

Erinne Vivani

**The Death of the Most
Horrible Monster**

1922

I was alone and sad. I walked aimlessly through the deserted countryside under the scourge of the noonday sun, with the sole aim of living a few hours in solitude, far from the crowd of voluptuaries and paupers. Dark thoughts bombarded my brain, my mind was in turmoil and I walked, I walked tirelessly, paying no attention to the passing time, not to paths I traversed, which were completely unknown to me.

The sun was nearly setting when I found myself in a place that I called the realm of death. The terrain was all muddy, not one tree, not one blade of grass. A corrupt stench emanated from the pond, over which the sky was almost covered with a myriad of insects and strange black birds, that whirled through the still air without making any noise. Where was I? I turned around and began walking again with the intention of going back home, but I hadn't even gone ten steps when a voice sounded in that bog and called me by name. Hesitating a bit, I turned toward the point from which the voice had come and spotted something moving in the mud. Who could it be? I took a few steps and made out a horrible monster, who invited me with gestures to approach him. What horror! He was a frightening monster. His body was covered with very long, muddy, bloody, shaggy hair. His enormous head was covered with so many huge snakes that rhythmically opened their mouths wide. The eyes, the nose, the mouth and the ears were replaced with six large circular holes. Instead of fingers and toes, the hands and feet had very long, hooked claws. And that stench came from his body!

With a voice that had nothing human about it, the monster said to me:

"Oh, there you are at last! Why aren't you laughing now, cursed disciple of Stirner, solitary dweller of the peaks, scourge of morals? Why aren't you laughing now?"

"But that Egyptian Stirner!" I answered. "I am no one's disciple. But who are you, and how do you know me?"

"I," the monster replied, "am Morality and I demand the reasons for the insults that you've poured out on me for nearly twenty years, along with those rascals, your individualist comrades. You have always reviled me though you know that I am the direct emanation of God and am eternal and omnipotent like him. If you don't change your mind, I, with these divine hands, will kill you and drink your damned blood."

"Here, oh Morality," I added in dismay, "I might be wrong and would like to admit it. Try to convince me of the errors I committed and I will be happy to become you faithful slave and fervent admirer."

But the monster answered wrathfully:

"No, no, here it is not a question of being convinced or persuaded, here it is a question of blindly believing me as others do, and you are no different from the others, do you understand?"

“I’ve understood divinely,” I ventured to declare, “only I would like to beg you to talk to me about the high mission that you have in the world: satisfy me.”

“I will satisfy you,” the monster said, “but first I want to eat.”

As he said this, he sat down, opened a sack that he had beside him, lifted a dead baby out of it, bit into the little head and begin to greedily eat.

I was horrified.

Morality asked me: “Would you like to have some?”

“Many thanks,” I answered, “but we individualists are not really cannibals as a great man, a moralist of recent times, insinuated. Tell me, if it’s permissible, who provides you with those poor babies?”

He candidly confessed:

“All the moralists bring them to me in exchange for the services I render them.”

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When he had finished the macabre meal, the monster started to speak:

“Now, listen to me well, I will speak frankly and sincerely to you, but don’t get squeamish if I show you excessively bitter and sensitive truths.

Know, first of all, that my nature and functions change with the changing of historical and social times and vary from place to place. In certain places, for example, cannibalism and polygamy are moral, while among us, they are the most atrocious crimes. And even here, what was allowed yesterday is banned today, because it is considered immoral, whereas tomorrow it might even be judged very moral, or even made downright obligatory.

Furthermore, my functions change in accordance with the social classes, parties, sects, organizations, etc., to which individuals belong, because my spirit is like a polyhedron of a thousand faces and each face is intended for a given group or category of human beings”

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“For example, I tell the rich ruling class:

For you it is moral to live on the backs of the workers, to travel in luxury trains, in automobiles, in airships, to dress in silk, to spend thousands of dollars on a bauble, to keep a hundred gilded prostitutes, to own palaces in the cities, villas on the mountains and by the sea and servants in livery and horses and carriages and everything, because property is sacred and inviolable. So try to educate the rabble in the respect of that principle, and if the mob of the poor and of slaves dares to raise its head, you have recourse to the hired killers who, in the name of

the law or for a handful of cash, will know how to put those who violate sacred property in their place.”

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“To priests and monks I say:

Preach resignation and humility, darken the intellect, put minds to sleep, promise paradise beyond the tomb, always fleece the poor when they are baptized, confirmed, given communion, married, when they are ill, when they die and get buried and even hundreds and thousands of years after they are buried, reciting psalms in celebration of the mass for their souls. So it is.

And don't get the idea of forming a family, because it is a serious worry. Woman? . . . Eh, there are so many rich and poor women who need your confessional! Don't be afraid. Even many subversives send their wives, their sisters, their daughters to you. And then there are the nuns, Mary's daughters, her pupils, etc. and in the end, it isn't said that we must discard the children entrusted to you religious care. Always entertain yourselves, since the nitwits pay well. Hurrah for the black mass!”

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“But my work becomes most eloquent and effective when I exercise the patriotic function. Oh, the fatherland! I say to the children of rich men, officers, priests and whores: ‘Be patriotic. Whoever doesn't love the fatherland, doesn't love his mother. And show your patriotic passion by singing the praises of war, the world's hygiene. There are your enemies who speak a different language from yours, who have different customs, exterminate them in the holy name of the fatherland. Our king, the king of the rich, will conquer a span of earth, will be more powerful, and, because of his power, yours will grow, since he is your father, the father of the fatherland. Shout in the streets and alleys: Long live war! and war will be. You don't want to go? You are right. You are rich and deserve to be spared. Shout: We will arm ourselves and depart, and the army of outcasts will depart without thinking and slaughter and get slaughtered because the king and the fatherland want it this way, I want it this way.

Mothers, wives, children, sisters will weep and curse in vain. Will there be recalcitrant soldiers who don't want to go, that don't want to murder unknown people who have never caused them any harm? But does it seem like it? Workers are patriots, they are heroes, they will fight like lions and bring back victory.

If, later, they didn't show themselves as such, our fine gendarmes, the royal guards, the officers of the *Guardia di Finanza*¹ and other cops would think to give them a kick in the ass and push them to attack and counterattack.

Forward, Savoy, through love or through force!

Hatred will spread like wildfire, the thirst for blood will become unquenchable; it will become lust. It will be a savage body to body struggle, rivers of blood will flow and mountains of corpses will rise. The more a man is a brute, the more he will be judged a hero. This is what happened in the last world war. There were millions and millions of deaths, millions and millions who were left blind, deaf, mute, mad, criminal, tubercular, crippled in their arms and legs, stupefied and so on saying, but what does it matter?

The war generated famine and plague. Old people and children of workers wept and stretched out their hand for pity from the people, young women became prostitutes, but the rich had more money, more power, more glory. This is war, this is the fatherland, this is Morality.”

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“Now I will tell you about one of my dear descendants: fascism. Three years ago, the interests of the nation, that is of the bourgeoisie, were seriously threatened by the proletarian tide, which — tired of putting up with endless misery — was overwhelming the sacred institutions of the fatherland. The proletariat no longer listened to its rulers' gentle exhortations to calm. Then fascism rose up to destroy the subversives. Thousands of young men enlisted, and they were armed to the teeth.

The police and the judicial system assured them of impunity, the bourgeoisie paid a discrete wage, the press respectfully gave its applause, and they were able to adopt the practice of terror on a large scale.

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Flanked by the royal guard and by the police in black shirts, every day they commit all sorts of acts of bravado. They make it obligatory for citizens to stick the tricolor outside of their windows, to wear a ribbon in the buttonhole of their jacket, to rise to their feet, hats off, at the first notes of the royal march, to shout Long live the king! In compensation, they basically call themselves republicans like their duce. And they set fire to the workers' hovels. Everything is permitted

¹ A militarized Italian police force under the authority of the Minister of Economy and Finance.

to them except striking the leaders of the opposing parties, because if these parties lost their leaders, no one would carry out the task of firefighter and spy.”

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The monster paused a moment, then continued the speech:

“Perhaps you are ignorant of my infinite power and therefore fight me, oh wicked one. To form a concept of my supreme power for you, I am telling you that I penetrate into human hearts, direct the emotions and passions and all the carnal relations between man and woman. In this case, I take the name of sexual morality.

Among civilized people like us, I proclaim single, monogamous, exclusivist love. It is true that very few men and women follow it, that almost the totality prefer the plurality of affections and of copulations, because all are lovers of the new and the various in all manifestations of life and especially in love, but what could that matter to me?

I require love for just one, if not in substance, at least in form because appearances must absolutely be saved.

I know that you are not of this opinion, that you like to frolic from flower to flower, savoring sinful pleasures, inhaling with your full lungs the scents of the velvety flesh, decorating yourself with the flowers of evil. But I laugh at you, at the disappointments and sorrows that I create for you. I have promised you I’d be sincere, and I will speak to you as well of the very serious inconveniences that derive from the prohibitions of sexual morality.

Young boys and girls, to whom copulation — due to their tender age — is denied, are consumed and mangled in the practice of masturbation.

A few years ago — you’ll recall — the newspapers spoke of a young woman of the high aristocracy, who, while she entertained herself in her room with her dog, heard the door handle move. To hide her guilt, she tried to free herself from the dog’s embrace, the beast, who couldn’t tolerate the abrupt interruption, strangled her.

The instances in which a some woman, in order to destroy the evidence of her illegitimate love, tries to abort and goes to end her days in the hospital.

Some other woman, still in homage to morality, strangles the fruit of her womb with her own hands and throws it in a canal of a sewer. Then there are the most beautiful women, exuberant with youthful life, thirsty for intoxication, who are obliged to give themselves to the embrace of an old, diseased, repugnant man.” “Ah,” I interrupted, “I wasn’t wrong when I wrote in a magazine that venereal diseases, copulation with dogs, infanticide and all the crimes committed for amorous passion have their origins in the limitations imposed by morality!”

“I don’t allow you to interrupt me,” Morality protested, “because my truth must not be discussed, but accepted.”

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“Now I should speak to you for a while about the disciplined, advanced and conscious proletariat, but it would be useless, since you know far too well its infinite merit as beast of burden and of the lash. Instead I will mention the various political parties, republican, socialist and communist.

All parties are equivalent, all are based on state reason, on the principle of authority. It’s not a struggle for liberty, but rather for the replacement of one more or less idiotic and savage tyranny with another. In Russia, for example, Lenin came after the Czar, and Lenin will be followed by . . . Lenone² and so on, because that is what moral law wants.”

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“As you well know, not even anarchists — better designate by the name of libertarian communists — are immune to moralism. Haven’t you heard how they preach and how they opine on the Goddess Morality?

They also organize, that is, deceive themselves and deceive others. They also want to redeem the world, as if freedom could be granted. Freedom, instead, must be lived. And they speak to the masses about a radiant tomorrow: and the masses either don’t understand anything, or they turn a dazzled eye toward the promised Land. Tomorrow the revolution and expropriation, tomorrow equality, freedom and happiness for all. In the meantime, one starves to death.

The theory of the future is the theory of more or less rosy dream, but so far from reality. It is the theory of Christianity. Christ died twenty centuries ago, but Christianity is still alive and triumphant. Christ, for the love of men, said Tomorrow!

All schools of socialism repeat, parrot-like, Tomorrow!, Tomorrow! It is my shadow — the shadow of Morality — that, to cloud the reality of the present, speaks of the light of the future.

I have weakened and domesticated anarchists; I have made them honest and civil; I have spoken to them of love against hatred, of justice and not of revenge, and they — strong from my protection — have risen in the pulpit and — as revolutionaries — have preached against acts of individual terrorism and — as expropriators

² This is, unfortunately, an untranslatable insulting play on words. *Lenone* is the Italian word for a procurer or pimp.

— against expropriations by individuals. Doesn't it seem abundantly logical to you? Sure, because for them the individual is worth much less than a pathogenic microbe, whereas society is everything.

It is necessary to destroy egoism in human beings — they obsessively cry — because when egoism is destroyed, human beings will live happily on the earth as good brothers. Whereas you say to everyone and especially to revolutionaries: Be egoistic, because the more egoistic you are, the thirstier you will be for freedom and happiness, and the less you will be able to tolerate your state of misery and enslavement.

Today, in consequence of the fascist police reaction, you start talking in your papers of the need for heroic anarchism again. But it is still certain that anarchist moralists, who will stigmatize every act of individual rebellion, will never be lacking. The social-anarchists were the ones who downgraded, branded, cast stones at Ravochol, Henry, Vaillant, Duval, Mariani, Aguggini and so many other avengers of Anarchy. And I did this on my own, the glory is all mine. I am Morality, born from blind ignorance and the authoritarian spirit of humanity, and I must carry out my function of darkening minds, of creating frightening and baleful phantoms, of extinguishing any spirit of revolt, and as long as I live, human being will be slaves, poor and cowardly. And not even you will be spared from my miserable, ruthless wrath, oh hellish devil.”

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“Stop, by god!” — I roared — and in a split second pulled out my poisoned dagger; I rushed at the monster slashing his throat terribly. The mortally wounded monster sunk his claws into my poor flesh making it bleed and spewed a reeking greenish-yellow slime from his mouth, completely flooding my face. But new and more terrible blows of my knife rained on the monster, who fell to the ground. He was dead. I immediately thought of cutting out his heart to show to my friends, my comrades, my brothers in sorrow and struggle. And I got ready for the task with my weapon.

But, imagine, oh my brother, the impression I felt when, in place of a heart, I found a huge stone? Suddenly getting over my surprise, I exclaimed: “It's good in itself.” This would serve me for perfecting my blows when facing some moralistic swine, if there still were any.

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