CHAPTER TEN
ANTI-SEMITISM AND THE VAMPIRE THEME

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Modern versions of vampire poetics can fruitfully be dated beginning from the Francis Ford Coppola film Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1992–1993), which provided the vampire film tradition with a new impulse. Since the opening of the third millennium, the avant-garde Dracula: Pages from a Virgin’s Diary by the Canadian producer Guy Maddin (2002) continued the same intellectual line: Stoker’s novel is here recast as an esthete’s ballet, with the characters wearing makeup to resemble Coppola’s characters, and acting in a mainly grey-scale silent film meant to evoke associations of Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens (rendered in English as Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror, or Nosferatu: A Symphony of Terror, 1922), the expressionistic masterpiece by F.W. Murnau, which instantiates the perpetual opposition between Victorian chastity and vampire sexuality. In the films Vampires (1998) by John Carpenter (also known as John Carpenter’s Vampires) and Van Helsing (2004) by Stephen Sommers, the struggle against vampires is extravagantly transformed into an action-packed thriller with vampire exterminators featuring as an elite fighters’ unit in the service of the Vatican. The film Dracula 2000 should be considered part of the same series, with the “2000” which appears in the title understood as an allusion to popular eschatology of the millennium. The producer, Patrick Lussier, made a movie based on an original script (written jointly with P. Soisson). The movie is not meant for family viewing; it rather addresses itself to intellectuals (a notion corroborated by the Miramax Company trademark).

The plot is a typical enough construct, based on yet another one of Dracula’s resurrections. However it also contains an unexpected post-modernistic turn: the great vampire appears as a reincarnation of the great traitor, Judas Iscariot. This development makes it possible to “enrich” the traditional image by motivating the vampire’s hatred of Christ, the Christian faith, and everything Christian per se.

The reception of Lussier’s film in Russia was marked by a peculiar side effect bound up with a simple logical operation: Dracula’s being Judas
Iscariot and Judas’ being a Jew together imply that Dracula is Jewish. A participant in a dialogue conducted through the internet contributes the following considerations:

Recently, I was finally able to watch this movie, and here is the conclusion I arrived at: the plot development is much too weak for this altogether not all that bad of a film. ... The movie is very classical and conforms to the accepted myths about vampires: that they are afraid of crosses, holy water, and the like. They can be killed with an aspen stake, after preliminarily being beheaded. Everybody bitten by Dracula will be able to regain a human likeness if Dracula himself is killed. But! There are [two] things which make this movie stand out from among all the others: (...) ...

2. Dracula is not the generally familiar Vlad Țepeș, but rather the even more familiar Judas Iscariot.

In short, the authors have recollected that history has seen an even greater sinner than some Polish petty prince (big deal if he stuck people up on stakes and feasted on dead bodies, but look at Judas—that’s quite a lot sharper, taking aim at the Lord Himself!). And here I was, just overwhelmed by the realization: so Dracula, then, is a Jew! Wow, what a nationalistic movie that makes! The Jews are guilty of everything all over again.¹

This internet writer, evidently, is being ironic. By contrast, “The Return of Rus’: On the Way to a Russian State,” an essay by Vladimir Popov posted on the internet approximately during the same years, takes itself quite seriously. Popov (editor-in-chief of the newspaper  Ekho Rossii  (Echo of Russia)) synthesizes the results of anti-Semitic historiography, theosophy, and research on the shady scientific undertakings of the early 20th century (cf. the Soviet project of crossing a human being with an ape), and offers far-reaching conclusions:

The legend of Dracula opens before us the most secret reality of these non-human creatures. Dracula is the autobiography of the ape-Jew. In order to prolong his life, as a vampire, he must suck Aryan blood, thus prolonging unto infinity his existence as a zombie, absorbing the magical substance, which it contains. The truth about the ritual crimes of the Jews has been historically proven by the great Russian researcher Vladimir Dal’, the author of the famous Dictionary of the Russian Language ... Those who believe that the descendants of the Lemur monkeys are creatures just like other human beings, will never be able to understand them.²

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