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Review of *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction* by Joseph Adriano

Diane Hoeveler
Marquette University, diane.hoeveler@marquette.edu

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Book Review: *Our Ladies of Darkness: Feminine Daemonology in Male Gothic Fiction*. By JOSEPH ANDRIANO . University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

Diane Long Hoeveler
English, Marquette University
Milwaukee, WI

It takes a brave soul to publish a "post-Jungian" study of female archetypes in fiction written by nineteenth-century men these days. Let's face it: if the neo-Freudians do not aim first, the feminists will. And then, of course, the Foucaultians will not be far behind. As a critic who has subscribed at various times to all three of those discourse systems, I want to state at the outset that I learned something from reading Joseph Andriano's book, even if I ultimately did not find his methodology persuasive or convincing.

Let me review the organization and content of *Our Ladies of Darkness* first. After a brief (too brief, in my view) introduction, Andriano examines the "archetypal feminine" in twelve pieces of gothic fiction: Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable Amoureux;* Matthew Lewis's *The Monk;* E.T.A. Hoffman's "The Sandman" and "The Mines at Falun";

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Washington Irving's "The Adventures of the German Student"; Theophile Gautier's "La Morte Amoureuse" ; Edgar Allan Poe's "Ligeia"; Thomas De Quincey's *Suspiria de Profundis;* Joseph Le Fanu's "Carmilla"; Bram Stoker's *Dracula;* and Henry James's "Madonna of the Future" and "The Last of the Valerii." Now these pieces of fiction represent work done in France, England, Germany, Ireland, and America from the late eighteenth through the late nineteenth centuries. And yet the historicity of these fictions—a detailed discussion of the specific social, economic, cultural, and religious characteristics of each locality—is never developed. In fact, the author claims, as Jungians are wont to do, that a collective unconscious is at work producing "transpersonal terrors shared by many men in many cultures" (p. 10). I agree that men do share certain "transpersonal" obsessions, but the shape of those obsessions surely is altered to some extent by one's culture and cannot be monolithic, as the Jungians would have us believe.

But Andriano does not present himself as an old-fashioned Jungian. He is what is now known as a "post-Jungian," and he spends two appendices explaining exactly what a post-Jungian does (this material I thought could have been more appropriately incorporated into the introduction). Those who subscribe to post-Jungianism now use an "inductive" rather than a "deductive" process to find the anima. They "look instead for her signs" rather than assuming her existence before they approach the text (p. 29). Andriano (and the post-Jungians) now claim that female archetypes are not "signified Givens but rather signifiers (i.e., utterances, words or images) whose meaning derives first from interaction with (and difference from) other signifiers in the text, and second from connotations and associations (from other texts) the reader brings to bear on the text at hand" (p. 3). Much is made of this new and improved brand of Jungianism, but unfortunately I could not detect how this new variety was significantly different from the old, except, perhaps, in the more elaborate critical posturings.

Andriano does clearly delineate the anima that he chooses to examine, and he does have some interesting and provocative ideas about her presence in these texts: she is "a projection of the haunted Self" (p. 2); "a persistent symbol of our two most impelling instincts, the erotic and the thanatotic" (p. 3); "the return of the repressed, the

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exiled goddess coming back to demand her due" (p. 6); split between two poles—"the Madonna (daemon of love) and the Medusa (daemon of death)" (p. 148). And his focus—what he calls "the dynamics of anima projection" (p. 146)—is closely examined in all of these texts, but the outcome is always the same; the obsession and its contortions follow the uncannily eerie and identical path. The male consciousness cannot accept the feminine as anything other than a mother or a whore, and so it falls into either the "morbidity of necrophilia" (p. 148) or the frenzy of "nympholepsy." Such men are frequently the victims of "breast fixation and fetishism": ''Adolescent fascination with the feminine degenerates into adult fear and loathing if anima is never recognized as part of self and soul, if she is instead perceived only as other. Other becomes alien, alien becomes monster" (p. 138).

What is perhaps the most alarming, however, is the "happy ending" envisioned by Jungians (or post-Jungians). Andriano claims throughout the text that "breath" or "spirit" is the "anima's proper symbol, her elements air and water, not earth and fire" (p. 144). Only when the anima returns to the "air" as "disembodied" and "an animated soul," will the mind of man no longer be haunted (p. 144). Let me ask what Mary Poovey asked about *Frankenstein,* "Is there a woman in this text?" If women are at their best and most nurturing as "spirits" for men, vehicles for men to achieve their "androgyny," then women do not exist except as textual absences, gaps in the narrative, signifiers as black holes. And this, I am afraid, is what Andriano demonstrates in his study. He might also have considered the fact that, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has so amply demonstrated in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York, 1985) and *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley, CA, 1990), the women in these texts exist only to mediate between men or between aspects of the split and fragmented male mind. The androgyny that Andriano celebrates throughout his book more accurately can be described as a species of male "cannibalization," which I have analyzed at length elsewhere. In short, feminist sensibilities will not be reassured by reading Andriano's Jungian diagnosis. And yet I commend him for following his own light. Would that we all would produce work that we care passionately about and that then we would debate openly and forthrightly about the differences in our visions.

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