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Cover Page Footnote

Mark Bernard holds a Ph.D. in American Culture Studies, with emphasis in Film, Media, and Culture, from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. His work has appeared in several journals and anthologies. He is co-author of the forthcoming book *The Politics of Food and Film* and is currently at work on a book-length manuscript titled, *Selling the Splat Pack: The DVD Revolution and the American Horror Film*.

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For several years, many film scholars have invested in the idea of an “émigré narrative,” a genealogy that traces such noted exiled German filmmakers as Fritz Lang and Robert Siodmak as they fled Hitler’s Germany and ended up in Hollywood where they were supposedly able, through the films they made there, to express themselves, convey exilic despair, tap into cultural anxieties, and critique the fascist state they had left behind. Edward Dimendberg offers a succinct summary of the “émigré narrative,” locating its roots in film scholarship that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s and claiming that this “underlying supposition of German creative predominance still remains an article of faith among many film historians and critics” (114). According to these proponents of the “émigré narrative,” exiled German filmmakers were able, to paraphrase Lutz Koepnick, to take German cultural material, put it in their pockets, carry it across the Atlantic, and “simply plug into a different context” (“Doubling” 84), in this case, Hollywood.

“A Foreign Man in a Fog”

Even though the belief in the “German school of Hollywood” remains, as Dimendberg puts it, “an article of faith” for many film scholars (118, 114), the émigré narrative has come under criticism in recent years. These challenges have come from a variety of fronts, one of the most significant of which has been the question of authorship. Dimendberg writes that “Critically scrutinizing the auteurism and romantic belief in the self-expression of the film director” has played a large role in dismantling the émigré narrative and asks, “Working initially as vulnerable outsiders in a film production system and language that were both new to them, how much autonomy and creative input could the German émigrés . . . contribute to their films, subject as they were to the influence of Hollywood studio executives, producers, censors, novelists, and screenplay writers?” (118). Thomas Elsaesser also challenges the notion of German filmic self-expression in Hollywood, claiming that the émigré narrative ignores “the complex decision-making process of Hollywood picture making by focusing on an implausible degree of directorial self-expression” (442n). In other words, scholars such as Elsaesser warn that it is untenable to argue that these German-born filmmakers were able to express themselves in Hollywood due to the multiple agents – both industrial and cultural– at work during studio-era Hollywood. The émigré director (and, for that matter, most other directors as well) was simply one cog in a complex machine that produces the “meaning” of filmic texts.

Lutz Koepnick acknowledges that films made by émigré German directors were “not a product of German authorship in exile or a belated offspring of Weimar cinema” (*Dark* 166), but is hesitant to totally efface the notion of German authorship in Hollywood. Instead, Koepnick suggests that the films made by exiled

directors in Hollywood are not expressions of exiled German identities, nor are they merely standardized Hollywood products; instead, meaning in these films is produced from the complex interface between the authorship of an exiled filmmaker and the standardized practices of the studio system. Many exiled German filmmakers, Koepnick claims, were able “to explore forms of authorship amid a film industry dedicated to standardized genre products and escapist star vehicles” and that “the most fascinating aspects of exile directorship . . . [emerged] . . . not in spite of studio control but as a result of complex negotiations with the various forces that defined the ‘genius’ of studio filmmaking” (“Doubling” 83, 85).

According to Koepnick, one of the émigré German directors to interface most interestingly with the standardization of studio-era Hollywood was Robert Siodmak. Koepnick claims it was not until 1943, when the director began working regularly in Hollywood, that Siodmak’s films began to exhibit “Expressionistic predilections” (*Dark* 166), a stylistic shift that allowed Siodmak to create complex films that “[articulate] diverse styles, cultural codes, and experiences into a performative and pluralistic hybrid” (*Dark* 166). Most remarkably, Siodmak’s Hollywood work, Koepnick argues, is filled with “Rupture[s] and displacement[s]” that lead his films both to critique Nazi Germany’s “anesthetic fantasies of wholeness and self-presence” and to “promote more decentered forms of subjectivity that recognize lack, fragmentation, and nonidentity as peculiarly modern sources of meaning” (*Dark* 169, 168).

Koepnick analyzes Siodmak’s celebrated work in film noir, including canonical films such as *Phantom Lady* (1944) and *The Spiral Staircase* (1945) and marginal fare like *Cobra Woman* (1943) to bear out his claim that Siodmak’s Hollywood films, with their

Modernist emphasis on “lack, fragmentation, and nonidentity,” confront and critique Nazi cinema’s “Wagnerian ideologies of embodiment” (*Dark* 168). Koepnick’s work on Siodmak shows how this filmic critique is made possible through the interface between exilic directorship and the mechanisms of the studio system and offers a different, more necessarily complex framework for analyzing German émigré authorship.

***Son of Dracula*: Siodmak Picture or Vehicle for Lon Chaney Jr.?**

It is unfortunate, then, that Koepnick never devotes his attention to *Son of Dracula*, the third picture in Universal’s *Dracula* series that Siodmak directed for the studio in 1943. Koepnick is not exceptional in this regard, for the film has often been undervalued by many, including Siodmak himself. According to Deborah Alpi, Siodmak himself lamented while shooting the film that the original screenplay for the movie, written by his equally legendary brother Curt Siodmak, was “terrible” and sounded as if it “had been knocked together in a few days” (qtd. in Alpi 113). Alpi’s own evaluations of the film range from equivocal praise – at one point, she calls it a “more than acceptable entry in the Universal horror canon” (113) – to dismissal as she ultimately considers the film a “minor effort” for a director of Siodmak’s mettle (114).

Likewise, Michael Walker, in his extensive survey of Siodmak’s 1940s *film noir* pictures, does not even mention the film by name, instead referring to it merely as “a vehicle for . . . B-picture [star] Lon Chaney Jr.” (“Robert” 110). Perhaps most surprisingly, Curt Siodmak, in his autobiography, devotes only four paragraphs to a discussion of *Son of Dracula*, a film that would end up being the only American collaboration between himself and his brother (277-78). Ultimately,

the standing opinion of *Son of Dracula*, according to Tom Weaver, Michael Brunas, and John Brunas, is that the film “is still regarded as a footnote, a stepping stone to [Siodmak’s] later, highly regarded film noir works” (368-69).

However, *Son of Dracula* is much more significant than these dismissals suggest. If, as Koepnick suggests, Siodmak’s most interesting work emerges from his negotiations with the filmmaking mechanisms of studio-era Hollywood, *Son of Dracula* is worth a closer look, for it is doubtful that Siodmak was ever under more pressure from a studio than when he was shooting this film. In 1943, Siodmak’s career in Hollywood was off to an inauspicious start: after having struck out on jobs at Paramount, Republic, and 20th Century-Fox (Weaver 366), his brother Curt, who was a darling at Universal after penning their 1941 blockbuster *The Wolf Man* (George Waggner, 1941), got Robert a job directing his screenplay for *Son of Dracula* (Siodmak 277). Universal included an option for more pictures in Siodmak’s contract if they were pleased with his work on *Son of Dracula*, so “there was pressure on the director to make good fast” (Weaver 366). The film had to be shot cheaply and quickly, but perhaps the biggest obstacle that would be placed in Siodmak’s path was in terms of casting.

Siodmak was forced to cast Lon Chaney Jr. in the role of Count Dracula, a part for which the bulky American actor was, putting it lightly, ill-suited. After his turn as the Wolf Man, however, Chaney was Universal’s number one horror actor, and during the early 1940s, he claimed that the studio “received more mail for [him] . . . than any other star” (qtd. in Smith 42). His claims to popularity are supported by Universal’s decision to cast him, whether he fit the role or not, in as many of their monster pictures as possible. Weaver,

“A Foreign Man in a Fog”

Brunas, and Brunas lament that *Son of Dracula* is a prime example of Chaney being “cynically miscast” by Universal in hopes of guaranteeing profit (366). However, Koepnick’s claims that Siodmak’s films are most complex and interesting when the director must negotiate with Hollywood filmmaking practices are certainly borne out in *Son of Dracula*, for the casting of Chaney, coupled with visual and narrative aesthetic decisions made by Siodmak, makes for a complex portrayal of the infamous Count, one that is predicated on notions of lack, absence, fragmentation, and decentered forms of subjectivity – the very notions that Koepnick cites as central to Siodmak’s work in Hollywood.

In order to foreground these characteristics of Siodmak’s *Dracula*, referred to as “Count Alucard” throughout much of the film, it will be helpful to draw key comparisons between Chaney’s performance as *Dracula* and Bela Lugosi’s iconic turn as the Count in the 1931 film *Dracula*, the first sound horror picture made by Universal, directed by American Tod Browning. Discussing *Son of Dracula*, Curt Siodmak complains that “Lon [Chaney] was wrongly cast. Bela Lugosi should have played the part” (277), and indeed Lugosi, with his performance in Browning’s film, set the standard for how an onscreen *Dracula* should look, sound, and act. The ways in which Chaney’s performance in Siodmak’s picture differs from – or fails to live up to – Lugosi’s performance highlight issues of absence, fragmentation, and problematic subjectivity in Siodmak’s film. First, it will be helpful to consider the differences between the two actors’ onscreen personas and the trajectories of their careers in relation to how they “perform” *Dracula*. A closer look at their performances foregrounds issues of the embodiment in the two films. A consideration of how the two *Draculas*

act on or are acted upon by their respective female leads will show how Siodmak's Dracula, as played by Chaney, is a figure marked by decentered subjectivity. Due to the ways in which he lacks embodiment and is worked upon by forces outside of his control, Siodmak's Count Alucard can possibly be taken as a metaphor for the exile in Hollywood.

Authenticity and Performance: Lugosi and Chaney Play Count Dracula

It has been well-documented how the role of Count Dracula was both a blessing and a curse to the career of Bela Lugosi and how playing Dracula in Browning's 1931 film afforded the Hungarian-born actor an entryway into Hollywood, but forever typecast him as a big-screen boogiemán thereafter. However, worth noting here are a few instances of how Lugosi's portrayal of Dracula was, and continues to be, perceived by movie-going audiences as an authentic performance. As David Skal notes, Lugosi was one of Universal's last choices for the part, even though he had performed it to much acclaim and box office on the stage, and was offered a paltry sum of thirty five hundred dollars to play the title role (177). Despite the minuscule amount of money he would receive, Lugosi took the job, hoping that it would make him a star at a time when he was unknown to movie-going audiences (178). The part did make Lugosi recognizable to audiences, but in such a way that would link him to the role of Dracula and perpetuate a myth that Lugosi was, in fact, not acting at all when he portrayed the Count. These myths began circulating on the set of the film, before *Dracula* was even completed. For instance, David Manners, who played Jonathan Harker in the film, loved to treat interviewers to tales of how he would see "Lugosi standing in front of a full-length mirror between scenes, intoning 'I am Dracula.'"

“A Foreign Man in a Fog”

(qtd. in Skal 186). Manners continues: “I never thought [Lugosi] was acting, but being the odd man he was” (qtd. in Skal 186).

When the film was ready for release, the publicity department at Universal further engendered the notion of Lugosi literally as Count Dracula, selling Lugosi’s “authenticity” and seemingly unnatural connection to the role. Robert Spadoni documents how “In its promotion of *Dracula*, the studio fixed on Lugosi’s foreign birth and accent to spin a story around the actor that was designed to make him seem darkly mysterious” (118). According to Spadoni, “the marketers seemed intent on playing up the man’s similarity to the vampire in Stoker’s novel” and went so far as to tie “aspects of Lugosi’s personal history” to that of the fictional Count Dracula (118), thus linking “the authenticity of the film’s horror” to the authenticity of Lugosi’s performance (119). Universal’s ploy worked: *Dracula* was a blockbuster hit, “earning more money than any other Universal film released that year” (Spadoni 46), and Lugosi and Dracula were symbiotically linked as one. Writing in 2006, Lyndon W. Joslin proclaims that “It’s a testimonial to the popularity of [*Dracula*], and the hypnotic power of [Lugosi’s] performance, that to this very day, despite the many other versions of *Dracula* that have been filmed in the interim, Bela Lugosi still *is* Dracula to the general public” (25). Ultimately, the confluence of Lugosi’s anonymity prior to his performance in *Dracula*, his Eastern European looks and accent, the endeavors of Universal’s marketing department, and the reception of the film created an air of authenticity around Lugosi’s performance of Dracula.

Universal did not need to worry about filling Lugosi’s shoes in their 1936 sequel, *Dracula’s Daughter* (Lambert Hillyer, 1936), because the Production Code, made more stringent under the leadership of Joseph

Breen, dictated that Dracula could not even appear in the film if Universal wanted to pass the Code's standards (Skal 234). However, twelve years after the release of *Dracula*, Chaney had his work cut out for him when he donned the Count's cape for *Son of Dracula*. Chaney's rise to fame was a long journey, and at times, it seemed as if the only way Chaney could become a success would be to give up his own identity. Throughout his youth, Chaney, who was born Creighton Chaney, was interested in acting, but his father, a legendary superstar of the silent screen best known for his roles in horror pictures, forbid Creighton to pursue an acting career (Smith 7-8). When Chaney Sr. passed away in 1930, his son renewed his interest in acting and shortly thereafter signed a contract with RKO in 1931 (Smith 11). Much to Chaney's chagrin, RKO immediately pressured him to change his name to Lon Chaney Jr. in order to capitalize on his father's immense success, but determined to make it in the movie business on his own merit, Chaney resisted the name change (Smith 12). However, when his first several films were flops, he finally consented (Smith 13).

After a decade of disappointing films, Chaney finally attained success when he played Lenny in *Of Mice and Men* (Lewis Milestone, 1939) and found himself under contract to Universal at a time when the studio was enjoying financial success from a "Second Wave" of monster films, inaugurated by Rowland V. Lee's *Son of Frankenstein* in 1939. Universal's only problem was that their iconic stars (Karloff, Lugosi) of the "First Wave" of monster pictures from the early 1930s were either growing uninterested in playing monsters or were on shaky ground with the studio (again, Karloff and Lugosi respectively). The studio was looking for a replacement "horror icon," and Chaney Jr.,

“A Foreign Man in a Fog”

saddled as he was with his father’s legacy as a big screen boogeyman, was the perfect choice.

Chaney’s status as Universal’s premier monster was established by his performance as the title character in 1941’s *The Wolf Man*, and afterward, Universal decided to cast him in as many of their monster pictures as possible, whether he fit the role or not. In addition to reprising his Wolf Man role four more times, Chaney, during his tenure at Universal, eventually portrayed the Frankenstein monster, the Mummy, and Dracula. This wide variety of roles may suggest that Chaney was an actor of considerable versatility, but such was not the case. In fact, Chaney was often criticized for being “wooden” and “unnatural” in his performances (Smith 13). Writing specifically about Chaney’s monster film acting, Weaver, Brunas, and Brunas lament, “Lon Chaney believed that all there was to playing a monster was to endure Jack Pierce’s torturous makeup sessions” (290). Likewise, David Hogan describes Chaney’s performance in *Son of Dracula* as “flat and passionless” and jokes that the most noteworthy feature of Chaney’s performance was his decision to “[allow] Universal makeup artists to gray his temples and give him a slick pencil mustache” (144).

These comments seem to posit Chaney as an absence, an actor who, beyond the make-up and wardrobe, is not “really there” and designates lack by “standing in” for someone – his father, for example – or something else. Similarly, Ken Gelder observes that “The titles of Universal’s vampire films – *Dracula* (1931), *Dracula’s Daughter* (1936), *Son of Dracula* (1943) and so on – indicate just how self-referential they were: a stable of films were created around Lugosi’s ‘original’ (and family-oriented) Count” (91). Thus, in addition to acting as a substitute for his father, the American Chaney, in Siodmak’s film, is also standing in

for the Hungarian-born Lugosi, a double displacement that foregrounds Chaney both as an inauthentic Hungarian and a figure of absence. The incongruous and inauthentic nature of Chaney's performance as the Count makes it clear how the extra-filmic politics of studio-era Hollywood (like Universal's instance on casting the clunky Chaney in as many of their horror pictures as possible) interface with the authorship and aesthetic decisions of an émigré filmmaker like Siodmak to create films that exhibit the qualities of lack and fragmentation that Koepnick claims are central to Siodmak's work in Hollywood. The ways in which Siodmak's direction (along with his brother's storyline) corroborates with Chaney's status as a figure of absence and lack are apparent from the opening scenes of *Son of Dracula*, an opening that differs significantly from the one in Browning's *Dracula*.

Dracula and His Son: Embodiment/Presence and Disembodiment/Absence

Joslin and Spadoni both note how Browning's screen version of *Dracula* differs from the stage version from which it was adapted, a divergence that takes place during the film's opening. Joslin observes that the stage adaptation of *Dracula* "unfolds as a whodunit, with Renfield a suspect in the vampire attacks, and the Count initially dismissed" as unlikely suspect (25). However, the film jettisons the whodunit plot in favor of making it clear who the film's eponymous monster will be. The opening scene depicts Renfield (Dwight Frye) making his journey, via horse and carriage, to a real estate transaction with Count Dracula, and the sensationalistic scene is filled with the wide-eyed faces and voices of the Transylvanian locals warning Renfield to go no further. The next, quite famous, scene is made up of a sequence of shots at Castle Dracula that depict the Count and his

“A Foreign Man in a Fog”

wives rising from their coffins. As Spadoni notes, “Viewers need only hear the warnings of the frightened villagers and see Dracula rise from his coffin (both in the opening minutes of the film) . . . to know who the murderer is” (50). Unlike in the state adaptation, there is no mystery as to who will determine and drive the narrative in *Dracula*, for Lugosi’s Count commandingly stands before the camera. As Karl Freund’s camera tracks directly toward Lugosi’s face and mesmerizing eyes, it is almost as if the camera and the audience, like Dracula’s wives who rise to surround him, are both drawn toward Dracula’s face and body, unable to resist, in this famous shot.

Lugosi’s Dracula’s revelation of himself early on in the course of the film foreshadows his overwhelming bodily presence in *Dracula*. Spadoni argues that the ways in which Lugosi performs Dracula and the ways in which the camera depicts him in Browning’s film give his Count a “persistent corporeality” (62). Adding to this, Spadoni suggests, is how the filmmakers decide not to show Lugosi’s Count changing forms – for instance, the camera never shows him transforming into bats, wolves, etc. – nor do they show him getting younger or older depending on his feeding habits, as he does in Stoker’s novel (62). All of these factors result in Lugosi’s Dracula appearing, according to Spadoni, “thickly materialized at all times” (62). The seemingly materialized nature of Lugosi’s body (which, Spadoni argues, was further accentuated by the still relatively new emergence of sound in film) couples with the presumed “authenticity” of Lugosi’s performance to create a very “real” Count in Browning’s *Dracula* whose body drives the narrative.

Siodmak takes a drastically different approach to the revelation of the Count’s body in the opening scenes of *Son of Dracula*. The film, which takes place in the

American South, opens up in a train station as Frank Stanley (Robert Paige) and Dr. Brewster (Frank Craven) wait for the arrival by train of a visitor whom they refer to as Count Alucard. When the train pulls into the station, Frank and Dr. Brewster are informed that Alucard himself is not on the train, and the two men confusedly resign themselves to transporting Alucard's luggage to the Dark Oaks plantation, home of the Caldwells, the family who is to host Alucard during his visit. As they look over the Count's luggage, Brewster notes Alucard's name printed on a sideways stacked piece of luggage and begins spelling the name backward to himself aloud, as if he already suspects that the name is phony and is merely "Dracula" spelled in reverse. However, Frank interrupts Brewster before he can complete the spelling, and any suspicions that Brewster may have about Alucard are temporarily put aside.

There are several significant differences between the beginnings of the two films. First, while both films begin with scenes centered upon transportation, the beginning of Browning's *Dracula* features a horse and carriage, giving the film, even in 1931, an antediluvian, out of date feel. Conversely, *Son of Dracula* begins at a train station, featuring a more modernized form of transportation, which is significant considering that Koepnick claims that the more fragmented, decentered subjectivities present in Siodmak's Hollywood films are often the result of modernization and are more "modern senses of meaning" (*Dark* 168). Additionally, the confused characters of Frank and Dr. Brewster, who have no idea whom they are really waiting for at the train station, are opposite from the wide-eyed, frightened villagers of Browning's *Dracula*, who know exactly what kind of menace lurks within the walls of Castle Dracula. However, perhaps the most significant difference between the opening of the two films is how

“A Foreign Man in a Fog”

Siodmak's Dracula is absent from these opening moments, as opposed to the Count's striking, commanding, early embodied presence in Browning's film, and how the failure of "Count Alucard" to arrive when expected creates an early rupture in the film's narrative and seems to predicate the film on a character that lacks true embodiment. Even as the film moves back to the Caldwell's home at Dark Oaks and introduces Kay Caldwell (Louise Allbritton), a woman who has grown obsessed with the occult and who has invited Count Alucard to her family's home, these issues of the Count's lack of embodiment are not resolved, but are complicated further.

Count Alucard first "appears" in the film as a bat, when Kay goes to consult with Queen Zimba (Adeline DeWalt Reynolds), a gypsy fortuneteller whom Kay brought back to Dark Oaks from her "travels abroad." Zimba warns Kay that Alucard will eventually arrive and bring bad tidings when he does, and sure enough, a bat, accompanied by an ominous blare of brass instruments on the soundtrack, appears in the doorway of Zimba's hut, causing the aged gypsy to fall over dead from shock. Lugosi's Count, in Browning's film, does not appear as a bat until after his iconic first appearance, a fact that adds to the Count's "persistent corporeality." However, Siodmak's Count first appears as a fake rubber bat, a reveal that, coupled with his absence from the beginning of the film, seems to give Alucard a persistent *in-corporeality*.

When Count Alucard finally appears "in the flesh" in the film's next scene, it is in a manner far different from Lugosi's striking first appearance. Whereas Lugosi stares at the camera full-on and seemingly commands and pulls in the tracking camera with his mesmerizing gaze and presence, the first shot that features Count Alucard begins as a shot peeking into the window of a

reception that Kay is having for Alucard's (delayed) arrival. The camera cranes back from the window – the frame-within-the-frame filled with blissfully unaware party-goers – to the dark, wooded terrain outside where it eventually finds Count Alucard lurking in the darkness. The craning camera moves over Alucard's shoulder, locating him in the bottom left-hand side of the frame. Alucard faces away from the camera, only turning around and facing the camera, with a wide-eyed, almost confused expression on his face (perhaps Chaney attempting to look frightening without the aid of Jack Pierce's Wolf Man or Mummy make-up), when the camera locks him within the center of the frame.

Unlike Lugosi's Count, who commands the camera, Chaney's Count is commanded by the camera, reacting to, rather than guiding, its movements. By introducing Chaney's Count in this fashion, a manner that emphasizes his absence, disembodiment, and lack of control, Siodmak is perhaps playing off of the notion that Chaney is simply inauthentic in the role or is merely "standing in" for Lugosi's "authentic" Count. At this point, it becomes more apparent that meaning in *Son of Dracula* is created, as Koepnick suggests about Siodmak's other Hollywood pictures, by Siodmak's authorship interfacing with the machinery of studio-era Hollywood. The result of this interface in this instance is Count Alucard's decentered subjectivity: he is a character whose identity is dependent both upon the absent figures whom he stands in for (Lon Chaney Sr., the "authentic" Bela Lugosi) and the world of the film (represented here by the camera) that works upon him and commands his behavior, rather than vice versa. As Deborah Alpi observes, "Alucard's life is governed by the constraints . . . which dictate his world" (114), and Alucard is a far cry from Lugosi's Count who commands the film's field of vision and who, as Nina

Auerbach puts it, “makes stagy, self-delighted entrances into his adversaries’ drawing rooms” (115). The shot that introduces Count Alucard in *Son of Dracula* as timidly lurking in the shadows forecasts how the world of this film is going to decenter Alucard.

Distressed Damsels or Fatal Femmes: The Women of *Dracula* and *Son of Dracula*

To say the two female leads of *Dracula* and *Son of Dracula* differ from each other would be a dramatic understatement. In fact, noting the difference between the two films’ depiction of their female leads is an excellent way to explore the differences between Lugosi’s *Dracula* and Chaney’s Count Alucard. In Browning’s *Dracula*, Mina Harker (Helen Chandler) is little more than a victim, the precious prey of the villainous Count, who must be protected by the men in her life, including the wise and paternal Dr. Van Helsing (Edward Van Sloan), at all costs. There is little for Chandler to do with her role as Mina besides to alternatively fall under Dracula’s spell or be horrified by the Count. Chandler was so disappointed by her role that she complained to an interviewer one year later, “In *Dracula*, I played one of those bewildered little girls who go around pale, hollow-eyed and anguished, wondering about things” (qtd. in Skal 179). Chandler certainly had grounds for complaint, for the material given to her and David Manners to work with as the film’s central romantic couple is so weak and marginal that, according to Spadoni, Universal’s marketing department fretted over encouraging female audiences to come to the film for its romantic elements: “the relationship between Mina . . . and John Harker . . . was deemed too insubstantial to rate as a satisfying secondary romantic plot line” (51). The driving force of Browning’s film is unquestionably Lugosi’s fully-

embodied and “authentic” Dracula, so much so that Lugosi’s career-making performance pushes the rest of the film to the margins.

At first, it seems as if *Son of Dracula* is going to proceed along similar lines. When Alucard invades the Caldwell’s home (in the form of a bat, again accentuating his incorporeality), he murders Kay’s father (George Irving) in an upstairs bedroom, usurping the Father and seemingly inserting himself as the phallic center of the home. Alucard then seduces Kay, much to the chagrin of her family and Frank, her fiancé. Predictably, Kay casts aside Frank and marries to Alucard, transforming into a vampire herself, and Frank becomes hysterical when he believes he has murdered Kay in an attempt to kill Alucard and is thrown into jail. However, it becomes clear, later into the film as it approaches the third act, that Kay is a far different character from the terrorized Mina, helpless against Dracula’s charms. A vampiric Kay visits Frank in his cell and reveals to him that luring Alucard to Dark Oaks and becoming a vampire herself has always been her plan. Further, she wants Frank to become a vampire along with her and destroy Alucard so that they can live with each other forever as immortals.

At this point in the film, Kay Caldwell transforms from the lady-in-peril character type so familiar to the horror genre into a femme fatale, a character type most synonymous with film noir, and her transformation ruptures, disjoins, and reshapes the narrative of the film itself. Alpi notes how Kay’s transformation into a femme fatale makes *Son of Dracula* bear “a closer resemblance to [Siodmak’s later *noir* films] than to Tod Browning’s *Dracula* . . . particularly in the story line of the cuckolded central character plotted against by a *femme fatale* and her lover” (114). This reshaping of the narrative pushes Count Alucard, whose presence in and

“*A Foreign Man in a Fog*”

grasp upon the film’s milieu was already tenuous, to the margins. After all, as Michael Walker notes, it is the femme fatale who “gets the plot moving” in a *film noir* (“Introduction” 12). Thus, Kay is no mere bride of Dracula like the women commanded by Lugosi in Browning’s film. Rather, she is the central character who enacts her subjectivity and power upon the film’s narrative, and fittingly, as Joslin notes, it is she, not Alucard, who is shown putting the vampiric bite on victims (164), in specific, her lover, Frank. At this point, Alucard is less the full-bodied monster of the Hollywood horror film and more like the cuckolded husband of film noir.

Accordingly, the climax of the film seems to be more concerned with the containment of this release of feminine power, as embodied by Kay, the fusion of vampire and femme fatale, than it is with the destruction of the duped Count. Frank escapes from the jail and flees to Dark Oaks in order to carry out Kay’s wishes and destroy the Count, doing so rather easily by burning the Count’s coffin that he must return to before sunrise. When the Count, who now seems relatively harmless after Kay’s confession that she has masterminded everything, realizes what Frank has done, he stumbles around, pours sweat, ineffectually attempts to smother the flames, and rather pathetically implores Frank to “Put it out!” The “portly and ill-tempered” behavior, as Joslin describes it (166), of Count Alucard in danger is in stark contrast to the “balletic precision and fluidity” that Spadoni notes in Lugosi’s body when the Count is threatened in Browning’s film (67), another point of comparison that highlights Alucard’s lack of bodily and corporal control. As the sun rises, the Count evaporates, leaving only his cape and a ring on a skeletal finger floating in a pool of water, which is fitting, considering

how Chaney's performance, according to his critics, overly-relies on wardrobe and is marked by absence.

The film then moves to its climax, a moment that had been reserved for the destruction of the title character in previous Universal vampire films. Frank discovers a sleeping Kay in an upstairs bedroom of the Dark Oaks estate and, denying his own desire and love for Kay, sets her and her bed aflame. Only as Kay burns on her bed does the film's crisis seem resolved: romantic string music swells on the soundtrack, and the camera tracks in on Frank's mournful face. This concluding scene contains elements of horror, film noir, and gothic romance and bears out Koepnick's claims that Siodmak's Hollywood films "[articulate] diverse styles, cultural codes, and experiences into a performative and pluralistic hybrid" (166). Elsaesser argues that films made by German émigrés in Hollywood usually exhibited these darker qualities of modern gothic genres such as horror and film noir, not as a result of some form of tortured expression on the part of the exiled directors, but rather because these were the types of films that German directors were most proficient at producing and that Hollywood producers expected them to make (376, 431). Siodmak, as has already been mentioned, was offered the option of a contract at Universal if he delivered on *Son of Dracula*, so perhaps he wanted to include as many bankable modes and styles into this hybridized film as possible to show his technical proficiency. If so, the same mechanisms of studio-era Hollywood that forced Siodmak to cast Lon Chaney Jr. in a part the actor was ill-suited for – the type of negotiations with Hollywood that are key to meaning-making in Siodmak's films – are responsible for causing Chaney's Alucard to get lost in the pluralistic shuffle of *Son of Dracula*.

“A Foreign Man in a Fog”: Siodmak in Hollywood

While Siodmak’s *Son of Dracula* clearly demonstrates how the authorship of an exiled filmmaker such as Siodmak interfaces with Hollywood industry policy to create meaning, it is still tempting to read the beleaguered, displaced, in transit, almost incorporeal Count Alucard as a figure evocative of the émigrés who were fleeing to America before and during the outbreak of World War II. The ways in which Alucard is depicted as displaced in America, arriving (or not) by means of modern transportation, and changing his name in order to sound “less suspicious” and to circulate with less difficulty seem to echo the experiences that German émigrés surely underwent as they traveled from Europe to America.

This reading, as enticing as it may be, risks returning to the “émigré narrative” that has been necessarily challenged, complicated, and revised by recent scholarship. However, it may not be untenable to argue that, rather than being a figure who expresses émigré angst, perhaps Count Alucard is emblematic of a more general émigré uneasiness about being displaced, worked upon by forces outside of one’s control, and losing one’s name, identity, and body. In this respect, Lon Chaney, Jr., an actor hoisted upon a newly arrived foreign director who had to prove himself in Hollywood, is the perfect conduit for these anxieties, considering how his career was predicated upon his giving up his name and “standing in” for other actors who came before him. It may be going too far to claim that the themes of fragmentation and disembodiment in *Son of Dracula* resist Nazi cinema’s “Wagnerian ideologies of embodiment” in the same ways that Koepnick argues they do in Siodmak’s other Hollywood pictures (*Dark* 168), but it is appropriate to consider fragmentation and disembodiment in this film as heavily-mediated

symptoms of an émigré integrating with the machinery of Hollywood, but hoping not to be completely subsumed by it.

At one point in the film, Count Alucard is described as “a foreign man in a fog,” so perhaps one can consider the “foreign man” as Siodmak and “the fog” that wraps around and envelops the figure as the complex mechanism of studio-era Hollywood. Both Siodmak and Classical Hollywood filmmaking practices work together to make meaning in *Son of Dracula*. Even though the swirling mists make it difficult to tell where one ends and the other begins, the “foreign man” is still there, still present, even though his outline is difficult to discern.

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“A Foreign Man in a Fog”

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