

# CLASSIC READINGS ON MONSTER THEORY

## *DEMONSTRARE* Volume 1

Edited by  
**ASA SIMON MITTMAN**  
and **MARCUS HENSEL**



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University  
Press

**ARC** HUMANITIES PRESS  
REFERENCE

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*To Grendel's Mother—may she someday have a name*

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## INTRODUCTION: “A MARVEL OF MONSTERS”

ASA SIMON MITTMAN and MARCUS HENSEL

### Under the Werewolf’s Skin

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

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

Many werewolf narratives imply that the monstrosity is a curse, but the source of this curse is rarely spelled out in such detail. This cursed werewolf then explains that he and his wife are this cursed pair, and that she, trapped in the shape of a wolf, is dying and needs a priest to attend to her last rites. “The priest follows trembling,” but is hesitant to provide a mass and absolution for a talking wolf.<sup>4</sup> Then, as Gerald tells us, “to cleanse any doubt, his foot performing as a hand, [the male wolf] pulled back the entire skin of the [female] wolf from the head to the navel and folded it back; and the clear form of an old woman appeared [...] He immediately rolled the skin of the wolf back on, and joined it together in its prior form.”<sup>5</sup> The priest then agrees—“compelled more by terror than reason,”<sup>6</sup> though Gerald does not specify the precise cause of this fear—to perform the last rites for her. As Caroline Walker Bynum asks in her book on Gerald and medieval ideas about transformation, “did the priest improperly give the Eucharist,” that is, in Catholicism, the miraculously transformed body and blood of Jesus, “to a wolf or properly comfort a dying if deformed ‘human’?”<sup>7</sup>

What do we take from this? There are many lessons embedded in this strange tale, but for our purposes here, the

---

1 Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, vol. 5, *Topographia Hibernica, et Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. James F. Dimock (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), 101: “Nunc ea, quae nostris hic temporibus digna stupore contigerunt, explicemus.” Translations from Gerald are ours.

2 Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, 101: “verba de Deo sana subjunxit.”

3 Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, 102: “De quodam hominum genere sumus Ossiriensium. Unde, quolibet septennio, per imprecationem sancti cuiusdam, Natalis scilicet abbatis, duo, videlicet mas et femina, tam a formis quam finibus exulare coguntur. Formam enim humanam prorsus exuentes, induunt lupinam. Completo vero septennii spatio, si forte superstites fuerint, aliis duobus ipsorum loco simili conditione subrogatis, ad pristinam redeunt tam patriam quam naturam.”

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4 Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, 102: “presbyter sequitur tremebundus.”

5 Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, 102–3: “Et ut omnem abstergeret dubietatem, pede quasi pro manu fungens, pellem totam a capite lupae retrahens, usque ad umbilicum replicavit: et statim expressa forma vetulae cuiusdam apparuit [...] Et statim pellis, a lupo retracta, priori se forme coaptavit.”

6 Gerald of Wales, *Opera*, 103: “terrore tamen magis quam ratione compulsus.”

7 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 27.

key one is this: inside *every* monster lurks a human being. Hence, werewolves “retain in (or under) wolfishness the rapaciousness or courtesy of human selves.”<sup>8</sup> Peel back the fur, the scales, the spikes, the slime, and beneath the monstrous hide, there *we* are, always and inevitably. This is because all monsters are human creations. They exist because we create or define them as such.<sup>9</sup> We therefore owe them our care and attention. We must not follow the model of Doctor Frankenstein, who gives life to a creature he then rejects with disgust. The Monster implores the doctor—and we would be wise to heed this admonition:

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

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

This is not a new insight. In the early fifth century, Saint Augustine, an early Christian bishop of the North African city of Hippo, uses a series of Latin puns to characterize the nature of monsters. He says they take their name, *monstra*, from *monstrare* (to show) in order *demonstrare* (to demonstrate) something that we can learn from.<sup>11</sup> While we might draw different conclusions about what lessons they teach, we agree with Augustine that we have much to learn from monsters. They are, as Julia Kristeva says in a related context, “the primers of my culture.”<sup>12</sup> By gathering a great

variety and range of sources in this volume, we hope to give the monsters their due, to do our duty towards them, to look carefully and thoughtfully at them, and, ultimately, to *see* them and understand what they strive to demonstrate for us.

## On the Shoulders of Giants

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

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

Conceiving of our work as “monster theory” or “monster studies” involves adopting a fairly recent critical lens, and most of the material specifically and sustainedly dealing with monsters has been written after 1980. Indeed, one might argue that monster theory in its present form would not be possible without the advent of postmodern theory: the roots of monster theory, like the closely allied fields of postcolonial

<sup>8</sup> Bynum, 32.

<sup>9</sup> Asa Simon Mittman, “Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster Studies,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman with Peter Dendle (London: Ashgate, 2012), 1–14; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–25, and volume 1 of this collection.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein, Or The Modern Prometheus*, in volume 2 of this collection, 179.

<sup>11</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, in volume 2 of this collection.

<sup>12</sup> Julia Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection,” in volume 1 of this collection.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel D. McGarry, trans., *The Metalogicon of John of Salisbury: A Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1967), 167.

and queer theory, lie in the post-structuralism of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard. A full explanation of post-structuralism lies far beyond the scope of this chapter, but suffice it to say that this new way of thinking questioned the universality of Enlightenment ideals—the notion that the world can be understood through careful, scientific examination and rational thought, and that doing so would lead to the betterment of society—and rejected traditional centres of cultures and philosophies. The upshot of this decentring was significant: Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917)—a urinal placed on a pedestal—now had just as much claim to "art" as did Leonardo da Vinci's fresco, *The Last Supper* (1495–1498), and marginal groups from colonized subjects to queer cultures to monsters became valid foci for study.

Because the marginal was just that until the mid-1960s, texts that deal specifically with monsters are sparse prior. J.R.R. Tolkien's 1936 essay "*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*" is really the opening salvo in monster theory, with the eminent medievalist and author arguing that monsters were not something to be embarrassed about. Rudolf Wittkower followed in 1942 with his "*Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters*," examining a number of monsters and covering a massive historical scope—from Classical Greece to seventeenth-century Germany and England. He ends with a note that becomes a refrain in monster theory: monsters "shaped not only the day-dreams of beauty and harmony of western man but created at the same time symbols which expressed the horrors of his real dreams."<sup>14</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World* (1947/1965) departs from its precursors by consistently interpreting monsters in a positive way.<sup>15</sup> By placing them in the "carnavalesque" setting in which the official culture is rejected and parodied, he reads monsters as comic, gay figures—objects of laughter, which defeats fear. In a short essay published in 1962, Georges Canguilhem returns to the traditional negative reading of the monster, concluding that monsters are a disruptive entity in the natural order of things. As disruptions, however, he argues that they are also formative: they remind us of the fragility and impermanence of the "natural" world.<sup>16</sup>

1968 brought a sea change in Western thought. After the student protests in Poland and France, and the growth of Civil Rights and antiwar movements in the United States, scholars began to look at literature (and therefore monsters) differently. In 1975 Michel Foucault gave a series of lectures at the Collège de France on the concept of "abnormal."<sup>17</sup> Arguing for the importance of the body, and for notions of power as a strategy rather than a fixed fact, he traces the absorption of the monster into the judicial and medical systems of Europe, where it eventually becomes what Foucault calls a "pale monster" that can be either punished (assimilated into the legal and cultural complex) or treated (assimilated into the medical complex).

Six years after Foucault's lecture, John Block Friedman published *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, which traces the depiction of monstrous peoples from ancient Greece and into the early modern period.<sup>18</sup> Friedman undertakes a sustained cultural examination of monsters, identifying key markers of identity used to other monsters.<sup>19</sup> Over the course of the following decade, this approach, in which scholars analyze how monsters are constructed as inferior beings due to differences in these markers, became the dominant approach in monster theory.

In his 1990 *Philosophy of Horror*, Noël Carroll shifts the focus from the markers on the bodies and in the actions of monsters to the interactions of normative humans with them. Rejecting any definition of a monster based on its quiddity (what it is), he instead adopts affective criteria based on the emotional responses to it by characters in narratives and audiences reading them (how it is perceived).<sup>20</sup> It is not the inherent qualities of the being that make it monstrous but the response "we"—characters within a narrative and readers/viewers of these narratives—have to it that renders the creature a monster. Carroll is particularly interested in disgust, based in the monster's categorical impurity, and fear, brought about by danger to the individual or community.

In 1996, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's introduction to *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* provided a list of seven theses on

<sup>14</sup> Rudolf Wittkower, "Marvels of the East: A Study in the Historicism of Monsters," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 5 (1942): 159–97 at 197.

<sup>15</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

<sup>16</sup> Georges Canguilhem, "Monstrosity and the Monstrous," *Diogenes* 40 (1962): 27–42.

<sup>17</sup> Michel Foucault, *Abnormal*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Verso, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), and see selection in volume 1 of this collection.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror* (New York: Routledge, 1990), and see selection in volume 1 of this collection.

monsters, the purpose of which was to create a basis for using monsters to interpret and understand the cultures that produced them.<sup>21</sup> Though there are only seven, they cover an astonishing range: some explore the monster's body and its shattering of classification systems, and some speak to the cultural impact of a monster's very existence, but all shape the monster theory that comes after.

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

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

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

## Classic Readings on Monster Theory

Our first volume is intended to introduce students to the most important and influential modern theorists of the monstrous. We start with J.R.R. Tolkien's “*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*,” first published in *The Proceedings of the British Academy* in 1936, which says monsters merit serious scholarly consideration and are not an error or accident

or embarrassment when they appear in “serious” works of literature. The succeeding entries, covering approaches to monstrous images, monstrous texts, horror, abjection, or fear, build on the foundation laid in Tolkien's essay. Some important texts, however, do not focus on monsters at all: for instance, Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism*, the seminal text of postcolonialism, argues that the West identifies itself through a (false) vision of the East *created by the West*. For a number of reasons, Said's ideas overlap with and influence monster theory, and it is our hope that this selection of readings will provide a range of interpretive tools and strategies for students to use to grapple with the primary sources in the second volume—and everywhere else.

All of the selections collected here are presented as they originally appeared, unless specified by an editorial note in the selection's critical introduction. We have not regularized, expanded, or altered spellings or citation styles except in cases of clear errors. Any insertions or notes by volume editors are enclosed in brackets and attributed to “Eds.” We provide a brief introduction to each reading, setting the theorist and theory in context, and providing background and guiding questions. Cross-references to other works in this collection are noted with **underlined, bold** text. There are many other readings that we might have included (with unlimited resources, this volume would look very different), yet the set of readings here collected are among the most essential for any student entering the vibrant field of monster theory.

It is worth noting that some of these readings are very challenging. Some have rich and, at times, specialized vocabulary, bristly writing styles, and, most importantly, difficult concepts that ask the reader to reconsider how they have understood not only the monstrous, but also the norm defined through its difference with the monstrous. In every case, though, these readings will reward your efforts. Give them the time they need, and you will acquire a richer understanding of the vital nature of monsters—and of the humans who encounter them.

## Primary Sources on Monsters

Our second volume is intended to introduce students to some of the most influential and indicative monster narratives from the West. These texts contain numerous intersections, with many deliberately building upon the foundations laid by others. Together, they form a reasonably coherent set of materials, thereby allowing us to witness the consistent, multi-millennial strategies the West has articulated, weaponized, and deployed to exclude, disempower, and

<sup>21</sup> Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” and see selection in volume 1 of this collection.



dehumanize a range of groups and individuals within and without its porous boundaries. The readings in volume two are all primary sources, which means that they are all either original, creative works or accounts written at or near the time of the events they narrate.

## Destroy All Monsters: An Urgency

Deep within a large crowd, a young white man in a plain white t-shirt, with a blue bandana around his neck and a white particle mask askew on top of his head, holds a homemade sign on a pole.<sup>22</sup> It reads in red ink, darkened here and there with black, "DESTROY ALL MONSTERS." Above this slogan is the raised fist of Black Lives Matter, drawn in a range of colors and radiating bright orange lines. This photograph was taken on August 12, 2017 (the day before we drafted this essay) at the Unite the Right rally, which brought together neo-Nazis, white nationalists, white supremacists, the Ku Klux Klan, and other hate groups in Charlottesville, Virginia. This was purportedly the largest white supremacist rally in the United States in decades, though firm figures on attendance are difficult to obtain.

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

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

Surely they must, for if they do not, how could we?<sup>23</sup>

There are moments, though, when monsters seem particularly potent, prevalent, even necessary. By some measures, the world has never been more peaceful, and human life never more safe and secure.<sup>24</sup> And yet, this is not the experience most of us have. The news each day makes it seem that the world is on fire, that we are living in the most dangerous

of times. This is statistically untrue, vastly so; various prehistoric burial sites indicate that 20%, 30%, even 60% of deaths were due to interpersonal violence.<sup>25</sup> But since the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which killed perhaps 200,000 people in a matter of moments and gave birth to Godzilla and the rest of the *kaijū*<sup>26</sup>), we have lived with a different level of existential threat.

And now, as we write this introduction, the United States is in a state of tumult, a convulsion, a paroxysm, as white supremacist groups march through our streets bearing torches and shouting Nazi-era slogans of hate ("Blood and soil!" "Jews will not replace us!"<sup>27</sup>). The young man with the "DESTROY ALL MONSTERS" sign was one of the counter-protesters, one of the marchers who came to challenge and defy the torch-bearing mob. In hipster fashion, he seems to have taken his slogan from Ishirō Honda's somewhat obscure eighth sequel to *Godzilla*, released in 1968, in which the monsters from previous *kaijū* films (Godzilla, Rodan, Mothra, and others) attack cities through the world under the command of scientists who are, in turn, under mind control by hostile aliens.<sup>28</sup> This slogan, then, is a fitting response to the sense that American cities are being attacked as if by an outside force, yet *this is not an alien invasion*. These marchers are American citizens, and, despite the foreign origins of many of the symbols they carry, they are part of a long-standing American history of hate groups, and—whether individuals wish it or not—are a part of the identities of and systems that benefit all white Americans.<sup>29</sup>

**25** Max Roser, "Ethnographic and Archaeological Evidence on Violent Deaths," *Our World in Data* (2016) <<https://ourworldindata.org/ethnographic-and-archaeological-evidence-on-violent-deaths/>>.

**26** William Tsutsui, "Chapter 1: The Birth of Gōjira," in *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004), 13–42.

**27** Yair Rosenberg, "'Jews will not replace us': Why white supremacists go after Jews," *The Washington Post* (August 14, 2017) <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/08/14/jews-will-not-replace-us-why-white-supremacists-go-after-jews/>>.

**28** He might, though, have based it on the 1970s–1980s proto-punk band from Detroit of the same name.

**29** See, for example, "Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy" *Southern Poverty Law Center* (April 21, 2016) <<https://www.splcenter.org/20160421/whose-heritage-public-symbols-confederacy>>. See also Karl Steel, "Bad Heritage: The American Viking Fantasy, from the Nineteenth Century to Now," in *Nature, Culture, Ecologies: Nature in Transcultural Contexts*, ed. Gesa Mackenthun and Stephanie Wodianska (Münster: Waxmann, 2017).

**22** The image, by Reuters photographer Joshua Roberts, is captioned "A group of counter-protesters march against members of white nationalist protesters in Charlottesville, Virginia." It is available in Priscilla Alvarez, "A State of Emergency in Charlottesville," *The Atlantic* (August 12, 2017) <<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/protests-nationalists-charlottesville/536661/>>.

**23** Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 20.

**24** Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

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

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

We cannot destroy all monsters, much as we might sometimes wish to. We are all one another's monsters. This is because monsters are relative to the culture that produces them. In medieval Christian art and literature, demons are often dark-skinned; in medieval Islamic art and literature, demons are often white-skinned.<sup>30</sup> Nazis, as we have just seen, have become revenants (sometimes literally, at least

on film) and crept back out of the darkness. But seventy-odd years ago, the German Nazi propaganda newspaper *Der Stürmer* published grotesquely caricatured images of Jews literally consuming "good" Germans. This noxious imagery is still alive and kicking, and was on display in Charlottesville at the Unite the Right rally. Your monster may be our friend; our friend may be your monster. This does *not* mean that all such moves are morally, ethically, practically, or rhetorically interchangeable, however.

Reading the texts in this collection carefully should reveal problematic processes you see all around you. These processes may cause you harm, or you may be unintentionally perpetuating them and the harms they cause others. The ideology of the hate groups that the sign-holding counter-protester came out to defy might be summed up by the very same slogan he brandished, though they would consider others to be the "monsters": Jewish, Black, Hispanic, LGBTQIA, and differently abled people—and any others who do not fit their violently restrictive notions of human "purity." Assertions of monstrosity are not merely insults, but are fundamental denials of the humanity of human beings. Darren Wilson, the police officer who shot and killed Michael Brown, sparking the massive protests in Ferguson, Missouri, dehumanized his victim, saying during grand jury proceedings, "it looks like a demon."<sup>31</sup>

Of course, we have no doubt that we are on the right side of history. This is immaterial. If we give in to the impulse to destroy one another, we fall into the divisive trap that hate groups lay. To be clear, there is no equivalency whatsoever between those who declare that certain people have no right to live freely and peacefully—or to live at all—because of their race or religion or nationality or sexuality or gender identity, or any other basic element of their human identity, and those who declare that they, that *we*, that *all people* do have these fundamental and inalienable rights. Nevertheless, hate groups tap into something (monstrously) human: all the bombs and blood of the Allied Nations could never have destroyed the Nazis because their strategy of power through demonization was already a revenant, shambling through Columbus's governorship of Hispaniola, the Massacre at Wounded Knee, and the Kiev Pogrom of 1905. Nazism was certain to outlive Nazis as a fetid, festering, rotting corpse of an ideology. But as with Gerald's sympathetic werewolves,

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Geraldine Heng, "The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages I: Race Studies, Modernity, and the Middle Ages," and "The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages II: Locations of Medieval Race," *Literature Compass* 8/5 (2011): 258–74; 275–93; and Francesca Leoni, "On the Monstrous in the Islamic Visual Tradition," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Mittman with Peter Dendle (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 151–72.

<sup>31</sup> State of Missouri vs. Darren Wilson. Grand Jury Testimony, vol. 5 (16 September, 2014): 224–25. Also note that Wilson uses the pronoun "it" instead of "he," serving to further dehumanize Brown.

beneath the skin of the entirely unsympathetic Nazi zombies are yet more humans. Whatever we think about the ethics of people on opposing sides of conflicts, whether some might claim that there were "fine people" on both sides, the point is that there are *people* on both sides, and *we* are always and inevitably the real monsters of history.

In James Cameron's 1986 science-fiction/horror film *Aliens*, a group of marines, a corporate agent, and their guide Ripley—Sigourney Weaver in her most iconic role—find a young girl nicknamed Newt living in the ruins of a planetary terraforming colony decimated by the film franchise's eponymous monsters. Newt is understandably traumatized and catatonic, but eventually speaks. In a darkly parodic scene, Ripley tucks Newt in to bed, and the young child says "My mommy always said there were no monsters—no *real* ones, but there are." Ripley, serving in the place of her mother, responds as no parents ever do: "Yes, there are, aren't there?" The next scene, though, shows us who those *real* monsters are, when the corporate agent attempts to impregnate Newt with the alien's offspring so as to smuggle it back to earth as a superweapon. As Jeffrey Weinstock argues, "the ostensible monster in *Alien* and its various sequels is obviously the nightmarish double-mouthed extraterrestrial designed by H. R. Giger. Just as monstrous and more insidious, however, is the corporation," embodied in its agent, "Carter Burke (Paul Reiser at his most smarmy), a human .... The *Alien* films thus essentially have two monsters—the alien itself and the bigger monster, the monstrous corporation, that just as clearly feeds on the lives of the human characters."<sup>32</sup> Even in a film with a monster as unrelentingly terrifying as the Xenomorph—with its razor-sharp fangs, claws, eyeless "face," seemingly exposed vertebrae, acid for blood, and use of humans as living incubators for its deadly offspring—it is the humans who are the worst monsters.

One of the few consensus views throughout the texts collected in this volume is that it is not, in the end, horns or fangs or claws that make a being monstrous, but the purpose to which a being puts whatever tools and weapons it has. Ishirō Honda's *Destroy All Monsters*—spoiler alert!—has an ironic twist: it is the good old monsters, led by Godzilla, who in the end save humanity. They are scorned, feared, and attacked by the world's powers, but want only to return to

their peaceful island of Monsterland. The world needs its monsters, and its monster stories. This is the impetus for our collection. Whether the monsters are deadly enemies or unlikely saviours, their stories are essential to our understanding of the world, and our place within it.

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**32** Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, "Invisible Monsters: Vision, Horror, and Contemporary Culture," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman with Peter Dendle (London: Ashgate, 2012): 275–89 at 283.