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I have stood knee deep in mud and bone and filled my lungs with mustard gas. I have seen two brothers fall. I have lain with holy wars and copulated with the autumnal fallout. I have dug trenches for the refugees; I have murdered dissidents where the ground never thaws and starved the masses into faith. A child's shadow burnt into the brickwork. A house of skulls in the jungle. The innocent, the innocent, Mandus, trod and bled and gassed and starved and beaten and murdered and enslaved. This is your coming century! They will eat them, Mandus, they will make pigs of you all and they will bury their snouts into your ribs and they will eat your hearts!

— (*Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs*)

Resumo

Representações de masculinidades e monstruosidades na ficção moderna de horror nos Estados Unidos sugerem uma interação constante e recíproca entre homem e monstro. Seja ao estabelecer oposição ou ao uni-los em uma só entidade a ser erradicada, o horror moderno estadunidense revela feridas de masculinidade que se tornam tão expostas quanto os monstros que simbolizam o mal mais intangível. A ficção *pulp* de horror do início do século XX retrata homens como figuras protetoras que travam batalhas contra ameaças a identidades modernas de cunho nacional, racional e sexual. Apesar disso, nota-se agora que são heróis falidos cuja perspectiva reducionista alimenta os próprios monstros dos quais juram nos proteger. Já no meio do século, as ansiedades expressas através de histórias de apocalipse e de casas mal-assombradas já antecipam o tom que caracteriza o horror estadunidense após a década de 1970, quando leitores são advertidos das ameaças oriundas da própria pátria. Os lares dos Estados Unidos, bem como seus restaurantes, escolas, corporações, cidadezinhas, ou até mesmo seus carros e hotéis de beira de estrada—eles se tornam residências para aberrações ou transformam-se nos próprios monstros, ganhando a função de signos para manifestações de males políticos. Monstros emergem das mesmas instituições que nutrem um sonho americano já arruinado, muitas das quais, por sua vez, são nutridas por formas tradicionais de masculinidade. Já na virada para o século XXI, novas políticas de gênero fomentam retratos de masculinidades não tradicionais como não monstruosas. Vários desses projetos, contudo, replicam padrões em reafirmação de políticas do século anterior. Cem anos de literatura de horror traçam um caminho em que heróis viris mas xenófobos dão lugar a homens capazes de olhar para casa e reconhecer as imperfeições brotando em solo americano. Todavia, parece não haver consciência ou autorreferência capazes de estancar as feridas da masculinidade, feridas cuja natureza, também típica aos monstros, é sangrar em alerta.

Palavras-chave: masculinidade, monstruosidade, ficção de horror estadunidense.

Abstract

The representation of masculinity and monstrosity in modern horror fiction in the United States suggests constant and reciprocal interaction between man and monster. Either by establishing an opposition or by conjoining both in one entity to be eradicated, modern American horror opens wounds of masculinity that become as exposed as the monsters that symbolize humanity's unspeakable evils. Horror pulp fiction from the beginning of the twentieth century depicts men as protectors waging war against monsters who threaten national, rational, and sexual modern identities. Nevertheless, we may now read those male characters as failed heroes whose reductive perspectives nourish the very monsters they pledge to defeat. While the anxieties expressed through mid-century horror also lay emphasis on the trespassing monsters from foreign lands, apocalyptic tales and haunted house stories already set the tone that characterizes American horror after the 1970s, when readers are warned that the threat comes from within. American homes, diners, schools, corporations, small towns, or even cars and roadside motels—they become residences for freaks or even turn out to be monstrosities themselves, functioning as signs for political manifestations of evil. Monsters emerge from the same institutions that nurture the failed American dream, many of which, in turn, are sustained by forms of traditional masculinity. In the turn into the twenty-first century, new politics of gender spark the depiction of non-traditional masculinities as non-monstrous. Many such attempts, however, replicate patterns of monstrous masculinities in a restatement of early-twentieth-century politics. One hundred years of horror literature trace a path in which virile and xenophobic heroes give room to those able to look inward and face the more familiar abnormalities growing on American soil. No amount of self-referentiality or awareness, however, seems able to close a wound of masculinity whose nature, like a monster's, is to bleed in order to warn.

Keywords: masculinity, monstrosity, American fiction.

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Introduction

The shapes of monstrosity are erratic and its contours imprecise. From the oldest accounts in human history to horror films announced this semester, monsters remain marked by deviation and exclusion, often unkindly so. Freaks are relegated to the margins, marking exclusionary politics of otherness in which diversity has no place among whoever is considered normal. Also marked by instability and imprecision is the concept of masculinity, which, in contrast to the monster, tends to indicate what some consider proper and standard. Why, then, would we look at these two concepts side-by-side? Could it be that man and monster are occasionally not so different as we believe?

The divisions between men and monsters are not always so clear. The appalling physicality of classic freaks may be a pleasant assurance that otherness is always identifiable, as it is shown in flesh, but otherness comes in various configurations. Psychological, moral, and social monstrosities can be as frightening as corporeal difference, even if they are more easily disguisable. Some monsters, perhaps, live closer to us than we care to admit.

In its basic inquiries and assumptions, this dissertation expands on my MA thesis, as it develops my analysis of masculinity as portrayed in Stephen King's fiction to encompass twentieth-century horror as a whole. It seemed, during the two years of my MA studies, that King was not alone in portraying masculinity as an unsolvable problem—that is, as an open wound. To what extent, though, is this insolubility constituent of the conflicts within horror fiction?

> Is the representation of masculinity as an open wound a specific flaw of King's fiction, or is it a larger issue? Is it a correlate of popular fiction, who some view as an overly simplistic form of literature? Or does it have a relationship with horror literature, which King characterizes as conservative? (Santos 117)

Rhetorically, we may even ask if the rare positive depictions of masculinity carry any meaningful value. They probably do insofar as the idea of having "value" has any importance in cultural studies, but the question reminds us that, while horror fiction "reaffirm[s] the virtues of the norm" (King, *Danse Macabre* 442-43), it does so by contrast, as its direct subject is not positive images, but the bleak, the repugnant, and the abject.

Conceiving masculinity in favorable terms is a difficult exercise, in both an individual and a cultural level. Individually, for instance, some women seem more afraid of male-perpetrated sexual assault than of death.[1] Culturally, the image of manhood seems equally tainted. As we will discuss later, "[p]atriarchy proves an almost insurmountable stumbling-block for critics aiming to provide an affirmative reading of masculinity" (Rowland et al. 6). As the popular saying and title of Flannery O'Connor's short story alerts us, indeed, a good man is hard to find.

The argument behind these considerations is neither that all men are monsters nor that the truly monstrous is always masculine, but rather that, in literature, both masculinity and monstrosity may contain each other to a degree that shapes relevant patterns behind textual productions. And how were these patterns developed throughout the twentieth century? How has the representation of monstrosity and masculinities shifted over the last one hundred years? And what does this shift indicate in relation to monstrosity and masculinity as angles we use to define and negotiate with the other? Answering these and other questions, this dissertation focuses on changes in the representation of masculinity and monstrosity in horror fiction written, published, or marketed in the United States after World War I. The choice of working with American horror literature is a natural repercussion of my MA and undergraduate research on Stephen King, and the same applies to the topic of masculinities, as it also guided both my undergraduate monograph and my MA thesis.

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[1] See Gordon, Madriz, and Lane.

The most immediately recognizable form of divergence in the monster is its body, since physical aspects may function as a visual and instantaneous indication of an inadmissible combination of categories. In the third of his seven theses about monstrosity, Jeffrey Cohen reminds us that the monster evades standard categorization (6). Examples range from the bodies of griffins, which mix features of a bird and a mammal, to zombies and vampires, who abound with both life and death. Such hybridity does not seem natural and requires us to reevaluate our premises regarding categorical distinctions and presupposed boundaries. For this reason, monsters can also be metaphors for social difference, carrying in their unorthodox bodies a reminder of their otherness.

Masculinity, like monstrosity, is marked by unstable shapes and imprecise contours, but for different reasons. While the distressing vagueness of the monster is in its disrespect for categories, the vagueness in masculinity is in the concept itself. At first glance, mapping masculinity seems an undemanding task, since the cultural associations are plenty: virility, strength, endurance, hard work, courage. When one considers, however, how these compose only one traditional way of being a man, the concept of "masculinity" itself almost collapses.

How do we approach the topic, then, after we start to account for its plurality? John Beynon remarks, as an introduction to the subject, that expressions of maleness, like gender, vary historically, geographically, and culturally (1). Recognizing this is the first step for anyone developing a study of masculinity. "[W]hen we link masculinity to culture," he writes, "it immediately becomes evident that in terms of enactment masculinity is a diverse, mobile, even unstable construction" (2). R. W. Connell, too, defends that the masculine and the feminine "prove remarkably elusive and difficult to define," and "that the underlying reason [for that] is the character of gender itself, historically changing and politically fraught" (3). This hints at numerous ways of being a man and indicates the mutable nature that male characters may have in literature as fictional representatives of countless masculinities, which are hardly ever consistent.

Since masculinity and monstrosity may compose or influence identity politics, it should not be surprising that twentieth-century literary theory and cultural studies mark the acknowledgment of variations in both men and monsters. Traditional positions regarding monstrosity assign an inherent otherness to abominations and freaks, focusing on their defects and portraying the monster as a being separated from humanity by insufficiencies. Recent models, however, demonstrate that inferiority, perfection, or adequacy are but products of perspective.

The most basic assumption about monsters, which comes from classical treatises, myths, and ancient stories, is that they are physically impure and evil. Marking the classical perspective, Aristotle associates monstrosity to that which "has in a way departed from the type" (book 4, ch. 3) and is "a kind of deficiency" (book 4, ch. 3). This reaffirms the notion of monsters as marginal beings, since deformities or physical categorical breaks (e.g., bestial features in humans) are justification for ostracism in both diegetic and extradiegetic contexts. Monsters belong elsewhere, and, once they are expelled to their nests and lairs, to their marginal places, society is safe again.

The negative consequence of this perspective is that, since difference can be made monstrous via political discourse, human beings can be dehumanized and monstrified. Banishing Grendel from Heorot or ensuring the Big Bad Wolf remains in the dark forest, then, seems frighteningly similar to apartheid or the Jim Crow laws. As we will see in the following chapters, however, works of fiction like Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love*, and Guillermo del Toro's *The Shape of Water* exemplify how otherness and monstrosity can undergo a process of reversion of perspective.

Monsters have expository and scape-goat functions. In their classical form, they directly expose the evil they embody and, in their death, help purge such evil from our world. They may also expose the evil inside us, which refuses to be easily removed. These monsters, as individuals, may be slain, but evil tends to endure.

Ideas and discourses about masculinity have also been used, historically, as a tool for seg-regation, and, more recently, began to revert toward an inclusive approach. The British Empire, for example, helped guarantee its sustainability with notions constructed around "proper" masculinity. J. A. Mangan remarks, in his preface to *'Manufactured' Masculinity*, that "[f]rom approximately 1850 imperial masculinity was methodically 'manufactured' by means of a cultural 'conveyor belt' set up eventually throughout the empire with varying degrees of efficiency and with variable responses" (preface). Beynon comments that Mangan, along with Philip Mason and James Walvin, describes this form of masculinity in terms of athleticism, sexual purity, courage, authority, and stoicism. He adds, "Imperial masculinity was a product of time, place, power and class, along with firmly held and unquestioned conceptions of racial and national superiority" (28). Since then, feminism, masculinity studies, and gender studies in general have brought light to alternative forms of masculinity, as now terms such as "traditional masculinity" imply the recognition of multiple ways of being a man. A diachronic perspective reveals, though, that the very concept of "masculinity" has once dominated what we now recognize as traditional discourse and has made it the yardstick of politics of otherness.

Manhood, along with nationality, ethnicity, and class, instituted more than the English gentleman: they characterized *us* to justify the process of creating *them*. It is the positive for the negative image of monstrosity, a measure of purity we use to tune our machines when they make our monsters. Perhaps these parameters are not as overt as they once have been, since we tend to recognize the plethora of meanings behind being masculine and respect the "monstrosity" of others, but there is little indication they will ever cease to exist.

The representation of monsters in U.S. literature, then, establishes patterns in tandem with the representations of masculinity, even if they typically comprise opposite images. This is an ideal invitation for a diachronic and encyclopedic study. Much of the patterns addressed in this dissertation, in fact, may echo in other literary tendencies. The blood-curdling werewolf may be a close

relative of the crime fiction serial killer—and their literary links might be the likes of Hannibal Lecter. Likewise, the topic of masculinity is accessible in works of fiction from Ernest Hemingway to Dan Brown, even if some portrayals seem more insightful than others. Narratives from science-fiction, horror cinema, and non-American literature, too, constantly intersect horror fiction from the U.S.A., reminding us that, as literature is not created from nothing, literary patterns have roots that split up, grow, and die.

As these roots may be seamlessly connected to each other and the trunk of literature, this thesis deals with no massive shift that turned American horror on its head, but, instead, proposes a comprehensive approach to follow a chronology of horror. We will find several noteworthy marks within literary records, constituting patterns that, though not confined to an age, character-ize the moods and concerns of particular moments. The first mark: classical monster hunters using their "heroic" proclivities to protect traditional nationality, rationality, and sexuality. The second: the apparent domestic bliss of mid-century America concealing monsters with the potential to devastate ideals of family and masculinity from within the walls that protect them. The third: a haunted country where belief in institutions is at its lowest, and masculinities, in a process of trans-formation, struggle to pick up the pieces of their fragmented values. The fourth mark: horror literature attempting to recapture and redefine their own icons after the turn into the new millen-nium.

Establishing a succinct thematic thread for an encyclopedic work seems equally contradic-tory and necessary. Contradictory because, as we reduce our focus to increasingly specific themes, less and less texts fit under our scope, which results in a less comprehensive analysis. This is nec-essary because, while the ideal objective consists of addressing tendencies using numerous works of fiction as evidence, "numerous" should not be confused with "limitless." In *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King observes that, in a comprehensive work about horror culture, "[i]f one were to begin with Grendel and Grendel's mum and work up from there, even the Reader's Digest Condensed

Book version would encompass four volumes" (9). The following chapters, then, find their balance not only on objective factors (e.g., the number of works cited for each pattern) but also on subjective choices (e.g., some sections invite for deep, long analysis of two or three narratives, while others function better by having as evidence five or ten briefly summarized stories).

Finding a *statement* to guide the entire dissertation was even more intimidating. For four years I have been asking myself "What is it that I am trying to prove (or at least indicate)?" A substantial part of the work was written before I could find an answer that was well-structured and honest enough to be suitable. The tentative answers became statements for each chapter and signs on the road toward a unifying proposition.

I want to indicate that masculinity and monstrosity are frequently indissociable in horror fiction. That has been a decent contender for an overall statement; nevertheless, the sentence's generalized focus and amplitude proved more introductory than all-encompassing. It also lacks a solid purpose or final touch. Masculinity and monstrosity go together in narratives of horror… And? ("So what?," my advisor would often ask me, goading me into more robust arguments.) This proposition became, then, the foundation for chapter one, which presents the definitions of our main terms and then establishes a "baseline" of monstrosity by discussing its relation to alterity before the turn into the twentieth century.

I want to make evident how some forms of masculinity are established in processes of disenfranchisement and forced erasure. More specifically, I want to indicate how masculinity, often defined by contrasts, is constructed in post-WWI American horror fiction in opposition to monstrified forms of nationality, rationality, and sexuality. Masculinity may be perceived as the norm, with other parallels "lacking" something. Chapter two suggests that, as men accept roles of protectors or defenders, traditional forms of masculinity are actually *dependent* on "second-class" citizens to be formed and defined. How can our brave men be monster hunters if there are no monsters to kill?

I want to show the complex interplay of power behind monstrosity and masculinity, which may be marked by patriarchal privilege and, behind appearances, hang by a thin thread. Chapter three focuses on the masculinity of unemotional men during mid-century times of perceived domestic bliss but hidden political and male anxiety. To their neighbors and the general public, American homes were bastions of capitalism and testaments of the American dream. Within their walls, a different reality indicated that mid-century homes, like nuclear shelters, were signs of a frightened U.S. retreating into its own domestic shells while the collective eyes of America gazed inward at the skeletons in their own closets.

I want to make evident the distinctive Americanness of some monstrous places, objects, and their interactions with masculinities. Chapter four shows that, by the end of the century, American monsters had reached adult age and were ready to leave their homes. Free to explore the geographies of the United States, monsters showed their faces in the most typical American places and appeared as icons of Americanness, from high-schools and small towns to cars and handguns.

And I want to give a sense of how wounds of masculinity appear incurable even after significant attempts at healing. Chapter five centers on twenty-first century horror narratives that refer to previous patterns and tropes, either as a contemporary consolidation or remodeling of twentieth century monstrosities and masculinities, or as a crisis in representation. This last chapter hints at possible developments of the modern monster in post-2000 fiction and is supposed to parallel the pre-WWI horror narratives of chapter one as a suggestion of patterns that future researchers may identify when looking at our current years.

The product, I expect, is more than the sums of its parts. By mixing encyclopedic work with deep dives into the particulars of monster stories and male characters, I offer a panoramic view of twentieth-century American horror fiction that, I hope, is wide enough to capture its most iconic freaks and sufficiently thorough so we can appreciate them in all their shades of gray. But beware: here there be men.

Chapter 1: The Gates of Difference

"Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?" — *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley, ch. XV)

Introduction: Millennia of Otherness

Monsters are necessary. From classical myths to postmodernist novels, they expose inconsistencies and symbolize evil, a concept that would otherwise be even harder to confront and bitter to taste. Such a vast cultural element comes in many shapes: animalistic beings, humorous parodies of traditional monsters, villains who lack sound moral, savage bloodsuckers, beings who rise above human cognition, and men and women with double faces living double lives. As Jeffrey Cohen postulates, "The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference" (7). Monsters are born from the vision of "them" as utterly foreign to "us," thereby sustaining our fears by projecting them onto the Other. For this reason, our first step, before meeting the monstrosities and masculinities of twentieth-century American literature, is to become familiar with their foreign or local predecessors, to whatever was made different and then banished to beyond the gates.

After defining "monster" and "masculinity," I will examine several characteristic patterns of monstrosity from various ages. *Gulliver's Travels*, for instance, exemplifies the relative and social and geographical nature of monsters. Then, closer to the twentieth century, we notice, through *The King in Yellow*, how, in early cosmic horror, monstrosity was also foreign to the human mind. "The Great God Pan" narrows down the "human mind" to the "male mind," suggesting a gendered quality to monstrosity in representations of female strangeness. Moving back to an earlier past, we see how *Beowulf* makes us more familiar with honorable executioners and, later on, how *Frankenstein* acquaints us with troubled creators. Closer to our times and in tune with the categorical

oddities of monstrosity, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* indicates that strangeness and famili-

arity may coexist violently within ourselves.

Monstrosity is often equated to impurity and otherness; monsters stand for whatever dif-

ference must be kept at bay. Difference, however, is a matter of perspective and presentation.

While the traditional Other lives beyond borders, we may also talk of an otherness not of customs

and lands, but of mentalities, ideologies, and genders. Even before the turn of the century, mon-

sters already lurked closer to what we consider normal and the norm: ourselves. We have long

been mirrored in those we despise most intensely, and they have been closer to us than we would

be comfortable to admit. The monsters we make, indifferent to our permission, open the gates of

difference.

What Is a Monster?

Modern American horror has roots in narratives that portray monstrosity with remarkable

moral and bodily complexity and contradiction. While horror pulp fiction and its numerous stere-

otypes set up the scene for a form of horror literature that can be read in the light of Modernism

and modernity, the complex monsters of pre-modern classics such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* are

also a cornerstone of the modern patterns. Such patterns, in turn, help consolidate those classics.

Amid this versatile literary background, how can we bring forth any sensible definition of "mon-

ster"?

In approaching monstrosity, we ought to recognize it evades totality, categorical pigeon-

holing, and absolutes. Allen Weiss indicates that "[m]onsters are variously characterized by acci-

dent, indetermination, formlessness; by material incompleteness, categorical ambiguity, ontologi-

cal instability" (124). Jeffrey Cohen comes to aid when he states that the monster "refuses easy

categorization" and does not "participate in the classificatory 'order of things'" (6). "A true mon-

ster," Weiss adds, "will be remembered for the shock it produces, breaking all chains of

association" (124). Monsters, then, exist as products of our struggles to conceptualize and approach evil face to face.

The monster functions as a sign of an evil to be eradicated—it is a danger to people's physical well-being, representing moral blemishes and deviations in human behavior. As Julio Jeha explains, "Monsters provide us with a negative image of the world, revealing categorical splits. In this way, they function as metaphors, those figures of speech that indicate a similarity between dissimilar things, usually gathering elements from different cognitive domains" (21-22). Being a representation of "something other than itself" (Cohen 4), that is, a sign, the monster arrives to symbolize the tortuous breaking of limits and definitions that guard us against our anxieties. For instance, werewolves, being both human and beast, embody the uncomfortable notion that people are neither reason nor instinct, but a knotty combination. The human/wolf monster commits evil acts of murder and cannibalism, but it is truly evil in its semiosis.

Nonetheless, because of the elusiveness of the concept of evil[2] and the vastness of modern American horror literature, we must apply our skepticism to an apparent fundamental propriety of monstrosity and ask, "Are monsters *always* evil?" No, not if we understand evil actions to require moral agency. As I point out elsewhere, "[s]ome monsters … are in an ambiguous position in relation to their agency, as they are simultaneously human and animalistic (e.g., mindless zombies, bloodthirsty werewolves)" (49). What separates some folkloric monsters, such as the jackalope or the chupacabra, from real taxonomized beings is merely that the first group originates from human imagination and the second from natural selection. There is no relation to morality.

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[2] Jeha reminds us that several "philosophers speak of [evil] as an enigma, an impenetrable mystery" (10). Richard Kearney observes, "[o]ne of the oldest conundrums of human thought is *unde malum*? Where does evil come from?" (83).

This approach to evil may center on actions and the morality of the agent, absolving amoral entities and non-entities alike. While literary theorists and philosophers may disagree in the specifics, we can generalize that action-based conceptualizations of evil postulate that evil beings are those that commit immoral actions with enough *intensity* or with enough *frequency*. For instance, John Kekes stipulates limitations for the concept, based on "the combination of three components: the malevolent motivation of evildoers; the serious, excessive harm caused by their actions; and the lack of morally acceptable excuse for the actions" (2). Evil is the willful immorality of "gratuitous excesses" (2). Laurence Mordekhai Thomas, in his book on the evils of American slavery and the Holocaust, follows similar delimitations. An evil action involves "magnitude of harm" (75), is carried out "willfully," and under reasonable responsibility. While some perspectives require evil to "have motives or effects that are not possessed to any degree by ordinary wrongs" (Russell 659), others understand "that evil is not qualitatively distinct from ordinary wrongdoing." Humanity is naturally evil for some (Kekes), while others (Thomas) chose not to appeal to that view. At any rate, I may try to simplify an action-based conceptualization of evil to my purposes and presuppose that a) being evil requires performing evil actions knowingly, and b) only entities with a moral agency can perform morally evaluable actions.

The connection between monstrosity and evil becomes a possibility, then, not a requirement. While Dracula, for example, is notably malicious, as he imposes his extremely immoral will on other people, enslaving and murdering them, the vampire Henry Sturges in *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, who fights against slave-owners and vampires alongside the fictional version of the American president, does not fit so nicely under the same label. Yet, both seem monstrous, since, being undead, they carry an air of utter foreignness—both to our social customs and our notions of what should or should not exist. Henry Sturges and Dracula are *dreadful*: they evoke apprehension, fear, disgust, and, sometimes, awe. Monsters *symbolize* evil; they do not necessarily act evil.

Moreover, monstrosity may not require evil intention from the monster, but, instead, a *narrative* consequence. When Noël Carroll is developing a delimitation of the horror genre based on a feeling it tries to evoke, he states, "Members of the horror genre will be identified as narratives and/or images (in the case of fine art, film, etc.) predicated on raising the affect of horror in audiences" (15). A part of horror, then, is its production of a particular reaction of fear, unease, or disgust. By linking monsters to humans but leaving some questions regarding their agency, filmmakers and writers may produce an effect of fear related to our understanding of certain actions as simultaneously ferocious and morally conscious. Take a zombie feasting on a fresh human corpse, for instance. Were the zombie a mindless animal, this would be natural predatory behavior. Were the zombie a living human being, we would question his or her moral or sanity. The zombie (living but dead, human but feral) is a mixture of incompatible categories that horrifies viewers and readers. As a being of absolute difference, the monster is made to remind us of deep-seated revulsion.

These monsters exist as scientific anomalies: conventional approaches based on reason fail to explain their attributes. In what world, after all, can the dead live? A part of Carroll's definition of "monster" identifies it as "any being not believed to exist now according to contemporary science" (27) and that is "regarded as threatening and impure" (28). His formalization aptly summarizes the nature of traditional monstrosity: aliens, ghosts, changelings, hybrids, cryptids, and even deities fall under this definition. The specificity of Carroll's definition works under a necessary rigor to the exploration of monstrosities, but, as it is so categorical, it requires adaptation to detect less traditional monsters and not to monstrify other categories. Using only these parameters as a guideline for the selection of texts, for instance, would limit this dissertation and exclude narratives that subvert concepts linked to monstrosity. I will, therefore, deviate from Carroll's definition in part and encompass a body of work based on several forms of monstrosity, an idea to which we will return soon.

Some of the allegedly dreadful beings we will encounter may baffle both diegetic and extradiegetic scientific approaches, but, when seen from up close, they may reveal not the sickness of monstrosity, but the compassion of humanity. Likewise, not all monsters escape scientific understanding. For instance, the man-fish in *The Shape of Water*, to which we will return in our final chapter, seems loving and empathetic, while its hunter, an army officer, feels such a strong need to overpower others that it reads like a sick fetish. The dreadful[3] aspect of the monster may reside not in its constitution, but in its acts.

Physical ugliness or deformity, in this case, are less ontological and more political. Dreadfulness is not a required property for monstrosity, but a traditional code assigned to otherness. Carroll recurs to the example of how Dracula, in John Badham's 1979 movie adaptation, is both monstrous and handsome. "[M]onstrosity and impurity," he sums up, "may be more than skin-deep" (41). It is Victor Frankenstein, for instance, who surfaces as the appalling monster of his story—not his gruesome creature. Through such lens, monstrosity retains its power as a concept and loses its prejudicial overtones, while monster theories veer toward a moral-based conceptualization, exposing dehumanizing discourses.

These are moral monsters: their transgressions exceed the immorality of simply bad people and fall into the category of evil. Their corrupt character, ideology, and rhetoric lead their actions to violate the most sacred and fundamental human boundaries. While Carroll recognizes the intricacies of analyzing monstrosity through moral terms, he brushes the category off too quickly, which, when combined with other choices in his conceptualization, may not affect his monster theory to a severe degree, but which would mean significant harm to us here. He writes,

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[3] Although Carroll uses the word "dread" to refer to anxiety, awe, foreboding, and unease expressed by genres other than horror (42), in our case it is a term for the disgust and repulsion that, in his theory, characterizes the monstrous figures of horror narratives.

> A monster can be a being who is extremely cruel and/or evil. … However, I think that for
> our purposes we can regard this particular use of "monster" as a form of moral condemnation which is basically metaphorical. For there are lots of monsters who are good guys:
> E.T., Ariel, and The Swamp Thing in the DC comic book serial. (41)

While we agree on the possibility of good monsters, dismissing the monster of morality as "basically metaphorical" appears dangerously circular: immoral monsters are impure only as a metaphor for the impurity of the traditional monster (i.e., outside the natural order as governed by science), while the traditional monster is itself a metaphor for evil or immorality.

Carroll's dismissal comes to narrow down his concept of "horror," but we find the moral monster even in the center of narratives that belong almost indisputably in the horror genre. Besides Victor Frankenstein, several infamous characters give length to the roll of moral monstrosity: his colleagues in the practice of resurrection, such as Lovecraft's Herbert West and Stephen King's Louis Creed, from *Pet Sematary*; serial killers in the manner of Jigsaw or Hannibal Lecter; as well as several renditions of Lucifer, as in Andrew Neiderman's *Devil's Advocate*, or his followers, as in Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby*.

Surprisingly, while failing in the ethical account, several of these moral monsters display a sufficient amount of humanity. Kevin Lomax in *Devil's Advocate* and Guy Woodhouse in *Rosemary's Baby* close deals with Satan and his worshipers motivated by a human vice—greed. Even if exaggerated as a stereotypical obsession of traditional masculinity, their fear of professional failure (as both acquire success through bargains with satanic forces) remains relatable as a natural preoccupation of adult life. They often reveal even a capacity for empathy, be it in Guy's initial willingness to adapt to consider his wife's preferences or in Kevin being described by the statement, "There was nothing he wouldn't do for [his wife]" (ch. 2).

In King's *Pet Sematary*, Louis Creed, who resurrects his son despite knowledge of previous resurrections gone awry, even displays an excessive mode of emotional bonding. The core of

King's novel is a question of compassion: we may hold Louis Creed in contempt for his inability to properly grieve and for his choice of resurrecting his son into a twisted version of himself, but, under the same situation, facing similar loss and guilt, and knowing that a dead child was a few hours' work away from returning, would we not contemplate taking the same path? To ignore warnings and knowingly bring a half-dead monster to life is a moral transgression. To wish a loved one to return is an everyday human inclination. While the ethics of these moral monsters distinguish them from the implied reader,[4] their emotional makeup inspires partial identification rather than repulsion.

Just as horror literature has monsters unfit for scientific explanation and short of ethical competence, it displays monsters whose *emotions* cause estrangement. When returning to *The Shape of Water* in my last chapter, I will show how the narrator guides us to understand the world not through strict reason or ethical grounds, but through emotions and empathy. The half-man, half-fish creature is a freak of science with questionable capacity for moral accountability. However, he returns the protagonist's affection. At the same time, the real monster, the handsome and traditional army officer, with his proper wife and kids, only displays ill will and disgust for his peers. Rather than signaling humanity through our *homo sapiens* body or our morally sound choices, the movie and its novelization warn that whoever fails at empathy risks a steadfast and blind walk toward monstrosity.

These are monsters of emotional indifference: they are not included in the accepted discourses involving emotion, as they display inhuman feelings or unfit emotional states in either quantity or quality. These monsters appear as cold-blooded madmen; in some depictions of

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[4] "The term 'Implied reader,' coined by [Wayne C.] Booth [in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*] … designates the image of the recipient that the author had while writing or, more accurately, the author's image of the recipient that is fixed and objectified in the text by specific indexical signs" (Schmid).

religious entities like Satan; in cruel folkloric creatures, such as the vampires of *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*; in the heartless slave owner in the pulp horror story "'What a Man Sows—'"; in the sadistic clown cult in "Afraid of Clowns" one of R. L. Stine's stories for children; or in the Cenobites from Clive Barker's *The Hellbound Heart/Hellraiser*. Still elaborating on Carroll's science-based definition, we recognize that, while traditional monsters do not conform to scientific approaches and moral monsters break ethical boundaries, this third kind falls outside the human understanding of the world through emotions.

Art materializes evil in a monstrous triad of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. This ternary definition exposes one of the complications in the ontology of evil, that is, the shortcomings of approaching the topic through a single definition. How can we work with an *action*-based definition of evil when monsters of *pathos* are distinguished through *emotions*? While on this topic, we may even question the capacity of action-based definitions to account for monsters of *logos*. What actions, if any, characterize a being whose *existence* defies scientific clarification? Even if action-based definitions of evil explain monsters of *ethos*, and even if, as we have noted, monsters are not necessarily evil, the definition seems insufficient for the other two-thirds of the triad. These questions will reappear in several other forms throughout the following chapters, and here it suffices to predict we will require more than one approach to evil. Several perspectives may even be used simultaneously, as the three categories of monstrosity overlap.

Similar problems of conceptualization surface when we seek a definition of "horror story." We could rely on what Carroll describes as the emotion that horror art evokes in its characters and audience, that is, *horror*. Carroll expands on this feeling generated by horror not only as fear but also as disgust, repulsion, as the abjection we sense when contemplating the utterly unnatural. Moreover, as Cohen notes in his sixth thesis, this repulsion is accompanied by a desire for the forbidden (17). Nor do mere creatures of dread define monstrosity. While dreadful, a shark is not necessarily a monster, since conventional scientific methods can be used to explain its existence

and its properties. Sharks can, however, be *made into* or *presented as* monsters, as in *Jaws* or *Sharknado*, respectively, via magnification and massification.[5] In *Jaws*, both novel and film, a massive great white shark attacks people at a coastal resort, while *Sharknado* is a disaster movie with the over-the-top premise of a tornado carrying herds of bloodthirsty sharks. Both the conventional science that fails to categorize monsters and the dread they inspire are bound by context and presentation, as they refer to imagined worlds within narratives.

While these fish are notably dreadful, other monsters can only be seen as such indirectly. Cookie Monster, from PBS's *Sesame Street*, with his soft blue fur and goofy happy eyes, is the polar opposite of fearful, both is his character design and in his portrayal. Of similar characterization are Herman Munster from *The Munsters* and the butler Lurch from *The Addams Family*—they are jokes, caricatures, parodies. The first mixes the appearance of Boris Karloff's rendition of Frankenstein's creature in the 1931 film and a humorous and childlike naivety; the second, not unlike the first, is a tall and funereal man, but stern and often incoherent in speech. Precisely because of that, they should be analyzed as monsters: they are commentaries on traditional forms of monstrosity, even if a parodic commentary at that.

While they help us approach evil, monsters are not necessarily evil themselves. They are connected to evil (or dread) in a multitude of possibilities, including having ugly bodies but beautiful values. These dreadful beings may even make us laugh instead of scream. Thus, we may alter Carroll's terminology to widen the scope of the definition by including some charming monsters and imagined worlds not based on science. We may posit, "A monster is any entity that, first,

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[5] Carroll remarks that massive groups of repellent creatures are recurrently used in monster stories as a resource to enhance the foul characteristics of these beings (50). Enlarging the scale of dreadful beings also amplifies their horror (48-49).

cannot be comprehended using the conventional means of the social setting where it is located and, second, that is associated, directly or indirectly, with the feeling of dread."

Herman Munster, Lurch, and Cookie Monster, or characters from Ray Bradbury's "Homecoming" or Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love*, to which we will return in later chapters, can help us understand how some patterns of monstrosity have been remodeled throughout the decades. Understanding monsters born after the twentieth century calls for a definition that encompasses monstrosity in more than a chronological perspective, one that also identifies our deviants in relation to literary movements and narrative techniques. Conceptualizing monsters in direct and indirect associations to evil allows us to approach contemporary, postmodernist, and experimental novels while maintaining the formal aspects of conventional definitions. Most importantly, seeing the monster as such allows for an inspection of its relation to masculinity.

Studying men in the context of monster stories redirect us back to an examination of the concept of monstrosity. How could we understand male archetypes, such as the hero who kills the monster, if not by dissecting his victim? The assumptions behind monstrosity exist in conjunction with those that enable the behavior of innumerous male characters in horror stories.

The savagery of the humanoid amphibian in *The Creature of the Black Lagoon*, for example, mirrors the savagery of a new character who, six decades later, in *The Shape of Water*, stands for the monster hunters who killed the original creature. The masculinity of the new hunter, when reexamined, incorporates not only the masculinity of the original hunters from the 1954 movie, but also the monstrosity of the original monster. Monster and hunter are fused in a sole figure. The fall of what he perceives as *masculine* domination traces a descent similar to the *monstrous* domination of classical freaks. We see, as the human hunter falls, that his debased morals have been making *him* the monster all along.

Meanwhile, in the 2011 novel *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, an army-trained monster hunter dies mauled by the apparitions he hunted, while a confiscated key separates him

from his weapons locker, his autonomy, and his male identity as a soldier and a defender. In this case, monstrosity lives, while masculinity withers away. Both examples, nevertheless, reveal that, when studied side by side, the two concepts might reveal as much about each other as they reveal about themselves.

What Are Masculinities?

Masculinities are socially recognized forms of presenting or recognizing oneself in relation to the male gender. This definition generalizes the most relevant contemporary theories about the topic. While it may lack, for instance, the controversial predications of post-structuralist theories, which narrow down the term to a discursive form of identity politics, it still cares for the presentation involved in displays of masculinity. It is not a biological account of the male gender either, but we should not forget the role bodies plays in physical and even mental representations of male characters. Mostly, the definition serves us as a guideline comprehensive enough for ample literary analysis, allowing several theoretical perspectives to show their strengths throughout the decades from WWI to the present. It is, in its function, intended as a literary definition.

Several other terms accompany "masculinity" in its semantic field. While I often use them interchangeably, recognizing their differences may provide us with useful nuance. "Masculinity," the word I tend to use most frequently, carries prescriptive undertones, hence my understanding of it as "socially recognized".[6] While "masculinity" encompasses distinct attributes *related* the male

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[6] Lexico dictionary defines it as "[q]ualities or attributes regarded as characteristic of men" ("Masculinity" [*Lexico*]). Merriam-Webster chooses a more biological angle, "the quality or nature of the male sex : the quality, state, or degree of being masculine or manly" ("Masculinity" [*Merriam-Webster*]).

gender, "manhood" is the *state of being of* the male gender or sex, either personally or collectively.[7]

A woman behaving in ways people typically associate with men may be showing her masculinity

(or her "masculine side") but not her manhood, for that is the quality of literally being a man—

not of being *like* a man. Being *like* a man would fall under "maleness," which refers to a relation

to the male gender, but not necessarily implying social recognition like "masculinity" does.[8] In

short, then: "masculinity" is a set of traits, behavior, or beliefs that *people believe* characterizes the male

gender, be it traditional (e.g., fixing cars, drinking whiskey, having a full beard) or not (e.g., a father

cooking for his toddler); "manhood" is the *state* of being a man (not a woman, not a boy, not gender-

neutral); "maleness" is the *quality* of being *like* a man (e.g., Pablo Picasso's *Man with a Pipe*).

Masculinities are plural and must be socially recognized because they are set up in multiple

contexts. Even personal opinions about maleness come from conventions within societies, histo-

ries, and cultures, whether in agreement or in defiance. As John Beynon summarizes, "Masculinity

is always interpolated by cultural, historical and geographical location" (1). Masculinities in the U.S.

have similarities and differences from masculinities, for instance, in Brazil, just as those forms of

masculinity change within these countries diachronically and within internal differences in social

settings (e.g., class, ethnicity, age) and cultural environments (e.g., artistic representations,

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[7] Lexico gives, as a broad definition for "manhood," "Men, especially those of a country, regarded

collectively," but it also provides a definition that overlaps "masculinity," "Qualities traditionally

associated with men, such as courage, strength, and sexual potency" ("Manhood," [*Lexico*]). Mer-

riam-Webster provides a definition that better fits our purposes, "the condition of being an adult

male as distinguished from a child or female" ("Manhood," [*Merriam-Webster*]).

[8] For a definition of "maleness," Lexico refers to "male" ("Maleness," [*Lexico*]). Merriam-Webster

automatically redirects to the same word ("Male," [*Merriam-Webster*]).

language, rituals). Hence the use of the term in the plural: it accounts for a range of contrasting norms, acts, codes, and beliefs.

While plurality improves conceptualization, it may also induce polarized uses of terminology: overgeneralization on the one hand, unwarranted specification on the other. Pluralizing the concept with attention to morphology and disregard for its semantics by continuing its use as a singular and general category (albeit with an "s" in the end) is of little help. Minute specification and overuse of qualifiers may lead to a similar problem in definition, even if through the opposite path. Elsewhere, discussing Anthony McMahon's terminological recommendations, I note,

> [He] argues that, since masculinity is evasive in terms of description and conceptualization, we may fall into the trap of reducing it to a list of traits (e.g., endurance, strength, hard work) that, in some discourses, are seen as superior to their alleged feminine equivalent (e.g., care, communication, openness) [(McMahon 2)]. … While it is impossible to clarify the term to perfection, there must be a point where it is reasonable to stop lest we specify *ad infinitum*. (Santos 14)

While such difficulty is not exclusive to masculinity studies, the field's relatively recent formalization requires distinguished precision when we define what is man and what is manly.

Behind this very word "manly" lies a connection to the male gender. Contextualized within the plurality of this definition, this connection may be of intentional self-expression of masculinity (e.g., mannerisms, fashion, language) or of a more distant relation (e.g., muscle constitution, aggression, logical thinking). We may disagree that logical thinking, aggression, or, for instance, foul language is intrinsically masculine, but most of us know people who perpetuate these beliefs or who opt for a form of masculinity defined by them. This gender-based definition implies that, while we restrain the femininity/masculinity dichotomy to a connection to the male/female gender opposition, we nevertheless allow for non-traditional forms of tracing such connections. A woman (female gender) may display habits and practices considered (by herself or others) as being

connected to the male gender (masculinity). Everyone can be masculine to a certain degree, as one form of masculinity may oppose the other and even the slight shift of gait or change of hair may, willingly or not, be read in relation to gender expression. From bodybuilders to drag kings, from the Boy Scouts to the concept of "passing," or from fatherhood to hygiene, all that may be gendered, clearly or not, is probably seen somewhere both as macho and as sissy.

Masculinities need to be socially recognized, even if negatively or via ostracism. If a man stands alone in a room, his masculinity only exists concerning (actual or imaginary, realized or unrealized) social interactions. When Dorian Gray, for instance, studies his monstrous portrait that "would be to him the most magical of mirrors," revealing "his own body … [and] his own soul" (Wilde, ch. 8), he is looking less at an all-knowing magic mirror and more at a sign of his own social and gendered self-destruction. While this may seem evident at first, the practice of discussing masculinity is also the struggle of avoiding any previously established standards and the attempt at garnering useful information while doing so.

I use the word "present" to account for varied social interactions while also avoiding reference to gender, masculinity, or femininity in the post-structuralist sense of performativity. As I summarize in my MA thesis, "[a]n understanding of gender as a mere performance does not acknowledge the physically changing nature of the people behind the stage. People are hardly a vessel for their attributes, but rather something massively more complex" (9). Beynon describes an approach in which "masculinity is a performance, a set of stage directions, a 'script' that men learn to perform" (58). While Beynon remains neutral and descriptive, Connell states that regarding masculinity as "a more or less neutral surface or landscape on which a social symbolism is imprinted" (46) creates a framework in which, "[w]ith so much emphasis on the signifier, the signified tends to vanish" (50). Masculinity seems to be a performance in certain contexts (e.g.,

joking between male peers as a form of bonding),[9] while, in others, it is more physical (e.g., problems of inadequate male genital hygiene).[10] A woman may present herself as female and masculine, either because she enjoys a butch lesbian aesthetics or, say, because she simply finds checkered, long-sleeved shirts comfortable and other people connect such fashion to the male gender.

For this reason, masculinity and other identitary components are interdependent, be they ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, or even less obvious ones, such as weight. These intersections come at innumerable forms: they imply generalized difference (e.g., black masculinity, white masculinity), and they reinforce certain masculine ideals (e.g., the English gentleman as an upper-class citizen). Additionally, they establish masculinity at the expense of other identities: homophobic behavior, for example, functions as reinforcement of macho masculinity. Monsters, the quintessential Others, may stand for whatever "lacks masculinity" or simply exist to reinforce the manliness of heroic monster hunters.

Masculinities in horror fiction come in a series of codes and traditions. The male monster hunter enters the twentieth century as a guardian of margins, willing to remove the female, foreign, non-white Other, but he may end as Lou Carmody in Joe Hill's *NOS4A2*, a nerdy father who is momentarily put outside the narrative as a more fitting mother saves their son. Many monsters, too, will display masks of masculinity throughout the next pages, while others will fail to remove their masks or tell them apart from their own faces. But in their bodies, too, they will show reminders of monstrosity and masculinity alike. Those are, for instance, the scars in Will Graham's face after his encounter with Francis Dollarhyde, a morally repulsive serial killer in Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon*. Under this definition of masculinity, based on the presentation or self-recognition of

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[9] In "The Fraternal Bond as a Joking Relationship: A Case Study of the Role of Sexist Jokes in Male Group Bonding," Peter Lyman analyzes how jokes may create male bonding.

[10] See Birley et al. and Morris.

the male gender, but with a literary scope, we will see dozens of men turning into monsters and dozens of monsters into men.

Nevertheless, not even an encyclopedic work about the vast genre of horror exists without its omissions. While in certain sections (notably in chapter one) I directly address matters of nationality or ethnicity, readers will notice most male protagonists analyzed in the following chapters are white. Attention to diversity has been given throughout the selection of the corpus, but, since the principal guideline for my choice of texts was their status as mainstream horror, the intersections between manhood and other identitary components are not central to my thematic development. I do not mean to say my observations about masculinities refer exclusively to white (or heterosexual, middleclass) men, but neither do they encompass all relevant identities. Most importantly, my generalizations are not attempts at erasing identitary difference. They are the recognition of overarching patterns in horror culture.

Monsters Outside Our Lands

By origin and definition, monsters come from external dwellings. Carroll observes that "monsters are native to places outside of and/or unknown to the human world [or may also] come from marginal, hidden, or abandoned sites" (34-35). In H. P. Lovecraft's "The Outsider," for instance, an unnamed monstrous protagonist escapes confinement and seeks to "reach beyond to the other" (par. 1), only to be shunned by people. It ultimately recognizes that its fate is to "ride with the mocking and friendly ghouls on the night-wind" (par. 18). Lovecraft draws a clear line between monster and human, a line that cannot (or should not) be crossed. In other words, the monster lurks in the margins, be they geographical, socio-cultural, or ontological. If the monster

perhaps escapes and forces its way into "our" world, monster slayers readily dispatch it, fulfilling its expository function by demonstrating our supposed normality in opposition to its strangeness.[11]

As violators of the perceived laws of humankind and nature, monsters possess a quality of social and geographical foreignness noticeable in literatures in English since their earliest recorded texts. We may refer to *Beowulf*, in which celebration follows the expulsion of the monster Grendel to the margins, as such accomplishment assures both the prosperity of the mead-hall of Heorot and the grandeur of the titular hero. Throughout the centuries, numerous parodies, inversions, and revivals have sculpted other faces for this foreignness, but the traditional monstrosity from faraway lands remains alive today and lived still in works closely preceding the turn into the twentieth century. For instance, in Arthur Conan Doyle's "Lot No. 249," a supernatural Egyptian mummy, foreign to recognized laws of nature and to nineteenth-century England, threatens the rational male minds of the "centre of learning and light" (Doyle) that is the University of Oxford. Similar monstrous aspects of foreignness debuted in modern American pulp fiction as villains, curses, and retrograde people from oversea nations, threatening twentieth-century American values and identities. At the time of their development, and even if they are separated by more than a millennium, these two works dealt with personal or communal unease by creating scapegoats: Grendel, a "fiend out of hell-pit" (101), stands in opposition to religious virtues alluded to in the

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[11] The etymology of "monster" according to the Oxford online dictionary: "Late Middle English: from Old French monstre, from Latin monstrum 'portent or monster', from monere 'warn'" ("Monster"). And an excerpt from Augustine's *City of God*, contextualized within an argument for the recognition as seemingly unnatural phenomena as natural under divine intervention: "They say that they are called 'monsters,' because they demonstrate or signify something; 'portents,' because they portend something; and so forth" (1,032). Etymologically speaking, then, the monster warns, reveals, and exposes.

Biblical parallels of *Beowulf*; Doyle's mummy represents a geopolitical other as viewed by the British Empire, and Lovecraft's human/fish hybrids from the town of Innsmouth, to choose one of several examples from pulp fiction, are stand-ins for his fears of racial degenerations.

Monsters stand for our unease or cognitive dissonance—and, as a product of our urge to represent suffering, monsters also give form to the cracks in our cultural boundaries. As Jeha reminds us, "social groups need boundaries to keep their members within and to protect themselves against outside enemies. … Boundaries exist to maintain guidelines and order; any transgression causes discomfort and requires us to return the world to the state we consider right. The monster is an artifice to mark anything that violates these cultural boundaries" (7, my translation). Monsters are born (or made) as manifestations of violated limits, be they cultural or ideological.

A suitable pre-WWI work to exemplify the transgression of cultural boundaries is Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Swift's satire is unraveled as Lemuel Gulliver meets the six-inch-tall Lilliputians and goes to war over the proper method of cracking an egg. The narrative advances as he reaches Brobdingnag and is disgusted by its native gigantic inhabitants; further on in the story, Gulliver encounters equally astonishing peoples who are themselves astonished by *his* otherness. While several episodes in *Gulliver's Travels* correlate directly to real-world concepts or people, Swift's work reaches beyond pure satire, also serving, in monster theory, as a portrayal of monstrosity as a two-way street.

The birth of monsters affects, perhaps in equal measure, both creature and creator. The most recognizable example is Victor Frankenstein, who views the instant of the creation of his progeny as the moment "the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (ch. 5). Through the transgression of creating a monster, he ensures his own moral monstrosity. Writing on the intersection between eighteenth-century legality and the grotesque in Swift's satire, Ian McCormick notices a similar occurrence,

Gulliver classifies other cultures, but they also seek to categorize him. Nevertheless, the kind of human being represented by Gulliver cannot be judged properly as a fixed and stable classification. The most successful grotesque classification, emphasizing the essential sportiveness of humanity, is that proposed by the Brobdingnagians, who name Gulliver a *lusus naturae*.[12] Yet this is achieved by an abdication of coherence, for it is a category of the non-category. (289)

Or, in other words, the category of monster. The otherness of Brobdingnagians is only as aberrant as Gulliver's own, and the freakishness of Frankenstein's creature accentuates his creator's amorality. Even though the formulations of such monstrosities are not equal (Gulliver ascribes otherness to Brobdingnagians and vice-versa, while Frankenstein creates a monster and becomes himself a moral monster), both suggest the same fundamental composition of monstrosity: it is subject to perspective. All lands are foreign lands, even our own.

It is tempting to assume that, by ridding ourselves of the monster, we are also eliminating what it stands for, but such comfort is all but guaranteed. The hero slays the monster; good conquers evil. The formula would be simple, but its implications are not, since, in the process of creating freaks to be exterminated, we imbue them with what frightens us the most—we lay bare our fears, and nobody is obliged to mind them. The witches of Salem, for instance, are long hanged, but contemporary views are still not kind to the magistrates and executioners involved in the process. Richard Kearney comments that "it is not so surprising to witness examples of surrogate demonic creatures serving as sacrificial scapegoats in real life. … The countless instances of heretic burning, witch-hunting, Jew-baiting, persecution, torture and other inquisitorial rites of purgation speak for themselves" (31). In literature, we see how hard it is to read stories like Doyle's "Lot No. 249" without seeing the toxic imperialist masculinity manifested in characters who quip

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[12] A freak; a joke or whim of nature ("Lusus naturae").

sentences such as "You'll find that your filthy Egyptian tricks won't answer in England." Monsters tend to endure as symbols, and of equal resilience are the politics behind monster-making.

This process of imbuing entities or groups with exotic, repellent, and threatening charac-teristics—monstrification—reaches even beyond *stricto sensu* imperialism or witch hunts. Such pat-terns show themselves in post-WWI horror, for example, as the noxious immigrants in Lovecraft's "The Street," which narrates the downfall of a beautiful city into a slum ridden with "sinister faces with furtive eyes and odd features" (67). These are not Lovecraftian monsters from another di-mension or aberrations in a traditional sense, but merely foreigners monstrified through the lenses of racism and xenophobia. We will return to those in the following chapters, and, here in these pages, we see part of their origins.

Monsters Beyond Our Minds

Monstrous beings, the harbingers of difference, mark a multitude of boundary violations: on their back, they carry the weight of human imperfection; in their flesh, the marks of conflict. As they embody the politics of limits (us/them, inside/outside), monsters wander freely through the borders between what we hold close to heart and what remains not apprehended and out of place. "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear," writes Lovecraft, "and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" ("Supernatural"). Nevertheless, despite origi-nating from ignorance, the monsters from the great unknown are not an empty signifier.

When we ask ourselves "What does this unfathomable monstrosity stand for?," the answer is often more puzzling than a mere "That which we do not understand." If humanity's most primal fear is the fear of the unknown, we ought to mind how such unknown is contextualized within human historical and cultural experiences, which themselves are bound to time and place. If we read the monster as an innate question mark, we ignore how active and self-reflective the process of monster-making is. When Lovecraft tells us of an unknown species from the most profound

oceanic domains (the Deep Ones, a race of fish/human hybrids), he reveals his anxieties about racial miscegenation. Even creatures without an exact corporeal image point beyond the unknown. Stephen King's shape-shifting clown Pennywise and the formless monsters in *Bird Box* are more familiar than we would like to admit: as we will see in the next chapters, they are both our individual fears and a generalized warning about the gullibility and savagery of mob mentality. Every person's unknown has a different nature and displays a different shade of obscurity and ignorance.

In this context, the most meaningful literary representation, popularized during the turn into the twentieth century, is the maddening monstrosity of cosmic horror. This strand of horror literature, though popularized by Lovecraft, emerged before his publications, already revealing its marks in the fiction of British authors, such as Arthur Machen and Algernon Blackwood, as well as in works by the American Robert W. Chambers and the Lovecraft contemporary Robert Bloch. What brings these authors under the same umbrella is an attempted generalization of horror to experiences familiar to humanity, which took the form of forces and experiences that transcend human comprehension. When we read of Frankenstein, his monster, Mr. Hyde, and Dracula, our preoccupations center on their moral nature and intent ("Why?") and the experience of enacting or coming to face with evil ("How?"), while cosmic horror evokes a more primitive unanswerable query: "What?"

In stories like Machen's "The Great God Pan" and Blackwood's "The Willows," the monsters can barely be comprehended by human sense. In "The Great God Pan," the sudden arrival of a woman is connected to several deaths, and, upon being forced to commit suicide as punishment, she is revealed to be the offspring of a female human and the male deity from the title. In "The Willows," two men sailing down the Danube River encounter otherworldly forces that manifest as strange phenomena, setting off intermittent moments of disturbing silence and existential anguish over the insignificance of humanity and human intellect in a world inhabited by grotesque

gods. Chamber's *The King in Yellow*, also through depictions of the inapprehensible, elevates artistic and moral decadence to a standard no human artist could fathom or dared follow.

In *The King in Yellow*, often read in the light of the European Decadent movement,[13] the apparent refusal of the conservative aesthetic reveals repressed values that, in reality, function as a criticism of the Decadents and some forms of non-traditional masculinity. In Chambers's collection of stories, male characters seem to welcome non-traditional masculinities wholeheartedly, breaking away from traditions by establishing a distance from conservative morality and aesthetics—it is, however, merely a pretense of non-conformity. Characters in *The King in Yellow* encounter a forbidden theater play, also fictional, that gives the title to Chambers's book. The play, whose content often drives its readers into madness, features the character of the Yellow King, a powerful, supernatural, and malevolent entity who reigns in an obscure dimension and exerts his influence over whoever reads the theater piece. Contact with the King aggravates a dissonance already present in some of Chambers's characters: the will to transcend socially accepted aesthetics versus the adherence to the moral constraints. The play reveals the inconsistency of characters who are ultimately unable to put their avant-garde ideals to practice.

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[13] David Punter notes, "[Chamber's] stories are not obviously concerned with any of the great themes of decadence except that of the Medusa, but their style is at times more truly decadent than anything to be found in Wilde [as] Chambers works obliquely, always suggesting a wider dominance of evil and decay without being drawn into portraying the dimensions of that dominance" (38). See Emmert and also Kellermeyer, who, more bluntly than Punter, observes that Chamber's book "was both influenced by and a commentary on the booming Decadence Movement, and can accurately be called both the subject and the object of that genre—simultaneously satirizing and reveling in the depraved sensuality and morbid hedonism of the so-called 'Yellow Nineties.'"

In "The Yellow Sign," for instance, Mr. Scott, a painter and the narrator, states, "She [his model] and I never discussed morals at all, and I had no intention of doing so, partly because I had none myself" (49). Further on, however, he reveals, "I am a Catholic. When I listen to high mass, when I sign myself, I feel that everything, including myself, is more cheerful, and when I confess, it does me good" (50). Shortly after, he insists that "I was no good," and that "I had led an easy-going reckless life, taking what invited me of pleasure, deploring and sometimes bitterly regretting consequences" (51). After he and his model describe dreams and visions of Scott being chased by a night watchman, they find among Scott's books one "I should never open" and "that nothing on earth could have persuaded me to buy": it is the cursed play *The King in Yellow*. At this point, after so many of Scott's inconsistencies, it is difficult to understand if we should trust this information—does *The King in Yellow*, banned, burned by the Church, connected to murders and suicides, not seem the perfect piece for an immoral maverick such as Scott? Why does he seem so resistant to reading it? Despite his opposition, he reads the play and finds abominable truths in it, finds "words understood by the ignorant and wise alike, words which are more precious than jewels, more soothing than music, more awful than death!" (55-56). Finally, after witnessing his model's death, Scott realizes the watchman who pursued him is a several-month-old decomposed body. He feels the Yellow King's presence and notices he is now "past human help or hope" (56).

When juxtaposed with the truly subversive art form of the play, the alleged subversion and unconventionality of characters such as Scott reveal internal inconsistencies that contradict the supposed rejection of high artistic and moral values. Scott, who claims to lead "an easy-going reckless life" (51), only truly loses control of himself when he comes in contact with the play. When his nonconformist assessment of himself is put into question by the play's supernatural influences (e.g., the undead watchman, Scott's descent into madness and death), what initially seems a short story with Decadent themes takes a different turn. Were Chambers's characters really so amoral? It seems more plausible that they inhabit a strange threshold between the freedom

brought by amorality and the social conducts still accepted for men of the time. They have the appearance and fame of subversives, but they enjoy social acceptance. Their true *ethos* is only revealed by an extreme disruption in common reason, in logic, in *logos*.

Cosmic monsters are beyond our grasp not because they are outside our standard methodology of understanding and categorizing the world (even though, being monsters, they may be) but because they defy the most basic human assumptions (e.g., time is linear, we perceive existence through senses). They are presented to unveil vast and sublime systems of cognition, to imply that the human race is insignificant, and to disturb the perceived harmonies of existence (cosmos). In this sense, cosmic monstrosity aims to bring monstrosity to the roots of its definition: what our conventional methods, to our dread, fail to explain. If the line between known and unknown is not static and monsters come and go as this line shifts alongside human knowledge, then cosmic horror could be described as the horror that always follows the line.

Rather than exposing the universality of cosmic horror, such description puts the spotlight on its limitation: rationalism. What draws the line between known and unknown, familiar and unfamiliar in cosmic horror is reason, logic, science. While these are invaluable and reliable systems, in practice they are neither impartial or neutral. In chapter two, we will see how depictions of science, for instance, are not always detached from traditional masculine values; in chapter five, we will follow narratives that distinguish familiar from unfamiliar through *pathos* and *eros*, not through *logos*. Even the most serene and peaceful creature may defy reason, while the most mundane passerby among us may be full of sadistic cruelty.

Gendered Monstrosity

To read horror fiction means to open the gates to the most sickening forms of manhood. We see the moment of creation of male monsters, and, face-to-face with such fascinating and repulsive characters, become increasingly familiar with the monster-producing machinery. Works

like Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, Stephen King's *The Shining* or creepypastas[14] like "Dear Abby," whose narrator is an obsessive male stalker, exemplify how men's relation to tradition, work, and sexuality can be explored via literary characters who sustain some sort of monstrosity, even if not a physical one. Other examples, such as King's *Cycle of the Werewolf* and *Rose Madder*, which portray a wolf-man and a minotaur, or the film *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, with Leatherface wearing a human-skin mask, depict more traditional physical components of monsters in association with maleness. Even when the monsters are not male, but, instead, are hunted by a man, as in *The Great God Pan* and *Carmilla*, they can work as metaphors exposing deep-rooted male transgressions. The history of manhood corresponds to the prescription of "proper" male qualities. Monsters and hunters are at the heart of these social prescriptions, enabling and suffering from a system of (mostly dysfunctional) masculinities.

In my experience, when confronted with the terms "monstrosity" and "masculinity," people assume a connection that points to the immorality of manhood. "Men are pigs" becomes "men are monsters." While such immediate connection may reveal a personal bias, it is not incorrect *per se*. As the authors of *Signs of Masculinities* note in the introduction to their book, "Patriarchy proves an almost insurmountable stumbling-block for critics aiming to provide an affirmative reading of masculinity, as men have been historically categorised as oppressors, exercising their power over women at every opportunity and at every level of society" (6). Historical categorizations of

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[14] "Creepypasta [sic] are essentially internet horror stories, passed around on forums and other sites to disturb and frighten readers. The name 'Creepypasta' comes from the word 'copypasta', an internet slang term for a block of text that gets copied and pasted over and over again from website to website. Creepypastas are sometimes supplemented with pictures, audio and/or video footage related to the story, typically with gory, distorted, or otherwise shocking content" ("Creepypasta Wiki: What Is Creepypasta?").

masculinity as an oppressive power repeatedly resurface in horror stories and literary criticism. The very study of masculinities and monstrosities seems haunted by its own past.

Male monsters typify male transgressions. That men, especially men of traditional masculinities, are laden with vices, few sensible theorists would deny, not only because of simple human fallibility but also because of the inadequacy of numerous forms of old-fashioned masculinity. Horror literature is not short of examples. We may choose to start with Jekyll and Hyde and end in Stephen King's numerous abusive fathers and grandfathers. In apparent contradiction, men may be viewed as monstrous for the opposite reason, for *not* fitting into traditional masculine models. They exhibit identities outside the male gender like Norman Bates in *Psycho* or the Buffalo Bill in *Silence of the Lambs*, whose unhealthy psychology manifests itself as a monstrosity of *pathos* in femininity. While scholars challenge the simplicity (Milette and Travis, Walsh) or the validity (Robinson, Kimmel) or the very existence (Edwards) of a real "crisis of masculinity," and even if the term frequently surfaces as an argument against equality, it comes to mind here. To look at both traditional and non-traditional men and quickly perceive their blemishes but failing at recognizing virtues suggests, indeed, an unstable turning point. We may only wonder what lies beyond.

Likewise, repellent monstrosity flourishes even in man's "better half." Female characters have personified emasculation anxiety, have been used as justification of monstrous behavior, have acted as harbingers of deviant sexuality, and have been turned into monsters only to be dispatched by men as a reassurance of some male-dominated state of affairs. It makes up part of the conflict in King's *Pet Sematary*, in which the central father figure perceives his wife as a threat to his manhood, ultimately turning her into a living corpse as a final means of asserting control over his family life. In cinema, it is the driving force in the creation of a male monster in John Carpenter's *Halloween*, as Michael Myers "at the age of six murdered his sister for preferring sex to taking care of him" (Gill 22). The figure of the madwoman in the attic, which Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar examine in Victorian literature, represents a broader class of monsters: disenfranchised and

psychotic women locked up, literally or metaphorically, to suffer at the hands of men, be they Gothic villains, overbearing husbands, or even equally deranged brothers, as in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." Thankfully, not all heterosocial interactions are so grim in horror literature. Neither do they always follow the pattern of an abusive man producing a monstrous, abused woman. This particular design is merely emphasized by one's eyes looking at female monsters with male transgressions in one's mind.

As monsters embody otherwise inexpressible forms of evil, gendered creatures and creators put equally gendered terrors on the page. Michael Kimmel remarks that, at the turn into the twentieth century, "[m]edical texts abounded with details of the problems of women's civic equality and the terror of women's sexual autonomy, using scientific discourse as the basis for their arguments. Many manuals conflated the effects of political equality and sexual autonomy, casting women as both lustful temptresses and pious guardians of home and hearth" (79). Grace Duffield Goodwin, in *Anti-suffrage: Ten Good Reasons*,[15] published in 1913, defended that "[o]nly among primitive people did women do the work we now designate as 'man's work'" (85). On the following pages, her arguments turn to "the new science of eugenics" (89) and to allegations that women have severe "temperamental disabilities" that render "equal footing in political life all but impossible" (91). Not unlike Goodwin's juxtaposition of primitiveness and the New Woman, pre-WWI literature has conceived its share of female monsters.

They were generated via unregulated experiments in Machen's "The Great God Pan," they preyed on traditional family values in Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, and, through millennia, they still stand for emasculation, like Medusa in contemporary readings. These women's

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[15] The American anti-suffragist "movement was commonly understood to be founded, staffed, and led by women" (Thurner 35). This corroborates the dissociation of male-dominance advocates from the male gender and from masculinity

monstrification implies either diegetic or presumed (extradiegetic) evil:[16] they may stand for what fictional characters consider transgressive or for what the construction of a literary piece assumes as such. Women, in this pattern, are rendered evil and, therefore, liable to be exterminated. Helen, the daughter of Pan, kills herself when compelled by a group of men, Carmilla dies by stake and fire at the hand of another male group, and Medusa meets Theseus's sword in a fatal decapitation (Freeman, ch. "Poseidon").

We only have to pause for a brief analysis of Machen's short story to understand some occurrences of this pattern. Following the scene of an eerie experiment done to a woman, we learn of sinister disappearances and sudden insanity cases surrounding another young woman in the following years. Even later, we read of a Mrs. Beaumont's arrival to London, who is reportedly the same young women linked to the disappearances, but after a change of name and a stay in the Americas involving orgies and obscure practices. In London, she corrupts various young men, who commit suicide, probably after having sex with her. Following the discovery of her transgressions and true identity, a group of men force her to hang herself. She complies, resulting in a bizarre death during which she undergoes a series of transformations: human to animal and women to men, finishing as an amorphous, viscous substance. We later understand she was the offspring of the woman who, years before, was subjected to the eerie experiments. Her father is thought to be Pan, the goat-like Greek pastoral deity of fertility, associated both with merrymaking and, in some depictions, hysteria ("Pan").

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[16] I go over this differentiation elsewhere, and we may also profit from it here. "Diegetic evil," on the one hand, is "a form of evil whose assumptions begin and end in the diegesis" (50). "Presumed evil," on the other hand, "is the form of evil that comes from extradiegetic presuppositions and that has unironic and unaware diegetic reflections. It indicates the moral assumptions behind a literary piece" (52).

Despite its roots in Greek mythology, Machen's novella reveals a mix of Christian fear and Victorian sexual repression. Pan comes not as a pastoral deity of fertility, but as the cloven-hoofed, goat-horned stand-in for Satan (Goho 4). Mrs. Beaumont (or Helen, her real name) is on par with the Antichrist. This Christian parallel overtly repeats itself throughout the plot, be it in the title of a character's book, *Memoirs to Prove the Existence of the Devil*, in which the first section of the narrative is related, or in the usage of the Latin passage "ET DIABOLUS INCARNATE EST. ET HOMO FACTUS EST" (ch. II).[17] In a religious perspective, Helen's Satanic wickedness contrasts with a Godly presence. Moreover, in a moral aspect, her sexual corruption of men contrasts with the Victorian pretense of moral purity.

Sexuality, madness, evil, and the negation of Christian values bundle up in a monstrous female body created and destroyed by men. Helen's forced suicide disguises a blend of witch-hunting and exorcism: the woman is hanged; the evil presence is chased away to protect people from "forces before which the souls of men must wither and die and blacken" (ch. VII). Reading *The Great God Pan* contextualized within Victorian moral hypocrisy exposes men's fears of sexual publicity and male corruption. At first Helen seems the typical deviant female, a stereotype of the lustful prostitute eager to corrupt men. She, however, resulting from an experiment conducted by a male scientist, is *created* and destroyed by men, as a scapegoat for deviance and "odd" sexuality. In this sense, Machen's novella matches Stevenson's *Strange Case*, genders being reversed only in the monster, not in killers or creators.

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[17] Roger Luckhurst translates the passage as "'And the devil was made incarnate. And was made man'" and identifies it as a "a blasphemous rewriting of the Nicene Creed," specifically of the lines he translates as "'By the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man'" (279).

Female monsters hide several male figures: creators, failed fathers, (allegedly) emasculated subjects, and monster hunters. Male monsters, too, thrive in an atmosphere of corrupt masculinities, enabling both male degradation and male dominance, often simultaneously. While these men may be regarded as the victims or the villains in a fictional representation of a society, a masculinity-centered approach ought to do away with such stereotypes, even if they are inherent part of the Gothic background of horror fiction. This is particularly relevant because, in everyday discourse of real-world evil performed by men, we often find such one-word labels: villain, criminal, psychopath; or hero, victim, mentally ill. Male characters should not be brushed off as the consequence or the sole mastermind behind male dominance or a patriarchal state of affairs. They are not the byproduct or the engineers of a male social machine, but its cogs.

Monster Makers and Monster Hunters

As individuals, monsters may be eliminated by a well-planted stake to the heart or by the tenacity of an exorcist, but their cultural presence lives on. In the second of his seven theses, Jeffrey Cohen posits that the "Monster Always Escapes" (4), meaning that, as cultural beings, monsters shift in response to cultural changes. Bram Stoker, for example, could not have predicted the numerous vampires of literature and cinema read in connection to the AIDS epidemic, but his novel *Dracula* breathed life both into its fictional dead and into the myth of the vampire as a metaphor for contamination. In more than one way, vampires have died, risen, died, and risen again, but refuse to remain dead.

If we agree with Cohen, it follows that the creation of monstrous archetypes[18] is done by repetition, be the monsters "real" like the witches of Salem or literary like Stoker's undead.

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[18] I use the term "monstrous archetype" to refer to groups of monsters that share enough characteristics. As Allen Weiss notes in his thesis number four, "The logic of monsters is one of

Exploring another example, we may notice how zombies, too, have long been present in fiction, even turning into a fad after the 2000s. Sarah Lauro uses Peter Dendle's *Zombie Movie Encyclopedia* as a piece of evidence for the zombie craze: the first volume covers from 1932 to 2000, while the second, the larger of the two, ranges only from 2000 to 2010 (viii). As to vampires, Cohen observes, after a brief historical account of the creatures as represented in art, that "[i]n each of these vampire stories, the undead returns in slightly different clothing, each time to be read against contemporary social movements or a specific, determining event" (5). The literary monster, in its function of "embodying the unspeakable" (Jeha 11), changes but persists. Our anxieties become the clay monster makers use to mold their progenies. And in follows the figure of the monster hunter, who solidifies the monster maker's function by eliminating a creature and ending the cycle so it may begin anew.

When we refer to these two figures, the monster maker and the hunter, we inevitably bring up to the discussion the process of scapegoating, often overt and ritualistic, but at other times a sort of silent pact. Monster makers work through dehumanizing actions that result in the production of a new monster or, more interestingly here, in the stripping of human qualities from people who are then turned into monsters. Victor Frankenstein surfaces as the quintessential literary example of the first type. The second one we encounter frequently in real life: the overmasculine

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particulars, not essences. Each monster exists in a class by itself. Monsters may, however, generate entire classes of beings" (124). The living-dead is an archetype, for instance. It encompasses smaller archetypes, such as vampires, zombies, mummies, and ghosts. These, in turn, may be divided even further: the Greek vrykolakas, the zombies from George Romero's movies, or poltergeists. Eventually we reach individual monsters: Count Dracula, Peeves in the *Harry Potter* series, or Stephen King's Pennywise the clown. Individual monsters, according to Cohen, may be destroyed, while archetypes endure.

homophobic relative, the xenophobic friend, the misogynistic colleague. In such cases, the formation of a monstrous other is less grandiose than Frankenstein's moment of creation, and the actions of such creators often come as words, but the vision of the Other as a less-than-human being is there all the same.

Monster hunters finish the callous work of eliminating or suppressing the anomaly, thereby reinstituting a sense of peace. They populate fiction as heroes, as armored knights, vampire hunters, exorcists, police, or army officers, as the chosen protagonists who often sacrifice themselves for the greater good. But they are also the single-minded madmen engrossed in providing a notion of peace at any cost. And when the witches have been hanged in Salem, the black men and women have been lynched, the immigrants have been murdered, and when the Ku Klux Klan members have finished a riot and returned home, we see that people being made into monsters to be destroyed for no justifiable reason only produce a short-lived, false notion of peace, which does not survive well under the scrutiny of history. In the next chapters we will see that, as American modern horror ages throughout the twentieth century, the status of the monster hunters (and *male* monster hunters especially) branches out into narratives in which the hunters themselves are the moral monsters.

Even though monsters may incite more animosity from readers, horror literature also implies that their creators should share responsibility. The modern horror genre, in fact, draws constantly from the novel that became the fundamental warning about the making of monsters. In Mary Shelley's classic, Victor Frankenstein generates a monster in two steps: first by irresponsibly using scientific techniques to assemble his creature's physical form, and second by inscribing his own fears into his progeny. According to his own statement, the creature himself has potential for both good and evil, becoming truly malicious because of Frankenstein's rejection. "I was benevolent," creature declares to creator, "my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures,

who owe me nothing?" (ch. 10). Whether the creature's narrative deserves any credence remains one of the several subtleties of Shelley's novel. Regardless, the "depraved wretch" (ch. 7) is man-made.

Frankenstein, in turn, sees in the monster the dangers present in himself: the propensity to excess, to grandiosity. In the scientist's case, such grandiosity is his use of "bad science" to create life. Lucia de La Rocque and Luiz Antonio Teixeira note that, "[i]n its essence, good science would be a form of knowledge marked by ethical values that would assure social security to any possible resulting dangers. Ignoring these limits, Victor falls into disgrace" (16, my translation). They cite Robert Merton, who regards "universality, communality, disinterest and organized skepticism" as "institutional imperatives of science that should constitute the guideline for scientific conduct" (qtd. in 16, my translation). Frankenstein fails in all accounts. The monster's excess, as Frankenstein sees it, lies in his potential to dominate the world in cooperation with a female companion, creating "a race of devils [that] would be propagated upon the earth" (ch. 20). Frankenstein's evil is his hubris, while the creature is, among others, his perceived potential for massification.[19] The creator's response to such danger is abandoning the lab-coat in favor of the pistol to hunt down his creation.

Outlining an archetype as ancient as the monster hunter requires us to visit a past more remote than the last few centuries. Seeking its origin seems fruitless, as versions of the Hero appear in thousands of narratives that go back millennia—from Jesus Christ to Achilles to Gilgamesh (Campbell). Here we turn to the North-Germanic hero Beowulf and to the Arthurian knight Sir Gawain.

While monstrosity in *Beowulf* is fertile soil for discussions on the classic monsters in literatures in English, its presentation is structured on a dualism that cultural development has made look outdated: animalistic monsters vs. stalwart heroes. Even if the presentation seems simplistic, it benefits us to look at *Beowulf*'s Grendel—the "fiend out of hell" (100)—as a paradigm of

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[19] See footnote 5.

monstrosity that, before being questioned, had to be established. Grendel's functions as scapegoat, for he embodies evil that, once removed from the world or the center of the narrative, reassures the worthy powers of good. Whether such "powers of good" are genuinely worthy remains open to interpretation.

> On the creation of scapegoats, Richard Kearney writes,
>
> Rather than acknowledge that we are deep down answerable to an alterity which unsettles us, we devise all kinds of evasion strategies. Primary amongst these is the attempt to simplify our existence by scapegoating others as 'aliens'. So doing we contrive to transmute the sacrificial alien into a monster, or into a fetish-god. Nevertheless, either way, we refuse to recognize the stranger. (5)

Described as a "grim demon / haunting the marches" (102-03) and as "[m]alignant by nature" (137), Grendel is presented as an inhabitant of the margins who lives "in misery among the banished monsters" (105). He disrupts the center of the narrative—that is, the heroic lives of "courage and greatness" (2)—to "work his evil in the world" (101). Although Grendel neither substitutes any real-world entity nor embodies a specific transgression directly, he operates as a scapegoat by serving as sacrifice. Grendel is not to be recognized, to be understood or empathized with: he exists to die.[20]

In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the honor of the Arthurian hero does not lie in his ability to kill the monstrous titular knight; nevertheless, like Beowulf, he embarks on a quest to overcome a monster. After Sir Gawain accepts the Green Knight's challenge at Camelot—each to hit the other *once* with their weapons—and the Knight survives, the narrative is settled: the hero's honor depends on a foreign, dreadful creature whose existence initially defies any plausible explanation.

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[20] The opposite is true in John Gardner's *Grendel*, a 1971 retelling of *Beowulf*, in which the monster's existentialist musing provides depth to its character and subverts its original narrative function.

After suffering Sir Gawain's attack and being decapitated, the knight "cops hold of his head and hoists it high" (433). Simon Armitage's modern-English version follows with,

> And when he wheeled about
>
> his bloody neck still bled.
>
> His point was proved. The court
>
> was deadened now with dread. (440-44)

In precisely one year, Gawain must find the Green Knight and accept his attack, honoring the challenge. Only at the end of the narrative is the Knight revealed as a lord who accommodated Gawain for days in his castle, with whom the Arthurian knight exchanged gifts and pleasantries. In the final revealing conversation, Gawain admits having been tricked by the lord's wife into accepting a belt as a secret gift, which was not in accordance with his deal with his host.

After listing Biblical men who were tricked by women, such as Adam and Samson, Gawain argues,

> Yet all were charmed and changed
>
> by wily womankind.
>
> I suffered just the same,
>
> so clear me of my crime. (2425-28)

The lord obliges. He, too, was "guided" (2456) by a woman: the sorceress Morgan le Fay, who sent the Green Knight in an attempt to distress and attack the Round Table. The antagonist shifts from unnatural man to unnatural woman, but the scapegoating structure remains. While these tales of honorable heroism, registered in literature, have survived numerous lifetimes, their relevance for modern horror is chiefly one of contrast. Being neither horror nor modern, they call attention as a summarized example of the traditional heroics that would not survive World War I unscathed.

The cultural history of monstrosity is the history of monster makers and hunters, the history of scapegoating and dehumanization, and the history of otherness. Giving life to monsters,

either literally or metaphorically, is a social act. In this sense, there is some similarity between the roles of monster hunter and monster maker. Admittedly, their actions are distinguished by degree and ethics, as hunting down a vampire who menaces Victorian London is a world away from assembling a monster from various body parts. Nevertheless, a similarity in *function* exists.

Like classic monster makers, such as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein or H. G. Wells's Dr. Moreau, monster hunters, too, take part in the dismissal or erasure of dignity and humanity. Once the killing is endorsed by their peers, there comes the mortal strike. For this reason, monstrification—signaling, assigning, or creating monstrous properties—is not a means restricted to the mad scientist or the cowled occultist.

Professor Van Helsing, for instance, needs Dracula to be seen as a monster so he can be hunted. While Frankenstein generates a monster in a literal sense, Van Helsing does so through discourse. Initially a difficult task, but the other central characters eventually recognize the grim nature of the count.

It may seem, at first, that we do not need Van Helsing's arguments to indicate the obvious monstrosity of Count Dracula, and, indeed, that is partially correct, but only in one sense of the word "monster." Dracula and the vampires that he creates have inherent properties that defy standard scientific reasoning, such as being simultaneously dead and alive. Under the professor's rhetoric or not, they are monsters (in Noël Carroll's science-based definition). More specifically (and here I depart from Carroll's terminology but retain his reasoning) they are monsters of *logos*. As we will see, notably in fiction written in the late twentieth century, monsters of *logos* do not present inherent physical danger. They put in peril, no doubt, our preconceived notions of normal and abnormal.

What Professor Van Helsing addresses is monstrosity of *ethos* and *pathos*, as the vampires do not conform to our morals or to our emotions. These beings cannot be understood by general scientific approaches, and their actions cannot be assimilated through any sane moral code, just as

their thwarted emotions are not relatable to a human being's. Three times they are monsters, then, and must be eradicated. So straightforward would it be, were not the monsters of some narratives within their very killers and creators.

Monstrous Duality

One of the modern monster's expository functions is to imply that, even if monsters are the product of difference, their creation often implies similarity. As Cohen explains, "the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond—of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate Within" (7). Monsters bring forth difference, and, simultaneously, seem disturbingly familiar, not to forget Freud's "The Uncanny." They assert the presence of the strange and the different, even if that includes us ourselves. Depending on the perspective, *especially if it includes ourselves.*

Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* approaches such monstrous duality (strange and familiar) in terms of masculinity. Stevenson's story affects contemporary popular culture so profoundly that distinguishing it from ideas that precede his work is as difficult as categorizing with precision the ideas about male monstrosity that only came after. Edgar Allan Poe's "William Wilson" had depicted an eerie double forty-seven years before Stevenson's, and the double, as an archetype, precedes Poe and vanishes back into history, appearing in pre-modern European folklore as changelings[21] and in some contemporary interpretations of

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[21] "A child believed to have been secretly substituted by fairies for the parents' real child in infancy" ("Changeling").

ancient-Egypt concepts for the soul.[22] Stevenson's characters, nevertheless, have left an undeniable mark in popular culture, from animated shorts made by Warner Bros.[23] to songs by The Who.[24]

In *Strange Case*, the repression of a libertine masculinity rejected by Victorian moral discourse culminates in a monstrous double that functions as a metaphor for the hypocrisies and flaws of late-nineteenth-century English morality. The double or "doppelgänger"—literally, "double-goer" ("Doppelgänger")—as a literary concept is not intrinsically tied to manhood, as it can be loosely applied to general human figures that function as a mirrored correlate to the self. In the Gothic or horror traditions, Stevenson's novella being a prominent example, the double is typically laced with uncanny qualities. The uncanny in horror fiction, traditionally read in light of Sigmund Freud's observations, denotes an unpleasant feeling or thought that, once repressed, resurfaces to assert its haunting presence. It is the family secret everybody knows but no one discusses; it is the ghost from the Gothic novel, haunting us so we do not forget our sins; and it is the double who, despite our feelings of dread and aversion, has in his or her eyes the same glimmer we see in our own.

Hyde is not merely a mirrored correlate to Jekyll, but a manifestation and a consequence of the doctor's repressed urges and feelings. Hyde *is* Jekyll. Jekyll himself reveals that he "concealed [his] pleasures" and "regarded and hid [his irregularities] with an almost morbid sense of shame." Even the idea of repression is approached vaguely, as we do not know the precise nature of his "pleasures," although we meet Hyde's violent tendencies and can speculate, given the Victorian moral hypocrisies, that sexuality also plays a part. In the same paragraph as the quotation above, Jekyll remarks that, even before Hyde or the serum, he "stood already committed to a profound

[22] See "The Soul in Ancient Egypt" and "Ka."

[23] A short film named "Hyde and Go Tweet" in which Tweety drinks from Dr. Jekyll's potion and suffers its effects.

[24] "Doctor Jimmy" and "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

duplicity of life." Jekyll's duplicity is, on the one hand, familiar and intertwined with his own personality, but, on the other, unfamiliar, as it was hidden and repressed for decades.

The idea behind such familiarity is not that it is necessarily openly acknowledged or exposed, but that it is integral part of the self, while the unfamiliarity is not seen in terms of exotic or alien, but as what is cast aside but remains inside. This sort of double is not extrinsic to one's true self; instead, it is one of its most significant components. The monster and the "hero" are the same—and all notions of true heroism or Victorian gentlemanliness are but pretenses.

In this context, the dual monster fulfills its expository function by challenging premises regarding human rationality: it personifies the lack of rational control over the self. Generally speaking, Gothic texts may expose repressed fears via doubles that remind us of how animalistic and primitive drives remain part of humanity even if repressed in social settings. Holly-Mary Romero, in her thesis *The Doppelganger in Select Nineteenth-Century British Fiction:* Frankenstein*, Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and* Dracula, reminds us that "[i]n *The Uncanny*, Freud employs such words as 'repetition,' 'primitive,' 'unfamiliar,' 'automaton,' and 'repression' [(234, 235, 220, 227, 241)], all characteristics that can be associated with [the] novels" she addresses in her work (84). In *Frankenstein*, the titular character and his physically grotesque progeny stand for authorial and parental anxiety in relation to a suppressed fear of giving birth and creating a double: the creature's monstrosity, inscribed in flesh, makes it impossible to ignore his father's moral monstrosity. Likewise, Stevenson's novella models Hyde, the primitive monster, so as to unearth the unspoken tendencies of Dr. Jekyll: but it differs by addressing not the fears of a parent or author, but the fragile rationale of the Victorian Englishman.

The polarization in *Strange Case* encompasses masculinity as a whole, involving its moral, cultural, and social aspects. In an article about professions and masculinities in works by Stevenson and H. G. Wells, Theresa Jamieson, noting that progress and degradation had gone hand in hand in Victorian England, writes, "For earlier Victorians evolution had been synonymous with

progress, but by the mid-1880s society lay in the shadow of its darker twin: devolution" (73). "That made perfect sense," Jamieson points out, "at a time when degeneracy theories were plentiful." Such degeneration shows its face in the moral disobediences of Dorian Gray or in the criminal-ridden London of Sherlock Holmes. In *Strange Case*, it is the perfect context for the formation of male monsters.

Behind the Victorian façade of decorum and dignity were the compulsions of an entire sub-section of masculinity, just as behind Jekyll lies Hyde. The humane side of the double incorporates unattainable male ideals; the monster, meanwhile, emerges from the frustration of complying to these forms of masculinity. Beynon reminds us that, in nineteenth-century England, the education of young men emphasized physical form, social rigor, and correlated with Imperialism, pointing at a morally courageous hegemonic masculinity in body and mind (27-28). On the other side of the coin was what Jamieson claims to have "publicly pathologised male sexuality": "Journalistic exposés surrounding child prostitution and homosexual brothels, as well as the press coverage of the White-chapel murders [by Jack the Ripper]" (74). Jamieson describes the moment as a hysteria that has destabilized or ruined the concept of middle-class masculinity.

Over the decades, the Jekyll/Hyde double has become metonymy for other duplicities, and the structure of masculinities in these double relationships remains similar to that of Stevenson's narrative. In Paul Compton's "The Diary of Philip Westerly," for instance, published in the *Weird Tales* magazine in 1936, a man becomes increasingly ugly, while the disfigured man he sees in the mirror becomes increasingly handsome, as in a reversed Dorian Gray state. In Robert Bloch's *Psycho*, as we will see in chapter three, the dual nature of the monster is a double gender, encompassing more than the essence of masculinities. In Stephen King's *Dark Half*, an author's aggressively masculine persona, who functions as a pen name for his less highbrow crime novels, gains physical form and commits serial murders in what he perceives as revenge. Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* revisits the Jekyll/Hyde dichotomy by presenting two equally dysfunctional

extremes of masculinity: the narrator is morose, apathetic, and incapable of expressing feelings, while his double is marked by energetic assertions of his views on anarchism and nihilism, which serve to justify his inclination toward destruction. In J. J. Abram's science-fiction television series *Fringe*, an ambitious scientist, whose marvelous discoveries come at the expense of his failure as husband and father, opens a gateway to a parallel universe, starting a dispute with his less scrupulous self from the other side and opening doors for doubles and shape-shifting monsters from this other reality. Linda Dryden notes that, when Brian A. Rose wrote *Jekyll and Hyde Adapted: Dramatizations of Cultural Anxiety in 1996*, he "estimated that around 80 films had been based on or influenced by Stevenson's classic, including the Nutty Professor series of comedy films" (13). We ought to notice how Jekyll and Hyde, as cultural icons, suggest the need to understand older patterns in fiction before delving into modern horror.

It is impossible to separate the contemporary moral/immoral double from Jekyll and Hyde, even if the concept precedes the novella. The same is true for a number of Gothic works, as they have offered us stereotypes of exceptional significance. In *Danse Macabre*, King wonders about Frankenstein's repercussion in popular culture. He writes,

> How did it happen that this modest gothic tale [*Frankenstein*], which was only about a hundred pages long in its first draft … became caught in a kind of cultural echo chamber, amplifying through the years until, a hundred and sixty-four years later, we have a cereal called Frankenberry … an old TV series called *The Munsters* … Aurora Frankenstein model kits … and a saying such as "He looked like Frankenstein" as a kind of apotheosis of ugly? (71-72)

These questions are worth asking, but their scope seems to encompass more than Mary Shelley's novel. In addition to Franken Berry, monster-inspired cereal brands include Count Chocula, Fruity Yummy Mummy, Frute Brute, and Boo Berry, which correspond to Dracula, mummies, werewolves, and ghosts. In the audio-visual media, the apparent correlate is the dozens of Universal

monster movies that were produced in the first half of the twentieth century. Finally, model kits and actions figures have gone far beyond what the Aurora Plastic Company could produce in the 1970s, now including models of hundreds or thousands of pop culture characters. Just as Frankenstein works as a referential point for cultural stereotypes such as the mad scientist and his monstrous creation, *Strange Case* has helped popularize the double and the monsters whose physical duplicity correlates with duplicities of morality and sociability.

Several illustrations or adaptations of Stevenson's novella depict Mr. Hyde as physically dreadful like countless other monsters before him. His monstrosity, in addition, is not confined to his physicality. His body, a product of Jekyll's repression, works, instead, as *one* of the possible signs for what Carroll calls the "categorical contradictoriness" (32) of the monster, the contrasting parallels (dead and alive; beast and human) that grant monsters their status of impure. This impurity also comes forth, even if more indirectly, as an immoral attitude or an unempathetic emotional disposition. The bodily duality connects to a monstrosity of *logos*, as we witness Hyde's "extraordinary looking," "down-right detestable" appearance and understand that by all conventional scientific means he should not exist. In his peculiar escapades and criminal behavior, we see the monster of *ethos*. Finally, when "trampl[ing] calmly over [a] child's body," Hyde completes the triad with an impurity of *pathos*, demonstrating an emotional carelessness so uncharacteristic of Dr. Jekyll. Over the decades, the Jekyll and Hyde have become the "ideal" monster of masculinity, fusing a desirable, possible, and amicable half with another that triggers abjection and illustrates impossibilities in terms of body, ethics, and emotions.

We may remember Mr. Hyde as the green-skinned, ape-like figure shown in the 1931 movie poster or the cover of the 1988 video game adaptation, or as the muscular brute of Alan Moore and Kevin O'Neill's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and its movie adaptation, but Mr. Hyde, in the original text, more than simply physically dreadful, has an aura that suggests strangeness. His body shows "an imprint of deformity and decay," but, more than that, because of the

purity of its evil, Mr. Hyde causes "visible misgiving of the flesh" on those who see him and evades easy description, although "[t]here is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something down-right detestable." One more reason for his quintessential monstrosity, as Edward Hyde appears to break even semiotic standards: a sign with signified but without an attainable signifier. Monstrous indeed.

Several masculine monsters from Victorian literature, and, later, modern horror, are not dreadful only in their outlooks, but also plainly (and often intentionally) immoral and unemotional. Stevenson's work helped popularize and helps typify male monsters whose transgressions express a triple masculine repression: body, thought, and emotion.[25]

Conclusion: Trouble, Blood, and Time

We witness the components of horror conventions establish themselves or mutate as we examine monsters diachronically. From *Beowulf* to Algernon Blackwood's "The Willows," horror literature preceding WWI laid the foundations of tropes that would be remodeled in the twentieth century: the honorable monster hunter, the haunted monster maker, the threats of foreign monstrosities, and the fear of monsters within us. Fiction from distant periods contextualize these patterns and establish a literary and theoretical baseline for the analysis of modern horror. As we move along a selected history of monstrosity, the utilities and shortcomings of literary conventions reveal the importance of studying the masculinities of horror fiction.

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[25] Part of the previous paragraphs is translated and adapted from an oral presentation I did, during my PhD studies, for the 2018 International Conference of ABRALIC titled "Repressão masculina em *O médico e o monstro*, *O rei de amarelo* e suas repercussões contemporâneas" ("Male repression in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The King in Yellow* and their contemporary repercussions").

Monsters are a metaphor that transits between Us and Them with enough power to declare our differences and, in time, reveal our similarities. We can recognize our virtues in monstrous beings (to see human kindness in the freaks of *Geek Love*, to recognize colonized peoples in Shakespeare's Caliban) because we have created, become familiar with, and, so to speak, killed such monsters. The fish creature in *The Shape of Water* is able to show us the wide range of romantic love because its cultural predecessor was slaughtered in *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, contributing to a pattern of monstrosities that we now may wish to reevaluate. Repugnance does not suddenly morph into recognition; it requires trouble, blood, and the passing of time.

The twentieth century, with two world wars and significant technological development, was marked by key periods of troubled and bloodied transformation. Horror fiction published during this time in the U.S., or written by Americans, records the adversities and accomplishments of the nineteen hundreds and grows into a testament that our repulsion *is* recognition. We monstrify not only what is beyond the pale, but also what we fear is within ourselves. Such uncanny identification should not come lightly, though, but rather with the awareness of, and, for some of us, with the accountability for our dead monsters. They may have died as scapegoats, but they were set up to return as martyrs. And, indeed, the monster returns.

Chapter 2: The Fragility of Heroes (1914-1939)

Those who have crossed

With direct eyes, to death's other kingdom

Remember us—if at all—not as lost

Violent souls, but only

As the hollow men

The stuffed men.

— "The Hollow Men" (T. S. Eliot, lines 15-20)

Introduction: War Heroes and Monsters

In the first decades of the twentieth century, monstrous Others were written to fulfill their function and be eliminated by heroes who, we now recognize, were both flawed and fragile. Conversely, some of those monsters had human qualities, after all. When we see human virtues in monsters and monstrosity in certain humans, we upset their traditional functions, so it is logical for the heroic monster hunter not to survive modernity unscathed. His heroic ideals, his glory, and his honor gave room to his wish to erase difference.

World War I, manhood, and horror have shaped monsters that, along with their hunters, reveal fears over national, rational, and sexual modern identities. The patterns of American horror literature within this triangular connection (war, manhood, horror) mold a response to concerns following the turn into the twentieth century: dispel the monster; heal the wounds. Some authors articulated this course of thought in all seriousness. All it took to prevent massive death was a true hero. Technological novelties were dangerous in themselves. Social change and urbanization meant social chaos. In hindsight, however, we notice that other authors denounced the insufficient simplicity of this logic. The male protectors were not the honorable, valiant heroes of before, and

their strategies were as political as they seemed altruistic. Technological advances, social changes, and urbanization inevitably happened as part of modernity. Reason for prudence, not for panic. Post-WWI horror pulp fiction strayed into *modern* heroics, in which heroes are often as rotten as the monsters they hunt and the land they inhabit.

The connections between the Great War, modern horror fiction, and turn-of-the-century masculinities range from the obvious to the terrifying and subtle. While pulp magazines such as *Weird Tales* seem short of fiction that directly incorporates elements of war into the horror genre, their contributors did not ignore the trenches. Moreover, much of what horrified the readers who handed over their 25 cents for each edition of the self-proclaimed "unique magazine" was also a horror of masculinity. Male rapists, necrophiliacs, and killers of women, as well as men who sub-jugate others even through acts of heroism, they all inhabit the pulpy pages of early-twentieth-century horror. Closing the triangular connection on which this chapter is based, the discourses favoring war and traditional masculinity nourished one another, as they implied *real* men were out there fighting (see fig. 1).

Conforming to the "war is masculinity" discourse, H. P. Lovecraft published "Pacifist War Song—1917" in March of its titular year, straying from his dream-like horror tales and cosmic monstrosities to enter the realm of poetic satire. The poem alerts readers that "our country's close to war" (17), which would be revealed truthful in less than a month for the U.S., after President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany. In the poem, making a mockery of his anti-war speaker, Lovecraft adds,

> Our fathers were both rude and bold,
>
> And would not live like brothers;
>
> But we are of a finer mould—
>
> We're much more like our mothers! (25-28)

Fig. 1 Christy, Howard Chandler. "Gee I Wish I Were a Man, I'd Join the Navy."

"Our," in this context, seems to refer to Americans and the "Greasers" (21), an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century derogatory slang that, consistent with Lovecraft's conspicuous xenophobia, referred to Mexicans near the U.S. border ("Greaser"). Lovecraft was addressing tensions old and new: the Mexican-American War and the Zimmerman Telegram, a decoded piece of communication proposing a military agreement between Germany and Mexico. The "Greasers," Lovecraft posited, would "[i]nvade our southern plains" (22). Though xenophobic as Lovecraft was, his verses and the slang were in tune with the generalized anti-Mexican sentiment of the 1910s.[26]

In another poem, Lovecraft maintains his view of war opposition as cowardice. "The Peace Advocate," also published in 1917, tells of a vicar who "was a man of peace" (7) and "knew not bravery" (15), but who, after "quick to his brain came manhood's thought" (41), decides to rescue troops and defend his family alongside his son. As an epilogue, he burns a Bible and, manhood renewed, stands against peace. The master of weird fiction made no efforts to hide his position: war did not merely require manhood; it was *the* test for manhood. One did not exist without the other.

While Lovecraft set his sights directly on the Great War, it frequently edged into pulp horror fiction indirectly, almost in an incidental design, as if implied rather than addressed. Some minor allusions, such as the Viennese origins and personal contacts of the mad scientist Dr. Calgroni, the antagonist of a story we will approach later, serve first as an example of the monstrification of foreigners and second as war commentary. When tensions that would lead to World War II and to the Cold War would come forth, the fear of communism and the fear of the atom

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[26] Monica Muñoz Martinez provides detailed historical commentary on conflicts between Mexico and the U.S. in *The Injustice Never Leaves You*. Her comment on a cartoon in which Uncle Sam shovels dead Mexican revolutionaries into a trash can summarizes my point here: "In the 1910s the figure of the menacing Mexican revolutionary and bandit was cemented in the popular imagination" (19).

would become an emblem for the fear of the Other. Horror in the 1910s, 1920s, and most of the 1930s, though, displayed prejudice whose lack of identifiable rhyme or reason makes it hard to diagnose only one or two main thematic patterns of xenophobia. Generalized animosity painted monstrous features in several Others, be they from Europe, from Asia, from Egypt and other countries in Africa or in the Middle East, or from Mexico, and even from within the U.S.

While one story rejected the Viennese, others would paint the Chinese as morally monstrous, providing undisguised literary examples of the Yellow Peril.[27] They admonish against exotic diseases in "The Green and Gold Bug" or against the moral monstrosities who threaten America in "The Dust of Death." "The Desert Lich," in similar fashion, paints a stereotypical picture of Arab masculinity. The curse of the Egyptian mummy, too, was entering popular culture through American stories such as Seabury Quinn's "Body and Soul" and Robert Carr's "Spider-Bite," and through British tales like Agatha Christie's "The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb."

Against those monsters of bizarre masculinities there was, no doubt, the male hero. He is the virile explorer who saves the country or the scholar who momentarily leaves his study and reveals, often via romantic encounters, to be more than a bookworm. To every monster biting on the neck of the U.S.'s national identity there was a hero, a monster hunter, a protector—for better or, quite often, for worse.

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[27] Leung Wing-Fai, in a book review for *The Irish Times*, provides a precise definition that contains somber yet humorous imagery: "The phrase yellow peril (sometimes yellow terror or yellow spectre), coined by Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, in the 1880s, after a dream in which he saw the Buddha riding a dragon threatening to invade Europe, blends western anxieties about sex, racist fears of the alien other, and the Spenglerian belief that the West will become outnumbered and enslaved by the East" ("Perceptions of the East").

Protecting Nation, Reason, and Manhood

The eerie tales of early-twentieth-century America, like most pulp fiction, have not aged well in terms of social values, but survive, nevertheless, as priceless cultural remains. Their heroes, whose backward methods we may now question, already stood for decaying classical heroics and, if we understand classical heroes to fight in the name of honor, we find no surprise in pulp horror fiction being short of heroism in its classical form. Horror pulps were led, instead, by armies of unprepared men who would rather die than admit any mistake or any stain on their character. Mad scientists create monsters only to prove they can ("The Extraordinary Experiment of Dr. Calgroni") or gloat over immoral scientific accomplishments ("Doctor X"), while other men face the gallows to punish women ("The Gallows"), or die by the hand of women even while confident of their superior, tough manhood ("The Mystery of Black Jean"), mock African-American super-stitions to emphasize a strong sense of white masculinity ("Black Cunjer"), cowardly attempt to murder love rivals ("The Incubus"), or are framed to believe that their (invalid) guilt for rape and murder sprout from sexual impotence ("I Am the Madman!"). Bravery loses all associations with heroism in the classical sense and is appropriated as a means to assert the masculinities of hollow men.

In her thesis on heroism in British WWI literature, Cristina Povidori encapsulates the cultural shift of the Great War through a term that "plac[es] a particular emphasis on this sense of discontinuity between pre-war and post-war constructions of heroic masculinity, especially on the idea that the nineteenth-century hero was replaced by a weak, vulnerable, maimed and emasculated human being" (115). Even if it serves us here only as a reminder that we ought to observe post-War heroes (or monster hunters) with a modern eye, the term gains an eerie quality in our context: she discusses the death of heroes and heroism as the "ghost myth." The technological and social impact of the Great War and of modernity itself was the framework of a world where classical heroism—or a heroism based on honor—had little place in many artistic manifestations, including horror fiction. Extending Povidori's metaphor, we understand that, while righteous heroic

characters or presentations were dead, their ghost, as a distorted version, would haunt the twentieth century.

Shortly after the turn of the century, Lovecraft's monster hunters—archaeologists, professors, antiquarians, librarians—would seek monsters not to put them down as a display of honor, but to accomplish the impossible: to classify the monster in conventional categories and secure ontological harmony. No wonder they fail and lose the sanity and rationality they sought to protect. Such nuances remain restricted to Lovecraft's cosmic horror fiction, as his non-horror poems dealing directly with war encourage the achievement of honor through combat in battles that he did not fight, despite his attempt at enlisting.

Overseas, classical heroes made even less sense after WWI. When the plot of *Dracula* became the plot of *Nosferatu* in 1922, the horror context of German Expressionism required more than the unsubtle change in characters names to disguise the source material. *Dracula*'s honorable classical heroism lost a significant part of its appeal after the Great War. Professor Van Helsing, who is "willing to peril even our own souls for the safety of one we love—for the good of mankind, and for the honour and glory of God" (ch. XXIV) becomes Professor Bulwer, who merely gives a few lectures of symbolic value and arrives too late at the scene of the vampire's demise, which happens without the aid of any masculine hero. In American horror pulps, these monster hunters protecting nationality, rationality, and sexuality seemed equally set up to fail.

While there is not a one-to-one relation between WWI and the modern design of monster hunters, as if the classical hero had died as the first trench was dug or the armistice signed, the turn into the twentieth century is the context for the roots of modern war, modern horror, monsters, and protectors. Some examples of the mode of heroism that associated with modernity precedes WWI: Machen had already depicted fearful monster hunters acting in shame instead of honor in *The Great God Pan*, for instance. The modern hero was not born in an instant.

Nevertheless, the technological aspects of WWI (e.g., chemical warfare, submarines, tanks) made images and narratives of honorable heroes pale in the face of the ironwork of the Great War. Peter Filene interprets the conflagration as a promise of reasserted masculinity, as some men "envisioned the battlefield as a proving ground where they could enact and repossess the manliness that modern American society had baffled" (97). The promise, naturally, was unfulfilled.

Filene also asks a crucial question about masculine self-reflection during the war: "Did [men] see themselves as chivalric knights riding tanks or planes in the name of democracy and manhood?" (99). Among various answers to this comprehensive question, he emphasizes how warfare, contrary to men's initial envision, upset, or wrecked any male exultation. In an analysis of masculinity and historical accounts of WWI, Ana Carden-Coyne cites and reviews a number of historians and observes that, in some accounts, extreme violence "undercut fantasies about heroic warfare and the capacity of military masculinity to withstand modern technological warfare" (5) and "[t]he expectations of stoicism and heroism placed on individuals were no match for the scale and reach of industrialised slaughter" (2). W. Scott Poole, too, after tracing the connections between the conflict and European cultural manifestations, such as horror in German Expressionist films and horrifying imagery in Kafka, turns his eyes toward the U.S. and summarizes,

> The social and economic events that followed the Great War, unwinding its consequences like the opening of a shroud, eventually negated the happy public pronouncements of "the American dream" and "the American century." The telling of an American horror story became possible, inescapable. (ch. 1)

While attributing oversimplified causations between modern American horror, masculinities, and WWI would not do justice to the nuances of Poole's analysis, we ought to seriously consider how some forms of monster fiction carry the weight of the real horror of war and of the shocking and contradictory remodeling of early-twentieth-century masculinities. Having considered Filene, Carden-Coyne, and Poole's observations, and with the complexity of Filene's question still in

mind, we must also consider the cultural and literary implications of such critical moment. We may ask a version of our guiding question, then: *What are some relevant post-War patterns of representations of masculinity in the monsters and monster hunters of pulp horror fiction?*

Primarily, even to contemplate American horror fiction through a broad analysis, one must recognize how the immense amount of material can be unsettling or, in a more constructive perspective, humbling. Defining and limiting oneself to specific patterns only reveals that these patterns branch out, intersect, enhance, rework, and overshadow each other. Even if many of the texts published in pulp magazines like *Weird Tales* and *Strange Stories* lie under the umbrella of horror fiction—crime literature and science fiction are common exceptions—several are outside the scope of this dissertation.

Lovecraft's "The Outsider" presents monstrosity in its excellence: a being flees the ruins of his underground home only to realize the monster everybody fears is the being itself. It inhabits and crosses a border, resurfaces from what was deemed forgotten, and is neither alive nor dead. There is no reason and there is no evidence, however, to indicate this monster is male. It remains genderless; that is, if we assume it still possesses any of its humanity.

Of similar shape is "The Closing Hand," published in the first issue of *Weird Tales* and penned by Farnsworth Wright, the writer who would become the magazine's editor during its golden age, from 1924 to 1940. Wright's story puts two sisters against a terrifying nocturnal presence. The older one decides to investigate and dies, while the younger falls asleep and unknowingly stays beside her sister's body in the dark until sunrise. The reader is left to speculate whether the presence was "a disembodied spirit" (98), "some escaped beast" (99), or "a murderer." The narrator specifies that a "burglar" carries the responsibility for the murder, but it is hard to be sure after the doubtful tone of the preceding narrative. As Stephen King would do in *It* decades later, Wright wrote directly of children's imagination and of a presence embodying fear of fear itself. This story, nevertheless, has little connection with masculinity.

I. W. D. Peters's "The Gallows," on the contrary, points a direct finger to masculinity. In this short story, published only sixty-three pages after Wright's in the first issue of *Weird Tales*, a man dies at the gallows to punish and inflict guilt on his adulterous wife. It involves defamation, public perceptions of manhood, and a calculated wish to harm. Nevertheless, there are no monsters in "The Gallows."

The examples seem as numerous as the pages of those pulp magazines. In those pages, hundreds of stories reached their public—hundreds of diverse stories that still serve as evidence of the versatility and the ingenuity of their writers. It was part of the birth of a repulsive, yet intriguing child: the modern American horror story. This was not a child born of chance, but of consequence.

Protectors of Nationality

Let a series of images stand as example: an American man waking up inside a crashed airplane surrounded by mosquitoes in an alligator-ridden section of the Everglades; the same man riding a canoe beside his two saviors; the man being welcomed to a research facility in this isolated place, accompanied by the two leading scientists (one is an American and the other is a peculiar Chinese) and being introduced to their experiments with fungoids; a man ablaze lunging toward some Chinese men, opening fire with his rifle; the American army storming the research facility by plane and by boat. This series of images, which come from key plot points of Hugh Jeffries's "The Dust of Death," could have been taken from a war film. In Jeffries's 1931 story, published in *Weird Tales*, war against the Chinese and their biological weapon is prevented by the twisted heroics of one single American man.

The U.S. required constant vigilance, as terror lurked in its marshes, its streets, and in its homes. And that terror was not American. That terror belonged elsewhere and had to return to its place or be terminated. This anti-immigrant rhetoric, which is yet to leave the pages of American horror fiction and the screens of TVs switched on to world news, was also in the visual art that

advertised the pulps. The April/May 1931 edition of *Weird Tales* came with a cover by which, in fact, we *can* judge the magazine. A stereotypical Asian "wise man" stares at the reader. His expression lies between preoccupation, menace, and mere neutrality, while his yellow and purple robes, the red dragons painted on his Qing dynasty hat, and the inhumanly long and sharp nails of his right hand shift the interpretation of the image toward mysticism, exoticism, and powers of an incomprehensible nature (see fig. 2). The title of the cover story erases any doubts: "The Dust of Death." In case the cover and the two additional illustrations that accompany Jeffries's short story are not sufficient, its initial sentences define the nature of its monster once more. The tale opens with the summarized account of how "[o]ne yellow man aided by the stolen brains of a white man of science came close to wiping out of existence the civilization of North America" (320). Following an airplane crash in the Everglades, the pilot Greg Morris, along with his saviors—Joe Big, a Native American; and Polly Houlton, the "pretty girl in the canoe" (322)—reaches a research facility and meets Doctor Tsu Liang (the "yellow man") and Professor Howard Houlton (Polly's father and "the white man of science"). Not long after the uncovering of Tsu Liang's menacing character, Greg Morris brings to light the thinly-veiled secret of the research operations: the Chinese intended to develop a fungus capable of erasing human free will with the purpose of political domination. What follows is a series of altercations involving firearms and fungal weapons that culminates in Greg Morris and the American army killing the Chinese terrorists and saving the Houltons and the U.S.

"The Dust of Death" brings an undisguised combat between a post-war heroic American masculinity and a foreign threat taking roots in American land. On one side of the fight, the morally monstrous Doctor Tsu Liang and his capability of replicating monstrosity into others stand for a

Fig. 2 Senf, Curtis Charles. Cover of *Weird Tales*, May 1931.

generalized image of Eastern domination without much profundity beyond its thirst for political control. On the other side, we have Greg Morris, the airplane pilot who typifies the male American hero whose free soul refuses to remain attached to such things as a family, a home, or even, metaphorically, the ground beneath his feet. Leslie Fiedler, in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, summarizes the lone American hero as "the typical male protagonist of our fiction [who] has been a man on the run, harried into the forest and out to sea, down the river or into combat—anywhere to avoid 'civilization,' which is to say, the confrontation of a man and woman which leads to the fall to sex, marriage, and responsibility" (26). The airplane pilot whose solitary flight gets interrupted by a crash and following complications asserts his heterosexuality while rejecting the supposed constrains of traditional relationships. The strategy, not unlike the one employed to monstrify the Chinese, consists in emphasizing heterosexual desire while painting women as unusual outsiders. "Women are strange creatures," Greg Morris says. He adds that his opinion is widespread. "Other men have said that before" (348). If we concur with Fiedler's definition of "civilization" for this American hero as the restrains of a traditional heterosexual relationship, we become privy to one of the ironies in "The Dust of Death": Greg Morris fights to save "the civilization of North America" (320) while simultaneously avoiding it. This typical American hero combats not only a foreign threat to American ideals, but also the very ideals he struggles to protect.

An ironic form of politics, at the same time, seems to have gotten lost among the pulp-fiction stereotypes. The Native American Joe Big, despite the cliché servitude of his representation, reminds us that, while Chinese domination is the main threat, the Everglades have long since been populated by Native-American peoples who went through their own horrifying process of subjugation. Greg Morris, however, is oblivious to that.

After the initial altercations, Joe Big leaves the Everglades to meet Greg Morris in New York and reveals "everybody gone or dead … Uncle dead. All Seminole dead. Me—I last of my nation" (342). Readers cannot be sure if Joe Big speaks hyperbolically or if, in a form of alternate

history, the Seminole people or a specific tribe have literally been subjected to a genocide.[28] Greg Morris's response revels the central preoccupations of the narrative, "I am going back to the Everglades. Tsu Liang has caught Professor Houlton and Polly. I go to rescue them. Or perhaps avenge them" (343). The Seminole are erased and, with Joe Big's death at the end, vanish from the narrative without disturbing it. A glorified form of national masculinity is defined on opposition to the conquered, who are quickly discarded. Once Joe Big is dead and the irony remains unaddressed, Greg Morris's domineering masculinity reigns free.

The anxiety over Chinese domination weighs on the characters' minds throughout the narrative, but, in tune with Poole's interpretation of horror as a depiction of real, ongoing perils instead of merely a reflected anxiety over future possibilities (ch. 1), some dominance has already been established prior to Greg Morris's serendipitous plane accident. Polly's brother has been affected by the fungus. And Dr. Houlton has been tricked into changing his American Dream of "turn[ing] the Everglades to great economic value" (323) into the development of a biological weapon. It is true that country-wide domination remains merely a fearful possibility; nevertheless, the Chinese monster breeds in *American* soil. Closing borders would not be as effective anymore, the narrative hints. Eradicating such monsters requires deportation or more lethal forms of banishment. The unsettling assumption behind the narrative resonates with the xenophobic warnings popularized, for instance, by Lovecraft's fiction: it took a "true" white man to recognize and clean the contamination of a foreignness that had already installed itself within the country.

In *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, Lovecraft expresses most directly the U.S. fear of racial contamination. When visiting the desolate coastal town of Innsmouth, Massachusetts, during a tour of New England done partly to document his genealogy, the unnamed protagonist uncovers the

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[28] The Florida peninsula was first occupied by the Calusa and the Tequesta, who, after a couple of centuries of deleterious interactions with the Spanish, gave way to the Seminole.

taboo history of the place. According to some residents of neighboring towns, Innsmouth was plagued by disease and inhabited by strange, deformed people; to those privy to its secrets, it bore an even darker history. Zadok Allen, an alcoholic resident, reveals the town's past through a series of aimless, drunken comments, indicating that, generations before, the people of Innsmouth had interbred with a repulsive race of saltwater humanoids, the Deep Ones. Only partially phased by Zadok's narrative, the protagonist stays in town and, overnight, witnesses the true identity of the residents, understanding Zadok's stories to be literal. Months later, he finds courage to restart the documentation of his genealogy and discovers, through a series of antiques and family heirlooms, to be himself part of the hybrid people of Innsmouth. The novella ends with supernatural forces calling the protagonist to join his kin in their ancient ocean home of Y'ha-nthlei, where he believes "we [the Deep Ones] shall dwell amidst wonder and glory forever" (858).

This final remark brings unexpected depth to the novella. A straightforward reading, if we bear in mind Lovecraft's open distrust and repulsion over immigrants, would paint *The Shadow over Innsmouth* as the quintessential Lovecraftian tale. Being part of the Cthulhu mythos, it becomes even more traditional as a representation of the author's body of work. Alternatively, we could read the narrator's closing change of spirits (from hating to seeking the hybrids of Innsmouth) as Lovecraft's attempt at reconciling with the foreignness that usually caused in him such repulse. Either approach, however, lacks the depth of Tracy Bealer's reading of *Innsmouth* within a modernist context. She understands *Innsmouth* neither as an outlet for Lovecraft's racism nor as an authorial change of hearts. Instead, she pinpoints a modernist ambivalence, as *Innsmouth* "literalizes the racial anxieties activated by modernist social change into a horror plot, and, through the resolution of that plot, reveals a writer working through and considering an empathetic, though still deeply ambivalent, aesthetic response to racial difference" (45). On the one hand, we have a "white, male subject;" on the other, the "racially marked immigrants." What connects them is the

"Innsmouth look" (Lovecraft 820), a term characters use to refer to the Innsmouthians' odd facial features.

According to Bealer, the look ambiguously marks the hybrid people as ostracized and humiliated but also as a powerful, dangerous race whose very gaze invades and prods its target (47, 48). As a counterpoint for Frantz Fanon's identification of a racist gaze in Lovecraft's novella, Bealer cites a passage indicating how the "Innsmouth look" (here not the features, but the act of looking) "lead[s] the *narrator* to feel … confinement" (48): "I could not escape the sensation," the narrator tells, "of being watched from ambush on every hand by sly, staring eyes that never shut" (825). The ambiguous appearance/gazing, brought together not only by the word "look," but also by the disgusting effect of the Innsmouthian physical monstrosity, embodies a modernist approach to a monster whose power comes from the same place as its powerlessness.

She, however, is not for a reading that completely omits racism from the novella, but for the realization that, despite Lovecraft's disdain of modernism and modernity (Poole 41) the narration of *Innsmouth* "reveals both an obsession to categorize and degrade difference *and* the unsettling realization that the racialized other is always already looking back" (48), which is "indicative of modernist ambivalence towards the racial other" and "produces [through the narrator's body] a tenuous space for an empathic engagement with otherness" (46). Bealer's reading is a valuable move in the direction of a psychoanalytic interpretation of Lovecraft's relations to the Other, but it should not be taken too literally, as, despite the ambivalence in some of Lovecraft's narratives, his racism and his xenophobia were extreme, overt, and obvious, not ambivalent.

Leif Sorensen, writing about pulp fiction as a modernist archive, develops an argument parallel to Beal's, but focused on Lovecraft's interests on the vestiges of American history. Sorensen writes, "Lovecraft effectively negotiates between two different and opposed archives: an antiquarian trove of the familiar and reassuring and a pseudo-ethnographic one of the different and horrifying" (502). This text-centered interpretation recognizes a less empathetic Lovecraft

than Beal's, as Sorensen identifies tension and opposition, not reconciliation. While more solid, it lacks Beal's understanding of the different and the Other not as an archive or a vestige, but as an active force capable of "looking back." As we will see later when discussing more recent works, such as Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*, monsters are the scariest not only as a symbol of utter alterity, but in their capacity of turning our gaze right back at us.

While Poole's theory of horror narratives functioning as witnesses instead of warnings applies more seamlessly to post-WWI European horror culture, it nevertheless holds true even in countries where no trenches were dug. Racial and political turmoil in America during the turn into the twentieth century should not be underestimated, especially in relation to foreigners. James Whitman, for example, observes that American anti-immigrant and second-citizenship laws were present even in discussions of Nazi policies (38). "From the late nineteenth century onward," he writes, "the United States came to be regarded as 'the leader in developing explicitly racist policies of nationality and immigration' [(Fitzgerald and Cook-Martin, *Culling the Masses* 7)], and American immigration and naturalization practices were attracting plenty of notice in Europe well before the emergence of the Nazi movement" (36). Especially relevant to our context here are the Immigration Act of 1917,[29] which banned immigrants from some regions in Asia, and the Immigration Act of 1924,[30] which reduced immigrant quotas and banned migrants from Asia completely. The War

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[29] According to the Museum of Chinese in America, "Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1917, which added to the number of undesirables banned from entering the country, including but not limited to, 'idiots,' 'feeble-minded persons,' 'epileptics,' 'insane persons,' alcoholics, 'professional beggars,' all persons 'mentally or physically defective,' polygamists, and anarchists … [and people from] a region that included much of eastern Asia and the Pacific Islands … Previously, only the Chinese had been excluded from admission to the country" ("Immigration Act of 1917").

[30] "In all of its parts, the most basic purpose of the 1924 Immigration Act was to preserve the ideal

made its impression in regards to economic changes (e.g., increase of women's work) influencing and influenced by social changes (e.g., first- and second-wave feminism, immigration bans), and horror pulp fiction is a testament of the fears brought about by such changes.

"The Green and Gold Bug," whose short narrative relies on a triple danger to nationality, rationality, and sexuality, brings the Chinese threat through its titular insect, which functions as curse and a warning. Returning from their honeymoon in China, a man is deemed sick, and his wife Josephine plays the irrational woman part by assigning his malady to a revengeful Chinese "magician, or priest, or soothsayer or something, [who] had power with the Chinese gods" (93). Her rational father is immediately dismissive,

> Dick has got some low-down foreign plague. It don't matter whether the Democrats or the Republicans are in power, there's no place like the U.S.A. Confound these outlandish, God-forsaken, evil-smelling places, where all the pests and misery of the world are bred. (94)

The exaggerated tone seems to acknowledge the kind of irony that is lost in "The Dust of Death": Josephine's descendants probably migrated from some "outlandish, God-forsaken, evil-smelling places" (94) into the U.S.

Under the rhetoric of Josephine's father, the same finger that points at the Chinese points at his American family. His comment exposes the political nature of the narrative and dismisses Josephine's non-traditional explanation for her husband's malady. Since she is far from being a

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of U.S. homogeneity," affirms the U.S. Department of State's Office of the Historian ("The Immigration Act of 1924"). The act, which reduces the established immigration quotas, states, "[t]he annual quota of any nationality shall be 2 per centum of the number of foreign-born individuals of such nationality resident in continental United States as determined by the United States census of 1890, but the minimum quota of any nationality shall be 100" (United States, Congress, House, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence 159).

successful male protector, her preoccupation is unacknowledged and her words are mute. Her father ends with an advice characteristic of his tone, "Just smile, little girl, and get ready to go to housekeeping" (94). A few paragraphs later, the sick husband, lacking his "human qualities, mind and body" (95), murders his wife and commits suicide. The narrative assigns Josephine a counterpoint to the male protector: the belief in the supernatural. As we will see in the next two sections, the horror pulp protector is not only of a particular patriotism, but is also defined by his rationality and his gender. "The Green and Gold Bug" shows the supposed dangers of living outside the protection of the rational American male.

Even though the presence of an openly nationalist male protector or monster hunter characterizes the plot of a limited number of stories, his marks spread violently across pulp horror fiction. Even in his absence, the structure in which he participates survives. Contrasting with the homely, burger-and-fries American horror[31] of late twentieth century, earlier tales of the genre, set sometimes in American soil, sometimes abroad, rely heavily on a foreign Other, often fetishized to the point of becoming attractive in its own repulsion.

The icons of this fetishized foreigner may be the ancient Egyptian mummies, whose sarcophagi, when opened as far as in another continent, threatened the U.S. with curses that could cross the Atlantic. Sara Sallam, in her thesis on dehumanization in mummy photographs and films, introduces her subject by reminding us that "[i]n the late eighteenth century, the Napoleonic

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[31] Stephen King, when describing his type-casting as a horror writer and his "plain fiction for plain folks" (697), has characterized his work as "the literary equivalent of a Big Mac and a large fries from McDonald's" (697). Rather than interpreting this as a self-derogatory comment, the light-hearted tone of the foreword containing this phrase suggests another reading. King takes everyday American life to meet typical and popular American anxieties that often correspond to human fears in general, as his worldwide sales suggest.

expedition to Egypt refuelled this interest [in ancient Egyptian customs], and established Egyptology as a scientific discipline. Consequently, a period of popular fascination with mummies, known as 'Mummymania,' swept across Europe and most of the English-speaking world" (1). Even after centuries, dehumanized mummies remain signs for the "exotic" customs of the Other. Sallam pinpoints several key periods in her discussion: for instance, the beginning of the aesthetic portrayal of mummies as "inanimate artefacts" (1) in the final decades of the nineteenth century, and the early decades of the twentieth century, when the mummy was established within the horror cinematic conventions as a monster. People living in this last period could also reach exoticized ancient Egypt through pulp fiction, as tales of cursed pyramids and evil pharaohs gained popularity in magazines such as *Fantastic Adventures*, *Terror Tales*, and *Weird Tales*.

In Lovecraft's "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs," ghost-written for Harry Houdini as a fictional autobiographical account, the narrator performs one of his famous escapes when confined in Egypt within an unknown structure by a mysterious tour guide who may be, in fact, the modern embodiment of a pharaoh. The tale takes a turn into typical Lovecraftian horror and directs readers even beyond the usual associations of ancient Egypt to treasures and curses, as the fictionalized Houdini, not unlike Lovecraft's typical male explorer, declares, "The East … Egypt … truly, this dark cradle of civilization was ever the well-spring of horrors and marvels unspeakable!" (10). Unlike his fictional American towns, such as Innsmouth or the nameless place in "The Street," Lovecraft's Egypt is not plagued by migrant horrors, but is *intrinsically* an evil place. True to its cosmic horror tones, "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs" gives us a fallible protector, who, instead of banishing the monster and erasing the perceived threat, is so dismayed by his encounter with monstrosity that his only escape is to brush away the entire experience as "my own fantastic imagination" (4).

In "Body and Soul," Seabury Quinn's detective Jules de Grandin uncovers a successful attempt of transferring a soul from a criminal to a mummy brought to the U.S. from Egypt. No Egyptian curse or archeological mystery plays central part in this story, but the mummy's body still

serves as a vessel for evil. It cannot be easily destroyed (it survives several gunshots, for instance) and comes as an easily found body of minimal importance if lost. Egypt and Egyptology also give a general nod to Eastern exoticism and supernatural atmosphere as viewed through a lens of otherization, which ties nicely with the supernatural vs. scientific tension involved in the attempt of putting one's soul into a new body.

"Spider-Bite," written by a fifteen-year-old Robert Spencer Carr, is another traditional account of ancient Egypt. Two researchers open a secret passage to a tomb and, following the instructions on a scroll, bring a mummified scribe back to life with the sole purpose of finding lost riches. The scribe, after an attempt at murdering his reanimators, is mortally wounded by the same peculiar spider whose venom injected new life into his body. Having only male characters, it is yet another straightforward account whose scared natives, full of "pet superstitions" (744), oppose the reasonable, intellectual, and American way of thinking.

These stories are woven into popular culture so firmly that many of us might find it difficult to imagine mummies without also conjuring up the fear of curses, the physical disgust, and the threat that accompany these dead bodies of ancient Egyptians who, we also probably imagine, walk back and forth with extended arms, a stiff gait, and a stern expression. "The revivification of mummies itself transforms them into spectacles," Sallam writes, "turning them from merely dead bodies to uncanny revived creatures" (29). Undead monsters by themselves are too diverse to always carry a negative connotation, but Sallam's comments are best read when considering how spectators are led to view the mummy, as a visual cinematic sign, in a lens of otherness and aversion, but also of wonder and even voyeurism. In some magazine covers, for instance, Egyptian exoticism is mixed with eroticism and bodily violence in the forced mummification of partially nude women (see figs. 3 and 4).
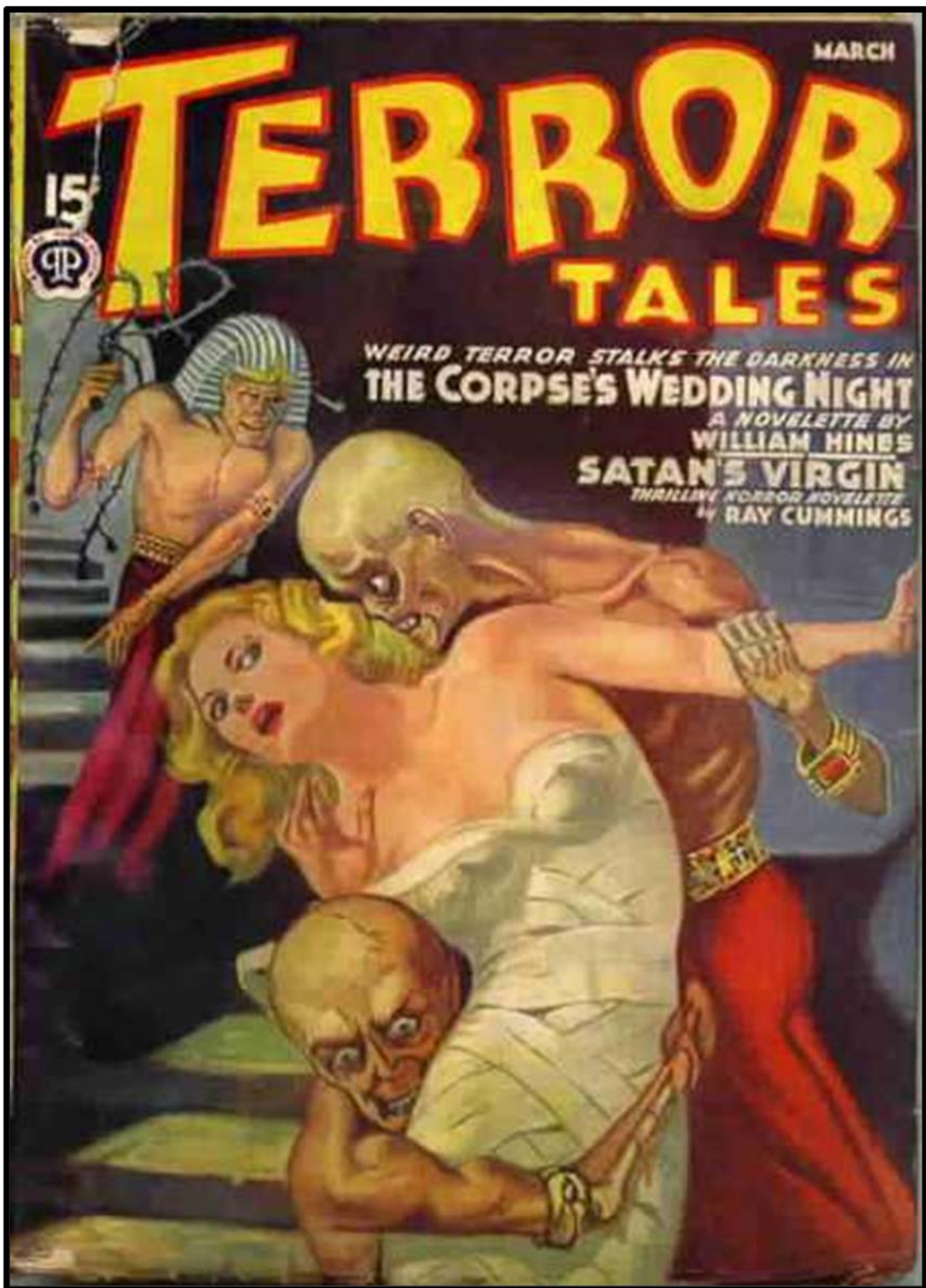
Fig. 3 Drew, John. Cover of *Terror Tales*, March 1940.

Fig. 4 Cover of *Terror Tales*, Mar-Apr 1939.

Fortunately, we can at least dial down our mummy fears when the monster hunter arrives to save the day. Sallam interprets the threat of the mummy as an evil necessary to its narrative and liable to be contained, since mummy stories (or at least their early-twentieth-century versions) typically have the white male protagonist as a referential center. In other words, and in a perspective of monster theory, mummies have the scapegoating function of momentarily de-centering the narrative and being removed in order to reassert the feeling that all is well now, we do not have to worry about those far-away lands and their odd people. Each heroic attempt at saving the day, however, is also one additional brick forming a cultural wall. As Sallam writes, "each and every mummy monster film affirms at its end the superiority of modernity and the West" (29). Despite being wide in its generalization, Sallam's statement provides a good overview of her body of work. Bringing it closer to our discussion, we may rephrase it as a reminder that the monster hunter, in pulp horror fiction, erases difference and establishes dominance by killing the monster and neutralizing the Other. The foreign monster, in opposition, highlights the perceived alienness of the immigrant or the non-American, reveals the rampant fear over the rupture of geopolitical boundaries, and serves as a stand-in for practices deemed esoteric or enigmatic.

We could posit that, following WWI, American horror fiction warned readers that the monster was not satisfied with being contained *out there* anymore. Geographical and social transgression, however, has always been in the nature of the monster. It seems more reasonable to understand this pattern of the monstrous foreigner and the patriot male protector as a change not in the ontology of monstrosity, but in the assumptions behind horror culture: it was too late to warn; it was a time to bear witness, as the monster was on its way.

"The Dust of Death" implies that the Chinese were not welcome in American academia, but begrudgingly tolerated. Lovecraft's warnings against "mixed races," too, only made sense in a context in which these multiple ethnicities already shared family trees. In "The Street," the foreigners resemble a plague that takes over a city and overshadow its former inhabitants, gradually

rendering public borders an obsolete concept and public living a nightmare. *The Shadow over Innsmouth* drives the point home with the threat of the Deep Ones. Even mummies threaten to return, either as the present-day re-embodiment of pharaohs or as a punitive curse asserting the past in the present.

As Lovecraft also suggests in "Dagon," one could see oncoming monstrosity when looking at the ongoing war, inadvertently seeing, also, the insinuating darkness of the end of the world. It is the attack of a German "sea-raider" (23) that initiates the chain of events that culminates in a sailor, lost at sea, finding a deserted canyon formation in the ocean and feeling "on the edge of the world; peering over the rim into a fathomless chaos of eternal night" (25). There he finds an uncanny monolith and the scaly giant monster that worships it. The sense of post-war desolation reaches us even more directly than the imagery of that witness of chaos: "I dream of a day when [the monstrous race of sea giants] may rise above the billows to drag down in their reeking talons the remnants of puny, war-exhausted mankind" (27). Such chaos comes as an apocalypse sans revelation: "universal pandemonium."[32]

For every monster threatening a sense of nationality, several others would threaten the social fabric as a whole, or at least the very *rationality* so characteristic of the traditional masculinity

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[32] The use of the word "pandemonium" is not without connection to its creator John Milton. Dagon, originally a Bronze Age deity, appears as one of Satan's followers in *Paradise Lost* (line 462). Lovecraft's narrator admits that "[t]hrough my terror ran curious reminiscences of *Paradise Lost*, and of Satan's hideous climb through the unfashioned realms of darkness" (25). The imagery in "Dagon" is indeed hellish, but the religious elements, by providing an opposite image, only emphasize the secular nature of the expected end of times. When the "Fish-God" (26) attacks, humankind will already be, after all, only the "remnants" of a "puny, war-exhausted" version of itself. We need little help in our own termination.

of our early-twentieth-century monster hunter. Such rationality walks hand-in-hand with the xenophobic patriotism discussed here. The brave and reasonable American men keep company with superstitious non-Americans, often cowards, but suitable for work. They are the native helpers in "Spider-Bite," who are threatened at gunpoint when they refuse to use their "monkeylike agility" (739) to continue the exploration of a tomb. Or the "offensive Bedouins who inhabited a squalid mud village" and "pestiferously assailed every traveler" (5) in "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs." This trump of "civilized" Americans over "savages" gains an ironic quality when even Native Americans are portrayed as not sufficiently American, as is the case of Joe Big in "The Dust of Death." Sorensen's comment on Lovecraft's interest in ethnography fits well here, as, generally speaking, it applies to a significant number of pulp horror stories: "For Lovecraft, rational, scientific representation is only proper when the subject matter is the familiar. When the subject matter derives from a foreign culture, in fact, Lovecraft maintains that such a pose is actively misleading in its implication that such material could or should be relevant to a member of another culture" (512). In other words, seeing rational thought in Anglo-Saxons is a norm, while any thought at all coming from other peoples is incomprehensible and without value. It is no wonder that the typical American patriotic monster hunter of pulp horror is also a man of reason, and in no commendable form.

Protectors of Rationality

Horror fiction, especially narrative concerning the supernatural, commonly plays between two varieties of knowledge: on one end, science, empiricism, and logic; on the other, mysticism, folklore, and the supernatural. The first reassures us that nothing is out there, that ghosts exist only in myths, tales, and unhealthy minds, while the second warns us, and, heeding its words, we sleep with the lights on. In pulp horror fiction, scientists, professors, archeologists, and academics embody empirical knowledge, while the paranormal often takes the stage as cosmic monsters and

monstrous humans defying science with supernatural powers. Consequently, as in *Dracula*, the protectors of rationality may drive a metaphorical or literal stake through the heart of the beast.

The alternative, also recurrent in the genre, seems less desirable for the agents of reason. The supernatural may be impervious to attacks of rationality and even to reason itself, switching power dynamics. In *Burn, Witch, Burn*, for instance, the female expert in black magic indeed ends scorched, but through most of the narrative she fights the protagonist, a medical doctor, in a battle of wits. His is scientific, proven, and measurable; hers is mystical, irrational, *and true*. As the witch burns, so does the protagonist's conviction in science. In this pattern, male protectors of rationality survive their encounter with the supernatural, but at the cost of their sanity. The epitome of this fall from reason is Cthulhu and other cosmic monsters waking from their slumber in dark depths. They give form— often diffuse form—to whatever walks outside human comprehension.

While we could regard cosmic horror and Lovecraftian horror as the same, we ought to recognize the benefits of a more nuanced conceptualization, especially in the context of modernism and post-War pulps in the U.S. Cosmic horror, through a traditional "affect and tone of horror," attempts "to undermine the human presumption of knowledge, displaying the abyssal contrast between delusions of human exceptionalism and the reality that we are but one species of animal among thousands, struggling for survival on one planet among millions, in a universe whose virtually infinite reaches are beyond our meager ability to grasp or understand" (Sean Moreland, 164-65). Human experiences, especially those of the senses and of the sciences, guide the protagonists of cosmic horror fiction to the unfathomably vast structures and systems behind what Brian Stableford calls the "network of appearances" of everyday life, revealing the "arcane realities of cosmology" (236). They are the grandiose mysteries behind the depraved behavior in "The Great God Pan," the haunting sounds and mental influences in "The Willows." As we will see in the last chapter, their contemporary repercussions reach us through maddening photographs in "The Imago Sequence" and even inside the comfort of our homes, as in *House of Leaves*. These elements

may even be a smaller part of a larger horror narrative better classified in another genre, such as the insanity that affects people who look at the unknown creatures in *Bird Box*, which is not, in most part, a novel focused on cosmic horror, but rather a mixture of psychological horror and post-apocalypse narrative. In general, they all correspond to an irreversible gaze at the abysses of the universe.

Lovecraft, however, solidified an individual stylistic approach to cosmic horror, sprouting numerous pastiches[33] and providing material to the creation of a shared fictional universe that almost turns personal style into a subgenre. A list of relevant contributors to the Cthulhu mythos includes several pillars of horror fiction, such as August Derleth, Robert Bloch, Ramsey Campbell, and Robert E. Howard. In his "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," Lovecraft, according to Todd Spaulding, provides some elements that, in fact, work better as a definition of *his* fiction and thematic concerns when approaching cosmic horror. Central to them is "the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which forever imprison us and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond the radius of our sight and analysis" (Lovecraft). Whether we agree with Spaulding's observation is not a trivial choice, as, while Lovecraft's description works for several stories penned by other authors, his choice of words and concept ("cosmic spaces," being imprisoned) and their context (in his essay he comments his own writing methods) suggests a personal link to his stories and their recurrent themes. Lovecraft's contribution, in other words, defines both a genre and a personal style.

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[33] See Stefan Dziemianowicz's "Terror Eternal: The Enduring Popularity of H. P. Lovecraft" for a general exploration of Lovecraft's legacy in fiction and other general publications. The "Cthulhu Mythos anthology" Wikipedia article also lists hundreds of stories and collections related to Lovecraft's fiction.

Such definition, however, lacks the political thread that permeates Lovecraft's stories and weird tales/cosmic horror alike. If cosmic horror puts humankind in a place of insignificance, Lovecraftian horror, more specifically, puts Anglo-Saxon reason and knowledge in a place of insignificance, while simultaneously celebrating Anglo-Saxon dominion over other peoples. His iconic "Call of Cthulhu" exemplifies his politics quite openly, even if compared to his most explicit tales.

The embedded narratives in "Call of Cthulhu" tell of secret cults that worship an ancient monster-god whose existence and power defy the most basic laws of nature. Strange carvings, awe-inspiring nightmares, and physically impossible architectural designs compose the essence of Cthulhu's influence as a monster, a god, and a sign. Such violations of time, space, logic, and nature indicate human comprehension falls much short of grasping the intricacies of our reality.

Cthulhu's existence implies that the sciences, in Lovecraft's universe, fail at their chief function of explaining nature. We are lucky, in fact, that "[t]he sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little" (355) because of their inability to piece together the maddening truth of Lovecraft's chaotic cosmos. Alternatively, artistic forms of attaining reality, while not fallible in the same sense, trigger a rupture with sanity and end in the loss of our humanity.

Influenced by recent nightmares, an artist sculpts a figure of Cthulhu himself and begins walking a path whose tormenting end is familiar to Lovecraft readers: his artists and scholars who channel hidden dark forces are driven to insanity. The sculptor's dreams in "Call of Cthulhu" cease before such fate, but he seems more fortunate than his peers. Other Lovecraft characters, such as "a singular tribe or cult of degenerate Esquimaux" (363) or some "mongrel celebrants" (366) who comprise another cult in Louisiana, seem to have neither the rationalism to withstand the forces of chaos nor the artistic finesse to channel them into sculptures or paintings.

One of the paradoxes of Lovecraftian fiction happens when, in order to state the alleged supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon man and of the rationalism attached to his figure, Lovecraft places him against monsters whose magnitude tower above Anglo-Saxons and the rest of humankind

alike. In such situation, Anglo-Saxon reason is not necessarily suppressed because of its failures, but because of a form of monstrosity that inhabits realms outside its sphere or even outside human grasp. To some manifestation or noises, we learn in "The Call of Cthulhu," "[o]nly poetry or madness could do justice" (365). In Lovecraft's fiction, poets and artists, like scientists, are predominantly white and descend from Anglo-Saxons; to other ethnicities, only madness remains. The immediate implication is that foreignness equates peril and instability, that whatever falls outside the domain of Anglo-Saxon men is degenerate, abominable, and evil. This constant threat to Anglo-Saxon manhood, however, also backfires, hinting at the precarious state of uncertainty and distress of its forms of masculinity. As Tracy Bealer identifies it in *Innsmouth*, we may understand this pattern as yet another ambivalence in Lovecraft's fiction.

That there is a unified Anglo-Saxon rationale is already an overgeneralization, so it is not surprising that its status of superiority be put into question. The most startling is *how*, since this questioning comes as a consequence of Lovecraft's attempt at *asserting* Anglo-Saxon superiority. This ambivalence could hardly be spotted as such if we did not, in hindsight, think of pulp fiction in a context that associates masculinity to traditions of nationalism and rationalism. In the diegesis of many iconic weird tales, the "true" American/Anglo-Saxon man thinks and behaves in the supposed fashion of their brave and conquering people. When cosmic monsters expose the fallible masculinity of Lovecraft's protagonists, they are also haunting these men with knowledge thus far ignored, that is, the fallibility of their stereotyped mode of thinking. Their scholarly side would insist that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but, as they frequently end dead or insane, Lovecraft's male protagonists and their pulp colleagues in general ultimately reinforce an opposite cliché: ignorance is bliss.

In Lovecraft's *Shadow out of Time*, after a professor of Political Economy inadvertently changes bodies with an ancient extraterrestrial being, he must adapt his worldly notions to fit his experience, all the while having his sanity put into question and remaining safe only because he

cannot recall his entire experience. He tries to walk the thin line of safe knowledge in Lovecraftian horror. In "The Grinning Ghoul," one of Robert Bloch's cosmic horror stories, after witnessing the repulsive creatures that live beneath a crypt, a levelheaded psychiatrist goes mad, unable to cope with the overpowering awareness of the supernatural. While it lacks a literal monster, "NEXT!—Within Four Creeping Walls" illustrates how a mind guided by "logic and proof" (Sneddon 41) succumbs to the influences of a room that may be haunted. In early American horror cinema, Sir Joseph Whemple, the leader of the expedition uncovering the curse of pharaoh Imhotep in the 1932 film *The Mummy*, represents these rational men, insisting, even after facts suggest otherwise, that no supernatural agent takes part in the series of murders and mysteries that follow the discovery of Imhotep's mummy.

These men protect a rationality built not on healthy skepticism, but as one pillar of the triangular structure of national, rational, and gendered authoritarianism. With the fall of one pillar, however, the whole structure collapses. These protectors of rationality, when countered by the supernatural, either as a monster or as mystery, lose their façade of socially acceptable, virile, and rational manhood (a façade they may not even know they have). Their objectivity ends up being less truly objective and more *their* objectivity, that is, subjectivity disguised as impartiality.

In Sandra Harding's preface for *Objectivity and Diversity*, she introduces her wariness of falling back on objectivity as an argumentative appeal within scientific fields. "[T]he invocation of 'objectivity,' for a knowledge claim," she argues, citing the philosopher Ian Hacking, "has more to do with attempts to boost the status of the claim than with any actual criteria the claim has satisfied" (ix). Such rhetorical usage of the objectivity concept reaches us charged with political assumptions, revealing biased discourses in places scientific neutrality is claimed to exist.

While Harding's generalizations seem questionable, as they embrace immense proportions, they at least hold true if recontextualized to these pieces of horror culture. Strangely, when limiting her observations, she specifies a post-World War II change (xiii), while, at least in modern horror

fiction, a monolithic approach to rationality and science emerges decades before the conflagration. Despite our reservations or the need for recontextualization, we may safely recognize, guided by Harding's tenets, that a discourse of rationality indeed helps sustain the identity politics of several male characters of pulp horror fiction.

In our context here, the correlate is the repeated assurance, usually uttered by male characters, that conventional reason and modern science can account for literally every phenomenon and serve as the only explanation for all occurrences. In the real, extradiegetic world, the correct application of scientific principles may indeed reveal that the ghosts, zombies, resurrected mummies, curses, and haunted rooms of pulp fiction are more easily explained as a product of folklore rather than fact. In the diegesis of early modern horror, however, that is not the case. Scientists and men of reason scoff at claims for which, in their context, at least some serious credence should be given.

This tension marks horror fiction as one of its main features. As many of us do in *our* world, these men believe *theirs* to be free of supernatural influence. We may stand at the edge of our seats, separated by the dramatic irony of suspense, wishing to warn them that the mummy indeed carries a curse, or that the dead *are* rising, but there is no reason, within diegetic logic, they should believe so.

The prevalence of such tension, however, does not mean we must brush away the presentation of pulp male characters under the argument that it is normal to dismiss the supernatural. Instead, it strengthens our claim about authoritarian discourses. While dramatic irony may distance us from ill-advised and unaware characters, suspension of disbelief brings us together again, especially when we are eagerly reading at the edge of our seats, failing to rationalize away our fright. "What if…" we think, "What if our world is indeed like theirs?" Should we also adapt our reason and view to try and accommodate the supernatural? Perhaps not, but does that not mean, then,

that some of us may be guilty of some authoritarianism as they are, be it of reason, nationality, or sexuality? When such doubt lays its roots, character presentation in horror fiction shines best.

In some narratives, doubt may even come as a triple warning, as these three pillars of nation, reason, and sexuality may coexist within the same characters. Abraham Merritt's *Burn, Witch, Burn*, for example, concentrates these aspects to the point of being indistinguishable. The plot involves a battle of wits (of different kinds) between Madame Mandilip, a foreign witch, who commits several murders and assaults with the aid of supernatural dolls and her psychic abilities, and an American male doctor, Dr. Lowell, who treats some of Madame Mandilip's victims and investigates the odd condition they are put in. As science battles folklore, Dr. Lowell is urged to accept that the "matter … is extra-medical, outside the science we know" and that "[u]ntil we admit that, we'll get nowhere" (97). His perspective shifts from traditional, widely-accepted science to encompass mysticism and the supernatural.

The most representative feature of the novel is how Dr. Lowell initially illustrates one side of the three categories protected by pulp monster hunters while Madame Mandilip signals the opposite. Dr. Lowell is rational, American, and a man; Madame Mandilip is magical, foreign, and a woman. Throughout the novel, Dr. Lowell is confronted with the knowledge that his attachment to reason, in that context, seems less a weapon and more a hindrance, as "[t]he ignorance that your science has fostered is [the witch's] shield" (149). Dr. Lowell abandons his attachment to reason after the novel's climax, when one of the possessed dolls kills Madame Mandilip. While a non-scientific medical doctor may be a red flag in our reality, in the diegesis of *Burn, Witch, Burn*, Dr. Lowell is merely adapting his view to the world, not the world to his views, as he has attempted before.

How else could these early-twentieth-century rational men confront monsters that exist beyond the bounds of the quantifiable and the intelligible? How could they protect anyone against supernatural threats if they dismiss the supernatural in its entirety? Madame Mandilip's beliefs in the supernatural holds true in *Burn, Witch, Burn*, and Dr. Lowell is only able to fulfill his role as

protector when he takes in a hefty amount of irrationality. Other men are not so fortunate. The ill husband dies in "The Green and Gold Bug" because no one but his wife dares to consider a supernatural agent may be behind his affliction. The suicide in "NEXT!" occurs because of a similar repulsion fueled by fear of the supernatural. The rational protector can only overcome monsters of irrationality by becoming irrational himself.

When conflict reaches a climax and the lid is taken off to reveal unnamed beings and barbaric doings, reason, instead of being adapted, often falls apart. Not every character in pulp horror goes through Dr. Lowell's change of mind, and, consequently, science is not applied to its typical function of approaching the new and the unknown. Madness takes its place instead.

What complicates the characterization of such rational masculinities is that "becoming ir-rational" makes sense only when comparing *extradiegetic* science to a *diegetic* world. We can argue that within the world of *Burn, Witch, Burn*, a reasonable, scientific mind would hypothesize and confirm the existence of witches and magic, *as both are real in that world*. Witches, curses, voodoo dolls, and similar effigies are perfectly natural within the diegesis if we understand that "natural" encompasses all that exists in nature, in the world. Or, in the words Dr. Lowell uses to justify his initial reason-based perspective, "Nothing can be supernatural. If anything exists, it must exist in obedience to natural laws"[34] (Merrit 114). Magic, in this context, even if it is by definition a rupture of perceived natural laws, seems as natural as medicine or any other human-made study or practice.

We can hardly blame characters who do not immediately accept what the revisitation and reformulation of most natural laws would imply, but it is also hard to ignore their clinging to reason and science as an identitary component connected to their nationality and, as we will see in the

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[34] Here we do well to remember Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of a Monstrous Child," especially his observation that "Whatever falls out contrary to custom we say is contrary to nature, but nothing, whatever it be, is contrary to her."

next section, their sexuality. The initial refusal to believe in magical phenomena characterizes a healthy tendency to explain the natural by using frequent and typical hypotheses, while the final acquiescence to unconventional explanations comes from an empirical mindset that has exhausted all prevailing explanations. Once more, a modernist ambivalence characterizes the pulp horror hero. The protector of rationality confirms his rationality by refusing unrestrained (and unethical) applications of science and holding the banner of empirical reasoning until it is no longer viable. We are, however, left to wonder if such defense of rationality comes from honest rational methodology or from the fear of welcoming forms of knowledge that oppose the veneer of rational manhood.

And what monstrosities may come from this rigid masculine rationality if it is left unchecked? We have thought of monstrosity as opposed to scientific thinking, but monsters may also exist *because* of it. So, when we consider, for example, the monster in the early twentieth century as a product of science, what science are we talking about? In part, it is the hubristic and unethical science inherited from Jekylls, Moreaus, and Frankensteins, a science practiced within secret laboratories, away from the scientific community that has dismissed it. It is also, oddly, a restrictive science that fails to abide to basic scientific etiquette. It rejects the observations that challenge standard hypotheses instead of *welcoming* those observations and *adapting* the hypotheses. These monsters and their creators do not prove that science is evil—they are not anti-scientific— but rather that scientific discourse and its execution are made imperfect at the hands of imperfect men who do away with scientific accountability (Jeha, "Ética da criação"). In the pulps, this develops into scientism, a disproportionate and discriminatory conviction on science not as a method of understanding the natural world, but as dogma.

Scrutinizing the rational principles of male monster hunters does not imply a resistance to science or reason, but it does warn against reason when associated with an ill-natured, self-aggrandizing moral superiority. Recalling La Rocque, Teixeira, and Merton's definitions of adequate and inadequate scientific behavior as, respectively, communal and private, we may understand that the

mad scientists of early twentieth-century horror, like their predecessors, use the scientific method not as a procedure to obtain knowledge, but as a tool to assure personal gain and attain superiority.[35] In "A Soulless Resurrection," whose anonymous author, allegedly, was "a St. Louis Newspaperman Who Afterwards Committed Suicide" (111), a proud, ambitious architecture student witnesses his dead cousin return to life as "a picture of nameless horror" (114). The culprit is their grandfather, who used the quietness after her death to resurrect her by himself, rejoicing in "[h]ow the Academy will hail me" (114). The protagonist of Culpeper Chunn's "Doctor X" "perfected an operation for grafting the brain of an animal in the cranium of another animal" (21). The first human subjects are the doctor himself and his son, whose younger body serves as a host for the doctor's brain, increasing his own longevity.

Outside U.S. literature, but nevertheless in dialog with other products of horror culture, the 1920 German film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, too, exemplifies the intricacies of knowledge, its morals, and its power dynamics. In the movie, a young man named Francis tells the story of several murders a somnambulist committed following the orders of Dr. Caligari, who turns out to be the director of a mental institution. The final section of the film reveals Francis is a patient at this institution, casting his entire narrative into doubt. Explaining an analysis done by Siegfried

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[35] The most notable example is perhaps Victor Frankenstein. He retells of a memorable conversation with Waldman, one of his mentors, in which Waldman states, "The labours of men of genius, however erroneously directed, scarcely ever fail in ultimately turning to the solid advantage of mankind." However, such shared selflessness, which rings pleasantly to Frankenstein's ears as an assurance that the end justifies the means, proves to be superficial and short-lived. Shortly after in his account, Frankenstein shares his selfish thoughts of how "a new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs."

Kracauer, Poole reminds us that the original movie script started as a warning against the masses being dominated by authoritarian leaders but the actual recorded version reverts the warning to an argument for the need of strong leadership (103-10). As he had done before and would do after, the individualistic male mad scientist misuses science to create and release monster after monster in the twentieth-century horror pulps and movies.

Similarly, in "The Extraordinary Experiment of Dr. Calgroni," written by Joseph Faus and James Bennet Wooding, a peculiar scientist creates a monster only to prove to his skeptical colleague that such an act was possible. Both plot and title evoke the German movie, which had been screened in the U.S. two years before the publication of Faus and Wooding's short story in the first edition of *Weird Tales*. In "Dr. Calgroni," after defending that he could "prolong a human life indefinitely by the insertion of a live thigh gland from a young quadrumamous mammal, such as the Pithecoid"[36] (144), the doctor receives negative reactions from the scientific community and abandons social life to conduct his experiment in solitude. He writes on a sign at the entrance of his new property "POSITIVELY NO ADMITTANCE!" (145). Within its walls, he makes progress in secret. His only company comes after he requests "a hospital for their best surgical man" (147), who flees a few hours after his arrival. On completing his experiment, Dr. Calgroni makes quick exit, too, leaving behind only a dead and brainless ape, an explanatory note, and his monster, a man with a transplanted ape brain who breaks into the local circus.

In Lovecraft's "Herbert West—Reanimator," a physician develops a method of reanimating the dead, which haunt him throughout his life and ultimately consume his body. Endowed with a "cold brain" (186), West begins from a premise that "all life is a chemical and physical process, and that the so-called 'soul' is a myth" (182) and embarks on a "quest amid black and forbidden realms of the unknown" (189), discovering the "mechanical nature" (194) of life. His

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[36] Apes. ("Pithecoid.")

discoveries take large proportions when he immerses himself in the battlefields of World War I, where access was free to bodies, which he used as subjects. The story ends when one of the reanimated subjects, wearing a war uniform, attacks West along a "horde of silent toiling things which only insanity—or worse—could create" (204).

An atavistic quality guides the plot of these tales, suggesting human beings do not comprise a special taxonomic category detached from our evolutionary cousins. Perhaps the most iconic of the atavistic stories of the time is H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, published in 1896, a few decades before the golden age of horror pulps. Wells writes of a mad Frankenstein-like scientist who uses vivisection to give *Homo sapiens* traits to bears, ocelots, swine, canines, and oxen, and we, human readers, are invited to reflect on the inaccuracy of understanding ourselves as absolutely unique beings. The birth of such monsters is a manifest of the decades marked by the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and by Cesare Lombroso's theories on atavism.[37]

In the context of pulp horror, this marks yet another modernist tension. Scientific advancements (e.g., in wireless communication, in chemistry and pharmaceutical sciences) and more accessible technologies (e.g., household appliances, access to electricity) made possible to look forward, to either a hopeful future or the corruption of unrestricted progress in medicine, in urbanism, and within ourselves. Inevitably, progress also induced and enabled a look backward at our pre-human origins and the impression they have left on the modern *Homo sapiens*.

Our atavistic past tugs the rope from one side, while a possible future of rampant science and technology tugs from the other. This is why two apparently divergent patterns of monstrosity

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[37] "Lombroso tried to discern a possible relationship between criminal psychopathology and physical or constitutional defects. His chief contention was the existence of a hereditary, or atavistic, class of criminals who are in effect biological throwbacks to a more primitive stage of human evolution" ("Cesare Lombroso").

coexist in early-twentieth-century American horror. Monster hunters fight beasts that threaten to bring revelations from our past, be they Egyptian mummies, hybrids between humans and wild animals, witches of ancient power, or old gods waking from their deep slumber. Creators of monsters bring the dead back to life, interfere in human consciousness at their will, and tap into unknown forms of power, suggesting how unregulated and ill-disposed scientific progress can result in an inhuman future. One looks backward, the other looks forward—often oscillating within the same piece of fiction—but both look in fear of a *present* perceived threat: modernity.

This tension marks the threshold between forms of knowledge deemed safe and unsafe, or perhaps desired and undesirable. Monsters born from science warn us that certain realms may be beyond human cognitive or moral capacity. Either we *cannot* (yet) comprehend our supposed human condition (be it by looking inward at ourselves or outward at the cosmos) or we *must not* even try to, lest we discover or invent technologies our ethics are not prepared to administer.

At first the analysis of these barriers seems merely a horror version of the oversimplified perspective of science-fiction as anti-scientific, and perhaps it is. The commonplace understanding of science fiction as a warning against the evils of progress may in fact have its place here, as the golden age of pulp fiction (sci-fi and horror alike) is responsible for a vast list of what today have become clichés. Nevertheless, the factor of significance here comes through when we see the cliché mad scientists and monster hunters through the lens of masculinity, especially that of a masculinity so attached to rationality.

The monster hunters that eliminate dissident thought resemble the protectors of nationally we have met, as both defend, in addition, a third element, an element of gender and sexuality. They protect a nationalism entangled with a mode of thinking and support a form of manhood in which ego and male social appearance trump ethical evaluations of knowledge, foreign politics, and gender presentation itself. Feeling and appearing manly becomes more important than having an

honest thought process, than viewing foreigners with less prejudice, and even more important than showing the world any semblance of authentic masculinity.

Protectors of Sexuality

The interplay of gender occurs in horror pulps in typical overly masculine form, which is not surprising, as the great majority of pulp writers were male. We cannot affirm that this glorification of manhood results directly from the gender imbalance in pulp writers, but neither should we ignore the relevance of editorial decisions and both writer and reader demographic to diachronic literary analysis. Both the contributors and the gendered patterns of pulp magazines belong to a bigger design, which also includes the target audience, the cover art, the ads—and that would later develop into horror stories being published in pornographic magazines geared toward heterosexual men.

The consequence, though, is not a unified, masculinist representation of manhood. As we have seen, the patterns in the presentation of masculinities reveal meaningful forms of ambivalence, be they Lovecraft's assertion of Anglo-Saxon supremacy via contact with even more supreme foreign monsters, or protectors of rationality behaving irrationally toward new knowledge, or, in relation to sexuality and gender, monstrosity being assigned both to traditional and non-traditional masculinities. Monstrosity here appears through domineering men who abuse and victimize women, but "unmanly" men are also exposed as the corrupted evildoers of these horror stories.

Women characters, too, are not exempt of guilt, being blamed even for men's wrongdoings. "[T]he war," Peter Filene observes, "seemed simultaneously to reinforce the traditional manly role and to open untraditional opportunities for women" (111). This may be the most easily recognizable gender conflict in the narratives of *Weird Tales*, *Terror Tales*, *Horror Stories*, and similar magazines. By this point we recognize that the masculinities presented through horror magazines

require a categorization that allows for such ambivalence. We must not fail to see, either, that, behind the stock characters of pulp fiction, lies a web of gender relations that, in hindsight, did not oversimplify social history, despite its constant stock characters and clichés.

In *Burn, Witch, Burn*, for instance, the gender schism lessens at certain points, suggesting that a less strict gender separation may form better men, but also uglier monsters. When the notorious gangster Julian Ricori, both victim and detective in the witch-hunt, reveals his kinder side to the protagonist and narrator, the passage reads, "He comforted me—gently as a woman" (169). Readers are left to their own conclusions, as the comment is not developed. Any suggestions of homoerotic feelings between Ricori and Dr. Lowell, the narrator, are not significantly supported by other passages, and, while the suggestion of the gentleness of traditional femininities may indicate one cares for the other, the very presence of a woman in the simile may be read as the *opposite* of homoeroticism. Dr. Lowell seems so far removed from the idea of male intimacy that he immediately associates gentleness to womanhood. This hint of a female component in a male friend may actually be a roundabout way of narrating a positive social interaction whose intimacy reaches beyond stereotypical masculine subjects (e.g., work, politics, sports) to form a human connection Dr. Lowell can only understand in terms of heterosocial or heterosexual relationships.

This interlacing of gender, however, does not always result in positive connotations. The description of the witch's uglier physical form includes how a "mustached upper lip and thick mouth produced a suggestion of masculinity grotesquely in contrast with the immense bosom" (141). Such double-sex abnormality inverts the other shape the witch uses to present herself, that is, "a woman of breath-taking beauty—tall and slender and exquisite. Naked, her hair, black and silken fine, half-clothed her to her knees" (188). This interplay between the attractive woman and the repulsive body within the same monster greets readers of horror in other works of the genre, such as Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of *The Shining*, in which a ghost appears both as an attractive, unclothed woman and as an old, rotten version of herself. More broadly speaking, the pattern may

account for a double-edge femininity as seen through heterosexual male perspective. On the one hand, the desirable presentation of a woman; on the other, gendered abjection.

A desirable form may encompass more than a sexually attractive body, as behind "desire," for our purposes here, we must understand there is a notion of pleasant conformity. A desirable woman conforms to the advice in "The Dust of Death" and will "[j]ust smile … and get ready to go to housekeeping" (Jeffries 94). A desirable man, as we have seen in the two previous sections, embodies nationalist pride and rational superiority. Repulse, too, goes beyond bodily abjection to encompass several gendered nonconformities.

In "The Shattered Timbrel," a man brings his girlfriend back from the dead, but she returns as a broken version of herself—living body and dead mind. Success in developing such means for reanimation would have meant prestige, financial gain, and, most importantly, "a salary big enough so that we can get married" (Knapp 116). Following the failure, however, the horror of a zombie-like body and the impossibility of fulfilling the social expectation of marriage come together in a German colleague's brief sarcastic comment, "And perhaps you will think you must marry her, *dummkopf*" (119). The closest possibility to marriage becomes the protagonist dying in hopes to meet his never-to-be wife.

In Julian Kilman's "The Mystery of Black Jean," which fits better the genre of crime but does not conceal its monsters, the toughest, meanest man in town is dethroned by a female school-teacher whose delicate appearance hides sanguine viciousness. While in "The Shattered Timbrel" we see failure in the compliance with marriage, in "Black Jean" we have, merely three years after women obtained nationwide voting rights in the U.S., an even more horrifying idea: women with power to unmake the American self-made men. "In the Dark," published more than a decade later, embodies guilt into the form of a dead woman who haunts the lover who murdered her, exerting her revenge over him even after death. The murder, which followed an attempt at extortion, cements a battle of the sexes that culminates into quintessential haunting, as even the blind protagonist

can see the form of his lover threatening him from beyond the veil. Gender dissidence, in these examples, differs, for instance, from Madame Mandilip's female/male duality, but it still indicates a feminine interference in a perceived masculine area of dominion.

Just as foreign influences pose a perceived threat, and just as the loss of reason seems an ongoing risk, female sexuality and, perhaps, womanhood itself continuously threaten masculine spheres in the fictional worlds of American pulp horror. That is at least true under the perspective of monster hunters and protectors, since their actions as form of gendered "self-defense" happen so noticeably. Murder happens as a consequence of blackmail in "In the Dark"; resurrection in "The Shattered Timbrel" is carried out in a self-serving pursuit for marriage, love, and perhaps glory.

In horror pulps, men who present themselves as victims or heroes may be merely diverting attention from their own guilt and interest at protecting values in which they are personally interested. Ironically, perhaps such preservation has become commonplace in contemporary anti-heroes, who project a more sincere, less saccharine self-image. The presence of imperfect men in horror literature is hardly new, but the noteworthy pattern here boils down to the preservation of masculinity hiding behind the scapegoating or monstrification of female characters and non-traditional masculinities.

Be it in heroes or anti-heroes of horror literature, the pattern of female monstrification continues throughout the decades in other works, as we will see. In Robert Bloch's *Psycho*, Norma Bates's possessiveness of her son Norman seeds a co-dependency destructive enough to take lives. In Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon*, the emasculation takes a more literal form when Francis Dolarhyde's grandmother threatens to remove her grandson's penis if he urinates in his bed once again, originating traumatic memories that resurface and culminate in Dolarhyde's murders. Rachel Creed, in Stephen King's *Pet Sematary*, represents her husband's ties to a domestic life and, later, his failure. These women, like Eve in some interpretations, seem to have done the initial nudge toward the fall of men.

Many male protagonists of horror fiction seem to agree: it is women's fault. The narratives may be supportive or admonitory, but, regardless, the castrating woman removes a man's masculinity and in its place leaves something darker. Assigning the guilt to femininity, however, may inadvertently reveal another aspect of this pattern, that is, the failure of male accountability. If we recall the airplane pilot in "The Dust of Death" or the numerous unmarried and unbound protagonists of pulp horror, among which we find the typical Lovecraftian non-sexual scholar, Leslie Fiedler's American hero comes to mind again, as he "has been a man on the run, harried into the forest and out to sea, down the river or into combat—anywhere to avoid 'civilization,' which is to say, the confrontation of a man and woman which leads to the fall to sex, marriage, and responsibility" (26). Moreover, much of modern horror, especially during the pulp phase, addresses the thematic preoccupations of its representative texts or predecessors, among which *Frankenstein* shows significant presence. Shelley's protagonist reappears not only in twentieth-century mad doctors and reanimators, but also in several male characters who refuse to be held accountable for their actions as creators, fathers, professionals, or simply as men. After her novel, it seems understandable that horror fiction has its share of male unaccountability.

Granted, some of these men bear no responsibility over their own emasculation, as they are simply incapable of adequate self-protection. Among these we find men abused as boys, as we will see in Thomas Harris's Hannibal series, or whose role of victim and perpetrator defies simplicity, as hinted in Bloch's *Psycho* and developed in the television series *Bates Motel*. One of the lingering questions of these narratives addresses the prevention of evil, the intricate morality behind mentally unstable killers, and the origin of an evil man being natural or nurtural. Could all of this have been prevented if someone had put a stop to the women abusing these boys? This inquiry may appear for its own sake, never being answered, not even tentatively.

Even if the question remains rhetorical, these horror narratives suggest that emasculation may be the genesis of repulsive male vices. In *Red Dragon*, Dolarhyde transforms his traumatic

castration anxiety into a murderous drive and enacts his revenge. Numerous examples appear in the pulps, too. The wish to marry a certain woman drives a man into an attempt to murder his love rival in Hamilton Craigie's "The Incubus," whose title, referencing a male sex demon, may suggest the lengths the protagonist would go to fulfill his erotic desires. The madness-driven husband in "The Gallows" wishes so strongly to enact revenge on his wife that even dying becomes a strategy to see her punished for her infidelity. In "The Desert Lich," a slave-owner who sold an unfaithful wife meets a gruesome form of revenge. Even as he is taken to be entombed with the corpse of the woman he sold, he argues, "You buy of me a woman! And she will betray you; it is to be expected" (49). "The Man Who Died Twice" tells of the ghost of an emasculated man murdered by his wife making a futile attempt at reenacting of his old life, only to finally die again, this time permanently. The implication is often more horrifying than the content of the narratives themselves: since the cause behind male destructive behavior goes back to abusive or untrustworthy women, these narratives imply the women who are victimized—raped, murdered, or kidnapped—have other women to blame.

However, are we not, then, resorting to blaming the victims? In this subject, symbolically, we are. If we assume women play a part in the genesis of men as monsters of pathos who, in turn, abuse other women, we may be fueling a generalized argument that assumes, almost tautologically, that women suffer because they cause suffering. It is their own fault. If we shift our gaze to the killers themselves, blaming comes with less difficulty, but these killers are victims themselves of other crimes.

There is a difference, however, between merely blaming victims for evil actions done to them and suggesting that these characters, despite dichotomous paradigms of victim/culprit, remain responsible but unaccountable for their actions. Even though this refusal of accountability may seem a passive process, based on avoiding rather than acting, it requires, instead, a complex set of actions: avoidance, yes, but also pretension, blame-shifting, even manipulation. Dr. Calgroni,

for instance, shifts blame by justifying his unethical scientific practices as a result of being removed from academic circles under the "consensus … that he was an impracticable theorist gone mad" (Faus and Wooding 144). While Dr. Calgroni bears the status of victim only is his mind and narrative, more obvious victims still mold the account of their experiences to fit a rhetoric of monstrification. The spouses in "The Green and Gold Bug," for example, only allude to the altercation that may have resulted in their being cursed, leaving out any explanation behind the revenge that ends in their death. We will return to this pattern of refusal of accountability in the next chapters, as later in the century we find more intricate works, such as *The Shining* or *The Devil's Advocate*, which have a closer connection between accountability and masculinity.

Do the protectors of sexuality, then, defend men against the emasculating threats of the "fairer sex"? The crucial question at this point is not about what protectors of sexuality protect from, but about *what* they protect to begin with. If we take their perspective, we notice early-twentieth-century protectors of sexuality defend a masculinity already failing at hiding the bruises caused by modernity. Ironically, in their attempts at protecting socially rigid forms of masculinity, protectors of nation, reason, and gender let their flaws show most clearly. Their manhood is their undoing.

While several female monsters harm men in the pulps, male monsters seem more numerous or at least equally relevant. In tune with all the ambivalence we have discussed so far, these monsters of manhood appear as deviations both in traditional and non-traditional masculinities. On the one hand, the desire to fulfill the traditional role of suitor and husband inspires the criminal in "The Incubus," who is as monstrous as the creature he imagines to be after him. On the other hand, the ghost in "The Man Who Died Twice" and the man who believes himself to be a serial rapist in "I Am the Madman!" fall under the stereotype of the emasculated man.

Like the pulps, several Universal monster movies—some being original scripts (e.g., *The Wolf Man*, *The Mummy*, *Werewolf of London*), others being adaptations from fiction (e.g., *The Invisible Man*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Frankenstein*)—portrayed men as dual creatures in the beginning of

the twentieth century, putting into monstrous bodies the ambiguities that plagued men. The 1924 version of *The Wolf Man*, now presumably a lost movie, has as protagonist an English gentleman whose drinking habits turn him into a beast capable of murder and rape ("The Wolf Man"). In *The Invisible Man*, Dr. Jack Griffin, the titular character, oscillates between a monster of *pathos* with plans of world domination and an affectionate and protective fiancé.

Even before the Great War, literatures in English would invite us to gaze at the dualistic masculinity that became so characteristic of the twentieth century. As we have seen, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* remains part of the pop culture environment as, perhaps, the number one narrative of masculine duality. Even though the narrative widens its gaze to encompass humanity as a whole the gaze also converges into British masculinities in specific. The relation between work and leisure, in particular, characterizes a significant part of the imbalance of masculinity in *Strange Case* and gives us a prelude of early-twentieth-century male duality in horror.

Typically, work is a fundamental structural component of traditional masculinity. For instance, Beynon recognizes in some groups a nostalgic discourse about the male body, in which the "gym-produced" bodies of "new men" are but a fake version of a true heroic, "labour-hewn, working class male body of the past" (128). In this sense, the male body seems to work as evidence of the presence or lack of "true" masculinity. If emasculating women inevitably remind us of Eve, working men will take us back to the curse of Adam. In relation to professions and *Strange Case*, Theresa Jamieson writes,

> each player in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is positioned with regard to his or her occupation: Utterson, the Lawyer; Dr Jekyll, of course; Sir Danvers Carew, the M.P.; Dr Lanyon; Mr. Guest, the Clerk; and Sawbones, the apothecary; even Mr. Enfield, though of no known profession, receives the appellation 'man about town'. On the other hand, marginal female characters such as Hyde's housekeeper and the maid who witnesses the

Carew murder, not necessitating names, are characterized entirely by their occupations. Hyde, however, appears to do very little. (77)

While other male characters are categorized by their profession, Hyde's presence suggests "a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul" (Stevenson 77). Far from genuinely being liberating, in context this actually means a corrupt idleness. To complete her argument, Jamieson cites Anne McClintock, who argues that "of all the stigmas invented by colonialists to differentiate themselves from a country's native inhabitants, 'the most tirelessly invoked was idleness'" (qtd. in Jamieson 76). There is, then, a narrative effort to portray Hyde not necessarily as a foreign other, but as someone with characteristics deemed alien or antagonistic in the context of masculinity. This process of distancing and othering is central to the concept of monsters, and the use of work-related morality as a frame to define homeliness or strangeness is typically masculine. The implication is what the narrative indicates more directly through the existence of Dr. Jekyll's chemical formula: the constitution of the Victorian gentlemen is as fragile as the supposed Victorian scientific progress.

But what about the American horror pulps? If, in a few decades after Stevenson's *Strange Case*, "the Great War killed off the bachelor gentleman" (Skovmand qtd. in Beynon 30), we may also understand that post-War American horror fiction saw its men relying on the nationalist and rationalist authoritarian perspectives to avoid the death or wounding of ideals of masculinity. If the Victorian gentleman, fragile as he is, leans on work and a public presence as a support for his masculinity, the American "man on the run" (Fiedler 26) finds his footing in anti-immigrant and disproportionate rational mindsets.[38]

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[38] The two previous paragraphs were translated and adapted from the same oral presentation mentioned in footnote 22.

The idea of emasculation, in this context, also incorporates fears of domestication. What men fear and women supposedly lead to is not only the removal of traditionally masculine features, but also an identity shift from the free-spirited and rough bravery of men who are "out there in the world" to an obedient homeboundness. Peter Filene, whose *Him/Her/Self* gives a social-historical account of gender roles in modern America, identifies a significant increase in perceived male domesticity in the decades following the Great Depression and the World Wars, even when unemployment rates had already decreased and white-collar jobs could serve as a mirror for the identity of middle-class men (169-75). The association between men and the public sphere (which today we may take for granted as a tradition that calls for revision) comes with a complicating caveat: male presence was also expected at home. It is yet another dispute, now between domestication, civilization, and order versus wildness, primitiveness, and chaos.

Men on the run—be it away or toward monstrosity, or away from the perceived domesticating forces of civilization[39]—configure a pattern spreading wider than horror fiction. In his examination of male journeys in the U.S. literary canon, Michael Kimmel observes, "In both real life and in the dreams that populate American fiction, men have run away to join the army, been kidnapped or abandoned on desert islands, gone west, or, as today [1993/2005], run off to the woods for an all-male retreat" (20). His examples include Washington Irving's *Rip Van Winkle*, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, Robert Bly's mythopoetic men's movement,[40] and Henry David Thoreau's transcendentalist experience at Walden Pond.

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[39] In the context of early-twentieth-century pulps, we may understand civilization to mean the acceptance of conventional attitudes toward nation, reason, and sex/gender. To be civilized is to be patriotic, rational, and a married heterosexual. It is also to inhabit an environment of urbanization and modernity by abiding by its general social contracts.

[40] The mythopoetic men's movement peaked in the 1980s and 1990s and drew from Jungian

The examples are equally relevant within horror tradition. We have seen a movement away from civilization in the airplane pilot in "The Dust of Death," for instance. The inhospitable settings of horror pulp fiction involve the perfect circumstances for these men on the run, be they adventurers in Floridian wetlands, archeologists in Egypt, or explorers in South America or China. Later we will examine Louis Creed's and Jack Torrance's desire to abandon their family in Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* and *The Shining*. In the last chapter we will also recognize some of that wanderlust in Ig Perrish in Joe Hill's *Horns*, who gains demonic powers and retreats into the woods, and in Johnny Truant, Will Navidson, and Zampanò, the three main male characters in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*.

While the typical escapist run of manhood in American fiction has as destination a wild environment, the rejection of civilization does not require seeing the wilderness as its polar opposite. Men may remove themselves from a socially organized system to live by their own rules, as titular protagonist does in "The Extraordinary Experiment of Dr. Calgroni" by conducting unrevised and unethical scientific experiments. The same applies to Lovecraft's Herbest West, who reanimates the dead, or, outside the field of medicine, to Richard Pickman in "Pickman's Model," who is rejected by other artists due to his appalling subject matter. Moreover, men even become uncivilized by burying themselves within the very urban landscapes that house civilization.

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archetypes, arguing for the restoration of a wilder, more natural manhood via retreats and against industrialization and the upbringing of boys in female-dominated environments. As noted in *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*, "The mythopoetic movement eschewed any concrete social or political agenda, focusing instead on a therapeutic program of workshops, conferences, and wilderness retreats through which men who had become soft and unassertive in the face of feminist challenges and the lack of male role models could redress the wounds of masculinity and reconnect with a deep masculine essence" (302).

"The Man who Owned the World," a story of the "Beautiful Dream and [the] Rude Awakening" (25) of a homeless and mentally ill man, exemplifies how men can simultaneously run from the rules of a society and, even if in a delusion, abide by its standards. Its protagonist, John Rust, lives in an abandoned cellar he calls a "treasure-chamber" (Owen 26) and claims to own limitless riches, but dies in poverty after being cured from his delusions. John Rust's escape from civilization does not involve retreating into the wilderness, but rather fully inserting himself into an urban environment and into a capitalist standpoint, also burying himself in his own mind, in a world where he was not poor and hungry, but instead of "more wealth than even Midas dreamed of." The result is monstrosity all the same.

John Rust may inhabit a cellar below a jewelry store in Greenwich Village, Manhattan, but despite living in the most recognizable urban center in the U.S., he remains as unkempt as any other pulp horror savage. He has "the skin … drawn over the raw bones without any intervening layer of flesh," his face is "repulsive," his mouth shows "toothless gums," and the "fanatical light in his eyes … was not human, but a glow such as might appear in the eyes of a maniac or a wild animal." The monster of *ethos* in this short two-page story may live as a criticism of the byproducts of a harsh economy, or as a statement about the consequences of irrationality, or even as a mockery of the rising counter-culture of Greenwich Village, but he dies as an undomesticated man who turns into a free-thinking mad monster.

And what about the men who could not or did not run? "By 1954," Filene explains, "*Life* magazine was announcing 'the domestication of the American male'" (173) and it seemed that "[t]he good father must also be the good husband in the kitchen, in the living room, and in the bedroom" (535). We do not need to look only at mid-century literature to find support for Filene's observations in fictional universes. As early as 1927, stories such as "The Man Who Died Twice" and "I Am the Madman!" suggest the opposite of the wild running man is an emasculated subject confined within a place of protection turned into a cell of restraint—the home. Even the ads in

pulp magazines seemed of two minds about their target audience, advertising both dinner sets and flight lessons (see figs. 5 and 6).

The free man may be basking in his utter freedom from "civilization," but he remains a wild animal lost in the woods of his own masculinity, at times walking in circles or perpetually chasing after scents of where to go. The four-page story "In the Triangle," less plot-driven than the usual *Weird Tales* narrative, suggests, in its symbolism, the misdirecting relation some men have with freedom. It centers on an encounter between a young man, an older man, and a beast in a triangular clearing in a forest. The young man, after hearing a threatening sound, leaves his house in the woods where he spends much of his time reading. He finds the old man being attacked by a beast with a "mechanical nature" (109) and characteristics of "ape, pig, and dog" (110). Only after saving the older man does the young man realize the altercation was a ruse aimed at luring him into the beast's claws. Having his arms pinned by the monster, he uses his own teeth as an alternative, biting at the beast and, in a dreamlike moment, noticing he is "lying prone, in the position the beast had occupied" (112). Magically, he now inhabits the beast's dying body. His last glimpse is the young man—his previous body—and the older man walking away from the forest.

Archetypes for youth and old age, grit and wisdom, or impulsivity and indomitability clash to cement masculine ambivalence, granting conflicting properties to domesticity and wildness. The young man's house in the woods already hints at some contrast, being an enclave of domesticity within the wilderness. As much as cabins in the woods, country houses, and their variations are commonplace, their widespread presence in the horror genre only gives more credibility to their symbolism in "In the Triangle." They are a domestic place deprived of its domesticity.

Fig. 5 Dinner Set Advertisement.

Fig. 6 American School of Aviation Advertisement.

When the young man changes body with the beast, symbols for wildness also become self-contradictory. In the form of a beast—either the story's unknown mechanical being, or a werewolf, or a vampire—man achieves true natural freedom (in opposition to urban domestication). He is free to roam in nature, to hunt, to be physical, even to kill. The contradiction is that the free man is not free to do much else, as he is bound to his bestial nature.

His opposite, the "domesticated" man, also becomes the butt of another dangerous metaphor, often finding himself at the worse end of the leash. For instance, the protagonist of "I Am the Madman!" is "modern enough to know [he is] liv[ing] off a rich wife" (Brooks 73). He is tricked by his wife's uncle and led to believe his sexual impotence, his guilt for a crime he did not commit, and his memory loss episodes were linked to a series of rapes and murders. This domesticated man, who is often "held … like a little boy" (73) in his wife's arms and who "had never entered [his] wife's room other than as a brother might that of a sister" (73), becomes impotent and disgusted by sex because of a plot to have him arrested, his wife killed, and her money gone to her uncle. A share of prejudice also composes the uncle's motivation, as he shuns "miscegenation" and believes "[t]he upper castes must never, never marry below their levels" (78). The uncle, who acts as a protector of traditional masculinity, sexuality, and ethnic purity, ends up being himself the madman from the title.

Not every male character experiences his masculinity in these two extremes, however. Even men in search of a domestic life (i.e., marriage, "civilization") may tread the path of wild masculinity, be it as a means to an end or as the only path available in their perspective. Again, we are reminded of Victor Frankenstein. His isolated scientific practices in the University of Ingolstadt and his secretive outings exist juxtaposed with his family relationships and with his engagement with Elizabeth. The same applies to his creature. His murders and his roaming through the wilderness after escaping

Frankenstein's laboratory exist in function of his wish to understand family and to begin his own "civilized" life by having himself a bride, like his father/creator.

The tension inviting men to a safe home and urging them out into the waste lands (of war, of the wilderness, of debauchery) stands out as only *one* aspect of gender in pulp and horror, so we must not forget other aspects of power dynamics within gender relations. While male characters, verbally or symbolically, spout complaints of emasculation, real disenfranchised women fought for voting rights. This chapter focuses on male protectors, often the self-perceived heroes of pulp horror, but for every hero defending manhood we have a villain doing much worse in matters of gender relations.

On the covers, fetishized, semi-naked women are saved by the heroes, but are often also the target of frightening gazes that suggest from obsession to rape (see figs. 7-8). Even less graphic stories put masculinities and femininities in positions of conflict. "Silver Bullet," written by Phyllis A. Whitney, who would set an impressive record of published suspense novels from the 1940s until the 1990s, starts with the typical scene of husband and wife driving through rural America and develops the traditional man as an experienced savior holding superior knowledge, then subverts the theme, only to finally abandon the subversion and close the tale with a restatement of masculinity as salvation and femininity as powerlessness. In both ghoulish stories and more down-to-earth narratives, gender relations and sexuality were not ignored, even if not always directly addressed either.

Escape as an alternative to domesticity or as a strategy to keep masculinity alive seems an anachronistic response to a modern phenomenon. Even if we blindly agree about the domestication of masculinity that *Life* magazine announced in the 1950s and, even decades earlier, the pulp magazines implied in their ads, we must still be skeptical about the journeys traveled by these numerous male characters in fiction. The covers and stories in pulp horror magazines incite fighting domestication with dominance. Foreign men and supernatural monsters hold women in
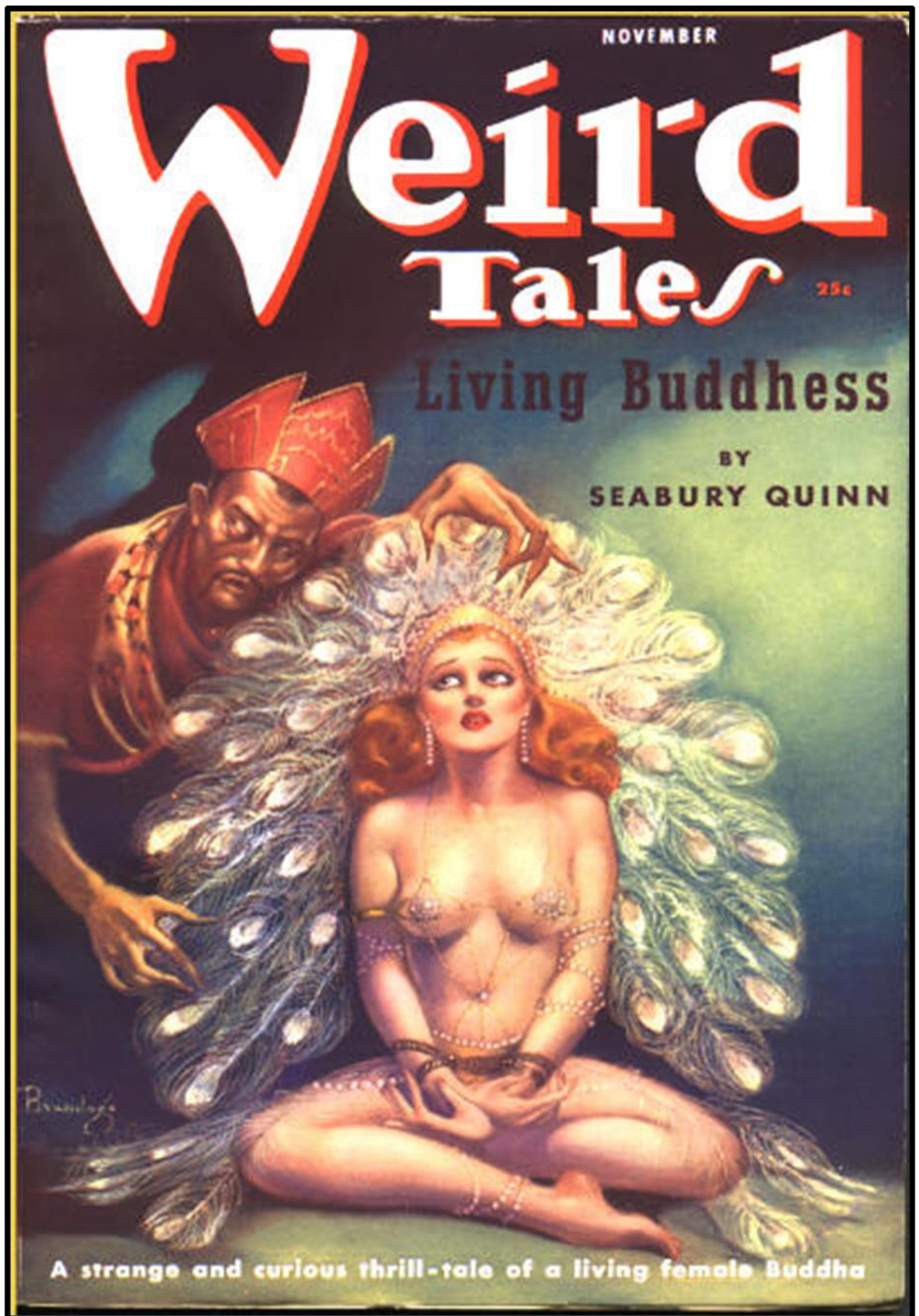
Fig. 7 Brundage, Margaret. Cover of *Weird Tales*, Nov 1937.

Fig. 8 Drew, John. Cover of *Horror Stories*, Aug-Sep. 1936

leashes, at gunpoint, or simply hold them in place with a menacing stare, illustrating two evils as seen at the turn of the century. First, the monster is out there—he, she, or it has a different language, a different color, and a different way—and the monster approaches our gates, ready to harm our women. Second, monstrosity, due to its state of utter difference, simply cannot think right, and the more we learn, the more we fear their curses, their hexes, and the supernatural powers woven into their irrational, uncivilized behavior.

A third evil is as apparent as the first two in both covers and in narratives. They are depraved men gazing at the naked damsels in distress, or witches and female vampires whose explicit sexuality is equally menacing, or monsters with phallic tentacles that, despite being from another planet or dimension, predominantly attack women who are attractive, young, and white. These monsters of aggressive sexuality, moreover, are not always the villains.

When we take a distance, we may even notice a fourth evil, or, instead, an extension of all three: the "heroes" themselves. The male heroes of horror pulps share the guilt of manhandling women and foreigners, share the personalities imbued with aggression, and share the propensity to bypass ethical procedures in the name of nation, reason, and manhood. Some overtly behave as antiheroes, reminding us of their crime fiction cousins, the hardboiled detectives. Actions of characters like the airplane pilot in "The Dust of Death" tend to be the fruit of their cynicism instead of any heroic moral compass.

Others are not so obviously antiheroic. These are the archeologists from horror fiction or the science fiction explorers who toured exotic planets and would later go where no man had gone before. At any rate, as we have seen, even the actions of the latter group are not, in hindsight, of pristine heroism. It is no coincidence that science fiction and hardboiled crime fiction flourished in post-war American pulps along with our weird horror stories. The enemy stood right outside and no one could afford naivete at this point, even if that took immersing oneself into the mindset of wild monsters.

Conclusion: Clawing at the Gates

Traditional heroes may have defended their customs, logic, and land because they comprised a state of affairs threatened by a monster. The knights-errant of the twentieth century, as one expects of monster hunters, also fought to preserve their familiar world and context, but we can easily spot among their values some that, already in their decline, ought not to have been preserved. Fear of an uprising of women in the suffragette movement and a resistance to modernity itself were met with a disconcerting response perhaps appropriate for such perplexing times: faced with inescapable changes and the hollow plight of war, one might as well face it like a real man.

In horror fiction, this response now reads like a thinly-veiled attempt at defending premodern manhood while glorifying and fearing the Great War. An odd and contradictory perspective, but representative of the ambiguity marking that new century. No wonder Lovecraft expresses his time so well.

His heroes, often as anti-modern as the author, gaze at his deities and monsters with awe, responding simultaneously with devotion and terror. While those ancient gods bring new dimensions to everyday life, often awarding with longevity or power those who live under their weird covenant, the magnitude of their cosmic supremacy suggests our earthly lives may end in the blink of an eye. Everything is nothing under the shadows of the revered Cthulhu, under the chaos of the formless Azathoth, or under the immensity of Dagon. An immensity, we have seen, that brings about visions of a world decimated by human conflict. As portents of evil, these monsters show us the future of an annihilation already crossing the gates of difference.

Decades after "Dagon," this vision of a world ravaged or emptied by war would be reaffirmed twice in *Weird Tales*, and in two contrasting poems. Francis Flagg, in his sonnet "To Howard Phillips Lovecraft," remembers the "genius that no death can ever take" (12) with imagery from Lovecraft's own portrayal of fear-inducing immensity, mentioning "the vast and formless scheme" (2) and "a timeless time" (6). Flagg's poem ends with deference to the dead writer and to his

immortal writing. In the same issue of *Weird Tales*, "The Poets," by Robert E. Howard, brings despair reminiscent of the ending of "Dagon," but, unlike Flagg's poem, makes no attempt at throwing a lifeline. Time ends in "the gray of old oblivion's womb" (8) for the dead artist. Is there any salvation? None, since the literary reputation celebrated in Flagg's poem constitutes, in Howard's, "the musty thing that men call Fame" (20). And "[w]ho cares?" (27), the speaker asks. Not a soul. "A vast indifference/Is all the answer of the marching throng" (28). In Flagg's poem, Lovecraft's legacy exists in a world as chaotic as his fictional cosmic spaces. In Howard's, artistic death/genesis lies forgotten in a time of war and destruction.

We do well to remember W. Scott Poole's arguments for reading modern horror as an outgrowth of World War I. "Horror as an art form, as escape, as a rendition of what had just happened [in the war] became the only possible response for a world that could not stop screaming" (59). Horror fiction, then, may come not as the fear of impending doom, but as consequence of real, evident, and massive destruction, which was also, paradoxically, seen as an opportunity for traditional forms of masculinity to truly live.

War, masculinity, and monstrosity converge into these glimpses at the end of the world—into the "[g]ray dust and ash where leaped the mystic fire" (Howard), into a "formless scheme" (Flagg), and into "the fathomless chaos of eternal night" (Lovecraft, "Dagon" 25). An undead WWI combatant raises his own battalion of zombies in Lovecraft's "Herbert West—Reanimator," while in "The Dust of Death" the Chinese master a weapon to "zombify" people without killing them. As we will see in the following chapters, horror fiction would become closely acquainted with the theme of hordes of semi-conscious people depriving humans of our peace, of our well-being, of whatever grants us sound sleep at night. With them comes the end of times—or at least the beginning of the end.

Even the comfort of familiar faces may end, as citizens of Small Town, U.S.A. become hollow actors of the American Dream. This is the subtext of Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers*, a

1954 serial novel about aliens replacing people with inhuman replicas. In the same year, in Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, a species of vampires becomes a substitute for *Homo sapiens* due to a pandemic. In the next chapter, we will see that these semi-human characters indicate that not sleeping soundly may have always been human nature.

While vampires and zombies remain mostly confined to horror culture, the imagery of mass lifelessness goes beyond the scary stories that followed the Great War, becoming one of the quintessential images of modernity. As Poole observes, these images match the perspective of English-language modernists on post-war decay (78). Literary modernists repeatedly reach for similar pictures of vastness, paralysis or death, emptiness, or awe akin to the Gothic sublime. We see it in T. S. Eliot's "evening … spread out against the sky/Like a patient etherized upon a table" ("The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," lines 2-3). It impacts us more strongly in *The Waste Land*: "Who are those hooded hordes swarming/Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth/Ringed by the flat horizon only[?]" (lines 368-70). And again, in the entirety of Eliot's *The Hollow Men*. A similar lifelessness closes James Joyce's *Dubliners* in "The Dead," as its protagonist gazes through a window and, mesmerized, contemplates the falling snow. "His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead." Yet again, in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, through the war-traumatized Septimus's delusion, which begins with a dead army colleague and ends in terrifying magnitude,

> It was Evans! But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed … [T]he dead man in the grey suit came nearer … raising his hand like some colossal figure who has lamented the fate of man for ages in the desert alone with his hands pressed to his forehead, furrows of despair on his cheeks … [W]ith legions of men prostrate behind him he, the giant mourner, receives for one moment on his face the whole—
>
> … The millions lamented; for ages they had sorrowed.

In horror culture, the image is in the procession of coffins in *Nosferatu* (see fig. 9), which visually

represent what Poole describes as "the deathbird's black wings … cover[ing] the earth" (37).

Fig. 9 Still from *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1:18:15)

Even if the discourse of some pieces of literature or the recruitment posters on uncount-

able walls suggested battlegrounds were the test of true men, these warriors fought not in a battle

for glory or honor, but in a war threatening to put out the flame of heroic manhood. After a

barrage of nauseating narrative snapshots of the Great War, Poole agrees there was "[n]o senti-

mentality and no words about love for the fatherland, the empire, the monarch, or the value of

sacrifice." Poole's imagery (some from war poems or memoirs) contemplates severed limbs, vomit,

disembodied bones, clutching hands, and an Armistice Day parade led by the disfigured. Those

could not be closer to stories of horror or further from traditional heroic tales.

American horror literature turned into the twentieth century with little room for Beowulfs and Arthurian knights. Send in the secluded scientists, the Herbert Wests, the womanizing airplane pilots flying solo, the prodding archeologists, the domesticated men, and send in Lovecraft's mad literati. The stage was a country far away from the European front lines, but nevertheless feeling the impact of modern warfare. The direction was to close doors to protect a sense of nationality, to close minds to maintain rationality, and to close one's self-expression to a restricted sexuality and proper gender presentation. All was closed, but the hordes were clawing at the gates.

Chapter 3: The Varnish of Prosperity (1940-1970s)

We were fertile ground for the seeds of terror, we war babies; we had been raised in a strange circus atmosphere of paranoia, patriotism, and national hubris. We were told that we were the greatest nation on earth and that any Iron Curtain outlaw who tried to draw down on us in that great saloon of international politics would discover who the fastest gun in the West was … but we were also told exactly what to keep in our fallout shelters and how long we would have to stay in there after we won the war. We had more to eat than any nation in the history of the world, but there were traces of Strontium-90 in our milk from nuclear testing.

— *Danse Macabre* (Stephen King, 23)

Introduction: Anxiety, Paranoia, Terror, and a Void

Cursed Egyptian mummies brought over the Atlantic and unspeakable eldritch horrors unearthed during searches for forbidden knowledge, these were the quintessential monsters at the dawn of the twentieth century. The deviants from the 1940s on, albeit equally frightening, were more homegrown. Some anxieties expressed through horror fiction published between the 1940s and the early 1970s do carry over the generalized xenophobia from the initial decades of the twentieth century, but, as we will see, our typical mid-century monster indicates a generalized, nationwide unease.

If, in chapter two, the feeling that branded horror literature boiled down to an impulse to protect nation, reason, and gender expression from the monsters clawing at the gates, what is our ambiance now? Stories about "men of reason" losing their sense when faced with impossible horrors continue to be written, just as the fear of an attack from outside the borders remains. These borders kept the red flags of Nazism out, or at least such was the thought. From one red flag to

another, they also held the monsters of Communism at bay, even if some of them were more imaginary than mass media let out.

Though some of the literature indicates an external origin for monstrosities and its context of publication often implicates other countries in political misconduct, monsters grew on American land and gorged themselves on American fears. At surface level, the alien spores substituting imitations for people in Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers*, [41] for instance, may be simply contextualized within the general repulse against Communism: they symbolize an external threat to American personal freedom. Nevertheless, perfect alien replacements (unlike the less-human antagonists of older stories, such as "The Dust of Death") magnify the paranoia woven into the narrative, which becomes McCarthyism[42] wearing a thin disguise.

What frightens Finney's protagonist the most is not the "what"—that is, the prospect of Earth being invaded—but the "how"—friends and family members losing their (undisguisedly American) freedom. The alien facsimiles validate a common fear in the minds of some 1950s readers, insinuating how close their own fellow Americans were of being misguided or perverted. Robert Neville's neighbor, turned into a savage mockery of his former self in Richard Matheson's 1954 *I Am Legend*, reveals a similar apprehension. Could one really "love thy neighbor" during those uncertain times?

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[41] Often titled *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, possibly because of its 1956 and 1978 movie adaptations, which have this title.

[42] A form of Red Scare and anti-communist persecution or "the period of time in American history that saw U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin produce a series of investigations and hearings during the 1950s in an effort to expose supposed communist infiltration of various areas of the U.S. government" ("McCarthyism").

In Europe, even two decades before the 1950s, monsters also dwelled in the streets among the masses. Scott Poole addresses this point in his analysis of how a serial killer blends within Berliners in Fritz Lang's 1931 film *M* and how disease and death are welcomed into Germany in *Nosferatu*. "Both *Nosferatu* and *M* reminded cinemagoers of *das grosse Sterben*[43] of the Great War" (232), he explains. While these German movies date from the interwar period, they embody a paranoia that would feature prominently in the American horror classics of the following decades.

In the U.S. the peril was within its borders and amid the masses, disguised as a true American patriot. Fascism had grown in its own American way, as evidenced, according to Poole, by the revival of the Ku Klux Klan during the 1910s and by "far right organizations emerg[ing] during the interwar years, many of them born out of the postwar 'Red Scare'" (238-39). While horror culture translates well the sense of danger and paranoia, the face of the enemy remains a blur. Is the monster a fascist or a communist? Are the blood-red streaks the background for a hammer and sickle or for a swastika? In any case, the Red Scare and the generalized paranoia would outlive the interwar period and rise after World War II.

When considering a unifying mood or ambiance for the patterns within mid-century American horror literature, we may be tempted to refer to it as the "age of anxiety," to borrow an introductory phrase from Darryl Jones, Elizabeth McCarthy, and Bernice Murphy's *It Came From the 1950s!* But are not many ages, if not *all* ages, moments of anxiety? We could recur to the term "paranoia," but it is not precise enough, as it already showed its colors in the xenophobia preceding this period. Terror? As Poole observes, "What's most striking, when examining the writings of fascist thinkers and the speeches of fascist leaders, is the degree to which sheer terror shaped their view of the world" (243). But, even when writing about the distant past, we are reminded that terror, as a feeling and as a sign, carries another meaning for Americans after September 11, 2001.

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[43] The Great Mortality, as in the Black Plague.

Poole also mentions a *void*, a post-war sense of desolation well illustrated by Kafka and T. S. Eliot. And by Lovecraft in his prose poem "Nyarlathotep," which "captures the emptiness and fear of the war's aftermath" (Poole 82) through images of absolute chaos in an unstable world (81). This void, though, seems less characteristic of a mid-century moment and more applicable to the years immediately following World War I or, later, the end of the American war in Vietnam, as we notice by Poole's reading of the emptiness of symbolic dolls in slasher movies from the 1980s or late 1970s (231).

Anxiety, paranoia, terror, and a void. It was all of that, yet none of those will suffice. Our last option—a void—seems the most descriptive, but, if there was any void in post-WWII America, it was an open secret, an unspoken truth hidden under the paper-thin varnish of consumerism and prosperity. On the surface, all was well. From family-friendly TV shows and Tupperware containers to suburban life aided by the G. I. Bill,[44] the 1950s and even late 1940s proved to be the golden age of Americana. A few counterpoints were, first, the disenfranchisement that would lead to the civil rights movement, second, the onset of the Cold War, and third, the rampant fear of nuclear warfare.

Direct preoccupations about the world-destroying capabilities of the atom did not comprise the only fear on American minds. According to Jones et al., in the 1950s, "juvenile delinquents" and the popular culture products consumed by the young had a significant impact on social unrest, as did changes in female sexuality, and some perils partially related to the actual war and atomic power, such as communist invasions or "the unpatriotic unprepared [Americans against whom other] American citizens will need to arm themselves" (11). Indeed, a Google Books Ngram Viewer search indicates that the usage of the terms "juvenile delinquent" and "juvenile

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[44] "U.S. legislation adopted in 1944 that provided various benefits to veterans of World War II," including "low-interest mortgage" ("G.I. Bill").

delinquency" rose in the 1950s in the U.S., peaking in the 1960s. In relation to female sexuality in this mid-century context, Peter Filene notes that, what "in the nineteenth century [had been] a perversion [and] in the early twentieth century a radical notion … had become an undisputed fact of marital life" (173-74). Undisputed in its existence, yes, but, as Filene himself establishes, still disapproved of when expressed less conservatively. Politically, Americans' concerns over their fellow citizens, as Jones et al. note, appear in novels such as Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* and Shirley Jackson's *The Sundial*. We may add Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* to the list, as its central threat literally takes the shape of the protagonist's neighbors and acquaintances.

Similarly, stories depicting haunted homes, in which people get trapped in a place supposed to protect them, function as narrative representations of the duplicities of mid-century domestic life in America. The roadside motel is the uncanny place in *Psycho*, familiar and accommodating, but also, now, a horror cliché denoting utmost untrustworthiness. Old American residences, such as the mansions in Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* or Matheson's *Hell House*, elicit the worst in their guests. The stories behind their construction, often tied to the two world wars and the economic development associated to them, ensure the dawn of the twentieth century in the U.S. and the social impact of modernity remain a piece of the puzzle, even if at the back of the readers' minds. New homes, too, when sheltering families in hope of a fresh start, turn the American Dream on its head, as is the case in *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist*. These are zoomed-in snapshots of a pattern involving great monsters destabilizing traditional ideals of family, faith, work, and the crumbling masculinities that support these concepts and institutions.

It was, indeed, also a void in masculinity, an emptiness in its re-signification after two global wars, an emptiness in its "unhealable" wounds. "The immense suffering of civilians and soldiers," Poole writes, addressing the aftermath of World War I in Italy, "the way physical and psychological mutilation called into question conceptions of masculinity, and the burst of nationalist fervor that accompanied the 1914 declarations of war combined in making the conflict the

diabolical cauldron for Europe's political derangement" (237). Similarly, to the millions of American men who served during WWII, no amount of camouflage could hide the social imperfections of post-war manhood.

Like their imperfect male family leaders, the suburban homes of the 1950s and 1960s protected but also alienated the families inside them. Nuclear shelters, then in vogue, had a more explicit protective function but also, in the absurdity of their very purpose, embodied the panic of being attacked and the lengths one was able to go to defend personal freedom. *The Body Snatchers* and its 1956 movie adaptation show us a protagonist fighting the threat of monsters who replace humanity by replicas deprived of free will and individuality. In Richard Matheson's *The Shrinking Man*, a narrative kick-started by a nuclear accident, the male family leader is deprived not only of his freedom, but also of his domestic male role as husband and breadwinner.

Not all mid-century American fears lead directly to the atom, but, as externalized in horror culture (and in numerous works of science-fiction), they form a coherent image of the aftermath of World War II, that is, of an economic boom that enabled traditional family structures to thrive while masking their own blemishes. As Stephanie Coontz summarizes in her book addressing the American nostalgia for "good old days" that never were, "Beneath the polished facades of many 'ideal' families, suburban as well as urban, was violence, terror, or simply grinding misery that only occasionally came to light" (ch. 2). The typical image of this age would be quite strange: perhaps a bit of Norman Rockwell's cheerfulness, contrasting with the monstrous subject matter of a *Weird Tales* cover and the solitude of Edward Hopper's paintings. That mental image, for me, would have a traditional American family—father, mother, son, daughter, and dog—locked inside their appliance-equipped, TV-tuned home while unspeakable chaos reigns not abroad, but right there on their *cul de sac*. They smile. Like in the bar of Hopper's famous *Nighthawks*, there is no visible exit.

Apocalyptic Analgesia

In her 1965 essay "The Imagination of Disaster," Susan Sontag posits that speculative genres (she uses the term "fantasy") provide a form of mediation between our anxiety over "inconceivable terror" and our apathy, our "unremitting banality" (42). More specifically, she argues black-and-white science-fiction films from the first decades of the twentieth century (also, to an extent, the then-recent Technicolor movies) showcase such dualism of anxiety and apathy in their portrayal of disaster as end-of-the-world madness filtered by a sense of plain sobriety. We have a juxtaposition of apocalypse and the insensibility to emotional pain, what we may call emotional analgesia.

Sontag's generalizations about science-fiction may ring less true now than they did in 1965, but its summary of early- and mid-century sci-fi movie patterns retains its descriptive powers. Even if we did not expand Sontag's observations to encompass the horror movies that she mentions only in passing (which we will), we would already have enough material for the identification of multiple patterns in the characterization of masculinities. On a political axis, we see that mid-century science-fiction and horror cinema and literature[45] may range from total absence of criticism (according to Sontag) to narratives that delve deeply into the ugliest stains on the social fabric.

On the zero-social-criticism end of the spectrum of readings, Sontag observes "[t]here is absolutely no social criticism, of even the most implicit kind, in science fiction films" (48). She sees works such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*[46] and *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* as allegories in

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[45] The decades from 1920 to 1970 showcase numerous examples of the modern genre hybridization of science fiction and horror, both on the page and on the big screen. Since *Frankenstein*, and especially since their early-twentieth-century development (as seen, for example, in Universal monster movies), modern monsters have been maintaining a steady bond with mad scientists and other science-fiction icons.

[46] "The film, which was made at the height of the Cold War, has been theorized as an indictment

which there is some correspondence of elements but no significant political thread to accompany the poetics defining the representation of disaster. In *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (the 1956 movie), for instance, one of the given explanations for people doubting the legitimacy of their loved ones, who have been replaced by alien copies, is an "epidemics of mass hysteria" caused by "[w]orry about what's going on in the world, perhaps" (16:00). Readers are left to wonder about what specifically is "going on in the world," as there is no more development. On the allegorical level, though, aliens replacing humans with emotionless copies may stand for fear of the influence of communism, while, more directly, the fictional atomic bombings in *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* stand for real bomb tests conducted by the U.S. and by Russia.

To critics standing on the end of the spectrum that defends political readings of these narratives, Sontag's strong statement is, at best, reductive, and, at its worst, nonsensical. Anna Creadick's examination of crises of masculinity as portrayed in four early Cold War-era films contains a strong opposition to the allegorical and apolitical views. "I feel uncomfortable," she writes, "with arguments which collapse all giant insect/space invader/human mutation films of the 1950s together as apolitical aesthetic experiences or allegories," as "[c]loser attention to the particular kinds of anxiety-producing technology being portrayed … reveals more pointed cultural critiques than Sontag and others have seen" (297). Creadick adds that "reducing these sci-fi films to metaphor makes arguments about repression, consensus, and complicity in the postwar years too easy to prove" (297). That is, when we watch *Them!* or read Jack Finney's *The Body Snatchers* and erase the possibility of political discourse shaping the narrative, we are understanding scriptwriters, novelists, and movie producers were on board with the social dynamics dictating "proper" and "improper"

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of or an allegory for many things, from Cold War paranoia and the fear of McCarthyism to the alienation felt in mass society to the tyrannical egalitarianism and loss of personal autonomy common in communist societies." ("Invasion of the Body Snatchers")

conduct in the 1950s—or at least they were repressed enough not to challenge them directly. To Creadick, we ought to look closely into these stories in find political expression in their subtext.

Indeed, uncountable interpretations of mid-century sci-fi (and horror) films pigeonhole them as films "about the Cold War" or "a warning about nuclear power" or "some movie criticizing consumer society," but this does not do justice to Sontag's essay, even if we see it as responsible for shaping future interpretations of science-fiction or disaster movies. While reductive readings promote a dangerous and unitary view of literature, cinema, and art in general, as they threaten to close discussions and erase further discourse, Sontag's recognition of allegory in movies is critical of the exact same "oneness" of interpretation. Most of the elements that would bring a deep political aspect to the films she refers to are buried beneath allegorical simplicity, beneath bombs, disasters, explosions, and monsters who connect directly to extradiegetic events. And to Sontag, it seems, politics in the subtext does not suffice.

In *Danse Macabre*, Stephen King approaches the same topic, expressing, in his typical barefaced humor, the "benefits" of allegorical film with concealed politics. He uses the term "horror," but refers to the same mid-century hybrid-genre narratives involving aliens, mutant insects, and similar monsters of *logos*. He writes,

> During that period [1950s, 1970s, 1980s] (and to a lesser degree, in the seventy or so years preceding), the horror genre has often been able to find national phobic pressure points, and those books and films which have been the most successful almost always seem to play upon and express fears which exist across a wide spectrum of people. Such fears, which are often political, economic, and psychological rather than supernatural, give the best work of horror a pleasing allegorical feel—and it's the one sort of allegory that most filmmakers seem at home with. Maybe because they know that if the shit starts getting too thick, they can always bring the monster shambling out of the darkness again. (18-19)

Like Sontag, who mentions images of "a supplementary and historical anxiety … not experienced consciously by most people" (65), King recognizes the "national phobic pressure points" (19) behind the curtain of mid-century speculative fiction.

Neither seems to be addressed directly or thoroughly by the average monster film in the 1950s. If they are, it is only because, as King's puts it, "if the shit starts getting too thick" (19), filmmakers and authors may return to narratives that seem even less political (e.g., supernatural fears instead of political ones). Sontag and King seem to agree, each in their own style, that allegory sweeps nuanced representations of political discussions under the rug. If we, as a rule, have to dig into the subtext of a decade of narratives to find any political manifestation that goes beyond simple allegory, what does that say about the complicity of the authorial voices behind them? Although Sontag's essay may have contributed to the oversimplified attempts at readings of speculative fiction, her harsh sentence may be directed not at the narratives themselves, but at the lack of political charge or involvement in *the telling* of the narratives or in the final product.

Referring to depersonalization in narratives in which aliens or robots replace human beings, Sontag argues that "[t]he image [of anxiety, of disaster] derives most of its power from a supplementary and historical anxiety, also not experienced *consciously* by most people, about the depersonalizing conditions of modern urban society" (48). More generally, she understands "the notion of science as a social activity, interlocking with social and political interests, is *unacknowledged*" (my emphasis) in these narratives. Her choice of words ("experienced *consciously*," "*unacknowledged*") suggests her criticism is not about apolitical films, but of films that are political only to the extent in which they do not have to be openly so.

These narratives imagine worlds where political conflict exists almost in a vacuum, with little or no political parallels of implications within the story. Only the audience or the readers know it *is not* a vacuum—hence the allegorical characteristic. The conflicts, are, in fact, supported by an extradiegetic context. So, while the radiation winds that cause the protagonist of *The Shrinking*

Man to gradually lose mass and size are only briefly mentioned in the novel, not being connected to any political concern, Matheson's readers understand that, outside the pages, experiments with radioactivity were one of the most pressing political concerns. The lack of diegetic development only reinforces the invitation to understand them alongside a real-world sign. A word may be enough for the wise, but Sontag's criticism is pointed at words (*political* words) being almost redacted from these texts, leaving a mere shadow where explicit politics should have been.

When we throw into the mixture discussions of gender performances and social manifestations of traditional masculinities, we recognize even more immediately the instability of the implied politics behind what appear to be simple, allegorical narratives. If there is anything wrong with masculinity, it is frequently pushed back to hide side-by-side with other openly political discourses behind the center stage action in which American prosperity constantly trumps alien (or Russian, or communist, or Nazi) threats. In the viewpoint of gender, much of what Sontag terms a "extreme moral simplification—that is to say, a morally acceptable fantasy where one can give outlet to cruel or at least amoral feelings" (45)—appears to be handled not only through the process of imbuing groups with monstrous characteristics, but also through the suppression of "improper" masculine feelings.

As it happens in other typically American narratives, when the Western cowboy triumphs over Indigenous Americans or the war hero obliterates the foreign enemy to save a fellow soldier, emotionless masculinity is celebrated in its conquest over the Other. "The sense of superiority over the freak," Sontag writes, comparing sci-fi and horror films, "conjoined in varying proportions with the titillation of fear and aversion makes it possible for moral scruples to be lifted, for cruelty to be enjoyed" (45). Modern monsters constitute one of the key overlaps between the two genres and allow us to watch "one of the purest forms of spectacle" (45), or, in other words, they allow us to suspend our moral scruples and, in general, to "rarely [be] inside anyone's feelings" (45) in the narratives. If we apply Sontag's observations more generally, we see these narratives

provide catharsis from emotions without us having to go through the "troublesome" stage of actually addressing them.

One of the more evident examples is Finney's *The Body Snatchers*. It involves the people of Mill Valley, California, being replaced by alien seed pods that gradually take the form of emotion-less human beings with reduced life span. Like a plague, or like humanity itself, according to one of the aliens (186-87), these extraterrestrials would exhaust Earth's natural resources and its life and then drift through space toward their next target. The book indeed concludes with the pods drifting away to space, but humanity remains safe after the aliens deem Earth unfit because of the protagonist's resilience and humanity's general perseverance. Don Siegel's 1956 movie adaptation ends with a desperate call to the FBI, as pods are being shipped *en masse* to populous cities.

This film's rendition of the protagonist, Dr. Miles Bennell, contains a reasonable amount of emotion, mostly in his romantic interactions. In a lighthearted manner, Kevin McCarthy's acting conveys some playfulness and boyish contentment, as his character treats patients, learns of people acting strangely throughout town, and flirts with his high-school sweetheart Becky Driscoll, who has recently returned to Santa Mira.[47] Where, then, do we find emotional suppression?

Perhaps Miles's antagonists, the "pod people,"[48] have the answer. They are not absolutely empty of emotion but show "only the pretense of it" (Finney 24). As a character phrases in the film when accusing her uncle of being an impostor, "Words, gestures, the tone of voice … Everything else is the same, but not the feeling" (11:40). In this respect, Miles and his monstrous foils

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[47] A fictional town in California. Not the setting of Finney's novel (which is Mill Valley, California), but its equivalent in Siegel's movie.

[48] The phrase entered American culture to mean "A person considered to be conformist, unoriginal, or emotionless; one who lacks personality or individuality" ("Pod person"). The allusion is to Finney's novel and its adaptations, and this usage of the term dates to the 1970s.

are made in each other's image. He, too, even if on a different level, displays a minimum range of emotions, showing only proper, well-selected faces.

Some gap between real and fictional conventions for displaying feelings is expected when reading a book or watching a film (especially if they are nearing their seventieth anniversary), but these narratives give us emotions that have gone through a diegetic filter and suppressed even more. For example, Miles's juvenile nature and the general lighthearted tones of the secondary story thread (Miles's love affair with Becky) hide or minimize complex feelings such as grief or existential anxiety by exchanging them for simpler, less "harmful" and more socially acceptable concerns. The deepest, most truthful emotions remain hidden in the subtext. At best they are almost let out, but never quite so.

Both in the novel and in the film adaptation, characters often explicitly prevent the expression of troublesome emotions by cutting short a dialog with censoring expressions. "Take it easy, Becky," Miles advises, as Becky gets increasingly desperate in her account of her cousin's idea that one of their family members is not really himself. When examining a blank cadaver free of defining features or fingerprints, Jack Belicec concludes it is "[w]aiting for the final finished face to be stamped onto it," to which his wife, Theodora, replies, alluding to the alien's similarity to her husband, "But whose face? Tell me that" (21:39-47). As Jack approaches Theodora, Miles attempts to terminate the conversation by saying, "I think we could all use a drink" (21:48). She repeats her question, suggesting it was not rhetorical and gets a response only after listing all physical similarities between her husband and the alien duplicate in formation: Jack, serving the drinks, cuts himself and lashes at her, "Teddy, will you stop talking nonsense?" (22:20). Not coincidently, two men are responsible for interrupting Theodora's attempts at bringing to light an unpleasant but objective truth: the cadaver in their house was remarkably similar to her husband.

Miles's humorous quips fulfill the same silencing function. When crossing a street alongside Becky and reminiscing about their romantic relationship in the past, he comments, "I've found

out that a doctor's wife needs the understanding of an Einstein and the patience of a saint." In two words, she throws him off guard, "And love?" "I wouldn't know about that," he replies. "I'm just a general practitioner. Love is handled by the specialists" (08:00-15). As an isolated incident, his remarks may seem merely flirtatious, but, in context, we may see them as yet another attempt at deflecting conversations involving emotions.

Shortly before one third of the movie, when recognizing the gravity of the situation in Santa Mira becomes inevitable for Miles, he demonstrates yet again his wish to dissociate disaster from the expression of his feelings. In voice-over narration, he explains, "I was careful not to let Becky know it, but for the first time I was really scared" (24:10-15). We see the true nature behind Miles's restrictions at this point. They follow the logic of the pod-people's dissimulation, but in reverse. Unlike the pod people, who do not *feel* emotion but at first pretend to, Miles fails by not *disclosing* what he truly feels. He does not let the audience know either, at least not by his actions or expressions. There is no remarkable intensity of emotion or suspense in the filmography, which may result in a more passive movie-watching experience, guiding us into what Sontag describes as an audience that "are merely spectators; we watch" (45), as opposed to being actually emotionally engaged with a compelling, human narrative. The narratives simply do not seriously address the feelings of the characters or even that the characters are able to feel painful, complex emotions.

In these examples and in others, men are responsible for the silence, while women attempt to address unwanted subjects and supply emotions. In the novel, "Becky covered her face with her hands and began to cry" when expressing her doubts about her father's identity (42). Later, after the alien doubles are exposed, Becky directly avows, "I'm just too scared; I haven't been this frightened since I was a little girl" (116). When Theodora has the confirmation that the cadaver in her home is gradually becoming a duplicate of her husband, she lets out a scream of agony (26:00). When a dog is almost run over by a truck, Becky shouts in despair, exposing herself and Miles to the pod people (01:05:10). We are not dealing with emotionally suppressed people exactly, but with *men* stifling their

non-conforming emotions as a strategy to formulate conforming masculinities. Women, meanwhile, will let out the typical high-pitched scream of madness or panic. These are perhaps the two sides of the most obvious gender cliché: women as beings of emotion, men as beings of reason. In these examples, though, we do not see masculinity in defense of reason as we saw in the pulp magazines; instead, masculinity is defined in a *via negativa*. Regardless of what proper masculinity is, it does not involve showing pain or emotion.

A brief scene in the 1956 movie appears to contradict these observations, but, once more, turns into a moment of silence. Hiding from the pod people, Miles tells Becky, "In my practice I see how people have allowed their humanity to drain away. Only it happens slowly instead of all the once. They didn't seem to mind." Becky replies, "Just some people, Miles." "All of us, a little bit. We harden our hearts, grow callous. Only when we have to fight to stay human we realize how precious it is to us. How dear." Then Miles turns his speech into flirting once more, as if moving away from philosophical considerations and shifting into a language that requires less introspection from the audience. He says to Becky, "As you are to me." They kiss and the music score rises in intensity. The scene ends. Grief for the loss of humanity is erased, now silenced by a kiss in a traditional, acceptable, and silent demonstration of love (54:24-55).

Near the final moments of the movie, Miles expresses his fears and tries to contact drivers on the highway and, further on, he relays his stories to doctors. This moment of emotional expression, however, far from redeeming, comes from a distressed, unkempt man who, in the eyes of outsiders, seems to have lost all grasp on reality. It is quite ironic that a man fighting for humanity's right to feel shows so few feelings himself. When he shows them, they come in the form of incoherent accusations about the inhumanity of his acquaintances. Even more ironic is that, for a story about the fundamental value of emotions in a meaningful human experience, *The Body Snatchers* and its first adaptation suggest that it is our emotions that make us weak, and that a human

race without real feelings, living merely under the socially acceptable premise that yes, all is well, thank you very much, is, indeed, happier.

Finney's novel and its adaptations are not alone in the list of emotional analgesia, as mid-century science-fiction, horror, and even less speculative or fantastical genres routinely portray unwanted emotional turmoil hidden by a varnish of domestic happiness. Looking at other genres, and moving briefly from fiction to drama, we are reminded of two plays written, performed, and published in the 1940s and 1950s that revolved around dynamics of suppressing and expressing emotions. Tennessee Williams, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, puts under the same roof the delusional Southern belle Blanche Dubois, who hides her emotional fragility with upper-class arrogance, and the crude Stanley Kowalski, who displays a form of hypermasculinity[49] without any feelings more complex than hunger, anger, and lust. In *A Long Day's Journey into Night*, Eugene O'Neill, similarly, writes of a family blotting out their unspoken emotional traumas and dissatisfactions via drug abuse and simple negation of reality. In an article contextualizing Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House* (to which we will return in this chapter) in the 1950s, Angela Hague, citing Arlene Skolnick's *Embattled Paradise: The American Family in an Age of Uncertainty* mentions

> "contrasting visions" of the 1950s that included idyllic images of family life that appeared in situation comedies and popular magazines and, on the other hand, "a nightmare vision of American family life" presented in the works of Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Edward Albee. (74)

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[49] Charles Corprew, Jamaal Matthews, and Avery Mitchell provide a short but comprehensive overview of the concept of "hypermasculinity," listings several authors and their contributions to the definition. In its essence, it involves a stereotype and inflation of characteristics from traditional forms of manhood (e.g., misogyny, aggression, dominance, risk-taking, violence as excitement, importance of status, lack of emotion and affect) (106).

The major difference between these plays and the mid-century horror stories is how suppression of emotion constitutes the core of the conflicts in Williams and O'Neill's works, while *The Body Snatchers* and the other works mentioned by Sontag, in their form and content, appear to be complicit with the characters' inability to feel emotional pain. In Williams's and O'Neill's plays, the stifling of emotions is addressed directly, not as a structural or stylistic byproduct of scenes in which male characters function as machine-like husks fueled by heroism or anger. They direct audiences or readers to the corrosive and traumatizing outcomes of emotional suppression, while the pattern seen in the horror stories involves the normalization of non-emotion.

The aftermath of World War II, mostly associated with mid-century economic boom in the U.S., hid a darker scenario not only for several army veterans who went through the war itself, but also for people living suburban lives that, at first glance, seemed the poster-image of the American Dream but were, beneath the surface, highly susceptible to personal anguish, domestic tribulation, and masculine failure. By 1939, the American Man had become a parody of the pulp hero in James Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty." By 1949, he had become "The Laughing Man" of J. D. Salinger's short story, a hypermasculine counterpoint to the meek narrator. By 1956, it had become *The Shrinking Man*, who, in Richard Matheson's novel, dwindles in size and manhood, as mundane household objects take mountainous proportions, and small threats, such as spiders, grow into monsters.

Sontag suggests that Jack Arnold's movie adaptation of Matheson's *Shrinking Man* stands outside the scope of her observations about the language of disaster, a language that involves moral simplification and lacks the acknowledgement of characters' feelings. Other works, such as Matheson's 1954 novel *I Am Legend*, also reject simple morality and the presentation of emotionless masculinity at face value. Well-developed internal conflict substitutes for the erasure of emotion in narratives whose literal apocalypse is mirrored by a psychological devastation of the protagonists' states of mind.

Like the plays by Williams and O'Neill, and unlike many horror and sci-fi narratives of the time, these works do not erase painful emotions, but portray male characters who go through processes of dissolution of masculinity and attempt to negotiate the complex mental states such processes warrant. Success may be infrequent, but, in this respect, the narratives may be just acknowledging emotional complexity, not ignoring it. In the plays, this is shown via alcoholism or sexual abuse, while the images of horror and science fiction veer toward the monstrous in these Richard Matheson novels: a man who shrinks to impossible levels, and (one of the most horrific monsters of context) a regular human being in a world of vampires.

In this context, Peter Filene's men on the run, as portrayed in narratives of apocalypse (and here we may understand the term equally as revelation, disaster, and a point of change) ultimately do not find identity in anti-society environments as stereotyped in American literature by Henry David Thoreau, Jack Kerouac, or by the Wild West gunslinger in Western films, but lose the cover they themselves may have thought was real: they were not running from the society or the Other, but, as usual, from what the Other represents and they carry within themselves. In times of monsters and apocalypse, one runs from oneself when there is nothing else to run from. And, when men on the run flee even from themselves, the result may be the dissolution of their masculinities. The failure to build manhood in terms of independence, freedom, and wilderness leads to a more open recognition that these pillars characterizing the "free man" hold, instead, a façade of avoidance, escapism, and anti-social behavior.

In *The Shrinking Man*, we see physical reduction as a metaphor for reductions of emotion and masculinity. After being washed over by a "spray impregnated with radiation" (145), Scott Carey begins to become smaller. The process initially involves confusion and frustration, as Scott's clothes stop fitting him, and doctors fail to provide a hopeful prognosis. Frustration becomes shame, as Scott becomes smaller than his infant daughter. Unable to work or drive, his role as a provider changes into the plight of being a financial burden to his family. His relationship with his wife turns

into a source of shame, as Scott's body is ambiguously sexed (as he still feels sexual desire) and not sexed (as his body resembles a child's). He ceases to be a father, a breadwinner, a husband, and imagines his eventual demise: shrink to a void, to infinitesimal existence.

Domesticity and emasculation guide readers' focus as early as the first edition book cover (see fig. 10). Scott stands on unlit paper matches, holding a pin that seems longer than his own body. Two common objects suggest what the rest of the book confirms: domestic objects furnish the arena where the shrinking man fights for his life. Scott brandishes the pin as a weapon against a black widow spider, another symbol both common on American's households and representative of women's triumph over emasculated men.

In Jack Arnold's 1957 film adaptation, titled *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, as the opening credits roll, a cloud of smoke grows accompanied by the rising musical score and opposed by a shrinking male figure (00:24-01:10). This image suggests viewers must keep in mind the other half of the allegory. As Scott Carey slowly shrinks to sub-atomic size, the powers of the Atom grow over Man. Nature reacts to the American atomic projects by removing a man from a context of urbanization, civilization, and domestication—ironically, by pushing him deeper into the constituents of his civilized, urban, domestic life.

Symbols of mid-century domestic life appear early in the movie, but later gain a darker meaning. There is a milkman, a refrigerator, a cat, then morning breakfast (04:30-06:50). Scott, who will later have to fight for food and to survive the cat's attacks, assures his pet, mostly talking to himself, that "everything is going to be all right" (10:22). He does not sound convincing, nor does he look convincing when, with a sad face attempting a smile, he tells his wife "[w]e'll go back to the doctor tomorrow. I'm sure he's got a pill for it" (10:00). The previous line, uttered by his wife, remains one of the rare instances in mid-century horror in which a woman says to a man he

Fig. 10 Cover of *The Shrinking Man*

is being irrational: "Well, that's silly, honey. People just don't get smaller" (09:55). Indeed, Peter Filene assures us "[t]he fact that almost half the men in the daily comic strips were shorter than their wives did not mean that real men were shrinking" (173). Except that Scott *is* shrinking, and Filene, in jest, is alluding to *The Shrinking Man* and the idea that men *were* shrinking, at least metaphorically.

Scott's sadness, in the novel and the movie, turns into a more traditionally masculine emotion: rage. He grows frustrated with the media, with other people's look at him, and impatient about the situation. The rage also shows loathing directed toward himself, his own body, the dissociation between his self-perceived images and the images his body is able to express. Overwhelming, though, as it may be, self-hatred is only at second place on Scott's list. Primarily, he seems angry at the pretense around him, mainly coming from his wife. Even though he is long past the point of believing a pill would reverse or even halt his condition, his wife seems unable to address his predicament directly. In the movie, she assures him of her love and that "[n]ot a darn thing's changed" and that "as long as you've got this wedding ring on, you've got me" (16:00). His ring then ominously falls from his small finger. Immediately in the film (but a few days or weeks or months after in the chronological time), Scott, now as short as his wife's waist, shouts at her, asking her to recognize that people are laughing at him, that he has become a joke for the people who crowd his front yard to peek at the Incredible Shrinking Man (19:50). In the original text, Scott remembers "[t]he way [his mother] kept avoiding the obvious" (34) and goes through "his period of furies—a time when he experienced an endless and continuously mounting anger at the plight he was in" (61), a form of "fury that made him lash out incontinently at anyone he thought was mocking him" (62). Indeed, he refuses to publicize his life: "No, thank you, but I don't care to be exposed to the morbid curiosity of the public" (61). Two opposites incite his anger: those who pretended he was fine, and those who look at him with insatiable curiosity.

Scott becomes, if not a monster *per se*, at least a freak, an abnormality, a *lusus naturae*. Being a freak separates Scott from fellow humans; being a man in a child-like body distances him from his wife; but what completely alienates him from social life is his recognition of the seriousness of his condition. His wife, perhaps to inspire hope and safety, refuses to face the husband's predicament. Scott even accuses her of being unable to look at him (20:05). Everyone else makes light of the situation by doing the opposite, by directing their eyes and video cameras toward him, making him a circus freak that should not be taken seriously.

This dissolution of Scott as a masculine, social, and human being is a dissolution of a pretense of prosperity, that is, of the masculine, physical, social appearances to which he used to conform. He goes from respectable member of society to freak in a few months' time—and because of situations external to his control. He knows how easy the varnish of American prosperity can be removed, and what seems to enrage him is that no one else acknowledges that.

Another example of a fall from masculinity, unmentioned by Sontag, is *I Am Legend*, also written by Matheson, and at the time only recently adapted into film.[50] This time we follow Robert Neville after an apocalyptic pandemic that has turned humanity into violent, animalistic vampires. On an individual level, the novel explores the self-examination of Robert Neville as he comes to terms with a devastated new world where every street is as ruined as the next. On a political sphere, readers see how the disease has created a world without central structure. There is no political state, no society, no culture but the remnants of a long-gone world of which Neville is the sole witness. Or at least that is the reader's impression up to the final sections of the novel. Neville eventually encounters another survivor—an infected woman who reveals there are others who, unlike Neville, who is immune, have contracted the diseased but survived as vampires with no

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[50] *The Last Man on Earth*. Two subsequent adaptations are *The Omega Man* and *I Am Legend*.

animalistic instincts of violence. Neville, who has killed uncountable vampires since the outbreak, eventually faces execution as punishment for his acts.

Robert Neville is, in fact, the monster. The vampires, in our perspective, remain the monsters of *logos*, as they are unexplained by science or reason in a world where science and reason themselves have fallen.[51] We may even see them as monsters of *pathos* and *ethos*, as they deprive Neville of a fair judgment and execute other vampires (the violent, animalistic kind). But is our perspective really the prevalent one in the new world, populated with people who are not human? In *I Am Legend* we find the ultimate irony of the monster stories written in the 1950s: after the man on the run from civilization fails to escape his emotions and does not find his masculinity even when completely removed from society, he desires to find his way back to what he has lost. And surprisingly, despite the apocalypse, the civilization Neville was so eager to return to is there—it is just not for him.

In *The Shrinking Man* and *I Am Legend*, the imagination of disaster differs from the one Sontag identifies in numerous science-fiction films. Instead of narratives arranged to enable passive reading or watching, we have critical explorations of characters plagued by a painful range of emotions. They may be either allowing themselves to feel their pain more freely or attempting to suppress feelings and become mere "watchers" of their own lives, but, if the situation is the latter, now we are not invited to accompany them. In either case, the content of these narratives involves an emotion-focused struggle of masculinity. Less passively, we watch, feelings and all.

In an article about another of Matheson's influential mid-century novels, *Hell House*, to which a significant part of the next section is dedicated, Iván Gómez highlights the importance of the *locus horribilis* in Matheson's fiction. "Then the hellish space," he writes,

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[51] Over the years, Neville has developed a solid hypothesis for the effects of the disease, but, in any case, the hypothesis falls outside the scope of traditional science as we understand it.

[w]ould be a space where, by definition, it is easy to enter but very hard to escape from, since its limits are never defined, it changes shape, and we never see its point of origin or end. The protagonist of *I Am Legend* inhabits an immense environment, impossible to explore, where there are no-go zones dominated by vampires. To the protagonist of *The Shrinking Man*, his daily surroundings change into an authentic domestic hellscape where everything becomes threatening (26, my translation).[52]

These spaces reflect and enhance the internal ambiguity of the main characters, a significant portion of which is an ambiguity of masculinity. As Gómez explains, "Evil finally has a face, and it is ours. These characters … face a problem much more unsolvable than a shifting labyrinth: they face an unstable and disarticulated *I* that inhabits spaces of indefiniteness" (26, my translation).[53] What these (male) characters express goes beyond emotional analgesia—beyond the inability or refusal to feel emotional pain. What these men scream as they are reduced into nothing, as they cease to exist to become legends, is the plight of an entire generation. *I have killed the monsters, but*

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[52] "El espacio infernal sería así un espacio en el que, por definición, es fácil adentrarse aunque muy difícil escapar, puesto que nunca tiene unos límites definidos, cambia de forma, nunca vemos su punto de origen ni final. El protagonista de *I Am Legend* (*Soy leyenda*, 1954) habita un entorno gigantesco, imposible de explorar, en el que existen zonas en las que es mejor no adentrarse por ser dominio exclusivo de los vampiros; para el de *The Shrinking Man* (*El hombre menguante*, 1956) el entorno cotidiano se convierte en un auténtico infierno doméstico en el que todo se vuelve amenazante." (Gómez 26)

[53] "Así que el mal tiene finalmente un rostro y es el nuestro. Esos personajes sumidos en infiernos cotidianos, enfrentados a los demonios de la casa Belasco, a los vampiros del mañana o a la energía atómica se enfrentan finalmente a un problema mucho más irresoluble que un laberinto cambiante: se enfrentan a un yo inestable y desarticulado habitante de espacios de indefinición." (Gómez 26)

they keep returning from the dead. I have tried to numb my fears, but there are so many. And I have all I need: car, house, wife, children, a job. But am I more than a man in his domestic hellscape?

The result is indeed apocalyptic, and, again, in many senses of the word. The protagonists' world is erased, and a new era begins—literally in *I Am Legend*, metaphorically in *The Shrinking Man*. At any rate, personal or global disasters catalyze a revelation: living under a roof of stoically-controlled emotions, if taken to an extreme, creates monsters of *pathos*.

Hearth and Horror

The architecture of medieval castles, prominent in the eighteenth-century Gothic narratives popularized by Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, and their contemporaries, remains somewhat consistent in later tales of horror. Henry James gave us an account of domestic paranoia as early as 1898 in *The Turn of the Screw*, set in the typical haunted old mansion whose literary cornerstones were set by Gothic novels and their *loci horrendi*. Edgar Allan Poe, too, despite writing in a context removed from actual medieval architecture, wove into "The Fall of the House of Usher" the ambiguous personal relations and the putrid elements of decay that we see in Gothic narratives and still recognize in modern novels such as Stephen King's *The Shining* and in films such as *The Others*.

Much of our familiarity with these *unheimlich* places, though, comes from the elements woven within them after World War II in a modern context in the U.S. The Gothic tropes of a heroine and a male villain gain a distinguished tone after first-wave feminism, just as early-twentieth-century industrialization and modernization contextualize Gothic barbarism in a different era.[54] By tuning barbarism to the development of twentieth-century technology and integrating

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[54] According to Punter, barbarism can be seen "as the fear of the past, … as the fear of the aristocracy, … [and] as a fear … in the present and even the future" (183).

them, along with gender matters, within modernity, the horror genre reworks Gothic subjects and acquires nuances that let out the true colors behind the flaking varnish of prosperity of mid-century America. It turns out that bringing electrical lights and hot water to the haunted castle only accentuates its sharp shadows and cold spots.

The architectural progeny of the castle of Otranto now has its doors pried open by paranormal investigators studying the supernatural phenomena of haunted houses that have become monuments of the American cultural landscape. As Dale Bailey defends, "the popularity of that [haunted house] formula depended upon its versatility in exploring American themes" (ix). These houses become the corrupted version of a touristic sight, since, like the house from Grant Wood's *American Gothic* painting[55] or the House of the Seven Gables,[56] they are widely known (in their fictional worlds). Unlike the numerous visitors of those famous houses, though, only a few dare enter Richard Matheson's Hell House or Shirley Jackson's Hill House.

In Matheson's *Hell House*, a group of four (two mediums, a scientist, and his wife) attempts a feat that has killed several others: to spend a week at "the Mount Everest of haunted houses" (17), the Belasco House, or Hell House. The guests experience degradation of reason, emotion, and morals in the vast emptiness of a mansion that, as its former owner did when alive, goads its inhabitants into extreme savagery. The four are physically hurt by moving objects and mentally drained by occurrences that evoke psychological trauma—they are conspired against, sexually assaulted, and, ultimately, some lose their lives, all in the name of a single question. Is there life after death?

What initially compels the group to explore the Belasco house is a wealthy man's impending death. Rolf Rudolph Deutsch, an eighty-seven-year-old written media publisher in his deathbed, tasks them with definitively proving or disproving the existence of consciousness after death.

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[55] In Eldon, Iowa, now including a center for visitors.

[56] In Salem, Massachusetts, popularized by Nathaniel Hawthorne's Gothic novel of the same name.

The mediums understand consciousness to remain in the form of spirits. The scientist hypothesizes that "residual energy" (73) accounts for abnormal phenomena, no post-death consciousness being involved. While "parapsychological phenomena" (72) occur frequently within Hell House, being scientifically reproducible and measurable, the central question, which initially brought the four investigators to the mansion, remains unanswered until the final moments of the novel.

The closing chapters reveal that Emeric Belasco himself haunted the place, continuing, even after death, his voyeuristic, sadistic, psychopathic influence on the guests at his house, who he watched having sex, mutilating, drugging, and killing each other. The novel implies neither pure science nor pure faith by themselves can combat or explain Belasco and his dominance over his mansion. The final conflict involves mediumistic powers, but also a machine that possibly weakens the spiritual energy of the house.

Even though Deutsch's anxiety over death and his desire to purchase an answer to one of the most central questions behind humanity's existence sets the novel in motion, his death, which happens within a few days, eventually puts an end to any obligations to answer the unanswerable. Moreover, the quartet enters the house not honestly imbued with a desire to carry out observations of a scientific or investigative nature. The physical medium, Benjamin Fischer, wishes to face the force that scarred him as a child. The mental medium, Florence Tanner, has true altruistic motives, as she wishes to help the spirits that she believes haunt the mansion and to build a church with the payment for her endeavor. As we gain knowledge of her traumatic backstory, however, we learn that a significant amount of self-validation guides her altruism. Dr. Lionel Barrett's approach is scientific at the surface, but his certainty of the outcome of his experiments (fact-based, but imbued with excessive emotional investment, and, ultimately, wrong) seems as dangerous as Florence Tanner's dogma.

While it has these easily detectable concerns, *Hell House* offers another matter as its central theme—not the metaphysics of death, but ethics and politics of life. Deutsch ends the novel dead

and his question, even if answered, loses much of its value when compared with the other doubts the Belasco house poses. Even if there is life after death, is it morally acceptable to remain conscious because of a fixation on wrongdoing as Belasco does? Is the answer to the ultimate human conundrum more valuable than the success of our interpersonal relations when alive?

Unlike the early-twentieth-century narratives that centered on the alleged degradation of reason, gender identity, and nation, the inner conflicts boiling up in some mid-century horror stories concern the anxiety of sharing spaces with one's neighbor in a context in which reason, masculinity/femininity, and nation are neither entirely degraded nor exactly the same as they once have been. Defenses and attacks on reason are juxtaposed with similar discussions regarding faith; both, in fact, are portrayed as fallible in the hand of humans. Dr. Barrett's science becomes prejudice and narrow-mindedness, while Florence Tanner's piety becomes sanctimony. The character's understanding of masculinity and femininity undergoes a revision forced by the house's tensions, as they bring to light, for instance, Dr. Barrett's sexual impotence and his wife's attraction for women. National history is made apparent through the retelling of Belasco's relation to his mansion.

On one level, *Hell House* works with the typical parallels of masculinity/reason against femininity/sensitivity, which are complicated by the constant harassment (often of a sexual nature) done by Belasco through his house. Perversions of religious symbols aim to disturb Florence Tanner: a nude "figure of Jesus [with] an enormous phallus jutting upward" (36), and "walls … covered with pornographic murals" (36). Dr. Barrett's sexual impotence becomes part of a conflict exposing his marital disputes, and his scientism reaches deadly levels, as he intends to "end the so-called curse of Hell House by purely scientific means" (134) and the house retaliates.

In general, the guests' masculinity, femininity, sexuality, and sexual orientation, linked to their self-understanding and their identity, are broken by Belasco's ghost operating through his house. Under his influence, Edith Barrett makes a strong sexual advance toward her husband, initiating a rape attempt and exclaiming, "For Christ's sake, make it hard!" (161). Lionel Barrett's

impotence and his wife's sexual assault, later mirrored by an attack on his machine, happen alongside Florence Tanner's rape, which is carried out by a manifestation of Belasco.

As Belasco's attacks target the visitors' psychological vulnerabilities, the weak structure of their masculinities and femininities collapse. Edith has her sexuality put in doubt by Florence's nudity and sexual advances, which make resurface previous sexual assaults Edith has suffered. "Of course you are [a lesbian]," a possessed Florence says to Edith. "We're both that way … Men are ugly, men are cruel. Only women can be trusted. Only women can be loved. Your own father tried to rape you, didn't he?" (248). Florence's death happens as a result of her attempts to save what she believes is the soul of Belasco's son—but is, in fact, one of Belasco's tricks. He "used her memory about her brother's death, and tied it in to her obsession about" (310) his son to guilt Florence into saving someone to compensate for her inability to save her brother, whose death was, in her words, "the only real sorrow of my life" (155). Indeed, "[o]ne of [Belasco's] favorite hobbies was destroying women" (61).

On another level, though, Matheson's work provides a rare instance of healthy masculinity, one that is able to survive a barrage of violations. Ben Fischer constitutes and enacts his masculinity without negative components we usually associate with traditional, authoritarian male stereotypes. His sexuality, for instance, is not aggressive. His refusal to have erotic relations with a possessed Edith is met with derogatory comments made as mockery of both characters' sexuality, as Edith asks, "Never had a tit before? … Suck them, you fairy bastard, or I'll get myself a woman who will!" (182). He is passive and analytical throughout most of the novel, not taking the reigns as Dr. Barret tries to do. Even though he is the sole survivor of any previous expeditions to Hell House, he refuses to embody the role of the hero or monster hunter, as he never charges in headfirst.

Fischer, consciously or not, perceives how the differences that create fissures between the people in Hell House have more than a sexual nature and encompass their entire personalities, including their traumas and their masculinities/femininities. When he confronts Belasco's ghost,

his strategy is to belittle the predator who calls himself the "Roaring Giant" and who appropriates his house to seem more powerful and more numerous. "Evil?," Fischer says to Belasco. "You, you funny little bastard? … What a funny little man you really were. What a funny little crawling bug of a ghost. You weren't a genius. You were a nut, a creep, a deviate, a slob, a loser" (321). And so, Belasco reverts to his insecure self and vanishes. Fischer is able to utilize Belasco's techniques of belittling others, but without self-consciousness as a reason. And, refusing the heroic role, he recognizes defeating the house "took all of us": Lionel's mentality, Florence's spirituality, Edith's support, and Fischer's patient observations (324).

Matheson's narrative wraps up with a suggestion that its characters have been struggling with weaknesses that were part of what made them powerful. Lionel's scientism is part of his scientifically inclined mentality; Florence's self-righteousness is part of her spirituality; Edith's trauma-related anxiety and doubts are part of her caution; Fischer's passivity was part of a masculinity focused not on stereotypical heroism and action, but on patience, analysis, and understanding. We are presented four characters with relatable, similar, but independently developed struggles and we understand that only those who can tolerate their self-reflected judgmental gazes in the presence of the Other can survive. As Iván Gómez reminds us, "the author locates more than a few stories in daily spaces transmuted into authentic hellscapes where characters end up psychically lost. Matheson's hells have precise physical and material entities but destroy the minds of their characters rather than their bodies" (18, my translation).[57] The hell in Hell House, as it turns out, is less Christian and more social, interpersonal.

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[57] "No son pocos los relatos que el autor sitúa en espacios cotidianos transmutados en auténticos infiernos en los que los personajes se acaban perdiendo psíquicamente. Los infiernos en Matheson tienen una entidad física y material muy precisa, pero no destruyen el cuerpo de los personajes, sino su mente."

The haunting of the Belasco house, even if carried out by a single individual, surpasses the influence of one entity and even the influence of the murders and criminal orgies that took place inside its walls. Emeric Belasco made his home a "private hell" (26) by using his money, his influence, and his wish to control other human beings and bask in what he believes in the most: "'That rare *vis viva*[58] of the self, that magnetism, that most secret and prevailing delectation of the mind: influence'" (59). For Belasco, this begins in his infancy with the hanging of a cat and ends in a series of events involving cannibalism, rape, and madness running rampant in his house. "These spaces," Gómez explains, "are usually cursed because heinous acts of evil have been committed in them, in violation, it can be said, of human and divine laws" (24).[59] Like the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining*, the Belasco house grew on the sediments of modernity's darkest side, being the by-product of a world war. In fact, Emeric Belasco, as Fischer explains in the beginning of the novel, "was born in 1879, the illegitimate son of Myron Sandler, an American munitions maker" (57). The Belasco house and his other projects were financed by "his father [leaving] him ten and a half million dollars—his share of the proceeds from the sales of rifles and machine guns" (59). The house was built following World War I, in 1919. The debasement was gradually introduced from 1920 on.

Chronologically, the peak (or the bottom) of Belasco's sinful festivities happens decades before events such as the sexual revolution in the 1960s. We can hardly ignore this political context, though, as the novel was published in 1971. The "open sensuality" (60) of the Belasco house makes little direct reference to the history of sex liberation in America, being more of "a parallel to

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[58] Obsolete scientific term related to kinetic energy ("vis viva"). It may be understood here metaphorically as "allure" and "charisma," or more literally as "living force."

[59] "Estos espacios suelen estar malditos porque en ellos se han cometido actos atroces de maldad, violando, se diría, las leyes humanas y divinas."

eighteenth-century European high society" (60) or a modern-day version of Marquis de Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom*. Matheson's fictional account of sexual degradation, however, was published in the midst of second-wave feminism's appeals toward liberation of sexuality, work, and family roles, less than a decade after the Equal Pay Act of 1963[60] and Civil Rights Act of 1964.[61] Such parallels may not be as explicit in Hell House as they are in other American novels published later in the century, but these choices in characterization and in the composition of the narrative constantly remind us that, not only financially, but also morally, Hell House, as a symbol and a place for monsters, exists as a byproduct of the modern conflicts of the twentieth century. These places bring forth forms of moral degeneration and decadence that result from the unprecedented lavishness of their owners, but what "enables" such lavishness is not only personal immorality, but the abuse of a social and economic context.

On a more text-centered aspect, its literary context, too, was fundamental, as it followed Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*, published in 1959 and still relevant to all American haunted house stories. As Angela Hague observes, "Home is a disturbing signifier throughout Jackson's fiction, a fact that reflects the ambiguous role of home and domesticity in the 1950s" (83). *Hill House* involves the usual scenario in which a group of people spends time in a haunted mansion. They are John Montague, a researcher of psychic phenomena; Eleanor Vance and Theodora, invited by Montague for having witnessed paranormal events previously; and Luke Sanderson, the proprietor's nephew. Like Matheson's would do twelve years later, Jackson's novel addresses concerns of a metaphysical nature and, even more substantially, concerns of ethics and politics. People

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[60] "Equal Pay Act of 1963 (EPA), landmark U.S. legislation mandating equal pay for equal work, in a measure to end gender-based disparity." ("Equal Pay Act of 1963")

[61] "Civil Rights Act, comprehensive U.S. legislation intended to end discrimination based on race, colour, religion, or national origin." ("Civil Rights Act")

are enclosed in a space where evil roams free—we, the readers, are invited to watch. We witness disputes between the living and the dead, but, primarily, what enthralls us is the monstrous forces of the house catalyzing battles between the living people against each other and against themselves.

Initially, Eleanor admires Theodora. After being touched "gently, reassuringly" (ch. 2) by Theodora on her shoulder, Eleanor thinks, "She is charming … not at all the sort of person who belongs in this dreary, dark place, but then, probably, I don't belong here either" (ch. 2). Not long after, identification, influenced by self-consciousness, becomes envy, as she thinks, "she is lovely … I wish I were lovely" (ch. 2). By imagining the Other's perception of herself, Eleanor self-consciousness develops into neurosis, once more exemplifying a kind of interpersonal hell. This is evidenced by a series of self-doubting questions, "What did I do; did I make a fool of myself? Were they laughing at me?" (ch. 4). Envy is mixed with clinging admiration and fear of disappointment, as Eleanor "had come in no more than half an hour to think of Theodora as close and vital, someone whose anger would be frightening" (ch. 2). Then it becomes hate, as "she had never felt such uncontrollable loathing for any person before" (ch. 5). It is easy to ascribe an erotic undertone to the women's initial interactions and descriptions, but perhaps that is more due to frequent portrayals of sudden admiration (healthy or not) as romantic infatuation. Their girlish banter, too, may be read as flirting.

The relevant matter at hand regarding these two characters, though, involves how their relationship (romantic, erotic, or social) disturbs Eleanor's grief and already feeble individuality. In her mother's recent death, Eleanor has lost both the central female figure in her life and her sense of self as a caretaker. She finds in Theodora a surrogate female figure from which she can borrow opinions, looks, and an identity. Theodora seems to play her part, teasing Eleanor, gently touching her cheek, and even joking that "I'm positive we're cousins" (ch. 2). Eleanor, who demonstrates anxious struggles even with her daily routine before traveling to Hill House, navigates between her desire of authenticity and her willingness to conform to social expectations. "[O]nce they have

trapped you into being like everyone else," she imagines herself telling a little girl who refuses to drink milk from a regular glass in a restaurant, "you will never see your [favorite] cup of stars again" (ch. 1). In other words, Eleanor fears once one gives in to social pressure, one's identity is lost. In her perspective, then, Theodora, a lesbian, free-spirited artist, seems to fill in a blank female role: lover, mother, sister, friend, self. Dr. Montague (father) and Luke (husband, brother) complete the promise of a surrogate family in Hill House.

This reading may be contrasted to interpretations recognizing other nuances of Eleanor's psyche. As Brittany Roberts defends in an article proposing a reassessment of Jackson's novel,

> The conventional reading of *Hill House* thus identifies Eleanor's inabilities to be fully accepted by her new family and to break away from her mother as key aspects of the novel's tragic ending and of its status as a work of gothic fiction. However, this mode of analysis ironically replicates a patriarchal view of women by seeking to re-establish a conventional domesticity at the novel's close, with Eleanor circumscribed within the very same imprisoning familial structure that she sought to escape at the novel's opening. (69-70)

Roberts argues for a reading that goes beyond "Eleanor's publicly stated desires for sociality" (69) and the recognition of "the relationship between Eleanor and Hill House as abusive and unidirectional" (70) and that understands "that the process undergone by Eleanor and Hill House is one of mutual fulfilment, a process of accommodating one another's needs." Behind Eleanor's plainly stated desire for a social life is a fantasy involving loneliness that, more than her hope to find a new family, may be the real escape from a tainted family relationship. In Roberts's words, "*Hill House* presents social isolation—perhaps even agoraphobia—not as a tragedy, but as a potential alternative route to female happiness and liberation" (73). While Roberts's understanding of Jackson's novel may initially seem far-fetched, seeing accommodation where terror is, she develops a well-structured critique that connects with perceptions of the male-dominated mid-century American home as a place of degradation of femininity.

The depictions of these forms of degradation, specifically in domestic settings, do not paint the full picture of the horrors of mid-century homes, but, in Jackson's work, become a memorable literary contribution. As Hague writes,

> By focusing on her female characters' isolation, loneliness, and fragmenting identities, their simultaneous inability to relate to the world outside themselves or to function autonomously, and their confrontation with an inner emptiness that often results in mental illness, Jackson displays in pathological terms the position of many women in the 1950s. (74)

Because our understanding of femininity and masculinity traditionally manifests in a duality, Jackson's accounts of female disenfranchisement illuminate the other side of the coin.

We see, for instance, a feminine version of the "man on the run" in Roberts's reading of Eleanor in *Hill House*. Compared with the original masculine version of the trope, it contextualizes the movement toward escape, suggesting the issue behind running away is not running *per se*, but running from responsibilities in a place of entitlement and authority. As we saw in relation to *The Shrinking Man* and *I Am Legend*, running is often an endless plight, a strange means without destination. Tom Engelhardt, in a description of mid-century U.S., explains, "The country was reimagining itself as a magic kingdom, a cornucopic [sic] mechanism for turning out the world's play toys and pleasure environment" (87) but, for men, women, and children, even "in abundance lay a potentially debilitating sense of nowhere to go" as "something—whether the bomb or a Communist takeover—could still arrive from beyond that blank horizon before you even knew what hit you" (88). Failed men on the run, Eleanor's impulse to escape, and the interpersonal hellscape of the Belasco House, they all suggest that, wherever you ran to, the monsters would follow.

While, in the diegesis of horror, ghosts and other supernatural byproducts of traumatic events typically make their abode in the dampness of crypts or the stillness of mansions where dust has long settled, we understand that frightening stories succeed best with the conflict of monsters invading the space people live in. In Jackson's novel, the narrator evasively announces that

"whatever walked there, walked alone" (ch. 1). One immediately foresees the clash of the upcoming characters with this faceless, nameless "whatever" monster; one anticipates the moment when such being—or multiple beings, or forces—will be seen and heard and felt, when they will inevitably gain name and physical form. But they do not. Jackson holds us hostage to this anxiety and provides no release, not even in the novel's ambiguous climax and denouement, in which Eleanor's death may mean the loss of her battle against Hill House or her giving in to an afterlife of blissful solitude, of "walking alone."

When I write that monsters dwell where people live, I do not mean these dissident creatures necessarily thrive in crowded spaces at broad daylight. We know it to be the opposite, as Castle Dracula lies deep within the Carpathians. The monstrous etymological function, though, requires something to admonish against; therefore, the best fulfillment of such function is among us humans, with our unspoken traumas and secrets in plain sight. And so, we only recognize the full extent of Dracula's influence when he travels to London. Modernity and the twentieth century have shown monsters a whole new banquet of places.

In other words, monsters, even if they are lonely creatures, exist where people's worries are. And where were people's worries in mid-century America? They were directed toward the family itself as a social structure, since, as Stephanie Coontz relates, "For most Americans [in the 1950s], the most salient symbol and immediate beneficiary of their newfound prosperity was the nuclear family" (ch. 2). Monsters lived in secluded mansions, waiting for their prey, but they were starting to learn their way around the bustling suburbs and family homes, where the doors were frequently wide open.

Coontz also describes how American eyes were aimed toward the family structure. "For the first time," she explains, "men as well as women were encouraged to root their identity and self-image in familial and parental roles" (ch. 2). She mentions how "[t]he novelty of these family and gender values can be seen in the dramatic postwar transformation of movie themes," citing

Peter Biskind's observations on how several actors shifted their roles from lone male characters (cowboys, vagabonds) to men living in a domestic setting (ch. 2). Monsters and many horrors of masculinity, as we know, followed along.

The consequence of such migration was the exposure of what until then was, in popular speculative fiction, a frequent oxymoron: *male domestic* conflicts. In "Mad House," one of Matheson's short stories, the man vs. home conflict goes to literal lengths, as a frustrated writer with marital problems battles his anger, which is manifested in the house. "[F]renzied wrath … sprays his insides with acid" (44), as a broken marriage and the inability to create fiction make the protagonist's temper "become ingrained in the structure" (58) of the house. Matheson, through the neurotic behavior and chaotic reasoning of his protagonist narrator, expresses some observations family historians would later make about the unstable realities behind portrayals of the perfect American family. "A man had a choice, after all," concludes the narrator. "He devoted his life to his work or to his wife and home and children. It could not be combined. Not in this day and age. In this insane world where God is second to income and goodness to wealth" (54). He continues, longing for the return to a more acceptable pattern, "[t]he pattern that was Sally right there cleaning and cooking and trying to make their home happy and warm" (52). And he plainly rages, as his anger dominates him, "I am to be obeyed" (60). His house, abandoned by his wife, who managed to escape the husband's aggression, starts to malfunction. Doors get stuck, glasses crack, saucers break, a bed gets in the way of a knee, a typewriter seems to move by itself. The metaphor is plain, referring to what psychiatrists, according to Peter Filene, called "the ineffectual man, the passive man, the man whose masculine ego had been robbed" (173). Matheson's narrative ends in the epitome of mental suffering: suicide, whether it is incited by the house we cannot tell.

A similar piece of fiction, Frederic Brown's "The House," gives us a dream-like sequence of a man exploring an uncanny house that ends without any possibility of escape. "Who knows what mysteries lie behind the shell?" (65), asks the paratextual paragraph near the title. The three-

page short story gives little context to the man entering the peculiar home, as it relies mostly on loose objects and decorations to provide its theme and atmosphere. The inscription "Semper Fidelis"[62] and an old portrait of Benjamin Franklin suggest Americanness, while theater programs advertising toothbrushes and building lots bring domesticity to mind. Scimitars, Buddhist hymns, and the word "Ragnarock" add foreignness to the strange mixture.[63] The man enters a locked door marked with his name, which is "a counterpart … [of] the room in which he had been born" (67), finds candles, sees the shadows of a chair, a bed, and a cradle. He perceives an issue of *Harper's Magazine* and thinks "tenderly of his wife who had died many years ago" (67). When "darkness began to gather in the farther corners of the room … he screamed, and beat and clawed at the door until his hands were a raw and bloody pulp" (67). The disconnected imagery leaves little room to analysis beside the associations incited by the objects: war, domesticity, foreignness, the end of times, Americanness, marriage, death, madness. In our context, these words are enough.

"It's a Good Life," written by Jerome Bixby in 1953, involves a child with godlike powers holding an entire town hostage to his whims, inflicting otherworldly forms of punishment onto those who dare even think about defying him. Popularized by its adaptations into a 1961 episode of *Twilight Zone*[64] and into the third segment of *Twilight Zone: The Movie*, Bixby's short story is primarily set in a house in a town removed from the rest of the world and focuses on the child-god's caprices during a neighbor's birthday celebration. Bixby develops a simultaneously jolly and terrifying comment on a society that fears eminent collapse but in which the only well-regarded form of self-expression is smiling.

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[62] "[A]lways faithful—motto of the U.S. Marine Corps" ("Semper Fidelis").

[63] "Ragnarök, (Old Norse: "Doom of the Gods"), in Scandinavian mythology, the end of the world of gods and men." (Ragnarök)

[64] Episode 73 (season 3, episode 8), also titled "It's a Good Life."

Anthony Fremont, a three-year-old boy who is not entirely aware of his powers, reacts bitterly when displeased, as many young children would do—the consequence, however, goes beyond a mere tantrum. Anthony reads people's minds and, with a mere "small, sulky thought" (152), is able to bend the laws of nature, kill the living, and reanimate the dead. "Everybody in Peaksville always said 'Oh, fine,' or 'Good,' or 'Say, that's swell,' when almost everything happened or was mentioned … because if they didn't try to cover up how they really felt, Anthony might overhear with his mind, and then nobody knew what might happen" (153). Any dissatisfaction with the *status quo* meant Anthony can violently change the weather in an attempt to help or can even make a recently dead neighbor walk from his grave to meet his mourning wife (if he likes you) or can send you to a grave in the cornfield (if he does not). The result is a mandatory public atmosphere of contentment that functions as a magnified look on the prosperity and paranoia of the U.S. in the 1950s, an atmosphere in which happiness is the only welcome social manifestation of emotion. The paranoia comes from each inhabitant of Peaksville fearing their neighbors will express themselves freely and ruin the lives of the entire town, or perhaps the entire world, if there is any of it left outside their community, which Anthony made float amidst an abyss of nothingness. Indeed, when a neighbor, in a drunken display of bravado, attempts to interfere by requesting people sing for his birthday, he is immediately sent to the cornfield, as Anthony dislikes singing. The short story ends with the assurance that "it snowed, and killed off half the crops—but it was a good day" (169).

"Mad House" constructs a narrative in which a possibly supernatural home becomes indissociable from its breadwinner's madness and fury. "The House," through loose images and with space for open interpretations, paints an abstract (also possibly supernatural) picture of lost American men. "It's a Good Life," more openly magic, encompasses the entire structures of the family and the small town, but still provides specific commentaries on masculinity, in particular in its depiction of discontentment let out in a man's drunken indiscretion. They are different variations

of male or fatherly issues contextualized within the family—and, as we will see, such variations may not even involve monsters of *logos* or directly contain a father or a man as a central figure, as wounds of masculinity often appear as wounds of neglect and absence.

William March's *The Bad Seed*, for example, constructs a monster of *pathos* out of a young girl whose image we would hardly associate with the sort of corruption she represents. In this 1954 novel, adapted into a play in the same year[65] and into a movie two years later,[66] Rhoda Penmark exemplifies how a generally well-behaved and healthy child (that is, apparently sound in terms of our *ethos* and *logos*) secretly holds a family hostage to her whims, being responsible for the murder of another child and general emotional manipulation of her mother, leading to her suicide. Behind the happy exterior of a family whose only child, an apparently obedient, impeccable girl, there lies Rhoda's history of crimes—a "bad seed" she inherited from her grandmother, a serial killer executed in the electric chair.

The ambiguities and contradictions of the 1950s family make the subject of several social history books, which analyze in life what horror culture suggests in fiction and in the cinema. On the one hand, Coontz sees that "[t]he 1950s was a profamily period if there ever was one" (ch. 2). She mentions that "[r]ates of divorce and illegitimacy were half what they are today [in 1992]; marriage was almost universally praised; the family was everywhere hailed as the most basic institution in society; and a massive baby boom, among all classes and ethnic groups, made America a 'child-centered' society" (ch. 2). On the other hand, if her observations seem too idyllic, it is because they precede her explanation that this nostalgia is a trap, as the apparent prosperity hid ugly disfigurations. "The reality of these families was far more painful and complex than the situation-comedy reruns or the expurgated memories of the nostalgic would suggest," Coontz writes (ch.

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[65] Written by Maxwell Anderson, premiered on Broadway.

[66] Adapted from Anderson's screenplay by John Lee Mahin and directed by Mervyn LeRoy.

2). She lists economic, ethnic, and gender inequalities, explaining that "not all American families shared in the consumer expansion," that "real life was not so white as it was on television," and that "[w]omen's retreat to housewifery, for example, was in many cases not freely chosen" (ch. 2). In other words, the typical, idealized American family of the 1950s may be the consequence of a post-war economic boom, but, as our haunted houses and evil children show, it was also a product of blindness—blindness to diversity, to conflicts, to multiple forms of suburban emptiness.

To an alarming degree, horror culture indicates, this emptiness is the absence of the father, be it symbolic or literal. As Susan Faludi summarizes in relation to post-WWII father/son relationships, fathers "failed to pass the mantle, the knowledge, all that power and authority" (959). We may even wonder: is there anything at all under the mantle of such masculinity, under the varnish of its prosperity?

Men may have failed to pass the mantle because it was as present and concrete as the plethora of emotionally absent fathers in the horror fiction of the time. Shortly after the previous passage, Faludi notes that "[w]hat undid them was their fathers' silence" (959), a form of emotional absence even during physical presence. If we look for examples in literature, we see no present paternal figure in William March's *The Bad Seed*, which takes place during one of the business trips of Rhoda's father. There is no present father in Robert Bloch's *Psycho* either, or in Stephen King's *Carrie*. Not even the surrogate Father Karras can avoid facing such emptiness in William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*. When present, the father may even be more a curse than a blessing, as in *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Shining*.

Father absence could indicate the absence of rules and of a patriarch, but, in agreement with Faludi's observations, it does not mean true feminine freedom from patriarchy,[67] being,

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[67] Patriarchy is notably hard to define, but for the moment we may understand it as "a family, group, or government controlled by a man or a group of men" ("Patriarchy").

instead, another form of emptiness in the mid-century American void. We have a list of monstrified and sexualized female characters ogled by the (abstract) male audience, but we also have absent, incomplete, wounded, perverted masculinities on the pages and screens of horror culture. What we rarely have is a father to pass the mantle, that is, a well-structured masculine archetype that tethers the male audience as a positive male reference.

In Bloch's *Psycho* and Hitchcock's cinematic adaptation, the absent father and the ever present (dead) mother exemplify both the abstract negative masculinity and the monstrified feminine. *Psycho* centers on the disappearance of a young woman and the subsequent investigation, which unearths the secrets of Norman Bates, a serial murderer who incorporated his dead mother's personality into his fragile self. Norman's father is not part of the narrative and his mother, even if dead, is present as the primary antagonist.

David Greven understands Norman's mother as a manifestation of an archetype present in horror culture: the "death-mother." "The death-mother is an effect produced by the film text as a whole," Greven posits. And it "connotes a recurring set of preoccupations in the horror genre across a range of literary and film texts," also being "a maternal figure associated with death, offering toxic threat, not conventional nurture, terror, not love. More crucially, the death-mother emerges as a synthesis, an emblem, of a *world* of death" (167). He strengthens his conceptualization of this monstrous female figure with Barbara Creed's and Julia Kristeva's theories on the monstrous feminine and abjection, describing a warped mirroring of traditional feminine elements.

Despite the father's absence in these American homes, a masculine presence may still affect the narrative. In *Psycho*, this presence is in Norman's inability to fit models of traditional, controlling, and patriarchal masculinities. We see it in Norman's initial conversation with his "mother" (really a conversation with himself), as she says

> "Never had the gumption to leave home. Never had the gumption to go out and get yourself a job, or join the army, or even find yourself a girl —"

"You wouldn't let me!"

"That's right, Norman. I wouldn't let you. But if you were half a man, you'd have gone your own way." (ch. 1)

The death-mother acts through Norman inasmuch as his masculinity fails to act. Even though traditional masculinity is absent in him, the value assigned to this form of masculinity drives much of his feelings of inadequacy. The meek, neurotic little man wears the clothes and personalities of the overbearing mother, killing and dominating those his male personality wishes to control but can only observe. The absence of traditional forms of masculinity in Norman only makes traditional masculinity *more* present, as a desire, a goal, a path.

Masculinity often intrudes into narratives through the language chosen by male authors, as Erica Joan Dymond indicates in her close reading of several passages of Stephen King's *Carrie*. King's novel, through epistolary passages mixed with direct narrative, gives an account of a teenage girl whose coming of age becomes a monstrous form of deliverance and vengeance when she develops telekinetic powers. As Dymond shows, "In *Carrie*, King strives to relate to women and portray them thoughtfully; however, the author frequently employs overtly masculine images in reference to his female subjects" (95). While King himself describes his efforts to tell a story able to engage with feminine experiences and perspectives, gendered language betrays his effort through "masculine" similes describing Carrie telekinetically raising a hairbrush like one raises a barbell and staring at her mother like a gunslinger ready to fire (Dymond 96). As Dymond explains,

Through the use of gendered language, King's failure to connect with women seems highlighted in neon. When the author tries to address women in a nonsexist manner, he can do so only by thinking of them as men—and rendering male comparisons. Nonetheless, for King, with personal maturity comes creative maturity. Carrie's use of language provides a glimpse of where King began—and appreciation for the manner in which his work grows over the decades that follow. (98)

While Carrie's father is one of those absent male figures, masculinity remains present, maybe not as directly as the femininity of Carrie's overbearing mother, but obliquely through language.

In William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist*, Father Karras symbolically fills in for the absent father of a possessed child while mimicking the function of a generation of expendable soldiers and sacrificing his own life in battle, in his case a battle against a demonic force. The plot of the novel, which centers on a possessed young girl who undergoes an exorcism, aptly addresses topics such as religion, emotional absence, and skepticism, and excels even more in reflecting on political issues in its subtext. In his overview of *The Exorcist* as a religious and political warning against evil as an active force (independent of forces of good), Nick Cull explains how Blatty's novel and William Friedkin's film "touched on issues that were all too alive for the world of 1973" (47). He mentions contemporary and foreign evil, the Vietnam War, inter-generational conflict, fear of youth, women "usurping" masculine roles—and father absence.

While horror fiction frequently reminds us that the sins of the parents visit upon the children, the cardinal sin of the fathers in these works is simply not being there. "The sons," Faludi explains in a metaphor that connects well with our scope here, "grew up with fathers who so often seemed spectral, there and yet not there, 'heads' of household strangely disconnected from the familial body" (959). The varnish of prosperity may hide unpleasant truths, but worse still is removing the varnish and finding nothing—nothing but absent fathers.

In this aspect, stories of shattered homes involve haunted houses, but also monstrous children. In *The Bad Seed*, "It's a Good Life," *The Exorcist* and *Carrie*, the dissolution of the American family happens simultaneously to the development of the monstrous child—of the monstrous *female* child, in most cases. In *Rosemary's Baby*, the focus is on the gestational development of a demonic baby boy. As Adrian Schober explains, summarizing Kathy Merlock Jackson's arguments in *Images of Children in American Film: A Sociocultural Analysis*, "a noticeable change began to occur in representations of the child following the Second World War that would have been inconceivable in

the prior decades" (26). Schober add that "the possessed child, along with its cousin, the satanic child, is, in essence, an American construction" (27) and their "gender is of crucial importance" (28). Schober develops the commentary to include representations of pedophilia intersected with patriarchy and male fantasies, also connected to Laura Mulvey's concept of the "male gaze."

Therein lies the key difference between the portrayal of femininity and masculinity in these narratives of monstrous women and destroyed families: the monstrous feminine has a tangible manifestation, while masculinity terrorizes as an abstract force and as absences, inefficiencies, or voids. In *Carrie*, femininity is in the protagonist's abusive mother and in Carrie's monstrous body itself, in menstruation, in blood. Masculinity is in language. In *The Bad Seed*, a girl embodies female monstrosity, while masculinity appears as father absence. In *Psycho*, the female monster takes the form of a mother who, even after death, lives in her son's broken mind. Masculinity is, once more, in the father's absence and in Norman's insufficiency. In *The Exorcist*, femininity is in the monstrous child. Masculinity, in self-doubting priests and a father who is elsewhere.

Granted, men still populate these short stories, movies, and novels—it is not true that there are absolutely no tangible forms of masculinity; it is true, though, that the primary or most relevant signifier for masculinity is marked by intangibility, insufficiency, or absence. Wounds of masculinity are not foregrounded in these works (and, often, in their critical approaches). While femininity may become monstrous and abject, masculinity permeates the narratives as a gaze, a patriarchal atmosphere, an abstract evil. The ultimate female monster threatens us by *acts*, by *doing* in a world that masculinity haunts by merely *being*.

We could understand this lack of balance as an authorial blunder, as a shortcoming of the male author, as critical analyses marred by sexism. It seems more probable, though, that, like King, who lacked "female language" in the 1970s, these authors lacked the tools to portray complex masculinities alongside complex femininities, just as critics of their works lack the material to advance their interpretations of evil masculinities beyond universal terms. This metonymic portrayal

of femininity, in which a character stands for general female disenfranchisement, when put side by side with the generalized portrayal of masculinity, in which it comes as an abstract force, reveals the irony behind these attempts at complex representations of women: women are gendered and become the monsters, the Other; men remain "genderless" neutral subjects whose masculinities and gender specificities are not fully realized, emerging only as the ephemeral heavy hand of patriarchy.

Conclusion: From Home to Homeland

Mid-century American homes, as portrayed in horror literature, were prosperous enough to hide horde of monsters. As Stephanie Coontz mentions, "[f]or most Americans, the most salient symbol and immediate beneficiary of their newfound [mid-century] prosperity was the nuclear family" (ch. 2). "The values of 1950s families," she continues, "also were new. The emphasis on producing a whole world of satisfaction, amusement, and inventiveness within the nuclear family had no precedents." Serious domestic unease and political anxiety, however, were buried under the delights of new suburban homes. In horror culture, these afflictions, remodeled to seem private affairs, were notorious but unacknowledged, speaking to people not as direct political commentary, but as allegories or clichés.

Susan Sontag balances her moral judgment, but warns harshly against "clichés about identity, volition, power, knowledge, happiness, social consensus, guilt, responsibility which are, to say the least, not serviceable in our present extremity [of 1965]" (42). When defining the grounds for such comments, she makes a passing remark that connects well with our filter for analyzing monstrosity through *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos*: "collective nightmares cannot be banished by demonstrating that they are, intellectually and morally, fallacious" (42). Indeed, both diegetically and extradiegetically, these "nightmares" and their signs, the monsters, connect best with approaches that immerse fully in the very notions guiding the making of monsters.

In a perfect world, we could approach these narratives of disaster with the eyes of a kinder reader or viewer. The emotionlessness of the protagonist of *The Body Snatchers* or other disaster movies could indicate they are neither anxious nor apathetic regarding real or possible perils, but prudently aware of them, knowledgeable about the processes behind them, and pragmatic when it comes to such reality. But is that really it?

This reading would imply both a tremendous amount of emotional maturity in the characters that help advance the plot of these alien invasion stories *and* readers armed with judicious literacy, ready to unveil layers on layers of deliberately unacknowledged characterization. In other words, we need not reach for far-fetched maturity in characters who, more simply explained, are a product of the panic of their times. As Sontag observes, "old science fiction films, and most of the comics, still have an essentially innocent relation to disaster" (44), and to that we may add horror narratives. If we restrain our focus to the works themselves, then, especially to mid-century speculative fiction dealing with horror and monsters in the U.S., we can identify more easily that their structure does, indeed, sustain the duality of anxiety and apathy Sontag observed half a century ago.

In its most impacting moment, the duality behind anxiety and apathy, of being overwhelmed by emotions even while trying to escape them, will mean the symbolic destruction of manhood. Through the process, the American Man becomes the Incredible Shrinking Man or is reduced to legend in a world marked by the end of humanity itself. While these emotions often take such central roles in horror narratives, even if (or especially when) protagonists try to suppress them, they may also materialize less directly as haunted spaces imbued with a history of conflict and capable of driving their inhabitants into emotional breakdown.

In these stories of haunted spaces, matters of homeliness and unhomeliness converge, resulting in mental, existential, and even architectural or, later, as we will see in *House of Leaves*, semiotic despair. In homely places populated by unhomely monsters, our basic need of shelter and

protection is juxtaposed with a primitive tendency to escape danger. Where are we to go, though, when our safest space is so dangerous? We certainly may not run home.

One of the highest points of the haunted house subgenre in American fiction takes these questions to their extremes by concocting a mixture of unwanted domesticity, family conflicts, corrupted childhood, open secrets, unhealthy silence, and a failed American dream. *The Shining*, arguably Stephen King's most well-known novel, marks a significant point in the career of an author who contributes as largely to the next pattern in our discussion as Lovecraft contributed to the pulps and Richard Matheson contributed to mid-century speculative fiction. Marking not only the dissolution of an American home, *The Shining* (King's novel and Kubrick's movie adaptation) symbolically suggests the ruin of Americana. For this reason, it marks both the end of chapter three and the beginning of chapter four, closing decades marked by a post-war prosperity that hid domestic tribulation and ushering in the grievances of the end of the twentieth century.

As so much of *The Shining* is dedicated to narrating not only the hauntings, but also the past of its setting and its ties to American history (real and fictional), it marks the transition between this chapter and the next. King's novel explores key aspects of the patterns discussed on this chapter: first, a deep-seated silence barely hides the imperfections of the Torrance family, the main characters of the novel; second, it shows the collapse of a breadwinner's masculinity and his failed attempts at dominance; third, we have the structuring and disintegration of a haunted hotel that serves as home for an American family. It blends these themes seamlessly with its end-of-the-century variations. By imbuing the Overlook hotel with a history interwoven with that of its own country, King gives the novel its distinct Americanness, focusing heavily on the aspects of masculine dissolution that figure so prominently in the narratives discussed of our next chapter. American history has adorned the background of our narratives so far, but, after the 1960s and the 1970s, the political silence Susan Sontag identifies in mid-century speculative fiction is broken, as America becomes the haunted place.

Chapter 4: The Land of the Free (1970s-2000)

This inhuman place makes human monsters.

— *The Shining* (Stephen King, 197)

Introduction: Lost and American

If we retrace our steps and review the images of horror culture in the previous chapters, we notice how various objects symbolize and shape our ideas about nationality. Foreign artefacts (e.g., the beetle in "The Green and Gold Beetle," the sculptures in "The Call of Cthulhu") and clothes (e.g., the traditional Chinese hat in the cover of *Weird Tales* for "The Dust of Death") are charged with negative connotations of danger, mystery, or exoticism. The iconic example is the mummy, whose torn rags hide the curses of sinister Egypt.

In more recent stories, some of these objects influence our understanding of horror stories published in the U.S. as essentially American. The bulky refrigerator and the milk bottles in Jack Arnold's *The Incredible Shrinking Man* place the movie not only specifically in the middle of the twentieth century, but in the post-WWII U.S. of that time. Richard Matheson's original novel, too, furnish its domestic settings with a multitude of typically American items. In Don Siegel's movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, an alien duplicate posing as a man mows the lawn and smokes a pipe in front of an American house and two cars (14:12-24). Later, the film shows us a diner without its usual crowd, its band replaced by a jukebox (17:00).

Commenting on the concept of esthetics as addressed in Finney's *The Body Snatchers*, King writes,

Although Finney never puts this fine a point on it in his book, he certainly suggests that the most horrible thing about "them" is that they lack even the most common and easily attainable sense of aesthetics. Never mind, Finney suggests, that these usurping aliens from

outer space can't appreciate *La Traviata* or *Moby Dick* or even a good Norman Rockwell cover on the *Saturday Evening Post*. That's bad enough, but—my God!—they don't mow their lawns or replace the pane of garage glass that got broken when the kid down the street batted a baseball through it. They don't repaint their houses when they get flaky. The roads leading into Santa Mira, we're told, are so full of potholes and washouts that pretty soon the salesmen who service the town—who aerate its municipal lungs with the life-giving atmosphere of capitalism, you might say—will no longer bother to come. (*Danse Macabre* 19-20)

King seems to be referencing two aspects of Finney's novel. First, the pseudo-humanity of the pod-people, who cannot appreciate human art and recognize beauty in the expression of human emotion. Second, the pseudo-Americanness of the pod-people, who do not abide to the country's standards. In iconic horror stories from the 1950s and 1960s, the American way of life, constantly under the threat of communism, radiation, and its monsters, is symbolized precisely by these pieces of Americana: lawnmowers, milk bottles, vintage refrigerators, American cars. In the final decades of the twentieth century, though, these objects are assigned new meaning, ceasing to be tokens of domesticity that must be protected and becoming haunted material that, in itself, contains threats to the American Dream.

King's early fiction helps mark the transition between these mid-century expressions of domestic horror and the exposure of scars in the *products* of these decades of prosperity. His novels, beginning with *Carrie* in 1974, illustrate the development of horror literature after the 1970s: the consolidation of American culture and its institutions as monsters. *The Shining*, for example, condenses American sins into the structure of a hotel and, by making its basement a dump for incriminating documents and records of obscene practices, symbolizes a country built on the land it contaminated.

Examples range from King's fiction to films about monstrous children and thriller court-room dramas. As Adrian Schober points out, "*The Omen* films, appearing in the post-Vietnam and Watergate era when faith in institutions was at an all-time low, make explicit this link between Satanism and politics" (19). And *The Devil's Advocate* establishes a similar connection, focusing specifically on the way Satanism (as a representation of human vices) interacts with the practice of law. As readers and viewers witness the fall of American institutions, another decline is made apparent. In this post 1960s moment, when contemporary reflections on manhood began to so-lidify, and criticism to patriarchal structures popularized the recognition that men, too, could be negatively affected by male-centered spaces, masculinities entered one of their many "crises."

Many men felt disoriented in this process of transformation. Isolated from their families and spouses, deprived of healthy homosocial relationships, and lost from and within themselves. In horror fiction, male characters enter uncanny places and leave as shattered versions of them-selves, carrying broken memories told through equally broken narratives and puzzling books. At times they lose physical and symbolic sense of their own skin, as bodily transformations turn them into monsters. Or they displace their own discomfort to others in crimes that enact traumatic moments and open masculine wounds.

Untrustworthy Institutions

By the 1970s, iconic literary examples of American haunted houses and doomed families had reached publishers and bookstores. Readers were well acquainted with the dangers of the roadside motel and with Norman Bates's unstable personalities, as they had read *Psycho.* They knew father absence could, surprisingly, create an overwhelming masculine presence, caustic enough to rot the family from within, for they had read *The Bad Seed*, *The Exorcist*, and *Carrie.* They had un-masked the cult behind Rosemary Woodhouse's Satanic pregnancy in *Rosemary's Baby* and, in *The Body Snatchers* and *I Am Legend*, learned to abide by McCarthyism and see their own neighbors as

alarming threats to the American Dream. They had also witnessed the remnants of a tainted sexual

liberation haunting *Hell House*, where they confirmed what they had seen in *The Haunting of Hill*

House, that is, that places fraught with vices and secrets can make one wonder if safety in numbers

is truly more secure then social isolation. The lesson for mid-century readers of horror was a

warning that monsters were no longer just clawing at the gates, nor were they abated by protectors

of nation, reason, and sexuality—monsters were, in fact, inside American homes, that contradic-

tory place where safety coexisted with danger.

And the monsters were ready for the next step. As the post-war appearance of domestic

prosperity dwindled and the Civil Rights Movement, the opposition to the presence of U.S. troops

in Vietnam, and the sexual revolution marked social unrest throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Amer-

ican homes became too small for the average monster. They were ready to show that fear and para-

noia were not exclusively household matters. No—they were of overall *national* concern.

Monsters still showed the incongruities of the home, as families still hid skeletons in their

closets—but so did America's finest institutions, as shown by the Kent State shooting[68] and the

Watergate Scandal.[69] The typical end-of-the-century American horror story does not exclusively

point fingers at the duplicities of the American families, for perhaps such accusations were hardly

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[68] "[T]he shooting of unarmed college students at Kent State University, in northeastern Ohio, by

the Ohio National Guard on May 4, 1970, one of the seminal events of the anti-Vietnam War

movement in the United States." ("Kent State Shooting")

[69] "[I]nterlocking political scandals of the administration of U.S. Pres. Richard M. Nixon that were

revealed following the arrest of five burglars at Democratic National Committee (DNC) head-

quarters in the Watergate office-apartment-hotel complex in Washington, D.C., on June 17, 1972.

On August 9, 1974, facing likely impeachment for his role in covering up the scandal, Nixon be-

came the only U.S. president to resign." ("Watergate Scandal")

even necessary, but depicts a world with homes built on American soil salted by a bloody past, by a disquieting present, and by an unreliable future. As Dale Bailey observes, "The popularity of that formula [of the American haunted house] depended upon its versatility in exploring American themes" (ix). For example, *Halloween* contains "[o]ne of the classic horror film sequences that lays bare the lack of safety and support culturally associated with American suburbia," in which "Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis) is running down the block, desperately banging on the doors of her neighbors. Her cries are ignored, and she eventually must face the killer Michael Myers on her own" (Wiśniewska 65). The initial moments of *Nightmare on Elm Street* lead us from a house to a school as we are guided by children singing "One two, Freddy's coming for you. / Three four, better lock your door. / Five six, grab your crucifix. / Seven eight, gonna stay up late. / Nine ten, never sleep again" (4:16-40). In both movies, however, locking doors proves as ineffective as appealing to a neighbor's kindness.

Differently from the previous decades, the Americanness of these haunted houses and monster-filled neighborhoods often constitutes more than the background for other thematic developments. The United States, its politics, its culture, and its people actively engage readers as one of the main preoccupations within horror culture. America experiences its ghosts not as a place, but, primarily, as a nation.

Bailey appropriately separates the 1970s and 1980s from its preceding years in recognition of "the contemporary haunted house formula as it took shape in" these decades and of "the psychological ghost story, with its emphasis on ambiguity and narrative uncertainty" (x). He also recognizes a halfway point between what I divide here as chapter three and chapter four, noting that *The Haunting of Hill House* "anticipates the mature formula of the 1970s and later" (25). To that I add *The Shining*, not as an anticipatory work, but as a retrospective work. If Jackson's novel has the foresight to help constitute a pattern, King's has the strength to contextualize this pattern by looking back on its formative decades.

The Shining, especially after Stanley Kubrick and Diane Johnson's 1980 film adaptation, survives as a crucial example of how the byproducts of the twentieth century are so nutritious to monsters. King's 1977 novel details the slow collapse of the Torrance family members, who spend a harsh winter by themselves caretaking the Overlook, a sizable haunted hotel in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Jack Torrance, father and husband, confronts the ghosts of the hotel and the traumas of his own past, succumbing to a mixture of vulnerabilities and external hazards: his alcoholism; his self-perceived failure as a writer, a teacher, a husband, a father, and a man; his disturbing upbringing; and the "the sins of a patriarchal society" (Manchel 68) that survive as the spirits of the hotel. Wendy Torrance, mother and wife, fights to survive her possessed and aggressive husband and the harsh conditions of the Colorado winter. Danny, their son, deals with the same threats while coping with psychic abilities that turn him into a much-desired prey to the supernatural forces of the Overlook.

The walls of the hotel frame a maze trapping an American family, but, more than that, the building accumulates residues of American tradition in its history. We can approach this thematic concern in King's novel under the assumption that "[t]he intersection between tradition and masculinity manifests itself in at least four forms: literary/artistic tradition, work tradition, the relation between tradition and space, and the tradition of masculinity itself" (Santos 19). Regarding literature and work, Jack Torrance fails as a writer who seeks critical praise but gets none, and he fails as a breadwinner, since, prior to the main events of the novel, he has been fired from a teaching position. As to space, we see American history as the history of the Overlook when Jack uncovers a scrapbook containing documents and newspaper clippings that explain how the place has ties to organized crime and was financed by a man who started his fortune inventing armament technology for U.S. forces. No wonder Kubrick's movie adaptation sets the hotel on top of the clichéd Indian burial ground, decorates the walls with Indigenous American items, and even depicts food

whose labels remind us of Indigenous American cultures as digested by American corporations.[70] Finally, in relation to the tradition of masculinity, "[t]here is a metaphoric level in which the phallic symbolism informs us of Jack's position as a man, but also of symbolic significance is that John 'Jack' Torrance represents the everyday American men from the final decades of the twentieth century" (Santos 21). Tony Magistrale also describes *The Shining*, both King's novel and Kubrick's adaptation, as having "profound cultural-historical resonance as specifically *American* works of art," and being "masterworks that are as deep a reflection of American culture as the paintings of Norman Rockwell or the music of Aaron Copland, although truth be told, the America represented in *The Shining* is certainly a discordant variance from anything we typically associate with Rockwell and Copland" (*America's Storyteller* 92). The Torrance family goes beyond an association to other American households and suggests a metonymy for America itself.

One of the most fascinating aspects of King's fiction derives from that: his consistency in developing his monstrous yet captivating United States, especially regarding popular culture and, in our context, masculinity. Some of his more famous stories are set within relatively confined spaces (and even then, become part of his imagining of America): the Overlook hotel in *The Shining*, Annie Wilkes's house in *Misery*, the bedroom in *Gerald's Game*, and the penitentiary in *The Green Mile*. Other stories, especially in the initial decades of King's career, map a more encompassing fictional version of the United States marked by its own history, its men, and its monsters. Men sacrifice themselves to save America in a good versus evil battle in *The Stand*, a father dies in *The Running Man* when participating in a deadly game to provide for his daughter in a dystopian future, and the Dark Tower series involves a long trek through a post-apocalyptic world that contains several elements of U.S. history, from cowboys to ZZ Top songs. Coming from a writer who

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[70] See Rodney Ascher's *Room 237*, a documentary about Kubrick's *The Shining* whose interpretations range from evidence-based analysis to unfounded conspiracy theories.

published his first novel in 1974 and has his recent confirmed publication to be released in the first semester of 2022, King's consistent depictions of masculinity, monstrosity, and Americanness substantiate the cultural and literary value of this thematic triad. King's fictional universes, throughout decades, chart maps of America where X marks not the treasure, but tensions—of the political, social, and personal kinds.

By the final decades of the twentieth century, the domestic trend in horror stories became distinctively American, and, central to this formation, male protagonists both carried the weight of their duties of masculinity and lashed out at their own family members in frustration. The mad, possessed, or hostile father/husband/male breadwinner, too, becomes a trope of contemporary horror narratives as a ramification of more traditional Gothic villains. In King's work, this trope emerges with great frequency: as Jack Torrance in *The Shining*; as Nathan Grantham, who returns from the dead on Father's Day to kill his family in the anthology film *Creepshow* (written by King and directed by George Romero); as Alvin Marsh in *It*, who abuses his young daughter both physically and emotionally (and perhaps sexually); and, to some extent, even as Louis Creed in *Pet Sematary*, who, despite his sincere love for his son, fails to go through a healthy grief process and sets in motion the collapse of his family. These fathers, true to Magistrale's observations, are *American* fathers and husbands.

King's fiction represents well these patterns, as he tends to be both a prolific and a political writer, but the evil husband/father as a patriarch of haunted American homes encompasses much more than one author's work. On chapter three, we saw the typification of possibly the worst of fathers, the Devil, in *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Omen*. In cinema, the examples include sheriff Gus Gilbert in *Pet Sematary Two*, who physically assaults his son; the murderous fathers in *The Stepfather* and in *Scream for Help*; the cannibalistic Grandpa Sawyer in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and Papa Jupiter in *The Hills Have Eyes*; and the deranged "Daddy" in *The People Under the Stairs*. At least two horror video games released in the twentieth century also display these characters: in *D*, developed

by a Japanese company and set in the United States, a daughter must survive her vampire father's imminent hunger for human flesh; in *Phantasmagoria*, a typical American writer-in-haunted-house narrative, the antagonists are not fathers, but husbands who gain supernatural powers via demonic bargains or possessions and attempt to murder their wives. Be it in literature, in the cinema, or in video games, the evil American father/husband shows his tyranny in stories that became emblematic of their country and its horror culture.

In 1977, the same year King published *The Shining*, another home entered America's horror mythology: 112 Ocean Avenue, in Amityville, Long Island. Jay Anson's *The Amityville Horror*, claimed to be based on true events,[71] involves the Lutz family (George, Kathy, and three children) moving to a haunted house and being physically and mentally attacked by supernatural forces related to murders that had happened in the place. Throughout the formulaic haunted house narrative, we accompany the mental fragmentation of George Lutz, who, much like Jack Torrance, goes from loving father to fear-inducing patriarch. This masculine descent into monstrosity also acquires an American context. The house is claimed to stand where the Shinnecock Indian Nation "used land … as an enclosure for the sick, mad, and dying" (Anson 122), which is not true for the actual house, but invented for the novel (Bartholomew 8).

In an article on religious and medical authority in American popular culture, Sean Quinlan analyzes post-1960 books and movies, such as *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Exorcist*, and *The Omen* and addresses a form of literary social commentary typical to end-century horror fiction: monsters exposing the collapse of American institutions. "Writers used demonic possession to get beyond

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[71] For our purposes, *The Amityville Horror* is fiction. Some of the occurrences on the book are facts, such as the murders committed by Ronald DeFeo Jr. in 112 Ocean Avenue—the rest is probably fabricated. As Robert E. Bartholomew notes, "The most remarkable aspect of the Amityville hoax is the stubborn persistence of the myth in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary" (12).

the basic theme of generational conflict," he notes, "and instead dramatize a deeper crisis in American society" while "paint[ing] a picture in which everywhere in America traditional authority was falling apart and all the old values had dissipated" (315). Quinlan's corpus spans at least three decades, but focuses on the 1970s, as by then the pattern had already been established. The monster as a portent of institutionalized evil, in fact, remains alive and well even after the twentieth century, but it left an undeniably singular mark in that decade. Part of this mistrust was akin to paranoia, as popular writers "took memories of the sixties counterculture and political radicalism and literally demonized both of them" (315). Countless examples of Satanic Panic,[72] too, reveal the mental image Americans had of evil spreading in their country.

In Andrew Neiderman's *The Devil's Advocate*, Kevin Lomax, a tenacious lawyer with dishonest tendencies, is recruited by a law firm whose success spans from the work of the Devil himself. After moving to Manhattan, Kevin works on morally dubious cases for John Milton, the alias used by the Devil as the head of the John Milton and Associates law firm. Meanwhile, Kevin's work increasingly separates him from his wife Miriam (Mary Ann in the movie adaptation), who suffers sexual and physical attacks. In the movie, she understands the true demonic nature of the law firm. Milton's goal is revealed to be Kevin (who is in fact Milton's son) and his half-sister having a child that would be the Antichrist. In the novel, Kevin is the one who attains knowledge of a conspiracy involving "[n]ot only lawyers, but politicians, doctors, teachers … everyone working within the system to corrupt the soul of mankind and defeat God Himself" (ch. 14). His wife bears John Milton's son, who she believes is Kevin's. Kevin's part in the conspiracy is to be an inside lawyer in the prison system—whether he wants it or not.

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[72] Satanic panic, or satanic ritual abuse, refers to several unsubstantiated allegations, starting in the 1980s, of Satanic groups or similar institutions abusing people, especially children, in violent and degrading rituals.

Katherine Low, in an article about the 1997 movie adaptation of Neiderman's novel, draws attention to Kevin's body as a sign of "popular American fascination with the lone sacrificial male hero who prevails in the end through his strength." The movie ends with Kevin's suicide as refusal to father the Antichrist, after which the narrative returns to one of his older cases as if nothing had happened after that point. Somehow changed, he decides not to represent his client, who he had, in the original narrative, saved from a guilty verdict through the aggressive, shameless cross-examination of a child victim. Kevin has been put through an ordeal against institutions turned evil and prevailed in a process wherein, as Low observes, referring to Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence's *The Myth of the American Superhero*, "American culture displaces redemption from the powers usually reserved for God into the hands of an ordinary man with a super alter ego" (10). As a reminder of the insignificance of personal efforts in a world of public evil, however, the film ends with John Milton, disguised as a reporter, enticing Kevin yet again, now preying on his vanity by suggesting an interview could make him famous. The novel has a similar twist, as Milton, presumed dead, reappears as the inmate who would guide Kevin's law practice inside the prison.

In view of Kevin's initial eager personality and his change into a power-loving lawyer practicing immorally, *The Devil's Advocate* may be easily read as a story of temptation. As in *Rosemary's Baby*, in which Guy Woodhouse's career rises as he joins the Satanic cult, temptation comes through professional success for Kevin, who is assigned increasingly noteworthy and rewarding cases in Milton's firm. As a consequence, comes money, which gains sinful overtones in the luxurious penthouses, lewd parties, and open orgies in which Milton's associates partake. Accompanying power comes the patriarchal form of masculinity that reigns under the Devil's enterprise, in which, as Low describes, "[e]very woman's body in Kevin's life becomes an instrument of Satan" (5).

Like other narratives of its time, such as *The Omen*, *The Devil's Advocate* proposes Apocalypse through politics. As the "good" capacities of the Church and the State tumble over, "evil" institutionalized masculinity rises to power under the guidance of Satan himself. Contradictorily, though,

while John Milton/Satan's law firm succeeds in embodying the corruption spreading throughout American institutions and masculinities, it almost creates a smaller parallel to what it represents, harming the very act of representation. In other words, it is as though Milton's company or similar offices of extreme immoral behavior were the problem, not the institutions they stand for, which, in comparison, seem quite tame or more victim than culprit.

Such is often the nature of the monster, who, by embodying our sins, risks calling all the attention to itself and, as a scapegoat, being sacrificed and leaving the world as sinful as before. Of course, knowledgeable readers and moviegoers understand scapegoats and monsters portray forms of evil other than themselves. As Low puts it, "American apocalyptic films before the turn of the century reflect this cultural milieu of [catastrophic] fear and tension" (1). She refers to "tensions over the threat of computer failure as a result of shifting the dating system from the 1900s to 2000s" and similar anxieties, which could hardly be dissociated from the mistrust of institutions and their technologies (1). Nevertheless, institutionalized evil as portrayed by end-of-the-century horror calls to mind Sontag's urge for more explicit narrative politics. Let us be clear, then: generally speaking, institutions were in the public eye as a national concern. In this case, the devil is not in the details, but everywhere.

In *The Omen*, Jeremy (Robert in the movie) and Katherine Thorn unwittingly become part of a conspiracy to bring the Antichrist to life and grant him political power through Jeremy's contacts as a diplomat and friend to the U.S. president. After their newborn baby dies (later we learn the baby has been murdered), Jeremy secretly adopts Damien, a child he tells Katherine is their own biological heir. When Damien starts displaying troublesome behavior and people around him die or suffer accidents, Jeremy Thorn begins an investigation that reveals his son's evil origins.

Institutions fail the Thorns constantly. A psychiatrist tries to help Katherine with her mental deterioration caused by dreams (and Damien's behaviors) and other medical professionals assist her recovery after she jumps (or "accidentally" falls, in the movie) from a second-floor balcony

and has her pregnancy terminated. Priests, more directly, advise Jeremy to kill Damien. Neither medicine nor religion finds success, though. Katherine's mental state worsens, and tactless doctors assure Jeremy, "There's a lot to be grateful for. She's still alive, and with the proper care she probably won't ever try it again. My own sister-in-law was suicidal. Took a bath and brought the toaster into it. When she pushed down the handle, she electrocuted herself" (146). Katherine ultimately dies when pushed through a window, and Jeremy, when trying to kill Damien, is shot by the police. Ironically, the police fail by doing its job and killing Jeremy, saving the Antichrist's life.

In these examples we have failure of institutions, but not necessarily American institutions, as the novel and the film are mainly set in London and Rome. Despite its European setting, *The Omen* reminds us constantly of its Americanness by way of its protagonist, as Jeremy becomes the U. S. Ambassador to the United Kingdom early in the narrative. Moreover, the story ends with the suggestion that Damien is adopted by the President of the United States, and we may infer that these institutionalized failures, according to the Satanists' plans, enable the future collapse of the presidency. In this context, it is the ultimate institution, since through it Damien is prophesized to bring about the end of the world.

Completing the set of failures, scenes and passages address what the Thorns find so painful to realize: they seem to be failing as a traditional family, too. As the "master of the house" (68), Jeremy is responsible for maintaining his political career as an ambassador and for responding publicly to the Thorns' affairs. The family's respectable public image, however, does not last long after Damien's first troubling episodes: first, his nanny kills herself during a party, shouting "Look here, Damien! It's all for you!" (31); second, in route to a wedding, Damien's "face gripped with tension as they inched inexorably closer to the massive, towering church" (58) just before panic overwhelms the boy. Katherine handles domestic matters, failing as a mother because of her previous inability to have children and because of her rejection of Damien, who finds a more suitable mother figure in his new Satanist nanny.

"What could be wrong with our child, Robert?," Katherine eventually asks her husband in the movie. "We're beautiful people, aren't we?" (35:24) In the novel, she asks, upset with the realization she resents her son, "Who ever heard of a beautiful family not having a beautiful child? … We never thought of what it would be like to raise one. We just thought of what our pictures would look like in the newspapers" (134). The well-structured, "beautiful" American family crumbles in the face of evil and all other degrees of wrongdoing. In this case, considering Robert's profession, we are taken from the suburbs to another form of familial institution, one that represents not America's hardworking white-collar middle class, but the entirety of the country as it is politically perceived. The fall of the Thorns means the fall of the United States of America.

Monstrous Americana

American homes, diners, schools, corporations, small towns, and even cars—they conceal freaks and turn themselves into monstrosities, functioning as signs for political and cultural manifestations of national evil. While *The Omen* and *The Devil's Advocate* narrate the demise of American institutions and, through their masculine monsters—the Antichrist and Satan—demonstrate the instability of establishments and systems, other pieces of fiction depict distinctively American places and objects as symbolic of end-century unease.

American highways pave the way for monsters in Matheson's 1974 short-story "Duel" (adapted into a movie in the same year by Matheson and Steven Spielberg), in which a semi-trailer truck, guided by a driver whose hidden identity renders the truck itself a monster, assaults a driver (aptly named Mann) through a desert highway toward San Francisco. Mann, "widely considered an allegory of Everyman" (Boczkowska 89), "is typical of that lower middle-class American who's been insulated by suburban modernization … [and] that never expects to be challenged by anything more than his television set breaking down" (Dave Pirie qtd. in Boczkowska 92) but who abandons the comforts of home as he hits the road. In other words, cars, because of their cultural

relevance and portrayal as tools enabling masculine power, provide an opportunity to narrate class conflict through a road movie and its literary equivalent, all the while keeping the Americanness of the narrative in the foreground.

Duel is not, however, a typical road movie narrative. "In many 1970s road movies," Boczkowska explains, "cultural and socio-political critique is often replaced with individual existential and psychological concerns influenced by the postwar European cinema's auteurist and modernist approach to filmmaking" (90). *Duel*, in contrast, separates Mann's journey from narratives of personal growth or emotional adventure, leaving only "the most fundamental elements of the genre: vehicles, people, and the nonmetaphorical physicality of the earth itself" (Klosterman 135). To Boczkowska, this "depoliticizes the genre" (i.e., removes the existential, psychological, metaphorical concerns) but "maintains the tension between rebellion and tradition in which the former shifts away from the conflict with conformist society to masculine anxiety" (93).

Duel, unlike the conventional road movie, does not trace a journey of growth; as its title suggests, it depicts a contemporary-day battle. "[T]he American highway becomes a nightmarish no-man's land in which the conventional rules of law, order and polite society hold no sway," as it "almost always comes down to duelling versions of American masculinity, usually coded as middleclass (the protagonist) and working class (the antagonist)" (Murphy 40). One piece of Americana—the Wild West revolver—is replaced by a car and a tanker truck. The setting, not geographically far from typical Wild West towns, is a California highway, probably in the Mojave Desert, with "a billboard advertising CHUCK'S CAFE," and "debris lying beside the highway: beer cans, candy wrappers, ice-cream containers, newspaper sections browned and rotted by the weather, a FOR SALE sign torn in half" (Matheson). At one moment, Mann's reaction to his surroundings comes as a sarcastic thought that summarizes his predicaments and his environment, "Keep America beautiful" (Matheson). The quintessential American dispute of masculinity, the gunslinger showdown at high noon, is reshaped but remains "a portrait of a contemporary America" (Murphy 46).

Tales of possessed vehicles reach back several decades in the twentieth century. Theodore Sturgeon, in 1944, published "Killdozer!," which involves a bulldozer possessed by an alien force. "You Drive," a 1964 episode of *The Twilight Zone*, has a sentient car forcing his owner to confess a hit-and-run to the police. In the 1977 horror film *The Car*, a vehicle commits several murders. *Black Cadillac*, a thriller movie, develops its plot in the same general lines, but involves a driver. King's short story "Trucks," adapted for cinema as *Maximum Overdrive*, describes large vehicles becoming alive and decimating humanity, which becomes a race doomed to serve the machines by pumping fuel. His 1983 novel *Christine* (made into a movie directed by John Carpenter in the same year) has gained considerable fame as a tale mixing supernatural machines, youth, and American culture, especially rock and roll music. His 2002 *From a Buick 8* also features a supernatural car, this one being an interdimensional portal. In 2012, King and Joe Hill published *Throttle*, which is based on Matheson's *Duel* and involves a truck driver attacking a motorcycle gang.[73]

Another subgenre, the small-town horror narrative, plays a significant role in the portrayal of horrific American places. *Jaws* turns a frightening animal into a timeless monster that unsettles an entire coastal community in Peter Benchley's 1974 novel and Spielberg's 1975 film. *Tremors* mixes monsters with comedy and Western elements when colossal worms attack the residents of Perfection, Nevada. In Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands*, "although the castle's Gothic atmosphere

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[73] Peter Tragos connects the onset of motorcycle customization in the U.S. to post-war masculinities. Mike Seate writes, "Many of the early bob job [custom motorcycle] riders were servicemen returning from as much as a half-decade overseas in uniform. They came home changed men, many of them looking to replicate some of the thrills and visceral danger of wartime life, and with a little money and few nights in the garage, they could create machines that reminded them of the supercharged fighter planes and rugged military bikes they'd come to rely on in battle" (34).

and the part of Vincent Price as Edward's inventor create a direct visual link to the horror films of the fifties, it is the saturated colorful and out rightly bucolic suburbia that provides a sense of evil lurking in seemingly peaceful surroundings" (Wiśniewska 69).

By the final decades of the twentieth century, Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes* had already set part of the tone for the small-town horror that involved children. The narratives would even take a more adventurous aspect as in *The Goonies*, which later inspired the aesthetic and setting of works like the TV series *Stranger Things*, set in the 1980s. Recent parodies, like the mystery animated TV series *Gravity Falls*, keep alive monstrous archetypes within the small-town ambiance. Some of these titles have become staples of their subgenres, solidifying popular culture tropes (e.g., only children being aware of the horrors) or images (e.g., the cover and poster for *Jaws*) that make the post-1970s small-town horror narrative almost indistinguishable from end-century horror as a whole. King alone has written a vast number of them: *Carrie*, *Salem's Lot*, "The Mist," *Pet Sematary*, *Cycle of the Werewolf*, "Rainy Season," *Needful Things*, "You Know They Got a Hell of a Band," *Under the Dome*—and *It*, a novel that along the decades has attained significant pop-culture status as a story about childhood, small towns, and fear itself.

It involves a group of children and their discovery of an ancient being living beneath the town of Derry and feeding on its inhabitants and their fears. The children face their enemy in its numerous manifestations, and, as adults, must return to their hometown and permanently vanquish the monster. Susan Brown argues that, in King's novel, "painful denials and implicit weaknesses of American culture manifest themselves, especially in regard to the seven major characters" as "[e]ach of these children represents someone who has not quite realized the American dream because of some physical or social handicap." She mentions young Bill Denbrough's guilt over his brother's death, Beverly Marsh's abusive father, and Eddie Kaspbrak's overbearing mother. In adulthood, the traumatized characters have simply given new faces to the same denials. Bill's guilt still torments him, Beverly married an abusive man, and Eddie, an overbearing woman.

Their denials directly relate to dualities of masculinity/femininity.[74] Bill fails as an older brother. Beverly has her body repeatedly assaulted or accessed by invasive men. Her father physically (and possibly sexually) assaults her, her husband beats her, and, in one of the novel's most off-putting passages, she has sex with the groups' boys in the sewer—or, rather, "lets" them have sex with her. Eddie, despite his financial success, lives an unhappy and emasculating marriage to a woman eerily similar to his mother.

The "implicit weaknesses of American culture," then, occupies the space between extreme passivity (feminine) and persistent aggression (masculine). It occupies that empty area where well-balanced masculinities and femininities should have been, and, likewise, the American microcosm of Derry is itself stuck between these two extremes of manhood and womanhood. Even It, the evil being living under the town, abandons his female form (an alien spider able to lay eggs) to assume the masculine persona of Pennywise the Clown. No wonder one of the first scenes involves the murder of a gay man, who, in the perspective of a traditional town unable to disconnect heterosexuality and manhood, inhabits the forbidden place between masculine and feminine, or even male and female.

Like small towns, American schools often figure in horror narratives as a typical national *locus*. One troubling aspect of U.S. schools as settings of horror, though, is the inevitable recollection of real-life events, such as school shootings, that have changed the collective image of the usual microcosm of teenage life into a nightmarish labyrinth of life-altering horror. "These

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[74] Brown's reading, more specifically, addresses male baby boomers, who, "[h]aving cast doubt on their own masculinity through their close affiliations with their mothers and rejection of their fathers (by their rejection of the manly act of war), … had unconscious doubts about their own masculinity as defined through American cultural models."

incidents [school shootings] are infrequent,[75] but they represent a disquieting threat at the core of the national psyche: the possibility that the ostensibly safe haven of the suburban school could shatter at any time" (Phipps 99). Like the haunted house narratives that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s, stories of school shooters destabilize perceived American safety through fictional depictions of carnages carried out by (male) students.

Real-life discussions, especially "the standard, media-generated discourse" often involve "issues such as masculinity and high school stratification contribut[ing] to simplistic narratives about school shootings, most of which revolve around the assumption that the perpetrator is an outcast suffering from feelings of intense failure and emasculation" (Phipps 100). Serious debate, then, is often erased by overinflated concerns about violence in video games or Marilyn Manson's songs. Like propagators of Satanic Panic or anti-rock music discourse in the 1980s, "[t]he media essentially create a persona that brings together a series of broad, collective concerns about adolescent life in contemporary America" (Phipps 100). The school shooter, then, becomes a twisted American icon, an amalgamation of counterculture, cruelty, and typical adolescence.

Gregory Phipps analyzes two novels in which the protagonists "try to create the persona themselves" (100): King's *Rage* and Lionel Shriver's *We Need to Talk About Kevin. Rage* involves a high school student who holds his class hostage with a pistol. It predates the 1999 Columbine

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[75] One may disagree regarding the infrequency of school shootings in the U.S if one includes non-lethal incidents. Wikipedia has them separated into two pages, one before the year 2000 and one after. The first list contains hundreds of incidents. The second is also frightening long, especially because it encompasses little more than two decades. During the writing of this dissertation alone, more than one hundred incidents have occurred, according to the list. ("List of School Shootings in the United States")

High School massacre and is believed to have influenced at least five other school shootings,[76] which made King decide to keep the book out of print. *We Need to Talk About Kevin*, written as letters from Kevin's mother to her deceased husband, covers her son's troubled childhood and adolescence, describes his cold, anti-social personality, and centers on the massacre in which Kevin killed his father, his sister, and several classmates and school employees.

As Phipps explains, the discourse focused on masculinity, school stratification, and cultural media influence is not entirely wrong, but fails because of its simplification of its subject. The broad strokes, the sensationalism, and what is *not* being said by the discourse shadow a much larger discussion that involves issues such as gun control and a self-reflexive criticism to the very media that turn school shooters into national sensations. "[T]he figure of the school shooter," he writes, "showcases hypermasculine ideals of violence, reckless courage, and 'cool' emotional detachment" (100). The adoration or fetishization of the school shooter as a figure derives from that hypermasculine persona that, in turn, owes its existence to standard mediatic discourse's erasure of the complexity behind these crimes.

Even an analysis of Kevin as a character, which is considerably less complicated than any psychological evaluation or profiling of real-life shooters, demands that a list of pressures and stressors be factored in. Veronica Csillag analyzes the influences behind Kevin's upbringing and lists "temperamental features, maternal inadequacy, paternal narcissism and denial, marital discord, pernicious envy, and their confluence, which ultimately resulted in Kevin's development into the sociopath he became" (20). Variations of horror are behind some of these components: the evil patriarch (as in *The Shining* and the several films listed in the previous section), the sins of the father (or mother) passing onto the son (*Psycho*, *The Bad Seed*), and the willful disregard for someone else's trauma or evil (*It*).

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[76] See "Rage (King Novel)."

First, Kevin's father may not be a Gothic villain, but his protective attitude worsens the fact that Kevin's mother "felt degraded from subject to object" (Csillag 21) during her pregnancy, as her husband "proved to be the domineering patriarch he had always been underneath the thin veneer of gender equality rhetoric." Second, Eva's insistence on Kevin bearing her Armenian surname evokes "the transgenerational transmission of [the Armenian genocide] trauma [in which] an uncanny phenomenon occurs: the past and the present, self and other, converge." Third, "Kevin's father, with his denial of evil and with his false cheer, is a prime example of someone who will turn a blind eye to the wrong (and for which he pays dearly)" (23). *We Need to Talk About Kevin* is not a typical horror story, but nevertheless is a novel that centers on a horrific event and involves a monster of *pathos* who cannot feel enthusiasm about human things and, in Csillag's words, shows that "[m]uch as we, ordinary mortals, yearn for meaning, it remains incomplete, and much as we wish to have control over our own lives and our community, we are not masters in our own house" (24). In this context, Kevin's murder spree is not a simplistic outlet for his adolescent instability or his formative traumatic experiences, but just one of the plot points in a life story of powerlessness and gradual loss of self-understanding.

Indeed, when we see that Americana become objects of American horror in the end of the twentieth century and that the geographies of horror begin to systematically encompass public American places, we understand horror culture to be denouncing loss of mastery, control, and property. Cars were out of control, either possessing evil intent or becoming the weapons of disturbed drivers. The American home was unhomely, but so were American schools, roads, and small towns. The 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s marked the history of horror with cinematic and literary productions that built on the influence of other moments, such as the pulp magazine stories from the initial decades of the century or the Hammer horror films from the 1950s and 1960s, and solidified a national and cultural form of expressing fear that remains relevant to this day.

Lost in Transformation

A significant portion of the male anxieties analyzed in the previous chapters are anxieties about the definition and presentation of masculinity. Men struggle in conceptualizing and enacting adequate masculinities, that is, behaving "manly" in a social setting. As early as *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, we have social conformity masking repressed masculine aspects that, when brought to the surface, surprise not only readers but also the very men about whose secretive masculinities we learn.

While many ramifications of feminism, especially in the earlier waves, have objective goals pertaining to women's rights, advocates of plural masculinities (and some authors of fiction) tend to focus on seeking proper conceptualization amidst a sea of criticisms about manhood, its contradictions, and its privileges. Privately, men may struggle to find what it means for them to be a man. Publicly, we oscillate between our enactments of masculinity. Resilient, but not emotionally voiceless. Present, not overbearing. Strong, but never *too* strong. While women fought for voting rights and still demand that public policymakers recognize their rights regarding abortion, personal hygiene in disenfranchised communities, political representation, and numerous others, men seem to contemplate *what we should be* as men.

Of course, women do a great deal of introspection too and, on a public level, amass an impressive body of knowledge about their various experiences and identities; men often fight for their rights *as men* too, either in relation to paternity leave or the draft, to name two ongoing negotiations. Nevertheless, the general state of affairs (and it seems true in literature too) involves women in a *movement* for rights, but men participating in masculinity *studies*, which is not surprising, considering that the relative privilege of men demands considerable self-examination and awareness before we can demand changes and rights *as men*. Action without thought risks becoming mere reaction, and enough reactionary movements already stain the contemporary perception of manhood and its crises.

Regardless of time, masculinity seems to be always "in crisis." John Beynon dedicates an entire section of *Masculinities and Culture* to this subject, as "claims that men and masculinity are currently in crisis are constantly and vociferously made" though the term is "ill defined and elusive" (75). In fiction, we can imagine some characters as proponents of the crisis of masculinity: anti-woman sentiments characterize protectors of sexuality in pulp fiction; mid-century America kindles the masculine impulse to be on the run from domestication like the protagonist of *The Body Snatchers*; and Jack Torrance and several protagonists from King's novel seem to believe the masculine arena is set up for men like them to fail. In the previous chapters, when discussing monstrous and masculine duality, I mention a few characters whose contemplations and doubts about manhood result in a splitting of personality: the protagonist of "The Diary of Philip Westerly," whose mirror reflection gets more attractive while his real face deteriorates; or Norman Bates in *Psycho*, who reaches for the mother personality as a refuge for broken masculinities. Outside horror, *Fight Club* splits male personalities into a weak, sleepless Narrator and an aggressive Tyler Durden whose arguments about end-century calamities of manhood remain pertinent despite his satirical hypermasculinity going over the head of the cult followers of Chuck Palahniuk's novel and David Fincher's movie adaptation.

The final years of the twentieth century seems remarkably full of men in crisis crying wolf, as "[i]n the 1990s men have been seen to be in the forefront of social concerns about jobs, changing family patterns, failure in school and violent crime" (Beynon 76). Beynon lists several factors often claimed to contribute to crises of masculinity, from job changes to misunderstandings about traditional masculinity amid the gay movement. While these may seem compelling arguments, we risk again falling into reactionary politics. For instance, jobs have always changed in one way or

another,[77] and, while pro-gay social organizations gained massive influence after the 1960s, there have always been and there will always be movements calling for social acceptance and changes on traditional masculinity. That is why traditions change (even if slowly). Most of these arguments, as Beynon recognizes, are not a final proof of male crisis. Because of these tensions and others, masculinities may indeed be in a period of *change*—the problem is that, to the privileged bearers of hegemonic masculinity who believe gay men are damaging good old *real* manhood, any change is crisis.

The most typical subgenre of horror dealing with masculine destruction in moments of transformation is perhaps the werewolf story. *The Werewolf of London* and *The Wolf Man* are two famous mid-century examples of such narratives in the cinema, while, after the 1970s, we have the horror comedy film *An American Werewolf in London*, in which an American backpacker in England is transformed into a werewolf. Two years later, King's *Cycle of the Werewolf*, would take these animalistic threats to a small town in Maine where werewolf attacks happen monthly.

The body horror subgenre, too, often depicts transformation as a process of loss, especially loss of oneself. Canadian David Cronenberg's *Videodrome* involves the physical and mental deterioration of several people exposed to a TV broadcast. His 1986 *The Fly*, an American production, remakes the 1958 classic sci-fi movie in which a scientist is fused with a fly and begins to lose his mind. In literature, the comic book series *Black Hole* calls attention to adolescence and the transition into adult life in a story involving a sexually transmitted disease that causes abject mutations in teenagers.

At times, these transformations may not be as obvious as bodily deformities, appearing, instead, as the mental disintegration of masculine subjects. In the year 2000, Mark Z. Danielewski published a book that develops a dense story of masculine psychological fragmentation and

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[77] For instance, Peter Filene remarks that, during the years of the Great Depression, unemployed American men were "left holding onto emptiness" (155).

combines the scenery of American homes with the horrific incongruences of Lovecraft's geographies, as ramifications of cosmic horror and haunted house stories relay their horrors through a progressively broken narrative. In a web of framed narratives, academic footnotes, obscure references, and typographical experimentation (see fig. 11), *House of Leaves* relates a subtle breakdown of American institutions involving a process of transformation that results in broken masculinities—all of this done through pages and pages of utter semiotic despair.

The book includes several diegetic levels and centers on the story of photographer Will Navidson's new house, inside of which grows a shadowy space large enough to fit several houses (or perhaps a town, or even, the book suggests, the entire Earth) while, on the outside, the structure remains inconspicuously unchanged. Navidson organizes expeditions into this dark void where sometimes one finds walls and stairs and other times one hears the growl of monsters. He supposedly recorded these expeditions and edited several video documentaries that have been shared with a limited selection of people but are now lost. One of the privileged few who have witnessed the Navidson Record is Zampanò, an elderly man who wrote a convoluted academic analysis of the films. His written accounts of Navidson's expeditions rely on his memory for the details, as the tapes are lost and, ironically, Zampanò is blind and dictates his writing. After Zampanò's mysterious death, a young man named Johnny Truant finds the manuscript and begins the tremendous undertaking of editing it. Truant's text is altered even further by "the editors," about whom readers know nothing. In the unclear footnotes, endnotes, and appendixes of this hypermediated work that is *House of Leaves*, we learn to question Navidson's family problems and his documentary (does it even exist in any diegetic level?), we wonder about Zampanò's encounter
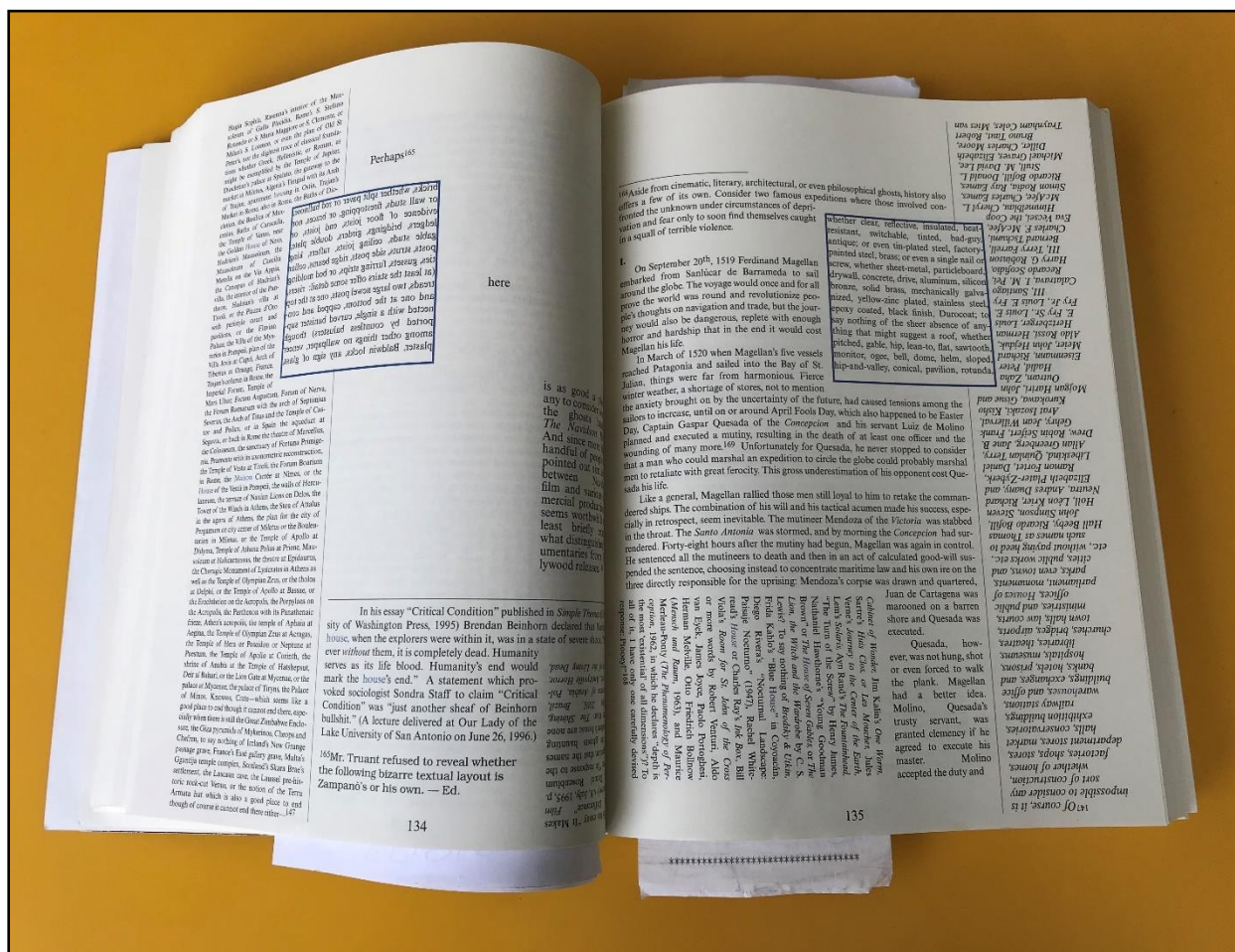
Fig. 11 Justin Bruce. Pages 134 and 135 of *House of Leaves*.

with a monster (real? imagined?) and ask ourselves about Johnny Truant's mental breakdown (hallucinations? hauntings?). There are no answers in *House of Leaves*, only a slow, tortuous journey through fragmented text that mimics the lives of three broken male characters.

As in more typical haunted house stories, *House of Leaves* follows its protagonists' descent into a nightmarish state of madness. Johnny Truant's job and his love affair with a stripper go awry as he edits Navidson's increasingly disturbing adventures, and his own mental state worsens. Zampanò succumbs to a monster, possibly the same entity whose roars echo inside the dark labyrinthine chambers of the house on Ash Tree Lane. Navidson, who is the most affected of the three, handles the powers of the house more directly, as he undergoes physical contact with the dark

world within its walls. In other words, the house manages to violate mediation and disturb even the people who merely read or retell its story.

Manhood is not a topic developed in depth in *House of Leaves*, but, still, the fragmentation of masculinity becomes relevant because of its three male narrators/editors/filmmakers and the narrative focus on the general dissolution of their psyche. Johnny Truant's infatuation with a stripper slowly evolves into a story that reveals a feminine wound in his life: his mother, about whom little is told, lives in a mental hospital and has herself gone through a process of mental degradation that seems to have passed on to her son. Her letters to Johnny read as a disconnected yarn of references as the rest of Danielewski's novel does. Through loose comments we can recognize the novel's motifs and themes,[78] and the growing disconnectedness of her writings caution against what Johnny's mind may one day become. Zampanó's exclusive choice of female students to help on his reading and writing is at best suspicious. Navidson's contact with his house uncovers many of his masculine-related apprehensions: fears over his supposed cowardice, his wife's infidelity, and the confusion between his courageous behavior and his death-drive seen through his wish "to see the house exact its annihilating effects on his own being" (387).

While *House of Leaves* and the examples of visceral horror and lycanthropy exemplify narratives of failed male self-reflection in moments of transformation quite straightforwardly, we may find the subject as a thematic concern of a famous series of novels that does not picture physical monstrosity so directly. In Thomas Harris's Hannibal series, the cannibal murderer Hannibal Lecter, as we know to be common in monsters, obscures attempts at categorization. He is described

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[78] In her letters, Johnny's mother alludes to *Beowulf* and classic monsters, to Johnny's mental deterioration, and the self-referentiality of language. She writes, "My little Viking warrior! Let the monsters all tremble!" (595); "Never neglect your mind Johnny [sic]" (591); "once again written words will have to serve" (590).

as a monster precisely because he evades the usual classification of psychiatric disorders: "never forget what he is," warn the psychiatrists responsible for Hannibal. "Oh, he's a monster" (8:10-17). In *Red Dragon*, we also have Lecter described as "a monster. I think of him as one of those pitiful things that are born in hospitals from time to time. They feed it, and keep it warm, but they don't put it on the machines and it dies. Lecter is the same way in his head, but he looks normal and nobody could tell" (64). His almost superhuman senses are confirmation that Hannibal, whatever he is, is not like us. His memory is seemingly foolproof and his sense of smell, for example, can detect physiological abnormalities such as cancer.

Primarily, however, Hannibal is a monster of *pathos* and *ethos*. His crimes, which usually involve cannibalism and murder, characterize a misplaced desire for female figures, be it romantic, filial, or fraternal. Behind Dr. Lecter's cannibalism is the hushed trauma of seeing his sister devoured by criminals during a heavy winter in World War II Lithuania. The absence of his sister and mother, also killed in the war, is transferred to Lady Murasaki, Hannibal's aunt, with whom he has a relationship of lover and foster son. Throughout his childhood, adolescence and early adulthood, Hannibal is forced to face up to his part in the loss of these three female figures. When he unearths his traumatic memories and discovers that he has participated in his own sister's cannibalism, having devoured her alongside the men who had captured her, Hannibal assumes his identity as a murderer and cannibal, recognizing his misplaced desire. Decades later, now in prison, he transfers the function embodied by the women in his family to the FBI agent Clarice Starling. He manipulates her psychologically and makes her subservient to him, ultimately, in his conception, exercising control over a woman who, as a surrogate, symbolically offsets his loss of his identities as brother, son, and husband.

Hannibal is not simply a monster, but he is a monster in his position within masculinity, a monster of lost male identities. The origin of evil in Harris's series, broadly speaking, lies in traumatic events involving female figures who bind men to the very moment of trauma. Moreover, it

is by embodying femininity (or a twisted version of it) that monstrous killers attempt to rearrange their fragmented masculinities. This process takes place through consumption of the feminine— whether the literal act of cooking and devouring female flesh or symbolic gynophagy.

Hannibal murders and eats female students, while Francis Dolarhyde, the serial killer in *Red Dragon*, uses his grandmother's dentures to bite his victims, but only the women. Dolarhyde develops a secondary personality based on the Great Red Dragon—a biblical Satanic figure from the Book of Revelation who clashes against a woman—[79]and must, in his mind, take the lives and absorb the vital energy of women as fuel for his transformation into a being that would surpasses masculinity, femininity, or even humanity. *The Silence of the Lambs*, second book in the series, features Buffalo Bill, whose behavior can be interpreted in a similar manner: he murders women, removes their skins, and wears them so he can occupy the place of his absent mother. The recurring theme of a man consuming and (in his perspective) honoring femininity is also developed in the TV series *Hannibal* in its version of the Minnesota Shrike, a serial killer mentioned in passage in *Red Dragon*. The first episodes center on the Shrike, who, along with his daughter, murders women, eats them, and creates household objects using their remains. Consuming these women, all chosen in the image of his daughter, is the Shrike's remedy for his intense fear of losing her. These killers, in general, establish destructive connections with women, connections born from the harmful structure of their masculinities and that only bring about further deterioration.

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[79] "Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on its heads" (*New International Version*, Rev. 12.3). "The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray" (Rev. 12.9). "When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child" (Rev. 12.13).

These killers' minds validate a structure in which they feel less at odds with their twisted masculinities by consuming femininity and degrading women's bodies. Concomitantly, a symbolic degradation of the killers' masculinities takes place, isolating them further from any access to healthy mechanisms to cope with their mental suffering. For example, as Diana da Silva Rodrigues points out, "Buffalo Bill believes he is a transsexual, but he is not seen as such and this triggers his tendency to kill" (32, my translation).[80] Once detached from any transgender/transsexual identity, Buffalo Bill figures in the novel simply as a male psychopath, a man with a mental disorder.[81] If Buffalo Bill, on the one hand, abandons his masculinity in favor of a female persona, on the other, Francis Dollarhyde is terrified of being wrongly labeled a homosexual, clinging even more to his masculine identity because of his associations between manliness and heterosexuality. Despite their different mentalities, both resort to the consumption of female figures as an attempt to soothe anxieties, be it in complete renunciation of traditional masculinity or in its unhealthy affirmation.

This consumption is part of a process of transformation, as these serial killers consume to become different entities: Buffalo Bill murders, in his conception, to become a woman (the mother); Dolarhyde sees his victims as a means of becoming the Great Red Dragon. In *Manhunter*, the first film adaptation of *Red Dragon*, a character notes that Dolarhyde, by using mirrors at his crime scenes, creates a spectacle and "changes people into beings who want and desire him" (1:33). The death's-

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[80] "Buffalo Bill acredita ser transexual, mas não é tido como tal e isso desencadeia sua tendência a matar."

[81] This does not mean *Silence of the Lambs* is completely exempt from criticism regarding its contributions to negative images of trans people in popular culture. In her YouTube channel Contrapoints, Natalie Wynn conduces a humorous and substantial analysis on the subject. See "JK Rowling | ContraPoints."

head hawkmoth, a moth distinguishable for a shape resembling a human skull on its thorax, is symbolic of transformation in *Silence of the Lambs*, as it undergoes metamorphosis.

The recurring theme of transformation also raises questions about the nature of evil and its connection to monstrosity. Are these killers born human/humane and then *become* monsters, or are they *born* monsters and, through this process of transformation, show their true selves? Can ordinary people ever become monsters? This fundamental question of nature vs. nurture gains additional importance in the character of Will Graham, the main investigator in *Red Dragon*. Will excels in criminal profiling by forming empathetic bonds with criminals, often simply by observing a crime scene. He goes beyond "reading" criminals and begins to *feel* like them and to inhabit their minds. His role as monster hunter is both favored and tainted by his extreme empathy: by taking the perspective of the monster, Will sees how thin the line is between us and them. This is illustrated in *Red Dragon* when Will and Hannibal—hunter and monster—talk in a penitentiary: Hannibal is restrained by chains, and a red line traces his limit on the floor, separating the two men (44:10-47:55). This tension between being born or becoming a monster represents one of the main philosophical examinations in the Hannibal series of books: can anyone become a monster, or are they already born that way?

The characters' concerns are not merely philosophical, but also personal, as their identity (and masculinity) depends on whatever paves the road to monstrosity. In Will's case, the debate is only somewhat relevant. If monsters are made, then he should be careful not to make himself one by being too close to those monsters he investigates. Even if monsters are born as such, Will should hope to keep his monstrosity dormant. Either way, he does well to find balance in his contact with the criminals he profiles, lest their masculinity-defining impulses leak into his.

To Hannibal, though, understanding the origin of evil is paramount. If monstrosity comes by nature, Dr. Lecter is excused—maybe not of the crimes he has committed, but at least of the desires he has. If monsters are made, however, he could have prevented the death of Lady

Murasaki and the fate of his victims, including Clarice Starling. Perhaps (and probably so in his mind) Dr. Lecter could even have prevented his sister Mischa from being killed and consumed, and, as a consequence, prevented a life ruined by a transformation from man into monster.

Conclusion: American, Born and Raised

In post-1970s American nightmares, the home roofs but does not protect. The families in Anson's *The Amityville Horror*, in King's *The Shining* and *Pet Sematary*, and in Neiderman's *The Devil's Advocate* experience and play a part in the destruction of their own homes in a literary development of the domestic panic typical in mid-century horror stories. These more recent novels, though, expand the anxieties of home to encompass the family *as an institution* in the U.S. The curses cast on American families may spring from the tainted land on which their houses were built, or from the past wars of their countries or their ancestors' transgressions. In any case, American residences represent more than the middle-class apprehensions of the 1950s and 1960s, becoming the microcosm of an entire nation.

Small towns, too, contribute to the pattern by offering a dark experience of American childhood in *It*, while corporate U.S. shows its horror in *The Devil's Advocate*. American cars turn into monsters in Matheson's *Duel*. High school is revealed a land of fury and tyranny in King's *Carrie* and an example of nation-wide concerns about violence in Shriver's *We Need to Talk About Kevin*. In *The Omen*, monsters emerge from the same institutions that fail to nurture the American Dream, many of which, in turn, are sustained by traditional masculinity. These monsters do not exert their influence from overseas and have not breached the boarders; they are American, born and raised.

In these patterns, attempting to escape their conditions (inherent or created; real or imagined) men go through transformative journeys that, instead of bringing personal growth, result in the fragmentation of their own masculinities. Male characters in the Hannibal series undergo

various types of transformation, most of them linked to femininity, be it through the consumption of women's flesh or the assimilation of feminine identities. Harris's novels, through monstrosities that represent masculinities in a criminal, immoral, and grotesque extreme, put an odd reasoning in evidence: in the minds of monsters like Hannibal Lecter, Francis Dolarhyde, and Buffalo Bill, the origin of monsters is linked to contact with women, so it is by devouring the feminine that they seek to heal their broken selves.

In Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, masculine fragmentation mixes with meta-narrative processes and semiotic absurdity to convey the dissolution of its main characters. As mental confusion breaks diegetic boundaries, monsters feed off Navidson, Zampanò, and Truant's wounds of masculinity. The narrative about the house on Ash Tree Lane becomes indissociable from the narratives *about the narrative* of the house, and the words on the pages become increasingly cluttered to evoke the abysmal path of three men losing their sense of self.

Institutions lose their popularity, as horror stories reveal the inefficacy of hospitals, embassies, and courtrooms. Typical American objects and places cease to be marks of a country in need of protection and become monsters themselves. Amidst it all, strong, resilient, and vigorous men get lost on their own way home.

Chapter 5: The Humanity of Monsters (2000—)

Monsters are the patron saints of imperfection.

— Guillermo del Toro (Riefe)

Introduction: Homage, Inversion, Crisis

Writing about recent works of literature with an encyclopedic point of view is a challenge of perspective. The freshness of works published in the last decades provides a certain contextual familiarity, but one may find it comes as a hindrance—the books stand too close to be properly seen. As a consequence, this chapter is not as lengthy as chapters one to four. Freshness may result in familiarity, but it is temporal distance that guarantees a reliable point for analysis. This chapter, then, is less firm in its observations, suggesting vague tendencies, not discernible patterns.

Our guiding thread will be the power that contemporary horror has of looking back in its own past. Twenty-first-century horror often calls attention to horror in self-referentiality, reminding us of how literature is as much the result of *re*writing as it is of writing. In *Danse Macabre*, King proposes an understanding of horror as a paradoxical manifestation of dissatisfaction that enables a more solid return to normality, indicating horror culture has the tendency to go back and forth in cycles of disruption and stability. He writes,

> Horror, terror, fear, panic: these are the emotions which drive wedges between us, split us off from the crowd, and make us alone. It is paradoxical that feelings and emotions we associate with the "mob instinct" should do this, but crowds are lonely places to be, we're told, a fellowship with no love in it. The melodies of the horror tale are simple and repetitive, and they are melodies of disestablishment and disintegration … but another paradox is that the ritual outletting of these emotions seems to bring things back to a more stable and constructive state again. … I believe it's this feeling of reintegration, arising from a

field specializing in death, fear, and monstrosity, that makes the danse macabre so reward-

ing and magical. (27-28)

King omits, at least in this specific passage, which is guided by musical and mechanic metaphors,

that the "tools" we use to create "melodies" of horror are often entangled in this ebb and flow of

construction and destruction. That is, these tools are often *people*—or at least monstrified people.

The making of monsters, more frequently than we may be comfortable to admit, involves the

punishment or dehumanization of disenfranchised groups in order to "bring things back to a more

stable and constructive state again."

In this sense, horror as a "mob instinct" is less paradoxical than King claims. As I observed

in chapter one, mobs have participated in the Salem witch trials, lynched black people, and killed

immigrants. There is a reason Jackson's "The Lottery" is so frequently anthologized and selected

for American Literature syllabi. The end of the twentieth century, then, can serve us as an invitation

to reevaluate the simple and repetitive melodies of horror in their incessant cycle of disintegration

and construction (to use King's words) and to ask questions about the *tools*—the people, the mon-

sters. What was King Kong thinking atop the Empire State building? When threatened, did the

creature of the Black Lagoon cry? It is, strangely, a return to the basics of modern horror, to

Frankenstein's monster and his misunderstood attempts at being recognized as a living, breathing,

human being.

The first aspect of this return happens in homages that revisit the past but maintain the

original set of relations between masculinity and monstrosity. Think of the numerous remakes or

reboots of audiovisual monster narratives, such as *The Invisible Man*, *The Mummy* and other Univer-

sal monster movies. Monsters of *logos* (often also monsters of *pathos* and *ethos*) maintain their rep-

rehensible masculine attitudes, while heroic men often repeat pulp fiction stereotypes.

The second pattern—of inversion—revisits the past and suggest that the "real monster"

is an abnormality of *pathos* and *ethos*, not of *logos*. *The Shape of Water*, for instance, both Del Toro's

film and the novel version written with Kraus, depict a creature science cannot explain but whom human morals and love can welcome. While post-modernist or contemporary fiction may carry out such inversion through self-referential irony or parodic characters, the pattern has been present in modern horror from the beginning. In *Frankenstein*, while the creature is a monster of *logos*, it may be regarded, at least initially, as morally neutral and willing to develop positive emotions. The monster of *pathos* and *ethos* is Frankenstein himself. Recent works, like Del Toro's, may alter narrative elements to defy conventions, but the principles remain. In other words, changes in poetics, not in politics.

The third pattern—of crisis—follows the directions of the pattern of inversion but fails by changing the varnish coating the narrative elements but not their essence, meaning, or logic. Works such as *Twilight* turn the monster into a desirable goal, an attractive mirror of our best qualities, which is the opposite of its classic function of symbolizing our deviations. Our value-imbued perceptions of monsters do not change; rather, monsters themselves change into gallant idolized figures. They are aspiring classical heroes, even if under rotten skin. The dysfunctional logic of rejecting the Other without complex ethical evaluation also remains.

The implication is that the process of mediating difference does not require much effort, since good monsters (revered, fetishized) are as great as humans can be, while evil monsters (ridiculed, ostracized) are beyond any help. Such ideas of "good" and "evil," however, are defined too broadly to be valuable. Monstrosity is somehow diluted—many monsters are a little human, while everyone is a bit monstrous. The monster, then, loses its power in a pattern that suggests we are past social difference and that the Other does not exist, that the concept is weak, gone, *demodé*.

Homage

The pattern of homage can be seen in the recontextualization or repetition of older patterns, tropes, icons, images. They may also overtly reference an author or style, even providing

pastiches that help consolidate what we now perceive as patterns in horror culture—hence my choice of the name "homage." Creepypastas such as "Smile Dog," "Squidward's Suicide," or "suicidemouse.avi" toy with the possibility of Internet video versions of cursed artistic works like the sculptures in Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu" or the play in *The King in Yellow*. "The Imago Sequence" breathes new life into Lovecraft's iconic cosmic horror by portraying the mental breakdown of a character in contemporary times when in contact with a series of photographs that remind us of the eerie paintings in "Pickman's Model." The creepypasta "Burgrr Entries," written by Bogleech, parodies comedy sci-fi movies and depicts aliens destroying Earth by replacing our food with irresistible (and increasingly grotesque and disgusting) meat-based products. Joe Hill, in his collection *20ᵗʰ Century Ghosts*, anthologizes previously published short stories that pay homage to literary and social anxieties from that century and lay them out with a vision only possible in the twenty-first.

In "You Will Hear the Locus Sing," Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" meets, in typical 1950s fashion, mutations caused by radiation. "Bobby Conroy Comes Back from the Dead," more emotional and less horrifying, is set during the filming of George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*. "Abraham's Boys," in which Abraham Van Helsing has a deadly encounter with one of his young sons, adds a layer of tyrannous masculinity to the professor from *Dracula*.

In Hill's "Best New Horror," an editor meets a writer as repulsive as the monsters from his stories and uncomfortably more human. Embedded in the main narrative is one of this writer's pieces, a horror tale about a woman kidnapped by a "giant with jaundiced eyeballs and teeth in tin braces" (13), a tale that "lingered on female degradation, and [whose] heroine had been written as a somewhat willing accomplice to her own emotional, sexual and spiritual mistreatment" (16). After escaping her captors, the woman sees her social life decline because of her physical and emotional scars, and she is ultimately recaptured, finding "a kind of relief" in her notion that "she belongs with them," with the monsters (16).

Hill's short story presents an ambiguous viewpoint regarding monstrosity. On the one hand, seeing a monstrous woman accept her condition and join the freaks may makes us feel safe, as we understand that monsters belong to the margins. On the other hand, the transition of human girl to monstrous woman reminds us that those prohibitive politics of monstrosity only work under the condition that we the "normal" people be prepared to take our leave in the case we turn into freaks. Additionally, in the embedding narrative, when the editor meets the eerie, obsessed writer, who shares a swastika-adorned house with a "disturbingly fat [and] tattooed" brother, the plot reminds us once more that the physically disturbing[82] can be evil. This does not happen because evil is inherent to what is considered ugly, but because our bodies, like swastikas and other symbols turned evil, can be marred by malicious practices, discourses, and ideologies.

"Best New Horror" is ambivalent in its politics of monstrosity. The editor visits the writer without initially showing much fear or prejudice, which indicates that, despite his knowledge of the writer's strangeness, he did not connect eccentricity and difference to malignity. Ironically, however, the editor finds the writer in a real monster lair in the form of a residence whose "corridor itself seemed crooked somehow" (32). After realizing that the writer's mother is tied to a bed and confined to a life of immobility and starvation, the editor is chased by the writer and his brothers, one of them carrying an iconic chainsaw. In the introduction to Hill's collection of short stories, Christopher Golden writes that, in "'Best New Horror,' it is impossible not to recognize a certain familiarity and to realize where the tale is leading, but rather than failing, this is its greatest

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[82] While the association of fatness to repulsiveness and monstrosity is a recurrent harmful trope, it is hard to say if such attribution comes from the editor's prejudice or Joe Hill's own thematic choices. The character/narrator could have chosen any other attribute in his description; Hill, too, may be recurring to what Noël Carroll terms as magnification to enhance an attribute one may consider horrifying.

achievement" (6). Hill's story, then, goes beyond a simple representation of traditional or non-traditional monsters and develops a commentary on contemporary horror fiction and its cultural implications. It points at prejudicial portrayals of otherness and indicates that they can destroy lives, but it also warns us that the dismissal of traditional monstrosity is just as deadly.

In his anthology, Hill acknowledges the importance of contemporary politics of monstrosity but also exposes the dangers of a moral high ground and reminds us why we need monstrous categories. It is no coincidence that "Best New Horror" comes first in the collection, as it sets the tone to all other narratives. In this context, the most menacing ghost of the twentieth century, ever accompanying us, is our responsibility to differentiate between our honest lost souls and our darkest specters.

Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*, too, underscores the need to differentiate between monsters of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* and judge based on individual and specific ethical measurements. The novel involves the sudden arrival of monsters that, when seen by human or animal eyes, devastates minds and prompts immediate suicidal behavior. Alongside these monsters of *logos*, the novel portrays monsters of *pathos* and *ethos* as the people who see these indescribable monsters, somehow survive, and are compelled into hostile behavior not toward themselves, but toward others.

It is an homage, or a development of cosmic horror, but between the lines there is a suggestion that while the unnatural beings are regarded as monstrous, they may not be morally evil, as they may not have the intention to either harm or help. One of the creatures, for instance, start to remove the protagonist's blindfold until she says,

'No,' … 'This is mine.'

For a moment, nothing happens. Then something touches her face. Malorie grimaces. But it is only the fold, returning to its place on her nose and temples. (297)

The creature has stopped mid-act, perhaps instinctively protecting her from its own visage. And Malorie, the protagonist, thinks, "*Maybe they mean us no harm. Maybe they are surprised by what they do to*

us. It's an overlap, Malorie. Their world and ours. Just an accident. Maybe they don't like hurting us at all' (297). The monsters may simply be creatures from another planet or dimension who somehow, when perceived visually, bring about an overwhelming, maddening form of existential anxiety.

The other form of monstrosity, not of *logos*, but of *ethos* and *pathos*, is in the people who see the monsters and do not kill themselves but seek to show the horrors to (or simply murder) everyone else instead. While the monster's appearance causes awe in its most sublime and macabre form and forces most people into suicide, either as an act of madness or an act of self-mercy to escape a horror impossible to grasp, some people see the monsters and take another path. When faced with the ultimate horrors of existence, whatever they are, they do not move toward an immediate end of suffering via suicide, but decide, instead, to spread such suffering, as they find delight in doing so.

In an action-based definition, they are evil. The monsters, on the other hand, might not necessarily be so. The most iconic works of cosmic horror portray monsters that simultaneously signify our *amoral* human reservations about the unknown and display intentional, *immoral* tendencies toward evil. Cthulhu, Dagon, and Nyarlathotep corporify the chaotic and the absurd, but they are also simply malevolent. To gaze into the monsters of *Bird Box*, however, is not to gaze into raw evil itself, but to gaze at the naked truths of the universe. Evil is in the eye of the beholder, or in his/her mind, ready to be reaped. In this sense, *Bird Box* suggests our next pattern: the pattern of inversion.

Inversion

The tendency of inversion in horror culture preserves esthetics of monstrosity but alters its politics. The classic figure of the monster remains (e.g., dissident bodies, abject features) as does its expository function (e.g., categorical oddity, otherness) but their implications and social meanings

are different. Monsters who appear physically traditional, then, are imbued with an uncharacteristic sense of morality, which suggests true evil is an ethical matter, not physical or social.

For instance, the poster and the book cover of *The Shape of Water*, both of which display its protagonist (the Devonian, a fish-human hybrid with finger and toe webbings, human arms and legs, and fish-like gills), already visually hint at how Guillermo Del Toro, Vanessa Taylor, and Daniel Kraus's works reshape classical horror movies, specifically *The Creature of the Black Lagoon*. The Devonian's physique is a direct reworking of the Creature's, but *The Shape of Water* takes *The Creature of the Black Lagoon* to another direction, exploring the discourses that are silent in the 1954 film. On the one hand, *The Creature of the Black Lagoon* is a textbook representation of mid-twentieth-century masculinities and monstrosities: a heroic male and a damsel in distress who sympathize with the male monstrous figure *only to an extent* and an annoying, bossy man whose first reaction is to kill the creature with his phallic harpoon. On the other hand, Del Toro and Kraus give us Elisa Esposito, a heroin in distress who fully sympathizes with the monstrous figure, with whom she unites against a villain of toxic masculinity. Viewers and readers also lend an ear to a black woman's concerns through Zelda Fuller, Elisa's coworker and friend, while non-white characters in *Lagoon* are merely assistances destined to die murdered by the creature. The non-traditional masculinity of Giles, an elderly gay man, is neither relegated to the background nor naively exaggerated to a point of caricature. He simply is there, trying to be recognized as a professional, human, sexual member of society. All these attempts at letting social minorities speak is reinforced by the literal muteness of the protagonists (Elisa and the Devonian).

Older monstrous "good guys," like the Addams Family and the Munsters, remind us that connecting monsters of *logos* to positive characteristics is not exclusive to twenty-first century narratives. Like the previous patterns in the twentieth century, the reversion of monster stories has somehow always been there but becomes more solid or recognizable during a certain age. Works

like Katherine Dunn's *Geek Love*, for example, pave the way to stories like *Freak Show*, the fourth season of *American Horror Story*, in which we see freaks and monsters as real, flawed people.

In *Geek Love* we follow the Binewskis, a family of carnival freaks (e.g., a hunchback, a boy with flippers, a telekinetic baby) whose stories are told by Olympia, one of its members. The perspective on monstrosity changes, and we see through the eyes of the freaks, noticing the humanity of the so-called monster and the monstrosity of humans. The novel shows the need for context and perspective in our evaluations of monsters, reviewing the human/freak binary and indicating that monstrosity is not inherent to inhabitants of the margins.

In a novel whose protagonists have non-standard bodies or abilities, one of the evilest actions comes from a man whose appearance is no different from our own. When the Binewskis arrange a small trip outside their usual carnival setting, they are welcomed by an armed man who fires, feels "a sudden warm pleasure" (ch. 5) and later only regrets having missed. The conflict in this scene, along with the human light with which the freaks are presented throughout the novel (i.e., they are not perfect beings either, and can be as evil as everyone else), questions the assumption that physical deformity is a trait of monsters, affirming instead that monstrosity (moral, psychological) and evil may be closer to humanity than Lovecraft's scholars are.

Benjamin Taylor explains that "the binary tension that haunts Dunn's novel posits the 'freakish' on one end and the 'normal' on the other" so "the novel's construction of the freak-norm binary allows for its very dissolution" as "transformation of bodies and the fluidity of these categories contradict the very role of a binary." Monstrosity, as Cohen and Carroll explain, is bound to culture, and the cultural preconceptions guiding our definition of monsters are often malleable enough so that the categories of monster and human are presented as negotiable. When we think about politics of monstrosity and otherness, what defines the other/monster may depend less on monsters themselves and more on the assumptions of the monstrifier.

A similar, more recent narrative, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, also questions assumptions about monstrosity without stripping freaks of their abnormalities. It narrates how Jacob Portman, a discontent 16-year-old, meets "peculiars" (children with paranormal or otherwise odd abilities) who live in a one-day time loop during the Second World War. In this young-adult novel about discrimination and social stigma, we are reminded that the different, often living in danger, deserve respect.

Those monsters of *logos* from *Geek Love*, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, and T*he Shape of Water* are not of Vitruvian physique but are at least humanly moral and humanly flawed. The connotation is that unusual bodies do not imply moral abomination and that we must, therefore, do away with our prejudices as much as possible. The inversion poetics does not provide new form to the body, but to thoughts and assumptions about it, which grants us a unique perspective of past traditional monsters and stablishes a solid ground for politics of monstrosity based on tolerance, not on ostracism.

Crisis

In our third and last pattern, the postmodernist monster goes through a crisis when its monstrous characteristics are taken away. If we compare *The Shape of Water* and *Twilight* as examples, be they the novels or the films, we notice a path of superficial similarities that takes us to different destinations. Granted, both are fantasy romance stories developed within the relatively short time frame of 15 years and both have male monsters as secondary characters who play a danger-and-love[83] game with their young female protagonists in the style of *King Kong* or the many retellings of Beauty and the Beast. Despite the appearances, however, the characterization and the

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[83] See Jonathan McIntosh's video "Abduction as Romance" for a more generalized analysis of the trope.

thematic concerns diverge. While Del Toro's themes include the importance of protecting one's freedom even while relying on others, Stephanie Meyer's love story romanticizes a relationship of codependency. The monsters themselves, moreover, are not alike: the Devonian is an animalistic "gentleman in distress," at least for the better part of the story, but Edward Cullen is a vampiric rendition of Prince Charming.

Moreover, and more relevant for this discussion, the male monster's figuration in each work relates to patterns of characterization that question classical notions of the monster, but they do so with different assumptions and results. The Devonian stands for the emergent need of questioning social definitions of monstrosity, and Edward Cullen's existence goes against the traditional conception of vampires. These functions seem similar, but, one the one hand, *The Shape of Water*, in its questioning, reminds us that real monsters are not necessarily physically ugly but rather morally despicable; one the other, *Twilight* embellishes Edward's immoral behavior, hiding his monstrosity under a façade of good looks and impeccable manners. Del Toro's story paints immorality as true monstrosity. Meyer's erases the monster. There are at least two poetics at play: besides the pattern of inversion, we see a pattern of crisis.

In a lecture entitled "El monstruo posmoderno y su crisis en la literatura, en el cine y en la tv,"[84] David Roas argues that the postmodernist naturalization (or crisis) of the monster is conservative in excess. Relying on examples that range from the Godzilla franchise to *Warm Bodies*, Roas suggests that such banalization of monstrosity promotes destruction without construction. As colossal lizards become friendlier[85] and as ferocious ghouls become our significant others, the

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[84] Lecture given at *Monstruosidades Ficcionais*, a conference uniting different symposia in Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) in November 2018. My use of David Roas's lecture as a source relies mainly on my own notes.

[85] Already in the Shōwa period (1954–75), "Godzilla began evolving into a friendlier, more playful

monster's expository function is distorted into erasure. He questions postmodernist impulses of "de-otherization" (merely removing otherness from monsters) and argues that to naturalize the monster is to make it banal.

This naturalization, on the surface level, seems socially progressive because of its concern about entities of the lowest cast, but its acceptance of monsters is dangerously blind. In works such as *Twilight* and *Warm Bodies*, we are letting monsters speak, and such admission of werewolves, zombies, and vampires into the roll of humanity would be progressive were it a form of hospitality with at least some moral discernment. Along with desirable strangers, however, undesirable monsters are welcomed by this postmodernist politics. Monstrous others are welcomed without the adoption of bigoted moral high ground, but there is risk in such carelessness. Deprived of any meaningful guidance, these forms of acceptance become uninstructed moral relativism, acceptance in its best and in its worst, acceptance of everything. The postmodernist naturalization/crisis of the monster is, for this reason, recklessly progressive and permissive in its development, but often materializes as excessively *conservative* narratives. In its unrestricted acceptance, Roas argues, postmodern crisis takes monstrosity as a full package, including outdated values.

Edward Cullen, a one-hundred-seven-year-old vampire whose apparent age is seventeen, is characterized by a multitude of extraordinary talents: heightened senses, as well as inhuman strength, endurance, speed, dexterity, and physical attractiveness, abilities vampires possess in general; and, in particular, mind-reading, musical aptitude, wealth, and protectiveness. The last two characteristics are present in the etymological meaning of his first name, "Edward" being a combination of the Old English terms "ead" and "weard," which relate respectively to the words "wealth" and "guard" ("Reconstruction: Proto-Germanic/Audawarduz"; Campbell). He seems,

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antihero … and, as years went by, it evolved into an anthropomorphic superhero" (Godzilla).

indeed, as David Roas humorously characterized him on his lecture, "Cristo con colmillos."[86] Edward's closeness to perfection elevates him to a godlike status, but, more strikingly, and conveyed by Roas's comic wording, Edward's characterization is glaringly at odds with the figure of the vampire.

Edward exemplifies not only a crisis in the representation of the vampire or the monster, but a crisis in representation itself. Being deprived of mythical or popular characteristics of the vampire does not, by itself, indicate anything critical or anything new, since the vampire, as we see in diachronical, geographical, cultural, and sociological analyses, is a monster that comes in hundreds of forms. New vampires constantly appear in fiction, as in *I Am Legend*. The representation of Edward, though, is taken to an extreme level: so much of the vampire is removed from him that he could have been anything else. If the pattern of inversion teaches us we may want to accept some monsters in our lives, the pattern of crisis fails by suggesting we accept any and every thing.

Richard Kearney provides similar words of caution in a discussion about Jacques Derrida's theories on hospitality.[87] Since "[t]o be absolutely hospitable to the other," Kearney writes, "is, it appears, to suspend all criteria of ethical discrimination" (72), "in such non-discriminate openness to alterity we find ourselves unable to differentiate between good and evil. A fine lesson in tolerance, to be sure, but not necessarily in moral judgment" (72). Accepting strangers despite their immoral and monstrous behavior like is a judgment just as shallow as accepting no stranger at all. Lessening the impact of our moral judgment of monstrous strangers is a laudable (though exhausting) display of humanity, but erasing such judgment altogether is troubling, especially when this stranger is literally out there (or in here) to kill us.

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[86] "Christ with fangs."

[87] See Kevin O'Gorman's "Jacques Derrida's Philosophy of Hospitality" and Derrida's *Of Hospitality*.

Conclusion: One Hundred Years, Revisited

Homage sustains traditional politics and esthetics of monstrosity, showing us that the dangers embodied by classical monsters remain relevant today. Inversion applies the same abject esthetics in the construction of its freaks but subverts old horror politics by not immediately assuming the outsider, the hideous, and the physically monstrous embody absolute transgressions. Crisis involves a breakdown of the very structure that characterizes the monster, resulting in a dissolution of its esthetics and its politics. Not much meaning is left; not much monstrosity, either.

Roas, in his lecture, seemed to imply the question, "How can some postmodern monsters be so subversive at first glance and yet ultimately be so traditional?" They subvert part of the cultural perception we have about monstrosity—the threatening foreign vampire count becomes a protective teenager—but such subversion does not result in any meaningful contribution to the semiosis of the monster, which merely stops working as a sign. Rather, by dusting off Prince Charming, we just move full circle back to tradition.

Dracula, Henry Sturges (from *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*), and Edward Cullen are all vampires, but, as Henry asks of Lincoln in Seth Grahame-Smith's novel, we should "judge [all vampires] not equally" (ch. 27 02:25). How, then, can we judge them at all? Richard Kearney defends a perspective fit to the complexity of contemporary times: we learn, we understand, we do not assume. Only then we know which vampires may be invited into our homes.

Conclusion

"I have stood knee deep in mud and bone and filled my lungs with mustard gas," a machine declares in the final moments of *Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs*. Despite its story being set in London, written by a Swedish studio, and told in a video game, not in written prose, its ending involves a sequence of images that recaptures much of the American horror fiction I have analyzed in this dissertation. As a warning for Oswald Mandus, its creator and playable character in the game, the Machine continues,

> I have seen two brothers fall. I have lain with holy wars and copulated with the autumnal fallout. I have dug trenches for the refugees; I have murdered dissidents where the ground never thaws and starved the masses into faith. A child's shadow burnt into the brickwork. A house of skulls in the jungle. The innocent, the innocent, Mandus, trod and bled and gassed and starved and beaten and murdered and enslaved. This is your coming century! They will eat them Mandus, they will make pigs of you all and they will bury their snouts into your ribs and they will eat your hearts!

Despite beginning its monologue as if relating past experiences, the Machine is referring to the future. In the turn from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, *Amnesia* tells its players, Oswald Mandus builds a god-machine that incorporates parts of his soul and manages to glimpse the events about to transpire in the next age. The images it provides us are a warning for Mandus, a warning against all the brutalities, conflicts, and spilled blood of the twentieth century. The game ends when the player destroys the machine, and Mandus, regretful, understands it is not his place to interfere with the future, regardless of its horrors.

Indeed, the twentieth century may be easily perceived as a century of horror—by the Machine, by Mandus, and by us. After following American horror fiction published in the last one-hundred years, one may feel the century's technological developments and social improvements pale in comparison to the modern atrocities of genocides, hate crimes, terrorism, and wars that are set to

begin even before the previous conflict is over. Such misery may or may not reflect our personal opinion or our historical perspective on the past century, but it is present in the horror fiction of this period, even if, at times, narratives provide a silver lining or finish off on a hopeful tone.

There is plenty of evil in diegetic worlds and not much good. Lovecraft's cosmic terrors have no benign counterpart, for instance. In fact, the neutral state of his cosmos nears chaos. This chaos is neither a monster who can be vanquished by a hero nor a force from which spring harmonious gods to rule heaven and earth; it is simply the absence of order, of purpose, and of meaning. In *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, humanity is supposed to be an obstinate foe that frightens the aliens away. Yet, as humans are represented only by two unorganized dissidents, the story, which calls for emotional expression but depicts a limited range of it, ends almost as if the aliens could not be bothered to make an effort and just sought easier prey. In *The Omen*, forces of evil can conjure up a storm to kill Father Tassone (Father Brennan in the movie), but the power of God remains limited to churches, which fail to protect the religious man simply because of locked doors and gates. Commenting on this subject as depicted in stories of religious evil following the 1960s, Sean Quinlan writes, "Although they framed the sixties as a cosmic battle between good and evil, they also proffered a curious vision of faith itself: a faith in which there was no good but only evil, Satan but no God" (315). Narratives involving religion seem to epitomize this disparity, but, in general, evil seems to hold more power than good does in most horror stories.

In modern American horror, masculinities go through a related struggle. There is an overwhelming number of hypermasculine characters and of characters who are not masculine enough, or who are not masculine in the right shape, the right time, or the right way. So easily, it seems, we fall short of healthy forms of manhood. Is it a crisis of masculinity? Have we all fallen from grace?

It is expected that horror culture offers us these diegetic worlds lacking balance, as they serve as vehicles for the depiction of evil. If in *The Omen* a simple prayer could catch the ears of God and guarantee the response of an omnipotent force of good, the novel would, instead, be as

short as flash fiction. That we, as human beings, are mostly on our own against Satan or Cthulhu is symptomatic of our anxieties, as these overwhelming entities stand for the shortcomings of our knowledge and the failures of our institutions, difficulties bound to produce feelings of powerlessness. Our greatest demons, then, address our gravest matters. The disparity of powerful vices versus limited human virtues also speaks for the ability of horror, as a genre, to build metaphors and scenarios that engage with the real world, in which our good intentions are limited by our own resources. It is even natural that most stories, generally speaking, work under such premises, as these challenging forces of evil constitute the basic driving force behind storytelling: conflict.

But does the same justification apply to depictions of masculinities as open wounds or unsolvable problems? Are they, like the disproportionate powers of evil in horror, merely a consequence of a genre's cultural lens? What does it mean, then, that even our male heroes contribute to these harmful masculine stereotypes, perpetuating heroic manliness as unreal at best and, in its worst, as condescending and intolerant? Such questions have accompanied me since my initial contact with masculinity as a subject in horror literature, shaping much of my research since then. *Why? Why is it represented so frequently as an open wound in horror culture?*

First, because, as I wrote, narratives in general need conflict and some of that conflict may involve gender, sexuality, and masculinities or femininities. In this sense, the same justification we have for evil does apply to masculinity, as stories about perfect men would simply not be good stories. Second, because horror narratives need conflict and benefit from signs to represent evil. Many men are evil. Many forms of masculinity are also evil. As we need signs for evil, we make monsters. The result: monstrous men become symbols for the evils of masculinity. That becomes evident once we understand the cultural history of masculinity and the function of the monster as a metaphor.

Third, masculinities are frequently depicted as open wounds in recognition of the failure of patriarchal values and systems in guiding our institutions, modes of thinking, and definitions of

self. The concept of patriarchy is neither simple to define nor something we may take for granted. If we go beyond definitions centered on "a family, group, or government controlled by a man or a group of men" ("Patriarchy") and understand patriarchy as a political or social system centered on hegemonic or traditional masculinities, we may see horror culture in another light. The stories we have seen, from Victorian to postmodernist fiction, including most of the American horror tales addressed here, involve men and women at odds with political aspects of masculinity and with patriarchal values.

Under the shadow of patriarchy, we may approach masculinity as if it were a generalized feeling, an intangible evil, a modern-day phantasmagoria. We identify that broad view in critical analyses contrasting personal female struggle not to personal evil acts perpetrated by male characters, but to an omnipresent patriarchal danger. While the common grounds for interpreting women as oppressed subjects include a wide range of terminologies, archetypes, images, and concepts (from the madwoman in the attic to the male gaze to mansplaining), the lexicon of men and masculinities in their look toward themselves remains less robust.

Groups of men often lack a sensible common goal regarding their identities as men. The recognition of patriarchal failure does not imply that men as a category are disenfranchised and, therefore, does not reveal primordial and tangible needs of masculinity, at least not like first-wave feminism, for instance, did about voting rights. In relation to less-tangible goals (but nevertheless important) we seem to be lost amid an ocean of relativization and comparison, much like some forms of contemporary feminism: some of us advocate for more open conceptualizations of masculinity and the respect for non-traditional masculine values; others wish return to old-fashioned forms of masculinity, which are not inherently negative; yet others deem our discussion unnecessary; others dive even deeper into a sea of philosophical conceptualization, discussing whether or not the body is relevant to gender studies or whether masculinity studies itself should even exist.

These discussions may be open-ended and immaterial, but I do not mean to say they are unnecessary. They are what I have been doing here since page one, and they characterize a human need, one that goes beyond tangible factors (food, shelter, safety, human rights) and involves less substantial necessities (self-understanding, social awareness, philosophy). Nevertheless, this form of discussion, which easily expose male flaws but lacks common goal, creates the sense of an unsolvable problem: masculinity defined in a *via negativa*. When knowing who we are is unmanageable, let us explore what we should not be.

And so, horror depicts masculinity as an open wound—because it *is* a constant struggle. Men who conform to hegemonic stereotypes often cause the wounds, as traditional masculinity carries a history of abuse and aggression. Those who do not conform (men or women) find themselves unable to treat their wounds or even recognize they exist. Those living between hegemony and disenfranchisement, which probably includes most of us, oscillate between our own pains and the (often unwilling) perpetuation of a cycle of suffering.

It is not as simple as men "lacking the tools" one needs to understand and address masculinity (although that is part of the predicament) but more about an attitude of movement without orientation, of prescription without real self-understanding. While outdated terms like "alpha male" are given undue credit and expanded into notions about the "sigma male,"[88] one wonders if the Greek alphabet is long enough for all these prescriptions of manly behavior—and one wonders if there are any positive and sensible forms of understanding oneself *as a man*. Between the archetype of the evil father and the cultural narratives that teach us a good man is as expendable as a good soldier, men remain lost and unwilling to stop and ask for directions.

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[88] It is "slang term used in masculinist subcultures for a popular, successful, but highly independent and self-reliant man" ("Sigma Male").

I reflect on this not as a proponent of a masculine crisis or similar discourses, but as an advocate for masculine introspection. Narratives of crisis are based on questions that imply a movement toward masculine failure, a movement in the direction of a doomed future. "Look at where masculinity is going," they urge us. "Where are these new men trying to go?" We should, instead, ask a more self-reflective question about our positioning as men, "Where are we *now*? What are we looking at when we see ourselves?"

One of the frequent criticisms of cultural studies of masculinities (from which I was not spared) sustains that manhood should not be studied because men, within a patriarchal society, already occupy many of the topics we explore when learning about basic subjects. This disapproval questions the need for a dedicated broad area of knowledge specialized on men because we already learn about Aristotle and Descartes in high-school Philosophy, Darwin in Biology, Galileo in Physics. The validity of this reproach is not null, as the history of academic and traditional knowledge reveals an astonishing inequality in the names of those credited with discoveries or even allowed access to schooling in the first place. The implication, however (that we should not study men *in their condition as men*) remains incongruous with the requirements of modern-day manhood. We are simultaneously warned not to look at ourselves and urged to improve. The consequence, unsurprisingly, is a reactionary look forward—not an examination of who we are and have been *as men*, but a desire for change without knowing what from, a plan for the future deprived of the experience of learning the past.

I recall an incident, after a talk I gave about masculinities in popular culture, in which a high-school male student quietly asked me whether I thought it was possible for a man to change his form of masculinity. Quite a simple question at first, it seems; in reality, so complicated. I do not know if he was asking for himself or someone else, nor do I remember the specifics of my answer. But can we? Can we, as men, adjust our principles and our core? Can we close our wounds? Feasible, but quite challenging if we do not look at ourselves as a collective and find some suitable

model or another. And disheartening, as all we see are open wounds. In any case, we men may not

know exactly who our heroes are, but at least we have met our monsters—and that will do for now.

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