

ing (re)production. If narrative no longer pushes towards some reproductive conclusion, some coming together of opposites, and if those opposites have been multiplied so as to no longer oppose one another, narrative and sexuality cease to be either heterosexual or homosexual (the terms through which we understand such joiner) and become something else. And in so far as sexual narrative and desire are dislocated in cooperative positions, it tells the disappearance of a dominant reproductive narrative form also signals the dispersion of the sex/gender system, since binaries are no longer functionally necessary and heterosexuality no longer define narrative direction.¹⁴

If the gender of two is not the principal and of Paris is not, then what more can the story be? With the return of the desire for conclusion or production, if production ceases to be a terminal desire, narrative might organize itself in relation to other patterns that have already structured narrative such as repetition, alternation, perpetual oscillation, or morphing. One doesn't, however, simply begin to tell a different story one day; change will need to be gradual and conscious. In other words, the story can change, and it may be possible to change the story and through narrative's function, affect all of the layers of ideology that adhere to narrative form. But this is a utopian projection. Narrative, like metaphor, quickly—instantly—recoups itself. Just as metaphor will never disappear from language, but may only cease to ground order, metaphor will never disappear from narrative. Narrative's structural reliance on metaphor, on what Peter Brooks calls its deployment of "sameness and difference," could conceivably move from metaphor to a more metonymical arrangement represented by something more like routes on a map or the multiple and varied choices of hypertext.¹⁵ Narrative would then cease to be conceived of as a singular or primary trajectory and organize itself around multiple and equally viable possibilities or trails (to use a metaphor) that may or may not replicate an oedipal story. But that would enable the telling of stories other than the oedipal, providing a possibility for the promulgation of slightly different reproductive ideologies.

The effect of multiplying the number of terms engaged in reproduction is ultimately to lose the idea of narrative as an organizing episteme that gathers multiples within a directional reproductive dynamic, and to gain an idea of narrative as sets of multiple possibilities that produce a dynamic in their choice and reading. While certainly this production of a narrative dynamic will also be the reproduction of a dynamic located elsewhere—in ideology, psychology—a more metonymically premised narrative inevitably shifts the locus of narrative's dynamic from narrative itself to reading and selection, in ways already enabled by hypertext. The organizational locus of narrative shifts from narrative structure to the structure of reading and selection as performances of narrative rather than the consumption of one. In so far as the human psyche replays the oedipal, this dynamic may simply relocate an oedi-

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Judith Roof

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PROLOGUE

Significant Trends

“PAY NO ATTENTION TO THAT MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN”

The munchkin denizens of Oz, that fantasmatic terrain where the cyclone dumps Dorothy, have an immediate answer to her alienation. After ascertaining that she believes she is no witch, they advise her to “follow the yellow brick road” that will lead her to “the great and powerful Wizard of Oz.” The Wizard of Oz, they croon, is a wizard because he does wonderful things. Seeking this powerful paternal doer, Dorothy, her dog Toto, and the three figuratively castrated companions she accumulates on the road brave the threats of the Wicked Witch of the West to get to Emerald City, the home of the wizard extraordinaire whom they plan to petition to rectify their separations or supply their lost parts (brain, heart, courage).¹

The Wizard, however, is not as forthcoming as a beneficent Papa should be, and he denies the foursome their favors until they rid him of the pesky and

(we find out later) much more powerful Wicked Witch of the West. This Witch challenges his rule by writing in the sky with a smoldering broom, casting spells (swaying consciousness), and provoking visions of “other scenes” in a crystal ball (enlisting the unconscious). A spunky gal, Dorothy sets out to purge this threat to the West and accidentally succeeds in doing so with a bucket of water; a “mechanics of fluids,” water fittingly melts the witch into a steaming pool.² Triumphant, Dorothy returns to Oz to collect the reward she has now earned only to discover, through the agency of the always intrepid Toto, that the Wizard’s pyrotechnical facade of billowing flames and booming voice is just a simulation of power wielded by a little, very human, “humbug” man behind a curtain.

His real stature revealed, the little man (who, it turns out, is an estranged carnival showman accidentally transported to Oz in a hot-air balloon) isn’t completely bogus. Although he seems to have trouble operating the mechanism of his wizard simulation and the balloon, he understands enough about desire to demand payment in advance and enough about castration to know that symbolic objects will suffice to cure Dorothy’s companions’ feelings of incompleteness. Hence a degree for the brainless Scarecrow, a ticking heart-shaped watch for the Tin Woodman, and a medal of valor for the Cowardly Lion are enough to compensate. But the beset Dorothy, whose trip to Oz separated her from the avuncular bliss she had enjoyed before the evil Miss Gulch tried to confiscate her Toto, sees through the Wizard’s guise of power and discerns that he is in the same boat as she.

2

When the Wizard resorts to the literal and decides to reinflate the carnival balloon to try to transport Dorothy, Toto, and himself back to Kansas, he accidentally takes off without Dorothy. But all is not lost. The good Witch of the North who advised Dorothy to seek the Wizard in the first place now informs her that she has always had the ability to go home if only she had sufficient desire. Telling her to click her heels together three times and incant, “There’s no place like home,” the Good Witch enables Dorothy to regain domestic bliss and heal oedipal trauma through the repetition of the word—not the Name-of-the-Father, but the literal signifier of domestic space.

Victor Fleming’s 1939 adaptation of L. Frank Baum’s turn-of-the-century children’s tale cannily sets out not only crises in incipient consumerism, timely allegories of totalitarian threat, and endorsements of secular humanism, but also the spectacle of the Father’s unveiling and his reduction to the literal and impotent.³ No match for machines, the Wizard, who has masterfully manipulated a commodity system (or because he has mastered the commodity system), sacrifices his reign in a vain attempt to help Dorothy. The apparatus of his powerful persona collapsed, he replaces himself with the now-brainy Scarecrow, a weightless collection of detachable parts. In his absence, the figurative daughter’s Symbolic, reduced to the vague myth of

familial domain, becomes instantly accessible in a pedestrian version of the Internet.

A DEAL YOU CAN'T REFUSE

It is a legend that a Don cannot deny the request of a supplicant who comes to him on the day of his daughter's wedding. The opening scene of *The Godfather* (book and film) depicts the undertaker Bonasera's desperate request that Don Vito Corleone avenge the beating of his daughter.⁴ Having gone first to the police and then through the American justice system, which gave the perpetrators only a suspended sentence, Bonasera belatedly seeks the Don's help, asking him for "justice." But Corleone coldly makes clear the terms of his largess: Bonasera must become his "friend," must become indebted to the Godfather for a justice clearly understood not as retributive murder, but as the disbursement of equal suffering. "Some day," Don Corleone says, "and that day may never come, I will call upon you to do me a service in return. Until that day, consider this justice a gift from my wife, your daughter's godmother" (33). The lesson to the undertaker is clear: eschew the false and impotent law of culture and believe wholeheartedly in the power of the Godfather; sustain yourself with a system composed of symbolic family ties instead of appealing to an impotent nest of opportunistic lawyers, corrupt judges, and usurious bankers in an order that has already failed.

SPERM TALES

As visual technologies improve and smaller and smaller vistas can be distinctly displayed, the narrative of human reproduction shifts from its macroscopic frame of romance and avian/apiarian fable to an increasingly microscopic, epic narrative of travel and penetration. As the frame of reference shrinks, the scale of seminal accomplishment expands and the sperm's figuration shifts from the metaphorical (little critter, for example) to the synecdochically paternal (the father's genetic material). Reproduction's courtship narrative—an egg and a sperm blissfully uniting—imagines a coming together of tiny elements that simply substitute for human players in an invisible imaginary field. The more "scientific" narrative enabled by electron photostcopy and videography images sperm as little wriggling, directed beings with heads and tails who take a really long and well-planned trip through a hostile terrain crowded with barriers they must heroically penetrate. Synecdoches of their penile delivery system, the sperm continue as little penetrators until their message is delivered and production begins.

Heroic mites, sperm have become the overly literalized vestiges of paternity and Beowulf. Initially gathered in the epididymis in response to nerve stimuli, the sperm become the payload in a complex system that "must function perfectly." Leaving the epididymis, the sperm are joined by fructose (sup-

plies) from the seminal vesicles and a fluid medium (a vehicle) from the prostate gland and are propelled through the penis by involuntary muscular contractions (an engine). Once through the seemingly endless twelve inches of the male system, the sperm encounter the “dangerously inhospitable” environment of the female vagina where one fourth of the sperm force dies immediately. A large contingent of defective sperm malfunctions. Foreign cells in the woman’s body, some healthy sperm are attacked by antibodies. Other deeply anxious sperm hit prematurely on incorrect cells. The remainder swims mightily against contrary currents, “programmed” as they are to “seek the egg.”

If they are lucky enough to find the mucin strands provided by the cervix during ovulation, the sperms can swim in gangs into the uterus, an outer layer of sperm protecting an inner layer against the female body’s various dangers. When the gang gets to the uterus, some stay in the cervix, perhaps to provide “backup.” In the uterus, the sperm encounter a binary dilemma, the choice of two tubes: one with an egg, the other without, on/off, a primal, genital computer. Half of the group chooses the wrong tube; the other half contends with fallopian cilia, which create a gentle downward current against which the still-determined sperm must swim. Some sperm get stuck in the cells lining the fallopian tube; others lose their sense of direction. By the time they reach the egg, only fifty sperm out of two hundred million are left. These fifty must race to digest the two layers of nutritive cells that encase the egg. Only one will win through to the final penetration that echoes the original, displaced from its primal scene twelve to fourteen inches.

The sperms’ series of travails resembles allegorical epic or romance. But while the allegory’s protagonist labors in one cosmos that clearly refers to another more spiritual locus, sperm protagonists struggle synecdochically in a too literal, too fleshly scene.⁵ While the allegorical protagonist proves the truth of a conceptual system, sperm reiterate the already literal. Impersonating the microscopic specifics of a BOATS (Based on a True Life Story) film, the story of reproduction assures us that what we see on the surface is really what happens down the line, inner equaling outer, the whole process reifying sexual difference and biology on the cellular level (and beyond, if we can image it). Scratch an allegorical protagonist and you find God; scratch a sperm and you find patriarchy’s chemically encoded genetic message.

This rendering of the sperm’s story comes from *The Miracle of Life*, presented on Nova in the 1980s.⁶ Envisioning reproduction’s constantly opening frames requires technology; one penetration simply compels another in a constant search for the moment when all comes together, when the sperm loses its genetic payload and somehow the coded strands of DNA intermingle and reorder their sequential code into a new message. A metonymic voyage, the sperm’s microid tale transforms the metaphor of condensational oneness

into a series of repetitive stages, each characterized by a penetration and loss and each linked to the next by physical contiguity. The sperm have become a cyborg community, organized into self-sacrifice, programmed to a goal, dispensable in large numbers, highly inefficient but successful carriers of information. Paternity is an all too literal endeavor.

MARIO BROTHERS

In the late 1980s Nintendo introduced Mario Brothers, a video system that enabled a more complex prolonged narrative game than Ping Pong, Tennis, or Space Invaders.⁷ Metonymical epics, Mario Brothers (and its sequels) take a cartoon protagonist controlled by the game's player(s) through succeeding levels of difficulty, each crowded with increasingly complex hurdles and requiring better hand-eye coordination. Peopled by various threatening denizens, each level has a specific theme and environment; within each level are various windows that open as the protagonist penetrates into various apertures (magic doors, large standing pots) to gain valuable advantages. The exits and entrances from level to level are contiguous; each opens into the next in a series of unfolding panoramas.

The prototype for many video games, Mario Brothers' sequential narrative depicts conflict as epic; that is, where the protagonist is "superior in degree to other men (sic), but not to his environment."⁸ Mario Brothers 2 situates the entire process within an overtly romanticized narrative of a Princess's rescue, located in a reified subconscious terrain. The protagonist Mario has a dream in which he is asked to defeat the enemy Wart, who has put the land of "Subcon" under a spell and "return Subcon to its natural state" (3). When awake, Mario and his friends go on a picnic only to discover the very same world featured in Mario's dream in a small cave. But this is a dream world of repetition and displacement cast in the almost meaningless discourse of good and evil personified by various versions of animated mobile masks.

The games are captivating; like programmed pieces we are pulled from level to level through the illusion of our prowess, but also (and more significantly) by the lure of extra lives, new vistas, and the sense that if we could try one more time we would penetrate further. And we are also lured by the fact that within each level's rolling sequence are shortcuts that "warp" players from level to level in a macro progress far more empowering than laborious engagement with a series of annoying obstacles. At the end of each level is a big enemy who spits and throws things—in some cases a male enemy "who thinks he is a girl and . . . spits eggs from his mouth" (27). Overcoming these enemies is rewarded with uplifting martial music and the chance to win extra lives.

The "natural state" of Subcon is a state renaturalized by a metonymical logic of sequence and progression. Not the subconscious (or the unconscious) but

rather a cultural unconscious whose good/evil dichotomies become ever more like cartoons, ever more like a programmed venture into a seven-world, twenty-level cosmos with an already cannily familiar mechanistic epistemology.

THE SON OF TIME

In the late 1960s, digital technology in the form of hand-held calculators and digital watches first became widely available in America. Calculators' binary proficiency rapidly replaced the slide rule's analogue virtuosity. The timepiece's representational shift from the analogue clock's ever-changing tableau to the instantaneous conclusions of digital's incremental leaps made graphically visible a cultural shift from the precedence of metaphor—or figuring by analogy—to an increased emphasis on metonymy, whose discontinuous, nonspatial, divisible, sparse economy of specific serial digits cuts up time's erstwhile luscious flow.

Just as its instantaneous displays are metonymical, digital representations are themselves the visual conclusions to an adjacent metonymical process. Sustained by a hidden logic of micro-circuit contiguity, the digital depends upon the binary operation of computer chips that make calculations through a series of on/off electronic switches. While the metaphoricity of analogue time emphasizes the relation of earth to sun, hand to hand, time to space, and process to product, digital's metonymy emphasizes product (a number) over its elided process, appearing to provide the authority of discrete numerical signifiers, but also leaving temporal gaps between process and product, between one answer (one minute) and the next. (What time is it when the number is changing?) Digital's metonymic gaps produce an anxiety whose symptoms and defenses are a persistence of image (single numbers remain long past their time) and the insertion of the image of analogue timepieces—the tiny clock or minute hourglass—in the more protracted temporal gap at the moment of computer processing. This vestigial metaphor spatially occupies the duration of calculation that would otherwise appear to be empty, fulfilling a nostalgia for metaphor's dubious plenitude.

QVC

Home-shopping channels, where electronic media meet consumer culture, reveal commodity culture's departure from any exchange among people to people's exchanges of objects.⁹ Item after featured item, an endless array of commodity alternatives appears, each equivalent to the next, each posed as fulfilling some desire, but each equally capable of fulfilling that desire. Referring to no real need, these commodities comprise a system in which commodity trades with commodity in an endless chain.

"The substance of life, unified in this universal digest," this mediatized shopping spree, "can," Jean Baudrillard exclaims, "no longer have any *meaning*: that which produced the dream work, the poetic work, the work of meaning,

that is the grand schemas of displacement and condensation, the great figures of metaphor and contradiction, which are founded on the lived articulation of distinct elements, is no longer possible" (35). Only perpetual displacement and deferral remain, "the eternal substitution of homogeneous elements"—QVC, shopping malls, catalogues, billboards, commercials—an endless, chained display of syntagmatic objects that finally stand only for objecthood and the consumable, and consumption itself as the only meaningful activity in an order that is losing its metaphoric underpinning.

ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR OEDIPUS

In 1900, Karl Landsteiner discovered human blood groups. A tool for the identification of criminals and fathers, blood groups enabled the elimination rather than positive identification of suspects.¹⁰ The first paternity tests based on red-cell blood types "excluded only 15 to 19 percent of alleged fathers." Refined over the years, hematology and serology yielded ever-more specific markers; red-cell antigens "identified 75 percent of 'non-fathers,'" and by 1981, a new test based on Human Leukocyte Antigens yielded 99 percent accuracy.¹¹ The even greater identificatory potential of DNA testing, developed in the early 1980s and made prominent in the O. J. Simpson case, feeds the hope of positive identification of individuals rather than the elimination of suspects.¹²

Oedipus didn't recognize his own father; like the deductive Sherlock Holmes, he had to infer from circumstances, belatedly establishing his filiation from witness testimony and cultural law. As the medico-pharmaceutical establishment delves inward, paternity becomes less and less the guess of prophecy, Tiresias's testimony, or clever deduction and more a matter of discerning patterns in the nearly infinite combinations of chemical codes. Imagining DNA testing as a highly reliable identificatory procedure that replaces the masterful Holmes's deduction skills, science writers signal the revolution in method by the repetition of Holmes's name in the titles of their columns: "Leaving Holmes in the Dust" (*Newsweek* 1987); "Not So Elementary, My Dear Holmes" (*The Economist* 1989). Paternity has been a mystery to be solved; the titles' hint that science has finally exceeded Holmes's skills suggests that someone has finally solved the paternal mystery. The appeal of a test that renders human identity in a form like a "bar code" is finally the certainty of paternity itself; "this type of test will take us closer to the time when there need no longer be disputes concerning paternity, because test results will be so accurate that true fathers will be more likely to settle out of court than fight a losing battle'" (*Science News* 1981, 317). Science thinks it has replaced the Name-of-the-Father.

Whether or not father can ever be identified with complete certainty, Landsteiner's turn-of-the-century discovery unveiled, at least in the imagination, the mystery of the man behind the curtain.

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INTRODUCTION

THIS PROJECT concentrates on several manifestations of reproductive anxiety (the bodybuilder/superhero, law, the pregnant father, the vampire, the shift from analogue to digital) in western and primarily American culture. These examples of anxiety are symptoms of a more profound Symbolic change that begins to show as western culture shifts from an analogue to a digitally based order. Because reproduction embodies the terms of Symbolic Law (or Symbolic Law models itself after the elements of reproduction), representations of reproduction often reveal anxieties about Symbolic change as well as providing compensations for it. Focusing primarily on post-World War II phenomena, this study presents the idea of a change in the Symbolic itself as part of the broader sweep of cultural and epistemological transition that has been occurring for at least the past two-hundred years. Understanding these changes as also occurring in the Symbolic means possibly seeing how such

change might be directed so as not to reiterate the gender inequities linked to the Symbolic relation between the paternal and Law.

This project began as several disjointed attempts to explain the recurrence of certain images and patterns in American popular culture—for example, the fact that vampire motifs show up in *Aliens*. Circling around not only reproduction (the alien's) but also the clash of reproductive systems (alien v. human), such combinations suggest some threat to the system or order reproduction represents. But as these patterns are located in a larger historical context, it soon became apparent that there was a larger story here, a trajectory that arced from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) to Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994), from *The Vampyre* (1819) to Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1994) and through such disparate phenomena as Dada, Pop art, superhero narratives, and television baseball.

Slim as the thread might seem, vampires, aliens, and feminist heroics, all represent anxieties about an unauthorized reproduction that challenges proper (i.e., paternal) reproductive order and human aegis. Frankenstein, bodybuilders, Pop art, and male pregnancy compensate for reproductive anxieties by multiplying and extending creative paternal power. Taken together, these disparate instances express a pattern of threat and restitution around paternity and patriarchy that has occurred in various forms since at least the inception of a mechanized industrial culture. The pattern of challenge/compensation reflects insecurities about Symbolic order that appear in the guise of issues about paternity, human authority and creativity, and/or technological threat.

By the Symbolic, I mean the sets of rules and language that comprise the sociocultural order in its largest sense. This means not only language and laws, but the principles of substitution and displacement through which language and Law work. Inextricably interwound with the Imaginary (the dimension of conscious and unconscious images) and the Real (objects and experiences), the Symbolic order's substitutive process contributes to the psychic development of individuals and grounds the organization of societies. While the Imaginary "infuses the unconscious into consciousness to create discontinuities, inconsistencies, and irruptions," the Symbolic "connects, labels, and orients Imaginary incidents, so giving import, perpetuity, and reality to otherwise solipsistic perception."¹ The Imaginary enables identification, desire, representation, while the Symbolic stabilizes, "gives form to and 'translate[s]' the Imaginary" (Ragland-Sullivan 156).

It is possible for the Symbolic to change and, in so doing, manifest its transformation through symptoms that appear in the representations that constitute a cultural Imaginary. Analogous to and an extension of the intra-psychic imaginary order, this cultural Imaginary, comprised of images, relationships, and identifications, works on the level of the social and cultural systems of image, narrative, and fantasy. And the Symbolic is changing, showing signs of slow

transformation. Jacques Lacan suggests that “the oedipus complex cannot run indefinitely in forms of society that are more and more losing the sense of tragedy.”² I would suggest that tragedy can no longer exist in forms of society that are increasingly employing a digital rather than an analogue (or metaphorical) form of organizing, storing, or even conceiving of information and relations. Radical effects of Symbolic transformation appear in everything from the recent recognition of multicultural diversity to the breakdown of the nuclear family to commodity culture’s simulations.

Although the Symbolic works through principles of both substitution and displacement, substitution pulls together the linguistic and larger social rules of culture. “The paradox and tragedy of being human,” comments Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, “stems from the fact that, by accepting language as a substitute for an impossible union [between mother and child], language itself as a symbol builds absence—Castration—into the structure of the subject and ensures that the human condition will be marked by eternal wanting” (172). Substituting a symbol for something else means that the symbol, while importing meaning, also refers to an absence. This mode of substitution also characterizes systems of rules and law that organize and regulate human interactions by prohibiting some relations (incest) and fabricating others (property, contract, paternity). Rules of order on all levels share the same substitutive structure as language, a substitution linked primarily to metaphor as the figuration of substitution as well as to metonymy as the mechanism of displacement. Although the Symbolic does not consist solely of metaphor and metonymy, the two processes characterize the mechanisms by which Symbolization occurs and the Symbolic operates.

My emphasis on the paternal comes from the way the paternal works as the emblematic metaphor of the Symbolic not only in lacanian psychoanalytic theory, but in the more overt power structures of modern western culture. This emphasis is both on paternity’s literal gendered form and on how patriarchal tradition imbues western conceptions of reproduction, continuity, law, and order. Organized around a series of prohibitions and exchanges, patriarchal order deploys the father’s name, concepts of generation, real property, legacy, and tradition to maintain the illusion of continuity, rightly directed productivity, and meaning in its reproductive organizations. Linked to bourgeois familial ideologies and particular conceptions of regulation rather than to the necessities of nature or technological capability, literal patriarchal formations such as nuclear families and male-centered hierarchies jealously protect the realm of metaphorical figuration by which order is understood.

THE IMPETUS TO CHANGE

What stimulates the emergence of symptoms linked to instabilities in the Symbolic? Do changes in the Symbolic lead to changes on the level of repre-

sentations? Or is it changes in the Real—the realm of objects and experiences—that force a resymbolization? Apart from natural phenomena (earthquakes, meteors hitting earth), what object or experience isn't already, in some way, produced through the Symbolic and the Imaginary? If I want to link Symbolic change to technological change, for example, what stimulates technological change in the first place? How is it that we can imagine technological advances before we can accomplish them? Rather than representing some sudden integration of an alien mode of organizing or the discovery of a completely new world, the transformation I'm suggesting is a possibility already contained within the system. Any shift is a shift in emphasis.

The transformation of the Symbolic has multiple causes and effects whose circular interrelation confuses any linear sense of evolution or sustained and organized transformation. The invention and increasing use of mechanical forms of production both incite the beginnings of a change in the way humans perceive their relation to the world and are continually produced by an imagination already capable of envisioning the mainly metonymical workings of machinery. Scientific advancement increases the ability to particularize, to forge increasingly complex and minute cause-effect relations that gradually transform metaphorical scientific accounts of phenomena into the imagined potential for a completed chain of causal links. For example, Freud's metaphorical accounts of psychic operation characterize processes he imagines as finally biochemical, if only the biochemistry could be adequately particularized.³ The father, who was for so long proved by the name, becomes a spermatocytic activity discernible through enhanced microscopic tracking and organized genetic markers. The desire for such complete and microscopic—such gapless—explanation is, in turn, stimulated by an already burgeoning mechanistic culture, an imagination already inflected by metonymy's alternate power—the power to fill in the links that metaphor elides or substitutes for. But even the imaginary plenitude of metonymic facts leaves gaps, tiny fissures from cause to effect that excite the reassertion of metaphor.

The project of this book is not to detail the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century causes for this Symbolic shift, but rather to trace some of the twentieth-century cultural resistances to and compensations for it as those appear in popular cultural representation. The configurations I have selected all manifest some anxiety about reproduction that repeats in their reappearances in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and is, in all cases, linked in some way to mechanical reproduction. Linking them to trends in technology and historical repetitions provides a larger scope of examination that ultimately suggests that our Symbolic is not a newly contrived result of recent technological revolutions, but has been in the process of changing at least since the introduction of a machine-based industrial culture. Seeing these representations as evidence of Symbolic change adds another rationale to their already complex functioning.

For example, the vampire's association with death seems a sufficient menace to human existence to explain its recurrence. Although vampires' practices might represent everything from fantasies of oral sex, lesbianism, male homosexuality, or even rape to delusions of allomorphic potency, vampires also represent an anxiety about the continuity of order and proper kinship. Infiltrating patriarchy, seizing the virgins human males have (traditionally) reserved for themselves, vampires spawn vampires, twisting the rules of exogamy and limit into the beguiling prospect of interminable sanguinary feasting. If we connect this vampiric anxiety about human continuity and order to the behavior of Ridley Scott's aliens, their point of common threat, apart from the iconic similarity of their skeletal figures and hypertrophied teeth, is their usurpation of human order through unauthorized and extra-patriarchal reproductions. The figures that overcome the vampires' threats to patriarchal reproduction—strong fathers (Van Helsing) or heroic mothers (Ripley)—reassuringly reassert and supplement tradition or die in the attempt. Like bodybuilding and superheroics, the emphatic reassertion of the masculine, the familial, or the human attempts to counter instabilities in patriarchal tradition and order.

Appearing in the early nineteenth century, again in the 1890s, and re-emerging as a major figure in the flurry of vampire films of the 1950s and 1970s, the vampire's mainstream textual representations coincide with industrialization, the invention of cinema, and the invention of the digital computer.⁴ But if this play of recurrent cultural images has any relation to more concrete cultural change, what besides mechanical reproduction might threaten patriarchal order as that functions as a symptom of Symbolic transformation? Let me make it clear at this point that there are probably numerous causes for the kind of drama I have begun to sketch. Much of the rapid complex social and technological change of the last two hundred years, for example, produces anxiety in western cultures as does the invention of the nuclear bomb, the cold war, a loss of American national prestige, and the rise of a less-centralized world marketplace. This book will follow only one—the drama of threat and compensation to literal and metaphorical reproductive orders salvaged by various refigurations of a much enhanced, specifically (re)productive father or his figurations. Although reproduction in its various biological and technological meanings is only one of a number of possible loci where the trajectory of cultural anxiety might register (others might be nationalism, racism, sexism, isolationism), the father's alignment of reproduction with conceptions of continuity represents a particularly suspicious, Symbolic instance of overcompensation for an order that is giving way.

Other texts and events seem to ratify this hypothesis, providing examples of the anxious alliance of the mechanical and the reproductive (the invention of photography and cinema, computers), paternal unveiling (the strategically timed *The Wizard of Oz*, for example), or symbolic compensation (the mech-

anisms of Pop art or television's fifty-year preoccupation with law and order). Taking texts and movements together writes one strand of a process of cultural change where cultural texts suggest a reading of the effects of technology's history and a history of technology suggests a particular relation among cultural texts. If texts anxious about reproduction dramatize tensions about changes in the Symbolic, then the centrality of the paternal is no accident, but is itself a symptom of the kind of Symbolic under seige.

Since I read these sites as running texts within a broadly historical context, they have enough recurring elements and a sufficiently stable structure to enable a psychoanalytically informed reading of their symptoms and some of the cultural work they do. It may well be that psychoanalysis is what leads to explications of these instances as versions of paternal malaise, but I also interpret the paternal as a Symbolic rather than literal function except where culture seems to have already supplanted the Symbolic father with the literal. In a way, psychoanalysis' own predilection for the father is evidence of psychoanalysis' incipient examination of the foundations of order at the point in time where that order has begun to fall apart. In this context, psychoanalysis itself becomes a way simultaneously to acknowledge the fragility of the father and to reassert a fail-safe Symbolic, which, in manipulating the terms of order on the level of analysis, becomes itself coterminous with the Symbolic it defines.

But even if this project is some psychoanalytic solipsism, psychoanalysis is a symptom of the same instability/compensation structure I identify in more popular terrain. In the same way that psychoanalysis is preeminently a European-American phenomenon, so the pattern of Symbolic shift and compensation I discuss is western and modern. The context of the symptoms I have selected is "western culture," which for the purposes of this book means primarily American culture with western-European influences. Although some phenomena—Frankenstein, vampires, and the photographic prehistory—I discuss are predominantly European, I am particularly interested in how these appear and function in American culture from the 1950s on.

Because the premises of this argument derive from specialized psychoanalytic and linguistic concepts, it is necessary to define the terms of this project—the Law-of-the-Name-of-the-Father, metaphor, metonymy, the digital. These concepts, though taken from psychoanalysis and technology, characterize a certain relation between representation and social law. The context of their definition is always already the context of their change; we catch them in flux, exposing their mechanisms as products of an intellectual trajectory that is itself part of a more sweeping symbolic change. So Freud and Roman Jakobson, who in their various ways define metaphor and metonymy as the basic poles of human symbolization, can identify them because the system is already in flux; so, too, can Lacan identify the paternal function as central because it is in the process of failing. I define these terms, then, as symbolic

decay exposes the terms of its own sustenance, as they no longer quite work and yet work quite well to refigure themselves.

THE LAW OF THE NAME

Like Michel Foucault, we can certainly attribute grand shifts in culture and society to changes in deployments of power and sweeping transformations in societal organization; however, the seemingly coincidental literalization of the father may not be so coincidental if the paternal metaphor that emblemizes the Symbolic has, in fact, already become literal on some level.⁵ If Lacan's characterization of the Law as paternal is correct, at least insofar as the paternal grounds a traditional Rule of order, property, and propriety, then a change in the status of the father's symbolization would affect the entire system and vice versa. This would happen regardless of the way the system works—even if that system actually worked the other way around, even if the father empowers the Symbolic rather than the Symbolic empowering the father.

This book's argument depends upon reading Lacan's notion of the Law-of-the-Name-of-the-Father with suspicion. Itself a metaphor, the Law-of-the-Name-of-the-Father centers symbolization as a delusively patriarchal and highly metaphorical formation; the Symbolic's "differential logic" makes sexual difference its terrain and the dramatic environment of human reproduction and the family its setting. As the figure of the Law, the father's prohibitive function is linked to a lack of provable relation in concrete terms; the "something" of the father's name stands in to cover both the lack associated with the literal father's failure or absence (with the idea that the real father doesn't necessarily wield the father's power) and the lack of provable connection between father and child. The Name also prohibits the child's over-realized relation with the mother. Within this familial model, the Law-of-the-Name-of-the-Father becomes the metaphor of the cultural tendency towards metaphor as a principle of order and limit challenged by mechanical reproduction, digital technologies, and paternal certainty.

But the terms provided by Lacan's paternal metaphor are themselves the symptoms of a compensation in the field of reproduction, as reproduction provides the model for social order (the family, kinship, legacy, property) and as the paternal metaphor represents the figure whose absence founds the metaphor that characterizes order itself. Reproduction in its various mechanical, artistic, and biological guises becomes the terrain for the Symbolic's renegotiation, again through the beset figure of the paternal metaphor. Its various ancillary features—gender, the name, prohibition, lack—become the players in a field of shifting systems as the mechanical is superceded by the digital, as visual metonymies become the invisible operations that install fundamental changes in the relation between reproduction, time, and a decreasingly visible mechanics.