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Article

Gender, Genre and *Dracula*: Joan Copjec and "Vampire Fiction"

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Abstract: This article critiques a certain psychoanalytic approach both to the genre of "Vampire Fiction" and the "anxiety" it induces. Joan Copjec's claim is that these are founded on "nothing", genre and affect being defined by the "overwhelming presence of the real", for which all "interpretation [. . .] is superfluous and inappropriate." It follows that Copjec does not understand the encounter with "the real" staged within *Dracula* through the words on the page, genre and affect being located instead of either within the bare bones of the textual structure or in an unreadable "aura" surrounding the text. This article counters this understanding through a focus on precise textual formulations within *Dracula*. It begins by reading in detail linguistic constructions of gendered identities, and the identity "child"; moves to question Copjec's wider claim that genre transcends textual considerations; and closes with a comparative analysis of *Dracula* and Rousseau's *Émile*, a text that Copjec takes to be its "precise equivalent", but not because of language. What is finally at stake in this article is whether a detailed engagement with language can be jettisoned when considering constructions of genre and gender. It argues that reintroducing textuality problematises Copjec's arguments, and the empty identities upon which they are founded.

Keywords: *Dracula*; vampires; gender; children; "child-brain"; Rousseau; Joan Copjec; "extimate object"

1. Introduction

Perhaps the most celebrated recent intervention into the field of history, gender, and the Gothic is Joan Copjec's *Read My Desire* (2015), especially the chapter "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety". Copjec writes this work within a Lacanian tradition enacted by, amongst others, Frederic Jameson (Jameson 1977), Miran Bozovic (Bozovic 2000), and, most famously, Slavoj Žižek (Žižek 1997). Her aim, shared by these theorists, is to question prevailing historicist and deconstructive approaches to literature.[1] More often seen as antagonistic, these movements are, within Copjec's analysis, too content to analyse structures of deferral without acknowledging the limit these require—a limit, that, as we shall see, turns on what is understood to be the ironically necessary and subversive power of "nothing". In her reading, whilst deconstruction follows the "free play" of the signifier, and historicism responds to whatever text it meets with reference to a further text, neither can address the cut-off point or constitutive gap necessary to such movement. Thus, for example:

> Lacan argues [. . .] that beyond the signifying network, beyond the visual field, there is, in fact, nothing at all [. . .] Yet the fact that representation seems to hide, to put an arbored

[1] These authors all appear in Žižek's edited collection *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (Žižek 2006), a text that can be read as a unified statement from a group otherwise resistant to being understood as a movement. The work of these authors is also, however, regularly discussed in *The International Journal of Žižek Studies*. See Flisfeder (2019) for a recent discussion. For a recent reaffirmation of Copjec's position, see Copjec (2016).

> screen of signifiers in front of something hidden beneath, is not treated by Lacan as simple error that the subject can undo; nor is the deceptiveness of language something that undoes the subject, deconstructs the subject by menacing its boundaries. Rather, language's opacity is taken as the very cause of the subject's being, that is, its desire, or want-to-be. The fact that it is materially impossible to say the whole truth–that truth always backs away from language, that words always fall short of their goal–founds the subject. (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 35)

The nothing that interests Copjec, then, is one that is required by, yet falls beyond, textuality, meaning, and identity. In the chapter of *Read My Desire* that concerns us here, this nothing is taken to be the source of the "anxiety" that is understood to attend a seemingly diverse range of texts. In what follows, I will address two of the genres that are understood to have such "anxiety" as their "essential feature": "vampire fiction", and the literature of eighteenth century breast-feeding advocacy (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 118). My aim is to question Copjec's account of the constitutive nothing of genre, and the account also of gender to which it is bound, through returning to an analysis the textuality that "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety" can be read to repress.

2. "Encounter"

Let us begin with "vampire fiction". Copjec's claim is that the celebrated problematics of identity associated with vampires are not to be understood, for example, by reading through gender as a discursive and historical construction. The argument instead is that we should "confront" what such criticism apparently misses, the "overwhelming presence of the real" for which all "interpretation [. . .] is superfluous and inappropriate" (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 126). As Copjec states:

> If vampirism makes our hearts pound [. . .] this is not because it puts us in contact with objects and persons—others—who affect us, but because it confronts us with an absence of absence—an Other—who threatens to asphyxiate us. (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 128)

It follows that the existing criticism generally fails in not paying due attention to the anxiety the vampire produces: that "the encounter with the vampire is always anxiety-ridden would seem to be undebatable" (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 127). I would suggest that this formulation *is* open to debate, as it introduces a number of problems, not least that of establishing what is to count as an "encounter" within "vampire fiction, in all its gothic forms" (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 118). Who, for example, is understood to experience such an "encounter"? To answer such a question requires an engagement with the language of these fictions, one largely resisted within Copjec's work.[2] My interest, then, is in building on Ken Gelder's observation that "Copjec in fact barely mentions vampire fiction in the course of her argument: it is there as a kind of ideal, an imaginary text" (Gelder 1994, p. 48).

There are challenges in Copjec's understanding, even if we were to assume that the encounter is that experienced by a discrete character in a given text. Here we might turn to *Dracula*, the only work of vampire fiction referenced in "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety", and one of the most celebrated vampire encounters. *Dracula* has saved one of the text's narrators, Jonathan Harker, from the murderous attention of the "young women" in the vampire"s castle:

> "Are we to have nothing to-night?" said one of them [the women], with a low laugh, as she pointed to the bag which he had thrown upon the floor, and which moved as though there were some living thing within it. For answer he nodded his head. One of the women jumped forward and opened it. If my ears did not deceive me there was a gasp and a low wail, as of a half-smothered child. The women closed round, whilst I was aghast with horror; but as I looked they disappeared, and with them the dreadful bag. (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 47)

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[2] A resistance that, I would argue, can be read in Copjec's wider project. See, for example, Copjec (2002). To work through this project in detail is beyond the scope of this present article, however.

The "encounter" is limited to Harker. The narration he offers is retrospective, and within it there can be no seeing inside the bag, and hearing comes only with the possibility of error. Harker claims to have seen and to have heard, yet what he witnessed was not a living child, only something comparable to one. If pity, horror, or, indeed, anxiety, are to be read here, they are dependent on the narrator's lack of knowledge of what it is "the women closed round". What is in the bag is not a child, at this point in the narration, because it is unreachable, invisible, other than itself. It follows that if anxiety attends the encounter, it is constituted through narrational point-of-view, and that whatever is in the bag does not, therefore, encounter the vampires, and does not suffer anxiety.

3. "It Is Not the Child Who Is the Vampire . . . "

To further work through how the notion of "encounter" might be challenged by a detailed reading of text, and how this reading in turn might impact on discourses of gender and history, I will address the figure of the child. As suggested already, Copjec does not notice the child within her analysis of the vampiric encounter, yet childhood is important to the understanding of *Dracula* forwarded in "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety". Indeed, in what follows I argue that central debates within the critical response to *Dracula* can be read to turn on constructions of childhood. It is my contention that the structures of deferral and iteration that result in disagreements between Copjec and wider critical responses to Stoker's novel can be productively addressed through tracing the work's contradictory conceptions of childhood. If *Dracula* is taken to turn on notions of doubling and displacement, then it seems to me that, for example, a reading of the enigma of *Dracula*'s repetitious "child-brain" has the potential to impact upon existing understandings of the very structure of the novel.

I will begin by turning to Copjec's claim that "all the narratives and iconography of vampirism" make "clear, it is not the child who is the vampire". For Copjec, the image of the child at the mother's breast is understood not to elicit the anxiety that defines the genre of vampire fiction. (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 128) Instead:

> It is only at the point where the fantasy enabling this relation to the partial object no longer holds that the anxiety-ridden phenomenon of vampirism takes over, signalling, then, the drying up of the breast as object-cause of desire, the disappearance of the fantasy support 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 [1993] 2015, p. 128)

Because "[t]he breast [. . .] is an object, an appendage of the body, from which we separate ourselves in order to constitute ourselves as subjects", such a constitution "can only be accomplished through the inclusion within ourselves of this negation of what we are not" (Copjec [1993] 2015, pp. 128–29). In other words, for Copjec, "Freudian objects" such as the breast are "not only rejected from but also internal to the subject [. . .] they are extimate, which means they are in us as that which is not in us" (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 129). For most of the time, the extimate object "appears as a lost part of ourselves", but there are occasions when we get too close, and this results in anxiety, a "special feeling of uncanniness". When "our distance from it is reduced" in this way, the extimate object:

> no longer appears as a partial object, but–on the contrary–as a complete body, an almost exact double of our own, except for the fact that this double is endowed with the object that we sacrificed in order to become a subject. This would mean that the vampire is not only a creature that menaces the breast as object-cause of desire, but that it is also a double of the victim, whose distorted bodily form indicates its possession of a certain excess object: the breast once again, but this time as source of jouissance. The most vivid confirmation of this thesis concerning the double is given [. . .] in that horrifyingly obscene moment when we are startled to witness Mina Harker drinking from the breast of *Dracula*. Desire, society itself, is endangered by Mina's intimacy with this extimate object. (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 129)

According to this argument, *Dracula* is a threat to the breast and the breast itself, and intimacy with this double figure is threatening to the social organisation. This is the danger of an "overproximity"

to what, after Jacques Lacan, Copjec names the "unique" object *a*, the lack of lack that has neither "essence nor a signification", so "inalienable that like *Dracula* and all other vampires of Gothic and Romantic fiction it cannot even cast a shadow" (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 119)[3].

If we turn to the passage in *Dracula* that Copjec references, it could be argued that further compressions and doublings can be read: "The attitude of the two [*Dracula* and Mina] had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink." (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 300) To introduce the text neglected by Copjec's analysis thus problematises her claim that the child is not the vampire. *Dracula* is not passive in the scene, but rather forceful, and this in a way that resembles a child. As was also the case in the quotation discussed above concerning the women in the castle, the child is introduced through comparison, but here as the aggressor, not the victim. If one threat I read in this formulation is that of a child implicated in the scene of anxiety-inducing feeding, another is simply that of the substitutive economy of the symbolic making a disruptive return to the seemingly singular experience of the real. In being the breast and the threat to this, *Dracula* resembles a child. To encounter *Dracula* requires a third: the vampire is registered in terms of his being like another. But even this is not quite the case, as it is the "attitude of the two", *Dracula* and Mina, that resembles child and kitten. *Dracula*, the "inalienable object", cannot be taken on his own.

There is a further excess to be returned to Copjec's account of "that horrifying moment" that "we are startled to witness", as in *Dracula*, this event is narrated neither by "us", nor the two parties directly involved. It follows that the problematics of identity are not limited to Copjec's reading the "inalienable" as a multiple identity, nor even to the sense in which Mina and *Dracula* need to be taken together as differently gendered subjects if they are to resemble the ungendered kitten and child. Indeed, the failure to account for the specifics of narrational framing that I take here to be exemplified in the disappearance of Dr Seward's narration is a persistent difficulty with Copjec's analogical approach to *Dracula*. On the one hand, "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety" offers an account of the Lacanian formation of the subject, one that is concerned with how, for example, the "object *a* appears as a lost part of ourselves". A link is then made between "our" recognition of this "extimate object", and Mina's relationship with *Dracula*: the one instances the other. The difficulty is Mina's feeding is not this kind of narrative of collective recognition, but rather Dr Seward's view of an intimate encounter between others. Copjec"s account represses this difference, and thus produces a compromised "equivalence". In short, Copjec's equivalence can neither engage the gendered shifts and externally constituted identities to be read through the figure of the child, nor the narrated frame of the text.[4]

It is necessary to range a little more widely over Stoker's text if we are to gain a clearer understanding of the challenge the child offers to notions of stable, consistent, and gendered identity. Take, for example, Van Helsing's reference to Mina as "my child". As such, she is understood to be what she opposes within Dr Seward's account of *Dracula*'s attack upon her. Children, moreover, in the "bloofer lady" journalistic sequence, are figured in terms of performance through an ability to be what they are not that rivals that of Ellen Terry.[5] It follows that, in being like the child, *Dracula* and the contents of the "dreadful bag" pertain to a quality of childhood in a more radical sense: childhood is defined, in part, by a performative otherness. A further turn of the screw: *Dracula* resembles the child against the animal when Mina drinks his blood, but he has the ability to appear in the form of an animal in a way that is not simply resemblance, whilst the animals he commands are, of course, the

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[3] Already a difficulty can be read in Copjec's take on the inalienable. The breast enjoys this condition despite being "like" *Dracula*.

[4] "Equivalence" is a term Žižekian influenced critics engage, especially as it relates to the work of Ernesto Laclau. "Equivalence" for Copjec is, as I read it, a "positive" term, however, one with discrete features that are "essential". For more on the frame necessary to any discussion of genre, see, of course, Derrida (1980).

[5] See especially White (2012).

music-making "children of the night" (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 25). Lastly, at least within this admittedly cursory reading, *Dracula* is understood by Van Helsing to have a "child-brain", this because his brain does not develop, fated as it is to do the same thing over and over again. In Van Helsing's formulation, the child can be read as an adjectival modifier to the brain or the owner of it, but in either case the brain has a strange independence: it is not that *Dracula* is a child, at this stage, only that he has a "child-brain". Crucially, I read this organ to be as much a "partial object" as anything else in Copjec's account. As such, the logic of the "extimate" returns to *Dracula* himself, problematising what I take to be the claim that he is necessarily "without feature" and fundamentally "inalienable": the relationship between Mina and *Dracula* finds repetition in that between *Dracula* and his brain.

The difficulty for Copjec in the reading of the child offered above is, I would suggest, not with the general impossibility of a given identity. As I have argued, "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety" is committed to drawing out the uncanny presence of the other in the self and the self in the other. My issue with this account is its claim that the image of the child at the mother's breast is necessarily free from anxiety. For this to be the case, the comforting child must be protected from the uncanny textual effects introduced within *Dracula*. Copjec's method, I would suggest, rests on the notion of a "point" of anxiety, at which the symbolic is both defied and necessitated (Copjec [1993] 2015, pp. 22, 34). In such an understanding, that I take to be committed to a discrete set of impossible divisions introduced through the limit of the inexpressible real, what is bypassed is ironically the *différance* required for the dimension of difference. In my reading, neither vampire nor child are encountered as a fixed point, but are constituted instead by an elsewhere that can never wholly be recovered, returned, and encountered as is. The child at the breast is always already haunted by its already haunted others, and it is this textuality that is necessarily repressed in Copjec's reading.

4. "*Dracula* alone Reproduces His Form . . . "

At this stage I would like to expand on the implications of this haunting effect for gendered constructions. As read above, in so far as the child has a skill of duplicity that "rivals Ellen Terry" it can be read in terms of the female. The connection between women and children is also made in what I take to be opposing terms, as Jonathan describes Mina as sleeping "calmly and sweetly like a little child" (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 346), and Mina herself understands children in terms of "unconscious simplicity" (Stoker [1897] 2003, pp. 235, 346). Mina is also understood to be other than the child, however, at least in so far as Van Helsing contrasts her "man's brain" to the "child-brain" of *Dracula* (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 250). In this, a connection can be read between Mina and *Dracula*, as in different ways both are divided in terms of gender through their brains. *Dracula* is a "he" for Van Helsing, but his brain is not so gendered. It is like that of the "criminal" or "little animal", reproducing itself over and over again, and notions of male or female seemingly have no place within the category (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 56).

This lack of gendered determination does not necessarily foreclose questions of gender. Here I am thinking especially of Jack Halberstam's claim "that male but not female vampires reproduce; Lucy and the three female vampires in Transylvania feed from children but do not create vampire children. *Dracula* alone reproduces his form" (Halberstam 1993, p. 345). If vampiric reproduction of form is male, then the child-brain, in its singularity and iteration, could be marked by gender. Such an analysis is not without its problems. Are we to assume that the reproduction of "form" in question is exemplified by Lucy's transformation, or that of the women in the castle? If so, gender is not essential to the "form" that is reproduced: if vampire Lucy is a reproduction of *Dracula*'s "form", then the opposition between the two is undone. Equally, however, we could read gender persisting across form, with the form of the vampires in the castle being fundamentally "his". For Van Helsing, "he [Dracula] can [. . .] appear [. . .] in any of the forms that are to him" (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 252). It follows that, in this understanding, form is an appearance only, and it is a gendered "he" who appears.

I am reading, in Halberstam's quotation, an antagonistic iteration of gender and form, one that both collapses differences in gender and secures its asymmetry. Here we might turn to Harker's

claim that the women in the castle are not women, but "devils of the Pit" (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 61). Any notion that this confirms vampirism to be ungendered only goes so far, as *Dracula* is not himself constructed as a negative identity: only three of the vampires in the castle are definitively not women. Contrast this construction also with Harker's subsequent understanding of *Dracula* and the women as "the devil and his children" (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 61). As the children are "his", gender defines the opposition, even though "children" resists the notion of a womanly identity that troubles Harker. As we have read, however, it is not that the child simply escapes gender, it being, for example, female in its unconsciousness, and its peformativity; comparable to *Dracula* in its violence to female and animal others; opposed to gender, in its difference from the "man's brain".

5. Equivalence: " . . . Anxiety, Hesitations, Postponements . . . "

Such shifts in gendered identity fall outside the scope of Copjec's account and thus also from an account of what defines the genre "vampire fiction". For Copjec, the defining feature of such fiction is established in only two ways: it is *internal to* vampire fiction as a structure of repetition that registers the real; it is *external to* vampire fiction as an "aura of anxiety" that surrounds, or is simply other to, the form. This is an aura in which the real may be encountered. Let us briefly think about the first of these formulas, before proceeding to read the second in more detail. Repetition is key to the reading of "vampire fiction" in "Vampires, Breast-Feeding and Anxiety", as it is taken to be necessary to the production of "anxiety", this because the "real"—the fundamental aspect of the fiction—is registered through repetition:

> The real that is to be negated cannot be represented by a signifier, since the real is, by definition, that which has no adequate signifier. How, then, can this negation take place within the symbolic as the requirement demands? The answer is, through repetition, through the signifier's repeated attempt–and failure–to designate itself. The signifier's difference from itself, its radical inability to signify itself, causes it to turn in circles around the real that is lacking in it. (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 121)

The force of this argument is that the real—that which Copjec thinks is missing from dominant accounts of *Dracula*—is both what is radically other than the text, and what is registered within certain textual structures: "the anxiety, hesitations, postponements, digressions that characterise vampire fiction" (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 132).

One difficulty I read here is that identities such as the vampire, that are seemingly inalienable, are caught up in a deferral that takes in others—such as the woman and the child—and this in a way that does not keep such identities within the category of trope or unit, but produces it also as a figure *of* repetition and deferral. Here I am thinking especially of Richard Ready's contention that *Dracula*'s "child-brain" lends its structure to the novel as a whole. For Ready, *Dracula* is built upon a "continually receding climax [. . .] The book engorges suspension for its own sake, or for the sake of having not much else to offer except more suspension", while the heroic narrators of the novel evidence an "inability to write, say or read meaning in the child-brain absurdity of their situation. In this narrative world, the uncanny dwindles into an evacuation of adult meaning through inanition of worthwhile narrative material" (Ready 2010, p. 279). In such an understanding, the novel is a response to deprivation, a repetitious, delaying narrative, and one that fits perfectly into Peter Brooks' evocation of Freud's "master plot": the iterated, "arabesque" narrative of *Dracula* ensures we do not find ourselves too quickly at the point of its termination, yet this putting off of narrative death necessitates the meaningless repetitions that constitute "the death-drive" (Ready 2010, p. 280). It follows that, in this reading of the "child-brain", the child is constituted as repetition and sublimation as much as through these structures. Indeed, for Ready, "[t]he novel strays, like the Hampstead children drawn to the Un-dead Lucy" (Ready 2010, p. 281). As Copjec avoids the precise terms of the text, there can be no reading of the extent to which a given identity—"the child", for example—is caught up in what "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety" must understand to be an enabling,

if deathly and meaningless, structure. Again, it is not only that, for example, the child repeats its adult or gendered other, but that it repeats the very structure of repetition itself. For this reason, repetition, "postponement", and the like, cannot keep to their pure position as "death-drive", as, vertiginously, the postponement is itself postponed in so far as it is never simply itself, but a repetition of a child that is also constructed as other to itself. The death drive is not the pure repetition beneath or beyond the child but the beyond that returns through reading, through the precise, deferrals of "the child" in *Dracula*. For Copjec, one should not dwell too much on the specificity of text, as this is a distraction from the "limit". My contention, counter to this, is that to return to the text is to read how the limit of the symbolic is caught up in the very repetitions and deferrals it evades, and not only in the acceptable sense of a confluence between real and repetition.[6]

6. Equivalence: " . . . The Most Essential Aspect . . . "

To introduce Copjec's second notion of "equivalence" in genre fiction, it is necessary to work back to the introduction to "Vampires, Breast-Feeding, and Anxiety", especially as the connections between the genres in question might seem tenuous at best. Copjec begins her discussion with quotations from Jean Jacques Rousseau and Mary Wollstonecraft that, it is argued, "stand as indications of a phenomenon that was widespread in the eighteenth century, an insignia, we might even say, of Enlightenment thought: the advocacy of breast feeding" (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 117).[7] It is further claimed that the "most essential aspect" of such advocacy is not to be found in the "external causes or the meaning of the phenomenon" but "the aura of anxiety that surrounds it" (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 118). The tenuous nature of the connection between genres is explicable, then, in so far as the anxiety understood as the common factor between them is located on the outside of the texts. Ironically, as I read it, Copjec's move away from "external causes" thus results in the "essential" being located on the outside of the phenomenon. Thus, despite anxiety initially being understood as an individual encounter with the real, its signification and application extends beyond this: it is not only, as Copjec claims, that "nothing precedes" whatever anxiety one might experience, that "its cause cannot be determined", but that the encounter with the discourse of the anxiety of another is also lacking in this way (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 118). In this quotation from Copjec I locate a narrational problem that is something of the reverse of that discussed in my analysis of Copjec's account of the "young women" sequence above: instead of a reading that ignores a wider narration and understands only the experience of an individual character, here, we have a privileging of a wider knowledge that forgets its own declared commitment to the individual subject.

I understand the disinclination to read the precise terms of the text problematic here because, when engaged in detail, this "breast-feeding discourse" can be understood to engage the very questions of origins that Copjec's approach claims to circumvent in her account of anxiety. Here is the quotation from Allan Bloom's translation of *Émile* with which "Vampires, Breast-Feeding and Anxiety" begins:

> Do you wish to bring everyone back to his first duties? Begin with mothers. You will be surprised by the changes you will produce. Everything follows successively from the first depravity [mothers who despise their first duty and no longer feed their children]. The whole moral order degenerates . . . . But let mothers deign to nurse their children, morals will reform themselves, nature's sentiments will be awakened in every heart, the state will be repeopled. This first point, this point alone, will bring everything back together. (Rousseau [1762] 1979 quoted in Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 117)

For Rousseau, "you" are to begin with mothers, but in one sense that is not where you begin. There is a "wish", or rather, there is an unanswered question concerning a wish "to bring everyone

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[6] For a further, rare (and for me highly influential) critique of gender and structure in Copjec's *Read my Desire*, see Ziarek (1997).
[7] For an alternative account of breat-feeding and *Dracula*, see Law (2010).

back to his first duties". The wish—not necessarily wished—requires everyone now to be in a position from which they can be brought back. Being brought back in this way means that the first duty is not dependent on origins: despite everyone having strayed from "his" first duties, these remain first duties even on return. This is not to say that return simply secures the origin. Although the return comes from a place of deviation, the narrational claim is that "everything follows successively from the first depravity": you return to the first duty, and begin with mothers, in depravity's wake. Although the return to an origin necessitates the repetition of the latter term, this is not an unproblematic process of confirmation. How, after all, is it possible to return to the beginning?

This challenge to narratives of origin can be read to be repeated in claims concerning the purity of nature, and the counter-intuitive sense in which this is served by iteration and intervention. Here I am thinking of the permissive demand to "let mothers nurse their children" as much as the process of waking a sleeping "sentiment [. . .]". I understand here that the naturalness of mothers must be allowed, and in this I read a repetition of the narrative of return as worked through above: even if what is allowed is the absolute purity of natural expression, it is now guaranteed as such through a compromising frame. To let mothers act in a certain way is to "begin with mothers", yet this, ironically, requires an authority already in place: it is "you" who will "begin with mothers", if that is your wish. Carry on with this action, however, and you will be surprised, in a way that the narration will not be, at the results of a wish that the narration is uncertain has occurred. Begin with mothers, to be sure, but you have not yet so begun. Although neither your actions, nor your reactions to these, have yet occurred, they are already mapped out.

If mothers are only uncertainly a beginning, they are certainly not an end. As we have read, if you were to let mothers "deign to nurse their children", "you" would be surprised by the changes "you" make. Mothers make nothing, in other words. Morals will reform themselves and nature's sentiments have always been there in the heart, needing only to be woken. If everything is to be brought back, there can be no external agent responsible for reform. Nature does not need a mother. Thus, although you might begin with mothers, this is finally to "bring everyone back to his first duties". Mothers do not need to come back, as in this argument they fall outside the gendered universal. Beginning with mothers isolates them from the changes "you" will have caused, and the resulting return to first duties thus occurs in the absence of the mother. To reformulate: begin—or not—with mothers, that in a possible future, known by the narration to be unknown by you, you, rather than mothers, might cause changes so that the "he" who is claimed to be "everyone" might return to the start of things. Only this still is not quite the case, as the passage ends with the declaration that: "This first point, this point alone, will bring everything back together." Mothers are surely included in this "everything" to be brought back. "Everything" entails an even more radical return, however, in so far as this narrating frame is still something. Imagine a return that might overcome or eclipse the interventions that have enabled it, that might write-off even the narrator's instructional framing: the narration as fractured, but the possibility held out of it returning to its right place, no longer distanced, isolated or otherwise alienated. Impossible: the narration remains a supplement.[8]

In the appeal to "this point alone", I read Rousseau to join Copjec in a move to isolate an "aspect", and privilege it over others. Certainly, Rousseau's "first point" is unlike "the most essential aspect" of the advocacy of breastfeeding, in so far as the latter lacks what is taken to be the certain positionality of the former, yet, as we have read, there is a certain failure to fix the point even at the moment of its demarcation. Returning to the precise terms of *Émile* does not necessarily lead to any general opposition to Copjec's claims concerning the problematisation of causality: everything does not follow successively from the first within Rousseau's formulations. As I understand it, however, this problematisation is not to be located in some free-floating, a-textual "aura", but arises instead from a reading of text. In so far as the difficulty I read here is that of a supplementary frame returning to the

[8] An extended engagement with the issue of origins in this passage would need to read the question of translation.

production of the real, I read a connection to Copjec's analysis of vampire fiction as introduced above. It is the avoidance of any engagement with Rousseau's language that allows Copjec to get safely to the point of danger. For Copjec, this point is the recognition of a "gap in the causal chain" surrounding *Émile*, a gap understood also to be repeated in *Dracula* (Copjec [1993] 2015, p. 118).

7. Conclusions

My suggestion is, then, that to reframe the notion of equivalence, we should engage the precise terms of a given text rather than turn to questions of structure or external auras. Take, for example, the notes that bookend *Dracula*. Here is the first:

> How these papers have been placed in sequence will be made manifest in the reading of them. All needless matters have been eliminated, so that a history almost at variance with the possibilities of later-day belief may stand forth as simple fact. There is throughout no statement of past things wherein memory may err, for all the records chosen are exactly contemporary, given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them. (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 6)

As Harriet Hustis argues in her analysis of this introductory note, "by claiming to be the enactment (via reading) of the construction of a 'history' from 'exactly contemporary' 'records,' the novel reveals, not its source, but the fact that it apparently has none". (Hustis 2001, p. 19) The history of the text's production is to be materialised in the future. Just as Rousseau calls upon an origin that is retrospectively constructed, a point of fixity that is necessarily split and other to itself, so too this note undercuts material certainty even as it is established. *Dracula* is not, I would argue, a text that falls outside history in its "essential aspect", not a text in which the question of origins does not intrude, but instead one in which a theory of history, and historical production, can be read, one in which origins are called upon, but only in a way that entails their loss precisely at the point of capture. Because the textual history is to be established only at some distant point within the readerly process, it follows that a further "equivalence" can be suggested: just as Rousseau's text makes claims about a futurity that is mapped out, although yet to arrive, so here the manifestation of the past conditions of production is certainly to occur, just not yet.

Turning to the final note to *Dracula*, we can read a further "equivalence" still, as this appeal to futurity is also bound to a certain disappearance of mothers: in this note, Jonathan Harker recounts his return to Transylvania, seven years after *Dracula*'s defeat, with his surviving friends, and his young son, whose "bundle of names links all our little band of men together":

> We could hardly ask any one, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story. Van Helsing summed it all up as he said, with our boy on his knee:—"We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us! This boy 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 so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake.". (Stoker [1897] 2003, p. 402)

The future is known, and in the future, there will be knowledge of a mother, yet this is to be held by one whose names bind men together, leaving women unbound. Jack Halberstam develops a reading of the eclipsing of women:

> the boy is as much the son of *Dracula* as he is of the "little band of men" after whom he is named. [. . .] Quincey is hardly the authentic reproduction of his parents. Monster, in fact, merges with man by the novel's end, and the boy reincarnates the dead American, Quincey Morris, and the dead vampire, *Dracula*, as if to ensure that, from now on, Englishness, rather than a purity of heritage and lineage, or a symbol for national power, will become nothing more than a lost moment in Gothic history. (Halberstam 1993, p. 350)

I would only add to this analysis of melancholic national identity a sense of the disruption the identity of the child can bring to a reading of *Dracula*: further engaging the child in this concluding note can, I suggest, extend the kind of anti-essentialist criticism that Halberstam champions. Here, we might return to Hustis' contention that the initial note "far from explaining the existence of the final product (the novel *Dracula*), announces the text's status as pure process or textuality-in-the-making". On these terms, this note differs from its final counterpart: for Van Helsing, none of the proofs "stand forth" as fact, and thus the inadequacy of the text will not be countered by a process that makes its structure manifest, but a knowing centred on Mina that will not rest with the text at all (Hustis 2001, p. 20). The child at the end of the novel might be positioned as the guarantor of meaning, but this meaning is irrecoverable, with what Little Quincey knows, and whatever produces this knowing in him, finally as inaccessible as *Dracula* in his coffin (or a child sweetly sleeping). This suggests, ironically, that it is not an inaccessibility that is "inalienable" and other to textuality, but one caught up in the play of its difference: we can follow the "nothing" that evades signification across a signifying chain. The end of the novel repeats an appeal to the deferral of the text, the postponement of its realisation, and this, again, necessitates further divisions and deferrals, with the child now the promise of fulfilment as well as all the contrary constructions read above. Moreover, the narrative of reincarnation here opens questions relating to repetition and difference. When my form is repeated, does the difference in those that follow me disrupt the certainty of my being, or does my consistency suggest a core of identity that insists across a variety of forms? Is such a repetition bound to a heterosexual repression of women, and, if so, does such male generation differ from the deathly iterations of the child-brain? To reformulate: is *Dracula* something other than his wives? Is a child other than a vampire, or a woman, or a man? How are we to decide such matters, if the child is a figure of iteration as much as an iterated figure? And, finally—going forward—might such questions impact upon discussions of genre, that is, upon the repetition of form that would seem to be, in Copjec's analysis, the condition of its possibility?

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