

Ambivalent title of 'the demon lover' and 'the open window'

[Life](#), [Love](#)



Man has always lived in a most deceiving world, and departed from that idea, every self-respecting author wants to make his readers more sensitive to our planet as it stands. In libraries, shelves are overloaded with committed novels, but it is certainly possible to make an issue and to make the audience well-aware of its own naivety by the use of an ambivalent title, as Elizabeth Bowen and Saki have tried to do with their respective short stories 'The Demon Lover' and 'The Open Window'. The first tale yet, 'The Demon Lover', shows that it is not that difficult to put one on the wrong track.

The title implies that it might be a ghost story, which was still very popular those days, but after a first lecture we can conclude that this is not the case. In spite of the spooky setting – such as the old dusty house in a abandoned neighborhood – and implicit assumptions about the potential presence of a ghost, there are no explicit clues that come up to the reader's first expectations. Even the suspicious letter on the hall table is not convincing enough; what is more, the fact that no one significant had any key of the house, that there was no stamp on the envelop, that the letter was signed with the first letter of Mrs.

Drover's name and that "she went to the mirror" (p. 4, l. 27) to see her reflection raises the question whether she did not write it herself. The only demons that occur in the story are those of Mrs. Drover's past: she is constantly betrayed by nervous twitches as "an intermittent muscular flicker to the left of her mouth" (p. 4, l. 36), and by the flash-backs to her cold lover in her youth. Incapable to leave her traumas behind, not a single day passes

without being haunted by delusions, which is at a low ebb when she mistakes the taxi driver for her formal fiance and she drives completely mad.

Delusions could also be found in the other story, 'The Open Window'. Just like in Bowen's story, one might be mistaken about the fact that the text deals with paranormal phenomena – for instance the beginning the story that could be interpreted as a ghost story, but “ an undefinable something about the room seemed to suggest masculine habitation” (p. 69, l. 25) shows that there are actually still living there. It starts already with the names of the protagonists: one might think those do not have any significant purpose within the story, but in point of fact, these names are the foundations of the tale. On one hand, Vera's name could be an ironic prophecy: although it might be a word pun for 'veracious', it draws the audience's attention to be very careful with her treacherous tales.

On the other hand, by becoming nuts at the end of the story, Mr. Nuttel wears a very appropriate name. For both of them, the title can have a different meaning: a symbolical for Mr. Nuttel, for whom the fresh air blown into the room represents a new start in life, and a useful one for Vera, who is very keen on deceiving and telling great stories. “ Romance at short notice was her specialty” (p. 70, l. 30)) What is more, because she is a professional manipulator, differences between reality and imagination become slightly invisible, but the open window will open their eyes too, so that they will be forced to think twice. The conclusion is simple: different interpretations ascribed to an ambivalent title do not only broaden one's horizon, but one could also gain a clear understanding of social standards, human mind and

the world in general. And last but not least, it is the perfect way for man to overcome their own naivety.