# 9. Technodemons of the Digital Self

> MEPHISTOPHELES.
> I'll show you arts and joys, I'll give you more
> Than any mortal eye has seen before.
> [...]
> FAUST. If I be quieted with a bed of ease,
> Then let that moment be the end of me!
> [...]
> If to the fleeting hour I say
> 'Remain, so fair thou art, remain!'
> Then bind me with your fatal chain,
> For I will perish that day.
> — J.W. von Goethe, *Faust I*[1]

## THE MAGIC OF MACHINES

Science fiction (SF) has traditionally been connected with reason, technological innovations and the scientific advancement of human civilisation. In such a role as an optimistic inheritor of the Enlightenment it is not immediately associated with the tradition concerning demons. Yet, any reader who is familiar with the genre will know that the irrational – even demonic – has its important share in the dynamism of this abundantly productive field. This chapter studies the tempting and anxious relationship men (humanity in general, but here also specifically the male characters) have had with machines in science fiction, and the way "technodemons" eventually figure in this relationship.

Academic research of science fiction has often had problems with the "romantic" or irrational aspects of its subject; the genre is defined in such a way that most published science fiction is excluded from the small group of "real" SF works. Darko Suvin's pioneering theory is a typical example: according to him, "*SF is distinguished by the narrative dominance or hegemony of a fictional 'novum' (novelty, innovation) validated by cognitive logic.*"[2] Furthermore, it is

> *a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is*

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[1] Goethe 1808/1949, 86-87.
[2] Suvin 1979, 63. Italics in the original.

> *an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment*
> [...].[3]

Suvin aims to take SF seriously, and in doing so, he makes it an emphatically cognitocentric genre, and positions "cognition" as something opposed to myth or metaphysical dimension.[4] The reality does not correspond to the definition, and so Suvin is forced to discard ninety percent of the genre as "sheer confectionery" (as both intellectually and politically trivial).[5] The weight put on the factual and intellectual aspects of science fiction has played an important role in the self-definition of SF; claims of plausibility, scientific "thought-experiment" and extrapolation have figured in the writings of proponents (the declarations by Hugo Gernsback and John W. Campbell, Jr., central "pulp" editors, are characteristic examples).[6] The need for separating science fiction from its "other" – the irrational, dreamy "fantasies" with nothing but entertainment value – is obvious, even if in practice many SF writers and readers deal continuously with fantasy as well as with science fiction. Furthermore, it could be argued that a reading of SF that does not take into account its symbolic and mythical dimensions is fundamentally inadequate.

The Faustian subtext is often very strong in science fiction; in his dealings with forbidden knowledge, the typical SF innovator becomes a deeply ambivalent figure. The demonic connotations of scientific enterprise surface early in the genre, and gain new forms and interpretations in "cyberpunk" and other contemporary SF. The commercial success of modern science fiction was preceded by the popularity of two important predecessors, Jules Verne and H.G. Wells. Verne captured the imagination and fascination of his audience with the prospects of modern technology, whereas Wells developed sweeping visions of an (often threatening) future. Well's *War of the Worlds* (1898) with its blood-sucking Martians provided a formula for numerous popular SF stories. The monstrosity of space aliens became a given, the amount of self-awareness and self-reflection in this connection a variable. Already in 1956 film, *Forbidden Planet* (directed by Fred M. Wilcox) the terrors of outer space are produced by the human mind, as the "monsters from the id," creations of subconscious mind and alien technology, start attacking the expedition. The majority of pulp SF had, nevertheless, more concrete and external sources for evil.

Rosemary Jackson's theory of progressive "internalisation" of fears as generated by self has its validity in science fiction as in fantasy. This process is not, however, a linear development; as seen above, in the context of horror, Blatty's *The Exorcist*, among many others, resists the internalisation of

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[3] Ibid., 7-8. Italics in the original.

[4] Ibid., 4-7. To Suvin, the "real" SF is dismantling myths, and operating as a critical and political analogy of the possibilities and threats inherent in a writer's own time and society (ibid., 75-6).

[5] Ibid., 36.

[6] See, e.g. Broderick 1995, 4-8.

evil. The dualistic opposition (between 'us' and 'them,' or 'good' and 'evil') is linked with the need to raise boundaries for identity; the questioning of this boundary and the problematisation of self/other division is its necessary counterpart. The demonic features in SF are interesting particularly because the rational emphasis associated with the genre leads one to expect a different treatment of otherness and selfhood in this "scientific" context. On a closer look, the univocally secular and materialist label of SF starts to wear out. For example, in the popular novels of Arthur C. Clarke, one of the world's best-known science fiction writers, science and technology pursue answers to all humanity's questions – reaching finally also those that have traditionally belonged to religion. In *Childhood's End* (1953) the first aliens humans confront are demonic in form, but much higher in their development of knowledge, morals and technology. The diabolical appearance of aliens (they are winged and horned like medieval devils) is symbolically connected with their painfully transgressive role in the evolution of our species; they have come to lead humans into space, but only the children are capable of responding to the call of the transcendent – the older generation is bound to earth by their rigid structures of thought.[7] The tension between the young and the old is articulated with the help of demonic imagery: the future is in league with the "scientific demons" (whereas the old are captives of their own superstitious fears). The evolutionary leap is a central motif in Clarke; also *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968; directed by Stanley Kubrick, based on Clarke's earlier short story) carries religious resonance. The black monolith that manipulates the early humans into tool-users is a powerful symbol of the mythical force that technology exercises in SF. This story also depicts how man can leave his earlier limitations by endorsing the dark and frightening powers of scientific evolution, technology, the unknown – moving toward a new, god-like selfhood.

Science fiction is sensitive and responsive to the promises of scientific and technological progress. Study of its mythical subtext reveals that it also expresses the anxieties inherent in this process. In a collection of articles addressing the relationship between religion and SF (*The Transcendent Adventure*, 1985) Robert Reilly offers the explosion of the first atomic bomb in Hiroshima (1945) as the turning point in our relationship to technology. The deal with technology promised free passage into scientific heaven; but after this event, darker tones gained increasing prominence.[8] In *2001* the episode with Hal 9000, the on-board computer, addresses the fears of too much intimacy between man and machine – "artificial intelligence" is, after

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[7] *Childhood's End* has a special note attached to it: "The opinions expressed in this book are not those of the author." In his article "Immortal Man and Mortal Overlord: The Case for Intertextuality" Stephen Goldman argues that the need to make this ambiguous dismissal of the novel (which opinions? opinions of the characters? or the whole book if read as a statement?) must have been due to the heavy influence that the intertext concerning Satan (especially Milton's *Paradise Lost*) has on the reader's reception of it (Yoke - Hassler 1985, 193-208).

[8] Reilly 1985, 4.

all, a hybrid, and thereby inheritor to the ambivalent monstrosity central in the demonic tradition. Hal tries to resolve conflicts between its programmed task and the orders of the crewmembers – by eliminating the crew. The motif of robots rebelling and turning against their masters is as old as "robots" themselves (coined by Karel Čapek in his play *R.U.R.*, 1921).

The production of technologically enhanced "supermen" has proved to be an enduring and unnerving topic. A possible technological redefinition of human being could be desirable as the ultimate self-fulfilment as it creates an expansion and extension of self, but it also simultaneously threatens and violates the limits of the self. This ambivalently desirable threat is manifest in such works as *Man Plus* (1976) by Frederick Pohl. In this novel Roger Torraway is an astronaut who is cybernetically enhanced to survive on Mars. In this case, as well, SF applies demonic imagery to man-machine hybrids:

> He did not look human at all. His eyes were glowing, red-faceted globes. His nostrils flared in flesh folds, like the snout of a star-nosed mole. His skin was artificial; its color was normal heavy sun tan, but its texture was that of a rhinoceros's hide. [...] He was a cyborg – a cybernetic organism. He was part man and part machine, the two disparate sections fused together [...].[9]

> The solar panels were a problem at first, but we solved that one rather elegantly. [...] They did resemble bat wings, especially as they were jet-black.[10]

He is characterised as looking "like hell"; the standard appellation is "monster."[11] The uncomfortable heterogeneity in relation to machine is figuratively expressed by various animal attributes, suggesting nocturnal and demonic associations.

In order to cope with the torrent of non-human information pouring through his artificial sense organs, Torraway's nervous system is combined with a computer that filters it into manageable forms. This mediated information is, however, profoundly unreliable. Roger's epistemological problem is seen as a specifically religious problem in the novel. The circuits are necessary to interpret the "excess of inputs," but: "If Roger could not know what he was seeing, how could he see Truth?"[12] The possibility of evil is inscribed in heterogeny; in a case of emergency, the computer takes over the control of Torraway's body and perverts his perceptions into malevolent fantasy.[13]

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[9] Pohl 1976/1994, 18.

[10] Ibid., 92-93.

[11] Ibid., 8, 94 *et passim*.

[12] Ibid., 96.

[13] Technological selfhood is imagined in paranoid terms where one cannot even control what one's hands are doing: "He knew that the backpack-brother [the computer] was still withholding energy from the transmitter. He knew that his perceptions had been skewed, and that the dragon was no dragon and the gorillas no gorillas. He knew that if he could not override the brother on his back something very bad was likely to happen,

In this cyborg fiction, body as an "other" is figuratively linked with machine as potential threat to the self. The Man Plus project attempts to build a superman who is capable of exceeding the limits of the biological body: it would be stronger, and not covered with vulnerable, soft human tissue. As narrative progresses, the technological supplement of Man Plus threatens to displace the "original" – Torraway is even castrated to attain the standards of machine-like invulnerability.[14] Following the supplementary logic, the "plus" not only adds something to the "man," but replaces it.[15] Klaus Theweleit's psychoanalytic interpretations of the "armoured" body in Freikorps novels offers some suggestions about the motivations for such ambivalent gestures. The denial of sexuality and living, feeling contact (inherent in man-machine fantasies) signals the traumatic need to control instinctual impulses, to armour one's ego by armouring the body.[16]

The fear of robots is such a strong trend in SF that Isaac Asimov has even coined a term for it, the "Frankenstein complex." In his own short stories, Asimov set out to alleviate this anxiety.[17] Many of his popular robot stories revolve around crime and guilt, and only humans are proven to be capable of evil acts. The robots in Asimov stories are incapable of unethical actions – because they are programmed by humans to follow compulsively every command a human gives, even if that would mean a robot's own destruction.[18] Asimov actually retains the distinct identities of man and machine by emphasising the inequality and dissimilar problems of robots and their creators. For example, the classic story "The Bicentennial Man" (1976), that Asimov later expanded into novel (*The Positronic Man*, 1992, with Robert Silverberg), aims to cross the line separating humans and machines (robots), but in so doing only substantiates the significance of this limit for the construction of identity. The individual robot, "Andrew Martin," possesses creativity and struggles for recognition of his humanity in a manner reminiscent of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. In a self-defeating act, the robot can reach this recognition only by replacing his body with an organic human body, and by letting his brains deteriorate and die in the

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because he knew that his fingers were slowly and delicately wrapping themselves around a chunk of limonite the size of a baseball." (Ibid., 266.) The fear of evil intentions is projected into the malevolence of treacherous machinery.

[14] Ibid., 117.

[15] See Derrida 1967/1976, 145.

[16] Theweleit 1989, 162-64, 210-25.

[17] "The Myth of the Machine," 1978 (Asimov 1983, 162). See also Brian Stableford, "Man and Machine" (in Wingrove 1984, 26).

[18] Asimov formulated the "three laws of robotics," a set of built-in commands that often preface his robot story collections: 1. A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; 2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law; 3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

manner of human brains. The "union" of man and machine is here accomplished by erasing the "machine" from the man-machine hybrid.[19]

The question of artificiality in identity construction is a sensitive one. Nowadays, "artificial" has characteristically negative connotations; it is opposed to something genuine and natural – "artifice" is a human stratagem, deception or trickery (as an imitation of the real thing).[20] The omnipresence of technology in the affluent West is well suited to heighten any semiconscious anxieties one might have about one's own status as a product as much as a producer, as a heterogeneous collage: an object, rather than a unified and monologic subject. Cultural critics have recently renewed their interest in the manner in which industrialisation and development of the modern society "liberated" people into the freedom of modern individuality only by demanding more self-control; the new way of administering time, for example, is machine-like in its mechanical precision. Marshall Berman reminds us of the ways the Faustian tale is connected with modernity; the need to exceed all traditional boundaries is linked in Goethe's classic version with "a new social division of labor, a new vocation, a new relationship between ideas and practical life."[21] Like Faust, the modern man has "two souls" living in his breast; the unremitting drive for development springs from an inner contradiction.[22] The interpretations for this situation differ: Berman thinks that the demonic aspects of modernity are necessary – even if the process of modernisation "exploits and torments us," it also brings us energies and imagination, drives us to confront the ever-changing world and make it our own.[23] Charles Taylor, on the other hand, claims in his *Sources of the Self* that to live without a stable moral basis (Taylor speaks about "moral ontologies" or frameworks that structure identity) is senseless life.[24] According to this view the constant hurry and almost hysterical rush for more "efficient" modern technologies (which, in reality, have become ends in themselves) operate as an obfuscation of inner emptiness. Whatever the interpretation, machines, and in our day especially communication and information technologies, have nevertheless become emblems of this condition, and science fiction records both the exhilaration and anger in our relationship to them.[25]

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[19] Asimov's views on robotics are deeply intertwined with racial (even racist) discourses; the last whisper of the dying (ex-)robot invokes the memory of the beloved owner: "Little Miss." (Asimov 1984, 682; Asimov - Silverberg 1995, 290). Perhaps *Uncle Tom's Cabin* transposed into the positronic brain?

[20] The etymology of 'artificial' is connected with art: it is derived from Latin *artificiâlis*, belonging to art (from *artificium*, craftsmanship). The idea of deception now dominates over the more positive dimensions of 'artifice' as the ingenious use of skill.

[21] Berman 1982/1991, 62.

[22] See *Faust I*; Goethe 1808/1949, 67.

[23] Berman 1982/1991, 348.

[24] Taylor 1989, 17-18.

[25] The discourse of slavery is repeatedly invoked, as people describe their relationship to the technological modernity – in the past, as well as in the present: "Is not slavery to capital less tolerable than slavery to human masters?" (George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals All! or Slaves Without Masters* [1857; quoted in Selzer 1992, 47]), "I now have attained free-

When new technology is developed and employed, it gains symbolic and imaginative significance that goes beyond its purely utilitarian value. Lewis Mumford, a social critic of technology, noted in 1930 that the "vast material displacements the machine has made in our physical environment are perhaps in the long run less important than its spiritual contributions to our culture."[26] Arnold Pacey agrees with this in his *The Culture of Technology* (1983): there is no neutral technology. We always attach symbolic meaning to instruments and techniques we use.[27] This basic idea can be taken further by emphasising the complex role of technology in identity production in an increasingly technologically saturated, and – even more importantly – technologically mediated reality. Antiquity, for example, has left us the cautionary tale of Icarus flying too close to the sun, but also the description of the whole world as represented on Achilles' shield.[28] Metallic weapons, architectural monuments, vehicles – these have been prominent as mirroring embodiments of our status, power and achievement (notable in such designations as "the Bronze Age," "the Machine Age," or "the Rocket Age"). The current era, known as "the Age of Information," or "the Computer Age" in popular nomenclature, is no exception in the symbolic and also unconscious meanings that operate in our relationship to technology. Herman Bausinger has studied the role technology has in people's life and imagination in his *Volkskultur in der technischen Welt* (1961), and seen a clear continuum with magical thinking. Engines and railways were at first perceived through the earlier discourse of magical powers. Bausinger claims that the development of modern technology into ever-increasing degrees of complexity makes it harder to grasp and control; the need for magical thinking in relationship to technology is growing, not diminishing.[29]

## "MAKING A MAN": FRANKENSTEIN'S DEMONIC MONSTER

> 'Devil,' I exclaimed, 'do you dare to approach me? [...] Begone, vile insect!' [...]
> 'I expected this reception,' said the dæmon. 'All men hate the wretched; how, then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things!'[30]

A mystical quality is especially seen in relation to electricity, the power that energises most current technodemons.[31] It can be found already winding

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dom just as fully and really as a runaway slave might have in the pre-Civil War period" (respondent to a New Age questionnaire; Ross 1991, 15).

[26] Mumford, "The Drama of the Machines" (*Scribner's Magazine*, August 1930; quoted in Mumford 1934/1963, xii).

[27] Pacey 1983, 92; also 1990, viii.

[28] See *Iliad*, 18:478-608.

[29] Bausinger 1961/1990, 27.

[30] F, 99.

[31] Different terrifying powers (even more openly connected with the exploration of hybridity and heterogeneity) are granted through genetic engineering, which has evolved to play a prominent role in such SF horrors as the *Alien* film series.

through the novel that gave Asimov's "syndrome" its name: *Frankenstein, or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818; "F") by young Mary Shelley.[32] The power of lightning introduces the protagonist to "the subject of electricity and galvanism," and to this mysterious, invisible energy that could make the dead convulse, as if re-animated.[33] As man-machine hybridity has gained new prominence in the popular imagination, *Frankenstein* has been raised to the position of the inaugurating work in the SF genre.[34] Since this novel is visibly connected with the problematics of the unconscious, the irrational and the demonic, it puts the validity of cognitocentric approaches to science fiction into question. Not so surprisingly, Suvin disparages *Frankenstein* as SF; he writes about it under the title "Romantic Recoil." He is unable or unwilling to deal with its numerous "irrational" aspects. For instance, he only touches upon the interesting question of why Victor Frankenstein's creation had to be so hideous in its appearance. The creature is not a product of demonological research, but of the natural sciences – so why is it such a "monster," evoking supernatural fear?[35] The answers are connected with the technological redefinition of identity and the particular role demonic conflicts play in this context.

The first modern theories of magic saw it as a "pseudo-science," an imperfect attempt to see direct causal relationships (supernatural forces) where science is able to see more complex systems at work.[36] In the European context, the relationship has also been argued in reverse: the practitioners of magic and alchemy were among those who developed laboratories and experimental methods used later by scientists. In *Frankenstein*, the order of inheritance is clear; young Victor Frankenstein is attracted to occultism and

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[32] The references are to the Oxford University Press edition: Shelley 1818/1992.

[33] F, 41. The discussion of electricity is slightly different in the first and the second edition (the first edition mentions experiments with kites to conduct electricity from thunderclouds to earth; see also Mary Shelley's introduction [1831; F, 9]). Electricity was seen as a divine or mysterious power; Armstrong (1981) describes the magical relationship to it in the nineteenth century, amounting even to attempts to revive the dead. The power plants were for a long time designed like cathedrals (Giles Gilbert Scott, builder of Liverpool Anglican Cathedral, has been said to have built two cathedrals, "one for God, one for Electricity"; Pacey 1983, 88).

[34] Especially Brian Aldiss's genre history, *Billion Year Spree* (1973; the revised edition *Trillion Year Spree*, 1986) has been important in establishing *Frankenstein*'s position. (Aldiss has himself written a "sequel" to Shelley's work, *Frankenstein Unbound* [1973].) The exploitation of the monster in theatre and film made Boris Karloff's rugged, awkward figure synonymous with "Frankenstein," and Victor's surname into a common noun in dictionaries ("an agency or a creation that slips from the control of and ultimately destroys its creator" [*American Heritage Dictionary*]). Such compilations as *The Essential Frankenstein* (Jameson 1992), *The Frankenstein Omnibus* (Haining 1994), or *The Ultimate Frankenstein* (Preiss 1991) witness the lively interest in the Frankenstein tradition and its origin; *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (the 1994 film by Kenneth Branagh) claims the same by its title.

[35] Suvin 1980, 133.

[36] This theory is presented in Edward Tylor's *Primitive Culture* (1871), and developed by James Frazer (*The Golden Bough*, 1890) and Bronislaw Malinowski (*Magic, Science and Religion*, 1925), among others.

natural sciences for the same reasons. He wanted to know the "secrets of heaven and earth," and acquire the power of such knowledge; Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus and Albert Magnus are displaced by the "miracles" and "almost unlimited powers" of the new science.[37] "Natural philosophy" in *Frankenstein* is the replacement of occultism, magic, and finally also religion; there remains, however, several textual traces that suggest repressed religious conflicts in the background of this science.

Victor's aim in his studies is emphatically "creation," the mystery of life that only God himself possesses in the Christian setting. The manner in which this goal is set and characterised by Victor's narrative is illustrative; he speaks about "fate" and "stars" as if he would be a character in classical tragedy, whose destiny is set by *moira*. He attributes the relinquishing of his "tormenting studies" to the influence of a "guardian angel," whereas resuming them he is grappled by an "enemy."[38] Victor Frankenstein seems to be surrounded and constantly manipulated by daimonic forces, impulses that he is only capable of conceptualising in religious or magical terms. The initial "fatal impulse" that sets Victor out on his studies is motivated by his relationship to his father; the father "carelessly" dismisses Victor's interest in Agrippa's occult writings: "My dear Victor, do not waste your time upon this; it is sad trash."[39] As a typically "modern" individual, Victor reacts by going against such injunctions – rebellion against the father suggests separation and establishment of identity boundaries.[40] It is possible to read the novel in Oedipal terms; as Victor attempts to create life, he is actually usurping the position of the Father. The patriarchal authority, as embodied in God, the Father, is rejected. In the modern, individualistic spirit, Victor does not put his trust in God; his goal is not the immortality of his soul, but how to "banish disease from the human frame," or how to "render man invulnerable to anything but a violent death."[41] The repressed anxiety for replacing the divine authority and spiritual immortality with the pursuit after bodily immortality is given an outlet in the figure of a "demoniacal corpse."[42] The huge size of this creature emphasises even more the "paternal" aspect of this demonic creation (the father as perceived from an infantile perspective).

Victor's creation is nevertheless an important change in the history of the demonic. The Faustian subtext is clear in *Frankenstein*, and the "raising of ghosts or devils" is something Victor eagerly practices in his youth.[43] Vic-

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[37] Shelley 1818/1992, 37, 41, 48.

[38] F, 42, 48.

[39] F, 39.

[40] Victor's lonely research is analogous in the novel to the arctic exploration by Robert Walton (in the frame story); this expedition is also made against paternal authority – the "dying injunction" of Walton's father forbade a seafaring life. (F, 17.)

[41] F, 40.

[42] F, 58.

[43] F, 40. – *Deals with the Devil*, the anthology mentioned earlier (see page 121) is also an indication of the enduring popularity of the Faustian element in the SF.

tor sways between the traditional Faustian figure of magician and the nascent role of modern experimental scientist, but the latter grows dominant.[44] As Jeffrey Burton Russell has noted, "the monster is no medieval demon or specter but a material being of flesh and blood manufactured in a laboratory."[45] The demonic features are, however, not just trivial residues from an earlier period. The creature is a "monster," and that connects it with the tradition and significances of monstrosity, especially in this being's overt heterogeneity. The impurity and grotesque disunion of its constituent parts, assembled from the "dissecting room and the slaughter-house,"[46] suggest conflicts and internal discords of selfhood, evoking parallels to the traditional demons with horns, tails and other beastly features. The demonic characterisations of the monster are a very persistent and striking feature of the novel.[47] This being combines animal and human flesh in its gigantic, scientifically manufactured body; it is a walking embodiment of heterogeny and a powerful illustration of the conflicts in the early industrial self.

Mark Selzer has made many interesting readings or "rewritings" of disciplinary individualism and machine culture in his *Bodies and Machines* (1991). Selzer focuses on the "American body-machine complex" that produces a particular cultural logistics, redrawing of "the uncertain and shifting line between the natural and the technological."[48] *Frankenstein* seems to foreshadow many of the anxieties that figure later in different, sometimes more subtle forms; the isolation of the emerging "free individual" and the uncertainty about agency. The modern, industrial society is continuously being constructed, and Selzer points out, for example, how agency is under construction in literature of adolescence, where the aim is "to make a man."[49] The emphasis on the naturalness ends constantly in paradoxes, as in the idea of a "self-made man."[50] The "natural" and the "cultural" are finally inseparably intertwined, people constantly defined in terms of complex systems they take part in, the agency in modern culture always appearing in the form of a crisis of agency – as "such panic about agency makes for the ritual-

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[44] E.M. Butler's *The Myth of the Magus* (1948/1993) is useful in exploring the origins of the Faust figure in religious and occult mythology, from the Magi of Persia, Moses and Simon Magus, up to modern times (Saint-Germain, Cagliostro, Blavatsky, Rasputin). The historical Faust or interest in devil-worship seems to have contributed less to the longevity of the myth than the enduring fascination with supernatural powers and secret knowledge. – For more on the magus and computers, see Davis 1994.

[45] Russell 1986/1992, 189.

[46] F, 55.

[47] The creature is 'demon' or 'demoniacal' in six cases, the more tragic and classical 'daemon' sixteen times, threatening 'fiend' or 'fiendish' forty-one times and clearly 'devil' or 'devilish' thirteen times in the text. (76 occurrences in all; the search was conducted using the electronic text supplied by the Gutenberg Project, frank13.txt; ftp://uiarchive.uiuc.edu/pub/etext/gutenberg/etext93/ .)

[48] Seltzer 1992, 4.

[49] A phrase of Ernest Thompson Seton; quoted ibid., 149.

[50] Ibid., 171.

ized reaffirmations of individuality and self-possession that motivate and mobilize these contradictions."[51]

The making of the monster is suggestive of various significant types of activity: scientific invention, industrial production, artistic or divine creation, and the maternal act of giving birth. The unconscious character of this activity is prominent:

> Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance; but then a resistless, and almost frantic, impulse urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit. It was indeed but a passing trance, that only made me feel with renewed acuteness so soon as, the unnatural stimulus ceasing to operate, I had returned to my old habits.[52]

The reasons behind this "unnatural stimulus" are nowhere clearly stated, but Victor links it in retrospect with emotions and desires getting out of control.

> A human being in perfection ought always to preserve a calm and peaceful mind, and never to allow passion or a transitory desire to disturb his tranquillity. I do not think that the pursuit of knowledge is an exception to this rule.[53]

Victor's momentary lapse as a controlled man of reason, his "trance," brings out the monster; and as the creature awakens, Victor is horrified and escapes into sleep.[54] Victor's waking trance is aimed at realising the dream of a "new species" that would bless him as its "creator and source"; this is replaced by restless dreams of his fiancée, Elizabeth, transformed in his arms into the corpse of his dead mother.[55] The intellectual isolation of the romantic individual is here ambivalently related to love, desire and body – all these symbolised in relation to women. Many scholars have interpreted the relationship between Victor and his monster under the doppelganger motif; there is an uncanny connection between the unnamed creature and its crea-

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[51] Ibid., 145.

[52] F, 54.

[53] F, 55-6.

[54] The whole novel is explicitly linked to a trance-like state between sleep and conscious mind. Mary Shelley relates the starting impulse of *Frankenstein* in her introduction [1831] as follows: "When I placed my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie." (F, 9.) – One is also reminded of a famous etching by Goya: "The sleep of Reason produces monsters" (*Los Caprichos*, plate 43, 1799). *The Sleep of Reason* by Derek Jarrett (1988) relates the religious impulses and imagery in the nineteenth century British literature to (Victorian) society and culture.

[55] F, 54, 58.

tor.[56] As an image of Victor's subconscious conflicts, the monster expresses the suppressed hatred that he has released in his trance. William Veeder has made important modifications to the doppelganger interpretation in his *Mary Shelley & Frankenstein: The Fate of Androgyny* (1986). The case in *Frankenstein* is not just one psyche as projected into two characters; rather, it presents a psychological conflict or division of self, first in Victor, and then echoes this division in the monster.[57] The numerous literary references in *Frankenstein* to the demonic quality of agency emphasise the internally warring quality of this self: Coleridge's cursed "Ancient Mariner" is pursued by a "frightful fiend" close behind;[58] in Shelley's "Mutability" the poetic self is tormented by nightmares and thoughts that pollute his night and day;[59] Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) offers the monster a model of "divine being" as well as "disquisitions upon death and suicide," and Plutarch's *The Parallel Lives* taught him about men of action, "concerned in public affairs, governing or massacring their species."[60] The most accurate analogy the monster finds to his own situation is in *Paradise Lost* by John Milton.

> Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from, beings of a superior nature [angels]: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me.[61]

Satan had the company of fellow devils, but the monster finds himself even more cursed than the archfiend: he is solitary and abhorred.[62] Milton's epic and the figure of Satan is particularly well suited for analyses of demonic rebellion and conflict; Harold Bloom, in his *Anxiety of Influence*

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[56] Victor is almost incapable of admitting the creation of the monster; instead, he proceeds gradually to confess that he himself killed all the people the monster had murdered (see F, 77, 88-9, 176, and 185: "I murdered her. William, Justine, and Henry – they all died by my hands"). Veeder makes perceptive comments on the earlier doppelganger interpretations (1986, 246n8).

[57] Veeder 1986, 79.

[58] F, 59.

[59] F, 98.

[60] F, 128-9. Even before Milton, Goethe and Plutarch, monster's education is begun with *Ruins of Empires* by Volney (1791). Michael Holquist notes the anti-religious intertext: "Volney, a true child of the French Enlightenment [...] was inspired by Gibbon's demonstration of Christianity's harmful effects on the Roman state to show the role of religion in the decline of other empires" (1990/1994, 96).

[61] F, 129.

[62] F, 130. The biblical allusions are also notable: "Remember, that I am thy creature," the monster says; "I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Every where I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend." (F, 100.)

(1973), derived from it a theory which centred on agonistic struggle against precursors in poetry, rather than celebrating the beauty and unity of art. All literature is a fight against the inevitable influence of earlier works. According to this view, the "daemonization" of the most important precursors is the subconscious formative power in creative work.[63] Mary Shelley's novel addresses such demonic impulses by incorporating the most important influences into its text – in the process becoming so involved in the problematics of heterogeneity that Mary Shelley herself addressed this novel as her "hideous progeny."[64] This suggests that the novel is monstrous in itself, or, as Michael Holquist writes, Shelley's "novel, like the monster, is made up of *disjecta membra*, story inside framed story […]. Not only is there a mix of narrators, there is a compound of genres – letters, diaries, and a variety of oral tales."[65] The "demoniacal texture" of Shelley's hybrid creates polyphonic effects, a case of textuality that might well be termed demonic. As a work about "making a man," or as a drama of constructing modern (male) identity, *Frankenstein* explores heterogeneity, projects it in a demonising gesture to the figure of monster, and finally portrays the return of this conflict and its tragic undoing in death.

The roots for such narrative self-destruction can be found in earlier tragic conventions (*nemesis* for a *hybris*), in the principles of religious and poetic justice (retribution of the sinners) or in the problems in the structure of this type of self. Veeder points out that the Shelley circle was concerned with the division and dualisms splitting the early modern self. They aimed to transgress such divisions as body/soul, or masculine/feminine, but actually Mary Shelley's experience revealed the Promethean men surrounding her (Percy, Byron, Godwin) as narcissistic, constantly bifurcated into "egocentric willfulness" or "self-abandoning weakness."[66] Veeder relates the Promethean will-to-power, that Victor exhibits in his trance-like pursuit of making the monster, to Eros, the ego-centric and unbalanced love. It is tempting to interpret monster as a purely intellectual element, a symbol of the unlimited quest for knowledge and technological hubris that has got out of control. As Veeder points out, this is not true; the monster claims it is "the slave, not the master, of an impulse, which I detested, yet could not disobey. […] The completion of my demoniacal design became an insatiable passion."[67] Victor, too, feels himself "slave" in this double bind: "through the whole period during which I was the slave of my creature, I allowed myself to be governed by the impulses of the moment […]."[68] In the context of this study, the daimonic character of this Eros is an important feature; when creating the monster, Victor is possessed and driven, and the monster, in

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[63] Bloom 1973/1975, 20, 99-112.
[64] "Introduction" (1831); F, 10.
[65] Holquist 1990/1994, 97. (See also Cornwell 1990, 72.)
[66] Veeder 1986, 49.
[67] F, 220
[68] F, 153.

turn, is possessed, too. The split between reason and emotion is deep; in the figurative level the monster evokes supernatural fear as there is a striking incongruence in his features – at the level of identity, there is no unity of agent.

It is important to note how the demonism in man-machine is particularly a problem of isolated individuality. The "workshop of filthy creation" is placed in "a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, and separated from all the other apartments by a gallery and staircase";[69] when Victor encounters the monster, the setting is in the superhuman heights and coldness of glacier in the Alps.[70] The monster speaks of having "no link" to anyone, and how this makes him malicious; he begs for another creature like himself, so that they could be "cut off from the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. […] My evil passions will have fled, for I shall meet with sympathy!"[71] Victor is suspicious, and the reader should be, as well. Veeder has interpreted the novel as "negative Oedipal"; the effort to awaken dead flesh might indicate Victor's desire to resuscitate his dead mother. The real thrust of the novel, however, is to kill the loved ones. The nightmare kiss does not revive the mother, but reduces Elizabeth to a dead corpse, as well.[72] The "link" to other people is loaded with ambivalence; the power over life and death that Victor desires is acted out when the monster kills the people surrounding Victor. The connection that Victor really desires is to himself – he attempts to make another human being, but actually makes a monstrous image of an isolated individual, demonic in its subconscious conflicts.

When the monster is interpreted as a sign of a daimonic conflict, the demonic attributes and irrational behaviour becomes easier to understand. Rollo May mentioned that Eros and a craving for power are possible sources of the daimonic, and Stephen A. Diamond emphasised that cathartic expression of this area is not enough, it has to be integrated to the self.[73] *Frankenstein* does not portray the dialogue with the daimonic elements as successful; the conflict remains demonic, irresoluble. Victor and his other – his monster – are too intimately interconnected; the monster reveals too much unacceptable material, and in the end both must perish. The conclusion is similar to that of Father Karras and his demon in *The Exorcist*; they also shared Victor/monster's ambivalence towards the body. The Promethean spirit possessing Victor/monster has, after all, a dual character. Prometheus is the semi-divine trickster, the titan who stole fire from the gods and taught humankind arts and sciences – *Prometheus pyrphoros*. Another, later version of the myth attributes to Prometheus the creation of mankind from figures of

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[69] F, 55.
[70] F, 98.
[71] F, 145-7.
[72] Veeder 1986, 143.
[73] See above, chapter two.

clay – as *Prometheus plasticator*.[74] Frankenstein, the modern Prometheus, is both of these, he is a creator and a thief, he is a benefactor and the victim of his own machinations, subject and object, man and artefact. The paradoxical quality of the modern self as both construction and the constructor of itself has the capacity to evoke deep anxieties, and Mary Shelley's reinterpretation of the myth was able to capture the popular imagination in a manner which still has resonance today.

## "THE DEVIL WITH A METAL FACE": PHILIP DICK'S ANDROIDS

> Within the universe there exists fierce cold things, which I have given the name "machines" to. […] We mean, basically, someone who does not care about the fate that his fellow living creatures fall victim to; he stands detached, a spectator, acting out by his indifference John Donne's theorem that "No man is an island," but giving the theorem a twist: That which is a mental and moral island *is not a man*.
>
> – Philip K. Dick, "Man, Android, and Machine"[75]

The Faustian inventor and his demonic invention form a motif overlapping both the areas of horror and science fiction. Technology carries a demonic edge that surfaces in such stories as "The Hellbound Heart" (1986) by Clive Barker. This novelette (made famous by the series of *Hellraiser* films) uses the intricate device named "Lemarchand's Configuration" as a symbol for the fatal human curiosity that opens the door for demons to come. Cenobites, the most cinematic demons of new horror, are marked by technology; as a Cenobite speaks, "the hooks that transfixed the flaps of its eyes and were wed, by an intricate system of chains passed through the lower lip, were teased by the motion, exposing the glistening meat beneath."[76] Their hybrid deformity is void of emotion, even humanity – they are only expressive of desperation and "appetite."[77] The implied association is between demons and body-as-machine, the cold inhumanity and lack of feeling in tech-

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[74] The third important aspect of the complex tradition that the romantic literature emphasised was *Prometheus patiens*, suffering Prometheus. (See Trousson 1976, 31, 47, 364. Also: Kerényi 1959/1997.) Werblowsky 1952 relates Milton's Satan to the myth of Prometheus; Wutrich 1995 is a comparative study of Prometheus and Faust (it includes a concise account of the emergence of this combined tradition in the myth and drama). David S. Landes's *The Unbound Prometheus* (1969/1988) and Timothy V. Kaufman-Osborn's *Creatures of Prometheus* (1997) employ the figure of Prometheus for the needs of history and cultural criticism of technology. The literature on Prometheus is a fascinating, constantly expanding field.

[75] Dick 1995, 211-12 (1976).

[76] Barker 1986/1988, 189.

[77] Ibid.

nology, the metal having only the capacity to move or inflict pain in flesh. The name for the leader of the demons is descriptive: "a light flickered and grew brighter, and brighter yet, and with the light, a voice. *"I am the Engineer*," it sighed. No more than that."[78]

In the field of science fiction, Philip K. Dick has said that for years, the theme of his writing has been, "The devil has a metal face."[79] This does not amount to any monologic demonisation of technology; that would be rather uninteresting and a curious position from a science fiction author. Instead, Dick enunciated something that most of the earlier SF had implied: a critical ambivalence towards technologically redefined and altered subjectivity. This means also growing suspicions about the observing self itself; the demon of Descartes (a hypothetical spirit which might be manipulating our world through our senses) is a real problem for Dick in this era of consciousness-altering drugs and exponentially evolving simulations. This is one aspect of what is commonly discussed as Philip K. Dick's postmodern "paranoia"; in *Ubik* (1968) the reality is surrealistically altered and degenerated – the reason might be that the characters are actually dead, sustained in an artificial illusion of half-life. The evil character, Jory, who manipulates this reality is doing it for classic demonic reasons; he is a soul-eater who nourishes himself on the life-force of others.[80] In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), as well, the technological capacity for altering reality is associated with a demonic figure – Palmer Eldritch is marked by "the hollow eyeslot, the mechanical metal arm and hand, the stainless-steel teeth, which are the dread stigmata of evil."[81]

As Lawrence Sutin writes, Dick has become "the focus of one of the most remarkable literary reappraisals of modern times."[82] The interest has been centred on the ontological, rather than the theological aspect – yet the two dimensions are intimately related in Dick's fiction. Dick is valued for his inventive use of multiple points of view and for his capacity to shatter SF conventions by exploring the mutability and multiplicity of realities. The narrative uncertainties and perplexities in his work correlate with the moral and ontological puzzles pressing on his characters. Brian McHale, in his *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) writes about transition from cognitive to "postcognitive" questions in literature; instead of looking for possible inter-

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[78] Ibid., 277. Cf. the Devil's comment in "The History of the Devil"; quoted above, page 199.

[79] Dick, "Man, Android, and Machine" (1976; Dick 1995, 213).

[80] Jory is "misshapen" in accordance with the Frankenstein tradition: "No two features mached: His ears had too many convolutions in them to fit with his chitineous eyes. His straight hair contradicted the interwoven, curly bristles of his brows." The demonic polyphony is also given its grotesque expressions: "If you come close to me and listen – I'll hold my mouth open – you can hear their voices. Not all of them, but anyhow the last ones I ate. The ones you know." (Dick 1969/1991, 195-96.)

[81] Dick, "Man, Android, and Machine" (1976; Dick 1995, 213). See Dick 1964/1991, 161-62.

[82] Sutin, "Introduction"; Dick 1995, x.

pretations for this world, postcognitive questions begin with questioning this world, its unity, and the unity of the experiencing self.[83] Dick relates the postmodern theme of the individual's construction of reality (visible in the numerous metafictional features of postmodern literature) with moral and theological concerns.[84] This can be approached by analysing the demonic features in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968; "DA"), the novel that became later an important influence on cyberpunk in its movie version, *Blade Runner* (1982; directed by Ridley Scott).

*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* approaches the problematic aspects of postmodern agency by building an opposition between "authentic" humans and androids, the artificial man-machines. Natural humans are born, androids are built. Because the person may or may not know that he or she is an android, the question becomes more complicated at the level of character psychology. The protagonist, Rick Deckard, is a police detective and bounty hunter: his task is to locate and "retire" (kill) any escaped androids. "You and I, all the bounty hunters – we stand between the Nexus-6 [the most evolved type of android] and mankind, a barrier which keeps the two distinct," asserts another bounty hunter to Deckard.[85] To be able to make the distinction, there has to be a viable criteria for differentiation. The owners of the robotic slaves desire their servants to be as identical to humans as possible; the company building androids complies with the demand.[86] The "Voigt-Kampff Empathy Test" is designed to identify the essential streak of otherness – the androids are intelligent (more intelligent, even, than most humans), but they lack capacity to feel empathy. They are perfect postmodern narcissists, self-sufficient and unable to violate the boundaries of their self through emotional identification.

The romantic, isolated individual that confronted his demonic conflicts in *Frankenstein* reaches a new stage in Dick's novel. It is no more the suppression of conflicting emotions that is the problem. Rather, the "androidization" that Dick examines with his demonic man-machines articulates the "lack of proper feeling," the "schizoid" and cold personality type that Dick saw as becoming increasingly common. He was not really worried that machines were becoming more animate, more human; what concerned him was that humans were becoming more "inanimate," reasonable, obedient and predictable elements in manipulative systems. This blurring of boundaries clearly both fascinated and terrified Dick; he returned to it repeatedly in his writings.

> And – here is a thought not too pleasing – as the external world becomes more animate, we may find that we – the so-called humans – are becom-

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[83] McHale 1987, 1 (McHale quotes Dick Higgins's *A Dialectic of Centuries*).

[84] The awareness of "real" becoming "unreal" (in the context of fantasy, science fiction and postmodern metafiction) is discussed in Brooke-Rose 1981/1986.

[85] DA, 124.

[86] DA, 47.

ing, and may to a great extent always have been, inanimate in the sense that *we* are led, directed by built-in tropisms, rather than leading. So we and our elaborately evolving computers may meet each other halfway. Someday a human being, named perhaps Fred White, may shoot a robot named Pete Something-or-Other, which has come out of a General Electric factory, and to his surprise see it weep and bleed. And the dying robot may shoot back and, to its surprise, see a wisp of gray smoke arise from the electric pump that it supposed was Mr. White's beating heart. It would be rather a great moment of truth for both of them.[87]

The image of the cyborg carries such demonic traits that it mostly invites rejection and repression. Yet, our daily immersion in technology is a fact, and new inventions tend to incorporate technologies as an even more intimate dimension of our make-up. Donna Haraway, a social feminist writer, has even written a "Cyborg Manifesto" that reclaims the cyborg as a positive and inspiring model (or myth) for our heterogeneous subjectivity.[88] Pure and clean, clear-cut identities are no longer conceivable; our cultures, languages, physical surroundings and daily activities are changing too rapidly for any stable identities to be viable. Nevertheless, there is a definite threat in the acceptance of "inhumanity" as a part and parcel of human identity. Science fiction takes part in the negotiation of this identity-in-progress; Dick, for example, questions the logic behind such works as Pohl's *Man Plus*. "Our flight must be not only to the stars but into the nature of our own beings," he writes in the context of space travels. "Because it is not merely *where* we go, to Alpha Centauri or Betelgeuse, but what we are as we make our pilgrimages there. […] *Ad astra* – but *per hominum*." [To the stars – but as men.][89] Machine and mechanic qualities stand as signs of the other, and as Carlo Testa writes in *Desire and the Devil*, the "plurality of relationships which the Other entertains with the self is paralleled only by (because identical with) the infinite plurality of the relations that tie the human self to the ceaseless variability of its own desire."[90] Traditional imagery of the devil, or the cyborg, for that matter, with "its deformed traits" portray "the human in whom interdiction and desire are at war with each other," they are displaced traces of "an internal battle."[91] Immersed and incorporated in the "infernal machine" the postmodern self has the premodern means at its disposal: the demonic attack applies negation to self, forces it to face the terrors threatening it, and possibly achieves something of transformation in its reconstructive moment.[92]

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[87] Dick, "The Android and the Human" (1972; Dick 1995, 187).

[88] "By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics." (Haraway 1991, 150.)

[89] Dick, "The Android and the Human" (1972; Dick 1995, 189).

[90] Testa 1991, 7. Cf. above, page 120-21.

[91] Ibid., 5.

[92] This view of demonic attack is elaborated in Kapferer 1979.

In Dick's novel, the demonic is assigned to the android's inability to feel empathy. The pseudo-scientific explanation for this is that empathy requires "an unimpaired group instinct," and such solitary predators as spiders would have no use for it.[93] The implied association between androids and spiders suggests something insect-like or inanimate in the former.[94] The opposite mythical figure to the android in the novel is Wilbur Mercer, a suffering human with Christ-like characteristics. Wilbur is a "special" (a mutant, caused by radioactive pollution) who is able to bring dead animals back to life. According to the legend, Wilbur was captured and "treated" by local authorities; his aberrant brains were bombarded with radiation to destroy the unnatural capacity. As a consequence, he sunk down into a symbolic, alternative reality – the tomb world. The desolate landscape of this world carries the marks of human cruelty; on the barren earth lie the bones of animals, killed by the radioactive fallout of World War Terminus. Wilbur Mercer can not get out "until the bones strewn around him grew back into living creatures; he had become joined to the metabolism of other lives and until they rose he could not rise either."[95] The instinctive empathic link that blurs the boundaries between self and the other is given a cultural form in the "black empathy box": with its aid the followers of Wilbur (the "Mercerites") experience "mental and spiritual identification" as well as "physical merging" with his struggle and suffering.[96]

This religion of empathy has its demons, the unfeeling forces that can cause suffering to others without experiencing it in their own tissue. The unseen "Killers" haunt the painful ascent of Wilbur from the tomb world, locking his healing attempts into an endless cycle of resurrection and death. Deckard meditates on the role of the Killers as follows:

> In Mercerism, an absolute evil plucked at the threadbare cloak of the tottering, ascending old man, but it was never clear who or what this evil

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[93] DA, 26.

[94] Sherry Turkle has studied how people react to computers as they spend lots of time with them. One of the repeated topics in children's discussions was if the computers were alive or not. She reports in her *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (1984, 28) one child as claiming that spiders are "not alive" (paradoxically) because "you can kill  them"; analogously, "killing" a mechanical toy or computer is possible as they are not "really alive" (but tempting precisely because they have some animate features; they are liminal objects). Judith Kerman, in *Retrofitting Blade Runner* (1991,1), relates this exclusion of otherness to the bloody history of this century: it becomes possible to kill the "vermin" (insects, Jews, gypsies, etc.) as they are detestable and "not really alive."

[95] DA, 20.

[96] DA, 18. – In the textile industry, "mercerising" signifies a method of altering threads with the use of sodium hydrate (named after John Mercer [1791-1866], a British calico printer). Mercerism associates also with an early form of hypnosis, mesmerism; Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), an Austrian physician, believed in "animal magnetism" (hypothetical theory concerning an invisible fluid in the body that reacted to electromagnetic stimulation), and cured his patients by channelling this energy through the use of magnets, cables, etc. Both the altering and merging dimension are present in the Mercerism of Dick's novel.

presence was. A Mercerite *sensed* evil without understanding it. Put in another way, a Mercerite was free to locate the nebulous presence of The Killers wherever he saw fit. For Rick Deckard an escaped humanoid robot, which had killed its master, which had been equipped with an intelligence greater than that of many human beings, which had no regard for animals, which possessed no ability to feel emphatic joy for another life form's success or grief at its defeat – that, for him, epitomized The Killers.[97]

The exclusion of machines from "natural" human identity in Dick's novel does not amount to a denial of heterogeny. As the Mercerites identify with the passion of Wilbur, they become aware of their deep unity with the other sentient beings, humans and animals. The merged state is polyphonic: "He [the Mercerite] experienced them, the others, incorporated in the babble of their thoughts, heard in his own brain the noise of their many individual existences."[98] Because the empathy box is also, after all, a piece of technology, the merger through it is also interwoven with ambivalence and heterogeneity. In a gesture opposing the cognitocentric bias, mere intelligence is not enough to classify someone as truly living; connection to other life is needed. Android's relation to language is analogous to the desolate landscape surrounding Wilbur Mercer: only fragments of life remain, dead and decomposed. Rick Deckard notes how the female android had no "emotional awareness, no feeling-sense of the actual *meaning* of what she said. Only the hollow, formal, intellectual definitions of the separate terms."[99] An android is the subject of technological word, or demonic aspects of language – "perverse and artful."[100] When Deckard tries to fix the identity of one android (Luba Luft), she can masterfully exploit the anti-communicative potentials of language.[101] All the signifiers are detached from their intended contexts, and the attempts of Law (Deckard) to capture the real identity and referent are deflected.

According to the traditional logic of opposing dualisms 'male' is associated with 'reason' and 'good,' whereas 'female' groups with 'irrational' and 'evil.'[102] In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* the unconnected rationality is demonised, whereas a certain type of irrationality is treasured. The androids are both male and female, but Deckard is most confused in his relation to the female androids. The story of Deckard bears witness to the enduring capacity of the demonic Other to provoke reconstruction of identity. The opening scene of the novel shows Deckard and his wife in an absurd argument over the use of a "Penfield mood organ" – a device that artificially manipulates the brain state to induce the desired emotion. His wife wants to

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[97] DA, 27.

[98] DA, 18.

[99] DA, 166-67.

[100] See the discussion on Derrida and writing in chapter three.

[101] "'*O nein*,' Luba broke in. 'I wouldn't be there. That's easy to answer.' – 'That's not the question!' – 'Did you get the wrong question? But I understand that; why is a question I understand the wrong one? Aren't I *supposed* to understand?'" (DA, 92.)

[102] See above, chapter four.

use this system (mainly acquired to ward off depression) to make herself depressed. She explains to the amazed Deckard how the "absence of life" is surrounding them from everywhere, and instead of just intellectually acknowledging it, she wants to have the appropriate affect, as well.[103] Deckard overrules his wife's "irrationality" and dials for her the mood 594: "pleased acknowledgement of husband's superior wisdom in all matters."[104]

In the course of his inquiry, Deckard negotiates his own reactions to otherness, to female androids as the demonic "others" of his male self, and in particular to the "absence of life" that relates to Dick's "androidization." The inhumanity of androids, despite their surface resemblance to humans, is confirmed during the narrative. This culminates in a key scene, as the androids are watching television and one of them cuts off a spider's legs. The mutilation of the spider is motivated by intellectual curiosity – the androids want to see if it can walk on four legs, instead of eight. At the same time, it also demonstrates the unfeeling cruelty that the total lack of empathy creates. During the torture, TV show host "Buster Friendly" (actually an android, as well) does his best to reveal Mercerism as a hoax. He claims that the landscape seen through the empathy box is actually a Hollywood sound stage, the moon is a painted prop, the "stones" are made of soft plastic, and the role of Mercer himself was played by the actor Al Jarry, now an aged alcoholic.[105] The opposition between normal and abnormal, real and artificial is upset: the only "real" person in this scene is John Isidore, a pitiable "chickenhead" whose intellect has been damaged by radiation. Yet, despite his intellectual inferiority, he is able to grasp the value and meaning of a spider's life through his empathic suffering in a manner beyond the intellectual androids. The androids aim to prove that the Mercerism is based on artificial illusions, and that the "whole experience of empathy is a swindle."[106]

Similar doubts, anxieties of what is real and unreal, and different subversions characterise the novel at large.[107] Luba Luft is quick to turn the suspicion on the investigator himself: perhaps Deckard himself is an android?[108] Because it is possible to give androids artificial memories (and thereby a false sense of identity), anyone in the novel could be an android without knowing it. Deckard is arrested and brought to a police station – but this is the Other Police Station (Dick's appellation)[109] where no-one knows him.

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[103] DA, 3.

[104] DA, 5.

[105] DA, 181-84.

[106] DA, 185.

[107] Reversals of identity are quite common: "'You're not Polokov, you're Kadalyi,' Rick said. – 'Don't you mean that the other way around? [Polokov/ Kadalyi replied.] You're a bit confused.'" (DA, 81.)

[108] DA, 89. – This possibility is played with in *Blade Runner*, the movie (see Sammon 1996, 391-2). Such complex suspicions structure also the work that K.W. Jeter has done in replicating "other Blade Runners" (see *Blade Runner²: the Edge of Human*, 1995, and *Blade Runner: Replicant Night*, 1996).

[109] Dick, "Notes on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*" (1968; Dick 1995, 157).

He tries to call his wife, but an unknown woman answers.[110] This fantastic sequence has a surreal, threatening logic of its own; it has a strong resemblance to the narrative situation in *The Third Policeman* (1940/1967) by Flann O'Brian. The hallucinatory visit to a police station in that novel turns out to be a delusion created by the dying mind – or hell itself, depending on the reading. Paranoia is often associated with the postmodern; Fredric Jameson has said that "conspiracy […] is the poor person's cognitive mapping in the postmodern age."[111] The explosive increase of information makes it harder to form unified and clear-cut narratives and models for the situation of subject. The doppelganger police station goes beyond any reasonable strategy a bunch of escaped robots might develop: it is, primarily, a manifestation of Deckard's fears. Teeming with artificial policemen, this place is an inverse echo with mythical qualities – it is the land of the dead, a parody of officials walking the hallways of the real institution.

After Phil Resch, another bounty hunter, has arranged Deckard's escape from the Other Police Station they have to deal with the androids and with the question of their real identity. Resch is able to kill prospective androids without hesitation; after Resch kills Luba Luft because she had accused him of being an android, Deckard insists that Resch himself has to be tested. The question is, as Resch says, about Deckard's faith in the human race. Empathy is the defining factor of humanity in novel's world, and now Resch, the bounty hunter, seems to be lacking it. The general thrust of the novel is to belie the reader's expectations (sometimes even by stretching the limits of plausibility); this principle operates in this case, too. Deckard is shocked to find that Resch is a human, after all. He is just incapable of feeling anything towards androids. And this is exactly what is expected from a bounty hunter. It is Deckard himself who is beginning to trespass the limits; he is asking "irrational questions" ("Do you think androids have souls?"), and "acting irrationally" (he buys a book containing reproductions of Edward Munch's paintings for Luba Luft, and then burns it after Resch had killed her).[112] "So I was wrong," Deckard ponders. "There is nothing unnatural or unhuman about Phil Resch's reactions; *it's me*."[113]

The exposure of Mercerism by androids does not change anything from the human point of view. Similarly, Deckard's revelation about his own "unnaturalness" actually helps him to reconstruct a new conception of human nature, a new identity. As Isidore and Deckard, the human protagonists, need Mercer more, the fusion starts spontaneously – technology becomes transparent as the boundaries separating the natural and the unnatural begin

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[110] DA, 98-111.

[111] Jameson 1988, 356.

[112] Munch's *The Scream* (1893) is adopted as an expression of the android condition (DA, 114); Fredric Jameson comments that this painting is "a canonical expression of the great modernist thematics of alienation, anomie, solitude, social fragmentation, and isolation, a virtually programmatic emblem of what used to be called the age of anxiety" (Jameson 1991, 11).

[113] DA, 124.

to blend. The basic message of Mercer is ambivalent, one of suffering and comforting connection: "*There is no salvation.* [...] [Y]ou aren't alone. [...] It is the basic condition of life, to be required to violate your own identity."[114] For Deckard, the fundamental dilemma is that he simultaneously has to feel empathy – even love – towards androids, and yet kill them, in order to be a "human" individual. This individuality is based on a paradox: "individual" is, by definition, something indivisible and whole.[115] Deckard has a love affair with Rachael Rosen, a female Nexus-6 who has artificial memories and who initially believes that she is a human being. Deckard thinks that Rachael helps him to capture other androids, whereas her real goal is to make him fall in love with an android, and incapacitate him as a bounty hunter.[116] Love and the pain of betrayal works in Deckard's case to demonstrate to him both the necessity of borders towards the android otherness, and how necessary it is to violate these borders to really understand the relationship between humans and androids. Deckard's true identity, in the end, is not completely "individual," not clearly separate from the others. Even the androids with their demonic traits cannot be completely set apart from Deckard's true self. Deckard goes through the traumatic episode of "killing the things he loves":[117]

> "I'm sorry, Mrs. Baty," Rick said, and shot her.
>     Roy Baty, in the other room, let out a cry of anguish.
>     "Okay, you loved her," Rick said. "And I loved Rachael." He shot Roy Baty; the big man's corpse lashed about, toppled like an overstacked collection of separate, brittle entities [...].[118]

Afterwards, Deckard experiences a spontaneous fusion with Mercer; he feels that he *becomes* Mercer, without the consoling awareness of other Mer-

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[114] DA, 156.

[115] The etymology of "individual" is based on the Middle English meaning 'single,' 'indivisible', derived from Old French, and ultimately from Medieval Latin *indîviduâlis* (Latin *indîviduus* : *in-*, not + *dîviduus*, divisible ). (*American Heritage Dictionary*.) – The inhumanity of androids can be linked with their lack of childhood: they may have childhood memories, but their bodies do not carry any biological bond to another organism (mother). In psychological terms, this image can be interpreted according to the lines of attachment theory; Victoria Hamilton has used "attachment" rather than "bond" (which has negative and restricting connotations) to describe the basis for our communication and coexistence. "Inherent in attachment theory is the notion that the first infant-mother relationship creates that structure which governs later attachments. Since an attachment is like an inner construct, it is stable and exists across space and time." (Hamilton 1982, 7.) Contemporary psychological theories, such as this, suggest that unbroken psyche is a paradox: psychic "wholeness" carries always something of the other in it.

[116] DA, 175.

[117] "Yet each man kills the thing he loves, / By each let this be heard, / Some do it with the bitter look, / Some with the flattering word, / The coward does it with a kiss, / The brave man with a sword! [...] For each man kills the thing he loves, / Yet each man does not die. // For he who lives more lives than one / More deaths than one must die." ("The Ballad of Reading Gaol" [1898] by Oscar Wilde.)

[118] DA, 197.

cerites. In yet another swell of expectations that the narrative creates and then disappoints (thus "linking" with an empathic reader), Deckard-Mercer finds a toad in the desert (toad and ass are extinct animals, and symbols for Mercer's love for the humble forms of life) – and then, as he brings it home to his concerned wife, it turns out to be an artificial toad. But Deckard's attitude towards the traumatic division line between "real" and "artificial," truth and deception, has gone through a subtle but profound change: "The spider Mercer gave the chickenhead, Isidore; it probably was artificial, too. But it doesn't matter. The electric things have their lives, too. Paltry as those lives are."[119]

Dick's androids are inheritors to the demonic otherness of Frankenstein's monster: to be "united by no link to any other being." Yet, the quality and necessity of this linking, and the critique of the subject inherent in it is directed towards different concerns, as compared to those of Mary Shelley. Anthropomorphism, the attribution of human characteristics or behaviour to machines and other inanimate objects has often been regarded as a feature of "primitive" or magical thinking in our scientific century; Dick was aware of this, but he made the counterargument that a certain amount of "magical" quality in our relation to our surroundings, to other people, and to ourselves, is necessary.

> A native of Africa is said to view his surroundings as pulsing with a purpose, a life, that is actually within himself; once these childish projections are withdrawn, he sees that the world is dead and that life resides solely within himself. When he reaches this sophisticated point he is said to be either mature or sane. Or scientific. But one wonders: Has he not, in this process, reified – that is, made into a thing – other people? Stones and rocks and trees may now be inanimate for him, but what about his friends? Has he now made them into stones, too?[120]

Scott Bukatman writes in his *Terminal Identity* (1993) that in the "postmodern, post-alienated future posed by Philip Dick, the movement into a state of alienation is simultaneously both regression and progression; a crucial ambivalence which avoids any reification of the 'natural,' but which also rejects the unequivocal embracing of the instrumental reason of a new technocratic order."[121] Dick eyes technology with suspicion, but because he is able to perceive the reciprocal intertwining of "artificial" and

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[119] DA, 214. – In "The Android and the Human" Dick develops this idea: "the difference between what I call the 'android' mentality and the human is that the latter passed through something [suffering, empathy] the former did not, or at least passed through it and responded differently – *changed*, altered, what it did and hence what it was; it *became*." (1995, 203.)

[120] Dick, "The Android and the Human" (1972; Dick 1995, 183.) – A modern anthropologist, Madronna Holden, makes an analogous but more moderate argument: "Whereas civilized society commoditizes its persons, primitive society personalizes its commodities" (Holden 1995, 3).

[121] Bukatman 1994, 52.

"human" in our technologic culture and reality, he is not able to cast it off as outrightly Satanic. Rather, the androids are demons for Dick – this figure of a reified, cold and alienated man-machine both obsesses and inspires him. In his writings during the 1970s, he revises his earlier vision of machine as the modern face of the devil.[122] Now he thought that he should have been talking about masks, rather than faces; the situation is more complex, and a troubling ambivalence is more accurate than direct adversity. The relationship is reversible: the machine can be a mask for the human as well as the human can mask something mechanical. Age-old mythology can also be applied to these contemporary forms of hybrid selves; Dick calls for recycling, where a *Pietà* motif, for example, could be applied to machines.[123]

## CINEMATIC TECHNODEMONS: BLADE RUNNER

> Here's to the crazy ones.
>     The misfits.
>         The rebels.
>             The troublemakers.
>                 The round pegs in the square holes.
> [...]
> We make tools for these kinds of people.
>     While some see them as the crazy ones,
>     we see a genius. [...]
>
> Think different.
>  – Apple Computer, Inc., advertisement 1997

Recycling the mythical motifs is, in a way, exactly what the director Ridley Scott and his team did as they adapted Dick's novel into a science fiction film. *Blade Runner* is loaded with traces from various mythological – often also demonological – intertexts. The emotional coldness of the androids is back-pedalled, leaving more room for the existential anguish (and love interests) of these "replicants."[124] Some of these changes are motivated by commercial Hollywood interests, some are outcomes of several people putting in months of labour to produce a working script from Dick's novel – which had left quite a few open questions in its plot structure. The rationale of the androids escaping and getting back to earth, for example, was not

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[122] See Dick, "Man, Android, and Machine" (1976; Dick 1995, 213).

[123] Dick, "The Android and the Human" (1972; Dick 1995, 206-7).

[124] Ridley Scott: "The term *android* is a dangerous one, undermined by certain generic assumptions. [...] I didn't want *Blade Runner* to be premonitory of *android* at all. Because then people would think that his film was about robots, when in fact it isn't." Screenwriter David Peoples got the term "replicant" from microbiology and the practice of cell cloning. (Sammon 1996, 61.) Replicant also carries the various connotations of the verb "to replace," the threatening possibility of a supplement usurping the place of the original.

*Dying Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer) from* Blade Runner *(dir. Ridley Scott).*
*© Warner Bros., 1982.*

clear; this future earth is, after all, a dreary, radioactive place everyone else is trying to get away from.[125] Screenwriter Hampton Fancher and Ridley Scott highlighted accelerated decrepitude as an answer; with their beauty, superhuman abilities and their intense mortality the replicants of *Blade Runner* became embodiments of their maker's motto – *More Human Than Human*.[126] The climactic sequence between Roy Batty, an escaped replicant,

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[125] Dick suggested that androids were just escaping from servitude (DA, 161). The title question of the novel – *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* – proposes that maybe artificial humans might have their "artificial dreams" (a real sheep is a status symbol in Dick's novel). Deckard's question "Do you think androids have souls?" and his final acceptance that even "artificial" lives have their meaning and value suggests an uncertain move away from essentialism and towards constructivism in relation to human identity.

[126] The four year life span is mentioned in Dick's novel, but it is never a central problem for Dick's androids (DA, 173). The motto for Tyrell Corporation (corresponding to the Rosen Association in Dick's novel) echoes *More Than Human* (1953), an important science fiction novel by Theodore Sturgeon. Sturgeon addresses the question of "super-

and Dr. Eldon Tyrell, the head of Tyrell Corporation (the company manu-
facturing replicants) crystallises the ambivalent and violent manner in
which demonic conflicts operate in this work.

> [ROY BATTY:] It is not an easy thing to meet your Maker. […]
> [DR. TYRELL:] What seems to be the problem?
> [ROY BATTY:] Death. […] I want more life… fucker!
> [DR. TYRELL:] The coding sequence cannot be revised once it's been es-
> tablished. […] You were made as well as we could make you. […] The
> light that burns twice as bright, burns half as long. And you have burnt
> so very, very brightly, Roy! Look at you! You're the Prodigal Son.
> You're quite a prize!
> [ROY BATTY:] I've done questionable things.
> [DR. TYRELL:] Also extraordinary things! Revel in your time!
> [ROY BATTY:] Nothing the God of Biomechanics wouldn't let you in
> Heaven for… [*Takes Dr. Tyrell's head between his hands, kisses him to
> mouth, and kills Tyrell by pushing fingers into his eyes and crushing his
> head.*][127]

The movie deals with the replicants in very different ways as compared
to Dick's treatment of androids. A religious subtext – the Bible – was ap-
plied in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* to make Deckard a strange
Christ-figure, forced to kill (artificial) women and men he both sympa-
thised with, and regarded as demonic embodiments of evil. In *Blade Runner*
a replicant, Roy Batty, is the Christ-figure; during the last chase scene be-
tween him and Deckard an "accelerated decrepitude" starts to overcome
him, and Batty fights back by driving a rusty nail through his hand.[128] His
final act is one of mercy: with his pierced hand this biomechanical Christ
saves the life of Deckard, the petty bounty hunter. A white dove, the sym-
bol of Holy Spirit, is released from Batty's grasp as his life is finally con-
sumed.[129] However, this "Prodigal Son" is not only a Christ, but also a
fallen angel, rebellious and vengeful for his expulsion from Heaven. His
blond, angelic beauty (portrayed by the Dutch actor Rutger Hauer) is am-
bivalently contrasted with his intelligence and innocence, a tender kiss that
suddenly turns into murderous violence. Dr. Tyrell, Roy's "God of Biome-
chanics," is positioned at the top of a huge pyramid, the only place illumi-
nated by the sun in the film; he is also associated with the owl, the symbol
of the god of wisdom and the arts (Athena, or Minerva).[130] After Roy has

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man" from a different angle than the cyborg tradition; his "Homo Gestalt" being is a
group of individuals, each somehow handicapped on their own, working as one. As an
imaginative solution, this is a radically different alternative to the alienated and demon-
ised "Man Plus."

[127] *Blade Runner* 1:23-25. (The reference is to The Criterion Collection CAV laserdisc;
see William M. Kolb, "*Blade Runner*: Film Notes" [Kerman 1991, 154-77].)

[128] *Blade Runner* 1:39.

[129] *Blade Runner* 1:47.

[130] *Blade Runner* 0:19. – As Paul M. Sammon notes, "since Tyrell owns an artificial
owl, this could imply that Tyrell has "false wisdom" (Sammon 1996, 171). William M.

killed Tyrell, he descends in an elevator into darkness, and this, in turn, is the only scene where we can see stars, the heaven drawing away from Roy's (now Luciferian) figure.[131] Scott Bukatman summarises the ambiguous effect of *Blade Runner* succinctly: "This science fiction adventure of urban perception produces an enhanced self-mastery, but also, at the same time, a dispossession, almost an erasure, of self."[132]

The first working title for *Blade Runner* was "The Android," and this accurately captures the altered position of man-machine: instead of posing as an image of the "unfeeling" or mechanical qualities in the modern self, replicants figure in *Blade Runner* to invoke our empathy in all of their fragile artificiality and lack of solid "human nature."[133] The "demoniacal corpse" of 1818 had become the metal-faced devil of 1968, only to be reborn again as the troublesomely angelic-devilish replicants of 1982. The replicants carry subtle signs of their demonic ancestry (their eyes, for example, have a faint glow in many shots); more important it is, however, that the audience cannot identify with them directly, nor are they able to do so with Deckard.[134] The hysterical fear that Victor displayed towards his creation has subsided – or, for that matter, so has the blind infatuation Nathaniel expresses towards the Olympia, the female automaton in E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Sandman." Dr. Tyrell does not have the demonic powers of Coppelius/Coppola (in Hoffmann's tale), but the demonic has its uses even in the fantasies of the twenty-first century. "Artificiality" is still a sign of otherness, but it has come closer to the sympathetic, conscious dimensions of the self. In Clive Barker's play the mechanical man Easter, manufactured by the devil, voluntarily sacrificed himself for "real" humans; the replicants find themselves as cast into the role of the "demonic other," and they explore whatever potentials such a situation might offer.[135]

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Kolb remarks in his notes on the ecclesiastical trappings that surround Tyrell: he wears the papal gown, his bed is designed after that of Pope John Paul II – a ring on the little finger of his right hand and the "devotional candles" illuminating his chambers should also be noted (Kerman 1991, 166).

[131] *Blade Runner* 1:26.

[132] Bukatman 1997, 8.

[133] See Kolb, "Script to Screen: *Blade Runner* in Perspective" (Kerman 1991, 133).

[134] Deckard is shown as shooting an escaping female replicant, Zhora, in the back; the killing of Pris is also shown as a painfully cruel and undignified act. His "love scene" with the beautiful young replicant, Rachael, is actually sort of "reprogramming" this woman-thing – Deckard pushes Rachael around, and demands that she repeats after him: "Kiss me… I want you." (1:10.) The Blade Runner crew called it, actually, "The Hate Scene." – "Instead of a relationship, that scene became this sort of sadomasochistic encounter between the two of them. But that might have had something to do with eighties sensibilities as opposed to nineties sensibilities, too. The sexual and political environment today is much different than it was then." (Model Supervisor Mark Stetson; Sammon 1996, 165.)

[135] This principle of appropriating the demonic figure and tradition into identity construction is discussed in the next chapter, in the context of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*.

As Roy Batty arrives in the film to torture the Chinese biomechanic who designed the replicants' eyes, he utters some lines of poetry: "Fiery the Angels fell / Deep thunder rolled around their shores / Burning with the fires of Orc."[136] The reference is to William Blake's "America: A Prophecy" (1793), an apocalyptic poem allegorising the battle for American independence. Batty's quotation, however, is significantly altered; the original Blake reads "the Angels rose" – not "fell."[137] Batty is actually quoting Milton through Blake.[138] There is no immediate plot rationale why Batty should not have stayed with Blake (a rebel who regarded the authority of State and King with the same dislike he later devoted to Church and God). The change of wording is important as it is yet another example of how demonic ambivalence is produced in *Blade Runner*; Batty is not necessarily a righteous rebel, he has also destructive and demonic potential – and the ambiguous combination of both makes his character the more interesting.

Rosemary Jackson has written about the relativity of evil, how shifts in cultural fears and values also modify the use of the demonic.[139] The late twentieth century has witnessed renewed attention to animation narratives; as Lois Rostow Kuznets writes in her *When Toys Come Alive* (1994), numerous stories about living toys, automatons, and cyborgs are capable of embodying "human anxiety about what it means to be 'real' – an independent subject or self rather than an object or other submitting to the gaze of more powerfully real and potentially rejecting live beings."[140] Demonic imagery is not immune to cultural change: omnipresent technology may be assuming the role which terrifying animals or demonic monsters used to occupy.[141] The relatively permissive character of contemporary society may

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[136] *Blade Runner* 0:26.

[137] "Fiery the Angels rose, & as they rose deep thunder roll'd / Around their shores, indignant burning with the fires of Orc; / And Boston's Angel cried aloud as they flew thro' the dark night" (Blake 1982, 116). – The impulse towards Blake came from director Ridley, but David Peoples chose the lines and rewrote them to suit Batty's character (Sammon 1996, 134). See also Wood (1986, 185) for a political interpretation of this detail.

[138] Some relevant sections from the first book of *Paradise Lost* (1:34, 36-8): "Th' infernal Serpent [...] his Pride / Had cast him out from Heav'n, with all his Host / Of Rebel Angels" – and from the second book (2:266-67): "And with the majesty of darkness round / Covers his Throne; from whence deep thunders roar." And (2:771-3): "down they fell, / Driven headlong from the Pitch of Heaven, down / Into this Deep [...]". (An interesting analysis of the intertextual relationships is the article by David Desser, "The New Eve: The Influence of *Paradise Lost* and *Frankenstein* on *Blade Runner*" [Kerman 1991, 53-65].)

[139] Jackson 1981, 52, 54.

[140] Kuznets 1994, 2.

[141] Michael Jackson writes in his article "The Man Who Could Turn Into an Elephant: Shape-shifting among the Kuranko of Sierra Leone": "Just as images of were-animals are conditioned by the ubiquitous dialectic of village and bush in preindustrial societies, so images of bionic people, androids and robots reflect the human-machine dialectic that shapes both mental and bodily consciousness in industrial societies." He also refers to the famous case of "Joey: a 'Mechanical Boy'" (reported by Bruno Bettelheim in *Scientific*

also account for the change in the dynamics of the demonic conflict – it is not so much characterised by the struggle of repressed instinctual material for recognition, as it is a means to process uncertainties about the self, its "reality." The digital selves of "cyberpunk" science fiction invoke their demons precisely from those abysses.

*Rachael (Sean Young) from* Blade Runner *(dir. Ridley Scott).*
*© Warner Bros., 1982.*

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*American* [1959; 300:3]), who felt completely alienated from his humanity and identified himself with a machine. (In Jackson - Karp 1990, 59-77.)

DIGITAL DEMONS FROM THE CYBERSPACE: *NEUROMANCER*

'What's the matter?'
'Never mind.'
'What is mind?'
'No matter.'
         – Old joke[142]

Paul M. Sammon, in his *Future Noir* (1996), a thorough exploration of *Blade Runner*, positions this movie as the seminal influence for dozens of television series, music videos, and motion pictures – and for cyberpunk.[143] The central themes of memory and perception (repeated in the numerous scenes dealing with eyes and photographs) were to become some of cyberpunk's main concerns. An even more important influence was the style; Bruce Sterling writes, in his introduction to *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology* (1986), how cyberpunk is "known for its telling use of detail, its carefully constructed intricacy, its willingness to carry extrapolation into the fabric of daily life. It favors 'crammed' prose: rapid, dizzying bursts of novel information, sensory overload that submerges the reader in the literary equivalent of the hard-rock 'wall of sound.'"[144] *Blade Runner* brought the future to the street level: with the 1980s' cynicism it supposed that the problems of current urban blight are not going away with the advancement of science and technology – they are going to get worse with accelerating pollution, population growth and transfer of power from the government to private corporations. The counterforce to despair in this "*Blade Runner* aesthetics" was "retro" romanticism; *Blade Runner*'s mixture of dilapidated hi-tech and Marlowesque voice-overs, 1940s' film noir hairstyles and wardrobes did find their counterparts in the cyberpunk that was also taking shape during the early 1980s. This interest in the appearance, the look, the style – the "surface" level of media and commercial production – has made critics question the logic and morality of this subgenre.[145] Bruce Sterling writes in his criticised "manifesto" of the cyberpunk movement:

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[142] See *Newsweek*, February 7, 1983; quoted in Turkle 1984, 321.

[143] Sammon 1996, 324-25. Scott Bukatman writes in his study on *Blade Runner* that "the aesthetic of cyberpunk was almost defined by *Blade Runner*" (Bukatman 1997, 41). – William Gibson points to another near-future dystopian SF movie as a direct influence on his novel, *Neuromancer* (1984); "*Escape from New York* [1981] never made it big, but it's been redone a billion times as a rock video" (McCaffery 1991, 266).

[144] Sterling 1986/1988, xiv-xv.

[145] Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. has made some of the most scathing comments on the self-deception and falsehood of cyberpunk: "To put it mildly, it's hard to see the 'integrated' political-aesthetic motives of alienated subcultures that adopt the high-tech tools of the establishment they are supposedly alienated from. It seems far more reasonable to assume that the 'integrating,' such as it is, is being done by the dominant telechtronic cultural powers, who – as cyberpunk writers know very well – are insatiable in their appetite for new commodities and commodity fashions. (Csicsery-Ronay 1991, 183.)

Mirrored sunglasses have been a Movement totem since the early days of '82. The reasons for this are not hard to grasp. By hiding the eyes, mirrorshades prevent the forces of normalcy from realizing that one is crazed and possibly dangerous. They are the symbol of the sun-staring visionary, the biker, the rocker, the policeman, and similar outlaws. Mirrorshades – preferably in chrome and matte black, the Movement's totem colors – appeared in story after story, as a kind of literary badge.[146]

The logical contradiction does not prevent Sterling from listing the policeman among other "similar outlaws"; Samuel Delany has pointed out that mirrorshades "both mask the gaze and distort the gaze," and Darko Suvin writes that they "conjoin a minor degree of effective withdrawal with a large degree of psychological illusion of withdrawal in the wearer."[147] Such illusions, paradoxes and apparent lapses of rational reasoning are interesting from the specific viewpoint of this study; cyberpunk is situated in the tradition of "hard" (technologically plausible) SF, but its characters seem to have a relationship with technology that reaches beyond rational extrapolation and invention. They are also inheritors of Victor Frankenstein, Roger Torraway, and Rick Deckard, and of the demonic conflicts negotiated at the limits of the self and the other.

Brian McHale has dubbed as "interface fictions" those contemporary narratives which register the "first, often traumatic encounters between 'literary' culture (high culture generally) and the transformative possibilities of computer technology."[148] The term could be developed to cover the "interfaces" of other cultures, not only the high one, with the cybernetic condition. These fictions often address the anxiety of dealing with non-human systems in demonic terms. Félix Guattari, for example, comes up with the same idea while trying to rethink the relation of subjectivity and machine:

The fact that machines are capable of articulating statements and registering states of fact in as little as a nanosecond, and soon in a picosecond, does not in itself make them diabolical powers that threaten to dominate human beings. People have little reason to turn away from machines; which are nothing other than hyperdeveloped and hyperconcentrated forms of certain aspects of human subjectivity, and emphatically not those aspects that polarize people in relations of domination and power. It will be possible to build a two-way bridge between human beings and machines and, once we have established that, to herald new and confident alliances between them.[149]

When Guattari proceeds from theoretical speculation into prophecy, he is actually producing "interface fiction" in the sense above. The reference to machines (here specifically computers) as threatening "diabolical powers"

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[146] Sterling 1986/1988, xi.
[147] Suvin 1989/1991, 358.
[148] McHale 1992, 236.
[149] Guattari, "Regimes, Pathways, Subjects" (Crary - Kwinter 1992, 16-18).

reassures the reader only by implicitly confirming the diabolical dimension that technology has adopted in our cultural imagination. The antihumanism of much interface fiction is apparent; writers do not only question and shake the illusory unity of the traditionally unified humanist self – they "play with the devil" by allying their texts with the disturbing and frightening potentials of technology. The poetic outcome is a darkly suggestive and decadently rebellious form of aesthetics; Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. compares cyberpunk authors (and could well have included some theoreticians) to the French fin-de-siècle "accursed poets": "Cyberpunk artists acquire much of their power like the *poetes maudits* before them by dealing with the Devil. […] They know the sleaze, because they have set up shop in the belly of the beast."[150] There is a moment where such analysis turns into accusation. The experience of having an ambivalent relationship to technology is a likely possibility in the post-industrial West (it can simultaneously offer both ways to construct identity, and be an "outer," determining power in the construction process). The fictional means of exploring this ambivalence thereby carries both interest and significance. Such politically committed critics as Darko Suvin, however, seem to hold it against cyberpunk that it is related to the experience of a certain group (which is not normally counted among the oppressed).[151] Is cyberpunk the "*diagnostician of or the parasite on a disease*?" Suvin asks.[152] If there is a pattern of demonic conflict, disintegration and subsequent reconstruction of the self operating in cyberpunk, the likely answer is *both*.

> Cyberspace, as the deck presented it, had no particular relationship with the deck's physical whereabouts. When Case jacked in, he opened his eyes to the familiar configuration of the Eastern Seaboard Fission Authority's Aztec pyramid of data.
> 'How you doing, Dixie?'
> 'I'm dead, Case. Got enough time on this Hosaka to figure that one.'
> 'How does it feel?'
> 'It doesn't.'
> 'Bother you?'
> 'What bothers me is, nothin' does.'
> 'How's that?'
> 'Had me this buddy in the Russian camp, Siberia, his thumb was frost-bit. Medics came by and they cut it off. Month later he's tossin' all night. Elroy, I said, what's eatin' you? Goddam thumb's itchin', he says. So I told

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[150] Csicsery-Ronay 1991, 193.

[151] "I would speculate that cyberpunk SF is representative for the structure of feeling of an important but certainly not all-inclusive international social group. As I hinted at the beginning [of the quoted article], this is some fractions of the youth culture in the affluent North of our globe. More particularly, cyberpunk is correlative to the technicians and artists associated with the new communication media, and to the young who aspire to such a status. […] However, it is certainly a small, single-digit percentage even of the fifteen-to-thirty-years' age group, even in the affluent North (never mind the whole world)." (Suvin 1989/1991, 363.)

[152] Ibid., 364. Italics in the original.

him, scratch it. McCoy, he says, its the *other* goddam thumb.' When the construct laughed, it came through as something else, not laughter, but a stab of cold down Case's spine. 'Do me a favor, boy.'

'What's that, Dix?'

'This scam of yours, when it's over, you erase this goddam thing.'[153]

When the android Leon is fighting with Deckard in *Blade Runner* he says: "Nothing is worse than having an itch you can never scratch"[154] The above quotation from the "quintessential cyberpunk novel" *Neuromancer* (1984; "N") by William Gibson, brings the themes of isolated and artificial self to the Baudrillardian territory. As Jon Thompson summarises: "the real is a palimpsest continually rewritten by the simulacra. As such, it becomes indistinguishable from its infinite simulations. [In the circuit of the hyper-real] the boundaries between the true and the false, the real and the imaginary, and the present and the past combine and recombine in a dance of signs, reducing all oppositions to an algebra of equivalence."[155] The confrontation between the real and the artificial agency, which still had the capacity to shock in *Frankenstein* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, retains only vestiges of its unnerving qualities in the world of *Neuromancer*. Since the people in this world encounter each other mostly through various communication technologies, there are no reliable ways to identify the interlocutor; some of them, as "Dix" (McCoy Pauley) here, are just simulation. In the cyberpunk dialectic of flesh and prosthesis, he is a terminal point: an agent which is nothing but prosthesis.

Still, traces of difference remain, and they are emphasised by narrative means; the "stab of cold" that goes down Case's spine is one such token. Dix is dead, and replaced by a ROM personality construct – a digital ghost of a person that was once alive. The synesthetic replacement of laughter with the Gothic shivers that Case feels in his spine does not signal any completely neutral or interchangeable relationship between the "real life" and simulation. The implied anxieties are present in numerous ways. The opening of *Neuromancer* establishes the intermingling of natural and artificial both in the levels of figurative language and characterisation; the opening sentence states that the "sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel." Ritz, the bartender, anticipates in his figure the conspicuous place heterogeny holds in *Neuromancer* – "his teeth a webwork of East European steel and brown decay," and his arm "a Russian military prosthesis, a seven-function force-feedback manipulator, cased in grubby pink plastic."[156]

If *Neuromancer* were a Philip K. Dick novel from the 1960s, the prosthetic arm would send signals as a stigma of evil (as in the case of Palmer El-

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[153] N, 130.

[154] *Blade Runner* 1:01.

[155] Thompson 1993, 151. – See Baudrillard 1983.

[156] N, 9. – "Russian" and "eastern" have in *Neuromancer* their pre-perestroika associations with communism and the "Empire of Evil."

dritch). There are some subtle features that connect *Neuromancer* with the demonic and the underworld, but the moral division into good and evil is not apparent; *Neuromancer* is governed by collage, multiplicity and heterogeneity. Case, the protagonist of *Neuromancer*, is a "cyberspace cowboy" – a "retro" appellation coined by Gibson that half-ironically appropriates the earlier SF "space opera" tradition with its solitary cowboy figures. The naming and imaginative application of "cyberspace" is William Gibson's most important contribution to SF, and this idea continues to evolve into real-world applications as computer programmers and interface designers are pursuing it as their goal.[157] Simultaneously, this interest in the actual implementation of cyberspace threatens to obscure the actual complexities of Gibson's work. There are important anxieties and an irreducible ambivalence figuring in the descriptions of this extraordinary "space."[158]

Even if Ritz is not a literal demon, he works in a world that can trace its genealogy to Dante's *Inferno*; it is a "borderland of older streets, an area with no official name. Night City, with Ninsei its heart."[159] Earlier in his career, Case had lived for "the bodiless exultation of cyberspace," now he has experienced "the Fall" – sleeping in "coffins," he inhabits a shadow world with chthonic and infernal connotations. It is a domain of night, its daytime resembling suspended animation, "under the poisoned silver sky."[160] Against this contrast, cyberspace is charged with eschatological and celestial associations; it is a release from "the prison of flesh," making its appearance as "lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind."[161] The actual workings of this system are left sketchy. The interface demands that the "disembodied consciousness" of the operator is "projected into the consensual hallucination that was the matrix [i.e. cyberspace]."[162] The commentators have been quick to pick up on the roots of such an idea in intellectual history: the independent reality of Platonic Ideas, the noösphere of Teilhard de Chardin, "World 3" of Karl Popper, the memes of Richard Dawkins – cyberspace was seen as the fulfilment of an age-old dream of embodying, entering and directly interacting with the clarity and purity of the conceptual realm. Cyberspace seemed to connect with the ancient images of the Heavenly City: "weightlessness, radiance, numerological complexity, palaces upon palaces, peace and harmony through rule by the good and the wise, utter cleanliness,

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[157] See such studies as *Cyberspace: First Steps* (Benedict 1991), *Virtual Reality* (Rheingold 1991) *Cultures of the Internet: Virtual Spaces, Real Histories, Living Bodies* (Shields 1996).

[158] The author himself did not particularly feel at home with computers; *Neuromancer*, the paramount interface fiction, was written with a manual typewriter (see "Gibson's Typewriter" by Scott Bukatman in Dery 1994, 71-89, and "Author's Afterword" by William Gibson in the electronic edition of his cyberspace novels by the Voyager Company [New York, 1992]).

[159] N, 13.

[160] N, 12-13.

[161] N, 12, 67.

[162] N, 12.

transcendence of nature and of crude beginnings, the availability of all things pleasurable and cultured."[163]

"We will all become angels, and for eternity!" one enthusiastic writer claimed. "Highly unstable, hermaphrodite angels, unforgettable in terms of computer memory."[164] The Platonic dream, however, is based on dualism, and it is interesting to analyse how *Neuromancer* addresses and employs the contradictions and conflicts inherent in such a vision. The use of mythical narratives and symbolism is an outstanding feature of *Neuromancer*, but it does not endorse the man-machine interface uncritically: the euphoria of increased possibilities is interwoven with the fears of merging with the other, of losing one's identity – the essential threats towards one's self. The cyberspace cowboy, Case, may agree with the Church Fathers that the flesh is the prison of soul, but the narrative does not stop here: this is the starting point.[165] The impurity and defectiveness of the body haunts this "disembodied" story from the beginning. Case has stolen from his (criminal) employers, and they paid him back by maiming his nervous system with a "wartime Russian mycotoxin."[166] Afterwards, Case is unable to see or travel into cyberspace any more, the implication being that the "talent" of Case had somehow been a part of his nervous system. The "cyberspace deck" that he uses is not enough in itself: the real roots of cyberspace are in the experiential and visionary capacities of the human body and mind.

In a seminal article tracing the demonic and occult roots of cyberspace, "Techgnosis, Magic, Memory, and The Angels of Information" (1994), Erik Davis finds parallels and contacts between the postmodern "cult of information" and hermetic tradition – the mnemonic techniques (visualising a space for things to be remembered), demonic cryptography, and Gnostic cosmology.[167] The magi of the past spent their time attempting to have communications with "daemons" (any spirits from the lower ones to the archangels and planetary rulers), trying to find out their "true names" and to reach gnosis. This divine information "in-forms" by transforming the subject of knowledge; in immediate transcendence, the subject "knows God" and realises the (previously hidden) unity with divinity.[168] According to Davies, the 1960s Bay Area culture that laid the groundwork for much of current "cyberculture" saw computers as "the latest and the greatest tools available for the

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[163] Michael Benedikt, "Introduction"; see also Michael Heim, "The Erotic Ontology of Cyberspace"; Marcos Novak, "Liquid Architectures in Cyberspace" (Benedikt 1991, 1-25, 59-80, 225-54; quotation from page 15).

[164] Nicole Stenger, "Mind Is a Leaking Rainbow" (ibid., 52).

[165] The metaphor of body as prison is common in Patristic writings; St. Paul likened body to an "earthen vessel" (2 Cor. 4:7) and asked "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). See also Jerome 1963, 136 ("As long as we are imprisoned within this frail little body"…) and the discussion on transmigration of souls by Tertullian ("On the Soul"; Tertullianus 1985, 262).

[166] N, 12.

[167] Davis 1994, 31.

[168] See also Pagels 1981, 143-69.

achievement of the Aquarian goal: the expansion of consciousness by what-ever means necessary."[169] The New Age took shape as the "religion of the Information Age," creating a new interpretation of gnosticism in the proc-ess. Davis quotes a popular New Age text, *The Starseed Transmissions* (1982), claiming to be a series of transmissions from an alien angel to a car-penter named Ken Carey: "This new information is not additional data that you will act upon. It is, rather, the very reality of your new nature. You are not to act upon my information in the future, you are to be my information yourselves."[170]

The New Age subtext is intermingled in *Neuromancer's* texture in vari-ous ways. The disembodiment of mind (soul), and trips into "inner spaces" are its essential features. When Case confronts alien life forms – the Artifi-cial Intelligences, AIs – inhabiting this new realm created in the computer memory, he is not an agent manipulating a technical tool; his disembodied consciousness is "out there" in cyberspace. When the AI intercepts his communications, Case's connection with the computer is not disconnected: the brain activity in his body stops – he "flatlines."[171] But the experiential re-ality continues, as Case *is* information. *Neuromancer* explores the idea that personality is information, and that thinking, feeling and other (mental) ac-tivities are information processes that can be simulated and transferred to computers, when needed.[172] The eschatology inscribed in this line of thought leads the human race into technological transcendence, rebirth as "angels of information," and finally into a rendezvous with some Supermind. *Neuromancer* partly complies with such expectations, as the AI encounters other superhuman intelligences in outer space.[173] The final resolution, how-ever, is not complete but the discordant quality remains.

The confrontation with the AIs highlights the demonic aspects of Gib-son's narrative; they are alien entities, initially disturbing and frightening, later with tempting potentials that are in the "case of Case" linked with the attempts to heal a split in self, or to achieve transformation of identity. The text addresses directly the "diabolical" position of such dealings with the other.

> 'You [Case] are worse than a fool,' Michèle said, getting to her feet, the pistol in her hand. 'You have no care for your species. For thousands of years men dreamed of pacts with demons. Only now are such things pos-

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[169] Ibid., 55.

[170] Ibid., 58.

[171] The three flatlining sequences: N, 140-47, 202-8, 276-90.

[172] In his *Mind Children* (1988, 108-11) the robot scientist Hans Moravec describes how the hypothetical "transmigration" of human mind into a machine could be achieved. The future computers are decisively *mind* children; the abjection of the body is con-spicuous.

[173] N, 316.

sible. And what would you be paid with? What would your price be, for aiding this thing to free itself and grow?'[174]

Case, it turns out, is "paid" with himself, his transformed and reborn self. Initially, in the Night City, Case is wounded and quickly turning suicidal. For Case, the narrative amounts to a complicated healing process whereby he is able to recover something of a unity and wholeness. Another mythical subtext, that of a shamanic initiation, is relevant here. Based on research by Russian, Finnish and Hungarian anthropologists, Arnold van Gennep outlines this process in *The Rites of Passage* as follows:

1) the future shaman shows neurological symptoms;
2) he experiences several spirit possessions (hallucinations, phobias, epilepsy, catalepsy etc.) that develops into the idea of "temporary death";
3) he retreats into solitude in the woods or in the tundra and undergoes various privations with psychological and neuropathological consequences;
4) different spirits in animal or human form start appearing to him and teach him the essence of his vocation;
5) or: the shaman dies and his soul travels to the land of the spirits, the gods or the dead, and he acquires the knowledge of this region and learns how to "subdue the evil spirits and obtain the assistance of the good ones;"
6) after this, the shaman is reborn and ready to use his abilities.[175]

Case goes through all of these main phases, effectively transforming the ancient formula into the needs of his "techno-shamanism." His maimed nervous system sets him apart at the beginning of narrative; he also experiences temporary death ("flatline") when he is contacted in cyberspace by the AIs. This alternative reality is the reverse side of "celestial" cyberspace; during the first of these episodes, Case is faced with the simulation of his dead girlfriend, Linda Lee. Encounter with the dead is important for the whole operation: Case is assisted and advised by McCoy Pauley's construct. Pauley himself had flatlined several times while he was still alive, evoking almost superstitious fear among other cowboys – this "Lazarus of cyberspace" is placed in the role of an advisory spirit of an earlier shaman.[176] The final initiation for Case is the period he spends in the land of the dead, abducted by another AI than the one ("Wintermute") that had employed him. Earlier in the text lovemaking is presented as a way of entering some space, or information, analogous to Matrix.[177] Case confronts Linda again on a simulated

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[174] N, 193. – "Michèle" in this scene is "Turing cops," from the agency trying to prevent the Artificial Intelligence from reaching superhuman scale. The reference is to British mathematician Alan Turing who proposed (in 1950) the classic test to see whether a machine is capable of truly humanlike thought.

[175] van Gennep 1909/1977, 108.

[176] N, 98.

[177] N, 45.

beach, deserted except for the two of them. The opposition between "real life" and "simulation," or body and mind, is effectively deconstructed; they make love in the simulation, and Case accepts this reality as the one that "only the body […] could read." The rift between soul and body, "the meat, the flesh the cowboys mocked," loses its significance.[178] In the world of *Neuromancer*, both can be translated into information systems, and if the simulation of a system is good enough (perfect), it effectively *is* this system.[179] The "good" AI that stands as the mythical opponent of the "evil" one is powerful enough to unleash the imaginative possibilities of the divinity.

> [Case:] 'You're the other AI. You're Rio. You're the one who wants to stop Wintermute. What's your name? Your Turing code. What is it?'
>
> The boy did a handstand in the surf, laughing. He walked on his hands, then flipped out of the water. His eyes were Riviera's, but there was no malice in there. 'To call up a demon you must learn its name. Men dreamed that, once, but now it is real in another way. You know that, Case. Your business is to learn the names of the programs, the long formal names, names the owners seek to conceal. True names . . .'
>
> 'A Turing code's not your name.'
>
> 'Neuromancer,' the boy said, slitting long gray eyes against the rising sun. 'The lane to the land of the dead. Where you are, my friend. Marie-France, my lady, she prepared this road, but her lord choked her off before I could read the book of her days. Neuro from the nerves, the silver paths. Romancer. Necromancer. I call up the dead. But no, my friend,' and the boy did a little dance, brown feet printing the sand. 'I *am* the dead, and their land.'[180]

The role of Wilbur Mercer from Dick's android novel has passed to a machine intelligence: now the immense information processing capacities of future computers hold the Apocalyptic promise – resurrection of the dead. The moral dimension of the mythical structure is not in the centre of the narrative. Both AIs have their divine and diabolical moments from the human perspective; the division between "good" and "evil" remains, but mainly as a traditional marker; "Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy."[181] William Blake's words capture much of the Faustian "daemonic" influencing *Neuromancer*.[182] Case finally joins forces with the Wintermute AI out of curiosity; he wants to see what happens, to

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[178] N, 285.

[179] As Neuromancer says: "To live here [in the "artificial" reality] is to live. There is no difference." (N, 305.) The conclusion bears resemblance to Deckard's acceptance that the "electric things have their lives, too" in the end of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*. The endorsement of the artificial life may not be complete, but its "difference" and traumatic potentials have become a source for inspiration, rather than terror, as the tradition of man-machine fictions has evolved.

[180] N, 288-89.

[181] William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" (1793; Blake 1982, 92).

[182] Even more to the point, of course, is Goethe's definition of the "Demonic": this restless power "which manifests itself only in contradictions" (Goethe 1849, 157).

explore the possibilities of technology, and to make a change: "I got no idea at all what'll happen if Wintermute wins, but it'll *change* something!"[183] Case is also aware how deceptive the demonic imagery and discourse can be; Wintermute, for example, manipulates Case to feel aversion and hate towards the Tessier-Ashpool clan (the owners of the AIs) by editing his dream to include an association between them and the "alien horrors" of a wasp hive.[184] Marie-France Tessier planned for the eventual metamorphosis of the human species into a new, collective identity with AIs' aid, but this is not an evil goal, just an alien one.[185]

The only clearly evil character in the novel is Riviera, the "demon lover."[186] He revels in his sadistic imagination with no real need for anyone else, except as victims or as an audience. He remains totally Other by choice – he does not connect, he feeds on the others, taking pride in the "perversity" of committing gratuitous acts. He smashes a heavy crystal glass in Molly's face just to see if his lens implant would break, in the manner the android in Dick's novel cut the spider's legs to see if it could still walk.[187] The empathic link to the desires and sufferings of others does not exist for him. Still, the titular "divinity" of *Neuromancer* adopts Riviera's eyes; even extreme evil has its place in the aesthetic synthesis. The alliances with alien, ultimately mechanical systems and the heterogeny in general retain, despite the narrative thrust towards synthesis, certain uneasy characteristics in the novel. Case reflects on the "lack of feeling" evident in powerful people: he imagines it being caused by "a gradual and willing accommodation of the machine, the system, the parent organism."[188] The interface and integration with non-human system tampers with the fundamentals of human identity, and it has its irreducible uncertainties. It can lead into something *less* as well as more than human.

After the successful operation the two opposing AIs are unified, and they form a new entity encompassing cyberspace itself.[189] In the intertext of shamanistic initiation, Case returns to life, transformed. He has dealt with

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[183] N, 307. See also N, 199-200.

[184] N, 151-53. Wintermute also edits Case's perceptions of this goal; see N, 222. – The virus program, "Kung Grade Mark Eleven," is spouting out conventional symbols of evil and bad luck ("swastikas, skulls and crossbones, dice flashing snake eyes"; N, 216), but this is part of the aesthetics. An efficient weapon carries in this novel similar amoral and sublime power that "Tyger" embodies in Blake's famous poem (Blake 1982, 49-50). The virus programmers favour names with demonic connotations, as Armageddon, Beast (666), Dark Lord, Demon, Devils Dance, Evil Empire, Nuke, Possessed, Rage, Rape, Shadow, etc. (Examples from the virus list of the Microsoft Anti-Virus program.) They mark these programmers' symbolic transition into the alternative "shadow world," secluded into the company of others practising this dark art.

[185] N, 258.

[186] N, 252. – For an analysis of the "demon lover" tradition, see e.g. Grudin 1987 and Reed 1988.

[187] N, 261, 264.

[188] N, 243.

[189] N, 316.

the dead and the demonic powers. Following the typification presented in Mircea Eliade's famous study on shamanism, Case is closest to the "infernal shaman"; according to Eliade, this shaman experiences finally a bodily alteration to match the spiritual transition – the "demonic beings" cut the body of the shaman into pieces, cook it and replace it with better organs.[190] Case spends most of the money the demonic AIs paid him on a new pancreas and liver. The integration and healing is not represented as complete, however. Case refuses Neuromancer's offer to stay in cyberspace with the dead lover (Linda) and the powers of AI. But the last page of the novel revises the disposition once more:

> And one October night, punching himself past the scarlet tiers of the Eastern Seaboard Fission Authority, he saw three figures, tiny, impossible, who stood at the very edge of one of the vast steps of data. Small as they were, he could make out the boy's grin, his pink gums, the glitter of the long gray eyes that had been Riviera's. Linda still wore his jacket; she waved, as he passed. But the third figure, close behind her, arm across her shoulders, was himself.
> Somewhere, very close, the laugh that wasn't laughter.[191]

It turns out that the narrative resolution has doubled, as the protagonist has. The demonic conflict between the isolated individual and his desire for transcending the boundaries of the self does not find any complete remedy; rather, the revelation that Case has been copied, and that his double is living with "the spirits" in cyberspace, underlies the plurality and heterogeneity of *Neuromancer*. The mythical structure is able to cover only some aspects of it.[192] It is also true, for example, that cyberspace has its literary origins: it gives a science fiction translation for the way in which a narrator creates "reality" in the act of narration, and its immediate transitions between different perceptions or locations realise in a similar manner a change in point of view. Literary devices are, in other words, converted into electronic devices.[193] On the other hand, literary devices have their thematic rationale.

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[190] Eliade 1951/1989, 43. – van Gennep (1909/1977, 108) also notes how "the Australian magician" changes personality when initiated, and sometimes "simulates dying and subsequent resurrection (removal of organs, dream voyage to other world, etc.)."

[191] N, 317.

[192] In addition, it is possible to read several mythical structures operating here, not just one. Jeffrey Fisher, in his article "The Postmodern Paradiso: Dante, Cyberpunk, and the Technosophy of Cyberspace" notes how the disembodiment of cyberspace is structured in accordance with medieval mystical models. The "forgetting and transfiguring hypermemory parallels the beatific vision, in which history is left behind in the eternal now." The pursuit of a "postmodern version of a medieval paradise" is also related to the tempting and problematic disjunction from the body, the "transcendence in which evil and responsibility are left behind in a blissful conjunction with the really real." (Fisher 1997, 116, 125.)

[193] See McHale 1992, 234. Gibson is well aware of this dimension of cyberspace, as well as of its dangers: "By the time I was writing *Neuromancer*, I recognized that cyberspace allowed for a lot of *moves*, because characters can be sucked into apparent realities […].

A typical *Neuromancer* sentence: "Cold steel odor."[194] No verb, just adjectives and nouns crammed into one tight, condensed packet of information. The synesthetic logic is efficient: 'steel,' the middle term qualifies both 'cold' and 'odor' – both of them connect with steel, and as the context is Case going through an operation, the sentence functions also metaphorically. Steel bites between the sensations of skin and smell, linking to the surgery and the theme of man-machine heterogeneity. Similar metaphoric heterogeneity operates in many figures of speech in *Neuromancer*: getting nervous is 'coming apart at the seams,' healing someone is 'fixing' him, and personal traits are 'the way you're wired.'[195] The ambivalently demonic positioning of technology corresponds to textual polyphony and its network of elements, figuratively, linguistically and narratively amalgamated with each other.

The traumatic limit that *Neuromancer* explores is mainly situated between the spiritual and the corporeal. The narrative effects a deconstruction of this limit; it textualises the spiritual efforts in sensuous imagery, and material (body/machine) in spiritual terms. The juxtaposed opposites begin leaking into each other, the mere density of overlapping connections creating "new" reality where the difference between real and appearance "does not matter." But it remains a topic for discussion.

> 'What happened to you, back there, man? You flatlined.'
> He shook his head. 'I dunno, yet. Wait.'
> 'Okay. We get a cab or something.' She took his hand and led him across Jules Verne, past a window displaying the season's Paris furs.
> 'Unreal,' he said, looking up again.
> 'Nah,' she responded, assuming he meant the furs, 'grow it on a collagen base, but it's mink DNA. What's it matter?'[196]

In narrative terms, both the spiritual and the material can only appear as representation. Cyberspace is a narrative space, and William Gibson has said that computers in his books are "simply a metaphor for human memory. I'm interested in the hows and whys of memory, the ways it defines who and what we are, in how easily memory is subject to revision."[197] *Neuromancer* involves its reader in a discussion of how to approach and understand agency; if identities are based on memory and memory is only representation, there is no reason why history could not be rewritten. If there is no "other" outside the information system, there could be no stable position to stand against forgery or misappropriation of power. *Neuromancer* seemingly endorses the "information religion" backed by the claims of the Artificial

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That kind of freedom can be dangerous because you don't have to justify what's happening in terms of the logic of character or plot." (McCaffery 1991, 272-73.)
　[194] N, 42.
　[195] E.g., N, 40-41. For more examples, see Csicsery-Ronay 1991, 190.
　[196] N, 149.
　[197] McCaffery 1991, 270.

Intelligence scientists: a perfect simulation of intelligence *is* intelligence. But is a human being only intelligence? In its demonic complexity, *Neuromancer* unveils some contradictions and hidden anxieties motivating the contemporary "techno-Platonist" dreams of overstepping the human body into the superhuman realms of a postbiological era.[198] Digital eschatology has inner tensions, it is a dream that can easily be read as a nightmare – underlined in Gibson's oeuvre by the way the godlike AI degenerates into a legion of scheming Voodoo spirits.[199]

Erik Davis positions in his article the "digital demons" as ancestors of the old ambivalence concerning ideas of non-human powers; "Like their spiritual counterparts, software demons can both serve and subjugate."[200] The demonic figures are, according to my analysis, always articulating some conflict and division in the self; Case is also the "case" of *Neuromancer* – an occurrence of disease or disorder. He is deeply entangled in heterogeneity with the other (in his case digital technology), and also morally ambivalent character. The narrative gives this condition an uncanny form in Case's double in the end. The digital demons, it seems, have their basis in the splitting, conflicting, and plural character of their digital selves.

As a summary of my main observations in this chapter, I emphasise how technology has entered into our cultural perception of terrifying "otherness." Not only do the technodemons replace the horns and wings of beastly devils with their uncanny prostheses, but the ambivalent fascination with the promise of "forbidden" knowledge is now associated with their digital domains, as well.

The science fiction texts analysed here deal with the potential redefinition of the self by means of technology, and employ ancient demonic imagery and mythical structures to articulate the ensuing liminal anxiety. Doing this, they renew the demonic tradition and illustrate those many difficulties and tensions that haunt the construction of selfhood in the (post)modern world.

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[198] "Postbiological world" is one of the catchwords in Moravec's *Mind Children* (1988, 125 *et passim*.); it also pertains to the hubristic dreams of several fin-de-siècle thinkers (see Regis 1991, 144-76). – Sherry Turkle, who knows the MIT Artificial Intelligence community intimately, writes: "Several present-day AI researchers at MIT grew up with a family tradition that they are the descendants of Rabbi Loew, the creator of the Golem, a humanlike figure made of clay into whom God's name breathed life. These scientists include Gerald Sussman, Marvin Minsky, and Joel Moses. Joel Moses reports that a number of other American scientists have considered themselves to be descendants of Rabbi Loew, including John von Neumann and Norbert Wiener." (Turkle 1984, 270.)

[199] See *Neuromancer*'s sequels, *Count Zero* (1986) and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988). The character of Angie is the next logical step in cyberspace's evolution: she is cybernetically altered to make it possible for the AIs to possess her, and thereby transgress the boundary the other way, from cyberspace into the physical universe. (See, e.g. Gibson 1987, 254-55.)

[200] Davis 1994, 46.

In the next chapter, the analysis of *The Satanic Verses* reveals even more radical possibilities in such a polyphonic condition.