PRIMARY SOURCES ON MONSTERS

DEMONSTRARE Volume 2

Edited by
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INTRODUCTION: A MARVEL OF MONSTERS

ASA SIMON MITTMAN and MARCUS HENSEL

Under the Werewolf’s Skin

Gerald of Wales, a priest and writer active in Britain around 1200 CE, tells a curious tale of “some astonishing things that happened in our times.”¹ He has heard the story of another priest travelling through Ireland with only a boy as his companion. They are sitting around a campfire, beneath a tree, when a wolf approaches them. Naturally, they are afraid, but the wolf then speaks to them with a human voice, telling them to have no fear. The wolf even “added sensible words about God” to further reassure him.² The priest is, nonetheless, astonished and afraid: he and his young assistant are alone in the woods with a supernatural creature, a wolf that speaks like a man. The wolf then tells the priest his story:

We are of the kin of the people of Ossory. Thus, every seven years, by the curse of a certain saint, Abbot Natalis, two people, male and female, both in this form, are exiled from the boundaries of other people. Stripping off the form of the human completely, they put on a wolfsish form. At the end of the space of seven years, if they survive, they return to their former country and nature, and two others are chosen in their place, in the same condition.³

Many werewolf narratives imply that the monstrosity is a curse, but the source of this curse is rarely spelled out in such detail. This cursed werewolf then explains that he and his wife are this cursed pair, and that she, trapped in the shape of a wolf, is dying and needs a priest to attend to her last rites. “The priest follows trembling,” but is hesitant to pro-

vide a mass and absolution for a talking wolf.⁴ Then, as Gerald tells us, “to cleanse any doubt, his foot performing as a hand, [the male wolf] pulled back the entire skin of the [female] wolf from the head to the navel and folded it back; and the clear form of an old woman appeared [...]. He immediately rolled the skin of the wolf back on, and joined it together in its prior form.”⁵ The priest then agrees—“compelled more by terror than reason,”⁶ though Gerald does not specify the precise cause of this fear—to perform the last rites for her. As Caroline Walker Bynum asks in her book on Gerald and medieval ideas about transformation, “Did the priest improperly give the Eucharist,” that is, In Catholicism, the miraculously transformed body and blood of Jesus, “to a wolf or properly comfort a dying if deformed ‘human’?”⁷

What do we take from this? There are many lessons embedded in this strange tale, but for our purposes here, the key one is this: inside every monster lurks a human being. Hence, werewolves “retain in (or under) wolshiness the rapaciousness or courtesy of human selves.”⁸ Peel back the fur, the scales, the spikes, the slime, and beneath the monstrous hide, there we are, always and inevitably. This is because all monsters are human creations. They exist because we create or define them as such.⁹ We therefore owe them our care and

² Gerald of Cambrensis, Opera, 101: “verba de Deo sana subhunxit.”
³ Gerald of Cambrensis, Opera, 102: “De quodam hominum genere sumus Osiriaensium. Unde, quolibi septennio, per imprecationem sancti cujusdam, Natalis scilicet abbatis, duo, videlicet mas et femina, tam a formis quam finibus exulare cognuntur: Formam enim humanam prorsus exuentes, induunt lupinam. Completo vero septennii spatio, si forte superstites fuerint, alias duobus ipsisordi loco similii conditioe subrogatis, ad pristinam redunt tam patrion quam naturam.”
⁴ Gerald of Cambrensis, Opera, 102: “presbyter sequitur tremebundus.”
⁵ Gerald of Cambrensis, Opera, 102–03: “Et ut omnen abstergeret dubietatem, sede quasi pro manu jungsens, peltem totam a capitelo retrahens, usque ad umbilicum replicavit: et statim expressa forma vetuelae cujusdam apparuit [...]. Et statin pellicis, a lupo retracta, priori se formae coaptavit.”
⁶ Gerald of Cambrensis, Opera, 103: “terrore tamen magis quam ratione compulsus.”
⁸ Bynum, 32.
attention. We must not follow the model of Doctor Frankenstein, who gives life to a creature he then rejects with disgust. The Monster implores the doctor—and we would be wise to heed this admonition:

> All men hate the wretched; how then must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things! Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. You purpose to kill me. How dare you sport thus with life? Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind.¹⁰

Monsters do perform important work for us as individuals and communities, policing our boundaries, defining our norms and mores through their inversions and transgressions. Through their bodies, words, and deeds, monsters show us ourselves.

This is not a new insight. In the early fifth century, Saint Augustine, an Early Christian bishop of the North African city of Hippo, uses a series of Latin puns to characterize the nature of monsters. He says they take their name, monstra from monstare (to show) in order demonstrare (to demonstrate) something that we can learn from.¹¹ While we might draw different conclusions about what lessons they teach, we agree with Augustine that we have much to learn from monsters. They are, as Julia Kristeva says in a related context, “the primers of my culture.”¹² By gathering a great variety of primary sources in this volume, we hope to give the monsters their due, to do our duty towards them, to look carefully and thoughtfully at them, and, ultimately, to see them and understand what they strive to demonstrate for us.

On the Shoulders of Giants

When Isaac Newton famously noted that he stood “on the shoulders of giants,” what he meant was that he did not have to invent all his ideas out of nothing. Indeed, Newton borrowed this clever line used to describe how he relied on the work of others from an earlier author; perhaps the twelfth-century bishop of Chartres, France, John of Salisbury, who cites Bernard of Chartres as his source; this is how scholarship works, with long chains of authors building on—and hopefully crediting!—one another’s work. In John’s (or Bernard’s) version, there are two monstrous figures, with he and his contemporaries as “dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants.”¹³ In this short phrase, these various authors both humble themselves and denigrate “dwarfs,” also elevating those they respect by comparing them to “giants.”

In assembling this collection, we are working to celebrate monster stories and the monsters they unleash or attempt to contain—each of which perches atop the previous creation, building the canon. We have organized the larger work into two volumes: Classic Readings on Monster Theory and Primary Sources on Monsters. The first volume is a contribution to the field of “monster theory” and the second to “monster studies.” These terms have each been in use for about twenty years, but it is really only in the last five or so that they have gained much traction. “Monster Theory” is a term that was coined by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen for his 1996 collection of essays, Monster Theory: Reading Culture, and we use it here to refer to academic sources that provide methods for considering monsters, approaches to them, ways of seeing how monsters and the monstrous function in various contexts.

Conceiving of our work as “monster theory” or “monster studies” involves adopting a fairly recent critical lens, and most of the material specifically and sustainably dealing with monsters has been written after 1980. Indeed, one might argue that monster theory in its present form would not be possible without the advent of postmodern theory: the roots of monster theory, like the closely allied fields of postcolonial and queer theory, lie in the post-structuralism of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard. A full explanation of post-structuralism lies far beyond the scope of this chapter, but suffice it to say that this new way of thinking questioned the universality of Enlightenment ideals—the notion that the world can be understood through careful, scientific examination and rational thought, and that doing so would lead to the betterment of society—and rejected traditional centres of cultures and philosophies. The upshot of this decentering was significant: Marcel Duchamp’s Fountain (1917)—a urinal placed on a pedestal—now had just as much claim to “art” as did Leonardo da Vinci’s fresco, The Last Supper (1495–1498).

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¹⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Frankenstein, Or The Modern Prometheus, in this volume, 179.
¹¹ Augustine, City of God, in volume 2 of this collection.
¹² Julia Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection,” in volume 1 of this collection.
and marginal groups from colonized subjects to queer cultures to monsters became vital foci for study.

Because the marginal was just that until the mid-1960s, texts that deal specifically with monsters are sparse prior. J.R.R. Tolkien’s 1936 essay “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics” is really the opening salvo in monster theory, with the eminent medievalist and author arguing that monsters were not something to be embarrassed about. Mikhail Bakhtin’s Rabelais and His World (1947/1965) departs from the norm by consistently interpreting monsters in a positive way. By placing them in the “carnivalesque” setting in which the official culture is rejected and parodied, he reads monsters as comic, gay figures—objects of laughter, which defeats fear.

1968 brought a sea change in Western thought. After the student protests in Poland and France, and the growth of Civil Rights and antiwar movements in the United States, scholars began to look at literature (and therefore monsters) differently. John Block Friedman’s The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought, published in 1983, is heir to that shift. Tracing the depiction of monstrous peoples from ancient Greece and into the early modern period, Friedman undertakes a sustained cultural examination of monsters, identifying key markers of identity used to other monsters. Over the course of the following decade, this approach, in which scholars analyze how monsters are constructed as inferior beings due to differences in these markers, became the dominant approach in monster theory. In his 1990 Philosophy of Horror, Noël Carroll adopts a broader scope, defining the monster in affective terms based on the emotional responses to it by characters in narratives and audiences reading them. He is particularly interested in disgust, based in the monster’s categorical impurity, and fear, brought about by danger to the individual or community.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s introduction to Monster Theory: Reading Culture provided a list of seven theses on monsters, the purpose of which was to create a basis for using monsters to interpret and understand the cultures that produced them.

16 Noël Carroll, The Philosophy of Horror (New York: Routledge, 1990), and see selection in volume 1 of this collection.
17 Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” and see selection in volume 1 of this collection.

Though there are only seven, they cover an astonishing range: some explore the monster’s body and its shattering of classification systems, and some speak to the cultural impact of a monster’s very existence, but all shape the monster theory that comes after.

Cohen’s essay is something of a manifesto and marks a break in the narrative arc of monster theory, because he neither seeks the meaning of a specific monster, nor uses monsters as a cog in a larger theory: bending Augustine’s claim that monsters exist to teach, Cohen argues only that monsters mean. The essay, however, still relies on the work of earlier scholars. Most of his theses rely on previous thinkers: for example, the ideas in Thesis III are discussed by Foucault, Friedman, and Carroll. In that sense, Cohen stands, like Newton, on the shoulders of giants. However, he uses these earlier ideas to discover and communicate something completely new in monster theory—an articulation of heretofore unspoken, disparate ideas into a cohesive theory.

It is at this point that one loses the thread, so to speak. Either because the works are so recent that we cannot fully judge their impact on monster theory or because there are too many of them to maintain a coherent history, like the monster itself, the shape and direction of the field fragments, blurs, and is difficult to define.

Unlike “monster theory,” “monster studies” is a more recent term, and, like all fields characterized as “studies,” it is used to describe content rather than approaches to that content. We have attempted to assemble here a collection of monsters. There is no widely recognized collective noun to describe a group of monsters, but we have borrowed for the title to this introduction Siobhan Carroll’s suggestion: a marvel of monsters. This term captures the potentially positive role of monsters that—evil or sublime—captive us.

Classic Readings on Monster Theory

The first volume of this project is intended to introduce students to the most important and influential modern theorists of the monstrous. It is our hope that this selection of readings will provide a range of interpretive tools and strategies for students to use to grapple with monsters.

Primary Sources on Monsters

This volume is intended to introduce students to some of the most influential and indicative monster narratives from the West. These texts contain numerous intersections, with many deliberately building upon the foundations laid by others.
Together, they form a reasonably coherent set of materials, thereby allowing us to witness the consistent, multi-millen- nium strategies the West has articulated, weaponized, and deployed to exclude, disempower, and dehumanize a range of groups and individuals within and without its porous boundaries. The readings in volume 2 are all primary sources, which means that they are all either original, creative works or accounts written at or near the time of the events they narrate. Many of the sources we have included are works of fiction—short stories, selections from novels, and the like. Others are religious, scientific, or historical texts. Some sit at the boundaries between these genres.

We begin with what is not only the earliest monster text, but what is also among the earliest texts of any kind, and the oldest surviving substantial work of literature in any lan- guage: The Epic of Gilgamesh, written in Sumerian around 2000 BCE. The final two works in the volume—Slender Man and the SCP (Special Containment Procedures) Foundation Wiki—were produced more than 4000 years later, and are artefacts of our own current digital age. In between, we meet Biblical giants, dangerous creations of Greek gods, the strangely popular Wonders of the East, werewolves, conjoined hybrid beings, ghosts, ghouls, goblins, trolls, vampires, and aliens. Monsters have been important elements of visual and textual works for the entirety of human history, and show no signs of diminishing in importance. In some periods, they are primarily generated for entertainment, whereas in oth- ers they are taken as scientific and medical facts, and in yet others are the frequent subject of religious speculation. In all cases, though, they are central to how people view themselves and their roles in the world.

We chose to include images as well as texts, unusual in a source reader like this, because many monsters are highly visual, known primarily through their appearance, and because the process of rendering things as visual that are only loosely described in a text, if described at all, raises fascinating questions. The images should not be viewed as “mere” illustrations to be glanced at, or judged based on how closely they mirror the content of the texts they accompany. Instead, they should be treated as their own “texts,” given the same level of care and consideration as the verbal texts in this collection. We have therefore provided introductions for the images in similar form to the introductions that accompany the texts, placing each in its context and providing viewing questions. Cross-references to other works in this collection are noted with **underlined, bold** text.

**Destroy All Monsters: An Urgency**

Deep within a large crowd, a young white man in a plain white t-shirt, with a blue bandana around his neck and a white particle mask askew on top of his head, holds a homemade sign on a pole.18 It reads in red ink, darkened here and there with black, “DESTROY ALL MONSTERS.” Above this slogan is the raised fist of Black Lives Matter; drawn in a range of colours and radiating bright orange lines. This photograph was taken on August 12, 2017 (the day before we drafted this essay) at the Unite the Right rally, which brought together neo-Nazis, white nationalists, white supremacists, the Ku Klux Klan, and other hate groups in Charlottesville, Virginia. This was purportedly the largest white supremacist rally in the United States in decades, though firm figures on attendance are difficult to obtain.

Monsters have been around as long as humans, since they define us by stalking our borders and mirroring our traits. Indeed, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen has argued, in a sense humans cannot have existed prior to the monsters that define us:

Perhaps it is time to ask the question that always arises when the monster is discussed seriously... Do monsters really exist?

Surely they must, for if they do not, how could we?19

There are moments, though, when monsters seem particularly potent, prevalent, even necessary. By some measures, the world has never been more peaceful, and human life never more safe and secure.20 And yet, this is not the experience most of us have. The news each day makes it seem that the world is on fire, that we are living in the most dangerous of times. This is statistically untrue, vastly so; various prehistoric burial sites indicate that 20%, 30%, even 60% of deaths were due to interpersonal violence.21 But since the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which

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19 Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 20.
INTRODUCTION: A MARVEL OF MONSTERS

killed perhaps 200,000 people in a matter of moments and gave birth to Godzilla and the rest of the kaijū; we have lived with a different level of existential threat.

And now, as we write this introduction, the United States is in a state of tumult, a convulsion, a paroxysm, as white supremacist groups march through our streets bearing torches and shouting Nazi-era slogans of hate (“Blood and soil!” “Jews will not replace us!”). The young man with the “DESTROY ALL MONSTERS” sign was one of the counter-protesters, one of the marchers who came to challenge and defy the torch-bearing mob. In hipster fashion, he seems to have taken his slogan from Ishirō Honda’s somewhat obscure eighth sequel to Godzilla, released in 1968, in which the monsters from previous kaijū films (Godzilla, Rodan, Mothra, and others) attack cities through the world under the command of scientists who are, in turn, under mind control by hostile aliens. This slogan, then, is a fitting response to the sense that American cities are being attacked as if by an outside force, yet this is not an alien invasion. These marchers are American citizens, and, despite the foreign origins of many of the symbols they carry, they are part of a long-standing American history of hate groups, and—whether individuals wish it or not—are a part of the identities of and systems that benefit all white Americans.

The trouble with the counter-protester’s slogan is that, of course, we can never destroy all monsters. Anyone familiar with monster narratives, from Gilgamesh to Godzilla, knows that there is always a sequel, always a Return Of, a Bride Of, a Son Of,... Always a Godzilla Raids Again (directed by Motoyoshi Oda, 1955). Surely, it has generally seemed that the Nazis were thoroughly and absolutely defeated, yet the Unite the Right marchers wore and waved swastikas, gave the Nazi salute, shouted “hell” this and “hell” that. A poisonous ideology that seemed long dead shambled back to life. Of course, monster movies have long literalized this fear in a seemingly endless series of Nazi zombie movies including, among many others, Shock Waves (1977), Zombie Lake (1981), Oasis of the Zombies (1982), Dead Snow (2009), Angry Nazi Zombies (2012), Outpost: Black Sun (2012), Nazis at the Center of the Earth (2012), Frankensteins Army (2013), and Dead Snow 2: Red vs. Dead (2014).

The fascist marchers in Charlottesville and those who sympathize with them are participating in one of the oldest of human impulses, to define themselves through the exclusion of others, to puff themselves up by attempting to stomp others down, to raise their sense of self-worth through the insult of, denunciation of, and outright assault on and murder of other individuals and groups. This pernicious role is one of the central functions that monsters serve across time. Monsters are fun—tremendous, city-smashing, fire-breathing, shape-shifting, boundary-pushing messy, sexy, crazy fun. But if, in these narratives and images, you only see the fun, you are missing a great deal of the importance of monsters and the power we grant them to shape our societies. As Augustine tells us, these monsters demonstrate so much we can learn from; as Cohen argues, they bear substantial meaning.

We cannot destroy all monsters, much as we might sometimes wish to. We are all one another’s monsters. This is because monsters are relative to the culture that produces them. In medieval Christian art and literature, demons are often dark-skinned; in medieval Islamic art and literature, demons are often white-skinned. Nazis, as we have just seen, have become revenants (sometimes literally, at least on film) and crept back out of the darkness. But seventy-odd years ago, the German Nazi propaganda newspaper Der Stürmer published grotesquely caricatured images of Jews literally consuming “good” Germans. This noxious imagery is still alive and kicking, and was on display in Charlottesville at the Unite the Right rally. Your monster may be our friend; our friend may be your monster. This does not mean that all

24 He might, though, have based it on the 1970s–1980s proto-punk band from Detroit of the same name.
such moves are morally, ethically, practically, or rhetorically interchangeable, however.

Reading the texts in this collection carefully should reveal problematic processes you see all around you. These processes may cause you harm, or you may be unintentionally perpetuating them and the harms they cause others. The ideology of the hate groups that the sign-holding counter-protester came out to defy might be summed up by the very same slogan he brandished, though they would consider others to be the "monsters": Jewish, Black, Hispanic, LGBTQIA, and differently abled people—and any others who do not fit their violently restrictive notions of human “purity.” Assertions of monstrosity are not merely insults, but are fundamental denials of the humanity of human beings. Darren Wilson, the police officer who shot and killed Michael Brown, sparking the massive protests in Ferguson, Missouri, dehumanized his victim, saying during grand jury proceedings, “it looks like a demon.”

Of course, we have no doubt that we are on the right side of history. This is immaterial. If we give in to the impulse to destroy one another, we fall into the divisive trap that hate groups lay. To be clear, there is no equivalency whatsoever between those who declare that certain people have no right to live freely and peacefully—or to live at all—because of their race or religion or nationality or sexuality or gender identity, or any other basic element of their human identity, and those who declare that they, that we, that all people do have these fundamental and inalienable rights. Nevertheless, hate groups tap into something (monstrously) human: all the bombs and blood of the Allied Nations could never have destroyed the Nazis because their strategy of power through demonization was already a revenant, shambling through Columbus’s governorship of Hispaniola, the Massacre at Wounded Knee, and the Kiev Pogrom of 1905. Nazism was certain to outlive Nazis as a fetid, festering, rotting corpse of an ideology. But as with Gerald’s sympathetic werewolves, beneath the skin of the entirely unsympathetic Nazi zombies are yet more humans. Whatever we think about the ethics of people on opposing sides of conflicts, whether some might claim that there were “fine people” on both sides, the point is that there are people on both sides, and we are always and inevitably the real monsters of history.

In James Cameron’s 1986 science-fiction/horror film Aliens, a group of marines, a corporate agent, and their guide Ripley—Sigourney Weaver in her most iconic role—find a young girl nicknamed Newt living in the ruins of a planetary terraforming colony decimated by the film franchise’s eponymous monsters. Newt is understandably traumatized and catatonic, but eventually speaks. In a dandy’s parody scene, Ripley tucks Newt in to bed, and the young child says, "My mommy always said there were no monsters—no real ones, but there are.” Ripley, serving in the place of her mother, responds as no parents ever do: “Yes, there are, aren’t there?” The next scene, though, shows us who those real monsters are, when the corporate agent attempts to impregnate Newt with the alien’s offspring so as to smuggle it back to earth as a superweapon. As Jeffrey Weinstock argues, “the ostensible monster in Alien and its various sequels is obviously the nightmareish double-mouthed extraterrestrial designed by H. R. Giger. Just as monstrous and more insidious, however, is the corporation,” embodied in its agent, “Carter Burke (Paul Reiser at his most smarmy), a human… The Alien films thus essentially have two monsters—the alien itself and the bigger monster, the monstrous corporation, that just as clearly feeds on the lives of the human characters.” Even in a film with a monster as relentlessly terrifying as the Xenomorph—with its razor-sharp fangs, claws, eyeless “lace,” seemingly exposed vertebrae, acid for blood, and use of humans as living incubators for its deadly offspring—it is the humans who are the worst monsters.

Some of the “monsters” we have assembled in this volume are horrors, nightmare creations of unadulterated malice; others may prove more sympathetic than the humans they encounter, since it is not, in the end, horns or fangs or claws that make a being monstrous, but the purpose to which a being puts whatever tools and weapons it has. Ishirō Honda’s Destroy All Monsters—spoiler alert!—has an ironic twist: it is the good old monsters, led by Godzilla, who in the end save humanity. They are scorned, feared, and attacked by the world’s powers, but want only to return to their peaceful island of Monsterland. The world needs its monsters, and its monster stories. This is the impetus for our collection. Whether the monsters are deadly enemies or unlikely saviors, their stories are essential to our understanding of the world, and our place within it.