DEMONIC TEXTS AND TEXTUAL DEMONS

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The Demonic Tradition, the Self, and Popular Fiction

Frans Ilkka Mäyrä

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– Frans Ilkka Mäyrä
Tampere, Finland

This book is dedicated to my parents, Reetta and Matti Mäyrä.

Contents

Illustrations

Abbreviations

BT	Anne Rice, *The Tale of the Body Thief*
DA	Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*
E	William Peter Blatty, *The Exorcist*
F	Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus*
HD	Clive Barker, "The History of the Devil"
IV	Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*
MD	Anne Rice, *Memnoch the Devil*
N	William Gibson, *Neuromancer*
QD	Anne Rice, *The Queen of the Damned*
RB	Ira Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*
SV	Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses*
VL	Anne Rice, *The Vampire Lestat*

See Bibliography for further details.

The Beginnings

> And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"
> He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many."
>
> – The Gospel according to Mark[1]

INTRODUCING THE INTRODUCTIONS

This study deals with demons, and the plural and heterogeneous materials associated with them. It is not concerned with the actual existence of such beings, or with metaphysical speculations that such beliefs might inspire; rather, the reality of demons I am interested in unfolds in the pages of fiction and in horror movies, in hallucinatory fantasies of visionaries, madmen, and people tormented by anxieties and oppressive social conditions.[2] Troublesome and often obnoxious, demons nevertheless continue to figure in our nightmares and even in such waking fantasies as might be granted the name of art. They have been in our cultural vocabulary for thousands of years and continue to challenge our assumptions and theories of human nature. Ancient transgressors, they help to give a historical dimension to the current debate on dissolution of subjectivity, plurality, heterogeneity and conflicts in the structure of the self. They can be approached with theories of text or the self, but in the process they also help to reveal the demonic tensions in these theories, in their own textual selves.

Since the subject of this study is plural, not one, it is only appropriate that it has several introductions. The first one, "Discovering the Demonic Heritage" will open this work with some notable examples of demonic figures appearing in folklore and literature. The next section, titled "The Character of This Study," will position my work by discussing its goals, theoretical and methodological preferences, and it also clarifies my use of some key

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[1] Mk. 5:9. – Bible translations are from the "Revised Standard Version" if not otherwise indicated.

[2] Readers interested in engaging in campaigns against the demonic powers are well served by the abundant offerings of bestselling "spiritual warfare" literature; e.g. Kurt E. Koch, *Between Christ and Satan* (1968) and *Demonology Past and Present: Discerning and Overcoming Demonic Strongholds* (1973), Hal Lindsey with C.C., Carlson, *Satan is Alive and Well on Planet Earth* (1972), Mark I. Bubeck, *The Adversary: The Christian Versus Demon Activity* (1975) and *Overcoming the Adversary* (1984), Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (1997), Thomas E. Trask and Wayde I. Goodall, *The Battle: Defeating the Enemies of Your Soul* (1997) – just to mention a few classic and recent examples.

concepts. In the section "Previous Research" the reader will find which studies I consider as the most important predecessors and influences on this research. Finally, "How to Use This Book" gives some reading advice and outlines the contents of the different chapters. The whole work can also be read as an introduction; it is an introduction to a special area, often characterised by controversy and confusion. My hope is that this book can inform and stimulate its readers to create their own interpretations, either parallel to the lines I have drawn in my readings, or in new directions.

Next, I will quickly outline how the demonic has figured in different mythologies and folklore and then in the Western literary tradition by reference to some canonical works. This will familiarise the reader with some central themes – the relationship between self and demonic figures, and the internalisation of the demonic, in particular – which will be studied with more detail in the subsequent chapters.

DISCOVERING THE DEMONIC HERITAGE

The prevailing hold that realistic narrative conventions still have on our impressions of literature might make demons appear as marginal figures – fairytale remnants from an alien culture. However, one needs only to take a wider look at the cultural and historical landscape and the situation alters dramatically.

Various demonic beings are present in narratives all over the world. They haunt and pursue, tempt and terrify – and charge innumerable stories in this process with necessary excitement as the protagonists try to survive their visitations. In the Sanskrit epic, *Ramayana*, the ten-headed king of demons, Ravana, abducts queen Sita and forces her husband Rama and his allies to undergo numerous adventures before they eventually succeed in slaying Ravana. In another part of the world, the Zoroastrians tell of Ahriman, "the Lie," an evil lord who fights with his demons against the light and good creation of Ahura Mazda only to be defeated by him at the end of time. The educated and sophisticated elite often scorns the belief in the existence of demons, but these creatures have such a hold on the imagination that they keep coming back. Buddhism is a good example of this. The Blessed One could have taught the non-existence of gods and demons, but as the doctrine was transmitted in narratives there has been very little Buddhism without some mythology that often also exhibits demonic figures. The Badhâna Sutta and many other Buddhist sources relate colourful stories that describe how Mâra, the Evil One, does his worst to complicate Siddharta's road to enlightenment. As T.O. Ling writes, "Mâra emerges from the background of popular demonology, and has obvious affinities with it."[3] Stories about de-

[3] See Ling 1962, 43-71 (quotation from the page 44). The section "Works of General Reference" in my bibliography offers starting points for those interested in getting more information about non-Western demonologies. (See especially *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade.)

mons form an important part of the narrative heritage in many cultures, and this material has proven exceedingly enduring. Folklores all over the world celebrate demons alongside human ghosts and natural spirits, in animal as well as human forms, and do not often clearly distinguish their moral character: the same spirit may be benevolent or malevolent. The fundamental moral character of spirits is often described as morally ambivalent or neutral towards humans. The attitude and conduct of humans themselves has a strong influence on the reaction of the supernatural in a folktale.

The Western literature has made use of a particular, emphatically dualistic demonological heritage, which I outline in chapter one. Some of the best known works of European literary tradition contain a great deal of demonic material. Dante Alighieri created a monument to the Middle Ages in his famous *Commedia* (1314-1321).[4] The invisible realities of Christian theology are illustrated in one hundred cantos, as Dante gives a vivid description of his tripartite journey through the worlds beyond the grave – first, *Inferno*, then *Purgatorio*, and finally *Paradiso*. Combining sophisticated allegorical symbolism with realistic (and often cruel) descriptions of the suffering sinners, the *Inferno* culminates in a confrontation with the Devil. Dante's description of his vision is well worth quoting:

> If once he was as fair as now he's foul
> and dared to raise his brows against his Maker,
> it is fitting that all grief should spring from him.
>
> Oh, how amazed I was when I looked up
> and saw a head – one head wearing three faces!
> One was in front (and that was a bright red),
>
> the other two attached themselves to this one
> just above the middle of each shoulder,
> and at the crown all three were joined in one:
>
> The right face was a blend of white and yellow,
> the left the color of those people's skin
> who live along the river Nile's descent.
>
> Beneath each face two mighty wings stretched out,
> the size you might expect of this huge bird
> (I never saw a ship with larger sails):
>
> not feathered wings but rather like the ones
> a bat would have. He flapped them constantly,
> keeping three winds continuously in motion

[4] "Comedy" as a title suggests that the direction of the poem is from darkness to light, from misfortune to happiness (and is thereby "untragic" according to the Aristotelian classification; see chapter 13 of *Poetics* [Aristotle 1982, 57-58]). Dante's poem was made "divine" (*La divina commedia*) in the 1555 edition.

to lock Cocytus eternally in ice.
He wept from his six eyes, and down three chins
were dripping tears all mixed with bloody slaver.[5]

Huge, passive and immovable, Dante's "Dis" is a part of a fixed structure. He is locked in the icy pit of Hell, in the position of farthest distance from the light and goodness of God, and in his allegorically subordinate role – his three faces a diabolical parody of the Holy Trinity, and a distorting mirror of God's perfection (ignorance, impotence and hatred or envy, opposing the Highest Wisdom, Divine Omnipotence and Primal Love).[6] The bat's wings, however, also suggest the figure of a medieval demon with its nocturnal and beastly associations, generously illustrated in medieval descriptions of hell.

The Renaissance and the subsequent economic and social development created a demand for a new individuality; the subjects for Church and State became increasingly aware of themselves as free individuals, agents with economical and political initiative and independence.[7] The tempting possibilities and painful turmoil of this cultural metamorphosis did not pass without receiving its manifestation in demonic imagery. *Paradise Lost* (1667) by John Milton reshaped the figure of the Devil by granting him the role of an active performer. His character captured the rebellious spirit of his time and explored the moral defects and dangers inherent in its conflicting dynamism. Catherine Belsey has located a change in discursive practices in the latter half of the seventeenth century that eventually produced the idea of a rational, unified and autonomous subject of modern "liberal humanism." But this subject enters the cultural stage as "an isolated figure, uncertain of the knowledge of the self, the world and others which legitimates its lonely dominion."[8] Milton's Satan breathes this into poetry:

The mind is its own place, and in it self
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
[…].
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav'n.[9]

The Devil's celebration of the fully autonomous subjectivity encourages the reader to put the proud words under scrutiny; it is the Devil speaking, after all. The emerging free self finds in this scene its ambivalent apotheosis: both an embodiment of the courageous ideals of modernity, and its

[5] *Inf.* 34:34-54; Dante 1314/1984, 380-81.
[6] See Mark Musa's notes and commentary (ibid., 384-5).
[7] See, e.g. Heller 1967/1978, 198-99; Taylor 1989, 101-5; Foucault 1966/1989, 217, 308.
[8] Belsey 1985, 86.
[9] *Paradise Lost* 1:253-63; Milton 1973, 12.

negative, demonic aspect – the disconnection, emptiness, rage, narcissism.[10] Milton's own experiences as a secretary in Cromwell's Council of State, and the bitter disappointment of the Restoration has undoubtedly granted his portrait of the diabolical rebel some of its striking power and captivating ambivalence.[11]

The popular "Devil books" (*Teufelsbücher*), flourishing from about 1545 to the beginning of the seventeenth century, had brought up the Protestant peoples to standards of proper conduct; they warned of particular vices (dressing, eating, drinking, cursing, dancing, and so on) and colourfully described the associated demons.[12] The early Lutherans tended to take the Devil seriously, and the fantastic stories told about the magician Faustus came to be interpreted in this context as proofs that Faustus had been in league with Satan.[13] The Faust legend has received numerous literary interpretations (Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* [c. 1588] should especially be mentioned), but none were so influential as *Faust: Eine Tragödie* (1808, 1832) by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Milton still formulated his goal in *Paradise Lost* in dominantly Christian terms: "That to the highth of this great Argument / I may assert Eternal Providence, / And justifie the wayes of God to men."[14] Goethe was writing from another perspective, radically altered by the Enlightenment, the birth of modern science, the advent of industrialism and Romantic individuality. His protagonist is a modern man, a scientist, and his demons are rising from a troubling inner emptiness and pains of love (Part One), inner contradictions constantly spurring him to the productive life of achievement – even at the cost of appearing immoral (Part Two). Mephistopheles, Goethe's Devil, is "Part of a power that would / Alone work evil, but engenders good."[15] Goethe described his views on this power in his autobiography:

> He [Goethe himself, as the protagonist of the autobiography] thought he could detect in nature – both animate and inanimate, with soul or without soul – something which manifests itself only in contradictions, and which, therefore, could not be comprehended under any idea, still less under one word. It was not godlike, for it seemed unreasonable; not human, for it had no understanding; nor devilish, for it was beneficent; nor angelic, for it often betrayed a malicious pleasure. It resembled chance, for it evolved no consequences; it was like Providence, for it hinted at connection. All that limits us it seemed to penetrate; it seemed to sport at will with the necessary elements of our existence; it contracted time and expanded

[10] Harold Bloom's use of *Paradise Lost* and the figure of Satan is illustrative; see his *Anxiety of Influence* (Bloom 1973/1975, 20-21).

[11] See Hill 1984.

[12] Russell 1986/1992, 54.

[13] Melanchton, Luther's disciple, wrote an account of Faustus' life in the 1540s (ibid., 59).

[14] *Paradise Lost* 1:24-26 (Milton 1973, 6).

[15] *Faust I*; Goethe 1808/1949, 75.

> space. In the impossible alone did it appear to find pleasure, while it rejected the possible with contempt.
>
> To this principle, which seemed to come in between all other principles to separate them, and yet to link them together, I gave the name of *Demonic*, after the example of the ancients, and of those who, at any rate, had perceptions of the same kind.[16]

The modern literature on the demonic has inherited a great deal from this restless, amoral principle. As Rosemary Jackson observes, Goethe redefined the demonic, unlocking it from its earlier, fixed role as an external supernatural evil, and made it something more disturbing – an "apprehension of otherness as a force which is neither good, nor evil."[17]

Goethe has directly inspired many notable works, such as Thomas Mann's exploration of the tragic developments in Germany in his *Doktor Faustus* (1947) and *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912; Death in Venice).[18] A comparable impression in the role of the demonic in modern literature is perhaps only made by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Goethe's ambiguous celebration of the amoral demonic, and his willingness to endorse even its destructive dimensions in such "demonic individuals" as Napoleon, receives its rebuttal in the wretched attempt of Raskolnikov to move "beyond good and evil" by committing murder (*Prestupleniye i nakazaniye*, 1866; Crime and Punishment). Such a novel as *Besy* (1872; The Possessed) announces its interest in discussing the inner emptiness of modern intellectuals and the consequent evil in demonic terms already in its title. Dostoyevsky's critique is fundamentally conservative and Christian, but also in his works the demonic is treated as an internal and psychological reality rather than something supernatural. In *Bratya Karamazovy* (1879-80; The Brothers Karamazov) Ivan is faced with the Devil in his *delirium tremens* and tries to maintain his sanity by declaring this visitor as a delusion:

> I always divine the nonsense you talk, because *it is I, it is I myself who am speaking, not you*! […]
>
> You are a hallucination I am having. You are the embodiment of myself, but only of one side of me . . . of my thoughts and emotions, though only those that are most loathsome and stupid.[19]

In another kind of ambiguity, Ivan cannot really incorporate his evil double as a part of himself; as he is awakened, he rushes to the window claiming: "It is not a dream! No, I swear it, it was not a dream, it has all just happened!"[20] Such a state of cognitive hesitation has taken a central place in the modern critical perception of fantasy and Gothic (I will return to this in

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[16] Goethe 1849, 157. Emphasis added.

[17] Jackson 1981, 56.

[18] The earlier work also displays the influence of Nietzsche's views on demons and tragedy (discussed below, pp. 75-80).

[19] Dostoyevsky 1880/1993, 735. Italics in the original.

[20] Ibid., 751.

chapter four), but one should remember Ivan's affirmation of the demonic other, as well as his attempts at denial. The significance of the demonic should be looked for in the recurring pattern of simultaneous recognition and rejection. This ambivalent logic is discussed in its various interpretative possibilities and diverse manifestations in the following chapters.

THE CHARACTER OF THIS STUDY

The initial task of the writer is to open and position one's text by explicating its context and starting points. The basic contents and aims of this study are indicated by its title, *Demonic Texts and Textual Demons*: my focus is on such characters and other features of texts that relate to demons and the demonic. The chiasmatic structure suggests a reciprocal relationship; not only are my texts "demonic" (polyphonic and internally conflicting), but the demons are also "textualised" (consisting of numerous impulses, influences and mutually warring discourses). The three terms of my subtitle – *the Demonic Tradition, the Self, and Popular Fiction* – name the three areas where these elements will be identified and examined. The "demonic tradition" I am interested in is realised in the demonologies of the past, and in the beliefs, practices and narratives of many people even today (different cults, fundamentalist religious groups and many non-Western cultures are especially notable in having kept their demonic traditions alive). The "self" refers to an identity (narrative, social, or psychological) that is problematised, disintegrated and reintegrated by the disrupting effects of demonic activity. By titling my analysed texts "popular fiction" I do not mean that they all would be bestsellers (even if many of them are); rather, this selection (discussed below) demonstrates the wide range of demonic elements in contemporary fiction, from popular horror through science fiction to the "magical realism" of Salman Rushdie. With their blasphemous potential, demonic elements have the capacity to mingle "high" and "low" in a manner that shakes the boundary between "art" and "popular entertainment."

In addition to the history treated in this study, my thesis also has a history of its own. I wrote my first essay on the subject in 1987 – a brief seminar paper dealing with *The Exorcist*. Employing metaphoric language from the subject of my research, I might say that I have been possessed by the topic ever since. Demons kept appearing in surprising contexts and I was gradually able to perceive their connections in a challenging framework of questions. During the last few years I have noticed some signs of increasing interest in this outlandish field. Concerned discussions about Satanism among youth cultures surface regularly in the press, but the 1990s has also seen attempts to restore the demonic as a religious, social or psychological concept. These moves, in their turn, were met by critical answers that aimed to unmask the reactionary agenda of such efforts. There were suddenly "demonic violence," "demonic males," even "demonic apes" on the agenda. Much of this debate was intimately linked to the social developments and

political disputes in a North American context, and I found myself somewhat of an outsider to many of its features.

My own point of view is shaped by the secular, scientific and mediated horizon of the postmodern world many of us are inhabiting. The burst of "theory" that invaded the literary disciplines during the 1980s has left its distinct marks on this study, but even more important has been the daily experience of living within a multiplicity of languages, different cultures and discourses constantly contributing to each other, and often also competing and colliding with each other. The somewhat marginal cultural position of Finland proved to be an asset; not only in the sense of making me aware how "we" are defined and determined by "their" cultural projections and stereotypes (Edward Said's work is potent in demonstrating this theme[21]), but also in pointing out how "us" and "them" have always been inseparably intertwined. Stimulating "foreign" influences are always turning the task of representing an identity (personal, as well as collective) into a dialectic of autonomy, innovation as well as something uncomfortable, or alien.

I therefore approach most definitions of the demonic with caution. The central concepts of this work are put into a centrifugal, rather than centripetal, movement. "Demon," for example, is approached in its various roles as an ambivalent supernatural being of religion and folklore, and then applied to wider theoretical discussion and elucidation in literary analyses. The initial nucleus is nevertheless maintained, and I use "demonic figure" or "demonic character" in those cases where some association with demonic forces is suggested, but when a dimension of "supernatural being" is lacking or unclear.

The "demonic" is similarly explored in various contexts both as an adjective and a noun, while it retains its connection to the demonic tradition (as characterised in chapter one). In general parlance, the demonic has lost some of its specificity – a person can be "demonic" and that can simply mean "strongly motivated" or "inspired." This study emphasises the uncanny and disturbing, as well as the imaginative and inspiring potentials of the demonic; this area is so often illustrated in violent, infernal imagery, I argue, because it is rooted in some significant but unrecognised areas – typically in sexual impulses, destructive anger, or conflicts in social or psychic identity that cannot be faced directly. Its chthonic, underground associations relate to its subconscious and repressed status. The grotesque forms, that are another distinctive feature of this area, are capable of suggesting powerful tensions in their distortions.

This emphasis on the significance of "unpresentable" materials has led me to critique the cognitocentrism that tends to dominate many current theories, across disciplinary boundaries.[22] The significance of an uncon-

[21] See Said, *Orientalism* (1978).

[22] As employed in this study, "cognitocentric" owes its usefulness as a critical concept especially to new studies that have revealed the fundamental role of emotions in human thought and behaviour (popularised by Daniel Goleman in his book, *Emotional Intelli-*

scious conflict, for example, can be "translated" into cognitive statements only crudely. It is felt in a particular situation, under particular conditions and the ensuing pain and anxiety can discharge in various expressions, and these, in their turn, can be analysed. One should, however, be careful not to assume that any particular situation could be completely condensed into one's analytical statements, or – even worse – to deny or "bracket" such a reality on the basis that it does not conform to the demands of intellectual clarity. As William Ray has written: "meaning involves a tension, perhaps an unresolvable paradox, between system and instance," and "this paradox must inform literary study."[23] This tension between interpretative reduction and the irreducible difference (and *differance*) is discussed in chapter three.

Another set of key concepts for this study are "self," "subject" and other names for human agency, and their "Other." I prefer to read philosophical concepts back into history and particular situations whenever possible, and this is reflected in the dominance of various "selves" over the more abstracted "subject." Any self also has its Other – or such can be constructed from those areas that are excluded beyond its boundaries. Our perception of otherness is never neutral; others tend to get meanings in their relation to our own "centres of signification." In this sense "Other" is a mythical concept, and the use of a capital letter is justifiable. I am not so comfortable with the practice of some proponents of Jungian or self psychology to capitalise "Self." This suggests that some "true Self" could be perceived beyond the various "roles" that mask our real identity – even from ourselves. This is a debatable idea and figures in the discussion of chapter two. If "Self" appears in the text, this is a feature of a text I am quoting or paraphrasing, and not an endorsement of the aforementioned view.[24]

I am well aware that many of the selected texts in this thesis are controversial, to say the least. They have the capacity to shock, to hurt, or insult some readers. *The Exorcist* can offend with its handling of Christian symbols

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gence [1995]; see also Sacks 1987 & 1996); it is also related to the inadequacies of the traditional opposites, "emotivism" and "cognitivism," for the study of cultures (see Shweder 1991, 226-29). The experience of meaning or the act of making a value judgement (such as distinguishing between good and evil) carry many dimensions; the dominance of mere cognition should be questioned and rethought in our theories, as well as the conventional views on the "rational" and the "irrational." (Cf. Jacques Derrida's project of creating a critique of "logocentrism.")

[23] Ray 1985, 3.

[24] An American proponent of "psychology of the self," Heinz Kohut, usefully differentiates three levels that are relevant in discussing questions of psychological identity; 'ego,' 'id' and 'superego' relate to the structural (abstract) dimension of theoretical analysis, 'personality' is employed in the social sphere, whereas 'self' mainly suggests the level of personal experience (Kohut 1971/1977, xiv). Kohut's views are also important because he focuses on the (post)modern "loss of self." According to him, narcissistic personality disorders dominate in the late twentieth century. These are symptoms of insecurity, alienation and dislocation: the inner structures of contemporary psyche are not stabilised. Whereas a Freudian patient had neurotic symptoms because of conflicts in instinctual repression, Kohut describes people with feelings of fragmentation or inner emptiness. (See Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self* [1971/1977], *The Restoration of the Self* [1977].)

and the female body, and *The Satanic Verses* with its irreverent attitude towards the Islamic tradition, for example. Other readers may read these, and my other texts, and find enjoyment, thrilling ideas and startling visions, complex and conflicting presentations that address their own, complex and conflicting conditions. My own position is closer to this latter group, but during my research I have also grown much more aware of how much a disturbing potential contributes to the particular fascination and effect these demonic texts are capable of invoking. They find their audience among those readers who are capable of a playful and experimenting attitude even towards "serious" matters, or who have resentment, oppositional attitudes and a dissident position towards the dominant values and ways of living. Such attitudes are prominent especially among youth cultures, where demonic imagery is a manifest element in rock lyrics, music videos, computer and role playing games, comic books and animated cartoons. This study may help to situate such contemporary popular forms in a wider context, but one does not need to be a fan or a specialist in these areas, I hope, to appreciate the more comprehensive view of the demonic adopted in this study.

A recognition of the conflicting ethical status of my subject matter for different audiences leads also to the consideration of the ethics of research in this area. Even if it would be possible to do "purely" neutral, formal or descriptive criticism (which I do not believe), demonic texts clearly demand a different approach; in their provocative and often outrageous characteristics they invite strong reactions and call for interpretative activity – they engage their reader in their conflicts and invite ethical and evaluative criticism. In practice, this can mean various things; in his *The Ethics of Reading* (1986), J. Hillis Miller argues that an ethical attitude towards a text demands that the reader make a particular text the "law" of his reading, forcing him to follow it with "fidelity and obedience."[25] The productive and "re-visioning" aspect of reading complicates the picture, but Miller's deconstructionistic emphasis on the fundamental "unreadability" of a text nevertheless grants it an air of immunity or inviolability. Wayne C. Booth, in contrast, opens his discussion of an "ethics of fiction," *The Company We Keep* (1988), with an eye towards particular readers and their evaluative reactions towards texts: his book is dedicated to Paul Moses, a black assistant professor at The University of Chicago during the 1960s, who refused to teach *Huckleberry Finn* because he felt it was offensive. Booth argues that "we arrive at our sense of value in narrative in precisely the way we arrive at our sense of value in persons: by *experiencing* them in an immeasurably rich context of others that are both like and unlike them."[26] Basically, this amounts to what phenomenology and hermeneutics have long been saying about the reading process: there is a dialectic of anticipation and retrospection as the horizon of the work and that of the reader are related to each other. Any "understanding"

[25] Miller 1987, 102.
[26] Booth 1988, 70. Italics in the original.

that is produced of a work reflects the reader's own disposition as well as that of the text.[27] Booth resorts to neologism, and uses "coduction" as the name for the particular logic of the communal appraisal of narratives.[28]

Picking a middle road between these two interpretations of ethical criticism, I think that it is important to note both sides of this situation; first, how our relationships to fiction are different from our relationships to persons – there is generally a much greater degree of freedom and tolerance in this area as compared to our real-life concerns. And second, both writing and reading are activities that do not happen in a completely separate sphere, even if we were "only" discussing "mere fiction" here. A work of fiction may have an effect on the reader, even if I think that many of the "detrimental" effects of such questionable materials as violence or pornography are really readers' ways of exploring *their own* morally ambivalent and destructive impulses, using these materials as their means.[29] This might seem quite a liberal position; many readers would probably pass much more severe "judgements" on the disturbing aspects of the demonic texts in question. Because of the strong tradition of condemnation and prohibition that has stigmatised this field, I feel that a more neutral and many-faceted way of reading the demonic is nevertheless justifiable. I emphasise the free and voluntary nature of this area; the sadomasochistic pleasures of the demons in contemporary horror, for example, are produced and consumed within this particular subculture, and any ethical reading of them should pay attention to this context, with its alternative values and aesthetics. But one should not try to "clean" or palliate the demonic: it is loaded with fears, aggressions and ambiguous desires to counterbalance its striking energy and imaginative stimulation.

Hermeneutic and ethical considerations also have necessary links to the methodology of this study. Rather than promoting one single theory and way of reading, I rely on an interdisciplinary approach and a plurality of reading strategies to capture the diversity and specificity of the various texts. The basic reading position is perceived as a dialogue with the text, and an openness towards various interpretative contexts, all contributing to a many-sided presentation of the subject matter. The tensions inherent in such an approach to reading are treated in chapter three. The literary study of the following pages is informed by anthropology, psychology, philosophy, theories of text and self, conceptual analysis and often also specific contextual (biographical, social, historical) information. The goal is to offer the reader a rich and illustrative exploration into the world of demons, and to construct an interpretative framework that helps to make the demonic

[27] See, e.g. Iser 1972.
[28] Booth 1988, 72-3.
[29] The psychological and philosophical views presented in chapter two can both be interpreted as supporting such a view, and also as contesting any sharp distinction and division between "internal" and "external" reasons for human motivations – "my desires" and "my ideas" always having their roots in the dialectic of the self and the Other.

elements in texts more intelligible. If there were one argument governing this study, it would be precisely that no single argument is enough to exhaust the tension, dialogue and conflict constantly characterising the borderline condition of demons. They warn us of intellectual hubris and encourage us to respect the complexity of ourselves and our otherness.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Literary demonology is not one of the most popular topics for current research, but there are some worthy predecessors. Theology and anthropology have their ample corpus of studies of both the Judeo-Christian Devil, and of the demonic beliefs of the non-Christian peoples. Many of these are not only sources of information but also documents of their times and attitudes; the Dominican friars, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, for example, supply bountiful evidence of the powers of the Devil (and of their hatred of women) in their *Malleus Maleficarum* (c. 1486). Montague Summers, who celebrated the "inexhaustible wells of wisdom" and the "modernity" of this document of witch craze in his introduction, also used it uncritically as a source for his "scholarly" studies.[30] One is better advised by modern scholarship, which has questioned many of the old myths flourishing in this area. The Devil has received a detailed history in the series of studies by Jeffrey Burton Russell. *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (1977) addresses the prehistory of personified evil, *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (1981) brings the history up to the fifth century, *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (1984) stops before the Reformation, and *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (1986) completes the sequence.[31] I have profited especially from the last volume, as the modern history of the Devil is increasingly also literary history. For those interested in the logic of witch-hunts, I recommend *Europe's Inner Demons* (1975) by Norman Cohn, Joseph Klaits's *Servants of Satan* (1985), and Lyndal Roper's *Oedipus and the Devil* (1994).

My most important sources for demonology are documented in the references for chapter one, and in the bibliography. I nevertheless want to mention particularly *Essentials of Demonology* (1949) by Edward Langton, a learned and meticulous study containing a wealth of information. Because my interests have not so much been spurred by the ambition to engage in detailed historical scholarship as by the need to create an interpretative background for the demonic in contemporary culture, I value highly such a work as *The Ancient Enemy* (1987) by Neil Forsyth. This kind of study tries to synthesise broad developments, to produce interpretations and still maintain a grasp of historical particularities. A classic of general demonic lore is

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[30] See Kramer - Sprenger 1486/1996, xv-xvi; Summers 1925/1994; 1928/1995; 1969. The influence of Summers can still be seen in some current studies of the demonic; see e.g. Valk 1994.

[31] Russell's *The Prince of Darkness* (1988) is an accessible summary of this tetralogy.

The History of the Devil and the Idea of Evil (1900) by Paul Carus, and a more current, highly recommendable introduction is *The Powers of Evil in Western Religion, Magic and Folk Belief* (1975) by Richard Cavendish. I should also mention my debt to Alan E. Bernstein's *The Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds* (1993) and *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (1994) by Bernard McGinn, in their respective fields of expertise. Elaine Pagels's *The Origin of Satan* (1995) and Gerald Messadié's *Histoire Générale du Diable* (1993; A History of the Devil) offered many stimulating ideas.[32]

Literary criticism has engaged with the demonic both on a level of general theory and through specific readings, but not in abundance in either category. A pioneering study by Maximilian Rudwin, *The Devil in Legend and Literature* (1931) is dedicated to the memory of Paul Carus and is useful especially in linking Faust studies with cultural history and the demonic tradition. Rudwin identifies and classifies many of those different roles that the Devil plays in Western literature: the Devil as "master of matter," "prince of this world," or as "sponsor of reason;" "Satan as scholar," as "symbol of science," or generally, how the Devil has the "diabolical responsibility for scientific discoveries." He also notes how often the arts have been represented as sponsored by Satan, and how the Devil himself has repeatedly been portrayed as an artist.[33] The numerous uses that the Romantic rebels and materialist dissidents found for the Devil, lead Rudwin to conclude:

> Thus the Devil is the representative of terrestrial interests and enjoyments, in contrast to those of the spiritual realm. As a skillful reasoner and logician, he plays havoc with those who dispute his clever materialistic philosophy, for he excels in dialectic. He stands for the glorification of the flesh in painting and sculpture, in the dance and drama, in fiction and romantic adve[n]ture, depicting forbidden pleasures in vivid colors, luring on the amorous and the yearning to supposed happiness only to dash this expectation into an empty sense of unreality and frustration. It is his restless impulse in men which provokes them to unsettle the old order of things and become reformers in the hope of promoting greater happiness.[34]

Rudwin closes his study with the "salvation of Satan in modern poetry," the Romantic and Decadent literary endorsement of the materialism

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[32] The modern interest in the symbolic and cultural roles of the demonic is, of course, profoundly indebted to the contributions of psychology and psychoanalysis. Ernest Jones (1931/1959, 154-55) has summed up the psychoanalytic view in three quotations: "He was not cast down from heaven, but arose out of the depths of human soul" (A. Graf), "For the Devil is certainly nothing else than the personification of the repressed, unconscious instinctual life" (S. Freud), and "The Devil and the sombre dæmonic figures of the myths are – psychologically regarded – functional symbols, personifications of the suppressed and unsublimated elements of the instinctual life" (H. Silbert).

[33] Rudwin 1931/1973, 243-54.

[34] Ibid., 269-70. – A more recent study, *The Devil in English Literature* (1978) by Hannes Vatter basically just confirms the main findings of Rudwin's work.

and the powers of disorder. "Satan secured his strongest sympathy," Rudwin writes, "from the French poets of the Romantic period."[35] This claim is substantiated by the massive, two-volume thesis, *Le Diable dans la littérature française* (1960), by Max Milner. Milner covers the literary demonology of the French literature that was created between Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable amoreux* (1776; The Devil in Love) and Charles Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal* (1857, 1861; The Flowers of Evil). The influence of Enlightenment philosophy, European occult traditions, revolutionary and satirical interests, Milton, modern Christian thought, Gothic tradition, Hoffmann and German Romanticism, and modern Satanism are all explored in the French context in Milner's work. The figure of Satan and demonic imagery appears through its perspective as situated at the centre of vigorous intellectual activity and pan-European debate that concerned values and world-view, aesthetics and ethics, politics and poetry.

My own interest is not primarily directed towards study of the Devil as a literary personage or motif; the plural and heterogeneous character of demons and the demonic in general connects to a wider setting and questions that have been left almost untouched by literary studies. The older "myth criticism" made some attempts in this direction. Northrop Frye abstracted from literary history and from the results of such anthropological syntheses as the encyclopaedic *Golden Bough* (1890-1915), by Sir James Frazer, a broad structural theory of modes, symbols, myths and genres, published as *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957). The demonic has a place in this system: demonic imagery is a form of "metaphorical organization" and identification, undesirable, and opposed to the apocalyptic (desirable) alternative.[36] Frye writes:

> Opposed to apocalyptic symbolism is the presentation of the world that desire totally rejects: the world of the nightmare and the scapegoat, of bondage and pain and confusion; the world as it is before the human imagination begins to work on it and before any image of human desire, such as the city or the garden, has been solidly established; the world also of perverted or wasted work, ruins and catacombs, instruments of torture and monuments of folly. […] Hence one of the central themes of demonic imagery is parody, the mocking of the exuberant play of art by suggesting its imitation in terms of "real life."[37]

Frye's illustrations of this dark and parodic imagery are suggestive, but the grandiose theoretical scheme supporting it has gradually lost its relevance. Frazer and his "Cambridge school" of anthropology were looking after universal logic and patterns in myths and rituals, but later research has

[35] Rudwin 1931/1973, 285.

[36] Frye 1957/1973, 139. The apocalyptic and the demonic belong under the more general category of "undisplaced myth," which is in its turn an alternative category to the less metaphorical (and more modern) forms of metaphorical organisation, the "romantic" and the "realistic."

[37] Ibid., 147.

emphasised that such elements (no matter how ancient) nevertheless gain their meanings in their particular social and cultural contexts, and therefore detailed case studies are preferable to grand systems. The "poststructuralist" critique of human sciences has not completely drained such systems of knowledge of their usefulness and relevance, but the truth claims invested in them are nowadays formulated with much more caution. A historian, like Hayden White, might well focus his reading on the fictional and metaphorical aspects of historiography, while endorsing Frye's categories as analytical tools.[38] In the case of this study, particularly its cultural context should be noted as an important qualification: this is a modern, distinctly Western work.[39]

The traditional dimension of demonic imagery cannot be denied, no matter how illusory any comprehensive theory of the role of demonic in cultural history might necessarily be. Kent Ljungquist, in his article "Daemon" for the *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs* (1988), presents quite a similar approach to the demonic tradition to the one that I have adopted for my own purposes.[40] It is useful to know the classical background and the ambivalent characteristics of the pre-Christian "demons" to better understand how the demonic operates in contemporary fiction. But the idea is to bring materials from history to face the hermeneutic challenge of our own situation, the present context, rather than to suppose that the interpretations and selections should reflect some "objective reality" of the past. The "fidelity and obedience" of ethical reading relates also to the ideals of scientific method, but one should differentiate between studies that aim at factual demonstration and verification, and studies that engage in cultural discussion and interpretation. This one is primarily of the latter kind.

One influential predecessor is yet to be mentioned. I have profited immensely from the discussion of the demonic by Rosemary Jackson in her *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981). Her reading is informed by modern developments in philosophy and psychoanalysis, and particularly the way she situates the demonic at the dialectic of "I" and "not-I," or the self and its perception of otherness, has been helpful in numerous ways. Other debts in theory, illustrative examples and interpretations are too numerous to be listed here; they are discussed in chapters one to three, and in the references throughout the work.

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[38] White 1973, 7-11. For an overview of the various positions adopted by twentieth-century historiography, see Breisach (1994, 327-419).

[39] *The Concept of Man: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (1966; edited by S. Radhakrishnan and P.T. Raju) is one example of an alternative approach to the discussions concerning subjectivity. Vytautas Kavolis notes how even cross-cultural psychology asks "only Western questions of both Western and non-Western psyches. Efforts to develop non-Western psychologies out of the heart of non-Western experiences and from within the linguistic universes by which these experiences have been structured are rarely (mainly in Japan and in India) beyond elementary beginnings." (Kavolis 1984, 10 ["Preface"].)

[40] Ljungquist 1988.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This work is organised in two parts: the first offers more general, historically and theoretically oriented information and interpretations, whereas the second consists of analyses of some contemporary demonic texts. Because these may serve different interests and readers, it perhaps useful for me to give a brief outline of their contents here. The reader is encouraged to read this book in a non-linear manner (suiting the plurality of its structure and materials), exploiting the possibilities for transition opened up by the references (both internal and external) in the footnotes.

The first chapter, "The Ancestry of the Demonic," is a general introduction to the demonic tradition and the various demonic discourses. It is concerned with historical materials and builds an interpretation of them, the borderline character of demons as a starting point. The "demonic tradition" that I am discussing here should be taken as a heuristic construction, not as a claim for some clear and unified group of demonic beliefs or materials, passed immutably from generation to generation. The structural logic of demons (their liminal and transgressive character among and between cultural categories) seems to be quite enduring, but the particular uses that these figures have served are extremely diverse, reaching from a *daimon* from a Greek tragedy to a jesting devil from a Medieval carnival, or to the hysterical behaviour of a possessed nun in seventeenth-century France.

"The Demonic in the Self," the second chapter, focuses on the relationship between demons and the self and connects it to various theoretical discussions. I approach the self as a metaphorical and mental construction, a figure of speech, realised in its various, often narrative representations. Demons find their expressive potentials in the disruptive aspects of this necessarily incomplete and dynamic process of self-representation. Expressing and exploring the disintegration and disunity of the self, demons have the theoretical sympathies of such psychological and philosophical views that reject the traditional humanistic idea of a more or less coherent and unbroken subjectivity. This chapter reveals a dialogue and tension between two ways of reading the self, the "therapeutic" and the "aesthetic." While the former perceives a state of incoherence as a challenge for integrative and healing activities, the latter emphasises tension and conflict as rich and necessary constituents for the polysemy of our plural condition. Friedrich Nietzsche is my central example of the demonic potentials in the aesthetic or anti-humanistic theorisation.

The conflict and dialectic of opposing objectives also structures my reading of "textuality" in chapter three, "Unravelling the Demonic Text." The debate between Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida on the status of "madness" in Descartes's meditations offers a way to differentiate between two modes of perceiving a text, and consequently two different reading practices. Both these writers are radical French proponents of "poststruc-

turalism," but in this case they are used to illustrate alternate ways of relating to the demon of madness: Foucault appears to be more interested in the emancipatory, engaged and historically or socially contextual textuality, whereas Derrida's deconstruction perceives the "context" also in textual terms. I put this radically textual, deconstructive and polyphonic alternative under a closer scrutiny and read Bakhtin, Kristeva, Derrida and Barthes to outline the genesis of a peculiar idea, the "demonic text." The ambivalent, rebellious and blasphemous aspects in the 1960s' and 1970s' theories of text become more comprehensible, I hope, in light of this reading of their demonic subtext.

Chapter four, "Demons of Horror: Intimations of an Inner Alien," opens the second part of my study. The supernatural, violent and sexual materials associated with the demonic have traditionally been confined to the Gothic, or horror literature. Most of my examples are therefore from contemporary representatives of this genre, even if demonic imagery and subject matters have begun breaking into other areas, as well. (Chapters nine and ten concern developments outside the horror genre.) Chapter four stands as a brief introduction to horror, and to the roles the demonic has traditionally played in this literature – which has nowadays grown into a whole subculture of its own.

"Mothering a Demon: Rosemary's Baby," chapter five, is the first of my horror analyses. Ira Levin's novel holds a special place as it is one of the key works to inspire fresh interest in the Satanic and demonic subject matter in the 1970s. It also introduces an important modern demonic motif, the demonic child. Questions of identity and insecurity are here explored with reference to body as a demonic topos.

In chapter six, "The Inarticulate Body: Demonic Conflicts in *The Exorcist*," we will meet another demonic bestseller. W.P. Blatty's novel has obvious affinities to *Rosemary's Baby* – both of them deal with contemporary fears with the demonic child as their central motif – but in a closer analysis Blatty's tone and attitude towards the demonic is profoundly different. I read *The Exorcist* as a demonic male fantasy, and as a modern Catholic work with a sternly Manichaean worldview.

Chapter seven, "Good at Being Evil: the Demons of *The Vampire Chronicles*" is a reading of a series of popular vampire novels by Anne Rice. Narrative desire and desire for blood become inseparable as I untangle the demonic conflicts and metamorphoses from these thick volumes. The series becomes increasingly incoherent as it draws away from its initial, tragic impulses; the demonic conflict and endless striving at the heart of these vampiric selves is finally all that endures.

After Rice's massive *Chronicles*, I have chosen to focus on a concise text in chapter eight, "The (Un)Traditionalist: Clive Barker's Devil." Barker is an important current horror author, even if not as popular as Anne Rice or Stephen King. Barker's play, "The History of the Devil; or Scenes from a Pretended Life" is an early work of British experimental theatre and broad-

ens the study outside the American popular novel. Where the earlier works treated the demonic with an almost hysterical fear, Rice and Barker are examples of modern horror, where the monsters are confronted and their voice is heard. Barker's extreme visions and awareness of previous traditions (such as *Grand Guignol*) makes his treatment of the Devil and the demons innovative and fascinating.

Barker's Devil is also an engineer, and his demonic creation – an artificial human being – operates as a bridge to chapter nine, "Technodemons of the Digital Self." The analysed examples here come outside of the horror genre, from science fiction, and I have seen it as necessary to write some historical context to the demonic "man-machines" in this chapter. The "magical" meanings attached to new forms of technology, and particularly to electricity, can be traced back to *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley. Demonic attributes and frightening ambivalence has figured in cyborgs, robots, androids and other man-machines ever since Victor Frankenstein's "daemon." Frederic Pohl's *Man Plus*, Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, the movie *Blade Runner* and *Neuromancer* by William Gibson are read with an eye towards how they articulate technological "otherness" in relation to human identity, and this chapter reveals an interesting displacement of the demonic. Rather than figuring at the borderline of the supernatural, or to beastly nature, contemporary demons appear at the borderline of technology; they evoke contemporary anxieties of redefinition or loss of self.

The last analysis, in chapter ten, is titled "*The Satanic Verses* and the Demonic Text." Salman Rushdie's novel has generated diplomatic crises and violent riots; while it is not my intention to offer any comprehensive explanation as to why this happened, the analysis of the novel's demonic features may suggest some answers. *The Satanic Verses* is very self-conscious in its use of the many possibilities that connect the demonic to the postmodern theories of the text and the self (as studied in chapters two and three), and it sums up many features that the previous popular novels only implied. It celebrates monstrosity as a form of hybridity, the hallmark of our postmodern condition: it presents demonisation as a political and racist practice of dehumanising the others ("aliens"). It takes forceful sides in a cultural struggle, and situates itself against religious fundamentalism and other systems of thought that would return to the pre-modern state of clear-cut identities. In this process it is necessarily placing itself in the position of religious "adversary;" *The Satanic Verses* considers the self-demonising potentials in its own project, and even prophesies its author's future verdict. The analysis presents this novel as so entangled in the various, partly unconscious demonic conflicts that it undoubtedly is my best example of a demonic text in all of its ambiguous glory.

Last but not least, "The Epilogue" discusses such developments that could not fit in this study, and summarises my main findings and the lessons I derive from this demonic endeavour. The bibliography does not contain all

the materials I have used, but all explicit references are identified there, and also a few important others. The bibliography is divided in three parts (general reference, research literature and works of fiction) for practical reasons. An index is also supplied to facilitate quick access to the discussions of individual texts, authors and key concepts.

Finally a note on the use of the personal pronoun: "he" is applied throughout this study as a substitute for "the reader" to indicate my own, active role. A female reader, or a reader from a different cultural background or with a different set of values, would perhaps read these materials differently in numerous ways I cannot anticipate. Instead of trying to deny such a possibility, I embrace it. Disagreement is another name for diversity, and a sign of the other, inviting respectful dialogue, rather than denial.