Symbolist Drama and New Genesis: The Concept of the Suffering Demon As the Ordering Principle of Chaos

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Every literary movement has its catalogue of themes to express aesthetic or philosophical tenets and to enhance the perception of its historical uniqueness. Symbolism, which rejected the stringent rules of the scientific approach to literature favoured by naturalism, devoted itself to the study of a mathematically and accurately constructed world model on the other side of the mirror. This mirror functioned as a threshold marking a break in the continuous accumulation of knowledge and forcing the cognitive process to move in the *other* direction. It can be seen as a demarcation line between the two movements and, thus, between their respective epistomologies. Whereas the Naturalists' concept of cognizance was delineated by the process in which human thought was corrected by the science of nature or the external order of things, the Symbolists' concept of epistemology was based on the very absence of a clear-cut distinction between reality and illusion, public and private space, objectivity and subjectivity, thesis and idea, real space and the other space, what Foucault calls, a heterotopia.[1] Accordingly, "the other side of the mirror" was represented by the eternal bond to the unknown, the mystery of the universe, and apocalyptic expectations about social changes and revolution, rather than by an image of existing things, observable reality, and the scientific pursuit of truth. As a corollary of this shift, the symbolist playwrights, writers, and painters felt a pressing need to re-define old notions and to establish new paradigms for the most basic philosophical concepts of genesis and eschatology.

One of these paradigms, the "suffering demon," which surfaced in novels, short-stories, dramas, and paintings in many Eastern and Western European countries at the turn of the century, has gone

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unnoticed by theatre scholars. The "suffering demon" was the Symbolists' attempt to establish metaphysical exegesis, i.e., to establish man's place in the micro- and macro-cosms of the changing Universe. By way of addressing the scholarly inattention to this critical feature of the Symbolist aesthetic, and due to the complexity of the topic, my essay will focus on two central arguments. First, the main changes in the myth of the Devil and the significant historical and aesthetic/philosophical principles that made the Devil emerge as a suffering demon will be presented. Second, the execution of the theme in selected works will be discussed.

The Christian story of the Devil can be found in two myths which exist independently.[2] One of them is the myth of the rebellion and fall of the angels, which is based on an interpretation of a single line of Isaiah: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning."[3] The second myth which was accepted by Hebrew and Christian writers tells the story of the Angels of God who having fallen in love with the daughters of men, sinned with them, and as a punishment for their sin were expelled out of the Kingdom of Heaven.[4]

This binary opposition of good and evil spirits was characteristic only of those religions which were dualistic in nature. Such an assumption is supported by ample examples from the religious tradition of Israel. Satan was not considered God's adversary in the Mosaic system. In Genesis, the serpent is merely the most subtle and cunning of the beasts.[5] The Old Testament recognizes Beelzebub only as a divinity of the idolaters.[6] In the Book of Job, Satan appears among the angels in heaven as a malicious servant of God who enjoys performing the functions of a tempter, a torturer, and an avenger, however, he neither contradicts God, nor hinders his work.[7] In the older books of Hebrew literature, especially in the Pentateuch, Satan is not mentioned at all. Zachariah speaks of Satan as an angel whose office it is to accuse and to demand the punishment of the wicked. Thus, he may be seen as an adversary of man but never of God.

Christianity considerably changed previously accepted concepts. Jehovah was transformed into a milder and kinder god. His son, for love of man, became man to expiate original sin. If, in the "Book of Wisdom," Satan is treated as a disturber and corrupter of the work of God, impelling our first parents to sin through his envy, this new Satan gains a new dimension--a degree of greatness and importance.[8] This image of the Devil has its roots in two biblical interpretations. First, Satan leads to sin; redemption can only be provided by the death of God's son, Christ. Second, even though he crushed the Gates of Hell and rescued the souls of the dead, Christ did not completely overthrow Satan's power.[9]

In keeping with this biblical interpretation, the Christian fathers

saw Satan as a powerful adversary of God. At the same time, he acquired a more realistic shape for congregations. From the third century onward, Satan started to be associated with anti-Christian forces. For example, Roman and Germanic gods and goddesses, i.e., Jove, Minerva, Venus, Loki, and Feuris, were considered the servants of the Prince of Darkness. Tertullian was convinced that Rome was Satan's empire.[10] In the centuries to follow, Christianity's contact with other religions brought additional elements to the myth of the Devil. He could be seen in an animal shape, as a faun, a satyr, or appear as a human bearing resemblance to Plato, Nero, and Mahomet, individuals who were not accepted by the growing ecclesiastical groups. Simultaneously, the concept of the devil infiltrated the Church's politics, literature, philosophy, and visual arts. The study of Church history from the fourth to the fifteenth century offers interesting clues about the development of the myth of the Devil which reached its apex in Medieval witchcraft. Throughout the centuries, the Christian Church used this particular myth to fight against laxity among both clerics and laymen.[11] Men and women were burnt at the stake and their property was confiscated by either the state of the Church because they were believed to have signed a pact with the Devil.[12] The didactic ecclesiastical writings from the eleventh and twelfth centuries depicted some cathedrals, choirs, cloisters, or priests, monks, and nuns as belonging to the domain of Satan.[13] St. Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* and St. Aquinas' *De Malo* discussed at length the concept of evil and its place in God's and man's cosmos.[14] On the other hand, in the popular tradition, the Devil was presented on medieval stages as a comic figure rather than as a powerful adversary of God.[15]

Even though the basic ecclesiastical image of the Devil was firmly entrenched in biblical tradition, vernacular literature and philosophy indicate that the humanist's attitude toward the Devil underwent a considerable transformation throughout the next centuries. For example, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* and Milton's *Paradise Lost* offered a new dimension to the treatment of the Prince of Darkness. The Devil was portrayed as God's *equal* whose aim was to strike God through man. Satan or Mephistopheles were defined in terms of the concept of the *principum individuationis* rather than as a medieval generic type. Romantics, whose theory was rooted in the philosophy of Leibniz and Wolfe, not only elaborated on the image, but also established a new relationship between the Devil and man, wherein man was, for the first time, perceived as the creator and the Pan of his cosmos. Accordingly, it was man and not God who shaped his fate and chose his destiny; he, the poet, and not Christ, suffered for mankind and sacrificed his life to redeem souls.[16] This shift in

approach, this new "religion," was dictated by and had its origin in the belief that the world which God created was full of suffering and disorder. In his fight for the new order, man chose the Devil, God's powerful adversary, who, as in Goethe's *Faust* or Byron's *Cain*, could be seen either as a shadow figure of a struggling hero, or as an initiator leading the hero to the forbidden tree of knowledge. The Symbolists' nostalgic longing for the past and its archetypes found its full expression in the mysteries of occult lore and demonology, i.e., themes drawn from the domain of the underworld. At the same time, however, a linear perception of the devil-figure was ruptured. Huysman's *La Bas* (1891), is one of a very few examples of the Black Mass and satanism in literature depicting Satan both as a grim figure of medieval iconography and the symbol of a human being probing into the limits of existence.[17] This interest in mysticism coupled with the philosophies of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer forced the Symbolists to revise their understanding of the treatment of the evil spirit. Since God was dead or dying, the equilibrium between reason and passion, or good and evil, was out of balance. Since God was dead, or dying, only passion was left; but passion bereft of its counterpart, reason, can be the source of both creativity and destruction.

As a corollary of this philosophy, the Symbolists saw themselves torn between a subjective, or internal, world of dreams, illusions, and hallucinations, and an objective, or external, world governed by rigid rules derived from politics, Christian morality, and the materialism of the age. As the century drew toward its close, a feeling of uneasiness, intense self-consciousness, aesthetic hyper-sensitivity, and fear of the next millennium, as well as of the inevitable collision between inner and outer worlds, engulfed intellectuals in melancholic visions of death and apocalypse. Their cosmos seemed to be spinning aimlessly. As the image of God faded, the world seemed to come under the control of a collective unconsciousness which suppressed the struggle for individual freedom.[18]

This philosophy of an individual's fight for freedom and his/her defeat was depicted in Symbolist writings. Although it took different forms in different countries, the prevailing tone was the same. The hero, named Prometheus, Saviour, or Rebel, lost the power which had been given to him by the Romantics; instead, he was destroyed by God or by a collective ego, and, thus once again, acquired the distinctive features of a demon "fallen from heaven." However, this affirmation of alienation, isolation, and loneliness led to his suffering, which resulted from the realization that God did not care for human beings. Therefore, the hero was perceived as an outcast or a suffering demon rather than a traditional adversary of God or people's enemy.

The term "suffering demon" may seem, at first, to be merely a

well-phrased oxymoron contradicting, those religious beliefs which present the demon as a powerful adversary of God, the medieval tradition which depicted the Devil as a joyful and comic figure in, for example, the cycle plays, and the human need to distinguish between good and evil or between *summum bonum* and *infinitum malum*. The seeming contradiction in the term "suffering demon" was, however, made acceptable at the turn of the century through the Symbolists' technique of the *coincidentia oppositorum*.[19] The *coincidentia oppositorum* expresses the desire to erase the borderline and to combine different spheres and emotions, to reach a new dimension of a human experience through the assessment of extreme or juxtaposed emotions and situations. The semiotic and philosophical significance of this conjunction was immense in its day. It meant that love and hatred were neither binary opposites, nor only complementary emotions--but they could simultaneously be experienced; that light and darkness were merged into one entity. More importantly, suffering and demon were not immediately exclusive terms. On the contrary, the phrase was an expression of a change in the concepts of epistemology and cognizance. This change can be best explained in terms of the Symbolists' abandonment of the traditional space of representation of naturalism, and the movement toward the absence of clear-cut distinctions and the unification of the binary opposites--a decision that required establishment of a set of paradigms that could embrace the Chaos.

What is and who is the Symbolists' suffering demon? In order to answer this question and define the term, two functional categories will be used: "God versus Devil," which is dominated by biblical symbolism, and "People versus Soul," which concentrates on the conflicts between society and an individual. The image of the suffering demon represents the biblical struggle between good an evil spirits conceived, in unorthodox terms, as reversed roles, in order to illuminate the question of the true nature of the act of creation. On the other hand, the suffering of the demon can be perceived as the human quest for self-awareness, a probing of the limits of existence in the chaotic and demonic world of the turn of the century.

I. God vs. Devil

> Lucifer: The Maker--call him
> Which name thou wilt: he makes but to
> destroy.
> Byron, *Cain*, act I, scene 1.

This concept of the "Maker . . . [who] makes but to destroy," which finds its source in Byron, was further developed by Strindberg,

Panizza, and Vrubel. The Romantics perceived God as the major *dramatis persona* of the Myth of the Creation, and therefore, the Devil, be it Lucifer or Mephistopheles, was relegated to the position of a mere instigator of man's disobedience. The Symbolists presented a new perspective, i.e., the need to focus on the relationship between God and Lucifer. In the Epilogue to his *Inferno*, Strindberg offers a tenable explanation of this considerable shift in the presentation of biblical theme:

> Read the miracle-play that concludes his drama *Master Olaf*. He wrote this miracle-play thirty years ago, before he knew anything about the sect of heretics who called themselves Stedinger. Pope Gregory IX excommunicated them in the year 1232 because of their satanic teaching, which was that 'Lucifer the good God, expelled and dethroned by "The Other," will come again when the usurper, who is called God, has earned the contempt of mankind through his wretched rule, his cruelty, and his injustice, and has himself become convinced of his incompetence.'
>
> The Prince of the World, who condemns mortals to sin and punishes virtue by the Cross and the stake, by sleeplessness and nightmares, who is he? The tormentor, to whom we have been consigned because of some unknown or forgotten crime, committed in a previous existence? . . . What a Babylonian confusion.[20]

Strindberg attempts to deal with this confusion in his one-act play, *Coram Populo* (1878-1898), in which he depicts Lucifer as the Bearer of Light who is dethroned by God--the evil spirit. Thus, Strindberg reverses the biblical story and suggests that God created the world out of boredom. Therefore, the sole act of creation was but his hazardous gamble, whose result was of no importance, since

> from Nothingness it [the world] will be born and to Nothingness it will one day return.[21]

This notion of *cuvier*[22] reinforces the frigid nature of God. Moreover, his lack of interest in what will happen to the world is extended to people. In his eyes, they are but the creatures that will populate this out-of-nothing place and will only bring to him the pleasure of watching their sufferings, struggle, and their death. Young and beautiful Lucifer, a halo around his head, is opposed to the insipid nature of such an act of creation. He is full of sympathy for people and intends to prevent the evil scheming against the as yet not created

world, and it is this intention which brings God's wrath upon him and results in his eternal damnation. Like Prometheus, Lucifer, the Bearer of Light, for the love of people, decides to carry mankind the light of truth--the original sin that will be Adam and Eve's deliverance. His good intentions are openly stated in the conversation with Adam, in which he calls himself "Lucifer, the bearer of light, who desires [your] happiness, who suffers [your] sufferings."[23] However, he is chained for betraying God and is cast into the abyss. This physical act of limiting his actions and power adds to his moral suffering which stems from a realization that the struggle to save the world and its people is futile because even the total extermination of those he loves, which would deliver them, is countered by the powerful evil spirit, God:

Uriel Lucifer has breathed upon the waters; they rise and deliver the mortals.

God I know. But I have saved two of the last enlightened, who will never know the key to the mystery. Their vessel has come ashore on Mount Ararat and they have made burnt offerings.

Uriel But Lucifer has given them a plant called the vine, whose juice besots. A drop of wine, and they see things as they are.

God Lunatics! They don't know that I have endowed their plant with strange properties: madness, sleep, and forgetfulness. With this plant they will no longer know what their eyes have seen.

Uriel Woe is ours! What are they doing down there, fools who inhabit the earth?

God They are building a tower and they wish to storm heaven. Ha! Lucifer has taught them to question. Be it so! I shall confound their tongues so that their questions remain unanswered and my brother Lucifer be struck dumb![24]

In the context of Strindberg's play, it becomes apparent that the playwright intended to question the order of things which had come to him from the traditional, religious perception of the world and its creation. The theme had been used by numerous writers, but Strindberg's was a novel approach, since the Devil was viewed as a suffering demon rather than a powerful adversary of God. This new treatment of Lucifer, whose every action to save the world and to teach people to question is defied by the evil spirit, God, reflects a chaotic universe ruled by uncontested laws rather than by the light of truth. The melancholy mood of the play matches the suffering of the Demon

who will forever stay in the shadow of the triumphant God, the evil spirit, and watch God's cruel actions until the world returns to Nothingness.

Panizza's *The Council of Love* (1894) also subverts the biblical myth.[25] Although his play could be treated as satire on the arrival of syphilis, the very description of the Devil is open to a reading of the "suffering demon."

> The Devil stands before them [God, Mary, and Christ], leaning on one foot and supporting the other one with his hand. He wears a black close-fitting costume, but his features wear an expression that is decadent, worn and embittered.[26]

Andre Breton suggested that Panizza's Devil is *sympathique*.[27] However, he is more than that. He is both an intellectual and a rebel who, a long time ago, jeopardized the order of Heaven and forced God to relinquish half of his domain. Yet he is filled with nostalgia for the fine world, and dreams of promotion. But the world he left is not the same. He recognizes this change when he is summoned before the Creator because his help is required. Heaven is in a state of moral and physical decay. It has become a place of shrewd plottings and suppressed sexual desires, evidenced by the relationship between the Virgin Mary and the Devil. It seems as if he were at her mercy and, therefore, she will be amiable to him as long as either his presence satisfies her needs or his actions fulfill her whims. The moment he becomes dispensable, he is reminded of his place and position in the celestial circle:

> Forgotten and kicked downstairs. Dismissed. Audience finished. Anything goes when you do something for them, something they cannot do and that's really dirty, then they will turn on the smiles and say: "My friend, my friend." But once the audience is over, then back to your dirt and mud. Back to your "Devil's filth, Devil's filth."[28]

Thus the Devil is alienated and treated as a "sub-human" who can be used by a heavenly aristocracy to carry out their punitive orders. His alienation is increased by the fact that he is barred from having any contact with either angels or people, though he might be useful to them, if his books were not censored and could freely circulate in heaven. His promethean thoughts must be punished, because he is only what his position in the universe, restricted by the traditional concept of heaven and hell, allows him to be. In fact, though a senile

God and impotent Christ cannot prevent the deterioration of Christian values on the earth, the biblical myth must be perpetuated, because the old order must be maintained.

The act of perpetuating the old myth forces the Devil to take responsibility for the evil deeds which have been orchestrated in heaven. He becomes a scapegoat and a lonely figure who almost cries when he begs Mary for his freedom of thought, a freedom which, in his opinion, might revolutionize the stagnant powers in heaven. But Mary prefers the well-established order that covers up God's senility, Christ's lack of charisma, and her own lust for sexual fantasies. The Devil will be able to dream of a better world but to change nothing. An escape into the dream world, however, can be a dangerous act. Thus, in order to diminish his torment, the Devil must follow the orders of those who keep the power and withdraw into the darkness of his realm and suffer in silence. His only hope is the child born of his union with Salome. Syphilis will be sent down to earth to poison all mankind. Perhaps through his son, the Devil will gain his freedom of thought and speech.

Panizza's "suffering demon" functions thus as a probe used by the playwright to re-construct his vision of the world by using the biblical myths and indicating the depletion of vital energies that have kept the tensions between the forces binding together the Old Universe. As is indicated in the play, these forces, and specifically, the belief in the myth of their necessity to exist, lead to the crisis and rejection of the solid and firm world of realism and naturalism. De-creation, distortion, disintegration, fragmentation, dissolution, decomposition, and alienation, isolation, loneliness, randomness become the paradigms of this new problematic reality, i.e., Chaos.

Both *Coram Populo* and *The Council of Love* confront us with the issue of the Maker who creates only to destroy. Unlike Byron's Lucifer, however, whose task was to "show the history of the past, and present, and of the future worlds,"[29] Strindbergs's and Panizza's devils were an incarnation of the anguish which made them question the order of things. As the result of this enquiry, the demon, whose name was the "Bearer of Light," lost his proverbial powers; instead, he experienced suffering either as the result of his realization of the awesome strength of God, the evil spirit, or suffered defeat by a well-established order guarded by militant heavenly forces. Alienation, melancholy, sympathy for the fate of man, loneliness, and sadness were the new attributes of the devil-figure in Symbolist writings.

A similar tone in the treatment of the Devil was also to be adopted by painters, of whom Vrubel' is a good example.[30] Between 1890 and 1902, the Russian painter created a series of works featuring devils and illustrated Lermontov's poem *The Demon*. His fascination

with the Dark Prince is fully explained in a letter Vrubel wrote to his father in which he asserted:

> The Demon is a spirit which is not so much evil as suffering and vulnerable, yet withal a powerful and noble king.[31]

This statement epitomizes the mood of the painting *The Demon Seated* (1890) which depicts a strong man who is lost in thought. He is sitting alone on a huge plane between the sky and the earth. Behind him, there is a crystal-like flower which like a precious jade, reflects the rays of the setting sun. The light of the sunset casts a yellow shade on the torso and the arms of the figure. The face is hidden in darkness which is broken by a sparkle of light mirrored by a motionless tear on the face of a hero. Each detail of the painting seems to symbolize the demon's suffering, frustration, and alienation. The young man is sitting in a position of despair. His body is dwarfed, his arms embrace his bent knees, and his hands, which are joined together, express utmost resignation. The face reveals a turmoil of doubts, hopes, and longings. The eyes are directed not into the brightness of the setting sun but into darkness. It seems that the demon realizes that the beauty of the sunset is not for him to admire; that is, the light, which signifies peace and tranquility, is not for him. His spiritually charged sight is therefore directed into darkness which evokes a feeling that everything in front of him is closed. There is no hope, no future for him, but a deserted plane and an awesome air of silence that curls about him. This feeling of frustration is intensified by the use of various shades of blue, violet, lilac, and green. Their coldness seems to correspond to the mood of the picture which invokes in us the image of:

> Silence in which the saddened soul is inclined
> To feel more and more like an orphan. . . .[32]

II. People vs. Soul:

> Silence in which the saddened soul is inclined
> To feel more and more like an orphan,
> All alone in the melancholy evening
> Looking back at the past as at a flower-
> covered grave.
> Rodenbach, *Petits Poems de Bruges*.

If the concept of the "suffering demon" enriches interpretation of Vrubel's paintings, his works can also be perceived as a transient form

between the two categories, "God vs. Devil" and "People vs. Soul." On the one hand, the demon contains all the attributes of the evil spirit as presented by Strindberg and Panizza. On the other hand, he is painted in such a way as to show his resemblance to a human being struggling to find the meaning of existence and his place in society. In the latter interpretation man becomes the adversary of the people, for in pointing out the inefficiencies of the system, he automatically becomes the rebel--the evil spirit who suffocates when unable to break through the wall that separates him from other people. He is defeated by God's obsolete commandments by which the actions of man are measured. In the eyes of the people, the hero is perceived as the demon who must be expunged, since the freedom he offers means the destruction of a comfort of the dilapidated world described by Strindberg and Panizza. This concept of the "suffering demon" can be found in the works of Blok, Sologub, and Soloviov; Huysmans uses it metaphorically in *La Bas* to create an image of man probing the limits of human existence and thought.

Soloviov, the mystical anarchist, rejected the chaotic world of his time.[33] His *A Short Story of Antichrist* depicts this attitude, best expressed by Zinaida Gippuius's

> religion which would vindicate, sanctify and accept life. A religion not of solitude, but of communion, of the union of the many in the name of the one.[34]

Soloviov creates the image of "the one" who bears the signs of exceptional divine favour. He is a genius who might be characterized by nobility, beauty, lofty asceticism, disinterestedness, and active philanthropy. He believes that he has been chosen to give all men what they need.

> Christ as a moralist divided men into the good and into the bad, but I will unite them by blessings which are needed by the good and by the bad alike. Christ brought a sword, I shall bring peace.[35]

He is waiting for a sign that he is God's beloved before beginning his work to save humanity, but the sign is not given. Disillusioned, the genius attempts to commit suicide, but is saved by the Devil who comforts him:

> You are beautiful, powerful and great. Do your work in your own name, not in mine. I want nothing from you. He whom you regard as God asked of his son boundless

> obedience, obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. . . .[36]

The hero follows the voice of "a figure glowing with a misty phosphorescent light" and takes up the actions that will secure eternal, universal peace, i.e., the introduction of social reforms, unification of all cults, bread and circuses for the people of the world. The hero unites in himself the Tsar, who brings to the new age the ideal of the genuine Christian leader, and the Pope, who is the head of the unified Church and the Prophet of the new era to come. The hero symbolizes a regenerated concept of God which is, however, destroyed, because he refuses to tackle Christian dogma. For this reason, in the eyes of the people who defend and support the old order, the chaos, the hero assumes all of the characteristics of the Antichrist and, therefore, he must either be converted or die. The people, in order to safeguard well-established dogmas and patterns, reject the Humanist whose mystical, intellectual, and empirical knowledge classify him in their minds as in league with the demon, the Antichrist. Thus, the hero's dream to save mankind turns suddenly into a nightmare that brings pain and suffering to man, whereas God and his order return to normal.

The Antichrist is an example of a suffering demon who aspires to be a humanist. *The Petty Demon* by Sologub provides an example of a man whose suffering is caused by his own emotional, paranoic behaviour, imposed on him by the entire town.[37] Peredonov, a school teacher in one of the provinces in Russia, is the archetype of man's pathetic weakness and his inclinations toward pettiness--a man who marries a woman for convenience, harasses his pupils, becomes an infiltrator, and sees demons in everyone who mentions the inspector's position he wants to obtain. The novel/play is thick with cruel actions and latent sexual and homosexual desires, which, as Merezhkovsky maintains, are the indispensable means through which the foredoomed human will best express himself and his self-awareness.[38]

At the beginning of the novel/play, we are convinced that Peredonov is the demon himself. Only later, does one realize that his conviction is only half-true. The teacher is not the only demon, but one of many who live in this hostile, "perverted" society. It is society which forces him to escape into madness and makes him the "butt" of the town's cruel jokes. Peredonov is not aware of the game in which he must ultimately be a loser. Not one of the master-players, Peredonov is vulnerable to their blows when he withdraws from the immediate reality of life. Due to numerous intrigues behind his back to make him marry Varvara, his mind becomes sick and obsessed. He is blinded by the false appearances of the evil wasteland, a re-created

Sodom, in which eroticism and sadism are but subtle components of a morbid world devoted to sex and death. The town fully represents the true nature of a perverse society. The reader realizes that tormented Peredonov is only a petty demon in a horde of more ominous demons in this kingdom of Satan.

Peredonov's hopeless struggle with life and the hostile society that surrounds him was closely connected with Blok's perception of the world.[39] Blok's *The Stranger* presents another variant of the suffering demon whose pain was inflicted by people. The playwright himself, to a certain extent, suggested such a reading of the play in his essay *On Symbolism* written in 1910:

> The Stranger. She is not simply a lady in the black dress and with an ostrich feather in her hat. She is a demonic alloy of different worlds; mostly of grey and lilac. If I were using Vrubel's tools, I would paint the demon. However, one creates with the tools which have been bestowed upon him.[40]

Blok uses words to create symbolic images out of which the figure of The Stranger appears. Her arrival is anticipated by the Poet whose words sound like an incantation for occult lore:

> Poet Blue snow. Whirling. Softly falling. Blue eyes. This veil. Slowly she passes by. The sky has come open. Appear. Appear.[41]

A mysterious woman dressed all in black appears crossing the bridge. She meets Azure who awakens in her a dormant passion for love which ultimately changes its form to that of base sexual desire during the conversation with The Gentleman. The Poet, however, does not encounter his own creation. She disappears in the darkness of the night, and her footsteps are covered by the falling azure snow.

Who is this veiled woman? The Stranger, who is called to earth by The Poet, as well as The Astrologer, is the incarnation of a spirit who assumes a human shape and becomes a reflection of the figure we would like to see. Thus, The Stranger is the mirror of our dreams, ambitions, and desires. Such a perception of her finds its justification in the words she directs to The Gentleman:

> Now, let me think. In heaven, among the stars,
> I had no name at all . . .
> but here, on this blue earth,
> "Maria" is the name I like . . .
> Call me "Maria."[42]

These lines reinforce the conviction that she might either be the Virgin Mary, a pure incarnation of the earthborn passion awakened in her by Azure's platonic love, or a Maria Magdalena who is in the grip of a base sexuality. The Stranger moves from place to place in the quest for her identity, but all she finds is a feeling of alienation, the world bereft of emotions, and the failure of the people to respond to her true celestial nature. While on earth, like the characters from Sologub's novel, or Soloviov's short story, the Stranger becomes part of a chaotic and demonic world. She assumes different guises to adapt herself to the requirements of the successive stages of her quest. Yet, she dreams of becoming something more than a mirror of human needs and desires. Unable to accept being a reflection of different expectations, she must disappear, as other suffering demons have. There is only azure snow falling and

> Silence in which the saddened soul is inclined
> To feel more and more like an orphan. . . .[43]

In brief, both the theoretical and analytical parts of this essay indicate that the concept of the "suffering demon" can be seen as the ordering principle of Chaos and as an expression of the Symbolists' desire to establish man's place in the micro- and macro-cosms of the New Universe. The works of Strindberg, Panizza, and Vrubel deal with the external world, moulded by God, whose proverbial powers and intentions are questioned by the Rebel. Soloviov, Sologub, and Blok are concerned with life here and now. Their Rebel is Man who fights against the philosophical, cultural, and intellectual stultification at the turn of the century. However, neither God nor the collective is ready to accept the bearer of light and truth. He must disappear, as Blok's Stranger did. Only the literary creations described in this essay are marked with the presence of the other, i.e., the suffering demon.

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Notes

1. Heterotopia is a term which is borrowed from Michel Foucault. He defines heterotopia as a space which is a counter-site to the real space, i.e., the real space is simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted in heterotopia. See Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, Spring 1986: 22-27.

2. See, for example, Maurice Garcon, *The Devil* (New York: E.P. Dutton Co., 1930), Rossell Hope Robbins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1981), Jeffrey Burton Russell, *The Devil: Perception of Evil*

from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell UP, 1979), or *Lucifer the Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell UP, 1984).

3. Isaiah, XIV, 12.

4. The first myth does not seem to be of Christian origin, since many other religions refer to demons whose actions were contrary to the gods. In Egypt there was Set or Seth, the nefarious demon of death whose anger was to be feared. The Phoenicians opposed Moloch and Astarte to Baal and Astherath. Nor does the second myth seem to be of Christian origin, since it can be perceived as a modified version of the numerous stories from Greek and Roman literature in which marriages between gods and mortals were common. See, for example, Paul Carus, *The History of the Devil and the Idea of the Devil* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1974).

5. Genesis, III, 1.

6. In the Old Testament, the form Baal Zebub occurs four times in the first chapter of the second book of Kings and meant "Lord of Flies." The name itself was of a Canaanitish divinity, the chief seat of whose worship was at Ekron. See Arturo Graf, *The Story of the Devil* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1931) 35.

7. Job, I, 6; II, 1. The nature of Jewish monotheism can be found in the temptation of Abraham, the slaughter of the first-born in Egypt, the fire-rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the pestilence to punish David.

8. "For God created man to be immoral, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless, through envy of the devil came death into the world: and they that do hold of his side do find it." See *Wisdom of Solomon*, II, 23-24.

9. Satan was never as feared in any Judaic tradition as he was after the victory of Christ over him, after the completion of the work of redemption. St. John was the first to attempt to condemn the devil. He asserted that the world must be judged and the prince of this world, i.e., Satan, must be cast out. See John, XII, 31.

10. See Tertullian, "On the Spectacles" in *Dramatic Theory and Criticism* ed. Bernard F. Dukore (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974) 85-93.

11. Charlemagne accused the clergy of abusing the devil and Hell for the sake of filching money and seizing estates. See Graf 136. Pope John XII (955-963) was deposed of the papal office because, among many other things, he was found guilty of having drunk to the health of the devil. See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910) 4: 287.

12. See Rossell Hope Robins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1981).

13. See, for example, Walter Map's *On the Folly of Courtiers*, Heisterbach's *Dialogus Miraculorum*, Tilberienisis's *Otia Imperiala* in *Witchcraft in Europe 1100-1700*, Alan C. Kors and Edward Peters eds. (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1972).

14. See St. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Toronto: E. Mellen Press, 1974).

15. See A. Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), D. Owen *The Vision of Hell* (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1971), or Richard Axton, *European Drama of the Early Middle Ages* (Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 1975).

16. For example, in Juliusz Slowacki's *Kordian* (1834), the hero gives a monologue at Mont Blanc in which he pronounces his desire to suffer for mankind and sacrifices his own life to redeem the souls of others.

17. J.K. Huysmans, *Down There (La-Bas)*, trans. Keene Wallace (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972).

18. See, for example, G.M. Trevelyan *English Social History* (London: Pelican Books, 1977), chapter XVIII, Philippe Jullian, *Dreamers of Decadence: Symbolist Painters of 1890's*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975).

19. The term *coincidentia oppositorum* was introduced by the fifteenth century mystic, churchman, and philosopher, Nicholas of Cusa. It specifically referred to the union of contraries in God. For a more detailed discussion of the *coincidentia*

oppositorum see Mircea Eliade, *Mephistopheles et L'androgyne* (Paris: Gallimard) 95-154.

20. Strindberg, *Inferno and from an Occult Diary*. Trans. Mary Sandbach (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, Ltd.: 1979) 273.

21. Strindberg, *Coram Populo* in *Demons, Doubles and Dreamers. A Collection of Symbolists' Plays*, ed. and trans. D.C. Gerould (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publication, 1985) 37.

22. The notion of *Cuvier* refers to the speculation that the world had been destroyed several times before the creation of man. See, *The Complete Works of Byron*, ed. Paul E. More (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1933) 627.

23. *Demons, Doubles, and Dreamers* 38.

24. 39-40.

25. Oscar Panizza (1853-1921), a German writer who was persecuted by the Bavarian courts (for *The Council of Love*) and later by German authorities (for the poem *Parisiana*). In 1903 he began to manifest signs of paranoia for which he was to be confined for the rest of his life.

26. Oscar Panizza, *The Council of Love*, trans. Oreste F. Pucciani (New York: The Viking Press, 1973) 79.

27. x.

28. 98.

29. G.G. Byron, *Cain*, in *The Complete Works of Byron* 636.

30. Mikhail Aleksandrovich Vrubel (1856-1910), a Russian painter who was well-known for his illustrations of Lermontov's poem *The Demon* (a series of paintings). Vrubel suffered a mental illness from 1902; in 1906 he lost his sight.

31. "Introduction" to *Vrubel: Russian Painters Series* (Leningrad: Aurora Publication, 1975) v.

32. Jullian 250.

33. Vladimir Sergeevich Soloviov (1953-1900), a Russian philosopher and poet, a proponent of the idea of theocracy, a universal Church, and God-manhood. His works include: *The Crisis of Western Philosophy, La Russie et l'Eglise universelle, Three Conversations*.

34. James West, *Russian Symbolism* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1970) 134.

35. V.S. Soloviov, *A Short Story of Antichrist* in *A Soloviov Anthology*, ed. S. Frank (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1950) 230.

36. *A Soloviov Anthology* 231.

37. Fyodor Sologub was a pseudonym of Fyodr Teternikov (1863-1927), a Russian symbolist poet and novelist. Fyodor Sologub, *The Petty Demon*, trans. and intro. S.D. Cioran (Ann Arbor, MI.: Ardis Publishers, 1983). Shortly after the novel had been completed in 1907, it was adapted for the stage and travelled around Russia.

38. Merezhkovsky quoted by James Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretative History of Russian Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1966) 514.

39. Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok (1880-1921), a Russian symbolist poet who is known for his poems (*Poems About a Beautiful Lady, The Snow Mask* and plays (*The Puppet Show, The Stranger, The Rose and the Cross*). After the 1905 Revolution the focus of his poetry shifted to urban events.

40. Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Blok, *O symboliz'me* (St. Petersburg: Alkonost, 1921) 16. (Translation mine.)

41. Blok, *The Stranger*, in *Demons, Doubles and Dreamers* 154.

42. 158.

43. 250.