

Divine Madness: Archetypes of Romantic Love

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Five

The Demon-Lover: Obsession's Heart

In the first four chapters of this book, we have developed a language to talk about love and about the human psyche. Chapter 1 demonstrated that every love is implicitly the love of God, insofar as we pass away (*fana*) from what is lesser and limiting to what is greater. This implied that projection need not always take the form of "masking" our partner but that our anima or animus can function as a lens. In chapter 2 we considered the painful consequences of losing love's unity, and our need to lose a naïve, sensual, and literal possession of our beloved in order to come into a transcendently deeper love of her. Chapter 3 returned to the topic of love's unity to consider the Self on the model of shamanism, as a functioning organ of the psyche that organizes, unifies, and balances our inner life and, no less significantly, unifies us with or beloved and with the cosmos. In chapter 4 we considered our joint woundedness as the flaw in the Self's premythic synthesis undergirded by a chaotic jumble of Unintegrated instinct/archetypes. It is the basis of an existential anxiety, which has been discussed in recent psychological literature as a "narcissistic wound."

Now we employ the images and concepts developed in previous chapters to appreciate typical situations that arise between lovers. The language we have been using enables us to take a sympathetic stance toward such entanglements. As always, we wish to come to grips with the psychological roots and spiritual possibilities of love's vicissitudes. In this chapter and the next, we consider the "demon lover," a beloved who occasions a very obsessive kind of erotic bond. What distinguishes the demon lover from the beloved through whom we love God is the degree of wholeness experienced. In genuine *fana*, we are connected with our beloved through our Self and our anima or animus acts as a lens to bring her or his being into focus. In relationship with a demon lover, however, the connection turns on our respective wounds in such a way that we lose a sense of wholeness while at the same time retaining a sense of holiness. This seemingly paradoxical state of affairs is expressed very powerfully in Coleridge's famous unfinished poem, "Kubla Khan":

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

(Coleridge, 103)

This is the fascinating scene that may unfold when we look through the wound in the Self to the powerful chaos of the instinct/archetypes beneath. It is as though a traveller on

the bridge of fog should stop and look down, thereby daring to face his most panicky fears. Instead of a black abyss, a disjointed world of uncanny beauty calls out with the irresistible pull of the sirens' song. The very next lines of Coleridge's poem present the frightening destructiveness and mysterious promise of this "sunless" realm:

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermittent burst
Hugh fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.

(Ibid)

Here the very earth is roused to a high pitch of blind, instinctual panting -- suggesting both the rapturous dilations and ejaculations of sexuality and the agonizing gripe and expulsions of the dysentery from which Coleridge was suffering at the time he dreamt the poem. The dancing boulders present the prospect of almost certain death to any who would venture into the romantic chasm, but the sacred river is something else.

Alph, the sacred river, runs "Through caverns measureless to man/ Down to a sunless sea." It is the source of our deepest unconscious longings and images. When it is "flung up momentarily" to the surface, consciousness becomes flooded with its primordial darkness -- but also with the long-hidden mysterious promise of that underworld of the psyche. In his final lines, the poet describes himself as enchanted by the magic of this river whereby he has had visions and heard marvelous symphonies and songs. But his intoxication with the transformation he has undergone, makes him a danger to any he might encounter:

And all should cry, Beware! Beware! --
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

(Ibid)

He is entirely beside himself. By his eyes and hair, he seems to present a kind of weird Moses -- although the power which surrounds him is hardly a nimbus of glory, and he has nothing so solid to show for his experience as a tablet of stone. Having drunk the milk of Paradise, he himself has become the demon-lover. The holy beverage which fills him is what makes him demonic. In the same way, the abyss beneath the bridge of fog and the horrible wound in the Self are dangerous on account of the "holy." Instead of purifying and uplifting, as we might expect, the holy has here been enlisted in a tendency toward sully and lowering. Indeed, the danger and the promise of the demonic in romantic love resides precisely in this uncanny attraction to the holy sparks which we may find in the darkness of the abyss.

This chapter explores the two-fold nature of the demonic, the uncanny holiness which is its substance and the distortions, limitations, and fragmentations which render it destructive. We have already seen some indications of the demonic in foregoing chapters.

Turandot's murderous obsession, for example, is equally as demonic as her lovers' eager self-immolation. The very idea of a love potion suggests something dark and uncontrollable, for which reason King Mark's love for his nephew and his wife appears all the more admirable: "Neither poison nor sorcery, only the tender nobility of his heart, moved him to love" (Bedier, 37). Emily Bronte's Heathcliff appears a good deal less than noble on the day before his death, when he says: "I repent of nothing -- I'm too happy, and yet I'm not happy enough. My soul's bliss kills my body, but doesn't satisfy itself" (316). Even the mystics speak of a nearly unendurable thirst. John of the Cross says, "Its vehemence is not continual but only experienced from time to time; although usually some thirst is felt" (*Night*, I, 11, 1).

A few literary examples may help to describe what it means to lose the wholeness of the Self, to fall through the wound, as it were, and find oneself in a vale of obsessive striving. In D. H. Lawrence's novel, *Sons and Lovers*, Paul and Clara get a taste of their woundedness and of the demonic as soon as they have known "the immensity of their passion":

They felt small, half afraid, childish and wondering, like Adam and Eve when they lost their innocence and realized the magnificence of the power which drove them out of Paradise and across the great night and the great day of humanity. . . . They could let themselves be carried by life, and they felt a sort of peace each in the other. Nothing could nullify it, nothing could take it away; it was almost their belief in life.

But Clara was not satisfied. Something great was there, . . . enveloped her. But it did not keep her. They had *known*, but she could not keep the moment. She wanted it again; she wanted something permanent (1985b, 343).

Paul and Clara are right on the brink of the demonic. Their love has brought them to an awareness of the wholeness of the Self level of the psyche ("almost their belief in life"), of their woundedness (the sense of impermanence), as well as of the powerful obsessive pull to experience the moment again and again in the vain hope that it can somehow become permanent.

In *Women in Love*, the same author gives us a more disturbing picture of a demon lover, when the insecure bohemian, Halliday, betrays his fear of the sexually experienced young woman known as "the Pussum."

[Halliday] gave Gerald the impression that he was terrified of [the Pussum], and he loved his terror. He seemed to relish his own horror and hatred of her, turn it over and extract every flavor from it, in real panic (121). Two pages later, the Pussum delights in provoking his fear by gesturing toward his hand with a knife. We are probably justified in concluding that Halliday fears the Pussum because she dares to do what he both fears and longs for. In Jungian language, she embodies both his anima and his shadow; she lives his "unlived life." But to live this dimension of life would be for him to relinquish the rules and boundaries which maintain his sense of identity and safety. Consequently she represents for him both an imperative challenge and the threat of annihilation.

A somewhat different kind of example is presented in Flaubert's novel, *Madame Bovary*, where callous libertine, Rodolphe, corrupts the foolishly romantic Emma Bovary, who then brings demonic obsession with her into an affair with a relatively unspoiled Leon:

[Rodolphe] made of her something supple and corrupt. Hers was an idiotic sort of attachment, full of admiration for him, of voluptuousness for her, a beatitude that benumbed her; her soul sank into this drunkenness, shriveled up, drowned in it, like Clarence in his butt of Malmsey (208).

[Leon] did not know what recreation of her whole being drove her more and more to plunge into the pleasures of life. She was becoming irritable, greedy, voluptuous; and she walked about the streets with him carrying her head high, without fear, so she said, of compromising herself. At times, however, Emma shuddered at the sudden thought of meeting Rodolphe, for it seemed to her that, although they were separated forever, she was not completely free from her subjugation to him (301f).

Mme. Bovary's career suggests a fairly common characteristic of the demon lover, namely its tendency to draw one further and further away from sanity and decency. The more villainous the individual, the more ghastly the demon must be. Such is portrayed by Dostoyevsky in his early novel, *The Insulted and Injured*, where Prince Volkovsky, as thorough a villain as may be found in literature, tells the following story to the narrator, Vanya. There is no question that the story is being told in large part for its shock value, in order to warn Vanya not to interfere in the Prince's plans. But it is also very likely true.

I used at one time to know a lady; she was not in her first youth, but about twenty-seven or twenty-eight. She was a beauty of the first rank. What a bust, what a figure, what a carriage! Her eyes were as keen as an eagle's, but always stern and forbidding; her manner was majestic and unapproachable . . . My lady's sensuality was such that even the Marquis de Sade might have taken lessons from her. But the intensest, the most poignant thrill in this sensuality was its secrecy, the audacity of the deception. This jeering at everything which in public the countess preached as being lofty, transcendent and inviolable, this diabolic inward chuckle, in fact, and conscious trampling on everything held sacred, and all this unbridled and carried to the utmost pitch of licentiousness such as even the warmest imagination could scarcely conceive -- in that, above all lay the keenness of the gratification. Yes, she was the devil incarnate, but it was a devil supremely fascinating. I cannot think of her now without ecstasy. In the very heat of voluptuousness she would suddenly laugh like one possessed, and I understood it thoroughly, I understood that laughter and laughed too (237).

We, the listeners, understand that laughter, too, but only in a tentative and general fashion. In order to deepen and extend our knowledge of the demon lover, we need a tale which takes us inside the psyche of the affected individual. Myths, fairy tales, and ancient legends, turn the psyche inside-out, as it were, and dole out the several inner psychic roles (subpersonalities) to other people, animals, spirits, and the like. By its naivete, such traditional story telling achieves a compelling psychological accuracy.

In the following story, which comes from Mesopotamia, the demonic element is presented in the traditional Arabic form of the jinn (singular: jinni; often represented in English as *genie*). Nicholson (1921: 190, n.3) describes the jinn as "ethereal creatures, endowed with speech, transparent (so that they are usually invisible), and capable of assuming various shapes." Gibb's description is a bit more folkloric:

The *jinn* are, like men, created, but of fire instead of earth; there are believers and infidels amongst them, and the unbelievers will be judged with men and condemned to Hell. The rebellious *jinn* are called *shaitans* [cf. Satan]; they lead men astray, oppose the Prophets, and try to overhear what is discussed in Heaven but are driven off by shooting stars. They teach men sorcery, and were made subject to Solomon, for whom they dived and built (57).

The distinguished modern interpreter, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, calls the jinn simply

"psychic forces" (65).

The Story of Abdul

Abdul, the last scion of an Iraqi farm family ruined by gradual salination of its lands, spent his days in a coffee house bemoaning his fate, until one day a bejeweled stranger appeared and promised Abdul a sure escape from his poverty. The key to the world's wealth and wisdom lay in a cave in the middle of the desert. Although the path down to this cave was rumored to be as terrifying as a journey to one's own grave and its treasure guarded by the Queen of the Jinn who fed on human souls, the stranger assured Abdul and his friends that these were only superstitions. Abdul's heart was so aflame with greed that he begged to know the exact location of the cave. The stranger promised to take him there; and despite his friends' well-meaning protests, Abdul agreed to go.

On the way through the desert, Abdul's wary eye found no sign of jinn but plenty of disastrous omens. Even his dreams warned him to turn back; but before he had finally made up his mind to heed them, the stranger pointed with satisfaction to an archway of stones so huge that only jinn could have carried them and set them in place. Beneath the arch lay a narrow opening which breathed a dank and evil air. As Abdul hesitated to enter, the stranger and his camels suddenly vanished so that Abdul could see no alternative to descent. Imagining jinn huge and bloodthirsty enough to tear a man limb from limb, he felt his way down a long set of stone steps and found himself in front of a metal door bearing the following inscription: "Let the seeker kiss this door if he wishes to enter. He will receive more treasure than he can count and more knowledge than he can speak of." Abdul touched the door with his lips, and it opened upon a cave flooded with an unearthly light which glanced off gold, silver, and jewels in every beautiful form imaginable. Abdul's eyes were pulled away from these riches, by a feminine voice of indescribable beauty and compelling force commanding him to approach. He looked up to see a woman of entrancing beauty, seated on a pile of jewels. She promised him all the wealth and wisdom in the world if only he would take her in his arms and kiss her.

Abdul was only too happy to do so, and was delighted to find the tip of her tongue between his lips. As he responded with his own tongue, she drew it further and further into her mouth, at first gently and seductively and then roughly and insistently, as though moved by a passion which exceeded Abdul's wildest dreams. Finally, she ripped the tongue out by its roots with a terrific, superhuman yank. Then she pressed her own tongue into the wound where it implanted itself. At this point the demonic beauty fell lifeless from Abdul's arms and melted into a pool of slime.

As Abdul took to his heels in horror, a strange voice issuing from his own throat brought him to a halt. It announced that from that moment on Abdul would do its bidding. So long as he obeyed, he would have all the wealth he desired; disobedience would be punished. Abdul tried to utter a prayer to banish this evil, but his lips and throat moved spasmodically without making a sound. Then he tried to scream but produced instead a hideous, ringing laugh.

The tongue directed Abdul across the burning desert, where he found water enough -- although it had no taste. When he arrived back in his home town, he ordered a meal fit for a king. The aroma of the spices drove him wild, but he could not taste a thing, though the tongue praised the flavors extravagantly.

Back in the coffee house, Abdul's friends jeered at him for his torn and dirty clothes. The tongue responded by accusing one of the companions of having slept with another's wife. The two former friends pulled out knives and killed one another on the spot. Alarmed, Abdul turned and ran to his home, where his wife came out to greet him. Instead of embracing her, however, he was stopped horrified in his tracks by the tongue calling all his neighbors out to witness. To Abdul's frantic despair, it pronounced the divorce formula three times -- the Quran's ritual to effect a final and legal separation. Unable to prevent this new tragedy, Abdul turned to comfort his son whereupon the tongue frightened the boy so that he fell down a well to his death.

Now wholly alone, Abdul sought out mosques and holy places to have the evil exorcised; but the

tongue would always curl back and strangle him before he was able to reach the sacred precincts. One night, however, he succeeded in arresting a holy man, walking beside the Euphrates, and wrote in the sand his desire for exorcism. As soon as the saint began to speak, the demon tongue started to shiver and convulse with such force that Abdul was thrown off balance. He landed in the river just as the exorcised tongue leapt from his mouth and slithered into the waves like a fat eel. Immediately four huge fish appeared and devoured Abdul's limbs before the holy man could haul him out.

When he had recovered his health, the limbless, voiceless Abdul was placed in a corner of the town market, where surrounded by the riches of the earth, he wordlessly begged for whatever crumbs and sips people would place in his mouth and whatever coins they cared to toss on the ground before him. On learning his story, the Caliph ordered a plaque erected on the wall above Abdul's head to warn people that this is what happens to a man to whom the jinn promise, and give, more knowledge than he can speak and more riches than he can count (Time-Life(b), 106-120).

The bitter tone at the end of this tale nearly obscures its ambiguity. We will never know whether Abdul is sadder but wiser and therefore, in an "inner" or spiritual sense, has really attained unspeakable wisdom and uncountable riches or, on the other hand, whether his knowledge only concerns the horrendous reality of the jinn which is unspeakable because he is tongueless and his coins uncountable because he is limbless. The latter alternative -- literal, accusatory, and bitter -- is perhaps what the Caliph, as representative of worldly order and doctrinal orthodoxy, intended. The Sufis might be expected to favor the first alternative. For example, Ibnu'l-Farid (d. 1235) speaks of a cataleptic woman who is able to foretell future events and speak in a language she never learned. He takes this as evidence that she is under control of the jinn and argues that if such a relationship is possible between bodily and spiritual beings, how much the more a relationship between creature and Creator (Nicholson, 1921: 220, n.225). Jili (d. 1412) has a similarly complex view of relations between mystics and the jinn who believe in God:

Their night is our day, and their day our night. After the sun sets in our earth, they appear on it and fall in love with the children of men. Most of these spirits envy the disciples of the Mystic Way, and taking them unawares bring them to ruin (Ibid.: 124).

It appears from this that these jinn want to love and serve God, insofar as they fall in love with and envy the Sufis. But, like the "elementals" of western occult literature, they are partial beings, one-sided, incapable of maintaining a vision of the whole. They have "one-track minds" so that their best intentions are perverted and distorted. The psychological picture which emerges from this is that of the instinctual level of the psyche, where the instinct-archetypes have lost the harmonious whole-making perspective of the Self and fall apart into autonomous elements, each striving blindly for its own ends.

Although the jinn are unique to the Arabic and Islamic cultural world, the role they play is given other names in other traditions. Buddhist cosmology speaks of "hungry ghosts," which occupy the second lowest of twenty-seven ranks of beings, just two ranks below humans (Rinpoche: 24f). To be possessed by hungry ghosts is to be in "the mental state in which a host of desires arises in our minds . . . [such that] we do not know how to be satisfied even when we attain our desire of the moment" (Niwano: 8). Trungpa (139) describes it much more graphically:

Now [the individual] experiences great hunger for more pleasurable, spacious conditions and fantasizes numerous ways to satisfy his hunger. . . . Each time he seems about to achieve

pleasure, he is rudely awakened from his idyllic dream; but his hunger is so demanding that he is not daunted and so continues to churn out fantasies of future satisfaction. The pain of disappointment involves [him] in a love-hate relationship with his dreams. He is fascinated by them, but the disappointment is so painful that he is repelled by them as well (139).

In these mytho-psychological words, Trungpa describes the foundational insight of Buddhism, namely that (profane) human existence is characterized by pain and that pain originates in desire. Hungry ghosts, like jinn, personify our frantic, obsessive alienation from ourselves.

Hinduism warns its ambitious seekers after enlightenment to beware of the *siddhis*, or miraculous powers (cf. Eliade, 1954: 85-90). The universal experience of accomplished yogins is that at a certain level of spiritual achievement, one naturally acquires certain superior-seeming talents. For example, one may know the cries of all creatures, the details of one's own previous existences, the mental states of other men, and the like. These are very much the phenomena discussed above in the chapter on the love potion. They stem from achieving a conscious connection with one's own unity (the Self) and that of the universe. The danger of the *siddhis* is that the yogin may become side-tracked into a pursuit of these numinous, yet far less than ultimate matters, and forget about nirvana or union with God. This is exactly the state into which Abdul has fallen.

Abdul's greed is not only for gold. He was always seeking wisdom, as well; and in the beautiful woman of the cave he thought he had found sexual and emotional fulfillment also. Jinn, hungry ghosts, and obsession with *siddhis* all point to a tension between a centered relationship to one's whole being on the one hand and, on the other, a distorted, unbalanced perversion of desire. The situation is analogous to that discussed in connection with Lohengrin in Chapter Three, except that Elsa needed to be sure her love for the unknown knight came from her Self rather than merely from her ego, from the "periphery" of the psyche. In the case of Abdul, the motivation symbolized by the Queen of the Jinn comes from a stratum of the psyche more primitive than that of the Self. Because these psychic elements are so primitive, powerful, and alien to the ego, they are quite outside of our control. Consequently, we experience the demon lover as gripping us with superhuman power. We find ourselves compelled to act in ways we would repudiate if only we were in our right minds. We obsess about these things, as "drunk" with our obsession as Mme. Bovary, while with another part of our mind, we find it silly and beneath our dignity. In this regard, we are exactly like Abdul who wants to praise God but cannot prevent his tongue pronouncing the most heinous blasphemies, who runs to his wife for comfort only to suffer the tongue's divorcing her, who tries to reassure his son only to give the tongue opportunity to kill the lad.

The story of Abdul derives its horror from the story-teller's device of clearly dividing the psychic agency between Abdul's ego and the autonomous will of the tongue. Although, in our everyday experience of the demon lover, the separation of powers is more subtle, portraying the conflict through distinct protagonists is a common literary device. I think, for example, of Octavius and Tanner in G. B. Shaw's *Man and Superman*. Tanner, who most resembles the G. B. Shaw who wrote the introduction to the play has just described women -- and Ann, in particular -- as lionesses who devour their mates.

Octavius: I do so want her to eat me that I can bear your brutalities because they give me hope.

Tanner: Tavy: that's the devilish side of a woman's fascination: she makes you will your own destruction.

Octavius: But it's not destruction; it's fulfillment.

Tanner: Yes, of her purpose; and that purpose is neither her happiness nor yours, but Nature's (60).

By "Nature," here, Tanner and Shaw refer to the propagation of the species. For them, woman is nothing but an embodiment of this instinct-archetype. Tanner uses his cynicism as a shield to prevent his falling for the demon lover, Ann, while Tavy cannot wait to be devoured. The one wants his independence at the price of dishonesty while the other is willing to buy illusory bliss at the cost of his individuality. They are two parts of a single person, drawn to and yet fighting off the demon lover.

Splitting and fragmentation is a central manifestation of involvement with a demon lover. The picture of a whole world and a whole Self breaks into pieces. I blind myself to one reality in order to believe in or enjoy another. Abdul wants one thing while his jinn-possessed tongue achieves another. In *Women in Love*, Birkin correctly diagnoses this fragmentation in Gerald:

"Part of you wants the Pussum, and nothing but the Pussum, part of you wants the mines, the business, and nothing but the business -- and there you are -- all in bits -- "

"And part of me wants something else," said Gerald, in a queer, quiet, real voice (1982: 154).

A "real" romantic love, one which pulled Gerald together at the level of the Self, would not leave such a gnawing sense of dissatisfaction. Gerald's "wound" is open. Closing it is beyond his ability, so that he can only find temporary and fragmentary relief in the Pussum, in the mines, or even in Gudrun, the woman who evidently loves him -- as we see about a hundred pages later when he enters her bedroom in the middle of the night without warning. "He was a perfect hard flame of passionate desire for her. Yet in the small core of the flame was an unyielding anguish for another thing" (256). Thomas Hardy's *Return of the Native* presents another variation on this theme in Eustacia Vye's psychic fragmentation:

"As far as social ethics were concerned Eustacia approached the savage state, though in emotions she was all the while an epicure. She had advanced to the secret recesses of sensuousness, yet had hardly crossed the threshold of conventionality" (85).

Beneath the wound in the Self, therefore, are an indefinite number of autonomous and unyielding desires: sensuousness, safety, comfort, meaning, purpose, power, self-worth, self-annihilation, and many more. Each of these has the capacity, indeed the propensity, to put itself forward as the central or absolute requirement of the personality.

The difference between these two levels of psychic organization, that of the demonic instinct-archetypes and that of the Self, may be characterized by the difference between the symbol of the worm and that of the snake. They appear to have a great deal in common: long flexible animals without limbs which crawl on their bellies and spend a good deal of time under ground. But the worm is blind and devoid of a central nervous system. Instead of a spinal column, it has a series of ganglia by which the several body segments respond independently. When cut into pieces, each segment can regenerate all the anatomical parts necessary for a new individual, very much as the instinct-archetypes claim independence and

autonomy when not harmonized into a Self. The worm has no need of eyes, as it lives its life buried in the dark earth or even fouler matrix, where it finds its nourishment. As devourer of corpses, its habitat is death itself. The snake, on the other hand, is noted for its sharp eyes and its wisdom ("Be ye wise as serpents and gentle as doves" -- Mt.10:16). So far from being associated with death, the snake's shedding of its skin has given rise to its universal mythic association with spontaneous regeneration and immortality. Not only does it have a central nervous system, but Jung even refers to the snake as a symbol for the spinal column itself. The foundational, uniting imagery of the snake is unmistakable from even a cursory study of Joseph Campbell's coffee-table book, *The Mythic Image*. A cobra, for example, spreads its hoods to shelter the Buddha as he reaches nirvana. Vishnu sleeps on a coiled serpent floating on the primordial ocean and dreams the world and everyone in it. A snake winds round the staff of Asklepios, the god of healing. Such examples and many, many more show the snake to be the foundation of consciousness, the unified primordial source of all health, both psychic and physical. When we are in touch with our snake, our Self, we are in harmony with ourselves and with the universe. Opposing to our snake, we are torn apart; we enter the deathly realm of the worm.

The threat, then, of the demon lover is that he or she pulls us into this dark, fragmentary world reeking of death. Why, then, are we so fascinated with this figure? Does it shimmer and move and seem to come alive like a corpse being devoured by worms? Abdul cannot resist the Queen of the Jinn. Mme. Bovary, being deprived of Rodolphe, spends her time and money lavishly on an affair with Leon, a man she does not really love. Gerald keeps returning to the Pussum. The demon lover is rewarding, certainly not in an ultimate sense, but rewarding enough that we can not leave him or her alone. In a flippant moment Lord Byron had a word to say about it:

In her first passion woman loves her lover,
In all the others all she loves is love,
Which grows a habit she can ne'er get over
And fits her loosely -- like an easy glove, . . .
(Canto 3, v. iii)

These facts are just as true, just as irrational, and just as inescapable for men as for women.

Lawrence describes Gerald's fragmentation as a search:

He had found his most satisfying relief in women. After a debauch with some desperate woman, he went on quite easy and forgetful. . . . A Pussum was alright in her way, but she was an exceptional case, and even she mattered extremely little. No, women in that sense were useless to him any more. He felt that his mind needed acute stimulation, before he could be physically roused (307).

Gerald looks to desperate women for escape from the confines of his ego and superego. He wants peace and freedom from the demanding, rigid, mechanical, exhausting, emotionless world he has constructed for himself. He goes to the opposite extreme, to a woman whose life is very much in pieces to find a semblance of what he seeks. But on closer inspection, what she offers looks like the wormy corpse's horrid pretense to life. She allows Gerald to forget his rigidity for a short time, but leaves him longing for another opposite, mental stimulation. Every "cure" unbalances the psychic system and requires, in its turn, to be cured.

Flaubert knows the cycle well. Here Emma Bovary cures her desolation with a foolish semblance of a Lohengrin:

No, she was not happy -- she had never been. Whence came this insufficiency in life -- this instantaneous turning to decay of everything on which she had leaned? But if there were somewhere a being strong and beautiful, a radiant nature, full at once of exaltation and refinement, a poet's heart in an angel's form, a lyre with sounding chords ringing out elegiac epithalmia to heaven, why, perchance, should she not find him? (311)

She wants a man who will sweep her off her feet and never let her touch the earth again. Having no capacity to understand the mystery of the naked sword and having no respect for loneliness, Mme. Bovary longs for some kind of ultimate peace and unity. It is an eternal longing to return to some original state of oneness.

Marguerite Duras, in her novella, *The Lover*, expresses this longing in very sensual terms. A fifteen-year-old, extremely wise and precocious French girl is having an affair with a twenty-seven-year-old, child-like milquetoast of a Chinese man. Eyes averted in shame, he picks her up at her Saigon high school in his limousine every afternoon:

I tell him to come over to me, tell him he must possess me again. . . . I tell him of this desire. He tells me to wait a while. Talks to me, says he knew right away, when we were crossing the river that I'd be like this after my first lover, that I'd love love, he says he knows now I'll deceive him and deceive all the men I'm ever with. . . . His hands are expert, marvelous, perfect. . . . He calls me a whore, a slut, he says I'm his only love, and that's what he ought to say, and what you do say when you just let things say themselves, when you let the body alone, to seek and find and feel what it likes, and then everything is right, and nothing's wasted, the waste is covered over and all is swept away in the torrent, in the force of desire (42f).

She is describing a good deal more than good sex in this passage. She is describing a unity of two beings which sounds exactly like a taste of the love potion. In fact it is the love potion. What gives life to the demon lover is the same divine spark which makes the love of God the source, depth, and meaning of romantic love. Let the butterfly suck nectar from the rose, let the soul suck mere sustenance from eros, the divine spark in romantic love makes the soul a moth plunging back and forth through the flame of self-transcendence.

The demon lover has long been the bugaboo of romantic love. It may at first seem strange to find the divine spark animating him, giving him life, giving him soul or "anima." Christian theologian, Paul Tillich, however, would not be surprised.

Demons in mythological vision are divine-antidivine beings. They are not simply negations of the divine but participate in a distorted way in the power and holiness of the divine. The term must be understood against this mythological background. The demonic does not resist self-transcendence as does the profane, but it distorts self-transcendence by identifying a particular bearer of holiness with the holy itself. . . . The claim of something finite to infinity or to divine greatness is the characteristic of the demonic (Vol. 3: 102).

In similar manner the demon lover represents a distortion of the unity, balance, wholeness, and life of romantic love. In the following interchange from *Women in Love*, Hermione shows how near and yet how far she is to attaining such wholeness. Birkin plays the role of her demon lover in this passage:

She was gnawed as by a neuralgia, tormented by his potential absence from her . . . As she stood

bearing herself pensively, the rapt look on her face, that seemed spiritual, like the angels, but which came from torture, gave her a certain poignancy that tore his heart with pity. He saw her bowed head, her rapt face, the face of an almost demoniacal ecstasy. Feeling him looking, she lifted her face and sought his eyes, her own beautiful grey eyes flaring him a great signal. But he avoided her look, she sank her head in torment and shame, the gnawing at her heart going on. And he, too, was tortured with shame, and ultimate dislike, and with acute pity for her . . . (69).

Now that we have defined the demon lover as a fragmentary and distorted representation of the divine spark which makes romantic love but a species of the love of God, we must ask how such corruption comes about. Again, we shall begin with a story rather than with a theory. The story of Abdul expresses the mythic stratum of the psyche, describes the demon lover in essential and generalized terms. It applies to everyone. The story of Paul Morel, from *Sons and Lovers*, describes how the corruption of the divine spark comes about with a specific individual.

The Story of Paul Morel

Paul's mother married his father because he seemed distinguished and caring. Within a very few years she came to despise him for his neglect of her, his lack of grit, his drinking, and his impulsiveness. She turned her attentions to her eldest son, William, and, after his death to Paul, her second son. Paul and his mother enjoyed an easy intimacy -- sometimes, when on outings, even acting a bit like lovers. She clung to him.

Everything he did was for her. She waited for his coming home in the evening, and then she unburdened herself of all she had pondered or of all that had occurred to her during the day. He sat and listened with his earnestness. The two shared lives (116).

As late as age twenty-three, after two significant love affairs of his own, Paul tells his mother: "But I shan't marry, mother. I shall live with you and we'll have a servant" (239).

His first and more significant love was Miriam, a girl from a nearby farm who thought herself "a princess turned into a swine-girl" (142). She was afraid of this young man like a Walter Scott hero, who could paint and speak French and commuted everyday to Nottingham to work. He taught her his nature mysticism through observations on life in the countryside about them and through his painting, which appeared as if he had "painted the shimmering protoplasm in the leaves . . . and not the stiffness of the shape." He vivified things which previously had had no meaning for her (151). He drew from his mother "the life warmth, the strength to produce; Miriam urged this warmth into intensity like a white light" (157). "With Miriam he was always on the high plane of abstraction, when his natural fire of love was transmuted into the fine stream of thought" (171).

Paul could not abide the way Miriam would bend over a flower, as though the two were loving one another, it was "too intimate" (171). She bent over his drawings the same way, and "it irritated him that she peered so into everything that was his, searching him out" (198). He was afraid of her love, afraid she would suck the life and soul out of him.

"You don't want to love," [he accused her], "your eternal and abnormal craving is to be loved. You aren't positive, you're negative. You absorb, absorb, as if you must fill yourself up with love, because you've got a shortage somewhere" (214f).

For her part she thought, "There was something pathetic about this man. He wanted so badly to love, to be tender" (216). But he was violent. He smashed her beliefs, the religion in which she lived (190). Meanwhile, she was the threshing floor for his own beliefs. "While he trampled his ideas upon her soul, the truth came out for him. She alone helped him towards realization" (223). He hated the intimacy and the power this gave her.

Paul ended their relationship because they seemed unable to express their affection physically.

They were both highly ambivalent. "She wanted to run her hands down his sides. She always wanted to embrace him, so long as he did not want her" (187).

He did not know he wanted to crush her onto his breast to ease the ache there. He was afraid of her. The fact that he might want her as a man wants a woman had in him been suppressed into a shame. When she shrank in her convulsed coiled torture from the thought of such a thing, he had winced to the depths of his soul. And now this "purity" prevented even their first love-kiss. It was as if she could scarcely stand the shock of physical love, even a passionate kiss, and then he was too shrinking and sensitive to give it (176).

Two years later they attempted love-making, but he was completely put off, finding "the look at the back of her eyes, like a creature awaiting immolation" (282).

Miriam was one year younger than Paul. When he took up with Clara, he was twenty-three; she was thirty and divorced. His attraction to her was largely physical. He was very conscious of her breasts and arms and the down on her cheek. At one point they go to a play:

A kind of eternal look about her, as if she were a wistful sphinx, made it necessary for him to kiss her. . . . He was Clara's white heavy arms, her throat, her moving bosom. That seemed to be himself. Then away somewhere the play went on, and he was identified with that also. There was no himself. The gray and black eyes of Clara, her bosom coming down on him, her arm that he held gripped between his hands, were all that existed. Then he felt himself small and helpless, her towering in her force above him (321).

Their love-making at the beginning of the affair was described earlier in this chapter as a powerful experience of the wound in the Self which left them unsatisfied but thirsty for more. As time passed their love making grew more mechanical, so they gradually began to "introduce novelties": such as choosing a spot near enough to the river that the water almost touched their faces, or in a hollow beside the footpath while people walked by (353).

If Paul could blame his first failure in love on Miriam, Clara would blame him for his second. She complained that he never gave himself to her. He replied, "If I start to make love to you, I just go like a leaf down the wind." -- "And leave me out of count," (352) she returned.

"Take me!" he said simply.

Occasionally she would. . . . She was afraid of the man who was not there with her, whom she could feel behind this make-believe lover; somebody sinister, that filled her with horror . . . it made her feel as if death itself had her in its grip (374).

There was something evanescent about Morel, she thought, something shifting and false. He would never make sure ground for a woman to stand on (393).

Paul felt this very keenly:

"You know, mother, I think there must be something the matter with me, that I can't love. When she's there, as a rule, I do love her. Sometimes, when I see her just as the woman, I love her, mother; but then, when she talks and criticizes, I often don't listen to her."

"Yet she's as much sense as Miriam."

"Perhaps; and I love her better than Miriam. But why don't they hold me?"

The last question was almost a lamentation (339).

Paul knows the answer to his own question: no other woman can hold him so long as his mother lives. He says it himself on the page following the lamentation quoted above. Unfortunately the novel ends too soon after Mrs. Morel's death for us to learn whether Paul

has, indeed, been freed from the grasp of the demon lover.

There can be no doubt that Paul Morel's relationship to his mother lies somewhere at the root of his demonic eros.[1] We are presented first of all with a picture of massive insufficiency passed on from generation to generation. Mrs. Morel looked to her husband to make up for the wound in her Self, and he fled her expectations, preferring to drink and rage away his frustrations. In looking to his mother, therefore, Paul is not only looking to one who is already wounded, but he cannot ignore the fact that he is no higher than her third choice -- his father and older brother having already failed her. He himself received scant recognition from her for his efforts at painting. It is easy to see why he is mortally afraid of being sucked dry by Miriam or of being overwhelmed by Clara. These are but shadows of the threat his mother poses for him. Because Mrs. Morel has been so needy and clinging, intimacy has, in Paul's experience, come to mean the threat of being drained and smothered.

Looked at this way, Miriam and Clara function for Paul as fragments of his mother. What she is not able or unwilling to give in the form of encouragement and understanding regarding his painting, Miriam supplies. He gets a kind of starter dose of life warmth from his mother, but Miriam focuses and intensifies it. But then something stops him. He cannot abide her pouring intensity, as she bends over a flower, his work, or himself. He requires her attention to his ideas, but he has to trample them brutally out on her soul, as though punishing her for getting too near or in order to drive her away. The reason he cannot express his affection for her in a physical manner is very likely that he needs, for safety's sake, to keep his relationship with her on a purely intellectual/spiritual plane. He cannot open himself to her for fear of being sucked dry.

What is left out in his relationship with Miriam, Paul pours into his affair with Clara. She represents the physical, instinctual dimension of relationship for him. So intent is he upon keeping the spiritual and bodily realms separate, that he seems unwilling to accept his mother's observation that Clara has "as much sense" as Miriam. In fact she is also sensitive, intelligent, and fairly well-read. She even reads French, though not so well as Paul. Paul seems to need to ignore that side of her. He needs to keep split apart these two dimensions of himself and of relationship. He is frightened of being smothered, psychologically, as in the soft flesh he so badly needs to be held by.

Miriam and Clara are more in agreement about Paul than he is about them. He is their demon lover while they are his. He, too, promises a great deal more than he can deliver. They see him as undeveloped, undependable, unable to love and unable to be loved. For all his charms and accomplishments, in short, he is a "mama's boy." He flees intimacy and provides "no solid ground for a woman to stand on." Quite the opposite: he looks to find his own footing in a woman, in his mother. Because he has not developed a relationship with the ground of his own psyche, i.e., his Self, he seeks it elsewhere. As a consequence, his Self remains undeveloped. It never knits together his gaping wound. This is why women who seek a real engagement from him are disappointed by the softness at his core.

We would not go far wrong to surmise that Paul's earliest experiences of his mother were frustrating. On account of her own neediness, she lived in an inaccessible narcissistic cocoon,[2] leaving Paul feeling abandoned and unworthy of love and companionship. This configuration was then repeated twice, as Paul had to wait for both his father and his brother

to fail his mother before she would turn to him. When she finally did so, he had cause to rejoice, but only tentatively -- as she had amply proven her capacity for emotional treachery. He had learned by this time that he was, on his own account, unworthy of real affection or high regard. Thus in his mind, what his mother offered him was unexpected and unearned. He was almost worthy. He would do in a pinch to distract someone from her grieving the people she evidently preferred to him. Still, he felt more solid than he ever had before. He had to pay for this paltry gratification by tolerating his mother's draining, smothering, and clinging behavior. Because it was such a relief from abandonment, Paul found these conditions quite agreeable, indeed a privilege.

The deeper meaning of the cost he had to pay for this false stability was that he came to look to his mother for the support he should have found in his own Self. Lacking a foundation of psychological stability within himself, he understandably appeared groundless in the eyes of Clara and pitifully incapable of love in the eyes of Miriam. This, too, is why his mother's death might become the occasion for his establishing himself as an independent, self-sufficient, and emotionally adequate human being.

For Paul Morel, then, the demon lover's power derives from her seeming to offer him access to the unity, balance, and foundational stability of the Self. In this, he is by no means distinct from all victims of demon lovers. Although his observations about them are by no means wrong, Paul's demon lovers are not demonic in themselves but are made so by what he projects onto them. In the language of Tillich, Paul sees Clara and Miriam as bearers of the Holy Unification of Self. They do bear this, as everyone does. Paul is not wrong about their having very great significance for him. His mistake is to believe that he will achieve self-transcendence through them, by possessing them in a literal sense. In this literalism he distorts them as symbols of his own self-transcendence. This distortion is what makes them demon lovers for him.

There is no wonder that our demon lover always mirrors our own psychic woundedness. Our demon lovers are a crystallization of everything that is unfinished, unwhole, and unbalanced in us. We fall in love with them because we rightly see in them the secret of our potential wholeness.

I would like to think that our association with them can crucially assist our striving for wholeness. This is the topic of the next chapter. Abdul may very possibly be sadder but truly wiser and truly richer. Perhaps his love affair with the Queen of the Jinn has transformed him so profoundly that he now is familiar with truths the rest of us are very unlikely to encounter and that he is rich in a way we cannot fully appreciate.

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1. The "mother complex" is frequently involved in issues of romantic love. I am not prepared, however, to generalize the case of Paul Morel too widely.
 2. By "narcissistic cocoon," I refer to the remoteness and self-referenced quality of an individual suffering from what Balint calls the "basic fault" or what Kohut calls the narcissistic personality. It is as though these people cannot be reached for genuine interpersonal communication, even though they may be sufficiently socialized as to hid this "wound" from superficial observation.