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**Our Lady of the Telegraph:
Mina as Medieval Cyborg
in Bram Stoker's *Dracula***

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In her influential 1982 article, “*Dracula*: Stoker’s Response to the New Woman,” Carol Senf argues that Bram Stoker’s characterization of Mina Harker, *Dracula*’s sole female vampire hunter, reveals his anxieties about the emergence of the New Woman. Senf defends her claim against what she views as hostile critical perspectives, quoting a contemporary article by critic Brian Murphy in which he argues that Mina “is no Victorian; she is a medieval lady whose honor and virtue are protected” (qtd. in Senf 34). Rather than allow the possibility that Stoker’s treatment of Mina bears similarities to medieval archetypes, Senf attacks Murphy, for whom, she charges, “the treatment of women in the novel is clearly irrelevant” (33). For Senf, the equation of Mina with a medieval, chivalric damsel damagingly distracts from her striking similarities to (and telling differences from) the late-Victorian figure of the New Woman.

By the end of Senf’s article, she has persuasively established that Mina is characterized as an independent and capable character, thereby

comparable to the emerging figure of the New Woman. She further argues that Stoker anxiously compensates for Mina's exceptional intellect and professional utility by investing her with a more "traditional femininity" than that characteristic of the New Woman, who, Senf rehearses, was often seen by her contemporaries as a sexual threat (45). However, while characterizing Mina as a de-sexed New Woman, Senf curiously borrows a phrase from the character of Van Helsing, suggesting that his praise for Mina "best captures the essence of her character" (48):

"She is one of God's women, fashioned by His own hand to show us men and other women that there is a heaven where we can enter, and that its light can be here on earth. So true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist - and that, let me tell you, is much in this age, so sceptical and selfish" (qtd. in Senf 48).

If we follow Senf's suggestion that Van Helsing's appraisal best captures Mina's essence, we probably ought to look elsewhere than the New Woman for a comparable archetype. Indeed, Van Helsing suggests that Mina is not characteristic of her age but antithetical to it; she is "[s]o true, so sweet, so noble, so little an egoist," out of step with "this age, so sceptical and selfish" (48). I would propose that, unlike the quintessentially fin-de-siècle New Woman, Mina, at least in Van Helsing's estimation, may represent an idyllic past characterized by good

intentions and simple faith. Moreover, Van Helsing's characterization of Mina arguably exceeds Senf's caveat of "traditional femininity," sounding more like a pastor's praise of an extravagantly selfless virgin saint, an exemplar to men and women, than the domestically circumscribed "Angel in the House" (45).

I would not argue that Van Helsing's characterization offers a complete picture of the incredibly complex, often contradictory, ever-changing Mina Harker. However, I propose that his description is quite in keeping with a significant vein that Stoker mines in his characterization of Mina, particularly in the final third of the novel. This vein, so rich and familiar a resource to the Victorians, is their reconstituted medieval past. My argument is premised on a narrative of Mina's development that imagines continuities, rather than mutual exclusivity, between Stoker's "New Woman" and medieval archetypes.

I begin my analysis with this premise because it is the opposition between "New Woman" and "Victorian femininity" that has structured so much of the debate surrounding Mina's character in *Dracula* and has largely elided the relevance of medieval reference points. In an admirable effort to resist Van Helsing's idealized (to some, stereotypically Victorian) conception of Mina, critics have sought and re-sought affinities between Mina and the New Woman. As recently as 2005, Charles E. Prescott and Grace A. Giorgio have suggested of Mina, "Because her own self-representation is often annoyingly self-effacing, it is

not surprising that Mina's multifaceted agency is frequently downplayed in the criticism of the novel" (488). The critics' goal, they suggest is to "resist this self-presentation and place Mina squarely within two late-century discourses of disputed femininity, the New Woman and passionate friendship" so that "a much more ambivalent sense of self becomes legible" (488). I believe that acknowledging Mina's parallels with medieval archetypes allows for an interpretation that better explains the contradictions Prescott and Giorgio identify: Mina's effacing "self-representation" as well as her "multifaceted agency" (488).

Medieval Mina

The novel certainly provides ample evidence for Murphy's point that Mina resembles a medieval lady worthy of the bravest defense, particularly following Dracula's attack. The appearance of Mina's scar, which itself was the result of the men's attempt to protect her in their absence, becomes the occasion for their renewed, chivalric rededication of purpose; as Jonathan relates, "We men pledged ourselves to raise the veil of sorrow from the head of her whom, each in his own way, we loved; and we prayed for help and guidance in the terrible task which lay before us" (Stoker 259). Mina is characterized as a woman worthy of the kneeling men's chivalric devotion, a "sweet, sweet, good, good woman," who is "so good and so brave that we all felt that our hearts were strengthened to work and endure for her" (268, 254). At the very end of

the novel, in Jonathan's appending "Note," Stoker tries to draw the plot together as if it had been all along a romantic quest purely for the sake of Mina's salvation.

Stoker's "reading" of *Dracula* as a chivalric narrative, of course, founders on the issue of Mina's immense helpfulness. Though the men worry heavily over Mina's role within their group, she is thoroughly useful to them, making copies, remembering train schedules, and later excelling in the realms of logic and criminal psychology. At the same time, Mina is extravagantly selfless, giving spiritual counsel and keeping up an appearance of cheerfulness even under dire circumstances. I would suggest that, in his ambivalent characterization of Mina and her fluctuating role within the group, Stoker draws from two distinct, competing medieval discourses: not only the romance, in which chivalry is the masculine imperative and meek protection the feminine, but also medieval women's devotional texts, wherein (virgin) women could exalt their vocation while remaining exceedingly humble themselves. Indeed, many of Mina's qualities invite the reader to compare her with female medieval ascetics.

Following Dracula's poisoning bite, Mina becomes thin and pale, yet is often depicted with eyes aglow. Soon after her exchange of blood with Dracula, Mina appears "very, very pale—almost ghastly, and so thin that her lips were drawn away" (257). Later, Jonathan notes that Mina, under hypnosis, does not "seem the same woman. There was a far-away look in her eyes" (271). Finally,

immediately prior to the book's final showdown, Van Helsing notes that Mina, "was looking thin and pale and weak; but her eyes were pure and glowed with fervour" (321). Critic Phyllis Roth, is incorrect, then, when she suggests that "Mina is never described physically" (Roth 417); rather than render Mina utterly bodiless, the novel allows us frightening glimpses of her figure wasting away.

However, it is important to point out that Mina does not take on the voluptuous qualities of the overtly sexualized female vampires; rather, Van Helsing's late physical description of Mina is used to contrast her appearance to troubling signs of vampirism. It appears that, while the men may worry over Mina's possibly-sharpening teeth, Mina is actually undergoing a more obvious physical transformation: into an ascetic figure. Her extreme thinness, a result of her loss of blood and the early stages of her vampiric transformation, brings to mind the appearance of women who ritually fast, and indeed Mina herself reports that she "could not eat" (322). Furthermore, her glowing eyes bespeak increased "spiritual intensity" (283); they express not only her determination to defeat the long-sought enemy, but a fervent religious excitation to advance the work of God in doing so – like the apocryphal St. Margaret battling Satan in the form of a dragon ("Saint Margaret").

In fact, the physical descriptions of Mina compare quite closely to a prominent late-Victorian representation of a medieval visionary, the character of Sir Percivale's sister in Tennyson's *The Holy*

*Grail*¹. This nameless woman, who is known only as “the pale nun,” is so thin from fasting that the “sun / Shone and the wind blew, through her.” Nonetheless, she has eyes described by the narrator as, “Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful, / Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful, / Beautiful in the light of holiness” (Tennyson ll. 129, 97-98, 102-104). This figure, whose aspect is so much like Mina’s, resembles a medieval visionary both in the simple sense that she sees a vision of the grail, but also in her consequent ability to offer directive spiritual counsel to many of Arthur’s knights.

Likewise, as Mina increasingly resembles this powerful medieval archetype, she too gains certain powers associated with her. Following her attack, she gains a preternatural receptivity to the remote sounds surrounding Dracula; later, her reports include both the sensations of sight and touch. Her sensitivity to the location of her enemy echoes a selection from the medieval *Life of Christina Mirabilis*, wherein the mystic envisions, across a great distance, the “air full of swords and blood” at the same time that the enemy was attacking the duke of Brabant, the leader of the Third Crusade (qtd. in “Visionary Tradition” 8). Furthermore, one could find another analogous remote perception in the legends surrounding St.

¹ As Auerbach and Skal note, “The ritual oaths and stately tableaux so frequent in the last third of the novel reflect the contemporary popularity of Arthurian legend in poetry, plays, and paintings. In 1895 the Lyceum staged Comyns-Carr’s *King Arthur*, a picturesque adaptation of Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*.” (287).

Clare, who, enfeebled in her elder years, was nonetheless reportedly able to watch the image of her Church's mass projected miraculously onto her bedroom wall ("Saint Clare"). Alternately, we could understand Mina's receptivity to Dracula's hearing (and later sight and tactile sensations) as a variation on the broader trope of mind reading, an ability attributed to many medieval visionary writers as well ("Visionary Tradition" 7).

Mina supplements her preternatural receptivity by providing practical spiritual insight to the men; following her attack, Mina begins giving the men regular spiritual counsel. In the introduction to her edited book, *Medieval Women's Visionary Literature*, Elizabeth Petroff describes a similar stage in the growth of a female mystic that she calls "the psychic" stage (7). In this stage, the visionary "begins to look outside herself, becoming more concerned with the spiritual welfare of others" (7). Indeed, this is exactly how Mina acts following her encounter with Dracula. Even during the retelling of the event, Mina looks at Jonathan, "pityingly, as if he were the injured one" (251). Afterward, she heroically maintains a cheerful appearance to lift the spirits of the group, and gives a series of speeches on hope and faith in God's will to the worried men. The men are sensitive to these pious speeches; for example, Jonathan reports, "Mina says that perhaps we are the instruments of ultimate good. It may be! I shall try to think as she does." (Stoker 275). While Mina does not have the ability to read the men's minds in a preternatural sense, she does nonetheless adroitly anticipate their

emotional needs and acts selflessly to support them as an exemplar of faith (“Visionary Tradition” 7).

Mina gains a degree of authority through her role as exemplar of spiritual correctness. Petroff characterizes the psychic stage as one in which the visionary becomes a respected authority through her incisive “insights about the spiritual welfare of others” (8); indeed, the men look to Mina for guidance and see her (in one sense) as their better, contrasting “her lovingkindness against [their] grim hate; her tender faith against all [their] fears and doubting” (268). Like Sir Percivale’s sister in *The Holy Grail* and the medieval religious archetype she embodies, Mina is able to offer, in addition to her trance-induced perceptions, advice to the group of men that draws from an insight characterized as feminine. Tennyson’s nun is able to persuade members of King Arthur’s masculine circle, more accustomed to jousting than to fasting and praying, to quit the kingdom of Camelot and seek the source of her vision. Mina, similarly, momentarily succeeds in curbing her knights’ violent, retaliatory instincts against Dracula, challenging the men see that his appearance masks a pitiable, trapped soul akin to hers. In this way, Mina counters the men’s understanding of their mission from one of destruction to one of salvation. Importantly, Mina’s valuable insight and authority are predicated on her difference from the group of men.

However, the price of Mina’s authority is extravagant humility and selflessness. Rather than empower her development as an ascetic, Mina’s humility more often acts as an injunction for the

men to take up their chivalric duty; for example, when she asserts, "I know that all that brave men can do for a poor weak woman...you will do," Mina compels the novel to return to its chivalric mode (286). Furthermore, Mina is not a volitional ascetic, but rather adapts to the changes that Dracula's attack produces within her. Petroff suggests that a mystic's development often begins with a violent stage of purgation, a period of penitence in which the ascetic's "desire for true contrition expresses itself in fantasies of self-punishment, degradation, and public humiliation"; such fantasies often involve an imagined attack by Satan ("Visionary Tradition" 6). Following Dracula's attack, Mina of course protests her innocence, exclaiming, "What have I done to deserve such a fate?" (Stoker 244). Though she momentarily pledges celibacy, that is, to "touch [Jonathan] or kiss him no more," this quintessential assertion of a female religious' agency is not only precipitated by Dracula's actions, but immediately ignored by Jonathan himself (248). Stoker thereby diminishes the archetype of the medieval mystic, reducing her agency at every step.

Despite Mina's piety, her miraculous visions, perhaps her most significant contribution to the hunt for Dracula, are likewise understood as aftereffects of his attack, rather than owing to a privileged, innate insight. That is, Mina gains her powers of superior perception from Dracula, and not from God. She is not chosen but victimized, gaining her power, as Leda from the swan, through rape. Furthermore, her encounter with Satan-as-Dracula starts her on a path toward perdition rather

than salvation², one that, while initially granting her the power of spiritual counsel, also raises the men's suspicions of her trustworthiness and encourages them to talk behind her back. Though her sensitivity to Dracula's location is exploited for good, the men never forget its origin in Dracula's own "dark powers."

Mechanical Mina

Mina's transition into a rather limited variant of a medieval visionary, one who is self-effacing with no authority to interpret or remember her visions, renders her in increasing resemblance to a piece of technology within the men's arsenal of vampire-hunting tools. As I will argue, Mina's preternatural receptivity becomes instrumentalized as a tool among "all the maps and appliances of various kinds" that the men use to hunt Dracula (308). However, it is important to note at the outset that the novel does not suggest that this degradation of Mina into appliance is purely and wholesomely utilitarian; instead it highlights concerns about the trustworthiness and reliability of technology as a way to express anxieties about gender and dominance.

Before pursuing this argument, it is necessary to trace the development of Mina's technological transformation, the onset of which is roughly synchronous with the beginning of her transition into a visionary-like figure. Immediately prior to her attack, Mina is demoted from a full and

² I am grateful to Erik Carlson for this succinct contrast.

essential participant in the quest for Dracula to a liability whose utility to the group becomes uncertain – a matter of debate for the men. Whereas Mina had been seen (if uneasily) as an asset throughout, at a certain point, the men decide that she is too much woman, and hence should be treated not as a colleague but as an object to be protected. Coincidentally, immediately after this re-evaluation of Mina's role, Dracula is able to make his first physical contact with her, drawing blood from her neck. It is as if the men's decision to see her as vulnerable is a self-fulfilling speech act: in compelling her obedience, they render her meek. In choosing to have her "kept in the dark" about their heretofore-shared plans, they forsake her to Dracula's dark powers, divesting her of her prior role and, at least initially, of the illuminating reason that her writing had demonstrated (225).

The men's re-evaluation of Mina thus not only coincides with her subjection to Dracula, it conditions this transformation. As if her rational mind has been switched off, she acts bewildered rather than suspicious when recalling the "pillar of cloud" with two red eyes that she sees in her dream, even though she had witnessed something quite similar when Lucy had been pursued by Dracula (227). Mina not only experiences a lapse in reason, she also loses her ability to speak of the event to the men; reduced to silent submission ("I could say nothing"), Mina is both prepared for the silence preceding Dracula's first arrival, and the command to silence he offers the next time we see him (214). Indeed, after her first visit by Dracula, she

shockingly withholds her report of this crucial event because of an exaggeratedly feminine discretion as she is worried that her nighttime “fancies” might “alarm” the men (228). That is, she is reduced to a silence beyond what we already know of her reason.

That this moment of silence appears so extraordinarily out of character is perhaps at some level an expression of the degree to which Mina has now been deprived of her previous role and thus her forged identity within the group. As Prescott and Giorgio suggest, “Forced into passivity by the codes of propriety she has attempted to rewrite to allow for her own activity, she now indeed gives in to paternalistic dictates, but in a way that Van Helsing and Jonathan Harker could never have predicted” (503). While Mina is rendered utterly vulnerable by the men’s decision to see her as such, she is rendered silent due to their injunction to be so, despite what her better judgment might otherwise allow. While this moment in the text can be read simply as extreme instance of plot contrivance, I believe that if we see it as the beginning of Mina’s transformation-as-“technologization,” we can better understand what the text is communicating in this decisive break in the plot.

The machine of the plot only works at this point if we accept Mina as behaving like a tool or even a machine herself. The “switching off” of her rational mind and her powers of speech at the men’s behest are the first signs that she is undergoing a fundamental transformation, even before the bite marks on her neck become visible. Dracula himself, during his second visit, confirms the power

that he has over her in terms that have been made available by the men's re-evaluation; no longer a "helper," Mina must now "come to [his] call" an echo of her sudden submission to the men's orders that deprived her of the position of helper; the men have deactivated Mina and Dracula imagines reactivating her (244). Only later, Dracula imagines, once she has been utterly drained of volition, will Mina transform into *his* "companion and...helper." For now, Dracula tells her that she will no longer be able to "play [her] brains" against him, as she must first be utterly debased, transformed from thoughtful participant in a group endeavor to the villain's personal "wine-press" (252).

It would be mistaken, I would argue, to read Dracula's subjection of Mina to his orders as separate from her subjection to the protagonists'; Stoker invites us to compare these exertions of male dominance by juxtaposing the one with the other. However, it would clearly be an overstatement to suggest that Dracula and the men treat Mina in exactly the same way. Dracula, as he gruesomely suggests, sees her primarily as a "bountiful wine-press" whose provision of blood is both a punishment for having used her brain in battle, as well as a means to starve the power of her rational mind (252). The men, by contrast, turn Mina into a much less gruesome, and infinitely more productive, machine.

In an odd collaboration, as the men unwittingly condition Mina to be used as a mere vessel for Dracula, he, in turn, both metaphorically

and literally makes it possible for her to be exploited as a tool against him. Dracula provides the metaphorical precedent which understands Mina's brain as a powerful tool that is up for grabs; as Dracula became angered that Mina has "played [her] brains" against him, Van Helsing territorially asserts, "most we want all her great brain" (251, 295). Furthermore, Dracula activates Mina in a way that (unbeknownst to him) enables her to be used by the men. When Van Helsing explains to Mina, "you go by my volition," that is, to "travel" to Dracula and report her sensations, he echoes Dracula's claim that he need only send a mental message and Mina will "cross land or sea to do [his] bidding" (297, 252). By hypnotizing Mina, Van Helsing has essentially "hacked" into Mina's Dracula-enhanced brain, and surreptitiously used it for purposes contrary to the programmer's intent.

The changing relationship between Van Helsing and Mina, which increases in intimacy as the novel progresses, mimics how the discourse of the medieval visionary adapts into, and is ultimately subordinated beneath, a discourse that understands Mina as a wonder of technology. In Petroff's description of the relationship between the medieval visionary and her confessor, the latter often served an important role as a learned doctrinal authority, telling the woman when her experiences did not cohere with scriptural teachings (which may have been unfamiliar to them) (Body and Soul 139-140). Indeed, during Mina's first hypnosis, Mina and Van Helsing are each ascribed powers of interpretation, with Van Helsing acting as the greater authority.

However, later Stoker perverts the dialectical relationship between visionary and confessor in his technological rendering of Mina, replacing it with a more conventional relationship of command and obedience. In contrast to Mina's initial, requested hypnosis session, where she had appeared "as if interpreting something," performing a task akin to "reading her shorthand notes," her later sessions are characterized as habitual and passive, bypassing the intellect entirely. As Jonathan explains, "[Van Helsing] seems to have power at these particular moments to simply will, and her thoughts obey him" (289).

During this period of the novel, the male protagonists increasingly view Mina less as a visionary and more as a kind of transmitting device that allows her to remain helpful but under their increasing force. Because of the reliability and reproducibility of Mina's hypnotic state, Seward refers to her latest description of Dracula's perceptions as her "hypnotic report" (291). Mina's miraculous ability is thereby quickly taken for granted through such quotidian language. Notice the context of the following passage: "'Mrs. Harker reported last night and this morning as usual: 'lapping waves and rushing water,' though she added that 'the waves were very faint.' The telegrams from London have been the same: 'no further report'" (292). Stoker not only uses the same language, "report," in describing Mina's preternaturally relayed sensations and the telegraphic text, but, through the juxtaposition of the two "reports," he suggests an equivalence

between Mina and the telegram as information-transmission technologies. Mina is no longer an interpretive collaborator alongside Van Helsing, but rather a transmission device herself, utterly yielding to her users' will.

A later instance of Mina's hypnosis characterizes even her physical movements as automatic and involuntary. During the journey to Galatz, Mina is characterized as increasingly lethargic, dead tired, sleeping more and more as she nears the castle. Even though the hypnosis attempts gradually require more strenuous effort, at one point, once hypnotized, Mina involuntarily mimics Dracula's movements. After reporting that she can see a "gleam of light" and feel "the air blowing," Mina's behavior takes a radical shift. In Seward's description, "Here she stopped. She had risen, as if impulsively, from where she lay on the sofa, and raised both her hands, palms upwards, as if lifting a weight" (298).

Stoker extends the impulsive characterization of Mina's movements by describing similar behavior after she awakens, confusing the boundary between waking life and sleepwalking. After waking up, Mina, unknowing and uncurious about her latest "report," does not behave groggily or appear exhausted by the strenuous effort at hypnosis. Rather, in Seward's words, "Suddenly she sat up, and, as she opened her eyes, said sweetly:— 'would none of you like a cup of tea? You must all be so tired!' We would only make her happy, and so acquiesced. She bustled off to get tea" (298). The suddenness of the question,

her thoughtlessness of her condition, and the dutiful bustling makes the action appear automatic, as if she has been programmed to serve the men.

Mina in this moment looks far less like an authoritative medieval mystic than a *zashiki karakuri*, or a 19th Century Japanese tea-serving robot (Boyle). Whereas we have seen Mina's remarkable receptivity to Dracula's sensations regarded as yet another technology in the group's arsenal, here we see her prior sensitivity to the men's spiritual needs grossly parodied as the mechanical act of a dutifully selfless (robot)secretary. Whether in mimicry of Dracula or in service of his hunters, Mina has seemingly transformed into an automaton with puppet-like responses to her alternating masters.

The same logic that would cast the visionary St. Clare, (who, as mentioned, once witnessed mass projected on her bedroom wall) as the "patron saint of television" reinterprets Mina's preternatural powers within a discourse of modern information transmission technology ("Saint Clare"). In analyzing Stoker's treatments of Mina's "visions," it would be negligent to overlook contemporary developments of technology such as the telegraph, or telephone, both of which are utterly essential to the heroic quest of the novel. However, I would argue that Mina's powers exceed those of contemporary technologies, and anticipate wonders like radio and television that were then futuristic, dreamlike. Accordingly, the anxieties about the betrayal of such spectral technologies are highly exaggerated.

Mina as Cyborg

Perhaps Stoker is right to be anxious about his creation. By the end of the novel, Mina has exceeded a tool or even a machine in her capabilities, becoming an extraordinarily rational being for whom technology is not a tool, but more like a second nature. Throughout the novel, Mina had been characterized as a person for whom technology was not merely useful but necessary; as she notes, at the beginning of a late journal entry, “I feel so grateful to the man who invented the ‘Traveller’s’ typewriter, and to Mr Morris for getting this one for me. I should have felt quite astray doing the work if I had to write with a pen...” (303). Her close tie to technology is further evidenced by her intense familiarity with the train schedule, as well as her adeptness making copies and sending telegrams. One could argue that all the characters in *Dracula* are thoroughly involved with, even dependent on, technology. The difference in Mina is the extent to which discourses of technology transform her appearance and behavior, whether understood as, or indeed, appearing as a human telegraph or robotic secretary. For the other characters, technology offers a set of tools to be used; in Mina, compulsion and volition are more seriously intermixed.

For example, Mina resembles information-retrieval technology in her extraordinary recall; her data storage and retrieval are mechanical, perfect. However, while Mina’s data storage is mechanical, her choice to make herself into a “train fiend” is

purely volitional. When Van Helsing asks the group (“generally”) when the next train leaves for Galatz, Mina, to the men’s surprise, interjects, “At 6:30 tomorrow morning!” (293). Even though the men had chosen to keep the news of the sighting of the *Czarina Catherina* from Mina, she had nonetheless anticipated the journey to Galatz and memorized, or rather, “learned the timetables very carefully” (293). Mina had once made herself into a “train fiend” to be of use to her husband back in Exeter, and “always make[s] a study of the timetables now”; here her uncanny recall and reason provoke astonishment from Van Helsing, who murmurs “Wonderful Woman!” (293). Her recall, of the train schedules and later of the directions to Dracula’s house, is so perfect that it astonishes, appearing not only skilful but uncanny. Her choice to become a “train fiend,” however, is thoroughly practical.

Mina’s powers extend from her sharp memory to her more complex, exceptional rational abilities. Late in the novel, when discussing criminology with Mina, Van Helsing implies a prejudiced view of the way women’s minds function; in marveling at Mina’s capacity for logical thought, he states that, “your mind works true, and argues not *a particulari ad universale*” (296). That is, Mina is capable of deductive reasoning, which is gendered male, rather than feminine, inductive reasoning based on personal observations. Despite the fact that Mina has only been touched once by crime, during her attack, she can nevertheless think logically about criminality. However, the men

credit themselves with enabling Mina's logical thought, her brain having been, according to Van Helsing, "trained like man's brain" (295). The men divorce Mina's brain from a whole being. Rather, it is understood a useful tool for the men, much like her preternatural insights were metaphorically re-coded as telegraphic reports for their interpretation. However, the men's wonder at Mina's syllogistic thinking owes to the fact that her brain is self-directed; while they may claim credit for "training" her brain, she often exceeds them in her demonstrated rational prowess.

By layering miraculous and technological discourses in characterizing Mina's development, Stoker interprets Mina as a wonder of unprecedented and unpredictable abilities, requiring the invention of a new category to understand her: the cyborg. From the outset, Mina is conceived as a rare amalgam of excellent components. Rather than be regarded as a capable, feeling woman with characteristics germane to both masculine and feminine stereotypes, Mina had been metaphorically anatomized into a main-trained man's brain (acutely sharp), a God-given woman's heart (hyperbolically tender), and "dark" extra-sensory perceptions. As critic Ann Balsamo suggests, such a contingent definition of woman is nothing new; she notes, "the female body historically was constructed as a hybrid case, thus making it compatible with notions of cyborg identity promulgated by more recent cultural critics" (19).

In fact, Mina's transformation allegorizes the development of machines into cyborgs. In her

famous essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto," Donna Haraway describes how, among pre-cybernetic creations, "basically machines were not self-moving, self-designing, autonomous" (152). "Now," she notes, "we are not so sure" (152). As we have seen, the way that Mina is used and interpreted certainly troubles the boundary between "natural and artificial" while her behavior, perhaps most significantly, thoroughly troubles the distinction between "self-developing and externally designed" (152). Mina indeed is used as technology, yet she masterfully appropriates, even incorporates, technology for her own use. Though the men attempt to circumscribe Mina's visions as a type of technology, or her logic as a product of her "trained" brain, they can only express wonderment at her continual exceeding of their expectations.

In the novel's climactic scene, written by Mina, we see, through Mina's eyes (and through Van Helsing's eyeglasses), the culminating event of the novel happening from a distance: Morris' self-sacrifice and the dispersal of Dracula's curse. Interestingly, after a certain point in the narrative, the lens of Van Helsing's glasses disappear, erasing the distinction between the glasses and Mina's own "natural" vision. Though we are initially told that Mina is looking through Van Helsing's glasses, after a while, she watches the scene over her aimed weapon, with no further mention of the spectacles. As Auerbach and Skal note in their edition of *Dracula*, "Since Mina is looking down from a height, her sudden detailed vision makes her the lens of a movie camera rather than a plausible

human observer” (Stoker 324). In fact, Mina is not only capable of seeing a great distance, her eye itself can focus on two objects at once. She not only sees Mr. Morris pass through the side of the ring of gypsies, at the same time she, “with the tail of [her] eye” sees Jonathan “pressing desperately forward” (324). Furthermore, Mina can miraculously see her own face: “The sun was now right down upon the mountain top, and the red gleams fell upon my face, so that it was bathed in rosy light” (326). Mina’s vision thus surpasses even the zoom of a movie camera, suggesting an all-encompassing vision, one of unlimited power.

Such a fantasy of limitless vision was present among late-Victorians, registered through their reactions to the incalculable promise of photography. In Kate Flint’s book *Victorians and the Visual Imagination*, she notes the wonder people felt at technology that “enables the photographic eye to achieve what the human eye could not” (31). She quotes from an 1883 article by Richard A. Proctor in which he sees photography’s promise, “to be a Cereberus to the science of the future...indeed, with photography, spectroscopy, polariscopy, and other aids, science promises soon to be Argus-eyed” (32). *Dracula*, in its culminating scene, no longer expresses anxiety about powerful technologies that may betray their owner, but a glimpse of the limitless vision they promise. At this moment, Mina’s extraordinary vision is no longer a medieval wonder, but represents the promise of a synergistic

compatibility between, rather than the humble equation of, women and technology.³

In his essay on *Dracula*, critic David Punter identifies a “significant paradox about modernity”: he argues, “On the one hand, modernity asserts the dominance of – scientific and rational – knowledge; it promises to banish the dark places of the mind, to lay the ghosts to rest and to exterminate the monsters. But on the other hand, it beckons us toward an unknown future, where old certainties will no longer hold and old writs will no longer run” (35). Stoker’s updating of material from the reservoir of the medieval past allows him to depict a future that is simultaneously alien and familiar. By combining the “visionary” figure with technologies of vision and information transmission, Stoker conveys an attitude toward the future that is simultaneously confident in the rational power of science and awe-struck by the unknown.

Stoker modernizes the figure of the medieval visionary, incorporating her into the fomenting discourse of the cyborg. He finds her the handy pairing of deep humility along with a deep and sincere dedication to her work; her virginity also offers a way around the thorny problem of the perceived sexual impropriety of the New Woman.

³ Interestingly, what Mina witnesses at this moment is the stuff of religious vision: Morris’ Christ-like self-sacrifice. However, unlike the final stage in a medieval mystic’s development, Mina does not forge an affective connection with the Christ figure (“Visionary Tradition” 11-12). Instead, the novel’s other medieval discourse, the chivalric narrative, champions, as Morris’ sacrifice is framed as an act done specifically for Mina’s sake, rather than for all humanity.

As a reaction to modernity, and particularly its threats of destabilizing familiar boundaries of not only men and women's appropriate behavior, but what defines their complementary essences, Stoker turns to the medieval past for a stable, familiar, yet exceptional archetype. The medieval archetype offers a wondrous power and even a degree of authority, though Stoker caricatures even her humility by rendering her abject. He uses Mina as a conduit to manage his fears of both women's and technology's betrayal of man, the upturning of two familiar hierarchies of power. Ultimately, however, Mina exceeds any machine-like circumscription. She joins with machine not to overthrow man but to serve him brilliantly; she remains practically useful, but uncannily absorbs new technologies, knowledge, and logic, becoming a hybrid of a "man-trained" and "self-made" woman — while all the while remaining ineffably mysterious, utterly wonderful.

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