fairy tales and stories featuring transformed Others. His *Der golden Topf* (The Golden Pot) (1814) stands out with its dramatis personae of transforming snakes and witches who are eventually changed into beets (Gallagher 273).<sup>42</sup>

As for the other frequently appearing Other in the form of corpse-brides and femme fatales, such figures have made many appearances since the Greek Lamia. These “wombs and tombs,” reminiscent of Dracula’s vampiric daughters, include, among others Goethe’s *The Bride of Corinth* (1797), Coleridge’s *Christabel* (1816), Thomas Love Peacock’s *Rhododaphne* (1818), Keats’ *Lamia* (1819) and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1819), Nodier’s *Smarra, or the Demons of the Night* (1821), Merimée’s *The Venus of*

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<sup>41</sup> In the latter work, Goethe’s *The New Melusine* features a gnome princess who transforms herself to human form, helps her lover metamorphose until he destroys the magic ring to turn back into human form. As the name suggests, *Tales for Transformation* there are numerous metamorphoses in these stories.

<sup>42</sup> “Hoffmann’s metamorphoses in *Der golden Topf* do not feature elaborate graphic descriptions of the development of the various stages of the physical metamorphosis from man to bird or woman to snake as happens in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, but the reader is left in no doubt that there has been a complete corporeal metamorphosis.”

*Ille* (1835), Gautier's *La Morte Amoureuse* (1836), Poe's *Ligeia* and the various vampiric subjects in Baudelaire's *Les Fleures du Mal* (1857). All these texts present a store of female protagonists and "incubus-like femmes fatales" who seek to seduce and make prey, using their magical powers to bring change (Kessler xix). In Keats, the transformation is literal and physical: "Shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?" cries the philosopher to Lycius who is enamoured with Lamia. She threatens to bring about death, madden and metamorphose those who were taken in by her charming entreaties. Haggard's Ayesha in *She* (1886-7) is a beautiful and evil ruler, in the deeps of Africa, and "much involved with various archetypes of death and rebirth" like many of her sorceress predecessors (Frye *Secular Scripture* 114). Bram Stoker's Arabella in *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911) is a femme fatale who transforms herself into a prehistoric snake-like monster with the intention of dragging her suitors into her underground lair to drink their blood. The guileful, unscrupulous, seductive femme fatale archetype who could bring about metamorphosis opened the way to many Marxist-feminist readings. From the earliest myths to fairy tales, decadent poems to film, the bewitched and bewitching powerful dark lady remains an important facilitator of metamorphosis, otherizing her victims in the process.

Throughout the nineteenth century, tales of superstition and gore enjoyed great popularity. The impact of an industrializing world can be read in stories of metamorphosis in works where protagonists face their inner and outer demons in a rapidly changing world. It is fair to say that the *Sturm und Drang* movement gave a start to Romanticism in literature- and it was here that many a monster was born and bred. Poets such as Tennyson (1809-1892) wrote extensively on characters capable of

metamorphosing others and themselves such as Ariadne, Niobe, Medea and Circe. Swinburne's women, vampiric femme fatales and "others" par excellence, "helped prepare the age for *The Golden Bough's* great mother goddesses and their ambivalent relationship to their worshippers" (Louis 39). Besides the modernized Ovidian protagonist and the "new woman," a cornerstone of many nineteenth century works stands the male decadent figure: a Belle époque degenerate and miserable *étranger* who chose to remain an outcast, in his world of opium dens and slovenly streets, a different type of Dorian Gray. De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) would become the role-model for the Modern changeling, wilting away and shunned from proper society, a drugged Other who would be reborn in the works of Fallada and the Beats.

In the twentieth century, there are specific genres where we encounter metamorphosed Others frequently. Greek and Ovidian changelings haunt the many verses of Rilke, Yeats, Pound, H.D, Hughes and Sexton among many other poets, and we come across witches like Circe in many modern novels, such as in Joyce's *Ulysses*. We see fantastic transformations in works of magic realism, and in the grim(m) stories of Hermann Hesse, Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood, who have frequently refashioned tales of old into new. The romance novels of the previous century give way to a different kind of romance that is science fiction, where we frequently encounter archetypal stories of mythical journeys which in turn give way to metamorphoses. *The First Man on the Moon* (1901) by H.G.Wells and Tolkien's fantastic literature are built upon such a structure. Numerous works turn metamorphosis into metaphor or allegory to explain currents in politics; Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* is a noteworthy example. Horror fictions with

their monsters, ghosts, vampires and zombies is another genre where metamorphoses frequently “otherize” the intended victim. Postcolonial literature has also bred its Others: metamorphosis here is oftentimes highlighted via magic realistic strategies, such as we see in several works of Salman Rushdie. As for the other Others of society, many protagonists of gay and lesbian literature and characters with protean genders like Orlando underline the dictum that identity cannot be fixed (Ivory 73).

We have thus far seen how stories of metamorphosis have themselves metamorphosed into different forms in the mythologies of Sumerian/Assyro-Babylonians, Egyptians and Greek and Romans. We have scratched the surface of European literature of the middle and early modern ages and the moderns with their numerous transformations and transformed Others. Though there are ample examples of transformation into Others in the different literatures of the world, from Nordic beasts to Japanese demon stories, I have focused on the specific tradition of metamorphosis in the Mediterranean basin; a series of transforming myths that fed off from each other and influenced European literature. It will be seen that certain themes and forms of otherization via metamorphosis echo the myths and stories that have been presented in this chapter. As we shall see in the following chapters, all the punitive metamorphoses we have encountered can be related to the father-son imbroglios of the following chapter which features a set of Promethean fathers and preyed on sons in *Frankenstein* and *Metamorphosis*. The protean genders of many gods, monsters and she-demons of this chapter will resonate with *Dracula*, while we shall encounter a Narcissus with his Medusa-like ways in *Dorian Gray*. Thus, I have endeavoured to present a survey of myths which have a relevance to the novels I shall analyze in the following chapters. It

will be seen how certain archetypal features of these myths find their counterparts in the novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which I have focused on, in an attempt to explore the legacy upon which they draw.

### CHAPTER III

#### FATHERS AND SONS

##### The Monster without a Name

*A little more than kin, less than kind.*

Hamlet

The story is an old one. Fathers oppressing their sons and sons who are locked in a fierce battle to castrate and replace their fathers- mythological fathers and sons who warred with one another, Biblical fathers who were willing to slay their sons to prove their faith and oceans of literature where father-gods, demons and humans and their prodigal and rebellious sons were forever caught in a struggle to oust one another by bringing down the idols of old and replacing them with the new. Having surveyed how gods frequently punish humans with metamorphosis which otherizes the victim in the previous chapter, we shall see how after gods, it is the male parental figure who consciously or unconsciously attempts metamorphosing the son. In the following pages, we shall see pairings of fathers and sons who have become each other's Others.

Many world mythologies begin with the act of infanticide. Uranus, primordial father of all Gods, hates and persecutes his own children, the Titans. Hesiod's *Theogony* relates how Cronos, Uranus' youngest son, castrates and dethrones his father with the aid of his mother Gaia. Cronos' conduct towards his children is even harsher than his father's. Having being warned by an oracle that one of his sons would supplant him,



Cronos becomes the prototypical devouring parent, swallowing his children the moment they are born. But his son Zeus, plots against the father with his mother Rhea's help. This theme is repeated in the mythologies of many cultures. The Ynglinga Saga of ancient Scandinavia reveals how Odin killed nine of his sons so that he would live a longer life (Da Silva 14).<sup>43</sup> Indian mythology is filled with murderous fathers and sons, or father surrogates and their avatars, as is the case with Krishna who manages to evade his murderers with his guile. Turning the Freudian schema around, it is usually the primary act of infanticide that invites parricide. It can be said that infanticide entered the mythologies of most cultures because it was common practice in the worlds that subsequently created these myths.

E. Wellisch records an archaeology of infanticide, focusing on the history of Spartans, Gauls, Irish Celts, Phoenicians, Semitic tribes such as the Moabites and Carthaginians who "slew children as if they were lambs or chickens" (Wellisch 13). A brief survey the history of law shows how infanticide could be justified in many cultures. Patria Potestas in Roman law for example granted fathers a right to dispose of his offspring as he saw fit. Be it explained by psychological traits imbedded in us as Freud and his acolytes claim, or an anthropological issue as Lévi-Strauss's theories aspire to prove, the father-son relationship is a tumultuous affair that has continued to morph and metamorphose, affording many a writer and thinker room for new interpretations.

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<sup>43</sup> Odin is also known for his shape-shifting, metamorphosing powers: "he famously becomes "a bird or a beast, a fish or a dragon" in order to go "in an instant to far-off lands," while his body-like that of benandaty, kresniks, and werewolves-lies "as though he were asleep or dead."

There are different theories as to how the sons engaged in a struggle against their fathers. The term “Oedipus complex” was coined in 1910, and nothing was the same after that. No one had systematically analyzed this problematic relationship until Freud utilized literature, as he was often wont to do, to hypothesize about the dynamics of this conflict. Though Freud has been deemed a fabulist by most of his later critics, he is nonetheless still a *terminus a quo* when it comes to fathers and sons. Barthes notes that, “Darwin, Atkinson, and later Freud (in *Totem and Taboo*) have suggested that in the earliest period of our history, men lived in savage hordes. Each horde was subject to the most powerful male, who possessed women, children, and property without distinction. The sons were dispossessed of everything, for the father’s strength prevented them from obtaining the sisters or mothers whom they coveted. If the sons happened to provoke the father’s jealousy, they were pitilessly killed, castrated, or driven out. Hence, according to these authors, the sons ultimately banded together to kill the father and take his place” (*On Racine* 8).

It has been pointed out by Milton and Ernest Jones how the Devil represents an unconscious aspect of the Father-Son complex. From the point of view of the son, the father exhibited the diabolical aspects of “arbitrariness, unjustness, petty tyranny and general unreasonableness” while the son played the part of the arch-rebel in defying his father (Bridgwater 37). This archetypal struggle between father and son, God and Lucifer has been reworked in various ways, as we shall see.

This never-ending struggle also has a political aspect. Parricide the “Number One Monster of the patriarchal order” is not only “both feared (by the patriarch) and desired (by his sons), it is “also taken to be its founding truth, driven into the collective

unconscious” (Hall 106). Some thinkers such as Deleuze and Guattari have argued that this may in fact be a primeval instinct forbidden by the law, which results in our numerous acts of sublimation and monster-creation, where the mythical and fictional sons threaten and attempt to kill on our behalves. “The law tells us, ‘You shall not marry your mother or kill your father.’ And we, docile subjects that we are, say to ourselves ‘So that’s what I wanted!’...For it can happen that the law forbids something perfectly fictitious in the realm of desire or ‘instincts’ to persuade its subjects that their intention corresponded to that fiction. ...It is not even a return of the repressed. It is a factitious product of repression” (Deleuze and Guattari *L’Anti-Oedipe* 136-7). That stories of warring fathers and sons keep reappearing should be symptomatic, especially when one or the other is depicted as a hideous Other. In the two father and son figures I shall examine, the intentional ambiguity as to the heroic and monstrous characteristics of the respective father and son figures seem to bring into question the patriarchal system that Deleuze and Guattari critiques.

There are countless fathers and sons in literature who continue to feed the fires of Oedipal and anti-Oedipal debates. “He is not even a tragic hero but a murderer”: Kierkegaard had blamed a biblical father thus (Kierkegaard 77). Some of these fathers sought to remove their sons, some were merely hostile. Sometimes it was the sons who acted first. Greek mythology and drama catalogues a series of fathers and sons such as Uranus & Cronos, Cronos & Zeus, Oedipus & Laios, Theseus & Hippolytus, Perseus & his hostile grandfather Akrisios and stepfather Polydektes. The battle is often one sided, not mutual. Scholars such as Otto Rank and Lord Raglan have researched the hostility between fathers and sons in the myths of different cultures: “The hypothesis that the main

direction of hostility is from father to son received much confirmation from our reading from the following: fourteen North American peoples; four Circum-Mediterranean peoples; five from East Eurasia; three from the Insular Pacific; four from Africa... In many cases the myth states as an explicit motif the father's fear of being killed or displaced by his son" (Kluckhohn 55). From the Greeks and the Bible, we can trace models of warring fathers and sons that appear frequently in the literature of the Renaissance. Some of Shakespeare's plays, most notably *Hamlet*, can be read in an Oedipal light. Since this list is overwhelming in its length and substance, we shall have to make do with only two well known literary father-son figures who metamorphose and otherize in vicious ways.

Marina Warner, who has analyzed the theme of warring fathers and sons from Hesiod's Cronos myth onwards notes that the theme of the ogre as generic father opposed by his sons was significantly emphasized in the nineteenth century becoming the "master plot of the Victorian symbolic imagination" (Warner 68). Faithful to the myths of old, I shall begin with a nineteenth century father and son story that features a "vile insect"<sup>44</sup> without a name (Shelley 122). When Mary Shelley created him, she expressly chose not to give him a name, since the creator/father Victor Frankenstein abandoned his creation after he fashioned him from cadavers of different animals and men. Metamorphosing dead matter into life, as in ancient myths, Victor is victorious over nature until he encounters his creation. Disgusted by the sallow, monstrous appearance of this "insect" as he calls him, the father deserts his creation, thereby becoming an absence to be

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<sup>44</sup> I have used the earliest surviving draft with Percy Shelley's corrections and amendments, brought to light by Charles E. Robinson.

constantly pursued. Thus, “the monster” as he will repeatedly be referred to, is not given a name. In the Lacanian sense, the monster does not get a *nom du pere* for indeed his father is absent, a *non du pere* as Lacan has playfully noted.

*Frankenstein* can be connected to some of the myths touched upon in the first chapter. As the original title suggests, he is linked to Prometheus since Dr. Frankenstein also toys with nature. However, unlike his predecessor Frankenstein’s discovery turns macabre. Prometheus was a favourite of many Romantic writers, regarded as a revolutionary credited with the creation of humankind from clay, a hero who warred against gods along the way. “[Percy] Shelley uses Prometheus to help undo the myth of patriarchal power, both theoretically and as recently embodied by the historical figure of Napoleon...By contrast to her husband, Mary Shelley looked to the creative aspects of Prometheus’ persona to ask important questions about the limits of artistic and scientific imagination” (Dougherty 108-10). Unlike many of her contemporaries, I believe Mary Shelley questioned the enlightenment ethics of “modern Prometheus.” Assuming the role of God, her Doctor is a Faustian character; he may not have wagered his soul but he too delves into the forbidden to ultimately undergo metamorphosis himself. As in *Paradise Lost*, Dr. Frankenstein wants to create a new paradise for a new Adam but he himself turns into Lucifer.

Feminist critics have argued that Mary Shelley has imbued the character of Victor Frankenstein with hysterical feminine qualities, thereby reading the novel as a birth-myth turned awry, the ambitious scientist as man trying to be a woman, a mother.<sup>45</sup> What needs

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<sup>45</sup> Noteworthy examples of such readings include Ellen Moers, who interprets Victor Frankenstein as a life-giving mother in a story that poses as a phantasmagoria of the nursery,

to be stressed from the point of view of the Oedipal equation is not whether the monster's parentage is "masculine" or "feminine" but that this parent chooses to abandon his creation. In *Frankenstein*, we see how the first impulse of the father is to flee from his "son," leaving him in his "filthy chamber" to take off to faraway lands. Victor then views his creation as an adversary who needs to be destroyed. The essence of the tragedy of both father and son lies in this primal act of abandonment. What is perplexing about Victor is how abhorrent he finds his creation the moment he has brought him to life. It was he who frequented charnel houses, dissecting rooms and slaughterhouses to collect bones and body parts that he thought were "beautiful" (Shelley 81). After two years of laborious and frenzied work, he stitches his creature up, furnishes him with lustrous black flowing hair, teeth of pearly whiteness and watery eyes. And yet, as if he had not picked and put together the pieces himself he is horrified at the sight of "the monster's" ugliness. As wretched as the creature is, he is the product of Victor's collage hence this abandonment at first sight is surprising and inexplicable. Some critics turn to the psychological explanation of a mother's disgust with her first-born, attributing to Victor postpartum depression<sup>46</sup> or relating it to Mary Shelley's biography where there are ample examples of child-bearing trauma (Johnson 6). I find that such interpretations do not explain the continued revulsion of the parent towards his creation/child, and the recurrent repulsion the creature is met with from all levels and sexes of society; aristocratic characters such as Walton and the peasants, men and women alike, faint at the sight of

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Gilbert and Gubar who name Victor as "Eve and Eve all along" and Colleen Hobbs who tracks Victor's hysterical outbursts and secretive ways as Shelley's way of pasting the model of a nineteenth century hysteric upon his character.

<sup>46</sup> Barbara Johnson cites Ellen Moers, U.C. Knoepfelmacher and Mary Poovey as adherents of such theories.

him. Can it be that ugliness could conjure such animosity and revulsion? In a like manner, we will see how Gregor Samsa's father is actually relieved when his monstrous son perishes and is cast out. He does not even want to know what is done with the carcass. Judging from his overall demeanor, it would not be unfair to suppose that, were it not up to the sister and mother, Gregor would have been cast out or destroyed by the father, long before.

According to Aristotle, anything that did not resemble his parents, especially the father, was considered to be a monster (Aristotle 106). Frankenstein's son, so unlike his father would be a de facto monster in Aristotelian terms. On top of his unnaturalness, he is also repugnant in appearance. It can be said that Shelley was lending Aristotle's classic approach to Doctor Frankenstein, and by extension his society and extended family, who made and named a monster out of this otherwise innocent creation. To understand the impetus behind the parent's and society's revulsion which turned the monster into an abject outcast, I turn to Paul Ricoeur. From the moment Frankenstein has created him, he is an "other" forever longing to be a part of society that rejects him. In *The Symbolism of Evil*, Ricoeur raises the issue of the archaic fear that stems from the impure. Like Jung who had loaded his concept of "universal subconscious" with archaic symbols such as snakes and rodents that haunt mankind, Ricoeur has suggested that an ancient "primitive dread" is aroused when man comes face to face with an unclean creature (Ricoeur 30). From his "workshop of filthy creation" Victor raises a "miserable monster..." whom he seeks to avoid the moment he is animated (Shelley 78). Shelley's underlining of filth interestingly brings to mind Gregor who has been transformed into an *ungeziefer*, unclean animal not suitable for sacrifice. Perhaps impurity is the reason why Frankenstein's

monster, as eloquent and convincing as he is in making himself heard, is constantly being shunned: “Reenacting a drama of defilement...Shelley plunges beneath the surface of the civilized to examine vestigial impulses that shape enculturated norms. If the monster’s body determines its fate, it also presents the social order that reviles it with a fearsome image of impurity...the monster confronts them with an impurity so complete that it cannot be assimilated to civilized order and reactivates instead a primitive dread” (Youngquist 345).

Primitive dread is taken a step further when Shelley embellishes the “daemonical corpse” of the monster with satanic qualities, who, with the culture he has received (at this point the monster has read Milton’s *Paradise Lost*) becomes the ultimate embodiment of fear, the fallen angel locked in his lake of ice. Victor has thus created a monster who invokes man’s primal fears, who, when “educated” embodies the archetypal model of evil, the devil himself. Blake had pointed out that there is Scriptural evidence for Satan as a sky god. Northrop Fry notes that “in other words, the Frankenstein theme of actualizing human death-impulses in some form of fateful mechanism has a strong natural connection with the sky or ‘outer space’” (Frye *New Directions* 129).<sup>47</sup> From the archetypal point of view, Frankenstein’s monster is thus linked to some sky deity that inevitably is correlated to our death instincts, our attraction to the “unknown.” Harold Bloom states that Shelley’s poignant sentences render the fallen angel that is Frankenstein an Adam, who in turn became a fallen angel as soon as he became aware of his mortality according to Bloom (Bloom *Fallen Angels* 63). I believe that Frankenstein becomes an Adam when he meets the family; he is introduced to the ways of man, their

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<sup>47</sup> From Fry’s article “New Directions from Old.”



stories and books, their loves and hates. He falls once he is rejected, whereupon he starts destroying the family. Thus he becomes more and more removed from the realm of humans, making mountainous terrains his home.

Shelley has it that the monster and his father meet at a glacial setting, invoking the lake of ice in Dante's inferno. Judging from the geographical references Shelley makes, Mark A. Rubenstein suggests that they must unmistakably be at *La Mer de Glace*, which makes it significant not only because of its "hellish" allusion but because of the Oedipal significance hidden in the homonymous word "mere" and "mer," marking the location where they convene at a lake of the frozen mother and waters (Rubenstein 176). Though Shelley repeatedly has Frankenstein refer to his creation as a daemon, the first allusion to Satan comes from the monster himself. "Remember that I am thy creature- I ought to be thy Adam- but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed," the monster exclaims, going on to explain that it is only the caves of ice he does not fear (Shelley 123). Shelley sustains Dantesque imagery as the monster explains the closest thing he came to calling a home, "a divine retreat as Pandemonium appeared to the dominions of hell after their suffocation in the lake of fire" (Shelley 131).<sup>48</sup> The choice of landscape is significant in aligning *Frankenstein* to the descent myths mentioned in the first chapter. The monster's caves are typical destinations of heroes who visit underworlds. Seeking such retreats in order to escape hunters, the consequence is often

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<sup>48</sup> The father and son's places of reunion always happen to be such frozen, wild lands. This seclusion from society follows the model of an archetypal beast, starting with the monster's choice of retreat: "(monsters) often live in borderline places, inhabiting an "outside" dimension... They often live in lairs deep underground, in an unseen dimension as it were, or in watery places like marshes, fens, or swamps. Or else they infest distant wilderness of which people are afraid, like mountain tops, oceans, glaciers, or jungles" (Gilmore 12).

metamorphosis or death according to the archetypal pattern. In this case, the monster is lost into the great unknown, while the hunter-father who incurs a different kind of transformation eventually suffers the ultimate change that is death.

It is interesting to observe how the father takes to the son at the end of the novel. Though Frankenstein has not nurtured him like a parent should, they end up being each other's only relations. The father-son duo locked in a deadly chase end up mirroring each other; Frankenstein transformed into a fallen angel fuelled by his vengeance as he murderously pursues his son to the arctic pole. In the midst of a frozen sea, his journey concludes like Dante's Satan where his last friend and audience Walton remarks: "What a glorious creature must he have been in his days of prosperity when he is thus noble and godlike in ruin. He seems to feel his own worth and the greatness of his fall" (Shelley 233). This is important because Shelley seems to be suggesting that the struggle between the son and father results in a switching of roles where the diabolical characterizations attributed to the son are adopted by the father. In *Violence and the Sacred* René Girard had pointed out both Oedipus and his father are moved by their anger that brought about the tragedy (Girard 73). I believe this holds true for Frankenstein and his monster where their mutual anger and sense of being wronged binds them together, the reciprocity of their angst eventually metamorphosing one into the other. As in the case of Radcliffe's generic Gothic novel *The Italian* where the only difference between the prisoner and the guard is that they view two different faces of the same door, the father and son here become mirror images of each other in their wrath (Davenport-Hines 229).

Whether the monster is the incarnation of an unclean creature or the embodiment of Satan himself, it is clear that he is literally made "other" by his father, and doomed to

remain so because of his wretched appearance. What is more, the father turned almost insane in his pursuit is also transformed into an “other,” a haggard, vengeful creature hardly recognizable to those acquaintances who see him. He has become the shell of his former self: “He must have been a noble creature in his better days” notes Walton. (Shelley 55). Unlike the metamorphoses models of the previous chapter, here we encounter a psychological transformation that gives way to physical changes in the father. As for the physique of the monster, the repugnance he evokes in the people who set eyes on his countenance may be explained by a Ricoeurian understanding of the unclean; he may even be considered uncanny, but I still find the father’s initial horror and consequent abandonment (which becomes the leitmotif of the novel) perplexing. Victor states that he “had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then. But when those muscles and joints were endued with motion, it became a thing such as even Dante would never have conceived” (Shelley 82). He may have been a hideous conglomeration of dead parts before, but it is the animation of the monster that actually sets the father off. Perhaps, we could understand Victor’s inherent horror through Lacanian terms. Psychoanalytic critics have claimed that the raising of the monster may have been a symbolic mirror stage for Victor. We had hitherto seen Frankenstein as the son of a loving, nurturing family. He is but a young, ambitious university student who has left his family and dead mother behind to cloister himself in his “womb-like” laboratory as Rubenstein and Youngquist have suggested, to give life to what he first calls a monster. Thus, when his creation finally comes to life, Victor, the young, inexperienced student suddenly turned father, comes face to face with the Lacanian Real and his ordinary reality faces the threat of disappearing:

What shocks Victor is simply that the image comes to life, as if this essential thing has been added back. “The double,” writes Dolar, “is the same as me plus the object *a*, that invisible part of being added to my image.” Victor does not encounter himself as another person: that would be startling enough, to be sure, but not as strange as actually seeing as an image that element of the self that one loses when one recognizes one’s reflection in the mirror. Suddenly he sees what it would be like to be an image and be complete, too: to appear in the world *and lack nothing*. (Murfin 286)

The sequence of events leading to Victor’s scientific endeavours seems to signal the beginning of his manhood. The monster’s creation may well be when Victor comes face to face with the mirror stage, albeit in his own shattering way. According to Lacan, the entry into maturity comes through an act of alienation where the ego is constructed on an image outside oneself. To make up for the initial lack of completeness in the body, the self creates an ego that poses as a unified, complete being. As Victor stitches up the body parts of his “son” he seems to be instating himself for the first time. This can be read as an act of ego-building which serves to conceal the disturbing lack of unity in his life. His horror may be explained by his realization of the fiction of the unified self. Certain psychoanalytic critics have interpreted the monster as his mirror image. It has been pointed out that “his creation ends up resembling his own mirror image more than it does his maternal object” while others have read the monster as the *object petit a*, something forever desired but never regained (Murfin 273). David Collings states that Victor has not entered the Symbolic Stage, frozen in the purgatory between the Imaginary and the Symbolic (Murfin 272).

While Shelley may anticipate Lacanian theory in terms of Victor's recognition of this inherent lack of unity embodied in the monster he creates, I find suggestions such as Collings' to be farfetched. The Symbolic Stage is situated in the realm of language, where the child develops his/her identity from the words of the parents. We do not have enough information on Victor to place him in such a purgatory. Shelley repeatedly underlines how the monster is so eloquent of speech, a master of language, and Victor himself is said to be a product of a loving, nurturing home that has made him who he is. If anything, both the father and the son reign over the realm of language, so if we must place them in some sort of Dantesque setting, it would be the hell of the other where one recognizes the fragmentary nature of existence in all its horror (Murfin 280).<sup>49</sup>

Victor, intrigued by the dark arts of Agrippa, and the alchemical heroes his professors mocked, is introduced to the wonderful world of natural sciences and chemistry as soon as he enrolls in college. With the "genuine knowledge" he acquires, his first intention is to turn dead matter into life, what would nowadays be called a Faustian endeavour. It is important to note that he undertakes this experiment right after he has lost his mother. It can be said that losing his mother, leaving his family and going off to college is his rite of passage. As a boy turned man, his initial desire is to create, replacing his mother's creative powers. Behind his desire may lurk the intention of bringing her back to life one day, as well as filling the gap left with her loss: "A new existence would

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<sup>49</sup>Murfin places the father and son in a different kind of purgatory which I find more convincing: "The world of *Frankenstein* is deeply divided. On the one hand, there is a social order rooted in kinship, marriage, and legality, related to what Lacan calls the Symbolic order... On the other hand, there is the domain of rivalry between Victor and his creature, resembling Lacan's Imaginary order, exemplified by the curious solitude of each, the fact that neither can belong to a family, their endless fascination with each other, and their utter incapacity to communicate their situation to anyone else (except of course Robert Walton, the novel's narrator)." (Murfin 280)

bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. Pursuing these reflections, I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter I might in process of time (although I now found it impossible) renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption” (Shelley 78). The impetus behind “renewing the dead” certainly brings to mind the recently deceased mother, along with his genuine ambition to accomplish what no man has been able to do: “spurning the social realm in favour of the bodily mother, whom he attempts to recover by creating the monster” (Murfin 272).

However reviving the mother or replacing her upsets the natural order of things, as it does Victor. I find that his extreme agitation and fright once he has brought his creature to life is not only a symbolic mirror stage, but the culmination of his manic trials and tribulations crystallizes the realization that his mother cannot be brought back. Once animated, the creature is too horrid, and this is something he would not want for his mother. He has come of age, leaving behind his studies as a university student to play god and this new status seems to upset him, caught as he is betwixt boyhood and manhood, between the lost and not found (mother). “The novel thus suggests that the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the sense of ordinary reality itself depend on the primordial loss of the maternal body; to revive it is to threaten the order of the world” (Murfin 286).

We need not forget that Victor is creating life from dead matter. His experiment is no simple science-fiction feat defying nature. Frequenting charnel houses, he uses the dead to create life. It is true that “what interests Victor is obviously not making a baby with his fiancée, Elizabeth; it is making one by himself” (Flahault 55). Tracing the

genesis of this desire, Flahault proposes that Victor is after infinity thereby creating a blasphemous Eucharist, the monster being the very flesh of the sacrifice. I believe this dabbling with the dead places Victor in the realm of heroes who have descended to the world of the dead. His laboratory, more so than a womb, is a khora which in Derridan terms is a radical otherness which gives place to being.<sup>50</sup> In this “solitary chamber-or rather a cell at the top of the house and separated from all other apartments by a gallery and staircase- I kept my workshop of filthy creation” (Shelley 78). He fills his hidden khora with body parts of the dead he has collected for two years in order to create a monster much larger than man and much larger than life. Secluded thus from the life around him, Victor’s ascent to his workshop is a parody of the archetypal descents to hell, a scientific Orpheus hoping to retrieve his beloved dead from the bowels of his laboratory, and as such, is a subversion of myth by Shelley. Also, the clandestine nature of his experiment is reminiscent of mythical births: “Shrouding and concealment are natural consequences of a threatened birth, and the infant hidden by a terrified mother or nurse occurs in the myths of Zeus and Dionysus as well as the biblical stories of Moses and Jesus” (Frye *Secular Scripture* 100). We need to see that the master whose “profane fingers meddled with the secrets of the human frame” in the dirty space he has created is actually in his own hell, perhaps ringing with the memories of his dead mother. Even if he flees his laboratory/hell which he indeed does as soon as his experiment is complete, his hell won’t let him go. The monster of this space is doomed to be a monster not because of his physical hideousness but because he is the product of Victor’s khora/hell. If I extend the Orphic metaphor further, then his “beloved” monster’s gaze is the

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<sup>50</sup> In Platonic terms, a khora is neither a being or nonbeing, a giver of space, a matrix.

penetrating gaze from hell, a gaze that indeed follows him to his end. Coincidentally, the rejected abjects, the monster and Gregor, both become voyeurs, eyeing their families with the desire of recognition, the want to be an “I” in their eyes.

Hobbes starts his *Leviathan* with the metaphor of machines as artificial animals created by Man just as Man is a machine created by God. As a “Monstrorum Artifex”<sup>51</sup> Shelley mirrors the anxieties of earlier philosophers such as Campanella, Descartes and Hobbes who have read the body as a machine. As an artificial man, Frankenstein’s monster is more of a machine. Hanafi holds that “if machines are monstrous, and the human body is a machine, then human bodies must be monstrous, too” (Hanafi 135). I believe Shelley seems to bring into question our own monstrosities by highlighting her monster’s construction. The monster’s artificiality brings to the foreground our machine bodies, the Cartesian work of engineering. Thus, the idea of the monster is repeatedly problematized.

What scholars of imaginary monsters like Campbell claim is that monsters share many common traits, being embodiments of man’s instinctual fears. For Freud, monsters signify the projection of a repressed self, the personification of a repudiated wish or sense of guilt, “always the familiar self disguised as the alien Other” (Gilmore 16). It can be said that *Frankenstein* follows certain characteristics of monster lore. We have seen how according to some readers the monster could conceivably represent the dead mother or Victor’s realization of disunity or the archetypal unclean. All these things may also be an amalgamation of Frankenstein’s repressed fears and his bottled-up animosity against his

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<sup>51</sup> Or maker of monsters in the words of Pliny. (Borges 79).



father. The novel lends itself to a perverse Oedipal reading, for despite all the praises Victor heaps on his father, there is an underlying polemic behind his eulogies. The novel in fact opens with a portrait of his father who “not until the decline of life” thought of marrying, “bestowing on the state sons who might carry his virtues and his name down to posterity” (Shelley 59). Soon this distant (c)old father is blamed by the son for the misfortunes that befall him. Victor’s father looks carelessly at the book his son is reading and remarks that it is “sad trash.”

Under such circumstances I should certainly have thrown Agrippa aside and applied myself to the more rational theory of chemistry which has resulted from modern discoveries. It is even possible that the train of my ideas might have never received that fatal impulse which led me to my ruin. But the cursory glance my father had taken of my volume by no means assured me that he was acquainted with its contents; and I continued to read with the greatest avidity...although I often wished to communicate these secret stories of knowledge to my father, yet his definite censure of my favourite Agrippa always withheld me (Shelley 64).

The father as a distant authoritarian is contrasted against the mother (“My father directed our studies and my mother partook of our enjoyments”) (Shelley 67). Thus, Victor’s whole endeavour can be interpreted as a defiance against the father who rebuked and ignored him, as did his professor, another father substitute, pushing him into recesses of the dark sciences.

His act is not only a defiance of nature, a search for the infinite as Flahault remarked, but also a way to make up for the lack of both of his parents. While it is true that “the monster is uniformly understood to be a symbol of Victor Frankenstein’s repressed wishes and passions, the nature of those passions and hidden desires varies considerably. Despite the structure provided by Oedipus” he also needs to be read as an extension of Victor’s aggression towards his own father (Murfín 128). Victor’s father’s lack of interest and belittling attitude becomes the model he himself follows to the

extreme when he in fact fathers a monster-son. The moment his son utters “inarticulate sounds” Victor expresses his distaste: “He might have spoken, but I did not hear” is his response, disappearing into the night, leaving his newly “born” behind (Shelley 82). Since his behaviour is an exaggerated echo of his father’s lack of nurturing attention, this meaningful repetition may be interpreted in the light of Lacanian repetition complex (Felman 43).<sup>52</sup> This pattern which is compulsively repeated as a hide and seek between father and son throughout the novel can therefore be attributed to Victor’s father’s initial lack of presence. What is more, Shelley has it that most of the male characters in the book fall prey to an Oedipal persecution syndrome. According to Richard Van Oort:

Everyone has the same tired story of persecution to tell. Walton is persecuted by his dead father who would not allow him to go to sea. Victor is persecuted by an unsympathetic father who denigrates his youthful reading of the alchemists... The monster and Victor are textbook examples of Girard’s monstrous double. Each feels morally certain that he is the victim of the other’s persecution. Even the characters within each narrator’s story are emblematic of the narrative structure of resentment, beginning with the story of Beaufort victimized by his ill luck in the marketplace and ending with the monster’s account of the victimized De Lacey family. Monstrosity, Shelley suggests, is the natural endpoint of this mimetic rivalry. It is the inevitable outcome of Victor’s obsessive desire for transcendence...(Oort 135)

I would further venture to suggest that the repeated diatribe against the unjust legal system is an extension of the sentiment against the father. Kafka mocks the patriarchal system via the three bearded lodgers in *The Metamorphosis*, this being a minor example among his numerous attempts to belittle officers and judges in works such as *The Castle* and *The Trial*. Shelley seems to take a similar stab by underlining how unjust and useless courts are. All her references to Justine and Felix’s trials are laced with overt criticism;

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<sup>52</sup> “For Lacan, what is repeated in the text is not the content of a fantasy but the symbolic displacement of a signifier through the insistence of a signifying chain; repetition is not of *sameness* but of *difference*, not of independent terms or of analogous themes but of a structure of differential interrelationships, in which what *returns* is always *other*.”

courts are all inept and the judgement they pass is always flawed. Like the tyrannical Turkish father of the novel, they play cruelly with the lives of innocents. Thus, all the fathers and the courts which they preside over are shown in an uncomplimentary light, uncaring at best, murderous at their worse (Botting 126).<sup>53</sup>

This vicious cycle between fathers and sons takes a ghastly turn when it comes to the mothers. Shelley especially amplifies a repetitive structure when she touches on the theme of missing mothers or “lost objects” as Rubenstein calls them. Since all the characters in *Frankenstein* are orphans, it would be fair to say that it is the actual missing parent who taunts and haunts the protagonists. Victor’s, Safie’s, Elizabeth’s and Justine’s mothers are all dead, inviting interpretations such as Paul Youngquist’s who believes Shelley’s mothers are those who bring death into the world (Youngquist 350). Not divulging into any biographical explanations as most critics have done, I nonetheless second this ominous point, for each time we see mothers, they are correlated with death. The most startling scene between a mother and her child is the one that takes place in Victor’s nightmare the night he brings his monster to life:

I saw Elizabeth in the bloom of health walking in the streets of Ingolstadt; delighted and surprised, I embraced her; but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw grave worms crawling in the folds of the flannel. (Shelley 81)

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<sup>53</sup> Botting goes a step further in explaining Frankenstein’s creation experiment: “At the same time as it (the navel as mother, the other) conceives of an absent father, the desire to penetrate the unconscious proposes to efface this absent origin and, by possessing the mother, become one’s won father and son- to become the origin and product of oneself and thus attain the position of the phallus. However, the phallus exists, irrecoverably, among the prior and distant traces of the Other.”

The obvious Oedipal connotation of the dream brings to mind Jean-Joseph Goux's central thesis that excepting the anomaly that is the Oedipus myth, heroes have to destroy the she-monster that is representative of the mother in order to move on and marry the maiden (Goux 6-9). Perseus, Bellerophon and Jason all slay these she-monsters so as to win the hand of the king's daughter. If we understand the creation of the monster as an attempt to bring back the mother, then the above manifestation of the unconscious is meaningful. Shelley reverses the mythic scheme in Frankenstein's unconscious as outlined by Goux. The fiancée (whom the mother had expressly designed to take her place) is metamorphosed into the dead mother in the dream, and in reality Frankenstein's monster destroys the fiancée before their love is consummated (Shelley 61). Goux points out that it is matricide not patricide as Freud thought that is universally held to be the most difficult task; unlike Orestes, Frankenstein cannot seem to "kill" his mother and is therefore doomed to be stuck with his monster who keeps haunting him like his mother. It is to be noted that when the monster does not make his appearance, Frankenstein seeks him out. His silence on the subject of his creation can therefore be understood as an endeavour to keep the mother in his life.

For Lacan, the concept of the Other begins when the subject identifies with an object different from itself. This usually happens to be the mother, and then develops into the 'Symbolic other, or the real father' (Raglan 16). Frankenstein does not seem to pass onto this stage. His mother always lurks before him, either as a ghostly reminder on the mantelpiece (seated next to a coffin), a nightmare he sees right after his first and only act of creation, behind his monster and fiancée. She is, like all the absent mothers in the novel, idealized and all too present. The aforementioned dream in fact makes it manifest

that she, rather than Elizabeth, is the true object of desire. Holding onto his dead mother, Victor's feeble yearnings for Elizabeth do not convince the reader. He puts off his engagement so as to create a female monster for his "son." When he finally sets to work after months of idle frolic, he leaves the project incomplete. The impotence he exhibited at the trial of Justine unjustly sends her to her death because he does not come forward. All his secrecy can be seen as a reluctance to let go of his mother. According to this line of thought, acknowledging his creation entails moving forward, leaving his past and mother behind, but he certainly is not prepared for that. On the night he is to consummate his marriage with Elizabeth, he could have stayed by her side. Instead he waits for the monster alone while he destroys her on their marriage bed. All these actions, or rather inactions on the part of Frankenstein have lead critics such as J.M.Hill to claim that Victor only desires exclusive maternal love (Murfin 128). I believe that Victor had in fact wanted to fulfil his mother's wish by marrying Elizabeth. His now defunct act of sublimation triggers a series of events that make the mother all the more alive as is evidenced in his dream. Thus, while he may not desire maternal love exclusively, there is no more space left from the mother- he simply cannot breach her law.

It is no surprise that the fixation on his mother, along with his inherent impotence pertaining to taking any sort of action (except the creation of the monster) has lead many a critic to read Shelley's protagonist as well as the monster as passive and feminine" (London 256). Bette London calls the father son duo "Eve and Eve all along." Though, I believe Eve is prone to take action, the point here is that they are critiqued as classically passive characters who bring about each other's falls. Perhaps, underlining the "feminine" in the male protagonists is a critic's way of compensation for the "beautiful,

gentle, selfless, boring nurturers and victims” that are Shelley’s lack-luster female characterizations (Johnson 7). This kind of characterization has posed a problem for feminist critics who blame Shelley for her idealized, caricaturized women. I would hold that it is their absence that underlines their presence. This certainly holds for the mother figures. With her death, Frankenstein’s mother whose “features expressed affection even in death” becomes all the more present (Shelley 68). Even his fiancée Elizabeth, who is so instrumental in renewing “the spirit of cheerfulness” of the mourning family, seems to be recognized and loved because she reminds them of the deceased mother. Alive, Elizabeth can certainly not compete with the mother. In her passing, she is tied to the mother all the more. In their lack, women make themselves known via portraits and photographs. The portrait of the mother on the murdered child’s breast becomes the item used by the court to wrongly send Justine to the gallows. The monster, upon seeing the silvery object is mesmerized by the woman’s beauty in the cameo necklace. As can be expected, the woman turns out to be Frankenstein’s mother. She haunts the eye, yet again:

As I fixed my eyes on the child, I saw something glittering on his breast. I took it. It was the portrait of a most lovely woman. In spite of my malignity, it softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark, deep eyes and lovely lips, but presently my rage returned: I remembered that I was for ever deprived of the delights such beautiful creatures could bestow; and that she whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have changed that air of divine benignity to one of horror and detestation. (Shelley 168)

Here, the mother who had metaphorically metamorphosed into Frankenstein’s object of desire literally becomes the coveted object of the monster. As a glittering “thing” on the breast of her strangled son, she lures with her “deep, dark eyes.” She becomes the monster’s *objet petit a* that can never be attained. As with Gregor’s poster, the

photograph brings out the human in the monster, it softens him. The monster mirrors his father's angst, expressed when he laid eyes upon his creation: here on the chest of the dead child is a reminder of the unattainable. Frankenstein is horrified that his mother cannot be brought back once he sees the un-unified conglomerate that is his zombie son. The son subconsciously yearns for the same mother, sitting on the first creature he has killed. Thus, he himself becomes a twice-removed Oedipal figure, angry he cannot be with such a lovely Jocasta. Richard Van Oort states that *Frankenstein is Oedipus Tyrannus* without the tyranny: "At least Oedipus gets to rule Thebes for a few years (just long enough to marry his mother and raise his two daughters/sisters). Shelley does not even grant her monster the possibility of a minimal social interaction within the nuclear family. The monster thus bears a closer resemblance to the infant Oedipus abandoned on Mount Cithaeron than the adult man who marries a queen to become a king" (Oort 134). I had pointed out that both father and son, being the progeny of parents who abandon their offspring, were akin to Oedipus. I would add that the above episode with the coveted portrait relates the monster to Oedipus with his unknowing attraction to the mother.

If these static portraits of distant beings bring out the human(e) in monsters, people bring out the monsters in those they deem to be "others." The only person who does not judge the monster is an old blind man. Alas, he is harshly whisked off with a stick by the man's son as soon as he is spotted kneeling at his feet. "Where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster" complains Frankenstein's son who fears that he is to be "an outcast in the world for ever" (Shelley 159). Throughout his life, the monster is rejected most brutally based solely on his appearance. We see how eloquent he is when he does manage to talk but even this is

interpreted as a satanic strategy by his father. Warning Walton, Frankenstein speaks of his son as if he is describing Milton's Satan: "'Oh! he is eloquent and persuasive, and once his words had even power over my heart- but trust him not. His soul is as hellish as his form, full of treachery and fiend-like malice-hear him not'" (Shelley 231). However, it is precisely because no one cares to hear him out that he turns to monstrous ways. Since he is not heard, he chooses to "strangle" out others' voices. If the reader has sympathy for the devil, it is simply because he is not given a chance to let this eloquent voice be heard. Repeatedly referred to as a "spectral monster," "vampire," "filthy daemon" and "wretch" he eventually calls himself such things, blaming the world who has named, then made him thus. It is almost as if by naming him "monster," they make him so. Therefore, having been introduced to Milton's work, he identifies with Satan in the Biblical myth: "All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment. I, like the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me." At the very end of the novel, the monster seemingly accepts the role society has bestowed upon him as the absolute "other": "The fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet he, even he, man's enemy, had friends and associates; I am quite alone" (Shelley 161 and 243).

We can perhaps explain Frankenstein's disgust and his consequent metamorphosis, on his psychological state and his lacks. It could even be said the father becomes more and more (metaphorically) monstrous as his son continues to haunt him: "My abhorrence of this fiend cannot be conceived. When I thought of him, I gnashed my teeth, my eyes became inflamed, and I ardently wished to extinguish that life which I had so thoughtlessly bestowed" (Shelley 116). The actions taken against him by the villagers and the De Lacey family to whom he offers his services without making himself known



are, however, the most monstrous acts. Their behaviour also invites a reading from a hierarchical perspective since these people identify physical appearance with inferiority and evil.

Perhaps to stress the innocence of the monster, Shelley makes him into a vegetarian. Before vengeance becomes the stuff that nourishes the adversarial father and son: “But revenge kept me alive” (Shelley 224). Shelley twice underlines the fact that the monster feeds only on fruits and nuts. Conversely, she has it that Frankenstein subsists mainly on wild animals that cross his path (Shelley 226). I have hitherto not come across a satisfactory explanation for this emphasis. I will suggest that here this is done so as to stress that he who is called monster does not touch the meat of beasts. His vegetarianism probably points to his kindly nature. His awe when he hears the old father make music and the sweet sounds of birds parallel Gregor’s becoming human, all too human, upon hearing his sister’s violin. As a creature who does not devour other life forms, his ghastly acts of strangling become all the more striking. By eliminating Frankenstein’s relatives one by one, he comes closer to his father, the hunter. Further, he does not spill blood; how he destroys them is by asphyxiation- a form of silencing. It was stated earlier how certain critics believe Shelley imbues the monster with feminine qualities. “The novel allows the repressed to return in a transmuted form: ‘despite its form, the monster embodies a specifically *female* position- it returns to remind a narrowly masculine and secular ideology of what has been repressed: the mother, the body, the spirit, love” (Botting 103). Perhaps the monster’s potential gentleness, evidenced by vegetarianism, is

another way of bringing out the feminine in him. Or perhaps the monster has read Plutarch, one of the earliest advocates of vegetarianism, all too closely (Adams 144).<sup>54</sup>

The feminizing of both Frankenstein and the monster needs be discussed with caution however. Certain critics have gone so far as to suggest that Shelley privileges femaleness, interpreting the mountainous landscape where the monster and his father meet as an emblem of a vagina enclosing a penis.<sup>55</sup> Anne Mellor points out that the creation of the monster is a masculine attempt to circumvent the maternal, usurping and destroying the life-giving power of sexuality while Gordon Hirsch states that penis envy is a central issue of the novel (Murfen 284). William Veeder holds that Frankenstein is the ‘negative Oedipus’ who desires to kill the mother and possess the father. I have to agree with Botting who holds that most of these readings fail: “they only frame the text within a Freudian order in which certain symptoms can be diagnosed” (Botting 128). The novella seems to problematize the concept of an ideal family, despite the fact that Frankenstein’s family is presented as a group of well-educated, upper class, affectionate people.

However, none of the men in the novella even approach the ideal, resorting to violence and vengeance as soon as they perceive a threat. The women who are either virgins or mothers seem to be embodiments of perfection, but they are too distant, idealized idols, not given a voice or character. It is clear enough that Frankenstein’s failed project can be seen as a radical critique of Utilitarian philosophy, a subject that preoccupied Shelley’s father (Collings 196). Thus, the subject of fathers transforming their sons and vice versa

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<sup>54</sup> Plutarch was one of the three works read by the monster. It should be remembered that his work on vegetarianism (“On Flesh-Eating”) was translated into English by Joseph Ritson and Percy Shelley.

<sup>55</sup> Fred V. Randel’s theory (Botting 104).

can easily lend itself to a reading of the text as social critique. Shelley's novel literalizes metaphors to the point where metaphors are brought into question.

## Ungeziefer: The Unclean

*The sun...In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds*

*On half the nations and with fear of change*

*Perplexes monarchs.*

Milton

Another son who is transformed into a monster or “vile insect” is Gregor Samsa. The metamorphosis is literal. It is no coincidence that Kafka chose an Ovidian title for his work. As in many of Ovid’s stories, the pathos brought about by a deprecating transformation points to the many wrongs exercised by those who bring about change; in this case, gods are replaced by fathers and father surrogates in their offices. It has been pointed out that Ovid who had provided a model and lexicon for representing change always placed metamorphoses towards to the end of his tales whereas Kafka reversed the chronology and began his work with metamorphosis. “Kafka’s displacement of metamorphosis to a position eccentric to the narrative proper corresponds to a shift in the symbolic value of transformation that gains currency precisely when the first great novels are written...[representing] the relatively new literary theme of the dislocated private party, alone against the world” (E. Butler 16).

There are many similarities between Frankenstein’s monster and Gregor. Like Oedipus, they have been abandoned by the father and mother. Kafka’s works are a mine quarried most frequently in psychoanalytic studies. As Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari have repeatedly refrained from “putting him into nursery” by “oedipalizing and relating him to mother-father narratives” they have nonetheless paved the way to “father/son”

readings.<sup>56</sup> I shall attempt to analyze his *Metamorphosis* from the point view of othering transformations, without succumbing to a “gros Oedipe” interpretation. This is a difficult task for Kafka’s work readily lends itself to a psychoanalytic reading in that his parasitic officials and grim father figures are always in the foreground. How then, to avoid offering mundane psychoanalytic interpretations when in every twist and turn of Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*, *The Trial*, *The Castle* and in every cranny of stories such as *The Cares of a Family Man* he lets loose father-son figures broiling in Oedipal angst ? As valuable as Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari’s readings of Kafka are, they cannot but steer clear from the sirens that are Kafka’s father figures.

Calling Kafka the “Dante of the Freudian age,” Walter Herbert Sokel has noted Kafka’s keen interest in psychoanalysts of his day:

Historically, Kafka’s writing career coincided with the appearance of the fundamental texts that established psychoanalysis...In Kafka’s most formative decade as a writer, the influence of Freud radiated through the intellectual avant-garde of Central Europe and, in his native Prague, Kafka could not escape it. Freud was discussed and lectured in the literary salon of Frau Berta Fanta, which Kafka frequented. He became personally acquainted with and was greatly attracted to the psychoanalytic thinker and reformer Otto Gross, whom the avant-garde of Kafka’s day hailed as a martyr to the Oedipal family institution. He was very interested in a book in which the psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel had referred to his “The Metamorphosis,” ...and Kafka lists Freud among the associations that came to him in reading over “The Judgement,” the evening it was written. “Thoughts of Freud, naturally,” Kafka observed. (Sokel 152)

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<sup>56</sup> Hailing the Kafka readings of Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari, Réda Bensmaïa has pointed out how Kafka has been abused: “The ‘reading’ that Benjamin proposes for Kafka’s work is clear from the outset and is characterized- no less than that of Deleuze and Guattari- by never trying to find archetypes that claim to have ‘qualified’ Kafka’s ‘imaginary’ or to interpret his work by moving from the unknown back to the known: the Castle is God, the world of the father, power that cannot be grasped; the cockroach is anxiety, castration, the dreamworld and its multiple metamorphoses, and so forth” (*Kafka: Pour Une Mineure*, ix).

Though Benjamin, Deleuze and Guattari chose not to camp all the bosses, judges, clerks and lawyers under the symbolic heading of the “father figure,” it is the same Benjamin who points out that “there is much to indicate that the world of officials and the world of fathers are the same to Kafka” (Benjamin 113). Kafka was indeed a child of his times; in a rapidly industrializing world of dismal cities with their hardworking citizens running around like ants, he created a host of fathers and father surrogates who crushed or attempted to crush their sons, thus exacting the Oedipal plot of the Modern age. “The convergences of Kafka’s and Freud’s views of the working of the mind- explicitly and systematically analyzed by Freud, implicitly shown by Kafka- are numerous, profound, and amazing” (Sokel 164).

I have chosen perhaps the most prominent example of an Oedipal relationship in Kafka’s oeuvre, *The Metamorphosis*. There are many fathers or patriarchal figures at war with their sons in Kafka’s work, but no where does an otherizing metamorphosis occur as it does in this novella. It has been pointed out that Kafka’s writing undergoes three phases: his earlier works are heavily influenced by Franz Brentano,<sup>57</sup> his stories map Freudian problematics, and only in the final narratives is psychoanalysis cast out entirely (Ryan 100). Published in 1915, *The Metamorphosis* fits right into Kafka’s “psychoanalytic phase” where the father quashes his son in more ways than one. Economically and from a psychological point of view, the father who is never given a name is he who has let his son become a slave to the system, toiling to pay the father’s debts. He is strong and merciless, eventually killing his son with an apple he hurls.

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<sup>57</sup> The philosopher and psychologist who taught and influenced, among others, Husserl and Freud.

Kafka's story invites many Marxist and psychoanalytic readings because of the role of the father figure whose power is constantly being juxtaposed against the weak vermin-like creature the son has turned into.

The first time we see this father is as a stern, strong voice knocking on Gregor's door. The "painfully squeaking" Gregor has already undergone his metamorphosis and the sounds that issue from him are muddled, unclear, coming from "somewhere below" (Kafka 10). Enter the father who admonishes him in his "deep voice." This is the booming voice of authority that is immediately superimposed over the Gregor's squealing sounds. The stark difference between the two voices is startling. What is more, though the father's first knock is gentle (*schwach*: weak), he continues to pound on the door "with his fist"- this fist is in direct contrast with Gregor, who having lost his hands, is making a pathetic attempt to open the door.

The difference between father and son is further underlined when we come to the physique of the two characters. Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from troubled dreams and found himself transformed into a monstrous insect- we know that. What we do not know is what kind of thing he is- as with his voice, Gregor is an ambivalent creature. Kafka saw to it that this was so, for, in a letter to his publisher in 1915, he asked that the creature not be depicted in the book. He deliberately chose the vague word *ungeziefer*, literally an unclean animal not suitable for sacrifice, unlike Isaac not fit to be slain, rather than the common word for a dung beetle, *mistkafer* (which happens to be used only by the commoner charwoman in the story) (Bloom *Franz Kafka* 204). This amorphous creature is in direct contrast with the father decked in a gold-buttoned uniform and boots, which he never takes off. While Kafka offers a very hazy picture of the metamorphosed

son, the father's depiction is plain and detailed. Not only is the father explicitly described but his apparel spells his authority and strength, accessorized with the clerk's cane; "Gregor was astounded at the enormous size of the soles of his boots" (Kafka 63). It has been noted that the father is no titanic figure but an old man. He only appears to be so because of Gregor's perspective: "His shoe soles seem "enormous" to his son because of his insect angle of vision- not because the old man is superhuman but because the son is less than human" (Greenberg 51). Benjamin goes on to point out the stains on the father's uniform, and his filthy underwear links him to the world of officials: "Filth is the element of the officials...Uncleanness is so much the attribute of officials that one could almost regard them as enormous parasites...In the same way the fathers in Kafka's strange families batten on their sons, lying on top of them like giant parasites. They not only prey upon their strength, but gnaw away at the sons' right to exist. The fathers punish, but they are at the same time the accusers" (Benjamin 113). Both the *ungeziefer* and the father with the filthy uniform are marked by their stains but one has lost his authority and uniform, while the other keeps sporting his old power, albeit in stained clothes.

The contrast between the stature and strength of the father and son reminds one of the reunion scene between Odysseus and Telemachus. It will be remembered how the father was metamorphosed, appearing before his son in god-like stature. In the *Odyssey*, it is a goddess who transforms the father into this gigantic, younger man. In the *Metamorphosis* we see how the father appears younger and more virile as the son shrivels. Moreover, Odysseus' change of clothes makes him appear like a god before his son who is a stranger to him. I believe Gregor Samsa's father's gold buttoned uniform



too, which represents hierarchal power, crushes his son. Like Telemachus, he shrinks before this costume, its power.

A further observation as to the corporeal self of Gregor Samsa could also link him to Oedipus. Kafka describes Gregor as having numerous little legs upon which he can barely stand. In his first effort to drag himself out of bed, Gregor lies there panting and “once more saw his little legs struggling with each other more fiercely than ever, if it were possible” (Kafka 13). On his first attempt to manifest his transformation to the clerk and his family, his father shoos and beats him back into his room making hissing sounds very much like the parasites Benjamin describes. In the course of the commotion, Gregor loses one leg: “His left side felt like one single, long, unpleasantly taut scar and he had actually to limp on his two rows of legs. Moreover, one leg had been seriously injured in the course of the morning’s events- was almost a miracle that only one had become injured- and trailed lifelessly behind him” (Kafka 34). *Oidipous* we know, means “swollen foot” and Lévi-Strauss goes on at length to relate how Oedipus’s deformity can be associated with “the most typical of chthonic animals, the serpent;” a creature that is seen as a transition between the realm of the underworld and mankind (Da Silva 186).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “Seemingly then, the snake/dragon is the implicit link in Lévi-Strauss’s connection of the “awkward walking” theme to that of Theban autochthony. Cadmus, the founder of Thebes, was a dragon killer and a serpent himself...Furthermore, the fact that in Athens the lower members of chthonic founders are snake tails finds an echo in that the last kings of an “earth-born dragon’s brood” in Thebes are unified, as Lévi-Strauss discovered, by a common difficulty in walking straight. Indeed, Oedipus-the last of three “Labdacide” kings who impersonate the demise of the *genos* and one furthermore marked by scars on his feet and ankles- ends his career as he descends into the underworld as a *daimon* at the summon of “Zeus of the Underworld to dwell ‘in a hero’s grave.’ Now, the snake is the regular form of both “Zeus-Hades” and of the hero in his tomb, for generally “the daimonic power of the dead is figured under the form of the snake.”

Besides this common “limb trouble” that Oedipus and Gregor share, Lévi-Strauss’ theory is interesting in that it places Oedipus in the realm of purgatory creatures, stuck between two worlds. It prefigures Gregor’s in-between state, once his metamorphosis into a vermin has been realized. Gregor ends up being cloistered in his room with old things and furniture that remind him of what he had once been, things his mother and sister attempt to remove, but for the picture of a woman which he manages to save. His narration that is intelligible to the reader is heard as a series of squeals by the others. So though he is aware of his physical transformation, his mind has not altered. While his family pass judgement upon him, declaring that “this monster” cannot be their son or brother, he understands them perfectly but cannot express himself; thus, Gregor’s limbo is akin to the sufferings of many a prey of transformation such as Actaeon and Tithonus where the body/mind dichotomy is underlined so as to exacerbate the tragedy of the metamorphosis.

Throughout *The Metamorphosis* Kafka overtly distinguishes the roles of the father and son. While Gregor diminishes before everybody’s eyes, the strength of his father cannot go unnoticed: “two strong people- he thought of his father and the servant girl...” (Kafka 15). Besides drawing attention to the physical difference between father and son, Kafka presents a relationship very much embroiled in an Oedipal struggle. The first time Freud mentions the Oedipus complex is in his essay *A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men (Contributions to the Psychology of Love)* where he points out that once the son was initiated into sexuality, he was reminded of impressions from his infancy: “He [the son] begins to desire his mother herself in the sense with which he has recently become acquainted, and to hate his father anew as a rival who stands in the way of the

wish; he comes, as we say, under the dominance of the Oedipus complex” (*On Sexuality* 238). Now, it is known that Freud modified his theory over the years, but the basic substratum of the theory is revealed in this first sentence, and it corresponds perfectly with the triangle formed by Gregor, his mother and father. Throughout the story, Gregor’s mother, as opposed to the father, is seen as a rather weak, voiceless creature, very much like the new Gregor. She yearns to see her son but is dissuaded by the father and sister: “But later she had to be restrained by force and when she then cried out: “Let me go to Gregor, he is my unfortunate son!” (Kafka 51). Gregor always speaks of her lovingly, whereas the father is always presented as a contender: “...he had known from the very first day of his new life that his father considered only the severest treatment as appropriate for dealing with him” (Kafka 63).

Before the transformation takes place, Gregor actually assumes the role of the father by becoming the breadwinner of the family (“Gregor said to himself, and as he stared ahead into the darkness, he felt very proud that he had been able to provide such a life for his parents and sister in such a lovely flat”) (Kafka 35). He toils at a demeaning job to pay his father’s debts, and to support the family in a big house that his father has chosen for them. Once he is metamorphosed, he is liberated from the shackles of work, hence the almost joyous initial response to his transformation, but then we realize that this new freedom is not only a new form of imprisonment, but it also entails the loss of the father role he had assumed. He had hitherto proudly put the money he made upon the living room table. Acting the part of a father to his sister, he was planning on disclosing his secret plan to enrol her in a music school against the wish of his parents. This picture is consequently transformed with Gregor’s suspension over the family dinner table,

sputtering it with all sorts of gooey refuse. From that “bread topped” table of authority he is pushed back hurriedly to his room.

Could it be that the assumption of his father’s role caused the guilt-ridden Samsa to metamorphose? Freud hypothesizes that the desire to replace the father always comes with a sense of guilt:

The sons tried to kill the father, but afterward they never ceased to regret it. As they gained their freedom they missed their thralldom. Political-religious history is a record of man’s irrational attempts to reinstate the primal father. The will, once free, found itself wanting also to renounce its freedom, not just from prudence-what Freud, echoing Hobbes, called “the struggle of all against all”- but also from remorse and craving for authority. (Rieff 194)

Following the Freudian thesis, Gregor’s replacement of the father seems to be a role he wanted and yet not; his metamorphosis then, almost reads like a punishment he brings upon himself, with the accompanying sense of guilt for having symbolically killed his father. However, Gregor seems to have ridden himself of guilt once the transformation has taken place: “The metamorphosis thus allows him to abandon a social identity which is based on the son’s obligation to clear the parental *Schuld*, a term which connotes both financial debt as well as guilt” (Fuchs 37).

The assumption of the role of the father lends itself to the Oedipal scheme and Gregor’s transformation may be seen as his salvation rather than punishment. According to Deleuze and Guattari, his becoming an insect is an absolute act of deterritorialization: “Gregor becomes a cockroach not to flee his father but rather to find an escape where his father didn’t know to find one, in order to flee the director, the business, and the bureaucrats, to reach that region where the voice no longer does anything but hum” (Deleuze and Guattari *Littérature Mineure* 13). From this point of view, Gregor’s

metamorphosis can be interpreted as a liberation from his old world with the demeaning job and monotonous life it has to offer, a salvation from the meaninglessness of a servile existence. It has even been suggested that this is an escape from his Jewishness.

Greenberg has argued that Gregor becomes more humane, if not human, by becoming an “other.” “*Only* as an outcast does he sense the possibility of an ultimate salvation rather than just a restoration of the *status quo*” (Greenberg 59). The episode where he listens to his sister’s violin playing is cited as an example of how he surpasses his former self, appreciating the transcendence of music for the first time in his life. I have however strong reservations as to the interpretation of Gregor’s transformation as a form of spiritual salvation or an escape, since he does after all find himself in a different kind of prison. According to these critics, the insect which Gregor turned into must be an Egyptian scarab beetle, which represented resurrection. I hold that the transformation Gregor Samsa undergoes is emblematic of how a bourgeois society and family turn the subject into a vermin, beetle, or some such monstrosity. Alienation and otherization seem to be inevitable, whether he is an employee scuffling about to make ends meet or a vermin locked into his room.

The Other can also be seen as a repressed ego in Freudian terms. The function of the metamorphosis is telling from the point of view of the Freudian concept of repression which holds that when the ego rejects a wish due to parental or societal disapproval, that wish is pushed back into the unconscious “where all the forbidden wishes gather and fester.” Sokel reads *The Metamorphosis* as a neurotic symptom and Gregor as a patient of a possible Freud or Lacan:

It appears as a calamitous malfunctioning, a gigantic “parapraxis” of Gregor’s body, as an inexplicable blow of “outrageous fortune,” which relieves its victim of all responsibility for the fulfilment of his wish, and punishes him for it in the bargain... The fantastic in Kafka’s tale thus behaves like the uncanny as seen by Freud. It is a “return of the repressed... the symptoms of extreme excitement that the narrator describes clearly reveal the ambivalence between longing and fear with which the Kafka protagonist always experiences his relationship to “the other. (Sokel 158)

This form of otherization brings to mind Hegel’s master and slave dialectic (*Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*)- a struggle akin to Freud’s Oedipus postulate. We know that the general principle of idealism is “no object without a subject.” (R.R. Williams 1). It follows that the other is a derivative from and subordinate to unity and self-identification. Hegel posits that one can find oneself through the other; this theme of inter-subjectivity in German Idealism is haunted by solipsism, as Williams points out, but it also creates a de-facto hierarchy between the self and other, for though they are dependent on each other, one always masters the other. Kafka’s story is laced with this dialectic, where Hegel’s *geist*, “an identity that divides itself and opposes itself to itself” is reincarnated in the persona of Gregor, a literal Other and outcast from the point of view of the father/clerk/society (R.R. Williams 2). Gregor, the vermin, is a product, not only of his father, but the repressive, bureaucratic society that has bred him. He is doomed to be a slave (because, according to Hegel, he who is afraid of death first becomes the slave) up until the very end when he embraces the idea of death, thereby becoming a *geist*, in both the Hegelian and simple sense of the word. “His own opinion that he would have to disappear was, if possible, even firmer than his sister’s. He remained in this state of vacant and peaceful reflection... then his head sank all the way down without his consent, and his last breath flowed faintly out of his nostrils” (Kafka 88). In Hegelian terms, his

disappearance is in fact his birth as a subject. His alienation and consequent demise can therefore be seen as the birth of a subject and death of the slave in the Hegelian dialectic.

In other words, the insignificant salesman metamorphoses into an undefined object that is the slave become subject. The family whose shortcomings the subject observes is eventually subordinated to the role of the slave, who serve to mirror the changes in the subject, assuming the role of the Other in the Idealist scheme. And they, with their materialistic preoccupations and they who observe death (Gregor) and life (Gretta) are actually reigned over by Gregor's death, though they are still alive. Gregor's otherization is his rebirth: "...the truth, about his [Gregor's] life is his death-in-life by his banishment and self-banishment from the human community. But having finally accepted the truth, having finally bowed to the yoke of the metaphor that he has been trying to shake off, he begins to sense a possibility that exists for him *only* in his outcast state. He is hungry enough, he realizes, but not for the world's fare, 'not for that kind of food'" (Greenberg 58).

Food, coincidentally, raises the issue of abjection, another otherizing element that can be seen in Gregor's repulsion at the sight of milk. "He immediately dipped his head into the milk to almost over his eyes...but because he didn't like the milk either, though it had always been his favorite drink...the fresh foods, on the other hand, he did not care for. He couldn't even stand the smell of them..." (Kafka 34-29). Kristeva has identified food-loathing as the most elementary and archaic form of abjection since milk, our first food, has been force-fed to us, hence our repulsion at the sight or touch of clotted cream. Milk that had been Gregor's favourite drink, something from the realm of the mother, is now abhorrent to him- in his rejection of it, he becomes an abject subject in Kristeva's

understanding of the term: “I” want none of that element, sign of their desire; “I” do not assimilate it, “I” expel it. But since the food is not an “other” for “me,” who am only in their desire, I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which “I” claim to establish *myself*...it is thus that *they* see that “I” am in the process of becoming an other at the expense of my own death” (Kristeva *Powers of Horror* 3). Read from this perspective, Gregor rejects milk thereby turning himself into a Kristeva subject, and takes a liking to that which is rotten and decayed (“old, half-rotten vegetables; bones from last night’s supper”) which fits in perfectly within the realm of the abject with its sour milk, dung, corpses and refuse (Kafka 38).

Gregor may be “born” as a subject with his transformation and death according to the Hegelian system. He most certainly becomes a subject turning into an “I” by rejecting the now abject (milk). It needs be noted however that this “I” is never a free subject (McAfee 46).<sup>59</sup> This metamorphosis may well be interpreted as Gregor’s very own mirror stage where he is born again, reasserting himself by abjecting the food of his former existence. The mother and her reminders hover around him like his most prized possession, the picture of a woman he has cut from a glossy magazine- but the transformation brings about a separation from the mother, so much so that he becomes her abject; something that makes her sick and nauseous, like curdling milk.

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<sup>59</sup> The “I” is never free from the uncanny presence of the mother. “Kristeva agrees that the mirror stage may bring about a sense of unity, but she thinks that, even before this stage, the infant begins to separate itself from others...The infant develops these by a process she calls abjection, a process of jettisoning what seems to be part of oneself. The abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother’s engulfing embrace. What is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether” (McAfee 46).



The fact that the mother is a rather peripheral, ghostly character without much say in the story is telling. As we know, the role of the mother is central in the Oedipal scheme as well as for Lacan. That Gregor's mother is dominated by the father seems to signal Gregor's repression of his attachment to her:

According to Lacan, the symbolic is dominated by the 'law of the father' which requires the child's acceptance of the post Oedipal position. Lacan argues that through the Oedipal drama the child has to repress its pre-Oedipal attachment to the mother. This alone enables the child to become a speaking subject in the social order. Thus the symbolic is dominated by the imperatives of paternal authority." (Fuchs 26)

Now that his mother is removed from the picture, leaving the father to reign over everyone in the family, Gregor attaches himself to another object of desire: a photograph of a woman in furs. She is the first "thing" Gregor introduces us to, a glossy picture cut from a magazine, "sitting upright and raising up toward the viewer a heavy fur muff into which her entire forearm had disappeared" (Kafka 7). And she is the only thing he tries to save: "[Gregor] quickly crawled up to it and pressed himself against the glass, which held him fast and soothed his hot belly. This picture at least, which Gregor now completely covered, would definitely not be taken away by anyone" (Kafka 57).<sup>60</sup> If one is to indulge in an Oedipal reading, this twice removed unknown woman seems to be the replacement of the mother/lover. As with the absent women in *Frankenstein*, she is something more palpable than the ghostly, scared mother whose possession by the father is accepted by Gregor. Thus, the father's random and strange emphasis on the picture to the clerk ("he whittled a small picture-frame; you will marvel at how pretty it is") seems

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<sup>60</sup> In discussing the inevitability of inviting psychoanalytic interpretations David Eggenschwiler has sardonically remarked, "if we were tactlessly persistent, we could even mutter something about sublimations cooling the overheated id" (*Modern Critical Interpretations: Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis* 77).

to resonate with an appreciation tinged with jealousy (Kafka 17). At this point, he is anxious to enter Gregor's room both to check on his son and also to show the picture, remarking that the clerk can't miss it since it is hung right across the door. The picture is also the only "human" thing left for Gregor, so his rather sexual attachment to her, literally, can be interpreted as a desperate attempt to cling onto his past humanity.

That Gregor's prized possession is clad in furs is an interesting detail one should not overlook. Lorenz has pointed out that it is usually such excessively fashion conscious characters who are usually turned into images that replace a woman's physical presence in Kafka. "This is one of the many instances in Kafka's writing that masculinity or femininity are depicted in the absence of the appropriately gendered being" (Lorenz 175). I would venture to suggest that being richly clad makes her all the more appealing yet removes her further from the Gregor. She is a khora, a hidden, and the fact that parts of her body disappear into the fur muff, and outside the picture is also significant. Thus, this thrice removed object of desire, be it a mother surrogate or an embodiment of life, is turned into an icon, an actress such as Huguette Duflos who became an object of aspiration and hate to Aimée, inspiring Lacan to write a thesis on how the distant ideal image could turn the subject (i.e. Aimée) into an object of punishment. The glossy picture then, could also be seen as the cause of Gregor's self-flagellation, serving as a reminder of his bestiality against civilization that tames beasts by turning them into fashionable costumes such as muffs.

Gregor's transformation is double in many ways. First we see him as a vermin, who not only gets accustomed to his new shape, but enjoys his new capabilities: "He adopted the habit of crawling all over the walls and ceiling. He especially liked hanging

from the ceiling” (Kafka 51). But he is repeatedly incapacitated by his father’s blows, so much so that his last transformation is into a weak shell of a thing, no longer the active, creeping vermin that he was: Gregor’s body was completely flat and dry” (Kafka 89). With the apple stuck to his back, Gregor becomes a festering, decaying thing amidst the useless heaps of junk that have been stuffed into his room. This is once again in direct contrast with his father whose new job, though tiring, has evidently rejuvenated the old man: “As the son’s life wanes the family’s revives; especially the father’s flourishes with renewed vigor and he becomes a blustering, energetic, rather ridiculous man-a regular Kafka papa.” (Greenberg 56).<sup>61</sup> It can be said that this chiasmic pattern of Gregor’s downward spiral and his family’s good fortunes is the final metamorphosis of the book. We should not forget another major metamorphosis amidst these multiple transformations of Gregor’s; along with his father, his sister Grete is another character who undergoes change throughout the story. At the very end, as the family celebrates the death of Gregor, that is to say, the end to all the shame that he has brought upon them, it is clear that Grete has metamorphosed into a woman, born out of the cocoon of her former self: “While they were thus conversing, it occurred to Mr. and Mrs. Samsa almost at the same moment at the sight of their increasingly lively daughter, that despite all the troubles which had turned her cheeks pale, she had recently blossomed into a pretty and shapely girl” (Kafka 94).<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> It has also been noted by Lorenz that the fact that Gregor’s family prospers after his demise is part of Kafka’s general critique against the family: “The few traditional families he portrays are distinctly troubled” (Lorenz 171).

<sup>62</sup> It should be noted that critics such as Deleuze and Guattari hold that it is the sister/brother relationship rather than the mother/ son relationship that is incestuous in the novella (Deleuze and Guattari 15).

These Oedipal relations and transferences may seem to approach caricature, hence the criticism of Deleuze and Guattari who regard many a psychoanalytic interpretation as reductionist. It is true that Kafka's virulent letter to his father has been used to buttress many such criticisms, enlarging Oedipus "to the point of absurdity, comedy" (Deleuze and Guattari *Littérature Mineure* 10).<sup>63</sup> David Eggenschwiler notes however that the very critics of the psychoanalytical approach are also too ready to tap into the few diary entries of Kafka where Kafka complains about psychoanalysis ("nausea after too much psychology" and calling it "an anthropomorphic theory") to prove that he could not have produced an Oedipal text. On the contrary, Eggenschwiler purports that Kafka was intentionally making Oedipal references. The "confrontation between father and son seems inescapably and intentionally Freudian," he says, at times executed in a humorous fashion so as to make a parable out of the story (Eggenschwiler 78).

It is true that many episodes in *The Metamorphosis*, underline the antagonism between father and son.<sup>64</sup> One such example can be found in the scene of Gregor's last appearance where the father finds the son interposed between him and his wife. Each time Gregor makes an attempt to enter the space of his parents, he is pushed back by the father. Certain critics have gone as far as to interpret the apples as the instruments of the original Father, expelling his son from paradise, nailed to the spot with apples à la Christ in this final climactic apple scene. Such interpretations miss the point that Kafka was

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<sup>63</sup> Deleuze and Guattari go on to liken Kafka to Dracula, locked in his coffin like desk, he imagines Gregor kissing the naked neck of his sister.

<sup>64</sup> We know from his notes that Kafka intended to combine 'The Metamorphosis,' 'The Judgement' and 'The Stoker' under the title of 'The Sons.' In all these stories, he presents us with a problematic father and son story.

intentionally being ambiguous in his choice of language and his setting of mood, swerving between the tragic and comic. In fact, if one is keen to approach him from a Freudian perspective as the critics who have relied on his diaries and letters to his father have done, then it need not be forgotten that “among the strongest “Freudian” components of Kafka is his ambivalence” (Sokel 155). Kafka’s nonchalance in describing the violent apple scene followed by Gregor’s death and his overtly Oedipal references should indeed be read as a parody of the biblical expulsion, an open text suggestive enough to lend itself to psychoanalytic, Marxist, Judeo-Christian readings. No matter what kind of reading is brought upon the texts, Kafka’s short stories and novels suggest, but never authenticate, as Todorov has said (Todorov 90).<sup>65</sup> When his ambiguous metaphors encapsulate the “solitude of the indecipherable” it is only natural that Kafka attracts critics like leeches (Bruce 243, Sontag 18). His father and son in *The Metamorphosis* certainly allow one to consider them as figures entrenched in an Oedipal embrace, turning each other into “others” while bringing into question the “lacks” in a state of utter abjection. Criticising his work, one generates other acts of metamorphosis. “Kafka was discovered in the 20s by the Expressionists, damned by the Nazis then the Marxists in the 30s and reinvented by the French Existentialists after World War II. What is most remarkable about the bountiful interpretations and biographies is that every critic was right and every biographer was right! Kafka turns out to be as much an Expressionist as a Zionist as a mystic as a pre- and post-Communist Czech as an Existentialist as a post-modernist as a post-colonialist as a (whatever he will be next month)” (Gilman 9).

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<sup>65</sup> “...the distinctive feature of Kafka’s texts is that they lend themselves to a multiplicity of interpretations without authenticating any one of them.”

There are an incredible number of similarities between Gregor and Frankenstein's monster. Both Gregor and "the monster" fall prey to the cruel, superficial behaviour of the people around them. In both works, people loathe them and turn them into outcasts based on their physical appearance. In literalizing metaphors, Shelley and Kafka sculpt actual monsters to mirror what is actually monstrous: prejudiced societies with all their hierarchies and power struggles. In their choice of diets, the vegetarian Frankenstein's monster and Gregor who is turned off by meat and milk to only devour that which is dank and putrid, seem to point to a non-consumerist attitudes in direct contrast with the two ambitious families of the novellas. While the father figures in both works otherize their sons into monsters, the women are portrayed as removed and idealized khoras. Both texts lend themselves to multiple readings, thus opening the way to contradictory interpretations. At the core however is a polemic against the family, the impossible project that it is.

In his analysis of interchangeable gods and heroes, Max Müller had said metaphor becomes personified and ossified. This dictum holds for the works of Shelley and Kafka that we have analyzed. One can spy Oedipal reflexes in the sighs of Gregor Samsa and Frankenstein, infanticide and patricide are themes that tinge the texts, tying them to ancient mythology. From the nineteenth century onward, scholars who have investigated the recurrent motifs in the stories of gods and heroes have pointed out that the central dynamic behind many legends is the presence of two male figures. Read in the light of classical myth, it will be seen these stories take off where the Greeks left (Hansen 30).<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "On one level, at least, such stories appear to portray the typical development of males with a focus upon the difficulties experienced by fathers and sons, each of whom perceives the other as

Gregor Samsa and Frankenstein's monster are locked in a struggle against their fathers, almost seconding Freud who claims that all history is divided by the act of parricide where "the primal murder signalled the beginning of political society and the beginning of all ritual" (Rieff 195). They are reminiscent of tragic heroes doomed to war with their fathers under the pallid shadows of the mothers. In these two works the sons are transformed into semi-tragic heroes thanks to their fathers. It has been claimed that "...the double role of all tragic heroes, Oedipus and Hamlet as well as Moses and Christ [is] to die the representative deaths of both son and father" (Rieff 285). This schema holds true for Frankenstein's monster. In Gregor Samsa's modern world on the other hand, the father keeps his sovereignty. In dying, the monster and Gregor are turned into sacrificial heroes and scapegoats that are removed, no longer posing a threat to their respective families and societies.

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threatening, the father fearing displacement and the son fearing exclusion. Ordinary reality is transformed into narrative via simplification, acting out, and exaggeration. The narrative simplifies the complexity of a real-life father in his relationship to his son by selecting two aspects out of many, supportiveness (or passivity) and hostility, each of which appears in the story as a simple character (benevolent, passive, or hostile). The characters may then act out their peculiar attitude, which in real life might not be clearly externalized. The hostility of the father can be expressed as an attempt by the hostile father figure to do away with the hero, and the hero's dealing with the threatening aspect of his father may be similarly be expressed by the hero's acting in such a way that, intentionally or not, the hostile father figure comes to harm. Overall, the stages and actions of ordinary male development are exaggerated so that they appear as colorful extremes. A young man's leaving home appears as travel in an exotic land. His establishing himself as a capable adult appears as the accomplishment of great task. His marriage to a female outside of his familiar world appears as marriage to a foreign bride. And his coming to terms with the resentful side of his father appears as displacement of the hostile father figure" (Hansen 30).

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MONSTERS OF A PROTEAN NATURE

Draco Slain

*La femme cependant, de sa bouch de fraise,  
En se tordant ainsi qu'un serpent sur la braise,  
Et pétrissant ses seins sur le fer de son busc,  
Laissait couler ces mots tout imprégnés de musc:*

Baudelaire: Les Métamorphoses du Vampire

*O Piteous Work of MUTABILITY!  
By which, we all are subject to that Curse,  
And Death instead of Life have sucked from our Nurse.*

Spenser: Mutabilitie Canto

In the course of the following two chapters, I shall be discussing two protean creatures who invoke the terrible sublime. The first one, Dracula, is one of the most celebrated monsters of Western literature making an appearance as an abjected mother figure, a dragon to be slayed, an Other to be removed so the bride may be saved. As one of the oldest creatures of a metamorphosing liminal nature, the vampire has been a favourite Other for centuries. The history of vampires began more than five thousand years ago in the cultures of Sumer, Akkad and the Indus Valley, and they have kept frightening and captivating us with the disgust they produce and eternity they promise. “Dracula” is a diminutive form of the Latin word for serpent or dragon, “draco.” As such, he is related



to the ancient embodiments of evil we saw in the first chapter, a reincarnation of the Christian Devil in the guise of a serpent. The slaying of the monster is one of the most recurrent stories in mythology. Clyde Kluckhohn points out that the theme appears in thirty-seven of fifty cultures where “not infrequently, the elaboration of the theme has a faintly Oedipal flavor” (Kluckhohn 51). It is two such protean monsters that have come to be read as embodiments of evil that I will work on in the following chapters.

Myths and literary texts have shown us the tumultuous rivalry between fathers and sons which has bred heroes and villains and brought about infanticide and patricide. But there is another archetypal rivalry which is said to precede the Oedipal rivalry: “an aberrant myth, obtained by a disruption of the initial narrative form” which is the famous dragon slayer myth seen as *the* primary myth by Vladimir Propp (Goux 3). It has been pointed out by Georges Dumézil, one of the foremost mythographers, that the Oedipus myth itself is said to be a transformation of the archaic tripartition (the sacred, war, fertility); according to his research, it is matricide, not patricide that is the universal and primary form, for the hero is he who slays the female dragon or serpent and brings an end to feminine chaos and darkness. According to Hesiod, the mother of all monsters was Echidna, a creature with the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a snake. A denizen of deep sea caves, she represented a primordial mother from whose grasp all wished to escape. Goux has skillfully shown how most archetypal heroes, with the exception of Oedipus, slay the (she) gorgon, chimaera, or monster, to go on to marry the daughter of a king.<sup>67</sup> Perseus, Bellerophon and Odysseus all undergo such trials, thereby

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<sup>67</sup> Oedipus’ own she-monster, the sphinx, is not slain by him but chooses to kill herself once he has solved her riddle. Once she is removed, Oedipus goes on to marry his own mother.

exhibiting a similar schema of removing the mother figure symbolized by the she-monster. Thus, according to Goux, the hero becomes “a man” by sacrificing his attachment to his mother, thereby gaining access to the bride. It is matricide that constitutes the liberation of the (new) woman/bride and the deification of the hero (Goux 27). The primal monomyth then is that of the hero who is metaphorically reborn by being delivered from the clasp of his mother, the letting go of the deathly desire of returning to the cavern/uterus/hell of the mother’s embrace. In this chapter, we are in the realm of such monsters, femme fatales and objects of desire; the mothers, lovers and the mirrors of the Narcissistic self, those taunters and haunters of their unsuspecting prey. We shall see how metamorphosis comes about as a means of escape and attack, a threat in itself due to its contagiousness.

In the Freudian Oedipal system, the primary object of desire is the mother but Freud frequently resorts to generalizations, especially in dealing with the feminine subject. It has been noted that one of the shortcomings of Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex and its resolution is that it is based on a Greek attitude to life (Wellisch 4). Greek thinkers and writers, by and large, appears to be fraught with misogynistic attitudes and differed dramatically from us in their understanding of familial relations; it was upon this different system of relations that analysts and critics built their theories in their attempts to explain the nature and workings of the human psyche and its relation to the “other.” In his book *The Jealous Potter*, Lévi-Strauss suggests that part of Freud’s greatness was that he thought “the way myths do,” deeming him a mythmaker rather than a theorist (Da Silva 185). Žižek agrees: “One should also follow Lévi-Strauss when he claims that Freud’s analysis of the Oedipus myth is another version of the Oedipus myth,

to be treated in the same way as the original myth: further variations of a myth try to displace and resolve in another way the contradiction which the original myth tried to resolve.” (*Lost Causes* 76). Having perceived in Freud the “attraction which mythological explanations have” Wittgenstein also brought into question Freud’s schemata (*Lectures* 43). Gananath Obeyesekere notes that the Oedipus complex is a “fictitious term”: “Freud initially observed the complex in his own life; then in very scattered form, in dreams; he saw its parallelism with the myth; the myth then helped him formalize the complex; then back to the myth to legitimize the complex. This mode of reasoning...is the methodological dimension of the hermeneutic circle” (Obeyesekere 93). Jung, for instance, did not put Oedipal rivalry at the heart of his archetypal reading of myths. According to him, Freud did not recognize the central position of matricide in the family drama. Thus, Jung focused on the figure of the mother; a monster in her cavernous dwelling place who captivates her son, holding him back and trapping him in the numberless coils of her reptilian attachment (Goux 26).

Lacan reaches for a golden mean between Freud and Jung in his re-evaluation of the mother. According to Lacan, it was neither the desire for the mother that was the most radical form of desire, nor was the threat of castration that was the greatest threat. The truly terrible threat according to him was the confrontation with the lack of the Thing, a primordial object of desire that the mother situates but with which she cannot be identified (Goux 30). Though the mother may not be the primary Thing, she is inextricably linked to it, an *objet petit a* in her own right, since she is what the subject knows before it enters the realm of language. Thus, though she may not be a Jungian

monster who needs to be removed as argued by Goux, she is directly linked to the lost object of desire whose lack threatens the subject's very being.

The mother also finds a place in the realm of the abject. Kristeva situates the mother's body as the primary object of abjection, an impossibility without borders: "The "subject" discovers itself as the impossible separation/identity of the maternal body. It hates that body but only because it can't be free of it. That body, the body without border, the body out of which the abject subject came, is impossible" (*Powers of Horror* 3). This body, that is the mother, very much like the Echidnas and she-dragons of ancient lore, is what the subject is drawn to and repelled by. It is the one familiar body that opens up a world and at the same time eclipses the subject, changing him/her under its shade. Kristeva's theory can be correlated with that of Goux's in that the mother, or her body, needs be removed so that one can become a subject. According to Kristeva, abjection first arises when the infant is still in an imaginary union with its mother, before the infant has become a subject, prior to the mirror state and the entry into the realm of language. In order to become a subject, "the first thing to be abjected is the mother's body, the child's own origin" (qtd. in McAfee 48). "Abjection is a way of denying the primal narcissistic identification with the mother, almost" according to the philosopher Kelly Oliver. However, the mother to which Kristeva refers is not the Freudian feminine (Oliver 7). Turning away from the traditional Oedipal story, the mother is neither subject nor object but a function in Kristeva's theory (McAfee 48).

Unlike Freud's *das Unheimliche* (which literally translates as "the un-home-like," meaningful especially in the light of the traditional mother situated at the heart(h) of the home), Kristeva's abject mother continues to haunt the subject. She cannot be smugly

erased or repressed as Freud proposed. Since the un-home-like ghost that is the lost mother's body lurks within the subject, the uncanny abject mother always stands as a threat to eradicate him. According to Kristeva, "there is no such luck with the abject...So, too, with the mother. In fact, this fear of falling back into the mother's body, metaphorically at least, of losing one's own identity, is what Freud identified as the ultimate source of the feeling of uncanniness...He calls this phenomenon "the return of the repressed"; Kristeva calls it "maternal abjection." A longing to fall back into the maternal *chora* as well as deep anxiety over the possibility of losing one's subjectivity (qtd. in McAfee 48).

It comes as no surprise that, before the patriarchal prioritizing of the father/son relation, mothers and their children held a central place in the mythologies we have overviewed.<sup>68</sup> "According to Larsen, mothers and sons were worshipped together in heroic cults more often than fathers and sons (or fathers and daughters), and the mother-son cult is found throughout Greece, with pairs such as Auge and Telephos, Elara and Tityos, Alkmene and Herakles, and even Homer and his mother Klymene" (Lewis 450). In this particular mythic scheme, the destruction of the mother allows her replacement, the hero's maiden, to come into the picture.

In the following pages I will attempt to read the protean monster that is Dracula, a mother and father, natural and unnatural dragon to be slain. We are once again in the realm of the Gothic whose creatures of darkness have for centuries symbolized the

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<sup>68</sup> Notable mothers and sons from ancient mythology and religion include Ishtar and Tammuz, Isis and Horus, Isi and Iswara, Cybele and Deios. The Virgin Mary and her son follow similar patterns such as the concept of virgin birth, being a mother to a sacrificed god.

antithesis of the natural. Researchers like David Keyworth have produced aetiologies of the vampire, citing how Eastern European folklore found its way into European literature and theology up until the Austro-Hungarian Empire purged such beliefs. Though we encountered numerous incarnations of the vampire from the Sumerians to the Hebrews, Ancient Greeks to Christians, the monsters we know today mainly originate from early eighteenth-century Europe when Eastern European folklore captured the imagination of the West (Kallen 31).<sup>69</sup> Vampires have continued to fascinate poets, painters and filmmakers alike in that they represent the ultimate Other with the power to metamorphose and remain undead. They have always been emblems of “otherness,” said to be empowered by the Devil as noted by the thirteenth-century Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré and have been “observed” resurrecting the dead as recorded by the sixteenth-century demonologist Martin Del Rio (Keyworth 158). Their literary apogee has been the nineteenth century however when Byron’s and Polidori’s romantic antiheroes and the reincarnations of the Greco-Roman Lamiae, those she-devils of Keats, Coleridge, Sheridan Le Fanu, Poe, D’Aurevilly, Nodier, Gautier, Baudelaire, and Swinburne, lured and ruined their prey, problematizing gender issues and sexuality alongside larger issues such as Rousseau’s concept of nurture versus Sadean nature.

At once undergoing and inducing metamorphosis, vampires threaten to otherize their victims by contaminating them with their (super)natural powers. The vampiric process is not just drainage but osmosis in that the “good blood” of the victim is exchanged for something that is liminal, dead and undead. Like the bodily fluids they live

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<sup>69</sup> Due to the vampire mania of the 1740s, empress Maria Theresa had to issue a series of edicts that forbade the opening and desecration of graves. It was only thus that the authorities put an end to the vampire hysteria in Eastern Europe.

off, vampires are abject, polluting others by crossing boundaries and destroying the “clarity of the intersubjective relationship” (Conroy 106). Up to Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, we do not see many signs of metamorphosis when it comes to the vampiric protagonist. The vampire is usually a dark being, oftentimes highly sexed, seducing in order to survive; but he or she does not undergo much change. In *Dracula* however we see the count as a shape-shifter, changing into a series nocturnal creatures such as a wolf or dog, into rats and bats. One of the first transformation stories of the bat occurs once again in Ovid where the daughters of Minyas are metamorphosed into creatures with “featherless wings...and shrill voices” for having disrespected Bacchus on his feast day (Ovid 123). Perhaps, the tradition of portraying vampires as feminine characters and the bat symbolism stems from this Ovidian metamorphosis myth. Stoker’s *Dracula* has the power to transform into a natural force such as mist or fog too. Thus, he not only changes into traditionally abhorred and feared creatures of the night but into things beyond the earthly.

Though vampires are seen as supernatural creatures, defying nature by defying death, they also represent chthonic nature. If indeed “every road from Rousseau leads to Sade,” as Paglia claims, our attempts to bridle nature and envision her as a clean, organized garden often ends with a juxtaposition of the fearless feral, the uncontrollable mother reincarnated as *Dracula* and his daughters (Paglia 14). With all her darkness she pervades modern households alit with the new electricity of Stoker’s day. Like *Dorian Gray*, *Dracula* is not thoroughly masculine, despite certain descriptions of his beard of changing colours, his forceful arms and brows; he enters the lives of his preys as a force of nature, often associated with the masculine, feeding off of them like a child and mothering them too, like a woman. Thus, he is unlike his later incarnations, reduced to

a fallen aristocrat seducing women, a grotesque Nosferatu tiptoeing into their bedrooms like a shadow; he is in the breeze and fog, jumping ships in the guise of a dog. He seems to have come all the way to England from his wild, mountainous terrain to conquer the Modern. But he cannot take over as would an avalanche or flood. Ergo, desire, and its theatrical spectacles: “Freudian readings of *Dracula* are admitted by the one fundamental law that, beginning with Stoker, vampirism must observe: the vampire can penetrate a household or economy by invitation only. In other words: dread covers for desire. But this invitation is at the same time under the vampire’s remote control. It’s unconscious...” (Rickels 196). Since desire always seems to come through an Other, as underlined in Lacanian theory, we shall now analyze the antics of the amorphous monster that is the vampire Dracula, using and shielding desire to turn his victims into Others (Oliver 11).

Despite all the Oedipal readings of Dracula whose destruction is interpreted as a “re-enactment of that killing of the primal father who has kept all the women to himself,”<sup>70</sup> I hold that there is a feminine element in Dracula who takes on the role of the mother/seducer with a vengeance. A chthonian creature attached to his earth,<sup>71</sup> a *vagina dentata* (a vagina with teeth) of sorts, he threatens not only men, by preying upon them, but especially their women, converting them into sexually liberated, anti-mothers. It is no surprise that the issue of motherhood gone awry frequently comes up in vampire stories;

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<sup>70</sup> Such interpretations are offered by Richard Astle and Rosemary Jackson where the sons seem to enact the Girardian power triangle in which Dracula acts as the evil father who fights his sons over the body of the mother.

<sup>71</sup> The Greek word comes from khthon, referring to earth, the essential ingredient that keeps Dracula “alive.” In Latin, patria, or one’s native soil is masculine but the Greek word for earth (gaia) is feminine.



the vampire, be it male or female, is a mother figure and monster suck(l)ing her children/preys. One of the earliest vampires in literature, Heinrich August Ossenfelder's *Der Vampir* (1748) is a man who threatens a maiden by proving to her that his teaching is better than her mother's. In other words, he is competing for the role of the mother. It is no surprise that most vampiric protagonists up to Stoker have been femme fatales; Carmilla seduces Laura in Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla*, thus defying traditional structures of kinship by which men regulate the exchange of women (Signorotti 607). Goethe's *Bride of Corinth* crystallizes the dichotomy between the pagan, Dionysian female against the Apollonian-Christian male. Coleridge's Christabel, Gautier's Clarimond in *La Morte Amoureuse*, Poe's *Ligeia* are all shady female characters who come to haunt and change the natural order of things. When vampires are masculine figures as with Polidori's vampyr, they are thinly disguised Byronic anti-heroes, also serving to upturn the conventions of society; they oftentimes play the part of masculine aggressors in direct contrast with the seemingly impotent male characters of the said novels. These vampires are virile male figures in touch with their femininity because of their relationship to nature. You distinguish them from the other males in the said works by their proximity to nature, its feminine and masculine features. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is no exception.

Franco Moretti holds that at the root of vampirism is the ambivalent impulse of the child towards the mother. He readdresses the issue of primal fear which begins when the child bites into the very breast he has been feeding upon and the retaliation that may come from the mother as a consequence of his cannibalism (Moretti 100). He holds that Hoffman, Baudelaire, Poe openly reflect the unconscious by making their vampires

women.<sup>72</sup> But mass culture, according to Moretti, has transformed the vampire into a man (as Polidori, Stoker, and cinema have done) and this serves to protect the conscious mind by keeping it in a state of unawareness: “The vampire is transformed into a man by mass culture, which has to promote spontaneous certainties and cannot let itself plumb the unconscious too deeply” (Moretti 104). Stoker’s novel, a best-seller almost as soon as it was printed, has been crucial in shaping the image of the vampire; popular reincarnations have however carefully erased the motherly aspects of the count. Whether Moretti’s diatribe against a “comforting” popular culture machine is well founded is not our concern here- the fact of the matter remains that the feminine side of male vampires have virtually disappeared in our day. Thus I return to the original *Dracula* to analyze how Stoker delineates the vampire as a role-mother to the various women in the novel.

Dracula’s protean gender and shapeshifting qualities correlate him to transformative deities such as Zeus or Dionysus of ancient mythology. He is masculine and feminine like these gods, seducing both women and men. Like Zeus, who for example metamorphoses into a serpent to seduce Persephone, Dracula takes on the form of different animals so as to approach the women he chooses as prey. He is likewise akin to Dionysos who takes on the shape of Zeus, Cronus, a youth, lion, horse, snake and bull in order to evade the Titans. It is in this form that Dionysos is cut to bits then pieced together by his mother (Brown, Cave and Doyle 34). Dracula needs the earth of his homeland to regain power whilst trying to escape the band of men.

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<sup>72</sup> Early vampires, like Lilith, were mostly she-vampires, but they were not shape-shifters like Dracula. Stoker seems to borrow this quality from both Ovid and Eastern European lore.

Stoker opens the novel with Jonathan Harker's journal. Harker has ventured into the awe-inspiring landscape of Dracula's east where the wildness of the Carpathians seems to foreshadow the tempestuous storm soon to be unleashed by Dracula. Travelling on the eve of St. George's day of all days, Harker approaches *his* dragon via the "serpentine" ways of the mountains (Stoker 15). Though Williams states that 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..." I hold that the allusion to the war between a hero and a (she)-dragon is more Jungian, thus more along the lines of Goux's thesis I referenced earlier (A. William 448). Harker penetrates the count's lands- we know this from Dracula's letter to him: "I trust...you will enjoy your stay in *my* beautiful land" (*italics mine*) where the count is landed gentry (Stoker 11). "Here I am noble; I am *boyar*; the common people know me, and I am master" (Stoker 31). As it turns out, he will return to slay the dragon/drakul in these very lands, in front of Dracula's own lair, thereby freeing his bride Mina from the dragon's clasp. Jung has established the relationship of the hero to the dragon thus: "the hero who clings to the mother is the dragon, and when he is reborn from the mother he becomes the conqueror of the dragon...[he] represents the positive, favourable action of the unconscious, while the dragon is its negative and unfavourable action- not birth, but a devouring; not a beneficial and constructive deed, but greedy retention and destruction" (Jung 375). If we are to follow Jung, then Dracula is accorded the role of the (maternal) monster who is linked to the son from the very beginning with this reference to St. George, the slayer of the dragon. Thus the scheme unfolds, climaxing with an onslaught on a monster by a band of

men and closing with the portrait of a happy family featuring Harker, as the head of a family with his domesticated Mina and their son.

Since, according to the patriarchal imagination the female is “bloody, irrational, soulless, almost uncontrollable” like the vampire, a number of critics such as Anne Williams focus on Dracula’s femininity where he, “the other” of the horror plot” is correlated to that “most powerful and persistent “other” of Western culture, the female” (A. Williams 446). Feminist critics such as Williams liken Dracula to Artemis, the “Lady of the Wild Things...[who] wields control over beasts and may raise a storm at will.” His relationship with the moon and repulsion for garlic are also linked to the ancient cults of goddesses (A. Williams 454).<sup>73</sup> Though such readings afford interesting “proof” as to the femininity of our monster, in my opinion it is actually his role within the circle of women around him that place Dracula in the centre of something like a goddess cult. On the other hand, his masculinity manifested as a force of nature, makes him an interesting in-between case, at once feminine yet attributed with many masculine characteristics like a veritable Artemis.

We are introduced to Dracula through the senses. As a traveller in the beginning and at end of the novel, Harker discovers Dracula’s lands with his mouth so to speak, making note of the foods he tastes with particular relish: “chicken done up some way with red pepper, which was very good but thirsty. (*Mem.*, get recipe for Mina)”, “a very

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<sup>73</sup> “In the 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...” (A. Williams 454).

excellent dish, which they called ‘impletata’ (*Mem.*, get recipe for this also)”, “I dined on what they called “robber steak” (Stoker 7, 9, 13). Thus, we enter Dracula’s realm through the sensual experimentation of a foreigner’s palate. Stoker draws upon other senses which seem to be heightened as the coach draws near the count’s castle. As evening closes around him, a cold mist (a form which Dracula takes) hinders sight and gives way to touch. Harker is startled by the strength of the driver/dracula’s hand who catches his arm “in a grip of steel” (Stoker 19). As they make their way to Dracula’s castle, Harker is terrified by the howling of dogs and baying of wolves, “closing round on us from every side” (Stoker 21). Harker, a conventional Victorian character whose metaphorical impotence Stoker underlines by making him a figure who prioritizes a business deal over his marriage (and putting him into a coma-like sleep as Dracula and his fiancé engage in “unspeakable” lurid activities), is introduced to the world of the senses when he enters Dracula’s domain. Thus it is not surprising that it is here and only here that we will see him sexually aroused, when he is seduced by Dracula’s daughters of the night. It can be said that Dracula brings out the sensuality and sexuality of all the characters he comes into contact with. In this way, he is once again a force of nature, awakening the repressed ids of all these hypocritical Victorians. But it is women’s sexualisation, not men’s, that is regarded as a threat, for, “while male virility is celebrated, female sexuality and desire have been portrayed in cultural production...as something unstable, voracious, and threatening. Elizabeth Grosz describes it as the ‘fantasy of the vagina dentant, of the non-human status of woman as android, vampire and *animal*’” (Liu 3).

Christopher Craft claims that embedded in the heart of Stoker’s text is an ambivalence between the masculine and the feminine which results in a deep anxiety

about dissolution of gender, pertaining to gender bending, especially of female characters. “*Dracula* presents a characteristic, if hyperbolic, instance of Victorian anxiety over the potential fluidity of gender roles (Craft 99). This ambivalence is outlined in the very aspect and eyes of Dracula. The dichotomy between the masculine and feminine meet in his features; his markedly masculine face which sports a very strong aquiline nose, lofty domed forehead, bushy hair and a heavy moustache is in direct contrast with his feminine red lips, extraordinary pallor and hands with long and fine nails. The hairs in the centre of Dracula’s palms link him to the bestial, the wolf, which he will soon celebrate to the horror of Harker: “Listen to them-the children of the night. What music they make!...Ah sir, you dwellers in the city cannot enter into the feelings of the hunter” (Stoker 29). Soon this hunter, having studied London from his ancient seat riddled in superstition and dead history, through train schedules, dictionaries and geography will attempt to conquer the modern city by cont(r)acting its madmen and women- his natural acolytes and heirs, these “others.”<sup>74</sup>

Dracula’s motherly aspect comes to the foreground with his women, although this, and the mothers he creates are models of motherhood gone awry. Though I agree with critics like Craft on the issue of gender dissolution and problematization, I would not go so far as to suggest that the novel’s opening anxiety is Dracula’s homosexual

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<sup>74</sup> Incidentally, we will see Mina boasting of her knowledge of English Bradshaw’s Guide’s (train schedules) when helping the band of men hunt Dracula down. Thus, both Dracula and Mina are portrayed as Modern characters, keeping up with the latest technologies, always up to speed. Dracula’s invasion of London is seen to be a reverse colonization according to Stephen Arata (as noted by Eric Kwan-Wai Yu in “Productive Fear: Labor, Sexuality, and Mimicry in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 145).

interest in Harker.<sup>75</sup> This does not mean that Stoker is not suggestive, but Dracula, rather than scandalizing society in a Wildean manner by stirring its established standards, acts more so like “a monster-baby” as Barbara R. Almond suggests, in his egocentric usage of people as objects (Almond 222). In this respect only is he akin to the narcissist Dorian Gray. It is not the “horror” of homosexuality but a bestial, Dionysian sexuality that unsettles those neat Victorian boundaries, delineating women as paragons of patience and goodness and men as active, progressive doers.<sup>76</sup> Dracula also upsets the virgin/whore dichotomy by being the perfect mother to his women who undergo metamorphosis under his influence.

It can be said that Dracula is a true Sadean revolutionary reversing all forms of convention in his defiance of cultural, sexual, and physical norms. We see him crawling down the castle walls like an insect disguised in Harker’s clothes. “He is the boundary, he is the one who crosses (Trans-sylvania= across the woods), and the one who knows the other side” (Halberstam 89). His metamorphosis into a dog or a bat may be seen as supernatural but I find that all these transformations into beasts make him far more a thing of nature, especially when contrasted with all the cloistered, sheltered Victorians of the novel. The first time we witness Dracula with women is in a scene where roles have been reversed. Harker seeks solace in one of the forbidden rooms of the castle; he decides to sleep in a room which he fancies to be a nursery “where of old ladies had sat and sung and lived sweet lives whilst their gentle breasts were sad for their menfolk away in the

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<sup>75</sup> Dracula’s exclamation “”This man belongs to me” need not necessarily mean he covets Harker as a sexual object. (Stoker 55)

<sup>76</sup> Craft draws upon Ruskin’s formulation of men and women which Stoker openly inverts. (Craft 95)

midst of remorseless wars” (Stoker 52). Stoker immediately subverts this blissful picture of domesticity by introducing Dracula’s ladies who assume masculine roles, ready to penetrate the passive Harker with their pearly teeth. Despite his bouts of anxiety and guilt (“It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet Mina’s eyes..”), Harker cannot but long for those ruby red voluptuous lips (Stoker 53). Lying there submissively, he closes his eyes “in languorous ecstasy and waited,” assuming a feminine role as the vampires prepare to feed upon him. They are sexually aggressive, just as Lucy and Mina will be, once they make Dracula’s acquaintance.

There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as she licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck. (Stoker 54)

The highly charged tone of the text accentuates the bestial features of the femme fatale. This is the only scene where we witness a sexual exchange between the (female) hunter and her prey, since Dracula’s attacks upon Lucy remain blurry and his encounter with Mina is positively maternal. Dracula’s women are at once emblematic of the fierce forces of nature: “Daemonic archetypes of woman, filling world mythology, represent the uncontrollable nearness of nature” (Paglia 13). They also reverse the “natural” order of things during the dinner Dracula offers them. Here, he acts like a mother to her famished vampire children, appeasing their aroused hunger with a half-smothered child.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> The reason why I emphasize Dracula’s maternal nature in this scene is because it is the mother, not father, who usually brings food to its litter. The infantile way his “daughters” ask for food and the way he gives a child to them is reminiscent of a she-animal bringing food to her children. Of course, in this case, that the “food” is a human baby distinguishes the monsters from the people: humans are the prey of a different breed, the vampires.



Juxtaposed against the idealized role of the mother, the femme fatales are cannibalistic devourers of children just like their Greek originals. The fact that both Dracula's ladies and Lucy turn to supping upon children is telling. When Dracula transforms his women into vampires, they become anti-mothers; all the vampire women in the novel victimize only children. Surely, their choice of victim is not based on convenience as Van Helsing, the vampire hunter, suggests. Mother turned monster is another anxiety that Stoker weaves into the text. If vampires threaten the natural state of affairs, what is more terrible than mothers transformed into blood-thirsty, child-eating fiends? Women such as Lucy bring to mind archetypal stories of descent where goddesses such as Inanna enter netherworlds. Lucy's metamorphosis recalls to us Inanna's change when she is turned into a corpse and is accompanied by shades. She is also like Circe, seducing her victims in her beguiling ways. This is another descent story where the changed heroine is hunted when she returns to her tomb.

Stoker's parody and subversion of the conventional mother image reaches its apex with Dracula/Mina where the image of the child upon a mother's breast is reversed, Dracula resuming the role of mother, yet again, feeding his child not milk but blood. In this scene we encounter once again a Harker who is portrayed as passive, sound asleep "as though in a stupor" as his wife and Dracula engage in a lurid breast-feeding scene in his presence. As opposed to the predatory Dracula who is described by Mina as "hard, cruel, sensual," all the other men in the novel are stilted and impotent (Stoker 223). Harker himself declares that he "felt impotent in the dark;" Arthur complains about his "shrunk manhood" and Dr. Seward of his bleeding heart while Van Helsing has a fit of hysterics in a stereotypically feminine way (Stoker 242, 217, 214, and 225). Dracula, on

the contrary, is the id- like Zeus, he is virile, phallic, entering rooms in the form of a column of mist: “[The mist] grew thicker and thicker, till it seemed as if it became concentrated into a pillar of cloud in the room, through the top of which I could see the light of the gas shining like a red eye” (Stoker 333). Thus, when he says “your girls that you all love are mine already,” he emphasizes his (masculine) power over them, in contrast to the men which he likens to slaughtered sheep “with pale faces all in a row, like sheep in a butcher’s” (Stoker 394). Yet, despite such masculine attributes and aggressive behaviour, Dracula is always maternal with the women around him, albeit in a forceful way. The scene of Mina supping upon his bosom is described as “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” (Stoker 363). It is his bare breast that is espied from his torn-open-shirt, while her white nightdress is smeared with his blood, almost evoking another reversal of roles, Mina being the taker of his virginity (Craft 111).<sup>78</sup> The scene could even be read as a diabolic sacrament, the passion between a bruised anti-god whose wound opens the way for Mina’s transformation. Dracula is no hunter here; if anything, it is Mina who is gorging upon his breast. Lacan had noted that vampirism began with the drying up of the breast as object-cause of desire: “The drying up of desire is the danger against which vampirism warns us, sending up a cry for the breast that would deliver us from this horror” (Copjec 128).<sup>79</sup> From this standpoint, Dracula’s symbolic breastfeeding of Mina nourishes his “daughter” with desire. Having fed upon the milk of desire, all the

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<sup>78</sup> It has been suggested that Dracula’s open wound is a reference to the bleeding vagina, yet another example of gender displacement.

<sup>79</sup> Lacan’s passing remarks on vampirism are taken from his unpublished seminar on anxiety (Copjec 128).

women who come into contact with him are sexualized, turning more and more erotic and beautiful- Lucy becomes more “radiantly beautiful” in her tomb, Mina’s eyes appear more appealing, she is said to be more charming than ever (Stoker 258, 397, 370). Vampirism instigates desire, but in so doing oftentimes creates physically beautiful monsters, femmes fatales who have to be either salvaged or destroyed. It comes as no surprise then that the liberated women of *Dracula*, who are perhaps forcibly disengaged from their conventional ways of life, are killed off or cleansed. Lucy likened to Medusa whose purity is changed to “voluptuous wantonness,” whose eyes are “unclean and full of hell-fire,” is staked by the very band of men whose blood transfusions (a different form of sexual exchange) had kept her alive (Stoker 271). Like her fellow creatures of the night, she is “conventionally represented as abject because she disrupts identity and order (Dyer 54). Lucy’s ultimate phallic punishment of the stake serves to do away with her infamous question as to “why a girl cannot have three husbands?” Mina, at the end of the novel is turned into a puppet of a mother. Her journal entries disappear, hence her voice, once she is with child (Twitchell 66).<sup>80</sup>

However I would not go so far to suggest, as does Roth, that hatred of the mother constitutes the subtext of the novel.<sup>81</sup> It is not the mother that needs to be removed from the picture, mirroring the Oedipal scheme of the previous chapter, but the monster-mother who needs to be destroyed, to open the way for paragons of light such as Mina to

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<sup>80</sup> “In essence the problem to be addressed is this: could the myth of the femme fatale represent a sublimated male desire to deprive the woman of her sexuality and thus make her subservient to his will? For the femme fatale is wonderfully attractive, to be sure, but she is not the kind to be taken home, and not the type to be entertained for long. She can castrate as well as seduce. She is no “lady,” not because she is immoral, but because she is too powerful, too threatening to the male ego” (Twitchell 66).

<sup>81</sup> As suggested by Phyllis A. Roth in “Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*.”

mother sons who will in turn fight other dragons. Dracula here is the archetypal monster-mother propagating other monsters such as Lucy who pose a threat to the established patriarchal order. The emergence of Christianity saw to it that ancient goddesses who were “motherly, virginal and seductive simultaneously” were split into the virgin and the whore (Wymen and Dionisopoulos 3). The two leading female characters of the novel are clearly distinguished from one another so as to make a lesson of what is proper and what is not; Lucy “the whore” is killed twice while Mina, a perfect concoction of docility and practicality, thanks to her “man’s brains” helps the band of men hunt Dracula down (Stoker 302). She is “the virgin” turned into an icon, the maiden who is saved and married to the hero once the dragon is destroyed. Further, she bears a son, continuing the good race of dragon slayers. “This boy [her son] will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is. Already he knows her sweetness and loving care; later on he will understand how some men loved her and that they did dare much for her sake” (Stoker 486).

It is not just the dragon-slayer archetype that can be traced in *Dracula*. We need to enter Freudian waters once again where Eros and Thanatos are intermingled. The adorer, according to Marie Bonaparte, dares not approach the object of his desire because he feels it is surrounded by a fearful mystery; Moretti posits that this mystery is vampirism, which to him is the resuscitation of the repressed. “The repressed returns, then, but disguised as a monster. For a psychoanalytic study, the main fact is precisely this metamorphosis” (Moretti 103). The vampire belongs to the realm of the dead, a borderline creature who seems to awaken the death-instinct, hence also the pleasure principle in others. The vampire is Thanatos sauced with Eros’s alluring guises, inviting

one back to nature, its titillating darkness, its horrors. As such, it is inevitably linked to arguments which marry death and desire. Long before Freud went on to posit his theory on the death instinct, Sabina Spielrein had underlined the antagonistic elements in sexuality, the attraction-repulsion/Eros-Thanatos interrelation underneath the sexual drive: “This demonic force, whose very essence is destruction, at the same time is the creative force, since out of the destruction (of two individuals) a new one arises” (Skeat 544).<sup>82</sup> I believe the vampire embodies this drive where death and (immortal) life are intermingled. Renfield, Dracula’s devotee at the asylum,<sup>83</sup> devours insects and vermin as he awaits his master to transform him into a vampire: “What he desires is to absorb as many lives as he can,” diagnoses his doctor; the baser we are, the closer we are to Thanatos who wants to reverse life back to the inorganic, inchoate (Stoker 95). Just like Thanatos, Dracula “is an active force. Whereas Thanatos, the ground-less, supported and brought to the surface by Eros, remains essentially silent and all the more terrible. Thanatos *is*; it is an absolute” (*Pleasure Principle* 242). Eros and Thanatos are inextricably linked because we need a little bit of death to inject jouissance into life (Rickels 196).<sup>84</sup> Thus, it comes in the reincarnation of the vampire, a Dracula’s bite

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<sup>82</sup>From a letter by Spielrein to Freud dated 1909. Both Spielrein and Freud quote Rumi’s “for when the flames of love arise, then self, the gloomy despot dies” in broaching open the subject of Eros’ destructive yet creative powers. Her paper “Destruction as the Cause of Coming to Be” is said to anticipate Freud’s death wish and Jung’s views on “transformation.” (Cambridge Companion to Jung, pxxxvi).

<sup>83</sup> That the war against Dracula is launched from the asylum is telling, especially if read under a Foucauldian light in viewing those considered to be outside the system: Dracula, Renfield and the women.

<sup>84</sup> “When Freud diagnosed the vampire phantasm in *Totem and Taboo*, he issued the invitation to the vampire from within that alternation between identification and projection on which the work of mourning runs. The other’s death creates a disturbance that comes at you with the force of the occult. But on the inside, it’s a case of secret death wishes running for the cover of a projection that brings back the dead. Projection- both the kind missiles travel and the same kind that packs

which reminds the protagonists that being so close to death, they are alive. The wounds on Lucy's neck with white edges and a vermilion centre seem to symbolize this co-existence of death and life- a stagnant circle of decadence coiled around a budding, ebullient force of life. In his virile deadness, Dracula becomes the memento mori of the Harker family who return to his castle as tourists wandering in the Disneyland of this newly domesticated violence.

As "mother" Dracula sexualizes the family; Mina becomes more physical, Harker more attentive to her when he had previously prioritized himself and his job: "Taking off from Freud's primary narcissism hypothesis, Anna Freud believes that the child is 'lured' or seduced by his mother away from his exclusive, auto-erotic, preoccupation with his own bodily needs. Through seduction, the infant's attention is redirected to those persons in the outside world who satisfy his more primary, self-centered preoccupations. Thus, the all-important step from primary narcissism to object-love is accomplished" (Hamilton 35). Since all those who come in contact with Dracula become sexualized in one way or another, reading him as a mother thus enables us to see his victims and vampire acolytes as children who are learning to move away from the centre of themselves (narcissism) to a foreign and frightening world outside.

One other Freudian approach need be addressed in lieu of the fact that Stoker lays so much emphasis upon Dracula's "boxes of earth" which keep him alive- they are his *Heim*. It will be recalled how Freud pointed out in "The Uncanny" that the notion of being buried alive, far from being considered eerie filled his patients with pleasure for it

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death wishes inside the vampire's attack- requires that inside the target area one would strike long range, one must also already have "intelligence," that is, knowledge of the other."

signified “an intra-uterine existence.” Without digressing into postcolonial readings of what this earth may symbolize, I shall simply make note of its possible connotations. Though I concur with Case that “the feminist allocation of this lascivious pleasure of proximity with the mother is simply a bad hangover from too much Freud,” there is something about the vampire’s dependence on this earth that must be explored (Case 207). Could not Dracula’s repeated<sup>85</sup> returns to his earthy coffin point to his return to the primal, primary mother? In this respect, he reminds one of the myth of Antaeus who also gained his strength from earth, his mother Gaia. He was finally defeated by Hercules who severed his contact with earth by lifting him aloft. In their attempts to destroy Dracula, the men do not chase him but go after his earth. This earth, like Renfield’s crawlers, is symbolic of chthonian nature- it is that which grounds the ungrounded. It is undoubtedly feminine in its associations, yet it is dead matter, a ground where the dead are placed; a befitting home for the un-homed. The destruction of his earth, then, becomes a threat of castration according to the Freudian train of thought. Thus Dracula, a nobleman bound to his earth, is once again masculinised. “His power is “masculine,” but it is power wielded on behalf of what culture calls “female”- darkness, madness, and blood” (A. Williams 447). It has been stated that the “most frightening in the story is the extreme mobility and power of the “King-vampire” (Yu 147). However he needs the earth to revitalize him; without it, Dracula cannot survive. Thus, this vampire-king is tied to and limited by his

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<sup>85</sup> Repetition is an important motif of the uncanny: “he is his own prisoner of repeated performances. The uncanny itself, Freud argues, signifies a return of the repressed, a bringing to light of that which should have remained hidden- that his erotic oral sexuality is more seductive than the phallic sexuality of proper upright men. It is the feminine and animalistic nature of the uncanny male vampire that is abhorrent to patriarchal civilization” (Creed 84).

homeland's earth. The demarcation separating the masculine and feminine is once again brought to the surface.

Whether a Jungian (she)-monster or an Oedipal father to be removed so as to open up access to women, what is certain is that Dracula is an Other. Stoker calls him "the other" fouling Mina's sweet life (Stoker 374). He is "the thing," not of really nature but having to obey nature's laws, as Van Helsing observes (Stoker 479). At once young and old, warm and cold, beast and man, dead and undead, he cannot be pinpointed- he is grey. Repeatedly referred to as "a monster," he is a diabolical "dark mass," a "flame of fire" with power over the brute world (Stoker 326). Those he touches, he stains. Juxtaposed against a snow-pure Mina who is likened to a martyr, he reeks. Stoker stresses the fact that all the places Dracula inhabits smell vile (Stoker 386). As such, he is abjected and abject. According to Kristeva, "It is...not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules" (*Powers of Horror* 4). Having touched his "foul, awful, sneering mouth" Mina rubs her lips as though she is contaminated, hence her complaint that she is "unclean" (Stoker 413). God forbid she turn into some such monster, a kind of Lucy shuffling men around and gorging on babies. Dracula's earth and Mina's forehead are sterilized with a wafer which happens to be a portion of the host used against a satanic force. All the Christians who wage war against Dracula such as Lord Godalming and Abraham Van Helsing (whose first name means 'father of many' as some critics have pointed out) fight against one thing: his powers of metamorphosis. Van Helsing's biggest worry is that they may turn into him. As with Frankenstein's monster, the biggest threat is that he can beget those like himself, become the "father or furtherer of a new order of



beings, whose road must lead through Death, not Life” (Stoker 389). Thus, the monster, as is usually the case, is cornered and destroyed before it can turn others into monsters, create a string of “others.” We know that in the ancient times, the victory of Marduk over the primeval dragon Tiamat was celebrated annually (Campbell *Masks* 21). The war waged against Dracula needs be read in the light of such myths, where good defeats evil, where light closes upon darkness. Despite being the personification of evil contrasted against the Christian warriors of the novel, Dracula’s evil need also be brought into question however. The novel’s ambiguous take on evil seems to be in agreement with a monster’s dichotomy-destruction powers, as had been noted by Cohen in his theses on the monster, are inseparable from rejuvenating forces. “Repeatedly, we are told that the source of evil is the good. It is not, in fact, a matter of the good being infected by the evil, though that is the superficial form which the process takes. Evil is inherent in good” (I. Massey, 99).

Each monster perfectly mirrors the fears of the society it springs from. Thus, Dracula is akin to many a primeval monster, but he carries with him the stigma of his times. “Count Dracula, much like Mary Shelley’s creature, is the perfect monster because of the sheer number of anxieties collapsed into his transgressive body and seductive embrace” (Prescott and Grace 498).

Jean Laplanche holds that seduction is the moment of encounter with the unconscious of the other. “Seduction, therefore, both stages a contained, controlled crisis of the subject’s identity *and* enables the resolution of that crisis and the re-consolidation of that identity” (Kuzmanovic 413). The crisis that comes about with seduction by a vampire is the exact opposite of this- it brings about the obliteration of identities and pre-

established orders. Stoker's narrative is riddled with the fear that once "kissed" there is no turning back, unless of course the source of the contamination is completely destroyed.

To sum up, critics hold that "fear of the mother is the novel's-and the culture's-heart of darkness" (A. Williams 452) while others claim that Dracula is a dark-father, threatening to empower the patriarchal system he (re)enters. I believe that Dracula poses a threat because he represents change; keeping up with the new world, he swiftly adapts and in so doing, threatens to upturn the crusty, stale state of affairs. Metamorphosing into forces of nature, he breaks barriers and bolts. By metamorphosing women into vampires, he intimidates society, creating a family of un-motherly, independent, sexually active women. Thus, he cannot just be "a mother" or "a father" to his new breed of creatures; he is all, changing and shape-shifting as each circumstance calls for.

Judith Halberstam says Dracula is "otherness itself...monster and man, feminine and powerful, parasitical and wealthy; he is repulsive and fascinating, he exerts the consummate gaze but is scrutinized in all things, he lives forever but can be killed. Dracula is indeed not simply a monster but a technology of monstrosity" (Halberstam 88). His popularity can partially be explained by his Byronic rock star airs, but what makes him captivating is that he cannot be located or pigeonholed under one caption. Dracula is all of the above and yet not- thus he has become the emblem of Otherness. Reading him as a dragon to be destroyed, a critic reaches the Kleinian paradigm where he can be equated to the mother who holds the central place of *das Ding*. Hence, though he is removed and the girl saved, his presence still presides, akin to the irremovable abject mother of Kristeva, the primary Thing that continues to haunt according to Lacan.

Perhaps the family's subsequent visit to Dracula's castle after the birth of their son points to his presence through absence, a thing brewing in his earth, awaiting new converts. The fact that they are drawn to his sylvan world has been interpreted as Modernity domesticating the chthonic, but I believe their homage points to their insurmountable fascination with the Other, its reign over ordinary men and women.

The fact that Dracula is not staked but stabbed with a bowie knife also lends credence to the thought that he is after all not killed off in the novel. (Auerbach 205).<sup>86</sup> That the fastidious Stoker chose to leave his monster's demise ambiguous is important. Indeed, Dracula is omnipresent in books and movies, music and philosophical treatises of today. As a metaphor for power and control, as the symbol of the Other threatening to take life and contaminate others with vampirism, he has metamorphosed into many forms, and has been interpreted according to the preoccupations of the times. Thus, in contemporary criticism we can go so far as to see him as the paragon of a consumer working to primarily brainwash women, the natural preys of capitalist society. Paul Barber's thorough anthropological study goes to show how throughout the ages the vampire "takes on the allegorical weight of the changing times and collective psyches" (Hollinger 4). The vampire is evidently destined to remain undead.

The sympathy monsters may arouse, even in their preys, as in Mina's case, is understandable, for they are the catalysts of social upheaval. Monsters are the opposition that keeps the embers of the fire going; without a war, there is no cause. Why protagonists such as Dracula and Dorian Gray, as we shall see, seduce, is that they

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<sup>86</sup> As pointed out by Phyllis A. Roth in "Suddenly Sexual Women in *Dracula*."

promise, and oftentimes deliver brave new worlds. But we need be cautious when pitting them against their binary opposites, the heroes who fight demons, for they cannot be held. We ought to be wary of categorizing them under captions such as “mother” “father” or even “evil” when their power runs in their play of surfaces and their ambivalence.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Monstrous Sublime

*Like some stifling forest of bronze-work,  
transformed as if by malign enchantment out of living trees...*

From Marius the Epicurean by Walter Pater

*For me your love is only pain  
I've opened my eyes  
And seen in you, my lady fair,  
The devil in disguise.*

Tannhauser Ballad

Beauty that has launched a thousand ships and troubled philosophers from times immemorial has been a common culprit in bringing about metamorphosis. Mythological characters such as Andromeda, Gerana and Narcissus are all punished and metamorphosed because of their beauty or vanity. On the other hand, in the world of Greeks and Romans the harmony between the beauty of forms and the goodness of the soul, the ideal underpinning *kalokagathia*, is repeatedly underlined (Eco *On Beauty* 46).<sup>87</sup> It was in the first century A.D that Longinus produced his treatise “On the Sublime” wherein he declared that the nobility of the soul played the most important part in sublimity (Longinus 86). This is not far from the Romantic notion of the beautiful as a

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<sup>87</sup> Eco has pointed out that if the beautiful is good it follows that the ugly is evil. “The enemy must be ugly because beauty is identified with good (*kalokagathia*), and one of the fundamental characteristics of beauty has always been what the Middle Ages called *integritas* (in other words, having all that is required to be an average representative of the species)” (Eco *Enemy* 5).

pointer to universal unity, translated into the realm of the sublime by Coleridge and others (Singer & Dunn 88). Beauty can also make its possessor an “other.” In differentiating the beautiful and the sublime, Burke had rendered beauty “dead and inoperative” whereas the sublime aroused terror and astonishment due to its vastness, obscurity, magnificence, ruggedness and infinity (Schenk 105). The strong passions aroused by the sublimely beautiful therefore otherized it. From Longinus to Nietzsche, we encounter a myriad of theories equating the beautiful with the good and evil with the ugly. Oscar Wilde figures in this equation in the most tantalizing way: his *Dorian Gray* is a critique, among other things, of the fin de siècle’s preoccupation with beauty.

His leading character Dorian Gray is the epitome of idealized Hellenistic beauty, and like Narcissus gone awry, rotting from within, he poisons himself and those around him. The novel thus reads like a sly criticism of works such as *Marius the Epicurean*, Walter Pater’s 1885 novel which was considered the bible of many a dandy with its idealization of aesthetics. Echoing the passionate throes of aesthetes afraid of physical deterioration, “when I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself,” Dorian questions Nietzschean aesthetics with its dictum of beauty representing good (Wilde 50). Committing one villainous act after another, Dorian’s shell, contrary to the dictum, retains his ideal beauty and youth, while his picture turns ugly and old; a possible moralistic reformulation of Nietzsche in that aesthetics is undercut by ethics. Thus, Wilde seems to take a statement such as “It is perhaps the vestige of dandyism that the worst punishment for evil is not god’s wrath but to be ugly” and makes an ironic statement with Dorian as the caricaturized dandy (McDonald 25). We shall see that Wilde mocks such philosophies, turning Longinus’ understanding of sublimity inside out. Wilde also seems

to have sculpted Dorian upon Burke's understanding of the terrible power of sublime beauty where "a mode or pain is always the cause of the sublime" (Burke 219). Whoever is enamoured with him is met with a terrible pain. Likewise, Dorian's fate is akin to Narcissus except that in this modern age, Dorian becomes his own god and demon, metamorphosing inwardly thanks to his own acts and whims while his portrait undergoes visible transformation. An urban Narcissus, he stares not into a lake like his predecessor. Instead he hides his real self inside a secret room to gaze into his soul's movements. His picture becomes the lake he obsessively turns to.

That the first epigram opening the book is about beauty is telling: "The artist is the creator of beautiful things" (Wilde 21). A student of Ruskin and Pater, Wilde toys with the idealistic aesthetic axiologies of Plato, Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel and Croce, turning them upside down by first presenting beauty as the elated embodiment of all that is good, then making it literally fester. Wilde continues the problematization of the terrible and powerful force that is beauty by making sure that all of Dorian's relations are judged on the basis of it. Thus, the fact that beauty is subject to destruction, made manifest by the portrait, can be interpreted as an acerbic critique against the prophets of beauty, especially against Wilde's (and Dorian's) one-time hero Pater. Like Pater's Mona Lisa, likened to a vampire older than the rocks upon which she sits, Dorian is a kind of vampire feeding upon the adoration and love about him since his unchanging, numinous beauty astounds all who lay eyes upon him. Except of course, Wilde's "Mona Lisa" has a double, undergoing metamorphosis and taking on a repugnant appearance. Thus certain critics like Peter Ackroyd note that "beneath the brilliant surface of Wilde's prose there is the mordant gaze of the moralist" (Wilde 14). Amidst all its rich descriptions of the

sensual à la Huysmans, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* affords multiple, and often contradictory readings of beauty, as is evident in the opening epigrams. Though Wilde proclaims that “All art is quite useless” for example, he also raises those to the status of the elect “to whom beautiful things mean only Beauty” (Wilde 21). I agree with Sarah Kofman who points out that the novel is an “imposture of beauty” for beauty becomes yet another screen for its fragile, perishable nature” (Kofman 10). Yet at the end, it is the beautiful portrait and the decaying body of Dorian that remains. Through Lord Henry, Wilde hails and mocks beauty simultaneously.

In the only novel he has penned, Oscar Wilde juxtaposes many binary opposites, the dichotomies between soul/body, good/evil, eternal/transient through Dorian, forever divided amidst these oppositions; he is at once a Grecian beauty to be worshiped, and a heartless, egotistical, murderous creature whose beauty hides it all. As his story unfolds, we witness his metamorphosis from an “unspotted” body of innocence, pink and white as another kind of Narcissus flower, to one with a “withered, wrinkled, and loathsome visage” (Wilde 39, 264). As his beautiful mother before him, Dorian is the object of adoration. “What the invention of oil-painting was to the Venetians, the face of Antinous was to late Greek sculpture, and the face of Dorian Gray will someday be to me” says his fervid admirer Basil, who admits to seeing the world differently after he has met Dorian (Wilde 32). Wilde seems to indirectly draw upon the uncanny description of vampires in recounting the power Dorian’s presence arouses in others. It is as if those who behold his beauty come under the spell of a supernatural being:

Something seemed to tell me that I was on the verge of a terrible crisis in my life. I had a strange feeling that Fate had in store for me exquisite joys and exquisite sorrows. I grew afraid, and turned to quit the room. It was not conscience that



made me do so; it was a sort of cowardice... Suddenly I found myself face to face with the young man whose personality had so strangely stirred me. (Wilde 28)

All the “high” and “low” characters are in awe of the power of his beauty. Basil is enamoured or rather besotted by it, as if turned somnambulistic before the power of Dorian’s beauty, and the frame-maker Mr. Hubbard’s assistant glances at him “with a look of shy wonder in his rough, uncomely face. He had never seen anyone so marvellous” (Wilde 154). It is this kind of superb beauty that Wilde brings into question, as if taking a stab at the Idealistic philosophers, debunking their long-held notion that a thing is good because it is beautiful and ridiculing those who rejected works of art accredited to be socially evil, very much along the lines of his contemporary Tolstoy in his book *What is Art*. This otherworldly beauty of Dorian’s and the fascination it inspires, I would liken to what Rudolf Otto describes as the sacred or numinous;<sup>88</sup> in the presence of such a force which is certainly Other, one is filled with a feeling of terror, as in the case of Basil. “The numinous presents itself as something “wholly other” (*ganz andere*) something basically and totally different” (Eliade *The Sacred* 9). So with his astounding beauty Dorian is already an Other, making his worshippers fear and tremble as if before a divine force, a *mysterium tremendum*. Dorian keeps on luring worshippers- he inspires both awe and love. As Otto puts it, “the daemonic-divine object may appear to the mind an object of horror and dread, but at the same time it is no less something that allures with a potent charm, and the creature, who trembles before it, utterly cowed and cast down, has always at the same time the impulse to turn to it, nay even to make it somehow his own” (Otto 31).

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<sup>88</sup> From the Latin word for god, numen.

Dorian's unchanging beauty is mocked by the fact that he is turning internally grotesque, but his evil is oftentimes painted in a complimentary light; it is his flaws that make him more than just a pretty picture after all. Wilde seems to be challenging the age-old conviction in a Cartesian and Hobbsian way; the ancient habit of using beauty and good interchangeably is debunked, but not in the moralistic tones of Christian philosophers before him. Here, beauty is still a force not to be conjured with; though it may turn vicious, it is still powerful.

The fact is that Dorian starts enjoying his portrait's deterioration, his soul's downfall. Thus he becomes the ultimate aesthete turned decadent, though even this view and sensibility of his is repeatedly subjected to change, like the picture. In his fickleness, Dorian is the most human of the novel's characters. All the other personages in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, be it the moralist painter Basil Hallward or Lord Henry who preaches but practices not, remain the same, impervious to any kind of transformation while Dorian repeatedly changes his mind and heart. Though his physical appearance retains its perfect beauty in the eyes of the beholders, we know through the soul-mirror of his portrait the toll taken by his sins. We also see through his fears and guilty spells how he often wishes to change himself and his lifestyle. Thus, it can be said that Dorian is the only subject in the novel who undergoes differing forms of transformation. He unknowingly brings about the final change, the picture returning to Dorian's former beauty while Dorian takes on the picture's/his soul's horrid features. What remains at the end is a corpse who would not be recognised had it not been for Dorian's rings, and a picture, a beautiful picture, which has regained its original splendour. This is perhaps Wilde's final epigrammatic statement as to the immortality of an objet d'art juxtaposed

against mortal man who always ends up withered and wrinkled with age. Somewhat like Dracula, Dorian is a dragon slain: but Wilde makes Dorian his own slayer, a split-self and Other bringing about change.

Let us turn to the beginning of the novel where the primary metamorphosis is achieved through art. This happens whilst Dorian's beauty is painted just as he is subjected to the "poisonous" philosophies of Lord Henry. Both Lord Henry and Basil assumes the role of Doctor Frankenstein here, also giving birth to a beautiful protean monster prematurely: "To a large extent the lad was his own creation. He had made him premature" (Wilde 83). Basil paints him as he is changing, while his soul is first introduced to the possibilities of carnal decadence. Dorian, whose first-name spells his Grecian beauty, is also grey; his ambivalence and in-between state is spelled in his surname; thus, unlike Basil, he is susceptible to Lord Henry's influence. Stepping upon the dais "with the air of a young Greek martyr" he is indeed a Narcissus who is as yet apparently unconscious of his own beauty and the effect it has on others (Wilde 40). Whereas the Christian tradition equated "the flesh" with the female body, Wilde seems to embody La Belle Epoque's preoccupation with all that is Greek; "Victorian cult of Greece" which "gently and unpointedly positioned the male flesh/muscle as the indicative instance of 'the body' whose surfaces, features, abilities were subject or object of unphobic enjoyment" (Sedgwick 136). This male beauty, in its unspotted, youthful form makes Lord Henry understand why Basil worships Dorian and the Lord declares that beauty is a form of genius. Before us is built an "unmarred"<sup>89</sup> portrait, a newly discovered marble god. Hence the devilish character Lord Henry's eagerness to bring

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<sup>89</sup> A word Wilde uses very often, as in chapters 6, 10, 11, 18, 20.

about change, which he readily achieves. It is only after Lord Henry's "strange panegyric" that Dorian is stirred. The soul of Dorian's picture, infused with Pater's hedonistic calling, at first serves as a mirror to his beauty then acts as a hideous doppelganger that only Dorian recognizes. Through his picture, Dorian becomes an object. Frye underlines the importance of mirrors and clocks, both significant objects in the novel, when it comes to fallen heroes: "At lower levels Narcissus or twin image darkens into a sinister doppelganger figure, the hero's shadow and the portent of his own death or isolation... The night world progressively becomes, as we sink deeper into it, a world where everything is an object, including ourselves, and consequently mirrors and clocks take on a good deal of importance as objectifying images" (Frye *Secular Scripture* 117).

It is significant that Dorian only achieves selfhood through his image. He who has hitherto been described as nothing but a beautiful thing, a living statue devoid of any thoughts or schemes, becomes a subject and object simultaneously once his picture is painted. The image-self which "transfixes the subject as object" turns him into a subject, but ultimately otherizes him (C. Brown 129). The portrait which turns him into a Barthesian memento mori signifying the "death in person" of the model and the birth of the object that is the picture starts metamorphosing the self once the self starts making choices as a subject. The subject/object that is the picture serves to keep Dorian as an object for the outside world while intrinsically reflecting how he is changing as a subject.

In the construction of the self and its other, one need be reminded that Dorian is built upon Narcissus, who, by definition knows no boundary between the self and the other. When Dorian does come into being via the painted picture, Lacan's theory of the

Gaze which explains how the self is destabilized when its “unity” is compromised with the awareness of others also enters our picture. Dorian’s obsession with himself and his mirror image seems to arise from the desire to escape these others who are bound to dethrone him from the pedestal of his g(l)azed self. “Like Dorian Gray, Lacan’s subject becomes aware of the Gaze from everywhere and attempts to escape its castrating and nullifying effects by appropriating it in a delusive attempt at self-empowerment” (Hovey 27). What Lacan points out as the field of the Other makes the subject feel “less,” which is why certain narcissists create a world where they only exist, and the boundary between self and others is destroyed. Thus, by transforming into a narcissist, he finds desire only in the self, and not the Other. Becoming his own Other, the others only serve to compliment this narcissistic self.

We have seen earlier how the ghost of a mother shuffled aside by the dominating, patriarchal figure can turn the subject into an “other.” In this chapter, we shall see how the mother and the mother’s surrogate, the “bride” of the irremovable mother, triggers the transformation of the protagonist into an Other. Though Lord Henry and his decadent philosophies seem to be the catalysts for Dorian’s change, I hold that the role of women is central in bringing about his metamorphosis.

Lady Margaret Devereux and Dorian Gray are a mother and son worthy of idolatry for their startling physical beauty. Though we see the transformation of his soul, Dorian remains as beautiful as his mother; in fact, it can be said that he takes vengeance on her behalf from his grandfather by remaining so beautiful, that is of course, until the attempted murder of his painted soul. Dorian’s cruel grandfather had destroyed his daughter’s happiness by arranging a fake duel in order to remove her “lowly” husband

from her life. Dorian, in turn flaunts his beauty, destroying all the society figures his grandfather looked up to. It can be said that he becomes the mother-monster; a chthonian force in the guise of a beautiful homoerotic creature, a *homme-fatale* ruining his idolaters by giving them a world, then taking it back.

Upon making Dorian's acquaintance, Lord Henry Wotton, who also plays the part of the decadent Paterian Mephistopheles of the novel, makes inquiries about his new object and subject of fascination, for indeed it is first the portrait, then the model who captivates this world-weary man. "I want you to tell me about his mother. What was she like? Whom did she marry?" is the first thing he inquires, only to be told that the mother, like her son, was "extraordinarily beautiful" making "all the men frantic by running away with a penniless young fellow; a mere nobody...a subaltern in a foot regiment..." In short, Lady Margaret Devereux was "one of the loveliest creatures" Lord Wotton's Uncle George laid eyes upon (Wilde 57-8). By presenting Margaret Devereux as an erratic, emotional character, Wilde seems to prepare the way for the tragedy that awaits her; Dorian's mother, we are told, is "snatched away by death, the boy left to solitude and the tyranny of an old and loveless man," his grandfather Lord Kelso (Wilde 57).<sup>90</sup> Wilde's continued emphasis on the mother's beauty thus links her to her son. It can be said that beauty is the only inheritance he receives from his mother who dies so young; and beauty and his preoccupation with all things physical is the one thing that brings about his metamorphosis and consequent demise. In the rest of the novel, we do not hear much of

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<sup>90</sup> Interpreting the absent and present feminine characters in Wilde's novel, Alexandra Lagbein holds that Wilde, typical of his age, depreciates women: "Dorian's mother, Margeret Devereux, represents another type of typically female behaviour... This romantic disposition of hers shall demonstrate women's fatal predilection for over-emotionalized, irrational and unwise behaviour which very often ends in a disaster for their own person" (Lagbein 9).

this mother; but she is ever present in the golden locks and red lips of her son. Kofman claims that “The picture of Dorian Gray serves as a screen for another picture, the picture of his mother as a bacchante...Rather than give her up through the processes of mourning, he makes his mother himself” (Deutscher and Oliver 10). It is true that this mask-like gift of beauty he takes from her keeps her forever present in his delicate, feminine features. The mother, like the absent mothers of the monster and Gregor, is lost but forever present. His inheritance of her features is the most important thing for the aesthete Dorian; fragile beauty, always young and powerful as a Keatsian “bright star,” is both acclaimed and problematized by Wilde. However, the indestructible mother as postulated by Kristeva makes Margeret Devereux, and through her, her son Dorian and his intended bride, haunt the subjects forever in search of a lost object, turning them into different kinds of monsters. In *Dorian Gray* the ghost of the mother who has not achieved abjection turns the subject into an object, objectifying him to the point of irreognition.

We saw how Dorian started changing when introduced to Lord Henry’s philosophies. But the actual physical metamorphosis of the picture is made manifest after Dorian’s only debacle with a woman. Enter, Dorian’s very own object of desire, the beautiful, innocent Sibyl Vane with whom he is smitten on a befitting level of artifice since she is an actress transforming into a different Shakespearean character each night. Like Dorian and his mother she is, first and foremost, beautiful: “She was the loveliest thing I had ever seen in my life. You said to me once that pathos left you unmoved, but that beauty, mere beauty, could fill your eyes with tears. I tell you, Harry, I could hardly see this girl for the mist of tears that came across me” (Wilde 75). And like Dorian in the

earlier part of the novel, she seems to be unconscious of her power over others. We know from Wilde's writings of his attitude towards actresses. In his sonnet on Sarah Bernhardt, he turns her into a "monstrous Phedre- a vampire from hell, the recipient of kisses from 'the loveless lips' of dead men" (Powell 182). According to George Bernard Shaw, his making Dorian's primary object of desire an actress or "diseased vampire" needs to be noted. Dorian has found his equal in beauty with her own power to tantalize and to metamorphose every night. Like his mother, Sibyl is worthy of idolatry: "Sibyl Vane is sacred" Dorian declares with burning eyes (Wilde 77). Wilde's description of her echoes that of his Greek Dorian, thus, as a similar object of desire she turns into a sort of Narcissistic reflection of his and his mother's beauty combined. Their specular beauty is of a Greek flower: "with a little flower-like-face, a small Greek head with plaited coils of dark-brown hair, eyes that were violet wells of passion, lips that were like petals of a rose" (Wilde 75). Sibyl's very name points to Greek prophetesses. Burkert points out that sibyls were "frenzied women from whose lips the god speaks" (*Greek Religion* 116). Wilde seems to continue with his statements on Aestheticism in making his Sibyl speak the words of playwrights, the gods of Wilde's time.

The Lady as sublime object is one we are familiar with in the tradition of courtly love. In accordance with this tradition, Wilde empties Sibyl Va(i)n(e) to the point of cold abstraction; as the perfect object of an aesthete's idolatry, she is Freud's *das Ding*, a Lacanian absolute, inscrutable Otherness, an automaton, which perfectly compliments the narcissist. "The idealization of the Lady, her elevation to a spiritual, ethereal Ideal, is therefore to be conceived of as a strictly secondary phenomenon: it is a narcissistic projection whose function is to render her traumatic dimension invisible...Deprived of



every real substance, the Lady functions as a mirror on to which the subject projects his narcissistic ideal” (Žižek *Metastases of Enjoyment* 90). This Lacanian formulation which certainly applies to Dorian and his Sibyl is not taken to the mistress and servant level of courtly masochistic desire since Dorian, as befits a perfect Narcissus, drops her to turn himself into his ultimate object of fascination. His infernal portrait becomes his lake/mirror which he returns to night after night to stare into. He is full of himself alone. “He never knew- never, indeed, had any cause to know- that somewhat grotesque dread of mirrors, and polished metal surfaces, and still water...” (Wilde 158). Though Wilde insinuates that Dorian frequents the lower reaches of the city with its bordellos and dens, we are never allowed to peep into Dorian’s carnal sublimations and ascertain either his conquests or his homosexuality. This goes along the lines of Freud’s Narcissus whom he regards as the “other,” the female (Kristeva *Tales of Love* 21). The most sensual moments in the novel are those when he is regarding himself. As such, Dorian is the perfect aesthete locked into himself, a different type of Basil who is like the quasi-religious aesthete Leivers of *Sons and Lovers* in that “both characters’ lack...consummation and communication with the beloved [that] is essential” (Alley 5).

For Freud, holding the desired one at bay was necessary in order to keep the embers of that desire burning. With Dorian, his beloved Sibyl is kept as a distant object until she becomes too real to take. When Sibyl shows her true self behind the stage, Dorian returns to his own stage where his portrait awaits: “Often, on returning home from one of those mysterious and prolonged absences that gave rise to such strange conjecture among those who were his friends...he himself would creep upstairs to the locked room, open the door with the key that never left him now, and stand, with a mirror, in front of

the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him, looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from polished glass” (Wilde 159). According to Freud and de Man, the difference between self and other is a deception based on fallacy. Thus love is an inverted repetition of a self-referential gesture and is inevitably narcissistic (Prager 207). It can therefore be said that Dorian’s gestures toward the ones he “loves,” be it Sibyl before she loses her allure, or Lord Henry with all his polished yet empty talk, are consistent in his role as a Narcissus par excellence. Even in his choice of objects of desire, he has picked Echoes who say what he wants to hear.

Wilde’s choice of an actress as the object of desire is also an extension of his play on surfaces. “Le theatre fascine Dorian, et ce gout mortifière de la metamorphose fait du jeu de roles une des formes du désir de s’approprier l’autre, jusque dans son propre corps...Le miroir, le portrait, le role qu’elle lui renvoie sont ce qui le fait rever, et non pas la jeune fille innocente qui lui offrira son coeur” (Gomis 239).<sup>91</sup> Sibyl becomes the embodiment of soullessness, a beauty as well as Echo, mirroring others. Befittingly so because the Sibyl in Greek mythology had no character of her own, being a mouthpiece for the prophetic voice of Apollo. For Dorian, the modern Sibyl exists on stage, reincarnating all the immortal beloveds of history and drama: she is “all the great heroines of the world in one. She is more than an individual...I want to make Romeo jealous. I want the dead lovers of the world to hear our laughter, and grow sad. I want a

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<sup>91</sup> “Theatre fascinates Dorian, and this mortifying taste for metamorphosis creates a role play which is a form of desire to espouse another, even if this is a marriage to himself...The mirror, the portrait, the role she refers to him are the dream, and not the innocent young girl who offers him her heart.” (My translation)

breath of our passion to stir their dust into consciousness, to wake their ashes into pain” (Wilde 80). It is no coincidence that Dorian and Sibyl never see each other in any place other than the backstage of the theatre. He is enamoured with her superb artifice, her portrayals of Juliet, Rosalind and Desdemona. Hence she is dropped as soon as she loses her talent as an actress and starts animating Dorian’s favourite Shakespearean characters in a puppet-like manner. Wilde breaks the romance by breaking her mirroring: “Without your art you are nothing. I would have made you famous, splendid, magnificent. The world would have worshipped you, and you would have borne my name. What are you now? A third-rate actress with a pretty face,” Dorian declares (Wilde 116). When she is no longer a good mirror, she is broken. And this is when Dorian’s own mirror of a picture alters, the mouth becoming “horribly changed” with a new cruel smile (Wilde 124).

It can be said that for Dorian, Sibyl turns into her mother by becoming a bad actress. In contrast to Dorian’s sacred, sculpture-like beauty of a mother Wilde sets Sibyl’s “faded, tired-looking” mother with “bismuth-whitened hands” (Wilde 86). Her make-up is underlined so as to contrast her to the apparently natural beauty of Dorian’s mother. Sibyl’s mother is the epitome of a jaded, third-rate actress, gaudily melodramatic, aiming to fix her daughter in a profitable marriage. Wilde contrasts Lady Margaret Devereux/Dorian and Sibyl’s Apollonian bodies of cold, marbeline beauty to the almost bestial, caricature-like artificiality of this mother. While most of the characters in the novel are hailed for their artificiality in perfect accord with Gautier’s motto of decadence, Sibyl’s mother’s histrionic ways are stressed to the point of hideousness. Wilde makes the mother spit out parrot-phrases whilst she waves her crooked, false-jewelled fingers, which gives “grotesqueness to her words” (Wilde 87). The disparity between the

aristocratic clan and the Vanes, frame makers and harlots in opium dens is obvious. Like Roman emperors before them, Dorian and his mother practice “class transvestism” but return to their gilded cages at the end of the game. Dorian can afford to enjoy his transformation into a monster in the luxury of his secluded rooms. Conversely, Sybil’s mother, a withered crone “beneath the coarse powder that daubed her cheeks,” is not so fortunate (Wilde 87).

Dorian’s metamorphosis comes about when he starts abhorring Sibyl’s representation of others. In doing so, Dorian breaks his bond with the outside world, turning into himself, making himself his sole object of fascination. Levinas has stated that, “this bond with the other which is not reducible to representation of the other, but to his invocation, and in which invocation is not preceded by an understanding, I call *religion*. The essence of discourse is prayer” (*Entre Nous* 7). When Dorian becomes his own object of fascination and the sacred Sibyl is replaced by his own picture, he becomes his own Other whose soul is systematically marred for the benefit of watching its transformation. Caught in a kind of grotesque fascination, Dorian becomes a beguiler to the world outside; he sees and exhibits this face upon the oval glass framed in ivory cupids. The transforming face in the portrait, he cloisters in an old dusty room that had served as his childhood study, locked away from the gaze of his patriarchal grandfather. Wilde has made Dorian a negative Narcissus, idolizing his own picture’s corruption (Wilde 135).<sup>92</sup> “He is *devoted* to his portrait: I use the word as in classical Latin, where

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<sup>92</sup> Dorian eventually chooses to be the monster: “Once in boyish mockery of Narcissus, he had kissed, or feigned to kiss, those painted lips that now smiled so cruelly at him. Morning after morning he had sat before the portrait, wondering at its beauty, almost enamoured of it, as it seemed to him at times. Was it to alter now with every mood to which he yielded? Was it to become *a monstrous and loathsome thing*, to be hidden away in a locked room, to be shut out

“devotus” means bewitched, enchanted, consecrated, dedicated to divine service, and *marked for slaughter*” (Paglia 527). It follows that his devotion prepares the way for slaughter, consecrating his new temple with the death of its first prey, the artist who had created the metamorphosing object that is the portrait.

Dorian’s first metamorphosis then is all the more meaningful in the light of the fact that he halts Sibyl’s ambition to change. It can be said he steals from Sibyl her transformative powers when, having fallen in love (off stage) she can no longer act a woman in love on stage since she is “transfigured with joy” (Wilde 114). The ecstasy of love dominating her, she finds the love she plays onstage a pallid reflection of the real thing. Thus, she stops being a stage person to become a real person; something Dorian will not have. Rebuking Sibyl’s advances and calling off the engagement on the premise of her bad acting, Dorian prepares her end and his own beginning as a kind of vampire on the prowl. Upon deserting her, he roams the streets of the night, biting into blood red cherries that are offered to him at dawn whilst she is poisoning herself. Estelle Valls de Gomis holds that “il devient métaphoriquement un vrai vampire,”<sup>93</sup> the red cherries under pale dawn’s skies symbolising her wasted virginity and spilt blood:

Les cerise’s couleur de sang on été cueillies a minuit- heure magique- et ont un gout de lune froide. Ces cerises symbolisent la vie de Sibyl croquée par Dorian: cueillies pratiquement a l’heure ou elle s’est donné la mort, elles sont comme gorgées de son sang, et la froideur de la lune qui les a pénétrées est comme la froideur de la mort qui s’est insinuée dans la corps de Sibyl. Nous pourrions y voir une métaphore de la defloration...mais celle-ci tiendrait au fait que, ne

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from the sunlight that had so often touched to brighter gold the waving wonder of its hair?” (My italics).

<sup>93</sup> Metaphorically he became a true vampire (My translation)

pouvant être déflorée par l'amour; Sibyl s'est offerte à son pendant, la mort.  
(Gomis 239)<sup>94</sup>

It is not only Gomis but Paglia who reads Dorian as a vampire. She points out that “Dorian, like a vampire, dominates the plane of eye-contact,” and his idolaters/victims are always destroyed, sometimes inadvertently. Basil who grows pale at the sight of his beauty, is likened to the “vampire’s bled victim” (Paglia 519). Others hold that Dorian’s acts echo Jack the Ripper, the celebrity murderer of Wilde’s day: “Wilde wanted Dorian’s act of murder to be seen as an exaggerated plunge into pure evil, and he sought to achieve this effect partly by associating him with Jack the Ripper” (Nassar 218). His cutting up of Basil after the artist plunges his knife into the portrait exhibits exaggerated homoerotic elements, the knife being symbolic of the phallus for critics. Praz holds that a love crime becomes an integral part of vampirism and vampire stories (Praz 76). Thus, one can correlate Dorian’s abandonment of Sibyl and his murder of Basil to the generic stories of Byronic vampire stories such as Polidori’s *The Vampire* or Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Be he a vampiric figure or a refined version of the mysterious ripper, one thing is certain; he is eventually ostracized by the very society that idolizes him. People steer clear when he enters clubhouses, and rumours as to how he brings about the ruin of society debutants abound. It is important to note that Dorian literally realizes Levinas’ otherization by becoming a murderer of his idolaters and himself as the other (i.e. the picture). As pointed out earlier, Levinas states that “the other is the only being whose

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<sup>94</sup> “The Cherry’s colour of blood was collected at the magical hour of midnight, and has a taste of the cold moon. These cherries symbolize the life of Sybil bitten by Dorian: almost picked at the time she committed suicide, they are engorged with her blood, and the coldness of the moon that has penetrated is like the coldness of death permeating from the body of Sybil. We could see a metaphor of defloration...but this would be as such; unable to be deflowered by love, Sybil offered its counterpart, death.” (My translation)

negation can be declared only as total: a murder. The other is the only being I want to kill.” But, according to him “at the very moment when my power to kill is realized, the other has escaped” (*Entre Nous* 9). In Dorian’s case, no escape is realized, or perhaps death affords the only escape. In attempting to remove the other within him, he kills himself. Basil’s murder at the foot of the portrait reads like a sacrificial rite, but his removal only exacerbates the picture’s hold on Dorian. At the end, it is the picture, his soul and object of fascination, which is the ultimate vampire:

The painting feeds on Dorian, until in desperation he murders Basil, a propitiatory blood-sacrifice before an *objet de culte*, from whose bondage he fights to be free. But the painting will be satisfied with no other victim but Dorian. The finale is one of the uncanniest moments in literature. Killing Dorian, the painting achieves its ultimate vampirism, triumphantly regaining “all the wonder of [its] exquisite youth and beauty.” The painting finds the elixir of eternal youth by shedding Dorian’s blood. (Paglia 526)

Like the vampire who takes a prey with natural calm and ease, Dorian placidly watches as everyone around him is destroyed. As befits the perfect narcissist aesthete, Dorian is apathetic towards others. “So I have murdered Sibyl Vane,” said Dorian Gray half to himself- ‘murdered her as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife. Yet the roses are not less lovely for all that. The birds sing just as happily in my garden. And tonight I am to dine with you, and then go on to the Opera, and sup somewhere, I suppose, afterwards. How extraordinarily dramatic life is!’” (Wilde 128). Like a Narcissus blind to Echo’s pleas, Dorian admits his apathy, watching her tragedy as if it were a play. She was after all nothing but an actress he was enamoured with from afar, hence it comes as no surprise that he sees her end as if she were a character in a play: “And yet I must admit that this thing that has happened does not affect me as it should. It seems to me simply like a wonderful ending to a wonderful play. It has all the terrible beauty of a Greek

tragedy, a tragedy in which I took a great part, but by which I have not been wounded” (Wilde 130). His extreme nonchalance at her death horrifies Basil. Likewise, after Basil’s murder, when “the events of the preceding night crept with silent blood-stained feet,” Dorian coolly chooses to blackmail an old friend to remove the remains of the painter, by burning him with acid; the very tool of Sibyl’s suicide (Wilde 196). The annihilation of Basil is followed by the suicide of the “chemist/remover.” As the corpses line up on the altar of his self, the portrait turns more and more gruesome and Dorian’s fascination more unwholesome. As if seeking vengeance upon the world that simply took him for an object of beauty, he turns everyone around him, including himself, into an object that provides entertainment, bringing to mind Sartre’s statement as to how hell could be the other: “The attempt to reduce other people to pure objects can finally lead to the acts of the sadist. The sadist cannot bear that another should look at him and judge him. He tries to overcome his shame at being an object, he abuses others in order to destroy their subjectivity and thus regain his freedom” (qtd. in King 77).

After brief moments of consternation, Dorian resumes his double life of opera and opium dens, running back to his house even in the midst of parties, to see the effects of change on the portrait. This once again brings us to Levinas, whose writing sheds an eerie light upon the metamorphosing face of the portrait: “There is, in the face of the Other, always the death of the other and thus, in some way, an incitement to murder” (*Entre Nous* 104). Though Levinas points out that the “face” is not a plastic form, like a portrait, I find that it is very apt in relation to Dorian’s picture-face. In his metamorphosing face, Dorian sees the death of his beautiful self. He is enamoured yet repulsed by his pictorial face, which recalls “la dialectique d’attraction/repulsion liée au



vampire, que ses victime adorent et haïssent tout a la fois” (Gomis 240).<sup>95</sup> His face gradually becomes the Other as he remains superficially unchanged. This beautiful face incites a desire to murder which brings on further change (in the portrait). When Levinas states that the “face of the Other is perhaps the very beginning of philosophy,” he means that it stimulates the birth of the theoretical with its concern for justice. In Dorian’s Sadean bedroom philosophies we see that others have become mere ornaments and instruments that help him sculpt his soul into an Other. His *liasons dangereuses* ultimately turn him into a dangerous foe, an abject even for those who frequent seedy dens in the outskirts of London. Since his vile acts are translated into ugly contours upon the face in the portrait, he starts to experiment in order to see how good will be chiselled upon it. When he spares an innocent country girl, he rushes back to see if the picture has changed for the better. It has not. Justice, in Dorian’s world is Sadean, no Rousseau rules his universe after all. The Nietzschean war between Apollo and Dionysos meet in his very aspect, the Greek beauty of his face versus the viciousness of his soul:

The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his soul. He would examine with minute care, and sometimes with a monstrous and terrible delight, the hideous lines that seared the wrinkling forehead, or crawled around the heavy sensual mouth, wondering sometimes which were the more horrible, the signs of sin or the signs of age. He would place

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<sup>95</sup>“The dialectic of attraction/repulsion related to the vampire, which his victims adore and abominate at the same time.” (My translation)

his white hands beside the coarse bloated hands of the picture and smile. He mocked the misshapen body and the failing limbs. (Wilde 159)

By becoming his own object of desire, his own source of pleasure, Dorian also opens (to) the world. Enamoured by works of high art, beautiful stones or textiles, and also the low entertainments of bordellos, he enters the realm of pleasure. The inside/outside dichotomy follows the Narcissistic object-choice: he entertains so as to be worshipped, he toys with love so as to derive pleasure only for himself. Both Spinoza and Freud hold that the ultimate aim of human desire is to unite with the world of pleasure, “for Spinoza the energy of the individual is essentially directed at self-maintenance, self-activity, self-perfection (*conatus in suo esse perseverandi*), which is also self-enjoyment. Thus for Spinoza, as for Freud, the self-perfection (narcissism) of the human individual is fulfilled in the union with the world of pleasure” (N.O. Brown 97). His own beauty and the beautiful things he collects simultaneously invite and threaten, become tools for him to derive pleasure from, to seduce and to destroy those around him.

We have thus far addressed the issue of beauty juxtaposed against evil made visible by the portrait’s hideousness. Throughout the novel, Wilde seems to play upon the anxiety that evil will be made manifest, be it in bloated hands or misshapen limbs, in accordance with the aesthetic notion that ugliness is a sign of evil. Wilde’s work actually reads like a diatribe against Aestheticism in that he takes this premise and turns the hero, the embodiment of beauty and charm, into that which is physically repulsive, and this intrinsically, deeply so, because the picture represents the inner reaches of his soul. He attacks Victorian aesthetes with their own weapon, for it is the picture, a work of art they hold above all, that is literally festering. Wilde separates ethics and aesthetics as with a

knife, the very instrument used to slay both the artist (Basil) and the artwork (which turns out to be himself). In doing so, Wilde points to the breach between ethics and aesthetics: “ethics and aesthetics are separate realms; the good is not the beautiful, the evil is not the ugly, this is the founding statement of faith of the aesthete” (McDonald 24). The fact that his outer beauty remains unspotted is poignant, because this points to the blindness of those who will not believe his evil-doings, judging him by his cover. Dorian who had once blamed a (yellow) book for influencing him adversely becomes an uncracked book himself; no one bothers to “read him” and so he only reads himself, his crimes chiselled line by line in the form of grimaces and monstrous lines. He is a strange Narcissus, fearful of actual mirrors, polished metal and still water; it is his soul, not his body that he is obsessed with after all. If Narcissus’ reflected self, echoing each movement faithfully, becomes his object of adulation, it is a mimetic infatuation. With his knowledge of the existence of the soul, Dorian reverses the Narcissus cycle. It is the changes worked upon his soul’s mirror that fascinate him, not his reflected likeness. As such, he is no longer an aesthete but a connoisseur debunker of the age-old aesthetic theory equating beauty to good, and ugliness to evil. I find that part of his joy in regarding something so wretched stems from the arcane knowledge that the aesthete philosophy is at once proven true and false: sure enough, that which is evil is inscribed upon the face, aesthetes hold, but only he can read the writing of that invisible ink while the outside world continues to be deceived.

Wilde offers a critique on many levels, starting with those closest to his green-carnationed sensibilities. Audrey Jaffe interprets Dorian Gray as the embodiment of culture, the beautiful face defining the dominant culture’s requirements for beauty: “It is

the *idea* of culture that takes shape here in, and as, an imaginary body, and the idea of the group- of the self as an idealized projection of others- that enables the replacement, or at least the overlapping, of the injurious name with the beautiful face (Jaffe 172). Though the dominant culture's "face" is that of a Greek marble statue with an aristocratic background, Dorian is not only both the beautiful and the ugly, but is fascinated by both ugliness and beauty. I agree with Jaffe that as Dorian's inscribed sins are his experiences, his picture needs to be seen as an accumulation of marks that suggest the possibility of individuality, and not just a conglomeration of ugly lines. Thus, it can be said that he is the embodiment of culture; a culture swathed in hypocrisy.

Dorian Gray also hints at the emergence of *another other* and can be read as a further critique of a double-faced culture. Portending Wilde's own subsequent "downfall," the deaths of homosexual characters' stress the importance of disguise, for appearances, as we know from Dorian, save one from affront (Halberstam 65).<sup>96</sup>

Another side of the coin however is that such secrecy, with all its games and masks, breeds monsters:

In both *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, disguise becomes equivalent to self in a way that confuses the model of subjectivity that each author maps. While at first the model of a monster hiding behind a respectable or aesthetically pleasing front seems to produce a deep, structured subjectivity, in each the hidden self subverts the notion of an authentic self and makes subjectivity a surface effect...Furthermore, as Jeff Nunokawa points out, in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 'the expression of homosexual desire cancels, rather than clarifies, the definition of the character through whom it is conducted.' The friction of surfaces, in other words, in this text is likely to erase self as it is to

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<sup>96</sup> It is interesting to note that homosexuality has been made an integral feature of the Gothic horror by many critics such as Sedgwick. Jaffe points out that many early Gothic authors including Lewis, Beckford and Walpole were all linked to homosexual scandals. "In Gothic, slippage occurs between these two unstable categories [normal and perverse] and the monster, or the agent of fear, becomes easily recognizable as the queer" (Halberstam 65).

construct another one...But both Hyde and Gray represent a similar threat, the sexual menace of perverse desire and the epistemological menace of unstable identities. (Halberstam 64)

Though I would agree that subjectivity is turned into a surface effect on one level, the notion of an “authentic self” needs be questioned, and this is what Wilde is seemingly doing. Who is Dorian’s authentic self, his face or his soul, a homosexual caught in conflicting throes of passion or a text-book decadent engaging in every sort of debauchery? I believe that Wilde insinuates that Dorian is all of the above. If anything, Dorian has many selves. Unstable identities stirred by closeted homosexuality may abound in many Gothic novels as some critics suggest, but I think this does not fully apply to Dorian. Wilde h(y/i)des his many characters well, but he does not make them unstable or shifty. Basil is constant to the end, and, Wilde does not seem to suggest that it is Dorian’s perverse desires that make him a shifty subject. In fact, I believe that despite all the pretence and role-playing, Dorian is the one character who is openly engaged in dialogue with his “other” self. “Collapsing the difference Freud wished to maintain, in his discussion of homosexuality, between desire for the possession of the other, it suggests a fantasy of such perfect sympathy with the other that the other turns out to be, for better or worse, the self (Jaffe 172).

Throughout the novel, Wilde presents us with doubling and doubles. The main doubling, as has been stated, occurs within Dorian himself. The portrait is himself and not. It has prompted Pater and others to call it Dorian’s doppelganger. Though it is the difference not the similarity between himself and his portrait that is accentuated, we are still in the realm of doubles. This incessant doubling, seen in the diametrically opposed mothers of Dorian and Sybil, the interchangeable characters of mother and son

transforming into one another and the double lives that are led by Victorian notables underline the play-within-a play structure of the novel. There are times Dorian wants to be honest and good, as when he admits his crime to Lord Henry. But he is not believed because of the untainted light of his face. His beauty is a mask that saves and dooms him simultaneously (Wilde 158).<sup>97</sup> Thus he goes back to his old, villainous ways where we are always situated in the realm of make-believe or theatre, even when we leave the stage and its backroom melodrama behind. As if caught in circus mirrors, Dorian's doublings before the world are magnified to extraordinary proportions. Craft has pointed out that the mirror is a kind of (silent) machine, manufactured to "produce, over and over again, exactly this calculated deviance... So proficient is this technical exhibition that it sponsors a fantasy of faultless mimesis: 'Am I really like that?' as Dorian puts it while gazing at the 'most magical of mirrors.' Yet it is exactly this mimetic proficiency which promotes a double alienation." (*Come See About Me* 128). Craft holds that Wilde goes beyond and corrects Lacan in that identity construction can never escape the imbrication of vision and language (Craft 129).<sup>98</sup> But I find that in this intertwined palimpsest of vision and language, Wilde privileges vision over language. Speaking of constructs, it is evident that the world becomes Dorian's stage where his exploits are recorded in the demonic lines

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<sup>97</sup> "For the wonderful beauty that had so fascinated Basil Hallward, and many others besides him, seemed never to leave him. Even those who had heard the most evil things against him, and from time to time strange rumours about his mode of life crept through London and became a chatter of the clubs, could not believe anything to his dishonour when they saw him" (Wilde 97).

<sup>98</sup> Craft goes on to question the real: "In Wilde's fable, that alibi assumes the form of a portrait-as-mirror: 'It is the real Dorian Gray-that is all.' Wilde thus insists that the subject generated within and through this reflexive process arrives double-crossed as nothing less than its own rhetorical figure, say chiasmus: first a specular crossing of person into image, then a reverse crossing of image back into person, not to mention the physical crossing of light rays that inverts the image in relation to its object-source" (Craft 129).

and age spots upon his portrait's face, but, having remained unspotted himself, the "truth" he offers is taken as yet another piece of theatrics.

The beautiful face, like a theatre mask, halts any explanation offered along the way. Our Greek Dorian is seemingly cast in a Greek play where crude masks declare a character's gaiety or dolour, goodness or foulness. Dorian's mask of beauty becomes his reality in accord with Lord Henry's philosophy that "it is simply expression...that gives reality to things." (Wilde 137). Despite the fact that strange rumours creep around him, and though the purity of his face rebukes those who "wondered how one so charming and graceful as he was could have escaped the stain of an age that was at once sordid and sensual," everyone is nonetheless enamoured with him. (Wilde 159) Hence he remains unmarred, unharmed, since no one believes the rumours when they lay eyes upon his face. His mask of beauty always saves his reputation and the day.

Naturally it follows that after quite a number of doublings, "there is no ultimately controlling perspective based on a geometry of narrative relations that allows us to find a stable, resolving point of vantage" (Riquelme 31). Dorian's double face and double life point to a "vertical split" as outlined by theorists such as Heine Kohut (Schulz 8). He is more like the double-faced Janus, the Roman god of doorways, stuck between good and evil, high and low. Though he swerves towards the demonic, Lord Henry's protégé of decadence that he is, he still remains divided- hence his habitual desire to do good, to be good, to spare. Hence also Christopher Nassaar's statement that in *Dorian Gray* "Wilde explored human evil and concluded that human nature is 'gray' (Nassaar 219). Like all primitive divinities, he has a double nature; "Dionysus is at one and the same time the 'most terrible' and the 'most gentle' of the gods...In fact, there is no ancient divinity who

does not have a double face” (Girard 265). In his fickleness, he is truly a god as Lord Henry claims.

Wilde’s use of doublings can also be interpreted as reflective of typical la belle époque sensibilities of the in-betweens; an appetite for Byronic misdemeanours coupled with Victorian guilt. Since a monster is always “an embodiment of a certain cultural moment- of a time, a feeling and a place” the monster that is Dorian Gray mirrors the anxieties of the Victorian period (Cohen 4). Scholars have noted the numerous instances of doubling of character, narrative structures and even objects in the novel (Riquelme 31).<sup>99</sup> The interlocking relationship between the men in the novel is sauced with blatant homoeroticism- “love that dares not speak its name” certainly abounds in the ménage à trois of Dorian/Basil/Lord Henry but it comes with due punishment, finding Basil and Dorian knifed, Lord Henry deserted by his wife and bereft of his friends. Dorian’s own self, constantly metamorphosing despite his mask, is a harbinger of the many split characters in literature that will explode once the époque loses its shimmer and false gold. Wilde portends the birth of the modern subject, akin to Eagleton’s reading of our own postmodernist subject who is a “dispersed, decentered network of libidinal attachments, emptied of ethical substance” (Dollimore 71). Zizek asks whether there is not more truth in the mask we wear, the games we play, the fictions we obey (*Metastases Enjoyment*

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<sup>99</sup> “Central to the novel’s structure is the doubling not only of person and painting that Pater mentions but also of picture and book, both the book within the narrative that Lord Henry gives Dorian [purported to be Huysman’s *A Rebours*] (brackets mine) and the book we read that is also a *Picture*. The doublings include Basil Hallward and Lord Henry Wotton as fraternal collaborators in the production of the painting and as doubles of different kinds for Dorian himself. Hallward and Wotton split up the dual role that Leonardo da Vinci fills as the quintessential artist-scientist. As a detached experimenter with human lives, Wotton is an avatar of Victor Frankenstein, who produces an ugly, destructive double of himself. There is, as well, the parallel between Dorian Gray and Sybil Vane, as attractive young people to whom unpleasant, destructive revelations are made” (Riquelme 31).



92). The mirror that is Dorian's face shows us how beauty lies, and in its lying, beguiles. He is simultaneously his mother, his own love, his own age, torn and thorny in a civilization with its discontents. Wilde foreshadows the broken selves of the post war period, but does not condescend to the view that wholeness is possible, or even better. According to McAfee, "the abject is what does not respect boundaries. It beseeches and pulverizes the subject" (McAfee 46). *Dorian Gray* presents the anatomy of man, pure and degraded, beautiful and ugly, good and evil. Despite Wilde's letters to the editors of certain magazines at the advent of his 'gross indecency' trials, and despite what Ackroyd and some other critics hold, he does not do this in a moralising tone. It is the greyness without boundaries that reigns, caught and constantly shifting between truth and beauty which Wilde subverts, making a monster out of the one who is most beautiful. Dorian is a sublime creature that burns with his beauty and hides all that is terrible. Thus Wilde does away with Platonic and Nietzschean binaries by engendering an Other who is an Apollo on the outside, a Dionysus at his "most terrible" inside.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

*Plus ça change, plus c'est la meme chose.*

Alphonse Karr

*Les Guepes*, 1849.

Some scholars have seen unchanging messages in the ancient stories of mankind. For them, archetypal stories reflect our primeval instincts, our fear of the monstrous Other and a moth-like attraction to death, the desire to replace our fathers or mothers, to fight demons inside and outside ourselves. Creation myths are a narration of sacred history whereby man desires to turn chaos (the abyss/unknown in Greek) into cosmos (order) according to Mircea Eliade. These myths exemplify how different cultures over different times ask similar questions and seek similar answers to the age-old questions of mankind (Leeming xx). For Eliade, myth expresses a continuity between structures of human existence and cosmic structures. Mythology keeps reappearing in different shapes and forms thus it is also a way of seeing the present in the light of the past, becoming a 'nominizing,' 'cosmizing' or ordering experience. Ian G. Barbour points out how myths can offer a vision into the basic structure of reality, while Durkeim states that myths can provide patterns for human action or they can promote the integration of society (Barbour 20-23). A student of mythology then starts picking recurring patterns out of the tapestry of works and worlds which use and reuse old stories such as the search for immortality or heroes fighting villains for maidens so as to draw parallels between the old and new, perhaps to interpret the inherent nature of Man, his dreams and fears. Through such

structuralist lenses the world with its amalgamation of history and story, reality and fiction, becomes meaningful. Such is the nature of mythography, a study that sees continuity between distant poles, drawing parallels between different cultures over different times. The habit of scanning the dreams and visions of different societies of the past or comparing and contrasting the ancients to our day is a challenging endeavour. The studies of Lord Raglan, Frazer or Campbell make the world a more “coherent” place; the recurring patterns tie cultures to one another, make sense out of chaos; see continuity over breaches of time and geography. But the time of macro visions appears to have passed, and in our day there is no place for such all-encompassing world pictures. Nevertheless, we still trace certain recurring myths, though with a focus on micro details.

This does not mean one cannot look into literature and draw new parallels. Having read the words of ancient poets and the works of mythographers, and having surveyed the mythologies of the Sumerians, Assyro-Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, certain myths of the Bible and European literature up to the twentieth century, I have found certain themes, certain recurring stories that resonate in four modern narratives, choosing to focus on change, an unchanging subject throughout the centuries. I have endeavoured to read some of these seemingly unrelated works of literature with the old mythologies in mind. The Earl of Rochester noted that “since ‘tis Nature’s law to change,/Constancy alone is strange” (Rochester 2). Titania’s speech on the seasons in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* points to a kind of change that sees hoary-headed frosts in the lap of a crimson rose, the movement of seasons, swift as life and death. But not all change is metamorphosis, and not all change is about the transformation of one bright green leaf into red, a beautiful maiden into a wrinkled hag. Thus my focus is on the kind

of metamorphosis which creates monstrous Others. According to some scholars, it is the Other that constitutes the self, while others simply note the interdependence between the two. This amorphousness and interchangeability works perfectly well when dealing with the subject of “the metamorphosed other,” for one is always open to the question as to who was the Other of the subjects in question.

Having picked works from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that mirrored certain problems of old and reflected certain problems of new, I read the old mythologies differently which brought me to Lord Raglan’s statement: “We say that coming events cast their shadows before them, but what we really mean is that later events cast their shadows back over earlier ones” (Raglan 3). Monsters are useful: they keep reappearing, the old casting their shadows over the new and the new echoing some of the feats of the old, because they reflect our fears. They become our scapegoats and the embodiment of sins *we* wished to have committed yet could not. Aristotle claimed that some of the most painful or horrific things in life “such as the forms of the lowest animals and of corpses” became enjoyable spectacles through the art of representation because we derived pleasure out of indirect confrontation. Fictional monsters steal our hearts because they “deliver ecstatic relief from terror” (Warner 6). Joyfully, we are scared, in the safety of film screens and racy page turners.

The Latin word for monster, *monstrum*, can be translated as an abnormality, something that has strayed away from the natural order. It also means a “divine omen, portent, sign” (Oxford Etymonline). It can be said that monsters serve to mirror society’s anxieties and as such, may be read as signs or projections. There are numerous monsters in mythology and literature who were transformed from a former state into their current

forms. This kind of metamorphosis brings into question not only *their* monstrosities, but those of the societies that created them. Thus the reciprocal relationship between ourselves and our monsters could be underlined in stories of otherizing metamorphosis. Therefore one can include in one's reading of cultures the monsters they engender.

The rivalry between fathers and sons is an archetypal story that not only bred many "others" but which also blurred the lines between heroes and monsters. Derrida began his *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* with the father and son model of Cicero, thus bringing forth the question whether one invents the child or whether the child invents himself: "Is it the specular invention of parental narcissism or is it as the other who, in speaking, in responding becomes the absolute invention, the irreducible transcendence of what is nearest, all the more heterogeneous and inventive in that it seems to respond to parental desire" (Derrida 4). This inventive aspect of the father-son relationship, coupled with the violence of early mythologies, is evident in *Frankenstein* where a father literally invents his son, only to try to destroy him. Here, the father transformed body parts of corpses into living matter and through metamorphosis created a monster, an Other in the eyes of the society which shut this machine-son out. Shelley seems to bring into question who actually was the monster or the monstrous; a father who abandoned his son the moment he gave him life, or a seemingly perfect family who beat this monster with clubs, appalled at his appearance, despite the fact that he had not harmed a soul and lavished kindness upon them. Thus, the Hegelian dictum as to the Other in relation to the self is illuminated. Here the monster is 'made,' mirroring the superficial biases of a scientific society, reflecting their own ugliness. The second metamorphosis in Shelley's novel, that of Dr. Frankenstein is psychological. I believe the changes that occur in the father and

son who turned into each other's demons here mirror the other father and son I worked on where only physical transformation occurred.

In this other father and son duo I focused on, the transformation was quite literal. Reading Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* with the issue of otherizing metamorphosis in mind, one finds many similarities between Frankenstein's monster and the monster into which Gregor metamorphoses. They were certainly both creatures of their own times, reflecting the anxieties of the day, but the familial relationship between the strong, overbearing father and the barely existent mother is the first parallel that stands out. Both monsters were ostracized by the family and society that brought them to life, both had a gentleness that victimized them. This brings to view questions as to the Other or the abject. Here were two anti-heroes from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries who shared common worlds, echoing the father-son wars of ancient mythologies.

In all four novels, the mothers are either dead or insignificant characters. I believe this serves to further abject these characters in that the abjection of the mother is not properly achieved, which, according to Kristeva constitutes the proper subject. The figure of the mother is presented as that which is longed for in *Frankenstein* and *Dorian Gray*; Gregor Samsa's mother is there but not there and Dracula emulates the mother figure by attempting to transform and to mother monsters. Thus, either as motherless monsters or mothering monsters, these four protagonists do not become autonomous since the mother figure seems to lurk in the background as a powerful absence. This, according to Kristeva, abjects the child since the mother is not separated as an object. In most of these works, the mother represents a distant sublime figure, but without abjecting her, that is to say, without severing her as an independent object, the male child himself becomes abject

(Powers of Horror 157). The mother needs to be otherized, the female dragon needs to be slain so that the male can love another woman, but this does not happen in any of these novels, further pointing to the abjectness of these protagonists. Frankenstein's monster wants a mate but is denied it lest he propagate monsters; thus, his mother/father becomes the sole object of desire; he has not been able to separate himself from Dr. Frankenstein. Gregor Samsa seems to project his longing for a strong feminine figure to the lady in furs but is denied sublimation, thus remaining abject. Dorian Gray's narcissism seems to stem from the fact that he has almost replaced his mother instead of "killing" her; thus he can love no one, and remains untouched even when his once object of infatuation takes her own life. Dracula on the other hand, when he personifies the she-dragon, the undying mother, personifies other things too. As such, he is the abject mother himself.

The slaying of monsters is a prominent recurring theme in mythology. Like the ancient warring duo of father and son, the subject of heroes and villains brought into question the nature of good and evil, along with many other dichotomies. Campbell pointed out that it was Zoroaster who broke the "dreamlike spell of this contemplative, metaphysically oriented tradition, where light and darkness alternated and danced together in a world-creating cosmic shadow play"<sup>100</sup> to create the world of binary oppositions, where light fought against dark, and where good was forever at war with evil (*The Historical Development of Mythology* 25). *Dracula* and *Dorian Gray* are excellent texts that repeat the dragon-slayer theme and turn it inside out. Such protean protagonists, in direct contrast with the virile fathers and sons of Shelley and Kafka, present a well-rounded reading of "others."

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<sup>100</sup> From Campbell's *The Masks of God*.

Bram Stoker makes countless references to Dracula embodying a force of “outside” evil that needed to be fought against with Christianity as weapon. Moreover, Dracula is not only the Other but a mother to the other Others of society, women. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Wilde brought to the forefront the question of the inside versus the outside, the skin/soul dichotomy probed by many a philosopher, and in doing so broadened the way to a discussion of otherizing metamorphosis. Like Dracula, Dorian Gray is arguably another kind of he/she-monster, a protean creature ambiguously sexed, an aesthete of the Belle Epoque who becomes his own Other in the closet of his old self. Like Dracula, the monster Dorian is eventually slain, but only after he has corrupted his society and piled a number of victims before the altar of himself. He is his own slayer. Wilde has put many doubles into his text, thus it should come as no surprise that Dorian is both the monster and the one who brings about the monster’s destruction. In the war between good and evil, Wilde sets before us a number of binary oppositions, only to make them murky, befitting a protagonist who is decidedly grey. Dorian’s story echoes ancient myths where protagonists who exhibited hubris against the gods met the punishment of metamorphosis into an Other. In addition, Wilde’s protagonist echoes the preoccupation of the times where aesthetics took the form of religion.

Dracula, the literal vampire, and Dorian, the metaphorical one are Others that remind one of primeval creatures of evil. Since vampires are some of our most ancient monsters, their modern incarnations seemed to shed light upon the old and new anxieties of the societies that engendered them. By looking at the Others of the past two hundred years we can see how they were modeled upon the “others” already existent in society;



the foreigner, the woman, the homosexual, the weakling. It is these Others that have perhaps always posed a Foucauldian threat.

Besides the correspondence between *Doctor Frankenstein/The Metamorphosis* and *Dracula/Picture of Dorian Gray*, there are a number of similarities between all four works that I will briefly mention. First of all, I find that it is significant that all of these texts' women are mostly absent, or present through their absence. Unlike the many Others of well known Gothic and vampire fictions, the women in the four works under discussion are treated like distant objects to fall in love with, puppets to be adored from a distance. In *Frankenstein* she is set in a silver cameo, the mother that all the protagonists yearned for in their respective ways. In the *Metamorphosis*, the mother was silenced, and the idealized 'woman in furs' is turned into a model of perfection never to be attained. In *Dorian Gray* she is another dead mother remembered for her beauty or a stage actress mimicking fictive heroines. Only in *Dracula*, where certain women are empowered by the monster, do they become subjects, and not pictures or idealized women set upon a pedestal. Women such as Lucy are modeled upon the witches of late sixteenth century demonology, which in turn was highly influenced by the Ovidian Medea, that is to say, women who are powerful and not necessarily motherly. Thus, when they are lent power, they become the metamorphosed Other, a threat to be removed from society. The old myth of women as the embodiments of the devil or Eves seduced by devils/dragons, is once again repeated here. In doing so, they are at once otherized and set apart from the remote embodiments of perfection we have seen in the aforementioned works.

As monsters, some of the protagonists of these novels defy the currents of their respective societies. Both *Dracula* and *Dorian Gray* personify the "other Victorians" as

Steven Marcus points out (Foucault 293). The brothel and the mental hospital are places of tolerance to exercise free sex according to Foucault, and it is coincidentally London's mental hospital that is the home of Dracula's acolyte and devotee Renfield, while London's brothels and opium dens are the places which Dorian frequents. As aristocratic adversaries of the established Victorian bourgeois order, both Dracula and Dorian pose a threat to society. They are not a part of the rigorous system which represses sexuality so as to obtain maximum gain from its labor force. They do not reproduce (unless it is to make others like themselves as in Dracula's case), thus these vampires, hedonists and decadents stand in direct contrast to the repressive Victorian society that preaches staunch religious rules and strict adherence to family values. If Dracula and Dorian represent the defiers of the Victorian order, Frankenstein's monster and Gregor are two protagonists who symbolize the repressed ones of that system. As opposed to the physically titillating and "present" Dracula and Dorian, they are shunned and castigated for the physical repulsion they evoke. In their case, society shuts them out so completely that they both become invisible. Sexually, they can only sublimate by yearning for women in photographs. It is their close-minded societies which seems to create, then destroy them, turning them into the monsters that they are. Monsters are born and bred to become scapegoats, indulging in the sex and violence their societies intrinsically desire but cannot have. Jung had identified a reptilian nature in archaic men which is embedded deeply within us and in the *Origins of the Sexual Impulse* Colin Wilson argues that it is difficult to declare à la Tolstoy what constitutes the "normal" when there is so much desired violence in even those seemingly good and normal (Jung *Modern Man* 144, Wilson 19, 80). It can be said that all the monsters except Gregor have become monstrous Others in

that they can exercise differing forms of archaic violence so shunned and oftentimes envied by society.

There are other parallels between the *dramatis personae* of these four works. With respect to the geography or location choices, it is striking that both Dracula and Frankenstein's monster choose steep, distant heights as their abodes. As for Dorian Gray and Gregor Samsa, they have closeted themselves into their own selves and rooms. The former, in the attic that was his former room as a child and the latter as a vermin in a room of his family's house. Could Dracula's castle and the hinterland abode of Frankenstein's monster (and perhaps the upstairs hidden room of Dorian) represent their respective hells? Eliade's had posited that "the transcendental category of height, of the superterrestrial...reveals transcendence, force, eternity. It *exists absolutely* because it is *high, infinite, eternal, powerful*" (Eliade *The Sacred* 119). The *Iliad's* Hades is a cavern and abyss, an "essence of cold, darkness, and stagnant air" (Bodkin 101). Tartarus in the Greek tradition is a ghostly, cold place. The heights in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* are reminiscent of the cavernous hells of old, including Dante's and Milton's hells. It is true that works of Gothic literature oftentimes depict mountainous terrains, so both may be following a certain legacy in their choice of landscape. These are Gothic landscapes of the terrible sublime: "sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul, and allowed it to soar from the obscure world to light and joy" (Shelley 125). But I also believe that the heights they have chosen as their abodes are symbolic of their own hells. They are creatures who are outsiders and "others," so it is befitting that their homes are distant, difficult terrains beyond the reach of ordinary humans as is Hades in mythology. As for Dorian and

Gregor Samsa, I believe their “closets” represent the opposite of these heights. They too are in their respective hells.

These landscapes bring to mind another mythological archetype which recounts the story of descent to the underworld. In some myths, the hero descends to hell to gain wisdom or to learn a secret. The symbolic descent has been interpreted as a representation of reaching the beyond in the bowels of Mother Earth or the gigantic monster in earlier mythologies (Eliade *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* 64). In the case of the novels I have analyzed, I believe that Harker’s entry into Dracula’s castle and his introduction to the dark world of Dracula’s she-monsters is a kind of descent story. Likewise, Dorian’s descent into the low world of opium dens, representative of the “other” London, shows to the reader his “other” face. It is here we discover his demonic, unchanging side from the eyes of a society that has witnessed how he ruins people yet remains outwardly angelic. The final chase between father and son in *Frankenstein* draw us into a kind of dismal wintry world akin to the frozen hells of Dante and Milton. Gregor Samsa’s metamorphosis turns his room into a place of refuse, where all the unused furniture is stocked and all the unwanted, putrid food is thrown into. His transformation creates a new space for him, his former self decaying amidst all that is putrid and discarded.

It can be said that in their choice of “lost” or “absent” figures and such distant wintry landscapes, these novels are representative of Gothic fiction’s partialness for a subliminal longing for that which is past and beyond grasp. “The Gothic’s fictive excess, therefore, is sublime because, even like Longinus’s “loftiness” or John Dennis’s “enthusiasm,” it represents that which is by nature beyond representation. ..the “dead”

mother in Radcliffe's narratives, Victor's missed "mummy" in *Frankenstein*, the aristocracy in *Dracula*, youth in *Dorian Gray*, vaguely medieval settings in early Gothic narratives, and Catholic superstition in many more Gothic tales all testify to the Gothic sublime's drive to return to an earlier state of things. The Gothic has always used alien figures that are obscure yet somehow intimate in order to produce its sublime effects" (Cameron 12). The yearning to return to old days also plagues the metamorphosed Gregor Samsa. All these works evoke the sublime in the Burkian sense of the word since all the metamorphosed protagonists arouse an ancient awe and terror, similar to our monsters of old. Burke locates the sublime purely in terms of fear and death, a power that threatens the subject's self-preservation (Milbank 236). As sublimations of the repressed and repressing, *Dorian Gray* and *Dracula* are agents of Burke's subliminal terror, hunters who use their beauty and power to tantalize and hypnotize with their terrible attraction. Both these monsters point to the double etymology behind the word "monstrare" which means to "show" and to "warn" for, like the terrifying gods of old. They simultaneously dominate the sphere of the eye and serve as a warning. Unlike the beautiful which simply delights but does not overpower, their subliminal power is Burkean in that they threaten and frighten (Gonzalez 236). "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* demonstrates how the sublime follows either the ardor of intellectual breakthrough or the horrific consequences of radical change" (Easterbrook 761). Gregor Samsa brings about terror when he ventures into the living quarters of his parents and tenants. Samsa demonstrates the difference between the classical understanding of sublime, which is almost synonymous with beauty, and Radcliffe's and Burke's terrible sublime which he evokes. Transported by the beauty of his sister's violin music, he has a moment of sublimity which transports him to

a kind of euphoric transcendence. Yet, the moment he is seen, he arouses a Burkean terror in the denizens of the house.

Jung and Eliade were fascinated by the archetype of beings bodily incorporated into the monster and they cited the story of Jonah where the whale's belly represents hell, as the prototype of the Biblical Leviathan, among other myths that repeated this story. Each story I have worked on metaphorically involves the concept of being engulfed by a monster. Dracula, as a force of nature such as fog, is represented as a chthonian power that swallows the blood or essence of others, and in doing so transforms them. Scholars such as Sir Edward Burnett Tylor have made a list of engulfing monsters, and in most cases, these myths narrate the war between day and night, as is the case in *Dracula* (Tylor 337). I believe Dorian Gray 'engulfs' in his own way. His beauty that is his mask is such an irresistible force that people are taken (in) and victimized by him. The lair where he entertains his prey is surrounded with beautiful things, the richest fabrics, the costliest objects- it is here that Basil is slaughtered, it is here the Lord Henry is fooled by the artifacts that reflect the taste and beauty of that face. I claim that Dorian engulfs his world with his own beauty as well as its extensions in the form of art objects. Conversely, the other two protagonists are creatures who are engulfed by the monstrous world that names them monsters. The patriarchal machinery surrounding Gregor Samsa, made manifest in the personification of the father and surrogate father-figures, surround and suffocate him until he finds himself metamorphosed into a monstrous vermin. Likewise, it is an unfriendly, belligerent, hurtful world that unanimously turns Frankenstein's creation into a monster.

Blindness is an important theme in all these works. The masters of old had insinuated that it was blindness that brought about tragedy, thus we saw how Creon's misunderstanding of his son Haemon in *Antigone*, Ajax's rage or Oedipus's spiritual and literal blindness brought about their respective tragedies. In both *Frankenstein* and *Metamorphosis*, the father figures are blind to their sons. The abandonment of his son by Doctor Frankenstein, and Gregor Samsa's father's utter lack of sympathy for his son's metamorphosis mirror the blind ancients whose lives fell apart because they turned a blind eye when it came time to take action. I believe the *hamartia* of Doctor Frankenstein and Gregor's father is Aristotelian in that it does not refer to a tragic flaw but to the failure of judgement to recognize a child, parent or sibling. In a different vein, the atrocities committed by Dorian Gray are received with a different kind of myopia. Blinded by his beauty, society will not accept that he can do anything heinous. Even when he pleads guilty, his society refuses to take his word. It can be argued that even Dracula is subject to his new world's blindness: from the very beginning, he is dismissed as a foreign body, a monster threatening the social order. As such, he is not allowed to enter and assimilate. He will always remain a monster because of his difference. Had these fathers and Victorians been more attentive and open, perhaps these protagonists would not have been turned into monsters. Thus, it can be said that the common theme of blindness runs through all these stories about the Others.

In all these works, metamorphosis Otherizes the protagonists into the monsters and villains that they are. Transformation is oftentimes interlinked with the process of otherization. Massey has pointed out how that metamorphosis is "typically violent and flies in the face of reason. It does not lend itself to assimilation into pleasurable or consoling

schemes...it has something typically ugly, monstrous, unabsorbable about it (I. Massey 17). Thus, we see how a Doctor Frankenstein's monster of his own making metamorphoses into a murderous, vengeful creature as society shuts him out. We see Gregor Samsa who wakes up as a vermin, mirroring the monstrosity of the patriarchal and modernist system. Dorian Gray transforms into a truly heedless and hideous monster once he gets acquainted with the metamorphosing picture of his soul. And Dracula uses metamorphosis to break and evade boundaries, converting others into vampiric Others. In all these stories, metamorphosis is violent and brings about violence. Both metamorphosis and the metamorphosed monster are dangerous because they threaten to smash the distinction as Cohen has pointed out in his thesis on the monster. "Because of its ontological liminality, the monster notoriously appears at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes" (Cohen 7). And as such, these metamorphosed Others rebuke boundary and enclosure, thereby becoming embodiments of Derrida's *ce dangereux supplement*.

It is claimed that "poetry can only be made out of other poems; novels out of other novels" (Frye *Anatomy of Criticism* 97). One cannot help but hear the echoes of earlier myths in modern fictions, refashioned but recognizable. When Eliade asks whatever became of myths in the modern age, he need only observe the present-day Christian church to see how old tales of metamorphosis have been translated or simply read as fiction. He after all reads Marxism as an enriched form of Judaeo-Christian mythology (Eliade *Myths, Dreams & Mysteries* 25).

Barthes believed that everything can be a myth and can be turned into a myth since it is the basic characteristic of myth to "transform a meaning into form. In other



words, myth is always a language-robbery” (*Mythologies* 131). There are certain stories that have been repeated over and over again in seemingly unrelated cultures across the globe, stories that have inspired structuralists to conclude that they point to some kind of universal subconscious, some ingrained human instinct that surfaces and resurfaces over vast terrains and oceans of time. But there are also stories that borrow from old and make new: new mythologies are born from the remains of the old.

We have seen how certain stories used and reused throughout the centuries, and how certain archetypal themes resurface in new works. The old myths that resonate in their new forms are both part of the archetype and go beyond it. They are new, and as such, are open space for further metamorphosis in new works and worlds that will be built upon them. As such, we will encounter their Others in new garbs and times, we will witness clashes featuring new fathers and sons, and each time, like Orpheus, they will be themselves and also not, transformed and transforming.

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