

4. *Demons of Horror: Intimations of an Inner Alien*

What is hell? Hell is oneself,
Hell is alone, the other figures in it
Merely projections. There is nothing to escape from
And nothing to escape to. One is always alone.

– T.S. Eliot, *The Cocktail Party*¹

TEXTS OF TRANSGRESSION

What is the role of demons, or supernatural in general, in horror? It could be argued that there cannot be Gothic horror without some element of supernatural threat, but this characteristic is not enough to define a genre in itself. “Horror” is an emotive term, and essential to understanding of this genre – one that is increasingly known by this appellation only, without the “Gothic” prefix.² A touch of supernatural was customary in the classic Gothic literature, which usually is dated from 1764 (publication of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*) to 1820 (the year of Charles Robert Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer*). Both of these “signposts” have their share of the supernatural; Walpole’s story has its animated portrait and mysterious pieces of a giant suit of armour, Maturin a supernaturally empowered character who is under a diabolical contract.³ To evoke the horror that separates Gothic from other atmospheric romances, classic horror stories depict or suggest something otherworldly. The borderline between realistic, or non-magical, and supernatural story-lines has received particular theoretical attention, as in the theory of Tzvetan Todorov.⁴ A

¹ Eliot 1950, 87.

² See, in this context, particularly Noël Carroll’s theory of horror; discussed in the first chapter (page 33-36).

³ Walpole 1764/1966; Maturin 1820/1989. (John Melmoth the Traveller, Maturin’s cursed title character, “obtained from the enemy of souls a range of existence beyond the period allotted to mortality” and many special powers, but his efforts in tempting others to exchange their destinies with him proved curiously futile in the end [ibid., 537-8]. The most demonic feature of this novel is perhaps finally the way its “sermons” and “blasphemies” become “dangerously entangled” [see the introduction by Chris Baldick, page xvi].)

⁴ Todorov defines his category of “fantastic” on the basis of reader’s vacillation between supernatural and non-supernatural explanations. The pure fantastic, according to him, should be understood as the median line between the domains of “the uncanny” and

brief look into the specific character of the horror genre is needed here to create some interpretative context for the demonic elements discussed.

A considerable amount of critical energy has been spent on the task of defining Gothic as a genre. Typically this has produced lists of Gothic devices – Eugenia C. DeLamotte has named this a “shopping list” approach.⁵ A haunted castle is a traditional element, as are a mysterious hero, or villain, and a virtuous lady in distress. In her work *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* (1979), Elizabeth MacAndrew portrays a lineage of writers occupied by the common interest (evil as an inner, psychological reality in man), borrowing Gothic devices from each other, and introducing new ones.⁶ *The Castle of Otranto* characterises well the initial nucleus of “Gothic features,” later works added tormented monks, monsters and mad scientists, ghosts and devils, witches and vampires, and even distanced themselves from the medieval settings in favour of contemporary reality. As Anne Williams writes in her *Art of Darkness* (1995), the history of Gothic has produced a plenitude that persistently oversteps all defining boundaries. There does not seem to be one definitive feature that would serve any attempt at a conclusive definition; even groups of features arranged by “family resemblances” tend to become strained. Williams advocates George Lakoff’s theory concerning the concept of category as a cognitive structure. According to this view, the individual items do not necessarily share any “essence,” or even family resemblance, with each other, if they belong to the same category. The categories are, instead, produced in accordance with certain principles of cognitive logic: “These principles, taken together, will predict the *structure* of a category, but not its specific content.”⁷

Modern studies of horror are not so interested in finding definitive boundaries of genre, or in inventing new subgenres in order to assimilate the constant flux into some Aristotelian order. They are more engaged with the inner dynamism of the genre, relying on the readers’ ability to recognise and relish even unorthodox works as parts of the tradition. Williams argues that the structure that organises Gothic horror as a category is its representation of “ambivalently attractive” otherness. The initial impulse to portray medieval settings (or examples of “primitive” magical thinking, or exotic elements

“the marvellous.” Todorov 1970/1975, 25-31, 44. Todorov’s definition is emphatically cognitocentric (in favour of purely intellectual and epistemological criteria) and excludes almost all actual literature. Cf. Darko Suvin’s definition of science fiction, below, pages 205-6.

⁵ DeLamotte 1990, 5. Eino Railo’s classic study, *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (1927) has become a typical representative of scholarship that catalogues the different components that “make up” this genre.

⁶ MacAndrew 1979, 5-9, *et passim*.

⁷ Williams 1995, 12-18 (quotation from page 18); Lakoff’s theory is discussed above, pp. 57-8. – Robert Miles argues that Gothic should be approached as a particular aesthetic, rather than a genre. Developed in the ‘Age of Sensibility’ it was ideologically charged from the beginning, giving a discursive form to “an idealized, culturally compromised, self, exaggerated and repudiated, explored and denied” it was above all “an aesthetic of change.” (Miles 1993, 30-33.)

from the Orient) was aimed at confronting contemporary social reality and its “urbane, civilised self” with their “uncivilised” other. After this, the principle of chaining leads from one element to another.⁸

Williams’s emphasis on the role of otherness is shared by several recent studies of horror. In her *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion*, Rosemary Jackson speaks of “desire for otherness,” and claims that “the history of the survival of Gothic horror is one of progressive internalization and recognition of fears as generated by self.”⁹ Eugenia C. DeLamotte, in her study *Perils of the Night* (1990) takes issue with the Gothic “myth,” which she perceives as centred on the “distinction between me and not-me.”¹⁰ She claims that “Gothic terror has its primary source in an anxiety about boundaries,” and that this anxiety (experienced in such different spheres as psychological, epistemological, religious, and social) finds in Gothic romance a symbolic language congenial to their expression.¹¹ The closed space is so central an element in the Gothic vocabulary, that one important recent study builds its interpretation of the tradition using it as the sole starting point.¹² DeLamotte sees the literal boundaries as only one dimension in this tradition’s involvement with “anxieties of the threshold.” The sound of a door grating on its hinges is the fascinating and terrifying hallmark of horror; something unknown is about to step over the threshold.¹³ The dead are going to visit the living, the past is invading the present, madness is starting to mix with reason. Physical violence is finally “a transgression against the body, the last barrier protecting the self from the other.”¹⁴ The imperative to break all the boundaries, to confront all imaginable forms of forbidden “otherness,” can be seen as the driving force behind the horror genre.¹⁵ The liminal character of the demonic is in intimate relation to this central feature of horror.¹⁶

Study of the changing faces the horror adopts in its pursuit for “other” can give us insights into wider systems of meaning. As Anne Williams em-

⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁹ Jackson 1981, 19, 24.

¹⁰ DeLamotte 1990, 23. Anne Williams thinks that DeLamotte’s view of the Gothic is valid at the level of theme, but she criticises DeLamotte for missing several other important dimensions (“such as literary form, the relation between Gothic and ‘high Romantic’ or other canonical forms, the persistence of popular Gothic and its expansion into non-literary media, and the power of Gothic to elicit certain responses from its audience”; Williams 1995, 16).

¹¹ Ibid., 13-14.

¹² Manuel Aguirre, *The Closed Space: Horror Literature and Western Symbolism* (1990).

¹³ See Mark S. Madoff’s article “Inside, Outside, and the Gothic Locked-Room Mystery” for a discussion of this particular image (in Graham 1989, 49-62).

¹⁴ DeLamotte 1990, 20-21.

¹⁵ Fred Botting defines Gothic as writing of excess; “In Gothic productions imagination and emotional effects exceed reason. Passion, excitement and sensation transgress social proprieties and moral laws. Ambivalence and uncertainty obscure single meanings. [...] Gothic excesses transgressed the proper limits of aesthetics as well as social order in the overflow of emotions that undermined boundaries of life and fiction, fantasy and reality.” (Botting 1996, 3-4.)

¹⁶ See above, page 26-27.

phasises, “otherness” is always a relative term: other is defined by its exclusion and difference from the dominating centres of signification. Already Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* gave a list of opposites (attributed to the Pythagoreans), which translates heterogeneous reality into manageable divisions:¹⁷

male	female
limited	unlimited
odd	even
one	many
right	left
square	oblong
at rest	moving
straight	curved
light	darkness
good	evil

Williams notes how the second column, which starts from “female” and ends with “evil,” contains elements associated with a Gothic (or Romantic) aesthetic, as opposed to the “good” and “male” line more in accordance with the ideals of classicism (or, to a lesser degree, with the modern concept of Realism).¹⁸ Feminist criticism has been especially quick to note how the Western inclination to privilege an association of reason with male – a tradition Jacques Derrida dubbed “Phallogocentrism” – also positions female and irrational as a cultural “other.” The male/female couple has received ample attention; however, one could claim that such binary oppositions as singular/plural, and stable/variable are equally important in understanding the structure of “otherness” at work in horror.

There are nevertheless some important lessons to be learned about the status of the female in horror. Anne Williams claims that Gothic effectively divides into two separate, but thematically and historically related genres: the male and female Gothic. She opposes female writers’ works (from Anne Radcliffe to romance writer Victoria Holt) to such “male” novels as M.G. Lewis’s *The Monk*, Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and Stephen King’s *Carrie*. Williams points to several differences between the “female formula” and the Male Gothic in narrative technique, in assumptions about the supernatural, and in plot. Whereas female authors often generate suspense from holding to the heroines (limited) point of view and explain “supernatural” in psychological terms, male writers are, according to Williams, more distanced from female characters. The Male Gothic also posits supernatural as “reality” in the text, and prefers tragic endings over the happy closures of the female Gothic romances. Furthermore, Williams thinks that the male point of view (or, ultimately the different cultural positions of men and women) makes

¹⁷ See *Met.* I, 5 (986a22-986b1) and Williams 1995, 18-19. See also the discussion of contrary principia in the tenth book of *Metaphysics* (1052a15-1059a14).

¹⁸ Williams 1995, 18-19.

Male Gothic liable to combine desire and violence in their descriptions of femininity: “Male Gothic plot and narrative conventions also focus on female suffering, positioning the audience as voyeurs who, though sympathetic, may take pleasure in female victimization.”¹⁹

DESIRABLE DEVILS

Joseph Andriano, in his work *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction* (1993), comes up with a somewhat more positive interpretation of the status of female “otherness” in the Male Gothic. His starting point is

the realization that even when a man is haunted by a feminine demon or ghost, he could still be encountering himself – or part of himself. The haunting Other may be a projection of the haunted Self: outer demon is inner daemon, a psychic entity unrecognized as such by the male ego.²⁰

Andriano’s study uses Carl Jung’s concept of archetype, although he denounces some of the essentialist emphases in this tradition. The “post-Jungian approach” is just a reading strategy for Andriano. “The readings [in *Our Ladies of Darkness*] are based on the premise that the anima and the related mother archetype are not signified Givens but rather signifiers [...].” In other words, the meaning of an archetype “derives first from interaction with (and difference from) other signifiers in the text, and second from connotations and associations (from other texts) the reader brings to bear on the text at hand.”²¹ Andriano’s universal intertext is Jung’s corpus; he is a Jungian reader, whose task is to seek out signs of archetypes as they are identified by Jung’s theory.²² He believes that such signifiers as ‘self,’ ‘ego,’ ‘id,’ ‘anima,’ ‘animus,’ or ‘shadow’ are of “primordial origin” and “associated with human instinctual drives.”²³ According to this view, the culmination of psychological development is in the integration of opposite tendencies and achievement of personal wholeness. Andriano can interpret the frequent association between the demonic and femininity in Gothic along these lines; it is the feminine element in male psyche (*anima*) that holds powers both to enchant and to terrify. “What these men [disconnected with their feminine side] fear most is the crossing of gender boundaries.”²⁴ This interpretation

¹⁹ Ibid., 102-7 (quotation from page 104).

²⁰ Andriano 1993, 2.

²¹ Ibid., 3.

²² A different reading of the imagination and of the feminine as a symbol of the Other is *Baroque Reason* by Christine Buci-Glucksmann (1984/1994). She analyses the figures and myths of *Angelus Novus*, Salome and Medusa, as “theatricizations of existence” which enables her “Baroque Reason” to deal with the notions of ambivalence and difference inherent in the modern experience. “Baroque Reason” involves and modifies the connection between forms of thinking and aesthetic forms.

²³ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁴ Ibid., 5.

explains the extremes of Male Gothic starting from the marked dread of men towards the boundaries of their masculine identity. It is interesting to note how Eugenia C. DeLamotte is able to interpret the *Female* Gothic in the same way; she emphasises boundaries of the self as a particular “Women’s Theme.”²⁵ If one attempts to combine these views, the readers seem to be unanimous only in their opinion that Gothic is able to address “our” (as opposed to “their”) worries, as essential threats to the boundaries of the self.

Andriano’s examples and analyses are illustrative of the ambiguous character of the demonic, regardless of whether one is an advocate of Jungian theory or not. The first Gothic text Andriano reads – *Le Diable amoureux* by Jacques Cazotte (1772) – embodies well the deep ambiguity of the demonic elements in horror fiction.²⁶ This novella (or, the first example of *le conte fantastique*) consists of the temptations of its narrator-hero, a young naval officer named don Alvaro.²⁷ The young man is bored, and becomes fascinated by necromancy. Soberano, an older officer and cabalist, shows him how to conjure, and Alvaro evokes “Béelzebuth,” standing in a pentacle. The demon appears at first in the shape of a huge camel’s head, then, at Alvaro’s request, takes the form of a spaniel (“une petite femelle,” as Alvaro notes). After this, the demon does different spectacular services for Alvaro, and follows him, variously in the disguise of a page boy (“Biondetto”), or as a seductively beautiful woman (“Biondetta”). In his analysis, Andriano points out that not only is the narrator-protagonist unable to define the demon’s gender, or to decide if it really is the benevolent, female spirit it claims to be, or to decide if (s)he is really in love with him – the text itself is thoroughly ambiguous and supports different, conflicting readings. The tale culminates in sexual intercourse between Alvaro and Biondetta (whom he has now learned to love), and the subsequent revelation in bed: “Je suis le Diable, mon cher Alvare, je suis le Diable.”²⁸ Alvaro runs to his mother, renouncing all women and resolved to enter the monastery. At the end a wise doctor tells him that he was tempted in the flesh by the devil, but his remorse has saved him. He should marry a girl her mother has chosen for him – one he would never mistake for the Devil.

Cazotte was aware of the demonological literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and found there a conflict between the Church Fathers and such early experimenting “scientists” as Paracelsus. The former group regarded all utilitarian interaction with the spirit world as dealings with devils; the latter tried to find ways to benefit themselves (and if inter-

²⁵ DeLamotte 1990, chapter five. See also below, analysis of vampires in pp. 185-91.

²⁶ This story is also Todorov’s paradigmatic text in his treatment of the fantastic.

²⁷ I have used the new translation, *The Devil in Love*, by Stephen Sartarelli (Cazotte 1772/1993). (“Don Alvare” in the French original; see Andriano 1993, 11-18, for a summary of the tale. Cf. also Milner 1960a, 67-102; Summers 1969, 224-25.)

²⁸ In Cazotte 1772/1993, 75; Andriano 1993, 17.

course with spirits was profitable and enjoyable, it was good).²⁹ The Enlightenment view (that spirits could have no real influence over human affairs) was also gaining favour, and Andriano sees all three views supported by Cazotte's text.

The pious reader preferring the didactic interpretation [of the dangers of temptation] would take Biondetta as evil, the erotically oriented reader would see her as Sylph [a benevolent aerial spirit], and the "enlightened" reader would take her as the ultimately harmless product of Alvare's overheated brain.³⁰

The basic question concerning the nature of the demon is thus articulated ambiguously in the text; the demon oscillates continuously between male and female, which heightens the uncertainty of boundaries, and identities, permeating *Le Diable amoureux*. The association between dangerous or grotesque animals and the Devil was common enough, but why a camel's head?³¹ Frightening (and lowly) dogs have been also associated to the infernal powers, but Cazotte's choice was a spaniel, which inspires mixed reactions. Furthermore, the devil's imitation of a woman in love is almost too complete; even when alone, spied from a keyhole by Alvaro, or seriously wounded, Biondetta gives proof of her love. Even her final confession of demonic identity is loving in tone: "mon cher..." Andriano concludes that Cazotte "may have been consciously warning men of the dangers of lawless passion, but he was not 'in complete control of his material'".³² The traditional materials of *le conte moral* are transformed into something more ambiguous as the demon comes to signify the tempting possibilities and terrors at the borders of identity: the dangers evoked by desire for an openly sexual woman (as opposed to the "moral" relationship with mother, who also represents the Mother Church); or the inarticulate desires and fears surrounding sexual identity (embodied in the confusing double identity of

²⁹ The Faustian dilemmas of such interests are discussed below, in chapter eight.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

³¹ "Scarcely had I finished calling when at once a double window opens up above me, at the top of the vault: a torrent of light more dazzling than the daylight pours down from it, and a great camel's head as ghastly in its dimensions as in its form appears at the window; its ears especially were enormous. [...] *Che vuoi?* it bellowed [Italian: *What do you want?*]" (Cazotte 1772/1993, 9.) – Andriano suggests influences from the Jewish midrashim and the cabalistic Zohar (which interpret the serpent of Eden as a winged camel), but notes that "[i]n his desire to avoid clichés, however, Cazotte created only more ambiguity" (*ibid.*, 21). (The classic painting of the oppressive presence of the unconscious in the form of a demonic horse's head, penetrating through the curtains of a young girl's dream, *The Nightmare* by Henry Fuseli, was only finished in 1781, and exhibited in the Royal Academy in 1782.) Jones has made interesting analyses of the connection between horse and "night-fiend" (*mare* and the demonic *mara*); he points out the link between riding and sexual intercourse, and notes how the phallic significance can be embodied by the animal's head alone (Jones 1931/1959, 270).

³² *Ibid.*, 23; Andriano's reference here is to Lawrence M. Porter's article "The Seductive Satan of Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux*" (*L'Esprit Créateur* 18:2 [1978]: 3-12).

Biondetto/Biondetta). The demon is adapted into the story as a suitably heterogeneous figure. It can pass from an animal into a boy and into a girl, and because the protagonist (and the reader) retain the memories of the previous incarnations, the demonic character is always invested with traces of otherness.

Andriano writes that “boundaries between subject and object break down in this tale. [Biondetta] is Alvaro’s own desire.”³³ I think it would be more correct to say that the demon in Cazotte’s tale questions the boundaries of subject by showing how Alvaro’s desires are *not* “his” – in the sense that he would be able to fully comprehend and control his desires, fantasies and fears. In his *Desire and the Devil* (1991), Carlo Testa notes how definitions of desire tend to be circular: typically in the manner “any *production of preference* leading to a choice that *appeals to the self*.”³⁴ Desire is produced by a self on basis of a desire that already is a feature of the self. Jacques Lacan made the link between desire and Other necessary by stating that desire is always desire for the Other; as Other is beyond our full grasp and comprehension, so is “our” desire always escaping our own attempts to make it some law, limits or logic.³⁵ Testa sees the demonic as particularly well suited for expressing the alterity of desire.

Desire as fascinating, enslaving, destroying the self – what would best [better?] qualify it to be considered for definition as *demonic*? [...] [O]ne of the recurrent names used to designate the Unnameable, the unspeakable paradox of the devil, is, not by chance, its Other Name: *Drugoy* – The Other. [...] The devil can [...] be seen as a multiple entity capable of self-contradictorily assuming opposite meanings. Its physical Protean attitudes are well-known to the traditional repertoire of literature; these qualities are but an external trace of a moral condition.³⁶

Testa addresses the motif of sexual intercourse with a demon by a reference to Ernest Jones’s theory: tempting incubi (or, succubi, as the female Biondetta) are for Jones the self’s camouflaged way of formulating an “unacceptable desire.”³⁷ Testa claims that the devil figure has the same function in literature: “it expresses the intention to bypass an interdiction.” The heterogeneous and conflicting shapes of demons represent figuratively this sort of inner conflicts; “The devil is, among other things, the displaced trace of an internal battle.”³⁸

Not all prominent demons in horror literature are as desirable as Biondetta. Testa speaks of “the demonic genre,” but he is not discussing Gothic; instead, he is interested in those works that portray demonic contracts. The

³³ Ibid., 25.

³⁴ Testa 1991, 1. Italics in the original.

³⁵ See Lacan, “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious” (1966/1989, 292-325).

³⁶ Testa 1991, 3.

³⁷ See Jones 1931/1959, 42, 97.

³⁸ Testa 1991, 5.

question of hedonism is important in Goethe's *Faust* and other works (by Balzac, Flaubert and Bulgakov) which Testa analyses. However, if one compares the rather articulate tradition of Mephistopheles to the demons in horror, certain features start to become discernible. Devils in Testa's genre are perhaps plotting for the perdition of the protagonist, but there is much more room for discussion than in a typical horror story. The conflict embodied in the confrontation with demonic forces is violent in horror. It is also more often focused closer on the physical, rather than on the intellectual aspect of subjectivity. Even when demonic contracts are dealt with in horror literature, the approach is chosen primarily to evoke suspense, terror, and literally: *horror*. If one studies, for example, Clive Barker's treatment of the demonic contract in his novella "The Hellbound Heart" (and the series of *Hellraiser* movies based on it), one can see the idea of a "contract" giving way to that of a "trap."³⁹ The same development can be perceived in the recent collection of short stories titled *Deals with the Devil*.⁴⁰ To summarise this point, in the horror genre contact with the demonic signals the onset of a painful and frightening ordeal that tests the limits of the protagonist's self and his or her reality.

Andriano's other examples of feminine demonology in horror literature strengthen the connection between inner conflicts and demons. Andriano points out that the protagonist (Ambrosio) in Matthew Gregory Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) "is reported to be so strict an observer of Chastity, that He knows not in what consists the difference of Man and Woman."⁴¹ As in Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux*, Lewis's novel portrays ambivalent desire in the shape of a man/woman (Rosario/Matilda), who later is revealed to be a demon. This character's behaviour is also described in a similarly ambiguous manner: the omniscient narrator describes "Matilda's" thoughts and actions as filled with love in the beginning, until she is suddenly revealed to have been "a subordinate spirit," a Devil's tool.⁴² Andriano notes that Lewis is carefully orchestrating and manipulating ambivalent attitudes in *The Monk*, sometimes ridiculing "Catholic superstition," sometimes shaking "Enlightenment dismissal of the supernatural. He [Lewis] is simply inconsistent."⁴³ However, if one reminds oneself here of Testa's observations about the connection between the demonic and the flux of desire, this "inconsistency" becomes a noteworthy feature of a demonic text. Any consistent commit-

³⁹ Frank has no exact idea what he is doing in opening the Lemarchand's box that invites the demons. (Barker 1986/1988a.) I refer to this work also in the context of the "engineering demons" of chapter nine (see page 219).

⁴⁰ Resnick - Greenberg - Estleman 1994. This collection has its predecessor in *Deals with the Devil*, edited by B. Davenport (New York, 1958.)

⁴¹ Lewis 1796/1983, 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 440. Cf., e.g., Matilda's soliloquy next to wounded Ambrosio, and her final exhortation to Ambrosio to give up his soul (*Ibid.*, 79, 428-40). Andriano (1993, 37) emphasises that Matilda is revealed to be a *male* demon, but the text does not give enough support for this interpretation.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

ment to a system of thought would limit the transgressive powers of narrative; *The Monk* reacts against all borderlines in a truly Gothic manner. “[T]he Gothic experience grows out of prohibition,” writes Kenneth W. Graham in his preface to *Gothic Fictions: Prohibition/Transgression* (1989).⁴⁴ In the same volume, Anne McWhir analyses the double move in the early Gothic to encourage *both* scepticism and credulity towards the supernatural. She writes of Ambrosio’s destruction at the end of *The Monk*, that

It is the final disintegration of human identity by the forces of inner chaos, and Lewis has far less control over these forces than he pretends to have. His power as manipulator, like Ambrosio’s, is limited by the stronger power of his demonic imagery.⁴⁵

The introduction of a demon at the end of the novel seems to provoke conflicting readings among the critics: Andriano claims that “Matilda’s ambiguity is too obviously manipulated by Lewis” (as compared to a true archetype), and McWhir says in the quotation above that Lewis fails as a manipulator of his material.⁴⁶ All the Gothic excesses in *The Monk* – the scenes of rape, necrophilia, torture – culminate in the figure and speech of the raving demon: “Hark, Ambrosio, while I unveil your crimes! You have shed the blood of two innocents; Antonia and Elvira perished by your hand. That Antonia whom you violated, was your Sister! That Elvira whom you murdered, gave you birth!”⁴⁷ The question of authorial control is finally made irrelevant by the text itself; it deals with the devil, and the demonic elements function as interrogators of subjectivity. The individual psychology of Lewis, the author, is only one aspect of the question thematised in this demonic text: where are the limits of subjectivity? All Ambrosio’s crimes point back at himself. It could be argued that the devil enters at the end as a disciplinary mechanism of a self-scrutinising subject – the novel can be read as a fantasy of self-exploration. *The Monk* is a study of desires, and of the subject that can generate such desires. The demonic figures (Matilda and the Devil himself) personify the existence of unacceptable desires in the psyche, an irreducible element of otherness. The Devil claims: “Your lust only needed an opportunity to break forth [...]. It was I who threw Matilda in your way; It was I who gave you entrance to Antonia’s chamber; It was I [...].”⁴⁸ The paradoxical logic of the demonic is opened for analysis: the (unacceptable) desire is part of the subject, but this part has to be renounced by the same subject, into a separate figure. The “I” is revealed to be plural and polyphonic in horror.

⁴⁴ Graham 1989, xiii.

⁴⁵ McWhir, “The Gothic Transgression of Disbelief: Walpole, Radcliffe and Lewis” (in Graham 1989, 29-47; quotation from page 42).

⁴⁶ Andriano 1993, 37.

⁴⁷ Lewis 1796/1983, 439.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 440.

The tendency of male fantasies to perceive the demonic in the feminine did not end with these eighteenth-century novels. Nina Auerbach, in her *Woman and the Demon* (1982), has given attention to such works as H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) and George MacDonald's *Lilith* (1895). She shows how the Victorian imagination was possessed by the tempting and terrible woman, a mythical creature endowed with the disruptive capacity for endless transformations. Auerbach proceeds to make a feminist interpretation that this demonic image was born from the tension between the official weakness of the women, and their actual power.⁴⁹ An alternative ("male") interpretation could focus on these texts as male fantasies; those fears, anxieties and aggressions that are bound with female "demons" can be seen as products of the ambiguous status of desire for the constitution of a male self. The disruptive elements in fiction would not be so much directly derived from real women, than from the desire working at the limits, or outside of conscious control. The association of the female with the demonic can thus be interpreted as the male perception of ambiguous desire, inspired by woman as the Other.

The female demon is only one aspect of the demonic in the horror tradition, but it has proved to be an enduring one. Just to pick one modern example, *Ghost Story* (1979) by Peter Straub builds its varying degrees of suspense and terror around a female character, "Eva Galli" or "Alma Mobley." Don Wanderley, the protagonist, both loves Alma, and realises that he has to destroy her; she is a member of an ancient alien race, capable of metamorphoses and of producing nightmarish visions. The novel is very self-conscious in its play with the horror genre, and presents the female demon as a sort of essence of horror; this "woman" exists only to tempt and frighten the male victims in Milburn to death, to act out a "ghost story." Any contract or traditional trade with soul has been eliminated from this demonic tale: it is all about desire and imagination, an exploration of the need to feel horror in front of an abyss of one's own. "You are at the mercy of your human imaginations," this creature explains, "and when you look for us, you should always look in the places of your imagination."⁵⁰

The case of the female demon points out how horror literature explores the borderline of the unconscious. It would be equally possible to gather a continuum of demonic male figures, which would show the ambiguous otherness in male shape. Mario Praz's chapter "The Metamorphoses of Satan" (in *The Romantic Agony*, 1933) makes a start in this direction; he studies how the total otherness of the medieval devil is blended with increasing amounts of (self-)consciousness. The Fatal Men, characteristic of Ann Radcliffe's Gothic fiction, with their "traces of many passions," "habitual gloom and severity," are, according to Praz, descendants of John Milton's Satan.⁵¹ The aspect of the demon as an opponent, an "other voice," that accents the

⁴⁹ Auerbach 1982, 55, 185-89, *et passim*.

⁵⁰ Straub 1980, 469.

⁵¹ Praz 1933/1988, 61; the quoted phrases are from Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797).

conflict and combat in the individuation process, was a favourite of the romantics. It was finally Lord Byron who adopted the Satanic myth as a part of his personal mythology, and started to “act out” the inner torments both in his writings and in his private life.⁵²

Perhaps the most pertinent description of the central role of the demonic in the fantastic literature (and in the Gothic, as one part of it) can be found in Rosemary Jackson’s work. She pays special attention to the unconscious powers and how they have been articulated and explained in literature. In Gothic, and in fantasy in general, the imagination plays a very important role; as an opponent of the conscious self (that ‘I’ we are aware of) imaginative fiction opens up a dialogue with the ‘not-I’ (something we do not see in ourselves, but can imagine elsewhere). Jackson argues that it is one of the central tendencies of the fantastic to “re-discover a unity of self and other.”⁵³ “Evil” is an important term in connection to the other; it is relative and functions as a demonstration of those features that ought to be excluded from the socially acceptable self. Jackson sees a historical change in the traditional ways to represent evil and the other:

Within a supernatural economy, or a magical thought mode, otherness is designated as otherworldly, supernatural, as being above, or outside, the human. The other tends to be identified as an otherworldly, evil force: Satan, the devil, the demon (just as good is identified through figures of angels, benevolent fairies, wise men). [...]

The modern fantastic is characterized by a radical shift in the naming, or interpretation, of the demonic. [...]

The demonic [in modern literature] is not supernatural, but is an aspect of personal and interpersonal life, a manifestation of unconscious desire. Around such narratives, themes of the ‘I’ and the ‘not-I’ interact strangely, expressing difficulties of knowledge (of the ‘I’) (introducing problems of *vision*) and of guilt, over desire, (relation to the ‘not-I’) articulated in the narrative (introducing problems of *discourse*), the two intertwining with each other, as in *Frankenstein*.⁵⁴

Even if I would like to argue that the move towards the rejection of the supernatural is not so complete as Jackson makes it appear, her main argument is convincing. When supernatural elements are adopted in modern horror, these “evil powers” tend to maintain an uncanny link with the self of the protagonist, or victim. Jackson writes in connection with *Dracula* and its followers, how “otherness is established through fusion of self with something outside, producing a new form, and ‘other’ reality (structured around themes of the ‘not-I’).”⁵⁵ It could be argued that the problematic differentia-

⁵² See *ibid.*, 63-83.

⁵³ Jackson 1981, 52.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 53-55.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 59. – H.P. Lovecraft’s “unspeakable” horrors are a classic example of the undifferentiated quality of the terrifying Other; see, e.g., *The Lurker at the Threshold* (Love-

tion/undifferentiation of self from the other is at the heart of the demonic in horror. In the following analyses I shall proceed to read this (almost) illegible division line, starting with a young mother, and her relationship to her baby.

craft 1945/1988). His “Cthulhu Mythos” with its Old Ones is one of the most important demonologies of classic American horror.