

**Intersections of Horror and Religion in *The Exorcist* Television Series
with Reference to M. G. Lewis's *The Monk***

by

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Introduction

Matthew Gregory Lewis' Gothic horror novel *The Monk: A Romance* (1796) and William Peter Blatty's novel *The Exorcist* (1971), the latter adapted into an eponymous film directed by William Friedkin (1973), shocked audiences with their depictions of horror when they were first published. The texts resonated with their respective audiences across different centuries and remain iconic in the twenty-first century as provocative narrative pieces that push the boundaries of storytelling and what is acceptable to share with an audience. In this major research essay, I examine the representations and intersections of horror and religion in the 2016 television series *The Exorcist* with occasional references to other works in *The Exorcist* canon. *The Exorcist* television series, created by Jeremy Slater, is a continuation of the world in *The Exorcist* film, involving new characters and storylines.

At the intersection of religion and horror, these texts belong to the broader tradition of Gothic fiction and horror writing. Gothic fiction tends to critique Catholicism and its understanding of and connection to the supernatural. Representations of horror carry moral implications that readers are invited to either follow or reject. By focusing on aspects of the Gothic, I also examine the narrative tools and filmic devices used in these texts to analyze the dynamic and affective power of visualizing the horror and evil of their respective stories. The central depictions of evil in these texts, generally represented by demonic figures and forces, have the power to spread their nefarious influence in insidious ways, negatively affecting unsuspecting characters within the texts including family members and friends. Through an analysis of these texts, I will reveal the ways in which demonic figures communicate warnings to the audience stimulating awareness of the spread of evil in society, the cultural side effects of which may include the audience's increased mindfulness of the signs of evil as cultural and

literary constructions not only in Gothic fiction but as constructs to be mindful of in powerful institutions.

My essay begins with several relevant research questions that I hope to answer during this study: how is evil defined and represented? To what extent is evil glamorized or demonized and what are the implied repercussions of choices that characters make? What are the psychoanalytic or other cultural and social underpinnings of such evil? To answer these questions, I build upon previous studies to explore the representation of evil and horror by focusing on the purposeful manipulation of a character's mind. To this end, I use theories such as Terry Eagleton's cultural study *On Evil* (2010) and Henry Bacon's *The Fascination of Film Violence* (2015) to discuss the artistic manifestations of evil depicted in these texts, and their affective power to conceptualize horror and Gothic textual elements. In his 2010 book *On Evil*, Eagleton argues that evil is a real force to contend with in everyday life. He examines works from several classic novelists and shows how the relevant characters demonstrate certain philosophical concepts of evil. For example, William Golding's 1956 novel *Pincher Martin* is a "story about purgatory" in which the main character is too proud to die but was "never really alive in the first place" (Eagleton 20). Through explorations of these afflicted literary characters, as well as studying different philosophers and schools of thought, Eagleton discusses conceptualizations of God, Heaven, Hell, and philosophical states of the world that enable certain situations to flourish. Expanding on Eagleton, film studies scholar Henry Bacon addresses the symbolism of evil in his subsections on the nature of evil, categories of evil, and situating evil in film in his book *The Fascination of Film Violence*. Influenced by Paul Ricoeur's writings, Bacon argues that evil is used in filmic narratives to "gauge moral dimensions of human activities," and "at its most monstrous develops into relishing [human suffering]" (52).

The evil characters discussed by Bacon are actively immoral, and the task of the protagonist is to fight against them through whatever means with or without the help of others. In other words, evil is a “metaphysical power which can take possession of the self but which can also be removed—just like Christ promises to take away the sins of the world. The central symbol here is contamination, the idea of evil as a stain” (71).

While considering this metaphysical power, the television series studied herein also reveals the characters’ physical, psychological, and spiritual suffering. Many of the characters are prisoners entrapped in their minds and bodies, while their family members experience residual effects of the violence from the possession and exorcism. Typically, the exorcists who perform the ritual of expelling evil forces feel a primary responsibility to God, the possessed, and themselves to save the victims; in addition, they must also be in the right state of mind, feeling strong and faithful in their cause. The filmic moments of horror and gore represent brief flashes of the fear and torment that the sufferers of evil forces feel; the film’s and television series’ effect is to communicate a glimpse of the horror through the fictional and supernatural realm. Through narrative devices, the series explores the intelligible and unintelligible aspects of evil through the lens of the characters—and audience’s—perceptions of the events. As viewers gain an understanding of why certain characters are forced to think or act a certain way, in most cases the characters garner sympathy from the audience.

As this study will document, the authors convey strikingly different messages in their texts, using horror and the problematic of evil to communicate broader values and ideas. Using images and scenes of horror in their respective works, Lewis’s *The Monk* shows the consequence of sinful transgressions, while Blatty’s *The Exorcist* television series shows a continuous struggle between good and evil where the good barely outweighs the impact of evil. In representing evil

through filmic and literary devices, as I will argue in this essay, these texts ultimately illuminate different sides of the self and explore the capabilities of human strength and the extent of suffering. They also raise questions about the nature of evil. Perpetrators of evil acts may be presented as having underlying motivations, whose effect is to create chaos and emotional harm to the characters. The texts consistently send messages to their audience that evil should be combatted, and that preserving the self is worth the struggle of facing whatever onslaught of evil that the supernatural forces thrust on to the characters.

Section 1: The Problematic of Evil: Literature Review and Comparative Perspectives

Exorcism can be defined as “the act or practice of expelling an evil spirit by adjuration;” adjuration is defined as “a solemn oath” (Merriam-Webster). The history of exorcisms dates back to “biblical accounts of the exorcisms performed by Christ,” although a substantial amount of philosophical, hermeneutical, and theological literature deals with the “authenticity of possessions, the validity of exorcisms, the existence of spirits, the relationship between the natural and the supernatural realms” (Levack 32). Most prominent in Christian faith, the belief in possession and exorcism posits that “demons have the ability to enter a human body and literally take possession of it; that is, assume control of its physical and mental functions” (Levack 33). The symptoms of possession and the authenticity of exorcism are rife with skepticism and controversy, but the concepts continue to be given attention as they are grounded in scripture. In the centuries after the Bible was written, Christian writers had to “develop a systematic body of knowledge regarding the metaphysical nature of these creatures and the powers they exercised in the natural world” (Levack 55). The details of exorcisms continue to be explored in fictional works as metaphors for struggle and working through life’s problems.

In his 2010 study *On Evil*, literary and cultural scholar Terry Eagleton ponders many concepts and ways of thinking about and approaching evil, from calling evil “just a thing in itself” (3), to an “unfathomable mystery [...] beyond explanation” (8), to a thing that is “supposed to be special, not commonplace” (13). That is to say that evil should be thought of as removed from any psychological or “social conditions [that would seek] to understand why they did what they did. And such understanding can always bring forgiveness in its wake” (3), which slightly negates the very evilness of the action in question. Eagleton delves into the concepts of autonomy versus togetherness and selfishness versus selflessness when theorizing the origins and

reasoning behind evil. He holds that, as humans, “we are born self-centred as an effect of our biology. Egoism is a natural condition, whereas goodness involves a set of complex practical skills we have to learn” (36). He brings up the concept of original sin as a challenge to the “individualist doctrine that we are the sole proprietors of our own actions” (37). The supernatural forces found in the texts studied in this paper show the ease with which people can be manipulated into doing and even thinking things that their usual self would not consider. Demons factor into the “skein of human action and reaction” in these Gothic narratives, adding another layer or area of culpability for a person’s words or behaviours and making it even more difficult to say “who really has ownership of a particular deed” (37). The line separating where one person’s “responsibility (or even interests, desires, or identity)” ends, and the other person’s begins, is blurred (37). This is evident in the characters of the texts studied here, when they are influenced by outer forces that move into their minds and affect their behaviour.

Many obstacles stand in the way of human beings living good and just lives, but that does not mean we should see evil as a “fixed ontological feature of the human condition” (Bernstein, *Radical Evil* in Eagleton *On Evil* 38). According to Eagleton, much like working to resolve illness and conflict, humanity can and should still “strive to resolve such contentions;” there are still things that can be done to improve conditions (38-39). As Eagleton reminds readers, beyond the problematic of original sin are “the perversity of human desire, the prevalence of illusion and idolatry, the scandal of suffering, the dull persistence of oppression and injustice, the scarcity of public virtue, the insolence of power, the fragility of goodness and the formidable power of appetite and self-interest” (Eagleton, *On Evil* 37). All of these failings, some more prominently than others, thread through the works discussed herein.

According to philosopher Slavoj Žižek, “evil is something which threatens to return forever.... [It is] a spectral dimension which magically survives its physical annihilation and continues to haunt us” (Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* in Eagleton 50-51). This idea is especially relevant in texts where the evil forces are supernatural and span beyond the earthly dimension. In the crossover and clash of good and evil that happens during an exorcism, “the good accept evil by embracing it in their love and mercy” (56). Evil seeks to destroy, because that is the “only way to trump God’s act of creation” (60). Much like the demons’ grip in *The Exorcist* series, something has always come before evil, since the devil himself is a fallen angel; evil is not entirely self-dependent, though it believes it is and wants to be (63). The demons in the series want to take back the world that was originally meant for them, which they believe humans, who are favoured by God, have taken over. Eagleton also entertains some prevalent philosophical notions, one being that evil “has, or appears to have, no practical purpose. Evil is supremely pointless;” evil, just like God, is “its own reason for being” (84). The reasons for evil occurring are especially explored in *The Exorcist* series, as characters search for meaning behind the actions of the evil forces that affect them.

The exorcism thematic in literature and culture has been extensively explored, and there are several articles that are particularly useful for my essay and will be briefly introduced in this section, establishing also how much the television series owes to previous rendering of the exorcism motif, notably in *The Monk*. Anti-Catholic sentiments pervade the novel *The Monk*, as Steven Blakemore documents in “Matthew Lewis’s Black Mass: Sexual, Religious Inversion in *The Monk*,” showing how inversions of gender illuminate a link between misogyny and the “feminine, Catholic ‘Other’ in eighteenth-century Protestant discourse” (521). Because the novel’s protagonist, Ambrosio, a devout thirty-year old monk, was placed at the doorsteps of a

convent as an infant and then raised there, Blakemore argues that Ambrosio has also been placed in a feminine position: his situation is like that of a sheltered young virgin, protected to “keep her ‘innocence’ and ‘virtue’” (522). Ambrosio is also “ignorant and innocent of the world and its temptations” (522). These insights can be applied to *The Exorcist* television series, which approaches exorcism from a Catholic perspective, as we shall see.

In contrast to Blakemore, who focuses on gender roles, Peter Brooks’ essay “Virtue and Terror: *The Monk*” addresses questions of morals, historical context, and transitions into a new world. Its main argument is that ethics have come to be based on terror rather than virtue, showing a world that does not have its values lined up properly or normally. It touches on ideas of the monstrous being latent within humanity, “awaiting only the impulsions of our desire to come to hideous birth” (251). According to Brooks, this polarization can be seen in the operations of the demonic forces in *The Exorcist* film, as there are no other paths to go other than the possessed either rejecting or accepting the demon into their soul. In both texts the supernatural elements eventually infuse the beliefs of the characters, a pattern of the Gothic novel, which can also be traced to deeply embedded intertextual relationships and influences. Indeed, in his essay “Matthew Lewis and the Gothic Horror of Obsessional Neurosis,” literary scholar Ed Cameron compares *The Monk* with the works of Ann Radcliffe to show the development of the Gothic narrative as a genre that uses the themes of terror and horror to express deep anxieties. Thus, Lewis responds to Radcliffe’s style of writing by describing “in lurid detail the specters that Gothic fiction had previously left to the superstitious or explained away” (169).

Besides this intertextual focus, questions of religion and science are equally important, as explored in Amy Chambers’ article “‘Somewhere between Science and Superstition’: Religious

Outrage, Horrific Science, and *The Exorcist* (1973)” arguing that the 1973 film *The Exorcist* reflected fears in American society of the changing values and attitudes towards religion and science and represented anxieties about which side would be favoured and trusted. She argues that the film portrays faith and ritual, rather than science, as the saviours of the possessed child (15). Moving from science to criminal law, Penny Crofts’ article “Monstrous Bodily Excess” focuses on the physical transformation of the main character in *The Exorcist* film and “explores how the criminal law would categorize and respond to a case of possession” (374). The question of blame and responsibility, as well as the split between mind and body, are prevalent in the texts studied here. Robert F. Geary’s article introduces the concept of “deep horror,” which claims that existence is nihilistic and there can be no happy endings in the films and novels that include deep horror. Crofts highlights the harsh criticisms that *The Exorcist* film received, yet Amy Chambers’ more recent study has qualified these findings by documenting that the audience were not nearly as outraged as advertised and that the outrage was exaggerated for advertisement purposes.

Indeed, the rhetoric of horror is deeply embedded in the workings of the film and antecedent novels. From a linguistic perspective, Gavin Hurley’s article explores the rhetorically dialectic interplay between the “good” and “evil” parts of *The Exorcist* novel, arguing that the author, William Blatty, communicates these different themes through rhetorical devices focused on what he calls “Catholic horror.” This focus is further explored in Jarlath Killeen’s chapter “The Monster Club: Monstrosity, Catholicism and Revising the (1641) Rising,” which focuses on the monstrous in the context of Irish Anglican attitudes in the eighteenth century. These attitudes that were held towards Catholics and Catholicism are also explored in *The Monk* and *The Exorcist* series, as in all the texts there are anxieties surrounding Catholicism as a collective

organization. In many studies the phenomenon of horror and evil is related to social issues, finding evil embedded in the contemporary society and historical events that gave birth and shaped these texts. For example, Lowczanin's feminist approach in studying *The Monk* reveals how the novel responded to the upheaval of the French Revolution, which overthrew the monarchical system and ended up with the horror-and-death regime of Robespierre. This approach is also echoed by Maximillian Novak, who insists on studying "the relationship of Gothic fiction to history and the past, the connection between Gothic and Grotesque, the Grotesque villain, and finally, Gothic form" (52).

Meanwhile, feminist film studies scholars, such as Barbara Creed in her book *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (1993), critically examine the representation of women in horror films, exposing the misogyny embedded in representing the young or menstrual woman as demonic. Like Creed, other feminist psychoanalytic theorists have unpacked themes of sexuality, eroticism, and deep-seated fear prevalent in Gothic horror involving the supernatural and possession. This focus is continued in Lisa Naomi Mulman's article "Sexuality on the Surface: Catholicism and the Erotic Object in Lewis's 'The Monk'" which studies Lewis' *The Monk* by comparing the "labyrinthine corridors and caverns" in the novel to "our most powerful fears" (99). Mulman thinks of Lewis's use of objects (such as the veil, lamp, and rosary) as "sites of religious, aesthetic, and social anxiety" (101). In this reading, *The Monk* can be related to Sigmund Freud's version of self-consciousness and repression. Mulman argues further that Lewis is not simply vilifying Catholicism, but rather is ambivalent towards the religion, and the anti-Catholic terror is that being extremely invested in the material realm leads to "unchecked and unmediated impulse" (101). In the end, Ambrosio's vision is not socially constructed; it is "unconscious of social consequence" (104), a point echoed also in Ian

Olney's feminist study of *The Exorcist* film, arguing that the feminine factors into the concept of possession, "refiguring possession as a transmission of female excess" (562). Sara Williams's feminist article "'The Power of Christ Compels You': Holy Water, Hysteria, and the Oedipal Psychodrama in *The Exorcist*" highlights the work's evocations of hysteria – a stereotypically female condition. The representation of bodies and the feminine is explored in the texts, particularly in the context of unruly or transgressive female bodies or their behaviours.

Section 2: *The Exorcist TV Series*

The television series *The Exorcist* (2016-2018) involves viewers in the psychological dimensions of exorcism by introducing them centrally to two priests in Chicago: young Father Thomas, an immigrant from Mexico, and Father Marcus, an older priest and grizzled veteran of the church. Both are essential to the story, which is set in a modern-day suburb of Chicago. Father Tomas is new to running the parish and struggles at various points in the series because of a sense of lacking pride and worthiness. He is paired with Father Marcus, who has been excommunicated from the Church for performing an unsanctioned exorcism on a boy, which went awry, meaning the boy died from the demon-inflicted injuries. Thus, in Episode 1, Father Marcus operates beyond the bounds of the Church, refusing also to seek forgiveness from the Church; instead, he addresses himself primarily to God to aid him in performing his exorcisms. Although later in the series, he struggles with not being able to connect with God, when he is first introduced to viewers, Father Marcus is not afraid of facing “evil” head-on, connecting with the humans who are possessed by evil, demonic forces; the connection with God and the Bible allows him to intervene to get them to what he believes is a safer state of being. Yet things are far from clear-cut psychologically, and what scares him is the possibility of losing his ability to save the possessed from their tormentors; his power of exorcism comes from faith and direct communication with the word of God.

Nonetheless, and this further deepens the psychological texture, Father Marcus’s power as an exorcist is rooted in his traumatic past. As a young boy he witnessed his father murdering his mother, a violent experience that left him traumatized and moreover left him an orphan, as the Church took over as Father Marcus’ guardian. As a young orphan, he was raised by the Church in the U.K., a profoundly influential upbringing that shaped his faith and values by

forcing him to face difficult people and situations head-on; later as a young adult, he was trained by the clergymen to become an exorcist, meaning he uses the Bible to aid him in his prayers to save the human being underneath the horror manifestation of the demon. He feels that he was called by God to be an exorcist, and therefore continues in this profession even when it gets tiring on his mind and spirit.

Father Marcus explains to Father Tomas that when he was first locked in a room with a demon as a young man and an exorcist in training, he felt relief because he finally found a purpose in his young life; he was armed with the word of God and his teachings from the church leaders: “I was the gun, the church was the hand, and the words were true” (*The Exorcist* s1 ep2). He explains further that while he was watching one of the priests perform an exorcism, he saw a beatific vision at the moment of exorcism; it was a multisensory experience, accompanied by distinct sounds he could hear (s1 ep2). This experience provided proof of God’s power, prompting Father Marcus to devote his life to being an exorcist, which meant a truly unconventional path even for a man of the cloth. Indeed, it was an experience that was so extraordinary and unorthodox that it eventually exiled him from society, as well as from the Church, as he chose to live his life on the move from country to country, wherever the cases of possession took him. At the same time, despite this tremendous burden, Father Marcus has a loving and caring side, as evidenced when he befriends Harper, a ten-year-old girl physically abused by her mother in Season 2, and when he fights for the life of Casey Rance, the possessed teenager from Season 1. He also shows devotion to Father Tomas, first warning him to stay away from his path for the sake of his safety, but then agreeing to apprentice him as an exorcist. Since, as Eagleton states, “being itself is a kind of good” (60), Father Marcus’s very avoidance of the evil of nihilism is a positive.

The series focuses on demonic possession and its psychological as well as social ramifications by dramatizing the ripple effect that trickles down to family members and even society at large. The most definitive sign that a demon has taken over a person's body is first dramatized in Episode 1, when one of the boy's eyes rolls and a second pupil presents itself – this is the boy that Father Marcus was unable to save. Within the semiotic of exorcism, as interpreted by Father Marcus in both religious and psychological terms, this symbolizes the secondary presence taking up residence in the person's body so that there are two warring personalities within the human body. For example, in several episodes, the demons have such a strong effect on the characters because they tap into their repressed thoughts and desires. As we shall see, some of the horror aesthetics in the series represent the immediate worry dramatized within a character's psyche, or act as a response to a traumatic action that has taken place.

Echoing the original film's psychological focus, in the television series, Father Tomas initially believes that “demons aren't real; they are an invention of the Church to explain things like addiction or mental illness” (s1 ep 1). This is what he tells the concerned mother in Chicago, Angela Rance, who believes her eldest daughter is possessed by a demon. No sooner has Father Tomas denied the existence of demons than he finds himself confronted with their existence, when a crow violently slams into the window of the church, graphically introducing the first aesthetic image of horror in the series. Later in the episode, Henry Rance, the father of the girl presumed possessed by demons, brings a message to Father Tomas that introduces another signifier in which religion and psychology intersect. Henry is afflicted with a recent brain injury, which provides a channel of sorts for this type of religious communication to occur. Soon after, Father Tomas seeks out Father Marcus, sharing these visions, and begins a slow-building partnership as they soon work together.

Throughout Season 1, as the city is becoming overrun with demons, the filmic narrative highlights the merging of religious with psychological and social concerns. The demons are mobilizing their powers and strength in numbers in preparation for the Pope's arrival, whose presence is marked through a powerful visual rhetoric, notably the recurring use of posters. In one, the Pope's back is turned to the viewer, with the words "He is coming" emblazoned across the top, a double meaning signifying the Pope's visit and the emergence of the demon. The deeply disturbing part of this storyline is that many of the members of the papal planning committee, the group of people who are working with the Pope's team to coordinate the event consisting of a visit and a parade, are already compromised by demonic entities. In developing this paranoid rhetoric, the horror resides not specifically in the visuals, but the viewer's prescience of what is to come. Through frequent filmic repetition of visualized signs and dark omens throughout the seasons (as manifested, for example, in the repeated referencing of a poster advertising the Pope's arrival in Season 1 and in the children's handprints in multiple spaces in Season 2), the viewer experiences a sense of tension and impending catastrophe.

During the time of the film's release in 1973, viewers were haunted by the trauma of historical events such as the many losses of the Vietnam War and the loss of trust in political leadership during Watergate, but there were also positive movements such as the civil rights and women's rights movements (Chambers 3). According to film scholar Amy Chambers, during the era of the *Exorcist* film, many viewers felt that doctors and priests "failed to adequately explain or eradicate the national and international traumas" of this time (3), leaving this work to the movies and literature. During this time, mental health facilities and institutions of moral authority, like the Church, were called into question, and this is reflected in both the *Exorcist* film and the television series four decades later. Both exorcism and the medical procedures

attempting to rectify the symptoms of mental distress in the film and series indicate the bodies of the afflicted are no longer their own (14). Chambers' observations extend to the television series as well, as the brief instances of medical aid appearing in Season 1 carry a sense of futility; the scientific help is either delaying or worsening the effects of the possession. The source of salvation lies directly between the exorcist and the afflicted person, meaning that the solution is located at the intersection of the religious and the psychological with the exorcist being a mediator.

For example, in Season 1, the demonic entity that has a psychological hold on Casey Rance sometimes comes to her in the human form, a man who curiously appears to be a comforting presence; his disposition is sweet and gentle, and he attempts to coach Casey toward making selfish choices that will serve only her pleasure. As they forge a connection, the demon is allowed access into Casey's innermost thoughts and feelings and desires. As the connection grows stronger, the demon enables Casey to act on her urges even if it is at the detriment of other people. For example, while playing lacrosse, Casey is taunted by her opponents, and near the end of the game she decides, with the demon's encouragement and supernatural ability, to retaliate in a violent manner. She breaks a bone in one of her opponents. In Season 1, the demon's intent is largely to reclaim the human he had possessed so many years ago: to get revenge on Angela by possessing her daughter. This in turn harkens back to *The Monk*, in which the supernatural forces working to sway the protagonist Ambrosio to immorality are based on primal human desires, which take Ambrosio farther away from the light of God and the possibility of salvation.

This gendered relationship between Casey and the male demon culminates in a more overtly sexual scene and problematic in Episode 3, when Casey's demonic powers are on display. In Episode 3 the demon appears to Casey while she is being harassed by a man on the

Chicago subway; as he transfers his demonic power to her through a kiss, she launches into an aggressive attack on her harasser, scratching him and eventually breaking his jaw. The electricity malfunctions, and in the final camera shot Casey is bloodied from the other man's blood, and she urinates in the middle of the subway car, the latter graphic scene paying homage to the urination scene from the 1973 film *The Exorcist* in which the protagonist Regan MacNeil first exhibits evidence of her demonic possession. Regan had urinated in front of her mother and her party guests, signifying that she was not in full physical control of her body, and that her mental state was also altered so that she did not feel embarrassment or the pressure to adhere to conventional societal mores.

As Casey's possession grows more evident to those around her, the two priests attempt to draw the demon out of her, to have proof of its presence so that they can begin an official exorcism. Their questions aim to provoke the demon to speak through Casey, whereby Father Marcus's emotionally resonant queries prove to be the better rhetorical strategy compared with Father Tomas' overly forward method which puts the demon on guard. When the demon speaks through Casey, he sounds terrifying, but when the demon is speaking to Casey in their own private bubble, he has a kind, comforting, and non-threatening presence. This contrast adds to the creepiness for viewers. If Casey chooses the demon of her own free will, then the bond between them will be stronger, which will require a more challenging exorcism. As the demon addresses Father Marcus through Casey, he also targets the priest's vulnerabilities, taunting him with details of his failures. Aware of this rich network of communication, Father Marcus tells another priest, "The demons are communicating with one another, sharing information" (s1 ep3).

The depth of psychological suffering becomes clear when Casey is taken to a psychiatric hospital and is confined to the bed. Highlighting its critique of traditional health care institutions,

the television series portrays her hospital experience as detrimental to her health, showing the utter failure of a clinical adherence to science (Chambers 4). What ultimately aids the exorcists in their banishing of the demon is the “power of restored faith” while performing the actions of an exorcism (4). Near the end of the episode, the demon man chokes Casey’s nurse with her crucifix necklace as a way of pressuring Casey accept him into her body and mind, a fate barely prevented by her mother who enters the room at the last second, unwittingly stopping the demon from strangling the nurse.

Signs of impending demonic activity pervade not only the Rance family, but this entire suburb in Chicago. A flashback in Episode 3 reveals that Casey’s sister Kat’s car crash was caused in part by the homeless man that was shown at the beginning of the season to be a demonic presence. In another scene, while Angela is working alongside the papal planning committee at a fancy hotel venue, a man outside begins making apocalyptic proclamations, and the socioeconomic class difference is markedly evident. Typically, most people will completely dismiss a disheveled-looking homeless man and believe whatever he is saying is the result of poor mental health, although in this case it is foreshadowing a real threat to the city. The contrast between the lower-class outsider and the posh inside of the fancy venue illustrates a wide divide between the classes of people and demonstrates differences in levels of authority. Towards the end of the committee’s meeting, the people inside look out the window to see that the homeless man has been immolated, while the camera focuses on the smoke rising; this portrays a significant omen in anticipation of the Pope’s arrival.

The end of the second episode reveals a series of horrible, brutal killings in stark detail; the camera moves through the house as an unsuspecting teenager passes by his bloody and murdered parents and is then grabbed and killed. It is a small mercy that he was unaware of the

carnage, so he did not have to feel intense fear and dread before his demise. After this grisly scene, the scene moves to show multiple people walking from several houses to a van, all carrying their own box of harvested organs from their killings. Episode 6 shows that these harvested organs factor into a sinister ceremony that the members of the papal planning committee plan to perform, called “vocare pulvere,” or “ceremony of ash.” The organs had been baked, dried, and turned into ash, which was then put into an ornate chalice and used in the demon-summoning ceremony. Using a chalice is another perversion of the Catholic faith, since this vessel is prominent in Catholicism. The participants are spellbound by the whole process, showing a disconcerting acceptance of what the viewer knows to be evil, but in the characters’ minds is the very opposite: a joyous occasion that brings them closer to their goal of destroying the Catholic Church. The seamless blend of human and non-human provides some intrigue and confusion for viewers in trying to decipher the intentions of these corrupt members, because as humans the actions they become involved with would be seen as appalling, but as non-humans their behaviour would not be surprising (Eagleton 9).

During Fathers Tomas and Marcus’ attempts to exorcize Casey, the power of the demon is such that it can emotionally manipulate its foe to preserve itself. Father Tomas figures out for himself in Episode 5 that the demon will reach inside his mind and latch onto his most treasured memories, as he explains to Father Marcus: “the way it takes love - finds it, you can feel it sniffing for it - and twists it” (s1 ep5). With the ability to mimic the voices of the exorcists’ deceased loved ones, twisting their words to weaken the priests’ resolve, evil threatens to tempt them into thinking they are not good enough to do their job. They must work towards being good and holding onto their faith to be of service to the possessed Casey; after all, goodness is more admirable when it can be “put to the test” (Eagleton 10). The exorcists in the television series as

well as the film portray the “old-fashioned puritan view that virtue must prove its credentials in strenuous combat with its enemies” (10).

Some gory imagery threatens Angela’s psychological wellbeing, giving a face to her fears. While Angela is dreaming, the demon targeting her and her family manifests an image of Angela’s worst fear, of her daughter Casey as a deceased corpse washed up in the river. This imagined caricature of Casey renders her unrecognizable with her skin physically deteriorating and succumbing to natural elements (s1 ep6). The physical rotting could symbolize the mental and psychological deterioration of Angela, as the holes in her hope for Casey to be found safe continue to grow. Again, evil works its way into the cracks of the psyche, chipping away at what one knows to be true and distorting good things to make them come to be seen in an evil light. When Father Marcus searches for Casey, she twice eludes his grasp. She is protected by a den of the possessed homeless and runs away from Father Marcus using classic movements from the *Exorcist* film: she crawls on the wall and walks in a backbend. When Father Marcus finally apprehends her, the two priests can get back to work on her interrupted exorcism.

The physical effects of possession worsen the longer the possession wears on. After weeks of being possessed, Casey’s body is failing; she has sores, dark teeth, and dark, pronounced vein-like markings on her neck and face. In addition to the outer body, the demon makes efforts to attack her from within, which wears down her mental state and fortitude. Father Marcus takes Casey to a convent, where he had previously worked with the nuns and witnessed a gentler approach to performing an exorcism -- one which included physical affection and soft-spoken prayers and words of affirmation. This time, Father Marcus feels let down by the nuns, because they believe that Casey is so close to death that they are preparing to administer a tea made from belladonna leaves, which “will bring about a swift and painless end” (s1 ep7). The

Mother Superior says to Father Marcus, “sometimes suffering doesn’t serve a higher purpose; it just is” (s1 ep7). The tea is administered to those for whom an exorcism did not work. Parallels to the right-to-die issue can be gleaned here, especially with the nun’s rationalization:

“needlessly torturing a woman whose body is rotting before our eyes, with zero hope of recovery, that is not compassion” (s1 ep7). Additionally, by controlling Casey’s death, the nuns would spare her soul from a religious standpoint; if the demon takes her, she will have no hope of reaching heaven (s1 ep7). This scene invokes a sense of futility and meaninglessness that evil has caused here (Eagleton 13), due to Casey’s demon rendering her body into a potentially unsavable shell.

Episode 8 reveals that Casey’s demon is one and the same as the one who had possessed Angela when she was a child, which was the plot from *The Exorcist* film. The demon’s reasons for doing so are to exact its revenge against Angela by targeting her and her family, since she was able to escape its grasp all those years ago with the help of Fathers Merrin and Karras. With this revelation, the series uses this narrative opportunity to go back in time to Regan’s past, when Regan was still named Angela; she changed her name to escape her childhood trauma relating to possession. Regan’s past from *The Exorcist* film explores further the details from that moment when she was first interacting with the demon. In the present, the demon in Casey locks eyes with Angela and gets into her head, bringing her back to the past in a dreamlike scene where she first discovered and played with the Ouija board. The fact that the demon makes her relive this is quite sinister because Angela is forced to watch herself making an innocent bad decision that started the ruination of her life and the lifelong struggle to distance herself from her past. Angela is emotionally affected by how the demon shaped her childhood. She begins to cry, perhaps because she wishes she could have gotten through to her younger self to warn her of the path she

knows she will inevitably go down. This sequence demonstrates the interplay between the viewer's and the character's awareness level of the evils in the scenario.

In the final episode of Season 1, Fathers Bennett and Marcus are held hostage by the papal planning committee members. Most of these members are integrated, meaning the demon and the human have fused together so that the demon has claimed the human soul. At this point, there is no hope for exorcising the person underneath since in many cases the person has freely chosen to give themselves over to the demon. These integrated members make a last-ditch attempt to claim the priests for their side by forcing their way into the priests' innermost thoughts and feelings. They attempt to twist their loved one's words around -- taking from past conversations the priests have had with their loved ones -- and convince them that they are not good enough to remain on God's side. Back at the Rance house, Father Tomas is facing a similar fate as the demon communicates with him through his mind after knocking him out in real life. These dreams are meant to sow seeds of doubt in the priests' minds; the words come from the people who mean the most to them, and it is very hard to differentiate between reality and fake delusions or false conversations. To prevent Father Tomas from fighting against the demon, the demon engineers his dreams to try to convey hopelessness, that he does not stand a chance against the evil forces. The demon refers to everything and everyone Father Tomas has lost in his life, and makes him question whether his sacrifices were worth it -- "what did it get you?" (s1 ep10). This mental attack goes on for a lengthy period, interspersed throughout most of the episode, and escalates when Father Marcus intrudes in Father Tomas' mind, saying he represents all the bad parts of him -- "I'm every rotten lie you've ever told" (s1 ep10). As with Fathers Bennett and Marcus, the demons gather deeply personal information on the religious figures and use it to chip away at their faith and mental strength. But one way the malevolent forces sabotage

themselves in their quest to convert their victims is when they go too far with the fabrications. In this case, the victim can snap out of the spell and realize that their loved ones would never say the things that the demons are crafting them to say. Fathers Bennett and Marcus are able to bring each other out from the grip of the demons' emotional manipulation – Father Bennett assures Father Marcus that the demon is lying when the demon says the Church “never gave a single damn” about him, and Father Marcus is able to free himself and Father Bennett from their shackles before Father Bennett is tempted to join the demonic forces by the image of his sister and the promise of reuniting with her and righting past wrongs (s1 ep10).

During the demon's attack on Angela and her family, Angela manages to keep a small compartment in her mind free from the demon, where it had previously been thought that Angela was integrated and therefore unable to be exorcised. The imagery shows Angela locked in a bedroom, and the demon approaches with a face that is burned and blackened, his dark hand and fingernails scraping against the wall as he walks toward Angela's room. Angela is forced to stay inside to protect herself while she listens to the demon torture her family. The series combines the culminating plot points of the season by moving back and forth between the final moments of Angela's exorcism and the demons' foiled attempt to attack the Pope. Father Marcus kills the Pope's would-be murderer with the crucifix from his rosary, averting a public fall to chaos within the Vatican. In the final moments of Angela's exorcism, the demon is outside Angela's mental door, beaten up and desperately begging her by her old name “Regan” to come back, before he is vanquished.

Season 2 of *The Exorcist* is set in an entirely different location and focuses on a different family. However, the priests do not reach the family until almost mid-way through the season; they are first shown to be on the road, finding and fighting demons as they go. The season opens

with an instance where Father Tomas lets the demon inside his mind, which Father Marcus insists he is not supposed to do because it makes the demon's job of manipulating Father Tomas easier. Father Tomas did so to get personal information about the possessed victim to help her in the priests' fight against the demon. Father Tomas allowing the demon into his mind, therefore, was a double-edged sword. The season opens with a dream sequence; Father Tomas is at a children's birthday party, and there are painted handprints on the wall. The reverie turns twisted when the piñata releases black sludge, and a woman emerges from the puddle. The music becomes distorted as well, and then the scene dissolves into real life as Fathers Marcus and Tomas are in a car chase with the husband of the woman they are trying to exorcise; the husband is deeply skeptical of the priests' methods. They reach a barn and continue the exorcism, and this demon again targets the priests' deepest fears and anxieties to try to prevent the exorcism from working. This time Father Marcus has a latent fear that God has abandoned him and that Father Tomas, whose skills as an exorcist have been growing under Father Marcus' tutelage, is "God's new favourite" and does not need Father Marcus anymore (s2 ep1). Giving the demon access to one's thoughts is a point of contention between the priests for most of the season. Father Tomas tries to finish the exorcism by approaching the woman in his mind. They are in a confessional booth, and the holy water Father Tomas passed by was black, thick, and bubbling -- like the liquid the woman arose from in the children's birthday party scene. As Father Tomas is trying to talk to the woman, she has her mouth open, and a song is playing from it. Father Tomas leans in closer, and suddenly a hand shoots out from her mouth and grabs Father Tomas by the throat, which wakes him up. His experimental new method of exorcism did not work, and the exorcism attempt is thwarted for the time being because her husband takes her away.

The family of focus in Season 2 consists of Andy, a foster parent, and his adopted children. They live on an island, and the kids tell a story of the island witch, setting up the context for future events in the season. As the viewer is introduced to each of the teens, the show cleverly sets the scene so that it is hard to tell which person will be targeted by the impending demonic presence. One could interpret this to mean that the demon is assessing each of them to decide who will be the best target, or that the show creators are playing a game with the viewers by keeping them guessing. First it is Truck, a sweet autistic boy, who hears ominous whispering through the open door of a shed, and from the well that has a prominent place in the island witch story. Then Caleb, a nice blind boy, is seen to be playing a record player with the music sounding backwards and is seemingly looking right at the camera although he is blind. Shelby is the most interested in religion of all the kids, and Verity is the most cynical but well-meaning under her tough exterior. She is the one who shares the story of the island witch, which has Caleb standing over the well as a test of initiation into the family, hoping the wooden covering does not break so that he does not fall in. Andy, the father, is a kind, hardworking man who consistently puts in effort to make the children feel at ease within the family -- bantering with them and encouraging them, as well as ensuring they put in their fair share of work. A foster care worker named Rose soon arrives onto the island, and Andy hopes to convince her that he can keep his foster home open. It is slowly revealed that Andy recently lost his wife, Nikki, and the rules of foster care are that two adults should be there to care for the kids. Rose and Andy had also dated in the past, adding a layer to their current dynamic of Rose as the authority figure. Rose is invited to dinner at the house, during which time viewers get to know the kids better; this is also where much of the incidents and curious happenings occur that hint at an ominous presence lurking.

Some odd situations that occur are that Truck has a propensity for sleepwalking, and Caleb goes back to the well overnight seemingly not of his own volition.

Parallels could be drawn between the worlds of foster care and religion, with questions of finding and establishing one's home, and deciding where to make one's home; where "home" is could also be decided for the person, especially if the person is young. Where Season 1 focused on one exorcism within a family, Season 2 focuses on a central exorcism with the added theme of families' journeys to negotiate their space, values, and beliefs, and fight for what they hold dear. Evil attempts to take root in the family unit, fracturing deep relationships, but through the family's response in banding together, they can confront evil and battle for the preservation of their goodness and healthy relationships. Related to this idea is Rose's character arc throughout the season. Rose's presence among the family at first makes the viewer feel wary, like she is intruding on the family, but by the end of the season she is the one who makes the effort to keep them all together -- she adopts them, continuing Andy's wish to keep the family together. Rose had fallen into the well during the climactic confrontation with the demon, but the children rescued her, enabling them to continue their lives together as a family unit after the crisis had passed.

Andy has a fifth foster child -- a young girl named Grace -- who lives in the attic and is too scared to leave the house, and rarely or never interacts with the other kids. Andy is at first very gentle and caring with Grace, subtly pushing her to go outside the house and interact with her siblings. As they make progress in this regard, signs slowly come to light that something is off about their relationship. When Andy and Grace venture outside one day, an abnormally large flock of birds gravitate toward the house, some of them hitting the walls and breaking the windows. This phenomenon added to a few other omens on the island, such as a lamb born with

birth defects and other animals being sick. One night, Verity sees Andy leaving Grace's room, and she goes to check the room for herself. The room is at the top of a flight of stairs, and there is a door closing it off to the rest of the house -- symbolic of Andy's relationship with Grace versus the rest of his kids. Andy's experience in the room just prior to Verity's intrusion was that of a pleasant children's bedroom, with soft blankets and pastel-coloured decorations. But when Verity enters a minute later, she is faced with what looks like an old art studio; plates of old food with maggots on top are scattered around the floor, which tells the viewer with certainty that Grace is, in fact, a figment of Andy's imagination. These developments prompt the viewer to think about the timeline of events: for example, Grace was already present at the beginning but signs of evil and omens began slightly later in the season, which shows that evil can already be situated before anything manifests (much like a virus) -- or the presence is not inherently evil yet, but merely the seeds of evil. When Verity questions Andy in Episode 5, Andy starts to experience what viewers will see in increasing amounts throughout the rest of the season, which are moments of dissociation between reality and what is going on in his mind. He still sees the room as Grace's room, and only after further questioning does the room's true appearance move in on him. He is surprised at first, and then defensive; the reality is threatening to crash down on him and ruin his fantasy. A physical symbol of the demon's increasing hold on Andy is a bug bite that he first receives in Grace's room; later, when they are on a family camping trip, Andy has small holes in his chest -- symbolic of the demon burrowing into him. A wasp covered in clear goo crawls out of one of the holes and moves close to his eye; the demon now has a more visceral effect on him. Grace is now able to trail Andy even when he is far from the house, whereas before she was not able to leave the house beyond the immediate property.

Father Bennett's role continues in Season 2 as he goes to the Vatican to attempt to bring it to the church's attention that there is a conspiracy afoot within their organization. He is conducting his own investigation on the papal planning committee, trying to assemble evidence. At the Vatican court of appeal, he explains that "the conspiracy is vast and well-hidden" and that he has "reason to believe that the integrated have infiltrated every level of the church" (s2 ep2). This situation in the television series is quite fear-inducing: to have such strong evil get so close and personal to a powerful organization that is supposed to stand for the morally good and sacred yet is revealed to have evil hidden at its core. This idea of penetrating a person, place, and entire institution to change their morals for the worse is a commentary on the many historical misdeeds of the Catholic Church (from the witch hunt in Europe to sexual abuse in North American residential schools), thus exposing the Church's own transgression, and its descent into sin and evil. In the series, the evil spreads like a cancer or rash everywhere, and if enough people neglect to be vigilant, the evil elements take over. It seems like no one can or will help him, and no one can fix the situation. In the face of futility, something to remember is that like Father Marcus' situation, even in the worst-case scenario a little glimpse of God can still provide salvation. This notion makes a good case to bring God back into one's life. Father Bennett remains steadfast for the entire series in his faith, untainted by the evil forces, until the final moments of Episode 10; he is taken to the hospital because he is wounded, and representatives from the corrupt papal group bring some ashes of human remains and place them underneath his bed. Reminiscent of the "vocare pulvere" ceremony from Season 1, an incantation is said and Father Bennett's eye changes to reveal two pupils, characteristic of possession. The scene then moves to the hallway to create a jump scare. The hallway is quiet, with a pair of nurses making their rounds from room to room, and then the camera suddenly zooms in just a little bit, and

Father Bennett is seen walking quickly behind a nurse; he is holding a large pair of shears in his outstretched hands, and the scene quickly cuts to an image of a statue with its head cut off.

Over the course of the series, the portrayal of the Catholic Church trains the viewer to see the Church, and religious places in general, as contaminated sites, because in the context of the series the viewer knows that these sites are compromised by corrupt, sneaky, and sinister forces. Scenes involving people with ties to the Church that viewers know are possessed remind viewers that an evil master plan is at work. This notion can certainly be seen in *The Monk*, with the hidden, sinful behaviours of Ambrosio and some of the nuns. One scene in Season 2 of *The Exorcist* series introduces a formidable character named Mouse who foils another plan by corrupted men to harm the Church. In a scene of horror, they start bleeding and vomiting from eating a dessert laced with communion wafers, and Mouse sets the entire room on fire to get rid of the evidence. Mouse and Father Marcus, later in the season, are revealed to have known each other through the Church, and some parallels exist between their lifestyles and struggles.

Season 2 explores different circumstances surrounding exorcisms, and how people can respond to the situation. After Fathers Marcus and Tomas successfully finish their first exorcism on the road, they are called to the house of a sick girl named Harper, whose mother insists she is possessed. The priests evaluate her, and there are a few characteristic signs of being possessed that harken back to the film, like their house looking like the house from the film and that Harper projectile vomits a small amount onto the priest. These signs help to show that Harper is in fact not truly possessed, and the mother had been keeping her sick for much of her life. The priests thankfully figured this out, because to perform an exorcism on someone who is not possessed can do more harm than good (s2 ep3). Harper is soon removed from her mother's care, and with Rose, Father Marcus, and Father Tomas, is sent to live in Andy's foster home. When they bring

her to the island, Father Tomas is hit with sensations of hearing ominous whispers through the woods, and he and Father Marcus see spider webs on the trees. In Andy's house, Father Tomas sees handprints on the wall much like the image from his dream in Episode 1, which makes him know he is in the right place. Rather than an imitation of evil that Harper's mother tried to keep up, more urgent and real signs of evil come to Father Tomas through the means of natural elements.

In Episode 6, several characters converge in spectacular fashion on a stormy night that starts with Harper's mother sneaking into the house to get her daughter back. Fathers Marcus and Tomas arrive, the kids wake up from the commotion, and everyone is there to witness Andy confronting Harper's mom; he lifts her up by the neck, stabs her in an eerily slow and casual manner, and he even moves the knife upwards in a gruesome fashion. He then places a bloody handprint on the wall, in a sort of mimicry or mockery of the children's handprints.

As Grace starts to gain more power, the viewer sees her exerting more influence over the other kids. She has a voodoo-esque power of manipulating Truck in Episode 5 to start banging his head against the wall and then strangling Verity. After this, Truck is temporarily sent to live somewhere else, and the family's togetherness is in jeopardy. Father Tomas is the one who stops the attack from the house; he asks Grace to show herself, and she does, taking him into another dream sequence -- an activity that Father Tomas has been involved with during the entire season. Father Tomas experiences the visceral sensations from the story of the origins of the island demon; this demon has been on the island for decades, targeting families and convincing fathers to murder their families. Father Tomas experiences what happened to some of the family members in his dream: he gets shot and blood drips from his mouth, and in another scene, he throws up water as a vicarious sensation from a boy who was pushed into the well. He also

receives bloody wounds on his face from the father who is possessed to murder, in the story of the original family that the demon targeted.

The central crisis of the season, which is Andy's relationship with his deceased wife who the demon is impersonating, is explored in depth in Episode 6, titled "Darling Nikki." As Andy's grip on reality further deteriorates, the demon – manifesting as Nikki -- uses his mental weakness to its full advantage, impersonating Nikki to keep him close to her. Nikki says to him, "we won't let them tear us apart," referring to the exorcists' attempts to complete the exorcism (s2 ep6). Andy goes on an up and down journey of starting to accept the demon; it is using the guise of relieving him from grief and loneliness to get into his mind, preying on human emotions. As Father Tomas said, "that's how it works its way in... it seeks vulnerability, emotional trauma" (s2 ep6). Andy's behavioural changes start to become noticed by Rose; he is emotionally distant with the children, whereas he used to be thoughtful and involved in their well-being and success. For example, when he went to visit Truck in the mental institution, Truck was very emotional, but Andy offered little comfort; Andy did not relay Truck's message of apology to Verity, although both Truck and Verity were hoping to communicate with each other. In some conversations Andy has with others, he sounds as though he is trying to mimic the way he was talking before, indicating that the demon is speaking more for him now.

The horror genre "provide[s] sustained meditations on wickedness" (Crofts 373). The added element of religion adds even greater parallels to the larger themes of horror and criminal law. Both religion and criminal law outline what wrongs are, particularly regarding moral wrongs (373). Consuming horror media provides a safe place in which to be exposed to these concepts, and additionally "there is something deeply attractive about the horrible" (374), especially in stories such as *The Exorcist* series and film where demons disguise themselves as

people who are attractive to their targets. If the mind reigns supreme over the body in regulating physical states, and “bodies out of control are categorised at law as involuntary” (375), the onus is set heavily on the exorcists to regain control by casting the demon out and saving the human being. The priests must be on the run partly because very few people will be on their side if they try to plead their case regarding the transgressions of the possessed victims that they have exorcised. The act of possession permeates the boundary between self and other and suggests that “potentially other categories and boundaries are challengeable” (378). The series experiments with shifting boundaries particularly with Andy, when the narrative shows his mental deterioration as the demon slowly changes his memories to an incorrect version of the circumstances surrounding his wife Nikki’s death, and the reactions he and his family members had to the tragic event.

Maria Walters, the woman who was not chosen to be the leader of the pack of demons, now has cancer in Season 2 and is confined to a hospital bed. Father Bennett and Mouse visit her to get more information on the impending army of demons. The demon inside her calls her “terminal” and “worthless,” which raises the idea that the demon might have resigned itself to die with her, since she is integrated with it. Father Bennett and Mouse put holy water into her I.V. to torture her for information, and she says in a demonic voice, as black goo trickles from her eyes and mouth, “Torture? How terribly exciting” (s1 ep6). Their exchange does not yield answers for Father Bennett and Mouse, so Mouse ends up shooting Maria in the head; as she does so the chandelier falls and one of the shards of glass pierces Father Bennett’s side as he lunges to protect Mouse. The creepy final shot of Maria’s face shows her mouth open, a bullet hole in her forehead, and her eye that has returned to normal -- back to one pupil, showing she is a human corpse, and the demon has disappeared.

If a monster is threatening and impure, and often a hybrid of different species (Killeen 147), in the case of *The Exorcist* film and television series, the monstrous is the diabolical merging of human and demon. As well, the demon as monster does not have corporeal form, but it is all too easy for this type of supernatural creature to find hosts so that they may wreak their havoc. The fact that the possessed look like normal people creates a sense of uncanniness; the fully integrated demons are “actually hollowed-out shells containing a terrifying otherness” (Killeen 148). Andy’s internal battle is complex; the demon works to distort his memories of many of his significant life moments to gain his allegiance. Andy goes in and out of his right mind during the exorcism; at one point Andy sees Fathers Marcus and Tomas as demons who are trying to harm him, which flips the script around from what the viewer knows to be true. The priests look menacing with their grimaces and wild eyes, and Father Marcus holds a crucifix to Andy’s head that leaves a cross-shaped burn (s1 ep7). The turning point here is that Andy says “help me” to the demon, because he wants to be saved from the pain of the exorcism, whereas before he was saying “help me” to Father Marcus.

In *The Monk*, it is the main characters, not the secondary ones, who directly suffer from the horrific events. In the television program, in contrast, the most horrific events happen to secondary characters, as when Andy ends up killing the neighbour his children are staying with in a most gruesome manner, with an ice pick. As horrific and graphic as the act is, since viewers are not as emotionally invested in these secondary characters who become victims, they are less affected by these filmic representations of horror. With the survival of the main characters, the episodic structure of the television series continues.

When Father Tomas can access the inside of Andy’s head, he realizes that Andy has been physically fighting the demon, having to literally bat it away as it continues its onslaught against

Andy. Author Henry Bacon, in his 2015 book *The Fascination of Film Violence*, mentions a “justification of counterviolence” (87); *The Exorcist* makes violence a necessity in some cases rather than an act that requires moral justification. Some of the characters have no choice but to act in a violent manner to preserve either themselves or their loved ones from the demon’s wrath. In the end, Andy sacrifices his life, ensuring that the demon will die so that he can save other families from being targeted by the demon. Andy dies at the hands of Father Marcus; the arrangement was agreed upon by everyone, but Father Marcus now feels unworthy of continuing as an exorcist because he committed a mortal sin. Father Tomas tries to convince Father Marcus not to leave, reminding him of all the innocent lives he will have saved and that every sin can be forgiven, but Father Marcus cannot forgive himself (s2 ep10). Thus, he leaves Father Tomas and Mouse to embark on their own journey of “being hunted by the single largest, richest, and most powerful organization in the history of mankind” (s2 ep10), referring to the Catholic Church.

Conclusion

As Terry Eagleton posits in his book *On Evil*, calling an action evil means it is beyond comprehension, and unintelligible; in other words, the less sense an action makes, the more fraught with evil it typically is (2-3). *The Exorcist* television series leaves viewers with a felt experience of evil as perpetrated by demons, whose design is to spread chaos. The demons occasionally explain themselves and their designs, making the causes and effects of evil intelligible to the viewer. This is like Lewis's novel *The Monk*, in which most of the evil actions of the characters are *unintelligible* to the characters around them but are made clear to the reader who learns about the characters' intentions and reasonings from the narrator, and it is evident that the cause of the evil aspects is mainly from supernatural elements. If evil is not thought to have a cause -- that it is its own cause, like being intrinsically good or evil (Eagleton 4) -- then in this series and novel, all the evil is attributed to and encapsulated in the demons and supernatural forces. Viewers have sympathy for almost all the characters, because they often partake in evil actions against their will, and it is an up and down struggle between the forces of good and evil -- from internal, psychological forces, and external, supernatural forces. The main character not to be felt sorry for is Ambrosio, because he continuously pursues his newfound depraved desires, and puts in little effort to fight against them. Even with his depravity, his death is still a horrific spectacle, testing also how far he has come from being human, having given himself to the devil and sin. In *The Exorcist* television series, the characters must answer to the consequences of the actions of outside evil forces. While the spreading of evil causes consistent destruction and damage, there is nonetheless more redemption in the television series than in *The Monk*.

The texts studied in this paper take different approaches to displaying the manifestations of evil. *The Exorcist* series, in Season 1, employed gore and aesthetic horror more liberally in its

clever continuation of the story from the original film, while in Season 2 the storyline focused more heavily on the psychological aspects of evil and other difficult emotions like grief and guilt. The horrible power of demons is that they can penetrate the innermost parts of a human being -- tainting their soul, mind, and memories -- and take away a person's free will and self-control. This threat is scarier than any graphic image of horror. To combat the power of demonic forces, it is important to hold on to faith; and for the less religious readers and viewers, to stay strong in beliefs and values, and hold on to loved ones, since "autonomy is a dream of evil" (Eagleton 12). *The Exorcist* film has been interpreted by the church "as a positive response to the power of faith" (Chambers 5). When all else fails, those armed with faith can combat horror -- real or aesthetic -- and have goodness prevail.

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