

[Contents](#) [Index](#)

The Dialectic of Fear

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{67} The fear of bourgeois civilization is summed up in two names: Frankenstein and Dracula. The monster and the vampire are born together one night in 1816 in the drawing room of the [Villa Chapuis](#) near [Geneva](#), out of a society game among friends to while away a rainy summer. Born in the full spate of the industrial revolution, they rise again together in the critical years at the end of the nineteenth century under the names of Hyde and Dracula. In the twentieth century they conquer the cinema: after the First World War, in German Expressionism; after the 1929 crisis, with the big RKO productions in America; then in 1956-57, [Peter Cushing](#) and Christopher Lee, directed by [Terence Fisher](#), again, triumphantly, incarnate this twin-faced nightmare. Frankenstein and Dracula lead parallel lives. They are indivisible, because complementary, figures; the two horrible faces of a single society, its *extremes*: the disfigured wretch and the ruthless proprietor. The [worker and capital](#): 'the whole of society must split into the two classes of *property owners* and propertyless *workers*.' That 'must', which for Marx is a scientific prediction of the future (and {68} the guarantee of a future reordering of society), is a forewarning of the end for nineteenth-century bourgeois culture.

I. Towards a Sociology of the Modern Monster

The literature of terror is born precisely out of the terror of a split society and out of the desire to heal it. It is for just this reason that Dracula and Frankenstein, with rare exceptions, do not appear together. The threat would be too great, and this literature, having produced terror, must also erase it and restore peace. It must restore the broken equilibrium -- giving the illusion of being able to stop history -- because the monster expresses the anxiety that the future will be monstrous. His antagonist -- the enemy of the monster -- will always be, by contrast, a representative of the present, a distillation of complacent nineteenth-century mediocrity: nationalistic, stupid, superstitious, philistine, impotent, self-satisfied. But this does not show through. Fascinated by the horror of the monster, the public accepts the vices of its destroyer without a murmur, just as it accepts his literary depiction, the jaded and repetitive typology which regains its strength and its virginity on contact with the unknown. The monster, then, serves to displace the antagonisms and horrors evidenced within society to outside society itself. In *Frankenstein* the struggle will be between a 'race of devils' and the 'species of man'. Whoever dares to fight the monster automatically becomes the representative of the species, of the whole of society. The monster, the utterly unknown, serves to reconstruct a universality, a social cohesion which in itself would no longer carry conviction.

Frankenstein's monster and Dracula the vampire are, unlike previous monsters, dynamic, totalizing monsters. This is what makes them frightening. Before, things were different. Sade's malefactors agree to operate on the margins of society, hidden away in their towers. Justine is their victim because she rejects the modern world, the world of the city, of exchange, of her reduction to a commodity. She thus gives herself over to the old horror of the feudal world, the will of the individual master. Moreover, in Sade the evil has a 'natural' limit which cannot be overstepped: the gratification of the master's desire. Once he is satiated, the torture ceases too. Dracula, on the other hand, is an ascetic of terror: in him is celebrated the

victory 'of the desire for *possession* over that of *enjoyment*', and possession as such, indifferent to consumption, is by its very nature insatiable and unlimited. [Polidori](#)'s vampire is still a petty feudal lord forced to travel round Europe strangling young ladies for the miserable purpose of surviving. Time is against him, against his conservative desires. [Stoker](#)'s Dracula, by contrast, is a rational entrepreneur who invests his gold to expand his dominion: to conquer the City of London. And already Frankenstein's monster sows devastation over [the whole world](#), from the [Alps](#) to [Scotland](#), from [Eastern Europe](#) to the [Pole](#). By comparison, the gigantic ghost of *The Castle of Otranto* looks like a dwarf. He is confined to a single place; he can appear once only; he is merely a relic of the past. Once order is reestablished he is silent for ever. The modern monsters, however, threaten to live for ever and to conquer the world. For this reason they must be killed.

Frankenstein

{69} Like the proletariat, the monster is denied a [name](#) and an individuality. He is the Frankenstein monster; he belongs wholly to his creator (just as one can speak of 'a Ford worker'). Like the proletariat, he is a *collective* and *artificial* creature. He is not found in nature, but built. Frankenstein is a productive *inventor*-scientist, in open conflict with Walton, the contemplative *discoverer*-scientist (the pattern is repeated with Jekyll and Lanyon). Reunited and brought back to life in the monster are the limbs of those -- the 'poor' -- whom the breakdown of feudal relations has forced into brigandage, poverty and death. Only [modern science](#) -- this metaphor for the 'dark satanic mills' -- can offer them a future. It sews them together again, moulds them according to its will and finally gives them life. But at the moment the monster opens its eyes, its creator draws back in horror: 'by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; . . . How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe . . . ?' [\[1.4.1\]](#)

Between Frankenstein and the monster there is an ambivalent, dialectical relationship, the same as that which, according to Marx, connects capital with wage-labour. On the one hand, the scientist cannot but create the monster: 'often did my human nature turn with loathing from my occupation, whilst, still urged on by an eagerness which perpetually increased, I brought my work near to a conclusion' [\[1.3.6\]](#). On the other hand, he is immediately afraid of it and wants to kill it, because he realizes he has given life to a creature stronger than himself and of which he cannot henceforth be free. It is the same curse that afflicts Jekyll: 'to put your good heart at rest, I will tell you one thing: the moment I choose, I can be rid of Mr Hyde.' And yet it is Hyde who will become master of his master's life. The fear aroused by the monster, in other words, is the fear of one who is afraid of having 'produced his own gravediggers'.

A 'Race of Devils'

The monster's explicit 'demands' cannot in fact produce fear. They are not a gesture of challenge; they are 'reformist' demands. The monster wishes only to have [rights of citizenship](#) among men: 'I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature, and I will be ever mild and docile to my natural lord and king, . . . I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous' [\[2.2.5\]](#). Furthermore, when all kindly relations with humans have failed, the monster humbly accepts his marginalization, begging only to have another creature who is 'as deformed and horrible as myself'. But even this is denied him. The monster's sheer *existence* is frightening enough for Frankenstein, let alone the prospect of his producing children and multiplying. Frankenstein -- who never manages to consummate his marriage -- is the victim of the same impotence that Benjamin describes: 'Social reasons for impotence: the imagination of the bourgeois class stopped caring about the future of the productive forces it had unleashed . . . Male impotence -- key figure of solitude, in it the

arrest of the productive forces is effected'. The possibility of the monster having descendants presents itself to the scientist as a real nightmare: 'a race of {70} devils would be propagated upon the earth who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror' [3.3.1].

'Race of devils': this image of the proletariat encapsulates one of the most reactionary elements in Mary Shelley's ideology. The monster is a historical product, an artificial being: but once transformed into a 'race' he re-enters the immutable realm of Nature. He can become the object of an instinctive, elemental hatred; and 'men' need this hatred to counterbalance the force unleashed by the monster. So true is this that racial discrimination is not superimposed on the development of the narrative but springs directly from it: it is not only Mary Shelley who wants to make the monster a creature of another race, but Frankenstein himself. Frankenstein does not in fact want to create a man (as he claims) but a monster, a race. He narrates at length the 'infinite pains and care' [1.4.1] with which he had endeavoured to form the creature; he tells us that 'his limbs were in proportion' and that he had 'selected his features as beautiful' [1.4.1]. So many lies -- in the same paragraph, three words later, we read: 'His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes. . . . his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.' Even before he begins to live, this new being is already monstrous, already a race apart. He must be so, he is made to be so -- he is created but on these conditions. There is here a clear lament for the feudal sumptuary laws which, by imposing a particular style of dress on each social rank, allowed it to be recognized at a distance and nailed it physically to its social role. Now that clothes have become commodities that anyone can buy, this is no longer possible. Difference in rank must now be inscribed more deeply: in one's skin, one's eyes, one's build. The monster makes us realize how hard it was for the dominant classes to resign themselves to the idea that all human beings are -- or ought to be -- equal.

But the monster also makes us realize that in an unequal society they are not equal. Not because they belong to different 'races' but because inequality really does score itself into one's skin, one's eyes and one's body. And more so, evidently, in the case of the first industrial workers: the monster is disfigured not only because Frankenstein wants him to be like that, but also because this was how things actually were in the first decades of the industrial revolution. In him, the metaphors of the critics of civil society become real. The monster incarnates the dialectic of estranged labour described by the young Marx: 'the more his product is shaped, the more misshapen the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous the worker; the more powerful the work, the more powerless the worker; the more intelligent the work, the duller the worker and the more he becomes a slave of nature. . . . It is true that labour produces . . . palaces, but hovels for the worker. . . . It produces intelligence, but it produces idiocy and cretinism for the worker.' Frankenstein's invention is thus a pregnant metaphor of the process of capitalist production, which forms by deforming, civilizes by barbarizing, enriches by impoverishing -- a two-sided process in which each affirmation entails a negation. And indeed the monster -- the pedestal on which Frankenstein erects his anguished greatness -- is always described *by negation*: man is well proportioned, the monster is not; man is beautiful, {71} the monster ugly; man is good, the monster evil. The monster is man turned upside-down, negated. He has no autonomous existence; he can never be really free or have a future. He lives only as the other side of that coin which is Frankenstein. When the scientist dies, the monster does not know what to do with his own life and commits suicide.

Mary Shelley's Bad Dream

The two extremes of *Frankenstein* are the scientist and the monster. But it is more precise to say that they become extremes in the course of the narration. Mary Shelley's novel rests in fact on an elementary

scheme, that of simplification and splitting ('The whole of society must split into the two classes. . .'). It is a process that demands its victims, and indeed, all the 'intermediate' characters perish one after the other by the monster's hand: Frankenstein's brother William, the maid Justine, his friend Clerval, his wife Elizabeth, his father. This is a sequence echoed in the sacrifice of Philemon and Baucis, as [Faust's](#) entrepreneurial dream dictates the destruction, in the figures of the two old people, of the family unit and small independent property. In *Frankenstein* too, the victims of the monster (or rather of the struggle between the monster and the scientist, a struggle which prefigures the social relations of the future) are those who still represent the ethical and economic ideal of the family as an 'extended' unit: not just the relatives, but also the maid and the fraternal friend Clerval. Clerval, in comparison with his contemporary, Victor, is still placidly traditionalist: he, unlike Frankenstein, has chosen to stay in his parents' town, in his family home, and to keep their values alive. These values are corporative, localistic, unchanging: the ethic of the 'common road' praised by Robinson Crusoe's father. Frankenstein himself ends up being converted to them, but by then it is too late: 'how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow. . . . Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquility and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries' [[Walton 11](#)]

Frankenstein's last words reconnect with Mary Shelley's preface, which gives the aim of the work as 'the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection' [[Preface 2](#)]. Nor is it by accident that his words are spoken to Walton, since Walton is essential for the communication of the work's message. Like Frankenstein, Walton starts out as the protagonist of a desperate undertaking, spurred on by an imperious as well as aggressive and inhuman idea of scientific progress: 'One man's life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge which I sought' [[Letter 4.6](#)]. But Frankenstein's story puts him off. At the end, Walton accedes to the protestations of the sailors, who are frightened for their lives, and agrees to come back 'ignorant and disappointed' [[Walton 8](#)] to his homeland and his family. Thanks to his conversion, Walton survives. And this confers on him a dominant function in the [narrative structure](#), in the book's system of 'senders' of messages. Walton both begins the story and ends it. His narrative 'contains', and thus subordinates, Frankenstein's narrative (which in turn 'contains' that of the monster). The broadest, most comprehensive, most universal [narrative viewpoint](#) is reserved for Walton. The narrative system inverts the meaning of *Frankenstein* as we {72} have described it, exorcising its horror. The dominant element of reality is not the splitting of society into two opposing poles, but its symbolic reunification in the Walton family. The wound is healed: one goes back home.

The universality attributed to Walton by the system of narrative senders applies not only to the story at hand but to the whole course of history. Through Walton, Frankenstein and the monster are relegated to the status of mere historical 'accidents'; theirs is only an episode, a 'case' (Stevenson's title will be *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*). By this means Mary Shelley wants to convince us that *capitalism has no future*: it may have been around for a few years, but now it is all over. Anyone can see that Frankenstein and the monster die without heirs, while Robert Walton survives. It is a glaring anachronism, but one for which Mary Shelley has prepared us. The sociological fulcrum of *Frankenstein* -- the creation of the proletariat -- responds neither to economic interests nor to objective needs. It is the product of a solitary, subjective and entirely disinterested piece of work: Frankenstein expects no personal advantage from creating the monster. Or rather, he cannot expect it, because in the world of the novel there is no way of utilizing the monster. And there is no way of utilizing him because there are no factories. And there are no factories for two very good reasons: because for Mary Shelley the demands of production have no value in themselves, but must be subordinated to the maintenance of the moral and material solidity of the family; and because, as she understood, the factories would undoubtedly multiply the feared 'race of devils' to an infinite number. Wishing to exorcise the proletariat, Mary Shelley, with absolute logical consistency, erases capital from her picture too. In other words, she erases history.

And indeed, the end result of the peculiar narrative structure employed is to make the story of Frankenstein and the monster resemble a *fable*. As in a fable, the story proceeds in *oral* form: Frankenstein speaks to Walton, the monster to Frankenstein, Frankenstein to Walton again (whereas Walton, who embodies history and the future, *writes*). As in a fable, there is an attempt to create a cosy, trusting, domestic situation: even the monster, at the beginning of his narrative, suggests that he and Frankenstein take refuge in a mountain cottage so as to be more comfortable. As in a fable, by an iron law, what has happened must be considered an *imaginary* occurrence. Capitalism is a dream -- a bad dream, but a dream nonetheless.

Dracula

Count Dracula is an aristocrat only in a manner of speaking. Jonathan Harker -- the London estate agent who stays in his castle and whose diary opens Stoker's novel -- observes with astonishment that Dracula lacks precisely what makes a man 'noble': servants. Dracula stoops to driving the carriage, cooking the meals, making the beds, cleaning the castle. The Count has read [Adam Smith](#): he knows that servants are unproductive workers who diminish the income of the person who keeps them. Dracula also lacks the aristocrat's conspicuous consumption: he does not eat, he does not drink, he does not make love, he does not like showy clothes, he does not go to the theatre and he does not go hunting, he does {73} not hold receptions and does not build stately homes. Not even his violence has pleasure as its goal. Dracula (unlike Vlad the Impaler, the historical Dracula, and all other vampires before him) does not *like* spilling blood: he *needs* blood. He sucks just as much as is necessary and never wastes a drop. His ultimate aim is not to destroy the lives of others according to whim, to waste them, but to *use* them. Dracula, in other words, is a saver, an ascetic, an upholder of the Protestant ethic. And in fact he has no body -- or rather, he has no shadow. His body admittedly exists, but it is 'incorporeal' -- 'sensibly supersensible' -- as Marx wrote of the commodity, 'impossible as a physical fact', as Mary Shelley defines the monster in the first lines of her preface. In fact it is impossible 'physically', to estrange a man from himself, to de-humanize him. But alienated labour, as a social relation, makes it possible. So too there really exists a social product which has no body, which has exchange-value but no use-value. This product, we know, is money. And when Harker explores the castle, he finds just one thing: 'a great heap of gold . . . gold of all kinds, Roman, and British, and Austrian, and Hungarian, and Greek and Turkish money, covered with a film of dust, as though it had lain long in the ground.' The money that had been buried comes back to life, becomes capital and embarks on the conquest of the world: this and none other is the story of Dracula the vampire.

'Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks.' Marx's analogy unravels the vampire metaphor. As everyone knows, the vampire is dead and yet not dead: he is an Un-Dead, a 'dead' person who yet manages to live thanks to the blood he sucks from the living. Their strength becomes his strength. The stronger the vampire becomes, the weaker the living become: 'the capitalist gets rich, not, like the miser, in proportion to his personal labour and restricted consumption, but at the same rate as he squeezes out labour-power from others, and compels the worker to renounce all the enjoyments of life.' Like capital, Dracula is impelled towards a continuous growth, an unlimited expansion of his domain: accumulation is inherent in his nature. 'This', Harker exclaims, 'was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps for centuries to come, he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for circle of semi-demons to batten on blood, and create a *new and ever widening* circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless.' 'And so the circle goes on ever widening', Van Helsing says later on; and Seward describes Dracula as 'the father or furtherer of a new order of beings'.

All Dracula's actions really have as their final goal the creation of this 'new order of beings' which finds its most fertile soil, logically enough, in England. And finally, just as the capitalist is 'capital personified' and must subordinate his private existence to the abstract and incessant movement of accumulation, so Dracula is not impelled by the *desire* for power but by the *curse* of power, by an obligation he cannot escape. 'When they (the Un-Dead) become such', Van Helsing explains, 'there comes with the change the curse of immortality; they cannot die, but must go on age after age adding new victims and multiplying the evils of the world'. It is remarked later of the vampire that he 'can do all these things, yet he is not free'. His curse compels him to make ever more victims, just as the capitalist is compelled to accumulate. His nature forces him to struggle to {74} be unlimited, to subjugate *the whole of society*. For this reason, one cannot 'coexist' with the vampire. One must either succumb to him or kill him, thereby freeing the world of his presence and him of his curse. When the knife plunges into Dracula's heart, in the moment before his dissolution, 'there was in the face a look of peace, such as I would never have imagined might have rested there'. There flashes forth here the idea, to which we shall return, of the *purification* of capital.

The Vampire as Monopolist

If the vampire is a metaphor for capital, then Stoker's vampire, who is of 1897, must be the capital of 1897. The capital which, after lying 'buried' for twenty long years of recession, rises again to set out on the irreversible road of concentration and monopoly. And Dracula is a true monopolist: solitary and despotic, he will not brook competition. Like monopoly capital, his ambition is to subjugate the last vestiges of the liberal era and destroy all forms of economic independence. He no longer restricts himself to incorporating (in a literal sense) the physical and moral strength of his victims. He intends to make them his forever. Hence the horror, for the bourgeois mind. One is bound to Dracula, as to the devil, for life; no longer 'for a fixed period', as the classic bourgeois contract stipulated with the intention of maintaining the freedom of the contracting parties. The vampire, like monopoly, destroys the hope that one's independence can one day be bought back. He threatens the idea of individual liberty. For this reason the nineteenth-century bourgeois is able to imagine monopoly only in the guise of Count Dracula, the aristocrat, the figure of the past, the relic of distant lands and dark ages. Because the nineteenth-century bourgeois believes in free trade, and he knows that in order to become established, free competition had to destroy the tyranny of feudal monopoly. For him, then, monopoly and free competition are irreconcilable concepts. Monopoly is the past of competition, the middle ages. He cannot believe it can be its future, that competition itself can generate monopoly in new forms. And yet 'modern monopoly is . . . the true synthesis . . . the negation of feudal monopoly insofar as it implies the system of competition, and the negation of competition insofar as it is monopoly.'

Dracula is thus at once the final product of the bourgeois century and its negation. In Stoker's novel only this second aspect -- the negative and destructive one -- appears. There are very good reasons for this. In Britain at the end of the nineteenth century, monopolistic concentration was far less developed (for various economic and political reasons) than in the other advanced capitalist societies. Monopoly could thus be perceived as something extraneous to British history: as a *foreign threat*. This is why Dracula is not British, while his antagonists (with one exception, as we shall see, and with the addition of Van Helsing, born in that other classic homeland of free trade, Holland) are British through and through. Nationalism -- the defence to the death of British civilization -- has a central role in *Dracula*. The idea of the nation is central because it is collective: it coordinates individual energies and enables them to resist the threat. For while Dracula threatens the freedom of the individual, the latter alone lacks the power to resist or defeat him.

{75} Indeed the followers of pure economic individualism, those who pursue only their own profit, are,

without knowing it, the vampire's best allies. Individualism is not the weapon with which Dracula can be beaten. Other things are needed -- in effect, two: money and religion. These are considered as a single whole, which must not be separated: in other words, money at the service of religion and vice versa. The money of Dracula's enemies is money that *refuses to become capital*, that wants not to obey the profane economic laws of capitalism but to be used to do good. Towards the end of the novel, Mina Harker thinks of her friends' financial commitment: 'it made me think of the wonderful power of money! What can it not do when it is properly applied; and what might it do when basely used!' This is the point: money should be used according to justice. Money must not have its end in itself, in its continuous accumulation. It must have, rather, a moral, anti-economic end, to the point where colossal expenditures and losses can be calmly accepted. This idea of money is, for the capitalist, something inadmissible. But it is also the great ideologic lie of Victorian capitalism, a capitalism which is ashamed of itself and which hides factories and stations beneath cumbrous Gothic superstructures; which prolongs and extols aristocratic models of life; which exalts the holiness of the family as the latter begins secretly to break up.

Dracula's enemies are precisely the exponents of *this* capitalism. They are the militant version of Dickens's benefactors. They find their fulfilment in religious superstition, whereas the vampire is paralysed by it. And yet the crucifixes, holy wafers, garlic, magic flowers, and so on, are not important for their intrinsic religious meaning but for a subtler reason. Their true function consists in setting impassable limits to the vampire's activity. They prevent him from entering this or that house, conquering this or that person, carrying out this or that metamorphosis. But setting limits to the vampire-capital means attacking his very *raison d'être*: he must by his nature be able to expand without limit, to destroy every restraint upon his action. Religious superstition imposes the same limits on Dracula that Victorian capitalism declares itself to accept spontaneously. But Dracula -- who is capital that is not ashamed of itself, true to its own nature, an end in itself -- cannot survive in these conditions. And so this symbol of a cruel historical development falls victim to a handful of whited sepulchres, a bunch of fanatics who want to arrest the course of history. It is they who are the relics of the dark ages.

American Financiers and Other Crypto-Vampires

At the end of *Dracula* the vampire's defeat is complete. Dracula and his lovers are destroyed, Mina Harker is saved at the last moment. Only one Morris, cloud darkens the happy ending. In killing Dracula, Quincy P. Morris, the American who has been helping his British friends to save their nation, dies too, almost by accident. The occurrence seems inexplicable extraneous to the logic of the narrative, yet it fits perfectly into Stoker's sociological design. The American, Morris, *must* die, because Morris is a vampire. From his first appearance he is shrouded in mystery (a friendly sort of mystery, it is true -- but isn't Count Dracula himself likeable, at the beginning?). 'He is such a nice fellow, an American from Texas, and he looks so young and so fresh that it seems almost impossible that he has {76} been to so many places and has had such adventures.' What places? What adventures? Where does all his money come from? What does Mr Morris do? Where does he live? Nobody knows any of this. But nobody suspects. Nobody suspects even when Lucy dies -- and then turns into a vampire -- immediately after receiving a blood transfusion from Morris. Nobody suspects when Morris, shortly afterwards, tells the story of his mare, sucked dry of blood in the Pampas by 'one of those big bats that they call vampires'.

It is the first time that the name 'vampire' is mentioned in the novel: but there is no reaction. And there is no reaction a few lines further on when Morris, 'coming close to me, . . . spoke in a fierce half-whisper: "What took it [the blood] out?"' But Dr Seward shakes his head; he hasn't the slightest idea. And Morris, reassured, promises to help. Nobody, finally, suspects when, in the course of the meeting to plan the vampire hunt, Morris leaves the room to take a shot -- missing, naturally -- at the big bat on the

window-ledge listening to the preparations; or when, after Dracula bursts into the household, Morris hides among the trees, the only effect of which is that he loses sight of Dracula and invites the others to call off the hunt for the night. This is pretty well all Morris does in *Dracula*. He would be a totally superfluous character if, unlike the others, he were not characterized by this mysterious connivance with the world of the vampires. So long as things go well for Dracula, Morris acts like an accomplice. As soon as there is a reversal of fortunes, he turns into his staunchest enemy. Morris enters into competition with Dracula; he would like to replace him in the conquest of the Old World. He does not succeed in the novel but he will succeed, in 'real' history, a few years afterwards.

While it is interesting to understand that Morris is connected with the vampires -- because America will end up by subjugating Britain in reality and Britain is, albeit unconsciously, afraid of it -- the decisive thing is to understand why Stoker does *not* portray him as a vampire. The answer lies in the bourgeois conception of monopoly described earlier. For Stoker, monopoly *must* be feudal, oriental, tyrannical. It cannot be the product of that very society he wants to defend. And Morris, naturally, is by contrast a product of Western civilization, just as America is a rib of Britain and American capitalism a consequence of British capitalism. To make Morris a vampire would mean accusing capitalism directly: or rather accusing Britain, admitting that it is Britain herself that has given birth to the monster. This cannot be. For the good of Britain, then, Morris must be sacrificed. But Britain must be kept out of a crime whose legitimacy she cannot recognize. He will be killed by the chance knife-thrust of a gypsy (whom the British will allow to escape unpunished). And at the moment when Morris dies, and the threat disappears, old England grants its blessing to this excessively pushy and unscrupulous financier, and raises him to the dignity of a Bengal Lancer: 'And, to our bitter grief, with a smile and silence, he died, a gallant gentleman.' (The sentence significantly abounds in the clichés of heroic-imperial English literature). These, it should be noted, are the *last* words of the novel, whose true ending does not lie -- as is clear by now -- in the death of the Romanian count, but in the killing of the American financier.

{77} One of the most striking aspects of *Dracula* as of *Frankenstein* before it -- is its system of narrative senders. To begin with, there is the fact that in this network of letters, diaries, notes, telegrams, notices, phonograph recordings and articles, the narrative function proper, namely the description and ordering of events, is reserved for the British alone. We never have access to Van Helsing's point of view, or to Morris's, and still less to Dracula's. The string of events exists only in the form and with the meaning stamped upon it by British Victorian culture. It is those cultural categories, those moral values, those forms of expression that are endangered by the vampire: it is those same categories, forms and values that reassert themselves and emerge triumphant. It is a victory of convention over exception, of the present over the possible future, of standard British English over any kind of linguistic transgression.

In *Dracula* we have, transparently, the perfect and immutable English of the narrators on the one hand, and Morris's American 'dialect', Dracula's schoolbook English and Van Helsing's bloomers on the other. As Dracula is a danger because he constitutes an unforeseen variation from the British cultural code, so the maximum threat on the plane of content coincides with the maximum inefficiency and dislocation of the English language. Half way through the novel, when Dracula seems to be in control of the situation, the frequency of Van Helsing's speeches increases enormously, and his perverse English dominates the stage. It becomes dominant because although the English language possesses the word 'vampire', it is unable to ascribe a meaning to it, in the same way that British society considers 'capitalist monopoly' a meaningless expression. Van Helsing has to explain, in his approximate and mangled English, what a vampire is. Only then, when these notions have been translated into the linguistic and cultural code of the English, and the code has been reorganized and reinforced, can the narrative return to its previous fluidity, the hunt begin and victory appear secure. It is entirely logical that the last sentence should be, as we saw, a veritable procession of literary English.

In *Dracula* there is no omniscient narrator, only individual and mutually separate points of view. The first-person account is a clear expression of the desire to keep hold of one's individuality, which the vampire threatens to subjugate. Yet so long as the conflict is one between human 'individualism' and vampirical 'totalization', things do not go at all well for the humans. Just as a system of perfect competition cannot do other than give way to monopoly, so a handful of isolated individuals cannot oppose the concentrated force of the vampire. It is a problem we have already witnessed on the plane of content: here it reemerges on the plane of narrative forms. The individuality of the narration must be preserved and at the same time its negative aspect -- the doubt, importance, ignorance and even mutual distrust and hostility of the protagonists -- must be eliminated. Stoker's solution is brilliant. It is to collate, to make a systematic integration of the different points of view. In the second half of *Dracula*, that of the hunt (which begins, it should be noted, only *after* the collation), it is more accurate to speak of a 'collective' narrator than of different narrators. There are no longer, as there were, at the beginning, *different* versions of a single episode, a procedure which expressed the uncertainty and error of the individual account. The narrative now {78} expresses the *general* point of view, the official version of events. Even the style loses its initial idiosyncrasies, be they professional or individual, and is amalgamated into Standard British English. This collation is, in other words, the Victorian compromise in the field of narrative technique. It unifies the different interests and cultural paradigms of the dominant class (law, commerce, the land, science) under the banner of the common good. It restores the narrative equilibrium, giving this dark episode a form and a meaning which are finally clear, communicable and universal.

The Return of the Repressed

A sociological analysis of *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* reveals that one of the institutions most threatened by the monsters is the family. Yet this fear cannot be explained wholly in historical and economic terms. On the contrary, it is very likely that its deepest root is to be found elsewhere: in Eros. 'Dracula', David Pirie has written, '... can be seen as the great submerged force of Victorian libido breaking out to punish the repressive society which had imprisoned it; one of the most appalling things that Dracula does to the matronly women of his Victorian enemies (in the novel as in the film) is to make them sensual.' It is true. For confirmation one only has to reread the episode of Lucy. Lucy is the only character who falls victim to Dracula. She is punished, because she is the only one who shows some kind of *desire*. Stoker is inflexible on this point: all the other characters are immune to the temptations of the flesh, or capable of rigorous sublimations. Van Helsing, Morris, Seward and Holmwood are all *single*. Mina and Jonathan get married in hospital, when Jonathan is in a state of prostration and impotence; and they marry in order to mend, to forget the terrible experience (which was also sexual) undergone by Jonathan in Transylvania. 'Share my ignorance' is what he asks of his wife.

Not so Lucy, who awaits her wedding day with impatience. It is on this restlessness -- on her 'somnambulism' -- that Dracula exerts leverage to win her. And the more he takes possession of Lucy, the more he brings out her sexual side. A few moments before her death, 'She opened her eyes, which were now dull and hard at once, and said in a soft voluptuous voice, such as I had never heard from her lips: . . .'. And Lucy as a 'vampire' is even more seductive: 'The sweetness was turned to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness. . . . the face became wreathed with a voluptuous smile . . . she advanced to him with outstretched arms and a wanton smile . . . and with a langorous, voluptuous grace, said: "Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!"' The seduction is about to work, but Van Helsing breaks its spell. They proceed to Lucy's execution. Lucy dies in a very unusual way: in the throes of what, to the 'public' mind of the Victorians, must have seemed like an orgasm: 'The Thing in the coffin

writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam.' Surrounded by his friends who goad him on with their cries, Arthur Holmwood Lord Godalming purges the world of this fearful Thing; not without deriving, {79} in distorted but transparent forms, enormous sexual satisfaction: 'He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it.'

Dracula, then, liberates and exalts sexual desire. And this desire *attracts* but -- at the same time -- frightens. Lucy is beautiful, but dangerous. Fear and attraction are one and the same: and not just in Stoker. Much of nineteenth-century bourgeois high culture had already treated Eros and sex as *ambivalent* phenomena. Their rhetorical figure is the oxymoron, the contradiction in terms, through which Baudelaire sings the ambiguity of amorous relations. Among the condemned poems of *Les Fleurs du Mal* -- a title which is itself an oxymoron -- is 'Les métamorphoses du vampire', where the irresistible female seducer is described 'twisting like a snake over charcoal'. And Stendhal noted in the margin of the first page of *De l'Amour*: 'I undertake to trace with a mathematical precision and (if I can) truth, the history of the illness called *love*.' Love is an illness: it entails the renunciation of his individuality and reason. For Stendhal, the devotee of enlightenment, this means denying one's very reason for existing. Love becomes a mortal danger, and only a greater danger (Dracula!) can cure the person who falls victim to it: 'The leap from Leucates was a fine image in antiquity. In fact, the remedy for love is almost impossible. It requires not only that danger which sharply recalls a man's attention to his own preservation; it also requires -- something far more difficult -- the continuity of an enticing danger.' An enticing danger, just as that of love is a dangerous enticement: fear and desire incessantly overturn into one another. They are indivisible. We find this confirmed in Sade, in Keats's *Lamia*, in Poe's *Ligeia*, in Baudelaire's women, in Hoffmann's woman vampire. Why is this?

The Psychoanalysis of Vampirism

Vampirism is an excellent example of the identity of desire and fear: let us therefore put it at the centre of the analysis. And let us take the psychoanalytic interpretation of this phenomenon, advanced for example by Marie Bonaparte in her study of Poe. Commenting on Baudelaire's remark that all Poe's women are 'strikingly delineated as though by an adorer', Marie Bonaparte adds: 'An adorer . . . who dare not approach the object of his adoration, since he feels it surrounded by some fearful, dangerous mystery.' This mystery is none other than vampirism:

The danger of sexuality, the punishment that threatens all who yield, is shown, as in *Berenice*, by the manner in which Egaeus is obsessed by her teeth. And indeed, in psychoanalysis, many cases of male impotence reveal, though more or less buried in the unconscious -- strange as it may seem to many a reader -- the notion of the female vagina being furnished with teeth, and thus a source of danger in being able to bite and castrate. . . . Mouth and vagina are equated in the unconscious and, when Egaeus yields to the morbid impulse to draw Berenice's teeth, he yields both the yearning for the mother's organ and to be revenged upon it, since the dangers that hedge it about make him {80} sexually avoid all women as too menacing. His act is therefore a sort of retributive castration inflicted on the mother whom he loves, and yet hates, because obdurate to his sex-love for her in infancy. . . . This concept of the *vagina dentata* and its consequent menace is, however, also a displacement (in this case downwards) of a factor with roots deep in infantile experience. We know that babes which, while toothless, are content to suck the breast, no sooner cut their

first teeth than they use them to bite the same breast. This, in each of us, is the first manifestation of the aggressive instinct, . . . later, when the sense of what 'one should not do' has been instilled by ever severer and more numerous moral injunctions . . . the memory, or rather the phantasy of biting the mother's breast must become charged, in the unconscious, with past feelings of wickedness. And the child, having learnt by experience what is meant by the law of retaliation when he infringes the code . . . begins, in his turn, to fear that the bites he wished to give his mother will be visited on him: namely, retaliation for his 'cannibalism'.

This passage identifies with precision the *ambivalent root*, interweaving hate and love, that underlies vampirism. An analogous ambivalence had already been described by Freud in relation to the taboo on the dead (and the vampire is, as we know, also a dead person who comes back to life, to destroy those who remain):

. . . this hostility, distressingly felt in the unconscious as satisfaction over the death . . . [is displaced] on to the object of the hostility, on to the dead themselves. Once again . . . we find that the taboo has grown up on the basis of an ambivalent emotional attitude. The taboo upon the dead arises, like the others, from the contrast between conscious pain and unconscious satisfaction over the death that has occurred. Since such is the origin of the ghost's resentment, it follows naturally that the survivors who have the most to fear will be those who were formerly its nearest and dearest.

Freud's text leaves no doubt: the ambivalence exists within the psyche of the person suffering from the fear. In order to heal this state of tension one is forced to repress, unconsciously, one of the two affective states in conflict, the one that is socially more illicit. From this repression arises fear: 'every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety'. And fear breaks out when -- for whatever reason -- this repressed impulse returns and thrusts itself upon the mind: 'an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once again to be confirmed.' Fear, in other words, coincides with the 'return of the repressed'. And this brings us perhaps to the heart of the matter.

The Monster Within

{81} The literature of terror is studded with passages where the protagonists brush against the awareness described by Freud that the perturbing element is within them: that it is they themselves that produce the monsters they fear. Their first fear is inevitably that of going mad. 'Remember, I am not recording the vision of a madman.' (*Frankenstein* [1.3.4]) 'God preserve my sanity . . . there is but one thing to hope for: that I may not go mad, if, indeed, I be not mad already.' (*Dracula*, Harker's words) '[Dr Seward] says that I afford him a curious psychological study'. (Lucy) 'I have come to the conclusion that it must be something mental.' (Seward, who is also the director of a mental hospital) Jekyll has to defend himself from the suspicion of being mad, just like Polidori's Aubrey a century earlier. In these novels, reality tends to work according to the laws that govern dreams: 'I wasn't dreaming', 'as in a dream', 'as if I had gone through a long nightmare'. This is the return of the repressed. But *how* does it return? Not as madness, or only marginally so. The lesson these books wish to impart is that one need not be afraid of going mad; that is, one need not fear one's own repressions, the splitting of one's own psyche. No, one should be afraid of the monster, of something material, something *external*.

"Dr Van Helsing, are you mad?" "Would I were!" he said. "Madness were easy to bear compared with

truth like this." *Would I were*: this is the key. Madness is nothing in comparison with the vampire. Madness does not present a problem. Or rather: madness, in itself, does not exist: it is the vampire, the monster, the potion that creates it. *Dracula*, written in the same year that saw Freud begin his self-analysis, is a refined attempt by the nineteenth-century mind not to recognize itself. This is symbolized by the character who -- already in the grip of fear -- finds himself by chance in front of a mirror. He looks at it and jumps: in the mirror is a reflection of his face. But the reader's attention is immediately distracted: the fear does not come from his having seen his *own* image, but from the fact that the *vampire* is not reflected in the mirror. Finding himself face to face with the simple, terrible truth, the author -- and with him the character and the reader -- draws back in horror.

The repressed returns, then, but disguised as a monster. For a psychoanalytic study, the main fact is precisely this metamorphosis. As Francesco Orlando has remarked of his analysis of Racine's *Phèdre*, 'the relationship between the unconscious and literature was not postulated according to the presence of contents, whatever their nature, in the literary work . . . perverse desire could not have been acceptable as content in the literary work without the latter's also accepting *the formal model capable of filtering it*.' This formal model is the monster metaphor, the vampire metaphor. It 'filters', makes bearable to the conscious mind those desires and fears which the latter has judged to be unacceptable and has thus been forced to repress, and whose existence it consequently cannot recognize. The literary formalization, the rhetorical figure, therefore has a double function: it *expresses* the unconscious content and at the same time *hides* it. Literature always contains *both* these functions. Taking away one or the other would mean eliminating either the problem of the unconscious (by asserting that everything in literature is {82} transparent and manifest) or the problem of literary communication (by asserting that literature serves *only* to hide certain contents).

Yet while these two functions are always present in the literary metaphor, the relationship between them can nevertheless change. One can stand out more than the other and win a dominant position within the overall signification of the work. These observations have a direct bearing on our argument, because the metaphor of the vampire is a splendid example of how the equilibrium of literary functions can vary. The problem can be posed thus: what is the sex -- in literature, naturally, not in reality -- are vampires? Vampires, unlike angels, do have a sex, it changes. In one set of works (Poe, Hoffmann, Baudelaire: 'elite' culture) they are women. In another ([Polidori](#), [Stoker](#), the cinema: 'mass' culture) they are men. The metamorphosis is by no means accidental. At the root of vampirism, as we have seen, lies an ambivalent impulse of the child towards its mother. To present the vampire as a *woman* therefore means to make relatively little distortion of the unconscious content. The literary figure still retains the essential element -- the sex -- of that which is at the source of the perturbation. The defences that literature puts up to protect the conscious mind are relatively elastic: D. H. Lawrence (as Baudelaire, implicitly, before him) passes with ease from the vampire theme back to Poe's perverse erotic desires. But if the vampire becomes a man, the unconscious source of the perturbation is hidden by a further layer of signifieds. The link becomes more tenuous. The conscious mind can rest easy: all that remains of the original fear is a word, 'Dracula': that splendid and inexplicable feminine name. The metamorphosis, in other words, serves to protect the conscious mind, or more precisely to keep it in a state of greater unawareness. The vampire is transformed into a man by mass culture, which has to promote spontaneous certainties and cannot let itself plumb the unconscious too deeply. Yet at the same time and for precisely this reason, the repressed content, which has remained unconscious, produces an irresistible fear. Spurious certainties and terror support each other.

III. The Strategy of Terror

Marxist analysis and psychoanalytic analysis have permitted us to isolate two prominent groups of

signifieds which come together in the literature of terror and which render it necessary, so to speak. They are, clearly, different signifieds, and it is hard to unite them harmoniously. I do not propose here to reconstruct the many missing links that might connect socioeconomic structures and sexual-psychological structures in a single conceptual chain. Nor can I say whether this undertaking -- attempted many times and in many different ways -- is really possible: whether, that is, it is permissible to 'integrate' Marxism and psychoanalysis into a much broader and much more solid science of modern society. It is a highly complicated scientific problem, and I do not intend to broach its general aspects. I would merely like to explain the two reasons that -- in this specific case -- persuaded me to use two such different methodologies. The first is rather obvious. The central characters of this literature -- the monster, the vampire-- are metaphors, rhetorical figures built on the analogy between different semantic fields. Wishing to incarnate Fear as such, they must of necessity combine fears that have different causes: {83} economic, ideological, psychical, sexual (and others should be added, beginning with religious fear). This fact seems to me to make it possible, if not obligatory, to use different tools in order to reconstruct the multiform roots of the terrorizing metaphor.

But the monster and the vampire are metaphors for another reason too. Not only in order to synthesize phenomena of different natures, but also to transform them: to change their form, and with it their meaning. In *Dracula* there is monopoly capital and the fear of the mother: but these meanings are subordinated to the literal presence of the murderous count. They can be expressed only if they are hidden (or at least trans-formed) by his black cloak. Only in this way can the social consciousness admit its own fears without laying itself open to stigma. Marxism and psychoanalysis thus converge in defining the function of this literature: to take up within itself determinate fears in order to present them in a form different from their real one: to transform them into other fears, so that readers do not have to face up to what might really frighten them. It is a 'negative' function: it distorts reality. It is a work of 'mystification'. But it is also a work of 'production'. The more these great symbols of mass culture depart from reality the more, of necessity, they must expand and enrich the structures of false consciousness: which is nothing other than the dominant culture. They are not confined to distortion and falsification: they form, affirm, convince. And this process is automatic and self-propelling. Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker do not have the slightest intention of 'mystifying' reality: they interpret and express it in a spontaneously mendacious manner.

This becomes clearer if we go back once again to the fact that monsters are metaphors. Now generally, in literature, metaphors are constructed (by the author) and perceived (by the reader) precisely as metaphors. But in the literature of terror this rule no longer applies. The metaphor is no longer a metaphor: it is a character as real as the others. 'The supernatural', Todorov has written, 'often appears because we take a figurative sense literally.' Taking the figurative sense literally means considering the metaphor as an element of reality. It means, in other words, that a particular intellectual construction -- the metaphor and the ideology expressed within it -- really has become a 'material force', an independent entity, that escapes the rational control of its user. The intellectual no longer builds the cultural universe; rather, this universe speaks through the intellectual's mouth. After all, this is a familiar story: it is the story of Dr Frankenstein. In Mary Shelley's novel, the monster, the metaphor, still appears, at least in part, as something constructed, as a product. The monster, she warns us, is something 'impossible as a physical fact': it is something metaphorical. Yet the monster *lives*. Frankenstein's first moment of terror arises precisely in the face of this fact: a metaphor gets up and walks. Once this has happened, he knows that he will never be able to regain control of it. From now on, the metaphor of the monster will lead an autonomous existence: it will no longer be a product, a consequence, but the very origin of the literature of terror. By the time of *Dracula* -- which carries the logic of this literature to its furthest consequences -- the vampire has existed since time immemorial, uncreated and inexplicable.

A Conservative Restoration

{84} There is another point on which the works of Shelley and Stoker diverge radically from one another: the *effect* they mean to produce on the reader. The difference, to paraphrase Benjamin, can be put like this: a description of fear and a frightening description are by no means the same thing. *Frankenstein* (like *Jekyll and Hyde*) does not want to *scare* readers, but to *convince* them. It appeals to their reason. It wants to make them reflect on a number of important problems (the development of science, the ethic of the family, respect for tradition) and agree -- rationally -- that these are threatened by powerful and hidden forces. In other words it wants to get readers' assent to the 'philosophical' arguments expounded in black and white by the author in the course of the narration. Fear is made subordinate to this design: it is one of the means used to convince, but not the only one, nor the main one. The person who is frightened is not the reader, but the protagonist. The fear is resolved within the text, without penetrating the text's relationship with its addressee. Mary Shelley uses two stylistic expedients to achieve this effect. She fixes the narrative time in the past: and the past attenuates every fear, because the intervening time enables one not to remain a prisoner of events. Chance is replaced by order, shock by reflection, doubt by certainty -- all the more completely in that (the second expedient) the monster has nothing *unknown* about him: we watch Frankenstein assemble him piece by piece, and we know from the start what characteristics he will have. He is threatening because he is alive and because he is big, not because he is beyond rational comprehension. For fear to arise, reason must be made insecure. As Barthes puts it: "suspense" grips you in the "mind", not in the "guts".

The narrative structure of *Dracula*, the real masterpiece of the literature of terror, is different. Here the narrative time is always the present, and the narrative order -- always paratactic -- never establishes causal connections. Like the narrator, the readers has only clues: then sees the effects, but do not know the causes. It is precisely this situation that generates suspense. And this, in its turn, reinforces the readers' identification with the story being narrated. They are dragged forcibly *into* the text; the characters' fear is also theirs. Between text and reader there no longer exists that distance which in *Frankenstein* stimulated reflection. Stoker does not want a thinking reader, but a frightened one. Of course, fear is not an end in itself: it is a means to obtain consent to the ideological values we have examined. But this time, fear is the *only* means. In other words the conviction is no longer in the least rational: it is just as unconscious as the terror that produces it. And thus, while professing to save a reason threatened by hidden forces, the literature of terror merely enslaves it more securely. The restoration of a logical order coincides with unconscious and irrational adherence to a system of values beyond dispute. Professing to save the individual, it in fact annuls him. It presents society -- whether the feudal idyll of *Frankenstein* or the Victorian England of *Dracula* -- as a great corporation: whoever breaks its bonds is done for. To think for oneself, to follow one's own interests: these are the real dangers that this literature wants to exorcise. Illiberal in a deep sense, it mirrors and promotes the desire for an integrated society, a capitalism that manages to be 'organic'.

{85} This is the literature of dialectical relations, in which the opposites, instead of separating and entering into conflict, exist in function of one another, reinforce one other. Such, for Marx, is the relation between capital and wage labour. Such, for Freud, is the relation between super-ego and unconscious. Such, for Stendhal, is the bond between the lover and the 'illness' he calls 'love'. Such is the relationship that binds Frankenstein to the monster and Lucy to Dracula. Such, finally, is the bond between the reader and the literature of terror. The more a work frightens, the more it edifies. The more it humiliates, the more it uplifts. The more it hides, the more it gives the illusion of revealing. It is a fear one *needs*: the price one pays for coming contentedly to terms with a social body based on irrationality and menace. Who says it is escapism?