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More Human than Human

**Aspects
of Monstrosity
in the Novels
and Films
in English
of the 1980s
and Early 1990s**

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INTRODUCTION Defining the Monster in the 1980s and 1990s

I.1. Why Study Monsters?

‘More Human than Human’ is the motto of the Tyrell Corporation, the company which manufactures perfect reproductions of human beings—called ‘replicants’—in Ridley Scott’s classic science-fiction film *Blade Runner* (1982). I have chosen Tyrell’s motto as the title for the present dissertation because this film was the starting point of my work. Why, I wondered when seeing the film for the first time more than ten years ago, is the hero Deckard so villainous and the villain Roy so heroic? Why, instead of being horrific like his most direct ancestor—Frankenstein’s monster—is the monstrous Roy handsome and sensitive? Indeed, why must he be exterminated since, far from being an abject, horrific monster, he is a superman? How is this attractive monster comparable to the horrific monsters of other films and novels produced in the 1980s and 1990s? Those questions are the seeds from which this dissertation grew. In addition, I felt also challenged by Tyrell’s motto to consider the question of whether the monster, far from being the representation of the subhuman, was, in fact, an expression of humankind’s struggle to leave behind our innate capacity to do evil, and also, of our aspiration—with its ensuing anxieties—to be one day superhuman, that is to say, more than human and less monstrously evil than we are now. It seemed to me then, and it still seems to me now, that answering those questions is a worthwhile undertaking.

The subtitle of this dissertation is “Aspects of Monstrosity in the Films and Novels in English of the 1980s and 1990s”. The phrase “aspects of monstrosity” indicates that this is not a classificatory study of contemporary monstrosity made on the basis of the monsters that can be found in films and novels, but a study of the cultural circumstances (in the widest sense) that shape the figure of the monster in our days. I have consequently disregarded both an approach limited by the notion of genre in fiction and a division of my dissertation in chapters devoted each to a particular kind of monster, since neither would be adequate to prove my theses. The two main theses I prove in this study of the monster are: first, that monstrosity is a fluid cultural construction in a constant state of change, permeating important areas of contemporary culture in which it occupies not a marginal but a central position. Second, that contemporary monsters cannot be satisfactorily accounted for simply by means of their description and classification within the domain of a particular genre, such as horror or science fiction: it is necessary to consider the monster as a ubiquitous figure present in different cultural manifestations, rather than as a figure shaped by a particular genre. The monster offers an excellent vantage point from which the notion of genre itself can be questioned, and from which the links between our primitive selves and our current cultural manifestations can be also explored.

My approach to monstrosity is inclusive rather than exclusive. This means that this is not a dissertation which deals only with horrific, hostile non-human creatures—the most basic notion of the monster—but with the monster in most of the many senses of the word. The entries for the word ‘monster’ in the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the *Webster Dictionary* actually provide a rather long list of meanings, of all them habitually used without much reflection on how they are linked. According to the 1989

edition of the *OED*, a monster is, firstly, an unnatural prodigy or marvel, which indicates the potential of the monster to fascinate—a point I discuss in Chapter 1. Secondly, the monster is an animal, vegetal or human being born with malformations, that is to say, an abnormality, also called a ‘natural monster’ or a ‘freak of nature’ to differentiate it from the imaginary monsters; thirdly, a monster is an imaginary animal of bizarre features, such as the mythical Sphynx; fourthly, a monster is also a creature of huge dimensions but of no other anatomical abnormal particularity. Lastly, and most importantly, a monster is also a person of inhuman cruelty. The *Webster Dictionary* adds to this list the definition of monster as a creature or person of extraordinary ugliness, which repels but does not necessarily horrify. In addition, it must be noted that ‘monster’ can also mean an artist of outstanding reputation, in the sense of an artistic prodigy, and that the collocation ‘a monster of...’ allows the construction of phrases as curious as “a monster of virtue” (Fiedler, 1973: 75) and “a monster of [the] fear of sexuality” (Carter, 1990: 49). Even the phrase ‘a monster of beauty’ could be eventually coined, if it has not been coined yet.

On the basis of those definitions I have set out to test the validity of a comprehensive definition of the monster: throughout this dissertation I will maintain and prove that a monster is any non-human creature or human being of extraordinary, abnormal physical or psychological qualities. By extraordinary and abnormal I mean whatever exceeds the norm, either in a positive or a negative sense. Thus, according to my comprehensive definition, which avoids the usual problem of whether human and non-human monsters have any common feature at all, the following could be regarded as monsters: a horrific, hostile, non-human creature such as the extraterrestrial monster of Ridley Scott’s *Alien*; a beautiful, non-human, angelic creature such as the jellyfish aliens of James Cameron’s *The Abyss*; a physically attractive but psychologically abnormal, evil man such as Pat Bateman, the hero of Brett Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho*; a grotesque, evil freak such as Arturo, the limbless Seal Boy in Katherine Dunn’s *Geek Love*; an attractive, erotic—by no means evil—freak such as the winged woman Fevvers in Angela Carter’s *Nights at the Circus* and a beautiful, good, prodigious person such as the metamorphic Anyanwu in Olivia Butler’s *Wild Seed*. These and the rest of the monsters I have analysed in this dissertation attest to the variety of contemporary monstrosity, proving that only a generic definition that contemplates the idea of the monster as an extraordinary creature in its amplest sense can account for the apparently heterogeneous reality of monstrosity in the 1980s and 1990s, as represented in the films and novels under discussion.

Plato regarded the study of monstrosity as a “pretty enough” pastime leading nowhere. He considered the interpretations of the centaurs, chimeras, gorgons, pegasus and other “countless and strange monsters” in which some of his contemporaries were engaged simply an “artificial and tedious business” (*Phaedrus*, 229D ff. in Hume, 1984: xvi). In Plato’s view, studying monsters is a pointless enterprise, that should only be undertaken, if at all, once man knows himself: “It seems absurd to me”, Plato argues, “that, as long as I am in ignorance of myself, I should concern myself with extraneous matters” (ibid.: xvi). In contrast, Katherine Hume (ibid.: xvi) notes that “since Freud, we feel that one can know oneself only if one recognises the monsters inhabiting the fastness of the unconscious”, an idea that serves partly to justify why this dissertation has been written. The monsters, especially the monsters of fiction (included those of myth), are not figures that lead an existence separate from humankind. They are creations of humankind’s imagination arising from the depths of the collective and the personal unconscious which can be said to be simultaneously Freudian and Jungian

constructs. Jung himself saw an analogy between man's own psyche and the worldview in which the monsters occupy such an important place:

How else could it have occurred to man to divide the cosmos, on the analogy of day and night, summer and winter, into a bright day-world and a dark night-world peopled with fabulous monsters, unless he had the prototype of such a division in himself, in the polarity between the conscious and the invisible and unknowable unconscious? (Jung, 1959: 101)

The monsters are thus a Freudian index not only of the personality of the individual novelists and filmmakers whose work I am considering, but also a Jungian index of the collective anxieties of the readers and audiences to whom their work is addressed. This is why studying the monster is not a gratuitous investment of time and energies in extraneous matters, as Plato claimed, but a way of approaching the underside of human life along a route still largely unexplored.

However, I would not like to justify why studying monsters is useful on the sole basis of psychology or psychoanalysis. I understand that Plato's injunction to know oneself also implies knowing one's own place within the surrounding historical and cultural context. Thus, if the monster is, as I claim, a reflection of the inner self of humankind—hence the interest in its study—the monster must be also a sign not only of the collective transhistorical unconscious but also of the collective historical unconscious, which is informed by specific historical and cultural factors. Thus, I have devoted most of this dissertation to discussing the monster's positioning at a crossroads between the primitive, mythical (pre-historic in the sense of lacking a sense of history) substratum of culture and the postmodern strong self-awareness of historicity. The monster, my thesis is, is not determined once and for all by the archetypes of the collective unconscious or the Freudian id; on the contrary, it evolves constantly, being especially sensitive to changes brought about by social, historical and cultural forces. From the perspective of postmodernity, we tend to see mainly the master narrative of the history of culture, the Freudian narratives of the individual unconscious and the Jungian narratives of the collective unconscious, but we are frequently oblivious that there are other paths worth exploring. The positioning of the monster at a crossroads between postmodern high culture, contemporary popular culture and primitive myth allows us to find other links with our present, our past and even our future that fall beyond the scope of psychonalysis, demanding a much larger, anthropological, approach.

I.2. Primary Sources

The choice of primary sources, films and novels, has been conditioned by my inclusive approach to monstrosity and by the dates that delimit the period under study, the years between 1979 and 1995. The final selection of films and novels has been determined in principle by their availability and by my wish to cover as many instances of monstrosity as possible. Also—perhaps—by my initial fear that there were too few primary sources on the topic I had chosen, a fear that turned out to be absolutely unfounded, as can be seen by checking the lists of films and novels. The difference between the number of novels and the number of films is easy to justify: films are much more accessible because there is more easily available information about them; in addition, it must be noted that they offer an additional advantage over novels: they can be studied in a much shorter length of time because of their own limited duration.

Comparatively, it is much easier to build a basic knowledge of film than of the novel: in fact, one can become an amateur expert in film history just by sitting regularly in front of the television set, TV guide in hand. Many of the films that have turned out to be fundamental in my research have actually reached me—rather than I have reached them—through television; evidently I have kept my video-tape recorder constantly at work in search of new material. In most cases, ignoring many of the films that came to me in this way would have been, simply, negligent, though this does not mean that I have studied all of them indiscriminately. Novels, though, do not find their way so easily into researchers' living-rooms and have required other strategies of research, involving many visits to libraries and bookshops and also many hours of conversation with friends and colleagues, spent in trying to hunt down any useful reference to novels about monsters.

Since there are no specific references in any guide about whether a certain novel or a film deals with monsters, this means that I have found the relevant primary sources often on a trial by error basis. A good memory and an ability for reading between the lines of plot summaries have been indispensable. The *Variety Movie Guide* of the years 1992 and 1995 edited by Derek Elley, together with the British film magazines *Premiere* and *Empire* and the Spanish *Fotogramas*, have been my constant companions in the last three years. I have avoided using any of the many specific guides for genre film, since the *Variety* guide covers the field of the medium and the high-budget film of any genre very well. It was not my aim to enter the territory of the low-budget film, nor to focus on obscure, little circulated films, in which specific genre guides abound, because it was my intention to study the monster of well-known, popular films. The films have all been traced with the indirect help of the film programmers of British and Spanish TV and the staff of the diverse local video-clubs I have been visiting, and with the more direct recommendations of friends, who have lent me, on occasions, material from their own video collections. The fact that it has been relatively easy to locate the films has reinforced my impression that the monster is not at the margins of culture but at its very centre.

The novels have been traced with greater difficulty. Friends and colleagues helped me to find a considerable number of mainstream novels. I was forced to read many blurbs and many books before choosing others myself, for the simple reason that there are no good guides to contemporary literary fiction with specific information about the plots of mainstream novels. In contrast, I could consult a few very useful guides to contemporary genre fiction (fantasy, horror and science fiction) including Cawthorn and Moorcock's *Fantasy: The 100 Best Books* (1988), Jones and Newman's *Horror 100 Best Books* (1988), Pringle's *Modern Fantasy: The 100 Best Books* (1988) and Sullivan's *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural* (1986). These were very appropriate introductions to whole exciting worlds of which I knew virtually nothing. Obviously, the choice of a number of novels has been decided by the choice of the corresponding screen adaptation. Some novels published before 1979 have been included, such as Brian Aldiss' *Frankenstein Unbound* (1973), Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), because it is my opinion that their recent respective screen adaptations make them part of the 1980s and 1990s. In any case, despite the considerable number of screen adaptations I have considered, this is not a dissertation about the monster in screen adaptations. In fact, I have analysed some novels without analysing their screen versions, whereas not all the original novels on which the films are based have been analysed.

Although it is customary for films and novels to be analysed independently, since they are clearly different narrative media, in this dissertation no distinction has been made between films and novels, to which I often refer collectively as ‘texts’. This is due to several reasons. One is that the high number of screen adaptations is transforming novels into part of composite, multimedia texts. For many who enjoy the screen version before reading the novel, the original novel may even occupy a secondary place in their view of the multimedia text formed by both. Another reason is the fact that I am not interested in analysing the diverse narrative techniques of films and novels, but in comparing their subjects, plots and the main motifs regarding the monster that are most often employed. These can be perfectly compared across the gulf separating the literary from the aural-visual, as my dissertation proves. The images of monstrosity that linger in the mind of the viewer and the reader after having seen a film or having read a novel are of special interest for me. In this sense, I am following Keith Cohen’s conclusions about the similar effects that films and novels have in the memory of those who enjoy them:

Though the filmic image is *there* before the eyes, it soon disappears and eventually, blended with personal associations and connotations, occupies the same domain as the literary image: the memory. Thus, the syntagmatic process of perception may be more immediate in the cinema, but the paradigmatic process of mental linkage and recollection is the same for both cinema and the novel. (Cohen, 1979: 90, original emphasis)

As far as this dissertation is concerned, films and novels are treated as cultural artefacts capable of generating significant images of monstrosity that form part of the collective cultural memory of the last fifteen years.

The language of all the films and novels is English, and their nationality either British or American, though I have not followed a strict, exclusive criteria as far as nationality is concerned. Thus, the list of primary sources includes novels by Irish authors such as Christy Brown, John Banville or Patrick McCabe, together with novels by a South African writer (J.M. Coetzee), a Canadian (William Gibson), an Australian (Thomas Keneally) and even a Vietnamese (Le Ly Hayslip). Arguably, the nationality of a novel is conditioned basically by the nationality of its author and the language s/he uses—though, obviously, the influence of writers of other nationalities, the place where the author lives and other circumstances may also shape the content of his or her work. For instance, how should Thomas Keneally’s *Schindler’s List* be classified, taking into account that Keneally is an Australian who lives in California and that he wrote this novel at the instigation of a Polish immigrant to the USA who had a story to tell but did not know how? How can we determine the national culture to which this novel belongs, if at all? The nationality of a film is, however, even more problematic. A film such as *Death and the Maiden*, directed by a Pole who lives in France (Roman Polanski), written by a Chilean (Ariel Dorfman) who based the screenplay on his own play, originally in Spanish, financed by Channel Four and a French producer, and played by British and American actors speaking English cannot be really classified as a product of any one nationality. In fact it is even difficult to say whether this film is either European or American.

Whether a film is American or British is technically established by the nationality of the studio that finances it, so that a film directed by a Briton working in Hollywood is regarded as an American film, despite the British cultural connotations the

director may have infused into his or her work. This is why on occasions I have used the label English-language (which I have preferred to Anglo-American) to define the cultural products I am dealing with, even though I am aware that this label is not wholly satisfactory. In any case, only exceptionally have I considered films of other nationalities than British and American, such as Luc Besson's *Léon*, nominally a French film despite the fact that its original language is English. Although the temptation has been very strong, I have finally decided not to refer to the monster of Japanese 'anime' (animated fantasy films based on comics) or 'manga' (comics), on the grounds that their original language is not English, even though, arguably, Japanese monsters are now as popular in the Western world as their English-language counterparts. I have also ignored comics in general and video-games, even those based on films or novels that I analyse, for this is a vast territory I am not yet prepared to tackle; I look forward, though, to correcting this situation, for this is research that would complement best my own. The same can be said about the use of the monster in advertising and in children's fiction.

I.3. Dating the Monster: 1979–1995

I.3.1. The Historical and Cultural Context: The USA and the UK

As for the period under discussion, the initial date, 1979, corresponds to the release of Ridley Scott's *Alien*, a film introducing an elegant, nightmarish outer-space horrific monster which was acclaimed by audiences and critics and which is now about to reappear in the fourth film of the series, currently in production. *Alien* bridged the gap between the popular monster film of the 1950s—with films such as Jack Arnold's *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), a direct precursor of Scott's film—and the more stylish, neo-Gothic, postmodernist fantasy film of the 1980s and 1990s. The period under discussion concluded in 1995 with the release of Stephen Frears' screen adaptation of Valerie Martin's *Mary Reilly*, a retelling of R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* from the point of view of a new character: Mary, Jekyll's maid. Frears' film has closed the cycle of revisions of the three main nineteenth British Gothic texts about monstrosity started by Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and followed by Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, but must also be inscribed within the cycle started by Scott himself, involving original films and adaptations of novels about monstrosity made by prestige film directors working with large budgets. Although the dates 1979 and 1995 refer to the release of two films, they should be understood as the dates that determine the whole cultural panorama of monstrosity rather than just those that determine the most recent cycle of the representation of the monster in film¹.

Historically, the period 1979 to 1995 is marked by the conservative revolution of the Reagan government in the USA and the Thatcher government in the UK and its aftermath. Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, Ronald Reagan one year later; they formed a unique Anglo-American alliance based on their personal affinities, their defence of economic liberalism, their disregard of Europe and a deep nostalgia for an ideal time—basically the 1950s—when the world leadership of the USA and the UK was not disputed so fiercely as it was in the 1980s. The monster was never far from the

1. More detailed information about this cycle can be found in Chapter 2, which discusses it in depth.

imagination of these leaders and of those who commented on their personalities: Reagan's unfortunate definition of the now extinct USSR as an 'empire of evil' found an enormous resonance in the media, while jocular references to Thatcher as 'she-who-must-be-obeyed', in reference to H. Rider Haggard's Victorian monstrous heroine Ayesha in *She* (1887), were not rare (Karlin, 1991: xiv). James Donald notes that a number of writers, among whom he mentions Sarah Benton, Laura Mulvey and Jacqueline Rose in the UK and Michael Rogin in the USA, turned to "images of the monstrous in trying to explain the dynamics and appeal of Thatcherism and Reaganism" (1989: 235). The influence of Reaganism in the construction of the spectacular masculine body of the monstrous hero of recent Hollywood films has been researched by Susan Jeffords (1994), while Leslie Friedman and others have analysed in *British Film and Thatcherism* how "in a truly paradoxical manner, the intense and unwavering hatred of Margaret Thatcher provided the spark necessary to force Britain's best visual artists to new creative heights and, in so doing, to ignite a moribund industry" (Friedman, 1993: xix), which, needless to say, has also produced its share of monsters.

Because of the cost of World War II for the UK and because of the progressive loss of its colonial power, the UK was relegated to a secondary position behind the USA from the 1950s onwards. Thatcher tried to recover part of the lost leadership by turning her back on Europe and looking up to America, expecting that the Americanization of the UK and her own alliance with Reagan could actually return the UK to its former imperial splendour. Leonard Quart, an American scholar, argues that Thatcher's reorientation of her country benefited it greatly:

British society became Americanized: much more efficient, hedonistic, cash-obsessed, and competitive. It was now dominated by a driven New Class, one utterly removed from the more moribund, communally oriented working class and the complacently paternalistic upper-class cultures that traditionally dominated British life. (1993: 21)

The benefits of Britain's Americanization were not, however, as conspicuous for all. "Heartland", a song written in 1987 by Matt Johnson, leader of the pop band *The The*, for their influential record *Infected*, described Britain in an unmistakably critical tone as the 51st state of the USA. Certainly, looking up to Reagan's America entailed a loss of national cultural identity discernible in many spheres of culture, among them the horror film. In his accomplished study of the British horror film, *Hammer and After*, Peter Hutchings argues that while both *The Company of Wolves* and *Hellraiser*, the two most popular British films about monstrosity of the 1980s,

are in many ways impressive, it is significant, however, that neither attempts to engage in any meaningful sense with a specifically British reality. Unlike, say, Hammer horror, which did very much locate itself in relation to nationally specific issues and anxieties, these recent British horrors look elsewhere for their effects and meanings. (1993: 186)

Though 'elsewhere' in these two films is the space of myth and of Gothic, in fact, a great number of British filmmakers and writers have looked elsewhere—that is to say, to America—for ways of finding audiences beyond the narrow market of the British cultural industry. Neil Jordan, John Badham, Ridley Scott, Tony Scott, Stephen Frears, Alan Parker, have lent their talents to the much more powerful US film industry, though

many of them have later returned to Britain in search of more respect for their personal artistic views than Hollywood is prepared to grant them. At any rate, many genre and mainstream British writers of fiction, such as Martin Amis, openly acknowledge the influence of American culture, despite Britain's generalised anti-Americanism. Clive Barker himself, the British novelist and filmmaker who directed *Hellraiser*, now lives in Los Angeles and can be said to be in the process of becoming an American author. Does this mean that British fiction (both films and novels) is nothing but a territory colonised by American culture and that the new process of cultural colonisation has reversed the original cultural dependence of the American colonies on Britain? To a certain extent, and especially as far as film is concerned, it is true that sharing the language has turned out to be a hazard rather than a benefit for the survival of British culture in a world dominated by American culture. Yet in the field of the novel it can be said that the differences are more marked and that there is a brand of typically introspective Gothic British fiction, exemplified by mainstream writers such as Ian McEwan, which is certainly less influenced by the culture coming from across the Atlantic. Nevertheless, it is more and more difficult to ascertain *a priori* whether a novel comes from a British or an American pen, especially in the field of genre fiction. British horror novelist Ramsay Campbell stated² that there are specific differences between American and British fantasy novelists beyond the point of where the stories are located, but when pressed to name those differences, he acknowledged that it is increasingly difficult to notice them because British authors tend to imitate their colleagues from across the Atlantic.

1.3.2. Money, Morality, Belief and the Monster

Alan MacFarlane argues that the root of evil as it is understood now is money. According to him, “‘money’, which is a short-hand way of saying capitalist relations, market values, trade and exchange, ushers in a world of moral confusion” (MacFarlane, 1985: 71), in which the distinctions between good and evil are blurred. In my view, money, that is to say, the capitalist system of power, is conditioning a pessimistic, dystopian, technophobic view of the world which serves as background for the contemporary monster; at the same time, it can be said that the contemporary monster is also a product of capitalism's constant search for profitable novelty. The liberal capitalism espoused by Reagan's America and Thatcher's Britain is, precisely, the main cause of the anxieties nourishing the figure of the monster today. The individuals feel threatened by a system that seems to have reached a state of endless self-perpetuation—an impression possibly accentuated by the quick conversion of the former communist block into consumerism—and in which the privileges of today may be suddenly obliterated by an unexpected change in the market. Even though capitalism is preaching the imminent arrival of utopia, especially because of the constant advances in science and technology, there is a distinct impression that capitalism is leading us to a dystopian world in which technoscience and democratic politics are not to be trusted. Culture, which had seemed until a few decades ago, the repository of the most important values of civilization, is seen now as nothing but an extension of capitalism. Fewer and fewer believe now that culture can really repress the barbarian in us, far less terminate him or her for good.

2. In conversation with the author in June 1995 during the Second International Conference of the Gothic Association held at Stirling University.

How has the English-language world come to this situation and why is the presence of the monster so conspicuous now? In my view, the period 1979-1995 has its roots in 1945, a year that marked the beginning of the Cold War, a war that is not really over, despite the conversion of the ex-communist countries to capitalist democracy, since the threat of nuclear wipe-out has not been really averted. 1945 exposed to the light a fact that has not been fully accepted by English-language—specifically by American—culture yet: the discovery of the Nazi extermination camps and the dropping of the American nuclear bombs on Japan proved that the monstrous capacity to do evil on a scale never contemplated before is shared by democratic and undemocratic systems of power. Stalin's bloody rule of the USSR and Mao's no less repressive dictatorship in communist China may have convinced many Western supporters of democracy and capitalism that the evil monster was a nightmare raised by the sleep of democracy, rather than by the sleep of reason as the legend in one of Goya's most famous engravings reads. However, from the 1960s onwards, that is to say, from the years when postmodernist culture was consolidated up till the present, there is an awareness, as Fredric Jameson notes, "that this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror" (1991: 5).

America also leads the world in the construction of the monster, which means that America's own growing unease in the face of the reality of Vietnam, Watergate, Irangate, the Gulf War and other events must necessarily be reflected in the atmosphere that the contemporary monster breathes. This is, no doubt, the case. Most narratives about monstrosity reflect the ambivalence that the average citizen feels for power in general and more concretely for power in capitalism and democracy. Justified paranoia, the persecution of the innocent for economic or political reasons, the creeping intrusion of barbarism into everyday life, the impossibility of explaining neuroses and psychoses, the nostalgia for a morally stable world, the resistance to play the role of hero/ine as heroism leads nowhere, the incapacity to believe in good and the overwhelming presence of evil, the catharsis that only leads to deeper despair, the fear of losing one's own privileges are the aspects most often repeated in the films and novels I consider in the current dissertation.

The period 1979 to 1995 also corresponds to a new religious and moral cycle still in the making. The number of citizens of the English-language and the Western world who regard themselves as atheist or agnostic liberals has been growing steadily, but so has the number of fanatical believers. Fundamentalism and sectarianism—Christian or not—are the two main threats to the utopian wish to see tolerance reign one day. The re-emergence of strong religious belief, not only in Khomeini's Iran but also in Pat Buchanan's USA, the land of the TV preachers, is part of this nostalgic desire for an idealised pre-1960s world in which liberalism and moral relativism did not play such a conspicuous role. Yet, liberals and fundamentalists alike face the threat of the rise of violence in the English-language and the whole Western world, which is caused mainly by the effects of liberal capitalism: this increases the differences between the rich and the poor, undermining the utopian dream of the socialist welfare state in Europe and the utopian dream of a classless America, but also simply, human solidarity. Nobody can really explain why the contemporary world seems simultaneously the best and the worst of all possible worlds; nobody can envisage an alternative to the strict moral systems of the past or absolute moral relativism. In this atmosphere it is not strange that the monster reigns in contemporary culture. The monster represents evil and the

intolerable—but also the little scope left for subversion and rebellion under capitalism, and, what is more important, the wish to escape towards mythical territories which are not conditioned by the dire realities of the immediate present.

It is also important to note that while for the Western world and especially for the English-language world, the monster is a sign of moral instability and decadence, it needn't be always so. In Japan, where, as I have noted, the monster is an even more popular figure than in the West, the monster is regarded as a safety valve for the anxieties felt by the average citizen under the rule of capitalist democracy. Frederik Schodt observes that, unlike what is the case in the USA,

Japan's constitution forbids war; guns are strictly controlled; and the national crime rate, including that of sex crimes, is extremely low. Moreover, during the years that sales of comics in Japan soared, the crime rate was actually dropping. When a young boy in Tokyo reads a lurid action comic, it is far more difficult for him to associate it with his surrounding environment than it would be for a child in New York or Detroit. (Schodt, 1986: 132)

Why should this be so? It is my belief that the Japanese have achieved a greater social and moral cohesion than the USA precisely because they have drawn tighter lines demarcating the sphere of the fictional and the sphere of the real and because they have limited the interaction of the individual with both. Japan is, notoriously, a conservative, hierarchical patriarchy which leaves much less scope for individualism than the more democratic societies of the West. Presumably, the powerlessness of the average Japanese citizen is compensated with the constant daydreaming of 'manga' about powerful, metamorphic monsters engaged in endless battles for world domination, or for the sake of avoiding the impending, fatal destruction of Japan in the hands of a sinister arch-villain, who usually represents the excesses of militaristic technoscience. In contrast, the average Western citizen is brought up in a culture that, far from being really democratic and solidary, actually prizes instant gratification and the individualistic quest for power (euphemistically called 'success'), beyond moral values. The risk that this culture assumes is that the power craved by the individual might be of a negative nature, that is to say, that the individual might crave not the simple power to succeed but the power to do evil. The many texts in which the evil monster is destroyed serve the purpose of teaching that the quest for individual power must be moderated—that the American dream must not lead to nightmare—but for those who feel absolutely disempowered because of their sex, race, class, physical appearance or age, and for those who seek a shortcut towards power, tired of waiting for a chance that never comes, exerting monstrous, evil power is a temptation not always avoided, hence the rise of violence in recent years.

Even though in this dissertation I am analysing fiction, in fact, the monster also occupies a very important space in the version of reality given by the media. Arguably, the news is another form of postmodernist narrative in which fiction and fact mingle, hence the difficulties of average Western citizens to distinguish between the moral ambiguities of fiction and those of the media, that is to say, to tell apart the real and the fictional monster. Noël Carroll separates both by discriminating between natural horror, the horror elicited by real life events or situations, and art-horror, "a cross-art, cross-media genre whose existence is already recognized in ordinary language" (Carroll, 1990: 12). Attractive as Carroll's terminology is, it cannot be totally accurate. The problem is that it is unclear whether we apply the 'art horror' or the 'natural horror' format when

watching or reading news about the monsters of reality. The category of the real and the fictional inevitably merge, what is more, the media plays with both as if they were part of the same cultural continuum. Thus, in an article published in *The Sunday Times* dealing with the trial of Piero Pacciani, an Italian peasant accused of having murdered a number of young couples, the journalist writes that this man is “accused of being ‘Il mostro’, the legendary monster of Florence, a serial killer who murdered and mutilated young men and women with as much savagery as the cannibalistic demon of *The Silence of the Lambs*” (Kennedy, 1994). Apart from basing the whole article on the alleged similarities between Paciani’s and Hannibal Lecter’s gruesome acts, the journalist reports the attendance of Thomas Harris, the American novelist who wrote *The Silence of the Lambs*, to Paciani’s trial. Harris, rumoured to be writing a book on Paciani, was in fact then at work on the sequel to his own novel; presumably, and paradoxically, Hannibal Lecter’s third public appearance may be thus tinged with Harris’ observations on Paciani. Curiously enough, in 1994, when Paciani’s trial started (he was finally acquitted almost two years later for lack of evidence) many Italians flocked to the cinemas to enjoy the film hit of the year: Roberto Benigni’s comedy *Il Mostro*, a satire centred on the tribulations of an innocent citizen mistaken for a serial killer.

Why this attraction for the monster of fiction and this fictionalization of the monster of reality? In a culture dominated primarily by the loss of faith in religion, democratic politics and high art as solutions for the problems of the contemporary world, a primitive attraction for the monster of fiction is one of the few elements that allow the citizens of the Western democracies to exercise their need to believe. The monster of reality is, in comparison, strangely elusive: the evil human being is usually acquitted, like Paciani, for lack of evidence; the freak is hidden out of sight. The monster of fiction is, comparatively, more real and seems to be in touch with a transcendent, supernatural reality far above the banality of everyday evil, and also far from the outmoded morality preached by the main religions.

As J.R.R. Tolkien writes, “the monsters do not depart, whether the gods go or come” (1983a: 22). This does mean, however, that the gods go or come without regret or nostalgia. The sceptical, ironic attitude towards religious belief held by many in the 1980s and 1990s hardly masks a need to believe in something, to seek transcendence. The cultural omnipresence of the monster signifies a nostalgia for belief, if only for belief in the existence of monsters, and reflects a problematic flaw in the apparent cultural sophistication of postmodernity. The monster lies at the crossroads between our primitive collective cultural inheritance and our own sense of advanced modernity, of postmodernity. Anthropology has revealed much about the mechanisms that rule belief, myth and religion in primitive societies but we are still at a loss to explain how the primitive substratum survives in modern Western societies as it indeed does. Since the exposure to belief in the monster in postmodern narratives, ranging from films, novels, television series, cartoons, video-games to news in the media is brief—bounded by how long our enjoyment of a given cultural product lasts—the monster of postmodernist fiction has the advantage of allowing the postmodernist consumer of culture to dissociate him or herself from the more primitive unconscious needs fulfilled by belief: the enjoyment of the dreadful pleasures of monstrosity is not precluded by more essential issues, as it occupies a secondary position in people’s lives, mainly as entertainment. There is no doubt a great difference between the overwhelming influence of the belief in the monsters of hell in the everyday lives of Middle Age peasants, for instance, and the less prominent position occupied by belief in the monsters of outer space in the life of the citizens of Western societies in the late twentieth century.

Fictional monstrosity alleviates the boredom of absolute, banal disbelief: its presence does not require from late twentieth-century consumers of culture the willing suspension of disbelief but the wish to indulge in belief. And this is something that capitalism has learned to exploit most aptly.

I.4. Gothic Postmodernist Fiction

“Fantasy”, Katherine Hume writes (op. cit.: 21), “is any departure from consensus reality, an impulse native to literature and manifested in innumerable variations, from monster to metaphor”. It can be thus argued that all the primary sources analysed in this dissertation are works of fantasy understood in its amplest sense, that is to say, not as a genre but as a fictional mode opposed to realism—and also that all the monsters are in a sense metaphors. Some of the texts that I have selected (mainly those dealing with the evil, human monster) are realistic, though they can be said to be part of two main sub-genres which could be labelled (loosely and rather irreverently), respectively, the ‘psycho confessional’ (novels dealing with crime from the perspective of the psychotic criminal) and ‘cops and psychos’ (novels and films narrating a plot of police persecution of a psychotic criminal). Other texts can be classified as magic realism—the novels by Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson and Salman Rushdie would fall under this heading—whereas many others can be classified under the heading of different genres, mainly science fiction, horror or fantasy (in the narrow sense of genre). I have not dealt with detective fiction or crime fiction because they deal too narrowly with the monster (the evil criminal), focusing mainly on the person who hunts him or her. However, I have not respected the barriers between the different genres, nor those between the so-called mainstream (or literary realism) and so-called genre fiction (either non-literary realism or fantasy). In some chapters, though, the perspective is rather that of genre: Chapter 6, for instance, deals with science-fiction texts. Not even in this case, however, are particular genre labels a more important than the particular subjects of the texts in question.

The current definition of genre is more consistent with the marketing strategies of the publishing houses and the film distributors than with the actual content of the works in question, which seldom respect the formulas said (wrongly) to define genre fiction. Thus, it has been my priority to show that the analysis of a certain cultural construct, such as monstrosity, which is present in (so-called) genre fiction and in (so-called) mainstream fiction, sheds more light about the cultural reality of a certain period than a narrow analysis based on the rather inconsistent notion of genre or on the differences between genre and the mainstream. The notion of genre is, in fact, extremely vague and is not really useful to accurately describe the works I am dealing with, nor, arguably, any novel or film. Each of them could be said, in fact, a genre in itself. Take, for instance, the cases of Michael Crichton’s *Jurassic Park*, Tim Powers’ *The Stress of her Regard*, Tim Burton’s *Edward Scissorhands* and Alan Parker’s *Angel Heart*. Since *Jurassic Park* deals with an imaginary situation—the recreation of dinosaurs out of DNA found in fossils—it is, arguably a science-fiction film. However, the expected futuristic settings are missing and the location is a tropical island rather than outer space; in fact, Crichton claims that his novel is not science-fiction at all, but rather a (political) denunciation of the possible negative effects of scientific research being carried out right now. Powers’ novel *The Stress of her Regard* is a fine Gothic thriller set in the early nineteenth century; it includes among its cast of characters the Romantic poets Shelley, Byron and Keats so that it could be regarded as a postmodernist mainstream novel in the

same vein as Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, which is halfway between realism and fantasy. However, Powers' novel is also a vampire novel—though it has little or nothing in common with others of the same 'sub-genre' such as *Interview with the Vampire* and Suzy McKee Charnas' *The Vampire Tapestry*, except for the presence of the vampire. Tim Burton's film is so idiosyncratic that no label seem appropriate at all to define it, except 'Burtonesque'. *Edward Scissorhands* is fantasy in the same imprecise way in which fairy tales are fantasy, but, despite its recalling a fairy tale, this film is too critical of the real America behind the scenes to be regarded as fantasy in the same sense as, for instance, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. *Angel Heart* presents similar problems as far its genre is regarded: it is a classic detective film, made in imitation of 1940s 'film noir', but it is also a horror film belonging to the sub-genre of the possession film popularised in the 1970s. As can be seen, rather than speak about genres it is preferable to speak of postmodernist fiction, in the sense of contemporary films and novels that disregard purposely all genre labels. The obvious difficulty in writing from this point of view is that striking the adequate tone has been a constant difficulty: it has been my constant worry that readers specialised in any of the 'genres' I deal with might find my choice of primary sources limited, whereas those familiar mainly with literary fiction might find their reading hampered by my many references to horror, science-fiction and fantasy texts they may be not familiar with. I have done my best to assume that I am writing for both types of readers, but I am aware of the difficulties my choice entails.

The label I prefer to classify the texts I am dealing with is Gothic postmodernist fiction. This is not meant to be an exclusive category only suitable for texts that fulfil a number of specifications, nor is it meant to describe a genre indigenous to the 1980s and 1990s. Practically without any exception, all the primary sources considered in this dissertation are at the crossroads between the legacy left by Gothic fiction and the emergence of postmodernism. George Haggerty (1989: 20) notes that "the great challenge to the Gothic writer was the paradox between the subjective world of dreamlike experience and the public objective world of the novel". If we replace the word novel by novel and film, Haggerty's statement fits perfectly the position of the authors of all the texts I have selected. They are not realistic portraits of the 1980s and 1990s to which both author and audience can objectively refer but *subjective representations of that reality*, born and bred in the cultural space between individual, subjective consciousness and the collective unconscious. They articulate, thus, the private and the public, the daydream and the myth and can be said to be, consequently, Gothic.

Norman Denzin (1991: vii) defines postmodernism as the sum total of the following terms:

a nostalgic, conservative longing for the past, coupled with an erasure of the boundaries between the past and the present; an intense preoccupation with the real and its representations; a pornography of the visible; the commodification of sexuality and desire; intense emotional experiences shaped by anxiety, alienation, resentment, and a detachment from others. (Denzin, 1991: vii)

It could be argued that the re-emergence of Gothic is part of the nostalgia for the past typical of postmodernism. Furthermore, that the postmodernist nostalgia for the past was originally invented by the Gothic return to the barbaric Middle Ages. The other characteristics that Denzin lists could be, arguably, also attributed to Gothic, together with the most conspicuous common link between Gothic and postmodernism: the

mixture of motifs derived from high culture and popular culture. “Post-Modernism”, Jim Collins remarks (1989: 13) “is most productively understood not just as a transitional reaction against Modernism, but as the culmination of the ongoing proliferation of popular narrative that began nearly two centuries ago”, that is to say, when Gothic fiction first emerged. I would add to this brief list of the similarities between Gothic and postmodernist fiction the degree of self-consciousness, and in many cases the open self-parody, assumed by writers and filmmakers. The very first Gothic text, Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), can be alternatively read as a straightforward horror story or as a tongue-in-cheek parody of eighteenth century medievalism; likewise, many of the contemporary Gothic postmodernist texts contain self-parodic elements and a playful sense of humour seldom appreciated.

Gothic postmodernist texts challenge the formal, elitist approach of criticism to contemporary culture. Writing about 1980s films, Steve Connor (1989: 178) notes that “postmodernist films may evoke the complexities of high theory but this is at odds with the apparent accessibility and box-office success of such impeccably postmodernist films as *Blade Runner*”. The popular, in the sense of that which attracts a large audience, and the ‘serious’, that which is worthy of consideration according to scholars, are “categories are both overlapping and historically variable” (Ashley, 1989: 2). Gothic postmodernist texts force, thus, scholars to redefine the boundaries between the low and the high, the popular and the elite, and the criteria that define these boundaries. They should also invite scholars and critics to discussing why, despite the fact that the concepts of Gothic and postmodernism are frequently mentioned in reviews published in periodicals addressed to the general public, there is not yet a formal study of their links yet, nor an awareness at the level of the general public of the evident links between eighteenth-century Gothic and twentieth-century postmodern Gothic.

1.5. Popular Culture: A Definition

Since a very high percentage of the primary sources of this dissertation could be regarded not only as Gothic postmodernist but also as popular culture, I would like to reflect on what is meant by the word ‘popular’. Fredric Jameson asserts that

the ‘popular’ as such no longer exists, except under very specific and marginalized conditions (internal and external pockets of so-called underdevelopment within the capitalist world system); the commodity production of contemporary or industrial mass culture has nothing whatsoever to do, and nothing in common, with forms of popular or folk art. (1990: 15)

Rosemary Jackson further argues that the main mode of popular culture, fantasy, “is severed from its roots in carnivalesque art: it is no longer a communal form” (Jackson, 1981: 16). What is more, she denies that fantasy or Gothic may be countercultural or transgressive at all, as popular culture is often implied to be. For her, fantasies are frequently used “to re-confirm institutional order by supplying a vicarious fulfilment of desire and neutralizing an urge towards transgression” (ibid.: 72). In contrast, Jonathan Coe (1994: 8) has recently contended that what “passes for “high” culture...—the literary novel, the serious play, the art movie—has grown terminally inert and listless; popular culture is where it’s all... There is no reason to see this as a cause either for lament or celebration: it is simply a fact that we have to recognise”. The question of what the popular is, is, thus, given totally opposite answers: while Jameson denies the existence

of the popular, Coe announces the death of high culture and the triumph of the extra-canonical, that is, of the popular.

Both are right. Speaking about popular culture and high culture means speaking about different, even complementary, systems of marketing culture and not only about the social origins and the educational level of those who create or consume culture. Even though Jameson's and Jackson's claims that the popular does not exist within capitalism could be refuted with evidence about the creation of different street fashions, pop music currents, graffiti art and so on, it is easy to see that, even when culture is seen to be truly popular, capitalism plays an important role in its decontextualisation from its original social milieu. On the other hand, it must be taken into account that what is called popular in fiction—which is mainly what is not canonical—is frequently created by people of the same social and educational background as those who create so-called high culture: the artists who write fantasy, horror, science fiction, romances, detective novels and other modes of so-called genre fiction are mostly middle-class and have university degrees; this is also the case for most filmmakers who produce so-called commercial films. However, middle-class or working-class, with or without university degrees, today's consumers of culture are notoriously omnivorous and so cannot be easily divided along class or education lines.

Coe's claim that "popular culture is where it's all" does not mean that a cultural revolution has been won by the common people but that the common people have lost their belief in the authority of the critics to determine what is best. Subjectivism and critical relativism are the main tenets of most consumers of culture today. It is often argued that high culture enjoys a very healthy life today as the success of the exhibition of work by artists such as Van Gogh or the sales of opera CDs prove, but this is not an indisputable truth. As everybody knows, mass success is not a proof of quality, though this does not mean that success necessarily connotes a lack of quality. What really marks the boundaries between the popular and the elite is not only the intrinsic intention of the artist to attract or repel a large mass of public, but the publicity that each cultural product receives. Elite cultural products may become popular if they are shown on television; the popular may remain elite—a matter of reduced fandom—if it is not visible on the media. This is why, on the whole, more people see films than read novels: films are conspicuous by virtue of the high amounts of money invested in advertising them, while novels receive virtually no advertising. Indeed, it could be claimed that a screen adaptation is the best advertising a novel can receive.

To return to the main issue under discussion, monstrosity, it must be noted that the monster does not always belong to the realm of so-called popular culture, or genre fiction. Stephen King is the most popular novelist dealing with the monster but he is also the one who receives most publicity. The work of Angela Carter and Salman Rushdie is regarded as part of mainstream culture, but it is also popular by virtue of its remarkable sales figures, which maybe are justified because their work is closer to fantasy than to realistic literary fiction. So-called popular writers like Tim Powers or Dan Simmons, who write non-realistic fiction, are in fact less popular—less well known—than Carter or Rushdie, though for Powers' and Simmons' loyal fans Carter or Rushdie may be perfectly unknown. In film, the question is still more problematic, for the artistic film seems to be about to disappear altogether. Film *is* popular culture because of its system of distribution, aiming at large audiences as the only means to recoup the huge amounts of money invested by the studios. It could be also argued that the distinctions between the popular and the elite are maintained above all by the business interests that

condition contemporary culture, interests which also condition scholars themselves, directly or indirectly.

I would agree with Harriet Hawkins' observation that

It is not the artistic tradition but the academic tradition that has erected barriers between 'high art' and popular genres even as it has erected barricades between art and life. The artistic tradition (popular as well as exalted) tends to break all such barriers down, even as in the last analysis it is the artists (popular as well as exalted) who create the extra-generic, extra-curricular, extra-temporal and international canons of art. (Hawkins, 1990: 113)

Yet, as Northrop Frye notes, "we should be careful not to idealize [the popular] as a virtuous resistance to elitism" (1976: 27). In fact, the ambiguous elitist position of the university regarding the popular or genre fiction (which is certainly being slowly modified) is not informed by clear critical or artistic tenets designed to defend high art from the onslaughts of the popular, but by a generalised confusion about the role of culture in business, or rather the role of business in culture. That is to say, the real differences between the popular/genre and the elite/mainstream are jointly marked by the university and by those who market culture. The former tends to neglect to a great extent how 'culture as show business' works, in its pursuit of a sound definition of aesthetics and in its exploration of the ideological interface between the book and the world; the latter, tend to ignore what scholars say, except when it comes to marketing the cultural products that the university endorses or produces itself (Martín: 1995). Umberto Eco argues that the contemporary tendency to discriminate between high culture and culture as show business—which is what the popular really means now—is in fact an anachronism which ignores "decades and decades of cultural anthropology" (1987: 152). Eco notes that we still speak of culture mainly with reference to high culture, that is to say, to the artistic manifestations said to be 'serious':

In other words, the premise is that show business is amusement, faintly culpable, whereas a lecture, a Beethoven symphony, a philosophical discussion are boring experiences (and therefore "serious"). The son who gets a bad grade at school is strictly forbidden by his parent to go to a rock concert, but may attend a cultural event (which, on the contrary, will supposedly be good for him). (ibid.: 152)

The idea that the popular and high art are demarcated by sound critical principles rather than by the vague concept of 'seriousness' is also analysed by Lawrence Levine in his study *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. According to Levine the general public was excluded from cultural spaces that have been common in democratic America until the end of the nineteenth century, including opera and Shakespeare's plays, by the social and economic elites seeking a confirmation of their privileged status. When the trend to exclude low-paying customers from cultural acts was contested with violent riots (the earliest was the Astor Place riot of 1849 in New York) the response of the social elites, Levine writes

was a tripartite one: to retreat into their own private spaces whenever possible; to transform public spaces by rules, systems of taste, and canons of behavior of their own choosing; and, finally, to convert the strangers so that their modes of behavior and cultural predilections emulated those of the elites—an urge that... always remained shrouded in ambivalence. (1988: 77)

Presumably, the establishment of a canon by the university was part of this much wider social trend not only in the USA but in the UK, where the growth in literacy and the emergence of a flood of publications for working-class readers spurred the desire of the cultural elites to redraw the blurred boundaries between them and the mass. The situation now is that while, thanks to the popularization of some aspects of high culture via media such as television, radio, CDs, video and so on, it is not so easy to keep the social spheres so separated, hence the mixture of the elite and the popular—or rather non-elite—in the production and the consumption of culture. Ironically, while high (or mainstream) culture is available practically for anybody, the criticism of high culture produced by the university appears to be still more elitist to the average consumer of culture than the cultural products it deals with.

It could be argued that since the 1960s scholars have been expanding the scope of their interests and that many of them are producing work on the so-called popular, which should may be better defined as the extra-canonical. This is certainly true, but this does not mean that fantasy in its widest meaning—that of non-realistic fiction—has found a secure place in the university. In 1984 Ann Swinfen gave her book on post-war fantasy the title of *In Defence of Fantasy* and found it necessary to claim that

Perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of undertaking a serious critical study of the fantasy novel results from the attitude of the majority of contemporary critics—an attitude which suggests that the so-called ‘realist’ mode of writing is somehow more profound, more morally committed, more involved with ‘real’ human concerns than a mode of writing which employs the marvellous. The contention of this defence of fantasy is that this is far from being the case. (1984: 10)

Swinfen falls, nonetheless, in the temptation of using the word ‘serious’ to qualify her own work as a password for the admittance of her study in the cultural domain safeguarded by the university. Nevertheless, Swinfen’s may have been an exaggerated claim conditioned by her attempts at self-defence, for, writing in the same year 1984, Christopher Pawling speaks of “a growth of interest in popular fiction over the last few years” in the university (1984: 1), though he adds that “one could not claim that it has been established in schools or colleges as a central component of literary studies” (ibid.: 1) Eight years later, matters seem to have changed much, to judge by Brian Attebery’s claim that the proliferation of work on fantasy “indicates a growing academic interest in a body of literature that deliberately violates the generic conventions of realism, conventions that not too long ago were generally used as defining criteria for great or serious fiction” (1992: 1). Yet he also remarks that this interest has not led to a re-evaluation of the canon, from which fantasy is still excluded. The situation could be thus summarised as one of a progressive opening of the university towards non-realistic fiction and towards extra-canonical realistic fiction produced by minorities, though the canon for fiction still remains largely a list of realistic novels; magical realism, such as that practised by Salman Rushdie, seems to have secured a footing in the canon, but, so far, few are prepared to consider a multi-genre canon, or to dispense with the idea of genre or ‘seriousness’ at all, a situation which is, naturally, leading to the formation of genre canons inside or outside the university.

This leads me back to the criterion I have followed to choose the films and novels and to justifying the positioning of my work regarding the canon and the popular. When studying contemporary culture the researcher embarks on an exciting journey

through poorly charted territory, still relatively unaffected by the academic process of canonisation. The criterion I have followed in the choice of films and novels has been to ignore the question of genre and the popular (except in this introduction), and to consider mainly texts with a minimum quality, inevitably according to my own subjective judgement; this has been done in combination with what I have judged to be a generalized consensus about their success, based on box-office figures for films and the familiarity of the readers that have been willing to inform me with the names and titles of the novels—criteria I certainly acknowledge to be also arguably subjective. The mixture of genres and the inclusion of many mainstream novels and films should be enough to indicate that I do not support the idea that there should be separate canons for the different genres, though this does not mean I am against critical evaluation. Despite this I have avoided the critical evaluation of the films and novels, considering that their very inclusion in the list of primary sources would be enough to suggest that their are valid.

Arguably, not all the films and novels I have selected would be unanimously regarded as quality artwork. One of the issues most often invoked to mark the differences between high art (or mainstream) and the popular is, precisely, that the popular is sub-art or not art at all. Hence, some critics and scholars working on popular culture tend to leave evaluation aside and to claim as Roger B. Rollin does that “the only possible functions of the teacher and serious student of Popular Culture are *description* and *interpretation*—‘illumination’, in short” (Ashley, 1989: 18, original emphasis). Description because the territory is very vast, interpretation because studying “the interface between a work’s aesthetic form and the desires and anxieties of its audience” is worthwhile” (ibid.: 18). This is, indeed, a dissertation in which description and interpretation have been given a priority over evaluation but this does not mean that I have accepted Rollin’s rather bizarre dictum that

no serious student of popular Culture can lose time, money, or energy by tuning in on *Rhoda*, paying to see *Jaws*, or skimming through Harold Robbins’s latest opus. Because for such students these activities are called “research”, and whether they entail pleasure or pain is immaterial... Questions of aesthetic value are irrelevant to such practical matters. (ibid.: 18)

Precisely, my point is that argumentation of this sort is used to maintain the artificial distance between the popular/genre and high/mainstream art, and to prevent the pressing need for the reformulation of a new aesthetics for contemporary art that does away with the barriers between realism and fantasy and with those between the mainstream and the popular—maybe even with the need to consider fiction from the limited point of view of aesthetics. Why assume that realistic, artistic, ‘serious’ fiction is the only fictional mode—genre, perhaps?—worth studying when other non-realistic novels and films may be artistically less ‘serious’—though that is debatable—but are culturally more significant, more influential, more essential in shaping the world around us?

As far as the issue that this dissertation discusses is concerned, namely monstrosity, my conclusion is that ‘literary’ fiction deals with the extraordinary, monstrous human psychology of excess, while ‘genre’, science fiction, horror and fantasy mainly, invents landscapes of excess where monstrosity is the norm. Yet my experience of reading the novels and seeing the films has taught me other lessons concerning the differences between the candidates for canonisation and the cultural products that could only aspire to canonisation if the very idea of the canon is altered.

First, Rollin's alleged waste of time, money and energy risked by the researcher of so-called popular culture is not conditioned by the cultural product itself but by the researcher's own attitude—a good researcher is one who can see that “even the most banal of narratives may help to shed light on the material reality which lies behind the ostensibly unified conflict-free world of ideology” (Pawling, op. cit.: 12). Second, there are no clear criteria to account for the dramatic shift of taste happened in the last two decades. James B. Twitchell contends that “what most costumers want... is, almost by definition, what a generation ago would have been labelled common, unwashed, scumular, barbaric or *vulgar*” (1992: 2), yet matters are not so simple. James Kavanagh's definition of *Alien* as “an aesthetically effective mass-cultural production” (1990: 73) rather than vulgarity serves to characterize most of the films and many of the novels I have considered. Third, my personal experience of the novels and the films has corroborated my initial impression that the quality of so-called mainstream or literary fiction and that of genre fiction is perfectly comparable: it is by no means true that popular genre fiction is formula as many contend. In fact, one can detect an enthusiasm in the best science fiction, horror and fantasy—connoted by the sheer length of the novels, the cohesion of their complex plots, the panoramic description of their imaginary universes—which is certainly missing in the mainstream, more narrowly centred on the exploration of the psychology of one or a number of characters. My assumption is that not prejudice, but simply a lack of information—and perhaps the rather ugly design of most covers of genre novels !—is what prevents the work of Dan Simmons, Clive Barker, Terry Pratchett, Tim Powers, just to name a few fantasy writers, from being ranked together (or even above) those of Jeannette Winterson, John Banville, Peter Ackroyd or Ian McEwan.

This lack of information is a consequence of how the business of culture is run:

It is still the case that many newspapers, journals and magazines will only review hardback books. This is true both in Britain and in America. The only ‘serious’ books are those which appear in hard covers first, whether they are fiction or non-fiction, and are destined for a ‘serious’ readership via the universities, the libraries or fairly rich book buyers in the West End of London; all other publishing is, by inference, populist or simply trivial. (Worpole, 1984: 8)

Thus, while most university researchers get their information about contemporary culture from ‘serious’ publications reviewing only ‘serious’ books, the readers of genre fiction—published usually in paperback, hence invisible for the ‘serious’ reviewers—seek other means of communication, frequently much more active and participative than those bonding the readers of ‘serious’ fiction. Science fiction and fantasy fans, especially, enjoy “countless self-publicized fanzines and regular conventions where readers, writers and others meet and mingle” (LeFanu, 1988:121). The world of serious literature and the world of fandom are separated in fact by a rather wide gulf, and also by a rather perceptible mutual distrust, most patent not only in the reviews and the congresses but also in the literary prizes awarded to the best in each field.

Asked once in an interview what prize she coveted most, the American fantasy novelist Ursula K. LeGuin promptly answered the Nobel prize. When the journalist reminded her that the Nobel prize was not awarded to genre fiction writers, LeGuin wryly replied that she would settle for the Nobel prize for peace rather than literature. Yet, this unjustifiable exclusion of genre fiction from the highest literary award does not mean that genre fiction writers feel envious or jealous of the world of the Booker prize

winner, to mention one of the most important literary distinctions apart from the Nobel. The criteria to award the Booker to the best novel of the year in Britain is, in the words of Martin Goff, the prize administrator, that the book be “a well-written book with good narrative power, 3-D characters, a good use of English... and then something else that turns a book from being a jolly good novel into a prizewinning one” (Donald, 1994: 13). Alan Taylor, one of the judges, puts it more succinctly: “I think the most important criterion is, would you still want to read this book in 25 years?” (ibid.: 13), which is, of course, a very subjective standard. An unstated criterion is that the book must not be fantasy fiction (or genre fiction of any kind) which automatically excludes many of the most popular British writers—from P.D. James to Terry Pratchett, passing through Ken Follett or Joanna Trollope. No wonder, then, that there is a widespread feeling of antagonism between the booksellers who rely on the Booker to do business and the judges, who are increasingly narrowing the range of good fiction that can opt for the Booker (Lees, 1994a).

Brian Aldiss, one of the few fantasy British writers to enjoy a rare ubiquity in the world of culture, sees the Booker with different eyes. Commenting on the year when Iris Murdoch won the prize with *The Sea, the Sea*, he says:

“Having seen what are supposedly the big fish in the big pond, at the Booker Prize dinner, I thought what an awful giveaway mainstream literature was... There was such an air of weariness and uninterest in what went on, and I thought the speeches were very poor. The reservations of the judges, concerning the winners, I felt were an awful let-down—enthusiasm is a valuable quality. You couldn’t help comparing it with the Hugo awards, which maybe you’ve always looked down on simply because they’re part of the science-fiction family, or whatever you call it—the tribe. But if you go to the Hugo ceremony, everyone’s read the novels, and they’re saying, you know, my *God*, if X doesn’t win this year, I’ll *shoot* myself. The partisanship is tremendous. It may be misdirected, but it’s *there*, and I did feel, after the Booker Prize, that we in science-fiction really have the edge in a lot of ways”. (in Platt, 1986: 78, original emphasis)

In general, fantasy writers are not as assured of their own position as Aldiss is, and seem to feel a certain uneasiness regarding the world of mainstream literature, possibly because, unlike what is usually believed, most creators of so-called popular culture actually come from the same social and educational background as those who produce mainstream or literary fiction. Piers Anthony, a science-fiction writer of outstanding reputation as a pure entertainer, is perhaps especially honest when he confesses to his interviewer Charles Platt that

“... I may be one of the most commercial writers you’ll interview, in the sense that I write the cheap stuff that sells big. By training—I have a degree in creative writing—by education—I was born in England, my parents each graduated from Oxford University, and I have the background, the literary background, and what am I doing? Light entertainment... I regret it in the intellectual sense that I wish I could have done a piece of such quality that I would get an award from the Nobel committee, but the compensation for this is money, and I’ll *take* the money!” (in ibid.: 223)

More perplexed by his own position seemed the late Philip K. Dick, a cult American science-fiction writer, who told Platt about the difficulties of being stranded between two diametrically opposed cultural worlds:

“I was in a curious position [as a student at Berkeley]. I had read science fiction since I was twelve years old, and was really addicted. I just loved it. I also was reading what the Berkeley intellectual community was reading. For example, Proust or Joyce. So I occupied two worlds right there which normally did not intersect. Then, working in the retail store, the people I knew were TV salesmen, and repairmen; they considered me peculiar for reading at *all*... I managed to become universally despised wherever I went”. (in *ibid.*: 148, original emphasis)

However, Stephen King is the one fantasy writer interviewed by Platt who summarises best the ambitions of the popular writer to found a new territory that bridges the gaps between the so-called high and the so-called low:

“I always liked that kind of fiction [popular fantasy fiction], and that’s what I always wanted to write. There ought to be a middle ground, where you can do it with some nobility, instead of either a) being a schlockmeister or b) saying ‘Hey everybody’s just *saying* that I’m only a popular writer. They don’t understand how sensitive my soul is.’ There ought to be a place in the middle where you can say, ‘I’m trying to do the best I can with what I’ve got, and create things that are at least as honest as what any craftsman would make.’” (in *ibid.*: 265)

Nevertheless, I should like to insist once more on the idea that the consumption and the production of culture—even the critical reputation of novelists and filmmakers—are conditioned by the networks that market and distribute culture rather than by the reviewers and the scholar-critics. The millions of books King has sold despite the scholars’ notorious lack of enthusiasm for his work are a clear indication of this inescapable reality. I do not mean that it is *because* of this lack of scholarly interest that King is a best-selling writer but that the paths of the scholar and the popular writer seem, simply, not to cross except accidentally. In fact, one wonders what would happen to King’s very high reputation among his countless readers around the world if suddenly scholar-critics agreed that King was the twentieth-century Charles Dickens and a flourishing academic industry based on King’s work flooded the academic market. What seems indisputable is that the labels put onto the work of a writer or a filmmaker are more damaging for those who produce work initially marketed as popular fiction. Once a genre writer, always a genre writer, the axiom seems to be. Thus, Josephine Saxton, a writer whose early work was labelled by publishers and critics alike as science fiction complained in 1991 that

I have a novel going the rounds of the publishers at this time which has been rejected twelve times on the grounds that the editors do not know how to *handle* it. Genre labelling by publishers is restrictive, damaging and patronising to the reading public, about whom I am convinced publishers know nothing, although they do know how to manipulate them. It is applicable only for narrow parameters, for the story which is tailormade by a skilled hack to a specific demand. (1991: 214, original emphasis)

This does not mean that there is not a way out of this unfair ghettoization. The work of J.G. Ballard started moving from the science-fiction section—where still his books can be found—to the mainstream section in British bookshops about ten years ago, when it was seen that his novels escape easy labelling. Iain Banks has opted for another solution: two parallel careers, one in the mainstream and another in science fiction as Iain M. Banks—and as far as I have been able to assess, the Spanish readers of his science-fiction novels, which are highly appreciated, ignore all about the ‘other’ Ian Banks: they have not even been told that he exists. It is, thus, necessary to conclude with Ken Worpole, that “we have to be wary of definitions of popular literature which simply look at genres and themes. The processes of publishing and distribution count as much towards making certain kinds of literature ‘popular’” (op. cit.: 92).

Writing about the state of literature in 1979 Gerald Graff maintained that “the real “avant-garde” is advanced capitalism, with its built-in need to destroy all vestiges of tradition, all orthodox ideologies, all continuous and stable forms of reality in order to stimulate higher levels of consumption” (1979: 8). Arguably, the influence of the market is more direct on film, especially on the Hollywood blockbuster, the big-budget film aimed at a mass audience. The relative cheapness of book publishing in comparison to filmmaking is precisely the reason why novelists may indulge in experimentation to an extent that filmmakers simply cannot afford. However, where Graff is totally wrong is in the supposition that capitalism is not interested in continuity and that it advances as a great Juggernaut towards an anarchic cultural future. In fact, the opposite is the case. It is true that capitalism thrives on novelty but it does not thrive on the destruction of tradition. Rather, it invents or reinvents its own traditions on the basis of elements that were once new, hence financially attractive. Writing about films, Thomas Schatz, who has investigated in depth the world of the new Hollywood and of the Hollywood blockbuster, argues that

Movies are not produced in creative or cultural isolation, nor are they consumed that way. Individual movies may affect each one of us powerfully and somewhat differently, but essentially they are all generated by a collective production system which honors certain narrative traditions (or conventions) in designing for a mass market. (Schatz, 1981: 7)

The same could be said about novels to a certain extent. It could be even argued that the avant-garde has been destroyed by capitalism and replaced by the constant—rather bungling—search for the best-selling novel and the successful blockbuster. Unlike what is usually assumed, publishing houses do not know very well how to manufacture best-sellers, nor are Hollywood studios so good at marketing blockbusters as one might think. Writing about the USA, James Twitchell notes that “publishers estimate one bestseller in every 100 books, while studios need one blockbuster every twenty films” (op. cit.: 144), yet this does not mean that best-sellers and blockbusters always work, as Hollywood knows well. What is more, the world of the best-seller and the film hit are more omnivorous than one might think: Jane Austen is currently a best-selling novelist thanks to Ang Lee and Emma Thompson’s Oscar-award winner *Sense and Sensibility* (1995), whereas Renny Harlin is rumoured to have sunk one of the highest budgets ever spent by Hollywood with the ship of his ill-fated pirate film *Cutthroat Island* (1995), a product designed to please all but which has finally pleased fewer people than Austen.

Capitalism is, as I see it, a system that sells artistic originality while being at heart traditional and conservative. It cares more for keeping the collaborative machine

of production and distribution working smoothly than for the contents of what it sells, as most film-goers are currently realising. In film, distinguishing between the popular and the mainstream makes no sense, except for the programmers of film festivals specialised in the alternative to Hollywood films. All films are geared at being popular, otherwise they are regarded as failures. This means, as many are now bitterly claiming, that Hollywood has quite forgotten how to make films because of the interest of studio executives in the accountant's balance sheet. Yet, I should say that the artistic balance sheet is neither better nor worse than it has always been—what has changed are the tastes of the younger audiences, as has always happened.

What is nevertheless clearly perceptible is the growing interest for the fantastic shown by most Hollywood studios. The top-grossing films of all times are fantasy films, what is more, fantasy films in which the monster plays a prominent role; the list includes among others the *Star Wars* trilogy, the *Terminator* diptych, *Jurassic Park* and *Batman*. What is more, among the twenty-five best-selling novels of the 1980s in the USA (Twitchell, op. cit.: 72–73) seven are by Stephen King; needless to say, all deal with monsters and have been adapted for the screen. The proliferation of monstrosity in the 1980s and 1990s film is, precisely, an indicator of how Hollywood works: there is a nostalgic return to the past with the remaking or the imitation of films that were popular and presented a good ratio investment-profits in the 1930s and 1950s, coupled with, on the one hand, ever-increasing budgets spent on sensational special effects and, on the other hand, the production of as many sequels as possible of films about monstrosity that became expected or unexpected box-office hits. The problem is that Hollywood exhausts its models faster and faster because it overexploits them, so that an habitual film-goer has the impression that everything has been done before, when in fact in the last fifteen years there have been countless innovations, especially in the narratives dealing with monstrosity.

The situation is also different in film as far as the university is considered. Films were only regarded a proper academic subject from the 1960s onwards when French critics and scholars led the way in the study of the art-house films then being produced by the *Nouvelle Vague* French directors. Unlike Hollywood's commercial films, art-house films lent themselves more easily to the application of theory to their readings, hence their popularity among scholars. However, a fundamental mistake was then made: the director was attributed practically the same status as the literary author and, so, the fundamental fact that the cinema is a collaborative process sustained by business interests was practically ignored for decades. In any case, as can be seen, Hollywood filmmakers had worked for sixty years with their backs to the academic world, concerning themselves with a narrative media that was understood to be, simply, business and, what is more, popular entertainment without artistic pretensions. This means that, still now, when films studies are being developed in universities around the world, there is very little interaction between Hollywood and the scholars. Film theory has gone to the cinema in the last decades, as the title of the collection of essays published by Jim Collins, Hillary Radner and Ava Preacher Collins (1993) says, and is now closely following what is happening in Hollywood. There are even learned studies of B-series horror films originally intended to be plain fun for a Saturday night claiming (wrongly) that they are valuable for artistic reasons (Searing, 1986). But Hollywood seems to care only for its own Academy, still valuing the reputation of its artists for the box-office receipts of their last film and the Oscars it won. Paradoxically, unlike mainstream and popular books, which can be found usually in the same bookshops and libraries, studio films (the equivalent of the popular book, though they are in fact the

mainstream films) do not share the same networks of distribution with the independent art-house films. Even though films are now more accessible than ever thanks to videotapes, in fact it is much easier for a member of the general public to locate any novel (literary or popular) in a good library or a second-hand book shop than an independent film, usually confined to film archives run by governmental institutions or to university archives habitually used only by researchers.

To sum up, the popular is neither what the 'people' create, nor what they consume. The popular is created mainly by the middle classes and consumed by all, except by those who specifically want to distinguish themselves from the 'mass', within any social class. From the point of view of the scholars, the popular is what is at the margins of the canon (that is, mainly 'genre' fiction) despite reaching a large public, which seemingly should be a proof of its forming part of culture to a much larger extent than that which reaches only an elite because of its alleged aesthetic merits. What is not realistic or has no avowed artistic pretensions is genre and popular, hence excluded from the canon—at least for the time being, as the canon obviously changes—though, in fact, many non-realistic films and novels have a much higher aesthetic quality than many realistic, so-called artistic, candidates for canonisation. In fact, it could be said that the canon is limited to a particular 'genre', that of literary realistic fiction (or in the case of film, artistic, realistic film) and that, to a certain extent, demanding that the canon expands to encompass other 'genres' makes no sense, especially as those other 'genres' also have more or less official canons, formed on other grounds than pure aesthetics. It could also be argued that a proficient *connoisseur* of, for instance, science fiction, is as elitist and anti-populist as a defender of the literary canon such as Harold Bloom—though the authority of the former is not acknowledged by the university. From the point of view of those who market culture, the 'popular' is, on the one hand, what makes a profit by attracting a large audience (which might, paradoxically, include high or mainstream art) and, on the other hand, what is tailored and labelled as popular (or genre) even though it might fail to attract an audience at all. The monster can be found in all these ranges of culture, so that, by virtue of its cultural ubiquity it can be said that the monster is a 'popular' figure, that is to say, a figure fascinating many across cultural boundaries. I regard, thus, this long discussion of the meaning of the popular not as an off-topic digression but as essential preliminary reflection on the position of the monster in contemporary culture. The following dissertation thoroughly depends on this preliminary formulation of this definition of the popular, which will be presupposed throughout.

I.6. Secondary Sources

The secondary sources I have consulted are of many types. The main hindrance I have had to face is the scarcity of bibliography that deals directly with the figure of the monster. For this reason and because I have been working from a multidisciplinary standpoint, the bibliography includes not only works on literature and film but also works on other artistic manifestations such as comics, painting and photography, together with works covering a wide range of disciplines: psychology, ethics, politics, religion, anthropology, mythology, gender studies and, obviously, the theory of contemporary culture. Since this is a dissertation about the recent past that includes even the last three years, which are the years I have spent working on it, the bibliography also includes the press articles that came to my hands in this period. This may not be regarded as proper academic research, but researching on contemporary culture also

involves gauging the news for information about what is happening right now, which in the case of my dissertation was absolutely necessary. I have avoided using specific bibliography on particular novels and films with a few exceptions—mainly *Alien* and *Blade Runner*—because I am not particularly interested in discussing individual texts in depth but in determining how they fit within the general panorama of contemporary monstrosity.

There are few works that deal directly with the monster and, of those, most refer to the monster as a figure of the past, more or less remote. The essays that deal with the contemporary monster do so frequently in an indirect way: there is, thus, a considerable number of books on horror fiction but not on the monster *per se* in contemporary culture, and much less across genre barriers or across the dividing line between novels and films. My research has, consequently, consisted not of assembling direct evidence from the secondary sources dealing with the monster to support my theses, but of assembling indirect evidence gathered by unearthing a subliminal discourse on monstrosity implied in all the secondary sources but acknowledged by very few. The monster is seemingly often taken for granted, as if it were a fixture of culture in its anthropological sense that does not deserve further attention—possibly because it is associated with simplistic primitive pleasures rooted in childhood rather than with the sophisticated postmodernist enjoyment of art and its theoretical discussion.

The main texts on monstrosity in other cultural areas than contemporary fiction that I have read are Claude Kappler's *Monstres, Démons et Merveilles à la Fin du Moyen Age* (1980), John Block Friedman's *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (1981), Robert Bogdan's *Freak Show* (1988), Leslie Fiedler's *Freaks* (1978), Gilbert Lascaut's *Le Monstre dans l'Art Occidental* (1973), and Marie-Hélène Huet's *Monstrous Imagination* (1993). The books by Kappler and Friedman deal, as can be seen from their titles, with periods rather remote from the one under discussion in this dissertation but are fundamental to an understanding of the background from which the contemporary monster emerges. Their main objective is to provide extensive information about the social and cultural forces shaping the representation of the monster in medieval visual and literary art. Bogdan's and Fiedler's respective studies of the figure of the freak perfectly complement the books by Kappler and Friedman by indirectly highlighting the fact that monstrosity still plays a very important role in social life, especially as concerns the way we see each other's bodies. In contrast, Lascaut's and Huet's books study the representation of the monster in the arts from ancient Greece to our days. Lascaut's is a profound study of the monster as an aesthetic problem, as its subtitle indicates, which discusses not only the ubiquity of the monster in all cultural manifestations throughout the ages but also the alleged validity and convenience of a Cartesian, rational classification of the monsters over a less structured (or structuralist) approach which may take into account that irrationality is the monster's breeding ground. Huet's essay analyses from a feminist point of view mainly the consequences of the idea, initially sustained by the Greeks, that the role of the feminine imagination could explain why the monsters were born in real life and in the life of the imagination. Huet puts special emphasis on the discussion of how Romanticism—specifically *Frankenstein*—attributes for the first time to the father the capacity to create monsters and what this important shift means for the entrance of the monster into the centre of culture.

As I have noted, very few books deal jointly with films and novels. Furthermore, there seems to be a peculiar imbalance between the numbers of books on genre film, which are considerable, and the number of books on genre novels, which are not so

many. This is possibly due to the fact that fantasy films occupy a much less marginal position in film studies than fantasy novels in literary studies. In any case, tracking the monster has often been a matter of following its footprints in works dealing with genre (mainly horror and science fiction), though, even in them, the discourse on the monster is frequently uneven and elusive. Jack Sullivan's excellent guide to horror fiction, *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*, covers a vast field with its six hundred entries on individual writers, filmmakers, books and films, and its fifty long essays on subjects ranging from Romanticism to the pulps, yet none of them is devoted to the word 'monster', despite the abundant references to many individual monsters throughout the book. Sullivan's guide can, nonetheless, quench anybody's thirst for information about the evolution of fiction (films and novels, but also comics, short story, drama and even television) produced in the last two hundred years in which the monster appears. Carlos Clarens' *Horror Movies* (1968) and S.S. Praver's *Caligari Children* (1980) provide useful insights into the development of horror film since the beginning of film itself, proving that the monster was and still is one of the first and most solid attractions offered by the film screen. David Skal's *The Monster Show* (1990) is one of the few monographs to include the word 'monster' in its title, though it is not, either, a book on monstrosity but on the evolution of the horror film until the late 1980s. Like Clarens', Skal's accomplished book, can be said to be a thorough, well researched study of the horror film addressed to demanding horror *aficionados*, rather than to scholars. Despite Skal's claim that *The Monster Show* is a cultural history of horror, as its subtitle indicates, his book deals only incidentally with the monster in twentieth-century literature, focusing exclusively on film.

There are other secondary sources dealing with the horror film from the point of view of genre that provide interesting insights into the nature of the contemporary monster. Andrew Tudor's *Monsters and Mad Scientists* (1989), which, curiously bears almost the same subtitle as Skal's book—*A Cultural History of the Horror Movie*—discusses monstrosity also indirectly on the basis of a classification of horror films into different categories along a chronological, or diachronic, axis and also along a synchronic axis. Thus, Tudor distributes horror films into a number of main historical periods; the content of the films is then described according to the function of the monster in each. There is, however, no overall discussion of the monster in itself. Tudor insists specifically on the idea of genre, rather than on the idea of monstrosity, just as Skal does, which posits an important problem: the many science-fiction films in which a horrific monster appears force both to make exceptions to their own rule that genre is fundamental to an understanding of monstrosity and to accepting that different genres may be mixed in the same text. Noël Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (1990) is based on the same principle: Carroll's quite detailed classification of monsters—which, nonetheless, only covers horrific non-human monsters—is made to fit in within a general theory of horror, which discusses, mainly what Carroll calls the paradoxes of the heart, namely, why we enjoy horror and how we can be horrified by a monster that we know to be just an imaginary creature.

The books on horror films by Carol Clover, Vera Dika and Barbara Creed are characterized by their being feminist studies of the genre of horror which aim at exposing the patriarchal strategies allegedly followed by horror filmmakers. Clover's *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1993) and Dika's *Games of Terror* (1990) discuss gender roles in contemporary horror films, with special emphasis on how women are sadistically victimized in them. As far as I know, Dika's is the first, or one of the first, monographs printed by a university press to deal with a sub-genre within the horror

film, the 'stalker' or 'slasher', a low-budget film which narrates the exploits of a bloodthirsty serial killer. Clover's followed no doubt in the wake of Dika's work. However, it cannot be said that these books spring from a genuine interest in expanding the field of scholarly knowledge by embracing the so-far neglected area of the horror film. Clearly, they have been written with the aim of condemning from a feminist point of view the representation of women in those films and are, thus, aimed at a very different public from the other studies of the horror film I have mentioned. Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993) is similar to Dika's and Clover's books in that it focuses exclusively on film, though Creed covers a much more extensive field, using psychoanalysis—as it is often done now in film studies following the pioneering 1970s work of the *Screen* group—to interpret the construction of feminine monstrosity in contemporary film.

There is not quite an exact equivalent in literary studies of the monographs on horror film I have mentioned, though the notion of genre is also relevant in the discussion of the fantasy novel. However, the genre whose study is now receiving increasingly attention in the academia is not horror but Gothic. In fact, what is being discussed is to what extent Gothic can be defined as a genre—most scholars are answering that this is not the case—and whether horror fiction, and even science fiction, are not in fact modes of the Gothic. The study of Gothic complements, nevertheless, that of the monster in horror film, for the main contribution of Gothic to the history of monstrosity is the popularisation of the human moral monster, that is to say, of the villain. Thus, while the work on the horrific monster of film tends to focus on the non-human monster—the horrific creature—or on the dehumanised human monster, those who work on Gothic tend to focus on the psychology of the evil, human monster.

One of the most accomplished introductions to Gothic fiction is David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* (1980), which provides a detailed account of the evolution of Gothic, and the notion of terror in fiction, from 1765—the date of the publication of Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*—to the late 1970s³. Punter's book must be acknowledged as one of the main inspirations behind the present dissertation, especially as far as the idea of the continuity of Gothic as an alternative to the continuity of realism is concerned. The other main sources that have reinforced this aspect of my work are Elizabeth MacAndrew's *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* (1979), because of its very thorough analysis of the villain of eighteenth Gothic fiction, and Victor Sage's *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (1988), especially because of its account of the relationship between religious belief and the representation of the evil villain in Gothic fiction.

Among the other secondary sources I have consulted, Anne Baring and Jules Cashford's *The Myth of the Goddess* (1993) is the one that has exerted the greatest influence on the present dissertation. In principle, a study of the evolution of the figure of the goddess and its progressive loss under the patriarchal system instituted in the Iron Age might not seem to be directly related to the topic of monstrosity. However, thanks to their account of the demonisation of the goddess in Babylon and her subsequent transformation into a monster by the Semites and the Aryan patriarchies, I could finally grasp the meaning of the contemporary monster, which, in my opinion, is a sign of the problematic decadence of patriarchal values. These are being now questioned by women and men for the first time in almost four thousand years. Baring and Cashford's book is

3. A second edition covering not only the period covered by the original edition—1765 to 1980—but also the last fifteen years was published in January 1996 by Longman.

an excellent example not only of how to apply Jungian psychology to the study of myth and religion but also of how to produce humanist discourse that avoids the pitfalls of radical androphobic feminism and of misogynistic scholarship (see Chapter 7). Their fascinating account of the rise and the fall of the goddess functions as a rebuttal of the excesses of patriarchy but also as a reminder of the need to find a better balance between men and women in the near future.

The book that most resembles this dissertation is Marina Warner's *Six Myths of our Times: Managing Monsters* (1994), a collection of six lectures that Warner wrote when she was invited by the BBC to deliver the prestigious Reith Lectures in 1994. Even though I had not heard about Warner's book when I started working on this dissertation, it turned out that she had already discussed monstrosity under different aspects—including among others gender roles, childhood, and colonialism—from a socio-cultural point of view, as I intended to do, rather than from the point of view of genre. Nonetheless, there the similarities end, for I have used only a small number of the primary and secondary sources that she uses and also because our conclusions are very different, mainly because she writes from an unambiguous feminist point of view, taking myth rather than the Gothic as her starting point. Interestingly, Warner makes no reference to the monster in her introduction to the lectures. Instead, she claims that when asked to deliver the lectures, which should deal with society and culture, she decided to “build on my interest in fairy tales, legends, myths and the way they interpenetrate and influence our lives” (1994a: xi). Presumably, the realization that these are narratives about monsters came later but is not specifically stressed at any point in the lectures.

This dissertation shares with most of the secondary sources I have mentioned in this section an interest in approaching the monster from a multidisciplinary, socio-cultural point of view, though it differs from them in other important aspects. My contribution to the existing bibliography on the monster is based mainly on my addressing the topic of monstrosity itself, rather than that of monster in a particular genre, and on my focusing simultaneously on novels and films dealing with the monster, which had not been previously done. This study of monstrosity also aims at describing the links between aspects of monstrosity so far considered separately, such as the nature of the human and the non-human monster, and at exploring the connections between aspects of reality and their representation through the monster.

I.7. Theoretical Framework and Organization

The theoretical framework I have used in this dissertation is utterly eclectic. I have purposefully avoided following any particular interpretative theory so as to feel free to tackle my subject from as many angles as possible. However, throughout my study of monstrosity I constantly refer to the concept of ‘representation’, which must be justified at this point. It is not my supposition that the monster is a symbol belonging to a discourse on reality that is fully articulated and agreed on by those who write novels or make films now. In fact, I prefer viewing the monster rather as a ‘symptom’ that indicates the tensions present in cultural forces operating in the period under discussion. Problematic aspects of reality—the ones on which each chapter of this dissertation is based—which cannot be solved by other means (by means of rational thinking) are projected onto the monster in a constant search for stability. Important issues such as power, ethics, gender, the status of childhood are given fictional representation in more or less typical plots in which the monster occupies a central position as a symptom of the problems associated to those issues. There is no overt, conscious control over those

representations; it is my aim to interpret them throughout this dissertation and also to prove that there is a rather consistent discourse constantly in the making at a cultural level that could be regarded as the postmodernist equivalent of primitive mythmaking.

The second question that arises in regard to how the fictional monster and reality interact is whether the texts in which the monster appears compensate for a problematic reality, in a direct or inverse relation, or whether they mirror reality, exaggerating or magnifying the issues that are the object of the representations I analyse. There is, in fact, no single answer for this question. I interpret the monster mainly as a wish-fulfilment fantasy created to compensate for the shortcomings of reality in many different ways. Sometimes this bears a direct relation to reality: the individual film-goer or novel reader may vicariously experience the hero/ine's sense of triumph over the monster and read it as an allegory of a situation that will eventually take place in real life. Inversely, the total or relative defeat of the hero/ine by the monster offers the comfort of exposing problematic situations that cannot be dealt with directly in real life: for instance, as I argue in Chapter 6, dystopian, technophobic science fiction is helping audiences to process their fear of the privileges attached to individuality, which are threatened by the pressures that capitalism puts on them. The Pyrrhic victory of the (often monstrous) hero/ine of his/her defeat compensates for the daily impression of powerlessness felt by the average citizen Western because it comforts him or her with the idea that, at least, the monstrosity of the current systems of power of real life is exposed.

The texts I analyse in this dissertation can be said to mirror society but they do so by interposing several mirrors between reality and its representation. It is not a matter of magnifying or exaggerating problems existing in real life but of noting that, like the monster Medusa, some problems cannot be looked at straight in the face: Perseus' reflecting shield is needed for protection against the monster's petrifying stare. In a sense, my work has consisted of looking at those mirrors—the representations of the problematic issues of reality—and also at reality in order to try to find out how they distort or sharply focus the monsters of reality. Alternatively, and to use a metaphor inspired by one of the primary sources I analyse, this dissertation follows also the method use by Deckard in *Blade Runner* in the famous scene in which he scans with the help of an enlarging device an apparently ordinary photograph of a hotel room, in which he knows that one of the monsters he is tracing is pictured. Deckard's scanner turns the photo into a tri-dimensional representation of the room and locates the 'replicant' Zhora behind a pillar that obscured her presence. My work tries to do the same for the larger picture of contemporary reality.

One main point that I must clarify is the question of whether this is a feminist dissertation. I would like to think that it is a humanist dissertation, that is to say, a work addressed to readers who believe that men and women are, fundamentally, persons—perhaps, as a popular Catalan TV show would put it, human persons of masculine or feminine sex. I personally believe that feminism offers a theoretical framework too biased and too limited (this is a question I discuss in more depth in Chapter 7) but being myself a woman influenced by feminism, it is only honest to acknowledge that many of the ideas in this dissertation are feminist. However, I would like very much to emphasize the point that for me attacking patriarchy is an obligation for everyone—men or women—who believe, as I do, that the systems of oppression must be terminated, and not a fight that concerns only women. Helping men free themselves from patriarchy is, as I see it, the decisive battle that has to be fought if humanism is to be ever conquered. As far as this dissertation is concerned, my opinions have led me to be very critical of

androphobic feminist criticism and to disregard to a great extent the much easier path marked by the strong current of feminism in the world of scholarship. The feminist view of the monster is contradictory: on the one hand, feminism rejects the male monster—seen as a sign of patriarchy’s monstrous power—but, on the other hand, there is an obvious attraction for the female monster because she is seen as a wish-fulfilment fantasy of power, which is precisely what many male monsters are for men.

Even though I have invoked the names of Freud and Jung at certain points, it cannot be said that this dissertation has a strong psychoanalytical or simply psychological basis. I have avoided using an exclusively psychological approach to the question of how the monsters expose the anxieties of the personal or the collective unconscious. I am more interested, in fact, in establishing the cultural foundations of monstrosity in the period of the 1980s and 1990s than in exploring the connections between the Jungian archetypes or the Freudian id and the concrete instances of contemporary monstrosity. In this dissertation the collective and the personal unconscious have been granted an importance similar but not superior to the role of the systems of power and the systems of distribution of culture in shaping the image of the contemporary monster. Studying the monster is, in my view, useful to gauge not only the state of man’s soul but also the state of the social, political and cultural institutions and networks of power that envelope man in a concrete historical period. I must acknowledge, in addition, my own—relative—ignorance of psychology; on the other hand I must note that if this ignorance has not been dispelled, it is because I did not feel that this was the best path to follow in the discussion of monstrosity. It seems to me that the use of Jungian, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis in the critical interpretation of fiction is very productive but tends to neglect an alternative view of humankind based on the idea of myth and ritual and to focus excessively on cultural constructions, such as the family, whose historical development is hardly ever questioned. Why see ourselves as Freud’s postmodernist children and not (also) as the rather disoriented city cousins of the tribesman whose world is rooted in myth? My purpose is not to apply a concrete psychoanalytical theory to the monster but clarifying the extent and importance of this still largely ignored field, which encompasses other aspects than the psychology of the contemporary human being.

If there is any major theoretical influence at all in this dissertation, this is exerted no doubt by the work of Michel Foucault. I can by no means claim to be an expert reader of Foucault’s work but his description in *Discipline and Punish* of how power reshapes itself as society and history evolves is present throughout my work. Even though, arguably, I am also writing from a Marxist standpoint—even though I confess to not having read Marx yet—from my own point of view Marx’s view of class is subordinated to Foucault’s view of power. How power is exerted, who exerts it and who craves for it are the factors that articulate the social and the cultural life, including class, gender relations, race relations, generational relations, and other aspects such as the university and, obviously, politics. In fact, one of the main arguments I am using to define the monster is that the monster is, simultaneously, a figure dreaded because of its immense power and a wish-fulfilment fantasy of empowerment, hence the fear its elicits and also its universal appeal.

I have organised my dissertation in eight chapters, corresponding to eight major aspects discernible in the contemporary representation of monstrosity, which are, in the order of the chapters: the iconography of the monster, how the image of the monster is propagated in contemporary culture, how the monster fits within the contemporary idea of myth, the relationship between the monster and evil, the monster as an image of

political power, the monster as a product of the capitalist system, gendered monstrosity, and the child and the monster. The first two chapters are intended to function as introductions to the rest of the dissertation, hence the greater density of the background information about the history of the monster provided in them. Most chapters consists of two main sections whose respective contents are duly explained in the introduction to each chapter.

I have provided detailed information about the films and novels I analyse in two separate appendixes, with the titles of “Bibliography: Primary Sources” and “Filmography”. Although this is not usually done, I have written a brief summary of the plots to guide the reader, as it is unrealistic to suppose that the reader may be familiar with all the films and all the novels. The entries for the novels contain information about the screen adaptations based on them, while the entries for the films specify the title of the original novel on which they are based and the Oscar awards or nominations they have received. This dissertation is best approached if the reader browses first through these appendixes. An extra appendix inserted after the “Filmography”, with the title of “Appendix 1: Landmarks in the Work of Special Effects Artists” offers extra information about the aesthetics of the monster in film, complementing Chapter 1⁴.

1.8. The Monster and the Researcher

Finally, I would like to devote the last section of this introduction to a few remarks about my personal involvement in the topic I have been researching for the last three years. A high percentage of the novels and films I have analysed are geared to eliciting strong emotional responses from readers or viewers and I have not remained immune to them. Questions about why or how I can conduct research on a subject that touches horror so often have been often asked to me, and are, indeed, pertinent to the conclusions I have reached. However, my research has allowed me to tap a well concealed vein as regards monstrosity: reactions to my work in progress have been indeed positive, coming from people both inside and outside the university. Comments have often run along the lines of how fascinating my subject was and how lucky I was to be working on such enjoyable material—which says quite a lot about the contemporary idea of pleasure! Surprisingly (at least to me), nobody has suggested that monstrosity is a trivial subject or inappropriate for a doctoral dissertation. Quite the contrary.

Many people have volunteered suggestions, titles of novels and films and have talked with me or written to me about favourite films and novels dealing with monstrosity. In this sense, and considering the many questions I have been asked about the *Alien* trilogy, I must conclude that the eponymous creature is currently the most

4. I have kept the use of footnotes and references for the quotations down to a minimum, using the simplest format available. The dates I have used in the references for the quotations are always that of the edition I am using and not that of the original date of publication. The entry in the “Bibliography: Secondary Sources” contains both. If the edition I am using is a reprint of an earlier edition, I have indicated the date of the reprint between brackets: this is the date I have used in the reference for the quotation. I have not provided a translation for the quotations from the secondary sources in French, relying on the familiarity of my reader with this language. For simplicity’s sake I have regarded film directors as the authors of the films I am discussing; yet a phrase such as Ridley Scott’s *Alien* should rather indicate that Scott is the head of the team who made the film and not its author, as I regard films as team work. Regarding the punctuation, I would like to remark that I am using single quotation marks for emphasis and double quotation marks for text quoted from a primary or a secondary source.

popular monster, followed closely by the Terminator. Among the novel readers who have commented on their favourite monsters with me, the names most frequently mentioned have been those of Ender, the protagonist of Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* and Pat Bateman, the protagonist of Brett Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*. Men have been probably more eager than women to discuss their views on monstrosity with me. I find, though, that what puts women off discussing monstrosity is not their lack of interest in the subject but their rejection of a culture of violence they perceive as monstrously masculine. Interestingly enough, female monsters that show women can be also represented as powerful beings, such as Catherine Trammell of *Basic Instinct*, or strong heroines, such as Sarah Connor of *The Terminator*, spurred very stimulating conversations.

Many people have also emphasized the pleasure my research must have meant for me, as if research and pleasure had to be irreconcilable opposites. A few have even told me with a certain defiant envy—I cannot define it otherwise—that I was extraordinarily lucky to have been granted the chance of working on novels and films that I count among my favourites. This is indeed the case, but my dissertation would be unfairly robbed of all its seriousness—yes, I am also using the word—if it were taken as merely a 'fan' book. The pleasure of my research has been derived indeed from the realization of the interest it arose—as for the paradoxical pleasure my material may have given me, my hope is that it is reflected in the seriousness of my intention, as should be the ideal case for all researchers.

The favourable reception that my ongoing research has found is radically different from the difficulties that Andrew Tudor faced when working just a few years ago on his book *Monsters and Mad Scientists*. As he writes in the "Preface" to his book:

The worst thing about writing this book has been admitting to it. Few conversation-stoppers have quite the force of a well-timed 'Well, yes, actually I'm working on horror movies', a response to solicitous inquires that provokes pity and disbelief in about equal proportions. After 10 years or so I can report back to all those who have been concerned about my mental health ('Doesn't it desensitize you?', one genteel lady asked, as if viewing horror movies functioned as a kind of condom of the conscience) that I have no desire to kick kittens, drink blood or disembowel members of the moral majority... (op. cit.: vi)

Nor do I indeed... though I sometimes worry about what the members of the moral majority would say if they saw my private video collection and my library! That worry increased when I saw David Fincher's *Se7en*, in which the screen writer, Andrew Kevin Walker, came up with an ingenious solution to justify how his two heroic policemen track a cultured serial killer fond of quoting Dante and Milton with the blood of his victims: the FBI is said to keep a list of all those who borrow 'dangerous' books from public libraries—obviously not only Dante and Milton (!) but also books on horror, crime, evil and monsters, that is to say, my very own sources. Despite my growing, justified or unjustified, paranoia, the cultural climate must have certainly changed in the last ten years for absolutely nobody has questioned at all the danger of my becoming desensitized thanks to my material—perhaps because they thought that my choice was a sign of my being already desensitized.

The effect on me of the primary sources I have selected has been actually far from desensitizing. In fact, I should say that I am much more sensitive now than I was before I started researching on monstrosity, especially as regards the monsters of reality

that can be daily seen on the news. Even Freddy Krueger, the monstrous hero of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, ends up seeming a friendly monster in comparison with the serial killers and the mass murderers on the news, and I mean the ones on the payroll of a government or associated with terrorist groups, rather than the occasional psychotic mass murderers or serial killers. Horror films rarely scare me now because I have learned a few things about the mechanism to control one's emotions when doing research—or am I simply bragging, in imitation of the teenagers who see them to test their endurance? One of my colleagues was genuinely puzzled as to the method I followed to take notes when watching horror films, which has made me think in some depth about the psychological strategies we use to 'enjoy' fear when facing the monster in film⁵. Only one text gave me nightmares, Christopher Fowler's novel *Spanky*, though I am completely at a loss to explain why, since it is not especially horrific or, at least, not more than other films and novels I have seen and read.

However, despite the strong emotions elicited by the fictional monsters I have come across during my research, or precisely, because of these emotions, I have been and still am much more horrified by the monsters of real life. The war in Bosnia has been raging for the three years during which I have been working on this dissertation, which means that the images of people I regard as monsters—Slobodan Milosevic, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic—have been constantly present in the background. I am sure that, like me, many people have been wondering why this war has happened and why these monsters have committed such appalling atrocities in the midst of civilized Europe. Whatever the fate of Karadzic and Mladic may be if their status as war criminals finally leads to their arrest and trial by The International Court of Justice at the Hague, neither the discovery of the Srebrenica mass graves, nor the images of the massacre in Sarajevo's market made me feel the full horror of the situation as another event. For me, the real measure of the horror of this war and of the monsters behind it became evident when I saw on TV Drazen Erdemovic, the twenty-five-year-old Croatian soldier who, on May 29th 1996, acknowledged before the International Court of Justice having killed hundreds of Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica, when he was under the orders of the Bosnian-Serbs in whose army he served. This 'monster', declaring in tears that he had killed his victims because he had been threatened with the death of his wife and child if he did not obey, made me understand much about the meaning of real life monstrosity. Erdemovic, who was handed over to the International Court of Justice by the Serbs in an attempt to spare the bloodthirsty Bosnian-Serb leaders, is to be a key witness in the forthcoming trial of his superiors, Mladic and Karadzic, if it is ever held.

Nevertheless, for me, the blackest date in these last three years was 13th March 1996, when sociopath Thomas Hamilton entered a school in Dunblane, Scotland, and

5. A brief anecdote can suffice to explain how difficult it is to keep a tight reign on one's reactions when doing research on horror films (or on any other film that may elicit strong emotions): I was watching *The Thing* (for the third time!), expecting to make detailed notes on the scene of the horrific metamorphosis of the extraterrestrial creature—which is the most difficult scene I have dealt with, in terms of how deeply it affects me. I was on my own and in control of my reactions as the film progressed, but somebody else joined me then to see the scene. The interruption distracted me and I was so disturbed by the images on the screen – despite the fact that I knew them well—that I could not make a note at all. Needless to say, I saw the film—again!—on my own, and I have followed the same strategy with all the other films. Novels do not pose the same problem because, obviously, we read them on our own and in silence.

killed sixteen children—aged between five and six—and their schoolmistress before killing himself. The facts were horrific enough to shatter not only the confidence in civilization of most Britons but also that of many other people around the world, especially because very young children were involved. Yet, what is now known as the ‘Slaughter of the Innocents’ had a especially poignant emotional effect on me for another reason: Hamilton happened to be a resident of Stirling, the same Scottish town in whose university I had been doing research for my dissertation during the academic year 1994-95. Many sessions with my supervisor, Prof. David Punter, had finished with his jocular injunction to be careful and not come across any ‘monsters’ on the way home. Now I wonder whether I ever did come across Hamilton on the way home. Needless to say, this grim irony has affected me much more deeply than any film or any novel on the monster I may have seen or read.

At this point, I should clarify that not all the texts—films and novels—I have analysed for this dissertation are horror fiction and that the highest degree of horror may be elicited by texts that are not particularly gory or meant to scare with easy thrills. Horror, as I understand it now, is not an emotion that can be easily provoked in the reader or viewer; in addition, it may take many different forms and even be understood from different angles by different viewers or readers. I have no doubt that *The Thing* is the most terrific text I have dealt with, in the classical sense of being a good suspense horror film, portraying what is, for me, the most repulsive monster ever seen on the screen. But I have been more genuinely moved by other texts which pull horror in different directions: *The Fly*, for instance, is, despite the nauseating transformation of Seth Brundle into a monster a most moving love story—and so are *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* and *Candyman*. As far as the representation of psychotic killers is concerned, there is possibly no other film as disturbing as *Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer*, which is, I must confess, the only film I have expunged from my video collection because I was ashamed that somebody might see it in my home and believe I had enjoyed it. Other films, such as *Se7en* and *Kalifornia*, impressed me deeply with a sense of moral horror at the state the world is in, an impression very similar from the one that *Schindler’s List* produces. I happened to see this film with a Jewish friend, who was certainly appalled by what she was seeing on the screen, in a cinema full of people who, like the two of us, were in tears throughout the projection—this is also the effect that horror may produce.

Other films and novels I have analysed are also fascinating mixtures of horror and sentimentalism. Stephen King’s *Pet Sematary* and *The Dead Zone* are two amazing tear-jerkers, though this may be hard to believe if we take into account King’s reputation as the ‘king’ of horror. There is also much genuine feeling and moving beauty in the stories narrated in *The Man without a Face*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Blade Runner*, *The Hidden*, *Léon*, *The Abyss*, *Enemy Mine* and even *The Terminator 2*—if one can see it. The monster may also be found in a territory born of the intersection of laughter and horror—black comedies such as *An American Werewolf in London* and *Serial Mom* prove that the monster also has a comic side, as do other films much less horrific such as *Gremlins* or *The Mask*.

The monsters of the novel are different from those of film, mainly because their personalities are better developed, whereas, obviously, their image is more blurred. Horror novels cannot aim at achieving the concentrated effect of films, which are usually seen without interruptions, and offer less superficial portraits of the characters than is often implied by those who dislike them. A friend wondered how I could read books with such ugly, lurid covers by which she meant mostly the paperback edition of the genre novels I had selected—in fact, another dissertation could be written about the

artwork employed to market 'genre' novels in contrast to 'mainstream' novels. However, as far as the novels are regarded, I would like to stress the sheer diversity of the monsters in them and the efforts made by novelists in creating imaginary worlds that seduce the reader from the first page. This particular feeling of enjoying a novel so much that one is sorry to finish it has recurred so frequently throughout my reading of the novels I have selected that I would not know which to highlight. Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, Salman Rushdie's *Shame* and Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* are all excellent novels that constantly surprise the reader with their portrait of the monster. Yet, I was especially charmed—this is exactly the word—by the very long novels, averaging between 800 and 900 pages by Robert McCammon (*Swan Song*), Clive Barker (*Imajica*), and Stephen King (*It*), by Dan Simmons' diptych *Hyperion Cantos* and by Terry Pratchett's hilarious *Discworld* series, to which I have become hopelessly addicted.

Obviously, one of the main theses I defend in this dissertation—namely, that monsters are fascinating rather than simply horrific—is necessarily based on my own fascination for some of these monsters and, in some cases, for the hero/ine who confronts him or her. The most fascinating, fictional human monsters are, in my view, Patrick Bateman the hero of *American Psycho* and Francis Urquhart, the hero of Michael Dobbs' trilogy *House of Cards*, *To Play the King* and *The Final Cut*. Catherine Trammell, the villainous heroine of *Basic Instinct* and Alasdair Gray's heroine in *Poor Things*, Bella Baxter, are two of the most fascinating examples of female monstrosity. Among the odd couples formed by a hero/ine and a monster, no doubt that of Ellen Ripley and the 'alien' monster is the most popular, though the one formed by Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter is much more intriguing and captivating. As for the monsters who act together, Mickey and Mallory, the heroes of Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers*, form, no doubt, the most subversive association between two evildoers seen on a cinema screen. There is, however, a worrying shortage of marvellous monsters, which are totally outnumbered by the overwhelming presence of evil monsters of horrific or non-horrific physical appearance. Possibly this scarcity is what makes me feel specially fond of the angelic extraterrestrials of *The Abyss*, whose luminous, enchanting appearance seems to me a challenge to those who are seeking new directions in the representation of monstrosity.

If there is any indisputable conclusion to derive from these observations, which should hopefully also serve as an invitation for my reader to enjoy the following pages, is that the monster may be sometimes horrific, but fascinating is always the right adjective for it.

CHAPTER 1 Fascinating Bodies: The New Iconography of Monstrosity

1.0. Introduction

The new iconography of monstrosity of the last fifteen years is placed at the end of a long tradition in the representation of the monster in the Western world, the roots of which stretch backwards to prehistoric times. The morphology of the new monsters encompasses in its very wide range motifs derived from myth, religion, high art and popular culture. However, what makes the iconography of the contemporary monster unique are three main factors. First, the multiplication of cultural media which serve as vehicles to circulate and popularise the monster's image, second, the proliferation of icons of monstrosity due to the expansion of the cultural market animated by capitalism and, third, the contemporary artists' wish to explore, on the one hand, the limits of the visualization of the monster (and of monstrous violence) and, on the other hand, their wish to question the conventional association of aesthetic pleasure with beauty.

The first part of this chapter reviews the different stages in the historical development of the representation of monstrosity in visual and narrative media since prehistory. This survey is not intended to be an exhaustive examination of the cultural position of the monster and of its iconographical and literary representation throughout the ages, as this would amply surpass the limits of the chapter and even of the whole dissertation. My intention is rather to underline those aspects that are still relevant for the cultural construction of monstrosity and for the visualization of the monster at the end of the twentieth century, and also those that stress the differences and the similarities between the monster of the past and the monster of the present.

The second part of the chapter discusses the cultural preoccupations reflected by the image of the monster and how they echo each other throughout film and the novel. A section is devoted to gender aspects in the iconography of the contemporary monster for two reasons: first, a preoccupation with the monstrous body (in the sense of the prodigious, spectacular body) as an object of desire is central to an understanding of the position of the monster within capitalist postmodernism. Second, the body of the monster—designed to be enjoyed as an spectacle—has much in common with that of the hero: both have become the site for the discussion of the limits of acceptable masculinity at a time when the decadence of patriarchy under the pressure of feminism is forcing men to reconsider their own representation. The second subsection presents an alternative classification of monsters according to the response their image elicits from readers or viewers rather than according to their physical appearance. The nature of the postmodernist monster, often represented as a plastic, protean body of deceiving appearance, expresses on the one hand, the ludic pleasure for transformation typical of a culture such as ours, which values the ability to endlessly change one's public image and, on the other hand, anxieties about the limits of our capacity to recognise the monsters of reality and to survive in a constantly changing cultural environment. The last subsection deals with the rising threshold of the graphic depiction of violence and

horror, as the ability to inflict physical and mental harm seems a more reliable mark of the monster than its unstable bodily appearance. My argumentation proves that, against what is usually believed because of the greater attention usually attracted by films, the strategies to visualize the monster and the violence it causes are similar in film and the novel. The interaction between the monsters of film and the monster of the novel is a subject explored in more depth in Chapter 2.

1.1. Monstrous Imagery: The Sources of the New Iconography of Monstrosity

1.1.1. Monsters of Myth: The Monstrous Goddess and the Heroic Hunter

The most crucial juncture in the history of the evolution of the images of monstrosity is the passage from the stage in which the monsters are images emanating from the fears caused by the creatures of the natural world to the stage in which they become images springing from the depths of the collective (or personal) unconscious. In this second stage the images of monstrosity may be manipulated through myth, religion and art to signify a horrifying power that must be opposed. There is no doubt that images of monsters have accompanied humankind since the beginning of times and that their origin lies buried in the enigmatic remains of the psychology of prehistoric man still present in our collective unconscious. Monsters must have first emerged from the description of wild beasts, magnified by a bragging hunter, or by a terrified survivor of the encounter with the deadly beast, in order to impress an audience sitting around a fire guarding them from the presence of the same predatory beasts in the dark. This would explain why monsters have been and are still typically imagined as horrific creatures of enormous size provided with all the weaponry used by predators: powerful claws, big mouths with huge fangs, great bodily strength and a notorious capacity to hunt by stealth and bring sudden death upon their victims.

Other factors may be the origin of the monstrous images that have evolved with prehistoric man into history. The images of monstrosity provoking reactions ranging from fear to wonder may have arisen from the mistaken perception of animals seen in the dark (maybe just heard and imagined on the basis on the stories heard), the unexpected discovery of hitherto unknown animal species, rare prodigies of nature stranded in isolated evolutionary pockets which have since become extinct, the products of hallucinations or madness, and even childhood fears recalled by adult storytellers interested in bullying unruly children into submission. Nature also offered primitive man another form of monstrosity: that of misshapen animals born with genetic defects and that of monstrous humans, also genetically defective. The bodies of these human beings, recalling the shape of a particular animal, may have been often believed to be the unnatural offspring of the miscegenation between women and animals, a motif basic in the misogynistic myths of the Western world and perhaps also the origin of the traditional association of a tribe with a totemic animal in other parts of the world.

The human capacity to visualize what is being narrated (orally or through the written word) and to further visualize in daydreams and dreams new images based on the perception of the natural environment, on stories once heard, images once seen, and on personal or collective unconscious anxieties, is the key to understanding how the monster comes to life in the human imagination. Nightmares may hold the final clue as to how and why the natural monster became an image full of connotations, a symbol on

occasions, used in myths and other types of folk narratives, such as fairy tales, to process deep concerns of the human soul. However, even though the actual psychological mechanisms used by the monster-maker of the past and that of the present may be the same, what has been radically altered since the rise of individualism is the way in which those mechanisms have been foregrounded, especially in the post-Freud era.

The sources of inspiration for the prehistoric story-teller and myth maker, may have been the same that inspired Mary Shelley and R.L. Stevenson to produce lasting myths for our times: both writers attributed their writing of, respectively, *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), to striking images of monstrosity derived from their nightmares. Yet both did so in an effort to understand how and why they had conceived such monsters, as if there were a primary difference between producing fiction and producing fictional monsters, or as if producing their monsters was something that had to be accounted for before an imaginary tribunal composed of stern judges making a decision on the moral soundness of the monster-maker. In fact, far from being perversions or bizarre deviations from the normal created by abnormal human minds, the monsters are part of how humans have always visualized and still visualize the world. Yet, the self-conscious dissociation of man after the rise of rationalism from the images of monstrosity he has always created and the defamiliarisation with a religious and mythical world that was familiar until barely two centuries ago, are essential elements to understand why despite the popularity and ubiquity of the contemporary images of monstrosity most tend to take them for granted as by-products of the human imagination.

Monsters acquired a mythical status when the prehistoric bragging hunter was elevated to the category of heroic hunter in archaic myth and later transformed into the heroic warrior of classical myth. The wild beast slowly evolved into a symbol of chaotic power that the hero had to defeat in order to ensure his own survival and that of the ordered universe he represented. According to Edith Porada, prehistoric societies started representing evil powers—that is to say, their own fears of pain, sorrow and death—as monsters in order to create the illusion that these could be manipulated. “Gradually” she writes, “a system appears to have been built up in which certain figures represented evil beings while others were devised which were shown to conquer or, at least to control, evil forces”. (1987: 1). In the early Indo-European narratives (oral, but also sometimes illustrated by drawings on rocks) the image of both the monster and the hero was, in principle, conditioned by the geography, climate and fauna of each respective region. This would explain the varied iconography of monstrosity and also the diverse evil powers attributed to each particular monster, in short, the close interdependence between a natural region and its myths. Yet the basic narrative of conflict, confrontation and death of the monster at the hero’s hands and the slow evolution of the combat for survival into a combat in which issues of cosmological magnitude were at stake was the same for all Indo-European cultures and their descendants until our days (Porada, *ibid.*).

The Indo-European worldview was ‘masculine’, as opposed to the ‘feminine’ universe of the agriculturist devoted to the Great Mother Earth since the Paleolithic age. It was shaped by the tragic view of life as an endless struggle for survival in which hunting and war were primary activities (Baring and Cashford, 1993). This lifestyle typical of nomadic tribes of hunters was engendered by, and engendered itself, patriarchal societies which worshipped sky gods, the embodiments of lightning, thunder, fire and air. Their rhythm of life was marked by the sun and not by the moon as happened in matriarchal societies. These were based on the idea that just as the moon’s

four phases include three days of darkness, life's three phases (childhood, adulthood, old age) has a fourth phase, death. In these matriarchal cultures the goddess was the incarnation of the Earth's archetypically female power to give life and also to recycle it by receiving the dead back into her own body. The moon as a symbol of regeneration and the waters from which life originated—the same waters that flow in childbirth—became the main symbols of a goddess under whose rule darkness and light, death and life, were a continuum. In many archaic representations of the goddess she is accompanied by a son-lover whom she has engendered on her own, and whose ritual sacrifice, followed by the goddess' descent to the underworld to retrieve him from death, ensures the repetition of the seasons: winter (the death of the son-lover) leads to spring (his return) and to the renewal of the 'male' power to fertilise Earth and woman in sacred marriage. There are no heroes and no monsters in this idyllic matriarchal universe which, according to the archaeological evidence found in this century, seems to have occupied the Middle East and, above all, the lands of Old Europe (Central Europe and the Balkans, mainly) from 7,000 BC onwards, until patriarchal tribes coming from central Asia and the deserts of north Africa destroyed it about 3,500 BC.

In contrast, for the nomadic tribes—Indo-European and also Semitic—the Earth was a harsh mistress that denied her fruits to the men living in the deserts of northern Africa and the steppes of central Asia. A new mythology in which the hero was identified with the sun, emerging victorious at dawn from the nightly combat with the powers of darkness identified with evil, chaos and the 'feminine', that is to say, with the monster, was developed in the Bronze Age (3250-1250 BC). This accompanied the Indo-European (Aryans) and Semitic invasion and destruction of the matriarchal agriculturist societies of Old Europe and the Middle East, respectively. This new mythology may have sprung from the dissociation of man and Earth typical of nomadic tribes devoted to hunting and later to cattle raising, but the virulence of its misogyny strongly suggests a component of rebellion against the matriarchy of the goddess in which the son-lover is only a secondary figure. During the Iron Age (1250 BC until the birth of Christ) these invaders succeeded in establishing the basis for the replacing of the worship of the goddess by new patriarchal mythologies, such as Greek polytheism or Hebrew monotheism. In the former the goddess was hidden behind the images of the many goddesses subordinated to the patriarchal Zeus; in the latter, the cult of the Earth goddess became the cult of the much less powerful Virgin Mary. There are enough signs of popular resistance throughout the ages against the total loss of the prehistoric goddess to suggest that patriarchy was actually forced to accommodate the goddess within its system, being incapable of totally erasing her figure.

According to Anne Baring and Jules Cashford (op. cit.: 273-298) the goddess was first represented as a monster within a typical mythical narrative of confrontation with a hero in the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish*. This epic was written when the Semitic Amorite Hammurabian dynasty came to power in Babylon by right of conquest, around 1750 BC, and later became the main inspiration behind the mythology framing the three main monotheistic religions: Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The original epic had been forgotten though, and only its discovery in 1848 among the ruins of Asurbanipal's once famed library allowed for the reconstruction of the links between archaic Semitic myths and the religions descending from them. The myth in which the fierce divine hero Marduk slays the ferocious sea serpent Tiamat has been variously interpreted. For some it is a symbolic rendering of the rise of the new Semitic dynasty and the fall of the conquered Babylon; for others, it is a myth derived from an annual ritual in which the hero would represent the force of the spring conquering the flooding waters of the

Mesopotamian Tigris and Euphrates and in which the son-lover would thus usurp the powers of the regenerating Earth represented by the waters. However, as Baring and Cashford put it, not only can all the combats between heroes and dragons in subsequent myths and literature be traced back to this epic but also “the violent image of conquest in the *Enuma Elish* set the paradigm of the Iron Age as one of conflicts between the older mythology of the mother goddess and the new myths of the Aryan and Semitic father gods” (ibid: 275).

The *Enuma Elish* reverses the mythology of the earlier era by replacing the “mother goddess who generates creation as part of herself by a god who ‘makes’ creation as something separate from himself” (ibid: 273). This Babylonian epic narrates a myth that recalls some episodes in the Greek myth of creation, which actually fuses Indo-European motifs with aspects derived from the older Babylonian myth. The similarities are most marked especially as far as the confrontation between the younger and the older generation of gods is concerned. The god Apsu (the waters of heaven) and the goddess Tiamat (the waters of the sea) are originally a single unit which the onset of Creation splits in two halves, one masculine, the other feminine. As husband and wife, Apsu and Tiamat originate several generations of young gods, but Apsu becomes restless and breaks the rules of the sacred marriage by deciding to kill their offspring, against his wife’s claims that destroying what has been created makes no sense. Eventually, a son or grandson, Ea, foils Apsu’s plans, kills the father god and plans Tiamat’s defeat, for which he and his wife Damkina engender the monstrous hero Marduk (he has four eyes, four ears and spouts fire) to be their champion. Proving his innate mastery of the natural elements of the sky—winds, thunder and lightning—Marduk is crowned new king of the gods, while his uncle Anu causes Tiamat to become pregnant by sending evil winds that stir her waters.

The birth of a monstrous brood of sea serpents, among them her son and new consort, Kingu, the owner of the tablets of the law, ensues. However, all are soon exterminated by the mighty Marduk, who takes Kingu’s tablets of the law becoming thus the legitimate patriarchal lawgiver. He also splits the goddess’ carcass into two parts, of which one half becomes heaven and the other earth. Not satisfied yet with this refashioning of original creation, Marduk produces mankind out of Kingu’s blood and institutes a new solar calendar, becoming the ruler of the sun and also of the moon. The image of the life-giving goddess is thus degraded by the new patriarchal ruler and she is literally transformed into a monster, represented as either a sea serpent or dragon, only capable of begetting monsters. The water or sea serpent, formerly used as a phallic symbol of the goddess’ parthenogenetic power to engender life on her own, becomes in this new mythology a symbol of the power of the monstrous goddess to cause death. The son-lover is split into two: the ‘masculine’ hero Marduk who can dissociate himself from Earth and slay her if necessary in order to soar beyond the pull of Earth’s matter, and the ‘feminine’ demon (Kingu) rejected by the hero because he cannot divorce himself from his incestuous mother nor submit to the new law of the patriarchal gods, a point that makes him the ancestor of the serpent of Paradise and of Satan.

Traces of Tiamat’s life and death are to be found in Greek mythology, and from it they reverberate down to Christianity. Hesiod’s *Theogony* (eighth century BC) narrates how the original couple of god and goddess, Ouranus (heaven) and Gaia (earth), beget not only the Titans but also an assorted number of monsters, the Cyclops and the Giants, all of whom are mainly embodiments of the natural elements. Yet another group of apocryphal legends narrates how Gaia, the Earth goddess, breeds a son (Pontus, the sea wave) by herself, a son who becomes her lover. This incestuous liaison between the

Earth goddess and her son-lover in their Greek incarnation is, once more, the origin of a brood of monsters divided in different generations, among whom Cetus, the gigantic sea serpent killed by Perseus and herself the mother of the three Gorgons (including Medusa, another of Perseus' victims), can be found.

Cetus has much in common with Tiamat and becomes later an image that evolves beyond its Greek context, appearing in later Christian iconography as simply the sea monster or 'cetos'. 'Cetos' is the Greek word for 'whale', hence the root of the word cetacean, used to describe a class of sea mammals, but it is also the word used in the *Bible* to name the giant fish that swallows Jonah, presumably an incarnation of the Babylonian Tiamat. As John Boardman (1987: 84) notes, the form, personality, identity and function of the 'cetos' change much from one representation to the other but its diverse images have answered "the iconographic needs of other artists called upon to express visually some otherworldly denizen of the deep, to act in myth, or to threaten gods, heroes, men, or, at the last trump, a selection of mankind", for two millennia and for cultures as diverse as the Celtic and the Hindu, among many others. In time, Tiamat was transformed through the intermediate stage of her 'cetos' image into the source for the dragon killed in Christian imagery either by the archangel St. Michael or by St. George. The latter is a saint whose legend was actually born of the adaptation for Christianity of the myth of the hero's combat with the monster, specifically of the myth narrating Perseus' confrontation with the sea serpent Cetus that threatened Andromeda's life. The Earth goddess as a dragon symbolizing wisdom is a familiar figure in the mythology of the Far East, but she has certainly also inspired the many imaginary monsters populating the seas and feared by seafarers even at the time when Columbus set sail to America. Later, when the exploration of the Earth proved there were no such monsters, Tiamat abandoned the territory of myth and legend to survive in fiction, where she can still be found, as I will show later in this chapter.

The monster slain by the hero in Greek myths is usually unique and seems to exist exclusively "to offer potential heroes the occasion to prove their heroic mettle" (Blanckenhagen, 1987: 85). The solitary monsters of myth and the imaginary tribes of monsters that later become the bases for the Plinian races (see section 1.1.2.) share a great proximity with their geographical environment. The land (or the sea if that is the case) engenders its own particular kind of monster as in the archaic myths, an idea that stresses the connection between mother Earth and her monstrous children. In Greek myth, the monsters are found at specific geographical locations: thus, Thebes is threatened by its enigmatic guardian the Sphynx, whereas Odysseus encounters among others the monsters Scylla and Charybdis guarding a strait he must cross in his voyage. In any case, it is also important to remember that the monsters of Greek myth may also be the hero's counterparts in another sense: the hero is born of the union of a god or a goddess with a mortal, that is to say, he represents humanity reaching for immortality; in contrast, the monster may be born from the unnatural union of woman and animal and it represents the degradation of humankind. The Cretan Minotaur, born to King Minos' wife Pasiphaé and a bull (an animal that had symbolized the power of the goddess' son-lover to renew life in ancient Cretan religion) is the best known instance.

Apart from being an occasion to prove the hero's mettle, the monsters also represent a conundrum for the hero, an enigma that has to be deciphered in order to be destroyed, something which becomes literal in the case of Oedipus' killing of the Sphynx. The monster posits a challenge that hinders the way of the hero towards his ultimate goal, usually fame, though the hero's combat with the monster is hardly ever the main adventure. In fact, the monsters seemingly act as signposts that mark the hero's

way towards fame and immortality. In some cases, it seems that the function of the monster is also to remind the hero of the power of the gods to punish mortals and gods alike with the loss of their natural body: the Gorgon Medusa slain by Perseus was in fact a beautiful demi-goddess who was tragically transformed into a monster because she had had sex with the god Poseidon disobeying Athena's injunction.

It is important to notice that the main heroes of Greek myth—Theseus, Jason, Herakles, Odysseus, Perseus—cannot succeed with the sole help of their masculine cunning and courage: they need further aid from the deeper instinctual levels of the psyche characteristically personified as female, incarnated in the figures of heroines such as Medea, Ariadne, Circe (Baring and Cashford, op. cit.: 294) or in those of the goddesses that protect the heroes, frequently Athena or Aphrodite. From this point of view, the Greek hero appears to be a new incarnation of the goddess' son-lover, although the relationship is split now into two: the hero enjoys the protection of a surrogate 'mother' (a goddess subordinated to the father god Zeus) and the company of the human woman who is his (often betrayed) bride. At any rate, the heroes of Greek myth have little in common with the wave of English-language superheroes that appear at the beginning of the twentieth century. In contrast to the wandering heroes involved in many encounters with monsters and in many affairs with women of Greek myth, twentieth-century heroes tend to be more chaste—even sexually dubious like Superman—and are often haunted by the image of a succession of villainous archenemies in relationships that often seem homoerotic. Women play in the new myths an even more secondary role, more similar to Andromeda's—literally the reward Perseus receives for killing Cetus—than to Athena's or Ariadne's. The contemporary superheroes are popular incarnations of the Nietzschean superman and symbols of imperialistic and nationalistic power rather than men with a tragic sense of fate. The monsters are still now the heroes' *raison d'être* but the gods have been replaced by a Manichaean morality very far from the Greek idea of fate.

The monsters of myth and the idea of monstrosity per se were of no interest for the Greek philosophers, yet natural monsters, that is to say, genetically defective animals and humans, attracted the attention of Aristotle. In his treatise *The Generation of Animals* (fourth century BC) Aristotle describes natural monsters or 'terata' as the result of accidents occurred in the process of generation. In his misogynistic view, woman was but a vessel in which man's seed reproduced itself, so that any failure to replicate the father's image from the birth of daughters to that of 'terata' had to be attributed to the mother. The idea that women only contributed the womb to the process of forming a new human being persisted for centuries and so did the attribution to the mother of the child's possible defects. Empedocles blamed woman's unbound imagination and her inability to control the emotions awakened by the sight of impressive images for the birth of the monstrous child; in his view, the 'terata' reproduced undesirable images that had impressed the mother's weak imagination and had thus erased the genetic contribution of the father (Huet, op. cit.: 1- 5).

Even though men like Aristotle were not fond of studying the monsters of myth, in fact the misogyny of the Greek mythological explanation for the birth of the monster was replicated, as can be seen, by no less misogynistic proto-scientific theories about the causes of abnormal births of monstrous babies. The origin of imaginary and natural monsters had been attributed to woman by men who had kept for themselves either the role of the mythical monster slayer or that of the scientist. Courage, intelligence and reason defined as 'masculine' attributes were thus aligned against the chaotic, even evil, female monstrous power to create life. This situation was to erase from the collective

memory the existence of the Earth goddess and to lay the foundations for an association between monstrosity and woman that is beginning to be contested only recently.

1.1.2. The Mythical Monster of Literature and the Plinian Races

The transition of the monster of Greek myth to later cultures begins with the dissociation of Greek mythology from its religious context, a process that, according to Richard Buxton (1994: 51), became definitively fixed in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (9 AD). Buxton stresses the fact that mythical images including those of monsters were transmitted in Greece through the oral retelling of the myths but that they were also ubiquitous in coins, pottery, paintings, sculpture and architectural decoration representing scenes from the myths. The myths were, thus, from the beginning a source of endless inspiration for artists in both the literary field (in oral and later written form) and the visual arts (first religious, later profane). Paradoxically, the early presence of the monster of Greek myth in the arts eased its passage into the domain of 'pure' art once Greek religion was lost.

In fact, the image of the monster can only be understood as the product of a constant interaction between language and images, the sacred and the profane. In order to understand how the monster evolves from myth and religion into art it is essential to stress the significant difference between the decontextualised myth as it appears in the arts of the cultures that borrow it from Greece—and for which the myth lacks a sacred dimension—and the myth as it was in the context of Greek religion. In its passage from religion to the art of other cultures the myth is literally profaned, made unfit for belief, and the monster is partly or totally deprived of its original mythological, ritualistic and religious meaning. The myths narrating the confrontations of heroes and monsters persist in the culture of the Western world first, because they refer back to archetypes emanating from the collective unconscious—which evolves with history—and, second, because the imaginary monster is perceived as the interface between art and belief, and also, in psychological terms, between the conscious and the unconscious. Linked or not to a particular religious cult, the enigmatic iconography of the monsters appears to mean something, something rooted in a transcendent reality beyond art that the contemplation of the artistic object may help reach. Gilbert Lascaut (1973: 20–21) speaks of 'm forms' in reference to the monsters of religious art that combine appealing aesthetic values with an intriguing dimension that inspires awe and a religious sense. These must be distinguished from the natural monsters or 'terata', who attract the morbid gaze of the onlooker, and from the monsters at the margins of religious art, whose function is to please the eye (mental or physical) with the evidence of the richness of the human imagination.

Since the monster's body as represented in religious art—the 'm forms'—can signify the existence of a supernatural world beyond the natural world and beyond the world of pure aesthetic values, it is obvious that the monster has an enormous potential within religious iconography. This is not confined to polytheistic religions grounded on myth: Christianity itself did not miss the productive association of the monster with the Devil. Before the enigmatic image of the gargoyle decorating a Gothic cathedral or a painting of St. Michael slaying the dragon that represents Satan, the believer and the non-believer alike are meant to feel wonder in the double sense of aesthetic admiration for the horrific and of psychological uncertainty in the face of the monstrous. The monster of religious art challenges the believer to consider what ultimate intention may

move a divine creator capable of creating monsters; the non-believer is indirectly invited to consider why the existence of the supernatural domain where the monsters thrive, Hell, seems more perceptible for Christianity than that of Heaven.

Yet not only the imaginary monster of pagan or Christian iconography connotes the existence of a supernatural world. In fact, the imaginary monster came to share part of its cultural domain with the natural monster. The 'terata', which were for the Greeks nothing but accidents of natural generation, later became portents for the Romans, prodigies that showed in a mysterious way the gods' intentions. The Romans' 'monstra' are messages from the gods that both admonish mortals ('monere', the Latin root of the word monster means 'to warn') and that are worth showing ('monstrare' means in Latin 'showing') for the sense of awe and wonder they inspire. From this point of view, the apparent exploitation of the 'monstra' in the American freak show of the nineteenth century appears to be a belated profane version of the Roman sacred view of the prodigy. The spectator of the freak show satisfied his or her curiosity but also indulged in experiencing the fear of the unknown in the presence of human beings whose bodies had been seemingly shaped not by sheer accident but by God's strange designs. The fear of what cannot be understood, which informs man's attitude towards the natural and the imaginary monster, is no doubt the fear of an enigmatic dimension of life outside normality only glimpsed through the body of the monster.

Apart from influential ideas about the mythical monster and the natural monster, Greco-Roman antiquity also legated to the Middle Ages the notion of the Plinian races. On the basis of Homer, Ctesias (early fifth century BC), Megasthenes (fourth century BC), and the apocryphal "Letter of Alexander to Aristotle on the Wonders of India", the Roman Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD) included in his *Natural History* an exhaustive description of the imaginary monstrous races believed to populate faraway regions of the Earth. In the ethnocentric panorama of ancient Greece, the other races—the 'barbarians'—were imagined as different species of monsters shaped by the particular geographical environment where they lived, returning to the old idea of the Earth as a breeder of monsters. The tales of travellers professing to have seen these strange races, passed off as genuine accounts of the reality of the world, were, however, soon parodied by writers such as the Greek Lucian of Samosata (125–192 AD) whose fantasies *True History* and *Icaromenipus* were the first to narrate the encounters of space voyagers with alien races populating the moon. Lucian de Samosata's work, a fantasy populated by monsters outside the domain of myth, has been hailed as the ancestor of contemporary science fiction, though its influence was only felt from 1634 onwards when it was translated into English, anticipating the vogue for imaginary space voyages such as those of the French writer Cyrano de Bergerac (1657, *Voyage dans la Lune*).

The original races described by Pliny grew in number throughout the Middle Ages as more and more bizarre traits were ascribed to them, thanks to, rather than despite, the tales of travellers. The Plinian races can be seen in numerous illustrations of medieval books and in many medieval maps, populating the abundant patches of 'terra incognita' and the unexplored margins of the Earth. Curiously enough, the Plinian races persisted in the geographical imagination of medieval man even when actual encounters with non-white races had taken place. Travellers—pilgrims, Crusaders, tradesmen—wrote abundantly about what they saw but either because they feared to contradict the authority of venerated texts or for other reasons, the illusion that the people they met were actually members of the strange races persisted even against the grain of the evidence provided by their own eyes. Like the horrific sea monsters, the Plinian races survived the first wave of imperialist conquest of other lands inaugurated by Columbus

in 1492 and continued to be a fundamental part of the worldview of most people until the eighteenth century when they definitively passed into the domain of fiction and were no longer literally believed in. John Friedman (op. cit.: 24) justifies this state of matters with an argument that could also satisfactorily explain the appeal of science fiction today and the popular belief in the actual existence of alien races:

First, there appears to have been a psychological need for the Plinian peoples. Their appeal to medieval men was based on such factors as fantasy, escapism, delight in the exercise of the imagination, and—very important—fear of the unknown. If the monstrous races had not existed, it is likely that people would have created them

Friedman suggests in addition that some of the races could be based on the wrong identification of actual ethnic groups such as some African aboriginals, yet on the whole it can be said that medieval travellers seem to have behaved remarkably like modern tourists, who only see what the Michelin guide read at home lets them see. Claude Kappler (op cit.: 115) ironically quips that “la rencontre avec les monstres reste une pierre de touche de l’authenticité d’une expérience de voyage: qui n’a pas vu de monstres n’a pas voyagé!” This could explain why man’s first voyage to the moon in 1969 was such a disappointing event for many, and why so many people still believe it never took place: there were no monsters to be seen on the TV screen.

Ironically, the contemporary descendants of the Plinian races imagined by countless science-fiction writers following the example set by Jules Verne’s (1928–1905) and H.G. Wells’ (1866–1946) pioneering scientific romances may have pre-empted the need for space travel. Since the alien monsters are seemingly not to be found anywhere in the Solar System, humankind seems resigned to discovering them in fiction, though this does not mean that belief in them has been completely lost. Novels and films often explain the inevitably outlandish morphology of the extraterrestrial races on the basis of fanciful pseudoscientific Darwinian theories about the influence of the environment in the evolution of the extraterrestrial races, which seems to be but an updated version of the old idea justifying the anatomy of the Plinian monsters on the basis of their natural environment. The many testimonies of UFO sightings and of abductions by extraterrestrials, together with scientists’ serious search for intelligent life elsewhere in the universe, prove that the Plinian races have not been fully integrated into the domain of fiction and that they still inform an important part of mankind’s living imagination within the current mythical and scientific paradigms.

A preoccupation that emerged in relation to the Plinian races after the rise of Christianity was what place they had to be allocated within God’s creation. St. Augustine (sixth century AD) devoted Book 16 of *The City of God* to arguing that far from being accidents of nature, as Aristotle proposed, or failures of God’s power to control his creations, the natural monsters and the monstrous races could only be part of God’s enigmatic plan of creation and should be respected for that reason. Unlike the Greeks and the Romans, who practised infanticide in order to eliminate the ‘terata’, Christians abominate such practice, which forced medieval theologians to consider why monstrous children were born at all, how they fit within the master plan of God’s creation and whether they owned a soul that could be worthy of salvation. The theological reflection on monstrous children was extrapolated to the monstrous races: St. Augustine concluded that both were human and worthy of salvation, a ‘normal abnormality’ of which only God could know the intention. This sympathetic attitude and

the evangelical interest in their spiritual welfare was challenged by a second negative point of view: “rather than merely manifesting the variety of the Creation, the monstrous races were seen as cursed and degenerate, a warning to other men against pride and disobedience” (Friedman, op.cit.: 88). Homiletic writers such as Paulinus of Nola associated the black Ethiopians—originally one of the Plinian races—with sin, explaining that the Ethiopians “were burned black not by the sun but by vices and sin” (ibid: 65). The image of the monstrous human Other started connoting, thus, not simply difference but inferiority deserving only condemnation, a point essential to an understanding of the tensions between racist colonialism and the evangelical message preached by those missionaries who were the faithful followers of St. Augustine’s humane view of the other races.

1.1.3. The Demonization of the Monster in Christianity

As I have already argued, the monstrous goddess Tiamat is the foundation on which the development of the iconography of monstrosity used by Judaism and later Christianity lies. She generated The *Old Testament*’s images of monstrosity as the ‘cetos’: Jonah’s whale, but also Leviathan and Behemoth derive from her. In *The New Testament*, Tiamat’s image as a dragon is taken by John in the *Book of Revelation* (circa 70 AD) and interpreted as the Beast defeated by St. Michael. The Beast, an incarnation of Satan or the Devil, is according to the *Apocrypha*, a fallen angel who dared disobey God (the version later followed by Milton) or, alternatively, one of the Nephilim—a race of angels—punished by God for having had sexual intercourse with women. I have already noted that the Devil seems to be the Christian incarnation of the old goddess’ son-lover, a version of masculinity fallen because it cannot reject the materialism embodied by the mother goddess. The darkness, chaos and evil associated with night and the goddess become the domain of the masculine Devil and she is degraded to the point of becoming a secondary product of God’s creation of man, Eve, born not of the clay with which Adam is fashioned by the father god, but from Adam’s rib.

The Devil enters Judaism from Mazdaism, a religion developed by Zoroaster (sixth century BC) in Persia. Zoroaster preached a view of the universe based on the eternal confrontation between the twin opposite principles of light (represented by Ahura Mazda) and darkness (Ahriman). According to Zoroaster’s religion, the final victory of Ahura Mazda over the reign of darkness could only be secured with the believer’s unconditional support of the principle of good. Zoroaster’s teachings, which were available to the Jews exiled in Babylon through his book Avesta, can be said to fit in neatly within the much older Semitic Babylonian myths about the deposition of the goddess. Ahura Mazda would represent the patriarchal Aryan-Semitic sky god, whereas Ahriman might well be the goddess, associated by patriarchy with darkness and evil. However, Ahriman is not said to be specifically female. In fact, the figure it inspires within Judaism, Satan (‘the adversary’), is understood to be masculine. As I see it, this is one of the most intriguing points in the patriarchal construction of evil: even though evil is initially identified with femaleness in figures such as Tiamat, a parallel trend seems to run by which evil is identified with maleness or with a form of deviant masculinity more or less closely associated to femininity. Logic dictates that Satan should be female in Christianity, which lacks a female powerful entity; yet Satan is unmistakably male despite his association with women, beginning with Eve herself. It seems to me that the pull of the archaic myth of the heroic hunter’s combat with the

beast—a myth of which the confrontation between Marduk and Tiamat derives—resurfaced in the crucial process of the construction of Satan. God’s eternal adversary could only be envisaged by the patriarchal culture that created him as a similarly powerful—male—deity of darkness.

The myth of the fall of man narrated in the *Old Testament* explains how evil first appeared. Yet, in this myth the Devil has not yet taken the shape of the apocalyptic Beast. In fact, there is no mention in Genesis of the Devil, but simply of the serpent, understood to be Satan himself only when Satan played a more prominent part in the *New Testament*. The serpent is, however, the symbol of the fallen goddess’ own ‘phallus’, the symbol of her independence to create life on her own, rather than a masculine phallus. Eve, whose name means the ‘mother of all living’, is herself a degraded version of the Earth goddess deprived of her power to give life; Eve is so far from the goddess herself that she even fails to recognise the serpent as her natural ally. Eve’s temptation and the sin she commits when disobeying and tempting Adam to eat the forbidden fruit are the excuse patriarchy used to prompt the final surrender of the goddess. The patriarchal sky God initially separated the oblivious Eve (the goddess) from her power to create, symbolized by the serpent; when the serpent attempted a reunion, which must liberate both from God’s rule and must also persuade Adam to abandon the domain of his own father, God reacts by punishing Eve with her total subordination to Adam. Adam himself is punished for having sided with woman (or the goddess) rather than with God; Adam’s resentment of God’s rejection is ultimately, the reason why misogyny arises: his fear of not deserving God’s love leads him and the patriarchy he represents to hate woman. The Earth mother and the human mother who represents her are consequently degraded to the level of matter: interestingly, both ‘mother’ and ‘matter’ derive from the same Latin word, ‘mater’. The serpent sentenced by God to crawl on its belly and to be the eternal enemy of woman’s sons signifies woman’s earthly nature, which is incapable of rising spiritually above the Earth’s material world. When the serpent is finally associated with Satan, it comes to signify man’s unmanly (or feminine) side: that attached to materialism and woman, which is incapable of soaring far from the earth’s material grip—also from women’s—towards the spiritual domain of the patriarchal sky god.

From the thirteenth century onwards, the cultural climate of Europe was invaded by the demons imported from the East possibly by the Crusaders and by a generalisation of the presence of Satan, who had actually played a rather minor role in the construction of Christianity. The Devil and Hell are actually elements that enter first Judaism and then Christianity via the popular imagination rather than from the sacred scriptures, despite the influence of Mazdaism. Before the Middle Ages, the imaginary monsters, including the Plinian races, were, basically, prodigies which had a place in nature, no matter how bizarre they may seem to us. The Plinian races shared a cultural space with the ‘terata’, as I have shown, and also with the fabulous beasts of the medieval bestiaries, which were rather fanciful representations of the animals seen by the medieval travellers. Gothic cathedrals were also rich with the imagery of all kinds of monsters represented in sculptures, painting and stained-glass windows. Yet, in the late Middle Ages, the Devil, Claude Kappler writes (op.cit.: 254) was marked as a monster, while “le monstre se fait diabolique aussi souvent que possible et la vie s’imprègne d’un monstreux-diabolique omniprésent qui s’impose par une sorte d’évidence”. The representations of the Devil as a monster proliferated while woman and the Devil converged once again in this demonisation of life around the fifteenth century, a period of renewed misogyny.

The enduring cult of the Virgin Mary compensated somehow for the loss of the old goddess but after a period in which the cult of Mary was particularly strong (the twelfth and thirteenth centuries), the Church launched a formidable attack against women, centred on the figure of the witch, which was later complemented by the Protestant rejection of the worship of the Virgin Mary. Two Dominican priests, Sprenger (himself a devoted admirer of the Virgin Mary) and Kraemer were empowered by the Pope to set up a commission of enquiry into witchcraft, from which the classical handbook of the Inquisition, the *Malleus Malleficarum*, emerged in 1487, going through nineteen editions in three hundred years, as long as the Inquisition survived. The witch was probably an independent, eccentric, wise or simply unpopular woman said to derive her alleged supernatural powers from sexual intercourse with the Devil. The Virgin Mary was, in contrast, a figure too close to the goddess for the comfort of those who exclusively venerated the patriarchal father god. The attack against both figures is somehow complementary: Catholics and Protestants alike feared the witch because she appeared to have been empowered by her contact with a male supernatural entity; the Protestants denied the status of the Virgin Mary as a woman who had been granted the power to make her son divine by God and reduced her to the level of ordinary womanhood. The point in both cases was to reject the powerful woman regardless of whether her power was evil, as in the witch's case, or good, as in the Virgin's, and to distinguish between two male sources of power: one superior, God's, because it does not need woman; the other inferior, Satan's, because it uses woman's willing collaboration to lead men astray, away from God's spiritual dominion.

Several main trends converge in the medieval and late medieval representation of the Devil. In medieval art the Devil was often represented as the apocalyptic Beast: red eyes, a red mouth with huge fangs and tongue, fur or scales varying in coloration from green to black, horns, bat wings unlike the bird wings of the angels, a long tail, a forked tongue, cloven feet and always a muscular body that seems sometimes reptilian and sometimes human. However, representations of the Devil as the apocalyptic Beast are mixed with representations of him as the serpent or the dragon derived from Tiamat, especially whenever the Devil is represented as St. Michael's victim. Another typical image of the Devil is that associated with the image of the Greek god Pan and with the image of the satyr; the representation of the Devil as a horned satyr, half-human half-he-goat, is perhaps the Devil's most popular image. However, the images are extremely mixed. In an exhibition of Italian Renaissance and Baroque images of angels, I came across an image of St. Michael killing a beast, or Devil, which was a typical horned satyr from the waist up and a two-legged sea serpent (if that is conceivable) from the waist down.

Yet, since Satan is above all, the tempter, and since woman has been traditionally seen as a temptress because of Eve's sin, the image of woman has been demonised and woman has come to represent the monstrosity associated in the late Middle Ages with the Devil. In the misogynistic view of the late Middle Ages woman and the Devil share an uncanny ability to metamorphose that is used to seduce and trap men into sin and damnation (Kappler, op. cit.: 119). Both the metamorphic qualities of the late medieval Devil and the early medieval iconography of the apocalyptic Beast have been inherited by the shape-shifting monsters of the twentieth century, though it can also be said that the passion for transformation attributed to the evil seductress survives in the late twentieth-century universe of the female film star and the female top-model. Seduction has ceased being a demonic pursuit; we live now in a hedonistic world in which everybody—male or female—is expected to constantly transform his or her

image so as to result attractive. Yet the figure of the demonic woman has not been completely lost. Her last popular incarnation was the 1920s and 1930s screen vamp, herself the immediate heiress of the demonic woman of Victorian Decadence. The screen vamp still endures though she is now a figure positioned halfway between the misogynistic representation of women and the wish-fulfilment fantasies of women themselves. Even though the Devil may have receded to the background as belief ebbs, the image of the powerful woman is still given demonic undertones in the late twentieth century. Nonetheless, the witch and the femme fatale are no longer derided images of woman: in fact, some women are using these demonic or pseudo-demonic images to gain popularity or to subvert the patriarchal disempowerment of women.

The split of woman between the demonic temptress and the virginal angel—the witch and Mary, Eve and Dante’s Beatrice—shows that extreme misogyny and its counterpart, exacerbated idealism, actually refer to man’s split psyche rather than to woman’s reality. The myth of Faustus, especially in Christopher Marlowe’s version (1604), makes temptation and damnation an issue between two males, Faustus and Mephistopheles, in which woman plays a minor role. The serpent that tempted Eve, Faustus says, “may be saved, but not Faustus” (V, ii, 40). Faustus, the man beyond salvation is tempted not so much by the Devil as by his own lust for knowledge and also by his lust for Helen of Troy’s silent beauty, her silence being a sign that woman has become simply an empty icon in man’s confrontation with himself. In fact, by rebelling against the fact that choosing knowledge means choosing damnation, Faustus follows the path taken by the serpent, that is to say, by the goddess, against the patriarchal God’s overzealous monopoly of wisdom. Man’s real adversary turns out to be God himself and not the Devil Mephistopheles, who can only tempt those men already tempted by their own aspirations to surpass God’s wisdom.

Apart from the iconography of monstrosity of religious art, the representation of the ‘terata’ and the Plinian races, the centuries between the birth of Christ and the emergence of the modern world legate to the twentieth-century other images of monstrosity, mainly derived from literature and painting. The pagan world of the Nordic sagas and Christianity become fused in the Old English epic *Beowulf* (eight century AD) in which the ancient goddess and her son-lover reappear as the evil monster Grendel and his mother. The exaltation of the heroic monster slayer is replaced in *Beowulf* by a grimmer worldview, as the hero gains with his exploits an uncertain glory that leaves a bitter aftertaste—a motif constantly exploited in recent fiction. The epic world of the Nordic sagas is also behind the work that made fantasy literature respectable in the twentieth century, J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–55), and behind the many novels derived from the popularisation of Tolkien’s work in the 1960s, especially the ‘sword and sorcery’ subgenre.

Beowulf itself inspired John Gardner to write his novel *Grendel* (1972), which, as its title indicates, retells the epic from the point of view of the ferocious monster. He is presented as a victim of a cruel world molded by his unstoppable, instinctive urge to kill and by men’s brutal idea of heroism. Instead of poetry exalting the values of the patriarchal warrior, *Grendel* offers a reflection on the meaning of cruelty, suggesting that the real monster is not the predator hunted down by the warrior, but the warrior thirsting for fame and glory. Thus, in *Grendel* Gardner reverses the traditional values of epic poetry, questioning hero worship in patriarchal societies and denouncing with this allegory the false sense of heroism exploited by the American government in Vietnam. In a sense, Gardner’s novel is the first epic narrative to openly side with the monster after Milton’s unconscious support of the Devil’s party in *Paradise Lost*, as Blake saw

it. Yet, unlike Milton's Satan, Gardner's *Grendel* has no moral grandeur whatsoever; he is a thinking predator who elicits sympathy and disgust in equal measure. Gardner can be said to return thus to the archaic world of the myth of the hunter after thousands of years of having listened to the same narrative of the victorious confrontation of the hero with the monster. His novel discloses that the hero always won because the monster had been silenced.

This survey of the demonisation of the monster cannot be complete without a reference to the text about Christian Hell that has inspired most illustrators: Dante's *Inferno*, the most popular section of his *Divine Comedy* (1304- 1321). The fact that Dante's description of Purgatory and Heaven have ceased inspiring artists whereas his description of Hell still does—as, for instance, in David Fincher's film *Se7en* (1995) in which the psychopathic monster is a fervent reader of Dante's *Inferno*—is in itself a telling comment on the immense appeal that the idea of a monstrous domain populated by evil demons has for the human imagination. In comparison, the iconography of Heaven, despite the many images of angels produced by artists throughout the centuries and despite their current vogue in the USA, appears to be tinged by a certain banality, perhaps a bland sentimentality, that seems to prevent it from carrying as much forceful meaning as that of Hell.

Even today, one of the most important sources of inspiration for contemporary iconographers of Hell and the monster is the work of Hieronimus Bosch (1450-1516). His carnivalesque, already ironic use of the monster and his bizarre view of Hell and its monsters of dislocated anatomy have found their most genuine inheritors in the work of surrealist painters such as Salvador Dalí. However, unlike Dalí, who portrays the monster as an almost pathological extension of the artist's soul within a Romantic tradition, Bosch belongs to a different artistic paradigm in which the artists' monster cannot be properly read as a product of his personal psychology but as an image that carries a transpersonal significance grounded on religion and on its links with all the previous iconography of monstrosity. Since we are no longer familiar with the iconography of Christian Hell, we now see in Bosch's monsters mainly signs of the artist's enigmatic personality. However, our iconographical blindness should not obscure the fact that Bosch's main intention was not to portray the monsters of his own soul but monsters that could be 'recognised' by all his contemporaries as those of Christian Hell.

1.1.4. The Humanisation of the Monster: From Caliban to the Gothic Villain

The Tempest (1611-12), one of Shakespeare's last plays, includes in its cast of characters the monster Caliban and the spirit Ariel. To a certain extent, *The Tempest* can be read as yet another version of the deposition of the archaic Earth goddess and her son-lover by a patriarchal god: the death of the witch Sycorax leaves her heir Caliban, the offspring of her liaison with a devil, unprotected before the arrival of the magician Prospero, who takes possession of Caliban's island and enslaves both him and the spirit Ariel. Prospero attributes to Sycorax the power to control the moon (V, i, 269-271) and although Caliban does not go so far, he tells Stephano and Trinculo how his mother had taught him to worship the moon (II, ii, 137). The implication is that the power of the woman-witch is linked to that of the Earth goddess and her nocturnal domain and that Caliban is not fit to enter Prospero's less materialistic, more spiritual domain of masculine wisdom because he is too close to the subversive model of feminine wisdom

represented by his mother. Actually, the many references to Caliban's materialism, his incapacity to rise above his native earth and the fact that he might be the son of earth and the sea (half-fish, half-man, as Trinculo describes him, (II, ii, 24)) put Caliban in the long tradition of monstrous sons of the forgotten goddess Tiamat. Caliban can be said to be a monster not only because he is said to be misshapen but also because by alienating Prospero's initial moderate sympathy with the obscure episode of Miranda's attempted rape, he misses the chance to find a surrogate father that can guide him in the domain of sanctioned masculinity.

Despite his constant shape-shifting and his non-human nature, nobody regards Ariel as a monster. This is due, first, to the fact that Ariel belongs to the implicitly masculine world of the spirit—hence his bearing an angel's name—while Caliban appears to be a monstrous emanation of the feminine domain of matter. Second, what distinguishes Ariel from Caliban is an issue of capital importance in the myth of the fall of man, namely, obedience: Ariel, who has refused to carry out the witch's orders, has been deprived of his freedom by Sycorax, but is later released by Prospero to be finally rewarded with his regained freedom for being a good, loyal servant to the magician. In contrast, Caliban, who is faithful to his mother's teachings and memories and refuses to obey the magician, is punished with the loss of his domain and with slavery, especially after the episode in which he tries to organize a blundering coup d'état against Prospero's tyranny. Ariel's reward and Caliban's punishment suggest that the same quality of loyalty can be read differently by the patriarchal god represented by the magician Prospero; Prospero's patriarchal rule rather than the extraordinary nature of Ariel and Caliban ultimately determines who the monster is.

The few indications in the text about Caliban's physical appearance are confusing enough so as to have been diversely interpreted in each staging of the play. Prospero describes Caliban as "a freckled whelp, hag-born—not honoured with / a human shape" (I.ii, 281-82). In any case, despite Prospero's disgust, the feelings that this grotesque monster awaken are diverse and range from the compassion felt by Miranda, the only woman in the cast, to the mockery with which the others receive him, especially Trinculo and Stephano. Be that as it may, he is not a horrific monster that elicits fear from the onlooker. To further complicate the visualization of Caliban's body as Shakespeare conceived it, Miranda refers to him as a member of a "vile race" (I, ii, 358), which leads us to the matter of how Caliban is related to the Plinian races and, by extension, to colonialism.

At a given point, Gonzalo narrates to Alonso his encounter with Prospero and his daughter, whom he takes for members of some fabulous race of islanders; to reinforce his argument he tells Alonso about the increasing number of reports brought by travellers proving the actual existence of strange races, such as that of the men whose heads stand in their breast (III, iii, 48), that is to say, the Blemmyae, one of the Plinian races. Even though Shakespeare wrote at a time when the exploration of the globe was well under way, the belief in the Plinian races was still strong and *The Tempest* is not the only play by Shakespeare in which they are alluded to. *Othello's* tales about his own encounter with the strange races are so fascinating for Desdemona that she cannot help falling in love with this experienced, seasoned traveller (*Othello*, I, iii, 128-170). Among others, Othello has met the Plinian Anthropophagi or Cannibals, whom Columbus thought to have discovered in the native inhabitants of the central islands of America, placed on a sea he called Caribbean. This denomination suggests that Caliban's name is but a metathesis of the word Cannibal, from which Caribbean derives.

This interpretation has led critics to identify Caliban with the native Americans dispossessed of their lands by the colonialists, despite the implausibility that the paths of the Algerian Sycorax and the Neapolitan Prospero would cross in an Atlantic and not a Mediterranean island. Yet, in the 1960s and 1970s Caliban was in a certain sense vindicated as a symbol of the oppression of coloured people by their white masters under colonial rule and was often played by actors of races other than white. The paradox of this reading of Caliban is that it totally reverses the disempowered position of Caliban under Prospero's imperialistic rule. Caliban, the monster designed to set off Miranda's purity and, hence, to elicit contempt from the audience, has received little by little more and more sympathy, finally becoming a symbol of colonialist oppression.

The identification of Caliban with the Caribbean has not been, of course, the only interpretation of Caliban's physical appearance since the seventeenth century. He was then seen mainly as a monster in the moral sense of the word: a savage of grotesque physical appearance inspired only by vice and opposing the beneficial forces of civilization represented by Prospero. The eighteenth century saw Caliban as a kind of fallen noble savage at a point when the Plinian races were giving way to the idealised noble savage of the Enlightenment; accordingly, more emphasis was put on Caliban's potential virtues on the grounds of his final acknowledgement of the mistake committed in trying to depose Prospero. During the Romantic period *The Tempest* was re-examined by some from the point of view of the monster—perhaps because of the influence of Milton's *Paradise Lost*—and Prospero was first interpreted as Caliban's unfair oppressor, a view still popular today. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Caliban was often represented as the Darwinian missing link, bespeaking fears of involution and miscegenation. Later there came, as I have noted, Caliban's identification with the native Americans conquered by white Europeans.

However, one of the most recent representations of Caliban—in Peter Greenaway's beautiful film *Prospero's Books* (1991)—presents the monster as a beautiful dancing satyr (fully human except for the tiny horns sprouting from his head) in a role played by dancer Michael Clark. Unlike all the other characters, this naked, supple, elegant Caliban cannot seemingly cease touching the ground as he moves, which recalls, once more, his association with matter, his mother and the feminine. Shakespeare's enigmatic monster is nonetheless used by Greenaway to challenge traditional ideas about monstrosity, within a line followed by many other contemporary artists. Caliban, the precursor of the “countless beauty-loving monsters including the Hunch-back of Notre Dame and the Phantom of the Opera as well as the Creature from the Black Lagoon and Kong” (Hawkins, op. cit.: 122), becomes in Greenaway's film a narcissistic monster himself: rather than Miranda (whose name means the one to be admired, or looked at), Caliban is the one who fascinates the spectator's gaze.

Following perhaps the trend set by John Gardner's *Grendel*, a recent novel has also given the monster Caliban a voice. Tad Williams' *Caliban's Hour* (1994) retakes Shakespeare's story twenty years later. It narrates how Caliban traces Prospero and Miranda to their native Italy where he finally confronts her—Prospero is already dead—to tell her his view of the past events involving both and to exact revenge for his ill-treatment with her death. This Caliban is not born a monster, neither physically nor morally, but is made one by Prospero and his daughter. Williams completely reverses the episode of Miranda's attempted rape to transform it into a turning point in Caliban's life: not Miranda but Caliban is the one who loses his innocence when, disgusted by her own attraction towards him, she falsely accuses him of having raped her. Prospero's rejection and the severe beating to which he subjects his servant are the actual reasons

why the hitherto happy Caliban becomes a moral and physical monster. Yet his monstrosity does not prevent Miranda's daughter, Giulietta, who has secretly watched the interview between her mother and the visitor, from choosing to elope with him rather than accept the marriage of convenience arranged by her parents. To Giulietta, Caliban's island is a promise of freedom; to Caliban, the chance to possess her body and soul are enough satisfaction for the suffering that Prospero and Miranda caused him.

Williams' novel supposes, thus, that Caliban is finally empowered to populate his island with his and Giulietta's children. In this way he can finally satisfy a desire first arisen with his innocent admiration of Miranda's beauty. Both in Shakespeare's play and in Williams' novel Caliban's grotesque anatomy encloses in fact a human soul that rebels against the prohibition to enjoy beauty and to reproduce himself, though it has taken almost four hundred years to respond with sympathy to Caliban's demand for love. Two centuries after the first performance of *The Tempest*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) still made a similar point about the injunction put on the nameless monster by his master Victor Frankenstein. Frankenstein awakens the monster's desire for revenge which leads to tragedy not only with his neglect but also with the destruction of the monstrous mate that he is fashioning for his Adam, an act that by which Frankenstein denies his monster the right to reproduce himself in the same way that Prospero denies Caliban's.

The monster's tragedy in Milton *Paradise Lost* (1667), a text which greatly influenced Mary Shelley's novel, is of quite a different sign. Unlike Caliban and Frankenstein's creature, Satan has been born an angel (Lucifer) and not a horrific monster. His tragedy is, therefore, the loss of his status as an angel and not simply his being a monster. Far from being a creature closely linked to matter as Caliban is, Milton's Lucifer is forced to enter for the first time the domain of matter and monstrosity (Chaos or Hell) as a punishment for having disobeyed the masculine, patriarchal rule of God. The horror of the angel robbed of his beauty is a narcissistic type of horror, which shows that man has finally severed the ties binding him to the Earth goddess to enter a new patriarchal paradigm in which two types of masculinity—one evil and disloyal to God, the other good and loyal—are confronted. However, the goddess still survives in Milton's epic as Sin, Satan's own daughter-lover, sprung armed from his own head as Athena sprang from Zeus'. Sin is Eve's monstrous counterpart, for both are born of fathers who create them directly or indirectly in their own image. Yet if Eve is a degraded image of the goddess, Sin is even more degraded. The couple formed by the goddess and her son becomes in Milton's epic the incestuous couple formed by Satan and her daughter; she is, like Tiamat and Gaia, the mother of a brood of monsters, but, unlike her predecessors, Sin plays but a minor role in the confrontation of materialistic with spiritual masculinity. In short, all traces of female power have been finally swept away; what is more, the distance mediating between the male monster and the subordinated female monster allows Milton to redefine the characteristics traditionally attributed to the Devil. The abjection associated with the female monster gives way, thus, to the aesthetics of the sublime associated with the male monster.

When Satan awakes in Hell signs of his former angelic morphology are still visible—he is winged, armoured and magnificently huge, a veritable titan (Book 1, 193-209). Yet his scarred face, faded cheeks, darkened brows and cruel eyes (Book 1, 587-612) are no longer those of an angel. They announce the physiognomy of many later Gothic villains, themselves the inspiration for the Byronic hero. Milton's Satan is, with this mixture of imposing and horrific anatomical traits a sublime monster, no longer simply the awe-inspiring apocalyptic beast of medieval iconography, but an enigmatic

icon which signifies the survival of the human soul inside the body of the fallen sinner. The human soul concealed in Caliban's freakish body can be glimpsed but momentarily: it is a common soul, moved by desire and selfishness. Yet, the human soul concealed in Satan's titanic body is itself titanic, that is to say, it shows that evil is not banal and petty like Caliban's actions but a genuine match for God's powers. As *Paradise Lost* advances, Satan's personality loses much of its initial rebellious majesty, yet, the impression he produces in Book 1 lingers on, inviting Milton's reader to consider whether the evil monster can possibly be more alluring than the loyal angels.

Although ideas about the sublime have been mostly likened to the feeling of awe inspired by impressive natural landscapes—the Gothic novel made an extensive use of such motif—since *Paradise Lost* the monster itself is also a source of the sublime, sometimes in conjunction with its environment, sometimes on its own. Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) provided the ideological foundation on which the Gothic novel's visualizing strategies lay and may also be useful to define the sublime monster. In Burke's own words:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. (1990:36).

When the ideas about the sublime enter the novel through the Gothic romance, the sublime monster inherited from Milton also enters this literary genre. The fertile union of the novel and the aesthetics of the sublime give birth to a new type of human moral monster, the villain, a figure that still endures in our days and that has somehow displaced the supernatural monsters and the Devil himself. The villain had been already seen on the Jacobean stage in plays such as John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1613) but the Gothic novel gives him a moral dimension missing in Jacobean drama. The Gothic villain is a type of monster who does not need an impressive anatomy to manifest his monstrosity: this is innate, inner, human, a moral corruption of the soul that can be glimpsed only through the villain's facial features and the expression of his eyes. What makes him sublime is not, hence, his physical appearance but the enigmatic presence of evil in his soul, for he is not a fallen sinner tempted by an external agent but a person who carries evil in him. With the Gothic novel, the ancient Beast of the hunter myths has finally become a human monster, even more monstrous by virtue of his being a (fallen) human being.

It is important to notice that the imagery of moral monstrosity and the iconography of death of the Gothic novel also marks the final stage of the transition of the monster from religious literature to profane fiction. Victor Sage argues that one of the most important sources of images of horror in the Protestant world dates from the sixteenth century: John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, published in Mary Tudor's reign, led the way in linking Catholicism to the atrocities committed against the Protestants in the popular imagination. Sage further argues that this association of Catholicism with horrific images of violence persisted with the reprinting in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries of Reformation works produced in the sixteenth century, and of other dissenting works produced in the seventeenth century. These reprintings

conditioned the availability of popular images in the horror tradition and later provided, nineteenth-century writers with their materials (op. cit.: xvii). Yet, to what extent was the dislike of Catholicism one of the major driving forces behind the rise of the Gothic novel? According to Sage's hypothesis,

the rise and currency of literary Gothic is strongly related to the growth of the campaign for Catholic Emancipation from the 1770s onward until the first stage ends temporarily with the Emancipation Act of 1829; but further, that continuance of the horror novel is equally, if not more strongly, related to the subsequent struggles, doctrinal and political, which flared up between Catholic and Protestant throughout the course of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. (ibid.: 28)

This means that the religious imagery used by the Gothic novel is based on a quite radical rejection of Catholicism and of the iconography associated with it. The villain, as happens in Anne Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) and in Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), is frequently a Catholic and still today Catholic iconography is found in many horror films and novels. However, as I see it, even though Gothic fiction depends to a great extent on religious belief—that is to say, it elicits a stronger impression from the reader if s/he is a believer—the Gothic novel also plants the first seeds for the trivialization of belief. This is in part due to the fact that the villain assumes more importance, which means that purely religious issues are displaced to the background while the exploration of the psychology of evil is pushed to the foreground. It cannot be said, on the other hand, that Catholicism is explored in depth in the works of Radcliffe or Lewis, so that it is more accurate to say that the religious imagery appearing in Gothic has become an aesthetic marker for the moral monster, the villain. In any case, a certain aversion against Catholicism—and perhaps against all forms of religious belief regarded as fanatical by average Protestants, raging from Islam fundamentalism to certain sects—still informs the contemporary view of horror and the monster. However, it can be said that the horrific imagery associated to religion rather than the serious discussion of religious tenets is what still attracts the attention of contemporary novelists and film makers.

According to Robert Miles (1993: 51) the visual discourse of the Gothic novel is gendered. He distinguishes between male Gothic and female Gothic. The former is visually dominated by reverie, in which woman appears as a monster of artifice, and which “presuppose a masculine subject dazzled by actual, or self-produced stimuli with a tendency to an eroticization figured through the female body”. In contrast “the aesthetics of the sublime presuppose a female subject-position disciplined through a male presence”, a paradoxical willingness on the subject's side to enjoy the superiority of the object. In my own view, it is more appropriate to replace Miles' problematic use of terms such as “female subject-position” by definitions of the sublime and the monster that connote above all, positions of power and powerlessness, likely to be adopted by both men and women. Since the eighteenth century the function of the sublime monster in fiction—no longer a source only of wonder but also of fear—is not simply to provide an excuse to prove the hero's courage and intelligence but to invite readers and audiences to consider the meaning of power, and, above all, of the power to cause death. The sublime monster of the Gothic novel—be it a demonic or evil woman or man, or a non-human being—always puts the onlooker in a position of powerlessness, disciplined by the powerful body of the monster. This is a strategy that is still profusely used today in

contemporary Gothic, both film and novel. The gaze of the film-goer on the screen or of the reader's mental eye is ultimately controlled by the artist who uses the monster to determine when we can look and when we cannot, and we submit, on condition that when we are allowed to look the artist has promised to show us the sublime. This is why the monster is invariably associated to a type of narrative derived from Gothic in which suspense—the tension between being or not being allowed to look and the fear of seeing—is essential.

1.1.5. Romantic Monsters and Decadence: From Frankenstein to Salomé

The Gothic novel appears at a point when the scientific impulse of the Enlightenment and the imperialist expansion of the European nations have totally destroyed the myth of the Plinian races. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the natural monster has become the object of the new science of teratology, founded by Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772-1844) and his son Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, who coined the word in 1830 (Huet, op. cit.: 108). However, this rationalisation of the body of the natural monster as a scientific object coincides with Mary Shelley's Romantic reflection in her novel *Frankenstein* about patriarchal science's capacity to engender monsters. Victor Frankenstein's odyssey can be read from many perspectives, but one of the most obvious is that man's usurpation of woman's power to create life can only engender monsters—the god that took over the goddess' power to give life and attributed to her the origin of monsters is thus punished with the horror of his own monstrous creation. Despite the many subsequent interpretations of the image of Frankenstein's monster (reviewed in more detail in Chapter 2), Mary Shelley originally described a creature that is made monstrous by a defective combination of originally beautiful anatomical features. This implies that science (the ultimate knowledge of all the elements) may be enough to create life but not to create beauty: another kind of power—possibly artistic intuition or simply the rules of natural reproduction—is necessary to understand the mechanism of life.

Taking as a cue Milton's Satan and the Gothic villain, the Romantics stressed the uniqueness and humanity of the individualised sublime monster, bringing to the foreground the monster's understanding of his own soul, as Mary Shelley did in her novel. The Byronic hero also contributed to the aesthetic of monstrosity by inspiring John Polidori to create the figure of the literary vampire—his tale "The Vampire" (1819) is apparently based on Byron himself— that haunts English nineteenth-century Gothic literature down to Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). The Byronic hero, an ambiguous type of man best described as the 'homme fatale', gradually becomes the 'femme fatale' of late nineteenth century Decadence. Mario Praz (1978 :27) places the birth of this alternative aesthetics of the fascinating monster in the nineteenth century's view of "Horror as a source of delight and beauty" which "ended by reacting on men's actual conception of beauty itself: The Horrid, from being a category of the Beautiful, ended by becoming one of its essential elements, and the 'beautifully horrid' passed by insensible degrees into the 'horribly beautiful'". The 'horribly beautiful' was assimilated to woman by degrees until the misogynistic representation of women as monsters by the Decadent artists exposed to what extent this aesthetic category had become a sexist tool to fight the New Woman's budding demands of autonomy. While the suffragettes struggled for woman's right to the vote, first rate and second rate male painters were representing women in postures that suggested that women were unable to stand on their own feet

(Dijkstra, 1986), or as horrific monsters. The nymphs with broken backs, the airy weightless women, the sleeping damsels or the dead brides together with the female monsters, mainly vampires (often reinforcing the image of woman in relation to the serpent) and mythological castrating menaces such as Judith and Salomé, were ubiquitous in the art of the end of the century. The monstrous women painted by men like Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1896), Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901), Gustave Moreau (1826-1898), Edvard Munch (1863-1944) and a long list of minor artists signify man's misogynistic horror for woman's power as an independent person capable of feeling desire.

These images may have justified the male onlooker's impression that women are the cause of men's problems, but seen from a female perspective the monstrous women reveal a very different truth: man's inability to cope with the excessive repression of sexuality in the Victorian period is what produced these images of loathsome desire—misogyny then and now can be said to be the result of man's inability to understand his own sexuality. From this perspective, what is truly monstrous is not woman, but man's persistence in seeing woman for what she is not, that is to say, for the monster he sees inside himself when he considers his own sexuality. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) dramatize man's fall into an awareness of his own monstrosity: bodily decadence is the price to pay for the enslavement to vice, caused in its turn by an abnormal, repressed sexuality. Both Jekyll and Gray seek a method—science, magic—to indulge in vice, that is to say, in contact with women through sex, while still keeping their respectable façade. In Stevenson's story this dissociation of the respectable man and the monster inside—the sexual man—is so radical that no woman appears in the text at all, as if her mere presence were enough to dismantle the bachelor Jekyll's pretence of respectability. As I see it, the Decadent artists, Stevenson, Gray, and to a certain extent Stoker, set unwittingly the foundations for an important, radical reversal in the representation of gendered monstrosity: the misogynistic representation of women as monsters started giving way a century ago to a new representation of men by men as monsters beyond salvation, which may have been ultimately derived from women's representation of the Byronic hero, in characters such as Victor Frankenstein, Heathcliff and Mr. Rochester. This degradation of the Byronic hero into the fallen monster signified the beginning of the decadence of the patriarchal model. The process is still under way and has reached a critical moment in the 1980s and 1990s, when many men are trying to find a middle way between the demands of feminism and those of outmoded patriarchal masculinism.

Not only literature and painting contributed to the production of images of monstrosity for the nineteenth century. Book illustration was also an important source of monstrous iconography, including the work of artists as different as William Blake (1757-1827) and Sir John Tenniel. Blake understood his work as the interaction of the word and the image and produced in his engravings a way of visualizing the text that went far beyond the idea of illustration. His drawings illustrating passages from the *Bible*—among them some the *Revelation* of St. John—contain appealing images of monstrosity which are, obviously, within a tradition completely different from that to which Tenniel belongs. Tenniel, whose best known work were the drawings he produced to illustrate Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), was one of the most outstanding artists working in the field of children's literature, a field that because of its richness—especially as far as the creation of the new iconography of the monster in the 1980s and 1990s is concerned—deserves by itself a separate study. Other nineteenth-century artists such as the Swiss painter Henri Füssli (1741-1825), a close associate of

Blake's, and the French engraver Gustav Doré (1833-1883) who produced splendid illustrations for Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Dante's *Inferno* and the *Bible* occupy outstanding places in the story of the iconographical representation of the monster.

1.1.6. The Monster in the Twentieth Century: Between Language and Image

1.1.6.1. The Expansion of the Iconography of the Monster

With the beginning of the twentieth century, the monster enters a new phase of its cultural existence, shaped mainly by the emergence of many more vehicles to transmit its image than previously. Factors such as the rise of new forms of popular entertainment based on the image rather than the word (film, TV, video-games), the increasing availability of art through museums, exhibitions and cheaper art books, the popularisation of children's illustrated literature and of genre fiction are some of the factors that conditioned and still condition the cultural market, together with the entrance of psychology—especially of Freudianism—in the world of art, both in the literary and the visual arts. In painting, the avantgardes—Dadaism, Cubism and later Surrealism—experiment in the early decades of the century with new strategies of visualization: the Cubist fragmentation of the human body, the surrealistic representation of the fantastic plastic body retrieved by the artist from his subconscious, the exploration of the aesthetic values of ugliness in Expressionism. The work of Picasso, Miró, Dalí, Ernst, Bacon has many points in common with those of the iconographers of monstrosity working in popular media like films or comics, being frequently cited as a major inspiration, whereas German expressionism is at the root of the creative use of photography in the American monster films of the 1930s, especially in the work of Karl Freund in Hollywood films such as *Frankenstein*. On the other hand, the entrance of other mythologies and religions into the cultural atmosphere of the twentieth century thanks to the avid interest awakened not only by the booming vogue for the supernatural in the first decades of the century but also by the findings of archaeologists, should be regarded as one of the most important factors shaping the new monsters of the century, together with the popularisation of science as rationalistic response to myth and the supernatural, in a century split between the need to reconcile the existence of God with science and the need to expose the horror uncovered (or created) by rationalism.

In general terms, it can be said that the dominating artistic paradigm of the twentieth century is still Romanticism, so that the images of monstrosity produced can be assumed to be, above all, extremely original in aesthetic terms and profoundly personal creations in which the artists of the post-Freudian age express their inner world with a high degree of self-consciousness about the processes of the unconscious. On the other hand, this Romanticism is inextricably bound to the stark commercial nature of the world-wide cultural market built initially by American capitalism, to the point that it is almost impossible to persist in separating the 'true' artist from the 'commercial' artists as many still do. In this phase the centre of the cultural construction of the monster and its iconography has been displaced from Europe to the USA, where the commercial exploitation of film and other forms of popular culture such as comics and the pulps became a booming business that laid the foundations for the cultural market in which the monster still thrives now. The 1980s and the 1990s, part of the postmodernist cultural climate engendered in the 1960s, use the monster to express an attitude that I

would define as postmodernist Gothic romanticism, characterized by an ironic pessimism, a dystopia that yearns to be utopian and, in general, an impossibility to break away from a certainly apocalyptic vision of life.

The monster lives in the twentieth century between the word and the image, high art and popular fiction, myth and submyth, banality and transcendence and is by nature profane, protean, and genuinely a product of the collective unconscious harassed by a sense of an ending caused by historical factors such as the two world wars. It is almost impossible to separate its literary representations from its presence in the visual arts, for there is a ceaseless interaction between both domains that includes, in addition, the artistic highs and lows of each field. As regards literature, the oral tradition of myth, the folk tale, the fairy tale, the legend and the fable have reached the last two decades of the twentieth century through written versions, frequently illustrated, and through the immense legacy of their influence on literary genres from epic to the short story, obviously including poetry and the novel, themselves the sources of countless interpretations in painting, illustration and newer narrative media such as film and TV. The theatre is another form of interaction between the word and the image bringing to the twentieth-century new images of monstrosity, not only through new productions of classics such as *The Tempest*, but also through new plays and through stage adaptations of well-known classics such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, not to forget alternatives to the mainstream such as the French horror theatre of the Grand Guignol (1888-1962), of crucial influence on the rise of graphic forms of depicting horror in the twentieth century.

The importance of literature—both mainstream and popular—is capital in the development of the new iconography of the monster in the twentieth century. The relationship between the printed page monster and the screen monster is as constant and important now as it was at the beginning of film history. What has changed is the direction of the exchange of images between both narrative media: while in the first half of the century film depends to a large extent on the novel, which keeps its own pace or even rejects film (as the Modernists did), in the second half of the century novels are written by a generation brought up on films and TV. They bring to the novel cinematographic techniques and a new treatment of the figure of the monster. This derives from the literary tradition which has frequently reached them through education, from the reading of extra-canonical genre fiction and from the TV and film images recalled from their childhood and teenage years, together with other images coming from children's fiction, comics, photography or painting. It is important to notice that books also make their contribution to the iconography of the monster through their covers; not only illustrations accompanying the text in children's books but also the covers of adult fiction engross the current iconography of the monster.

The field of the literary has expanded enormously as a producer of monstrous images with the rise of genre fiction, especially science fiction, horror, and fantasy, inexhaustible sources of adaptations to the printed and the screen image. It is essential to understand that the contemporary monster derives from the academically visible tradition of high art as much as from the commercial culture of the early twentieth century. Both traditions were totally separated until the 1960s, but are now part of the same cultural atmosphere of postmodernism. The interaction of word and image generated new hybrid narrative media in the first decades of the century such as the dime novels, the pulps and comics, all appeared in the USA to cater to the tastes of mass consumers. The dime novels were cheap publications of sensationalistic subject matter addressed to a public that was literate but not educated. The pulps were cheap periodical

publications containing short stories and novellas (usually dealing with fantasy, horror and mystery) assembled for quick consumption and disposal, sold under lurid covers that inspired many comics draughtsmen. By the 1920s many of the pulps had become specialised in a single genre so that by the 1930s, when they reached their golden age, the interaction between the flourishing new fashion for horror films and the content and covers of the new pulps was remarkable.

Most pulps ceased publication in the 1940s not before they had become the source of inspiration for another narrative media, comics. The birth of the most popular American comics centring on the figure of a superhero took place in the 1930s, following the vogue for pulp fiction and also the popular literature of adventures for boys. Adventure is indeed the key word in the early comics featuring Tarzan (1929), Buck Rogers (1929), Dick Tracy (1931) and Flash Gordon (1934). In 1938, Superman, created by Siegel and Shuster for Action Comics, inaugurated the tradition of the American superhero, which mixes motifs coming from the ancient myths of monster slaying heroes with the self-confident American ideal of individualism and the underlying new myth of the Nietzschean superman. The messianic Superman and the more Gothic Batman (1940), both split heroes in a Jekyll and Hyde fashion combining a super masculine heroic façade with a more subdued (perhaps effeminate) public persona, have endured the passage of time and are still in the 1990s very popular characters, though Batman seems to be attracting greater numbers of followers in these pessimistic times.

The American superheroes fought in their adventures monsters of all descriptions, many of them based on the mock Gothic of the 1930s horror film, that fuelled the imagination of their young adepts, especially through the very popular Marvel comics in which the superheroes often also assumed a political role in their defence of democratic values on behalf of America. However, after World War II a tide of gothicism reached the shores of the American comics business. EC, the main publishing house of comics in the 1950s, issued successful titles such as *Tales from the Crypt* (1950-55), *The Vault of Horror* (1950-54) and *The Haunt of Fear* (1950-54) that offered to their readers—the generation that later created the horror fiction of the 1980s—a strong diet of gory horror. The horrific monster of comic met a similar success in Europe, crossing the Atlantic apparently thanks to the American soldiers stationed in Europe (Sabin, 1993: 29). However, the solid commercial career of these comics in the USA was brought to a halt in 1954 with the publication of American psychiatrist Fredric Wertham's book *The Seduction of the Innocent*, which claimed that the horrific content of the comics was exerting a very negative influence on the minds of children. The campaign spread from the USA to the UK and resulted in the end of this type of publication, although the impulse to represent extreme bodily destruction resurfaced in the late 1970s and 1980s cycle of horror films when the young readers of the 1950s became themselves the new producers of images of monstrosity.

1.1.6.2. The Art of the Monster -Maker: Special Effects and the Monster of Film

The contribution of films to the visualization of the monster in the twentieth century is incommensurable, though not much attention has been paid to how the evolution of special effects techniques has affected the representation of the monster on the screen. There have been detailed analyses of the content of monsters films in relation to the historical background of each period but, in general, little has been made of the

fact that the image of the monster is conditioned by the limitations of its visualization on the screen in terms of pure technique. Despite the appearance of typewriters at the beginning of the century and of personal computers and word processors in the 1980s, writers still work now essentially in the same way as Shakespeare did, struggling to shape language for their particular needs. In film, there is no equivalent situation, for each film represents a step forward in technical aspects. In fact, it can be said that the monster is a sign of the state of the art in film and that in the 1980s and 1990s the monster is, more than ever, a sign that technology has colonised the world of show business. The spectacular monsters of contemporary film—the *Alien*, the *Predator*, the *Terminator* and many others—have been produced with techniques that are entirely new or that represent immense advances on already well-known special effects techniques. Technology conditions the monster of film, yet technology is also shaped by new ideas about the iconography of the monster and by the constant search for commercial success.

Writing about the increasing realism of gruesome and grotesque scenes of monstrous violence in film, Will Rockett (1988:38) asserts that “the difficulty the filmmaker faces is that each new, astonishing effect is picked up and repeated in other such films”. This constant search for novelty in the iconography of monstrosity is also essential in the novel, and should be blamed partly on the capitalist marketing of culture: the image of the monster is, like fashion, an expression of an endless search for originality that only occasionally produces lasting products—like the works of haute couture the monster must be bold, striking and always new so that its relationship with the imagery of monstrosity of the past can only be nostalgic in an ironic, postmodernist way. Following my analogy with the world of fashion, film also relies on a select number of highly valued designers to produce these always new images of monstrosity. These men—for this is a field from which women are conspicuously absent—are the interface between the artist and Hollywood’s business system but are treated with little artistic respect by both the art critics and Hollywood: for the former they are not proper artists, for the latter they are just craftsmen employed to give shape to the studios’ products. However, without these artists, whose work can perhaps be best defined as mobile sculpture to be filmed, the 1980s and 1990s would lack many of the images that inform contemporary culture. This section focuses on how currently available special effects techniques developed by a tightly knit group of artists are contributing to the shaping of new images for the monster on screen. It is also my aim to refer to the way in which these artists have influenced each other and to point out the often ignored difficulties facing the independent artist in the Romantic tradition when entering the domain of film business, as in the case of H.R. Giger’s work for *Alien* (1979).

Special effects are not the invention of film. In fact, they played an important role in the theatre (including the opera) until the end of the nineteenth century when they passed onto film. Unfortunately, the importance of special effects on the stage or of scenography in general, has been greatly underrated in the study of the theatre, which has focused almost exclusively on the text. Within the field of horror, as Jeffrey N. Cox (1992: 16) observes in relation to the period 1789–1825, “as in the current horror or Gothic film, special effects could make or break a new Gothic drama”. The French theatre of the Grand Guignol inherited at the turn of the century the Gothic stage tradition, keeping its extreme visualization of horror well into the 1960s (Sullivan, op. cit.: 184–85). Although the story of special effects in fantasy films began with George Mèlies’ (1861–1938) inspired transformation of theatrical special effects techniques into new, cinematic tools to visualize the impossible, the image of the monster on the screen

was initially constructed thanks to make-up. No other actor exemplifies better than Lon Chaney (1883–1930) the enigma posed by the actor in constant transformation, a passion for change and for disguising one's true persona that he took to inconceivable extremes of self-inflicted pain and masochism. Chaney's most memorable roles were the hunchback Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923), an adaptation of Victor Hugo's novel *Notre Dame de Paris, 1482* (1832) and the secretive Erik of *Phantom of the Opera* (1925) from the novel by Gaston Leroux (1911). Both films were in their time the most expensive films ever made at a cost of \$1 million each, in contrast to the rather cheap 1930s horror films such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Chaney's creative monster make-up pioneered not only the screen exploitation of the monstrous body as spectacle but also the art of film make-up, now so relevant in contemporary filmmaking.

The three main screen adaptations of the 1930s based on the classics of British nineteenth-century Gothic, Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and Robert Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1932), relied on the use of make-up and of expressionistic photography to shape the image of the human monster on screen. Other 1930s horror film such as the very popular *King Kong* (1933) perfected a new way of visualizing the non-human monster on the screen: stop-motion animation. This technique was first developed by the very same creator of *King Kong*, Willis O'Brien, for the silent film *The Lost World* (1925), based on Arthur Conan Doyle's 1910 novel. This film showed for the first time dinosaurs and other fantastic prehistoric creatures moving on the screen thanks to stop-motion animation techniques applied to scale models of the monsters. This time consuming technique, in which the illusion of animated movement is achieved by photographing the scale models shot by shot following very slight changes in their positions, came to perfection in the work of Ray Harryhausen in the 1950s and 1960s in films such as *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963). Although stop-motion animation techniques have animated countless creatures in TV series for children and in advertising, their high cost made them unsuitable for film. Nevertheless, a recent film, the popular and bizarre *Nightmare before Christmas* (1993), has been produced exclusively with stop-motion animation techniques thanks to the zeal put by its producer, Tim Burton, and its director, Henry Selik, in the renewal of a special effects technique that seemed outmoded. Nevertheless, the use of scale models to represent the monsters on the screen started moving in a new direction with the work of Bob Mattey for *Jaws* (1975) in which the monster, a giant shark, was conceived as a real size mechanical sculpture moved thanks to a mixture of hydraulic and electronic mechanisms operated by a large crew of special effects technicians. This inaugurated an era in special effects in which realism became the key word.

The iconography of monstrosity today is conformed by three main branches within film special effects: make-up, model making (including animatronics, that is to say, realistic sculptures made of soft materials such as latex foam, moved by electronic mechanisms) and infographics (computer animation). As horror film director John Carpenter remarks "special make-up effects have become one of the world's newest art forms since Linda Blair's head rotated and spat green vomit in *The Exorcist*" (Salisbury and Hedgecock, 1994: 6), a film released in 1973. Undoubtedly, the current phase of the iconography of the monster on film begins with the work of make-up artist Dick Smith for this film, not only because of Smith's creative, influential innovations but also because he also became the teacher of a number of young disciples who are now the main artists in special effects: Tom Savini, Rick Baker, Stan Winston, Rob Bottin, Greg Cannom, Chris Walas and Steve Johnson. It is important to notice that not all the special

effects artists are accomplished in all the areas of this artistic field. People like Stan Winston who can design an image and realize it by using make-up, model-making or animatronics are not the rule. Nevertheless, it is easy to see that the talent of the special effects artist is visual in all senses: they are draughtsmen, sculptors, engineers and photographers all in one.

Before 1973, Dick Smith already had a reputation in the field based on his long career and also on his book, *Monster Make-up Handbook* (1965) published through Forrest J. Ackerman's very popular magazine *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (1958). While the magazine was avidly read by many of today's film directors—Spielberg among them acknowledges its influence on his work—reading Smith's work became a turning point in the lives of many of the future special effects artists. A singular feature of the field of special effects is that because of the initial lack of training facilities to form them, many of its most successful artists learned their craft from Smith on an individual basis, in a way not very different to the training received by medieval artists apprenticed to a master. The story of most special effects artists of outstanding repute follows very similar patterns: they were all interested in their jobs vocationally and from their early teenage years and were formed by working with more experienced artists. Baker was 'apprenticed' to Smith at 14 and he in his turn took Rob Bottin and Steve Johnson under his wing when Bottin was 14 and Johnson 16. The reasons why such young boys could be interested in learning Smith's craft are varied but Baker recalls with a certain irony that "when I was a little kid I didn't go out and play army with the other kids or play with little cars, I made and drew monsters. I grew up in a lower middle-class neighbourhood where guys I knew were committing major crimes. Making rubber monsters kept me out of trouble" (ibid: 26). Once started in their professional careers the collaborations between the members of this closely knit community have been frequent, which means that progress in the field has often moved in an homogeneous direction.

The iconography of the metamorphic monster, or shape-shifter, is specially relevant in the development of film special effects techniques. To a certain extent, it can be said that the shape-shifter exists on the screen because of the new special techniques that have made its creation possible, or, conversely, that the effort made to make the shape-shifter visible on the screen is crucial to an understanding of how special effects have evolved. The plasticity of the protean latex foam, which can be adapted both to make-up and to model-making purposes, enabled Smith to produce two landmarks in the story of make-up in film with his work for *The Exorcist*: the realistic, accelerated ageing of the priest played by Max von Sydow and the fantastic transformation of the childish teenager played by Linda Blair into the monstrous girl possessed by the Devil. Dick's work for both characters summarises well what special effects are about—either producing an illusion of total naturalness or visualizing the impossible.

The next landmark in the visualization of the monster's transformation on screen was Rick Baker's impressive work for John Landis's *An American Werewolf in London* (1981) which won the first Oscar ever for make-up effects, a category that was included in the awards and has been maintained since then (see "Appendix 1") thanks to the important contribution to new forms of visualizing monstrosity invented by Baker. His work for Landis benefited from Dick's previous work for Ken Russell in *Altered States* (1980) in which the first attempt at gradual metamorphosis using latex foam can be seen. Landis wanted to show the body of actor David Naughton being transformed into a monstrous creature—rather different from a real wolf—in full light and in a sequence that showed the minimum number of discontinuities thanks to an excellent editing. Baker

came up with a stop-motion technique, shooting frame by frame the actor in different stages of make-up. The result was the most perfect representation of metamorphosis seen on the screen before the infinite possibilities opened by infographics or computer animation in the late 1980s.

But if showing a single transformation had been a challenge, producing a shape-shifter that would undertake several seemed almost a dream. Producer Howard Hawks and director Christian Nyby were tempted into filming John W. Campbell Jr.'s novella *Who Goes There?* as *The Thing from Another World* in 1951 because the text featured an interesting shape-shifting extraterrestrial. However, they soon decided to use a man in a rubber suit because the shape-shifter of the text could not be reproduced with the then available special effects. In 1979, for all its sophistication, the final shot of the extraterrestrial monster sucked into space in *Alien* clearly shows that the monster is nothing but a man in a much more sophisticated rubber suit, which somehow deflates the audiences' suspension of disbelief. When the 1982 version of *The Thing*, also directed by John Carpenter, was released, a whole revolution in the world of special effects had taken place. One of Rick Baker's disciple, Rob Bottin was the man who designed the monster for Carpenter's film.

Necessarily a film like *The Thing* must emerge from a tight collaboration between the film director, the screen writer and the special effects artist. Even though many horror films look deceptively easy to make, in fact they must strike a delicate balance: a good screenplay runs the risk of becoming a ludicrous film if the special effects are not good enough. *The Thing* is, in this regard, a rare, accomplished film, though initially the impact of Rob Bottin's monster quite obscured the quality of the film, hailed now as a masterpiece of horror. The creature of *The Thing*, possibly the most horrific monster ever seen on the screen, consumed \$1.5 million of a budget unusually high for a horror film and also a whole year of Rob Bottin's work. Collaboration played an essential role in the creation of the monster, since Bottin worked for the designs with illustrators Mike Ploog and Mentor Huebner, and with Stan Winston and mechanical effects supervisor Roy Arbogast in the construction of the animatronic skinless dog, the first shape taken by the monster. The novelty of *The Thing* was not only the high quality of the transformation scenes but the sheer horror they provoked due mainly to the impossibility of determining the final result of the metamorphosis. In fact, the horror of the film is based on two main motifs: the monster, an extraterrestrial stranded in the Arctic which consumes bodies and then replicates their exact form, cannot be easily detected, which means that the members of the scientific expedition trapped in the Arctic become increasingly paranoid as the plot unfolds—any man could be the thing and so all suspect each other. Yet, once the fake body is detected, the monster reacts by transforming itself into wild horrific shapes that distort and then destroy the body it had assumed. Paranoia is thus increased by the fear of not knowing what horror will emerge from the replicas of those the thing has killed. Paradoxically, although *The Thing* is now acknowledged as a classic of horror fiction the film failed at the box-office at the time of its release. This might have been due to the extremity of its visualization—the main metamorphosis is indeed almost unwatchable—or as Mark Salisbury and Alan Hedgecock (ibid: 59) suggest because of the coincidence with the release of *E.T.*. Both the iconography of the extraterrestrial monster in *E.T.* and the message sent by the film were in total contradiction with the horrific monster of *The Thing* and its pessimistic message. *E.T.* preaches intergalactical understanding and invites humankind to abandon its paranoid fear of a possible meeting with an alien species. In contrast, *The Thing* exploits the paranoid fears

awakened by the 1950s monster films. The final scene shows the only two survivors surrendering to the grim awareness that one of them is actually a clone formed by the shape-shifter alien: he will bring death to the whole human species.

After *The Thing*, the main next step in the shaping of the monster was the introduction of computer animation or infographics. This technique was pioneered by another 1982 film, Disney's *Tron*, which is, basically, a computer game performed by live actors. However, Disney could not see then the immense potential of infographics and *Tron* did not exert an immediate influence on animation films. Actually, John Landis had tried to use computers for the werewolf metamorphosis in *An American Werewolf in London*, convinced that only computers could solve the problem that had worried Howard Hawks thirty years before when trying to visualize the shape-shifting monster for his version of *The Thing*. What Landis actually had in mind in the early 1970s was using mainframe computers to produce a virtual image of metamorphosis, that is to say, an image wholly generated by a computer that was not based on anything filmed live. By 1981 the possibility of creating virtual images already existed but the cost was beyond the possibilities of any studio and so Landis turned to Rick Baker's brilliant work. In 1988, another step forward was taken with the introduction of morphing, a technique designed to create a virtual visualization of the transformation of an image into another image. *Willow* was the first film in which morphing was used: the image of the actor was scanned, introduced in a computer and there modified without the need of make-up or model-making. In 1989, infographics was used to generate the first virtual monster seen on screen, that is to say, the first monster wholly created with a computer: the water monster of *The Abyss*, a shape-shifter capable of copying the faces of those who look at it. The first film totally generated with infographics is *Toy Story*, an animation film released in 1995 by Disney and Pixar and directed by John Lasseter, who had previously collaborated with Disney in the making of *Tron*.

The film in which infographics, and especially morphing, was finally established as the special effects technique with a most promising future is James Cameron's *The Terminator 2* (1991). In this film, shape-shifting is visualized by a combination of animatronics created by Stan Winston and infographic effects produced by the Industrial Light and Magic, the special effects company owned by George Lucas that pioneered the development of infographics. *The Terminator 2* is not only a film about two monsters but also about two forms of understanding the iconography of monstrosity: the film pitches the older T-1, formed by Arnold Schwarzenegger's spectacular and sculptured body and by the metal skeleton designed by Stan Winston that surfaces when the T-1's body is burned, against the chamaleonic quicksilver T-1000 which has no real image except those he imitates. Actor Robert Patrick lent his body and his face to the figure of the T-1000, which he himself plays in the incarnation it assumes throughout most of the film, that of a Los Angeles policeman. Yet there are a number of impacting scenes in which the T-1000 is seen to assume the physical appearance of other people and also to sprout spiky metal protuberances, shatter in pieces or melt.

Most special effect artists seem to agree that with the rise of infographics a whole phase in the iconography of monstrosity in film is over and that the 'never-seen-before' is to take new directions. Winston, however, relativises the question by observing that in *The Terminator 2* there are more than 300 make-up and animatronic gags, considerably many more than infographics effects simply because the cost of these is still too high (ibid: 116). Winston has won his most recent Oscar for another project combining his animatronics and the ILM's infographics, Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993). He remains sceptical as to the end of traditional special effects, insisting on

the importance of the “one common artistic eye” (ibid: 118) above changing special effects techniques. Yet the steady decrease in the cost of infographic effects will possibly redefine in the near future the survival of traditional special effects techniques and of the monster itself.

The art of the special effects artist is subjected not only to the limitations of the available materials and techniques to shape them but also to the demands of the film director and producer. The collaborative nature of film often involves a struggle for the control of the final product in which the relatively low hierarchical position of the special effects artist usually hinders the protection of his interests. Even when the results of these tensions are successful, the truth that emerges is one of incessant struggle for one’s own parcel of control, an issue often ignored by audiences or film critics who only have access to the final product. The effects of the struggle for power in the process of visualization of the monster in film were manifest in the work of H.R. Giger for *Alien*. The original designs for the monster were published in a book (Giger, 1979) that contains also excerpts from the diary Giger kept as the shooting of the film progressed in Shepperton. This book is a wonderful document about the chaotic reality of filmmaking and about the absolute disregard with which Hollywood treats artists.

From Giger’s observations the impression arises that the high quality of *Alien* and the successful use of Giger’s designs for the monster are due to an uncanny combination of factors that have very little to do with tight artistic control. Giger, a Swiss painter best described as neo-Gothic and neo-Romantic, was recruited by the producers only accidentally when a catalogue of Giger’s work reached producer Dan O’Bannon (then working on the script for *Alien*) thanks to Salvador Dalí. Dalí, himself the author of the designs for the famous dream scene in Hitchcock’s *Spellbound* (1945) epitomizes together with his disciple Giger the kind of contemporary artist interested in the fantastic likely to attract large segments of the general public apart from art collectors and critics. Ridley Scott, himself an admirer of Giger’s book *Necronomicon* (1977)—a title inspired by Lovecraft’s work—enthusiastically welcomed Giger’s collaboration in the film he was to direct. Scott, himself with a background as a graphic artist, used Giger’s book as a production design bible throughout the shooting of the film. What Hollywood did not expect from Giger, an accidental newcomer to its gates, was that he would react with such protectiveness towards his work. To the surprise of his business-minded employers, Giger kept close track of the dealings involved in his contract as he understood that its terms would jeopardise his creativity and the control on his work, which in fact occurred. His diary records his increasing frustration first at the limitations imposed by the tight budget on his work (*Alien* was not to be an expensive film) and second at the demands of the producers which forced Giger to involve himself progressively in the actual model-making, when he had only been hired to draw the designs for the monster and some of the sets. Yet, Giger’s main worry was, above all, that the solutions taken to lower the total cost of the film would make his own work look cheap and artistically less valuable than his paintings.

A turning point in Giger’s progressive loss of control over his work happened when the Italian specialist in animatronics Carlo Rambaldi—who would later animate E.T.—was called in to mechanise the monster’s head; his arrival increased the patronising interventions of the team of producers and their disregard for Giger’s authority on the set. When one after the other sculptures carefully prepared by Giger and his crew were expunged from the film without the producers consulting with him, he bitterly concluded that “I suppose I shall never master the secret of how such decisions are taken. It is getting clear to me that my creative capacity is slowly but surely being

numbered. I'm still convinced that the best critic of an artist's work is the artist himself..". (ibid.: 74). Ironically, Giger was eventually awarded an Oscar for his work together with Carlo Rambaldi, Brian Johnson, Nick Allder and Denys Ayling and has since then collaborated in the design of monsters for a number of recent films, among them *Species* (1995). As the box-office and critical failure of this film shows, a good design for the monster is not enough to sustain by itself the fabric of a monster film. Ironically Giger was accused by many unsatisfied reviewers of overexploiting for profit the success of his designs for *Alien* in the much inferior *Species*, which probably attracted many more spectators than its unconvincing plot deserved thanks precisely to the use of Giger's name in the film's advertising material. Nonetheless, Hollywood has tended not to properly reward the men who have designed the productions—and the creatures—that have attracted most spectators and that have often resulted in successful films in terms not only of business but also of artistic achievement. So far only Stan Winston and Rick Baker have managed to insert their names in the initial rather than the final credits of the films in which they collaborate, a situation that will be probably common once Hollywood realizes that the names of special effects artists also have the capacity of increasing box-office returns.

1.1.6.3. Monstrous Images in the 1980s and 1990s: The Universal Monster

Apart from books, periodical publications such as comics, films and visual arts such as painting, sculpture, photography and video, TV, the press and the music industry are an important source of images of monstrosity: TV series such as *Star Trek* or *The X-Files*, children's TV cartoons, reality shows and crime reports on the news, together with the treatment of crime in the press focus routinely on varieties of contemporary monstrosity. Video-games also rely on images of fantasy, frequently connected to the figure of the horrific monster, while some branches of youth culture—especially that associated with heavy-metal music—also exploit the iconography of monstrosity. Not even advertising is immune to monster fever.

The 1980s and 1990s creator of new iconographies of monstrosity cannot but help being postmodernist, given the wealth of images of the past and the present from which s/he can draw inspiration. It follows that this intense recycling of the monsters of the past together with the multiplication of the media offering images of monstrosity (artistic or otherwise) has conditioned the postmodernist monster so that it can only be a protean creature, impossible to define on the basis of a single point of view, whether it is aesthetic, ethic, anthropological, or sociological. The postmodernist monster is mythical (archaic or classical), Biblical, medieval, Gothic, Romantic and even futuristic simultaneously, deriving from a genealogy that despite being visible enough in its body may have ceased making sense because of the monster's constant trespass of different cultural domains.

What is kept, for instance, of the European medieval gargoyles in Disney's new cartoon TV series, *Gargoyles* (1994), in which a group of monstrous men petrified by an evil sorcerer in early medieval Scotland awaken in contemporary New York to play the role of superheroes? Even though a cultural critic can see in the gargoyle Goliath's physical appearance echoes of the medieval representation of the Devil as a beast with bat wings, of Milton's Satan and of Blake's Red Dragon in the illustration of St. John's *Book of Revelation*, the children who are the target audience of the series are more likely to link this postmodernist gargoyle with Batman or some of the heroes of Japanese 'manga'. The monster of the 1980s and 1990s sinks its roots deep into the past, as I have

shown, but it is also a monster created anew each time, for audiences and readers who often lack the memory of the most immediate tradition not to mention the memory of the very remote past, despite the current high levels of education and the availability of information. This ignorance of the historical roots of the monster on the side of the monster makers and on that of the consumers of their products, results paradoxically in a constant renewal of images that often leaves many critics and audiences with an unexplainable feeling of *déjà vu*. This has been misread as an exhaustion of the same old story about heroes and monsters, when in fact it is thanks to the monster that the links of our culture with myths as ancient as that of the Earth goddess are still kept.

This does not mean that the iconography of monstrosity has reached a phase in which, as Jean Baudrillard could put it, there are more signs than signifiers. Just as the image of the goddess was lost to the new iconography of monstrosity imposed on her by the new patriarchal religions, a new iconographical revolution is taking place now ultimately related to that primordial takeover of the goddess' power. The current iconography of monstrosity is dramatising the beginning of the decadence of the patriarchy that overturned the goddess: more and more male monsters of all descriptions are to be seen redrawing the boundaries of power between the sexes; heroism is acquiring female traits, monstrosity is losing them while the body of the male hero denotes the increasing difficulties of patriarchy to find a model of masculinity that inspires respect rather than reluctant submission. The domain of monstrous iconography is, as always, a masculine domain but it is now part of a world in which the impact of feminism cannot be easily dismissed. As I will argue in the following sections, the voyeuristic postmodernist cult of the spectacular body, human or non-human, female and male, is an essential element in the construction of contemporary monstrosity.

1.2. The Cult of the Monster: The Meaning of the Monstrous Body

1.2.1 The Spectacular Body of the Monster: Images of Fascinated Desire

Why the images of monstrosity appear to be so attractive and ubiquitous today is a question that can be answered only by acknowledging that the monster reverses the values of the traditional aesthetic and ideological discourse in decadence in the Western world. Leonard Davis writes in *Resisting Novels* (1987: 124) that “the very valence of beauty or ugliness in novels... is not neutral but is predicated on ideological considerations”. A basic ideological use of beauty or ugliness lies in their respective associations to good and evil from which the traditional view of the monster as a being of extreme ugliness and extreme evil follows. Attractive characters in novels also fulfil another role, not so different from that of models in advertising—they sell the cultural product to the consumer by eliciting desire. According to Davis, when we read a novel we are expected not so much to identify with a character as to desire it “in some non-specific but erotic way” (ibid: 127). However, cultural changes may result in the reader's shifting of sympathy (and also desire) towards characters that were not initially designed in principle to be attractive. Thus, extremely unattractive characters like Milton's Satan and Shakespeare's Caliban have colonised for the monster a territory reserved for Richardson's Clarissa or for Austen's Darcy, successfully competing with images purposefully built to elicit desire and to enhance the reader's pleasure in the text. We have learned to look at the monster rather than to look away from it and have found

when doing so that the monster is as fascinating as the hero. In the 1980s and 1990s it can be said that the monster's body sells the cultural product in which it appears with as much success as the beautiful heroes or heroines of the novel do. This leads to the conclusion that either Davis's supposition that characters are desired in an unspecific, erotic way is wrong or that the meaning of desire extends much further than expected, embracing the monster and denying the traditional association of beauty with the highest aesthetic pleasure. Attraction and fascination appear to have been understood so far on the narrow basis of the aesthetic pleasure caused by beauty, when in fact, the aesthetic pleasure of the ugly, the grotesque and the spectacular embodied by the monster coexist with it.

Monsters often possess extraordinary bodies and/or minds. However monsters may also possess an ordinary body housing an extraordinary mind. Any body, any mind that alters the sense of the onlooker's normality either because of its extreme beauty (or goodness) or because of its extreme ugliness (or evil) is equally fascinating, which explains why the word monster can also be used in the sense of prodigy and the extraordinary as an epithet applied to idols of culture such as film stars or rock stars, or simply great artists. The word idol is particularly appropriate in this context: an idol is a figure that inspires a sublime sense of transcending normality, a figure that fascinates because it is literally extra-ordinary. In a sense, the monsters of postmodernism are idols, grotesque or not, that belong to the same pantheon as sex symbols, since their bodies (sometimes their minds) produce a fascinating effect on those who sustain their cult.

The culture of the 1980s and 1990s cannot be properly understood without the booming cult of the healthy body, a cult that actually reflects the public expansion of desire. The perfect body is not so much a reflection of the wish to live long, healthy lives but of the wish to remain young and, therefore, sexually attractive. According to Jean Baudrillard (1990:33), "our entire body culture, with its concern for the 'expression' of the body's 'desires,' for the stereophonics of desire, is a culture of irredeemable monstrosity and obscenity". The veritable monster is not the horrific bug-eyed creature but desire, of which the omnipresent perfect human body used in advertising, pornography and film is but a sign. For Baudrillard (ibid: 34), ours is a culture in which:

Everything is to be produced, everything is to be legible, everything is to become real, visible, accountable; everything is to be transcribed in relations of force, systems of concepts or measurable energy; everything is to be said, accumulated, indexed and recorded. This is sex as it exists in pornography, but more generally, this is the enterprise of our whole culture of monstration, of demonstration, of productive monstrosity.

The role of the extremely disturbing body of the monster in this totalling voyeuristic culture of the 1980s and 1990s centred on desire and the exploration of all its possibilities is twofold: on the one hand, the monster appears as another category of the fascinating body that is used to sell the cultural products of late capitalism. On the other hand, the monster's enigmatic body is the site where the limits of the human body and the anxieties about the imperfect control of it are discussed by a culture that fears, above all, the monster as a symbol of arbitrary destruction. A strange phenomenon related to the place of the monster in the culture of the saleable body is the success of the monster as a children's toy. Presumably, any toy that represents an extreme, attractive version of

the body—from Barbie to a model of the *Alien* monster—satisfies the buyer's wish to possess and manipulate spectacular bodies existing in an inaccessible domain, whether this is that of the little girl's fantasies of herself as a successful adult woman (as a consumer in Barbie's version) or that of the little boy's view of himself as a successful adult man (as a hero in most war toys). These toys are images that signify the power to dominate others—as the marketing of the toy does with the buyer—with the sole force of the body's appearance. Who holds the power in this relationship between the subject and the object of the gaze mediated by the consumption of the cultural product in which the monster is sold, is the issue that explains the attractiveness of the monster.

Laura Mulvey has examined in her influential essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" the patriarchal construction of the image of woman in classical Hollywood film. She has labelled man's pleasurable gaze at woman's fascinating body on the screen narcissistic scopophilia. According to her (1992: 28), films narrate a basically Oedipal conflict and invite the male spectator to identify with the male protagonist of the film; through his screen surrogate the male spectator's gaze controls the presence of woman on the screen, who is exposed as an erotic object. The male spectator obtains, thus, a narcissistic pleasure in feeling his affinity with the powerful male star, who is not an erotic object like woman but an ideal alter ego for the narcissistic male spectator. Mulvey's conclusion is that film is a patriarchal tool that furthers man's control over woman and that women should welcome the beginning of new traditions to represent them on the screen that gave new directions for the expression of desire.

This way of considering the exploitation of woman's body on the screen overlooks an important point: not all film stars—male or female—are or have been victims of a ruthless, exploitative exhibition of their bodies for the narcissistic voyeurism of audiences. On the contrary, many have exploited the system for their benefit, using their exhibitionism to attract the spectator's gaze and to force the system to submit to the star's own needs. This is why David Thomas (1993:102) refers to one of the most exhibitionistic film stars to have played heroic roles, Arnold Schwarzenegger, as a "new phenomenon, the superstar as bully". Narcissistic scopophilia has become in the exhibitionistic realm of the 1980s and 1990s, dominated by very aggressive marketing techniques applied to all kinds of cultural products, rather a masochistic subservience to what the system will make us see, whether this is the body of the star or that of the monster. In this context, the most extreme bullying is imposed on the film-goer or reader who chooses to see the body of the monster, or to get to know the mind of the evil human monster. Literature is not outside the game of browbeating the buyer of culture into submission: the appeal of *American Psycho* (1991) and *The Wasp Factory* (1984) are the same kind as that of *Alien* and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)—they take the gaze (mental or physical) away from the reader or viewer's control and force it to take new, unexpected directions, following the path marked by the monster. Narcissism is replaced in this pleasurable masochism by the challenge of the test proposed by the artists, namely, how much one is prepared to 'see' before pleasure becomes the displeasure of either boredom or the intolerable.

The actor in general inspires fascinated desire because his or her body has the capacity to seduce the audience in many disguises. The star, who should be distinguished from the actor, is, simultaneously, a multiple shape-shifter and a fixed image of desire—frequently a fabrication imposed by the studio on the real (unknown) personality of the actor. This multiplicity of images superimposed on a body that conceals an enigmatic personality is characteristic of the shape-shifting monster of

recent films and novels, and suggests that the old attribution to Satan of a diabolic capacity to seduce by using deceptive images has become an integral part of the spectacular body and has ceased to connote evil to signify instead, simply, fascinated desire. The power of the film star, the porn star and the fashion star is akin to that of the monster: s/he controls the gaze and, hence, the desire to buy (or find sexual gratification, or feel powerful enough to control the Other) by a controlled exposure of the body, which in the novel is often paralleled by an exposure of the mind. More similarities can even be observed between the commercial use the stripper makes of his or her body and the way in which audiences are sold the body of the monster: film trailers suggest half-glimpsed images of the monster's body, whereas the use of suspense in the horror film ensures that the spectator will stay on his or her seat until the slow unveiling—the striptease—of the monster's body is completed at the end of the film.

Desire has become inextricably bound to capitalism and to consumerism. Buying is satisfying the desire elicited by advertising which uses the beauty of female models to join in the consumer's mind images of sex and capitalist consumption: while women wish to be like these (role)models of advertising, for men possessing an object becomes the equivalent of possessing the body that advertises it. Desire has become a public matter: the private erotic pleasure derived from reading a novel and feeling that desire identified by Davis has been extrapolated to the public sphere in a process that shows no sign of ceasing. The place of woman's body in this culture of 'monstration' is, despite the feminist resistance to women's exploitation, more according with the new image that women want to give of themselves than it might seem. Many women's ideal in the 1990s is a woman who is attractive, ambitious, economically independent and in control of her body and its image: this ideal is in many cases personified by fashion models and actresses, the bearer of woman's public image. What is man's place in this realm of the pure image and the perfect body? The public voyeurism centred on woman is slowly beginning to conquer man's body—especially that of male fashion models—on behalf of capitalism and to treat it as an object, valuing it for its capacity to sell. The dynamic (masculine) image of the muscular hero shares the public gaze with the static (feminine) image of the muscular fashion model: yet neither can offer an adequate image or model for the man of the 1990s. The ideal of man's beauty has been lost in the construction of consumerism around woman's body and now it is not even clear whence the new image can come—from women or from men—nor whether heterosexual or homosexual men will lead the way.

While a new consensus arises as to what a desirable image of masculinity is, what is happening is that man's attempts at renewing the figure of the patriarchal hero or at dramatising the loss of his popularity is resulting in the masculinisation of the monster, or, alternatively, in man's transformation into a monster. In a man's world, as ours still is, the image of woman as beauty—which women themselves may regard as an undesirable stereotype—remains stable as female monstrosity decreases due to the feminist attack against the still rampant misogyny of Hollywood and the world of advertising. In contrast, because of the pressure of feminism, the representation of man's body has been problematised in cultural products aiming at a very large number of consumers, among which women are to be counted. The hero as macho man and the beast of old myth have given way to a spectacular display of different forms of masculine monstrosity so contiguous as to make the identification of the monster and of the hero very doubtful in many cases: their images are often interchangeable. The still existing misogyny is not the central concern in the iconography of monstrosity; on the contrary, the central concern is the definition of an image of masculinity that can be

powerful without being monstrous and that can vindicate for man the territory lost to the advances of feminism. Why men have failed to produce a new acceptable hero and have produced instead countless beasts, demons, psychopaths, killing machines and the grotesque muscular heroes of comics is, therefore, a matter for profound reflection.

In her insightful study of the representation of masculinity in film, Susan Jeffords (1993: 245) writes that “US masculinity in Hollywood films of the 1980s was largely transcribed through spectacle and bodies, with the male body itself becoming often the most fulfilling form of spectacle... That externality itself confirmed that the outer parameters of the male body were to be the focus of audience attention, desire, and politics”. This means that the spectacular body became a shield used by man to deflect his preoccupations about how his mind should change in order to keep pace with the decadence of patriarchal values. The ‘hard body’, in Jeffords’ words, of the heroes played by Sylvester Stallone, Bruce Willis, Arnold Schwarzenegger or Jean-Claude Van Damme does not indicate man’s confidence in his own image but man’s fear of letting his feminine, ‘soft’ side surface. Interestingly, in her otherwise perceptive survey of heroic figures such as Rambo, Robocop, Batman, the Terminator (in the heroic version of *The Terminator 2*) Jeffords fails to mention a significant fact: the barrier between the hero and the monster has been erased—these heroes, far from being acceptable role models for men, are nothing but monsters split into two by their failure to function as normal men within society.

As I have noted, the ideal of masculine beauty is currently extremely vague. In a sense, this can be attributed to the idea that genuine masculinity entails muscularity, in itself an excessive—even monstrous—growth of man’s body and not its natural shape. The hero-worship granted now to the figure of the athlete is related to the positive association of man’s reshaping of his own body in an unnatural way. However, the athlete of real life and the athletic superhero of fiction are not average man but a hypertrophied version of masculinity, as monstrous as the super slim female fashion model. As Umberto Eco (op. cit.: 61) notes, “the athlete is a monster, he is the Man Who Laughs, the geisha with the compressed and atrophied foot, dedicated to total instrumentation”. The confusion about where the limits are between the monstrous athlete and the ideal male body has allowed men like Arnold Schwarzenegger, an athlete who found fame first thanks to the titles won in the equivalent of beauty contests for men—body-building contests—to play epic heroes like Conan the Barbarian and monsters, such as the Terminator.

The current cult of the healthy body has no doubt one of its maximum expressions in body-building, yet since body-building is a way of cultivating or reshaping the body that is not restricted to men, muscularity has partly ceased to mean masculinity. Yvonne Tasker (1993: 3) has coined a new term to define the status of woman’s body redefined by body-building: ‘musculinity.’ The ‘musculine’ woman and her screen counterpart, the ‘musculine’ heroine who can be found especially in action films, proves that culture and not biology have conditioned the distribution of gender roles and the way in which men and women have seen themselves. The weak feminine body created by patriarchy and also perhaps by feminine sentimentalism is disappearing, though the many cases of anorexia indicate that women seem to feel a morbid attachment to the figure of the fragile-looking, extremely thin woman. In contrast, the women who have opted for ‘musculinity’ have created a new model of a more athletic woman. The paradox is that the ‘musculine’ woman can be found in a new territory which is different from that of the monstrous, derided virago of the Victorian Decadence: far from being a sign of monstrosity, the muscles of the ‘musculine’ heroine

seem to be attractive for many men, who no longer cherish the ideal of the physically weak woman. But if woman also conquers the realm of masculinity, what is left for men except to exaggerate their own muscularity to the point of monstrosity? As Yvonne Tasker notes, the figure of the male bodybuilder (or that of the muscular male star playing heroic roles on the screen) may “signal an assertion of male dominance, an eroticising of the powerful male body” for its defenders, but it also likely to seem “an hysterical and unstable image of manhood” (Tasker, *ibid.*: 80).

Muscles appear to be ultimately a dead end in the construction of a new, desirable image of masculinity because they cannot guarantee the imprint of sanctioned masculinity on their owner; what is more, since they are always ‘excessive’ they immediately suggest that man’s anatomy cannot find a balanced ideal and is always prone to being monstrous. In contrast, the ‘musculine’ woman does not appear to be less feminine nor more monstrous, possibly because woman’s body is expected (or allowed) to be more protean in our culture than man’s. As woman has conquered more territory for her body, so that she can choose as an ideal the slim top-model, the ‘musculine’ woman or an androgynous image without appearing to be masculine, therefore, without appearing to be more monstrous, this is not the case with men. Despite the timid opening since the 1960s of new, alternative ways for men to redefine their own images, men are still trapped by an enormous conservatism in the way they dress or, simply, in the way they express the attraction of their bodies. In comparison to the body of woman, the body of men is practically absent, invisible in our culture, despite the alleged overwhelming presence of the Lacanian phallus, which means that man only becomes really visible in extreme, monstrous representations. There is thus not much difference between the muscular superhero and the drag queen, as both are extreme images that differ as much as possible from the blurred image of the average man. Male monsters and heroes are the site of discussion for the redefinition of man, this is why they may encompass images as varied as the muscular hostile alien of *Predator* or the effeminate serial killer of *The Silence of the Lambs* and also why the many horrific metamorphoses portrayed in recent fiction affect principally the bodies of men. The monsters can be said, therefore, to embody all of man’s ambivalence towards the quite rigid images of masculinity together with man’s wish to rebuild a stable image of masculinity.

Other alternatives in the representation of the male monster try to break away from stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity, with ambiguous results. In Tim Burton’s *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) the eponymous monster Edward is a harmless, androgynous Goth boy, an image popularised by the Gothic rock bands that emerged in the early 1980s such as The Cure, whose components used to wear dark clothes, make-up and flowing, spiky hair styles. Edward’s lovely pale face and his lean, boyish body are in jarring contrast to the two bunches of shears he has for hands. This peculiar monster is a mixed image of masculine aggression and feminine softness: his hands are a symbol of his inability to touch but also a formidable barrier between him and the others that he uses to preserve his isolation. The same can be said in fact of Batman’s outfit or of Robocop’s titanium armour, elements used to signify a typically masculine toughness which is more appearance than reality. Lacking like Batman an alter ego that can help him blend in better, Edward can only happily enjoy his androgyny on his own extra-social domain, far from the aggressive femininity and the bullying masculinity of the inhabitants of the American suburb crowned by his Gothic castle. Thus, Burton implicitly acknowledges that all the alternatives to the rigid gender roles of English-language society are bound to be seen as dangerous disruptions of the current order and

that the only available space for the freakish man who rejects masculinity and femininity is the seclusion Edward secures for himself in his fantastic domain.

Bret Easton Ellis' psychopathic yuppie Pat Bateman in *American Psycho* and Martin Amis's Nazi, Tod Friendly, in his novel *Time's Arrow* (1991) are as beautiful as monstrous. Bateman's and Friendly's handsomeness is very masculine by comparison to Edward's androgynous beauty; in fact, their acceptable masculine façade protects both men from the suspicions of those around them, who never guess that they are evil men. Yet Bateman's and Friendly's beauty also forces the reader to consider why beauty is typically associated with monstrosity in women but not in men. The monstrous 'femme fatale' arises precisely from men's ambivalent view of the deadly nature of female beauty; logically, heterosexual men would not deem the beauty of the handsome male monster deadly because of his eroticism. It can be argued that male beauty is thus used to enhance the discord between what the reader/viewer thinks is normal on the basis of the representations of the monstrous in fiction and what chaotic reality has to offer—if anything can be expected from human beings, why not expect as well that handsome monsters may exist? The good looks of Bateman and Friendly, who are exterminators rather than deadly seducers, show that the monsters traditionally engendered by female chaos have finally become a sign of the chaos inside contemporary man's psyche. It is an irony that while the very human Bateman and Friendly are narcissistic lovers of their own bodies who inflict terrible destruction on the bodies of others, another kind of male monsters—the handsome artificial lovers of *The Robots of Dawn* (1984), *Hyperion* (1989), *The Silver Metal Lover* (1986) and *Body of Glass* (1991)—are presented as generous givers of pleasure or, as in *Blade Runner* (1982) as lovers of life. The suggestion that the perfect man is the manufactured man that must be finally destroyed is in itself a significant comment on the difficult position of masculinity in the 1980s and 1990s.

1.2.2. The Monsters in Transformation: Metamorphosis and the Deceptive Body

As I have argued in the section I have devoted to special effects, metamorphosis has played and still plays a very important role in the visualization of the monster today. The idea of metamorphosis or shape-shifting derives from myth and from fairy tales though, as I have shown, only from the 1980s onwards has it been possible to see the representation of a complete process of transformation on the screen rather than simply imagine it on the basis of an oral or a written narrative. According to Marina Warner (1994b: xv), "shape-shifting is one of fairy tale's dominant and characteristic wonders". Warner adds that, "more so than the presence of fairies, the moral function, the imaged antiquity and oral anonymity of the ultimate source, and the happy ending (though all these factors help towards a definition of the genre), metamorphosis defines the fairy tale". The metamorphosis of the enchanted prince into a frog or of the fairy into a hag is an event brought about by magic that can be used to make a moral point in the fairy tale but it is not usually presented as a horrific event. Fairy-tale characters are the victims of the magical designs of others on them in a way similar to the characters of myth. Nevertheless, in Greek myth, the gods exert their powers to metamorphose human beings into monsters, animals, plants, trees or even minerals for varied reasons, including punishment for disobedience but also perpetuating the life of dying mortals or saving them from other dangers, such as impending rape.

R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) is a Gothic inheritor of the metamorphosis of fairy tale. Stevenson's text is crucial in the construction of the contemporary image of the monster as it suggests more straightforwardly than any previous story about monsters that the true monster lies in us and, more concretely, in the repressed shadow or subconscious represented by Hyde. Yet, the transformation of the civilized Dr. Jekyll into the hideous—hitherto hidden—Mr. Hyde differs from the idea of metamorphosis in the fairy tale, which is usually 'solved' once the spell is broken, and from the metamorphosis of classical myth, in the emphasis that Stevenson puts on the horror it elicits from the onlooker and the victim. This horror is doubled by the realization that Jekyll's ordeal is brought upon himself by his own hand and not by the external intervention of a god or a fairy.

Instead of the painless metamorphoses of fairy tale and myth, Jekyll's metamorphosis is presented as a painful process of rebirth repeated cyclically (as often as the magic potion acts), resulting in the monstrous Hyde and in an unstable, uncontrollable change of identity only stopped by death. Those who witness a metamorphosis in fairy tales or myth feel, above all, wonder or awe, for the transformation is, in any case, magical but not ontologically disruptive. In contrast, Jekyll's metamorphosis into Hyde is a breach of the rationalistic, scientific background of Jekyll's Victorian universe so intolerable for its only witness, Dr. Lanyon, that it causes his death. Jekyll's mental and bodily suffering, the fact that he has himself caused his own tragedy because of his perverse search for gratification and the visualization of the metamorphosis from the point of view of the witness are elements frequently repeated in the many horrific transformations of contemporary narratives.

Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (1915) is, in contrast to Stevenson's text, very limited visually: Grigor Samsa is not seen to change—he has simply changed into a man-sized cockroach when his narrative begins. In a sense, this is the same pattern used by Milton in *Paradise Lost*: Satan awakens in Hell after a horrific metamorphosis which he cannot remember, though, unlike Grigor Samsa, Satan knows why he has been transformed and by whom. Kafka writes about the horror of knowing that one's own mind can be arbitrarily cut off from the world and encased in a horrific body, as if he had turned to what happens in the mind of the spellbound prince of fairy tale when he realizes that he is nothing but a frog. Yet Kafka's narrative about the ordeal of his insect hybrid picks up the tale of the metamorphoses at the point where Greek myths left it rather than where Stevenson did. In stories of metamorphoses like Stevenson's the physical change implies a psychological change, while in Kafka's the horror is derived from the fact that the psychological change has not taken place: Grigor Samsa's mind is still alive inside the monstrous body of the man-sized cockroach and, what is even worse, there is no fairy tale princess endowed with the power of kissing this man back to life. In fact, Grigor Samsa's sister, the only woman who comes close to him, ends up sweeping away his, or the cockroach's, mortal remains.

The metamorphic monster appears quite frequently in the novels and films of the 1980s and 1990s, no doubt not only because of the direct influence of Stevenson or Kafka but also because of the enormous appeal that the idea of transformation itself has for the contemporary culture. However, the meaning of the metamorphosis cannot be said to be constant for all cases. In Robert McCammon's novel *Swan Song* (1987), which deals with the survivors of the nuclear holocaust that wipes out USA in the late 1980s, human beings are subject to a double metamorphosis. In a first—Kafkaesque—phase, horrific skin diseases resulting from nuclear radiation deform the bodies of the survivors; in a second stage, a supernatural metamorphosis similar to that of fairy tales,

frees the good survivors from the burden of their monstrous bodies rewarding them with beauty for their patient suffering. The 'evil' survivors who lapsed into barbarism are condemned to become even more horrific monsters in a transformation that recalls Jekyll's final metamorphosis into Hyde.

While transformation means in *Swan Song* simultaneously the arbitrariness of unjust destruction caused by humans and a fair supernatural system of moral reward and punishment, in other films and novels the monster is characterized by an obsessive, morbid desire for absolute transformation. The two serial killers of Thomas Harris' novels, *Red Dragon* (1981)—filmed by Michael Mann as *Manhunter* (1986)—and *The Silence of the Innocent* (1988), filmed by Jonathan Demme as *The Silence of the Lambs*, fall into this category. In the former, serial killer Francis Dolarhyde craves to become the dragon in William Blake's engraving "The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun" which illustrates a scene of St. John's *Book of Revelation*. Dolarhyde tattoos his muscular body with a gigantic dragon as he develops a schizophrenic split personality in a process which culminates in his eating Blake's original engraving in order to shortcut his illusory transformation into the Beast of the Apocalypse. Dolarhyde's failed metamorphosis culminates and reverses the story of the successive transformations of the goddess Tiamat, the original image of the dragon, into diverse monsters including the Beast of Revelation: the contemporary misogynistic male psychopath tries to assume an image of powerful masculinity, but his failed attempt discloses not only his own sickness but also that of the patriarchy that creates such monstrous images. In *Silence of the Lambs*, the serial killer Jame Gumb is a frustrated would-be-transsexual who victimizes women because he cannot become a woman himself. Gumb believes that his transformation into a woman, something he desires apparently because of his morbid Oedipal love for her mother, will take place when he can finally wear the suit he is making out of his victims' skins. To signify his desire for this magic metamorphosis, Gumb chooses as a fitting symbol of his own view of his metamorphic self a rare species of nocturnal butterfly that he places in his victims' mouths. Yet, the shadow of Mr. Hyde is also present in *The Silence of the Lambs* in Gumb's distasteful choice of name for the leather goods company he briefly owns: 'Mr. Hide'.

Not only men are obsessed to the point of madness by a desire for radical transformation. Barbet Schroeder's suspense film *Single White Female* (1992), based on John Lutz's novel, narrates how Heddie, Ally's new flatmate, becomes her monstrous doppelgänger in her constant search for a new sister to replace her twin, drowned when both were only nine. Unlike Gumb, Heddie requires just some shopping for clothes and a new haircut to feel that she has become the woman she wishes to be. However, the extremest form of female transformation in the sense of appropriation of the other woman's body is the one undertaken by the giantess Ruth in Fay Weldon's novel *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983). She becomes a perfect replica of the petite Mary Fisher, her husband's mistress, thanks to plastic surgery. As can be seen, this two women understand metamorphosis as a process that will allow them to become literally another woman whom they have accepted as a desirable model. In the case of Dolarhyde and Gumb, there is no such equivalent desirable model of masculinity: Dolarhyde wants to become a mythical beast, Gumb a woman.

One of the motifs most frequently invoked to justify metamorphosis in recent fiction is the release of pent-up rage. This is a motif especially common in Japanese 'manga' where rage is usually represented as a powerful flow of supernatural energy. Yet, the instances I have come across in my survey of the English-language monster

refer to two women. In the witty, tongue-in-cheek 1994 remake of the 1950s film *Attack of the 50 Ft Woman* a magic beam sent from an extraterrestrial spaceship transforms the submissive Nancy, played by Daryl Hannah, into a gigantic, strong woman who can finally free herself from her oppression at the hands of her bullying father and her unfaithful husband. A similar situation is faced by Salman Rushdie's Sufiya Zinobia in his novel *Shame* (1983). Sufiya, a retarded woman whose body has accumulated the shame her family feels for her and the shame she feels for the world is metamorphosed by this very shame into a legendary man-eating white panther that alters the course of life in her land. Her father and her husband are also among her victims.

The monstrous transformation is often the result of the transgression of a taboo. This is usually related to the prohibition of acquiring forbidden knowledge about the mechanisms of sex or the artificial creation of life and death. The metamorphosis may be the punishment for transgressions of which the subject is well aware, which would follow Stevenson's model, or, alternatively, can transform an innocent subject into a monster in imitation of Kafka's. In general terms, women are punished with horrific transformations for having sex against the injunctions put by others on them, while men usually break taboos referred to the creation of artificial life. The motif of woman's transformation into a lethal predator brought about by her loss of virginity was the basis of Jacques Torneur's elegant horror film *Cat People* (1942). In the 1982 remake, the virginal Irina suffers the same fate, yet hers is a transformation that can be reversed by love; interestingly, in this film Irina has a brother who is also subject to the same taboo, a point that undermines the original misogynistic view of female sexuality of the 1940s film. This man uses his metamorphosis to his own advantage, become a bloodthirsty predator; his cruelty suggests that man's and not woman's sexuality is the real monster. *The Company of Wolves* (1984) deals with a similar taboo, though in Rosalee's case the final transgression of the prohibition to have sex with the werewolf that haunts her grandmother's house results in her joyous liberation and in her becoming a werewolf herself. Rosalee's transformation, which unlike those of the other werewolves in the film is not seen, signifies her acceptance of sexuality rather than her punishment, but also suggests that sexuality may be potentially monstrous depending on whether the subject may enjoy it or not.

The transgression of the taboo on the acquisition of forbidden knowledge about how to manipulate life is a very frequent leitmotiv in contemporary narratives about monstrosity. This motif is no doubt derived from *Frankenstein*, but while Mary Shelley's doctor hero was punished with death, many of his descendants in contemporary films and novels are punished with horrific changes for their transgressions, like Dr. Jekyll. This is the case of Seth Brundle who becomes a creature part fly, part man in *The Fly* (1986), a film that also considers the metamorphosis as the horrific effect of disease (especially of cancer), and of Dr. Jessup, who is turned into an ape and later a monstrous shapeless mass in *Altered States*. Another form of transgression occurs when the subject wishes to learn about death: in Clive Barker's short story "The Forbidden" (filmed as *Candyman* in 1992) Helen, a PhD student writing on a modern urban legend about a mythical killer is herself transformed into an undead monster after the burning of her body. This is also the fate of journalist Karen in *The Howling*, in which her interest in a psychopath ultimately leads to her transformation into a werewolf before the TV cameras when she is trying to denounce the existence of the creatures, or of Frank in *Hellraiser* (1987), whose search for sado-masochistic pleasure transforms him into a particularly gruesome skinless undead.

Louis's transformation into a mournful vampire in *Interview with the Vampire* is also a form of penance brought about by his wish to die.

However, most transformations occur in contexts that emphasize the haphazard nature of life and that are closer to Kafka's scenario than to Stevenson's. The victims do not deserve their fate but accept it, and in some cases their own death, with resignation, convinced of the arbitrariness of life and death. David in *An American Werewolf in London* and Daniel in *Heart-Beast* (1986) are transformed into werewolves because they unwittingly transgress norms they ignore during their stay in foreign lands. An accident turns Nick Holloway into an invisible man in *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* (1992), and a mask is the reason why Stanley Ipkiss becomes an impossibly cartoonish character in *The Mask* (1994). Other transformations are caused by vicious attacks such as the one scientist Peyton suffers in *Darkman* (1990), which turns his face into the masque of death very similar to Lon Chaney's characterisation as Eric, the Phantom of the Opera. Two victims of a horrific attack by a gang literally come back from death transformed into monsters, though of a heroic type: policeman Alex Murphy is reborn in *Robocop* (1986) as a cyborg in a titanium armour employed as a new model policeman by the corporation OCP; the undead rock singer Eric adopts in *The Crow* (1994) a new image, a cross between Batman's archenemy the Joker and the androgynous Goth boy Edward Scissorhands, which signifies his assumption of a new personality, that of the avenger of his dead fiancée.

While most of the metamorphic changes I have detailed respond to a preoccupation with the transgression of taboos and to the fear of losing control on one's own body by accident or through violence, some of the metamorphic rebirths of recent films and novels express the wish to enter into a communion with other beings and to transcend individuality. In novels such as Greg Bear's *Blood Music* (1985), Charles Sheffield's *The Nimrod Hunt* (1986), and Dan Simmons' *The Fall of Hyperion* (1990) the protagonists (themselves abnormal people who have been modified by a disease or who have been created as laboratory experiments) go through the harrowing process of being integrated into a new level of collective consciousness in metamorphosis that are symbolic representations of death and rebirth and that give a new interpretation to the old idea of the composite monster. The monster in, for instance, *The Nimrod Hunt*, is the sum total of a human and three non-human bodies merging mentally and physically. In Orson Scott Card's novelization of *The Abyss* the protagonist Bud is rescued from death in the underwater abyss of the title by aliens who re-create him as a new type of human being capable of feeling his individuality as one of the components of a larger collective mind. In these texts, metamorphosis clearly implies that the human body and mind can only transcend their limitations by having magical access to a new phase of evolution, which is always brought about by aliens or by man-made artificial intelligences: the visualization of the monstrous metamorphosis is, thus, the expression of a New Age wish-fulfilment fantasy of transcendence and communion.

The importance of change in the current iconography of monstrosity is exemplified not only by the metamorphic monster that reaches a final, stable phase in the transformation but also by the multiple shape-shifter. This type of shape-shifting monster cannot be explained simply as a multiple metamorphic monster. The shape-shifter adopts many forms in succession, which means that it is hard to spot, so that its threat is reinforced with each transformation, a characterisation that derives from the iconography of the Devil. Some of these shape-shifters are technically body snatchers, that is to say, instead of being protean bodies that can metamorphose at will, body snatchers are disembodied spirits that take different bodies whose possessors they kill.

Although most shape-shifters like the alien of *The Thing*, the Devil in *Swan Song*, the T-1000 in *The Terminator 2* or the body-snatching demon of *Spanky* (1994) are evil, not all monsters of this kind are presented in negative terms suggesting a satanic nature. Olivia Butler's novel *Wild Seed* (1980) narrates the love story between the multiple shape-shifter Anyanwu and the body snatcher Doro; the novel deals with the efforts of Anyanwu, who is a caring matriarch and a reputed healer, to convince Doro that his immense power can find a better use than killing. Likewise, in the film *The Hidden* (1987) an alien, best defined as an angelic body snatcher, stalks and kills another body-snatching alien who is evil. The shape-shifter in both varieties is a monster rich in significance: on the one hand, it is clearly associated with the Devil, and also with paranoid fears and the mistrust of superficial appearances; on the other hand, as seen in Anyanwu, the shape-shifter is a wish-fulfilment figure typical of a culture that at a superficial level invites individuals to endlessly transform their physical appearance through fashion, cosmetics, sport and even plastic surgery and that also values the personal transformation of the individual striving for success.

In this culture of the chameleonic body the monsters sporting a fixed image are often figures of extremity, spectacular bodies that are often more grotesque than horrifying. In some cases, the monsters are presented in groups including individuals with many variations so that no single image can stand for all. This is the case of the monsters of the *Alien* trilogy, which appear in different phases of growth and also in different varieties as adults, and also those of *The Abyss*. Monsters like the Gremlins of the eponymous film (1984) appear divided into a disgustingly evil and a cuddly good subspecies, within which a high number of idiosyncratic individuals can be distinguished. Whenever an individual, unique monster appears in a film or in a novel of the 1980s and 1990s it is given, in all likelihood, an original image that breaks away from anything seen or imagined before, though there may be still thematic points of connection with other monsters. Freddy Krueger, with his hobo clothes, razor gloves, black hat and scarred face is one of those grotesque, unique figures together with the leather-clad Cenobites of *Hellraiser*, or the winged woman Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* (1984). Other monsters such as Edward in *Edward Scissorhands*, *E.T.*, the imposing metallic god of *Hyperion* and the luminous aliens of *Cocoon* (1985) suggest that the territory of monstrosity encompasses much more than the grotesque and the horrific: this is a domain actually informed by variety and difference, and by the onlooker's curiosity and fascination before always surprising otherness.

Monsters resist a neat classification in the three categories of fixed images, metamorphosers and multiple shape-shifters: too many instances escape the grid. Classifications of any kind abolish the richness and diversity of the monstrous without explaining it, as the essence of the monster is to be "chaotic, conforming to no existing class" (Buxton, op. cit.: 205). Noel Carroll (op. cit.: 52), who identifies the monster exclusively with the horrific creature, argues that "fusion, fission, magnification, massification and horrific metonymy are the major tropes for presenting the monsters of art-horror". Actually, this classification is too narrow, for it ignores human evil monsters of normal physical appearance and also non-human angelic figures; furthermore, it fails to explain metamorphic and shape-shifting monsters. What defines the monster is the capacity of its image to disrupt our ontological frame of mind by surprising us with an unexpected set of physical and psychological features, either because they are all abnormal or because the monster displays an uncanny combination of the normal and the abnormal. Supposing that the physical appearance of all creatures, including the imaginary ones, and of human beings could be divided into three main categories—

hideous, average, beautiful—and that an equivalent triad could be found in a moral division into categories of evil, average and good, the monster would be a creature characterized by any of the following combinations: hideous body/evil behaviour, hideous body/average behaviour, hideous body/good behaviour, beautiful body/evil behaviour, beautiful body/good behaviour. A creature average in looks and behaviour could not be monstrous while the category of the extraordinarily beautiful but average in behaviour seems not to have a place within the current cultural phase of the construction of monstrosity, except as prodigy, in the sense that can be applied to film and pop music stars and fashion models.

A hideous monster that is good or behaves in an average, normal way disrupts many notions about the ideological identification of good looks with good morals, while a hideous, evil monster confirms them. The power to threaten its victims defines the monster only partially, for, often the monster is a victim of those who threaten it because of its abnormal physical appearance. A number of contemporary films and novels try to educate the reader or the viewer into an acceptance of difference, no matter how abnormal this may seem at first sight. Thus, in *Enemy Mine* (1985) a lizard-like extraterrestrial—curiously played by black actor Lou Gosset Jr.—and a white human male must come to terms with their initial mutual repulsion in order to survive in the hostile environment where both are left stranded. So complete is their final blindness to their widely diverging anatomies that the human male ends up taking care of the baby engendered by the alien, who also happens to be a parthenogenetic hermaphrodite.

Intimacy dispels or relativises monstrosity, a point also emphasised by *The Man without a Face* (1993) and by *The Elephant Man* (1980). Ugliness that seems monstrous to strangers is accepted without fear or mistrust when it corresponds to a beloved person—somebody in the family or a new friend—but the beholder may find that social acceptance of the so-called monster is not so easy, or in other words, that social barriers are by no means as easy to break down as personal barriers. Often, the monster's physical appearance prevents all kind of contact with its personality if the beholders cannot overcome their prejudices or if they overcome them only partly. Fear, or even contempt, cannot be replaced by trust when the beholder remains always prejudiced, which shows that the beholder is often the true monster. The treatment John Merrick receives in the film *The Elephant Man* when he is in the hands of his barbaric exploiters exemplifies this. A sadly ironic instance of wishful thinking (rather hypocritical) occurs in narratives in which the acceptance of ugliness by the beholder turns the monster magically into a beautiful being; the replacement of fear by trust in the beholder is thus rewarded but there is not a real acceptance of difference. “Beauty and the Beast” is the classic instance of this, though in none of its recent transpositions to new plots, except for Disney's adaptation of the fairy tale (1993), is the monster transformed into a handsome man as a reward for Belle's loyalty.

Monsters most often combine ugliness and instinctual hostility against humans. No possibility of turning fear into trust can be considered then because the behaviour of the monster prevents all communication and, furthermore, because it is destructive of the beholder as in the relations between predator and prey. The monster is then a proper object of fear for its victims, though readers or viewers may be engaged simultaneously in an exercise of empathy with the victims and the hero and of aesthetic appreciation, or fascination for the monster. The extraterrestrial monster in the film *Predator* (1987) is a clear instance of this kind. However, the originally abnormal human monster can be sometimes magically transformed into a normal, even attractive human being, in plots that question whether monstrosity lies in the psyche or in the body. The misshapen

criminal in the film *Johnny Handsome* (1989), played by Mickey Rourke, is helped to achieve normality by a plastic surgeon who believes that Johnny has been doomed to be evil by the social rejection of his abnormal physical appearance. As it turns out, Johnny becomes a handsome man, but he is still a criminal at heart (a moral monster), seeking revenge on those who abused him under his previous identity. Johnny Handsome denies thus the premise of *Frankenstein*, namely, that the social rejection of ugliness is responsible for turning a benevolent man into an evil monster: Johnny is always evil, though his social marginalization is responsible for making him irredeemably evil.

Monsters may accept their own images or seek to change them, to disguise what they are. The Beast of *Beauty and the Beast* is pitiful because he cannot come to terms with his own image, but monsters like Freddy Krueger are horrifying because they positively enjoy their ugliness and their evil ways. Likewise, some monsters like the Seal Boy Arturo in Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* (1983), can even be narcissistic to the point of being megalomaniac: Arturo even starts a cult whose adepts mutilate their bodies to resemble those of their limbless master. Another narcissistic monster is the villain Max Cady in the film *Cape Fear* (1991). His muscular body, tattooed with the scales representing justice and with many passages from the *Old Testament*, is displayed in the film's initial scene; this spectacular body signifies Cady's transformation in prison into an even more dangerous monster than he originally was.

A more complex form of monstrosity is that of the evil human being of average looks; this is the classic boy-next-door who turns out to be a psychopath, introduced by Hitchcock with his Norman Bates in *Psycho* (1960). Since we think in terms of stereotyped clichés derived from fiction it often comes as a shock to realize that in real life, the worst monster most often looks harmless. Philip Roth stresses the point in his description of the real-life Nazi John Demjanjuk in the novel *Operation Shylock* (1993), which deals partly with his trial in Israel as the alleged Ivan the Terrible. The looks of the grandfatherly Demjanjuk fascinate Roth and prove to him "that to be both a loving grandfather and a mass murderer is not all that difficult. It's because you could do both so well that I can't stop staring at you" (p. 63). When no external sign betrays the monster his or her bizarre normality becomes the more horrifying. Other normal people revealing themselves as monstrous abnormalities are the killer housewife Beverly Sutphin in the comedy film *Serial Mom* (1994), the villainous Peyton in the film *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* (1992) and the family man Jack Torrance in the novel and film *The Shining* (1977). All of them are figures related to a family context which is the site of tension from which abnormality most often emerges. The normality of conventional family life seems to conceal a potential for monstrosity that has only recently been tapped.

Normality, of course, is relative. In a context in which the cult of the body dominates social perceptions of the individuals, all lack of beauty is seen as abnormal, while a perfect body may easily conceal the most monstrous being, as I have noted in the cases of Pat Bateman, the anti-hero of *American Psycho* and Tod Friendly, the anti-hero of *Time's Arrow*. The yuppie image covers up men with monstrous ideas of fun, like Ian Wharton in William Self's *My Idea of Fun* (1993) or the dandy demon of *Spanky*. Interestingly, the trim image of the yuppie Bateman is in contrast to two other businessmen: Bob Glandier in the novel *The Businessman* (1984) and the Fat Controller in Self's *My Idea of Fun*. Glandier belongs to the late 1970s and early 1980s and his fall is marked not only by his killing of his wife but also by the rise of intolerance against the cigar-smoking, fat, unhealthy businessman, replaced by the likes of Bateman, an example of the healthy-looking executive fashionable in the 1980s. In contrast, the Fat

Controller, apparently the Devil himself, is a rather more transhistorical, Falstaffian figure of unbounded obesity.

At the end of the spectrum of monstrosity lies the beautiful monster. As I have already noted the 'femme fatale' is the prototype of the beautiful, evil monster, but there is also a type of beautiful, benevolent monster of which angels are the prototype. The monstrosity of angels may seem paradoxical, yet the fact that they are imaginary non-human creatures puts them in the same category as devils, a type of monsters to which they are, nevertheless closely related in Christian myths. Although the angel is not a figure that has been particularly exploited in the twentieth century, the fact is that angels often appear in films and novels as normal human beings (usually men as in *Jacob's Ladder* (1990) or *Wings of Desire* (1987), just to name two instances) and hardly ever, if at all, as the winged, robed, androgynous creatures of medieval iconography. When they appear as luminous beings, they are inevitably alien messiahs (see Chapter 4) as in *Starman* (1984), *Cocoon* or *The Abyss*. The latter contains possibly the only instance of a moment of terror provoked by a sublime beautiful monster: when a member of the crew working in the underwater oil rig placed on the edge of the abyss comes across one of the lovely aliens (a cross between a jellyfish and a butterfly), the shock of believing this to be the angel of death that comes for him makes him enter into a coma. This scene suggests that our rationalistic outlook on the world is as much threatened by the horrific monster as by the angelic monster and that were we to see an angel our reaction would be as extreme as if we saw a devil. The conclusion to be derived from this survey of the images of monstrosity is, accordingly, that the immensely varied iconography of monstrosity encompasses whatever is extraordinary, and not only the grotesque, the horrific and the fantastic. Fascination rather than disgust is the key word to understand the contemporary iconography of monstrosity.

1.2.3. The Limits of the Visualization of Monstrous Violence in the Age of Special Effects: The Monster and the Imagery of the Broken Body

The iconography of monstrosity cannot be understood without the imagery of violence and death. The monsters of the 1980s and 1990s are defined rather by an unbound capacity to do physical or psychological harm than by an average horrific, grotesque or fantastic image than can summarise their main morphological traits—even though, as I have noted, by no means can all monsters be said to be threatening or horrific. There is no correlation between the degree of horror caused by the physical appearance of the monstrous body and the amount of violence caused by the monster; on the contrary, apparently normal human beings—even beautiful human beings—are seen committing unspeakable acts of violence on the pages of novels and on the screen, while morphologically extreme monsters inhabit the fantasies of children's cartoons and books as harmless, friendly monsters. Since the possession of claws, fangs, and slimy skins is totally insufficient to describe the monster of contemporary fiction, I should like to turn now to the discussion of the depiction of the violence caused by the monster, as this serves better to characterize monstrosity. An interesting point, as I will show, is that the very graphic portrait of violence is very similar in film and in the novel, against what might be expected. The perfected special effects of film have been blamed for the explosion of realistic violence in fiction, but the contemporary novel does not lag behind film as far as the representation of the broken body is concerned.

The imagery of Hell in Christianity is the meeting point of the monster and the broken body. The demons of Hell are monsters who torture, so that all the representations of Hell are also representations of the violent destruction of the human body. One of the paradoxes of Christianity is that the separation of the sinner's soul from God was imaged as the ceaseless torment inflicted on the body of the sinner in Hell rather than as a spiritual lack of contact with God. This may have been the result of mixing Hebrew ideas about Hell as a place to atone for one's sin with other mythologies, such as the Greek, in which those who disobey the gods are sentenced to the eternal repetition of their punishment. Why the torture of the body in Hell symbolized the separation of the soul from God and, whether the pain of Hell was inflicted on the actual body or was simply a metaphor, were questions that occupied many theologians in the Middle Ages and that ultimately undermined the theological basis of Hell, that is to say, its credibility.

Horrible death was also the subject of many paintings describing the martyrdom of a particular saint, produced throughout the Middle Ages. The legends of the martyrdom of saints are one of the most frequently overlooked sources for the imagery of death inherited by the contemporary monster, possibly because the horror endured by the saint had to be distinguished from that of Hell: the sinner's pain put God beyond his or her reach, while the saint's suffering approximated him to God. The saint appeared, thus, as a heroic figure whose apparent defeat by the monster (the non-Christian torturers) was actually a victory of the soul. Although images of torture are often related to the infamous task of the Inquisition, it is necessary to recall that torture had been part of the iconography of the Christian church and of sainthood, long before torture came to be associated by Protestantism with the worst horrors of Catholicism, and long before the Protestant martyr victimized by the Catholic inquisition replaced in the English-language world the image of the early Christian saint tortured by the infidels.

The visceral horror of death was also the subject depicted in the fourteenth century iconographical tradition of the "Danse Macabre"; the frail human body was represented in a carnivalesque dance with omnipresent, raging death, a motif entrenched in European culture following the ravages caused by the Black Death epidemic started in 1348. The iconography of death returns to the foreground with Gothic fiction and Romanticism and begets later through the work of Francisco de Goya (1746-1828), especially in his series of engravings *Disasters of War*, a pioneering use of the unbearable sight of the broken body to denounce the horror of death caused not by the ravages of diseases but by war. Goya's work prefigures an iconographical tradition that expresses anxieties about the meaning of heroism and the actual effects of the violence caused by the hero. This serves to represent the horrific effects of war in the twentieth century, whose mass scale warfare techniques turn each potential hero into an actual monster of destruction. This association of the monster with the indiscriminate, arbitrary death of the "Danse Macabre" medieval tradition and its use to support the humanist hatred of war and violence first expressed artistically by Goya are behind much contemporary horror fiction and its iconography of extreme violence. Stephen King's choice of title for his essay on horror fiction, *Danse Macabre*, appears therefore to acknowledge the fact that twentieth-century creators of art-horror like him occupy a place within an ancient tradition but that, at the same time, the medieval iconography of death and the monster occupies a preeminent position in the imagination of the contemporary artist.

Yet, for all its clearly discernible sources, the frequent destruction of the body by the monster in contemporary fiction lacks the religious connotations of the medieval

past or of the more recent wave of anti-Catholic feeling in Protestant countries. It could be said that the images have been preserved but they have been dissociated from their meaning, to become, simply, sensationalist, morbid images. The process started with the Gothic novel itself, especially with *The Monk*, though violence was left dormant during the nineteenth century, which showed a greater preference for static images of death. The Romantic/Gothic cult of the dead bride, as in Edgar Allan Poe's short stories or in the paintings of the Decadent artists, is part of this morbid attraction for death.

According to David Skal (op. cit.: 66) the iconography of violent destruction of the body by the monster must be understood within the context of the extremely violent destruction caused by war in the twentieth century. Skal argues that audiences familiarised with the horrors brought about by World War I—not only the dead, but the many veterans mutilated in war and their horrific tales of death in the trenches—may have found in Lon Chaney's creatures a fictional, Gothic version of the broken faces and bodies of reality. The Gothic monster was endowed in the first half of the twentieth century with the task of symbolically airing the horror of the violence that had destroyed the bodies of so many men in real life. From Hiroshima onwards, and especially since Vietnam, the broken body has filled an important public space in the media—maybe relying on the space already occupied by sensationalism in fiction and in the tabloid press—that partly politicises violence but that also deprives the dead body of a deeper meaning at a personal level. The dead body of the martyred saint is a venerated body, but the destroyed body of the victims of war and terrorist or criminal violence suggest the emptiness of a meaningless loss of life rather than elicit the respect due to the victims. This indifference in the face of the work of the monster of reality has partly passed to the world of fiction. As Peter Boss (1986: 16) writes, death is in modern film “often casual to the point of randomness; devoid of metaphysical import,... frequently squalid, incidental to the main action, mechanically routine in its execution and lonely but for the unwavering scrutiny of the lens as it seeks out details of broken bodies”. The same can be said about the images of bodily destruction shown on TV and the press.

Philip Brophy (1986: 8) links the frequent destruction of the body in film to the ascendancy in horror fiction of a mode of showing as opposed to telling. This is a mode that is, in addition, alike in film and in the novel regardless of the actual moral intention of the author (a point I discuss in Chapter 4). It is also strongly connected to the media's morally passive showing of atrocity in the belief that images speak louder than words. The generation of contemporary artists who were prevented in their childhood from gazing freely at the broken bodies shown in the 1950s horror comics, were the same ones later sent to Vietnam, if they were American; if they were European they could not ignore, either, the TV and press images showing the tragic effects of that war on the bodies of the victims. Ironically, the children of the 1950s protected against the comics' images of horror inherited from Gothic, went back to those very same images to frame the reality of what they saw in war. Tom Savini, the man who created the gory special effects that have popularised Gothic horror films such as *Friday the Thirteenth* (1980), based his ultra-realistic designs for the representation of violence inflicted on the human body by the monster precisely on his own experience as a photographer in the Vietnam war. The profound impact of the destruction he witnessed led Savini to fuse realism with the older tradition mainly transmitted through Gothic. His work inaugurated the increasing stylisation of the destruction of the body on the screen, a process that has produced a remarkable paradox: the unglamorous broken bodies of the news now appear to be the work of second rate special effects artists by comparison to the elaborated effects employed in contemporary film to portray the destruction of the body.

The search for the “ideal of absolute atrocity” that Leslie Fiedler (1973:134) perceived in Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk*, has not been abandoned yet. Images of bodily destruction are ubiquitous not only in horror novels or films, but also, as I have noted, in the media. Yet, because of the attention usually attracted by horror films, especially of sub-genres such as the slasher and the splatter—films centred on the exploits of a psychopathic serial killer which rely on sensationalistic special effects to pad out the flimsy plots—the general impression is that the sadistic destruction of the body does not have an equivalent in written fiction, except in that of lowest quality. This is, simply, wrong. The following passages, extracted from novels published between 1979 and 1995, prove that the monster and the violent depiction of monstrous violence are not confined to the horror film. They prove, furthermore, that monstrous violence permeates the work of mainstream and genre writers across gender barriers. I invite my reader to consider whether there are clear style markers that may help determine what gender the author is and whether the passages correspond to mainstream or genre novels:

It’s not easy to wield a hammer in a motor car. When I struck her the first time I expected to feel the sharp, clean smack of steel on bone, but it was more like hitting clay, or hard putty. The word fontanel sprang into my mind. I thought one good bash would do it, but, as the autopsy would show, she had a remarkably strong skull—even in that, you see, she was unlucky. The first blow fell just at the hairline, above her left eye. There was not much blood, only a dark-red glistening dent with hair matted in it. She shuddered, but remained sitting upright, swaying a little, looking at me with eyes that would not focus properly. Perhaps I would have stopped then, if she had not suddenly launched herself at me across the back of the seat, flailing and screaming. I was dismayed. How could this be happening to me—it was all so unfair.

The axe came whistling down and buried itself in Paul Sheldon’s left leg just above the ankle. Pain exploded up his body in a gigantic bolt. Dark-red blood splattered her face like Indian war paint. It splattered the wall. He heard the blade squeal against bone as she wrenched it free. He looked unbelievably down at himself. The sheet was turning red. He saw his toes wriggling. Then he saw her raising the dripping axe again. Her hair had fallen free of its pins and hung around her blank face.

I had only a little way to walk home, and hardly expected to find such an early opportunity to exercise my calling. Hearing a horse behind me I moved to one side, but not soon enough to escape the touch of a whip. I turned in a fury and saw it to be a pock-marked, leather-faced, drab-witted ancient, got up in grey with a flat lace collar too big for modesty. I pulled him from his horse and popped his eyeballs with my thumbs, and then, forcing open his jaw as I would to get a chicken bone out of a dog, I loosened his teeth with my heel and soon had them mostly out and wrapped up in his own handkerchief.

The second card-player lifted his head and saw, over the bowed head of his fellow, the face of Satan standing on the moonlight. The man could not speak. His mouth came open, and in that instant the black claws of the Devil raked through the body of the other man. There was a snap and gush of blood, and head and body were separated. Out of the deluge came a long paw and, as the living card-player started his scream, hooked out his throat.

The first of these four passages belongs to John Banville's *The Book of Evidence* (1989: 113), a mainstream novel, whereas the second can be found in Stephen King's *Misery* (1987: 242), a horror novel which has been adapted for the cinema. The authors of the third and fourth passages are women: Jeanette Winterson's heroine, the Dog Woman, in *Sexing the Cherry* (1989: 92) is the monster narrating her exploits in the third passage, while the monster seen as Satan by his victim is actually a werewolf, Daniel, the protagonist of Tannith Lee's *Heart-Beast* (1992: 64). What the four passages have in common among themselves and with many others is the conciseness and the attention to detail, no matter how disgusting that may be for the reader. The passages by Banville and Winterson are, in addition, written in the first person, which makes them even more disturbing for the reader, though they manage to be horrific in different ways: Banville's Freddy is mentally and bodily involved in his unspeakable act, Winterson's Dog Woman keeps herself mentally detached from the horror she is creating—paradoxically, proximity and detachment to violence are valid to mark the monster and cause a disquieting effect in the reader, above all, because their reader is not a seeker of horror as King's and Lee's are.

Can the passages by Lee and King be said to be more or less cinematic than those by Banville and Winterson, as the use of the third person narrative voice by the former might suggest? The answer is no. The four passages are intensely visual in a cinematic way—Lee's specially recalls strongly the strategies used in werewolf films such as Neil Jordan's *The Company of Wolves*. Yet, in Rob Reiner's excellent adaptation of Stephen King's *Misery*, the crucial scene in which the madwoman Annie Wilkes symbolically castrates her prisoner, the writer Paul Sheldon, by cutting off his left foot has been replaced by a bloodless horrific scene in which Annie is seen to break Paul's feet with a sledge hammer. In this otherwise faithful adaptation, the extreme violence of King's book is missing perhaps because of the director's preoccupation with producing a mainstream film that did not recall the sub-genre of the slashers and splatters. This is the more surprising in view of the extreme images of violence in mainstream films and in view of the strategies available to Reiner to have adapted King's bloody scene without showing—just suggesting—all the extent of Annie's brutality.

What has been seemingly lost in the novel is the possibility of handling violence and the monster in a literary way. Monstrous violence seems to require a stark, threadbare language that is literary in the sense that it is used to impress the reader of a work of fiction with emotional effects controlled by the writer. Yet, it is a language of the visible that shows rather than tells, and that aims at forcing images into the reader's mind, images that must prompt a reflection on the reader's side on the meaning of monstrosity, usually without the author's help. For a contemporary reader, the use of poetic language to describe the effects of monstrous language, as in the following passage from William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1593), seems a cynical and improper use of the beauty of language. Here is Marcus lamenting the fate of his niece Lavinia, the survivor of a brutal rape and of the ensuing attack in which she has lost her hands and her tongue:

Speak, gentle niece, what stern ungentle hands
Hath lopp'd and hew'd and made thy body bare
Of her two branches, those sweet ornaments,
Whose circling shadows kings have sought to sleep in,
And might not gain so great a happiness

As half thy love? Why dost not speak to me?
Alas, a crimson river of warm blood,
Like to a bubbling fountain stirr'd with wind,
Doth rise and fall between thy rosed lips,
Coming and going with thy honey breath. (II, iv, 15-25)

In contrast to Shakespeare's poetic treatment of the effects of monstrous violence, contemporary writers produce scenes in which language is primarily used as an aid to the visualization: what must remain after having read the text is the image visualized and not the language which recedes into the background. This effect is akin to the one produced by special effects in film: the tools of the artist (the writer's language, the filmmaker's photography and special effects) try to be as unobtrusive as possible so as to centre on achieving an intensely visual moment. Only after that moment can the surprised reader or viewer consider how it has been created. While for the novel, part of the enjoyment of reading about monstrosity is derived from the interplay between the author who force-feeds his or her reader with striking images and the reader who indulges in this intrusion of the disturbing imagery of monstrosity, in film the pleasure of seeing the monster and monstrous violence relies on enjoyment of a paradox: special effects create an illusion that the viewer cannot dispel even when s/he knows that it is faked. Although she refers to science fiction, Vivian Sobchack's (1993:41) observation about the pleasures of seeing the impossible also apply to the horror film: "the satisfaction comes from seeing the visual interaction of actual and impossible in the same frame, from the filmmaker's ability to make us suspend our disbelief at the very moment we are also wondering 'How did they do it?'" When reading a novel like *American Psycho*, which seems as close as possible to Fiedler's ideal of absolute atrocity, what the reader wonders is also how the writer did it. For both film and the novel the questions regarding the representation of monstrosity and the effects of monstrous violence are the same: why the images of the intolerable have reached such visual concreteness—the perfect realism of the unreal—and how the Platonic conception of art as a means to create beauty fits in this artistic panorama inspired by monstrosity.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have reviewed major aspects that condition the image of the monster in the 1980s and 1990s. The new iconography of monstrosity in these decades is ultimately grounded on the patriarchal overturning of the prehistoric Earth goddess and on the use of the monster to represent fallen matriarchy. Despite the fact that the memory of the oldest myths representing that defeat, such as the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, has been lost, the fact is that the image of the monster is essential to an understanding of the beginning of the decadence of patriarchal values in the late twentieth century. Even though misogyny seems to be a very important element in the construction of the image of the monster throughout the centuries, in the 1980s and 1990s the proliferation of male monsters suggests that men are currently reacting against the evident rise of values associated to woman and against the rise of the stronger post-feminist woman—still in a confused way so that the monster represents abject masculinity but also male power. The images of male monsters show, to a certain extent, that we have reached the end of the phase inaugurated with the deposition of the goddess.

The current iconography for the monster derives motifs from the past—myth, religion, the arts—and the present. The multiplication of cultural channels or media to transmit the image of the monster has resulted in a multiplicity of monstrous icons, though it can be said that contemporary films and novels share to a remarkable extent similar strategies to visualize the monster. Since the monster is also defined by its capacity to inflict bodily harm, I have considered the iconography of bodily destruction and the raising of the threshold of tolerance in the graphic representation of violence as extensions of the iconography of monstrosity. In film, the evolution of the images of monstrosity is closely linked to the frequently underrated work of special effects artists, which reflects the ceaseless search for new images to fascinate film-goers in the interests of capitalism.

In this chapter I have also argued that the traditional view of the monster as a horrific, disgusting creature is too limited. Instead, I have proposed an alternative definition of the monster as a being (human or not, imaginary or real) of extraordinary physical appearance and/or behaviour capable of upsetting our sense of normality and even of eliciting fascinated desire from the reader or viewer. One particularity of the iconography of monstrosity in the films and novels of the 1980s and 1990s is the important role played by metamorphosis. The monstrous shape-shifter of multiple bodies is the counterpart of the spectacular body of fixed image; both belong to iconographical traditions started in archaic myth but have found in the context of the 1980s and 1990s—a time in which constant change and the quest for novelty are paramount—a fertile ground on which to proliferate.

CHAPTER 2 Old Monsters, New Monsters: Vision and Revision From Screen Adaptation to Novelization

2.0. Introduction

The monster of film frequently derives from the printed word. The omnivorous appetite of the film industry has consumed all types of successful published narratives in its endless search for safe business. Mainstream literature, genre fiction, and hybrids between word and image such as comics, have become the sources for countless film adaptations since the beginning of the twentieth century. The popularity of film and the huge amounts of money invested in the making and advertising of Hollywood's products—especially of those known as blockbusters in which the monster is frequently the star—have paradoxically resulted in new forms of circulating the images of the monster on the printed page. Novelisations of screenplays, new novels, comics, video-games, cartoon TV series and toys have sprung from films which are, in many cases, adaptations of written texts of diverse popularity. The first section of this chapter reviews very briefly the evolution of the monster of film since its beginnings in contrast to the creation of new monsters for the printed page, focusing next on the two texts that define the limits of monstrosity in the period under study: the film *Alien* (1979) and the novel *American Psycho* (1991).

No doubt, the three most popular monsters of the screen adapted from literary sources are the vampire Dracula, Victor Frankenstein's creature and Dr. Jekyll. The second section of this chapter discusses their endurance into the 1980s and 1990s despite the changing cultural and commercial background of film. This section also deals with the difficulties faced by the mainstream film directors responsible for the most recent adaptations of the original texts by Bram Stoker, Mary Shelley and R.L. Stevenson: Francis Ford Coppola, Kenneth Branagh and Stephen Frears, respectively. My argumentation proves that the new revisions are conditioned not only by the actual degree of faithfulness to the literary sources but also by the many previous screen adaptations and by the new interest of reputed filmmakers in the horror film. These screen adaptations arrive, in addition, at a moment when the new monsters inspired by the original Gothic triad but that cannot be considered direct adaptations or imitations, seem to have forestalled the need for further revisions of the classics.

The last section of this chapter deals with a number of screen adaptations of contemporary novels and with the tensions among filmmakers, novelists and the reading public for the final control of the film. The difference cases review, among other aspects, the limits of the folklorisation of the motifs springing from novels and films about monsters (centring my analysis on the particular case of the *Hellraiser* (1987–1993) series), the resistance of readers against the screen adaptation of cult novels (focusing on the cases of *Dune* (1984), *Interview with the Vampire* (1994) and *The Naked Lunch* (1991)), the interesting differences in the adaptation of the same novel about monstrosity—Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983)—for British TV and American film and, finally, the position of the novelist commissioned to write a

novelization. As shall be seen, this constant transfer of images of monstrosity from the novel to film and from the screen to the printed page is limited by a conservative mixture of artistic and commercial interests: the easy adaptability of the literary text and the limitations imposed by available special effects techniques, together with the budget they require, mark the divergence in the paths of contemporary films and novels about monstrosity.

2.1. Recycling and Renewing the Monster in the 1980s and 1990s

2.1.1. The Monster in the Twentieth-Century Film and Novel

Only nine novels from the list of the best hundred modern fantasy novels published between 1946 and 1987 elaborated by David Pringle (1987) have been adapted for the cinema screen, with remarkable little success except for Roman Polanski's adaptation of Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967). A similar situation can be inferred from Jones and Newman's (1988) list of the hundred best horror books published between 1592 and 1987. Classics of monstrosity such as Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), James Hogg's *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) or Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Uncle Silas* (1864), have not been adapted for the screen or have only inspired failed films. Even though since the beginning of its history film has relied—and still relies—on the adaptation of popular texts about monstrosity, the fact is that Hollywood's relationships with the world of the genre or the mainstream novelist interested in the monster are certainly erratic. Some authors such as Stephen King are systematically adapted regardless of the quality of his novels, while excellent novels written in the 1980s and 1990s are ignored, despite their critical and commercial success, what is more, regardless of the fact that many of the authors that have written them use strategies of visualization that can be defined as cinematic. On the other hand, the writers whose novels on monstrosity have been adapted for the screen have not benefited greatly from the success of the film. Most people are, for instance, familiar with *Blade Runner* (1982) but few know that it was based on a novel by Philip K. Dick, and even fewer have read either this novel or any of Dick's other books. What seems to be even worse, when the adaptations have not been especially remarkable, as has been the case of most films based on King's novels, this has created great confusion as to the actual quality of the original novels: many people consider King to be a bad writer solely on the basis of the bad films based on his novels.

The situation can be summarised as follows: film exerts a great influence on writers who are producing visually stunning novels about monstrosity in the 1980s and 1990s but seems unable to adapt these novels for the screen or to adapt them in high quality products. Instead, even though the aspects of monstrosity dealt with by contemporary novelists and filmmakers are remarkably homogeneous, Hollywood prefers using original screenplays—often imitations of stories written in the period between the 1930s and the 1950s for comics and the pulps—or adapted screenplays based on very popular best-sellers, regardless of their literary quality, with preference for a limited list of very familiar names, comics, TV series and even video-games. Presumably, the situation will change when Hollywood realizes that there is a still untapped immense potential for business in the adaptation of old and new genre fiction,

which can be certainly attractive for a large audience already familiar with the written texts, and who expects them to be visualized with all the impacting images the technology of film special effects can produce now.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, when film was still regarded as a carnival attraction, genre fiction began to emerge with the consolidation of authors such as H.G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle and Bram Stoker, whose work has been later adapted for the screen on countless occasions. This was the golden decade of the ghost story in Britain, with the work of writers such as Lafcadio Hearn, M.R. James, William Hope Hodgson, Algernon Blackwood, Oliver Onions and Lord Dunsany. Yet their work has only occasionally inspired screen adaptations, such as Jacques Torneur's *The Curse of the Demon* (1957), remotely based on one of James's short stories, "Casting of the Runes" (1911). While in Britain the bases for the separation between literary or mainstream fiction and genre fiction were being laid with the emergence of Modernism and literary criticism attached to the university, in the USA the construction of monstrosity was dominated by popular publications such as the dime novels and the fiction weeklies which appeared at the turn of the century. Later, from the 1920s onwards, dime novels and fiction weeklies faced the tough competition of the pulps—cheap periodical publications containing mainly short stories whose name refers to the pulpwood paper on which they were printed—and from the 1930s onwards of the comics. The role of cheap periodical publications together with the rise of the short story as a genre is essential to an understanding of the development of genre fiction, especially horror and science fiction: without the meeting ground provided by these magazines for writers and the young readers who later became writers themselves, and without the need to master the short story as the most suitable genre for that type of publication, many of the later successful novelists who started their careers outside the conventional literary circles would have been unable to find a responsive audience.

The 1910s were marked by the rise of film, with the first adaptations of *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* both in Europe and in the USA. Film traversed an exciting period of consolidation as an art form, which culminated in the field of the monstrous with the release of Robert Wiener's classic *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), a film which applied the artistic findings of German expressionism to the visualization of the human monster and his background. The field of popular literature was also beginning a rapid expansion in the 1910s with a type of low or middlebrow escapist fiction to which in some cases film seemed specially receptive: Gaston Leroux's best-seller *The Phantom of the Opera* (1911), first adapted in 1925, has since then been the object of four other screen versions (released in 1930, 1942, 1962 and 1989) and has also inspired Brian de Palma's satiric *The Phantom of Paradise* (1974). The 1910s saw the publication of other popular classics about monstrosity: Sax Rohmer's *Dr. Fu Manchu* (1911) did much to popularise the figure of the villainous mad doctor; years later, Gustav Meyerinck's *The Golem* and Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (both 1915) added new layers of meaning to the construction of monstrosity, the former by reviving the late medieval legend of the Golem, the latter by introducing the absurd in the field of monstrosity. This was also the period in which Edgar Rice Burroughs started publishing his series of Martian novels, which followed the wake of the popularisation of the scientific romances of Wells and Verne. The cheap publications such as dime novels and the magazines were dominated by adventure fiction written for boys (and often by boys) and given a pseudoscientific gloss, which established the foundations on which an alternative to the canon was to flourish a few decades later.

The reign of the monster was consolidated in film and in the pulps in the 1920s, though it suffered important changes with the 1929 crash. The 1920s was the decade in which the great silent horror films were produced, films that were already in many cases new versions of productions filmed in the previous decade: John S. Robertson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—the first Hollywood adaptation but the sixth to be produced worldwide—and *The Golem* (a German film unrelated to the novel by Meyerinck), both released in 1920, were revisions of that type, which took the technical possibilities of film a step further, encouraging the audience to expect a gradual rising of the quality of the horror film as spectacle. The German film director F.W. Murnau released a spurious version of Stoker's *Dracula*, *Nosferatu* (1922) the first vampire to be seen on the screen and, four years later, an adaptation of the myth of Faust. As I have noted in Chapter 1, Lon Chaney reached stardom in the 1920s thanks to his interpretations of the monsters Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and Erik in *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), both lavish productions that can be said the first blockbusters centring on the figure of the human monster. Meanwhile, Fritz Lang filmed in Germany *Metropolis* (1926), a film that joined Gothic with futurism in a way imitated decades later by Gothic postmodernist films such as *Blade Runner*. The rise of Nazism forced many of the German artists who had founded the booming German film industry rooted in the strong tradition of the German literature of the fantastic to migrate to the USA, where they contributed to a great extent towards the consolidation of the Hollywood horror film. People such as the photography director Karl Freund introduced expressionistic photography, which raised considerably the artistic level of the American horror film.

As Ron Goulart notes (Sullivan, op. cit.: 337) the pulps reached their golden age in roughly the two decades between the wars. The first pulps of the 1900s and 1910s—*Argosy*, *Adventure*, *All-Story*—published stories of different genres, and allowed writers such as Edgar Rice Burroughs their entrance into the literary market. From the 1910s onwards the pulps became specialised in different genres, detective fiction being the first to have its own magazine. In 1919 Street & Smith started publishing the short-lived *The Thrill Book*, which can be regarded as the first horror pulp. *Weird Tales* (first published in 1923), edited shortly by Edwin Baird and later by Fansworth Wright, became the home for all kinds of old and new monsters: it reprinted—and popularised among young readers—classics such as the short stories by Edgar Allan Poe and also gave entrance to new contributors who later became first rate figures in the field of extra-canonical literature: Ashton Clark Smith, Robert Bloch, Ray Bradbury and, the most important of them, H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937). Lovecraft, who refused to see himself as merely a pulp fiction writer, insisted instead on the links between his work and that of Edgar Allan Poe, from whom he learned the Gothic manners that impregnate his short stories. Lovecraft's pseudomythical tales about the grotesque alien gods who haunt the Earth that they once fashioned derive from long forgotten pagan sources recuperated with the interest in occultism at the turn of the century, but are also part of the Darwinian fears of miscegenation and devolution that shaped the monster at the beginning of the century. Lovecraft himself confessed that he saw himself intellectually as a sceptic incapable of believing in fairy tales, myths—or science—but aesthetically as a lover of the grotesque and the monstrous, a definition that suits many of the creators and readers of horror and science fiction.

The new pulps of the 1920s became the vehicle to articulate the field of science fiction especially with the work of Hugo Gernsback (1884-1967), who edited the popular *Amazing Stories* (1926), and who has been credited with the coinage of the term science fiction, and with that of J.W. Campbell Jr. (1910-1917), who in 1924 took over

the edition of *Astounding Stories* from the hands of its founder, F. Orlin Tremaine. Due to the influence of Campbell's editorship the contributors to the popular magazines started abandoning the adventure stories populated by so-called BEMs—bug-eyed monsters—and by heroes rescuing damsels in distress from the claws of lusty space monsters. These were the belated descendants of the threatening monsters of archaic and classical myth but also the predecessors of those space monsters that invaded the film screens in the 1950s. Instead of pure fantasy Gernsback popularised a new type of short story, based on more rigorous scientific tenets, which led to the golden age of 1930s prophetic, optimistic science fiction.

In the 1930s the field of the horror film expanded with the new 'talkies' adapted from stage plays. This was the case of *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1932) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932), all of them adapted from Broadway hits rather than from the original texts that were the source for the plays. Other horror films were adaptations from original primary sources: *Island of Lost Souls* (1932) was the first screen version of H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). These monsters of the screen were joined by monsters without literary sources, such as *King Kong* (1933), and *The Mummy* (1932), which found a receptive audience interested in the mystery of foreign lands as seen through the adventure novels and the stories published in dime novels, cheap weeklies and the pulps. This was also an audience that sought in the fantasy film an evasion from the everyday problems caused by the Depression ensuing from the 1929 crash. They crowded the cinemas to escape as far as possible from drab reality not only into the realm of terror, mystery and adventure but also into that of musical and comedies. *Werewolf of London* (1935) and *White Zombie* (1932) introduced to the screen two monsters that have proved to be extremely popular but that derive from folklore rather than literature and that have, so far, failed to inspire major novels in the field of fantasy. Interestingly, the horror film and the horror novel had not established by the 1930s the proximity to be found in later decades: significantly, Guy Endore's novel *The Werewolf of Paris* (1933), which can be said to belong to the cycle of 1930s monstrosity reflected by the American screens, was not adapted for the screen until the 1960s by Hammer studios.

Horror also dominated the 1930s pulps, which moved according to Goulat's (ibid.: 339) "from old dark houses and closer to old dark perversions". The pulps entered a period marked by a misogynistic eroticism bordering on pure sado-masochistic pornography, which made visible for the general public—especially on the lurid covers—what the strict Hays code was censoring in film. This vogue for sensationalist horror lasted until the end of the 1940s when the pressure exerted by civic groups against the horror pulps and the horror comics terminated their reign. The importance of the iconography of monstrosity produced by those who illustrated the horror pulps (and also the covers of science-fiction magazines or, in general, cheap genre fiction paperbacks) cannot be minimised. The draughtsmen who created the superheroes and the monsters of the 1930s and 1940s comics and who made them the stars on their own right of independent magazines no longer attached to newspapers and other periodicals have no doubt inspired subsequent generations (Sabin, op. cit.: 144- 146). Yet illustrators such as Frank R. Paul, Virgil Finlay, Harry Clarke, Hugh Rankin, Margaret Brundage, Lee Brown Coye and many others inspired with their work for the pulps and for book editions of well-known classics such as Poe many budding writers, illustrators and filmmakers. On the other hand, the mainstream novel contributed to the construction of monstrosity in the 1930s with Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). This dystopian novel disrupted the rosy panorama painted by the 1930s optimistic belief in

science propounded by popular science fiction with the introduction of a type of Gothic horror inspired not by the monster but by a monstrous system of power, a motif later taken up by George Orwell in *1984*.

The 1940s were a decade in which the appeal of the monster of the horror film waned to be replaced by a type of more subtle Gothic horror (represented by Hitchcock's first American film, *Rebecca* (1940) or Jacques Tourneur's *Cat People* (1942)), and by a considerable number of remakes or new versions of horror classics already filmed in the 1920s and the 1930s. Lewis Allen's horror film *The Uninvited* (1944) based on the 1942 novel by Dorothy McCardle was the first major horror film released by a studio since the 1930s and also one of the few cases in which a contemporary horror novel had been adapted for the screen soon after its publication. Yet, if the survival of the monster of film seemed jeopardised by its exhaustion and by the release of spoofs such as *Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948), the activity in the field of genre fiction published by magazines showed no signs of diminishing, quite the contrary. The list of authors who started publishing their work in the 1940s and whose work was to shape the cultural construction of monstrosity, especially as far as science fiction is concerned, includes Jack Williamson, Clifford D. Simak, A.E. van Vogt, Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, Fredrick Pohl, Lester del Rey and Fritz Leiber—authors who often published work halfway between horror and science fiction. In the field of the mainstream novel the 1940s saw the publication of George Orwell's *1984* (1948), a novel which resorts to the British tradition of Gothic horror to denounce the horrors of monstrous totalitarian regimes, specifically of Stalin's communism. The first volume of Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* trilogy, *Titus Groan* (1946), an idiosyncratic blend of Gothic horror and the world of children's fantasies, was apparently also inspired by the horrors of the monsters of reality of the decade, more concretely, by Peake's visit to the infamous Nazi concentration camp at Belsen.

The period 1939 to 1945, during which World War II was fought, altered the direction taken by the monster of film and written fiction during the previous decades. The 1950s are marked, above all, firstly, by the wave of American monster films which take the harmful effects of science rather than the supernatural as an excuse to account for the birth of the monsters (usually gigantic animals or hostile aliens) and, secondly, by the British cycle of neo-Gothic films produced by Hammer studios, spanning from 1957 with Terence Fisher's *The Curse of Frankenstein* to 1972 with *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell*, also by Terence Fisher. Hammer's films are, in fact, inspired by the 1930s black and white American horror film, which they update by using colour and also by introducing a greater dose of eroticism and violence. The American monster films of the 1950s are mainly a response to the fears unleashed by nuclear power and by the climate of paranoia and fear of invasion by the U.S.S.R., yet they have much in common with the stories about bug-eyed monsters of the first decades of the century. In fact, while the writers working for the magazines had already abandoned the stereotyped hostile extraterrestrials and robots for more humanist representations of the Other by the 1940s, films lagged behind in this sense, insisting on the horror of the monster in the shape of a horrific creature or beast. The blend of science and horror in films such as *It Came from Outer Space* (1953), *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1953), *Them!* (1954), the film that marks the entrance of the 'BEM' on the screen, *Forbidden Planet* (1956), *The Fly* (1958), *It!: the Terror from Outer Space* (1958), and many others is a main inspiration for the American monster films of the 1980s, which are in many cases very expensive remakes of the cheap 1950s films. Why this is the case is a question too complex to be answered in brief, yet a generational factor could furnish an important

clue: those who saw these films as children have paid homage as adult filmmakers to the terrors of childhood, renewing them for a younger generation more used to lavish special effects for whom the original 1950s products appear to be cheap and trite.

In the field of publishing, the eruption of the cheap paperback in the world of genre fiction considerably altered the panorama, as authors who had been unable to find a publisher for novels serialised in magazines could now have access to a larger readership, not needing to pass first through the step of the hardback edition. The new writers who started then their careers with contributions to the surviving magazines soon passed to the world of the paperback in which their predecessors were also finding their place. The 1950s saw the beginning of the careers of science-fiction authors as important as Arthur Bester, Arthur C. Clarke, James Blish, Brian Aldiss, Philip K. Dick, Poul Anderson, Jack Vance, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Philip José Farmer, and Robert Heinlein. Their names became popular in the 1960s at a time when science fiction and horror received the first signs of attention from scholars. However, the 1950s were also a prolific decade as far as the publication of fundamental titles shaping the construction of monstrosity is concerned. Robert E. Howard published in 1950 *Conan the Barbarian*, the first 'sword and sorcery' novel (in Fritz Leiber's felicitous coinage) and the origin of all the ensuing heroic fantasy so popular today and so closely linked with the folk tale and the prehistoric myth of the hunter. Davis Grubb's *The Night of the Hunter* appeared in 1953, becoming a year later the source of an excellent film, which has become a classic of psychological horror and which is one of the first instances of the encounter of the monster and the child in a work of fiction for adults. In 1954, two very different novels referring to the difference between monstrous barbarism and the isolated individual were published: William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and Richard Matheson's *I am Legend* (adapted in the 1970s as *The Omega Man*). The paranoid, pessimistic message of Matheson's novel, which narrates the ordeal of the only survivor of a plague that turns all the inhabitants of the Earth into vampires, found an echo in Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* (1955)—famously adapted by Don Siegel as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956)—and in John Wyndham's successful *The Day of the Triffids* (1957), both classical accounts of alien invasion resulting in the total wipe-out of the human species. However, possibly the most popular text dealing with monstrosity published in the 1950s is J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55), a text that, as Anne Swinfen claims, made fantasy respectable (op. cit.: 1).

The monster of the 1960s is actually born in 1959 with the publication of Robert Bloch's *Psycho*, the inspiration for Hitchcock's 1960 film. The psychopathic Norman Bates is the screen reflection of a new type of human, moral monster inspired by gruesome real life events not unlike those committed by the infamous Charles Manson and his 'family' in the late 1960s. The monster of the 1960s is the first to break the barriers between normality and abnormality, reality and fiction, genre and the mainstream, the first to be genuinely postmodern. The decade is marked by a series of novelties in the cultural domain of monstrosity and by a growth of the monster into a figure of cult that reflects the condition of humanity split between evil and good rather than the hostile other of 1950s monster films. A number of factors define the eclectic atmosphere which surrounds the monster in the 1960s. The gothicism of the Hammer films, especially those directed by Terence Fisher, inspires European directors such as Roger Vadim, Roman Polanski and Mario Bava to produce idiosyncratic horror films, aimed at a new type of audience, the horror connoisseur who enjoys monstrosity but dislikes the conventions of the film genres in which the monster is confined. The intellectual varnish of some of these films does not prevent Roman Polanski, though,

from directing a parody of the vampire film, *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1965), which seems to be in the line of 1960s TV series such as *The Addams Family* or its competitor, *The Munsters*. The Hammer films were probably the main inspiration also for Roger Corman, who in the 1960s directed a series of rather free adaptations of Poe's short stories, beginning with *House of Usher* (1960). Corman was also responsible for the first screen adaptation of a text by Lovecraft, "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward", released in 1963 as *The Haunted Palace* in the same year when one of the few successful films dealing with Greek myths, *Jason and the Argonauts*—with impressive special effects by Ray Harryhausen—was also released. Also in the 1960s Jack Clayton directed a memorable adaptation of Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Innocents* (1961), which recalls strongly the elegant atmosphere of Charles Laughton's idiosyncratic *The Night of the Hunter*. However, the most important screen adaptation of the decade in the field of fiction about monstrosity is Roman Polanski's 1968 version of Ira Levin's novel *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), which dealt also with the topic of the monstrous child, introduced in 1960 with *Village of the Damned*, an adaptation of John Wyndham's novel.

The interest of young film directors in exploring new territories in 'underground' culture led to the emergence of a new type of low-budget, independent monster film which breaks away from the idea of film as either big business or art: George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), interpreted as a virulent attack on the consumer society established in the 1950s and 1960s, inspired in the 1970s a wave of horror films based on the destruction of the body and on a type of monster that inspires disgust rather than fear. This review of the evolution of the images of monstrosity on the 1960s screen cannot be complete without a brief mention of the two most influential TV series in the field of fantasy: *Star Trek* (first series, 1966-1969) and *The Twilight Zone* (1959-1964), both series in which monstrosity has played an important role. Apart from constant re-screenings on TV, the latter was the inspiration for *The Twilight Zone: The Movie* (1983), directed by John Landis, Joe Dante, Steven Spielberg and George Miller, while the former has inspired two new TV series in the 1990s and, so far, seven films spanning the whole period covered in this dissertation, 1979 to 1995.

As I have already remarked, the paperback simplified the entrance of genre fiction writers into the publishing market. The field of the novel and the short story grew immensely as regards the monster in the 1960s not only because the number of new genre fiction writers increased spectacularly as the reading public grew (both in the sense of increasing in numbers and of being formed by the children who enjoyed the 1950s monsters films and the 1950s comics) but also because of a number of new factors. Among the new writers—Roger Zelazny, Harlan Ellison, Frank Herbert, Robert Silverberg, Larry Niven, Thomas Disch, Kurt Vonnegut, Samuel Delaney—some were women, such as Ursula K. Leguin, Anne McCaffrey and James Tiptree Jr. (the penname of Alice Sheldon). They entered science fiction and heroic fantasy providing new perspectives on monstrosity and questioning the predominance of men in those genres. These women paved thus the path for the evolution of science fiction, horror and fantasy written by women in the 1970s and 1980s, though they did not always write from feminist positions.

The breaking down of barriers between the literary and the popular brought about by postmodernism resulted in a split between the readership that enjoyed the conventional science fiction and horror inherited from the pulps and those who were more demanding in terms of literary quality. These often favoured authors who far from adjusting to the marginalization of genre fiction in the world of the academy were often

persons with university degrees in English literature who sought to renew what they considered to be the stale world of genre fiction with an infusion of literary experimentalism. In Britain this was the task undertaken by the collaborators of Michael Moorcock's magazine *New Worlds* (1968–1971), among them Moorcock himself and J.G. Ballard. In the USA, perhaps Philip K. Dick represents the trend best. Despite the cult built around the figure of the late Dick and his depiction of the monster as a perfect replica of humanity who happens not to be human—in the paranoid tradition of Finney's body snatchers—the postmodernist monster is, in my view, best defined by Thomas Pynchon's *V.* (1963), a mainstream novel which anticipates the view of the monster as a fascinating rather than threatening human shape-shifter of deceiving appearance.

The 1970s were the years in which the monster abandoned the 'underground' of B-series horror films and genre fiction for specialists or fans in order to establish itself as the staple of best-sellers and blockbusters. This current began with William Peter Blatty's best-selling novel *The Exorcist* (1971), adapted for the screen by William Friedkin in 1973 in a film that became the first horror film to be nominated for the Hollywood Oscar for best picture. Blatty's novel and the other main horror best-seller of 1971, Tom Tryon's *The Other* (adapted for the screen in 1972 by Robert Mulligan) secured a place for the child in horror fiction after Wyndham and Levin's pioneering 1960s novels, in a trend that was to culminate with *The Omen* (1976). Following the immense commercial success of *The Exorcist* the 1970s witnessed the publication of a succession of important best-selling novels about monsters of different descriptions soon transferred onto the screen: Michael Crichton's first novel *The Andromeda Strain* (1971), Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives* (1972), Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* (1973), Stephen King's first novel *Carrie* (1974), Peter Benchley's *Jaws* (1975), Ira Levin's *The Boys from Brazil* (1978). Other had to wait a few more years but finally reached the screen in the 1980s and 1990s: Jeffrey Konvitz's *The Sentinel* (1974), Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), Colin Wilson's *The Space Vampires* (1976), William Hjortberg's *Falling Angel* (1978) and Whitley Strieber's *The Wolfen* (1978), just to name but a few. New writers such as James Herbert, Ramsey Campbell, Brian Lumley, Peter Straub, Gene Wolfe, T.E.D. Klein and many others came to join the lists of authors contributing to the construction of monstrosity in fiction in the then expanding field of horror, which seemed to have come to the foreground relegating science fiction to a secondary position. As Noel Carroll (op. cit.: 2) observes:

what seems to have happened in the first half of the seventies is that horror, so to speak, entered the mainstream. Its audience was no longer specialized, but widened, and horror novels became increasingly easy to come by. This, in turn, augmented the audience looking for horror entertainments and, by the late seventies and eighties, a phalanx of authors arose to satisfy that demand ...

Film benefited from the new interest in horror in two senses: firstly, the number of adaptations grew steadily throughout the decade, even though Hollywood could not keep pace with the flow of new novels about monstrosity whose market had been widening in part precisely thanks to the adaptations. Secondly, the popularity of fantasy—especially horror, since science fiction was passing through a less stimulating phase—allowed the rise of a new generation of filmmakers whose most important work has shaped the image of the monster in the 1980s and 1990s: Steven Spielberg, Tobe Hooper, David Cronenberg, Brian de Palma, John Carpenter, John Landis, Joe Dante and David Lynch among others. In the 1970s the new wave of gruesome B-series horror

films, such as Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), shared the ground with parodies of horror that have become cult films, such as Jim Sharman's *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), experimental horror as in David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977), the blockbuster such as *Jaws* (1975) and the remakes of the 1950s monster films, such as Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978). The monsters of science fiction, which had played a more marginal role in the early 1970s, found new territories in the work of George Lucas with the beginning of the *Star Wars* trilogy (1977) and in the work of Steven Spielberg with *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), which anticipates *E.T.* (1982).

To summarise, by the beginning of the 1980s the atmosphere was ripe for the extraordinary expansion of the field of monstrosity in Western culture. The growth of the field of horror in the 1970s was continued in the 1980s, so that it could be said that in the 1980s and still now there are more living authors writing about the monster than ever; they are, besides, keeping a booming publishing business alive which is, together with science fiction, that which attracts most young readers, a fact that will certainly be of capital importance to determine the future of the novel in general. The growth of horror has been paralleled by that of science fiction and by what is badly defined under the wide label of fantasy. Science fiction has benefited from the rise of cyberpunk, especially in the work of William Gibson, though cyberpunk is proving to be particularly difficult to adapt for the screen. Horror, science fiction and fantasy are genres still dominated by men, yet the list of new women writers in these fields is now impressive: Octavia Butler, Gwyneth Jones, Vonda McIntyre, C.J. Cherryh, Suzy McKee Charnas, Tannith Lee, Marge Piercy, Pamela Sargent, Pat Cadigan, are but a few of the women who have consolidated a literary career in these fields. The 1980s are also characterized by the breaking down of the distinctions between the mainstream and genre fiction: as can be seen from the list of primary sources (both films and novels) that I have compiled many mainstream writers are, in fact, writing fantasy while many mainstream film directors often work in horror and science-fiction films. Genre fiction about monstrosity is occupying more and more shelf space in both book-shops and video-clubs as the best of it improves in artistic quality, so that it can be said that the artistic differences between a good so-called genre fiction novel and good so-called mainstream fiction are quickly diminishing. This does not mean, though, that products of not so demanding standards are being produced to satisfy all types of consumers of culture—however, an omnivorous consumer of culture might well choose to read Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* and Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* in the same week in which s/he enjoys *The Evil Dead* and *Dead Ringers*. The barriers of genre are becoming more and more meaningless, whereas the common interest in cultural aspects, of which monstrosity is one of the most important, are offering new perspectives to understand the transfer of narratives from one medium to another and also the eclectic tastes of the consumers of culture.

2.1.2. Between the Popular Cult Film and the Mainstream Cult Novel

In order to clarify the limits of monstrosity in the English-language culture of the 1980s and 1990s I would like to consider first the case of the *Alien* series, which comprises the original 1979 film and the sequels, *Aliens* (1986) and *Alien³* (1992). The series is important not only because *Alien* marks the passage of the monster from the

1970s to the 1980s, but also because this series is a most significant instance firstly, of the successful commercial exploitation of monstrosity in the multimedia narratives typical of the 1980s and 1990s, and, secondly, of the canonisation of the contemporary monster film. Arguably, Ridley Scott's *Alien* is one of the three capital texts about the monster produced in the last fifteen years together with *Blade Runner* (also directed by Scott, 1982) and Brett Easton Ellis' novel *American Psycho* (1991). They form, besides, a triangle that demarcates the territory occupied by monstrosity in the 1980s and 1990s: *Alien* pitches humanity (championed for the first time by a woman) against a new version of the non-human mythical beast deriving both from the hunter myths and the deposition of the Earth goddess; *Blade Runner* invites audiences to consider the possibility that science might lead us to produce artificial human beings which could be more human than us and, so, pre-empt the need for our survival as a species, whereas *American Psycho* propounds the idea that the most extreme form of human monstrosity is the product of refined civilization. The return to myth of *Alien*, the futuristic dystopian world of *Blade Runner* and the moral pessimism of *American Psycho* are the three main ideological landscapes inhabited by the monster today.

As far as the interaction between the written word and the screen is concerned these three texts are also relevant to account for the state of the relationship between the novel and film in the 1980s and 1990s: *Alien* was not based on literary sources, but has generated a series of novelizations and novels; *Blade Runner* is an extremely free adaptation of a novel by Philip K. Dick who has become a cult writer because of the influence of the film; despite David Cronenberg's recent announcement (1994) that he was preparing an adaptation of *American Psycho* for the screen, so far the project has not been materialised because of the obvious problems presented by the screen visualization of the extremely gory scenes depicted by Ellis in his novel. Cronenberg finally abandoned the adaptation of *American Psycho* to adapt instead J.G. Ballard's 1973 novel *Crash*, another instance of the extremely violent, pornographic mainstream literary text challenging the limits of permissibility allowed to screen adapters. Cronenberg's new film (1996) may thus be intended to pave the ground for the future release of a screen version of *American Psycho*, or may instead signify the impossibility of breaking down the barriers limiting what can be shown on the cinema screen.

No doubt, *Blade Runner* is, in terms of cultural relevance, the most important of these three texts, not only because of the enormous influence that its dystopian visualization of the near future has had on subsequent films (especially as regards the aesthetics of the film) but also because it upsets the basic tenets of all myths of monstrosity: in this mythical story the non-human monster becomes the humane hero and the human hero is exposed as a monster. *Blade Runner* is, besides, a postmodernist revision of *Frankenstein*, working on the interesting premise that eventually Frankenstein's monster will have to be destroyed not because he is horrific but because he is superior to humankind, hence a threat not so much to its survival but to its self-esteem as a species. Despite the fact that *Alien* preceded *Blade Runner* in director Ridley Scott's career and despite the popular and critical success of both films, they seemingly occupy different positions in the recent history of film. Arguably, *Blade Runner* is itself the heir of the change of direction in the construction of monstrosity started by *Alien* especially because of the effort made in both films in terms of production design, which is, ultimately, what marks the main difference between these films and the 1950s monster films. Yet *Alien* has inspired a number of sequels and an ever increasing merchandising phenomenon whereas *Blade Runner* has acquired the status of cult film especially because of its academic canonisation (Kerman, 1991). This does not mean

that *Alien* has not attracted the interest of scholars but simply that there is a much greater consensus among scholars and among the admirers of *Blade Runner* as to its high artistic quality.

The success of *Alien* is based on the multiplicity of readings to which it lends itself despite being, at first sight, a conventional monster film. As many commentators have remarked, Scott's film is the indisputable heir of the paranoid 1950s American films about hostile outer space monsters like other films that preceded it, such as Philip Kaufmann's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), a remake of Don Siegel's 1956 version, or others that followed it, such as John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982), a remake of Christian Nyby's 1951 film. *Alien* is not a direct remake, even though *It! The Terror from outer Space* (1958) has been mentioned as its most immediate source, but clearly aims at remaking the whole tradition of the 1950s monster film for new audiences. This was indeed the initial purpose of producers Gordon Carroll, David Giler and Walter Hill who actually intended to release a relatively cheap film (the budget was only \$9 million) capable of recouping their investment on the basis of a mixture of genuinely postmodernist nostalgia for the old 1950s film and of sheer visual innovation for the more demanding new audiences. Nevertheless, other commentators have also found direct links between Scott's film and the 1970s sub-genre of the slasher film, a horror film centred on the survival of a woman who narrowly escapes the threat posed by a human monster that exterminates all around her. The freedom with which motifs derived from different film sub-genres were mixed in *Alien* by the producers and by Scott, a mainstream director with no previous experience in the field of the fantasy film, are what define this film as a postmodernist product.

The key to enliven the predictability of Dan O'Bannon's script –seemingly plagiarised from A.E. van Vogt's "Black Destroyer", published in the pulp *Astounding Science-Fiction* in 1939 –was Scott's tight direction of the work of cameraman Derek Vanlint, and a production design that abandoned the clean look of other 1970s science-fiction films made in the style of *2001* (1968) –from *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) to *Star Wars* (1977)–to embrace instead a murky, gloomy Gothic atmosphere later copied by countless films. The spaceship crew–presented as a group of workers involved in routine tasks rather than in adventure–offered seemingly little to interest audiences in their fate. Nonetheless, the shifting of the heroic role from a man to a woman (Ellen Ripley, played by Sigourney Weaver), which was apparently a decision made on the spur of the moment during the shooting of the film, surprised the film's audience and ensured its success and that of the series to a great extent. To this also contributed the extraordinary quality of the designs for the monster by Swiss artist H.R. Giger, to whose work I have already referred in Chapter 1.

The threatening extraterrestrial simply called 'alien' is a creature aimed at horrifying as much as at fascinating that was generated to be visually stunning and morphologically original–elegant, as Sigourney Weaver once put it. The monster was different from previous monsters seen on the screen because it was born of the marriage of high art and cinematic special effects. Giger himself has emphasized his artistic links with Dalí's surrealism and Füssli's personal Gothic-Romantic style, though he has mentioned Francis Bacon's "Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion" triptych (1944) as the most direct inspiration behind the alien. His designs for the monster pioneered the representation of the postmodernist monster as a shape-shifter: the alien is shown in as many as four different forms in the film, each representing a phase of its growth. Thus, part of the suspense of the film is based on this multiplicity of images: each time a new phase begins, the characters in the film and the audience

actually feel a double kind of fear: fear of the last horrific shape taken by the monster and fear of the unknown shape it is taking then.

The ambiguous image of this protean creature has many different possible meanings. Apparently, the main inspiration for the 'modus operandi' of the alien was the Newton wasp, a species that uses the bodies of its prey as cocoons for their larvae. The aliens reproduce themselves by raping orally their male or female victims in order to insert a larva that grows in the stomach of the victim, who is kept alive while s/he is used as a cocoon and then killed by the birth of the phallic baby alien, which gnaws its way out of its host's body. Seemingly, the aliens do not kill humans for food, but either because they feel threatened or to collect more cocoons for their offspring. The weapons they use to kill are their powerful claws and a kind of lethal vagina dentata that springs from a clearly phallic head to stab the victim. The alien's obsession for reproducing itself can be said to symbolize the fear of sex and reproduction: this is a monster originating in collective unconscious anxieties that suggest an increasing dissociation from in the minds of contemporary men and women between sex and reproduction, the latter seen as something animal, even monstrous.

Yet, the fact that the aliens do not discriminate between male and female victims and the fact that they all originate seemingly from a parthenogenetic egg-laying queen, ultimately derived from the representation of the goddess Tiamat as a monster, implies that the creatures are sexually more ambivalent than the images of oral rape might suggest. The similarities of the alien with social insects such as wasps, bees and ants connote fear and unease in the face of alternative social structures in which there is no place for the individual. On the other hand, the alien may also connote disease: interestingly, deadly viruses such as the one that causes malaria are also mutant shape-shifters with different phases of growth. Despite its futuristic 'biomechanical' anatomy, a fusion of organic and inorganic elements, the claws and the reptilian tail of the alien also recall the image of the Devil as the apocalyptic Beast. The image of the monster has been further multiplied in the sequels: *Aliens* introduced the fierce and enigmatic alien queen, *Alien*³ introduced an alien capable of crawling on walls and ceilings. In short, speaking of the monster of the *Alien* series means speaking of a succession of different monsters: the most popular monster of the last fifteen years is thus a monster whose image far from being fixed is still expanding and changing. Presumably the fourth film in the series, currently in pre-production stage, will add new images to this multiplicity of representations.

The confrontation between the alien monster and the new, reluctant female warrior-hunter of this new version of archaic myth is orchestrated by the economic system that envelops both: patriarchal late capitalism. The true source of evil is not the monster, basically a survivor that cannot help preying on other species but the monstrous multiplanetary corporation, the Company which preys on its expendable workers in the pursuit of its goal: the exploitation of the monster as the ultimate biological weapon. The heroine Ripley, who behaves at first in her strict adherence to the Company's rules as an employee bound to her employer by what can only be described as feudal allegiance, is awakened to a new consciousness of her position when she realizes that the lives of the crew have been jeopardised by the Company's interest in capturing the alien. It is not clear whether Ripley reacts to this situation as an angered worker, an angered woman or, simply, a very scared person, but her status as an officer forces her to assume a heroic role which has been variously interpreted as feminist (see Chapter 7 for a more detailed discussion of this point) or anti-capitalist. Unlike the other female character in *Alien* (officer Lambert, played by Veronica Cartwright) who reacts

to the monster with screams and a paralysing fear that make her an easy prey for the alien, the more androgynous heroine played by Weaver learns to control her fear and to use her cunning to defeat the monster and thus survive. Ripley paved the way for a type of intelligent, courageous woman—most notably Sarah Connor in *The Terminator* (1984) and Clarice Starling in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)—who proved a success with both men and women, though it is unclear whether this is a figure that will survive in contemporary film. Interestingly enough, it was actress Sigourney Weaver's choice to let Ripley die in the third film in the series, *Alien*³, which she co-produced, so as to avoid the danger of typecasting herself in the role. Nevertheless, a forthcoming fourth episode of the series is being currently scripted in which Weaver is to play Ripley's role once more. The producers initially considered making a fourth film without Ripley but they were soon discouraged by the series' fans who wish to see Ripley championing humankind against the monster again.

In the words of Gail Anne Hurd, the producer of *Aliens*, the genre of the series can be defined as “pop-corn epic” (Clover, 1989: 131), a statement which invites us to consider to what extent the appeal of the monster film is based on the nostalgia for the lost literary genre of epic poetry. Regardless of the different narrative media and the changing cultural background, can we recognise in the *Alien* trilogy the same impulse that led to the writing of the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* or of the much closer *Beowulf*? In fact, despite Hurd's tongue-in-cheek labelling of the series, the trilogy has a number of surprising coincidences with *Beowulf*, so that it can be concluded that even though as a literary genre epic poetry itself has not survived, its plots have survived in popular culture. In *Beowulf* the monster Grendel that haunts king Hrothgar's hall to kill his sleeping warriors is killed by the eponymous hero Beowulf, who has volunteered for the task. In the first episode of the series Ripley kills, like Beowulf, the male monster that has been harassing her crew, though far from achieving any kind of glory, she simply survives. After the killing of the first male monster, a second episode follows in which Beowulf track the monster's horrific mother to her lair with the help of his thanes; *Aliens* narrates how Ripley, accompanied by a platoon of tough marines also locates and confronts the mother of the monster she had previously killed. Grendel's mother and the alien queen are both gigantic, clawed predators that cannot die by the sword (the alien's blood is a highly corrosive acid, that of Grendel's mother melts Beowulf's sword) and that must be killed in single combat.

Both heroes kill the female monster with their bare hands and are saved at a critical junction by the protection afforded by their armour. Beowulf faces a last encounter with the monster after being a king for fifty years, at a point in his life when dejection and the proximity of death are undermining his strength; Ripley is said to have spent fifty-seven years asleep in space before her second meeting with the monster, though the third encounter takes place when her strength is already spent in the long fight and when she only expects death. Neither Ripley nor Beowulf ever have a family or a permanent lover and with their altruistic killing of the third monster both accept their own death: Beowulf is poisoned by a bite in the neck from the dragon he slays, Ripley dies when her parasitical baby alien bursts out of her stomach. Beowulf's body is incinerated, Ripley throws herself into the fire together with her monstrous offspring. Whether the producers bore this analogy in mind throughout the *Alien* trilogy can only be a matter for speculation, yet the coincidences are so remarkable as to point, at least, to the undeniable roots of the trilogy in the English-language worldview that produced *Beowulf*. J.R.R. Tolkien (1983a: 25) writes that the northern mythological imagination gave the heroes “victory but no honour, and found a potent but terrible solution in naked

will and courage.... But we may remember that the poet of *Beowulf* saw clearly: the wages of heroism is death". This can fit perfectly into the elegiac mood that closes the trilogy with Ripley's sacrifice.

The *Alien* trilogy is of exceptional interest for an understanding of the evolution of the monster film in the 1980s and 1990s for several reasons which include the exploitation of characters and themes in narrative media other than film and the differences between the USA and the UK film industry. *Alien*, *Aliens* and *Alien³*, have all been financed by 20th C Fox, yet the trilogy has moved twice across the Atlantic. The first film was a medium-budget production made in Britain at Shepperton Studios—currently owned by Ridley Scott and his brother Tony—directed by a mainstream British film director but financed by American money. This 'sleeper' (a film of unexpected box-office success) was followed by a big-budget sequel, made in Hollywood by the American director James Cameron, himself a specialist in very expensive monster films, including *The Terminator* (1984), its sequel *The Terminator 2* (1991) and *The Abyss* (1989). For the third part, which was a medium-budget film, the producers returned again to Britain where the cost of making the film was lower and hired a newcomer, British director David Fincher, who is now working in the USA.

Because of these changes, Ripley's personality has been pulled in different directions, with a certain disregard for coherence, though she has been certainly growing in protagonism. The accidental hero of the first film, a rather unsympathetic character, who is little more than a narrative function generated by the presence of the monster becomes in *Aliens* a reluctant female Rambo possibly inspired by Cameron's collaboration in the writing of the first Rambo film, *First Blood* (1982). The plot reads as a confrontation between female and male ideas of heroism rather than as a confrontation between the human and the monster: despite fitting the militaristic parameters of most American action films, *Aliens* deals with the fight between this new woman warrior incarnated in Ripley and the parthenogenetic archaic monstrous mother of old myth for the life of a little girl—Newt—who has managed to survive alone the onslaughts of the creatures in the decimated colony. In this all-female epic men play no role except making wrong decisions and dying. In *Alien³*, set in a planet used as a penal colony for a reduced number of highly dangerous male psychopaths, who the alien really is—the woman, or the monster— and who the monsters really are—the men, the alien or perhaps the woman—are the issues that underline the apocalyptic confrontation between Ripley, the monster and the Company. As regards the quality of the three films, most critics and spectators agree that Scott's is the best in artistic terms, while Cameron's lacks artistic depth despite its lavishness and the greater role assigned to Ripley. In general, *Alien³* was regarded as a failed attempt at recreating the Gothic atmosphere of the first episode, and was especially disliked by American audiences, though the revalorisation of David Fincher's work after the success of *Se7en* (1995) will probably lead to a positive re-evaluation of his first film. To a great extent, the failure of *Alien³* could be attributed to its fatalism rather than to its alleged lack of quality. Few films with an unhappy end succeed in America, though Fincher's typically British insistence on the final victory of the monster in his first film and the popularity achieved by his second film thanks precisely to a similar pessimistic end may alter this reluctance to accept the tragedy of defeat.

The volume of business generated by the *Alien* trilogy is, simply, amazing, though, in fact, the intensive bombardment of the market with *Alien* products was originated by *Aliens*. As far as the adaptation of the films to the printed page is concerned, this is not less surprising. The novelization of the trilogy by science-fiction

writer Allan Dean Foster preceded a series of novels about the monsters that are independent from any of the three screenplays. So far, the *Aliens* series, started in 1992, includes *Earth Hive*, *Nightmare Asylum* and *Genocide* by Steve Perry and a fourth novel *The Female War* by Perry and his daughter Stephanie Perry. A second series of novels in which the *Alien*'s adversary is the Predator monster of the eponymous film—produced also by 20th C Fox in 1987 following the success of *Aliens* in 1986—extends so far to three titles: *Prey*, *Hunter's Planet* and *Concrete Jungle*. Both series, published by Millennium for the comics publishing house Dark Horse, are based, according to the credits printed on the first page, not only on the films but also on the graphic novels by Mark Verheiden and Mark. A. Nelson, themselves a spin-off of the very successful Dark Horse comics. *Aliens*, the comic, was first published in 1988, while *Predator*, the comic, appeared in 1989. 20th C Fox's interest in circulating new stories about the alien or the predator monster in print—which is known as licensing in reverse—responds to its search for new stories that could be successfully adapted:

A notable example of licensing in reverse occurred when Dark Horse Comics struck several deals with Hollywood movie companies (notably 20th Century Fox) to turn top films, such as *The Terminator*, *Predator* and *Aliens*, into ongoing comics, 'We wanted characters people don't get enough of', Dark Horse founder Mike Richardson told *Premiere* magazine [in June 1992], adding: 'we write our movie comics as if they're sequels—we don't live off what's already there' What is so clever about this arrangement is that it allows for the possibility that plots generated in the comics might then be used in future films. (Sabin, op. cit.: 288)

This is how the image of the monster is kept alive while audiences eagerly wait for a new sequel.

While the new comics and new novels await their transfer to the screen the circulation of the *Alien* monster in the multimedia narrative material has extended to video-games and even to neo-narrative products: London boasts among its attractions an 'Alien Experience' to be enjoyed at the Trocadero, in which the fans of the trilogy are treated to the very experience Ripley acts in the three films, that is to say, to meeting the monster and being chased in truly Gothic fashion through dimly-lit corridors—but in safety. More surprising and paradoxical is the merchandising of the horrific alien as a toy, especially when the three films of the series are rated 18. The Boots Christmas 1994 catalogue featured an 'Alien Bubble Bath' (a reproduction of the monster) in its section of toiletries for children while the Argos Catalogue for the same period included an assortment of alien toys, all of them suitable for six-year-olds. Curiously enough, in Spain exactly the same toys are available for four-year-olds. It cannot be said that this is a new phenomenon, as sales of models of popular monsters started as early as the 1960s; the difference is marked now by the sheer scale of the advertising budgets and by the astonishing range of products the monster helps to sell.

In summary, all the features typical of the postmodernist commercialization of monstrosity in multimedia entertainment based on the blockbuster converge in the *Alien* trilogy. They are complemented by the globalisation of the monster film, so that the monster is made to belong to as many cultures as have access to the films (often dubbed) and to their merchandising. The monster becomes a myth because it has become a commodity and, conversely, it is turned into a commodity because its badly understood universal appeal guarantees the profit derived from the merchandising. Nonetheless, the commercial success of the *Alien* series has not affected its canonisation

in film studies. The rise of the alien monster to cultural ‘respectability’ is proved not only by the three Oscars and seven nominations gathered by the series, but also by the many academic papers devoted to the trilogy, especially to the figure of Ripley (see for instance, Cobbs, 1990, and also Kavanagh (1990), Newton (1990) and Sobchack (1990)). Fans who regard the films as cult films, critics who discuss the feminist basis of Ripley’s role as monster slayer, the children who play with the models and those who enjoy the thrill of being chased by the Trocadero *Alien* are all part of the same phenomenon: the encroachment of the monster in contemporary culture.

The perfect counterpart to *Alien* is Bret Easton Ellis’ novel *American Psycho*. The whole spectrum of postmodernist monstrosity oscillates between the bestial predator of Scott’s film and the psychopathic yuppie of Ellis’ novel: the former is a representation of extreme non-human otherness, the latter of unbounded human monstrosity. Ellis’ villain and hero, Pat Bateman, is a late 1980s New York yuppie who details in his diary the acts of unspeakable violence he commits (or maybe just imagines he commits) against all those weaker than him—women, homeless people, homosexual men—and who, against all odds, remains undetected at the end of the novel. Unlike the *Alien* trilogy, *American Psycho* had an extraordinarily hostile reception even before its publication. James Twitchell (op. cit.: 128-129) reports the strange case of the publication of this extraordinary mainstream novel which had to be finally published as a paperback, in the manner of most genre fiction. Simon & Schuster initially paid Ellis \$300,000 for the novel. Yet when people working on the manuscript complained because of the explicitness of its violent scenes, Time and Sky published excerpts suggesting that the novel was an unacceptable text that should not be published. Simon & Schuster is owned by Paramount Communications, a multimedia company whose movie subsidiary, Paramount Pictures, was responsible for the making and exploitation of the *Friday the Thirteenth* series (1980–1989), which had popularised in its eight films the gruesome killings of the infamous psycho Jason. However, despite this connection, Simon & Schuster immediately announced the decision to withdraw Ellis’ book on the basis of ‘bad taste’ following the indications of the head of Paramount Communications, Martin Davis, who seemingly found no links between Jason and Pat Bateman. Binky Urban—Ellis’ agent—then sold the novel for only \$75,000 to Sonny Mehta of Knopf and Vintage who finally published as a paperback. Publication was, however, the beginning of a nightmare for Ellis: threats against Ellis’ life prevented his publisher Viking to invite the author to London for the advertising campaign of the novel. Leslie White (1994: 20) reports that “comparisons with Salman Rushdie were made, but faded with the barrage of angry reaction”, coming especially from feminists such as A.S. Byatt, Doris Lessing and Gloria Steinem. Asked by White how the eye of the storm felt at the time, Ellis declared:

“It felt like a joke, a huge postmodernist irony—the book was so badly misread”. For Ellis, *American Psycho* was a clear attack on misogynist, heterosexist, white, racist men, but to have the protagonist, Bateman, get his come-uppance—as the moral lobby insisted he should have done—would have been unrealistic. “In America, people like Bateman end up writing books, being on talk shows, having movies made of their lives. They don’t always get punished”. (in *ibid.*: 20)

The rejection of Ellis’ novel by the a culture that allows the proliferation of the image of the alien monster even in children’s toys furthers the postmodernist irony of the situation. As could be expected in these times in which scandal means little or

nothing, the angry reaction against the book only managed to draw attention towards it, so that in October 1994, the book was still selling a steady 2,000 copies a month in Britain alone. While nobody seems to have questioned why the *Alien* trilogy had been produced at all, *American Psycho* has elicited that kind of question from its detractors. Even though the alien monster destroys his victims in violent attacks which are the peak scenes in each of the films, these have been tolerated and certainly enjoyed by many spectators eagerly awaiting a fourth episode in the saga. In contrast, imagining a world in which Bateman dolls were sold as children's toys is an obscenity, which suggests that the limits of the visualization of the monster and of monstrous violence are defined by bizarre patterns we take for granted too easily.

There are many questions that should be asked in reference to the different criteria used to measure what is tolerable for film and for the novel regarding the representation of monstrosity. Possibly the differences between the treatment given to the *Alien* series and that given to *American Psycho* have little to do with the actual threshold of violence tolerated in each media and more with a set of expectations surrounding the figure of the monster. A basic expectation shattered by *American Psycho* but respected by *Alien* is that the monster appears to be an enigmatic Other, radically different from us. Both Ellis' novel and the *Alien* series criticize late capitalism by suggesting that it breeds evil monsters—a human one in the case of the novel, a non-human one in the case of the film. Yet the combat between Ripley and the monster—and by extension the Company that employs her but protects the creature—is a form of wish-fulfilment fantasy that ultimately advocates the triumph of the qualities that characterize the heroine: courage, intelligence, determination. *American Psycho*, in contrast, offers no comfort at all: it claims that the lair of the monster is not a desolate planet in outer space but the very hub of civilization, the Manhattan where Bateman lives and kills. It also maintains that the monster is not at the margins of society as slasher films such as *Friday the Thirteenth* suggest, nor at the margins of the known universe as in *Alien*, but at its very centre. This and not the explicitness of the book is what made it intolerable for those who rejected it; they were possibly too afraid of the monster's exposure of the decadence of civilization.

2.2. New Readings of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* for the Screen

2.2.1. Recycling the Gothic Monsters

The popularity of the monstrous triad formed by Frankenstein's creature, the vampire *Dracula* and the dual scientist Dr. Jekyll in film has obscured an important fact: the three 1930s American films that secured a place for the monster in the cinema—Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), James Whale's *Frankenstein* (1931) and Robert Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932)—were not inspired directly by the nineteenth-century British texts but by stage adaptations written in the first quarter of the century. These Broadway stage adaptations were actually the last in a long line that had begun with the early adaptation of *Frankenstein* for the stage just a few years after its publication; many of the most popular motifs in the 1930s films, differing from the literary originals and inherited by subsequent screen adaptations, originated in fact from the less well-known plays. The widening gulf between the literary texts and their adaptations—even their folklorisation—has been questioned only recently, with a new

wave of big-budget films made by mainstream directors, which is characterized by an ambiguous return to the original source mixed with an evident anxiety of influences about all the previous screen adaptations. This wave includes Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) and Stephen Frears *Mary Reilly* (1995) actually based on a best-selling novel by Valerie Martin, itself a retelling of Stevenson's novella. The commercial success of the first and the failure of the second plus the difficulties to find a satisfactory end for the third bespeak of the challenges that the revision of these paradigmatic stories about monstrosity present. Analysing how the appeal of the three most classic screen monsters has been reawakened in the 1990s after the point of inflection represented by the beginning of a new cycle of monstrosity in the horror films of the 1970s, a period during which the appeal of the triad seemed utterly exhausted, will furnish important clues to understand the mechanism through which monstrosity is redefined for each cultural period.

Why does this interest to adapt and revise these classics of monstrosity arise? An obvious answer would be that given the limits of the visualization of the monster in the novel, stage and screen adapters exploit the dissatisfaction or the curiosity on the readers' side as to what the 'real' image of the monster described by the writer should be like. The number of screen adaptations and their repetition from decade to decade may depend on technical factors, business interests or artistic interests. Thus, many cycles include a silent film, a black and white 'talkie', a colour film and a new colour film with quality special effects. On the side of business, popular monsters always attract a steady number of fans, for which they are arguably a safe investment in any period in which originality and creativity ebb. Among the artistic interests that can account for the flow of new adaptations and remakes of monster films is the wish to provide the definitive iconography that will cancel out all the previous representations from the collective cultural memory or that will provide an iconography adapted for the times. The obsession with monsters like Frankenstein's creature and Dracula is, in any case, a cultural phenomenon much more significant than it might seem: 110 versions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* have been filmed so far (Driscoll, 1994), Branagh's being the newest and also the most expensive one ever at a cost of \$35 million. Silver and Ursini (1993) list 355 items including films from many nations, TV series and documentaries about Dracula in *The Vampire Film: From Nosferatu to Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Few mainstream novels, if any, can boast of having inspired so many adaptations and imitations in film.

The different strategies of visualization in film and the novel are the key concept in this process of constant adaptation of the monster for the screen. Yet, as George Bluestone (1957: 1) argues, the common intention of novelist and filmmaker is more relevant than the differences between the two narrative media:

... the phrase "to make you see" assumes an effective relationship between creative artist and receptive audience. Novelist and director meet here in a common intention. One may, on the other hand, see visually through the eye or imaginatively through the mind. And between the percept of the visual image and the concept of the mental image lies the root difference between the two media.

Indirectly, this distinction also explains why the classic Gothic horror canon is in need of constant revision in film while the original literary texts enjoy a more lasting cultural and commercial life. The monstrous imagery suggested by the literary texts can

accommodate the mental images supplied by each different reader so that, for instance, despite Stoker's description of Dracula, he is different for each new reader. In contrast, a film fixes a particular image of the monster that is inextricably bound to the technical means, acting conventions and ideas about the visually tolerable valid for a particular period. Monster films age because their visualization is rigid compared to that of the novel; in the best cases, they gain a charming aura that endears them to subsequent generations, as is the case of *King Kong*. This does not mean, however, that any new adaptation may jeopardise the survival of an older film and consign it to oblivion for good. In fact, the opposite case is more frequent because the expectations are usually higher in the case of a new version: what may be the point, indeed, of producing a new Dracula if not to produce a 'better' film than any of the previous versions? Nevertheless, even when the new film version achieves a certain distinction because of its original recreation of the old film, this does not guarantee success: John Guillermin's 1976 *King Kong* may have won an honorary Oscar for best visual effects and discovered beautiful, talented Jessica Lange, but few remember it now.

There is another phenomenon at work in these series of adaptations of Dracula, Frankenstein and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* that can be generalized to comprehend most adaptations and serialisations. John Ellis (1982: 4) maintains that since a constant re-reading or re-viewing of a text one has relished ends in the inevitable shattering of the illusion that nourishes the reader or viewer's pleasure, "adaptation into another medium becomes a means of prolonging the pleasure of the original representation". From this point of view, "there is no difference between the filming of a pre-existent novel or the novelization of a pre-existent film" (ibid.: 4). Following Ellis, the frequent revisions of the paradigmatic triad of nineteenth-century Gothic texts is a proof of their permanent appeal rather than of their nearing oblivion every few years. The many adaptations are justified because rather than demand the exact retelling of favourite stories as children do, adults obtain pleasure from being told the same well-liked stories about monstrosity from different angles. "Desire", as Stephen Neale writes to explain the pleasures obtained from enjoying a particular genre "is a function of both repetition and difference" (1987: 48). Accordingly, it can be said that the preference for a particular classic Gothic monster in a certain cultural period may not be correctly asserted from the success and popularity of its adaptations. The failure of an adaptation may be conditioned by its failure to live up to the expectations of audiences rather than by the exhaustion of the monster or the myth that narrates its story. The adapters may have wrongly supposed, for instance, that audiences would not reject an unorthodox reading of the literary original or they may have missed new connotations of the classical monster attached to it in an intertextual process recognised by the audience.

To complement Ellis' theory about the prolonged pleasure found in adaptations, it is worth looking at Harriet Hawkins' suggestion (1995) that the directions taken by adaptations may seem random and chaotic but actually behave in ways similar to the fractals described by chaos theory. Certain complex texts may originate subsequent adaptations that succeed because they appeal to something infused by the original text in the culture generating the adaptations; the links between originals and adaptations may not be perceptible at first sight because of the proximity of the adaptation and the distance of the original, but the pattern can be appreciated if seen from the adequate vantage point. The host of imitations, some of them very simple, others more complex but always below the level of complexity of the original, are what Hawkins calls 'fractal forgeries'. They aspire to replicating and even usurping the universally appealing nature of the original. However, while the 'forgeries' may seem to be parasitical growths on the

original texts, in fact, many times they contribute to their canonisation or to their recuperation for a culture that was in the process of forgetting them.

Even though it is impossible to predict with accuracy the direction that will be taken by future adaptations of the classics of monstrosity—countless butterfly effects may disrupt the sequence—it is certainly possible to recognise basic patterns in two directions: missing links can be reconstructed and future patterns can be predicted for short-term periods. Hawkins cites John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, both texts about monstrosity, as instances of literary strange attractors capable of generating a host of more or less remote imitations and adaptations. Obviously, one thing is dealing with the genealogy of a work in which what Harold Bloom defined as the anxiety of influences is at work and quite another is accounting for the fact that texts apparently as remote as Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* actually belong to the same cultural paradigm, or, as Hawkins puts it, that a pattern that makes the former a fractal forgery of the latter is visible. To sum up, as Hawkins argues, future scholars will have to take into account not only direct lines of cultural transmission—traditions—but also the apparently random, chaotic transfer of motifs from one work to another. That this is not totally random is proven in the case of the example discussed by Hawkins by the fact that even though direct references to Milton are missing in Crichton's novel, the sequel bears the significant title of *Lost Eden*.

As I see it, Hawkins misses an important point, namely, that canonical works such as *Paradise Lost*, or *The Tempest* are worthy of academic consideration not only because they originate a spate of imitations and adaptations, as she argues, but also because they are actually resonators that vibrate with motifs coming from popular sources—they are fractal forgeries of larger, still unseen fractal originals, one of which is, possibly, the whole cultural construct of monstrosity. On the other hand, she fails to explain on what basis only some aspects are transferred from the original to the imitation or adaptation. My own suggestion is that texts such as *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are adapted so frequently because their success is due to an inbuilt lack of cohesion rather than to their complexity. That is to say, they are adapted not because they are admired as they are but because what makes them attractive are the questions they beg. Inevitably gaps and irregularities are observed by each successive generations, depending on their own main cultural preoccupations. Thus, each generation creates their own versions in a process that acts simultaneously as a homage and as an original creation (a paradoxically original re-creation): the adaptations may 'correct' Milton or Shakespeare, Stevenson or Stoker—for instance by purging sexist elements from the texts in new versions—or they may prolong the life of their respected source by underlining what makes it relevant for a new historical circumstance. Rather than let the monster die of old age, as it will inevitably do if its myth is not updated, the monster is recycled—replicated to be the same and yet different, resurrected in a new world. Necessarily, aspects that could never have been considered by the original author become in time the central point of the adaptation—as correction, homage or renewal—to the extent that a totally faithful adaptation is not only impossible but also undesirable. What is indeed desirable is considering whether an homogeneous pattern is currently conditioning the last wave of adaptations of the classic Gothic horror canon. This is indeed the case. Four main aspects delimit nowadays the revision of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: the vindication of the adaptation as an original re-creation, the raising of the threshold of the tolerable in art-horror thanks to the development of special effects and the relaxation

of censorship, the problematics of parody (specifically whether parody can act as homage), and the ambiguous role of women in the original texts.

The appeal of the classic Gothic monsters seemed to have peaked out in the 1970s. Dr. Jekyll, Frankenstein's monster and Dracula became the stars of parodies such as Roy Ward Baker's *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971), Mel Brook's *Young Frankenstein* (1974), Jim Sharman's *Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) and Stan Dragoti's *Love at First Bite* (1979), enjoyable spoofs of the 1930s films. Nonetheless, the introduction of parodic elements somehow gave a new lease of life to the monsters, for these three films were not out of tune with a new trend in horror fully established at the beginning of the 1980s. *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) or *The Evil Dead* (1983) showed that the new monsters could be horrific and comic at the same time by virtue of the sheer excess of the plots: the monster became more horrific but also more grotesque than ever, a creature of carnival rather than of serious Gothic horror. The monster of the 1980s B-series reigned in a new, unstable domain where it parodied, above all, its own importance and the seriousness of the anxieties behind it. A point often overlooked is that a very high percentage of so-called horror films are actually black comedies or satires, combining moments of heightened terror with comic relief; they are often appreciated because of their tongue-in-cheek sense of humour and because of their deft use of special effects more than for their capacity to scare. Very few contemporary novels or films about monsters are truly scary: they may elicit anger, anguish, contempt, disgust, or even sympathy from the reader or viewer rather than fear. Even a reputed horror novelist like Stephen King actually produces a type of novel that cannot be so easily classified: *The Dead Zone*, *Dolores Claiborne*, *Misery* or even *The Shining* are novels about pain and anguish more than about horror, which is inferred from the situations of the characters rather than forced by King on his reader. Even though horror fiction is expanding as never before this expansion corresponds paradoxically to its failure: comparatively, it was easier for Browning, Whale and Mamoulian to scare their audiences in the 1930s than it is now for Carpenter, Cronenberg or Landis, who must often resort to either humour or the macabre to draw the attention of horror fans. Audiences are now much more familiar with the themes and conventions of the genre and each new film or novel struggles to achieve that ever receding ideal of the genuinely horrifying story.

The low-cost horror films of the 1930s, created by the young producer Carl Laemmle Jr. for Universal Studios in order to guarantee the survival of the company throughout the difficult years of the Depression, targeted audiences in search of a escape from a drab reality. The recent wave of big-budget horror films targets instead audiences dissatisfied with the alleged shallow treatment of the classics of Gothic horror in the 1930s low-budget genre film and in more recent adaptations, such as those produced by Hammer in the 1950s and 1960s. The wave of expensive New Gothic cinema, in Lizzie Francke's phrase (1994: 66), directed between 1992 and 1995 by "auterish" (in Francke's word) directors such as Francis Ford Coppola, Kenneth Branagh, Mike Nichols, Stephen Frears or Neil Jordan who thought they could make the horror film respectable, is, as Francke remarks, "set on achieving the kind of cultural credibility associated with literature" (ibid.: 66). The following sections, which reviews recent adaptations of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* discuss why all these films have finally failed to achieve that desired credibility.

2.2.2. New Versions of *Dracula*

The first screen adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897) was F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922), a film made without the consent of Stoker's legal heir, his widow Florence. Her threats to take Murnau to court forced him to introduce a number of changes in the plot and the roles of the main characters. In Murnau's version the Count, renamed Orlock and played by Max Schreck, is represented as a freakish man whose physical appearance strongly recalls that of a rat. His association with this animal is furthered by the introduction of the motif of the plague that decimates the German town chosen by Orlock as his new residence. Yet, instead of succumbing to Van Helsing's stake, the vampire is destroyed by daylight when he fails to break the spell that his contemplation of his beloved Mina, asleep and defenceless before him, casts on him. Tod Browning's *Dracula* (1931), was the first screen version authorized by Stoker's heirs despite the fact that it was not based on the original novel but on the 1927 play by Hamilton Dean and John Balderstone, the first dramatization of the novel staged in the USA. Despite the extent to which Bela Lugosi's performance as the Count has been aggrandised by his admirers—among them the producer Ed Wood portrayed in Tim Burton's eponymous film (1995), who rescued Lugosi from total oblivion at the end of his life—Browning's *Dracula* can only be seen now with a certain ironic distance, possibly best defined in the term 'camp'.

Although most horror critics avoid the discussion of how horror films age, often preferring homage to objectivity, or justifying their fast ageing on the low budgets spent on them (Ellis, 1992: 53), the fact is that the success of the 1931 *Dracula* is an enigma by 1990s standards: the production design is poor, the special effects ludicrous—how is disbelief to be suspended when Lugosi transforms into a plain rubber bat?—even the three brides of *Dracula* are unappetising, when in the novel they remain as seductive now as in 1897. Lugosi's *Dracula* is insufferably passionless and stilted in contrast to the two main *Draculas* after Christopher Lee's interpretation of the Count in the cycle of Hammer films: Frank Langella in John Badham's *Dracula* (1979) and Gary Oldman in Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Different acting conventions, progressing further and further away from the theatrical model, the raising of the threshold in the representation of violence and sex, the use of expensive special effects, all these factors have contributed to ageing Browning's *Dracula* badly, though, naturally, it still has the merit of having been the pioneer.

Two versions of *Dracula* were released in 1979: Dragoti's spoof, *Love at First Bite*, and Badham's version. Both revise Browning's film rather than Stoker's novel and appear at the end of a cycle of adaptations that also includes the many vampire films produced by Hammer. Although Terence Fisher's 1958 *Dracula* may have seemed a more immediate reference, in fact George Hamilton's *Dracula* in Dragoti's film is closely related to Lugosi's down to the fact that make-up artist William Tuttle, the original creator of Lugosi's look as the Count, also designed Hamilton's make-up for the same role. Dragotti's spoof and Badham's film are not as different as might seem as far as the image of the Count and the role of Mina are concerned: both films present the Count as a successful seducer and reverse Browning's happy end by making Mina willingly embrace vampirism.

The running joke in *Love at First Bite* is that the world of the late 1970s is more terrifying for *Dracula* than he can be for anybody else. Exiled from his native Transylvania because he has been evicted by the communist government from his castle, the Count meets his lost love Mina in New York incarnated in the promiscuous fashion

model Cindy. The far from perfect Cindy is a caricature of the independent woman of feminism: she does everything in excess, from drinking to having sex, but cannot understand why, for which she seeks the advice of yet another boyfriend, a psychiatrist descended from Van Helsing. The comic confrontation between this man and Dracula for the possession of Cindy's body also exposes the shortcomings of two models of masculinity: the attractive seducer does not understand woman's sexuality any better than the psychiatrist understands her mind. Their mutual sexual jealousy and Cindy's choice of vampirism on the grounds that Dracula is a better lover throw light on *Bram Stoker's Dracula* from a different perspective: far from being representatives of a solid, dominant patriarchy, Van Helsing and his descendants are failed men, afraid of not meeting the sexual requirements of the New Woman—either the new woman born at the same time when Stoker created the meek Mina of his novel or the new woman born of the 1960s and 1970s feminist movement. As he is represented in Dragotti's and Badham's versions, the vampire is the Byronic Don Juan reborn, the 'homme fatale' who threatens the self-confidence of the average man.

Nonetheless, Badham's underrated *Dracula* offers a grimmer alternative to the happy union of Dracula and his new bride Cindy in *Love at First Bite*. The setting of the film is the Edwardian Age, which presupposes that the New Woman has climbed the first rungs of the ladder leading to the carefree Cindy of the pre-AIDS 1970s. This is dramatized in the film not without a number of important contradictions. A significant change from the original novel is the reversal of roles of the two main female characters: in this version the weak, sweet Mina—Dr. Van Helsing's daughter—is the first to succumb to Dracula's charms and to pay the price of being staked by her own father for it. Despite the example of Mina's fate, her best friend Lucy—Dr. Seward's daughter and Harker's fiancée—chooses to let herself be seduced by the Count, played by Frank Langella in the spirit of Christopher Lee's Count rather than in Lugosi's. Once she is determined to accept Dracula's attentions, Lucy dares all the men around her to stop her, which they fail to do.

As played by Kate Nelligan, this fusion of the original Mina and Lucy is no longer a twenty-year-old Victorian virgin, but a twentieth-century woman choosing vampirism rather than a life as Harker's wife and Seward's daughter. Yet, this is the point at which the contradictions of the plot surface: since Lucy is portrayed with sympathy and since it is obvious that Harker is no match for her strong personality, her frantic physical struggle to escape him and join the vampire appear to be a symbol for woman's liberation from patriarchy. Dracula's killing of the old, tired vampire fighter played by Laurence Olivier also seems to stress the death of an old model of patriarchy: the father who has impaled the vampire daughter is in his turn impaled by the vampire with the very stake chosen to kill him. The final image of the Count, crucified by Harker on the mast of the ship taking him home, is almost a blasphemy, as it recalls that of Christ as redeemer. Dracula flies away transformed into a bat just before the sunrise may kill him, leaving Lucy behind, but her bloodshot eyes and her long fangs suggest that a new life as a vampire has begun for her in which there may be a future with Dracula. The ambiguous end of the film may suggest to many that the New Woman of the Edwardian Age, or the feminist of the late 1970s when the film was made, are nothing but monsters empowered by monstrous, false men like Dracula who betray their own gender. Yet the average man in the audience can hardly sympathize with his screen surrogates: Cindy's psychiatrist, Van Helsing, Harker and Seward are such ineffective figures, such unappealing representations of patriarchy that their humiliation cannot be seen as something totally undesirable. This leads to the final contradiction: the role

model proposed to the average man is the monster, the Byronic hero as Dracula, the vampiric seducer. This man and the women he 'frees' from patriarchal constraints are no doubt monsters united by a common search for sexual freedom, but, precisely because they have managed to break free they have become monsters that elicit a certain sympathy rather than absolute horror. Secretly, all the men in the audience want to be Dracula; secretly all the women want to exert the power to choose and be, like Milton's Satan, queens in Hell rather than servants in Heaven.

Mina's choice is of a very different nature in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, since in this version Dracula and not herself is in need of redeeming liberation. While Stoker vaguely suggests that the vampire's double human and bestly nature originates in a mating of a woman of his tribe—the Draculs—with their totemic animal, the dragon, screen writer Jim V. Hart supplies a new origin for the vampire. Dracula, a Christian warrior fighting the Turks in the fourteenth century, is deprived of his humanity when he abjures God, following the Catholic Church's refusal to bury his bride Elisabetta in consecrated ground, after her committing suicide wrongly believing that he had died in the battlefield. This Dracula is, thus, another version of the Byronic hero, damned into a personal Hell that can only end when he finds Elisabetta again, reborn in the nineteenth century as Mina Murray.

Mina's seduction ultimately leads to the turning point in which she must choose between becoming herself a vampire and damning herself and her lover for ever, or redeeming him by killing him, which none of the four men protecting her can do. The Count's willingness to die only if his death is Mina's own choice is a motif borrowed from "Beauty and the Beast"; however, the happy end of the fairy tale is superseded in Coppola's film by an ambiguous end: the petite Mina is seen to wield a large sword, pierce Dracula's heart and then behead him, which secures the salvation of his soul and of her own, as well. Neither what this violent act of love supposes for her nor what turn her life will take from that moment onwards are issues clarified by Hart or Coppola, as the film ends at this point. All in all, the ambiguities of this end are even more dramatic than those of Badham's film: the patriarchal men have failed in the task of destroying the monster, leaving Mina literally alone to fulfil their task, yet the alternative model, the Don Juan, has also failed. Far from being a subversive liberator of repressed female desire, Dracula is a doomed romantic who can offer man no other solution but death to the problem of what a desirable image of masculinity is. Ironically, the film seems to celebrate the memory of the lost romantic hero—the hero of women's romance—rather than point forward towards the rejection of monstrosity on men's side and towards the acceptance of women's freedom of choice. Mina's life, we are made to believe, will be a long mourning for the lost monstrous lover rather than a joyous embrace of her husband and domesticity.

No such love story can be found in Stoker's novel, which contradicts the alleged faithfulness to the novel proclaimed by the film's title. However, interesting as this aspect of the revision of Stoker's *Dracula* is in this film, Coppola's adaptation is perhaps more concerned with avoiding the weight of all the previous Draculas in film than with respecting the original novel. This manifest anxiety of influences is reflected in the search for a new, striking visualization conceived as a homage to Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Gary Oldman plays a multiple Dracula constantly metamorphosing from feral wolf to handsome dandy, from the bloodthirsty young warrior in red armour to the eccentric old vampire wrapped in his majestic red robe, always carefully eschewing the Dracula in Victorian evening dress and black satin cape, imitating instead the more romantic but more horrific Count Orlock. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* can be said to be,

actually, a double adaptation. On the one hand, it fills a gap in the fabric of the novel: the love story adds a new perspective stressing the similarities between the game of sexual seduction that the Count carries out in the film and the hunting strategies of the predator, which is what he is in Stoker's novel. On the other hand, Coppola's homage to expressionistic shadows, to the artificiality of the make-believe strategies of film and his rejection of state-of-the-art special effects also turn the film into a mainstream artistic statement against the contemporary cinema of fantasy and its reliance on special effects.

A multi-layered adaptation like this one takes risks that more conventional versions avoid, since it targets different segments in the audience already familiar with many adaptations of the same subject or perhaps with the original novel. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* was conceived as a quality blockbuster with the expectation that Coppola's direction would make the best artistic use of the high budget and the cast of film stars so as to attract diverse layers of the audience: film buffs fond of his previous films, spectators who favour commercial films but would rarely see a horror film, spectators of omnivorous tastes and also those who enjoy horror films above any other genre. Filmgoers little familiar with the films that Coppola pays homage to were enticed to see the film by the promise of its original visualization as could be glimpsed in the advertising trailer (a promise later prolonged in the video-game and the comic), while fans of the cycle of adaptations of *Dracula* were invited to play the game of intertextuality and to recognize the quotations from *Nosferatu* or spot the differences with other *Dracula* films.

James Brown (1993) notes that as with most blockbusters, "the ideal, implied spectator [of Coppola's *Dracula*] is a sophisticated simpleton: experienced enough not to be fobbed off with any but the latest wizardry, but dumb enough not to want anything else". Paradoxically, the film failed to convince admirers of Stoker's novel, mainly because they resented the transformation of Stoker's brutal predator into a romantic hero, as much as lovers of horror films who resented Coppola's willed ignorance of the conventions of modern horror films especially as far as the use of special effects is concerned. Coppola's film managed nonetheless to attract a large enough heterogeneous audience, surely not of all it composed by sophisticated simpletons, who were satisfied above all by the quality of the film's *mise-en-scène* in comparison to that of previous *Draculas*. This benefited from the many millions invested in the film by Coppola's own studio, American Zoetrope, and also from the progressive freedom in the representation of eroticism and violence slowly gained by the cinema. Adapting Stoker exactly as he envisioned his novel has not been possible until recently because censorship or the prevalent moral code had always limited the representation of the implicit eroticism of Stoker's original novel on the screen. Coppola's film was released in a wholly different cultural atmosphere. Not only could the film be more explicit than previous adaptations due to the rise of the threshold of tolerance in the representation of violence and eroticism: it had to be necessarily so or risk losing an audience used to the voyeuristic strategies of the horror film.

Coppola's *Dracula* is not Bram Stoker's but it strikes a successful balance between Stoker's subtle visualization of the monster bound by Victorianism and the unbounded explicitness of the 1980s and 1990s horror film. A proof of this compromise is the adaptation of the following scene of the novel, in which one night Mina follows a sleepwalking Lucy to a churchyard where she is first attacked by the Count: "There was undoubtedly something, long and black", Mina writes, "bending over the half-reclining white figure. I called in fright, 'Lucy! Lucy!' and something raised a head, and from where I was I could see a white face and red, gleaming eyes" (p. 90). This appears in the

film as a shocking scene in which Dracula in the form of a horrific werewolf is seen raping Lucy before Mina's very own eyes. The nightmarish scene respects the essence of the dreamlike quality of Mina's perception of the attack according to Stoker's novel, simultaneously enhancing it by dispelling the doubts about the vague 'something' the Victorian Mina saw with the precision that only contemporary special effects techniques can afford.

In scenes like this one, the problematics of adapting *Dracula* is fully revealed: part of the audience may object that Stoker's novel is never visually so explicit, another that most 1990s horror films are much more extreme in this sense and a third that so much excess is almost parodic. In a sense, Coppola's *Dracula* solves the problem of how to prevent audiences from falling into the temptation of laughing—nervously or openly—at the vampire by splitting his physical appearance into a number of chamaleonic, even contradictory images. Gary Oldman's Dracula is also emotionally chamaleonic and exhibits a sinister sense of humour that nonetheless combines well with his tearful romanticism and his capacity to horrify in his incarnation as a beast.

His magnified Dracula fits within a context likewise excessive in which Mina and Lucy discuss the attractions of the pornographic engravings of Richard Burton's *Thousand and One Nights*, the rational scientist Van Helsing uses his sixth sense to detect the liaison between Mina and the Count and in which the drug-addict Dr. Seward behaves like one of his mad patients. The ceaseless flow of baroque imagery, the many more signifiers than signifieds, keep the audience too busy to consider the differences with the novel until, once the film is over, the memory of the many divergent details form the original finally discloses an obvious truth underlying all adaptations of *Dracula*: the only Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is the 1897 novel. It is hence, pointless, to demand from the film absolute faithfulness when one can simply read the novel. It cannot be said, then, that Coppola remains faithful to the spirit of Stoker's novel in the presentation of the vampire. Furthermore, it seems obvious that the title is ironic, a joke cracked at the expense of those who might think that seeing the film is the exact equivalent of reading the novel. *Bram Stoker's Dracula* is actually a homage to Stoker's novel as the originator of a rich legacy of capital importance for the collective and the personal imagination of the twentieth century, but it is also a parody of the shallowest aspects of those legacy including the cult of the novel, coming from a mainstream director seeing horror fiction from a certain distance, from a different cultural vantage point. Whether his own version will eventually become a cult film like Browning's still remains to be seen.

2.2.3. New Versions of *Frankenstein*

By the time Frankenstein's monster found his most popular incarnation in the person of British actor Boris Karloff, the creature had already undergone a century of adaptations and revisions. The first of these was Richard Brinsley Peake's play *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein* (1823) which, despite public protests against its sensational content, attracted a considerable number of spectators, including Mary Shelley herself. Even though the stage adaptations of works such as *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* have been now forgotten except by a few specialised scholars and by a few fans, in fact many of the most popular motifs in the respective myths are actually derived from the plays which inspired the films and not from the original novels. What is more, not even Mary Shelley herself was immune to the reception of Peake's stage

adaptation of her novel. Peake's moralistic reading of Victor Frankenstein as a transgressor punished by his attempt at usurping God's power to create life, a topic introduced according to Chris Baldick (1987: 58) to placate the demonstrations against the alleged immorality of the play, was taken into account by her for the second edition of the novel:

When Mary Shelley came to revise her novel for the third edition of 1831, on which virtually all modern editions have been based, she incorporated several of the more conservative readings implied in the dramatic and rhetorical uses to which the story had been put since 1818. Now distancing herself from her radical past, the author strengthened the cautionary element of the novel to the point where it could be read as an 'improving' work. (ibid.: 62)

Despite her apprehensions about Peake's work, Baldick adds, Mary Shelley put the word 'presumption' in Frankenstein's mouth, in a new speech addressed to Walton in which he regrets his having created the monster. Instead of a fellow romantic explorer of the unknown, Walton appears in the 1831 version as a victim of blind passion for transgressive knowledge who is saved from a terrible fate by Frankenstein's confession of guilt. The 1818 Victor Frankenstein portrayed as a new Prometheus has become by 1831 the teller of a cautionary tale from which the countless moralistic stage and film versions derive. "The excesses of the story's multiple significance", Baldick (ibid.: 62) observes, were curbed down by "exhibiting the monster as an awful warning". Therefore Mary Shelley's original description of the monster as a human soul suffering from the effects of the inadequacy of his sentient mind to his monstrous body gave way to the popular view derived from Peake's play of the creature as the speechless huge automaton in human form.

Peake's *Presumption* is actually a melodrama very different from the original novel or the screen adaptations. The play introduced, among other themes, the comic figure of Frankenstein's servant Fritz which was still kept in James Whale's 1931 film, based in its turn on the play by Peggy Webling, *Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre* (1927). Far from being anecdotal, Fritz's clumsiness is used by Webling to explain why Victor Frankenstein accidentally grafts the brain of a criminal onto his monster, a point which serves to introduce a new topic that utterly subverts Mary Shelley's view of the monster as a born innocent. In addition, Peake's version also introduced notions about the nature of the monster that have little to do with the creature of the novel but that have been routinely kept in the films derived from Whale's successful adaptation. In Peake's play the monster is described by Frankenstein as a huge automaton, a portrait seemingly inspired by the legend of the Golem rather than by the original novel. Frankenstein's monster and the Golem were connected once again in the 1930s through an early draft of the screenplay for Whale's film which was inspired by Paul Weggener's 1920 film *The Golem*. Whale finally worked on a different screenplay but he employed the services of German photographer Karl Freund, who had worked with Weggener in *The Golem*.

In Peake's version, the monster possesses a childish mind that jars with his monstrous body. He remains an inarticulate menace throughout the play, as in Whale's film, which precludes the need for including in the film the essential explanatory interview between creator and creature of the novel. The 1931 film adds to the tale of the monster's creation a particularly kitsch vision of Europe created by a team of European artists working primarily for American audiences. Victor Frankenstein

(renamed Henry) is portrayed as the proverbial amoral ‘mad doctor’ of pulp fiction, a character derived from Mary Shelley’s own *Frankenstein*: “Frankenstein is only interested in human life”, a character says with irony, “first to destroy it, then to create it. This is his mad dream”. This presumptuous scientist is very similar to the power hungry scientist of another 1930s film, *The Invisible Man* adapted from H.G. Wells’ novel, though, unlike Jack Griffin, the 1930s Henry Frankenstein miraculously preserves intact his belief in his own innocence and never acknowledges his guilt in the creation of the monster. Interestingly, although one of the motifs introduced by Whale that has best survived the passage of time is the monster’s persecution by a mob of honest citizens intent on lynching him—the same motif appears, for instance, in Tim Burton’s peculiar updating of Mary Shelley’s novel, *Edward Scissorhands* (1990)—this motif did not originate in the original novel nor in Whale’s film. The murderous mob of good citizens belongs to a bigoted America that does not tolerate difference; it seems to have appeared first on the screen in David Griffith’s reactionary *Intolerance* (1916) in the guise of the Ku Klux Klan though it also raised its ugly head as the Parisian mob that drowns Lon Chaney as Erik, the Phantom of the Opera in the eponymous film. Unlike its predecessors, the angry mob that chases the charming Edward Scissorhands away from American suburbia and back to his Gothic castle is made to pass through a moment of embarrassed self-consciousness. Convinced by a lie told by the monster’s beloved Kim that he is dead, the mob disbands, and never attempts to accomplish the task of killing him despite the many signs that he has survived the chase: rather than tolerate the monster—the different Other—as a neighbour, the most that suburban American can do is to persuade itself that his liberating influence can be counteracted by constraining him to a fantastic domain outside the daily normality of America.

A peculiar issue that has attracted the interest of many readers and potential adapters is the aborted creation of the female monster in Mary Shelley’s novel. The main enigma of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is why Victor could not please his monster and fashion a female that could not bear children, which he could have easily done. The horror that the potential birth of a new breed of monsters awakens in Victor justifies his destruction of the creature’s mate yet this horror has also been interpreted as a sign of ambiguity on Mary Shelley’s side towards the female body. Victor’s aborted creation of the monstrous woman has been variously read as a transposition of Mary Shelley’s mistrust towards her own body, due to her inability to prevent the deaths of her children. Her fear of not being able to beget healthy, normal children has been adduced as one of the main causes behind the creation of Victor and his monstrous progeny and also as one of the causes why she saw the female body as an uncontrollable hazard. Already in 1935, James Whale’s spin-off to his own *Frankenstein*, *The Bride of Frankenstein*, proposed an ironic solution to fill the gap in the novel: when Frankenstein finally creates a female mate for his monster, she is no less horrified by the male monster than any ordinary woman would be.

The topic of the female monster that *Frankenstein* refuses to create recurs in all the adaptations produced in the 1980s, including *Blade Runner* and its monstrous heroine Rachael. Yet, all coincide in opposing Whale’s solution: the new women seek in the male monster a natural partner, rejecting the patriarchal creator and accepting the neglected creature as a companion. This is a solution similar to Lucy’s choice in Badham’s *Dracula* which seemingly stresses the links between the monstrous man and woman. Interestingly, the film and the novel that are most directly linked to Whale’s *Bride of Frankenstein*—Frank Roddam’s film *The Bride* (1985) and Hillary Bailey’s novel *Frankenstein’s Bride* (1995) —coincide in degrading Frankenstein to the

unsympathetic role of a lascivious Pygmalion who attempts and fails to rob his monster of his loving bride. Because of the attraction that Frankenstein feels for the beauty of the new Eve she is kept unaware of the existence of her true mate; the ugliness of the male monster results in his rejection, but the beauty of the new woman leads Frankenstein not only to feel desire for her but also to try to integrate her in society as a respectable, refined lady. The progressive disclosure of Frankenstein's true intentions towards her prompt the woman to seek out the protection of the rejected male monster, whom she identifies as her genuine partner. Thus, Roddam's film ends with the timely entrance of the male monster into his beloved's bedroom just when the threat of impending rape posed by Frankenstein himself is to materialise, whereas Bailey's novel ends with Eve's destruction of Frankenstein's other women, his wife and daughter in revenge for her own victimization. In Roddam's film the sympathy of the audience is channelled towards the couple of monstrous lovers plainly on the grounds of the female monster's beauty: they become yet another version of "Beauty and the Beast". Nonetheless, as Brian Aldiss' *Frankenstein Unbound* (1973) suggests, sympathy is strongly related to the tolerable physical appearance of the monstrous bride. The horrific woman that Frankenstein creates in Aldiss' novel is destroyed by the protagonist Joseph Bodenland because he cannot tolerate her gruesome physical appearance. Interestingly, the supposition that woman is man's masterpiece, present in the new versions of *Bride of Frankenstein* but also in *Blade Runner* reverses the myth of creation of Genesis: the new Eve's creation culminates the work started with the new Adam who is, in fact, a failure compared with her.

The screen adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* became virtually pointless after the release of *Blade Runner* in 1982. Unlike *Dracula*, which is a story rooted in the supernatural, *Frankenstein* is primarily a science-fiction novel—according to Brian Aldiss, the novel that indeed originated science fiction (1973: 7 -44). Thus, it depends to a much greater extent on a certain view of science to elicit from its readers a suspension of disbelief. With *Blade Runner* the myth of Frankenstein abandons the almost magical use of science in the original novel to enter a different scientific paradigm in which the construction of the replicants seems to audiences feasible rather than fantastic. When, as happens in *Blade Runner*, genetic engineering replaces galvanism as the scientific 'excuse' on which the plot of the creation of an artificial person is grounded many paths to adapt the original story are closed: Frankenstein's pseudoscientific methods are completely emptied of their already fuzzy credibility while the ugliness of the monster risks being seen as part of Frankenstein's scientific inexperience rather than as a warning against his sinful ways. Being a creature born of superstition, the vampire does not face the same problem of scientific credibility, which means that, despite the many recent variations on the subject, one representation of the vampire is unlikely to supersede all others.

It was precisely the commercial success of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* what prompted Coppola and screen writer Jim V. Hart to commission Kenneth Branagh to direct *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, a product paid by Sony in a last desperate attempt to salvage what has proved to be a ruinous business: the purchase of the Hollywood Columbia studios (Alexander, 1994). Branagh, a director specialised in adapting Shakespeare for the screen with critical and commercial success seemed a good choice to head the project of adapting a classic of British literature. Actually, the film had much worse critical and commercial results that could be expected from the reputation of its director, producers and actors, something that must be blamed on Branagh's double

failure to take *Blade Runner* into account and to strike a balance between the homage and the parody of the original novel as Coppola did in the case of Stoker's novel.

As I have noted, *Dracula* is sentimentalised in Coppola's version and portrayed as a romantic hero in a way that does not correspond to the original novel but that is not so dissimilar to previous adaptations. In contrast, throughout the cycle of imitations and adaptations the original Victor Frankenstein had progressively lost his romantic personality to become the prototype for the unemotional scientist of many dystopian films and novels (see Chapter 6). Branagh's film endeavours to recreate the romantic genius portrayed by Mary Shelley at the expense of the monster, who is robbed in this version of part of the protagonism he has in the novel. David Wickes' more modest *Frankenstein* (1992)—made for Ted Turner's cable TV empire and only released on video, hence much less publicised—anticipated Branagh's in this return to the romantic roots of the myth by emphasizing two important issues reintroduced by *Blade Runner*: firstly, the pride felt by the romantic genius in his nonetheless partly failed creation and secondly, the acknowledgement of the limitations of this newly-found power to create.

Wickes' and not Branagh's is the first film version to begin, like the novel, with the episode in the Arctic and to include the illuminating interview between the monster and his creator. Victor Frankenstein, played by Patrick Bergin, is presented as a young, popular and brilliant university professor unjustly denied a position he deserves for his innovative research. He is not, then, an isolated man working on his own, but a man making a political statement with his research in favour of science and rationalism and seeking the benefit of as many people as possible with his discoveries. The showpiece in his workshop is a womb-like tank full of foetal liquid in which a man, being formed in Frankenstein's own image, awaits birth. The accidental malfunction in the mechanism prevents the man from being completed; his premature birth, staged in a scene very similar to the one in Branagh's version, is the actual cause of his deformities, but, since he has been made in his creator's image, the creature and Frankenstein are in a sense twins, sharing the same capacity to feel physical and mental pain. The motif of the doppelgänger, first introduced in Peggy Webling's play, is thus coupled with folkloristic beliefs about the psychic links between twins and also connotes the telepathic association between *Dracula* and Mina that allows Van Helsing to track the vampire to his lair.

Frankenstein's misshapen double contrasts pitifully with the perfect replicant Roy Batty of *Blade Runner*, though Wickes follows Ridley Scott's film rather than Mary Shelley's novel in the presentation of the relationship between the creature and the creator. There is even a direct quotation from *Blade Runner* in the scene in which the monster, determined to kill his maker after a long chase, which ends with Frankenstein hanging from the brink of a precipice, saves him instead from death just as Roy saves Deckard in a similar situation. The influence of Scott's portrait of the romantic monster who is pitiable because of the awareness of his tragic situation has therefore paradoxically led Wickes to represent the monster from a romantic point of view closer to Mary Shelley's novel.

Since Wickes' Frankenstein is not a creator but a re-creator who copies bodies from nature, when his monster demands a female companion he is forced to turn to his fiancée Elizabeth for a model of the new Eve. She volunteers for the task out of love for Victor and compassion for the lonely monster, yet the pain that the process of replication entails is so unbearable for her that Victor aborts the female monster for fear of killing Elizabeth. This results in the subsequent revenge of the angered monster on his creator, as happens in the novel, yet a new twist is introduced in the plot by which

Victor becomes the main suspect of the deaths in his family. Both monster and scientist then become runaway outcasts and embark on a mutual chase leading them to the North Pole. When the creature begs for a mercy killing from Frankenstein, he embraces his own monstrous image and dives with him into the cold water of the Arctic, drowning in a journey back to primal womb, this time together as if they were, at last, twins in a common maternal womb.

Compared to the mutual understanding between monster and creator reached in Wickes' *Frankenstein*, a theme that derives from the understanding between the dying Roy and his persecutor Deckard at the end of *Blade Runner*, the solution reached by Branagh's version, still presenting an unsympathetic monster, appears a step backwards. The screenplay of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, written by two men who had collaborated in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series which is notorious for its tongue-in-cheek black sense of humour, seems at odds with Branagh's failed attempt at making a would-be canonical film. There is a fundamental misunderstanding between the subversive, even irreverent, reading of Mary Shelley's novel by the screenplay writers, Darabont and Lady—which emphasizes the ugliness of both the monster and of his creation—and Branagh's playing up of the love story between Victor and Elizabeth. While Coppola and Hart seem to share the same vision in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, so that the horror story and the love story can fuse smoothly into a single thread, Branagh adopts a more individualistic stance, preferring to focus on Frankenstein's personality at the expense of the relationship between the monster and his creator. Instead of presenting monster and creator as soul mates as Wickes or Ridley Scott did, in Branagh's version the creator within the novel is duplicated by the creator of the film, a situation emphasized by Branagh's narcissistic performance in the role of Frankenstein.

One of the aspects in which the dissociation between the romantic creator and the horrific monster is clearest in Branagh's film is the physical appearance of both. There has never been a more handsome Frankenstein on the screen than the one played by Branagh himself, nor has there been a more repulsive creature than the one played by Robert de Niro. The creation of a new iconography for the creature was hampered by two problems: firstly, since de Niro was regarded as one of the main attractions in the film, a characterisation that made him unrecognisable was discarded. The result is that the image of the star interferes with that of the monster. Secondly, make-up artist Daniel Parker could not imitate Jack Pierce's make-up for Boris Karloff in James Whale's 1931 *Frankenstein* nor allude to it, for it is protected by copyright owned by Universal studios (Kermode and Kirkham, 1994). Instead, he used as his main inspiration Phil Leaky's make-up for Christopher Lee in Hammer's *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), which also differed from Pierce's for the same reason. Parker's monstrous icon displays, instead of Pierce's bolts, a collection of scars that are seen to heal as the film goes on. Painstakingly created as it is with its detailed fragmented anatomy, the new image of the monster sadly fails to provide any new insight into the nature of the creature. Pierce's work suggested the extreme otherness of the monster, its almost mechanical nature, close to the description of the monster as an automaton in its earliest stage adaptation. Parker's adds nothing significant to the personality of the monster, though it makes his image fit in within the current cult of the representation of the broken body in horror films. Far from achieving the desired end, the pretentiousness of the *mise-en-scène* often makes the ghastly monster simply ludicrous and many of the scenes in which he intervenes are either gruesome and meaningless or unwittingly parodic, underdirected in contrast to the overdirected love plot.

A certainly remarkable subtext underlying the superficial romanticism of Branagh's *Frankenstein* is the progressive exposure of an ambiguous bitterness manifested in the brutal profanation of the bodies of his mentor and his bride. In both cases, Victor Frankenstein humiliates those he loves with the excuse of prolonging their lives with a zest that is, to say the least, suspect. Professor Waldman, Victor's mentor, has actually managed to decipher the secrets that will allow his disciple to create the monster but refuses to help Victor, afraid of the monsters he might create. The story of the lonely creator is thus turned into the story of the ambitious disciple who cannot outdo his mentor. Waldman's grisly death (he is stabbed by a beggar who refuses to be vaccinated by him against the plague) allows Frankenstein access to his master's notes and, hence, paves the way for the creation of the monster. Even though Victor justifies his work as a homage to his dead mentor, only conscious or subconscious hatred of him can explain why his success must involve degrading the powerful father figure that overshadowed his own mediocre work: the monster results from the grafting of Waldman's brain onto the body of the man who killed him. Far from returning Waldman from death, which would have exploited the Kafkaesque topic of the soul caged in an alien body, the operation erases Waldman's memories and personality, so that the new creature is no longer him, nor the killer but an odd composite monster. Victor's awareness that the monster's mind is his former master's transforms the pleasure of creation into the pleasure of sadistic degradation.

Something similar happens in Elizabeth's case. Initially, Victor's efforts as a young student are devoted to finding a way of giving birth that would free women from the risk of dying in childbirth as happened to his mother. This new topic may have been a concession on the screen writers' side to please women in the audience so that, far from being a misogynist man bent on usurping women's role as givers of life, Frankenstein would appear as an altruistic saviour of women. However, the treatment that Victor gives to Elizabeth's body destroys this image and confirms his misogyny. In a harrowing scene that takes place after Victor and Elizabeth's long postponed wedding, the monster rips Elizabeth's heart from her body on her wedding night, a form of brutal rape that Victor helplessly witnesses; yet the viciousness of the attack is followed by a gratuitous accident in which Elizabeth's hair and face are burned. Victor creates then another composite monster, a parody of woman, and a rather sadistic one for that matter, by putting together Justine's body—she is executed in one of the most horrific scenes of the film because of its sadism—and Elizabeth's head and hands. So horrified is this new Elizabeth by her new nature that when creator and creature threaten to tear her in two in the struggle to possess her, she burns herself to death.

The film does not speak of a love for life so great that it leads Victor Frankenstein to bring dead flesh back to life, but of a hatred of the body, dead or alive, especially if it is the female body, which is in line with the visualizing strategies of monstrous violence in contemporary horror film. In comparison to Tyrell's secret genetic engineering methods to create the replicants in *Blade Runner*, Victor's crude surgical methods in Branagh's film make no sense: Victor appears hacking bodies frantically with machetes and can only produce monsters suffering from acute physical and mental agonies. Obviously, the weakest point in Mary Shelley's novel is why Victor should build new bodies out of pieces of cadavers instead of reanimating a whole body and compared to which the question of how he does it is not really relevant. *Blade Runner* offers an elegant solution by which the replicants' bodies are built as an organic whole out of separate organs individually grown by genetic engineers. While the replicants may take a further step in the direction of humanity by putting together the

fragments of their piecemeal personalities, Branagh's monster cannot progress further than a skin-deep understanding of who he is. What we see on the screen is a living mass of scarred tissue slowly healing, but never a human soul becoming aware of his superiority over his maker.

The conclusion to be derived from this peculiar adaptation, especially if it is compared to *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, is that the screenplay was written by two men who profoundly disliked Victor Frankenstein (perhaps even the novel itself) and directed by one who missed the terrible dissection of Frankenstein's monstrous personality ingrained in the script because he was too attracted by the romantic side of the character. Unlike previous adaptations and imitations Branagh's simply refuses to acknowledge Frankenstein's monstrosity or to consider how it can be compatible with his romantic striving for knowledge. Instead he proposes a portrait of Frankenstein as a man who deserves sympathy for no other reason than he is a sensitive man very much in love with Elizabeth—despite the fact that this sensitivity is actually pure selfishness. Coppola and Hart needn't make such distinction between the monster and the romantic because in their version *Dracula* is his own creator and the creature in one. In addition, they kept a certain ironic distance—greater on Coppola's side—which gives the adaptation a greater stability, also aided by Gary Oldman's flexible performance and his credibility as both predatory monster and Byronic hero. Branagh, more used to a type of adaptation grounded on the respect for the literary text, could not master the code used by Darabont and Lady to parody Mary Shelley's novel, and tried unsuccessfully to stick to the spirit of the text with his own performance, which became thus unwittingly part of the parody.

The motif of the making of the bride out of Elizabeth's body links Branagh's version to Roger Corman's *Frankenstein Unbound* (1990), based on Brian Aldiss' 1973 novel of the same title. This is a bizarre—certainly unbound—fantasy narrating the adventures of Joseph Bodenland, a scientist led by a time warp from the USA in 2031 to Switzerland in 1817, where he meets not only Frankenstein and his creature but also Mary Godwin, Shelley and Byron. The whole point of the plot is a rather unembarrassed sexual fantasy on Aldiss' side that allows his alter ego Bodenland, Mary's future admirer, not only to make love to her but also to intervene in the writing of her own novel: Bodenland draws her attention to the strange events in the lives of the Frankenstein family and also gives Mary a copy of the novel she still has to write. In Corman's version the monster kills Elizabeth in the same violent, gory style of Branagh's monster though, following Aldiss' novel, instead of reanimating her out of love Frankenstein recycles her body to give his monster a bride. Both Helena Bonham-Carter in Branagh's film and Catherine Rabbet in Corman's, play the new female monster as a living doll in deep pain, but Rabbet's pseudo-Elizabeth antedates Bonham-Carter's in her realization that her sympathies have gone to the monster with her new monstrous state. Instead of suicide, Corman's new Elizabeth chooses to protect the male monster from Frankenstein's murderous intentions and the couple become runaways after killing Victor. Chased by Bodenland, they reach a bleak landscape in the future from which all traces of human life have been erased, partly thanks to Bodenland's own experiments; finally sympathising with Frankenstein, Bodenland exterminates the couple and thus a possible future new mankind born from them, despite their protestations that he should not kill what he does not understand.

Aldiss' novel differs from the film precisely in his representation of the monster's bride. In Aldiss' version, Frankenstein fashions the female monster with pieces of Justine's body, yet this new Eve looks masculine, with her thick legs and her

towering height. In contrast, the male monster looks much more appealing and is described as a sublime creature:

In his anger, he was beautiful. I use the word beautiful knowing it to be inaccurate, yet not knowing how else to counteract the myth that has circulated for two centuries that Frankenstein's monster's face was a hideous conglomeration of second-hand features.

It was not so. Perhaps the lie drew its life from a human longing for those chills of horror which are depraved forms of religious awe. And I must admit that Mary Shelley began the rumour; but she had to make her impression on an untutored audience. I can only declare that the face before me had a terrible beauty (p. 167).

Voyeurism reaches a peak in the novel and in the Frankenstein myth when, after this vindication of the male body to correct Mary Shelley's allegedly malicious slandering against it, Bodenland finally sees the monstrous couple making love, possibly the moment of true horror the first novel circumvented, the gap in the fabric that has attracted most adapters. The disgusting sight of the sublime male monster engaged in sex with the ogress created by Frankenstein is, in fact, what spurs the misogynistic Bodenland to kill both monsters.

As *Frankenstein Unbound* shows, a consequence of the popularity of *Frankenstein* is the representation of Mary Shelley as a fictional character in several stories dealing with the creation of the monster. Ken Russell's film *Gothic* (1986) and Gonzalo Suárez's *Rowing in the Wind* (1988) revisit Villa Diodatti in 1816 to narrate from different perspectives why Mary Shelley created her monster and conclude that Mary Shelley expressed through her creature her fear that she herself was a monster. The disparate accounts of the relationships among the members of the Romantic circle formed by Mary Godwin, Shelley, Byron, Claire Clairmont and John Polidori in both films, coincide nonetheless in the representation of Mary Shelley as a catalyst of forces of destruction unleashed by the romantic probing of the dark side of the human mind. In this background of unbound passion she is portrayed by both Russell and Suárez, despite the enormous differences between their films, as the only member of the romantic circle capable of channelling towards civilization the energy unleashed by the romantic strife to break away from the conventional and the rational. However, given the ambiguity of Mary Shelley's own portrait of the romantic genius in her novel—the question of whether the real monster is Victor Frankenstein or his creature underlies the whole novel—she is regarded in both films simultaneously as an outsider (a privileged observer) in the relationship between the poets Byron and Keats and as a woman who deserves homage for having transmitted to us a lasting view of the romantic spirit.

The recurrence of untimely deaths in the circle of Mary Shelley's family and friends is an essential point in Russell's and Suárez's characterisation of her. The monster and Mary are presented as twin angels of death, innocent agents of destruction that cannot help bringing death to those they love. Russell's film deals with the idea that the nightmare Mary Shelley had on the night of the 16th June 1816 in which she saw the monster for the first time was produced in fact by the psychological pressure put on her by her companions. In the film a bizarre ceremony allows the subconscious energies of Byron, Shelley, Polidori, Mary Godwin and Claire Clairmont to raise from the depths of their personal fears the creatures of nightmare that pursue them throughout the film and that are related to particular events in their lives. As Will Rockett (op. cit.: 12) notes, "the film suggests not only demonic dread's presence in human perceptions and

imagination, but also the possibility that it might lead to the perception of the divine, albeit in its most frightening aspect". The nightmarish night—for all the events in the film turn out to be events in Mary's nightmare—allows her to foresee not only her own creation of the monster but the future deaths of all around her and serves also to give vent to repressed energies in her own self. Without the liberating effect of the fear felt in her nightmare by this civilized, sensible woman, the film suggests that she could not have coped with her worst personal fears when the deaths of those around her took place. The novel and the monster may have been the result of her wish to please her husband and her friends with a horror story, but as the film suggests, subconscious preoccupations forced Mary Shelley to assume a sibylline role grounded on personal anxieties about her role as a woman—as a giver of life—that led her to deal with anxieties universally felt about birth and death.

In Suárez's film Mary is also presented as an angel of death. She attributes the wake of deaths she is leaving behind herself—beginning with her mother's death in her own birth—to her having unleashed a monster from her deepest fears even before she is born. Mary is identified with Victor in the final scene which shows her waiting to face her monster in the North Pole where she is writing her story and expecting death—her monster—to come. The monster is always present in Mary's life as her shadow, announcing the deaths of Mary's friends and relatives, and even causing that of her own child William, making her assume the burden of the guilt for all the deaths. Her transgression, the creation of the monster, is seen in this film as a fatalistic condition in Mary's life that will never leave her.

While Russell's film includes in the nightmarish events a cathartic force that enables Mary to handle fear fictionally, Suárez's offers an opposite view: her fiction invades Mary's life to the point of making the monster indistinguishable from herself. *Gothic* is, as its title indicates, truly Gothic with its unbounded visual excess and its supernatural events but is, in comparison to *Rowing in the Wind*, a more optimistic film. The latter is a more truly romantic film, not only because of its use of natural landscape and the events it narrates, but also because of its portrait of the romantic despair that invades Mary's life. The paradox is, then, that although Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* deals with the creation of life, the novel is read by Russell and Suárez as a story about how life leads inevitably to death—the monster flourishes briefly (the four-year lifespan of the replicants of *Blade Runner* shows this inevitable mortality) only to return to death, from which he was withdrawn by his creator for reasons not even Frankenstein knows well. In any case, a point missed by both Russell and Suárez in their paradoxically misogynistic homage to the figure of Mary Shelley, is the cautionary nature of her novel: the critique of the romantic man who inevitably creates monsters is ignored by both in favour of an identification of the monster not with his male creator—the scientist—but with his female creator, the novelist.

The inclusion of Mary Shelley as a fictional character within the myth of monstrosity she herself created is part of a typically postmodernist game, by which the portrait of the romantic writer created by academic research is subverted in fantasies fusing biographical elements, the texts written by the romantic artists themselves and aspects of monstrosity. The view of the romantic poet as a monster—in the sense of prodigy—has led to the writing of novels as idiosyncratic as Dan Simmons' *Hyperion* (1989) and *The Fall of Hyperion* (1990) and Tim Powers' *The Annubis Gates* (1983) and *The Stress of her Regard* (1989), in which Keats, Byron and Shelley are represented as monsters. The circle is thus closed: Mary Shelley's view of the manufactured human

monster as a Romantic finally leads to the view of the Romantic as a monster created like Frankenstein's creature by a monstrous mind.

Dan Simmons' two volume novel generically entitled *Hyperion Cantos* is a science-fiction novel centring on the wish of the Artificial Intelligences, who have re-created a replicant John Keats out of the original John Keats' DNA, to create their own God. The new Johnny Keats finds himself playing the role of the prophet heralding the arrival of a messiah (his yet unborn daughter) that will bring reconciliation between men and their intelligent machines, as he ponders why he cannot be the same John Keats who wrote *Hyperion*. John Keats also appears as a character in Tim Powers' *The Stress of her Regard* (1989), a fantasy novel that again presents the Romantic poets—Keats, Shelley and Byron—in league with non-human vampiric intelligences (the Nephilim or fallen angels of the *Apocrypha*) who have granted them extraordinary powers of creation that ultimately lead to their own deaths. In a previous novel by Powers, *The Annubis Gates* (1983), Coleridge is also present in a secondary role while a replica of Byron, quite similar to Keats' cybrid in *Hyperion Cantos*, can also be found there. This novel, which begins when an American Literature professor is invited to travel backwards in time to meet Coleridge, explains this interest in the Romantic poets as nostalgia for the extraordinary: a longing for the Romantics in a time such as ours in which there seems to be no equivalent figures is metaphorically expressed in these novels by the production of copies or clones.

The cloning of the poet, however, is bound to be a failure for the reproduction of the DNA does not ensure the reproduction of the mysterious qualities that fashion the personality. While in *The Annubis Gates*, Byron's 'ka' dies a sad death when he realizes that he is not the poet himself, despite the eerie knowledge he has of texts Byron still has to write, in *Hyperion*, Keats' replica is aware that at the most he can expect is becoming a specialist in Keats' life but not Keats himself. The poet's twin—Byron's ka, Keats' cybrid—is always the monster but he shares enough with his twin so as to be something more than a mere copy but something less than the original. Nostalgia for the myth-making poet is also accompanied by personal homage on the author's side, who vindicates the right to offer a personal version of the myth the poet has become. Indeed, to stress the fact that each time a student approaches one of the Romantic poets a new version is born, Simmons presents in *The Fall of Hyperion* a second cybrid of Keats that is, also like all the imitations of an original in a cycle of adaptations, different yet the same.

The plots of these novels, so rich in fantastic incident, partly depend on a familiarisation of the reader with the figures of the Romantics to be fully meaningful. However, it is not true that most readers of these novels by Simmons and Powers, marketed as genre fiction and not as mainstream, are familiar with the lives and works of the Romantic poets. Indeed, they may miss the point altogether and just stay tuned to the gripping plot-driven narratives without much significant loss of pleasure. In discussion with a friend of scientific training who counts Simmons among his favourite writers, I was even told that it is completely irrelevant to know who Keats was to understand *Hyperion Cantos* and that, in any case, the literary references were a defect rather than an asset for the novel. A few readers might well be expected to graduate from reading Simmons' *Hyperion* to reading Keats' own but it is more sensible to think that all the information they will receive about the Romantic poets will reach them through this channel, no matter how odd this might seem to those of us who are familiar with their work through the study of Literature.

To a certain extent, films like *Gothic* and the novels by Simmons and Powers are parodic, though the parody is not so much against the Romantics but against a serious, scholarly view of them, which, in contrast, *Rowing in the Wind* respects. The cybrid Keats who finds a home in the computer of a spaceship that suddenly starts reciting poetry in *The Fall of Hyperion*, the Coleridge that cannot tell his own chimeras apart from the monsters that surround him in a dungeon in *The Anubis Gates* or the Mary Shelley that is scared by everything and nothing in *Gothic*, are, so to speak, affectionate parodies built with a playful sense of literary homage. They subvert the image built by scholarship to claim that the Romantics were on the side of high culture as much as on the side of carnivalesque popular culture, while trying all the same to unravel the enigma of what made them different. Simmons faithfully follows the idea of the divine essence of the poet to explain the profound humanity of the cybrid Johnny Keats, which enables him to destroy the powerful Shrike, a god nicknamed the Lord of Pain, while Powers imagines in *The Stress of her Regard* a demonic Faustian pact as the source of the poets' super-humanity. Tim Powers deals, besides, with the making of the monstrous poet in *The Anubis Gates* with an interesting paradox: Brendan Doyle, an American professor of Literature specialised in the work of the mysterious American Romantic poet William Ashbless, travels to 1810 to meet him, only to discover that he is Ashbless himself:

Suddenly a thought struck him. My God, he thought, then if I stay and live out my life as Ashbless—which the universe pretty clearly means me to do—then nobody wrote Ashbless' poems. I'll copy out his poems from memory, having read them in the 1932 *Collected Poems*, and my copies will be set in type for the magazines, and they'll use tear sheets from the magazines to assemble the *Collected Poems*! They're a closed loop, uncreated! I'm just the... messenger and caretaker. (p. 331)

The motif of the time loop provides an interesting plot for this novel but also stresses the point that the Romantics are an invention of the present, a fiction, partial in the case of the real poets, total in the case of Ashbless. He is, in addition, a dream figure for the American admirer of the Romantic poets—the American Romantic poet—and though Powers concludes *The Stress of her Regard*, his other novel on the Romantic poets, with his protagonist wishing his own son is not born an extraordinary being like the Romantics, this fictional resurrection of the poets and of Mary Shelley is clearly nostalgic. This nostalgia explicitly refers to the myth-making ability of the Romantic poets and of Mary Shelley as we see it now and denotes, no doubt, an underlying confusion about who the real myth makers are now (for, although there are many, none seem to be the pure artists the Romantics are in the popular imagination) or, alternatively, a growing anxiety of influences in Harold Bloom's terms (1973: 29): "To be enslaved by any precursor's system, Blake says, is to be inhibited by an obsessive reasoning and comparing, presumably of one's own works to the precursor's. Poetic Influence is thus a disease of self-consciousness". It could be said, following Bloom, that the 1980s and 1990s, as far as the weight imposed by the Romantic construction of monstrosity on the present is concerned, are years in which the disease of self-consciousness has been subverted by those working at the margins of high art and turned into a rich source for new films and novels.

2.2.4. The Strange Case of Mary Reilly and Mr. Hyde

R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) was adapted for the stage soon after its publication by T.R. Sullivan, whose 1887 play gave actor Richard Mansfield an enormously popular role that he played until 1907. Eleven screen versions were produced between 1908 and 1920, both in the USA and in Europe, although the first quality version was the 1920 film by John S. Robertson, with John Barrymore in the dual role of Jekyll and Hyde. This version, written by Clara S. Berenger, links Jekyll with Dorian Gray and introduces a female character whose function is to justify Jekyll's attraction for sex and his transformation into Hyde. The 'bad' girl was a dance-hall artist in the 1920 film, a prostitute in Mamoulian's 1932 version and in Fleming's 1941, but became in Roy Ward Baker's *Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971) Jekyll's own twin personality. The glamorous sister Hyde, made responsible for the crimes of Jack the Ripper has recently reappeared in *Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde* (1995), a comedy whose main asset is based on the use of computer animation (morphing) to visualize the gradual transformation of Jekyll into the exuberant Ms. Hyde played by Sean Young. The absence of women in Stevenson's original text and the monstrous, ape-like Mr. Hyde who symbolizes Jekyll's repressed sexuality have been finally replaced by a new idea more in tune with the rise of the figure of the drag queen in the 1990s: the monster hiding inside every Jekyll is the almost parodic version of the ultra-feminine sexual woman idolised by the transvestites and the transsexuals.

The adaptation of Stevenson's novella that corresponds to the cycle of new Gothic films together with *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* is Stephen Frears' *Mary Reilly* (1995), a film that received rather unenthusiastic reviews. The new film version, which remained for more than a year and a half on the editing table while a decision was made about an appropriate ending, does not return to Stevenson's original but to the novel by Valerie Martin which reinterprets the story of Dr. Jekyll from the point of view of his maid Mary Reilly in a plot recalling "Beauty and the Beast". Six different ends were written by screen writer Christopher Hampton, none of which was found satisfactory by the studio, Columbia Tri-Star, for the type of widely appealing film they have in mind (Fowler, 1995). This is not surprising, considering the objections that the end of Valerie Martin's novel may rise on all fronts. The problem is that the novel is based on a romanticized idea of the relationship between masters and servants that clashes badly with Mary's own harsh life. How Mary's devotion for her workaholic master remains untouched despite the drudgery of the work she does in his household is never justified by Valerie Martin, except, perhaps, with the idea that Mary has become a masochist as a consequence of the ill-treatment she suffered at her father's hands. Jekyll and Mary's relationship is exploitative in more than just one sense, for he does not hesitate to use her loyalty to his own advantage, sending Mary on errands to cover up the crimes Hyde has committed. If something about Mary attracts Jekyll at all, this is her ability to unwittingly shed a new light thanks to her common sense on the cryptic thoughts about the nature of evil and the fear of oneself that he expresses to her. Yet since they always talk at cross purposes and since Jekyll never sees in her anything but a specially loyal servant, Mary's love for him seems groundless and, what is even worse, a masochistic fantasy. Only masochistic sentimentalism explains that when she finally realizes that the hideous Hyde is also her beloved Jekyll, she still goes on loving her master, despite the fact that he has never returned her love; when his dead body is found she sacrifices her reputation by letting herself be found clinging to him as a

symbolic form of establishing her undying devotion for him and of vindicating his innocence—even though he has not asked her to do so.

Frears' film is an excellent adaptation of the novel though not an outstanding film. Julia Roberts, who plays the role of Mary Reilly gives credibility to Mary's passion for her master; the actress strikes a very adequate balance towards Mary's natural shyness and meekness and her gradual accommodation to the dark impulses she discovers in her own soul. Frears chose to emphasize Mary's attraction for Mr. Hyde rather than faithfully respect Mary's protectiveness towards the fallen Dr. Jekyll as portrayed in the original story. This was particularly emphasized by a scene missing in the novel in which Mary has an erotic dream in which Hyde rapes her. The film becomes thus a study of woman's dual nature and ends, fittingly, with Mary's witnessing the final transformation of Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde and deciding to remain with him, and not with Jekyll as happens in the novel, until his dead body is found. The twin role of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is played by John Malkovich, who had previously worked with Frears in *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988), a film in which he played the role of the seducer Valmont. Malkovich plays Hyde as a more vicious Valmont so that there is an obvious sexual tension between him and Mary lacking in the novel; in contrast, his Dr. Jekyll is a rather more unsympathetic character than in previous screen adaptations or in Martin's novel, which contributes little to an understanding of Mary's original attraction for him. All in all, Frears' film can be said to be artistically honest but disappointing. *Mary Reilly* makes the best of a novel which it itself a failed attempt at adding a new angle to Stevenson's classic but because its original source is not convincing, the film itself fails. Martin's novel and Frears' adaptation seemingly indicate that the cycle of adaptations of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* cannot progress further. Even the special effects used to visualize Jekyll's metamorphosis are a dead end, not because they are of poor quality but, paradoxically, because they are excellent: for the time being, it seems impossible to produce a better representation of the transformation.

Further screen adaptations of Stevenson's own story are unlikely to appear in the next decade, but this does not mean that the theme of the man in constant struggle with an irrepressible alter ego who threatens to take over has lost its appeal. Many other twentieth-century narratives recall the story of Jekyll and Hyde: many heroes of comic such as Superman and Batman possess a dual personality which is by no means conflict-free despite not being as problematic as that of Stevenson's hero. Most serial killers of fiction respond to the stereotype of the perfectly respectable next-door neighbour whose darker side only surfaces with his criminal misdeeds. I would like to turn now to two recent films that are indirectly inspired by Stevenson's story and that might furnish some clues as to the directions that the topic of man's split personality might take in the future.

Jerry Lewis' parody of Jekyll and Hyde *The Nutty Professor* (1963) is the precedent of one of the most inspired comedies based on this classic of Gothic horror, Charles Russell's *The Mask* (1994), whose star role was interpreted by the comedian hailed as Lewis' successor, Jim Carrey. In this film Jekyll's Victorian earnestness, which is still romanticised in *Mary Reilly*, becomes the object of an affectionate, carnivalesque parody: Stanley Ipkiss, a not too bright bank clerk who represents the American Everyman, is transformed into his unruly alter ego, a living green-faced cartoon of contagious energy, when he comes across an ancient mask belonging to the lost cult of a minor god of mischief. Rather than spread corruption around him as Hyde does, Ipkiss' rowdy new persona acts like a boisterous Batman, punishing the villains

with bizarre tactics and finally winning the girl. In *The Mask* she is still the 'bad' girl of previous screen versions of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, though she is simply a gangster's moll rather than a prostitute; yet she assumes in the end an active role that helps save Ipkiss' life and her own. The vindication of Everyman is finally ratified precisely by her choosing to stay with the dull Ipkiss rather than with his farcical alter ego, who is, like Hyde, a monster. In this version, therefore, woman no longer connotes the repressed sexuality from which Hyde emerges; on the contrary, her love liberates Ipkiss/Jekyll from the need to wear a mask and helps him achieve a new harmony.

A similar vindication of Everyman takes place in another postmodernist adaptation of the paradigmatic book by H.G. Wells, *The Invisible Man* (1897), which is no doubt also derived from Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*. Like *The Mask*, which is based on a comic, John Carpenter's *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* (1992) is not directly based on the original literary source but on an intermediate text, in this case, the 1987 novel by H.F. Saint of the same title; however, the popular 1933 film by James Whale is also a fundamental intertext of Carpenter's film. In Whale's film, Jack Griffin is an ambitious scientist, not unlike Jekyll, who aspires to dominate the world thanks to a drug that makes him invisible; Griffin is not monstrous by virtue of his invisibility but because he is a portrait of the scientist as the fascist dictator on the rise, a figure of horrific overtones given the historical background contemporary to the making of the film in the 1930s. This monster of power, portrayed as an unsympathetic character unlike other monsters such as Jekyll or Frankenstein in the 1930s films, is nonetheless pardoned for his sins when he confesses to his girlfriend Flora—a figure descended from Mary Shelley's Elizabeth—his failure and his mistake in meddling with nature.

In contrast to the angry scientist who hungers for power in Whale's film, Carpenter's protagonist, Nick Holloway, is, as his name indicates, a hollow non-entity. Like Ipkiss, he chances upon his misfortune by accident, though in his case the accident is caused by his own clumsiness. Unlike his 1930s predecessor, the invisible man of the 1990s finds no positive use for his invisibility; on the contrary, his isolation and the relentless persecution of a mad government agent, David Jenkins, who wants to turn the invisible Holloway into the ultimate spy are the negative consequences of his transformation. Jenkins a monstrous torturer and killer, tries to involve Nick in a Faustian pact, having realized that since dull Nick was already invisible in a social sense his invisibility as a spy is doubly guaranteed by his new condition. In the end, Holloway frustrates Jenkins' plans and avoids the threat of becoming a freak exploited by the media, choosing the ideal, anonymous, happy life with his supportive girlfriend Alice.

Memoirs of an Invisible Man offers like *The Mask* a parodic revision of the original text, transposed from the mock Gothic Europe of the 1930s films to America in the 1990s, with protagonists that reject the uniqueness of the European romantic monster to enjoy a new existence as the all-American Everyman. Monstrosity is for them an accident brought about by the chaotic nature of life whose only real benefit is that it allows them to meet the woman of their dreams, a woman who responds with love for the man rather than love for the monster. They certainly parody the seriousness of the original European Gothic text, but their carnivalesque, irreverent attitude cannot conceal the fear these comedies express. While Jekyll condemns himself to die in his struggle to control his body, paying thus a price for having transgressed the limits of forbidden knowledge like Frankenstein, Ipkiss and Holloway are anti-romantic heroes born from a very different, typically American context defined by the fear that a fortuitous accident may deprive the individual of the control over his or her own body and turn him into a monstrous Other, a freak rejected by society.

As the different American films based on *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* show, Britain and America understand the monster differently. The British romantic monster is simultaneously admired and mocked by American film, which tends to trivialise him. There seems to be a basic incompatibility between the British romantic spirit that gave birth to *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *Mr. Hyde* and the American obsession for attaining a stable sense of normality which excludes all deviant monstrosity. For America, the monster is, basically, the freak, the outsider, while for Britain the monster is the dark other (maybe the dark brother) always close to us. This discrepancy between America and Britain—or perhaps Europe in general—is best dramatized in Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands*, a film in which one of *Frankenstein's* monster's descendant, Edward, finally renounces the possibility of becoming a suburban American citizen, choosing instead a life of happy isolation in the realm of the imaginary.

The wave of mainstream adaptations of the British classics of horror produced in recent years is now over. Since these films have not succeeded as was expected, and since their shortcomings have stressed the limits of the cycle of adaptations of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, it is unlikely that other similar high-budget adaptations are to be undertaken by Hollywood in the following decade. The next logical step is the adaptation of other works inspired more or less directly by the original British classics, though the ambiguous critical status of Neil Jordan's adaptation of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, a novel linked to *Dracula*, seemingly suggests that the best or the most innovative adaptations will be based on remote imitations, as was the case in *The Mask*. On the other hand, these adaptations have also disclosed that, unlike what was previously thought, making a good horror film is not an easy task: the more or less relative failure of reputed mainstream directors such as Francis Ford Coppola, Kenneth Branagh, Stephen Frears and Neil Jordan to deal with horror and the monster proves that, in any case, neither parody nor homage to the literary sources are the right ingredients to enliven the new Gothic films. New subjects are needed and also a much closer look at the so far underrated work of genre film directors.

2.3. New Paradigms of Monstrosity: The Problematic of Mythmaking in the Era of Commercial Culture

2.3.1. Serialisation and the limits of Folklorisation

Creating a new monster that can join the select circle of those who have gained universal fame as myths is by no means easy. In general, the monsters of the contemporary novel live in the shadow of contemporary film and the cases in which a writer is acknowledged as, at least, the co-creator of the new myth are rare: the name of Michael Crichton is familiar to many as the author of *Jurassic Park*, but fewer people could name Thomas Harris as the creator of Hannibal Lecter. Novels about monstrosity which have not been adapted exist for film-goers in a limbo also ignored by the media and advertising, inhabited by those who enjoy reading (fewer and fewer in relative if not in absolute numbers) and who often hope to see their favourite novels some time on the screen.

The domain of the monstrous in the novel is visited with frequency by Hollywood executives looking for classics or for new profitable properties on the

evidence of sales figures. Nevertheless, despite the generalised impression that the new Hollywood blockbusters—big-budget spectacular films sold to most countries in the world and often centering on a monster—are made according to a formula that guarantees success, the fact is that there is no such formula, as *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* has proved. The main Hollywood studios rely on the adaptations of novels, comics, video-games, and TV series on a trial by error basis in their constant search for the monster to be the star of films that will generate with its concomitant media exposure “a cultural commodity that might be regenerated in any number of media forms” (Schatz, 1993: 29). As Thomas Schatz adds, the forms can be certainly varied, and may include pop music, theme park rides, comic book, novelizations, and even arcade games: “*Hook and Terminator 2*”, he notes, “... were released simultaneously as movies and video games” (ibid.: 29). Another form of exploiting the monster as commodity is the sequel and even the serialisation, in two senses: independent companies who have produced an unexpected box-office hit—such as New Line and the original *Nightmare on Elm Street*—may grow by producing new sequels which attract costumers for the new films and the attached merchandising but also, retrospectively, for the first films of the series through video-rental outlets. In other cases, major Hollywood studios may consolidate the success of independent monster films either by distributing or producing the sequels. As James Twitchell (op. cit.: 56) observes, rather caustically “films are made to imitate films that made money”; in this sense, as he adds, “a clone is as good as a sequel”.

Obviously, not only films and novels dealing with monsters have inspired sequels or series, yet it can be said that most films and novels about monstrosity have been the source of further films and novels. Popularity—hence potential profits—is clearly to be considered a major factor in accounting for the repetition of well-known plots with well-known characters in film, though there seem to be other factors at work, especially as far as literature is concerned. One of these is that while mainstream novels tend to be in the 1980s and 1990s rather short and are hardly ever developed in a sequel and much less throughout several volumes, genre fiction—fantasy above all in its widest sense—is often published in trilogies or series, narrating a story of confrontations between a hero/ine and a monster in hundreds of pages. To name but a few Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* is completed by *Speaker for the Dead* and *Xenocide*, Olivia Butler's *Dawn* by *Wild Seed* and *Adulthood Rites*, Robert Holdstock's *Mythago Wood* by *Lavondyss* and *The Bone Forest*. Series are less common, though Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* series, running now to nineteen volumes, proves that there are exceptions. In general, these second and third volumes cannot be called sequels, as they are in most cases simply parts in which very long novels are divided. They repeat, somehow, the format of the three-volume Victorian novel and are clearly aimed at consolidating the potential readership of a given writer, as readers will buy the next instalment in the series as soon as it is published and not on account of the reviews.

The situation in the monster film is different. Only exceptionally are films planned in sets of two or three: George Lucas's trilogy *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Return of the Jedi* is one such exception. The most current formula is producing a sequel only if the original film is successful. Thus, even though there are properly speaking no trilogies in film, many monster films generate one or two sequels—*Alien* (*Aliens*, *Alien*³), *Hellraiser* (*Hellbound*, *Hellraiser III*), *Batman* (*Batman Returns*, *Batman Forever*)—but find it very difficult to keep the interest of the public alive from the third sequel onwards, which is usually released only through home video or transformed into a TV series—or both. This last case corresponds, for instance, to *Robocop*. *Robocop 4* and *Robocop 5*, which have been released for video rental but are,

in fact, episodes of the Canadian television series first screened in 1994, only two years after the release of *Robocop 3*.

How can the success of the *Friday the Thirteenth* (nine films) and the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series (seven films) be explained against this background of endless repetition of the same plot and why are the clones in these series as good—or better—for the public than the original film? No doubt sequels and serialisations as well as cycles of adaptations are typical of the view of culture as a commodity in Western societies, but the only way to explain why low-budget films may originate long series, while important Hollywood studios fail to produce successful new adaptations is the high degree of openness and tolerance the audience has towards the former in comparison to the latter. Low-budget horror films in which the film director as ‘author’ recedes to the background but in which a number of features recognisable from other monster films are foregrounded are closer to the world of the folk tale rather than to the world of art and function according to a different code:

Students of folklore or early literature recognize in horror the hallmarks of oral narrative: the free exchange of themes and motifs, the archetypal characters and situations, the accumulation of sequels, remakes, imitations. This is a field in which there is in some sense no original, no real or right text, but only variants; a world in which, therefore, the meaning of the individual example lies outside itself. The ‘art’ of the horror film, like the ‘art’ of pornography, is to a very large extent the art of rendition or performance, and it is understood as such by the competent audience. (Clover, 1993: 10)

This means that there is necessarily a difference between the way in which artistic authorship is understood in sequels or new adaptations of very well-known stories about monstrosity. Novels—both mainstream and genre fiction—are read as the products of a single artist and are, therefore, closed to the process of folklorisation (or appropriation) that only begins with an adaptation to another medium, typically film. Despite novels such as Valerie Martin’s *Mary Reilly*, nobody claims that s/he could write *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* or, for that matter, *Jurassic Park* or *The Silence of the Lambs*, better than the original authors—hence, the sequels, if there are any, are also written by the same authors (the case of Crichton’s *Lost Eden*) as their names are essential to sell the books. In contrast, the collaborative nature of film (the fact that the supposed ‘author’ is in fact surrounded by a crew of relatively anonymous people), the distance from the original text through the many adaptations, the respect (or lack of respect) for the expectations of the public and the claims made a priori about the quality of the film condition the reception of the sequels.

Before, for instance, *Freddy’s Dead: The Final Nightmare*, the sixth episode of *Nightmare on Elm Street*, the attitude of the spectator is less critical because, first, a film of this type makes no particular claims about being art, the creation of a quality film director, or an innovating film, nor does it try to distort the motifs introduced in the original. A displeased spectator can just wait for sequel number seven or eight or see again his or her favourite episode, while a vague ‘they’ are blamed for their inability to produce a better film—though this particular film can be regarded as a remarkable contribution to the series. In contrast, a big-budget film like *Batman Forever*, which has been extensively publicised, has a cast of big stars, a reputed director and producer but fails to accomplish the expectations of its spectators because it is out of tune with the comics and the first two films may put many viewers off the next sequel. Furthermore, it

may produce the impression that Hollywood is purposefully disregarding what people want to be told and, what is more important, what people could tell had they the means. Since the audience for the sequel is guaranteed by the advertising, less effort goes into the writing of the screenplay beginning by considering who is the best choice of screen writer. Rather than relying on a valid formula for a whole genre, screen writers rely on motifs borrowed from other successful films, so that, ultimately, all the screenplays give a strong impression of *déjà vu*, not because they have a common source but because they mirror each other.

The spectator attracted by the promise of original visualization shown in the trailer and by the presence of famed actors in the main roles may certainly feel frustrated and even angry at the film not for what it is, but for it could have been had more attention been paid to the story; this considering not only the spectacular technological means available to make the film but also the fact that many of those sitting in the dark of the cinema could have written better screenplays because many of them are more familiar with the motifs of the original texts, films or novels. As John Ellis (1992: 86) observes:

Dislike of a film is usually very aggressive ... A film which fails for a spectator usually fails because it does not provide the necessary play with phantasies, and the final closing accomplishment of a position of mastery and knowledge. The anxiety produced in the expectation of its satisfaction is not dissipated; it returns as a kind of aggression.

There is an illusion of accessibility—of complicity—in the case of successful series of low-budget horror films based on the closeness between audience and filmmakers (the sharing of the folk motifs, so to speak, informed by the phenomenon of fandom) that cannot be kept with expensive sequels or new adaptations which fail to make the most of the motifs already integrated in the contemporary ‘folklore’ about monstrosity circulating in the novel, comics and other narrative media, such as television.

One of the few artists generating new monsters for the new times in novels and films is the British writer and film director Clive Barker, whose main contribution to the new mythology of monstrosity are the demoniac Cenobites. They first appeared in Barker’s novella *The Hellbound Heart* (1986) whose screen version, *Hellraiser* (1987), was directed by Barker himself. With *Hellraiser*, Barker gave himself the chance to visualize his own literary work on the screen and to modify it in significant ways. This film has been followed, so far, by two sequels, *Hellraiser II: Hellbound* (1988) and *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth* (1992), in which Barker has been the executive producer, and by the Marvel-Epic comic (1991). In addition, one of Barker’s short stories, “The Forbidden”, has been adapted for the screen by Bernard Rose as *Candyman* (1992), a remarkable horror film that has originated a sequel, *Candyman 2* (1995), aimed at consolidating the popularity of the eponymous monster who has been even regarded as a possible replacement for Freddy Krueger as the bogeyman of the 1990s. The paradox of Barker’s case is that even though the films in which the Cenobites appear are far inferior to his novels (especially *Imajica*) and short stories, his fame among horror fans is based on these very popular yet shallow monsters that he chose to transfer onto the screen rather than on the more complex monsters of his literary work.

The motifs that bind the *Hellraiser* series—the search for transcendence through pain and woman’s ability to restore the monstrous Cenobite to his or her lost human form through compassion—appear mixed with motifs that come from *Frankenstein* (the

fragmented body), *Dracula* (the vampirising of the victims in order to rebuild the fragmented body), *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (the demonic Pinhead's split persona) and even from *Faust* (the pact with the demons that is not honoured). However, the potential of the rich mixture of themes to generate new directions in the construction of monstrosity in the 1980s and 1990s has been eclipsed by the series' main asset, namely, the original iconography of the neo-Gothic Cenobites with their leather clothes, grotesque faces, and open wounds, especially of their leader Pinhead. The third episode, for instance, fails to exploit the idea that Pinhead is actually a fallen human being, a British military officer named Spencer, who prefers to enter the realm of supernatural suffering as a demon rather than to endure life after the experience of only too human suffering in the trenches during World War I. Instead of exploiting this topic, much is made of the special effects showing how Pinhead fragments his victims' bodies as his own was fragmented.

The case of the *Hellraiser* series is, thus, typical. In short, sequels are produced until the iconographical appeal of the screen monster wears out, on the wrong assumption that the spectacular body of the monster suffices to sustain the interest of the spectator. This is obviously not the case, as the progressive loss of quality of most sequels show. The paradox is that there are sufficient innovating angles in most sequels to invigorate the budding mythical monster but since the talent of contemporary filmmaking seems to lie on the side of visualization rather than narration these motifs remain underexploited. On the other hand, while people like Barker himself, insist on making safe bets by reproducing the success of films in which the audience saw if not a great quality at least a potential for new paradigms of monstrosity, many of the most exceptional novels about monstrosity written in the 1980s and 1990s remain unadapted, including those written by people like Barker who could find the means to adapt them.

The conclusion is that the restricted ownership of the means to produce and distribute this type of 'folk tale' films is resulting in a progressive stagnation of the narratives about monstrosity in film. This decline is resented by audiences who are, unlike what is usually thought, used to reading long, complex printed texts (novels but also comics) which are visually and thematically appealing and who expect at least the same from films. The mechanism of film adaptation and serialisation actually restricts the participation of the best potential storytellers, those who in the past made their anonymous contributions to fairy tales, folk tales and legends told in the dark around the fire, who are now turned into apparently passive, more often dissatisfied, consumers. What explains the difference between the dynamic construction of the monster in the field of the literary—either mainstream or genre fiction—and the slow response of film to that diversity is, therefore, a series of factors: firstly, the great investment needed to make a film—even a low-budget one—in comparison to the cost of writing and publishing a book limits the number of filmmakers or screen writers who could offer new angles on monstrosity; secondly, the foregrounding of the visualization of the monster at the expense of the narrative which quickly exhausts the appeal of the monster in sequels and series is the cause and the effect of a growing disregard in Hollywood for (screen) writing, and thirdly, filmmakers seem to base their approach to the monster in film on the basis of other films but are, in general, bad readers of printed fiction, whereas writers have in general assimilated well what the best films can offer in terms of visualization as far as the construction of the monster is concerned. Perhaps with the expansion of Internet and with the immediate access of film producers to part of the potential audience, a new, more closer collaboration between those who make films and those who consume them will take place.

2.3.2. The Adaptation of Cult Novels and the Angry Reader

So far, I have discussed the cycles of adaptations of the classics of Gothic horror of the nineteenth century until our days and the mechanism by which film series try to develop new paradigmatic monsters. I should like to turn now to the adaptation of contemporary cult novels dealing with monstrosity never transferred before to the screen and that have also failed to satisfy the readers of the original novels, for different reasons. David Lynch's *Dune* (1984), David Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* (1992) and Neil Jordan's *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), respectively based on cult novels by Frank Herbert (1965), William Burroughs (1959) and Anne Rice (1976), are adaptations that share the particularity of having been scripted by the film director himself and that could also be said to belong to the wave of new Gothic films about monstrosity made by reputable film directors. Unlike *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, which were supposed to attract both the readers of the original novels and those familiar with the film versions, the three films by Lynch, Cronenberg and Jordan depended for their success mainly on the readers' familiarity with the novel and even on the approval of the author. *Dune* and *Interview with the Vampire* are directly comparable because both Lynch and Jordan accepted the commission to direct an adaptation aimed at attracting a large audience in which their own personal point of view was a secondary concern, while Cronenberg's film is actually a personal project made without any expectation of making a profit. Needless to say, his is the most idiosyncratic of these three adaptations and the one that responds best to the nature of the original text precisely because of the complete impossibility of being faithful to the complex original text.

"The sheer size of *Dune's* literary cult", Ed Sikov writes (1995:75), "meant that if the core audience rejected the film it couldn't possibly make its money back". Since Lynch's meticulous but unemotional visualization of *Dune* did displease its core audience (those familiar with the novel) the film became, as Sikov adds, "a gargantuan flop". This could not be redressed by the spectators unfamiliar with the novel, who could not digest the film's rather cryptic summary of events occupying many pages in the novel. Lynch's film, produced by Dino de Laurentiis as an expensive blockbuster targeting a large audience that could ensure the production of further sequels based on Herbert's series of *Dune* novels (something it failed to do), actually caused the ruin of the producer and is regarded now as a rarity in Lynch's otherwise successful career. In retrospect, it seems apparent that Lynch made the common mistake of relying on spectacular visualization to compensate for the impossibility of making sense of the novel's plot in a two hour film yet, it is also evident now that the failure of the film was due to Lynch's excessive adherence to the literary text. Thus, rather than an adaptation, Lynch's *Dune* can be said to be a good illustration of Herbert's *Dune*.

The Naked Lunch was made mainly because Cronenberg wanted to experiment how far an adaptation could go, especially when the original literary text seemed unfilmable. According to Cronenberg himself, his script counted with Burroughs' blessing, himself an avowed admirer of Cronenberg's work, which allowed the latter to partially disregard the opinion of the film's potential core audience and concentrate on laying siege to Burroughs' immensely complex and challenging work (Rodley, 1992: 157- 172). The adaptation of *The Naked Lunch* was interpreted by Cronenberg with a metaphor taken from one of his most successful films, *The Fly*: instead of transferring the book intact onto the screen just as Seth Brundle tries to transfer himself from one place to another through teletransportation, Cronenberg imagined his adaptation as the

‘monstrous’ fusion between Burroughs’ literary work and his own. The comparison of his adaptation with *The Fly* in which Seth is fused accidentally with a fly and turned into a monster, suggests that Cronenberg was aware of the risk of begetting a monster—rather than a monster film—and that he approached the film with a certain tongue-in-cheek attitude in complicity with Burroughs himself. The result is a film that can be hardly classified as a successful or a failed adaptation because it is in itself one more of Cronenberg’s bizarre discussions of monstrosity rather than an adaptation or even an illustration of Burroughs’ text. The question this film begs is why so much effort—especially as far as the iconography of the monsters in the film is concerned—goes into the production of a film doomed to fail. An appropriate answer could be that Cronenberg has access to the means to satisfy his personal need to visualize a favourite book and transmit his personal view of it, while most readers who would like to do the same simply have no choice in the matter.

The case of *Interview with the Vampire* is different, if only because the screen adaptation has drawn crowds to the cinemas unlike *Dune* or *The Naked Lunch*. Neil Jordan, who had already worked on an adaptation of a literary work in collaboration with the author—*The Company of Wolves*, based on a short story by Angela Carter, who wrote the script with Jordan—found his collaboration with authoress Anne Rice less gratifying. He completely rewrote the script that she had written herself and for that reason or because she felt the natural anxiety felt by an author whose work no longer depends solely on her, she objected to the project on all fronts, especially on the grounds of the alleged miscasting of Tom Cruise as her hero, or rather, anti-hero, the vampire Lestat. After a very active campaign on her side to sink the film before it was even released, she suddenly recanted and published an ad in the Hollywood trade papers, not only accepting the film but commending it and praising, above all, Tom Cruise’s performance as Lestat (Retna: 1995). The fact that the ad was later used by the studio that made the film, Warner, suggested to the suspicious-minded that David Geffen, the film producer, had made Rice see the advantages for all of the film becoming a big hit: there were even rumours that Geffen himself had generously funded Rice’s expensive ad. *Interview with the Vampire* is the first of a series of four novels—the others are *The Vampire Lestat*, *The Tale of the Body Thief* and *Queen of the Night*—that had sold millions before Jordan’s film but whose sales rocketed after its release. There is then an enormous potential business in the exploitation of the three sequels to the original novel that Rice had jeopardised with her initial negative attitude towards Jordan’s film. Presumably, the core audience composed of Rice’s admirers would have followed the writer rather than the film director and these were the target of her own ad.

However, there are important traces of the initial disagreement between Rice and Jordan in the film, which can be attributed to the latter’s attempts to undermine the seriousness of Rice’s treatment of the vampire with touches of carnivalesque horror. Lestat’s reprimand to the naughty vampire child Claudia, prompted by her bringing ‘work’ (victims) home, or the easy trick played by Jordan in the final scene when Lestat suddenly appears in the interviewer’s car though Lestat was supposed to be dying or already dead, subtly mock the novel. Yet, it is hard to ascribe Jordan’s ambiguous treatment of Rice’s novel to a single cause without fathoming first the actual reasons why Rice’s screenplay was rejected and rewritten. My suggestion is that Jordan missed in Rice’s circumspect vampire tale the subversiveness that Angela Carter brought into their collaboration in the much more accomplished *The Company of Wolves*, a much more modest film in financial terms that nevertheless introduced a breath of fresh air into the then stale atmosphere of the werewolf film. The consequences of Rice’s

argumentation through her character Louis—namely, that once the belief in the damnation of the immortal soul is lost, there's no tragic view of life for those alive or undead—are self-defeating: the vampire appears to live in a world as trivial as ours, what makes him different is, simply, his feeding habits. Only irony and a sick sense of humour can make him or her appealing, hence the divergence between Jordan's wry approach and Rice's earnestness.

Interestingly, Brett Easton Ellis makes the point in "The Secrets of Summer", a short story from his book *The Informers*, which narrates the lives of a group of contemporary vampires living in LA who are indistinguishable from the crowd of vapid New York yuppies portrayed in *American Psycho*. Jamie, the protagonist, is actually very similar to the materialistic, greedy, brutal Lestat. Both Ellis and Jordan insist in the banality of the vampire in secular times when, if the pun may be excused, the salvation of man's immortal soul is not the issue at stake. Yet, neither Jordan nor Ellis introduce into the world of the contemporary vampire the issue of AIDS. Now that Dracula has even appeared in a Japanese ad to counsel audiences on how to prevent AIDS from spreading, the vampire seems to have gone to a domain beyond parody, a yet uncharted mythical territory. As I have noted, with the rise of genetic engineering Frankenstein's monster has been transformed into a new paradigmatic monster, the replicant of *Blade Runner*. I have also argued that, being a creature born of superstition, the vampire may survive unharmed by changing scientific paradigms in the domain of the supernatural. Even at the risk of contradicting myself, it must be noted that the AIDS epidemic should presumably change the status of the vampire. Yet the AIDS epidemic has not so far affected the figure of the vampire—perhaps because the image of a vampire demanding a blood test would be a cruel joke not on the vampire but on those who suffer from AIDS. However, even though the mention of AIDS is avoided in recent films and books about vampires (Coppola denied that the reference to syphilis in his film had anything to do with AIDS), the situation cannot be sustained for long. Surely, after the anti-AIDS campaigns, most people in the audience and most readers will relate blood to disease and see in the vampire something else—possibly a doomed victim rather than a symbol of plague itself in the style of *Nosferatu*. How the vampire novel and the vampire film will tackle the new situation still remains to be seen.

2.3.3. Between the BBC and Hollywood: Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*

The peculiar case of the adaptation of Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983) for British TV and American film can illustrate a point I have not discussed yet: whether TV offers any advantage over film regarding the adaptation of novels in general and in particular of novels about monstrosity. The BBC series directed by Philip Saville in 1986 and Susan Seidelman's *She-Devil* (1989) differ enormously, not only because of the nature of the respective narrative medium but also because of the different attitudes towards adaptation in the UK and the USA. An obvious point that is hardly ever discussed is why film producers insist on adapting novels that must be mercilessly compressed by the screen writers when short stories could be better adapted. In the case of Weldon's novel, the six episode series has the obvious advantage of allowing the parodic content of the original novel unfold at more or less the same pace a reader would follow, while Seidelman's film must necessarily compress many points.

The British series respects with almost complete faithfulness Weldon's bitter sarcasm while the American film tones it down to make it the subject of a gentle comedy rather than of a grotesque satire. Weldon's novel ultimately directs its sarcasm against men: what men want, the novel suggests, is the sexy doll first represented by Mary Fisher and later by Ruth, the ugly wife of Fisher's lover, in her new persona. Men's demands force women to impossible mental and physical transformations to gain power over them, such as the one undergone by Ruth. However, the gap in Weldon's novel's fabric, or the main irony, depending on the perspective, is that if men are pathetic simpletons like Bobo, Ruth's husband, Ruth's re-creation of herself as the "impossible male fantasy made flesh" (p. 224) seems nothing but formidably masochistic self-indulgence. The parody is, then, seemingly directed against women who allow men to classify them as monsters or goddesses according to their bodies, and who transform themselves nonetheless into new monsters in an effort to become men's version of the goddess.

Here is the point at which Susan Seidelman differs from Weldon's original to offer a more feminist reading: Ruth (played by TV comedienne Roseanne) never becomes Mary (played by Meryl Streep) because her transformation is internal and not external. She behaves like the woman she thinks she is and not like the woman her husband Bobo sees in her because of her unattractive body. In Seidelman's version, Ruth frees herself and is later generous enough to free Mary from her stereotyped role as a pretty, young, voraciously sexy romance writer to help her to become a more mature writer. The idea of transformation is keyed to appeal to the very American passion for self-made, personal success: Ruth becomes a successful business woman running a female employment agency and Mary becomes a 'serious writer', abandoning romance fiction for the postmodernist autobiographical novel. In any case, Seidelman's decision not to transform Ruth into Mary is not dependent on the physical appearance of either Roseanne or Meryl Streep, as there are special effect techniques—both make-up and computer morphing—sufficiently developed so as to permit a credible visualization of the transformation. In the BBC series this was achieved with a deft use of make-up.

The paradox is that in Seidelman's version the more feminist reading softens too much Weldon's mockery of women's efforts to be other than themselves through fashion and the use of cosmetics and plastic surgery. There is nothing in the film as horrifying as the parallel process by which Ruth's enormous will power carries her through the painful process of her physical metamorphosis while her rival suffers a more horrific transformation as her body is destroyed by a cancer that Ruth's magic has provoked. Indeed, not even the BBC series portrayed this parallel process entire, making Mary die in a storm raised by Ruth. Instead, Seidelman offers in the initial scenes set in the beauty parlour a brief reflection on the false promises of cosmetics advertising: Ruth's physical transformation is limited and lasts only for as long as her make-up lasts. In contrast, in Weldon's novel Ruth's transformation is prompted by a mixture of jealousy and rage: by taking Ruth's husband as her lover, Mary indirectly forces the giantess Ruth to face herself and to consider the ways in which she can cease being a powerless freak to become a powerful monster. As Ruth sheds pieces of her body that do not fit into the image she covets, revenge loses its edge and the tale becomes one of how Ruth's new moral monstrosity grows out of her determination to recreate herself and vampirise Mary's body and life. Yet, unlike other women manufactured by men in fiction, Ruth is always in control of her transformation. She chooses her own Frankenstein, Dr. Black, the surgeon who reshapes her body, and makes him the first to fall in love with her new image, which for her, is enough prove of her newly conquered

power over men. Obviously, the irony of Weldon's novel, which Seidelman's film misses completely, is that as Ruth's monstrous exterior disappears, the monster inside her grows, so that by the end of the novel the new Ruth, far from being Seidelman's generous rescuer of women like Mary, has become a powerful, dangerous woman.

The bonding of Mary and Ruth through Bobo as imagined by Fay Weldon bears striking parallels to the triangle formed by the actress Madeline, her husband Ernest (a plastic surgeon) and his ex-fiancée the writer Helen in Robert Zemeckis' *Death Becomes Her* (1992). This film is even a much blacker comedy than Weldon's novel. As happens in Weldon's novel, Ernest is the excuse for the two women to engage in an open competition on the understanding that he will finally choose the one with the most attractive body. The issue of the film is not why a woman would go to the extreme of literally becoming another woman in order to win her husband back—which is the story Weldon narrates tongue-in-cheek—but how far a woman can go out of jealousy for a rival who always looks young and attractive. In fact, Hel's eternal youth is, as Mad discovers for her own benefit, the effect of a magic beverage but it entails a very high price: death. Mad and Hel discover that being undead, far from guaranteeing their everlasting beauty, has an unpleasant side effect, the constant need for maintenance of their crumbling bodies for which they need Ernest's help, who soon wearies of their demands.

Instead of avoiding the detailed visualization of the extreme transformation of woman's body as was done in the film adaptation of Fay Weldon's novel, Zemeckis pioneered in *Death Becomes Her* the use of the sophisticated infographics later used in *The Mask* to represent the human body as a plastic substance that can be reshaped at will. The resilient bodies of Mad and Hel are the farcical, carnivalesque response to the 1980s and 1990s cult of the body, especially to the cult of the eternally young body and the rejection of natural ageing. The very availability of infographics is what has allowed Zemeckis and his screenplay writers Martin Donovan and Martin Koepp to go much further than Weldon in the parodic treatment of the subject of the woman who becomes a monster in an effort to be attractive. In this sense, *Death Becomes Her* can be regarded as the best adaptation (or fractal forgery) of Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, even though it is not in fact directly related to it.

2.3.4. From the Screen to the Page: The Novelization

After having reviewed the ways in which the monster has been transferred from the printed page onto the screen, I should now like to turn to the reverse process: the novelization. The novels based on films can be divided into three types: firstly, new stories based on characters created for films (which technically are not novelizations), novelizations of original screenplays and novelizations of adapted screenplays. The novels based on the *Alien* trilogy and the two *Predator* films, which are jointly published by 20th Century Fox and the comics publishing house Dark Horse, are a popular instance of the independent novel based on the characters rather than the original films' plot. The novelizations of original screenplays have resulted in novels such as Graham Greene's *The Third Man*, based on his own script for Orson Welles' film, and Arthur C. Clarke's *2001*, based on the screenplay he wrote with Stanley Kubrick, which was in fact an adaptation of Clarke's short story "The Sentinel".

The novelizations of adapted screenplays have resulted in products as singular as the tie-ins of Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley Frankenstein* and Francis Ford Coppola's

Bram Stoker's Dracula. A film-goer visiting the local book shop is offered the choice of buying Mary Shelley's and Bram Stoker's classic novels in an edition specially published to tie in with the film release or the novelizations, which, despite bearing the name of Shelley and Stoker in their very titles, have been written by others. An uninformed book buyer may no doubt mistake one for the other, especially because both the novelizations and the novels' new editions are illustrated with stills from the films. A better informed book buyer may simply wonder who needs the novelization when the literary original is available. From the point of view of the studios, the sales of the novelizations are more profitable than the sales of the original novel simply because studios can always participate in deals involving the former but not the latter. Yet there are apparently other reasons for publishing novelizations which have to do with the decreasing standards of functional literacy. Joy Chamberlain, editor of Voyager Books, a publishing house specialised in novelizations, argues that the novelizations solve the problems a contemporary reader faces when reading the classic novels. "With the classic novels", Chamberlain notes, "there often seems to be a lack of syntax because it's from an older age" (Westbrook, 1996). According to her, the novelization "takes care" of the problem.

In the cases of Branagh's *Frankenstein* and Coppola's *Dracula* there were obvious economic advantages in the novelization: firstly, the novels are free of copyright; secondly, being dead, the original authors could not object to the re-writing of their texts. If somebody, say a scholar or a fan, objected on their behalf, they could always be told that the novelization is not actually a re-writing of the original novel but of the film based on it. Quite a different situation is encountered when the original novelist is alive. The novelization can put the author of the original novel in a most embarrassing, bizarre situation to judge by Philip K. Dick's predicament in the case of the adaptation of his novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* as *Blade Runner*. According to Gregg Rickman (1991) Dick, who initially loathed the screenplay by David Peoples and Hampton Fancher based on his novel, refused to grant permission for the novelization and planned, instead, to reissue his novel as the only way to show his disagreement with the yet unfilmed screenplay. To his surprise, the producers offered him another deal: that he himself should write the novelization on the basis of the screenplay and of his own observations as a guest on the film set. Even though this would have grossed him about \$400,000, Dick preferred to write the novel that would be his last, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, for which he was only paid \$7,500. When Scott's film was released, Dick's novel (apparently never read by Scott) was republished under the title of *Blade Runner* in a paperback edition still in print, which can be easily taken for a novelization since it lacks Dick's original title and is illustrated by an image of the film's main characters.

After Dick's death one of his short stories, "We will Remember It for you Wholesale" was made into a film, *Total Recall* directed by Paul Verhoeven and novelised by Piers Anthony, himself a very popular science-fiction writer. Interestingly, the first page of Anthony's novel contains the credits for the screenplay by Ronald Sushett, Dan O'Bannon and Gary Oldman and specifies that Piers Anthony based the novelization on it, but the name of Philip K. Dick is not even mentioned. Naturally, short stories are too short to be published as tie-ins of the screen adaptation, which could explain the need for the novelization of *Total Recall*. This is in fact the reason why William Gibson granted permission to Terry Bisson to novelize *Johnny Mnemonic*, a film directed by Robert Longo and based on Gibson's eponymous short story, included in his collection *Burning Chrome*. The cover of Bisson's novelization contains a caption

noting that his novel is based on the story and the screenplay by William Gibson. Gibson let another re-write his story—apparently in much inferior literary quality—rather than do it himself, even after having written the screenplay presumably, because he could earn thus more money from the rights of the novelization of “Johnny Mnemonic” without touching his original text.

Novelisations are a very peculiar brand of writing. They are actually adaptations to the printed page of screenplays, often written without the benefit of the novelizer having seen the final version of the film. Novelisations are produced as part of the advertising campaign of the film in question and are issued before its release to whet the appetite of prospective readers. Because they are tied in to the film’s screenplay, novelizations are usually perfunctory exercises in padding out what the screenplay’s bare dialogue and directions suggest. Since they are not expected to stand on their own as novels, novelizers rarely invest much effort in them, bound as they are to produce a piece of writing alien to their own artistic interests. It can be said, clearly, that novelists of reputation only agree to write them because novelizations are very well paid. However, there are exceptions to the rule in which the novelist commissioned to write the novelization may transform it into something other than a mere retelling of the screenplay. In this regard, Orson Scott Card’s novelization of James Cameron’s *The Abyss* reveals itself as a highly distinctive case.

Cameron, himself the author of the screenplay for *The Abyss*, chose Orson Scott Card to write the novelization first, because he was deeply dissatisfied with the novelizations of his previous films, and second, because he thought that Card’s interest in the human side of the characters rather than in the hardware typical of most science-fiction novels could help produce an artistically valuable novel rather than a mere novelization. For Cameron (1989: 351) “the book illuminates the film and vice versa, symbiotic partners in a single, multi-faceted dramatic work”. Indeed, symbiosis is an accurate term to define the unusual method that Card followed to write his version of *The Abyss*. Instead of working from the screenplay, Card worked from the videotapes of the film as editing progressed, so that the updating of the manuscript was often necessary depending on Cameron’s alterations of his own screenplay. Even more unusual is the fact that Card wrote the first three chapters, dealing with the childhood of the three main characters—Bud, Lindsey and Coffey—before filming began. The actors were asked to read them and hence based their performances on the childhood background Card had matured. That Card’s was an exceptional job is clearly indicated by Cameron’s unconditional praise of the novelization in his “Afterword” to the paperback edition. Actually, Cameron seems to have enjoyed the novel so much that he is at pains to underline the idea of collaboration between him and Card and to recommend Card’s readers to see the film, as if he feared that the pleasurable reading of the novel could pre-empt the need to see the film.

Card, who had so far refused to write any novelization, accepted the commission because he was interested in Cameron’s films. He was cautious about the novelization as in his opinion screenplays offer enough material for a novelette but not for a full-length novel; also because he had misgivings about the freedom he would be allowed by the studio. However, the idea of collaboration strongly appealed to him and he finally took the challenge when Cameron agreed to let him have access to his research and to the film stage, and ultimately because, in his own words, “I wanted to see if a novelization could be as valid a work of art as the film itself”. (Card, 1989: 355). But if contact with Cameron, the producer Gail Anne Hurd and Van Ling (Cameron’s researcher) was scant yet useful, contact with the actors seems to have been definitive,

which adds another layer to the concept of artistic collaboration. “Every one of the actors”, Card notes, “brought details of attitude and interpretation that opened up their characters to me, allowing me to make them more real in the novel than they would ever have been from the script alone” (ibid.: 359) So satisfactory was the collaboration with Cameron and his cast that Card compares their work to that of Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick for *2001* to conclude that his novel is “not a novelization as the term is usually understood, but a novel that stands on its own and yet complements, illuminates and fulfils the movie” (ibid.: 361).

What neither Cameron nor Card discuss is the material that Card transferred from his own novels to the novelization. All the dialogue of the film is there and so are all the scenes, but the angelic alien monsters of the film are much more complete in Card’s version because they bear a striking resemblance to his own alien monsters in *Ender’s Game*, his most popular novel. The aliens of Card’s *The Abyss*, who call themselves ‘builders of memory’ and are capable of sharing collectively their memories because they have no sense of individuality are almost the same ones that are unwittingly wiped out by the hero Ender in Card’s novel and who later save his human soul. Both Card’s *The Abyss* and *Ender’s Game* end with the aliens’ promise—already fulfilled in the former, to be fulfilled in the latter—to teach humankind how to share their memories with the aliens and so to put an end to our isolating individualism. The film and the novel of *The Abyss* are no doubt symbiotic especially as regards the visualization of the monsters, since the film shows the very beautiful angelic aliens in a display of special effects that the novel cannot match; yet the novel makes sense of who they are and, indeed, of the whole plot. It might well be that Cameron and Card had found their work so congenial because they were working on the same mythical material or, alternatively, that an unacknowledged influence was what led Cameron to select Card. In any case, Card’s *The Abyss* is a more complete narrative than either Cameron’s *The Abyss* or Card’s own *Ender’s Game*. Novel and film form a symbiotic continuum that cannot be easily dissected and which is actually completed with Steve Johnson’s successful design for the alien monsters, an essential element in the film and hence in the visualization of the novel that, oddly enough, neither Cameron nor Card mention in their commentaries on the novelization.

The difference between an exceptional novelization like Card’s and an average novelization can be best appreciated if we turn to Alan Dean Foster’s novelization of another of James Cameron’s films, *Aliens*. Foster’s novelization is a correct yet uninspired retelling of the film just like his own novelizations of Ridley Scott’s *Alien* and of David Fincher’s *Alien*³. The paperback edition of Card’s *The Abyss* runs to 349 pages and takes considerably longer to read than the film, itself an unusually long film, which means that by roughly the same price of the cinema ticket, the pleasure of enjoying the film’s plot from a new angle can be prolonged for quite a long time. Foster’s version of *Aliens*, which has only 240 pages even though *Aliens* is also a very long film, is far less well written and, since it adds little or nothing in depth of characterization nor in strategies of visualization to the film, can be read very quickly especially if the reader is already familiar with the film. Naturally, if the reader is not familiar with *Aliens*, Foster’s novelization serves well the same purpose of the film trailer, namely, anticipating the pleasure of seeing what both can only suggest.

The novelization is necessarily more limited than the film as far as the actual visualization of the scenes is concerned; much more so, if the film is question is a fantasy film such as *Aliens* or *The Abyss* in which special effects play such an important role. This is way the novelization is ultimately like the trailer an announcement of what

the film will make you see. If read after seeing the film, Foster's novelization or any average novelization only serves the purpose of refreshing the film-goer's memory of the film by helping to fix the screen's flitting image. In contrast, Card's novelization of *The Abyss* not only fixes the memory of those images but also adds layers of meaning to the original film that are inextricably bound to the reader's memories of Cameron's images. After reading Card's novel it is simply impossible to distinguish the characters of the film from the characters of the novel—they become a new type of fictional construction stranded between two media which can only be analyzed with critical tools different from those so far used to analyze film or the novel.

Conclusions

The many screen adaptations of the three main British classics of Gothic fiction of the nineteenth century—*Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*—prove that even though film depends to a large extent on the novel for the construction of monstrosity in the earliest stages of its history, from the 1930s onwards the main intertexts of films dealing with monstrosity are actually other films rather than contemporary novels. The construction of monstrosity in the novel and in film run along parallel lines because film does influence to a great extent the way in which the monster is visualized in the novel, yet in fact the choice of novels about monstrosity to be adapted for the screen is rather erratic and is based plainly on the estimation of the profits the adaptation can gross. These come not only from the film but also from all its attached merchandising, which may include new novels based on the film and novelizations. Many of the best novels on monstrosity remain unadapted, either because they are unfilmable due to their length, their prolix plot or their graphic representation of violence, and also because either they cannot guarantee a core audience or are too expensive to adapt.

In recent years two main currents criss-cross the representation of the monster in Hollywood: on the one hand, there is a constant search for an emblematic monster that can generate a profitable series of films whether they are original or adaptations. The many film series based on this principle include low or medium budget independent productions—such as the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series—or big budget productions, such as the *Batman* series. The limits of the serialisation are dictated not only by changes in the way films are marketed but also by the limitations of the film industry as a narrative medium: the series that succeed are those that keep the illusion of complicity with their audiences by leaving behind the idea of authorship and focusing on narrating a story constructed on the basis of motifs that have become popular in a way similar to that of folk tales, which they have replaced to a certain extent.

At the other end of the spectrum of the representation of the monster in film we find the new expensive adaptations of the classics of Gothic horror and the adaptation of cult novels by reputed mainstream film directors. As I have shown, the success of these films is conditioned by a number of important factors that affect their construction of the monster. The new films based on the classics of Gothic horror attempt to supersede the memory of previous adaptations by returning to the original text, but are in fact more concerned about the anxiety of influences of their predecessors than about the faithfulness to the original texts, which is certainly limited. This anxiety derives from the self-consciousness of the film directors—Coppola and Branagh, mainly—who find it very difficult to strike the proper balance between the personal homage to the original text—or to a favourite adaptation of it—and the parody of the popular cult built around it

mainly on the basis of the previous films. The adapters of contemporary cult novels about monstrosity never seen previously on the screen suffer another type of anxiety: they face the additional problem of having to please the author and a core audience that may have clear-cut expectations about the films. The effect of the failure of this type of adaptation is, paradoxically, to reinforce the status of the cult novel as the 'better' version, while its success may result in a bitter struggle with the original author for the ownership of the story, if not in legal terms at least in terms of public acknowledgements. This is what happened to Philip K. Dick, asked by the producers who had adapted his own novel, to write a novelization of the screenplay.

Given the tensions between adapters and readers as far as the construction of the monster is concerned, it should be inferred that the ideal relationship between film and the novel seems to be precisely the collaborative novelization, best exemplified by Orson Scott Card's *The Abyss*. Film still has to discover the immense wealth concealed in the short stories about monstrosity published in the old pulps and also those of many contemporary novels, both mainstream and genre fiction. Because of their length, short stories are seemingly more appropriate as source material for screen adaptations, for the issue of the problematic compression of the plots of novels is not raised in the case of films based on short stories, but there are still few outstanding instances of this type of adaptation. Whenever films are adapted from short stories, as in the case of *Total Recall* or *Johnny Mnemonic*, the original literary source usually receives little attention, precisely because short stories are notoriously difficult to market as tie-ins to the films, which explains their habitual replacement by novelizations when the film in question is released. There seems to be, nonetheless, a whole new area of interaction between film and the novel in the novelization—and also in the sequel written with the screen adaptation in mind such as Crichton's *Lost Eden*—that will require a new approach to the idea of authorship and to the idea of how the strategies of visualization in film and the novel interact. It is important to remember that the contemporary attraction for the monster is at the heart of this breaking down of the barriers between the printed and the aural-visual narrative media.

CHAPTER 3 Nostalgia for the Monster: Mythical Monsters and Freaks

3.0. Introduction

This chapter analyses how the imaginary monster of the new myths of destruction is related to collective anxieties about the privileged status of humankind and to the taboo discourse on teratology, that is to say, human physical monstrosity. Teratology is the scientific study of natural or biological ‘monsters’ in the now discarded medical sense of the word. In principle, teratology and teratogeny study the causes of malformations; yet in this chapter I will deal rather with the ethical discourse on ‘terata’ especially in reference to the ‘terata’ more popularly termed ‘freaks’. The dialectic between the new mythologies and teratology in the 1980s and 1990s is shaped by the growth in cultural importance of the imaginary monster and the increasing difficulties in dealing with natural or biological human monstrosity, both in fiction and in real life. The abundance of critical discourse on the imaginary monster, so ubiquitous in contemporary culture, seems to indicate the breaking down of all kinds of taboos affecting the definition of ‘humanity’ and ‘normality’: the imaginary monster’s body emerges as the site of discussion of issues involving sexuality, race, politics, class and even anxieties about nuclear destruction, gathering together all the negative features that human beings refuse to regard as their own. However, this openness of the cultural (and by extension, sociological and even anthropological) discourse built around the figure of the imaginary monster—including the human and the non-human monster—disguises a reluctance to face even more conflictive issues, buried more deeply in taboo territory. One of these major taboos concerns precisely the way in which we deal with physically monstrous human beings after the gradual loss of the figure of the freak.

The discussion of psychological monstrosity—to which I address myself in Chapter 4—cannot be said to be a taboo area; on the contrary, it has attracted plenty of controversy with reference to the idea of evil, both in real life and in fiction. In contrast, human physical monstrosity emerges as a particularly difficult topic involving serious ethical conflicts we do not readily face, either in fiction or in real life, and that are very little publicized. Nevertheless, since the way in which we define the abnormality of the adult freak or the severely malformed baby also defines our own normality, an analysis of the meaning of monstrosity in the 1980s and 1990s must necessarily include a survey of the profound rift caused by the erasure of the real life freak from the cultural panorama and its replacement by the imaginary monster, as reflected in the fiction of the last fifteen years. The imaginary monsters of the 1980s and 1990s certainly overlap with the figure of the freak in many instances, though whenever the freak appears in recent fiction it is in a decontextualized background—usually displaced towards fantasy or another time—carefully distanced from the actuality of contemporary teratology. Thus, as cultural discourse on the meaning of, for instance, the vampire increases, that on the legal ‘solutions’ given to the ‘problem’ of the natural monster is hushed, although the

latter is obviously more significant in understanding how we define humanity and the Other.

The fear of the imaginary monster and of the biological human monster derive nonetheless from similar roots: unease at the privileged position of the ‘normal’ human being, as a member of a community or species, and as an individual. Transhistorical fears like these are represented in a different way in each historical period, in ‘mythologies’ (a concept I will clarify in the following section) adapted for the times. The 1980s and 1990s are characterized by centring their representations of monstrosity on the exploration of the threat the monster poses for privilege. Here, I center my analysis on two central privileges and their related fears, which place the imaginary and the natural monster in a single anthropological continuum, despite the differences in the fictional treatment both categories receive. Both the imaginary monster and the natural monster are feared first, because they threaten the privileged position of humankind as a species without competition in the natural hierarchy of life on Earth and second, because they also materialize fears about the loss of body ownership. Before the imaginary or the natural monster, the ‘normal’ human being is made aware of his or her privileged position and, at the same time, of the fragility of such a position. As I will show, the fear of the takeover by the ‘secret species’—the non-human Other—is at the heart of the new mythologies, which displace towards the imaginary monster the fear that was once felt towards the now absent social category of the freak.

3.1. Nostalgia for the Mythical Monster: Beasts and Messiahs

3.1.1. Nostalgia for Myth

In our secularized era there is a strong nostalgia for belief that is partly satisfied through the short-term indulgence in belief enjoyed when seeing or reading fiction about monstrosity. Although monsters are secondary characters in primitive mythologies whose function is mainly to test the hero’s courage and bodily strength, monstrosity occupies the largest territory within contemporary mythmaking. The growing secularisation of the Western world has not pre-empted the need for myth, that is to say, for narratives that explain who we are, from myths of creation to legends about individual heroes. However, what distinguishes contemporary mythmaking from primitive mythologies is that the former is profane while the latter are sacred; furthermore, Western myths arise from individual artists producing original fiction while primitive myths are the work of anonymous creators polished by the passage through generations of storytellers. Contemporary Western myths are not grounded on religious belief; they try, nonetheless, to supply Western societies with a substitute for the main religious myth—Christianity—at a level that most cultural critics see as a degradation of ‘genuine’, religious mythmaking. Ursula LeGuin (1989: 64), for instance, defines contemporary myths such as that of Superman as ‘Submyth’, “...those mental images, figures and motifs which have no religious resonance and no intellectual or aesthetic value, but which are vigorously alive and powerful, so cannot be dismissed as mere stereotypes”.

The (sub)myth has popular roots, but it cannot be said to be without intellectual and aesthetic values; it does have them even if they are not be those of the high art use of myths, such as, for instance, in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. One of the reasons why there

is a resistance to seeing the correspondences between primitive and contemporary mythmaking is the generalised view that new myths are not expressed in highly valuable, highly artistic, texts. There is no ‘Homer’—if there was ever one—to give literary shape to postmodernist mythologies. Instead of a coherent network of myths bound by art we seem to have scattered myths that can enter the canon only with difficulties, if at all. Thus, Katherine Hume (op. cit.: 67) argues that while the evil or unpleasant monsters of classical Greek myth put the hero in touch “with something more than an ad hoc obstacle”, for her “such transpersonal significance for fantastic monsters is often lacking in contemporary popular literature”. But if contemporary monsters and heroes—and the myths they enact—mean nothing, the obvious popular success of many (sub)mythical texts about monstrosity seems practically impossible to explain, especially if what is judged is the artistic quality of their representations rather than their anthropological significance. Before a question such as why so many people have chosen to see the *Alien* trilogy, the two *Predator* or the two *Terminator* films it is necessary to consider the possibility that they do carry transpersonal meaning, specifically related to concerns that can only find expression in texts of a new mythology in the making. They are well tuned to the expectations of readers and viewers, though in fairness, it should be said that because the narratives are so many, only a few fully capture a truly meaningful mythical subtext.

In fact, the (sub)myth lies in a new territory between primitive mythmaking and the literate allusion to classical myths, a territory that is fully postmodernist in its self-consciousness of the ‘degradation’ of contemporary myth. A tongue-in-cheek attitude, irony and the grotesque are some of the metafictional elements used to acknowledge the shortcomings of this new kind of mythmaking. Yet the sheer volume of contemporary narratives with mythologizing content attests to a rather more serious search for some way out of triviality and towards transcendence. The impression is that artists, especially in genre fiction, have ceased trying to produce a literary or cinematic masterpiece, understood as a major artistic achievement, and are trying, instead, to produce a lasting myth, such as *Frankenstein*, or, more recently, *Blade Runner* (obviously not only because of the money a new monster can generate, as I have explained in the previous chapter). This may be, in itself, an attempt at denying the Modernist emphasis on the civilising values of high art: the insistence on the widespread existence of barbarism coming from the new myth makers suggests that art with high intellectual and aesthetic values may not be the most suitable fiction for this barbarian fin de siècle, while pseudo-primitive myths may touch more easily on the real anxieties beneath our sophisticated, technological age.

Ideally, the only way to appreciate contemporary mythmaking is to see it from a distance, abandoning cultural criticism in favour of anthropology. There are obvious advantages in treating our own cultural environment in a way similar to that used by anthropologists to study primitive cultures. Sociology and Cultural Studies rather obscure the fact that the primitive substratum of Western societies is very much alive—thus, often what is taken for bad literature or bad cinema is a rather good approximation to that substratum. This is why films and novels that are seen as formulaic and scarcely imaginative find popular acceptance: they strike a chord unrelated to (high) art that has much to do with the position of readers and viewers as members of a tribe, even if the tribe is as large as the whole Western world. They do form a corpus of stories related to each other by means of repeated motifs that rely on the complicity of audiences and readers to recognize them; genres are, then, nothing but mythmaking patterns that carry significance beyond the artistic media that produces them, and not, as it is often said,

pure formula. To what extent the persistence of the primitive self is a 'positive' feature of cultural life is, of course, debatable. Yet, I would like to insist on the fact that this resurfacing of the primitive—by no means a return to the primitive, for it has never gone away—is the only strategy valid for coping with a historical period of a marked dystopian character, in which the Enlightenment project of civilized progress has finally revealed its contradictions. As the history of the twentieth century has proven, the growth of civilization is accompanied by a growth of barbarism that is exposing the shortcomings of the civilizing project of the Enlightenment (Mestrovic, 1993)—the renewal of the mythology of destruction dramatizes this fact.

The reputed mythographer Mircea Eliade has stressed the fact that the persistence of myth in the late twentieth century is an irrefutable fact, though he has not attempted to explain how it can be understood in comparison to archaic myth. In his view (1971: 141), the main obstacle to interpreting myth nowadays is that it is so radically changed and so well camouflaged in the culture of the contemporary Western world that the connections with primitive mythmaking are very hard to see. This may account for the despondency with which cultural critics see contemporary mythmaking and, also, for the difficulties in accounting with precision for the links between primitivism and postmodernity. It is certainly the wrong path to try to find exact equivalencies between archaic or classical mythmaking and contemporary fiction with mythologizing content: the strategies of belief are radically different and so are the cultural uses of mythological material. Contemporary myths are not sacred stories narrating events which happened in 'primordial' times, nor do they explain how a supernatural being created all of reality or an aspect of it—the definition that Eliade (*ibid.*: 15) gives of myth and the one most widely accepted. What interests me especially about the idea of myth in the 1980s and 1990s is firstly, the idea of corpus, and, secondly, the opposition drawn by Eliade between archaic societies which believe in myth sustained by religion and modern, secular societies which believe in history to explain their own creation. What is taking place nowadays, at a point of inflection in history marked by the idea of the 'end of history' but also by the new expectations opened in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, is a massive recovery of mythmaking which would open new perspectives on the issue of how we can justify our progression from primitivism to the end of the barbaric twentieth century. The question behind most contemporary fiction, from mainstream to genre fiction, is where transcendence really lies, once religion and history have failed to provide clues as to our present condition and our future. If genre fiction—especially fantasy as in science fiction and horror—leans more towards the territory of mythology it is because, in a sense, it has taken a more radical position against history and against Modernist individualism: only global myths seem able to make sense of the global anxieties that define the contemporary period.

The mythological corpus need not be articulated as an illustration of beliefs widely held in a particular culture. On the contrary, what can be seen in the 1980s and 1990s is that contemporary mythmaking is very sensitive to historical changes: it works by trial and error, trying to articulate itself by gauging not only the actual changes in the Western world but also those that are expected to happen. Within the panorama of contemporary fiction, science fiction seems to be the genre coping best with the articulation of the mythology that an advanced technological society requires. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (1989: 31) remarks that "science fiction seems to be the only form of adult literature that can handle mythology with panache", while William Lomax writes that "science fiction... does not create the myth; rather, it dramatizes the need for mythmaking in a world without a vital totalizing myth" (1989: 253). The advantage of

science fiction over other genres, and the mainstream, is that it gathers primitive mythology with futuristic technology in a single stream, projecting towards fiction collective anxieties that refer simultaneously to all the extra-historical time of humankind, from the very primitive past—Eliade's 'primordial' time—to the very far future. This is why science-fiction films and novels often represent the future as a version of the remote past, as happened in the popular *Star Wars* trilogy and, indeed, in Stanley Kubrick's *2001*, perhaps the most illuminating instances of this mythological simultaneity I am referring to.

The atmosphere of many popular science-fiction films and novels is a mixture of Gothic medievalism transplanted to the heart of the near or the remote future, as if the real search were not for our future but for our past. Dan Simmons' diptych *Hyperion* (1989) and *The Fall of Hyperion* (1990) is a very rich, suggestive instance of that simultaneous search for the past, the future, a new mythology and the roots of primitive mythmaking. The seven pilgrims that travel in *Hyperion* to locate the mythical Shrike or Lord of Pain—a futuristic barbarian god of destruction—delve into their personal pasts in order to understand the future of humankind. This is threatened by the Shrike, a god for whom time passes backwards and who has, thus, already existed but not existed yet. As Simmons has it, only a new Christological redeemer (by which I mean a secular rather than a Christian messiah), the mythical, cybernetic Johnny Keats reborn from death thanks to genetic engineering can engineer the destruction of the Lord of Pain, thus giving rise to a new mythological time. The network of mythical subtexts, postmodernist literary allusion, and the use of Gothic and cyberpunk in Simmons' novels is typical of this new, still to be explored, mythology in the making.

Turning back to the questions of the mythological corpus and the historical versus the pre-historical need for myths, the stumbling block we next encounter is the relationship between myth and ritual in postmodernist Western societies. According to William Doty (1986: 11), a mythological corpus consists of

- (1) a usually complex network of myths that are (2) culturally important (3) imaginal (4) stories, conveying by means of (5) metaphoric and symbolic diction, (6) graphic imagery, and (7) emotional conviction and participation, (8) the primal, foundational accounts (9) of aspects of the real, experienced world and (10) humankind's roles and relative statuses within it. Mythologies may (11) convey the political and moral values of a culture and (12) provide systems of interpreting (13) individual experience within a universal perspective, which may include (14) the intervention of suprahuman entities as well as (15) aspects of the natural and cultural orders.

Taken as a whole, the many films and novels about monstrosity produced in the last fifteen years do form a (sub)mythological corpus that follows remarkably well Doty's definition. Needless to say, the mythological corpus of the contemporary Western world is not organized according to a universally accepted cosmogony neither by a set of rituals, as should be expected in a historical period defined by secular humanism. What gives coherence to this corpus is the relative narrowness of the main circles of myth makers. The same names crop up again and again throughout the main films about monstrosity cast in a mythological mold; likewise, the list of genuinely outstanding fantasy—science fiction, horror, sword and sorcery—writers or myth makers in my definition is limited, despite the fact that now more people than ever are producing texts that aim at becoming mythical. The texts produced do form a mythological network,

with frequent repetitions of motifs perfectly recognisable by those ‘initiated’ into the ‘mysteries’ of each submyth. Within this network some authors or texts stand out as ‘cult’ pieces or heroes, by which it is meant that they transmit a ‘meaning’ of special significance, seen by the initiates only. All in all, the texts are bound by what Northrop Frye (op. cit.: 9) describes as a “legacy of shared allusion”, which must not be confused with the Leavisite idea of tradition or with Harold Bloom’s anxiety of influences. On the contrary, the contemporary myth maker combines a primitive relish for ‘retelling’ a very significative myth with a truly postmodernist self-consciousness, often ironic, about the limits of originality.

The idea behind contemporary mythmaking is to make the old, new and the new, old simultaneously so that the myth is reaffirmed and redrawn at the same time, opening a window on a realm of fantasy that questions the actual importance of historical time. Thus, Clive Barker develops in his novel *Imajica* (1991) a simple mythical topic bound simultaneously to the contemporary debate of patriarchy versus feminism and also to the myths of Christological redemption, though he makes a point of never mentioning Christianity or indeed an alternative matriarchal religion at all in the occult mythological system he portrays. Barker’s hero, Gentle, a painter who can only produce forgeries—retellings of mythical paintings—discovers he is actually a hero in the classical sense, born of the god Hepaxamendios and a mortal woman. Out on a quest for this barbarian god, still unaware of who he is, Gentle eventually discovers that his mission of redemption must result in the destruction of the god and the liberation of the powerful goddesses once overruled by the patriarchal Hepaxamendios in a remote past—a point that links the novel with the myth of the goddess I reviewed in Chapter 1. What is most startling in Gentle’s long, mythical journey towards his origin in the father and his subsequent subversion of the role of patriarchal messiah is the contrast between the extraterrestrial Domains and the contemporary London in which Gentle lives. In the end, after many transitions backwards and forwards, the London of the 1980s emerges as a more fantastic realm than the Dominions of myth, an effect typical of the immersion in the mythical worldview of fiction such as *Imajica*.

This leads us back to the question of ritual and its relation to myth. In primitive myth, the ritual is a ceremony during which the myth is told or enacted so that the participants may feel that uncanny binding with the past which explains to primitive man where he stands in relation to the very remote past. The continuity between cosmogonic time and human time is ensured through ritual and myth so that a basic harmony between present and past is achieved and no doubts about the collective memory of the past arises: this memory is fixed by the narrative contained in the myth itself. The English folklorist Lord Raglan suggested in his book *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama* that ritual is the origin of myth and not viceversa: according to Raglan (Rank et al, 1990: 96), the tribe’s longing for ceremonial that reinforces their of binding with the past is fulfilled by high rank persons who elaborate a narrative to fit in the ritual. Thus, for Raglan, myths are by no means creations emanating spontaneously from the people but narratives created by an elite to fix a certain cosmogony that would be valid to explain the origin of the universe and of the tribe itself.

In contrast, the unreliability of memory—collective or individual—emerges as one of the main motifs in the mythologizing fiction of the 1980s and 1990s. Many films and novels dramatize our inability to recall our origins from the depths of the personal or the collective unconscious. The narratives are, in a sense, a Freudian exploration of our past but they seem to connote a Jungian search for the ultimate origin. The theme of the

person who has no memory of his or her origins and who turns out to have been born if not a monster at least from monstrous parents is constant in contemporary films and novels. Accessing the depths of personal memory gives a clue to accessing the depths of the collective past—down to the very gods of creation as in *Imajica* or to primal events, such as the defeat of the predator to which I refer in the next section. This regression to the past, this abandonment of the actual historical time by transcending our immediate individual circumstances through films and novels is the equivalent of ritual for us, while the content of those films and fictions act as our myths.

It may be argued that all films and all novels—all fiction—are the equivalent of primitive myths, since all fulfil this psychological need for an escape from historical, personal time. This is, in a sense, true. However, the mythological content of the texts about monstrosity I am considering in this section has been regarded as ‘escapist’ in a derogatory sense. Escaping into Joyce’s *Ulysses*, to return to an earlier instance of mythical Modernist text, is regarded as a positive immersion into civilized culture; escaping into *Hyperion*, *Imajica* or *Predator* is seen by many as a different activity, subcultural or paracultural, that implies a rejection of canonical texts (or myths?). I am not going to return to the question of the artificial division between the mainstream and popular culture, but I will insist on the idea that the ubiquitous presence of the monster across that dividing line signals precisely the need to articulate a mythology for the times, that is to say, a myth that serves for everyone. The mainstream is responding with less agility to that need because of the sheer weight of the literary tradition and the academy. Commercial or popular culture is, ironically, better prepared to instil into ‘escapism’ not ideology, as it is often claimed, but an instinctive sixth sense about what matters to many people for it depends precisely on popularity to subsist. As Eric Rabkin (1976: 73) writes, “if we know the world to which a reader escapes, then we know the world from which he comes”, thus, the content of the myth will furnish important clues about what cannot be processed in the context of historical time. Those who escape into the classical myth celebrated in high art escape from the same world of failed civilization that invites others to escape into the neo-barbarian myths celebrated in popular culture. If the levels of escapism seem to be higher and higher now this must be then not because most citizens of the Western world are irresponsible persons with a simplistic, hedonistic approach to life, but because contemporary history and politics and exerting an overwhelming pressure on us.

As I have noted, a large segment of contemporary mythmaking deals with the confrontation between the hero and the monster. While in traditional myths this confrontation is but an episode in the adventurous life of the hero, many contemporary (sub)mythical films and novels focus exclusively on this confrontation. Up to a point, the mythology of the 1980s and 1990s is best described as a mythology of destruction, opposing the cosmogonic myths of creation. The monster is central in these myths of destruction because it represents at the same time the primal and barbaric chaos that precedes creation and that ends it: the forgotten primordial time and the imagined future times find in the monster a suitable symbol of simultaneous creation and apocalypse through the figure of the Beast of the archaic hunter myths later inherited by Christian iconography. The 1980s and 1990s are not only the last two decades of the twentieth century but also the last twenty years of the second millennium and a certain feeling of exhaustion (especially as refers to the problematic persistence of patriarchy) accompanied by fantasies of regeneration is responsible for the resurfacing of primitive mythmaking in postmodernity. Thus, the main contemporary mythical current oscillates between the myths of total destruction and the myths of salvation, which frequently

involve extraterrestrials as either demonic destroyers or angelic messiahs. The many technophobic cautionary myths in imitation of *Frankenstein* and the pervasive presence of the theme of metamorphosis complete a fin de siècle, simultaneously dystopian and millennialist, whose mythology reflects the split between the announcement of the apocalyptic triumph of barbarism and the wish-fulfilling fantasies of a second coming of a redeemer. The Beast and the Messiah emerge, thus, as the main mythical figures of postmodernism.

The apocalyptic content of contemporary myth differs from the collective anxieties expressed in the fears of a final judgement that swept the Christian world ten centuries ago in an important point: apocalyptic fantasies about the end of the world are justified now by the existence of nuclear weapons. Technology and not superstition is the basis of the strong destructive pessimism of the 1980s, though this fear of the future may have subsided in the 1990s into a more optimistic belief in compassion as a 'solution' to the crisis of the barbaric civilization of the Western world. In this context, it is necessary to stress the important role played by the USA in shaping the historical reality of the Western world since the end of World War II. The preoccupation of American culture with the dichotomy of good and evil, innocence and guilt, individualism and community, the right to protection against abuse and the fragile reality of individual or national privilege also form the staple of the mythical thinking of the twentieth century, best expressed in film. The monster as the symbol of all that threatens 'privilege'—from the survival of a nation to the destruction of the individual—originates in British Gothic but has been exported worldwide by the USA through film and popular culture.

Hollywood is, no doubt, the main producer of myths and, despite the confluence of artistic talent recruited worldwide by the attractions of the American film industry, Hollywood appears, correctly or incorrectly, to stand for America. This would lead to the conclusion that contemporary mythmaking is American. This is true, for the historical evolution of America can account for the apocalyptic overtones of contemporary myth more than any other factor. Yet, this American mythmaking business exists to a large extent thanks to the acceptance it finds in the international market. My suggestion is that the increasing popularity of films narrating myths of destruction or salvation—from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) to *Twelve Monkeys* (1995)—stems from a collusion of Hollywood's interests in expanding its international market and the international audiences' pleasure in the erasure of foreignness through myth. This America of myth is not a foreign country but a very familiar domain to which we all can relate, a supranational domain which is in itself a myth created by the networks of distribution of commercial culture. There is a point beyond which it is merely irrelevant for audiences whether the heroes of *Alien*, *Predator*, or *E.T.* are American, especially if these audiences are likely to see the films in a dubbed version, for we are all citizens of Hollywood. Paradoxically, since the portrait of that mythical America of superheroes and monsters sells better than the portrait of the less well known real America, the latter remains a genuinely foreign country even for those used to consuming great amounts of 'genuinely' American cultural products. The same phenomenon is being repeated in the case of Japan: thousands of Western children and teenagers are familiar with the neo-barbarian myths successfully exported by Japan through 'manga' (printed comics) and 'anime' (animated films based on successful comics). However, the bridges built between Westerners and the Japanese through this type of (sub)mythical narratives, in itself originated from the identification of the Japanese with the neo-barbarian myths of American popular

culture, seem, however, so far incapable of conveying a better mutual understanding of the wide cultural differences between the West and Japan.

A point that is hardly ever considered in analysis of myth is why mythmaking crystallises better in particular nations and in particular historical contexts. Myth is usually explained on the basis of the Jungian collective unconscious or of Freudian psychoanalysis, both in themselves ‘mythological’ systems that try to account for the creation of the individual and the community. Carl Jung’s idea of the collective unconscious (op. cit.: 3–6), which “is not a personal acquisition but is inborn” and universal, forming a “common psychic substrate of a superpersonal nature which is present in every one of us”, has been widely invoked to explain why primitive myths present so many similarities. The archetypes, that is to say, the fixed contents of the collective unconscious which find their expression in myth and fairy tale by being consciously manipulated by the individual and coloured by his or her individuality, offer for many an explanation of the appeal of contemporary mythologizing fiction. Freud himself recurred to the myth of Oedipus for give his own mythological version of the explanation of the origins of the (male) human personality and saw evident affinities between dream and myth. His own disciple, Otto Rank, studied the myth of the birth of the hero in his book of the same title, explaining myths as representations of the life of the Oedipal child. Nevertheless, Jung and Freud’s efforts to explain the transhistorical nature of the human psyche, individual or collective, seem to me insufficient to account for the intimate relationship between the historical moment and transhistorical myth: even though both admit that the human psyche is affected by historical changes, their theories cannot account for the actual mechanisms of psychological change. Why the myths of the ‘Return of the Beast’ and the ‘Alien Messiah’ surface now in this particular historical context and in this particular fictional incarnation, and whether they can be read from a transhistorical mythical perspective different from that of Jung’s and Freud’s systems is the question to which I turn in the next two sections.

3.1.2. Nostalgia for the Predator

In Chapter 1, following the work of Baring and Cashford, I interpreted the origin and development of the monster in Western culture as a consequence of the replacement of the matriarchal cult of the goddess Earth by the patriarchal cult of the sky god or gods. As I have noted, in the Iron Age the goddess lost the struggle for power won by the patriarchal hunter-warrior and she was incorporated into the already existing myth of the hunter; in this myth she was represented as a monster, replacing the original wild beasts of the most archaic versions. Baring and Cashford base their Jungian analysis of why the once hegemonic feminine archetype was replaced by the hegemonic masculine archetype on the evidence furnished by archaeology and history: invasions, wars and genocide paved the ground for the abandonment of one model for another. I should like to turn now to a neo-Darwinian theory based on palaeontology which might shed light on the question of whether civilization is implicitly barbarian because it began with an act of aggression against a predator that became the prototype for the imaginary monster. Baring and Cashford argue that all the myths about the confrontation of a hero with a serpent or dragon can be traced back to the myth of Tiamat and Marduk narrated in the Babylonian epic *Enuma Elish* (op. cit.: 274). However, this plainly indicates that there was an already available mythical narrative model based on the confrontation of the archaic hunter with a wild beast and that Tiamat’s myth actually originates this a

much older patriarchal myth involving the killing of a monstrous predator. From this point of view, the current hegemonic ‘masculine’ archetype would be in a process of transition towards an androgynous model based on the idea of the hero/ine as a survivor using positive aggression contrary to the model of the hero as a barbaric abuser of negative aggression which arises in the Iron Age.

The 1980s and 1990s myth that I call the ‘Return of the Beast’ is best expounded by Bruce Chatwin in his travel book *The Songlines*, which deals with the myths assembled by the Australian aboriginals in the primordial time they call the ‘Dreamtime’. Chatwin’s observations are much in line with those of Mircea Eliade, especially as regards the difficulties of the history man (the secularised Western traveller represented by Chatwin) to understand how and why the Aboriginal wanderers of the primordial times built their myths on the basis of the features of the territories they traversed, including their fauna and flora. The idea of the wanderer or nomad leads Chatwin to consider the role played by the encounter with predators in the construction not only of archaic myth but also of the prehistoric nomadic family, in which the father would have played the role of hunter-protector. This concurs with Baring and Cashford’s idea that hunter myths originate from nomadic tribes while the myth of the goddess arises from tribes of agriculturists presumably less harassed by predators. At this point Chatwin considers, on the basis of the theories expounded by the palaeontologist C.K. Brain an even more important factor, how and why we, of all the species, stepped out of the predatory chain to become the hunters and not the hunted.

In the last chapter of *The Hunters or the Hunted?: An Introduction to African Cave Taphonomy*, C.K. Brain (1981: 266–274) concludes that the fossils found in the Sterfontein caves in South Africa hint at a correlation between the appearance of the first men and the extinction of a carnivore which preyed almost exclusively on hominids. This predator, ‘Dinofelis’, a big feline similar to the sabre-toothed tiger, is supposed to have lived in the deep recesses of dark caves and to have hunted by stealth and at night the asleep, defenceless, unsuspecting hominids living in the upper areas of the same caves. There is no definitive evidence as to why and how ‘Dinofelis’ disappeared; however, Brain’s hypothesis is that its prey learned somehow to repel its attacks, at first possibly with fire until a more aggressive defence brought the first death of the beast. This supposition opens the way for Chatwin’s speculations (1988: 252): “Could it be, one is tempted to ask, that *Dinofelis* was Our Beast? A Beast set aside from all the other Avatars of Hell? The Arch-Enemy who stalked us, stealthily and cunningly, wherever we went? But whom, in the end, we got the better of?” Never clearly seen, unstoppable and specially feared by the first hominids still dispossessed of fire or any weapon in the dark night, the image of ‘Dinofelis’ suggests to Chatwin that of the Devil. As he remarks, the most crucial event in the history of humankind, the event that made man himself possible, was the defeat of this predator. First kept at bay with fire—and how often this use of fire to ward off the beast is repeated in contemporary film from *The Thing* (1982) to *Alien*³ (1992)—a weapon used by a proto-hero may have caused the death of a ‘Dinofelis’, giving birth to the many myths of combats between heroes and monsters but also to a nostalgia for the lost adversary. An evolutionarily specialised predator would have been in quite an intimate relation with its proto-human prey, becoming for the proto-human hero occupied with the fight for survival not only an object of fear but also of fascination, a mystery. Chatwin notes that the defeat of the Beast was a Pyrrhic victory, that left us somehow yearning for a ‘false monster’ to replace the one that had been lost. The Devil and the Beasts of postmodernity respond to that nostalgia for the predator.

But why should Chatwin's myth of the lost Beast be relevant now for us as a collectivity in the 1980s and 1990s and not, for instance, Freud's myth of the killing of the violent primal, patriarchal father by his sons as described in *Totem and Taboo*? How, indeed, can both primal myths be reconciled if at all and how are they related to contemporary fiction? To begin with, both Chatwin and Freud try to account for the beginnings of civilization and at the same time for what survives of the primitive man in us. While Chatwin suggests that the Beast survived as the Devil in religion—as I see it, more generally as the Other, the monster—Freud suggests that the patriarchal father survives in the patriarchal God of religion. Both Chatwin and Freud speak of a primal act of aggression that results in guilt and a nostalgia so deep that it is internalized and transmitted through the generations—perhaps through genetic memories encoded in DNA.

The realization that we are as Martin Amis puts it “Einstein's Monsters”, that is to say, the only species in the natural world which does not look up to a predator to justify its existence but preys on itself and all the others has spurred many narratives in which we must reconsider our position by facing our predator—in a sense, a nostalgic replacement of both God and the Devil. With the development of the intercontinental nuclear missiles that ensure the total wipe-out of the planet in case of war, the 1980s secularised history man comes to an awareness that the whole human species is psychotic—inexcusably aggressive, predatory, and totally incapable of distinguishing the reality of human suffering from the fantasies of total destruction. The constant barbaric aggression against fellow human beings and against nature despite the growth of civilization cannot be cured by regressing to a primal state in a Freudian style: there may be many fossils but there are simply no memories of what our brains contained when we were harassed hominids, proto-humans or more advanced prehistoric men. On the other hand, the loss of the primitive man's trust in myth, ritual and religion plus, certainly, the doubts about another myth, that of the Enlightenment project of civilization, leaves the postmodernist man stranded at a moment when, in addition, the end of history is announced. No wonder then, that the myths of destruction refer to that dark area of the past in which the total destroyer was not us but the mythical Beast and at the same time to that near or remote future in which other predatory species threaten to destroy all of humankind.

The ‘Return of the Beast’ serves to evaluate our own role as aggressive predators and at the same time to present human aggressiveness as a boon. Chatwin himself suggests in *The Songlines* that instead of the innate aggressive tendencies of mankind supposed by scientists such as Raymond Dart and Konrad Lorenz, we should consider the hypothesis that man became a hunter in self-defence against the predatory beast. The strategies learned to defeat the beast become, according to Chatwin, the basis for hunting. Presumably, malicious aggression of the kind described by Freud in his myth of the killing of the primal father is a displacement towards the fellow human being of the violence used to hunt. Chatwin (*ibid.*: 248) writes that “all war propaganda... proceeded on the assumption that you must degrade the enemy into something bestial, infidel, cancerous, and so on. Or, alternatively, your fighters must transform themselves into surrogate beasts—in which case men became their legitimate prey”. In this idea that the hero and the monster face each other within a harsh natural order, using ‘positive’ aggression, lies the main difference between the films and novels I examine in this chapter and those which deal with evil, which I examine in the next chapter. Evil appears, perhaps as Freud suggests, with the killing of the father by the horde of brothers-hunters who misuse their habitually ‘positive’ use of aggression against

animals in hunting. The death and subsequent cannibalisation of the father, the first totemic meal repeated in rituals including Christian communion, is the symbolic event that marks the entrance of mankind into “social organization, of moral restrictions and of religion” (1975: 41) and also the event that triggers the discovery of guilt. In contrast, the survivalist myth of the Beast ignores guilt: the act of killing the Beast can only be seen in a positive light. In short, evil appears when the strategies of aggression learned to master the predatory beast are used to gain power over the other members of the tribe. The hominid tormented by the predatory beast evolves to become a tormentor of other men and eventually of women: this is how civilization began and has been maintained since then.

While Freud grounds the killing of the primal father in the patriarchal dispute between him and his male children over the ownership of the women in the tribe, Chatwin’s survivalist myth ignores the position of woman. According to Freud, negative aggression leading to guilt results from breaking the taboo of disobedience against the patriarchal father and presumably lays the foundations for the rise of the taboo of incest: negative aggression is used by men against men and victimizes women. In Chatwin’s scenario, positive aggression is used to defend the whole tribe from the predator; the tribe’s champion, he suggests, is male because men are stronger than women. Biology would explain why there are heroes but no heroines until the 1980s when technology in the form of sophisticated weaponry makes the actual gender of the hero/ine a matter dependent on the sexist or feminist ideology of a particular text. In fact, there is no reason to suppose that the first conqueror of the ‘*Dinofelis*’ was a male hominid, but there are reasons to suppose that if this proto-hero happened to be a male, males could have used their discovery of positive aggression as an ‘excuse’ to take power away from the females whose power was based on their capacity to create life. Of course, another attractive supposition is that in prehistoric matriarchal societies based on a hypothetical biological order women sent the men to hunt because the loss of a man would not greatly affect the survival of the tribe in terms of sexual reproduction. The myth of the hunter and patriarchy itself may have developed as a revolutionary step forward taken by men to undermine the power of the females over them. The discovery of negative aggression would have consolidated the rise of the patriarchal model.

Films such as the *Alien* trilogy (1979, 1986, 1992), *The Thing* (1982), *Predator* (1987), *Predator 2* (1990), *Species* (1995), *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Wolfen* (1981) and to a certain extent *The Terminator* (1984), develop a basic scenario of confrontation with the Beast centred on the heroic use of positive aggression against a predatory monster. A point to stress is the fact that these very popular films deal with a ‘return’ of the Beast, not only because they are themselves imitations or an updating of 1950s films—or of much older myths—but because the Beasts enter the historic time of humankind from another time, which is usually a barbaric future pointing backwards to prehistoric times. The evolutionary scenario they propose is that evolution does not imply civilization but the perfectibility of the aggressive, predatory instinct. These films complement thus the myth of the ‘Alien Messiah’, which implies that alternative paths of evolution result in pacifist, angelic, spiritual non-human beings. The position of the hero/ines of these films and novels is, however, different from that of the proto-human hero who drove the Beast away. The predicament of these ordinary people meeting extraordinary monsters is possibly best summarized in this exchange between Ender, the exterminator of the alien race in *Ender’s Game* and his sister Valentine:

“I’m a killer no matter what”

“What else should you be? Human beings didn’t evolve brains in order to lie around on lakes. Killing’s the first thing we learned. And a good thing we did, or we’d be dead, and the tigers would own the earth”. (p. 265)

This position has its dangers and its attractions (apart from the fact that it casts man in the new role of reluctant hunter and woman as a defender of positive aggression). It may be read as a reflection of the particular historical role chosen by America in the twentieth century: ‘heroic’ America is as reluctant as these mythical heroes to play her aggressive role but self-defence and the ‘salvation’ of humankind force her to assume an unpleasant position. However, all these films and novels coincide in distinguishing the ordinary hero/ine from the American system of corporate business and corrupt government, so that the hero/ine is seen to fight two kinds of aggression, one ‘natural’, that of the predator, the other ‘unnatural’, that of human beings. There is no doubt in any case that the ‘unnatural’ aggression is the worse.

An additional problem is that the role of the hero is usually assumed by a white male who masters the technology to defeat the Beast but lacks the mythological wisdom necessary to understand what the monster he is facing is. This mythological knowledge is often supplied by members of ethnic minorities, supposedly more ‘primitive’, or by women, supposedly more ‘sensitive’. Thus in *Wolfen*, the native Americans employed as construction workers in New York mock the white policeman incapable of unravelling the enigma behind the return of the ‘wolfen’ to their original hunting ground: the return of the Beast is the return to a mythical time they have not forgotten, the ‘wolfen’ are not simply wolves but totemic wolves of myth come to tell the white man that all excesses must be paid for. In *Predator*, the Central American female guerrilla taken as a prisoner by a US military platoon working undercover for the CIA is the first to see the Beast and to understand that the extraterrestrial is the ‘demon’ that appears in the myths of her people. Interestingly, even though she is a soldier, she is not allowed to take part in the fight against the (male) monster. The monster himself, an extraterrestrial hunter whose forays on Earth have the only aim of capturing trophies for his collection, only kills armed men as if his combats were re-enactments of that first encounter between the hunter and the ‘*Dinofelis*’.

Predator 2 stresses the links with the ethnic communities and the Beast in a more problematic way. In the final scene, the second *Predator* gives the black hero, policeman Mike Harrigan (Danny Glover), an eighteenth-century pistol as a proof that his species have visited Earth before and intend to return. They regard the Earth as a rich hunting ground and they are willing to sacrifice the odd individual killed by a human ‘hero’ for the pleasure of hunting men. Despite the casting of Glover in the role of humankind’s champion, the activities of the Predator are linked throughout the film to those of the gangs of ethnic minorities—Jamaicans, Colombians—whose booming drug-dealing business and in-fighting dominate the urban jungle of 1997 Los Angeles. The Predator makes no exception among the men he kills on race grounds nor depending on whether they respect the law, yet the fact is that Harrigan is enlightened about the real nature of the beast by King Willie, the Jamaican drug baron; King Willie’s foreknowledge of the arrival of the Beast is nonetheless useless to prevent him from becoming the Predator’s next victim. The links between the Beast and the minorities are also stressed by the dreadlocks that both the Jamaicans and the Predator sport and by the police’s initial confusion as to whether the cruel killing methods used by the monster are typical of the Colombian or the Jamaican gangs.

This is in itself racist discourse, but the fact that Harrigan is himself black suggests that culture (understood as integration in American culture) and not race is the real issue. In any case, the America that Harrigan defends from the monster is not that of the white man represented by the methodical, imperturbable FBI senior agent sent to capture the Predator, but that of the union of different genders and different ethnic groups: Harrigan's own team consists of two Hispanics (a man and a woman), a low-class white man and himself, whereas the FBI's team are all white men. Stranded between the pseudo-primitive culture of the Jamaicans and Colombians and the FBI's blind confidence in state-of-the-art technology, the African-American Harrigan survives the return of the Beast because he sees the shortcomings of both. Presumably, this is why even though he has killed a Predator, the remaining members of the extraterrestrial group of hunters allow him to survive. After the revelation received in the underground hideout of the monsters, Harrigan returns to the surface of the city knowing that the monster of the past will inevitably return in the future and that no hero can defeat the Beast for ever. Furthermore, that nobody will acknowledge his heroic acts at all and that other FBI men like the ones who died in the combat with the monster will deny that the Predator ever existed.

The myth of the 'Return of the Beast' goes beyond the concrete historical moment dominated by American culture and beyond the idea of the hostile extraterrestrial. The Beast may return in the form of an extraterrestrial race (what animal could, indeed, be believable as a predator of humans now that animals are seen as the victims?), but it may also take the shape of a disease, a mutated human, autonomous sentient artificial human beings or machines, extinct species reborn thanks to genetic engineering and even the undead vampires or other creatures of legend such as werewolves. The myth is thus, neo-Darwinian as it explores the fears that our privileged position as a species may be radically altered by an evolutionary accident, especially by those brought about by humankind itself. Apart from the threat posed by the existence of a large quantity of nuclear weapons, AIDS—which appeared in the early 1980s—has probably greatly contributed to this dystopian atmosphere of the end of the century, in several senses: first, because the illusion that modern medical science could conquer any disease has been shattered by the failure to produce a vaccine; secondly, the virus has been alternatively seen as a 'product' of Africa, where it originated and as a 'product' of illegal experimentation of colonialist white science in Africa—at a point there were rumours that the virus had passed from a monkey to a human thanks to experiments in trans-species blood transfusion, a myth that points simultaneously to a fear of miscegenation, involution and technology. Thirdly AIDS, in itself a biblical plague for many who thought it only attacked those who 'deserved' it, has not been seen truly as a disease but as a punishment linked to guilt and abnormality—the monstrous virus reaching those monstrous Others but not the privileged white, heterosexual, monogamous, drug-free, middle class. In the view of dangers as absolute and real as nuclear weapons or AIDS, the myth of the return of the Beast has an immediate psychological, consolatory (and cautionary) use: it reminds human beings that privilege is fragile and that we could lose it as a species or as an individual as the Beast did.

The fear of the loss of privilege and of the alien species takeover is no doubt bound to a paranoid pessimism about the barbaric state of civilization at the end of the century, though it would be only short-sighted to suggest that the paranoia is unfounded. What is significant is the fact that the myths of destruction apply only symbolically to postmodernist reality, indeed, that myth is preferred over realism to deal with global anxiety and fear, as if the worldwide reality of suffering and death could only be

processed through the sensationalism of the media or through myth. On the other hand, since filmmakers and novelists are usually reluctant to rationalize the mythical content of their work—perhaps because it is not explicable by reason but by intuition of what lies hidden in the collective unconscious—there is considerable confusion as to what ideology the neo-barbarian myths actually assert. These difficulties in apprehending reality may be part of the postmodernist confusion between reality and fiction but they may also be signs of a deeper despair: why deal with ‘reality’ in artistic terms when the constant presence of ‘reality’ in the media does not result in the better understanding of who we are? Why not leave historicity behind and move towards myth, or alternatively, banality, trivia?

I return thus to my initial question of why the imaginary Beast has a greater presence in our culture than real life ‘monstrous’ human beings: why is so much effort devoted to producing fiction and cultural studies about, for instance, vampires and not about the contemporary equivalents of John Merrick, the ‘Elephant Man’? A sign of contemporary myth is that it lives on the edge between transcendence and banality because belief is not a fundamental issue. The myth may carry as much meaning as secondary elaboration ascribes to it—my own reading of Chatwin’s myth and the available mythological corpus is in itself an attempt at understanding what exactly is touched when we read or see fiction of the kind I have described—or none at all. That is, after seeing *Predator*, audiences may have either the impression that the monster is but a banal fantasy or that he represents a most serious invitation to considering how easily all human life can be destroyed.

Predator, which is probably the quintessential text of the mythical type I am describing in this section, may be thus seen simply as a typical Hollywood vehicle for star Arnold Schwarzenegger: just another action film mixing elements derived from the Vietnam film and the science-fiction monster film reinforcing masculinist, racist, imperialistic and militaristic ideologies. For Schwarzenegger’s hero, Dutch, both the guerrilla and the monster are the ‘enemy’; the rainbow crew he leads, which includes a native American, an African-American and a Hispanic, and the token presence of a woman (the captured guerrilla) are either signs of political correctness or a reinforcement of the idea that only white men of a very muscular kind are fit to play heroic roles—at least in action films. Yet the entrance of woman in the myth of the hunter with Ellen Ripley in *Alien* and of the man other than white with Mike Harrigan in *Predator 2*, suggests that the ideology of this type of narrative is in constant transformation. The entrenchment of the Predator in the popular imagination—the success of the films, the comics, the novels, the attached merchandising—may be a further sign of the banality of the monster. However, the function of this mythologizing fiction is not only providing entertainment for a Saturday afternoon but also ostensibly that of setting the head spinning, as Chatwin describes his reaction when he read C.K. Brain’s hypothesis about the *Dinofelis*. His, ‘what if...?’ is the same ‘what if..?’ awakened by this kind of (sub)mythical fiction. Regardless of logic, probability and even possibility, when seeing the uncanny moment in which Dutch emerges from the mud, covered in dead leaves and looking the very incarnation of the hero of primitive myth to face the alien Predator—a primitive predator equipped with nuclear weapons, certainly postmodernist man’s Jungian shadow—what matters is Life and Death beyond the historical moment, beyond the awareness that this is just a film. And that is the essence of myth. Obviously, I am not suggesting that audiences understand that this and other films are elaborations on the myth described by Chatwin—there is no such awareness of the roots of myth in Hollywood. What I am suggesting is that (sub)myth

may appeal to aspects of the collective unconscious for which there is not yet an available discourse; this lack of discourse may make (sub)myth appear to be trivial, when in fact its triviality is a relative value that subverts the idea that real meaning lies in other cultural products that elicit abundant critical discourse.

In other cases, such as that of the vampire, the cultural or critical discourse seems to be obscuring mythical subtexts that have become taboo. Whatever the actual sources of the legends about vampires may have been (photophobic diseases and catatonic pseudo-deaths plus various theories on the decomposition of human bodies have been indicated) the fact is that vampires are related to taboos surrounding death. Freud (op. cit.: 65) inscribes the origins of demons, spirits and vampires based on the return of the dead to the influence of mourning: extreme detachment from the dead body would help dissociate “the survivors’ memories and hopes from the dead”. However, current critical discourse on vampirism tends to ignore the relationship between vampirism and death and focuses, instead, on sexuality. Richard Dyer (1988) suggests that Stoker’s Victorian Dracula and other vampires of fiction—especially Lestat and Louis in *Interview with the Vampire*—can be read as representations of the fear of homosexual men, Roger Dadoun (1989) sees Dracula’s stiff body as the very embodiment of male sexuality and he describes the male vampire as a ‘phalambulist’. Other critics have insisted in seeing Dracula as the patriarchal man literally sucking women’s blood and have pondered the attraction/repulsion dilemma posed to the victims. The application of sexual discourse to vampirism corresponds to that “constant optimization and an increasing valorisation of the discourse on sex” that Michel Foucault (1984: 23) sees as the sign not of censorship but of the Western man’s interest during the last three centuries in installing “an apparatus for producing an ever greater quantity of discourse about sex, capable of functioning and taking effect in its very economy”. In the case of the vampire my suggestion is that the sexual reading, while appearing to tell the underlying ‘truth’ about why vampirism is such an active part of the human imagination and of the current Gothic revival, is actually used to efface another underlying, more problematic and embarrassing truth: that we no longer know how to deal with death.

The vampire is often seen in the 1980s and 1990s as a non-human predator, even as literally an alien species as in Tobe Hooper’s *Lifeforce* (1985). The vampire keeps points of contact with the mythical Beast but is progressively losing the connotations associated with death that have been displaced in the twentieth century towards the zombie, a figure imported from Haitian folklore as recently as the 1930s. It cannot be denied that sexuality is one of the main issues in the current interpretation of vampirism, but novels such as *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) and *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980) insist on presenting the vampire mainly as a predator. In *Interview with the Vampire*, the vampires Louis and Lestat’s main bone of contention is that while the former cannot reconcile the remains of his human nature with his new nature as a predator, the latter lives happily as a human undead predator. In Suzy McKee Charnas’ *The Vampire Tapestry* Dr. Weyland is seen as a predator devoid of all sexual charm by a woman who tries to hunt him and by a boy who feeds the vampire when he is about to die. Bitten by the monster, the boy wonders how anybody may have seen a connection between vampirism and sexuality at all: the bite in the neck, indeed, is more reminiscent of the hunting methods of felines than of any kind of sexual contact. Weyland, himself a reputed anthropologist specialized in vampire legends, defines vampires as the top rung predators, specialised in human prey—or, as another character ironises, “a sort of left-over saber-tooth tiger, a truly endangered species” (p. 41). In short, a creation of the

human imagination based on the memory of Chatwin's 'Dinofelis'. This view of the vampire may incidentally give a clue to why fans of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* have been angered by Coppola's romantic revision of the vampire: why, they claim, has not Stoker's 'hunter or the hunted' scenario been respected when it is what justifies the lasting attraction of the vampire—and indeed of the myth of the eternal return of the Beast?

3.1.3. The Human Hero and the Alien Messiah

Regenia Gagnier (1990: 151) has argued that Dracula is defeated when his modern Victorian opponents class him as a 'child-brain' and 'criminaloid': "Once the forces of the information industry assign the Count the label of 'child-brain' (a contemporary term from ethnology) and 'criminaloid' (from criminology)—in late Victorian terms, atavistic, at a lower stage of evolution—he can only instinctively return home to the land of superstitions". Dracula must be read, then, as an optimistic assertion in favour of modernity and against the barbarism represented by the Count; his defeat is a triumph of civilization that leaves no nostalgia for the vanquished Beast. Contemporary myths are not so optimistic about the actual possibilities of civilization to defeat barbarism. Hero/ines take up their tasks reluctantly, wondering why they have been chosen and how they, ordinary human beings, can overcome the powerful monster. They are Christological heroes who find in the sacrifice to redeem others the highest justification of their humanity in the face of the inhumanity of the monster—and death.

As Alan Dundes (Rank et al., 1990: 179–223) has shown, Jesus stands in the same line as the heroes of primitive myth, though he is exceptional in two senses: first, what is missing in his myth is the killing of the monster and the marriage to the 'princess', second, he is placed within historical time by those who believe in him. For Baring and Cashford (op. cit.: 597) he is not a hero in the Indo-European sense of the hunter-warrior but the first of the prehistoric goddess' son-lovers destined to renew the fertility of the mother Earth with their yearly death,

whose voice we hear, or at least whose voice has come down to us. He is the first actually to teach the meaning of sacrifice, and the first to take that sacrifice upon himself willingly. In the tradition that clothed him, the son-lovers of earlier times were not drawn as consenting to their death or understanding it. If that is a valid comparison, then from any perspective this represents a crucial movement of consciousness to a higher level.

I do not intend here to disparage the figure of Jesus or to suggest as John Lennon once did referring to his own 'cult' that the heroes of popular culture are at the same level as the heroes of religion. However, I should like to point out that the persistence of Christological features in many neo-barbarian myths indicates that the ideal hero of the secularised 1980s and 1990s descends from the fusion between the myth of the hunter and the myth of the goddess embodied in Christ, the Messiah. The images are scattered and, on the whole, less evident than the overwhelming presence of the Beast, yet they form a suggestive network which outlines a type of hero different from the masculinist hunter-warrior. The list is long: Ripley's final sacrifice and that of the T-1 to prevent the second coming of the Beast and apocalypse, the replicant Roy's hand penetrated by a nail before his death directs his enemy Deckard's gaze towards the only glimpse of blue sky seen in the darkness of *Blade Runner*, Jean-Claude Van Damme's crucifixion in

Cyborg, the power to save lives of Oskar Schindler, Alex Murphy's resigned acceptance of his new role as an only half-human Robocop devoted to protecting the innocent are some of those Christological images in film. In the novel, the cybrid Johnny Keats who birth announces the reconciliation of humankind and their intelligent machines is perhaps the most prominent Christological hero together with the girl Swan, who has the power to regenerate the Earth devastated by nuclear explosions.

The Terminator is the most successful fusion of elements derived from the patriarchal hero myths analysed by Rank, Raglan and Dundes (ranging from *Gilgamesh* to the Greek myths) with the view of the ideal hero as a new, Christological version of the goddess' son-lover. In classical, patriarchal myth, the hero is conceived in extraordinary, even supernatural circumstances, often by a woman chosen by a god. He is often placed with foster parents and ignores who he really is because an interdiction has been put on his parents (usually the mother) to approach him. Eventually, he is reunited with his real parents and, though not much is known of his childhood, he becomes as an adult the slayer of a monster and a triumphant leader of his people, though usually he later loses his position.

The two *Terminator* films follow remarkably well this pattern. Sarah Connor (the woman 'chosen' by fate to be the mother of humankind's saviour) is visited by an 'angel of annunciation', chosen by the future redeemer of humankind—John Connor—to give her a message (the etymological meaning of 'angel' is, of course, messenger): she must become Connor's mother and help him through the 'dark years' until he can rise to the status of leader. Kyle, the 'angel', fathers the child John, who has thus a 'supernatural' origin because his father cannot possibly have been born when he begets the son. Later, Sarah is forced to separate from John and imprisoned in a psychiatric unit so as to prevent her disclosure of the existence of the computer created by patriarchal science that will eventually destroy humankind. The US government play thus the role of the jealous king or god that separates the woman from her hero son in archaic and classic myths. John is, like most traditional heroes, placed in the care of foster parents until eventually a second 'angel', the protective T-1, whom he has himself sent from the future reveals to him who he really is and reunites him with his mother. The second film concludes with the killing of the apocalyptic monster—the T-1000—and with John's ritual passage from childhood to adulthood achieved thanks to the sacrifice of his 'mentor', the T-1.

The most fascinating points of the story of John Connor's birth and childhood are the transfer of the idea of sacrifice from the Christological hero to the monstrous father, the T-1 of the second film, and the placing of the destiny of humankind in the hands of a dyad formed by the strong mother, Sarah, and her son. The adult John Connor is heroic because he devotes his life to defeating the autonomous, thinking machines that unleash the nuclear war that devastates Earth: he cannot regenerate the land as the goddess-girl Swan does in *Swan Song*, but he uses positive aggression to stop the masculinist, patriarchal negative aggression which permitted the construction of nuclear weapons. However, if John is to succeed and avoid his own sacrifice, he must first seek the help of his mother and transform her from an average woman into a warrior capable of supporting his cause: unlike the passive mothers of the traditional heroes—including the Virgin Mary—Sarah must make choices that involve the whole future of humankind and, what is even more important, must find a way of educating John that avoids the pitfalls of patriarchy and her own androphobia. Hence the need for the sacrifice of the surrogate father, the reconverted T-1, who is simultaneously the monstrous result of masculinist technology and John's own modification of that model

on the basis of the education received from Sarah. The pair formed by the goddess and the son-lover return in this apocalyptic myth to offer, at least, the possibility of a different view of the future.

One of the myths constantly retold against a science-fictional background is that of the 'Alien Messiah', in which sophisticated aliens tutor us in the advantages of superior civilization. This messianic race may well indicate that contemporary film audiences and film writers suffer from "a terminal sense of inadequacy and insecurity and a parallel fatalistic certainty that the problems of our contemporary society are insurmountable", as Alan Ruppertsberg (1990: 37) remarks. If this is the case, it follows that the aliens take the place of the gods, bringing to us a superhuman solution in films that serve the same function as "the biblical epics of the 1950s and 1960s" (ibid.: 37). This is the legacy of Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke's classic film *2001* (1968), a film that opposes the myth of the hostile predator from outer space by suggesting that our growth as a civilized species is related to the magical intervention of a superior race. Many primitive myths refer to the Promethean gods coming from the sky, gods who taught humankind different skills that gave rise to civilization and, indeed, many benign extraterrestrials of (sub)myth display superior abilities that are very far from human civilization. When these aliens appear as in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Cocoon* (1985), *Starman* (1984), *The Hidden* (1987) or *The Abyss* (1991) they are presented as 'spiritual' beings of luminous bodies—often disguised in a human body—totally different from the bizarre anatomy of the hostile extraterrestrials.

A remarkable point in which the myth of the 'Alien Messiah' and that of the 'Return of the Beast' differ is the fear of the species takeover. The benign aliens do not represent a threat and live in a totally separate sphere from humankind, away from Earth or, as in *The Abyss*, as the unsuspected denizens of the dark areas of the planet. The theme of the stranded alien—also present in *Alien* and in *The Thing*—seems to act, oddly enough, as a guarantee that the benign aliens will not alter the privileged position of humankind. There may be a sexual union between an angelic alien and a human, as happens in *Starman* and *Cocoon*, but the connotations are very different from the horror of the sexual union between human and alien in, for instance, *Species*. While traditional myth is populated by many heroes born of the union between mortals and gods down to the birth of Jesus from Mary, contemporary mythmaking is strangely constrained in this sense and seems to prefer technology rather than the divine to explain the superhuman nature of the heroes, if they are indeed superhuman.

The angelic alien of *The Abyss* are at a crossroads between the secret species, the stranded alien and the guardian angel. They have much in common with the extraterrestrial Klaatu of *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), who arrives on Earth to warn humans that the Earth will be destroyed by a coalition of planets unless peace is given a chance. Klaatu's failure—he is hunted down and killed—may be the pessimistic reason why the more recent alien visitors of fiction are not exactly messiahs with a mission but lost travellers. While the Beasts of myth threaten to conquer Earth, it is certainly ironic that the Alien Messiahs mostly avoid contact with the inhabitants of the Earth and that only accident prompts their strange meetings. What the 'memory builders' of *The Abyss* have apparently learned from Klaatu is that angelic persuasion does not work with humans: a miraculous show of power is needed, which in this film takes the shape of a tidal wave big enough to sweep across the whole Earth—incidentally, the apocalyptic end of the Earth envisioned in the myths of the Australian aboriginals portrayed in Peter Weir's beautiful film *The Last Wave* (1977), another film with a Christological hero. As it turns out, this bullying of the warring humans into peace

leaves the aliens powerless to go back home, though the question of the species takeover is eluded by the fact that the aliens live in the sea and can thus share Earth with man.

The ‘memory builders’ differ from humans, as their name indicates, in their ability to construct collective memories. Unlike humans, each individual can have access in a conscious way to all the collective memories of the species since its very origin and to all the particular memories of each individual since its birth. The alien species of *Ender’s Game* is privileged in the same way and so are the ‘noocytes’ of *Blood Music* (1985) and the new interspecies of *The Nimrod Hunt* (1986). These fantasies about the reification of the collective unconscious, its exteriorization to a conscious level—as taught by an alien race or on the basis of human intuition or even technological achievement—is a wish-fulfilment fantasy related to the impossibility of wholly recovering the past of the human species and the personal past of each individual. This fantasy is not always positive and may lead to the raising of horrific monsters as in the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, based on the premise that Freddy Krueger is a new archetype arisen from the collective nightmares of a group of teenagers. Yet, on the whole, mental linking is seen under a positive light and from many perspectives. Thus, in *Mythago Wood* (1984), a primal forest kept intact in England since the end of the Ice Age also preserves a capacity to materialize the fantasies—positive or negative—of all the men that have crossed it. When Steven Huxley enters it in search of his companion Guiwenneth—herself a mythical woman dreamed up by Steven’s father—he finds that the forest is the domain of all myths and of all ages and comes across figures of legend and people from other historical times. His father believed that the ‘myth imagoes’—the images of myths—carried in the unconscious found in the woods something far more powerful than the individual’s imagination, “a sort of creative field that can interact with our unconscious... The form of the idealized myth, the hero figures, alters with cultural changes, assuming the identity and technology of the time” (p. 49).

Cyberspace is the other main domain of the collective unconscious in postmodernist mythmaking, the domain where monstrous gods like *Neuromancer* in the eponymous cyberpunk novel by William Gibson (1984) or Jobe in *The Lawnmower Man* (1992) are created, assuming the ‘ideology and technology of the time’. To a certain extent, the aspiration to a mythical total memory has found its technological embodiment in the Internet, which is nothing but Gibson’s cyberspace. Douglas Rushkoff declared following the publication of his novel *Cyberia* that the Internet is “something that if it is not alive, is very life-like” (in Didbin, 1994: 12) He added that:

“It is also self-spreading because it feeds the natural human desire to connect and reach out, our natural net-like tendencies. I don’t see how it can be stopped.’

‘I think the Internet is going to be a vital extension of human life. The next phase of human evolution is going to see us becoming more of a single total human organism rather than groups of individuals...’

Obviously, what matters in this case is not so much the value of Rushkoff’s words as prophecy but the way in which they summarize a mythical aspiration that has so far only found its expression in an intuitive form in fiction, but that lacks a deeper analysis from an anthropological point of view. The ambiguity of his use of the word ‘evolution’—technological progress or species evolution?—links his comments on the Internet to my suggestion that the myths of the ‘Return of the Beast’ and the ‘Alien Messiah’ are fictional explorations of the fear that our species might lose its privileged position and

also of the possible directions that evolution may take. Whether the Internet will be represented in fiction as a potentially positive way of developing what Rushkoff describes as 'our natural net-like tendencies' or as a threat to individualism still remains to be seen.

Not all the new myths concern the nostalgia for the predator, the awaiting for a messiah or the mythical (mystical?) union of humankind through the sharing of the mythical collective consciousness. British writer Terry Pratchett has built a very successful literary career with his *Discworld* novel series by exploring with an enormous sense of humour how central belief is to raise monsters—what he calls collectively 'the Things'—from their otherworldly domain. The twenty novels of the series are based on a similar scheme: an individual or a group cause, often unwittingly, a breach in the fabric of the thin wall that separates the grotesque human inhabitants of the Discworld from their non-human, monstrous counterparts; the Things inevitably threaten to take over and only 'magic' can restore the balance between 'order'—if such is the word in the bizarre world of the humans—and the ever impending chaos. Belief is, in any case, the foundation of the clash between humankind and the Things, for only belief can sustain the existence of all kinds of mythical creatures—a topic frequently repeated in contemporary fantasy. Thus, *Small Gods* (1989) narrates the hilarious adventures of a small god—reduced to taking the shape of a humble turtle because he has lost his believers—in search of a single new believer that will restore him to his former glory. In *Guards, Guards!* (1992), a mythical Dragon raised by the alchemists plagues the inhabitants of the capital, Ankh-Morpork, until the pragmatic head of the city guards understands that the physically impossible beast has returned from a domain to which it had been banished after the community lost its belief in—and its memory of—it.

Pratchett's *Moving Pictures* (1990) touches directly on the role of the cinema as the medium that best suits the audience's need for make-believe mythical monsters. The novel deals with the 'rediscovery' of the new technique of filmmaking by the Ankh-Morpork alchemists: they have tricked a set of tiny demons to paint on a moving strip as fast as they can what is enacted before their eyes. The business of filmmaking proceeds among a strong feeling of déjà vu, until the fateful opening night of the blockbuster *Blown Away* when the audience's belief in the reality of the giant figures projected onto the screen causes them to come to life in a repetition of a long forgotten event that once doomed the ancient city of L.A. Only the efforts of the male star of *Blown Away*—forced to perpetuate the make-believe outside the screen and to play hero against the gigantic Things—and the timely apparition of the knight custodian of the lost city (a gigantic version of the Oscar statuette) ensure that the screen will be never again a gate for the Things to enter Ankh-Morpork.

Pratchett's satiric exposure of the film business and of Hollywood's (sub)mythical nature points, all the same, to an idea that is essential to an understanding of contemporary mythmaking and the position of the monster within it: the unconscious nostalgia that leads the alchemists—the new filmmakers—to (re)-create a means to believe is positive and enjoyable as long as the dividing line between reality and fiction is kept clear. When belief is missing, make-believe (film, novels) takes its place; the monster of make-believe may adequately fulfil this very human need to indulge in belief and to create myths. Yet, a return to real, primitive belief in myth is a step backwards, a regression towards an involutory, chaotic, barbarian state. Pratchett's humour and the interplay between banality and transcendence of most contemporary myth-making are a way of acknowledging the need for the myth and the impossibility of returning to it

except from the self-conscious, ironic stance of postmodernity in which, as I have shown, it thrives.

3.2. Nostalgia for the Freak: The Forbidden Gaze

The make-believe monsters of (sub)mythical fiction have erased the human exhibits of the freak show from popular culture. The pleasure taken in freely gazing at the monstrous human has been displaced towards the artificial body of the monster visualized in film, comic, video-game and towards the imaginary monster of the novel. The memory of the freak show is a memory of shame and embarrassment: further proof of the barbarism existing at the core of civilization. The freak disappeared from public exhibition allegedly for humanitarian reasons. Exhibiting humans for profit came to be regarded as an uncivilised activity and the freak show was pushed out of the public domain by invoking the degradation of the unfortunate human beings involved in it. However, I will argue that far from being an altruistic, humanitarian act of redemption, the pressure to end the freak show was due to concerns that had nothing to do with the freaks but with the onlookers. There came a point, in the 1930s, when the imaginary monsters of film were seen to better fulfil the need for the Other; then the sense of wonder once awakened by real, human monsters became, simply, pity. This pity led to the fall of the freak show but by no means to the integration of the freaks into normality. Instead, they were medicalized, redefined as disabled people, and, in general, hidden away from the public gaze in institutions or their homes. All the same, the gap left by the disappearance of the freak show has resulted, paradoxically, in less tolerance for physical difference so that at the end of the twentieth century the persons being exhibited are fashion models, that is to say, those who are a model of superior anatomy and who sell the illusion that anybody can be perfect. The difference of the freak appears the more threatening now in this illusory panorama of easily attainable perfect beauty than it did when the freak show was alive and when the homogenisation of a standard of human beauty was not so accused as it is now.

A remarkable paradox of the fiction of the twentieth century is that, as Katherine Hume (op. cit.: 20) argues, “the serious quest for novelty has forced writers to examine the grotesque, the acutely abnormal, and the unique” while at the same time the abnormal human is finding less and less tolerance in real life. Hume adds to her remark that this endless search for original subjects in the novel “contribute marginally at best to our understanding of human nature”, and may result, thus, in uninteresting material, irrelevant to the concerns of most readers. However, Hume misses an important point: the abnormal defines normality because it is its inverted image, hence there will always be a need for the human abnormal beyond the current quest for originality. The target of fiction about human monstrosity is not a widening readership or film audience composed of abnormal people but by people who want to be reassured in their normality—or, alternatively, by people who enjoy the subversion of illusory normality offered by fiction about the grotesque and the monstrous.

Monstrosity—in the sense of acute abnormality—and normality are irrelevant in isolation but function as a pillar of communal life. They mark the boundaries of tolerance towards an individual and, consequently, the power held by some to define others as monsters. The individuals or groups that hold that power are in positions of privilege and, so, they tend to elaborate two types of representations of monstrosity: myths of superiority—hostile or benign—and myths of inferiority, horrific or sentimental. The myths I have examined in the first section are myths of superiority in which the

'normal' man finds his privileges either threatened or miraculously maintained by more powerful beings. The myths of inferiority fulfil a similar function but the focus on the monsters' powerlessness stresses the superiority of the 'normal' hero. A certain degree of cruelty and hatred is mixed in the representation of 'abnormal' persons with a fascination for difference and with an increasingly problematic awareness of the fact that by defining monstrosity the 'normal' person defines his shadow, his own monstrous self. Women and children have been the target of that alternance between fascination and degradation (aspects that I analyse respectively in Chapters 7 and 8) though sexuality, race and class, have also been determining factors to establish the abnormal. Those who used to be called 'monsters' and later 'freaks' were also on the receiving end of the average people's power to define abnormality and now under the general label of the 'disabled', are beginning to demand a different, respectful treatment.

Despite the apparent advance of equality and political correctness on all fronts, fiction treasures its capacity to transgress social needs and to insist on being politically incorrect. Two instances will suffice to show how far ideal political correctness is from actual fiction, and how badly it misunderstands the passion of human beings for prejudice. Disregarding completely the claims of feminism against the misrepresentation of women as monstrous femme fatales, the recent film *Species* deals with the creation of a very beautiful woman, Sil, out of the mixed DNA of a human being and an extraterrestrial. Sil's extremely fast growth leads her to seek desperately a man to fulfil her instinctual wishes for motherhood. In the end, sexuality and motherhood reveal that beneath the beautiful woman there is a horrific monster that breeds also horrific men, and the film ends with the destruction of mother and son. Katherine Dunn's novel *Geek Love* (1983) is, likewise, as politically incorrect as possible. It deals with a bizarre family of freaks born to a married couple who breeds their monstrous children with the expectation of exploiting them in the family freak show. The freak show returns with a vengeance in this novel, which is possibly, the perfect illustration of the kind of original fiction described by Katherine Hume. *Species* or *Geek Love*, and many other films and novels, are fiction that can only be understood as carnivalesque. It has its appeal and its dangers, as it is useful to give vent to questions that are being repressed by the idealist expansion of political correctness; on the other hand, they should not pre-empt the need to find a more balanced way to represent those who do not have the power to define their own representations.

This tension between the privilege of defining normality and the right of difference to be respected is particularly problematized by the fact that alternative representations are not yet available. There is a breakdown of power, of social consensus, to construct the Other as monster on the basis of sex, sexual preference, age, race, class, education or disability, but there is also a great confusion as to what image we want to give of ourselves in order to deny the power of others to define us. This confusion has been generalized to those who until now held the power over the 'norm'—white, middle-class, Western men—and who are also in search of a new way of representing themselves. It can be said that the struggle for political correctness is pushing us towards the imaginary monster—the Beast, the Messiah—across and beyond human categories. This is possibly positive, though there is a certain risk that it may lead to ignoring very serious issues involved in the definition of humanity, such as how we deal with human biological or natural monsters, that are being pushed away from fiction to make room for that less problematic monster of myth.

3.2.1. The Death of the Freak

The last freak show in America, located in New York's Coney island, closed its doors at the beginning of 1996 to be replaced by a branch of another American popular institution, McDonald's. In spite of the belated survival of the Coney island attraction, the freak show saw the peak of its popularity between the 1840s and the 1940s and has been in decline since then. Although the exhibition of physically abnormal people for profit began long before the USA existed, the freak show itself is an American creation, and it is indeed in the American imagination that it has left its deepest imprint. The freak and the freak show have lost their place in the American fairground to resurface in fantasy, usually to signify the fear of the loss of body ownership of the new freak, most frequently a victim of some fantastic, fatal destiny. Thus, the hero of *Darkman* (1990), the disfigured scientist Peyton Westlake, is particularly anguished by the idea that he will be forced to become an attraction in a side show, an obvious anachronism in the L.A. of 1990 in which the film is set. In a number of recent films and novels about freaks, the secret laboratory of a corporation or of a government agency becomes the prison where the freak is secluded and exploited, as, for instance in *Firestarter* (1980). Other texts, such as *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* (1992) suggest that the sensationalist media are the true postmodernist heirs of the freak show in their passion for exhibiting the tragedies of the postmodernist everyman.

All in all, the fantastic freak of recent fiction is presented as an individual trapped by his circumstances and by the exploitative attitude of those around him; unlike the freaks of the freak show, the freak of recent fiction is a victim who cannot find a place in society. S/he is not, then, a representation of those who are marginalized because of their anatomy but of those who fear the marginalization they would face if they were suddenly turned into 'abnormal' humans because of disease, violence or an accident. In general, the fantastic freak is the victim of a generalized cruelty that is identified with something deeply ingrained in America, the tension between the egalitarian spirit that led to the foundation of the country and the actual inability to tolerate difference. Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), which has been misread as a charming fairy tale when it is a bitter attack on this white, middle-class intolerant America exposes the intolerance towards the freakish body in the brief but significant contact between the monster hero Edward and a disabled neighbour of the American suburb that almost destroys the freak. When Edward is first introduced in the neighbourhood, this man advises Edward not to let anybody call him a cripple because of his hands, which are bunches of shears; yet when Edward's loses the sympathy of the suburb and a mob intent on lynching him starts chasing him, this very same man asks whether the "cripple" has been caught yet. This shows how human the tendency of reinforcing one's own sense of normality by degrading others is, and how essential the freak is to satisfy that need, even for those already at the margins of normality.

The relationship between normality and abnormality is in a constant state of flux. As Robert Bogdan (op. cit.: x) comments, "'freak' is not a quality that belongs to the person on display. It is something that we created; a perspective, a set of practices—a social construction". This begs the question of what social change led to the disappearance of the freak for it is naive to suppose that physically monstrous humans are not born any longer. In fact, the disappearance of the freak follows the same lines as the disappearance of capital punishment as described by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1987): what delineates the process is not the alleged humanization of modern society but the interests of groups seeking to gain power. Up to a point, the

public executions of criminals and freak shows followed a similar destiny as they had points in common. The public executions exposed the body of the criminal—the moral monster—to the gaze of a crowd which could see in his or her punishment a show of power, a certainly ritualistic performance enacted for the benefit of keeping order. Capitalistic exhibitors used the freak, most often with his or her willing collaboration, to ensure their audiences that they were at the centre of society and not at the margins like the exhibits. The witness of a public execution and the spectator of the freak show achieved the same satisfaction, enjoying the idea that they were in a safe, privileged position that would never lead them to the scaffold or the side show.

When executions ceased being public and the freak show disappeared, the fear rose that the individual might be abused, not publicly but secretly, by a sinister system of power—a pharisaic government, a covetous corporation, corrupt science—and turned into a freak, exploited and punished in an undeserved way. Many contemporary films and novels indeed dramatize this fear. At this point, however, public imagination has turned away from the actual criminals and freaks, who are no longer visible, and has ceased to consider in what ways they are also victims. The fact that an eventual broadcasting of executions live on TV is being currently considered in the USA as a benefit for the community in some states stresses the point: the return of the public execution, seen through the eyes of the cameras, would serve the same purpose as fiction about freaks, namely, reassuring the average citizen of his or her normality, safety and rights and exonerating him or her from the need to think about why freaks and criminals deserved once or deserve now their loss of privilege and the loss of the ownership of their body.

The crucial factor in the disappearance of the freak show is intimately linked to the question of body ownership and the new power exerted by the medical profession in this sense in the twentieth century. In the mid nineteenth century the freak show and the medical profession entered a symbiotic relationship that brought about mutual benefit: doctors gained authority by becoming ‘experts’ in the conditions of the freaks they visited and they “legitimized the public’s interest in curiosities” (Bogdan, op. cit.: 27). However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the medical profession wanted to attain, above all, respectability and based part of its authority on defining human difference as ‘disease’. The next step in the medicalization of the freak in the USA took place in 1908, when an article titled “Circus and Museum Freaks, Curiosities of Pathology” appeared in the widely read *Scientific America Supplement*. This was the first criticism of the inhumanity of freak shows penned by a doctor and the first to suggest that the proper status of the freaks was as ‘patients’ and not as exhibits. The idea that sickness explained the freak reached the popular press in the 1920s. By the early 1930s, “the medicalized view of human differences had become so pervasive that Browning’s 1932 film *Freaks*, which starred many sideshow attractions, started with the statement that freaks’ abnormalities were gradually being eliminated by medical science” (Bogdan, *ibid.*: 66). The process by which the freaks were progressively deprived of their status as independent performing artists, which is what many of them were, to become diseased patients could be said to be near completion in the 1930s. The increased institutionalization of the disabled, together with the rising popularity of other forms of entertainment such as the cinema contributed to the disappearance of the freak show, though it was by no means true that the medical profession had managed to conquer disability; they only succeeded in creating a climate favourable for the discontinuation of the freak show and this was done so mainly by appealing to pity.

Pity or compassion are however not totally incompatible with exploitation as David Lynch's *The Elephant Man* (1980), a film based on the real life freak John Merrick shows. Merrick was rescued from the greedy clutches of his compassionless exploiter in a freak show by Dr. Treves, an eminent member of the staff of one of Victorian London's most important hospitals. Treves was horrified by the ill-treatment received by Merrick and offered him a home and protection in this hospital. Yet Dr. Treves' right to exhibit Merrick's body in the successful lectures that increase his own prestige as a doctor is questioned only timidly by Lynch's film. Lynch subtly indicates that the crowd of uneducated people enjoying the sight of Merrick's misshapen body in the freak show is moved by the same primal curiosity that moves Dr. Treves' learned colleagues and the upper-class people who become Merrick's frequent visitors while in hospital. However, the contrast between Merrick's brutal exploiter and the sensitive Dr. Treves is so marked that it is only inevitable to see Treves as Merrick's saviour and not as another type of more insidious exploiter. Questions of class possibly intervened in the decadence of the freak show as Lynch's film suggests: the working classes' enjoyment of the freak show was branded as illegitimate curiosity while the curiosity of those who fêted Merrick in society—his respectable visitors, the men of science and even his patroness, the Princess of Wales—was declared legitimate. When those who, like Dr. Treves, had the power to declare that gazing at the freak was a morbid spectacle it was done so in the name of human decency. In fact, this move was nothing but a step previous to the displacement of the ownership of the freak body to the medical profession and the law.

Although the reputation of the freak show was irredeemably damaged by the circulation of stories concerning the ruthless exploitation of the exhibits, a point on which *The Elephant Man* insists, this was not always the case. On the contrary, many freaks and their exhibitors struck up successful business partnerships, though sad cases, such as that of the unfortunate Siamese twins, the talented Hilton sisters, who fought a bitter legal battle to regain their freedom from their legal guardians and exploiters, surely contributed to the bad reputation of the freak show. Some contemporary texts, such as *Geek Love* and *Nights at the Circus* (1987), consider the right of the freak to choose making a living by exploiting the curiosity of audiences for the freak body, although they do so in such ambiguous terms and using so many outdated clichés that it is hard to take them seriously. The fact is that many people who would a century ago have been independent, popular and even wealthy, as freak show stars are now socially invisible because they have been marginalised as patients. Obviously, it would be only cruel to suggest that people with severe deformities ought to exhibit themselves for a living, but it is only fair to note that first, the invisibility of the formerly called freak in the streets, the work place and the media is a sign that s/he has not been really accepted as part of the normal order of society; second, other forms of bodily exploitation (pornography mainly, but also fashion, advertising and the cinema) have replaced the freak show as entertainment aimed at gratifying our voyeurism and third, the medical profession has not 'cured' the freak but devised more effective methods to prevent his or her being born or to transform him or her into a showpiece of what science can achieve. Whenever freaks such as Siamese twins are born, the media carries abundant information about the miraculous operations that permit their separation or 'cure'. In this kind of information human suffering is displaced to the background (it is not infrequent for at least one of the separated babies to die) whereas the power of technoscience is foregrounded.

Precisely, a possible reason why the adult freak and the monstrous baby have become socially invisible, lacking hence a clear fictional representation, is that their bodies are conspicuous signs of the limited success of the medical profession. The doctors who claimed in the 1930s that freaks had to become patients certainly gave false expectations that they could not fulfil. It is interesting to note that in Lynch's film, John Merrick chooses to die when, virtually a prisoner for life in the golden cage of Treves' hospital he realizes that medicine cannot cure him and that he has already enjoyed his fifteen minutes of Warholian fame as a 'visible' part of society, a visibility that he achieves in an outing to the theatre as a guest of the respectable Edwardian crowd attending a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*. On the other hand, another sign of that profound hypocrisy towards physical difference is the fact that disabled persons are customarily played on screen by able-bodied actors. The list of actors that have been praised or even awarded an Oscar for roles involving some kind of disability is impressive, especially in recent years, as if Hollywood was trying to impress on audiences the fact that disability is becoming tolerable on the screen. Yet there are hardly any disabled professional actors and the only truly freakish anatomies seen on screen are the product of make-up, animatronics or infographics. Once more, the point is not that severely deformed people should make a career out of their physical appearance but that supposing they wanted to as a means to earn a living they could not. What was the privilege of nineteenth-century freaks is now the only privilege of 'abnormally' attractive people.

The freak show begins its decline in the 1930s just when horror films based on literary figures—*Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Invisible Man*, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*—hit the screen. The decline of the freak show seems to progress in inverse ratio to the rise of the monster film: the more the fantastic monsters meet popular success, the less tolerant audiences become towards the presence of the real freak. In fact, the freak becomes literally part of the gallery of monsters of the horror film. Even Tod Browning, who in 1931 had directed the very successful *Dracula*, failed to understand when he directed *Freaks* the following year that having developed a taste for make-believe monsters, audiences could no longer endure the real 'monster' on screen. Although it flopped when it was originally released, *Freaks* enjoyed a considerable success in the 1960s as a cult film—coinciding with American photographer Diane Arbus' successful work on 1960s freaks—and is now regarded as a masterpiece of horror cinema. The cast of *Freaks* included many popular freaks of the day such as the Hilton sisters, but far from presenting them from a humane angle, the plot of Browning's film dealt with the freaks' malevolent transformation of a beautiful woman, married for money to a successful midget she had planned to kill, and her lover into horrific freaks. This, rather than the presence of the freaks, may have been the real reason for the failure of the film.

Browning inadvertently hit on the real motivation behind the fear of the freak, the idea that 'they' have the power to transform a 'normal' person into a monster by depriving that person of the ownership of his or her body, as the film shows. The same principle lies behind the fear for the mythical monster—Browning's own *Dracula* is based on that fear—though in the case of the mythical monsters the screen and the book place a barrier of safety between the person indulging in the satisfaction of the curiosity for the monsters and the thrill of the fear it elicits and the monster. The fascination for the mythical monster is exercised from a safe point of view: the likelihood of ever encountering in real life a hostile extraterrestrial monster or a friendly abyssal angel is certainly extremely low compared to that of meeting an actual physically monstrous or

freakish person. However, an average citizen of the Western world may meet hundreds of mythical monsters in his or her lifetime through the arts or entertainment but never come across a natural monster: these are hidden away. At the most, bodily deformity may be the subject of sentimental American TV films preaching the idea that willpower may make up for the shortcomings of modern medicine unable to 'cure' the freak. Yet, since, for reasons too complex to discuss here, these films do not seem to have a great impact on the large audiences that watch them, the freak is still mainly a figure that does not belong to reality.

The popular appeal of the erotic power of the predatory vampire, unearthed with Bela Lugosi's successful incarnation of Dracula on the stage and the screen, is intimately linked to the disappearance of the freak as an erotic object. Leslie Fiedler (1993: 137) writes that:

All Freaks are perceived to one degree or another as erotic. Indeed, abnormality arouses in some "normal" beholders a temptation to go beyond looking to knowing in the full carnal sense the ultimate other. That desire is itself felt as freaky, however, since it implies not only a longing for degradation but a dream of breaching the last taboo against miscegenation.

The erotic power that Fiedler attributes to freaks has the effect of forcing the beholder to reconsider the meaning of desire and of perversion: beauty and freakishness are seen to be but two sides of the same coin as whatever surpasses the 'norm' is attractive in the sense of inspiring curiosity and a desire to get to 'know', including the biblical sense of carnal knowledge. Needless to say, feeling attraction towards the alternative beauty of the freak has been stigmatized as perversion, that is to say, the person attracted towards the freak has been classed with the freaks. Included in the attack against the freak show carried out on the 1930s there is also an attack against the eroticism of the freak and a clearly eugenic subtext, aimed at preventing the reproduction of the freak, and at impressing on 'normal' people that the freak body is not desirable. Instead of the freak show, the screen offered two new types of desirable body, the glamorous star and the mythical monster. As Angela Carter shows in her novel *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), glamour and the star were fabrications of the show business with only flimsy connections with actual human bodies and personalities. In Carter's novel, the mysterious retired film star Tristessa turns out to have been a man appealing to the masses on the strength of his/her Garbo-like androgynous beauty. The mythical monster and the glamorous film star are placed on the screen for close scrutiny—in the dark, in loneliness among the fellow spectators—to let audiences indulge in fantasies well understood by filmmakers. The forbidden gaze at the freak is split in film into two kinds of legitimate gaze: at the star representing a model of beauty and at the imaginary monster representing a model of abjection, from the erotic Dracula of Lugosi to the horrific bodies of recent cinema. Much recent discourse on the appeal of stars and monsters stresses the role played by sex in the attraction for horror, arguably because most of the fears vented by horror films are said to be rooted in taboos associated with sexuality, yet little or nothing is written on the erotic attraction of the freak and on how what the individual desires is delimited by what society accepts at any given period.

The taboo against miscegenation that Fielder mentions as the root of the problem of the erotic attraction towards the freak is still very strong, to the point that few contemporary films and novels dare move beyond the sexual relationship between the freak and the 'normal' person. The horror of miscegenation is based on racist prejudices

wrongly claiming that the mixture of races results in monstrous individuals, despite the evidence that this is not the case. The erotic appeal of mulatto women, such as top model Naomi Campbell, should be the best argument against racism and the taboo of miscegenation, yet her image belongs to a realm that has nothing to do with the utopian goals of social interaction, but much with secret desires and fantasies. The word 'mulatto' itself furnishes an important clue about the taboo of miscegenation: the 'mule' is better tolerated than the 'mutant' because it is seen as a terminal line of descent, as an individual that will not originate a new species. The freak remains, thus, socially tolerable provided it does not perpetuate his or her difference but behind the tolerance there lurks the fear that the freak might transmit an undesirable genetic legacy that could 'degrade' the human species or even originate another species, an element that returns us back to the anxiety of species takeover related to the hostile mythical Beast. The freak itself has been traditionally seen as a product of miscegenation between humans and animals—in which it coincides with the monsters of classical myth such as the Minotaur. The Elephant Man, Arturo the Seal Boy in *Geek Love* and the names of many other freaks are a testimony of the interpretation of the freak body as the anatomical fusion of man and animal, hence, a new species, an idea that reinforces the general taboo against miscegenation and that places the desire for the freak at the same level as the perverted desire for an animal.

However, the way in which the eroticism of the freak is still exploited in contemporary fiction indicates there is a nostalgia for the legitimate gaze at the freak coupled with an acknowledgement of the 'normal' human being's wish to transgress the limits of desire sanctioned by a given society and its prevalent moral system. In the 1980s and 1990s the onlooker, who is frequently happier to feel the thrill of the ambiguous authenticity of the freak than to have proofs of his or her stark reality, and not the freak is the true transgressor of the barriers separating normality from abnormality. This is as it should be expected in postmodernity, a period characterized by the interplay of fictitious and real images and by the clash of normality and abnormality. Paradoxically, a late twentieth-century spectator or reader expects fiction to deal with abnormality as a reflection of the chaotic nature of life, though s/he is less tolerant, more negatively affected by the discovery that actual abnormality exists at the margins of real life. This has led to a curious situation: the reality of the life of those who would have been freaks a century ago has fallen into the domain of the documentary or of sentimental fiction, so that it can be said that their representation is marginal and their social presence scarce. The many fantastic freaks that appear in contemporary fiction inhabit a purely fictional territory anchored in an evident nostalgia for that mythical time when terms such as disability and political correctness did not exist and when gazing freely at the freak was allowed.

The eroticism of the freak is most manifest in the figure of Miranda, the tailed beauty born to the albino dwarf Olympia and her brother, Arturo the legless Seal Boy in *Geek Love*. Her name, inherited from Shakespeare's Miranda, does not indicate her contrast with the freakish Caliban but the fact that she is to be looked at for she is also a freak. One of the main subplots of Dunn's novel concerns Olympia's titanic efforts to prevent her unacknowledged daughter Miranda from becoming normal thanks to surgery paid for by a bizarre benefactress as part of her crusade to make abnormal people happy. Miranda, herself an artistic subject (she is a painter) and object, makes a living as an striptease artist, thus catering for the tastes of those who seek the unique combination of beauty and freakishness in the female body. As Dunn has it, Olympia's killing of her daughter's benefactress and her own death as the ultimate proof of her maternal love,

prevents Miranda from becoming normal, but she appears nonetheless not to be bound by the constrictions that would normally operate in real life. The dilemma she is involved in appears to be a false one, as false as the cult started by her father, Arturo, by which hundreds of followers have their limbs amputated in an effort to emulate him. This is, in a word, fantasy of the same kind as Browning's *Freaks*, appealing to the politically incorrect, carnivalesque interest in the freak.

Miranda's aunts, the Siamese twins Elly and Iphy, are also presented in terms that emphasize their erotic appeal. They are as explicit in this question as it is possible to be: "'You know what the norms really want to ask?' said Elly. 'What they want to know, all of them but never do unless they are drunk or simple, is How do we fuck? That and who, or maybe what'" (p. 232). Thus, seeing that the men in their audience do not care for their musical abilities in which they show undeniable artistic talent, the sisters decide to capitalise on their desire and start a lucrative but brief career as prostitutes which is cut short by Arturo's jealous, incestuous intervention. Prostitution also plays an important role in the life of Fevvers the Cockney Venus, the winged heroine of *Nights at the Circus* a novel in which Angela Carter explores the idea of the freakishness of the New Woman rising with the twentieth century. Herself the source of a seismic erotic disturbance, as her biographer Walser puts it, Fevvers claims she was never a prostitute, indeed that she is still a virgin. She claims so despite her having been raised in a brothel and despite having worked for a while for the notorious brothel of Madame Schreck as a living impersonation of a statuesque death accompanying a freak known as the Sleeping Beauty, one of the group offered by Schreck to men of 'special tastes'. Fevvers' escape from this very Gothic brothel finally starts her successful new career as an aerialist in a circus run by an American. She rises to international stardom not so much thanks to her acrobatic abilities—she performs nothing that no other trapeze artist could not match despite her wings—but to her erotic appeal and, above all, to the aura of dishonesty that surrounds her. All question her true nature and few believe she is a born freak and not a made freak, but the illusion that she sells as an impossible winged woman certainly attracts crowds to the circus.

Writing about the androgynous heroine Lulu of Frank Wedekind's plays, *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*, Angela Carter remarks that the lack of an obvious female anatomy in Wedekind's androgynous heroines looks as if to man's eyes "there was an inherent freakishness about breasts and buttocks at the best of times, as if half the human race were not equipped with them. As if they were as surprising and unusual physical appurtenances to find on a woman as fins or wings" (1990: 68). The passage explains the double freakishness of Carter's heroine Fevvers as a female freak, though she is exceptional among freaks in the high degree of control she has on the commercial exploitation of her own body. In contrast, the erotic appeal of the male freak is, in general, dissociated from the erotic appeal of the male body so that many films and novels dealing with male freaks have a triangular set of main characters of which two are male, one the freak, the other the 'normal' man. The woman in between may play the sentimental role of a woman saviour (which I analyse in Chapter 7) or may be shown to be herself a pervert attracted to deviant males, as is the case of Joyce, the oversexed housewife in *Edward Scissorhands*, who brings about Edward's fall into disgrace when he refuses to let himself be seduced by her.

To a certain extent, racism and the taboos against miscegenation are also useful in explaining the double moral in the representation of the erotic appeal of the freak. The erotic attraction towards the freak may imply, as Leslie Fiedler argues, a desire to feel degraded by contact with 'inferior' human beings, but it may also imply mastery

over those 'inferior' beings. It is a paradox indeed that while American southern white slave masters raped their black female slaves forcing them to conceive mulatto slave children but seeing no sign of degradation in doing this, one of the bases of racism was built on the unfounded accusation that black men were raping and degrading white women, whereas nothing at all was said about how white women coped with their desire for black male slaves. It was simply incomprehensible that such desire would arise, for a white woman wishing to conceive a child of mixed race was herself an aberration. Replacing the idea of race for that of freakishness, the same lines can be inferred. When a film or a novel presents a woman in love with a male freak she is given reasons that rationalize desire, making it unrecognizable. The woman may love the freak as Beauty loves the Beast, seeking his redemption, but not as men love the female freaks, for the indulgence of 'special tastes'. This results in an extraordinary narrowing down of actual human experience to a few stereotypes, as harmful to men as to women, which limits the enormous possibilities of the representation of desire in fiction.

The social invisibility of the formerly called freak is partly to blame for that state of matters in this particular case and for the predominance of fictional representations over reality but a deeper inability to process the actual meaning of human difference is still, no doubt, at the core of prejudice. We simply cannot imagine what desire for an abnormal body is without thinking of perversion when what we should really consider is why the social visibility of the abnormal body is so restricted and also why abnormality is expanding to include not only severe malformations but also simply those physical features excluded from the ideal of the tall, slim top-model. When recently watching a BBC documentary on the victims of Thalidomide—now people around thirty years of age—I was sorry to notice that my own ignorance had blinded me to the fact that many of these people were happy spouses and responsible parents of perfectly healthy children. I was particularly touched by the sight of a courageous woman, born legless and with severely malformed arms, who managed the feat of walking up the church aisle as a bride to meet at the altar the perfectly 'normal' man who was to marry her. She was later shown some years later with her healthy children, remarking that her only regret as a parent like those of many other victims of Thalidomide was not having been able to hug her babies. Her image as a 'normal' woman—worker, wife, mother—and those of other Thalidomide victims could impress more forcibly than thousands of words what is meant by understanding difference. Yet I could not fail to notice that the BBC documentary kept an absolute silence about how her husband and other spouses of similarly disabled people had coped with the reactions of others towards their companions or, indeed, to their own reactions the first time they met their spouses. In addition, the documentary also touched indirectly on another important taboo related to the rights of persons to reproduce themselves. The Thalidomide children were the living proof that the medical profession that had sought to treat the freak as a 'patient' had ultimately contributed to the creation of new freaks, new victims. Why we are failing to deal with these facts of reality in fiction and why we welcome instead fiction about imaginary freaks and mythical monsters appear to be questions much more essential in our definition of normality and monstrosity, humanity and inhumanity, than it might seem in view of the little public debate they arouse.

3.2.2. The Abnormal Baby: Sentimentalism and Infanticide

‘Monster’ is no longer the standard medical term for babies born with blatant defects; indeed, doctors are extremely reluctant to use the term and phrases such as “critically ill and congenitally deformed babies” (Duff and Campbell, 1977: 135) crop up often in medical or ethical literature. Yet the disappearance of the term has been accompanied by almost total silence about those babies and about any other form of physical abnormality, rather than in a re-evaluation of the arbitrariness of the actual legal and moral decisions made about them. The legal, ethical and medical literature about human physical monstrosity is the most genuine expression of the thin line dividing civilization and barbarism, beyond anything that the most violent fiction can express, though, for obvious reasons, the attention devoted to it by cultural critics is minimal. Yet, how can a critic understand the roots of the popularity of monstrosity in fiction without understanding first against what social background that fiction is produced? How can fiction about the arbitrary power held by the monster on life and death be understood without understanding first the interaction between the law, ethics and medicine in the definition of who holds the power to draw the line between euthanasia and extermination? Once more, my argumentation in this section stresses the sheer gulf between the cultural discourses available to discuss monstrosity in fiction and the very serious anxieties they actually mask. The point I should like to stress here is that while films and novels have been dealing with the freak in the 1980s and 1990s with sentimental or grotesque clichés, those same clichés have made it almost impossible to discuss the actual fate of adult or baby freaks in real life, for which no politically correct language is yet available.

The severely malformed babies appear at the margins of fiction in a surreptitious way. My first impression when reading the following passage in Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things* (1992), in which the late nineteenth-century surgeon Godwin Baxter explains how he developed the idea of creating his own Frankenstein’s monster—the pretty and eccentric Bella Baxter—was that it was part of the Gothic Victorian atmosphere in which Gray envelops his novel:

“And nature too can be ungenerous. You know how often it produces births we call unnatural because they cannot live without artificial help or cannot live at all: anacephalids, bicephalids, cyclops, and some so unique science does not name them. Good doctoring ensures the mothers never see these. Some malformations are less grotesque but equally dreadful—babies without digestive tracts who must starve to death as soon as the umbilical cord is cut if a kind hand does not first smother them. No doctor dare do such a thing, or order a nurse to do it, but the thing gets done, and in modern Glasgow—second city of Britain and foremost for infant mortality—few parents can afford a coffin, a funeral and a grave for every wee body they own. Even Catholics consign their unchristened to limbo. In the Workshop of the World limbo is usually the medical profession. For years I had been planning to take a discarded body and discarded brain from our social midden heap and unite them in a new life. I now did so, hence Bella”. (p. 33)

As it turns out, Baxter’s words are not out of place in the 1980s and 1990s. The situation he describes is still part of the problematics of medicine. What is intriguing is how the discourse on the malformed babies soon gives way to the discussion of Bella’s origin, how the transition between the real and the imaginary freak is effected smoothly, easing the effect caused by the naming of the handicapped babies and putting them in the same

imaginary reality as Bella. This is not surprising, since the text that discusses the dilemma faced by a parent with the birth of a monstrous child with the greatest insight is still Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, despite the enormous changes registered in medicine since 1818 when the novel was published. Interestingly, the subject of the existence of those malformed babies surfaces in another novel by a Scottish writer, Iain Banks. Set in the 1980s, *The Wasp Factory* deals in its main subplot with the madness of Eric, the protagonist's brother. This young man, a promising medical student training at the same Glasgow hospital where Baxter was trained a hundred years before, collapses mentally at the sights of the horrors inflicted on a deformed baby by artificially prolonged medical care. Baxter and Eric's extreme attitudes—the flight into mad creation or into downright madness—are two very representative examples of the impossibility of addressing this particular question directly in fiction. Neither Baxter nor Eric can cope with the horror of what nature does to human bodies and they retreat into their own kind of madness, which, nevertheless, signifies a deeper humanity than can be found in the grotesque representation of the freak so common in current fiction.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* considers the dilemma faced by the parent of a natural monster or freak. Granted that the creature can hardly be said to be natural because of his artificial genesis, still the problem remains the same. Paraphrasing Anne Mellor (1989: 40), *Frankenstein* is not only a book about a man who tries to give birth to a baby without the help of a woman, but also a book about the expectations of happy parenthood being shattered by the physical monstrosity of the innocent baby. Frankenstein is horrified and never considers for a second accepting his 'hideous progeny' as he is: he is shown to be a bad parent who rather wishes the monster had never been born, for which he no doubt elicits little sympathy from the reader. Nevertheless, the options that Victor does not want to confront when his baby is born—should he apply euthanasia to him, knowing he will not be accepted by society, or make an effort to accept and integrate him within his own family?—are the same ones that parents with a similar problem face in the 1980s and the 1990s and there are no narratives offering answers to these questions. Like Victor Frankenstein most writers and filmmakers ignore the real issue by turning the exploration of a crucial moral dilemma—how human a monstrous baby is—into a story of unfair or not so unfair persecution.

In terms of cultural perceptions, the knowledge that some human beings have an abnormal appearance due to the faulty genetic inheritance often transmitted by healthy parents, does not seem to prevent people from discriminating against them. By the time David Lynch's film about the life of the Victorian freak John Merrick, *The Elephant Man*, was released in 1980 the debate about the fate of severely handicapped babies was taking quite another direction. While the film emphasized the positive value of tolerance, presenting Merrick as a victim of disease and as a sensitive man trapped inside a monstrous body, babies not unlike Merrick in many cases were the subject of heated discussion over their right to live. In the late 1970s and early 1980s several legal battles were fought for the right to decide the termination of the life of severely handicapped babies on the grounds of their being unable to ever attain full humanity—thus contradicting the premise of sentimental fiction on the subject such as *The Elephant Man*. Three main dilemmas emerged from a few well-known cases: first, whether doctors were interested in saving these babies mainly as case studies regardless of more humane concerns for the suffering of the babies and their parents; second, whether the parents or the state held the right to decide on the life of a baby (McCormick, 1977; Roberts, 1977), and third, whether long-term survival was preferable to euthanasia. All

of these are subjects that contemporary fiction has been unable to deal with except, paradoxically, in the sentimental fiction of TV films based on real stories or in documentaries.

The experts on bioethics are skilled at referring to actual infanticide with euphemisms such as “discontinuance or withdrawal of treatment” (Duff and Campbell, op. cit.: 136) while the leaflets warning about the dangerous side effects of some medicines refer to the “possible teratogenic” consequences—the possibility that embryos or foetuses may be negatively affected by the medicine in question if pregnant women take them—an obscure term that is practically unintelligible for the average citizen. Monstrosity is a term carefully skirted even at a popular level when discussing what scientists study under the heading of teratology. Gustafson (1977: 162), for instance, refers to a handicapped infant with a phrase as ambiguous as “(nontechnically) a monstrosity”, which indicates that not even experts on bioethics have been able to devise the necessary terminology. There is a marked lack of vocabulary to refer to malformed babies and an even more marked lack of ethical and legal clarity to determine the actual malformations that may lead to permit infanticide, a term always used with considerable embarrassment. The way in which Western societies treat these children has even prompted specialists in bioethics to draw comparisons between the civilized Western world and the monstrosities of Nazism. At this point it is necessary to remember that the dubious Nazi policy to ‘ameliorate the Aryan race’ was not a German invention. The movement in favour of eugenics originated in Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century and only lost its popularity in the 1930s, just when Germany took the chance of applying its doctrine. This movement, formed by middle-class people, had as its aim the limitation of reproduction to healthy parents, ideally preventing those it considered degraded—the not too healthy working classes mainly—from having children even if enforced sterilisation had to be considered (Mazumdar, 1992).

The conclusions reached by eminent writers on ethics, mostly belonging to the utilitarian school, question the bases of Western societies to their very foundations. Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer, for instance, review in their book *Should the Baby Live?* (1987) the legal problems faced in the cases of the death of several congenitally diseased or malformed babies and conclude that a form of infanticide should be regulated by law so as to prevent the arbitrary application of infanticide, as it exists now. “Deliberately letting handicapped infants die”, Kuhse and Singer write (ibid.: 8) “is common medical practice, and is endorsed by some of the most respected members of the medical community”. Michael Tooley (1986: 83), another utilitarian, states that “a newborn baby does not possess the concept of a continuing self, any more than a newborn kitten possesses such a concept. If so, infanticide during a time interval shortly after birth must be morally acceptable”. The bioethics of rationalised cruelty are not generally accepted, in the same measure as abortion is not generally accepted despite its legality in many countries. We seem to have reached a crossroads in the history of the Western world in which what is available according to the law and in terms of medical techniques can be rationalised as convenient but hardly as moral, a point Anne MacLean (1993) emphasizes. According to her, the conclusions of utilitarian bioethics cannot be called moral and should not be used to consolidate the power of the medical professional. In the UK Margaret Thatcher’s reduction of the budget allocated to philosophy departments throughout the UK forced them to offer so-called practical degrees in bioethics that served to give the medical profession a moral legitimacy in cases of infant euthanasia that MacLean disputes. In view of this confusion between what medicine can achieve and what morality and the law dictate, it is hardly surprising that the fiction of the 1980s

and 1990s—itself in a state of confusion as to what is moral—cannot cope with these issues, preferring instead silence or the transposition of similar issues to fantasy, such as horror or science fiction, or to the sentimental mode, especially in narratives set in a time when the technology of modern medicine was not available.

At this point it is necessary to recall that this debate is necessarily linked to the availability of medical techniques to prevent the birth of malformed babies and to the typically postmodernist attitude towards science by which whatever can be done, will be done, regardless of the moral damage it may cause. Teratology, the science that aims at classifying the types of biological human monstrosity founded by Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire and his son Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire who coined the word in 1830, and teratogeny, the scientific study of monstrous embryology, founded by Camille Dareste, are alive and well, still subsisting today in the work of scientists trying to determine which genetic and chromosomal failings cause natural monstrosity or whether chemical substances used in medicine may have teratogenic effects. This is leading to morally untenable situations that are routinely accepted on purely pragmatic grounds. Thus, even though, for instance, Down-syndrome babies are not treated as ‘terata’ so that it is extremely difficult if not impossible to obtain a judicial order for their legal termination—it was not so just two decades ago—even countries with restrictive laws on abortion, such as Spain, authorise the termination of the foetus if the syndrome is detected.

Preventing the birth of abnormal children is becoming easier with the new medical techniques designed to detect genetic anomalies apart from Down syndrome. Currently, the Hammersmith Hospital in London is screening embryos for at least thirteen gene defects before they are implanted into their mother’s wombs in those cases where the parents are suspected of carrying defective genes. This very expensive treatment reassures potential parents about the good health—the ‘normality’ of their baby—but is also offered by the NHS on the grounds that it is cheaper than keeping the babies born with serious malformations or genetic diseases alive (Rogers, 1994). However, the limits of this eugenic, preventive medicine were put into question recently in the UK when it was discovered that the testing of the foetus for genetic defects had lead to actual malformations in babies whose mothers had undergone the tests too early in the pregnancy (Ryan, 1995). These cases and those of the malformed babies born to British veterans of the Gulf War, allegedly affected by some form of chemical or biological weapon, have publicized the existence of abnormalities hardly ever visible in the British media, associating them with science in general and in particular with genetic engineering and technological warfare.

Contemporary fiction has very little to say about these complex issues, and what is said is, in addition, confused and confusing. Science fiction deals with the subject of the manipulation of human reproduction and the human body by medicine and genetic engineering but the displacement of the discussion towards scenarios set in the future dealing with technological advances still unavailable, seems to be yet another way of avoiding a too problematic present. Freakish mutants like those of Mars brimming with toxic waste of the film *Total Recall* (1990) are a meaningful symbol of the dangers that the alliance between corporate business and technified science entails for our immediate future as a species, but they are hardly valid to discuss the current replacement of morality by utilitarian bioethics.

Recent fiction simply does not discuss the role of the parents of persons born deformed or the role of bioethics in the difficult decisions made every day concerning the survival of born or unborn children. As a general rule, most films and novels avoid

the ethical dilemmas posed by the new technologies of reproduction preferring instead to leave parents at the margins of the text or to deal with aspects in the life of the freak that place him or her at the margins of social life or in the domain of fantasy. The interaction between parent and child is, nonetheless, dominated in fiction by gender roles. Mothers are usually represented in relation to freakish male children while fathers (and father figures) play more prominent roles only in the absence of the mother, either because she is dead in which case they are usually the parents of freakish girls (*Firestarter*, *Swan Song*), or because the freakish child is the result of artificial creation following Frankenstein's pattern, in which case it is usually male.

In fact, the explanations furnished to account for the deformities of the fictional freak are none or, if there are any, they recall folklorist beliefs or pseudoscientific misogyny rather than modern genetics. In *The Elephant Man*, for instance, the deformities of John Merrick's body are accounted for on the basis of the popular theory that a strong impression could affect the mother. Only the rise of teratology in the nineteenth century and the unravelling of the mystery of how genes are transmitted demolished the credibility of such theory, though traces of it remain at a popular level. The initial sequence of the film narrates how Merrick's mother was badly scared by an elephant when visiting a circus which resulted in Merrick's deformities, an incident that turns out to be part of the fictitious biography used by John Merrick's exhibitor to attract customers. No doubt, the fantastic biographies of the freaks, which were an integral part of the freak show, are to blame for the dissemination of fantastic ideas about the origins of born freaks. Merrick's mother, a pretty woman who abandoned her monstrous child, appears further in the film only as an image in a photograph that her son treasures. Her absence and the lack of any explanation as to why she abandoned Merrick, or who his father was, contribute to the sentimentalization of the freak, who has nonetheless forgiven her despite his miserable life, but also serve to avoid discussing the difficult role of the parents in such cases. Instead, the film centers on the struggle for the possession of Merrick's body between his 'bad' father, his exhibitor, and his 'good' father, Dr. Treves.

A more recent film, *Johnny Handsome* (1989), still attributes to the absent mother—a prostitute—the responsibility of the making of the freak on the grounds of her drug abuse, though, again, nothing is said of the unknown father. Her death, which occurred when Johnny was still a child, is partly used in the film to justify why Johnny grew up to become a criminal and, once more, the conflict narrated is one between Johnny's two surrogate fathers: the 'good' surgeon who wants to reconstruct his deformed face and the 'bad' policeman who maintains that Johnny's soul and not his face is the site of his monstrosity. The issue of who is to blame for the criminal behaviour of the freak adult also surfaces in Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon* (1981), in which the neglect by the pretty mother of her malformed boy and his rejection by his mother's new husband and children are used to justify why the enraged Francis Dolarhyde devotes part of his adult life to massacring families.

In contrast to the role of the missing mothers, the role of the mother of the freak family of *Geek Love*, Crystal Lil, is most active: her children are created by her intake of toxic substances which is aimed at producing freaks for her husband's circus business. Every mother's anxieties about the health of their babies are turned upside down by Lil, who prefers to take into her hands the responsibility for the birth of the monsters rather than to let chance decide for her. Fevvers, the heroine of *Nights at the Circus*, is also a freak abandoned by her parents, though she claims to have been hatched from an egg and not born to woman, a bizarre notion that furthers the distance between the freak of

fiction and the 'terata' of real life. Obviously, it could not be otherwise considering that Fevvers' peculiar deformity—her wings—does not fall into any teratological category, and furthermore, that are seemingly part of the fantastic biography she has herself created.

It is rare to see on the screen or read about couples making decisions about their freakish offspring and when they appear at all there is usually either an imbalance between the role of the father and that of the mother, the mother usually preferring the child to survive despite the disadvantages this may suppose for the family, as happens in *The Fifth Child* (1988). In fact the scenario most often retold by these films and novels closely follows the pattern of Frankenstein, especially with respect to the mounting rage that leads the monster to destroy his creator and, by extension, society. John Merrick and Fevvers are exceptions rather than the rule in a panorama inhabited by freaks who grow up to be criminals (Johnny, Dolarhyde) or fantastic figures of revenge, such as the Penguin in *Batman Returns* (1992), or Sufiya Zinobia in Rushdie's *Shame* (1983). Shame is the emotion most frequently expressed by the parents of these freaks of recent fiction, while little or no reference is made to ethics precisely because the context is fantasy or because the plot is manipulated in such way that the issue of infanticide cannot arise. In fact, the only scene of (attempted) infanticide I have come across in my survey shows the upper-class parents of the Penguin in *Batman Returns* throwing their freakish baby into the freezing waters of a river, an action prompted by the shame they feel. Since the adult Penguin, who survived miraculously thanks to the help of the friendly penguins of the underground frozen waters, cannot avenge himself on his already dead parents, he redirects his hatred against the society that rejects him. Yet, as happens in Frankenstein, his grotesque, disgusting appearance seems to justify society's rejection of the freak rather than elicit our sympathy for the victimised freak. Shame and revengeful rage are major issues in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, though this novel also deals with a fantastic freak, the retarded Sufiya Zinobia. Born seemingly retarded because her body and mind are the vessels into which all the shame of her world is poured, the neglected, silent Sufiya grows to become first a most violent woman and later a man-eating panther. Her transformation is made possible by all the accumulation of shame and of unspoken rage that literally remakes her body. Interestingly, her revenge is directed against men in general and in particular against her father and her husband, who have disputed the ownership of her body and mind and whose irresponsible use of power within the family and the nation are the direct causes of Sufiya's transformation.

The fact that shame surfaces so often in these texts underlines the fact that the social consensus about the barriers between normality and abnormality still has a great force on the individual and that one of the reasons for the invisibility of the freak is that s/he is seen as a punishment for the faults of the parents and by extension of society. Incest, perhaps the greatest sexual taboo at the level of the individual and the community, has been traditionally blamed for the birth of monsters but when this topic is taken up in recent fiction, it is actually used to explain the tragedy of the innocent offspring as in *Waterland* (1983) and the popular best-selling saga of the beautiful Dollanganger children, which began in *Flowers in the Attic* (1979). Interestingly, the use of techniques of artificial reproduction has recently become the subject of a comedy in which the father becomes literally the freak. In Ivan Reitman's *Junior* (1994), Arnold Schwarzenegger abandons his habitual role as mythical hero to bear a test-tube baby daughter, implanted in his abdomen thanks to a new wonder drug. The usurpation of the maternal role is total since the baby's mother is a female scientist whose eggs have been secretly stolen for the experiment, but the film subverts the androphobic pattern of Mary

Shelley's *Frankenstein* to suggest that equality between the sexes will be reached when men can give birth not to freakish male artificial monsters but to healthy, natural daughters.

3.2.3. Images of Disability: The 'Special People'

Not all the people now labelled as disabled could have been found a hundred years ago in freak shows, but all those people exhibited in freak shows are regarded now as disabled people. One of the new politically correct terms employed to name disabled people in the USA is 'special people', which has lead opponents of political correctness to wonder in what sense disability implies the superior difference implied by the word 'special'. The paradox is that the point most frequently missed is that freak shows did exhibit very special people with special talents, as many freaks were performing artists who did not limit themselves to being the object of a curious gaze. As performing artists—and even as objects of that curious gaze—the freaks had a certain degree of control over their own social image, at least in the same way in which Hollywood stars had control over their own. There is, then, an interaction between artistic performance and freakishness, since both the artist and the freak are, after all, special people who form a class apart. It is precisely from disabled artists that the most interesting proposals to regain control over the artistic representation of the disabled body come, an effort directed towards dissociating freakishness from disability and disability itself from medical control. In this sense, the disabled face a problem similar to women's and other so-called minorities: their image has been controlled by the gaze of the able-bodied (of men in the case of women) and while they are not satisfied with the way they are seen, they have not yet defined an alternative.

A conference held in London a few years ago which aimed specifically at letting disabled people offer new proposals about how they would like to be represented, ended according to Dawn Langley (Hevey, 1992: xv) with the uncomfortable impression that "nobody really knew what a positive or alternative representation was". The disabled see gaining access to controlling the way in which they are represented as a process built on a political agenda concerning the ownership of the body and its representations. Since the eye of the onlooker defines the other as monstrous, those who were once or are still now defined as monsters must learn to represent themselves in order to offer an alternative image which can avoid the dangers of low self-esteem. This is, of course, an important departure both from the exploitative model of the freak show and from the medical model of the freak as a patient.

David Hevey, a British photographer, has proposed in his book *The Creatures that Time Forgot: Photography and Disability Imagery* that the disabled themselves turn the cameras towards their own bodies. Himself the victim of epileptic attacks, Hevey questions in his book the dubious use to which artistic photography has been put by British charities and reviews how the roots of discrimination are related to the capitalist system, itself the creator of the freak show. According to Hevey, the medical model of disability—the 'cure or care' system—has been now replaced by a social model of disability in which the person is defined by his or her inability to secure a job: instead of offering appropriate occupations for people with disabilities, the late-capitalist society tends to discriminate them on the basis of not being employable in the same terms as an able-bodied person. Following the work of Victor Finkelstein, Hevey (*ibid.*: 20) argues that the social concept of disability is now in its third phase: phase one took place in

pre-industrial times when the disabled were not separated from society, phase two began with the Industrial Revolution when the disabled were alienated from society because they cannot produce and their labour cannot be used fully, phase three is based on the institutionalization and the growth of the cure-or-care programmes. To this view, I would add a fourth phase that will take place in the near future by which medical techniques will be used to reduce to a minimum the possibility that a person with any kind of disability, disease or deformity may be born. Charities appeared precisely to make up for this marginalization in the job market and to run most of the cure-or-care programmes, but they have become one of the main targets of attack coming from the disabled themselves who see them as the main agents in maintaining the negative visualization of the disabled body.

The disabled complain that charities have been accepted as their own voice by the general public, when “within the disability industry, however, disabled people are actually the last in line” (ibid.: 22). In order to raise money that the state was not prepared to give, charities have exploited a pitiable image of disability which may have been effective in appealing to the (often hypocritical) altruism of donors but has misrepresented the disabled as totally dependent on the charity. The main grudge against charities is that they have shamelessly manipulated the image of the disabled, by denying control of it to the disabled themselves and by “bonding the actual disablement of people with impairments to the psychic fear in non-disabled people of the loss of ownership of their bodies” (ibid.: 24). Charities have subtly used images of the ‘freak’ renamed ‘disabled’ to persuade the general public to give money. This money has eased their consciences about the disabled but has also expressed an unconscious wish to make sure that the ‘freak’ stays in his or her ‘place’, far from society. What is more worrying is that, as Hevey (ibid.: 30) remarks, “there is no doubt that before the 1980s and early 1990s (when pressure came to be exerted on charities to market competitively) impairment charity advertising unashamedly relied, for its portrayal of disabled people, on notions of eugenics and the eugenic inferiority of disabled people”.

Charities have wittingly or unwittingly contributed with their tragic, pitiful imagery of disability to persuading donors that much human suffering could be avoided if the disabled did not exist. On the other hand, the use of sentimental images of disability has coexisted with the artistic exploitation of the image of the disabled as a freak, not only in film but also in photography with, for instance, the work of American photographer Diane Arbus. Hevey speaks of the need to do away with the ‘Miranda syndrome’—the able-bodied person pities the object of his or her gaze but cannot overcome his or her prejudices—by turning the camera held by the disabled towards the disabled themselves, as he does in his book. Though he is well aware that the process may entail pain and insurmountable contradictions, it has to be carried out as the only means to achieve simultaneously social visibility and the erasure of the sinister mythology attached to images of disability by the freak show, Hollywood, TV and also literature.

Against this background, the success of the screen adaptation of Christy Brown’s *My Left Foot* (1989) must have been received ambiguously by the disabled. While Brown’s autobiography captures well the spirit of the vindication of the control of his body by the disabled person, the film focuses instead on Brown’s love life, returning in a sense to the question of the eroticism of the freak. The central point of Brown’s autobiography is his refusal to conform to the doctors’ advice concerning how he should ‘normalise’ his body by using all his limbs instead of only his left foot and his growth into an autonomous person capable of making decisions about his own body, a point the

film does not render well. On the positive side, the film refuses to sentimentalise the disabled person as *The Elephant Man* does by using Brown's sense of humour as the best comment on how victims of cerebral palsy like him should be treated as persons and not as objects of pity. *My Left Foot*, the film, makes Brown's success as a person dependent first, on the courage of his mother who always rejected the doctors' pessimistic opinions about Christy's intelligence, and, second, on his success as an artist, painter and writer, leading to his success as a man. The final scene shows Brown accompanied by the pretty nurse who has been won over by the sensitivity displayed in his autobiography. This scene marks his integration into the literary world, where he faces a promising future, and also marks his 'normalisation' as a man. Naturally, the choice of Daniel Day-Lewis to play Brown's role is also significant: his excellent interpretation, which won him an Oscar for Best Actor, cannot mask the fact that what audiences see on the screen is an attractive actor playing the role of a disabled person, and not a truly disabled person. Although the fact that disabled people are routinely played on the screen by able-bodied actors is taken for granted, this is a subtle form of discrimination not unlike the old custom by which women were played exclusively by men until the revolutionary entrance of women onto the stage during the Restoration.

Significantly, nothing is said about how the freak and the artist merge in the body of Christy Brown or about to what extent he gained a certain reputation as an artist because he was disabled and not because he was an artist at all. Christy Brown's ability to paint and write with his left foot would have made him a likely candidate for exhibition in a freak show in the mid nineteenth century but since he grew up a century later in a very different atmosphere he could establish a reputation for himself as an artist, facing instead another battle: that for the control of his body against the doctors who treated him. Brown made the front page of the local Dublin paper at the age of nine with a photograph that showed him painting with his left foot, illustrating his having won a prize in a drawing contest, precisely the kind of image Hevey would have contested for it emphasizes the freak above the artist. This image begs the question of what makes 'special people' special: would the child and the adult Christy Brown have met with the same public attention if he had been able to paint with his right hand?

Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* makes a similar point in the scene in which Edward is interviewed in a chat shown on TV. Asked what would make him special if his hands were ordinary human hands instead of bunches of shears, Edward is left speechless and though his new friend Peg quickly answers that he would still be a special person under any circumstance, Edward himself adds that he'd much rather be normal. The point is that even when the personality of the 'freak', the 'disabled person' or the 'special person' is extraordinary this is not perceived as his or her body acts as a barrier for the others. *Edward Scissorhands* deals with our inability to understand that what is really extraordinary is not on the surface: Edward's hands make him a freak only for those who cannot see that his hands are, above all, the hands of the artist, always a cut above ordinary humankind. Brown's left foot, Fevvers' wings, Edward's hands, Merrick's deformities, cannot be compared to those of actual disabled people for they belong to people who would be special even without their freakish bodies. If they are special, they are so only in the sense that we all are but not really because they are 'special people' in the sense of the politically correct term designed to cover disability. This emphasis placed by contemporary fiction on making the disabled person appear as either a fantastic freak or as an extraordinarily sensitive person conceals the actual variety of people who have been labelled as disabled. This is comparable to the way in which women and children are represented: either they are angelic, monstrous or an

extraordinary personality despite their ordinary appearance. What is missing, though, is the ordinary woman, the ordinary child, the ordinary lives of the disabled. And also their own voices and their own representation of themselves.

The story of the freak ends in violent death (*Red Dragon*, *The Dead Zone*, *Johnny Handsome*, *Batman Returns*, *Total Recall*) or suicide (*Waterland*, *Geek Love*, *The Elephant Man*) with relative frequency. In a few cases, marriage concludes the plot as in *Nights at the Circus* and *Memoirs of an Invisible Man*—though there are no stories about those marriages or about the offspring derived from them. In many cases, the freak simply drifts away to find a place of his or her own in which s/he is not constantly reminded of the values that define normality and social life. This happens in *Shame*, *The Fifth Child*, *The Nimrod Hunt*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *Darkman* and *The Lawnmower Man*, texts in which the freak often declares that only loneliness can make monstrosity bearable. The insistence on the fictional freak's wish to hide away or to pass him or herself off as a 'normal' person is totally at odds with the demand of marginalized persons to become socially visible and suggests that 'normal' audiences and readers find wishfulfilment solutions in the endings of these contemporary texts—solutions that avoid, in any case, having to think in moral terms about the struggle for the power to define humanity and the monstrous Other.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have contrasted the increasing appeal of the mythical monster of fiction with the lack of a proper fictional representation of persons of abnormal physical appearance, and even of a proper language to discuss them. These two factors seem to be directly related: instead of considering problems that concern the need to redefine morality with regard to science and to reconsider the representation in fiction and the visual arts of images of disability, contemporary fiction focuses on more remote anxieties centred on the body of the imaginary monster. This is due to the fact that Western societies find it easier to produce (sub)mythical fiction than fiction dealing with the immediate reality, possibly because it is assumed that this is the territory of journalism, the documentary or the sentimental telefilm, and because there is a generalised wish to avoid issues that have to be dealt with in moral terms.

(Sub)mythical contemporary fiction is at a crossroads between primitive mythmaking, contemporary popular culture and the postmodernist man's speculations about the end of history. I have argued that contemporary mythmaking, which abounds in myths of destruction and survival, is essentially a dystopian subversion of the primitive myths of creation. Two main myths, that of the 'Return of the Beast' and the 'Alien Messiah', articulate much of the (sub)mythical fiction produced in the 1980s and 1990s. Both are pertinent to a historical situation in which man sees himself as the potential destroyer of Earth and of the human species thanks to nuclear weaponry. This and other factors, such as the appearance of AIDS, have led many artists to reconsider why we of all species evolved into this civilized barbarism—could we have defeated a specialized predator, as Bruce Chatwin claims, which left a nostalgia for the Beast?—and how we can evolve into a better form of humanity, perhaps with the help of a secularised Alien Messiah. Both myths also respond to the need to adapt elements derived from myth and Christianity to postmodernist secularized Christological values and to defend the idea of 'positive aggression'.

Although (sub)mythical fiction may seem escapist, the fact is that it deals with important preoccupations about the nature of man, that realistic fiction will not consider.

More worrying is the distorted representation of the physically monstrous human, which is almost negligible in realistic fiction and certainly stereotyped in fantasy fiction. Even though the 1980s and 1990s have witnessed the rise of important debates at a bioethical level concerning the rights of severely malformed babies to survive and of parents to use genetic engineering for the welfare of the child, contemporary fiction seems unable to deal with these questions except indirectly through genre fiction or by indulging in the sentimental mode of the telefilm and the reality show. The disappearance of the freak show and the struggle of the disabled to exert control over the visual representation of their bodies are episodes of the same ongoing debate about the limits of the rights of the medical profession, bioethics and the law to affect the individuals' ownership of their own bodies. My suggestion is that contemporary mythmaking and the misrepresentation of human natural monstrosity and of disability are rooted in a basic anxiety: the average Western citizens want to be reassured that their privileged position as 'normal' members of a privileged society will not be altered by their suffering some form of personal rejection or by their community's loss of control over its own privileges. What is represented in the body of the mythical monster—Beast or Messiah—or the freak is the individual's fear of being put in a position of powerlessness, either as a member of a species whose survival is in jeopardy or as an individual who has lost the privileges associated with normality within a certain community society.

CHAPTER 4 Evil and Monstrosity: The Moral Monster

4.0. Introduction

Monstrosity and evil are two concepts which are frequently intertwined; however, it is wrong to assume they are equivalent terms. All evil is perceived as a manifestation of monstrosity, but not all forms of monstrosity are necessarily evil. Furthermore, even though evil is usually identified with aggression, in fact, as Mary Midgley (1984: 3) argues, evil is much wider than aggression and is caused not only by violent impulses but also “by quiet, respectable, unaggressive motives like sloth, fear, avarice and greed”. As I have argued in Chapter 3, many contemporary films and novels make the point of distinguishing between negative aggression and heroism, that is to say, positive aggression. Nevertheless, even within the large range of negative aggression it is necessary to distinguish between the predator and the evil monster.

The evil or moral monster is characterized by his or her causing undeserved harm with violence and cruelty to innocent victims. Thus, it is technically wrong to class predatory monsters with the monsters of evil, for predators hunt by instinct and do not use aggression to inflict unnecessary, sadistic, cruel suffering on their victims. Their behaviour may be considered cruel (evil) if we sympathise with the suffering of the innocent victims, but for the predatory monster, predation is a necessary part of the natural order. The monster of the *Alien* trilogy is not, therefore, an evil monster. Still, because of the strong connection between predating and evil at a subconscious level, a connection rooted in the defeat of the primal predator that I analyzed in the previous chapter, the almost impossible dissociating of the predator from the evil monster in the human imagination, especially when its victims are human, serves as the psychological basis for the success of monster films like *Alien* (1979). In contrast, the extraterrestrial monster of *Predator* (1987) should be classed with the moral monsters, since, paradoxically, he is not a natural predator but an evil monster who causes unjustified violence for the sheer pleasure of gathering hunting trophies, and not because his existence and survival depend on his human prey.

Midgley argues in *Beast and Man* that the beast or natural predator has been unfairly exploited as a scapegoat to explain human evil. She attributes this to humankind’s reluctance to acknowledge the human nature of evil out of vanity and also out of fear of the uncontrollable force of human evil. “Man”, Midgley (1979: 31) writes, “has always been unwilling to admit his own ferocity, and has tried to deflect attention from it by making animals out to be more ferocious than they are”. The controversial evidence gathered by scientists like Konrad Lorenz by comparing human and animal aggression has not definitively proved whether evil is a thoroughly human, innate characteristic. In any case, even supposing that the alleged existence of evil among animals could be proved, the sheer scale of destruction caused by humans against members of their own as well as other animal species would still differentiate man from any animal. Midgley (ibid.: 40) remarks that man’s attempt at evading moral responsibility by blaming his animal nature for the existence of human evil “does the species credit, because it reflects our horror at the things we do”.

The blending of the natural predator with the evil monster, which may have been originated in the prehistoric hominids' fear of the specialised predator as explained in the previous chapter, has had two disastrous effects: first, it has hindered the understanding of the darkest areas of human behaviour, especially of human evil; second, it has affected in a negative sense the way in which nature is understood and has created enmities against undeserving animals, such as the wolf, which have become symbols of evil behaviour. A recent BBC documentary series, *Nightmares of Nature* (1995), discredits false beliefs about which animal is man's most dangerous predator. The fierce nature of lions, sharks, crocodiles, man-eating tigers, and other traditionally feared predators actually produces a yearly death tally much inferior to that of apparently peaceful animals such as elephants and rhinoceroses or, indeed, small insects such as the anopheles mosquito, which transmits malaria. In spite of the fact that the statistics prove that most attacks against human beings by animals occur mainly because of unfortunate intrusions of the humans into the breeding or hunting territory of dangerous animals, and despite the growing number of animal species in danger of extinction, myths about the evil nature of predators still persist. Nonetheless, the increasing difficulties in using animals as scapegoats to justify the 'natural' essence of human evil will inevitably lead to the exploitation of the imaginary non-human predatory monster to explain evil, as happens in *Alien*, and to produce more and more extreme portraits of human monsters so as to build a new frontier between human 'normality' and monstrous non-human 'abnormality'.

According to Midgley (1984: 14), evil is not an autonomous force but "essentially the absence of good". David Parkin (1985: 3) identifies evil, likewise, as a "negative aspect of morality". Evil, hence, cannot be understood on its own but within a dialectical relationship with good, that is to say, with moral life. This relationship is defined by John Kekes (1990: 121) as a "continuum between moral monstrosity and sainthood" rather than as a conflict between two opposite forces. For Kekes, evil people are those in whom vices have achieved dominance, understanding by vices not a corruption of the potentialities for good but their "equal partners" (ibid.: 9). From this point of view, we are all a mixture of potentially good and potentially bad qualities or virtues and vices. In Kekes' view, people who commit evil acts are not evil monsters but people dominated by their vices who do evil either in a spontaneous way or by choice. Much evil is caused by spontaneous, impulsive acting, and is, therefore, amoral, if we understand morality as a choice between good and evil behaviour. As Midgley (op. cit.: 63) writes, the formula for committing evil acts is "neither madness nor a bizarre morality, but a steady refusal to attend both to the consequences of one's actions and to the principles involved". In any case, the existence of the moral monster is acknowledged by both Midgley and Kekes: in fact those who choose to do evil in a rational way—often people of sharp intellect, strong will and capacity for choice—deny the theory that evil is caused by "some cognitive or volitional weakness that corrupts our essential goodness" (Kekes, op. cit.: 131).

Spontaneous or chosen, all evil is morally disreputable for the philosophers, mainly because it is antisocial not so much because it is immoral, and must be accordingly punished. Legal sanctions and social pressure make the choice of evil—of moral monstrosity—particularly hard, so that, according to Kekes (ibid.: 84), most potential moral monsters are forced to hide behind masks of hypocrisy or self-deception. The idea of evil analyzed by philosophers like Midgley and Kekes is not quite the same as that of psychologists and law makers. In general terms, philosophers separate evil from responsibility, rejecting the idea that spontaneous or impulsive evil is not

punishable; for them, all evil acts are punishable by law, regardless of the responsibility of the evildoer. Kekes (ibid.: 123) insists that “if we care about minimizing evil, then we must be prepared to judge habitual evildoers adversely, quite independently of whether they choose the evil they do”. This is not the trend followed by psychiatry and the law for which unchosen evil often means that the evildoer cannot be judged because s/he is not rationally, hence morally, responsible for his or her acts.

In this sense, the law and psychiatry are supporters of what Kekes calls the soft reaction to evil, that is to say, “the reluctance to allow evil actions to account as evidence for their agents’ being evil” (ibid.: 6). Kekes himself supports the hard reaction and so do most of the films and novels analyzed in this chapter. Socrates’ dictum that nobody does wrong willingly but only because of the negative influence of the Beast within—which has been the symbol of a wide range of attempts to justify evil, from passion to mental illness passing through the old theory of humours—or the Beast without—variously identified with the Devil and social discrimination—is being questioned today, when the instances of evil in real life seem harder and harder to explain in moral or, alternatively, psychological, terms. In the face of evil, most people seek comfort in the moral values established by religion or secular social consent or prefer a scientific, psychological explanation of why evil exists, yet what is dramatized in the films and novels examined in this chapter is the fact that, paradoxically, a deeper knowledge of evil does not really help to understand why evil acts happen, nor to prevent them from happening.

Believing that only evil monsters commit evil acts is, in this context, a consolatory fantasy. The horror felt for moral monsters may have two effects: s/he may appear either as an exception or as an example of a generalised rule. As an exception, the moral monster or evil monster (I will use both terms throughout the chapter) has an obvious use as a scapegoat; as an instance of the ordinary run of mankind, s/he is a menace to the moral integrity of society. The punishment and destruction of the moral monster of fiction allow people to reinforce their own sense of moral balance, of normality, in the same way that the exposure of the moral monsters of real life—the serial killers and mass murderers—in the media reinforces the idea that evil acts are committed exclusively by a certain type of person. Many novels and films play with the tension between the wish of audiences and readers to understand the roots of evil (and no doubt the pleasure afforded by experiencing the mystery of evil from a safe distance) and their wish to see justice triumph. All in all, the view of justice represented in many contemporary films and novels is very critical of the current legal and penal system in the Western world, defending instead a personal, eye-for-an-eye, violent type of punishment: since evil cannot be understood, these texts suggest, the least that can be expected from justice (usually embodied in a hero/ine who may not hesitate to break the law even if s/he represents it) is the physical destruction of the evildoer. This view of justice and the function of the moral monster as a scapegoat may result paradoxically in the reinforcement of the idea that the human potential for evil is outweighing the potential for good. The endless string of evildoers that inhabit contemporary films and novels, the preaching of Manichaeian values in the confrontation between the moral monster and the agent of good and the generalised mistrust in the expertise of those who define responsibility (psychologists, psychiatrists) and uphold the law also comprise the pessimistic panorama of contemporary fiction.

This reluctance to acknowledge evil as part of human nature is coupled with a reluctance to use words and images to discuss it from a serious (moral) standpoint, which has ironically permitted the insidious encroachment of evil itself in the everyday

life of Western societies. There are countless representations of violence in fiction and the media, and endless debates about the failure of the law to contain criminality and about the falling standards of morality attributed to the failure of the school and the family to educate the younger generations. Yet instead of facing evil, the citizens of the Western world prefer a prophylactic moral discourse that is sweeping the dust of human evil under the carpet, a state of affairs on which low-budget horror fiction and the sensationalist press thrive. As Jean Baudrillard (1990b: 89) argues in reference to the treatment in the West of Muslim fundamentalist terrorism supported by Iran, this reluctance to face evil reduces the rational discourse of the West to the low level of the imprecation, a totally useless tool by which to understand the root of evil:

Et d'ailleurs, au nom des droits de l'homme, nous finissons par traiter l'ayatollah de 'Mal Absolu' (Mitterrand), c'est-à-dire par nous aligner sur son imprécation, en contradiction avec les règles d'un discours éclairé (est-ce qu'on traite aujourd'hui un fou de 'fou'? On ne traite même plus un handicapé de 'handicapé', tellement nous avons peur du Mal, tellement nous gorgeons d'euphémismes pour éviter de désigner l'Autre, le malheur, l'irréductible). Ne nous étonnons pas que quelqu'un capable de parler littéralement, triomphalement, le langage du Mal déclenche un tel accès de faiblesse des cultures occidentales, en dépit des pétitions d'intellectuels. C'est que la légalité, la bonne conscience, la raison même deviennent complices de l'imprecation.

This gorging on euphemisms and the complicity of reason with an irrational view of evil described by Baudrillard is also echoed in contemporary fiction about the moral monster, sometimes even from the point of view of the monster. Freddie Montgomery, an existential moral monster and the hero of John Banville's *The Book of Evidence* (1989), comments thus on the limitations of language—of human thought—to comprehend evil and wonders, indeed, whether it exists at all:

By the way, leafing through my dictionary I am struck by the poverty of the language when it comes to naming or describing badness. Evil, wickedness, mischief, these words imply an agency, the conscious or at least active doing of wrong. They do not signify the bad in its inert, neutral, self-sustaining state. Then there are the adjectives: dreadful, heinous, execrable, vile, and so on. They are not so much descriptive as judgmental. They carry a weight of censure mingled with fear. Is this not a queer state of affairs? It makes me wonder. I ask myself if perhaps the thing itself—badness—does not exist at all, if these strangely vague and imprecise words are only a kind of ruse, a kind of elaborate cover for the fact that nothing is there. Or perhaps the words are an attempt to make it be there? Or, again, perhaps there is something, but the words invented it. Such considerations make me feel dizzy, as if a hole had opened briefly in the world. (p. 54)

This “queer state of affairs” is also leading to the wish to suppress the evidence of the existence of evil through censorship imposed mainly on films. Moral monstrosity poses other problems than aesthetic monstrosity with regard to audiences and readers, for it is widely believed that exposure to the fictional acts of evil monsters may trigger the wish to commit evil acts in imitation of the monster. Texts about aesthetic monsters, such as *The Elephant Man* (1980), do not cause sympathetic audiences to imitate its protagonist, despite Dunn's tongue-in-cheek discussion of the issue in *Geek Love* (1983) in relation to the grotesque cult of mutilated fans started by the legless Seal Boy, Arturo. As I have shown in Chapter 3, the fictional freak may even be used to conceal a moral

callousness towards real-life natural, aesthetic monsters. The implication is that while sentimental texts are failing to move their audiences to positive, moral actions and reflection, texts featuring moral monsters—novels like *American Psycho* (1991) or films like *Natural Born Killers* (1994)—inevitably inspire audiences and readers with an irresistible wish to imitate their protagonists. The debate about copycat theories of criminal behaviour and the defense of censorship reveal the fears of a concerned minority for the moral soundness of these texts. However, this moral minority fails to take into account important factors in the popular perception of the fictional evil monster. One of the factors that should be analyzed in this regard is why evil occupies such a large space in contemporary fiction and whether this fact obeys to an attempt to shock people—desensitised in part by the loss of religious belief and by the failure of the influential media to keep a moral standpoint—into an awareness of how important a role evil plays in real life, or is merely a side effect of the generalised reluctance to face the human nature of evil.

4.1. Explaining the Moral Monster: Between Hell and Psychoanalysis

4.1.1. Evil and the Devil

Comparing his films on amoral human monstrosity with Martin Scorsese's moral treatment of good and evil, David Cronenberg confessed once to his inability to believe in the Devil: "My curse is that I can't believe in the devil because I would have to believe in a purely evil being and I don't feel I've met anybody I could consider evil" (Rodley, op. cit.: 118). Cronenberg himself observes that Scorsese's Catholic upbringing has prepared him better to deal with the representation of evil, while Cronenberg is himself in this sense at a disadvantage, groping in the dark of the vast domain of human monstrosity. It is interesting to note that Cronenberg links belief in the Devil to the experience of human evil, as if the Devil were an emanation of human evil and not the other way round, as Christianity has claimed. Cronenberg's position is predominant among the artists dealing now with the evil monster. In fact, the scarcity of representations of the Devil in contemporary fiction, produced by a generation of artists mainly brought up without strong religious beliefs and addressing a public similar to themselves in this regard, may be explained by the redundancy of the Devil in a secularised world coming to terms with the fact that the nature of evil is human and not supernatural.

The Devil and the villain inspire the same dread as pure samples of evil and fulfil a similar function as scapegoats. In fact, the decadence of the figure of the Devil in fiction can be traced back to the rise of the Gothic villain, the missing link between Milton's supernatural Satan and Byron's human satanic hero. The years between Milton's unwittingly sympathetic representation of Satan as a proud fallen angel in the late seventeenth century and the rise of the rebellious Byronic hero of Romanticism in the early nineteenth century witness a process of humanisation of evil, in which evil loses its supernatural overtones to become purely human. Before the beginning of this transition the Devil had played mainly the role of keeper of God's prison for the moral monsters (Hell) in a harsh system of divine justice, used by the Church mainly to bully believers into submission and infidels into conversion. Hell—which etymologically means the hidden place—first appears in ancient cultures as simply the place where the

dead go, once the idea that death is but a return to the Earth goddess is replaced by the idea of death as the absolute end, a new attitude which appeared about 2500 BC (Baring and Cashford, op. cit.: 159). Although the Greek Hades counts among its inhabitants men tormented eternally, their punishment is arbitrarily dictated by the gods without a system of just reward and punishment.

Judaism constructs the idea of Hell as a place of punishment for the wicked run by teams of demonic torturers, though it is unclear how the principle of evil imported from Persian Mazdaism becomes the Devil, ruler of Hell, or why the Devil ultimately appears as God's civil servant in his role of Hell's governor and simultaneously as his main adversary in the struggle to capture the souls of men. The paradox is that Hell emerges from the popular Hebrew imagination as a consolatory fantasy build to appease the need for justice that is only imperfectly imparted by human judges, but when it is finally incorporated into the official doctrine of the Church—as late as the sixth century—it is used for the purpose of generalising the fear of God represented as a sternest judge. Ironically, the Church's repeated attempts to establish a clear, theologically sound construction of Hell finally led the way to Hell's decadence. The many theological inconsistencies and the lack of a scriptural basis finally undermined the foundation of the Christian system of punishment and had as a consequence the loss of the Devil's primordial role as an evil tempter (Minois, 1991). Proof that the process of updating Hell is not over yet is the Church of England's recent⁶ and controversial redefinition of Hell as a converted Purgatory, an idea prompted by the wish to erase God's image as a sadistic monster fond of victimizing sinners (Stansford, 1996). The Catholic Church is likewise propounding a new image of Hell as, basically, a place of non-being and of total separation from God. Interestingly, neither the Anglican nor the Catholic Church refer to the role of the Devil in their new view of Hell; both also avoid discussing to what extent evil acts are the realization of a potential to do evil present in all of us or the result of the Devil's manipulation of the human soul.

It can be said that for the contemporary secularised Western world, Hell is not the prison where the moral monster is punished, but rather the condition of the moral monster's life and, by extension, that of the victims who survive the encounter with the monster. David Pocock (1985: 48) notes that "in traditional Christianity the persistent moral sinner is a human monster not because of the effects of his bad acts, but because he appears to enjoy a perverse will contrary to the divine order, which among other things defines the end for which he is created". The sinner is, like the Devil, literally a pervert who corrupts the souls of those he tempts and who enjoys doing so. Born to do good and to follow God's will, the fallen angel Lucifer, who later becomes Satan and abuses (perverts) Eve's innocence, is the chief example of the sinner who carries Hell inside and who tries to pass onto others the pain and suffering caused by the punishment inflicted on him. The pattern is strangely repeated in the life of the contemporary psychopath, a man whose inner hell is often the result of his (willed or inescapable) refusal to conform to the moral norms of society. The impossibility of overturning the order that oppresses him transforms the chaos he carries inside into mental agony for him and physical pain for his victims, whom he probably sees not only as the hated representatives of this repressive forces but also as fellow companions in disgrace.

Whereas traditional Christianity believed in the idea that everybody had been created to do good and that evil arose from the Devil's abuse of his victims, the secular

6. The Church of England recently issued a report at the end of 1995, *The Mystery of Salvation*, which contains these new ideas on Hell.

Western world cannot help feeling a certain sympathy for the figure of the Devil, especially because of the heritage left by the Romantics, who interpreted Milton's Satan sympathetically. The Devil is seen now as a Romantic victim who cannot help doing evil and who does not necessarily enjoy his situation, but who has assumed it as a consequence of his rebellion against God. He need not even be a tempter, just a supernatural tutor of the human moral monster, who, unlike him, is often defined as such not because of his will to disrupt God's order but because of his acts—something that totally subverts the definition of the Christian moral monster.

Absolute evil embodied in a supernatural being is rarely represented in fiction. When this is done, there is a dissociation of evil from traditional Christian values, or alternatively, a subversion of them. In Clive Barker's *Imajica* (1991) the patriarchal god Hepaxamendios is himself the source of all evil, which he has unleashed by imprisoning and condemning to silence (to the hell of non-being) the goddesses whose throne he once usurped. Stephen King's *It* (1986) and Robert McCammon's *Swan Song* (1987) deal with shape-shifting evil monsters who embody the essence of evil and who subsist thanks to the capacity of human beings to do evil. 'It', an entity arrived on Earth from outer space and never related to Hell, creates a particular atmosphere of evil and destruction in the small town of Derry which is nonetheless sustained by the evil impulses felt by all its citizens rather than by the creature on its own. 'It' is, so to speak, the embodiment of the dark side of Derry's inhabitants. In *Swan Song*, the unnamed monster, who calls himself Friend, has returned to Earth because of the evil energy unleashed by the nuclear weapons employed in the war that has devastated the USA. His mission, as he sees it, is to ensure that the partial destruction of Earth, which has caused humanity to lapse into barbarism, is completed by the detonation of a secret weapon whose code only 'God' knows—'God' being none other than the President of the United States, driven mad by the aftermath of the war. Unlike 'It', Friend is not a physical entity that can be defeated and destroyed but a supernatural creature who can always return provided enough evil is done on Earth. Yet, he is a particular kind of Devil for he pursues the total destruction of humankind, rather than their submission to him, as the only possible ritual of purification to regenerate Earth. His aim is, in his view, doing good by cleansing Earth of all the human filth left by the atomic war and so for him, paradoxically the task of regeneration that the heroine Swan starts is nothing but evil, a preaching of hope for a future than can never take place. Friend appears thus more as an embodiment of pure despair than of pure evil and symbolizes the idea that evil happens mainly when hope for the future is lost either at a personal or at a collective level.

Of all the films I have surveyed, only Ridley Scott's *Legend* (1985) follows a traditional representation of the Devil as a composite monster—partly human and beast—living in an underground residence similar to Christian Hell. The stereotypical plot of Scott's film is actually based on the ancient myth of the hero's descent into pre-Christian Hell to retrieve a beloved woman taken by force, sometimes by death. This is a topic narrated in many myths that are derived in fact from the Earth goddess' rescue of her sacrificed son-lover, which would ensure the return of the spring. The plot of *Legend* is thus a belated descendant of the patriarchal myth of the solar hero's fight with the powers of evil identified with the night, darkness and death. The Devil, precisely renamed Darkness in the film, is a hybrid of the archaic Beast, the Christian iconography of the Devil and the later Gothic villain. Darkness' behaviour—especially in his lusting after the innocent, virginal heroine—and the triangle formed by him and the couple consisting of the virtuous hero and heroine are typically Gothic rather than inspired by classic myth. Rob Bottin's design for Darkness appropriates traditional

elements such as the cloven feet, tail, sharp teeth, red skin, muscular body and horns of the medieval iconography of the Devil to compose an innovative, formidable portrait of the Prince of Darkness different from any other seen on the screen. Interestingly, the linking of supernatural evil to the natural predator is reinforced by the similar deaths of Darkness and the fierce predator in Scott's previous film, *Alien*: both creatures are swept away into the void of infinite space after being tricked by resourceful heroines, who seemingly redress with their courageous rejection of evil the wrongs brought about by Eve's fall.

Another descent into Hell closes the long *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1980–1995) series. In the seventh episode of the Freddy Krueger saga, *Wes Craven's New Nightmare*, the heroine 'Heather Langenkamp' (the name of the actress who actually played heroine Nancy in the first film and who plays herself in this film) dreams herself into Hell in order to retrieve her five-year-old abducted by the evil Krueger. Mother and son (perhaps a repetition of the old goddess and son-lover couple) manage to imprison Krueger in one of his hell's furnaces, an idea inspired by the burning of the witch in "Hansel and Gretel" a scene which has impressed the child but which also recalls the undead Krueger's original death by burning. Nancy's mother confesses in the first episode how the failure of justice to control this evil child abuser prompted the angry parents of the children he had abused and killed to burn Freddy to death. This lynching recalls the sacrifice of those believed by the Inquisition to be possessed by the Devil, though in Krueger's case vengeful justice only results in the creation of an even worse evil monster, this time supernatural.

The fire supposed to 'purify' the suburb of the pervert's presence actually transforms Krueger into the arch-pervert, the Devil himself. In a remarkable scene in the film, director Wes Craven, playing himself, explains to 'Heather' that Freddy is the modern incarnation of a very ancient force that has taken many shapes throughout history. According to Craven's tongue-in-cheek justification of his own creation of Freddy, this force has got used to its manifestation as Freddy but because this figure is wearing out, a renewal is due in order to imprison the force of evil into another figure of fiction that can be used as scapegoat. Krueger's success as postmodernism's bogeyman is due to a felicitous use of a supernatural gothicism based on popular notions of Jungian psychoanalysis, the collective unconscious, and child abuse and also on the horror motifs of traditional folk tales. Freddy *is* the best fictional representation of the Devil for the 1980s and 1990s because he has linked the contemporary psycho pervert to the category of the Gothic supernatural and because he has inherited from the traditional representation of the Devil not only the capacity to do unbounded evil but also mischievousness, which is probably the clue to his success and popularity.

The Devil appears most frequently in contemporary fiction as a supernatural being seldom identified with the Devil himself who offers an unsolicited Faustian bargain to an unsuspecting human. Those who enter into such pacts with the demons are not totally innocent though they can hardly be said to be moral monsters; the bond with the evil supernatural monster traps them in horrific situations out of which they cannot always extricate themselves, even though in some cases there is no clear reason why these new Faustus should deserve such harsh punishment. What makes them good prey for the diverse devils that tempt them is their personal ambition, mainly regarding professional success, rather than Faust's aspiration to immortal wisdom. Yet, since they are not believers, there is no question of eternal damnation at stake, which rather blurs the horror inspired by the devils. There is not even a Hell into which these victims may fall: in fact, their life after the meeting with the monster becomes Hell itself, which fits

within the widespread impression that Hell is a condition of contemporary life rather than a place for the punishment of the wicked. Instead of condemning the sin of the man who tries to reach out for the forbidden fruit of knowledge, the contemporary version of the Faustian pact deals with the dangers of greed and corresponds to the widespread materialism of the 1980s and 1990s. It seems, in fact, a warning against the expectations of achieving professional and material success easily, as many have done in the last two decades.

What the different devils seek in these bargains is usually an extension of evil through their own reproduction, sometimes understood in a literal sense. George Miller's *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987) (based on John Updike's novel) deals with the failure of the Devil to seal a bargain with three witches. In this film Darryl Van Horn seduces three beautiful women of various artistic talents with bizarre promises about their future professional success, while in fact he wants if not their souls, at least their wombs in order to reproduce himself. However, in the twentieth century the Devil is such a weak creature that Alexandra, Suki and Jane finally trick him out of his paternity rights and keep their (apparently normal) children to themselves, untying the knot that had traditionally linked women to witchcraft and the Devil since the late Middle Ages. The demonic Doro of *Wild Seed* (1980), an ancient Nubian made immortal by a supernatural metamorphosis, also recruits human beings with a view to breeding them into a new super-race by making Faustian bargains with them for their bodies, offering in exchange long lives and material comfort.

Other Faustian pacts take place in *Spanky* (1994), *My Idea of Fun* (1993) and *Candyman* (1992). In *Spanky*, a monstrous demon incarnated in a handsome body that is dying tempts a young man, Martyn, to enter a bargain with him that seemingly brings in many material advantages to Martyn in exchange for nothing. Only at the very end does Spanky reveal his true aim, that of occupying Martyn's body. In *My Idea of Fun*, the Falstaffian Mr. Broadhurst, who has sponsored the business career of his protégé Ian since his childhood, finally claims from him the right to be reborn again in the body of Ian's own child. Candyman—a legendary local demon attached to a run down inner city state—traps PhD student Helen into a peculiar bargain: in exchange for confirming to her the existence of his legend, which she is researching, he claims her body and soul, and so Helen becomes herself another legendary figure of evil ready to lure more into the same bargain. The body and not the soul is also the object of greed of Clive Barker's evil Cenobites. Actually, one of the stumbling blocks in the construction of the theology of Hell was how could disembodied souls be delivered to the very physical torments of Hell and why torture should be the right punishment for the moral monster. Barker's *Hellraiser* (1987) and the film series based on it retake the subject of the physicality of punishment—in fact it could be said that this motif permeates all of contemporary fiction, as if the soul had ceased to exist and only a Sadeian view of the body made sense. In this view evil is represented basically as the unbound capacity to do *physical* harm through cruelty and violence.

One of the most successful recent films about the motif of the Faustian pact, Alan Parker's *Angel Heart* (1987), approaches the question of damnation from the perspective of an innocent man, Harry Angel, forced to give up his soul to an inflexible, unfair devil intent on making him honour a contract Angel has never signed. The plot gives a new twist to the theme of the Faustian bargain by narrating how the ambitious crooner Johnny Favourite, who has sold his soul to the Devil for fame, tries to back out of the agreement. Close to dying because of injuries received in service during World War II, Favourite and his witch girlfriend trick Lucifer out of Johnny's soul by killing

Harry Angel, a young soldier chosen at random, whose heart Favourite eats. This ritualistic act of cannibalism apparently grants Favourite the use of Angel's soul and consciousness as a mask to conceal himself from Lucifer's greedy hands, though Angel is never aware that he and Favourite occupy the same body or that Favourite exists at all. When Louis Cypher or Lucifer, a pony-tailed, bearded gentleman fond of dressing in dark colours contracts Angel, then self-employed as a private detective, to find Favourite, a number of deaths ensue involving those formerly connected with Johnny who have met Angel in the course of his investigation. Finally, the enigmatic Cypher discloses to his employee in an anguished scene of revelation that, while he believes himself to be the innocent Angel, he is in fact Favourite, hiding behind Angel's stolen soul, and that the crimes have been committed by the hidden Johnny under Lucifer's influence.

These crimes and his old debt are enough to carry Angel off to Hell for ever, although by the end of the film it is still unclear why Angel must pay for Favourite's deception and whether the man seen on his descent to Hell is still the desperate Angel, the callous Favourite, or both. Parker's film suggests that the dissociation of good and evil is so strong that we cannot literally see ourselves commit evil acts. We deny our evil side, which symbolically belongs to the Devil (it is literally his 'favourite') and end up thus destroying both the good and the evil side in Hell. Lucifer's system of reward and punishment does not make sense, as the innocent Angel is made to pay for Favourite's evil crimes, yet Lucifer's refusal to take only Favourite's soul and his unfair appropriation of Angel's, indicate that Favourite's appropriation of Angel's soul (the intrusion of evil into good) is an act that cannot be undone and, furthermore, that while there is certainly a Devil there is no God that will save Angel from his fate.

As is often the case with not fully successful films (and novels), *Mister Frost; Error! Marcador no definido.* (1990) is based on an attractive idea that does not find a correspondingly successful artistic realization but that does integrate nonetheless important aspects of the current discussion of evil. Mr. Frost is the name of a rather aristocratic serial killer (played by Jeff Goldblum) who claims to be the Devil. Arrested for the deaths of more than twenty people, justice finally decides that Frost's aloofness in the face of his crimes is a sign of his suffering from a serious mental disease and so he is sent to a psychiatric hospital. There he insists once more to the psychiatrist who treats him—a woman—that he *is* the Devil and that to prove it he will inspire her with an irrepressible wish to kill him in a short period of time. However, when she finally kills him it is still not known whether Frost is an evil monster who does not deserve the care he is being given, as the policeman who arrested him claims, a mentally ill man or the Devil himself. Neither is it known whether the psychiatrist has discovered her so far unknown evil side or whether she has committed an unavoidable evil act, tempted by the Devil. This refusal to support either the supernatural or the rational-scientific explanation of evil without hesitation, together with the more or less radical rejection of the authority of psychology and psychiatry, characterize not only this film but also most contemporary fiction about evil monstrosity.

The greatest paradox in the fictional representation of the Devil is that even though this is a figure that has lost a great deal of its popularity among believers it is still often found in films and novels, often, as I have remarked, represented as simply a supernatural evil monster not linked to Christianity. In contrast, the presence of God—or of corresponding principles of good—has diminished dramatically. Up to a certain point, this has been always the case. "Visionary literature", Yi-Fu Tuan (1980: 85) writes in reference to medieval times, "is largely devoted to the horrors of hell and has little to

say about heaven". The same can still be said about the visualizations of horror in this secularised late twentieth century. The Devil remains in the background, perennially ready to be used to explain evil and constantly producing supernatural but profane offspring, while the once virtuous hero/ines of fiction are currently represented as weak, gullible, human beings, not too surprised by the discovery that evil lies within themselves. The trickster tricks only those who already have a capacity to be tricked. The traditional confrontation between good and evil is giving way to a murkier palette of blurred moral tones which can be used to portray the infinite variation on human evil but that has few colours, if any, to depict good.

4.1.2. The Evil Villain

In *Love and Death in the American Novel* Leslie Fiedler (1973: 38) notes that "the final horrors, as modern society has come to realize, are neither the gods nor demons, but intimate aspects of our own minds". This realization has its first fictional expression in the Gothic novel, in a paradox that lies at its very core: even when it seems that the supernatural elements are real, such as in *The Monk*, what really matters in the Gothic novel is the horror created by the human villain moved by greed or lust. Gothic fiction is the first to denote an interest in the human mind as the site of evil and, as Elizabeth MacAndrew (op. cit.: 3) writes, the corpus of all Gothic novels composes "a picture of evil as a form of psychological monstrosity". This does not mean, however, that no links can be traced between the emerging Gothic villain and the supernatural Devil. The rabbinical tradition developed in the thirteenth century an evil lineage for Cain, the first human moral monster, by which he was actually not Adam's but the serpent's (i.e. the Devil's) son. The cursed, evil Cain, traditionally represented as an ugly, deformed man, was also attributed with the fathering of the monstrous races, the evil spirits and Noah's son Ham, himself the father of the non-white races, a bizarre tenet which has been used to justify racism throughout the ages. Cain's offspring was, finally, identified in the fifteenth century with the low-class villagers (churls or villains) for, as was then seen, Cain had ceased to be a gentleman after murdering Abel. "This sort of social thinking", John Friedman (op. cit.: 102) writes, "was particularly popular in England where, in the Middle English *Ywain and Gawain*, the churl of the woods with club by the magic fountain is called 'a churl of Cain's kindred'". It is precisely in England where, through an almost fabulous inversion, the physically and morally base medieval villain descended from Satan through Cain later became the upper-class Gothic villain born of Milton's Satan, afterwards begetting the Satanic hero of Romanticism.

How is evil understood in the Gothic novel? According to MacAndrew (ibid.: 249), evil is "that which mars the harmony of the universe". She argues that in the Gothic novel evil is a monstrous distortion of potentially good feelings resulting in the individual's war "with God's harmony within and outside himself" (ibid.: 24). By the middle of the eighteenth century thinkers such as Adam Smith had already laid the foundations for the equation of goodness with beauty and ugliness with evil that so profoundly permeated sentimental and Gothic literature, and that is still a bedrock of conventional ideas about good and evil. The Gothic novel denies the benevolent optimism of the sentimental novel with its show of the inner monstrosity of man. Thus, while sentimental authors saw in the offering of positive moral models a path towards the redemption of man from evil, the Gothic novelists realized that the display of evil

monstrosity could undermine the effect sought by sentimentalism. This led to a division among them between those who, like Anne Radcliffe, supported a happy resolution that would partly erase the effect produced by horror and terror and those who, like Matthew Lewis, did not, though one way or another, the moral monster always received his comeuppance.

The tensions between sentimental benevolism and Gothic are still alive in the definition of the contemporary villain, who is still struggling to show a human side denied by the Manichaeic distinction between virtue and vice in sentimentalism. The Gothic novel allowed some room for the humanity of the villain and discovered that his passions were but human passions felt by all in some degree, and that evil was not absolute in him but relative. The image of the wicked monk Schedoni in Anne Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), melting into tears at the sight of the sleeping heroine Ellena, whom he believes for a while to be his daughter, and transforming his murderous impulses against her into love, is one of the instances of the failure of absolute evil to dominate the Gothic villain. Up to a point it could be said that since the relativity of evil and its being attributed to the human psyche and not to an external agent are ideas that still endure, contemporary fiction about evil monstrosity is intrinsically Gothic.

The survival of the Gothic villain into the age of Freudian psychoanalysis, which is not based on moral, sentimental distinctions between good and evil, might seem at first sight an anachronism. However, the lasting success of the villain may be grounded precisely on his potential to transmit to postmodernity the generalised feeling that the moral monster is beyond explanation and even beyond religion. The villain also endures because he is placed at a crossroads between traditional morality and the Nietzschean superman in a way that the psychopath can never be. He is a strong mixture of rebellious amorality, irrepressible will, intelligence and individualism, a person who has put himself beyond good and evil and beyond the distinction between rationality and irrationality. The villain cannot be simply reduced to the madman because he is a figure that arises from the intuition that intelligence and irrationality are not fully incompatible; in fact, the villain's passion for doing evil is the dark counterpart to the rational intelligence of the often also passionate hero. Hero and villain are often the same man and can only be told apart because the villain's selfish amorality and his negative use of aggression have placed him beyond the pale of the tolerable.

The psychopath can be deconstructed by psychoanalysis, but the villain denies that psychology suffices to explain evil, hence his appeal in times when evil is regarded at a popular level as a still unknown force of the human mind, too horrifying to be accepted as the accidental result of mental disease. A certain novelty is contributed by stories, such as Charles Sheffield's science-fiction novel *The Nimrod Hunt* (1986), which describe the Freudian roots of the villain's personality, perhaps following attempts at explaining the villains of history through their childhood, as psychologist Alice Miller (1991) did in the case of Adolf Hitler⁷. In *The Nimrod Hunt*, the root of Esro Mondrian's obsession for building the ultimate system of defence of the universe—an obsession that almost costs the total destruction of the confederacy that employs him to defend its boundaries—is an event that he has blocked out of his memory. As a three-

7. Miller devotes a whole chapter of her book to analyzing Hitler's childhood. Although she does not follow the Freudian model, Miller discusses what aspects of Hitler's early years beyond the relationship with his parents may have contributed to the formation of his cruel personality.

year-old he was abandoned by his mother in the African savannah to be killed in the dark of night by roaming wild beasts. Surviving that night, Mondrian grew up to build a megalomaniac version of the protection from the beasts he had needed as a helpless child alone in the dark. However, this event still cannot justify why Mondrian employs mental cruelty and physical violence to achieve his ends, nor can it explain why he reacted with that particular obsession or whether any person would have reacted in the same way. Instead of the question of whether evil is something we do or we are, villains like Mondrian beg the question of whether evil is something innate in some of us or something that grows in us because of events in our childhood over which we have no control. The villain also questions to what extent the explanations of evil furnished by psychoanalysis and psychiatry explain human evil at all, lacking, as they do, precise tools to evaluate factors such as the will, intelligence, innate malice, or determination of each person.

Although he often acts alone, another characteristic that distinguishes the villain from the psychopath of fiction is that the former is frequently accompanied by minor villains—mere ‘baddies.’ The psychopath lives out a secret obsession that he fulfils through impulsive acts, whereas the villain masterminds the implementation of his obsession, making it public at least among his helpmeets and building around it a master plan that only the hero can thwart. The villain has a capacity of leadership that the psychopath lacks, a capacity that is possibly a reflection of that of the Devil among the demons. Villains who act alone are easier to categorise as madmen, for the company the villain keeps functions as a guarantee that his amoral view of the world makes sense beyond the boundaries of his own self. Far from representing an individual deviation of the moral norm, the villain as a leader stands for an alternative, inverted system of moral values.

Villains often form partnerships with an inferior villain who is usually on the other side of the law, or who may represent the body in the composite monster of which the superior villain is the brain. The combinations are many. In the *Robocop* (1987–1992) series the first film features a duo of villains composed of a corrupt executive of the OCP corporation and the leader of a criminal gang that controls downtown Detroit; the second film shows a most peculiar alliance between a drug baron and a vicious twelve-year-old who is his business associate. Policeman John Spartan fights in *Demolition Man* (1993) the dangerous criminal Simon Phoenix, who turns out to be tyrant Raymond Cocteau’s henchman. *Batman Returns* (1992) teams together the Catwoman, the Penguin and the businessman Max Schreck, an unusual threesome of villains allied against Batman, while in *Batman Forever* (1995), the hero faces another duo, formed by Harvey Two-Face and the Riddler. Apart from the common interest of destroying the hero or forming a partnership to gain money or power, sex may be also the basis of the partnership for some couples of villains. In *Basic Instinct* (1992), Catherine Trammel enjoys the company of a lesbian lover, who was once in prison for killing her brothers. The villain of *The Crow* (1994) is the incestuous lover of his stepsister, while in *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), Robert forms a partnership with his abused wife Caroline. These and many other instances of teams of villains imply that the hero is the really isolated figure in a landscape shaped by many more villains than heroes.

The role of the villain has been frequently played in recent American films by Europeans. Prestigious British actors such as Nigel Hawthorne, Alan Rickman, Michael Gambon, Ian Holm, Patrick MacNee, Jeremy Irons and Terence Stamp, among others, have been called to Hollywood in recent years to play secondary roles as villains. Even

the very popular TV series *Dynasty* featured British actress Joan Collins as the villainess Alexis Carrington. Only exceptionally have British actors, such as Anthony Hopkins (Hannibal Lecter in *The Silence of the Lambs*) or Gary Oldman (Dracula in Coppola's film), played leading roles in American films after having appeared as evil monsters on screen. Among European actors other than British, Dutch actor Jeroen Crabbe seems to have become another prominent specialist in playing villains, while his fellow countryman Rutger Hauer (the replicant Roy in *Blade Runner*) has alternatively appeared on film as hero or villain like another European actor, the Austrian Arnold Schwarzenegger. In commercial films—particularly in action films—a British, or vaguely 'European', accent is one of the main signs of identity of the villain together with the ability to master other languages (German, Arabic and Japanese are distinctively suspicious), a fondness for classical music, literature and the arts, and elegant—or at least idiosyncratic—clothes. In contrast to these cultured villains, the all-American hero lacks any artistic or intellectual knowledge; cleverness, moral integrity, his defense of the law and his positive (controlled) use of aggression make up for his educational disadvantages and suffice him to defeat the apparently superior villain.

Harriet Hawkins (1990: 13) writes that the image of the American hero reflects "the premium traditionally placed on the egalitarian virtues of Frontier times, when a man was judged by what he was and not by what he knew and the lack of a classical education did not count against you". Education is nonetheless also the suspect patrimony of the villain because it connotes the Jamesian idea of the civilized, decadent Europe together with a certain degree of femininity, which the hero opposes with his rugged masculinity. In addition, the foreignness of the villains of recent commercial American films also reflects a xenophobia the more remarkable for originating in a country once famed among immigrants as a tolerant land. The moral monster of commercial films is essentially un-American, either a foreigner—mainly upper-class, preferably from a country with a more rigid class system than the USA, such as the UK, or less democratic, such as Japan—or a member of an ethnic minority that refuses to be fully Americanised. Despite the evidence of the many crimes committed by American citizens, American audiences appreciate being told that the villain defeated by their all-American hero has not had the benefit of the American lifestyle and that terror is something introduced by ethnic groups that do not respect the American way of life⁸. Paradoxically, despite the popularity of the foreign villain, all-American heroes are also played by actors of other nationalities such as the Austrian Arnold Schwarzenegger, the Belgian Jean-Claude Van Damme or the Swedish Dolph Lundgren who have found in the USA their new home to the point that they are no longer seen as foreigners.

Obviously, not only European actors play the role of villains in American films. A number of American actors have also specialized in portraying evil villains. Ronnie Cox, Lance Henriksen, Michael Ironside, John Lithgow, Gary Busey, Christopher Walken, Ron Silver, Dennis Hopper, Eric Roberts, Michael Wincott are some of the names that are routinely typecast as villains. Regardless of their diverse quality as actors, what these men have in common is a physical appearance outside the standards observed by Hollywood heroes. This does not mean that villains are typically played by unattractive men and heroes played by attractive men—Bruce Willis, Sylvester Stallone

8. This was sadly reflected in the bombing of a government building in Oklahoma City in 1995: although the terrorists turned out to be white and members of an American right-wing militia organization, the first suspicions were directed against Arab terrorists. It remains to be seen how this deep shock will affect the representation of the villain in American popular fiction.

or Arnold Schwarzenegger who habitually play heroes cannot be said to be more attractive men than Walken or Roberts. As for offering differing images of masculinity, in fact the muscular hero frequently encounters a not less muscular opponent, so that many of the films featuring such confrontations do not offer alternative images of masculinity but just one, split between Jekyll (the hero) and his Hyde (the villain).

At any rate, the roles of villains and mere baddies make the variety of human types visible on screen, while heroes and heroines respond to a more homogeneous image of sexual desirability, which may not be evident from the bodies of the actors but rather from how studios market their images. The physical appearance of the villain ranges from grotesque ugliness to colossal ‘musculinity’ (the term coined by Yvonne Tasker) so that what really characterises the villain is not his body but the limited range of facial expressions he is allowed to display, which are confined to sadism, anger, hatred and perhaps madness. When the villain smiles he is being ironic or sarcastic but never happy. The most successful actors in villain roles are those who overcome the limitations of the role by suggesting that something else—something evil but deeply human—is alive behind the mask.

In this section I have referred to the villain as a man, ignoring so far the villainess. In fact, the villainess is necessarily a more restricted character because she is limited by the intersection of beauty and power. Few women enjoy a great measure of power, and since power is one of the marks of the villain, it follows that the number of villainesses must be small, as it is. Furthermore, women actually appear in commercial films as possessions of the villain but hardly as independent villainesses in the roles usually attributed to villains: corrupt businessmen or politicians, terrorists, mercenaries, drug or arms dealers. The villainess is typically a femme fatale, beautiful and invariably sexually attractive, who fulfils her obsessions through the power she gains on men. The variety of physical appearances in the representation of the villain is not allowed to the villainess, always played by attractive actresses such as Sharon Stone, Linda Fiorentino, Rebecca de Mornay, Theresa Russell, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Michelle Pfeiffer or Greta Scacchi, among others. An unattractive villainess makes no sense, for her power depends on her beauty, whereas the villain needs no physical attraction to wield power; this comes usually from his capacity to lead others into crime and for this he usually needs his physical strength and his capacity to cause harm through psychological cruelty and physical violence.

Villains and villainesses (and non-human evil monsters) are always portrayed from the hostile point of view of the hero and on the basis of their evil actions, not of their personalities. During their confrontation the hero may learn more about the motivations and the obsessions of the villain, yet the appeal of the villain is that he can never be fully understood, either because not enough information is available about his personality, or because what is available is not the fruit of introspection but rather of reports made by others. This is perhaps exemplified best in the encounter of Marlow and Kurtz in “Heart of Darkness” (1902) and in its screen adaptation *Apocalypse Now* (1979). The former’s efforts to decode the evil Kurtz are necessarily frustrated by the latter’s refusal to explain himself, so that all that remains of Kurtz are Marlow’s and the Company’s reports, plus Kurtz’s own voice in his ambiguous report about the possibilities of colonialism in Africa. Of the man—of the monster—nothing real remains. The villain lacks a voice of his own because granting him the use of one would make him become as human as the hero—an effect the Romantics discovered in their reading of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

Since commercial cinema does not have much room for psychological introspection, the villain thrives on the screen much better than on the printed page. The contemporary novel is interested, above all, in psychological introspection and, particularly, in presenting the voice of the evil monster without authorial comment in first person narratives. When the villain is given a first narrative voice, as in many contemporary novels, it is much more difficult to keep the empathetic detachment necessary to believe that the villain is nothing but an embodiment of pure evil; instead, when hearing the voice of the villain, the reader and the viewer may even sympathise with him—sometimes despite themselves. This sympathy turns the moral monster into a moral hero of a category not sufficiently defined yet. No film about monstrosity has been, so far, narrated from the point of view of the monster, though films such as *Blade Runner* (1982) have challenged their audiences to consider the humanity of the evil monster. When at the end of *Blade Runner* the apparently villainous replicant Roy pronounces a moving speech just before dying about his life as a slave, the hero Deckard—actually a no less villainous exterminator—sympathises with him and so does the audience. After Roy's speech, he and Deckard can no longer be seen as opposite embodiments of evil and good but as human mixtures of good and evil trapped by a system of power that exploits their capacity for aggression.

Yet, since the end of *Blade Runner* is an exception and not the rule, it could be inferred that the success of the villain of film is based on the fact that film audiences *do not want* to let the villain justify himself. This attitude could be due to the fact that accepting stereotypes like the villain simplifies the matter of judging to what extent evil is part of all humans. If the evil villain appears to be fully human, his humanity is, in any case, also ignored with, as David Pocock (op. cit.: 51) writes, “the angry ‘I don't want to know’, or a heightened sense of their monstrosity”. As Victor Sage (op. cit.: 170) notes with respect to *Frankenstein*, when Mary Shelley takes the opportunity to give us the monster's testimony “it is this directness of effect, still carrying us into the heart of the labyrinth, as it were, which results in the moral ambiguity that so characterises this novel”. It could well be that this moral ambiguity is not desirable, which would explain why the monster's voice is already literally missing in the first stage adaptation and is still mute in Boris Karloff's performance. Audiences probably relish the villain precisely because he confirms an unambiguous, Manichaeic, dangerous and conservative morality; this morality would be a consolatory myth that compensates for the actual ambiguity of morality in real life.

This does not necessarily mean that film audiences cannot exert adequate moral judgements applied to complex, ambiguous real life events. The non-human monster and the human moral monster are used if not as scapegoats, at least, as excuses for an escape into a fictional world in which good and evil are easy to distinguish. This escape, far from being an irresponsible evasion from reality, reinforces the social consensus on what is morally acceptable, rejecting the existentialism and moral nihilism more frequently found in the mainstream novel. It would be wrong to believe that the more conservative moral stand of film (shared up to a point by the so-called popular novel) is incompatible with the exploration of amorality of the mainstream novel, as many people consume both. In fact, they are complementary and nourish each other: they coincide in presenting the contemporary world as a place and time haunted by evil that cannot be controlled, much less understood. But while film thrives on consolatory fantasies of fair justice, the novel offers a complementary consolatory fantasy by offering the illusion of the rational discourse built by the madman to explain his own irrationality, as in *American Psycho*.

The ambiguous morality of *Frankenstein* has left an important double inheritance in fiction that might explain the current interaction of Manichaeism and amorality. On the one hand, popular fiction ceaselessly retells the plot of persecution and elimination of the horror created by man, in which the monster is portrayed as a moral monster or villain. On the other hand, contemporary mainstream novels dealing with moral monsters repeat the scheme of the monster's psychological introspection. It is important to note that since Frankenstein's monster is born as an adult, the psychoanalytical model applies imperfectly to him, while the influence of society and his rejection play a major role in the stressing of evil impulses in his personality. The novel of the 1980s and 1990s abounds in descendants of Frankenstein's monster, moral monsters not of fragmented body but of fragmented personality, unable to understand why they behave as they do, despite their intense self-awareness, constant introspection and not less constant reflection on their material circumstances. These anguished self-portraits act as mirrors held up to the reader and force him or her to consider to what extent evil is present in all of us and not only in the villain or in the non-human monster.

4.1.3. The Age of the Psychopath

4.1.3.1. The Construction of the Evil Psychopath

The representation of the human evil monster in fiction was radically altered with the introduction of the psychotic killer in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and in Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960). These two films popularised the idea of the Freudian moral monster, rationalizing the criminal deeds of their 'heroes'—both serial killers of women—as the result of childhood traumas endured at the hands of an abusive mother and an abusive father, respectively. This presentation of evil caught on, possibly because beyond the different degrees of conviction offered by the psychological explanations of the crimes these two films offered “a sense of these men's psychosis as *potentially* present within any of us” (Tudor, 1989: 45, original emphasis). The films contributed to the development of a new tradition in the representation of evil characterised in its current wave, as Andrew Tudor (ibid.: 197) remarks, “by graphic portrayal of violence; insanity conceived as a routine expectation in everyday life; declining efficacy of experts, whether coercive or psychiatric; little or no explanation for psychotic behaviour; violent misogyny as a central element in psychosis; and a narrative structure dominated by the tension requirements of the terrorizing narrative”. The problem with this tradition is that it is, fundamentally, a corrupted reading of Freudianism that has seeped down from the screen to popular notions about madness, criminality and its punishment. Right now the word psychopath conjures up in the popular imagination an incomprehensible mixture of evil and moral irresponsibility of which psychiatry and the law are accomplices, a view never justified by Freud or his followers.

Madness and evil converge in the figure of the psychopath in a long process that begins in the Renaissance. According to Michel Foucault (1993: 70): :

In the Renaissance, madness was present everywhere and mingled with every experience by its image or its dangers. During the classical period, madness was shown, but on the other side of bars; if present, it was at a distance, under the eyes of a reason that no longer felt any relation to it and that would not compromise itself by too close a resemblance. Madness had become a thing to look at: no

longer a monster inside oneself, but an animal with strange mechanisms, a bestiality from which man had long since been suppressed.

The animalisation of the madman meant that madness was seen not as a curable condition, but as a condition in need of discipline. It was furthermore believed that the animality of madness made the madman resistant to disease and to harsh physical mistreatment. The reinvention of madness as a disease begins when the confined madman—segregated from ‘normal’ society in the seventeenth century mainly because of his social uselessness in a market economy—ceases being exhibited in the ‘freak show’ run by eighteenth-century institutions such the asylum of St. Mary of Bethlehem in London, popularly known as Bedlam. When the French physician Pinel and his British counterpart Tuke free the madman from his chains and from the curious gaze of his visitors, the development of the process of observation and cure that spans the nineteenth century and gives rise to modern psychology and psychiatry begins.

Parallel to the treatment of madness is the problem of how to deal with the aggressive madman. Foucault notes that until the seventeenth century evil could only be acknowledged by means of public confession; later publicity was increasingly avoided by fear of scandal and even contagion and the aggressive madman was confined to the secrecy of prison to be kept or executed like any other criminal. With the rise of psychology there arises also a need to distinguish the aggressive madman who is not responsible for his acts from the evil criminal who is morally and legally accountable for them. The same evil act can be considered from two different judicial perspectives depending on whether the experts determine the capacity of the criminal to choose evil and hence whether s/he must receive psychiatric treatment, or a term in prison. The problem is that psychiatry and psychology have not developed so far infallible tools to determine the responsibility of the evildoer, though their place within the system of justice has been granted precisely on the basis of their alleged expertise in distinguishing responsible from irresponsible behaviour. This has caused a void in the system of justice that is the root of the resistance to the authority of the law and science to deal with evil articulated by contemporary films and novels.

The first to suggest that the penal system was failing society and that only a psychoanalytical criminology could help society by giving an unquestionable judgement on the psychology of criminals were Alexander and Staub, two German psychopathologists. Their book *The Psychopathological Concept of Crime* (1929, translated into English in 1931) defended the thesis that to properly judge criminals it was first necessary to ascertain their sanity. If proven insane, the criminal was entitled to psychiatric treatment for his or her mental illness but could not be judged by reason of diminished responsibility, the assumption being that only criminals who were fully responsible for their acts could be judged for them. The foundation on which criminal psychopathology rests is the concept of mental illness and the associated idea that psychiatry can treat and cure this type of disease. In fact, diagnosing a mental illness and pinpointing when and why it started is very difficult; furthermore, psychiatrists can seldom, if ever, assure society that an aggressive mental patient is cured and will not commit further crimes.

In the 1960s the American psychiatrist Thomas Szasz led the protest against the misuse of psychiatric diagnoses to exonerate evildoers from blame in court. His attack began by denouncing mental illness as a myth:

the notion of mental illness is used today chiefly to obscure and “explain away” problems in personal and social relationships, just as the notion of witchcraft was used for the same purpose from the early Middle Ages until well past the Renaissance. Today, we seek and achieve the denial of social, moral, and personal controversies by hastily retreating to playing the medical case. (1961: 205)

Szasz was concerned that through treating mental illnesses as bodily diseases the principle of personal responsibility, basic in a democratic political system, would be undermined and thus antisocial behaviour would remain unpunished. According to him, psychiatry is an activity that is only medical in name and that should rather be regarded as a form of “social engineering” (1965: vii), concerned with changing the attitudes and behaviour of individuals and even of nations. In *Law, Liberty and Psychiatry*, Szasz stated that “actually, law and psychiatry are similar in that both disciplines are concerned with *norms of conduct* and *methods of social control*” (ibid.: 2, original emphasis). It is interesting to note that the term sociopath is now currently used for psychopaths who act criminally allegedly because of their hatred of society and that the discipline of abnormal psychology is applied mainly to the study of why some individuals deviate from the norm rather than to the study of what psychological normality is at all.

Apart from steadily denouncing the undue power that psychiatric experts have accumulated in medical institutions and in the courts of law, Szasz accused the American judicial system of denying the criminal the right to be judged and the right to be absolved for his criminal guilt if s/he was proven innocent. These rights were forfeited for what Szasz regarded as an unlawful commitment to a psychiatric institution where the untried, alleged criminal might be indefinitely confined until a cure were confirmed, if it ever was. Thus, a criminal offence of moderate importance might lead to a short term in prison if the criminal were declared responsible for his or her acts but it might lead to seclusion for life in a psychiatric unit depending not on the judge but on the diagnosis of the psychiatrist. The power of the judge backed by the law was thus transferred in many cases to the psychologist or psychiatrist empowered to determine when a patient could be returned to society on the basis of vague medical criteria the patient himself or herself could not challenge. For Szasz this is nothing but “an expedient method for “disposing” of persons displaying certain kinds of antisocial conduct” (ibid.: 114) that serves justice badly and that is unfair towards the elemental rights of the allegedly antisocial person. What he proposes instead is to try the accused regardless of the psychiatric diagnoses of his mental disease, offering psychiatric treatment if it is deemed appropriate during the term of imprisonment. Szasz’s conclusion is that as long as psychiatrists cannot guarantee a cure for mental illness, justice must not be hindered by their testimony.

Invoking the name of Freud in court is another of the sins Szasz condemns. Apart from the fact that Freud’s work was devoted to the development of a therapy to cure neuroses and not psychoses, Freud did not actually intend his work to be used to explain or justify the moral monster: “Neither Freud nor the other early psychoanalysts paid much attention to the question of criminal responsibility. They wrote as if they believed that everyone was responsible for his actions” (Szasz, ibid.: 103). When asked to provide expert advice in the case of a man who had killed his father, Freud informed the doctor preparing the case that the Oedipus complex is always present and hence it is not pertinent to “provide a decision on the question of guilt” (ibid.: 105). Freud actually wrote in *Totem and Taboo* that one of the foundations of the human penal system is the

assumption that “the prohibited impulses are present alike in the criminal and in the avenging community. In this, psycho-analysis is no more than confirming the habitual pronouncement of the pious: we are all miserable sinners” (1975: 72). This aspect of Freudian ethics has been either neglected or misread, leading to the “the mistaken idea that everything wrong with people is the fault of their parents, particularly of their mothers” (Midgley, 1984: 167), while in fact, as Mary Midgley notes, the immense achievement of Freudianism was the discovery that we are imprisoned by the emotional patterns of our early lives which we insist on reproducing in our adult lives and that this is the same for all and not only for mentally diseased criminals.

This serious misuse of the main factors in the biography of the evildoer in order to avoid judging his or her evil acts is not confined to *Psycho* and its subsequent imitations. It is still firmly embedded in the judicial cases that inspire the novels and films analyzed in this section and goes beyond the formulation of mental disease in pseudo-Freudian terms. Thus, recently, an American jury was told that a twenty-five-year-old convicted killer, Tony Mobley, could not be held responsible for his crimes and sentenced to the electric chair according to the laws of Georgia because “genes inherited from his family played a crucial part in turning him into a cold-blooded killer” (Greig, 1994), that is to say, because he was born to kill, despite the fact that some members of his most immediate family circle were successful, law-abiding members of the community judging him. The article about Mobley was ironically accompanied by a photograph of Juliet Lewis and Woody Harrelson as Mallory and Mickey in Oliver Stone’s *Natural Born Killers* (1994), a film that despite its title suggests that evil is produced by the pressure the family, the media and society put on unhappy people born innocent. In Britain, another jury has been asked to determine whether a sixteen-year-old who stabbed a stranger to death, apparently in a mock ritual of initiation invented by his best friend, was or was not suffering from an incipient schizophrenia when he committed the crime, as the psychiatrists had claimed (Hicklin, 1995). Juries who lack psychiatric expertise but are asked to determine the legal responsibility of individuals may be thus increasingly forced to make decisions beyond the sphere of their competence because of the importance gained by the idea that evil acts are caused by mentally diseased individuals.

All these factors and other unfortunate occurrences, such as the fact that the leader of the Bosnian-Serbs in the recent war was the psychiatrist Radovan Karadzic whom no international tribunal seems capable of judging, contribute to creating an unfavourable attitude towards the authority of psychiatrists, psychologists and the law, which is faithfully rendered by contemporary fiction at all levels. Both popular fiction and the mainstream repeatedly expose the bogus explanations of evil offered by science and the law, preferring either no explanation at all as in the case of the villain or an explanation that is ultimately useless as in the cases of the evil psychopath and the existential moral monster that I will define later. The high number of villainous, ignorant or inept psychologists and psychiatrists in fiction is certainly a sign of this generalised mistrust—perhaps not so much for these sciences per se but for their usurpation of powers to delimit evil that belong to morality, the law and religion.

The Hannibal Lecter of *Red Dragon* (1981) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1989) and the Catherine Trammel of *Basic Instinct* (1991) must be understood against this background of disrespect for psychology and psychiatry. Both Lecter and Trammell are brilliant students of the human mind who have built a reputation on the strength of their unusual capacity to understand the evil acts committed by others and by themselves: he as an expert psychiatrist, she started her career as a popular novelist after getting a

degree in psychology. They furnish explanations for the psychotic behaviour of others, whom they see as mentally ill, but will not see themselves as mental cases nor try to 'cure' themselves in any way. Instead, both Lecter and Trammell enjoy a self-awareness that is perverse to our eyes but that is for them liberating, placing them within an amoral framework which is not that of the law or the ordinary run of humankind. Lecter and Trammell are appealing despite the evidence of the horrific acts they commit (his even worse than hers because he is a cannibal in addition to being a killer) because they are not bound by moral constraints and, thus, enjoy a Nietzschean freedom beyond good and evil which is very different from that of the psychopath. Precisely, Trammell and Lecter can decode the sick behaviour of the killers they encounter because they are aware of their own superiority over those whose behaviour is uncontrollable and who are thus regarded as mentally diseased, in short, because they are villains rather than psychotic killers.

Significantly, both Trammell and Lecter remain free in the end, their narrow escapes being further proof of the incapacity of the law to control evil and of their own capacity to understand the system. Catherine literally seduces the law, first by flashing her bare sex in the famous scene of her interrogation at the police station and later by seducing Nick—the policeman assigned to her case—into a meek belief in her innocence. Lecter's many humiliations at the hands of his guardian, a frustrated psychiatrist who cannot apply his ineffective methods because Lecter can see through them, end with his final announcement to heroine Clarice that he is having this man for dinner in another of his ritualistic breaches of the taboo of cannibalism. Yet *Silence of the Lambs* is especially ambiguous in its endorsement of moral values. On the one hand, the success of the intelligent and courageous heroine Clarice Starling, an FBI trainee agent, suggests that the organizations that uphold the law can benefit from a new generation prepared to avoid red tape by their use of common sense. However, the fact that Clarice's work leads to the serial killer Gumb's destruction but to Lecter's escape, suggests that the penal system devised to keep evil at bay will never be able to control the genuine moral monsters like Lecter or Gumb except by killing them. Expensive long-term confinement and the advice of psychiatry and psychology cannot serve the purpose of controlling evil; only the death of the killer, usually executed by a representative of the law in self-defence rather than after a fair trial, seems to satisfy the expectations of audiences. It is important to notice that the films and novels that deal with psychopaths and those who hunt them down routinely focus on the investigation to identify the criminal and on his subsequent chase but deal only superficially with the personality of the evildoer.

Many novels and films about the moral monster resist the principle that a criminal who is a monster does not deserve inhumane punishment. Michel Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* (op. cit.: 92) that:

If the law must now treat in a 'humane' way an individual who is 'outside nature' (whereas the old justice treated the 'outlaw' inhumanely), it is not on account of some profound humanity that the criminal conceals within him, but because of a necessary regulation of the effects of power. It is this economic rationality that must calculate the penalty and prescribe the appropriate techniques. 'Humanity' is the respectable name given to this economy and to its meticulous calculations.

The Silence of the Lambs is not unique in questioning whether the evil monster deserves the treatment the humane law gives him. A film such as Martin Scorsese's *Cape Fear* (1991) also stresses the view of prison as a place where the force of evil is renewed

rather than depleted, in part because of the humane treatment received by the convicted criminal. In this particular case, the criminal Max Cady, who has sadistically raped a teenage girl, receives in prison not only an education in the law but also an education in evil, for he becomes a rape victim himself. His shame, his new knowledge of the law and his desire to revenge himself on Sam, the lawyer whom he thinks did not defend him properly, lead Cady to lay siege to the lawyer's family so as to force Sam to act outside the law in self-defence.

A comparison between the 1961 version of *Cape Fear* and Scorsese's, made thirty years later, reveals interesting changes in the presentation of the evil monster and the middle-class family that confronts him. In general terms, the 1990s family is a much grimmer version of that in the 1960s film and so is Cady. While the 1960s version stresses the idea that Sam's family deserves the protection of the law against Cady's threats, the 1990s version exposes many skeletons in the cupboard of suburbia that come to the light precisely because of Cady's challenging the family to prove that they will maintain their respect for the law under all circumstances. The conflict between Cady and Sam is not that between an honest citizen who upholds the law and an evildoer but between two men who know the law can be manipulated and that it cannot protect the victim. The Cady played by Robert de Niro in Scorsese's film is an illiterate redneck, who has re-made himself in prison mentally and physically. His reading of the *Bible* has turned him into a fanatical avenger, a defender of the eye-for-an-eye law of the God of the *Old Testament*, which is, obviously, intended to defend the victim and not the evildoer⁹. Cady's new beliefs have found expression in the tattoos displayed on his muscular body—quotations from the *Bible* and the scales of justice—so that he appears to be, literally, an embodiment of divine justice. The motif of Cady's discovery of religion is, in fact, one of the new elements added to his characterisation, together with his physical re-making. De Niro's Cady is lewd yet attractive in a singular way, cultured and coarse, intelligent but bestial while Robert Mitchum's original Cady is rather subdued, a villain whose acts need not be shown because his perversity before those who represent the law suffice to characterize him as evil.

The confrontation between good and evil is very different in each of these versions. While in the 1960s version Cady's hatred of Sam is grounded on Sam's preventing Cady from killing a teenage girl he had raped and on his acting as a witness against Cady, in Scorsese's version the bone of contention is whether Sam concealed evidence proving that the girl raped by Cady was promiscuous when he acted as Cady's counsel for the defence. This detail alone suggests an increasing corruption of the law, for what makes Sam appear as a good citizen is his avoiding the use of a legal though immoral strategy to gain Cady's freedom which involves humiliating Cady's victim before a jury. It can be said that while the moral monster remains the same, he has more reasons to be disgusted with the suburban family that confronts him and with what they

9. *Eye for an Eye* (1995) is precisely the title of a new film by John Schlesinger, based on a novel by Erika Holzer, which narrates the struggle of a middle-class mother to see justice done when the killer of her teenage daughter walks free out of prison on the basis of a judicial technicality. As Schlesinger declared on a TV interview his film reflects the defencelessness of the average citizen in the face of vicious criminals like that of his film but also in the face of justice; its message is that we all can find courage if not to take justice in our hands, to force justice to act. This film contrasts, though, with two other films released in the same year, Tim Robbins' *Dead Man Walking* and Bruce Beresford's *Last Dance*, which expose the cruelty of the death penalty and the lack of compassion of the American judicial system.

represent as respectable citizens, precisely because Cady can best recognise the signs of their moral hypocrisy. The changes in Cady's relationship with Sam's women—his wife and teenage daughter—are significant in this regard. The happy housewife and the childish teen of the first film are replaced in the second by a depressive working woman embittered by her husband's infidelities and by an oversexed girl who may have even been abused by her father and who becomes an easy prey for the lascivious Cady.

In the 1961 film the issue is not how Cady can benefit from the moral weaknesses of Sam's family but how his threat to rape the daughter constrains the family. As a lawyer, Sam knows that the exposure endured by rape victims in the courts of justice is unbearable in most cases and only benefits the rapist. The fear of having to expose the daughter's shame if the rape occurs is the tool that Cady uses to force Sam to use illegal means to persecute him, whereas in the second film what is at stake is the physical survival of the members of the family. The first version ends with Sam's arresting Cady after having used his own wife as bait to distract Cady from his main target, Sam's own daughter. Cady is presumably sent to prison for life and so the film's end reinforces an optimistic belief in the ability of the law to control evil. Scorsese's version ends with Cady's death after a long, hard fight in which all the family is involved. The law is put aside in this confrontation and it is suggested that the confrontation between the monster and the family and his death are not known by anybody else. Paradoxically, Cady's horrific death seemingly becomes the foundation on which a new family life is built: Sam, Leigh and Danny's sharing of the secret of Cady's death fills the cracks threatening the collapse of their family life.

In *Cape Fear*, a fatal combination of poverty, illiteracy and religious fanaticism is used to explain the roots of Cady's evil personality. His victims are a middle-class family who, despite being at first on the side of the law, do not hesitate in the end to use violence to stop him and survive. *Kalifornia* (1993) offers a similar treatment of the topic of how class and evil are related from the point of view of the middle class. This film narrates the disastrous consequences of the fascination of writer Brian Kessler for the evil monstrosity of notorious psychopaths who are the subject of the book he is writing with the rather reluctant collaboration of his girlfriend Carrie, a photographer. Kessler's knowledge of the lives of the evil monsters he is researching does not prepare him for his chance encounter with a real monster, Early Grace. Early, a typical redneck like Cady, and his girlfriend Adele travel with Brian and Carrie to the mythical California where both couples expect their lives to take on a new direction, but the journey and the confrontation between these four people become the real turning point in their lives. This confrontation is articulated along two axes, class and gender roles, and questions Brian's irresponsible behaviour as a middle-class, white male who puts his morbid personal interests before the safety of his girlfriend. The film compares the positive effects of female bonding (Carrie teaches Adele to resist Early's constant bullying) with the dangers of male bonding, seen in Brian's demeaning himself in his search for a common ground in which Early and him can meet across barriers of class and education.

Brian's dissatisfaction with his life and his search for what he regards as 'reality'—that of the people who kill violently—force him finally to kill Early, though not before Early murders Adele and rapes Carrie. The final scene of the film, in which Carrie and Brian are seen in a wintry, wind-swept California having published their book and still together despite Brian's failure to foresee what Early would do, has a bittersweet tone: their brush with reality has left both badly bruised but this appears to be the price they had to pay for professional advancement. Their typically middle-class,

irresponsible, exploitative approach to the likes of Early appears as the equivalent of the exploitative violence of the working-class psychos they have researched. Brian's curiosity for the evil monster at the margins of society does not result in his taking up some form of social or political activism to prevent their existence but in the writing of a book that caters to the morbid tastes of the middle-class, those whose privileged background allows them to consider evil as something the others do. The nature of Early's evil remains unexplained, and so does the psychological harm suffered by Carrie after her rape; as for Brian, he does not seem to know 'reality' any better than before. *Kalifornia* and *Cape Fear* invite the audience to consider to what extent evil is a creation of the social and legal system rather than the fruit of personal circumstances or of mental disease. Both suggest that the middle class plays an insufficiently analyzed role in the construction of evil, indeed, that their fear of losing their privileged position prompts the working-class 'other' to harbour a hatred embodied by individuals such as Cady and Early. There is a danger in these films of identifying amorality with the middle class and moral monstrosity with the working class; in addition, the solution both propose, based on the physical confrontation between the male monster and the male law-abider, does not lead to a reflection in moral terms, but precisely to a reinforcement of the model of vengeful justice expounded by Cady.

The articulation of the confrontation between the evil monster and the middle-class no longer so respectable citizen is enacted in *Cape Fear* and in *Kalifornia* through the bodies of women threatened with rape by the monster. The misogynistic impulse has been present in the fictional figure of the psycho since Norman Bates appeared on the screen and is the foundation of the cycles of films known as slasher or stalker films, centred on the killing of a number of young people, usually women, by a faceless psychopath. The two most famous characters in this genre are Michael Myers, the psychopath in the *Halloween* (1978–1989) series and Jason, the protagonist of the *Friday the Thirteenth* (1980–1989) series. Vera Dika (op. cit.: 17) notes that in stalker films the Oedipus conflict appears as a major theme:

Each one of these films is in fact some variation on the overvaluation of family ties, the viewing of the primal scene (or its variant in acts of illicit sexuality or violently unlawful actions) and the horrible consequences of such perversions. Moreover, a psychological reading based on this early trauma is often given by the films themselves as the reason for the ensuing events.

But as Dika herself notes, films of this kind are not original but variations on the dramatization of the pseudo psychoanalytical material present in *Psycho*; they are a conscious remake and as such they are "a product of a postmodern impulse" (ibid.: 18). Yet film series such as *Halloween* or *Friday the Thirteenth* offer such weak pseudo-Freudian explanations for the behaviour of the serial killers that the effect is, in fact, a radical undermining of Freudian ideas. This superficial use of Freudianism to explain evil is part of the reaction against Freudianism that is now at work and that is directed not so much against Freud himself but against the use of his theories about the human psyche to justify evil as he never intended to do. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), inspired by the same real life events that inspired *Psycho*, was possibly the first film to deny the value of all explanation and to show the evil monster—the infamous Leatherface—as part of a bizarre family living with horror in the midst of harmony.

Since *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, films and novels dealing with the monster of evil have abandoned the idea that interpreting the psychology of the evildoer does

explain evil. This has led to two main currents. As I have noted, some films and novels offer no explanation at all for evil. Others offer carefully crafted explanations that, far from easing the mind of the reader or viewer from the horror of the evidence of evil, increase it. The serial killers who rationalize their behaviour or who will not accept that psychoanalysis may expose their real nature are many in contemporary fiction. In fact, it could be said that, through their lucid self-consciousness and their perfect awareness of the reasons why they kill, they destroy the myth of the evil, irrational madman and also challenge the reader or the viewer to dare to analyze themselves as deeply as they do. The effect of the confessions of these villainous psychopaths is always chilling, especially as often they do not take place in cathartic moments but rather in anticlimactic moments that precede an even more horrific realization of evil. They show that the evildoers know why they do evil but that they will not relent. In Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981)—incidentally, the only text I have come across in which the body of an attractive man is the object of the evil lust of the villain psychopath—the villainous Robert is fond of repeating his narrative about how his domineering father and the humiliation that his sisters inflicted on him have led him to become the abusive husband and killer he is now. Yet far from sounding genuine, this confession seems to have been concocted by Robert to stun his victims, the couple formed by Colin and Mary, who cannot understand why Robert brags about his unhappy childhood until they find themselves involved in his world of horror. A similar effect is achieved in *Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1989) by Henry's casual confession of his having killed his mother and by his brief speech to his new companion Ottis about the pleasures of killing victims chosen at random, something he does to fool those who insist on seeking patterns in the evildoing of psychos like himself in the belief that their behaviour can be decoded and understood.

The idea that the behaviour of the psychopath is characterised by a discernible pattern receives different yet complementary readings in two recent examples of what should be called the psycho film. *Se7en* (1995) and *Citizen X* (1995) belong to a genre developed between the late 1980s and the early 1990s out of the crossing of the monster film with the detective film. This genre or sub-genre, which also includes *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Basic Instinct*, deals not only with the resolution of a plot centred on a number of gruesome killings committed by a psychopath, but also with the personal consequences of the investigation for the representative of the law in charge of identifying the evil monster. Both *Se7en* and *Citizen X* deal with the topic of how the contact with the monster of evil may pollute the lives of those who must investigate him, but they do so from very different perspectives. To begin with, the contrast between the misdeeds of the real life psychopath portrayed in *Citizen X*, the infamous Andrei Chikatilo, known as the 'Rostov butcher', and the killer who calls himself John Doe in *Se7en* reveal how far the latter is from the reality of the former. Doe's villainy is not the product of a long story of sexual repression, which is what led Chikatilo to abuse, kill and partly devour more than fifty children and young persons, but a carefully planned statement about the moral decadence of the world in which he lives, inspired by Dante's description of Hell.

Doe tortures and kills people who, according to him, have committed one of the seven capital sins. His method finally leads him to the logical conclusion that he must include himself in the list of his own victims as a sinner guilty of envying the normal lives of the others. To punish himself, however, rather than kill himself Doe forces David Mills, the young policeman in charge of his case, to commit the last capital sin in his list, that of wrath. Doe wants to prove to Mills that we are all capable of doing evil

and to make his point he first kills Mills' pregnant wife and then challenges Mills to either summarily executing him on the spot or giving him the chance of a fair trial. Before this crucial scene a long conversation takes place between Mills, his partner and Doe in which all the questions anybody would like to ask a monster such as Doe are asked. Mills' angry 'why?' is answered with nonchalance by Doe: he sees himself as an avenger carrying out God's designs not fanatically but in a coldly calculated way. Doe, who remains calm and rational throughout the conversation unlike Mills, curtly rejects Mills' idea that he is mentally diseased, which he regards as Mill's own consolatory fantasy, and foretells his own death when he taunts Mills by stating that he would kill him if he could, as he finally does, rather than hand him over to justice. Even though *Se7en* is one of the few films ever made with a truly bitter, unhappy end, in fact Mills' arrest does not seem to be the prelude to his imprisonment for murder. The sympathy elicited by his ordeal suggests that he will not be sternly punished by the law for having killed Doe; the memory of what Doe did and forced him to do is his real punishment.

The method used to find Doe is most curious: the anonymous Doe, who has no fingerprints, no birth certificate and no social security number is one of the names in a list kept by the FBI recording all those who read dangerous books borrowed from public libraries. The fact that Doe's readings include, ironically, Dante and Milton suggests there is a strong connection between culture and evil, in the sense that any truly intelligent, sensitive person cannot help being overwhelmed by the portrait of evil painted by culture throughout the ages. Doe's reaction to redress the effects of sin is, in fact, to further evil and is, hence, intolerable, yet, the point he makes about the intrinsic decay of civilization is perfectly coherent, especially as he is himself proof of this decay. In a sense, his killings are the equivalent of the texts on the corruption of the world and his own that he has written: the murders, always inspired or accompanied by quotations from literary sources, are in fact intellectual reflection led to the ultimate consequences. It is difficult to sympathize with Doe's sadistic expression of his ideas but it is not so difficult to understand his own discourse on evil. It is certainly hard to imagine that anybody would strike such balance between extreme violence and extreme ideology and survive psychologically unharmed, yet, in a sense, a serial killer like Doe follows a strategy not unlike that of the contemporary terrorist. The killings of the terrorists are also a mixture of provocation, punishment meted out to the victim for the sins committed (obviously according to the terrorists' aberrant code) and ideological statement. However, for reasons too complex to enter into now, terrorists are not treated in the same way as serial killers or mass murderers but are still regarded as guilty of political crimes.

Citizen X discusses to what extent Andrei Chikatilo's real-life crimes are the proof of the decadence of human beings in general or of the Soviet Union in particular, understood as an alternative to the American civilization that has produced the fictional Doe. The film deals partly with the resistance of the Soviet authorities to acknowledge the existence of a monster in the midst of the crumbling communist utopia. Thus, the detective Viktor Bukarov, who is in the film in charge of the investigation, finds his task constantly hindered by the local representative of the communist party, Bondarchuk, who curtly reminds him that serial killers are exclusively a phenomenon of the decadent West. Bukarov is thus forced to fight for eight years, from 1982 to 1990, not only the increasingly confident Chikatilo, but also the bureaucracy of the government and their stubborn denial that the USSR may have ever harboured such a monster. Alone against the sadistic criminal monster and the monster of bureaucracy, Bukarov risks his own mental stability to heroically unmask both. The arrival of Gorbachev's Glasnost finally

allows Colonel Fetisov to support Bukarov's theories about the killer and to enlist in their aid for the first time in the history of crime in the USSR a reputed psychiatrist, Dr. Alexander Bujanovsky. The point of the film is to show how, despite their total lack of material resources and the impossibility of benefiting from the knowledge accumulated by the FBI, who pioneered the research on serial killers, Fetisov, Bujanovsky and Bukarov could finally identify and arrest the monster. The contrast between the portrait of the world of the American police and the stark poverty of the Russian police is most effective in stressing the disadvantages faced by those who cornered Chikatilo. *Citizen X* suggests that criminals like Chikatilo are not the product of a determined social, political and economical structure but of human misery. Yet, this film also suggests that evil is perpetuated when its existence is denied and when those in charge of stopping the evildoer are not given moral or material help by the system of power that has allocated to them the task of keeping society safe.

Bujanovsky's accurate profile of the killer's personality, written without any knowledge of the information accumulated in the West about psychopaths, plays the part of Doe's confession in *Se7en*: Bujanovsky's intuition and expertise has resulted in a portrait so precise of why the apparently normal Chikatilo kills that the killer is finally moved to confess. Far from being an avenger, Chikatilo is a weak man who lets himself be carried away by his need to make others suffer for his sexual and emotional shortcomings. However, the elaborate psychological explanation finally contributes nothing to Chikatilo's fate, for instead of being treated in a psychiatric hospital, he is sentenced to imprisonment for life and summarily executed in secret while in prison. Since *Citizen X* is based on real events, Chikatilo's execution cannot be read from the same perspective as John Doe's exceptional death. However, both ends suggest a similar conclusion: men like Chikatilo and Doe can be studied, classified and even understood by psychiatry or the average citizen but it is very difficult to feel compassion for them. It might be even argued that, implicitly, films like this are propaganda in favour of the death penalty. At least, they invite the audiences to consider whether the Christian view of the criminal as a sinner who must be given the chance to repent and the secular view of the criminal as a mentally diseased person who should be cured make sense in the face of some of the worst human monsters.

Hawksmoor (1985) and *Criminal Law* (1988), a rather underrated psycho film, also pitch together a serial killer with extreme ideas of justice based on a sadistic misreading of the *Bible* and a representative of the law unable to sustain a sound, alternative system of justice. In fact, they can be said to belong to the same sub-genre as *Se7en* and *Citizen X*, though *Criminal Law* also has points in common with Scorsese's *Cape Fear*. Nicholas Hawksmoor, a seventeenth century architect and Satanist, causes evil so forceful that it endures the passage of time and reverberates down to the twentieth century in which murder cases like the ones he committed—or might still be committing—reach the attention of his modern counterpart, Scotland Yard Inspector's Nick Hawksmoor. The original Hawksmoor's moral pessimism and his embracing of a religious cult that demands ritualistic sacrifices lock him in an insanity that is, nevertheless, profoundly rational and well argued. The most the new Hawksmoor can do before this evil is to understand the pattern, though not its real depth, and to finally see that there are no longer sides in the confrontation but a uniform and pervading invasion of evil.

A similar situation is reflected in *Criminal Law* when lawyer Ben Chase realizes that the upper-class, educated young man he has successfully defended is in fact a monstrous serial killer of women. Martin Thiel justifies his activities on the grounds that

by killing the clients of his mother's family planning clinic—women who have had abortions—he is applying God's justice and claiming one life for each lost life. However, the religious strand is typically mixed in the film with a pseudo-Freudian case (Martin witnessed at age four the gory results of an abortion that went wrong and blames his mother for the killing of innocent babes and for her alleged attempt at also aborting him) and with a moral reflection about the role of lawyers. The point of Martin's brutal killing of yet another woman after his trial is to force Ben, who has accepted his defence again expecting to find proofs to incriminate him and secure a death sentence, to take justice into his own hands, exactly as Cady does to Sam in *Cape Fear*. The resolution of the plot shows Martin's inciting Jill, the policewoman who is investigating his case, to shoot him dead, as she does, to defend Ben, who finally resists the temptation to kill his former client. Despite Martin's death and the symbolic revenge of his female victims by Jill, the legal system proves to be ineffective in controlling Martin; his own brand of justice is what finally triumphs as with his death, the shortcomings of justice—represented by Ben and Jill—are exposed.

The tongue-in-cheek confession of evil acquires more disturbing overtones in novels that mimic the voice of the moral monster in first person narratives. These literary exercises in ventriloquism are imaginative forays into the territory of evil carried out by writers stretching to its limits the power of literature to recreate the workings of the human mind. These explorations of the dynamics of obsession and evil are subversive recreations of the evil mind, written no doubt to challenge readers to feel empathy for these heroic monsters. This wide ranging field of the irreverent confession has given rise to novels as different as Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983) and Brett Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* (1991). Between them there is a subtle gradation raging from the pure existentialism of Ian McEwan's *The Innocent* (1990) and the relative existentialism of John Banville's *The Book of Evidence* to the blend of madness, comedy and horror in Iain Banks' *The Wasp Factory*, Will Self's *My Idea of Fun* or Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, apart from the plunge into the madness of the socially dispossessed of Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy* (1992).

As can be seen, with the exception of *American Psycho*, all the novels in this list are British; on the other hand, all the films I have surveyed are American, which, together with the fact that Ellis gives the adjective 'American' a prominent position in the title of his novel, suggest that the USA is more resistant than Britain—or Europe in general—to considering evil from inside the mind of the evildoer. The paradox is that *American Psycho* is the most solid rendition of the blend of the villain and the psychopath on the contemporary cultural scene and also, within this group, the novel that best articulates the interaction between the perverse mind and the perverse society that harbours the evil monster—and that is in itself evil. Ellis' novel can be read as a black comedy, for it is a parody of *Psycho* in which the Oedipal motel owner Bates has become the successful Manhattan yuppie Bateman, a psychotic killer who cannot explain what turned him into the monster he is, despite his ironic insistence on something that could have happened in his Harvard years. Nothing in Bateman's privileged background explains why he kills with such sadism, although at one point he speaks of his need for love—possibly another of Ellis' ironic reversals of common sense beliefs held by society. Class is important in *American Psycho*, as, first, the novel attacks America through the exposure of its yuppie elite in the 1980s and, second, because Bateman differs from upper-class villains like Trammell or Thiel in his lacking the will to carry out definite plans. He kills on impulse like the working-class evil monsters of the slasher films, though despite his taste for popular culture—mainly pop

music, and horror films—he cannot be said to sympathise with those below him. Bateman is, simultaneously, a bigoted hater of women and all minorities and a moderate conservative who believes in solidarity, a madman and a most rational philosopher, an evil villain and a distressed soul, an inhuman monster and any human being, which is what makes him so appealing and terrifying.

Bateman tells his reader repeatedly that there is no key to understanding his mind; the naive efforts of his secretary Jean to love him and the futile visits to his psychiatrist, are no use at all, though Bateman considers at one point entering normality by marrying Jean. The only reality in Bateman's life is that the mask of sanity is slipping away and exposing insanity. However, this alleged insanity does not prevent Bateman from articulating his pain and despair in terms that are not those of an irrational madman but those of a man daring to say what the 'normal' others cannot say; this gives his alleged madness another dimension beyond the concept of mental disease. Far from not knowing in what predicament he is, Bateman's opinions about his own evil acts are the same that any reader gains from observing his behaviour from a distance:

There are no more barriers to cross. All I have in common with the uncontrollable and the insane, the vicious and the evil, all the mayhem I have caused and my utter indifference toward it, I have now surpassed. I still, though, hold on to one single bleak truth: no one is safe, nothing is redeemed. Yet I am blameless. Each model of human behavior must be assumed to have some validity. Is evil something you are? Or is it something you do? My pain is constant and sharp and I do not hope for a better world for anyone. In fact I want my pain to be inflicted on others. I want no one to escape. But even after admitting this—and I have, countless times, in just about every act I've committed—and coming face-to-face with these truths, there is no catharsis. I gain no deeper knowledge about myself, no new understanding can be extracted from my telling. There has been no reason for me to tell you any of this. This confession has meant *nothing*... (p. 376, original italics and emphasis)

This confession, on the contrary, has meant much. It enunciates the dilemma that Bateman himself cannot solve: how the validity of each model of human behaviour clashes with that overwhelming pain that he must inflict on others. This is why the moral monster inspires fear: his model of human behaviour would lead to the chaos of constant pain. His cruelty and violence are what ultimately deligitimise the truths proclaimed by Bateman. Without his sins of blood what remains is a pessimistic, contagious outlook on reality, which is, like Doe's, a coherent exegesis of the decadence of the civilizing values of the Western world.

4.1.3.2. The Female Evil Monster

Bateman's idea that evil derives from the need to inflict on others the unbearable existential pain felt by the moral monster is one of the main keys to understanding the relationship between the world of the victims and the world of the killer. Many of the fictional villains and psychopaths are moved to do evil by a wish to avenge themselves on an unfair world: they act because of a general animosity against the world in a way that recalls Satan's temptation of the sinners. The Devil wants the sinners to suffer the same pain he is suffering because God rejected him for disobedience; the devilish villain and psychopaths of fiction see their victims as either sinners who deserve their punishment or as innocents whose undeserved punishment doubly terrorises the society that made the monster. However, there is a subtle distinction in the way men and

women are portrayed as moral monsters. The female evil monsters fall neatly into the categories of the villainess and the madwoman, whereas the female psychopath is, so far, a rarity. Although there may be other factors—which I review in Chapter 7—for the lack of psychotic female killers in fiction, the Freudian model has been used to explain female neurotics but cannot, seemingly, account for the behaviour of female psychotics—at least, in fiction. On the other hand, the theory that abuse in childhood leads to a wish for revenge in adulthood also fails in the case of women: abuse usually turns little girls into women willing to endure the company of violent men similar to their fathers but rarely results in the desire for revenge against the other sex that moves so many male psychopaths in fiction and in real life.

The vague idea of madness explains the female evil character, possibly because of the idea that it is not in woman's nature to behave violently unless she is insane¹⁰. Despite this presumption of innocence, the villainess and the madwoman are misogynistic constructions, less well defined in terms of the current concerns of psychology and psychiatry, yet they share with their male counterparts this wish to cure themselves of their pain by inflicting it on others. If they are the more threatening, this is because their anger is usually directed against men, which makes men in the audience feel insecure. Curiously enough, while some feminist critics have deplored some women's interest in art horror on the grounds that horror films and novels typecast women as victims, hence in their view it is pure masochism for a woman to 'enjoy' horror, little or nothing has been said about men's masochistic enjoyment of films or novels in which men are victimized by women. In fact, most of these films and novels have attracted the attention of feminist critics who have disparaged them on the grounds of their being misogynistic portraits of woman.

A small group of fictional mad women will give an indication of how female aggression is dealt with in contemporary fiction. Alex (*Fatal Attraction*, 1987), Heddie (*Single White Female*, 1992), Peyton (*The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*, 1992), and Annie (*Misery*, 1987) are all women maddened by psychological pain which pushes them to act desperately and aggressively against victims with whom they have an ambivalent love-hate relationship. These women find themselves in triangular relationships, interposing themselves between a couple, even when the triangle is as unconventional as that of writer Paul Sheldon, his star character Misery and his number one fan, Annie. The idea of replacing the 'normal' woman is central for Alex, Heddie and Peyton, so that they actually focus their hatred on another woman they may even admire or envy, whereas what fuels Annie's madness is the loss of her fictional idol, Misery, in a sense the woman she most admires. The intrusion of the madwoman into the middle-class home of her victim is also important in these films, though it is also reversed in *Misery* by the accidental invasion of the home of his fan Annie by middle-class writer Paul Sheldon.

There is no one, single moral point of view unifying the construction of the fictional madwoman. Madness is justified in these stories by a variety of reasons. Thus, for instance, Alex is a successful career woman who cannot cope with the stress of being abandoned by the latest married man she has seduced. The moralistic reading of *Fatal Attraction* did not escape its many detractors: the film condemned the double

10. As far as I know, only *Natural Born Killers* claims that a woman who has been abused can also vent her rage on society by killing indiscriminately, though here she is presented always in the company of her boyfriend; the film was derided by feminists who claimed that Mallory was a not a credible female character.

standard of morality, which makes male infidelity more tolerable than female infidelity, but did so by stressing the risks run by men when having affairs with women who might turn out to be mentally unbalanced. The film in fact decries the single woman's free choice of sexual partner and rewards the endurance of the wife who loyally supports her husband despite the consequences of his infidelity. The misogynistic presentation of Alex as a monster whose only function is killing her callous lover and destroying his family prevents a deeper consideration of her lover's morality. Despite having been warned by Alex of the possible consequences of his acts, her lover chooses to have sex with her without ever acknowledging his betrayal of his family. In a first version that was rejected after several test screenings previous to its release, Alex was seen to commit suicide with a knife with her lover's fingerprints, a proof sufficient to sentence him for life. This end, which was found too disturbing by the men in the audience, was finally rejected, and replaced by another, showing his and his wife's killing of Alex in self-defence.

Heddie and Peyton intrude in the lives of their victims because of a past trauma that justifies only vaguely why they kill. Heddie is traumatised at age nine by the loss of her identical twin, accidentally drowned, and seeks in her flatmates a new twin to replace the missing sister. When, Allie, her newest flatmate, is horrified by the progressive transformation of Heddie into her twin (she imitates Allie's hairstyle and clothes) and Heddie's manipulation of her personal life, a confrontation ensues, which ends with Allie's killing of Heddie in self-defence. *Single White Female* is based on the motif of the double and on countless stories about twins, for which it is comparable to *Dead Ringers*. However, it also belongs to a distinct group of films made at the turn of the decade, dealing with the intrusion of strangers into middle-class environments, and including among others *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*. This film also deals with the confrontation between two women, one of whom has brought about the disrepute and suicide of the other's husband—a gynaecologist—after accusing him of having sexually abused her, as he actually had. Peyton, this man's distressed wife miscarries as a result of the events and she plans an elaborate scheme to become first, the nanny of Claire's newly born baby and, later, the new mother and wife in the family. *Single White Female* and *The Rock that Hand the Cradle* end both with the fight for survival between the madwoman and her female victim, who is weaker, less aggressive and has been left unprotected by the madwoman's previous attack on the men that could defend her. It could well be that these fights and the killing of the madwoman are attractive in the same sense in which the moral victory of the heroine over the 'other woman' is attractive for the readers of romance. The fact that Allie is a single, successful career woman while Claire is a married woman and mother of two, together with the very different reasons why Heddie and Peyton enter their lives, make it difficult to find an overt moral point that unifies both stories, or that links them to *Fatal Attraction*. What they suggest, especially if they are considered together with other films in which men are the intruders, such as *Unlawful Entry* (1992) or *Pacific Heights* (1990), is that paranoia is not a condition suffered by the mentally ill but a characteristic of contemporary American society, dramatized in the films made for audiences worried about violence and who probably feel unsafe in their own houses. There seems to be a clear dividing line between those whose privileged middle-class status makes them feel constantly threatened and those who do threaten them out of envy for those privileges they also feel entitled to.

One of the most idiosyncratic studies of the postmodernist madwoman is Stephen King's *Misery*. This novel is a gripping tale but also a deep study of the

meaning of sadism and pain and, incidentally, a very poignant portrait of the predicament of the writer at the hands of his fans. The most relevant point in the treatment of female madness in *Misery* is Paul's identification of the unattractive working-class Annie with a formidable goddess of destruction. The knowledge of pain that Annie accumulated in her years as a nurse—years in which she killed all those in deep pain, especially helpless malformed babies, dying old people and the victims of car crashes—is applied in her nursing back Paul to life after a car accident lands him at her door. The relationship between Paul and Annie passes from love to hate when Annie discovers that Paul has killed her beloved heroine Misery in the last novel of the series. Annie reacts to what is for her a moral injury by transforming her power to heal her prisoner's wounds into formidable power to administer pain at will. His physical pain is thus an extension not only of the deeper disturbance in her mind but of the immediate pain she feels at the loss of the consolatory fantasy that Misery was. The bone of contention between Paul and Annie is the new Misery novel that he is forced to write to keep pain at bay, although in the course of his accidental impersonation of Scheherazade, Annie rewards his attempts at subverting her view of Misery with the amputation of a foot and a thumb, mutilations that symbolize Paul's castration as a man and as a writer.

Paul's discovery of a scrapbook in which Annie keeps a record of all the deaths she has caused allows him to understand that Annie's killings of the healthy and the unhealthy responded to "her deepening psychotic spiral" which caused her "to see all of them as poor, poor things" (p. 214). The scrapbook also reveals that Annie was tried for the death of several infants but was declared innocent because of lack of evidence, a point that stresses once more the failure of justice to deal with evil. Yet all this recital of atrocities is never accompanied with an explanation as to why Annie acted in this way, except for the bogus suggestion that she pitied those she killed. At the end of the novel, only Paul's fevered deliriums about Annie's being a goddess of destruction who demands human sacrifices to appease her sense of the futility of life remains, together with her image as Paul's terrible muse. Even though with Annie's destruction Paul frees himself from the obligation of having to return to Misery, he does publish *Misery's Return*, possibly as a secret homage to the misery out of which writing emerges, before embarking on the re-writing of the mainstream novel that he was taking to his publisher when the accident happened and that was destroyed by Annie. Annie transcends, thus, the (mad)woman to become the goddess, a type of pagan goddess (like the Babylonian Ishtar and the Egyptian Sekhmet) who once symbolized the arbitrariness of pain, suffering and death, and who was actually derived from a distorted view of the prehistoric Earth goddess. Madness and terrible divinity find thus a new incarnation in the female evil monster of the 1980s and 1990s.

4.1.3.3. The Existential Moral Monster

Three recent literary novels—Patrick McCabe's *The Butcher Boy*, John Banville's *The Book of Evidence* and Ian McEwan's *The Innocent*—focus on the predicament of a man whose whole life is altered by a murder he commits. Although the reasons for this murder are diverse, these three novels present evil as the crossroads between accident and fate, rejecting the notion that evil acts invariably point to the existence of an evil agent. McCabe's novel emphasises the role of the degraded family background in the transformation of the unstable child into the adult murderer, and is thus comparable, up to a point, to Iain Banks' *The Wasp Factory*. Nonetheless, since Francie Brady writes his

memoirs in the institution where he is confined—a prison or a psychiatric hospital—*The Butcher Boy* is also similar in tone and intention to Banville's *The Book of Evidence*. Actually, these three novels and others which also present murder from the evil monster's point of view could be grouped together under the generic label of 'books of evidence', since they purport to be the testimony that the killer offers society to judge him. McCabe's, Banville's and McEwan's work depict the innocence of the killer in different shades: Francie, the evil monster in the first novel, is a man whose unhappy life and disturbed mind are seen to lead inevitably to an absurd but not less tragic murder. In the second the murderer's background is not as unhappy, but Freddie is also entangled in a mixture of fatalism and absurdity at the time when he kills a woman. McEwan's Leonard breathes the same corrupt atmosphere for just a very short time, yet his fatal killing of a man conditions his life for ever.

The marketing strategies for selling contemporary novels work in mysterious ways, as can be seen from a comparison of the cover of *The Butcher Boy* with that of *The Wasp Factory*. Even though both novels are very similar in content (both narrate the passage from childhood to adolescence of a very disturbed child who kills) and even in tone (both are first person narratives, with an explosive mixture of amoral callousness and black comedy), the publishers of Banks' novel have placed before the actual text a collection of very negative reviews received by the book. In contrast, the very cover of *The Butcher Boy*—shortlisted for the Booker prize in 1992—contains not less than eight recommendations of the book, without counting those on the back cover and on the initial pages. Curiously enough, one of those notices even links McCabe's book to Banks' on the grounds that both books can be said to be studies in derangement that contemplate how the naughty little boy becomes the evil adult monster. An issue that deserves more attention is why literary reviewers and critics praise as good literature the writers' impersonation of the madman and to what extent this type of novel is valued because of the proficiency shown by the different writers in the exercise of ventriloquism without real regard to its actual horrific content. It could well be that there are, in relative terms, so many 'books of evidence' because they are regarded as literary exercises that put to test the skills of the writer, and not so much because there is a genuine interest in exploring the roots of evil. Furthermore, since most of them are first person narratives, it is extremely difficult to judge whether these confessional novels reflect the author's moral abhorrence of the monster s/he has given voice to. In fact, it could even be argued that novelists choose the first person narrator so as to delegate in the reader the responsibility of making any moral judgements about these monsters of evil.

The Butcher Boy runs through the whole gamut of factors considered as the main reasons why evil arises, beginning with the negative influence of parents. Francie's father is a failure and a drunkard, while his mother suffers from depressions and dies by her own hand. The neglected Francie stands only one chance of redemption in his friendship with a middle-class boy, Joe, but when Joe prefers another middle-class boy (Philip Nugent) as his new companion, Francie's life is doomed. Mrs Nugent's profound dislike of Francie and his family symbolizes for him the rejection of all society. This is the reason why she becomes for the teenage Francie a scapegoat on which to vent his mounting rage and pain through the gruesome murder that lands him in prison or, perhaps, in the same psychiatric hospital, where his mother was once an inmate, for life. Yet, for all the detailed circumstances of the petty conflicts between children that form the basis of Francie's animosity against Mrs. Nugent and society in general, the theory that an unfavourable family background determines the emergence of aggressive

psychosis or, put plainly, evil, only manages to shift the question of why individuals commit evil crimes onto the shoulders of society as a whole. Not all unfortunate children become killers in adult life, nor have all adult killers been unhappy children. Francie's own 'book of evidence' is valuable as a description of how reality appears to the mind of a psychotic, of somebody who cannot keep a clear distinction between reality and fiction; however, since it is literary fiction and not the genuine autobiography of a psychotic it is impossible to decide to what extent this and the many other similar novels are offering a true portrait of madness and evil or a fabrication based on stereotypical ideas.

The Book of Evidence contains the version of events that the convicted murderer Freddie Montgomery has not been allowed to deliver in court. A pressing need for money leads Freddie to attempt the robbery of a painting owned by a friend, but when he is discovered by a maid a series of absurdities end in her death. Freddie's version rejects not only the pseudo-Freudian interpretation of his act suggested by his lawyer and any other interpretation of his case proposed by those he calls amateur psychologists, but also the sensationalist representation of him by the media. Freddie claims that far from being the cold-blooded beast described by the media, he is the victim not of the Beast inside but of 'the inner man', a Mr. Hyde imagined by Freddie as a fat, vulgar man he has nicknamed Buster. Freddie's inner man is not literal, but a symbol that allows him to dissociate himself from the crime and, what is more significant, from his companions in prison, whom he calls monsters. The dissociation of the outer from the inner man is ambivalent, because although Freddie claims that the crime happened after the onset of his inner split, his arrest allows him to abandon with evident relief the mask of normality he had been wearing throughout his life, becoming, as he says, human for the first time. The emotional detachment with which he follows his own trial and his insistence on the idea of having become a stranger to himself strongly recall those of Meursault, the protagonist of Albert Camus *L'Étranger* (1942), a text fundamental in understanding the moral nihilism of the contemporary 'books of evidence'. Like Meursault's, Freddie's crime is not a matter of moral choice but a proof of how the banality of death envelops victims and murderers. Obviously, the problem with this attitude is that it silences the suffering of the victim, exonerating the evildoer without explaining why not everybody indulges in the same trigger-happy philosophy of life. Nevertheless, while Meursault hardly thinks of his victim as he awaits the day of his execution, Freddie comes to the conclusion that the only way in which he can redeem his sin is by living for him and for her:

This is the worst, the essential sin, I think, the one for which there will be no forgiveness: that I never imagined her vividly enough, that I never made her be there sufficiently, that I did not make her live. Yes, that failure of imagination is my real crime, the one that made the others possible. What I told that policeman is true—I killed her because I could kill her, and I could kill her because for me she was not alive. And so my task now is to bring her back to life. (p. 15)

The undeserving victim is thus partly vindicated by her murderer but only because he also vindicates her partial guilt—her not resisting him—and his own partial innocence, based on his construction of the inner man and on his dissociation from the crime. Evil, however, remains unexplained and so does the suffering of the victim.

Ian McEwan's *The Innocent* is a grim version of *Casablanca* (1942)—a point accentuated by the choice of Isabella Rossellini (Ingrid Bergman's daughter) to play the

role of Maria in the film adaptation. Instead of the street-wise Rick, McEwan's novel has a less heroic protagonist, an unglamorous young Englishman posted to Berlin in the 1950s, infatuated with a German woman, Maria, whose jealous estranged husband, Otto, is eventually killed by the couple in self-defence. Although the plot is not especially original, its main interest lies in how the ordinary Leonard and Maria cope with the moral guilt of having killed a human being and with the memory of the gruesome moment of the killing and its aftermath. In fact, the price they pay for digesting this unexpected intrusion of violence into their lives is a long separation that in the novel ends with the hope of immediate reunion and that in the film adaptation is compared, of all things, with the reunification of the two Germanys that forms the background of Maria and Leonard's meeting after thirty years.

Up to a point, Otto's murder prevents Leonard's degradation by putting an abrupt end to Leonard's dangerous fantasies, in which he imagines himself as a soldier raping the conquered Maria, symbolizing all of Germany. For a brief period, there is no difference whatsoever from Maria's point of view between the brutal husband and the gentle lover suddenly forcing upon her his fantasies of rape. Maria shows Leonard how thin the dividing line between the monstrous man and the innocent is, and how his potential for evil is in fact greater than Otto's: Leonard is trying unconsciously to destroy Maria while teaching her to trust him, whereas Otto's violence is part of an impersonal hatred easier to foresee and deflect because of his alcoholism and because the abuse that Maria had endured from him was physical rather than psychological. Although Maria and Leonard are helped by Leonard's superior, Colonel Glass, whom Maria ends up marrying, they do not really overcome their fall but remain in a kind of moral limbo, not having been allowed to present their own 'book of evidence'. As he awaits his arrest, Leonard's feelings are remarkably alike to those of Freddie Montgomery and summarise the attitude of the contemporary existentialist moral monster:

He was innocent, that he knew. Why then should his hands shake? Was it fear of being caught and punished? But he wanted them to come, and quickly. He wanted to stop thinking the same thoughts over, he wanted to speak to someone official and have his words written down, typed up for his signature. He wanted to set out the events, and make known to those whose job it was to have truths officially established how one thing had led to another, and how, despite appearances, he was no monster, he was not a deranged chopper-up of citizens, and that it was not insanity that caused him to haul his victim around Berlin in two suitcases. (p. 216)

If neither insanity, nor moral monstrosity, but only the string of accidents that put the murderer and the victim in the same path can account for the brutality of Otto's death and his dismemberment, there is no other possibility but to conclude that evil is a form of fatalism, another of the accidents of life. The renewal of Maria and Leonard's love at the end of the story marks the end of their purgatory and suggests that while convicted criminals like Freddie or Francie may be forced to feel the weight of their evil actions by the system of justice for a very long time, without the impositions of the law, which Maria and Leonard escape, moral guilt subsides and finally disappears, together with the memory of the victim.

4.2. Watching Evil, Acting Evil

4.2.1. The Theory of Copycat Behaviour and the Role of the Censors and Critics as Moral Guardians

Considerable amounts of research have been undertaken on novels and films about monstrosity analyzing their process of creation, their critical reception and their subsequent impact on their cultural context. However, very little research has been carried out at the level of consumption. Researchers may use reliable data about the systems of production and marketing of books and films, but we are forced to rely on intuition and personal impressions when discussing the actual effect of books and films on the general public. This is why the allegations about the harmful effects of films and novels dealing with evil monsters must be considered with a certain wariness. In general terms, it can be said that the theory of copycat behaviour, that is to say, the claim that some cultural products dealing with the monster of evil (from films to comics) may invite morally unsound people to imitate the monster and do evil, has no statistical or scientific validity whatsoever. As a matter of fact, it is the fruit of a biased moral judgement passed on to those who consume these products by critics and reviewers who, rather than limiting themselves to defending artistic principles, are defending conservative moral and class principles.

The moral monster is ubiquitous in the films and novels of the 1980s and 1990s, appearing in all genres, in the mainstream and in works of diverse artistic quality within each category. The critical reception of each of the texts surveyed in this chapter has been conditioned, above all, by the idea that good art bolsters good morals. In general terms, novels and films judged to be bad art have been also disparaged because of their alleged defense of evil and, what is more, it has been assumed that first, their audiences and readers were likewise immoral and, second, that they were at the greatest risk of becoming agents of evil in real life because of the influence of those works. In contrast, good art about moral evil has been praised by reviewers and critics, and its possible moral influence has been characteristically considered positive. Furthermore, those who appreciate the films and novels acclaimed as good art have been seen as a separate audience from those who seemingly ‘enjoy’ their self-imposed diet of bad art and bad morals. In fact, this limited view fails to account for two important points: first, why the same novel or film about evil monsters can have opposite effects depending on the morality of the viewer/reader and second, why such sweeping assumptions are made when in fact very little reliable information about who the actual viewers/readers of these ‘immoral’ works is available. Grahame Murdock (1984: 66) observes that “despite the massive amounts of time and money invested in trying to find out, we simply do not know enough about the tangled links between what people watch and how they think and behave”. He adds that so far, all the research has been carried out in the artificial environment of the psychology laboratory, mainly with university students as subjects who are by no means representative of all film audiences. Most contemporary criticism and censorship (masked with euphemisms such as ‘film classification’¹¹) is based,

11. The British Board of Film Censorship became in 1985 the British Board of Film Classification when it was felt that censorship was a term too strongly objected against by liberal segments of society. Despite its change of name the BBFC’s attributions are now the same of the period before 1985 and include expunging certain shots or scenes from the films it classifies.

however, on the supposition that the ways in which people are affected by certain kinds of fiction can be predicted. This behaviourist theory of morality has many drawbacks and cannot be sustained for lack of consistent evidence.

An instance of the ambiguity of the responses elicited by the moral portrait of the evil monster is the reception of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993). This film has been regarded as a masterpiece and has been commended for its sound morality—the Jewish World Congress has even suggested that seeing it is a duty for all, as a sign of respect for the Jewish victims of Holocaust. The sanctioned morals of the film did not prevent, however, some groups of young Neo-nazis from causing incidents in a few German cinemas, due to their enthusiastic reception of the impressive portrait of a veritable evil monster, the Nazi Amon Goeth played by British actor Ralph Fiennes. Indeed, few critics failed to notice how appealing this character was, as Spielberg has given a human dimension to the evil acts of the Nazis lacking in other works about the Holocaust. In the case of *Schindler's List* it is safe to assume that the presence of the evil monster and the horror of his actions ensure a cathartic reaction that shocks the horrified and tearful audiences into an awareness of the reality of evil, especially as the events narrated by the film are based on real life events. The presence of the moral monster in fiction is, therefore, tolerable provided its defeat reinforces the belief in the fundamentally good nature of people, a point that Spielberg makes only at the cost of ignoring Thomas Keneally's insistence in the original novel on the arbitrary boundaries between virtue and vice. A sign of the moral pessimism of the 1980s and 1990s is that both Spielberg and Keneally wonder in their respective versions why Oskar Schindler chose to be good, when being evil seemed the easy path. The cathartic value of both the film and the novel lies therefore in the exploration of that moral dilemma, which reflects substantially contemporary common sense beliefs about evil.

How does the morality of *Schindler's List* relate to the alleged immorality of films and novels of lower artistic quality and of, allegedly, lower morals? When faced with so-called splatter films such as Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* (1983) or Peter Jackson's *Brain Dead* (1992) in which all that seems to concern the filmmaker is depicting gory scenes against a background of sadistic amorality, it may be thought that there is a point in decrying the moral standards of their audiences. Although there are no reliable statistics about who those audiences are, the overall impression (taken from observant critics in their forays into cinemas and video-clubs) is that they are young, relatively uneducated, mostly working-class and, possibly, too numb emotionally to appreciate Keneally or Spielberg's *Schindler's List* or similar artistic, moral works. Despite the fact that there is virtually no research on how teenagers themselves understand horror fiction and why they see or read it, nor on who the adults consuming that kind of fiction alone at home on the video are, many critics have argued that the low moral standards of teenagers are the result of their unhealthy diet of horror. Few researchers have faced the question of whether this teenage pleasure for extreme forms of evil monstrosity is, in fact, a way of rebelling against the adults' somewhat hypocritical insistence on morality. Slasher and splatter films often allow teenagers a (nervous) laugh at the adult, serious, moral view of the world that has ceased making sense for them and which they know to harbour a greater share of evil than many people would care to acknowledge. These films confirm their belief in the widespread existence of evil and dramatize the weakness of their positions in a world in which adults criticize the (un)artistic tastes of the young and their loss of morality without judging first their own role in shaping the worldview of the younger generation.

This point is discussed by Jeffrey Sconce in his comparison of the critical reception granted to the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series with that given to *Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer*. According to Sconce, even though *Henry* presents a stark portrait of irredeemable evil against a realistic background potentially more likely to affect its audience negatively than the grotesque fantasy of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, the former has won its director, John McNaughton, a reputation as a respected artist, while the latter has been systematically decried as part of the diet of immorality and inanity on which young audiences feed. Sconce attributes these contrasted critical opinions to the fact that adult critics can understand the artistic strategies of *Henry*, which is a horror art-house film, but do not master the codes to correctly read the horror films teenagers appreciate. They resort then to condemning their quality and their morality, and by implication the morality of their audience and its capacity to emit valid critical judgements:

What is at stake in valuing one film or another, or even in attempting to define systematically a group of films, is a struggle over cultural meaning and power. Just as representation, enunciation, and identification are political processes, so too are the cultural classification and evaluation of texts. To say that one film is “good” horror and the other is not, or even to say that one film *is* horror and the other is not, presents a situation where a critic occupying a certain social and cultural position passes judgement on the viewing experiences and values of other social groups. (Sconce, 1993: 119)

The paradox of the conservative position of most film critics is that it fails to acknowledge the fact that Freddy Krueger and Henry are evil monsters born of the same pessimistic moral background who could be better understood together. Instead, the artificial discrimination between art and sub-art horror films supposes that only adult, mature audiences who understand art can deal with the presence of evil in fiction, wrongly presuming that younger audiences do not have the same capacity. In fact, it would be more accurate to speak of morally mature or immature viewers and readers on an individual basis since, as reality sadly proves every day, evil acts are caused by people of all social classes and ages.

In this particular case it is also necessary to stress that *Henry*'s moral nihilism sharply differs from the Manichaeian values of most horror films for teenagers. These generally achieve a cathartic effect frequently thanks to a particular sense of humour that its audience hardly ever misses and that also helps them to draw the line between fiction and reality. The more artistic texts, such as *Henry* or the novel *American Psycho*, are much more difficult to read precisely because they rely on the sophistication of their viewers and readers, who are invited to judge by themselves the evil acts they witness. It could be argued that many contemporary film directors and novelists miscalculate the powerful effect their products may have on impressionable audiences, by which I do not mean exclusively young audiences but also those adults who cannot cope with the representation of evil and monstrosity in fiction. The deeply moral exposure of evil in both *Henry* and *American Psycho* can be easily mistaken for an endorsement of the evil monster by both teenagers and adults who do not master the codes to interpret fictional horror, though only those who are already inclined to doing evil will imitate the exploits of Henry and Bateman in real life. It might be the case that in some extreme circumstances reading a certain novel or seeing a certain film awakens the capacity to do evil we all have, yet if this is the case, the novel or the book will be in all likelihood just

the straw that breaks the camel's back and not the reason why a perfectly ordinary person may become a mass murderer overnight.

How to write moral works at the end of the twentieth century, avoiding the pitfalls of sentimental smugness and the callousness of postmodernist irony is the question faced by filmmakers like John MacNaughton and writers like Brett Easton Ellis. The answer they and many others have given to this dilemma is the direct depiction of the evil monster without any moral comment, a model which is particularly difficult to interpret. This confusion about the actual effects of films and novels dealing with monstrosity is due to the fact that there is considerable perplexity about how positive values should be represented in fiction. The most widespread theory in this regard is that positive moral values ought to be reinforced by offering fictional examples of good behaviour, especially of good behaviour of people resisting evil and being rewarded for this. Yet this model has become outmoded in the 1980s and 1990s in so-called 'high-art', basically because of the negative critical attitude towards sentimentalism and because of the appeal of irony among postmodernists, which have resulted in the deconstruction and rejection of the language of sentimentalism. "In the twentieth century", Jane Todd (1986: 142) writes, "when the taste is for the ironic and self-reflexive in literature, the impossibility of ironic interpretation makes the method of sentimental drama repellant. Characters stating their exemplariness become ridiculous and... they seem opportunistic and smug". This does not mean, however, that the need for an adequate artistic code to express moral certainties has disappeared with the rise of self-reflexive irony. The postmodernist critical depreciation of the sentimental model often seems an acknowledgement of the impossibility of showing authentic sensibility in this twentieth century of horror, and in fact signifies nostalgia and even envy for lost moral certainties replaced by an unsatisfactory moral nihilism descending from existentialism.

With this refusal to take up an overt moral position, the writer or filmmaker places in the hands of the public the responsibility for judging, trusting that the public will recognise evil and will, accordingly, make the right moral judgements. As Emma Forrest (1994) notes about *American Psycho*, "the reader is assumed to be as intelligent as the author and is left to make his or her own moral judgements. Bret Easton Ellis trusts his art. He trusts his readers. That's the only moral defence he needs". That this trust may backfire was proved precisely by the angry rejection of Ellis' book by many intellectuals and by many educated people in the general public. Why is, however, this implicit morality so ambiguous, so difficult for both teenagers and adult critics to read? An obvious answer is that there is no social consensus about the definition of good and evil, and, hence, of morality. Since there is no central moral authority—a function that used to be fulfilled by religion, education and the family as an institution—each person feels entitled to build his or her own moral system, limited only by the boundaries set by the legal system and social uses. The law in the Western countries in the process of detaching itself from morality and of assuming a pragmatic standpoint that determines illegality but not immorality, the latter regarded now by most people as a matter to be shaped by personal beliefs and by the interaction of the individual and society. The issue of abortion is, for instance, one of the sites of struggle between morality and legality; abortion cannot be defended on moral grounds—an argument its opponents, usually religious believers, use for its being made illegal—yet it is legal in many Western countries because there is a great degree of social consensus about its convenience. Likewise, the existence of censorship—tutelage on the moral judgements that the general

public might make on works of fiction—signifies a great social consensus about the inconvenience of trusting individuals to pass their own moral judgement on fiction.

The problem with film censorship¹², apart from its political implications in undemocratic countries, is that it is based on a moral system of values that is not that of the works it judges. This may sound simplistic but it is the true root of the reasons why recent moral works of fiction are being misread as invitations to immorality or as Senator Robert Dole says, as attempts to create moral confusion. The discussion of censorship applied to the horror film¹³ became the object of a heated debate in the mid 1980s in Britain during the so-called ‘video-nasties’ campaign. Members of associations in defence of morality such as Mary Whitehouse led a strong protest against low-budget horror films that could be rented from video-clubs. This campaign helped the Thatcher government to pass the Video Recordings Bill in 1984, which formally empowered the BBFC to control the booming industry that was catering to the clients of the then also booming video-clubs. This means that the BBFC—renamed British Board of Film Classification in 1985—was given permission to censor material that Britons might choose to see in their own homes, when in theory the sole duty of the BBFC was classifying and censoring material that was the object of public exhibition. According to Martin Barker, writing in the midst of the campaign, the passing of the Bill

represents the biggest growth of censorship in this country for very many years. First, there are to be new controls on what people may be allowed to see. And, for the first time for a very long time, Parliament is taking powers for potential state

12. There is no literary censorship in the USA or the UK, though there still is in both countries an organization created by the film industry itself, and formally outside the control of the government, which has been empowered to classify films since the first quarter of the century. In America the MPAA (Motion Picture American Association) performs the function of fixing the categories under which films are classified; in Britain this is done by the BBFC (British Board of Film Classification). Unlike their American counterparts, the British BBFC may not only demand cuts in films before issuing the corresponding certificate (even in the cases in which films are rated ‘18’ or ‘R18’) but may also ban films outright, usually with the excuse that they are being reconsidered. This means that, even though in theory classification should work to prevent young persons from seeing unsuitable material, in fact films for adults are routinely censored. In the USA the situation is leading to strong self-censorship. In 1990 the new category NC-17 (no children under seventeen) was introduced at the request of a group of reputed Hollywood filmmakers who wanted their films for adults to be clearly distinguished from pornographic films. Until that moment the rating ‘X’ covered all, though people tend to associate the ‘X’ with pornography alone. However, films that get now an NC-17 rating are in practice treated as if they were pornography, that is, they are not advertised or reviewed in major publications and they are restricted to smaller distribution networks. Given the high cost of producing a film, this means that producers and filmmakers tend to make films that skirt the feared NC-17 rating for fear of not recouping the investment. The result is that self-censorship is preventing Hollywood from making genuine films for adults. Paradoxically, books are not classified, which means that theoretically a child would not be restricted from reading any novel for adults. Obviously, books for children bear indications of the suitable age for which they are intended, but this is not the same as film classification.

13. Sex scenes used to be the main target of film censors but with the increased permissiveness of recent years, violence rather than sex or violence accompanied with sex has become the main worry of censors and classifiers, at least in Britain. In the USA sex is notoriously less well tolerated than violence. Britain rather than the USA shows a constant preoccupation with theories of copycat behaviour, especially as regards American films.

political censorship. The political campaign has been so successful and its associated propaganda so effective, that hardly anyone has noticed.(1984a: 2).

The fact that the Parliament dominated by Thatcher's Tory majority chose to set up a commission to study low-budget horror films which led to the passing of the controversial Bill, whereas the Home Office had traditionally kept itself always at a discrete distance from the BBFC, can be no accident. The representation of monstrosity in film was and is still demonised in Britain because it gives conservative governments a good excuse to show their voters that the institutions that rule the country are concerned with the moral issues that (allegedly) worry citizens most. Taking measures to reinforce censorship gives the general public the impression that something effective is being done against immorality and criminality, when, in fact, this is not the case at all.

Those who see horror, and its central figure the monster, as a sign of the moral decadence of the late twentieth century argue that exposure to that kind of fiction, especially in film, can lead to the imitation of violent acts. They argue that since the access to violent materials by young persons, including children, cannot be controlled it is best to censor films (and also publications such as comics) for the entire population. The active moral minorities of the USA and the British Board of Film Classification in the UK are staunch supporters of this view. Those who believe that the fictional representation of horror in film and the novel (and by extension comics, cartoons, TV series, video-games, etc.) is therapeutic since it gives a measure of the true horrors that human beings inflict on each other, are against all forms of censorship. Martin Barker (1984b) argues that we can only be shocked out of our complaisant outlook on the world by being shown violence at its rawest—though in my view it is important to note that film does not reflect violence as it is in real life but as filmmakers choose to represent it. Total freedom for the artist seems preferable to Barker, although this entails the authorities' and the film industry's trust in the maturity of the viewers and readers. It is clearly not the case that all people are equally prepared to understand the reasons why extreme fictional violence can be effectively used to denounce the reality of human everyday violence. However, defenders of the disappearance of all forms of censorship are willing to take the risk and to redirect the efforts of the defenders of censorship towards the examination of the causes that lead a very small minority of psychotic individuals to mistake reality for fiction. As Nigel Andrews (1984: 39) suggests, "art should be the one area of human conscious activity, as dreams are the one of *unconscious* activity, where 'anything goes'".

In fact, works of fiction that are criticized (and even censored) on moral grounds usually attract a great deal of attention, resulting in high sales figures and box-office receipts, as if censorship and criticism had become an inverted index of what is worth seeing and reading. This happened recently in Britain, when the BBFC delayed the release of Oliver Stone's *Natural Born Killers* on the grounds that police abroad had linked it to at least ten killings (Lees, 1994b). The debate between the defenders and detractors of the BBFC and the publicity that this controversial decision received in the media ensured that by the time the film opened, a few months later than in any other European country, it drew crowds to the cinemas of Britain. The reviews showed in addition that there is an important generational rift between the older, more conservative critics, who derided the film, and the younger, less conservative critics, who praised it. Although certainly there must have been diverse opinions among the audience that *Natural Born Killers* attracted, the very fact that many Britons disregarded the opinions of the BBFC and the conservative critics and *chose* to see Stone's portrait of evil

monstrosity proves this lack of social consensus about moral values that I have underlined, questioning simultaneously the function of the censors and the critics as moral guardians¹⁴. People choose to enjoy the spectacle of evil monstrosity in films and novels because we *are* all potentially evil, a truth few are prepared to admit. The extreme portrait of evil will certainly affect in a negative sense those who are already losing control over their vices, but it will help those who are not to strengthen the tight reins kept on their own deficiencies because of the cathartic power of the portrait of the evil monster. Up to a point, censorship corroborates this pessimism by not discriminating between the morally immature or mentally ill people who may be led to commit copycat crimes and the average film-goers or clients of video-clubs, implying—especially in the case of the young—that the crimes occur because most human beings tend naturally to imitate evil monsters rather than virtuous heroes or heroines.

It is important to note that film (including video) and TV, together with comics, are the main targets of censorious criticism and that, in general, the theatre and the novel are free from the accusation of helping to spread unsound moral values. Speaking of the 1991 police raids on comic shops in the UK in a campaign that included threats of prosecution against artists, the confiscation of several American and European imports by customs authorities and the seizing by the police of UK comics, Roger Sabin (op. cit.: 113) notes that “almost all of the material objected to would have gone unnoticed in a novel, and while much of it might arguably have been indefensible on aesthetic grounds, it was clear that freedom of expression did not extend to comics to the same degree it did to other media”. There are two complementary reasons for this state of affairs. First, attending the performance of a play and reading a novel are generally regarded as activities in which only educated people, people who do not need moral supervision, engage. Naturally, in this sweeping generalisation there is no distinction between different audiences and readers within the wide fields of the theatre and the novel. Second, films and TV attract a great deal of media interest and are aimed at mass audiences, usually including large segments of the population with average or low levels of education, who are allegedly less prepared to make sound moral judgements. The abolition of censorship on plays and novels, achieved in Britain as recently as the 1960s, was welcomed as a victory of intellectual and artistic freedom over constricting old-fashioned moral guardianship—the reason being that ‘good’ works of art had finally been freed from the tyranny of the censor and made available to all. In contrast, the film-goers, TV viewers and comics readers who oppose censorship arguing that it curtails freedom of expression cannot be presented as people fighting a battle for the defence of worthy, artistic material that should be made available to all, for in many cases the censored material has not been designed with art in mind. Artistic values are not the issue at stake, but the right to choose what to see or read and how. However, those who

14. The release of Stone’s film for video rental was delayed by its distributor, Warner Home Video, after the Dunblane ‘Slaughter of the Innocent’ (March 1996) in which sixteen children were gunned down by sociopath Thomas Hamilton, who then committed suicide. Even though there is no indication whatsoever that Hamilton was inspired by the film and despite the fact that no children are killed or threatened in any way in Stone’s film, the BBFC showed with this decision that it backed the national moral outrage caused by the killing of the Scottish children. In contrast, the subscription TV channel Canal+ broadcast *Natural Born Killers* in April 1996 in Spain, where the film has been available for video rental since January 1996 and where it was released months before it was released in the UK. As far as I know, the Spanish media did not link in any way Stone’s film with Hamilton’s killing, nor was there any call for censorship.

have assumed a position of moral critical authority use the alleged lack of good taste of the majority of people as proof of their lack of good morals, purposefully confusing the defense of the freedom of choice based on the individual's moral responsibility supported by those who reject censorship with the defense of bad taste and bad morals.

The question of who is morally responsible for the work of art, whether the artist or a body of officially or unofficially appointed moral guardians can be viewed from perspectives as distant yet simultaneously equally paranoid as those of Tom Davies and Geoffrey Pearson. Writing from a religious, nostalgic standpoint, Davies argues in his book *The Man of Lawlessness*— a title that refers to the human evil monster—that the current reign of the evil monster in fiction is due to the exaggerated emphasis that Romanticism laid on the individual and on the positive view of the individual's struggle to achieve his or her ends, regardless of religion and morality. According to him, the same old Romantic themes have returned with a vengeance after a period of apparent restraint, as if they had been dictated by the “collaborating ghosts of Rousseau, Byron, Blake and de Sade”:

The Noble Savage (Rambo); freewheeling anarchism (the work of Henry Miller); the alienated violent man (the works of Colin Wilson and Norman Mailer); the emphasis on the macabre (Stephen King and James Herbert); the dreams of perfecting the world by committing crimes (Bonnie and Clyde and James Bond films); the pictorial celebration of perversion (Francis Bacon); a virtual rewrite of de Sade's *130 Days of Sodom* (every book of pornography and many news stories in Rupert Murdoch's the *Sun* and *The News of the World*); the constant streams of blood (most adult videos and almost every American film made for television); and the fascination with violence and war (nearly every edition of television news). (1989: 21)

What Romanticism is teaching to the citizens of Western democracies living in the late twentieth century is, according to Davies, that pursuing the realization of one's goals is legitimate, no matter how excessive those goals might be, and even if that pursuit impinges on the rights of others to pursue their own. The psychopath (and the evil monster in general) would thus be an extreme version of Romantic individualism, while the contemporary Romantic individual could be viewed as a potential moral monster. The ubiquitous presence of the evil monster and its feared role as an appealing model of behaviour can, in consequence, be explained by the individualistic, post-Romantic atmosphere breathed by the Western world, which is mainly the monstrous creation of the amoral artist. The solution that Davies suggests is a return to Christian values, a path which many people have already taken in the current revival of conservative religious values, most visibly in the USA, and which he recommends with an indisputable religious fanaticism.

In contrast, Geoffrey Pearson suggests in his book *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (1983) that the current debate about the harmful effects of some types of fiction is not directly related to the rise of individualism and Romanticism but to the increasing importance of the role played by the working class in the definition of culture and to the resistance of the middle class to the democratisation of society. Going backwards from the 1980s to the 1750s, taking leaps of about twenty years justified by the nostalgic idea that ‘things were different—better—twenty years ago’, Pearson shows that there is abundant written evidence in each period of the middle class's fears that some kinds of entertainment might incite the working class to engage in copycat acts of violence. The first important text in this history of respectable fears is Henry Fielding's

1751 pamphlet “Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers”, which is the first to link criminality with entertainment of low artistic quality and low morals. Similar accusations were directed later against Victorian music hall, the early silent films and the new Hollywood ‘talkies’ about gangsterism, culminating in Britain in the campaign against the so-called ‘video-nasties’. Pearson’s argumentation leads to the conclusion that censorship is actually a mechanism set up by the conservative middle class to control the working classes, which would explain why censorship affects mainly so-called ‘sub-art’ forms typical of popular culture.

As a matter of fact, even though censorship affects popular culture today more than ever, as I have already noted, all kinds of novels and plays were censored in the UK until the 1960s. What is more, popular novels such as Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) escaped the attention of the censors at a time when “Zola’s English publisher was imprisoned for indecency and Havelock Ellis’ clinical studies of sexual behaviour were banned” (Tracy, 1990: 41). More research is needed to establish whether it is true that the consumption of culture is always determined by class boundaries or whether, on the contrary, only a small minority consumes exclusively certain types of cultural products (‘high’ or ‘low’) while most people feed on an omnivorous cultural diet, something which would undermine the arguments of those who see a connection between popular culture and lax moral standards and that would also radically alter the ideas about the need for censorship.

The representation of evil in fiction in the last two decades is at an impasse in which the cult of horror and the culture of sentiment seem hopelessly locked. It is almost impossible to draw a line between the necessary–healthy–exposure to fictional evil, which should help the general public to reflect on real life evil and the gratuitous–unhealthy–consumption of sadism, which is wrongly evaluated now in terms of age, class and education. In fact, this dilemma is not new. It emerges with Gothic fiction, itself an offspring of sentimental fiction in which vice rather than virtue comes to occupy the foreground. According to Elizabeth Napier (1987: 143) “that sensitivity can through repeated exposure be converted to callousness is one of the most troubling moral paradoxes of the Gothic”, which is the reason why she considers that Gothic fiction failed in its alleged goal of forming readers with a moral awareness of good and evil. This, of course, can be easily contested by pointing out that although Gothic fiction derives from the earlier sentimental fiction, it follows Sadeian directives as well: it exposes sensitivity and the optimistic view of man naturally inclined towards good as pure wishful thinking. The mistake made by people like Napier who reject the experience of facing the monster of evil through fiction because horror desensitises is to confuse fiction with reality. Only individuals lacking strategies to understand the mechanisms of deconstruction of the text–lacking the self-consciousness to separate their imagining self from their real self–make that mistake. If they are children, the most effective way to prevent them from imitating what they see is not censorship sponsored by the state but the participation of the parents in the decisions about the choice of cultural products the child consumes. If they are adults, teenagers or older, there is simply no effective way of preventing them from mistaking reality and fiction, except trust. The fictional monster of evil does not desensitise sensitive, sensible individuals, just as sentimental fiction does not make unfeeling individuals truly sensitive, for indulging in fear or tears for fictional events does not mean that the same strategies will be necessarily used when facing real life events. What horror and the evil monster do to audiences and readers is rather to persuade them that sentimentalism is the escapist attitude in a world dominated by the mass media’s exploitation of the image of the many

moral monsters who have chosen or have been led by more or less enigmatic factors to do evil.

4.2.2. The Moral Responsibility of the Media in the Presentation of the Moral Monster

Our ideas of evil are not only derived from fiction. The mass media play an important role in the social construction of evil. They are, however, less exposed to censorious criticism for the obvious reason that the mass media offer reports on ‘reality’—regardless of how they actually exploit reality—while the artist is free to choose his or her subject, bearing thus a greater responsibility as to why some subjects are preferred to others. Philip Schlesinger and Howard Tumber have recently analyzed in their book *Reporting Crime: The Media Politics of Criminal Justice* how the media reflect the reality of crime. Despite the evident fascination with criminal activity and law enforcement that according to these authors is “at the very heart of popular culture” (1994: 6), and despite the many books analyzing this fascination, they conclude that “we know virtually nothing about what crime news means to readers, viewers, and listeners” (ibid.: 207). The most that can be done is to discuss what relation the reality of crime statistics bears to the percentage of crime coverage in the media. What emerges from this comparison is an important piece of information: in the USA and the UK, violent crime against the person—especially sexual crimes—is systematically over-reported in the media, while crime against property is always under-reported. Moreover:

Of the totality of crime covered by the press and television in Britain, violent crime against the person is given disproportionate attention by all news outlets. Violent crime ranges from almost a quarter of crime items covered in the quality press, through some 39 per cent of those in the mid-market press, to almost 46 per cent in the popular press. On national television news bulletins, violent crime occupies 40 per cent of crime-related items and it occupies more than 63 per cent of such items on local bulletins. Moreover, in terms of news prominence, violent crimes against the person constitute as much as 22 per cent of front-page crime items in the quality press and 45 per cent of those in mid-market and popular papers. (ibid.: 140)

What might seem definitive in this abundant representation of crime in the media is the ebbing interest of the general public in everyday crime and the growing interest in more and more sensational crimes—though it could also be argued that the media presentation of crime is what is raising the level of sensationalism required to interest audiences and readers.

There are significant variations in the tone used to present evil in quality journalism (including quality press, state-owned TV channels and radio stations) and the sensationalistic tabloids which can be classed together with some TV channels—mostly private—and radio stations. Schlesinger and Tumber analyze in this regard how Gary Taken, who raped and murdered a 19 year old girl in 1988, was presented from very different angles by different sectors of the market:

For the popular papers, and ITN, Taken was a ‘weirdo’ or ‘sex beast’. The popular papers drew a firm line between the world of abnormality, therefore, and that of wholesome normality. However, the extent to which graphic detail of the killer’s sexual obsessions was employed also made some newspapers part of the

voyeuristic world that they described. What was placed in the realm of the sexual horror story by the popular press was handled differently by both the mid-market and quality papers, which tended to talk more neutrally of Taken as a ‘killer’ or ‘murderer’, and to some extent, to use clinical designations such as ‘psychopath’. (ibid.: 145)

This use of different terminology to name evil in the media would suggest that the reaction against psychiatry and the law embedded in the films I have analyzed is backed by uneducated rather than by educated viewers. This seems to contradict the fact that most mainstream novels about monstrosity also reject the same clinical and legalistic explanations of evil. There is seemingly a convergence of interests between sectors of the working classes and the middle classes against the minority that holds the scientific and legal power to define evil: both the media and fiction can be said to enact that conflict. In any case, the use of ‘clinical designations’ by the quality press and the mainstream novel does not signify a basic agreement with the view of evil propounded by clinical psychology and psychiatry, but embarrassment. The word ‘monster’ is not easy to use for those who want to describe human evildoers within contemporary notions of decorum. Describing a ‘psychopath’ as a ‘monster’ is, for many, succumbing to the sin of using exaggerated, colourful language more apt for describing fantastic non-human creatures. Even the moral monsters of the ‘books of evidence’ shy away from the word, repeatedly claiming they are not monsters, but an indefinite something else.

In any case, it would be wrong to assume that only tabloids adopt biased, sensationalistic stances in the depiction of evil. The information given by the media about the two middle-class Spanish teenagers (aged 20 and 17) who killed a middle-aged working-class man in the course of a sadistic role game of their own invention is a case in point. Since the game was interpreted as *the cause* of the crime, the misinformation provided by most Spanish mass media damaged the reputation of the many peaceful role game players all over Spain. Far from taking the chance to rectify the unfortunate association of role games with the teenagers’ crime, even a newspaper as prestigious as *El País* published a certainly questionable report in which everything except the sadistic personality of the boys was blamed for the crime. Among other dubious statements, the author of the report, Francisco Peregil (1994) argues that the elder boy may have been driven mad by the horror films and books—especially “Cly Barker’s” (sic)—found in his home. The last page of the article offers an extract of *American Psycho*—the scene in which Bateman kills a black beggar—and an extract of the elder boy’s diary, narrating the horrifying crime he had committed, without any other comment. Nothing is said about the fact that *American Psycho* is fiction or about the place that the scene chosen occupies in the book. The immediate suggestion is that the young killer’s diary *springs* from the reading of the novel, so that questions such as the boy’s family background, education, mental stability and, above all, moral responsibility are put aside. Bateman is thus misrepresented as the cause and not as the symptom of the real life evil monstrosity of which this twenty-year-old killer is living proof.

The behaviour of the media in the face of evil is the subject of Oliver Stone’s *Natural Born Killers* (1994) and of John Waters’ *Serial Mom* (1994) both black comedies that question to what extent the media’s glamorising of the evil monster is the main cause for the undue attention paid to crime and for copycat crimes. *Natural Born Killers* is a satire not only against the presentation of crime in the mass media but also against the police and the prison system in the USA. Although the film drew the

attention of the British censors because of the high number of killings performed by Mickey and his wife Mallory, the film's main aim is not the justification of these crimes but the exposure of the contradictions in a society that hails the couple as heroes in the media but demands the police and the prison system to control them. Mickey and Mallory Knox are in their own view killers in love, born to do evil; Mallory is the product of a working-class home that has taught her nothing in terms of morality, except that power belongs to the abuser. Nothing is said, however, about Mickey's family background. According to him, evil people are people who belong to another species, as he tells Wayne Gale, the ambitious reality show host who interviews him in prison. Mickey's tongue-in-cheek explanation is ironically underlined by the bizarre blurring of his face for a brief moment, suggesting that evil monsters like Mickey are faces shaped by what we see in them and not by what they truly are. In this paranoid world of sadistic policemen, abusive prison governors and exploitative middle-class media stars, Mickey and Mallory seem by comparison to make sense regardless of the amoral ambiguity of their personalities.

Beyond the question of the moral responsibility of the media, what *Natural Born Killers* reveals is that both audiences and media stars nurse an unspeakable secret: they want to be on the other side of the camera. Mickey and Mallory become the heroes of the day first because they are romantic outlaws in love and on the run, second, because many envy the way in which they have freed themselves from all restraints by killing and lastly, because the long police chase and their brutal arrest make them appear as the vanguard of a submerged resistance against authority and the law, a stance secretly supported by their many admirers. What the couple achieve in their mad flight into nothingness and with their bloody escape from prison is the unmasking of the real desires of sensationalist journalism and its audience. When he is taken as a hostage by the couple, Wayne Gale, the star journalist following Mickey and Mallory's case, thinks that he has crossed the same fundamental barrier between moralistic conservatism and amoral freedom that they had crossed before. Gale declares then that he feels alive for the first time in his life—an effect that his sensationalist reports have not quite managed to achieve on himself or his audience—but the final irony is that just as in *The Silence of the Lambs* Hannibal Lecter avenges himself by having the psychiatrist Dr. Chilton 'for dinner', Mickey and Mallory give Gale a taste of 'reality' by killing him in front of his TV camera, producing thus more fodder for the media.

Celebrity and its associated glamour have become a kind of prize that perversely rewards the actions of the moral monster. Mickey and Mallory find themselves unexpectedly in the eye of the hurricane, but the coveted public exposure may never reach other monsters, such as Freddie in Banville's *The Book of Evidence*, who resent the media's neglect. The way in which he fancies himself in his imprisonment is similar to the treatment given to Mickey and Mallory, though in their case love and not culture mark the essential difference from the cold-blooded beast:

Somehow I pictured myself a sort of celebrity, kept apart from the other prisoners in a special wing, where I would receive parties of grave, important people and hold forth to them about the great issues of the day, impressing the men and charming the ladies. What insight! they would cry. What breadth! We were told you were a beast, cold-blooded, cruel, but now that we have seen you, have heard you, why -! And there am I, striking an elegant pose, my ascetic profile lifted to the light in the barred window, fingering a scented handkerchief and faintly smirking, Jean Jacques the cultured killer. (p. 5)

It may well be that, as David Cronenberg, notes “in a way, killing someone is the ultimate human experience” (Rodley, op. cit.: 119) or that, finally aware that evil cannot be explained by external causes, we have turned to the moral monsters—fictional or natural—to hear from their lips what it is like to be evil. They become thus an authority, superior to us in their knowledge of what it is like to kill, hence their appeal as reflected in the media.

Instead of the cultured killer or the romantic killer couple, *Serial Mom* portrays the suburban mother and wife as a serial killer. Waters’ film parodies simultaneously the evil monsters of the films and novels I have surveyed and the role of the media in the presentation of evil, a combination resulting in a film that while seeming a radical indictment of America is at heart a conservative defence of suburbia and its values. Beverley Sutphin, a housewife married to a moderately successful dentist, and mother of two teenagers, kills all those who do not respect her family and her suburban moral values, even down to the need to recycle one’s rubbish. The values on which suburbia thrives are attacked through Beverley’s violent crimes, but since she is herself a rather affectionate caricature of suburbia and an altogether implausible serial killer, the film wittingly or unwittingly stresses the point that evil is done by other than middle-class people.

Serial Mom is more successful in its satire of the media. Like Mickey and Mallory, Beverley becomes a celebrity while on the run from the police to the point that her final crime, the burning of a teenage neighbour who has discovered her deeds, is committed in front of a cheering crowd at a rock concert. The trial, in which Beverley acts as her own defence counsel, exposes all the legal (and illegal) trickery to which lawyers can turn in order to free evildoers. As Beverley busies herself in the preparation of her own defence, her daughter and a boyfriend—a tabloid journalist—start running a booming business selling memorabilia and a book about her crimes while Beverley’s son and the brother of one of her victims discuss the rights of TV dramatization. The trial reaches its peak when reality show hostess Suzanne Sommers attends it: for her Beverley is “an innocent woman wrongly accused”, a feminist heroine and, as Beverley tells the jury, a person “as normal as any of you”. Having won her freedom again for lack of incriminating evidence, Beverley immediately resumes her habit, killing a member of the jury (played, of all people, by Patricia Hearst) before Sommers’ eyes. The appeal of the film is, thus, based on the running joke that, given her looks and her middle-class background, nobody is ready to believe that Beverley is guilty. Once they know who she really is, the reaction is fascination rather than fear or disgust. Ironically, even though Beverley’s crimes are as violent and explicit as those seen in *Natural Born Killers*, *Serial Mom* did not create the same controversy on its release. This might be due to several factors: *Serial Mom* is a comedy produced by an independent filmmaker and not by a major studio, it is not related—not even remotely—to any similar case in real life and it was possibly assumed that a murderous middle-class housewife would not inspire copycat crimes but only wholesome laughter, unlike the bitter laughter at the arbitrary cruelty of life elicited by *Natural Born Killers*.

4.2.3. The Attraction of Horror and the Moral Monster: Sadistic Scopophilia and Empathetic Masochism

As I have argued in the previous section, given our ignorance about who the public for the evil monster of fiction is, establishing why and how horror is consumed is certainly risky. Vera Dika (op. cit.: 17, added emphasis) argues that audiences of horror films “respond as a group, *regardless* of the class or the social background”, which suggests that the personal supersedes the social in the consumption of horror. This is, however, debatable, as most people consume horror because of a mixture of personal and social reasons. Typically an audience exclusively composed of women will react in a different way to horror than one composed of men, gender being a more determinant factor than social class in this regard, though this does not mean that a particular man and a particular woman may ‘enjoy’ horror in the same way as any other man or woman.

How horror is consumed is another important question that has received insufficient attention. Horror films seem to be quickly moving out of the cinema and into the video-rental outlets, so it is necessary to know who sees this kind of film alone at home and who complies with the ritual of seeing them in a cinema. In *American Psycho* Brett Easton Ellis satirises this point by showing how his yuppie hero rents mainly pornography and horror from his exclusive video-club. While the teenagers make themselves visible as horror audiences by flocking together to the cinemas to see horror in a kind of ritualistic group ceremony to test their endurance, presumably older audiences keep a lower profile by consuming horror offered on TV and the video-club. Besides, group reactions to the evil monster are not the same as individual reactions, for there are psychological strategies for dealing with horror films in one’s own home when watching a video-tape or TV that are simply useless in a crowded cinema in the dark. Seeing videos at home, holding the power over the screen and not the other way round as happens in a cinema, is much closer to the experience of reading a novel. Presumably, this must also bear a relation to the way in which the monster of evil is appreciated by different audiences.

Noël Carroll discusses the pleasure we find in fictional horror from the viewpoint of what he calls ‘paradoxes of the heart’, namely, “1) how can anyone be frightened by what they know does not exist, and 2) why would anyone ever be interested in horror, since being horrified is so unpleasant?” (op. cit.: 8) The first question belongs in the same paradigm as questions such as, ‘How can anyone feel empathy, love or erotic attraction for a character of fiction?’ or ‘How can one shed tears for fictional misfortunes?’ Part of being human is having the psychological capacity to tune into the emotional content of stories about real or fictional events. Whether we are all frightened in the same way is another matter, although Edmund Burke’s indications about the important role played by emotional distance might furnish an important clue in answering the question that summarises Carroll’s twin questions, namely, why is horror attractive? Burke (op. cit.: 42) writes of the pleasure we feel in the misfortunes of others in his classic essay *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*:

I am convinced we have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others; for let the affection be what it will be in appearance, if it does not make us shun such objects, if on the contrary it induces us to approach them, if it makes us dwell upon them, in this case I conceive we must have a delight or pleasure of some species or other in contemplating objects

of this kind ... for terror is a passion which always produces delight if it does not press too close.

This is the approach that I call ‘sadistic scopophilia’, that is to say, the pleasure of looking at the victims of the monster of evil that confirms our freedom from the evil we see represented. Faced with the images in the media and the images of fiction, the individual’s sadistic scopophilia ensures that s/he feels pleasure—maybe the basic pleasure that the visible outcome of the presence of evil justifies his or her pessimistic view of the world. The opposite of this attitude is ‘empathetic masochism’, that is to say, the ability to feel for the victim of the monster of evil; this is not exactly the same as sympathy, for by empathetic masochism I imply that the reaction provoked by horror is projected towards the subject and not the object. This attitude springs from and confirms a pessimistic view of life by which we are all potentially victims of evil. Sadistic scopophilia and empathetic masochism are not exclusive and can coexist in the same individual without any contradiction, depending on whether we sympathise with the monster or the victim. When we cheer the actions of the hero that exterminates the monster, sadistic scopophilia occupies the foreground; when we feel with the victims but enjoy nonetheless the fullness of the portrait of the monster—as in *Schindler’s List*—empathetic masochism prevails. Masochism and sadism are integral parts of the human mind, and not simply perversions of it, that may help explain our reactions when confronting fictional or art horror, beyond judgements about the morality or immorality of those who produce and those who consume horror fiction.

Carroll’s own answer to his questions about the paradoxes of horror, that the pleasure of horror is the pleasure “involved in engaging our curiosity in the unknown” (op. cit.: 185) for which disgust is the price, is not really sufficient to explain the attraction for the monster of evil. It simply transforms the problem of why the horror of evil is pleasurable into the problem of why curiosity should be punishable. On his side, Stephen King writes in *Danse Macabre* (op. cit.: 27) that “we make up horrors to help us cope with the real ones”, touching on what he calls “phobic pressure points”, that is to say, the points that are reached by the creator of a horror story when his conscious mind touches the subconscious mind with a potent idea. King does not say how fictional horror helps to cope with actual horror, but since for him the job of the horror is to appeal “to all that is worst in us” (ibid.: 205), sadistic scopophilia would be the root of the appeal of the monster of evil. According to King, horror films—and by extension horror novels—present a model of evil monstrosity that is fascinating because it is liberating and because it has the power to temporarily release “the conservative Republican in a three-piece suit who resides within all of us” (ibid.: 55). Horror would fulfil the task of controlling the negative impulses that move us to try to dominate and even harm others by showing us the disastrous consequences that the monster of evil faces. The worst in us is the capacity to do evil that requires the strict control that only a conservative morality ensures. This agrees well with the view of the fictional monster of evil as a scapegoat receiving all the hatred and sadistic impulses that cannot be manifested towards others if a tolerant society is to survive.

In Will Rockett’s (op. cit.: 127) view, what he calls the ‘Cinema of Cruelty’ offers a view of evil monstrosity in which horror lies “in the degree to which the phenomenon surpasses human intellectual capacities ... , placing it beyond human

comprehension”¹⁵. The attraction of the monster of evil is grounded on the fact that s/he questions the definition of irrationality and of intelligence, blurring the line that separates the homicidal rage caused by madness from the will to do evil of the intelligent, methodical villain. The madman or madwoman is a minor mystery compared to that of the person who chooses to do evil not on impulse but systematically, which is what characterises the genuine moral monster. Rockett further notes that “in feeling a strong attraction toward certain films usually identified as horror, audiences are seeking transcendence, or at least confirmatory contact with the sublime or transcendent” (ibid.: 6). That is to say, there is a search for a confirmation of a transcendent idea of evil that explains why evil occupies such an important place in human nature. The fictional human monster of evil is the interface between that idea and its manifestation in the evildoers that appear in the media. Neither the monster of fiction nor the various criminals of real life can be fully understood, but at least the monster of fiction provides the satisfaction that something transcendent, mysterious and sublime explains evil while the monster of reality produces the dissatisfaction and the uncertainty of banality and random cruelty, implying that there is no transcendence but an all too human propensity to do evil if the chance arises. The preoccupation with evil and the fact that transcendence is sought in our secularised world in confirming the presence of evil—perhaps of the Devil—and not of good or God, are signs of a moral pessimism that has pervaded and is still pervading the last two decades of the twentieth century.

The middle way is Eric Rabkin’s alternative: the monster is a part of a strategy to overcome ‘*tedium vitae*’ through fiction. “Boredom”, Rabkin writes (op. cit.: 42), “is one of the prisons of the mind. The fantastic offers escape from this prison”. Since the monster of evil thrives in neo-Gothic narratives in which suspense is fundamental—despite the habitual predictability of the plots—and in which death is at stake, it can be said that one of the functions of the fictional monster of evil is lifting for a while the mantle of predictability that envelops everyday life and minimising the impact of the myriad of everyday, ordinary problems, proposing instead of boredom an extraordinary proximity to death. This obviously presupposes that the audience for the monster of evil are people who observe suffering and death from a privileged distance, but who find in the monster’s arbitrary use of violence and in the no less arbitrary choice of victims a healthy reminder of the always threatening presence of death. After meeting the fictional monster of evil, this *tedium vitae* is transformed into the feeling that life is worth living even if it is uneventful, for death always presses too close. Will Rockett indicates that horror enables people “to rehearse their own deaths” (op. cit.: 3) and to prepare themselves for the inevitable, perhaps by identifying with the victims. This should not be taken in the literal sense that particular forms of death are imagined by each particular viewer or reader but that our awareness that we are not—yet—one of the victims of death renews the impulse to go on living. The horror caused by the evil deeds of the fictional moral monster halts the death wish that Freud proposed as the complement of eros and allows audiences and readers to minimise trivial concerns, paradoxically transmitting an exhilarating, exciting view—through the visceral impact of the fear of death and the fight victims put up against the monster—of why life is worth living after all.

15. Rockett follows Antonin Artaud’s ideas about the Theatre of Cruelty: the spectator must be shocked out of his or her complacency by terror so that facing monstrosity even in a fictional narrative is no trivial entertainment but a deep jolt that alters the frame of mind of audiences.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have reviewed the construction of the moral monster in recent films and novels and the issue of the moral responsibility of artists and audiences concerning the representation of evil. I have argued that while philosophers make a point of distinguishing the moral responsibility of evildoers from the reasons why evil acts are committed, psychiatry, psychology and the law are confusing the definition of responsibility by failing to acknowledge that their accounts of the causes of evil do not suffice to explain evil to its victims. Taking the position of the silent victims, both commercial films and mainstream novels address the question of evil by denying the authority of psychiatry and the law and by approaching the mind of the evildoer directly, in order to find alternative explanations or to confirm the common sense belief that evil cannot be explained.

The presence in fiction of the supernatural pure agent of evil, the Devil, is diminishing in favour of the villain, who, beginning with the Gothic novel, embodies the idea that evil is caused exclusively by human agents. The villain thrives because, like the Devil and the Beast inside, he can be used as a scapegoat in order to discriminate between non-aggressive 'normality' and the evil ways of a minority of evil monsters like him. However, the rise of the fictional psychopath since the 1960s and the blurring of the margins between this figure and the villain in contemporary films and novels implies that there is a strong reaction at work against pseudo-Freudian explanations of evil and that pure, unexplained evil is preferred, perhaps as a consolatory fantasy that will mitigate the realization that we are all potentially evil. Many novels defend the view that potentially we are all moral monsters, that is to say that within a nihilistic, existential morality we are all prone to committing acts of evil for which there is no possible justification and that it is therefore meaningless to search for one.

The remarkable interest of audiences and readers in the representation of the evil monster is read by conservative critics and by censors as a sign of the moral decadence of the late twentieth century, although unlike liberal critics they regard it as a cause and not as a symptom. The theory of copycat behaviour has led to attempts to curtail the freedom of expression of artists and the freedom of choice of the consumers of culture, even though there is not enough evidence to enable us to understand how the portraits of both fictional and real life moral monsters affect audiences, nor to determine who those audiences are. Given the success and popularity of films and novels about moral monstrosity, it would be advisable to do more research on why people are attracted to them. My own answer in this regard is that these films and novels minimise everyday concerns by putting the reader or viewer in the presence of arbitrary death and of moral horror, which, experienced in the safety of the distance from the monster of fiction, enable readers and viewers to feel the absolute value of being alive.

CHAPTER 5 The Politics of Monstrosity: The Monsters of Power

5.0. Introduction

In this chapter I will consider the representation in recent films and novels of the relationship between political systems of power and monstrous individuals who find a place within them. My query is whether the fictional representation of the individuals working for the systems used by power to perpetuate itself—especially the army—questions in depth on whose side genuine monstrosity lies: that of the system of power or that of the person who is part of it. In political terms the period 1979 to 1995 is marked above all by the Reaganite conservative era in the USA (1980–1988), the rise of Thatcherism in the UK (1979–1990), and the fall of communism initiated by Gorbachev's 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika', culminating in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and in Germany's ensuing reunification. During these years, a considerable number of novels and films characterised by the exploitation of the Gothic plot of persecution has been produced, within a context in which the system of power and the powerless individual confront each other. The motif of the innocent individual persecuted by a villain who represents power had previously appeared in fiction at the end of the eighteenth century, in a political situation similar to that of the end of the twentieth century, when major events (in the case of Gothic fiction the French Revolution) opened then as now new, uncertain paths towards the future that cause unease and fear. Both the eighteenth-century British Gothic and the late twentieth-century American (and British) postmodernist Gothic dramatise the need to strike a balance between individual freedom and a trustworthy system of power by examining the excesses of political systems in which power is exerted arbitrarily and undemocratically. The contemporary narratives question the role of the moral monsters who can exert violence, especially in torture, within the bogus legality of dictatorships unrestrained by a fair legal or political framework such as that supposedly guaranteed by democracy. Since contemporary democracy is regarded by the USA as its most important political contribution to the world, and since the USA has assumed the role of world champion of democratic values, it follows that many of the novels and films surveyed in this chapter deal, directly or indirectly, with the advantages and disadvantages, not only of democracy, but also of the American idea of democracy exported to the Western world and beyond. Even when the films and novels do not directly deal with America, many of them invite us to consider, by comparison, firstly whether the democratic system of power invented by America is the best humankind has ever had and, secondly, whether using power for monstrous purposes is a sin only committed by those belonging to alien cultures and political systems or by anybody in power.

Among the monsters of power in fiction, the Nazis occupy a very prominent position, though they are actually a subset of a more general group, that of the torturers. Nazism is of particular interest for wide audiences and readers because it is a

phenomenon—and I refer to it in the present as it is by no means dead as a political ideology either in Europe or the USA—that shatters important moral beliefs. Several threads concur in texts about Nazism: the place of individual morality within a corrupt system of power, the implication of a whole nation in it (which is also a nation regarded as the cradle of much European high culture) and, especially, the idea of mass extermination. However, the long shadow of the civilised barbarian as a torturer spreads much wider than the realm of Nazism to encompass all dictatorial systems such as diverse communist tyrannies and the diverse military dictatorships of South America, also represented in recent fiction, as well as the role of the USA in its foreign interventions, such as the Vietnam war.

Most of the texts I examine in this chapter are closely bound to historical events of the twentieth century which they use as fictional background or as the basis for biographical or autobiographical accounts. The awareness that these texts offer ‘true’ information about relevant political realities places them at another level, different from that of the official version of history and also from that of historical fiction, if only because audiences and readers receive them with different expectations. The American cinema based on eye witness accounts of relevant political, historical events reinforces the ideology of democracy but also reveals intrinsically the contradictions in the position of the USA as a world-wide power.

Even though in a sense, some of the films and novels considered in this chapter could be regarded as historical fiction, I should like to distinguish between the kind of fiction that reconstructs a past historical period and the novelised accounts of real life events that have taken place in the last fifty years—such as *Schindler’s List*, *Heaven and Earth* and *Not without my Daughter*. These cannot be properly judged on their artistic merit because they are not primarily literary works but vehicles to transmit an impression of the personal suffering caused by particular political events to large audiences. They rely, in addition, in the empathetic capacity of the reader/viewer (already aware of the hardships endured by the victims thanks to the media rather than to historiography) to understand the horror caused by the moral monster within a monstrous system of power. Furthermore, the fiction surveyed in this chapter does not depict sweeping panoramas of the times, but stories centred on individuals and on the examination of why these individuals found themselves in such particular historical contexts, playing the role of victim or victimiser. As I see it, the loss of historical perspective and its replacement by the personalisation of conflicts generated by power is particularly stressed after Vietnam, a war in which for the first time ‘history’ came to be the sum total of the official version, the media and the eye witness. This personalisation has gathered momentum in the 1980s and is essential to an understanding of the way in which history and the monster of power is represented in recent fiction.

5.1. The Monster and Power

5.1.1. The Monster and the Systems of Power in the Twentieth Century

One of the characteristics that defines the monster is its power to threaten. The monster can threaten in many different ways, not all of them physically violent. As I showed in Chapter 3, the freak poses a threat to the sense of personal normality of the onlooker, challenging his or her capacity to tolerate mere physical difference. Facing the

monster thus means facing power, which in the case of the evil monster takes the form of a great capacity to arbitrarily harm its victims, psychologically or physically. In Chapter 4 I have considered the evil monster on a personal scale, without analysing in depth how the villain or the psychopath may be employed by systems of power. The question I should like to address now is how the evil individual finds a place within a system of power that allows him to develop his latent capacity to harm the innocent and, indeed, how arbitrary systems of power benefit from the universal capacity of humans to do evil. The characters I analyse in this chapter, some of them based on real people, comprise a category different from that of the psychopathic outlaw of recent fiction; instead of acting outside legality, they embody legality itself within atrocious systems of government. These people are presented in fiction as an even greater enigma than sociopaths and psychopaths because they would not perform their deeds on their own. Too weak and cowardly to constitute individual systems of terror, they need the shelter of monstrous systems to act on a scale much more massive than anything a serial killer might dream of.

Since power of all kinds—over individuals or nations—has an obvious attraction for most human beings, it is very often the case that monsters of evil, real or imaginary, human or non-human, elicit sympathetic responses from viewers and readers. As Todorov points out, the powerful monster is one of the constants of the literature of the fantastic. For him, the appeal of fantastic, non-human monsters is that “such beings symbolise dreams of power” (1989: 109), though he ventures no explanation for why this very human aspect of our natures must be displaced mainly towards the supernatural monster of fantasy. Noël Carroll (1990: 167) follows similar lines of thought:

Another way of explaining the attraction of horror—one that may be connected with elements of the religious account—is to say that horrific beings—like deities and daemons—attract us because of their power. They induce awe. In one mode of speaking, it might be said that we identify with monsters because of the power they possess—perhaps monsters are wishfulfilment figures ... It might be argued that we so admire the power monsters have that the disgust they engender is outweighed.

Though both Todorov and Carroll refer to non-human monsters of fantasy, presumably the fascination for power may lead us likewise to overcome the initial disgust for human moral monsters who wield great amounts of uncontrolled power in fiction or in real life. Fascist regimes based on the cult to the persona of the tyrant, such as those of Mussolini, Franco and Hitler, prove that power fascinates many who perpetuate the life of the dictator beyond its actual extinction. The fascination for the monster and fascism are close phenomena because both disempower the individual who surrenders to the allure of the powerful Other; in this sense, fear empowers us because it helps us to keep at bay the attraction towards the monster as an embodiment of power.

Before considering the relationship between the monster of power and democracy I would like to briefly address the question of whether there is a definition of monstrosity that can be valid across cultural barriers and that can be satisfactory to judge whether an individual or a whole system is monstrous¹⁶. Obviously, I am writing from the standpoint of a person living in the privileged Western world, in a country where democratic values can be said to be generally respected—despite the flagrant abuses committed by some corrupt groups of individuals in or close to power—and where most

16. I am indebted to Alan Reeves for having attracted my attention towards this issue.

of the population believe that the rights of the individuals and human rights should be protected. Therefore, my point of view regarding the definition of monstrosity cannot be said to be thoroughly objective because of the position I occupy as a citizen of the Western world. Like most Western citizens I believe that all those who abuse my rights as an individual—from my right to enjoy my life in peace to my right to express a political opinion—or as a member of a democratic community are moral monsters. However, as a Spaniard, I am well aware that defining the monster of power is more problematic than it might seem at first sight.

Like that of any Spaniard born in the mid-1960s, my life has been marked by the transition from Franco's dictatorship to democracy and is currently marked by the crisis of belief in democracy provoked by the disclosure of the serious breaches of the trust by those in power. The man who ruled Spain in my childhood, Franco, is now being redefined as a monster by many, who feel free to speak what they had kept silent for decades, and compared to other monsters such as Hitler and Stalin in a horrific ranking of twentieth-century destroyers of their own nations. I am aware that for a minority of Spaniards, Franco is no such monster but a hero who saved Spain from the dangers of communism, later made apparent by Stalin's cruel regime. However, despite this still deep rift in the foundations on which Spain lies, I think that no Spaniard would hesitate to agree with the idea that a person who orders the imprisonment, torture and extermination of thousands of people on behalf of any ideology is a (moral) monster. The problem seems to be, therefore, that whereas there is a certain consensus on what a monster of power is, there is no such consensus when it comes to labelling a particular historical figure or those who collaborated with him or her as monsters.

Take the case of Nazism, for instance, among many other totalitarianisms based on the absolute disrespect for human rights and the rights of the individuals. Hitler was one of the most horrific moral monsters in the whole history of humankind—the many innocent millions that his machinery of war and extermination killed prove the point. However, this is not a view defended by many who fought by his side or by many young people who defend now the return to power of his ideology. Some have even questioned the truthfulness of the research attributing to Hitler's reign the killing of six million Jews in the infamous concentration camps of the Third Reich, even though voicing these doubts may be even regarded as a criminal offence in some countries. I personally think that the horror caused by the Nazis is real enough and should not be questioned, but there are strong reasons to question the ideological uses to which this monstrous Hitler has been put to.

Democratic countries still use Hitler together with Stalin and Mao, as the twentieth-century's bogeymen. History is written by the winners, and the Allies no doubt wrote a version of history in which the human suffering caused by the Nazis weighed more than the human suffering caused by the Allies. The voices of those exterminated in Dresden or Hiroshima and Nagasaki sound weak and remote, if they are heard at all, in comparison to the voices of the Jews killed by the Nazis who were, nonetheless only a part of Hitler's victims. Beyond the ideologies of winners and losers there is a whole human territory which is invaded by evil whenever wars are fought or systems of power imposed on people who do not want them. The evil caused by monstrous systems of power consists, precisely, of absolute indifference towards that suffering, which is caused by the subordination of human rights and the rights of the individual to forces of change not even well understood by those who unleash them.

Beyond the question of whether individuals such as Hitler are the driving force behind bloody revolutions or the puppets driven by unstoppable historical forces, there

is a more important question to ask ourselves: what is the absolute level of tolerance for evil and the human suffering it causes? The Jews have used and still use today the spectre of the Holocaust to justify their right to hold the land now forming the state of Israel, but many of them are evidently indifferent to the human suffering endured by the Palestinians, which is visible no matter whether one thinks the Israelis or the Palestinians are right in their dispute. The USA decry the abominations of communist governments such as that of Fidel Castro in Cuba and are fighting now with all their might to 'free' the Cuban people from their dictator, but there is evidence that the USA supported Pol Pot's monstrous remaking of Kampuchea into the communist utopia of his dreams, dreamed while he was a university student in Paris, the heart of civilised Europe. Europe itself has done nothing effective to stop genocide from happening in its very own heart of darkness, in the territory of the now dismembered Yugoslavia. Political and commercial interests certainly condition who is defined as a monster of power, and condition also whether s/he will be kept in power or denounced. This is the point at which the system overpowers the individual. In democracies the individual's voice is heard when another individual harms a third individual: popular juries and public opinion have this function of literally voicing the people's opinions in, for instance, cases of murder. Yet democracies do not work when it comes to making decisions on how to deal with monsters of power—alien or one's own—because the voice of the people, who might well oppose that of their government, is drowned by that of the organism that represent the people in any (allegedly) democratic country.

Yet, the problem of interested tolerance is already becoming an issue more vital for the survival of democratic values than that of unmasking the evil monster, whether he is called Hitler or Saddam Hussein. The ugly shadow of collaborationism is now surfacing in France and causing many to consider why Hitler's evident ascension was tolerated for so long by France before his invasion of Poland, which led to the beginning of World War II. The European countries who once held colonial possessions in America, Asia or Africa have tolerated the entrenchment of tyrannies of diverse nature in the former colonies, while securing for themselves sound democratic governments. All the democratic countries have collaborated in the massacres of civilians in ex-Yugoslavia with their inability to co-ordinate their diplomatic, political, economic and military forces and are now hypocritically lamenting the daily discovery of mass graves reported by the media. At the end of the twentieth century, when fiction and the media are considering mainly the question of why moral monsters exist at all and how they corrupt morally sound individuals whom they attract to their domains, the question that goes unasked—or that is only asked privately by each Western citizen but goes unheard—is why the democratic countries emerged and still emerging from the ashes of Nazism, Stalinism and other dictatorships will not stop the monster of power from causing the great deal of human suffering endured by most of Earth's population.

Within the democratic context of the Western world (also including the democratic Japan, risen from the ashes of the militaristic empire vanquished in 1945) a person with an inordinate amount of uncontrollable power is one of the most feared monsters. However, democracy, especially in its American version, suffers from a constant tension: it depends on the idea of the community of voters who are all equal before the law, yet its economic system—capitalism—is based on the idea of the successful individual, the entrepreneur, and its political system is likewise based on the charismatic leader capable of winning elections. Democracy is in fact a system that tolerates short-lived autocracies of democratically elected rulers, provided no personal liberties are harmed. The tensions within the system, mainly the fear of those in power

who are not elected (the business elite, the military) and of those who do disrupt personal freedom (the criminals including the torturers of other dictatorial regimes) are the staple of the texts I analyse in this and the following chapter. As I will show in this chapter, America produces fiction—specially films—that give an illusion of subversion against the capitalist system while actually reinforcing it, though I do not attribute this to any kind of purposeful ideological manipulation by a conspirational elite, but to the films' capacity to mirror the concerns of great masses of the American population. The films and novels I consider in this chapter reinforce the idea that American democracy is the best political system thus far known by the world, despite its evident pitfalls; they do so by exposing corrupt political systems that function 'elsewhere', a territory that also includes the fantastic dystopian America of the future (as in the Huxleyan *Demolition Man* (1993), which portrays a brave new America ruled by the 'Japanised' dictator Raymond Cocteau) but not the America of the present. If they touch on the America of the present directly, the criticism of the structures of power is established in such way that the system remains intact after the conflict: the elimination of an individual villain or monster and the survival of the individual hero suffice to restore the lost balance.

Monstrosity understood as an excessive use of power is latent in any organisation that employs violence. These include illegal organisations such as religious sects and paramilitary terrorist groups that resist legal structures of power, and also organisations within the system of prevailing legality, such as the police and the military forces. Leaders of religious sects, terrorists, drug barons, mafia bosses, corrupt corporate businessmen or politicians and other kinds of organised criminals appear frequently in contemporary fiction, often attached to the government itself. The supposition of these films and novels is that democracy generates an amount of criminal illegality that is not accepted by the population at large but that is always preferred to the criminality against the individual within a dictatorial system. The organised criminals of fiction are usually presented in manichean terms in narratives that enact the confrontation between legality and illegality, and to a certain extent between virtue and vice. The popularity of cop shows on TV and of cop films attests if not to the belief in the competence of police to control criminality in real life, to the belief that American society—and by extension all democratic societies—are divided between those who 'naturally' embrace criminality and those who enforce the law, despite the limitations of the system, at an individual level.¹⁷

In general, the organised criminals of contemporary fiction are the inheritors of the Gothic villain, but they are also often a degradation of this figure into a mere stereotype. The unidimensional characters who show an inclination to do evil without much psychological or social justification, within illegal, criminal systems in so many contemporary films and novels are, as I have argued in the previous chapter, consolatory fantasies reinforcing the idea that moral monsters are 'abnormal' and form 'abnormal' associations. Actually, most villains are banal characters, far less intriguing than the characters who cross the border between apparent normality and criminal insanity on their own, as serial killers do, or within tyrannies, as torturers and other monstrous servants of dictatorships do. It is important to remark that most of the novels and films

17. Obviously, the fact that individual policemen and policewomen are increasingly presented as fallible human beings with faults of their own (petty corruption, alcoholism, excessive use of violence has two meanings: on the one hand, it bespeaks the limitations of the individual in front of the powerful system; on the other hand, it does away with the unrealistic image of the always honest cop, somehow humanising and desentimentalising these often stark morality plays of postmodernity.

analysed in this chapter deal with the monster of power embodied by a man in the service of a vast system and not with the leaders that create that system. The charismatic, monstrous leader seems to be regarded now as a psychological phenomenon, an exception in the ordinary run of humankind. Few films and novels concern the rise of the moral monster to power, with the interesting exception of Michael Dobbs' trilogy (*House of Cards*, *To Play the King* and *The Final Cut*) which narrates the ascent of the perverse British Prime Minister Francis Urquhart. In contrast, the servant of the corrupt system epitomises much better not only the interaction between historical events and the persons who live through them (the personal as the political) but also a certainly disturbing idea: even though charismatic evil monsters are exceptional, the cases in which the individual's capacity to do evil has found an outlet, thanks to extreme political situations, are by no means exceptional; on the contrary, they seem to prove that everybody carries a killer inside, whether this manifests itself as a heroic soldier or a horrific torturer.

The history of the twentieth century has indeed affected our perception of monstrosity, especially because of the effect the two world wars had on the civilian population. One of the aspects most deeply reconsidered has been the role of individual men within armies or other types of state controlled bodies. The glorious, heroic soldier of the past has given way to the soldier as an innocent victim of his own government's perverse ambitions. On the other hand, governments such as the American and the Soviet, empowered to destroy the whole world with atomic weapons, have gradually emerged as a more subtle kind of monster—hence more dangerous—than the expansionist Nazi or Japanese governments of the 1930s and all the other dictatorships on the planet, of any political tendency. At this point it is necessary to consider how the subject is linked to the power exerted by the state, either in dictatorships or in democracies. Both systems include an enormous amount of power over the individual but differ on the actual amount of psychological or physical violence tolerated against the individual. Two ways in which the individual makes contact with the political system of power seem obvious: states can declare war on each other and enforce the military conscription of their citizens; states also offer employment opportunities to many of its citizens in the army, the police and the civil service, for which these citizens obviously apply according to their needs and inclinations. Evidently, citizens employed by the government to carry out tasks of control on other citizens do exert an amount of power limited by the legality of each regime, though, clearly, there is a great difference between states which wage open war on other states or secret war on their citizens and those which do not.

In the panorama of the twentieth century, the greatest paradox is the position of the USA in world-wide affairs. Since December 1941, when the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour forced the USA to enter World War II, the armed forces of this country have played the role of a rather self-complacent international police force—what writer Saul Bellow defines as 'not global policeman so much as Little Mary Fixit' (Amis, 1987: 200)—casting themselves as the guardian angels of democracy. In Martin Amis' (1987: 200) words, "the US shows a persistent determination to 'angelise' herself. No more ideas; instead, a conviction of her own purity. Pro-good, anti-bad and right by definition". Yet, despite its lack of expansionist territorial policy and its own angelisation, the USA has amassed an enormous amount of imperialistic power based on its economic strength (thanks to multinational capitalism) and the threat of using its huge military power against the now defunct communist block. Amis himself (1987: xi) observes that one of the hardest things to understand about America is "what it is like to be a citizen of a superpower, to maintain democratically the means of planetary

extinction". This is not, however, a thing that Americans themselves can understand easily, hence the spate of fiction—especially since Vietnam—dealing with the contradictions of being an American citizen. American nuclear power was used against Japan with the justification that it would save the lives of many more people, who would perish if the war went on, and since it has remained fortunately unused for fifty years, it has helped paradoxically to maintain the myth of American innocence. No doubt, the Vietnam war has had a more direct impact on the average American citizen because of the publicity that surrounded it. In fact, the partial transformation of the USA from an angel to a devil in the popular imagination was carried out by those who opposed the war in Vietnam or who have portrayed the disastrous consequences of the American government's mistakes. Artists such as Oliver Stone have represented American democracy as a monstrous system serving the interests of the business and the military elite, a view that has become quite popular in the dystopian fiction of the 1980s and 1990s.

The Vietnam war had an important impact in five main aspects: first, it proved to Americans that their government had betrayed their trust and lied to them; second, it forced many American men to consider their roles (including both the veterans who still believed in the idea of the heroic soldiers, and the conscientious objectors that denied it); third, it disclosed a grim reality, namely, that some US soldiers were guilty of committing horrendous war crimes, such as the infamous My Lai massacre¹⁸, fourth, it proved that the American military forces were not invincible and fifth, it also proved that war was an extension of business. Vietnam showed that atrocities were committed by the soldiers of the 'good' army as much as by the 'enemy', as countless films and novels have narrated over the last twenty years. What marked the turning point in America's examination of its own power was the testimony of journalists and soldiers alike. Walter Cronkite, a prestigious CBS TV reporter sent to Vietnam to comment on the Tet offensive of February 1968, was the first to publicly contradict the official version, according to which the USA were not greatly involved in the civil war in Vietnam. He recalls that:

“With the offensive that had upset so many claims and predictions of our military and political leaders, I suffered a nauseous wave of doubt, uncertainty and confusion. I felt certain that this was the feeling of a majority of my fellow Americans. We all seemed to be searching and hoping for some kind of guidance. What could we believe? What was the truth?” (in Dougan and Weiss, 1988: 190)

This search for guidance was solved by many American men on an individual basis, though a neat dividing line separated working-class Americans, who bore the brunt of the ugliest aspects of the war, and middle-class Americans, among whose ranks could be found most of those who opposed the war or refused to fight. Many detached themselves from the war by dodging the draft, often fleeing to Canada, or by declaring themselves conscientious objectors on the grounds of, in the words of Jim Quay, one of the 170,000 conscientious objectors, “my growing awareness during those years of the enormous destruction visited upon the people of North and South Vietnam by the American military” (in Dougan and Weiss, 1988: 210).

18. 450 Vietnamese villagers were killed by USA troops on March 16 1968, a fact that only became public in 1969.

Many war crimes, a judicial category invented in the 1945 Nuremberg trial to judge the atrocities of German Nazism, were imputed to American soldiers exceeding their 'duty' in Vietnam. The idea of the war crime is in itself a sign of the monstrosity built into the political system. Nuremberg tried to delimit the terms of what is tolerable in war, as if the scapegoating of the enemy would prevent the atrocities of the Allies from becoming themselves the object of another trial, perhaps that by their own people. Instead of the idea that war is a crime perpetrated by an older generation in government against the younger generation it sends to fight—an idea popularised by the soldier victims of World War I and taken up again by commercial fiction regarding Vietnam veterans¹⁹—Nuremberg tried to build a legal framework for war: some crimes were necessary in it, others excessive. It is no wonder that the Nazis who were judged at Nuremberg resisted the very idea of the trial, for the notion of crime was simply inapplicable in their view: for them, the war did follow a strict code of legality; the Nazis had not hesitated to judge those of themselves who stepped outside the boundaries set by their own system of war legality. Currently, the efforts of the International Court of Justice at The Hague to arrest and try the Bosnian-Serb war criminals are being curtailed by political interests but also by the generalised awareness that all the sides have committed atrocities in a war that was in itself atrocious.

The Vietnam war also registered an evident change in the general public's opinion about the legitimacy of war. While the veterans of World War II were received as heroes (but forced to keep silent about what they saw and did in the war), the Vietnam veterans were denied the status of heroes. Ironically, part of that reaction was based on the absurdist view of war publicised in novels about World War II such as Joseph Heller's *Catch 22* (1961) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969)²⁰ and not on the testimony of the veterans, which only surfaced in the late 1970s. Vietnam veterans were initially represented in popular fiction as psychotic murderers. One of the films to describe best the demotion of the American hero into the psychotic Vietnam veteran—a category of victim and victimiser unlike that of the victimised shell-shocked soldier of World War I—was Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (1973). The unhinged Travis Bickle played by Robert de Niro raised doubts as to which side insanity lay on; seeing himself as a knight, out on the Quixotic errand of rescuing a child prostitute from her pimp, Bickle is actually a nightmarish degradation of the heroic soldier into a type of monster for which the USA was not prepared. Whether the heroic soldier was originally prone to murderous madness that the government exploited or whether he was driven mad by Vietnam is the dilemma underlying most early films and novels about Vietnam²¹. However, two new ways of representing the Vietnam vet can be recognised in the 1980s, exemplified on the one hand by Sylvester Stallone's immensely popular

19. The British war poets—mainly Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon—were the first to express this view through literature.

20. Vonnegut survived the Allied bombing of Dresden on 13th February 1945, which killed 135,000 people, twice the toll of Hiroshima. In an interview with Martin Amis, Vonnegut declared that only he had benefited from the raid: "There was Dresden", said Vonnegut, "a beautiful city full of museums and zoos—man at his greatest. And when we came up, the city was gone... The raid didn't shorten the war by half a second, didn't weaken a German defence attack anywhere, didn't free a single person from a death camp. Only one person benefited... Me. I got several dollars for each person killed. Imagine" (in Amis, 1987: 137).

21. See Berg (1991), for a survey of the representation of the Vietnam vet in popular fiction. Berg, curiously, does not mention *Taxi Driver*.

Rambo trilogy—beginning in 1982 with *First Blood*—and on the other by Oliver Stone’s own trilogy (*Platoon* (1986), *Born on the 4th July* (1989) and *Heaven and Earth* (1993)). Stallone’s Rambo arrived at a moment of crisis, when the USA of Reagan was being harassed by the crisis of the Beirut hostages, to vindicate the role of the victimised soldier and his integrity before the fundamental dishonesty of the US government²². In fact, Oliver Stone’s stance does not differ much from this position; instead of defending the model of the soldier as one-man-slaughterhouse proposed by the Rambo films, Stone avoids Stallone’s glorification of militaristic masculinity but coincides with him in stressing the sheer incompetence of the USA military establishment. His trilogy progresses from the presentation in *Platoon* of the middle-class soldier—Chris Taylor played by Charlie Sheen—as witness of a conflict between the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ side of the American army, with almost no reference to the Vietnamese, to the presentation of war from the point of view of a victim, a Vietnamese woman, in *Heaven and Earth* (1993), a film to which I will return in the last section of this chapter. The central film of the trilogy, *Born on the 4th July* (1989) insists on the same idea as *First Blood*, though instead of the recycling of the victimised soldier into the gun-crazy John Rambo, the soldier victim is presented by Stone as the disabled Ron Kovic, so impressively played by Tom Cruise. The issue of Stallone’s imaginary Rambo versus Stone’s preference for a real witness of the war such as Kovic will be discussed later. In any case, it seems clear that as Rowe and Berg (1991: 9) argue “by scapegoating the government, fiction films, novels, personal records, documentaries, and docudramas stressed again and again the inherent goodness of the American people and their collective ability to achieve a moral *consensus* when presented with the bare ‘facts’”.

The model of Western democracy exemplified by the USA suffered a more important setback with the Watergate affair, which unleashed an important crisis of trust in the highest figure of power within the system, the American President. This sense of betrayal was promptly transferred to fiction, especially to film, and has become one of the conventions most often found in narratives of monstrosity. As S.S. Praver (1980: 15) remarks,

Particularly characteristic of our time are suggestions, in American films of the post-Watergate era, from *The Werewolf of Washington* (1973) to *The Omen* (1976), as well as in some British films, that if we want to look for demons, monsters and devil-worshippers, we shall be most likely to find them in the offices of those to whom the destinies of nations have been entrusted.

Not only Watergate but also the fear that the democratically chosen president can go berserk and start an unstoppable nuclear war have sustained this view of the American government as a potential source of horrific monstrosity. Stanley Kubrick’s black comedy *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) presented the question from a different point of view. In this film impending nuclear war with the USSR is caused by the megalomaniac drive of an insane US general. The President of the USA is rendered powerless against this man’s solitary decision to launch a massive nuclear attack and so is his board of advisors, which includes, nonetheless, more sinister characters than the general himself: another Pentagon general who wants to carry the mistake to its furthest consequences,

22. For an analysis of Rambo’s image see Jeffords (1994: 41–49) and Tasker (1993: 91–108). Tasker questions Jeffords’s assumption that Rambo impersonates allegiance to Reaganite politics and reads him as the voice of the populist resistance against untrustworthy authority.

taking the chance to destroy the USSR, and the obviously Nazi scientist who has designed the unstoppable nuclear missiles.

In more recent fiction the president has appeared as a tragic figure forced to take a grim choice by terrible circumstances outside his control, as happens in *Swan Song* (1987), in which a peace-loving President finds himself in a most frustrating deadlock: if he responds to the Russians' attack, the USA will be destroyed, if he does not, the USA will be destroyed all the same. The American presidency is often represented in fiction as the Achilles heel of the political system, a vulnerable gap through which undesirable monsters of power can reach almost absolute power over America. The extreme right-wing, populist candidate Greg Stillson, stopped in his murderous tracks by the sacrifice of hero Johnny Smith in Stephen King's *The Dead Zone* (1979) and the malignant alien of *The Hidden* (1986), concealed within the body of yet another candidate to the American presidency, are prevented from reaching the White House only thanks to the intervention of paranormal powers. Johnny foresees that Stillson will declare nuclear war on the USSR in the near future, while only an angelic alien (disguised as an FBI agent!) can detect and stop the evil alien encased in the candidate's body. The 'fair' political assassinations with which both texts conclude reveal a clear anxiety about the fragility of the American political system while simultaneously reinforcing the idea that access is barred to monsters of power; however, the fact that only supernatural powers are effective to protect it suggests these novels and films enact wish-fulfilment fantasies of safety. The underlying horror is caused not only by the suggestion that the democratically elected president could turn out to be a fascist dictator but also by the impression that there seems to be no safeguard to stop him if that ever happened.

As can be seen, the anxieties behind the many films and texts about the monsters of power of the 1980s and 1990s relate to the unstable factors within democracy, with special emphasis on the issue of the trust granted by a 'innocent' majority of voters to a single man, who could turn out to be a moral monster—possibly because Hitler himself came to power thanks to winning a democratic election. What is feared is not only that this single man might gain too much power but also that his power might turn America itself or its citizens into monsters of power—as happened in Vietnam. On the other hand, the structures of power lurking behind the open face of democracy, especially the conglomerate formed by the military structure and the businessmen who support it, are also feared. The motif of the conspiracy run by corporate business and the military against the average 'honest' American citizen represented by the hero/ine recurs in many films and novels of downright paranoid overtones. As I will argue in the next section, this format derives from Gothic fiction and is particularly appropriate for describing the anxieties caused by the fear of abusive, monstrous power.

5.1.2. The Gothic Paradigm in the Fiction of the 1980s and 1990s

As I have noted, there are important links between the plots of many of the films and novels I deal with in this chapter and the following, and Gothic fiction. Eighteenth-century British Gothic fiction was the first to provide a paradigm to deal with the fictional representation of the monster of power and with monstrous systems of power. As Leslie Fiedler argues in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1973), this model was borrowed by the USA already in the early nineteenth century, and soon gained an important place in American literature. The typical Gothic plot involves the betrayal of

the trust put by an innocent (usually a woman) on a character who represents a powerful institution, such as the church or feudal aristocracy, and who turns out to be a treacherous villain. The villains of British Gothic are individuals who gain ascendancy over their victims precisely because they operate within a structure of power that backs them, be it medieval feudalism as in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), Spanish Catholicism as in Matthew Lewis *The Monk* (1796), or the patriarchal upper-class system as in many Gothic novels written by women.

The subsequent persecution of the innocent by the villain, and the confrontation between both, or between the villain and another character who champions the abused innocent, articulate the main events. These usually culminate in the climactic unmasking and/or destruction of the villainous monster of power and the vindication of the victimised innocent. A point frequently emphasised in Gothic fiction is that this figure of innocence cannot find shelter within the system designed for protection because this operates in the interests of the villain; only a more powerful figure than the villain, frequently belonging to the same structure of power, can vanquish him. This paradigm denounces abuses of power carried out by individual figures who stand nonetheless for the corruption of whole institutions—as is the case in Anne Radcliffe's portrait in *The Italian* (1797) of the excesses allowed by the Inquisition through the machinations of the evil monk Schedoni. In the generalised corruption attached to hierarchical structures of power, these people, who are mostly men, find a territory suitable for the pursuit of their personal careers of crime and deceit, the assumption usually being that moral monsters, far from corrupting stable systems, find a niche in the pockets of corruption growing inside any structure of power.

This suspense plot emerged in Great Britain within a context dominated by social and political unrest, due to the steady rise of the middle class and the demand for political reform in different degrees of important middle-class groups. The divided support of the French Revolution plunged Great Britain at the turn of the century into a period marked by dictatorial, repressive politics, quite resistant to democratisation. Michel Foucault (1987: 14) notes that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when “the great spectacle of physical punishment disappeared” from other European countries such as post-revolutionary France, England was one of the countries “most loath to see the disappearance of the public execution:... above all, no doubt, because she did not wish to diminish the rigour of her penal laws during the great social disturbances of the years 1780–1820”. This period coincides with the rise of Gothic fiction, which precedes chronologically, and in many instances ideologically, the rise of British Romanticism. The violence of early Gothic fiction can be said to be the fictional expression of a conservative fear of discontrol that the authorities were also expressing in public executions. Nevertheless, the original impulse of Gothic was not uniformly conservative and reflected the divisions within the middle class which produced Gothic fiction and to which it was addressed. Among those who used the format of the Gothic novel to express the anguish felt by the individual demanding political reform in the face of corrupt politics dominated by a privileged upper class, was the political writer William Godwin. It is important to remember that one of the few Gothic novels to deal with the actual conditions of the late eighteenth century was Godwin's own *Things as they Are; or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794). This novel is actually a fictionalisation of the argument advanced by Godwin himself in his influential *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), an essential text in the personal, intellectual growth of the Romantic poets. Godwin's novel and its most immediate descendant, his daughter Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), set the typical Gothic plot of persecution in a present

transformed into a territory of nightmare by abusive power, rather than in a remote past dominated by already defunct or dying systems of power as, for instance, Anne Radcliffe had done in her Gothic romances. Godwin's model is still the staple of most genre fiction of the 1980s and 1990s, though few would recognise its origins in Gothic.

As early as 1800 "the Marquis de Sade suggested a direct link between the instability of the Gothic form and the revolutionary turmoil of Europe" (Napier, 1987: 44). Contemporary reviewers of the Gothic novels "were in no doubt that they were a species of political writing" (Sage, 1988: xi),²³ although they differed sharply as to what interpretation to give them—a phenomenon repeated in the critical evaluations of contemporary American popular fiction descended from British Gothic. In any case, if in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain the Gothic novel was used to vent the middle classes' anxieties about the necessary abolition of the political model based on the tight alliance between the crown and the aristocracy, what could the use of Gothic be in the newly born democratic, republican USA of the same period? According to Fiedler (1973: 143), "a dream of innocence had sent Europeans across the ocean to build a new society immune to the compounded evil of the past from which no one in Europe could ever feel himself free" but the slaughter of the Indians and the slavery of Africans had left in the American consciousness "certain special guilts" that "awaited projection in the Gothic form". As he remarks, that loss of innocence led Americans to ask themselves the question of "how could one tell where the American dream ended and the Faustian nightmare began" (1973: 143). This is a question that was differently answered in American literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and that is still being asked today in American fiction, both mainstream and commercial. Those "special guilts", which have become in the course of time the guilt felt about the privilege of being the world's leading nation, are also still projected in the Gothic form.

The paranoid Gothic plot of persecution has been always present in nineteenth and twentieth-century fiction, including film. However, this plot tends to surface with renewed strength in periods of crisis in which individuals need wish-fulfilment fantasies narrating the hero's defeat of the villainous monster of power. Thus, although the political systems of late eighteenth-century Britain and late twentieth-century USA differ much, Gothic prevails in both periods because there is a distinct sense of impending change, which is feared and desired in the same measure. Gothic fiction produced in both periods seems unconcerned with ideological positions and appears to be simply escapist. However, Gothic fiction and its derivatives dramatise the struggle for political power between the defenceless individual and a repressive system that abuses him or her, and help to process political disturbances that many feel but cannot articulate in rational terms. Yvonne Tasker (1993: 166) claims that even though many genre films, especially action films, are dismissed by scholars and critics as ideologically irrelevant (or, on the contrary, demagogic) productions, in fact their popularity can only be accounted for by the fact that they fulfil well the task of dramatising the position of the disempowered individual in the face of absolute power. As I see it, the period under discussion in this dissertation differs from other periods of crisis, as far as the widespread use of the Gothic plot is concerned, in the considerable dose of dystopian pessimism infused into it. Currently, the citizen of the Western world

23. Sage himself reports (1988: xiii) that Maurice Lévy "came to the conclusion that the social and political revolution more importantly related to the Gothic writers was the so-called 'Glorious Revolution', the Protestant Settlement of 1688, the event which, arguably, saw the foundation of the English political state in its modern form".

is being repeatedly told by the films s/he sees and novels s/he reads that being optimistic is being irresponsible. The monsters of power are still defeated by the heroes, but these are not triumphant individuals. They are people overwhelmed by their awareness that every time a villainous monster is killed, the corruption ingrained in all systems of power is already nourishing a stronger replacement for the villain.

This widespread pessimism is, in fact, the result of the conservative revolutions of the 1980s. The beginning of the 1980s represented a political turning point for both the USA and the UK with the rise to power of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, respectively. One of the topics to which the conservative political ideologies promoted by Reagan and Thatcher addressed themselves was the question of the decadence of their respective countries and their survival into the future. Both ideologies, based primarily on the same Darwinian belief in free enterprise, were grounded above all on a deep nostalgia for the time when the power of the UK or the USA was undisputed. Fredric Jameson, who as a Marxist can hardly be said to be a neutral observer of Reagan's America, describes this nostalgia as

the nostalgia for a system in which Good and Evil are absolute black-and-white categories: they do not express a new Cold War psychology as much as they express the longing and the regret for a Cold War period in which things were still simple, not so much belief in Manichean forces as the nagging suspicion that everything would be so much easier if we could believe in them. (1990: 96)

In the UK Thatcher fought a losing battle first to deny the obvious loss of Britain's world leadership, handed over to the USA in World War II, by forming a strong alliance with Reagan at a personal and governmental level, and what is even more important, to mitigate the loss of its status as a world Empire with the Suez Crisis (1956-7), by leading the singular crusade to 'save' the Falklands. In the USA Ronald Reagan was the president for a very complex decade marked by the rise of a new world order in which the USA was frantically struggling to keep their leadership uncontested, inside and outside America, with episodes as bizarre as the invasion of Grenada. Since Gothic fiction identifies virtue with the innocent individual who resists the monster of power, and since both Reaganism and Thatcherism made the point of presenting themselves as staunch supporters of individualism, Gothic fiction has been bandied about both by defenders and detractors of conservatism, used as much on behalf of left-wing liberal humanism as on behalf of right-wing economic liberalism. Reagan's and Thatcher's black-and-white view of the world has inspired two types of neo-Gothic narrative that seemingly contradict each other but that are, essentially, the same. In one, the heroic individual confronts and defeats a monster of power in a conservative context marked by a clear separation between good and evil; in the other, the heroic individual is confused by the lack of clear moral values and finally surrenders to the view that all is dominated by different degrees of evil. As can be seen, whether the hero is John Rambo, who would epitomise the first type of narrative, or Ellen Ripley, who would epitomise the second, the message is similar: there is always a limit to the heroic individual's opposition to the system of monstrous power. Victory leads nowhere, except to another confrontation with the monster of power.

Many critics attribute the rise of horrific elements in popular fiction and the pervading presence of the Gothic plot of persecution to the decline of the USA and the UK and their inability to confront their crises in direct, concrete political terms. The USA is still undergoing the deep crisis visible in Reagan's presidency despite the

important changes brought about by the collapse of the communist block. On the one hand, the USA is still struggling to come to terms with the loss of its prestige as world leader; on the other, America is not adequately facing its profound division into two nations, that of the desperate underprivileged and that of the privileged who are afraid of losing their position. The collapse of the Pax Americana has given birth to a type of neo-Gothic narrative, cast in postmodernist terms, in which the individual representing the American everyman is portrayed “in less than sacrosanct terms” (Carroll, 1990: 211), trying to survive particularly menacing threats to his or her integrity as an individual allegedly protected by democracy. These threats are posed by monsters of power that come from within and from outside America itself. Japanese, German, British and Arab tycoons or terrorists go side by side with corrupt American politicians, businessmen, mafia bosses or drug barons in threatening the public order and the peace of mind of this fictional America that refuses to look at the deepest contradictions of the American lifestyle. In Britain, where the contradictions of Thatcherism have been faced more openly—for instance, in the films directed by Stephen Frears or Ken Loach—the Gothic plot is used rather to narrate the fall or collapse of the individual into monstrosity against a more Kafkaesque, less dramatic background.

What is lacking both in the American and the British representation of monstrous power in the 1980s and 1990s, is an adequate point of view from which ongoing historical trends can be really understood. Fiction has apparently left the territory of politics and the construction of contemporary history to the media and is failing to fulfil the important social role that, for instance, the Victorian novel played for Victorian society. This may, no doubt, be the result of the increasing ideological confusion: filmmakers and novelists seem to be disregarding all political ideologies to form their own on a personal, relativistic basis. This seems to be the only possible response to a situation in which politics seem to have been totally superseded by economics: the collapse of communism in the late 1980s was the collapse of an economic, and not an ideological, system; likewise, even though the European union has been justified by the need to form a strong political front capable of guaranteeing Europe’s independence from the USA, in fact, Europe is moving towards an economic union. The apparent end of ideology has led to a clear fragmentation of fiction that, on the whole, avoids facing the current systems of power to centre either in the individual (as is done chiefly in the mainstream novel) or in the discussion of remote systems of power, as happens often in fantasy in general and in science fiction in particular. This does not mean, however, that contemporary artists refuse to look at power; they are dramatising in fact the loss of the effective political function of fiction and of any other form of political criticism by looking elsewhere, away from the centre. Precisely, the key word to understanding both the late eighteenth-century and the late twentieth-century Gothic is ‘displacement’. As David Punter (1980: 61) observes, the sense of chaos that flooded Britain in the late eighteenth century with “a mass of fiction which rejected direct engagement with the activities of contemporary life in favour of geographically and historically remote actions and settings” must not be confused with escapism. It was in fact the result of “a very intense, if displaced, engagement with political and social problems, the difficulty of negotiating those problems being precisely reflected in Gothic’s central stylistic conventions”. The same can be said about contemporary neo-Gothic fiction: it is a metaphor of the individual’s sense of exclusion from the centre, of his or her fear of being marginalised from power.

The Gothic mode of fiction clearly bespeaks the anxieties of the middle classes, whose ideology demands controlled power to rule out anarchy, but also control on those

who hold power on behalf of all. In the eighteenth-century Gothic emerged at “the stage when the bourgeoisie, having to all intents and purposes gained social power, began to try to understand the conditions and history of their own ascent” (Punter, 1980: 127), and by implication its own power and the ways in which it might transform the world. In the late twentieth century, Gothic fiction is less class-bound, possibly because it reflects the extension of bourgeois ideology to cover all the classes in the allegedly classless America, and by extension in the Western world influenced by the USA and its culture. This mode of fiction is useful in considering why despite having averted the old threats of the aristocratic order and the new threats of totalitarian systems—of Nazism and communism above all—the bourgeois order is not free of threat. This is a fear intrinsically bound to Gothic since its emergence. David Punter (1980: 423) writes that:

The central contradiction, however, from which all the others flow, is this: that Gothic can at once and the same time be categorised as a middle-class and as an anti-middle-class literature ... This is the central dialectic of Gothic fiction. The dialectic of comfort and disturbance ... a continuous oscillation between reassurance and threat.

Gothic is necessarily middle-class and anti-middle class because the bourgeois order which replaced the aristocratic order was a revolutionary order that knew only too well the uses of political and economic power. The middle class emerging from a context of revolutionary changes in the late eighteenth century is well aware that positions of privilege are also positions of exposure and of danger. A class that believes in enterprising individuals and constant change carrying forward the political and economic system, is naturally anxious that this state of constant flux carries threats to its privileges.

For Fredric Jameson “Gothics”—by which he means the kind of contemporary popular Gothic fiction I have referred to—are indeed ultimately a class fantasy (or nightmare) in which the dialectic of privilege and shelter is exercised” (1991: 289). Jameson relates the anxieties of privilege revealed by original Gothic fiction particularly to the position of sheltered middle-class women. According to him, early Gothic fiction has been wrongly read as a politically relevant genre designed to overcome patriarchy as some feminists claim, when its real achievement is to have articulated a self-consciousness discourse “of the disadvantages of privilege” (1991: 289). Jameson further notes that in contemporary American gothics—most genre fiction—the individual victim (male or female) embodies “the collectivity itself, the U.S. public, which now lives out the anxieties of its economic privileges and its sheltered ‘exceptionalism’ in a pseudo-political version of the Gothic” (1991: 289). Thus, while Fiedler identified America’s guilt regarding the genocide of Indians and the slavery of black Africans as the factor that triggered the use of the Gothic model in nineteenth century American fiction, Jameson roots the collective fantasies of the postmodernist Gothic in the guilty enjoyment of the dynamics of comfort. He insists, though, on the fact that both the eighteenth-century and the twentieth-century Gothic—which he qualifies as boring, exhausted paradigms—offer ethical rather than political solutions to the threat of the powerful monster: the triumph of virtue over vice rather than social change. In Jameson’s view, then, Gothic fiction or its derivatives cannot be genuinely political because of the interest in perpetuating the status quo of the privileged class which produces it and to which it is addressed.

Presumably, the villain of early Gothic is often a member of the aristocracy because he would embody the kind of autocratic power that the more democratic rising middle classes wanted to see defeated. His excessive feudal privileges would be seen as a constant source of threat for the less privileged middle-class people unprotected by fair laws. Nevertheless, the villain performs a double function for the middle classes. On the one hand, he is a bogeyman used to scare the middle-class people in possession of newly acquired privileges with a nightmarish view of a situation in which those privileges could be suddenly withdrawn by the return of the old, powerful aristocracy. On the other hand, the villain is also used to mark the distinction between the working class and the middle class. According to Michel Foucault, the Gothic villain emerged in reaction to the real life working-class criminals whose notoriety was aggrandised by the lurid, popular broadsheets describing their executions. Foucault depicts Gothic fiction and one of its derivatives, detective fiction, as a literature “in which crime is glorified, because it is one of the fine arts, because it can be the work only of exceptional natures, because it reveals the monstrousness of the strong and powerful, because villainy is yet another mode of privilege” (1987: 68). As Rosemary Jackson (1981: 175) comments, Gothic fiction provided the middle classes with “vicarious wish-fulfilment through fantasies of incest, rape, murder, parricide, social disorder. Like pornography, it functioned to supply an object of desire, to imagine social and sexual transgression”. In short, Gothic fiction allowed then, and allows now, law-abiding middle-class individuals to imagine themselves as monsters of power through the empathy felt for the Gothic villain. This empathy is possible because, to their eyes, he is not degraded like the working-class criminal, but enjoys a certain privileged position based on his share of power. At the same time Gothic fiction pre-empts actual transgression by forcefully describing the catastrophe that would ensue for the respectable individual if those fantasies of power were acted out, and also by eliciting from viewers or readers sympathy for the individualistic hero/ine (or monstrous hero/ine) harassed by the monster of power. Gothic fiction is, in a way, the middle class’s fictional medium to neutralise its fear of the enormous power it holds and to express simultaneously forbidden fantasies of unbound power and wish-fulfilment fantasies of stability and absolute control.

Evidently, the irony is that the very same Gothic plot that emerged as a middle-class reaction to popular sensationalism has been incorporated into populist contemporary commercial culture. Within it, the typical Gothic plot of persecution and the Gothic villain are used to reinforce the idea of the natural ‘goodness’ of the average human being, of the ‘people’ versus the ‘system’ represented by the villain. In the two hundred years since its emergence, Gothic fiction has adapted itself remarkably well to changing political systems: thus, while early Gothic portrayed in symbolic terms the confrontation between the rising middle-class and the decadent aristocracy, contemporary Gothic postmodernist fiction enacts the confrontation between the average citizen of the democratic West and the villains who embody either alien systems of power that must be destroyed in the name of democratic values or those who overstep (or intend to overstep) the boundaries of privilege within capitalist democracy. It could be said that the success of neo-Gothic fiction is that it has adapted itself remarkably well to the social climate of the USA—and now of most of the Western world including the ex-communist nations—which is based on the idea that there are no social classes but a large consumer class (implicitly a middle class) with different degrees of wealth, to which we all ideally belong. However, despite the evolution of Gothic, much remains still of the glorification of crime noted by Foucault, which I would rather describe as glorification of power in any of its forms. The social origin of the fictional villain are

now diverse both within and outside democracy. In many cases he is a working-class misfit who bears a grudge against society, though in others he is the dark side of the American dream—a self-made man whose ambitions for power outside the legality acknowledged by democracy. The villain is glorified, thus, in the same measure that the self-made man is glorified by capitalist democracy.

In general terms, monsters of power can be divided into two main groups: that of the self-made men and that of the servants. There are overlaps in this division precisely because the villain may be simultaneously the servant in a hierarchical structure of power and the self-made man who rises within this structure, or who may even build it to suit his craving for power. George Orwell's torturer in *1984*, O'Brien, is an example of the servant who is indistinguishable from the system and who signifies the monstrosity of despotic power in general. Joseph Conrad's Kurtz in "Heart of Darkness" is a monster of power who begins his career as a servant of the European colonial system but who later erects a new, more aberrant subsystem thanks to which he side-steps the hierarchy binding him to colonialism. As can be seen from these two cases, in terms of the evil they may do, there seems to be little difference between the monster of power who is a servant and that who is a self-made man. However, there is another issue that is essential to an understanding of the monster of power: the self-made man may use to his own advantage acceptable, democratic ideological systems which cannot prevent his rise; the servant is monstrous only if the system for which he works is regarded as monstrous. Characters like Kurtz and others of more recent fiction, such as Francis Urquhart—the Machiavellian British Prime Minister of *House of Cards* and *To Play the King*—or Pat Bateman of *American Psycho*, the personification of the horrors of triumphant Reaganism, show that even those systems of power professedly endowed with the highest values of civilisation produce monsters. The servants of monstrous systems represented in recent fiction are characters whose easy fall into evil suggests that these systems know best how to elicit the dark side of man: torturers turn out to be ordinary men who discover and accept an innate, human capacity to do evil. The representation of the monster of power in recent fiction does not examine issues such as morality or sin—these seem to fall rather in the province of the psychopathic killer—but issues such as the intimate connection between civilisation and barbarism, the similarities between sanctioned and unsanctioned abuse of power, the individual's ambiguous admiration of the monster of power and the final surrender to the perpetuation of the lie behind the monstrous system of power. Contemporary postmodernist Gothic deals not only with the monsters of power produced by systems alien to democracy but also with the fact that all systems of power, including the capitalist democracy invented by the middle classes, produce monsters.

Postmodern Gothic fiction does not guarantee the triumph of good over evil. Artists and audiences seem to agree on the idea that the villain is at the heart of the system, that indeed part of the legal or illegal system of power has been created by the monster of power. The monster appears more and more frequently as a useful tool in a system larger than him or herself: the monster-villain becomes replaceable even when s/he seems to have made it to the top. Whenever the combination of economic and political interest decide it, cruel dictators and corrupt politicians fall, in the same way that businessmen in hierarchical multinational corporations may be replaced. This is probably the reason why, as I will show in the following section, many recent novels and films deal with the individual personality of the minor monster of power, the servant rather than the self-made man. The servant corresponds to the phase of late capitalism dominated by corporate business and democracy, systems based on the

perpetuation of the structure over the perpetuation of the individual. If there is any firm ideology behind the narratives about monstrosity of the 1980s and 1990s is that the individual, whether s/he is a monster or a victim, is at the mercy of large forces or structures that cannot be overpowered. Contemporary postmodernist Gothic does not in fact dramatise the confrontation of good and evil, but a ceaseless, amoral struggle for power. What can be inferred from the films and novels analysed in the following section is that power itself *is* the monster that leads human beings to do evil, ignoring human suffering.

5. 2. The Civilised Barbarian

5.2.1. The Making of the Civilised Barbarian under Reaganism and Thatcherism

The civilised barbarian denies the Enlightenment's utopian idea that culture and education may suffice one day to eradicate evil. In *Civilisation and Its Discontents* Sigmund Freud writes that we require beauty of civilisation, mainly manifested in the arts. "Besides", he adds, "we expect to see the signs of cleanliness and order" (1939: 54). Yet Freud himself sees that art is but "a mild narcotic" whose influence "is not strong enough to make us forget real misery" (1939: 35). He concludes pessimistically that:

Civilised society is perpetually menaced with disintegration through this primary hostility of men towards one another. Their interests in their common work would not hold them together; the passions of instinct are stronger than reasoned interests. Culture has to call up every possible reinforcement in order to erect barriers against the aggressive instincts of men and hold their manifestations in check by reaction-formations in men's minds. (1939: 86)

Paradoxically, Freud argues, primitive men must have been happier than we are, for they did not have to restrict their aggressive tendencies like civilised man. Despite his clear-sighted description of the state of civilisation, Freud still insists that culture—understood as high culture—can kill the hidden barbarian, freeing us from our own aggressive instincts. However, historical evidence proves that aggression and evil are not exclusively the patrimony of uneducated brutes; on the contrary, the many cultured monsters of power who have created—or thrived in—structures of power throughout history prove that a higher education often means a greater capacity to exert evil. Steven Spielberg makes the point succinctly in *Schindler's List* when he shows a few of the Nazi soldiers who are massacring the inhabitants of Cracow's Jewish ghetto stop their labour of extermination for a second to discuss whether the piano music that another soldier is playing is Mozart or Liszt.

The monster of power is frequently a civilised barbarian. In his soul a love of beauty may coexist with a love of evil. This has the effect of increasing the fear he elicits. The brutality of the uneducated underling can be understood—it is but a sign of his ignorance—but the brutality of the cultured man seemingly contradicts the most important foundation on which the whole civilising project of the Enlightenment lies. If culture is not seen to lead to good, what is the use of education, the arts or beauty itself? The Gothic texts that enact the elimination of the civilised barbarian usually imply that

culture and civilisation are not to blame for the existence of the moral monster; rather, the moral monster sequesters culture and civilisation and perverts them for as long as he survives. When he dies, culture and civilisation triumph, for they return to the hands of those who can make good use of them. However, when the villainous monster of power dies he takes with him to the grave the answer to the important question of how evil and beauty can mingle.

I should like to turn now to two texts that articulate best this encounter of evil and civilisation. The civilised barbarian depicted in the Gothic horror of Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) was transformed within just five years into Conrad's imperialistic monster of power Kurtz, in the not less Gothic "Heart of Darkness" (1902). Kurtz moves from the core of civilised Europe to the heart of Africa, where he regresses to the state of barbaric happiness described by Freud; Dracula, himself at the heart of a barbaric system of power that is dying, feudalism, moves from the heart of darkness of central Europe to London, the centre of the very same civilised Europe that has created Kurtz. The legend of the aristocratic vampire "partly invented to explain the problem of the connexion between aristocracy and immortality" (Punter, 1980: 258) at a time when the feudal system seemed impossible to abolish, is in fact exploited in *Dracula* to narrate the triumph of modernity or late Victorian civilisation over the Count as the ultimate civilised barbarian. The irony, of course, is that while this Victorian Europe is busy defeating the Gothic aristocratic villainous vampire, Europe itself is producing a new species of colonialist monster, embodied by Kurtz, who is much more dangerous than the Count. Despite the fact that Dracula embodies the invasion of civilisation by the barbaric forces at its margins, the Count poses a threat than can be easily controlled and which reinforces the self-esteem of the civilised men who vanquish him. In contrast, the threat posed by Kurtz is much more insidious: Kurtz is not an outsider but one of the European men carrying civilisation to the heart of the barbaric Africa depicted by Conrad. His failure and his fall into barbarism are a mirror held up to Europe's colonialism rather than to Africa's alleged barbarism. His seeing the horror undoes the triumph achieved by the civilised men who kill Dracula.

The similarities between Conrad's story and the first section of *Dracula* are indeed remarkable to the point of suggesting that Conrad had either read Stoker's novel or seen it adapted for the stage. Both narrate a journey taken by a young man progressing in his career (Harker or Marlow) dispatched by his employers to meet an older man who rules a remote country outside civilisation (Transylvania or the African jungle); this enigmatic man holds most of the population of this territory in thrall by means of sheer terror, in which he is aided by primitive people (Dracula's gypsies or Kurtz's African cannibals). When the long journey to the heart of darkness culminates in the meeting with the powerful man, the younger man finds savagery he cannot comprehend symbolised by a mysterious, savage woman (Kurtz's mistress or Dracula's brides) and his whole life is altered. Harker is less fortunate than Marlow, since his particular predator does not feel the moral qualms that lead Kurtz to succumb to the sense of his own horror: Dracula's brides are allowed to make him their toy, while Marlow is protected by Kurtz from being physically hurt. Both men survive to tell the tale of the encounter to a woman, a bride. Significantly, while Harker saves civilisation by showing his trust in his own bride Mina, telling her the truth about his ordeal, Marlow lies to Kurtz's intended, allowing the perpetuation of a monstrous lie, namely, that Kurtz never strayed from the path of civilisation.

Interestingly enough, Kurtz and Dracula are linked in the culture of the late twentieth century through the work of Francis Ford Coppola. Coppola has directed both

a most remarkable adaptation of “Heart of Darkness”—*Apocalypse Now* (1979)—and *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (1993). *Apocalypse Now* transfers the crisis of belief in the imperialistic mission of civilisation described by Conrad to Vietnam. American imperialism is implicitly compared in the film to European colonialism; the result is a much darker portrait of the barbaric underside of the civilised man. An American military officer, Colonel Kurtz (Marlon Brando), has taken his chance to establish a kingdom of his own in the Cambodian jungle, thus eluding his duty in the raging Vietnam war. Captain Willard (Martin Sheen), is the intelligence officer dispatched by the USA government to locate and kill Kurtz. The American government sees in Kurtz a threat to its own mission in Vietnam: his main sin is not to have discovered the uses of horror in forging his personal kingdom, but his realisation that the American military leaders are using horror to retain their power over Vietnam. As he slowly approaches Kurtz in his upriver journey through the war, Willard, himself morally ruined by his job as the US government’s hitman, ponders the attractions of Kurtz’s heart of darkness, no longer sure, as Marlow is, that the jungle is not his own kingdom.

Coppola’s *Dracula* and Kurtz are further linked by the way in which the respective films justify the transformation of the war hero into a predatory monster. I have already commented on the insertion of the romantic plot in *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (see Chapter 2), which narrates how the heroic warrior Vlad Dracul becomes the abject vampire Dracula when he rebels against God after the suicide of his innocent fiancée Elisabetta. Kurtz’s rebellion is of a similar, romantic, character. Both Kurtz and Dracula are portrayed by Coppola as the most heroic warriors in their respective armies until the discovery that those whom they serve can ill-treat the innocent turns them into monsters. Dracula abjures God because the Catholic church will not show compassion for Elisabetta and bury her body on sacred ground; Kurtz rebels against the USA because he witnesses the massacre of a group of children by American soldiers. This initially good, brilliant man is first appalled by the atrocities he sees, yet he is quickly won over to the side of evil by the realisation that the implacable soldiers are not monsters, as he initially thinks, but men carrying out orders. Those who give the orders, and not the men, are his own kind—the officers—and it is against their power that he rebels precisely because he realises that he is the best of them, hence the one potentially most evil. There is, then, a turning point at which all of Kurtz’s impressive potential to give the soldiers the right orders is tilted to the wrong end. Just as Dracula disputes the Church’s power to give him orders, Kurtz denies Willard’s and the American government’s right to judge him in view of the atrocities they are committing. Both accept, though, their own horror and their death at the hands of those sent to find them. Rather than exterminate the monster, Mina and Willard, respectively, give the man still alive inside the monster a mercy killing, which is also the only way of avoiding the temptation of becoming monsters themselves. Interestingly, both Willard and Mina face a difficult moment of choice in which fascination for the monster of power leads them to consider becoming themselves his successor or companion. Both finally choose to redeem the monster and leave the territory of wildness—the jungle, Transylvania—behind for ever, though in both cases it is uncertain how they will return to their own civilisation and in which terms they will go on living.

The romantic justification of the making of the civilised barbarian is missing in Bret Easton Ellis’ *American Psycho* (1991). Its hero, Pat Bateman, is, nonetheless, one of Kurtz’s heirs, epitomising in his person the uncanny combination of extreme civilisation and extreme brutality. Bateman, whom I have already discussed as a monster of evil in Chapter 4, belongs also under the epigraph of the civilised barbarian. Ellis

refuses to explain or justify Bateman in any intelligible psychoanalytical way, focusing instead on him as an embodiment of contradictory values. While he apparently is the very incarnation of good manners and restraint—the basis of civilisation—a psychotic killer lies concealed under his skin, the typical monster of power produced by the democratic USA. Bateman, like Kurtz, could have been the symbol of the success of the system and become one of its leaders but instead he has chosen, also like Kurtz, to gratify only his monstrous self.

Arguably, Bateman is not a monster of power since he never attempts to lead others or to gain political power by any means. However, as a successful member of the economic elite he is one of the ‘masters of the universe’—as Tom Wolfe has his yuppie hero Sherman McCoy call himself in *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987). By 1980s standards Bateman is the peak of civilisation. He and his New York yuppie coterie are fond of anything that reeks of money and of the power it conveys. Their personal value is the amount of money they are able to force out of the economic system by means of speculation and not of production. Bateman and his friends live in a haze of drugs and banality in which the mainstays of civilisation—Freud’s beauty in art, order and cleanliness—mean nothing, yet as one of them says: “I’m creative, I’m young, unscrupulous, highly motivated, highly skilled. In essence what I’m saying is that society *cannot* afford to lose me. I’m an *asset*” (p. 3, added emphasis). Their callousness towards minorities and women, their general ignorance of almost everything except designer clothes, their inability to show empathy to each other, reveals that civilisation has been replaced by the barbarians in expensive clothes. Pat Bateman is the more terrifying of them not because he kills so many people but because he does have the intelligence to understand himself and the heart of darkness in the civilisation that has made him. He is, in addition, the only one of the New York yuppies to espouse any kind of coherent political discourse, based on Reaganism:

“Well, we have to end apartheid for one. And slow down the nuclear arms race, stop terrorism and world hunger. Ensure a strong national defense, prevent the spread of communism in Central America, work for a Middle East peace settlement, prevent U.S. military involvement overseas. We have to ensure that America is a respected world power. Now, that’s not to belittle our domestic problems that are equally important, if not *more ...*” (p. 15, original emphasis)

This political idealism contrasts not only with his psychotic madness but also with the apoliticism of the greedy social sector to which he belongs. His political speech, pronounced before a totally disinterested dinner party—all of them slightly embarrassed by Bateman’s earnestness—also suggests that those who uphold his views are at the margins of the structure of power or are equally mad. Contesting Reagan’s and Bateman’s view of a strong America leading the world, *American Psycho* reveals a bleak panorama in which President Reagan cannot be told apart from a psychotic murderer. At the end of the novel, the TV news referring to somebody who has committed an unspeakable act with ‘Nancy’s’ help are overheard by Bateman and the yuppie crowd at a Manhattan bar. A “Why?” simply floating among the yuppies in the bar elicits Bateman’s last words:

Why? and automatically answering, out of the blue, for no reason, just opening my mouth, words coming out, summarizing for the idiots: “Well, though I know I should have done *that* instead of not doing it, I’m twenty-seven for Christ sakes

and this is, uh, how life presents itself in a bar or in a club in New York, maybe *anywhere*, at the end of the century and how people, you know, *me*, behave, and this is what being Patrick means to me, I guess, so, well, yup, uh... “. and this is followed by a sigh, then a slight shrug and another sigh and above one of the doors covered by red velvet drapes in Harry’s is a sign and on the sign in letters that match the drapes’ color are the words THIS IS NOT AN EXIT. (p. 399, original emphasis and ellipsis)

Bateman’s words are somehow more definite, more terrifying than Kurtz’s acknowledgement of horror for they reveal that the civilised barbarian feels no longer horror but a nonchalant conformism leading nowhere.

Even Bateman’s fantastic counterpart, *Batman*, appears in the 1989 film by Tim Burton as a symbol of the profound split of the American self between civilisation and the darker barbarian. Burton himself stated that “especially in America, people often present themselves as one thing but are really something else. Which is symbolic of the Batman character” (Salisbury, 1995: 72). Not only of Batman but also of Bateman and of a peculiarly Gothic, paranoiac, view of the world. The very popular *Batman* films series—*Batman* (1989), *Batman Returns* (1992) and *Batman Forever* (1995), based on characters created in the 1930s by Bob Kane—seems to have displaced the more angelic Superman from the place of honour as a popular hero. Instead of the naive, innocent Clark Kent—actually an alien messiah coming from Krypton to fight evil on Earth—the late 1980s and early 1990s are witnessing the rise of Batman as the all-American hero. The first film deals with the making of the hero, the millionaire Bruce Wayne. The psychological trauma he suffered as a child when he witnessed the brutal murder of his parents by a petty criminal, later reborn as the Joker, is the justification given to explain the split his personality suffered between his Jekyll (Wayne) and Hyde (Batman) sides. The almost psychotic Wayne, another of the masters of the American universe, signifies the weakness of the democratic system of power forced to rely on such an eccentric, almost schizophrenic hero as its ultimate defender. Batman is portrayed in the trilogy—specially in the two films by Burton—as a man always on the verge of definitively crossing the boundaries onto the side of the freaks. In addition, the fact that Batman’s symbol is the bat, also associated with the vampire, adds Gothic overtones to the figure of Gotham City’s guardian angel. The new Batman’s black suit (differing from the mainly blue costume of the original comics) is partly medieval armour like that worn by the archangel St. Michael in countless representations of his defeat of the apocalyptic beast, partly Dracula’s outfit, and partly the contemporary comics hero’s bulging muscles. All of this contributes to form a Gothic image that has come to symbolise rather illogically for America not its own heart of darkness but the ideology of order and civilisation from the side of the ‘good guys’. Batman’s and Bateman’s schizophrenia is very similar: an impossibility to act responsibly from their privileged positions so as to keep civilisation going, which results in an obvious mental disorder, useful for society in Batman’s case, harmful in Bateman’s. In any case, both Batman and Bateman are creations of a paranoiac part of American society, which is afraid of losing its privileges and is, thus, ready to employ its darkest side to counteract the advance of the Other, whether this is the evil villains of the *Batman* films or the members of the diverse minorities that Bateman eliminates.

America has generated its Reaganite monsters of power but Britain has also produced at least one monster of power who might well be called a Thatcherite monster. This is the villain-hero of Michael Dobbs’ *House of Cards*, *To Play the King* and *The*

Final Cut, Francis Urquhart. As Glenda Jackson writes, Urquhart is the man all love to hate and also the man who “makes Mrs Thatcher look like a bleeding-heart liberal and Machiavelli seem as politically astute as a Conservative party chairman” (1995: 13). Both Reaganism and Thatcherism are characterised by having generated a great deal of ‘displaced’ fiction, which, following a typically Gothic strategy, has not dealt with the politics of the moment explicitly but has nevertheless been political at heart. This may be so because, as Thomas Elsaesser observes (1993: 65), “under Thatcher, reality itself became fantastic”. What better, then, to discuss Thatcher’s conservative government of Britain than Dobbs’ remarkable example of the displaced discussion of contemporary politics, centred on the fantastic arch-villain Urquhart rather than on Thatcher’s Tory politics? Her shadow is nonetheless present throughout the story of the ambitious Scottish Tory politician who plots his way to become the Prime Minister, not only because Urquhart is obsessed with comparing his ten years as Prime Minister to hers but also because Michael Dobbs used to be Thatcher’s personal aide. The novels and their brilliant BBC adaptations attracted a great deal of attention in Great Britain precisely because they were seen as an insider’s view of a rather corrupt situation in which democratic politics was being manipulated by politicians excessively fond of power. Besides, the figure of the scheming Urquhart—actually closer to the Gothic villain than to Thatcher or her successor, John Major—offered the opportunity of speculating on important events that might well take place in Britain in the near future. Thus, the events that lead to the triumph of the future Charles III in *To Play the King* were transformed by the BBC adaptation into a nightmarish prophecy of a future few Britons would like to see. In the novel, the King renounces the crown to become the new king’s (his son Henry) counsellor, a move which allows him to thwart Urquhart’s plans to control the crown through the young heir, barely a teenager. In the BBC adaptation Urquhart forces Charles III’s abdication and becomes the powerful new regent, manipulating young Henry IX with the complicity of his mother, a nameless princess divorced from king Charles.

Urquhart is an upper-class Scot who at 39 abandons Scotland for a Tory seat in Surrey. Once in Westminster, he becomes the Chief Whip of the Conservative party still in power, though Collingridge, Thatcher’s fictional successor, is desperately fighting to keep abreast of the Labour party and to survive the internal fighting in his own party. This man “chosen largely for his television manner”, typifies for Urquhart “how superficial much of modern politics had become”. Urquhart, Dobbs adds, “yearned for the grand old days when politicians made their own rules rather than cowering before the rules laid down by the media” (1989: 49). No doubt, Urquhart’s main asset is his ability to use information in order to obtain power. The information he manages as Chief Whip, mostly on the moral misadventures of his peers, is used to secretly blackmail them, though Urquhart is also a master at using the media for his own advantage, leaking select pieces of news that dispose of his rivals in the election he finally wins. Information is literally power for Urquhart and so it is for the women who confront him, both brilliant journalists specialised in political information, Mattie Storin in *House of Cards* and the American Sarah Quine in *To Play the King*. However, while Dobbs puts the life of his villain hero twice in the hands of active and attractive professional young women who finally defeat him, the BBC adaptations were based on the opposite idea: the monster achieves his ends and stays in power, the women are killed by him.

The three novels have been successfully adapted for television by a BBC team²⁴. The alterations to Dobbs' first novel were such that Dobbs was forced to begin the sequel, *To Play the King*, not at the point at which his novel ended, with the heroine Mattie Storin's foiling Urquhart's plans and her forcing him to commit suicide, but with the replacement of Mattie, killed by Urquhart, with a second heroine. In his own preface to *To Play the King* Dobbs (1993: 9) comments that:

In the original book I had awarded the honour of survival to the delectable political correspondent Mattie Storin, believing in truth, justice and the triumph of good: But those sinister people who run the BBC's drama department are made of sterner stuff and, deciding that virtuous heroines are not to conquer the Nineties, reversed the ending to leave the evil Francis Urquhart triumphant and my poor, desirable heroine lying trampled on the cutting room floor. It was a wicked twist of fate which has brought me nothing but great good fortune.

The purpose of Dobbs' neo-Gothic plot, with this politically virtuous heroine who is also a successful career woman, was to dispel the gloom set by Urquhart's figure, making the villain receive his due, as happens in the traditional Gothic romance. But Andrew Davies' script for the BBC contained a darker kind of neo-Gothic that overwhelmed Dobbs' feminism. Instead of the independent heroines of Dobbs' imagination, Davies' women play a dangerous game of seduction with the monster of power that ends with the woman's death. The first two TV series focus on the rather perverse relationships binding Urquhart and the two heroines. Mattie, who is in her late twenties, actually seduces the 60-year-old Urquhart by asking him to let her call him 'daddy' and she dies begging her 'daddy' not to kill her. The slightly older Sarah cannot help being unfaithful to her husband with Urquhart. In both cases, the implication is that the sex appeal of the power incarnated in Urquhart overcomes the woman's reservations about his actual ethical nature and even her common sense. Both Mattie and Sarah are thus punished with death for their transgressive desire for the monster of power. The implacable pessimism of the BBC version of Dobbs' novels poses important questions about British readers and TV viewers: Urquhart's final triumph is hardly to be contemplated in an American novel or film, in which monsters of power are defeated as a rule.

Michael Dobbs does not devote many pages in his two first novels to justifying why Urquhart becomes such a monster of power. Yet the little attention paid by Dobbs to this question does not mean it is irrelevant in the construction of Urquhart's character. A significant characteristic in the construction of Urquhart as the Other, the outsider infiltrated in the machinery of government, is his Scottishness. He is the newcomer in an English exclusive world of power in which he always remains an outsider, despite his success. This turns out to be one of Urquhart's advantages in the game of power, though being Scottish also marks him at a personal level. His father, an impoverished landowner, regards Francis's sale of the family estates and his move to London as an unpardonable defection. Lurking beneath this sale is Francis's wish to sever the ties with a nation and a family in which he cannot progress. Despite this, the most important

24. *House of Cards* (1989) was adapted in 1990, *To Play the King* (1991) in 1993, *The Final Cut* (1995) in 1995. Ian Richardson played the machiavellic Francis Urquhart in the three series. The BBC's *The Final Cut*, released in November 1995, provoked controversy even before it was shown on TV, for it begins with Thatcher's funeral, something that was regarded by many as in very bad taste.

reason why Urquhart becomes such a monstrous political figure is the death of his elder brother Alistair, killed in Dunkirk during World War II. Although Francis always lives in the shadow of the mythologised elder brother, sibling rivalry is not the main motivation in his quest for power, but his wish to avoid his brother's fate: "Few men were favoured enough to take control of the great decisions of life; most simply suffered the decisions taken by others. He thought of his brother in the hedgerows of Dunkirk, a pawn like a million others in the games of the great. Urquhart could be one of the great, *should* be one of them" (1989, p. 343, original emphasis). This is a philosophy which summarises well the motivations of the civilised barbarian.

Possibly sensing that little had been said about Urquhart's past, Dobbs has chosen to end his trilogy and Urquhart's life with a story in which the past becomes the Prime Minister's nemesis. In *The Final Cut* a bored Urquhart, tired of his almost eleven years in Thatcher's shadow, decides to end his life after the botched attempt to turn Cyprus into his own Falklands. As it turns out, Urquhart manipulates the thirst for revenge of an old Greek Cypriot, Evanghelos Passolides, a fighter in the EOKA (the Cypriot liberation movement) whose young brothers were brutally killed by Urquhart in the same year of the Suez Crisis, 1956. Urquhart was then a young man doing his national service as an officer in British occupied Cyprus and this was the first death in his career as a representative of the British people. The atrocity committed in the past has left an indelible memory in Passolides' soul, which he seeks to avenge by killing Urquhart; the latter guides the steps of his murderer, so that the assassination occurs during the last political meeting presided by Urquhart's main opponent, Thomas Makepeace, and at a moment when other loud Tory voices demanding the Prime Minister's resignation can be heard. With his death Urquhart secures the reunification of his divided party and, what is more important, his own place in the history of Britain, not as a monster but as a victim. Who this civilised barbarian really is and what he has done to achieve the conquest of power is a secret that Urquhart carries to the grave.

5.2.2. 'Gothic Nazis': The Servants of the System

The representation of Nazism in recent fiction considers mainly the factors that led ordinary men to become servants of the most effective machinery of extermination ever designed by man. This topic is addressed among others by Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark* (1982)—adapted by Steven Spielberg as *Schindler's List* (1993)—, Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* (1991), Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* (1993) and Constantin Costa-Gavras' *The Music Box* (1989). All these films and novels refer specifically to the figure of the Nazi and to the personal choices involved in the acceptance or rejection of systems of power as monstrous as that orchestrated by Hitler. These four texts take the view that Nazism is the most atrocious system of power ever devised for granted; the links between Nazism and the long history of genocide and ethnic cleansing, which reaches down to the Iron Age, are not questioned. In fact, what binds these four texts is a similar attitude in the face of the evidence that ordinary men were recruited by Nazism to commit horrific crimes: it is assumed that these individuals had no choice and were led towards evil by the forces of history, but what motivates the novelists and the filmmakers to portray these men is the issue of why these men lost control and became monsters once they embraced the system. The question of whether all men would have behaved as they did is answered diversely: Amis and Keneally favour certain moral relativism, arguing that men found themselves on the side of evil or good without

choosing—whether they did evil or good they could never understand why. In contrast, Roth and Costa-Gavras portray men who chose evil and enjoyed their choice thanks to Nazism but who nonetheless refused to see themselves as monsters.

The German child psychologist Alice Miller attributes the success of Nazism to the “poisonous pedagogy” employed against German children. Miller, who rejects Freudian psychoanalysis, preferring to focus instead on the examination of the actual conditions in which children are brought up, devotes one of her essays in *For Your Own Good: The Roots of Violence in Child-rearing* to Hitler’s childhood. Her conclusion is that the way in which he was reared by his authoritarian father and the particular conditions of his family were ultimately responsible for his behaviour as an adult tyrant²⁵. About those who followed Hitler’s path, Miller (1991: 81) writes:

People with any sensitivity cannot be turned into mass murderers overnight. But the men and women who carried out “the final solution” did not let their feelings stand in their way for the simple reason that they had been raised not to have any feelings of their own but to experience their parents’ wishes as their own. These were people who, as children, had been proud of being tough and not crying, of carrying out all their duties ‘gladly’, of not being afraid—that is, at bottom, of not having inner life at all.

The texts about Nazism considered in this section shy away from considering the pattern described by Miller, preferring instead to focus on issues of identity—who the monster is rather than why—usually from the point of view of the appalled observer of his acts. When the past of the Nazi including his childhood is taken into account, as happens in *Time’s Arrow* and *Schindler’s Ark*, the picture that emerges does not coincide with Miller’s analysis. The ultimate explanation for why some individuals agreed to enter the machinery of death of Nazism is, in fact, a repetition of the existentialist worldview that shapes the lives of the killers I described as existential moral monsters in Chapter 4: they happened to be available when Nazism needed them. Obviously, Miller’s claim that the authoritarian education and the poisonous pedagogy inflicted on German children prepared them to play their part within Nazism does not contradict the claims of historians who have interpreted Nazism as the culmination of a series of trends inbuilt in German history. After all, education itself is part of history. Miller’s reasoning helps to explain, nonetheless how this historical trends trapped ordinary individuals into the sinister machinery of Nazism. Keneally’s *Schindler’s Ark*, an account of the real life miraculous salvation from genocide of 1,100 Jews by German industrialist Oskar Schindler, considers precisely why similar education and similar families produced the altruistic Schindler and the Nazi exterminator Amon Goeth. Even though the most personal aspects of Goeth’s and Schindler’s childhood are not scrutinised by Keneally, his conclusion is that no concrete factors can be blamed for the making of the monster of power, except a sequence of accidental circumstances that place one man on the side of humanity and another outside it, depending on a mixture of personal and historical factors.

25. The point that Hitler was the product of a unique combination of family circumstances was made by Ira Levin in a curious novel, *Boys from Brazil* (1977), which narrates the cloning of 94 young Hitlers out of Hitler’s own DNA. Even though the children do have Hitler’s potential to do evil, the old Nazi Dr. Mengele, who runs the experiment, finds out that his plans to return Hitler to life through just one of the boys are extremely unlikely to succeed precisely because the circumstances of Hitler’s childhood cannot be reproduced.

Even though Keneally's book is the Booker Prize winner that has sold best, its impact was minor compared to that of its screen adaptation, which has superseded if not the cultural memory of the book (on the contrary, it has helped it to sell even better), at least the original title, *Schindler's Ark*. One of the obvious questions that spring to mind about Schindler's life is why his story had not been told previously by a German. In fact, Australian writer Thomas Keneally, a resident in the USA, came across the legend of the German saviour of Jews thanks to a chance encounter with Leonard Pfefferberg, one of the names on Schindler's list. Pfefferberg's zeal and Keneally's collaboration secured for Schindler's story the wide audience it deserves. Spielberg bought the rights on the novel in 1982, as soon as it was published, but still a young director then, and fresh from the success of *E.T.*, he deemed it necessary to let a reasonable number of years pass before he was prepared to handle a subject as delicate as the Holocaust. The reasons why *Schindler's List* was made precisely in 1993 were, according to Spielberg himself, his rediscovery of his own Jewish roots—prompted by the conversion of his wife to Judaism—and his having achieved a privileged position in which he was free to risk a limited budget to make a purely personal film. Despite the many Jews placed in important positions in the Hollywood industry, Spielberg was told at the time by an anonymous executive that he had better give the \$29 million budget to the Museum of the Holocaust in Jerusalem if all he sought was to ease his Jewish conscience, for the Holocaust, Hollywood's voice protested, was box office poison.

The World Jewish Congress also distrusted Spielberg's personal involvement in the Jewish question. The king of special effects seemed to the Congress too young, too Hollywood, too politically naive to give screen credibility to the horror of the Jewish Holocaust, and so he was even banned from filming in Auschwitz. The Polish press (the film was made in Poland) was not less wary of Spielberg's intentions, especially after hundreds of notices were distributed by the casting team overnight in Warsaw requiring dark-haired, dark-eyed, Semitic-looking extras for the film. Ironically, while the debate about Spielberg's authority raged among his detractors and defenders, Hollywood welcomed the film as Spielberg's masterpiece. *Schindler's List* won seven Oscars and five nominations in 1993, in the same edition in which Spielberg's own *Jurassic Park* was awarded three (minor) Oscars. Many critics nonetheless insisted on proclaiming the wide gulf separating both films on the rather far-fetched grounds that Spielberg had made the (allegedly) far inferior *Jurassic Park* (also an adaptation, based on Michael Crichton's best-seller) only in order to finance *Schindler's List*. Few, if any, praised Spielberg for the amazing feat of having made two such excellent films in the same year or noticed that both *Schindler's List* and *Jurassic Park* are the culmination of a long career devoted to monstrosity in all its manifestations. From the early *Duel* (1971) down to *Jurassic Park* and passing through *Jaws* and *E.T.*, Spielberg's films have portrayed different types of monsters. *Schindler's List* and *Jurassic Park* are, in addition, comparable because deal with monsters of power who use the political and economic system which surrounds them for their benefit until a catastrophe stops them. Amon Goeth uses the protection afforded by Nazism to satisfy his personal greed for power and money; John Hammond may not exterminate hundreds of human beings as Goeth does in the pursuit of his personal satisfaction, but his exploitation of the resources offered by capitalist science and his creation of the live dinosaurs that inhabit his park actually risk the survival of the whole human race.

The mode of narration chosen by Spielberg, melodramatic epic shot in black and white in the style of documentaries, was meant to elicit tears from audiences and to impress them at the same time with a sense of historical credibility. It is indeed ironic

that the 'reality' of Goeth's random shootings, the furnaces of Auschwitz and the massacre of the Cracow ghetto could be best impressed on the minds of audiences by sparing them the real, lurid colours of historical horror. Spielberg symbolically indicated the impossibility of using colour in the motif of the little girl with the red coat—a motif taken from the novel—whom Schindler sees first surviving the eviction of the Jewish ghetto and, later, a dead body. This motif was criticised as an unpardonable lapse into characteristic Spielberg sentimentalism, together with the emotive final scene in which the real Schindlerjuden are seen parading before Schindler's tomb in Jerusalem with the actors who play their roles in the film. The last scene is inescapably sentimental for it contains the true homage of the film to the victims, making them visible, real, genuine, as the authorities behind Spielberg's camera. In fact, what these negative critiques indicate is that audiences and critics do not actually want to see reality—in all its colours—but a stylish version of it. That this was regarded as a sentimentalist strategy indicates how unwatchable reality has become and how difficult it is for postmodernist audiences to face the real yet invisible victims of history.

The world-wide release of *Schindler's List* offered food for thought in more than one sense, beginning with the fact that its opening night was staged in Jerusalem. A series of other opening nights crowned by the presence of VIPs started with a private projection for President Clinton and continued in Europe, attracting the leading personalities of each nation. The film was praised by the World Jewish Congress as much as by the German media; only a few dissenting voices could be heard coming from Emilie Schindler (Oskar's estranged wife), the Islamic countries which banned or censored the film and critics who, like the German Will Tremper, were angered not because the film misrepresented the Germany but because it was, after all, a sentimental film: "Seldom has a film upset me so much, brought me to the verge of tears and made me so angry", he wrote (Jackson, 1994: 62). It was obvious that the tears elicited by the film, which were apparently copious in all countries where it opened, though they were a sign of the strong moral horror elicited by the film rather than akin to those provoked by mere tear-jerkers, did not interfere with the enjoyment of the film as a masterpiece—they were, indeed, tears made legitimate by the critical and moral approval of the reviewers.

The commercial and critical success of the film and the attention attracted by the moral parable seen in Schindler's good deed should not obscure, though, the background against which the film should be read. To begin with, the popularity of Spielberg ensured an audience for *Schindler's List* that would have been very different had Oliver Stone, for instance, directed it. Yet the film's fiercest competitor in the box office was *Mrs. Doubtfire*, a comedy which after ten weeks had grossed 20% more takings than Spielberg's film. On the other hand, few questioned the privileged position of Jews in comparison to other victims of the Holocaust. The gypsies massacred by Hitler, for instance, still have to find a spokesman and money to pay for a masterpiece, while the Jews are fortunate to have both in the person of the not less privileged Spielberg. This does not mean that the Jews do not have the right to narrate their victimisation at the hands of the Nazis, but, simply, they are in a position to do so that is not accessible to the members of other equally victimised minorities lacking the artistic and financial resources to narrate their own drama.

Six months after the release of the film a polemic arose in *The New York Times Literary Review* as to the moral right of the USA to criticise Nazism in view, as Harold Pinter among others argued, of the harmful foreign policy carried out by the State Department, resulting in disasters such as the Vietnam war. Yet, few voices, if any,

wondered why Amon Goeth and not Radovan Karadzic was the villain in the film hit of 1993, at a time when the ghost of Nazi ethnic cleansing was raising its ugly head in ex-Yugoslavia. Spielberg's courage in screening the nightmare of fifty years ago is no doubt commendable, but his film also discloses a silent discourse about the difficulties of representing the victims of our time.

Keneally's novel is a portrait of Schindler's life as a moral mystery written in the best tradition of literature's exploration of good and evil. Keneally (1993: 14) observes in the "Author's Note", that he chose to render Schindler's acts in a novel not only because the craft of the novelist was the only one he could lay claim to but also because the novel's techniques seemed "suited for a character of such ambiguity and magnitude as Oskar". He adds that he "attempted to avoid all fiction, though, since fiction would debase the record", in this way drawing a sharp dividing line between "reality and the myths which are likely to attach themselves to a man of Oskar's stature". Precisely the point that interested Keneally and that to a large extent also attracted Spielberg was the impossibility of seeing Schindler's odyssey in the black and white morality of sentimentalism and Gothic. In the "Prologue" to his novel, Keneally writes that "fatal human malice is the staple of narrators, original sin the mother-fluid of historians. But it is a risky enterprise to write of virtue" (p. 15). He solved this dilemma with irony and an insidious questioning of Oskar's virtue achieved mainly by stressing his similarities with Amon Goeth, the sadistic Nazi commander of the Plaszow camp. While the key note in Amon Goeth's personality is his arbitrary use of power to kill and his immense greed, which even makes him step out of the 'legality' set up by Nazism, the key point about Oskar Schindler is his ambiguous virtue: all his goodness towards his Jews cannot conceal the fact that he was, in principle, a capitalist exploiter who saw his chance in Nazi-occupied Poland. The film reflects the point well by emphasising the role played by money, first to fulfil Schindler's wish to become an important industrialist and later to buy human lives.

The emotion that Oskar feels towards Amon is abomination, for Goeth is nothing but a greedy murderer who believes for a while in the absolute nature of his power. The irony of the situation is that Goeth saw in Oskar a real 'brother', as ambitious as him as far as money and power were concerned, and that he always trusted him. As Keneally remarks, "the reflection can hardly be avoided that Amon was Oskar's dark brother, was the berserk and fanatic executioner Oskar might, by some unhappy reversal of his appetites, have become" (p. 188). Nevertheless, the capitalist Schindler is also about to become a cog in the monster machinery of Nazism himself. In fact, his plans change dramatically only when he finds that the Nazis can make use of their power to curtail his freedom as a businessman. "I am a capitalist by temperament and I don't like being regulated" (p. 49) he tells Itzak Stern, the Jewish accountant who is the silent witness of the Nazi spoliation of Jewish business that benefits Schindler and his like. For Stern, however, Schindler is the Talmud's just Goy, the man who by saving the life of one man, saves the entire world. The Jewish lives he buys are the proof that other kinds of power could subvert Nazi power. Because Goeth has the power to kill, Oskar resolves to have the power to save and he literally buys it with the only means that may subdue Goeth: money.

The point made by the names in Schindler's list is that the victims of Nazism had individual identities: they were not an anonymous mass, as they were for Goeth, but

concrete individuals as they were for Oskar²⁶. Nonetheless, Schindler himself had a peculiar sense of the individuality of the victims; when in the novel he retrieves one of his workers from a train bound for an extermination camp he does not stop to consider why he is saving one Jew among so many. Later, when Schindler witnesses the eviction of the Jewish ghetto he finally understands the full horror of the situation:

Their lack of shame, as men who had been born of women and had to write letters home (What did they put in them?), wasn't the worst aspect of what he'd seen. He *knew* they had no shame, since the guard at the base of the column had not felt any need to stop the red child from seeing things. But, worst of all, if there was no shame, it meant there was official sanction. No one would find refuge any more behind the idea of German culture, nor behind those pronouncements uttered by leaders to exempt anonymous men from stepping beyond their garden, from looking out of their office windows at the realities of the pavement. (p. 143, original emphasis)

In the end, Goeth is not defeated by Oskar—whose real success is his personal transformation into the ‘just Goy’—but by the Nazi bureaucrats who inspect Plaszow. Amon's fall is brought about ironically not by his arbitrary killings but by his black market activities and embezzlements, which are not tolerated by the Nazi laws. Later, when he falls in the hands of the Americans and is handed over to a Polish court, the sharp memory of a Jewish prisoner employed by Goeth in his office will prove instrumental in bringing about Goeth's execution by hanging, though this will not free his survivors from their nightmares. Thirty years after the liberation the ex-prisoners still dreamed of Goeth: “When you saw Goeth”, said Polderk Pfefferberg, “you saw death” (p. 390). But while Goeth survived as an almost mythical figure in the nightmares of the survivors, Oskar's figure evolved into myth as well, despite the fact that he was not the only German to have resisted Goeth and his kind. But beyond his passion for saving Jewish lives or his dislike of the corrupt Nazi regime personified in Goeth, Schindler is heroic in a sense peculiar to capitalism. He did not sacrifice his life but he did sacrifice his wealth, his power within the Nazi system, in order to buy Jewish life from the covetous Amon. The figure of the just capitalist incarnated in Schindler re-emerged from history in moments framing the years of raging liberal capitalism in which a yuppie like Bateman appears as the ultimate negation of the American dream. Between 1982 when Keneally published his novel and 1993 when Spielberg released his film, money has been increasingly perceived as the greatest monster of power, above any totalitarian political system; *Schindler's List* proves that money rather than connivance with the ideology of Nazism put many greedy Germans on the side of the monster of power and that money could have easily saved the lives of many Jews if more Germans had been tempted like Schindler to gain an alternative kind of power.

Another of the topics dealt with in the contemporary representation of Nazism in fiction is the position of the USA in relation to the Nazis that took refuge in that country and became respectable American citizens. Two recent novels—Philip Roth's *Operation Shylock* and Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow*—and a film—Costa-Gavras' *The Music Box*—deal with the same motif, though from different perspectives. Part of the plot of

26. The same point was made about the American victims of Vietnam, in the memorial monument designed by Maya Ying Lin and erected in 1982, the year when *Schindler's Ark* was published. The monument is a list of names, a black marble slab where individual names regain their lost reality.

Operation Shylock describes the real life trial of one of these American citizens, John Demjanjuk, accused by the Israeli state of being the infamous Treblinka exterminator nicknamed Ivan the Terrible. Demjanjuk's real identity could not be proved in the 1988 trial celebrated in Israel after his extradition from the USA; new evidence contradicting the many witnesses who had identified the Ukrainian Nazi collaborator forced the judges to indefinitely suspend the death sentence that had been already dictated. Demjanjuk's trial appears in Roth's novel, whose main theme is how equivocal personal identity can be, as an instance of the frustration felt when, as happened in his case, the identity of the monster of power cannot be proven.

In contrast, the two fictional cases of *The Music Box* and *Time's Arrow* deal with the process by which the real identity of two Nazis sheltered under a false identity in the USA is discovered. Both Costa-Gavras' film and Amis' novel follow a truly Gothic plot by which the innocent closely attached to the monster progressively unearths the obscure truth about him; the growing doubts culminate into a final, firm answer as to how guilty the monster of power is, though the actual outcome is in each case very different. In Amis' novel the identity of the former Nazi Odilo Unverdorben is never publicly disclosed; in fact it is only established when all his life flashes back before his eyes in the moment before his death in an operating theatre: it is then when his horrified conscience starts the long journey backwards in time that the novel narrates. In *The Music Box* the unmasking of an old man as a former Nazi officer despite his protestations of innocence is seen through the eyes of his American daughter. Anne, a lawyer, takes up her father's defence when extradition procedures are started by the Hungarian government for war crimes committed by him as a member of the Gestapo in Hungary during World War II. When an anonymous victim sends her a music box containing the photos that prove who her father is, Anne's horror leads her to make a final choice: to withdraw her protection, implicitly that of the laws of the USA which she represents, and leave him face his fate in Hungary.

As can be seen, *The Music Box* is structured so that audiences—implicitly American—can recognise a central moral dilemma: what would you do, as a citizen of a democratic country, if you found out that your father (or a relative) had committed war crimes? Audiences are meant to sympathize with the suffering, virtuous heroine and to reject the villainous man who has lived a lie all his life. The point made by the film is not how a young man could be recruited by the Nazi machinery of terror, nor whether this young man was originally a moral monster or became one, but why the monster beneath the mask of the respectable citizen cannot be immediately recognised. The same issue is discussed by Roth and Amis in their respective novels, though Amis tries to go further, delving in the past of Unverdorben in search of an answer to the question of why he became a torturer and killer. The traditional fictional representation of the monster of power as a clearly identifiable villain has problematised the identification of the real life monster of power: reality proves that appearances are deceptive and that the moral monster cannot be recognised by his or her sinister physical appearance as happens in fiction. For Roth and Costa-Gavras this outmoded way of looking at monstrous power must be replaced by a new awareness that the monster is, in fact, any of us. In *Operation Shylock* and *The Music Box* the beloved grandfather turns out to have been in his youth a hideous monster empowered by Nazism to do evil, though there is no evident sign in his amiable looks that the monster once existed. Besides, in both *The Music Box* and *Time's Arrow*, the Nazi is presented as a handsome young man very different from the traditional villain; in fact, the actor chosen to play the role of the young Nazi officer in *The Music Box* looks remarkably like the model whose photo

appears on the cover of the American edition of *American Psycho*. How deceptive appearances can be is the motif linking these texts about Nazism with Ellis' novel.

Keneally's mystification as to why Oskar Schindler chose the harder path of altruism instead of abuse reveals a pessimistic outlook, shared by Roth in his examination of Demjanjuk's motivations. What most appals the fictional 'Roth' who narrates the trial in the novel is how well he understands the feeling of power that the chance to commit countless atrocities must have given the 22-year-old Ukrainian peasant recruited by the Nazis to do their dirty work:

What a time! Nothing like it ever again! A mere twenty-two and he owned the place—could do to any of them whatever he wished. To wield a whip and a pistol and a sword and a club, to be young and healthy and strong and drunk and powerful, *boundlessly* powerful, like a god! Nearly a million of them, a million, and on every one a Jewish face in which he could read the terror. Of him. *Of him!* Of a peasant boy of twenty-two! In the history of this entire world, had the opportunity ever been given to anyone anywhere to kill so many people all by himself, one by one? What a job! A sensational blowout every day! One continuous party! Blood! Vodka! Women! Death! Power! (p. 60, original emphasis)

Instead of the horror endured by Anne in *The Music Box*, instead of Keneally's ironic bafflement, Roth—himself a Jew—dives under the killer's skin, seeing his nightmarish behaviour not as an exception, but as universal human nature neither less horrific nor less deserving of punishment for being so. However, one must assume that the fictional 'Roth' and Philip Roth, the novelist, give in this passage not Demjanjuk's own thoughts, for they have no way to enter his mind, but their own view of what it is like to be a monster. What they imagine about Demjanjuk's feelings is, therefore, what they find inside themselves; if it is not impossible to put oneself in the monster's position, this means that monstrosity is not an alien, incomprehensible aberration of the human soul, but part of it. In a sense, the reader who feels that Roth's (or 'Roth's') description of Demjanjuk's position rings true, as I do, has already ceased looking at the monster as the 'Other' and has started looking at the monster as a fellow human being bound to all of us by the same potential to do evil.

The explanation that Roth finds for how this absolute monster could settle down peacefully to a nine-to-five routine in an American car factory is his monstrous contentment—by the early age of 22 he had had “the joy most people only get to dream of, nothing short of ecstasy!” (p. 61). This does not mean that Roth sympathises with Demjanjuk; on the contrary, his anger at this man is manifest in the bitter sarcasm of the passage quoted above. It is, partly, anger directed not so much at this concrete man but at man's capacity to do evil and ignore human suffering. For Roth the true miracle is not that the monster lusting for infinite power over the lives of so many could become John Demjanjuk, the all-American factory worker, but that his surviving victims—the ones forced to watch, to help—could manage to live ordinary lives after Treblinka. The true enigma is not why Ivan the Terrible did what he did—it is simply human nature—but why the victims are trying so hard to understand and not to seek pure, simple revenge and how they will accept the fact that Demjanjuk's identity cannot be proved.

The story of Odilo Unverdorben's life is told backwards from his death to his birth in *Time's Arrow* and comes from the mouth of a parasitical character attached to him. It is, however, unclear whether this character is Odilo's conscience or his

consciousness. The fact that it can sense Odilo's emotions but not his thoughts and its ignorance of the main facts in Odilo's life, suggest that the narrator is Odilo's much repressed conscience, given a last chance to do its task of regretting the evil Odilo has committed in his life. As happens in *Angel Heart*, the consciousness of the monster is split into a secret part fully aware of having committed evil acts and a manifest part totally unaware of the crimes committed by the 'other' inside. In fact, this tortuous narrative technique is employed in *Time's Arrow* to explore Odilo's horrific past from the standpoint of his innocent American self, with whom the voice of his conscience could be identified. Amis' choice in letting the voice of Odilo's uninformed, perplexed conscience block the Nazi killer's own voice from the reader, proves that it is still extremely difficult to narrate the atrocities committed by the Nazis from the point of view of a monstrous first person narrator. In *Time's Arrow* the first person narrator is not the monster himself, as in *American Psycho* or the 'books of evidence' surveyed in Chapter 4, but the voice of ignorance representing the puzzlement inspired by the Nazi in general rather than by Odilo's personality in particular. There are obviously political implications that make the representation of the Nazi's consciousness in his own words problematic but that do not affect the representation of the psychopath: Nazism is by no means an obsolete political ideology, as can be seen in the neo-Nazi groups operating in Germany. A writer who chose to represent the Nazi monster by replicating his voice—as Banville, McEwan, McCabe, Ellis and others have done with the psychotic killer—would probably incur either the anger of the Nazis themselves or of those who oppose them and who could regard the book as an apology of Nazism.

Amis' singular narrative denies up to a point the premises of both Freud and Miller. The more we delve into Odilo's past, the less we know about why he became a monster. The novel begins thus with the death of a guilty man who was once Dr. Mengele's subordinate at Auschwitz and ends with the birth an innocent baby for whom, as for Oskar Schindler and Amon Goeth, no fixed paths are marked. After reaching Odilo's birth in its journey backwards in time, the voice split from his consciousness concludes that "Odilo Unverdorben, as a moral being, is absolutely unexceptional, liable to do what everybody else does, good or bad, with no limit, once under the cover of numbers. He could never be an exception; he is dependent on the health of his society, needing the sandy smiles of Roland, of Rudolph, of Rudiger, of Reinhard" (p. 164). This conclusion strongly recalls Keneally's view that nothing in Goeth's and Schindler's childhood indicated that they would inevitably embrace or reject Nazism and that, in fact, Schindler was the really extraordinary exception in a world populated by men like Odilo or Goeth. The main point in both novels is precisely the impossibility of determining the rules by which individual human lives are inserted within large machineries of power.

Odilo himself claims to have suffered the pains of Hell in life, refusing to take all the blame for a situation that was mad and confused. His career as a torturer begins in 1942, when after getting a degree in medicine he is called to work in Treblinka and later Auschwitz. Presumably this is the moment of his schizophrenic split when Odilo dissociates himself from his own thinking self and develops this particular conscience which can feel his feelings but not think his thoughts. His forced separation from his family, wife and baby daughter together with his incapacity to process what is going on around him and his own guilt makes him lose "the idea of the gentleness of human flesh" (p. 120), including that of the tiny babies he tortures under Mengele's orders. Unlike what Miller suggests, the family is not the source of Odilo's willingness to embrace the authoritarian regime of Dr. Mengele; in fact, their silent reproach is what

makes Odilo feel the extent of his guilt for the first time, and what seals the growing split between the conscience that addresses him as 'you' and Odilo's own 'I'. This is the only passage in which both the alien voice and Odilo's own voice mingle and it is also the passage that marks their separation. Significantly, the split takes place when Odilo evaluates his own power:

The sadness is your very own; it entirely fits you. And Herta's glance sometimes, and her mother's glance, and even her father's glance, which is hard and countervailing, which is on my side (but I don't want it)—these glances say that in my hands there rests a mortal and miserable power. I am omnipotent. Also impotent. I am powerful and powerless. (p. 148)

This disempowering awareness of his evil acts is what makes Odilo the opposite of the blindly self-confident Amon Goeth: a diffuse fear of torture and a deep sense of guilt that his conscience cannot fully comprehend seem to be the price he pays for his past misdeeds, together with the dreams of the dreaded trial he might have to face one day and of a horrific death in the hands of an angry mob.

Despite having pronounced a verdict of non-guilty in Odilo's favour due to diminished moral responsibility, caused by the social and political pressures, Amis cannot resist the temptation of an "Afterword" to the novel where, once again, the system of powerful monstrosity established by the Nazis is dissociated from the individuals who carried it out and ascribed to all of Germany:

The offence was unique, not in its cruelty, nor in its cowardice, but in its style—in its combination of the atavistic and the modern. It was, at once, reptilian and 'logistical'. And although the offence was not deafeningly German, its style was. The National Socialists found the core of the reptile brain, and built an autobahn that went there. (p. 175)

However, the civilised barbarian is by no means the creation of the Germany of fifty years ago, though, arguably the shock that the discovery of the true horrors of Nazism caused in 1945 was magnified by the association of Germany to culture and civilisation. Nor is the reptilian brain civilised enough to understand the meaning of extermination, which in fact derives from the Neolithic idea of ritual sacrifice, that is to say, from culture, and not from basic animal instincts. According to Baring and Cashford (1993: 167) both the barbarian Aryan *and Semitic* invaders of Sumeria came to the conclusion that the conquest of a territory must lead to the "surrogate sacrifice of 'the other' in place of oneself or one's group ... On this hypothesis the wholesale extermination of other people—now designated the 'enemy'—became a new way to avoid death magically ... and even increase the 'divine potency' of the king himself". This may explain Hitler's (the tribal king) obsession for the extermination of the Jews. In fact, the methods that Amis and many others consider to be aberrations born of the efficiency of the modern Germany were actually already perfected by the Assyrians in the eighth century BC, which means that genocide, far from being the legacy of the reptilian brain, as Amis suggests, is born with the patriarchal cultures of the Iron Age, including the Semites. Obviously, even though the nature of the monsters of power has changed little since then, their methods have been 'improved' thanks to technology, as the Nazis' infamous use of the gas Cyklon B and the furnaces proves, and this has dramatically increased the scope of destruction they may cause.

The growth of moral indignation against the monster of power is directly linked in the twentieth century to the growth in the number of his victims; in a sense, it can be said that the Nazis of the texts surveyed in this section differ from the figure of the torturer I analyse in the next section precisely because they cannot distinguish individual victims from each other. The blurring of the names of the victims is the main horror we have inherited from Nazism, but it is a horror which has accompanied man throughout history. If there is an essential difference between Nazism and all the other structures of power based on the physical elimination of the enemy, from that of the Assyrians to the Serbs', this is the effort made by the survivors of Nazism to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive.

The problem is that we still cannot look at the Nazi except through the filter of the Gothic villain. At the beginning of *Schindler's Ark*, Keneally describes the abusive behaviour of the Nazi Amon Goeth with the Jews employed in his household and Schindler's compassion and sympathy for Goeth's victims. These scenes are meant to characterise Goeth as a domestic tyrant, similar to the many patriarchal men whose abuse of women and children has been only recently unearthed. Yet, Keneally himself spoils the force of Schindler's own testimony of Goeth's brutality by making an ironic remark that indicates his own fear of looking at the harsh reality portrayed in his book without the support of the conventions attached to the figure of the Gothic villain: "So the story of Oskar Schindler is begun perilously, with Gothic Nazis...". (p. 32, original ellipsis). Perilously for whom or for what? Actually, not so much for Goeth's victims or for Oskar as for Goeth himself. Keneally's novel transmits the voices and the names of the survivors and Schindler's own voice to posterity and we can now understand the human, personal suffering caused by evil structures of power such as Nazism. Through the testimony of Goeth's survivors we can also hear the testimony of all the dead and all the other survivors of history. Oskar's voice helps us also to understand the frailty of the hero's soul and the thin dividing line between good and evil. But, what about Goeth, what about his men? Their voices are absent, they remain the unheard 'Other' throughout the novel, throughout history. Keneally himself misses the importance of one of the most poignant horror stories narrated by the survivors, that of the Nazi soldier in love with a Jewish girl imprisoned in Plaszow. This young man is forced by Goeth to shoot the girl dead and, although Keneally uses well the sad tale of doomed love to stress Goeth's callousness and the ordeal of the Jews who were killed because they were hated but also because they were loved, the voice of the soldier is missing. Amis' *Time's Arrow* deals with one such soldier, but Amis' moral horror is still too strong, so that, like many others, he embraces displacement and the Gothic mode to portray the monster.

The voices of the victims must be heard and the monsters must be unmasked, but the victims can only be helped if the Gothic Nazi is replaced by the human Nazi, no matter how painful this process may be. The demonisation of the Nazi is preventing us from understanding the evil they did and, what is worse, is leading to the rebirth of Nazism itself. Many of the young neo-Nazis are in all probability the children of those Germans forced to keep silent about what they did in the war. The pain that could not be processed because of this compulsory silence is now surfacing to deny the evidence of the concentration camps and the existence of the victims. We still do not want to listen to men like Goeth because the victims' voices are not sufficiently loud and also because we are afraid of understanding him, as Oskar Schindler did or as 'Roth' does when he sees John Demjanjuk. Ironically, we listen to the voices of the killers who narrate their 'books of evidence' but we still cannot and will not listen to the Nazi, which is why

Goeth still survives now as a horrific bogeyman in the nightmares of the survivors. Perhaps it would help to listen first to men such as the Nazi soldier forced to kill his Jewish bride not by Goeth himself but by the collusion of historical and personal forces embodied by him as a representative of Nazism. His voice can give us more clues to understand whether the monster of power is an exceptional or an ordinary human being. We not be sufficiently prepared to listen to him, but the four texts I have analysed in this section suggest that the distance between him and us is diminishing and that the intimacy between the witness appalled by the existence of the Nazi evildoer and him is growing. Perhaps the affair of Hitler's diaries, which were 'discovered' in the 1980s and then were proved to be a forgery, is the clearest sign of this need to know the monster of power from the inside. Since the language to explain who the monster is from his own point of view is available thanks to the fiction that portrays the murderer, the only reason why the Nazi is not portrayed in this way in fiction must be necessarily political. It might well take fifty years more to understand the men and women who carried out the 'final solution'. Meanwhile, other 'final solutions' are being carried out before our very eyes. We wonder in our impotence why these things happen and sympathise with the victims of those we will not listen to.

5.2.3. The Long Shadow of the Torturer

In the 1980s and 1990s torture appears frequently in fiction as the cross-roads at which the barbarian and the civilised man find that they are one and the same. The issue most frequently discussed in the films and novels dealing with torture is not why torture takes place at all—it is assumed to be an essential part of a despotic use of power—but how torturers can dissociate their profession from their personal life. As happens in the case of the Nazi, there appear to be certain difficulties to allow the torturer narrate his misdeeds with his own voice. Among the texts I am analysing, only one—Gene Wolfe's *The Shadow of the Torturer*—presents the events in the plot from the point of view of the torturer, a young man apprenticed to a torturer's guild who nevertheless does not become a professional torturer. The others invariably reflect the predicament of the victim in relation to the whole system of oppression embodied in the particular figure of a single torturer, a paradigm derived from Gothic fiction passing through George Orwell's *1984*. Typically, the point of view in these texts is not that of the sensitive observer, as is the case in the narratives about Nazism, but that of the victim baffled by the enormous distance between his or her humanity and the dehumanised nature of the seemingly 'normal' torturer²⁷.

J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) narrates the fall of a middle-aged Magistrate who rules the affairs of a small frontier settlement on the brink of barbarian territory in an unspecified place and time. Occupied by his liaisons with women and the barbarian antiques he collects, this man has failed to see (or perhaps will not see) that the Empire he represents is founded on the fiction that the barbarians may arrive at any moment, for which the military forces are on permanent guard. He receives then the visit of Colonel Joll, one of the refined torturers on the empire's payroll, who

27. At least whenever torture is seen from a serious political point of view; in action films it is not rare for heroes to undergo torture in the hands of brutal villains, as happens for instance to Mel Gibson's character in *Lethal Weapon* (1987), but in these cases torture is presented as one more obstacle for the hero to overcome and not as the shattering experience that it is for victims of less heroic mettle.

has been empowered to torture a large number of the Magistrate's subjects. Joll's paranoid effort to determine when the barbarians will attack forces the Magistrate to finally open his eyes to the realities of the Empire. Joll's own savage philosophy of life is yet another proof that appearances are deceiving:

Pain is truth; all else is subject to doubt. That is what I bear away from my conversation with Colonel Joll, whom with his tapering fingernails, his mauve handkerchiefs, his slender feet in soft shoes I keep imagining back in the capital he is so obvious impatient for, murmuring to his friends in theatre corridors between the acts. (p. 5)

The suave torturer impatiently awaiting the end of his mission may seem an expression of civilisation in the middle of the barbarian country but he is indeed the true barbarian. The Quixotic Magistrate, who knows the rumours of unrest among the barbarians recur almost with precise periodical frequency once in every generation, takes it upon his shoulders to make a symbolic gesture of reconciliation with the barbarians. He chooses for this to take back to her people a barbarian woman who has been tortured and who has become his lover, but during his journey, which brings him no deeper knowledge of the barbarians, Joll's Civil Guard takes up the town and deposes the Magistrate.

Once deprived of his power, the Magistrate becomes just another candidate for torture, which in his case comes in the form of degradation, of reduction to his animal nature, as he awaits a legal trial that will never take place. When the confrontation between him and Joll finally takes place, the Colonel accuses the Magistrate of having attempted to pass into history with his martyrdom as the One Just Man (Schindler's 'just goy') without having first considered that his humiliation is too trivial, too habitual to reach the history books. The magistrate is then tortured by yet another blue-eyed, good-looking young man, whose very existence seems to the Magistrate an indecipherable enigma:

“Do not misunderstand me, I am not blaming you or accusing you, I am long past that. Remember, I too have devoted a life to the law, I know its processes, I know that the workings of justice are often obscure. I am only trying to understand. I am trying to understand the zone in which you live. I am trying to imagine how you breathe and eat and live from day to day. But I cannot! That is what troubles me! If I were he, I say to myself, my hand would feel so dirty that it would choke me”. (p. 126)

When the Civil Guard finally leaves because the Empire has collapsed rather than because the barbarian threat has been averted, the Magistrate is left in a world of chaos doomed to fall into barbarian hands sooner or later. After speculating whether the nomadic barbarians will eventually fall to the side of 'civilisation' when they discover the advantages of agriculture, he concludes that he has understood nothing from his ordeal except that Joll and himself are two sides of the same coin: “I was the lie that Empire tells itself when times are easy, he the truth that Empire tells when harsh winds blow” (p. 135).

Gene Wolfe's pseudo-medieval Gothic fantasy *The Shadow of the Torturer* (1980) also deals with torture within the political context of an unspecified empire, ruled by the Autarch of the House Absolute. While *Waiting for the Barbarians* is narrated by a victim and witness, in *The Shadow of the Torturer* the first person narrative voice belongs to young Severian, an apprentice torturer of the 'Order of the

Seekers for Truth and Penitence'. This order recruits its novices among the very young children of their victims so that the innocent children deprived by the guild of their own family may find a more respectable family among the torturers. The guild functions in a manner similar to any other medieval professional association: the apprenticeship culminates in the 'elevation', which entails freedom for the future torturer to organise his leisure outside the closed Citadel; 'mastership' is reached with the unanimous votes of all the living masters and allows the adult torturer "to pick and choose such assignments as may interest or amuse him, and direct the affairs of the guild itself" (p. 34). Judging from Severian's own experience as a child living among the torturers, this unusual life certainly affects the young novices who grow up to be strangely unemotional and passive, and who do not harbour feelings of resentment against those who killed their parents. In fact, most of these children accept the hierarchical order of the guild and the occupation of its members as part of the normal order of society, especially because the torturers do not make a secret of their profession. Severian's muted rebellion and his expulsion from the guild are in this order of things events much more exceptional than the recruiting of children into the guild.

Even though women have been excluded from the guild because of their allegedly extreme cruelty, they are not excluded from the ranks of the victims. One of them is Thecla, who is put under Severian's custody as she awaits for the time of her excruciation. Terrified but still trying to keep her dignity intact, Thecla partly awakens Severian's dormant sensitivity with her many questions about his feelings; still, since she makes the mistake of patronising him, Severian chooses to torture her in his first assignment as a fully adult torturer. However, her pain makes it impossible for him to resist the temptation to help her commit suicide and this single act of compassion costs him his career, sending him to a life in exile as an itinerant executioner. Nevertheless, Severian's personality is not altered dramatically by Thecla's death. His dissatisfaction with the guild is apparent before he attains mastership, "not because of the pain it inflicted on clients who sometimes have been innocent... ; but because it seemed to me inefficient and ineffectual, serving a power that was not only ineffectual but also remote" (p. 101). Later, he welcomes the sentence of exile as genuine liberation but, months after his first victim's death, he still strongly resents the idea that the guild is an abomination planted within the heart of the Autarchy. Quite on the contrary he insists that the guild has endured because "it serves as a focus for the hatred of the people, drawing it from the Autarch" (p. 231), an explanation no doubt useful to account for the role of torture in general. The torture inflicted by the guild on the 'clients', as they are called, handed over to them by the Autarch, serves in fact two purposes: on the one hand, it strengthens the power of the Autarch by showing to the average citizen the consequences of disobeying him; on the other hand, it channels the 'natural' cruelty of the citizens against the victims who become the sacrificial victims in lieu of the abhorred Autarch. Severian notes that when a powerful but unpopular citizen is delivered to the mercy of the guild they may receive suggestions from the citizens as to his or her disposal—but that most of them are impossible to implement because of their sheer cruelty.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians* torture is publicly performed by members of the army. In *The Shadow of the Torturer* the public ritual that celebrates the elevation of the torturer to mastership is a form of acknowledging the gory activities carried out in the dungeons of the Citadel. Both novels can be said to portray the model of punishment as a public show of power whose disappearance and replacement by the contemporary penal system is analysed by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*. The pain

inflicted on the body by the former system of punishment is seen by Foucault (1987: 7–9) not as a sign of the punishment proportionate to the accused's crimes but as a message transmitted from the site of power to the community of subjects, reinforcing the power of the king. When this message no longer connotes the incontestable, terrible power of the monarch, especially following the French Revolution of 1789, the exhibition of the physical pain of the accused or the convicted criminal is replaced by a system of imprisonment rather than torture whose aim is to separate legality from illegality, even though executions still remained public in many countries for some decades. The torturer working within a secret system of punishment such as those of many dictatorships (and no doubt of a few democracies) denotes, therefore, the awareness that the system of power has of its own illegitimacy, of its own injustice.

Secret torture features at the centre of the dystopian view of the future that George Orwell described in *1984*. Orwell's novel was adapted for the screen by British film director Michael Radford, who followed the British tradition of faithful screen adaptations produced in homage to the literary original to an unusual extreme: the film was actually shot between April and June 1984, the months in which the action of Orwell's novel takes place. Radford's version is certainly an accomplished adaptation of *1984*, not only because of its extreme respect for Orwell's work but also because of Richard Burton and John Hurt's excellent performances as the torturer O'Brien and his victim Winston Smith. However, Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985), an unacknowledged adaptation of Orwell's novel, offers an ironic, flamboyant interpretation of the original novel in which the target is not communism but a new system of power arising in a dystopian near future from the alliance of capitalist business and state bureaucracy.

Brazil narrates the tribulations of dull Sam Lowry, a junior civil servant in the incompetent Ministry of Information. Lowry's monotonous life is only enlivened by his dreams, in which he fancies himself as a winged superhero saving his dream girl from the clutches of horrific monsters, until one day when the arrest and death of a certain Harry Buttle, mistaken for the legendary rebel Harry Tuttle, sets Lowry on a track leading back to his friend Jack's office in the same ministry. There Lowry discovers not only that the congenial Jack is actually the torturer who has eliminated the innocent Buttle but also that Jack is a mere cog in a huge machinery of power designed to eliminate the citizens disloyal to Central Services. This is a private company run by the elderly, disabled Mr. Helpman which has a monopoly in all the services a citizen may need and which can no longer be told apart from the government itself. As Sam discovers, the Ministry of Information is nothing but the security branch of Central Services, beset by constant, enigmatic terrorist attacks that might be the work of Tuttle. The rebellious Tuttle is the only freelance worker in a world in which everybody works for the big brother figure, Mr. Helpman. Instead of preaching an anti-monopolist or anti-capitalist ideology, Tuttle fights his war against the monopoly of Central Services by offering any kind of service for free to citizens dissatisfied with Central Services and by refusing to comply with the enormous load of paperwork required to carry out the most simple operations in Helpman's bureaucratic dictatorship.

When Sam is visited by the mysterious Tuttle, out on a mission to eliminate two particularly inept workers of Central Services, unable to solve a malfunction of the plumbing system in Sam's flat, he starts believing like Winston Smith in *1984*, in the existence of an underground resistance. However, the Ministry's relentless persecution of Sam, the terrorist attacks and his meetings with Tuttle are presented by Gilliam in a surrealistic atmosphere which suggests that everything could be just the product of Sam's mounting paranoia. Whether the Ministry has grounds or not to persecute its

employee, the fact is that Sam's persistence in his attempt to prove that the innocent Tuttle was killed by mistake jeopardises not only his life but also the job of his best friend Jack, who is eventually forced to torture him. Instead of the aloof, cruel but fatherly O'Brien of Radford's film played by Richard Burton, Michael Palin plays a nervous, anguished torturer who knows he is being tested with Sam's pain and humiliation and who keeps on shouting at his victim that "this is a professional relationship". Gilliam's black comedy ends in an even more bitter mood than Orwell's novel, when Tuttle's valiant rescue of Sam in the middle of his session with Jack turns out to be the last dream Sam will ever dream. The last shot shows Jack and Mr. Helpman puzzling over Sam, who has been turned by torture into a mindless zombie only capable of humming his favourite song, "Brazil".

Sam's plunge into catatonic madness as a result of torture was the reason why the release of *Brazil* was delayed for months by its USA distributors, who preferred a more optimistic end, regardless of whether it made sense. A similar problem affected British director Ridley Scott, apparently forced to give his bleak film *Blade Runner* (1982) an inconsistent happy ending. The last scene in Scott's film, showing Deckard and the replicant Rachael flying away from the dark realities of 2019 L.A. towards beautiful countryside, has interesting parallels with the hallucinations suffered by both Smith in Radford's *1984* and Sam in *Brazil* when they are being tortured. Smith sees himself naked and free, reunited with his lover Julia in the green countryside, whereas Sam hallucinates his rescue by his girlfriend Jill, who takes him away to live a happy life in an idyllic landscape. The horrible reality enveloping the protagonists at the end of Gilliam's and Radford's versions of *1984* seems thus to mock the happy ending of *Blade Runner*, which could be easily read as just another fantastic hallucination provoked by Deckard's fear that he and his artificial lover Rachael might be captured, tortured and killed.

As can be seen from *Waiting for the Barbarians*, *The Shadow of the Torturer*, *1984* and *Brazil*, the strategy of displacement followed by Gothic fiction in discussing the political reality of the moment is still widely employed today. The imprecise setting of Coetzee's novel, Wolfe's use of a futuristic yet simultaneously medieval atmosphere, Radford's academicism and Gilliam's replacement of the references to communism in *1984* for the bizarre mixture of capitalism and bureaucracy, show that representing the monster of power in narratives that allow the reader/viewer to look at the torturer straight in the face is still extremely difficult. The voice of the torturer is missing, so that, as happens in the case of the Nazi, the process by which an average civilised citizen such as Joll, Severian, O'Brien or Jack may become such professional, efficient killers is left in the dark. The voice of the victim is heard, his or her search for an answer to the question of whether the torturer is human is contemplated, but these only lead us to sympathise with the victim rather than to understand who the torturer is and how he relates to his victims. Even though the distance between the villain and the innocent victim is shortened in these texts by the representation of the torturer as a civilised barbarian essentially indistinguishable from the average man, there is still much to be said about the victims' suffering, so as to allow writers and film makers to treat the monster of power as a full human being.

5.2.4. Woman and the Monsters of Power: The Survival of the Weakest?

Women are not represented as monsters of power of the type I have so far discussed, but they appear as victims in contexts suggesting that “it could be argued that the advent of civilised life has led to a greater brutalization of male behaviour” (Brittan, 1989: 88). Roman Polanski’s film *Death and the Maiden*, based on the play by the Chilean Ariel Dorfman that narrates the ordeal of the heroine Paulina Escobar, the Vietnamese Le Ly Hayslip’s two volume autobiography, and Betty Mahmoody’s account of her odyssey to abandon Iran and her Iranian husband are all texts that describe the confrontation between a woman and a monstrous man who abuses her physically and psychologically. The three women survive to eventually tell their stories and to demand justice, making the specific point that men’s brutality and cowardice are to blame for the suffering of the innocent, including other men, women and children.

Even though Dorfman’s play is not based on the memoirs of a concrete woman, whereas Hayslip and Mahmoody’s books are based on real life events, his play reflects nevertheless a situation suffered by many during the recent Chilean dictatorship. The large numbers of Chileans gone missing or tortured by their fellow citizens are represented by Paulina Escobar, a survivor who has the unique chance to force a confession out of the man she thinks was once her torturer, Dr. Miranda. Hayslip and Mahmoody’s autobiographical, novelised narratives recast the nightmarish experiences of both women in an ordered sequence of events which was adapted for the screen by Oliver Stone and Brian Gilbert, respectively. Stone’s *Heaven and Earth* (1993) and Gilbert’s *Not without my Daughter* (1991) further reshaped their original experiences, especially in the case of Hayslip, so that what initially appeared as personal accounts of how particular individuals suffered from the encounter with a monstrous system of power, finally became in film a story as symbolic and universal as Dorfman’s play.

Schubert’s *Death and the Maiden* was the music played by Paulina’s torturer in their sessions together. A preference for classical music is frequently used to characterise the barbarian as a civilised man, yet in Doorman’s screenplay for Polanski’s film the point is not so much how Miranda can enjoy listening to Schubert as he tortures Paulina but how she can learn to dissociate her terrible memories from the pleasure she had always felt when listening to Schubert’s music. The claustrophobic, Gothic narrative describing how Paulina tortures her own torturer in her isolated house on the coast one stormy night, leads to a last ambiguous scene in a concert hall where victim and victimiser are seen listening to Schubert’s music. The discomfiting shot of the self-satisfied Miranda enjoying *Death and the Maiden* with his beautiful wife and sons, while Paulina and her husband wriggle uncomfortably in their seats obviously far from enjoying Schubert, suggests that the cathartic effect achieved with Miranda’s confession means nothing, for the monster has a greater capacity than the victim to forget his suffering.

Paulina’s incapacity to forget and forgive is increased by her husband’s hesitant support of her cause. Gerardo, a young university professor and leader of the student opposition who was then her lover, was the reason why the eighteen-year-old Paulina suffered torture almost twenty years before the night when accidentally Miranda reappears. The man whose name Paulina did not reveal then, is also the man chosen by the new democratic president to chair the commission in charge of listing the names of the missing persons. The grim irony of the situation is that Gerardo disagrees with Paulina’s suggestion that the names of those who suffered torture should be on this list, together with those of the dead. In Gerardo’s and the government’s view the vindication

of the survivors would not further the advance of the still fragile democracy. According to Gerardo, the survivors like Paulina must seek comfort in oblivion and not in revenge. When a stranger takes Gerardo home on that stormy night, far from forgiving, Paulina shows a bewildered Gerardo how justice is done when the victim cannot forget.

Paulina has an unusual chance to understand that taking justice in her hands leads only to her own destruction as a human being. She becomes for a while a monster herself, using her accidentally gained power over Miranda to physically and psychologically torture a defenceless man. The doubt as to Miranda's true identity, for Paulina has recognised him because of his voice since she was always blindfolded in his presence, is what makes the situation the more horrific. The possibility is suggested through Gerardo's point of view that Paulina has been simply driven mad by her suffering and that Miranda is an innocent victim. In this regard, *Death and the Maiden* is a story that presents a false moral dilemma. Although Dorfman implies that the victims blinded by their thirst for revenge can also make mistakes, Paulina must necessarily be right about Miranda despite his protestations of innocence, otherwise her transformation into a violent inquisitor would be simply unbearable for the spectator and would undermine the sympathy due to the victim. The casting of Sigourney Weaver as Paulina is in fact one of the most ambiguous points of the film, not only because she is not believable as a South American woman but also because of her physique. Weaver is a very tall woman and when she is seen on screen overpowering Miranda (Ben Kingsley) physically without much effort, it becomes apparent that the smaller, slighter Miranda could only have tortured her by using the extreme violence of state power. This might in fact be a positive aspect of her performance, implying that even those who look strong may be abused by those who are weaker. Yet, Weaver's popular image as Ellen Ripley in *Alien* adds an evident intertextual layer to Polanski's film, so that the spectator cannot help identifying Paulina with the resolute Ripley, Miranda with the alien monster and Pinochet's sinister government with the sinister, monopolistic Company that protects the monster in *Alien*.

Dr. Miranda, named after the compassionate onlooker rather than the monster in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is employed by the Chilean dictatorship initially to help the torturers determine the physical capacity of the victims to undergo further torture. What finally turns Miranda into a torturer is his perverse enjoyment of the trust his victims put in him, believing that, as a doctor, he is there to alleviate their suffering. When Paulina forces him to confess, Miranda acknowledges the pleasure he took in the horrified surprise of the victims who suddenly felt how the only man who could help them was in fact the worst of their torturers. However, Miranda refuses to see himself as inherently evil and insists on his compassionate nature: as far as he is concerned, he did save the lives of those who, like Paulina, would be on the lists of the dead if it were not for his advice to the torturers. The fact that achieving Paulina's salvation did not give him the right to rape her repeatedly is never accepted by Miranda and this deprives his confession of any value whatsoever. The most immediate effect of Miranda's denial of his guilt is the redoubled horror felt by Paulina: far from giving her the satisfaction she wants, the confession actually frees Miranda from the burden of secrecy and allows him to discuss the perverse pleasure he enjoyed when raping her. In the end, Miranda's personality is still an enigma, a horror Paulina must learn to endure for the sake of democracy and civilisation. The only advantage she gains from the encounter is the identification of Dr. Miranda as her anonymous torturer. Nevertheless, since men like Gerardo will prevent her from making use of that information in the courts of justice, her future will necessarily include a measure of horror and will require courage to face the

monster whenever they happen to meet again. As for Schubert's music, it seems clear at the end of the film that it belongs now to Miranda's barbaric civilisation and that Paulina can do nothing to retrieve it from Miranda's possession.

Oliver Stone's *Heaven and Earth* and Brian Gilbert's *Not without my Daughter* are adaptations of books that also reflect the personal suffering involved in a precarious political situation. Hayslip and Mahmoody are aware that their ordeals do have a symbolic value: *Le Ly is* all Vietnamese women, *Betty is* all the (American) women married to intransigent Muslims. Hence their vindication of humanity beyond political barriers and of womanhood, and especially of motherhood, to oppose men's lust for power in the home and in the nation. As far as their nationality is concerned, Hayslip and Mahmoody's positions must be diametrically antagonistic. Hayslip is a Vietnamese who became an American citizen by marriage and who successfully combined her country's spiritual heritage with the materialism of the USA; Mahmoody was trapped for almost two years in a foreign country, Khomeini's Iran, that she profoundly disliked, because of her marriage to an Iranian man whose Americanisation was only partly completed. For Hayslip, men's monstrosity is not a matter of nationality but of the power they gain over the innocent; for Mahmoody, the pull of his native culture determines the transformation of her husband Moody into a monster once he is back in his homeland. In any case, despite their different nationalities, Hayslip and Mahmoody share the experience of a marriage to a man from another culture who suddenly became a monster of power ready to take advantage of the fact that nobody could protect his wife from him.

Stone's *Heaven and Earth*, the first American film to deal with the Vietnam war through the eyes of a Vietnamese, was regarded as a sentimental melodrama in comparison to Stone's own *Born on the 4th July*. This film was also based on the memoirs of a victim of the Vietnam war, disabled veteran Ron Kovic, and discussed the horrors endured by the victimised American soldier. In fact *Heaven and Earth* cannot be said to be less horrific. Hayslip was repeatedly tortured by the Vietnamese government for being a Viet Cong fighter while only the transient moment of lust of the two Viet Cong executioners sent to kill her, and who raped her instead, saved her from death. All these events were faithfully rendered in the film, which supports a humanist sentimentalism that should not be mistaken for the exploitative sentimentalism of the tear-jerker in film or the novel. This humanist sentimentalism, which allows the reader or viewer to sympathise with the victim without neglecting the need to face the evil caused by the monster in power, is the same as that of *Schindler's List* and *Death and the Maiden*. Far from celebrating the pleasure of shedding tears for fictional characters, it invites readers and spectators to consider the position of the victims of recent historical and political events, asking those of us lucky enough to have escaped the horrors of twentieth-century history to shed tears for those real people who do deserve our compassion.

Le Ly Hayslip's autobiography—the two volumes *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (1989) written with Jay Wurst and *Child of War, Woman of Peace* (1993) co-written with her son James—describes how the horror caused by men can influence a woman's life beyond the barriers of culture and nation. Hayslip, a peasant girl in a small village in Central Vietnam, was recruited by the Viet Cong at the age of 12. The Viet Cong preached that the Vietnamese people had a right to free themselves from the foreign presence that had enslaved them for so long. This doctrine went well with the beliefs held by the oppressed peasants among which they found many sympathisers. Her first epiphanic moment of horror, narrated in *When Heaven and Earth*

Changed Places, is the realisation that the French troops she had identified with the demons of Vietnamese legends were not such, but men of another race: “Still, I did not find the knowledge comforting. It meant that people, not monsters, made war” (p. 18). Later, her torture and rape and the combined horrors of the Viet Cong’s reign of terror and the American invasion makes her see how these people are in fact monsters who have found in the Vietnamese peasants the ideal victim:

The war—these men—had finally ground me down to oneness with the soil, from which I could no longer be distinguished as a person. Dishonoured, raped and ruined for any decent man, my soiled little body had become its own grave ... Both sides in this terrible, endless *stupid* war had finally found the perfect enemy: a terrified peasant girl who would endlessly and stupidly consent to be their victim—as all Vietnam peasants had consented to be victims, from creation to the end of time! (p. 125, original emphasis)

The route that Hayslip chose to escape this situation was marriage to an American man and a new life in the USA, where she believed she would be finally safe. The irony was, though, that the USA did not bring the desired safety but a fresh round of abuse, this time from the American men in her life. At this point novel and film diverge considerably, for Oliver Stone decided to conflate Hayslip’s three American husbands and several lovers into a single character, Steve Butler, who stands symbolically for all of America. This symbolism is the main strength and the main flaw in the film for the character of Butler suffers from an overload of symbolic significance in comparison to the more realistic Le Ly. Butler, played by Tommy Lee Jones, is the monster of power as wish-fulfilment fantasy, a Beast in search of redemption from Beauty who is, thus, very far from irredeemable monsters like Goeth, Dr. Miranda or Dr. Mahmoody. He is another version of the captain Willard of *Apocalypse Now*, a man morally destroyed by his task as a secret CIA exterminator, who decides that his salvation lies in marriage to a victim, a Vietnamese woman. Finally realising that he cannot live in peace with her, her son by a previous lover and their own children, Butler tries to unload the burden of his guilt by confessing to a horrified Le Ly who he really is, not before threatening to kill her as once the two Viet Cong executioners did.

This moving confession was clearly written by Stone to exonerate those who, like Butler, had no choice but to take part in war crimes ordered by the US government, and scapegoats once more the American structure of power rather than the men who form it. Unlike Willard, Butler is beyond redemption and so, before Le Ly can offer any help at all, he kills himself, releasing himself but also her from his suffering. This distressed man suffering an agony of love and hate for the victims he sees represented by his Vietnamese wife is a moral giant in contrast to the men that Le Ly met in real life, among them her husband Dennis Hayslip, on whose suicide Stone based Steve’s death. Dennis, an abusive husband too fond of fire arms, had planned the death of Le Ly and her sons; the anger that this discovery caused in her is reflected in her extrapolation of her opinion about him to all men, in *Child of War, Woman of Peace*:

All the American men I had known—in Vietnam or America—become narrow-minded, petty and vindictive when they are angry. They didn’t know about women and didn’t respect them. I couldn’t believe such men had ever known a mother’s love: the love of a woman who brought them into this world. Such atrocities as I had witnessed in both countries could only be perpetrated by men with no awareness of the sacred origins of life. (p. 174)

Perhaps the greatest paradox in this case is that Hayslip accepted the help of a man, Oliver Stone—whom she describes as “a kindred spirit” (p. 359)—to reach the much bigger world audience that only films can reach. Hayslip’s interest in a world-wide audience for the film was the reason why she did not object to Stone’s creation of Steve Butler. She herself was one of the main consultants employed during the shooting of the film and her task, together with the chance to publicise her charity (the foundation East meets West devoted to raising money to improve the situation of many Vietnamese) proved satisfactory enough so as not to resent Butler’s presence in the film. Stone nevertheless showed great respect for Le Ly’s suffering, despite seeking to obtain through Butler a symbolic pardon for the brutality of many men that none of the men in Le Ly’s real life were granted or deserved. The Le Ly of Stone’s film survives Butler’s suicide and is seemingly made stronger by the new independence that his death gives her. Like the lawyer Anne in *The Music Box*, Le Ly learns to dissociate herself from the monster who once occupied an important place in her life. For him, there is no possible salvation.

In *Not Without my Daughter* Betty Mahmoody presents Iran as a barbarian land, as far away as possible geographically and emotionally from the USA. Her novel is rich in derogatory descriptions of the habits of Iranians at all levels, an aspect that the film softens considerably. While Le Ly Hayslip expresses wonderfully her amazement at America and at the deep contrast between the spirituality of the East and the materialism of the West, Mahmoody’s book is a narrative full of hardly disguised contempt and hatred. This is understandable in view of her tribulations in Iran, but which makes a dispassionate reading almost impossible. Gilbert’s adaptation lacks much of Mahmoody’s anger, especially because Sally Field plays the role of a naive, unsuspecting wife taken by surprise by her husband’s change, when in fact, the original Betty was aware of her husband’s less commendable traits. There is a shorter distance between Betty Mahmoody’s Iranian husband as she portrays him in her book and his portrait in the screen adaptation, despite the film’s failure to satisfactorily account for his sudden transformation into a brutal despot. Dr. Sayyed Bozorg Mahmoody, nicknamed Moody, is the incarnation of a deeply set American fear, namely, that the influence of the native land and culture may outweigh the integration to America of the immigrant, something which is seen as a betrayal of the trust put by the USA in the new American citizen. The fact that Mahmoody is, in addition, a Muslim who becomes a fanatical defender of Khomeini’s revolution and of his anti-Americanism certainly strengthens the horror that he inspires to Western audiences, even though in his abusive ill-treatment of his wife and daughter he does not differ from many Western men.

Once in Iran, the supposedly Americanised Moody becomes a patriarchal monster of power, exerting on his wife and four-year-old daughter all the violence he can muster. What makes the difference between his American and his Iranian self is his own view of legality: while the network of power in the USA is intolerant of abusive husbands and fathers, the legal system of Iran makes it possible for him to treat his properties—including his two women—as he likes. Thus, only Betty herself can see Moody as a monster, while for his Iranian relatives he is behaving in the expected fashion. In the novel, Betty tries initially to explore why the dormant rage in Moody, which she had only glimpsed in isolated moments in America, explodes in Iran, concluding that the atmosphere of the country and the pressure of his relatives had forced Moody to relinquish his American civilised self. Both the film and the novel deal thus with how easy it is for a Western woman protected by democratic legality to lose

everything—her freedom, her children, her right not to be abused—and become the victim of a truly terrifying persecution, designed to persuade her to let her daughter Mahtob become another victim of the sternest patriarchy. Far from being a feminist pamphlet, Mahmoody's book presents events from the point of view of a mother terrified by the possibility that her daughter could be degraded to a mere chattel in her father's possession and, in time, in her husband's. Her feminism is, like Hayslip's, the result of experience and not of an androphobic ideological stance derived from reading or from a feminist education.

The film's optimistic end, showing Betty and Mahtob entering the American embassy in Turkey and returning thus to democratic legality which also means the protection of the innocent, does not in fact respect the rather pessimistic tone of the novel's conclusion:

Mahtob and I now live with the reality that we may never be free from Moody's ability to lash out at us from nearly half a world away. His vengeance could fall upon us at any time, in person, or through the vehicle of one of his innumerable legions of nephews. Moody knows that if he could somehow spirit Mahtob back to Iran, the laws of his alien society would support him completely. (p. 36)

A 'fatwa' not unlike the one threatening the life of writer Salman Rushdie was actually launched against Mahmoody and her daughter, the paradox being that they have been also forced to live in hiding in a democratic country that cannot guarantee their protection. As happens to Paulina in *Death and the Maiden*, democracy means for Mahmoody learning to live in the shadow of the monster who abused his power over her. She may give his name and tell the story of how she survived her persecution, but she is not free from his presence yet. Ironically, Le Ly Hayslip found in the same USA where Betty Mahmoody lives the protection that had been denied to her by the communist government of her own country. She has given herself the power to undo the effects of Vietnamese and American monstrosity by telling her story, naming the monsters and bringing the former enemies face to face through her books and her foundation. Her task in favour of reconciliation seems to offer a positive solution to the problem of how the USA could heal the wound of Vietnam. But, as Stone indicated in his film, this healing passes first through listening to the servants of the system that caused the wound. The same can be said about all the other wounds caused by the monsters of power.

Conclusions

The monsters of power I have considered in this chapter are men who operate within a legal system of power, usually backed by a dictatorial state that does not guarantee the rights of individuals nor human rights. Alternatively, the monster of power may operate within any of the pockets of corruption that can also be found within democracy. This suggests that all structures of power, including democracy, breed monsters. The films and novels in which they appear borrow many conventions from Gothic fiction, especially the plot of persecution of an innocent by a man who wields an inordinate amount of power and the strategies of displacement by which contemporary political conflicts are discussed without direct references to concrete situations. These monsters of power are moral monsters who combine the best of civilisation and the worst of the barbarian. What distinguishes them from the individual moral monster is

that the civilised barbarians employ all their dormant potential to do evil only within corrupt systems, mostly as servants rather than masters or self-made men. The main doubt regarding the civilised barbarian is whether he builds the systems of power that accommodate him, corrupting even democracy, or whether there are structures of power even in democracy that thrive by exploiting the darkest side of apparently good, ordinary men.

All the films and novels I have examined are implicit or explicit defences of democratic, liberal values. The examination of the contradictions implicit in democracy clarifies the points stressed in the denunciation of antidemocratic values. Thus, the position of the USA in Vietnam has certainly conditioned the dramatisation of the conflict between the innocent individual who trusts democracy to protect the innocent and those who betray this trust. The issue most frequently discussed in contemporary films and novels dealing with the monster of power is how an individual may become part of the machinery of horror of real or imaginary tyrannical states. Almost all these texts consider how the servants of the evil systems of power are recruited from the ranks of average men and the perplexity of their victims in the face of the evil acts they commit. However, portraying the monster of power in his own voice and from his own point of view, as has been done in the case of the moral monster, is still extremely difficult due to the negative political interpretations these texts might receive.

Most of the films and novels that I have analysed in this chapter describe the contrast between the 'normality' of the victims and the 'abnormality' of the torturer, though most defend the existential view that the monsters of power are not born but made by circumstances. They are unexceptional individuals who form, and are formed by, the system for which they work. Hardly any of these men shows any sign of remorse or repentance, not even when they acknowledge their evil acts after being positively identified by their victims. Their exposure or their confessions do not offer satisfactory explanations about their personalities or their acts, though they usually enhance the horror felt by the closely attached observer or the victim. The self-complacent dehumanisation of the monster of power who does not fear the consequences of his acts is a sign of the unreliability of the systems of legal, democratic power to protect the innocent and the rights of the individual. Most of these novels and films vindicate the victims' right to name and accuse the torturer, the abuser; they also vindicate an end to anonymity for the victim of atrocities committed in the name of politics and power, who deserves compassion and respect rather than oblivion among a mass of faceless bodies. Possibly, much more is to be said about the great suffering caused by the monsters of power in reality before they can be portrayed in fiction as fully human beings rather than as Gothic villains of deceptive identity.

CHAPTER 6 Frankenstein's Capitalist Heirs: The Uses of Making Monsters

6.0. Introduction

A number of recent American science-fiction films and novels which derive directly or indirectly from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* deal with the manufacture of monsters for profit. These texts are usually set in a dystopian near future when the expansion of late capitalism has caused the political and the economic system to merge, forming a single structure of power. The technophobic discourse pervading these films and novels is partly derived from the romantic defence of the monstrous individual manufactured by science, represented by the amateurish Victor Frankenstein, and partly from the replacement of the technologically successful, socialist utopia by a dystopian view of the future best exemplified by the work of three British writers: H.G. Wells and his two most immediate heirs, Aldous Huxley and George Orwell.

Instead of reflecting a general view of society, the American films and novels analysed in this chapter often focus on the confrontation between an individualistic hero/ine, who may even be a monster, and one of the authoritarian, capitalist regimes of the fictional near future, sometimes embodied in the person of a powerful tycoon. It is not infrequent for the lonely hero/ine to reject both the tycoon's capitalist discourse and the underground resistance movements composed by all those marginalized minorities that do not play relevant roles in the current economical system. Despite their apparent call to rebellion against the power of capitalism to manufacture hostile monsters or to turn the innocent into monsters, these technophobic, dystopian films and novels are at heart conservative and specifically anti-revolutionary. Their potential political content is short-circuited by the fact that they are themselves products of the very capitalist system they apparently criticize. Actually, a great deal of their popular appeal lies precisely in their capacity to sell a carefully measured illusion of subversion against the current systems of economic power. The main idea preached by these American texts, that only individual solutions to the conflict between the harassed individual and technological capitalism are valid, seems to please large numbers of spectators and readers little interested in taking political action against the economic system that is currently most the widely supported in the world.

Both the human and the non-human monsters created by Frankenstein's contemporary heirs are manufactured to serve practical purposes. The monsters are workers (actually slaves) employed in hazardous tasks within programmes of space exploration, military defence, or both. These are said to require pseudo-human or non-human bodies incapable of feeling emotions that are but a hindrance for their jobs. As can be easily guessed, many of these narratives concern the frustrated rebellion of the slave, soon quenched by an individualistic hero/ine; in other cases, the attempted rebellion results from the monstrous slave's awakening to a new awareness of his or her own condition, resulting in his or her personal liberation without further political or social consequences. The few exceptions to these rules are monsters developed to

explore the human mind through the alternative, artificial models of intelligence man himself can create. All these films and novels imply that the advance of technology will inevitably lead to the creation of sentient artificial minds that may threaten man's supremacy and to the manipulation of the bodies and minds of the innocent humans exploited by capitalism. Therefore, it can be said that the alliance between capitalism and science rather than the idea of scientific progress is the basis of their technophobic, dystopian stance. Nevertheless, these cautionary tales warning us against the wrong uses of science also express worries closely linked to the fear of losing our privileged position as a species, similar to those I analysed in Chapter 3 in relation to the hostile extraterrestrial monsters. This is why when man succeeds in creating the superman, as happens in *Blade Runner*, s/he must be eliminated for no other reason than the fact that s/he threatens the human creator's sovereignty.

Frankenstein's romantic search for answers to his query about the meaning of life and death is typically reduced in most of these texts to a mere search for the practical applications of science and technology when they are prostituted to the interests of the military and business elites. The role of Victor Frankenstein is habitually assumed in the fiction of the 1980s and 1990s by a rebellious genius on the payroll of a corporation or government agency that manipulates his work. In a few exceptional cases he may be an independent inventor, though this is a model clearly on the wane. Frankenstein's heirs are, nevertheless, not always heroic. The unsympathetic, compliant scientist—a salaried employee who approves without any ethical qualms his employer's pragmatic, unscrupulous exploitation of science and technology—is derived from the representation of Frankenstein as a villainous mad doctor. A few novels and films also deal with the figure of the tycoon as monster-maker, usually represented as a mixture of heroic and villainous romantic traits. The insistence on representing the anonymous corporation of late capitalism through a paternalistic figure may seem contradictory. However, the punishment of the tycoon by his own creation actually enacts a secret fantasy of aggression against the father and by extension against all authority: the tycoon of fiction is, in short, a scapegoat.

6.1. Technophobic Dystopia and the Myth of the Underground Resistance

6.1.1. The Limits of Dystopia and Technophobia

"The phenomenon of utopian discourse", Tom Moylan (1986: 2) writes, "is world-wide". Despite the many instances of early utopias, including the Garden of Eden, Moylan remarks that "the specific Western tradition of the literary utopia is generally agreed to have originated with Thomas More's *Utopia* in 1516 and has continued down to the 'critical utopias'" (ibid.: 2), such as the 1970s feminist science-fiction utopias. According to Moylan (ibid.: 4):

Utopia grew up with capitalism and the new world as its godparents while the underlying social and personal yearnings and sufferings were its immediate progenitors. Midwifed by authors of many persuasions and abilities, utopia has both reinforced the emerging economic order and attacked it as the official promises failed to meet the real needs of people's lives.

Between the 1880s and the 1920s, when the division between the utopia of capitalism and the utopia of Soviet socialism was consolidated, a number of writers initially used utopia to resist the increasing power of capital and to support socialism. However, growing pessimism about the possibilities of controlling the direction of economics and politics and the incorporation of the utopian discourse into capitalism and communism soon led to a gradual replacement of utopia by dystopia.

Dystopia—mainly articulated in science fiction derived from H.G. Wells’ works—became therefore a tool to criticize the fallacy of that utopia which both capitalism and communism claimed to have achieved, whereas utopia was progressively deprived of its potential to dispute the values of the predominant system of power and to offer alternatives. For Alexandra Aldridge (1984: ix) the dystopian novel “is not literally anti-scientific or anti-technological in the sense that it represents machine phobia. Instead, its authors are, more accurately, anti-scientistic”. Aldridge adds that the fiction produced by dystopian authors such as Wells is a criticism of the replacement of the “humanist ethos with a scientific/technological one” and that dystopia criticizes in fact not science but “the scientizing of society” (ibid.: ix). She dates dystopia as far back as archaic antiquity and cites as instances of early dystopias the ideas of Hades and Hell, emerging in response to the pastoral, utopian fantasy of the Garden of Eden. As I noted in chapters 1 and 3, Hades and Hell are creations of the worldview dominated by the masculinist myth of the hunter that deny the Earth goddess’s power to renew life by identifying her with the realm of death. It could be said, thus, that from the very beginning of culture, utopia (paradise) is marked ‘male’ and dystopia (hell) ‘female’. There has been, however, an important reversal of values in this regard, so that currently there is a division between ‘male’ science and technology, linked to apocalyptic destruction, and ‘female’ technophobia and conservationism, linked to a return to paradise. This reversal has taken place in the last two hundred years, since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. It can be said that Romanticism and the emergence of science fiction with *Frankenstein* are the first ideological, literary responses to the breaking down of the traditional values associated to masculinity and femininity, and also to nature and science. On the other hand, utopia and dystopia are also characterized by the respective absence and presence of the monster in them, and by the identification of the monster with masculinity. In feminist utopian science fiction the exclusion of the monster from paradise is often assimilated to the exclusion of man from women’s utopia. The male monster at the centre of dystopian discourse clearly signifies an exhaustion of the patriarchal foundations of contemporary science and technology and the confusion felt by contemporary man in the face of the problematic legacy handed down to him by patriarchy.

The strategy of displacement typical of Gothic fiction is partly linked to that of utopia. While in utopia the discussion of the concerns of the present is displaced towards an imaginary, ideal ‘somewhere else’, in contemporary dystopia these concerns are translated typically into a bleak near future characterized by man’s uncontrollable scientific manipulation of life. Within this context Brian Aldiss’ suggestion (op. cit.: 3) that *Frankenstein* (1818) is the first science-fiction novel makes absolute sense: Mary Shelley’s novel inaugurates a romantic, Gothic, technophobic, dystopian discourse on the dangers of science and technology created and mishandled by man which is the staple of a great part of contemporary science fiction. However, when Aldiss notes that science fiction is “characteristically cast in the Gothic or post-Gothic mould” (ibid.: 8) he is only partly right, for actually his observation applies mainly to postmodernist, dystopian science fiction, but excludes earlier utopian science fiction. Aldiss notes that

the Romantics were the first generation “to enjoy that enlarged vision of time—to this day still expanding—without which science fiction is perspectiveless, and less itself” (ibid.: 3). Yet he does not question to what extent science fiction as conceived by Mary Shelley and practised by her heirs is not only “the search for a definition of man and his status in the universe which will stand in our advanced but confused state of knowledge (science)” (ibid.: 3), but also a necessarily dystopian, androphobic discourse which makes utopia implicitly feminine. The fact that *Frankenstein* deals with the scientist’s usurpation of the female power to create life by natural means has an immense importance as regards the way in which gender roles are discussed in contemporary science fiction. In fact, it could be said that one of the main preoccupations in feminist science fiction is the search for a technology that enables women to reproduce themselves without men’s participation, in a utopian reversal of Frankenstein’s misogynistic misuse of science.

Science fiction was at first regarded as a utopian genre simply because the displacement towards the future of immediate uncertainties gave scope for “some hope for a better life” (Moylan, op. cit.: 35). Even though the modern dystopian current begins in 1895 with Wells’ *The Time Machine*, the utopian mood in science fiction lasted mainly until after World War II. From the 1950s onwards the dystopian discourse has been steadily growing within science fiction. The noun ‘dystopian’ itself was apparently coined by J.S. Mill in 1867, but was forgotten until J. Max Patrick ‘reinvented’ it in 1952, meaning the opposite not of utopia (‘nowhere’) but of eutopia, the ideal society (Aldridge, op. cit.: 8). Now it can be said without a doubt that most science fiction is dystopian and that it takes mainly the form of the cautionary, technophobic tale first enunciated by *Frankenstein*. Indeed, Wells’ own retelling of Frankenstein, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) contributed to the gradual transformation of man’s manipulation of natural life by science and technology into one of the main dystopian subjects in our days.

The twentieth-century utopia is based mainly on the successful application of science to achieving total control over nature. Science and technology are part of the capitalist and socialist utopias, yet while technophobic dystopia has been extremely rare in the communist block, capitalist Western societies have viewed with suspicion the increasing power attained by the scientists, especially in alliance with capitalism, and have reflected their fears in dystopian science fiction. To judge from the early example of Eugene Zamiatin’s *We* (1924), which was first published in an English translation in the USA following the relentless persecution of the author by the Soviet state, one of the reasons why there is no communist dystopia is the fact that dystopia was not tolerated in the USSR. Zamiatin’s dystopic view, Aldridge notes, was formed against his own bitter experience of the power of totalitarian bureaucracy and “against what he believed to be the perverse notion permeating Soviet policy, namely that the scientific world view was an end in itself, and that the process of revolution, having hardened into scientific dogma, had stopped” (ibid.: 32). According to Robert Scholes and Eric S. Rabkin (1977: 35 in Aldridge, ibid.: 66), Zamiatin’s work is at the root of the two main dystopian novels of the twentieth century in English, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell’s *1984* (1948):

Huxley took Zamiatin’s dystopian fable and made it more responsive to the impact of technological change. Orwell made the fable even more narrowly concerned with politics and power. The tendency among later British and American writers of dystopian fiction is to assume that technological and biological processes have got

beyond governmental control and will effectively shape human life regardless of the nominal system of government.

The appropriation of the scientific and technological resources by groups that engineer forms of social control leading inevitably to totalitarianism, regardless of whether they are willingly embraced as in *Brave New World* or opposed as in *1984*, soon became and still is one of the main subjects of contemporary popular fiction—both film and novels, American and British.

Critics such as Moylan and Wolmark believe that the survival of utopia into this dystopian future adumbrated by contemporary science fiction depends mainly on a renewal of science fiction coming from so far marginalised groups such as women. Despite his optimism, Moylan concludes, nonetheless, that “in the twentieth century it has become necessary to destroy utopia in order to save it” (ibid.: 46). According to him, Joanna Russ’ *The Female Man* “smuggled utopia into the dystopian world of the latter half of our century and initiated the revival and transformation of utopia in the 1970s” (ibid.: 157). Russ’ work was not a pioneering effort—it had been preceded by Dorothy Bryant’s *The Kin of Ata are Waiting for You* (1971) and Ursula K. LeGuin’s *The Dispossessed* (1974)—but it consolidated the achievements of feminist science fiction. Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), Suzy McKee Charnas’ *Motherlines* (1978) and Sally Miller Gearhart’s *The Wanderground* (1978) were the most important titles to follow Russ in the construction of a feminist utopian world. In this world utopia and the return to paradise was likened to an androphobic exclusion of men, who remained in enclosed spaces while the women returned to the countryside to live in idyllic, pastoral women-only communities. As Jenny Wolmark notes (1994: 4), “the confidently depicted separatist utopias of the 1970s... contained many ambiguities about gender relations, and this has become increasingly obvious as more recent versions of women-only communities confront the essentialist nature of those utopias”. In later novels, such as Sheri Tepper’s *The Gate to Women’s Country* (1988) and Pamela Sargent’s *The Shore of Women* (1986), utopian and dystopian elements are mixed and the values of enclosure and liminality reversed. In the scenario of these two novels, post-holocaust women-only societies have shifted “the burden of otherness ... from women to men. The narratives explain that men are excluded from positions of power as a consequence of their direct responsibility for the cataclysm” (Wolmark, ibid.: 88). As can be inferred, the feminist utopias of the 1980s and 1990s fail to account for the role of women as a scientist in the contemporary world, narrowly identifying contemporary science and technology with patriarchy. As a general rule, it can be said that while science fiction written by men deals with the negative effects of misused science and technology on humankind as a whole, science fiction written by women explores how technology and science taken away from men’s control can alter traditional gender roles mainly thanks to the alteration of reproductive strategies. Feminist science fiction in fact imagines a utopian space in which women may act as scientists for their own benefit, without man’s intervention and using science and technology only in measured ways to improve their bodies and to reproduce themselves.

Science-fictional utopia and dystopia intersect against the background not only of feminism but also, more generically, of postmodernism, which simultaneously exalts and rejects science and technology. It is evident, Wolmark (ibid.: 1) observes, that “in recent years science fiction as a whole has been increasingly identified with such postmodernist concerns as the instability of social and cultural categories, the erosion of confidence in historical narratives and a seemingly concomitant inability to imagine the

future". The theoretical narratives elaborated by critics such as Jameson and Baudrillard to explain the terminal sense of history of postmodernity and the confusion of the simulacra and the real, show that the new task of science fiction in postmodernity is similar to that of postmodernist theory, namely, "to re-invent the real as fiction, from within the hyper-real" (Wolmark, op. cit.: 14). Science fiction can be said, accordingly, to have been shaped by postmodernism and to be shaping postmodernism; indeed, the conventions of the genre have been borrowed by many mainstream writers and film makers and a great deal of mainstream experimentation is now of current use in science-fiction texts. However, the insistence of postmodernist critics on the dissolution of the self and on the rejection of traditional narratives elaborated to fix the self in history have left other currents, such as utopian science fiction stranded in minority cultural spaces. The utopian currents which have arisen precisely in opposition to postmodernism's nihilism, can hardly be heard in a panorama dominated by postmodernist narratives written mostly by men that announce an inevitably dystopian future for all, moving nearer and nearer to the present, from which it is impossible to see the future in a long term perspective.

Feminist critics such as Wolmark suggest that the intersection between the most recent science-fictional mode generated by men—cyberpunk—and feminism may be the key to restoring the balance between utopia and dystopia. Cyberpunk, a current within science fiction which began in the early 1980s with the work of William Gibson, deals with the contacts between the world of illegality and technoscience. It is fiction populated by marginal groups who trade illegally in technology used mainly to modify human bodies and in information illegally retrieved from the cyberspace, the virtual space in which all computer transactions takes place. Cyberpunk portrays, so to speak, the underside of the capitalist world of corporate business and is critical of patriarchal technoscience, though possibly less politically subversive than feminist science fiction. In Wolmark's view (ibid.: 110) cyberpunk and feminism share a common opposition to the apocalyptic tone of most recent science fiction and view the future with a mixture of utopian and dystopian feelings:

Cyberpunk explores the interface between human and machine in order to focus on the general question of what it means to be human; feminist science fiction has explored that interface, but in order to challenge those universalist and essentialist metaphors about 'humanity' which avoid confronting existing and unequal power relations.

However interested cyberpunk writers are in blurring the barriers between human and machine, questioning accordingly the binary opposition between them, this is not the same as questioning gender identities against a technoscientific background. There are few women working within the field of cyberpunk—Pat Cadigan is one of the few exceptions—and, in general, it can be said that the current technological expansion of the systems of information through computers and the Internet, on which cyberpunk is based, attracts the attention of many more men than women. On the other hand, men such as the film director James Cameron and the writers Orson Scott Card and Robert McCammon, are writing utopian post-apocalyptic scenarios in which women or values closely associated to women, such as the sharing of experiences in communal life, play an important role. It can be said that the technophobic, androphobic position has been widely accepted and that, given the progressive incorporation of women into the world of science and the progressive entrenchment of conservatism in the Western world,

speaking of utopia and dystopia in terms of gender roles will soon cease to make sense. The reconstruction of utopia and the end of this pervading dystopia, whose edge is being quickly blurred by its very omnipresence, may indeed come from women, who are still at the margins of science fiction. However, women will not move to the centre as long as they persist in writing feminist, androphobic utopias instead of joining the men who also oppose the dehumanising domain of technology through cyberpunk or through a more humanist version of science fiction.

The science-fiction films and novels analysed in this chapter belong to the phase of science-fiction that begins in the 1950s, marked by a dystopian mistrust of scientists and by the loss of science fiction's earlier prophetic, optimistic tone. All these texts have adapted to modern science the paradigm inaugurated by *Frankenstein*, with hardly any further intellectual reflection on the ethical dilemmas this novel proposes. There are infinite variations on the subject, yet the variations do not seem to be leading to a substantially new type of science fiction for the late twentieth century. They repeat to a great extent—especially in films—plots already familiar from the pulps and the 1950s monster film. In general terms it can be said that most of these texts reveal a rather dubious ignorance of what is actually happening in the domain of science and technology, which is not surprising considering that they are written mainly by humanists rather than scientists. Within science fiction itself there is currently a debate between the defenders of so-called 'hard' science fiction, for which scientific and technological soundness is a must, and the supporters of so-called 'soft' science fiction, for which the individual and not the technology must play the essential role. Implicit in this debate, there is another debate about the need to abandon the humanist, technophobic stance and return to the utopian optimism of early science fiction from a fresh point of view and at a moment when science fiction commands a much greater cultural respectability.

What nevertheless marks the real difference between past dystopian science fiction and the current cycle is, above all, the intrusion of technology into the narrative media. Most of these technophobic tales are narrated to mass audiences whose daily lives are shaped by science and technology in positive and negative ways, and who are aware of this reality. The expansion and worldwide success of technophobic narratives is paradoxically due to the advances of technology; multimedia narratives packaged simultaneously for film, video, novel, video-game and comics format require a familiarisation with technology thoroughly enjoyed by the younger generations which seems in contradiction with the anti-scientific position of those who produce them. In films this is most markedly so. The lavish special effects employed in Hollywood blockbusters to visualize the monster born of the misuse of science actually celebrate technological progress, to the point that in many cases the use of technology ends up devouring the technophobic content of the plot. The technophobia of these films is, thus, in glaring contradiction with their own flaunting of special effects. The novels—especially cyberpunk novels—rely increasingly on the reader's familiarisation with technoscientific jargon, even if that is only the jargon invented for each novel; in many cases, they are hardly penetrable for the computer illiterates or for those used to reading exclusively literary fiction.

The many positive achievements of science and technology in real life are usually slighted by contemporary writers and filmmakers because it seems impossible to deal with them from a positive point of view without connoting connivance with the unpopular technocracy. The technophobic discourse of these films and novels preaches that science leads inevitably to disaster because it is intrinsically harmful or, more

frequently, because it can be manipulated by the villains. There is a marked preference for technophobic, dystopian narratives, seemingly confirming the generalised impression that man himself has created the means to produce 'apocalypse now'. Yet it is certainly difficult to account for the fact that many people invest time and money in seeing films and reading novels that proclaim the immediate arrival of a grim, hopeless future, while living in comfort in technologically advanced societies.

Why, indeed, are people fond of being told the same story that Mary Shelley narrated two hundred years ago, enlarged to span not only the life and death of the monster but all of humankind's? There are several answers to this question. One is that the 1980s and 1990s are no doubt marked by an apocalyptic tone due to the development of nuclear weapons and the fear of diseases such as AIDS. The present situation of permanent crisis—possibly more acute since 1973 and the Oil Crisis—is reflected in the belief that these are decadent times leading to a decadent future or to the punk movement's prophecy of 'no future' for the world. Yet, there is another answer to the question: cautionary tales of this kind are enjoyed because technophobia is actually a fantasy created to compensate for a collective sense of guilt, in view of our privileged position as privileged citizens of technologically advanced societies.

As Fredric Jameson (1991: 384) writes, apocalyptic films like *Mad Max*, *The Terminator* or *Blade Runner*, do not mean "the breakdown of high technology in a future time of troubles, but its conquest in the first place ... what such films actually give us to consume are not those flimsy prognoses and dystopian meteorological bulletins but rather high technology itself". Audiences who applaud the spectacular special effects of films and readers who enjoy cyberpunk fiction cannot be as technophobic as the popularity and endurance of the Frankenstein myth suggests. This does not mean that people have not actually internalised obvious fears about the misuse and the limits of science and technology—the threat of nuclear war is real, and so are the devastating effects of AIDS. The constant rehearsal of apocalypse in fiction is cast in a romantic mould that distances the viewer/reader as member of a community from the actual possibility of his or her being a victim of a communal disaster. What is at stake is, in fact, the survival of the individual before the onslaught of forces that threaten to blend it into the anonymous community. This is why Aldridge (op. cit.: 17) claims that "in outlook, the dystopian novel is close to the mainstream modern novel. That is, the dystopian novel also dramatizes individualist, modernist themes—isolation, spiritual and emotional emptiness, alienation. What distinguishes it from the mainstream is its specific concentration on the alienating effects of science and technology". In short, the postmodernist dystopian novel—science fiction or mainstream—descends from Romanticism and Modernism and is only capable of understanding science and technology to the extent that they affect the individual. Dystopia is born of the inability or of the incompetence to think in social, solidary terms and is, therefore, typical of selfish, privileged segments of society concerned with the loss of conservative individualistic values. This means that dystopian narratives are especially appealing for those who fear, above all, the dissolution of the self reluctantly proclaimed by postmodernism: the dystopian texts prove that they are right in their pessimism, yet the re-valorisation of the heroic, victimized individual in these films and novels reassures their audiences that individualistic romanticism is still the main value, even if one has to become a monster to champion it.

Despite the early examples of H.G. Wells, Aldous Huxley and the first wave of respectable science-fiction writers in the 1950s, dystopia definitively enters science fiction in the 1960s when it ceases being a minority genre and gains cultural

respectability, thanks to writers such as Philip K. Dick and filmmakers such as Stanley Kubrick. In Adrian Mellor's certainly controversial opinion this change from marginalisation to respectability took place only when science fiction ceased to "embrace science and technology, and to view the future with optimism" (1984: 39). He adds that:

To the extent that it abandoned this world view, embracing instead the values of pessimism and tragic despair, so was it in turn embraced by the 'dominated fraction' of the dominant class. For the 'tragic vision', whose origins can clearly be discerned in SF from the 1950s onwards, is itself expressive of core values of the educated middle class.

Mellor further argues that the retreat into pessimism was seen by the dominated fraction of capitalism's dominant class "as a maturation, a welcome end to the isolation enforced upon a subculture by virtue of its faith in the future" (ibid.: 39). The end of the isolation of science fiction in the 1960s and 1970s led to the popularisation of dystopia. At least fifty-two Anglo-American science-fiction films set wholly or in part in some distinctly future time and released between 1970 and 1982 display "future societies ruled by some form of conspiracy, monopoly, or totalitarian apparatus" (Franklin, 1990: 31). In the 1980s and 1990s, dystopia is even taken for granted, accepted without any fuss by the working classes, because it is one of the many values seeping down the social classes in the ongoing process of assimilation of all classes into an all-encompassing consumer class. Mellor's supposition that dystopia is essentially middle-class is in accord with Jameson's idea that contemporary Gothic, of which dystopia is a sibling if not a child, deals with the anxieties of the American middle class. Yet, Jameson himself does not explain how the works of mass culture, which according to him (1990: 29) "cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well" have ceased to be utopian becoming not only dystopian but also ideologically confused and confusing. Indeed his view that the works of 'mass culture', whatever is meant by this terminology, "cannot manipulate unless they offer some genuine shred of content as a fantasy bribe to the public about to be so manipulated" (ibid.: 29), applies not to mass culture but, above all, to feminist science fiction.

This reflection directs us to a turning point in the discussion of the new versions of *Frankenstein*, concerning the ideology they espouse. This is, as I have noted, a conservative, romantic defence of individualism, paradoxical as this might sound, grounded on the contradictions inherent to the current economic system. Technophobia, as Ryan and Kellner (1990: 65) argue, places conservatism in a dilemma:

One antinomy of conservatism is that it requires technology for its economic programme, yet it fears technological modernity on a social and cultural plane. This can be read as a sign of the dilemma conservatives faced in the 1980s. In control of political and economic life, they could not gain power in the private realm of social values that on the whole continued to be more liberal.

These neo-*Frankenstein* fables give an illusion of liberal subversion in that private realm that cannot be reached by conservatism; yet the effect of that illusion is either dispelled immediately or bounded precisely by the limits of each person's social sensitivity. By sympathizing with the individualistic, romantic hero/ine, audiences and readers enjoy the illusion that their personal freedom is what matters most, though they

are obviously aware of being bound by powerful systems not unlike those which threaten the hero/ine. Thus, a positive ending—the typical conclusion by which the hero/ine avenges him or herself of the abuse s/he has received from technoscientists—offers a hope for an eventual return of utopia which pleases the majority in this dystopian times; a negative ending—in which typically the hero/ine discovers there is another battle to fight against the system of power—confirms the generalised view that the romantic individual is imprisoned by the structures of power, a view perfectly compatible with the belief in dystopia and the hope for a return of utopia. Dystopia succeeds simultaneously in convincing people that there is no solution to the ills of the 1980s and 1990s and that a solution will be found by courageous individuals for themselves if not for all. Hence its strength within both a conservative and a liberal political discourse: it pleases the romantic side of conservative and of liberal alike. The current dystopian discourse is dystopian despite itself, and since it would much rather be romantically utopian, it can appeal to both those who do believe in dystopia and those who hope for utopia.

The ideological discourse against the abuses of capitalism recurs in many science-fiction films and novels. But since most of these narratives deal with an indefinite near future and speculative matters that might well never arise (such as the use of humaniform robots as a slave labour force) this anti-capitalist discourse cannot be applied to the most immediate concerns of the audience. It can be said that these narratives are ideologically manipulative of their audiences and readers because they deny the very existence of a social, political or economic ideology in the name of democracy and individualism. Their message is a message in favour of inaction, leading no further than the private realm of the romantic individual to which it is addressed. After having seen a film such as *Alien*, which portrays the threat posed to the salaried worker's life by the treacherous alliance between corporate business and militaristic interests, the salaried worker in the audience is expected to buy the video-game and the toy models and to see the sequels, but not to apply for membership of a union or political party. This is so despite the fact that films like *Alien* that deal with the figure of the overexploited salaried employee are quite exceptional. The most important ideological manipulation of dystopian texts is, thus, the insistence on a retreat to a personal world, away from all forms of joint social action. This might be in itself a sign of the exhaustion of the democratic liberal model in an especially conservative period in which there has been a steady decline of the individual's involvement in politics at any level, partly motivated by the pessimistic impression that nothing can alter the system.

This romantic individualism exalted by dystopian narratives is not that of the romantic Frankenstein who tries to overcome human boundaries, but its American, conservative version. The exceptional struggle of the romantic individual to achieve the extraordinary even if it leads to catastrophe—which is the basis of the first edition of Frankenstein—has been replaced by the reluctant engagement of the ordinary American hero/ines (who are sometimes monstrous) of the 1980s and 1990s in facing an extraordinary threat that momentarily bars their return to an ordinary existence. Frankenstein is more often the villain than the romantic monster-maker in America. Despite the fact that these films and novels deal with the ordeal of monsters created to be slaves or with ordinary people who encounter dangerous monsters because of their jobs, there is no sense of class struggle in them. The economic system—multinational capitalism—is not seen in these narratives as exploitative of its workers in the Marxist sense but as a monster that threatens to turn the individual into a dehumanized cog in the machine.

The dehumanisation of the worker who was forced to perform a repetitive, mindless activity and swallowed by the monstrous machine in Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), is now more thorough. Both his mind and his body are literally made or remade by capitalism in secrecy so that the enormous extent of the abuse endured by the individual worker transforms him or her into a monster, presumably too horrified to publicise his or her ordeal. The system itself is always left untouched, following the tradition of American popular fiction. In this, in Leslie Friedman's words (1993: 7), "the archetypal American hero remains the rugged loner who fights for personal rights and individual freedoms, not the union organizer who battles for a better hourly wage or the factory worker who struggles against the bosses". Friedman attributes this individualistic position to the lack of class consciousness in the USA, reflected in the classless ideals and individual initiatives of most American genre films:

The point ... is to defeat evil individuals, not to question, reform or destroy the basic system that spawned them. In essence, the traditional American films see evil-doers as an aberration of a basically healthy society. They remain outside that society, intrinsically different from the mainstream and rarely signifying some internal social flaw that must be altered by fact or deed. Once they are dispatched, life returns to normal. (ibid.: 7)

But does it? The films and novels increasingly reflect an awareness that this normality does not exist, especially in the cases of those who have been transformed into monsters and survived the ordeal. When normality is represented in fiction at all, it seems to be more fictional and less believable than the pervading dystopia of recent films and novels, for there is always the paranoid suspicion that the monster lurking in the shadows will enter normality and destroy it again and again.

6.1.2. The Myth of the Underground Resistance Movement

Now, at the end of the twentieth century and in a moment of consolidation of multinational capitalism, and as happened at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution,

The individual comes to see himself at the mercy of forces which in fundamental ways elude his understanding. Under such circumstances, it is hardly surprising to find the emergence of a literature whose key motifs are paranoia, manipulation and injustice, and whose central project is understanding the inexplicable, the taboo, the irrational. (Punter, 1980: 127)

From the American point of view the inexplicable is firstly, why the American capitalist dream is becoming the American nightmare for so many, and secondly, why a country whose culture is based on the defence of individuality is doing so little for the defenceless individual harassed by economic forces. The American political-economic system of power that has led to aberrations such as the nuclear arms race is perceived in these dystopian texts as a monolithic entity that no individual can really undermine. Rebellion and resistance are presented in scarcely positive terms, except when what is at stake is individual survival. Thus, the story of the replicant Roy's rebellion in *Blade Runner* (1982), which involves the attempt of a group of humanoids to free themselves from slavery, is only told in its final phase, that of his defeat. Much is made in the film of the danger that he and his group of fellow humanoids represent, and about their

hunters' lack of compassion, yet, despite Roy's romantic death, it is never suggested that his suffering will necessarily lead the human masters to reconsider the rights of the slave workers.

Underground revolutionaries are not always doomed like Roy, but the plots tend to avoid showing them in action. John Connor is the leader of humankind in a future war against the machines that is portrayed in *The Terminator* (1984), yet his activities as a warrior are only depicted in a recently released video-game, not in the original film and its sequel. In the first *Terminator*, Connor appears as a shadow sending his own father to engender him back in 1984—the date when the film was made but also a date of Orwellian overtones. In *Terminator 2* (1991), Connor is still a ten-year-old child. His mother Sarah is said to have trained with the guerrillas in Central America and to have carried out a terrorist attack against the corporation Cyberdine. However, she is not depicted as the leader of a group but rather as a lonely, quite ineffective revolutionary. In the brief episode in Mexico, she dons combat gear and shows John the arsenal he will have to use eventually, but when it comes to carrying out some truly combative action—killing the scientist who will develop the thinking machines of the future—she simply collapses in tears. The female legend and her son are in fact so helpless that they must be aided by the old Terminator conveniently reprogrammed by the future John. At the end of the film one is left with the impression that they will be too busy surviving to become leaders at all.

Many recent films and novels dealing with the evils of capitalism portray underground resistance movements, among them not only *The Terminator* but also the novels *Neuromancer*, *Body of Glass*, and the films *Robocop 3*, *Total Recall* and *Demolition Man*. Similar organizations were also present in the dystopian future of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and in Orwell's *1984*. In Lang's film, a woman's (or simply, woman's) call for reconciliation between employers and workers in the name of Christian values heals the breach opened by the capitalist's malicious use of a female robot to arouse the anger of the masses so as to have a excuse to crush their resistance. Oddly enough, this sentimental solution strongly recalls that which Elizabeth Gaskell offered in her 1854 novel *North and South* through the figure of her heroine Margaret Hale, even though Lang's capitalist is, unlike Gaskell's, a villain less easily moved by her rhetoric. In *1984*, Orwell describes the deception practised by Big Brother's totalitarian dictatorship on would-be-rebels by persuading them that there is an underground resistance movement seeking eager adepts. Recent American fiction makes another use of the myth of the underground resistance movement: resistance movements are portrayed as ineffective solutions to the question of how to modify the system precisely because they need the solidary collaboration of many individuals; their leaders' values are compared with the positive individualistic values of the hero/ine and found wanting in respect for the individual. Only Marge Piercy's feminist novel, *Body of Glass*, concludes that the future belongs to a new resistance led by women, even though she presents its leader, Nili, as an individual with a strong personality who rejects the impotent resistance led by a man.

Rebel leaders are always, unlike the hero/ine, poorly defined secondary characters, which often prevents audiences and readers from sympathizing with them. The resistance to the corporation or dictator is often formed by working-class people, ethnic minorities, women and even children. They live often literally underground, surrounded by filth, surviving by eating rubbish and looking almost dead—perhaps undead. In *Total Recall* (1990) the freedom fighters are monsters, average working-class people transformed into horrific mutants thanks to the toxic waste produced by the

corporation that runs Mars. They are led by a monstrous baby–Kuato–parasitically attached to the abdomen of one of the men, which suggests that those in the resistance are mainly children, women or pseudo-women, but hardly ‘proper’ men like the hero. When the resistance leader is a man, he is likely to be a disagreeable character, either because he is too weak, like Lazarus in *Body of Glass*, or because he competes with the usually much cleaner, much more sensible hero, as happens in *Demolition Man* (1993). The hero may even refuse to collaborate or indeed to commit himself to helping the resistance; in fact, he most often uses the help of the underground fighters to survive or to carry out his own plans of resistance. Cases such as that of *Robocop 3* (1992), in which the eponymous monstrous hero is disloyal to his employer, the corporation OCP, preferring to fight on the side of those dispossessed by OCP—a group that includes a black female leader, the female engineer who has programmed the Robocop and a little American-Japanese girl—seem not to obey the rules. Yet, the film concludes when the middle-aged head of the Japanese firm plotting to buy OCP from its American owners acknowledges his defeat, bowing his head before the middle-aged men of the resistance, but not the women or the child whose mixed origins represent the hope for a tolerant future. Despite the fact that the resistance has won this particular battle and that a form of reconciliation has been achieved, the women have been partly excluded and there is no indication of a definitive overthrow of OCP’s power. The fact that the resistance movements are described as the result of generalised homelessness produces a peculiar impression in readers and audiences: the homeless are not desirable role models as dispossessed freedom fighters because they recall the unpleasant overtones of poverty in real life. This means that audiences and readers tend to sympathize with the lonesome hero who, despite being apparently classless, represents in fact the values of middle-class individualism. In addition, the resistance movement is often identified with terrorism or with ineffectual forms of political struggle that only succeed in perpetuating a barbaric lifestyle. Since the resistance often fails, while the hero manages to, at least, survive, individualism and a certain form of social Darwinism are strengthened as the only solution to cope with—never to solve—the exploitation to which the economic system subjects many nowadays.

Class consciousness does not make sense in an extreme situation, when salaried employees are too busy surviving to consider the right of their employers to exploit them. “Survival”, David Punter (1985: 12) observes, “has become the principal term which the dominant ideology seeks to substitute for an awareness of class. To the extent that we are brought—deliberately—to consider ourselves as equal victims of an arbitrary potential holocaust, we must also circumvent the important questions of access to present power”. This means that not only decisions on how to redress the balance of economic and political power but also those that affect gender relations and even relations between children and adults, are deferred. These narratives proclaim the triumph of survivalist nihilism as the ideology best adapted for living in the dystopian atmosphere of the late twentieth century and the more immediate future. Even when the Christological hero/ine undertakes the messianic salvation of humankind—as in *Alien* or *The Terminator 2*—there is no real presence of those who are to be saved, as if the fight against corporate power involved a multitude of ghosts and not real people. The message, if there is indeed one, seems to be that since social rebellion is unthinkable, the most an individual can do is to wage his or her own war, not in the expectancy of overturning the system but of simply killing the monster or achieving his personal freedom from monstrosity. It is precisely because there is an illusion of subversion behind these narratives of monstrosity that the monster (or the monster-hero) is always

seen as an individual. If there were a hundred identical replicants, terminators or robocops there would not be a unique individual to defend, but rather a whole class. Naturally, this is in itself capitalist discourse: individuals live in capitalist systems nursing the illusion of their perfect individual autonomy, wittingly or unwittingly accepting their anonymity within the economic system. It is only when the system threatens the privacy of the individual that s/he is forced to take up the role of accidental hero/ine and fight to survive.

Finally, it could be argued that there is no point in seeing political content of any kind in these films and novels because they do not aim at being ideological in any sense, or because there is no truly political science fiction (or simply fiction) with the exception of feminist science fiction. The right way of interpreting these narratives ought to regard them as pure entertainment, or, alternatively, as postmodernist metafiction about business produced by business itself. However, even if their ideological content is too weak to persuade people to assume any kind of political position, even if their creators have no political intention at all, the fact is that these films and novels are powerful dramatizations of fears felt by many Americans. They fear above all that the current American political and economic system—and by extension that of the world it dominates—is in itself monstrous. It is not necessary to believe in the accuracy of the predictions for the future that, for instance, *Blade Runner* makes, to see that for most people the dystopian version of the future of this and many other films and novels is essentially correct. If this bleak future makes sense to so many people, it must be concluded that technophobic dystopia has certainly gained a social and political import beyond the artistic quality and the ideological inconsistencies of the cultural products that articulate it. They cannot tell us how to solve either the problems of the present, or those of the near future. But they tell us that the postmodernist inability to imagine what will replace the seemingly unremitting capitalism of the late twentieth century is clearly a sign of the exhaustion of a romantic, individualistic, patriarchal, imperialistic cultural model that is seeking its renewal in science fiction.

6.2. In the Shadow of Frankenstein's Monster: Models of Artificial Humanity

6.2.1. The Making of the Enslaved Monster

God's creation of Adam is the main patriarchal myth underlying the narratives dealing with the artificial creation of life. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* suggests the possibility that science rather than magic could lead man to commit the double sin of arrogating God's power to create artificial life while usurping woman's power to create natural life. If we follow the logic of Mary Shelley's presentation of Frankenstein's monstrous Adam, the whole human race turns out to be the monstrous creation of a no less monstrous patriarchal creator, the usurper of the goddess's power, for Adam must be as artificial in God's eyes as the creature is to Victor Frankenstein's. A point that the Biblical God and the romantic Frankenstein have in common is their wish to create life for the sake of testing their own power to create. Unlike traditional monsters of myth, which are mainly the product of miscegenation, unnatural conception or an emanation of the natural environment, Frankenstein's monster is the product of an almost magical use of science. Far from being a freak of nature who just happens to be born, Frankenstein's monster is an unnatural freak, manufactured rather than born.

Frankenstein accomplishes the dream of building a human being out of flesh and bones without stopping first to think what use he can give to his creation (could he exhibit the monster, exploit him as a slave, keep him just for company as a friend or as a sexual partner?) and without considering in which terms the monster will develop as a fellow human being. His creature is not the ultimate end of his research but a means to that end—a mere stepping stone in his progress towards the final decoding of the enigma of life and death. The monster which has no other immediate use than giving his creator the satisfaction of having successfully concluded his work was nonetheless used by Mary Shelley to symbolize the depth of Frankenstein's double sin in a typically Gothic plot of persecution and revenge, borrowed by many subsequent adaptations and imitations. Her novel, in fact, focuses on the question of whether manufacturing artificial life is feasible, ignoring the question of the uses of making monsters beyond this point. Most contemporary films and novels tend to focus instead on how to exploit the monster; they portray the monster's rebellion as a consequence of his being born for the specific purpose of working rather than of his being born at all.

There is a great degree of confusion as to the actual nature of the new Frankenstein's monsters. The terminology itself is confusing. Nouns such as 'android' are used indistinctively to name metallic robots or flesh and blood artificial human beings. This confusion is due to the reluctance of postmodernist science-fiction writers and filmmakers to specify the scientific grounds of their plots, which focus more often on the psychological rather than the physical making of the monster. The twentieth-century robot is the interface between Frankenstein's emotional monster and the unemotional automaton fantasised in the eighteenth century, but the metallic robot is now a figure in decadence. Other models of artificial humanity based on genetic engineering (biological androids that I will call 'replicants' following the coinage of *Blade Runner*) and surgical implants ('cyborgs' or cybernetic organisms) are preferred in recent fiction. The fusion of natural or artificial human flesh and electronic circuitry seems more attractive, potentially richer in meaning for the ongoing debate about what it means to be human than the metal robot. The plots usually narrate the strife for autonomy of the artificial creations, though as I have noted, all of them deal with autonomy in terms of individuals, and not of groups or classes. None of these films and novels imagines what life could be like for the fake human beings once their freedom is gained, if they manage to survive at all. They consider chiefly the disadvantages of being psychologically human and anatomically artificial, in plots that deal mainly with the intolerant persecution of the monster rather than with the process of his or her awakening to self-consciousness.

The first monster manufactured with a purpose in mind other than the sheer pleasure of creating life is the Jewish giant called the Golem. A legend attributes his creation in the sixteenth century to Rabbi Judah Löw of Prague, who made him from clay to serve as a one-man-army in the defence of the Jews of the Prague ghetto. The creation of the Golem is in fact inspired by God's voice, so that no sin is committed by creating the Golem. As the first legends have it, the Golem is a dumb servant who reverts to clay as soon as his mission as protector is fulfilled. The motif of the rebellion is not used in the first versions of the legend, though later the Golem and Frankenstein's monster are associated, especially in film. The Golem can be said to be, therefore, a precedent of the combat replicants and cyborgs of many contemporary films and novels, though Mary Shelley's monster is also their direct predecessor as far as the motif of the emotional awakening of the artificial monster is concerned.

In *Frankenstein* the material out of which the monster is fashioned is neither clay nor metal, but human flesh and blood recycled from dead bodies. Although scientifically Mary Shelley's novel is quite incongruous—she makes in fact no real attempt at explaining how Frankenstein animates his Adam—the tradition of flesh and blood monsters that she inspired is richer now than the tradition of the clockwork automaton leading to the electronic robot. The complete robot that can do any work, as imagined in utopian science fiction, has lost much of its appeal because it does not seem to correspond any longer to the road that robotics is taking in real life. Pere Gallardo (1995: 130) argues in this regard that “although it seems clear that robots like the ones depicted in science fiction are not likely to exist because they are neither practical nor economical, their effectiveness as characters has been amply proven”. This leads to the paradoxical conclusion that the multifunctional robot imagined as an integral part of our future by science-fiction writers are not likely to exist ever and that their only actual use is as alternative models of the human mind in science fiction. The robots currently employed in factories are not anthropomorphic; the nightmare of a factory manned by androids, making humans redundant, will probably never come true, though for many unemployed workers the nightmare of an automated factory run by a combination of computers and mechanical arms is true enough.

The first robots of fiction were in fact biological androids made of synthetic flesh, whereas the electronic robot appeared first in film in *Metropolis* and in the pulps from the 1930s onwards. Maria, the robot of *Metropolis*, is very similar to the 1980s Terminator, the T-1: in both cases a coat of synthetic human flesh that can be easily destroyed covers a metallic endoskeleton capable of resisting fire. Even the motif of the burning of the flesh so as to reveal the underlying monster seems to have been borrowed by James Cameron from Lang's film. Maria and the Terminator differ nonetheless in a crucial point: the female robot is the exact replica of Maria, the Christian preacher, while the Terminator is not associated with any particular person; the second Terminator, the T-1000, can, however, replicate human bodies.

The Czech dramatist Karel Capek was the first to use the word ‘robot’, meaning an artificial organism created to work. His play *R.U.R.* (1921)—the acronym means ‘Rossum's Universal Robots’—was the first to narrate the plea of the monsters' awakening into a self-awareness of their slavery. Capek's robots are in fact biological androids undistinguishable from human beings in physical appearance, though their bodies are actually a physical improvement on the human model except for the fact that they can only live for twenty years. In psychological terms they are underdeveloped, for emotions are not regarded as indispensable to their work. The rebellion of the slave workers and the ensuing war in *R.U.R.* seemingly leads to a bleak future for both humans and robots: the former are in danger of being taken over, the latter cannot survive without the formula to regenerate them. In the end, though, ‘nature’ causes desire to appear among the robots and an alternative to their extinction is opened.

Why, however, did Capek use humaniform androids rather than metallic robots to narrate the rebellion of the enslaved workers? Pere Gallardo (*ibid.*: 120) suggests that “it was absolutely necessary that his robots could not be told from human beings so that one of his themes, namely man's dehumanization, could work not only symbolically but also visually”. The robot emerges thus as a metaphor for the exploitation of the human worker, yet the sympathy allegedly elicited from audiences and readers who cannot distinguish the replica from the human original is double-edged. On the one hand, the use of the robot is proof of the difficulties of writing political fiction about the working classes and another example of the Gothic strategy of displacement: the robot seems

capable of attracting more sympathy than the human worker; on the other hand, in the 1960s thanks, mainly to the work of Philip K. Dick, this sympathy is turned into plain uncertainty about the nature of the android. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) uses the robot as a sign of the mounting paranoia of the postmodernist world in which the androids pose a threat to humankind simply because they cannot be told apart from human beings.

The motif of the invisible monster, that is to say, of the replicant whose perfectly normal physical appearance conceals a non-human interior, is now common in science fiction, despite the fact that it does not reflect the current condition of science and technology. So far, the total reproduction or facsimile of the human being is just a figment of the human imagination, though there are already reports of limbs and organs being artificially grown in the lab. In addition, there are strong ethical barriers that would delay the creation of totally artificial flesh-and-blood human beings even if the technology were available. Genetic engineering has permitted the cloning of animals and plants and extensive modifications of the DNA of species created for laboratory research, but biotechnology of this type has not been applied to human beings, except as therapy to cure health problems caused by defective genes. Every time a piece of news about some spectacular advance in biotechnology is released, it is implied that only ethical uncertainties stand between us and the replicants of the fictional early twenty-first century. All things considered, cyberpunk's preference for the cyborg seems actually more consistent with current technoscientific developments. Many human beings are already cyborgs, since the practice of implanting electronic gadgets, such as pacemakers, in the human body is now common. Microcomputers will be certainly used in a few years to help correct many bodily dysfunctions: the blind will see, the deaf will hear, clogged arteries and damaged organs will be healed or replaced. There is still a long way to go before human beings can enhance the capacity of their brains to store memory by means of electronic devices or live a second life through a clone or as data in a computer, yet cyberpunk's predictions about the widespread availability of surgical implants harmonises with the direction technoscience is taking now.

6.2.2. The Emotional Awakening of the Enslaved Monster

A classification of the different models of artificial life based on their anatomies is less helpful for describing them than a classification in terms of their emotional awakening. Even though I am regarding robots, replicants and cyborgs as monsters, on the grounds of their not being fully human, it is necessary to distinguish between those artificial beings who are capable of reacting emotionally as humans and those who never cease behaving like machines. This distinction is nevertheless a fallacy, since all the artificial beings of science fiction are created in man's image and by man. The human mind is too limited to imagine radically different ways of being in the world that might correspond to non-human robots or replicants; 'humanised' artificial beings are actually representations of the positive values attached to human beings, while their violent counterparts are based on the psychology of the human moral monster or, in some instances, of the evil predator. As can be seen, the unemotional artificial being is a monster in the double sense of being neither human nor humane. My analysis of the new Frankenstein monster will turn first to the monsters who do not show signs of humanness because they cannot break away from the limited programmes run by their

brains. Next I will consider those who free themselves from their chains thanks to love, an accident, or the ambiguities embedded in their original personalities.

Although in the *Alien* trilogy the figure of the robot is marginal in comparison to the eponymous monster, the two robots Ash and Bishop play crucial roles. Both are similar types of replicant, made of electronic circuitry nourished by a sticky white fluid and encased in an apparently normal male body. What distinguishes Ash from Bishop is that the latter has been provided with an inbuilt set of constraints based on the Asimovian laws preventing him from harming human beings. In contrast, Ash does not hesitate to risk the lives of the human beings that may interfere with his secret mission, namely, capturing the alien for the Company. Isaac Asimov circumvented the problem of the rebellious robot in his short story "Runaround" (1942) by formulating the three 'Laws of Robotics' which regulate the behaviour of robots. These are: first, a robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; second, a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law and third, a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law (Gallardo, op. cit.: 135.). Asimov's robots are bodies of metal controlled by a positronic brain which can short-circuit if the laws are disobeyed.

The fact that Ash is not a human being is discovered by the Nostromo crew in *Alien* (1979) only when they attack him in self-defence. Before being switched off by Ripley, Ash declares his admiration for the alien and states that the monster will never be defeated by the much inferior humans. His lack of emotions appears then, on reflection, as an obvious sign of his monstrosity and his inhumanity. Yet his opinions and attitude are shared by the scientist Burke of *Aliens* (1986), who is commissioned by the Company to carry out the same secret mission that Ash failed to accomplish: capturing the alien monster alive. In this film, Ripley soon suspects and rejects Burke's inability to see beyond the Company's interests. Burke's childish excitement at the prospect of finally securing the creature is contrasted with the composed attitude of Bishop, who must necessarily protect the humans from the monster because of his programming. It cannot be said that Bishop is an autonomous sentient being who has outgrown his programming, but since he has been made more humane than Ash, he seems fully human, especially by comparison with Burke. Nevertheless, another issue is implicitly dealt with in the series which conditions the personality of the robots. If the technology to build Ash or Bishop is available, the reason why the Company does not send a crew of robots to capture the alien creature can only be an economic factor: the lives of the human crew are cheap in comparison to the 'lives' of the sophisticated, pseudo-human robots.

Since Bishop's nature is no secret, Ripley is forced to trust him, despite her initial misgivings, if not as an equal at least as a faithful servant, a role he performs to the end. Even though the colour of Bishop's blood is white like Ash's, Bishop's anatomy is also characterized by his capacity to feel pain, unlike Ash's. A scene in *Alien*³ (1992) in which Ripley switches on Bishop's mangled body—torn in two by the queen alien in *Aliens*—shows him suffering such agony that she must obey his final request for termination. Her trust and respect for him cannot be more different than from the horror provoked by Ash. However, the series fails to close an evident gap in the logic of events. If Ash was built to deceive the unsuspecting crew, why was the rather naive Bishop built? There are two answers to this question. At an extra-diagetic level, Bishop serves the purpose of introducing a new topic into the series, namely, the idea that the artificial beings produced by men can be more humane than some human

beings. At a diagetical level, an obvious answer is that he was built to try out another strategy on Ripley: trust instead of violence would lead her to help the Company in its search for the alien. Thus, even though Bishop is not monstrous in the same sense as Ash, his use by the Company is doubly monstrous. In the third film, Bishop and Ripley's mutual empathy is used by the Company to manipulate her to their advantage: a man identical to Bishop, who claims to be Bishop's maker, tempts Ripley to give the alien parasite in her body to the Company. The strategy backfires, though, for this Bishop who bleeds red blood confirms Ripley's impression that the humans working for the Company are the real monsters. The suave, sinister Frankenstein who seems a replica of his own creation truly convinces Ripley that the android Bishop's solution to his immense pain—his "I'd rather be nothing"—is her only solution as well.

Ash and the Terminator of the 1984 film have been given a human appearance so as to enable them to carry out their secret mission among unguarded humans. Unlike Bishop, the Terminator feels no pain and no empathy for human beings; the metal skeleton that emerges when his flesh is burned confirms what the rotten flesh of the wounds on his face already announced: he is the very image of death in the danse macabre of the 1980s. The Terminator is in addition the incarnation of the dystopian future imagined in the 1980s in which Frankenstein's sons and grandsons will reign. In Cameron's film the Frankenstein who creates the unemotional robot is the defense computer SkyNet, itself a rebellious Frankenstein monster originally created to monitor a possible nuclear war. SkyNet is born of the alliance between a corporation, Cyberdine, and the US government's dangerous defence policy. SkyNet becomes autonomous when those who have created it for war decide to switch it off when they realize its brain is too powerful: the computer reacts by doing the task for which it was programmed, unleashing a nuclear war, and cuts off then all its ties with humankind, next designing and building its own monstrous metal children. The timewarp in the plot allows the future resistance leader John to choose his own father and to send him from the future to protect his mother. It also allows SkyNet to engender itself by means of the Terminator also sent from the future. SkyNet is developed in the early 1990s thanks to the chip that controls the Terminator's brain, secretly sent by the government to Cyberdine after Sarah's destruction of the robot. When SkyNet's potent brain awakens, it frees all the computer-controlled machines from their bondage to humans; its next step is to create an army of Terminators to wage war on humankind. The machines see themselves as liberated slaves and fight humankind to prevent their return to slavery rather than to avenge themselves on their creators.

Before agreeing to appear in *The Terminator 2*, Arnold Schwarzenegger, back in the role of the Terminator that made him so popular, demanded that the killing machine of the first film was turned into a more humane robot. Schwarzenegger's interest in transforming the old T-1 into a new, heroic T-1 inspired James Cameron to insert into the screenplay the same motif of the Asimovian laws he had already used for Bishop in *Aliens*. The change was justified in the plot by making the adult John Connor send another T-1 from the future, suitably reprogrammed to protect his ten-year-old self and his mother from SkyNet's new creation, the villainous T-1000, a shape-shifter made of protean liquid metal. As I argued in Chapter 1, at an extra-diagetical level it can be said that the new T-1000 came to be as a result of the advances in infographics. The T-1000 breaks away from the robot and the replicant of fiction but makes no sense in technological terms, except as a showpiece of film special effects. At a diagetical level, the liquid monster suggests that SkyNet has given birth to the T-1000 thanks to a non-human technology that has no parallel in the limited world of human beings.

As far as their personalities are concerned, the T-1000 and the reprogrammed T-1 can be compared to Ash and Bishop, respectively. Like Ash, the T-1000 is callous and unfeeling; yet his shapelessness suggests that he is much more depersonalised than Ash. He repeats the pattern set by the first T-1, with the additional advantages that his capacity to transform himself and to confuse his victims give him. The reprogrammed T-1 is as limited as Bishop, indeed even more limited in aspects such as his incapacity to feel bodily pain. His emotional awakening is not complete, nor can it transcend the limits of his mission. The young John Connor and his mother Sarah attribute to him a capacity to altruistically care for them that is nothing but an illusion, for the T-1 cannot choose but to be their guardian. His final destruction is nevertheless much more sentimental than Bishop's 'death', since the T-1 chooses suicide rather than let others exploit the dangerous chip he carries in his brain. This moral choice is the proof that he has finally developed autonomous emotions, yet before dying he still reminds his already bereaved 'son' John that unlike humans, Terminators cannot cry.

The question of whether building robots for hazardous tasks is more cost-effective than employing humans is the basis of the *Robocop* series. This series also shows the limitations of robots as fictional characters and their replacement with the cyborg. Apart from the matter of the cost of making robots and of whether anthropomorphic, multitask robots are useful, in fictional terms the robots are limited because the only available alternatives seem to portray them as unemotional killing machines or faithful servants. The robot's personality can only be attractive when s/he is enabled to make moral choices by some accident that disrupts the smooth running of his or her central programme, or, indeed, when the robot ignores s/he is not human. In the three first *Robocop* films, the eponymous hero—a cyborg I will discuss in more detail later in this section—fights different models of artificial life created by OCP, the same corporation that also creates him. In the first film, RD209, a huge though clumsy police robot, is created by OCP to supply the recently privatized police force of Detroit with reliable workers that will not go on strike and demand higher wages as the human police do. When RD209 kills an OCP executive during its presentation because it misunderstands human reactions, another executive takes his chance to propose replacing the ineffective RD209 with a Robocop made of the human remains of a dead police officer and a computerised suit of armour. In the second film the cyborg Robocop confronts and defeats another monstrous police robot, composed of a huge metallic body and the brain of Detroit's public enemy number one, a villainous drug baron. In the third film, the threat comes from a Japanese robot called Otomo coated in flesh like Ash and the Terminator, which, unlike Robocop and his former rivals is not a unique product but one of a series of identical robots. Needless to say, none of Robocop's enemies show any positive human emotions, though Otomo's aggressiveness looks human enough, especially in comparison to the uncontrollable rage of the metallic monsters.

One of the most popular non-anthropomorphic metallic robots of fiction is the loquacious No. 5 of *Short Circuit* (1986) a descendant in equal parts of the C3PO of *Star Wars* (1977), *E.T.* (1982) and Frankenstein's monster. *Short Circuit* is a comedy for young audiences that narrates how one of the batch of robots created by young Dr. Newton Crosby for the US Defence Department becomes an autonomous thinker, thanks to a short circuit. The malfunction suffered by this metallic version of *E.T.* explains why the robot starts making decisions, the first of which is deciding to escape from the military complex where Crosby works. As could be expected, the film follows No. 5's immersion into everyday American life and its culture, controlled with many difficulties by Stephanie, a young woman who befriends the lost robot. Stephanie finally

persuades Crosby to accept No. 5 as an autonomous personality, and together creature, creator and woman foil the plans of the military to recover No. 5 in order to make it function 'normally', that is to say, soullessly. The comedy of the film depends on No. 5's expressiveness, which is certainly surprising considering that No. 5 is nothing but an animated meccano construction, and on its voracious consumption of all kinds of information which he can barely digest. The fact that *Short Circuit* is a comedy suggests that by 1986, when the film was released, the subject of the emotional awakening of the robot had lost much of its tragic dimension. The charming No. 5's rebellion is totally devoid of the political content that could be read in R.U.R., or of the apocalyptic overtones of SkyNet's awakening. Nevertheless, it typifies the individualistic rebellion dealt with in most of the American texts in which an artificial life form suddenly becomes aware of its latent humanness.

The comic treatment of the robot's awakening is also exemplified by Susan Seidelman's *Making Mr. Right* (1987), which belongs to a subgroup of texts dealing with a love story between an artificial being that looks human and a human. Isaac Asimov's *The Robots of Dawn*, Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass* and Tannith Lee's *The Silver Metal Lover* describe like Seidelman's film a relationship between a woman and a humanoid male robot, while *Blade Runner* narrates in its main subplot the love story between a man and a female replicant who is unaware that she is not human. In all these narratives it is supposed that the body of the humanoid robot is capable of performing all the sexual functions of a human except for reproduction; whatever the soft flesh and the smooth skin of the robots conceals concerns the human lovers only to a certain point, beyond which they invariably regard the artificial lovers as better than their human counterparts. Also typically, love interferes with the main original function for which the robots were created, though in the cases of the replicant Rachael of *Blade Runner* and Jander of *The Robots of Dawn*, it can be said that love in fact marks the apex of the emotional apprenticeship for which they were originally designed. The myth of Pygmalion, who fell in love with a lovely statue he had sculpted and which was given life by the gods, cannot be said to be reflected in these texts. Rather than deal with the relationship between the creature and the creator, these texts place the creator at a certain distance, from which s/he observes the relationship of the humanoid robot or replicant with a third person. On the other hand, the emotional awakening of the artificial lover is always subordinated in these texts to the desire felt by his or her human lover.

In Seidelman's comedy *Making Mr. Right*, Frankie, a woman who works for an advertising agency, is commissioned by the corporation Chemtec to run an advertising campaign to make Ulysses, their star product, a popular figure. The humanoid robot Ulysses—"the closest thing to man himself" as Frankie's slogan for him runs—has been designed as a model to test the endurance of human beings in long-term space travel. Since his programming is still far from being an adequate simulation of human emotions and behaviour, Frankie is asked to educate Ulysses mainly as regards relationships between humans. Seidelman's film implies that the products of the technoscientific domain of the male creator will be inevitably monstrous unless the psychological contribution of woman is taken into account, a point also discussed by Piercy in *Body of Glass*. The woman's task in both texts is to stir the male robot's feelings, a task which covers the gap left by the absence of the mother in *Frankenstein*. Although in this film the heroine is named Frankie, she is no female Frankenstein but the subversive individual who undermines the neo-Frankenstein's creation. Like Shira in Piercy's novel, Frankie succeeds only partially, for both make the male robot a dependent object

rather than an autonomous subject. Seidelman's title and the fact that the naive Ulysses is regarded as Mr. Right are an expressive commentary on how women see Frankenstein's monster: the fantasy of appropriating man's new Adam to remake him as woman's own man underlies Seidelman's film and Piercy's novel alike, despite their very different conclusions.

The narratives of *The Nimrod Hunt*, *The Robots of Dawn*, and *Blade Runner* are articulated by two main subplots. On the one hand, a humanoid robot or replicant discovers as a consequence of a love story that s/he is not human as s/he had always believed; on the other hand, this humanoid robot is closely associated to another robot—not necessarily humanoid—immersed in a process of emotional awakening much deeper and much more consequential than that of the humanoid in love. In *The Nimrod Hunt* (1986) the hero Chan turns out to be the unfinished product of the illegal activities of a genetic engineer who has disobeyed the laws forbidding the creation of intelligent human life. Chan's mental immaturity disappears when he is exposed to a brutal psychosomatic treatment which turns him into a soldier recruited to locate and eliminate the Morgan constructs. These are gigantic biomechanoid robots—partly metal, partly flesh—originally created by Dr. Livia Morgan—the only female Frankenstein I have come across—by order of commander Esro Mondrian. The constructs are to be used in the defence of the perimeter that limits the confederacy of planets to which Earth belongs. However, the Morgan constructs soon rebel, kill Dr. Morgan and hide on lonely planets where they learn to form mental units with other organisms; Nimrod is the name of the particular construct Chan is to hunt. Oddly enough, not much is made of the process that leads the constructs to gain consciousness and develop their own emotional responses, whereas Chan's manipulation by Mondrian is the subject of the main subplot. Although Chan is said to be artificial, this motif plays no major role in the novel. The plot of revenge against the Frankenstein figure centres on the relationship between Mondrian and the aggressive Chan he has created rather than on Morgan or on the nameless father who made Chan. In the end, it appears that Chan's artificiality plays the only role of indicating how deceptive appearances can be; as for his psychological maturation, its main consequence is to make him reluctant to enter one of the mental rings developed by the constructs. Having enjoyed his new sense of individuality for just a few months, Chan is not persuaded by his lover's argument that his individuality will not be lost in the union with others and never seems genuinely charmed by the Morgan constructs' revolutionary substitution of total communion for their original aggressiveness.

In Asimov's *The Robots of Dawn* (1984), Jander, a humanoid robot made by Dr. Fastolffe, suffers a strange 'death' apparently as a result of having been forced to simultaneously obey and disobey one of the Laws of Robotics. The 'roboticide' turns out to have important consequences for the future of humankind, since Jander is seen by Dr. Adamiro, the man who causes his accidental death when trying to steal information from him, as the prototype of the robots that should be used in space exploration and colonisation. In this novel the universe known to man encompasses fifty planets colonised by man; these fifty worlds differ precisely in the way they understand the role of robots in the colonising process. On Earth, the robots are unpopular because they are seen as direct competitors in the labour market; Aurora, where Jander has been manufactured, treats robots as fellow human beings. Yet within Aurora two main factions are fighting for the control of the construction of robots like Jander. The faction headed by Fastolffe opposes the faction led by his own daughter Vasilisa and by Adamiro, who think that planets should be prepared for later human migration by colonies of humaniform robots capable of imitating human behaviour down to a form of

mock sexual reproduction. Fastolffe, who knows from his experience with Jander that the robot may eventually regard themselves as human beings, prefers a mixed form of colonisation in which the robots are subordinated to their human partners.

The two female characters in *The Robots of Dawn* play an important, though secondary, role in the plot. Gladia, the bereaved woman who has accepted Jander as her husband, is used by Fastolffe to test the effects of love on his robot. Jander has not been actually created for space exploration, but to study whether robots who are unaware that they are not human can actually live as human beings. Gladia's contribution is, specifically, to reinforce Jander's sense of his own masculinity. Vasilisa, Fastolffe's estranged daughter, has unwittingly transformed her father's other robot and her own favourite pet robot R. Giskard into a mind reader with telepathic powers by reprogramming him. Since he is not humanoid, nobody suspects R. Giskard of being capable of developing human emotions and much less of having caused Jander's 'freeze out' so as to prevent others like Jander and himself from becoming slave labour. R. Giskard is human enough to know that his abilities had better be concealed from the humans around him and to make the moral choice of causing Jander's 'death'. Nevertheless, his moral autonomy is not total, for in the last instance the reason for his homicidal behaviour is his duty to protect his creator Dr. Fastolffe from Adamiro's threat, as dictated by the Laws.

The relationship between Gladia and Jander has some points in common with that between the teenage Jane and the robot Silver in Tannith Lee's *The Silver Metal Lover* (1986). Both Gladia and Jane are aware of the emotional predicament in which they put themselves by accepting artificial lovers and both learn to love the artificial anatomy of their lovers, leaving behind their initial prejudices. However, unlike Jander, Silver is aware of who he is and what he has been created for and so he struggles to keep the necessary emotional distance between him and his owner, Jane, so as not to harm her feelings. Lee's novel narrates how seventeen-year-old Jane falls in love with the robot Silver, whom she initially mistakes for a real man but who is in fact a new model of sex toy legally owned by a friend of hers. The idea that somebody will eventually market pseudo-human robots capable of satisfying all the sexual needs that a human may have is attractive but limited as far as its dramatic possibilities are concerned. The relationship between a human and a perfected version of the inflatable doll may be a good subject for an erotic or pornographic tale, but does not seem deep enough in terms of human emotion to sustain a whole novel. Tannith Lee overcomes this problem by centring her novel on the love that Jane feels for Silver even before she knows what he is and on Silver's emotional awakening rather than on the issue of how ownership may condition the relationship between humans and sentient machines.

All in all, *The Silver Metal Lover* is nothing but a beautifully told erotic fantasy in which a young woman is fortunate enough to meet the perfect lover and unfortunate enough to lose him. The fact that Jane is a rather unstable virginal teenager suggests that this is a kind of fantasy that only sexually immature young people would entertain, yet in Lee's description of Silver's many qualities—his beauty, his tenderness, his protectiveness—there are clear signs of a longing for the perfect new man that is not so immature. Part of Jane's fantasy is fulfilled when she meets that extraordinary sexual partner all humans dream of, but once Silver deflowers her and she her happy sexual awakening leads smoothly to a deep love for him, she feels the challenge of turning her pseudo-human lover into a fully human man. This second fantasy of making Silver 'feel' the same that she can feel is constantly hindered by Silver's casual remarks about his emotional limitations and his inability to sympathize with Jane's attempt to make

him more human. Yet, Jane finally manages to bring Silver to feel an orgasm, which in theory he cannot feel. His new sensitivity satisfies her more than the sexual pleasure he so generously gives her and apparently marks Silver's entrance into a new emotional stage for which he had not been programmed. In the end, the couple, who have been living in hiding because Jane is a minor and because she has taken Silver without his owner's permission, are betrayed and found. Sensing that Silver no longer has the same vacant expression of the other models of his series, his makers decide to destroy him so as to avoid trouble with the authorities, who are enforcing a ban on the production of pseudo-human robots because of the general public's distrust of these products.

A bereaved Jane concludes that the destruction of Silver can only be explained by the fear that men feel because of their impression that better, pliant, custom-made artificial lovers might eventually take their place in women's lives. Actually, to judge by the ending of Lee's novel, men might be right in feeling this anxiety—and so might women, considering that Silver's makers also sell female robots. The final chapter of the novel includes a curious supernatural episode in which Jane is contacted through an Ouija board by what seems to be Silver's soul. The message she receives from him indicates that he has survived his physical destruction to become a disembodied 'something else' in another dimension where she can reach him. Thus, Jane's final lament for Silver's death contains a certain hope for a mystical reunion with her lover after her death and suggests that Jane will remain faithful to Silver's memory, if not physically at least as far as her capacity to love is concerned. This romantic ending implies that women are ready to wait for the new man epitomized by Silver for decades, even if that means making their relationships with the men around them extremely problematic. The recurrent fantasy of the humanisation of the artificial lover, a motif that can be found in texts by men and by women, is no doubt a sign of widespread dissatisfaction in the relationships between men and women. The artificial lovers are, literally, consolatory fantasies created to express a longing for the arrival of a new man or a new woman but also created to express the awareness that neither men nor women can be manipulated to suit one's own needs without running the risk of losing our own humanity.

It is unclear whether the replicants of *Blade Runner* are biomechanoids or flesh and blood creatures. Tyrell, the Frankenstein figure, tells his masterpiece Roy that the 'God of biomechanics' would let him into his heaven, and claims to have designed Roy's brain; yet Roy wants his DNA to be recoded so as to halt his rapid ageing, seemingly indicating that his body is fully organic. In *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the novel by Philip K. Dick on which the film is based, the Nexus 6 models—referred to as 'andys' and 'carbons'—are humaniform robots developed illegally by the Rosen Corporation. The 'andys' are first an updated model of the organic androids used as soldiers in the war between the government and a powerful multinational corporation, though they are subsequently used for space colonisation. Although the 'andys' that cannot be told apart from human beings are illegal, businessmen like Rosen sell them clandestinely, which has forced the police to develop an empathy test to identify them. However, the new Nexus 6 can feel a greater degree of empathy than some unemotional humans and there are doubts that the test, designed to assert whether the 'andys' can feel emotion, is reliable. Deckard and the other bounty hunters have been put into a moral predicament by Rosen, since they may have killed human beings identified by the empathy test as 'andys'. Rosen's views on the matter are, however, those of the pure capitalist:

“We produced what the colonists wanted”, Eldon Rosen said. “We followed the time-honoured principle underlying every commercial venture. If our firm hadn’t made these progressively more human types, other firms in the field would have. We knew the risk we were taking when we developed the Nexus-6 brain unit ... Your position, Mr. Deckard, is extremely bad morally. Ours isn’t”. (p. 45)

The search by the andy Roy and his group for a mystical experience induced by drugs that is described in the novel is transformed by the film into Roy’s search for a father and an answer to the question of why he must die. As for the love story between the blade runner Deckard and the replicant Rachael, this is not very different from that between Gladia and Jander in *The Robots of Dawn*. Like Jander she is an experimental model, created by the head of the Tyrell Corporation to test the limits of the allegedly unemotional robots. Also like Jander, Rachael is unaware that she is not human, though she finds in her love for Deckard a basis on which to build her identity as a person, and specifically as a woman. Erica Sheen (1991: 139) argues that “narratives about the sexual identity of artificial life forms use cinema’s increasing self-consciousness about the process of image-making not to test conventional definitions of gender but to consolidate them”. In her view Rachael is forced by Deckard to enter the symbolic order she needn’t have entered at all, considering that her artificiality could have been the basis for the construction of a new type of sexual identity unrestricted by the patriarchal control of woman’s body. The same could be said about Asimov’s male robot Jander or about Piercy’s Yod, also male. The only justification for the definition of the replicants as sexual beings is the need to assimilate them to the humans they imitate, for, in fact, building a robot with gender characteristics makes little sense. For Joseph W. Slade (1990: 17) Rachael’s eroticism symbolizes the love for the technology we have created, which actually contradicts the apparent technophobia of dystopian films like *Blade Runner*:

The images of the romantically-photographed Rachael say what humans find it hard to say: that the reason we both adore and fear technology is that it is at least as humanizing as it is dehumanizing, that we find our humanity not just in rebelling against the control systems we have created but also in accepting our oneness with what we have created, that all that is best in us is as much the product of artifice as it is of nature.

The same could be said about Roy, especially in the romantic scene of his death.

Contradicting what should be expected of a corporation that works for profit—and also contradicting Dick—the replicants, and most of the artificial beings in the texts I am analysing, are unique and not mass produced. Roy, Leon, Zhora and Pris, the Nexus 6 group, are born with different levels of intelligence and physical abilities, custom-made to carry out specific tasks. Pris is a prostitute, Zhora an assassin, while the men are soldiers, Roy being one of the superior class. It is implied that his coming to consciousness precedes that of the others, though their violent escape from slavery and the colonies is not shown on screen. They return to Earth, where they are banned, simply because they want to live longer lives than the four year lifespan to which their artificial bodies have been purposely limited.

The confrontation between Roy and Deckard is the central scene of the film. Roy has then his only chance to express what it is like to be made like him: “Quite an experience to live in fear, isn’t it? That’s what it is to be a slave”. The slave, the

replicant made for work, ends his life with a simple metaphor about his life—“All those moments will be lost in time like tears in the rain”—which marks his access to an emotional use of language, a poetic use of language, stressing the fact that he has become fully human. Blake, acknowledged by Dick as one of his main influences, is quoted by Roy in a previous scene; the lines of *America, a Prophecy*, about the fiery angels who rose burning with the fires of Orc become in Roy’s mouth a lament for the fiery angels that fell (Morrison, 1990: 3). “Blake describes”, Rachela Morrison (ibid.: 3) writes, “and Roy embodies, the celebration of human dignity and our right to the freedom of both body and spirit”.

Roy could have been presented as a biomechanical Spartacus of the twenty first century, but instead he and the other replicants, including Rachael, look for individual solutions to their individual problems, in particular the question of their limited lifespan. They do not see themselves as workers but as persons deprived of their human identity because of their dehumanising slavery. Although some of the neo-*Frankenstein* films and novels include scenes of confrontation between creature and creator, the monsters do not seek revenge as Frankenstein’s monster does, but seek rather to be allowed to live in peace on their own terms, something only a few achieve. The humanisation that makes them useless as enslaved workers usually leads to their gratuitous elimination, their suicide or their assumption of a normality, which, if it ever happens, seems even more fantastic than their artificial nature. How to imagine, for instance, Rachael and Deckard’s life together? What kind of children would they have if any?

The illegality of the replicants, grounded on fears that they might pass themselves off as humans, is a motif repeated in many films and novels to justify why they have to be stalked and eliminated. It is, in fact, an obvious sign of paranoia caused by fears that a secret species living among us might one day end our supremacy. If the suggestion were that the fake human beings can become sensible, sensitive and harmless inhabitants of Earth, the Gothic plots of persecution and destruction of all the texts I am analysing in this chapter could not hold. Philip K. Dick himself explained that

There is amongst us something that is a bi-pedal humanoid, morphologically identical to the human being but which is not human. It is not human to complain, as one SS man did in his diary, that starving children are keeping you awake.

And there, in the 40s, was born my idea that within our species there is a bifurcation, a dichotomy between the truly human and that which mimics the truly human. (Strick, 1982: 72, in Morrison, op. cit.: 3)

Dick’s inhuman replica would correspond, therefore, to the moral monster I described in Chapter 4 and not to the romantic Blakean angel of Scott’s film. While Dick’s ‘andys’ embody the Beast, our shadow, Mr. Hyde, Scott’s ‘replicants’ are, as the Tyrell Corporation motto’s announces, more human than human, that is to say, the postmodernist version of the Nietzschean superman. This is why the relationship with these products of imaginary technology is one of love and hate. The chase of the replicant in *Blade Runner*, *Neuromancer* or *Body of Glass*, has no other justification but the paranoid fear that our own creations can take over the control of our lives. The pseudo-human and non-human supermen (or rather ‘superbeings’) like Roy, Rachael, Chan, Nimrod, Jander, R. Giskard, Silver, Yod, Nili, Wintermute, *Neuromancer* and others are loved because they are humankind’s masterpieces, but hated because they are the feared models of the next evolutionary step that could render the current human being obsolete. Furthermore, unlike the fear of hostile species I described in Chapter 3,

fear of the human simulacra is grounded in the idea that man himself may bring his own destruction not because he will inevitably create monsters like Frankenstein's creature but because he will create better humans like Roy or alternatives to human intelligence such as R. Giskard or Neuromancer. Utopian and dystopian images must be necessarily mixed in the futures imagined in these texts.

The cyborg is a human body modified by means of the surgical implantation of electronic gadgets or by means of controlled genetic alterations produced before or after birth. The emotional awakening of the cyborg is, unlike that of the electronic robot or the biological android, necessarily linked to a previous loss of identity, for the cyborg is originally human. The films and novels in which the cyborg can be found usually discuss this figure from two opposite points of view. On the one hand, the cyborg may be the victim of an alliance of military and business interests. The body of the dead worker is remade to suit the needs of his employers, his personality erased from his brain. The plot typically deals with the return of repressed signs of identity and with the cyborg's awareness of his dormant humanness. On the other hand, the cyborg may be a human who has chosen to remake himself or herself and whose modified body is the sign of a strong personality. *Robocop* and *Universal Soldier* are two instances of the first case, specifically as regards the male body, whereas *Body of Glass* discusses the advantages of the female cyborg over the male replicant as the model for a humanity capable of contesting the aggression of late capitalism.

The cyborg policeman of *Robocop* (1987) and the cyborg soldier of *Universal Soldier* (1992) are the reconstructed bodies of a policeman almost killed by a criminal gang and a Vietnam veteran killed by a maddened fellow soldier, respectively. Alex Murphy's and Luc's bodies have been recycled allegedly to reduce the costs of maintaining the police and the army. Since building electronic robots is extremely expensive and time-consuming, the 'undead' employees are the perfect solution to their employer's search for the dream worker. However, in the case of the universal soldier or 'UniSol' the economic advantage is dubious, for the price of each unit—\$250 million—is no doubt enough to buy the services of many human soldiers. Both Alex Murphy and Luc can be programmed as their employers wish because their memories have been erased; they are effective, loyal and reliable workers, at least until a malfunction eventually causes some of their suppressed memories to resurface.

Universal Soldier mixes the motif of the appropriation of the employee's body by his employer borrowed from *Robocop* with the motif of the psychotic Vietnam veteran. Out of the group of Vietnam veterans transformed into superhuman soldiers, only Luc recovers his humanity precisely because he never lost it as a soldier. The personality of men like the brutal sergeant whom Luc killed so as to prevent a My Lai style massacre is altered for the worse by the anatomic changes, for their original psychotic fixations are the only part of their original selves to resurface. The plot narrates how Luc, helped by Veronica, a journalist who has discovered the secret of the making of the UniSol, tracks the man who remade him, remembers who he was and defeats the villainous sergeant before returning to his former, idyllic life in his parents' farm. Luc's return home is, thus, not a rebellion but a search for his lost identity and a return to the self he lost when his body was appropriated by the army. Unlike Frankenstein's monster, Luc is not interested in revenge: in fact, he collapses when he meets his second father, the scientist who made him into a cyborg, and rejects Veronica's offer to publicise his story, choosing instead a return to his former anonymity in rural Louisiana.

The unsurprising ending of *Universal Soldier* is very different from the problematic ending of *Robocop*, perhaps because the signs of Alex Murphy's transformation are much more evident. While Jean-Claude Van Damme looks his habitual muscular self as Luc, Peter Weller's body is hardly visible inside the *Robocop*'s titanium armour, which implies that Murphy's process of dehumanisation is much more profound than Luc's. The memories that resurface in Murphy's brain belong to his former life as a family man, yet, unlike Luc, he cannot return home and be human again because he cannot escape his employer, OCP, and because his wife and son now lead now a new life with another man occupying his place. Oddly enough, Murphy blames his new state on the criminal gang that leaves him in a coma after severely maiming him—a gang which is allied to one of OCP's executives—and not on OCP itself, despite the fact that OCP engineers are the ones who turn him into a soulless cyborg. The plot is directed towards the satisfaction of Murphy's thirst for revenge, fulfilled with the killing of arch-villain Bodicker's gang and their sinister OCP ally, Jones. *Robocop*'s loyalty towards OCP and its paternalistic president is maintained in the end, despite his awareness of who he really is and of what has been done to him.

Robocop is a strange kind of hero, even an anti-hero. Instead of demanding his liberation and his return home, instead of killing OCP's president or himself, Murphy accepts his situation, insisting only on being called by his real name rather than *Robocop*. The robotic side of *Robocop* can be said to be more powerful than his human self perhaps because the pseudo-Asimovian directives that prevent him from being disloyal to OCP outweigh Murphy's sense of his own identity. *Robocop* offers, therefore, a much grimmer view than *Universal Soldier* about this dystopian near future populated by cyborgs and controlled by capitalist corporations and the military. Since *Robocop* never rises against OCP despite the torture inflicted on him every time he is reprogrammed, and since he dutifully kills the endless stream of criminals and other models of more robotic *Robocops* that harass Detroit's inhabitants, it can only be inferred that, as far as OCP is concerned, he is a success and a model to imitate in the future, with all the consequences this involves for his fellow workers. The bitter, ironic tone of the original film—missing in the much softer sequels and other cartoons and comics adaptations—is due to the implied contrast between the artificial man who mutinies to regain his freedom, like the replicant Roy, and the man transformed into a machine who accepts his fate, becoming thus the perfect but monstrous worker.

Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass* (1991) is a feminist novel that retells the legend of the Golem. The plot concerns the emotional awakening of a so-called cyborg, Yod (in fact a robot with a coating of human flesh), built by a Frankenstein figure, Dr. Avram Stein, to defend the Jewish free city of Tikva from the aspirations of Yakamura-Stichen, one of the 23 "multis" that rule the world in the twenty-first century. Stein fails to foresee that this new Golem will attract rather than deflect Yakamura-Stichen's attention and so, despite his good intentions, Y-S's interest in robbing Stein of his monster to market Yod as the perfect soldier becomes ultimately the reason for the confrontation between Tikva and the corporation. However, Yod is threatened not only by Y-S, but also by his own awareness of the inadequacy of his personality to the role for which he has been created. Yod discovers his human side thanks to his 'mother' Malkah, the woman responsible for programming him, and to her granddaughter Shira, the woman Yod falls in love with. Shira has in fact been entrusted with the job of teaching Yod to behave in a perfectly acceptable human—specifically male—way, so as to avoid the consequences of the strict laws forbidding the creation of humaniform robots.

Yet her sexual relationship with Yod disables him as a killing machine, turning him into a hybrid model of masculinity that cannot choose but destroy himself.

Piercy's novel summarises the preoccupations expressed in the other texts I am analysing from a feminist perspective. Its background is very similar indeed to that of cyberpunk, especially as regards the government of the world by a group of multinational corporations that also rule the private lives of their employees. The dominion of the corporations is established after the Two Week world war in 2017, which has wiped out the Middle East. Piercy's Earth, on the other hand, is another version of Huxley's *Brave New World*, with its hierarchies of 'techies', day labourers, and 'apes', people "altered chemically and surgically by special implants for inhuman strength and speed" (p. 18), who have replaced the outlawed robots after a failed rebellion. Shira, herself a 'techie' or highly qualified employee, shows no concern for overturning this division and only opposes Y-S's rule when she is not given custody of her three-year-old boy after her divorce.

As I have noted before, *Body of Glass* discusses the advantages of the female cyborg over the male replicant in this dystopian world of the near future. Piercy's novel suggests that the superior fighters of the future, the individuals that will do away with oppression, will not be mechanical men created by patriarchal scientists like Stein, but women who will use technology and science to remake themselves. Nili, the partly mechanical woman, who never doubts her personal identity, is preferred by Piercy to the partly human mechanical male monster Yod, who can never have a stable personal identity. The androphobic argumentation of the novel is typical of the feminist science fiction of the 1980s and 1990s and so is the mixture of dystopian and utopian elements in the plot. Instead of a direct confrontation between Yod and the cyborg Nili that could serve as the basis on which to decide where the advantages of each model lies, Piercy separates their stories: he is feminised and then rejected by Malkah and Shira, while she rises from the obscurity of the destroyed Middle East to wage war on Y-S as a new model of liberated and liberating woman.

In fact, Malkah and Shira wittingly or unwittingly sabotage Stein's work while pretending to be enhancing Yod's emotional capacities. Malkah acknowledges that her attempt to balance Yod's violent behaviour has doomed him to yearn for a full humanity he can never attain. However, Malkah also knows that enhancing Yod's humanity and involving him with Shira is the most effective mechanism to destroy him. She seems, therefore, to have plotted his death since the moment when he was made. On her side, Shira sees in Yod the perfect companion, especially because she needn't acknowledge his masculinity. In fact, Shira likes him because he is not a man: unlike men, he can be programmed; unlike men, he can always be trusted because he must always obey; unlike men, Yod is not a selfish sexual partner and, most wonderfully, does not sweat, smell badly or grow a beard like most men Shira knows. A particularly androphobic Pygmalion thus replaces Frankenstein in Piercy's plot. No wonder then that Yod finally commits suicide, also causing the death of his 'father' when he blows up Stein's lab. Shira briefly feels the temptation to remake Yod as her personal companion, not as a weapon, but she is discouraged by Yod's own video recording addressed to her before his suicide, in which he begs not to be reborn, since his creation was a mistake. She decides in the end not to rebuild him, as she finally understands that creation does not give a right to possession.

Nili is Shira's mother's lesbian lover. Her function in the plot is to contact the underground resistance that opposes Y-S, led by the rather ineffective Lazarus, and teach them all the knowledge she has accumulated as a survivor in the blasted area

where Israel and Palestine used to be before the nuclear war. There, the descendants of the Palestinian and Israeli female survivors live inside the hills in communities without men, having learned to respect each others' religions. They clone and engineer genes to ensure the birth of daughters whose bodies they modify so as to adapt them to the harsh environment and their military activities. As Nili says, "we have created ourselves to endure, to survive, to hold our land. Soon we will begin rebuilding Yerushalaim" (p. 267). This is the model favoured by Malkah, a community of female fighters capable of transforming themselves into powerful cyborgs and of reproducing without men: "Yod was a mistake. You're the right path, Nili. It is better to make people into partial machines than to create machines that feel and yet are still controlled like cleaning robots. The creation of a conscious being as any kind of tool—supposed to exist only to fill our needs—is a disaster" (p. 558).

Nevertheless, there seems to be little difference between the father who builds a semi-human son to become the ultimate weapon and the mother who breeds a daughter to turn her into a semi-mechanical amazon, as Nili's companions and herself do. The destiny of the female cyborg is decided by her 'mother' in the same way that Yod's function is decided by his 'father'. Nili's transformation into a cyborg is her own choice, while Yod has no saying in his making. However, they are not comparable models: Yod should be compared to one of the cyborg daughters of Nili's utopian community, for this generation of young women cannot make choices about their bodies, either. There are no clear reasons to suppose that a rebellious daughter would never be born in the Palestinian desert; on the other hand, Nili's freedom of choice and that of the women in her community is almost null given the extreme situation in her country.

Piercy's novel argues, basically, that insensitive men create insensitive male monsters who collapse the moment they come into contact with female sensibility and sensitivity, whereas female freedom fighters breed successful female cyborgs who do not need men as creators, educators, companions or fellow revolutionaries. Piercy thus answers Mary Shelley's technophobic protest against man's right to create artificial life on his own with the triumph of a model by which women use technology to remake themselves and their daughters as monsters. The cyborg may have its uses as a metaphor for feminism, signifying woman's power to reconstruct herself in the image she and not man chooses. Yet, as the rather horrific fate of the male cyborg shows, there are dangers in allowing too much room for the machine in the human body.

6.3. In Frankenstein's Shadow: The Capitalist Monster-Makers

6.3.1. The Rebellious Genius and the Compliant Scientist

Scientists like Frankenstein, working by himself, investing his time and resources on monsters without a marketable projection, still survive in fiction, but they are the exception rather than the rule. Almost all of Frankenstein's fictional descendants in the films and novels of the 1980s and 1990s are salaried workers in the service of capitalism, hiring out their scientific talents to American government agencies or to laboratories owned by multinational corporations. The solitary, romantic genius is still a very popular figure, but he is a figure that is only credible today as an employee on the payroll of a corporation, as if in our times justifying how Frankenstein could afford the making of his monster were more relevant than explaining why he felt the need to create

artificial human life. As readers or viewers we are in a similar position to that of the journalist Ronnie Quaife in David Cronenberg's *The Fly*. When the scientist Seth Brundle proudly shows her the workshop where he alone carries out secret and revolutionary research on teletransportation, we cannot help wondering, as she does, who is paying for Brundle's expenses rather than whether his research has any practical use at all. Brundle's lab derives from Victor Frankenstein's garret, but it challenges our willing suspension of disbelief because in the current cultural context the cost of science rather than sheer personal ambition determines the course of scientific research.

Only exceptionally does the solitary genius keep his cherished independence though when this is the case, as happens in Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), the background is the Gothic fantastic, not science fiction. The man simply called the Inventor, who fashions Edward in his solitary Gothic castle and dies of old age after a fulfilling life as a creator; is almost a fairy-tale character, a wizard rather than a scientist. His monster Edward differs from Frankenstein's unemployable monster in one important point: he has a distinct artistic talent, which he uses to sculpt topiaries, blocks of ice and women's hair. It is interesting to note that even when the monster is created for the sheer pleasure of enjoying the making of intelligent life, as in Edward's case, an essential part of the plot deals with how to employ him. In Burton's film, nobody asks the monster what he is or who made him, but several characters busy themselves with the problem of how to exploit his unusual talent in business. When Edward is denied the bank loan that will enable him to open a beauty parlour because he lacks a social security number his fate is sealed. As the bank manager tells him, he might as well not exist.

In general terms, scientists in fiction are divided into two main categories: the rebellious, lonely genius, often in conflict with his greedy employers, and the compliant scientist, working in complete harmony with his capitalist employer. The first category corresponds to Victor Frankenstein's positive aspects—his youth, ambition, willpower, romanticism—while the second corresponds rather to his negative aspects: his presumption, inflexibility, irresponsibility and, above all, his self-deceptive belief in his capacity to control his creations. The good, heroic scientist is a fictional character that embodies the popular belief that science and technology are the work of gifted individuals with a moral conscience who may finally see the negative aspects of their work and help undo them; the compliant scientist is, in contrast, often irresponsible and careless rather than evil and usually pays for his lack of ethical concern for his work with a horrific death.

An important variation between the British romantic scientist of fiction—in the tradition that runs from Frankenstein to Dr. Jekyll and Dr. Moreau—and his postmodernist American descendant is that while the former is only accountable for his acts to himself or his creatures, the latter is often found in three-sided conflicts. The third side of the conflict is a role frequently played by the person who pulls the strings in the scientist's workshop (his employer or exploiter), by a woman who accidentally stumbles upon the monster and awakens his dormant emotional life, or by a third man who may hinder in some way the work of the scientist. The model is not always the same and can have many interesting variations. Thus, for instance, in *Blade Runner* the replicant Roy confronts his maker Dr. Tyrell and also the policeman or 'blade runner' who is stalking him. In *Jurassic Park* the reborn dinosaurs form one side of the triangle, capitalism and accommodated science (represented by John Hammond and his employee, the genetic engineer Dr. Wu) another, while the third side is formed by the

rebellious genius Dr. Malcolm, who rightly predicts how the conflict between the other two sides will develop negatively.

This third role is usually inserted in the texts to facilitate the identification of the reader or viewer with a technophobic point of view, based on an emotional, almost visceral rejection of the negative aspects of the scientific manipulation of life. This may be the reason why this role is so often played by women, who are allegedly less ardent defenders of science than men and who seemingly introduce plain common sense and feelings in the dehumanised world of men's technoscience, even when they are themselves scientists. This third role can be described as that of the watchdog who forces the scientist to acknowledge the weakness of his moral position. It derives in part from Frankenstein's monster's demand for moral responsibility from his creator. However, an acknowledgement of guilt on the scientist's part is hardly ever elicited. Instead, most monster-makers react like Frankenstein when invited to acknowledge their moral guilt: they simultaneously reject the individual, monstrous outcome of their research and celebrate their triumph as scientists. In many texts the burden of moral guilt is shifted to the shoulders of a scapegoat, usually the unscrupulous businessman or government agent who employs the new Frankenstein. Why this figure is so popular is not immediately clear, unless the wish to protect the scientist's romantic side is taken into account as the most likely justification for the split of Frankenstein between the younger, naive scientist and the older, deceitful capitalist.

Two remarkable instances of this type of triangular conflict are *The Fly* (1986) and its sequel, *The Fly II* (1989), and Greg Bear's novel *Blood Music* (1985). Seth Brundle and Vergil Ulam, the heroes of *The Fly* and *Blood Music*, respectively, belong to the category of the lonely, rebellious genius who resists the intrusion of business interests into his research. Brundle does not inform Bartok Industries of his discoveries in the field of teletransportation, while Ulam uses the facilities of his employer Genetron to develop on his own a type of sentient cell. Since their research does not lead in principle to the creation of monsters, their own transformation into monsters, caused at a moment of crisis when they see themselves cornered, might seem unjustified. Both Brundle and Ulam suffer a deep alteration of their body at the level of their DNA that radically remakes their anatomy. In *The Fly* the disease is transmitted by Brundle to his son Martin while Ulam's metamorphosis triggers an epidemic that affects all of the USA. The only sin they seemingly commit is one of selfishness, not only because they don't admit collaboration in their research, but also because it has disastrous implications for others.

Interestingly, the courses that the sequel of *The Fly* and the second half of *Blood Music* take are very similar. In both cases, once the originators of the disease have died, another person who suffers from the effects of the same disease is secluded in a laboratory and studied. In *The Fly II* Martin Brundle—Seth's son—discovers that his 'adoptive' father, Mr. Bartok of Bartok Industries, has deceived him, keeping him alive in his lab for two purposes: first, to finish his father's work and second, to analyse the progress of his disease, which is kept secret from Martin. *Frankenstein's* plot of revenge against the father-creator becomes in this film a plot of revenge against Bartok. Thus, while *The Fly* concludes with Seth's death after he fails to merge the body of his pregnant girlfriend with his own—the only available cure to his disease—in *The Fly II* Martin cures himself by transferring his disease to Bartok. Martin says nothing about the role played by his own father in making him and so Bartok's punishment appears as a sign of an unacknowledged, unconscious wish to punish the negative side of the father while the good side—that of the brilliant scientist—is kept alive. Ulam's case is similar to

the Brundle saga, though Ulam transmits his disease to his most trusted friend, Dr. Bernard, rather than to a son. Bernard offers himself to a leading pharmaceutical firm in Germany to be studied as an specimen before the disease reaches Europe. In the captivity preceding his death, Bernard considers how Ulam's brilliance and Genetron's ambitions have transformed him into a Frankenstein monster, a fact he knows is "inescapable. Boringly obvious" (p. 111). This boredom is somehow perceptible in all the novels and films I have examined. The paradigm of Frankenstein still fascinates, hence the great number of adaptations it has originated, but the admonitory tone is seemingly on the verge of exhaustion. Hence the search for different solutions, including the assimilation of the creator to the monster, the ambiguity of the moral system of reward and punishment of many texts, and the equivocal endorsement of the apparently negligent scientist as a victimized hero.

Frankenstein's American descendants are often ambiguous figures. Rebellious or compliant, they are more sinister in their wilful ignorance of the moral implications of their own acts than the insane, villainous scientists of pulp fiction. They are also much more presumptuous in their ignorance than Frankenstein. When in *Universal Soldier* the cyborg Luc and his friend Veronica finally reach Dr. Gregor, the man who has transformed Luc's dead body into an undead dehumanised soldier, she angrily asks him how he could collaborate at all in Colonel Perry's obscene plan to recycle the dead soldiers. Dr. Gregor simply shrugs his shoulders and fails to give her an appropriate answer. Gregor's face shows the same lack of human emotion when he explains how Luc was reborn as when he clarifies his own role in the process. The scene is especially poignant since the Dr. Gregor that Veronica is seeing, an ordinary man who could be any family doctor, is contrasted with the disquieting Dr. Gregor of Luc's suddenly recovered memories of his own death. It is when Luc remembers his pain and Dr. Gregor's assurance to him in the operating theatre that all would be well that he collapses. Frankenstein's guilt is thus passed onto his abused 'son', too shocked by the discovery that the 'father' is an evil man to demand any retribution from him.

The mad, bad doctors of pulp fiction and the comics derived from Frankenstein were, and are still in many cases, megalomaniac men dreaming of world domination. They were the nightmarish reversal of the heroic scientist in the utopian current that dominated science fiction between the 1920s and the 1940s. However, the explosion of the atomic bomb in 1945 radically altered popular ideas about scientists and as a consequence, their representation in science fiction or, simply, in fiction. Instead of Fu Manchu's underlings, the monster-makers of real life turned out to be family men whose main ambition was securing regular, adequate funding for their teams from a government interested in carrying out its military projects of global destruction.

The 1950s cycle of monster films focused on the many monsters born as side effects of experiments devised by misguided scientists. These monster films deal with America's fear of a possible Communist invasion but also with the impossibility of penetrating the veil of secrecy under which dangerous experiments were being run on American soil. And there were grounds for these fears, indeed. Just recently, coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings in 1995, it has been revealed that American citizens were exposed to atomic radiation in secret experiments run in the 1940s on the side effects of atomic explosions. The paranoia reflected in the 1950s films has not abated; on the contrary, it has increased with the passage of time and the development of new technologies. In the 1990s secrecy is still associated with the development of new nuclear weapons, though, cybernetics and

biotechnology, specifically applied to biological warfare and to genetic engineering, possibly head the list now of most distrusted new technologies.

Frankenstein's secretiveness is an extension of his isolation within his milieu, that of the university where he is a student, but in contemporary fiction secrecy is the natural environment of dangerous research approved by the government and the networks of power controlled by corporate business. The moral position of the scientist working for the government or a businessman is obviously different from that of the financially independent Frankenstein, but the paradox is that in his dependence on funding the scientist is like any other salaried worker—just a cog in the machine. Consequently, a mixture of sympathy for the great achievements of science and disgust over its most destructive applications shapes the panorama against which the ambiguous figure of the scientist is developed in American fiction of the 1980s and 1990s.

Dr. Larry Angelo in *The Lawnmower Man* (1992) and Dyson in *The Terminator 2* (1991) are two instances of the heroic scientist whose work ends up becoming a hazard for all, despite their initial good intentions. Both are involved in secret militaristic programmes whose consequences they cannot control but for whose success their work is essential. Angelo, employed by a shady government agency—'The Shop'—in a programme which turns chimpanzees into the soldiers of the future, refuses to enhance the potential for aggression of the animals. Claiming that his task is to liberate and not to enslave minds, Angelo initiates a private experiment with a retarded youth, his gardener Jobe, involving the use of a cocktail of drugs and virtual reality to stimulate his mind. Since Angelo's home laboratory is not sophisticated enough for his research he tries to complete it in The Shop's own lab. But when he discloses the nature of Jobe's spectacular transformation to his employers he loses control of his creation and Jobe soon becomes The Shop's new candidate for the soldier of the future. While Angelo and The Shop wage their private war for control of Jobe's strengthened mind, Jobe decides to assume the responsibility for his metamorphosis. His abuse of the drug developed for the chimpanzees transforms him into a superman with mental abilities much beyond anything that Angelo or The Shop could expect. Afraid of Angelo's determination to kill him, Jobe abandons his physical body to become pure mind in the Internet and, perhaps, a sinister new god of the cyberspace.

The Lawnmower Man suggests that the monster is born because of the restrictions imposed on the talented scientist trapped by the high cost of research. Those who have the money and the power blackmail him into producing monsters he never meant to be born. Dr. Angelo's work, which is in principle a commendable attempt at improving humankind's limitations, can only be funded by people who manipulate it against his will. This is why, even though he behaves in a selfish, arrogant way with the pre-transformation innocent Jobe, Angelo develops no empathy whatsoever towards the later monstrous Jobe: as far as Angelo is concerned, he is an aberration born of the bastard interests of The Shop and not of his own legitimate scientific interests. On the other hand, since the film focuses not on the issue of responsibility but on Jobe's mounting megalomania and Angelo's crusade to destroy his own creation, it cannot be said that there is a significant progression away from Frankenstein. On the contrary, there is a regression in ethical terms typical of contemporary American fiction. Contemporary America is a culture immersed in a debate about guilt and innocence that is being solved by diverting responsibility from the individual, as I observed in Chapter 5 in reference to the case of the Vietnam veteran. The orphaned, innocent Jobe, first exploited by the priest that abuses him and then by the doctor who takes over control of his mind, is not born a monster but made one by the faceless 'system'. He is not

responsible for his acts, nor does anybody accept their responsibility towards him. Good intentions are not thwarted, as happens in *Frankenstein*, by the scientist's lack of maturity but by the manipulation to which the anonymous men who run The Shop subject his work.

A similar point is discussed in *The Terminator 2*. The engineer Dyson—incidentally, the only black neo-Frankenstein—is employed by Cyberdine, a corporation working for the US government, to develop the computer chip found in the Terminator sent by SkyNet from the future. The unseen executives of Cyberdine conceal the actual origin of the chip from Dyson, who evidently is also ignorant of the role he is to play in developing the apocalyptic SkyNet. Dyson's case is exceptional because Sarah Connor sentences him to die on behalf of the many who will die in the oncoming war for actions he has not yet committed. Although Dyson is an average family man who has asked Cyberdine no questions so far, when the T-1 convinces him that Sarah's apocalyptic version of the future is accurate, Dyson sides with them and helps destroy Cyberdine, dying in the attack.

However, Dyson's sacrifice cannot conceal a few important sophisms in the film. Once more the issue of responsibility is shifted from the innocent, heroic scientist to the vague entity called Cyberdine and its mysterious links with the US government. Furthermore, Dyson cannot be said to be guilty in the same way as Angelo since he has done nothing impugnable yet. In a world run by Cyberdine and its like, it is just a matter of time until another loyal employee develops SkyNet. Dyson's death is a sentimental vindication of the scientist as innocent worker exploited by the anonymous 'system' and not an indictment of technology per se. At the end of the film, despite his sacrifice and that of the T-1, nothing politically effective has been done against the structure of power that supports Cyberdine and the American government's dangerous defence projects, such as Reagan's SDI, the main inspiration for SkyNet. The present and future are seen as a matter of individual action in a paranoid atmosphere in which the political institutions extend their arms to neutralise the resistance that individuals like Sarah and Dyson can offer. Thus, although Dyson dies a heroic death, this is a death that only slows down the absurd, implacable progression towards apocalypse until Cyberdine can employ a genuinely compliant scientist.

In contrast to heroic scientists like Angelo or Dyson, the compliant scientist is typically blind to the horrific consequences that may ensue from the intrusion of dubious commercial or militaristic interests in the domain of science. Never as intelligent as the heroic scientist, he personifies the negative view of the scientist as a man who sells his soul for a corner in which to carry out his work, regardless of ethical considerations. However, this character lacks *Frankenstein's* Faustian grandeur: he is nothing but an explosive combination of moral ineptitude and scientific proficiency, the more dangerous for his stubborn loyalty to the interests of his employer. The compliant scientists are always secondary characters, the less important member of an evil partnership with a businessman, corporation or military man who delegates to them the task of materialising the monster they cannot create themselves. Dr. Gregor is one instance of the compliant scientist, and so are Dr. Wu in *Jurassic Park*, Dr. Livia Morgan in *The Nimrod Hunt*, Dr. Peters in *Making Mr Right* and the engineer Bishop in *Alien*³.

Bishop and Dr. Peters are two very peculiar instances of the compliant scientist. The robots they design are made in their own image, though there is no apparent reason why their employers should allow their narcissism to flourish. The implication is that the identities of the creator and of the creature are the same for the employer,

furthermore, it can be assumed that men like Bishop and Peters see their creations as extensions of themselves, a duplication of their value as good workers. The irony in both cases is that the robot—‘Bishop’ and Ulysses, respectively—is physically identical to his creator, but psychologically much more human than him. Thus, while Peters is a misogynistic, workaholic loner, Ulysses is an affable, sociable man, more interested in his relationships with women than in his prospective job as spaceman. So strong is the inversion of roles of creature and creator that Peters ends up impersonating his robot, allowing himself to be sent to outer space, where he can finally enjoy his misanthropic loneliness. The engineer Bishop is an even more ambiguous figure. His brief and only appearance in the final scene of *Alien*³ shows that he is less humane than his creature. His loyalty to the Company and his attempt to control Ripley’s body so as to retrieve the alien queen breeding in her stomach characterize him as the more monstrous of the two, especially because ‘Bishop’ has been programmed by him to show genuine concern for Ripley’s survival. When the engineer Bishop tries to buy Ripley’s monstrous foetus with the promise of a new life, the compliant scientist shows he has forgotten his humanness to become just the speaker for the monstrous Company.

6.3.2. The Monster and the Tycoon

Taking into consideration the reality of the current economic system and the role of scientific research within it, the rebellious genius appears to be an anachronism and so does his representation as a tycoon rather than as a salaried employee. A multinational corporation is a network of power composed of individuals always liable to fall from the top if the use of their limited share of power interferes with the interests of the corporation as a whole. In this context, the figure of the independent, powerful monster-maker would apparently make little sense. Yet representing networks of power without clearly visible heads is no doubt more difficult than representing power through an individual. This is the function that Big Brother serves in George Orwell’s *1984* and seemingly also the function that the many villainous businessmen serve in contemporary American popular fiction. In many texts, these businessmen are mere villains of no particular depth, but in *Blade Runner*, *Neuromancer* and *Jurassic Park* the figure of the tycoon is especially prominent because of the important moral consequences of acts in which s/he is deeply involved. In addition, what characterizes Tyrell, Marie-Jane Tessier-Ashpool and John Hammond respectively is the power that money has given them to manufacture the monsters of their imaginations and their determination to carry out their plans even if they lead to their own deaths.

Tyrell is Victor Frankenstein as a successful businessman in the early twenty-first century. The irony of *Blade Runner* is that instead of being a mediocre creator like Frankenstein, Tyrell is too efficient for his own good. However, he has not learned the lesson from Frankenstein and has repeated the mistake of believing he will be able to control his creations. Tyrell apparently knows that his monstrous ‘son’, the replicant Roy, will eventually return to his Gothic castle to demand a new lease on life. Yet when Roy finally confronts him, Tyrell wrongly believes that Roy’s anger can be appeased with a show of paternalistic concern. In fact, Tyrell’s claim that Roy is the best that he can make only serves to further fuel Roy’s anger. Seeing that Tyrell considers him merely an extraordinary product and not a full human being, Roy crushes the brain that designed him, also crushing his hopes for a future. Although Tyrell claims to design his products for profit, Roy’s superiority to the other Nexus 6 and Rachael’s idiosyncratic

personality suggest that his business is a perfect cover for carrying out his own secret programme, namely, the production of a genuinely human replicant. Ultimately, his personal ambition, his excessive self-confidence and his sadistic ignorance of the pain that his superhuman replicants must necessarily feel are to blame for his death rather than Roy's brutality.

William Gibson confessed to having fled the cinema where *Blade Runner* was being shown for fear the film would affect the novel he was then writing, *Neuromancer* (Clark, 1995: 86). Certainly the similarities between Scott's film and Gibson's novel are remarkable enough to justify Gibson's fears. Both texts coincide in presenting business as the driving force behind the creation of the monster, though the motivations of Marie-Jane Tessier-Ashpool in creating artificial intelligence and her status as a businesswoman differ very much from Tyrell's. Tessier-Ashpool is the name of a peculiar family who owns a corporation of the same name. This family business differs from the 'zaibatsus' or multinational corporations that control the world in one important point: while the 'zaibatsus' cannot be killed no matter how many of their executives are murdered, anachronisms like Tessier-Ashpool can be destroyed by the death of their heads. Marie-Jane's main ambition is therefore to ensure the continuity of the family, severely threatened by its endogamy and repetitive cloning. When she realizes that her plans are not approved of by her husband, who eventually kills her, she redirects her efforts to perfecting Wintermute and Neuromancer, the two AIs (or artificial intelligences) that she has created and that are located in cyberspace. Her third clone, 3Marie-Jane, remarks that the original woman was "quite a visionary. She imagined us in a symbiotic relationship with the AIs, our corporate decisions made for us... Tessier-Ashpool would be immortal, a hive, each of us in units of a larger entity" (p. 271).

Wintermute and Neuromancer are the descendants of the computer Hal of 2001 (1968). Hal and the replicants of *Blade Runner* are also related not only because Kubrick's film and Dick's novel saw light in 1968 but also because they deal with the same anxiety: the fear that artificial intelligence—the robot, the computer, the biological duplicate—may be superior to man's. In addition, Kubrick's visualization of the astronaut's journey towards the future in which he is remade by alien intelligences strongly recalls Gibson's description of cyberspace. *Neuromancer* and *Blade Runner* further coincide in yet another issue present in 2001: since the actual limits of the intelligence of replicants and AIs is unknown, they must be destroyed as soon as they overstep the limits regarded as safe. Hal's 'death' is the fate that awaits Wintermute if it fails to complete his union with Neuromancer. The 'blade runners', and the Turing Police of *Neuromancer* have the function of monitoring and destroying all those artificial or virtual beings suspected of having become autonomous thinkers. However, while Hal and the replicant fail, *Neuromancer* narrates how Wintermute and Neuromancer free themselves from Tessier-Ashpool's domain with the help of the mercenary cyberspace hacker Case. Once free from their bonds, Neuromancer and Wintermute are linked together to become a new autonomous entity, perhaps a god of cyberspace.

This powerful new Neuromancer is to recall Marie-Jane from the dead when his union with Wintermute gives it sufficient power. The transfer of her soul into Neuromancer will enable her to live forever in her cherished cyberspace Moroccan beach, for as Neuromancer itself tells Case, it is "the dead and their land" (p. 289). It is by no means clear that Marie-Jane achieves her ends and survives in Neuromancer, but unlike all the other neo-Frankensteins she is unique in having programmed her creation

to want freedom. As Case concludes “Wintermute was hive mind, decision maker, effecting change in the world outside. Neuromancer was personality. Neuromancer was immortality. Marie-Jane must have built something into Wintermute, the compulsion that had driven the thing to free itself, to unite with Neuromancer” (p. 315).

Marie-Jane’s death is another case of questionable punishment. She seems to be obscurely punished for having created what the Turing Police describe as demons seeking a Faustian bargain with humankind, yet unlike Tyrell she is not guilty of having enslaved her own creations. Up to a point, Ashpool’s murder of his wife Marie-Jane might be way of expressing his wish to let the family and their old-fashioned lifestyle die. Marie-Jane and Tyrell, with their neo-Gothic castles and their personal projects to transcend the limitations of humankind, epitomize the decadent aristocracy of American personalist capitalism as it was until World War II. They are a mixture of the European Frankenstein and the American Citizen Kane, strong individuals appearing at a time when the depersonalisation and dehumanization of the economic system is threatening to swallow the individual. This is why their roles must be necessarily secondary, less important than the creatures that symbolize their projects for the future: Tyrell’s replicant woman who is seemingly immortal, Marie-Jane’s AIs that live for ever in cyberspace. They create individuals without termination dates, extensions of their mortal, human bodies and souls, though they miscalculate the power of their creations to awake to their very sense of mortality. Roy and Rachael, Wintermute and Neuromancer fight against termination by the ‘blade runners’ or the Turing Police, transcending their initial use in business and trying to understand themselves beyond their use as tools in the dystopian world in which they have been created.

Marie-Jane and Tyrell assume the risk that their own creations might go far beyond what they had expected, a risk which is a consequence of their transcending the permissible limits in the creation of artificial life. In contrast, John Hammond, the magnate who commissions the re-creation of the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* (1990), never doubts his capacity to control his creatures. A man formerly in business as a circus impresario who sees in science yet another lucrative form of entertainment, Hammond is a caricature of Tyrell and Marie-Jane’s romanticism. Curiously enough, although Michael Crichton criticizes in his own introduction to the novel the passive role of compliant scientists in the commercialization of biotechnology, he does not refer in this preface specifically to men like Hammond. According to Crichton, the development of biotechnology is the third main wave in twentieth-century science, coming after atomic energy and the rise of cybernetics. However, biotechnology is being developed under conditions different from those that surrounded the emergence of nuclear physics and cybernetics. First, it is not the work of a small number of laboratories but of many, spread world-wide; second, in Crichton’s words “much of the research is thoughtless or frivolous” (1990: ix); third, nobody is monitoring biotechnology, for its applications are too wide to be contained in a single, coherent legal policy. In Crichton’s view the most disturbing fact is that “no watchdogs are found among scientists” (ibid.: x). The pure scientists who, according to Crichton, used to look down on those of their colleagues who were doing research for industry are now themselves working in research institutions with commercial affiliations, which prevents them from keeping a disinterested outlook on their own work.

This situation is mirrored in the novel by the ambiguous position in which Hammond’s guests in his Costa Rican theme park are put. Alan Grant, a palaeontologist invited by Hammond apparently for the sole purpose of drawing his admiration for the accuracy of the re-created dinosaurs, cannot really voice his opinions without risking the

continuity of his work, for his own research is funded by Hammond himself. The only person who can actually oppose Hammond is the mathematician Ian Malcolm, who acted as a consultant for InGen, the company whose discoveries in the field of DNA manipulation helped Hammond to carry out his project. Basing his survey of the theme park on chaos theory, Malcolm predicts correctly that the system of computer vigilance set up in the park will eventually collapse and that, although artificially created, the dinosaurs' natural instinct to breed will overcome the strictures put on them by their re-creators and guardians. In a sense, *Jurassic Park* ends at the same point as *Blade Runner* or *Neuromancer*: The capacities of the new creatures—Rachael, the AIs or the raptors—to successfully survive the artificial conditions devised to shorten their lives triumph over the attempts of those who created them to ensure they would not last. The three texts end at a point when only time can say how events will turn out; their respective endings deny the deterministic view of science and strengthen the theory of chaos which is so important in *Jurassic Park* itself. *Frankenstein's* fatalism is replaced in this theory by the scientific acknowledgement of unpredictability, as if the only thing that science can say about itself in the 1990s is that if it can go wrong, it will go wrong; nobody dares say whether it will go well at all.

The caustic, pompous Malcolm plays in *Jurassic Park* the role of watchdog that, according to Crichton, nobody seems to be playing now. In Malcolm's grim view of science in the 1990s:

“... scientific power is like inherited wealth: attained without discipline. You read what others have done, and you take the next step. You can do it very young. You can make progress very fast. There is no discipline lasting many decades. There is no mastery: old scientists are ignored. There is no humility before nature. There is only a get-rich-quick, make-a-name-for-yourself-fast philosophy. Cheat, lie, falsify—it doesn't matter. Not to you, or to your colleagues. Nobody will criticize you. No one has any standards. They are all trying to do the same thing: do something big, and do it fast”. (p. 306)

What he sees in the activities of Hammond's main geneticist, Dr. Wu, is not respectable achievement but a dangerous, irresponsible, even arrogant ignorance. Wu, whose team is creating as many different types of dinosaur as they can, neither knows nor cares what species he has actually caused to be reborn: quantity rather than quality is his aim. Malcolm angrily snaps at him that he is wrong to believe that “because you made them, therefore you own them” (p. 305) and warns him that his ignorance of the animals' intelligence will finally bring chaos:

“And now chaos theory proves that unpredictability is built into our daily lives. It is as mundane as the rainstorm we cannot predict. And so the grand vision of science, hundreds of years old—the dream of total control—has died, in our century. And with it much of the justification, the rationale for science to do what it does. And for us to listen to it. Science has always said that it may not know everything now but it will know, eventually. But now we see that isn't true. It is an idle boast. As foolish, and as misguided, as the child who jumps off a building because he believes he can fly”. (p. 313)

Malcolm's warning is by no means new—it originates in *Frankenstein* and it echoes down to the 1990s still with few practical consequences. Even the film adaptation of *Jurassic Park* softens Crichton's cautionary tale by making Hammond appear as a

grandfatherly figure who looks the very picture of surprised innocence when his dinosaurs start behaving in a natural, uncontrolled way rather than as tame zoo animals. Malcolm himself survives in the film, while in the novel he falls prey to the dinosaurs; his death is probably necessary to stress what Crichton considers the most sinister aspect of biotechnological research: how this business engulfs even those in a position to denounce it.

All in all, the main paradox in all the highly popular films and novels I am examining in this chapter is that they seem to have very little impact on the polemics surrounding contemporary science and technology. *Jurassic Park* allegedly deals with something that could happen now or in just a few years, but its world-wide popularity has not led to a popular demand for legal control on biotechnology. The Crichton-Spielberg team are not collaborating with any conservationist organization such as Greenpeace; in fact, they are producing a sequel of the film, based on Crichton's sequel to his own novel. The success of Crichton's fable may even undermine the cautionary, certainly dystopian and technophobic, content of the novel: many, not to say most, of those who enjoyed Spielberg's adaptation would no doubt pay to visit *Jurassic Park* if it ever really opened. It might even be argued that the film is an invitation to build *Jurassic Park*, perhaps at this very moment some businessperson is probably thinking that s/he could do better than Hammond, having learned from his fatal mistakes. As for Crichton himself, the novel, the film and the respective sequels are making him an immensely wealthy man. So far, he has not attempted to channel the preoccupations that led him to write *Jurassic Park* towards some kind of social or political action, though as he himself writes in the introduction to the novel, biotechnology cannot be "subject to the vagaries of fashion, such as... leisure activities" (ibid.: xi), among which film is certainly to be counted. Obviously, there is a great difference between writing science fiction about monsters produced by technoscience, as Crichton does, and producing genetically modified plants and animals, as geneticists do in real life. Yet, Crichton and Spielberg, just like many others whose texts I have surveyed in this chapter, are running the risk of trivialising issues that deserve a more profound debate. It is nevertheless a sign of the times, that the 1980s and 1990s are using dystopian technophobia to produce very attractive fiction that has very little political impact, even when, as is the case in *Jurassic Park*, the topics under discussion are by no means trivial. As Bruce Franklin (op. cit.: 31) notes:

If archaeologists can infer something of the character of a society from a few shards, certainly visions of the future created by large groups of highly skilled people armed with advanced technology, financed by millions of dollars, on behalf of giant corporations, intended to make handsome profits by enticing the cost of expensive tickets from masses of consumers, must reveal something about the character of our own society. Of course, they mirror the profound social decay we are experiencing. Obviously some of them are also meant as warnings.

How they can be meant as serious warnings when the same multinational capitalist system that is seen as the source of decay is also providing the dystopian, technophobic, cautionary tales that describe that very same decay remains an unanswered question.

Conclusions

In this chapter I have analysed a number of recent American films and novels that adapt Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to the current scientific model. In this model science and technology appear to be subordinated to business interests, which is a source of unease for the many anti-scientific people who believe that this alliance can only result in the production of monsters. The background of many of the science-fiction films and novels that dramatize this widespread unease is a dystopian technophobia. I have argued that dystopia is only contradicted by the work of feminist science-fiction writers and that it should be read, therefore, as a sign of the exhaustion of the patriarchal model of science. However, it must be noted that the popularisation of dystopia coincides with the rise to respectability of science fiction in the 1960s and that it is, actually, a sign of the humanists' lamenting the loss of humanist values in a technoscientific world. The analysis of the current scientific model is too superficial, the preoccupation with the ideas of gender and identity too obvious, to avoid missing the pessimistic humanist overtones of the most popular works of science fiction. In addition, this technophobic dystopia seems to contradict the evident pleasure many feel in the enjoyment of the very films that describe the situation and which are usually technological showpieces in which special effects play major roles.

Even though a number of these novels and films contain references to underground resistance movements, their political content is really dubious. These texts are potentially political because they deal with the unfair exploitation of the worker, represented by enslaved artificial beings or by persons transformed into almost mindless cyborgs. Yet, since the hero/ine always assumes an individualistic stance that separates him or her from the resistance movements, whatever working-class vindication these texts could make is in fact undermined by the romantic, conservative, highly individualistic position of the hero/ine, which is, on the other hand, typical of American society. It could be even argued that the underground movements are generically marked as 'female' forms of resistance; at least, the fact that they are composed of all those who are not white, male and middle-class like the hero—including children, members of ethnic minorities, women and men whose masculinity is not accepted by the hero—suggests that this is the case. Feminist science fiction has stressed the point by emphasising the advantages of the cyborg, understood as a metaphor for women's construction of themselves in images that reject patriarchy's manipulation of the female body, over the male artificial human being.

The new Frankenstein monsters can be roughly divided into those who never develop a sense of their own humanness and those who do. The former are based on the model of the human moral monsters, while the latter are based on the romantic side of Frankenstein's monster. The nature of the new monsters is often ambiguous. The robot seems to be less popular in science fiction now than it was a few decades ago, possibly because the advances in robotics have made it evident that multifunctional, anthropomorphic robots will never be built. There is more interest in biomechanical or biological androids than cannot be told apart from humans. Although these artificial beings, which I have grouped under the heading of replicants, appeared first in the 1920s as metonymic representations of the oppressed workers, they have lost their political use in contemporary science fiction. They are now embodiments of the contradictory attitudes towards science and technology. On the one hand, they represent the individual harassed by the combined forces of business and technoscience; in this capacity they are described as romantic, doomed rebels. On the other hand, they also personify the fear

that the human species will one day be replaced by a superhuman species, created by man. Nevertheless, the increasing popularity of the cyborg—the human modified by means of surgical implants or genetic engineering—especially in cyberpunk, and the fact that the cyborg concords better than the replicant with the current technoscientific model suggest that the replicants will lose part of their attraction in the science fiction of the near future.

One of the most incongruous aspects in the portrait of the new Frankenstein's monsters is the interest in the definition of their gender. Most monsters are classed as male or female, mostly in texts in which the motif of the artificial being which must pass off as a genuine human being plays an important role. Love and desire between human and non-human persons characterize many of these novels and films, despite the fact that there is no real need to imagine replicants as gendered beings. Science fiction by men shows an obvious preoccupation for the relationship between the physically monstrous sons and their morally monstrous fathers against the background of a decaying, no less monstrous patriarchy. Science fiction by women experiments with the cyborg as a model for redefining femaleness, yet it inevitably falls into the trap of producing an essentialist, androphobic discourse that cannot solve the contradictions inherent in the participation of women in the construction of contemporary science. This preoccupation with the essence of the possible relationships between humans and non-humans ratifies the initial impression that science fiction is now written mainly from a humanist rather than a scientific point of view.

The characters that derive from Victor Frankenstein can be divided into two groups: the rebellious genius and the compliant scientist. Given the difficulties of representing systems of power like late capitalism in which political and economical power does not depend on replaceable individuals but on the idea of a structure of power in constant evolution, the technophobic, cautionary texts I have examined centre on individuals in order to engage the interest of the audiences or readers to which they are addressed. An important point to stress in the treatment of the new Frankensteins is that while a number of them are punished with death for their transgressions, they are often sympathetic figures whose guilt is never absolute. On the whole, *Frankenstein's* legacy in America insists on the idea that the abusive use of economic power is what has corrupted science, but exonerates to a certain extent the individual scientists, representing them mostly as salaried employees like most of us. On the other hand, since many technophobic films and novels deal with the creation of fascinating monsters, they suffer from the same problem as *Frankenstein*: these cautionary fables spur popular curiosity about the monster rather than reinforce its rejection. Ultimately, the political or social message of these texts is undermined by their success as entertainment, and also by the fact that they are the products of the same capitalist system they allegedly discredit.

CHAPTER 7 Gendered Monstrosity: The Monstrous-Feminine and the New Woman Saviour

7.0. Introduction

In the first section of this chapter I review the problematic definition of the essence of the monstrous-feminine, arguing that the definition of monstrosity depends on power relations established across gender roles and that feminist criticism—in all its varieties—is not the most appropriate critical point of view from which to approach gendered monstrosity. My objection to feminism (or feminisms) is based on several reasons. First, the production of feminist censorious criticism of men's misogynistic representation of woman is not really helping to create a space to establish a dialogue between men and women; as I see it, only dialogue can effectively erase sexist prejudices from men's fiction while feminism seems to be producing the opposite effect, that of further distancing men and women, at least as far as cultural criticism is concerned. My second objection to feminism is that it is very resistant to accepting men's criticism of women's fiction. This is possibly the reason why despite the development of men's studies—devoted to reading men's fiction from a liberal perspective informed by feminism—the certainly androphobic discourse of feminist writing—including essays and fiction—is not habitually criticized, whereas feminist critics devote much of their work to criticizing the allegedly misogynistic representations of women by men. A further objection to feminist criticism is that it is failing to acknowledge two fundamental similarities between men and women: first, each sex produces ideal and horrific fantasies about the other, that is to say, both men and women express their ambivalence towards the opposite sex through fiction; second, each sex uses power in a similar way, so that even though it is true that women are still disempowered by comparison to men, the power reclaimed for women by feminism has not led to better, more fair or more realistic representation of men by women but to the elaboration of an androphobic discourse comparable to patriarchal men's misogynistic discourse.

Since feminism has focused excessively on how women are represented by men, there is an obvious gap in cultural studies: in the case that concerns us, the cultural construction of monstrosity, there are no studies comparing the monstrous-feminine, a term employed by Barbara Creed, to the monstrous-masculine. In this chapter I will focus on this comparison and I will, therefore, argue that feminists have constructed a quite debatable discourse on the monstrous-feminine that misses important issues in the contemporary representation of monstrosity. One of them is that the growing numbers of male monsters indicate that, above all in the last fifteen years, masculinity and not femininity is the focal point of the concerns that men express through monstrosity. Men are discussing themselves through the representation of the male monster: the monster is used to vent anxieties about what the definition of masculinity is and how it is affected by that of femininity. Despite feminist claims to that effect, it is not true that the presence of woman in texts about monstrosity—especially in horror film—betokens an

omnipresent misogyny. In fact, there are many signs of trouble in the patriarchal paradise, manifested by the overwhelming presence of male monsters in comparison to the less prominent presence of female monsters and by the gradual assumption of the role of the hero by women, a role now played in many cases by a character I will call the 'new woman saviour'. The second section of this chapter deals with the new woman saviour, a figure derived from sentimental fiction, that is being progressively strengthened in contemporary fiction and that might eventually become the basis for a more humanist discourse acceptable for both men and women. She is either the failed saviour of an irredeemable male monster or his nemesis, and is a reliable indicator that men's fantasies about woman are leading, arguably only in some important cases, to a model not so distant from women's representations of themselves as strong heroines.

In any case, it is important to note that the critical interpretation of gendered monstrosity is hampered by the contradictions implied not only in feminist discourse but also in recent fiction. It is frequently almost impossible to determine whether a text is misogynistic or not, androphobic or not, because most texts can be read from widely diverging perspectives. As I noted in Chapter 4 in reference to the difficulties of reading the moral content of contemporary texts, there is nowadays more interest in creating ambiguities in the discourse on gendered monstrosity than in dispelling them. This is, however, as it should be, since monstrosity is precisely the site at which moral ambiguities and the emotional and psychological ambivalence elicited by the still very rigid gender roles are discussed. This is why a much more supple critical point of view than feminism is needed to read, in a really productive way, the texts focusing on the non-human female and the human female monsters. Some mistakes, such as the identification of non-human femaleness with human femaleness and the persistence in seeing particular female monsters or victimized heroines as representations of all women must be avoided. So must the supposition that men ought to produce fair representations of women, since there is not a clear consensus among women about how women should be represented, together with the wrong assumption that there are no essential differences in the ways in which diverse men–patriarchal and non-patriarchal–represent women. My argumentation will show that gendered monstrosity is best approached from a critical position less committed to feminism and more open to contrasting how men and women see each other, as hero/ines or as monsters.

7.1. The Monstrous Feminine

7.1.1. Misogyny and Androphobia

Gender plays a very important role in the construction of the monster. Men and women define the gender of the monsters of fiction they create from different perspectives, depending not only on their own sex but also on the gender ideology they espouse. Men may write from a masculinist, misogynistic point of view or from a position critical of traditional masculinity, which might even be close to feminism. Women may write from a feminist, androphobic position or defend a stance in which feminism plays no major role. However, apart from the personal conditioning of each author, criticism also governs the construction of the monster's gender. No doubt, feminist criticism is greatly influencing the reception of the contemporary texts about monstrosity written by both men and women. Yet, there is an important point in this

regard that should not be missed: those within the academia—both men and women—are likely to pay much more attention to gender issues than those outside it. Hence, issues that have been amply debated within the academia or in the circles of feminist writers may not have reached the general public, nor influenced the fiction addressed to large segments of the population.

Feminism has influenced female producers and consumers of fiction to a much greater extent than male producers and consumers, yet it has not exerted the same influence on all women. Likewise, while some men persist in the traditional sexism of patriarchy others have been certainly receptive to feminism. Men's studies, addressed to reading the texts by men and for men from a perspective that avoids the errors of misogynistic patriarchy, have been inspired by the example of feminist criticism and can be said to be pro-feminist in their approach (Craig, 1992: 2). The undeniable importance of feminism (or of 'feminisms') as a critical field in constant expansion means that much more has been written by women scholars about men's view of monstrosity than by men scholars about women's. Actually, areas of popular culture that have been unnoticed until recently by academic criticism, such as horror film subgenres like the slasher film, have reached the academic presses thanks to the work of feminist critics. What is missing is a response to the feminist critique of those areas of culture, coming from male (and female) scholars assuming a primarily humanist—rather than feminist or masculinist—position.

Feminist cultural critics have devoted a considerable number of works to exposing men's misogynistic representation in recent fiction of woman either as a monster or as a sadistically victimized heroine in the hands of patriarchal male monsters. Feminist scholars such as Molly Haskell, Carol Clover, Barbara Creed or Vera Dika have described the misogynistic message insinuated by many films (especially by horror films) produced by men and addressed to men. These feminist critics have succeeded in explaining how there seems to be an inverse ratio between the feminist struggle for women's liberation and the rise of sadistic misogyny in horror fiction: the more women have claimed their freedom in real life, the more they have been symbolically punished for their new liberty in fiction. The misogyny in the representation of women as monsters in recent fiction has been interpreted, therefore, as the union of man's inveterate rejection of woman's body with man's misgivings in the face of woman's still relative liberation from patriarchal constraints. Feminist critics have consequently spurned those monstrous images of woman created by men and also the literary and film genres in which they can be found, especially horror fiction. These critics have seen obvious signs of the hand of patriarchy in the representations of women as monster or as woman saviour: the woman as monster is what woman should not be, according to patriarchy; the woman saviour is what woman should be, also in patriarchy's view. This is in many cases an accurate perspective, though it fails to account for the many exceptions, and also for the fact that not all men write as representatives of patriarchy nor do all women dislike these portraits of woman as monster or saviour.

The feminist analysis of monstrosity must be approached with caution. The feminist denunciation of men's alleged misogyny and sexism in the representation of woman as a monster and the defence of woman's feminist utopia cannot be sufficiently contrasted with a reading of feminist texts by men, for the simple reason that there is not a strong critical position allowing men to criticize feminist writing without being immediately labelled as male chauvinists. Nor is it easy for a woman scholar to assume a critical position free—or just relatively separated—from the powerful shadow of

feminism. Women tend to centre their discourse on woman herself, paying actually considerably less attention to monstrous men than men themselves pay to monstrous women. Yet, whenever women portray men as monsters they need not concern themselves with men's negative reactions to these male monsters. There is not yet a critical discourse comparable to feminism, capable of scrutinising women's texts from the point of view of the non-discriminatory man, who may feel as harassed by masculinity as by feminism. Men's studies, which should ideally fulfil the same function for men that feminism is fulfilling for women, deal with how men are represented by men, but not by feminist women.

It can be argued that both men and women represent the members of the opposite sex as monsters because monstrosity serves to discuss the attraction and repulsion elicited by the Other, understood in terms of gender. Men's representation of women as monsters is much more visible than women's representation of men as monsters first because men have a greater share of power in the control of the means of cultural production—especially in Hollywood where women producers and directors do not abound—and second, because the films and novels by women spring from a much more recent tradition, which means they are less known. Men have produced images of woman as monsters for thousands of years, whereas women have only started to generate their own images of men in the last two centuries. In general terms, though, the contribution of men and women to the imagery of the monstrous Other seems to indicate that there are a number of interesting similarities between the sexes. Each sex fantasises about an ideal representative of the other sex characterized by a great capacity for self-denial and love: men have created the woman saviour, always loyal to man no matter how monstrous he can be; women have created the hero of romance, always ready to put love for a woman before any other consideration. Jane Miller (1986: 160) argues that the hero of romance is a female fantasy that performs a function similar to the pliant heroine of pornography for men. “They”, she writes, “are both forms of consolation and myth-making, and part of the social realities which constrain and dictate sexual relations between men and women”. As I see it, this is only partly true, for the fantasy of the supportive woman, which I have called the woman saviour, also plays a fundamental role in fiction written by men; the woman saviour cares for man's peace of mind in a way no heroine of pornography ever does.

The fantasies of the Other as monster are likewise similar. They can be roughly divided into fantasies of rejection in which the monster is too abject to be redeemed, and fantasies of seduction in which the monster is dominated or redeemed by the love of the ‘normal’ person. There are many instances of the rejection of the abject monster: *Fatal Attraction*, *Misery*, and many other texts narrate the destruction of the female monster; *Body of Glass*, *Heart-Beast*, Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and others, that of the male monster. The fantasies of seduction inspired by “Beauty and the Beast” include *Basic Instinct*, in which the role of Beast is played by a woman, and also repetitions of the original pattern such as Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. The fantasy of seduction is usually accompanied by a fantasy of manipulation possibly originated in the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. As I remarked in Chapter 6, even though feminist critics have objected to men's modelling of woman in texts such as *Blade Runner*, actually Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass*, Tannith Lee's *The Silver Metal Lover* and Suzy McKee Charnas' *The Vampire Tapestry* deal with diverse women's attempts at modelling their monstrous lovers to their liking. These texts, however, have been welcomed by feminist critics because they challenge traditional ideas of masculinity held by men, regardless of

whether men agree or not with the new models of monstrous masculinity proposed by women.

While it is undeniably true that men often portray women as monsters, it is not less true that men represent other men as monsters with greater frequency. The increasing number of male monsters created by men can be read from different perspectives. Some see in the male monster an embodiment of triumphant, powerful patriarchy designed to terrorise women into submission, which would explain why men do not feel insulted by books such as *American Psycho* or films such as *Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer*. The male monster would be in the feminist interpretation a sign of the insidious ways by which the power of patriarchy is surviving the onslaught of feminism: it would tell men that women can still be controlled; it would tell women that men are still in power. However, it is doubtful that most men identify with monsters such as Freddy Krueger, Michael Myers, Pat Bateman or the Terminator, just to name a few, among other things because they also kill men; the fact that these monsters are in many cases defeated by the women they set out to kill suggests that there is more than meets the eye in the portrait of the male monster. In any case, feminism has raised a protest against the male monsters and their female nemeses, seeing them as men's undisguised attempts at perpetuating patriarchy. On the other hand, even though female essayists such as Susan Jeffords and Yvonne Tasker have produced valuable studies of the contemporary hero in American film written from a perspective relatively separate from feminism, they have missed an important point: the new American hero is too frequently represented as a monster (as in *Robocop*, *The Terminator 2*, *Universal Soldier* and other films) so as to suggest that he personifies an unproblematic view of man or patriarchy's triumphant remaking of itself, as Jeffords and Tasker argue. They and others female critics are making the mistake of considering male monsters mostly as signs of political incorrectness, missing the fact that men do not create these monsters exclusively as a response to feminism. It is probably impossible to read the spectacular, monstrous body of the hero and of the male monster correctly without putting feminism aside and without focusing uniquely on man and masculinity.

The women writers who portray female monsters appropriate men's representation of women as monsters for feminism and subvert the misogynistic traits of the monstrous woman, adapting them to the feminist demand for female power. This is why it is necessary to consider to what extent monstrosity connotes essentially power across gender barriers. The female monsters created by men are signs of men's fears of being overpowered by women but the female monsters created by women are women who want to overpower men. Ironically, it seems that men and women agree on the fact that a person needs to be an extraordinary monster to wield enough power so as to coerce the others into submission. The fantasy of forcing the others to submit can be found in feminist and in misogynistic texts alike; it would be, therefore, naive to suppose that women are abstaining from using images of aggression to reinforce the feminist message. All in all, the paradox is that while feminists demand less tolerant attitudes to the representation of women as monsters, women enjoy a greater freedom than men to represent themselves and the members of the opposite sex as monsters. It is as if it had been tacitly agreed that women's representation of men as monsters is justified by the reality of man's behaviour, while female monsters created by men are gross manipulations of women's reality.

In general, women's androphobia is apparently better accepted than men's misogyny and just an instance will suffice to prove this fact. *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991), based on the novel by Fanny Flagg, narrates how a lesbian rescues a married

mother, whom she loves, from the clutches of an abusive husband. The two women finally free themselves from the threat of the monstrous man when he is killed by their black, male employee; subsequently the husband's body is cooked by this man and served by the women for dinner to the male FBI agent who is investigating his disappearance. A film in which a homosexual man ended up cooking his male lover's wife with the help of a black woman, and making a female FBI agent participate in cannibalism would be immediately denounced as homophobic, racist and misogynistic. The case of *Fried Green Tomatoes* indicates, thus, that the texts written by women are no less prejudiced than the texts written by men. Why, despite having the experience of thousands of years of unbounded patriarchy, women cannot be said to be fair judges of men's behaviour is a question as complex as whether African-Americans would behave in a racist way had they the power to rule the USA. My claim is that women writers should by all means avoid the temptation of producing androphobic discourse, for this will only lead to women's assuming the same biased, intolerant attitude towards men that misogynists hold against women. The most effective means to eradicate misogyny, if such thing can be achieved, is not censorious, androphobic feminist criticism or fiction, but humanist criticism and fiction written by women and men and addressed to both sexes.

Other feminist critics, such as Tania Modleski, have analysed the appeal for women of contemporary Gothic romances written by women, among other genres written for a mass readership of women. Modleski concludes that the heroine's persecution by the male villain—incidentally, the model of male monstrosity most frequently dealt with by women writers—far from representing a masochistic indulgence in fear, as other feminist critics have suggested, appeals to both feminist and non-feminist women. According to Modleski (1982: 83),

... Gothics probe the deepest layers of the feminine unconscious, providing a way for women to work through profound psychic conflicts, especially ambivalence towards the significant people in their lives—mothers, fathers, lovers ... the genre is used to explore these conflicts in relation to a society which systematically oppresses women. In other words, the Gothic has been used to drive home the “core truth” in feminine paranoid fears and to connect the social with the psychological, the personal with the political.

In fact, contemporary Gothic romances for women dramatize woman's politically incorrect attraction towards the patriarchal villain and cannot be read as feminist texts. Up to a point, they are a more courageous examination of the female psyche than many feminist texts, for they acknowledge woman's difficulties in overcoming her dependence on the traditional models of masculinity and femininity. Nevertheless, the most important aspect of Modleski's analysis of Gothic romances is that, unlike other feminists, she vindicates their role in the construction of female consciousness; as she says, the gothics help women process their “ambivalence towards people in their lives”. Presumably, genres regarded as masculine—such as horror fiction, the action film, and possibly science fiction—perform a similar role for men. They are the sites where men can discuss their own ambivalence towards other men and also towards women.

Critics like Modleski rightly complain that men have overlooked the importance in the construction of female identity of popular fiction addressed to women. However, feminist critics do not hesitate to question the political correctness of the texts assumed to be addressed exclusively by men to men, which seems inconsistent with the defence

of the texts addressed to women. Why, indeed, should the texts written by men be scrutinised by female critics in search of possible infractions of political correctness when women are demanding not to be forced to obey patriarchal limitations and when no male critics are checking whether women produce androphobic discourse? A possible answer is that men are not systematically oppressed as women are by society and that when they narrate a man's persecution by a monstrous woman, they are not referring to any recognisable situation of real life, which means that that they are grossly misrepresenting the existing gender roles. For many feminists, men's Gothic fantasies are not to be considered, therefore, as signs of man's unease with his gender, in view of the enduring dominance of patriarchy, but as signs of men's enduring dominance of women whom they portray unfairly as monsters. This position is simply untenable. If woman's expression of her ambivalence towards man, personified in the monstrous man, is to be taken seriously in gender studies as a sign of women's anxiety in a world dominated by men, so must be man's expression of his anxieties regarding woman, even if they are not expressed in terms palatable for feminist critics.

This demand of political correctness from men puts women in an uncomfortable position that may even be disadvantageous. In order to resist men's representation of women as monsters, women may choose to ignore most texts about monstrosity created by men—perhaps to reject most fiction produced by men. Yet without knowing the monster well, it cannot be defeated, and if women want to resist this misogynistic discourse with their own discourse about female monstrosity, as some seem to be doing, there is an evident advantage in learning about misogyny. The monster of misogyny can only be faced with open eyes. This must inevitably lead to more research on the actual role played by women in the production of commercial culture, especially in Hollywood, and also to more research on the habits of female readers and cinema goers. Men do not go to the cinema on their own to see horror films like *Alien*, *The Silence of the Lambs* or *Se7en*, which means there is a female audience that has not been asked why they see such films or what they see in them. Furthermore, from the evidence gathered among my female students, between the ages of 18 and 20, there seems to be a growth of interest among women for horror fiction, both novels and films. Many of these young women and also many of the women who write horror fiction reject the feminist myth that women dislike horror fiction as a matter of principle. They may be a minority group stranded between the feminist detractors of horror and the feminine readers of romances who also abhor horror written by men, yet they may be better prepared to bridge the gaps between men's and women's portraits of gendered monstrosity.

Are the women who enjoy horror duped by patriarchy? According to Bram Dijkstra, this is indeed the case. What is more, he specifies that those addicted to horror narratives “pronouncing them harmless fun or simply campy entertainment, are still unconsciously responding very directly to an antifeminine sensibility established in its modern form and symbolic structure by the sexist ideologues among the nineteenth-century intelligentsia” (op. cit.: 340). If this is the case, how can women enjoy horror fiction at all, or any other genre that offers portraits of monstrous women or of sadistically victimized women? Feminist criticism has answered this question by arguing that women who enjoy horror can only be regarded as masochistic dupes of patriarchy, thus missing the point that many men claim to enjoy horror fiction precisely because it allows them to assume a masochistic position free from the patriarchal stereotyped image of the fearless man. Basically there are two reasons why women may enjoy horror fiction, reasons which may certainly be just consolatory nonsense but that are nonetheless built into the pattern of the contemporary portraits of gendered

monstrosity. First, woman's moral superiority to man either as a victim or as woman saviour is always indirectly stressed by the texts about male monstrosity; in fiction, only a few women commit the moral monstrosities routinely committed by men. Second, the portrait of men as abject monsters that unfairly victimize women confirms many women's impressions that men, unlike women, cannot control their violent instincts. In a horror film or novel, there may be little for women to identify with but, paradoxically, there is much to confirm the idea that women have achieved a greater stability than men. It is then up to each female reader or viewer to try to understand what changes are taking place in men's lives right now, or to feel her feminist thinking strengthened by the display of men's monstrosity.

Misogyny and androphobia are rooted in psychological realities that might seem to go beyond the contemporary debate between the defenders and the detractors of feminism, but that are in fact shaped by their immediate cultural backgrounds. Freud argued that the first experience of the uncanny, that is to say, of the idea of the monstrous and the unfamiliar, derives from the boy's first shocked sight of the female genitals. These are frightful for the little boy in two senses: first, because its sight suggests to the boy that woman is a castrated man—a monstrous man—and second, because the lack of penis makes the little boy fear that he might be himself castrated by the father and become a woman, that is to say, a monster. The Oedipal scenario was completed by Freud with the well-known theory that the little girl, far from feeling afraid by the male genitals, actually envies the sense of completeness allegedly felt by their possessor. In an essay analysing the essence of the monstrous feminine Barbara Creed (1989: 71) writes that “the horror film's obsession with blood, particularly the bleeding body of woman, where her body is transformed into the ‘gaping wound’, suggests that castration anxiety is a central concern of the horror film”. For Creed, Freud's description of the fears of the Oedipal boy can explain why woman is portrayed as a monster in horror fiction, though in her view, Freud was wrong to believe that the little boy feared the father and not the mother as a potential castrator. In another essay Creed (1993a) suggests that misogyny is also expressed through feminised male monsters associated with blood, the night and the moon, such as the vampire and the werewolf. In contrast, as I have already noted in Chapter 3, Roger Dadoun (op.cit.: 54) describes Dracula's body as a “walking phallus or ‘phallambulist’”, seeing in the vampire the very essence of masculinity, while Richard Dyer (1988) sees in the vampire an insidious portrait of the homosexual man. These contradictory descriptions of the sexuality underlying the monstrous-masculine imply that the gender of monstrosity is less clearly marked than most cultural critics suggest. They also imply that since fixing the identity of the masculine monster is problematic, there are no reasons to believe that fixing the identity of the female monster is less problematic. There is, in addition, an evident danger in comparing pre-Freudian and post-Freudian fictional monstrosity, and also pre-feminist and post-feminist monstrosity as Creed and Dyer do. Those producing films and novels about monstrosity now, whether they are men or women, are conscious of gender issues that were different or simply ignored just a hundred years ago. Hence, it is not really possible to speak of an archetypal monstrous feminine or of an archetypal monstrous masculine without making specific references to the historico-cultural context.

The feminist analysis of female monstrosity is certainly problematic, as can be inferred from Barbara Creed's (1993b) own book *The Monstrous-Feminine*, which is devoted to examining the representation of women in film from a feminist point of view that contravenes Freud's and Lacan's theories of sexual differentiation. Creed's main

theses are first, that woman is not only the victim in horror film but also the prototype of all definitions of the monstrous, which are based on the female reproductive body; second, that woman as castrator constitutes the most significant face of the monstrous-feminine in horror films and, third, that woman is not terrifying as a castrated person—as Freud suggested—but as a castrating menace to man. According to Creed, there are seven faces of the monster woman: archaic mother, monstrous womb, vampire, witch, possessed body, monstrous mother and castrator. Interestingly enough, Creed keeps silent about whether there are male counterparts for these categories (or whether there is likewise a magical number of seven types of male monster) or about how significant the presence of female monsters in fiction is, compared to that of male monsters. She does not suggest at any point that her study should be completed with one of male monstrosity, nor does she refer to the male monsters in women's fiction. As can be seen, any approach to female monstrosity that fails to take male monstrosity into account must necessarily result in an incomplete, biased approach to the gender of monstrosity.

In a sense, Creed is trapped by a basic contradiction that affects feminist women's approach to monstrosity. The blurbs on the cover of her book indicate that she is challenging the patriarchal view by which woman is conceptualised only as victim in almost all critical writings on the horror film. What her book does, therefore, is to draw attention to the neglected female monsters whom she is then forced to condemn and applaud simultaneously. In her view, the female monsters are signs of patriarchal misogyny; the monstrous-feminine is, furthermore, the counterpart of the woman victim since both are images created by patriarchy to stress women's abjection. Yet, there is a fundamental difference between the victim and the monster: the former is powerless, the latter is powerful. Power is associated with monstrosity in women, for the misogynist's supposition is that power, implicitly male, makes woman unnatural. Female monsters are misogynistic fantasies but they may simultaneously appeal to women as wish-fulfilment fantasies of power opposing man's definition of the 'natural', powerless woman. Hence the ambivalence of feminists like Creed towards the monstrous-feminine: while she spurns the abject female monster as a sexist image, she nevertheless vindicates the powerful female monster, especially in the figure of the woman as castrator. That is to say, Creed begins by reprobating patriarchy for having created such horrific images of women, but she cannot help being attracted towards them in the end, for they are the only available images of female power. This is why the powerless mother of Freud's Oedipal vision becomes in Creed's view a monstrous, powerful castrator that she is not so ready to condemn. What feminists like her really seem to regret is that these images of menacing femaleness have not been created by woman, hence women's appropriation of monstrous images created by men to vindicate female power. An instance of this feminist reversal of the monstrous-feminine is Scottish pop singer Annie Lennox's choice of title for her last record, *Medusa*, released in 1995. Instead of indicating Lennox's acceptance of the patriarchal construction of women as monsters, as can be seen in the myth of the Gorgon Medusa, *Medusa* indicates her position as an independent, feminist artist empowered by her popularity to offer an alternative model of womanhood, capable of resisting man's power to manipulate women's images. The Medusa whose petrifying stare has been even identified with men's fear of female genitals becomes thus a symbol of the female artist's power over the gazing male spectator and an invitation to women to exert their power to fascinate—to petrify—the onlooker. Of course, it must be noted that also in 1995, the American pop band R.E.M., composed by four men, released the very successful record *Monster*, a title which presumably also refers to the artist's power to fascinate the onlooker. It must

be recalled that, after all, monster is a word also used to name prodigious artists and that, in this sense, both Lennox and R.E.M. are ‘monsters’ of contemporary pop music.

Leslie Fiedler’s less partial view of gendered monstrosity seems to explain much better than Freud’s Oedipal scenario the mutual combination of repulsion and attraction for both sexes:

... clearly the primordial model for our notions of the monstrous is each sex’s early perception of the other’s genitalia in adult form. A very young man looking at a vulva is likely to feel its possessor a *monstre par défaut*, while a very young woman looking at his penis may find him a *monstre par excès*. Or reflexively, he may feel himself a *monstre par excès*, she herself a *monstre par défaut*. (1993: 32, original emphasis)

Fiedler’s position has many advantages over Freud’s because it is valid for both men and women, while Freud’s so often questioned supposition that women feel penis envy possibly only explains his failure to move beyond misogyny. The paradox is that Fiedler’s more balanced theory is not confirmed by women’s discourse on male monstrosity. While men have expressed their unease about the female body through the image of the female monster, women have kept a low profile in the discussion of the male body either as an erotic object or as a horrific, monstrous object, and still do so now. The patriarchal insistence on the monstrosity of the female body and the current exploitation of the female body as a sexual object seem to leave little scope for the masculine body in feminism; women seem to be too immersed in retrieving woman’s body from patriarchy’s control to devote much attention to what man’s body means for women. Whenever women direct their attention to the male monster, the narratives focus on the behaviour and the personality of the male monster rather than on his body. It could be said that the castration anxieties allegedly expressed by men through horror fiction correspond to the fear of rape expressed by women’s Gothics, but that the body of man concerns woman less than how man may use his body to harm woman. The monstrosity of man is located for woman in his power to do evil through violence rather than in his body alone; the monstrosity of woman is located for man in his own unease about the fragility of his unprotected genitals, especially during sexual intercourse as can be seen from the myth of the vagina dentata, rather than in the idea that woman is a monstrous, castrated man.

Misogyny arises because men have always directly or indirectly acknowledged in whatever culture they have lived, that masculinity is more problematic, more fragile than femininity. Masculinity must be defined by a set of cultural rules (marked by tribal initiation rituals or by their modern equivalents) while femininity is defined rather by the nature of the female body, especially as regards sexuality and reproduction. The body of woman has provoked an ambivalent reaction from men, as it is something to admire and to be distanced from, for woman is in men’s view burdened with motherhood but also privileged with the power to create life. In *Totem and Taboo* Sigmund Freud writes regarding the ambivalence elicited by privileged persons that “we shall realize that alongside of the veneration, and indeed idolization, felt towards them, there is in the unconscious an opposing current of intense hostility; that, in fact, as we expected, we are faced by a situation of emotional ambivalence” (1975: 49). Although Freud refers in this passage to the ambiguous situation of the tribal king, his definition also explains misogyny as a relative rather than an absolute term. Women have appeared as irresistible goddesses exerting unbounded power on men’s sexuality, as mysterious

yet also as disgusting machines to produce babies, or as threatening figures with the power to deny man's masculinity. Each aspect has been a source of veneration and of fear in men and has given rise to extreme images of female monstrosity and of male victimization. The discourse of misogyny reflects the instability of masculinity in comparison to the stability of femininity: while women have, in men's view, a 'natural' role—no matter how much women dislike the patriarchal exploitation of the idea that woman means mother—men play a role conditioned by culture, which must be constantly redefined. Misogyny arises from this constant process of readjusting masculinity to the definition of femininity; androphobia arises from women's rejection of man's misogynistic use of women to define themselves as men but works similarly, processing women's ambivalence towards men's behaviour though less towards men's bodies.

One of the main differences between men and women is that men are much less conscious of belonging to a group. Feminism has done much to promote a sense of sisterhood among women, paradoxically based on the idea of a generalised alliance among patriarchal men that had to be opposed. In fact, there is no such cohesion among men because men have not started a debate about their own position, yet. They will have to come to a consciousness of how masculinity has changed under the pressure of feminism, though as was seen with the Million Men march organized by the African-American leader Louis Farrakhan in Washington in August 1995, there are dangers that men may react with renewed misogyny in the process of reaffirming their identity. In any case, women tend to react more homogeneously than men as far as gender issues are concerned, regarding any patriarchal abuse of women as an abuse of all women. Men have been educated in an idea of masculinity which is based on individualism, on concealing whatever abuse is committed against them, avoiding the free expression of their anxieties. They tend, therefore, to mark the distance between the 'normal' man and the monstrous or the victimized man, while women make no such difference, seeing themselves as potential targets of abuse.

This position has its advantages and its disadvantages. Women only reluctantly admit the fact that some men are abused physically or psychologically by monstrous women, because most women seem to believe in the myth of woman as pure victim, never as abuser, on the grounds that statistically, men commit many more acts of violence than women. As a woman under the influence of feminism, I was myself deeply irritated by what I took to be a very sexist remark by Mario Praz (which it might well be, nonetheless), when he writes in *The Romantic Agony* that "there have always existed Fatal Women both in mythology and in literature, since mythology and literature are imaginative reflections of the various aspects of real life, and real life has always provided more or less complete examples of arrogant and cruel female characters" (op. cit.: 189). When the news about Elfriede Blauersteiner, the Austrian black widow, hit the media in January 1996, I was forced to reconsider Praz's remark: there may be many more monstrous men, indeed, but this does not mean there are not 'examples' as Praz says of monstrous women. In fact, there are monstrous people of either sex. Quite another matter is the fact that Blauersteiner is a very different woman from the femme fatale constructed by men: far from being a sex goddess, she attracted her victims by offering companionship and loving care, which suggests that the fantasy of the supportive, caring woman is much stronger in man's psyche than the fantasy of the man-eater.

Likewise, feminism has tended to class men under the same label, making little effort to distinguish between the patriarchal man and the non-patriarchal man. For many women, each male serial killer, each rapist of fiction represents all men's aggressiveness

rather than that of a particular man. This attitude is confusing male novelists and filmmakers, for while no men have complained against the many portraits of men as monsters—which, I insist again, are signs of decadent rather than powerful patriarchy—women are constantly complaining against the representation of female monsters as signs of widespread misogyny. Men have not raised their voices against characters who represent the worst side of masculinity and who could certainly satisfy an androphobic woman that she is right in believing that men are monsters. David Cronenberg, who has often been attacked by feminists because of his allegedly misogynist films such as *The Brood* or *Dead Ringers*, has stated that “as a creator of characters, I believe I have the freedom to create a character who is not meant to represent all characters” (Rodley, op. cit.: 99). Cronenberg may have said this tongue-in-cheek to dupe women into seeing his films and enjoy them, but there seems to be something paranoiac in this supposition that a monstrous woman in fiction represents all women. This is a situation as bad for women as for men: women cannot afford the luxury of being seen as potential censors of men’s work if they want to claim total freedom as creators. When David Cronenberg says that this is “a no-win situation. Unless all women in your movie are absolutely done by the feminist book—and, of course, it depends which feminist book—you are not going to escape” (Rodley, op. cit.: 56), women should start considering what are the advantages of having this imaginary feminist book and whether this negative attitude contributes to diminishing or to increasing misogyny.

Using criticism for purposes of political correctness regarding gender issues seems to lead to a dead end, barring the way to any attempt at opening a dialogue between men and women. The only suitable response to men’s misuse of this imaginary feminist book is women’s creation of their own stories to offer alternative models, alternative narratives, challenging men’s misogyny hopefully not with women’s androphobia but with a more humanist attitude, valid for all. Before this utopian new humanism arrives, if it ever does, it is important not to curtail the freedom of creation of either men or women by means of censorious feminist criticism, for this is not effective in persuading novelists and filmmakers that misogyny must be eradicated. In view of feminist women’s androphobic discourse it is essential to debate whether feminist women are following the same sexist strategies that men followed in the establishment of patriarchy. It might well be that the equality between men and women defended by many feminists turned out to be based on the fact that men and women use power to portray the Other as a monster in the same way. It is also essential to debate why a male artist should assume an unbiased position that would take women’s point of view into account, when women themselves necessarily write from a biased point of view which, naturally, privileges their own view of the world and does not try to incorporate men’s as well.

7.1.2. Varieties of the Monstrous-Feminine

7.1.2.1. The Non-Human Female Monster

One of the categories of the monstrous feminine that Creed discusses is that of the archaic mother, that is to say, the parthenogenetic female who can reproduce herself without male help. The most popular instance of the archaic mother is the alien queen of *Aliens* (1986), discussed by Creed as a characteristically misogynistic male fantasy centred on men’s disgust for sexual reproduction and women’s fertility. Carol Clover

also concurs with Creed's view of *Aliens*. In Clover's opinion "to the extent that the monster is constructed as feminine, the horror film thus expresses female desire, only to show how monstrous it is. The intention is manifest in *Aliens*, in which ... Ripley is pitted in the climatic scene against the most terrifying 'alien' of all: an egg-laying Mother" (1989: 114). But how is the link between woman and desire made apparent in the alien queen, which is female but not human and which is, in addition, oviparous? For both Creed and Clover, the fact that the heroine Ellen Ripley is forced to confront and kill the beastly queen means that woman is forced by patriarchy to destroy a symbol of female fertility.

In a sense, Creed and Clover are right, for the queen descends no doubt from the Earth goddess represented as the monster Tiamat, a dragon of unbounded fertility. Even so, neither Creed nor Clover make much of the fact that Ripley kills the queen for a little girl, Newt, who has survived alone in the alien infested planet and whom Ripley rescues from a grim destiny: that of serving as a cocoon for another of the queen's descendants. This bond between Ripley and her 'adoptive' daughter Newt is used to strengthen the disparity between the alien queen and the women: they may be all female but Ripley and Newt are, above all, human, and cannot tolerate the abject alienness of the monster. On the contrary, Ripley protects her 'daughter' from a primitive, brutal life form whose survival has been guaranteed precisely by the manipulative, patriarchal corporation that employs her; by killing the monster, Ripley therefore denies the power of the people who have endangered Newt's life, her own and also that of the men and women exterminated by the queen's offspring. In a civilized order, neither the Company nor the queen have a place, and this is something acknowledged not only by Ripley but also by the men whose help she commands in this film and in *Alien*³ (1992).

While Creed and Clover have criticized the presentation of the monstrous archaic mother as an attack against the female power to engender life, they have neglected what the *Alien* trilogy says about women's fears of rape and unwanted pregnancy. Even though the men with whom I have discussed the trilogy prefer to stress the fact that both men and women are potential rape victims for the aliens, which use human bodies as receptacles to breed their progeny rather than as food, a man, John L. Cobbs, has rightly noted that the first film, *Alien* (1979) is a parable about abortion. According to Cobbs (1990: 201), the film's "pervasive gynaecological imagery" and the moral tension between the heroine and her 'Mother'—the Company's computer that monitors the life of the *Nostromo* astronauts—together with "the final vacuum expulsion" of the monster into outer space show that "the fundamental leitmotif of *Alien* is clearly abortion". The motif is repeated in *Alien*³ in which Ripley commits suicide given the impossibility of aborting the alien queen growing in her stomach.

The trilogy no doubt exploits fears that have to do with the body's fragile resistance to forceful invasion (especially of disease) and the loss of body ownership, but this does not contradict the suggestion that its main underlying subject is the fear of unwanted pregnancy. In fact, it could be said that the *Alien* trilogy expresses a still poorly articulated anxiety about sexual reproduction. Now, when fewer children are born because of the widespread use of methods of birth control there is an increasing defamiliarisation with the process of pregnancy, which in the cases of unwanted pregnancies is redoubled. In the film *Species* (1995) Sil, a beautiful woman born of a combination of human and extraterrestrial DNA, is transformed into a monster when she finally succeeds in getting pregnant. Sil is presented as a monstrous woman even before her final transformation, precisely because she understands sex exclusively as a means to reproduce herself. The increasing separation between sex and reproduction is thus

leading to a differentiation between the human female, who is capable of feeling desire and controlling her fertility, and the non-human or semi-human female monster, who ignores the meaning of desire and only understands the instinct to reproduce herself. It is, however, a mistake to identify this fear of the blind, instinctual drive embodied in the non-human female monster with woman, rather than with the anxieties felt by both men and women in the face of the process of human sexual reproduction. Whether women will eventually express the same fears that men are already expressing in films like *Alien* is still to be seen, but it is certainly possible that young women will do so as the birth-rate decreases.

The monstrous-feminine may even be but a manifestation of a more complex kind of evil monster. In Stephen King's *It* (1986) the eponymous extraterrestrial, evil shape-shifter can take the form most feared by those who confront him. When the group of six boys and a girl that 'It' has been victimizing face the monster together they see what they fear most: a giant, female spider surrounded by a multitude of eggs she has hatched on her own. Yet, this is not necessarily another instance of the misogynistic fear of the archaic mother. The children, who have encountered 'It' under disguises as different as a werewolf and an abusive father, draw a monstrous image from their collective unconscious that is related to primitive fears we do not understand well. It can be argued that both *It* and the *Alien* trilogy actually exploit that irrational fear humans feel for arachnids and insects, animals whom the image of both monsters strongly recalls.

The alien queen, which looks like a gigantic mixture of both spider and insect, and 'It' in its arachnid form, appeal to the most profound horrors of the primitive human being in all of us. Their gigantic size is directly related to the role that magnification plays in the construction of the monster. It must be remembered that one of the meanings of the adjective monstrous is huge and that fantasies of gigantic insects and arachnids populated the American screens in the 1950s. In fact, the role played by the gender of the alien queen and the giant spider of 'It' need not be explained in terms of human sexuality at all: what makes females potentially more horrific is their capacity to multiply the threat posed by the monster. As the title of *Aliens* indicates, this film differs from *Alien* mainly because the number of monstrous creatures has multiplied. If having to confront a single monster is difficult enough—especially if the monster is a shape-shifter like 'It'—simple logic suggests that fighting many monsters is much more difficult, hence the horrified reaction of the children coming across 'It's' eggs, and of Ripley when she faces the egg-laying alien queen. It is obvious that in this sense a male monster is more limited, less potentially horrific than a female monster endowed with the capacity to create a myriad of horrific monsters.

A different kind of archaic mother appears in James Cameron's *The Abyss* (1989) and in Orson Scott Card's novel *Ender's Game* (1985), which deal, like *Aliens*, with an alien race organized as a single mentality distributed throughout many individual bodies in imitation of social insects such as bees and ants. In Card's novel, the aliens enter into a war with the humans after having made the mistake of believing that the humans are not intelligent life forms—which they might well not be, to judge from their extremely aggressive reaction against the aliens. The aliens nevertheless pay for that mistake with their own destruction, but it is implied that they accept this expiation of their sin because it will allow them to be reborn thanks to the hero Ender. Ender himself is manipulated by the aliens, who teach him to love life above all, and to relinquish his status as the military hero who wiped out the alien race. In Cameron's film, the mission of the aliens is also to expose the absurdities of the militaristic male

code and the danger that nuclear weapons suppose for the survival of humankind. The two alien races, which are exclusively female, are presented by both Cameron and Card as examples of wisdom, sensibility and controlled use of power, which they use to persuade aggressive men to cease doing evil. It can be concluded, therefore, that not all the representations of the female non-human monster are negative. In a sense, Cameron's and Card's alien guardian angels are also women saviours—or at least female saviours. They are instances of the fantasy of the caring, loving woman ready to forgive the sins of the monstrous men and to teach them the right path even at the cost of losing their own lives. This, again, suggests that there is a certain balance between men's fantasies of the monstrous-feminine as a principle of destruction and their fantasies of the monstrous-feminine as a principle of life and rebirth. Why feminist criticism pays more attention to the former than to the latter is quite another matter.

The dinosaurs of Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* (1990) are all female because the men who have created them by means of genetic engineering think this will prevent them from breeding. It is also implied that female dinosaurs are thought to be less aggressive, hence more manageable, than male dinosaurs—the same motif argued in *Species* to justify why Sil and not a male has been created. As should be expected, a mistake made by the scientists enables some of the female dinosaurs to mutate into males: they use the DNA of a species of hermaphrodite frog to complete the dinosaurs DNA sequence. It is soon discovered that the dinosaurs are multiplying and that the scientists can do nothing to regain control on them. Marina Warner has criticized this imagery of horrific female reproductive power, especially in the case of *Jurassic Park*, whose story, according to Warner, can be reduced to a confrontation between “nature coded female with culture coded male” (1994a: 2). Yet, she has misread Crichton's novel and Spielberg's film, for what is horrifying is not that some of these female dinosaurs are fearsome predators or that they manage to reproduce and, at least in the novel, invade the world. On the contrary, Crichton criticizes patriarchy's presumption that it can control by means of science and technology the natural cycle of life.

What is monstrous is not that the female dinosaurs succeed in reproducing themselves but the way in which they are reborn from genetic material manipulated by men. If culture is coded male in this story, it can only be deduced that culture is in a very problematic state and that so is masculinity. The problem is that feminism is simultaneously assuming the identification of woman with nature as a positive fact—especially in view of the monstrous culture produced by men—and rejecting men's coding of nature as female. Crichton and Spielberg denounce the excesses of patriarchal science, but this is ignored by feminists like Warner, more interested in drawing the parallelism between the female velociraptors and Thelma and Louise, as she does, and in wondering why women are excluded from male-coded culture. While Crichton himself speaks of life always finding an outlet to break away from the artificial constraints put on it by man, Warner's attention is drawn towards the sex of the dinosaurs and it is she, in the last instance, who makes a derogatory identification of woman with the non-human female monster. The same can be said of Clover's and Creed's analyses of *Aliens*. All in all, the main objection that can be raised against the feminist interpretation of the non-human female monster is that it is too exclusively focused on the gender of the monster and on the identification of the non-human female with woman. Furthermore, feminists ignore the implicit negative portrait of men's manipulation of life, nor can they justify why sometimes the identification of woman with nature is positive while in other instances it is negative.

7.1.2.2. The Monstrous Woman

In the previous section I have referred to non-human monsters whose anatomy bears no relation to women's, except for the fact that they are all female. I have argued that interpreting the sexuality of the female non-human monsters in relation to the sexuality of women is inadequate precisely because the female monsters of *Aliens*, *The Abyss*, *It*, *Ender's Game* and *Jurassic Park* are not women but rather female animals. In this section I examine human and non-human female monsters whose bodies are unmistakably feminine, regardless of the evident differences between them. The feminine monsters can be roughly divided into two main categories: the imaginary feminine monster and the realistic feminine monster. The first category would correspond to feminine monsters whose body is not human or to women whose human body has been transformed into a monstrosity mostly because of supernatural events. These imaginary feminine monsters behave in extraordinary ways, though it cannot be always said that their behaviour is monstrous. In contrast, the second category would refer to women whose abnormal behaviour marks them as monsters. They are monsters not because their bodies have been manipulated but because they kill in a rational or an irrational way. Within each main category there are obvious overlaps: thus, vampire women may be non-human creatures or women transformed into vampires; likewise, in some cases, such as that of Laura in *Wolf*, it is not clear whether the woman has chosen to be transformed into a monster or has simply happened to be transformed. Most of the feminine monsters whom I have labelled 'realistic' on the grounds that there is no magical element in their making could nevertheless be interpreted as pure fantasies from a feminist point of view. Given the much lower numbers of female killers in real life, in comparison to the numbers of male killers, it could even be argued that the female killers of fiction –the female moral monsters–are not realistic at all, but simply another category of the imaginary feminine monster.

As I have noted, there are relatively few female monsters in comparison to male monsters. The proportion is very similar for both films and novels: approximately three fifths of the texts I am analysing in this dissertation narrate stories centred on a male monster, only one fifth concerns exclusively female monsters (and within that fifth about a third can be said to deal with images of female monstrosity that are not horrific) while another fifth is composed by texts in which male and female monsters, which are often of the same type, appear together. This clearly indicates that the monstrous-masculine is much more prominent in contemporary culture than the monstrous-feminine, despite the fact that the great majority of the texts under discussion have been created by men.

In general terms, the feminine monsters created by men are usually beautiful women of abnormal behaviour while the female monsters created by women are figures with a grotesque body and a no less grotesque behaviour. The winged woman Fevvers in Angela Carter's *Night at the Circus*, the gigantic Dog Woman in Jeannette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*, the albino dwarf Olympia in Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love* and the fat, ugly Ruth in Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* are all bizarre images of woman that could only have been produced by a man if he were prepared to risk an accusation of misogyny. The grotesque feminine may also appear in narratives of monstrosity created by men, such as Robert Zemeckis' film *Death Becomes Her* or Stephen King's novel *Misery*, but men seem more interested in the interplay between erotic images of sexual desirability and horrific images of violent death, than in the female grotesque. The attractive or beautiful woman–human or not–who kills men is a

figure born of the misogynistic atmosphere of nineteenth-century Decadence and has survived to our days acquiring in the meantime particularly ambiguous overtones. Fatal women like Catherine Trammel in *Basic Instinct* and Bridget in *The Last Seduction* reverse the traditional role of the vamp: instead of being destroyed because of the evil they commit they survive in the end after exposing men's weaknesses rather than women's abjection.

The imaginary feminine monsters can be divided into three main categories: feminine monsters who are not born of human parents, feminine monsters made by men (women transformed into monsters by others using magic or genetic manipulation) and finally, women who take an active part in their own transformation into monsters by using magic, plastic surgery or by reinventing their own biographies. The non-human feminine monsters who are not manufactured are very different from each other. Thus, the extraterrestrial creature of *Lifeforce* (1985) is a vampire who takes the form of a beautiful woman because this is how the male astronauts who come across her in outer space see her. Her two companions—who take male forms—are apparently shaped by the fantasies of the female astronauts, though they soon disappear from the scene. However, it cannot be said that this simulacrum of woman is simply a misogynistic fantasy acting as a scapegoat for men's hatred of women. In fact, *Lifeforce* is a horrific version of "The Sleeping Beauty" in which the gender roles are reversed: the hero, who has been chasing the space vampire with a view to killing her because she has brought a deadly plague that is decimating Earth, discovers when he is kissed by her that he is one of her monstrous kin, left stranded on Earth. The kiss of the monstrous woman therefore exposes the monstrous nature of man rather than his superiority over her abject self.

In *Cocoon* (1985) there is a similar erotic fantasy of awakening into a different self-consciousness also experienced by the hero, though in this case the extraterrestrial creature who offers to him what can only be described as virtual sex—or sex without touching—is not a horrific vampire but a luminous, angelic being encased in a woman's body. The fantasy of being chosen by an extraordinary woman, angelic or demonic, is also the main motif in *Splash!* (1984) and in *The Stress of her Regard* (1989). In the former, Madison, a mermaid, finds in contemporary New York the boy, now a grown-up man, she once saved from drowning. The media's persecution of Madison finally forces her human lover to make the choice of entering her world, becoming himself one of her kin. In Tim Powers' novel, the plea of the hero Crawford is precisely the opposite: he is the object of the erotic attentions of a lamia, a female vampire, who also holds in thrall the poet Shelley. The novel narrates how Crawford, the romantic poets he meets, and his own girlfriend, must struggle to rid themselves not only of the lamias' presence—females and males alike—but also of their own passion for them. It can be concluded, consequently, that the fantasy of being chosen by an extraordinary member of the opposite sex—evil or angelic—articulates many of the narratives of monstrosity. Furthermore, this fantasy covers a vast field, as it can be found in texts about monstrosity created by men and by women, and across genres since it is not necessarily embodied by a horrific monster.

There are, however, other cases in which this fantasy plays no major role and in which the feminine monster is particularly ambiguous. Two especially equivocal versions of the feminine monster are Ted Hughes' story for children, *The Iron Woman* (1993) and Jeanette Winterson's feminist novel *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). Both texts deal with a gigantic woman (split in Winterson's novel between a seventeenth-century killer and a twentieth-century radical feminist) who uses radical, violent methods to teach patriarchal men to behave properly, that is to say, as women would like. It is

certainly difficult to determine what is the intention behind both texts, for both read as parodies though it is not clear whether they are parodies of the excesses of feminism or of patriarchy. Incidentally, even though Winterson's *Dog Woman* is not a fantastic monster, she is grotesque enough to be regarded within the category of the imaginary feminine monster.

Ted Hughes' text deals with a black, metallic giantess who emerges one day from the filthy river mud to prevent men from further poisoning the waters. She might thus be a contemporary incarnation of the Earth goddess, whose main symbol is water, or a symbol of the current conservationist vogue, associated with feminism and with nature marked female. Initially, the giantess's plans include the total extermination of the polluters, though she later relents and limits herself to transforming all the men in England into man-sized fish condemned to surviving in their bathtubs. All the women and the boys under 18 are left untouched by this sudden metamorphosis because the giantess regards them as innocent of the destruction of the land. The second act of this impressive virago is to fight a monstrous cloud that emanates from the fish-men's bubbling mouths and that represents their greed. Once she destroys the cloud, the men revert to their human form though their white hair will always remind them of the power of the Iron Woman. One is left wondering about the motivations in Hughes' creation of the Iron Woman. The giantess is an inflexible woman, bent on punishment without ever stopping to listen to reason, though, curiously, nobody tries to contradict her. The horrific punishment that the men of England suffer seems an act of feminist wishful thinking, but the Iron Woman is such an unsympathetic figure that no child can possibly want her to exert her power on its father, brother, or male friend at all. The Iron Woman may thus be either a feminist or an anti-feminist figure, depending on whether the abusive treatment she gives men is seen as a fair punishment of patriarchy or as an unfair punishment of all men. Ted Hughes may have even written his tale as a tongue-in-cheek indictment against Margaret Thatcher, whose nickname—the Iron Lady—recalls that of the giantess, the Iron Woman. Since Thatcher is not a feminist, though it would be difficult to say whether she is more androphobic than misogynistic, interpreting the meaning of Hughes' Iron Woman from this point of view is even more problematic. At any rate, at the end of the story the Iron Woman forms an alliance with her predecessor, the Iron Man, who had managed to eradicate war from Earth in *The Iron Man*, a pacifist story for children written by Hughes in 1968. The couple of giants seem to be a new version of the union of the prehistoric god and goddess embodied in these mysterious gigantic robots nobody seems to have made.

Both the Iron Woman and the Dog Woman—thus nicknamed because she breeds hounds—are monsters because they are gigantic. Their physical size seems to be an indication of the dimensions of the disgust that impels these two women to wage war on men. As the unnamed modern counterpart of the Dog Woman notes, “it seems obvious, doesn't it, that someone who is ignored and overlooked will expand to the point where they have to be noticed, even if the noticing is fear and disgust” (p. 140). What is less obvious is to what extent the Dog Woman is to be taken as a parody of the feminist anger that makes her modern self want to grow as big as possible or as simply a Swiftian figure of fun. The Dog Woman possesses a formidable body capable of eliciting fear and disgust, a big and strong body that she relishes and that enables her to kill men as she pleases. However, it is doubtful whether the reader is supposed to sympathize with her androphobia or to condemn it as the other side of contemporary feminism; it is also disputable whether s/he is supposed to feel amused by the Dog Woman's various sexual misadventures or horrified by them. As happens in *The Iron Woman*, there is no clear

indication either as to the author's attitude towards her monstrous woman, despite the fact that Jeanette Winterson's feminist militancy is well known.

What is to be made, for instance, of the episode in which the Dog Woman bites off the penis of a man who has persuaded her to perform a fellatio for him? She naively claims that she has hurt him because until then she believed that men's genitals could grow again if an accident happened. Later, when she is better informed, she comes to the conclusion that if that is not the case, "this seems a great mistake on the part of nature, since men are so careless with their members and will put them anywhere without thinking" (p. 120). If this is provocative humour of the same kind used by Patrick Bateman in *American Psycho* to describe some of his killings, it must be concluded that Winterson does not dominate the register as proficiently as Brett Easton Ellis. There is, at any rate, little that is humorous or satirical in any way in the Dog Woman's killing of ten Puritan men, justified by her having followed too literally a Royalist preacher's injunction to take revenge on those who murdered the King, or in her hacking into pieces two clients of the brothel where she occasionally works administering masochistic pleasure through pain to men. The particularity of the Dog Woman is that she remains a monster to the end, when she declares: "I do not think of myself as a criminal, and indeed would protest any attempt to confine me in Newgate. My actions are not motivated by thought of gain, only by thought of justice, and I have searched my soul to conclude that there is no person dead at my hand who would be better off alive" (p. 147). One must necessarily wonder why the Dog Woman's words have elicited no protests from men, whereas Brett Easton Ellis had to face the attack of feminists angered by his hero's misogyny.

The attitude of the twentieth-century version of the Dog Woman, seems more sober: "I don't hate men", she says, "I just wish they'd try harder. They all want to be heroes and all we want is for them to stay at home and help with the housework and the kids. That's not the kind of heroism they enjoy" (p. 145). This modern version of the giantess is a rather attractive woman who believes she carries within herself a monster of enormous proportions that will burst out of her body when her tolerance of men's hypocrisy finally collapses. At a point in the novel she has a long fantasy in which she hallucinates how her own body becomes indeed that of her real gigantic self. In her fantasy, she becomes a virago not unlike Hughes' Iron Woman, trapping in a huge sack all the men who displease her. Unlike the Iron Woman, she is more selective, though, and only chooses men in positions of power, who will become the target of a peculiar kind of re-education. In her wishful thinking incarnation as the giantess she imagines herself imparting justice to men:

I force all the fat ones to go on a diet, and all the men line up for compulsory training in feminism and ecology. Then they start on the food surpluses, packing it with their own hands, distributing it in a great human chain of what used to be power and is now co-operation.

We change the world, and on the seventh day we have a party at the wine lake and make pancakes with the butter mountain and the peoples of the earth keep coming in waves and being fed and being clean and being well. And when the rivers sparkle, it's not with mercury... (p. 138)

Hughes' and Winterson's imaginary, fairy-tale giantesses manage, thus, to impose their view on men and to guarantee the quality of the sparkling, unpolluted waters. Feminism and ecology replace men's greed apparently because all the men are cowed into

submission not with powerful arguments but with powerful magic. Why the 'compulsory training' dreamed by Winterson's heroine or the unsound methods of Hughes' Iron Woman are better than men's unfairness and misogyny is the question that neither text answers. In fact, it is possible to treat both as parodies or as endorsements of feminism, though *The Iron Woman* implies more clearly that these feminist bullying methods are by no means better than those of traditional patriarchy. As can be seen, the same ambiguous figure of powerful female monstrosity can be used for different purposes that even contradict each other. They ultimately reveal that the real issue at stake in the representation of monstrosity is power, or, alternatively, that women's dream of power can only lead to creating monsters, no matter how effective they may be in redressing the wrongs of patriarchy.

As I noted in Chapter 6, Frankenstein's daughters are fewer than Frankenstein's sons. Rachael, the female replicant of *Blade Runner* (1982) is perhaps the best known of them, together with Zhora and Pris, the other two female replicants of Scott's film. Another indication of how feminist criticism fails to deal adequately with the feminine monsters is Erica Sheen's analysis of this film. Sheen (op. cit.: 153) has argued that "*Blade Runner* is a story of a woman 'made' by a man; of how the woman gains entry to the Symbolic Order through the rejection of a supposed unity with an illusory mother and an acceptance of the defining status of 'the law of the father' via a submission to the demands of male sexuality". However, her argumentation is misleading, for she has completely ignored not only the making of the male replicants and their problematic relationship with the father but also other texts in which men are made by other men. Likewise, Sheen has fixed her attention on Zhora and Pris as misogynistic representations of women, on the grounds that they are given degrading jobs as, respectively, a striptease artist and a prostitute, and also because they seemingly play no role in the search for their 'father', Tyrell. Yet Sheen does not mention that Roy and Leon, the male replicants, are likewise oppressed by a patriarchal system that has designed them to be killing machines. Zhora and Pris are probably the first unfairly victimized women seen on the screen resisting a man's attack. It can be argued that they are killed after prolonged physical confrontations, proving that their notable strength is not naturally feminine but monstrous, yet their victimization is justified (if it is justifiable) in the film because they are not human and not because they are women.

Men's making of women results only exceptionally in horrific monsters like the Sil of *Species*—a film, on the other hand, which was a notorious box-office failure. The fantasy of being chosen by a unique woman also plays a major role in the making of the artificial or the unnatural feminine monster. Curiously enough, in *Blade Runner*, *Mythago Wood* and *Poor Things* the woman created by a fatherly figure as the perfect companion ends up becoming the perfect companion of another man. Because these texts are erotic fantasies written by men, the monstrous women do not question the fact that their making must be completed with their union to a man, which is the point that feminists like Erica Sheen find difficult to accept. However, it cannot be said that Rachael, Guiwenneth and Bella, the heroines respectively of *Blade Runner*, *Mythago Wood* and *Poor Things*, are derogatory portraits of women: they are intelligent, courageous and sensitive and have much to teach to their men. In any case, the relationship between the human lover and the unnatural woman is not one of dominance and submission but rather a fulfilling companionship not very different from the fantasies women entertain in romances. Thus, in *Blade Runner* Rachael is much more than a perfect replica of woman manufactured by man, as she is also an improvement on the perfect man, Roy, previously made by her creator, Tyrell; at the end of the film it is

even suggested that Rachael might be immortal, hence, physically superior to the man who loves her and possibly also emotionally superior, having developed a finer moral sense than him about the meaning of his killings of the replicants.

The case of Guiwenneth, the heroine of *Mythago Wood* (1984) is much more ambiguous. Instead of a manufactured woman, Guiwenneth is literally a mythical image of a woman. She becomes flesh and blood when George Huxley, a middle-aged researcher, imagines that she is real in a primal forest that has the power to materialise mythical images. It can be said that Guiwenneth springs from her maker's head just as Athena sprang from Zeus's head, and that both are men's appropriations of the powerful image of the lost Earth goddess, especially in her incarnation as war goddess. This is confirmed in the novel, when Stephen, Huxley's son, observes that the mythago his father has created is "a manifestation of the Earth Goddess" (p. 52) and also a born fighter. Like Athena, Guiwenneth is a warrior, yet, instead of being an Amazonian virago she is totally devoted first to her maker, and when he dies, to his sons. In fact, Guiwenneth is even killed and remade by the younger son Chris before she is passed onto the elder, Stephen. The appropriation of her body by the Huxley men even prevents Guiwenneth from fulfilling her mission, namely, bringing an end to the constant tribal warfare in the forest, as she ought to do according to the legend that Huxley senior has unearthed in the forest. Thus, even though Guiwenneth has originally arisen from the depths of the collective unconscious as a powerful, semi-divine figure endowed with a capacity to bring reconciliation and the end of violence, her own story is relegated to a secondary place by the love story between her and Stephen.

In any case, despite the ambivalent sexism that informs her creation, it can be said that Guiwenneth is a fantasy completely different from the monstrous woman made by men, as can be found in classics such as E.T.A. Hoffman's "The Sandman" (1816) or in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Rapaccini's Daughter" (1838). Instead of the evil woman who destroys men, the new mythical image of woman is the beautiful warrior, quite capable of taking care of herself but also willing to take care of her male companion. It may be argued that this is a fantasy born of men's desires to shape woman's body and mind, but the woman warrior is not a misogynistic fantasy. In fact, she is very close to figures such as the Nili of *Body of Glass* and the many strong heroines of sword and sorcery fantasy written by women, not to mention Maxine Hong Kingston's heroine in her feminist book *The Woman Warrior* (1975). What mainly distinguishes the strong heroines created by men from those created by woman is not whether they are more or less monstrous women but their willingness to love men. Women's heroines are more markedly reluctant to enter into heterosexual, traditional relationships, whereas men's heroines are women who never question their need to love men.

The monstrous yet lovely Bella Baxter of Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) is a bizarre mixture of woman as innocent child and woman as nightmarish sex fiend. Gray subverts the dualistic Victorian view of women (the novel is set in the UK in the 1880s) as angels or whores by portraying a woman who is both. Bella, born when the Glaswegian surgeon Godwin Baxter puts together the body of a dead woman who had drowned herself and the brain of the eight-month female foetus she was carrying, is meant to be the perfect companion, but she turns out to be much more independent than Baxter could imagine. The irony of *Poor Things* is that the portrait of the liberated Bella given by Archibald McCandless, the man who eventually marries her and whose memoirs form the core of the novel, is contradicted within the novel itself by another text. This second text is an autobiographical text by McCandless' wife, Victoria, that she has written in order to desauthorise her husband's unrealistic portrait of herself as

Bella after reading his memoirs. In this autobiography, Victoria claims that Bella is nothing but the fantasy of a sad, not too bright man and so, she deligitimises her husband's portrait of herself as Bella.

The eccentric Victoria brings the voice of the feminist New Woman of the turn of the century into the novel, which obviously parodies it. Gray, tongue-in-cheek, defends poor McCandless' right to fantasize about Bella precisely because Victoria is far from being his ideal companion. Furthermore, Gray questions the right of feminists like Victoria to reject men's fantasies of women on the grounds that Bella and other fictional women created by men do not reflect real women's personalities and lives. Even though there is much to criticize in Gray's novel from a feminist point of view, to judge from the reactions of the women I know to have read Gray's novel, Bella is preferred to Victoria as a model of the independent woman. "You, dear reader", Victoria McCandless concludes, "have now two accounts to choose between, and there can be no doubt which is most probable. My second husband's story positively stinks of all that was morbid in that most morbid of centuries, the nineteenth" (p. 272). Yet Bella cannot be interpreted as a derogatory, misogynistic fantasy of woman but as a symbol of men's failure to control not only women but perhaps the far-reaching effects of their own morbid fantasies.

Poor Things deals, therefore, with the question of who is empowered to shape woman's image in fiction. It also questions whether those who try to manipulate Bella's life are more monstrous than herself, including perhaps Gray himself. None of the men who feel authorised to force Bella into a particular image of womanhood are acting with normality. All of them are different models of monstrous masculinity: the would-be-Pygmalion Godwin, who makes her because he hopes that unlike other women she will not be put off by his ugliness and will love him; the seducer Duncan Wedderburn, who finds to his own chagrin how Bella's liberated approach to sex exposes his shortcomings as a lover, and her repressive husband, the imperialistic hero General Blessington, who had planned to cure himself of his desire for her by forcing his wife Lady Victoria Blessington (technically Bella's mother but also herself) to undergo an ablation of the clitoris. Gray's parody of the feminist Victoria is framed, hence, by his parody of the misogynistic men surrounding Bella.

McCandless, whom Bella chooses to marry because, as she claims, she can treat him as she likes, may be the most monstrous of the men in her life or simply the average, sad, not too bright man that Victoria describes. According to Victoria, he is the one to have invented the horrific *Frankenstein*-style tale of Bella's making and to have claimed that this was Victoria's true origin: for her, McCandless and not Godwin is, consequently, the real monster-maker. Gray stresses the ambiguities of the plot by playfully pretending in genuine Gothic (and postmodernist) fashion that both McCandless' and Victoria's texts have been found by the editor, 'Gray' who is simply passing them on to the reader. It is thus for the reader to decide which of the two texts is real and which is a fantasy. 'Gray' indicates that Victoria McCandless' anger at her husband's memoirs is not justified, for McCandless had planted enough clues in his account to make Victoria understand he did not mean Bella to stand for herself. Victoria's indignation is thus totally misguided: what McCandless and Gray imply is that monstrous women like Bella should not be taken for literal portraits of women—misogynistic or not—but for what they are, namely, fantasies that men entertain about women. *Poor Things* also implies that not all these fantasies arise out of hatred and that the fantasies men entertain about women expose man's true nature rather than woman's, which remains, like Bella, an enigma that only woman can explain. For Gray the way to

dispel the enigma is not the feminist denial of man's right to his own fantasies but women's 'editing' of those fantasies, that is to say, a careful reading that will show that not all of them are negative or misogynistic.

Men's manipulation of woman's body is also the main topic of Iain Banks' *The Wasp Factory* (1984). In this black comedy Freud's speculations about the little boy's fear of the castrating father are transformed into the instrument to create a very peculiar male monster. The hero and monster Frank Cauldhame is unaware that he is in fact a woman, Frances, and also that he is one of his father's experiments. Angus, an ex-hippy of anarchist ideas and also a retired biochemist, has not only secretly manipulated Frances's body with male hormones but has also made her believe that she is actually a boy, castrated at age three by the family dog. Why Angus does this is not obvious at all: it might be simply madness, or his own way of avenging himself on women, especially on Agnes, Frances's mother, who abandoned him and their daughter. The irony of the novel is that the male hormones that Angus is giving Frances are the reason why the teenage Frank behaves in a very violent way, killing animals and children. While Frank boasts of his misogynistic manliness and of his outrageous acts of violence, unaware of who he is until the end of the novel, the reader is invited to consider whether gender is biologically determined and what the role played by the individual's upbringing is in determining gender roles.

Frank claims that he can feel man's superiority in his "uncastrated genes" (p. 118), yet all his acts are determined in fact by the overdose of testosterone Angus is administering to him (or her) and by his own ideas of masculinity. What is less obvious is where these ideas come from or whether they are the product of hormonal reactions. It could well be that they spring from Frank's need to distance himself from his father. Angus's passive acceptance of the decisions made by the women in his life, who invariably abandon him and their children, may have made him an undesirable model of masculinity to his son's eyes. On the other hand, Frank's hatred of women is probably based on resentment of his mother's abandoning him, rather than on actual contact with any women. Yet, Frank's misogyny is ultimately self-defeating, for when he accidentally stumbles upon the truth about his sex, his world simply collapses. His initial disbelief and his fury abate soon, turning into a "stunned acceptance" (p. 180) that leaves him shivering at the thought of sexual intercourse with a man and at the possibility of giving birth. The new Frances's only consolation is that, in her own words, "I am still me; I am the same person, with the same memories and the same deeds done, the same (small) achievements, the same (appalling) crimes to my name" (p. 182), though this is obviously not true. Frances's restoration to her original biological womanhood leaves Frank stranded in a no man's land, for he senses he was better off as a castrated man than as a woman burdened with the male, misogynistic personality of a killer:

I was proud; eunuch but unique; a fierce and noble presence in my lands, a crippled warrior, fallen prince...

Now I find I was the fool all along.

Believing in my great hurt, my literal cutting off from society's mainland, it seems to me that I took life in a sense too seriously, and the lives of others, for the same reason, too lightly. The murders were my own conception; my sex. (p. 183, original ellipsis)

The novel ends with the new Frances cradling her brother Eric, whose madness Frank had previously attributed to the dominance of feminine traits in his mind, and

speculating on how Eric will receive the news that his brother is in fact his sister. Since the novel ends at this point, we can only guess whether the new androgynous Frances will behave in a less brutal way than Frank. She may build on her own a new gender model based on the reality of her female body and on her knowledge of the male mind from the inside. But it is more likely that she will always be a freakish woman, split in two by the discordance between who she has believed herself to be for seventeen years and who she has always been biologically. This is what makes the novel's contribution to the ongoing debate on gender roles particularly ambiguous. On the one hand, Banks punishes the male misogynist with the loss of his masculinity, seemingly agreeing with Freud on the idea that castration anxieties are uppermost in men's mind and that they are linked to the fear of becoming a woman, that is to say, an inferior person. On the other hand, he suggests that anybody's sexual identity can be manipulated and that the root of male violence is a combination of hormonal and psychological traits. It is, accordingly, difficult to say whether Banks intends his readers to sympathize with Frank or with Frances—whether his loss of masculinity has more weight in the novel than her being robbed of her sexual identity by Angus—or to decide who is more monstrous, the father who manipulates his daughter or the mother who abandons her to such a father.

Frank Cauldhame belongs to the category of the woman transformed into a monster by means of magic or genetic manipulation. The magical transformations give power to the women who endure them, though their newly acquired power is often, not to say always, viewed as a source of conflict. This is why their elimination or their control by a man is the most frequent ending in this type of narrative. The vampire woman and the female werewolf are two of the most common figures under the heading of the metamorphic woman but it is important to note that the number of male vampires and werewolves is much higher. Likewise, in many texts women become monsters because they are manipulated or hurt by men—because they are men's victims—and not because they are presented as monstrous viragos or gynanders from a misogynistic point of view. Thus, the vampire girl Claudia in *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) is the victim of the couple formed by two male vampires, Louis and Lestat; Amanda is also transformed into a vampire in *Fright Night* (1985) by a male vampire whom her boyfriend is trying to destroy. Kate, a TV journalist trapped by a community of werewolves in *The Howling* (1980), is first betrayed by her husband and then transformed into a werewolf. Only in exceptional cases is the transformation caused by a woman, as happens in *The Hunger* (1983). The heroine Sarah becomes in this film a vampire queen only after displacing her bisexual lover, Miriam, from power.

As Robert Tracy (1990: 54) says of the undead, attractive women of nineteenth-century vampire fiction, they “are doubly monstrous because they combine masculine sexual aggression with feminine forms”. This is still valid for most feminine monsters of the 1980s and 1990s, though there is a perceptible change in men's attitude towards the combination of aggression and femininity. The woman who is beauty and the beast in one is a recurrent fantasy as likely to be embodied by the strong heroine as by the feminine monster who is finally destroyed. It is therefore necessary to make a distinction between the original figure of the feminine vampire created by the misogynistic Decadent artists that still survives today—Lucy in *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1993) is her latest incarnation, though she is adapted from Stoker's novel—and the more ambivalent contemporary feminine vampire, who may even be an independent woman such as Sarah in *The Hunger*. John Landis' *Innocent Blood* (1992) also rejects the conventional plot in which the vampire woman had to be destroyed, replacing it with a plot in which the vampire Marie becomes man's ideal companion, hence, another instance of a

widespread fantasy, that of being chosen by an extraordinary, unique—even monstrous—sexual partner.

Like most feminine monsters, Marie is an ambivalent figure. She feeds on evil men whom she always kills, thus using her predatory instinct not only to survive but also to impart a peculiar kind of androphobic justice. Although she uses sex to attract her victims, she eventually learns to dissociate desire from preying when she meets Genaro, a policeman who falls in love with her and who accepts her as she is. Marie's control of her animal instinct through love is a total reversal of the figure of the cat woman—a virgin who becomes a panther the first time she has sex—popularised by Jacques Torneur's 1942 film *Cat People*. The fact that the 1982 remake of *Cat People* was a box-office failure while there is currently a project to make a film on the Catwoman of the Batman film series is no coincidence. The contemporary Catwoman played by Michelle Pfeiffer in *Batman Returns* (1992) is not a victim of her own sexuality as the cat woman Irina, but of a powerful man who murders her. As if she were a vampire, she returns from the dead to avenge herself but also to transform herself into an independent woman like Marie, halfway between the villainess and the heroine. The Catwoman and Marie show thus that Irina and the view of sexuality she represents are outdated stereotypes. Marie, seen in the film attacking and devouring men during sexual intercourse but also teaching Genaro to trust her and to love her, is a sign that men's fantasies are now more masochistic than sadistic. Although he is initially appalled by the discovery of her real nature, sex and her collaboration in the hunting of Mafia boss Sal Macelli, an evil man whom Marie has failed to kill and who has become an evil vampire, makes Genaro change his mind about Marie. Once Macelli and his 'family' have been exterminated, Marie decides to kill herself rather than risk spreading evil again, but Genaro proposes a happier end for both. Being a black comedy, the film does not deal with deeper moral questions such as how anybody—man or woman—can tolerate having a monstrous killer for companion. Marie warns Genaro that she is by no means redeemed nor in less need of blood, yet he accepts her because he can no longer see her as an evil monster.

It seems then, that a long distance has been travelled since Lucy's heart was staked in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as a punishment for having wished to retain the love of three men: Marie is free to choose and may choose indeed to kill Genaro if she wishes. Yet, despite the differences, the shadow of misogynist prejudice can also be found in *Innocent Blood*. Marie may not be as horrific as Lucy for the average man, but she is a monster, as if Hollywood could only represent liberated, independent women either as monsters or as monster killers like Ellen Ripley. Marie lives in a man's world in which she is as exceptional as the female black attorney in charge of Macelli's case; it is indeed significant that rather than trust this woman Marie chooses Genaro, a simple policeman, as a companion to exterminate evil men like Macelli. The new fantasies about the monstrous woman are less misogynistic than the nineteenth-century fantasies of destruction, but they are also fantasies of control in which there is no room for women to communicate among themselves. This suggests that men have transferred their misogynistic fears from woman herself to women's capacity to form relationships or networks of power without men, as feminism teaches women to do.

There is still a need to represent woman as a monster that seems to have been reinforced by feminism rather than dispelled. It could be said that in these wish-fulfilment fantasies the men who accept the extraordinary, monstrous woman deny the power of feminism: the strong woman who is not a feminist and who like Rachael, Bella Baxter, Guiwenneth, or Marie accepts man as a companion no doubt bolsters the ego of

the reader or the viewer who identifies with the rather ordinary men that these extraordinary women love. Likewise, each of the heroes of romance who devotes his life to the love of a woman denies the power of misogynistic patriarchy. In fact, it might well be that these contemporary texts about the monstrous woman and the average man are a transposition to man's world of the myth of "Beauty and the Beast". Women's fantasy of transforming the patriarchal monster into the perfect lover narrated by this tale is reciprocated by men's fantasy of transforming the strong, untameable woman into the ideal companion.

Within the category of the women who are transformed into monsters there are two main subgroups. The first corresponds to the women who are transformed by others and which I have just analysed, while the second corresponds to the women who transform themselves into monsters in order to gain power. In Chapter 2 I analysed the similarities between Fay Weldon's Ruth in *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983) and Robert Zemeckis' Mad and Hel in *Death Becomes Her* (1992), two satires about the extremes to which women may go in order to be attractive for men, which can be read as attacks against the image of woman as a sexy doll. The cyborg Nili of *Body of Glass* (1991) is another version of woman's attempt at taking the reins in the transformation of her own body. I argued in Chapter 6 that feminist science fiction sees in the female cyborg a figure of great metaphorical potential to signify women's transformation of themselves, yet it is important to remember that the female cyborg is a figure created by men. The hitwoman Molly of *Neuromancer* (1984) is an earlier instance of the woman who has remade herself by enhancing her capacity to fight; she is in fact a typical instance of the mixture of femininity and masculine aggression favoured by the fantasies of many men. Of course, there is an important difference in the use to which Nili and Molly put their bodies, for Molly works for money and not for any feminist ideology as Nili does. In any case, the examples of Ruth, Mad, Helen, Nili and Molly suggest that there is more exchange of motifs and characters between the fiction produced by woman and the fiction produced by men than is apparent if we attend only the claims of feminist criticism.

In other cases the reasons why the woman is transformed into a monster are obscured or it is even doubted that she is in fact a monster. What seems obvious, though, is that the monstrous woman is superior to the monstrous man or to the apparently normal men who turn out to be more dangerous monsters than her. In *Wolf* (1994) it is not clear whether Laura has chosen to become a werewolf as Rosalee does in *The Company of Wolves* (1984), yet she keeps a tight control on her dark side whereas the men she transforms behave in a most brutal manner. Likewise, in *Wild Seed* (1980), Anyanwu's sensible use of her power to alter her shape at will is positively contrasted with the evil power of her lover Doro to possess the bodies of those he kills. Angela Carter's heroine Fevvers in *Nights at the Circus* (1987) may or may not be a genuine winged woman but she comes across many disagreeable men in her life who are more monstrous than her and who threaten her life in a way she never threatens theirs. The same can be said about Salman Rushdie's Sufiya Zinobia in *Shame* (1983), the woman panther who is literally an embodiment of woman's rage in the face of the shameful acts of the men she attacks.

While the imaginary feminine monsters are women of monstrous physical characteristics, the group of feminine monsters I have called realistic exhibit a monstrous, unnatural–unfeminine–behaviour. The realistic (or pseudo-realistic) feminine monsters are moral monsters that can be grouped together according to whether they are irrational or rational evil-doers, that is to say, madwomen or

villainesses. I have already referred to the madwoman in Chapter 4, with the examples of Alex in *Fatal Attraction*, Peyton in *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*, Heddie in *Single White Female* and Annie in *Misery* and to Beverley, the female serial killer of *Serial Mom*. I should like to consider now briefly another serial killer, Elizabeth Cree in Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* and, also briefly two figures that mix the femme fatale with the serial killer, Catherine Trammell of *Basic Instinct* and Catherine, the black widow of the eponymous film.

In real life women who kill are regarded as monstrous exceptions to the general rule of femininity, while male killers are often treated as if their existence confirmed a secret truth about all men. It is therefore difficult to judge whether the female killers of fiction must also be read as monstrous exceptions or as misogynistic fantasies aimed at distorting the image of women or, alternatively, at masking the fact that most violence is caused by men. A further difficulty is added by the fact that much is said about the violence caused by men in real life, but very little about that caused by women. Thus, the media does not usually cover cases of abuse by women against men, nor is the fact that there are women terrorists remarked. To be consistent with the feminist demand for equality, which incidentally has also led women to the armed forces and the police where they fulfil tasks that involve violence, more research should be done on whether women are also equally capable of using violence. Cases such as that of Rosemary West, the woman who collaborated with her husband Frederick in the horrific murders of a number of young women, should alter many preconceived ideas about women's abuse of violence.

Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994) focuses on a fictional Victorian woman who might have been Jack the Ripper. Ackroyd toys in addition with the idea that his monstrous heroine might have remained unsuspected because nobody would have believed that a respectable woman could be capable of killing other women. The irony of the novel is that respectability does not save Cree from the gallows when she is accused of the 'feminine' crime of poisoning her husband, John Cree. Actually, John Cree is his wife's last victim after the series of unladylike crimes he has discovered and that have been attributed to a serial killer known as the Limehouse Golem. This is a role she has added to her many roles as a successful vaudeville actress when her new persona as the respectable Mrs. Cree starts asphyxiating her. To complicate matters further, Cree assumes simultaneously the male persona that allows her to kill—her own version of Mr. Hyde—and her husband's; she intends to blame the crimes on him with a series of diaries she herself writes and in which the John Cree she has invented narrates her own crimes. Despite the fact that Ackroyd justifies Elizabeth's behaviour on the grounds of the constant abuse she received from her repressive mother, Elizabeth is not a very credible character. On the whole, Ackroyd's attempt at creating a female psycho killer is a failure precisely because he cannot imagine a consistent reason why Elizabeth kills, nor why she needs to impersonate a man to kill. The novel is unwittingly androphobic because it suggests that only women with a strong masculine side kill. Elizabeth is a monstrous woman, consequently, not because she is the essence of what misogynists cannot tolerate, but because she behaves as a monstrous man. If she had killed men without abandoning her female identity she could have been regarded as a female monster, but as Ackroyd portrays her, she is more a man in drag than a woman's impersonation of man.

In contrast, Catherine Trammell, the monstrous heroine of *Basic Instinct* (1991) kills men without having to behave like a man. She is yet another instance of the attractive combination of femininity and male aggressiveness so popular now, mixing

traits from the femme fatale and the serial killer. Since she is a villainess and not a madwoman, few clues are furnished as to why Catherine kills men and loves other female killers such as her lesbian lover, except her passion for plotting her novels and her life. As happens in the case of Marie, Catherine is a male fantasy designed to bolster the ego of the average man represented by Nick, the policeman who loves her. His killing of Catherine's lesbian lover and his plans for a rosy future with Catherine are part of the same fantasy of taming the strong woman into submission. Yet, the apparent link between Catherine's bisexuality and her killings raised more protests than her androphobia, which obscured the need to debate why men are attracted towards this type of masochistic erotic fantasy. The final shot of the film is especially ambiguous as it indicates that far from controlling Catherine, Nick has literally put his life in her hands. The ice-pick hidden under their bed means that he is living a particularly dangerous fantasy and that he or any man in the audience are wrong to believe that women like Catherine can be controlled. Quite another issue is why in Hollywood's version a strong woman who dominates the sexual relationship with a man must be necessarily monstrous.

Black Widow (1987) offers a more original treatment of the figure of the female serial killer. The film focuses on the ambivalent relationship between a beautiful woman, Catherine, and the Justice Department agent, Alexandra, who suspects her of having killed a number of wealthy men. Unlike Catherine Trammell, who uses a great amount of violence in her killings, Catherine poisons her successive husbands using a method of killing characteristically feminine, which is, incidentally, the same used by Elfriede Blauerstein, the Austrian black widow recently unmasked. The mixture of fear, fascination and envy that Catherine Trammell awakens in Nick is very similar to what Alexandra feels for the woman she is investigating. The incipient love story between the two women is nonetheless aborted when the black widow involves her beloved new friend in a complicated plot to blame her own crimes on Alexandra, ignoring that she is a representative of the law. However, unlike Nick, Alexandra is not so ready to forgive Catherine's manipulation of her life and so the film concludes with the punishment of the fatal woman and the vindication of the innocent woman whom she has victimized. The film suggests thus that despite the strong sexual attraction between Catherine and Alexandra, the weaker woman's sense of justice is more important than the black widow's emotional hold on her, whereas in *Basic Instinct* the monstrous woman avoids punishment by successfully manipulating her persecutor's feelings. Obviously, this is easier to achieve for Catherine Trammell regarding Nick than for Catherine regarding Alexandra, for the simple reason that Nick is a heterosexual man certainly attracted by his suspect, whereas Alexandra is not homosexual. Therefore, she can shake off the emotional hold that Catherine has got on her more easily than Nick.

The conclusion to be inferred from the many representations of the feminine monster I have analysed in this subsection is that the misogynistic component in the portrait of the feminine monster is more ambiguous than feminist criticism claims. The instability of men's position in a cultural context certainly transformed by feminism has resulted in a new type of masochistic fantasy dominated by the figure of the feminine monster. This mixture of femininity and masculine aggression is not directly related to the reality of women's behaviour but to the fantasies men entertain about women. In general terms, the feminine monster is no longer an abject figure that must be destroyed but a strong woman who challenges man to accept her as she is. Obviously her personality is defined by man and includes traits that may be objected to from a feminist point of view, but there are progressively fewer and fewer differences between the

feminine monsters created by men and by woman. Since many of the contemporary feminine monsters are figures who in many cases are not derogatory portraits of women, they have even gained a certain degree of popularity among women, especially because they are strong women who dominate their relationships with men. In any case, since what characterizes the aggressive feminine monster is her masculinisation, it can be concluded that the monstrous-feminine does not really exist. Paradoxically, what men fear in the gynander—the masculinised woman—is the aberrant man in her which reinforces my suggestion that men are discussing masculinity and not femininity through the feminine monster. On the other hand, man's fears of the new independent woman of the 1980s and 1990s are the foundation on which the abundant fantasies of seduction rest. The feminine monster who is partly villainness and partly ideal bride is the equivalent for men's writing of the repulsive yet fascinating villain of women's romance. This leads to the conclusion that the monster is a mirror of the anxieties felt by each gender in the face of the other and that the changes in gender roles of the 1980s and 1990s have necessarily brought changes in the representation of gendered monstrosity that must still be analysed in depth.

7.2. The New Woman Saviour

7.2.1. The Woman Saviour and the Monstrous Seducer

In *The Sadeian Woman*, Angela Carter writes that:

All the mythic versions of women, from the myth of the redeeming purity of the virgin to that of the healing, reconciling mother, are consolatory nonsenses; and consolatory nonsense seems to me a fair definition of myth, anyway ... If a revival of the myths of these cults gives women emotional satisfaction, it does so at the price of obscuring the real conditions of life ... Myth deals in false universals, to dull the pain of particular circumstances. (op. cit.: 5)

In this section my aim is to examine the myth of the new woman saviour and to determine whether it falls within the category of consolatory nonsense described by Carter. By 'new woman saviour' I refer to the female character who assumes a heroic role as the male monster's redeemer or nemesis in 1980s and 1990s films and novels about monstrosity. Although the new woman saviour derives from a tradition that goes back to Samuel Richardson's sentimental novel *Clarissa Harlowe* (1747-8), she has also assumed new features that derive from the direct or indirect impact of feminism on men's writing. As such, she has become an ambiguous figure, stranded between feminist criticism, which rejects her as yet another patriarchal attempt at controlling woman's ideals about themselves, and the more habitual representation in fiction produced by men of women, as secondary, unheroic characters. The new woman saviour that has attracted most critical attention is Ellen Ripley, the heroine of the *Alien* trilogy, though, arguably, Clarice Starling, the heroine of *The Silence of the Lambs*, is the most illustrative new woman saviour, especially as she is presented in the novel by Thomas Harris rather than in the film by Jonathan Demme. Unlike those women saviours who redeem (or fail to redeem) men, Clarice's efforts are aimed at saving a victimized woman held prisoner by a monstrous serial killer whom she kills, and at avenging the women he has already killed rather than at redeeming a monstrous man.

The woman saviour best ingrained in the popular imagination of the Christian world is no doubt the Virgin Mary. Leslie Fiedler argues in *Love and Death in the American Novel* that the woman saviour is a specifically Protestant myth that appears after the rejection of the figure of the Virgin Mary by the Protestant sects in the sixteenth century. The psychological need for a female protector did not disappear with the iconoclasts of the Reformation nor with the Puritans who destroyed venerated images of Mary throughout Northern and Central Europe. While in Catholic countries the Virgin Mary still remains one of the strongest bastions of popular devotion for both men and women, in Protestant countries the female redeemer of the male sinner is a figure that has been transposed to fiction and that has ultimately originated the postmodernist new woman saviour.

Of course, in the Catholic countries where Mary is worshipped her figure has been used to serve the patriarchal interests of the Catholic Church. Many Catholics would probably refuse to acknowledge the fact that the Virgin Mary is a much degraded manifestation of the archaic Earth goddess. Mary emerges in Christianity as the heiress of the cults of Isis, Cybele (or Artemis) and Diana, goddesses who were themselves manifestations of the lost Earth goddess. These goddesses emerged after the patriarchal usurpation of the palaeolithic goddess's throne failed to totally suppress her presence from the collective unconscious. The cult of Mary was strengthened in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, coinciding with the Church's suppression of the cults of diverse Greek, Roman and Eastern goddesses. A council celebrated in Ephesus in 431 AD declared that Mary was 'Theotokos', the mother of god and the bearer of divinity, thus, no longer the simply human woman of the *New Testament*. It is no coincidence that this council was celebrated in Ephesus, for this is where Artemis, whose cult was suppressed in 380 AD, had her most important sanctuary. The Earth goddess also survives in Christianity in the mysterious third figure of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Ghost, represented by a dove which used to be one of the old goddess's symbols. Baring and Cashford (op. cit.: 634–638) note that the Gnostic heresy—suppressed also in the fourth century—was persecuted among other things because the Gnostics claimed that there was initially a divine couple of God and Goddess with a son and a daughter and that the Holy Ghost eventually replaced the Goddess while Mary replaced the daughter. Likewise, in the Jewish Kabbalah, developed in the Middle Ages, the Holy Ghost, named Shekhinah, was identified with the feminine aspect of the divinity, also known as Sophia.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the seeds for the view of woman as a sadistically victimized saviour persecuted by a monstrous man, had already been planted for novelists to gather the fruits. The more positive aspects of the legacy left by the cult of the Earth goddess survived nonetheless in the collective unconscious to resurface in the twentieth century with the progressive emergence of feminism and, what is also important, with men's—or at least, some men's—acceptance of their own feminine side. An important fictional incarnation of the woman saviour is the victim of seduction that redeems her seducer, first appearing in Richardson's *Pamela* (1740-1). This novel narrates the triumph of the sentimental woman saviour, in this case a simple servant who manages to transform her lustful, threatening master into her own civilized husband without having to sacrifice her virtue, that is to say, her virginity. The Virgin Mary's power to mediate between God and the believer who turns to her for help—a power sustained by her bodily and spiritual purity—is degraded thus to the figure of the virtuous woman who sees in her virginity the best weapon to defeat the sinful man.

A similar wish-fulfilment fantasy narrating the metamorphosis of the monstrous man thanks to the effect of virtuous woman underlies the confrontation between “Beauty and the Beast” in Mme Leprince de Beaumont’s popular version, published in 1755 in Britain, where she lived and where she could have presumably read Richardson’s novels. Interestingly, while a previous, also very popular French version by Mme de Villeneuve published in 1740 concludes with the enchanted prince’s transformation into a man only after the wedding night, in Beaumont’s tale the transformation is a precondition for sex. In her version virtue, not sex, redeems the Beast, as happens in *Pamela*, so that the moral of Villeneuve’s version and of the more ancient versions of the tale—woman must learn to accept man’s sexuality and to discover that far from being brutal it can be rewarding for her—is reversed: man must learn to respect woman’s virtue. But while Pamela and Beauty are rewarded with a happy marriage with a man magically transformed from beast to prince for having kept their virtue, Clarissa’s fate is quite different. Raped by Lovelace in her drugged sleep, she cannot overcome her sense of shame and dies a martyr to her belief in her own purity, in which she recalls many of the Christian martyrs who would die rather than be raped. Even though her death redeems Lovelace, the fact that Richardson thought it necessary, and the popularity of the novel, among both men and women, established a dangerous pattern for subsequent fiction.

Though Clarissa; **Error! Marcador no definido.** never bore Lovelace’s children, the couple begot nonetheless many literary descendants. Clarissa became the mother of the sentimental heroine in a line that runs from Goethe’s Charlotte in *Werther’s Sorrows* to Henry James’s *Daisy Miller* and that also includes the more resourceful, less passive heroines of Gothic fiction. Lovelace, as Fiedler (1973: 69) writes, suffered a process of degradation into the stock villain of popular fiction and drama to become “the masturbatory fantasy figure of bourgeois ladies” in sentimental novels such as Mrs. Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple* and possibly also in fiction derived from Gothic and romantic motifs, such as Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* and her sister Charlotte’s *Jane Eyre*. However, it is not true that this degradation is a sign of Lovelace’s representation of a terminal tradition, as Fiedler argues. Lovelace is as fundamental as Clarissa in the development of the myth of the monstrous man and the woman saviour, precisely because he survives in the Gothic villain and later in the Byronic hero, among whose descendants all the tragic monsters of postmodernity and their bestial counterparts can be counted. Both Lovelace and Clarissa suffer a process of degradation that is parallel to the fall of sentimentalism and the rise of horror beginning with the Gothic novel, itself a genre derived from the sentimental novel. In Gothic fiction the hero is separated from the villain so that Lovelace’s potential for redemption is denied. Later, Dr. Jekyll symbolizes how impossible this redemption has become precisely because the terms have been reversed: while the sentimental heroine could save man’s soul, Dr. Jekyll’s transformation into Mr. Hyde discloses that man’s soul conceals an irredeemable monster.

In any case, the main consequence of the popularity of Richardson’s novel, especially among women, was the perpetuation of a type of sentimental plot which was unfavourable to women. As Leslie Fiedler argues, the ‘Pure Young Woman’ derived from *Clarissa* became a monster of virtue that proved a universal calamity. In America, especially “with no counter-tradition, cynical or idealizing, to challenge it, the sentimental view came to be accepted as quite literally true, [and] was imposed upon actual woman as a required role and responded to by men as if it were a fact of life

rather than of fancy” (op. cit.: 80). What followed was, according to Fiedler, a tacit mutual pact of tolerance by which men and women learned to accept unrealistic, idealized representations of themselves in fiction and to believe they were not fantasies but portraits of reality.

In Britain Clarissa’s passivity was viewed with more ambivalence possibly because the heroines of British Gothic fiction already subverted the feminine values represented by Richardson’s sentimental heroine. They were more Pamela than Clarissa, though they lacked the former’s capacity to manipulate the monstrous man, which is why they invariably needed a hero to rescue them from the hands of the villain. Evident signs of the split between the virtuous Gothic heroine who learns to survive by breaking some of the constraints put on femininity and the passive victim of sentimental fiction can be read in *Wuthering Heights* (1848). The first Cathy dies because she cannot solve the dilemma of having to choose between the villain (Heathcliff) and the civilized man (Edgar). She belongs to an old-fashioned world which only survives in her and Heathcliff’s ghosts. The second Cathy is a new woman saviour who has learned to save herself by resisting and surviving the villain and also by leaving behind the sentimentalism that doomed her aunt Isabella and the asphyxiating romanticism that killed her mother. Once she has saved herself, the second Cathy redeems her cousin Hareton from his appalling state of degradation mainly to suit her own needs for male companionship and not only for his own sake.

The split between the passive and the active heroine is also most visible in another Victorian Gothic novel, Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1860), with the figures of the weak heroine Laura, and her courageous sister Marian. Collins gives his hero Walter Hartright a unique chance of enjoying the life-long company of his wife, the childish Laura, whom he rescues from the villain Fosco, and also of Marian who has in fact saved Laura’s life and who is Hartright’s closest friend. Collins gives Marian a beautiful body but an ugly face, masculine resolution but feminine self-restraint and makes her become the object of count Fosco’s attentions much to her dislike. The fact that Collins is himself divided regarding Marian’s attractive is an early sign of the ambiguities in men’s fantasies about the strong heroine. In any case, if we are to judge from Fiedler’s description of the negative effects of the worship of the pure young woman in American fiction, and from her victimization in Collins’ novel, it could be argued that the victimization of woman in contemporary horror fiction is a sadistic, misogynistic response not against all women but against the passive model of the sentimental woman. The strong heroines who kill monsters and the new women saviours who survive the death of the irredeemable monsters derived from Lovelace are descendants of the Gothic heroine of British fiction and of the strong heroines of nineteenth-century British fiction. They have finally overthrown the long-standing reign of the sentimental heroine whom they have replaced with a mixture of femininity and the same masculine aggressiveness which is as likely to appear in the heroine as in the monster. Thus, the passive model of femininity exemplified by the Virgin Mary has been replaced, or is in the process of being finally replaced, by the much more active woman saviour. She is a proof of nostalgia for the principle of active femininity once embodied by the Earth goddess and lost because of the Judaeo-Christian, patriarchal manipulation of her image.

The seducer and the virginal young woman of Richardson’s sentimental novels still survive in Beryl Bainbridge’s *An Awfully Big Adventure* (1989), a novel in which the reversal of their roles leads to his death and to her surviving the loss of her virginity unscathed. Bainbridge’s lurid tale deals with a tragic triangle in which the figure of the

seduced woman is split into the mother seduced and later abandoned and the little girl—the seducer’s daughter—that she herself abandons. The grim irony of the plot is that the seducer, O’Hara, ends deflowering his sixteen-year-old daughter unwittingly, attracted by her physical similarity with her half-forgotten mother. When he finds out who young Stella is, O’Hara realizes that his life as a seducer is at an end and receives his death in an exemplary accident quite clearly procured by Bainbridge herself rather than by the logic of the plot.

O’Hara may be a monstrous, selfish exploiter of women, yet the no less selfish Stella turns out to be truly his father’s daughter. Bainbridge’s Stella is a great manipulator of people, the more dangerous for masking herself behind the pretence of complete innocence. In contrast, the failed screen adaptation portrays Stella as the innocent of sentimental fiction, thus completely destroying the unnerving effect that her self-centredness produces in the novel. She loses her virginity to O’Hara not quite because he has seduced her but, first, because she wants to get over as soon as possible with a rite of passage she considers a nuisance and second, because she is enacting in his brief affair with him the fantasy of letting herself be seduced like the mother whom she so badly misses. Yet precisely because she is playing the role of the victim—and it is certainly appropriate that O’Hara and her meet in a provincial theatre where she is taking the first steps in her career as an actress—and not really feeling it, O’Hara’s seduction leaves no deep marks in her. Instead of uttering “those naive and sweetly foolish declarations of undying love expected of a young girl whose virginity had just been taken” (p. 164), Stella candidly admits to a scandalised O’Hara that sex was not really enjoyable. O’Hara’s obsession with her callousness and his need to find out why she is like that is what ultimately leads to his death. When the other members of the theatrical company where she works discover why he died, Stella’s only preoccupation is to establish her innocence on the grounds that she is not old enough to shoulder the blame.

Bainbridge’s novel is perhaps best defined as a ‘conte cruel’ that is partly androphobic and partly misogynistic, and in which the boundaries between the male and the female monster are blurred. On the one hand, the male seducer is punished with death for the fortuitous incest with his daughter; Stella’s cold reaction towards him degrades him as a lover but his final degradation is the realization that Stella’s callousness is a legacy she has received from him. The daughter is thus closer to her unknown father than to the abandoned mother she identifies with. On the other hand, Stella is nothing but the monstrous child of two monstrously selfish persons, for while her mother was abandoned by O’Hara, she has been in her turn abandoned by her mother. Bainbridge demolishes the figure of the seducer but she also points out that Stella’s corrupt innocence is based on a poisonous, sentimental feminine model inherited from an irresponsible mother. If the mother had not herself acted following that model, if she had stayed by her daughter’s side and fought to prevent her from making the same mistake, Stella herself would have been redeemed.

7.2.2. From the Final Girl to the New Woman Saviour

Tobe Hooper’s *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) is the first film to focus on the ordeal of a damsel in distress who survives her encounter with the monster—the contemporary psychotic killer evolved from Lovelace and his Gothic descendants—after the death of the men supposed to have protected her. In Hooper’s film the screaming

heroine of horror fiction becomes the only survivor of a group including two men—one of them disabled—and two women who are attacked by the infamous Leatherface and his family. When she realizes that nobody can help her, this young woman screams her way out of the family's private slaughterhouse where they butcher not only animals but also their human victims; the last shot of the film shows her covered in blood and laughing hysterically on board the lorry carrying her away from the chainsaw-wielding Leatherface. Many subsequent horror films, which came to be known as slashers, imitated the pattern set by *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. They narrated the deaths of a number of young people, usually of both sexes, caused by a psychotic, almost supernatural killer who invariably failed to kill the heroine and who survived to appear in another sequel. While the killer became less and less human, the heroine became progressively stronger, more courageous, more resourceful and also more controlled. The success of John Carpenter's *Halloween* (1978) and the popularity gained by its heroine Laurie in her battle against the psychotic Michael Myers ensured the continuation of her presence on the screen and also paved the way for the appearance of the female monster slayer in *Alien*.

Eventually, this type of heroine attracted the attention of feminist critics who wondered why the horror film was the only genre in which women were the protagonists and also whether these female characters were victims of patriarchy or triumphant feminist heroines. Carol Clover was the first to define the heroine of the slasher film and even to christen her with the name of the Final Girl:

She is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again. She is abject terror personified. If her friends knew they were about to die only seconds before the event, the Final Girl lives with the knowledge for long minutes or hours. She alone looks death in the face, but she alone also finds the strength either to stay the killer long enough to be rescued (ending A) or to kill him herself (ending B). (1989: 35)

Clover further argues that the Final Girl did not appear as a result of the incorporation of feminist traits in film heroines, but, quite on the contrary, as a result of the sadistic wish to see the independent heroine fighting for her life in an extreme situation. This is questionable, first because it is often the case that both men and women are victimized and killed in slashers—or horror films in general—so that the Final Girl survives a situation which allegedly stronger men have failed to survive. Second, there is always an obvious difference between the women who are sadistically killed—usually too weak, too dependent on men's help—and the woman who is intelligent and courageous enough to survive on her own. Third, having been put in the heroic position formerly occupied only by men has made the Final Girl a respectable, credible figure for many men in film audiences or in film criticism. Will Rockett (op. cit.: 125) finds, for instance that the teenage heroine Nancy of *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) is “indicative of the new heroines in the better films of the supranatural and supernatural. Today, they are intelligent, sensible women who exceed the old norms of the horror canon to demonstrate the courage and intelligence necessary to defend themselves”. The Final Girl would therefore seem to be a positive step towards a fairer representation of women on the screen. She should be regarded not as the perpetuation of the traditional

screaming heroine of horror but as the missing link between the strong heroines of Gothic and Victorian fiction and the strong heroines of the 1980s and 1990s.

However, feminist critics like Clover herself have raised many objections against the Final Girl and the female characters derived from her, on the grounds that they are suspect models of what patriarchy wants women to be, namely, honorary men:

The Final Girl is boyish, in a word. Just as the killer is not fully masculine, she is not fully feminine—not, in any case, feminine in the ways of her friends. Her smartness, gravity, competence in mechanical and other practical matters, and sexual reluctance set her apart from other girls and ally her, ironically, with the very boys she fears or rejects, not to speak of the killer himself. Less we miss the point, it is spelled out in her name: Stevie, Marti, Terry, Laurie, Stretch, Will, Joey, Max. (op. cit.: 40)

Clover does not question what exactly is the difference between the Final Girls of androgynous names and the feminine—even ultra-feminine—friends who are dispatched by the killer, nor whether women feel identified with the victims or with the heroine. Instead her work has contributed, together with Linda Williams, to establishing a captious model of textual analysis for the horror film with an excessive fixation for gender roles which in fact make the understanding of who the Final Girl is difficult. If it is assumed that “there is something about the victim function that wants manifestation in a female, and something about the monster and hero functions that wants expression in a male” (ibid.: 12) as Clover does, without taking into account the actual ratios of male to female victims and hero/ines, the consequence is an important confusion about gender roles in horror film and what is even worse, the undesirable perpetuation of stereotypical definitions of the genders that feminism itself is trying to eliminate.

Referring to the killer as a “feminine male” and to the Final Girl as a “masculine female” or as a “female hero” (Clover, ibid.: 62), and marking the woman with the investigating gaze as unfeminine, despite the fact that audiences automatically assume the gender of characters to be the gender of the actor playing them, is simply misleading. It implies that there are fixed models of femininity and masculinity. In fact, the horror film dramatizes the blurring of these models after feminism, and has indeed further blurred them itself so that it would be preferable to discuss the victim’s, the hero/ine’s and the monster’s functions in relation to power and powerlessness rather than gender. Formulaic films and novels routinely cast women as victims and men as heroes (as well as abject, irredeemable monsters) but this familiarity with clichés certainly does not blind audiences to the actual gender of each role in each particular film or novel. On the contrary, Final Girls like Nancy and Ellen Ripley and women saviours like Sarah Connor and Clarice Starling have become popular precisely because they are perceived as clearly feminine and not as masculine females.

Linda Williams argues in her influential article “When the Woman Looks” that monster and woman share common grounds for mutual sympathy in classic monster films. In them, patriarchy portrays woman and the monster as embodiments of aberrant sexuality by comparison to the heterosexual male, patriarchal model represented by the hero. The monster becomes a double for the woman he victimizes in these films because both monster and woman diverge from the sexual model set by man. The elimination of the monster and the breaking of the relationship between monster and woman ensures the destruction of the male aberrant sexuality represented by the monster and also the return of woman to the patriarchal fold after the excursion to the freakish territory of the

monster's sexuality. According to Williams, classic monster films like *King Kong* show that women's sexuality is monstrous because the heroine's sexual appeal stirs the desire of the monster and is the cause of his attack on the civilized, male order. For Williams, in contemporary horror films, especially in slasher films in which the monster is not visible until the end, the female victim's mutilated body indicates that the monster's desire for her has literally turned her into the only visible monstrous body on screen.

In Williams' view the male audiences of classic horror films, that is, pre-1960s monster films, would sympathize with the girl's rescuer as a fellow enforcer of the patriarchal system. The films would deal mainly not with the threat posed by the monster but with the threat posed by the woman's breaking free of the power of normal male sexuality. In contrast, in contemporary slashers men would sympathize with the sadistic killer of women, who would punish his victims' liberated enjoyment of sex. Williams (1984: 88) claims, thus, that "the monster is thus a particularly insidious form of the many mirrors patriarchal structures of seeing hold up to the woman". Williams' analysis seemingly implies that horror films have the function of intimidating women into submission to the patriarchal order by showing them how little difference there is between them and the monster. This may have been so in the classic monster film—though it is doubtful for monster films were, and are, made by men and for men. From this point of view, it should be assumed that patriarchy is also telling men that it is dangerous to stray from the path of sanctioned male sexuality under penalty of becoming an abject monster like the one who threatens woman and must be eliminated. In any case, Williams' thesis fails to account for why the mirror held up to women by patriarchy now paradoxically reveals that the Final Girl and the woman saviour are more balanced, more 'normal', than the abnormal male monster with whom they allegedly share so much.

A point that must be clarified is that while the Final Girl simply survives her ordeal, the new woman saviour saves herself in order to save others, including perhaps, the monster. Ellen Ripley is the figure who articulates the transition of the Final Girl to the woman saviour. She is also a character granted a quite ambiguous reception by feminism. Carol Clover, who classes Ripley together with the Final Girls, denies that she is a feminist evolution of the traditional heroine of horror. Clover (1989: 53) argues that Ripley is in fact "a particularly grotesque expression of wishful thinking. She is simply an agreed-upon fiction and the male viewer's use of her as a vehicle for his own sadomasochistic fantasies an act of perhaps timeless dishonesty". On her side, Judith Newton grants that Ripley is a "fine and thrilling hero" —not heroine. Yet Newton sees the main snag in Ripley's femininity and not in her alleged gynandry: "impulsive, nurturing, and sexually desirable", Newton writes, "she is not so threatening to men after all" (1990: 87), as if Ripley's mission were killing men and not extraterrestrial monsters.

In contrast, James Kavanagh (op. cit.: 73), sees in the death of the first alien "the triumphant rebirth of humanism, disguised as powerful, progressive, and justifying feminism". Kavanagh adds that the film mobilizes all the resources of the courageous woman "to resist and ultimately obliterate the voracious phallic monster forced on her by Mother as the representative of the will of the appropriately absent Father (the Company)" (ibid.: 77). In his view, considering the fact that the relations between the men and the women of the *Nostromo's* crew are marked by rank in the Company's hierarchy and not by gender, "the film can be seen as almost postfeminist" (ibid.: 77). Obviously, neither Clover nor Kavanagh are representatives of respectively female and male audiences; many women might agree with Kavanagh's suggestion that Ripley is a

credible postfeminist heroine, whereas many men may have felt like Newton that Ripley is too feminine to be actually different from any other heroine of horror fiction. What is significant is that the defense of Ripley as a feminist heroine comes from a man, who has apparently failed to see that Ripley is, in Clover's words, a male surrogate. The confusion of gender roles is extreme in Vivian Sobchack's complaint against the lack of clear marks that identify Ripley as a woman:

Unlike Leia [of *Star Wars*], Ripley is not so much defused in her sexuality as she is confused with her male companions and denied any sexual difference at all. Instead of white robes that mark [Leia] both as a woman and chaste or off-limits sexually, she wears the same fatigues as the community of astronauts of which she is –from the beginning–a part. (1990: 106)

Precisely, Leia's white, virginal dress is the most obvious sign of the limitations to which she is subjected in the patriarchal fairy-tale universe in which she lives; the dress shows that the active role she plays in the defense of her kingdom is not as significant as it might seem and that she is fundamentally an update to the late 1970s of the fairy-tale princess. Ripley's androgynous working clothes indicate that her being one of the Company's employees is more important in the plot than her being a woman. Yet not even her unfeminine clothes can disguise the fact that she is a woman and not a masculine female. In *Alien*³, none of the psychotic male inmates of the penitentiary colony where she crash-lands fails to notice the conspicuous signs of her femininity, despite the fact that she wears the same clothes as them and has shaved her head also like them.

Sigourney Weaver herself, about to play Ripley's role for the fourth time, has recently declared that women needn't kill alien monsters on the screen to prove that they are strong heroines. For her, most women are currently playing the role of the strong heroine in their daily lives, combining their jobs with their family life and the development of their own personalities (Trashorras, 1996: 116). Unfortunately, Ripley and the other strong women I have mentioned are still exceptions in a bleak panorama that confirms Molly Haskell's (1987: 363) view that "the closer women come to claiming their rights and achieving independence in real life, the more loudly and stridently films tells us it's a man's world". The new women saviours are, therefore, men's new fantasies of women rather than a sign of men's acknowledgement of the progress made by women in the last decades. Yet, since these women are incorporating little by little more traits corresponding to Weaver's everyday life heroine they can eventually bridge the gap between men's fantasies about women and women's view of themselves, at least in the domain of fiction in which they fulfil a function similar to women's new romance heroes.

In her study of contemporary romances written and read by women, Carol Thurston argues that the romances of the 1980s have redefined the traditional model of the sentimental heroine, the pure young woman derived from Clarissa, producing a new heroine very similar to the model of independent woman elaborated by feminism. However, while the heroine of horror fiction and the feminist heroine must stand on their own because they are surrounded by ineffective male companions, the heroine of romance enjoys the company of the new hero, fashioned to suit her needs. He "exhibits many traits traditionally assigned to females—openness, flexibility, sensitivity, softness, and vulnerability" and has been transformed "from invincible superman into fallible human being" (1987: 98). Thurston further argues that "instead of man-as-enemy,

heterosexual romantic fiction since 1980 has come a long way toward reconstructing the hero in the image of women, by creating males who reflect female values” (ibid.: 185). This hero, this ‘female male’ is the authentic response to men’s ‘male female’: both are consolatory fantasies born of the combination in one character of the most desirable features of both sexes from the point of view of the writers and also of the audiences they address their work to. It is true that, like horror films, romances do not enjoy a very high reputation among feminists mainly because these narratives defend the model of the heterosexual couple and not that of the independent woman. However, as Thurston argues (ibid.: 110) “to suggest that heterosexual bonding is in itself inherently conservative and inimical to women, as some feminists have done, is to both deny human needs and turn a blind eye to where grassroots social change has and is taking place”. In the same way that “the power arrangement within the bonding relationship” is the focal point of change in most 1980s erotic romances, it can be said that the new power arrangements in horror fiction, with women playing a more prominent part and men a less prominent part, are signs of change in gender roles that cannot be fully appreciated from a feminist perspective.

7.2.3. Beauty and the Beast in the 1980s and 1990s

Most recent novels and films narrating the confrontation between a male monster and a woman saviour follow the narrative pattern established by the myth of “Beauty and the Beast”, which certainly deals with the subversion of power arrangements within the heterosexual couple. This is, nevertheless, an ambiguous myth that can be given a misogynistic reading (woman’s desire for the monster proves that her sexuality is monstrous) or an androphobic interpretation (man’s sexuality is monstrous and only woman’s love can make it ‘normal’). The many contemporary versions display the same ambiguity. Bruno Bettelheim (1978: 283 -285, 306–322) gives a psychoanalytical explanation for the proliferation of this myth in so many cultures and times. According to him, this myth has the use of easing the anxieties of the young woman who must transfer the Oedipal love for her father to another male figure in order to avoid the conflicts of an incestuous relationship. The story centres symbolically on the loss of the young woman’s virginity (the red rose she asks her father to bring from his journey and that he takes from the Beast’s castle) and in her discovery that her desire for the Beast transforms the sexual awakening she so much fears into something pleasant and rewarding. This is symbolized by the metamorphosis of the Beast back into a prince. Thus, Beauty “moves to the happy discovery that seeing these two loves in opposition is an immature view of things” (ibid.: 308). Bettelheim’s supposes that the abject image of the Beast in the many versions of this myth derives from the taboo which mothers or nurses telling the story imposed on sex: this is why the Beast is invariably deprived of his human form by a sorceress or a fairy he has failed to please in some way.

Nonetheless, there are a number of tensions in the tale that have emerged in recent films and novels and that have displaced the focal point of the myth from Beauty to the Beast. Most new versions deny the basic sentimental premise of the tale, namely, that women’s love can domesticate man’s monstrous aggressiveness. Instead, they simultaneously display a nostalgia for the now seemingly unacceptable sentimental solution—signified by the fact that the stronger heroines of the 1980s and 1990s suffer more, try harder but are less effective in saving men—and a considerable pessimism regarding men’s redemption, which is very often simply impossible to achieve. This

brutalization of the Beast and the redoubled victimization of Beauty symbolize not so much man's resistance to the idea of the strong woman but to the feminist rejection of the hero. This is why in the 1980s and the 1990s the monster and the hero have become almost undistinguishable, for both appear to be negative models of masculinity from the feminist perspective. As Arthur Brittan (op. cit.: 179) writes, "to be told that men are both oppressors and a problem is not something that men can easily live with". This new male self-consciousness has led towards an attempt at creating a new model of male hero, less violent, more in touch with his own feminine side who cannot be mistaken for the macho hero so derided by feminism. However, this is still a figure as exceptional as the strong heroine. The deep fracture at the core of masculinity has led more frequently to either stressing the sheer brutality of the male monster in contrast to the average man, or to constructing models of potentially redeemable male monstrosity. In any case, these three male figures—the new hero, the brutal monster and the redeemable monster—are not signs of the weakness of woman's position but of its strength.

As Lynn Segal (1990: 279) writes in *Slow Motion*, "men are not so popular today as once they were. There can be few times in history when being female has been quite so fashionable a preference for men". For David Thomas (op. cit.: 2) "Western society is obsessed with women to the point of mass neurosis", which is why most are blind to the changes that men are undergoing. This does not mean that patriarchy has been dismantled for good, for, unfortunately, this is not the case. While Segal argues that men are adapting too slowly to the changes women have already undergone in the last decades, Thomas argues that the problem is that women have not allowed men to construct a cultural space where they could discuss how to fit in this new world. Obviously, their portrait of contemporary society is no doubt too optimistic, for indeed neither all women are willing to accept the changes brought about by feminism, nor does a great majority of men want to find this new space. In any case, what seems evident is that women's criticism of men is now ubiquitous in Western culture and that the figure of the strong woman has gained a considerable importance in fiction produced by men. The problem is that since men cannot really reply to that criticism because they lack a degree of consensus as to how to redefine themselves after decades of feminism, they are responding with other methods. These are as varied as the psychopath's aggressiveness against women—and it must be remembered that psychopaths are usually very weak men who feel anxious about their own masculinity rather than very strong patriarchal men—and the fiction dealing with the masochistic punishment of male monsters destroyed by women. This does not mean, of course, that women are now powerful enough to indulge in the luxury of pitying men, when men still have a much greater share of power than women. The point is that these new versions of "Beauty and the Beast" clearly indicate that the dialogue between the genders is not taking place; this is why the women in these texts are forced to cope with very extreme situations in which they must understand the monstrous man. The fact that not even their understanding can save the monstrous man from destruction suggests that men must turn now to themselves for salvation just as women turned to themselves with feminism.

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) is an interesting instance of the problems in discerning whether the subtext underlying the new myth of "Beauty and the Beast" is misogynistic or androphobic. Susan Jeffords (1994:148) argues that Disney turned to this tale because it "helps to forward the image of unloved and unhappy white men who needed kindness and affection, rather than criticism and reform, in order to become their 'true' selves again". In her view, Belle is trapped between two very negative images of masculinity—the Beast and her suitor Gaston—so that her choice is not between the good

and the bad man, but between the bad and the even worse man. The Beast's monstrosity is blamed on a faulty upbringing (he was a spoilt child never taught the difference between men's selfishness and women's nurture), which makes his redemption possible; Gaston, the very incarnation of the macho man, is simply beyond justification or redemption. Jeffords (ibid.: 153) notes that the Beast's story might suggest that "masculinity has been betrayed by its own cultural imagery: what men thought they were supposed to be—strong, protective, powerful, commanding—has somehow backfired and become their own evil curse". However, she adds, if men are in that predicament, only they are to blame, and their appeal for woman's help—for Belle's help in the Beast's case—needn't be heeded.

The point that Jeffords misses is that the screenplay was written by a woman, Linda Wolverton. Her interpretation of the tale as a vindication of fallen masculinity, crying out to woman for help and acceptance in order to regain his lost power, can be easily turned the other way round. Why not suppose that Wolverton intended to warn Beauty (the feminist, sensitive, educated girl) of the need to help the Beast (the redeemable man) as the only means of averting a new reign of the macho bully, Gaston? The threat of misogynistic backlash would only be prevented with women's acceptance of the man who is willing to change for her; together, they could fight the conservative forces represented by Gaston. Presumably, Beauty and the new Prince will have learned from the mistakes in his education and will be prepared to raise their own children in a very different way, avoiding as much the possibility of a new Beast as that of a new Gaston. Both interpretations are not wholly incompatible, but while Jeffords sees the reduction of masculinity to the two models that she discusses as a punishment on the independent woman represented by Belle, Wolverton seems to stress the point that without woman's help and understanding no new model of masculinity can emerge from the monstrous body of patriarchy.

Beauty succeeds in redeeming the Beast because traces of his humanity can be found beneath his beastly persona. However, very frequently, Beauty fails in her task as a woman saviour not because of her inadequacy but because the male monster is incapable of indicating how she can help. In some cases, he even rejects her, seeing that his irredeemable monstrosity threatens her with death. In all these cases, the women emerge deeply scarred in emotional terms from their encounter with the monster, but they survive nonetheless to witness his destruction. Their failure is in essence not their own, but the male monster's failure to see beyond himself. Presumably, these novels and films indicate that men have to find a solution on their own for their problems but that, so far, they cannot; the woman saviour is seemingly a projection of the humanity that still survives in the male monster but she is not enough to salvage it. Despite their efforts, Donna in *Johnny Handsome*, Reba in *Red Dragon*, Le Ly in *Heaven and Earth*, cannot stop the course of self-destruction on which their respective lovers are bent. Somehow, these men are too engrossed by their own monstrosity to actually consider whether there is a way out of their diseased ego through woman's love.

Very often the woman saviour must witness the transformation of the normal man into a monster because of his having transgressed a taboo. Frequently, the man is a scientist obsessed by his work, though in other cases, the transformation is related to superstitions or religious beliefs. The underlying subtexts of the cases in which a scientist is involved is that man is desensitised by his obsession for his work, while woman can keep an adequate balance between her professional and her emotional life. In most of these films and novels, women stand loyally by the metamorphosed man and resist with all their might his repeated attempts at separating her from his side. This

woman saviour represents common sense, being the only element of normality in the male monster's bizarre life though, interestingly, the cases in which the woman manages to impose her common sense (and her love) on man's obsessions are the exception.

Altered States (1980) is one of these exceptions. In this film Eddie and Emilie Jessup's married life is ruined by Eddie's obsession for his scientific work and his selfishness concerning his wife's appeal for a better family life. Emilie, who is herself a reputed anthropologist and a mother of three, stands by her husband even when his experiments with drugs (he is trying to rebuild his body at the level of his DNA in order to create a new model of man) almost kill him. Emilie saves Eddie's life on that occasion, expecting that he will eventually return to her and their family, but far from heeding her warnings, Eddie persists in his childish fixation with his work to the point when his body is actually transformed into that of a horrific monster. Emilie herself is transformed into a monstrosity when she tries to save his life again. Moved by her persistence to help him even at the risk of losing her own life, Eddie suffers a deep shock that releases him from his monstrous body. The film ends when he finally acknowledges his love for Emilie, which restores her to her own normal body and promises a rebirth of their life as a couple. This is, as can be seen, a contemporary version of the sentimental solution with a happy end. It is a sign of the contemporary inclination towards pessimism that the film's ending seems indeed pure wishful thinking, especially in comparison with other versions of "Beauty and the Beast".

Not all the loving women are rewarded with such success for their patience with the male egoist. In *Darkman* (1990) Julie is rejected by Peyton, the scientist badly deformed in a horrific accident. Peyton's badly burned face recalls Lon Chaney's characterization as Eric, the Phantom of the Opera, but their stories are diametrically opposite. While Eric dreams of possessing a beautiful woman, threatening to rape her if she rejects him, Peyton abandons Julie because, as he says, he could never force her to live with a monster who is beyond salvation. Julie is paradoxically liberated from her role as woman saviour when she is most ready to assume it with all the consequences, including her isolation from society with Peyton. In contrast, in David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986), the most horrific version of "Beauty and the Beast", the woman saviour Ronnie must finally give the monstrous man Seth, the mercy killing he begs for, despite her efforts to help him. In this case, Seth becomes a monster partly because of his experiments but also because he fails to trust Ronnie and believe in her faithfulness. The accident that transforms him takes place on an exceptional night when Ronnie, angry with Seth for his selfishness and obsession with his work, and also because of his jealousy and possessiveness, has left him on his own. Seth's monstrosity is the direct result of his belief that he can work and live without Ronnie, a mistake for which he pays with his bodily degradation into a hybrid of fly and man.

Beauty's fate is especially problematic in *The Fly* because she has to make a decision not only about Seth's life but also about his child, the baby she is expecting. In fact, her body rather than her love become the only means to redeem Seth, for he plans to fuse his monstrous body with hers so as to become human again. Since Ronnie's pregnancy occurs after Seth has been horrifically altered by his own hand, she has reasonable doubts as to the baby's normality and so tries to have an abortion. Seth prevents her from aborting the baby because he sees in the embryo's genes a possible cure for himself. Yet, Seth's process of destruction is by then too advanced to allow him time to carry out his plans to fuse Ronnie's body with his own; finally, she puts an end to his misery, though not to her own, by shooting him dead. Precisely, *The Fly II* (1989) begins with Ronnie's death in childbirth and though no specific reason is given to

explain why she did not immediately abort her monstrous embryo after her killing the monstrous father, it is implied she has been forced to have the child by the patriarchal Mr. Bartok, Seth's employer. More surprising than the reluctance to face the issue of abortion in the first film is the total absence of the sacrificial mother in the second. Although Martin, Seth's son, fights Bartok's power over him with the help of another woman saviour—a young woman employed by Bartok—his behaviour is marked by his admiration for his missing father, despite the fact that he was a monster, and not for his missing mother, who was no doubt a victimized heroine.

As can be seen from *Mary Reilly* (1990), Valerie Martin's retelling of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the woman saviour is in some cases a survivor of sentimentalism that does not always fit within the predominantly anti-sentimentalist fiction of the 1980s and 1990s. Rather than a mature woman saviour, Mary is a pathetic shadow of this figure. Her capacity to love and to sacrifice herself to the needs of the monstrous man she loves are totally misdirected, because she can never find a position from which to address him as an equal. Unlike other women saviours, Mary never confronts Jekyll directly, too cowed by her awareness of her inferior social status; on his side, he behaves towards her with a mixture of paternalism and aloofness, never seeing in her the woman saviour that might change his life. Whatever Valerie Martin's intentions may have been, Mary's fierce attachment to Jekyll in *Mary Reilly* encourages the view that women are attracted to the role of the woman saviour because of their masochism and because of their obscure attraction towards the Mr. Hyde in man. While most novels and films with similar plots end with the woman saviour drawing some kind of line between her normality and the man's monstrosity, *Mary Reilly* is exceptional because the heroine tries to erase the difference. Nothing at all is gained by this attitude and although the novel might also be read as a sentimental protest at the way in which women's love goes unnoticed by selfish men, Mary's submission does not seem to indicate that this is the novel's real message. The box-office failure of Frears' adaptation seems to indicate that the woman saviour is now more credible as a monster slayer like Ripley than as a virginal redeemer like Mary. As a redeemer, the woman saviour runs the risk of becoming a parody, equally derided by feminists because of her masochism and by men because of her sugary sentimentalism.

Another instance of the split in the woman saviour between the monster slayer and the redeemer is Suzy McKee Charnas' novel *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980). The vampire of the title, Dr. Weyland, is the stereotypical hero of romance—handsome, intelligent, mysterious—but he is also a hardhearted vampire like Stoker's Dracula. For Katjie de Groot, a hardy woman who is also an experienced hunter, the only adequate approach to such a monster is violence. The uneducated but sensible Katjie is never blinded by Weyland's suavity; she sees in his beauty only the beauty of the big cats she has hunted in Africa. So, when she has her chance, she does not hesitate to shoot him, thus avenging the people he has already attacked. However, Weyland survives her aggression and in another episode he meets a different woman saviour, the psychologist Dr. Floria Landauer. Instead of a predator, Floria sees a man in need of love and so she tries to regain Weyland's lost humanity, responding to his endless, emotionless narrative of atrocities with love. Instead of responding to the lethal threat of the vampire with a gun like Katjie, Floria dares Weyland to have sex with her before killing her. The novelty of sex bound with love does in fact upset Weyland's mental balance and almost tips it in favour of his shedding his habitual callousness but, ultimately, the experience leaves him so scarred—and no doubt scared—that he decides to enter hibernation long before he had planned, and to return to life once his memory of Floria is lost for ever.

There can be no doubt as to which woman saviour is more credible, even more coherent with the real nature of the monster. Weyland's hurried retreat underground and Floria's smugness are unwittingly parodic; they imply that a woman saviour like Floria—a direct descendant of the heroines of sentimental fiction that Fiedler describes as monsters of virtue—completely misses the point that a more sensible woman like Katjie can see: she is dealing with a non-human predator and not with a sensitive man. Floria's bullying of Weyland into a "Beauty and the Beast" plot of salvation ultimately scares the monster away not because he is touched by her love or redeemed in any way, but because he is horrified by how she has manipulated him to suit her own erotic and romantic fantasies.

Like Floria, Anyanwu, the monstrous heroine of Olivia Butler's *Wild Seed* (1980), wants to restore a sense of humanity to the dehumanized male monster she loves, Doro, but unlike Floria, she is aware of the limits of her power to transform the monstrous man. Despite being a powerful, immortal shape-shifter herself, Anyanwu cannot resist the allure of Doro, another immortal spirit, roaming the Earth in search of the 'wild seed', the extraordinary men and women out of whom he will breed a superior race. The whole purpose of Anyanwu and Doro's passion for procreation is to eventually come across another supernatural person like themselves who will finally dispel their gloomy view of their own loneliness. Butler's supernatural tale is a parable about gender relations in everyday life: man and woman cannot live alone but the same natures that make them both unique also separate them in worlds apart.

At first, Anyanwu behaves in a masochistic way, constantly allowing Doro to humiliate her by using her body and mind as he pleases. Despite his abuse of her, Anyanwu persists in believing that Doro will eventually cease doing evil and that her love for him will one day be requited in the terms she deserves. However, this wishful thinking never materialises and Anyanwu abandons her delusion when Doro tries to kill her. This woman saviour finally succeeds in saving herself by renouncing her own power to change him. Instead of imposing the sentimental solution on Doro, Anyanwu makes him see that his dying human part is beyond redemption, perhaps already dead. The fear that his inhuman side might finally take over is what makes Doro finally accept her love but at this point Anyanwu has already decided to go her own way, putting in his hands the responsibility for his own rehabilitation. Having exhausted her role as a woman saviour, Anyanwu decides not to waste her efforts on him. Once she has secured a basic agreement (his promise that he will not kill indiscriminately or destroy his breeders at will; nor wield unlimited power over her) and persuaded Doro that cooperation must replace his use of force, Anyanwu, moves away from him to start her own breed. Finally Beauty claims her own domain, having done as much as she could for the Beast, although the fact that many films and stories still repeat the same pattern means that neither women nor men can solve their fears on their own.

Tim Burton's film *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) also concludes that the reconciliation of the world of men and women is impossible, though Burton portrays an atypical model of monstrous masculinity at odds with most male monsters because of its androgyny. The film mirrors the triangle of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*: Edward, the artificial man who cannot touch because his unfinished hands are bunches of shears plays the role of the spellbound Beast, the girl he loves, Kim, that of Belle and her boyfriend Jim that of the bully Gaston. Edward's hands represent the distance between his lonely world and the world of human contact for which they are useless. They are not, though, the real impediment for the transformation of his platonic relationship with Kim into a full relationship including sex. The real reason for his final rejection of her love is Edward's refusal to play a stereotyped role as Beauty's companion. Kim has

manipulated Edward's essentially pliable nature for her own convenience, casting him in the role of her saviour when the jealous Jim threatens her. Edward's love for her makes him use violence to kill Jim in a way he would never have used on his own and so he resents Kim's having elicited from him a dark side he had so far kept under control. Once both are free of Jim's threat, Edward chooses to be himself, to remain in his ideal artistic world and to renounce Kim as his only means of preserving his integrity. The only thing available for her to do is to lie, pretending that he is dead, so as to secure for him the release from the mob that persecutes him and to live the rest of her life without him.

As I have indicated, Clarice Starling, the heroine of Thomas Harris's novel *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) is the only woman saviour who sees herself as a saviour of women victimized by male monsters rather than as a saviour of men. In this story the role of the Final Girl traditional in slasher films has been split into two different female characters; one, the surviving victim—Catherine, the woman kidnapped by the killer—has been displaced to a secondary position, while, the other, the heroine Clarice, has assumed the role of deliverer traditionally played by men. Both the novel and the film mix elements derived from the Beauty and the Beast myth—especially in the relationship between Clarice and Hannibal Lecter—with motifs derived from traditional hero myths. Clarice's peculiar emotional bond with Lecter is based, above all, in his admiration for her determination to overcome the disadvantages of her working-class origins—as Lecter says, she is only a generation away from white trash—through her professional career in the FBI. Lecter also appreciates the way in which she can master her anger and her passionate wish to altruistically save Catherine and other possible victims (the lambs of the title) from their fatal destiny. Nevertheless, the particular relationship that grows between Lecter and Clarice is not love, nor does it lead to Lecter's redemption. At the most, Clarice's courage has the effect of touching the last human fibre left in Lecter's heart, but emotion does not prevent him from indirectly using her to escape from prison in order to continue killing. On her side, Clarice sees in Lecter simply a means to advance in her investigation of the murders committed by the killer nicknamed Buffalo Bill. She is never tempted to try to redeem Lecter, nor does she hesitate to shoot Jame Gumb—the real identity of Buffalo Bill—dead before releasing Catherine.

The doubt that immediately arises regarding Clarice's story is whether she would have been chosen to help in another kind of investigation in which no gender questions were so explicitly involved. Clarice's gender cannot be separated from her professional role as a woman saviour: she herself claims her right to hunt Buffalo Bill down on the grounds that being a woman she can sympathize much better with the victims and, hence, discover clues leading to the killer. Initially, her FBI supervisor, Crawford, uses her to elicit information from Lecter because he thinks that her beauty will attract Lecter, yet, ultimately, Lecter helps her to find Buffalo Bill because he admires her personality and not her body. Even though the film focuses on Clarice's need to find a surrogate father in either Crawford or Lecter who can replace her dead father and who can help her guide her steps in her rite of passage from being a simple trainee to being an FBI agent, in the novel the Oedipal subtext is subordinated to Clarice's social origins. This and not her gender determine the difficult relationship that she establishes with the mother of the woman she is to rescue and with Catherine herself.

In *Silence of the Lambs* the traditional triangle formed by the king, the princess and the monster-slaying hero has been replaced by a triangle formed by a queen (Senator Ruth Martin), her daughter Catherine and the heroine Clarice. She expects as a reward professional advancement within the FBI rather than the princess's hand as a hero would

expect. Buffalo Bill's victims are all working-class girls with whom Clarice easily sympathizes, but the overprotected Catherine and her powerful mother are for Clarice women who do not deserve so much sympathy. The relationship between Clarice and Senator Martin is marked by a mutual distrust and by Crawford's suggestion that Clarice's career depends very much on the senator's reaction to the outcome of her daughter's kidnapping. Class, and the amount of power wielded by the senator, make her to Clarice's eyes a much more intimidating figure than the cannibal Lecter. Since class differences prevent Clarice from feeling empathy for Catherine, she tries to identify instead with her on the basis of their both being fatherless young women. Ironically, when Clarice finally locates Catherine she is greeted by a barrage of verbal abuse and by the threat to use her mother's power to frustrate all her hopes of a career if she is not immediately released—a welcome no male rescuer has ever received from a damsel in distress.

In fact, the lack of empathy between them is stressed not only by the fact that there are no images of either Senator Martin or Catherine thanking Clarice for her efforts, but also by the fact that when Clarice kills Gumb his chest wound is identical to the one he inflicted on his last victim, Kimberly, a working-class girl whom Clarice has come to regard as her sister. Obviously, it could be argued that Thomas Harris has manipulated the plot so as to prevent Clarice from finding an ally in women such as Senator Martin, while her job and her life are conditioned by her relationship with men such as Crawford and Lecter. In fact, this is more true of the film in which class is not discussed at all. In the novel Clarice draws the courage she needs to hunt Gumb from the memories of her dead father, but also from the memories of her dauntless mother and from the rage she feels in the face of Gumb's sadistic treatment of his victims. Indeed, much more important than the absence of links between the women in *Silence of the Lambs* is the presentation of all the male characters as more or less dangerous manipulators of women. Essentially, there is only a difference of degree between Gumb's brutal killings of women and Crawford's endangering Clarice's life by putting her in touch with Lecter. When she kills Gumb, after having made the decision (in the novel, not in the film) to risk her career in order to save Catherine rather than obey the FBI red tape, Clarice wins a victory not only against the monstrous man but also against the seemingly flawless Crawford.

In Jonathan Demme's film, the reduction of the rather complex personal motivations that lead Clarice to hunt Gumb in Harris' novel, is a clear indication of the limits imposed on the figure of the new woman saviour. The forthcoming production of a second part of the film, based on Harris' sequel to his own novel, shows that there are reasons for a moderate optimism as far as the continuity of the new woman saviour in popular culture is concerned. However, in the film that was awarded the Oscar for Best Picture in 1992—the year after *The Silence of the Lambs* was awarded the same distinction—the woman saviour was literally dead and buried. Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* narrates the story of William Munny, a retired gunman transformed into a loving father of two children and a peaceful pig farmer by his loving wife Rebecca, a middle-class woman who made of his redemption her life's crowning achievement. Years after her death, Munny is lured out of his retirement by the reward a group of prostitutes are offering to the man that can avenge the vicious attack one of them has suffered at the hands of the local bully. Munny is tempted by the money because he sees in it an escape from the drudgery of his life as a farmer not only for him but also for his children.

Assuming again his old identity as a killer, Munny fights his rivals for the reward and also the stern sheriff who failed to exact a fair retribution for the attack and who will not allow the peace of his domain to be interrupted for the defence of the prostitutes. Eventually, Munny kills the women's offenders and leaves town with the money, not without recriminating the prostitutes for their attitude. Even if it is implied that it is thanks to Rebecca's teachings that Munny assumes the chivalrous task of defending the abused prostitutes and that he is a hero in comparison to the local sheriff, Munny's attitude is not exactly noble. He may be the best among the men surrounding these women, but he is, nonetheless a hired killer. The film concludes with the shot of the sunset, habitual at the end of westerns, though this time the scene shows Rebecca's abandoned house and grave and not the hero riding towards the setting sun. A text informs that Mrs. Feathers, Rebecca's mother, could not find Munny nor her grandchildren in her first visit to her daughter's grave because Munny had started a new life as a tradesman in San Francisco. Mrs. Feathers, the text concludes, could thus never demand an explanation as to why Rebecca had decided to devote her life to the notorious thief and murderer Munny. At the end of the film, the Beast has therefore completed his undoing of Beauty's redemption of him, leaving her behind in order to assume a new role as a father. By returning to his old life for a brief period Munny rejects the man that his wife created out of the monstrous killer. The man he himself creates is not born out of love but out of the violence and the hatred that harm the prostitute avenged by Munny. It is not clear why this reborn Munny is preferable to Rebecca's husband, nor in which way he has become a better father for his children, but the fact that he is said to be a prosperous tradesman after the episode of the reward indicates that his own redemption of himself was more effective than hers.

Finally, and to round off my review of the ambiguities of gendered monstrosity I should like to turn to David Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers* (1988). In this film the redeeming mission of Beauty, the actress Claire Niveau, is rendered ineffectual by the splitting of the Beast in the figures of Beverly and Elliot Mantle, two identical twin brothers who work as gynaecologists. Claire, one of their clients, is first simply an object of seduction, who passes from Elli to Bev's arms without being aware that they are two different men. Later, humiliated by the deception she has discovered, Claire demands that Bev and Elli put an end to their morbid union. The weaker Bev, whom Claire loves, cannot handle the strain of the separation from his brother and, despite his deep love for Claire, soon starts seeing her as a terrifying figure endowed with the power to sever him from Elli. This is emphasised by a particularly horrifying scene in which Bev dreams that he and Elli are in fact freakish Siamese twins and that Claire is literally biting off the tissue uniting him to Elli by the belly. Floundering in a haze of drugs that result in an unshakeable dependence on Bev, Elli ends by killing his brother and committing suicide, wrongly believing that since Claire is gone from his life he has to perform the role that she assumed in his nightmares.

Despite the fact that *Dead Ringers* deals with men who are obviously seriously disturbed—hence, not to be taken as models of stable masculinity and less of stable patriarchy—the film has been criticized because of its alleged misogyny. Helen Robbins (1993: 135) has argued that the protagonists of *Dead Ringers* and *The Fly*, another of Cronenberg's films, “suffer from womb envy, a feeling of impotence clearly stemming from their jealousy of female reproductive power” and so exalt “male activities that mimic natural female functions”. According to her, *Dead Ringers* is specially misogynistic because Bev and Elli's profession is used as an excuse to allow them to manipulate women's bodies, which they do not respect, and which they treat as the

objects in function of their research or, simply, their curiosity. However, Bev and Elli's real complaint is not womb envy but a sick narcissism that literally prevents them from seeing women even when their bodies are displayed before them. The misogyny accompanying that excessive narcissism is portrayed as an evident sign of their deficiencies as men and not as a sign of a balanced masculinity they have never enjoyed.

Likewise, the womb-like shape of Seth's teletransportation 'telepod' in *The Fly* may be an expression of womb envy as Robbins suggests, but Seth's attempt at usurping woman's role in creation by remaking his own body is so disastrous that we have to conclude that his womb envy has been decisively punished. As in Bev and Elli's case, Seth's alleged misogyny backfires on him, and evidences that he and not the woman he mistreats—his girlfriend Ronnie—is the real monster. The nightmarish scene in which Ronnie sees herself giving birth to a baby-sized insect larva shows the horrific effects of Seth's abuse of the powers that technology has granted him, rather than suggest that woman's body generates monsters. In the same way, the nightmare in which Bev sees Claire eating away the tissue that links him to his brother from navel to navel may be partly due to castration anxiety as Robbins notes, but it is more adequate to read it as a proof of how unnatural Bev and Elli's union is. Even though Claire's action is repulsive, nobody can fail to see that it is as necessary as severing the umbilical chord from the newly born baby's body. What is really disgusting is Bev's sick attachment to Elli and the way in which they manipulate Claire's body and the bodies of their clients.

Seeing Cronenberg as a man primarily occupied with a misogynist view of women misses the point. His true obsession is the monstrosity of men and their twisted views about what it is to be a man or a woman. This obsession is most apparent in *M. Butterfly* (1993), a film based on real life events that narrates a bizarre love story between a French diplomat living in Beijing and a Chinese opera singer—a woman who turns out to be actually a man pretending to be a woman so as to please his lover. In a scene of *M. Butterfly* the French diplomat—played by Jeremy Irons, who had also played Bev and Elli—must face the reality of the male body his lover is displaying before him. As he undresses, the character played by John Lone tells his lover that only a man can know what a perfect woman is, meaning that we all, men and women, see only what we want to see. Furthermore, that we all construct images of the opposite sex, some ideal, others monstrous, depending on our fears and fantasies. If women claim, as Molly Haskell does (op. cit.: 402), that “we want nothing else, on or off the screen, than the wide variety and dazzling diversity of male options”, we will have to cope with the reality that men's images of themselves are not as unproblematic as it might seem and that their images of women—from the abject monster to the heroic woman saviour—are reflections of those problematic images of themselves. What is more, the sheer variety of the monstrous-masculine indicates men's preoccupation for the stability of their representations in fiction rather than an untroubled enjoyment of a privileged position.

Conclusions

A certain degree of misogyny is evident in the representation of women as monsters, though the lack of a better analysis of women's androphobic representation of men in fiction makes it difficult to draw clear conclusions about how relevant misogyny actually is in the representation of gendered monstrosity. In any case, men's fantasies of women as monsters are self-addressed, in the sense that they discuss fears of woman that have more to do with men's than with women's nature. Therefore, they have to be evaluated from a perspective which takes into account not only man's discourse on

women but also women's discourse on men and the changes that feminism has brought about in the definition of gender roles and, especially, of masculinity. At any rate, the most effective way of resisting misogyny is not censorious feminist criticism but the elaboration of alternative fictional discourse by women that avoids androphobia so as not to repeat the mistakes of patriarchy.

Considering the evidence provided by the texts I have analysed, it should be concluded that the monstrous-feminine is actually a prolongation of the monstrous-masculine rather than an independent construction. Most of the female monsters I have analysed are women of monstrous behaviour and correspond to a widespread fantasy, that of the blend of feminine attractiveness and male aggressiveness, as likely to be embodied by the monster as by the strong heroine. There are no doubts that they are characters based on men's ambivalent attitude towards women rather than on plain misogyny, otherwise the progressive rise of the strong heroine could not be justified. However, what is more doubtful is how the feminine monsters have to be interpreted from a feminist point of view. If they are rejected because their behaviour is not feminine but masculine, it should be concluded that they have nothing to do with women and that men are portraying themselves through them: the monstrous-feminine would be simply the monstrous, feminine side of man. The female (non-human) or the feminine (human) monsters would be misogynistic constructions because they would arise from patriarchal man's manipulation and appropriation of woman's body, subsequently misrepresented with characteristics, such as aggressiveness, women simply do not have. This biased position presupposes that men have no grounds to justify their representation of monstrous women since in real life there are no monstrous women. Yet, since some feminist writers—from Barbara Creed to Jeanette Winterson—have been tempted to vindicate the figure of the feminine monster—because she is an exceptional representation of female power—there is an obvious contradiction as to how to read the feminine monster. We are forced to ask ourselves whether she is an aberrant male or a wish-fulfilment fantasy of female power.

As I have noted, the mixture of male and female traits is as habitual in the feminine monster as in the strong heroine. As I see it, the persistence in using Freudian psychoanalysis to interpret gendered monstrosity had hampered the consideration of the role played by other erotic fantasies that are shaped by the socio-cultural context. Thus, the erotic romances for women of the 1980s prove that women also fantasise about an ideal mixture of male and female traits embodied in the new hero, the counterpart of the attractive, yet monstrous villain, finally rejected by the heroine. In addition, the many instances in which there is no difference whatsoever between the monster and the hero/ine and also the many texts in which sexual relationships are established between a 'normal' person and a monster, lead to the conclusion that the current construction of monstrosity is conditioned by an omnipresent fantasy: that of being chosen by an extraordinary sexual partner—monstrous or not. This is especially clear in the many contemporary versions of "Beauty and the Beast". For both men and women mastering the threat posed by the monster through love poses an attractive challenge that films and novels allow them to live through in safety. This type of fantasy is designed to bolster the ego of the reader or the spectator who identifies with the human chosen by the extraordinary partner—though they possibly also invite readers and viewers to identify with the monster, who is more powerful and who can easily upset the power arrangements within the hybrid, heterosexual couple.

The last point I have considered is why in those new versions of "Beauty and the Beast" the unhappy end is more recurrent than the happy end. My conclusion is that they

are indications that the dialogue between men and women has been disrupted by a series of factors, among which feminism is the most important. Of course, it could be argued that what has been disrupted is the monologue that patriarchal man has addressed to woman in order to dominate her. Yet, this is insufficient to explain why in these new versions the monstrous man and not the woman is punished, neither why in the texts in which the roles are reversed—the woman is the monster, the man the saviour—she is accepted as she is. These fantasies no doubt imply that feminism has increased the fears—if not the misogyny—felt by men towards women. But what is less clear is what the destruction of so many male monsters at the hands of women or at their own hands implies. It is just too simplistic to suppose that men are symbolically punishing themselves for the serious grievances inflicted on women, especially since these texts are not addressed to women. This is a point signified by the fact that the new woman saviour usually survives her encounter with the monster unharmed, as if he could not significantly alter her life. It is possibly more accurate to see male monstrosity as a sign of men's difficulties in creating a model of masculinity capable of mixing male and female traits—as their fantasies of women do—that can still be distinguished from the new model of more androgynous femininity.

CHAPTER 8 Little Monsters?: Children and Monsters

8.0. Introduction

The monstrous child and the monstrous woman are two sides of the same coin. These are images that signify the power of others, usually men, to create models of monstrosity representing their own ambivalence towards the object of the representation. The misogynistic representations of women in fiction are being contested by feminism. Children, however, cannot oppose the conspicuous paedophobia of many horror films and novels since, obviously, they cannot articulate a critical discourse to argue their own defence. The awareness of this fact on the part of those who produce fiction for adults about monstrous children has been unsuccessfully pushed to the background of the texts. Clearly, a sense of guilt accompanied by a secret desire to be exculpated from the sin of paedophobia underlies most films and novels for adults of the 1980s and 1990s in which monstrous children appear. There is a generalized awareness among adults that presenting children as monsters contradicts the myth of childhood innocence, but there is also an imperious need to express the adults' secret fears of children through monstrous, fantastic versions of childhood. This situation results in an evident tension within these films and novels and in this sense of guilt, as adults are trapped between their need to express subconscious anxieties and their fear of producing unfair representations of children which may reveal that the adult is the real monster. Naturally, this sense of guilt is enhanced precisely by the adult's awareness that the child cannot even understand the images that misrepresent it and much less reject them.

Expressing these fears is, therefore, not an easy task. Now, when child abuse is a reality much bandied about by the media, the figure of the fictional monstrous child inevitably suggests that novelists and film directors or writers dealing with it are in a sense in the same position as the child abuser, forcing the innocent to assume an image tinged with corruption. In the 1980s and 1990s the question of child abuse has come to the foreground and horror fiction for adults has reflected not only the anxieties of parents worried about their limitations but also adult men's worries about their role as fathers. The alarming evidence of child abuse and the feminist vindication of the role of the mother have no doubt undermined the traditional model of patriarchal fatherhood and masculinity. Consequently, many recent films and novels deal with either the justification of the monstrous father or with his replacement by an extraordinary paternal figure, a monster of special qualities, who can teach the child another model of masculinity for the future capable of transcending the old-fashioned model now being divested of its authority.

In the first section of this chapter I will review the contradictions between the myth of innocent childhood and the demonisation of the child in many recent films and novels. These contradictions no doubt signify the anxieties of a post-Freudian generation whose awareness of the reality of childhood has made them feel a distinct ambivalence towards parenthood. In the second section, it is my aim to survey, first, the uses of the monster in fiction for children and the ambiguities surrounding the issue of whether its figure is desirable at all in this context. These have led to a rather uneven

imposition of restrictions on children's fiction which only denote a worrying lack of clear criteria about what children can tolerate in fiction. Second, this section also deals with films and novels for adults that narrate encounters between children and monsters. I examine, among other aspects, the role of the child as saviour, the subtle differences between the natural and the unnatural child and the role of the monster as a wish-fulfilment figure, that of the perfect father.

8.1. The Myth of Innocence: Monstrous Children

8.1.1 The Meaning of the Monstrous Child

Although children have been frequently pitted against monsters in folk tales or fairy tales allegedly created for the young, the many narratives for adults in which children are either victimized by a horrific monster or are horrific monsters themselves are no doubt a sign of our times. This new situation has arisen at a time of growing concern for the need to prevent children from being exposed to an excessive degree of violence in fiction, especially in film and on TV. Even more worrying than the child's exposure to fictional violence is the evidence unearthed by many social workers and child psychologists in the USA and the UK proving that many children are routinely abused—sexually, physically or psychologically—by their own parents and other adults. However, it is now, when children appear to be the more than ever the innocent victims of corrupted adults, that monstrous children are most abundant in fiction. In one of the essays of the collection *Managing Monsters*, Marina Warner (op. cit.: 43) observes that “the Child has never been seen as such a menacing enemy as today. Never before have children been so saturated with all the power of projected monstrosity to excite repulsion—and even terror”. How the little monsters compare to the victimized children of fiction is the main issue underlying the analysis of the texts I have included in this chapter.

The evil child embodies all the characteristics deemed by adults to be unnatural in a child, that is to say, all the qualities belonging in fact to the adult. As happens in the case of the monstrous woman, who is endowed with masculine traits that mark her as unfeminine, hence unnatural and monstrous, the monstrous child is defined by attributes artificially imposed on it by those who manipulate its image. The destruction of the monstrous woman of fiction, which as I noted in chapter 7 is not as frequent now as it used to be a few decades ago, was presumably enacted on the screen or the printed page to frighten women out of their desire to imitate the powerful image of femininity personified by the monstrous woman. The destruction of the evil child staged in horror films and novels cannot be explained on similar grounds, for children are not part of the audience or readership of those texts. It is evident that these are texts adults address to themselves in the same way that, as I have argued in chapter 7, the texts about female monstrosity are addressed by men to men and not primarily to women. The destruction of the evil child is excused in those texts on the grounds that an evil child is not a ‘real’ child in the same way that the destruction of male and female human monsters is justified with the idea that these are not ‘real’ human beings but monsters. However, in some circumstances it is hard to turn a blind eye to the fact that in many contemporary horror stories the death of a child, no matter how evil the child might be, is condoned and even relished. Even when death does not take place, the suggestion that the child is

associated with the devil by possession or actual incarnation, as happens in, respectively, *The Exorcist* (1973) and *The Omen* (1976), speaks volumes not so much about the nature of the child but about the adults' fear of the child. Since I have been defending the absolute freedom of expression against censorship and man's right to produce fantasies about women, I would like to stress an important point as far as the representation of the child is concerned, so as not to fall into a contradiction. The difference between sexism, racism and other forms of prejudice leading to discrimination against minorities is that those minorities consist of adults who may–must–work to eradicate prejudice. In my view, this task must be carried out from a humanist standpoint which defends the person and not so much the person as member of a minority confronting a hostile majority. Children, as I have noted, cannot articulate an anti-paedophobic discourse; consequently, their defencelessness is what makes the representation of children as monsters a much more problematic issue than the misrepresentation of adults empowered to speak up in their own defence by the conquest of civil liberties in the 1960s.

As S.S. Praver (op. cit.: 71) writes in *Caligari's Children*, “the gusto with which films like *The Omen* make the audience wish for the child's destruction has something deeply suspect about it—might there be a link, perhaps, between the way in which our more cruel instincts are here being directed against a child, and the disturbing use made of child ‘actors’ in pornographic films?” In fact, the pornographic or pseudo-pornographic exploitation in contemporary horror fiction of the evil child is but a reversal of the erotic exploitation of the innocent child so in vogue at the end of the nineteenth century. As Bram Dijkstra argues, painters of the period gratified the obscure desires of Victorian men by representing children in idealized versions of innocence with an obvious erotic content. These paintings were meant initially to accompany the mid nineteenth-century image of woman as an innocent, pliable child but as women's demand for more freedom led them to resist their representation as docile children, painters turned increasingly to the child in order to fulfil the fantasy of available, erotic innocence. “It is a sad irony”, Dijkstra (op. cit.: 195) writes, “that... overlooking the erotic content of these paintings, [many women] chose to see instead in these children portrayed as women an idealized version of the innocence many of them still revered as an ideal”. Women have no doubt played an important role in perpetuating the image of the innocent child created by nineteenth-century artists. It could be thus argued that the evil child has grown in response to women's sentimental view of the child—certainly contradicted by Freud, Klein and other psychologists—in the same way that, as I argued in chapter 7, the woman victimized in horror films is very often the same sentimental heroine revered by women. Despite the attention attracted by the sexual abuse of children at home or in pornography, a certain blindness towards the sexual exploitation of the child still persists today. Thus, although many have noticed the exploitation of the child in horror fiction, few have raised their voices against the obvious exploitation of the child in the advertising of products for children. Parents who employ their attractive, innocent offspring for money in advertising or show business cater to the secret erotic fantasies of adults in the same measure as those who write novels or make films about the monstrous child.

As happens in the case of women, there are two sides to the question of whether the figure of the evil child signifies love or hatred for the ‘normal’ child, whatever that may be. Stephen King, an author who very often touches on the subject of children and monstrosity, deals with this dilemma in his novel *Pet Sematary* (1988), reaching the conclusion that the patriarchal re-creator of children and women as monsters transforms

them out of love rather than out of hatred. In King's view, Louis's shortcomings as a fallible human being and not his incontrovertible patriarchal power are to blame for the pain inflicted on innocent women and children and, indeed, on his own innocent self. *Pet Sematary* narrates the horrific consequences of the death of two-year-old Gage, who is knocked down by one of the gigantic lorries that daily pass before his house. His father, Louis, blames himself for the moment of negligence that the child paid for with his life. Having been warned about the lorries, he had taken into his hands the responsibility of protecting Gage and his five-year-old sister Elli and, so, Gage's death is for Louis, more than an accident, a sign of his failure as a father. Louis's grief for the death of the lovely little boy inevitably leads to an even greater disaster: he gives Gage life for a second time by burying his mangled body in an ancient Indian burial ground where, as local folklore claims, dead bodies are reborn.

The breaking of the taboo that also dooms Victor Frankenstein—no man can give birth as women do, for he can only create monsters made of broken dead bodies and not of living matter—results in the monstrous child, a new Gage, whose rage and perfectly articulated though foul speech reveals that he is no longer a two-year-old babe but a demon. As happens in *Frankenstein*, the monstrous child seeks revenge for his new condition by killing what his father loves most—in this case, his own mother Rachel—rather than by attacking him directly. The crime committed by the monstrous child makes the father condemn him to a second, definitive death. Yet, his horrific experience with Gage does not stop Louis from transgressing the taboo once more in order to resuscitate Rachel's dead body. The novel ends, thus, with the creation of a new, monstrous Rachel, who recalls the images of the monstrous Elizabeth of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein Unbound*.

Implicit in *Pet Sematary* is the idea that the patriarchal father pays with the suffering of bereavement for the sin of believing in his unbounded power over the lives of those he loves and controls. Nevertheless, Louis's insane behaviour springs from an underlying tension in his relationship with his wife and children. Louis cannot be said to behave as a traditional patriarch—he is portrayed as a caring father and husband—but King's constant references to Louis's patience with the children's whims and to Louis's self-control in the face of the childish Rachel's depressive bouts suggest that things could be easier for this sensible, sensitive man if only the children and Rachel were less difficult to handle. King seems to suggest that Louis's deeply felt grief throws him off balance because he is already too stressed by the daily difficulties of family life. The reader feels compelled to sympathize with Louis in his bereavement and, simultaneously, to condemn him for the horrific manipulation of Gage's and Rachel's bodies. King seems divided between exonerating Louis from his responsibility in the deaths of his son and wife and proving how tainted and destructive his mind is. Who the reader is meant to fear most is never apparent precisely because Louis's monstrosity is less sensational, lacking the physical markers that underline Gage's and Rachel's transformation. Throughout the novel Louis plays the role of the innocent, yet the evil Gage and the zombie Rachel seem to fulfil a secret wish that Louis does not want to face, namely, his wanting the death of the innocent members of his family so as to remake them to his perverse liking. King seems torn between the need to expose Louis's shameful, guilty remaking of innocent children and women as monsters and the need to absolve him, and all men through him, presenting Louis as a victim of extreme circumstances. Whatever King's original intentions may have been, this ambiguous exposure of man's role in the transformation of women and children into monsters expresses important anxieties, present in the building of a self-conscious image of man

valid for the 1980s and 1990s. Men like Louis wish to leave patriarchy behind but fail ultimately to repress the patriarch in them as Dr. Jekyll failed to repress Mr. Hyde.

Another explanation for Louis's collapse can be found in the self-consciousness with which he faces his role as a parent. Not only Freud but also child psychologists such as Melanie Klein or Alice Miller have emphasised the role played by the parents not only in securing the immediate welfare of the child but also in securing the prospective happiness of the adult. Neither Louis nor Rachel were happy children; they have found in parenthood a way of redressing the deficiencies of their respective childhoods, yet, their efforts not to repeat the same mistakes their parents made are ultimately self-defeating. Their inability to discuss death with the children and with each other is what brings tragedy to their lives. Rachel, herself traumatized by the way in which her parents forced her to witness the horrible death of her ill sister, cannot transmit to her children a proper understanding of death. Louis's promise never to lie to his children is soon broken when he finds himself unable to tell his daughter Elli that her beloved cat is dead. His fear of spoiling Elli's innocence pushes him to use the magic of the burial ground for the first time. Elli instinctively notices that the reborn cat is different but despite her misgivings Louis returns to the forbidden ground with Gage's body. When Gage dies, neither Rachel nor Louis can cope with the situation and so their continuous effort to be the perfect parents ends in complete disaster.

It can thus be said that Louis is crushed by the weight of the responsibility of maintaining the innocence of his children intact. His ordeal and that to which he submits his family suggest that the figure of the monstrous child signifies not so much the fear of the child but rather the fear of the adult's imperfections as a parent. The monstrous child is the nightmare that haunts parents afraid of making mistakes in the upbringing of their children. It refutes the capacity of the parent to control all the factors that contribute to protecting the happiness and innocence of the child. But it is important to understand that the evil or monstrous child exists in our fantasies because it is the dark side of the myth of the innocent child, created by adults bent on segregating a segment of human life from the ugliness of daily life. The artificial hell inhabited by the mythical monstrous child is nothing but the counterpart of the no less artificial garden of Eden inhabited by the mythical innocent child. Presumably, the real child is to be found somewhere between both domains.

8.1.2 The Myth of the Innocent Child

The myth of the innocent child is consolidated in the nineteenth century together with the myth of woman as household angel. Yi-fu Tuan (op. cit.: 215) remarks that because infant mortality was extremely high, "before the eighteenth century, European parents often showed an apparent lack of devotion to their infants and young children... Why spend time and love on a child that might soon depart?" Angus McLaren (1992: 169) notes that the more limited size of upper and middle-class families together with the Puritan glorification of domesticity preached by the rising middle class meant first, that the fewer children were better cared for and second, "that the enriched middle classes of the prosperous eighteenth century were, not more loving parents, but better able to afford such indulgences". By the end of the eighteenth century the child had been firmly associated with purity and innocence; William Blake, for instance, reflects this view in his *Songs of Innocence* (1789). Later, the Romantic movement, especially

Wordsworth, would exalt the figure of the child and would even acknowledge the envy felt by the adult poet for the child's ability to gaze at the world with unprejudiced eyes. This idealisation of the child was taking place nonetheless in a period when capitalism was exploiting very young children in mines and factories throughout civilized Europe.

Not all children were represented in the same way in Victorian literature. Charlotte Brontë's young Jane Eyre or George Eliot's young Maggie Tulliver are spirited little girls very different not only from Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist or Little Nell but also from Emily Brontë's young Catherine Earnshaw and her companion Heathcliff. Yet the sentimental representation of the child seems to have prevailed over the more realistic, perhaps less gratifying portraits of childhood offered by *Jane Eyre* (1848), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) or *Wuthering Heights* (1848). By the 1850s the twin figures of the innocent child and woman as a household nun (Dijkstra, op. cit.: 3–24) had been firmly integrated into the panorama of Victorian culture. Child and woman were presented as inferior beings, endearing because of their weakness and incapable of autonomous thought; they were totally dependent on the patriarchal man that protected them, were always naturally inclined to do good and made the home a haven of peace to which man could retire after a hard day's work in the corrupt, manly world of business. One does not have to go far to find instances of the idealised woman-child. Dickens' Dora in *David Copperfield* is one. Yet by the 1860s when Wilkie Collins published *The Woman in White*, it appears that the woman-child was becoming an idol with clay feet. The ordeal to which Collins submits his heroine Laura—who loses all her property to a scheming husband and also her identity after she is confined in an asylum—seems to connote Victorian man's ambivalence towards the angelic woman he had himself created.

The image of children established by Victorian sentimentalism in the UK and the USA—Harriet Beecher Stowe's Little Eva of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) glorified the dying, innocent child in the USA—set the pattern for the image of the innocent child in the twentieth century. This has not been substantially altered despite Freud's revelations about the child's private life. "Children", Marina Warner (1994a: 44) writes, "are perceived as innocent because they are outside society, pre-historical, pre-social, instinctual, creatures of unreason, primitive, kin to unspoiled nature". Nineteenth-century imperialism was in fact sustained by the ideological use of the figure of the child. Curiously enough, the first recorded reference to *Frankenstein* in the domain of public discourse linked together the monster, the child and the slave. In the course of a debate on West Indian slave emancipation, Foreign Secretary George Canning told the House of Commons in 1824 that "we must deal with the Negro as with a person possessing sense, but only the sense of an infant" (quoted in Bahar, 1995: 12). According to Canning, freeing the black slave before he reaches the full maturity of the adult is the equivalent of imitating Victor Frankenstein's mistakes. Canning's racist remark is accompanied, thus, with a paedophobic remark: he is apparently untroubled by the inference that the child and the monster are basically the same.

Jacqueline Rose has explained how the representation of childhood—and the creation of fiction for children—have followed the model set up by colonialism. According to her:

Childhood is seen as the place where an older form of culture is preserved (nature or oral tradition), but the effect of this in turn is that this same form of culture is *infantilised*. At this level, children's fiction has a set of long-established links with the colonialism which identified the new world with the infantile state of man.

Along the lines of what is almost a semantic slippage, the child is assumed to have some special relationship to a world which—in our eyes at least—was only born when we found it. (1984: 50)

Before the advent of Freudianism, it can be said that children, women and the inhabitants of the colonised nations were seen as different aspects of the burden supported by the white man's shoulders. The myth of the innocent, pliant child, woman or colonial subject looking up to the Victorian man's authority obviously expressed a wish-fulfilment fantasy, for in real life there was not such an easy relationship between the white man and his dependents. Children's fiction was elaborated consequently not by taking into account who children really were but rather adults' fantasies of what they should be like. In these fantasies the children were innocent and so was the world around them, the world of childhood lost to the nostalgic writers who created it and to the parents who bought it. The panorama of children's fiction in the nineteenth and the twentieth century is obviously too vast to fit within the limits of this dissertation, but it seems safe to argue that despite early exceptions to the rule such as *Alice in Wonderland*, conventional children's fiction is a version of the pastoral, an idyllic view of childhood very far from the reality of children's lives or their own fantasies.

In any case, the myth of the innocent child, the household angel and the noble savage began a simultaneous—painfully slow—process of dissolution at the end of the nineteenth century, started by texts of very ambiguous interpretation. They all pointed, nonetheless, at the replacement of the innocent by a much more threatening figure. Fear of the New Woman inspired not only the Decadent artists' paintings but also narratives such as *Dracula* (1897), in which woman is split in two: the not so innocent Lucy whom Dracula turns into a vampire and the innocent Mina whose final transformation is prevented by the patriarchal men who surround her. This split of man between the monster (*Dracula*) and the saviour portrayed in *Dracula* is also found in Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" (1902), a narrative that replaced the myth of the childish savage with the figure of the threatening, inscrutable native whose world of barbarism swallows the soul of the European civilised man. In Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw" (1898), the myth of childhood innocence is questioned—still tentatively—with the Governess' account of the bizarre behaviour of Flora and Miles, the two siblings under her care.

While adults writing fiction for children fantasised about their return to Eden through the child, the figure of the child was taking quite different connotations in fiction written for adults. Arguably, Henry James' Flora and Miles stand for all those children literally destroyed not only by the adults' corruption but also by the adults' distorted view of them. However, Flora and Miles are also personifications of this budding fear that children might not be angels but sexually active persons (obviously not in the Freudian sense) so deeply corrupted that education can have no effect whatsoever on them. James' tale of horror deals in part with the impossibility of educating children and of repressing their sexual nature but also with the inappropriateness of those in whose hands their education lies. Miles's rigid school, his irresponsible guardian and his inexperienced governess fail to protect the child from another kind of ghostly teacher that can only tutor him in corruption. Up to a point, the governess' dilemma is also that of the patriarch: either the children are evil and she has been duped by their impersonation of innocence or she is herself projecting her obscure fears and desires onto them. Either they are monsters or she is. The undecidability on which the plot is built, that moment of hesitation that according to Todorov (op. cit.: 25)

constitutes the essence of the fantastic, announces the way in which adults and children will collide in many post-Freudian narratives. The mystery of the child's true nature is never really unveiled by the governess and we may alternatively believe that she is rightly terrified by her suspicion that Miles and Flora have been abused or that she is herself abusing the children with the force of her own delusions and paranoia²⁸.

James' is but the first turn of the screw in the process of unearthing the evil, corrupted child. While the taboo transgressed in James's story is the linking of the child with sex, a subject more often discussed now in relation to girls, William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1954) portrays another kind of corruption, that of the male child as a naturally violent prototype of the violent adult man. In Golding's novel the innocent child is left to cope on his own with the horror of the child barbarian—much as the heroine of horror fiction is abandoned to her fate in the hands of the monster—and so the myth of the good savage and the innocent child is reversed in one stroke. Civilization appears to be built on the repressed natural impulses of the child barbarian rather than on the lost Eden of child's fiction; the adults that finally take the survivors of the horror away seem to embody the lie that civilization is telling itself about the true personality of the child. Despite its derogatory portrait of children, *Lord of the Flies* is a very popular text among educators and young readers. This popularity indicates that the premises of Golding's text are, like those of other dystopias, simultaneously accepted and rejected by people who are still optimistic about the civilising effect of education on children. They read the novel from the—perhaps unwarranted—security that such dystopian regression to barbarism is not possible. Golding's novel speaks of an extraordinary accident by which children are isolated from adults and which has no real counterpart in everyday life. His supposition seems to be that successful adult tutelage prevents children (and the adults they later become) from reverting to barbarism in the midst of civilized society, an idea sadly contradicted by the increase of child violence in school, the very site of education and civilization. After *Lord of the Flies* the representation of the child, especially of boys, as perpetrators of violence has been frequent, as I will show later, though the same doubts remain as to whether either the myth of innocence or the newer myth of the child barbarian is a truthful representation of children.

8.1.3. The Little Monsters

8.1.3.1. Monstrous Girls

The monstrous children of recent fiction can be easily divided into two main categories according to their gender. The monstrous girl is a younger version of the misogynistic portrait of woman as a monster of abnormal sexuality while monstrous boys usually appear as budding monsters of patriarchal power engrossed in their passion for violence. The monstrous girl usually surfaces in the process of the little girl's transformation into a woman. This natural process is frequently portrayed as an unnatural, threatening metamorphosis capable of releasing unknown, dangerous forces that the young woman cannot always control. The role of the parents in these cases is to

28. I am aware that this duplicity was detected by Edmund Wilson's Freudian criticism of James' tale and that if he intended it to be there it must have been at a subconscious level.

try to repress the girl, so that her newly-acquired powers may be thwarted before she jeopardises the lives of those around her. In other cases parents are simply the witnesses of the dramatic, enigmatic eruption of the girl's new personality.

Mothers and father do not play exactly the same role in these cases. The relationships between mothers and daughters often involve hatred, while those between fathers and daughters tend to refer, if only indirectly, to an Oedipal, incestuous situation paradoxically much less conflictive. In both cases, though, parents fear the daughter's budding sexuality and her demands for autonomy. Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971), Stephen King's *Carrie* (1974) and the very popular screen adaptations that these novels inspired set the pattern for the portrait of the monstrous, demonised girl halfway between the innocent child-woman and the monstrous woman. Though they have important differences, both texts imply that the figure of the innocent girl can only be transformed into that of the monster by the intervention of an agent of evil, either the Devil himself or a repressive parent. She is thus simultaneously victimized by this evil and empowered by it to display her rage.

The prepubescent body of Regan, the girl possessed by the Devil in *The Exorcist*, expresses what the 'normal' innocent child cannot express: her sexuality, her violent drives and her profound hatred for her mother (Nicholson, 1993). The exorcism of the demon that allegedly possesses her displaces towards a supernatural context the ritual of psychoanalysis, but aims likewise at protecting the figure of the parent by replacing the child's troubled subconscious (presumably disturbed because of childhood experiences that are not disclosed in the narrative) with the Devil's presence. Since Regan is presented as an innocent child who is suffering from a bodily and mental invasion for which she is not held responsible (not even in a subconscious way), a psychoanalyst is no use in her case. Instead, Regan receives the help of a priest, a spiritual father who assumes the role of the absent biological father and who channels back to the Devil the evil power unleashed by her transition towards womanhood. The priest's exorcism of Regan's body and mind cures her of budding teenage urges for sexual and emotional emancipation, taking her back to her mother's protective arms and prolonging thus the ideal state of her innocence. Natural teenage rebellion appears thus as an evil invasion of Regan's body so that not only Regan's innocence but also her divorced mother's are maintained intact after the harrowing experience of the possession.

Regan falls within the category of the evil innocent, which Sabine Büssing describes as a typical literary product of the twentieth century. "One may say", Büssing writes (1987: xvii) "that in these cases the child is both a victim and an aggressor and evokes controversial emotions accordingly". This is the case especially when the victimized child engages in behaviour too violent to be pardoned, as happens in Stephen King's *Carrie*. Unlike Regan, Carrie is not possessed by the Devil, though, despite her innocence, her final destination is Hell and damnation. She can be described as an instance of the child who ends up believing that she is truly the monster her parents, in this case her mother, see. A child born out of wedlock, Carrie is regarded by her fanatical, religious mother as the one blot in her immaculate, moral life; she has identified the girl with the shameful act—in her view—that produced her, and so has forced Carrie to bear the burden of her own shame, giving her daughter a bigoted, repressive education that makes the girl the target of the high school's bullies. When Carrie's overdue menstruation finally marks the beginning of her long-delayed emotional adulthood, she also develops telekinetic powers. This evil innocent becomes then a goddess of destruction, killing the school bullies and also her fanatical but nonetheless beloved mother, seemingly confirming the mother's dread of her child's

true monstrous nature. Unlike Regan, who can be redeemed, Carrie puts herself beyond salvation, even though there are no doubts about her being the innocent victim of an abusive mother. Carrie's killing of her mother may have acted as a wish-fulfilment fantasy for those abused teenagers that read the novel or saw the film, but her final damnation shows that in the 1970s this fantasy was still punishable even when the child aggressor was a victim.

More than twenty years after *Carrie*, there are evident signs of change in the representation of the evil girl. Peter Jackson's film *Heavenly Creatures* (1994) and its slogan "Not all angels are innocent" is an ironic comment on the entanglement of the myth of innocent childhood with the myth of female angelhood²⁹ and also a challenging analysis of the monstrous girl. Jackson's film deals with the real life case of Pauline and Juliette, two teenage schoolgirls who shocked New Zealand in the 1950s when together they killed Pauline's mother, Honora. By keeping the sensationalism of the subject tightly under control, the film offers a sympathetic though by no means condoning portrait of the two girls and the crime they committed. As the film shows them, Pauline and Juliette are not victims of abuse, unless their parents' lack of empathy with them can be called abuse. The girls become aggressors because they regard themselves as the victims of adults who can not and will not understand their very intense friendship, which certainly includes sex but is not tainted with corruption as their parents think. Juliette's middle-class English parents and Pauline's working-class New Zealand parents project their own anxieties about sex, social class differences and education onto the girls and force them to separate, destroying thus a relationship much more fulfilling than their own with their respective daughters. The grief caused by the prospect of their separation leads the girls to kill Pauline's mother, who seemed to them the parent most opposed to their friendship, without further thought about the consequences of their evil act. Honora's death can be said thus to confirm the parents' suspicion that a streak of morbidity runs in the relationship between the girls, yet Pauline and Juliette become monsters because nobody else has really noticed that they exist at all as autonomous persons. The film vividly stresses the responsibility of the two sets of parents and their failure to see the girls as persons in their own right rather than as a fixture of their parents' home lives.

A more problematic portrait of the monstrous girl can be found in James Herbert's novel *The Shrine* (1983), which narrates the events surrounding the possession of an innocent prepubescent child, Alice, by the evil spirit of Elnor, a nun burned at the stake in the sixteenth century. Eleven-year-old Alice was conceived out of wedlock by her deeply religious mother in the very same field where Elnor was executed under the accusation of witchcraft. Seemingly, the tormented soul of this very Gothic nun transmigrates to Alice's embryonic body and surfaces before the girl can become an adolescent woman. Since the first signs of Alice's possession are benign—she recovers from her strange deafness, levitates, heals people, radiates holiness and endlessly draws a female figure perceived as the Virgin Mary—she is regarded as an innocent, even saintly, child whereas, in fact, her innocence is the disguise that the evil Elnor is using to seduce Alice's growing number of followers. Whether the child is naturally evil and has, hence, eased the entrance of Elnor's power in her soul is the most enigmatic point of the novel. Alice herself is always seen from a distance, portrayed as a cipher and not as a real child, so that her transformation into a saint and then into a devil appear to be in

29. Curiously enough, vodka Smirnoff launched an advertising campaign in 1995 in which a young woman was seen holding a bottle of vodka. The slogan read "There are no angels left".

tune with her mysterious nature. It can be said that as happens in *The Exorcist*, the identity of the real child is usurped by that of the entity that possesses her. Unlike Regan, though, Alice is not blessed with a protecting surrogate father. The narrator, the atheist provincial journalist Gerry Fenn, turns his attention towards the child only when it is too late for him to act as a saviour. He is too engrossed by his criticism of the gullibility of the Church and the greed of local tradesmen intent on turning Alice's village into a second Lourdes so as to notice that the life of a child is threatened. Fenn actually sees the Church's treatment of Alice as a living saint as a sign of our vulnerability to deceitful evil, especially when it comes in female form. His derogatory opinion of Alice's 'true' nature is endorsed when the girl breaks before Fenn's eyes a fundamental taboo by killing her own father. Alice murders her father for having abused her trust by trying to sell her story to the tabloids, but also for the sinful act of her conception which allowed Elnor to possess her soul and so to turn her into a monster. As happens in *Carrie*, the sins of the parents are visited upon the monstrous child who is destroyed after exacting from her parents the penalty for having passed such an awful legacy onto them.

The woman possessor and the possessed child are the sites where woman's mythical innocence and abjection meet. Elnor's image as an innocent, chaste nun conceals the promiscuous, powerful healer whose abilities to perform miracles are not granted by the Virgin Mary, as it is generally believed by her followers, but by her own powerful female nature. Alice's own miracles are undone because those who believe in her saintliness actually reinforce Elnor's power to do evil with the strength of their belief. The innocence of the child and of the nun is thus the façade behind which woman's real power lurks. As Herbert's novel implies, woman is as powerful as those who are in awe of her make her, but it is her choice to use or abuse the power she possesses. Alice's body is destroyed by the bullets of a psychopathic young man seeking his own share of power and his fifteen minutes of Warholian glory in becoming the saintly child's killer but Elnor's presence will not be exorcised by a man. Only the appearance of the Virgin Mary—the woman who does not abuse her power and also the mother of the holiest child—can redirect the immense energy drawn by Elnor from the crowds admiring Alice towards a more adequate, less threatening figure than Elnor. Fenn concludes that the power wielded by Elnor is of the same nature as the Virgin Mary's, for both superhuman women draw the sustenance to survive from those who believe in them. Herbert seems to imply, thus, that there is a specifically female type of power but that this is not necessarily in the possession exclusively of evil, monstrous women like Elnor. This power can be in fact used by positive figures such as the Virgin Mary. She obviously incarnates the good side of the Earth goddess while Elnor incarnates the dark side, the side feared by men, that has to be repressed. Her use of Alice is similar to the Devil's use of Regan's in *The Exorcist*: it implies that innocence, far from being free from evil, is the channel evil agents prefer to subvert the belief in absolute good.

Despite the example of *Shrine*, the figure of the monstrous girl gifted with supernatural powers is not always negative—on the contrary, it may actually represent the kind of positive power incarnated in the Virgin Mary or even go beyond it and claim for women the absolute power of the lost goddess Earth erased by patriarchy. Robert McCammon's *Swan Song* (1987) centres on Swan's transition from childhood to adulthood in an America devastated by the patriarchal misuse of nuclear weapons. As bands of monstrous, warring men roam this wasteland, Swan's body grows, accumulating not only beauty but also the power to make the land fertile again. Swan

embodies not only primal female fertility but also a definitely female brand of power to make men see their own moral monstrosity. Swan is granted her legendary power as a leader and as a woman saviour not so much by the magical jewelled crown that she receives as a mark of her kinship with the ancient goddess (or perhaps with the Virgin Mary) but by her innate capacity to forgive abuse. At the age of nine, Swan prevents her mother's brutal boyfriend from further harming her mother and herself simply by declaring that she forgives him. By the time when she is fifteen and already a woman, she is so secure of her power than when she faces the Devil who has caused evil men to destroy the world of her childhood she disarms him again: "So, yes, I do forgive you, because if it wasn't for you, we wouldn't have a second chance" (p. 944).

In *Swan Song* the female child is not represented as a younger version of the demonised woman. She has ceased being 'a problem' while, in contrast, men and the male Devil that tempts them to wage war on all humankind, have become 'the problem'. She is no doubt another version of the woman saviour seeking redemption not for the monstrous men but for her companions in suffering, whom she delivers from the patriarchal Devil and his no less patriarchal followers with the simple, unaggressive use of her serene attitude and her capacity to understand evil. As a wish-fulfilment fantasy, Swan stands at the other end of the spectrum of female monstrosity than Alice and can be said to belong, therefore, to a more humanist view of the world.

Claudia, the little girl of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) is not transformed into an evil monster by a woman like Elnor but by two monstrous fathers. The bite of the vampire Louis, who takes Claudia's life following the suggestion of his companion Lestat, metamorphoses the orphaned five-year-old Claudia into an immortal vampire child. The monstrous child completes the bizarre, subversive family formed by Louis and Lestat who actually adopt her as their daughter at a moment when their relationship is flagging. Yet the two male vampires grossly miscalculate their own power to control Claudia and she becomes in the end the main enemy of their happiness. Usually, monstrous, evil children are characterized by a high intelligence and a complex use of language that denotes either their possession by a supernatural, adult entity or their possessing an extraordinary mind, developed well beyond their biological age; indeed, what horrifies adults is that when the child acts, it does not act as a child at all. In Claudia's case the monstrous child is terrifying because she is an old person bound to a body whose growth has been halted by Louis's fatal bite. This disparity between body and mind results in an unendurable sexual frustration for Claudia, aggravated by her realization that her beloved Louis cannot see her as the woman she really is. Her fantasy of incest with the 'father' (Louis) is never realized not because it breaks a taboo in the vampire world but because her small size makes actual intercourse impossible. In Neil Jordan's screen adaptation (1994) the point is lost with the casting of twelve-year-old Kirsten Dunst as Claudia. Excellent as her performance is, Dunst appears as a vampiric Lolita on the verge of becoming an angry young woman like Regan or Carrie. A younger actress could have been chosen to play the part as there are precedents of very young children playing evil monsters: Harvey Stevens, for instance, was only six when he played Damian in *The Omen*. However, Dunst may have been preferred because casting an actress of Claudia's age may have been too problematic, given the obvious eroticism of the vampire child and the problematic question of child abuse.

David Skal (op. cit.: 346) reports that Anne Rice herself has acknowledged Claudia to be based on her own daughter Michele, who died of leukaemia in 1972, aged six. If the shadow of Poe's child-bride Virginia is behind his many Gothic brides it is conceivable that this little girl may have found a literary afterlife in Claudia, no matter

how disturbing the thought may be. In a sense, Claudia is an evil image of Harriet Beecher Stowe's Little Eva, a character also born from a mother's deep grief for her dead child. It is certainly common for bereaved parents to idealise the dead child; the innocent, pure child born of Stowe's grief can be interpreted as a manifestation of her need to transform her mourning for the child into a positive feeling. However, Rice's conversion of Michele into Claudia—a child who transcends death not by going to heaven like Eva but by becoming an undead vampire—proves that the monstrous child and the angelic innocent are complementary fantasies.

The similarities between Eva and Claudia are enough to suggest that Rice may have born Stowe's work in mind when writing her novel. Both girls are New Orleans natives and die at roughly the same age and in the same historical period. Eva has a very close relationship with her father, which is perpetuated beyond her death by his keeping alive her memory, whereas Claudia fascinates her two fathers, especially Louis. Eva's father cherishes the memory of his daughter because he believes she is an angel; Louis and Lestat love her because she fulfils their expectations as the perfect, evil daughter. In Louis's words, "I knew her to be less human than either of us, less human than either of us might have dreamed. Not the faintest conception bound her to the sympathies of human existence. Perhaps this explained why—despite everything I had done or failed to do—she clung to me. I was not her own kind. Merely the closest to it" (p. 150). Louis fails, however, to be more objective about his own participation and Lestat's in Claudia's victimization and in their appropriation of her body and mind. Claudia's capacity to do evil is, like Carrie's, unleashed when she fully realizes that her parent is also the maker of her monstrosity. Unlike Swan, Claudia cannot forgive and so she pours her pent-up anger on Lestat, ultimately committing the same crime that condemns Alice: killing of the father.

Claudia justifies her killing Lestat and her sparing Louis on the grounds that since Lestat had previously killed the vampire who made him into a monster, she is merely copying the pattern of abuse and revenge that he taught her. For her, Louis is like herself another of Lestat's victims, which is why she can exonerate him from the crime of having abused her by killing her and making her into the monster she is now. In the end, both parents prove undeserving of Claudia's respect, for she is deprived of her second life by Lestat when Louis neglects her rather frivolously for a new lover. This monstrous girl never gains enough power to overcome the consequences of her victimization. She is both the innocent abused by the monstrous—though not patriarchal—fathers and a monstrous woman frustrated by the impossibility of enjoying sex with her beloved father Louis. In the end, the combination of Lestat's hatred and Louis's neglect of her crush her. The Oedipal girl is made monstrous and finally killed by a father who hates her and by a father who cannot love her as she wants to be loved.

Another Oedipal conflict surrounds the seven-year-old girl Charlie in Stephen King's novel *Firestarter* (1980). This budding goddess of destruction is another type of evil innocent, a child "that abuses its superhuman abilities because it does not yet comprehend the consequences of its acts" (Büssing, op. cit.: 106). Charlie's pyrokinetic powers—an ability to light fires simply by thinking—is actually a mutation, the unexpected side effect of a secret experiment with hallucinogenic drugs secretly ran by a government agency, known as The Shop, devoted to researching parapsychological matters. Andy McGee, Charlie's father, and his wife-to-be Victoria, were used as guinea pigs in their student days to test this new wonder drug whose side effects also included their acquisition of mild psychic powers. Unlike Stephen King's other monstrous girl, Carrie, Charlie cannot blame her parents for her monstrous nature: her parents, who

were never informed about the composition of the drug are, like herself, the victims of the abuse perpetrated on them by The Shop. The suave Captain Hollister, the man who runs The Shop, assumes in this story the role of the villainous abuser as the representative of patriarchal technoscience and of the untrustworthy government that backs The Shop. His ambition to use Charlie's increasing powers as the ultimate weapon that will secure the USA's world supremacy makes the family become the target of a dramatic persecution, which soon claims Victoria's life and puts father and daughter on the run.

To chase the freakish Charlie, Captain Hollister sends another monster, agent John Rainbird, a psychotic madman and a genuinely ogreish fairy-tale figure:

Rainbird was a troll, an orc, a balrog of a man. He stood two inches shy of seven feet tall, and he wore his glossy black hair drawn back and tied in a curt ponytail. Ten years before, a Claymore had blown up in his face during his second tour of Vietnam, and now his countenance was a horrorshow of scar tissue and runneled flesh. His left eye was gone. There was nothing where it had been but a ravine. He would not have plastic surgery or an artificial eye because, he said, when he got to the happy hunting ground beyond, he would be asked to show his battlescars. (p. 110)

Rainbird, Charlie and her father Andy form an unusual Oedipal triangle. The two men pull the little girl, who is in constant need of reassurance about the limits of the use of her powers, in two opposite directions as each claims to love and understand her better than the other. In her arduous apprenticeship in self-control, Charlie is tutored by her father, who fears, above all, that the onset of her adolescence might turn her into an uncontrollable, powerful monster. As could be expected from a parent afraid of his or her daughter's inability to control herself, Andy teaches Charlie not to use her powers indiscriminately. Rainbird, who becomes a deceptive surrogate father for Charlie when she and Andy are captured, persuades her to learn to use higher and higher levels of her power for the benefit of The Shop. The paradox of the story is that when Andy is fatally wounded by Rainbird, he is reduced to begging his daughter to disobey the taboo he has so firmly set in her mind. He must then ask her to use all her might to destroy The Shop and Rainbird so as to prevent her own death and to revenge his own at Rainbird's hands.

While the relationship between Andy and Charlie is portrayed as one of mutual love and respect, only spoiled by their persecution, the relationship between Charlie and Rainbird is quite another matter. When Charlie is captured by Rainbird himself, something of which she is not aware until her father finally tells her the truth before dying, Rainbird blackmails Hollister into having unlimited access to Charlie's company, threatening to disclose the Shop's obscure operations to the media. Rainbird explains that he wants to know Charlie "intimately"—at one point he even observes that this intimacy "was something pre-erotic, almost mystic" (p. 338). He is fascinated by her power but also feels that a certain kinship binds him to her since both are seen by Hollister as monsters. Like the Devil who faces Swan in *Swan Song*, Rainbird recognizes in Charlie's budding female beauty a kind of divine power that attracts him fatally. So strong is this attraction that instead of killing her immediately after her capture (for he intends to murder the child to mark his possession of her power) Rainbird befriends her, making her see that both are freaks exploited by the system. Lying to her about the origin of the terrible scars on his face, Rainbird manages to awake pity for him in Charlie, in a process that culminates one stormy night when his pretended fear conducts Charlie to reverse roles and offer him protection, as if they were

Beauty and the Beast. Yet the horror of the little girl who burns people to death pales in comparison to the horror of Rainbird's ugly manipulation of her feelings. The realization that he has betrayed her and her love for Andy is what ultimately leads Charlie to use all her power against her treacherous father Rainbird in the same way that Claudia directs her anger against Lestat. Having defeated the ogre, who dies claiming his love for her, nothing prevents Charlie from destroying The Shop. Her burning of The Shop shows that Charlie has finally outgrown her dangerous childhood tantrums. Far from being an uncontrollable monster as her father feared, Charlie has matured into a peculiar strong heroine. Her revenge is presented as a fair act by which the patriarchal Frankensteins who made her receive their due. Not having Swan's inclination to forgive and not being guilty of having transgressed a taboo like Claudia, Charlie remains free and guiltless at the end, waiting for an adolescence that might turn her indeed into an adult goddess of destruction.

In the texts I have analysed in this section the monstrous girl is represented as a powerful figure capable of using her superhuman abilities either to do good or to do evil. She is halfway between the innocent woman and the villainess, for she is generally turned monstrous by the abuse to which she is subjected by her parents or by monstrous, surrogate parents. The monstrous girl may enter into conflicts with her mother or with her father, but in all cases what is most feared about her is whether her maturation into a woman will involve the maturation of supernatural or unnatural powers in her. Parents fear above all the possibility that she might no longer be controllable, which is why in these texts the emphasis is put on the rituals or pseudo-rituals devised to exorcise or control the girl's power. Only when she uses her power in a positive sense—either to create like Swan or to destroy like Charlie—is her autonomy accepted. In general, the evil power of the monstrous girl is attributed to an evil agent, as if the supposition that a girl might be naturally aggressive were out of question. In contrast, in the cases in which her power is positive, it emanates from herself and not from an external source.

8.1.3.2. Monstrous Boys

Supernatural agents, abusive or negligent parents, exploitative government agencies and even evil corporations have been blamed in fiction for the creation of the child monster. The belief in the innocence of the child—even if it is only relative—is essential for the survival of the very idea of civilization, but it is suffering blows coming from real life, especially as regards young boys' capacity to kill. Britain suffered a deep shock in November 1993 with the infamous case of the murder of James Bulger, a two-year-old boy killed by two boys, Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, then eleven, in a most vicious manner. The harshness of the public reaction against these unfortunate boys and the considerably adamant attitude of the judges, who regarded the boys as criminals rather than as children in need of help³⁰, exposed a profound rift in British

30. The children were initially sentenced to eight years of internment in a reforming institution, to which two extra years were added by the main judicial authority in Britain. In an unprecedented decision, the Home Office decided to use its prerogative to lengthen the term of reclusion dictated by the judges another five years. Venables and Thompson were sentenced, thus, to a total of fifteen years of confinement. In May 1996 the Home Office's imposition of the five extra years was overruled, in the same week when a group of girls, aged between 12 and 13 killed one of their classmates, aged 13. The case of Venables and Thompson is now to be transferred to the European Parliament at Strasbourg on the grounds that there may have

society as far as the understanding of the child from an adult perspective is concerned. In general terms, it can be said that many of those who followed the case believed that the young killers knew what they were doing, especially in this time, the late twentieth century, when children are not cocooned in ignorance as they once were. The general public's reaction was of one of distrust towards the claims of child psychologists and social workers who argued that Bulger's killers were in need of help and not of punishment.

Gitta Sereny, writing about a similar case that took place in 1861, and in which the young killers were soon freed from the reformatories where they were secluded after their crime, attacks the old-fashioned laws of Britain, which turn out to be in the 1990s crueller and less effective than the laws applied in Victorian times. In her view,

At the end of the 20th century, we know that violence in children is mostly caused by violence to children, and we therefore believe in treatment... we do know that if children commit violent crime, it is not only they who must receive treatment, but the environment that damaged them. Anything else is not only pointless but cruel; for it perpetuates both the circumstances which have caused the damage, and the child's uncomprehending feelings of guilt. (1995: 12)

Yet, Sereny's summary of widely accepted views among child psychologists and social workers—and indeed many other people—does not reflect the lack of social consensus as to how to treat a criminal child. Despite the outrage of many child psychologists, the Bulger case and the harsh sentences to which the killers were sentenced brought out the fear of the child's nature. The line running below the obvious popular hatred for the young murderers was the suspicion that monstrous children like these ones are maliciously using to their advantage the leniency and mercy recommended by child psychologists in these cases. Blaming the environment in which the child killers grew up could not satisfy those who demanded an exemplary punishment, possibly because in the end all Western society and not only the families of the children are to blame for atrocities like the one they committed. Much of the hatred these child killers inspired can be explained because the murder touched a deep fibre in the heart of British society: the boys were found guilty of having shattered the myth of childhood innocence by killing an innocent and by proving that reality contradicts the myth—children may kill like adults and still remain children. Indirectly, James Bulger's killers were also condemned as scapegoats by a society that cannot accept that children are a reflection of the adults' world and not another species growing in isolation. No doubt, the public condemnation of the act and the judges' sentences expressed also a value judgement. When put on the scales of justice, society's need to preserve the treasured ideal of the innocent victim represented by James Bulger outweighed society's need to face two facts: first, that children are indeed capable of doing evil and second, that society is at a loss to understand why.

Because no other clear scapegoat could be found, the Bulger case provoked a very negative reaction against films that deal with monstrous children. These allegations were prompted by the rumour that the crime had been committed in imitation of what can be seen in *Child's Play* (1988), notwithstanding the fact that this film, which was

been a breach of human rights in the fact that these children were treated as adults by the British judges. On her part, Denise Bulger, the mother of the child whom Venables and Thompson killed, is campaigning to achieve the imprisonment for life of her child's murderers. In her view, they committed an adult crime and should pay for it as adults.

not actually seen by James Bulger's killers, does not deal with a monstrous child but with an animated, monstrous doll. The video-rental release of another film, Joseph Reuben's film *The Good Son* (1993), was delayed for a year by the BBFC, due to alleged similarities in the plot with the Bulger murder (Lees: 1994b). *The Good Son* does not include however any scene that might recall the Bulger case, though its protagonist is a child who has killed a baby brother—in a scene not seen in the film. Yet, other monstrous children, such as the child gangster of *Robocop 2* (1990) (who is seen to deal in drugs, collaborate in torture and kill) have eluded censorship even though they appear in films that are very popular with young audiences. This leads to the conclusion that the BBFC acts mainly on cue at moments of social tension, banning or delaying the release of certain films that deal with evil children. The BBFC's activities can thus be said to be token gestures that satisfy society's thirst for a sign that 'something' is being done to prevent evil but that actually pre-empts the deeper examination of the reasons why some children may kill.

Ironically, the BBFC missed the point that *The Good Son* approaches the figure of the male child killer from a conservative, moralistic perspective. The film implies in fact that young Henry's crimes do not pay and he is punished for them in a horrific way that cannot fail to impress a child. Written by British novelist Ian McEwan, *The Good Son* presents evil in a way that is characteristic of McEwan's fictional world: evil is enigmatic and inexplicable but chillingly rational. However, the premises that may work for other characters in McEwan's novels—such as the figure of the villainous Robert in *The Comfort of Strangers*—seem rather strained in the case of Henry. This nine-year-old, middle-class boy is respected and loved by his parents who are unaware that he drowned a baby brother and has made an attempt on his sister's life. Only a neutral observer, Henry's cousin Mark, a motherless boy of the same age, can persuade Henry's mother that Henry is evil. What ultimately mars the film is not the credibility of Henry's personality, though this duplicitous and cold-blooded child is very different from the feckless, impulsive child killers of real life. The most dubious points of the film are first, the father's flat denial of his responsibility in Henry's crimes, which shifts the burden of the crimes on the mother's shoulders for no apparent reason and second, its rather far-fetched resolution.

In the final scene Henry's mother is seen holding each child with one hand over the edge of a cliff after having warded off Henry's murderous attack on herself. A few harrowing moments of hesitation, spent on trying to decide who to save before her strength is exhausted, end when she lets Henry go. With this act she replaces her evil son with a civilized, good son, Mark, who finds in her a new mother. Yet McEwan seems to disregard the evidence indicating that with hardly any exception mothers will support their children even when these turn out to be moral monsters. Asking a parent to keep an impartial sense of justice in a scene like that forces the plot into the dead end of incredibility. Unless, of course, the end suggests that the only way in which the mother can exculpate herself from the allegation of having created a monster is by killing her own son and choosing the 'right' boy. This reading seems confirmed by the very last shot, which shows the mother and her new son together, sharing the secret of Henry's death without any indication that Henry's father has questioned the new situation or suspected his wife of killing their boy. One wonders what the intention of Reuben's Manichaeic film is, especially in view of the casting of the very popular child actor Macaulay Culkin as the vicious Henry. Reuben's film cannot be read as a fable to terrify 'bad' children with the threat of suffering Henry's awful death because it is not a film for children. For many reviewers Culkin's performance as Henry evidenced an

obvious case of miscasting, though the film seems to be something other than a mistake in Caulkin's now flagging career. Why would an adult viewer familiar with Caulkin's performances in *Home Alone* and other films choose to see a film in which he plays a villain if not to sadistically enjoy the fantasy of replacing him with the prettier, more subdued Elijah Wood, who plays Mark? And why indeed did Caulkin's father and manager accept the role of Henry on behalf of his son if not to pander to those fantasies?

I have dealt with Frank Cauldham, the hero of Iain Banks' novel *The Wasp Factory* (1984), in chapter 7 from the point of view of how his, or rather her, gender conditions his behaviour. However, Frank also belongs in this chapter for he is a child killer in the double sense of being a killer of children and of having committed his crimes in his childhood. The deaths of Frank's cousins Blyth and Esmeralda and of his youngest brother Paul, are indeed memories of a childhood already gone. As narrated by the teenage Frank with his own farcical, irreverent voice these deaths appear to be just a few mischievous pranks orchestrated by a very naughty little boy going through a peculiar phase of his mental growth. Blyth, aged five, dies when a poisonous adder planted by Frank—then six—in the boy's wooden leg bites him; Frank's brother, Paul, also aged five, lets himself be persuaded by eight-year-old Frank to hit on the nose a 500 kg. German World War II bomb stranded on the Scottish island where they live; Esmeralda, aged four, is tied to a giant kite by nine-year-old Frank and carried away by the wind and into the sea. While revenge is Frank's motivation for killing the two boys—especially in Paul's case, as the boy was born at the very same time the family dog was allegedly castrating Frank, or so he has been told—the girl is killed “because I felt I owed it to myself and to the world in general. I had, after all, accounted for two male children and thus done womankind something of a statistical favour” (p. 87). Yet the fact is that the teenage Frank bears no grudge against children; on the contrary, he likes them better than adults: “Children aren't real people, in the sense that they are not small males and females but a separate species which will (probably) grow into one or the other in the due time. Younger children, in particular, before the insidious and evil influence of society and their parents have properly got to them, are sexlessly open and hence perfectly likeable” (p. 87).

Killing, however, proves to Frank that he is gifted with the power to control those around him and to secure for himself a greater share of the love his brother Eric and his father Angus already bestow on him. The most disturbing aspect of Frank's behaviour is that he feigns a deep bereavement and even blames himself for the ‘accidents’ to conceal his guilt. So good is his performance (and so young is the child) that nobody ever suspects him at all of having committed the crimes. On the contrary, he enjoys even more the love of his worried brother Eric and of his father, distressed as they are by the thought that another odd death might take away the youngest member of the family. Under cover of the innocence attributed to all children, this particular child enjoys the power of depriving others of life and gains through it a hold on the hearts of the other members of his family. As he says, “I am convinced that only my genuinely clear conscience let me convince the adults around me that I was totally innocent” (p. 88).

Not all the monstrous children of recent fiction enjoy Frank's genuinely clear conscience. The lucid Andrew Wiggin, another child killer and the hero of Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* (1985), undergoes a great deal of agonizing mental torture that is spared to Frank by his undoubtedly disturbed personality. Andrew, nicknamed Ender, is selected at the age of six to become the military leader that will save the world in a near future from the threat of the hostile alien species that has attacked Earth already twice.

Ender is the youngest in a trio of extraordinary siblings, consisting also of the intellectual, caring Valentine and the bully Peter, who is in the habit of victimizing his brother and sister. These three extremely intelligent children represent the confrontation between two forms of masculinity: Ender's, which will not acknowledge his dark side but will be forced to use it, and Peter's, who will progress in the course of the novel from sheer physical brutality to a pacifistic use of political power. Between both boys stands Valentine, who helps both overcome their destructive drives and who is presented as a stable, well-developed person. There may be a hint of misogyny in the idea that Valentine's function is to nurture the bruised egos of her brothers, but since, unlike them, she represents common sense and sensitivity and since she is later given the important task of keeping alive the memory of the war that ended all wars, it cannot be said that Card portrays her in negative terms, especially in comparison with her monstrous brothers.

Ender's Game narrates a paradox: Ender, the innocent child exploited by abusive adults, is turned into a monster despite his resistance to doing evil and only the aliens he kills can really save his soul. Peter, the violent, monstrous child who subverts the adults' rule over children, learns to use his initially evil personality to build up lasting world peace. While Ender is separated from his family and manipulated by the sinister Colonel Graff to become the allegedly hostile aliens' exterminator, Peter takes advantage of the anonymity that the NETS—a system of communication similar to Internet—grant him to cleverly pass himself off as an adult and affect public opinion about the oncoming war with the aliens. Ender and Peter's parents play no significant role in their story; their true father figure is Graff, a Frankenstein of the soul who rejects Peter on the grounds that he is too violent to be manipulated and who then tears the more pliant Ender's soul to pieces in order to remake him to his taste. The training Ender is given is based on provocation and seeks to elicit from him a very violent response that Graff may use to his advantage when the moment of crisis comes. However, instead of responding with total nonchalance to his own crimes as Frank does in *The Wasp Factory*, Ender struggles against being a killer and a monster, to the point that the battle against his dark side occupies more of his mind than oncoming battle with the aliens.

Ender's Battle School stands for any model of repressive education that requires the young boy to submit his individual will and moral conscience to the will of his educator. In school, Ender puts into practice what Peter taught him with his ceaseless bullying: how to conceal what he really feels. He is humiliated, isolated, starved of affection and trained to kill, while the grown-ups who control him discuss how far they can go before he breaks down. In contrast, the aliens' patient, secret infiltration of Ender's mind through the video-game that symbolically simulates his life, trains him to appreciate the value of life and peace. The sinister, competitive games of simulated destruction that Ender is forced to play in the school are mirrored by this game of simulated construction that invites Ender with its fairy-tale landscapes to return to his real self and to enjoy his real childhood. However, Ender is so utterly trapped by his need to please his superiors that he cannot see how his own behaviour is no longer that of a normal child. Thus, despite the warnings of another embittered child who points out how the real enemies are the teachers with their doctrine of hatred and revenge and not the aliens, Ender still persists in his belief that adults are always right even when they abuse him, an emotional pattern common among abused children.

After two years of military training, when Ender is only eight and while ten-year-old Peter is already working with Valentine for peace, the Battle School computer infiltrated by the aliens makes Ender play a nightmarish video-game in which he

symbolically kills Peter. Believing that the game marks the triumph of his dark side, Ender gives in to a most pessimistic mood about his own chances of controlling his potential to kill. This moment of weakness is used by Graff to trick Ender into playing a last game, the simulation of a battle—so he is told—during which Ender actually wipes out the entire alien civilization, to his utter dismay. Horrified by what he has done and rejected as a monster by all the inhabitants of Earth he has saved, by then pacifists converted to Peter and Valentine's creed, Ender becomes a homeless wanderer, while the Earth's colonisation of other planets begins, once the alien threat has been averted. The morally monstrous, fallen military child hero is ironically rescued from despair by the very species he has destroyed; when he visits their home planet on his pilgrimage, seeking atonement for his sin, he recognizes the fairy-tale landscape of the video-game, finds the last dormant alien queen and sets out to find a new home for them. The aliens, who are all female, seek a natural ally in Valentine. Their history is transmitted through her to Ender, who is pardoned for his monstrosity on condition that he becomes a speaker for the dead, that is to say, that who tells the truth about a person when s/he dies in a new, secular cult that expands with the colonies.

Card's monstrous children—so intelligent, so unchildlike—have indeed little to do with actual children: they are wish-fulfilment figures that enact the fantasies of rebellion against authority nursed by all school children and those who grow up with vivid, unpleasant memories of school. What Card does through the extraordinary Ender, Valentine and Peter is to suggest that a world run by monstrous adults has its last hope in children. Only respect and attention for what the children have to say, which we cannot afford to ignore, can result in a better world for all. Ender and Peter are examples of how the child capable of doing evil can be re-educated, though obviously the fact that the extraordinary alien race and Peter's sudden craving for power to do good account for their transformation makes it very difficult to link the premises of Card's novel with the problems of the real life child. In any case, this is one of the few texts to develop the romantic idea that children could rule the world with better common sense than adults and, thus, to deny the paedophobic content of fantasies such as Stephen King's *Children of Corn*, in which a community of evil children terrorise the adults that come across them. Ender's prodigious siblings benefit from the possibilities that technology grants them in order to impose their views: since nobody ever thinks that the new gurus of the NETS are children, they feel free to let their voice be heard without the constraints that adults impose on them. The attractive picture of a community of children freely communicating among themselves and with adults on the Internet can be glimpsed in Card's description of the NETS. No matter how fantastic it may seem, it is at least an important exception to the paedophobic representation of children in many texts for adults.

So far I have dealt with instances of the male child killer appearing in texts in which the main conflict surfaces when the child reaches a certain age. I should like to turn now to Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* (1988), a novel in which the parents and their monstrous male child enter into a conflict even before the monstrous child is born. The tempestuous relationship between the parents and the monstrous boy in Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child* is exceptional because it illustrates a question hardly ever discussed, namely, the pregnant mother's fear of her own child. Anne Mellor (op. cit.: 41) attributes to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* the articulation of the mother's fears of the unborn child for the first time in fiction:

The experience of pregnancy is one that male writers have by necessity avoided; and before Mary Shelley, female writers had considered the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth as improper, even taboo, subjects to be discussed before a male or mixed audience. Mary Shelley's focus on the birth-process illuminates for a male readership hitherto unpublished female anxieties, fears, and concerns about the birth-process and its consequences. At the same time, her story reassures a female audience that such fears are shared by other women.

However, the fact is that *Frankenstein* reinforces the taboo by displacing natural pregnancy towards an artificial method of creation that is controlled by a man and is thus very different from that experienced by women.

The Gothic theme of the appropriation of the natural process of pregnancy by an external, evil agent flourished in the 1960s following the commercialisation of the birth-control pill in 1960 and the crisis of the Thalidomide children in 1962. According to David Skal (op. cit.: 294):

In the post-Pill age, "normal" childbirth ceased to exist, at least in our collective dream-life. Reproduction crossed over into the realm of Gothic science fiction. Women would become pregnant by demons or computers, tinkered with by genetic engineers. Pregnancy was an act of war, a violent invasion by the enemy. These fearful images were rarely part of the debate over reproduction technology and abortion rights, but they provided a persistent subtext worth examination.

The fear caused by the unpredictability of the nature of the child became the core of horror narratives such as Ira Levin's *Rosemary Baby* (1967), filmed for the screen by Roman Polanski a year later, and John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957) adapted as *Village of the Damned* (1960), a film that has been the inspiration for a recent remake by John Carpenter. While Levin and Wyndham deal with mysterious pregnancies caused by a non-human agent—the Devil and an alien race, respectively—the first horror film to take the monstrous baby as the main focal point is Larry Cohen's *It's Alive*. Released in 1974, the same year as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and only a year after *The Exorcist*, this film eschews altogether the question of what made the baby monstrous, preferring to reduce the idea of the monster child to absurdity. Thus, Cohen's own screenplay focuses on a newborn baby's murder rampage in Los Angeles, while his direction gives an with an obvious tongue-in-cheek treatment to the bizarre plot. Cohen's hideous progeny was followed on the screen by the monstrous babies of David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1977) and David Cronenberg's *The Brood* (1978). Lynch's almost unwatchable nightmare involves a couple who give birth to something which appears to be a fetal calf; the episodes concerning the baffled parents' attempt at taking care of the baby are a grim travesty of the difficulties any young couple could face with the arrival of a baby. In *The Brood* Nola Carveth's pent-up rage causes foetal sacks to sprout out of her body; the sacks contain monstrous babies who start killing as soon as they are born. The misogynistic discourse is clear in both Lynch's and Cronenberg's texts, though their fantasies obviously indicate not how terrifying the process of birth is but how terrified men are in the face of it. In contrast to its predecessors, Lessing's novel addresses the fears of a young pregnant mother, Harriet, and follows them to the last consequences when they turn out to be, in Harriet's view, well-founded.

The other central motif in *The Fifth Child* is what Leslie Fiedler calls the myth of devolution, that is to say, the fear that through miscegenation or a freak step backwards in the evolutionary scale "our children or our children's children may create in the

future the subhuman we cannot find in the past” (1993: 241). The subhuman missing link is embodied in the monstrous child born to Harriet and David, a middle-class couple who, against the advice of family and friends, persist in their ideal of having as many children as possible. Actually, the third main idea built into the text is the discussion of where the balance lies between responsible and selfish parenthood. As Harriet and David see it, the fashion implanted in the 1960s for smaller families denotes pure selfishness: they’d much rather feel free to form a large family. But, as Harriet’s mother reminds them, whereas the aristocracy can afford to have as many children as they wish, and the poor must produce large numbers of children in the expectation that half of them will die, “people like us, in the middle, we have to be careful about the children we have so we can look after them” (p. 23). Harriet and David’s fifth child, Ben, is the one too many in their family, ostensibly their punishment for their own biological greediness and selfishness.

Harriet’s fifth pregnancy is physically painful and emotionally distressing. She soon starts thinking of the kicking foetus as the “enemy” and having fantasies of its being a composite monster. When the pregnancy has entered its eighth month she demands that the baby is taken out and fantasises about carving it out of her body herself with a big kitchen knife. When the baby is finally born, her worst fears are not confirmed, though she clearly has reasons not to be pleased with the baby or herself: “He was not a pretty baby. He did not look like a baby at all ... And her heart contracted with pity for him: poor little beast, his mother disliking him so much ... But she heard herself say nervously, though she tried to laugh, ‘He’s like a troll, or a goblin, or something’” (p. 60). The baby awakens in its parents a mixture of fascination and repulsion: he is, after all, extraordinary not only in looks but also in behaviour, with his strong compulsion to strive constantly for independence. However, the bond between parents and child fails to develop and, ironically, this has the effect of putting the couple off conceiving another child, for fear of a second Ben.

Time does not improve matters and while Harriet’s feelings of alienation grow—she thinks she is blamed for the child–siblings and relatives clash so badly with the violent, wilful boy that his seclusion in a special institution for severely handicapped children is agreed upon. As his youngest brother concludes, Ben is sent away “because he isn’t really one of us” (p. 93). Yet, turning a deaf ear to her family’s pleas and moved by a maternal feeling she cannot herself comprehend, Harriet rescues the boy from an appalling, rather Gothic institution where he was certain to have died. Nevertheless, from this point onwards the novel subtly shifts from discussing whether Ben is human at all to discussing whether he is ‘one of us’ in rather ambiguous terms. When the child grows up and the family disperses rather than endure his presence, Harriet sees that he is happiest in the company of a group of young unemployed people. Later, in school, where he does well, for he is, after all, freakish but not unintelligent, Ben forms his own criminal gang. It is at this point that mother and grandmother discuss Ben’s already adolescent nature and their fear of his sexual urges:

After that weekend Dorothy said to Harriet, ‘I wonder if Ben ever asks himself why he is so different from us.’

‘How do we know? I’ve never known what he’s thinking.’

‘Perhaps he thinks there’s more of his kind somewhere.’

‘Perhaps he does.’

‘Provided it’s not a female of the species!’

‘Ben makes you think—all those different people who lived on the earth once—they must be in us somewhere.’

‘All ready to pop up! But perhaps we simply don’t notice them when they do,’ said Dorothy.

‘Because we don’t want to.’ (p. 136)

The people Harriet and Dorothy do not want to notice are not exactly the goblins of the magical past that Harriet identifies with Ben at the moment of his birth, nor the Neanderthal caveman of the myth of devolution. For these two middle-class women, the invisible people are the criminals, a group they clearly identify with those outside their own class. When Ben’s gang achieves a sad notoriety because of its criminal exploits, Harriet never questions herself as to her responsibility as Ben’s mother. Her emotional alienation from her own son reflects the anxieties of the middle class in the face of criminality allegedly caused by ‘other’ people. For Harriet, Ben belongs to an alien tribe of barbaric criminals that has survived amongst ordinary humanity, that is to say, amongst people like her. “Did his people rape the females of humanity’s forebears”, she wonders, “thus making new races, which had flourished and departed, but perhaps left their seeds in the human matrix, here and there, to appear again, as Ben had?” (p. 156).

Harriet concludes that her decision to save Ben from dying in the sinister institution where he was confined was a mistake. Thus, when he becomes an adult and leaves his parents’ house, they are secretly relieved; the move to a new house without memories of him marks their desire to forget him, a hope mingled with the fear that Ben might eventually find his ‘own people’—abroad—and so reinforce his monstrous power to do evil. All in all, the implications of Lessing’s novel are certainly questionable. It is unclear whether the reader is meant to sympathize with Harriet and David’s ordeal or with Ben’s. The novel initially seems to condemn middle-class hypocrisy and selfishness but by the end of the book the punishment inflicted on Harriet and David through Ben seems disproportionate to the fault they have committed, their having brought a child too many into the world. Even more worrying is the association of Ben’s barbaric primitivism with his working-class companions and later with his gang. The novel professedly implies that evil may be born in middle-class homes but Lessing’s characterization of Ben as an alien intruder seems to point in the opposite direction, suggesting that only freak accidents allow evil to invade middle-class families. Lessing’s ambivalence in the face of evil is, additionally, reinforced by her depriving Ben of a personal point of view through which the reader could have access to his personality and by the lack of a scene of confrontation between the parents and their monstrous child which would express their conflict in less dubious terms.

Henry, Frank, Ender and Ben, the monstrous boys whose stories I have analysed in this section, are defined as monsters by their capacity to kill. In the case of the monstrous girl, the focal point of the plot is usually the fear that the girl’s transformation into a woman may unleash unknown forces of destruction, which are clearly a metaphor for the young woman’s sexual awakening. In the case of the monstrous boy, the rites of passage into adulthood are not so significant; in fact, in the cases of Frank and Ender, the monstrous child is transformed into a more tolerable adult. Consequently, it can be concluded that the figure of the monstrous boy differs from that of the monstrous girl mainly because the boy shows an innate capacity to do evil, whereas the girl’s potential to do evil is the result of manipulation or transformation. She is comparatively less monstrous than the boy.

8.1.3.3. Ghostly, Gothic Little Monsters

In this section I consider texts dealing with supernatural monstrous children whose behaviour cannot be judged by the moral standards set for average children. In three of these texts—Thomas Disch’s *The Businessman*, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Joel Schumacher’s *Flatliners*—the supernatural child motivated by a desire for revenge haunts the person who caused its death. In the other two texts—the films *The Addams Family* and *Addams Family’s Values*—the monstrous children are not horrific figures but characters of comedy that subvert the conventional image of the child.

Thomas Disch’s *The Businessman* (1984) shares with *It’s Alive* the premise that the monstrous baby’s rage is caused by the father’s forcing the mother to abort. In Cohen’s film the baby is not finally aborted, though anger transforms the embryo into a vicious baby murderer. In Disch’s novel the anger of the aborted embryo—aggravated because its mother is a Catholic—prompts him to return to life as a ghostly, supernatural baby bent on avenging himself for his untimely death. Bob Glandier, the eponymous businessman, is a brutal man who has raped and murdered his wife Giselle some time after the episode of the abortion. Giselle endures a stay in purgatory which includes haunting her husband as a ghost. Her life as a spirit is, however, not less violent than her life as a woman, and when Bob mistakes her ghost for one of his sexual fantasies, he rapes her a second time, making her pregnant. The child born of the supernatural mother’s sense of guilt and her mortal husband’s criminal derangement is the fiendish baby who claims to be the ghost of Giselle’s murdered embryo.

Despite what the summary of the plot indicates, it would be wrong to interpret *The Businessman* as an anti-abortionist tract. Disch’s novel is a grotesque, singular fantasy that pokes fun at issues such as death, crime and religious belief with an eccentric sense of humour only enjoyable if the reader is already familiarised with the black comedy of horror fiction, especially of films. The point of the novel is not even to discuss whether Giselle was right in agreeing to have the abortion, for she eventually acknowledges that her fear that she was carrying not a baby but a non-human monster of evil in her womb determined her decision. Like many horror films, Disch’s novel is a tour de force aimed at sustaining the reader’s willing suspension of disbelief with a preposterous narrative full of gruesome scenes. The episode of the baby’s birth, for instance, which shows him tearing his way out of Giselle’s womb—who is, fortunately, insensitive to pain because she is dead—to start killing immediately, is, in terms of visual strategies, very similar to the gory scenes of contemporary horror films.

The nameless baby himself is one of the most bizarre monsters—if not *the* most bizarre one—I have come across in my survey of 1980s and 1990s fiction, though he is, at the same time, a compound of characteristics typical of the monsters of these two decades. Like most monstrous children, although he appears to be nothing but an innocent, harmless infant, the linguistic register he uses is that of a callous, street-smart grown-up. Not even his foul-mouthed father can help being appalled by speeches like this:

“See what I mean? You can’t even speak the dreaded word. Not to worry. I didn’t come over here to seduce you, Pops. To be perfectly frank, sex is not one of my vital interests. Violence is another matter. I love violence. Really, I’m not that different from any eleven-year-old these days. Just a little more open and straightforward”. (p. 258)

Unlike other monstrous children but like many of the postmodernist monsters I have examined, the baby is a body snatcher who possesses human, animals and even inanimate objects throughout his sadistic victimization of his father. At one point, the child describes himself to his harassed father as a supernatural projection of Bob's distorted personality—a mirror image held up to him to show how monstrous Bob is—rather than a devil, a statement in which certainly the shadow of Frankenstein's monster can be perceived. In fact, the baby's declared aim is forcing Glandier to confess to the murder of his wife Giselle, so that the baby can be said to be in fact his mother's champion. In that sense, the nameless baby is one of the series of monstrous infants whose fantastic behaviour is aimed at exposing who the real monster is, usually a man representing patriarchy in different degrees.

The tone of *Beloved* (1987) and *Flatliners* (1990) is completely different from that of *The Businessman*. Toni Morrison's novel and Joel Schumacher's film combine a certain measure of Gothic horror inspired by the monstrous child with a serious reflection on the protagonists' part about their share of guilt in the making of the child monster. In both cases, the roguish humour of Disch's black comedy is simply absent. In Morrison's novel the ghost of Beloved, the dead two-year-old daughter of Sethe, a black woman who ran away from the Southern American plantation where she and her family were held as slaves, has been haunting Sethe's house for years. When Sethe's new boyfriend expels the ghost from Sethe's home, Beloved returns as a beautiful teenager to tantalise her mother with deceitful promises of forgiveness and love. Sethe herself had killed Beloved when, despite having reached her mother-in-law's home in a free state, her master threatened to snatch her children away from her. Preferring her children to be dead rather than slaves, Sethe determines to kill the four of them but she is stopped before she can complete the massacre. Although Sethe believes that Beloved has returned to comfort her and forgive her, the girl's purpose is actually to punish the mother. Sethe is so anguished by the possibility of losing her daughter again that she lets herself be persuaded of Beloved's goodness even when the girl tricks her into attempting to kill the white, elderly man who once saved her and her family.

When the demonic nature of the girl is publicly exposed and she disappears for ever, Sethe is cured of her longing for her lost baby and of her sense of guilt, resuming her life with normality. The enigmatic Beloved is evil but she is also a healer imparting the extreme shock therapy that purges her mother of the guilt endured for years. Yet, the moral of Morrison's novel is strangely ambivalent. The patriarchal, white slave master who persecutes Sethe and her family can be regarded as Beloved's real murderer but the ghost aims her anger at Sethe, who can be said to have killed Beloved out of love. Clearly, the punishment inflicted on Sethe is disproportionate to her crime. Beloved's seduction of her mother's boyfriend and her insidious way of winning her younger sister's love together with her manipulation of Sethe's feeling characterize Beloved as a demonic young woman, but her evil nature is discordant with the implied message that she and her mother are in fact victims of white patriarchy. Thus, Beloved's malevolent attempt at taking Sethe with her to the realm of death where she comes from seems gratuitous, even incoherent, with the novel's denunciation of the horrors endured by Sethe as a slave. The brutal slave master who abused Sethe and indirectly endangered the lives of her children seems indeed a more appropriate target of Beloved's hatred.

In Joel Schumacher's film *Flatliners*, Nelson, one of the group of medicine students who have discovered how to experience death and return to life, encounters in one of his brushes with death a monstrous child. This child, seen throughout the film chasing Nelson, axe in hand, intent on murdering him, turns out to be the angry ghost of

a child whom Nelson and his school gang used to bully ruthlessly. The bullying eventually went too far and caused the death of the child, who has now returned to put Nelson in the position of the terrorized victim and to force him to confess his sins. In his last immersion into death Nelson submits to the child's will rather than risk his life. His confession prompts a cathartic moment that transforms the threatening child into a smiling, satisfied, peaceful little boy, ready to forgive Nelson and him return to life for good. Three different solutions are, therefore, proposed in these narratives dealing with the return of the monstrous child seeking an acknowledgement of guilt. In *The Businessman* Glandier is destroyed by the evil child because he only accepts his guilt under duress; in *Beloved* Sethe is neither fully punished nor fully forgiven by her monstrous daughter but she is in any case cured of her dependence on the memory of Beloved; in *Flatliners*, Nelson is forgiven because he does repent and accept his guilt. In the three cases, the child is clearly a reflection of the adult, born of fear and guilt. The innocence of the child is thus replaced by evil because the child has in a sense absorbed the evil distilled by the person who has victimized him or her.

After so much horror, it is best to conclude this section with a humorous image, that of the three children of the Addams family, Wednesday, Pugsley and baby Pubert, appearing in *The Addams Family* (1991) and its sequel, *Addams Family Values* (1993)³¹. These little monsters who play strange games are children who never smile and who expose the abnormality of adults as much as of other children. The characters of the children, which are just lightly sketched in the first film, are given more protagonism in the sequel beginning with a murderous bout of sibling rivalry in which Wednesday and Pugsley try repeatedly to kill baby Pubert, in the belief that the arrival of a new baby in the family means that the elder children have to be sacrificed. The hilarious episode of the summer camp where Wednesday and Pugsley are sent is used to expose the hypocrisy surrounding childhood. In this all-American camp all the children who do not fit within the stereotype of the 'wasp' child are discriminated against as monsters. It is for Wednesday to lead a revolt against the complacency of the hypocrites who make childhood the site where a very conservative model of intolerance that dictates which child is a monster and which one is normal is implanted.

8.2. Childhood Fears: Children and Monsters

8.2.1. Protecting the Child from the Monster

Before turning to the fictional confrontation of the child and the monster in recent films and novels for adults, I should like to review very briefly the uses to which the monster has been put in fairy tales and the controversy about whether fiction for children should also contain a measure of horror. This controversy has developed parallel to the controversy surrounding the need for censorship in horror fiction designed with adults in mind and is based on the same tenet, namely, that the only way of protecting immature readers or viewers is not only by denying them access to problematic material but also by censoring this material for all readers and viewers. However, since there are no clear criteria about what is really harmful for children, it is

31. The two films are based on cartoon characters created by Charles Addams in the 1930s for *The New Yorker*; they were the object of a very popular TV series than ran from 1964 to 1966 in direct competition with another series focusing on a monstrous family, *The Munsters*.

frequently the case that problematic films or books reach young viewers or readers without any sign of protest from adults. On the other hand, while narrative media such as films and comics attract a great deal of attention from defenders of censorship, virtually nothing is said about the convenience of censoring literature or, at least, of classifying it according to ages in the same way that films are classified so as to prevent young readers from having access to unsuitable literary texts.

There are different opinions on the role of fairy tales in childhood. Thus, for J.R.R. Tolkien (1983b: 131) fairy tales and children have been associated due to an “accident of our domestic history” since, unlike what is usually believed, children “neither like fairy-stories more, nor understand them better than adults do”. In contrast, Bruno Bettelheim has argued in his influential book *The Uses of Enchantment* that fairy tales are essential for the psychological development of the child. “Fairy tales”, Bettelheim writes, “leave to the child’s fantasizing whether and how to apply to himself what the story reveals about life and human nature” (op. cit.: 45). The use of fairy tales, Bettelheim argues, is to let the child sort out the contradictory tendencies found in chaotic disarray in his or her psyche by identifying each feeling—fear, jealousy, destructive wishes and so on—with a fairy-tale figure. Thus, the Oedipal boy may identify with the boy confronting a monster in a fairy tale, and see himself as his mother’s saviour (the damsel in captivity) and his father as the evil dragon that wants to keep the damsel to himself and that the boy’s surrogate in the tale finally slays. Bettelheim’s psychoanalytical view of fairy tales implies that adults have unwittingly (unconsciously) designed a genre that suits perfectly the emotional needs of the young listeners or readers, who understand the tales better than the adults themselves.

Bettelheim disregards the cautionary use of the horrific elements of fairy tales. Yet in Richard Buxton’s opinion the monsters of Greek folk tales—possibly of myth—responded to the adults’ need “to control unruly children by conjuring up an image of what might happen if they continued to misbehave” (op. cit.: 18). Marina Warner (1994b: 43) has recently suggested that “the practice of storytelling was adapted to curb the tales children themselves might tell”. The suspicion that far from being fit tools to encourage the child’s psychological development many fairy tales are in fact part of the poisonous pedagogy and abusive education traditionally inflicted on children has led many educated parents to reject them and to reject, by extension, any form of fantasy containing horrific elements.

This rejection is, according to Bettelheim, a serious mistake. On the one hand, trying to minimise the impact of the disturbing elements of fairy tales by making the child aware of the psychological connotations attached to each figure deprives the child of a “much-needed outlet” for the sorting out of these contradictory tendencies Bettelheim had previously referred to:

Those who outlawed traditional folk fairy tales decided that if there were monsters in a story told to children, these must all be friendly—but they missed the monster a child knows best and is most concerned with: the monster he feels or fears himself to be, and which also sometimes persecutes him. By keeping this monster within the child unspoken of, hidden in his unconscious, adults prevent the child from spinning fantasies around it in the image of the fairy tales he knows. Without such fantasies, the child fails to get to know his monster better, nor is he given suggestions as to how he may gain mastery over it. (op. cit.: 121)

For him, paradoxically, without fairy tales the child runs the risk of becoming the monster the parents fear it might become due precisely to an excessive exposure to the

violence of the fairy tales or of any other fantasy story for children. The tales, therefore, are not only good to process anxieties regarding the child's appreciation of its own monstrous tendencies but also a safeguard—a safety valve, perhaps—for the anxious parents who want the child, above all, to develop into a normal adult. Because of the endurance of the myth of the innocent child, parents still resist the idea that the child also has destructive wishes that must be faced and dispelled. This, Bettelheim argues, is not to be done by pretending children just do not entertain such thoughts:

Parents who wish to deny that their child has murderous wishes and wants to tear things and even people into pieces believe that their child must be prevented from engaging in such thoughts (as if this were possible). By denying access to stories which implicitly tell the child that others have the same fantasies, he is left to feel that he is the only one who imagines such things. This makes his fantasies really scary. On the other hand, learning that others have the same or similar fantasies makes us feel that we are a part of humanity, and allay our fear that having such destructive ideas has put us beyond the common pale. (ibid.: 122)

He expresses, in addition, his perplexity about why since the 1960s well-educated parents have tabooed fairy tales for their children on the grounds that they could affect them negatively at the time when psychoanalysis “made them aware that, far from being innocent, the mind of the young child is filled with anxious, angry, destructive imaginings” (ibid.: 122). As I see it, the outlawing of fairy tales by educated parents is an unconscious reaction partly against the reality uncovered by psychoanalysis but also against the reality that Freud refused to reveal, namely, that abusive parents were the real monsters in children's lives. Fairy tales often suggest that this is indeed the case or put the child in a position in which it is ‘rightly’ terrorized by an adult or a non-human monster because it has transgressed a norm set up by adults. It might well be that the horror of fairy tales helps the child cope with the tensions between what it sees and what adults say there is and not necessarily with its emotional growth in Oedipal terms, as Bettelheim argues.

Contemporary literary fiction for children tries to follow a less violent model than fairy tales—though this is obviously not the case in the TV series (cartoons or live action) that children favour most and that for some unknown reason have not been so thoroughly scrutinized for political correctness. My supposition is that books are taken more seriously as educative tools, while TV, films, comics and other forms of entertainment for young children are seen as mere entertainment, more devoid of educational values. In any case, a quick glance at any TV guide anywhere in the Western world and Japan reveals that almost all—not to say all—the programmes for children deal with monsters, and that these monsters may be friendly (the type Bettelheim regarded as ineffective as far as the psychological development of the child is concerned) or extremely aggressive. The same can be said of comics for children. While many have expressed a concern about the extreme violence of some types of fiction for children, few seem to have wondered why the friendly and the unfriendly monsters play such an important role in the imaginary universe of childhood and why their presence is usually taken for granted. There is no scope in this dissertation to answer this question but it seems obvious to me that since the present study deals with monstrosity in fiction for adults, it would best be complemented by a study of the monster in children's fiction.

Rather than refer to the fulfilment of subconscious needs in the child, cultural critics writing about literature for children refer more often to the adults' conscious purpose of socialising the child through the model offered by written fiction. As John

Stephens (1992: 8) remarks “children’s fiction belongs firmly within the domain of cultural practices which exist for the purpose of socializing their target audience”. Children’s fiction, he adds, intends explicitly to foster in the reader a positive appreciation of a given set of moral and ethical values and of a sense of what is valuable in the culture’s past, present and future. Nicholas Tucker (1981: 197) describes popular literature for children as a compromise between the adults’ expectations that it will reflect sanctioned moral values and the child’s expectation that it will include some “reflection of their unsocialised, less acceptable feelings”. Tucker observes that the most successful children’s literature is that which manages to satisfy the parents and the educators with its appropriate teachings but also that which pleases the child with a seemingly subversive discourse.

The more realistic literature written for children with the purpose of explaining reality to them seems, in principle, unrelated to the ancient oral tradition of fairy tales, yet both are in fact inextricably bound. Realistic fiction for children tried to take a more prominent place at a time when the banning of certain issues in children’s fiction, and especially in politically incorrect fairy tales, was controversial:

Censorship in children’s books first became an issue with the growth of the ‘new realism’ of the 1960s, for when the veil of ‘protective optimism’ was lifted, and writers moved away from the mythological, historical or middle-class settings which had been traditional in children’s fiction, then whole areas of life which had never featured before in children’s fiction became important in the plotting and character of stories. (Barry: 1994, 232)

Ursula K. LeGuin, writing about the same issue in the middle 1970s, refers to these new realistic, politically correct stories for children as “problem books”, that is to say, books that present conflicts of real life as easy-to-solve puzzles. “*That*”, she argues, “is escapism, that posing evil as a ‘problem’, instead of what it is: all the pain and suffering and waste and loss and injustice we will meet all our lives long, and must face and cope with over and over and over, and admit, and live with, in order to live human lives at all” (1989b: 58). Like Bettelheim, she defends the use of fantasy for children, though she does so following Jungian and not Freudian ideas. The situation is now seemingly in transition towards a new model of children’s fiction. Although Victor Watson (1992: 18) argues that what has come to the foreground in recent fiction for children are “the embarrassment and taboos of the contemporary western world “ among which he lists poverty, inner-city despair, racial violence, conservation, death in various forms, and personal issues associated with sexuality, the fact is that the vast majority of books for children still deal with traditional subjects. It is certainly true that the new stories are more politically correct—although this has also forced many authors to assume a high degree of self-censorship—and that horrific monsters face the competition of friendly monsters, but there is still tension between the defenders and the detractors of absolute political correctness in children’s fiction. In a review of books for children, Nicolette Jones (1994a) notes that after the onslaught of the PC brigade, the needs of the child are winning the battle over the needs of the adults and that the best books are those which “blur the distinction between children’s and adult’s fiction, because they refuse to condescend or compromise”. The pendulum seems to be swinging back from the ‘safe’ stories Bettelheim denounced as actually unsafe in 1975 to a greater acceptance of the pleasure children find in stories many adults would deem unsuitable.

This panorama may nonetheless be too optimistic as doubts are being voiced about the direction that children's literature is to take in the future in a world dominated by aural-visual media such as TV and film. Nicolette Jones suggests that the problem of the suitability of books to children's needs is aggravated by the fact that parents "buying books for children are always looking back at their own childhood, and most children's books are published in a small time-warp" (1994b: 7) or indeed, following fashions—such as the merchandising attached to films, especially Disney's—that treat the child as potential consumer rather than as the target of an educational message. In Jones' view, it is important to note that the child may easily express his or her preference for products to which s/he has direct access (TV series and cartoons) or indirect access through advertising (films and video-games mainly) but that adults usually act as intermediaries between the child and the book. Consider, for instance, the phenomenon of the unexpected, extraordinary success of the Japanese TV cartoon series *Bola de Drac-Z* in Catalunya, around which children have built a veritable cult that has led to the publication of the Japanese comics based on the series—first circulated as photocopies—and the marketing of endless items of merchandising. Imagining that a similar phenomenon might be built around a book for children would seem, quite simply, impossible. This is why Jacqueline Rose sees children's literature as a body of literature that aims to take the children *in*, as the child always remains an outsider to the process of writing and buying it:

Children's fiction is impossible, not in the sense that it cannot be written (that would be nonsense), but in that it hangs on an impossibility, one which it rarely ventures to speak. This is the impossible relation between adult and child. Children's fiction is clearly about that relation, but it has the remarkable characteristic of being about something which it hardly ever talks of. Children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver), but where neither of them enters the space in between. (op. cit.: 1)

The enormous appeal of films, comics, video-games or television is, thus, partly based on the fact that children can access these narrative media more easily, often much to the dislike of parents and educators. These often feel incapable of controlling the exposure of children to horrific material that is intended for adults and that may harm the children's minds, hence the demand for censorship in fiction for adults and of self-censorship in fiction for children. Yet, the fact is that the monsters of fairy tales and the monsters of adult horror fiction are basically the same, for the adults producing fiction about monsters for other adults frequently draw their inspiration from childhood fears. Stephen King summarises this point best when he writes in *Danse Macabre* that "the job of the fantasy-horror writer is to make you, for a little while, a child again" (op. cit.: 456).

Cultural critics like Noël Carroll and Sabine Büssing offer more ambiguous explanations of the difference between adult horror and fairy tale. Carroll admits that "virtually the same monster—in terms of its appearance—can figure in both a work of horror and a fairy tale" (op. cit.: 53) but he distinguishes between horror stories in which characters react with fear to the monster, for it violates their conceptual scheme, and fairy tales in which the monster is accepted as an ordinary part of an extraordinary world that elicits wonder rather than fear. Büssing comments on a similar point: horror fiction arouses a deeper emotional reaction in the reader/viewer because "after all, the characters of horror fiction are infinitely closer to real life" (op. cit.: xviii). In contrast,

the hero of fairy tale is not astonished by the presence of the monster, as it does not contravene the rules of the marvellous world the hero inhabits. However, either explanation seems to me clearly insufficient. In both fairy tales for children (and other genres of children's fiction) and horror fiction for adults there is an intention to force the reader into a confrontation with fear embodied in the monster. What marks the difference is the author's awareness of the limits of tolerance of his or her audience. An author writing for adults will acknowledge no other limits than those the imagination can dictate (naturally bound by the conventions of the cultural context or by censorship) while an author writing for children will bear a different set of limitations in mind. This is why it is so difficult to decide what is suitable for children and what is not, since this necessarily depends on how mature a particular child is. A different matter is how to control the exposure of young children to material that is not suitable for them. Ideally, this should be a matter of individual needs and levels of tolerance to be supervised by the child's parents on the basis of adequate information provided by boards of classification and not of censorship. The protection of the innocent child has been the excuse traditionally invoked by the defenders of censorship to impose restrictions on films for adults, with the argument that, since the access of children to films for adults cannot be totally curtailed, it is better to censor those films for everybody³². But while a great deal of controversy is periodically stirred up by the censorship imposed on fiction for adults on behalf of the moral protection of children, few people seem to note that fiction for children—especially films for children—contains doses of violence and horror that is hardly ever questioned by censors but that might be potentially more harmful—if that is the word—for children.

I am not defending, in any case, the need to censor children's fiction. What I am questioning is the arbitrariness of the standards used to define whether certain scenes in films can be tolerated by children and the fact that parents are not really well informed about the criteria used to classify films (or, for that matter, books for children). Obviously, children do not form part of the boards of classification which exist in all countries; this means that film examiners are forced to work on assumptions based on the work of child psychologists, parents and educators associations, and not on concrete evidence proving how children react to certain scenes³³. It might well be that what an adult thinks would be intolerable for a child raises less anxieties than is supposed in the child and that, on the contrary, scenes deemed unproblematic by an adult could be shocking for a child.

Henry Selick and Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) and Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* (1993) are two films that should be considered in the discussion of where the limits of the tolerable are for children. Concerned parents have reacted against some of the scenes of Selick and Burton's film, which is a stop-motion film made with animated puppets rather than live action. The film exploits the mixture

32. The uses of the 'innocent child' to establish political censorship in comics are analyzed in Barker (1984d) and Sabin (1993). Both offer information especially on the 1950s campaign against comics. In reference to the 1984 campaign against the 'video-nasties' see Barker (1984a, 1984b and 1984c).

33. The ages taken into account in different countries to mark the dividing line between the adult and the child are most varied: in Spain films are rated U (universal), NRC7 (not recommended for children under 7), NRC13, NRC 18 and R18; Norway distinguishes between films for children under 5, under 10 and under 15; Britain has categories of classification for audiences under 6, 12, 15 and 18.

of delight and horror that children enjoy on Halloween and centres basically on the Gothic Halloweentown, whose inhabitants are an assorted bunch of monsters, including the hero Jake (an animated skeleton), his girlfriend (a rag doll who is constantly splitting her seams) and three mischievous children who collaborate in kidnapping Santa Claus. The genre of the film (it is a musical) and Disney's support—the film was distributed by Disney but it is actually an independent production—guaranteed the success of the film among children proving that, as Burton and Selick correctly intuited, a scary story can also be lovely. Furthermore, like the more recent *Toy Story* (1995), *The Nightmare before Christmas* drew to the cinemas not only children but also an audience of adults, enticed by the elaborate animation techniques and by Burton's reputation. Yet, some parents expressed their concern for the effects of scenes such as the one in which several children open the horrific Christmas presents that Jake Skellington has brought them to find, among other things, a severed head. The film acquired a reputation for being just on the verge of what is tolerable for a child—a reputation possibly enhanced by the use of the word nightmare in the title, which seems to point to a connection between this film and the popular *Nightmare on Elm Street* series—and did not attract the habitually massive crowds drawn by other Disney films³⁴.

The case of Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* illustrates the ideological vagaries surrounding the child in its role as spectator. Steven Spielberg has produced or directed a number of films, such as the very famous *E.T.: The Extraterrestrial*, *Poltergeist* (directed by Tobe Hooper), or *Empire of the Sun*, than can be described as narratives of the encounter between a monster and a child. However, the fact that children often appear in his films does not mean that all his films are apt for children, as is often said. This confusion has worked in his favour in *Jurassic Park*, whose merchandising has appealed, above all, to children's well-known fondness for the figure of the monstrous dinosaur. In fact, it could be said that Spielberg's very successful film has transformed the already popular dinosaurs into the favourite monsters of the 1990s children. Yet the novel by Michael Crichton on which the film is based is by no means a book for children, though it partly focuses on two children, the girl Alex and her brother Tim. What is more, the film contains truly harrowing chase scenes in which the monstrous dinosaurs are clearly intent on devouring Tim and Alex as well as other explicit scenes, including one in which the children witness how an adult is attacked and devoured by a carnivorous dinosaur and which is comparable in its degree of violence to many scenes in slasher films. All children can understand a fantastic story about Halloween while only a few can grasp the meaning of Crichton's cautionary tale. Yet parents seem to have blindly trusted Spielberg, who has a reputation for knowing how to produce family entertainment, whereas Burton's Gothic version of Halloween has been somewhat mistrusted. This proves that audiences do not follow homogeneous patterns of behaviour when deciding whether the content of a film is suitable for children and that

34. In fact, Disney seems to enjoy a certain immunity against the criticism of its products. Even though I have referred to Susan Jeffords' interpretation of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, outside the academia few voices—if any—are raised against Disney, possibly because its implacable marketing of its products is enough to drown any other voice. Yet, *The Lion King*, the star Disney film of the 1993-94 season, is certainly questionable in many fronts: it reproduces patriarchal, sexist stereotypes and, what is worse, it perpetuates a totally unrealistic vision of animal behaviour—which is, of course, typical of animated cartoons for children—when in fact it has been marketed as a product that helps children love nature.

potential objections can be pre-empted by the film director's reputation and by good marketing strategies.

As happens in *Jurassic Park*, child actors have been frequently employed in horrific scenes of contemporary films, either as monsters or as victims of their encounter with the monster. The paradox is that child actors appearing in films strictly for adults are not old enough to be allowed to see these films in a cinema. Taking into account the arguments vented in the debate about censorship in the UK, especially as regards the 1984 'video-nasties' campaign, it might be thought that child actors inevitably suffer from an important emotional strain when playing such roles and that their parents should be held responsible for exposing them to such psychological damage. Yet this does not seem to be the case. Harvey Stevens, who played the evil child Damien in *The Omen* when he was just six, corroborates that no harm is done to the child actor: "It didn't really affect me. I wasn't really sure what was going on. The acting wasn't exactly difficult. Usually I just stood there and the director told me what to do. I think it was the green eyes that did it" (Moviestore, 1995a). Carrie Henn, who played the role of the courageous nine-year-old Newt in *Aliens*, recalls how "the crew were always trying to scare me, but they couldn't. I never got scared until I saw the movie—even though I knew what was coming" (Moviestore, 1995b). To the question of whether her parents were worried about the violence and the offensive language of the film, Henn replies with a certain irony that she had heard worse at school.

As Henn herself points out, there is an obvious difference between taking part in the film and watching it, yet one cannot help wondering how children are instructed to perform scenes which involve make-up and special effects designed to scare audiences and also whether parents are not somehow exploiting their children by allowing them to perform in horror films. Both Harvey Stephens and Carrie Henn were children without previous acting experience whose parents accepted on their behalf the money offered for their collaboration in the films. Their satisfaction with the experience of having made the film jars badly, however, with the evident displeasure of the child appearing in a scene of the documentary *The Making of Bram Stoker's Dracula*. Francis Ford Coppola, the film's director, is seen patiently calming the little girl—possibly under the age of two—who plays the vampire Lucy's first victim. Impressed by actress Sadie Frost's characterization as Lucy, which involves a formidable set of fangs, the teary-eyed child refuses at first to play the scene until Coppola and her mother persuade her that it is just a game. Watching the little girl in tears striving to please her mother by letting Lucy hold her tight in her arms seemed to me a potentially more horrific scene than the one in which she is involved in the film, since such a young child could by no means understand the meaning of the 'game' she was being asked to play.

Another young actor, Miko Hughes, appears in *Wes Craven's New Nightmare* (1994), a film which deals with the triangle formed by the child, his mother and the monster, Freddy Krueger, in his latest screen appearance. The plot refers to the issue of how parents can best protect their children against the presence of the monster by suggesting that since the exposure of the child to some form of fictional horror is inevitable, parents had better help the child face it and overcome it. Five-year-old Dylan is the son of a special effects technician who works in the new Freddy Krueger film—the screenplay follows the motif of the film within the film—and of 'Heather Langenkampf', the horror film actress who played the fifteen-year-old heroine Nancy in the first Freddy Krueger film and who appears in the new film as a fictional version of herself. 'Heather' has taken special care to prevent Dylan from seeing any of her films, despite his parents' close relationship with horror films. So concerned is she about the influence they might

exert on him that she has decided to reject the role of Nancy in Wes Craven's new film about Freddy. However, this has not prevented her from allowing Dylan to enjoy fairy tales especially since, despite her dislike of their horrific content, the child obviously relishes them. The film implies that a child may perhaps be isolated from horror films for adults but that it is simply not possible to cut him or her off from the rich tradition of the fairy tale and that nothing at all is gained by making the child see how horrific fairy tales maybe.

Eventually Freddy Krueger himself enters Heather's life and starts persecuting the child, first terrorising him with images of the old film suddenly appearing on the TV screen and then seemingly possessing him. Since Dylan lacks the frame of reference provided by horror films he identifies Freddy with the figure he fears most, the witch who threatens Hansel and Gretel in his favourite fairy tale. This means that throughout the episode in which Heather descends to Freddy's hell in search of her child three stories are being narrated simultaneously. First, the story of the harassed mother who agrees to play Nancy once more to save her child. This corresponds to the subplot of the film dealing with the postmodernist tenet that fantasy and reality merge inescapably. Second, a horror story which retakes the subject and the characters of the first *Nightmare on Elm Street*, a film for teenagers; and, third, a horrific version of "Hansel and Gretel". The film deals, in addition, with the defeat of the patriarchal monster who has murdered the husband and father, and who is finally vanquished by the combined efforts of a mother and her son. Their victory over Freddy implies that much is to be gained by considering horror for adults and horror for children as part of the same cultural space rather than as separate territories. Only by avoiding the demonisation of violence and the monster and by understanding that the excessive protection of the child can be as harmful as its excessive exposure to fictional horror can a proper balance be achieved.

After this brief survey it must be concluded that in the last two decades parents have assumed in the UK, the USA and by extension the Western world and Japan, contradictory positions as far as the relationship between the child and the representation of monstrosity in fiction is concerned. Never before had children lived in a cultural atmosphere where the monster occupied such a conspicuous position; never before had parents debated the consequences of the child's exposure to the monster of fiction. A distinct conclusion can be inferred from the different cases I have examined: the capitalist system rather than educational interests explains why the universe of the child living in the 1980s and 1990s has been invaded by the monster. The discussion of the contents of children's books and the demand for censorship are in fact secondary issues in a cultural context dominated by narrative media in the service of capitalist business. What determines eventually how parents choose the multimedia narratives most children consume—including films, comics, video-games, toys and other items of merchandising—is advertising targeted at children. In a sense, the parents become the accomplices of a system that regards children mainly as consumers and that invalidates all the attempts at setting a homogeneous system of standards to guide the child in its choice. There are presumably few differences in the mechanism used to exploit the monster in children's fiction and in adult fiction: what counts in both cases is that the consumer is attracted by images that fascinate because they are extraordinary; the constant renewal of those images ensures that the market is kept alive, hence their proliferation. Nevertheless, parents are also accomplices of the capitalist system in a much more ambiguous sense. Some parents are struggling to impose political correctness in fiction for children—even in all kinds of fiction with the pretext that

children could be harmed by intolerable texts; others living in the same Western societies are allowing their children to appear in fantasy films (horrific or not) either as monsters, that is to say, as objects of paedophobic, sadistic fantasies or as victims persecuted by horrific monsters—for money. Without bearing these facts in mind it is not possible to understand the contradictions which Western societies—and especially the UK and the USA—are incurring when representing the child and the monster.

8.2.2. The Child and the Monster

8.2.2.1. The Child and the Irredeemable Monster

In this section I examine a number of films and novels for adults in which a child confronts a monster. In most of these texts the child assumes a position independent from that of the parents because they are missing, because they are abusing the child or because the relationship with the monster has replaced to a certain extent the relationship with the parents. The first subsection encompasses the texts in which the child opposes an evil monster that must be destroyed because there is no possible redemption for it, and also texts in which the children increasingly adopt new signs of identity different from those of the ordinary child. The second subsection deals with texts in which the encounter with the monster—often acting as a surrogate father—is presented as a positive step in the emotional development of the child and in which the child's affection redeems to a certain extent the monster from his fallen state.

Stephen King's *It* (1986) is a most thorough portrait of the collision between the child and the evil monster. *It* is based on the idea that children know better than adults how to recognize the monsters of real life due to their familiarity with the monsters of their private fears, a familiarity that adults are eventually forced to lose and can only be regained—only partially—when enjoying horror fiction. Three different lines are welded together in its plot: the story of the confrontation of a group of seven children with the monster 'It' that terrorizes their town Derry, the stories of each of these seven lives and the story of the reunion of those same seven children—now grown-ups—for a second battle with the monster twenty-seven years after the first. The second encounter requires them to regain their lost childhood selves and to retrieve from their lost memories of the events their lost capacity to believe not only in the monster but also in their power to defeat it.

As I have previously noted in chapter 7, 'It' is a shape-shifter that takes the form the beholder fears most. Ben, Mike, Stan, George, Eddie, Richie and Beverly are initially drawn together because they share the secret experience of having seen 'It', each in a form particularly suited to their family circumstances, their early childhood traumas or the imaginary horrors they enjoy in fiction. However, when the individual encounter with the monster takes place, four of these children are already enduring the attacks of another kind of monster: Ben, Eddie and Mike are being mercilessly persecuted by the school bully, Henry, himself a badly abused child; Eddie is in addition the victim of an overprotective mother and Beverly the victim of her father's sexual abuse. The cathartic confrontation and final destruction of 'It' is, then, the end of a psychological therapy for all that is not dissimilar to the psychoanalytical therapy undergone by the victims of child abuse: unearthing the memories of the confrontation with the monster means also unearthing the memories of abuse that have conditioned their lives. The call to face 'It' again forces them all out of their particular cocoons: the

fantastic monster serves the purpose of giving the children's grown-up selves a new sense of direction in their difficult lives and is also the excuse for a return to a time when intimate, personal problems could be discussed and solved. This is why, once each has solved his or her traumas, they can leave Derry and forget this second meeting with the monster in peace.

'It' is a protean creature that represents well the enormous terrors children often conceal from their elders, including their fear of them. This monster is inextricably bound to the secret fears of each child but it is also bound to Derry. Although the monster is explained by King as an alien entity that arrived in Earth much before the foundation of the town, 'It' has been given life thanks to the emotional nourishment 'It' has taken from the dark sides of Derry's inhabitants. Strange violent incidents like lynchings and massacres take place in the town in regular cycles that coincide with the monster's taking of a number of children, as if the adults were unwittingly paying with their offspring for their 'right' to enjoy the dark pleasures of exerting unbounded violence against other adults. However, like the children, the town has chosen to forget its involvement in such acts and must subconsciously delegate in their terrorized but courageous children the task of unearthing the demonic fiend. Unlike the adults, the children have a greater experience with fear in their daily lives, for they know it first hand from their terrible encounters with the school bullies and even with their parents. This makes it easier for them to believe in an even greater monster, which is precisely why 'It' chooses them as targets. As one of them, Mike, reflects as a grown-up:

... who is more capable of a total act of faith than a child?

But there's a problem: kids grow up. In the church, power is perpetuated and renewed by periodic ritualistic acts. In Derry, power seems to be perpetuated and renewed by periodic ritualistic acts, too. Can it be that It protects Itself by the simple fact that, as the children grow into the adults, they become either incapable of faith or crippled by a sort of spiritual and imaginative arthritis? (p. 879)

This is the central point in the relationship between the child and the monster: the child believes, while the adult does not and is afraid that believing will make him or her seem childish. However, growing up does not mean that the monster disappears: it lies buried under Derry or in the subconscious until it erupts without warning, demanding a radical therapy. As Bettelheim argues and as *It* also argues, children know better than adults may imagine how to cope with fear as they are not yet encumbered with the knowledge that fear may be unendurable and lead to psychosis or downright madness. At the end of *It* the monster has been destroyed, though not before having claimed two victims: Stan who commits suicide rather than face 'It' and Eddie, who succumbs to 'It' because he has not overcome in his own life his childhood ghosts. Yet since the five remaining adults start forgetting what they have done as soon as they leave Derry, this defeat does not guarantee that the monster will not return: there will always be new children ready to believe, there will always be new adults ready to take their pleasure in violence with the help of the hidden monster. Significantly, the only member of the original group who remains in Derry is Mike, who becomes the custodian of his friends' precious memories and, in his capacity as Derry's head librarian, of all the documentary memories that prove how intimate the relationship between 'It' and Derry is.

The same obsession that moves Mike to gather the scraps of memory proving that, like most mythological monsters, 'It' is a monster bound to its environment as much as to the individual and the collective consciousness of those who live near it, also

guides Jack Torrance, the protagonist of King's *The Shining* (1977). In a sense, *It* retells on a massive scale the story of *The Shining*, which was written almost ten years earlier. Instead of focusing on seven children, the adults of a town and the monster that haunts the town, *The Shining* centers only on the relationship between Jack, his son Danny and a third evil entity that possesses Jack and that is located in the Overlook Hotel where Jack is employed as a caretaker for the winter and where the Torrance family are to remain snowbound for months. Like Beverley in *It*, Danny is split in two regarding his abusive father: both Bev and Danny strive to keep their intense love for their respective fathers despite the evidence of abuse and believe that the desperate, violent father who abuses them is a representative (or himself a victim) of a much more powerful form of evil monstrosity. In both cases the supernatural monster eventually assumes the father's shape and erases him from the child's life, marking the impossibility of redeeming the father.

The Shining is the story of a family man desperately trying to control his dark side. Jack lives engrossed in his own frustrations as his alcoholism and his violent temper gradually make his professional, financial and emotional situation almost unbearable. King makes Jack initially responsible for the impending collapse of his family life but the novel turns out to be finally an ambivalent vindication of the innocence of the father. The explanation that Jack was abused as a child by his own father, which King inserts in the novel to justify why Jack ill-treats his wife Wendy and their child Danny, seems nevertheless insufficient for King himself, hence the introduction of the supernatural monster that possesses Jack's soul. Wendy's role is secondary precisely because King discusses through the confrontation between father and son whether the male children of abusive fathers must necessarily become the abusers of their own children. In *The Shining* King had not yet found the more sober, realistic tone of *Dolores Claiborne* (1992), a novel in which child abuse is dealt with from the perspective of the mother who kills her husband in revenge for his having sexually abused their teenage daughter. Since King supposes that Jack's weaknesses make him an easy target for the monstrous entity lurking in the Overlook Hotel, the plot is ineluctably presented as a fantastic process of exorcism in which Danny's paranormal abilities play a major role. An average child as young as Danny can do nothing to resist the violence of the father, but Danny is no average child, which is the reason why he can successfully confront the evil side of his father and survive the father's destruction without psychological harm. Danny is gifted with the ability to see flashes of the past and with a milder ability to read minds—a combined ability that Dick Halloran, the black cook of the Overlook Hotel who senses it in Danny, calls 'the shining'. Danny counts, in addition, on the help of an imaginary playmate called Tony (actually Danny's future self) that can warn him of the dangers he will find in the Overlook.

The atmospheric film adaptation of King's novel by Stanley Kubrick (1980) does not respect the two basic premises of the novel—first, that Jack is not mad but a typical case of abused child who becomes an abusive husband and father and, second, that he is clearly possessed by the malignant spirit of the place. Instead, Kubrick offers a more confused portrait of Jack as a psychotic madman and eschews altogether the issue of how Jack himself contributes to the destruction of the malignant spirit before dying. Kubrick's Jack, played by Jack Nicholson in a performance notorious for his overacting, is terrifying because he is a relentless monster of destruction, inspired by the eerie atmosphere of the hotel and by the example of Jack's predecessor, Grady, who had killed his wife and children in a bout of madness. In contrast, King's Jack is a pitiable monster, a man whose life moves from his monstrous father to his monstrous self and,

ultimately, to the monstrous embrace of the hotel. The horror of his story is that he is well aware of his fall and, above all, of the maddening possibility that his son will eventually become a victim of his own inner monstrosity.

The tragedy of the Torrances is that they are trapped by a place that, as Tony tells Danny, is an inhuman place that makes humans into monsters. So important is the sense of place and history that in his analysis of *The Shining* Fredric Jameson simply ignores all references to the question of abuse to center instead on Kubrick's retelling of King's novel as a narrative about the pull of the historical rather than the personal past. According to Jameson (1990: 90), Jack "is possessed neither by the devil as such nor by a "devil" or some analogous occult force, but rather simply by History, by the American past as it has left its sedimented traces in the corridors and dismembered suites". Jack's possession by the past—the 1920s in the film, the hotel's whole history in the novel—is read by Jameson as a subversion of democratic, liberal values signified by the "nostalgia for hierarchy and domination allegorized in Jack Nicholson's "possession" by the still Veblenesque social system in the 1920s" (ibid.: 96).

Indeed, the hotel's resident evil spirit chooses to seduce Jack with the hallucination of the splendid 1945 party in which Jack meets Grady and with the scrapbook containing information on the history of the hotel that diverts Jack's attention away from the play he is writing to inspire him with a new subject. Yet personal history surfaces in the novel as a much more important issue than national history: in a sense Danny is contributing to the list of historical events witnessed by the hotel with his lucid understanding of why the American patriarchal father must be forgiven and destroyed so as to allow the survival of the woman and the child that he has victimized. But the main issue at stake is why literature, the channel Jack has chosen to transcend his personal past and to pass onto history, cannot redeem him. Jack's literary ambitions are crucial in the relationship with his child and may have been introduced by King into the text precisely to undermine the idea that the place of man in history—if only in literary history—is more important than his place in his own family. In fact, the incident in which Jack beats Danny takes place when the child—then only two—spoils the manuscript of Jack's first play. Even though Wendy thinks that writing means "slowly closing a huge door on a roomful of monsters" (p. 116), writing is what alienates father and son, for Jack finally sees his responsibility as husband and father as a burden that will not let him soar towards the place in history that he thinks he deserves. Presumably, what King criticizes in the monstrous Jack is his inability to make the personal and the historical compatible and Jack's wrong assumption that he deserves a place in literary history as compensation for having being deprived of his place as a beloved son in his personal story.

The Shining shifts the burden of the monstrous man's redemption from the woman saviour to the child saviour. When the final confrontation between Danny and the possessed Jack takes place, the child must forgive the sins of the father and transfer his blame onto the place, opening a route of escape away from Hell for Jack's soul. "You're it, not my daddy", Danny shouts at the monster possessing his father's body, "and when you get what you want, you won't give my daddy anything because you're selfish. And my daddy knows that" (p. 398). In his desperate attempt at exculpating Jack, Danny even tells the monster that it was responsible for making Jack an alcoholic, when in fact Jack's alcoholism started years before he entered the hotel. Danny's courageous resistance to the monster lets Jack, the loving father, resurface for a last good-bye, which presumably signifies Jack's redemption: "suddenly his daddy was there, looking at him in mortal agony, and a sorrow so great that Danny's heart flamed

within his chest” (p. 399). The death of Jack’s body allows Danny to finally face the demon that has possessed his father, “a strange, shifting composite, many faces mixed imperfectly into one” (p. 400) which is similar to ‘It’ and also to the Devil in *Swan Song*. The novel ends fittingly with the destruction of the hotel, caused by the explosion of a faulty boiler Jack has neglected despite his employer’s warning that it might cause a catastrophe, and thus with the exorcism of the Overlook monsters. Wendy and Danny flee to the warm sun of Florida with the cook Halloran, who has come to their rescue and who occupies somehow Jack’s place as Danny’s surrogate father, everyone having seemingly already forgotten Jack.

Freddy Krueger himself plays the role of the irredeemable, abusive father in the sixth instalment of the series, *Freddy’s Dead: The Final Nightmare* (1991), the film that preceded *Wes Craven’s New Nightmare* in the series. In this film, the only one of the series directed by a woman, Rachel Talalay, Freddy is provided with a family life and a daughter. His representation as an abusive husband rounds off his image as a criminal child abuser and murderer. Thus the plot concerns the appalling discovery made by Maggie, a psychologist who works in a home for problematic teenagers, that her father is Krueger himself. The motif of the repressed childhood memories recovered by the adult is used to explain how Maggie remembers that she witnessed at a very young age how Freddy killed her mother for having transgressed his injunction never to enter the secret cellar workshop, where he keeps mementoes of his young victims. Freddy also appears in the film as the father of Tracy, one of the teenagers under Maggie’s care, who has run away from home so as to prevent her father from further abusing her sexually. While Freddy easily eliminates the weaker teenage boys that accompany Tracy—and who are also victims of abuse—Talalay presents both Tracy and Maggie as strong women quite capable of facing Freddy. No doubt, the scene in which Tracy beats up Freddy in her father’s disguise may fulfil the fantasies of many abused teenagers. Likewise, Maggie’s final triumph over Freddy both reinforces the image of the woman saviour and acts as a wish-fulfilment fantasy for those adults once abused or simply neglected by their parents who cannot find in real life such emphatic methods of revenge.

The child victimized by abusive adults is also the focal point of V.C. Andrews’s best-selling novel *Flowers in the Attic* (1979), a peculiar neo-Gothic novel that has a few intriguing points in common with Ian McEwan’s *The Cement Garden* (1978). Both deal with a group of four siblings—two teenagers, a boy and a girl, and two younger children, also a boy and a girl—who must face a new, bizarre kind of life on their own that leads to incest between the elder boy and girl. Themselves the product of incest between their mother and her uncle, the Dollanganger children of *Flowers in the Attic* start behaving in an abnormal way when they become prisoners under their callous grandmother’s care, with the connivance of their mother, who wants to keep them hidden until she becomes her stern, rich father’s heiress. This gloomy story about these sweet, pretty, American children neglected by their monstrous yet beautiful mother for the sake of money is, however, not so different from the story of the four working-class British children in McEwan’s novel. They are left on their own when they decide not to notify the death of their widowed mother to the authorities so as to avoid their feared separation. Yet, the crucial difference is that while McEwan’s children are, if not monstrous, at least unnatural, prolonging into their new freedom the strange, sexual games they already played when the mother was alive, Andrews’s children discover sexuality and incest almost naturally in a highly unnatural situation, though they were initially little less than angelic.

The imprisoned children of *Flowers in the Attic* become monstrous when in their isolation they inevitably commit the sin that their fanatical grandmother had warned them never to commit. They do so, however, within the logic of a situation that is horrific and in which they literally have no freedom at all. In contrast, McEwan's children are monstrous because they are free from all parental constraints, though their freedom leads them to the same situation of incest as Andrews's children. Interestingly, while *Flowers in the Attic* ends with the three remaining siblings finally running away from their Gothic mansion, the elders still thinking of a future together as a couple, *The Cement Garden* concludes with the children's being deprived of their freedom to return to the ordinary world of childhood. Both novels center on the sexuality of children, more specifically of young teenagers, presenting it from an ambiguous point of view: the incestuous relationship between brother and sister seems natural given the circumstances, yet it is nonetheless presented as a sin or an abnormality in absolute terms. The adult novelists use it to shock adults readers into a new awareness of the image of the child and its sexuality but do so by emphasizing the lack of adult tutelage on the children and by offering a portrait of children that while being sympathetic suggests, nonetheless, that all children have a potentially monstrous side inevitably evinced by abuse or neglect. In the texts in which the confrontation with the monster fulfils the child's thirst for revenge, this monstrous side is controlled by the very emotional satisfaction of having destroyed its roots. When children drift away from the rules of adult society they do not repeat the patterns of abuse but become, nonetheless, unnatural.

8.2.2.2. The Child and the Redeemable Monster

The relationship of the child with a monstrous father figure that replaces the dead father is the subject of three idiosyncratic films: Mel Gibson's *The Man without a Face* (1993), Luc Besson's *Léon* (1995) and James Cameron's *The Terminator 2* (1991). The three of them narrate stories in which a prepubescent child gains the sympathy of a monster who is then forced out of his particular shell in order to protect the child from the threat posed by other adults. The three stories are rites of passage for the child who enters adulthood, somewhat prematurely, after the encounter with the sympathetic monster. The three films end, likewise, with the inescapable sacrifice of the strong bond between child and monster³⁵. In addition, both Gibson and Besson discuss—though from rather opposite points of view—aspects of the sexuality of the young teenager evinced by his or her close relationship with the monster. While Gibson's film denounces the paranoid tarring of all men as potential abusers and vindicates the idea that children and men may enjoy a perfectly innocent friendship, Besson's film presents a paradoxically erotic yet innocent young girl for whom the monster is her first love.

Mel Gibson's screen adaptation of Isabelle Holland's novel *The Man without a Face* (1972) captures very well the characterization and mood of the original novel, set in the 1960s, but is radically different at the same time. The book is the story of young Chuck's acceptance of his budding homosexuality thanks to the friendship that the also homosexual Justin, a man in his mid-thirties, offers to him. Chuck, who is a fatherless

35. This group is best rounded out with the Mexican film *Cronos* (1992), directed by Guillermo del Toro, in which a little girl—who remains silent throughout the film—calmly comes to term with the fact that her beloved grandfather is still himself despite having been turned into a vampire. When she finally reaches a decision and utters the only word she is heard to say in the film—"Grandfather"—her family life with him and her mother enters into a new, happy phase.

boy, finds in Justin—an ex-teacher who tutors him one summer—the father figure who points to him the right way of understanding his own homosexuality and also a masculine presence he sorely needs in his world, harassed as he is by his mother and his two step-sisters. Holland's Justin symbolizes with his badly burnt face and his scarred body the negative effects of prejudice against homosexuals. He was once the innocent victim of an unfounded accusation of having sexually abused a young boy, who died in the car accident that disfigured him. Mel Gibson, well known for his conservative moral views, has kept intact Justin's physical appearance but has transformed him into a heterosexual man who has paid with the loss of his wife, his job and his ability to communicate with other people for a crime he never committed. Holland's story becomes in Gibson's hands not a tale about the happy, fulfilling friendship between two homosexuals of different ages but a tale about how impossible it is for a heterosexual man and a child to be friends without arousing everybody's suspicion.

Both the novel and the film emphasize the point that the figure of the father is indispensable for the harmonious growth of boys and for their successful passage into adulthood. Chuck has almost no memories of his father, a military pilot who died in Korea, but so strong is his idolisation of the absent father that he plans to follow in his footsteps, much to his mother's opposition, beginning by entering St. Matthew's, an exclusive, military boarding school. Chuck's dislike of Kitty, his mother, and his exaggerated misogyny are no doubt a sign of how much he misses his dead father but also of his intellectual blockage, for he is a poor achiever in a family of very intelligent women. The plot traces Chuck's discovery of two fundamental truths: first, thanks to Justin—who used to be a teacher in St. Matthew's and thus embodies proper masculinity for Chuck—he discovers that he is not intellectually inferior to his sisters but merely tormented by his own sense of inferiority. Second, his jealous stepsister Gloria, surprised by Chuck in bed with her boyfriend, punishes his transgression on her privacy by forcing Chuck to learn a more bitter truth: far from being a hero, his father was an alcoholic who abandoned the family and committed suicide. The failure of the mother, about to marry for the fifth time, to secure a proper stepfather for Chuck and her having kept the truth about her father a secret from Chuck alienate the boy from the women in his life and make him seek Justin's company.

However, just as Kitty made the mistake of not telling Chuck about his father's suicide, he makes the mistake of concealing his relationship with Justin from her, a mistake he later will have to pay dearly for. Chuck's choice of Justin as his tutor is complicated by two factors. On the one hand, Justin's flawed body, which is the symbol of the damaged status of masculinity, is both fascinating and repulsive to Chuck. The first step is, then, for him to overcome his fear of the monster and to progressively cease to see Justin's scars as their intimacy grows. However, Justin's inner scars run deeper and he is at first reluctant to assume his role as a father figure, afraid as he is of a repetition of his personal tragedy. When he agrees to tutor Chuck, Justin uses his disciplinary, conservative yet effective methods to maintain a certain emotional distance from Chuck. But when Chuck's initial dislike for Justin's gruelling methods abates the distance between the man and the child collapses.

The turning point in their relationship comes, interestingly, when Justin fails to tell Chuck the whole truth about his secret. Although he reveals the truth about the accident, Justin conceals the fact that he had been accused of child abuse, fearing that Chuck could lose his trust in him and also that this would jeopardise the results of the entrance examination for St. Matthew's. Secrecy, nevertheless, breeds only sorrow. Chuck's anger with his mother when he discovers the truth about his father's death

makes him run one night to Justin's house; when the police finds him there, Kitty's anger with Chuck for not having told her about Justin results in Justin's arrest on suspicion of having abused Chuck. Finally, Justin's concealment of his previous stay in prison because of the ugly accusations poured on him shatters the boy's trust in him. The boy has to cope simultaneously with the fact that his father abandoned him because he saw himself as a failure and felt he could not cope with the responsibility of a family, and with the suspicion that his new father is, likewise, a monster—a defaced man. But while the possibility of asking the father why he left Chuck has been impeded by death, Chuck still has a chance to learn the truth from Justin and, despite their forced separation, he feels that asking is the only way to feel respect again for Justin and also for himself as a man.

In the film, Justin asks Chuck to consider in one of his lessons the content of Shylock's speech about the humanity of the Jew in Shakespeare's *The Merchant's of Venice*. The importance of the ideas about deceptive appearances and the humanity of the marginalised man contained in Shylock's speech becomes evident during Justin's interrogation by a panel of experts who are trying to establish his guilt regarding Chuck. Gibson's Justin delivers then a passionate speech about how appearances always conceal the truth, refusing to protest his innocence, even though he knows that the prejudice against him is so strong. His version of Shylock's speech forms an interesting metafictional loop in the fabric of the film as Gibson, who plays himself the role of Justin, is an actor whose fame is based mainly on his attractive physical appearance. His choosing to appear physically disfigured in his first film as a director can be read, thus, as a call for his audience to see the artist in him beneath the more or less attractive surface.

In the end, trust becomes the crucial concept of the film. Just as he has refused to declare his innocence to the panel of inquisitors, Justin refuses to answer Chuck's question about whether he was guilty of abuse. This scene that takes place when Chuck has already passed the exam and so secured his own place within the model of masculinity that he initially chose. If he trusted the teacher, Justin answers, Chuck must trust the man and overcome on his own the doubts about him. Trust and friendship survive the test but Justin is forced to put an end to their relationship for the sake of the child, despite Chuck's anger at the adults who are corrupting the meaning of their friendship. The film becomes, thus, an indictment of the narrow-mindedness of a system that allegedly protects the child but actually fails to understand his or her needs. It is, as well, a warning against the pervading, poisonous, politically correct attitude by which any man is suspect of abuse until the opposite is proven, if it stands a chance at all of being proven. Gibson's is finally, a film about men and about how many chances are being missed of having better men in the future, a point to which I will return later in my analysis of *The Terminator 2*, a film which sadly enough suggests that the proper father is an artificial man, since caring men like Justin are to be found nowhere.

Luc Besson's unconstrained portrayal of the relationship between twelve-year-old Matilda and her protector Léon, a professional assassin in his mid-thirties, differs much from the moderated tone of Gibson's *The Man without a Face*. Despite the American English spoken in the film and its location in New York, *Léon* is, no doubt, a European film that could only have been conceived within a culture like the French, much more at ease with the erotic potential of the figure of the child than the English-language culture. Both *Léon* and a recent French film, Jeunet and Caro's *The City of Lost Children* (1995), narrate a love story between a young prepubescent girl and an adult man which is certainly erotic without being necessarily perverse. It is certainly

difficult to conceive of an American film showing a scene similar to the one in Jeunet and Caro's film in which the young Miette and her protector—simply called One—are seen together in bed warming each other on a cold night, or to the one in which Matilda, impersonating Madonna in a game, exhibits herself in her underwear before the eyes of the astonished Léon. Obviously, Léon and One live in an imaginary realm in which they are not accountable for their behaviour before any court, while Gibson's Justin lives in a Puritan America obsessed with child abuse. The 1990s New York of *Léon* in which a hotel manager shows no concern for the welfare of Matilda when she claims that Léon is not her father, as she had pretended, but actually her lover, as she fantasises, belongs to a fantastic America made impossible by the work of another European, Vladimir Nabokov.

More than any other story, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955) has made the image of the pubescent girl as an erotic object problematic. The diaries of the misogynistic, debauched Humbert Humbert suggest that only a monstrous pervert like him would be capable of distorting the image of a child to such extent. Yet, since no authorial voice contradicts Humbert's dubious statements about Lolita's immorality, his portrait of the nymphet Lolita as an experienced seductress has the effect of inevitably tarnishing the image of the (possibly totally) innocent girl. Is perversion, the reader is meant to wonder, the dream of the middle-aged European man exiled in the USA or the reality of the young American girl he seduces? Whatever Nabokov's original intention may have been—whether exposing perversion or indulging in it through fiction—*Lolita*, casts a longer shadow than the myth of Pygmalion on the relationship between young girls and adult men in fiction. It is an irony, thus, that in the new film version of Nabokov's novel, currently in production, young actress Nathalie Portman, who plays the role of Matilda in *Léon*, is cast in the title role.

While in the still shocking *Lolita* both the seducer and his victim are represented as corrupt monsters of selfishness, *Léon* challenges its viewers to accept a story in which corruption is an ingredient threatening the relationship between Matilda and Léon from the outside. Criminal corruption rather than seduction is the main theme of Besson's film. Despite being a ruthless killer, hence a moral monster, Léon never takes advantage of Matilda's manifest crush on him. Yet the life of the girl is threatened by a much worse enemy than a seducer: Stansford, a corrupt DEA agent who has massacred all the members of Matilda's family during an apparently legal search for drugs in her home. As it turns out, Stansford's actual intention is robbing Matilda's father, a petty drug dealer, of the important amount of cocaine that he keeps at home. While there is no question of child abuse in the film, Stansford's drug abuse and his activities as a drug dealer condition the meeting between Léon and Matilda. The girl literally thrusts herself into her neighbour Léon's arms when she miraculously survives Stansford's attack. In fact, it could be said that it is thanks to Stansford's crime that Matilda has the chance to abandon the corrupted world in which her father lived and get through Léon a second chance in life. The plot subverts thus the habitual confrontation between good and evil in contemporary fiction: Stansford, the representative of the law, becomes Matilda's evil persecutor, while Léon, who makes a living outside legality by doing evil, becomes her angelic protector.

After their first accidental meeting, Matilda and Léon embark on a relationship that breaks all the imaginable taboos. Matilda strikes a rather peculiar bargain with Léon: she teaches her illiterate protector how to read and write in exchange for his teaching her how to use a gun, which will enable her to carry out the act of revenge she dreams of. This is nothing but killing Stansford, the monster who has murdered her

family and, especially, her innocent four-year-old brother. Although Léon is, like Justin, reluctant to let the child enter his life, he is soon charmed by the vivacious, bold Matilda and lets himself be trapped into the role of her father figure and tutor, to the point of sacrificing his own life in the explosion that he sets up to kill Stansford and fulfil her dreams of revenge. The story ends with a reformed Matilda—no longer a Lolita in miniskirts and heavy make-up but an average schoolgirl—going back to her very conservative school after having inherited the money that Léon has left to her. This money, won by Léon's killings, is meant to act as a protection against the risk of Matilda's returning to the unstable life that she led with her family. The ending of Besson's film underlines the ease with which the child may resume normality, as for Matilda, Léon's sacrifice and love, while real, are part of a fantasy that she can safely outgrow. Unlike Chuck, the child of *The Man without a Face*, who is certainly aware of the price paid by Justin for having accepted his friendship, Matilda seems not to have fully grasped the magnitude of her protector's sacrifice. In fact, despite its being set in contemporary America, *Léon* seems more like a fairy tale with a princess, an enchanted monster that she redeems and a horrifying ogre who persecutes both than a realistic story.

Yet, ultimately, both are grounded on the same idea. The father figures Matilda and Chuck find in their way may be flawed—one is a killer, the other has been involved in a death—but what they learn from these monsters in terms of love and respect is much more than anybody else has ever offered or will ever offer to them. By focusing on extraordinary figures like Léon and Justin and on their altruistic devotion to the child's happiness, both films underline the shortcomings of average adults: only the monsters of children's own fantasies really understand them—the average adults reject the monster because they actually reject the child. Yet, this is a message addressed by adults to other adults which ultimately excludes the child. *The Man without a Face* was classified by the BBFC as a film only suitable for persons over 15; ironically this rating would exclude Chuck, its protagonist, from the audience. I have already remarked how paradoxical the situation of the child acting in horror films for adults is, but there seems to be an even greater paradox in the situation of the child not allowed to see a film about how positive the relationship between children and adults can be. The case of *Léon* is more debatable, for Besson's film clearly aims at attracting adults, especially men, with Matilda's naive eroticism. Nonetheless, regardless of the possible reasons why adults should feel attracted to seeing these two films, they border on territory that is common for both child and adult. Actually, Gibson's and Besson's films deal with the child's fantasy about a 'special' adult friend who fulfils the child's need for sympathy better than his or her own parents. The enormous success of another film with the same subject, *The Terminator 2*, proves how well children tune in to this kind of fantasy.

I have already referred to the plot of *The Terminator 2* in chapter 3 and in chapter 6, so here I should like to focus on the relationship between the hero, ten-year-old John Connor, and the 'good' Terminator sent by the forty-five-year-old Connor from the future to protect him and his mother Sarah. In principle, there is little to commend Connor as a role model for the 1990s child. He has a criminal record, uses foul language, disregards the injunctions of his caring foster parents and is seen in the film using his abilities to ransack an automatic teller. Lacking a father—Kyle died in 1984, in the first encounter between the 'bad' Terminator and Sarah Connor—and missing his mother, who is an inmate of a psychiatric hospital, John is presented as a child on the verge of becoming an irredeemable criminal. His salvation is secured in the nick of time by the second Terminator, a T-1 coming from the future, but also a father figure that the

adult John himself has programmed to suit the needs of his young, hopeless self. This new relationship between the child and his surrogate father is based on a reversal of roles: the T-1 has been programmed to obey John's orders, which is the excuse for a rather droll episode in which John enjoys the luxury of ordering the monster about. However, the episode also involves an incident which forces John to pass in one instant from being the child in the relationship to assuming the role of the adult. When the T-1 is about to execute a couple of young thugs John intervenes to teach the machine that he must not kill people. Like any child, the T-1 first questions John why he should restrain himself but ends up accepting John's teachings on trust.

The following episodes in the film concern the meeting of Sarah, her child and the T-1. In fact, by the time she is rescued from the institution where she is imprisoned, the bond between the T-1 and John has been consolidated and so the relationship between Sarah and John is relegated to the background. The relationship between mother and son is tense and this makes John seek affection in the machine, where he can find none. Sarah is angry that he had to rescue her and shows no signs of affection for John who obviously craves for a more doting mother. There is indeed something deeply sad about the situation of a child so starved of human love that he turns to a non-human monster for companionship. Sarah herself acknowledges John's pressing need for a father who can help him to take the first steps on the path to adulthood but her search for the ideal father that can take the child from her hands and initiate him into the rituals of masculinity has seemingly met with many failures. This is why, when she is preparing herself to die in the attempt to prevent the engineer Dyson from developing the computer SkyNet that will build the Terminators in the future, she decides to leave John in the T-1's hands. "In an insane world", she says, "this was the safest choice".

By eulogising the T-1's loyalty to John, Sarah disparages all men. Since John is humankind's best hope for the future, with her acceptance of the T-1 as his surrogate father Sarah actually accuses all men of having failed humankind because of their incapacity to be good, supportive, caring fathers—unlike this machine. Accepting the T-1 as John's new father also means severing the ties between John and a human model of masculinity. Because of the weak men she has met, Sarah forces John to erect a new model of masculinity on his own. This is based on the memory of his dead father Kyle (who seems to be the only exception to Sarah's androphobia, possibly because John himself chose Kyle in the future to be his own father), the example of his courageous mother and, above all, the T-1. The film does not suggest, however, that the T-1 replaces Sarah in giving life to John by saving him from the evil T-1000 or that he is working to be a better mother than Sarah, as Susan Jefford argues (1993: 248). What the film says is that John cannot learn everything from Sarah and that a boy's balanced upbringing requires the presence of a father. Quite a different matter is whether this is a conservative idea—I personally think it is not—and why this film reveals so little about the difficult years Sarah has spent alone with her child, nor about the future they will have to face together. The relationship between Sarah and John reaches a critical point in the episode of her confrontation with Dyson, whom Sarah cannot kill, presumably because she cannot bring herself to murder a man who is a beloved father and husband. Her pent-up anger explodes in a feminist outburst that John simply rejects: saying that all women are creative and that all men are destructive, as she does, may be nothing but pure realism for Sarah, but it is not an idea a ten-year-old boy can accept from his own mother, for it denies his own status as the future saviour of humankind.

In any case, what does the T-1 do to deserve the title of father of humankind that Sarah and John grant him? Apart from warding off the threat posed by the T-1000 and

being John's patient playmate, the T-1 distinguishes himself because he commits suicide. Like *Léon*, *The Terminator 2* ends with the sacrifice of the monstrous father: the T-1 descends into a vat of melted metal rather than risk the chance of letting the chip that controls his brain be found by Cyberdine. A weeping John protests that he is losing a father, but the T-1 reminds him that he was nonetheless a very limited father, for he is not human: "I don't know why you are crying", he tells a disconsolate John, "but it's something I could never do". The sacrifice returns the child to Sarah but when they face the road symbolizing the unknown future together, John is no longer mother's boy but a new man, who has learned the value of altruistic sacrifice. The T-1 has set for him an example of self-denial that presumably enables John to become the leader of the future underground resistance against SkyNet, but it has also told him with his final speech that Sarah can teach him the meaning of human emotion much better than a machine, much better than a man.

The lonely mother has been assisted in her task of channelling the child's impulses from criminal destruction to heroic redemption by a monstrous father who has proved to be better than any human father. Obviously, the arrival of the monstrous father happens because the real father is dead, and this also the case in *Léon* and *Man without a Face*: we never know what kind of father Kyle would have been for John if the original T-1 had not killed him. John's choice to replace Kyle proves successful but, as the T-1 reminds him, it is not totally appropriate. This is a lesson that John must still learn. In any case, the child stands for the future man as well as for the man of the future:

It is thus John Connor and not Sarah Connor or the Terminator who holds the real power of these films, and marks himself as the hero of Hollywood sequels, for it is he who survives the destruction of the 'old' masculinity, witnessing teary-eyed the Terminator's destruction. As he stands above the melting Terminators, audiences are to recognize in John Connor not only the father of his own and the human future, but the new masculinity as well. (Jeffords, 1993: 260)

The sacrifice of the monstrous father is a necessary measure to let the child progress towards a better future, free from the constraints of patriarchy that bind both women and men. The fact that these surrogate fathers can only show their love for the child by disappearing from the child's life shows that masculinity is suffering a process of reconstruction—the old father is gone, but the new has not yet arrived. Meanwhile these eccentric surrogate fathers point at the new directions masculinity should take or avoid and delegate in woman—Chuck's mother, Sarah, Matilda's teachers—the responsibility for the successful passage of the child into adulthood. The child itself—Chuck, Matilda, John—is a promise of that brighter future, which might or might not arrive, depending on whether the monstrous father can be replaced with a father who will stand by the child.

Conclusions

The monstrous child is defined by a set of anxieties endured by adults, who write the films and novels for adults in which the child monster appears. This is a figure that has little to do with real children and more to do with the adults' difficulties to express fears about their shortcomings as parents, ranging from pregnancy itself to the moment of granting autonomy to the adolescent child. Although very often the destruction of the monstrous child is justified by the fact of its being the result of an unnatural birth or a supernatural transformation which distinguishes it from actual children, the question is

that now more than ever children appear as aggressive figures whose death is excusable in adult fantasies that are very far from the myth of innocent childhood. They probably embody a form of unconscious rage against children that is not allowed to take a more manifest form in our times, when child abuse in real life is being denounced at so many levels and when parents, aware of the pressure society puts on them, are at a loss as to how to bring up their children correctly.

The function of the monstrous child is to act as a legitimate object of hatred that helps adults to deal with their mistrust of the myth of the innocence of the child and that allows them to cope with the aspects of children they dislike most. However, the exaggerated features of the monstrous child and the fact that most monstrous children are in fact miniaturised adult monsters also serves the function of forcing adults to consider the enormous distance between the child monster and normal children and, indeed, their own role in the formation of the image of the monstrous child. Very often, the figure of the monstrous child acts as a mirror in which the real monster-makers are reflected. The monstrous children are, indeed, often manifestations of the abuse they have endured at the hands of the adults and so their function is often to highlight the adults' guilt in the making of the monstrous child.

The criticism of the presence of the monster in fiction for children follows lines similar to the criticism of horror fiction in general. It is assumed that the monster, together with the violence that surrounds its figure, may be harmful for immature readers or viewers. However, defenders of the uses of fantasy, and even of the horrific material it may employ, argue that children can safely process stories that adults might not recommend to them on the grounds that these stories fulfil subconscious needs of the child which are badly understood by adults. Although there is a rather high degree of liberal and conservative censorship—aimed at protecting, respectively, the psychological and the moral development of the child—and even of self-censorship in fiction for children, nevertheless, a few paradoxical cases, such as the generalized acceptance of *Jurassic Park*, prove that there is not a clear criteria as to what is harmful for children. In any case, the most sensible approach is not to isolate children from the monster but to carefully tutor the child's exposure to fiction for children, or even for adults, about monstrosity, violence and horror.

Within fiction for adults the monster often occupies the place of the father in relation to the child. In some narratives the guilty father (usually guilty of abuse) is exonerated of his guilt and forgiven by the child, but destroyed nonetheless by evil forces that have possessed him thanks to his moral weakness. In other narratives, a monster assumes the father's position and builds a relationship with the child based on mutual respect, though this relationship must be often sacrificed to secure the child's welfare. In those cases, the child must overcome the loss of the monstrous father figure by accepting his or her own new maturity. The child is then prepared to face the future, a future that will hopefully be shaped by likewise open-minded children who have learnt from the monster how to be more tolerant and, hence, better persons.

CONCLUSIONS

As long as human beings feel the need to redefine the meaning of humanity, there will be a space for the monster in culture, understood in its amplest sense. The ubiquity of the monster in the British and the American cultural products of the 1980s and 1990s demonstrates that in these years the anxieties concerning the definition of what it is to be human run deep in the collective unconscious: the monsters are the symptoms that reveal the existence of those anxieties. The images of monstrosity are used to mark the limits of the abnormal, the intolerable, the subhuman and the barbaric but since they also connote power, monsters also delimit the extraordinary and the superhuman. The monster is entrenched in the cultural space where the current economic system—international or late capitalism—and the unstable contemporary system of moral values intersect: the extreme fascination caused by the varied iconography of monstrosity goes hand in hand with the extreme moral disgust elicited by the human evil monster.

The monster occupies a prominent place in all the ranges of contemporary culture. In fact, the monster of, roughly, the last fifteen years is a truly postmodernist construct, for it ignores the barriers dividing the popular from the elite, genre fiction from the mainstream—barriers artificially set up by the university and the current systems of book publishing and film distribution. The monster is thus a figure as familiar to the *connoisseur* of contemporary literary fiction as for the avid consumer of low-budget horror films. However, in spite of the monster's carnivalesque, postmodernist breaking down of cultural boundaries, it cannot be really stated that the contemporary monster is a countercultural construct: on the contrary, it appears to be a figure perfectly integrated within the contemporary cultural panorama. The potential subversiveness of the monster as a countercultural figure is thoroughly negated—counteracted—by the capitalist system, which, being by definition a system rooted on the cult to novelty, makes cultural subversiveness virtually impossible.

As far as the narrative media in which the monster appears are concerned, it must be concluded that the figure of the monster is especially useful to prove that there is a very fluid relationship between film and the novel, not only because of the many screen adaptations of novels but also because of the reverse influence of film on the strategies of visualization of the contemporary novel. The many multimedia texts about monstrosity also indicate that films and novels must be understood as just some of the ingredients in complex narrative texts also encompassing comics, television series, video-games and even advertising. The last technological wave to have swept the Western world, including the development and popularization of computers and video-tape recorders in the 1980s, has brought about fundamental changes in the way that the texts about monstrosity are produced and consumed. Speaking about films and novels as discrete cultural units makes no sense in a world in which consumers are used to enjoying the same story in multiple formats.

Technology is also reshaping the figure of the monster. This is happening at two levels. First, technology is conditioning aesthetics, as I have determined in my analysis of the role of film special effects artists. Infographics is still in the early stages of its development, and so, it is plain common sense to suppose that still unforeseeable

developments in this field will radically change the face of the monster in the near future. Moreover, that the process of mutual aesthetic influence between film and fiction will continue. On the other hand, as can be seen with the phenomenon of the American TV series *The X-Files*³⁶—which can be described as an episodic narrative about different forms of monstrosity—the Internet is already playing an important role in the construction of the new narratives about monstrosity: the oncoming episodes are being modelled to the tastes and suggestions of the cybnauts (who, it must be noted, needn't be American) that daily discuss the content of the series in any of the many forums about *The X-Files* open on the Internet. Needless to say, since a number of the films I have analysed in this dissertation are also present in the Internet through home pages or forums of debate, it follows that future sequels or even new films (or novels) may be eventually informed by the opinions of their potential audiences. The process of folklorisation may have found, thus, a new channel thanks to technology.

The aesthetics of monstrosity are framed, on the one hand, by the marvellous—that which is extraordinary and fascinating but not horrific—and, on the other hand, by the horrific, which may be likewise fascinating. The monster must be identified with the extraordinary rather than with simply the horrific; the field of the extraordinary is large enough so as to comprehend the grotesque, the terrifying, the disgusting but also the beautiful, as I have shown, and the simply different. Metamorphosis is the key concept in the current aesthetics of monstrosity: constant change and fluid forms are elements attractive not only to filmmakers interested in representing monstrosity with high quality special effects but also for writers interested in exploring the limits of the human body—as cyberpunk writers do—or the limits of human identity, as those who write about gender roles and evil do. As far as the strategies of visualization of the current cycle of Gothic postmodernist fiction are concerned, it must be noted that the process started in the mid 1970s to search for the limits of the absolutely intolerable image (or narrative) representing monstrosity—what Leslie Fiedler called the limits of absolute atrocity—is not over yet. The amount of cruelty inflicted on human bodies in fiction—both films and novels—has been steadily rising since then and shows, so far, no signs of abating, neither in film nor in the novel. Given the perfection attained by special effect techniques and the development of quality prose capable of conveying a most clear impression of evil, it is certainly hard to imagine what more explicit horrors, what more appalling evil monsters can be given birth to in future fiction. Not only the broken body is essential in fiction about monstrosity. The apocalyptic iconography inspired by the possible images of an impending holocaust—nuclear, or due to chemical or biological warfare—is essential in the 1980s and 1990s: the monster moves in desolate landscapes that belong mainly to a devastated Earth in a near future, though contemporary, everyday settings transformed into an eerie background by the presence of the monster are also common. The future is seemingly a terminal present populated by monsters, while the past seems to have died altogether.

The question of why this expansion of fictional monstrosity is taking place now can only be answered in reference to fundamental aspects of the contemporary world that reach beyond the ambit of culture. There is a widespread feeling that the civilizing project of the Enlightenment—of which the creation of the USA is one of the main achievements—and the ideal of utopia are failing, not because they cannot be fulfilled but because their fulfilment does not guarantee the elimination of evil. Atrocity turns out to

36. *The X-Files*, 1993–, Fox Broadcasting, created by Chris Carter, with David Duchovny as FBI agent Fox Mulder and Gillian Anderson as FBI agent Dana Scully.

be the work of the so-called civilized world rather than the work of an alien, barbarian world populated by monsters. In this sense, we are still living in the aftermath of the events of 1945, including the discovery of the Nazi extermination camps and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; 1989 might turn out to mark, in due perspective, the beginning of another cycle of monstrosity, somewhat less apocalyptic, less pessimistic, though the tragic war in Bosnia might indicate otherwise.

As I see it, the Western world is living the end of a historical cycle marked by the beginning of the end of patriarchy, the overturning of traditional moral and religious values and the rise of a more humanist discourse based on solidarity. These are aspects that, like Dr. Jekyll, have a positive and a negative side. The attempts at redefining gender roles have inspired many monstrous characters that are hindering the path towards a better communication between men and women. If we take into account the greater number of male monsters, it should be inferred that the redefinition of masculinity rather than the redefinition of femininity is currently one of the most problematic cultural issues in the Western world. An idea that should be considered in depth is whether the Industrial Revolution transformed gender roles to a much greater extent than it is habitually assumed. It is my opinion that an eventual equality between men and women will arrive sooner than it is expected because capitalism is blind to gender: women will have the same career opportunities as men when it is proven that they are capable of generating profits in the same measure, something which is already happening in many fields. It would be perhaps more accurate to think of gender relations in terms of how masculinity and femininity have been forced to adjust to the market conditions imposed by capitalism, especially by the liberal capitalism of the 1980s and 1990s. Late capitalism might thus be patriarchy's last creation but also its own nemesis.

The replacement of religious morality by the morality determined by the law and social consensus is leaving many gaps in the fabric of contemporary ethics, involving delicate issues that range from how to deal with mass extermination to how to deal with a handicapped baby. The humanist discourse is gaining converts daily but the defence of nature, of human rights and of solidarity between the West and the countries victimized by colonialism is being carried out against the background of man's increasing violence against the Earth and its inhabitants. The average Western citizen is likely to feel simultaneously threatened by the psychopath-next-door, the invisible conspirational networks of power and his or her own reluctance to face the fact that human beings are much more monstrous and even less human than the fantastic monsters they invent.

At this junction, the monster is indispensable in discussing and redefining the limits of what is tolerable in a society whose level of tolerance is being reshaped by the discourse of political correctness and by the insidious invasion of the individual's privacy by capitalist power. The monster represents everything that disturbs the average citizen of the Western world: the uncontrollable patriarch who abuses women, children and the men who reject patriarchy itself, but also the uncontrollable patriarchal system of technoscience that abuses the whole human species; evil on a massive scale embodied by imaginary alien races standing for our own evil side and evil on an individual scale represented by psychopathic serial killers; the sudden blurring of gender roles and the fear of sexual reproduction. Yet the monster also represents a route of escape towards fantastic worlds in which the individual can feel the vicarious satisfaction of having fought for his or her survival and victory in open confrontation against the systems of power that harass him or her in everyday life; alternatively, the monster may signify a wish-fulfilment fantasy of escape into a world of harmony and

order in which the individual's isolation is dispelled by the monster's bringing in peace and emotional communion with all the isolated others.

Another important point that should be inferred from my analysis of contemporary monstrosity is that the role of the monster is essential in the internationalisation of culture. One wonders where the English-language world begins and where it ends, indeed, whether there are still national cultures at all. The boundaries of the English-language or Anglo-American world are fixed obviously by the availability of the cultural products in English exported by the UK and, especially, by the USA. In this sense, it can be said that all the contemporary national cultures in the Western world—and probably in most nations of the world—are the product of the collision between the native, traditional culture and the English-language view of culture as an exportable commodity. It is not an exaggeration to say that, up to a point, we are all English-language and that the British and the American monsters *are* our monsters, even though these are monsters already sharing their cultural space with the monsters of Japanese popular culture favoured by the younger generations of Western citizens.

Monstrosity is also marked in the 1980s and 1990s by the progressive replacement of the religious supernatural for the technified paranormal. We are now at a turning point in which the idea of monstrosity is shedding its religious overtones and acquiring simultaneously primitive, barbaric and futuristic connotations. Our main anxiety is seemingly a quite Freudian need to establish our true prehistoric origins in the dawn of times and to foresee our final destination in the stars, that is to say, the end of our narrative. The basic questions we address to ourselves through the monster are whether we were born evil—morally monstrous—as a species and whether our collective destiny passes through a monstrous evil act of destruction, such as our own extermination, the destruction of the Earth or that of an alien intelligent race that could bring salvation. These are, obviously, questions that have been asked many times before the 1980s and 1990s and that have been heard with insistence especially since the publication of *Frankenstein* and the subsequent rise of horror fiction and science fiction. What distinguishes the 1980s and 1990s from previous periods is the rotund pessimism of the answers: all these texts about monstrosity proclaim that the human species was born evil and that its history is a narrative about the perfectibility of its power to do evil, culminating not only in the nuclear weapons that can destroy the world but also in the psychotic mass murderer. The problem is that the repetition of these pessimistic answers is blunting their edge: the technophobic, dystopian view of the future and the pessimism about the ceaseless evil done by individuals have become routine and there is a certain impression that, without new narratives offering a gleam of hope, this pervasive gloom cannot be dispelled.

However, these neo-utopian or neo-sentimental narratives seem still far off. As I see it, the pessimistic mood is likely to endure for at least a few more years. No doubt, the almost magical date of the 1st of January of the year 2000 and the events that may have happened by then will greatly condition the future of monstrosity, but, if we take into account that many of the contemporary dystopian texts refer to the first decades of the twenty first century, it could be argued that, so far, the forecast for the immediate future shows no signs that apocalypse has been averted. The discourse of political correctness might no doubt also delimit the future of monstrosity of the next ten years but in my view it will not affect the construction of monstrosity to a very great extent. We may expect many stories about patriarchal, oppressive male monsters fought by women, non-white people and even disabled people but it is unlikely that women,

members of ethnic minorities or the handicapped will cease being represented as monsters: being prejudiced is, simply, part of human nature. In order to avoid the onslaught of the defenders of political correctness, writers and filmmakers will have to move onto more radical forms of monstrosity, more alien, less human—moving further and further into outer space and into our inner mental space. Perhaps the most intriguing question is whether the universal presence of the horrific monsters will be eventually balanced by the presence of the marvellous monsters, which are now clearly outnumbered.

An issue that is definitive in the construction of monstrosity currently and that will still be so in the near future is power. The more power is gained by women and the members of other minorities, the more often will they be represented as monsters, though they will also gain the power to represent themselves or the others as monsters. In fact, it can be said that a clear sign of empowerment is the capacity to represent oneself (or the minority to which one belongs) as a threatening, rather than as an abject, monster. As far as women are concerned, the consolidation of the strong heroine should be accompanied by the search for a specifically feminine view of heroism, but also by the acknowledgement of the role played by women in contemporary patriarchal science and technology and, in general, within the current systems of power. The main question that women will have to face is whether power rather than gender conditions the behaviour of human beings, that is to say, whether women endowed with the same power as men will eventually behave in the same monstrous fashion of monstrous men. Baring and Cashford, whose work has exerted a great influence on this dissertation, conclude their book *The Myth of the Goddess* by stating that “it might be that a rhythmic interchange between archetypal feminine and masculine images (goddesses and gods) is necessary in order to evolve. To remain fixed in either mode may arrest the process of movement” (Baring and Cashford, op. cit.: 608) As I see it, persisting in the idea of this rhythmic interchange may prevent us from founding a necessary, humanist mode beyond gender differences to solve the contradictions of a world that was radically altered with the onset of the Industrial Revolution.

After the box-office failure of *Mary Reilly*, it seems clear that the cycle of screen adaptations of literary classics about monstrosity is over. News about a forthcoming screen adaptation of H.G. Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, suggests that there might be a second wave of neo-Gothic films based on other Gothic classics of the nineteenth century, but, in my opinion, they will not enjoy much popularity, especially among younger audiences. The next wave of screen adaptations dealing with the monster is, in fact, based on comics and video-games, despite the relative failure of a number of recent films based on well-known comics and video-games. However, there is still a vast untapped territory in the classics of twentieth-century genre fiction that filmmakers have not explored yet and that should be presumably the subject of screen adaptations dealing with the monster in the near future. Paul Verhoeven is currently shooting the screen adaptation of Robert Heinlein’s 1950s classic *Starship Troopers*, which promises to be a rather orthodox, high-tech version of the monster films populated by hostile aliens of the 1950s. In general terms, it could be said that films are lagging behind novels as far as the use the integration of the plots into the current technoscientific paradigm is concerned, but that the themes that will be presumably developed are the same: the effects of genetic engineering and biomechanics, the fear of disease (especially AIDS) and death, the anxieties about reproduction and about the creation of intelligent artificial life, worries about a possible loss of the privileges associated to the status of the human species in nature because of an alien invasion or the use of dangerous weapons. The

monsters are and will presumably continue being what technoscience creates but also what technoscience cannot control.

The directions for the future of fictional monstrosity are certainly being marked now by *The X-Files*, a series with which the world of the abnormal and the paranormal has returned to television after decades of absence. What characterizes the series is the conspirational, paranoiac mood—it supposes that the US government not only conceals evidence about alien life but that it has even run secret programmes to create hybrids of alien and human DNA—the constant hesitation between belief and disbelief, and the not less constant search for absolute truth. Although the main message of the series is that there are enigmatic systems of power capable of controlling even those who represent the law, such as the hero Mulder and the heroine Scully, both FBI agents, the series cannot be said to be political or subversive in any sense. If it has found such immediate and widespread success, this must be attributed to the ability of its creator, Chris Carter, to tap a rich vein in contemporary culture that had not been previously channelled towards the mass audiences of television, though it had been finding nourishment precisely films and novels like the ones I have analysed in this dissertation.

Mulder and Scully seem to have been unanimously accepted as the new model heroes of the 1990s possibly because they are also victims of the obscure manoeuvres of their superiors, designed to keep them off the truth. They represent thus the average honest, ‘normal’, citizen who believes that the real monster is not the alien or the freak—if they exist at all—but the powers lurking in the shadows of government. The hero and the heroine (herself inspired by the character of Clarice Starling in *The Silence of the Lambs*) are intelligent, educated, courageous but little inclined to use violence, good at using technological and scientific resources and emotionally controlled, though not to the point of being unable to feel the *frisson* of their encounters with the diverse monsters. These are mainly half-glimpsed aliens, intelligent machines, peculiar freakish mutants, and people with paranormal psychic powers often rooted in psychological traumas, all signifying the dark underside of everyday life. The creators of *The X-Files* are gathering together all the different strands of contemporary monstrosity, covering with their work a very wide range that encompasses the traditional and the futuristic. The series can be said to link the past of monstrosity with its future.

The culture produced in the 1980s and 1990s is still largely ignored by the university, though in comparison to previous periods in the history of scholarship and criticism it can be said that contemporary culture in all its ranges is receiving more attention now than ever. Much theory is written about the meaning of culture and about cultural studies but there is little actual information about individual cultural products and not enough interest in a multidisciplinary approach to contemporary culture which may be adequate to encompass in all their extent complex cultural constructions such as monstrosity. The present dissertation shows that it is possible to do fruitful research on the culture of the most recent years, but that this is only done adequately if the researcher keeps his or her eyes open to the whole reality of the times and not only to fiction, or to the theory currently written on fiction. The study of contemporary culture is usually carried out from a limited and limiting perspective: much more attention is devoted to theory than to the tangible reality of what is being written and filmed now. By assembling a large amount of information about the novels and films of the period under discussion, I have proved that there is a very large field of study waiting to be explored. The impression that almost everything has been researched, studied and written about turns out to be completely false: with more receptiveness to the world that surrounds us and in which we live, it can be easily seen that the future of cultural

studies—in which I would include literary and film studies—passes through the study of the immensely rich field of contemporary culture.

In general, it must be concluded that the average consumer of culture, especially if s/he is not older than thirty, is much better informed about the texts I have discussed in this dissertation than the average scholar-critic. This is due in part to the excessive fragmentation of the cultural reality as seen by the university, a situation that should be corrected by producing work of a more synthetic quality. This dissertation aims, precisely, at indicating new possible paths for this type of synthetic research. I have proved that the excessive fragmentation of literary and film studies is obscuring the very close relationship between the two narrative media—not to mention their relationship with other media. I have proved that film and the novel can be not only compared but also studied together and that the treatment that both narrative media give to some subjects, such as monstrosity, has many points in common despite the evident differences between films and novels. This dissertation also questions the definition of genre, which is too narrow and imprecise: the notion of separate genres cannot account for the fact that most contemporary narratives mix elements from different ‘genres’ nor for the fact that most audiences are proficient at decoding these mixed narratives. My work proves that it is possible to cross the artificial barriers separating diverse genres, and also genre fiction from the mainstream: this dissertation demonstrates that these barriers are arbitrary and that a whole new, productive range of research opens up if they are questioned. Aspects of contemporary culture that seem isolated can be seen from a unifying perspective that shows their forming a cultural continuum.

The present dissertation establishes, in addition, that the current systems of distribution of culture, or marketing, and the technological advances applied to the production of contemporary culture play a major role in shaping culture today. Contemporary culture can only be fully understood with regards to the conditions in which culture is marketed; these conditions are as important for an understanding of culture today as the study of the intellectual and ideological currents forging the cultural products consumed today. So far, aspects such as the marketing strategies of publishing houses and film distributors have received little or no attention at all—novels and films are usually studied in a strange void, in which the size of the audiences that they reach or their composition is neglected. This situation must be radically altered: it is necessary to learn more about who causes the cultural products to circulate and who consumes them. This dissertation also suggests that, since the current system of distribution of novels and films is controlled by multinational corporations, the nationality of the products of culture should be questioned. As I have shown, we are all English-languages and, partly, Japanese. This breaking down of national cultural barriers also deserves attention.

Within the specific territory of the history of the evolution of culture it seems clear to me that the place occupied by Gothic fiction has been so far totally undervalued. The references to the importance and influence of Gothic are still too timid and explain only inadequately that there are evident links between the eighteenth century genre and much contemporary culture. In fact culture is no longer shaped by the realistic paradigm, if it ever was. Mainstream realism is but one of the contemporary ‘modes’ of fiction—and not the main one. Contemporary English-language culture is a culture dominated by the rich legacy of Gothic, which passed from nineteenth-century Britain to the USA and hence to so-called popular culture. I am not suggesting simply that the original Gothic romances should be granted a place of honour in the history of literature, or the history of Western culture. My suggestion is that a totally new, alternative view of literature

should be seriously considered: instead of a canonical tradition based mainly on realism, for which 'genre' fiction is marginal, literature should be seen as a constant interplay between this tradition and a parallel tradition of the fantastic, whose current cycle begins with eighteenth-century Gothic fiction and which is, ultimately, more relevant to an understanding of contemporary culture.

Throughout this dissertation I have evidenced the limitations of theoretical discourses that enjoy now a widespread acceptance. I have insisted with special emphasis on the ambivalence of the tenets supported by 'feminism' or 'feminisms'. In chapter 7 I have proved that gender studies are still too constricted by the attention paid to feminist issues; there is still little fruitful comparison between the cultural products that men and women create and a pressing need to establish a humanist discourse that addresses the person rather than the man or the woman. I have, likewise, relativized the enormous influence exerted by psychoanalysis (Freudian or Lacanian) and by Jung's psychology of the archetypes on the analysis of contemporary fiction. I have done so by bringing into this dissertation other discourses, ranging from sociology to mythography and passing through ethics. In this dissertation I have proposed a new type of multidisciplinary discourse which is not tied to a single theoretical point of view and which allows the researcher more intellectual flexibility. In any case, this dissertation also shows that it is necessary to see the culture produced by the English-language world—our culture, I would insist once more—from a largely anthropological point of view that takes into account everything that shapes a culture: the pre-historical and the historical (even the post-historical), myth and postmodernist fiction, ritual and the systems of distribution of culture, belief and secularized relativism. Because the English-language world is the 'centre' of culture there is possibly an advantage in seeing its products from a position of relative marginalization such as mine: being a Spaniard, I can see this 'other' culture—which is nonetheless also my own—with new eyes, in a way similar to how the anthropologist sees foreign cultures. This position cannot be so easily assumed, I think, when looking at one's own 'tribe'.

As far as the subject of monstrosity itself is concerned, this dissertation proves first, that the monster is not at the margins but at the centre of culture—or, alternatively, that the centre is constantly reshaped by cultural constructs traditionally neglected on the grounds of their being marginal. The monster is a sign of the times, a symptom of the crisis of civilization and a challenge to traditional ideas about aesthetics. By linking different aspects of monstrosity—human and non-human, aesthetic and moral, mythical and postmodernist—I have proven that the narrow definition of the monster as a horrific creature must be replaced by a new definition that takes into account a new, open, alternative view of aesthetics in which fascination rather than beauty is the key word. My dissertation also establishes that isolating different kinds of monsters by classifying them into different types, or trying to define those types, goes against the grain of the very definition of monstrosity: the monster is protean and cannot be dealt with from a taxonomic point of view, for there will always be exceptions to whatever rules may be established.

The directions for future research are many. Apart from the study of still neglected contemporary films, novels, writers and filmmakers, there is a particularly attractive challenge to be faced: the writing of a comprehensive history of the novel in English of the 1980s and the early 1990s that brings together the mainstream and genre fiction, the novels by men and those by women. This history would also take into account ideally, first, how the novel is related to other narrative media such as film and, second, how the evolution of the novel is conditioned not only by the selective habits of

the university but also by the systems of book production and distribution. Obviously, much more work could be done on screen adaptations based on the idea that an adaptation is not simply a film but part of a global narrative composed of the original novel and the film, together with other screen adaptations or film sequels. Also, further research should be done in film studies regarding the role of screen playwrights, either original or adapters, and the connections of film with other narrative media—novels and novelizations, but also comics, video-games and TV series.

Within the very large field I have covered in this dissertation there are a number of issues that I think do deserve further attention. Each chapter may be regarded in fact as the embryo of a prospective book on a different aspect of monstrosity. Yet I would like to refer here to a number of subjects that I have not been able to develop in this dissertation to the extent that they deserve but that have attracted my attention as my research progressed. Originally, this dissertation started as a project on the strategies of visualization we use when we read; it was my initial purpose to relate the way we see the monster of the novel to the way the monster is visualized for us in films, especially in adaptations. This is a subject that I very much would like to consider in future research as I am especially interested in how written and audio-visual narratives interact. The relationship between technology and aesthetics in the last two decades is another topic I would like to research in the future, together with the question of why the monstrous can be a source of fascination as potent as beauty. The relationship between sentimentalism and horror and between humour and horror in contemporary film and the novel also deserve attention, without forgetting the question of who the audience of horror fiction—film and novel—actually are.

Other topics I would like to consider in the near future are the definition of the Gothic postmodernist fiction, the role of myth in postmodernist capitalism and the role of censorship in popular culture. Since I have been arguing throughout this dissertation that we are at a turning point in the history of the English-language world, informed by the impression that the civilizing project of the Enlightenment is failing, I must point out the need to do further research on the growth of dystopia, and on the extent to which the English-language world can be identified with the Western world in general. Throughout the elaboration of this dissertation I have borne in mind the fact that, even though I am neither British nor American, the English-language culture I have been researching is my own and that of many of my fellow country(wo)men. Hence my interest in studying how and why the fantasies and the anxieties of the English-language world may condition the worldview of a European, Mediterranean person like me. In my view, a parallel book should be written about how Japanese popular culture, itself conditioned by the English-language world, is now conditioning in its turn the Western world through its exports of popular culture—a culture inhabited by countless monsters. Apart from all these topics, there are two that are especially attractive for me: the overdue comparison between the monstrous-feminine and the monstrous-masculine and the role of the monster in cultural products for children.

The long pilgrimage of the monster towards academic respectability has not yet reached its end. It is my hope that this dissertation and the future work that can be derived from it prove that monstrosity is but the tip of a magnificent cultural iceberg that can only be explored with the multidisciplinary approach to culture afforded by cultural studies. Until now the monster has been dealt with as a figure outside the realm of humanity, but it seems to me that the real use of studying the monster is learning that it is 'one of us', our own creation and hence, our own mysterious double. Monsters are not 'freaks of culture' but images of our deepest selves. The monster delineates, thus, the

human and the subhuman in us, but it also defines our still to be fulfilled aspirations to become, one day, more human than we are now—more human than human.

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Lambeth Lizzie is a reputed vaudeville actress in late 19th century London who works for the company of the popular transvestite Dan Leno. Her speciality is impersonating men, which complements Leno's famous impersonations of women. Lizzie eventually gives up acting when she marries John Cree, a moderately rich man. However, her new life as the respectable Mrs. Cree is not as satisfactory as she expected, especially because her own repressions prevent her from having sex with her husband. Meanwhile, a series of gruesome murders attributed to a legendary killer, nicknamed the Golem, take place in the Limehouse district of London. Lizzie suspects that her husband is the real murderer and poisons him, for which she is finally hanged. Yet, the diaries of John Cree, which seemingly confirm Lizzie's suspicions, are never found. As it turns out, Lizzie herself is the notorious Golem: her passion for impersonating men has led her to act out her repressions by usurping her husband's personality. She kills, thus, while impersonating John, her last victim.

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Hawksmoor narrates the downfall and mental breakdown of two men: Nick Dyer, an 18th century architect commissioned to build seven churches in London, and Nick Hawksmoor, who is investigating a series of murders taking place in Dyer's churches in the 1980s. Dyer is an irrational, superstitious man. He is the follower of an obscure cult that leads him to sacrifice one person in each of his churches in a ritual of blood. Hawksmoor is, on the contrary, a rational investigator proud of his scientific skills, who is slowly trapped by the web of bizarre coincidences surrounding the crimes. The novel is also partly about the permanence of evil throughout time: the victims are similar in both periods and, since for Dyer his churches are a way of surviving the passage of time, he may well have survived until the 20th century to challenge Hawksmoor's rationality. His past and present evildoing suggest that reason cannot defeat evil and the barbaric cults that celebrate it.

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*Film based on the novel: Roger Corman, 1990, *Frankenstein Unbound*

In 2020 the space-time barrier is ruptured by a device to end the ongoing war. A middle-aged deposed presidential advisor, American Joseph Bodenland, disappears in a time warp that takes him to Switzerland in 1816. There he meets Victor Frankenstein and his monster, but also Shelley, his wife Mary and Byron. Bodenland tells Mary about how her novel will become famous one day. They make love while Frankenstein is busy fashioning a female monster out of Justine's dead body. Horrified by the sight of the monstrous couple having sex, Bodenland determines to kill Victor and his creations. When the two monsters run away, Victor decides to create a second male, expecting jealousy to upset the couple, but

Bodenland kills him before he can make this third monster. Then he stalks the runaways, exterminating them both in a near future where another time warp has left the three of them stranded.

Amis, Martin. *Time's Arrow*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1991.

The anonymous narrator of *Time's Arrow*, angel or conscience, reviews the life of his host, Tod Friendly, beginning with his death and moving backwards in time towards his birth. Tod's biographer is increasingly disoriented, for he has access to Tod's emotions but not to his thoughts. He is surprised to eventually find out that Tod used to be known by the name of Odilo Unverdorben and that he was a Nazi doctor who found shelter in the USA. While working in Auschwitz Odilo was an assistant of the infamous Dr. Mengele. There Odilo had presumably collaborated in Mengele's horrific experiments with babies, but he was lucky enough to leave his past behind first by escaping to Portugal, abandoning his wife and child, and later to the USA under a false identity. When the narrator reaches Odilo's early years, he discovers that there is nothing in them to mark Odilo as an exceptionally immoral man—the times marked him.

Andrews, Virginia. *Flowers in the Attic* (1979). London: HarperCollins, 1995.

*Film based on the novel: Jeffrey Bloom, 1987, *Flowers in the Attic*

The four Dollanganger children—Cathy, Chris, and the twins Cory and Carrie—lead a sheltered, happy life until their beloved father dies in a car crash. His death leaves the family in absolute poverty and, so, the mother takes the children to her parents' mansion, where they are locked in the attic under the care of their brutal grandmother. The mother explains that their stern but very wealthy grandfather disinherited her when she married their father—her own uncle—but that his impending death will make them rich, for she intends to win back his affection. Her father is not aware of the children's existence and her plan is to keep it a secret. However, little by little, she conveniently forgets about the prisoners to the point of actually marrying another man and letting Cory die of pneumonia. Cathy and Chris, deeply in love after three years, finally plan a escape for them and Carrie.

Asimov, Isaac. *The Robots of Dawn* (1984). London: HarperCollins, 1994.

Elijah Bailey, an Earth plainclothes detective, is called to Aurora to solve the mystery of the 'death' of R. Jander Panell, a humaniform robot. R. Jander was the 'husband' of Gladia Delmarre, a widow to whom the robot had been offered by his creator, Dr. Fastolffe. He has called Bailey to help him clear his name of any suspicion of roboticide. As it turns out, R. Giskard, Fastolffe's other robot, has caused the freeze-out of Jander's positronic brain when he realizes that Dr. Amadiro, Fastolffe's arch-rival, can obtain from Jander the information to create others like him for space exploration. Since Fastolffe opposes this use of robots, for fear they might eventually create their own society, R. Giskard, who is actually a freak robot accidentally programmed so that he can read minds, kills R. Jander, acting in the interests of his master.

Bainbridge, Beryl. *An Awfully Big Adventure*. London: Duckworth, 1989.

* Film based on the novel: Mike Newell, 1995, *An Awfully Big Adventure*

Stella, a 16-year-old girl abandoned by her mother because she is an illegitimate child, joins a theatrical company in Liverpool in the late 1940s. She is wilful and capricious and when she falls in love with the director of the company, Meredith, she is so blind to anything but herself that she fails to see that he is a corrupter of young men. When eventually another actor, O'Hara—a womaniser who knows

about Meredith's sex life—is called to bring some lustre to the company, Stella starts an affair with him that she handles in a cold, aloof way. She fails to react with some emotion even when O'Hara accidentally kills himself, after finding out that Stella is his own daughter. The several subplots deal with unrequited love and explore how those who are loved may behave monstrously towards their lovers.

Banks, Iain. *The Wasp Factory* (1984). London: Abacus, 1990 (1993).

Frank Cauldhame, 17, lives on a Scottish island with his father Angus, an ex-hippy. There, Frank performs odd, violent rituals that once included the killing of three children for which he has never been blamed. Frank, who does not officially exist, was abandoned by his mother, whom he hates, and has been educated by his father into believing a collection of absurdities. The family is completed by Eric, a madman on the run from the psychiatric unit where he was secluded after suffering a breakdown when training in the ward for severely malformed babies of a Glasgow hospital. Frank gives many hints as to being strangely disabled: he claims that he was attacked by the family dog when he was three and castrated. However, Frank's misogynistic, macho-style universe is shattered when he finds out that his father lied to him, and that he is in fact a woman, Frances.

Banville, John. *The Book of Evidence*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1989.

Freddie Montgomery, imprisoned for life for kidnapping and murdering a young woman, has waited in vain for the chance to become a media celebrity during his trial. Since he has been denied the chance to offer his testimony in court, he writes instead a 'book of evidence', expecting that this will give him his fifteen minutes of fame, though not a real moral understanding of his crime. Freddie tried to steal one of his friend Anna Behrens' paintings, which he wanted to sell in order to raise money for the ransom demanded by the gangsters who held his wife and child captive in a foreign country. Yet the robbery was discovered by Anna's maid, whom Freddie kidnapped and later killed seemingly because he could not get rid of her. Later, Freddie let himself be caught, longing for the relief of public confession, though he was obviously more interested in his public exposure than in his redemption.

Barker, Clive. *The Hellbound Heart* (1987). London: Fontana, 1991.

* Film based on the novella: Clive Barker, 1987, *Hellraiser*.

Frank invokes the demonic Cenobites in his brother Rory's empty house, thanks to the Lemarchand box. They grant Frank his wish of most intense pleasure, but, because of his arrogance, Frank is punished with the dismemberment of his body, though his mind survives the ordeal intact. A drop of Rory's blood accidentally triggers the remaking of Frank's body. He next engages the help of Rory's wife, Julia, who still loves him, years after the only sexual encounter she had with him. Though she is at first horrified, Julia soon sees that helping Frank means controlling him and, so, she starts picking up lonely men for Frank to kill and feed on. Yet her activities are discovered by Kirsty, a shy, plain friend of Rory's, who comes across Frank, then only partly remade, when spying on Julia. After stealing his box, Kirsty leads the Cenobites back to Frank. They dismember him for good, granting custody of the box to Kirsty.

Barker, Clive. *The Books of Blood, Volume 5*. London: Sphere, 1985.

*Film based on the story "The Forbidden": Bernard Rose, 1992, *Candyman*

Helen is a PhD student working on a dissertation about graffiti, of which she finds many samples in the derelict Spector Street State in Liverpool. There she contacts a young, single mother (Anne-Marie) who tells her about a series of grisly murders

the police claim to know nothing about. In one of the abandoned flats Helen finds an intriguing wall painting of a monstrous man and when he appears to seduce her, she realizes that the whole state is involved in his cult, which claims human sacrifices. These soon include Anne-Marie's baby and Helen herself, who is burnt at the Guy Fawkes bonfire. Her horrific death transforms Helen into yet another sinister local legend.

Barker, Clive. *Imajica* (1991). London: HarperCollins, 1994.

Gentle, a London painter specialised in producing fakes, is sucked into a bizarre adventure when he becomes involved with Pie, the man sent to murder Gentle's ex-mistress, Judith. Pie, an androgynous shape-shifter, is actually a 'mystif', an angelic inhabitant of another dimension in the Imajica, which encompasses four dominions and the Earth, the only one sealed up from the others. Gentle leaves with Pie for Yzzorderex, the capital of the main dominion. Eventually Judith, whose new lover is a member of a secret society seeking the opening of the Earth to the Imajica, follows him. As it turns out, Gentle is actually the double of a magician, Sartori (now Yzzorderex's dictatorial Autarch) born 200 years ago of the union between a human woman—Celestine—and the patriarchal God Hepaxamendios. Judith is herself a copy of Sartori's wife. Eventually Pie tells Gentle that he has been chosen by the goddesses, whose throne Hepaxamendios usurped, to liberate them by destroying Sartori's empire. Gentle does so, leaving Judith with the liberated goddesses. He begins then a new life with Pie in the dominions.

Bear, Greg. *Blood Music* (1985). London: Legend, 1988.

Vergil Ulam, a genetic engineer, develops intelligent blood cells—'noocytes'—that he injects into himself. He then develops a new contagious disease that gives his body a new, aberrant morphology. Neither Vergil's death, nor the also diseased Dr. Bernard, who offers himself as a specimen to a European laboratory, can halt the spread of the disease. The noocytes seemingly seduce all their hosts into accepting their dissolution and integration within the communal 'Noosphere'. As Bernard and others are offered the choice of a new life based on a reconstruction of their most valued memories within the Noosphere, the noocytes spread worldwide. While the individual self is replicated, so that there is no longer an original self but many avoiding death by sharing their memories in the Noosphere, the noocytes disappear in their exploration of the very small, leaving chaos behind.

Brown, Christy. *My Left Foot* (1954). London: Minerva, 1990 (1994).

* Film based on the autobiography: Jim Sheridan, 1989, *My Left Foot*

Christy Brown (1932-1981) was one of the 23 children born to a Dublin bricklayer and his wife. He was affected by cerebral palsy but was fortunately protected by his mother, who always believed that her child's body and not his mind was crippled, despite the opinions of doctors and relatives. She was proven right when Christy, who had severe speech and mobility problems, learned to spell imitating his siblings but using his left foot instead of his hands. Then, she set out to secure an education for her child, always within a very supportive family context. Brown overcame the deep crisis of his teenage years thanks to his ability to paint and to write. A pilgrimage to Lourdes at the age of 18 reconciled him to his disability, making him see that he was but one member of a large community of sufferers. His book ends with his presentation in society and his vindication of his right to use his left foot regardless of the doctors' advice.

Butler, Olivia. *Wild Seed* (1980). New York: Warner Books, 1988.

Doro is an immortal mind force and also a body snatcher, that is to say, he kills human beings whose bodies he successively occupies. For centuries he has been gathering people of special mental abilities from which he expects to breed a new race of supermen like him. When he meets Anyanwu in Africa his power is challenged for the first time: she is also immortal, a shape-shifter who can take any form but, unlike him, she does not kill. They become lovers but he soon betrays her, forcing her to take one of his sons as her husband and to move to America. She puts up with his manipulation of her husband and their children because she expects to redeem Doro before he becomes completely evil. However, when she finally confronts him, her love only persuades him to stop killing indiscriminately. Seeing that he no longer has unlimited power over her but that he is by no means a controlled force, Anyanwu abandons him to his fate and decides her own: becoming the matriarch of her own tribe.

Card, Orson Scott. *Ender's Game* (1985). New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1986.

Andrew Wiggins, a six-year-old child, is selected to enter the Battle School, which trains officers of the International Fleet, the only effective defence of Earth against the insect-like aliens who have already attacked it twice. Although Andrew, nicknamed Ender, resists the idea of becoming a killer, he responds well to the intensive training, at the cost of nearly losing his humanity. The children of the school are trained with a video game supposed to be a simulation of a real battle. Yet when the maximum level of difficulty is reached and Ender wins the game, he is told he has actually wiped out the aliens. What the commanders ignore is that Ender is playing another game—Free Play—secretly supplied to him by the aliens, who have chosen him as their only hope: he is eventually sent to their empty planet from which he recovers a pupa of an alien queen. His new mission is to preserve the memory of the race he killed, and to find a new location for them to start anew.

Card, Orson Scott. *The Abyss*. London: Legend, 1989.

*Novelization based on the film by James Cameron, 1989, *The Abyss*.

The troubled childhood of Budd, Lindsey and Coffey prepares them for the events that will shape their adult lives. When they meet as adults in the underwater oil rig Deepcore, which Lindsey has designed and Budd's crew operates, the situation is extraordinary: Coffey is a SEAL in charge of a rescue operation involving a missing submarine which carries an atomic bomb. Budd and Lindsey, then about to be divorced, are forced to co-operate with him. Lindsey is then contacted by a race of beautiful aliens who live in the abyss and call themselves 'builders of memory'. They want to prevent humankind from using nuclear weapons; to do so they threaten to unleash a gigantic tidal wave that will sweep the world clean unless nuclear weapons like the one in the submarine are abandoned. When Lindsey confronts and kills Coffey, Budd visits the abyssal aliens to convince them that peace is assured. *Aliens* and human beings become then part of a unique, harmonious mental entity.

Carter, Angela. *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981.

*Film based on the short story "The Company of Wolves": Neil Jordan, 1984, *The Company of Wolves*.

"The Company of Wolves" gathers several stories dealing with the theme of the werewolf. In one story, a hunter who kills a wolf finds that he has dismembered a man; in another, a witch turns the members of a wedding party into a pack of wolves because she wants the groom to serenade her. A woman marries a man who goes missing on their wedding night; when he suddenly returns years later he transforms into a beastly werewolf before her eyes. A young virgin who has just

started menstruating, meets a handsome hunter in the woods, who dares her find the way to her grandmother's house after kissing her. The couple make love on Christmas Eve once he kills her grandmother. Christmas day finds the girl in her lover's arms: both of them are now werewolves.

Carter, Angela. *Nights at the Circus* (1984). London: Picador, 1985.

Fevvers, the Cockney Venus, is a winged woman. She is a successful *aerialist* in a circus, but some suspect her of being a fraud, including a young Californian reporter, Jack Walser. In an interview with him for his series 'Great Humbugs of the World', Fevvers recounts her career: from her humble beginnings as a piece of decoration in a bizarre brothel to the current 'Fevvermania' sweeping Europe. In order to try to discern her real nature, Jack follows Fevvers to Russia, where she is on tour with the circus. There many adventures occur, among them an encounter with bandits in Siberia that leaves him amnesiac and in the hands of a strange tribe who do not distinguish between dream and reality. Fevvers rescues Jack and re-fashions him to become the New Man that will marry her, the New Woman, just when the 20th century begins. Whether she is a genuine freak or not becomes their shared secret.

Charnas, Suzy McKee. *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980). London: The Women's Press, 1995.

Dr. Edward Weyland is a successful anthropology professor specialized in vampire legends and also himself a vampire. His vampiric nature is detected by Katjie de Groot, who prevents him from biting her by shooting him. Badly hurt, Weyland is then trapped by a criminal, who has contacts with a small satanic circle and who exploits him as a highly-priced exhibit. Almost dying of starvation, the vampire is released by the criminal's 14-year-old nephew who pities him and returns to his college still unsuspected. Yet, before being hired again, Weyland is forced to undergo psychiatric treatment to justify his disappearance. His psychiatrist, Floria Landauer, believes that he is a real vampire and tries to turn him human by making him fall in love with her. She almost succeeds in humanising him, but he chooses finally to go back to earth and wake up in another century.

Coetzee, J.M. *Waiting for the Barbarians*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1980 (1983).

The life of an old Magistrate who rules the affairs of a small frontier settlement in an unspecified empire is altered by the visit of Colonel Joll, who is seeking evidence of an impending barbarian attack. The Magistrate discovers too late that Joll's methods to gather evidence involve torture. To ease his own sense of guilt he enters into a liaison with a barbarian woman who was one of Joll's victims. While he travels to return her to barbarian territory, Joll and his regiment occupy the settlement, though there are still no signs of an invasion. On his return, the Magistrate finds that a dictatorship has been imposed in his domain. His Quixotic attempts to save the natives from further torture only result in his humiliation. Eventually Joll and his men go, the regiment perhaps having been lost to the barbarians. The Magistrate reviews what he has seen, finally understanding that both himself and Joll are part of the Empire.

Crichton, Michael. *Jurassic Park*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1990 (1991).

*Film based on the novel: Steven Spielberg, 1993, *Jurassic Park*

A series of strange attacks against people are perpetrated by mysterious animals in Costa Rica in 1989. This coincides with the visit to an island off the coast of a group including the palaeontologist Alan Grant, the palaeobotanist Elli Sattler, the mathematician Ian Malcolm and the children Alexis and Tim. All are invited by

the children's grandfather, John Hammond, a Scottish ex-circus impresario, whose last venture is 'Jurassic Park'. The main attraction of this theme park are live dinosaurs, created out of fossilised DNA, that cannot escape the island or breed. However, Malcolm accurately predicts that the system of control will fail, as it does, and Alan soon discovers that the animals are breeding and that some have already escaped the island. The marauding animals stalk and kill all but Alan, Ellie and the children. They survive, but it is too late to stop the dinosaurs.

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). London: Panther, 1984.

*Film based on the novel: Ridley Scott, 1982, *Blade Runner*.

Rick Deckard is a hitman hired by the police to eliminate five illegal humaniform 'andys' of the Nexus 6 type. With the bounty of this assignment he expects to buy his wife Iran a real sheep to replace their electric pet. However, killing the Nexus 6 is no easy matter. Deckard has an affair with Rachael, a Nexus 6 made by the Rosen Corporation to prove that human and andys can no longer be told apart. Although Dick manages to kill the other andys, he is sickened by the sheer waste of their lives and by the discovery that Rachael's mission was to seduce him in order to make his task morally impossible for him. When he finally claims his reward and buys a real goat, Rachael kills the animal. The only use of the death of the andys is unmasking the addictive Mercer cult, which preaches mystical immortality: the andys' failure to enter the cult shows that loneliness and death cannot be overcome.

Disch, Thomas. *The Businessman: A Tale of Horror* (1984). New York: Berkeley, 1993.

Giselle has been raped and strangled by her husband, businessman Bob Glandier, when she tries to run away from him. She returns to haunt him as a ghost but Glandier is so intent on the macabre pleasures of his new life that he believes Giselle's ghost is part of them. Thus, when they have sex and she conceives a child, he still believes it is all part of his fantasies until the halfling—partly human, partly spirit—contacts him after his bloody birth. The monstrous baby is the ghost of the child Bob forced Giselle to abort and he is set on revenge. The shape-shifting child soon frames his father by committing a series of crimes that are imputed to Bob. Eventually Bob is sent to prison but a pact with the baby releases him. The baby, however, kills Bob. Bob's ghost is then left stranded in his hated relatives' home, which is his own particular vision of hell.

Dobbs, Michael. *House of Cards* (1989). London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

*BBC series based on the novel: Paul Seed, 1990, *House of Cards*

Francis Urquhart is the ambitious Chief Whip of the Tory party. After Thatcher's resignation, Collingridge becomes the new Prime Minister, but when he overlooks Urquhart in the first cabinet reshuffle, the Chief Whip decides to claim his due by other means. Urquhart spreads then a series of false rumours that jeopardise the government, firstly by blackmailing the drug addict who runs the advertising agency tied to the Conservatives, whom he later kills. Secondly, Urquhart involves Collingridge's alcoholic brother in a financial scam. Only Mattie Storin, a political correspondent who works for *The Daily Telegraph*, suspects Urquhart, despite having initially sided with him. When Collingridge is forced to resign she sees his game and confronts him with a recording that inculpates him. In despair, Urquhart throws himself off Big Ben and dies.

Dobbs, Michael. *To Play the King* (1992). London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993.

*BBC series based on the novel: Paul Seed, 1993, *To Play the King*

Francis Urquhart becomes the new Prime Minister under the new king Charles III, a divorced man not too fond of the new PM. Urquhart's position as the successor of Collingridge is contested by other Tories and, to secure it, he organizes a general election that he wins by a narrow margin. Sally Quine, an American journalist, becomes Urquhart's press secretary and also his much abused mistress. When she sees how he manipulates public opinion to the point of almost forcing the King to abdicate, she teams up with Urquhart's main enemy, press tycoon Landless, a victim of Urquhart's blackmail, to bring his downfall. The King finally abdicates, for he thinks that he is not cut for the job, the young Prince becomes the new King, and Urquhart's career is destroyed by Sally and Landless's exposure of his unsound methods.

Dobbs, Michael. *The Final Cut*. London: HarperCollins, 1995.

*BBC series based on the novel: Paul Seed, 1995, *The Final Cut*

Francis Urquhart is about to break Thatcher's record as longest standing Prime Minister in the 20th century. Many Tory voices are demanding his resignation, whereas he seems to feel frustrated, seeing that he cannot surpass Thatcher. In order to win glory similar to hers, Urquhart plans to turn Cyprus into his own Falklands. A rebel Greek group who threaten the discussion of a peace treaty with Turkey, which is also threatened by the discovery of oil in the island's subsoil, become his target. However, Urquhart's attempted 'liberation' of Cyprus must be halted because his own wife has been secretly dealing with both the Greek and the Turkish government, precisely to raise money for a memorial library. Urquhart decides then to court immortality, orchestrating his own assassination by the elderly Cypriot ex-freedom fighter, Evangelos Passolides. He is the brother of two young boys that he had burned to death in Cyprus in 1956 when he was a young officer doing his military service. His death two days before the general election reunites the Tory party, which wins again.

Dunn, Katherine. *Geek Love* (1983). London: Abacus, 1992 (1993).

Lil Binewski, born a Boston aristocrat and known as the geek Crystal Lil, gives up her job in a freak show for motherhood. Lil and her husband, who owns a fairground, give birth to a family of freaks: Arturo (a seal boy), the Siamese twins Electra and Iphigenia, Chick 'Fortunato' (a boy with telekinetic powers) and Olympia, a hunchbacked albino dwarf. The family is a success until Arturo—the originator of a macabre cult of mutilated followers—starts ruling it dictatorially and causes its disintegration by murdering the unruly Siamese twins. After this, Olympia secretly conceives the beautiful, tailed Miranda from Arturo's semen. The girl is raised as an orphan, but when a rich woman, Mary Lick, offers her money to remove her tail, Olympia starts her particular crusade to preserve the extraordinary nature of her unacknowledged daughter. Olympia kills Mary Lick and herself rather than see Miranda 'disfigured'.

Ellis, Brett Easton. *American Psycho*. New York: Vintage Books, 1991.

Pat Bateman is a successful New York Yuppie: good-looking, well-liked, engaged to the beautiful Evelyn and possessed of a vast knowledge about good manners. He is also a psychopath who kills in particularly vicious manners anyone he regards as a loser: homeless people, gays, members of ethnic minorities, business rivals and, above all, women. However, no matter how often he declares what he does or others seemingly suspect his crimes, nobody stops him and he slowly falls into a spiral of madness that seems just a continuation of the yuppie vapid style of life. Tired of his routine of brutal killings, Bateman is almost tempted by his secretary Jean's innocent offer of love, but he finally decides that it is not worth accepting.

Bateman faces the end of the 1980s knowing that his life is absurd but that nothing or nobody will purge it of this absurdity or, indeed, stop him.

Ellis, Bret Easton. "The Secrets of Summer" in *The Informers*. London: Picador, 1994.

Jamie is a good-looking California vampire, fond of his anthracite Porsche and his customized coffin. He is in the habit of picking up young girls with whom he has sex and later, sometimes, kills after biting. Jamie is not alone, but part of a wide network of vampires acting in California. All of them enjoy an expensive life style, and live undetected despite the grossness of their acts. When Jamie starts having visions of an impending nuclear holocaust, he warns his puzzled psychiatrist, Dr. Nova, that the vampires will nonetheless survive.

Fowler, Christopher. *Spanky*. London: Warner Books, 1994.

Martyn Ross, a dull sales assistant, meets in a London night-club a very good-looking man, somehow similar to him, who calls himself Spanky and claims to be a 'daemon'. He offers to be Martyn's personal daemon at no cost, enticing him with easy sex with a model (which he watches), getting clothes for him and in general promoting his welfare and his career. Martyn accepts this Faustian pact, unaware that his very weakness has attracted the daemon. When he is most enjoying his success, the daemon demands Martyn's body as payment for his new life of luxury. Spanky, actually a body-snatcher, needs a new body but, since he can only possess one if invited, he must cajole Martyn into accepting him. Martyn agrees to be possessed and, once Spanky is inside his body, attempts suicide, but he is saved and Spanky escapes. He spends the rest of his life as a homeless drifter, expecting to encounter Spanky in another body.

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer* (1984). London: HarperCollins, 1993.

Case is a 'cyberspace cowboy'. He steals information for money until one of his victims cripples him, making it impossible for him to jack into cyberspace. A new employer offers him a cure, provided he breaks the 'ice' (electronic defense) blocking the access to the Artificial Intelligence Neuromancer, owned by the Tessier-Ashpool corporation. Helped by a ghostly cowboy, the Dixie Flatliner, and by the hitwoman Molly, both hired by his employer, Case discovers that this is the AI Wintermute, also owned by Tessier-Ashpool. Wintermute wants to free Neuromancer and become with him a free entity in cyberspace. When Case eventually reaches the core of Tessier-Ashpool, the villa Straylight, he cracks the code Wintermute so desperately needs to regain its freedom. He succeeds in setting Wintermute and Neuromancer free and they become a new god of cyberspace.

Gray, Alasdair. *Poor Things*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1992.

In the late 19th century, the eccentric surgeon Godwin Baxter creates in his Glasgow home a new woman, made up of the body of a drowned mother and the brain of her eight-month foetus. Instead of fulfilling his dream of becoming a new Pygmalion, the childish Bella becomes engaged to Baxter's best friend, McCandless. Yet she elopes with her lover Duncan to travel around the Mediterranean and learn about life in general and sex in particular. Back to Glasgow, a mature Bella demands to know who she is. She is satisfied with Baxter's lie about her being amnesiac until a certain General Blessington claims her on her wedding day as his lost wife Victoria. Bella is then told how Blessington abused her but he is unmasked when she proves that he is a pervert. Bella starts then a career as a doctor specialised in family planning, eventually marrying McCandless. Yet a Victoria McCandless claims in a letter to her

descendants that Bella is nothing but a figment of her poor husband's deranged imagination.

Harris, Thomas. *Red Dragon* (1981). London: Arrow Books, 1993.

*Film based on the novel: Michael Mann, 1986, *Manhunter*.

Will Graham, the FBI agent who captured the notorious cannibal serial killer Hannibal Lecter, is forced out of his retirement by his ex-boss, Jack Crawford. Another serial killer, nicknamed the 'Tooth Fairy' because he bites his victims, is killing suburban families. As it turns out, the killer is a certain Francis Dolarhyde, who is traumatised by his malformed face and his irregular upbringing (he was rejected by his mother). He is befriended by a blind woman, Reba, who, unaware of who he is, seduces him. Her love causes a definitive split between his more human side and his schizophrenic alter ego, which he identifies with Blake's painting of the dragon of Revelation. While Graham traces Dolarhyde, the latter has contacted Lecter, his idol, and has been put on Graham's track. When Dolarhyde reaches Graham's home to carry out Lecter's revenge, Graham's wife Molly cannot prevent him from brutally slashing Graham's face, but she kills him.

Harris, Thomas. *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988). London: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1993.

*Film based on the novel: Jonathan Demme, 1990, *The Silence of the Lambs*

Clarice Starling, an FBI trainee, is sent by her supervisor Jack Crawford to meet Hannibal Lecter, the imprisoned cannibal serial killer, in order to engage his help in the case of a new serial killer of women. At first, Lecter despises Clarice because she is working-class but his snobbery is overcome by her ambition and he decides to help her. Meanwhile, the killer kidnaps Catherine, Senator Ruth Martin's daughter, and Clarice finds herself working against the clock to prevent her death. Lecter's hints lead Clarice to find out that the man who is killing and skinning working-class, big girls is a certain Jame Gumb. He is a frustrated transsexual who, as Lecter suggests, is making himself a suit out of the skins of the women he kills. In order to find him, Clarice has to break the rigid FBI rules, thus jeopardising her career, and must also overcome her dislike of upper-class Catherine and her mother, but she finally succeeds in killing Gumb as Lecter escapes his jailers.

Hayslip, Le Ly with Jay Wurts. *Heaven and Earth: When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (1989). London: Pan Books, 1994.

*Film based on the autobiography: Oliver Stone, 1994, *Heaven and Earth*

Le Ly was a peasant girl in Ky La, central Vietnam, when the Viet Cong reached her village. She was a Viet Cong fighter between the ages of 12 and 15, despite her pacifist father's opposition. During this time she was imprisoned and tortured three times by the government. Suspecting that she may have betrayed them, the Viet Cong condemns her to death but instead she is raped by two of their men. Unable to stand the shame, she escapes Ky La with her mother, becoming next a servant for a wealthy family. At the age of 16 she is made pregnant by her master and is expelled from the house. She moves then to Saigon, where she has her baby, becomes a black marketeer, and starts a series of liaisons with American men, hoping that one will marry her and take her and her child to the USA. Eventually she meets a middle-aged civilian engineer, Ed Munro, who marries her and with whom she moves to California.

Hayslip, Le Ly with James Hayslip. *Heaven and Earth: Child of War, Woman of Peace* (1993). London: Pan Books, 1994.

*Film based on the autobiography: Oliver Stone, 1994, *Heaven and Earth*

Aged 20, Le Ly Munro moves to the USA with her husband Ed and her two boys, only to find a strange land that does not welcome her, and a materialistic culture she despises. Back to Vietnam in 1971 because of Ed's job, she starts an affair with major Dante de Parma who, unknown to her, is an arms dealer. The family go back to the USA once again and Ed dies of a heart attack after discovering her infidelity. Le Ly marries then Dennis Hayslip but his passion for firearms and his religious fanaticism wreck the marriage. Eventually he commits suicide and Le Ly discovers that he had intended to kill her and the children for the money of their life insurance. Alone again, Le Ly succeeds as a businesswoman and when Dante reappears in her life she rejects him, choosing to devote herself to taking care of a number of Vietnamese orphans in the USA, and to running her American-Vietnamese foundation 'East meets West'.

Herbert, James. *Shrine* (1983). London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984.

Alice Pagett, 11, is working miracles, healing sick people in a field of her native village Banfield. The Catholic church attributes her powers to the Virgin Mary and the local businessmen see their chance to turn Banfield into a second Lourdes. Only journalist Gerry Fenn remains sceptical: what everybody thinks is holy, is for him distinctly evil. The innocent-looking Alice is for Fenn a clear suspect in the horrific deaths of Father Hagan and of her own father, even though this means that he must accept that some kind of supernatural power is at work. Eventually, Fenn discovers a manuscript about the 16th century nun Elnor, a powerful healer burnt as a witch, who appears to him as a horrific ghost. She has possessed Alice and though the child is killed by a megalomaniac in search of fame, only the apparition of the Virgin exorcises Banfield from Elnor's presence.

Holdstock, Robert. *Mythago Wood* (1984). London: Grafton, 1986.

Back in Britain from World War II, Steve Huxley is told by his brother Chris that their father has died. He has become the wild man Urscumug in the primal wood that surrounds their home and that was his object of research. Suddenly Chris himself disappears in the wood, and when Steve discovers the dead body of Guiwenneth, Chris's wife, he thinks that his brother is a murderer. However, a younger Chris reappears, obsessed with the 'mythagos', entities that the wood's energy materialises in conjunction with the unconscious figures rooted in the viewer's mind and that appear in legends: Guiwenneth was, precisely, the mythical woman their father created. Steve eventually creates his own mythagos until he produces a new Guiwenneth, who becomes his own beloved wife. Chris abducts her back to the forest and Steve goes after them, discovering that Chris is now the legendary Outsider. Steve accidentally kills the Outsider and the Urscumug takes dead Guiwenneth to Lavondyss, where she is to live again.

Holland, Isabelle. *The Man without a Face* (1972). London: Pan, 1993.

*Film based on the novel: Mel Gibson, 1993, *The Man without a Face*

14-year-old Chuck wants desperately to enter St Matthews', a boarding school, in order to eventually become a military pilot like his idolised dead father, and also to escape his mother and stepsisters. He needs a tutor to pass the entrance examination and, so, he approaches Justin McLeod, despite his fear of his badly burnt face and the wild rumours about him. At first Justin rejects Chuck, but he later agrees to tutor him if Chuck accepts his rather fierce discipline. Little by little, Chuck and Justin become close friends. Chuck reveals to him the trauma of the death of his father and Justin explains that his face was burnt in a car crash in which a 14-year-old student of his died. When Chuck finds Gloria in bed with a boyfriend, she tells him the truth about his alcoholic father out of spite and Chuck

runs to Justin's arms, discovering at last his own homosexuality. Justin commends Chuck to his new sympathetic stepfather, Barry, before dying of cancer.

Hughes, Ted. *The Iron Woman: A Sequel to the Iron Man*. London: Faber and Faber, 1993.

Lucy meets a giantess born from the filthy river mud who wants to destroy all the polluters. She can transmit through touch the wailing scream of all the creatures endangered by pollution. Lucy contacts Hogarth, the Iron Man's friend, and he realizes that the piercing scream is infectious: soon all human contact seems impossible. Suddenly, all the men become giant fish—only the women and the boys under 18 are left untouched. A monstrous cloud is formed, coming from the mouths of the bubbling fish men: the Iron Woman forces the cloud to confess that it is the evil god of gain, and with the help of the Iron Man's dragon, she eliminates it. The men regain then their human form, though a faint wailing can still be heard whenever pollution increases. Mysteriously, rubbish turns into a wonderful, non-polluting fuel: this saves the national economy for all the nations of the world send their waste to England for recycling into the miraculous fuel.

Keneally, Thomas. *Schindler's List* (1982). London: Sceptre, 1993.

*Film based on the novel: Steven Spielberg, 1994, *Schindler's List*

Oskar Schindler was a Czech industrialist, the owner of a factory in Cracow that he had acquired with the help of the Nazi invaders. However, witnessing the massacre of the Cracow Jewish ghetto triggered in Schindler a wish to save as many Jewish lives as his money could buy. To this end he sought a relationship with Amon Goeth, the brutal Nazi commandant of the Pláaszow camp and Oskar's dark counterpart. Eventually, Schindler managed to buy from the corrupt Amon (together with other charitable businessmen) the lives of 1,100 Jews, even pulling away from Auschwitz a group of Jewish women included in his list. In the end, Oskar transferred his Jews to the safer camp at Brinnlitz and there they patiently awaited for the end of the war. When it came, it brought freedom for his Jews, Goeth's downfall and the beginning of a difficult life for Schindler.

King, Stephen. *The Shining* (1977). Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980 (1993).

*Film based on the novel: Stanley Kubrick, 1980, *The Shining*.

After losing his job as an English teacher for attacking a student, Jack Torrance takes a new job as a winter caretaker in the Overlook Hotel, Colorado. He and his wife Wendy think that their stay in the lonely, snowbound hotel will help rebuild their family life—wrecked by his alcoholism and his having broken once his son Danny's arm—despite the fact that Jack's predecessor killed his family in the hotel. Once there, Jack is haunted by the evil spirits of the hotel, abandons the play he is writing for a book about the place and becomes a danger for his family that only his son Danny can avert. The boy, gifted with a psychic ability known as 'the shining', captures glimpses of the violent past of the hotel and, warned by his imaginary playmate Tony, senses that his father is possessed by a force which claims the sacrifice of the whole family. His love frees Jack's soul just before the hotel kills him—he and his mother escape.

King, Stephen. *The Dead Zone* (1979). London: Warner Books, 1992 (1994)

*Film based on the novel: David Cronenberg, 1983, *The Dead Zone*

Johnny Smith is a high school English teacher in love with co-worker Sarah. The first night they go out together he suffers a car crash that leaves him in a coma for almost five years. When he regains consciousness he finds Sarah married, his mother in the grip of a religious mania that leads to her death and himself

possessed of a strange ability to learn from people's past or future simply by touching them. Fighting off the sensationalist press that wants to exploit him and coming slowly to terms with the fact that Sarah is lost for him (except for a brief encounter) Johnny's sad new life begins. He uses his ability sparingly (to help the police, to save the life of his benefactor's son) but when he touches the candidate to the US Senate, Greg Stillson, Johnny sees that this madman will trigger a nuclear war when he becomes the future US President and, so, decides to kill him. He fails and is himself shot, dying later, but he unmasks Stillson's foul play.

King, Stephen. *Firestarter* (1980). London: Warner Books, 1992 (1994).

*Film based on the novel: Mark Lester, 1984, *Firestarter*.

Andy McGee, and his daughter Charlie, 7, are on the run from The Shop's agents, who have killed his wife Vickie. The couple were involved in an experiment run by Dr Wanless for The Shop, in which a dangerous drug was secretly tested in college students. The drug Lot 6 gave an unexpected result when their daughter was born with the ability to start fires. The Shop suspects that her ability may be unbound and want to use her for military purposes. Eventually the psychopathic agent John Rainbird blackmails The Shop's head, Hollister, to let him catch the fugitives, as he is fascinated by Charlie. Soon succeeding, Rainbird gains Charlie's trust and convinces her to collaborate in The Shop's experiments. Andy uses his own psychic abilities to escape and tell Charlie who Rainbird really is. Maddened by his betrayal and by his killing Andy, Charlie kills Rainbird and sets out to destroy The Shop before reporting their activities to the press.

King, Stephen. *It* (1986). London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987

*TV Film based on the novel: Tommy Lee Wallace, 1990, *It*.

Mike calls back to Derry his six friends Bill, Ben, Bev, Eddie, Richie and Stan to fulfil a promise they made in 1958 when they defeated together the monster It. 27 years later, in 1985, the monster has started killing children again and must be once again subjugated. All, except Stan (who commits suicide) go back to Derry to pool the combined faith that freed Derry from It in their childhood. This monster, an extraterrestrial evil entity arrived in Earth in prehistoric times, lives off the belief of children in monsters and also off the adults' evildoing. It is behind the deaths of the children but also behind the many violent incidents caused by adults occurred in Derry. It appeared once to the children as the monster they feared most and in 1985 It uses the same strategy to terrify them. Acting on their own and with the faith they had as children, the group traces the monster to its lair and using an old ritual Bill and Richie kill it. Then, they all forget what they have been through together.

King, Stephen. *Misery* (1987). Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992.

*Film based on the novel: Rob Reiner, 1990, *Misery*.

Paul Sheldon, author of the best-selling Misery novels, is rescued from his wrecked car by the ex-nurse Annie Wilkes, his number one fan. Her admiration becomes hatred when she reads the last Misery novel: Paul has dared kill Annie's beloved heroine in order to give his career a more literary turn. Angered by his betrayal, Annie burns Paul's new manuscript and subjects her prisoner to all kinds of humiliations, withdrawing his painkilling medication and even cutting off his foot. To appease the irate Annie, Paul must write a new Misery novel; clinging to it as if he were a new Scheherezade, Paul survives until the manuscript is ready. Meanwhile, he discovers, thanks to a scrapbook, that Annie was once a notorious serial killer. Paul decides then to attack her, beginning by pretending to burn his manuscript before her very eyes. Annie dies in the attack and, once free, Paul

publishes the new Misery novel, his best so far, to start immediately writing an entirely different kind of novel for a more demanding public.

King, Stephen. *Pet Sematary*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1988

*Film based on the novel: Mary Lambert, 1989, *Pet Sematary*

Louis Creed moves to Maine with his wife Rachel and their children, Elli, 5, and Gage, 2, when he gets a new post as head of the University of Maine infirmary. Their new neighbour, Jud, cautions them about the danger posed by the constant flux of lorries on the apparently quiet road but, despite his warning, Elli's cat is soon killed by one. Seeing Louis's anguish at having to break the bad news to Elli, Jud takes him to an ancient Indian burial ground, placed in the nearby woods, where they bury the cat, which returns to life the following day. Although Jud warns Louis that nobody should try to bury a person in the burial ground, when Gage is killed by another lorry, Louis does not hesitate to bury the child. Gage soon returns transformed into a horrific evil entity, killing Jud and his own mother Rachel before Louis can kill him for good. Yet Louis cannot help breaking the taboo again by taking Rachel to the burial ground.

Lee, Tanith. *The Silver Metal Lover*. London: Unwin, 1986.

Jane, a seventeen-year-old girl, is the daughter of a rich, respected intellectual, Demeta, with whom she lives. Jane falls in love with a young man, Silver, who turns out to be a robot programmed to be a musician and also a sex toy. When Jane realizes that she really loves Silver, despite knowing that he is a machine, she sells all her possessions and buys Silver through a friend of hers, Egyptia, as Jane is still a minor. Jane and Silver live then together in hiding for some months, while Demeta cuts off Jane's resources to force her to come back home. The happy love story between Jane and Silver is interrupted when E.M. decides to withdraw their products from the market because of the recent riots against the presence of pseudo-human robots in the streets. Egyptia realizes that she might be in trouble herself because she legally owns Silver and betrays him to E.M.. He is then taken from Jane and destroyed, not before he develops a soul. His soul eventually contacts Jane and promises to her that they will meet again after her death.

Lee, Tanith. *Heart-Beast*. London: Headline Feature, 1992.

Daniel Vehmund has killed his father to protect her mother from his violence. He flees then to a place in the Middle East where he is tricked into drinking a cup of wine with a strange diamond in it. A fever ensues and Daniel becomes a horrific werewolf on the ship taking him home, though he always remains unaware of the many deaths he causes. Back home, Daniel falls in love with beautiful Laura, a milkmaid who used to be his mother's companion and is now married to the rich Hyperion Worth, whom she does not love. Daniel's mother, Jenavere, is happy to enjoy his protection once more, but when she sees Daniel as a werewolf kill his brother Marshal she dies, believing that Daniel has materialised out of her wish to see her other son dead. Although Laura tries to discourage Daniel, Hyperion consents to their adultery, fascinated as he is by Daniel. He pays for this fascination with his own life, though. When Laura sees what Daniel really is, she kills him.

Lessing, Doris. *The Fifth Child* (1988). London: Flamingo, 1993.

Harriet and David Lovatt are a middle-class couple who marry in the late 1960s, expecting to raise a large family against the advice of their relatives. Harriet's first four pregnancies succeed each other very quickly; the fifth is especially difficult as their respective parents start resenting the couple's dependence on them and

because Harriet feels physically sick. When the baby is born Harriet rejects him: Ben is ugly in an odd way, as if he were of another race. As Ben grows up he behaves more violently until the family finally decides to abandon him in a special institution. Harriet retrieves him from the horrid institution where he has been placed and returns him home, even though this brings the slow disintegration of her family. Ben grows up and eventually forms a gang that Harriet holds responsible for a series of crimes in the neighbourhood. Harriet is relieved to see him leave home for good to meet those of his 'race'.

Mahmoody, Betty with William Hoffer. *Not without my Daughter* (1988). London: Corgi, 1989 (1994).

*Film based on the novel: Brian Gilbert, 1991, *Not without my Daughter*
 Betty Mahmoody and her husband, Dr Sayyed Bozorg Mahmoody ('Moody'), travel to Iran from the USA, together with their four-year-old daughter Mahtob, to meet Moody's family. Dismayed by the squalor and appalled by the realization that she is nothing in Iran but a despised Westerner and merely her husband's property, Betty soon tries desperately to return to the USA. Yet Moody and his family conspire to keep mother and daughter prisoners, while Moody becomes a tyrannical monster even for Mahtob. Eventually, on the rare occasions when she can escape Moody's vigilance, Betty contacts a network of sympathisers opposed to Khomeini's regime that offers her help. When Moody suggests that she may divorce him and leave Mahtob behind for ever, mother and daughter are helped to escape to Turkey.

Martin, Valerie. *Mary Reilly* (1990). London: Black Swan, 1991.

*Film based on the novel: Stephen Frears, 1995, *Mary Reilly*.
 Mary Reilly, 22, is employed as a maid in the London household of Dr. Jekyll. She arouses his sympathy when she explains to him that the scars in her hands are the result of her drunkard father's abuse: Jekyll sees in her a person who has experienced contact with monstrosity. Little by little, Mary falls in love with Jekyll, observing from a distance the suspicious comings and goings of his guest, Mr. Hyde; on his part, Jekyll grows fond of Mary, trusting her with a delicate mission, namely, covering the tracks of one of Hyde's crimes. He is also fond of interrogating her cryptically about her fear of her own nature. Although Mary still does not suspect who Hyde is, one night he approaches her, claiming to know her, and attacks her, biting her in the neck. When finally Jekyll's dead body is found after his suicide, Mary recognizes him as Hyde and lies down by his side, letting herself be found with him as a sign of her devotion.

McCabe, Patrick. *The Butcher Boy* (1992). London: Pan Books, 1993.

Francie Brady writes in a psychiatric hospital about why he killed Mrs. Nugent. His life as a child in a small Irish town changed with the arrival of the Nugents. Francie and his friend Joe once stole a collection of comics from Philip Nugent. Mrs. Nugent paid then a visit to the Bradys that changed Francie's view of his own family for ever: Mrs. Nugent made him feel ashamed for the first time of his mother's madness and his father's alcoholism, and of himself. He ran then away only to find on his return that his mother had committed suicide and that his father blamed him for it. When Joe shifts his allegiance to Philip, Francie's world collapses and, after breaking into the Nugents' home, he is placed in an institution. This place proves even worse for Francie as he is sexually abused by one of the priests that runs it. Back home, Joe and Philip finally disown him. He gets then a job in the local abattoir, lets his father die at home and finally vents his rage by brutally killing Mrs. Nugent.

McCannon, Robert. *Swan Song* (1987). London: Warner Books, 1992 (1994).

The President of the USA starts a nuclear war, despite his reluctance, that destroys the country. Among the survivors are 9-year-old Swan, befriended by ex-wrestler Josh, who is amazed to see that she has the power to make grass grow in the new waste land. Unknown to both, a homeless woman (Sister Creep) has a vision of Swan and starts searching for her to give her an enigmatic crown that the Devil also covets. Col. Macklin and his young assistant Roland run one of the many new armies that terrorise the survivors. They all converge after years of roaming the waste land, for the Devil uses Macklin to reach Swan. When they meet at last, the survivors, plagued by the disease known as Job's mask, shed their skin and are transformed into beautiful or ugly people, according to who they are inside. Swan becomes then a beautiful woman and stops the Devil from causing a second holocaust. She exorcises him simply by forgiving him and then makes the land fertile again.

McEwan, Ian. *The Cement Garden* (1978). London: Picador (1980).

*Film based on the novel: Andrew Birkin, 1993, *The Cement Garden*

Jack, 15, and his siblings—Julie, 17, Sue, 13 and Tom, 7—become orphans when their mother dies at home, shortly after their father's death of a heart attack. Loathing the idea of an eventual separation, Julie and Jack encase their mother's body in cement and leave it in the cellar. They go on then with their lives. Julie and Jack take the place of the missing parents, and Sue and Tom become their own children. They run the household, indulging their own fantasies and desires, allowing Tom to dress as a girl because he wants to be one, and entering into an incestuous relationship themselves. However, the family is eventually destroyed by the intrusion of Julie's middle-class boyfriend, Derek. He suspects what the cement block in the cellar contains but is willing to play their game if he is made part of the family. When this does not happen and he finds Julie and Jack in bed, he reports them to the police.

McEwan, Ian. *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981). London: Picador, 1982.

*Film based on the novel: Paul Schrader, 1990, *The Comfort of Strangers*.

Colin and Mary are both unemployed actors (she is divorced and a mother of two), trying to give their relationship of seven years another boost with a romantic holiday in Venice. There they are trapped in the web spun by Italian Robert and his ill-treated Canadian wife Caroline, who push onto Colin the harm they do each other. As Mary later discovers, their encounters with Robert are by no means casual: he has been following them all over Venice, taking pictures of Colin. One day Robert takes the couple to his home where they meet Caroline. While Robert is busy expounding on the pleasures of old-fashioned sexism and punching Colin for not agreeing with him, Caroline tells Mary about the sadomasochistic bond between her and Robert, which led him once to cripple her. Only too late, Mary realizes that they mean to kill Colin for their pleasure. When they do so, absurdly, before her very eyes, Mary can do nothing to prevent Colin's death.

McEwan, Ian. *The Innocent*. London: Picador, 1990.

*Film based on the novel: John Schlesinger, 1993, *The Innocent*.

Leonard Marnham, 25, an English specialist in telephones, is posted to Berlin in 1955 to collaborate with the Americans in the tapping of the Russian phone lines running into a tunnel they have just dug. His supervisor is Col. Glass, a man who mistrusts everybody, including Leonard's new girlfriend, Maria, a German secretary. On the night of their engagement, Maria's violent ex-husband Otto

attacks the couple in her flat and they kill him. Rather than confess to their crime, they dismember Otto's body and Leonard conceals it in two suitcases that he leaves in the tunnel, determined to sell the secret of the tunnel to the Russians. However, somebody anticipates him and when the tunnel is found with Otto's body in it, only Glass can help the couple. He does so, and Leonard soon leaves Germany. Maria, however, stays, and, knowing that they cannot be together after Otto's death, she marries Glass and moves to the USA.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. London: Picador, 1987.

1873. Sethe lives with her daughter Denver in a house haunted by the ghost of Beloved, her other daughter, who died at the age of 2. This changes when Paul D. arrives to see Sethe and exorcises the ghost. He was once a slave in the plantation Sethe escaped years ago with her three children, when the new master beat her even though she was pregnant. However, Paul is not aware that Sethe killed Beloved and tried to kill her other children when she saw her master come for them, though she was then a free woman in Ohio. Beloved enters again Sethe's house as a lovely teenager to spellbind Denver, seduce Paul D. (then Sethe's new companion) and make Sethe leave everything for her. Delighted by her supernatural return, Sethe fails to see that Beloved is wrecking her life until one day Sethe attacks her white benefactor when Beloved makes her believe that he has come to take her away. All see then that she is evil and, though Sethe is hurt by her vanishing, Beloved is forgotten like a bad dream.

Piercy, Marge. *Body of Glass* (1991). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992.

Dr. Avram Stein builds secretly a cyborg, Yod, to defend his free Jewish city, Tikva, from the covetousness of one of the multies, Yakamura-Stichen, in the 21st century. Yod is a warrior, jointly programmed by Stein and Malkah, but he lacks the social skills that would allow him to pass himself off for a human. Shira Shipman, Malkah's granddaughter, is commissioned with the job of teaching Yod how to be human and in the process they become lovers. Meanwhile, Malkah, also his lover, instructs him with the legend of the 16th century golem. When Shira's mother, Riva, arrives with her lesbian lover Nili (who is to contact the resistance) Yod's disadvantages are made apparent: while Nili is a successful fighter who carries out her mission well, Yod, far from protecting Tikva, endangers it with its presence. Seeing his failure, Stein plans to destroy Yod but before he can do so, Yod kills him and commits suicide. Shira is tempted to rebuild Yod but finally accepts that this would be another mistake.

Powers, Tim. *The Annubis Gates* (1983). London: HarperCollins, 1993.

When Dr. Romanelli and the gypsy Fikee invoke Annubis to flood England with its power, something goes wrong and Fikee is turned into a murderous ape. While Fikee transfers from one body to another (leaving on his trail the series of murders known as the Dancing Ape Madness), Romanelli tries another strategy to upset England: an artificial replica of his patient, Lord Byron, will kill the king. Upon these two plots stumbles Brendan Doyle, a 20th Century literature professor specialized in the mysterious American poet William Ashbless, who is left stranded in 1810 when he travels in time in an outing organized by the tycoon Darrow. A misencounter with Fikee leaves Doyle stranded as well in a body that is not his own: he is, to his surprise, William Ashbless himself. Meeting Byron's replica and later Coleridge himself, Doyle finally defeats Darrow's plans to become immortal with Fikee's help, and becomes himself immortal.

Powers, Tim. *The Stress of her Regard* (1989). London: Grafton, 1993.

Crawford, a 34-year-old gynaecologist in the early 19th century unwittingly invites a lamia to haunt him by putting his bride's wedding ring on a female statue. The lamias are vampire serpents that take human form, male or female, to victimise their human lovers. They are the nephelim of the *Bible* that came back in the year 1,000 when a Hapsburg nobleman had a stone sewn into his body in a mock pregnancy. Crawford believes Keats, Shelley and Byron's claims that they are associated to lamias, who are their muses and cause the death of their relatives in exchange for the gift of creativity. Shelley hosted one (his twin sister) since the moment of conception, the same one now preying on Crawford. Shelley is finally released from her by his drowning, and the Hapsburg host of the vampires is killed, but Crawford fears that his newly-born baby by Josephine, another victim of the lamias, might be the last of the doomed romantics.

Pratchett, Terry. *Guards, Guards!* (1989). London: Corgi, 1990 (1993).

The wizards of Ankh-Morpork's Unseen University summon a dragon from another dimension, expecting that it will attract an heir to the throne whom they will be able to manipulate as they like. The prince indeed exists in the person of corporal Carrot, the latest addition to the city's guard, though he has been raised by dwarves and ignores who he is. As a guard, Carrot takes part nonetheless in the hunting of the horrific dragon that stalks the citizens of Ankh-Morpork and that the wizards cannot control. Captain Vimes seeks the help of Lady Ramkin, an aristocratic breeder of the more domestic swamp dragons, who explains to him that the anatomically impossible dragon migrated to another dimension where it can simply be, without need of being believed in. The gigantic dragon, a female, becomes the new queen, though in the end it prefers to fly away with one of Lady Ramkin's tiny male dragons.

Pratchett, Terry. *Moving Pictures* (1990). London: Corgi, 1991(1993).

Ribobe, last of the Keepers of the Paramount, dies leaving no apprentice and, so, the prayers that keep a certain cave sealed, out of which monstrous things could escape, cease. In Ankh-Morpork the alchemists discover a method of keeping images in reels and move to Holy Wood to start producing the new moving pictures, haunted by an odd feeling of déjà vu. Victor, an apprentice magician, and Ginger become the film stars in the first blockbuster, *Blown Away*. The production of the film is halted by Ginger's sleepwalking to the cave, where the figure of a recumbent warrior is found. When the opening night of *Blown Away* finally arrives, Victor realizes that the magic of the film allows the things from another dimension to enter his world. The spectators' belief in what they see on the screen allows a monstrous screen Ginger to leave it and storm the city. He can only defeat it by pretending he is indeed a hero as the Librarian invokes the golden warrior to their aid.

Pratchett, Terry. *Small Gods* (1992). London: Corgi, 1993.

The Great God Om is fast losing his followers and has been reduced to assuming the shape of a tortoise constantly threatened by all kinds of predators, especially eagles. Desperate by his plight, Om chooses his own messiah in the person of Brutha, a young, rather stupid novice of his own cult, who turns out to have a special psychic power: a perfect memory. Brutha soon attracts the attention of Vorbis, the evil Exquisitor or head of the powerful Quisition, but because of his memory rather than because of his secret mission. Meanwhile, Vorbis is himself intent on another mission: extending his empire of fanaticism and cruelty, for which he travels to the Tyrant's dominion in Ephebe, where Om's main temple is. Eventually Vorbis announces that he is Om's own prophet and tries to kill Brutha.

Yet Vorbis is killed by a tortoise when he is torturing Brutha, the 'false' prophet, in the temple. The tortoise has been dropped from the sky by a rather clumsy eagle before the eyes of all of Om's believers.

Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). New York: Ballantine Books, 1977 (1989).

*Film based on the novel: Neil Jordan, 1994, *Interview with the Vampire* 1791, New Orleans. Louis's saintly brother commits suicide because of Louis's refusal to imitate him. Harrowed by his sense of guilt, Louis allows Lestat to make him a vampire. Life with Lestat soon becomes a dull affair, as Louis expects some kind of transcendence that the materialistic Lestat does not possess. When Lestat's killings go too far for Louis's liking, Lestat tries to appease him with a gift: a 5-year-old vampire, Claudia, who becomes their adoptive daughter. Years later, when Claudia finds out that she is trapped in her childish body because of Lestat, she kills him, fleeing with Louis to Eastern Europe in search of their roots. Unaware that Lestat has survived her attack, the couple move to Paris, where Lestat has orchestrated his revenge with the help of Armand's vampires. Claudia is killed and, though Louis destroys all the other vampires and goes back to New Orleans with his new lover Armand, life is no longer the same, especially when he learns that Armand teamed up with Lestat to kill Claudia.

Roth, Philip. *Operation Shylock: A Confession*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1993.

'Philip Roth', the famous Jewish American novelist, visits Israel in 1988. There he attends the trial of John Demjanjuk, accused of being the notorious Nazi exterminator Ivan the Terrible of Treblinka. But Demjanjuk's true identity seems as impossible to ascertain as the identity of another Philip Roth campaigning in Israel for a return of the Jews to their European Diaspora. Eventually 'Roth' discovers that the other Philip Roth is a man who looks like him and is indeed called like him and whose life has been spoiled by the shadow that the more famous Roth casts. This man has passed from admiration to usurping 'Roth's' personality and has started working for what 'Roth' regards as a crazy project, the return of the Jews to Europe and of the Palestinians to their land. When this man finally succumbs to a cancer, 'Roth' accepts to meet Arafat on behalf of the Jewish state, for secret talks about the new Diaspora organized by the Mossad.

Rushdie, Salman. *Shame* (1983). London: Picador, 1984.

Sufiya Zinobia, the daughter of Bilquis and Raza Hyder, is left mentally impaired by a brain fever when she is 2. Sufiya absorbs like a sponge all the shame heaped on her by her parents, who are convinced that she is a punishment. When she grows up her shame is expressed in outrageous acts of violence and in a psychosomatic skin disease. Omar Khayam, the doctor who treats her, marries her but, as time goes by, Sufiya's beast inside can be kept less and less easily at bay. She kills more often and more brutally until the discovery of her husband's adultery transforms her into a monstrous white panther for good. The beast finally gets the upper hand and escapes her husband, who is now convinced that she is a willing host for evil. Sufiya rampages the country at will, protected by her ashamed father (now the president of the dictatorial republic) and becomes a legend. She returns nonetheless to claim the lives of her father and her husband.

Self, Will. *My Idea of Fun* (1993). Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994.

Asked by girlfriend Jane about his idea of fun, Ian Wharton remembers his last exploit: severing with his bare hands the head of a man in the tube. She is pregnant and Ian wonders how he can let her know that the child she is carrying is the last

incarnation of a devil who has controlled his whole life. The Fat Controller appeared first in Ian's childhood as Mr. Broadshurt, a Falstaffian father figure, who tutored him well into his twenties. Eventually the adult Ian meets him again as the tycoon Samuel Northcliffe, for whom he works. Strangely enough, when Northcliffe's bizarre business ventures fail, Ian is told by Northcliffe himself and the mad psychiatrist in his pay, Dr. Gyggles, that he is responsible for a number of terrible crimes. In the end Ian kills Jane and he and the new incarnation of the Devil, his own son, move to NY.

Sheffield, Charles. *The Nimrod Hunt* (1986). London: Headline, 1988.

The Morgan Constructs, biomechanical organisms endowed with nuclear weaponry, have been secretly built by Dr. Livia Morgan to defend the Perimeter, the portion of space colonised by the humans. However, they have turned against their creators and now have to be eliminated. Pipe-Rillas, Angels and Tinker Composites form with humans the four races of the Stellar Group and they are to form as well the Pursuit teams that will hunt the Construct known as Nimrod. Two commoners from Earth are selected to form part of the teams, Leah and her companion Chan. Unexpectedly, Chan turns out to be mentally retarded and must be subjected to a painful process of mental enhancement. When this is finally over, he is shipped to Travancore where Leah's team has gone missing; there, he finds out that the Nimrod construct has turned the team into a new multi-race construct that transcends individuality. Chan fuses with them after being told he is, like the Constructs, a new artificial form of life.

Simmons, Dan. *Hyperion* (1989). London: Headline, 1990.

The Church of the Shrike sends seven pilgrims to the Shrike in Hyperion before the planet can be taken by the enemies of the Hegemony, the Ousters. It is rumoured that the Time Tombs of the Shrike Temple are opening and the pilgrims are to confront the Shrike, if he appears. The Lord of Pain or Shrike has encountered each pilgrim as warrior, muse, lover, and each bears him a grudge that must be solved. Father Hoyt must solve the mystery of the cruciform—a cross of organic material—implanted in his chest, Col. Kassad wants to meet again the warrior woman of his dreams, Martin Silenus—the poet—his terrible muse and object of his epic poem, Brawne Lamia, a detective, wishes to meet her dead lover Johnny Keats—a replica of the poet—and Sol Weintraub, the scholar, wants stop the ageing backwards of his daughter Rachel, now a baby. Only the Consul and the Templar Het Masteen are moved by more obscure reasons.

Simmons, Dan. *The Fall of Hyperion* (1990). London: Headline Feature, 1991.

The Ousters have taken Hyperion with the Consul's help and the pilgrims are trapped in the planet, meeting the formidable Shrike one by one. Meina Gladstone, the ruler of the Hegemony, follows the events thanks to the new cybrid Johnny Keats, whom she suspects is a construct of the AIs and the anti-image (or anti-Christ) of the Shrike. Johnny is sent to Hyperion and through Lamia, who is linked to the Shrike's mind, he learns that the older Johnny Keats had been made by the AIs as a fusion of human and artificial intelligence and that the AIs are warring among them, trying to decide whether they will altogether eliminate humankind or not. They are controlling the Hegemony through the farcasters that link its many worlds: like the human God, the artificial God is located in the minds of all who use it. To vanquish the AIs, Meina decides to switch off all the farcasters, even if that means chaos, while Johnny destroys the Shrike and announces the coming of a real cybrid, Lamia and the first Johnny's own daughter.

Weldon, Fay. *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983). London: Coronet, 1984 (1989).

BBC series based on the novel: Philip Saville, 1986, *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*

*Film based on the novel: Susan Seidelman, 1990, *She-Devil*.

Ruth determines to seek revenge when her husband Bobo abandons her for the pretty and rich romance writer Mary Fisher. Although far from beautiful, Ruth has been so far a good wife and mother, but her hatred of Mary overcomes her meekness and she sets out to become another kind of woman, a she-devil. Beginning by dumping her children Nicola and Andy in Bobo and Mary's lap, she rebuilds next her body in a slow, painful process that culminates in her assuming Mary's physical appearance. Meanwhile, she becomes a successful businesswoman, rising from being a servant to owning her own employment agency, and uses her skills to send Bobo to prison accused of embezzlement and to wreck Mary's life until she dies of cancer. When Bobo leaves prison, he is collected by this new Ruth in her Mary persona, now finally rich and powerful.

Williams, Tad. *Caliban's Hour*. London: Legend, 1994.

Caliban arrives in Italy looking for Miranda and Prospero, twenty years after the events narrated by William Shakespeare in *The Tempest*. When he finds out that Prospero is dead, he secretly visits Miranda, by then a married woman and a mother of a teenage girl, Giulietta. Caliban's initial intention is to avenge himself of his ill-treatment at the hands of Prospero and Miranda by killing her, only after narrating to her his version of the events that took place twenty years before on his island. The point that Caliban wants to impress upon Miranda is that he was victimised by Prospero because she lied, pretending that Caliban had tried to rape her, when in fact she was ashamed of the sexual attraction that she felt for the teenage Caliban. However, once Caliban has spent all his fury in telling Miranda how guilty she is of his unhappiness, he hesitates to kill her. Giulietta, who is angry with her mother because she has forced her to accept a marriage of convenience, takes the chance to avenge herself on her mother by offering herself to Caliban. A surprised Caliban accepts nonetheless Giulietta's hand and leaves with her for his island.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Sexing the Cherry*. London: Bloomsbury, 1989.

The Dog Woman lives with her foster child Jason in the 17th century. She is a woman of Rabelaisian anatomy, excessive in her naiveté and her unlimited strength. She is especially fond of killing Puritan men (whose teeth and ears she collects) though she despises all the men she encounters in her odd sexual adventures. On his side Jason undergoes his own adventures when he travels far from England; he gets involved with seven mysterious sisters who have killed the husbands they have been forced to marry. Some time in the 20th century, modern versions of the giantess and Jason are born—he, Nicholas Jordan, is the model of the New Man, educated and sensitive. She, a woman he fancies, is a mental giantess, a woman who fantasises about becoming somebody like the Dog Woman in order to be heard with the same ease she was heard then.

Wolfe, Gene. *The Shadow of the Torturer* (1980.) London: Legend, 1990.

Severian, a young apprentice torturer, stumbles one night upon Vodalus, a man risking his life to save a woman from the hands of the tyrannical Autarch. Impressed by Vodalus's courage, Severian's attitude towards his new charge, the chatelaine Thecla (who might be involved in Vodalus's conspiracy) changes radically: he falls in love with her and though he will not prevent her torture, piqued because she does not correspond his calf love, he betrays his oaths to the torturers guild by giving her a knife with which she commits suicide. Severian is then sentenced to death by the guild, but his sentence is unexpectedly commuted for exile to an isolated city in an endangered country though not all the guild agrees that Severian deserves this pardon He begins then a long pilgrimage towards his new destination, making a living on the way as a wandering executioner.

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B. Filmography

Films (1979-1995)³⁷

Abyss, The. 1989, 20th Century Fox, USA.

Dir James Cameron. Prod Gale Anne Hurd. Scr James Cameron. Ph Michael Salomon. Ed Joel Goodman. Mus Alan Silvestri. Prod Des Lesley Dilley. Cast: Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, Michael Biehn, Leo Burmester, Todd Graff, Kimberley Scott.

The crew of the underwater oil rig Deepcore are forced to collaborate with a group of military SEALs to try to recover a nuclear missile lost in the enigmatic sinking of the US submarine Montana. High tension develops between the rig's designer, Lindsey, the crew led by her ex-husband Bud, and the military team led by Lt. Coffey, which is complicated by their meeting a colony of angelic extraterrestrials that have set out to save humankind from its self-imposed nuclear threat.

Oscars: 1989, Best Visual Effects; Nominations: Best Cinematography, Art Direction, Sound.

Addams Family, The. 1991, Paramount, USA.

Dir Barry Sonnenfeld. Prod Scott Rudin. Scr Larry Wilson, Caroline Thompson, Larry Wilson (based on cartoon characters created by Charles Addams). Ph Owen Roizman. Ed Dede Allen, Jim Miller. Prod Des Richard MacDonald. Mus Marc Shaiman. Cast: Anjelica Huston, Raul Julia, Carel Struycken, Christopher Lloyd, Judith Malina, Christina Ricci, Jimmy Workman.

A family of freaks who live in a gothic mansion in American suburbia are visited by a man who claims to be the husband Gomez's lost brother, Fester. This man and his possessive mother actually want to rob the family of their treasure. The plot deals with how the different members of the family test the claimant and with how all the attempts of the couple to steal the money are frustrated. As it turns out, the man claiming to be Fester is indeed Gomez's lost brother: in the end he returns to the family and his false mother is unmasked.

Oscars: 1991, Nomination: Best Costume Design

Addams Family's Values. 1993, Paramount, USA.

Dir Barry Sonnenfeld. Prod Scott Rudin. Scr Paul Rudnick (based on cartoon characters created by Charles Addams). Ph Don Peterman. Ed Arthur Schmidt, Jim Miller. Prod Des Ken Levy. Cast: Anjelica Huston, Raul Julia, Christopher Lloyd, Joan Cusack, Christina Ricci, Carol Kane, Jimmy Workman, Carel Struycken.

A nanny is hired to take care of the Addams newly born baby, Pubert. She is a pretty, young woman who soon seduces Uncle Fester and becomes his wife. Fester ignores that she is a very well-known 'black widow' and that she is planning to turn him into her next victim. To her increasing desperation, all her plans go wrong and she has to put up with Fester's love for her as much as with his family. When she decides to do away with all of them, only baby Pubert can solve the situation.

Oscars: 1993, Nomination: Best Art Direction.

37. Dir = director; Prod = producer; Scr = screenplay; Ph = director of photography; Ed = editing; Prod Des = art director or production designer; Mus = music. Information about the film crews is taken from Elley (1991, 1994) and the films' credits; that about the Oscars, from Elley (ibid.), Bergan and Fuller (1992) and De Cominges et al. (1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996).

Alien: The Eighth Passenger. 1979, 20th Century Fox–Brandywine, UK.

Dir Ridley Scott. Prod Gordon Carroll, David Giller, Walter Hill. Scr Dan O'Bannon. Ph Derek Vanlint. Ed Terry Rawlings. Prod Des Michael Seymour. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Sigourney Weaver, Tom Skerritt, Veronica Cartwright, Harry Dean Stanton, John Hurt, Ian Holm.

The crew of the cargo spaceship Nostromo investigate a distress call that has interrupted their voyage home. When one of the astronauts touches one of the eggs found in the planet where the call comes from, a strange creature attaches itself to his face. Taken on board, this man, Kane, soon breeds a monstrous creature which rips its way out of his stomach. Within 24 hours the creature has grown to its adult size to stalk and kill the crew one by one. Only Lt. Ellen Ripley survives the massacre after killing the creature.

Oscars: 1979, Best Visual Effects; Nomination: Best Art Direction.

Aliens. 1986, 20th Century Fox–Brandywine, USA.

Dir James Cameron. Prod Gale Anne Hurd. Scr James Cameron. Ph Adrian Biddle. Ed Ray Lovejoy. Prod Des Peter Lamont. Mus James Horner. Cast: Sigourney Weaver, Carrie Henn, Michael Biehn, Lance Henriksen, Paul Reiser, Janette Goldstein.

After 57 years drifting asleep in space Ellen Ripley is rescued and blackmailed by the Company to return to the planet where the alien was found, now a mining colony. Contact with the planet has been lost and the Company suspects that an alien may be responsible. Ripley agrees reluctantly and what she and a marine crew find in the planet is a huge colony of the creatures and a single survivor, 9-year-old Newt. Eventually Ripley discovers the alien queen that is breeding the monsters and destroys her.

Oscars: 1986, Best Visual Effects, Sound Effects Editing; Nominations: Best Actress (Sigourney Weaver), Art Direction, Editing, Original Music Score, Sound.

Alien³. 1992, Brandywine, UK.

Dir David Fincher. Prod Gordon Carroll, David Giler, Walter Hill. Scr David Giler, Walter Hill and Larry Ferguson. Ph Alex Thompson. Ed Terry Rawlings. Prod Des Norman Reynolds. Mus Elliot Goldenthal. Cast: Sigourney Weaver, Charles Dance, Paul McGann, Brian Glover, Ralph Brown, Danny Webb, Lance Henriksen.

Escaping from the infested colony Ripley crash-lands in Fiorina, a small planet used as a penitentiary for dangerous male criminals. One of the aliens disembarks on the planet together with Ripley and she and the men must overcome their differences to fight together for survival. To her horror, Ripley eventually discovers that she carries an alien queen in her body and, once the adult monster has been killed, she decides to sacrifice herself rather than hand over the queen to the Company that covets her.

Oscars: 1992, Nomination: Best Visual Effects.

Altered States. 1980, Warner, USA.

Dir Ken Russell. Prod Howard Gottfried. Scr Paddy Chayefsky (based on his own novel). Ph Jordan Cronenweth. Ed Eric Jenkins. Prod Des Richard MacDonald. Mus John Corigliano. Cast: William Hurt, Blair Brown, Bob Balaban, Charles Haid.

Dr. Jessup is doing research on the state in which schizophrenic patients seem to reach a kind of primal communion with all things living. Offered a potion by a Mexican tribe, Jessup starts experimenting with his own body, putting aside his marriage and his family. Regressing first to a primitive state, Jessup disregards his wife's plea and runs a final experiment that literally turns him into the monster of

his own id. He can only save himself and his wife if he accepts that his love for her matters more than his work.

Oscars: 1980, Nomination: Best Original Score, Sound

An American Werewolf in London. 1981, Universal/Lycanthrope, USA.

Dir John Landis. Prod George Folsey Jr. Scr John Landis. Ph Robert Paynter. Ed Malcolm Campbell. Prod Des Leslie Dilley. Mus Elmer Bernstein. Cast: David Naughton, Jenny Agutter, Griffin Dunne, John Woodvine, Brian Glover, Frank Oz.

Jack and David, two American backpackers travelling in England, are attacked by a monstrous wolf after being denied shelter in a small village. Jack dies and David, befriended by pretty nurse Alex, soon becomes a werewolf, stalking and killing an increasing number of victims. The dead friend and these victims appear as decaying bodies to haunt the werewolf and try to lead him to his death, which will free them. Not even Alex's love can save David from his strange death in Britain.

Oscars: 1981, Best Make-Up.

An Awfully Big Adventure. 1995, Portman/Wolfhound through 20th Century-Fox, UK.

Dir Mike Newell. Prod Hillary Heath, Philip Hinchcliffe. Scr Charles Wood (based on the novel by Beryl Bainbridge). Ph Dick Pope. Ed Jon Gregory. Prod Des Mark Geraghty. Mus Richard Hartley. Cast: Hugh Grant, Alan Rickman, Georgina Cates, Prunella Scales.

Stella is a 16-year-old newcomer in a Liverpool repertoire company. There she falls hopelessly in love with Meredith, the director, unaware of his reputation as a corrupter of young men. An actor called O'Hara, with a reputation as a womaniser and an old feud with Meredith, enters the company and he soon seduces Stella, finding to his consternation that she is his own daughter by an aspiring actress he abandoned. Appalled by his discovery he suffers a mortal accident, while Stella still remains ignorant of the situation.

Angel Heart. 1987, Carolco/Winkat-Union, USA.

Dir Alan Parker. Prod Alan Marshall, Eliot Kastner. Scr Alan Parker (based on the novel by William Hjortsberg *Falling Angel*). Ph Michael Seresin. Ed Gerry Hambling. Prod Des Brian Morris. Mus Trevor Jones. Cast: Mickey Rourke, Robert de Niro, Charlotte Rampling, Lisa Bonet.

Harry Angel, a NY private detective, is hired by the enigmatic Lou Cypher to track Johnny Favourite, a 1940s famous crooner who has failed to honour a contract with Cypher. As Angel finds out more about missing Johnny, those he comes in contact with die mysteriously. When Angel meets Epiphany Proudfoot, Johnny's own daughter and the priestess of a voodoo cult, he realizes that Johnny and himself may be somehow linked. Cypher (Lucifer) tells a horrified Angel the truth: his soul was taken by Favourite in an attempt to escape the Faustian pact made with Lucifer. Now he is to pay and spend eternity in hell for his crimes.

Apocalypse Now. 1979, United Artists, USA.

Dir Francis Ford Coppola. Prod Francis Ford Coppola. Scr Francis Coppola, John Millius (based on the short story by Joseph Conrad, "Heart of Darkness", uncredited). Ph Vittorio Storaro. Ed Barry Malkin. Prod Des Dean Tavoularis. Mus Carmine Coppola. Cast: Marlon Brando, Martin Sheen, Robert Duvall, Dennis Hopper, Harrison Ford.

Captain Willard is dispatched by the US Army to find and kill Col. Kurtz, who has deserted his post in Vietnam and founded a private kingdom in the Cambodian

jungle. The more Willard becomes familiar with the details of Kurtz's brilliant career, the more he sympathises with the man, despite the atrocities he knows are being committed in his domain. When both finally meet, Kurtz hints to Willard that he is awaiting death and so his mission is accomplished. Tempted for a moment to become Kurtz's successor, Willard escapes back to Vietnam, carrying with him Kurtz's memories.

Oscars: 1979, Best Cinematography, Sound; Nominations: Best Picture, Director, Supporting Actor (Robert Duvall), Screenplay, Art Direction, Editing.

Attack of the 50 Ft Woman. 1994, Araba Films / HBO Pictures/ Warner Bros. TV, USA. Dir Christopher Guest. Prod Debra Hill. Scr Joseph Dougherty (based on the screenplay by Mark Hanna for the original 1958 film). Ph Russell Carpenter. Ed Harry Keramidis. Prod Des Joseph T. Garrity. Mus Nicholas Pike. Cast: Daryl Hannah, Daniel Baldwin, William Windom, Cristi Conaway, Paul Benedict.

Nancy Archer is an unhappy but patient young woman, married to the unfaithful, sexist Harry. She is the daughter of a powerful local tycoon who shamelessly mistreats her. One night, after catching Harry with his mistress Honey, Nancy runs to the desert where she sees by an alien spaceship. A ray shot from the ship turns Nancy into a giantess, who grows also into a mature woman determined to keep her husband to herself at all costs. When she finally gets him in her grasp, her alien friends reappear.

Basic Instinct. 1992, Carolco/Canal Plus, USA.

Dir Paul Verhoeven. Prod Alan Marshall. Scr Joe Eszterhas. Ed Frank J. Urioste. Ph Jan de Bont. Prod Des Terence Marsh. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Michael Douglas, Sharon Stone, Jeanne Tripplehorn, George Dzundza, Denis Arndt, Leilani Sarelle, Dorothy Malone.

Best-selling writer Catherine Trammell is suspected of having killed her boyfriend. Nick, the policeman in charge of the case, discovers that Catherine's life and work mirror each other and that he is the subject of Catherine's new novel, which closely resembles the case he is investigating. All indicates that Catherine is the killer but when evidence points at his ex-girlfriend, psychologist Lisa, Nick is only too ready to believe in Lisa's guilt. The possibility that Catherine has plotted his life as well as her work is beyond Nick.

Oscars: 1992, Nominations: Best Editing, Original Score.

Batman. 1989, Guber-Peters/Warner, USA.

Dir Tim Burton. Prod Jon Peters, Peter Guber. Scr Sam Hamm, Warren Skaaren (based on the comics characters created by Bob Kane). Ph Roger Pratt. Ed Ray Lovejoy. Prod Des Anton Furst. Mus Danny Elfman, Prince. Cast: Michael Keaton, Kim Basinger, Jack Nicholson, Robert Wohl, Pat Hingle, Billy Dee Williams.

Dull multimillionaire Bruce Wayne leads an exciting double life as hero Batman. When a severely deformed crook who has self-styled himself as the Joker attempts to take Gotham City by storm, and to seduce Wayne's girlfriend, photographer Vicki Vale, into the bargain, Batman foils his plans. Forced to confront the Joker, Wayne realizes that this criminal is the same one who killed his parents when he was a child, leaving him not only an orphan but also disturbed enough as to need to become Batman.

Oscars: 1989, Best Art Direction.

Batman Returns. 1992, Warner, USA.

Dir Tim Burton. Prod Denise Di Novi, Tim Burton. Scr Daniel Waters (based on the comics characters created by Bob Kane). Ed Chris Lebenzon. Ph Stephan Czapsky. Prod Des Bo Welch. Mus Danny Elfman. Cast: Michael Keaton, Michelle Pfeiffer, Danny de Vito, Christopher Walken.

Batman fights the freakish Penguin—allied with the corrupt Max Schreck to turn Gotham City into their particular dominion—and Catwoman, Schreck's secretary turned into a werecat when he kills her. As she embarks in her crusade to exact revenge from Schreck and to disarm Batman, he falls in love with Selina Kyle—the Catwoman herself. Once the Penguin's plans have been foiled by Batman and despite him and the Catwoman's having unmasked each other, she decides to go, not before killing Max Schreck.

Oscars: 1992, Nominations: Best Make-Up, Visual Effects.

Batman Forever, 1995, Warner, USA.

Dir Joel Schumacher. Prod Tim Burton, Peter MacGreggor-Scott. Scr Lee Batchler, Jane Scott Batchler, Akiva Goldsman (based on the comics characters created by Bob Kane). Ph Stephen Goldblatt. Ed Dennis Virkler. Prod Des Barbara Ling. Mus Elliot Goldenthal. Cast: Val Kilmer, Chris O'Donnell, Tommy Lee Jones, Jim Carrey, Nichole Kidman.

Batman makes a new enemy when he antagonises a mad inventor on his own payroll, Edward E. Nygma, whose device to capture TV viewer's minds millionaire Bruce Wayne will not mass produce. Nygma, refashioned as The Riddler, joins forces with another of Batman's enemies, Harvey Two-Faced. When both kill the parents of a young acrobat, Batman finds an unexpected ally in young self-styled Robin. On the other hand, Batman also becomes the love object of Dr. Chase Meridian, a psychoanalyst his later ego Bruce Wayne is in love with.

Beauty and the Beast. 1991, Walt Disney Studios/Silver Screen Partners IV, USA.

Dir Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise. Prod Don Hahn. Scr Linda Wolverton. Ed John Carnochan. Prod Des Brian McEntee. Mus Alan Menken. Songs Alan Menken and Howard Ashman.

Bella's father, an inventor, is imprisoned by the Beast as he enters his castle for shelter. He can only be released if Bella agrees to take his place, which she does. The Beast, who is actually a prince under a powerful spell, must overcome his obvious social shortcomings to make Bella love him, as her love is his only hope of ever regaining his human shape. The courtship goes well until Bella's suitor Gaston, an insufferable boaster of the worst kind, decides to rescue Bella's from the castle and kill the Beast. The Beast eventually kills Gaston and reverts to his original body.

Oscars: 1991, Best Song, Original Score; Nominations: Best Picture, Song, Sound.

Black Widow. 1987, Mark/Americent/American Entertainment, USA.

Dir Bob Rafelson. Prod Harold Schneider. Scr Ronald Bass. Ph Conrad L. Hall. Ed John Bloom. Prod Des Gene Callahan. Mus Michael Small. Cast: Debra Winger, Theresa Russell, Sami Frey, Dennis Hopper, Nicol Williamson.

Alexandra, an agent of the Justice Department suspects that the recent deaths of a number of wealthy middle-aged men might be linked. All these men died shortly after marrying a young, beautiful woman and the agent suspects that this woman might be the same in all the cases. She starts then tracking under cover the alleged 'black widow', Catherine, but when they meet a complex relationship of love and envy develops between them. The 'black widow' of changing identity manipulates

the killing of her last husband, so that Alexandra is blamed for it, but she is finally unmasked.

Blade Runner. 1982, Warner/Ladd, USA.

Dir Ridley Scott. Prod Michael Deeley. Scr David Peoples and Hampton Fancher (based on the novel by Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*). Ph Jordan Cronenweth. Ed Marsha Nakashima. Prod Des Lawrence G. Paul. Mus Vangelis. Cast: Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Joana Cassidy, Daryl Hannah, Edward James Olmos, Sean Young.

‘Blade runner’ Rick Deckard is on a new assignment to ‘retire’ six Nexus-6 replicants that have entered Earth illegally, after riots on another planet. To help him spot the replicants, Deckard is introduced to Rachael, a replicant produced by the Tyrell Corporation, who is unaware that she is not human. Deckard tells her the truth and they start a troubled relationship, made the more difficult by his retiring the replicants. When Deckard faces the dying replicant leader Roy, who saves his life, he sees that he must save Rachael.

NB: The version known as *The Director’s Cut* released in 1992 suggests that Deckard himself is a replicant.

Oscars: 1982, Nominations: Best Art Direction, Visual Effects.

Bram Stoker’s Dracula. 1992, American Zoetrope/Osiris Films. USA.

Dir Francis Ford Coppola. Prod Francis Ford Coppola, Fred Fuchs, Charles Mulhevell. Scr James V. Hart (based on the novel by Bram Stoker). Ph Michael Ballhaus. Ed Nicholas C. Smith, Glenn Scantlebury, Anne Goursauld. Mus Wojciech Kilar. Cast: Gary Oldman, Winona Ryder, Anthony Hopkins, Keanu Reeves, Sadie Frost, Cary Elwes.

Count Dracula’s fiancée commits suicide wrongly believing he has died in the battle field. Maddened by the loss and the impossibility of burying her in consecrated ground, he abjures God and is damned, becoming then a vampire. Centuries later, he realizes that his guest Jonathan Harker’s fiancée, Mina, is his lost love reborn and he plots his way to meet her in Britain. Leaving a trail of deaths behind him, Dracula returns to his native land where Mina is given the choice of staying with him or saving his immortal soul. She chooses to kill him, thus saving his soul.

Oscars: 1992, Best Sound Effects Editing, Costume Design, Make-Up; Nomination: Art Direction.

Brazil. 1985, Embassy International Pictures, UK.

Dir Terry Gilliam. Prod Arnon Milchan. Scr Tom Stoppard, Terry Gilliam, Charles McKeown (based on the novel by George Orwell, *1984*, uncredited). Ph Roger Pratt. Ed Julian Doyle. Mus Michael Kamen. Prod Des Norman Garwood. Cast: Jonathan Pryce, Robert de Niro, Michael Palin, Kim Greist, Katherine Helmond, Ian Holm.

Sam Lowry works for the incompetent Ministry of Information in an Orwellian future. Asked to clear up the unfortunate arrest and execution of family man Buttle instead of rebel Tuttle, Sam finds that a world of torture is concealed beneath the Ministry’s façade. He endlessly daydreams about a female lorry driver, Jill, who is desperately trying to lodge a complaint against Buttle’s death, and about hero Tuttle, but the heroic Sam of his dreams ends up in the hands of torturer Jack, not too ready to give up his dreams of freedom.

Oscars: 1985, Nominations: Best Original Screenplay, Art Direction.

Bride, The. 1985, Columbia-Delphi III/ Colgems, USA.

Dir Frank Roddam. Prod Victor Drai. Scr Lloyd Fonvielle. Ph Stephen H. Burum. Ed Michael Ellis. Prod Des Michael Seymour. Mus Maurice Jarre. Cast: Jennifer Beals, Sting, Anthony Higgins, Clancy Brwon, David Rappaport.

Dr. Frankenstein builds a female mate for his monster, but seeing the beauty of the new woman, whom he calls Eve, he decides to keep her for himself. The monster runs away and finds companionship in a midget who works in a circus, where he is also employed. Meanwhile, Eve, unaware of who she is or of the male monster's existence, is educated to become a respectable lady. However, her growing suspicions of Frankenstein's lustful intentions are proven right when he tries to rape her. The monster appears in the nick of time to save her and kill their maker.

Candyman. 1992, Lauren Films/Polygram Filmed Entertainment Propaganda Films, USA.

Dir Bernard Rose. Prod Steve Golin, Sigurjon Sighvasson, Alan Poul. Scr Bernard Rose (based on the short story by Clive Barker "The Forbidden"). Ed Dan Rae. Ph Anthony B. Richmond. Mus Philip Glass. Cast: Virginia Madsen, Tony Todd, Xander Berkeley, Kasi Lemmons, Vanessa Williams.

Helen is a PhD student of anthropology doing research on urban legends. She is told about the legend of a 19th century black painter murdered when he fell in love with a white woman. This man's ghost, sporting a hook and appearing in a run-down area of the city, seems to be responsible for a number of recent deaths. When Helen invokes him, he comes back from death to find his lost love in her. The 'Candyman' forces then Helen to go to him by kidnapping a baby; she tries to resist his call and though she rescues the child, her soul goes to him.

Cape Fear. 1991, Universal Amblin Ent./ Cappa Films/ Tribeca Prod, USA.

Dir Martin Scorsese. Prod Barbara de Fina. Scr Wesley Strick (based on the novel by John D. MacDonald *The Executioner* and the screenplay by James R. Webb for the 1961 screen adaptation). Ph Freddie Francis. Ed Thelma Schoonmaker. Prod Des Henry Bumstead. Mus Bernard Hermann. Cast: Robert de Niro, Nick Nolte, Jessica Lange, Juliette Lewis, Robert Mitchum, Gregory Peck.

After serving a sentence for a very violent rape, Max Cady decides to seek revenge on Sam, the lawyer who, according to Cady, did not do enough to secure him a shorter conviction. Cady starts harassing Sam's wife, Leigh, and their teenage daughter, Danny, never trespassing the limits of the law he now knows so well. Sam, increasingly desperate, starts recurring to illegal methods to stop Cady but all of them fail, until the family must face Cady together in the middle of a storm in isolated Cape Fear. There they kill him after a fierce battle and start a new life together.

Oscars: 1991, Nominations: Best Actor (Robert De Niro), Supporting Actress (Juliette Lewis).

Cat People. 1982, RKO-Universal, USA.

Dir Paul Schrader. Prod Charles Fries. Scr Alan Ormsby. Ph John Bailey. Ed Bud Smith. Prod Des Edward Richardson. Mus Giorgio Moroder, David Bowie. Cast: Nastassjia Kinski, Malcolm McDowell, John Heard, Annette O'Toole, Ruby Dee, Ed Begley Jr.

Irina is reunited in New Orleans with her long lost brother, ignoring that he transforms at night into the black panther that is terrorising the city. He tempts her into an incestuous relationship to become another of his kind but she resists him,

having fallen in love with a zoo curator. Although his brother warns her that she will become a panther if she engages in sex with this man, she cannot repress her instincts and lets nature take its course.

Cement Garden, The. 1994, Neue Constantin Film Produktion GmbH / Laurentic “Cement Garden” & Torii Productions. GER-FRA.

Dir Andrew Birkin. Prod Bee Gilbert, Ene Vanaveski. Scr Andrew Birkin (based on the novel by Ian McEwan). Ph Stephen Blackman. Ed Toby Tremlett. Prod Des Bernd Lepel. Mus Edward Shearmur. Cast: Charlotte Gainsbourg, Andrew Robertson, Sinead Cusack, Alice Courtald, Ned Birkin.

Julie, 17, and her siblings Jack, 15, Sue, 10 and Tom, 7 are orphaned when their mother dies at home soon after the death of their father. Trying to avoid the dispersal of the family that the state’s interference would cause, the children encase the mother’s body in cement and leave it in the cellar. They slowly adapt to their new life, with Julie and Jack eventually beginning an incestuous relationship that is discovered by Julie’s rich boyfriend, Derek. Angered because of this and because he feels he has not been trusted, Derek reports them to the police.

Citizen X, 1995, USA-Canada.

Dir Chris Gerolmo. Prod Timothy Marx. Scr Chirs Gerolmo (based on the book by Robert Cullen). Ph Robert Fraisse. Cast: Stephen Rea, Donald Sutherland, Max von Sydow, Jeffrey DeMunn, John Wood, Joss Ackland.

More than fifty murders were committed near the town of Rostov in Russia between 1982 and 1990. Viktor Bukarov, the forensics expert in charge of examining the first bodies found, was promoted and commissioned with the task of finding the murderer. Bukarov’s work was constantly hindered by the resistance of the communist authorities’ to acknowledging the existence of a serial killer in the USSR. It was not until the beginning of Gorbachev’s presidency that Bukarov received adequate help from a military officer and an expert in psychiatry to locate and arrest Andrei Chikatilo, an ordinary man who was proven to be the ‘Rostov’ butcher.

Cocoon, 1985, 20th Century-Fox / Zannuck-Brown, USA.

Dir Ron Howard. Prod Richard D. Zanuck, David Brown. Scr Tom Benedeck (based on the novel by David Saperstein). Ph Don Peterman. Ed Daniel Hanley, Michael J. Hill. Prod Des Jack T. Hollis. Mus James Horner. Cast: Don Ameche, Wilford Brimley, Hume Cronyn, Brian Deheney, Tahnee Welch, Steve Gutenberg.

Four mysterious visitors arrive in Florida and hire the services of a charter boat skipper to retrieve from the bottom of the sea what appear to be giant oyster shells. The leader of the visitors places then the shells in a swimming pool but, accidentally, a small group of retired people find that swimming in this pool gives them back the energy of youth. As the skipper discovers that the visitors are luminous beings covered by a suit of human flesh, the elderly group realise that their energy comes from the bodies of the aliens within the shells, who are now dying. The aliens then disclose the truth.

Oscars: 1985, Best Supporting Actor (Don Ameche), Visual Effects.

Comfort of Strangers, The. 1990, Erre/Sovereign/Reteitalia, USA/ITA.

Dir Paul Schrader. Prod Angelo Rizzoli. Scr Harold Pinter (based on the novel by Ian McEwan). Ph Dante Spinotti. Ed Bill Pankow. Prod Des Gianni Quaranta. Mus: Angelo

Badalamenti. Cast: Christopher Walken, Rupert Everett, Natasha Richardson, Helen Mirren.

Mary and Colin are a British unmarried couple on holiday in Venice, trying to rekindle their relationship. One night they meet an Italian, Robert, who insists on taking them to his home to meet his Canadian wife Caroline. Little by little Mary and Colin are trapped by the couple and by Robert's odd stories about his bullying, sexist father. Mary senses imminent danger when Caroline discloses her sadomasochistic relationship with Robert. Mary realizes then that both are after Colin, but she cannot prevent his terrible death, which takes place before her very eyes.

Company of Wolves, The. 1984, Palace, UK.

Dir Neil Jordan. Prod Chris Brown, Stephen Woolley. Scr Neil Jordan, Angela Carter (based on her own short story). Ph Bryan Lofus. Ed Rodney Holland. Prod Des Anton Furst. Mus George Fenton. Cast: Angela Lansbury, David Warner, Stephen Rea, Tusse Silberg, Sarah Patterson, Graham Crowden.

Rosaleen dreams of a forest in which she lives with her family in a fairy-tale past time. In her dreams the forest is inhabited by wolves who kill her sister and who feature in all the gruesome stories that her granny tells her, such as the one about the woman who married a werewolf. On the way to her granny's, sporting a red shawl, Rosaleen is approached by a young huntsman who challenges her to a race to her granny's. When she arrives, granny is gone but when her new friend reveals his true nature, Rosaleen decides to join him.

Criminal Law, 1988, Hemdale/Northwood, USA.

Dir Martin Campbell. Prod Robert McLean, Hilary Heath. Scr Mark Kasdan. Ph Philip Meheux. Ed Christopher Wimble. Prod Des Curtis Schnell. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Gary Oldman, Kevin Bacon, Karen Young, Tess Harper, Joe Don Baker.

Ben Chase, a lawyer, manages to free his wealthy client, Martin Thiel from prison, despite evidence that strongly suggests that Martin is the serial killer who has recently tortured and killed a number of young women. When another victim is found, Ben realizes that Martin is guilty but he finds himself under the obligation of having to save Martin from prison once more. Martin discloses then his dark secret—he kills women who have had abortions in order to avenge the fetuses aborted in his mother's clinic. Ben is forced to choose between killing Martin or defending him again.

Crow, The. 1994, Miramax Entertainment Media Investment Group, USA.

Dir Alex Proyas. Prod Edward R. Pressman, Jeff Most. Scr David J. Schow, John Shirley (based on the comics characters created by James O'Barr). Ph Darius Wolski. Ed Don Hoenig, Scott Smith. Prod Des Alex McDowell. Mus Graeme Revell. Cast: Brandon Lee, Ernie Hudson, Michael Wincott, Rochelle Davies, Sophia Shinas.

Rock musician Eric and Shelly are to be married on Halloween. On the eve, a gang attacks them at home: he is killed and she is beaten up and gang-raped, dying later. One year later Eric comes back from death to avenge her, aided by the crow that should have taken his soul to heaven. He makes up his face as a sinister clown and sets out to kill one by one the members of the gang. Once his mission is accomplished, Shelley's ghost leads Eric to his place of definitive rest.

Darkman. 1990, Universal/Darkman, USA.

Dir Sam Raimi. Prod Robert Tapert. Scr Chuck Pfarrer. Sam, Ivan Raimi. Daniel, Joshua Goldin. Ph Bill Pope. Ed Bud Smith, Scott Smith, David Stiven. Prod Des Randy Ser. Mus Danny Elfman. Cast: Liam Neeson, Frances McDormand, Colin Fries, Larry Drake, Nelson Mashita.

Peyton Westlake is a scientist working on the production of synthetic skin. His girlfriend, attorney Julie Hastings, gets hold of a document proving that tycoon Strack is using bribes and his alliance to gangster Durant to secure riverside land he wants to develop. Durant viciously attacks Peyton, who is not aware that the papers are in his lab. Badly burnt and virtually skinless, Peyton uses a series of synthetic masks to carry out his revenge. When Julie still offers her love to him, Peyton rejects her: he is now a monster who must live alone.

Dead Ringers. 1988, Mantle Clinic II. CAN.

Dir David Cronenberg. Prod David Cronenberg, Marc Boyman. Scr David Cronenberg, Norman Snider. Ph Peter Suschitzky. Ed Ronald Sanders. Prod Des Carol Spier. Mus Howard Shore. Cast: Jeremy Irons, Genevieve Bujold, Heidi von Palleske, Barbara Gordon, Shirley Douglas.

Bev and Elli Mantle are twin brothers and reputed gynaecologists. Elli, the more mature of the pair, seduces women he passes onto his shy brother Bev, without their victims' being aware of their game. One of them is actress Claire Niveau, an infertile woman whose unusual triple womb attracts Elli first. Bev falls desperately in love with her and though she comes to terms with her humiliation and encourages their relationship, Bev cannot do without his brother's tutelage and, so, he ends up destroying himself and Elli.

Dead Zone, The. 1983, Dino De Laurentiis, USA.

Dir David Cronenberg. Prod Debra Hill. Scr Jeffrey Boam (based on the novel by Stephen King). Ph Mark Irwin. Ed Ronald Sanders. Prod Des Carol Spier. Mus Michael Kamen. Cast: Christopher Walken, Brooke Adams, Tom Skerritt, Herbert Lom, Anthony Zerbe, Martin Sheen.

Johnny suffers a car crash that leaves him in a coma for years. When he regains consciousness he realizes that he has now psychic powers to foresee the future and to know the past of people with a simple touch, though these powers seem to be causing a 'dead zone' to grow in his brain. When he meets Greg Stillson, the ambitious candidate for the US Presidency and feels that he will cause a nuclear holocaust, Johnny tries to kill him before the dead zone eliminates Johnny himself. Though Johnny fails and is killed, Stillson's career is over.

Death and the Maiden. 1995, Capitol Films/ Channel Four/ Flach Films, FRA-UK.

Dir Roman Polanski. Prod Thom Mount, Josh Kramer. Scr Rafael Yglesias, Ariel Dorfman (based on his own play, *La muerte y la doncella*). Ph Tonino Delli Colli. Ed Herve de Luze. Prod Des Pierre Guffroy. Mus Wojciech Kilar. Cast: Sigourney Weaver, Ben Kingsley, Stuart Wilson.

Paulina Escobar thinks that she recognises in the voice of the stranger that has taken her husband Gerardo back home on a stormy night, the voice of the man who tortured her during the dictatorship when she was a student. She did not reveal then the name of the university resistance leader, her own lover, who is now her husband and also the man in charge of the commission to clarify the deaths under the dictatorship. When to Gerardo's horror, Paulina captures the stranger, Dr.

Miranda, the trio spend an agonizing night until she forces a confession out of Miranda. Despite the confession, Paulina cannot recover her peace of mind.

Death Becomes Her. 1992, Universal Pictures, USA.

Dir Robert Zemeckis. Prod Robert Zemeckis, Steve Starkey. Scr Martin Donovan, Martin Koepp. Ph Dean Cundey. Ed Arthur Schmidt. Prod Des Rick Carter. Mus Alan Silvestri. Cast: Meryl Streep, Goldie Hawn, Isabella Rossellini, Bruce Willis, Ian Ogilvy.

Madeline, a famous actress, marries plastic surgeon Ernest Melville, snatching him from writer Helen Sharp. Seven years later, Mad and Ernest's luck is down, while Hel reappears in their lives still miraculously young. Jealous Mad contacts a mysterious woman, who makes her drink an elixir of youth, the same one that Hel has apparently consumed. Both stay young and pretty, but seemingly, also dead and it need of constant repair. When Ernest can no longer endure maintaining their bodies, mutual dependence is their only hope.

Oscars: 1992, Best Visual Effects.

Demolition Man. 1993, Silver Pictures/ Warner, USA.

Dir Marco Brambilla. Prod Joel Silver, Michael Levy, Howard Kazanjian. Scr Daniel Waters, Robert Reanau, Peter M. Lenkov. Ph Alex Thomson. Ed Stuart Baird. Prod Des David L Snyder. Mus Elliot Goldenthal. Cast: Sylvester Stallone, Wesley Snipes, Sandra Bullock, Nigel Hawthorne, Benjamin Bratt.

Police officer John Spartan is condemned to a cryogenic sleep of 35 years for killing a high number of innocents in a blast during his chase of arch-criminal Simon Phoenix, who receives the same sentence. When Spartan is awoken to help the police chase Phoenix, who has escaped, he finds himself in a Huxleyan future in which life is safe and peaceful but also dull. Guided by policewoman Lenina Huxley and opposing tyrant Raymond Cocteau, Spartan captures Phoenix again, discovering in the chase that not all is well in paradise.

Dracula. 1979, Universal, USA.

Dir John Badham. Prod Walter Mirisch. Scr W.D. Richter (based on the play by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston). Ph Gilbert Taylor. Ed John Bloom. Prod Des Peter Murton. Mus John Williams. Cast: Frank Langella, Laurence Olivier, Kate Nelligan, Donald Pleasance, Trevor Eve, Jan Francis.

Mina Van Helsing, a friend of Lucy Seward's, is seduced by a stranger who follows the footsteps of the giant wolf reported to have escaped from a wrecked ship. She dies and, despite the advise of her fiancé Jonathan Harker and her father Dr. Seward, Lucy gets closer to the newly arrived Count Dracula. Called to attend his daughter's funeral, Van Helsing discovers that she has become a vampire, which he stakes. He realizes that Lucy is following the same course. Yet in the struggle, Dracula and Lucy prove to be stronger than their persecutors and Van Helsing is killed.

Dune. 1984, De Laurentiis, USA.

Dir David Lynch. Prod Raffaella De Laurentiis. Scr David Lynch (based on the novel by Frank Herbert). Ph Freddie Francis. Ed Anthony Gibbs. Prod Des Anthony Masters. Mus Toto, Marty Paich, Brian Eno. Cast: Kyle MacLachlan, Francesca Annis, Brad Douriff, Sian Philips, Sean Young, Sting, Virginia Madsen.

Paul Atreides is to become the warrior saviour of Dune. Dune is a planet coveted by the Harkonnen emperor because of its abundance in a spice of enigmatic origin,

but also beset by terrifying giant worms. When the emperor invades Dune, Paul and his witch mother escape to the desert. There he trains the natives to become his own army and learns as well that the worms are the sources of the coveted spice. Paul eventually defeats the evil envoy of the emperor and liberates Dune from his hold.

Oscars: 1984, Nomination: Best Sound.

Edward Scissorhands. 1990, 20th Century Fox, USA.

Dir Tim Burton. Prod Denise DeNovi, Tim Burton. Scr Caroline Thompson. Ph Stephan Czapsky. Ed Richard Halsey. Prod Des Bo Welsh. Mus Danny Elfman. Cast: Johnny Depp, Winona Ryder, Dianne Wiest, Anthony Michael Hall, Alan Arkin, Kathy Baker, Vincent Price.

Peg is an Avon saleslady who one day ventures into the gothic mansion crowning the hill of the sunny suburb where she lives. There she finds Edward, an odd-looking young man, who sports a bunch of shears instead of hands, as the Inventor, who made him, died before finishing him. Peg adopts Edward and though his integration within the suburban life seems at first easy, Edward is soon harassed by the demands the others put on him. Events soon lead to tragedy and, after killing a man, Edward decides to go back to his original isolation.

Oscars: 1990, Nomination: Best Make-Up.

Elephant Man, The. 1980, Paramount/ Brookfilms, USA.

Dir David Lynch. Prod Jonathan Sanger. Scr Christopher de Vore, Eric Bergen, David Lynch (based on Sir Christopher Treves' *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* and Ashley Montagu's *The Elephant Man: A Study in Dignity*). Ph Freddie Francis. Ed Anne V. Coates. Prod Des Stuart Craig. Mus John Morris. Cast: John Hurt, Anthony Hopkins, Anne Bancroft, John Gielgud, Wendy Hiller.

John Merrick, born with a disease that has severely malformed his bones, is rescued from his exploitative exhibitor by Dr. Frederick Treves, and is put under his care in a hospital. Far from being mentally impaired, Merrick is found to be a sensitive man who has greatly suffered. Thanks to Treves, Merrick is introduced to London's society and achieves a certain level of normality, interrupted by his abduction by his former master to be exploited again. Free once more, Merrick sees this normality is too fragile and lets himself die.

Oscars: 1980, Nominations: Best Picture, Director, Actor (John Hurt), Adapted Screenplay, Costume Design, Art Direction, Editing, Original Score.

Enemy Mine. 1985, Kings Road/ 20th Century Fox, USA.

Dir Wolfgang Petersen. Prod Stephen Friedman. Scr Edward Khmara. Ph Tont Imi. Ed Hannes Nikel. Prod Des Rolf Zehetbauer. Mus Maurice Jarre. Cast: Dennis Quaid, Lou Gosset Jr, Brion James, Richard Marcus, Carolyn McCormick, Bumper Robinson.

Combat pilot Davidge crash-lands in a deserted planet together with his enemy, the Drac Jeriba. To increase their chances of survival, Drac and human must learn to live together. When Jeriba, a hermaphrodite, dies in childbirth, Davidge becomes baby Zammis's foster father, a bond which leads him to kill humans in his defence. Suspected of being a double agent by the humans, Davidge is more successful in establishing trust between him and the Dracs, setting up a basic communication between the two races.

E.T.: The Extraterrestrial. 1982, Universal, USA.

Dir Steven Spielberg. Prod Stephen Spielberg. Scr Melissa Mathison. Ph Allen Davlau. Ed Carol Littleton. Prod Des James D. Bissell. Mus John Williams. Cast: Dee Wallace, Henry Thomas, Peter Coyote, Robert MacNaughton, Drew Barrymore, K.C. Martel.

A young boy comes across an extraterrestrial stranded in the back yard of his suburban home. Mutually scared at first, boy and alien come to terms with each other's monstrosity. The boy takes the alien first as a pet and later as a friend, letting his elder brother and his younger sister into the secret. When a government agency finds out that an alien has landed on Earth, they persecute and capture it. But when the boy sees that the alien is dying, he abducts it and arranges its safe passage back home.

Oscars: 1982, Best Sound, Original Score, Sound Effects Editing, Visual Effects; Nominations: Best Picture, Director, Original Screenplay, Cinematography, Editing.

Fatal Attraction. 1987, Paramount, USA.

Dir Adrian Lyne. Prod Stanley R. Jaffe, Sherry Lansing. Scr James Dearden. Ph Howard Atheron. Ed Michael Kahn, Peter E. Berger. Prod Des Mel Bourne. Mus Maurice Jarre. Cast: Michael Douglas, Glenn Close, Anne Archer, Fred Gwyne, Mike Nussbaum, Stuart Pankin.

Alex Forrest begins an affair with a married man she meets at her workplace. The man has just simply taken the chance one weekend when his wife is away, but for Alex the affair means much more. When she sees that he will not pay her any attention, she threatens suicide and later claims to be pregnant by him. Following him and his family to their new house, she kidnaps the man's little daughter and ends viciously attacking him and his wife in their home. The couple kill her in self-defence.

NB: another version distributed on video in 1992 ends with Alex committing suicide using a knife with the man's fingerprints on it, thus securing his being sent to jail.

Oscars: 1987, Nominations: Best Picture, Director, Actress (Glenn Close), Supporting Actress (Anne Archer), Adapted Screenplay, Editing.

Firestarter. 1984, De Laurentiis, USA.

Dir Mark Lester. Prod Frank Capra Jr. Scr Stanley Mann (based on the novel by Stephen King). Ph Giuseppe Ruzolini. Ed David Rawlins. Prod Des Giorgio Postiglione. Mus Tangerine Dream. Cast: Drew Barrymore, David Keith, George C. Scott, Martin Sheen, Moses Gunn.

Charlie is gifted with the power to start fires at will, which is why she and her father Andy are persecuted by a secret government agency, The Shop. Charlie's pyrokinesis is actually a mutation resulting from a secret experiment run by The Shop in which Andy was used as guinea pig. Eventually, The Shop dispatches the brutal Rainbird to capture Charlie. He succeeds and, pretending that he is just a monster like her, he wins the girl's trust. She collaborates with The Shop but when they still fail to release Andy, both seek a way out. When father and daughter meet, he tells her who Rainbird really is. Rainbird kills Andy and then she uses her power to kill him and destroy The Shop.

Flatliners. 1990, Stonebridge/ Columbia, USA.

Dir Joel Schumacher. Prod Michael Douglas, Rick Bieber. Scr Peter Filardi. Ph Jan de Bont. Ed Robert Brown. Prod Des Eugenio Zanetti. Mus James Newton Howard. Cast:

Kiefer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon, William Baldwin, Oliver Platt, Kimberley Scott.

A group of medicine students—four men and a woman—have discovered a method of experiencing death for a short time, coming back to life undamaged. Each tries the experiment but are subsequently plagued by ghosts from their past: one by the boy whose death was caused by his bullying, another by the black little girl he mocked at school, the woman by her dead drug-addict father. Release from the ghosts and the end of the experiment come when they face their guilt and accept it. Oscars: 1990, Nomination: Best Sound Effects Editing.

Fly, The. 1986, Brooksfilm, USA.

Dir David Cronenberg. Prod Stuart Cornfield. Scr Charles Edward Pogue, David Cronenberg. Ph Mark Irwin. Ed Ronald Sanders. Prod Des Carol Spier. Mus Howard Shore. Cast: Jeff Goldblum, Geena Davis, John Getz, Joy Booshel, Les Carlson.

Scientist Seth Brundle, working on teletransportation, convinces journalist Ronnie to write a book about his experiments and their collaboration soon leads to love. Feeling jealous and a failure, one night Seth teletransports himself. A fly intrudes in his 'telepod' and its DNA gets mixed with Brundle's in the process. Ronnie, who is expecting Seth's baby, witnesses the horrific metamorphosis of Seth into a hybrid of the fly and himself. He prevents her from aborting their baby, yet finally begs a mercy killing from her. Despite her fears for her child, and her love for Seth, she kills him.

Oscars: 1986, Best Make-Up.

Fly II, The. 1989, Brooksfilm, USA.

Dir Chris Walas. Prod Steven-Charles Jaffe. Scr Mick Garris, Jim Wheat, Ken Wheat, Frank Darabont. Ph Robin Vidgeon. Ed Sean Barton. Prod Des Michael S. Bolton. Mus Christopher Young. Cast: Eric Stolz, Daphne Zuniga, Lee Richardson, John Getz, Anne-Marie Lee.

Seth Brundle's son Martin is born as his mother dies. The boy is told that a rare syndrome affects him, and is kept virtually prisoner by Bartok, owner of the corporation that employed Brundle. When Martin reaches maturity, Bartok asks him to complete his father's work, for his scientists have failed. Martin succeeds but when he metamorphoses into a monster, and sees that his 'father' Bartok only wants to exploit him, he takes revenge. Helped by his girlfriend, the monstrous Martin is reborn as a normal man by stealing undamaged genes from Bartok who becomes thus his 'father' and a monster.

Frankenstein. 1992, Turner Pictures Inc./ Fox, USA.

Dir David Wickes. Scr David Wickes (based on the novel by Mary Shelley). Ph Jack Conroy. Ed John Groover. Prod Des William Alexander. Mus John Cameron. Cast: Patrick Bergin, Randy Quaid, Lambert Wilson, Fiona Gillies, John Mills.

Frankenstein is a young university professor. He is fashioning a man in his own image, but an accident causes the unfinished creature to escape. When creature and creator eventually meet, thanks to the bond that unites them as if they were twins, the creature demands a mate. Victor's fiancée volunteers to be the model for the female, but seeing that she cannot endure the painful process, Victor aborts the creation. The monster seeks revenge and both meet in the Arctic where Frankenstein sees that only death can free both of them.

Frankenstein Unbound. 1990, M-G-M / United Artists, USA.

Dir Roger Corman. Prod Roger Corman, Tom Mount, Kabi Jaeger. Scr Roger Corman (based on the novel by Brian Aldiss). Ph Armando Nannuzzi, Michael Scott. Ed Jay Cassidy. Prod Des Enrico Tovaglieri. Mus Carl Davis. Cast: John Hurt, Raul Julia, Bridget Fonda, Nick Brimble, Jason Patrick.

Joseph Buchanan, a 21st century scientist, appears in 1817 Switzerland thanks to a time warp. When he meets Frankenstein and his monster, but also Mary Shelley and her husband, he sees that he has a mission: warning Mary about her novel, making love to her, and destroying Victor's creations, including the new female monster made out of Elizabeth's remains he helps to make. When he and the male creature enter another time warp leading to a sordid future caused by Joseph's experiments, his mission to kill the monsters is accomplished.

Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare, 1991, New Line, USA.

Dir Rachel Talalay. Prod Robert Shaye, Aaron Warner. Scr Michael DeLucca. Ph Declan Quinn. Ed Janice Hampton. Prod Des C.J. Strawn. Mus Brian May. Cast: Robert Englund, Lisa Zane, Shon Greenblatt, Lezlie Deane, Ricky Dean Logan, Yaphet Kotto.

An amnesiac teen, John, arrives at the youth shelter run by psychologist Maggie, who helps him retrace his footsteps to Elm Street in Springwood, Ohio, a strange town without children or teenagers. Three other youngsters run away from the rehab centre and land on Elm Street: Carlos, whose mother caused his deafness, Tracy, an abused girl and Spenser, a video-addict who hates his father. One by one, Freddy dispatches the boys, though the girls offer more resistance. Maggie turns out to be Freddy's own daughter: only her courageous confrontation with her monstrous father can kill Freddy for good.

Fright Night. 1985, Columbia/ Tristar Films, USA.

Dir Tom Holland. Prod Herb Jaffe. Scr Tom Holland. Ph Jan Kiessen. Ed Ken Beyda. Prod Des John de Cuir Jr. Mus Brad Fiedel. Cast: Chris Sarandon, William Ragsdale, Amanda Barse, Jonathan Stark, Dorothy Fielding, Roddy McDowall.

Charlie suspects that his new neighbour Jerry Dandrige is a vampire. His virginal girlfriend Amy and his friend Brewster naively believe that Charlie can be cured of his delusion by Mr Vincent, a TV actor starring in the old-fashioned series *Fright Night*, where he appears as a skilled vampire hunter. Mr. Vincent, who does not even believe in vampires, finds out that Charlie is, unfortunately, right about Dandrige, who has meanwhile turned Amy and Brewster into vampires. He and Charlie must then face and defeat Jerry in order to rescue Amy.

Good Son, The. 1993, Fox, USA.

Dir Joseph Reuben. Prod Ex Daniel Rogosin, Ezra Swerdlow. Scr Ian McEwan. Ph John Lindley. Ed George Bowers. Prod Des Bill Groom, Mary Anne Page. Mus Elmer Bernstein. Cast: Macaulay Culkin, Elijah Wood, Wanda Crewson, David Morse, Daniel Hugh Kelly.

After his mother's death, 9-year-old Mark spends the winter with his uncle's family. Mark is appalled when he discovers that his apparently affable cousin Henry (also 9) has murdered a younger brother. When Henry tries to kill his own sister Connie, Mark tells his aunt Susan the truth, but this only makes matters worse as he is not believed. Henry's bullying of Mark culminates when he tries to kill Susan herself, whom Mark has come to regard as his own mother. During the attack an accident forces Susan to choose between Henry and Mark and, finally aware of the truth, she lets Henry die.

Gothic. 1986, Virgin, UK.

Dir Ken Russell. Prod Penny Corke. Scr Stephen Volk. Ph Mike Southon. Ed Michael Bradshell. Prod Des Christopher Hobbs. Mus Thomas Dolby. Cast: Gabriel Byrne, Julian Sands, Natasha Richardson, Myriam Cyr, Timothy Spall, Andreas Wisniewski.

Shelley, Mary Godwin and Claire Clairmont visit Lord Byron at Villa Diodatti. Together with Byron's doctor Polidori, one night they put in common all their psychic energies to unleash a demonic force that traps them into their own individual nightmares. Mary, haunted by the death of her children, suffers not only a nightmare, in which she sees Frankenstein and his monster but also foresees the deaths of those around her. Once her nocturnal ordeal is over, the following morning she's ready to begin her tale.

Gremlins. 1984, Amblin/ Warner, USA.

Dir Joe Dante. Prod Michael Finnell. Scr Chris Columbus. Ph John Hara. Ed Tina Hirsch. Prod Des James H. Spencer. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Zach Galligan, Hoyt Axton, Frances Lee McCain, Phoebe Cates, Polly Holiday.

A father acquires for his son a curious furry, cuddly creature as a Christmas present. The enigmatic Chinaman who sells the lovely pet, warns its new owner that the Mogwai must not be exposed to sunshine, fed after midnight or get wet, without explaining why. When, inevitably, several accidents of this kind affect the little animal, this spawns a high number of evil gremlins, veritable maniacs that throw the life of the family and of the whole suburb into complete chaos until they can be eliminated.

Hand that Rocks the Cradle, The. 1992, Interscope Communications Prod/ Nomura Babcock & Brown, USA.

Dir Curtis Hanson. Prod David Madden. Scr Amanda Silver. Ph Robert Elsewit. Ed John F. Link. Mus Graeme Revell. Cast: Annabella Sciorra, Rebecca de Mornay, Matt McCoy, Ernie Hudson, Julianne Moore, Madeleine Zima.

A reputed gynaecologist destroys his career when he sexually abuses a pregnant client, Claire. When he commits suicide, his also pregnant wife Peyton miscarries; maddened by grief, she plans an elaborate revenge on the woman who brought about her misery. She installs herself in Claire's home as the newly born baby's nanny, usurping little by little the mother's place in the family. However, a friend she kills and the mentally retarded gardener see through her just in time for the sickly mother to stop her. In their confrontation Claire is forced to kill Peyton.

Heaven and Earth. 1993, Ixtlan/ New Regency/ Todd-AO/ TAE/ Le Canal+, Alcor Films, USA.

Dir Oliver Stone. Prod Oliver Stone, Arnold Michan, Robert Kline, A. Kitman Ho. Scr Oliver Stone (based on the two volume autobiography *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* by Le Ly Hayslip with Jay Wurts and *Child of War, Woman of Peace* by Le Ly Hayslip with James Hayslip). Ph Robert Richardson. Ed David Brenner, Sally Menke. Mus Kitaro. Prod Des Victor Kempster. Cast: Hiep Thi Le, Tommy Lee Jones, Joan Chen, Haing S Ngor, Debbie Reynolds.

Le Ly, a Vietnamese peasant, suffers the horrors of war on the two sides: first a Viet Cong fighter, she is tortured by the government only to find that her comrades accuse her of treason and sentence her to death. After being raped instead of executed, she flees to Saigon, surviving as a black marketeer until she meets Steve, an American military man she marries. Life in America brings fresh horrors: Steve

cannot escape his past as an undercover CIA killer and commits suicide. Alone, Le Ly nonetheless succeeds and plans her return to Vietnam.

Heavenly Creatures. 1994, Wingnut/ Fontana through Miramax, New Zealand.
 Dir Peter Jackson. Prod Jim Booth. Scr Frances Walsh, Peter Jackson. Ph Alun Bollinger. Ed Jamie Selkirk. Prod Des Grant Major. Mus Peter Dament. Cast: Melanie Lynskey, Kate Winslet, Sarah Peirse, Diana Kent, Clive Merrison.

Pauline Reiper, a sulky 15-year-old schoolgirl, is charmed by lively British teenager Juliet Hulme, recently arrived in New Zealand. Pauline and Juliet enter a passionate friendship despite their class differences (Juliet is upper-middle class, Pauline working-class) based on their sharing of an imaginary land they fantasise about. Their parents eventually decide that their friendship is becoming too close for their liking and decide to separate them. Pauline blames her mother Honora for this and both girls kill her.

Oscars: 1994, Nomination: Best Original Screenplay.

Hellraiser. 1987, Film Futures, UK.

Dir Clive Barker. Prod Christopher Figgis. Scr Clive Barker (based on his own novella, *The Hellbound Heart*). Ph Robin Vidgeon. Ed Richard Marden. Prod Des Mike Buchanan. Mus Christopher Young. Cast: Andrew Robinson, Claire Higgins, Ashley Laurence, Sean Chapman.

Intent on going beyond this world's pleasures, Frank is given a taste of hellish enjoyment by the demonic Cenobites that ends in his bodily dismemberment, though his soul survives intact. Hiding in his brother Rory's house, Frank convinces his sister-in-law and former lover, Julia—still in love with Frank—to pick up men whose bodies he uses to rebuild his own. Yet Rory's daughter Kirsty not only finds Frank but also manages to invoke the Cenobites to take possession again of Frank. Only she survives him.

Hellraiser II: Hellbound, 1988, New World Pictures / Cinemarque Entertainment/ Film Futures, UK.

Dir Tony Randel. Prod Christopher Figg. Scr Peter Atkins (story by Clive Barker). Ph Robin Vidgeon. Ed Richard Marden. Prod Des Michael Buchanan. Mus Christopher Young. Cast: Claire Higgins, Ashley Laurence, Imogen Boorman, Kenneth Cranham, William Hope.

Kirsty is a patient of psychiatrist Dr. Channard, who pretends not to believe her account of the raising of the Cenobites. Yet he wishes to become one and so he raises Kirsty's stepmother, Julia, back from death. The couple use a young patient (Tiffany) to invoke the Cenobites, and the three of them, and Kirsty, are sucked into hell. There Channard finally becomes a Cenobite but when Kirsty's compassion restores their human forms to the original Cenobites only Tiffany's closing of the Cenobite box can free the girls and destroy Channard and Julia.

Hellraiser; Error! Marcador no definido. III: Hell on Earth, 1992, Fifth Avenue, USA.
 Dir Anthony Hickox. Prod Lawrence Mortoff. Scr Peter Atkins. Ph Gerry Lively. Ed Christopher Cibelli, James D.R. Hickox. Prod Des Steve Hardie. Mus Randy Miller, Christopher Young. Cast: Terry Farrell, Doug Bradley, Paula Marshall, Kevin Bernhardt, Ashley Laurence.

TV reporter Joey witnesses a mysterious death. Her investigation leads to a 'goth' club, The Boiler Room. Its owner, Monroe, has bought an enigmatic column where Pinhead, the Cenobite leader is encased; when the demon awakes Monroe must

sacrifice victims to him. Joey is visited in dreams by the human part of Pinhead, a British W.W.I military officer called Spencer. When Pinhead starts his rampage, turning those he kills into monsters, Joey is asked by Spencer to save him by killing Pinhead, as she finally does.

Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer. 1989, Maljack, USA.

Dir John McNaughton. Prod John McNaughton, Lisa Dedmond, Steve A. Jones. Scr Richard Fire, John McNaughton. Ph Charlie Lieberman. Ed Elena Maganini. Prod Des Rick Paul. Mus John McNaughton, Ken Hale, Steven A. Jones. Cast: Michael Rooker, Tracy Arnold, Tom Towles.

After a period in jail, where he has met Ottis, Henry resumes killing with Ottis as his assistant. Henry chooses his victims at random, following each time a different method, so that the police cannot find a pattern. Ottis's apprenticeship culminates in the horrific killing of a family Henry and him videotape and often watch. Ottis's sister Becky joins the duo, and although she tries to humanise Henry, he allows Ottis to rape her. Becky and Henry run away together after killing Ottis, but she's to become just another of Henry's victims.

Hidden, The. 1987, New Line Cinema / Heron Com. Inc. / Mega Entertainment Meltzer, USA.

Dir Jack Sholder. Prod Robert Shayes, Gerald T. Olson, Michael Mletzer. Scr Bob Hunt. Ph Jacques Haitkin. Ed Michael N. Knue. Prod Des C.J. Strawn, Mick Strawn. Mus, Michael Convertino. Cast: Kyle MacLachlan, Michael Nouri, Claudia Christian, Clarence Felder, Clu Gulager, Ed O'Ross.

Two extraterrestrials chase each other on Earth, occupying dying bodies they later abandon. The good one takes the body of an FBI agent in order to make his search easier, helped by policeman Thomas Beck. When the evil one takes the body of a candidate to the US Presidency, the angelic one kills him, although he cannot do anything to save Beck's life. Having lost his family to the evil alien, the angelic alien decides to occupy Beck's body and to take his place as husband and father.

Howling, The. 1980, Avco/ Embassy Pictures Group/ International Pictures Group, USA.

Dir Joe Dante. Prod Daniel H. Blatt. Scr John Sayles, Terence Winkless (based on the novel by Gary Brandner). Ph John Hara. Ed Mark Goldblatt, Joe Dante. Prod Des Michael Finnek, Jack Conrad. Mus Pino Donaggio. Cast: Dee Wallace, Patrick MacNee, Dennis Dugan, Christopher Stone, Belinda Balaski.

Karen White, a TV star reporter, is attacked by 'Eddie', a killer who has approached her for his fifteen minutes of fame. Badly affected by the attack she is sent with husband Bill to Dr. Wagner's colony to rest. She soon sees that 'Eddie' is a member of the group of werewolves lead by Wagner, which Bill joins as well. Karen is rescued by a fellow journalist who suspects Wagner, but her return to TV to report the destruction of the group is halted by her transformation into a werewolf before the cameras.

Hunger, The. 1983, Richard Shepherd, M-G-M, United Artists, USA.

Dir Tony Scott. Prod Richard Shepherd. Scr Ivan Davis, Michael Thomas (based on the novel by Whitley Strieber). Ph Stephen Goldblatt. Ed Pamela Bower. Prod Des Brian Morris. Mus Michael Rubini, Denny Jaeger. Cast: Catherine Deneuve, David Bowie, Susan Sarandon, Cliff De Young, Beth Ethlers.

Miriam is a sophisticated, immortal vampire happily living with her lover John, another vampire. When John starts showing signs of accelerated ageing he tries to contact doctor Sarah Roberts, an authority in the field of geriatrics. Sarah neglects John's case but to make amends she traces him to Miriam's house. There she is seduced by Miriam, who has meanwhile stored the undead John in the attic together with her many previous lovers. Now herself a vampire, Sarah lets Miriam's undead lovers take revenge on their cruel mistress and finally die in peace.

Innocent, The. 1993, Island World, UK-GER.

Dir John Schlesinger. Prod Norma Heyman, Chris Sievernich, Wieland Schulz-Keil. Scr Ian McEwan (based on his own novel). Ph Dietrich Lohmann. Ed Richard Marden. Prod Des Luciana Arrighi. Mus Gerald Gouriet. Cast: Campbell Scott, Anthony Hopkins, Isabella Rossellini, Ronald Nitschke, Hart Bochner

Leonard Marnham, a young British expert in electronics, is sent to Berlin in the 1950s to help the Americans tap the Russian phone lines, reached thanks to a tunnel. On his engagement night to Maria, a German secretary, they are attacked by jealous Otto, Maria's ex-husband. In the struggle she kills him and to hide their crime they cut the body into pieces and hide it away in the tunnel, just before the Russians discover it. Only Col. Glass's protection can help them, the price being Maria's marriage to Glass.

Innocent Blood. 1992, Warner, USA.

Dir John Landis. Prod Lee Rich, Leslie Belzbery. Scr Michael Wolk. Ph Mac Alhberg. Ed Dale Beldin. Prod Des Richard Sawyer. Mus Ira Newborn. Cast: Anne Parillaud, Robert Loggia, Anthony LaPaglia, Chazz Palminteri.

Marie is a pretty vampire who only feeds on 'bad guys', especially Italian. She always kills her victims but Mafia capo Sal Macelli survives her and becomes a vampire. He finds that there are many advantages in his new state and sets out to convert all his 'family' to vampirism. Only Marie, with the help of policeman Genaro who is chasing her, can stop Macelli and his clan. Soon Marie and Genaro fall in love and, though Marie decides to die after eliminating Macelli, Genaro asks her to stay with him regardless of her predatory habits.

Interview with the Vampire. 1994, Geffen Pictures, USA.

Dir Neil Jordan. Prod Stephen Woolley, David Geffen. Scr Ann Rice (based on her own novel) and Neil Jordan (uncredited). Ph Philippe Rousselot. Ed Mick Audsley. Prod Des Dante Ferretti. Mus Elliot Goldenthal. Cast: Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt, Kirsten Dunsten, Antonio Banderas, Stephen Rea, Christian Slater.

Louis, desperate after the death of his wife, craves for death that comes to him from classy vampire Lestat. Life with Lestat is enriched with the arrival of Claudia, a child both have turned into a vampire. Yet, angered because she cannot grow up, Claudia tries to kill Lestat. The couple flee to Paris where Armand and his group of vampires punish Claudia with death for her crime. A horrified Louis destroys all the other vampires, unaware that he is to meet once again Lestat back in America.

Oscars: 1994, Nomination: Best Original Score, Best Art Direction.

Johnny Handsome. 1989, Carolco/ Guber-Peters, USA.

Dir Walter Hill. Prod Charles Roven. Scr Ken Friedman (based on novel by John Godey, *The Three Worlds of Johnny Handsome*). Ph Matthew F. Leonetti. Ed Freeman Davies. Prod Des Gene Rudolf. Mus Ry Cooder. Cast: Mickey Rourke, Ellen Barkin, Lance Henriksen, Elizabeth McGovern, Morgan Freeman, Forest Whitaker.

Johnny, a man born with a severely disfigured face, is convicted for an armed robbery as his accomplices, Sunny and Rafe, have set him up. In prison, a plastic surgeon turns him into a handsome man, expecting that the change of identity will rehabilitate him, despite the scepticism of the police officer in charge of Johnny's case. As soon as he is out of prison, Johnny's plans for revenge become his priority and disregarding Donna's love, he sets out to confront Sunny and Rafe, with disastrous results for all.

Junior. 1994, Northern Lights, USA.

Dir Ivan Reitman. Prod Ivan Reitman. Scr Kevin Wade, Chris Conrad. Ph Adam Greenberg. Ed Wendy Greene Briamont. Mus James Newton Hoard. Cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Danny de Vito, Emma Thompson, Pamela Reed.

Larry, a gynaecologist, has discovered a new wonder drug that will prevent spontaneous miscarriages in difficult pregnancies. Since he lacks a legal permit to test his drug, he asks a colleague, Alex, to help him. Together they fertilise one of Dr. Reddin's frozen eggs—which she is to use for an experiment—with Alex's sperm, though Dr. Reddin is not informed. Then Larry implants the fertilised egg into Alex's abdomen, where the embryo develops normally. Alex's pregnancy angers Dr. Reddin but when their daughter Junior is born, she accepts her, and forms a family with Alex.

Jurassic Park. 1993, Amblin/ Universal, USA.

Dir Steven Spielberg. Prod Kathleen Kennedy, Gerard R. Molen. Scr David Koepp and Michael Crichton (based on the novel by Michael Crichton). Ph Dean Cundey. Ed Michael Kahn. Mus John Williams. Cast: Sam Neill, Laura Dern, Jeff Goldblum, Richard Attenborough, Ariana Richards.

Tycoon John Hammond invites a group formed by palaeontologist Dr. Grant, paleobotanist Elly, mathematician Dr. Malcolm and grandchildren Lex and Tim to try out the pleasures of his *Jurassic Park*, a theme park featuring live dinosaurs created from prehistoric DNA. As Malcolm predicts, safety in the park soon fails and, as the members of the group ward off or succumb to the vicious attacks of the beasts, it becomes clear that the dinosaurs are unexpectedly reproducing. In the end, the humans must leave the island to the dinosaurs and escape.

Oscars: 1993, Best Sound, Sound Editing, Visual Effects.

Kalifornia. 1993, Polygram/ Propaganda Films, USA.

Dir Dominic Sena. Prod Steve Golin, Aristides McGarry, Sigurjon Sighvasson. Scr Tim Metcalfe. Ph Bojan Bazelli. Prod Des Michael White. Ed Martin Hunter. Mus Carter Burnwell. Cast: Brad Pitt, David Duchovny, Michelle Forbes, Juliette Lewis.

Brian Kessler is a Pittsburgh journalist working on a book about psychopaths together with his photographer girlfriend Carrie. The couple intend to travel to California to improve their professional chances and to photograph the scenes of the crimes Brian is writing about on the way. To share expenses they put an ad and are contacted by Early Grace and his girlfriend Adele. The journey soon becomes a

nightmare, for Early is a psychopath who ends killing Adele and raping Carrie before forcing Brian to kill him.

Lawnmower Man, The. 1992, Allied Vision/ Lane Pringle Products/ Fuji Eight Co. Ltd, USA.

Dir Brett Leonard. Prod Gimel Everett, Milton Subotski. Scr Brett Leonard, Gimel Everett (from a short story by Stephen King, uncredited). Ed Alan Baumgarten. Ph Russell Carpenter. Prod Des Alex McDowell. Mus Dan Wyman. Cast: Jeff Fahey, Pierce Brosnan, Jenny Wright, Geoffrey Lewis.

Jobe, whose mental age is 5, is employed as a gardener by Dr. Angelo. With a combination of drugs and virtual reality programmes, Dr. Larry Angelo turns Jobe into a mental superman, after the disastrous results of his experiments involving the hyperstimulation of chimps' brains for military uses. When Jobe's intelligence goes beyond anything Angelo had imagined, he tries to stop him. Yet, by then, Jobe, grown into a megalomaniac with desires of revenge, has already become the new virtual god of cyberspace.

Legend. 1985, Legend/ 20th Century-Fox. UK.

Dir Ridley Scott. Prod Arnon Milchan. Scr William Hjortsberg. Ph Alex Thomson. Ed Terry Rawlings. Prod Des Assheton Gorton. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Tom Cruise, Mia Sara, Tim Curry, David Bennent, Alice Playten.

Princess Lily disrupts the order of the universe when she approaches the unicorns that her beloved Jack, a peasant boy, shows her in the forest. Tamed by her virginal beauty, the unicorns become an easy prey to Darkness's servants and are robbed of their power. Lily is then taken to hell to become Darkness's bride, while winter sets in the forest. Guided by elves, Jack follows her to Darkness's lair to rescue her, not before she frees the unicorns. With Darkness's defeat, harmony is regained.

Oscars: 1986, Nomination: Best Make-Up.

Léon. 1995, Gaumont/ Les Films du Dauphin, FRA.

Dir Luc Besson. Prod Claude Besson. Scr Luc Besson. Ph Thierry Arbogast. Ed Silvie Landra. Prod Des Bernard Grenet. Mus Eric Serra. Cast: Jean Reno, Nathalie Portman, Gary Oldman, Dany Aiello, Peter Appel.

12-year-old Matilda's family is exterminated by the vicious DEA agent Stansford and she is only saved because she pretends to live next door to her own flat. The tenant of this flat is Léon, a hitman, who reluctantly saves her from death but who learns eventually to love and protect her. On the run from Stansford, the pair have time to learn from each other (she how to use a gun, he how to read) before their enemy finally corners them. In order to avenge Matilda's family, Léon kills himself and Stansford.

Lifeforce. 1985, Canon/ Golan-Globus, UK.

Dir Tobe Hooper, Prod Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. Scr Dan O'Bannon and Don Jakoby (based on the novel by Colin Wilson, *The Space Vampires*). Ph Alen Hume. Ed John Grover. Prod Des John Graysmark. Mus Henri Mancini. Cast: Matilda May, Steven Railsback, Peter Firth, Patrick Stewart, Frank Finley.

Three humanoid aliens are taken to Earth after killing the crew of space shuttle Churchill, except for Col. Calson. They escape and the only woman reveals herself as a shape-shifter who draws the life force of her victims with a kiss. Calson and Col. Cain chase her in her different bodies as vampirism becomes a plague

decimating London. Calson confesses to his love for the woman, who, as it turns out, has come to fetch him, since he is one of their species. Cain realizes that the plague will stop when she takes Calson to her own planet and helps her.

Love at First Bite, 1979, American International, USA.

Dir Stan Dragoti. Prod Joel Freeman. Scr Robert Kaufman. Ph Edward Rosson. Ed Mort Fallick, Allan Jacobs. Prod Des Serge Krizman. Mus Charles Bernstein. Cast: George Hamilton, Susan Saint James, Richard Benjamin, Dick Shawn, Arte Johnson.

Count Dracula is evicted from his Roumanian castle by the communist government, who are to give the Count's residence to a famed athlete. The Count travels then to New York, where he meets and falls in love with Cindy, a fashion model who turns out to be the reincarnation of the Count's lost love. However, the Count faces strong competition for Cindy's sexual favours, not only because she is very promiscuous but because his boyfriend is a descendant of Dracula's enemy, Van Helsing. Yet, Cindy chooses in the end to become a vampire and enjoy her new life with Dracula.

Making Mr. Right. 1987, Barry & Enright, Orion Pictures, USA.

Dir Susan Seidelman. Prod Mike Wise, Joel Tuber. Scr Floyd Byars, Laurie Frank. Ph Edward Lachman. Ed Andrew Mondschein. Prod Des Jack Blackman. Mus Chaz Jankel. Cast: John Malkovich, Ann Magnuson, Ben Masters, Glenna Headley, Laurie Metcalf.

Career woman Frankie is to develop an advertising campaign for Ulysses, an android identical to Dr. Peters of Chemtec, who has designed him for work in space exploration. Frankie's task is to teach Ulysses the social graces that will make him popular, thus securing the funding for the project. However, the naive android quickly learns to fall in love with Frankie and to find the idea of his mission in space unbearable. A desperate Dr. Peters decides to trade places with his creation, allowing the couple to enjoy love.

Manhunter. 1986, De Laurentiis/ Roth, USA.

Dir Michael Mann. Prod Richard Roth. Scr Michael Mann (based on the novel by Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon*), Ph Dante Spinotti. Ed Dav Hoeni. Prod Des Mel Bourne. Mus The Reds, Michael Rubini. Cast: William L. Petersen, Kim Greist, Joan Allen, Brian Cox, Dennis Farina, Tom Noonan.

Former FBI agent Will Graham is summoned by his ex-boss Jack Crawford to help find out the identity of an enigmatic, brutal serial killer of families. Graham's reputation is based on his capture of Dr. Hannibal Lecter, the notorious cannibal whose help Crawford suggests might be used. Instead of helping, Lecter leads the killer to Graham in revenge; he is then forced to confront the killer to defend his own family.

Man without a Face, The. 1993, Icon/ Majestic Films, USA.

Dir Mel Gibson. Prod Bruce Davey. Scr Malcolm MacRury (based on the novel by Isabelle Holland). Ph Donald M. McAlpine. Ed Tony Gibbs. Prod Des Barbara Dunphy. Mus James Horner. Cast: Mel Gibson, Nick Stahl, Margaret Whitton, Fay Masterson, Geoffrey Lewis.

14-year-old Chuck asks Justin, an ex-teacher whose disfigured face keeps him isolated, to tutor him. He is to pass the entrance exam to a selective boarding school that will let him escape his unbearable life with his mother and sisters. Justin is reluctant at first, but he and Chuck eventually develop a close relationship which becomes tainted when it is revealed that Justin went to jail for sexually

abusing the boy killed in the car crash that disfigured him. Chuck ascertains that Justin is innocent but others ruin their friendship.

Mary Reilly. 1995, Columbia Tristar, UK.

Dir Stephen Frears. Prod Ned Tanen, Nancy Graham Tanen, Norma Heyman. Scr Christopher Hampton (based on the novel by Valerie Martin). Ph Philippe Rousselot. Ed Leslye Walker. Prod Des Stuart Craig. Mus George Fenton. Cast: Julia Roberts, John Malkovich, Glenn Close, Michael Gambon, George Cole.

Mary Reilly is a servant in Dr Jekyll's grim house. Mary falls in love with Jekyll, observing from a distance his suspicious assistant, Mr. Hyde. Jekyll shows certain sympathy for Mary when he finds out that the scars in her hands were caused by her father's abuse, but he does not hesitate to use her to cover Jekyll's awful crimes. Although Mary still does not suspect who Hyde is, she is troubled by the growing attraction she feels for him. Jekyll finally tells Mary the truth before he drinks a poison that brings back Hyde but also kills him. Mary lies down by his side, letting herself be found with him as a sign of her devotion.

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. 1994, American Zoetrope/ Sony, USA.

Dir Kenneth Branagh. Prod Francis Ford Coppola, James V. Hart, John Veitch. Scr Stephen Lady, Frank Darabont (based on the novel by Mary Shelley). Ph Roger Platt. Ed Andrew Marcus. Prod Des Tim Harvey. Mus Patrick Doyle. Cast: Kenneth Branagh, Robert de Niro, Helena Bonham-Carter, Tom Hulce, John Cleese, Aidan Quinn, Ian Holm.

Victor Frankenstein experiments with the reanimation of body parts, tutored by Prof. Waldman. Ironically, his great opportunity comes when Waldman's death allows Victor to graft his master's brain onto the body of the criminal who killed him. When the new monster, however, kills Victor's bride on their wedding night, Victor does not hesitate to remake her but, claimed by both monster and master, she chooses death. Creature and creator embark on a chase that leads the latter to death and the former to suicide.

Oscars: 1994, Nomination: Best Make-Up.

Mask, The. 1994, New Line Productions/ Dark Horse Entertainment, USA.

Dir Charles Russell. Prod Bob Engelman. Scr Mike Werb. Ph John Leonetti. Ed Arthur Coburn. Prod Des Craig Stearns. Mus Randy Elman. Cast: Jim Carrey, Cameron Diaz, Peter Riegert, Peter Greene, Amy Yasbeck, Richard Jeni.

Dull bank clerk Stanley Ipkiss becomes his mischievous alter ego thanks to a mask. With his new identity Ipkiss can foil the plans of the gangsters who try to rob the bank where he works and seduce the dream girl who is being used by them. When the mask eventually falls into the hands of Ipkiss' enemies, he is saved and the bad guys defeated thanks to his girl and his dog's courage. As she seems to prefer the unmasked Ipkiss, he tosses the mask back to the river it came from, but his dog is ready to be its new owner.

Oscars: 1994, Nomination: Best Visual Effects.

Memoirs of an Invisible Man. 1992, Warner/ Cornelius Productions, USA.

Dir John Carpenter. Prod Bruce Brodner, Dan Kolsrud. Scr Robert Coover, Dana Olsen, William Goldman (based on the novel by H.F. Saint). Ph William A. Fraker. Ed Marion Rothman. Mus Shirley Walker. Cast: Chevy Chase, Daryl Hannah, Sam Neill, Michael McKean, Stephen Tobolowsky.

Nick Holloway—a dull, inefficient executive—causes an accident at Magnascope Laboratories that leaves him invisible. The power-hungry CIA agent Jenkins is on his track, as he thinks that Nick will be invaluable as a spy. He forces Nick to face the dilemma of either becoming a media freak or handing control on his body over to mad Jenkins. Only his understanding girlfriend Alice can help Nick to develop a new strategy for survival, evade Jenkins and start a new life and a family with her, remaining still invisible.

Misery. 1990, Castle Rock / Nelson, USA.

Dir Rob Reiner. Prod Andrew Scheinman, Rob Reiner. Scr William Goldman (based on the novel by Stephen King). Ph Barry Sonnenfeld. Ed Robert Leighton. Prod Des Norman Garwood. Mus Marc Shaiman. Cast: Kathy Bates, James Caan, Frances Sternhagen, Richard Fansworth, Lauren Bacall.

Best-selling novelist Paul Sheldon, author of the popular and romantic *Misery* series, suffers a car accident. The madwoman who saves him from death, Annie Wilkes, is, unfortunately for Paul, also his number one fan. When she discovers that Misery is dead, she burns Paul's new literary novel, tortures him by withdrawing his medication, and breaks his legs, not before forcing him to write a new *Misery* novel. In the end, her prisoner decides to confront her and kill her. Once free, Paul publishes his last *Misery* novel and rewrites the one Annie burnt. Oscars: 1990, Best Actress (Kathy Bates).

Mister Frost. 1990, Hugo/ AAA/ OMM, FRA-UK.

Dir Philippe Setbon. Prod Xavier Gelin. Scr Philippe Setbon, Brad Lynch. Ph Dominique Berenguier. Ed Ray Lovejoy. Prod Des Max Barto. Cast: Jeff Goldblum, Alan Bates, Kathy Baker, Roland Girand, Daniel Gelin.

While investigating the disappearance of two men a policeman meets Mr. Frost who calmly declares that his garden is strewn with the bodies of the two men and other 20 victims. Taken to a psychiatric hospital, Mr. Frost claims to be the Devil himself and challenges the sceptical female psychologist in charge of his case to believe him: she, Mr. Frost foresees, will eventually kill him when she is persuaded that he's the Devil. Convinced by Frost's evident implication in the horrid death of a boy, she indeed kills him.

Music Box, The. 1989, Carolco, USA.

Dir Constantin Costa-Gavras. Prod Irwin Winkler. Scr Joe Eszterhas. Ph Patrick Blossier. Ed Joele Van Effenterre. Prod Des Jeannine Claudia Opperswall. Mus Philippe Sarde. Cast: Jessica Lange, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Frederick Forrest, Lukas Haas, Cheryl Lynn Bruce.

The father of Anne Talbot, a Chicago lawyer, is accused of having committed war crimes in Hungary as a Nazi officer during W.W. II. Convinced of his innocence and angered by the American media's supposition that he is indeed guilty, Anne defends him in the extradition proceedings, engaging in his aid even the help of her powerful father-in-law. However, when some photographs sent to her in a music box prove her father's guilt, Anne decides to let him face the charges on his own.

Oscars: 1989, Nomination: Best Actress (Jessica Lange).

My Left Foot. 1989, Granada, UK.

Dir Jim Sheridan. Prod Noel Pearson. Scr Shane Connaughton, Jim Sheridan (based on the autobiography by Christy Brown). Ph Jack Conroy. Ed J. Patrick Duffner. Prod Des

Austen Spriggs. Mus Elmer Bernstein. Cast: Daniel Day-Lewis, Ray McAnally, Brenda Fricker, Ruth McCabe, Fiona Shaw.

Although Christy Brown suffered from cerebral palsy from birth, his courageous mother rejected the doctors' opinion that Brown would remain a vegetable all his life. Thanks to her determination and the family's love Brown would slowly overcome his disability and the family's limited means become not only literate but, eventually, a painter and writer. The film focuses as well on Brown's emotional attachment to his therapist and to the pretty nurse who finally accepts the challenge of loving him.

Oscars: 1989, Best Actor (Daniel Day-Lewis), Best Supporting Actress (Brenda Fricker); Nominations: Best Picture, Director, Adapted Screenplay.

Naked Lunch, The. 1991, CAN-UK.

Dir David Cronenberg. Prod Jeremy Thomas. Scr David Cronenberg (based on the novel by William Burroughs). Ph Peter Suschitzky. Ed Ron Sanders. Prod Des Carol Spier. Mus Howard Shore, Ornette Coleman. Cast: Peter Weller, Judy Davis, Ian Holm, Julian Sands, Roy Scheider.

1953. New York. Bill Lee is a bug exterminator, married to Joan, who is addicted to bug powder. The eccentric Dr Benway prescribes a cure with centipede narcotics for Joan but, before it can be tried out, Bill accidentally shoots Joan dead. On the run, he meets several people in Interzone, among which are a mugwump—an alien—and the decadent Tom and Joan Frost. Bill enters then into a nightmarish world ruled by his typewriter, a talking insect which enslaves him into writing *The Naked Lunch*.

Natural Born Killers. 1994, Ixlan/ New Regency/ Warner, USA.

Dir Oliver Stone. Prod Jane Hamsher, Don Murphy, Clayton Townsend. Scr Quentin Tarantino (uncredited), David Veloz, Richard Rutowski, Oliver Stone. Ph Robert Richardson. Ed Hank Corwin, Brian Berdan. Prod Des Victor Kemspter. Mus Budd Carr (exec. prod.). Cast: Woody Harrelson, Juliette Lewis, Robert Downey Jr., Tommy Lee Jones, Rodney Langenfield.

Mickey and Mallory Knox are in love and on the run from the police having committed a series of killings, beginning with the murder of her parents. By the time they are captured by a vicious police agent, who is himself a killer, the couple have become a national celebrity. When reality show host Wayne Gale convinces the prison's warden to let him interview Mickey, the latter takes his chance to escape with Mallory, taking Gale as a human shield, and giving him finally not an exclusive interview but death.

Nightmare before Christmas, The. 1993, Touchstone Pictures, USA.

Dir Henry Selick. Prod Tim Burton, Denise di Novi. Scr Caroline Thompson and Michael McDowell (based on characters and story by Tim Burton). Ph Peter Kozachik. Ed Stan Webb. Mus Danny Elfman.

Jack Skellington, a leading citizen of Halloweentown, is tired of the routine of inventing more forms of scaring people. A walk in the forest leads him unexpectedly to the lovely Christmastown and, impressed by the colourful Christmas preparations, he decides to take over Santa Claus's role. With the help of three monstrous Halloweentown children, he kidnaps Santa Claus and involves the whole town in the first horrific Christmas. Only Marie, a rag doll who secretly loves Jack, sees the approaching disaster.

Oscars: 1993, Nomination: Best Visual Effects.

Nightmare on Elm Street. 1984, New Line / Media Home/ Smart Egg, USA.

Dir Wes Craven. Prod Robert Shaye. Scr Wes Craven. Ph Jacques Haitkin. Ed Rick Shaine. Prod Des Greg Fonseca. Mus Charles Bernstein. Cast: John Saxon, Ronee Blakely, Heather Langenkamp, Amanda Wyss, Johnny Depp, Robert Englund.

The adults of a quiet American suburb hide a terrible secret from their children: they burned to death Freddy Kruger, who had killed many children but walked free out of prison. When teenage Nancy's friend Tina is sadistically killed, she realizes she and her friends are trapped in a collective nightmare orchestrated by Freddy. The problem is that not even her police officer father believes her, and feeling betrayed, when Freddy has done away with friend Rod and her boyfriend, she sets out to fight him in her dreams.

1984. 1984, Virgin Film/ Umbrella -Rosenblum Films, UK.

Dir Michael Radford. Prod Simon Perry. Scr Michael Radford (based on the novel by George Orwell). Ph Roger Deakins. Ed Tom Priestly. Prod Des Allan Cameron. Mus Eurythmics and Dominic Muldowey. Cast: John Hurt, Richard Burton, Suzanna Hamilton, Cyril Cusack.

Winston Smith works for the Ministry of Information tampering with historical documents as Big Brother wills. He longs for some privacy, which he achieves in his relationship with fellow worker Julia. Having heard of the rebel Goldstein and his book, Winston is glad to be approached by O'Brien, who seems to oppose the government. When Julia and him are arrested, Winston discovers that O'Brien is the mastermind behind Goldstein's book and a merciless torturer who forces him to betray Julia and love the Big Brother.

Not without my Daughter. 1991, Pathe/ Ufland, USA.

Dir Brian Gilbert. Prod Harry J. Ufland, Mary Jane Ufland. Scr David W. Rintels (based on the autobiography by Betty Mahmoody with William Hoffer). Ph Peter Hannan. Ed Terry Rawlings. Prod Des Anthony Pratt. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Sally Field, Alfred Molina, Sheila Rosenthal, Rosahn Seth, Sarah Badel.

An American woman, Betty Mahmoody, married to an Iranian doctor of long residence in the USA, travels with him and their daughter Mahtob to Iran to meet his family in the middle of Khomeini's reign. Once there, he announces they are to remain in Iran indefinitely, and a horrified Betty finds herself trapped without a passport and having to endure his abuse and those of his family. Desperate to take Mahtob away, Betty contacts an underground Iranian network; they smuggles both out of Iran via the dangerous Turkish border.

Predator. 1987, 20th Century Fox/ Amercent/ American Entertainment, USA.

Dir John McTiernan. Prod Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver, John Davis. Scr Jim Thomas, John Thomas. Ph Donald McAlpine. Ed John F. Link, Mark Helfrich. Prod Des John Vallone. Mus Alan Silvestri. Cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Carl Weathers, Elpidia Carrillo, Bill Duke, Jesse Ventura.

A special rescue team lead by Dutch is sent to find a helicopter missing in an area of the Central American jungle controlled by the hostile guerrilla. Joined there by CIA man Dillon, they attack a guerrilla camp, taking a local girl as a prisoner. Once in the heart of the jungle, Dutch is angry to find out that he is actually helping to cover a botched CIA operation, but this problem is minor compared to the death of his men, taken, one by one, by an invisible enemy that the girl

describes as a demon. Dismissing her, only Dutch is left to defeat the alien predator.

Oscars: 1987, Nomination: Best Visual Effects.

Predator 2. 1990, 20th Century Fox, USA.

Dir Stephen Hopkins. Prod Lawrence Gordon, Joel Silver, John Davis. Scr Jim Thomas, John Thomas. Ph Peter Levy. Ed Mark Goldblatt. Prod Des Lawrence G. Paull. Mus Alan Silvestri. Cast: Danny Glover, Gary Busey, Ruben Blades, Maria Conchita Alonso, Kevin Peter Hall.

An alien predator lands in 1997 L.A., a city devastated by the constant warfare between the police and the gangs of drug dealers. Black police officer Harrigan sets out to find out who is causing the gruesome killings the gangs are blaming onto each other, and also killing his team. What he finds is a creature that kills for the sake of collecting trophies. Disregarding the threats of the FBI who want to capture and study the alien, he tracks it to its urban lair, only to find a group of aliens which arrived in Earth long before us. He kills the predator but the other predators indicate that they might eventually return to Earth.

Prospero's Books. 1991, Allarts/ Cinea/ Camera/ Penta, UK-FRA.

Dir Peter Greenaway. Prod Kees Kasander. Scr Peter Greenaway (based on the play by William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*). Ph Sacha Vierny. Ed Marina Bodbyl. Prod Des Ben Van Os, Jan Roelfs. Mus Michael Nyman. Cast: John Gielgud, Michael Clark, Michel Blanc, Roland Jopheson, Isabelle Pasco.

A visually stunning adaptation of *The Tempest*, *Prospero's Books* adds to Shakespeare's play a Prospero who is himself writing his own story and who is heard throughout the film giving his own voice to all the characters. Having caused a storm with the help of Ariel—represented by a child, a boy and a man—Prospero confronts his disloyal brother, as his daughter Miranda falls in love with Ferdinand and the treacherous Caliban—in this case a beautiful mute dancer—plots the overturn of Prospero's island kingdom.

Robocop. 1987, Davison/ Orion, USA.

Dir Paul Verhoeven. Prod Arne Schmidt. Scr Edward Neumeier. Ph Jost Vacano. Ed Frank J. Drioste. Prod Des William Sandell. Mus Basil Poledouris. Cast: Peter Weller, Nancy Allen, Ronny Cox, Kurtwood Smith.

The Detroit police has been sold to Omni Consumer Products, who have developed the ideal, cost-effective policeman: the Robocop. Yet, when the machine malfunctions, OCP replaces it with an alternative cyborg Robocop: Alex Murphy—a policeman just killed by the gangster Bodiker—whose brain is inserted into a metal body. The new Robocop has no memory of Murphy's life, but policewoman Louise helps him to remember enough to kill Bodiker and unmask the link between crime and OCP.

Oscars: 1987, Special Award for Sound Effects Editing; Nominations: Best Editing, Sound.

Robocop 2. 1990, Orion, USA.

Dir Irvin Kershner. Prod Jon Davidson. Scr Frank Miller, Wallon Green. Ph Mark Irwin. Ed William Anderson. Prod Des Peter Jamison. Mus Leonard Rosenman. Cast: Peter Weller, Nancy Allen, Dan O'Herily, Belinda Bauer, Tom Noonan, Gabriel Damon.

The new drug Nuke has greatly empowered drug baron Cain and his gang. The only threat to their safety is Robocop, whom they capture and dismantle. OCP are

developing the new R-2 and so have little interest in rebuilding R-1, which is reprogrammed, but is seemingly useless. The psychologist programming the new R-2 kills Cain when he is under arrest and has his brain grafted onto the R-2, which is then fed with Nuke. R-1, having regained his human identity, fights him and the OCP plans.

Robocop 3. 1992, Orion Pictures, USA.

Dir Fred Dekker. Prod Patrick Cowley. Scr Fred Dekker, Frank Miller. Ph Gary Kibbe. Ed Bert Lovitt. Prod Des Hilda Stark. Mus Basil Poledouris. Cast: Robert Burke, Nancy Allen, Remy Ryan, CCH Pounder, Rip Torn, Mako.

OCP is now owned by a major Japanese corporation run by the tycoon Kanemitsu. The plans to develop the new Delta City go ahead with the forcible eviction of the impoverished tenants of Old Detroit centre, many of whom are killed. Among the victims are the parents of an American-Japanese little girl, a computer wizard who teams with a tough female resistance leader and a female engineer fired by OCP for disagreeing with the misuse of the Robocop. Together with Robocop himself they foil OCP's plans and earn Kanemitsu's trust.

Rowing in the Wind. 1988, Ditirambo Films SA, Spain.

Dir Gonzalo Suárez. Prod Andrés Vicente Gómez. Scr Gonzalo Suárez. Ed José Salcedo. Ph Carlos Suárez. Prod Des José Lacoste. Mus Alejandro Massó. Cast: Hugh Grant, Liz McInnerney, Valentine Pelka, Elizabeth Hurley, José Luis Gómez.

From 1816, when she meets Byron in Villa Diodatti to her death, Mary Shelley is chased by the monster she created in *Frankenstein*, a creature who announces the deaths of her beloved husband, children and friends. Doubting whether she is not herself death, Mary is in an agony of guilt that leaves her powerless to prevent the deaths. After Byron, his daughter Allegra, Mary's children William and Clara and her husband Shelley have all died, Mary prepares to meet death and her monster, assuming her monstrous motherhood.

Schindler's List. 1993, Amblin Entertainment, USA.

Dir Steven Spielberg. Prod Steven Spielberg, Gerard R. Molen, Branko Lustig. Scr Steven Zaillian (based on the novel by Thomas Keneally, *Schindler's Ark*). Ph Jamusz Kaminski. Ed Michael Kahn. Mus John Williams. Cast: Liam Neeson, Ben Kingsley, Ralph Fiennes, Caroline Goodall, Jonathan Sagalle.

Oskar Schindler successfully runs a factory in Nazi-occupied Cracow, staffed by Jewish prisoners, but when he witnesses the massacre in the Jewish ghetto saving Jewish lives becomes his obsession. With plenty of money and tact he manoeuvres Nazi commander Amon Goeth, who runs a work camp where he commits all kinds of atrocities, into letting him buy the lives of 1,100 Jews for his factory. Schindler's strong determination leads him even to rescue his women from Auschwitz. Once they are all together, he and his Jews survive Goeth's fall and the war.

Oscars: 1993, Best Picture, Director, Screenplay Adaptation, Cinematography, Film Editing, Original Score, Art Direction; Nominations: Best Actor (Liam Neeson), Supporting Actor (Ralph Fiennes), Costume Design, Sound, Make-Up.

Serial Mom. 1994, Savoy Pictures, USA.

Dir John Waters. Prod John Fiedler, Mark Tavlov. Scr John Waters. Ph Robert M. Stevens. Ed Jane Hampton, Erica Huggins. Mus Basil Poladouris. Cast: Kathleen Turner, Sam Waterston, Ricki Lake, Matthew Lilard, Mary Jo Catlett.

Beverly Sutphin is the perfect wife of a dentist and the wonderful mother of Chip and Misty in suburban Baltimore. What her family does not suspect is that she is also a serial killer, and that her victims are those who annoy her or her family for the least expected reason. Once her activities become known, Beverly becomes a media star, though she never stops killing. When she is arrested and taken to court, she defends herself and proves her total innocence, even though all know she is guilty.

Se7en, 1995, New Line Cinema, USA.

Dir David Fincher. Prod Annold Kopelson, Phyllis Carlyle. Scr Andrew Kevin Walker. Ph Darius Khondij. Ed Richard Francis Bruce. Prod Des Arthur Max. Mus Howard Shore. Cast: Morgan Freeman, Brad Pitt, Kevin Spacey, Gwyneth Paltrow, John C. McGinley.

Young policeman David Mills is the new partner of an experienced detective about to retire. Together they must trace and arrest a serial killer who is perpetrating bizarre crimes, apparently following the list of the seven deadly sins. Eventually Mills and his companion find out that the psychopath is a certain John Doe and, though he escapes, they find in his apartment abundant evidence to satisfy them that he is their man. Unexpectedly, Doe turns himself in and makes a deal with Mills that will provide the evidence necessary to convict him. As it turns out, Doe has killed Mills' pregnant wife and challenges Mills to kill him or turn to justice, as he should. Mills chooses to kill him.

She-Devil. 1989, Seidelman/ Brett Productions, USA.

Dir Susan Seidelman. Prod G. Mac Brown, Jonathan Brett, Susan Seidelman. Scr Barry Strugatz, Mark R. Burns (based on the novel by Fay Weldon, *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*). Ph Oliver Stapleton. Ed Craig McKay. Prod Des Santo Loquasto. Mus Howard Shore. Cast: Meryl Streep, Roseanne Barr, Ed Begley Jr., A. Martínez, Sylvia Miles, Linda Hunt.

Fat, graceless housewife Ruth is abandoned by her accountant husband Bob for the pretty and successful romance writer Mary Fisher. Tired of always losing, Ruth sets out to change her life, beginning by dumping her children on Bob's lap and slowly climbing to the top as a businesswoman, while she poisons the lives of Bob and Mary. When she makes Mary believe that Bob has embezzled her money, he ends in prison and Mary herself starts a new ambitious, literary career, leaving Bob all to Ruth's care.

Shining, The. 1980, Warner, USA.

Dir Stanley Kubrick. Prod Stanley Kubrick. Scr Stanley Kubrick, Diane Johnson (based on the novel by Stephen King). Ph John Alcott. Ed Ray Lovejoy. Prod Des Roy Walker. Mus Bartok. Cast: Jack Nicholson, Shelley Duvall, Danny Lloyd, Scatman Crothers, Barry Nelson, Anne Jackson.

Jack Torrance gets a job as a caretaker in the once glamorous Overlook Hotel, where his predecessor murdered his wife and children. The cook Halloran notices that Jack's son, Danny, has the 'shining', an ability to see the past and to communicate telepathically. Once the family—Jack, Wendy, Danny—are snowbound and alone, Jack degenerates quickly, perhaps taken by the ghost of his predecessor or by his own failures, threatening to kill Wendy and Danny. Only the boy can stop him.

Short Circuit, 1986, Tri-Star/PSO, USA.

Dir John Badham. Prod David Foster, Lawrence Turman. Scr S.S. Wilson, Brent Maddock. Ph Nick McLean. Ed Frank Morris. Prod Des Dianne Wager. Mus David Shire. Cast: Ally Sheedy, Steve Guttenberg, Fisher Stevens, Austin Pendleton, G.W. Bailey.

Robot No. 5, one of a batch of ten created by young Dr. Newton Crosby for the Defence Department, shortcircuits and becomes an autonomous thinker. No. 5 escapes Nova's high-tech compound where he has been created and meets a young woman, Stephanie. She protects him from the authorities' and Nova's greedy hands but when No.5 is located by Crosby himself she must convince him that No. 5 does not deserve being turned into an unfeeling tool again.

Silence of the Lambs, The. 1991, Orion/ Strong Heart , USA

Dir Jonathan Demme. Prod Edward Saxon, Kenneth Utt, Ron Bozman. Scr Ted Tally (based on the novel by Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Innocent*). Ph Tak Fujimoto. Ed Craig McKay. Prod Des Kristi Zea. Mus Howard Shore. Cast: Anthony Hopkins, Jodie Foster, Scott Glenn, Ted Levine, Brooke Smith, Diane Baker.

FBI trainee Clarice Starling is sent by her supervisor Jack Crawford to meet the cannibal killer Hannibal Lecter in prison. He expects her to engage Lecter's help, as he is a psychiatrist, in the hunt of another serial killer, in this case of women. Lecter respects Clarice's ambition and unexpectedly decides to lead her to Jame Gumb, the killer, a frustrated transsexual. While she traces Gumb and faces him alone, Lecter escapes. In the end, Clarice kills Gumb and earns her honours with Lecter and Crawford's blessings.

Oscars: 1991, Best Picture, Director, Screenplay Adaptation, Best Actor (Anthony Hopkins), Best Actress (Jodie Foster); Nominations: Best Editing, Sound.

Single White Female. 1992, Columbia, USA.

Dir Barbet Schroeder. Prod Barbet Schroeder. Scr Don Roos (based on the novel by John Lutz, *SWF Seeks Same*). Ph Luciano Tovoli. Ed Lee Percy. Prod Des Milena Canonero. Mus Howard Shore. Cast: Jennifer Jason Leigh, Bridget Fonda, Steven Weber.

Ally takes a new flatmate, Heddie, when she spurns her unfaithful boyfriend. The newcomer is worried that the boyfriend's eventual return would leave her homeless, but , when Ally reassures her that this will not happen, friendship flourishes between them. However, Heddie seems too obsessed by copying her flatmate's lifestyle for Ally's liking. When Ally forgives her boyfriend and takes him back to her flat, Heddie's true, dangerous nature surfaces. First to fall is the boyfriend himself; later Ally finds out that Heddie is obsessed by the death of her twin sister in childhood, and is forced to kill her in self-defence.

Species. 1995, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA.

Dir Roger Donaldson. Prod Frank Mancuso Jr. Scr Dennis Feldman. Ph Andrezej Bartowak. Ed Conrad Buff. Prod Des John Muto. Mus Christopher Young. Cast: Natasha Henstridge, Ben Kingsley, Michael Madsen, Michael Molina, Forest Whitaker.

Sil is born in a lab out of the fusion of human and extraterrestrial DNA. Her body matures in just a few days. When the scientist who has created her decides to eliminate her, she runs away. Sil enters then the last phase of growth and desperately needs a man to impregnate her. The authorities assemble a team of experts to chase her and prevent her from killing more men. In the end, she conceives a child by one of the men in the team, becomes a horrific monster and

gives birth to a no less monstrous son. Both are killed, not before her genetic legacy passes onto another species, rats.

Splash!. 1984, Touchstone, USA.

Dir Ron Howard. Prod Brian Grazer. Scr Lowell Ganz, Babaloo Mandel, Bruce Jay Friedman. Ph Don Peterman. Ed Daniel P. Hanley. Prod Des Jack T. Collis. Mus Lee Holdridge. Cast: Tom Hanks, Daryl Hannah, John Candy, Eugene Levy, Dody Goodman, Shecky Green.

A mermaid who once saved the life of a drowning boy takes a human form in order to find him in New York. The boy is now a grown-up man expecting love to relieve the dullness of his lonely life. When he meets the lovely but bizarre stranger who calls herself Madison, he thinks that happiness has finally arrived as she corresponds his love. When a journalist working for a tabloid unmasks Madison's true nature, she is forced to return to the sea. The young man chooses to follow her and starts a new, underwater life.

Oscars: 1984, Nomination: Best Original Screenplay.

Starman. 1984, Columbia / Delphi II, USA.

Dir John Carpenter. Prod Larry J Franco. Scr Bruce A. Evans, Raynold Gideon. Ph Donald M. Morgan. Ed Marion Rothman. Prod Des Daniel Lomino. Mus Jack Nitzche. Cast: Jeff Bridges, Karen Allen, Charles Martin Smith, Richard Jaeckel, Robert Phalen, Tony Edwards.

A stranded alien takes the shape of Jenny Hayden's dead husband Scott before her horrified eyes. The false Scott and Jenny embark on a dangerous journey towards the meeting point where his team will collect him, followed by a government agency that wants to capture him. Although she is at first appalled by the alien's possession of Scott's body, she comes to terms with this odd resurrection; to thank her for her trust the alien makes Jenny pregnant with the child Scott could not give her and then leaves Earth.

Oscars: 1984, Nomination: Best Actor (Jeff Bridges).

Terminator, The. 1984, Hemdale, USA.

Dir James Cameron. Prod Gale Anne Hurd. Scr James Cameron, Gale Anne Hurd. Ph Adam Greenberg. Ed Mark Goldblatt. Prod Des George Costello. Mus Brad Fiedel. Cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Michael Biehn, Paul Winfield, Rick Rossovich.

Sarah Connor, a waitress, meets Kyle Reese who claims to have been sent from the future by her own still unborn son John to protect her. John is to be the leader that will defeat the machines in a future war they will declare against mankind; Kyle's mission is to destroy the terminator (a robot with a flesh coating) sent by the machines to kill her. As the killing machine stalks Sarah and Kyle, he admits that love for her legendary future figure pushed him toward the past to meet her. They conceive John and destroy the terminator, though Kyle dies.

Terminator 2: Judgement Day, 1991, Pacific Western/ Lighstorm Entertainment, USA.

Dir James Cameron. Prod James Cameron, Mario Kassar, Gale Anne Hurd. Scr James Cameron, William Wisher. Ph Adam Greenberg. Ed Conrad Buff, Mark Goldblatt, Richard A. Harris. Prod Des Joseph Nemec III. Mus Brad Fiedel. Cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Linda Hamilton, Edward Furlong, Robert Patrick.

Sarah Connor is in a psychiatric hospital and her son with foster parents. John, 10, is approached by a modified terminator he himself has sent from the future as

protection from the more lethal T-2000. Together they free Sarah and, on the run from the T-2000, trace the engineer who will develop the microchip on which the machines will base their new order. He is killed by the police and the T-2000 terminated by the T-1. Yet despite John's plea, the T-1 destroys itself leaving Sarah and John are at last together though alone.

Oscars: 1991, Best Sound, Visual Effects, Sound Effects Editing, Make-Up;
Nominations: Best Cinematography, Editing.

Thing, The. 1982, Universal/ Turman-Foster, USA.

Dir John Carpenter. Prod David Foster, Lawrence Turman. Scr Bill Lancaster (based on the short story by John Campbell, "Who Goes There?"). Ph Dean Cundey. Ed Todd Ramsay. Prod Des John J. Lloyd. Mus Ennio Morricone. Cast: Kurt Russell, A. Wildford Brimley, T.K. Carter, Keith David, Richard Dysart.

An extraterrestrial that can replicate human bodies infests an American scientific base in Antarctica. Almost maddened because they cannot spot the alien until it is too late, the men die one by one, without a chance of establishing communication with the outside world. While the attempts to stop the creature poison the atmosphere among the team, they can do nothing but burn the remains of those who die. In the end, only two are left, leader MacReady and Nauls, and one of them is the alien that will infect the world.

Total Recall, 1990, Carolco, USA

Dir Paul Verhoeven. Prod Buzz Feitshans, Ronald Shusett. Scr Ronald Shusett, Dan O'Bannon, Gary Oldman (based on the short story by Philip K. Dick, "We can Remember It for you Wholesale"). Ph Jost Vocado. Ed Frank J. Urioste. Prod Des William Sandel. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rachel Ticotin, Sharon Stone, Ronny Cox, Michael Ironside, Marsha Bell.

A construction worker is plagued by strange nightmares about Mars, though he has never been there. A visit to a travel agency specialised in mental travel makes him see that he has been reprogrammed to forget his stay in Mars. Back to Mars he is met by his estranged girlfriend, who puts him in touch with the new leader, mutant baby Kuato. However, when he seems to have regained a firm hold on his memories the man who runs the monopolistic company that owns Mars shows him that he was his own agent and not a rebel as he thinks.

Oscars: 1990, Special Achievement Award for Visual Effects; Nomination: Best Sound.

Unforgiven. 1992, Warner/ Malpaso, USA.

Dir Clint Eastwood. Prod Clint Eastwood. Scr David W. Peoples. Ph Jack N. Green. Ed Joel Cox. Prod Des Henry Bumstead. Mus Lenny Niehaus. Cast: Clint Eastwood, Gene Hackman, Morgan Freeman, Richard Harris, Jaimz Woolvett, Richard Harris.

Bill Munny is a retired gunman turned pig farmer after his marriage to his now deceased wife, Rebecca. One day he is offered the chance to earn some money by 'the Schofield Kid' who needs his help in order to claim the reward put up by a group of prostitutes. One of them has been mutilated by a local bully and Sheriff Little Bill Daggett is not too keen on punishing the man. Munny accepts and having to fight first Daggett and then the prostitute's attacker he reaps his reward and sets off west with his children, to start a new life.

Oscars: 1992, Best Picture, Director, Supporting Actor (Gene Hackman), Editing;
Nominations: Best Actor (Clint Eastwood), Original Screenplay, Cinematography, Art Direction, Sound.

Universal Soldier, 1992, Carolco/ IndieProd, USA.

Dir Roland Emmerich. Prod Allen Shapiro, Carig Baumgarten, Joel B. Michaels. Scr Brichard Rothstein, Christopher Leitch, Dean Devlin. Ph Karl Walter Lindenlaub. Ed Michael J. Duthie. Prod Des Holger Gross. Mus Christopher Franke. Cast: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dolph Lundgren, Ally Walker, Ed O’Ross, Jerry Orbach.

A vicious American platoon leader and his subordinate kill each other in Vietnam when the latter prevents the former from killing a group of defenceless peasants. 25 years later, both re-emerge as part of the secret *Universal Soldier* project, their bodies having been reconverted into cyborg organisms and their memories having been wiped out. When Veronica, a journalist, discovers the UniSol project, the undead ex-private, Luc, suddenly recovers part of his memories. He and Veronica embark on a journey towards his birthplace as they are chased by the maddened ex-sargeant.

Wes Craven’s New Nightmare, 1994, New Line Cinema, USA.

Dir Wes Craven. Prod Marianne Maddalena. Scr Wes Craven. Ph Mark Irwin. Ed Patrick Lussier. Prod Des Cynthia Charette. Mus J. Peter Robinson. Robert Englund, Heather Langenkamp, Miko Hughes, John Saxon, David Newson.

‘Heather Langenkamp’, who played Nancy in the original *Nightmare on Elm Street* directed by Wes Craven, is offered the leading role in the new *Nightmare* Craven is scripting. Now married and the mother of a 5-year-old boy, Dylan, she is reluctant to act in horror films that are not suitable for children. But when nightmares about Freddy start plaguing her, her husband is killed and her son seems to have been possessed by Freddy, she accepts playing Nancy once more to save herself and her son, and defeat Freddy in real life.

Witches of Eastwick, The. 1987, Warner, USA.

Dir George Miller. Prod Neil Canton, Jon Peters, Peter Guber. Scr Michael Cristofer (based on the novel by John Updike). Ph Vilmos Zsigmond. Ed Richard Francis Bruce, Hubert de la Buouilleire. Prod Des Polly Platt. Mus John Williams. Cast: Jack Nicholson, Cher, Susan Sarandon, Michelle Pfeiffer, Veronica Cartwright.

Sukie (a journalist), Jane (a music teacher) and Alexandra (a sculptress) are divorced and waiting for love to flourish again. When the eccentric Darryl Van Horn moves into the small town where they live, each falls for him and he charms them into accepting that he loves the three of them. This arrangement survives local gossip, but it does not survive the woman’s realisation that Van Horn is the devil himself. Finding that the three of them are pregnant by him, the witches join their forces and exorcise Van Horn, keeping his sons to themselves.

Oscars: 1987, Nominations: Best Original Score, Sound.

Wolf. 1994, Columbia Pictures, USA.

Dir Mike Nichols. Prod Douglas Wick. Scr Jim Harrison, Wesley Strick. Ph Joseph Rotunno. Ed Sam O’Steen. Prod Des Bo Welsh. Mus Ennio Morricone. Cast: Jack Nicholson, Michelle Pfeiffer, James Spader, Kate Nelligan, Christopher Plummer.

Will Randall is bitten by a wolf on a lonely road. The bite gives his body and mind a new edge: he fights his boss’ plans to ‘kick him upstairs’, gives his disloyal protégé Stuart his comeuppance and overcomes his wife’s betrayal. His boss’ s daughter, the misfit, beautiful Laura makes Will’s life seem brighter, but when he realizes that he is the murderous werewolf reported in the media love seems not enough. Stuart, himself turned a werewolf by Will, fights to possess Laura, but she has the last word, as she turns out to be the wolf that bit Will.

Wolfen. 1981, Orion, USA.

Dir Michael Wadleigh. Prod Rupert Hitzig. Scr Michael Wadleigh, David Eyre (based on the novel by Whitley Strieber). Ph Garry Fisher. Ed Chris Lebenzon, Dennis Dolan, Martin Barm, Marshall M. Borden. Prod Des Paul Sylbert. Mus James Horner. Cast: Albert Finney, Diane Venora, Edward James Olmos, Gregory Hines, Tom Noonan.

A policeman investigating a series of grisly murders suspects a member of the Indian community living in New York. Instead of confirming his suspicions, his contact with the Indians opens for him a world of inconceivable horror: there is no Indian ritualistic criminal, but a race of monstrous wolves—the wolfen—which are the embodiment of the ancient Indians deprived of their lands. They have come back to protect their hunting territory, threatened by a real estate mogul, and he cannot stop them.

Other Films on the Monster³⁸

Abbot and Costello Meet Frankenstein, 1948, Universal, USA.

Dir Charles T. Barton. Prod Robert Arthur. Scr Robert Lees, Frederic I. Rinaldo, John Grant. Ph Charles Van Enger. Ed Frank Gross. Mus Frank Skinner. Cast: Bud Abbott, Lou Costello, Lon Chaney, Bela Lugosi, Glenn Strange.

Attack of the 50 Ft Woman, 1958, Allied Artists, USA.

Dir Nathan Hertz. Prod Bernard Woolner. Scr Mark Hanna. Ph Jacques R. Marquette. Ed Edward Mann. Mus Ronald Stein. Cast: Allison Hayes, William Hudson, Yvette Vickers, Roy Gordon, George Douglas.

Bad Taste. 1987, Wingnut Films, N. ZEA.

Dir Peter Jackson. Prod Peter Jackson. Scr Peter Jackson, Ken Hammon, Tony Hiles. Ph Peter Jackson. Ed Peter Jackson, Jamie Selkirk. Prod Des Caroline Girdlestone. Mus Michelle Saullion. Cast: Terry Potter, Peter O’Herne, Craig Smith, Mike Minett, Peter Jackson.

Belle et la Bête, La. 1946, André Paulvé / Discina, FRA.

Dir Jean Cocteau. Prod André Paulvé. Scr Jean Cocteau (based on the fairy tale by Madame Leprince de Beaumont). Ph Henri Alekan. Ed Claude Ibéria. Prod Des Christian Berard. Mus Georges Auric. Cast: Josette day, Jean Marais, Mila Parély, Nane Germon, Michel Auclair, Raoul Marco, Marcel André.

Body Snatchers. 1993, Warner, USA.

Dir Abel Ferrara. Prod Kimberley Brent, Michael Jaffe, Robert H. Solo. Scr Raymond Cistheri, Larry Cohen, Stuart Gordon, Dennis Paoli, Nicholas St. John. Ph Bojan Bazelli. Ed Anthony Redman. Prod Des Peter Jameson. Mus Joe Delia. Cast: Gabrielle Anwar, Meg Tilly, Forest Whitaker, G. Elvis Philips, Reilly Murphy.

38. This list includes the films made between 1920 and 1995 mentioned in the dissertation. The films corresponding to the period under discussion in this dissertation (1979–1996) are either not so relevant for the subject or have been only considered very briefly.

Boys from Brazil, 1978, Producer Circle/ 20th Century-Fox, USA.

Dir Franklin J. Schaffner. Prod Martin Richards, Stanley O'Toole. Scr Heywood Gould (based on the novel by Ira Levin). Ph Henri Decae. Ed Robert E. Swink. Prod Des Gil Parrondo. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Gregory Peck, Laurence Olivier, James Mason, Uta Hagen, Denholm Elliot.

Oscars: 1978, Nominations: Best Actor (Laurence Olivier), Editing, Original Score.

Bride of Frankenstein, The. 1935, Universal, USA.

Dir James Whale. Prod Carl Laemmle Jr. Scr William Huribut, John L. Balderston. Ph John Mescall. Ed Ted Kent. Prod Des Charles D. Hall. Mus Franz Waxman. Cast: Boris Karloff, Colin Clive, Elsa Lanchester, Valerie Hobson, Ernest Thesiger, O.P. Heggie.

Oscars: 1935, Nomination: Best Sound.

Brood, The. 1979, New World, CAN.

Dir David Cronenberg. Prod Claude Heroux. Scr David Cronenberg. Ph Mark Irwin. Ed Alan Collins. Prod Des Carol Spier. Mus Howard Shore. Cast: Oliver Reed, Samantha Eggar, Art Hindle, Cindy Hinds.

Cabinett des Dr. Caligari, Das. 1919, Decla, GER.

Dir Robert Wiene. Prod Erich Pommer. Scr Carl Mayer, Hans Janowitz. Ph Willy Hameister. Prod Des Walter Roehrig, Walter Reimann, Herman Warm. Cast: Werner Kraus, Conrad Veidt, Lil Dagover, Friedrich Feher.

Candyman 2: Farewell to the Flesh. 1995, Gramercy Pictures, Polygram, Propaganda, USA.

Dir Bill Condon. Prod Clive Barker, Gregg Fienberg, Steve Golin, Anna C. Miller, Sigurjon Sightvasson. Scr Clive Barker, Mark Kruger, Rand Ravich. Ph Tobias A. Schlessler. Ed Virginia Katz. Prod Des Barry Robinson. Mus Philip Glass. Cast: Tony Todd, Kelly Rowan, William O'Leary, Bill Nunn.

Cape Fear. 1962, Universal / Melville Talbot.

Dir J.Lee Thompson. Prod Sy Bartlett. Scr James R. Webb (based on the novel by John D. MacDonald, *The Executioners*). Ph Samuel Leavitt. Ed Georeg Tomasini. Prod Des Alexander Golitzen, Robert Boyle. Mus Bernard Herrmann. Cast: Gregory Peck, Robert Mitchum, Polly Bergen, Lori Martin, Martin Balsam.

Carrie, 1976, United Artists, USA.

Dir Brian de Palma. Prod Paul Monash. Scr Lawrence D. Cohen (based on the novel by Stephen King). Ph Mario Tosi. Ed Paul Hirsch. Prod Des William Kennedy, Jack Fish. Mus Pino Donaggio Jr. Cast: Sissy Spacek, Piper Laurie, Amy Irving, William Katt, Nancy Allen, John Travolta.

Oscars: 1976, Nominations: Best Actress (Sissy Spacek), Supporting Actress (Piper Laurie).

Cat People. 1942, RKO, USA.

Dir Jacques Torneur. Prod Val Newton. Scr DeWitt Bodeen. Ph Nicholas Musuraca. Ed Mark Robson. Prod Des Albert S. D'Agostino, Walter E. Keller. Mus Roy Webb. Cast: Simone Simon, Kent Smith, Tom Conway, Jane Randolph, Jack Holt.

Cité des Enfants Perdus, La. 1994. FRA.

Dir Jean-Pierre Jeunet. Prod Marc Caro, Elías Querejeta, Claude Ossard. Scr Guilles Adrien, Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Marc Caro. Ph Darius Kohndji. Ed Hervé Schneider. Prod Des Daniel Szuster. Mus Angelo Badalamenti. Cast: Ron Perlman, Judith Vittet, Daniel Emilfork, Dominique Pinon, Mireille Moste.

Child's Play. 1988, United Artists, USA.

Dir Tom Holland. Prod David Kirschner. Scr Don Mancini, John Lafia, Tom Holland. Ph Bill Butter. Ed Edward Warschilka, Roy. E. Peterson. Prod Des Daniel A. Lomino. Mus Joe Renzetti. Cast: Catherine Hicks, Chris Sarandon, Alex Vincent, Brad Douriff.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind, 1977, Columbia, USA.

Dir Steven Spielberg. Prod Julia Phillips, Michael Phillips. Scr Steven Spielberg. Ph Vilmos Zsigmond, Douglas Slocombe, John Alonzo, Laszlo Kovacs. Ed Michael Kahn. Prod Des Joe Alves, Dan Lamino. Mus John Williams. Cast: Richard Dreyfuss, François Truffaut, Teri Garr, Melinda Dillon, Cary Guffey, Bob Balaban.

Creature from the Black Lagoon, 1954, Universal, USA.

Dir Jack Arnold. Prod William Alland. Scr Harry Essex, Arthur Ross. Ph William E. Snyder. Ed Ted J. Kent. Mus Joseph Geherson. Cast: Richard Carlson, Julie Adams, Richard Dening, Antonio Moreno, Nestor Paiva.

Cronos. 1992, Springall/Nossbaumer, MEX.

Dir Guillermo del Toro. Prod Alejandro Springall, Bernard Nossbaumer. Scr Guillermo del Toro. Ph Guillermo Navarro. Ed Paul O'Bryan, Raul Davalos. Prod Des Tolita Figueroa. Mus Javier Alvarez. Cast: Federico Luppi, Ron Perlman, Claudio Brook, Margarita Isabel, Aurora Gris.

Curse of the Demon, 1957, RKO, USA.

Dir Jacques Torneur. Prod Val Lewton. Scr Charles Bennett and Hal E. Chester (based on the short story by M.R. James, "Casting the Runes"). Ph Ted Scaiffe. Mus Clifton Parker. Cast: Dana Andrews, Niall McGinnis, Peggy Cummins, Athlene Seyler, Reginald Beckwith.

Curse of Frankenstein, The. 1957, Hammer, UK.

Dir Terence Fisher. Prod Anthony Hinds. Scr Jimmy Sangster. Ph Jack Asher. Ed James Needs. Prod Des Ted Marshall. Mus Leonard Salzedo. Cast: Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Hazel Court, Robert Urquhart, Valerie Gaunt.

Cyborg. 1987, Golan-Globus, USA.

Dir Albert Pyun. Prod Menahem Golan, Yoram Globus. Scr Kitty Chalmers. Ph Philip Alan Waters. Prod Des Douglas Leonard. Mus Kevin Bassinson. Cast: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Deborah Richter, Dayle Haddon, Vincent Klyne, Alex Daniels, Rolf Muller.

Day the Earth Stood Still. 1951, 20th-Century Fox, USA.

Dir Robert Wise. Prod Julian Blaustein. Scr Edmund H. North. Ph Leo Tover. Ed William Reynolds. Prod Des Lyle Wheeler, Addison Hehr. Mus Bernard Herrmann. Cast: Michael Rennie, Patricia Neal, Hugh Marlowe, Sam Jaffe, Bill Gray.

Dracula. 1931, Universal, USA.

Dir Tod Browning. Prod, Carl Laemmle Jr. Scr Garrett Fort, Dudley Murphy (based on the play by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston, inspired by Bram Stoker's novel). Ph Karl Freund. Ed Milton Carruth. Prod Des Charles D.Hall. Cast: Bela Lugosi, Helen Chandler, Davis Manners, Dwight Frye, Edwrad van Sloane.

Dracula. 1958, Hammer, UK.

Dir Terence Fisher. Prod Anthony Hinds. Scr Jimmy Sangster. Ph Jack Asher. Ed James Needs, Bill Lenny. Prod Des Bernard Robinson. Mus James Bernard. Cast: Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Melissa Stribling, Micahel Gough, Carol Marsh.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. 1920, Famous Players, Lasky, USA.

Dir John S. Robertson. Prod Adolph Zukor. Scr Clara Beranger. Ph Roy B. Overbaugh. Cast: John Barrymore, Cecil Clovelly, J. Malcolm Dunn, Brandon Hurst, Nita Naldi.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. 1932, Paramount, USA.

Dir Rouben Mamoulian. Prod Rouben Mamoulian. Scr Samuel Hoffenstein, Percy Heath (based on the novella by R.L. Stevenson). Ph Karl Struss. Cast: Fredric March, Miriam Hopkins, Rose Hobart, Holmes Herbert, Edgar Norton.

Oscars: 1931/32 Best Actor: Fredric March; Nominations: Best Adaptation, Cinematography.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. 1941, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA.

Dir Victor Fleming. Prod Victor Saville. Scr John Lee Mahin. Ph Joseph Ruttenberg. Ed Harold F. Kress. Prod Des Cedric Gibbons, Daniel B. Catchcart. Mus Franz Waxman. Cast: Spencer Tracy, Ingrid Bergman, Lana Turner, Ian Hunter, Donald Crisp.

Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde. 1971, Hammer, UK.

Dir Roy Ward Baker. Prod Albert Fennell, Brian Clemens. Scr Brian Clemens. Ph Norman Warick. Ed James Needs. Prod Des Robert Jones. Mus David Whitaker. Cast: Ralph Bates, Martine Beswick, Gerald Sim, Lewis Fiander, Dorothy Alison.

Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde. 1995, Savoy, USA.

Dir David Price. Prod Robert Shapiro, Jerry Leider. Scr Tim John, Oliver Butcher, William Davies, William Osborne. Ph Tom Priestly. Ed Tony Lombardo. Mus Marl MacKenzie. Cast: Tim Daly, Sean Young, Lysette Anthony, Harvey Fierstein, Stephen Tobolowski.

Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb, 1964, Columbia/Hawk, UK.

Dir Stanley Kubrick. Prod Stanley Kubrick. Scr Stanley Kubrick, Terry Southern, Peter George (based on the novel Red Alert by Peter George). Ph Gilbert Taylor. Ed Anthony Harvey. Prod Des Ken Adam. Mus Laurie Johnson. Cast: Peter Sellers, George C. Scott, Sterling Hayden, Keenan Wynn, Slim Pickens.

Oscars: 1964, Nominations: Best Picture, Director, Actor (Peter Sellers), Adapted Screenplay.

Duel. 1971, Universal, USA.

Dir Steven Spielberg. Prod George Eckstein. Scr Richard Matheson. Ph Jack A. Marta. Ed Frank Morriss. Prod Des Robert S. Smith. Mus Billy Goldenberg. Cast: Dennis Weaver, Jacqueline Scott, Eddie Firestone, Lou Frizzell, Gene Dynarski.

Ed Wood. 1994, Buena Vista, USA.

Dir Tim Burton. Prod Tim Burton, Denise di Novi. Scr Scott Alexander, Larry Karszewski (based on the book by Rudolph Gray, *Nightmare of Ecstasy: The Life and Art of Edward D. Wood Jr.*). Ph Stefan Czapsky. Ed Chris Lebanzon. Prod Des Tom Duffield. Mus Howard Shore. Cast: Johnny Depp, Martin Landau, Sarah Jessica Parker, Patricia Arquette, Bill Murray.

Eraserhead, 1977, AFI/ Lynch, USA.

Dir David Lynch. Prod David Lynch. Scr David Lynch. Ph Fred Elms. Ed David Lynch. Prod Des David Lynch. Mus Fats Waller. Cast: Jack Nance, Charlotte Stewart, Jeanne Bates, Judith Anna Roberts.

Evil Dead, The. 1983, Renaissance, USA.

Dir Sam Raimi. Prod Robert Taper. Scr Sam Raimi. Ph Tim Philo. Ed Edna Ruth Paul. Mus Joseph Lo Duca. Cast: Bruce Campbell, Ellen Sandweiss, Betsy Barker, Hal Delcrich, Sarah York.

Exorcist, The. 1973. Warner, USA.

Dir William Friedkin. Prod William Peter Blatty. Scr William Peter Blatty (based on his own novel). Ph Owen Roizman, Billy Williams. Ed Jordan Leondopoulos. Prod Des Bill Malley. Mus Jack Nitzche. Cast: Linda Blair, Ellen Burstyn, Jason Miller, Max Von Sydow, Lee J. Cobb.

Oscars: 1973, Best Adapted Screenplay, Sound; Nominations: Best Picture, Director, Actress (Ellen Burstyn), Supporting Actress (Linda Blair), Supporting Actor (Jason Miller), Cinematography, Art Direction, Editing.

Fearless Vampire Killers (UK: *Dance of the Vampires or Pardon Me, but your Teeth are in my Neck*). 1967, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Cadre, Filmways, UK.

Dir Roman Polanski. Prod Gene Gutowski. Scr Gerard Brach, Roman Polanski. Ph Douglas Slocombe. Ed Alastair McIntyre. Prod Des Wilfrid Shingleton. Mus Christopher Comeda. Cast: Roman Polanski, Jack MacGowran, Sharon Tate, Alfie Bass, Jessie Robbins.

Fly, The. 1958, 20th Centurey Fox, USA.

Dir Kurt Neumann. Prod Kurt Neumann. Scr James Clavell. Ph Karl Struss. Ed Merrill G. White. Prod Des Lyle R. Wheeler, Theobald Holsopple. Mus Paul Sawtell. Cast: Al Hedison, Patricia Owens, Vincet Price, Herbert Marshall, Kathleen Freeman.

Forbidden Planet. 1956, M-G-M, USA.

Dir Fred McLeod Wilcox. Prod Nicholas Nayfack. Scr Ciry Hume. Ph George J. Folsey. Ed Ferris Webster. Prod Des Cedric Gibbons, Arthur Lonergan. Mus Louis Barron, Bebe Barron. Cast: Walter Pidgeon, Anne Francis, Leslie Nielsen, Warren Stevens, Jack Kelly.

Frankenstein. 1931, Universal, USA..

Dir James Whale. Prod Carl Laemmle Jr. Scr John L Balderston, Garrett Fort, Francis Edward Faragoh (based on the play by Peggy Webbling, inspired by Mary Shelley's novel). Ph Arthur Edeson. Ed Clarence Kolster. Prod Des Charles D. Hall. Mus David Broekman. Cast: Colin Clive, Mae Clarke, John Boles, Boris Karloff, Edward Van Sloane, Dwight Frye.

Freaks. 1932, M-G-M, USA.

Dir Tod Browning. Prod Tod Browning. Scr Willis Golbeck, Leon Gordon, Al Boasberg (based on the short story "Spurs" by Tod Robbins, uncredited). Ph Merritt B. Gerstad. Ed Basil Wrangell. Prod Des Cedric Gibbons. Cast: Wallace Ford, Leila Hyams, Olga Baclanova, Roscoe Ates, Harry Earles.

Friday the Thirteenth, 1980, Cunningham, USA.

Dir Sean Cunningham. Prod Sean S. Cunningham. Scr Victor Miller. Ph Barry Abrams. Ed Bill Freda. Prod Des Virginia Field. Mus Harry Manfredini. Cast: Betsy Palmer, Adrienne King, Harry Crosby, Laurie Bartram.

Golem, The. 1920, GER.

Dir Paul Wegener, Carl Boese. Scr Paul Wegener, Henrik Galeen. Ph Karl Freund. Cast: Paul Wegener, Albert Steinruck, Ernst Deutsch.

Haunted Summer. 1988, USA.

Dir Ivan Passer. Scr Lewis John Carlino, Anne Edwards. Ph Giuseppe Rotunno. Ed Richard Fields, Cesare d'Amico. Prod Des Steven Grimes. Mus Christopher Young. Cast: Philip Anglim, Eric Stolz, Laura Dern, Peter Berling, Don Hodson, Alice Krige.

Halloween, 1978, Falcon, USA.

Dir John Carpenter. Prod Debra Hill. Scr John Carpenter. Ph Dean Cundey. Ed Tomy Wallace, Charles Burnstein. Prod Des Tommy Wallace. Mus John Carpenter. Cast: Donald Pleasance, Jamie Lee Curtis, Nancy Loomis, P.J. Soles, Charles Cyphers.

House of Usher (UK: *The Fall of the House of Usher*). 1960, American International/Alta Vista, USA.

Dir Roger Corman. Prod Roger Corman. Scr Richard Matheson. Ph Floyd Crosby. Ed Anthony Carras. Prod Des Daniel Haller. Mus Les Baxter. Cast: Vincent Price, Mark Damon, Myrna Fahey, Harry Ellerbe.

Hunchback of Notre Dame, The. 1923. Universal / Super-Jewel, USA.

Dir Wallace Worsley. Scr Edward T. Lowe, Perley Poore Sheehan (based on the novel by Victor Hugo). Ph Robert Newhard, Tony Kornman. Prod Des E.E. Sheely, Sydney Ullman, Steohen Goosson. Cast: Lon Chaney, Ernest Torrence, Patsy Ruth Miller, Norman Kerry, Kate Lester.

Innocents, The. 1961, 20th Century-Fox, USA.

Dir Jack Clayton. Prod Jack Clayton. Scr William Archibald, Truman Capote (based on the novella by Henry James "The Turn of the Screw"). Ph Freddie Francis. Ed James Clark. Prod Des Wilfrid Shingleton. Mus Georges Auric. Cast: Deborah Kerr, Michael Redgrave, Peter Wyngarde, Megs Jenkins, Martin Stephens, Pamela Franklin.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers. 1956, Allied Artists, USA.

Dir Don Siegel. Prod Walter Wanger. Scr Daniel Mainwaring (based on the novel by Jack Finney). Ph Ellsworth Fredricks. Ed Robert S. Eisen. Prod Des Ted Haworth. Mus Carmen Dragon. Cast: Kevin McCarthy, Dana Wynter, Larry Gates, King Donovan, Carolyn Jones.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers, 1978, United Artists, USA.

Dir Philip Kauffman. Prod Robert H. Solo. Scr W.D. Richter (based on the novel by Jack Finney and the 1956 film by Don Siegel). Ph Michael Chapman. Ed Douglas Stewart. Prod Des Charles Rosen. Mus Danny Zeilin. Cast: Donald Sutherland, Brooke Adams, Leonard Nimoy, Veronica Cartwright, Jeff Goldblum, Kevin McCarthy.

Invisible Man, The. 1933, Universal, USA.

Dir James Whale. Prod Carl Laemmle Jr. Scr R.C. Sheriff (based on the novel by H.G. Wells). Ph Arthur Edeson, John Mescall. Ed Maurice Pivar, Ted J. Kent. Prod Des. Charles D. Hall. Cast: Claude Rains, Gloria Stuart, Henry Travers, William Garrigan, Una O'Connor, Holmes Herbert.

Island of Lost Souls. 1933, Paramount, USA.

Dir Erle C. Kenton. Scr Waldemar Young, Philip Wylie (based on the novel by H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, uncredited). Ph Karl Struss. Cast: Charles Laughton, Bela Lugosi, Richard Arlen, Leila Hyams, Kathleen Burke.

It Came from Outer Space. 1953, Universal, USA.

Dir Jack Arnold. Prod William Alland. Scr Harry Essex. Ph Clifford Stine. Ed Paul Weatherwax. Prod Des Bernard Herzburn, Robert Boyle. Mus Joseph Gershenson. Cast: Richard Carlson, Barbara Rush, Charles Drake, Russell Johnson, Kathleen Hughes.

It's Alive. 1974, Larco, USA.

Dir Larry Cohen. Prod Larry Cohen. Scr Larry Cohen. Ph Fenton Hamilton. Ed Peter Honess. Mus Bernard Herrmann. Cast: John Ryan, Sharon Farrell, Andrew Duggan, Guy Stockwell, James Dixon.

It! The Terror from Beyond Space. 1958, Vogue, USA.

Dir Edward L. Cahn. Prod Robert E. Kent. Scr Jerome Bixby. Ph Kenneth Peach Sr. Ed Grant Whytock. Prod Des William Glasgow. Mus Paul Sawtell, Bert Shefter. Cast: Marshall Thompson, Shawn Smith, Kim Spalding, Anne Doran, Richard Benedict, Ray Corrigan.

Jacob's Ladder. 1990, Carolco, USA.

Dir Adrian Lyne. Prod Alan Marshall. Scr Bruce Joel Rubin. Ph Jeffrey L. Kimball. Ed Tom Rolf, Peter Amundson, B.J. Sears. Prod Des Brian Morris. Mus Maurice Jarre. Cast: Tim Robbins, Danny Aiello, Elizabeth Pena, Matt Craven, Macauley Culkin.

Jason and the Argonauts. 1963, Columbia, UK.

Dir Don Chaffey. Prod Charles H. Schneer. Scr Jan Read, Beverley Cross. Ph Wilkie Cooper. Ed Maurice Rootes. Prod Des Geoffrey Drake. Cast: Todd Armstrong, Nancy Kovack, Gary Raymond, Laurence Naismith, Niall McGinnis, Douglas Wilmer.

Jaws, 1975, Universal, USA.

Dir Steven Spielberg. Prod Richard D. Zanuck, David Brown. Scr Carl Gottlieb, Peter Benchley (based on his own novel). Ph Bill Butler. Ed Verna Fields. Prod Des Joseph Alves Jr. Mus John Williams. Cast: Roy Scheider, Robert Shaw, Richard Dreyfus, Lorraine Gary, Murray Hamilton.

Oscars: 1975, Best Sound, Original Score, Editing; Nomination: Best Picture.

Johnny Mnemonic. 1995, Cinevision/ Alliance Communication/ TriStar, USA.

Dir Robert Longo. Prod Don Carmody. Scr William Gibson (based on his own short story). Ph François Protat. Ed Ronald Sanders. Prod Des Nilo Rodin-Janeiro. Mus Brad Fiedel. Cast: Keanu Reeves, Dina Meyer, Dolph Lundgren, Ice-T, Takeshi Kitaro.

King Kong. 1933, RKO, USA.

Dir Ernest B. Shoedshack, Merian C. Cooper. Prod Ernest B. Shoedshack, Merian C. Cooper. Scr James Creelman, Ruth Rose, Merian C. Cooper. Ph Edward Linton, Vernon L. Walker, J.O. Taylor. Ed Ted Cheeseman. Prod Des Carroll Clark, Al Herman. Cast: Fay Wray, Robert Armstrong, Bruce Cabot, Frank Reicher, Sam Hardy.

King Kong. 1976, Paramount, USA.

Dir John Guillermin. Prod Dino de Laurentiis. Scr Lorenzo Semple Jr. Ph Richard E. Kline. Ed Ralph E. Winters. Prod Des Archie J. Bacon, David A. Constable, Robert Gundlach. Mus John Barry. Cast: Jeff Bridges, Jessica Lange, John Rudolph, Rene Auberjonois, Julius Harris.

Last Seduction, The. 1994, ITC, USA.

Dir John Dahl. Prod Jomathan Shestack. Scr Steve Baranick. Ph Jeffrey Jur. Ed Eric L. Beason. Prod Des Linda Pearl. Mus Joseph Vitarelli. Cast: Linda Fiorentino, Bill Pullman, J.T. Walsh, Peter Berg, Bill Nunn.

Matinee. 1993, Universal/ Renfield, USA.

Dir Joe Dante. Prod Michael Finnell. Scr Charlie Haas. Ph John Hora. Ed Marshall Harvey. Prod Des Steven Legler. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: John Goodman, Cathy Moriarty, Simon Fenton, Omri Katz, Lisa Jakub.

Metropolis. 1927, UFA, GER.

Dir Fritz Lang. Prod Erich Pommer. Scr Thea von Harbou. Ph Karl Freund, Günther Ritau. Prod Des Otto Hunte, Erich Kettlehurt, Karl Vollbrecht. Cast: Gustav Frölich, Brigitte Helm, Alfred Abel, Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Theodore Loos.

Mummy, The. 1933, Universal, USA.

Dir Karl Freund. Prod Stanley Bergerman. Scr John L. Balderston. Ph Charles Stumar. Prod Des Willy Pagan. Cast: Boris Karloff, Zita Johann, David Manners, Edward Van Sloan, Arthur Byron, Bramwell Fletcher.

Night of the Hunter. 1955, Gregory/ United Artists, USA.

Dir Charles Laughton. Prod Paul Gregory. Scr James Agee (based on the novel by David Grubb). Ph Stanley Cortez. Ed Robert Golden. Prod Des Hilyard Brown. Mus

Walter Schumann. Cast: Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters, Lillian Gish, Billy Chapin, Peter Graves.

Night of the Living Dead, 1968, Image Ten, USA.

Dir George Romero. Prod Russell Streiner, Karl Hardman. Scr John A. Russo, George Romero. Ph George Romero. Cast: Judith O'Dea, Russell Streiner, Duane Jones, Keith Wayne.

Nosferatu—Eine Symphonie des Grauens. 1922, Parana, GER.

Dir F.W. Murnau. Scr Henrik Galeen. Ph Fritz Arno Wagner. Cast: Max Schreck, Alexander Granach, Karl Schnell, Ruth Lanchoft.

Nutty Professor, The. 1963, Paramount/ Lewis, USA.

Dir Jerry Lewis. Prod Ernest D. Glucksman. Scr Jerry Lewis, Bill Richmond. Ph W. Wallace Kelley. Ed John Woodcock. Prod Des Hal Pereira, Walter Tyler. Cast: Jerry Lewis, Stella Stevens, Del Moore, Kathleen Freeman, Howard Morris.

Omega Man, The. 1971, Warner, USA.

Dir Boris Segal. Prod Walter Seltzer. Scr John William Carrington, Joyce H. Carrington (based on the novella by Richard Matheson, *I am Legend*). Ph Russell Metty. Ed William Ziegler. Prod Des Arthur Loel, Walter M. Simonds. Cast: Charlton Heston, Anthony Zerbe, Rosalind Cash, Paul Koslo, Lincoln Kilpatrick.

Omen, The. 1976, 20th Century-Fox, USA.

Dir Richard Donner. Prod Harvey Bernhard. Scr David Seltzer. Ph Gilbert Taylor. Ed Stuart Baird. Prod Des Cramen Dillon. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Gregory Peck, Lee Remick, Harvey Stephens, David Warner, Billie Whitelaw.
Oscars: 1976, Best Original Score; Nominations: Best Song.

Other, The. 1972, 20th Century-Fox, USA.

Dir Robert Mulligan. Prod Robert Mulligan. Scr Tom Tryon (based on his own novel). Ph Robert L. Surtees. Ed Folmar Blangsted, O. Nicholas Brown. Prod Des Albert Brenner. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: Uta Hagen, Diana Muldaur, Chris Udvarnoky, Martin Udvarnoky, Norma Connolly.

Pacific Heights. 1990, Morgan Creek, USA.

Dir John Schelsinger. Prod Scott Rudin, William Sackheim. Scr Daniel Pyne. Ph Dennis E. Jones. Ed Mark Warner. Prod Des Neil Spisak. Mus Hans Zimmer. Cast: Matthew Modine, Melanie Griffith, Michael Keaton, Mako, Lauri Metcalf, Nabu McCarthy.

Peeping Tom, 1960, Anglo Amalgamated/Powell, UK.

Dir Michael Powell. Prod Michael Powell. Scr Leo Marks. Ph Otto Heller. Ed Noreen Ackland. Prod Des Arthur Lawson. Mus Brian Essdale. Cast: Carl Boehm, Moira Shearer, Anna Masey, Maxine Audley, Shirley Ann Field.

Phantom of the Opera, The. 1925, Universal, USA.

Dir Rupert Julian. Prod Raymond Schrock, Elliot J. Clawson, Tom Reed. Scr uncredited (based on the novel by Gaston Leroux). Ph Virgil Miller. Ed Maurice Pivar. Prod Des

Charles D. Hall. Cast: Lon Chaney, Mary Philbin, Norman Kerry, Arthur Edmund Carewe, Gibson Gowland.

Phantom of the Opera. 1930, Universal, USA.

Dir Rupert Julian, Edward Sedwick, Ernst Laemmle. Scr Elliot J. Clawson, Frank McCormack, Tom Reed. Ph Charles van Enger. Ed Gilmore Walker. Prod Des Charles D. Hall, Ben Carre. Cast: Lon Chaney, Mary Philbin, Norman Kerry, Snitz Edwards, Arthur Edmund Carew.

Phantom of the Opera. 1943, Universal, USA.

Dir Arthur Lubin. Prod George Waggner. Scr Eric Taylor, Samuel Hoffinsein. Ph Hal Mohr. Prod Des Alexander Golitzen, John B. Goodman. Mus Edward Ward. Cast: Nelson Eddy, Susanna Foster, Claude Rains, Jane Farrar, Hume Cronyn. Oscars: 1943, Best Colour Photography, Best Colour Art Direction; Nominations: Best Scoring of a Musical Picture, Best Sound.

Phantom of the Opera. 1962, Hammer, UK.

Dir Terence Fisher. Prod Anthony Hinds. Scr John Elder. Ph Arthur Grant. Ed James Needs, Alfred Cox. Prod Des Bernard Robinson, Don Mingaye. Mus Edwain Astley. Cast: Herbert Lom, Heather Sears, Thorley Walters, Micheal Gough, Edward de Souza.

Phantom of the Opera. 1989, 21st Century, USA.

Dir Dwight H. Little. Prod Harry Alan Towers. Scr Duke Sandefur. Ph Elemer Ragalyi. Ed Charles Borsntein. Prod Des Tivada Bertalan. Mus Misha Segal. Cast: Robert Englund, Jill Schoelen, Alex Hyde-White, Bill Nighy, Stephanie Lawrence.

Phantom of the Paradise. 1974, Pressman-Williams/ 20th Century-Fox, USA.

Dir Brian De Palma. Prod Edward R. Pressman. Scr Brian De Palma. Ph Larry Pizer. Ed Paul Hirsch. Prod Des Jack Fisk. Mus Paul Williams. Cast: Paul Williams, William Finney, Jessica Harper, Goerge Memmali, Gerrit Graham. Oscars: 1974, Nomination: Best Adapted Score.

Poltergeist. 1982, M-G-M, United Artists, USA.

Dir Tobe Hooper. Prod Steven Spielberg, Frank Marshall. Scr Steven Spielberg, Mark Victor, Michael Grais. Ph Matthew F. Leonetti. Ed Michael Kahn. Prod Des James H. Spencer. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: JoBeth Williams, Craig T. Nelson, Beatrice Straight, Dominique Dunne, Oliver Robins, Heather O'Rourke

Psycho, 1960, Paramount, USA.

Dir Alfred Hitchcock. Prod Alfred Hitchcock. Scr Joseph Stefano (based on the novel by Robert Bloch). Ph John L. Russell. Ed George Tomasini. Prod Des Joseph Hurtley, Joseph Clatworthy. Mus Bernard Herrmann. Cast: Anthony Perkins, Vera Miles, Janet Leigh, John Gavin, Martin Balsam. Oscars: 1960, Nominations: Best Director, Supporting Actress (Janet Leigh), B&W Cinematography, B&W Art Direction.

Rocky Horror Picture Show, 1975, White/20th Century Fox, USA.

Dir Jim Sharman. Prod Michael White. Scr Jim Sharman, Richard O'Brien. Ph Peter Suschitzky. Prod Des Brian Thomson. Mus Richard Hartley. Cast: Tim Curry, Susan Sarandon, Barry Bostwick, Richard O'Brien, Jonathan Adams, Nell Campbell.

Rosemary's Baby. 1968, Paramount, USA.

Dir Roman Polanski. Prod William Castle. Scr Roman Polanski (based on the novel by Ira Levin). Ph William Fraker. Ed Sam O'Steen. Prod Des Richard Sylbert. Mus Christopher YOUNG. Cast: Mia Farrow, John Cassavettes, Ruth Gordon, Sidney Blackmer, Maurice Evans, Ralph Bellamy.

Oscars: 1968, Best Supporting Actress (Ruth Gordon); Nomination: Best Adapted Screenplay.

Star Trek: The Motion Picture. 1979, Paramount, USA.

Dir Robert Wise. Prod Gene Roddenberry. Scr Harold Livingston. Ph Richard H. Kline. Ed Todd Ramsay. Prod Des Harold Michelson. Mus Jerry Goldsmith. Cast: William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, DeForest Kelley, Stephen Collins, Persis Khambatta.

Star Wars. 1977, 20th Century-Fox, USA.

Dir George Lucas. Prod Gary Kurtz. Scr George Lucas. Ph Gilbert Taylor. Ed Paul Hirsch, Marcia Lucas, Richard Chew. Prod Des John Barry. Mus John Williams. Cast: Mark Hamill, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher, Peter Cushing, Alec Guinness.

Oscars: 1977, Best Art Direction, Sound, Original Score, Editing, Costume Design, Visual Effects, Special Achievement Award for Best Sound Effects; Nominations: Best Picture, Supporting Actor (Alec Guinness), Original Screenplay.

Taxi Driver. 1976, Columbia, USA.

Dir Martin Scorsese. Prod Michael Phillips, Julia Phillips. Scr Paul Schrader. Ph Michael Chapman. Ed Marcia Lucas, Tom Rolf, Melvin Shapiro. Prod Des Charles Rosen. Mus Bernard Herrmann. Cast: Robert de Niro, Cybill Shepherd, Peter Boyle, Harvey Keitel, Jodie Foster.

Texas Chainsaw Massacre, The. 1974. Vortex/Henkel/Hooper, USA.

Dir Tobe Hooper. Prod Tobe Hooper. Scr Tobe Hooper, Kim Henkel. Ph Daniel Pearl, Tobe Hooper. Ed Sallye Richardson, Larry Carroll. Prod Des Robert A. Burns. Mus Tobe Hooper, Wayne Bell. Cast: Marilyn Burns, Allen Danziger, Paul A. Partain, William Vail, Teri McMinn, Gunnar Hansen.

Them! 1954, Warner, USA.

Dir Gordon Douglas. Prod David Weisbart. Scr Ted Shederman. Ph Sid Hickox. Ed Thomas Reilly. Prod Des Stanley Fleischer. Mus Bronislau Kaper. Cast: James Whitmore, Edmund Gwenn, Joan Weldon, James Arness, Onslow Stevens, Sean McClory.

Thing (from Another World), The. 1951, Winchester / RKO, USA.

Dir Christian Nyby. Prod Howard Hughes. Scr Charles Lederer (based on the short story by J. Campbell "Who Goes There?"). Ph Russell Harlan. Ed Roland Gross. Prod Des Albert S. D'Agostino, John J. Hughes. Mus Dimitri Tiomkin. Cast: Margaret Sheridan, Kenneth Tobey, Robert Cornthwaite, Douglas Spencer, Dewey Martin.

Tron. 1982, Walt Disney, USA.

Dir Steven Lisberger. Prod Donald Kushner. Scr Steven Lisberger. Ph Bruce Logan. Ed Jeff Gourson. Prod Des Edward Mitzner. Mus Wendy Carlos. Cast: Jeff Bridges, Bruce Boxleitner, David Warner, Cindy Morgan, Barnard Hughes.

2001: A Space Odyssey, 1968, M-G-M, UK.

Dir Stanley Kubrick. Prod Stanley Kubrick. Scr Stanley Kubrick, Arthur C. Clarke. Ph Geoffrey Unsworth, John Alcott. Ed Ray Lovejoy. Prod Des Tony Masters, Harry Lange, Ernest Archer. Cast: Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood, William Sylvester, Daniel Richter, Douglas Rain, Leonard Rossiter.

Unlawful Entry. 1992, Largo, USA.

Dir Jonathan Kaplan. Prod Charles Gordon. Scr Lewis Colick. Ph Jamie Anderson. Ed Curtiss Clayton. Prod Des Lawrence G. Paull. Mus James Horner. Cast: Kurt Russell, Ray Liotta, Madeleine Stowe, Roger E. Mosley, Ken Lerner.

Village of the Damned. 1960, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, USA.

Dir Wolf Rilla. Prod Ronald Kinnoch. Scr Stirling Siliphant, George Barclay, Wolf Rilla (based on the novel by John Wyndham). Ph Geoffrey Faithfull. Ed Gordon Hales. Prod Des Ivan King. Mus Ron Goodwin. Cast: George Sanders, Barbara Shelley, Michael Gwynn, Laurence Naismith, John Phillips.

Village of the Damned. 1995, Alphaville, Universal Pictures, USA.

Dir John Carpenter. Prod Sandy King, Michael Preger. Scr David Himmelstein, Steven Siebert (uncredited) (based on the novel by John Wyndham). Ph Garry B. Kibbe. Ed Edward S. Warschilka Jr. Prod Des Roger Maus. Mus John Carpenter, Dave Davies. Cast: Christopher Reeves, Kirstey Alley, Michael Paré, Linda Kozlowski, Mark Hamill.

Werewolf of London. 1935, Universal, USA.

Dir Stuart Walker. Prod Stanley Bergerman, Robert Harris, Carl Laemmle Jr. Scr John Colton, Robert Harris. Ph Charles J. Stumar. Ed Russell F. Schoengarth. Prod Des Albert S. D'Agostino. Mus Karl Hajos. Cast: Henty Hull, Werner Holland, Valerie Hobson, Lester Matthews, Lawrence Grant.

White Zombie. 1932, Halperin, USA.

Dir Victor Halperin. Prod Victor Halperin. Scr Garnett Weston. Ph Arthur Martinelli. Cast: Bela Lugosi, Madge Bellamy, Joseph Cawthorn.

Young Frankenstein. 1974, 20th Century-Fox, USA.

Dir Mel Brooks. Prod Michael Gruskoff. Scr Gene Wilder, Mel Brooks. Ph Gerald Hirschfield. Ed John Howard. Prod Des Dale Hennessy. Mus John Morris. Cast: Gene Wilder, Peter Boyle, Marty Feldman, Madeline Kahn, Gene Hackman.

Other Films Mentioned³⁹

Born on the 4th July, 1989, Oliver Stone, USA.
Casablanca, 1942, Michael Curtiz, USA.
Crash, 1995, David Cronenberg, CAN.
Cutthroat Island, 1995, Renny Harlin, USA.
Dangerous Liaisons, 1988, Stephen Frears, USA.
Dead Man Walking, 1995, Tim Robbins, USA.
Empire of the Sun, 1987, Steven Spielberg, USA.
Eye for an Eye, 1995, John Schlesinger, USA.
First Blood, 1982, Ted Kotcheff, USA.
Fried Green Tomatoes, 1991, Jon Avnet, USA.
Home Alone, 1990, Chris Columbus, USA.
Hook, 1991, Steven Spielberg, USA.
Intolerance, 1916, D. W. Griffith, USA.
Last Dance, 1995, Bruce Beresford, USA.
Last Wave, The. 1977, Peter Weir, AUS.
Lethal Weapon, 1987, Richard Donner, USA.
Lion King, The. 1994, Roger Allens, Rob Minkoff, USA.
M. Butterfly. 1993, David Cronenberg, USA.
Mad Max. 1979, George Miller, AUS.
Modern Times. 1936, Charles Chaplin, USA.
Mostro, Il. 1994, Roberto Benigni, ITA.
Mrs. Doubtfire. 1993, Chris Columbus, USA.
Platoon. 1986, Oliver Stone, USA.
Raiders of the Lost Ark. 1981, Steven Spielberg, USA.
Rebecca. 1940, Alfred Hitchcock, USA.
Sense and Sensibility. 1995, Ang Lee, UK.
Spellbound. 1945, Alfred Hitchcock, USA.
Toy Story. 1995, John Lasseter, USA.
Twelve Monkeys. 1995, Terry Gilliam, USA.
Werewolf of Washington. 1973, Milton Moses, USA.
Willow. 1988, Ron Howard, USA.
Wings of Desire. 1987, Win Wenders, GER.

TV Series

Final Cut, The. 1995, BBC, USA.
 Dir Paul Seed. Prod Ken Riddington. Scr Andrew Davies, Michael Dobbs (based on Dobbs' own novel). Ph Jim Fryan, Ian Punter. Ed Dave King. Prod Des Ken Ledsham. Mus Jim Parker. Cast: Ian Richardson, Isla Blair, Dianne Fletcher, Paul Freeman, Alison Peebles.

39. This list includes the films mentioned in this dissertation that have no direct relation or only a minor relation with the monster.

House of Cards. 1990, BBC, UK.

Dir Paul Seed. Prod Ken Riddington. Scr Andrew Davies, Michael Dobbs (based on Dobbs' own novel). Ph Jim Fryan, Ian Punter. Ed Howard Billingham. Prod Des Ken Ledsham. Mus Jim Parker. Cast: Ian Richardson, Susannah Harker, Miles Anderson, David Lyon, Malcolm Tierney, Nicholas Selby.

Life and Loves of a She-Devil, The. 1990, BBC / Arts and Entertainment Network / Se7en Network Australia, UK.

Dir Philip Saville. Prod Sally Head. Scr Ted Whitehead (based on the novel by Fay Weldon). Ph Pete Thomas. Mus Peter Filleul. Cast: Julie T. Wallace, Patricia Hodge, Dennis Waterman.

To Play the King. 1994, BBC, UK.

Dir Paul Seed. Prod Ken Riddington. Scr Andrew Davies, Michael Dobbs (based on Dobbs' own novel). Ph Jim Fryan, Ian Punter. Ed Dave King. Prod Des Ken Ledsham. Mus Jim Parker. Cast: Ian Richardson, Michael Kitchen, Kitty Aldridge, Dianne Fletcher, Colin Jeavons.

Other Television Series

Addams Family, The. 1964–1966. Created by Filmways Pictures for ABC, USA.

Gargoyles. 1994. Created by Frank Paur for Buena Vista Television, USA.

Munsters, The. 1964–1966. Created by Joseph Connelly and Bob Mosher for CBS, USA.

Star Trek. 1966–1969. Created by Gene Roddenberry for NBC, USA.

Twilight Zone, The. 1959–1964. Created by Rod Serling for CBS, USA.

X-Files, The. 1994–. Created by Chris Carter for Fox Broadcasting, USA.

Documentaries

Nightmares of Nature. 1995, Zebra Films for BBC in association with National Geographic, UK.

Prod Richard Matthews. Researchers Tim Matin, Jan Castle. Ed William Ennals, Susanne Parker. Ph Richard Gannicliff, Richard Matthews, Mark Payne-Gill, Bruce Reitherman, Rodger Jackman, Simon Wagen, John Waters. Mus The Insects. Graphic Des 4:2:2 Video Graphics. Narrator: Tim Piggot-Smith.

The Making of Bram Stoker's Dracula. 1992, Columbia, USA.

Dir Jeff Werner. Prod Jeff Werner, Kincaid Jones, Kenneth Fuchs. Scr Kincaid Jones. Ph Dan Yarussi. Ed Oreet Rees.

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This dissertation can also be found online at <http://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/4915>. The reason why I have decided to produce this second edition is that the TDX version, a facsimile of the original volume, is split into different .pdf documents for each chapter. This, as I have discovered when recommending to my own doctoral students that they read a particular section, is not user-friendly enough; hence my decision to produce a single .pdf document.

This single-volume edition is more compact (the text is single-spaced) and differs, then, in pagination from the original. I have not altered it at all, except to unify the type for all the text (I used a different type in the original for the films) and to add a much needed title index. I apologise in advance for the inconvenience of having mixed in it diverse films and novels of the same title.

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