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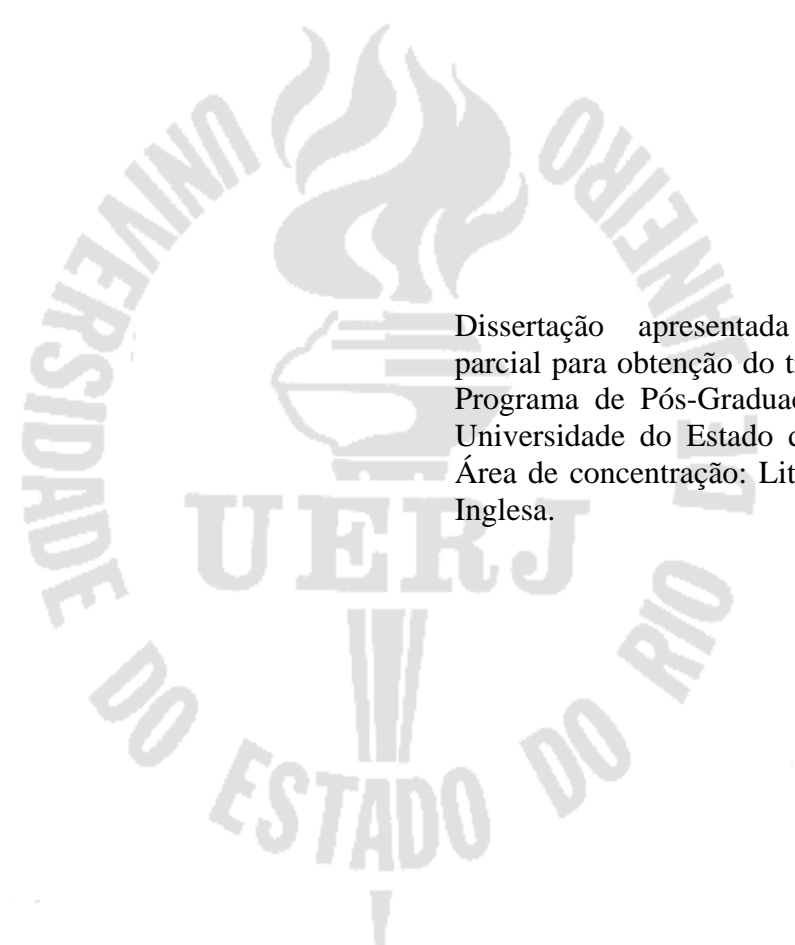
Transgressive elements in *The Monk*: social taboos

Rio de Janeiro

2010

Roberta da Fonseca Liporagi

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Dissertação apresentada como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Mestre, ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. Área de concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.

Orientadora: Prof^a Dr^a Maria Conceição Monteiro

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À minha mãe, por ser esse exemplo de mulher, de coragem e de perseverança. Nos momentos tristes e de fraqueza, você sempre me apoiou e me mostrou que sempre há uma solução enquanto acreditamos na vida. Seu otimismo e inteligência são minhas fontes de energia diárias. Muito obrigada por ser esse exemplo de mãe e de ser humano.

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RESUMO

LIPORAGI, Roberta da Fonseca. *Transgressive elements in The Monk: social taboos*. 2010. 87 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Literaturas de Língua Inglesa) – Instituto de Letras, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2010.

A presente dissertação tem como objetivo mostrar como a literatura gótica pode ser atemporal, subvertendo as mentes e conceitos de seus leitores. Partindo do contexto histórico e cultural em que *The Monk* se inseriu, esse trabalho visa levantar as questões e elementos tão fortemente reprimidos em nossa sociedade desde o final do século XVIII, como as idéias de mal, abjeção e expressão do eu, em um diálogo permanente com a teoria de Michel Foucault, David Punter, Julia Kristeva, entre outros. Desta forma, a análise do romance se dá paralelamente a uma crítica social, visto que a obra gótica tem por um de seus fins denunciar e deslocar a realidade social. Em última instância, será feita a análise algumas personagens do romance e sua respectiva importância na obra.

Palavras-chave: Monstruosidade. Mal. Sexualidade. Duplo.

ABSTRACT

The objective of the present dissertation is to show how gothic literature can be atemporal, subverting the minds and concepts of the readers. Starting from the historical and cultural context *The Monk* is inserted, this piece of work attempts to raise the issues and elements so strongly repressed in our society since the end of the 18th century, such as the concepts of evil, abjection and expression of the self, in a continuous dialogue with the theory of Michel Foucault, David Punter, Julia Kristeva, among others. This way, the romance is analysed concomitantly with social criticism, considering that gothic literature aims at denouncing and displacing the social reality. Finally, some characters and their respective relevance in the novel will be analysed.

Key words: Monstrosity. Evil. Sexuality. Double.

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1.CHAPTER 1: THE TRANSGRESSIVE WRITING OF ‘MONK’ LEWIS AND ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT

One thought that has always raised my curiosity over literature is the issue of transgression. Transgression of ideologies, conventions, norms, boundaries. Moreover, the principle that the fictional writing can make you consider possibilities that the real restraints do not permit has always fascinated me. Consequently, the very beginning of my studies were based on the individual who dared to do more than they should, who had the courage (or the insanity) to question standards, universal truths, moral codes. Since my reading of *Frankenstein* (1818) while still an adolescent until the present days, the figure of the transgressor has remained in my mind. The rebel, the one who thirsts for freedom, the unfit, the God-player have made literature the locus for the unimaginable, the impossible become true. For this reason, when the story of a monk called Ambrosio fell onto my hands, I realized that there could be no other Gothic piece of work that best played with the idea of transgression. As a rich piece of work for any kind of discussion concerning transgression, *The Monk* (written by Matthew Gregory Lewis in 1796) truly caught my attention from its very first page. And since *The Monk* has as its main characters one of the most transgressive figures ever seen in literature, no other novel would fit so completely my interest and preference and become, inevitably, the basis of my study. Discussing about the novel itself, it is important to point out that it is developed in multiple detached narratives which, as the romance unfolds, become not only connected, but surprisingly intertwined. *The Monk* provides the readers with strong and hard narratives, unveiling how far an individual can go in order to be fulfilled as well as how moral restraints can be easily destroyed when power and status are at stake. However, this piece of work will mainly focus on the narrative of Ambrosio, the monk that entitles the book.

Ambrosio is the abbot of the Capuchin monastery in Madrid. While still a kid, Ambrosio is left at the door of the religious premises, homeless, to be raised by the current abbot. Grown up inside the walls of what he came to consider a ‘home’, the monk’s view about life is extremely restricted and he is only able to experience what is morally and religiously permitted. The little child becomes, then, a healthy and charming man and occupies the most important position inside the monastery. Moreover, Ambrosio becomes a famous and highly considered religious figure, turning out to be the confessor of the upper classes and also having the whole city attend his sermons at the Capuchin church.

In the monastery, Ambrosio meets Rosario, a novice the monk quickly becomes fond of. Rosario seems to suffer from deep agonies and bad past memories, which makes the abbot get closer and closer. However, one day the novice decides to confess his real misfortune and, in doing so, he tells Ambrosio that he is, in fact, she. Rosario is a woman called Matilda who, after falling in love with the monk during his sermons, decides to pretend being a man so as to be close to him. The abbot, then, sees himself in a trap. Ambrosio does not want to let Matilda down by revealing her real sex and would, consequently, feel guilty if she tried to commit suicide (as she promised him to do if her secret were revealed). Nevertheless, at the same time, he cannot conceal this fact considering that this is an extreme transgression to the monks' religious principles. While this doubt fills the monk's heart and mind, an unfortunate situation takes place – Ambrosio is bitten by a serpent. In order to save his life, Matilda sucks the poison from the monk's body, condemning herself to death. After such a passionate and altruist act, the monk decides to surrender to Matilda's appeal and forgoes his monastic vows, having sex with her inside a cell in the monastery. As Ambrosio affirms that he wants Matilda to become his mistress, the false novice decides to perform a ritual to summon the demon and ask to be healed. And as she is successful in her 'healing alternative', Matilda becomes Ambrosio's lover.

Matilda introduces him to the delights of the flesh. He finds that she satisfies his lust with her enthusiasm and creativity. However, as time goes by and the monk's passion dies down, Ambrosio lacks 'something', a something that he identifies as Antonia. She is a girl who comes to Madrid with her mother to live with an aunt who helps them financially. Attending Ambrosio's sermons at church, the naïve girl feels great admiration and respect for him, but he takes advantage of it to get better acquainted to her and find ways to possess her sexually. In this new sexual moment, Matilda shifts from lover to assistant inasmuch as she helps Ambrosio find illicit ways to achieve his goal. Moreover, in the monk's first attempt to penetrate Antonia, her mother Elvira finds out about his machinations when she sees him in Antonia's bedroom in the middle of the night. Fearing being denounced and losing his social and religious position, Ambrosio kills Elvira and runs away. However, this cruel act does not stop the monk. Having his religious status as his alibi, he is soon ready to try to accomplish his desire. Ambrosio (with Matilda's help and guidance), gives Antonia a liquid to make her look dead so that she is considered dead and he is able to enslave her. He finally succeeds and rapes Antonia inside a vault where her 'dead body' was left. Nevertheless, what the monk could not predict was that there was a public revolt against the convent and the cemetery (which was placed between the two religious premises) and therefore, his plan is discovered.

Realizing that there are some nearby voices, Antonia tries to run away and look for help. In desperation, Ambrosio once more resorts to killing to try to escape from his unavoidable punishment. He stabs and kills the girl, but this time he is caught and taken to the feared Inquisition.

During his judgment Ambrosio is terribly tortured and condemned to be burned in public during a religious ceremony. Terrified by his imminent end, the abbot makes a pact with the Devil and sells his soul in order to be rescued from prison. Ambrosio's relief lasts very little. The monk is taken by the Devil to a high mountain where he listens to all the atrocities he committed and gets to know that Elvira was, in fact, his mother that he was taken away from, and Antonia his sister. After listening to these shocking revelations, the Devil throws the abbot against a sharp rock and he dies, receiving the punishment he could not escape from.

This brief summary turns out to be necessary insofar as the narrative in *The Monk* is full of astonishing and hard-to-believe discoveries and actions. In addition to that, as a Gothic piece of work, the novel reflects displacedly some worries and fears of the eighteenth century Enlightened western society. Therefore, to understand better the issues presented in the novel, a historical contextualization may clarify some things.

To start off, it is important to remember that the Britain of the 1790s lived a violent, revolutionary and even chaotic social and political moment. Along with the various difficulties faced by the English society, there were meetings “with gatherings of 10.000 or so to protest against the war (against France) and the lack of political reform” and also, “radicals were forced into self-exile to escape banishment and troops were sent up from the south and established in new barracks to suppress further unrest” (MILES, 2002, p.56). Still according to Robert Miles, the same picture could be seen in many other parts of the country and that consequently made the English violence become an unmentionable issue that could thus, be expressed only through displaced representations. That was the moment when the Gothic literature flourished.

The Gothic came as a direct result of changes in cultural values. At a time in which the reliance on reason was used as the basis for the explanation of natural and human activities, this new literary mode came to broaden out the perceptions and the view over rationality. Thus, this literary movement was seen as the Counter-Enlightenment, with emotional, aesthetic and philosophical reaction against the belief that by reasoning humankind could achieve true knowledge and hence obtain perfect virtue and happiness.

The Gothic fantasy proved compelling for its audience not because it was an interesting variation in a literary tradition, but because its transformation of the romance mythology reflected the transformations and tensions of the society in which its readers lived. Middle-class readers were attempting to adjust life in a radically new environment, an urban, capitalist culture and the pace of change seemed to increase exponentially. This new world [...] clearly required different concepts of what it meant to be an individual (DAY, 1985, p.81).

Also, the previous meaning of the word gothic which stood for something medieval, barbaric, primitive, “became invested with positive value in and for itself and came to be seen as representing virtues and qualities that the ‘modern’ world needed” (PUNTER, 2004, p.8). This way, the previous negative connotation that the Gothic embodied turned out to be seen as the representation of the contemporary social needs. Still according to Punter in his book called *The Gothic* (2004), there were four principal areas of past literature that were brought back with the revival of the Gothic, which are the following: the British heritage, which became part of the pieces of writing of the time; the interest in ballads, which may be best exemplified with Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* (1798); the inclusion of English medieval poetry; and finally, Gothic included the major work of Spenser and of the Elizabethans. All these revived elements helped construct a literary form that used the past as a mirror of the present to represent the primitive wildness still so rooted in society. For instance, in the passage of *The Monk* in which the local people revolt against the prioress of the convent, the mob’s attempt to lynch all the nuns expresses how barbaric and medieval any developed society can be when their anger blossoms.

In addition to that, the Gothic writing brought some features that became, somehow, part of every contemporary piece of work. One of these traits was the geography chosen in the books, which tended to describe ruins, Alps, rocks, black valleys, among other shadowy locals; also, some premises were recurrent ones, like castles, abbeys, convents and nunneries. Moreover, the Gothic narratives tended to make use of ghosts and its cognates (apparition, specter, sorcerer...) as well as some generic figures, such as the monk, the genius, the minstrel (MILES, 2002, p.41-42). Undoubtedly, Lewis’s book represents a genuine Gothic writing – the use of the rocks as the scenario for Ambrosio’s death, the architectural setting of the religious buildings, the use of the supernatural with ghosts and the Devil, and clearly, a religious figure as its main character. Therefore, as Davenport states, “you cannot have Gothic without a cruel hero-villain; without a cringing victim; and without a terrible place, some locale, hidden from public view, in which the drama can unfold” (DAVENPORT, 1999, p.8). For this reason, it may seem that there was a formula for this mode of writing and that every

Gothic narrative was about the same – definitely this is not the case. In spite of common features, what made this kind of writing so unique and innovating was that the arrangement and subversion of values pushed the reader further and further into a whole new fictional world. As Robert Miles, in his *The 1790s: the effulgence of Gothic* affirms: “one can find a precedent for everything, and yet *The Monk* was shockingly new, because it inverted, parodied, or exaggerated the features it cannibalized” (MILES, 2002, p.53). Along with these common features, some authors also contributed to the narratological development of the Gothic mode. For instance, Horace Walpole added the element of pastiche, whereas Ann Radcliffe, who is considered by some critics as the most outstanding writer of the time, incorporated in her writing landscape description as well as the use of the sublime and the picturesque in a new level of perfection. Also, Radcliffe expanded the idea of the heroine who escapes from her misfortunes and flights away in an European setting. This way the author inserted real scenery descriptions and history mixed with fictional and even supernatural characters.

As a consequence, all these new concepts and features helped establish a narrative that used the reason and logic so characteristic of the time, but placed them in an unreal and fantastic fictional world. Through this subversion, the prescriptive realism of the time could be criticized without being explicitly stated. Thus, the Gothic writing came as a ‘catharsis’, a way to expel the dissatisfactions and fears of the period. As Richard Davenport states:

Goths reject the bourgeois sense of human identity as a serious business, stable, abiding and continuous, requiring the assertion of one true cohesive inner self as proof of health and good citizenry. Instead, Goths celebrate human identity as an improvised performance, discontinuous and incessantly re-devised [...]. Goths believe in mistrust. Everybody wants to appear what is not; everybody deceives, and nobody knows nobody (DAVENPORT, 1999, p.7).

Therefore, despite all the social, economic and political European development, it could not represent and satisfy the individuals’ needs and characteristics. Consequently, that is precisely the point in which the taboo comes to light (and to literature). This new theme is incorporated in the literary form, due to its desire to express the inner self, inevitably spotlighting the issues that, despite being rooted in society, were silenced.

As examples of tabooed issues in Gothic literature, we can see the criticism on the familiar institution with the descriptions of incest, rapes performed by the fathers and/or brothers, which parodies the values of the affective family, transforming emotional and spiritual bonds into sexual ones. Along with that, there were also the barbaric attitudes taken

for the sake of status – pregnant daughters would be forced to abort and then sent to convents or even exiled in order not to shame the name of the family, especially if the primogenitor were a man. Moreover, the idea of decay was also a pertinent one. The concept of ‘ruin’ shifted from the architectural scope to the individuals’ bodies. The narratives spoke about ‘moral ruin’ (as in Radcliffe and Lewis), ‘corporeal ruin’ (as in Sade’s erotic stories) and ‘social-political ruin’ (represented by Frankenstein’s monster) (DAVENPORT, 1999, p.7). Talking about corporeal ruin, another permanent tabooed theme explicit in the Gothic writing is the relation of dominance and subordination frequently expressed through sexual intercourses. In many narratives, sexual acts were used to display economic, political authority, class control and superior status. The main purpose of the sexual relations was to act out roles of domination and subordination rather than erotic desire and/or fulfillment. Lastly, this literary mode spoke about massacres, executions, power abuse, issues hidden behind the principle that ‘progress justifies its means.’

In addition to the themes previously mentioned, there are two subjects that cannot be left out when dealing with Gothic writing – identity and sexuality. In this literary form, the identity is fragmented and the individual is not one self, but two. There is always a part of the self that is not admitted, and the selves never coexist. For one to remain, the other has to be destroyed. The same happens with the archetypal masculine and feminine, which cannot coexist. The nature of these archetypes is derived from the standards of romance, but it appears in the Gothic fantasy in the dynamics of domination and submissiveness. The masculine archetype embodies selfish, egocentric attitudes and feelings, often reflected as a desire to become godlike. Incorporated in this identity is the impulse to impose one’s will upon the world and other people. In order to do so, they have to break moral and social laws. The masculine identity can only be satisfied with power that is illegitimate. In this point, the Gothic male subverts the romantic hero, who seeks his true identity and legitimate place. On the other hand, the feminine identity embodies strong affective qualities. She expresses herself through submission and servitude. The archetypal feminine self tends to comply with the moral and social conventions and, this way, she personifies the will to virtue rather than the will to power. Certainly, these identities can be subverted, as in the example of Matilda, who “assumed a sort of courage and manliness in her manners” (LEWIS, 2003, p. 151). In the relationship between Ambrosio and Matilda, the roles of submission and servitude are inverted, where she possesses the masculine identity, and he, the feminine. However, in the Gothic sphere, these two identities can only deal in situations like the example above, where one individual is the double of the other. These identities are complementary, but they only

exist in opposition with each other and inside two halves. There is never balance, harmony between the masculine and the feminine inside the same self. William Day corroborates this idea when he states:

The protagonists acknowledge their doubled identities negatively and unconsciously through the violation or repression of one half of themselves. In order to fight the unadmitted and dangerous urge to unification, the protagonist may direct hostility or violence outward, particularly a double upon whom the unwanted, 'other' half of the self is projected. Violence and repression inevitably turn back upon the protagonist, though, because they are really directed at the doubled nature within (DAY, 1985, p.77).

In the Gothic sphere, all the violence is sexualized as well as all sexuality provokes violence. Repression denies sexuality; social norms repress sexuality; imprisonment confines sexuality. Therefore, when there is a removal of all these restrains, the result is generally a flood of sexual activity, accompanied by violence. Sex and sensuality are usually regarded as feminine qualities whereas the masculine correspond to authority expression and affirmation of superiority. This way, the problem of identity and sexuality in the Gothic fiction lies in the fact that the characters cannot control and channel their sexuality positively. Thus, there is a constant sexualization of violence and the transformation of "the power of continuity and affirmation into that of destruction and terror" (DAY, 1985, p.84). Consequently, these acts lead to a disintegration of these identities and personalities.

Surely, these issues needed to be revealed in a subjective, displaced way. This way, the possibilities of interpretation depended on the view of the reader. To exemplify, some critics consider the deformed ugliness of Frankenstein's monster as a reminder of the images of horrific revolutionary monsters in the French excess. In addition to that, in Lewis's story, Ambrosio's sexual mania was seen as a form of uncontrollable revolutionary libertinism. Anyway, the crucial point here is not if this interpretation was the authors' intention or not. What is in focus is the reflection these readings had on readers. The pleasure, the terror that makes readers strangely identify themselves with the sentiments, desires, needs shown throughout these narratives. The possibility of identifying yourself with the character portrayed on a Gothic narrative is, at least, a surprising one. As David Punter reminds us:

The 'dreadful pleasure' evoked by Gothic fiction is not merely the terror of falling from high precipices or of encountering the fearsome sight of a monster [...]. It is also the terror that we may be in danger of losing our minds, that the madness exemplified in the text may end up removing some of our own usual life coordinates, leaving us adrift, the victims of a transgression which can no longer be healed (PUNTER, 1989, p.7).

The dreadful element in the Gothic writing is that at a moment when the external changes become pressing, the literature looks inside, at the interior of the self and goes back to the past trying to safeguard the internal being and to observe if they are capable of survival in a new, dominating scenario. The questioning that the gothic proposes is then: ‘Who are you?’, ‘What characteristics truly represent your self?’, and ‘Are you a social or an individual being?’ All these thoughts may be revealing but also disturbing ones, since the messages conveyed in this kind of literature are not arisen from logic and reason, but from chaos, disorder, confusion. That is, then, the social danger of the Gothic fiction. It portrays the shadow, the socially unacceptable, the traits that should be banished.

Considering these tabooed matters as well as the common features used in the Gothic plots such as the afore-mentioned ones, this dissertation will focus on the devices and elements that formed the basis for the unfolding of *The Monk*. In chapter 2, some theoretical basis will be necessary to discuss about the outcasted figures that represent the collapse of identity – the monster and the Devil. Although there is no deformed figure in the novel in study, the meaning of the monster goes much beyond that; it represents the unfit, the creature that cannot comply with the moral standards and also cannot suffocate its double, its ‘Id’ in favor of a social standardization. Therefore, it cannot integrate the society it lives in. It has to be silenced, kept in the shadow, or used as a moral lesson to preach what should not be done. In addition to that, another marginalized figure is the Devil, who tried to play God and had to be, consequently, relegated to hell in order to show what happens to the one who challenges the most supreme force. In a way, these two figures are representations of the same problem – the questioning. And considering that the social requirements reflect God’s requirements, the two figures symbolize the transgression of these boundaries, one in a more humane sphere and the other in a more spiritual one.

In the following chapter, the resources used throughout the narrative will be in focus. The first subject in discussion will be the language used in the narrative. It is important to analyze the choice of words, the effect this choice has on the reader and also in what ways discourses played important roles in the development of the narrative – to express lack of communication, misunderstandings and negligence. Moreover, the religious institutions are definitely fundamental in the plot construction. They not only represent the sites where monks and nuns live, but mainly the locus of the most daring and cruel acts as well as erotic places where people went to show themselves. Finally, these institutions served as alibi to hide criminals under the disguise of a religious authority. Along with these locals, the metaphors concerning geography and the ideas of inside and outside are also interesting to express how

the closed places are the locals where the characters could perform all the actions they wanted to and reveal how their true selves are. On the other hand, while at outside places, the characters had to maintain their Ids hidden inside and only express their social identities, play the roles of collective beings. Therefore, it was inside that the individual could externalize their real intentions, necessities and desires. As the last element, the use of the Gothic supernatural is discussed. *The Monk* is a novel that makes great use of the supernatural. The author brings back some German legends, as the Bleeding Nun, a ghost that periodically came to haunt a house, also the Wandering Jew, who was said to be Doctor Faustus, and surely the Satanic figure, who appears in person (or spirit) to make a pact with Ambrosio. Playing with these supernatural figures, the novel makes use of the fantastic and, to some extent, of the marvelous, as metaphors for deeper subjects, placing the reader in a fictional world in which he/she is required to suspend disbelief in order to experience the sensations and terror that a prescriptive realistic narrative would not allow them to.

Finally, to conclude the line of study, in chapter 4 the main characters of the narrative will be the subject in discussion. As the female protagonists, Matilda and Antonia provide the reader with great examples of the two opposite extremes of the feminine stereotype. Antonia is ‘the angel of the house’¹, the eighteenth century ideal of woman. Her sexuality is denied to her, who channels it to religious purposes. Antonia is able to sublimate, to substitute the carnal plea for spiritual dedication. In fact, she is unaware of her sexuality as much as she is of people’s minds. At no moment during the narrative does Antonia realize the monk’s real intentions for her nor even her own connection with him. This way, Antonia is the heroine that is socially appropriate and should be seen as a moral lesson for the young European girls. In contrast, Matilda represents the danger a woman can become to a man and even to society. She is a woman who pretended to be a boy, who pretended to be a novice, simply to have the opportunity to persuade her object of desire (Ambrosio) to surrender to her charms and body. She is the ‘wretched woman,’ the Eve that makes the man perform the forbidden actions, the demon who condemns any man around her until his final fate. Moreover, Matilda personifies the ‘femme fatale’, the one who is sexually developed. She expresses her sexual appetite and her knowledge over the arts of love. In the roles of sex, she is the active one, which makes her, once more, assume the position of the man.

The third character in study will be Ambrosio, not only the male protagonist but the main character in the novel. Ambrosio is a deep, tormented character, who lives a continuous

¹ Although this is a long dated term, it became well known at Virginia Wolf’s time.

clash between his social identity as a monk, leader of a monastery and a religious example, and his inner self, a man in his fullest vigour, who desires to experience the joys of a sexual life and also to find a way to feel complete. His journey towards his self discovery starts with the relationship he establishes with Matilda, the first alter ego. With her he experiences sex as a way to transgress all the repression during his whole life. He does not connect it with affection, because he is unable to understand the power of it. He has never experienced it in the monastery and affection is not what links him to Matilda – their relation is based on the pursuit of pleasure and power. Moreover, since affection requires submission for the beloved ones, it cannot coexist with the masculine domination and violence Ambrosio desires to expurgate. In the continuation of his sexual journey, the monk identifies in Antonia a part of him that had been lost. What he seeks out is his own feminine half, denied and hidden with the loss of his mother and sister. Therefore, his pursuit of power is also a pursuit of his feminine nature. And, as a matter of fact, the monk's drama of rape, incest and murder is his unconscious quest for his own identity. As he fails to control Antonia and, consequently, his feminine half, he must murder her. However, in doing so, he destroys himself. His apothecic death on the obscure rocks is a symbolism of his real death – the failure to discover who he really is.

Considering everything that has been mentioned so far, the objective of this dissertation is to demonstrate how the Gothic literature can be seen as a piece of art that goes much beyond the scary, gloomy figures that became a label of this kind of mode, and express that it is a way to express the conflicts, the fears, the uncertainties, the desires of any individual. And, although the novel used as the basis of this study dates from the eighteenth century, the Gothic literature is not dependent on time because it does not retell history, it mirrors human beings in their full complexity. If at the end of this dissertation this idea becomes, at least a little clearer in the reader's mind, then this humble author should be satisfied.

2. CHAPTER 2: THE FORBIDDEN SHADOWY FORCES – THE MONSTER, THE EVIL

At a time when Enlightenment and its rationality propose an absolute reality and establish what an individual should be and do so as to become part of a system of mass called society, the concepts of monstrosity and evil become blurred ones. Since the cultural values did not permit flexibility or imperfections, the social individual turned out to be the product of a culture that praised rigidity and exclusion of the traits that could bring any kind of danger. As Marx would say, the bourgeoisie “has no moral, but makes use of it” (MARX apud Maffesoli, 2004, p.38). Consequently, in a world where there was no room for difference, the struggle against the repressed self became a stronger and tougher one, making individuality gradually dies away. Therefore, “rationalism becomes a self-destructive system, as what cannot be assimilated becomes, consequently, taboo” (MONTEIRO, 2009, p.97). ‘Taboo’ described what the monster and the Devil represented – outcasted figures that could only serve as examples of what could happen if someone rebelled against the normative system. Apart from that, these two concepts only carried silence, doubts and shadows.

2.1) The Monster

When we listen to the word ‘monster’, the immediate idea is the image of something horrifyingly inhuman, a beast, which has “unnatural asymmetry of parts, substitution of anatomical organs by unnatural forms, and recombination of humans and animal[...]” (KAPPLER, 1980, p.283). The concept of monster from the Middle Age to the Eighteenth century is essentially of a mixture. A mixture of two kingdoms, the human and the animal. A mixture of two species, two individuals, two genders; a mix of life and death.

Etymologically speaking, the ancient Romans tended to use *monstra* to mean all abnormal phenomena regarded as warnings or omens of the will of the gods; the English word monster derives from the Latin *monstrum*, which refers to that which is used to reveal (GILMORE, 2003, p.9). Also, as Punter reminded us in his *The Gothic*, the monster is something to be shown, something that serves to demonstrate (Latin, *monere*: to warn). By the eighteenth century, the horrific appearance of the monster had begun to serve as an

increasingly moral function. By providing a visible warning of the results of vice and insanity, monsters promoted virtuous behavior. Inasmuch as monsters were used to warn, to reveal what should not be done, they were fundamental when building the image of what ‘normality’ meant. Through difference, whether in appearance or behavior, monsters functioned to define and construct the politics of the ‘normal’.

Therefore, monsters are representations of the lines that must not be crossed. They represent what happens when there is transgression; in fact, monsters are the portrait of transgression – transgression of the natural limits, transgression of the law, transgression of classifications. Transgression is the basic issue as far as monstrosity is concerned. The monster contradicts the law. It is the infraction showed in its most powerful representation. However, according to Foucault in his *The Abnormals* (1974), even though a monster violates the law, it² does not deflagrate, from the entitled parts, a legal answer. What makes the strength and the capacity of inquietude of the monster is that, at the same time it transgresses the law, it makes the law voiceless. “What the monster rouses is not an answer from the law, but violence, a will to suppress what cannot be seen or done”³ (FOUCAULT, 2002, p.70). Due to this, the first aspect of monstrosity that will be discussed here is the social monster, the one which transgresses the behavioral conventions of a society.

2.1.1) The Monster as a Social Taboo

The figure of the monster is, as mentioned above, the one which represents the social boundaries that must not be violated. The monster is the one which has so far transgressed the bounds of nature as to become a moral advertisement. Nevertheless, at the same time it can be used as a means of controlling and policing a society, the monster incites the transgression of these social limits. As the displaced embodiment of tendencies that are repressed in a specific culture, it not only establishes the boundaries of the human, but may also challenge them. A monster is impressive exactly because it breaks the rules and do what humans can only imagine or dream of; it shows its potential by daring to speak the socially unspeakable. Since it observes no limits, respects no boundaries, a monster is also the spirit that says ‘yes’ to all that is forbidden. Hence, the monster is a paradoxical figure: it can be used as a means of

² The pronoun ‘it’ will be used in order to refer to the monster.

³ My translation.

helping ruling a society but needs to be hidden from it. As a consequence, the monster becomes a social taboo insofar as it represents the anthropological concepts of ‘sacred’ and ‘unclean’, in other words, it is a tabooed object because the figure of the monster causes both attraction and repulsion, worship and condemnation, love and hate. This dialectical relation is the consequence of the fact that the monster is the one that embodies the will to freedom, the one who loves himself and his pleasure to the end even if it condemns himself. Foucault classifies this concept as a *moral monster*, stating that it is the one which, breaking the social pact, prefers its own interests rather than the laws that regulate the society it is a member of⁴ (FOUCAULT, 2002, p.115).

This kind of monster is clearly seen in *The Monk* in the character Ambrosio, who despite being an abbot, violates all boundaries in order to satisfy his lustful and sexual objectives. Ambrosio not only breaks his monastic vows having sex with a woman inside the Capuchin monastery, but he also breaks one of the most important laws inside a society - he cowardly kills Elvira, the mother of his intended victim. Ambrosio embodies the moral monster so much so that he murders an innocent just to keep on having sexual pleasure without being discovered by society. His status, his social position needed to be guaranteed at all costs, which leads us to another kind of monstrosity defined as the *juridical monster*. This monster is seen in the figures that use their power inside a society to impose their interests in a criminal way – the tyrant, the lord, the bad priest, the guilty monk (FOUCAULT, 2002, p.117).

These figures transgress the law but in a way that keeps them in their position. It is through their importance inside society that they impose their violence, their freak, their lack of reason as a general law. And it is this power that they have which permits them to abuse, to exceed, in order to reach their personal objectives. This ‘superpower’ is what transforms libertinism into monstrosity. The juridical monster is a reflection of capitalism in which under its regimentation, man is alienated from himself, as it becomes impossible for the psyche to hold together the two faces of the same existence - the man as a being and the man as a social outcome. William Godwin calls this the ‘artificial man’, who is the production of a monstrous government:

A multitude of men may be feigned to be an individual, but they cannot become a real individual. The acts which go under the name of the society are really the acts now of one single person and then of another [...] (GODWIN, 1976, p.558).

⁴ My translation.

Still according to Godwin, it is the government itself that is the root of all monstrosity inasmuch as it is a perversion of the integrity of responsible individual action when he states that “democracy is a monstrous and unwieldy vessel, launched upon the sea of human passions, without ballast” (GODWIN, 1976, p.487).

Once more, Ambrosio can be mentioned. The monk uses his power as a religious authority not only to hide his real self, but also to make him somebody beyond all suspicion. Using his social, political and religious importance, he is able to commit the most horrible crimes guaranteed by his role in the community he is part of. Therefore, nothing would stop him. His position is a tool for him to have all the approval he needed, besides being a means of convincing people that his decisions are not in his own behalf, but simply good will to help. That is how Ambrosio is able to enter Elvira and Antonia’s house and put in practice his crimes. By convincing them that he, as a religious authority, would be of utmost help and support, he has their permission to take part in their lives and so he is able to murder Elvira and make everyone believe Antonia is dead so that he could have her as his sexual slave. Therefore, it is the power given to Ambrosio by society that allows him to do whatever he wants to.

That is one reason why monsters are so frightening: they challenge the moral and cosmological order of the universe. They represent the beast within each of us which cannot be killed “because its strength derives from the pressure with which it is held down by the smooth-faced man on the outside” (PUNTER, 1996, p.191). Due to the fact that they show this they are taboo – invested with destructive powers. In Ambrosio’s narrative, at first, it is sexual fulfillment that makes him violate the moral codes. He uses the social machinery in order to obtain the secret and forbidden sex he desires so much, leading us to start discussing about a different kind of monstrosity – the sexual one.

2.1.2) The Monster and its Transgressive Sexuality

As far as sexuality is concerned, a historical overview is necessary in order to understand how monstrosity is inserted in this scope. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a discourse on sex was multiplied. Sex was seen as part of a science which had moral and medical norms as main objectives. Knowledge over it was fundamental for the

controlling systems of a society to operate; it was through the discourse on sex that truth would emerge. It was a means of being permitted to know the most secret details of a society that needed to be ruled. Quoting Foucault's words: "The essential point is that sex was not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex became something fundamental, useful, or dangerous [...]" (FOUCAULT, 1998, p.56).

Therefore, it was through sex that a new system of control emerged. Up to the end of the eighteenth century, the three biggest explicit codes – canonical law, civil law, and the Catholic church governed sexual practices, building a network of truth. However, undoubtedly, the Church was the most powerful means of obtaining the truth about sex. Through confession, the speaking subject was also the subject of the statement. In order to confess, this subject needed the presence of another subject, who was not simply a listener, but an authority who judged, punished, consoled, forgave. And, as a matter of fact, the power did not lie in the one who spoke, but in the one who listened, who was able to know each individual's pleasures. Henceforth, a limiting discourse was created in order to shape society's mind. These discourses stirred up people's fears, claiming that strange pleasures would eventually result in nothing short of death: that of individuals, generations, the species itself (FOUCAULT, 1998, p.54).

As an example of this behavior shaping discourse there is Ambrosio. Despite being a religious authority, part of his fame was due to his inflamed sermons in which he preached that all actions considered sins would lead to a total perdition:

His voice was fraught with all the terrors of the tempest, while he inveighed against the vices of humanity, and described the punishment reserved for them in a future state (LEWIS, 2003, p.9).

And he was successful in his undertaking:

Every hearer looked back upon his past offences, and trembled: the thunder seemed to roll whose bolt was destined to crush him, and the abyss of eternal destruction to open before his feet (LEWIS, 2003, p.9).

Hence, this censoring discourse, through threat and terror, dominated society in order to try to control all sexual practices, manias and pleasures. Nevertheless, as Georges Bataille would say, religion leads essentially to the transgression of what is forbidden⁵. Terror

⁵ My translation

produces a dichotomical outcome - on one side there is rejection, but on the other there is attraction, inasmuch as terror has to do with power, with fantasies of power, with precisely those repressed desires (PUNTER, 1996, p.209). Terror attracts to an abyss, to a self analysis that gives rise to the questioning that we do not know what we are or what we are capable of. It is in the moment in which there is a simultaneous terror and fascination with the beast within that monstrosity emerges.

The monster demarcates not only between the real and the unreal, but between the permitted and the forbidden. The outbreak of the monster into human affairs represents the arrival of that which is denied in the self, those traits “out there.” And from this horrifyingly sense of the abyss, abjection arises as a distortion of desire, in which subjectivity itself disappears before the irrepressible might of the beheld object (PUNTER, 1996, p.211). The abject is a manifestation of the most primitive moment in our psyche; the abject is prior to the object, it is the first detachment of ‘I’ – it is a *non- ‘I’*. During the process of becoming, the I that does not assimilate, does not want or is able to become integrated, is expelled; it is abjected.

Abjection is intrinsically connected with the idea of loss – a loss that frightens, that has no limits. According to Julia Kristeva, an expert in the theory of abjection, this loss is not related to the spirit, but to the body: “[...] from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit – *cadere*, cadaver” (KRISTEVA, 1982, p.3). Thus, abjection does not refer to divine, but to something ‘down’, earthly. Abjection is caused by what disturbs identity, the order, the system and by what does not respect limits and rules. It violates the limits, the taboos. The abjected is something immoral, a terror that “from its place of banishment, does not cease challenging its master” (KRISTEVA, 1982, p.2).

The abject is related to perversion. It is pervert because it “neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them for its own benefit” (KRISTEVA, 1982, p.15). Therefore, the monster is the personification of the abjected I. The monster is the outcome of disorder, chaos. It represents our most primitive desires and it is the pleasure that is excluded, hidden; the abject is, in fact, the recognition of the ‘want’ in which any being is founded.

In *The Monk*, when Ambrosio surrenders to Matilda’s arms, he experiences sensations so far excluded from him. Being brought up in a monastery, the only feelings that he could have were fear of God and pity and compassion of the world. However, Ambrosio starts giving voice to his inner monster at the moment he concludes he is a superior being and states:

“I see no one possessed of such resolution. Religion cannot boast Ambrosio’s equal! How powerful an effect did my discourse produce upon its auditors[...]and pronounced me the sole uncorrupted pillar of the church!” (LEWIS, 2003, p.23).

Saying so, Ambrosio shows his narcissistic monster. Therefore, “abjection is a precondition of narcissism. It is coexistent with it and causes it to be permanently brittle” (KRISTEVA, 1982, p.13). As soon as he is free from repression, from the role of showing society how humble he is, the monk permits himself to contemplate his own reputation and to consider himself worthy of all worship. Nevertheless, undoubtedly, it was after having his first sexual experience that Ambrosio definitely gives free rein to his, so far, abjected I. Pleasure, as such a powerful feeling, causes the abject to exist. The monk had not had the chance to bring his abjected pleasure to light; but from the moment he was able to have it fulfilled, his monster emerged:

All impediments yielded before the force of his temperament, warm, sanguine, and voluptuous in the excess. As yet his other passions lay dormant; but they only needed to be once awakened, to display themselves with violence as great and irresistible (LEWIS, 2003, p.156).

Henceforth, the monk lets the part of himself that had been hidden become his deepest self. Quoting Kristeva’s words: “the ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the Other” (KRISTEVA, 1982, p.9). In quoting Kristeva and mentioning the ego, one important concept concerning the monster arises, which is the psychoanalytical view over its mind.

2.1.3) The Monster and the Uncanny

According to what has been mentioned so far, the monster represents the boundaries that must not be crossed, the frontier between human and inhuman, normal and abnormal, permitted and forbidden. The monster is the figure of what was repressed but, for some reason, came to light. Taking these definitions into consideration, the monster can be analyzed as our unconscious that emerges. As far as psychoanalysis is concerned, the unconscious is made up of powerful desires and is also “the repository of these repressed desires; it does not obey the laws of the conscious rational mind but rather has an energy and a logic of its own”

(WOODWARD, 2002, p.43). The unconscious is rooted in disapproved wishes and desires which have been under repression, so that its content is forbidden to and by the conscious mind. Considering the psychoanalytical subdivision of the mind in super-ego, ego and the unconscious (or the *id*), Freud's definitions are fundamental⁶. "The super-ego acts like a 'conscience' representing social constraints; it is the outcome of the demands of social forces" (WOODWARD, 2002, p.44). The ego works as an attempt to balance these two extremes and, thus, it is constantly in a state of conflict. Taking society as the scope of discussion, it is possible to say that it 'plays the role' of the super-ego, whereas the monster acts like the unconscious that cannot be repressed anymore.

Using Lacan's psychoanalytic theory over the child, it is possible to exemplify these notions better. In the so-called 'mirror stage', "the sense of identity of the child arises out of the internalization of outer views of itself" (WOODWARD, 2002, p.44). This stage represents the first moment in which the child becomes aware of the mother as an object detached from itself. "The infant reaches a sense of 'I' only through finding the 'I' reflected back by something outside itself, by the other; from the place of 'the other'" (WOODWARD, 2002, p.44). Therefore, just like the child, society builds its identity through exclusion, categorizing what is not rather than what it is. It is 'the other' that is fundamental at this point as a reference for society to build its sense of self. Due to the fact that it first adopted an identity from outside the self, "it goes on identifying with what it wants to be, but which is separate from the self, so that the self is permanently divided within itself" (WOODWARD, 2002, p.45). Once more, the concepts can be applied in the novel in discussion. Ambrosio is a religious figure who was raised by monks who told him what he could not be rather than what he could be. Thus, Ambrosio grows up in a continuous state of inner conflict, in a constant clash between his religious role and his repressed self:

At such times the contest for superiority between his real and acquired character was striking and unaccountable to those unacquainted with his original disposition. He pronounced the most severe sentences upon offenders, which, the moment after, compassion induced him to mitigate: he undertook the most daring enterprises, which the fear of their consequences soon obliged him to abandon [...] (LEWIS, 2003, p.155).

Therefore, the abbot is the portrait of a shattered self. For him to have a social identity, he was obliged to suffocate his self as an individual. These notions of the process of the

⁶ The notions taken in consideration in this study consider the super-ego the part of our mind that carries our cultural and social values. It is the part that permits us to live in society. The unconscious (or Id) represents our true, primitive, individual desires. The ego would be an 'in between', a balance between the super-ego and the unconscious.

construction of an identity are important inasmuch as they help to understand what ‘uncanny’ stands for.

Uncanny or, in the German language *unheimlich*, is considered frightening due to the fact that it represents what is not known and familiar. According to Freud, “naturally not everything which is new and unfamiliar is frightening, [...] some new things are frightening but not by any means all. Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar to make it uncanny” (FREUD, 2000, p.154). Nevertheless, Freud reminds us of one definition of *heimlich* which means something that is “concealed and kept out of sight” (FREUD, 2000, p.156). This concept meets Schelling’s definition of the *Unheimlich*, which stands for what “ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (FREUD, 2000, p.156). The experience of uncanniness may come from different situations – a recurrent action, a compulsive repetition, a fear that is exposed; whatever the case is, uncanny is always triggered by a dreadful process, in which the idea of something fateful and inescapable is extremely pertinent.

In psychoanalysis, there is a theory that asserts that all emotional states which are repressed become a morbid anxiety. Therefore, Freud states that among all this anxiety that is repressed, there must be some cases in which this repressed feeling recurs. Hence, “this class of morbid anxiety would then be no other than what is uncanny, irrespective of whether it originally aroused dread or some other affect” (FREUD, 2000, p.166). Inserting this notion into the literary world, in *The Monk*, Ambrosio is, as mentioned above, a full personification of a repressed being:

[...] in order to break his natural spirit, the monks terrified his young mind, by placing before him all the horrors with which superstition could furnish them; they painted him the torments of the damned in colours the most dark (LEWIS, 2003, p.155).

Thus, Ambrosio represents the individual that, being compelled to repress most of his thoughts and feelings, suffers from a constant dichotomy of the self and experiences uncanniness every moment his unconscious has room to manifest itself, especially when he is by himself and feels that no other human being, mainly religious figures, was as good as he is, due to the fact that “he was jealous of his equals and despised all merit but his own [...]” (LEWIS, 2003, p.155).

In addition to that, Freud also states that “uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old – established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression” (FREUD, 2000, p.166). Therefore, Ambrosio personifies the individual

who, in order to fit society's conventions, builds an identity taking into consideration what he must not be insofar as he represents a religious authority. Nevertheless, his *id* keeps inside of him. Hence, the closer he gets to humane feelings, such as envy, pride, desire, pleasure, his other self cannot be suffocated anymore and explodes in a storm of passion in which his self love permits him to experience his real desires to the utmost. It is not an unknown situation that unchains his unconscious thoughts; it is an identification with that situation that makes it difficult for him to keep on playing a social role and denying himself. All these feelings were part of him, but they were so strongly repressed that the monk did not have free will to decide whether to experiment them or not. Only after having the uncanny experience of a sexual act and spotlighting his body pleasure, Ambrosio is able to give free rein to his repressed identity.

To sum up, from what has been mentioned so far, it may be concluded that monsters play an important role not only in literature, but also in society. They portray terror and awe, but also attraction and admiration, inasmuch as they are free from social codes and are able to do what social individuals are not. Monsters may be referred to in the scope of social norms, sexuality, power relations and even in a psychoanalytical concept; however, it is undeniable that in all these issues one point converges – they represent what we want to do but cannot. According to David Gilmore, “monsters embody the existential threat to social life, the chaos, atavism, and negativism that symbolize destructiveness and all other obstacles to order and progress, all that which defeats, destroys, draws back, undermines, subverts the human project – that is, the *id*” (GILMORE, 2003, p.12). Once more, monsters are defined as our most powerful desires which need to be silenced and repressed so that we fit the social stereotype. Hence, they are sites of identification, sympathy, and self-recognition (PUNTER, 2004, p.265), many times representing the same sympathy felt for the figure of Satan or the self-recognition in an evil act.

2.2) The Evil

Throughout the centuries, in the Western world, the culture concerning the concepts of good and evil have been changed considerably. For instance, what was considered sacred in the Middle Age has a different connotation from the contemporary definition. Nowadays, it is easy to distinguish what is considered good and what is regarded as evil. But how and why

were these values established? What was the basis of this tradition? And, finally, what is good and what is evil, in fact? William Blake, poetically, shows a point of view:

Without contraries, there is no progression.
Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy,
Love and Hate are necessary to Human existence.
From these contraries spring what the religious call Good and Evil.
Good is the passive that obeys Reason.
Evil is the active springing from Energy.
Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell...
God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies.
Energy is the only life, and is from the Body;
and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
Energy is eternal delight (Blake apud Bataille, 2001, p.91).

Blake brilliantly defines the universal concepts of good and evil, by this he points out a crucial point – that there is no good without evil and the same is applied to the contrary. They coexist, depend on each other and were created and constructed for the same ends, in other words, shape and control the western world.

2.2.1) The Discursive Formation of the Concepts of Good and Evil

The Western powerful organizations, especially after the emergence of the Enlightenment, felt the necessity to establish how society should be. These institutions needed to convey discursive formations that could be internalized through a power that manipulated the masses and shaped their minds according to what should be considered good and ‘not good’. Hence, the discourse on religion aimed at eliminating what could not be inside society and “justifying the ways of God to man”⁷. In the Christian religious tradition, there was a great effort to ‘make use of’ good and a social mobilization to eliminate the darkness inside every being. Therefore, the meaning of evil embodied precisely the shadow inside every single being, that part of the individual’s nature that the moral and culture could not domesticate.

Due to the fact that the western is considered to represent ‘civilization’, a totalitarian ideal of society was built so as to educate the individual’s nature and build the perfect society. The Christian western tradition strongly imposed a universalism so as to put ‘good’ into practice; to do so, they put together individual and social energies to mobilize and eliminate

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This is a biblical passage but also a term used by Milton in his *Paradise Lost* (1667).

the dark side of the human being. Ironically, in order to maintain ‘God’s commands’, many atrocities were committed; the ones who did not follow the light were condemned to the darkness and to punishment. As Michel Maffesoli states: “in the name of ‘good’ different inquisitions did their dirty work. In its name all cultural ethnic murders were performed and justified by the economical and political imperialism. It is, once more, in its name that it is determined what *should be lived and thought* [...]” (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p.12).

Furthermore, the Christian religion determined several dichotomies that had not existed so far. One of them was between what was pure and impure which, according to Christianity, what was not preached was considered impure, and so banished to the profane world. Thus, “in the sacred world of Christianity, nothing that clearly recognized the fundamental characteristics of sin and transgression could survive” (BATAILLE, 2004, p.189). The divine world was reduced to the “God of Good” (BATAILLE, 2004, p.192) and light was its frontier. In this new classification there was no room for anything damned. And so “God separated light from darkness”.⁸ As a consequence, in this world of perfection, another banished element was eroticism.

For Western religiosity, eroticism was impure inasmuch as it was seen as an extramarital sexual practice and, therefore, profane. Moreover, eroticism reaches the individual’s deepest self who does not desire to discontinue; every single being wants immortality. Thus, the violence and violation inherent to the erotic activity leads to sexual excitation caused by the eminence of death. Death guarantees the continuity of the individual, whereas sexual reproduction leads to discontinuity. That is why eroticism is so dangerous for the Christian controlling system – it is always a dissolution of the constituted forms. In eroticism, the discontinued life is not condemned to disappear: it is only questioned. “It must be disturbed, bothered to the utmost” (BATAILLE, 2004, p.31). Eroticism is able to introduce in the mortal discontinued world all the possibilities of continuity which this world may live and make it possible for individuals to experience “the approval of life until death” (BATAILLE, 2004, p.19).

On the other way round, the Christian religion preached that continuity would only be reached through God. Death would not be the means for an individual to attest their continuity, but rather a manifestation of it. The only accepted eroticism was the sacred one, in which God’s love was the ecstasy to be pursued. According to Bataille in his *The Eroticism* (2004, p.21), “the continuity is given to us in the experience of the sacred. Divinity is the

⁸ Gen. 1,3.

essence of continuity”. Hence, the continuity found in God demanded that the followers expressed their unconditional love, substituting the body eroticism for the spiritual ardour in which God would represent the only desire. In order to encourage this kind of behavior, the Christian church promised to fulfill the expectations of its followers giving them the continuity they ardently wanted as well as immortality. In *The Monk*, Ambrosio personifies this individual that tries to deny his carnal plea in order to maintain his soul directed to the light:

He fixed his eyes upon a picture of the Virgin which was suspended opposite to him [...] ‘it is not the woman’s beauty that fills me with such enthusiasm: it is the painter’s skill that I admire; it is the divinity that I adore’ (LEWIS, 2003, p.24).

Therefore, according to the preaching of the Church, God was the only one to be admired, adored, worshipped. As a matter of fact, in the Western Christian world, there was an absolute interdiction. Not worshipping God was a transgression, but trying to have access to the sacred was a transgression as well. So, there was this paradox: “the access to the sacred is Evil; at the same time Evil is profane” (BATAILLE, 2004, p.107). Consequently, God was to be desired but not reached, he was in a superior position to be idolized. Jesus Christ was, thus, the savior, the reason, whose function was to know everything about everything, to elucidate the darkness, to explain the inexplicable, to say the reason why things happen. In short, to educate in a sententious way (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p.105). And then, the question that rises is: if God was the personification of light, immortality and good will, who/what was the representation of the ‘non-divine’? As the Christian religion interdicted practices so far considered sacred in the paganism, it became necessary to establish what should be feared; a dichotomy that should classify all the actions performed by a damned individual who did not obey God. Hence, the idea of evil ‘was born’.

2.2.2) The Faces of Evil

Christianism, with its interdictions, was opposed to the spirit of transgression. In fact, a religious improvement was only possible due to this opposition. In order to establish the limits, it was necessary to categorize what was considered prohibited and, therefore, could not be overcome. Due to the fact that transgression leads one to exceed the limits, it is the sole

purpose of all profane acts. Foucault supports this notion in a clearer way : “ at the root of sexuality, of the movement that nothing can limit [...] and at the root of this discourse on God which Western culture has maintained for so long [...] a singular experience is shaped: that of transgression” (FOUCAULT, 2000, p.72). Transgression is an action that involves the limits; it is a narrow passage attached to the frontier in which one may decide to cross or not. Therefore, only transgression has the power to give access to the sacred world. Hence, profanation is consequent to a primary transgression in which the limits of the divine were crossed, since “the principle of profanation is the profane use of the sacred” (BATAILLE, 2004, p.190).

In addition to that, transgression is part of a process composed by a sequential tripod: limit, contestation and, as a consequence, transgression. Contestation is the power one has to question and carry all values to their limits, in other words, “to contest is to proceed until one reaches the empty core where being achieves its limit and where the limit defines being” (FOUCAULT, 2000, p.75). Consequently, limit and transgression depend on each other in any occasion; there is no purpose in establishing a limit if it is uncrossable; the same way, transgression would be worthless if it crossed an illusionary limit. In Ambrosio’s narrative, although the abbot has moments of regret for what he has done, Matilda’s seed of contestation definitely helped him decide to abandon his religious life and surrender to a luxurious one:

Man was never created for celibacy; and were love a crime, God never would have made it so sweet, so irresistible! [...] Indulge in those pleasures freely, without which life is a worthless gift (LEWIS, 2003, p.147).

For the Christian religion, to contest is to question God’s benevolence and superiority. Therefore, contesting is evil. And thinking of evil in a more general aspect, we may try to come to a definition of it:

It is the gloomy side of our nature. The same nature that culture may partially domesticate, but that continues encouraging our desires, our fears, our feelings [...] evil is a ghost that haunts the conscience of the leaders of society, and that does nothing else than expressing what they had denied, but that kept existing in that immemorial memory which is the collective unconscious (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p.29).

Therefore, to do evil is to want what we do not want and desire what we cannot, since “to do Evil for the sake of Evil is to do the exact opposite of what we continue to affirm is Good” (BATAILLE, 2004, p.35). Hence nothing causes an evil will, since it is inside every single being. It is the evil will itself which causes an evil act. And, then, we may ask ourselves: how can a will become evil? According to Augustine in his *City of God* (413-26), it

happens when the will leaves the higher and turns to the lower; it becomes bad not because the thing to which it turns is bad, but because the turning is itself perverse. So, when an individual prefers the lower form of existence, he turns back to the light, to the spirit and goes down to the depth of life where his animality lies. When an individual does not identify themselves with divinity, it emerges the necessity to go down, to be in connection with the black abyss of cruelty, pleasure and desire (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p.37). However, in a society in which each one should sacrifice himself in order to converge in the greatness of the whole, the individual who does not conform to the totalitarianism is a portrait of a denied evil, which was repressed and considered dominated. Unavoidably, when this power is given room to, it rises in an uncontrollable, perverted way, enabling this individual to bring out the singularity in society, that is to say the rebelliousness of a fragment and/or a detail.

In order to control this rebelliousness and create a more justifiable politics of punishment, it was created a figure to personify all this falling movement from the bright heaven to the gloomy depth that, for not respecting the Master and for defying Him, fell from a divine place to a profane one. From this moment on, the figure of the Devil emerged from the darkness to the core of every society.

2.2.3) Satan / the Devil: the Fallen Angel

In the Christian religious tradition, Satan is Lucifer, an angel that is the most powerful, the most beautiful, and the one closest to God. However, considering himself as powerful as God, he decides to rebel and is expelled from heaven. In the scope of literature, the piece of work that best portrays the fall of the angel is definitely *Paradise Lost* (1667) by John Milton. In the book, Milton writes, in the form of a poem, the narrative of God, Satan, Adam, Eve and the creation of the world from the biblical account but also from his own perspective. In the first sections (the narrative is divided into 'books') Milton devotes much of the story to developing Satan's character. Satan begins the poem as a just-fallen angel of enormous stature, looks like a comet or meteor as he leaves hell, then disguises himself as a cherub, then as a cormorant, a toad, and finally a snake. Satan represents the enemy who chooses to commit an act that goes against the basic laws of God that challenges the very nature of the universe. Satan attempts to destroy the hierarchy of heaven through his rebellion. He commits this act not because of the tyranny of God but because he wants what he wants

rather than what God wants. Satan is an egoist. His interests always turn on his personal desires (GARDNER, 2005, p.3). Some critics claim that Milton's writing in the initial books about the characterization of Satan makes this figure understandable, and that, consequently Milton makes Satan the hero of the narrative. Although this point of view is contestable, it is a fact that Satan plays the most significant role in the narrative. The reader sympathizes with Satan's figure inasmuch as he was expelled from heaven for desiring to be bigger, to be superior, to contest, which are human characteristics. Moreover, when in Book 1 Satan makes a speech for the other rebellious angels, the image conveyed is heroic and of a leader when he rises off the lake of fire and delivers his speech challenging God:

"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"
Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat
That we must change for Heaven? — this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid
What shall be right: farthest from him is best
Whom reason hath equaled, force hath made supreme
Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells! Hail, horrors! hail,
Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell,
Receive thy new possessor — one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be, all but less than he
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; the' Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure; and, in my choice,
To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven"
(MILTON, 1996, I, l. 242-263).

In this speech Satan personifies the one who does not conform to the rules imposed, the transgressor, who does not accept the divine ideal. Despite the changes in Satan's figure throughout the book (in Book I he is a strong, imposing figure, whereas by the poem's end he slinks back to hell in the form of a serpent), what is in focus is the representation and image conveyed in the Satanic figure. The Devil's confidence in thinking that he could ever overthrow God displays tremendous vanity and pride, which are characteristics that are considered impure and forbidden by religious and moral rules. Nevertheless, they are part of human's nature, and that is precisely why the reader identifies themselves with Satan's in Milton's epic.

For the same reason, Ambrosio may be considered the most empathetic character in *The Monk*. The friar tries to follow the moral conventions, but he simply cannot. He, then, looks for ‘the other’ inside of him, the shadow that every human being is supposed to suffocate, the ‘Devil’ inside of us. However, as Maffesoli states, every totalitarianism leads to a structural duplicity, to a lack of difference, which opens a fissure that makes one look for ways to fulfill this emptiness. This search occurs in the social environment, in nature, inside the self, in the other, which for a moment in an imperfect way completes this self (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p.94). The same takes place in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) in which the reader tends to sympathize more with the monster than with Victor, due to its more ‘humane’ characteristics. Despite being physically deformed and to kill Victor’s relatives, the monster’s only wish is to have its desires and pleasures fulfilled. Interestingly, there is a moment in the novel in which the monster reads *Paradise Lost* and, although it first identifies itself with Adam, right after the monster sees itself reflected in the character of Satan in the passage below:

Paradise Lost excited different and far deeper emotions[...] Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. [...] Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition, for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me (SHELLEY, 1994, p.125).

Returning to *The Monk*, ironically, the figure of the Devil has a more moral than transgressive role. In the novel, Ambrosio is persuaded by Matilda and, indirectly, by the Devil to commit his forbidden acts. Moreover, it is Satan himself who takes the monk out of the prison he is in after being condemned by the Inquisition. Nevertheless, right after making the pact in which Ambrosio sold his soul to be free from prison, the character of Satan tells the friar how evil and mean he really is by narrating the murders of Antonia and her mother Elvira and also by stating that Ambrosio deserves no better future than Matilda, who is said to be a demon. After the accusations, Satan condemns the monk to meet his death. The figure of Satan in the book is, therefore, paradoxical - at the same time that he gives the means to transgress, he censures and preaches the horrors the ones who do obey God’s law have to face. Lewis, in a way, subverts the image of the Satanic character to convey the moral that the novel had to have in order to be published.

To sum up, the Devilish figure represents the dark side, the animality, the will to forbidden knowledge that exists inside every human being but is denied, domesticated, in the name of the collective good. The western society fears the shadow, the darkness that cannot

be controlled, shaped and, therefore the Satanic image came to serve as an example of what happens to those who rebel against God and His holy providence. Just like Ambrosio, the monster in *Frankenstein*, and all the examples that literature has provided us with along history, anyone that does not conform to what is considered divine, permitted, balanced, productive and who places their own necessities ahead of the collective's norm has to be punished, condemned, sent to death. That is the price to pay.

3. CHAPTER 3: ELEMENTS IN THE NARRATIVE

The beams of the lamp displayed none but the most revolting objects; skulls, bones, graves, and images whose eyes seemed to glare on them with horror and surprise (LEWIS, 2003, p.180).

The Monk is considered the most shocking, disturbing and Gothic of eighteenth-century English Gothic novels. Despite the heavy choice of topics, the novel has the double appeal of allowing the readers to indulge in extravagances of feeling while protecting them from their consequences by placing these situations in the scope of the supernatural, of the fantastic. In spite of being English, Lewis was directly influenced by the German school of terror, which led him to focus on certain issues, such as: fantasies of sexual brutality, physical corruption, ghost stories, demon lovers, monastic tyranny, just to name a few. Moreover, despite the German influence, Lewis fables of tyranny, incarceration, liberation provide a series of metaphors for more literal restrictions and imprisonments; in other words, it was an attempt to express “a call for freedom” (PUNTER, 2004, p.142), which was an enormous concern in Europe at the time. And one of the ways to express this necessity for release was through sexuality.

As far as sexuality is concerned, it is clear throughout the narrative that it does not concentrate on love, but rather on a sexual urgency that is inflamed by physical attraction, by fear, by the sense of transgression, by death. While Matilda is by Ambrosio's side, he is able to carry out his intention of resisting the temptation; however, at the moment Matilda is on the verge of dying, “on the bed of death” (LEWIS, 2003, p.56), then, the monk surrenders to his and her physical appeals. Hence, what makes the friar surrender to Matilda's arms is the strong necessity of fulfilling his sexual appetite. No other feeling is required in order to make him break his vows. Moreover, when Ambrosio chooses Antonia as his ‘victim’, it is her inconsolable situation that excites his lust. When the girl comes to him begging for a confessor for her dying mother, her grieved request makes her a perfect prey for him, in other words, “her affliction seemed to add new lustre to her charms” (LEWIS, 2003, p.158). Although, at first, the monk admires Antonia's beauty and innocence, the more impossible the sexual consummation seemed, the more he became obsessed with dishonoring her, culminating in Antonia's rape and murder. Hence, sexuality is presented in the novel as a destructive, dehumanized act, in which every time it is accomplished, it brings chaos, violence and death – be it physical or spiritual.

Although the narrative itself does not encourage the reader to see it as the imitation of real life due to its extreme actions and supernatural figures, the notion of reality in the novel is a shifty one inasmuch as it presents many shocks of confrontation, many revelations of feelings that are totally outside the reader's expectation and which undermine all common sense concepts about the way things should be. As Howells mentions in her *Love Mystery and Misery* (1995, p.32): "For Lewis, inconsistency and instability are part of the nature of things, not only of human beings and feelings but of the whole contingent world."

Therefore, the traditional idea of reality is somehow suspended insofar as the novel advocates that the self is unpredictable and capable of unrealized possibilities. Besides, the novel presents the reader with the disturbing possibility that the forces of passion and instinct are stronger than the forces of reason and conscience. And since all characters go through traumatic experiences and shocking revelations, all of them become (some of them more, others less) fragmented individuals who see themselves differently and, consequently, subvert the conventional assumption of the integrity of the self. Taking into consideration this concept about reality, it is most likely to assume that labeling *The Monk* as only a fantasy story is a too deterministic and limited position. Hence, what the readers experience in reading the novel is a questioning of what reality means and how far an individual may go so as to transgress it.

Therefore, due to the strong scenes, motifs and construction of characters, this chapter will focus on the narratological devices used to build such strong atmosphere and plot in *The Monk*. And as far as narrative construction is concerned, four main elements prove to be fundamental ones: the language, with its heavy choice of words; the religious institutions, which were strongly criticized throughout the novel; the metaphors concerning geography and space inside the novel, which lead to a deeper psychoanalytic approach; and finally the Gothic supernatural, a device that helps denounce reality through its subversion. These elements need a closer study in order to permit a better understanding of the whole piece of work as well as the unfolding of the narrative.

3.1) **Language**

Surely, these questionings would not come to the reader's mind without the use of a very manipulative structure and language. Throughout the narrative, the use of words is skillfully chosen to shock and disturb. Lewis's work, influenced by the German school, does not avoid the strong scenes of violence and sexual activity, which leads to the belief that it is a

way of resistance against externally imposed rules and regulations of the society of the time. The sensory perception and the physical matter are overwhelming preoccupations that are expressed through language. Moreover, the richness of details and descriptions, especially in the heaviest scenes, help the reader build a dark subterranean world with its terrors and odours of death. For instance, when the vault where Antonia lies supposedly dead is described, the image of death is laid in front of the reader's eyes:

By the side of three putrid half-corrupted bodies lay the sleeping Beauty. [...] as wrapped in her shroud she reclined upon her funeral bier, she seemed to smile at the images of death around her (LEWIS, 2003, p.248-249).

In addition to that, when the Devil is summoned by Matilda, it is described as a beautiful, good-looking figure, and its appearance is preceded by a pleasant melody, guiding the reader to find it as attractive as Ambrosio did himself:

What was his surprise when, the thunder ceasing to roll, a full strain of melodious music sounded in the air! At the same time the cloud disappeared, and he beheld a figure more beautiful than fancy's pencil ever drew. It was a youth, seemingly scarcely eighteen, the perfection of whose form and face was unrivalled (LEWIS, 2003, p.181).

However, if language is used in the narrative to successfully shock and seduce, it is also a resource to spotlight how language can be misinterpreted and there can be gaps of information. This issue is clearly seen in the failure of communication between men and women. One moment of 'misunderstanding' takes place when Ambrosio catches Agnes receiving a letter from her loved Raymond. Although the nun claims her love to be pure, the monk expresses no compassion for her. He does not understand her feelings nor ethic, and is also unable to understand her vocabulary condemning Agnes and her baby to a terrible doom when he decides to denounce her to the prioress of the convent :

Shall I conceal your crime, I whom you have deceived by your feigned confession? No, Daughter, no! I will render you a more essential service I will rescue you from perdition in spite of yourself. Penance and mortification shall expiate your offence, and Severity force you back to the paths of holiness (LEWIS, 2003, p.28-29).

It is evident the gap in the communication between Agnes and Ambrosio. While she asks him for some sympathy with her situation, the abbot can just relate what she says to sin and to a consequent necessary punishment.

In addition to that, the failure of communication is also present in a conversation between Ambrosio and Antonia in which, although the girl's feelings for the monk are simply

sisterly, he deliberately misinterprets what she says imagining that she feels physical passion for him. The passage below illustrates this moment:

‘It seemed as if I had long known you; as if I had a right to your friendship, your advice and your protection. I wept when you departed, and longed for the time which should restore you to my sight’ ‘Antonia, my charming Antonia!’ exclaimed the monk, and caught her in his bosom; ‘Can I believe in my senses? Repeat it to me, my sweet girl! Tell me again that you love me, that you love me truly and tenderly’ (LEWIS, 2003, p.171).

Once more, the abbot is incapable of overcoming this state of estrangement. In consequence, the results of the two examples mentioned above are curses in Agnes’ life and rape and murder in Antonia’s case. As Syngy Conger concludes about the issue: “Any faith in language in *The Monk* is eroded by the recurring doubt that words can mislead as well as elucidate [...]. They can doom the innocent and protect the guilty” (CONGER, 1989, p.126).

Therefore, language plays a fundamental role in the narrative inasmuch as it is used to create reactions – be them to frighten, to amaze or even to seduce. Moreover, language is also a tool to express the difficulty of communication and understanding between people and the consequent feeling of alienation. However, undoubtedly, it is due to the choice of words that the reading public identifies themselves in the narrative, feeling the same desires, fears and disgust. And using language to guide the readers, the narrative portrays the religious institutions as sites of superstition, repression and fear.

3.2) **The Religious Institutions**

Following the Gothic style of mixing belief and disbelief and subverting them, *The Monk* presents the monastic institutions as fraudulent mechanisms, lacking reason and truth. Moreover, Catholicism is considered guilty of “bewitching us with glorious idolatry of the golden Calves of *Rome*” (McWHIR, 1989, p.32), using mechanical artifices and superstition to enslave its followers. In the novel, although Ambrosio is proud of being superior to carnal temptations, he feels attracted by the holy and sensual image of Madonna that later, as he finds out, it is the picture of Matilda. And Matilda herself, who is supposedly a novice, opposes the superstition of the Church which imprisons, to magic, which liberates her from all her restraints. Nevertheless, in *The Monk*, both superstition and magic are used as perversions

of sexual energy and the reader is expected to suspend disapproval as well as disbelief (McWHIR, 1989, p.40).

The monastery and the convent provide a scenario within which all manner of deprivation and violence can proceed, safely guaranteed by supposed geographical and historical distance. For instance, in the monastery of the Capuchins Ambrosio has sex with Matilda and keeps her as his lover for as long as he wanted to. Besides that, the local becomes Ambrosio's alibi, inasmuch as he is supposed to be there all the time, and it is also the institution that raised Ambrosio and made him become the repressed being he is until he meets Matilda. In the novel, Ambrosio's culpability is admitted, but it casts the blame for it on his monastic educators insofar as the institutions act specifically against the emotional aspects of the individual, and it is the importance of chastity and of God that come in for education. Freud, in his *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, talks about this morality preached by religion which consists in suppressing the natural individual's instincts. Consequently, each individual was to contribute to some kind of renunciation, like prohibited tendencies of personality, aggressiveness, and certainly the sexual instincts. The religious morality encouraged the individual to seek 'sublimation', in other words, "the ability to exchange the originally sexual aim for another which is no longer sexual, but is psychically related" (FREUD, 1997, p.16). Therefore, the more an individual renounced to his instincts and satisfaction, the 'holier' he was, and his sacrifice was offered to the divinity. On the other hand, the one who would not comply with the norms sanctioned by the Church was considered "a criminal, an outlaw, unless his social position or striking abilities enable him to hold his own as a great man, a 'hero'" (FREUD, 1997, p.15). These last sentences perfectly fit Ambrosio's condition – an individual who did not follow the religious norms but who had his social position to cover his actions, which could only build a hypocritical and unreal identity. In Ambrosio's case, he not only falsified his public image of sanctity but it also destroyed his self-image until he actually becomes the hypocritical monster judged by the Inquisition.

In addition to that, there is the convent of St. Clare, which along with the monastery, form the abbey where most of the horrible and shocking scenes take place. The most abhorring figure is the prioress who, in order to keep the good reputation of 'her' convent, imprisons a pregnant nun and announces to her relatives that she died. She keeps Agnes, the nun, in a vault in the cemetery that separates the monastery and the convent. The prioress leaves the nun without any assistance even when she gives birth to her baby. Agnes keeps locked and lonely especially after her baby dies – there is no mercy when the prioress says:

Food shall be supplied to you, but not sufficient for the indulgence of appetite: you shall have just enough to keep together mind and soul [...] chained down in one of these secret dungeons, shut out from the world and light forever, with no comfort but religion, no society but repentance [...] (LEWIS, 2003, p.268).

Once more, the religious system is strongly criticized, as it is clear that the Church's primary opposition is not heresy, but sexuality. Thus, "because of the vows of celibacy taken by nuns and priests, the Inquisition, the monastery and the convent are images of the repression and mutilation that the characters inflict upon themselves" (DAY, 1985, p.135). Also, it is very much pointed out that the prioress and the nuns that helped her in her plans are totally inhuman and do not follow what Catholicism preaches at all. What is at stake is the image of the Catholic institution as well as the interest of the nobility inasmuch as the convents portray the place where desperate rich women either run away or are sent to. Agnes goes to the convent due to an unsuccessful attempt to escape with her lover; as she did not act according to the social rules, her only shelter was the seclusion in a convent. Similarly, Ellena, from Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), also looks for a convent after her aunt's death and the manipulations of the Marchese de Vivaldi in order to retreat from the world. However, in both cases, the convents prove to be prisons insofar as the two characters are imprisoned in a vault and in a cell, respectively and are also silenced and punished for their sexualities. The convent becomes, thus, a *locus* of sexual repression, in other words, the hiding place of sexuality (MONTEIRO, 2004, p.60).⁹

Moreover, it is in the convent that Ambrosio is able to obtain the liquid that makes Antonia be considered dead. Ambrosio has access to a kind of laboratory that contains the opiate, which again, denounces the illegal and anti-religious actions of the nuns and the monks. However, the religious criticism does not focus only on the religious premises mentioned above, but also on the Catholic Inquisition. Its system is portrayed as a "monstrous bureaucracy" (DAY, 1985, p.134). The Inquisition's role is to reinforce orthodoxy, which refers to matters of dogma, belief and the acceptance of conventional sanctioned values. The system holds unlimited power, permitting its members to 'play God' whenever the system is threatened. As William Day mentions: "Its (the inquisition's) power is presumed to flow directly from the Divine Father, through the pope" (DAY, 1985, p.134). In *The Monk*, the Inquisition is placed at the end of the narrative to attempt to eliminate the social threats – Ambrosio and Matilda. In order to obtain their confessions, the inquisitors use torture – both physical and psychological. The passage that follows describes Ambrosio's bodily and mental

⁹ My translation.

suffering: “His dislocated limbs, the nails torn from his hands and feet, and his fingers mashed and broken by the pressure of screws, were far surpassed in anguish by the agitation of his soul and vehemence of his terrors” (LEWIS, 2003, p.279). Also, Ambrosio and Matilda are condemned to be burnt in public during the *auto da fé* to serve as example to the population. This way, the narrative is used to denounce the abusive actions of the inquisitors who spoke on behalf of the ‘Holy Father’ and decided on whether an individual should have the right to live or not.

Nevertheless, it is prior to the end of the novel that there is the heaviest criticism concerning the Catholic church – Agnes’ death is revealed by one of the nuns, unchaining the population’s revolt. The mass of people invades the convent, killing the prioress and setting fire in the place, burning many other nuns. The crowd does not choose innocent and guilty; they simply exercise their revenge upon everything they found in the convent, from the nuns to the saints. The passage that describes the burning of the convent is an anguishing one:

The flames rising from the burning piles caught part of the building, which being old and dry, the conflagration spread with rapidity from room to room. The walls were soon shaken by the devouring element: the columns gave way, the roofs came tumbling down upon the rioters, and crushed many of them beneath their weight. Nothing was to be heard but shrieks and groans. The convent was wrapped in flames, and the whole presented a scene of devastation and horror (LEWIS, 2003, p.235).

The quoted part above represents the climax of the anti-Catholic movement, the ruin of the whole institution, members and preachings.

Therefore, in *The Monk* there is the intention to do a piece of work that sets the readers free from their superstitions and fears concerning religion, and to demonstrate how mistaken foundation their beliefs have. And shifting between credulity and superstition, belief and disbelief on the one hand and skepticism and reason on the other, the reader is perplexed to find out that the devil may use superstition to entrap, and that the religious institutions, instead of being places of retreat, become places of death and imprisonment as no reason is present in the attitudes made in these premises. Thus, in the novel, “Catholicism is the work of the devil in a more literal sense and must be the arch-enemy of reason and truth” (McWHIR, 1989, p.33).

3.3) Spatial Metaphors

Along with the religious issue in the novel, the architecture and the geographical space play important roles as metaphors of a deeper subject. The monastery and the convent play a paradoxical architectural representation – at the same time they are prisons and forbid people to live the outside life, they are not able to prevent or avoid the most cruel crimes committed in the book. Thus, they portray the metaphorical concepts of inside and outside.

Outside, as Mark Madoff states in his article *Inside, Outside, and the Gothic Locked-Room Mystery* (1989), is everything which is typical from the mind – reason, common sense, and will to dominate human affairs. It embodies those actions considered modern, civilized, enlightened. On the other hand, inside represents the ancient, barbaric, indecorous place where the Gothic protagonist, like the reader, only arrives through transgression. The protagonist transgresses the boundary between the outside and inside because the outside is open, familiar, and unsatisfying in its simplicity and rationality whereas the inside is closed, obscure, mysteriously attractive.

And as a matter of fact, throughout the novel, the narrative plays with this transition inside/outside not only with the religious buildings, but also with the movement of the characters towards a decision. This relation creates a dialectic of dilacerations – it is the line which they move between yes and no, security and danger, repression and license, innocence and experience, order and chaos. For instance, when sexuality emerges, it is through this shift; for the sexual act to be fulfilled, Ambrosio breaks against the limits of convention, ‘commuting’ to the inside space and making his transgression become each time more violent, leading the abbot to burst into murder and rape, allowing his desire and passion to flow. In other words, his movement toward inside made him reject reasoning faculties with their censorship and let egoism loose.

However, the sexual meaning of inside/outside in *The Monk* embodies more than that. As far as sexual repression and liberation are concerned, the symbol of the locked room is crucial to discuss about these issues, especially when dealing with Antonia’s sexuality. She often seems to be the representation of the locked room that is the sexual problem of the male characters – they want to discover her private side. Besides, the innocent girl is not conscious of the difference between inside and outside, familiar and uncanny, which leads her to the tragedy of her violated sexual integrity. Since she is not able to make such distinction, Antonia falls as a prey in Ambrosio’s trap believing his intentions were sincerely good. On the other hand, Ambrosio is also a piece in this game insofar as the more he wants to penetrate Antonia’s sexual mystery, which is a forbidden place, the more he becomes the

double of his outside being – a barbarian, primitive self. However, for Gaston Bachelard in his *A Poética do Espaço* (1957) “the inside and the outside are both intimate; they are always ready to invert, to change their hostility”¹⁰. And he also adds that if we are to “determine the self of the man, we are never certain that we are closer to our selves just by moving toward the center of the spiral; frequently, it is in the core of the self that we are false. Sometimes, it is through being out that the self tries out consistencies” (BACHELARD, 2008, p.218).

Moreover, the inside/outside spatial metaphor is also seen when contrasting two distinct moments in the novel: Lorenzo’s dream with Antonia in their wedding, and Antonia’s actual rape and murder. In the dream, it is Ambrosio, or rather the monstrous rapist, who intrudes the space of a sacred ceremony and takes the virgin girl; in the real rape of Antonia, Lorenzo invades the violent parody of marriage. Although he is a rescuer, he is a transgressor of a forbidden place, the vaults with their locked rooms.

Returning to the architecture of the religious institutions, it is interesting to note how these metaphors can be linked like rings of obscurity and criminal silence. The convent, the monastery and the cemetery are literally and figuratively locked and, therefore, apparently inside spaces. Nevertheless, all of these locals are, in fact, outside places inasmuch as they represent the civilized, the familiar. Outside places that hide the inside of its members, including the merciless attitudes of the prioress and Ambrosio’s obsessions. In addition to that, the church, a par excellence holy place, is readily described as a place where “women came to show themselves – the men, to see the women” (LEWIS, 2003, p.1). The imagery of the sacred local is then subverted to one that facilitates bodily exposure and stimulates carnal desire. Also, in *The Italian*, the first moment Vincentio saw Ellena was in the church of San Lorenzo, where her “sweetness and fine expression of her voice attracted his attention to her figure” (RADCLIFFE, 1998, p.4). The aforementioned passage reinforces the view of the church as a site that is not able to silence carnal needs but it is also a means for the inhabitants of the community to see and be seen through their body exposure. This way, the desire that cannot be socially expressed shifts to another sphere, revealing all the social and political hypocrisy that was corroborated by the Church (MONTEIRO, 2004, p.53).

Besides the inside/outside meanings, there are also some metaphors concerning space in the novel and one that is pertinent is the metaphor of the door. According to Bachelard, the door symbolizes a site of desires and temptation, the temptation to open the self from the core (BACHELARD, 2008, p.225). One of the moments in the narrative in which the door

¹⁰ My translation.

represents a deeper issue takes place when Ambrosio uses a magic myrtle to open all the ways up to Antonia's chamber. The door represents the way through which Ambrosio can penetrate his victim's space and body, violating the geographical and the social boundaries while crossing the open doors. Moreover, the door is also used to seal the obscure and secret actions that take place not only inside the religious institutions but also inside every locked place.

Therefore, the space is used to represent dichotomies – the difference between inside and outside; as a metaphor of culture, the difference between self and society; and as a metaphor of time, the difference between the barbaric past and the enlightened present (MADOFF, 1989, p.52). That is the reason why the Gothic spaces play such an important role; the locked rooms also enclose an ambiguity: they are repulsive yet attractive, despicable but also amazing.

3.4) **The Gothic Supernatural**

In the Age of Reason, imagination was seen as a disordering resource in a literary work, inasmuch as it inserted an excessive amount of improbabilities that could lead the readers to an “unaccountable weakness” (CLERY, 1995, p.3). Therefore, it was attributed to Gothic supernatural an infamous idea of “escapism” that could damage the readers' minds by allowing them to think about the world in ways not sanctioned by the leading institutions and ideologies; in other words, it should be removed from circulation at once.

However, despite the initial hostility faced by this literary mode, the Gothic supernatural emerged as a reflection of the changes in the European society, especially the English. Consequently, along with the rise of the reading public, there was the increase in the consumerism with its “unreal needs” (CLERY, 1995, p.7). Thus, the old superstition from the rural area was replaced by the urban primary necessity of having sensations provoked. The dangers of imagination and credulity were substituted by the “poetic faith, the voluntary suspension of disbelief” (CLERY, 1995, 5). In a society based on social inequality and capitalistic consumerism, the supernatural rises as an anxiety and reflection of the imminent modern world. Therefore, a new circle of superstition becomes part of the social reality: one that represents an attempt to accommodate experience, imagery, sensations that cannot be expressed in an enlightened society. The Gothic supernatural fiction reflects the preoccupation with the social decadence stimulating the creation of alternative worlds in

which the historical space-time of the author can be represented in a way that foregrounds the articulation of its economic, political, and cultural realities. The Gothic supernatural uses parallel worlds in order to portray a subverted reality, finding a way to show the conditions that mask the causes of the hard realities. This way, it is also able to disseminate itself in everyday life to expose the depredations produced by the socioeconomic forces and, this way, register the impact of an unseen social system (what Foucault calls panoptism) on everyday lives. This literary mode creates social environments that appear to be far worse than the real world, but that in fact, reflect the dark features of a reality that is so much interlaced within the system that becomes part of it without being noticed. This mode comes, then, as a codification of cultural needs and behavior, trying to encourage readers to achieve a freedom that comes from understanding – interpreting particular values, social codes, silent feelings and necessities.

The late eighteenth-century Gothic supernatural fiction comes as a means to question the reality of society, the norms and patterns, through the resources of imagination and unreality. These narratological strategies emerge as alternatives to describe things authors would never dare mention in a realistic way. And despite being labeled as a literature of ‘escapism’, it does not mean an escape from reality, but an escape to a possible different way of seeing, thinking, and being in the world. For instance, the ghosts, despite not empirically existing, can be read as big metaphors in the narrative to express the imagination and desire of the characters as well as of the readers. Thus, this mode comes as a means of combat and resistance against the censorship and limitations imposed by society, in other words, to voice unspeakable truths. It is, then, a literature that comes to disturb a pre-established order, to transgress certain frontiers that are realistically inaccessible. As William P. Day states in his *In the Circles of Fear and Desire* (1985): “The supernatural, or the sense of the supernatural, when it occurs in the Gothic fantasy, is the manifestation, not of transcendent order, but of chaos and disruption” (DAY, 1985, p.35). This way, the supernatural proves to be a way of transgressing the law but, at the same time, in a way that exempts the text from it.

Consequently, this kind of literature is not simply a resource to merely terrify and shock the reader; it is a means of terrifying and shocking the reader in order to denounce and give voice to social anxieties and concerns that, despite being intrinsically rooted in society, are silenced in order to keep its production and structure. Thus, the ghosts in the supernatural frequently represent the concerns that ‘haunt’ the social system. This concept is clearly seen in Adorno’s words:

[...] phantasmagoria comes into being when, under the constraints of its own limitations, modernity's latest products come close to the archaic. Every step forward is at the same time a step into the remote past. As bourgeois society advances, it finds that it needs its own camouflage of illusion simply in order to subsist. For only when so disguised does it venture to look the news in the face. That formula, 'it sounded so old, and yet was so new,' is the cipher of a social conjuncture (ADORNO, apud CLERY, 1995, p.10).

Therefore, it can be said that the terror tales can be used as affirmations of an autonomous scope of literature, detached from the descriptive and didactic social function of the realistic novel. In fact, the Gothic supernatural novel turns out to be a paradox with the realist inasmuch as the more it frightens, the more it edifies; the more it humiliates, the more it uplifts; the more it hides, the more it reveals (CLERY, 1995, p.9). This way, the effects upon the reader prove to be the ones a realist piece of work should produce but cannot, because it does not deeply reach the reader.

Moreover, in order to portray this reality escaping from the prescriptive realism of the time, the Gothic supernatural demands from the reader the capacity to suspend disbelief so as to permit belief and disbelief to coexist and create a fictional world where fear and uncertainty can be not just repressed, but also experienced and explored. Besides, the suspension of disbelief temporarily pushes the frontiers of the possible broadening the concept of reality, emotion and imagination, making them become much more subjective and connected. When separating belief/disbelief from fact, it is possible to understand that in the scope of superstition, besides legends, tradition and anecdotes, there is also room for self-discovery and for the portrayal of repressed desires, making the supernatural fiction "become a vast image for the darkness and mystery of inner experience" (McWHIR, 1989, p.31).

In the Gothic supernatural plot, there is often the subversion of both belief and disbelief, reason and imagination, rejection and identification, thus making the reader take part in unfamiliar, distant situations, but simultaneously understanding and even identifying with them. This understanding may come from the fact that superstition has a strong and long dated connection with religion; this way, witchcraft, ghosts, fairies, enchantments and spells have long been associated with the Bible and religious beliefs. Ironically (or not), in Lewis' *The Monk*, most of the spells and witchcraft rituals in the story take place in the cemetery that divides the Capuchin monastery and the St. Clare convent; besides, these rituals are performed by a 'false' novice (Matilda) and the monk Ambrosio, two supposedly religious figures. Therefore, it is clear the intention to intertwine Gothic supernatural and religious elements, as in the moment that describes Matilda's first ritual of witchcraft in the cemetery:

The night flies apace, and much must be done before morning. The nuns are retired; all is safe. Give me the lamp, Ambrosio. I must descend alone into these caverns [...] as you value your existence, presume not to follow me: your life would fall a victim to your imprudent curiosity (LEWIS, 2003, p.151).

The passage above clearly depicts that ‘unconventional’ actions occur in religious premises and that they are definitely not holy and sacred places. And considering that the religious institutions in the novel are a monastery and a convent, the criticism directly affects the Catholic church, very much accused of exploitation of superstition by false miracles and marvels. Therefore, although the Church despises superstition, it makes use of this strategy to convince the followers of its preachings.

Returning to the concept of supernatural itself, it is important to understand that it is an ‘umbrella’ term, including from fairy tales to demonic terror. Thus, discussing about a more specific mode may improve the understanding of the novel in discussion. According to Tzvetan Todorov in his *The Fantastic* (1975), the fantastic occurs when there is a hesitation of the reader as to the nature of an uncanny event. The idea of the fantastic is to be defined in relation to the real and the imaginary, in other words, when there is a phenomenon in which the reader can interpret as a natural or a supernatural cause. This possibility of hesitation is what creates the fantastic effect. In *The Monk*, this hesitation can be seen when the legend of the Bleeding Nun¹¹ is depicted. The first moment the ghost appears, the reader is not sure whether it is a supernatural figure or Agnes, a girl that pretends to be a ghost to run away with the man she loves. In the passage below, Agnes’ lover Raymond waits for her outside her house for them to escape together. At this moment, the figure that appears casts a doubt upon the reader:

She was habited exactly as she had described the spectre. A chaplet of beads hung upon her arm; her head was enveloped in a long white veil; her nun’s dress was stained with blood; and she had taken care to provide herself with a lamp and a dagger (LEWIS, 2003, p.101).

Although Raymond assumes it is Agnes, the description fits so perfectly the ghost of the Bleeding Nun that the reader cannot answer immediately if it is a rational or a supernatural situation. Only later the reader finds out that the character is, in fact, a ghost. After suffering an accident, Raymond realizes that the person that was beside him in the

¹¹ The Bleeding Nun is an unknown German legend that refers to a ghost that every five years, on the fifth of May appeared to haunt people holding a dagger and a torch and screaming as if it were a loud cry. Lewis uses this legend inside the narrative explaining later that the Bleeding Nun is Raymond’s ancestor.

carriage was not Agnes, and that the ghost of the nun is haunting him. There is a passage in which the ghost recites a poem to Raymond:

Raymond! Raymond! Thou art mine!
 Raymond! Raymond! I am thine!
 In thy veins while blood shall roll,
 I am thine!
 Thou art mine! –
 Mine thy body, mine thy soul! (LEWIS, 2003, p.101).

Moreover, in order to exorcise the spirit of the Bleeding Nun, Raymond gets in touch with a gloomy figure that later is said to be the personification of the German legend of the Wandering Jew, but who was also considered by the population as “Doctor Faustus, whom the Devil had sent back to Germany” (LEWIS, 2003, p.109). The character comes to perform an exorcising rite to make the ghost of the nun vanish, in a passage which is full of references to witchcraft:

The first thing which he produced was a small wooden crucifix; he sank upon his knees, gazed upon it mournfully, and cast his eyes towards heaven. He seemed to be praying devoutly [...]. He next drew from the chest a covered goblet, with the liquor which it contained, and which appeared to be blood, he sprinkled the floor [...]. Round about this he displaced various reliques, skulls, thigh bones, etc (LEWIS, 2003, p.111).

Continuing the ritual, the Jew takes out a Bible and reads it to the spirit of the nun, in a ritual that closely resembles the Catholic one to exorcise demons. Once more, the supernatural elements are connected to religion, depicting the attitude of the church toward this issue and making the reader question how far it can be assumed that religion and witchcraft have different roots and rites.

As far as criticism is concerned, these characters are considered as not rationalized, as unexplained supernatural. According to the critics, in *The Monk* the characters are only depicted to enrich the narrative and shock the reader, playing the role of mere ‘accessories’. As it can be read in *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction 1762-1800* “the supernatural functions purely to set the stage of the genre; they signal the conventionality of the supernatural as a peculiar aspect of the imaginary reality of the Gothic world[...]. The supernatural as it appears is to some extent ludicrous” (CLERY, 1995, p.38). Moreover, the same author considers the characters of the Bleeding Nun and the Wandering Jew as self-enclosed supernatural conventions, existing simply for the effect of fantasy.

In addition to that, Todorov classifies *The Monk* as a “marvelous” fiction, which describes according to him, a condition in which the laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, in other words, when the nature of the events does not provoke any particular reaction in the character or in the reader. The Gothic supernatural happens, then, for the sake of the plot construction, and it has no justification at all. Furthermore, Todorov considers the novel to be “the supernatural accepted (the “marvelous”)” and affirms that “in M.G. Lewis we are sure that the supernatural will receive *no* explanation.” Then, he continues his assertions: “Once we have finished reading, we understand [...] that what we call the fantastic has not existed” (TODOROV, 1975, p.42).

Taking into consideration Todorov’s structuralist approach, it is no surprise that he does not go beyond the literal text and its semantic and syntactical functions. However, it seems that many critics have had the same concept toward the interpretation of the novel. There is contestation for these pieces of criticism. Firstly, the fantastic can be seen in part of the narrative, as in the aforementioned example when the Bleeding Nun enters Raymond’s carriage and the reader wonders if it is a ghost or Agnes dressed as one. Moreover, in Matilda’s first rite in the vaults of the cemetery, there is no description of what she is in fact doing. It is another moment of hesitation in which nobody knows (even Ambrosio) if she is looking for a scientific or spiritual solution to her problem. This last example proves to fulfill the three conditions mentioned by Todorov for the fantastic to take place. Using his words, the fantastic requires that

First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character [...] Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as ‘poetic’ interpretations (TODOROV, 1975, p.42).

It is clear that the passage in the novel mentioned above incites the reader’s and character’s hesitation; also, it is not necessary to find an explanation in metaphorical interpretations to come to conclusions about Matilda’s act. Certainly, *The Monk* is not a novel that keeps the fantastic throughout its narrative; there are moments in which there is a certain hesitation but that receives a later answer to the questioning it raises. Therefore, considering the novel as only having a sensationalist Gothic supernatural seems to be too much limited and superficial.

In addition to that, the Bleeding Nun, the Wandering Jew and/or Faust may be seen as narratological metaphors to connect religion, witchcraft and legend inasmuch as they are more and/or less known German legends. These three characters may personify the attempt to connect all these beliefs related to a spiritual world and, in putting them together it invites the reader to see them as not so different and opposites as they may seem. The legendary figures may be read as the author's attempt to deconstruct the ideas of institutionalized church, witchcraft, good/evil and popular belief.

Furthermore, in the novel, there are several different moments in which the Gothic supernatural is present. One that deserves attention is the dream Lorenzo has in which a monster appears. Lorenzo falls in love with Antonia, the heroine; one night he is asleep he dreams about his wedding with Antonia. In his dream, both of them are in the church of the Capuchins. Lorenzo sees his bride entering the church and close to her, a long train of monks led by their abbot Ambrosio. Antonia gets close to her groom and is about to throw herself in his arms when suddenly some uncanny situation takes place:

[...] before he had time to receive her, an unknown rushed between them: his form was gigantic; his complexion was swarthy, his eyes fierce and terrible; his mouth breathed out volumes of fire, and on his forehead was written in legible characters 'Pride! Lust! Inhumanity!' (LEWIS, 2003, p.15).

At the moment the monster places itself between them, it is clear that it is there to destroy the possibility of Antonia and Lorenzo's imminent wedding and happiness, which gets even clearer as the narrative continues and the reader confirms that the monster's objective is to possess the virgin Antonia:

Antonia shrieked. The monster clasped her in his arms, and, springing with her upon the altar, tortured her with his odious caresses. [...] Instantly the cathedral seemed crumbling into pieces; the monks betook themselves to flight, shrieking fearfully; the lamps were extinguished, the altar sunk down, and in its place appeared an abyss vomiting forth clouds of flame. Uttering a loud and terrible cry, the monster plunged into the gulf, and in his fall attempted to drag Antonia with him. He strove in vain. Animated by supernatural powers she disengaged herself from his embraces, but her white robe was left in his possession (LEWIS, 2003, p.15).

This long passage proves to be necessary insofar as it foreshadows the unfolding of the whole narrative. Firstly, this part displacedly narrates Antonia's and Lorenzo's destinies in the story. Although they intend to marry each other, their journeys are separated when Antonia is considered dead and Ambrosio uses this premise to rape her and try to make her become his 'sexual slave'. Therefore, the part that refers to "odious caresses" clearly refers to the moment

of the rape. Moreover, when the monster takes her “white robe”, he takes her virginity, as really happens to Antonia in the narrative. Still in the dream, Lorenzo also foresees Antonia’s fate going to a spiritual world with a “wing of brilliant splendor” (LEWIS, 2003, p.15) and being received in a place full of bright rays and glory. A similar situation turns out to take place in the end of the narrative: Antonia is killed by Ambrosio and goes to the spiritual world calling out for her mother. Finally, perhaps the most important issue in the dream is the representation of the monster. As the reader can later find out, the horrifying monster personifies Ambrosio’s abjected self that gradually emerges throughout the course of the narrative. The three words seen in the monster’s forehead represent what the monk becomes and also what leads him to dishonor and kill Antonia. Therefore, it is clear that the supernatural is used as a means to depict displaced metaphors concerning the development of the narrative as well as a metaphor to portray Ambrosio’s otherness that had been suppressed so far. It is important to note that in the story “the real focus is not on the encounter of the physical and the Gothic supernatural worlds. The devils in these books function, not only as images of the monstrous, but also as doubles, as projections of the monstrousness of the human characters” (DAY, 1985, p.38).

This assumption leads this study once more to Todorov and his concept of fantastic literature. Despite the author’s classification of the novel as marvelous, the reading of the monster mentioned above can be better connected with his definition of “fantastic-uncanny” literature that stands for the condition in which “events that seem supernatural throughout a story receive a rational explanation at its end” (TODOROV, 1975, p.44). Although the meaning of the Gothic supernatural in *The Monk* may be more connected to psychoanalysis, there is indeed a reason for its existence and portrayal. Moreover, remembering once more the Freudian uncanny and his definition of *unheimlich*, it means something that is “concealed and kept out of sight” (FREUD, 2000, p.156); in other words, it represents the unfamiliar that, after a process of subversion of values and sentiments, becomes familiar. Situations that at first sounded unknown, after coming to light produce a familiar feeling as if that moment, somehow, had been or will be experienced. The uncanny literature deals with the idea of coincidence and fate, in which a story, a character has its destiny pre-established. This way, the whole narrative of the dream depicts that idea of uncanniness as far as fate is concerned. It summarizes the whole consequent uncanny unfolding that is about to happen. Furthermore, the monster mentioned above represents the uncanny self of Ambrosio that during his process of becoming the reader identifies as his repressed ‘I’ that turns out to be familiar.

Nevertheless, this is not the only moment in the narrative that a monstrous figure is represented as a metaphor for a deeper subject. The other two devilish figures portrayed in the novel, the Devil itself and Matilda, can also be read as doubles in the story. In relation to Matilda, although she is said to be a demon only in the very end of the story, she perfectly fits the symbolism of the Gothic supernatural in the novel. Matilda is the woman that seduces Ambrosio, uses magical powers to remove the poison of a snake from her body, becomes the monk's mistress, summons the demons to perform a magical rite for the abbot to possess Antonia tells him whatever he has to do to reach his objective concerning the desired girl. However, seeing Matilda from a different perspective, all the monstrosity attributed to her represents the monstrosity inside Ambrosio that he does not have courage to release altogether; therefore, he uses her to perform all the diabolical rites for him to feel that he is still a son of God and that his soul can be possibly saved. Matilda, as a supernatural figure, represents the silenced desires of the monk that he could not be permitted to have due to his social and religious position. The passage below describes the moment in which Matilda talks about her experience with witchcraft to Ambrosio and tries to make him face it differently:

Like you, I shuddered at the thoughts of magic; like you, I had formed a terrible idea of the consequences of raising a demon.[...] You remember the night which I passed in St. Clare's sepulchre. Then was it that, surrounded by mouldering bodies, I dared to perform those mystic rites, which summoned to my aid a falling angel. Judge what must have been my joy at discovering that my terrors were imaginary (LEWIS, 2003, p.175).

Matilda persuades Ambrosio to see the mystic rites she performs as much less terrifying than the monk may imagine. And, in fact, although he worries about his soul's salvation, she easily convinces him to take part in the ritual in which Ambrosio receives a branch of magic myrtle that would open all the doors to him and throw a spell upon Antonia. Although Ambrosio fears the rite at first, he later feels pleasure and surprise when it is over, expressing an uncanny feeling once more. He, then, identifies himself with that situation and environment.

Moreover, when Matilda gets rid of the Inquisition selling her soul to the Devil, she chooses to have an earthly life full of luxury and lust rather than a spiritual one. She prefers to have all pleasures and appetites fulfilled to the utmost and not to redeem herself. After seducing Ambrosio once more with the promise of a materialistic life and the possibility of not paying for his crimes in the Inquisition, she finally leaves his cell in a "cloud of blue fire" (LEWIS, 2003, p.283). Matilda, again, embodies Ambrosio's desire that he fears giving room

to. In fact, her choice is not only a metaphor for the monk, but also for the reader of the eighteenth century who could read the ‘selling’ the soul as the result of the consumption and materialization of the time. The demon is, thus, a subverted reflection of the social forces and therefore “we recognize them as all too real, metaphors for forces beneath and beyond reason” (McWHIR, 1989, p.43).

However, no supernatural representation is stronger than the character of Lucifer, the most powerful devilish figure. When he is summoned by Ambrosio to take the monk out of the inquisition cell, Lucifer appears with all his ugly and monstrous characteristic appearance, expressing that his objective is not to seduce the monk anymore, but to reveal the truth. After Ambrosio makes the blood pact and sells his soul, the Devil releases him from jail and takes him to the top of a mountain, where he tells Ambrosio all his crimes and faults, showing that for them to take place, it was not necessary any supernatural interference; all the darkness was inside Ambrosio and the Devil only gave him the key to unlock the doors. Lucifer blames Ambrosio for his excessive vanity, his vice and his inhumanity:

“your lust only needed an opportunity to break forth; you ran into the snare blindly and scrupled not to commit a crime which you blamed in another with unfeeling severity” (LEWIS, 2003, p.290).

Therefore, it is clear that the Gothic supernatural demons in the novel are not the ones who decide to make the evil decisions; they do not perform any action unless they are asked to. Consequently, the devilish figures “do not have real power over their victims, except insofar as their victims give them power” (DAY, 1985, p.39). This representation may be seen as the fact that the exterior evil can only take part in an individual’s life if there is an inner evil that wants to assume the control. Moreover, when Lucifer finishes his accusations and declarations, he releases Ambrosio from his hands sending the monk to a sharp point of rock to meet his death. This Gothic supernatural scene may also be read as a social metaphor in which Ambrosio’s fall is not only his own, but the fall and decadence of a hypocritical normative society.

To sum up, the supernatural is a literary mode that had its most influential moment in the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries coming to light as a response to an unstable social moment that had consumerism as the new order, and the more this bourgeois society advanced toward modernity, the more it fixed its necessities in an imaginable world where the law could be transgressed and the censorship eliminated. Therefore, supernatural comes as a proof that, no matter the time, no matter the society, there

is always a need for an alternative way of facing the harsh reality; human beings need to have different perspectives on problematic social and political practices in order to try to survive in a system that every day imposes more its norms and shapes.

Furthermore, in a established normatized society, there have to be ways that challenge this order and propose a different view over reality. Literature has, for a long time, had the role to portray and denounce the absurds and excesses of a social system that destroys, represses, shapes in the name of a 'major good'. And, the literary Gothic supernatural has been used to deconstruct the real world and cast a light on the darkness of our social identity. Therefore, this literary mode turned out to be a means to disseminate social criticism and interpellation and although there are many possibilities of reading the supernatural inside a literary text, all of them converge at a very crucial point: they point to a deep self-reflection, not only of the reader, but of all the world around through "fictional realities which are, to different degrees, discontinuous with the contemporary 'real', but which are drawn in relation to, and as a critique of, the world as we know it" (MOYLAN, 2000, p.192).

Reading the Gothic supernatural, it is possible to realize it is not a reaction against Enlightenment; rather, it comes as an accompaniment and alternative to express and embody what cannot be part of everyday society because they simply do not fit in the regulations preached by it. The Gothic supernatural deconstructs reality through an imaginary world in which the fears, the transgressions, the desires can be spoken about without crossing the frontiers of the realistic law; moreover, as Todorov states, "excesses will be more readily accepted if they are attributed to the devil" (TODOROV, 1975, p.159). The Gothic supernatural figures become metaphors for giving voice and shape to unspeakable truths. This way, the Gothic supernatural world is not distant from the real one; it is constructed through a subversion of values, from the feelings deep inside. Therefore, "that which seems supernatural in the novel does not truly come from without, but from within" (DAY, 1985, p.38). Finally, literature and its modes have provided the reader with texts that can help to develop the critical capacity to know, challenge, and change those aspects that deny or inhibit the possibility of setting humanity free.

4. CHAPTER 4: THE CHARACTERS AND THEIR REPRESENTATION

In *The Monk*, the main female and male characters play fundamental roles as far as social criticism is concerned. They bring to light norms and taboos so much suffocated during the last decades of the eighteenth century, portraying the reality and the concerns of the English society. These characters help discuss what was formerly left hidden, half-revealed, and that in the novel takes center stage in the narrative, unbalancing the apparent harmony and the moral of the community. Lewis does not spare any institution of power neither the people who take part in them, such as the members of the church, from the nuns to the inquisitors. And these norms that shaped society were permeated in the main characters. For instance, Matilda and Antonia depict the two extremes of the female stereotype – the evil perverted and the angel of the house, respectively. One was constructed to show what society expected a woman to be whereas the other expressed the attitudes and real desires that were strictly prohibited and that had to be punished. In addition to that, there is Ambrosio, who is the personification of society's hypocrisy and is an example of how far a man could go in order to keep his social and religious status and also fulfill his personal desires, since these two necessities could not coexist without causing a total chaos. Therefore, these characters (mostly subversively) reflect the historical context in which *The Monk* was created and also the condition of the individuals inside this system, especially the female ones.

4.1) Women in *The Monk* – A Social Reflection

Woman is doomed to immorality, because for her to be moral would mean that she must incarnate a being of superhuman qualities: the 'virtuous woman' of Proverbs, the 'perfect mother', the 'honest woman', and so on. Let her but think, dream, sleep, desire, breathe, without permission and she betrays the masculine ideal (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p.492).

The late eighteenth century England lived the fears about national and social transformations as well as changes in values. Hence, in consequence, a lot of questioning concerning beliefs and tradition unavoidably emerged. Within these matters, the issues of female's role in society and gender stereotypes began to be important ones. And,

consequently, when thinking about women and gender, one of the first words that comes to our minds is, once more, sexuality. Throughout the century, there was a whole set of discourses concerning women's behavior in relation to pregnancy, marriage and how sex was related to these two fundamental roles in women's lives.

To start with, a woman was considered a fragile tool for reproduction, a creature simultaneously "worshipped and objectified by man" (BOUCÉ, 1999, p.129). Women were considered important as far as procreation was concerned, since they were obviously fundamental for mankind's future. On the other hand, while individuals, women had no free will or free feelings and her relations were not based on individual sentiments, but on her commitment to carry on the feminine functions. For women, the reproductive function was dissociated from erotic pleasure, in other words, even after marriage women were not allowed to try out sexual enjoyment. Surely, women had no right to any sexual activity apart from marriage, insofar as sexual intercourse for women became an institution (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p.454). Therefore, women's fate was to be raised under parental strict observation, receive the minimum necessary education so that they did not awake to their sexuality and finally be 'delivered' by the father to a husband.

In consequence, when these girls entered the state of marriage, they were uncertain of their own feelings, physically frigid and sexually immature, which prevented even the husband to find any great pleasure in the sexual act. Moreover, inside marriage, sex had to follow social rules: the couples were supposed to have sex in the morning, so that the husband's semen would contain more sperm and the fertilization would be more likely to happen (BOUCÉ, 1999, p.127). Also, the couples were recommended not to have sex during pregnancy because that could produce some deformed creature. In addition to that, women were to have sex with their husbands only during their reproductive years; as soon as they stopped procreating, sex was not supposed to be useful anymore. Therefore, when women started having any sexual development, her relations had to be concluded. "As a reward for her previous submission, there remains for her only the choice between unappeased desire, infidelity, or neurosis" (FREUD, 1997, p.25).

Consequently, in place of love, the wives mostly felt a respectful sentiment called 'conjugal love'. According to the bourgeois society, the female ideal of life consisted of "quiet equilibrium in a life of immanence and repetition" (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p.466). A woman's universe was her home and frequently her only reality; she was doomed to struggle against the dirt, the stains and her desires. Hence, Beauvoir's words about marriage prove to be fundamental to explain not only women's social condition but the couple's when she says:

Marriage is obscene in principle insofar as it transforms into rights and duties those mutual relations which should be founded on spontaneous urge; it gives an instrumental and therefore degrading character to the two bodies in dooming them to know each other in their general aspect as bodies, not as persons (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p.463).

As previously mentioned, this period witnessed a growth in discourses on sex and a strict control from the civil and religious systems; the discourses on sex were meant to standardize and shape the population sexual practices while the Catholic church investigated the truth concerning sexuality through confession. Henceforth, from all the 'data' collected in this operation, limiting discourses were created in order to shape society's mind. Through these changes it was created what Foucault classifies as a 'politics of the body' which is, in other words, a way of transforming the body as part of a political, religious and social order that inserts the individual into a social machinery in which he/she is not one subject with personality and personal characteristics; this individual is one more gear of the systematic social machine.

Moreover, the discourse that concerned sexuality became a medical one, in which the aim was not to stimulate pleasure and freedom, but to limit and transform sex in a hygienic, 'pathological' act. Inside this discourse, women were fixed to their sexuality, considered by doctors as sick, fragile and disease transmitters. As Foucault states, women were said to be "just their sex" and also "the disease of men" (FOUCAULT, 2005, p.234). Therefore, during the eighteenth century, the body of the woman becomes a medical and political issue or rather, as Judith Butler would say, there is a materialization of this body. According to her, materiality is "something without which we cannot do anything" (BUTLER, 1993, p.29); this leads us to think about materiality as what a body means, as its origin and intelligibility. Materiality is the cultural construction inscribed in the body, in other words, it is the signification of this body, which is only established when the gender is determined. After the gender specification, the body becomes a site of investments from the system; therefore, when there is the materialization of the body, it becomes a social, cultural and religious prisoner.

Furthermore, as Foucault and, later on, Butler discuss is that the soul is the means for the body and the gender to be shaped. The soul is not used in the Christian meaning, but as a result of methods of control and punishment, which articulated, inhabits the subject and brings it into being. Hence, the soul is the "effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body" (FOUCAULT, 1991, p.177). Therefore, it is an instrument of power which shapes, stamps and labels the body, consequently making it (the body) an

individual that is the result of all the normatization and standardization imposed by the social structure. The soul is the materialization that is inscribed in the body, and if it is a female body, what is inscribed is its biological and hierarchical inferiority and its social place as the ‘outsider’. The same controlling system that includes the feminine as a subordinate term compared to the masculine excludes it, claiming that the feminine must be excluded for the economy to operate. In her *The Second Sex* (1997), Simone Beauvoir also discusses about the gender as a limiting concept and affirms that the term ‘female’ is derogatory precisely because it imprisons the woman in her sex, and that according to the patriarchal society “sexuality [...] represents the medium through which the subject attains a concrete sense of belonging to a particular kind (gender)” (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p.38). Therefore, in the western society, if there is a body, there is only signification when the gender is determined.

Within this context concerning the female role, the Gothic literature emerges as an attempt to portray the anxieties of the period, since the Gothic is usually considered to be a genre that comes to light during moments of cultural crisis to subvert it. And among the pieces of work written at that time, *The Monk* is a great example of how the issue of female stereotype became a shattered one. The novel provides the readers with female characters that turn out to be very much different not only in personality, but also in beliefs, attitudes, opinions, backgrounds and destinies. Despite being a male writer and having a male character as the protagonist who entitles the book, the female characters play a fundamental role, inasmuch as it is for and because of them that the male characters take decisions and attitudes throughout the narrative. From nuns to mistresses, the female characters embody all the complexity of being a human being associated with a gender that creates labels and blueprints. Nevertheless, this short study will focus on two characters that become the big ‘triggers’ for the whole set of actions to take place – Antonia and Matilda/Rosario.

Nevertheless, before discussing about the characters mentioned above, it is important to point out that one of the reasons why this book represents well this issue. The complexity of the feminine can be seen in the construction of the plot itself. Although some critics evaluate Lewis’ work as a typical male gothic novel, a deeper study shows that a simple label is not enough to evaluate this piece of writing. Considering what the same critics affirm about the female gothic writing, it is stated:

It is the heroine’s experiences that are represented as a journey leading towards the assumption of some kind of agency and power in the patriarchal world, or alternatively as a search for an absent mother (PUNTER, 2004, p.279).

Although this definition may be well applied to many female pieces of writing, it is also a pertinent aspect in the novel in study. Antonia is the character that personifies the typical heroine – she is naive, romantic, and throughout the novel the girl finds out all the darkness and perfidy in the world she imagines as a beautiful and fair one.

4.1.1) Antonia

To begin with, Antonia suffers with a destroyed family. Due to the fact that her father married her mother against the will of his family, which was rich, they have to leave Spain to find refuge in Cuba. There, Antonia and her mother have to go through the death of her father and two baby brothers. Leaving Cuba and going to Murcia, they both have to live detached from all members of their family who denied them a place among them. Moreover, after her father's death, the two women have to live with a miserable pension given by the paternal grandfather until his death. After that, their situation grows even worse inasmuch as there is no pension at all and they both have to live with Antonia's maternal aunt. Nevertheless, Antonia keeps her faith in God and in people, hoping that they will be accepted and helped by her father's family.

Moreover, the heroine of the novel also embodies the ideal woman when dealing with her behavior and reclusion. Since the very beginning of the narrative, which takes place at the Capuchin church in Madrid, Antonia refuses to take off her veil in order not to be exposed, claiming that she “never unveils in public” (LEWIS, 2003, p.4) because that was not the habit in Murcia. Therefore, it is possible to see in the character a thorough result of a body politic that, through routine, habitual activity, learned what is “‘inner’ and what is ‘outer’, which gestures are forbidden and required and how violable or inviolable are the boundaries of our bodies” (BORDO, 1995, p.16).

Besides, as far as sexuality is concerned, Antonia depicts what the eighteenth century patriarchal western society preached: women should be a simple and passive recipient who would conform to this situation inasmuch as the two sexes are of different necessities. The innocent girl is totally unaware of what life is about, of people's characters, of male-female relations, of her sex. She is the ideal woman for a man to marry, due to the fact that the less knowledge a woman had, the better it was for the husband because she would never develop her sexuality and the man would not be deceived and his honor would be safeguarded.

Women were to remain uncultured and weak, conditions that perfectly fit Antonia. Thus, “woman is the passive principle because she remains undeveloped in her unity” (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p.41). Beauvoir’s words perfectly summarize Antonia’s sexual condition – undeveloped. Through education and socialization, the naive girl does not need to be directly repressed; her sexuality proves to have been omitted and hidden from her throughout her process of identity construction. At no moment does she mention, question or wonder about the issue. Even when Ambrosio tries to possess her for the first time, Antonia is not able to recognize what is going on; instead, her only reactions are confusion and alarm. Antonia’s lack of sexual desire can be better understood in the passage below from *Feminism and Sexuality* (1996):

We might postulate a process of learning through social interaction whereby the sexual is assimilated into the individual’s self-concept [...]the feminine mode of sexual repression would then be explained as the outcome of a particular form of learning rather than the repression of some quantifiable sexual energy (JACKSON, 1996, p.64).

Nevertheless, for her misfortune, it was Antonia’s innocence and unconsciousness about sexuality that rose Ambrosio’s interest upon her. Her misunderstanding about his real intentions gave him free rein to fantasize about their relationship, imagining that somehow she desired him. As Susan Bordo would say, “conscious intention is not a requisite for females to be seen as responsible for the bodily responses of men, aggressive as well as sexual” (BORDO, 1995, p.6). Even if women are silent or speaking the opposite, they (or their bodies) are seen as symbols of provocation. Therefore, the more Antonia became an impossible goal, the more she became a prey to be violated, penetrated, corrupted, as shown in the passage:

He was not unconscious that his attempts were highly criminal. He saw clearly the baseness of seducing the innocent girl; but his passion was too violent to permit his abandoning his design. He resolved to pursue it, let the consequences be what they might (LEWIS, 2003, p.168).

Then, Antonia is caught in a trap in which she drinks a substance that makes her be considered dead. This way, she is taken to a vault where, after regaining her consciousness, she gets terrified at being surrounded by graves, tombs and corpses. In the first moment Ambrosio shows up, the victim feels relieved believing the monk is there to rescue her. Only after some moments, Antonia realizes she was captured by Ambrosio to become his sexual slave. Seeing the unconsoling situation she is in, Antonia struggles to disengage herself from his arms; however, having no success, she screams, prays, does whatever possible to escape

from her imminent dishonor. This scene makes Antonia and Ambrosio personify the moment in which men and women are in their most primitive, biological state; the moment in which “the male finds more and more varied ways in which to employ the forces he is master of; the female feels her enslavement more and more keenly” (BEAUVOIR, 1997, p.57). Therefore, in the eroticism and sexuality of the bodies, the female partner appears as the victim and object of desire whereas the male is a sacrificer, so much so that the moment Antonia is raped is presented as a totally destructive act:

He stifled her cries with kisses, treated her with the rudeness of an unprincipled barbarian, proceeded from freedom to freedom, and, in the violence of his lustful delirium, wounded and bruised her tender limbs. Heedless of her tears, cries, and entreaties, he gradually made himself master of her person[...] (LEWIS, 2003, p.252).

At this very moment, men and women are not only the outcome of social forces and norms, but also two bodies that act according to their biological construction. Women have the passive/victim position since they are weaker than men, have less muscular strength and cannot stand up to them in a fight.

Furthermore, Antonia’s rape is not a pertinent moment only when dealing with gender roles and biological dichotomies. It is also a moment in the narrative that raises a social concern related to incest, since, as Ambrosio and the reader later find out, he is Antonia’s brother. Therefore, it is clear at this moment that their stories also portray a shattered family that was reunited, not because of love and affection, but through incest and violence. This shows clearly the concern within the novel with the failure and breakdown of the family. As a matter of fact, when Antonia is violated, the very meaning of the family is also destroyed; her rape destroys the legitimacy of the blood alliance and, consequently, the respectability that should be part of the familiar institution. This leads us to Foucault once again, when he explains the transformations in the family in the eighteenth century.

According to him, as the families became an obligatory locus of affect, they turned out to be the primary site of sexuality; for this reason, the issue of incest occupied a central position in society, inasmuch as “it is constantly being solicited and refused; it is an object of obsession and attraction, a dreadful secret and an indispensable pivot. It is manifested as a thing that is strictly forbidden [...]” (FOUCAULT, 1998, p.109). Despite the displaced way the issue of incest is inserted in the narrative (since Antonia and Ambrosio have never lived together as brothers), the effects Antonia plays upon Ambrosio fit perfectly society’s worries concerning incest. She becomes his object of obsession, as if penetrating and possessing her, he would be able to recover something that was uncanny and only later on the reader is able to

identify – what Antonia represents is the female part of Ambrosio that was neglected to him since he was taken away from his mother. However, this is a subject that will be better discussed later on.

To sum up, Antonia plays a fundamental role while the ideal female stereotype. Also, she portrays the heroine that goes through an experience of understanding what rules and guides a patriarchal society. Nevertheless, the character does not abandon her initial depiction as the naive girl that can be compared to an angel insofar as her lack of ‘incorrect feelings’, desire and sexuality make her portray a paradox in relation to Ambrosio – although she is the inferior sex, she is superior to him. Even at her death (for a heroine would not keep on living after being dishonored), Antonia does not agonize; rather she calls out to her mother saying she was going for her and her eyes are depicted as sparkling “with celestial brightness” (LEWIS, 2003, p.258). Hence, *The Monk* subverts this gender value criticized by Bordo:

‘The mucky, humbling limitations of the flesh’ become the province of the female; on the other side stands an innocent and dignified ‘he’... to represent the part of the person that wants to stand clear of the flesh[...] carnal atmosphere of infancy, uncontaminated humanness is reserved for man (BORDO, 1995, p.5).

4.1.2) Matilda

While Antonia personifies the perfect female image, Matilda is the repulsive one. She is the extreme opposite of Antonia, transgressing all social, religious and ethical boundaries. To start off, Matilda begins in the narrative as Rosario, a novice that enters the Capuchin monastery to be close to Ambrosio. Making a pun with the gender subject, Rosario is an ambiguous name, which makes the reader wonders about the sex, deducing he/she is a man due to his/her position in the monastery that is exclusive for men.

However, for Ambrosio, Rosario does not need to confess ‘his’ real sex to call the monk’s attention. They start having a friendship from the very beginning Rosario enters the monastery and, as time goes by, they get more and more intimate. Despite being a supposed man, Rosario conveys the image of fragility and delicacy, frequently weeping while relating the misfortunes of his and his (false) sister’s lives. So much despair attracts Ambrosio’s pity and consolation, making their relation become more physical and the monk more attached to Rosario:

The friar was affected. He took Rosario's hand, and pressed it with tenderness [...]. 'From the moment in which I first beheld you I perceived sensations in my bosom till then unknown to me; I found a delight in your society which no one's else could afford' (LEWIS, 2003, p.35-36).

The bigger their intimacy grew, the more objective Rosario becomes in confessing all his admiration, affection, fondness of the monk. Rosario portrays an androgynous person as far as his physical appearance, behavior and feelings are concerned, which helps leading the reader to imagine that a homosexual relation is about to take place, especially after Rosario's words, in which he answers Ambrosio's question if he wishes he had never seen the abbot:

'Had never seen you?' repeated the novice, starting from the bank, grasping the friar's hand with a frantic air – 'you, you! Would to God that lightning had blasted them before you ever met my eyes! Would to God that I were never to see you more, and could forget that I had ever seen you!' (LEWIS, 2003, p.34).

The passage above clearly states that Ambrosio's presence and closeness disturbs and provokes strong feelings upon the novice. However, despite the apparent homosexual connection, Rosario is considered by Ambrosio as harmless and tender. While a man, their connection is nothing but 'friendship' and it does not transgress the social rules. However, from the moment Rosario confesses explicitly his love for Ambrosio, he also has to confess his real gender – the female one. The gender revealing proves to be necessary for two main reasons: firstly, an eighteenth-century society would not accept an open, declared homosexual relationship. As Foucault describes in his *Microphysics of Power*, "women's sexuality does not make them be out of the legitimate systems of alliance, whereas the homosexuals are in a different position in relation to the social body"¹². Therefore, although women were considered the inferior sex, they were, at least, included in the social machinery; the homosexual, on the other hand, was totally outcasted and considered abnormal.

The second reason for the gender change is due to the representation of this 'love'. It is a prohibited, transgressive one, so it was necessary to apply it to the body that socially represents the 'error' of the system. Matilda becomes the responsible for Ambrosio's destruction, be it personal, ideological and social. She represents the body that ruins, inasmuch as

¹² My translation.

[...]the *body* is the negative term, and if woman *is* the body, then women *are* that negativity, whatever it may be: distraction from knowledge, seduction away from God, capitulation to sexual desire, violence or aggression, failure of will, even death (BORDO, 1995, p.5).

The quotation above summarizes what Matilda will represent in Ambrosio's journey from the moment her real gender is revealed, and also her shift in personality and attitudes.

Interestingly, when Rosario becomes Matilda, she starts a process of revealing her personal characteristics concomitantly with her sex. The more female she is in her sex, the more male she becomes in her attitudes. Throughout the narrative, Matilda changes her position from a conformed lover to an articulated character that persuades the monk to do whatever she wants him to. There is a passage in the novel that clearly states Matilda's transformation:

She assumed a sort of courage and manliness in her manners [...] she spoke no longer to insinuate, but command: he found himself unable to cope with her in argument, and was unwillingly obliged to confess the superiority of her judgment. Every moment convinced him of the astonishing powers of her mind; but what she gained in the opinion of the man, she lost with interest in the affection of the lover. He regretted Rosario, the fond, the gentle, the submissive (LEWIS, 2003, p.151-152).

Therefore, Matilda/Rosario clearly represents a subversion of gender roles - while a man, feminine; as a woman, masculine. Thus, what makes Matilda personify the monk's ruin is not her sex, but her masculinity in manners and position. Furthermore, the relationship between Matilda and Ambrosio is also subverted inasmuch as she takes the role of the active, controlling, persuasive male whereas Ambrosio becomes the passive, controlled, repressed female. She gains more and more control over the abbot until she leads him to make a pact with the Devil, which culminates in his death.

Moreover, Matilda also portrays the male role when it comes to sexuality. She not only makes the first move, confessing her love for Ambrosio, but also persuades him to let her keep on living in the monastery and finally seduces him, becoming his lover. Unlike Antonia, Matilda's sexuality seems to be well developed and, after her first sexual intercourse with Ambrosio, Matilda reproaches the monk's regret, asking him not to blame her for teaching him what bliss is, and saying that life without sexual pleasures is a worthless gift (LEWIS, 2003, p.147). In addition to that, Matilda's openness concerning sex is suggested in a passage in which Ambrosio realizes that no other woman would fulfill his desires "so fully". However, sex between the two characters is not the main connection between them; although it is not a destructive act as it is in Antonia's case, it is dehumanized and basically a matter of

instinctual energy. What Matilda depicts is the pursuit of power that leads her to make the most extreme decisions in order to feed her greed and lust, carrying Ambrosio in her shadow.

Matilda searches power at all costs, and to obtain this power she sees herself in a situation in which only knowledge over witchcraft and evil rituals would bring her what she so much desired. Thus, through the combination of knowledge and the consequent power it brings, Matilda is able to fulfill her expectations. Therefore, it is possible to see Foucault's concept of power-knowledge relationship personified in her character:

Power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (FOUCAULT, 1991, p.175).

Due to her mastery over this subject, the false novice is able not only to seduce Ambrosio, but also to convince him to take part in the evil rituals claiming that the ends justify the means, and also making the rites seem less terrifying than Ambrosio imagines; the moments in which Matilda performs the rituals she is extremely beautiful and the demons she invokes are also attractive, inducing the abbot to be involved by that atmosphere and finally making him become part of it. Therefore, the lover and the abbot build an evil relationship, in which there is no 'noble feeling', and sex is a means to feed their lust. This way, their partnership proves to be much more evil than the devilish mechanisms for it constantly and consistently denies the natural human feelings.

Moreover, to support her cold and perfidious image, only in their last moments Matilda reveals to Ambrosio the truth she hid from him – that their final appeal would inevitably be to sell their souls to the Devil. She confesses that her desire for material and carnal fulfillment matters more than her spiritual life when she says:

The infernal spirits obey me as their sovereign; by their aid shall my days be passed in every refinement of luxury and voluptuousness. I will enjoy unrestrained the gratification of my senses; every passion shall be indulged even to satiety (LEWIS, 2003, p.282).

Matilda is a character that loves her earthly pleasures to the utmost, thus personifying the individual that prefers his/her interest to the social norms. This kind of individual is also seen in the figure of Doctor Faustus who, in spite of being an outstanding scholar, does not conform to the pursuit of knowledge in 'conventional' ways. His pride, restless intellect and desire to be more than man led him to his ultimate damnation inasmuch as he accepts

Mephostophilis' deal to make a blood pact with Lucifer, changing knowledge over magic for his soul. The scholar, then, breaks all social, moral, and religious norms in order to satisfy his desire to play God. Both Matilda and Faustus respect no limits so as to obtain knowledge and, consequently, power to fulfill their aims.

To sum up, Matilda represents the one that is socially scorned insofar as she has a 'masculine' personality, sexual appetite and a 'femme fatale' appeal, being even labeled as a demon in the novel. Also, she respects no social boundaries, especially while Rosario when she transgresses a male frontier (the monastery) and starts a relationship that tends to be homosexual.

In conclusion, as far as gender role is concerned, *The Monk* presents the reader with important social subjects. Despite displacing some issues concerning women, the novel is able to portray the worries present in the eighteenth-century English society, such as: the representation and place of the female gender in relation to the male one; the attitudes a female individual should/should not have; the institution of the family with its secret and incest cases; the homosexual relations; and how women's sexuality should be seen and considered.

In order to portray these issues, Antonia and Matilda are presented to embody the two opposite extremes of society's norms – the first as the perfect outcome of social patterns, and the latter as the disruption and subversion of the laws; one as an angel, the other as a demon. This way, the novel provides the reader with situations that makes them wonder why and how social rules are supposed to be followed, as well as up to what moment they really portray an evolved population. Thus, the gender issue raises the questions: What features state women's inferiority? How much has our western society really developed in this aspect? Within the issue of development, other questions are posed: How primitive and individualists are we? How far are we able to stand social norms?

These questionings are going to be the basic ideas for the following discussion about the main character in the novel, Ambrosio.

4.2) **Ambrosio and his Multiplicity – a Deep Character**

Our heart is uneasy. [...] And this uneasiness is the basis for the permanent state of conflict peculiar to the continuous tension between what one is and what one would like to be¹³
Maffesoli

Despite having different narratives and characters, *The Monk* could have had all its plot focused upon the character that entitles the book. Due to all his complexity, Ambrosio is a character that attracts the public's sympathy; through his multiplicity and continual process of becoming, the narrative makes him a 'humanized' character inasmuch as he portrays the problems and agonies of the human soul. He also suffers social oppression and is, up to a certain period in his life, a prey of the normatization imposed by society. The abbot is the perfect outcome of the social shaping system – a man who overcomes his sexual instincts so as to serve a major objective in the religious career; an abbot who instructs and preaches what the population had better and had better not do in order to please 'God'; an example for everybody in the community, since he was a rejected child who was raised inside a monastery and used this opportunity to be a good, superior being. In short, Ambrosio was the ideal – the ideal preacher, confessor, religious man and social figure.

Nevertheless, since the very beginning of the narrative, it is possible to see in Ambrosio, an interior multiplicity that leads him to a clash against the static conception of individual. All these unfoldings of himself makes him, unavoidably, refuse all the censoring moralism, despite preaching them. As Michel Maffesoli wrote in his *A Parte do Diabo* (2004) "The multiplicity inside oneself permits to understand the duplicity experienced against all kinds of power [...] and due to their inner multiplicity, the individual cannot recognize themselves in the social rigidity"¹⁴ (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p.115). Ambrosio definitely fits this concept in which, although he knows the social norms and what the system expects from him, his inner complexity does not permit him to conform to that, so much so that as soon as he faces the first temptation, the monk not only fails to resist it but he also permits himself to follow and experience his true self. Moreover, Ambrosio expresses his multiplicity projecting part of his own self on other characters that are, somehow, connected to him. And he uses these figures around him to perform the actions that he would like to but cannot, and they are also a means for him to accomplish his necessity for destruction. Therefore, these figures work as a complement of himself, as a kind of his own unfolding, as a continuation, as his doubles.

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My translation

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My translation

4.2.1) The Monk and his Doubles

The concept of the double is complex and vast and, therefore the issue is not going to be thoroughly developed in this chapter. Nevertheless, some key concepts have to be discussed so that some traits in the characters' attitudes can be better understood. The idea of the double is deeply connected with the fragmentation of identity, so that the double frequently 'blossoms' in moments of disturbance, in which the self sees himself/herself existing on various levels. This is the same context in which Ambrosio sees himself in. The monk had to confront himself after the moment he surrendered to Matilda's arm. However, although he gave up his monastic vows as well as his religious principles, it was not shame or remorse that tormented the friar; his true concern was to be discovered by society and, in consequence, lose his position as a religious authority. Due to that, Ambrosio always lived a confrontation between his two selves – the real and the one he built during the years he spent in the monastery. There is a passage in the novel that describes this clash:

At such times the contest for superiority between his real and acquired character was striking and unaccountable to those unacquainted with his original disposition. He pronounced the most severe sentences upon offenders which, the moment, after, compassion induced him to mitigate [...] his inborn genius darted a brilliant light upon the subjects the most obscure, and almost instantaneously his superstition replunged them in darkness more profound than that from which they had just been rescued (LEWIS, 2003, p.155).

In consequence, Ambrosio created a shattered individual who did not know which self to attend and which necessity to fulfill. Therefore, he created and projected a double of himself so that he could give room to both identities.

Nevertheless, *The Monk* is not exclusive in dealing with this issue. Throughout history, literature has shown some examples of the double motif in novels. One famous novel in which the double plays an important part is *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley. In the classic story of the physician who tries to create a perfect human being that turns out to be a deformed figure, the double idea lies precisely in the relationship between the doctor and the monster. The monster possesses all characteristics and desires that Victor Frankenstein is not able to have – it wants to live socially and be around other people whereas Victor refuses to live with his own family and friends. In addition to that, the monster also desires to have a partner, which is denied by Frankenstein, who despite not accepting the idea of the monster's procreation is also unable to be sexually fulfilled, inasmuch as his sexuality is sublimated and

he marries a woman who is practically his sister for mere social conventions. The monster has desires and a voice, it knows what it wants and it has an identity constructed from its necessities and wishes. To sum up, the monster represents everything Frankenstein cannot be – a being who is able to coexist with others and be sexually developed. Therefore, the double is created or developed from a necessity of the self to see itself projected and/or completed on another self, on the desire to hear himself speaking his innermost thoughts through a voice outside himself. In this sense, the monster is Frankenstein's half as well as Matilda is Ambrosio's.

The false novice becomes Ambrosio's first double insofar as she represents the audacity to perform all the desired actions that the friar was unable to do due to the fear of losing his reputation. Matilda pretends to be someone she is not, takes part in evil rituals, offers her body to Ambrosio and becomes his mistress inside a monastery. Matilda is the voice of Ambrosio's Id, she portrays his true primitive self. In other words, Matilda personifies Ambrosio's alter ego, the fusion of his masculine and sensual qualities. Moreover, she is the active agent in all of his sexual adventures. There is a moment in the narrative that Matilda's influence upon Ambrosio is seen when it refers to him:

Shame and remorse no longer tormented him; frequent repetitions made him familiar with sin, and his bosom became proof against the stings of consciousness. In these sentiments he was encouraged by Matilda [...] (LEWIS, 2003, p.153-154).

Hence, Matilda becomes the outer voice of Ambrosio, a shadow of his self. However, as time goes by, the mistress, just like the monster in Frankenstein, gradually succeeds in making use of its 'original owner'. They both slowly act in order to revert the roles in which the shadow becomes the master and the master is relegated to shadow. Whereas the monster tries to control the physician's attitudes by threatening and killing his family, Matilda persuades Ambrosio to perform all the actions she wants him to, until he finally sells his soul to the Devil. As an unavoidable consequence, the double and the master get into a heavy torment in which one of them has to be destroyed so that the other can continue existing. However, unlike Mary Shelley's novel in which the monster is burnt, Lewis's narrative displays more than one double for its main character, and it is on another double's account that the need for destruction is going to be consummated – on the naive Antonia.

The relationship between Ambrosio and Antonia is a destructive one since its very beginning. Ambrosio desires the young girl's body due to the beauty and difficulty that lay on her. Not once in their relation is there any feeling involved, in other words, there is no sentiment from the friar's part towards the girl. The only feeling involved in Ambrosio's

relation is his extreme self-love, which makes him establish connections so as to use the people around them for his own benefit. As Rank would say: “This *self-love* is an inseparable element of his being” (RANK, 1979, p.78). Therefore, Antonia is merely a prey in Ambrosio’s machinations and is one element in his morbid self-love. In addition to that, Ambrosio’s love for himself and his pleasure leads us to think of Freud’s theory of narcissism expressed in his *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*. In his theory, as the ego is developing, it is directing libido outward to objects (early on, to the mother, and later to other family members, people, and objects). Therefore, narcissism is ‘primary or normal’ and results from the attachment of our innate auto-erotic instincts to particular objects. Moreover, according to Freud, narcissism has some specific traits that seem to be recurrent in the issue: the residue of the original primary narcissism and the fulfillment of the imagined expectations of the ideal ego (for example, the sense of being ‘virtuous’). However, as it was denied to Ambrosio to have a family, the monk could not experience the first stage in which the mother would represent the main goal and object of his libido and love. Hence, what remained to Ambrosio to experience was the idealization of his expectations and the extreme self-love.

In this sense, Ambrosio can be compared to the character Dorian Gray from the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) by Oscar Wilde. Dorian Gray loves himself inordinately and desires to use a picture with his own image so as to transfer any trace of age or sin to it; this way the picture would be Dorian’s double that would preserve and keep him away from the death which would come with the loss of his beauty. However, the picture ends up becoming his conscience and making him despise his own soul. Whereas Dorian loved his own beauty, Ambrosio loved the power his position gave him. And, in both examples, the characters, with their narcissistic attitude and egoism, are unable to establish a spiritual relationship. They support abnormal sexual lives and the only connection they have with women is to obtain sensual pleasure, usually in a very crude way (RANK, 1979, p.71). Finally, both characters need to destroy the objects that represent their conscience: Dorian, the portrait; Ambrosio, Antonia.

Antonia was, at first, an idealized figure who Ambrosio feels delighted in contemplating, who he firstly thought he felt sentiments for:

He felt a thousand new emotions springing in his bosom, and he trembled to examine into the cause which gave them birth. They were totally different from those inspired by Matilda. [...] what he now felt was a mingled sentiment of tenderness, admiration, and respect [...] his thoughts were all gentle, sad, and soothing; and the whole wide world presented him with no other object than Antonia (LEWIS, 2003, p.158-159).

However, the monk quickly realizes that Antonia was “lost to him” (LEWIS, 2003, p.159) as a woman insofar as their relationship could just be that of a confessor/confessed one. Therefore, Ambrosio envisions that, in order to satisfy his lust, he had to “deprive her of that quality which formed her principal charm” (LEWIS, 2003, p.168), in other words, he had to possess her and destroy her innocence. It is clear that the friar is led by his brutal appetite for sex and destruction. Antonia’s innocence and love for the mother is what makes her become Ambrosio’s counterpart since she reminds him of something he could not be because it was denied him – the innocence that comes with a life surrounded by beloved people and a mother to be a reference and an object of love.

From this point of view, it is possible to fit Antonia in the representation of the Narcissus’s sister, in which “Narcissus thinks that he sees in his image his sister, who resembles him in every respect” (RANK, 1979, p.75). As the reader further finds out, Antonia is biologically Ambrosio’s sister, which once more indicates that her rape and murder represent the annihilation of the monk’s own necessity of familiar ties. This fact may explain the unusual bond that is created between them and, as a consequence, the woman who most complete him is his double, his sister. However, she is too innocent and he is too lost in his sexual fantasies to recognize a brother-sister relationship. During Antonia’s rape, the more disgusted, desperated and alarmed she became, the more the monk’s desires were inflamed showing that he wanted no sexual delightment but to transgress, destroy and perform what is sexually crude. Nevertheless, after the rape of Antonia, Ambrosio feels base and unmanly, and he realizes that the very excess of his eagerness to possess Antonia and confirm his manhood unmans him; the assertion of identity through sexuality leads, in fact, to the loss of it. (DAY, 1985, p.123). With Antonia’s sexual ruin, the abbot feels like giving up, but he cannot. The threat of having his crimes revealed would rob from him the only left identity – the religious one. And this he could not permit. Consequently, with the cemetery invasion and the imminent possibility of being denounced by the young girl, Ambrosio kills her consolidating the idea that for the master to continue existing, the double has to be annihilated.

To sum up, Otto Rank’s words briefly state what the double is:

The hero’s consciousness of his guilt causes him to transfer the responsibility for certain deeds of the self to another self, the double; his tremendous fear of death leads to a transference to the double. In order to escape this fear of death, the person resorts to suicide

which, however, he carries out on his double, because he loves and esteems his ego so very much. And finally, the double represents the embodiment of the soul (RANK, 1979, p. xix).

The quotation above summarizes the main idea of the concept of what a double means. Nevertheless, to understand such a complex character like Ambrosio, it is necessary to discuss why his doubles were created and what led him do it. And in order to think it over, it is fundamental to understand his identity construction.

4.2.2) The Shattered Identity

Since his infancy, Ambrosio's identity was permeated by exclusions, repressions and abstinence. The monk was left at the monastery of the Capuchins, abandoned and homeless; therefore, he never had any familiar root or reference. Consequently, the abbot lived the 'lack' deriving from abjection. According to Julia Kristeva in her *Powers of Horror*, the abject is prior to the object, it is constructed through exclusion, through a loss when she states:

Essentially different from "uncanniness," more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory. [...] Even before things for him *are* – hence before they are signifiable – he drives them out, dominated by drive as he is, and constitute his own territory, edged by the abject [...] What he has swallowed up instead of maternal love is an emptiness, or rather a maternal hatred (KRISTEVA, 1982, p.5-6).

Kristeva's words perfectly describe Ambrosio's condition – a being that experienced 'denial' before 'assimilation.' In addition to that, besides having no mother or maternal love as support, the friar did not have a paternal figure either. Inasmuch as the father represents the law and the order, in other words, the holy and sacred, the abbot grew without the construction of this sense. Therefore, no familiar identity was built in order to keep his abjected self under control, within the frontiers. In such case, the only way to keep the abjected self suffocated was imprisoning it within the walls of a monastery. A passage in the novel states how Ambrosio's true identity was regulated and repelled since the very beginning of his existence:

While yet a child, he was deprived of those parents. He fell into the power of a relation, whose only wish about him was never to hear of him no more: for that purpose, he gave him

in charge to his friend, the former superior of the Capuchins. The abbot, a very monk, used all his endeavours to persuade the boy that happiness existed not without the walls of a convent (LEWIS, 2003, p.155)

Nevertheless, not even all the repression that surrounded Ambrosio's life was enough to keep his abjected self locked in his unconscious. Although he was terrified by the monks, who placed before him all the horrors a soul could endure, he never really fit the stereotype of a religious figure insofar as "he was suffered to be proud, vain, ambitious, and disdainful" (LEWIS, 2003, p.155). What happened to Ambrosio was precisely what was necessary for the abject to emerge: tired of trying to identify himself with something related to the world he lived in, he finds his identification within. He, then, overcomes 'the mirror stage'¹⁵, in which his identity is multiple and fragmented due to the fact that it is constructed through the others' concept. As soon as Ambrosio realizes he cannot fit the profile that was created for him and, then, identifies his desires, he recognizes where all his very being was founded.

However, Ambrosio would not be able to set his abjected self free were it not for the first experience he lives with Matilda. While locked in the monastery he had a constant unquietness that he could not account for, the feeling that, as previously cited, expresses the tension between what one is and what one would like to be (MAFFESOLI, 2004, p.114). Only after the sexual intercourse with his future mistress, the monk releases what he has inside. Once more, it leads us to Kristeva's words when she affirms that what causes abjection is precisely what disturbs identity, system, order; what does not respects limits, laws and rules (KRISTEVA, 1982, p.4). Consequently, as Ambrosio decides to live his pleasures and desires fully, he decides to experience *jouissance*, not as an ephemeral pleasure but as a norm, making him give voice to the deject. Kathryn Woodward in *Identity and Difference*, gives a clearer definition of the deject, by saying that it is the one who is "preoccupied with demarking territories since he/she lacks the clear boundaries which constitute the object-world for normal subjects" (WOODWARD, 2002, p.294). Therefore, they are constantly changing, placing their solidity in jeopardy. When it comes to *jouissance*, the pleasure felt does not necessary come exclusively from sexual delight, but it can also derive from much stronger sensations, like pain and horror, which according to Edmund Burke constitutes a source of the 'sublime'. For him, the sublime is the outcome of the strongest emotion the mind is capable of feeling. According to him, everything that somehow is able to stimulate the ideas of pain and danger, in other words, everything that constitutes a source of the

¹⁵ The mirror stage is comprehended as the phase in a child's life in which the identity is constructed through the view and opinion of the individuals around him / her. The self is built under its reflection projected in the individuals' eyes, not according to the desires and wishes of the self.

sublime, produces the heaviest, strongest sensation the spirit can bear (BURKE, 1995, p.48). Relating the abject with the sublime, it is possible to say that both deal with the idea of loss as their source and a lack of limits as consequence; however, while the sublime refers to the spirit, to something 'up', the abject has to do with the body, 'down,' (KRISTEVA, 1982, p.20) and with the manipulation of this body, mainly in a perverse way.

The abject, according to Kristeva, is perverse because "it kills in the name of life" and "it curbs the other's suffering for its own profit" (KRISTEVA, 1982, p.13). At this point, we can see the image of Ambrosio reflected. The monk uses the morality and religion he preaches to conceal his libidinous acts inside the monastery and also to get closer to Antonia, while pretending to be her good willed confessor. He crosses over all the laws and morality, plays with the power invested on him and uses all the trust confided in him to obtain the necessary knowledge to reach his perfidious sexual objectives. Moreover, even when he transgresses the religious order of never leaving the monastery, he subverts it for his benefit claiming it is for Antonia's mother's (Elvira) sake. Therefore, he leaves the religious premises pretending that his only intention is to concede a religious visit to a sick follower, when in fact, his only intention was to analyze the territory he would soon attack. And, as a matter of fact, all the discoveries, transgressions, subversions in the narrative and in Ambrosio's conducts were led by or either resulted in sexual intercourse, which makes the reader question the extension of the significance of sexuality in the development of Ambrosio's personality.

As far as sexuality is concerned, it is well-known that it has always been a fundamental social and systematic issue. Due to that, it has been created a distinction that Freud (using von Ehrenfels's words) classified as "natural" and "civilized" sexual morality. The "natural" sexuality would define the necessity of a race to preserve its efficiency; whereas the "civilized" would represent a system that aims at producing cultural activity (FREUD, 1997, p.10). The civilized sexuality embodies the social norms concerning monogamy, sex after marriage and suppression of sexual desires in order to reach a bigger wealth of civilization. This is precisely the belief that Ambrosio preached and lived part of his life under. The man who renounced his instincts in favor of the evolution had his 'sacrifice' offered to the divinity. Therefore, people were encouraged to substitute their sexual aims for others which were no longer physical, in other words, to exercise the ability for sublimation. Once more, Ambrosio is seen. Throughout his life in the monastery, the monk had to suppress his natural instincts, even when he admires a picture from Madonna. Although he admires her beauty and voluptuousness, he reprimands himself for thinking about temptation. The very beginning of the narrative shows this in Ambrosio's words while he looks at the picture:

‘Oh, if such a creature existed, and existed but for me! Were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom! Gracious God, should I then resist the temptation? Should I not barter for a single embrace the reward of my sufferings for thirty years?’ (LEWIS, 2003, p.24).

In the passage above, it is clear that the sublimation Ambrosio goes through is definitely an agony for him. Moreover, he considers his sexual abstinence something to be rewarded, since he is doing it for the love of God. However, even desiring the woman in the picture, he realizes that he cannot possess her and that every woman is lost to him in his religious condition. As a consequence of all this sexual repression, Ambrosio suffers from anxiety and anguish. These feelings are classified by Freud as “psychoneurosis” and according to him “they are originated in the sexual needs of unsatisfied people and represent a kind of substitute for gratification of them” (FREUD, 1997, p.15). Therefore, the sexual dissatisfaction is, according to psychoanalysis, generally manifested in a negative way producing some nervousness that leads to psychoneurosis. In addition to that, Freud also warns about the possible outcomes of a strict sexual abstinence stating that an individual that is too repressed is also undermined, which may lead him to attain important objectives in a rude or unnecessary way. This individual sees the attitude to sex as the attitude to life; therefore, if he desires something he has to make himself owner of it before someone else does. Moreover, Freud comments on the sexual fantasies of these too repressed people affirming that the sexual objective is seldom to be reproduced in reality (FREUD, 1997, p.26), which confirms that people who keep a long sexual abstinence may have predispositions to some neurosis and psychosis. This psychoanalytic view perfectly describes Ambrosio’s sexual fantasies. Sex for him was, at no moment, a situation to delight and relax; on the contrary, it was seen as a way to consume, to exercise power, to satiate the beast inside. The sexual intercourse for the monk involved nothing but a brutal appetite to be satisfied to its full.

This strong desire makes Ambrosio transgress the limits of the civilized sexual morality and fall into the category of the perverts. However, Freud subdivides the perverts into two groups, in which one of them would correspond to the ones who fail to suppress their instincts. In this group, “the perverse tendencies come to expression from the unconscious part of the mind” (FREUD, 1997, p.19), in other words, the sexual instinct is kept in the unconscious until the day it comes to light. Therefore, Ambrosio while a pervert, despises sexual morality and gives free rein to all his powerful desires. This attitude is expressed in the friar’s first sexual intercourse with Matilda:

Ambrosio was in the full vigour of manhood; he saw before him a young and beautiful woman, the preserver of his life [...] Drunk with desire, he pressed his lips to those which sought them [...] he forgot his vows, his sanctity, and his fame; he remembered nothing but the pleasure and opportunity (LEWIS, 2003, p.58).

In short, Ambrosio's shattered identity can be understood from a range of perspectives, including his lack of familiar ties and references, the excessive sexual repression he suffered and the social norms imposed on him as a religious figure. All these reprehensions helped built an identity full of gaps, with skipped phases in life, and sexually tormented. The outcome of all these negative traits was an individual who developed doubles of himself and who was unable to love and live sentiments as any ordinary individual would do. Finally, in consequence, Ambrosio had the same destination of the other characters that had similar tormented unfoldings – Faustus¹⁶ and Prometheus.

4.2.3) Ambrosio's Final Moments and Considerations

Throughout the narrative in *The Monk*, the reader is sent back to previous stories in literature in which there were very similar characters and outcomes. However, as soon as the reader reaches the last moments in Ambrosio's narrative, these literary connections become clearer and it is impossible not to see the major influence from Doctor Faustus's and Prometheus's stories in the monk's fate. Although some critics consider this an obvious copy, in Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), the reader may see this issue from a different perspective while reading her concepts about intertextuality: "A literary work can actually no longer be considered original; if it were, it could have no meaning for its reader. It is only as part of prior discourses that any text derives meaning and significance" (HUTCHEON, 1988, p.126). Therefore, it is fundamental to point out that the textual references in the novel create a dialogue with past references in order to bring them to light and also question them. Nevertheless, due to the limitations of a brief piece of work like this, just the main parts will be discussed.

One of the moments in which intertextuality plays an important role takes place in Ambrosio's final pact with the Devil. Just like Doctor Faustus, Ambrosio makes a blood pact

¹⁶ The Faustian character that is going to be in discussion is the one written by Christopher Marlowe, in 1588. The one written by Goethe is not going to be considered.

with the Devil selling his soul to it. Nevertheless, the reasons for the pact were different ones: Faustus sold his soul to the Devil in order to have twenty four years of pleasure and unlimited knowledge with Mephostophilis as his permanent servant; Ambrosio made the pact so as to escape from the inquisition and the punishment reserved for him – to be burnt alive during a religious ceremony, to serve as an example to the population. Despite having different reasons to summon Lucifer, both characters are led to do this due to the same characteristics: overweening pride, the desire to be over ordinary men and to have the power of a God, and mainly, the desire to, somehow, obtain knowledge. In this point, another narrative that inevitably comes to our minds is, once more, Frankenstein.

All the main characters in these pieces of work, desire to obtain knowledge, since with knowledge they can consequently obtain power. Frankenstein wanted to have knowledge over diseases and elixir of life so as to have power over life and death. The scholar's intention of playing God are shown when he says: "Wealth was an inferior object, but what glory would attend the discovery if I could banish disease from the human frame..." (SHELLEY, 1994, p.39). Therefore, the forbidden knowledge Frankenstein desired would enable him to have the control that no one else, except God, could have. In the same line of thought, Doctor Faustus's idea of knowledge was not noble and dignified. The power the scholar wanted to gain over magic would be used to make him control his enemies and overcome everything that could be an obstacle to his wishes, when he says

Having thee ever to attend on me,
To give me whatsoever I shall ask,
To tell me whatsoever I demand,
To slay mine enemies and aid my friends,
And always be obedient to my will
(MARLOWE, 1976, p.68)

Faustus makes a point when he affirms that he intends to use the knowledge over magic and the evil world for his own and sole benefit. He can control, then, everything and everyone around him. Finally, there is the idea of knowledge in the narrative of Ambrosio. Once more, it is through knowledge that an individual can have control over a situation inasmuch as the monk uses the knowledge obtained during the evil rituals to obtain a myrtle that opened all the doors and which was used to keep Antonia asleep while the friar tried to perform his sexual objectives with the girl's body. Not having success in the first attempt, Ambrosio again makes use of the forbidden information in order to obtain the liquor that

would make Antonia look dead so that he would use her sexually. Therefore, the knowledge would bring power to penetrate Antonia's house and body.

However, in all stories, the main characters are never able to get rid of a final punishment for attempting to have a forbidden knowledge and play God in their own benefits. In the narratives, the characters are judged (by men and/or by God), accused and condemned. For instance, in the narratives of *The Monk* and *Doctor Faustus*, the characters are accused by the Devil itself of being too vain, as in the passage from *The Monk* that follows:

And you it was who thought yourself proof against temptation, absolved from human frailties, and free from error and vice! Is pride, then, a virtue? Is inhumanity no fault? (LEWIS, 2003, p.289).

In this quotation, Lucifer is criticizing the monk for all his hypocrisy and sins, and like Faustus in Marlowe's narrative, both are sent to eternal damnation after realizing they could not count on or take refuge in the divine forgiveness anymore. In both narratives there are moments in which the characters try to appeal to God in order not to carry out their punishment. Nevertheless, they are not forgiven and when Faustus gets down on his knees, Mephostophilis tells him "What, are you crying? It's too late [...] the fools that laugh on earth will cry in hell"¹⁷ (MARLOWE, apud MONTEIRO, 2004, p.107).

Moreover, in both stories, the two main characters seal their cursed fates after having intercourse with women who were, in fact, evil spirits raised by the Devil: Faustus, with Helen and Ambrosio with Matilda. Although their importance in the narrative differ considerably (since Helen has two brief appearances during the story), these female characters come to unchain the vanity and selfishness of the male characters and condemn them. Once more, the woman is portrayed as the damnation of the man. The return to the issue of women as the representation of the negative and dark proves that, many times, intertextuality permits that "margins and edges gain new value. The 'ex-centric' – as both off-center and de-centered – gets attention" (HUTCHEON, 1988, p.130). Despite following the traditional view over women, *The Monk* places its female character as an intelligent, powerful figure, not as just a negative body giving voice to the female necessities and capacities.

Besides the reading of Faustus during the novel, Ambrosio's death is also a relevant moment as far as intertextuality is concerned. Just before being thrown to death, Ambrosio is reproached by Lucifer for all his illicit and immoral actions. Ambrosio and the reader find out that the woman he killed was in fact his mother and, consequently, the girl he raped and

¹⁷ My translation

murdered was his sister. While listening to the accusations, the monk is led by the Devil up to the top of a high mountain. Realizing he is trapped in the pact he sealed, Ambrosio tries to plead Divine forgiveness when Lucifer tells him: “Dare you still implore the Eternal’s mercy? Would you feign penitence, and act an hypocrite’s part? Villain! Resign your hopes of pardon. Thus I secure my prey” (LEWIS, 2003, p.290). In this moment, the Prometheus legend comes to the reader’s mind inasmuch as in the story, Prometheus played a trick against Zeus like the monk tried to do with Lucifer. However, in the Promethean story, the semi-God placed two sacrificial offerings before the Olympian: beef hidden inside an ox's stomach (nourishment hidden inside a displeasing exterior), and the bull's bones wrapped completely in "glistening fat" (something inedible hidden inside a pleasing exterior). As Zeus chose the latter, humans would keep the meat for themselves and burn the bones wrapped in fat as an offering to the gods. In retribution, the angered Zeus hid fire from humans, which Prometheus in turn stole and gave it back to mankind. As punishment Prometheus was chained to a rock, where his liver was eaten out daily by an eagle, only to be regenerated by night, eternally.

Therefore, both characters try to deceive a more powerful being and have a similar spot as the scenario of their final damnation – Prometheus is chained in a high mountain to suffer eternally, whereas Ambrosio is taken from a rock where he was placed and carried by Lucifer to a dreadful height, from where he was released and his body received by a sharp rock. Both characters find their fate in a harrowing, desolating atmosphere representing and being examples of what happens when one tries to play God – or the Devil.

5. FINAL WORDS

Some years ago, when I first read *Frankenstein*, it was clear to me that it was much more than a story of a ‘monster.’ I realized that it was, in fact, a story of rejection, greed, thirst for power and, mainly, transgression. It was then, when I started to wonder why the human nature is so primarily transgressive and how and why we suffocate it since the very beginning of our existence. This curiosity led me to the study of the Gothic, with its shocking, uncomfortable fiction, to seek the reason for transgression, the motif that made Victor Frankenstein desire to have control over life and death. In this initial study, I could find out that what the Gothic represents is not simply an obscure, terrifying world. This mode expresses why there are so many feelings we cannot account for, why we sometimes identify ourselves with a group or a character that is apparently completely different from us, it shows us our ‘others’. Consequently, the reading and/or studying of the Gothic may become a process of cultural self-analysis and the images which it throws, the figures of a troubled social group. As Punter states about the Gothic:

Gothic takes us on a tour through the labyrinthine corridors of repression, gives us glimpses of the skeletons of dead desires and makes them move again. It is in this sense that Gothic has been, over the last 200 years, a mode of history and a mode of memory (PUNTER, 1996, p.188).

This way, along with the study of the Gothic, the concept of monstrosity, good and evil, transgression, pursuit of knowledge, sexuality started to become a little clearer. I could then, understand how these issues are connected and how important they were in the kind of study I intended to throw myself at. In the meantime, due to one of the subjects taken in the Master course, I laid hands on a copy of *The Monk* and during my reading of it, I could not help sympathizing with Ambrosio and looking at him as a really humane being. Like the nameless creature in *Frankenstein*, he could not fit the environment he lived in and, in order to satisfy his needs, he transgresses all the possible boundaries. Surely, the context and reason for the transgression of these two characters are completely different; however, what makes them converge is the strong desire to be complete, satisfied. In addition to that, I could notice that the reading of the novel provided me with all the issues that had raised my curiosity. And

inasmuch as I was willing to understand the social system of transgression and repression, it was at this moment that I decided to put the idea for this dissertation together.

As I started analyzing Ambrosio, the connection between the character and Foucault's concept of monstrosity became clearer and clearer. The monk is a great example of what monstrosity is about, which has nothing to do with physical appearance, but with difference. The monster is the one who, for some reason, is not part of the standardized society and, therefore, has to be eliminated. Interestingly, the abbot is not only an ordinary human figure, but he also has a role in society, which shows that this 'monstrosity' does not have to be apparent at all. It represents a necessity, a desire, the incapacity to conform to the rules. This is a very pertinent trait of the Gothic fiction, the feature that expresses the inability to cope with the realism, to be a simple description of the time it speaks about. Therefore that is why

Where the classical was well ordered, the Gothic was chaotic; where the classical was simple and pure, the Gothic was ornate and convoluted; where the classics offered a world of clear rules and limits, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration, the product of the wild and the uncivilized, a world that constantly tended to overflow cultural boundaries (PUNTER, 2004, p.7).

From the study of monstrosity, the idea of taboo came as a natural consequence. As everything that does not belong to the rational, civilized world has to be left 'out', they become tabooed issues. Nobody knows, nobody speaks of them. The taboos cannot be mentioned inasmuch as they are bad, evil. And considering that the two basic implications of taboo lie in the dichotomy sacred-unclean, the study of the concept of evil naturally emerged in this study. In this point, the idea that good and evil are social and religious constructions helped the understanding that one cannot internalize what it is really about unless he/she is exposed to it. Therefore, for an individual like Ambrosio, the concept of good and evil were theoretical ones insofar as he lived without really understanding and/or experiencing them. When he preached in his sermons and condemned the ones who did not follow the Catholic doctrines, he was unaware that sometimes, the evil, the 'Devil' is part of us and it is not possible to simply hide it. Then, when the monk saw himself in the dilemma of choosing between the 'divine' and the 'profane' he could not stick to the rules he imposed on the followers of the church.

The thought that nobody is totally good or evil (and therefore never complete) led this study to another issue – the one of the double. With the huge help of Otto Rank's theory, it was possible to understand a little better the plurality that is part of every individual and that the failure in understanding that one self may be fragmented leads to the projection of this self

in the 'other', in the distinct, different being. The individual attempts to end up with his/her identity emptiness by transferring what he/she cannot or does not know how to deal with, to another self who has the role of completing this other fragmented self. Because of the complexity of the self and the constant clashes between one's Id and superego, a shattered identity is a natural result of all this confrontation and chaos. And in Ambrosio's narrative, this conflict is clearly seen. The monk is a man with no roots and with a religious life which he cannot fit in. He, then, projects his sexual needs on Matilda making her become his alter ego as she has the courage to experience the sex that he does not have. Moreover, his feminine self is personified by Antonia, his biological sister. By controlling her through sexual violence, Ambrosio tries to control his own feminine side and also the familiar absence by destroying any kind of link with it. Nonetheless, he does not succeed. The more he seeks his identity, the more distant he gets from it. The more he looks for his place in the world, the more he gets lost. And, as a matter of fact, in a Gothic story, he could not succeed inasmuch as this literature is meant to disturb, to cause unease, not to offer a perfect utopian end. Ambrosio symbolizes the complexity, plurality of every single human being and he represents the one who does not conform to the definition of 'normality' established hegemonically. And by showing that 'normality' is a social construct that is controlled by morals and rules that are convenient to a certain ideology, this piece of study concludes its journey.

This way, this dissertation ends here with the hope of having showed how the Gothic fiction may express important concerns and issues that permeate society; I expect to have been able to convey my own reading of the novel and how the identity features aforementioned can have different points of view and also how the 'outcast', the 'monster', the 'Devil' can be read as ways to personify the difference, the singularity. The Gothic constantly tells us that nobody is equal and that we do not have to be. It is the subjectivity of the self that makes us humans. Also, it tells us that we fear the unknown, the 'ex-centric' simply because we cannot control it, therefore we exclude it. And that is why the Gothic is still so contemporary – it is still out there. No matter when, this mode reflects the contradictions of our souls, minds and flesh, the horror of violence, the social control over the individual bodies, the exclusion of the socially underprivileged, in other words, the clashes and conflicts that lie in the core of our souls. This way, the Gothic writing "ceaselessly insists that there is much that should make us ashamed. The Gothic imagination continues to haunt us all" (DAVENPORT, 1999, p.11).

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