

‘He make in the mirror no reflect’:
 undead aesthetics and mechanical
 reproduction – *Dorian Gray*, *Dracula* and
 David Reed’s ‘vampire painting’

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IN DEVELOPING the *Open, Graves, Open Minds* project, I was struck by the irony of creatures with no reflection becoming such a pervasive reflection of modern culture. My research here has developed directly out of this meditation on the vampire’s reflection or shadow. Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* famously ‘throws no shadow’ though he has long been associated with darkness and shade (‘I love the shade and the shadow’).¹ In the former Yugoslavia, certain Muslim gypsies are said to believe that a vampire is a dead person’s shadow.² ‘Shadow traders’ were common in Romania, according to Emily Gerard, writing not long before Stoker’s novel. They traded shadows to architects who attempted to secure and wall up a person’s shadow to ensure that their buildings were durable, with the result that after death that person would become a vampire.³

Shadows are inextricably linked to superstitions about vampires but they are equally associated with myths around the origins of art, and with broader notions of reflection and reproduction, as I will show. The term ‘shadow’ can be applied to ‘a portrait as contrasted with the original’ and to ‘an imitation, copy; a counterpart’.⁴ Pliny even identified the birth of artistic representation in tracing an outline around a man’s shadow.⁵ Here, the dark shape or outline confirms an absence, but there is a presence too, a representation, of self or soul. In the eighteenth century, it was the shadow of the face, not the face itself that was the soul’s true reflection, according to Lavatar’s theory of physiognomy.⁶ In the nineteenth century, Stoker showed the soulless vampire

to be ‘an unmirrorable image’, a creature virtually beyond representation, assuming multiple forms. Without his mirror image, *Dracula* becomes ‘physiognomy’s true vanishing point’, a profoundly unsettling figure.⁷

In this chapter I attempt to uncover the origins of the non-reflection motif and interrogate the vampire’s complex relationship to this optical phenomenon. I focus, to begin with, on Stoker’s handwritten notes for *Dracula* where the vampire’s lack of a reflection or shadow is first located and where this conceit is extended to include its image in photography and painting.⁸ From this, I develop the notion of ‘vampire painting’ in the writings of Pater and Wilde, and interrogate *Dracula* and *Dorian Gray* in relation to the idea of reproduction, and tensions around realism and mimesis, drawing on Benjamin’s analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction and his theorisation of the outmoded. I conclude with a discussion of the contemporary artist David Reed whose abstract painting is offered up as another version of non-reflection. Reed has responded directly to Stoker’s *Dracula* notebooks in his own ‘vampire painting’, creating a compelling homage to the unmirrorable figure of the vampire.

The vampire’s lack of a reflection, the ‘unseen face in the mirror’,⁹ is first revealed to us in *Dracula* (1897). On arriving at the castle, Harker is quick to observe that ‘in none of the rooms is there a mirror’ (21); as he gets the little shaving glass from his bag and hangs it by the window, he is approached by the Count:

Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count’s voice saying to me, ‘Good morning.’ I started, for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the glass covered the whole room behind me. In starting I had cut myself slightly, but did not notice it at the moment. Having answered the Count’s salutation, I turned to the glass again to see how I had been mistaken. This time there could be no error, for the man was close to me, and I could see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed; but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself. (27)

Dracula reacts violently to this ‘foul bauble of man’s vanity’ (28), the mirror, which has betrayed his secret, hurling it out of the window where it smashes it into a thousand pieces on the stone courtyard below. The trope of the vampire’s non-reflection has always intrigued scholars. Critical approaches to this phenomenon in fiction have tended to draw on Freud’s ‘uncanny’, Otto Rank’s theory of the *doppelgänger* or double, or Lacan’s ‘mirror phase’.¹⁰ My aim in this chapter is to take this phenomenon back to its beginnings, to examine the *Dracula* Notebooks in the Rosenbach museum (Stoker’s research

notes for the novel) and simply to pose the question: did Stoker sit down at his desk one day and invent the mirror non-reflection motif?

Tellingly, there is no mention of mirrors in relation to vampires in any of Stoker's folkloric sources – Emily Gerard's *Transylvanian Superstitions* (1885) or *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888), for example – nor is there any material on this phenomenon in 'Vampires in New England', the article Stoker found during a trip to New York in 1896, or in the entry on 'vampires' in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* of 1888 which he had consulted.¹¹ Dracula's literary precursors, Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), Rymer's *Varney the Vampire* (1847) and Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' (1872), similarly lack any reference to this particular aspect of vampire lore (though Le Fanu's collection of tales *In a Glass Darkly* (1872), where 'Carmilla' appeared, points to reflection as a motif). The truth is that despite much speculation that the silver in mirrors is repellent to the vampire – a trait borrowed from werewolves – we are still no closer to understanding how the non-reflection motif came about.¹²

Stoker picked up a few details from Sabine Baring-Gould's *The Book of Werewolves* (1865) which elaborates on the werewolf's relationship to the vampire and how it loses its soul: 'The Greek werewolf is closely related to the vampire. The lycanthropist falls into a cataleptic trance, during which his soul leaves his body, enters that of a wolf and ravens for blood ... after death the lycanthropists become vampires.'¹³ In the light of this, and of Lavatar's shadow-soul, I begin to wonder, as others have, if Stoker's imagining of the vampire casting no reflection is an elaborate metaphor for its lack of a soul.¹⁴ Dracula throws no shadow and casts no reflection; he has no soul, as physical existence and appetite are all that concern him. Paul Barber's work on the folkloric vampire sheds some further light on this, documenting the importance of mirrors as soul traps. They can contain the soul of the dead in the form of a reflection, hence they are turned to the wall when someone dies or when a corpse is in the room.¹⁵ In many cultures the shadow and the mirror image are both unmistakably associated with the soul. Shadowy images (including the photograph) are seen as part of a person and not just optical phenomena.¹⁶

Shadows are undoubtedly connected to superstitions about vampires; the role played by mirrors is harder to gauge with any certainty.¹⁷ Casting around, I seized on the idea that mirrors were used to create the vampire on stage in the early nineteenth century, a technique developed for early melodramas, such as Planché's *The Vampire, or Bride of the Isles*, staged at the Lyceum in London in 1820.¹⁸ Phantasmagoria saw the raising of the dead on stage in productions such as *Pepper's Ghost* where mirrors and reflections were again used.¹⁹ These vampiric theatricals predate *Dracula* and it seems

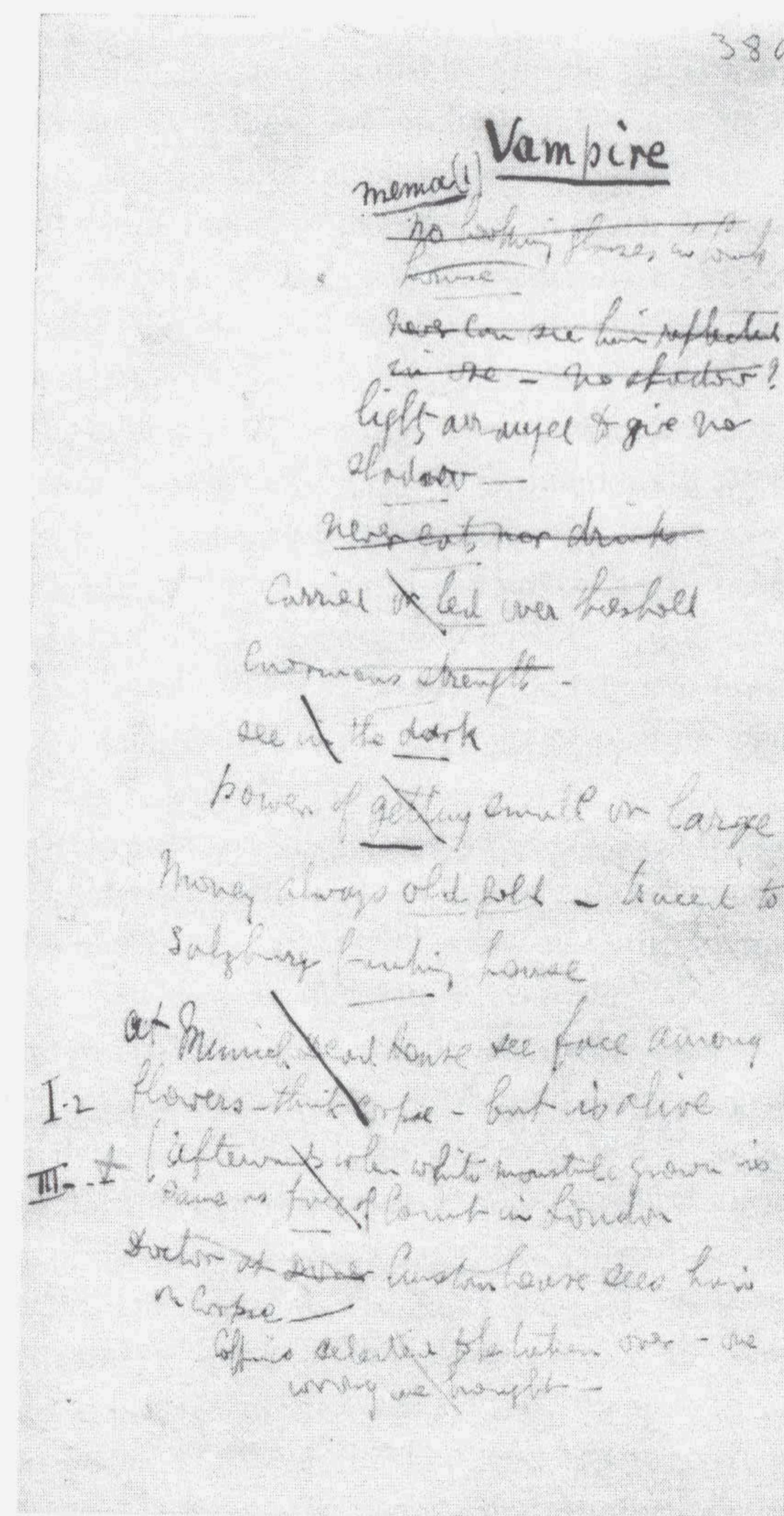


Figure 4.1. Bram Stoker's notebook entry on mirrors and reflection

plausible that Stoker would have been aware of earlier optical effects and the 'vampire trap', immersed as he was in the culture of the nineteenth-century theatre.²⁰ I wondered if the *Dracula* notebooks contained evidence of this. Leafing through the handwritten pages, I stumbled immediately on a reference to mirrors (see Figure 4.1). As early as page three, Stoker writes 'No looking glasses in Count's house never can see him reflected in one – no shadow?'²¹ Then, on page four, he elaborates further: 'painters cannot paint him – their likeness always like someone else'; 'Could not codak him [sic] – come out black or like skeleton corpse' (see Figure 4.2). What I found in the

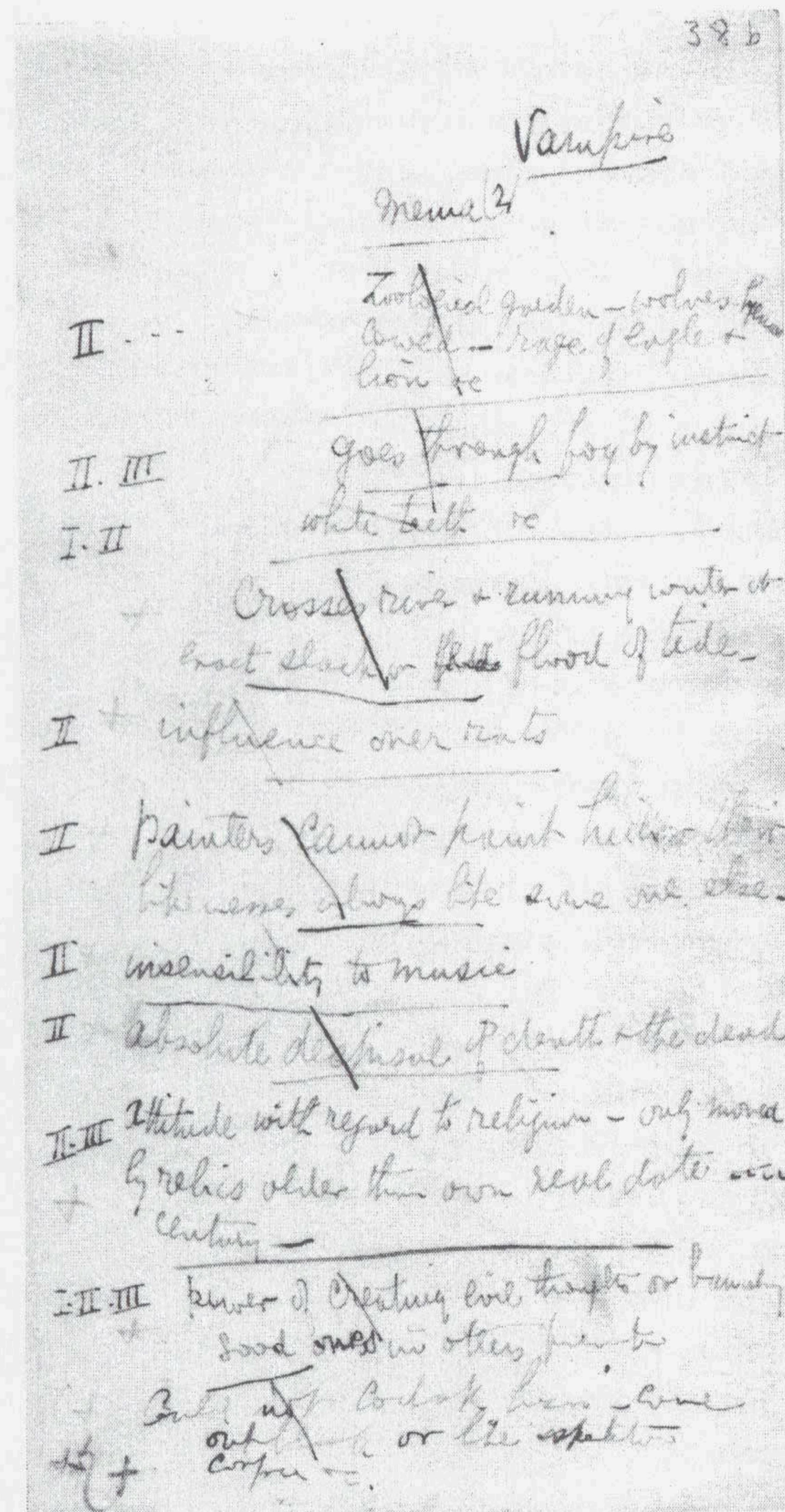


Figure 4.2. Bram Stoker's notebook entry on Kodak

notebook entries was surprising: emerging from all the drawings and notes was a unique record of developing theories of mechanical reproduction. In writing the novel, Stoker's research was not confined to folklore; it extended to aesthetic debates and ideas around new technology, in particular the birth of photography.

The rise of photography was propelled by the innovations in 1884 of George Eastman, who replaced the photographic plate with dry gel on paper, or film. Photography immediately became more appealing and accessible to the amateur. Eastman began selling his Kodak camera in July 1888 with the

slogan 'You press the button, we do the rest'. Now, anyone could become a photographer, and photography became available for the mass-market soon after via the Kodak Brownie.²² There are multiple references to new recording technologies in *Dracula*: the camera, phonograph, typewriter – all of these are used by the 'Crew of Light' in an attempt to track down and document the non-reflecting vampire. '*Dracula* and its media' have been well documented by Jennifer Wicke, but she does not make any reference to the notebook entry on Kodak in relation to the Count.²³ 'Everyday the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction', argues Benjamin.²⁴ What results is 'a tremendous shattering of tradition'.²⁵ These processes are 'intimately connected with contemporary mass movements'.²⁶ Harker's use of the camera in the novel can be seen to demonstrate these processes. It marks a new vogue for photo consumerism. He takes 'views' of the Carfax estate 'from various points' (25) and uses his Kodak in the service of real estate (but he never attempts to photograph the Count).

The vampire's lack of a reflection or image in a photograph is symbolic of a tension whereby premodern worldviews collide with contemporary modes of production in the novel, and, as Wicke points out, the 'snapshot camera so many people were wielding at the time is really also a celluloid analog of vampirism in action, the extraction out of an essence in an act of consumption'.²⁷ 'The mirror with a memory' is a term used for photography in Rosalind Krauss in her analysis of new media; inviting us to see photography in *Dracula* as an extension of the non-reflection motif.²⁸ Stoker's ancient, shadowless Count does not show up on a photograph; he 'come[s] out black or like a skeleton corpse'. We are nearer to the X-ray than the photograph in Stoker's imagining of this image. In 1896, close to the date of the novel's publication, Röntgen made a picture of his wife's hand, formed through X-rays, on a photographic plate. This was the first ever photograph of a human body part using X-rays. On seeing the picture Frau Röntgen believed that she had seen her own death.²⁹ This whiff of the grave is evocative of the figure of the vampire and indicative of wider fears over the new medium of photography. In 1902, Van Negelein noted that farmers in the north of Greece were afraid of the photograph (their souls might be captured if their pictures were taken),³⁰ and Benjamin cites 'a chauvinistic rag' to show the reactionary attitudes to photography in nineteenth-century Europe: 'To try to capture fleeting mirror images ... is not just an impossible undertaking ... the very wish to do such a thing is blasphemous. Man is made in the image of God, and God's image cannot be captured by any machine of human devising.'³¹ Unease over new technologies is wedded here to deeper anxieties around scientific

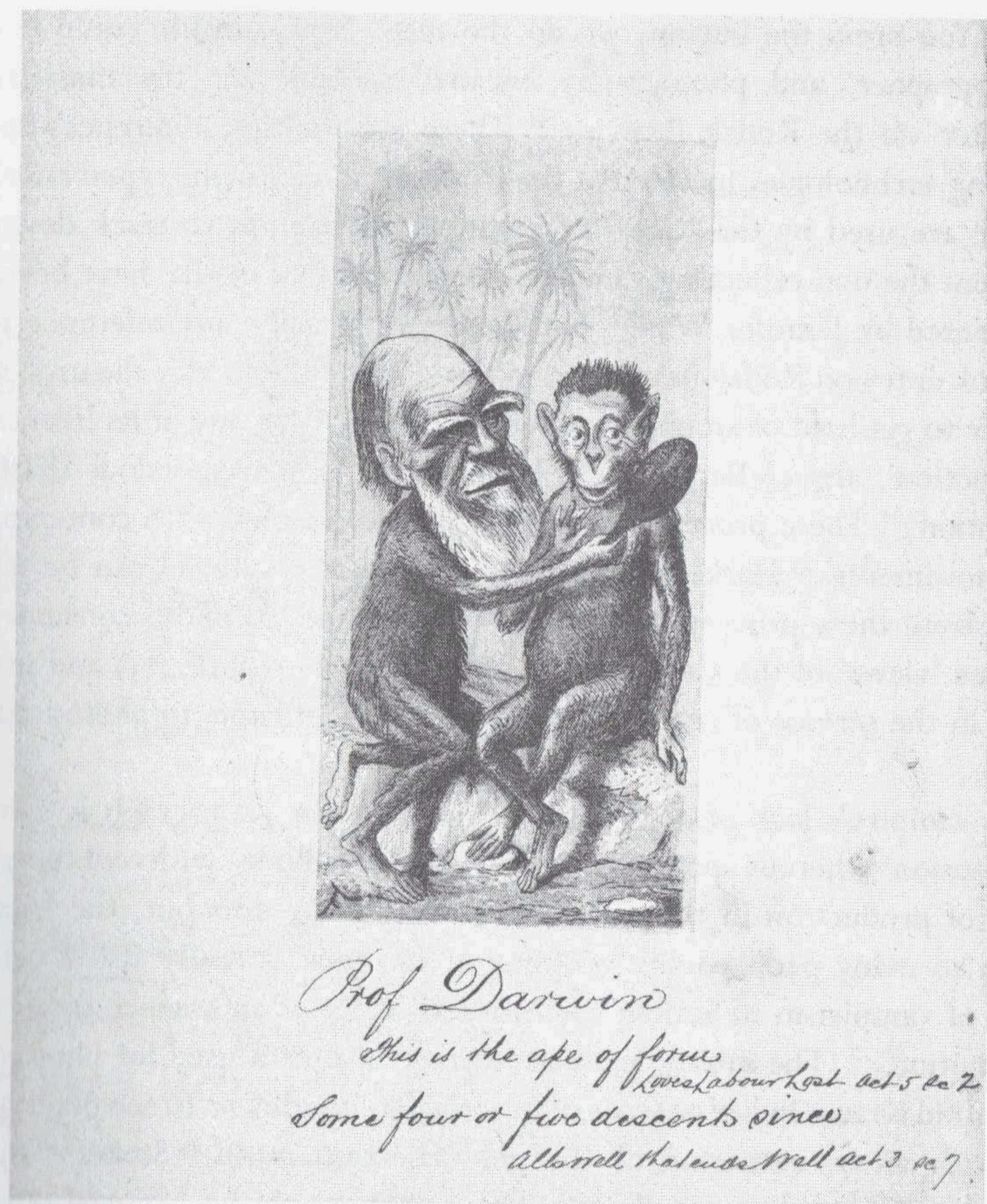


Figure 4.3. Darwin and an ape looking at their likeness in a mirror

discovery and its challenge to Christian doctrine. A satirical cartoon from the nineteenth century shows Darwin and an ape looking at their likeness in a mirror (see Figure 4.3). Stoker's refusal to allow us to acknowledge our likeness to Dracula (we cannot see a reflection) is symptomatic, perhaps, of wider anxieties around our kinship with the soulless 'Other' brought about by Darwin's evolutionary theories.³² Renfield, the maniacal character controlled by Dracula, is the vehicle for these Darwinian ideas in the novel ('I want no souls, life is all I want' (250)).

Van Helsing perpetuates the myth of non-reflection, informing his associates that the vampire 'throws no shadow; he make in the mirror no reflect' (223). A scientist, philosopher and metaphysician (106), he must explain the existence of vampires 'for [in] this enlightened age when men believe not what they see, the doubting of wise men would be his [the vampire's] greatest

strength' (298). 'I have trained myself to keep an open mind' (220), reports Van Helsing (in sympathy with our *Open Graves, Open Minds* project). Dracula has no likeness, no shadow, and no photographic image, and he cannot be tracked by these means. He 'can grow and become small; and he can at times vanish and come unknown' (221). He is timeless, 'he is known everywhere that man has been', 'he cannot die by the mere passing of time' (222). Despite such advantages, he is destroyed at the end of the novel, but the new recording technologies have failed to document the history of this ancient creature with any authenticity:

I took the papers from the safe where they have been ever since our return so long ago. We were struck with the fact that, in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document! Nothing but a mass of typewriting. (351)

Benjamin demonstrates how in the age of mechanical reproduction 'authenticity and authority' are lost: 'Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction ... And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.'³³ This loss seems to occur in *Dracula*, and the witnesses return to word-of-mouth testimony or storytelling to record and give authenticity to their encounter with the vampire. Faith in modernity, in new technologies, has been tested and the reader is encouraged to acknowledge that 'The old centuries had, and have powers of their own which mere modernity cannot kill' (37). An anti-Enlightenment narrative is emerging, but it is ambiguous. Even the smallest of innovations, such as the shorthand used by Mina, is a manifestation of mechanical reproduction; it is such as this that creates the contradictions around modernity and new technologies in the novel. Dr Seward's phonograph diary, recorded on to wax cylinders, is listened to by Mina and transcribed on to her typewriter. Her account of these processes reveals something of what has been lost:

That is a wonderful machine ... it told me in its very tones, the anguish of your heart. It was like a soul crying out to almighty God. No one must hear that spoken ever again! See I have tried to be useful. I have copied out the words on my typewriter and none other need hear your heart beat, as I did. (207)

The authenticity of the experience, its rawness, cannot be reproduced when transcribing between different media and the typewritten words are instead another 'analog of vampirism in action'. Benjamin argues 'that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This

is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art'.³⁴ Here its loss is made manifest in literature through the medium of typewriting. Though Benjamin sees revolutionary potential in this stripping away of aura, it unsettles Stoker. Intriguingly, though, in the first stage of the recording processes, the authenticity is emphasised, rather than it withering, highlighting the novel's ambivalence towards technological transcription.

Stoker himself was a painter and a founding member of the Dublin Sketching Club, as it was known when it was set up in 1874.³⁵ A painter whose vampire did not have a likeness, he says of the creature that 'painters cannot paint him – their likeness always like someone else'.³⁶ I now want to broaden my approach to include painting and ideas that surface in relation to the figure of the vampire in works of art, both real and imagined, beginning with the writings of Oscar Wilde.

There is a passage in 'The Critic as Artist' (1891) where Wilde imagines the *Mona Lisa* as a vampire, following its description in Pater:³⁷

Mr Pater has put into the portrait of the Monna Lisa [*sic*] something that Lionardo [*sic*] never dreamed of? The painter may have been merely the slave of an archaic smile, as some have fancied, but whenever I pass into the cool galleries of the Palace of the Louvre and stand before that strange figure 'set in its marble chair in the cirque of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea', I murmur to myself, 'She is older than the rocks on which she sits; like the vampire she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave' ... and so the picture becomes more wonderful to us than it really is, and reveals to us a secret of which, in truth, it knows nothing.³⁸

Pater's description of the *Mona Lisa* as a vampire fired Wilde's imagination, and *Dorian Gray*, in turn, allows discussions of vampirism in the *fin de siècle* to map on to wider aesthetic debates and cultural fears around the relevance of painting in an age of mechanical reproduction. The theme of mirroring, of doubling, is extended to include uncanny or vampiric portraits in *Dorian Gray*.³⁹ The nature and function of art is a central concern in this cautionary tale; Dorian's living portrait enacts a decadent rejection of the act of mimesis, of art imitating life. The artist, Basil Hallward will not exhibit the painting of Dorian because he is afraid he has put too much of himself into it and because he has 'shown in it the secret of his own soul'.⁴⁰ Dorian, in turn, is disturbed by the portrait's vampiric qualities: 'every moment that passes takes something from me and gives something to it. Oh, if it were only the other way! If the picture could change, and I could always be what I am now!' (26); 'I would give my soul for that' (25). His wish granted, the portrait lives and is mutable whereas Dorian has the fixity and permanence of a work of art; he

has 'become the spectator of [his] own life' (94) – he is nothing but a pallid mask of chalk with leaden eyes (91). Following his corruption by the 'yellow book', Dorian becomes a creature of the night, a vampiric seducer, a Lord Ruthven, with a *Mona Lisa* smile.⁴¹

It is after the suicide of one of his conquests, the actress Sibyl Vane, that he first notices the change in the portrait, where 'the quivering, ardent sunlight showed him the lines of cruelty round the mouth as clearly as if he had been looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing' (78). The vampiric portrait is for Dorian 'the most magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him its own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul' (91). His narcissism is such that he is often pictured standing 'with a mirror, in front of the portrait ... looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass' (109).⁴² Dorian is too enamoured of his resemblance, presented without 'mist or veil' in the portrait (98). In the 'Decay of Lying' (1891), Wilde argues that Art 'is not to be judged by any external standard of resemblance. She is a veil, rather than a mirror'.⁴³ Yet *Dorian Gray's* preface contrasts this anti-realism with the bourgeois monster, Caliban's aversion to seeing himself reflected: 'The nineteenth-century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass. The nineteenth-century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass.'⁴⁴ Wilde, the master of paradox and contradiction, indulges in some Hegelian dialectics, rejecting the narrow instrumentalism demanded of realist art and advocating aestheticism, yet simultaneously defending a critical realism that exposes the vices of the bourgeoisie (indeed, there is evidence that he had read Hegel).⁴⁵ He uses this device to explore and satirise the relationships in realism between artist, subject and audience/viewer.⁴⁶

The portrait's undead subject, Dorian, is driven to destroy his own image after stabbing the artist in the neck – gestures reminiscent both of the staking of the vampire and the act of vampirism. The palette knife that had created the portrait is now used to destroy the artist; 'as it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant' (187). It would kill the 'monstrous soul-life' (187) of the painting. A man, 'loathsome of visage', is found in front of the portrait with a knife in his heart. It is perhaps worth noting that Dracula, similarly, is killed not by a stake but by a knife that is plunged into the throat and through the heart. James Twitchell's analysis of the 'artist as vampire' is illuminating here. 'For just as the vampire enervates his victims, so too does representational art, art that attempts literally to "hold a mirror up to nature", drain metaphorical energy or attention from the artistic experience.'⁴⁷ The notion of vampiric painting is a response to

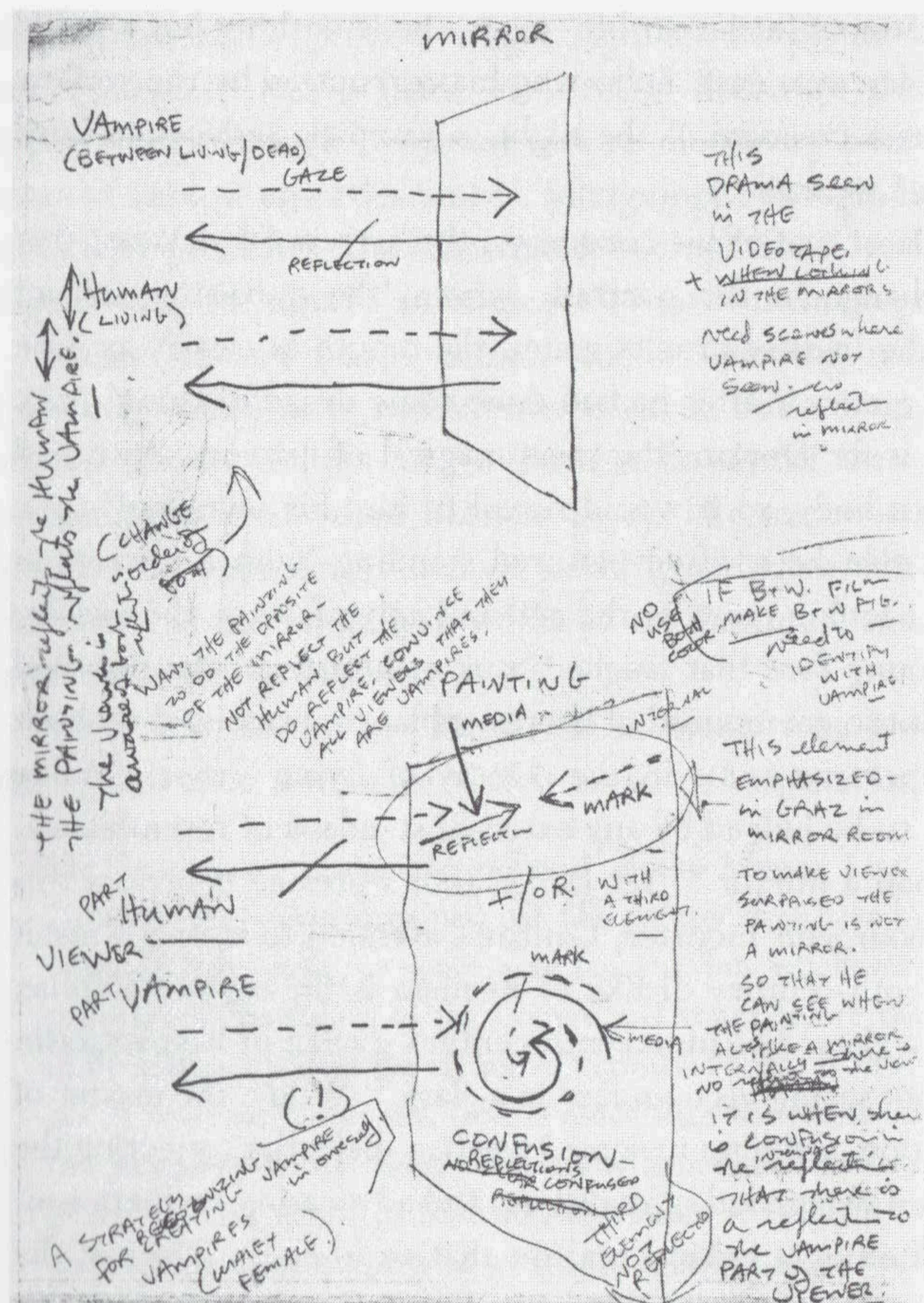
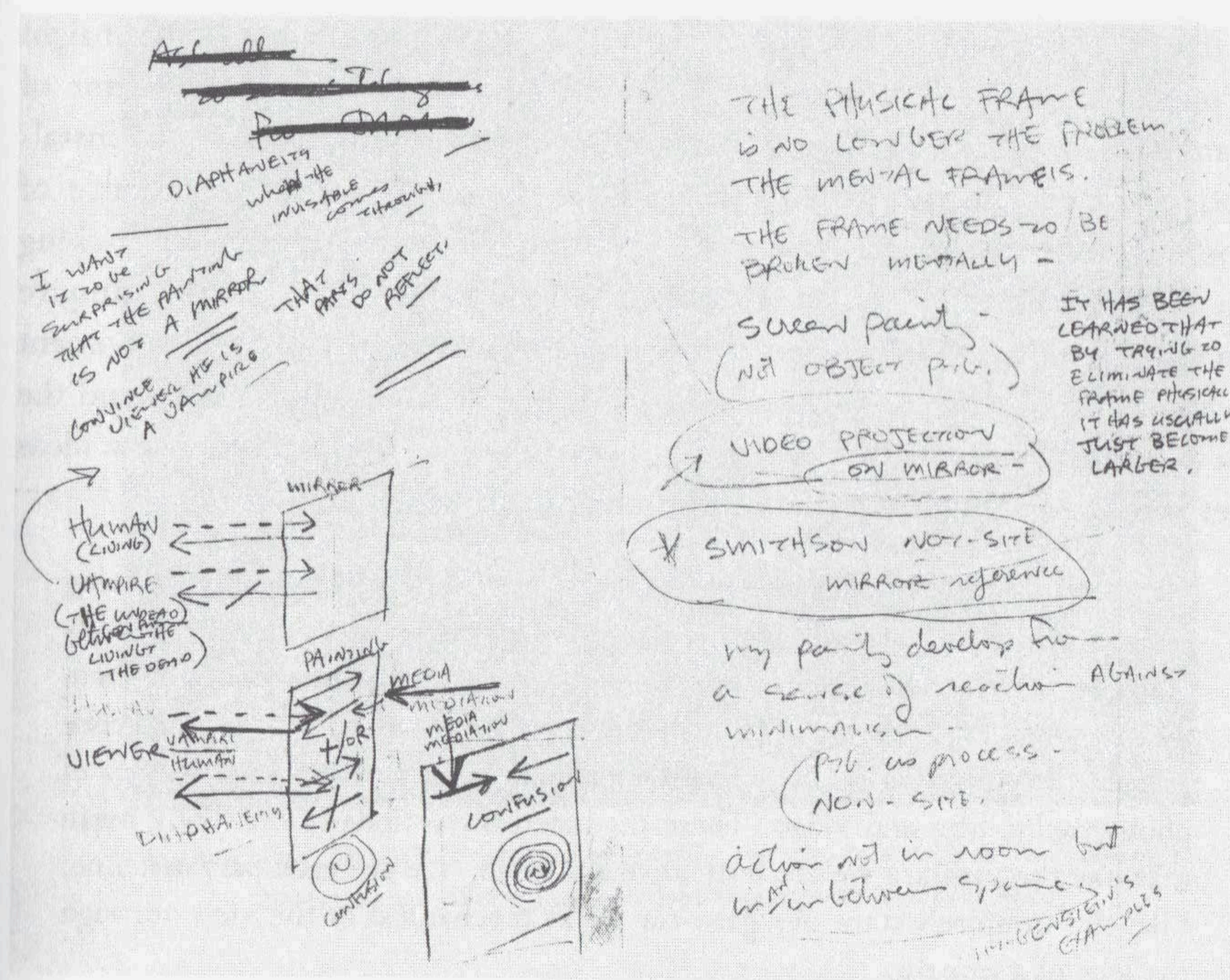


Figure 4.4. David Reed's notebooks on reflection: an homage to Bram Stoker's research notes for Dracula

the precarious future of painting following the birth of photography and foreshadowing the development of film.⁴⁸ The image of the artist as vampire can be used in relation to David Reed's practice, for, as Stephen Berg says, all painting is essentially 'reliant on an act of vampirism – vampirism towards reality, or as in Reed's case, towards what we are accustomed to calling its image, that is toward, itself'.⁴⁹

David Reed was born in San Diego, California, in 1946. He has been a resident of New York since the 1970s. A practising artist for over forty years, Reed has developed an oeuvre that, with all its concentration on forms of painting, also maintains relationships to other, more recent image media, especially to film and video art.⁵⁰ In a reversal of the perspectives of abstract expressionism (whose subjective pathos refers back to the artist), his paintings directly address the effect on the viewer. In short, he invites us to explore the 'non-reflective' nature of abstract painting: 'It is conceivable that Reed's



pictures [like the vampire] themselves have no looking-glass images and can only come into your life if invited'.⁵¹

Such an invitation came to me, via the artist John Rimmer.⁵² John sent me some images of Reed's paintings and introduced me to the artist's 'vampire journal'.⁵³ Reed exhibited 'New Paintings for the Mirror Room and Archive in a Studio off the Courtyard' at the Neue Galerie in Graz in 1996. It contained a 'mirror room for vampires'. 'Painting: Motion Pictures' at the Museum of Contemporary Art in San Diego followed in 1998, and the 'Painting/Vampire Study Center' at the Goldie Paley Gallery at Moore College of Art and Design, Philadelphia, was developed in 1999. I wrote to Reed, explaining the *Open Graves, Open Minds* project and my research into non-reflection. He responded by sending me a supplement to his earlier works. This consisted of a series of notes, diagrams, reproductions and paintings, and contained excerpts from Bram Stoker's notes for *Dracula*, as well as stills from Tod Browning's 1931 film *Dracula*. When I examined the papers, I found the artist's notes and diagrams were a homage in the style of Bram Stoker's journal (see Figure 4.4). And I saw my own research questions writ large: 'Did Stoker ... invent the mirror non reflection motif? Are the notes from the Rosenbach Museum and Library evidence of this? Or, is there evidence that he came across the motif in his research of vampire legends?

I like to think that he did invent the motif. Then there is a specific insight from which all variations are derived.⁵⁴ Reed was continuing the theme of vampire paintings which began for him in Graz. Thinking back to the installations for the mirror room for vampires, he asks, 'Is our experience of looking at an abstract painting like the vampire's experience when looking in a mirror? Does looking at an abstract painting allow us to see the vampire in ourselves?'⁵⁵ The *Dracula* notebooks marked a particular historical moment when vampirism in literature responded to mechanical reproduction and the new media of photography and film. In an attempt to find out how these ideas resonate in contemporary painting, I examined Reed's journal:

May 20th: [T]he painter Dona Nelson ... spoke about how abstract painting reflects not the actual appearance of our body but a distorted body, a body closer to the way we actually experience it. We are not simply the body form we see reflected in the mirror but a strange amalgam of our actual experience and distortions. Many of these distortions are caused by our experiences of photography, film and video. These mediated distortions of our body mean that like the vampire we are both alive and dead. We are each part machine. Like the vampire's stare our gaze can be as mechanical as the view through the lens of a camera.

Reed's thoughts turn from abstract painting to vampirism and technology and back again before focusing on the non-reflection scene in Browning's *Dracula*. In the film, Dracula is detected because he casts no reflection in Van Helsing's cigarette case. Reed re-imagines this as a laptop computer:

July 8th: [T]he cigarette case ... looks like a laptop computer in Tod Browning's film, which was made in 1931, many years before there were any laptop computers [see Figure 4.5]. When Dracula knocks down the reflecting cigarette case (for fear of his non reflection becoming apparent in it) it is as if he is trying to destroy future technology. One could make a chart: more anxiety about technological changes, more vampires.⁵⁶

Some insightful theorising around the vampire's reflection from the perspective of a painter develops from this:

August 20th: Several years ago Frank Owen, a painter friend of mine spoke of a theory he developed about the vampire's reflection. He said that a reflection in a mirror is half the size of what is reflected. Perhaps a vampire reflects back a reflection. So the reflection is reflected back and forth an infinite number of times becoming infinitely small. Perhaps that is what Count Dracula sees when he looks into the cigarette case ... Or perhaps for a vampire the image is doubled instead. Then the vampire sees his image reflected back and forth



Figure 4.5. Dracula is detected because he casts no reflection in Van Helsing's cigarette case (reimagined as a laptop computer in David Reed)

doubling in size until it is infinitely large. Perhaps that sight is what scares the vampire. That seems to be what the media is doing to us.⁵⁷

Inspired by Reed's discussion of reflection and non-reflection, I gave some consideration to his question, 'what does Dracula see?' Given the folklorist accounts of mirrors as soul traps, it is not inconceivable that Dracula does see something, or, like Dorian Gray, is confronted with his own blackened soul trapped there. Hence his violent reaction; he knocks the mirror to the floor. Kim Newman addresses this very idea of what the vampire sees in *Anno Dracula* (1992); his character Lord Ruthven claims that 'it is untrue that vampires lack a reflection. It is just that the reflection invariably does not *reflect*, as it were, what is out here in the world.'⁵⁸ The problem of photographing vampires is also given some creative consideration through Newman's Lord Godalming: 'some disappeared completely while others saw an apparently empty suit of clothes'; this is explained at the expense of modern technology as 'only a painter can capture the inner man ... human genius shall always be superior to mechanical-chemical trickery'.⁵⁹ Newman's vampire can be painted, whereas Dracula shows no likeness in any media.

I decided to expand my research to include painting in relation to vampirism in a number of texts. Van Helsing's 'he make in the mirror no reflect' is a useful metaphor for Reed's relationship to his own paintings (and

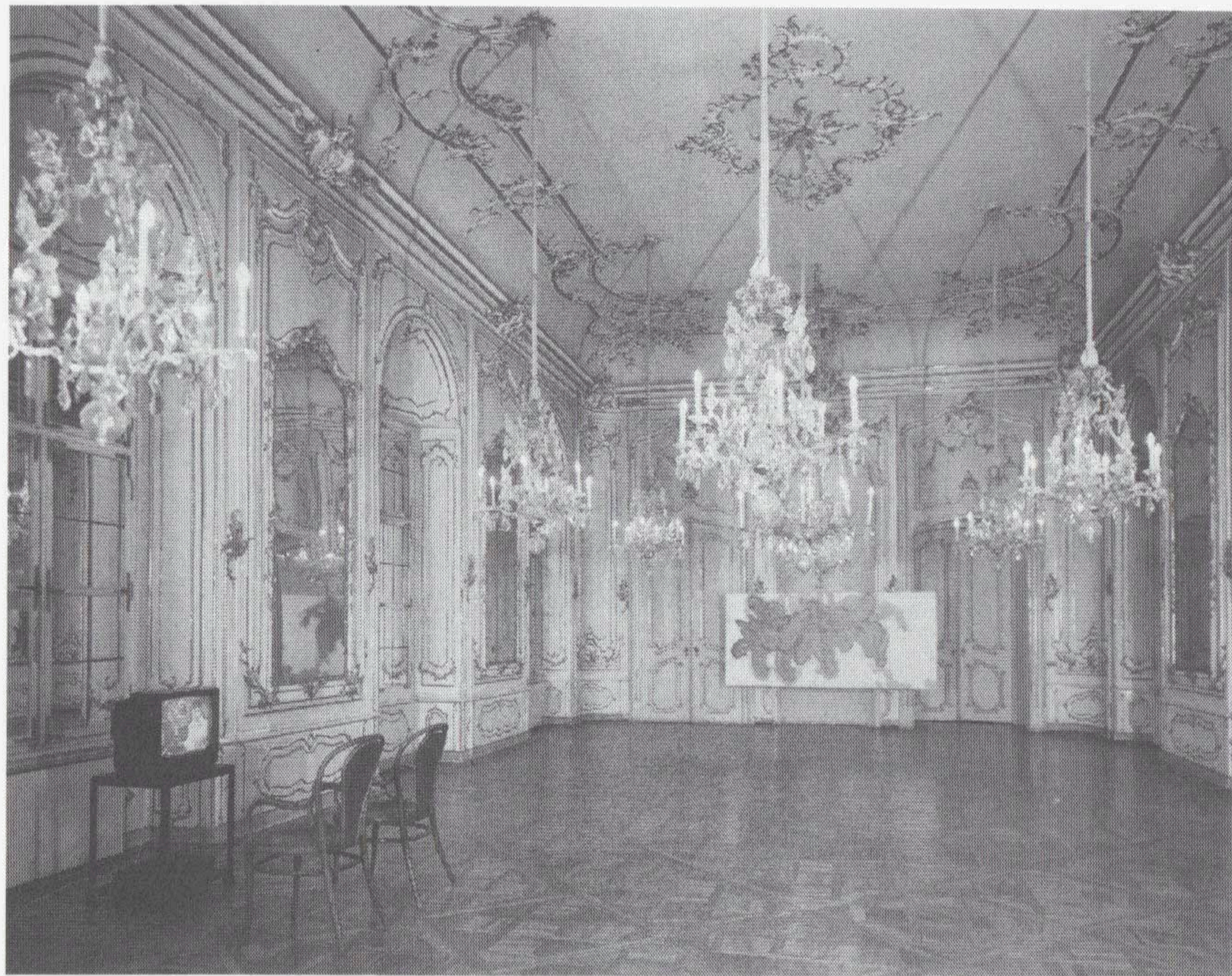


Figure 4.6. David Reed, 'Installation of Mirror Room. On-screen scene from *The Brides of Dracula*, Terence Fisher, 1960

possibly to the viewer of them). John Rimmer tells me that 'like the helluloid [*sic*], there are no shadows in abstract painting; if there are, the work is moving towards verisimilitude, which is where Reed hovers, maybe'.⁶⁰ Reed's painting practices are as elusive as the vampire, despite our exchanges and the explanations in his journals.⁶¹ Here, Reed responds playfully to the vampire through gesture, because the vampire 'has no presence, his body is defined by motifs and constructed through devices'; he is, in short, 'Van Helsing's bag of tricks brought to life'.⁶² In the installation of the 'Mirror Room for Vampires', a number of Reed's vampire paintings are displayed on mirrors and there is a video screen playing a compilation of scenes involving reflection from thirty-five vampire films (see Figure 4.6).

In the Goldie Paley Gallery,

[w]hile thinking about his installation for the museum's spectacular mirror room, Reed was struck by the way that light was refracted through the prisms of its twenty crystal chandeliers 'Light was everywhere – spectral light, flashing on and off; always changing, depending on where you were standing in the room'. He also noted that sometimes he could see his reflection in the room's

elaborate Baroque mirrors, but sometimes he could not. He remembered as a child, seeing a film about a vampire that was detected because its image was not reflected in a mirror. There, in Graz (home to several famous vampires) surrounded by spectral light and his own reflection and non reflection, David Reed discovered a new line of inquiry – Vampire Painting.⁶³

The notion of 'vampire painting' is not new; as my discussion of Wilde and Pater has shown, in fact, it predates Stoker. In the preface to *Dorian Gray*, Wilde argues that 'it is the spectator and not life that art really mirrors'; this is complicated by abstract painting.⁶⁴ Without a likeness reflected in a painting, does the onlooker become in some way a vampire? Or, as Reed puts it, 'is looking at an abstract painting similar to a vampire not reflecting in a mirror?'⁶⁵ Reed's paintings are both veil and mirror, elongated like celluloid they are revived and animated by the 'vampire's kiss' of photography. Reed's 'Vampire Study Center' is a fitting homage to *Dracula*, developed as it is from the phenomenon of non-reflection and its metaphorical resonances for abstract painting. In the conclusion to the notes Reed sent me, I discover the following epigram:

The death of painting has been announced for at least a hundred years. David Reed makes vampire paintings to extend the limits of the medium and to ensure that painting, like the creature itself, will endure until the end of time.⁶⁶

Reed's work shows non-reflection in painting in the present where it is in dialogue with other visual media such as photography, video and film.

In the twentieth century, the figure of the non-reflecting vampire was to be transformed and reanimated by its appropriation in film. Stacey Abbott recalls that in 1896 Maxim Gorky described the effect of the newly invented cinematograph itself as 'entering the Kingdom of Shadows'.⁶⁷ German expressionist filmmakers used the shadow metaphorically to give added, often uncanny meaning to the nature of projection; the vampire's shadow was restored via these techniques.⁶⁸ Many of the unsettling effects in early vampire film (for example, Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932)) come from making play with the fiend's menacing shadow (despite *Dracula's* lack of one). Kim Newman implies that the 'old not-visible-in-a-mirror trick' is perhaps an outmoded conceit, following the development of film:

It used to be among the most commonplace of undead traits – like drinking blood [or] sleeping in a coffin ... even more arcane lore about not being able to cross a threshold unless invited is now (thanks to *Let the Right One In*) more common in film and fiction. If you're trying to fit vampires into something

resembling our universe – representing vampirism as a blood disease, a lifestyle choice, a sexual kink or a parasitic species mimicking humanity – then the mirror thing is embarrassing magic.⁶⁹

The mirror motif is ‘hard to square with practicalities, especially if extended to photography in all its forms,’ Newman continues, ‘so Anne Rice’s vampires can be seen in a looking-glass, and that runs into many recent vampire franchises’.⁷⁰ Kimberley McMahon-Coleman observes too that ‘televisual vampires post-*Buffy* are often reflected in mirrors and can be photographed ... reflecting the trends of domestication and normalisation’.⁷¹ Vampires in *Buffy* and *Angel* don’t cast reflections but they can be photographed and recorded on video.⁷²

Despite the ‘domestication’ of the contemporary vampire figure, I see the non-reflection trope being continually reborn. Rice spectacularly debunked such lore in *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), but Stephenie Meyer has reimaged it in the Twilight saga.⁷³ In *New Moon* (2006), Bella has a dream in which she thinks she is meeting her long-dead grandmother.⁷⁴ Then, behind her, she sees the beautiful Edward. Only then does she realise ‘There was no Gran. That was *me*. Me in the mirror. Me – ancient, creased and withered. Edward stood behind me, casting no reflection, excruciatingly lovely and forever seventeen’.⁷⁵ In this female-centred narrative, Edward is the one ‘casting no reflection’; he will neither age nor experience the overbearing strangeness that Walter Benjamin identifies as ‘the estrangement felt before one’s own image in the mirror’, a strangeness akin to that felt by an actor ‘before the camera’.⁷⁶ The mechanical portraiture of film makes of the actor’s soul a transferrable commodity; Edward’s non-reflection may liberate him from this market. A vampire Adonis who remains ‘Forever seventeen’, he is perhaps more Dorian Gray than Dracula, though he has not paid Dorian’s price.⁷⁷

Wilde’s themes around mirroring, reproduction, reflection and a lack of soul find their way into the supernatural machinery of *Dracula*, in the motif of the soulless vampire not reflecting in a mirror. Mirrors are undoubtedly connected to the soul in Wilde, and Dorian reacts violently to them at times in the novel, foreshadowing Dracula: ‘flinging the mirror on the floor [he] crushed it into silver splinters beneath his heel’ (185). It does not seem far-fetched to see Dorian, who shares the protagonist of the yellow book’s ‘grotesque dread of mirrors’ (108), as influential on Stoker’s representation of Dracula.

Following Auerbach’s assumption that ‘Dracula has no voice’ and that his story is entirely constructed by others, we might assume that as the

vampire gains a voice it also gains a reflection.⁷⁸ This is only partially true; the non-reflection motif is still a prominent and enigmatic device. I have departed from current debates around the subjectivity and humanisation of the vampire, tracing the elusive origins of the non-reflection motif in the references to contemporaneous technology in Stoker’s *Dracula* notebooks. I have argued that *Dracula* and *Dorian Gray* mark a unique historical moment when vampirism in literature surfaces in response to mechanical reproduction and the new media of photography and film. Superstitions around vampires and myths about the shadowy origins of art converge in the vampiric portrait of *Dorian Gray*. The anxieties that occur around realism and mimesis in this text, following the birth of photography, show vampirism to be firmly bound to notions of reflection in art and fears over new technologies. Painting’s relationship to new media in the present has again been illustrated through vampirism in an analysis of David Reed’s ‘vampire painting’. And there’s a ‘*Twilight* connection’: rather than killing painting, the ‘vampire’s kiss of photography’ has made it the ‘immortal beloved’.⁷⁹ Reed has allowed us to come full circle, gesturing back to the *Dracula* notebooks that were our starting point, and where the origins of the myth were first uncovered, whilst exploring non-reflection in abstract painting and video art. I began at the outset of the project with the thought that the vampire not reflecting in a mirror may have fallen out of favour. But the vampire still refuses to show a likeness of its own; yet, holding a glass up to ourselves, it perpetually mirrors modern culture.

Notes

- 1 Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. Luckhurst, p. 223, p. 26. All further references are to this edition and in parentheses.
- 2 Barber, *Vampires*, p. 188.
- 3 Gerard, *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888), II, p. 18. Shadow trading also features in Adelbert von Chamisso’s story *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (*Peter Schlemihl’s Miraculous Story*) (1814). The story was widely circulated in English when it was illustrated by George Cruikshank (1827).
- 4 “Shadow”, ME. b. Applied rhet. to a portrait as contrasted with the original –1679. c. an obscure indication; a symbol, type; a prefiguration, foreshadowing. late ME. d. Something of opposite character that necessarily accompanies or follows something else, as shadow does light 1830. e. An imitation, copy; a counterpart 1693. ... 4. A spectral form, phantom’. late ME’ (*Shorter OED*).
- 5 ‘[T]he origin of painting ... began with tracing an outline around a man’s shadow ... pictures were originally done in this way’ (Pliny, *Natural History*, Book xxxv, p. 15, cited in Stoichita, *A Short History*, p. 11).

- 6 '[T]he author of *Essays on Physiognomy* makes an important conceptual leap. In fact, according to him, it is not – as was accepted by tradition – the human face that is the reflection of the soul, but the shadow of this face', Stoichita, *A Short History*, p. 157. Lavatar's *Essays on Physiognomy* (Leipzig and Winterthur, 1776) was translated into English and published in London in 1792. Stoker owned an edition of it (see 'Bram Stoker's Library' in *Bram Stoker's Notes*, p. 313).
- 7 David Glover claims that Stoker's novel is 'beset by the difficulties that haunted physiognomy, the fear that things are not always what they seem ... the Count himself often seems to occupy a space that is virtually beyond representation, an unmirrorable image, a force able to assume a multiplicity of forms, physiognomy's true vanishing point' (*Vampires*, p. 74).
- 8 Bram Stoker's handwritten research notes for *Dracula* (1890–1897) are housed in the Rosenbach Museum and Library in Philadelphia. The museum acquired them only in 1970. They were originally sold at Sotheby's by Stoker's widow Florence in 1913. Sir Christopher Frayling was the first scholar to have access to the newly recovered notes; he used them to research his seminal work *Vampyres* (1978). The notes were eventually transcribed and edited by Robert Eighteen-Bisang and Elizabeth Miller and published in facsimile in 2008.
- 9 As in the subtitle of Senf's 'Dracula' article.
- 10 I am thinking in particular of Ken Gelder's application of the 'uncanny' to the theme of doubling in 'Carmilla' in his seminal study *Reading the Vampire*, pp. 42–64; see also Martin, 'The Vampire in the Looking Glass'. Andrew Butler's current work in *Solar Flares* draws on Otto Rank's three types of double in relation to vampires. Senf's 'Dracula: The Unseen Face in the Mirror' is more broadly psychoanalytic in its approach.
- 11 Both sources are in *Bram Stoker's Notes for Dracula*. This comprehensive work reproduces the handwritten notes both in facsimile and in annotated transcription.
- 12 There is a huge amount of confusion in popular culture about the origins of this. See, for example, 'Why Does Silver Kill Werewolves?'; and 'Silver Bullet', in Wikipedia.
- 13 Baring-Gould, *Werewolves*, p. 87. Stoker's use of this book is well known; see, for example, 'Bram Stoker's Nonfiction Sources for *Dracula*', in *Bram Stoker's Notes*, p. 4; and Luckhurst's introduction to Stoker, *Dracula*, p. xvii. Elsewhere, Paul Barber asserts that 'among the Slavs, the werewolf typically turns into a vampire after its death' (*Vampires*, p. 96), and Alan Dundes claims that 'in Yugoslavia the vampire has merged with the werewolf (usually called 'vukodlak', and only occasionally 'vampir')' (*The Vampire*, p. 51).
- 14 As Dundes says, 'The vampire is "dead" and soulless it has no reflection' (*The Vampire*, p. 145). Erik Butler is in agreement: 'a missing reflection is functionally identical to a missing shadow – that is, a missing soul' (*Metamorphoses*, p. 56).
- 15 Barber, *Vampires*, p. 182.
- 16 Notably in Northern Eurasian cultures, according to Barber (*Vampires*, p. 188). It seems that reflecting water can also act as a convenient soul receptacle (there is the belief that spirits cannot cross water). *Dracula* can cross water only at the

- slack or flood of the tide (a motif that is frequently taken up in the Hammer Horror Christopher Lee films). See Hutchings, *Dracula*, for discussions of Dracula's attributes in such films (pp. 34–42).
- 17 There is an obvious connection between the two phenomena as the *Shorter OED* illustrates: "Shadow" II. 2. A reflected image ME'.
- 18 For Planché, see McFarland, 'The Vampire on Stage', pp. 29–32.
- 19 For the influence of this on vampire cinema, see Stacey Abbott's Chapter 6 below.
- 20 Stage effects, including those of the phantasmagoria, are discussed more broadly in Roxana Stuart, *Stage Blood*. Auerbach describes the function of the vampire trap thus: 'Depending on its placement, the vampire trap allowed the actor to be alternately body and spirit; the trap in the floor catapulted him back and forth, between hell and heaven, while the trap in the flats endowed him with the semblance of immateriality as he moved in and out of walls' (*Our Vampires*, pp. 6–7). For Stoker and the theatre more generally, see Wynne, *Bram Stoker and the Stage*.
- 21 Stoker, *Bram Stoker's Notes*, pp. 3, 4.
- 22 'History of Kodak', Kodak website. See also Teukolsky, 'Picture Language' and Walter Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography'.
- 23 Wicke, 'Vampiric Typewriting'. For compelling discussions around 'unsettlement', contemporary technology and vampirism, see Ivan Phillips, Chapter 14 below.
- 24 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 225.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 223.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 223.
- 27 Wicke, 'Vampiric Typewriting', p. 472.
- 28 Krauss, 'Reinventing the Medium', p. 295.
- 29 Assmus, 'The Early History of X-rays'. 'Frau Röntgen was taken aback and somewhat frightened by the first x-ray plate of a human subject which enabled her to see her own skeleton. The feeling ... was [of a] vague premonition or death': Calarco, 'An Historical Overview'.
- 30 Cited in Barber, *Vampires*, p. 180.
- 31 The *Leipziger Stadtanzeiger*, cited in Benjamin, 'A Small History', p. 241.
- 32 This denial of our kinship with the soulless or animal 'other' (through the figure of the vampire) may reveal Stoker's response to Darwinism. The unsettling Darwinian idea that species are not fixed and are fluid is dramatised in *Dracula*'s metamorphosis into lower animals (bats, dogs etc.) in the novel. One of the vampire's most vulnerable victims is Renfield, a weak-minded maniac whose bizarre mental condition, 'Zoophagia', means he has a compulsion to devour ever more evolved animals – the fly, then the spider that catches the fly, then the bird that catches the spider. This apt Darwinian metaphor is developed by Stoker in the novel.
- 33 Benjamin, 'The Work of Art', p. 223.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 223.
- 35 See Sweeney, 'Dracula Creator Bram Stoker'.
- 36 Stoker, *Bram Stoker's Notes*, p. 4.
- 37 Pater, 'Leonardo Da Vinci', in *The Renaissance*, p. 80.

- 38 Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', Part 1, pp. 213–43 (pp. 238–9).
- 39 For doubling in *Dorian Gray*, see Craft, 'Come See about Me'. For the relationship between *Dracula* and Wilde's novel, see Schaffer, "A Wilde Desire Took Me".
- 40 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Bristow, pp. 6, 8. All further references are to this edition and in parentheses. Kim Newman has a character called 'Basil Hallward' exhibit with Whistler and Sickert in his novel; a wonderful conceit (see *Anno Dracula*, p. 158).
- 41 The significance of the yellow book should be noted here. *Dorian Gray* features a French novel (most probably Huysmans's *A Rebours* (1884)) with a yellow cover to which its hero is attracted; the literary magazine of Beardsley was called *The Yellow Book*; Oscar Wilde is carried off to prison holding a book with a yellow wrapper; Constable issued *Dracula* in a bright yellow cover in May 1897.
- 42 'The vampire is the nameless counterpart of Narcissus' (Weibel, 'Phantom Painting', p. 56).
- 43 Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, pp. 163–93 (p. 178).
- 44 Preface, *Dorian Gray*, p. 3.
- 45 Wilde cites 'Hegel's system of contraries' in 'The Truth of Masks', p. 304. Linda Dowling confirms that 'Wilde became familiar with Hegelian philosophy at Oxford, where a powerful school of English expositors of Hegel established itself by the 1870s' (*The Soul of Man*, n. 78, p. 377). For further reading, see Smith, 'Protoplasmic Hierarchy'.
- 46 Themes of creativity and painting continue in Viereck's 1907 novel *The House of the Vampire*. Here Wilde himself is recast as an undead vampire figure and art has become the province of a master race of vampires (see Lisa Lampert-Weissig's Chapter 5 below). Other supernatural tales with themes of vampiric portraiture include Poe's 'The Oval Portrait' (1842) and Hume Nisbet's 'The Old Portrait' (1900). Christopher Frayling notes that the vampire as 'metaphor for the creative process' makes 'an occasional appearance' in nineteenth-century fiction (*Vampires*, p. 62).
- 47 James Twitchell includes *Dorian Gray* in a study of 'The Artist as Vampire', in *The Living Dead*, pp. 142–91.
- 48 Interestingly, Wilde has Basil Hallward state 'there are only two eras of any importance in the world's history. The first is the appearance of a new medium for art, and the second is the appearance of a new personality for art' (*Dorian Gray*, p. 12).
- 49 Berg, 'Technicolor Vampires', p. 68.
- 50 Sixty works by the artist have recently been exhibited at Kunst Museum in Bonn in a show entitled 'Heart of Glass' (June to October 2012).
- 51 Reed in correspondence, 8 May 2011. Critical material on Reed in relation to vampirism has included, but is not limited to, the following: Madore, 'Sixty Fractions of Wegohn', Weibel, 'Phantom Painting', Loreck, 'Some Reflections on David Reed's Paintings', all in Reed, *New Paintings*, pp. 4–11, pp. 49–55, pp. 56–62; Berg, 'Technicolor Vampires', in Reed, *You Look Good in Blue*, pp. 58–68.

- 52 'John Rimmer is an artist who trained as a painter and is currently working on a project employing digital technologies "as painting", co-opting the visual language of painting into digital video making. John's research ... developed out of his training in philosophy and fine art ... he has exhibited both nationally and internationally and recently curated *Digitalis*, a touring exhibition that was hosted in Transylvania' (John Rimmer in correspondence, 20 March 2012).
- 53 The 'Vampire Journal' records Reed's thoughts as he embarks on a journey through vampire film and listens to a recording of Stoker's novel *Dracula*. It is reproduced in full in David Reed, *New Paintings*, pp. 12–23.
- 54 Reed, notes from the artist's journal, 6 July 1999, 'Painting/Vampire'.
- 55 Reed, 'Painting/Vampire', 12 April 1999.
- 56 The cigarette case image is shown on a laptop computer photographed alongside the film stills in the notes.
- 57 Reed, 'Painting/Vampire'; select entries in the artist's journal for the year 1999.
- 58 Newman, *Anno Dracula*, p. 158. In Newman's alternative history, historical and fictional characters (such as Ruthven) mix freely.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 158. 'In the TV series *Ultraviolet*, vampires don't show up in any mechanical media – they can't use telephones, for instance. In the *Anno Dracula* piece I'm writing at the moment, I'm exploring the difficulty of photographing vampires as a minor theme', Kim Newman in correspondence, May 2012.
- 60 John Rimmer in correspondence, May 2011.
- 61 'I have mixed colors for the horizontal bands that will be under the brush marks of the paintings for the mirror room. The color sequence from top to bottom is: rose/paler red/white/pale green/blue. These colors will be barely visible when the brush marks are cut out and surrounded by white. They cause a subliminal suffusion, like the sparkling prismatic flash of the chandeliers' (Reed, *New Paintings*, p. 13).
- 62 Reed, *Vampire Journal*, p. 16.
- 63 Longhauser, Foreword, Reed, 'Painting/Vampire', p. 1.
- 64 Preface, *Dorian Gray*, p. 3.
- 65 From the title-page to Reed, 'Painting/Vampire'.
- 66 Longhauser, Foreword, Reed, 'Painting/Vampire', p. 2.
- 67 See Stacey Abbott's Chapter 6 below (p. 94). All the optical effects of cinema are already there in the novel despite the absence of the cinematograph itself.
- 68 See shadow and projection in Stoichita, *A Short History*, p. 148. Stacey Abbott's and Ivan Phillips's Chapters 6 and 14 below are similarly insightful on the use of shadow and projection in vampire film.
- 69 Newman, 'Why Don't Vampires Cast Reflections?'
- 70 *Ibid.*
- 71 Kimberley McMahon-Coleman, pp. 221 (Chapter 13) below.
- 72 I am grateful to Stacey Abbott for clarifying this via correspondence.
- 73 See Rice, *Interview*, p. 27.
- 74 Meyer, *New Moon*, p. 3.
- 75 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

- 76 'The Work of Art', p. 232. Benjamin is referring to the experience of the actor transcending self here so it seems fitting to use it for *Twilight*, where Robert Pattinson has become the commodity 'Edward Cullen' through the medium of film.
- 77 David Skal draws some useful comparisons between Wilde and Stoker biographically and thematically in terms of their work in *Hollywood Gothic*, pp. 59–65; and Christopher Frayling comments on their Anglo-Irish connections, their friendship and shared intellectual and literary circles (*Vampyres*, pp. 65–6).
- 78 Auerbach, *Our Vampires*, p. 82.
- 79 'Thank you for reviving my thoughts about non reflection. I recently had an exhibition of my painting with the photographs of Wiliam Eggleston at Peder Lund in Oslo. I discovered that painting and photography look especially good together at the moment because both are freshly outmoded media – there's a *Twilight* connection. Rather than killing painting, the vampire's kiss of photography has made it the immortal beloved. I hope there are more shows combining photography and painting' (David Reed in correspondence, 8 May 2011).

5

The vampire as dark and glorious
necessity in George Sylvester Viereck's
House of the Vampire and
Hanns Heinz Ewers's *Vampir*

Lisa Lampert-Weissig

Evil has its right to live, just like everything else – only the petty are hateful/ugly.¹

Vampires embody paradox: they are simultaneously living and dead, attractive and repulsive, immortal yet still vulnerable. It is perhaps fitting, then, that the figure of the vampire can help us to understand the intertwined stories of two equally paradoxical humans, George Sylvester Viereck (1884–1962) and Hanns Heinz Ewers (1871–1943). Each openly supported the National-Socialist regime in Germany while simultaneously maintaining that he was 'philo-Semitic'. How can one be a 'pro-Jewish' Nazi? The cognitive dissonance required to maintain such self-deception could be seen as the psychological equivalent of the liminal vampire state. I want to suggest that the portrayals of vampires by Viereck and Ewers provide some insight into how they could support Hitler's brutal regime.

Ewers, a German, and Viereck, a German-born US citizen, came to know one another in New York while working together for the German cause prior to the American entry into the First World War. The two prolific and prominent men of letters had much else in common. Both styled themselves as literary provocateurs whose works included explorations of sexuality and 'perversity', features included in the vampire novels each penned, Viereck's 1907 *House of the Vampire* and Ewers's 1920 *Vampir: ein verwilderter Roman in Fetzen und Farben* (*Vampire: An Overgrown Novel in Scraps and Colours*). Viereck and Ewers were also both admirers of Swinburne, Wilde and Poe. The Satanist Alesteir Crowley and the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld were among their shared associates.