Monsters and the Monstrous

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Introduction

Cristina Santos

Since its inception the journal has sought to explore the broad concept of 'The Monster' and 'The Monstrous' from a multifaceted inter-disciplinary perspective. This issue continues that investigation by furthering the study of the enduring influence and imagery of monsters and the monstrous on human culture throughout history. These monsters are not only physical embodiments of society's anxieties, fears and views of the abject but also engage with stereotypes of normative and non-normative people, behaviours and belief systems.

This issue begins with an essay that examines illustrations from sixteenth-century representations of good versus evil in ritual magic and spirits, some more monstrous than others, and their link to the expression of masculinity of the time. The construct of masculinity is further explored in the discussion of the fairy tale *Beauty and the Beast* as part of a dialogue that perpetuates systems of gendered power systems and violence against women. Yet the monstrous Other has also been, very often, determined by fear of the unknown and all that is different—culturally, socially, sexually and politically. At times this anxiety around the abject, culminates in the pursuit of perfection—human perfection—where technology, eugenics, genetic modification and plastic surgery inspire monsters of their own. These monsters ultimately reveal that which makes us most human can also make us the most monstrous at the same time. Since not all monsters hide underneath our beds many lie deep within us. One need only view J.J. Abrams television series *Fringe* (2008-2013) to recognize that the path taken by scientists' intent on improving humanity quickly veers to a landscape of the monstrous.

This open call issue undertakes the task of examining specific 'monsters' as well as evaluating the role, function and consequences of persons, actions or events identified as 'monstrous'. Intrinsic to this discussion will be the evaluation of history and contemporary cultural influences of monsters and monstrous metaphors in varying cultural imaginaries of the world in both the past and present. After all, as long as humans continue to think, dream and imagine so will monsters and all things monstrous continue to populate human expressions of fear, anxiety and all things that 'go bump in the night.'

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‘He appeareth like a monster’: Representing Monstrous Spiritual Encounters in Folger MS. V.b.26

James Clark, Joseph Peterson and Daniel Harms

Abstract

Folger Shakespeare Library V.b.26, a sixteenth-century miscellany of ritual magic, is notable for its lists and illustrations of spirits. Such spirits are a key part of magical procedure from the period, with directories of spirits in many forms providing a magician with a wide range of monsters to be summoned. The pictures in V.b.26 are taken from traditional works of magic, as well as from two printed texts, appropriated by the author in order to illustrate the text. Such monsters may have served as methods for magicians to assert their masculinity through a ritual struggle and triumph over dangerous forces.

Key Words

Ritual magic, masculinity, Folger Shakespeare Library, demons, spirits, illustrations, manuscripts.

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> One of the important means of influencing inimical powers was their representation in a context in which they could be manipulated for the benefit of one or more individuals. The first step toward this process must have been the act of giving visual form to evil powers…[1]

In an unnamed manuscript at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, monsters abound. Satan appears within, as an uncharacteristically shaggy figure, bent over so far he seems to be walking on four legs. Bilgall is a spirit that appears to be a cow with the head of a fire-breathing man. The most impressive, however, is no doubt Mosacus, a trunked monstrosity with the tail of a fish and animal heads placed all over his body (Figures 6, 8, and 1). These illustrations have been given considerable space on each space, often with the text wrapping around them to indicate they were drawn beforehand. All of these are figures that are seem to be out of nightmares - but indeed, there were many who actively sought to meet them. With these drawings occur spells and incantations to draw these horrible beings to the reader. Why would anyone desire to do so?

These were hardly the only monsters to populate the English mental landscape during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as the literature, folklore, drama, song, and poetry are filled with such creatures. Surekha Davies provides us with three major categories of monsters that were prevalent in this milieu. The first, drawing upon Aristotle, depicted monsters as deviations from the natural order, deserving a scientific description yet with no broader epistemological or aesthetic significance. The second, calling upon Cicero, viewed such creatures as prodigies which manifest to express the will or displeasure of the divine. The third, taking its inspiration from Pliny, described monsters as wonders of nature found in faraway lands.[2]

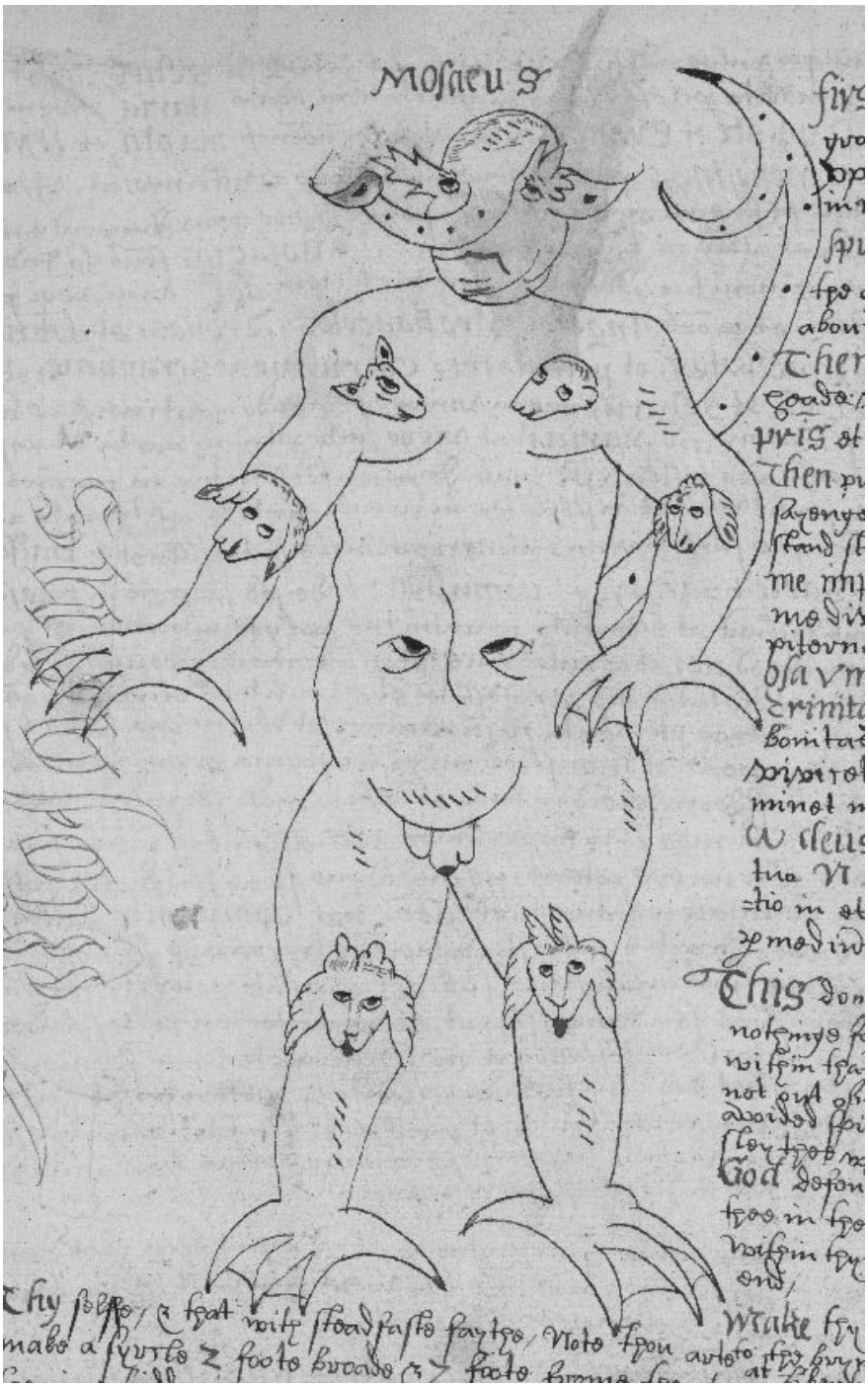

Figure 1: Illustration of Mosacus from V.b.26 (see Table 1, item 8). No copyright date. By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Figure 2: Illustration of monstrous birth, Edward Fenton's *Certaine secrete wonders*… RB 12959, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Still, monsters are violators of categories by their very nature, and herein we will describe a group that challenges these categories: the spirits described in works of ritual magic, such as Folger V.b.26, from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Beginning with the practice of ritual magic itself, we will move to the appearances of the spirits therein, as manifested in the lists of demons on whom the magician might call. In particular, we will discuss the spirits in Folger MS. V.b.26, which appear not only in a list but also in a series of striking illustrations. We will cover the origin of these illustrations, and how monsters from the three categories listed above and beyond were appropriated and adapted for use in this manuscript. Finally, we will examine the significance of these creatures in the context of the performance of ritual magic, and its significance within early modern European models of manhood.

1. Ritual Magic in the Elizabethan Era

Although debates on the invisible world were prevalent in intellectual and theological circles, the spiritual world of sixteenth-century England remained consistent in popular belief. God was the head of the celestial hierarchy, commanding the obedience of the angels and permitting the involvement of demons. The latter were dangerous spirits, often depicted with horns, tails, hooves, wings, and distorted or exaggerated features, but who could also shapeshift and take the form of animals. The demons could inflict both physical and spiritual harm upon those around them, but they might also respond to petitions or be tricked into assisting. Humans could interact with spirits via a number of methods: prayer, visions, exorcism, or chance encounters. Through these techniques, a person could seek to interact with such beings in order to accomplish aims not answered through prayer - especially those that might be seen askance by the Most High, such as acquiring knowledge of the world, speaking with the dead, obtaining treasure, or procuring love. These objectives were the province of the ritual magician, who could treat with these spirits to achieve all manner of ends.[3]

Accomplishing these goals required detailed ritual procedures for the benefit of the magician. Although we have works purporting to be comprehensive examinations of spirit summoning, a high number take the character of miscellanies, with individual procedures copied as the scribes discovered them from the collections of others with similar interests. Even with a burgeoning print culture, the questionable nature of these treatises and the writers’ desire to create customized works ensured the survival of a manuscript culture of ritual magic. A small number of these manuals still survive, ensconced in special collections in Europe and North America. These provide us with a fascinating view of how such procedures were carried out, complete with elaborate diagrams, lengthy prayers, and sections in Latin or various ciphers.[4]

According to these books, the magician seeking to compel spirits should engage in a range of purifications, which may include fasting, ablutions, recitation of psalms, giving alms, and attending mass. In most cases, the practitioner should assemble various types of ritual equipment, often including a wand, a sword, or robes that must be made or obtained in a carefully prescribed manner. Once these initial steps were completed, the would-be magician repairs to an isolated or hidden place, drawing a circle upon the ground in which to stand. He should speak a series of incantations to compel the spirit to appear. Such speeches typically included a declaration of the magician’s intent; an address of the spirit or spirits to be called; a lengthy series of invocations calling upon and recounting all manner of holy names, spirits, individuals, and events; and a declaration of what the magician desired of the spirit. A spirit who does not appear or agree to serve the magician in the specified manner may be threatened with further punishments until it complies. In some cases, the spirit is compelled to reach an agreement to come to the magician in the future without the full conjuration. Having done its duty, the spirit is dismissed quickly and the ritual ends.[5]

2. The Appearance of Demons in Ritual Magic

What is the nature of these spirits being called upon? How might a magician choose which of the infernal host would be best suitable for a particular task? To accomplish this, many magical texts include lists of spirits, describing the capabilities of each and the purposes to which they might be put. Such lists have a long pedigree, beginning with the *Testament of Solomon*, which likely dates to the third century AD. The *Testament* tells of Solomon’s conjuring of a long list of spirits using a ring that the Archangel Michael provided to him. As each is summoned and appears in its monstrous form, it relates to Solomon its name, its function (usually causing a specific illness), and how its designs might be thwarted. Eventually the influence of these creatures leads Solomon to lose the grace of God. The *Testament* was well known in the later years of the Byzantine Empire, and although we have no clear pedigree

of the lists that turned up in medieval and Renaissance grimoires, the parallels are striking.[6]

Similar lists would later appear during the medieval and early Renaissance period, finding print in such Elizabethan works as Johann Weyer's *De praestigiis daemonum* and Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. Other manuscripts across Western Europe, including Trinity College O.8.29, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek CLM 849, and Bodleian Digby 30, showcase the variety of names that might appear on these lists (Boudet, Jackson, Kieckhefer).[7] The most famous of these, however, was that appearing in a few selected manuscripts entitled the 'Lemegeton,' one section of which the magician Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) was to later popularize in his publication *The Book of the Goetia of Solomon the King*.[8] The exact list of spirits covered differs considerably among the lists, but they do share some commonalities in structure. Most include the spirits' names, their appearances (which often vary considerably), their stations in the infernal hierarchy, and what they could accomplish on behalf of the magician.

It should be noted that the wording of the rites used to summon these spirits belie the systematization of their appearances. Most of the incantations for spirits operate under the assumption that the spirits can shift in form, appearing with a horrific or pleasant visage, as they choose. Because of this, a frequent imperative is that the spirit show itself in a non-threatening form. Perhaps the most common word used is the Latin 'pulchra' ('beautiful') with phrases such as 'in pulcra [sic] forma humana,' 'in formis humanis pulcherimus,' or 'ad nos in pulchra et amabile forma' being frequent.[9] Other words that appear often in such incantations are 'humana' (human), 'decora' ('beautiful' or 'elegant') and 'sine ulla tortuositate vel deformitate' ('without tortuosity or deformity'), and similar phrases.[10] Folger MS. V.b.26 often states that the spirit should appear in the form of a small boy, usually of three years. Not only does this specify the shape in which the magician wants the spirit to appear, but it also paints a portrait of its opposite number: ugly, inhuman, deformed, and powerful.

Nonetheless, magicians did seem to think of spirits in particular forms, even if that form might be contingent. Examining one particular manuscript may help us to explore the diverse ways in which this monstrosity displayed itself.

3. Monstrous Offices

We now to turn to a particular miscellany manuscript of Elizabethan magic, forming part of the collection of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. Two dates, May 8, 1577 and 1583, appear in the text, as both appear in the middle of the manuscript, but the dating of the beginning and the end is more difficult. Further, later additions and annotations are made at different points in the manuscript, further complicating the question of dating.

At some point the book was split into two parts. The first section through a network of London occultists, including the miniatures painter Richard Cosway (c. 1740-1821), balloonist George Graham (1784-1867), astrologer Robert Cross Smith ('Raphael'), (1795-1832), and accountant Frederick Hockley (1805-1880). After dropping out of sight, it became the property of the poet Edward Meyerstein (1889-1952) and passed from his estate to the booksellers Day's Ltd., from which the Folger purchased it in 1958. The second section dropped out of sight, but turned up in the library of the artist Robert Lenciewicz (1941-2002), and was donated to the Folger by the B. H. Breslauer Foundation. Both sections have been reunited in the Folger collection (albeit still under separate covers).[11]

The sections of V.b.26 we will examine are the lists of spirits to be summoned that appear on pages 73-84, and a series of illustrated operations to summon particular spirits from pages 164-200. The former consists of one long list, the 'Officium de spirittibus'; a brief section on Mycob, the queen of the fairies; and brief lists of the spirits beholden to each demonic king of the four directions.

This section of the manuscript describes a cavalcade of spirits with all manner of forms. A good number therein appear as knights, nobles, or other men. Among them are Barbaryes, who ‘appeareth like ann armed souldier’ bearing a spear and banner; Barbates or Barbares, ‘a showter [shooter], or fforrest man’; and the ‘knight’ Geenex who shows himself as ‘a valiant captayne.’[12] Even if they do appear as human, however, they do not merit any change in the overall summoning procedure.

Animal forms also appear in abundance. Some simply appear as animals, such as Gasyaxe who is ‘like a hare’ or Mageyne ‘like [a] hedg hoge’ (79). Others are composites; Moyle ‘appeareth like a Lyon, & hath wings like a griffen,’ and Marshiones is ‘like to a stronge man, havinge a serpents tayle’ (77). Some conform to other categories of monster, such as Barbares, who is’like a saggittary that is halfe a man & halfe a beast’ (78); Leban, who resembles a ‘gyante,’ (80), or even Amada, ‘like a monstrous beast’ (77). Beyond the natural world are Porax, who resembles ‘an Aungell, & yet blacke & very darcke’ (77), Tamor or Chamor, who ‘appeareth in a fyery flame’ (76), and Goorox ‘he appeareth like a bowle [a bowl or ball], & sometyme like a mann’ (78).

As we have discussed, one important commonality between the official and surreptitious magical literatures of the period is the juxtaposition of human and animal examples in order to distinguish demonic figures. This does not mean that the compiler eschewed more prevalent contemporary depictions of demons, however. Most notably, we are told that the spirit Lewteffar or Falcas ‘hath starry eyes, & *a heade of a divell*, the tayle of a viper, & the hands of a beare, & the feete of a mole’ (76, my italics). Thus, the official conception of the devil is recognized at exactly one point on the list, but only as a single element, not repeated elsewhere, of a panoply of possible forms.

Yet within this cavalcade, we have one commonality: the spirits are uniformly referred to as male, not only in terms of the pronoun ‘he,’ but also in their ranks: knights, princes, earls, and so forth. That does not mean that they uniformly appear as such; half a dozen spirits, such as Paymon (74), Rewsyn (77), Gemyen (77), Jambex (79), Fewrayn (79), Carmerin (79), and Gemon (80), appear in female forms. Nonetheless, even these are referred to with male pronouns. This is very much in line with traditional attitudes of theologians, epitomized by William of Auvergne in his *De universo*, in which he argued that spirits could not be female due to their lack of reproductive ability, even though their essential nature as weak and passive allowed them to appear as such.[13]

Another section of V.b.26 features operations to summon individual spirits, including Birto, Bilgall, Ascariell, Satan, Orobas, Baron, Romulon, Mosacus, and Oberion. Most of them include separate ritual preparations, an incantation particular to the spirit, and a circle into which the spirit is to be summoned. Although this is particularly notable as a collection of such rituals, similar operations often turn up in other manuscripts. What sets apart Folger MS. V.b.26 apart are a dozen illustrations, sometimes occupying a full page, of the spirits to be summoned. Further, following the text ending this section of the manuscript are five illustrations which would also seem to be spirits, without accompanying text.

Upon initial examination, we hypothesized that these illustrations might be based on the scribe’s supposed visions of spiritual beings. As we soon discovered, many can be traced back to other sources. For example, some of the images of Oberion, king of the fairies (#10 and #12 on Table 1, see Figure 3), turn up in other manuscripts regarding that spirit.[14] Likewise, one ritual includes two circles to call the spirit Birto, taking the form of a wyvern (#1). This figure is present in a great number of manuscripts from later periods.[15]

Yet we also have more blatant appropriations from other genres of text. One key work is an English translation of a work by Pierre Boaistuau (c. 1517-1566), a Breton humanist, author, and compiler. Boaistuau studied law at Poictiers, Valencia, and Avignon, as well as entertaining

an amateur interest in medicine. He made trips to Italy, Germany, and England, the latter in 1561, when he presented his *Histoires prodigieuses*, a collection of marvellous births, exotic creatures, and miraculous occurrences, to Queen Elizabeth I in hope of gaining her patronage. Eight years later, Boaistuau's work received an uncredited translation into English, with additional material, under the title *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature*. The translator was George Fenton (d. 1603), a soldier and explorer later known for joining Frobisher's second and third expeditions in search of the Northwest Passage. He later became the head of an expedition for trade with the East, which he subverted into attempts at piracy and crowning himself king of St. Helena. Different woodcuts appear in Fenton's edition as opposed to the French editions, and as the illustrations below are closer to the manuscript than those appearing in the French, this one will be used in our analysis.[16]

Another source is the Roman author Flavius Vegetius Renatus' treatise on warfare, recruitment of soldiers, sieges, and other military topics, *De re militari*. In 1529, the Augsburg publisher Heinrich Stainer published a German translation of the work, *Vier bucher der Ritterschafft*…including a number of woodcuts displaying a variety of battering rams, trebuchets, cannons, and other siege instruments ranging in imagination from practical to imaginative. It seems that the illustrator of the Folger MS. had access to this or the 1536, French translation from Paris publisher Chrestian Wechel, *Du fait de guerre*, which used the same woodcuts, given that no English translation used the same images. No matter which translation he might have used, the illustrator appropriated this as another source for his monsters, including the monstrous Orobas (Figures 4 and 5).[17]

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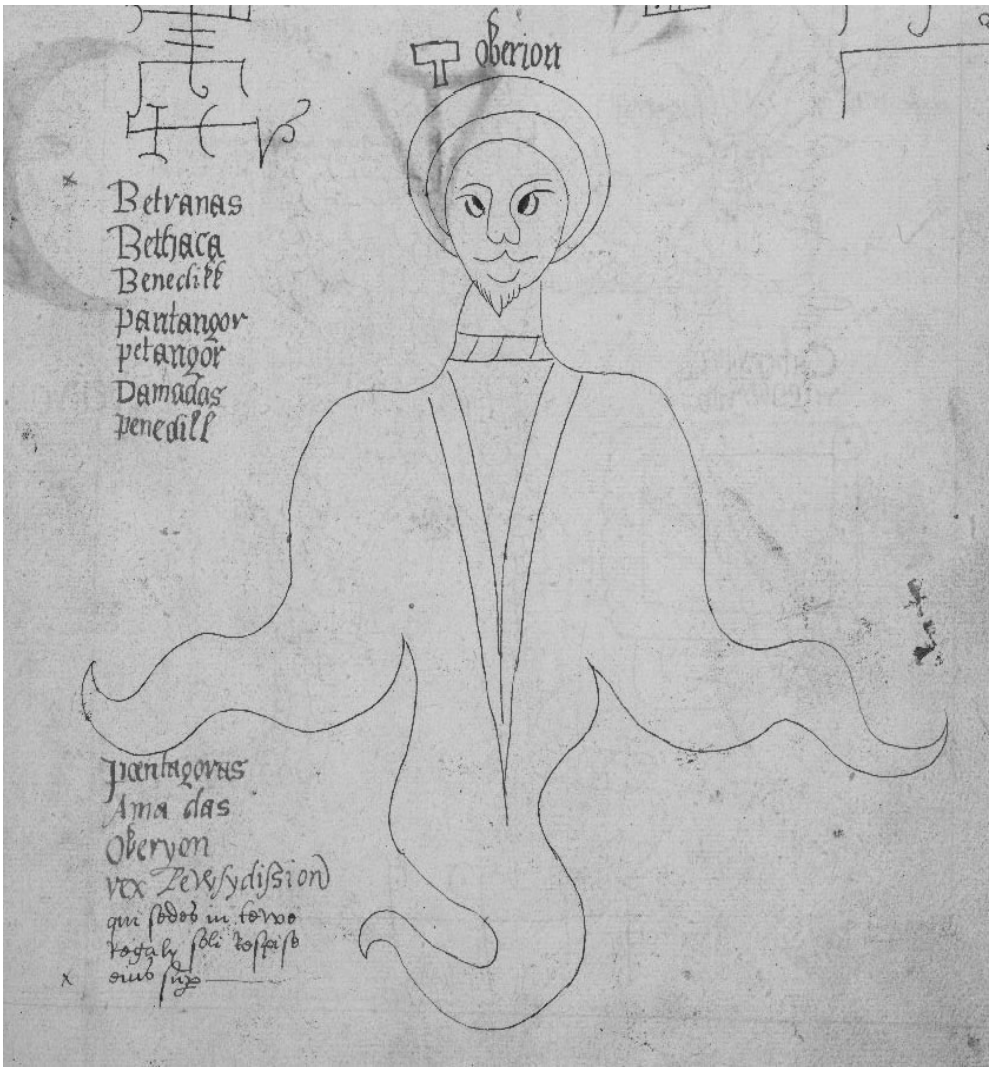

Figure 3: Illustration of Oberion from V.b.26 (see Table 1, item 10).
By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

If we examine the illustrations in the manuscript that were copied from Fenton and Vegetius’ works, we find that representatives of all three of Davies’ categories have been transformed into spirits. The first (#17 on Table 1) is a curious creature, appearing to be a dragon or wyvern covered with flowers, with no label attached. This appears in Fenton as a monstrous fish seen by over two hundred people in Paris, including doctors of the university. As no text accompanies it, we might be able to dismiss its significance, but its association with the other figures taken from Fenton links it with the spirits.[20]

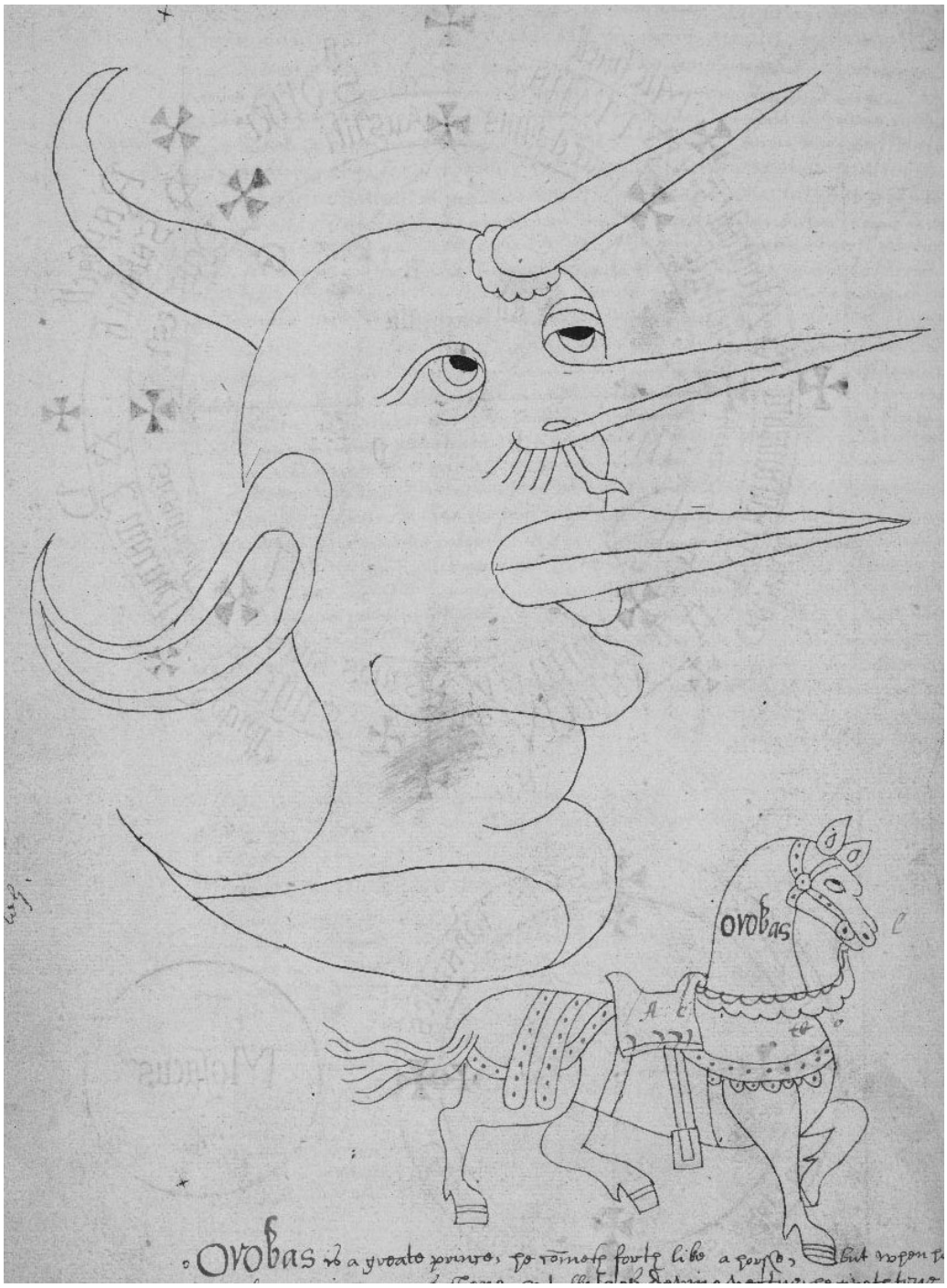

Figure 4: Illustration of Orobas from V.b.26 (see Table 1, item 9).
By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

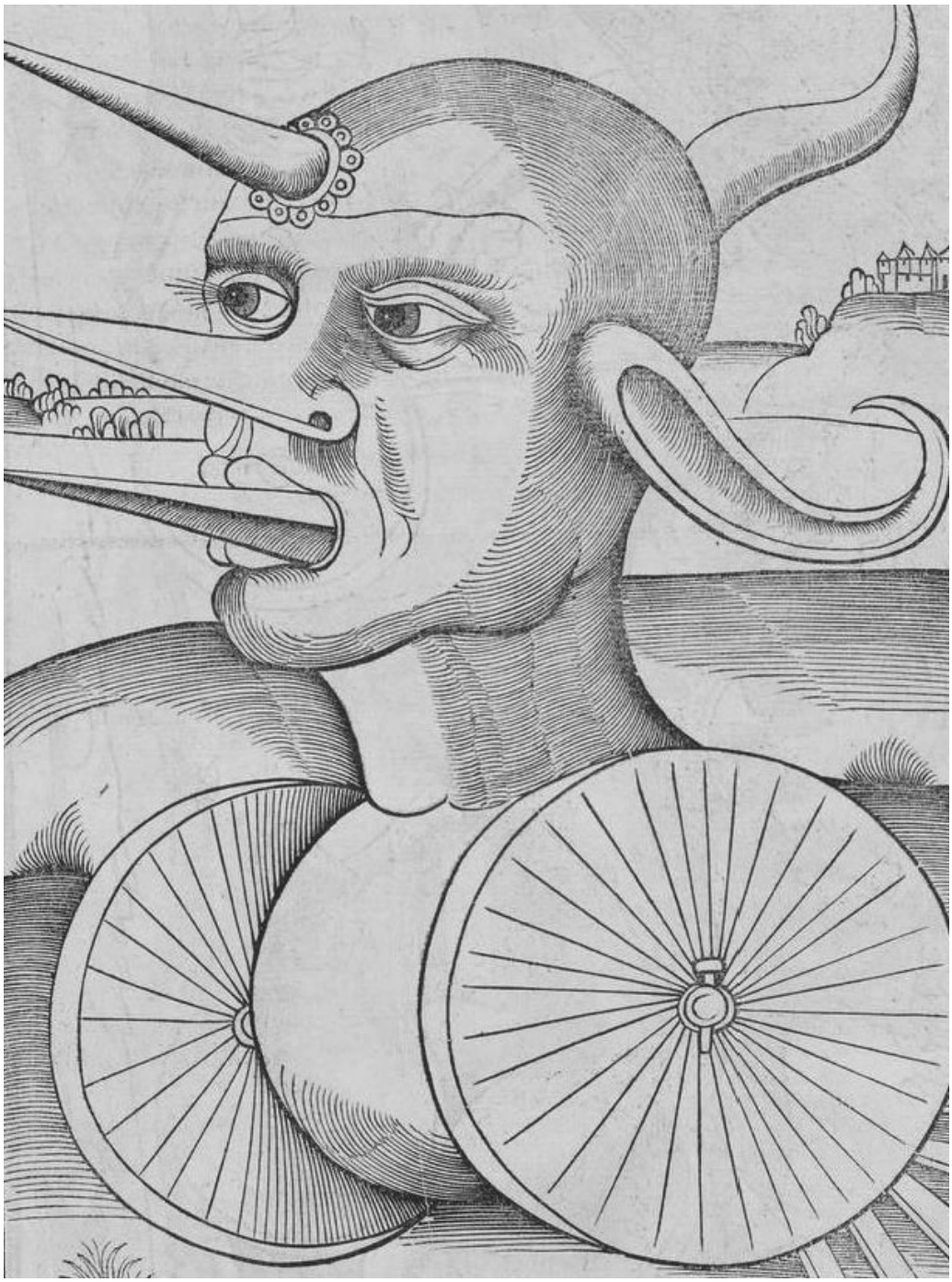

Figure 5: Illustration of a siege engine, from Vegetius’ *Vier bucher der Ritterschafft* (Augsburg, Stainer, 1529). Courtesy University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Library).

Table 1: List, Known Origins, and Nature of Monstrous Entities Pictured in Folger V.b.26

Number	Folger MS. Name and Page	Source	Nature of copied illustration, if known
1	p. 164: 'Birto'	Traditional for magical MSS.	Spirit
2	p. 165: 'Bilgall'	Fenton 1569, p. 144	Not stated
3	p. 168: 'Annabath, Annobathe'	Vegetius 1529	Human
4	p. 169: 'Ascariell'	Fenton 1569, p. 38	Human
5	p. 172: 'Satan'	Fenton 1569, p. 110	Creature from distant lands (wild man)
6	p. 175: 'Baron'	Fenton 1569, p. 30	Creature from distant lands (satyr)
7	p. 178: 'Romulon'	Fenton 1569, p. 61	Human
8	p. 181: 'Mosacus'	Fenton 1569, p. 14	Divine portent
9	p. 184: 'Orobas'	Vegetius 1529	Siege engine
10	p. 185: 'Oberyon'	Traditional for magical MSS.	Spirit
11	p. 185: 'Oberyon'	Unknown	--
12	p. 186: 'Oberyon'	Traditional for magical MSS.	Spirit
13	p. 203: [unnamed]	Fenton 1569, p. 70	Human
14	p. 204: [unnamed]	Unknown	--
15	p. 204: [unnamed]	Fenton 1569, p. 12	Natural oddity
16	p. 205: [unnamed]	Unknown	--
17	p. 205: [unnamed]	Fenton 1569, p. 49	Natural oddity

On another such blank page are illustrations of two beings, one hairy, and the other noticeably smaller than the other. This appears to be inspired by a picture in Fenton, which depicts:

> there was brought to [Charles III] a maide, rough and covered with haire like a beare, the which the mother had brought forth in so hideous and deformed a shape, by having too much regarde to the picture of S. Iohn cloathed with a bears skinne… By the like meanes … a princesse …was delivered of a childe blacke lyke an Ethiopian … lyke unto a Moore, accustomably tied at hir bed…[21]

Such assertions that a child in the womb could be deformed due to creatures or images witnessed by the mother was prevalent at the time.[22]

Monsters that appeared to portend the views of the divine, the second category of Davies’ scheme, are also represented here. We should revisit (reluctantly) the spirit ‘Mosacus’ (#8), who bears the trunk of an elephant, a forked tail like a fish, and a body studded with the heads of various animals. A close match appears in Fenton’s edition of Boaistuau on page 16v (numbered 14v). The illustration depicts a supposed deformed child born in Krakow in February 1547, which lived for only four hours before delivering the ominous phrase, ‘Watch, the Lord cometh.’[23]

Strange creatures from far lands, Davies’ third category, turn up repeatedly in the manuscript. The first illustration that bears discussion is that of the spirit Baron (#6), as a hairy, tusked creature, on page 175. In Boaistuau’s work, this appears on page 37r (misnumbered 30r) as a depiction of the meeting between St. Augustine and the satyr. In that famous dialogue, reported in St. Jerome’s *Vita Pauli Eremitae* (ch. 8, col. 24), the satyr claimed to be one of a species that welcomed the news of Jesus’ coming and hoped for the salvation of its kind. Later theologians treated this with scepticism, claiming instead that the creature was a demon. In 1627, François Hédelin, abbé d'Aubignac, published his classic work on satyrs, attempting to define them as monsters and demons instead of humans. Although V.b.26 does not refer to St. Augustine’s encounter, the illustrator nonetheless attaches the figure of the satyr to a particular demon, as if to declare a particular side in the debate over the monster’s nature.[24]

Similarly, we might consider the near-quadrupedal, hairy Satan (#5). The source of this is a woodcut at the beginning of one of Fenton’s chapters, described in the text as ‘a Monster, having the shape of the face of a man, who was taken in the forrest of Haneberg, in the yere. 1531’. Given descriptions from the period of the devil as being hairy with the ears and claws of an animal, this might not be so far afield. A being that would likely have been called a wild man at the time and a cryptid today has been appropriated to stand in for the Prince of Darkness.[25]

We also have monsters for whom we lack sufficient information to place them into any particular category. Fenton includes at least one addition to Boaistuau’s work that made its way into the Folger: a creature on page 144, which only bears the legend, ‘This as you see (resembling most a Calfe) hath the head of a man, bearing a beard, with a brest like to a man, and two dugges well formed.’[26] Within the Folger manuscript, this becomes a curious bovine, fire-breathing creature known as Bilgall (#2), who appears with a short conjuration and his own magical circle.

We also have figures appropriated from elsewhere whose monstrosity is the creation of the illustrator. For example, a bejewelled individual with a staff appears at the beginning of Fenton’s chapter on the properties of gems.[27] This figure appears in the summoning into the crystal of the demon Ascariell (#4). Likewise, one of the unlabeled figures at the end of the text (#13) is copied from a woodcut in Fenton. The original shows a man performing the famous procedure to call a dog to him tied to a mandrake, so that the canine and not the man will die of the plant’s legendary scream.[28] We also include the woodcut from Vegetius’ book depicting an underwater knight, who is appropriated in the Folger manuscript as Annaboth (#3), whose ‘office is to make one marvalous cunninge in necromancie & to shewe hidd treasure & to tell

whoe are the keepers.'[29] Vegetius also includes a fantastic siege engine in the form a man's head with spikes protruding from his face, all mounted on wheels. The illustrator of the Folger takes this model, sans wheels, and turns it into Orobas (#9), 'a greate prince, he commeth forth like a horsse, but when he putteth one him a mans shape, he talketh of devine vertue'.[30] Thus, a machine of destruction is transformed via appropriation into a prince of hell who speaks of heaven.

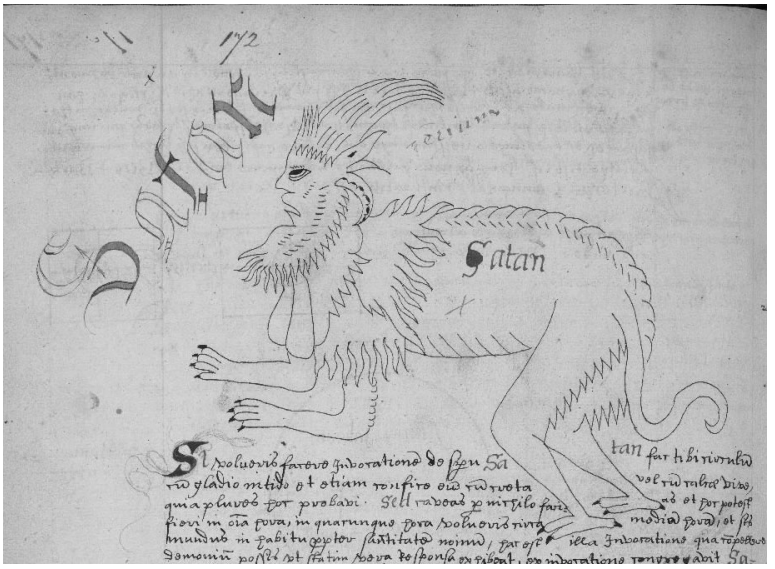

Figure 6: Illustration of Satan from V.b.26 (see Table 1, item 5).
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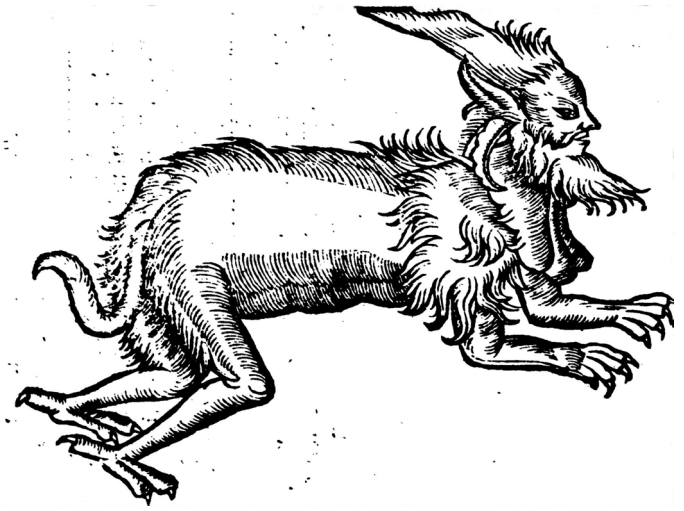

Figure 7: Illustration of wild man, Edward Fenton's *Certaine secrete wonders…* RB 12959, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

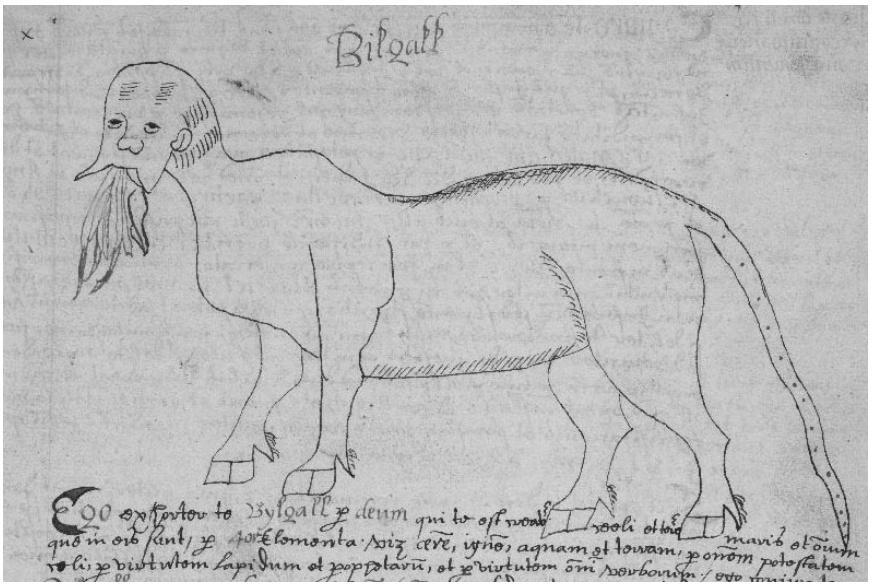

Figure 8: Illustration of Bilgall from V.b.26 (see Table 1, item 2).
By permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

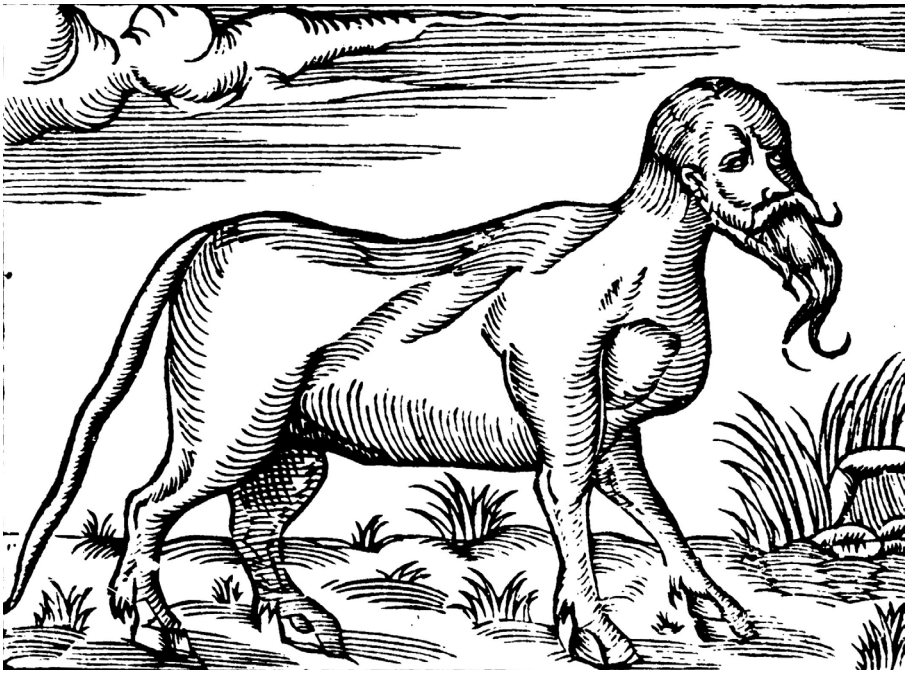

Figure 9: Illustration from Edward Fenton’s *Certaine secrete wonders*… RB 12959, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Image published with permission of ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Such appropriation raises the question of how accepted these images would have been by the viewers. We do have an indicator of this, appearing as an annotation in a different hand at the end of the aforementioned list of spirits. Three new descriptions at the end refer to the spirits in the operations appearing later in the text. The first is Mosacus, who 'appeareth the the forme of a giant with the snowte of an Elephant'. The second is the king of fairies Oberyon, and the final is Bilgall, who 'appeareth in the liknes of an oxe but a mans head with flames of fier proceedinge out of hir mouth'.[31] The flames, it should be noted, are the 'beard' of the mysterious calf woodcut in Boaistuau, reinterpreted for this description.

4. Reading the Monsters

What is the purpose of these illustrations and written descriptions of monsters? A magician, armed with the appropriate purifications, implements, and purifications, should be able to compel the spirit to appear in a friendly and human form. If the magician saw the creature in its horrible form, it meant a failure to control the spirit that places his body and soul in great peril. Surely it would be irrelevant at that time whether the demon appears as a bear or a winged dog? Likewise, if the spirit appeared in a fair form, there was no need to know how it might have appeared. Further, why should spirits in the grimoires appear in such forms? Theology aside, why must a monster be called upon simply to learn the liberal arts, or to find buried treasure?

To answer these questions, we must take to heart Cohen's reminder that 'the monstrous body is pure culture…the monster only exists to be read.'[32] If this is the case, for which audience is this text written? After all, ritual magic was a subversive activity in Elizabethan times, in which any 'Invocations or Conjuracons of evill and wicked Spirites' should be punished with 'paynes of Death.'[33] Nonetheless, we might construct a hypothetical reader of magical works such as Folger V.b.26. Given the presence of both English and Latin, this individual must be literate in both, and with the recitation of psalms identified by their Latin incipits, have access to or deep knowledge of the scriptures in Latin. As many of the rites require ceremonies performed at particular times with specific and often custom-made equipment, the reader should have sufficient time, money, and autonomy to carry out the instructions. Further, these preparations often require knowledge of Roman Catholic liturgy, such as the Ave Maria and attendance at – or in some cases, presiding over – the Mass.[34] It could be argued that not all of this knowledge and resources was necessary to use each ceremony in the book, or even to read large portions of it. Nonetheless, all of these paint a picture of an individual who has all of these traits – and those most likely to possess these traits in Elizabethan society were men.

This hypothesis is further confirmed by both the ownership information about the test which we possess, the narratives in the text itself, and the conditions for spells. The two names mentioned prominently in the text, which could be taken as potential owners, are John Porter and John Weston.[35] The text also includes a few brief tales indicating the power of the book's magic and the way in which it should be conducted. 'Weston' appears in two stories, in one of which he and Joseph the Turk escape the clutches of the Soldan at Alexandria via a ring of invisibility and swarms of spirits. In the second, he teams up with a canon to make a display of magical prowess to the 'prince of Pavoye' and a 'Brettencourt' in the prince's service.[36] Later, we encounter a description of a magical fraternity, consisting of one Friar Bacon, Thomas Drowre, and four 'doctours & maisters of the hye sciens'[37] from universities at Orleans and in England. Finally, at some points the text refers specifically to avoiding the company of women when a rite is to be performed, or that such exposure will leave the operator unable to hold power over the spirits.[38] Uniformly, the text presents its ownership and rituals within a male dominated milieu and discourse.

This in itself is not surprising, when considered within the context of ritual magic as a whole. Such procedures had been the province of men since the Middle Ages, when a ‘clerical underworld’ of monks, priests, friars, and university students who sought, disseminated, and practiced ritual magic as they moved through monasteries, universities, and other settings. Most of the owners of such texts, as provided in the manuscripts, were male, and it was even possible to have sections of monastery libraries dedicated to such works. At the same time, accounts of female practitioners do occur, but they are rarities in the overall record.[39]

Klaassen expands upon this to show how texts of ritual magic embodied fundamental ideals about masculinity on behalf of their authors and compilers. The purposes of ritual magic procedures might include gaining knowledge on various topics, acquiring women for sexual purposes, finding treasure, traveling in a speedy fashion, and gaining fame and honours, among others. These topics illuminate the owners’ values, priorities, and concerns that reflect the ambiguities of identity within a male learned community, in which members’ success was valued through access to wealth, sex, travel, and social status.[40]

Might these same ambiguities explain not just the purposes of these rites, but the methods used to acquire it? In her work, Timbers grapples further with the issue of masculinity in early modern magic. Through the spiritual practice of conjuring and binding spirits, ‘the magician demonstrated male honour, manly courage and mastery over the spirit world’. She calls particular attention to the sexualized nature of many descriptions of demons, emphasizing the exaggerated sexual characteristics that emerge in many sources.[41] The spirits in Folger V.b.26 are rarely depicted in this manner, but the parallels between Timbers’ sexual monstrosity and the other varieties thereof in the manuscript prove illustrative.

Further, if we examine this in light of Porada’s statement with which we began, along with Lada-Richards’ study of the role of monsters in Greek ritual, we might hypothesize that the purpose of our demons is to create a ‘formidable opponent to the great heroes on the verge of manhood’,[42] confirming their social status and masculinity via overcoming an opponent that lies outside society and humanity. We might see a similar situation in a Christian context among the monastic communities of Egypt, in which spiritual warfare against demons in the form of animals, Ethiopians, and women served as a marker for monks whose masculinity was at variance with the standards of the broader culture.[43]

Through the spirit summoning process, with their lengthy descriptions of puissant spiritual beings, saints, and magicians such as Solomon, the magician shores up his own masculinity by tying it to Christian cosmology and the triumph of good over evil. Mastery of demons did not simply confirm the magician’s status as a man in early modern society, it both placed the magician within and reaffirmed the basic narrative of faith, in which order conquers disorder and unity asserts itself over heterogeneity. Ultimately, Mosacus, Bilgall, and the others recapitulate the narrative of Christ’s ascension and the destruction of evil.

Notes

[1] Edith Porada, ‘Introduction: Monsters and Demons: Death and Life in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds,’ *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds : Papers Presented in Honor of Edith Porada*, edited by Edith Porada, Ann. E Farkas, Prudence O. Harper, and Evelyn B. Harrison (Mainz on Rhine: P. von Zabern, 1987), 1.

Thanks to Bobby Derie, Franklin Townsend, Folger Shakespeare Library, University of Michigan Special Collections, and SUNY Cortland Interlibrary Loan Department for all of their assistance.

[2] Surekha Davies, ‘The Unlucky, the Bad, and the Ugly: Categories of Monstrosity from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment,’ *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the*

Monstrous, edited by Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2012), 49-75.

[3] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer, the Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984); Jeremy Harte, 'Hell on Earth; Encountering Devils in the Medieval Landscape,' *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 177-95; Darren Oldridge, *The Devil in Early Modern England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000).

[4] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Frank Klaassen, 'Learning and Masculinity in Manuscripts of Ritual Magic of the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance,' *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 38, no. 1 (2007): 49-76.

[5] Richard Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites: A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century*.

[6] Dennis C. Duling, 'Testament of Solomon (First to Third Century A.D.): A New Translation and Introduction,' *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983)'; Torijano, *Solomon, the Esoteric King : From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition*; Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology*, 158–9.

[7] Wier and Oporinus, *Ioannis Vvieri De praestigiis daemonum,* 909–34; Scot, *The Discouerie of Witchcraft,* 377–92.; Boudet, 'Les Who's Who Démonologiques de La Renaissance et Leurs Ancêtres Médiévaux'; Kieckhefer, *Forbidden Rites : A Necromancer's Manual of the Fifteenth Century;* Jackson, 'A Contribution toward an Edition of the Confession of Cyprian of Antioch: The Secreta Cypriani.'. See also British Library Additional MS. 36674 (65r), Sloane MS. 3853 (257r-258v), Wellcome MS. 110 (32r, 101r-104r).

[8] cf. Harley MS. 6483; Sloane MSS 2731, 3648, 3825; Crowley, *The Book of the Goetia of Solomon the King,*.

[9] e.g. Sloane 3853 55r, Rawlinson D. 252 17v, KSol M276 p. 29.

[10] Wellcome MS. 110 100v., Sloane 3853 20r., Sloane 3826 98v.

[11] For more details on this work, please see Harms, Clark, and Peterson, *The Book of Oberon*, pp. 11-14.

[12] Folger V.b.26, 76, 78, 80.

[13] Guilelmus, *Guilielmi Alverni Opera Omnia*, vol. I, 1068; Caciola, *Discerning Spirits : Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages*, 161–3. An exception appears in another operation in the manuscript, as the magician is to treat sexually with a spirit, who we are assured 'indubio [sic] mulier [est]'. Yet even this is in doubt, as the magician is cautioned not to ask the being 'quid est an mulier vel spiritus' (Folger V.b.26, 39)

[14] e.g. Wellcome MS 110, 97r.

[15] Sloane 3824; Wellcome 3203; University of Utah, The Clavis or Key to Unlock the Mysteries of Magic. An account of a manuscript in C. J. S. Thompson's *Mysteries and Secrets of Magic* from the same century at the British Library (Plate 10, 269) suggests the dragon image might have appeared in contemporary MSS.

[16] Boaistuau, *Histoires prodigieuses : (édition de 1561) : édition critique*; Boaistuau, *Certaine secrete wonders of nature*; Rigg, 'Fenton, Edward.'

[17] Vegetius Renatus, *Flauij Vegetii Renati/vier Bücher Der Ritterschafft*; Vegetius Renatus et al., *Flaue Vegece Rene du fait de guerre et fleur de cheualerie, quatre liures*. Special thanks to Franklin Townsend for his insight into this link.

[18] Boaistuau, *Histoires prodigieuses : (édition de 1561) : édition critique*; Boaistuau, *Certaine secrete wonders of nature*; Rigg, 'Fenton, Edward.'

[19] Vegetius Renatus, *Flauij Vegetii Renati/vier Bücher Der Ritterschafft*; Vegetius Renatus et al., *Flaue Vegece Rene du fait de guerre et fleur de cheualerie, quatre liures*. Special thanks to Franklin Townsend for his insight into this link.
[20] Boaistuau, *Certaine secrete wonders of nature*…., 49.
[21] Ibid., 12.
[22] Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism : Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England*.
[23] For more on this creature, see Bates, *Emblematic Monsters : Unnatural Conceptions and Deformed Births in Early Modern Europe*, 74, 225.
[24] Hedelin, *Des Satyres brutes monstres et demons*.
[25] Boaistuau, *Certaine secrete wonders of nature…,* 110; Palmer, ‘The Inhabitants of Hell: Devils,’ 28.
[26] Boaistuau, *Certaine secrete wonders of nature*, 144.
[27] Ibid., 38.
[28] Ibid., 70.
[29] Vegetius Renatus, *Flauij Vegetii Renati/vier Bücher Der Ritterschafft*, cxix. Folger V.b.26, p. 168.
[30] Ibid., xvii.; Folger V.b.26, p. 184
[31] Ibid. p. 80.
[32] Cohen, ‘Monster Culture (Seven Theses),’ 4.
[33] 5 Eliz. c. 16, *Great Britain Statutes of the Realm* v. 4, p. 446
[34] Ibid. 25, 27, 61, 127.
[35] Ibid. pp. 135, 142.
[36] Ibid. p. 142.
[37] Ibid. p. 213.
[38] Ibid. p. 39, 214.
[39] Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 153–6; Klaassen, ‘Learning and Masculinity in Manuscripts of Ritual Magic of the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance,’ 54–6; Page, *Magic in the Cloister : Pious Motives, Illicit Interests, and Occult Approaches to the Medieval Universe*.
[40] Klaassen, ‘Learning and Masculinity in Manuscripts of Ritual Magic of the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance.’ Blécourt (‘The Werewolf, the Witch, and the Warlock,’ 211-12) states that these could be functions to be performed for clients. With the exception of treasure hunts (on which see Dillinger, *Magical Treasure Hunting*), evidence for such transactions is scanty.
[41] Timbers, *Magic and Masculinity : Ritual Magic and Gender in the Early Modern Era*, 109, 112–3.
[42] Lada-Richards, ‘‘Foul Monster or Good Savior’?: Reflections on Ritual Monsters,’ 55.
[42] Brakke, *Demons and the Making of the Monk : Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity*, 31–32, 182–3.

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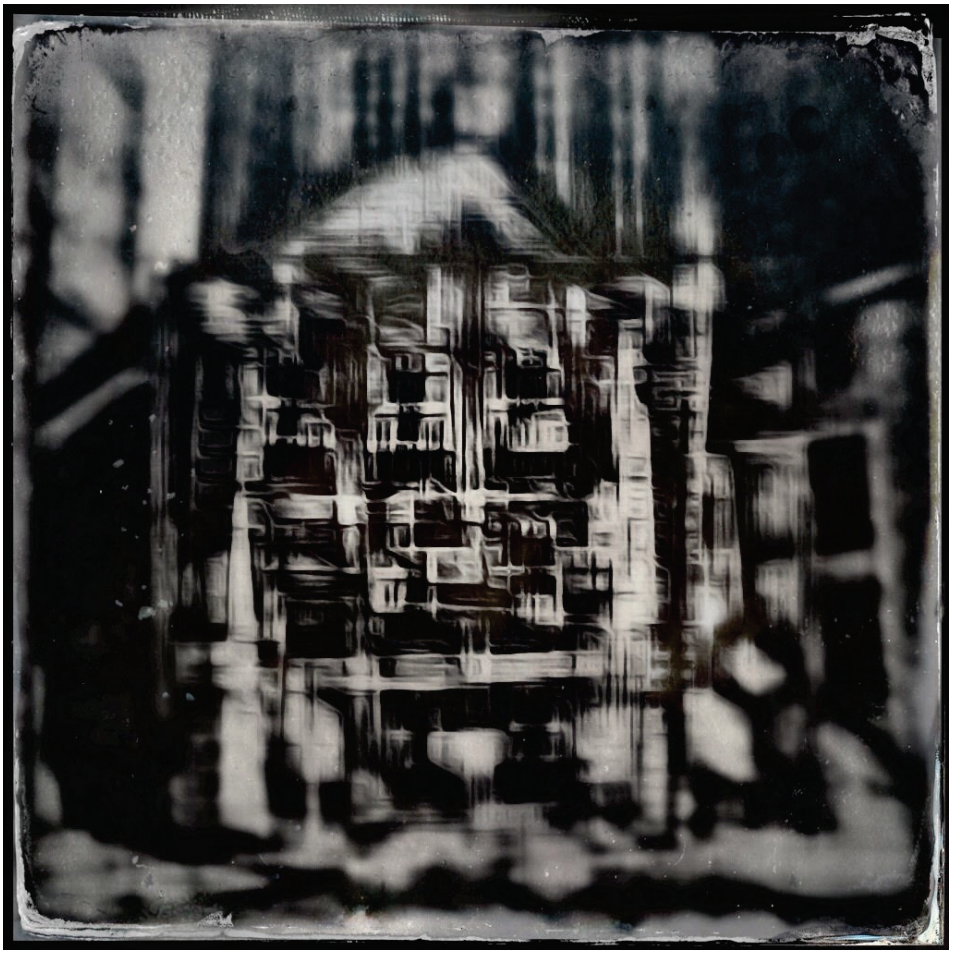

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Beauty and the Beast: An Abusive Tale as Old as Time: Reinforcing Notions of Masculinity, Abuse and Neoliberal Anxiety through Popular Culture

Haneen Al-Ghabra

Abstract

This article[1] explores the television series *Beauty and the Beast* (2012) (currently airing). The article argues that discourses about gender and systems of domination at large have reinforced notions of masculinity, in turn perpetuating violence towards women. Even further, today's monstrous creations are a product of their time. Through systems such as neoliberalism, whiteness and patriarchy, monstrous and hybrid characters are able to reflect newer forms of gender and racial identity. This article argues that some of today's monstrous creations are symptomatic of *colonial anxiety* and are a direct result of dominant ideological structures within today's contemporary storytelling. Fairy tales like *Beauty and the Beast* are portrayed through a white male gaze; therefore, reflecting even deeper anxieties within the U.S. and beyond. For this reason there is a need to identify the discrepancies that white heteronormativity has perpetuated through popular media. By pinpointing these incongruities, one can create platforms in order to formulate strategies to empower non-white heteronormativity practices.

Key Words

Beauty and the Beast, monstrosity, neoliberalism, white gaze, masculinity, intersectionality, hybridity, physical abuse.

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> The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our cultures, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle but one that could in our best hopes bring us to the end of rape, violence of war.[2]

Like so many tales, *Beauty and the Beast* is one of those stories that has been retold over and over again because it is situated within a cultural milieu in which certain discourses inform us about masculinity, gender and systems of domination at large. Each adaption has reinforced notions of masculinity and has normalized violence towards women. However, each reworking of *Beauty and the Beast* is also a product of its time and today, systems of domination such as neoliberalism, whiteness, and patriarchy, circulate and provide platforms in which to examine a long-existing problem but with nuanced forms of gender and racial identity. For this reason, some of today's monstrous creations are symptomatic of colonial anxiety and have resulted out of today's modern day colonialism that is carried out through the 'War on Terror' and the U.S. presence in the Middle East and other countries. This anxiety is a direct product of neoliberalism and allows us to understand how masculinity, femininity and racial identity have

been positioned in narratives of *Beauty and the Beast*. By examining the present-day adaptation of *Beauty and the Beast* and the monstrosity of the hybrid werewolf, one can better situate him/herself in a position to interfere in these discursive practices. This article argues that contemporary fairy tales such as *Beauty and the Beast* have reinforced violence towards women. It also argues that tales such as *Beauty and the Beast* (2012) are portrayed through a white male gaze and therefore are a direct reflection of the anxiety that the U.S., at both an individual and global level, experiences as a superpower.

This study examines the television series *Beauty and the Beast*.[3] It first explores theoretical components such as intersectionality, neoliberalism and hybridity as components that provide new meanings about today's contemporary fairy tales and monsters. It then addresses older folklore versions of this tale for comparison purposes, then focuses on the new TV series, *Beauty and the Beast*.[4] The article also follows with discourses about masculinity and femininity and their application to the television series and monstrosity and how it is constructed onto both *Beauty* and the *Beast* by normalizing abusive relationships. Furthermore, hybridity is added as an additional flavour to this article through a dichotomy between neoliberal anxiety, and racial hybridity. For this reason, the study argues that today's subliminal messages that women internalize unknowingly are a direct product of today's time. Thus, this article brings to the table regenerative contemporary fairy tales that have shaped old but new forms of racial and gender positionalities but is overlaid with colonial anxiety. This cloud of neoliberalism brings forth an unfamiliar approach at re-hashing current fairy tales in an era of acute modern day colonialism.

1. Today's Monstrosity: Intersectionality, Neoliberalism and Hybridity

Intersectionality helps guide a more complex analysis of how race, gender and sexuality are interconnected. With Patricia Hill Collins one must take into account, the simultaneity of race, class and gender oppression in order to empower feminist knowledge.[5] Collins introduced the matrix of domination, a system that enables thinking about other oppressions such as religion, age and sexual orientation. In this matrix, Collins argues that white women would be oppressed by gender but privileged by race. In this context, the white woman is an oppressor and is also oppressed.[6] This creates the basis for analysing how heteronormativity normalizes its hegemonic gaze depending on the race, gender and sexuality of the individual and how it is useful in intervening in discursive practices within popular culture that appear through a white masculine and heterosexual gaze. Thus, while understanding intersectionality is a foundational stage in conducting such an analysis, it is also of equal importance to link this to overarching hegemonic structures.

For this reason it is important to address popular culture in the context of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is the exercise of political power on the principles of the market economy.[7] Richard Jones and Bernadette Calafell state,

> Neoliberalism's collusion with late-capitalism creates an ostensible level playing field, but only for those with the monetary capital to enter the game; countries and people are brought closer through technology and trade, but the digital divide and neo-colonialism reinforce the longstanding hegemony of the West; and, finally, from all these practices results the epistemic and physical violence inherent in a system that privileges some and oppresses others.[8]

Popular culture is thus symptomatic of these systems of privilege as it resecures notions of dominance through monstrosity. However, the difference today is that with the collusion of

neoliberalism and privileged positionalities such as male or white privilege in juxtaposition with neo-colonialism, colonial anxieties are both manifested in contemporary fairy tales and reflected in current day monstrosity. These anxieties become the symbol for defining privilege, oppression and hegemonic demarcations. Thus, humankind has entered an era of neoliberalism and it is no coincidence that the detrimental anxieties that accompany superpowers such as the U.S. are reflected in popular culture. Neoliberalism has been able to advance technology and science by desensitizing warfare and this has been reflected in notions of hybridity in television shows such as *Beauty and the Beast* (2012).

Hybrid characters, such as monsters, that have surpassed the state of human reveal deep-seated anxieties about race, gender and colonial anxiety. Posthumanism, a state that is beyond human can be located in most everyday monsters and these characters are typically non-dominant racial hybrids and permeate into our modern day narratives. In other words, the human has become an engineered being, a mix between fictional and real, is genetically mutated and reveals anxieties about embodiment. Myra Seaman for instance states,

> The posthuman is not a distinct 'other,' an entirely new species; instead, the posthuman is a hybrid that is more developed, more advanced, or more powerful version of the existing self.[9]

In this instance I echo Marwan Kraidy in arguing that hybridity must be understood as a communicative process engulfed by the socio-political and the economic and that to understand this is to become aware of the fact that transcultural relations are very dynamic.[10] He also adds that critical hybridity theory takes into account the space where intercultural and international are identified in terms of power. American technology and non-Western audiences are sites where popular culture is presented and is the basis of a dialogue between the non-West and the U.S. and the establishments of global standards.[11] More importantly, Kraidy states that hybridity's inequality is hidden and this requires a critical approach in analysing theories of hybridity and communication.[12]

In addition the word 'postcolonial' implies that colonialism is over and glosses over any traces of hegemony. Hybridity fosters a ground in order to negotiate these identities and discourses and embraces central cultures.[13] Moreover, hybridity is negotiated in terms of location, identity and postcoloniality in contradistinction to neo-colonialism. However, it blurs perspectives and the only way to overcome this is to examine it from a non-universal perspective.[14] For this very reason a postcolonial context of whiteness can enable us to locate and contextualize whiteness. With Raka Shome one can recognize that what is lacking in literature is how whiteness can occupy space and how it travels to other worlds through products, media music etc.[15] Whiteness is about the discursive because neo-colonialism sustains global white dominance and hybrid monsters in today's modern day western fairy tales exert anxiety through their reassertion of masculinity and whiteness. In other words, this post-colonial anxiety is directly reflected in today's fairy tales and together, monstrosity and hybrid characters are symptomatic of whiteness and male privileged systems of dominance, which are reasserted through neoliberalism.

With Jeffrey Cohen one can connect monstrosity to hybridity by asserting that animalistic natures are lost when impulses and violence come to the fore.[16] He uses the werewolf as an example because of its half human, half animal nature. Unresolved animalistic tendencies are irreducible hybrids that are complex, unstable and are pro-animal but post-human.[17] Thus, hybridity is the combination of unbalanced differences and bodies such as the werewolf raise questions about identity and stability, making hybridity appear dangerous.[18] It is also important to note that the male werewolf becomes victimized through a violent site of

transformation due to an external threat as opposed to the female werewolf whose threat erupts from within.[19] This is vital in addressing issues of sexism in representations of characters such as the werewolf. However, what happens when hybridity occupies a character that is of a privileged positionality? Are hybrid masculine monsters normalized in our neoliberalistic world? What are today's modern fairy tales a reflection of?

2. Heteronormativity and the Male Gaze in Popular Culture: Notions of Masculinity and Femininity

According to Laura Mulvey, one way that films maintain the dominant patriarchal order, is through pleasure in looking such as through the interpretation of anything erotic as 'the language of the dominant patriarchal order'.[20] Furthermore, pleasure is split into two categories, the active male and the passive female and it is the male gaze that looks at the female object and often tends to sexualize it. This sort of gaze shapes representations of different cultures such as in its own gaze or framework and therefore leaves no room for a woman to experience her own gaze.[21] Other theorists such as Peter Tragos have followed in Mulvey's definition of gaze and have asserted that popular culture has become a safe haven for men to exert their dominance through the gaze.[22] Mary Devereaux defines a gaze as 'the act of looking' and refers to 'a way of thinking about, and acting in the world'.[23]

Even though Mulvey's concept of the gaze has been theorized from a white positionality it allows us to reflect on notions of masculinity and patriarchal order, however, one must problematize her gaze and extend it. Shome, for example, states that there is an analogy between both the male and white gaze wherein 'the look' at our non-white bodies is different when in the US. Shome discusses returning the gaze and how it is met with complete denial, therefore, indicating that looking relations are historically and culturally learned.[24] For this reason it is crucial to note that the gaze affects different points of oppression through race, gender and sexuality in very divergent ways. Similarly, Kaja Silverman questions Mulvey's concept of the gaze and how there is no room for a woman to experience her own gaze and notes that at times the gaze can direct desire towards the male subject and estrange the subject to what is the norm in dominant representations.[25] She uses the example of Fassbinder's Cinema in which subjectivity becomes dependent on the changing images through the look of a male or female. Thus, films such as *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* create a male body where economic, social and sexual oppression meet. [26] Even though it is important that Silverman questions whether one a woman can experience her own gaze, the majority of film and television is still reflected through a dominant heterosexual male gaze.

Following Gust Yep one may come to the realization that,

> Heteronormativity makes heterosexuality hegemonic through the process of normalization. Although it is experienced consciously or unconsciously and with different degrees of pain and suffering, this process of normalization is a site of violence in the lives of women, men and transgenders–across the spectrum of sexualities–in modern Western societies.[27]

Hence, patriarchy is a massive formation of male dominance, is treated at a level of abstraction and muddles the arrangements of order within patriarchy.[28] Its abstraction obscures our ability to easily identify notions of male dominance.

As a result, various forms of oppression and dominance in mainstream society are constructed through a white male heterosexual gaze. Dominant male gazes are depicted in film through the filmmaker's camera or lens and the visual shooting and the angle of the camera reflect a male gaze. Moreover, when the final cut is made, regardless of the editor's gender, she

is most likely already subjected unconsciously to this gaze. The gaze is also reinforced by cinematic male text whereas even if the text is written by a woman, she is unaware that she has also internalized the male gaze.[29] This can be applied across a wide spectrum of marginalized identities such as queer, transgender, disabled, poor, women and people of colour who are depicted through a white male heterosexual gaze that fails to transcend their true experiences of oppression.

Under the umbrella of neoliberalism and through modern day fairy tales such as *Beauty and the Beast*, heteronormativity and patriarchy operate at a secondary level to normalize oppressive aspects that are becoming extremely faint to see. In the following section I provide an overview of the historical roadmap that the story *Beauty and the Beast* has taken in order to outline the evolution of *Beauty and the Beast* in conjunction with racial, gender and colonial discrimination and how today it reinforces both the white and male gaze in a distinct way.

3. The Evolution of *Beauty and the Beast*

The oldest tale of *Beauty and the Beast* is said to be the story of *Cupid and Psyche* written by Apuleius in the middle of the second century A.D. It is a Greek story even though others argue that the story is of African and Indian influence.[30] In this tale, Psyche (who is Beauty) is incapable of getting married and as a result, is abandoned by her father on a mountaintop to be taken by a beast. Psyche is then rescued by Cupid who takes her to his castle, only visiting her in the dark, so that his identity would remain concealed. Psyche's sisters, fully convinced that Cupid is a monstrous snake, persuade Psyche to cut his head off while sleeping and so Psyche holds a lantern above Cupid in order to reveal his identity, only to find out that he was not a monster. Cupid, feeling betrayed, flees the castle where Psyche is staying and in turn Psyche kills her sisters in order to earn his gratitude back. Cupid and Psyche are then held prisoner at different locations by Cupid's mother Venus, until one day Cupid escapes, finds Psyche and they live happily ever after.[31] In this story Psyche's father represents patriarchal dominance while Psyche represents internalized patriarchy by killing her sisters to earn back Cupid's loyalty. Likewise, Cupid would only see Psyche at night revealing to the reader that being with an unemotionally available person is adequate enough.

Another adaptation and renowned story of *Beauty and the Beast* is by Jeanne Marie Le Prince de Beaumont who wrote a narrative that resembles Disney's version of *Beauty and the Beast*.[32] In this story Beauty's father, a merchant, gets caught in a storm on the way home and makes his way into an empty castle with no one in it. The merchant finds a table laid with food and a place to sleep until he can travel back safely the next day. The following day he wonders into the garden and finds a red rose and decides to pluck one from the garden because Beauty asked him for one. Immediately an angry Beast appears and wants to kill the merchant because of his ungratefulness but decides he will forgive him if he brings him Beauty as a prisoner. Beauty learns to love this strange Beast and at the end of the story she kisses him turning him into a prince.[33]

This story continued into television and film. For example, *Beauty and the Beast* was aired on television and was a TV series in 1987 (CBS), written by Ron Koslow. Thus, the aim of the show was to create a more classical version of the fairy tale. The goal was to be able to reach out to all genres, all audiences and it was again done through patriarchal overlays.[34] In this TV series, Vincent (the Beast) appears to have masculine and feminine characteristics bringing forth the fact that patriarchy is the means in which one can express his/her femininity and masculinity. Beauty (Catherine) assumes the role of the daughter and continues in this patriarchal role throughout her romantic relationship with Vincent.[35]

Disney also brings forth another version of *Beauty and the Beast* through their renowned 1991 film. The story preludes with a mean prince who dismisses an ugly woman carrying a

rose. The ugly woman seeking shelter suddenly transforms into a beautiful young lady and casts a spell upon the prince, turning him into a beast. The beast is destined to remain a monster forever unless a woman falls in love with him before the age of 21.

Throughout the film Belle (who is Beauty) is seen as 'peculiar' because she reads, revealing to the audience that a woman should not be educated. Likewise, Gaston demonstrates his manhood by demeaning Belle such as in one of the songs about Gaston, where messages such as 'it's not nice for a woman to read' are reiterated. Gaston also asks Belle to marry him, but is extremely forceful in his approach, even though Belle says no, which challenges masculinity and positions the audience to sympathize with Belle. However, the film normalizes notions of masculinity later on with the Beast such as in another song about Gaston, where the audience learns that nobody fights like Gaston and has biceps like Gaston or is even as hairy or manly as Gaston, again, reinforcing performances of 'normal' masculinity.

When the first scene with the beast appears, the beast looks like a wolf; he tells Belle, 'you will join me for dinner, that's not a request', implying that she is both his property and prisoner. On another occasion, the beast finds Belle near the west wing he slams the table and breaks a wall and in return Belle runs away and is attacked by wolves but the beast saves her. Again, the beast is abusive and holds Belle captive but this is disregarded when he saves Belle. The beast is told to try to be presentable and to control his temper, implying that an abusive man can change his habits. The beast tries and then says, 'I'm just fooling myself she will never see me as anything but a monster' implying that he is the victim here and she cannot see past his monstrosity. In this instance, the monstrous aspects of masculinity are normalized.

However, throughout the film he becomes more and more gentle, suggesting to the reader that a woman can tame an overly masculine or abusive man. At the same time, many women interpret abuse as a sign that their partner cares for them.[36] The messages and narratives that audience members receive from Disney is that the young girls and boys watching Disney are in fact romanticizing and internalizing abuse.

Many variations of this story exist as the beast has been a one eyed monster, a dog, a snake, a monkey and the list goes on. The moral of these stories is that 'they live happily ever after' despite the abusiveness and as a result individuals grow up fantasizing about fairy tales and grow up trying to live happily ever after. Ironically, today, the art and chicanery that Hollywood has managed to produce has set the bar even higher and is a manifestation of the anxiety that privileged groups, such as the U.S. have had to deal with. However, today these ill-disposed messages are so deeply imbedded into popular culture that it is hard to pinpoint them because they are also circulating under systems of neoliberalism and whiteness, creating an abstraction that is faint to sight.

4. *Beauty and the Beast* 2012

The latest version of *Beauty and the Beast* aired for the first time in October 2012 and is a CW television series written by Ron Koslow. The CW television network is an American broadcast television network that is a joint venture between CBS Corporation and Times Warner.[37] Catherine Chandler (Beauty) witnesses her mother's murder and is saved by a beast that she only sees fleetingly. Vincent Killer (Beast) is a half human, half monster U.S. ex-military soldier who was part of an experimental Special Forces group, owned and run by Murfeeld. The goal of the experiment was to make U.S. soldiers into super soldiers that were stronger and faster but something went wrong with the experiment while in Afghanistan and orders were given to kill all the super soldiers. Vincent is the only one that managed to escape and is living in hiding in New York City and is a real human that has been 'monsterized' because he was injected with a cross species DNA – meaning he was human but became monstrous. As mentioned earlier his monstrosity was due to an external threat, in this case an

injection. Throughout the series he grapples with anxieties about his monstrosity. Catherine and Vincent learn later that Catherine's mother worked for Murfeeld, the institution that was involved in the Special Project that made Vincent half monster. Murfeeld remains a puzzle in the series because it is not clear whether Murfeeld is a company or a government. It seems as if Murfeeld is a corporation that is stronger than any existing government and is a direct product of neoliberalism, while Vincent represents the anxiety around masculinity and monstrosity in today's day and age and the anxiety of returning solders from the Middle East which also appears in a plethora of films such as in *American Sniper, The Hurt Locker, In the Valley of Elah, The Messenger* and so forth.

Years later, Catherine is led to Vincent through a crime scene where his DNA is found at the murder site. She is led to Vincent's roommate, JT Forbes who is a medical researcher and an instructor at a university and then encounters Vincent where she finds her mother's murder story on Vincent's desk and soon learns that Vincent saved her life. The story unfolds into a romantic relationship where Catherine and Vincent will do anything to protect each other.

Catherine is a leading detective at NYPD who partners with Tess Vargas another leading Latina detective. The implication to the audience is that individuals have entered a post feminist era when in reality they have not because U.S. American television is a global medium, it will suggest to the rest of the world that the U.S. is post-feminist and the world needs to follow in their footsteps. Catherine is also a woman of colour with an Asian mother and a Latino father Vincent is a human but sporadically turns into a monster and so Catherine covers his mistakes in the process, especially through her job, revealing that a woman will protect a man and abandon her work ethic throughout her career. Thus, her identity as a woman of colour places her into an oppressed system where those that are more privileged will always view her as incompetent.

In *Beauty and the Beast*, the gaze attempts to be subtle. In one scene, Catherine and Tess are told to wait outside by their boss, Joe Bishop who is Black, when a judge has suddenly been murdered. Two male detectives are put on the case instead and in another murder investigation, Tess is sidelined by Joe, who she is having an affair with at the same time. He asks her to do paperwork while he takes out the male detectives again signifying the dominant rule of masculinity. At a surface level Catherine and Tess are seen as role models for females worldwide because they are leading detectives and are also women of colour and their boss who is Black is seen as breaking racial stereotypes. However, at an abstract level this is not the case due to the fact that Catherine and Tess are successful in their careers but fail in other aspects of their life. This suggests that women cannot have it all when in fact feminism has failed women in this way. During the first episode of season 1, Catherine is seen racing through the streets in her cop car to get to a crime scene and in the following scene meets up with her date who decides he does not want to date her anymore because she is too involved in her career. Simultaneously, Tess is having an affair with her married boss Joe, reflecting that this is all she can get.

Catherine is also seen as 'careless' because she cuts corners in her career as in one case where she helps hide two sick young sisters of a murder suspect who are 'illegal immigrants' and need a doctor desperately. No reference is given to the fact that these girls are 'undocumented' or 'overstayers' instead the rhetoric pertains to the fact that they are 'illegal', again reinforcing the rhetoric of the white gaze. Here, this space gives room for the viewer to see the white race as the only 'acceptable' race and positions Catherine as breaking the law as a NYPD detective by harbouring 'illegal immigrants', again positioning the undocumented young girls as being the threatening component to the system when in fact they are the underprivileged part of a ascendant system. This is how whiteness works in making itself invisible and visible, dominant and non-dominant.

Moreover, notions of masculinity are extremely prevalent throughout the episodes. When the NYPD has to create a baseball team, the rules require them to have two girls on the team, signifying that girls do not play sports. Moreover, when Tess is put on a fraternity hazing case she says, 'Public Disgracing and humiliation, the joys of male bonding'.[38] Another example is when JT tells Vincent to do something nice for Valentine's Day and says, 'Making a mockery out of your manhood'.[39] Again, this reinforces the characteristics of what it means to perform masculinity. When Catherine and Tess have a huge fallout and Tess decides to change partners she says, 'No one thought two chicks could make a team anyways, guess we will prove them right'.[40]

Notions of masculinity and femininity are also tied tightly into the racial backgrounds of both Tess and Catherine. However in season two the show reveals that Catherine's father is actually not her real father and that her real father is white. This complicates things further as suddenly Catherine becomes stronger and starts to question her relationship with Vincent because of her father's whiteness. This suggests white imperial feminism as superior to women of colour. So while gender is linked to sexuality in a heteronormative struggle, whiteness sustains the heterosexual male dominant gaze.[41]

5. Normalizing Abusive Relationships and Monstrosity

As whiteness sustains the heterosexual male dominant gaze, one learns that the patriarchal system at a more complex level, promotes domination over women; therefore, this could include abuse. As mentioned earlier, with Yep one can come to an understanding that the strongest forms of normalization in Western systems are though heteronormativity. Therefore, the normalization of heteronormativity becomes a site of violence on individuals across a wide range of sexualities.[42] Even further, heterosexuality subordinates and oppresses women making it difficult for women to identify sites of emotional, psychic, physical and economic oppressions in their relationships.[43] As I have stated earlier, in today's modern day era, heteronormativity stems out of new developments within the umbrella of neoliberalism. As colonial and neoliberal overlays expand and new technology and warfare develops, heteronormativity becomes more abusive but even more normalized.

In the case of *Beauty and the Beast* (2012) this is regulated throughout the series. However, first and foremost the way it is presented in the series is a through a level of abstraction in the sense that some of the lines have dual interpretations. For example, even though Vincent's main goal is to protect Catherine, she loves him for this and sees past his abusiveness. At another level her friends and family pertain to the fact that he is abusive such as in one case when Catherine goes alone to a club without a gun and Vincent comes to the rescue when a man tries to attack her. He strangles the man until he becomes unconscious. Catherine says to Vincent, 'You beat the information out of him' and Vincent responds, 'this is why I don't get involved.' Catherine then proceeds to tell Vincent that she cannot figure out how this relationship can work because she cannot contact him, but then Vincent randomly shows up and she cannot call him but his roommate can.[44] Hence, this has a surface level meaning and an abstract meaning. At one level Catherine is concerned with solving a case and Vincent is trying to help and she needs to contact him in order to solve some cases but at a deeper level the lines symbolize abusive cycles and the fact that Vincent is emotionally and physically unavailable.

Another example of this abstract dichotomy is when Catherine describes her life with Vincent and says,

> Half of it isn't and I know because in the other half I have to lie to everyone, act like I'm doing things I'm not, watch every word I say, put up walls and then remember where I've put them.[45]

At a surface level Catherine is lying about seeing him because everyone thinks Vincent is dead; however; it also pertains to the fact that many women who are abused start to isolate themselves. This is also evident when Vincent almost kills someone and then decides to put himself in confinement. When Catherine comes to visit him, JT and Vincent tell Catherine that she triggered Vincent thus turning him into a monster. In this instance it is important to note that masculine monstrosity and white masculinity are both normalized through the re-centering of the woman's body.

Moreover, when Tess, Catherine, and Catherine's sister are discussing Catherine's relationship, Tess says, 'Cat's guys got issues,' to which Catherine responds, 'What guy doesn't, have some form of PTSD?' Tess says, 'Like flashbacks?' Then Cat answers, 'No more like a bad temper, not toward me.' Tess responds, 'What?!' Catherine's sister says, 'I thought you were done with the bad boys?' Catherine replies, 'He is not a bad boy. He is sweet and heroic.' Tess buts in, 'And apparently abusive.' To which Catherine responds, 'It is not like that at all we have a really deep connection and he understands me like no one else does'.[46] In this section one may witness the normalization of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and abuse as a direct result of colonial anxiety and new forms of technology. It is an anxiety of going abroad and killing innocent people that is now being manifested through masculinity and notions of abuse. It is an anxiety that lurks among the soldiers that return to the U.S. and are forced to live a normal life after being involved in mass killings. However, it is vital to note that the war is not responsible for continuing male abuse and white dominance but rather becomes a vehicle through which PTSD, abuse and white dominance can be normalized.

As I have illustrated, the abusive analogies are evident and are normalized throughout the series because the viewer becomes attached to Vincent and Catherine's relationship and to the fact that Vincent is protective and is Catherine's saviour. Looking at this through a more monstrous lens one can also explain why Catherine sticks around. For example in Angela Carter's (1979) rewriting of *Little Red Riding Hood* and Mercede's Lacky's (1995) story, *The Fire Rose* there is a narrative in which the man or werewolf can transform from aggression into tenderness by being rehabilitated by the woman.[47] Cohen also states that the fear of the monster really means that one desires the monster. The monster normalizes issues that are abnormal and forbidden.[48] Monsters that are terrifying also are an escape from reality and this is why the monster becomes appealing. Cohen says, 'The monster awakens one to the pleasures of the body, to the simple and fleeting joys of being frightened, or frightening to the experience of mortality and corporality'.[49] Even further, monsters are dangerous but are also realms of fantasy and liberation. More importantly, normalizing a monster is done through neutralizing threating aspects and is destroyed by eliminating the monster's sins.[50] Cohen raises the question of whether this kind of monster is a deep anxiety and that this monster exists within humanity. Cohen's notion of deep anxiety within a monster that exists within humanity is crucial in understanding modern day fairy tales that have become a manifestation of colonial anxiety in the sense that the crisis in masculinity has resulted from a crisis in neoliberalism and colonialism. Humans are becoming monstorized and this is leading to a deep anxiety that is creating hybrid characters like Vincent.

6. Hybridity as Neoliberal/Colonial Anxiety

As demonstrated in the beginning of this article, the normalization of masculinity has existed in fairy tales for centuries. However, what situates today's monsters from yesterday's monsters is this new generation of anxiety. Vincent (2012 series) is a U.S. soldier that gets injected with DNA that is supposed to make him stronger, faster and more masculine. As a result of the DNA injections the soldiers raid villages in Afghanistan, a genocide that has left the government no choice but to kill Vincent and the other men. The U.S. has been exerting

what they term a post racial era for years while continuously partaking in wars abroad. For example, the rhetorical mischievousness in the 'Post' is to create more layers of difficulty in decoding oppressive tactics. Many claim that in order to counteract coverted racism and sexism under the guise of 'Post', one must reintroduce discrimination into one's narratives, conversations and pedagogy.[51] Consider the advancement in technology developed in order to fight the War on Terror. This raises anxieties within the psyches of the soldiers that are sent to countries like Afghanistan and Iraq to fight. Vincent reflects these hybrid notions of anxieties, technology, unbalanced differences, and transcultural relations. At a deeper level Vincent is a reconciliation of the United States government's guilt of invading other countries and killing countless of people. However, he is a man-made monster who at times is good but at times is monstrous, and this is because he is a victim of both technology and of neoliberalism. This is also because he is a hybrid creature and one whish poses a danger in a white heterosexual society. For this reason, different bodies, including white masculine bodies, are products of today's time, and they are implicated and used as tools under systems of whiteness. This is today's modern day monster.

Neoliberalism and globalization are culprits of the never-ending privatization that society has been transforming bodies into. Today, corporations are now becoming stronger than governments. In *Beauty and the Beast*, the organization, Murfeeld remains a mystery but is also explicitly seen as a corporation. Murfeeld is out to kill Vincent because there experiment has gone wrong. Murfeeld remains the symbol of the strength and power of corporations in the midst of neoliberalism. When Catherine gets kidnapped by Murfeeld, they tell her that it is to protect the citizens of the United States,[52] when in fact they have created the animalistic and violent tendencies that reside within Vincent. In the same scene, the Murfeeld agent shows Catherine a village in Afghanistan and how the village was wiped out and says, 'I know its romantic to think he is some kind of mythological protective beast,' and then says, 'do you really think we would pool so many resources to find him if he wasn't absolutely lethal?' He then gives her his number and threatens to go back to the wrong tactics if he does not hear from her in three days.[53] In another scene, when Vincent is being hunted down by the police Murfeeld asks Evan to tamper with evidence so that the task force does not get to Vincent first. The agent states, 'It's paramount we get there before the police put it through the justice system'.[54]

As mentioned previously, Vincent's animalistic and violent tendencies reflect a colonial anxiety, sometimes called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among the soldiers that return to the US and are forced to live a normal, humanistic life after being involved in mass killings. These soldiers become hybrids of a PTSD animal and a half civilized human. Social Learning Theory demonstrates that abusive behaviours are learned behaviours either directly or indirectly from witnessing violence.[55] A study conducted on veterans with posttraumatic disorder revealed that domestic violence was higher than those of the general population.[56] In addition, addressing intimate relationships especially with the soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan is vital.[57] Even though this anxiety becomes a site of contestation for these soldiers, such as Vincent, it is vital to note that this only re-centres whiteness. While Vincent poses an anxiety crisis in U.S. soldiers, seldom does one ever get to see the other side of the coin, the atrocities and the mass murders of innocent children and women in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. This is another way that whiteness works as an invisible force.

Thus, Vincent represents the hybridity of the dynamic political, economic, and transcultural relations. Vincent's hybridity is a power struggle between neoliberalism and humanism, between violence and ethics, and between intercultural relations and imperialism. Vincent represents a more complex level of the way systems of domination operate. Today, the victims are those that are part of the U.S. government and those that are trained to go abroad to

kill people. Vincent represents the anxieties within us, to kill other races, to be animalistic and then to return to our human life.

On the other hand, Catherine represents a racial hybrid and for this reason is dangerous. She is a racial mix and female; therefore, is a hazard because hybridity is feared due to the fact that those who are hybrid stem out of different classification systems – whether it be race, gender, sexuality, and so forth. Therefore, Catherine represents the utopian model of dangerous hybridity. She is mixed and therefore is a danger to white heteronormative society. Throughout the history of mixed racial identities in the film/TV industry, hybridity was consistently described as 'biologically inferior', 'deceitful' and 'emotional instable'.[58]

7. Conclusion

I began this article with a quote by Anzaldúa stating that the answers lie in healing the divide between our thoughts and cultures and possibly bringing us to the end of violence, rape and war.[59] The tales of *Beauty and the Beast* mentioned in this article bring us to this exact instance. Moments that reinforce masculinity, gender and systems of domination and normalize violence towards women. Moments in which travelling through time with a story allows one to identify incongruities. Theories of hegemony for instance, allow us to gauge the control of cultural understandings and dominant ideologies [60] These powerful systems are used as a means to control apparatuses such as language and rhetoric. It is in this chaotic midst of power conflicts that rhetoric could never be more vital. Power is not only located in the production of space but also in rhetoric. Maintaining power requires an art of rhetoric and persuasion and this is maintained through language. By exploiting language and repackaging it, the harsh reality of hegemony and patriarchy becomes distorted. Anzaldúa's call to heal the divide between our thoughts and culture can most certainly be guided by uncovering distorted rhetoric.

The U.S., one of the most advanced democracies, is now in a position to craft any narrative possible. This is where marginalized groups such as women need to come together to counteract this. Therefore, there is a need for a shared platform where women of all races, sexualities and ideologies can unite despite their differences. The hegemonic divide and conquer strategy has been an enormous obstacle to the impediment of women's plight for freedom. This is not an easy task because first each individual woman has different oppression points. Second, there are a group of oppressed women who need to be aware that they are oppressed. Earlier, when the article referred to women editors in filmmaking, who were already subjected unconsciously to this gaze, this implies that these type of women need their minds and souls to be decolonized. There are other groups of women (both white women and women of colour) that have inscribed white privilege onto their bodies and this needs to addressed. Other women need to capitalize on their strengths and grow from their oppression points and for this reason our goal as women should be to capitalize our differences as sites of similarity and solidarity. Most important, is defining popular culture as 'one of those sites where this struggle for and against culture of the powerful is engaged'.[61] It is also, 'the area of consent and resistance' and 'it is partly where hegemony arises and where it is secured'.[62] Thus, we need to approach women from a variety of different strategies but the end goal should be a common ground that has the ability to dissolve the split that Anzaldúa stresses is in dire need of healing.

Even though the latter is a call to speak with marginalized identities, it is of equal importance to bring to light the complexities that occur when hybridity occupies privilege positionalities. Not only are some of these characters normalized but become white bodies that are victims under a system of whiteness. This normalization of white heterosexual masculinity is fundamental in addressing how our own privileged positionalities become unconscious weapons that separate us from other marginalized identities instead of being allies.[63] For example those that are abusive in real life begin to view their abusive habits as normal when

watching shows such as *Beauty and the Beast* due to privileged ideologies that normalize privileged bodies. Nonetheless, societies' anxieties have created a spill over into hybrid monsters such as Vincent. He represents a melting pot of postcolonial anxiety and hybridity and a reconciliation of guilty war crimes. Thus, popular culture has entered an era of *Colonial Anxiety* as demonstrated earlier.

Thus, my goal in writing this article was to deconstruct white hegemonic and heteronormative constructs such as in contemporary fairy tales such as *Beauty and the Beast*. However, this article is an invitation to readers, activist, theorists and filmmakers, from both minority and privileged positionalities, to continue to work against the struggle of hegemonic ideologies that have created painstaking repercussions and has shaped the thinking of both privileged and disenfranchises communities through popular culture. This invitation is just one tiny step in healing the divide between our thoughts and communities.

Notes

[1] This article is dedicated to all women who may have been in abusive relationships, may you find the strength and wisdom to break the cycle and heal. I also thank Dr. Bernadette Calafell who taught me the ropes to the world of Monstrosity and beyond.
[2] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands – La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1999), 102.
[3] *Beauty and the Beast: The Complete First Season*, dir. Ron Kaslow. The CW Network, 2012.
[4] *Beauty and the Beast*, dir. Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise. Burbank, CA: Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 1991; *Beauty and the Beast: Complete First Season.*
[5] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 221.
[6] Ibid., 225.
[7] Michel Foucault and Michel Snellart, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 133.
[8] Richard G. Jones Jr and Bernadette Marie Calafell, 'Contesting Neoliberalism through Critical Pedagogy, Intersectional Reflexivity, and Personal Narrative: Queer Tales of Academia,' *Journal of Homosexuality* 59 (2012): 974.
[9] Seaman, Myra J. 'Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future.' *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37, no. 2 (2007): 250.
[10] Marwan M. Kraidy, 'Hybridity in Cultural Globalization,' *Communication Theory* 12 (2002): 317.
[11] Ibid., 327.
[12] Ibid., 318.
[13] Ella Shohat, 'Notes on the 'Post-Colonial',' *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 105.
[14] Ibid., 110.
[15] Raka Shome, 'Whiteness and the Politics of Location: Postcolonial Reflections,' *Whiteness: The Communication of Social Identity*, ed. Thomas K. Nakayama and Judith N. Martin (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1999), 108.
[16] Jeffrey J. Cohen, 'The Werewolf's Indifference,' *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 34 (2012): 351.
[17] Ibid., 353.
[18] Ibid., 352-355.
[19] Bianca Nielson. 'Something's Wrong, Like More Than You Being Female' *Thirdspace* 3 (2004).
[20] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' *Screen* 16 (1975): 9.

[21] Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure,' 6.
[22] Peter Tragos, 'Monster Masculinity: Honey, I'll Be in the Garage Reasserting My Manhood,' *The Journal of Popular Culture* 42 (2009): 546.
[23] Mary Devereaux, 'Oppressive Texts, Resisting Readers and the Gendered Spectator: The New Aesthetics,' *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48 (1990): 347.
[24] Shome, 'Whiteness and the Politics of Location,' 125.
[25] Silverman, K. 'Fassbinder and Lacan: A Reconsideration of Gaze, Look, and Image.' *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies* 7, no. 1 19 (1989): 71.
[26] Ibid., 75-76.
[27] Gust A. Yep, 'The Violence of Heteronormativity in Communication Studies: Notes on Injuries, Healing, and Queer World-Making,' *Journal of Homosexuality* 45 (2003): 10.
[28] Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Bargaining with Patriarchy,' *Gender & Society* 2 (1988): 274-275.
[29] Devereaux 'Oppressive Texts,' 339.
[30] Betsy G. Hearne, *Beauty and the Beast: Visions and Revisions of an Old Tale* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 15.
[31] Jerry Griswold, *The Meanings of 'Beauty and the Beast': A Handbook* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004), 67.
[32] Beaumont, Jeanne-Marie Leprince De, and Jesus Lopez Pastor. *Beauty and the Beast*. (Belgium: Primento and Caramel, 2014), 4-16.
[33] Ibid., 4-16.
[34] Henry Jenkins, 'It's Not a Fairy Tale Anymore: Gender, Genre, Beauty and the Beast,' *Journal of Film and Video* 43 (1991): 94.
[35] J. P. Williams, ''A Bond Stronger than Friendship or Love': Female Psychological Development in 'Beauty and the Beast',' *NWSA Journal* 4 (1992): 67.
[36] Laura Beres, 'Beauty and the Beast: The Romanticization of Abuse in Popular Culture,' *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 2 (1999): 191.
[37] 'The CW.' Wikipedia. Accessed August 5, 2015.
[38] *Beauty and the Beast: Complete First Season – Out of Control*.
[39] *Beauty and the Beast: Complete First Season – Trust No One*.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Yep, 'Violence of Heteronormativity,' 26.
[42] Ibid.,10.
[43] Ibid., 11.
[44] *Beauty and the Beast: Complete First Season – All In*.
[45] *Beauty and the Beast: Complete First Season – Saturn Returns*.
[46] *Beauty and the Beast: Complete First Season – Cold Turkey*.
[47] Coudray, Chantal Bourgault Du. *The Curse of the Werewolf.* London: I.B. Tauris, 2006.
[48] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses),' *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 16.
[49] Ibid., 17.
[50] Ibid., 18.
[51] Squires, C., E. King Watts, M. Douglas Vavrus, K. A. Ono, K. Feyh, B. M. Calafell, and D. C. Brouwer. 'What Is This 'Post-' in Postracial, Postfeminist... (Fill in the Blank)?' *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 2010, 210-53.
[52] *Beauty and the Beast: Complete First Season – Basic Instinct*.
[53] Ibid.
[54] *Beauty and the Beast: Complete First Season – Insatiable*.
[55] Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977), 305.

[56] Michelle D. Sherman et al, 'Domestic Violence in Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder who Seek Couples Therapy,' *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 32 (2006): 479.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Mary C. Beltrán and Camilla Fojas, 'Introduction: Mixed Race in Hollywood Film and Media Culture,' *Mixed Race in Hollywood*, eds. Mary C. Beltrán and Camilla Fojas (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 10.
[59] Gloria Anzaldúa, '*Borderlands'*102.
[60] Langman, L. 'An Overview: Hegemony', *Critical Sociology*: 425-32.
[61] Stuart Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular' (1981),' *Cultural Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Imre Szeman and Tomothy Kaposy (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 79.
[62] Ibid., 79-80.
[63]Ghabra, Haneen Shafeeq. 'Disrupting Privileged and Oppressed Spaces: Reflecting Ethically on My Arabness through Feminist Autoethnography.' *Kaleidoscope: A Graduate Journal of Qualitative Communication Research* 14 (2015): 1-16.

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Cole Haddon's *Dracula* TV Series (2013-2014): The Americanness of Stoker's Resurrected Vampire

Ildikó Limpár

Abstract

The British-American TV series *Dracula* (2013-14), cancelled after its first season of ten episodes, is mostly referred to as a 'reimagining' of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* novel. Keeping the original setting of Victorian England yet treating the novel freely, the series re-contextualizes the well-known characters and themes of the original piece. The paper focuses on how some of the changes successfully contribute to understanding this new Dracula character as a cultural signifier of our time. One of the important features to consider in this respect is how the TV series breaks with the original East-West simple binarism, when it presents Dracula as both Eastern European and American, while connecting the economic-political forces that Dracula fights against to the Eastern European Order of the Dragon. The American background reinforces Dracula as an 'Other' in nineteenth-century England, but also lends an aspect of inventiveness and modernism to its character. This feature evokes the theme of technology versus religious heritage that is central in Stoker's work in a transformed manner, identifying the vampire as a threat both ancient and modern. Dracula's modernizing character becomes manifest through his ambition to ruin the old secret society's economic power, trying to utilize wireless electricity to work against the oil market that 'fuels' the Order of the Dragon. This businessman activity is symbolic also because it emphasizes the vampire's continuous effort to step out of his role as the creature of darkness, and link himself to light. To support the observation that this newly fashioned Dracula is subversive and reflective of our age, his relationship to the substantially redesigned subsidiary characters Renfield and Mina is also examined.

Key Words

Dracula, Stoker, Haddon, monster, vampire, colonization, American, Frankenstein, technology, Renfield.

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The *Dracula* TV series (2013-2014), created by Cole Haddon and brought to screen in British-American co-production, started its life for the targeted audience with a strong poster campaign. Several of these advertisements show Jonathan Rhys Meyer, the actor impersonating the title character, ready to bite into a woman's neck. The word 'Dracula' is painted with red, enlarged letters, and is usually completed with a slogan suggesting that the familiar story is redressed as fresh and modern, appealing to the contemporary audience. Key words are 'legend' and 'new' in variations, such as 'A legend is reborn'; 'The legend takes new life'; 'Old legend / New blood'. Utilizing the potential for interpreting these slogans in diverse manners, these promoting lines not only hint at the vampire's predatory nature, but they also imply that the new life and the new blood belong to the reshaped character, revitalizing, resurrecting a Dracula that diverges from Bram Stoker's monster. Indeed, the Dracula we meet in the TV show appears to be a mixture of the new and old. Among the striking novelties we may count

Dracula's obsession with his love interest, which reflects the contemporary trend of humanizing the vampire and utilizing the character for the purposes of the popular supernatural romance. The love-driven blood sucker, in addition, is given the chance for rebirth in America. At first sight this choice appears to go against the traditional associations of the character that is always seen in contrast with the more developed and lightened West. Considering that the series is a British-American co-production, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that the Americanisation of the vampire character indicates merely an attempt 'to flatter the self-image of contemporary, progressive American viewers ('he's modern like you, you're sexy like him, right?') and draw them into identification with its protagonist.'[1] I propose, however, that turning Dracula into an American character is a move that indeed manages to dust the old legend: it enables the producers to re-contextualize the main theme of the novel, that of colonization, as Dracula's Americanness functions, in fact, as the primary tool to interpret Stoker's concept of the vampire for a contemporary audience in a transparent manner. Re-mythologising the protagonist results in creating a complex character as opposed to Stoker's more abstract demon, especially that the TV-series pays attention to unfolding the various components and consequences of the vampire's Americanness.

Deliberately breaking with the tradition that sees Dracula as the monster coming from the East to invade the West, and giving the character a dual identity that connects him both to the East and the West reveals a pensive strategy that forms a modern vampire, one that better can be understood by a contemporary audience—yet one that actually is true to the basic qualities of Stoker's demonic creature. In both cases, the background of the monster reflects the culture it emerges from. As 'a very intense, if displaced engagement with political and social problems' is inherent in the Gothic tradition,[2] monsters, naturally, carry special significance, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen explains:

> The monster is born […] as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place. The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the monstrum is etymologically 'that which reveals,' 'that which warns,' a glyph that seeks a hierophant.[3]

Understanding the nature of the monster is bound to examining how Dracula, the monster as a cultural signifier, is structured via its associations to geographical and thus cultural spaces in the novel and its modern film adaptation.

Although Stoker places the emphasis on the opposition between the Western world, represented by the British Empire, and the Eastern world, embodied by Count Dracula from Romania, he involves America in the power game. American character Quincy P. Morris comes to play a noteworthy role in the novel: having joined the team that was formed to fight and eliminate the vampire, the American becomes one of the men that in the end kill Dracula. Inflicting the vampire with a mortal wound, however, brings his own death, too. He dies as a hero, and Stoker closes the Dracula hunt narrative in effect not with the vampire's but Morris's death (not counting the Epilogue, which focuses on the healing process). As a consequence, the American motif is much more than decoration even in Stoker's text and has given space for various interpretations.

Morris's role, on the one hand, has been seen as a reflection of the political situation of the time. Richard Wasson in 1966 suggests that Morris as a pragmatic character who trusts his weapons rather than occult practices to annihilate a vampire mirrors America in her role of 'the

armorer of the West,' while the death of the character provides criticism on 'the Monroe's Doctrine's restrictive measures against […America's] participation in European affairs.'[4] Other critics, such as Hartlen, consider Morris as an 'honorary Englishman,' who has the 'the privilege of dying to protect England.'[5]

The above readings are based on the notion that Morris as an American joins the team of European (mostly British) characters who form an alliance against Dracula. The critics place the American character in a bipolar system, where threat is identified by the vampire from the East, whereby the West, made up of Western Europe and America, defends Western values. From the 1980s on, however, as a consequence of the approaches taken by Franco Moretti and then Stephen D. Arata, who go into more length to elaborate on the complexity that Morris's American identity reveals, the character's position has been evaluated as a much more ambiguous one.

As Arata contends, 'Morris is linked with vampires and racial Others.'[6] His argument highlights the duality in Morris's American identity, which naturally aligns him with the 'Anglo-Saxon brotherhood,' but which also positions him as a new imperial rival, thus a threat to the British Empire, which associates him with Dracula.[7] Arata's reading is not without precedent, though. It was Moretti in 1982 who first suggested that Morris is actually a vampire character—although he is not portrayed as one, and with good reason:

> For Stoker, monopoly *must* be feudal, oriental, tyrannical. It cannot be the product of that very society he wants to defend. And Morris, naturally, is by contrast a product of Western civilization, just as America is a rib of Britain and American capitalism a consequence of British capitalism. To make Morris a vampire would mean accusing capitalism directly: or rather accusing Britain, admitting that it is Britain herself that has given birth to the monster.[8]

In Haddon's version of Dracula, we cannot sense, of course, Stoker's shyness about connecting vampirism and America. In fact, since the publication of the novel in 1897, America's role as the number one world power that colonizes or subjugates the rest of the world in various manners has been secured. Thus the idea to make Dracula return as an American character seems to be a logical and justified move. The American threat that could only be hinted at in Stoker version is brought into focus more than a century later.

This modern Dracula, however, is more than a mere translation of the symbolic content Stoker attached to his vampire character coming from the East, turning it into a monster from the West. This monster is seen by his environment as an American entrepreneur, while the audience is simultaneously reminded of the vampire's classic / Eastern roots. Dracula, now bearing the name Grayson, fuses Stoker's explicit and implicit vampire characters. His duality is what the series emphasizes, never abandoning the literary roots of the character. In the interview to Harker, Grayson gives an introduction to himself, aiming at manipulating the journalist. When the journalist asks him why he came to England, he replies with a lie that fits his fabricated American identity: 'This is the country of my great-grandparents' birth. In that regard, it's a homecoming.'[910] While this claim contradicts the facts we learn about Dracula's past from the film episodes, it still proves to carry the truth in a larger context: considering Stoker's Dracula as Grayson's literary ancestor, a great-grandparent, who as a literary character was indeed born in England, the idea of homecoming does make sense and strikes the informed audience as true.

In this public confession do we find the producers' message about their revitalized Dracula, too. Grayson presents himself as a character of dual identity, a man of past and future, which corresponds to his double origin of East and West. His words reposition England as a

European terrain merging old and new—that is, a land between East and West. This England exhibits the exact duality that the vampire attaches to himself, thus we see how his character corresponds to the land that he wants to invade. He himself makes this point clearly:

> Europe speaks to me in a way no other place does. You know, we call it 'The Old World' for a reason. And yet, her people seek the new wherever they can. I understand this struggle. I, myself, am descended from a very old family. But my mind, always fixed on the future. I surround myself with things that speak to both.[11]

When Harker notes that Grayson is 'full of contradictions,' Grayson laconically replies: 'So is the world.'[12] His words reveal that his character may be read as the by-product of the modern world. He is not in contradiction with the world—he just mirrors the contradictions that the word surrounding him has developed.

The conflicting nature of the new Dracula is supported by a twofold myth building. As the name Dracula historically links with Vlad Tepes, it would have been illogical to abandon the monster's relation with the East; therefore, the creators of the TV show looked more into the historical character's life, and as a consequence decided to introduce the Order of the Dragon into the story line. The Order of the Dragon was founded by King Sigismund in 1408 to create an extra bastion against the Eastern powers, that is, the non-Christian Turks.[13] This function of the Order makes it possible to see it as atavistic to the demonic forces represented by vampires, and it may even be connected to Dracula's family history, as Tepes's father, a contemporary to Sigismund, even became member of the Order. Based upon the historical evidence, Vlad Tepes himself cannot be connected to the Order directly, but the TV show mythologises the historical reality of the Order, suggesting that it has turned into a secret society and survived the past centuries to keep fighting against the dark powers that threaten Christian values. This inherent relation between the vampire and the Order is reflected in their names, too. As Constantin Rezachevici explains, 'Draculea' (Dracula) originally was a nickname for Tepes's father (also named Vlad) indicating that he belonged to the Order of the Dragon. Only later, by the time his son, Vlad Tepes inherited this name 'meaning son of Dracul,' 'it became confused with the Romanian word 'Dracul', meaning 'the devil,''[14] inspiring even Stoker to replace 'Wampyr' in his manuscript with Dracula.[15] The link between the Order and the vampire via the common origin of their names (still manifest in the same word root noticeable in both names) reminds the audience of a shared past and the historical dimension of the combat between the Order and the demonic powers.

When Van Helsing reinserts Dracula in the power game, and the vampire assumes the role of the determined American businessman, being American theoretically suggests a set of values that opposes that of the Order; however, the visual representation of the rebirth generates doubt as to which set of values is the right one. The spectators must make sense of the combination of two rebirths: a physical and a metaphorical one, which serves to relativize the moral character of the monster. Dracula is physically brought back to life when Van Helsing removes the number of iron stakes that render the vampire's body dead, and pours blood into the vampire's mouth so that he may revitalize. The opening scene thus visualizes the slogan that 'A legend is reborn.' What is more, we are immediately confronted with the duality of the concept behind the character: he is a savage, brutal monster brought back to life in Transylvania; the next scene, however, shows him as fully, symbolically resurrected: he emerges from pure water, showing a civilized image of the American businessman. The bath scene, though evoking baptism, does not turn Dracula into a purified character; still, the audience is advised to see the vampire as a reformed one. After he learns why he was dragged

back to this modern life, his rebirth completes by assuming his new identity, that of the American Grayson, to be able to take revenge on the Order that turned him into a vampire. When the vampire goes immigrant, we see him inhabiting an American Dream story: his past is erased for the public, and thus all that is visible is his shell as a new and successful entrepreneur from the New World—the new Land of Opportunities, since in Stoker's novel the land where anything is possible is England: Van Helsing calls it 'a place of most promise,' as Wasson also underlines.[16]

While Dracula's Americanness urges one to rethink the character, it must be noted that what appears to be a brand new idea—that is, modernizing the character and associating it with the West—is already present in Stoker's text. While early studies highlight the primary contrast between Dracula of the East and the alliance of the West fighting the vampire. after a while critics, such as Stephen D. Arata, Patricia McKee, and Christopher Bundrick,[17] recognize the colonizer in Dracula, emphasizing the similarity between him and members of the group that forms to annihilate him.

Thus making Dracula American actually supports the original narrative's basic idea that Dracula is as much of a modern, western character in behaviour as he is connected to the East, which is represented as the world of backwardness, superstition, and feudal conditions. In the novel Dracula's modernity is manifest in his dangerous ability of leaning and adapting to the Western circumstances—a faculty in which Haddon's Dracula even exceeds his literary ancestor. In the TV series, the vampire's amplified aptitude for developing and answering challenges actually subverts the relation between the vampire and its hunters: not only is Grayson a modern character who has the ability to keep up with the West, but a character who is much more connected to advancement and technology than his opponents.

An American businessman trying to conquer the British market is a motif that helps to highlight the colonization threat theme, which is dominant in Stoker's narrative. In fact, the opposition between Grayson and the Order of the Dragon first manifests itself as an economic one when Grayson indicates his wish to buy patents from British Imperial, the company run by the Order of the Dragon, to ensure the financial means and economic power he needs to function effectively.

> [Alexander Grayson:] British Imperial holds patents, patents to high-efficiency coolants which would be most useful in advancing one of my technological projects. I would very much like to acquire those patents.
> [Sir Clive Dawes:] Mister Grayson, the British Imperial Company is in the business of selling our products to British industry, not our underlying patents to interloping colonials.[18]

As the above quote demonstrates, Grayson's character as both an American and as an entrepreneur opens up ways in which the colonization theme may openly be presented. Dialogues between Grayson and various characters reveal his plan to destroy his primal enemy economically. The vampire understands that it is a futile attempt to kill all the members of the Organisation, for he needs to fight against the company and not simply against the people in it. Killing the company demands annihilation of its power in the market and not the people working for it. As Grayson explains it to his secretary, Renfield,

> They believe [oil] will fuel the next century. And if they control it, they control the future. But from the moment we demonstrate the viability of geomagnetic technology… Poof! No more money. No more power. No more Order of the Dragon.[19]

While bringing the theme of colonization into the foreground and highlighting the protagonist's modernity, the American identity of the vampire creates a peculiar complexity to the theme of otherness. The Order of the Dragon considers Grayson as an Other because of his American background, thus the vampire is able to use his Americanness as a disguise that distracts his opponents' attention. The Order of the Dragon, and especially its huntsman, are unable to identify Grayson as a vampire, because the mask of the American entrepreneur prevents them from seeing Grayson for what he really is. As he openly confronts the Order in business matters, it is taken granted that the threat in the form of bloody murders comes from another source, which is hidden from their sight. It is no wonder, therefore, that even the huntsman fails to connect the two problems: 'I share your concerns about the American, but he is hardly the greatest threat that we face,' she remarks in Episode 4.[20] Grayson's status as an Other due to his American background is thus useful for him in the hostile English business world. His strangeness, furthermore, attracts the huntsman—who is, actually, a huntswoman—and the vampire can use the woman's feelings at his own advantage. Grayson in this relationship proves to be a real predator, hunting for the huntsman to create safety for himself by manipulating the woman's and the Order's actions.

While the above use of his American identity enables Grayson to secure his position as a victimizer who considers his opponents preys, it is exactly his American background that strongly associates him with the victimized, too, which again reinforces the inherent duality of the character. The primary source of his link to the marginalised is his relationship with Renfield. As a black person who, nevertheless, dared to study and become a lawyer, Renfield clearly stands for the racial Other. He suffers humiliation for his skin colour in his home, America, as clients refuse to make use of his services. Grayson, however, has no objections against him; in fact, he trusts Renfield exactly because of the similarities in their conditions. The vampire is as much of a racial Other as a black man is in nineteenth century America: 'I too know what it's like to live as an outcast, outside what passes for polite society, but rarely is,' Grayson confesses to Renfield.[21]

Beside this clear verbal confirmation, the audience is continuously reminded of the two characters' alliance based on similarities via their accents as well as their consciously chosen costumes. Dressing Renfield up as a gentleman provides an important scene in Episode 5: it shows Grayson's generosity and liberal thinking, and allows us to see Renfield's metamorphosis. The fancy clothes serve as costumes for a fancy society of British imperialists, but they also reveal partnership. Equally suggestive are some of the moments when we see Grayson and Renfield beside each other. They are often neatly juxtaposed for a few moments in their black and white clothes. The colours they wear are the same, but dark skinned Renfield looks like his pale master's 'shadow'. The similar style is often notable in their clothing, but Renfield is like the grey (or, in American spelling, gray) Grayson's somewhat colourized version, often wearing an accessory of sangria red. At times it is the neck-tie that suggests this difference—for instance, when Grayson wears black, and Renfield wears red at the magnetic light demonstration in Episode 1—, while on other occasions it is his hat or the collar of his coat.

This arrangement reflects Renfield's position as a racial Other, but also mirrors the notion that Grayson's difference can best be caught by his greyness or paleness. The vampire's dangerousness, as Bruce A. McClelland explains, lies in its ability to adapt to its environment enough to disperse doubts about its humanity, for it is 'ambulatory and mimetic of the individual'[22]; yet, if we wanted to 'colourize' this particular vampire, his colour would be red as blood—something that has become Renfield's signifier. Renfield, consequently, reflects the publicly invisible otherness of the vampire as a racial, that is, coloured Other and as a character associated with the colour of blood. Yet Grayson's American background defines him as an

Other in England not only because he wants to invade the British market and because his manners and accents are American; he is defined as an Other because his 'spirit'—if we may use this word in association with a vampire at all—is American. This aspect of his otherness is marked by the continuous presence of his assistant, the black American, fancily dressed lawyer, Renfield, who is perceived as an anomaly in nineteenth century England.

The duality of Grayson's character as an American intruder in the European world is thus further focalised through Renfield's character. Associating the two of them boosts Grayson's complexity as a modern entrepreneur, who not only ventures to launch new technology in the world, but also demonstrates his enlightened, democratic thinking by openly relying on Renfield's services. The producers of the show, in addition, manipulate the audience to sympathize with Grayson by emphasizing his connection to the marginalized and the oppressed. Grayson's affiliation with Renfield completes with the flashbacks through which we learn how the Order of the Dragon captured and tortured him, how they killed his wife, and how they turned him into a vampire to punish for the sins he had committed. These recurring scenes of memories assure that we see not only the predator but also the victim in Grayson's character, especially that the flashbacks make us watch the character suffer, while we are only briefly informed about the cause of this punishment, never actually seeing or learning explicitly what Tepes did in order to deserve his sentence. Only in Episode 8 may the audience finally hear what the Order of the Dragon knows about Dracula.

> He was a medieval warrior prince renowned for his savagery and ruthlessness. He was master huntsman in his native land, and he served on the High Council of this very organization […]. He defied the Ordo Draco, was excommunicated by the Church and found guilty of heresy. So grievous was his sin that a sentence of death was considered inadequate. So they employed occult rituals and transformed him into the living demon that we now know as the Fell One, Nosferatu, primo Master vampire, Dracula.[23]

The spectators are exposed to the character's monstrous nature only after he has turned into a vampire; and since it is revealed that it was the Order of the Dragon that initiated the transformation of the human into a living dead, Grayson may more easily win sympathy than members of the Order of the Dragon, whose methods are not unlike the vampire's when it comes to gaining and maintaining power.

The complexity and the duality of the character, exhibiting contrasting qualities, aim at the relativization of the evil that is immanent in the concept of the vampire. In order to do so, the TV show presents the use of technology, which becomes inseparable from Grayson's character, as a moral question, too. Stoker also deals with this issue, although approaching it from a different perspective: he emphasizes the contradictory nature of technology's effect on our life. While modern technology is a means to destroy the vampire in the novel, Stoker also makes the point that technological development has deprived modern man of the basic 'skill' that is needed to fight against a vampire: the faith in the vampire. As Van Helsing explains, 'in this enlightened age, when men believe not even what they see, the doubting of wise men would be [Dracula's] greatest strength.'[24] Thus technological advancement serves the demonic powers, as it paves the way to the invasion of the vampires. This function does not make technology itself evil—it would not be able to serve the vampire hunters, then—but warns us against allowing technology take over our spiritual life. Technology is a double edged knife, argues Stoker: on the one hand, it generates anarchy, a hell-like experience, which is expressed via the diabolic vampire character's emergence; on the other hand, technology, when used by

experts who combine it with 'observation, deduction, and hypothesis testing—the tools of the scientist as well as the detective',[25] is the means to triumph over this chaos.

This controversial role of technology is further complicated in Haddon's *Dracula*, when we understand the implications in Grayson's new technology that promises magnetic, wire free electricity to the people. Magnetism and electricity are two important fields to which nineteenth-century science paid special attention, thus they really stand for advancement; however, more significant is how they metaphorically relate to the vampire. Magnetism alludes to the vampire's assumed 'magnetic force,'[26] that is, his skill to hypnotize people—something that also Stoker's Dracula practices when he visits his prey to suck their blood. Magnetism in the TV series, consequently, reinforces the inseparability of occultism and science, which was evident for Victorian people,[27] but is presented in the show as two opposing notions.[28] Electricity, on the other hand, provides various interpretations of Grayson's character, via its associations with light, freedom, and life.

The invention Grayson promotes aims at providing light without wires, but is, in fact, the means to metaphorical darkness. The vampire, a kind of rebellious Lucifer character who would bring light in a new form to the people, intends to gain economic victory over the Order of the Dragon, whose hegemony is based on their oil interests. The new technology thus may be used as a tool to generate anarchy in the world of the vampire's opponents.

The science that Grayson focuses on, however, is only partially about bringing freedom in terms of using light—light without the limitation that wires mean—to the people. Beyond this project, he wants to bring the experience of enjoying light and freedom—for himself. Van Helsing, the real man of science behind Grayson's technological projects, invests most of his time and energy in experimenting with the vampire's blood so that the living dead may be able to walk in the sun again. The desire to enjoy sunlight, again, reflects Dracula's duality. Once he is able to make a public appearance in daytime, he dismisses the suspicions that he may be a vampire, which furthers his grand design to disrupt the Order of the Dragon. Disposing of the limitation that sunlight assures for the vampires, Dracula would become more effective in destroying his enemies, as he could hunt even without the natural alliance of the monster, that is, darkness. Therefore, it appears that Grayson's scientific interest in bringing light to the people and to himself is of practical importance, both related to his purpose of taking revenge on the Order.

It becomes soon evident, though, that Grayson's passion for his projects on light corresponds to his yearning for light in a metaphorical sense. His soul might be possessed by Satan, his heart may not be able to beat, but there is one thing that the curse that turned him into a vampire could not change: his feelings for his deceased wife. His memories of love and his passion towards the woman whom he adored in his human life also resurrect when he catches the first glimpse of Mina, who appears to be a reincarnation of the lost beloved, Ilona. Grayson, who never for a moment hesitates to brutally kill those who make hindrance for his plans, has a moral dilemma about Mina, feeling that taking her would be 'abomination.'[29] His consciousness does not allow him to turn the woman into a vampire and enjoy her company until the end of time. In this particular case, he is capable of considering his act from a moral perspective, and at least for the time being he is able to make the morally right decision, which proves that a part in him is not possessed by demonic powers. His love for his wife connects Grayson to his pre-vampire, fully human life. Mina is thus the light in his life, dragging him out of the darkness for moments at least—but one may equally argue that the vampire's passion for Mina is what pushes him into the ultimate darkness by seducing the woman, taking advantage of Harker's weakness and by allowing his most monstrous self to act when Mina needs protection. Yet, whichever way we judge Grayson's relationship to morality, it must be acknowledged that Grayson suffers from the feelings he has, he has moral concerns when he

fights for the love of the woman, and the only person who appears to change his relationship to the world is Mina, who signifies the past to him. She is beauty in a world where everyone is an enemy, and bloodsucking is the means to survive; she is hope, promising a reconnection with the past in a world which does not have Ilona any more.

It is of symbolic importance, then, that walking in sunlight demands a beating heart, and the experiments Grayson's scientist conducts aims at the revitalization of the dead. Van Helsing, as an alternative Victor Frankenstein, uses high voltage electricity to make the vampire's heart beat so that the serum turning him sun resistant may circulate in his body. Some of the visual representations—especially in the scenes where the serum is first tested on a vampire woman—pay tribute to Frankenstein films to create the link between the two narratives in the audience's mind.

The association with the Frankenstein character is well thought out, for in the TV show we have a Dracula that evokes Frankenstein's monster—and a number of issues that Shelley's novel addresses. Among these we find the issue of the monster's morality. As we could see, Haddon's Dracula diverges significantly from Stoker's in this respect: the vampire's soulless darkness is never questioned in the novel, while the team that continuously uses holy objects to fight the living dead demonstrates an undoubtedly superior morality. In the series, however, the vampire's immorality is relativized by his emerging moral dilemmas and by the questionable morality of the Order of the Dragon. The latter proves more monstrous than the ancient vampire when Van Helsing calls Browning, head of the Order, 'a monster [m]ore vile' than Dracula himself.[30] In *Frankenstein*, the ability to think, to feel—and especially to love—humanizes the monster, who is able to judge his deeds from a moral perspective, and who kills first because he is not aware of his strength, his own nature, then because he thinks he is forced to do so in order to achieve his aim. Grayson sees his existence very similarly: on the one hand, it is in his nature that he must drink blood, so some of the murders he commits are 'natural' consequences of his existence; on the other hand, he also feels he is forced to punish his enemies with deaths in order to achieve his goal: revenge.

The visual allusion to *Frankenstein* reverberates the implication that the monster is something that we deliberately create—out of hybris. When Stoker blames technology for letting the vampire infiltrate into Britain and turn the people into monsters like him, it is in fact mankind's hybris that he makes responsible for what happens. It is not difficult to see the resemblance between the two nineteenth-century texts that use the Gothic to reflect on the social issues of the age, both highlighting the dangers that mankind's interest in perfecting technology poses. But this theme is more subtly treated in Stoker's novel than in Shelley's, especially since Dracula is a demon, and as such, mankind does not specifically create the monster—only lets it on the loose, whereas in *Frankenstein* we have a human character who creates a breathing monster out of dismantled bodies of dead people. Haddon's *Dracula* evokes Frankenstein in this respect: it is human beings—members of the Order of the Dragon—who create a vampire from the man they kill; then, to reinforce the connection with Frankenstein's monster, Dracula as a living dead is granted temporary human-like life when Van Helsing activates his heart by leading electricity into it. Haddon's Dracula, therefore, is the product of human 'creation.' When the Order of the Dragon decides to punish Vlad Tepes by sentencing him to never ending suffering in the form of a vampire, dooming him to exist in eternal darkness, its members challenge God as much as Frankenstein does in Shelley's novel. Although the members of the Order swear to defend the Christian world, they seem to forget that creating a new race, giving life to inanimate flesh, according to their belief, is God's sole privilege. They assume that God entitled them to act in His name: 'Using the power of the God you denounced, Ordo Draco has made a monster.'[31] Later, in Episode 8, the Order reveals the vampire's origin: 'Created, not sired, by us,'[32] as the huntsman words it to her fellow members.

The precision in her phrasing displays a perfect understanding of their transgression of God's law.

The analogy between what the Order and Frankenstein do is clear, and this way those who show hybris by playing God are the ones who may be identified villainous in the first place, while the vampire's monstrosity becomes a reflection of human nature. Haddon's Dracula, just like Frankenstein's monster, is a character that powerfully speaks of mankind's monstrous nature.

While the Order of the Dragon was supposed to protect mankind, it gave life to the greatest threat to humans, and although this idea is implicitly present in Stoker's *Dracula*, the TV show is very explicit in blaming mankind's hybris for the demonic attacks. Bram Stoker and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley connect mankind's sin to technology, and in this respect the TV series diverges from the route taken by these nineteenth-century writers. The hybris of the Order of the Dragons comes from a religious conviction that they have the right to act like God in the name of God. Their activity is characterized by as much duality as that of the vampire.

The ambivalence of the Order supports the equivovacy of its opponent. In the original novel, the team fighting Dracula succeeds because of their combined, creative usage of technology and religion. In the TV show, however, the Order of the Dragon is characterized by backwardness and lack of modernity in various ways. It favours oil enterprise instead of Dracula's new technology; furthermore, it uses the same old fashioned methods to fight the demonic powers as the ones used centuries ago: instead of developed technology, they rely on occultism, religion, and close combat with medieval weapons and methods to eliminate vampires. These features are compatible with the Order's Eastern origin: historically it is a Hungarian order, and the TV show uses flashbacks to make clear that it worked in Eastern Europe when Vlad Tepes lived as a human count. Nevertheless, the Order, having been founded as a force to protect the Eastern cultural borders, is now active in Britain, which suggests a shift in our interpretation of the West, too. Haddon's adaptation justifies Stoker's prophetic vision about a threat of the future coming from the West, that is, America, which he alluded to via Morris's character.

Grayson's America, accordingly, may be read as a threatening source of new technology that colonizes from the inside as opposed to the outside—by transforming the human into a monster, using subversion, just as Stoker's Dracula does. In the TV show, the secret nature of the invasion is even more emphatic, as people do know Grayson but do not suspect that it is he who disrupts the order on a larger scale. However, by relativizing the evil of the demon and the positive values of those fighting against the monster, Haddon's text explores the complexity of the situation, considering cause and effect, surpassing a mere demonstration of contrasting value systems. In fact, the TV series highlights rather the similarity and not the contrast between the opposing parties when communicates about economic power. Grayson's business activity offers him protection and cover, under which he can more freely hunt his prey. But equally important, the Order of the Dragon is a prime example of the fact that economic hegemony may be used to hide and subsidize illegal activities. The economic rivalry between the Order and Grayson indicates that the power game in the name of justice on both sides is manipulative; it corrupts and destroys innocent people, and lacks even the attempt at fair play. In effect, it is hard to claim that the Order of the Dragon would serve the benefit of mankind.

The modernisation of the vampire is rooted in the destabilisation of the clear moral contrast between the vampire and his hunters. Fair (the hunting team) and foul (the monster) alike are moved into the grey zone, which Dracula's new name, Grayson, emblematically bespeaks. The poster promotion and the TV advertisements of the show laid special emphasis on recolouring the original narrative with romance, suggesting that what is new is Dracula's passionate love relationship with a woman. This assumed transformation of the narrative would

connect the show to the trend of vampire novels that challenge Stoker's authority in vampire literature and try to revise the notion that women are primarily 'property and (...) tools in men's efforts to control and abuse other men'[33] But in fact, although we do have a more humanized vampire in the person of Grayson, the romance line constitutes part of the power game, and stays true to the Victorian spirit of the novel. The TV show, no doubt, has utilized new blood to ensure a sufficient number of viewers and it definitely aims at turning the monster into a creature that is more complex and attractive than Stoker's Dracula. Nevertheless, the real new colour is not the red of love beside the red of blood and the black of evil. The new colour is the grey, and grey Grayson's appearance on the screen speaks of a culture that knows no black and white any more. Having Americanised Dracula highlights the nature of the dangers that are more latently present in Stoker's novel, and reshapes our notion about monstrosity and the perils of our contemporary world, as well, questioning even our ability to take a moral stance.

Notes

[1] Richard Gough Thomas, 'Review: *Dracula* (2013),' *Journal of Victorian Culture Online* November 12, 2013, viewed on 28 August 2015, http://blogs.tandf.co.uk/jvc/2013/11/12/review-dracula-2013/.
[2] David Putnam quoted in Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization,' *Victorian Studies* 33.4 (Summer 1990): 621.
[3] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture. (Seven Theses),' *Monster Theory: Reading Culture,* ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota Press, 1996.Cohen), 4.
[4] Richard Wasson, 'The Politics of Dracula,' *English Literature in Transition 1880-1920* 9.1. (1966): 26.
[5] Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization,' *Victorian Studies* 33.4 (Summer 1990): 641.
[6] Ibid., 642.
[7] Ibid., 642.
[8] Franco Moretti, 'The Dialectic of Fear,' *New Left Review* 136 (1982): 76.
[9] All quotes from the episodes are from '*Dracula* (2013) Episode scripts,' Springfield! Springfield! For the individual quotes, I provide only the episode's title and number.
[10] *Dracula: Season One*. NBC Universal, 2014, DVD*,* Episode 1: 'The Blood is the Life.'
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Constantin Rezachevici, 'From the Order of the Dragon to Dracula,' *Journal of Dracula Studies* 1 (1999): n.p. Journal of Dracula Studies Archive, Kutztown University. Viewed on 14 January 2016. https://kutztownenglish.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/jds_v1_1999_rezachevici.pdf
[14] Ibid.
[15] Elizabeth Miller, 'Getting to Know the Un-Dead: Bram Stoker, vampires and *Dracula,' Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*, ed. Carla T. Kungl (Oxford, U.K.: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2003), 3.
[16] Wasson, 'The Politics of Dracula,' 25.
[17] In: Arata 'The Occidental Tourist'; Christopher Bundrick, ''Covered in Blood and Dirt': Industrial, Capital and Cultural Crisis in Red Rock and Dracula,' *The Southern Literary Journal* 47.1 (Fall 2014): 21-34; Patricia McKee, 'Racialization, Capitalism, and Aesthetics in Stoker's 'Dracula,'' *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 36.1 (2002): 42-60.
[18] *Dracula*, Episode 1: 'The Blood is the Life.'
[19] Ibid.

[20] *Dracula*, Episode 4: 'From Darkness to Light.'
[21] *Dracula,* Episode 5: 'The Devil's Waltz.'
[22] Bruce A. McClelland. *Slayers and Their Vampires: A Cultural History of Killing the Dead* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 2.
[23] *Dracula*, Episode 8: 'Come to Die.'
[24] Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Gosset and Dunlap, 1897), 324-25.
[25] Rosemary Jann, 'Saved by Science? The Mixed Messages of Stoker's Dracula,' *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 31.2 (1989): 280.
[26] *Dracula*, Episode 8: 'Come to Die.'
[27] Philip Holden, 'Castle, Coffin, Stomach: 'Dracula' and the Banality of the Occult,' *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29.2 (2001): 472.
[28] Cf. Dracula's words on his technology: 'There was neither magic nor trickery involved. Simply science, physics, and technology. Although I have been known to dabble in the occult.' *Dracula:* Season One. (2013-14; NBC Universal, 2014), DVD, Episode 2: 'A Whiff of Sulfur.'
[29] *Dracula*, Episode 2: 'A Whiff of Sulfur.'
[30] *Dracula*, Episode 10: 'Let there be Light.'
[31] *Dracula*, Episode 3: 'Goblin Merchant Men.'
[32] *Dracula*, Episode 8: 'Come to Die.'
[33] Judith E. Johnson, 'Women and Vampires: Nightmare or Utopia?' *The Kenyon Review*, New Series, 15.1. (1993): 76. Johnson specifically focuses on female novelists' use of women characters in vampire narratives, noting how the authors 'revise the central sexual and economic metaphor of blood drinking' (77-78). Katie Harse's article on Jody Scott, Angela Carter and Anne Rice includes this aspect but it thoroughly examines these writers' divergence from Stoker's authorial text in a wider context.

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Building the Perfect Superhero: Science and America-Themed Comic Book Characters

Cord A. Scott

Abstract

This article looks at the concept of eugenics, genetic manipulation and its impact on comic book superheroes, specifically those heroes that embodied the American ideals. The idea of serums or other sorts of genetic manipulation were both part of science fiction as well as scientific fact from that era. The stories harkened back to the concept of science within literature. The essay also analyses the perception of how science and the manipulation of science could create or distort the concept of humanity.

Key Words

Eugenics, Comic Books, Captain America, World War II, stereotypes, Nazism, patriotism, America, science

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> Behold! The crowning achievement of all my years of hard work! The first of a corps of super-agents whose mental and physical ability will make them a terror to spies and saboteurs. We shall call you Captain America, son! Because, like you--- America shall gain the strength and will to safeguard our shores![1]

For comic book readers, superheroes are the epitome of perfection: they possess strength, agility, and ability to adapt to stress related events around them as they fight never ending conflicts with seemingly endless wells of stamina. While the superhero was a result of the idea of better living through science in the 1930s, the theme of creating a person through genetic manipulation was already being practiced through the concept of eugenics. The idea of breeding or sterilizing humans for stronger members of the species was a controversial, yet accepted, practice on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean in the early part of the twentieth-century. Hitler often talked of the Aryans and their sub-human genetic inferiors. German propaganda minister Josef Goebbels even went so far as to state that Superman was a Jew, and the concept of comic books nothing more than the prattling of a decadent society consumed with fantasy.[2] The comic books were another symbol of American weakness as well as Jewish influence on American culture. Yet the comic book cover of *Captain America #1* was one in which Hitler was punched out by the very stereotype—created through blood infused, scientific perfectio—that he espoused: the strong blue eyed, blonde haired character very much akin to that of the Aryan 'superman' idolized by the Nazis. Steroids, associated with the image of superheroes (or their modern athletic counterparts), stemmed from Nazi science experiments and other attempts to augment or enhance the human body, and often carried over to the popular concept of superheroes, which were enhanced with physical enhancements. The initial story line of Captain

America tied in both concepts. Government sponsorship (and control) of a superhero was also utilized in Cap's predecessor, the Shield.

This article looks at the concept of eugenics, genetic manipulation and its impact on comic book superheroes, specifically those heroes that embodied the American ideals: Captain America, the Shield, USAgent, Major Liberty, Wonder Woman and to an extent, even Superman from the early days of comics. The idea of serums or other sorts of genetic manipulation were both part of science fiction as well as scientific fact from that era. The stories harkened back to the concept of science within literature. For some American pop culturalists, the American version of science was that it helped people. The perception of the European scientist was that he was in fact cold, analytical and ultimately playing God through their experiments.[3] What were the results of these manipulations? Often in the stories, the scientific endeavours merely amplified character traits, either good in the case of Captain America, or evil in the case of many of his foes, re-enforcing the perception of science in the respective cultures, in that Europeans were obsessed with the negative nature of science while Americans were for the betterment of all society. This construct is not the reality for scientists around the world have their own versions of the nature of science and experimentation.[4]

In addition, discussion will also move towards the newer America-themed characters that took the eugenics idea and twisted it in new socially aware concepts (*Superpatriot* and *Truth* – the latter comic is an African-American Captain America developed from the Tuskegee experiments) that reflected the recent revelations of American experiments during the early 1900s. The unintended side-effects of genetic manipulation have also been approached in other comics that portray superheroes as slowly going insane. The present study questions whether these storylines are a reflection of modern society as well.

1. Eugenics, Social Darwinism and the Early Scientific Movement

The idea of genetic manipulation for the betterment of society is nothing new. Plato advocated it in Greek society, and cultures around the world have practiced these measures in some form or another since the dawn of man. In the 1800s however, the ideas were codified by several key scientists. Charles Darwin was the first to discuss the evolution of man in his book the *Origin of the Species*, first published in 1859.[5] By 1865, the process had gone one step further with the concept of eugenics espoused by Sir Francis Galton. His theory stated that through the selective breeding of some races, the natural selection of dominant races of men (in this case white Europeans) would lead to greater prosperity of all humanity. The term *eugenics* was defined in 1883 by Webster's Dictionary as 'a science that deals with the improvement (as by control of human breeding) of heredity qualities of a race or breed.'[6]

While the development of comic book superheroes is not eugenics per se (as far as breeding is concerned), it is important to note that genetic manipulation is involved in the plots from the comic books of the era (1937-1941), such as Captain America and the Shield to name two. These real aspects of science tied into the story lines of comics as they made for compelling, realistic fiction in the comics, as well as the earlier pulp fiction such as books and movies. By 1900 Hugo DeVries improved upon Darwin's thesis to develop the concept of mutation as a way of enhancing species.[7] The idea of science altering people into a perfect physical specimen is a cornerstone of the comic book creation theory, as well as a common theme in many media such as films, television, and literature. The two ideas of Neo-Darwinian synthesis and chemical enhancement would both become part of the story lines for many comics.

It is not to say that pop culture did not also embrace the idea of the best and the beautiful for heroic types. In Europe, the ideas first espoused on paper by Adolf Lanz in the magazine *Ostara* (1905) told of whom was desirable for the genetically superior stock, which would be

later codified upon by the Nazi Party in the 1930s. Lanz published a test of genetic traits that were needed to make the strongest people available, specifically the Aryan race, mentioned by title.[8] These traits were also what viewers of American media would and still see as 'typical' Americans later on: blonde hair, blue eyes, and height over others, with a societal disposition towards the ethical values of the Protestants of Northern Europe. It is these very traits that also become part and parcel of the comic book superhero.

In the 1920s, the eugenics movement in the US gained considerable strength. This was in part due to the promotion of the concept by the American Eugenics Society (AES). By utilizing concepts in visual and written form, and especially geared towards the educational system in the US, the idea was to engrain Americans with the concept that moral turpitude, and physical maladies, would be the downfall of the country. However if one practiced Eugenics, then the US would survive and thrive. Since it was during the 1920s that the AES was at an apex of popularity, it is quite possible that it had some sort of impact on the writers and artists that created the comic books – what better medium to educate readers on the monstrous nature of unchecked science through exaggerated depictions of the body? – where the combination of art and story could further allow the reader's mind to create further scenarios – in the 1930s.[9]

The confluence of real world issues concerning genetics and the rise of the fantasy world of comics created several main characters that owed their powers to science and genetics. The issue of eugenics made enough of an impact in general debates that it was a topic of the NY State Assembly of School Administrators of 1934.[10] It was apparent in these meetings that the ideas were there to in some form or another give priority to the students who would be the most worthy, and let the others simply stay in their mediocrity. If they were deemed mentally or physically stunted in some form, then the result was that they would be removed from a 'proper' educational setting.

For the proponents of eugenics, popular culture was used as further justification of the need to purify humans within society. Right wing parties within the United States saw the rise in criminal acts in the 1930s as part of the massive influx of immigrants and undesirable elements from southern Europe and Asia. Certain characteristics seemed common in criminals as was noted by eugenicist Cesare Lombrosso, such as sloping forehead, beady eyes, and even in some cases physical abnormalities, such as stunted limbs, or physical tics. The popular culture of the day, specifically comic strips such as Dick Tracy, carried on the stereotypes that supported the claim for eugenics, in that the most dangerous criminals were those who had some sort of physical feature that made them monstrous, and therefore dangerous. It was thought that through better breeding, society would become more enlightened, less prone to violence, and ultimately better for all.[11]

During that era, the concept of eugenics in America had reached its pinnacle. Forced sterilization programs were commonplace as patients in asylums were sterilized without their consent to prevent a weakening of the gene pool. The explanation of eugenics within American culture of the day was often one of perception towards the 'weak' be they mentally weak, or physically deformed in some aspect. For those identified as 'defective' their lot was one that showed not only connection to an immoral lifestyle (bred from lesser stock, or having defects that were attributed to alcohol or drug abuse, or promiscuous sex), but also made them less likely to have any sort of truly productive role in society. The perception that the Nazis eliminated those of 'life unworthy of living' was actually practiced through some aspect of eugenics format in the US, UK, Canada and France well before the Nazi party advocated it as part of German law.[12]

The situation towards eugenics was further exacerbated in the US by perceptions of race. African-American served as a well spring of racial stereotypes, not to mention 'proof' of genetic degradation, as far as American and European scientists were concerned. Anyone other

than Europeans needed to be led, as was stated in the Kipling poem of the 'White Man's burden'.[13] The concept of an 'ideal' society – with perfect 'Americans' of solid northern European race – was monstrous in its own right, as its premise was grounded in homogeneity, not in any sort of diversity that spurred America forward in terms of creativity, religion, or even ethnic stock over the decades.[14]

Further, it seemed a mere extension of logic to note that within the comic books of the late 1930s and 1940s that the superhero represented the enlightenment of humanity, while the criminal element was in fact an aberration in the genetic line. By purifying the genes of the weaker impulses, society would be much better in the long run. When World War II erupted in Europe, many of the eugenics concepts pushed by fascist regimes came to the forefront. The idea was now that democratic societies which often stressed multiple groups within a societal structure, were in a fight with those pushing for a physically, socially, and racially pure society perpetuated by the autocratic German government.

Finally, as with much of the literature of the era that had monsters and destroyers of monsters with super-human attributes, the idea of genetic manipulation ties into the general idea that America was the land of the best people, ideas, and ultimately, science. Science in the right hands could create individuals who could protect the world from all the bad science or political ideologies, like the concepts perpetuated by the Nazis in Germany. This idea of American exceptualism was, and is still, interesting as it permeates so much of American culture even to this day. An example of this would be the use of the atomic bomb. While much of the world has noted the destructive effects of such a weapon, and has debated whether or not it should have been used, Americans have seen the weapon as necessary to end the war, and thankful that it was in US, not Nazi or Soviet, hands.

The idea that has often prevailed in American culture is the approach to science, in which American scientists often work towards the greater (practical) good of society, while the often better trained European scientists approach science, and in particular life sciences, as a way to play God. They can eliminate disease or create superior creations in theory, and this general attitude towards science makes life a consequence. If European scientists kill people in the process of creating something better, then that is merely a consequence of advancing the field. In reality few scientists approach this manner of scientific research in such a callous way. But when given the natural mutations in literature (Dr. Frankenstein and his monster, Count Dracula) the stereotype is re-enforced, while the reality is that scientists are far more studious and balanced.

2. The Patriotic Superheroes

Some of the comic book superheroes mentioned from the 1930s (the origin of the comic book) were powerful beyond belief. Superman was the apex of this, although his powers became almost omnipotent after World War II. Many superheroes simply showed up and had either brief explanations of how they obtained their power, or better yet, no explanation at all. Most interesting were the characters that enveloped the principles of America, to the point that they were literally clad in the flag. The first was the *Shield*, created by Archie Comics in 1940. The second was *Captain America*, created approximately 8 months after, in the spring of 1941 by Jack Kirby and Joe Simon for Marvel Comics. It is interesting to note that Kirby and Simon were both Jewish, yet their hero was the Aryan stereotype, at least from a physical description.

Captain America, the Shield, and other patriotically themed superheroes represented a triumph of science and morality of the eugenics era. Most were the creation of better living through science, but their moral strength was also of the utmost importance to making them superheroes. The Shield and Captain America both lasted several years, and sold hundreds of thousands of issues each month.

For the character who became The Shield, the road was very much a combination of morality and science. Joe Higgins watched his father, who was a scientist as well as Army Intelligence officer in World War I, work towards enhancing the human body. Following the infamous 'Black Tom' New Jersey sabotage incident, Tom Higgins is mortally injured by saboteurs. On his death bed, young Joe and Tom's friend J. Edgar Hoover, vow to clear Tom's name. Following a meteoric educational career, Joe Higgins stumbles upon the missing part of the formula. By putting chemicals on his body at key points (the Sacrum, Heart, Innervation, Eyes, Lungs and Derma – hence the name SHIELD), and by being bombarded with fluoroscopic rays for twelve hours, Higgins finds himself an impervious superhero.[15] However, he still had to succumb to the will of the American government, for when he petitioned Hoover to join the FBI he agreed to assist them; Hoover replied that Higgins must still take the entrance exam (which he aced). Thus, the Shield was now both an arm of the government, as well as a superior human based on his science and ethical strength. His moral superiority was demonstrated through his sense of right and wrong, as well as his helping protect the weak.[16]

The creation of Captain America is also one of strength through science. After seeing newsreels of Nazi atrocities, Steve Rogers attempts to enlist in the U.S. Army, but is labeled '4F' (physically unfit) for military service. Despite his failure of the physical, his desire to do what is right causes him to persevere, and he is told to go to an address the next day. When he arrives, he is introduced to Dr. Reinstein (later in the 1960s comics, the name is changed to Erskine in a 'back story' of Captain America's origins), who injects Rogers with a 'super-soldier' serum. This serum causes the frail Rogers to instantly bulk up, and heal any wounds with an amazing physiological speed. Unfortunately, Rogers is the only recipient of the serum, as Reinstein is assassinated by a Nazi just after the serum is injected. Thus, Captain America sets off on his quest to defend the moral ideals of America, by stopping evil men, mad scientists – an allusion to the Nazis, and criminals who simply wished to profit from others.[17]

What is notable is not only how these characters are created, but how their enemies look compared to them. Some enemies were drawn in a way that made them the epitome of the Jewish stereotype: large noses, dark brooding eyes, and a sinister appearance in tone. Whether this was conscious or not on the part of the comic book illustrators – many of which were Jewish – is subject to argument.[18] Between the eugenics programs in the U.S. combined with Hitler's obsession with race and purity, many stereotyped features found a place within a visual art such as comic books.[19]

Furthermore, whenever science that created the American superheroes was applied to the Axis powers, the results were quite the opposite. For example, the nemesis of Captain America from that era of WWII was the Red Skull. He was a product of a Nazi super-science program (so it was thought) but later, he was hit by Captain America, and his red skull mask was broken, and he was revealed to be just a war profiteer but not imbued with any super strength.[20] In later episodes of *Captain America*, the Red Skull returned to wreak more havoc upon US soil. However, his scientific endeavours were definitely explained away by making him skilled with scientific means and the money to make gimmicks that would aid his physical skills.

What is also important in these episodes was how science is presented. In *Captain America #4*, 'Horror Hospital', the nefarious Dr Grimm created a monster with only one eye named Gorro that feeds on human blood through transfusions. The story makes the reader aware of the horrors of science, and that some scientists are working for God-like ends of life and death. As with the story formula, the genetic anomaly (inferior as he is a 'bad guy') is defeated by the other genetic anomaly, Captain America.[21]

Other comic book story lines went beyond the realm of the eugenics programs and dealt with 'scientific' procedures such as re-animation of the dead. Again, with the storylines prior to 1943, it was ironic that the Germans should delve into taboo topics, especially with the war

going their way. The best example of this comes from *Captain America #9*, 'The Black Talon'. In this story, a famous artist has his hand crushed in a car accident. A renowned scientist Dr. Steiner talked to the artist then proceeded to parade out an African-American convict who was to die the next day in the electric chair. The convict offered his hand as a humanitarian gesture, which Dr Steiner attached the next day. He offered the artist a warning of sorts: with the 'new blood coursing through your veins' in the first successful operation of its kind, the side effects were unknown. For the artist, it was an urge to kill. Again, the presumption of race and miscegenation causing violence is apparent, and the German origins of the doctor suggest an unethical approach to science.[22]

Finally 'The Case of the Hollow Men' utilized the scientific 'perfection' of the re-animation of the dead for soldiering purposes. In this story, the Lord of Death (as he calls himself) has created a 'di-namo fluid' which will give any person superhuman strength for 24 hours. For this the subjects had to be alive and drained of their blood, only to have it replaced with the fluid. After the 24 hours, they permanently died, but by that time they had served their purpose. The underlining goal of this experiment was intriguing: create super-soldiers to fight, and at the same time rid the town of any homeless people or other undesirables. What was truly amazing in the end of the issue, the Lord of Death (who had been vanquished by Captain America) received a personal call from Hitler directly, asking for progress on the program. That Hitler had such personal attention to all fifth columnists, as well as direct lines of communication to spies operating in the US, was impressive but more of a play on his megalomania rather than any sort of reality.[23] The German scientists (or German paid ones) appear as arrogant, and ultimately bumbling in their programs.

For the Japanese, science was even more sinister. The Yellow Claw (another enemy of Captain America) also used science for evil purposes. His goal was to use genetic manipulation to control people, but this too led to his change in appearance. The Japanese held an attitude of racial superiority in Asia prior to, and during World War II, and so this concept fit in with that of the Nazis.[24] Given the general depiction of Asians in comics of the 1940s, the changes were not substantial, but instead fell back to stereotypes: buck teeth or fangs, coke-bottle glasses, and a willingness to undermine American society. The Japanese also were seen as far more malicious in their warfare, as well as in their medical experiments, given their surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, and their general brutality on the battlefield, prefaced as a form of honour in combat. But the ultimate pursuit of the Roosevelt Administration at the onset of World War II for the United States was that Germany presented a greater strategic risk – due in no small part to their scientific endeavours, either perceived or real – and therefore was the immediate target for destruction. The Japanese were 'other' and therefore were not seen as scientifically advanced, as far as the perception of Americans were concerned.

In the story 'The Vampire Strikes' in *All Winners #2* (1942), the Japanese military was accused of dropping disease germs on China. The enemy of the story, Dr. Togu, used the weapons and 'delved into the realm of pseudo-science and came up with' the secret of the vampire.[25] In a case of life imitating art, the Japanese did in fact conduct weapons testing of germ warfare on Chinese citizens in Manchuria (under the auspices of Unit 731), but this information would not have been known at the time of the writing of the comic book.[26] There was a similar story line in *Destroyer* (another superhero – named Destroyer – who actually fought in Germany) in which Doctor Berg developed a black plague germ project. When told to work on the project or face life in a concentration camp, Dr. Berg noted that his program was designed to kill rats, not people.[27] These threats against the doctor and his family kept him in the clutches of the Nazis.

For the majority of patriotically themed heroes, the origins were either left to mystery, conjecture of the reader, or were explained as a part of occult/supernatural means, as was the

story line for Mister Liberty, who was possessed with powers from spirits of American leaders from the Revolutionary War. While they are interesting to read, the characters did not last very long, as they did not seem to resonate with readers. For those characters that did survive, their 'back-stories' were often changed to reflect a scientific creation. The idea of spawning or improving life in a science lab was a common one. However, as the patriotically themed characters started to sell less and less, the genre was eventually ended. Captain America was first discontinued in the late 1940s, re-introduced briefly in 1954, then disappeared until the early 1960s. The SHIELD went to the wayside as well. While the concept of science and genetic manipulation was common in comics by the 1960s,[28] the connection with patriotism was not always there.

3. Modern Comics and the Continuation of Scientific Alteration

As the comics have continued, so too have the concepts behind them. The idea of genetic manipulation has thrived with superheroes, especially those that represented a national ideal or theme. The concept from the Vietnam era (1960s) forward was that the US could create morality and stability around the world through a strong military. Superheroes in comic books also took that guise, akin to that of the hyper-masculine action heroes in movies as well. To an extent, all these characters became muscle-bound, strong and almost caricature-like in presentation. They also seemed to act in ways that emulate steroid use: they are strong, but side effects could be seen as erratic, and potentially dangerous to either the host body (in this case the country) or to others through aggression. By the 1980s, the idea of renewed patriotism in the Reagan Era in the US, combined with new weapons systems, re-established the idea that scientific endeavours could be combined with righteousness to defeat evil in its forms. While the reality of blood borne diseases were prevalent – this was the height of the AIDS panic in the mid-1980s, there were several comic book plots in which patriotism and science were connected. Here are some examples in the last 25 years:

The *Captain America Annual (Von Strucker Gambit)* utilized further issues of genetic enhancement of HYDRA – A worldwide terrorist group – wants DNA from various superheroes. This neo-Nazi group is run by Baron von Strucker, who was an enemy of Marvel's Nick Fury. Fury's SHIELD (Supreme Headquarters, International Espionage Law-enforcement Division – a fictional variation of the CIA) enlists Captain America to help defeat the intruders. HYDRA wants the DNA from Captain America, for his genetic perfection, and the Punisher for his instinctive fighting skills, not to mention his unpredictability in perhaps turning to the villainous side of the law as a genetic base to create new super-soldiers dedicated to HYDRA. Here again, the idea is creating the perfect terrorist through science. The concept is paradoxical to that of groups like Al-Qaeda, which eschew any Western technology.

In *Reagan's Raiders* (1987), a variation of the Super-soldier serum is developed, but only seems to work on older people. In a true patriotic aspect, the then-President Ronald Reagan, George Schultz (Secretary of State), Casper Weinberger (Secretary of Defense) and George Bush (Vice President) all took the serum. Over the course of the three issues, the serum gives the already powerful men even more strength and agility. In the first episode they proceed to take out a terrorist cell. In the later episodes they rescue the missing POWs from Vietnam.

In the instance of *Reagan's Raiders*, the apex of science, and the moral integrity of the individuals were such that they were allowed to right the social wrongs of the world. The cover of the third (and ultimately last) issue even had a common fantasy of a lot of people in the mid-1980s culture: the rescue of missing soldiers from Vietnam, as well as a return to American superiority that had eroded during the Vietnam War. In fact the cover of the comic was in fact a play on the popular movie *Rambo*. While the comic book series was meant to be tongue in

cheek, it still touched upon the common aspect of patriotically themed superheroes: science combined with a strong moral core could get results and save people from evil.[29]

One comic book that offered readers a more cynical, post-Vietnam conspiracy aspect was Marvel's *What If? #28-#29* (1991). Marvel writers, like many historians, wanted to alter the original story lines of their comics to speculate on how history might have changed if 'known' events that changed, and this series offered a chance to do so. In the issues, Dr Erskine, the original designer of the super soldier serum given to Steve Rogers to become Captain America, survives an assassination attempt. It deprived Steve Rogers of his need for defeating the Nazis, and made him part of a machine. It removed his *raison d'être*. Dr Erskine goes on to create a 500 man army of super-soldiers that win WWII on Christmas Day, 1942. Unfortunately, all but Rogers are killed off when a rogue U-boat sinks the ship. Rogers goes on to win the Cold War, and the Presidency, while creating a society in which those people injected with the serum live a long healthy life. The issue here is that Rogers (as President) determines what people are to receive the serum. Those of lesser skin and deemed unsuitable. The U.S. becomes similar to the Third Reich, as people deemed as undesirable were placed in camps.

This story line continued in *What if #29*, in which the genetically enhanced super-soldiers were used to gather up genetically inferior people, commonly depicted under the Nazi terms of people of colour, and maintain a brutal police state with a veneer of acceptability and perfection. Only after the real Captain America and other various superheroes revolt and defeat the President of the U.S. does the reader find out that President 'Steve Rogers/Captain America' is in fact the diabolical Red Skull. Again, the idea here is that science can merely amplify what is already in ones core of beliefs.

Fighting American was another character that dealt with science, but had a strange twist. In the original version (Marvel, 1954), the Flagg brothers changed and merged into one body through nebulous science, and it caused the body of the older brother, Johnny to heal from war wounds, but at the same time, the moral insight and memory of Nelson Flagg to enter his brother's body. The end result is a super-powered character that has triumphed through science.[30] In the DC version (1996) of *Fighting American*, the character is part of a super-soldier program during the Cold War, but is put into cryogenic suspension, only to be re-awoken after the end of the Cold War (the reason? The government can no longer justify the expense!). He goes on to fight evil characters like Def Izzit, and Gross National Product, homage to the original satirical characters in the first series.

Superpatriot (from Image Comics) and the character Flagg/Patriot (from Marvel's *Supreme Superheroes*) are also the creation of science and bio-genetics or mutations. In the former case, Johnny Armstrong was exposed to Nazi experiments and later is re-built using a regeneration serum, as well as bio-mechanical systems which allow him to fashion weapons out of living tissue. He ends up fighting neo-Nazi Fourth Reich soldiers who were created in the same fashion. Enhanced by cybernetics as well as genetic manipulation, he still had issues of relating to the present when he was more in tune with the events of the 1940s. The idea presented by the creator of the comic, Eric Larson, is one perpetuated by many venues in American society, in that life was less complicated due to technology and moral issues in the past than it is today. Many Americans, especially more conservative ones, long to go back to a time where things are more simple if only from perception.

In the case of Flagg/Patriot from the *Supreme Power* series, a meteor that crashes in Illinois created 100 mutated people who now have some sort of super strength. In the case of the Flagg/Patriot, he becomes a spokesman for US corporations, and the great goals that they can accomplish. The overall concept of the comic book was that private companies, not necessary government agencies would ultimately create more benefits for society. This concept

was in line with the concept that American enterprise and entrepreneurial savvy would defeat government controlled systems like fascism or communism.

While the majority of comic book story lines were developed during a time of discussion of racial purity in American and world history in the 1940s, another modern character needs to be discussed at this point. In 2003, Marvel comics took the mythic story line of Captain America's creation, and gave it a realistic, yet sinister twist. Kyle Baker and Robert Morales created the six part mini-series *Truth: Red White and Black*, which took the story of Cap's creation, and changed it to also reflect the Tuskegee experiments of the 1940s. In this story line, the Super-soldier serum developed by Dr Reinstein was in fact tested on African-American soldiers first. Unfortunately, the results were far more deleterious and fatal for the African-Americans. Throughout the story, only one develops 'properly': Isaiah Bradley who goes into the Schwatzebitte concentration camp in 1942 to destroy an identical project that the Germans are working on. Eventually the 'real' Captain America returns and the story of the Black Captain America is lost to myth and speculation. The story line made deliberate comparisons to the eugenics programs as well as the Tuskegee experiments. It was for this reason that the story had the potential to achieve something greater than it did. The premise of an alternate, racially created Captain America was intriguing, but the sales were disappointing. The illustrations of the characters in the comics, meant to convey an urban style of art, detracted from the story line and sales for the comic book line were tepid at best.

Even in more recent titles, the fear of genetic manipulation remains, and is a remnant of the American cultural landscape of WWII and the Nazi experiments. In *Fighting American* (this time from Awesome Comics) a bio-weapon is created that attacks a person based on their melanin (pigmentation). While the series ended before the final instalment could be written, again, it showed the power of the concept of genetics in comic story lines.

In the DC title *Countdown to Adventure* #2, Superman is converted to what would be Hitler's ideal as applied to comics: A blonde haired, blue eyed, Superman, complete with stylized Swastika in place of his trademark 'S'. Even the other members of the alternate Justice League sported Nazi insignia: The Flash with dual lightning bolts, Wonder Woman with red hair, looking akin to a Wagnerian princess, and Hawkman and Hawkgirl in Nordic roles.[31]

4. Conclusion

So what, if any, conclusions can be drawn from the comics of the 1930s and 1940s as well as the more recent comics with older themes? It is readily apparent that the underlying terms of race directly affected the comic book market, regardless of who was reading them. Stereotypes abounded, and inevitably, the good looking man won the day. What was surprising is that the idea of eugenics was fairly prevalent in the story lines, but in a far more subtle fashion that one would expect. The stories which used aspects of eugenics and the manipulation of the body were often more of amplifying character than heightening physical prowess. The storylines were often written to note that a purity of deed or good constitution was just as important in creating a super-soldier. One had to have internal strength through moral righteousness, not just physical stamina and strength.

The idea of science fact, combined with science fiction and fantasy, was one that made the stories a possible predictor of future events. While the idea of genetic manipulation for enhanced strength is a common theme in the creation stories of many comic book characters, the idea of genetically enhanced *American* characters is also telling of what science could and should do so that the world is kept safe by people who have great strength and great moral fortitude and values. This attitude of morality was part and parcel of the new 'cold war' in which America and her values would guard against the perils of communism. American aims

were to allow folks to choose their own path, so the stories went, and not act like Communists bent on subjugation and conquest.

Given that the greatest and most enduring characters which embodied the eugenics themes lived on through various creations is attestation to the power of the concept, and what would be considered building the perfect superhero, both inside (through moral character) and out. However, it also showed that the concept of the monstrous in regards to science and eugenics could very easily be manipulated to show the character weaknesses that are not on the surface, but in the soul.

Notes

[1] Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, *Captain America #1* (New York: Marvel Comics, 1941), 1.
[2] Josef Goebbels, *Das Schwarze Korps*, 25 April 1940, 8.
[3] John Nachbar and Kevin Lause, *Popular Culture: An Introduction* (Bowling Green OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1992), 139.
[4] Cord Scott, *Comics and Conflict*: *patriotism and propaganda from WWII through Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Annapolis MD: US Naval Institute Press, 2014), 66-69.
[5] James McClellan, III and Harold Dorn, *Science and Technology in World History: An Introduction* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 323.
[6] Webster's dictionary.
[7] McClellan and Dorn, *Science and Technology*, 328.
[8] Joachim Remak*, The Nazi Years: A Documentary History* (Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 9.
[9] Harry Bruinius, *Better for all the World*: *The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 234.
[10] Kuhl, *The Nazi Connection*, 46.
[11] Kerry Soper, 'Classical Bodies versus the Criminal Carnival,' *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s* (Athens OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), 269, 272.
[12] Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell, *Cultural Locations of Disability* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 101, 106.
[13] Rudyard Kipling. *The White Man's Burden*, 1899.
[14] Ibid., 106-108.
[15] Paul Castiglia, ed., *The Shield: America's First Patriotic Comic Book Hero* (Mamaroneck, NY: Archie Comics, 1940, 2002), 71.
[16] Ibid., 73.
[17] Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, *Captain America #1* (New York: Marvel Comics, 1941, 2000), 5-6.
[18] Simcha Weinstein, *Up, up, and oy vey!: How Jewish History, Culture, and Values Shaped the Comic Book Superhero* (Baltimore, MD: Leviathan Press, 2006), 16-17.
[19] Black, *War against the Weak*, 273-274.
[20] Kirby and Simon, *Captain America*, 44.
[21] Ibid., 183.
[22] Ibid., 165-167.
[23] Various, *The Golden Age of Marvel Comics #1* (New York: Marvel Comics, 2000), 35.
[24] John Dower, *War without Mercy* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 33-35.
[25] Various, *All Winners Vol. #2* (New York: Marvel Comics, 2005), 17, 18.
[26] Hal Gold, *Unit 731: Testimony* (Tokyo: Yenbooks, 1996), 3.

[27] Stan Lee and Jack Binder, 'Destroyer,' *All Winners Vol. #1* (New York: Marvel, 1942, 2006), 97.
[28] Two of the most popular characters of this era of the early 1960s were the Incredible Hulk and the Amazing Spiderman, both from Marvel comics. While the genetic manipulation was an integral part of the story line, the overt American theme was not as common. While Captain America was re-introduced in 1964, and his genetic make-up was written into the reintroduction story as how it helped him survive, most superheroes simply died off.
[29] Monroe Arnold and Rich Buckler, *Reagans Raiders #3* (CA: Solson Comics, 1987).
[30] Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, *The Complete Fighting American* (New York: Marvel Comics, 1989), 9.
[31] Justin Grey (writer) and Travis Moore (pencils). 'Forerunner Part Two: The Evolution of the Species,' *Countdown to Adventure #2* (New York: DC Comics), 35.

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Short Stories and Poetry

John Donestre

Sara Rich

Her walk was brisk as the day was too. The days were so short this time of year, with the shortest of them all only a week away.

Her thoughts were preoccupied elsewhere. As Christmas drew near, and Thanksgiving was over, she felt even more the foreigner, separated by an ocean and three languages from the hot hedge-burning fireplace that kept her family's ranch house warm during wind-strewn and ice-ridden winters on the Great Plains.

As she walked, the cobblestones closing and counting the distance between her flat and the brick walls of the library, urine-soaked by decades of seven-a.m. drunks, she heard loneliness stumbling along after her, disguised as yellowed leaves whirling toward the backs of her feet.

New Years Day would mark nine days until five years of being in this country: this country that seemed incessantly devoid of warmth, even in the sweaty heights of summer. Winters made it remote and desolate even though Christmas markets burgeoned with fondue and fresh waffles and Glühwein. This place was packed with people, not a one of them to be bothered with the existence of the next one.

The park was still open, and she decided to cut through it since dusk was ascending rapidly across the eastern sky, chasing out that last dirty bit of sunlight that only served to highlight the dinginess of the village and its unresponsive, defeatist post-war architecture. The park was also the only place on her flatward path where she could choose to walk in grass instead of stone or concrete. Although cold and wet, the grass and the earth it grew out of gave her feet a sense of being warmed and welcomed, grounded knowing that at least grass and mud are the same everywhere, practically.

A man's shape was silhouetted against the light falling from a street lamp, and the silhouette grew bigger as they walked toward each other, toward opposite entrance and exit points of the park. As they came closer together, his silhouette gained shape and colour. He wore beige corduroys and a hip-length navy-blue jacket, but she still noticed that beneath those winter layers was well-formed man. His stride was confident without arrogance, strong without brutality. He had a five-o'clock shadow that made a whisker-frame around a healthy-lipped mouth and made his square jaw and aqualine nose more prominent. His tawny hair was longish and thick, like the mane of some Serengeti lion or a once-thought-extinct ancestor. His eyes were primeval orange-brown and glowed like a hedge-burning fireplace. She found herself smiling.

'Good evening,' he offered first, and she immediately detected a familiar twang in his words. 'I don't reckon you've got the time, do you?' He smiled, lips closed and a little dry.

'Oh, sure.' She pulled back the left sleeve of her jacket and pushed up the rim of her glove. 'It's 4:32.'

'Gonna be dark soon, I guess.'

She smiled again, teeth exposed. ‘Yeah, any minute now.’ He glanced skyward, curiously, and she asked, ‘Sorry to be nosy, but where are you from?’

‘Kansas, born and raised. You?’

‘Me too. I guess international Kansans are a rare breed. Are you studying here?’

‘Yep, sure am. Linguistics. How ‘bout you?’

‘History. Early modern European,’ she clarified. ‘What part of Kansas are you from?’

‘By the sound of it, same as you. Southwestern part, just a little north of the Panhandle.’

‘This is just uncanny!’ She nearly trampled over him like one of those yellowed leaves, eager for familiarity and non-loneliness and a trip, no matter how fleeting, back to the prairie from the other side of the marble-small world. ‘Will you get to go home for Christmas?’

‘Not this year. Too much work to do. So you live around here?’ His tone was friendly, inquisitive, genuine.

‘Yeah, just a little ways beyond the park.’

‘Oh, pardon me. Name’s Donestre. John Donestre.’ He extended a hand, ungloved and warm, and she took it with hers and thought she could feel smooth, clean fingernails and strong work calluses beneath her black faux-leather.

‘I’m Kristin. It's really nice to meet you. Donestre sounds French. Do you have family here?’

‘Nope. The name’s Anglo-Saxon, and I’m here alone.’ As he said it, she had a sudden need to accompany him everywhere, to alleviate his aloneness as he would hers. She felt like this was all happening for a reason, that fate was forming a magnet that drew them together and would refuse them to ever separate again, like they were meant to be together from birth or even conception, and somehow, across thousands of miles and a few decades, they had found each other and the miles and years no longer mattered at all.

‘I don’t suppose you’d want to come over for a cup of coffee? My place is just around the corner, on the other side of the park. I bet we’d have a few things to talk about.’ His invitation fell on greedy, blushing ears.

‘Sure, I’d love to,’ she said, trying in vain to hide her enthusiasm.

He smiled, lips parted this time, also trying in vain to hide his enthusiasm. She shyly looked away before noticing how the street lamp reflected off white, polished teeth that ended in little points like those of carnivores. The incisors tilted back slightly and elevated the canines, which were more feline than not.

At his apartment, he opened the door for her and she entered. The furnishings were sparse and the walls decorated only in age-old paper with a fleur-de-lis print. No photos or paintings, but there was a bookshelf on the opposite wall. She wandered closer just long enough to make out that they were multilingual volumes, some in scripts unrecognizable, the kinds of books belonging to a linguist or a collector.

‘It’s so nice and warm in here,’ she observed while removing her gloves and shoving them into her coat pockets.

‘Yeah, it’s good to be in out of the cold.’ He blew on his hands and rubbed them together, exaggeratedly since they hadn’t really been cold before. ‘Here, I’ll take that,’ he said and hung Kristin’s coat on a hook behind the closed and locked door and placed his own on top of it. ‘Make yourself at home. I usually make it pretty strong, is that all right?’

‘You read my mind. And just black, please, no milk or sugar.’ She sat down on the loveseat, upholstered in floral tapestry with little creatures, foxes and peacocks, intermittently woven between the plants. ‘This couch is fabulous. Is it old?’

He filled a teapot with water and set it on the gas stove and answered, ‘Yeah, it’s pretty old. Well, you’re the historian; I guess you could tell me.’

Kristin laughed modestly. ‘I don’t know that much about antique furniture, but judging by the orange and brown colour scheme, it might be from the 60s.’

‘It’s a lot older’n that. Have a look at the woodwork.’ He dropped three spoonfuls of coffee grounds into the French press.

She examined the intricate scrollwork on the back, arms, and legs. Although it was smooth and delicate, the wood also appeared strong and unchanged – no sticky layers of varnish or splintered rosettes. ‘Is it mahogany?’

‘Straight out of the Belgian Congo. Before it was the Belgian Congo.’

‘When the whole area was privately controlled by King Leopold II.’ With her index finger, she traced the outline of a woven yellow leopard peering down from the branches of a tree. ‘So it’s turn-of-the-century. And in such good condition.’ Since knowing its antiquity, her admiration for the settee was compounded, as if the aged furniture was binding the centuries and continents together. The world was minute and conquerable again. And somehow, by his awareness of this history, she felt even more validated in her attraction to this very familiar stranger. Someone else who appreciated relics; in fact, his whole apartment, and he himself, seemed somewhat anachronistic, folkloric in a modern age. And yet he, the fellow Midwesterner displaced, did not seem out of place in this environment, like she still did but did not want to be.

He joined her on the loveseat and handed her the coffee in an old white porcelain cup, fissured minutely with time and heat-release like dry skin on the back of a winter hand. ‘You know, I still make sun tea in the summers,’ he said modestly, like he was at a confessional.

She smiled collaboratively. ‘Me too. When the opportunity arises between cloud cover.’ Then the words came stumbling out before she could stop them, those yellow-leafed words seeking an immediate remedy to loneliness.

‘I hope this doesn’t sound too weird, but I feel like I know you. Or knew you, before. I went to school in Garden City. Is it possible we knew each other there? It’s just that I feel so – It’s just that you’re so –’ She shook her head slowly and took a deep breath, looking for the right, least-incriminating words.

‘Comfortable? Familiar? That doesn’t sound weird to me at all.’ The warmth in his eyes was reassuring, and the corners of his mouth lifted.

She looked down shyly, sipped the last of her coffee, and set the empty cup on the table, which was an antique leather-bound travel trunk, another relic of transience transformed into a stationery and satisfied subservience.

‘I know we just met, but I hope you’ll stay for dinner.’ He cleared his throat and added quietly, ‘And I don’t want you to leave.’ He set his still-full cup on the trunk next to hers. With his hands free, he reached over and gently touched her light brown hair, straight and short-cropped. ‘You’re so familiar to me,’ he said softly, almost a whisper. His hands enveloped the sides of her face, and she’d never felt so admired or adored. She’d never felt so known.

She looked into his hedge-burning eyes and made no attempt to speak. She could not speak, although they had promised each other conversation. Her tacit response was confirmation enough that she would be staying for dinner, for the night, for ever. He held the back of her head and kissed her and she succumbed to the weight of his lips, the tickling of his whiskers, and the sharpness of his teeth. They made love, and she knew that she would never be alone again, that she would be with him always, their bodies conjoined into a single timeless, spaceless entity.

Afterward, the coffee’s effect came, and she became comatose. He carried her to the bathtub, pressed against his bare chest and cradled in his arms, and placed her in the basin, elevated by four white clawed feet cast in iron.

He started with her belly, ravenous. His face stained sanguine, his beard dripping with her blood and viscera, he gnawed through her midsection with unimaginable hunger. He took no time to lick his lips or wipe them with the back of his hand: her heart was still beating, the entrails still warm, and the blood still rushing.

She had eaten an apple for lunch, and he could taste it, sweet and ripe.

As he lapped up the blood pooling in the half-eaten cavity, her heart stopped beating.

Even with her still-warm bowels completely masticated, he was still famished. Limb by limb, he licked the bones clean before crunching them too between his polished leonine incisors.

When he had finished, he leaned back from the blood-painted bathtub, panting, his own bowels full to bursting. Her head lay in the basin, face drained pale and porcelain, and eyes closed with the peaceful look of someone whose last thoughts had been of knowing what it means to be beloved. With great affection and tenderness, he reached his hands out to her and stroked her hair, so familiar. Carefully, he picked up her head, face cradled in crimson hands, and held it to his heart as though he could make love to her again. He kissed the coldening lips, gently but fully. And as he did so, he began to weep. He pressed her hair and tender, dead face against the side of his neck and embraced it tightly as he cried, wetting the soft brown hair with twin salt-water rivers. His hunger for human companionship was satiated for now. But while he would feel the emptiness and longing again within a few short days, she would never be alone. And for that, he envied her.

Sara Rich writes speculative fiction, authors and illustrates children's books in English and Dutch, has a doctorate in Ancient Near Eastern Studies (Leuven), and works as an underwater archaeologist. Her debut novel, *Ligatures*, was released in 2013.

►▼◄

Their King Dirt Pervert

Bob McNeil

Moloch, the parent,
  Loves filicide
  And it won't conceive remorse.
Moloch, the teacher,
  Chalks impure lessons
  Across young slates.
Moloch, the chaplain,
  Conducts more than notes
  In the boys' choir.
Moloch, the coach,
  Wants touchdowns
  Along preadolescent fields.

Moloch, the puppeteer,
Strings then controls
Marionettes attending school.
Moloch, the kidnapper,
Mails enslaved girls anywhere
Perversion puts up the postage.
Moloch, the singer,
Lets auditory opiates
Procure puerile acolytes.
Moloch, the comic,
Throws Mickey Finn rumors
Under sweet pudding standup jokes.
Moloch, the felon,
Pours honeyed rationale atop what he
Calls sexual boo-boos with babies.
Moloch, the videographer,
Tapes untarnished chicks
For voyeuristic hawks.
Moloch, the actor,
Lauds judicial limitations
In a pedophiliac soliloquy.
Moloch, the cinephile,
Won't hear an epigram revealing
Woody's adopted wretchedness.
Moloch, the reader,
Will never see a verse
Howling Allen's pederastic guilt.
Moloch, the recidivist,
Supports NAMBLA among other
Atrocities in need of either
Depo-Provera or annihilation.

Bob McNeil was influenced by the Imagists and the Negritude Movement. Furthermore, after years of being a professional illustrator, spoken word artist and writer, he still hopes to express and address the needs of the human mosaic.

►▼◄

Infection

April Pitts

How did I give birth to you,
my demonic, paralyzing friend?
Certainly, you don't look like any other
child born to my family.
They all have names like
Diabetes, Cancer, and Lupus.
But you were different.
Unlike your loud, pushy, and obnoxious
cousins, you quietly grew inside me,
emerging only when some clever doctor
discovered your true name,
Multiple Sclerosis, and forced you
to appear on my MRI scan.
'Oh, don't claim it! Don't claim it!'
My mother cried at the
announcement of your birth.
But it was too late.
I knew you were mine when
I saw your sad, unforgiving
eyes staring back at me
in the bathroom mirror.
So like my own.

April Pitts is a writer and teacher from Detroit, Michigan. Her poetry has previously been published in Monsters and the Monstrous and she also has work forthcoming in Bearing Witness: Joyce Carol Oates Studies.

►▼◄

Stone Faced

Lucretia Whitener

He watched her through the window, as he'd done many times before. This time, though, he wasn't *just* going to watch. A predator only stalks its prey for so long; then, the hunt begins.

He'd been planning this hunt for weeks – months, actually. But it had taken awhile to find the perfect prey. He didn't think of women as people, but as victims, as prey, just as he

usually thought of himself only as The Hunter. His name, his job, his other life was only a cover necessary for survival while he fulfilled his true calling. Death was his god, and he was its high priest.

He had always enjoyed killing things, and it was even more fun if he could torture them first. He'd begun with the usual pulling wings off butterflies and smashing bugs, preferably slowly, so they could feel what was happening to them. As he got older, and better at it, he had progressed to birds and any small animals he could catch.

When he was five, he saw the family dog run over by a car in the street. As he stood looking down at the twisted, bloody remains, he felt no sadness. Instead, he was mesmerized as he watched the light fade from its eyes as it crossed the threshold from life to death – and by the spreading pool of blood, running slowly towards him on the road.

*****

Madelynne turned off the TV and DVD player, then grabbed her water bottle as she headed for the shower. She hated going to gyms and exercise classes, much preferring to do her workouts at home alone. Lately, though, she had been feeling a bit uncomfortable. She felt like she was being watched. She knew it was silly, but she couldn't shake the weird vibes. Maybe getting an outdoor camera system would be helpful; it wasn't like she couldn't afford it.

Madelynne had owned this house for almost two years, and she loved it. It was a lovely old house on a lovely old street, with lots of yard space on all four sides. The result was a feeling of splendid isolation in the midst of the city. She could see her neighbours, but couldn't hear them; since all of them had small children, this was often a blessing. It wasn't that she didn't like children, but she liked her peace and quiet more.

*****

He had killed his first human prey at eight years old, when he pushed a smaller classmate into a full drainage ditch just after a storm and watched him drown. The resulting excitement had been so intense he had actually been ill; of course, everyone had assumed he was traumatized by such a terrible accident that he could do nothing to prevent.

After that, he had gone back to animals, but he began developing different methods of capture, torture and death to see how it would be possible to adapt them to humans. He wanted his next human kill to be *much* more than just a death. He wanted it to be… exquisite. And it was.

Each kill was unique, because each hunt was unique. What mattered most was not the prey itself, although that was definitely an important factor, but the methods of capture, of torture, and of death. He had a storage unit where he displayed his trophies; all he had to do was look at each one to remember the whole hunt from start to finish. He visited regularly to refresh the memories.

*****

Madelynne had worked hard to get where she was. Growing up in a family without many resources, she had learned to grab every opportunity by the nose before it had a chance to look the other way, and then hang onto it for all she was worth. This attitude and determination had gotten her through high school and college, where she decided that being an advocate for battered women and children was the ideal career for her. Law school was even tougher than she had expected, but the stubbornness she had acquired as a child got her through that with

flying colours. Now she was an attorney in a small but successful law firm that not only championed women, but was owned and operated by them as well.

*****

He had chosen his prey carefully, as he always did. Each one had to be worthy of his attention, worthy of becoming a trophy he would be proud of. She was physically fit, and appeared to be of above average intelligence. He knew this because he worked in the same building she did, although not for the same employer. She was an attorney, while he was in a much different and less noticeable line of work. While not beautiful, she was arresting and confident, the sort of person you would notice and remember. Exactly the kind of prey that would attract a hunter who blended well into the background and was rarely paid much attention by anyone. The satisfaction of putting women like her in her place reminded him of how he *ought* to be treated.

*****

After her shower, Madelynne went into her bedroom to finish changing. As always, her eyes went to the table by the window as soon as she came through the door. There stood Medusa, mouth set in a snarl, snaky hair flying, bow poised to shoot. She had seen the statue at a street fair, and had fallen in love with it. She had read the Greek myth of Medusa in school, and always felt a sense of kinship with the youngest of three beautiful immortal sisters, who had been changed by a jealous goddess into a hideous mortal monster with snakes for hair, and condemned to turn anyone who looked at her into stone. Madelynne was the youngest and plainest of four sisters, and had been teased about her looks more often than she cared to think about. She tried to make up for it by working out as much as possible, and she had a svelte, athletic body to show for it, but nothing would ever change her face except makeup, which she loathed, or plastic surgery, which she refused to consider. There was nothing actually wrong with her face, she just wasn't beautiful. Her one real beauty was her thick, curly hair, and she took both pride and comfort in the fact that none of her sisters had hair as gorgeous as hers. Medusa's statue was a constant reminder to be strong, no matter how different or strange – or 'less than' – she might seem to others, and to demand justice for those who were denied it through no fault of their own.

*****

He had carefully planned out exactly what he would do to her. A hunting knife, he decided, would be his weapon of choice; nothing to exotic or elaborate for this one. He debated on whether or not to drug her in order to lengthen the torture time, but decided against it. Drugs often dulled the pain and fear too much, and sometimes worked against him by completely knocking them out, unless he'd had a chance to experiment on them a bit first to find their tolerance level. He was sometimes able to do that, thanks to his job, but not in this case. And he wanted her to know and feel everything that was happening to her for as long as possible; she needed to know who held the *real* power.

*****

After changing, Madelynne ate dinner and then read for a bit before going to bed. She had picked up a mythology book at the store the other day, and was thumbing idly through it

when she found the story of Medusa. Reading it again made her smile, and she thought with satisfaction that, in a way, she was an avatar for this goddess who had been so unjustly condemned. Too bad there wasn't a way of letting Medusa know her story had helped so many others. But she wasn't real, so it was a moot point and a silly thought. Madelynne closed the book and went to bed.

*****

It was just before midnight when he silently crept through the backyard, keeping low in case someone in a neighbouring house happened to look out the window. No need to risk going in through the front door when there was a convenient sliding door in the back that was rarely locked. As he hoped, it was open, and he slipped noiselessly through. He stopped a moment, listening in the dark for sounds that would tell him where she was. There was nothing but the ticking of the clock and no lights were on, so he knew she must be in bed. Smiling, he pulled a large knife from his belt and headed for the bedroom door.

In the house that backed Madelynne's, a woman in the kitchen getting a midnight snack saw a shadowy figure slip through the sliding door of the other house. Grabbing the phone, she dialed 911.

*****

Madelynne came awake with a start. Her bedroom door was opening, and a dark figure was coming through it. Her eyes widened in disbelief, and then in terror, knowing there was no place for her to run.

Suddenly there was a glow from the table by the window. In the soft light, she could see the man's face. He looked surprised as the light came on, and turned his head toward it. As Madelynne watched, his expression changed from mild surprise to astonishment, and then to horrified fear. When his face began to turn an odd shade of gray, Madelynne was stunned, not quite able to believe what was happening, but knowing in her heart it was real. Instead of turning to look at the light, she closed her eyes and buried her head under the covers. Softly she whispered, 'Thank you.'

*****

Sirens screaming, two police cars pulled up in front of the house. Two officers rushed the door, guns drawn, and kicked it open, while the other two went around to the back. All four converged on the bedroom, where they saw a motionless figure framed in the doorway.

'Freeze!' shouted one of the officers. 'Drop your weapon!' another yelled. But the man in the doorway never moved. He stood with his back to them, one hand on the open door as though pushing it open. The other hand held a large knife.

'Drop your weapon!' repeated the officer, then he fired at the man's arm. They all jumped in shocked surprise at the loud 'ping' the bullet made as it hit his arm and then ricocheted sideways into the doorway. The man remained motionless, but a small chunk of something fell off his arm onto the floor.

Cautiously, two officers stepped forward and moved to either side of the man, grabbing his arms. But neither arm moved. The two men looked at him, then at each other.

'You guys aren't going to believe this,' one of them said softly. 'He's made of solid stone.'

Lucretia Whitener lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband, son and eight indoor cats. She has always loved spooky stories, and was introduced to Poe and Lovecraft as a teen. She has both a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Anthropology, and her idea of the perfect job is working in a museum, preferably with Egyptian mummies and artifacts. She is also fascinated by funeral archaeology, and spends a lot of time in cemeteries. One of her favorite things to do is host picnics for her friends in various cemeteries. Her other hobbies include reading, writing, gardening, crocheting, needlepoint, and wearing 'interesting' outfits to work.

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Image 1: *Trees at Night at Virginia Commonwealth University*.
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Film Reviews

A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night

Dir. Ana Lily Amirpour, 2014
StudioCanal,
DVD: 96 Minutes

Now that the sparkle from *Twilight* and the rash of paranormal romance adaptions is slowly fading, with its associated hysterics about the death of the undead, vampire films are finally getting interesting again. In 2013 Jim Jarmusche's *Only Lovers Left Alive* the vampire re-associated itself with drug culture and connected once again with an older audience that had survived the 60s/70s – not always with rose-tinted glasses. And 2014 saw *What We Do In The Shadows* by Jemaine Clement and Taika Waititi, knowingly send up the genre and fly-on-the-wall film making whilst keeping a sharp eye on real life foibles and hierarchies. Both films managed to side step the teen-centric focus of the majority of recent vampire films and by exploring some of the more untouched areas of the genre raised interest once again in our, suddenly not so long in the tooth, blood sucking companions. Apart from the slight misstep of *Dracula Untold* (2014) by Gary Shore – though this still might come good if the suspected sequels come out – the run of good fortune appears to be continuing as seen in *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*. Billed as 'The first Iranian vampire Spaghetti Western' it is and it is not, all of that.

The director Ana Lily Amirpour, though of Iranian lineage, was born in England and moved to America with her family while still young, settling in Bakersfield, California. *A Girl* is her first full length film and although set in Iran it was actually filmed in Taft in Kern County in southern California.[1] Not that much of the films audience would be familiar with suburban Iran, but the street scenes particularly seem otherworldly rather than specifically middle eastern. Curiously this corresponds to a similar feeling produced by Count Dracula's castle in Tod Browning's 1931 *Dracula*, where it is supposedly set in Transylvania but contradictory details locate it beyond a particular place rather than in it. Subsequently the director herself notes 'The Iran of the film isn't meant to resemble the 'Iran Iran,' I think of it as a fairytale Iranian town. Like how Gotham is a New York of the mind. It's a comic book kind of Iran.'[2] This relating to New York is interesting and will be returned to later. A sense of unreality is certainly felt strongly when watching movie, with long silences and an often sparse use of sound – again linking it to the dreamlike start of Brownings movie – which when combined with the fact that it is filmed in black and white and spoken entirely in Persian it purposely frames itself as a very different film to mainstream glossy vampire films we have become used to. It is also worth noting its connection to Tomas Alfredson's *Let the Right One In,* and although the films are set in almost antithetical locations, one in snow and one in a desert town, both narratives feature vampires that are drawn from nothingness by the protagonist – which can also include the town itself – and so one is never certain whether we are watching the dream of the human protagonist or our own. Here though, if anything it might be the vampire, or even Iran itself that is dreaming. The story takes place in the fictional location of Bad City which is something of an Iranian ghost town and seems extremely scarcely inhabited. It has the feeling of town, or suburb, that life has passed by and left it the worse for its passing, a little like the fading industrial town of Braddock in Romero's vampire film *Martin* (1977) but also a place that is cut

off from everywhere else where the tide of urban vibrancy has withdrawn and left its detritus abandoned on the sand, and in that sense it gives it a certain spaghetti western feel; a deserted landscape sculpted by the residue of violence which appears to be waiting for something to happen to it, and that something is the vampire with no name. The inhabitants of Bad City that are focused on in the story that are trying to negotiate their lives in between these ruins of industrialization are a young man, Arash, whose father, Hossein, became a drug addict after the death of his wife; Saeed, who is a drug dealer and pimp and to whom Arash owes money for his father's drugs; Atti, a middle aged prostitute that works for Saeed, and who Hossein knows and begs to sleep with him and a nameless street urchin. And of course the vampire known simply as 'the girl.'

The construction of Amirpour's vampire is very interesting, there is no back story, though apparently a graphic novel series explaining this is being considered, and she just seems to appear from nowhere gliding through the night streets of Bad City on her skateboard with her chador flowing out behind her, which, as the director comments, makes her look, 'like Batman, like a stingray, like a creature of the night.'[3] The look is something of a master stroke, and even when not on her skate board she wears hooped black and white tops and black trousers giving her the feel of Audrey Hepburn in Paris, which not only makes this vampire distinctly unique, but lends it a feeling of youth, modernity and freedom which links the 'vampire with no name' to other undead flanuese that roam the night-time streets of cities making them their own.[4] Perhaps the most obvious comparison is to Michael Almereyda's *Nadja* from 1994, which is also filmed in black and white, and whose early scenes show Dracula's Daughter, Nadja, walking through the dark streets of New York with her cape flapping like wings behind her. Whilst the streets are much more populated the sense of the female vampire being separate, or above, all that goes on around her is extremely comparable to *A Girl*. Not too far behind this is Abel Ferrera's *The Addiction*, again in black and white and again set in New York and the vampress Casanova, and the newly turned Kathy, both configure woman that own the night streets of the city. The streets that Amirpour's vampire surveys are largely deserted but like the 'Bat-man' she resembles she seems intent on punishing those that are violent to others. Her first victim is Saeed, the drug dealer, but she also prevents the street urchin from following the examples he sees on the streets of Bad City with the warning, 'I'll be watching you for the rest of your life.'[5] Returning to her dealings with Saeed, she follows him in the street after he had earlier beaten up a Arash who owed him money for drugs he had been procuring for his father. The girl appears in front of the dealer, who naturally assumes a woman out alone is looking for adventure and, even though she never speaks, invites her back to his place. This, as events soon reveal, was not a wise thing to have done, and the girl attacks and kills the dealer.[6] The young man comes to the dealers house the following day to pay him the money he owes, only to find his dead body, and rather conveniently a large amount of drugs as well. The young man has recently lost his job and so the stash of drugs is difficult to ignore, and buoyed be his new source of income, is invited to a costume party by the daughter of his former employer. He decides to go to the party dressed as Count Dracula but whilst there he is persuaded to take some of the drugs himself and gets extremely stoned and wanders out into the streets to try and find his way home. Curious rather than aggressive, the vampire girl follows the boy until they meet in one of the best scenes in the film, with the boy having no idea he is looking death in the face. The girl decides that she likes the boy and takes him home and the rest, as they say, is history.

The film is hugely fascinating and plays on the complex position of Iran in the modern world. Under the weight of US and European sanctions it has an annual rate of inflation of 42% and an unemployment rate of 28%. With the religious ban on alcohol and the close proximity of Afghanistan – one of the largest producers of drugs in the world – Iran has 2 million addicts. In

particular there is a form of homemade crystal meth that is 'favored by many poor disheartened young men and by many middle class women trying to stay thin.'[7] This is the ghost world that the vampire with no name patrols, a world with a helpless addicted father, of a disaffected young man that owes money to a drug dealer, with an aging prostitute that reminds the addict of his wife, and a little boy who is told be a stranger that he better be good or else. This is a world made partly from outdated patriarchal and religious tradition and foreign intervention but which does not prevent the youth of Bad City wanting the lifestyle of America and Europe. The vampire is an outsider to this, not being part of Islamic tradition – at least not in the way that the Christian West configures it – and so the nameless girl is at home and yet a stranger in Bad City, not unlike those that are stuck there. But whilst she represents the oppression of the West, which is killing the traditional life of Iran, she also symbolizes a way out of the dead end town, not least in being a woman that has control over her own life. Autonomy would then seem to be the key to escape; if one owns oneself then one owes nothing to anyone else – which is potentially something of an advert for Western democracy. The vampire with no name, like many of the undead before her, lives through movement and so leaves the town so she can be reborn elsewhere, or like Clint Eastwood's iconic cowboy, move on to save another town from itself.

Notes

[1] It was also co-produced by Elijah Woods production company SpectreVision
[2] Daniel Schindel, 'Ana Lily Amirpour Creates a Fairytale Iranian Town in *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*,' *Los Angeles Magazine,* 21 November 2014, viewed 9 September 2015, http://www.lamag.com/culturefiles/vampire-western-noir-romance-set-iran-filmed-near-bakersfield/#sthash.7dP85kxY.dpuf
[3] Ibid.
[4] See Stacey Abbott, 'New York and the Vampire Flaneuse,' *Celluloid Vampires: Life after Death in the Modern World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 141-162.
[5] *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*.
[6] This is not an unusual device for films featuring female vampires where sexually aggressive men have the tables turned on them and are attacked by their would be victim, one of the recent examples of this is 'Amateur Night' by David Bruckner which is a section within the compilation film V/H/S from 2012. Here a group of boys pick up a young girl to take her back to a hotel room for sex, only to find out she is a vampire.
[7] Anon, 'The Other Religion: Why So Many Young Iranians are Hooked on Gard Drugs,' *The Economist*, 17 August 2013, viewed 9 September 2015, http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21583717-why-so-many-young-iranians-are-hooked-hard-drugs-other-religion.

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Starry Eyes

Dir. Kevin Kolsch, Dennis Widmyer, 2014
Snowfort Pictures, Parallactic Pictures and Dark Sky Films
DVD: 98 Minutes

Sarah (Alex Essoe) is an aspiring actress who moonlights as a waitress at a fast food restaurant called Big Taters. Her employer Carl (Pat Healy) is displeased with her because she doesn't prioritise work ('real life') over audition calls ('dreams'). Even her friends are unsupportive, either unconcerned or downright bitchy about it, like Erin (Fabienne Therese), who never misses a chance to be insolent.

On a whim, Sarah applies for a main part with Astraeus Pictures, a production company that specialises in horror movies. Although her audition doesn't go well, the casting director (Maria Olsen) calls her back in after witnessing her breakdown in the ladies' room, during which she pulls out strands of her hair. She asks her to repeat her episode of self-harm before the auditioning panel. Reluctantly, Sarah acquiesces.

She leaves the audition feeling foolish and confused. However, a few days later she receives a call from Astraeus Pictures, informing her that the producer of the film would like to meet her. She is overjoyed at the news and, believing that she got the part, quits her job at Big Taters.

The film focuses on bodily transformation as an initiation passage into a literal 'cult of celebrity'. Sarah seems to find her confidence and identity in submission to the gaze, gaining legitimisation/validation through the dominating and scrutinising gaze; in the final re-birth, she is given a new life by a group of 'spectators'.

The male cinematic gaze and the anxieties it provokes are established in the opening credits where Sarah's privacy is invaded by a cruel and humiliating gaze. We see her meticulously poring over her 'flawed' physique, checking for shortcomings that only her

unforgiving eye – perhaps channelling and intensifying the dominant gaze – brings to the fore. Nothing is permitted to remain concealed. This is underscored by her employer's remark - 'Where is she even hiding that thing?' - as he stares at her backside, trying to figure out where she's keeping her mobile phone beneath clothes that tightly hug the skin. The audition for The Silver Scream, the film that she believes will pave her way to stardom, requires Sarah to go 'beyond' acting. She is expected to lay bare her inner self, to strip away her veneer of self-control along with her self-consciousness (and literally clawing out her hair), as the onlookers remain impassive and an invisible camera records the ordeal.

The second audition is an ironic gateway to self-actualisation, where Sarah is offered liberation after being forced to strip naked under a hypnotic spotlight and told to 'lose' herself in front of a camera that she didn't know was there. She seems certain of what she wants, but her aspirations must be stripped back to their driving ambition: in the words of Astraeus's producer (Louis Dezseran), 'something primal... the blackest of human desires'. However this liberation is achieved through awkwardness and vulnerability rather than increased control or empowerment. In letting go of her inhibitions in order to be 'herself', she is required to perform further roles, yielding to the gatekeepers' power to make demands which override her will.

The film offers a kind of forensic look at a woman falling apart without the comforts of clinical distance. The shots of Sarah taking herself apart in front of the bathroom mirror are a physical disintegration of a self that has become an abject Other, in order to be more 'perfectly' reintegrated. They echo Seth Brundle's (Jeff Goldblum) metamorphosis in David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986). However, whereas Seth kept his own discarded body parts in jars, a morbid, possibly nostalgic and regretful reminder of a previous self, Sarah does no such thing. Her gaze is penetrating and relentless and does not permit distancing of any kind. Rather, it seems to aim for the intimacy and the immediacy of a screen turned into a 'scream', wrenched from the inside(s). In fact, Tracy's (Amanda Fuller) murder becomes a silent scream.

Sarah's dissolution is however captioned with a promise of renewal. Once the putrefacient process commences, she is confident that she will emerge triumphant like a phoenix out of the ashes, because she is not 'a million other girls'. These other girls, unlike her, are destined for a lifetime of silly ditties at Big Taters or, in the case of her friends, forever stuck in a mire of unfulfilled ambitions. Their deep transformation will never take place as is graphically demonstrated by the manner of their demise (at Sarah's hand): a knife to the face (Erin), head bludgeoned by a dumb bell (Ashley – Natalie Castillo) and a chewed tongue (Tracy). All three of them had 'work done' on their faces but none transcended their tedious mundane self.

The relentless focus on bodily transformation in *Starry Eyes* is reminiscent of Clive Barker's fascination with 'monstrous' transformations (1997), which owes something to Cronenberg. It is interwoven with a critique of Hollywood, and in some ways may be closer to the kind of transformation into an automaton found in *The Stepford Wives* (Bryan Forbes, 1975). Thus, rather than the fleshly manifestations of the 'silver screen' in Barker's *Son of Celluloid* (1985), the flesh in Starry Eyes is replaced with spectacle. Sarah is increasingly overcome by a sense of entitlement, convinced of her difference from her surrounding group of friends. Yet, while Barker's monstrous tends to celebrate difference, Sarah's perceived rejection by her peers leads her to seek inclusion and assimilation into something else, an exclusive and privileged inner circle whose gaze (or spectatorship) literally endows her with a new life.

The satirical critique of the movie industry is the only entry-point for a lighter, more humorous, touch. The 'be yourself' mantra, foregrounded in the Astraeus audition call, is formulated along the lines of the American acting Method: So you're an actor. You can become other people. But can you be yourself? Can you put your inner being on the screen? Then come try out for Celeste, a young up and coming actor in our Tinsel Town terror tale: The Silver

Scream.' This seems to demand authenticity, literal embodiment of a role, or of malleable flesh that can be moulded into a role. However what we witness is more of an evisceration rather than a visceral change, as evidenced by Sarah's ultimate transformation into a mannequin-like automaton devoid of humanity. The emphasis is on stardom, the shallower, more glamorous aspect of the acting profession and its glittering promise. Hence the numerous references to the stars: the title of the film, Celeste (the role she auditions for), Astraeus (an astrological ancient Greek deity), the wall of old Hollywood pin-ups in Sarah's room. The paradox of performance wrapped in a guise of authenticity.

'Tater Gators' presents a different view of authenticity – one rooted in the humdrum. Sarah's employer rests upon an assurance of stable identity, claiming of his brand and its tacky novelty strategy: 'It's all me.' However, the Tater manager fails to realise that he is as much a victim of objectification as Sarah is. Sarah sees him as a means to an end, and therefore doesn't value the effort and sense of self he invests in his business, which is the same thing he does to her.

Overall Starry Eyes doesn't offer a developed critique of celebrity culture, or make it a consistent target. Sarah's initiation relegates her to participant in a group that is presented as an alternative to the uninspired and shallow mainstream system but ultimately they help her achieve just that, a sparkling, hollow veneer of stardom. This makes for an ambivalent tone. The viewer's gaze is more focused on Sarah's transformation as a threshold experience, rather than on the world she is entering and the sinister cold figures that inhabit it. Sarah's own aspirations, agency, and desires are inextricably bound up with the Other's desire, and her re-birth into a reintegrated identity doesn't cast light on the other side of the process.

Starry Eyes is more successful as a bona fide horror film, one that foregrounds female characters and madness. It shies away from clichéd scare tactics, opting instead to go for a more visceral, at times brutal, experience, the kind that gets under your skin and leaves you reeling.

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