

DESIRE AS A MONSTER

Visible and invisible monsters in “The Afternoon Wind”

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Abstract

This study focuses on the appearances of monsters and their role as a physical existence and as a product of the mind in the Dutch Caribbean story “E biento di atardi”.¹ The meaning of the visible and (incorporeal) invisible monsters are examined in order to reveal hidden histories. The narratives create a space where their monstrosities are both hidden and revealed at the same time: the invisible ones find their origin in desires (incorporeal), while the visible show up as a replication of the imaginary ones. This article aims to prove that desire is the main reason for the existence of the literary horrendous creatures. With their presence, they subvert the story and at the same time, they deconstruct the image of Aruba, branded as ‘One happy island’. The space is inhabited by the living and the dead at the same time with their deepest longings and this creates horror and together with the environment of the island that is the setting of the story, they form the monstrosity making this 'happy island' a desert of inaccessible harshness and drought which is symbolically the breeding ground and the dominion of the monstrousness.

Introduction

The idea of the Caribbean islands as an exotic paradise parallel with the contriving of myths about monstrous creatures began with the discovery and conquest of the Caribbean in 1492 (and of Aruba in 1499 by Alonso de Ojeda) (Braham). Nowadays this two-sidedness in views of this region still exists. The idea of tropical beaches, exotic culture and exciting music of the Caribbean known from the touristic brochures combines with a dark side of mysterious religions and cults and its oral tradition of ghost stories (Graham Huguana 126 – 141). This western view is paralleled by a local tradition of oral storytelling that has great influence in Caribbean writing (Vété-Congolo) and these stories can be a way to unveil the hideousness on the islands that is kept secret in daily life. In the work of fiction of the contemporary author Jossy Tromp (1954), we can find uncanny places, monstrous creatures, ghosts and harsh circumstances that deconstruct the image of paradise. Tromp,

¹ “E biento di atardi” (“The Afternoon Wind”) is a short story from the collection of short stories *E biento di atardi y otro cuentanan Arubiano*, 1998 (*The Afternoon Wind and Other Aruban Stories*). All the stories are written in Papiamentu and the English versions are my translations.

an Aruban writer of fiction and poetry in Papiamentu, studied biology and law and was a teacher at the largest higher general secondary education school of the island. He made his debut as a writer in 1988 with the collection of short stories *Cetilalma y otro cuentanan Arubiano (Cetilalma and other Aruban Stories)*.² *Gabilan (Hawk, 2009)* was his first collection of poems and *Na caminda (On the way, 2015)* his second. He also wrote a play *Camid'i cruz (Crossroad)* in 2015. We can deduct from the titles of the collections of short stories that the author frames his stories as typically Aruban. In “E biento di atardi” he constructs a fantasized, imaginary, surreal and baroque island that resembles Aruba but is inhabited by eerie characters with deep desires and monstrous entities. Evil, decay and threat are omnipresent and there is almost no escape possible. The setting is the island inhabited with hostile and evil characters, desire, secrecy and superstition in grim habitat. The wind, the draught, the sea, the dust and cacti function as companions of the characters and form part of the same repulsiveness. In this story there appear to be traumatic occurrences in the past that are not made explicit. This may explain why the protagonist has a great desire to be with his mother (the monster) which is impossible to control and why he invents and perceives monsters. The appearances show up and hide at the same time, in order to play with the narrator, the text and the reader.

In this article, I will analyse the presence of monstrous creatures and constructions in the story “The Afternoon Wind” in order to identify what their functions are in relation to the desire in the story and I will reveal the link between longing and the existence of monstrosity.

Synopsis of “The Afternoon Wind”

The story is being told in an analepsis by the narrator as an adult man living on his own. He reflects on his life with his grandparents living on the granary, when the visit of a monster started after his mother had died. In “The Afternoon Wind” the beast returns to the main character and narrator when he is a mature man and in flashbacks, we get information about the visits in the past when he was still a young boy waiting for his mother.

Alejandro Simon Silvester reveals his obscure life as lonely boy, who lives with his grandparents Mamachi and Papachi in a desolated dilapidated granary. One of their children, Altigracia, was the mother of the narrator but she died when her son was a young boy.

² His other works are five volumes of short stories.

Alejandro constantly doubts about what is actually happening and what is a creation of his mind. On the one hand, he accepts the presence of different kind of monsters, but on the other hand, he does not understand why they come to him. One specific creature makes more contact: a horrible presence from another world with frightening eyes like fire worms, large donkey ears, plastic-like wet wings and a hot breath and it makes sharp noises (Tromp 5). The colour of its skin is grey and its back has short hairs on it and it smells like decayed rats and sulphur. Other creatures that habituate the story are ugly bulges, devils, beasts, bad souls, shapeshifters and the prince of bad dreams.

Alejandro Simon Silvestre relates the existence of the creatures to a hideous secret in the family and he sometimes confuses the specific monster with his mother Altagracia who died when he was a child. His grandparents took care of him, but the grandmother held him responsible for their misfortune, because he might be the product of incest. There is doubt about the stage of life of the grandfather, because occasionally he is considered to be dead, while he is still among the living. Mamachi and Papachi had two children: Federico died as a young man in the sea when he went fishing with his father during a heavy storm and Altagracia, the mother of the narrator whom they also lost. Alejandro remarks about her demise on page 41: 'my mother is dead for a long time now. The last memory of her was during that afternoon when I saw her lying in her bed... the room was full of white doves. On her right side there was a guardian angel'. Before she died, his mother promised him that she would come back to him and at that moment the longing for the return of his mother started. We do not know who the boy's father is and his existence is surrounded with assumptions, accusations and secrecy.

The supposedly (almost) dead grandfather dwells in the granary waiting for his death to come while waiting for a horrendous creature to come and visit him every day, but he refuses to accept his end. There are many uncertainties about the stage of life and death of the old man, because people said that he is dead, but at the same time, he is acting, as he is alive. Halfway the story the old man is found in the granary with his belly cut open and a huge amount of blood gushing out of it. He had hatchet cuts all over his body. The narrator recounts that 'they wanted to cut him in pieces, but something hindered them' (Tromp 25). However, the circumstances of his death are full of riddles and cause general bewilderment, as illustrated on page 34: 'the news about his death caused a lot of unrest. There were many versions of his death. Many of these were rumours, while others were speculations'.

The grandmother is an evil woman who holds her grandson responsible for the misfortunes and for the death of the old man and she keeps harassing him despite her love for him. The boy thinks that she is a lunatic and an evil person, because she was always doing strange things and according to him, her life was dark, and she could see the devil, spirits and beheaded creatures (40). The old woman is also cursing Altagracia, her own daughter and the mother of the boy, because of something that she presumably did in the past, which was considered intolerable. The grandmother repeatedly communicates with her dead children, accusing them for having abandoned her and begging them to come back.

Alejandro is continually haunted by the absence of his mother, by his desire to be with her again and by the presence of a monstrous being with its accomplices. The deformed figure returns to him in his adulthood, with the awful memories of his life on the granary. At the end, the creature changed into the appearance of his mother seducing him with her beautiful face and body. Alejandro starts to question his sanity and was tempted to follow her when she transformed into a big bat and flew out of the window.

Narrative perspective

The story is narrated from the perspective of the adult man, who looks back on the years of his macabre youth. This covers the larger part of the narrative, and only in the last pages we do return to the present'. The story about his childhood with the monster on the granary of his grandparents is narrated in retrospection by Alejandro as an adult. In this flashback, he recounts the event according to his own experience and interpretation, but he doubts his own existence and gets confused about what is reality and what is his own invention. He is constantly informing the reader that he is creating his own stories and inventing the experiences in his life: 'Maybe I was just fantasizing things or maybe I was imagining them. Maybe. On the other hand, it was not the first time that my brain was creating its own monsters' (Tromp 7). Again, on page 21 when he says that: 'I cannot remember if I was dreaming or if it was happening for real. In my case it does not matter anyhow, because of the subtle difference that exists according to me between dream and reality.'

Sometimes the narration is appropriated by the voice of the grandmother, and it looks like Alejandro is mimicking her (26-27 and 34-35) and on other occasions, there is an exterior narrator that describes an occurrence outside the perception of Alejandro and his grandmother, for instance, in the fragment where Federico died (28). The narrator is unreliable and he is

deliberately trying to confuse the reader, creating chaos, repetition, chasms and doubts in the narration.

The same, but still different

Before analysing the function of the monster, we first have to make clear what we mean with this category of creature. When we think of a monster, we imagine a grotesque creature that causes fright and aversion and causes threat and destruction to people. It is almost humanlike, but at the other side it belongs to the world of the abnormality and is being marginalized as other. At the same time, it belongs and it does not belong to the same world as the human race. Does the monster hide within us as our counterpart in order to reveal our secrets and does he manifest itself as a symbol of decay and disgust?

According to Aristotle: 'The first characteristic of the monster is to be different.' (Arnold 24), while Michael Palencia-Roth³ makes reference to the similarity and difference between the human being and the creature as he says that 'The monster- *teras* in Greek, *monstrum* in Latin- generally is a creature similar to yet different from human beings. Both the similarity and the difference are important in the term's semantic field. A monster deviates from the accepted norm of humanity. This may be a simple thought, but it has enormous consequences' (italics in original 24). The degree to which a certain appearance and its behaviour diverges from what can be considered as normative is relevant. Palencia-Roth places the paradigm of monstrosity and teratology in the writing of Homer when he wrote that 'The Cyclops, or Polyphemus, is a "monstrous man" (*Odyssey* 9: 187) both biologically and morally: biologically, through his gigantic size and his single eye, and morally, through barbarous practices and attitudes' and that they live 'beyond the borders of the known world' (25). It exists between the human and the other, the real and the fiction, the known and the unknown and between the purposefully and the unconscious.

'*Monster* derives from the Latin word *monstrum*, which in turn derives from the root *monere* (to warn)' (Asma, italics in original 13) and it is hence showing and warning at the same time.

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Hock-soon Ng⁴ argues that the word 'is derived from the Latin *monstrum*, from which the verb *monstrare* ("show" or "reveal") and *monere* ("warn" or "portend") are formed, and which also refers to a divine omen that announces God's (or the gods') will or judgment' (italics in original 4). Hock-soon Ng argues further that 'major nineteenth-century Gothic narratives, especially *fin de siècle* Gothic, situate the monster as geographically and physically other, [while] the monster in much contemporary literature is located, by contrast, in an "elsewhere" that is intimately within us' (italics in original 1). He states that it:

ruptures the reality of the self from *within* the subject - it reveals that the self is ultimately a complex "construction" of society, culture, language and ideology, one which, in the process of becoming constructed, has subjugated "something" more fundamental within the self. But this "something" cannot be totally erased, and given the right circumstances, can return to disrupt the frail construction' (italics in original 1-2).

This misshapen entity is different from what we consider as "normal", it deviates from our perception of standardness and belongs to the "otherness". Cohen uses the terms of 'corporeal' and 'incorporeal' to categorize the different types of monsters. Corporeal is the type anatomically described, while incorporeal is body-less, immaterial, like the wind, a shadow or a sound. Cohen specifies that 'the monster's body is both corporeal and incorporeal' (5). I prefer to make a distinction between the visible and invisible, because according to me, an incorporeal entity can still be visible in the form of a vision or shadow, while an invisible entity is not optically perceptible or it is hidden. The invisible one can also manifest itself in the form of a creation of our brains, being visible for the perceiver, but not discernible to others: an invisible incorporeal being.

Santiesteban claims that 'the monster is image and even when the monster is verbally recreated, it remains primordially visual. The reader imagines the figure that is referred to by the word and completes the visual impression in his mind' (125). According to him, it 'is not an idea but

⁴ Andrew Hock-soon Ng Andrew Ng is Associate Professor in Literary Studies and the Chair of Postgraduate Studies at the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University Malaysia. He received his PhD from the University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia. He specializes in Gothic and horror narratives, and is particularly interested in a framework that compares the related genres' Eastern and Western manifestations. His current research looks at the literary tradition of Asian monstrosities.

a reflection in the mirror, a distorted mirror, and therefore, deforming; but the reflected object is real before the deformation, before the experience, it belongs to a general objective reality. Once deformed, it will be part of the fictional reality' (125). He suggests that its presence in fiction has different functions as it can ask for attention and it changes and gives a new rhythm to the work. Its objective is to show something as it attracts and repels at the same time (121-122). This is observable in Alejandro's desire for his mother and for the creature at the same time, while he detests the creature (disguised as his mother). There is a constant repetition of the same contradiction, making it impossible for Alejandro to escape from this appealing monstrosity. According to Freud, 'what renders an event, situation, thing, or a piece of art uncanny is repetition. The constant recurrence of the same thing is the principal factor that accounts for the feeling of the uncanny. The inner compulsion to repeat ... is a feature of the human psyche that brings about feelings of uncanniness' (Schweigert 19-20).

Santiesteban emphasizes that the monster persists in 'its ornamental use' and it 'stays in the artistic usage', thus becoming hereby a baroque construction (122). The image of the monstrous figure can transform into other forms: a physically abhorrent creature can 'be accompanied by a shadow, a mystery or a marginality' (124) and thus by an incorporeal entity. In "The Afternoon Wind" the physical counterpart appears accompanied with an incorporeal form, like the wind, the rain, the drought and other elements of the nature, which are part of the same monstrosity. The grandmother warns her grandson that the evening wind is evil: 'The treacherous wind brings all kinds of bad souls with it and they try to abduct you' (Tromp 12). Thereby, the visible being demands to show something hidden, a secret or a desire, while the invisible one wants to hide something. The function of the discernible sort is, to reveal the hidden 'just as our nightmares are lurid and irrational actualizations of fears we have about conditions in our "real" lives, the monster as the embodiment of verbs, or *to reveal* and *to warn*, suggests the making visible of things otherwise unseen and unknowable: past sin, future apocalypse, or ... present ideology' (Bloom Bissonette 113).

The monster lives between us and is being constructed by us and as a matter of fact, we even may be the creature. Hock-soon Ng wants to show that they are part of the unconscious and that 'monstrosity is often a struggle with, or a traumatic experience of, what is known in the Lacanian model, as the Void' (2). He says further that monstrosity is created by language, but at the same time it 'surpasses language and even jams it, forcing it to encounter an impasse and/or become monstrous itself. They accomplish this because, although situated within language, it is also 'an excess of signification, a strange by-product or leftover from the process of making meaning''

(3, citation of Peter Brooks, *Body Works*). Hock-soon Ng compares the monstrous with literature and he claims that Dracula, for example, cannot be definitively killed. 'Literature as a vehicle to expurgate the "other" fails, in the end, to resolve the anxieties experienced: the monster cannot be destroyed because it *is within the self*' (italics in original 5). He concludes giving it a more abstract image stating that 'the monster is both a creation and deconstruction of language' (21). I apply this abstract image of the creature both as a desire and as a deconstruction of language in the sense of not being able to communicate. Just like Hock-Soon Ng, Richard Kearney⁵ also thinks that it lives within the self: and into the text 'each monster narrative recalls that the self is never secure in self' (3) and thus can always manifest itself in order to demand its place.

Desire

For Plato 'desire can be for another human being (*eros*), for friendship with another human being (*philia*), for a kind of intellectual companionship (*nomos*), and for harmony and unity with the world of ideas (*theoria*). For Aristophanes it is 'a physical desire of one person for another' and it is hence a sexual longing, but he clarifies that this can be focused on the 'friendship with another, rising above the sexual, erotic desire'. Socrates affirms this idea arguing that 'the line between *eros* and *philia* is not always so clearly demarcated. (Silverman 2). 'For Aristotle, desire plays an important role in ethical behaviour' and hence it is not 'a form of love' and it 'functions between knowledge and action'. This establishes 'a certain conflict in the process of choosing' and 'this type of desire has to do with a kind of power over oneself and one's emotions as opposed to a feeling or passion for another person or object' (4). However, this feeling also has a negative connotation when it is at the expense of other individuals. 'Evil thoughts in the mind, even if never acted upon, mean that there are bad intentions, for evil thoughts *are* bad intentions. And bad intentions are sinful. Sinfulness is not just by virtue of sinful acts; even sinful desires are considered to be sin' (4). At this point, it becomes a feeling that can also be negative and atrocious. According to Hegel, this wish is based on domination and control (1) and in Goethe's *Faust* it has its limits 'and if those limits are not respected, something like damnations is the certain fate' and it functions as a warning to prevent condemnation. Like Goethe, Kant likewise agrees that 'desire wants it all through affirmation, and this is ultimately the achievement of power: to overcome the other through desire, to overcome oneself through will to power, rejecting established values, ideals, and

⁵ Richard Kearney is an Irish philosopher and public intellectual specializing in contemporary continental philosophy.

expectations.’ De Sade reinforces this idea asserting that ‘desire is desire to encompass everything – through the fullest expression of the passion’ (7).

According to Hugh J. Silverman, professor of Philosophy and Comparative Literature at the State University of New York:

Sex, or the libido characterizes a certain energy, drive, passion, or enthusiasm for the object of one’s desire. *Jouissance* is charged with directionality, excess, and release of energy. The libidinal is affective, desiring, and often out of control (1, Italics in original).

The longing of Alejandro to see his mother again (invisible monster) transforms into the appearance of the real creature to him (visible). Alejandro sees an ‘apparition’ that talks to him claiming him as her child and he thinks: ‘My mother? Impossible. This is an ugly creature that looks more like a bat...’ (40). If the mother of Alejandro is part of the monstrosity, because of her past and because of her return as a creature, this will make Alejandro also part of the monstrosity and ‘the monster can function as an alter ego, as an alluring projection of (an Other) self’ (Cohen 17). The Self and (M)Other relationship between him and his mother is at the same time the relationship between the protagonist and the monster. Sometimes, he confuses the appearance of the mother for that of the other and longs for the strange being to come and visit him. At other times, the image of the mother transforms into that of the monster: at the end of the story, it reappeared to Alejandro and then metamorphosed into his mother in order to seduce him erotically, calling him to come with her. He loses himself in the beautiful appearance of his mother: ‘Now, instead of the ugly creature, a young lady was standing on the same place. The wind was blowing her long hair into her face. I loved her face. Her face was beautiful. Also, her transparent dress was blowing in the wind pressing against her body that was lusty and voluptuous’ (Tromp 41).

The monster repels and attracts at the same time and it shows a desired aspect and hides its real appearance. The mother/Other has to disappear in order to liberate the Self (Cohen 17) and in “The Afternoon Wind” the malformed mother keeps on reappearing to torment her child and to reinforce his desire. Cohen states that the monster turns ‘immaterial and vanishes, to reappear someplace else’, but leaves its ‘damage’ and ‘material remains’ (4). In the story, the creature becomes invisible leaving its destruction behind but will reappear at another time or place in order to charm Alejandro. It disappeared out of the life of the young boy leaving its scars, to return in the present: first the mother died and return in a grotesque shape in his childhood and

later on when he was an adolescent man. The reason why the monster always escapes is 'because it refuses categorization' and in order 'to return to its habitations at the margins of the world' (6). It has many appearances and it is omnipresent in the story causing confusion to the characters and to the reader.

Desire is the reason why the monster came into the life of the protagonist and it has its own objective and intentions, but can he accept that it only exists because of him and how does it unveil itself to him? There are various references to the creature appearing (physically) to the protagonist: the strange beast was visiting the grandfather every evening and the grandmother refused to believe this, when the boy informs her of this (Tromp 19). The flutter of the giant wings of the beast produces a cyclone in front of the grandfather. He questions the fact that the thing is a beast but does not know another name for it (20) and on page 22, he speaks openly about the thing as his grandfather is sitting in the granary with 'the beast resting in his lap and making strange sounds'. Again, on page 24, Alejandro says that the last time he saw the beast; it was lying quietly while the old man was caressing its belly with its swollen breasts and pointed nipples. At this point we can observe a reciprocal attraction between the creature and the old man. He says that after the beast left, his whole world collapsed (24) because the object of his longing disappeared. Can we assume that the boy sees the monstrous thing as his mother, leaving him now for the second time: first when she died and now as a pregnant beast? At the end of the story the monster/mother visited him again, now as an adult, and left him for the third time transforming into a wild bat flying out of the window screaming, while Alejandro was thinking: 'she kept on screaming before she flew away in order to disappear forever, I hope, out of my mind' (42). Was the critter pregnant of Papachi, just as Alejandra was pregnant of her own father, repeating the incest again and making Alejandro part of the same circular monstrosity? According to Patricia Trapero Llobera, at long last all monsters are human (79), so we can conclude that the monstrosity in "The Afternoon Wind" lives in the characters of this story. She stresses that deformity can be physical or moral (81) and the moral (invisible) can be the reason in this story for the creation of desire and horror at the same time.

In this story, desire embodies an image that exhibits itself as an invisible nightmare creating a visible one, however Santiesteban underlines that 'monsters can be real or imaginary' and 'in the real ones we can find mutations of normal people that were born deformed: animals or men with two heads, without limbs, giants and dwarfs, etcetera. They are real and tangible monsters. On the other hand, there are those that are mere productions of the mind and imaginary creations of the humans' (97). In the "Afternoon Wind", a 'real' entity manifests itself that does not

belong to the category of Santiesteban and according to Alejandro, it is a terrible creature, something that resembles the prehistoric creatures and mythological griffins. It comes flying into the house with a lot of noise and keeps circling in the living room and he considers it as a creature from another world and calls it a devil. It manifests itself in order to deceive and seduce (Papachi and Alejandro), but also to hide the reality (secret). However, if we take the theory of Santiesteban into consideration, then we can conclude that the monsters in the story are just mental creations of the longing of Alejandro.

In contrast to the traditional ghost stories in which appearances have the function to disturb the quotidian life with their undesirable images causing fear, in the “Afternoon Wind”, it seems almost normal that the living communicates with the (un)dead and this is accepted as a part of quotidian life. The living accept the appearances as something belonging to the same dimension as theirs so they do not interrogate the existence of the creatures and are neither puzzled as to why this is happening to them. The protagonist does not really fear the abhorrent appearance, in fact, he is constantly longing for its visits. As an adult, he is not surprised when the creature returns to him because all the time, he was waiting for it: he was longing for its reappearance. Cohen reinforces this idea by stating that:

the monster’s body quite literary, incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy [...], giving them life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exist only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically “that which reveals,” that which warns,” a glyph that seeks a hierophant. Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself; it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again (4).

Its function is more than merely origin and result of fear; in this story, it reveals a secret of incest, that is a warning about the disturbed past and/or it is a wish that cannot be accomplished: Alejandro's longing to be with his mother again, although he knows that she is dead. This desire is so strong that it metamorphoses into an (erotic) obsession. This compulsive longing repeats itself in the grandmother’s wishes to be with her dead children, reproaching them for not visiting her: 'Altagracia, where are you? Answer me. Please, answer me. Federico come to your mother' (39) and of the grandfather caressing the creature.

Cohen affirms that the fear of the monster is a form of desire for something that attracts and

repulses at the same time and the known/unknown manifests itself to manipulate the longing of the other. Regarding this, Sigmund Freud argues that 'this belongs to the realm of the frightening, of what evokes fear and dread' (*The Uncanny* 123). He states that the familiar can become uncanny and frightening' and 'that something can be frightening precisely because it is unknown and familiar' (124-125). The familiar aspect for Alejandro is the absence of his mother and his appetite to be with her that becomes uncanny when instead of his (dead) mother, the creature visits him (in his fantasies). For Alejandro this means that he is constantly trying to re-invent himself based on whether or not the monster appears to him. He feels deserted and his longing for his mother (and thus for the monster) becomes overpowering. According to Lacan 'individuals are driven by desires which are the symbols of the unfulfilled desires' (in Baranoglu 15): for Alejandro it is impossible to achieve his wish to see his mother and to receive her love as she died when he was a young boy. His only consolation is the visits of her substitute that probably is (the embodiment of the desire for) his mother. The creature comes at nightfall while he is waiting fervently for it as he says: 'I keep on watching the sky until I saw it while the wind carries and rocks it between the cacti at the east-side of the house and I become happy despite the fact that it was not coming for me. However, this was good as my feeling of euphoria only lasts for a moment. Afterwards I become very scared. This is the reason why I did not lose it from my sight and watched its movements all the time' (Tromp 21). Weedman stresses that 'Gothic novels of the Romantic period often juxtaposed the sublime with monsters - frightening creatures both extraordinary and unnatural, often of vast or grotesque proportions. In Gothic literature, monsters are imbued with uncanny elements and serve to eternalise repressed fears and desires' (1). This feeling is very close to that of fear as they have the same emotion as is evident in the case of Alejandro when he is waiting for the mother (desire) in the shape of the monster (fear) to visit him.

We can correlate the relationship of Alejandro and his mother with that of Victor Frankenstein with his creation, because 'the real object of the desire of Victor is the mother. As Victor's father expands the lack in Victor which cannot be filled with anything but the love of the mother' (Baranoglu 19). This is notable in the role of the mother in "The Afternoon Wind" as she is presented on different occasions as the mother/monster and this assumption is not unreasonable given that her parents are also considered as such, therefore making him also part of this monstrous family line. 'He was lying on the sofa and the apparition was still there saying to him that he must not be afraid, as she is *his* mother. He thinks that the grotesque creature cannot be his mother' (Tromp 5), but when he heard her soft and sweet voice, he doubts again

and his desire to be with her increases again, reinforcing the entanglement of the mother with the strange being as part of the same aversion and lust.

Alejandro describes his last memory of his mother when she was lying on her bed. The room was filled with white doves and on her right side stood a guardian angel. He climbed on the bed to say goodbye and she kissed him on his head and said something in his ear (a secret). From then on, the monster appeared to him in the form of his longing for his deceased mother. The void of the mother figure is being filled with the appearance of the creature: 'it always came when I was thinking about home and about my mother. When will she come back for me? She promised me that she would return and the last time I saw her, she asked me to be patient. These were her last words and still after many days, weeks and years, still no sign of her' (20). The missing becomes longing for the mother figure and waiting for the beast (21). Schweigert reaffirms that 'a desire is a desire only as long as its fulfilment is not achieved' (48). Alejandro keeps longing for his mother and his desire will never be fulfilled and this keeps the monster alive and without him, there would be no monster. Just like Frankenstein, he created his own monster in order to keep his desire alive.

Alejandro, after so many years, is trying to reshape his need for his mother, but she continues to appear to him in the shape of a monstrous creature. The desire is the invisible monster that gives form to the visible one in the capacity of the mother. This longing transforms into a duplication of the Oedipus complex: the relation of the grandfather with his own daughter and the (sexual) hunger of Alejandro for his mother. Relating to this, Baranoglu asserts that 'the lack of the desired object is inevitable' (13) and Fink specifies that it 'is a constant search for something else, and there is no specifiable object that is capable of satisfying it, in other words, extinguish it' (90). This indicates that

Desire becomes a horror when a wish or a longing is so intense and all determining that it subverts the sense of reality and the (object of) it becomes more certain than realness. This illusion comes alive to seduce, manipulate and torture the petitioner, while the (object of) desire converts into a fetish. This is the type of monster we are dealing with in this analysis.

Silence and Secrecy

In "The Afternoon Wind" the silence and secrecy are part of the invisible monstrosity and, just like desire, it is the origin of the visible one that keeps on reincarnating in time and space. The

silence is represented in the communication between the old man and the monster that visits him, speaking their own secret language, while the man refuses to speak with the living, ignoring their existence, moving between the world of the living and the dead. According to Santiesteban the other type of monster is the 'mere production of the mind and imaginary creation of the humans' (97), while Slavoj Žižek argues: 'that which does not exist, continues to *insist*, striving toward existence (22) in order to claim its place. In the story, Altagracia, the dead mother of Alejandro, keeps demanding the attention of her son, although she does not exist anymore. According to Derrida the ghost manoeuvres between the world of the dead and the living and one 'does not know whether it is living or dead' (6). This is perceptible in the figure of the dead mother of Alejandro as she seems to be absent all the time. The monster is a spectral appearance of the dead mother who is coming to terrorize/seduce her own son, because of their disturbed and dubious relationship, but on the other hand it is the grandfather as well, belonging to the dimension of the dead, but still among the living. The spectral is 'a figure of absolute alterity (existing both outside and within us)' (Blanco 33): it is the creature that comes every time again and it is the desire within the protagonist of the story. The spectral is also, 'the class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (Freud 1), however, in "The Afternoon Wind" it never causes real fright to the narrator. It seems like business as usual for him that they exist and form part of his daily life; at most they cause a kind of disgust or aversion, while on the other hand they take the shape of a sort of longing.

The secrecy that is kept during the whole story is part of the invisible monstrosity that gives space to the visible monster to manifest itself. The boy knows that something bad happened, but he cannot figure out what this is, making it impossible for him to narrate the story accordingly. The grandmother says that Alejandro is the cause of all this misery (Tromp 6) and even though this secret is never told in the story, we can assume that this mystery is related to the grandfather, the daughter and Alejandro. The grandfather did not approve of his daughter's boyfriend because he probably was sexually abusing his own daughter. He may be the father (and grandfather) of Alejandro and did not want his daughter to have a boyfriend. This will make Alejandro the creation of a monstrous, forbidden and secret relationship and it explains the love/hate feelings of the grandmother for her husband, her daughter and her grandson, while she accepts and tolerates this relationship at the same time.⁶ Another reason to assume that the

⁶If we take the story "The Murder of Carmelo Buchi Poli" into consideration, we can see the same line of monstrosity as in the "Afternoon Wind". Carmelo Buchi Poli torments the whole family commanding and claiming respect and order, according to his own rules. He commits incest with his daughter and his granddaughter, who gives birth to their son Manuel. When the time comes for Carmelo to die, he refuses to leave the world of the living and his own son (and great grandson) came to murder him. The evilness of the old man in "The Afternoon Wind" is being strengthened by the

grandfather of the child is also his father is that the identity of the father is not known and the death of Altagracia is not disclosed. There are deep, dark secrets in the family and according to the grandmother: 'not everything can be tolerated by the daylight. Not everything can be discussed with everyone... These are scandalous things. These are shameful things. Things that cause pain' (36). What really happened will never be told and this is the reason why we can only guess and deduce what could be the reason of the existing monstrosity. Maybe the monster only exists in the mind of the narrator because of his past. This Oedipal monstrosity almost repeats itself again as it comes to visit Alejandro, now as an adult man, and transforms itself into his mother, seducing him erotically and begging him to come with her.

The Wind

The wind and the darkness are invisible companions of the creature of this story: the wind is being described anthropomorphically and becomes almost visible: 'its muscles were shining, and the tendons of its neck were almost snatching. I could see how it was crying ... I could feel its cold fingers like that of dead people' (Tromp 25). The afternoon brings all kinds of illnesses because if it blows over you, you will get as sick as a dog. There is almost no cure for the fever and your blood will boil until you die. The reason for this is that the wind brings bad souls that want to take you with them (12). The wind also deforms conversations making communication impossible (13) and was moving between cacti that were crying for some water. The wind has no mercy with the sparse vegetation and the hard wind brings drought and sickness and animals die of famine. The wind is evil and a symbol of the decay and ruination: on page 17 when the grandmother says that since the death of the old men everything is lost, the granary is a ruin and the wind is the only thing that you can hear. The wind brings the monster of death and decay with it and the afternoon wind is part of the monstrosity. According to the French priest, explorer, and writer André Thévet (1516-1590), Haiti was a monstrous beast living inside the wind (*La cosmographie universelle*, 1090).⁷ The wind suffocates nature and becomes stronger when the respiration gets heavier (Tromp 18). The soft breeze that comforts during the day is scary when the vivid colours that make the protagonist happy disappear making him nostalgic. This wind causes nostalgia to the boy wishing to be reunited with his mother, thus making his lust stronger. As a matter of fact, the wind and the monster always come from the same

monstrousness of his wife who is hiding his perversion making her an accomplice. On page 13 the grandmother says to the boy: 'If it was not for him [the Grandfather] you were not here today'.

⁷ Figure d'une beste monstrueuse laquelle ne vit que de vent, dicte Haiit. Bête appelée " Haiit " par Paré et "Haüt" par Thevet, bête qui a un visage d'homme et des pattes griffues.

<http://www.biusante.parisdescartes.fr/histoire/images/index.php?refphot=21240>

direction, i.e. the east (21). The thing lives in the wind and is part of it or maybe the beast is the wind (making it visible and invisible at the same time) as shown in some fragments of the story: ghosts were dancing tirelessly on the hard wind of the hurricane while it was snatching and carrying the hunchbacked Dividivi trees. The dead were screaming while the living was crying for forgiveness. The sky was dark, and it was raining like a deluge dragging skeletons out of their graves (24). Thus, the wind (invisible) is the one caressing the old man and it is the one that torments the boy, returns to him and will never depart from him. The wind brings the monster with it and it blows the words away making it impossible to communicate and share the secrets. The island with its wind is the reason for it to exist and to manifest itself. This breeze causes nostalgia and desire in the boy, wanting him to be reunited with his mother, to be part of her life and to have an intimate relationship with her.

Madness, inventions and hallucinations

It is impossible to be convinced that Alejandro is not fantasizing and inventing his own horror: on many occasions in the story, his grandmother says that he is a strange and insane boy. Perhaps the true crux of the problem is what the monster is for itself and what it is for the man who creates it, who believes in it, who recreates it and who recreates it with him. (Santiesteban 124). However, who is the real monster? Is it the creation or the creator? Is it the one that constructs the monstrosity, the real monster? The monstrosity is only possible because we create it, either in our minds or in real life and this is the reason why the creature is only a victim of our desire. 'The monster is continually linked to forbidden practices, to normalize and to enforce. The monster also attracts: the same creatures who terrify and interdict can evoke potent escapist fantasies; the linking of monstrosity with the forbidden makes the monster even more appealing as a temporary egress from constraint' (Cohen 16-17). There seems to be no escape possible as the beast tormented the young boy in the past but returns when Alejandro is older and living on his own. The thing comes flying into his room and takes the narrator back to the uncanny past. Is it a trick of the mind that creates the monsters? Can we relate its existence to something unspeakable and a family secret? According to Freud uncanny is 'everything that was meant to remain a secret and hidden and that has come into the open' (232). This means that the uncanny is not something new or strange, but 'something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed' (148), it repeats itself and is not just a coincidence.

There are traits in the story that indicate the insane state of Alejandro's mind. He considers the fact that he is inventing things (6) and on page 41, he doubts about his own mental health as he

thinks: 'I think that my brain is not functioning well'. Again, on page 42 as the beast flies out of his house, he says: 'as it flies outside and disappears for good, I hope, out of my mind'. It lives in his mind, in his memory and in his history as an invention of his madness.

He is aware of his hallucinations, as he is conscious about the fact that this mental state deforms the reality and creates other dimensions. Besides, he is admitting that he creates his own stories and that his brain produces its own monsters (7). He was always dreaming and fantasizing extravagant things and there seems to be no escape of this vicious circle: 'I felt obliged to create my own universe' (21). He was waiting for the thing to come and visit him as this was 'like a relief for me and of importance for my survival' (21). At this time, it is unclear whether the beast lives in his head or exists for real as he says that when it visits is stopped, it flies out of his thoughts (21), which reinforces the idea that he is inventing his own monsters. He comments further that on a day that he saw its body beating like a living hart and that he was not sure if he was dreaming this or if this was happening in reality: 'in my case this does not make any difference because of the subtle difference that according to me exists between dream and reality'. So, he does not consider the margin between reality and fantasy as very important and he cannot make a distinction between dream and reality. Hereafter he says that he made a mistake many times barbarously in the distinction between the so many variations of the reality (21). He gets lost in the demarcation between reality and dream and between the different spectrums of realities, taking the reader with him into the doubts and uncertainties. The horror may be only simulations or creations of his own mind.

Conclusions

The appearance of the unknown in the text is like a guideline for the reader to disclose the things that are not told explicitly in the story. Hereby, the creature appears in different shapes and non-shapes and becomes visible and sensible for the narrator, while at the same time it hides itself from him and is only perceptible through the written text. "The Afternoon Wind" is in itself a monstrous creation as a text, because of the many uncertainties, repetitions and secrecy deliberately present in order to create confusion, chaos and disorder. The monsters are multiple, excessive and widely represented in the story making it complicated to distinguish the different types and their functionality. This makes the story in itself a monstrous construction. It is an image that is being deformed functioning as a part of the fictional reality in "The Afternoon

Wind” as the monstrosity lives in the text and can only exist due to the story, which is also an invention.

In “The Afternoon Wind”, the real monster is created by the words of the narrator in order to compensate for his forbidden desire that lives in his mind. The existence of the creature is questionable, while it is constantly present, disturbing the linearity of the story, forcing it to repeat and mutate all the time. There is an impossibility to communicate: the characters cannot connect and the narrator cannot retell the story properly. They live within itself, thus they live within Alejandro, the narrator and protagonist, but the creatures also live within the granary, on the island, making Aruba the real monster. The granary can be considered as the source and incubator of the monstrosity. In this barn the creature visits the grandfather and in here the monstrosity is extant in different shapes. The granary can be interpreted as a symbol for the island, where horrific things happen that are kept secret.

In this story, the physically active Monster is accompanied by causative ones, the elements of nature and of the island making them also part of the monstrosity: this island called 'One Happy Island' shows its other face, the dark side of paradise where creatures, ghosts and evil live. The space is inhabited by the living and the dead at the same time and it is the home of the unhomely, the uncanny. There seems to be no fixed demarcation in time and space, as the entities travel through these concepts to haunt the narrator of the story. The monstrosity hides in nature (plants, animals and dirt), but also in the elements (wind, rain, drought). The elements are parts of the monstrosity contributing to the existence of the thing, just like the different body parts that doctor Frankenstein uses for his creation. The desert island with its inaccessible harshness and drought is the symbolical breeding ground and the dominion of the monstrosity.

The unknown elements to the margins of rationality are hidden behind the mask of the Happy Island. The uncanny is being concealed by the cliché images of a tropical paradise and through the monsters a part of the terrible reality is being exposed. The function of the monstrosity, with the existence of physical and invisible beings, is to seduce in order to reveal part of the unknown and that which is kept hidden. The mother is the object of desire, while the monster is the object of disgust, but they are the same, thus we can conclude that the mother is the other at the same time.

I conclude that the invisible monsters represent the desire of the abomination, while the visible are the symbol of the vulgarity and the evil. The monstrosity lives on the island, in fact, the

island is the deformed entity by accepting and tolerating the act of incest and pretending not to know what happens. The fictive image of the island functions as a mask to hide the grossness of the reality and gossip is a diversionary manoeuvre not to tell the truth. The function of the monsters is to deconstruct the idea of the tropical Caribbean island as a paradise and to show the other side of it: the hideous, harsh and hostile components where real ones live and transform themselves into exemplary beings. They are showing themselves in order to reveal (monstrare) the objectionable secrecy in the island.

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