



# Monsters from the Id: The Rise of Horror in Fiction and Film

E. Michael Jones

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Tales of horror, so popular in modern literature and film, originated in the sexual decadence unleashed by the French Revolution. In a compelling new study of horror from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein to modern Hollywood, one of America's most original critics shows that the moral order, when suppressed, reasserts itself as an avenging monster in the midst of the chaos and suffering of cultural revolution.

As the Age of Reason gave way to the Terror, not only in Paris but in Mary Shelley's own life, the first monster of the modern imagination was born. Like much of the English literary class, Shelley's family-including her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, and her husband, Percy-had embraced the French Enlightenment, throwing off old restraints on sexuality. The result of their ruinous dissipation was Frankenstein, in which Shelley's monster rises in repudiation of the very rationalism that produced it.

The next monster to appear as moral decay spread from revolutionary France was the vampire, Frankenstein's rationalist fascination with electricity giving way to the romantic myth of blood. Jones follows the progress of horror from Victorian England and Bram Stoker's Dracula to Weimar Germany and Murnau's classic film Nosferatu. Bringing his account to the end of the twentieth century, he shows how the Western imagination has responded to the explosive force of the sexual revolution with horror of unprecedented intensity. In the Alien series and other contemporary horror films, the culture of abortion and pornography has unwittingly spawned a new and terrifying breed of avenging monster.



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