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Imagining the Monstrous: a Journey from Abhorrence to Understanding

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For Issue Two, see below. For Issue One, click on this link.

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## INTRODUCTION

The studies in this journal present an overview of issues concerning alterity ranging from the conventional to the revisionist. Danièle Cybulskie's study of Len Wiseman's *Underworld* (2003) addresses vampire and werewolf folklore in the modern world while examining the connection to its Anglo-Saxon roots. Ryan Whibbs moves us from the abnormal to the exotic in his study of candy and cannibalism in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1971). This concept of consumption takes on monstrous proportions in Noah Salo's examination of *Terminator II* (1991) as we see the products of social experimentation consuming society itself. In Sue Ballam's essay on *Star Trek* (the original series 1966-1969), the consequences of social development into alien regions are markedly less dire as humankind's travels through space bring us into contact with monsters that are fundamentally benign. Science fiction like *Terminator II* or *Star Trek* assume that boundaries of space and time are there to be crossed: Danica Taylor's examination of *Wizard's First Rule* (1994) presents a fantasy world in which the integrity of borders separating one race from another must be enforced in order to preserve inherent definitions of the monstrous. In the final essay, Karen Walhout destabilizes the historical stereotype of hermaphroditism found in the *Liber Monstrorum* in her study of *Middlesex* (2003), where the sympathetic main character is marginalized by social expectation. These six essays trace the development of alterity from objectified predators and abnormalities to a re-envisioning of monsters as self-aware and self-determining Others through the shift in narrative perspective.

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SHEEP IN WOLVES' CLOTHING:  
THE SUBVERSION OF THE HEROIC OTHER IN LEN WISEMAN'S *UNDERWORLD*

Danièle Cybulskie  
Catharine Parr Traill College

One of the most important ways in which narrative speaks to audience is through empathy. The ability to empathize with a character is central to the enjoyment of a story, and to the understanding of its inherent messages or morals. In many Western stories, the difference between hero and villain is frequently flagged by the physical: the hero is human, the villain is not. Through these traditional folk and fairy tales, the audience is trained to automatically empathize with the hero or heroine, and not with the villain, simply by default of shared species.

However, not all stories follow the traditional form of human hero versus monstrous villain. From time immemorial human beings have reached out to the 'other,' seeking a sense of commonality with the beings that are feared, placing them at the heart of narrative. Modern narratives, such as Len Wiseman's film *Underworld*, are built with pride on the concept of the monstrous antihero, following the tradition of narratives such as *The Passion of St. Christopher*, and *Beowulf*. Yet time and time again, attempts to see the other as kindred fall short. Even when embracing him as hero, storytellers keep the nonhuman figure at a distance, somehow different enough that he is out of the audience's empathetic reach. *Underworld* is no exception.

*Underworld* centres on an ancient war between Vampires and Lycans (werewolves) which rages on unbeknownst to humans. At the onset of the film, the audience knows only that the war has been fought equally fiercely by both species. Gradually, it is revealed that the Lycans are seeking to end the war through the creation of a hybrid of the two species, linking them together permanently.<sup>1</sup> The narrator of the story is a Vampire, Selene, who must overcome her prejudice for the love of Michael, a human who has become a Lycan and whose blood is the key to hybridity. Though ostensibly a story about the power of love to conquer all obstacles, most notably racial prejudice, *Underworld* reveals prejudices of its own.

Both *Underworld* and the much-earlier *Beowulf* pit two supernatural beings against each other, blurring the humanity of both hero and villain in order to create a more equal conflict. The main characters of both stories are somewhere between human and monster. In *Beowulf*, neither Beowulf nor Grendel is physically described in detail, leaving much to the imagination. Beowulf is called 'leod'<sup>2</sup> and 'hilderince',<sup>3</sup> and his armour is often described, but his physical form is not addressed. In fact, of the two, Grendel has more features described which tie him to humanity than Beowulf does. Although Grendel has a horrible 'grape',<sup>4</sup> it is not too far-removed from a human's 'clawed' hand. Indeed, Grendel has a 'hond... / earm ond eaxe',<sup>5</sup> not a haunch, and is able to grab, implying opposable digits, which distances him from the animal world. Indeed the 'feondes fingras'<sup>6</sup> each have a 'stedenægl',<sup>7</sup> not a talon, and when

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<sup>1</sup> *Underworld*, Prod. Tom Rosenberg et al., Dir. Len Wiseman, Screen Gems and Lakeshore Entertainment, 2003. scene 20.

<sup>2</sup> 'man,' *Beowulf*, eds. Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998) 1.829.

<sup>3</sup> 'warrior,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, 1.1495.

<sup>4</sup> 'claw,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, 1.836.

<sup>5</sup> 'hand... / arm and shoulder,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, 11.834-835.

<sup>6</sup> 'enemy's fingers,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, 1.984

<sup>7</sup> 'firm nail,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, 1.985

Beowulf returns to Heorot with his Grendel's head, he is dragging it 'be feaxe,'<sup>8</sup> not by the fur. These cues which signal Grendel's common features with humankind make him more sympathetic as a character, while the lack of details surrounding Beowulf tend to make him less clearly human. As there is a supernatural element to Grendel, which shows through the narrator's references to him as a 'scynscaþa,'<sup>9</sup> so Beowulf is also not quite human in various ways. He is said to have 'þritiges / manna mægen-cræft on his mundgripe'<sup>10</sup> and is able to kill many dangerous creatures, such as the sea monsters which attack during his race with Breca.<sup>11</sup> He is also touched by the divine; he is several times referred to as being aided by God,<sup>12</sup> and carries armour given to his family by the old gods.<sup>13</sup> Both Beowulf and Grendel are somehow beyond human.

In *Underworld*, there is a similar leveling of two supernatural species to make them more equal. Following centuries of monster tradition, *Underworld's* Vampires and Lycans are both cannibals in that they both are creatures that were once human, and now feed on humans. However, the physical differences, so cleverly veiled in *Beowulf*, are ever-present in the visual narrative of *Underworld*. The Lycans are large, hairy, and able to change their shape at will, from human to werewolf. When in their wolf form they are closer to wolf than man, with long snouts, sharp claws, and big ears. They walk on hind legs, but can also choose to run on four. The Lycans are physically stronger than the Vampires, who consistently are the same size whether in human or Vampire form. The Vampires also follow tradition in that the main signifier of their species is two long, pointed fangs, which become much more pronounced when they are ready to fight. Traditionally, Vampires are immortals while the life-span of werewolves is not often addressed. In *Underworld*, both species are immortal<sup>14</sup> and able to heal quickly.

Interestingly, though both Grendel and the Lycans are given more of a reason to be involved in conflict than are their seemingly equal enemies, Beowulf and the Vampires are still more sympathetic to the audience. Grendel is said to have 'geþolode'<sup>15</sup> from the constant reveling which occurs when Heorot is built upon his land,<sup>16</sup> and this seems to be the instigation for his attacks upon the Scyldings. For the Lycans, once enslaved by the Vampires, it is the killing of a Lycan's (Vampire) wife as punishment for interbreeding which triggers the interracial conflict.<sup>17</sup> However, despite this violent act, the Vampires are shown to be less threatening, as they are less cannibalistic than the Lycans. Selene shows Michael a synthetic type of blood that they are developing<sup>18</sup> which, as one might imagine, will not only feed them, but will also be invaluable to humanity, eliminating the need for blood donors. Although Selene admits that this is mainly to generate funds, later in the film another Vampire alludes to rules which insist that Vampires drink the blood of livestock, not humans.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, Vampires find it difficult to conceive that Lycans would have any interest in a human being except for food.<sup>20</sup> Although we cannot trust a Vampire's opinion on the subject of Lycans, we do not see Lycans in search of an alternate food source. In fact, the Lycans seem barely able to restrain themselves from eating Michael, the sole human

<sup>8</sup> 'by the hair,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, l.1647.

<sup>9</sup> 'spectral foe,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, l.707.

<sup>10</sup> 'thirty / men's strength in his handgrip,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, ll.379-380

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, ll.559-569.

<sup>12</sup> e.g. Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, ll. 1553-1554.

<sup>13</sup> Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, l.455.

<sup>14</sup> Wiseman, *Underworld*. sc. 12.

<sup>15</sup> 'suffered,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, l.87.

<sup>16</sup> Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, ll.86-90.

<sup>17</sup> Wiseman, *Underworld*. sc. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Wiseman, *Underworld*. sc. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Wiseman, *Underworld*. sc. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Wiseman, *Underworld*. sc. 4.

being who can end their feud. When the Lycan chieftain encounters Michael, he gains a sample of his blood by biting him on the neck and drinking some of it, even though he knows this will result in Michael's transformation into a Lycan himself, against his will.<sup>21</sup> The Vampires' concern for human life when contrasted to the Lycans' hunger for human flesh ingratiates them in the minds of *Underworld*'s audience, the members of which are, inevitably, human beings. Similarly, Beowulf, though as much of a threat to non-humans as Grendel is to humans, is somehow less blameworthy, as, through killing, he saves large numbers of the human race. Although Grendel and his mother share a strong familial bond, Grendel's actions are not claimed to be on behalf of his species, as Beowulf's are.<sup>22</sup> Beowulf claims that through the killing of Grendel he will have 'leoda / willan geworhte',<sup>23</sup> and indeed Grendel's death is wished for by the people. Conversely, Grendel 'sibbe ne wolde',<sup>24</sup> even though it might have meant his own survival, and his mother wishes only 'sunu deoð wrecan'.<sup>25</sup> Although Grendel's family has been more wronged than has Beowulf personally, their killing is cast in a much more sinister light. Both Grendel and the Lycans are shown to be more blameworthy for their violence, portrayed as instigators who are more concerned with personal vengeance than the greater good.

Despite any attempts, successful or not, to bring Grendel and Beowulf together as near equals, and to give Grendel reasons behind his killing, the *Beowulf* poet is always aware of who the hero of the story is, and makes Beowulf's dominance over the 'other' both predictable and satisfying. From the beginning of the poem, Grendel is described as one of 'Caines cynne'<sup>26</sup> while Beowulf is described as 'æpele ond eacen'.<sup>27</sup> God's blessing is unfailingly bestowed upon Beowulf during his visit to Heorot, while Grendel is always 'godes andsacan'.<sup>28</sup> By adding the weight of divinity, the *Beowulf* poet makes it difficult for the audience to identify with Grendel, a being cursed by God. Also, though Grendel is brought closer to humanity, and Beowulf is pushed farther from it, Beowulf is undoubtedly a human being for all his gifts, and as such still personifies the audience's hope of humankind prevailing over the monsters which threaten it. Although the *Beowulf* poet brings Grendel close enough for sympathy or even pity, he does not make him human enough for the audience to wholly identify with him. Grendel is, from the beginning, the villain who must be destroyed by the hero: Beowulf.

This element of easily-identifiable hero omnipresent in *Beowulf* is conspicuously missing in *Underworld* in an effort to complicate the issue of hero and villain. Although the audience is eventually told of the Lycans' efforts to end the conflict, in order to prolong suspense the truth is not revealed right away, and, in the meantime, the Lycans are shown to be the lifelong enemies of both Selene and humanity. We are told that not only do the Lycans hunt human beings for food, but they are also responsible for the brutal murder of Selene's family, children and all.<sup>29</sup> As a result of this early introduction to Lycans as enemies, rather than as the altruistic saviours of both races, *Underworld*, like *The Passion of St. Christopher*, loses the altruism of its heroic characters by casting them in a prejudicial light.

<sup>21</sup> Wiseman, *Underworld*. sc. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Although Beowulf's true motives may be debatable, he claims to be acting for the greater good, and there is no such claim made by or on behalf of Grendel or his mother.

<sup>23</sup> 'the peoples' / wishes accomplished,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, ll.634-635.

<sup>24</sup> 'did not want peace,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, l.154.

<sup>25</sup> 'her son's death to avenge,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, l.1278.

<sup>26</sup> 'Cain's kin,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, l.107.

<sup>27</sup> 'noble and mighty,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, l.98.

<sup>28</sup> 'God's adversary,' Mitchell & Robinson, *Beowulf*, l.786.

<sup>29</sup> Wiseman, *Underworld*. sc. 14. Later in the film (scene 25), this is revealed to have been the work of a Vampire; however, the audience (like Selene) spends most of the film believing it is the work of Lycans.

The hagiography of a *cynocephalus*, *The Passion* tells of St. Christopher's conversion to Christianity, good works, and martyrdom. The narrators of three major versions of the story, in Latin and Old Irish, laud Christopher's efforts to convert a city and its leader to Christianity, but keep him at a distance, most notably through constant reminders of his racial alterity. Rather than emphasizing the ways in which St. Christopher is human, as the *Beowulf* poet does with Grendel, the narrators of *The Passion of St. Christopher* seem committed to pointing out his differences.

In each story, Christopher is described in a similar way to Pliny's *cynocephalus*, a 'carnivorous dog-headed man' with 'huge teeth.'<sup>30</sup> The narrator of BHL 1764 says that Christopher was 'from the land of man-eaters,'<sup>31</sup> and a servant of the king describes Christopher's appearance: 'His head was terrifying, like that of a dog. His hair was very long and gleamed like gold. His eyes were like the morning star, and his teeth like the tusks of a boar. Words are not sufficient to tell of his greatness.'<sup>32</sup> Christopher consistently has a 'terrible appearance'<sup>33</sup> which frightens all who look upon it, most notably startling the king out of his seat in all three versions of the story.<sup>34</sup>

Although Christopher's persecution is based on his Christian faith, and the potential he has to convert others to it, like the Lycans, his race is a dominant feature of his life, often commented upon before his actions. When Christopher is presented to him in BHL 1766, the king says, 'Dog-headed and evil troublemaker, do you not sacrifice to my great gods?'<sup>35</sup> confronting Christopher with his race before his lawlessness. Later, he repeats this phrase almost verbatim, replacing 'evil' with 'wicked,'<sup>36</sup> and goes on to call him '[w]icked beast,'<sup>37</sup> stripping Christopher not only of his grace, but, more importantly, of his humanity. In the Irish version, the king requests that the soldiers 'bring [Christopher's] head ... that [he] may see it'<sup>38</sup> as a curiosity, and when he meets Christopher, the king flatly tells him he is 'hideous.'<sup>39</sup> But it is not just the king who comments on Christopher's race; even those whom Christopher converts at first do not have 'the courage to go to him.'<sup>40</sup> The prostitutes who become his most fervent followers see his face and say to themselves, '[w]e shall die...if we see more.'<sup>41</sup> It seems to take as much courage to face Christopher as it does to convert.

Perhaps the most telling moments of Christopher's race overpowering his grace occur in BHL 1764. In this version, the narrator twice mentions that God 'loves the human race,'<sup>42</sup> leaving Christopher marginalized, if not as a member of a separate race, then as a deformed member of the human race. God

<sup>30</sup> John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races of Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981) p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> *The Passion of St. Christopher* (BHL 1764), *St. Christopher*, ed. David Woods, Dec. 2000, University College Cork, 14 Nov. 2005 <<http://www.ucc.ie/milmar/BHL1764.html>>. paragraph 1.

<sup>32</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1764, para 3.

<sup>33</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1764, para 3.

<sup>34</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1764, para 9; *The Passion of St. Christopher* (BHL 1766), *St. Christopher*, ed. David Woods, Dec. 2000, University College Cork, 14 Nov. 2005

<<http://www.ucc.ie/milmar/BHL1766.html>>. para 3; *Irish Passion of St. Christopher*, *St. Christopher*, trans. J. Fraser, ed. David Woods, Dec. 2000, University College Cork, 14 Nov. 2005 <<http://www.ucc.ie/milmar/chrsirish.html>>, para 9.

<sup>35</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1766, para 3.

<sup>36</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1766, para 10.

<sup>37</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1766, para 12.

<sup>38</sup> Woods, *Irish Passion*, para 3.

<sup>39</sup> Woods, *Irish Passion*, para 19.

<sup>40</sup> Woods, *Irish Passion*, para 5.

<sup>41</sup> Woods, *Irish Passion*, para 11.

<sup>42</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1764, paras. 2 & 26.

Himself, when calling Christopher to heaven, says to him ‘all [your brothers] wonder at you, and my army of angels desires to see you.’<sup>43</sup> If those who are considered ‘brothers’<sup>44</sup> of Christopher are in heaven for good deeds, as Christian doctrine suggests, it seems less likely that they are curious to see him for his works than for his face. After Christopher’s conversion and blessing from God, the narrator of this version mentions that his face ‘was unchanged and terrible.’<sup>45</sup> The fact that the narrator mentions the lack of change seems to imply that one should expect a change in appearance; that God’s blessing should show on the outside. It seems that Christopher’s appearance is not only distracting, but also interferes with his reception as a messenger from God, both for the characters involved as well as for the audience.

In the same way, *Underworld* constantly reminds its audience of how different the Lycans are from human beings, which interferes with their reception as the species working towards unity. As I mentioned, Vampires and Lycans look like human beings when they are not fighting. However, in a film which revolves around war the two species frequently *are* fighting, and must often undergo their respective changes to become monstrous and battle-ready. For the Lycans, this shift involves the gradual and gruesome distortion of facial features, revealing slimy, shiny skin, and views of the inner workings of the human-Lycan body, all of which is accompanied by much fierce roaring. None of this is particularly attractive or appealing. The change also forces them to remove, or rip out of, their clothing, and seems to render them incapable of speech, or communication through gesture, further distancing the Lycans from the human audience. Also, the Lycans are used visually the way that monsters are used in horror films, leaving audience sympathy to rest with the Vampires. Near the end of the film, for example, the Vampires storm the Lycan cave led by Selene in the search for Michael, and creep through the tunnels with the suspenseful anxiety of human victims in a horror film.<sup>46</sup> The Lycans, lying in wait, jump out of the dark to attack their victims accompanied by a purposefully startling soundtrack.

With the Lycans being visually (and aurally) cast as the ‘monster,’ the audience instinctively seeks out the victim, and its gaze is automatically directed to the Vampires. Not only does the visual casting of the Vampires as victims garner sympathy for the Vampires themselves, but this effect is heightened by the fact that, even when in battle, the Vampires look human. For the Vampires, the change to battle-readiness involves a simple shift in eye-colour from a natural human colour to an icy blue, as well as a lengthening of fangs. This does not seem to be a painful process, but rather a flexing of muscles, and takes much less time than the Lycan change. Their clothing and speech, vital ties to humanity, also remain intact. Because the Lycans are much larger than Vampires, they physically dominate them, making any encounter between the two seem somehow unfair, despite the Vampires’ superior weaponry.<sup>47</sup> All of these visual cues cast the Vampires as much less villainous and frightening. Also, the treatment of the Lycans as victimizers of the Vampires is especially potent, since, during Selene’s aforementioned search for Michael, not only are the Vampires invading the Lycans’ home, but the audience is aware at this point in the film that the Lycans are the race which is trying to end the violence. After the film has done its best to convince the audience that the Lycans are altruistic, their final appearance is as villainous. The placement of this particularly frightening view of the Lycans near the end of the film makes it difficult to remember that the Lycans are the peacemakers.

Despite the hopes of the filmmakers to make *Underworld*’s Lycans heroic in the eyes of the audience, by the time the truth is revealed, the damage has already been done. The Lycans are remembered more for their frightening aspect than for their altruism, much like St. Christopher is in his

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<sup>43</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1764, para 27.

<sup>44</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1764, para 27.

<sup>45</sup> Woods, *Passion* BHL 1764, para 3.

<sup>46</sup> Wiseman, *Underworld*. sc. 22.

<sup>47</sup> When in wolf form, Lycans fight with teeth and claws, while Vampires use guns both in human and in Vampire form.



*Passion*. Through constant reminders of the Lycans' alterity, and the casting of the narrator as a Vampire, the audience, like that of *Beowulf* easily identifies with the more human of the combatants. Again, the other, despite his best efforts, is left marginalized.

It seems that the early training of human beings to see non-humans as 'other' is deeply rooted in Western culture, to the point at which, even when hero and villain are blurred, instinct pulls us towards what we perceive to be the lesser of two evils: the one with a face like ours. Our empathetic response has been conditioned so that monsters will always be monsters, no matter what they do. Even after thousands of years and thousands of stories, human empathy seems only to extend to humans.

IN A MONSTER'S KITCHEN: FOOD IMAGES AS A MEASURE OF ALTERITY  
IN ANGLO-SAXON AND MODERN CULTURE

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*Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are*

-Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826)

Throughout literature, food has been one of the most revealing aspects of a character's personality. As the nineteenth century French gastronome Brillat-Savarin quite rightly noted above, one's diet does indeed reflect deeper elements of character. The richness gained from associating a character with a particular type of food was recognized equally in Anglo-Saxon literature as it is in modern film. The *Cotton Vitellius A. XV* manuscript (c. 1000 AD), and Mel Stuart's 1971 film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* both use food items as a measure of another's alterity. It is significant to note that, while so much is unknown about Grendel and his Mother, the *Beowulf* poet considered their diet to be one of the most important elements of their character to convey. The same can be said of characters in *The Wonders of the East* and the *Liber Monstrorum*. In *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, the entire world of Wonka's factory is separated from reality by candy. While there are differences in the use of food imagery in the modern and Anglo-Saxon periods, there are important similarities as well.

This research seeks to further explore commonalities and differences in the use of food imagery as a method of denoting alterity in *Cotton Vitellius A. XV* and *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. Following on the John Block Friedman's work on the topic, this research will explore the associations between characters and food items. A lucid description of the richness and versatility of medieval and modern food imagery will emerge.

To humans, one of the most bewildering aspects of alterity is the inability to explain what is being seen. When something is different, especially another race or group of people, one of the most prevalent ways to quantify the difference is by measuring it against familiar life structures. Writers of the Anglo-Saxon period did exactly that. When they were confronted with something they could not identify or explain they were forced to make implicit comparisons based on commonalities with their own culture. John Block Friedman noted the deeper uses of many common cultural elements in setting a distance between the perceived self and other.

Everyday cultural differences in such things as diet, speech, clothes, weapons, customs, and social organization were what truly set alien peoples apart from their observers in the

classical world, and the power of these cultural traits to mark a race as monsters persisted into the Middle Ages and beyond.<sup>48</sup>

Friedman notes diet as a key factor in differentiating 'us' from other.

Diet and food products are truly some of the most potent images with which to set a character. A primary reason for this is that food can say so much with such little effort. Again, Friedman notes,

A character in a postwar British novel of social class is defined partly by the fact that she uses 'sauce' on her food. A writer evokes the cultural milieu of his boyhood by describing a typical family dinner. The epithets 'frog' for a Frenchman or 'kraut' for German identify whole nations with a food known to be eaten there. Ants, sheep's eyes, wild game, wheat germ, pork - all place a distance between the people who eat them and the people who do not.<sup>49</sup>

These perspectives can be conveyed simply with the mention of a food product. However, there can be some distance between those who are perceived as other, and the food they eat. For example, not every Frenchman eats frog's legs. Not every German eats sauerkraut. This is especially important to note later in this essay. Willy Wonka's Oompa-Loompas are never observed eating a single thing. However, their entire existence centers on chocolate and candy production. There is a direct connection between Oompa-Loompas and chocolate since they do refine and produce it, however, they still do not consume anything during the film. Whether a character eats a food product or not, the food associated with the character can be one of the most important and telling social clues available to readers and viewers.

While frogs, sauerkraut, and chocolate are all familiar to the modern reader, one food group, common among Anglo-Saxon monsters, is often overlooked: human flesh. Taboo surrounding cannibalism has existed in the majority of human cultures. While there are some examples of institutionalized cannibalism, for the most part the world's humans prefer not to eat each other.<sup>50</sup> Just as most modern humans consider cannibalism with revolt, so too did Anglo-Saxons. For them, the act of eating another human was not only socially barbaric, it went against the very core of medieval Christianity. Cannibalism was an especially heinous crime since it annihilated the body and prevented the victim from being able to rise again on judgement day. Yes, Anglo-Saxon Christians did consume the flesh of their saviour in the form of bread at the Eucharist. However, Jesus was more than simply a man; he was the 'spirit of God' and the 'lamb of God,' both of which are much easier to swallow, so to speak.

Friedman notes that Anglo-Saxons understood cannibalism in the context of the Biblical creation story. Cain, as the murderous son of Adam and Eve, was often portrayed in Anglo-Saxon sources in a state of squalor, surrounded by the remnants of Abel, consuming each morsel of his brother.<sup>51</sup> In order to quantify and understand cannibalism amongst unknown races, Anglo-Saxons considered it to be the

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<sup>48</sup> John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1981), pp. 26.

<sup>49</sup> Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>50</sup> For examples of long-standing, institutionalized cannibalism see other works located in: Paula Brown and Donald Tuzin, *The Ethnography of Cannibalism*, ed. Paula Brown and Donald Tuzin (Washington: Society for Psychological Anthropology, 1983).

<sup>51</sup> Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, pp. 95.

product of Cain's sin.<sup>52</sup> This sin earned his monstrous descendants a life of similar barbarity.

The *Beowulf* poet names Grendel and his mother as being descendants of Cain specifically, and leads the reader to assume that their cannibalistic lifestyle is a result of their barbaric ancestry.<sup>53</sup> As mentioned previously, one of the most revealing clues given to the reader about Grendel and his Mother is what they ate. When Beowulf seeks to enter Hrothgar's court for the first time, he notes:

*Wen' ic þæt he wille                      gifhe wealdan mot*  
*in þæm guðsele                      Geotena leode*  
*etan unforhte,                      swa he oft dyde,*  
*mægen hreðmanna.      Na þu minne þearft*  
*hafalan hydan      ac he me habban wile*  
*dreore fahne      gif mec deað nimeð,*  
*byreð blodig wæl,      byrgean þenceð,*  
*eteð angenga      unmunlice ...<sup>54</sup>*

It is not the fact that Grendel will simply kill the Geatish people that is most appalling to Beowulf. Rather, the manner in which Grendel will 'etan unforhte'<sup>55</sup> the entire nation. He will leave no trace of Hrothgar's people – their bodies will be consumed whole and their kingdom destroyed. The poet notes later, when Grendel has broached Herot's 'muban'<sup>56</sup> he saw Hrothgar's men sleeping on the ground and 'him alumpen wæs / wistfylle wen.'<sup>57</sup> The most horrific aspect of Grendel's ferocity seems to emanate not from the fact that he eats people; but rather that he eats them with relish and delight – just as anyone at a lavish feast would dine. This same 'feasting' imagery is used on Grendel's mother.

Like Grendel, his Mother is depicted as a man-eater also. Grendel's Mother approaches Heorot at night, searching to avenge her son's death. She succeeds in taking one of Hrothgar's best-loved thanes, Æschere. When Hrothgar is trying to account for the brutality of Grendel's Mother's attack, he notes, 'ic ne wat hwæper / atol æse wlanc eftsiðas teah, / fylle gefægmod.'<sup>58</sup> Much like her son, Grendel's Mother's affinity to human flesh is compared to a banquet feast. Again, this grizzly feast of human cadavers is made all the more so because of the enjoyment. It is the inhumanity of this enjoyment of human flesh which really sets the Grendel clan apart.

<sup>52</sup> Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, pp. 95.

<sup>53</sup> Bruce Mitchell and Fred Robinson, ed., *Beowulf: An Edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), ll. 1258b-1266b, *Grendles modor, / ides, aglæcwif, yrmþe gemunde, / se þe wæteregeas unian scolde, / cealde streamas, siþðan Cain wearð / to ecgbanan angan breþer, / fæderenmæge; he þa fag gewat, / morþre gemearcod, mandream fleon, / westen warode. þanon woc fela / geosceaftgasta; wæs þara Grendel sum*; Grendel's mother, the terrible-woman, recalled her wretchedness, that one who inhabited dreadful waters and cold streams, since Cain killed at sword point his only brother, his father's people; he left quickly, murder-marked, he fled mankind, and abided in wastelands. Many terrible creatures awoke from him [Cain], Grendel being amongst them.

<sup>54</sup> ll. 442-449 'If allowed to win, I expect he will eat without fear the Geatish nation in their warrior's hall, as he has done often to many glorious warriors. You will not cover my head, but he will have me – gory and hostile – if my death should come to pass and he bear my bloody corpse away, that lone-walker, tasting and eating without remorse.'

<sup>55</sup> ll. 444a, 'consume without fear.'

<sup>56</sup> ll. 724a, 'mouth.'

<sup>57</sup> ll. 733b-734a, 'he wished himself to have come upon a lavish feast.'

<sup>58</sup> ll. 1331b-1333a, 'I do not know where / that terrible, exulting carrion returned / making glad [on her desire to] feast.'

These food-related clues offer an incredibly rich image of monsters whose overall visual appearance remain a complete mystery. The physical appearance of Grendel or his Mother is never vividly described. What is known, the fact that they savour the taste of human flesh, is strong enough to conjure a vivid image in the reader's mind. What do Grendel and his Mother look like? To the poet and readers of the *Beowulf* poem, they look like cannibals. They are essentially formless human-eaters: 'wælgæst wæfre'<sup>59</sup> who stalk the earth in search of their prey. Grendel and his Mother truly are defined by what they eat, rather than how they look.

While *Beowulf* poet avoided visual descriptions of certain characters, the same cannot be said of *The Wonders of the East*.<sup>60</sup> Food and visual imagery projected on to specific characters, told Anglo-Saxons much about their character. Like the cannibals of *Beowulf*, monsters who ate humans were among the most horrific and barbaric 'wonders' recorded.

*Begeondan Brixonte ðære ea, east ðanon, beoð men acende lange 7 micle, þa habbað fet 7 sceancan twelf fota lange, sidan mid breostum seofan fota lange. Hi beoð sweartes hiwes 7 hi syndan Hostes nemde. Cuðlice swa hwylcne mann swa hi gefoð, þonne fretað hi hine.*<sup>61</sup>

These 'Hostes',<sup>62</sup> are among the most barbaric figures in *The Wonders of the East*. An eleventh century edition of this manuscript even provided a picture of these beasts (See Appendix 1). The unfortunate human victim, dwarfed in size by the gigantic beast clutching on to him, wearily looks out to the viewer as the *Hostis* enjoys the first bites of his human feast. Everything about this picture relates the inhumanity of a beast consuming a human: the forlorn look on the human's face, the beastly proportions of the monster, the strange land in the background. Each clue in this painting suggests everything about cannibals is very un-human.

So far, cannibalism has been explored in its Anglo-Saxon context. However, these were not the only food-related images recognized in Old English literature. While cannibal imagery essentially conveyed fear, food was also used in *The Wonders of the East* to denote less abrasive forms of alterity. The lengthy sixth entry in *The Wonders of the East* contains a reference to snakes who guard their hoard of pepper. The author notes that when people wish to harvest the pepper, they must set the entire area on fire in order to disperse the snakes 'forðan se pipor byð sweart.'<sup>63</sup> The pepper and the snakes act to enforce a certain mystique about each other. Spices have often been imbued with mystical attributes throughout history. Many cultures have revered them for their healing and digestive qualities. The fact that snakes guard it and that it is difficult to harvest adds to this air of mystery. The pepper is, quite literally, harvested from a world of alterity: a world of snake-guards and exotic spices.

The eighth entry in *The Wonders of the East* notes the existence of a certain race of 'doubtful men' or 'homodubii' who are noted to 'hreawan fisceon hi libbað 7 þa etað.'<sup>64</sup> These men are not overly

<sup>59</sup> ll. 1331a, 'restless death-spirits.'

<sup>60</sup> Anon., "Wonders of the East," *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript* (Toronto: University of Toronto P, 1995), pp. 185-203.

<sup>61</sup> Wonders #14, 'Beyond the Brixonte river, East from there, are men who are born great and tall, they have twelve foot long feet and shanks, and chests which are seven feet long. They are black in colour and they are known as *Hostes* [or enemy]. Just as certainly as they seize a man, so too do they devour him.'

<sup>62</sup> Latin: enemies.

<sup>63</sup> Wonders #6, 'this is why pepper is black.'

<sup>64</sup> Wonders #8, 'eat raw fish and live from them.'

terrible – their most notable attribute is that they eat raw fish. Certainly this would have been considered somewhat barbaric, however, *homodubii* are relatively mild-mannered compared to some of the creatures of *The Wonders of the East*. They were, nevertheless, defined and set apart by the type of food they ate. To Anglo-Saxons, eating raw fish was obviously remarkable, and by extension, different. Despite their close resemblance to humans in every other aspect, *homodubii* were undoubtedly marked as ‘other’ from an Anglo-Saxon perspective.

The author of *The Wonders of the East* used food imagery effectively in order to mark certain groups of people as ‘other.’ They included the obvious example of cannibalism, which by its very nature sets practitioners in opposition to Anglo-Saxon mores. However, food items defined serpents and men alike. Pepper was produced in a seemingly alien environment. *Homodubii* were almost human, but not civilized enough to eat cooked meat. Each of these aspects, whether it was cannibalism or more mainstream food items like pepper or fish, were meant as a measure of social proximity. The Anglo-Saxons were noting these attributes as a measure of how similar these cultures or lands were to their own norms. Grendel and his Mother were in diametric opposition to Anglo-Saxon customs because of their habit of eating humans. So too were the *Hostes* of *The Wonders of the East* for the exact same reason. Paula Brown and Donald Tuzin, in the preface to their collection of essays entitled *The Ethnography of Cannibalism* note that cannibalism is revered with awe because of its ‘mythic and ritual implications, and its connections with witchcraft and sorcery beliefs and with the power of its flesh-and-blood substance.’<sup>65</sup> Cannibalism is symbolic on many levels. Anglo-Saxon authors recognized this. They used a variety of food-related clues in order to set characters, especially ones of which little was known, into context with their own culture. While these unknown peoples did not necessarily have to eat the food they were associated with, as seen with the pepper-guarding snakes, they were defined by the food with which they were associated.

The characters in Mel Stuart’s 1971 film, *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*, are similarly defined by their proximity to chocolate and candy. The Wonka empire is built on a food item: candy. The film is set in a rather generic, British-looking city. Charlie, the son of an impoverished and bed-ridden family, finds a golden ticket wrapped in a Wonka chocolate bar. The ticket, one of a select few, gained Charlie a tour of Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory. The narrative notes that these lucky ticket holders would be the first outsiders to see the chocolate factory in many years. Once inside, Wonka’s guests notice they have stepped into another world: Wonka is eccentric, the factory is staffed with a race of men known as Oompa-Loompas, there are beautiful gardens and rivers made from candy, and strange contraptions with every bell and whistle imaginable churn out the most delicious candies. Every aspect of Wonka’s factory is unique. It is literally another world. Within the factory an entire ecosystem has developed making it self-sufficient and able to isolate itself from the rest of the world. The movie ends with Charlie giving his everlasting gobstopper back to Wonka, and because of this action, Wonka announces that Charlie has won ownership of the factory.

While it is never made clear whether any of the inhabitants of this empire actually eat any of the candy they produce, the entire world they live in is clearly defined and set apart by candy. Much like the food related clues used to indicate a measure of alterity in Anglo-Saxon sources, the chocolate and sweets of the Wonka factory are indicative of separation from the outside world.

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<sup>65</sup> Paula Brown and Donald Tuzin, ‘Editor’s Preface,’ *The Ethnography of Cannibalism*, ed. Paula Brown and Donald Tuzin (Washington: Society for Psychological Anthropology, 1983), pp. 1-5. Quote taken from page 3.

One of the clearest uses of food as a method of indicating alterity is found in the relationship of Oompa-Loompas to the candy that they create. Willy Wonka notes at the beginning of the movie that he rescued the Oompa-Loompas from a place called Lumpa Land, where they had been stalked by ‘Horn Swagglers, Rotten Vermicious Kinids, and Swangdoodles.’<sup>66</sup> While the movie does not say this specifically, In Roald Dhal’s original 1964 version of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* the Oompa-Loompas were noted to actually be pygmies from ‘...the very deepest and darkest part of the African jungle where no white man had been before.’<sup>67</sup> These are the exact same people identified in the *Liber Monstrorum*: ‘And it is said that a certain unseen race of people are born ... who are one cubit in height ... And the Greeks call them Pigmies, from [the Greek word for] ‘cubit’.’<sup>68</sup> Pigmies were seen to be ‘other’ by the Anglo-Saxons to the point that they included them in books of monsters. Apparently they were also perceived by modern audiences as other. Dhal was forced to change pygmies to Oompa-Loompas because of the negative connotations enslaved pygmies could have in relation to African Americans.<sup>69</sup> Importantly, projecting this image on to a group of people had the power to ‘other’ today just as it did in Anglo-Saxon England.

The framing and blocking of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* very firmly set Oompa-Loompas apart. One of the most memorable scenes of the movie is Charlie and the other winner’s entry into the first major room of the factory. Before them unfolds a large open atrium filled with grass, plants, and a river all made of chocolate and candy. Beyond the chocolate river, separated in their own area of the room are the Oompa-Loompas. When the unfortunate Augustus Gloop, another of the contest winners, gets too close to the chocolate river – and ultimately too close to the domain of the Oompa-Loompas - he falls in and becomes lodged in a large pipe. The message is clear: do not cross the border between humans and Oompa-Loompas. The Oompa-Loompas never talk to the contest winners, and only very rarely to Willy Wonka or amongst themselves. They are all the same size, wear the same clothes, have the same green hair. They are very much a separate race, but they are defined, and separated from the world, by the candy they produce. The only reason they are known is because they produce vast quantities of chocolate. They are very much defined by the food which makes them; both on a superficial level, and at a deeper level.

In Susan Terrio’s sociological survey of the French chocolate industry, entitled *Crafting the Culture and History of French Chocolate*, she comments on the deeper meanings of chocolate. While her comments are primarily aimed toward the French, some elements can be applied generally. She notes that chocolate has always retained an element of exoticism.

This exoticized history of French chocolate highlights the process whereby an unruly substance that served as a bitter, spicy drink to Aztec nobles at Montezuma II’s court was ‘tamed’ and made appetizing to the delicate, ‘civilized’ palates of European aristocrats. Chocolatiers celebrate the transformation from raw to cooked and also promote chocolate as a substance that fuses nature and culture ... It is domesticated yet remains inextricably

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<sup>66</sup> *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, dir. Mel Stuart, perf. Gene Wilder, Peter Ostrum, et al., Warner Brothers, 1971.

<sup>67</sup> Jeremy Treglown, *Roald Dahl: A Biography*, January 8, 2006, <<http://www.roalddahlfans.com/books/charoompa.php>>.

<sup>68</sup> Anon., “Liber Monstrorum,” *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript* (Toronto: University of Toronto P, 1995), pp. 255-317. Quote taken from I.23.

<sup>69</sup> It should be kept in mind that this was in the wake of the American civil rights movement.

linked to the consuming habits of the elites redefined as both cultured and hedonistic.<sup>70</sup>

It is difficult to summarize the cultural significance of European chocolate as well as Terrio. It is true that Europeans were eager to tame chocolate into something which could convey both European style and their eclectic taste. The rich, highly refined version of chocolate popularised to the rest of the world by Europeans, was very much a tamed version of its ancient South American counterpart. As noted in the previous paragraph, Oompa-Loompas were defined by this tamed and refined chocolate. Chocolate, the very aspect of their life which separated them from ‘normal’ people, also refined and tamed them. The *Liber Monstrorum* noted that Pigmies were hostile.<sup>71</sup> Willy Wonka’s Pigmies-turned-Oompa-Loompas were not hostile. They dressed in western clothes, had western-style haircuts, and lived in a refined world of candy. They even saved Augustus Gloop from the chocolate pipe. They were noble at heart. These modern monsters who worked at refining chocolate were consequently refined by the very chocolate-loving culture which surrounded them.

The Oompa-Loompas who inhabit Willy Wonka’s chocolate factory are one of the clearest modern examples of a food item delineating cultural alterity. Originally they were very much different. Anglo-Saxons and modern audiences alike would have been familiar with Pigmies. While Rhold Dhal eventually changed this, Oompa-Loompas nevertheless remained a visually different group. As well, their positioning and framing in the movie separated them from what was perceived to be ‘normal’: the world of the contest winners. The chocolate river, and the gates of the chocolate factory itself separated Oompa-Loompas from the world of ‘normalcy’. Not only did Oompa-Loompas work at refining chocolate, but their battle-hardened, ‘hostile’ nature seemed to have been refined by the very culture that desired the chocolate which they produced.

Food is one of the richest, most poignant social clues. Brillat-Savarin’s quip ‘Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are’ is time tested. The faceless, formless cannibals of Beowulf are defined more by what they eat than by their grizzly appearance. They are cannibals. The raw fish eaters, cannibals, and pepper-snakes of the *The Wonders of the East* are again defined by what they eat: of the few precious clues known by the reader, a food closely associated with them is one of the most important clues. The Oompa-Loompas of *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* not only produce candy, but were subject to the refinement which they themselves subjected chocolate to.

It can be argued that food items appearing in these sources are nothing more than illustrative facts. To an extent this is true. However, the way in which food is able to be illustrative is through the intimate relationship each human has with it. Eating is one of the most regular and universal human habits. By linking a character or a situation with a known food item, one is able to judge the proximity of one culture to the other. Notice that food items mentioned are never unknown to the observer: pepper, raw fish, chocolate, are all known elements of diet. The native foods of the characters in *The Wonders of the East* and the *Liber Monstrorum*, uncommon to Europeans, are never mentioned. Unknown ingredients would have created an uncertain measure of alterity. Instead, by mentioning shared food items, modern and Anglo-Saxon authors were able to create a vivid, specific measure of alterity between themselves and the unknown.

#### HUMAN MONSTROSITY IN *TERMINATOR II*, *BEOWULF* AND THE *PASSION OF ST CHRISTOPHER*

<sup>70</sup> Susan J. Terrio, *Crafting the Culture and History of French Chocolate* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 273.

<sup>71</sup> Anon., *Liber Monstrorum* I.23.

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Humanity's perpetual fascination with alterity and monstrosity is notable in various media from antiquity to modern times. Many contemporary fictitious monsters have either direct or indirect origins in monsters of the past. Humanoid monsters are especially disturbing. Early monsters such as giants, vampires and cynocephali closely resemble humans and have high intelligence. One famous modern monster is the Terminator, introduced by James Cameron's film series. In this trilogy the Terminator is an intelligent humanoid machine that even has flesh. The Terminator is sent from the future to assassinate important resistance.<sup>72</sup>

Humanoid monsters are frightening because their actions and intelligence resembles ours. We see monstrosity in them, but we can also see it in ourselves. The Terminator is terrifying because it is a man-made monster designed to know everything about human anatomy to make it a better assassin. The Terminator also has the ability to develop human emotions and feelings. The closer a monster resembles humanity, the more ambiguous its monstrosity becomes.

The idea of a humanoid monster that can be reluctantly empathized with can be traced back to various source texts. For example, Grendel in the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf* is a bloodthirsty savage, however upon a close reading of the poem he appears more human. Grendel's mother as well can be humanized as she seeks to avenge the death of her son. The *Beowulf* poet makes it clear that the definition of monstrous depends on whose eyes we are looking through. Saint Christopher from the *Passion of Saint Christopher* legend is another historical character that is an indirect source for the monstrosity of the Terminator. Saint Christopher is of the cannibalistic dog-headed race, the Cynocephali, yet he becomes a Christian and then desires to save people's souls rather than to eat their bodies.

Each of these beings can be defined as monstrous by human classification: they are all from a foreign land, possess a frightening appearance and strength, and under natural circumstances systematically seek out humans to destroy. However, each character in the end is less than monstrous. In these sources monstrosity is not defined by origin, by physical appearance or by reputation, but instead by the actions of the individual. In that case, the humans that eventually destroy them are the true monsters, and admitting our own monstrosity is the most frightening aspect of these stories.

Monsters are often foreign creatures. Their foreignness helps to define their monstrosity, because "they" are from "out there." The Terminator is from a post apocalyptic world in the year 2023 when the terminators have killed most humans in a nuclear war. Oil fires on the horizon and red clouds are the only light. The land is barren, with old cars and skeletons lining the streets. The screenplay by James Cameron describes the horizon as "a landscape in Hell."<sup>73</sup> Humans created the terminators and all the technology responsible for this new world. Though the terminators are foreign to the human characters in the films, the humans are much closer to living in this future world than they think.

The dark landscape parallels with older sources. When *Beowulf* first mentions Grendel, the poet writes:

*wæs se grimma gæst    Grendel haten  
mære mearcstapa    se þe moras heold  
fen ond fæsten,    fifelcynnes eard*

<sup>72</sup> For a synopsis of the plot of the film *Terminator II: Judgment Day* please see the appendix.

<sup>73</sup> James Cameron and William Wisher, William. *Terminator II: Judgment Day Revised Final Shooting Script*. Sci-Fi Scripts < <http://www.scifiscripts.com/scripts/t2.txt>>.



*wonsæli wer weardode hwile*<sup>74</sup>

Grendel lives on the boundaries of the marshes, in an environment that is inhospitable to humans. This land is associated with evil and it is unpleasant to the Geats. However, the hall is on the border of the marshes, imposing on Grendel's territory:

*Ða se ellengæst earforðlice  
þrage gepolode se þe in þystrum bad  
þæt he dogora gehwam dream gehyrde  
hludne in healle; þær wæs hearpan sweg*<sup>75</sup>

Grendel hates the noise coming from Hrothgar's hall that destroys his solitude. Like the terminators strive to kill the last remnants of humans in the new world, the loud drunken festivities of Hrothgar's men are partial motivation for Grendel to attack. Effectually, Hrothgar brings the attack upon himself by deciding to build their hall so close to Grendel's territory. The humans in the *Terminator* trilogy also cause their own destruction by continually developing weapons and more powerful machines. Grendel is not the only foreign character however, the hero Beowulf is also from a distant land and comes to help Hrothgar defeat Grendel,

*Het him yðlidan  
godne gegyrwan, cwæð, he guðcýning  
ofer swanrade secean wolde  
mærne þeoden þa him wæs manna þearf.*<sup>76</sup>

Interestingly, all the major fighting in Beowulf is between different foreign characters with Hrothgar and his men stuck in the middle.

Saint Christopher is also from a foreign land, "the land of the man-eaters,"<sup>77</sup> but he does not stay in this land. After he converts to Christianity he is called to enter the heathen city to save its people from hell. This city is as foreign to Christopher as his land is to the inhabitants of the city. Christopher expects persecution because the king of the city is known for hating Christians, and Christopher is eventually martyred. Christopher is also a man-made monster, the King has Christopher executed because he comes to the city preaching a foreign religion. However, if Christopher had not been converted he would not have ventured to the city to preach in the first place.

The city is also foreign to the original readers of the legend. The Passion of Saint Christopher was a religious lesson put into the form of an interesting story, and the city full of heathen worship is just as foreign to the readers as the "land of the man-eaters." The city is also full of "man-eaters" in a way, as the king of the city has "sent forth an edict ... that all who worshipped God should taste the unclean food

<sup>74</sup> *Beowulf: An Edition*, ed. Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson. Malden, United States: Blackwell, 2004. Original translation: 'That grim spirit was named Grendel. He was a mighty boundary-stepper who held the moors and marshes as a stronghold, in the realm of the giants that miserable man dwelled a while' (ll. 102-104).

<sup>75</sup> Then the bold spirit wretchedly suffered for a time. He lived in darkness and everyday he heard the enjoyment and happy songs coming from the hall. (ll. 86-9).

<sup>76</sup> He himself prepared a good ship, said; he desired to seek the war-king over the swan's riding, the renowned king that was in need (ll 198b-201).

<sup>77</sup> David Woods, "Saint Christopher," *The Cult of Saint Christopher*, 18 September 1999, University College Cork, 15 October 2005, < <http://www.ucc.ie/milmart/Christopher.html#LKS>>.

of idolatry.”<sup>78</sup> A Christian wrote this document of *The Passion of Saint Christopher* and the “unclean food” is a euphemism for the worship of pagan gods. Anyone who does not want to worship these gods is killed, including Saint Christopher. Each of these characters are from inhospitable landscapes, however the human characters are equally foreign, so foreignness alone cannot define monstrosity. Another traditional definition of monstrosity is physical appearance and strength. This is the most immediately frightening aspect of a monster.

Humans are naturally xenophobic and assume that other creatures and people are dangerous. The terminator machine is disturbing to view. It looks like a human skeleton that is made of nearly indestructible metal. In the opening scenes of *Terminator II* James Cameron describes a terminator’s “glowing red eyes compassionlessly sweep[ing] the dead terrain, hunting.”<sup>79</sup> The Terminator also has super-human strength and endurance. However, these dangerous traits are hidden by real human flesh. The flesh was originally added to the Terminator’s design to hide its true identity, but it is also symbolic of the machine’s ability to become more human. At one point the Terminator tells John, “My CPU is a neural-net processor... a learning computer. But Skynet presets the switch to “read-only” when we are sent out alone.”<sup>80</sup> Skynet does not want the terminators to learn new things and possibly feel compassion for their targets. After learning this John reprograms the terminator so he can feel human emotion.

The monstrosity of the Terminator’s strength and appearance is further undermined in the story. The Terminator’s main purpose is to destroy human life, however as a machine it is amoral and can be reprogrammed for other functions. When the young John Connor asks who sent the Terminator back in time to protect him instead of killing him, the Terminator replies, “You [sent me]. Thirty years from now you reprogrammed me to be your protector here, in this time.”<sup>81</sup> The Terminator’s program is reversed, and instead of being a frightening monster, he is a protector.

There are not any descriptions of the physical appearances of Grendel and his mother in *Beowulf*. They are always related to darkness, and by this method the poet establishes that they could be lurking in any dark corner and the darkness becomes emblematic of the Grendelkin. It is not their appearance but their physical strength that is described. Grendel’s strength is so well known that the “*Monig... swiðferhðum*”<sup>82</sup> men fear him. Entering the hall for the second time, Grendel easily breaks the fortified door with just the touch of his hand:

*Duru sona onarn  
fyrbendum fæst syþðan he hire folmum onhran*<sup>83</sup>

Immediately after this Grendel finds a man to eat, and rips him apart easily with his bare hands:

*Ne þæt se aglæca yldan þohte  
ac he gefeng hraðe forman siðe  
slæpendne rinc, slat unwearnum,  
bat banlocan, blod edrum dranc,*

<sup>78</sup> Woods, David.

<sup>79</sup> *Sci-fi Scripts* March 19 2006, <<http://www.scifiscripts.com/scripts/t2.txt>>.

<sup>80</sup> *Sci-fi Scripts* March 19 2006, <<http://www.scifiscripts.com/scripts/t2.txt>>.

<sup>81</sup> *Sci-fi Scripts* March 19 2006, <<http://www.scifiscripts.com/scripts/t2.txt>>.

<sup>82</sup> many... strong- minded (l. 171) *Beowulf*, trans. R.M. Liuzza. Peterborough, Canada: Broadview, 2000. Liuzza’s translation is “strong men.”

<sup>83</sup> The Door of fire-forged bars immediately sprang open when he touched it with the palm of his hand. (ll. 721b-722).

*synsnædum swealh, sona hæfde  
unlyfigendes eal gefeormod,  
fet ond folma.<sup>84</sup>*

Grendel's mother also has fearsome strength. Her skin is strong and almost indestructible, like the Terminator:

*Ða se gist onfand  
þæt se beadoleoma bitan nolde,  
aldre sceþðan ac seo ecg geswac  
ðeodne æt þearfe; ðolode ær fela  
hondgemota, helm oft gescær  
fæges fyrghrægl<sup>85</sup>*

When Beowulf fights her in her hall he brings along a powerful sword, but it fails to hurt her and Beowulf no longer uses that sword.

Monstrosity is uncertain when Beowulf the protector acts in a monstrous way. In the fight scene between Beowulf and Grendel the text moves into third person pronouns so that the two characters become virtually indistinguishable in the dark. This technique establishes that both characters are acting in a monstrous way:

*Forð near ætstop,  
nam þa mid handa higeþihtigne  
rinc on ræste, him ræhte ongear  
feond mid folme; he onfeng hraþe  
inwitþancum ond wið earm gesæt.<sup>86</sup>*

Later on, after killing Grendel's mother Beowulf finds Grendel's dead body and purposely desecrates it to show his victory:

*He him þæs lean forgeald  
reþe cempa to ðæs þe he on ræste geseah  
guðwerigne Grendel licgan  
aldorleasne swa him ær gescod  
hild æt Heorote – hra wide sprong  
syþðan he æfter deaðe drepe þrowade*

<sup>84</sup> Not that the monster wanted to delay, but he quickly grabbed at once a sleeping man and unrestrainedly tore him open, biting his bone-locks and drinking the blood from his veins. He swallowed the sinful morsels and quickly had devoured the dead man, from his feet to his hands. (ll. 739-745a).

<sup>85</sup> Then the guest found that the battle-sword would not bite, or deliver a deathblow. Its edge failed the prince in need, though it had before endured much hand-to-hand battle, often cleaving helmets and cutting through coats of mail. (ll. 1522b-1527a).

<sup>86</sup> He then advanced forth, taken by the hand the strong-hearted man in rest, the man in the resting place against his enemy with the hand he took quickly with vile intention and sat upon his arm. (ll. 745b-49). This translation is purposely clumsy and literal to show the ambiguity of the language in the original.

*heorosweng heardne- ond hine þa heafde becearf.*<sup>87</sup>

Beowulf did not need to “pay back” Grendel any more, as Grendel is already dead. Beowulf’s actions are gratuitously violent

Saint Christopher does not have superhuman strength, but he is a cynocephalus, “a race that have the heads of dogs.”<sup>88</sup> The cynocephali use their fangs to eat humans. This alone would make them monstrous as cannibalism is forbidden in most societies. Though he has a monstrous appearance, this cannot make him a monster because he forsakes his cannibalism and seeks to help the people of the city. Therefore, purposeful destruction of human life is the key in defining the monstrous.

The Terminator’s programming makes it monstrous. Ideally humans would use their creation to benefit their lives, but Skynet gave the Terminator the singular programming to mimic and assassinate humans. With this goal in mind the Terminator will never stop until he completes this task. A person targeted for termination must live his or her entire life running in fear from an assassin that never sleeps, unless the Terminator is destroyed. This fear is the main focus of all three movies in the series, as each movie is a long chase sequence in which the humans narrowly escape the Terminators. The makers of the Terminator movies have taken a primal human fear, the fear of being killed, and made it even worse by using a symbol of human ingenuity and creativity, an advanced computer system, as the killer.

However, in *Terminator II* the mission of the T-101 Terminator is to protect, and after having his microchip reprogrammed he begins to understand the value of human life. Before he is destroyed he says, “I now know why you cry, but I could never do it.”<sup>89</sup> With this conclusion we pity the Terminator, because as soon as he is truly “redeemed,” like Saint Christopher, from his monstrous state. The reprogramming of the Terminator transforms him so that he is no longer amoral, so that he can understand the value of human life. He is still destroyed because he knows that if he is not destroyed, humans will take advantage of his technology and the war with the machines will not be prevented.

The fear of being killed is a driving force in the plot of *Beowulf* as well. Although Grendel is angry that Hrothgar’s men have imposed on his territory, another reason for attacking is so that he can kill and eat them:

*With unhælo  
grim ond grædig gearo sona wæs  
reoc ond reþe ond on ræste genam  
þritig þegna, þanon eft gewat  
huðe hremig to ham faran  
mid þære wælfylle wica neosan.*<sup>90</sup>

Though it is unacceptable for a human to kill and eat another human in most cultures, is it unclear whether or not it is justifiable to label Grendel a monster for doing what he naturally does. Many creatures on earth will kill humans, but they cannot be blamed for it when we invade their habitat, as Hrothgar and his men have done.

<sup>87</sup> He paid him back for the faults he found in him, that fierce warrior. He saw Grendel in rest, exhausted by battle, lying dead, lifeless from the injury he suffered at Heorot. His corpse was gaping open after receiving a hard sword-stroke after death, and his head was chopped off (ll. 1584b-1590).

<sup>88</sup> Woods, David.

<sup>89</sup> *Sci-fi Scripts* March 19 2006, <<http://www.scifiscripts.com/scripts/t2.txt>>.

<sup>90</sup> *The creature of evil was grim and greedy, was immediately ready, savage and fierce, and in their resting place he seized thirty warriors. He then journeyed home boasting and exulting, seeking his dwellings with all those he violently slaughtered (ll. 120b-125).*

Grendel's mother also seeks to kill people, not for food, but to avenge her son's death at the hands of Beowulf:

*Ofsæt þa þone selegyst ond hyre seaxe geteah  
Brad ond brunecg, wolde hire bearn wrecan  
Angan eaferan.*<sup>91</sup>

Grendel's mother is humanized by seeking revenge for her son's death, a justifiable action in Anglo-Saxon culture. However, because she is a "monster" and not a human, she is killed as well. Saint Christopher is also killed because of who he is. Upon seeing Christopher a citizen immediately reports him to the king, "Hail O King, I have news for you. I have seen a man with a dog's head on him and long hair, and eyes glittering like the morning star in his head, and his tusks were like the teeth of a wild boar."<sup>92</sup> Despite his fearsome prowess Saint Christopher does not wish to harm the people of the city. His actions have the best intentions but the wickedness of the King blinds him so that he cannot see Saint Christopher as a loving man. All four of these characters are killed because of what they are instead of what they are doing.

Each of these characters could be defined monstrous because of their origins, appearance and their behaviour, but in the end they are not monstrous. The Terminator is destroyed because of the technology in his microchip, Grendel is killed because of his natural actions, Grendel's mother is killed for doing something that the human's would have done as well, and Saint Christopher is killed because of the bias of the King. Although the four monsters are shown to value "human" qualities such as friendship, honour, family, and revenge, the human characters still destroy them. The attitudes and behaviour of the many of the human characters in these stories are equally violent and destructive as the monsters. Monstrosity comes to be defined solely by actions, and not origin or appearances as we would normally presume, and because of this we must realize that we as humans can truly be monstrous.

#### APPENDIX: Synopsis of the film *Terminator II: Judgement Day*

The film *Terminator II: Judgement Day* is part of a trilogy written and directed by James Cameron. In each of the films a Terminator comes back in time from a post-apocalyptic future where machines have destroyed the majority of humans. The goal of the Terminator is to assassinate key members of the human resistance against the machines, to stop the human victory.

In *Terminator II*, General John Connor reprograms a model T-101 Terminator to protect himself in the past, since the machines, in a last effort sent back a prototype "liquid metal" T-1000 to kill John as a young boy. However, things are complicated when the John sets out to save his mother from a mental institution, putting himself into explicit danger. John and the terminator are successful at saving Sarah, but they almost die in the process.

Sarah decides to kill Miles, the inventor of the neural net processor that eventually leads to the invention of Skynet and the war with the machines, and John sets out to save him. At Miles' house the Terminator tells him about the future, and the four of them travel to the Cyberdyne Systems building to destroy Miles' work. A fight with the police leads to the total destruction of the Cyberdyne building, and in all the commotion the T-1000 finds them and begins to chase them.

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<sup>91</sup> She set upon him, her hall-guest, and drew her short-sword, broad and with a shining blade, desiring to avenge her son, her one and only offspring (ll. 1545-1547).

<sup>92</sup> Woods, David

The final battle takes place in a steel mill, and after the destruction of the T-1000, John and Sarah are forced to destroy the good Terminator, in order to stop judgement day, the day the war with the machines begins. Sarah concludes the film saying, “for the first time I look to the future with hope, because if a machine, a Terminator, can learn the value of human life, maybe so can we.”

## THE FUTURE'S PAST

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Throughout the history of man there are many examples of what has been considered to be monstrous, or the 'other'. It is interesting to try and trace the path of alterity which has been woven into history and see how past perceptions of monsters compare to modern conceptions of monsters. Old English texts, such as *The Wonders of the East*, convey the alterity of creatures found in far off countries. Tales such as *Liber Monstrorum* emerged with explanations of these monsters and vague attempts at explaining the reasons for their unusual appearances or habits. In the present world, television shows, such as *Star Trek*, take these monsters and rework them into forms which are more humanoid. This is perhaps an attempt to also make them more understandable, or at least more plausible. Man tends to be more comfortable with human form due to the similarity with his own shape and the ability to try and converse. He fears animals because of lack of knowledge about them and the inability to speak with them. Hence, human forms appear less frightening.

Both *The Wonders of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* deal mostly with appearance, describing the physical traits of these creatures clearly. In *Wonders of the East* we find beings who 'acenned Preosellices hiwes'<sup>93</sup> or who 'habbað hwit lic 7 tu neb on anum heafde.'<sup>94</sup> In *Liber Monstrorum* similar descriptions are mimicked. There is a 'genus utriusque sexus describitur'<sup>95</sup> and 'homines . . . facie quidem bipertita'<sup>96</sup> We also see colour mentioned in *Liber Monstrorum* with 'Aethiopes toto corpore nigri'<sup>97</sup> and those with 'corpora miri candoris.'<sup>98</sup> All of these descriptions could easily be the sources of the aliens in *Let That Be Your Last Battlefield* from the original *Star Trek* series. For example, the beings in this particular episode have a face which is pure white on one side, and jet black on the other. The fact that one is black on the right side, and the other black on the left, produces some unusual visual effects. This attribute exposes a different form of prejudice to that which was found on earth before the years when *Star Trek* is set. One of these aliens actually says that he is black on the right side, intimating that he is the better of the two. This is a reflection of the black/white colour issue found on earth in the nineteenth century and an issue missing from the crew on the star ship 'Enterprise.' The other alien in this episode has a prejudice against humans, as is clearly illustrated when he says they are all the same. He adds that they condemn others first and then attack them. *The Wonders of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* deal with the difference in colour of skin in many of the monsters listed. Because the Anglo Saxons were not familiar with races of different hues of skin in their own land, these races were alien or the 'other' since they were unknown and not understood.

One *Star Trek* episode, titled *The Trouble With Tribbles*, deals with creatures who are small, furry and very affectionate. It is difficult to conceive of them being a threat to anything or anyone. These tribbles are discovered to be 'born pregnant' and 'bi-sexual' by Dr. McCoy. The source here would be *Liber Monstrorum*'s dual sexed individuals, as previously mentioned. The situation in this episode deals

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<sup>93</sup>'Produced three hues' Andy Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 192.

<sup>94</sup>'Possess white bodies and two faces on one head' Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, p.191.

<sup>95</sup>'genus [of joint] sex described' Andy Orchard, *Liber Monstrorum*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 270.

<sup>96</sup>'Men with[ a] bipart face' Orchard, *Liber Monstrorum*,, p. 170.

<sup>97</sup>'Ethiopians [whose] whole body [is] black' Orchard, *Liber Monstrorum*, p. 262.

<sup>98</sup>'Bodies [of ] amazing whiteness' Orchard, *Liber Monstrorum*, p. 262.

with a being removed from its natural habitat, and thereby, its natural predators. By doing this, the trader who introduced the tribble to the humans, set off a chain of events which caused multiple problems on board ship. These tribbles were not seen as monstrous at first, in fact they were perceived as ‘cute and cuddly’. They were still an ‘other’, but were not deemed a threat until their overwhelming regeneration invaded every possible area of the Enterprise. The result, however, was beneficial as the tribbles ate the grain being carried to an earth station. Since this grain had been poisoned by the Klingons, a plot to destroy an Earth outpost was foiled, and the Klingons’ deviousness was temporarily ended.

Another difference in appearance is size. Both *The Wonders of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* describe many beings of extremely large size. They describe some as ‘*menn akende butan heafdum, þa habbaþ on heora breostum heora eagan 7 muð. Hi syndan eahta fota lange 7 eahta fota brade*’<sup>99</sup> and those who are only as tall as a normal human forearm’s length. This shortness relates to pygmies but could also tie in with midgets or dwarves. With *Star Trek*, the character Baloc fits these descriptions in different ways. On first seeing his image on the ship’s screen, the Enterprise crew encounter a very large head which is bald and bulging at the back, resting on large dark shoulders. In *The Wonders of the East* ‘*men acende lange 7 micel . . . mid breostan seofan fota lange . . . Cuðlice swa hwylcne mann swa hi gefoð, þonne fretað hi hine.*’<sup>100</sup> The likeness here gives rise to the initial fear felt by the crew of the Enterprise. Bigger and stronger lead to a healthy wariness as self preservation is more difficult with an enemy that can easily overpower its opponent. The cheeks of this alien are sunken and his eyes are dark. This apparition takes on his ghostlike appearance, partially because of the whiteness of his skin. At the end of this episode, the starship members discover that Baloc is actually a very small creature. The original image was his alter ego, a dummy, giving him the illusion of size which often equates with strength. The real Baloc is a midget who looks very childlike. His demeanour and appearance are gentle and friendly. He is actually quite harmless and simply uses his apparition to lure company to assuage his loneliness. It is clear that when the crew from *Star Trek* encounter the more gentle version of Baloc, they are more comfortable than when they first viewed his on screen image. This conveys a human trait which will likely never change; large, imposing beings are threatening while smaller, childlike beings are to be nurtured.

There is also the interesting phenomenon of Spock’s ears. In *The Wonders of the East* a race is described to have ‘*earan swa fann*’<sup>101</sup> and this exact description is also found in *Liber Monstrorum*. Although Spock’s Vulcan ears are not that big, they are larger than human’s and pointed at the top. Another species, the Romulans, are similar in appearance to the Vulcan’s, as they are a related species. This helps illustrate the concept that all men are related and were only considered different, and a possible enemy, because they were not known or understood. Appropriately, it was Mr. Spock who said that ‘all life forms evolved from lower levels to the more advanced stages’ in *Let This Be Your Last Battlefield*. As Mr. Spock is a totally rational being, these words have weight. He is speaking of evolution which has been a topic of contention throughout the history of man.

Appearance and habitat often go together, as the first can be dictated by the second. Harsh climates tend to be home to rougher, more hardy individuals, while lush environs seem to surround those with more delicate features. In *The Wonders of the East* one race is found on ‘*oðer dun ðær syndon swearte menn, 7 nænig oðer man to ðam mannum geferan mag for ðam þe seo dun byð eall byrnende*’<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup>‘Men born without heads, they have on their breast their eyes and mouth. They are eight foot long and eight foot wide’ Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, p. 192.

<sup>100</sup>‘Men are born long and great . . . with breasts seven foot long. Evidently as soon as they seize each man, then they consume him.’ Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, p.192.

<sup>101</sup>‘Ears like fans’ Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, p.196.

<sup>102</sup>‘Another mountain which sends forth dark men, and not any other men to them proceed for this mountain which they inhabit is all on fire.’ Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, p. 202.



and *Liber Monstrorum* explains the Ethiopians black colour occurring because it is they ‘*quia sub tertio zonarum feruentissimo et torrido mundi circulo demorantur.*’<sup>103</sup> Here black skin is equated with heat of some form. Since heat and fire are dangerous to man, it makes sense that beings able to withstand heat should be feared. If they can survive what other men cannot, they must have a power unknown to other races and power arouses fear. ‘*Et quoddam inuisum genus humanum in antris et concauis montium latebris nasci perhibetur, qui sunt statura cubitales*’<sup>104</sup> These people are small but aggressive. It is not stated if their hostility is due to their surroundings or their lack of height. Regardless, they are different, and therefore, alien. The end of this entry explains that ‘*quos Braeci a cubito pigmeos uocant*’<sup>105</sup> The term cubit, as stated in the *Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, on page 212, means ‘approximately equal to the length of a forearm.’

In *The Cloud Dwellers*, another episode of *Star Trek*, there are Troglytes who live on the planet, underground. They mine the planet for things needed by the cloud dwellers. These Troglytes are rough, dirty and not accustomed to light and warmth. Their complexion is ruddy and their hair is dark, so they contrast greatly with the fairer skin and hair of those living above the planet in the cloud city, Stratos. Even the clothing is markedly different between the two groups. The miners wear coveralls of stiff fabric which hide gender to some extent. The cloud people wear formal attire, men in white suits and women in flowing gowns. They are spotlessly clean and almost glow in contrast to their counterparts on the planet.

Skin colour can relate to habitat but colour can be the surroundings as well. The planet Arianas is in need of being decontaminated. This planet, as seen from the starship, is a yellow haze. After decontamination it is viewed in bright, strong earth colours of blue, green and brown. Here colour gives a strong division between good and bad, an allusion created in the earlier writings cited. Aside from the race with half black, half white faces, and the planet Arianas, *Star Trek* uses colour to differentiate in other ways. Habitat and appearance are combined differently with one group of *Star Trek* villains, the Romulans. The ship the Romulans inhabit is painted to look like a war bird. Like the character Baloc, who used the illusion of size to make himself appear more formidable, the Romulans use the ferocity of a predatory bird to give their ship, and possibly themselves, a more intimidating appearance. The Romulans are of human form but have large ears like those of the Vulcans.

Planets in the *Star Trek* series are often barren, rocky places with little or no greenery and harsh light and heat from a sun. The ‘other’ in *The Wonders of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* often come from harsh habitats, which are said to create harsh people, such as the Ethiopians. The space exploration series is furthering the notion that alterity is due to differences in habitat as well as being far from the home place, or planet in the case of *Star Trek*, of the exploring race. In *Metamorphosis* the planet is earthlike but not as lush. *The Wonders of the East* relates ‘*Ðis mannkynn lifað f ela geara, 7 hi syndon fremfulle menn.*’<sup>106</sup> This is very similar to the plot in *Star Trek*’s *Metamorphosis* in which a human is being kept on a planet. Captain Kirk and his landing crew discover that the human is actually 150 years old and thought, by them, to have died many years ago of old age. Astonishingly this person appears as a young man. A dwelling created by an entity for the human she has captured is quite habitable. This alien appears to the human in the form of an energy cloud. He is able to communicate with this entity through his mind. The human has everything he needs to survive, except human

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<sup>103</sup>‘Who under [the] third climatic region, boiling hot and torrid world circle, stay. Orchard, *Liber Monstrorum*, p.262.

<sup>104</sup>‘And [it is] quoted [that a] certain hateful genus [of] human are born in hollow mountain lairs and caves who exist, [and in] stature [are a] cubit’ Orchard, *Liber Monstrorum*, p. 272.

<sup>105</sup>‘Greeks [say] a cubit [is what] pygmies [are] called’ Orchard, *Liber Monstrorum*., p. 272.

<sup>106</sup>‘These mankind exist many years, and they are well disposed men.’ Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, p. 200.

companionship. This is where the *Star Trek* crew is important. They are drawn to this planet, by the alien, in order to provide a fellow human being to stay and keep the original human company. There is another lesson in this episode, where we learn that immortality is not as pleasant as would be expected. The human is bored as he has nothing to do and no fellow human to converse with. Although the provider has seen to all material needs, the needs of the mind are not being met.

*The Wonders of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* comment on personality traits, as well as appearance. The disposition of a race, or person, can deem them to be monstrous. If they appear threatening, or are misunderstood, fear can be aroused in those new to the circumstance, leaving the impression of newly encountered monstrosity. One description is of a ‘*stow ellreorde men beoð on*,’<sup>107</sup> while another has ‘*is sum gebungen 7 gedefe sacert to gesett, 7 he ða hofa gehealdeð 7 begymeþ*.’<sup>108</sup> These people dwell on an island. As previously noted the *Liber Monstrorum* described cave dwellers as hostile. The obvious parallels to *The Cloud Minders* are clear. The Troglites live in caves and are aggressive while the people who rule the planet live on a cloud and are watched over by the overseer of Stratus. In contrast to the cave dwellers, they live a seemingly gentle existence, protected from the harshness of the planet itself.

Also in *The Wonders of the East* there is a race who ‘*mid leaslicum wordum hine beswicað, ond him onfoð*.’<sup>109</sup> This can be related to the situation with Baloc. After threatening to destroy the Enterprise, he sends out a distress signal which Captain Kirk cannot ignore. This is when they board the small ship belonging to Baloc and discover his secret. Baloc is lonely for company and uses trickery to get people on board his ship to answer his questions and challenge his mind.

One of the most intriguing concepts of *Star Trek* is the incorporation of various different earth races as part of the Federation. We see a unified race of humans instead of separate categories of white, black, Asian, Russian and so forth. There appears to be no prejudices on board Federation ships, in fact Captain Kirk, in *Balance of Terror* tells the navigator there is ‘no room for bigotry on the bridge.’ They do, however, encounter prejudice amongst the aliens they are searching for in order to learn what they can about their universe. The half black, half white race are prejudice against each other as well as humans. The cloud people feel they are superior to the inhabitants of the planet they float above and depend on for their existence. The Romulans, as stated in *Balance of Terror*, believe that ‘any group entering the neutral zone means war.’ In *The Carbomite Manoeuvre*, Baloc calls humans a ‘primitive and savage civilization.’ He changes his mind later after the humans show their more compassionate side.

Captain Kirk makes a good point, in *Arena*, when, in the face of battle, he states that there is ‘no such thing as unknown, only things temporarily hidden, temporarily not understood.’ He says this when his crew and ship are under threat of destruction. He also deals with fear in *Arena* where he is to battle a reptilian alien. He tries to instill courage in himself, after first seeing this creature. Realizing that he has an ‘instinctive revulsion to reptiles’ he tells himself that he ‘must fight to remember it is an intelligent, highly advanced individual, captain of a star ship’ while also being a ‘dangerously clever opponent.’ In the end Kirk finds he has a certain amount of respect for this creature, even though it tried to kill him. It was a simple matter of survival, from start to finish. In the end a ‘Metron’ appears and tells Kirk that he showed an ‘advanced trait of mercy’ by letting the monster live, and this was after the monster told Kirk that ‘you destroyed monsters as I shall destroy you.’ Captain Kirk did not know anything about this alien, and was afraid of it because of its ferocious and reptilian appearance. It walked on two feet as humans do and was obviously intelligent. This conflicted with the human’s revulsion to the scales and spikes of the Gorn. Similar features are found in *Liber Monstrorum* where ‘*Quae is suis*

<sup>107</sup>‘Locality barbarous men are in.’ Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, p.194.

<sup>108</sup>‘[a] certain virtuous and kindly priest to establish and he [is] there [to] protect court and takes care of [them].’ Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, p.198.

<sup>109</sup>‘With false words him deceive and him seize.’ Orchard, *Wonders of the East*, p.196.

*uertieibus ossa serrata uelut gladios gestant*<sup>110</sup> and *'eam sibi leones quamuis inualidioris feram corporis*<sup>111</sup> give a clear picture of the Gorn even though they are describing animals in India, [crocodiles].

Both *The Wonders of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* also give details of races which can run away so fast that they seem to fly. In *Star Trek* the space ships of both the humans and the aliens can utilise warp speeds to flee their enemies. Those which cannot flee, but must stay and protect themselves, do so in different ways. The creature in *The Devil in the Dark*, which looks like a lump of rock which can move at a relatively quick speed, is trying to protect its offspring. The miners on the planet have dug down low enough to disturb her nest and destroy many of her eggs. In retaliation the rock creature destroys those who come down into her territory, and their equipment. This is yet another example of misunderstanding leading to the assumption that a new creature encountered is a threat.

*The Wonders of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* started by simply describing the differences found in new peoples and animals encountered on journeys beyond the borders of their own existence. They progressed to possible explanations of their differences. This has the effect of making them more easily understood, and validating their existence and importance on earth. Comparing locations of a cultures existence with appearance traits, these sources attempt to explain races such as the Ethiopians with their hot environment and the Pygmies who live in caves. *Star Trek* has taken this several steps further and tried to instigate a harmony amongst a variety of entities existing in the universe. Throughout the series, the lack of prejudice amongst earth inhabitants is refreshing. *Star Trek* crew members deal with new species they come upon with patience and an attempt at understanding. *The Wonders of the East* and *Liber Monstrorum* both dealt solely with earth's creatures who lived beyond the realm of their own natural habitat. The star travellers went beyond the boundaries of their planet to learn what was out there where humans had not been before. They dealt with creatures previously unknown, trusting the humanoid above the animalistic at times. The curiosity of the human species to learn about, not just their immediate surroundings, but anything outside of their comfort zone, provides entertainment and speculation.

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<sup>110</sup>‘They, [on] the crown of [their] head bear bones serrated just as [a] sword’, Orchard, *Liber Monstrorum*, p. 294.

<sup>111</sup>‘And back serrated and armed [with] savage teeth’, Orchard, *Liber Monstrorum*, p. 300.

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Historians are continuously trying to understand and relate the past to the present so that people can fully comprehend the world in which they live. The same comprehension exists and is necessary to the understanding of modern literature. Past writers who have influenced and reflected an older time are vital to understanding the style, myths and intrigue, which continue to exist in modern prose. Ancient writings like Pliny the Elder's *Natural Histories*, *Wonders of the East* and the *Letters from Alexander the Great to Aristotle* are historical pieces that can offer insight and interesting comparisons for the writings of current writers like Terry Goodkind in his novel *Wizard's First Rule*.

Terry Goodkind's fantasy novel deals with the overcoming of alterity. Pliny's work is littered with alterity figures and the explanations for their existence. Both writers put the image of alterity forward and then find some way of reconciling this alterity; in the case of Goodkind it is through the understanding and expanded knowledge of his characters. In the case of Pliny, it is through what was at the time a reasonable, rational and scientific study of the world around him. Pliny attempts an examination of monsters and is the first person to reference the Blemmeyae<sup>112</sup>. *Wonders of the East* is similar. While it also deals with figures of alterity, it simply explains and describes their existence and appearance without judgement or prejudice. The *Letter of Alexander* is an adventure story that is told from the eyes of the hero, in the same way that Goodkind's novel gives the reader insight from the point of view of the main character and hero, Richard Cypher.

There are many points of comparison between Goodkind's novel and the historical works listed above, but this paper does not strive to explore them all. The focus will be on enforced boundaries and the obligatory exile and exclusion of powerful women.

Goodkind's story begins with the problem of failing boundaries which were set in place by the people of three different lands: D'Hara, the Midlands and Westland. Previous wars involving the use of magic resulted in the division of lands into those of Dark Magic, Good Magic and no magic at all. Those who possessed no magic lived in Westland and feared all those who had magical capabilities. They saw them as alterous figures because magical people possessed a power that the ordinary human could not. Those who chose to use their magic for the good of society lived in the Midlands and regarded those who used their magic for evil as alterous and dangerous. The evil magic users viewed the other two groups as groups which could eventually be conquered and made into subjects since they were considered inferior. The ones who used Dark Magic were from D'Hara.

Westland, the Midlands and D'Hara had boundaries that separated the lands from one another. Each boundary is guarded by boundary wardens who forbid the entrance of any foreigner into their land: the wardens of Westland, where there was no magic, would not allow the entry of someone who possessed magic. Within the novel there is a sense of urgency to secure the boundaries before they fall entirely, especially in Westland. The people there are afraid that the magical people they had worked so hard to keep out would in fact be inside their land. Kahlan Amnell, a Mother Confessor<sup>113</sup> who wields enormous power

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<sup>112</sup> Williams, David, *Deformed Discourse* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), p. 135

<sup>113</sup> A Mother Confessor is the most powerful woman in the Midlands. There is only one Mother Confessor at any time; other confessors exist but have lesser powers. Confessors hold the power of truth. When her magical touch is in use, she can subject whomever she touches to do her bidding and to tell only the truth. A mother confessor lives only with other confessors. If a confessor wants to have a husband, with the act of sex her magic is unleashed and the man she is with has been 'touched'. This touch removes his personality and subjects him to complete servitude to her to the end of his days. The Mother Confessor, as the most

and magic, seeks Zedd, the former Great Wizard of the Midlands, for help and guidance. She explains to him the severity of the failing boundaries. She says:

‘The boundary between D’Hara and the Midlands is down, the boundary between the Midlands and Westland is failing, and soon it too will be down. The people of Westland will be taken by the very thing they fear most: magic. Terrible, frightening magic like none they have ever imagined.’<sup>114</sup>

With this statement, Kahlen emphasizes the fear of the people of Westland and the importance of the boundary to their peace and state of mind and their personal freedoms. Dark Magic is frightening to the people of Westland because it is ruthless. Magic of any kind is feared by all in Westland and a magic which is known to be evil is terrifying. The people of Westland are completely aware of what they are afraid of, and Kahlan agrees that they are right to be afraid. The people of Westland had set up their boundaries to keep out the known enemy of magic.

In the historical works, boundaries were set by something wholly different. They were not a question of a guarded area and dividing line between two lands, the ancient boundaries were vast areas of land. Boundaries in *Wonders of the East* and the *Letter of Alexander* are created by space. *Wonders* takes pains to explain exactly where cities are and where people and things are in relation to the cities. This practise is based on the premise that if people have a general idea of where a city is then they can relate to where the things they fear actually live. It is the intended function of measurements and place names to create a sense of realism when questionable creatures are involved. An example of this technique is shown in a description of a place near the Red Sea: ‘Donne is sume ealand on ðære Readan Sæ, þær is moncynn þæt is mid us Donostre genemned.’<sup>115</sup> The Red Sea is a place known to exist thereby making the named group of people seem real and legitimate. By using real place names the authors lend validity to their fabulous subjects: if the place is true, then its inhabitants must be true as well. The *Letter of Alexander* shows real places with strange characters but in a different way from *Wonders*. In this work the author validates the monsters by using a real person who has travelled to faraway places to vouch for their legitimacy. The letter says:

‘HER IS SEO GESETENIS Alexanres epistoles þæs miclan kyninges 7 þs mæran Macedoniscan, þone he wrat 7 sende to Aristotile his magistre be gesetenisse Indie þære miclan þeode, 7 be þære widgalnisse his siðfato 7 his fora, þe he geond middangeard ferde.’<sup>116</sup>

With Alexander as the narrator of this story, the reader understands that the story is not only a letter about a real place, but Alexander’s own chronicle of journeys into faraway places and his meetings with foreign people. In the case of both *Wonders* and *Letter of Alexander* the boundaries are set by space and because of what the people do not know: what they fear is unbeknownst to them, but the idea that something exists is enough to maintain a boundary of space.

What is interesting in comparing *Wizard’s First Rule* to the Old English works is that all regularly refer to borders. Furthermore, the crossing of that boundary is something to be feared and can only be done

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powerful, is feared by women who are afraid she will take their husbands or sons and feared by men who are afraid that she will choose them to be her mate.

<sup>114</sup> Goodkind, Terry, *Wizard’s First Rule*, (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1994), p. 93

<sup>115</sup> Orchard, Andy, *Pride and Prodigies*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p. 196  
There is an island in the Red Sea, there is a kind of people who are named Donostre.

<sup>116</sup> Orchard, *Pride*, p. 224

Here is the letter of Alexander, the great king and famous Macedonian, that he wrote and sent to Aristotle, his teacher, about India, the great land, and the whole of his travels and his journey throughout the world.

by a most courageous person like Alexander the Great or Richard Cypher<sup>117</sup>. Where the modern text strays from the Old English works is that in Goodkind's novel the boundaries exist because ordinary people have experienced what is out there and they fear it. In Old English the boundaries exist for people who have never experience anything beyond the bounds of their own space. The ordinary Anglo-Saxon would not have ventured and crossed into the boundaries of known monsters, nor was it likely that they monsters crossed into Anglo-Saxon lands. In either case, both groups of people, the real old English people and Goodkind's fictional group, create for themselves a kind of exile by which they shield themselves from the unknown and keep their own kind together and safe from what exists outside the boundaries.

Exile, and specifically the exile of powerful women, is another theme of *Wizard's First Rule*. Denna is a Mord-Sith<sup>118</sup> who takes Richard captive. She lives and works alone, and possesses magic, power and a remarkable tolerance of pain. She was taken from her family at fifteen years old and then tortured and punished in the worst ways in order to become the best Mord-Sith at Darken Rahl's compound. As a Mord-Sith she continues the traditions of pain with magic and is remarkably successful at converting people to only believe and remember what she wants them to recollect. She is almost successful at converting Richard while he is in her captivity, but one night he decided to ask about her pain instead of his own and was greeted with a different response that he imagined:

‘There is rarely a time I am without pain, of one kind or another. That is one reason the training of a Mord-Sith takes years – to learn to handle the pain. I guess it's also why only women are Mord-Sith; men are too weak to handle the pain.’<sup>119</sup>

The only Mord-Sith in the novel are women and the men are the ones who are to be broken. Men, once broken, are complete submissive to the Mord-Sith who broke them, while women can retain enough of themselves to have independence and control over the pain and eventually become Mord-Sith. The ability to endure this kind of pain makes these women monstrous. No other human can bear the pain which they have gone through: most others would have died. The Mord-Sith alterity is also prevalent in their mindset – all that they think and do is always related to pain. The relation of things to pain encompasses both the good and bad because to the Mord-Sith who is always in pain, there are good forms of it to be had.

The previous quotation is an intriguing look into exile in Goodkind's work. The only people in his works who live alone and seem to have no close companions are women of a powerful order: women who possess enough power to destroy most other people. Denna is one of these, as is Kahlan, the Mother

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<sup>117</sup> Richard Cypher is the main character in *Wizard's First Rule*. He is a woods guide at the beginning of the story and saves Kahlan as she is being attacked. He is eventually chosen to be the Seeker (explained in a later footnote) and leads the struggle against Darken Rahl who is the leader of D'Hara and threatening to take over the Midlands and Westland. Richard shows incredible courage because he has no magical powers and has never had contact with very magical people during his life. The only weapons Richard has are a Sword and his wits.

<sup>118</sup> A Mord-Sith is a woman who has been trained to endure pain. The pain stems from an Agiel, a magic baton that continuously emits pain. Mord-Sith are used to 'break' the minds of people through the use of pain and torture with the Agiel. The end result of a person tortured and broken by a Mord-Sith is a person reduced to servitude – much the same as with a Mother Confessor, but the process is much longer and far more painful. In order to become a Mord-Sith a girl must be able to endure the constant pain of the Agiel and use it properly on others. Good Mord-Sith are taken as children and often see their families killed. The Agiel they use on others is generally the one used to train them, setting a specific number of Mord-Sith. The only way an Agiel is passed on is with the death of a Mord-Sith.

<sup>119</sup> Goodkind, *Wizard's*, p. 684

Confessor, and Adie, the bone woman<sup>120</sup> who lives in the boundaries. Richard comes in contact with all of these women, and all of them try to keep him at a distance because they know that they must continue their lives of forced exile in order to maintain their duties within society. A Mother Confessor must live with other confessors away from society and a Mord-Sith could not live among others who do not have her awareness and tolerance for pain. For these women, who they are and what they have become sentences them to a life alone and they have come to accept their lives of solitude. Yet Richard is a Seeker<sup>121</sup> and so they cannot simply push him away as they could with others. Richard seeks to understand. He comes to know Denna, Kahlen and Adie and understand their personalities and the reasons for some of their magical actions but the one thing he never mentions is the exile of these women. The only man who lives in exile is Zedd and he chooses that to be so: his only friend is Richard, but Zedd could live among anyone he chose without major issue or conflict.

Only the powerful women in Goodkind's story are in cast out from society. What is interesting is that the exile of women is not new: in fact it exists in historic texts. *Wonders* describes women who go against the conventional norms near Babylon:

'Ymb þa stowe beoð wif akenned ða habbað beardas swa side oð heora breost, 7 horses hyda hi habbað him to hrægle gedon. Þa syndan þa huntigystran swiðe genemde, 7 fore hundum tigras 7 leopardos þæt hi fedað þæt syndan þa kenestan deor. 7 ealra ðæra wildeora kynn, þæra þe on ðære dune akene beoð, þæt hi gehuntigaþ.'<sup>122</sup>

The simple fact that this description exists in *Wonders* shows that these women were monstrous. They are bearded women and this is truly an uncommon sight. The idea that women could grow beards as men could, must have shown the Anglo-Saxon readers that there was something not right about these women. There is also no mention of men or children in this passage either which would indicate that these women live only with one another; they must be self-sufficient. In being self-sufficient and having beards, these women defy the boundaries of gender roles set out for them by society and live as men would: as hunters and the tamers of wild animals. This reversal of gender roles makes these women powerful because their strength and alterous appearance strikes fear in the hearts of those who conform. Aside from their appearance, men fear these women because they are able to take over their jobs as hunters and providers, and women fear them because they are able to do more than the ordinary woman and do it on their own to survive independently.

Pliny also depicts women as monstrous and evil when he discusses the origins of monstrosity. He says that

'But nothing could easily be found that is more remarkable [*monstrificium*] than the monthly flux of women. Contact with it turns new wine sour, crops touched by it become barren,

<sup>120</sup> Adie is an old sorceress who lives in the woods between the boundaries of Westland and the Midlands. She only appears once in the novel however she has a deep understanding of magic and human nature so much of her wisdom reappears. She is eager to talk to Richard when they encounter her, but has little interest in talking to the others with him. Her monstrosity is link to her missing a leg and that she lives in a house made of bones. Adie keeps all kinds of bones around her house and inside as well in order to continue with her magic spells and her understanding of people.

<sup>121</sup> The Seeker is given the Sword of Truth, a magical sword whose magic can only be activated with the emotions and power of a True Seeker. A Seeker is one who is continuously in search of the truth, and who uses his mind over his physical power and strength. A True Seeker, like Richard, seeks to understand and his personality and his intrigue make it difficult to exile oneself from him.

<sup>122</sup> Orchard, *Pride*, p. 198

Around that land women are born who have beards that hang down to their breasts, and horses hides are their clothes. They are known to be great huntresses, and instead of dogs they have tigers and leopards, that are fierce beasts. And the many kinds of wild beasts which are born on the mountain are hunted by them.

grafts die, seeds in gardens are dried up, the fruits of trees falls off, the bright surface of mirrors in which it is merely reflected is dimmed, the edge of steel and the gleam of ivory are dulled, hives of bees die, even bronze and iron are at once seized by the rust, and a horrible smell fills the air.<sup>123</sup>

What is interesting here is that Pliny's woman seems to have some kind of power that should be feared: much like the characters in Goodkind's novel. What makes Pliny's woman alterous is the very thing that makes her a woman: her ability to menstruate. According to Pliny, women are monstrous and destructive by nature, and that what is natural to a woman is intrinsically evil and sets her apart as monstrous. While Pliny's women seem only to be able to kill plants and damage metals, the repercussions of this are huge. Without crops entire populations could starve and possibly die, and with damaged metals, no armour or weapons could be used as defence or taken into battle, allowing the area to be susceptible to attack. This indicates the uselessness of women and that women are inherently destructive. The women in both Pliny and Goodkind's writings have the ability to jeopardize the lives of those around them, and as such should be feared. This fear, when permeated throughout all levels of society would not allow women to live comfortably among the general populace, and so they live alone or with their own kind as in *Wonders*. Women's monstrosity seems to be a reinforcement of strong patriarchal values, which in light of the view of women, are seen as intrinsically good. This theme is well manifested in the works of Pliny and *Wonders* and Goodkind's inclusion of this theme in *Wizard's First Rule* suggests that this social structure is still normative somewhere in the Modern Western psyche. At no time in the novel do any characters question the roles of women or their powers. Richard is saddened that Kahlan has had so few friends and he notices is that she is lonely. He is also saddened by Denna's pain and isolation, but Richard never makes the connection between the women. As the only male who is in contact with powerful women throughout the novel, Richard never comments on the fact that the most dangerous creatures he meets on his journey are not strange and mythical beasts, but powerful single women.

The works of Pliny, *Wonders of the East* and *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle* are works which reflect an ancient time and continue to influence the present. The influence of the themes of boundaries and the exclusion of powerful and monstrous women, continue to exist in modern prose. Terry Goodkind's novel *Wizard's First Rule* demonstrates a powerful link between the past and the present. Goodkind's work confirms that the interests of readers have remained constant despite the varied approaches to monstrous story-telling. People understand the importance of boundaries and they continue to accept the exclusion of powerful women. With Terry Goodkind's work as an indicator, the themes of the past thrive in the texts of the present, and quite possibly will continue to infuse the themes of the future.

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<sup>123</sup> Williams, *Deformed*, p. 175



## THE EVOLUTION OF PERSPECTIVE: STUDIES IN ALTERITY OVER TIME

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The term ‘monster’ has a generally negative connotation in today’s society. At the present time we associate the word monster with someone who is different than regular people, and is usually frightening or violent because they exist outside the ‘social norm.’ This notion of the word today is the same as it was over one thousand years ago. This can be seen in certain ancient texts which explore different sorts of alterity. Alterity is a term used to express that which is different from one’s self, the ‘other.’ Hermaphrodites are one example of a group that society sees as different from themselves. A study of their presence in ancient literature compared to modern literature uncovers society’s view of the monster, and how that view has changed over the years. Old English and Latin texts, including Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies*, Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*, as well as *Beowulf* and *Liber Monstrorum*, show an attempt at a progressive view of alterity. Focusing specifically on hermaphrodite monsters, this essay will show that although these older source texts attempt to form a view of monsters as non-threatening rather than as dangerous prodigies, some of the older, more negative attitudes remain even in modern society. This can be seen by the maintenance of boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them.’ However, there is still some progression towards a different *idea* of alterity. Following a discussion of the source texts, a modern example of literature will reveal the truth about alterity. Jeffrey Eugenides’ novel *Middlesex* is a modern text that takes on the perspective of a hermaphrodite, challenging the audience to modify its notion of monsters. The revelation is that there is no set standard of normal and abnormal, but that we all exist as ‘others’ to each other.

Before works like Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History* and Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies* were written, the general public believed that babies born with abnormalities like mixed genitalia were signals of future wars or deaths.<sup>124</sup> Fearing negative omens, people killed or abandoned these children in order to avoid their fate. There are many instances of hermaphrodites losing their lives in this manner in the work *Mirabilia* by Phlegon of Tralles (Second Century). In his book *Sexual Ambivalence: Androgyny and Hermaphroditism in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, Luc Brisson sites an example from *Mirabilia* and explains:

...the diviners’ interpretation of the prodigy is that there will be a clash between the Locrians and the Aetolians because the child, a hermaphrodite, is different from its Locrian mother and also from its Aetolian father. They then pronounce upon the type of purification to be carried out.<sup>125</sup>

Often the child is thrown into the sea, burned, or abandoned beyond the borders of the people’s land. The superstition and purification involved with these events shows an extreme and negative reaction to hermaphrodites. Not only did people fear the future negative event, but also the prodigy’s ‘unnaturalness.’ According to Brisson, this common view at the time was influenced by Aristotle’s definition of ‘monster,’ based on biological reasoning. Aristotle says: ‘anyone who does not take after his parents is really in a way a monstrosity, since in these cases Nature has in a way strayed from the generic type.’<sup>126</sup> According to this view, that which is ‘normal’ consists of that which is generic, or lacking any obvious difference. As Brisson

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<sup>124</sup>Luc Brisson, *Sexual Ambivalence: Androgyny and Hermaphroditism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), [www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/8914/8914.ch01.html](http://www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/8914/8914.ch01.html) (Online book)

<sup>125</sup>Brisson, *Sexual Ambivalence*, Ch.1

<sup>126</sup>Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* IV 2, 767b

remarks, '[A hermaphrodite] is different because it has two sexes, and this constitutes an extraordinary deviation from nature.'<sup>127</sup>

Another common superstition that shows itself in ancient texts finds its origin in the biblical story of Cain and Abel. According to the book of Genesis, after killing his brother Cain was exiled from the Garden of Eden and forced to wander the world bearing a mark that would identify him.<sup>128</sup> He went east of Eden, an area of the world mentioned in most early texts as having a high population of monsters. It was believed that Cain's descendants survived the Flood<sup>129</sup>, and bore the mark of Cain in the form of their monstrous aspects. One example of this is found in *Beowulf* with the explanation that Grendel is the kin of Cain. The author says of Cain that:

...he þa fag gewat morþre gemearcod mandream fleon, westen warode. Þanon woc fela  
geosceafgasta; wæs þæra Grendel sum, heorowearh hetelic...<sup>130</sup>

People of this early time period believed that monstrosity was influenced by heredity. As Friedman remarks, 'In an age where the child was still considered an extension of the parent, genealogy offered the most direct approach to any problem of identity, and the monstrous races were no exception to this regard.'<sup>131</sup> This focus on genetic inheritance shows society's willingness to exclude and condemn whole family lines as monstrous, in an attempt to separate themselves from alterity.

These earlier beliefs about alterity were harsh and superstitious, based on fear and a misunderstanding of what these monsters were and what their purpose was. Some of these attitudes are still ingrained in society, as there are modern examples of similar reactions which will be discussed later in this essay. However, much of the fear and violence toward hermaphrodites is abated with the coming of works like Pliny's *Natural History* and Isidore's *Etymologies*, as reasoning and science replace superstition in explaining the nature of these anomalies. No longer are hermaphrodites viewed as abnormal or unnatural. This acceptance is one step towards a different understanding of alterity. However true sympathy for the monster comes much later with the shifting of perspective. This shift is one that shows itself in modern texts, but not in the following source texts.

Isidore's overall approach to explaining the existence of monsters is important in showing the change in attitude toward hermaphrodites. Isidore's *Etymologies* is a compilation of much of the existing knowledge of the sixth century. It is objective, explanatory and analytical rather than opinionated. It deals strictly with science and the search for truth through collecting facts and considering them logically. In the chapter *On Man and Monsters*, Isidore reveals a more accepting and less superstitious view of portents and prodigies, like hermaphrodites. His first entry addresses the negative ideas surrounding monsters in general and explains how they are natural and not to be feared:

Portents are things which seem to have been born contrary to nature, but in truth they are not contrary to nature, because they exist by the divine will, since the Creator's will is the

<sup>127</sup>Bisson, *Sexual Ambivalence*, Ch.1

<sup>128</sup>Bible, Genesis 4:1-26.

<sup>129</sup>Bible, Genesis 6-9

<sup>130</sup>*Beowulf*, ed. Mitchell, Bruce, Robinson, (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004)

l. 1263-7...he fled the joys of men, bloodstained, marked by murder, into the wilderness. From thence many hateful creatures were born; one of them was Grendel, a hateful and fierce outcast... (my translation)

<sup>131</sup>John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races of Medieval Art and Thought*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1981), p.88

nature of everything created. For this reason the very pagans called God 'Nature' sometimes, 'god' at other times.<sup>132</sup>

Isidore's connection between God and nature is a key step toward the acceptance of alterity. Rather than reinforcing superstition or fear in his audience, he explains through reasoning the diversities of nature in the world. His knowledge in some ways is flawed. For instance, when discussing the different races of the world, he says that people from Ethiopia have dark skin because they have been 'scorched by the nearness of the sun.'<sup>133</sup> His theory is based on the science of the four humours of the body; moisture (blood), air (lungs), earth (flesh), and fire (body heat).<sup>134</sup> He believes that an imbalance in the four humours of the body has caused this darker skin tone, a logical deduction for someone who knows nothing about skin pigment. However inaccurate, Isidore's intention to discover natural causes for anomalies shows a progressive change in the view of alterity, one that tries to understand monsters through science. Although he eliminates the boundary of fear, others still exist within the text.

Isidore maintains a certain barrier between the 'other' and his audience, both in the perspective he takes, and his use of categorization. His perspective is from 'normal' society looking at alterity from a geographical distance, and he reinterprets existing works of literature rather than directly observing the monsters themselves. This separation results in a very one-sided view of alterity. We do not gain any information from the alteritous beings themselves, but rather a disjointed observer. Also, Isidore's rigorous classification and organization of the monsters in the *Etymologies* shows his society's need for boundaries and control. Isidore has named, defined and made these anomalies part of a common body of knowledge, in a sense placing them in a controlled context. This makes monsters less threatening because they are less likely to be misunderstood or even encountered, since one knows who and what they are, where they are and how to avoid them. Unfortunately Isidore's objective knowledge of monsters does not break down the barriers of 'us' and 'them.'

One of Isidore's major influences was Pliny the Elder. Pliny's *Natural History* has the same effect as the *Etymologies* in reducing the hostility towards monsters. Pliny provides a view of hermaphrodites as subjects of curiosity and appreciation through art, as well as novelties that provide entertainment. He says:

Persons are also born of both sexes combined - what we call Hermaphrodites, formerly called androgyny and considered portents, but now as entertainments. Pompey the Great, among the decorations of his theater placed images of celebrated marvels, made with special elaboration for the purpose and talent of eminent artists.<sup>135</sup>

This view of hermaphrodites is completely lacking superstition and fear. Hermaphrodites have now been accepted as part of nature, and thus represented in art which 'celebrates' their differences rather than shunning them. Yet, like Isidore, Pliny also maintains a distance when he speaks of the hermaphrodite through the lens of art. As well, he has categorized them as 'entertainments' which insinuates that hermaphrodites are not on the same level as other humans. In a sense, he is stripping away their human qualities and making them objects, thus enhancing the boundary between hermaphrodites and non-hermaphrodites.

The same sort of boundary exists in *Liber Monstrorum*, where the author describes a number of different monsters, relating their physical appearance in detail. The purpose of this work is less scientific and therefore less accurate than some other sources. It says hermaphrodites are a 'race of joint sex, who have a

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<sup>132</sup>Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, ed. Ernest Brehaut, (New York: B. Franklin, 1964), section XI, III, I.

<sup>133</sup>Isidore, *Etymologies*, section XIV, V.

<sup>134</sup>Isidore, *Etymologies*, section IX.

<sup>135</sup>Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1958), section VII, III, I. 33-35.

right male breast and a female left breast for nourishing babies. And people say they reproduce by alternating sexual roles.’<sup>136</sup> The inaccuracy of the description shows that the author of *Liber Monstrorum* is not concerned with scientific detail or interpreting the meaning of these monsters as if they were prodigies. His sole purpose is to show, and therefore entertain his audience. Again, hermaphrodites are being objectified and looked at from a distance. Still, this mentality is far less drastic and harmful than earlier more superstitious views of hermaphrodites, and reveals a progression away from fear and towards acceptance and appreciation of the diversity of the world. The next step involves taking on the perspective of the monstrosity itself, in order to reveal the true nature of alterity.

The sources discussed so far have revealed certain attitudes society has toward hermaphrodites and monsters in general. Despite the gradual progression towards acceptance, there remains a tendency to set up boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ or hermaphrodites and non-hermaphrodites. These boundaries are made through our use of categorization as seen in Isidore’s writings, their objectification as seen in the Pliny and *Liber Monstrorum* texts, and the one-sided perspective as seen in all early sources. Jeffrey Eugenides’ *Middlesex* is a modern text that discusses hermaphrodites, and reveals the last stage in understanding alterity.

*Middlesex* is a fictional novel set in the twentieth century, and the story follows three generations of the Stephanides family. The narrator is a hermaphrodite named Cal Stephanides. Cal narrates the story of his grandparents Desdemona and Eleutherios (Lefty), as they leave their home in Turkey, travel to America and establish themselves there. Cal’s grandparents are not only husband and wife, but third cousins and also brother and sister. Cal’s parents, Milton and Tessie are first cousins, and the result of these inter-family marriages results in Cal’s hermaphroditism. Cal’s state is not discovered by himself, his family doctor, or his family until he is fourteen. He is raised as an ‘all-American girl,’ in the 1970s. During his first few awkward teenage years, Cal feels different from other girls. When it is discovered that he has male genetic code and both male and female genitalia, Cal struggles with Dr. Luce, a specialist in sexuality, about whether Cal is a boy or a girl. Eventually Cal runs away. Although he lives the rest of his life as a man in both name and attire, he still feels the influence of his upbringing as a female. In the case of this novel, the ‘monster’ himself is the source of information rather than a separated observer. This variation from the older texts allows for a better understanding of how society reacts to monsters and what these reactions say about alterity. In connecting certain events of this novel to the source texts, society’s reasons for creating these boundaries will be revealed and questioned.

The first person narration of *Middlesex* puts the audience and the ‘monster’ on the same level. An example of this is seen when comparing Cal and Grendel from *Beowulf* through the idea of heredity. Just as Grendel’s monstrous nature is the inevitable result of his connection with Cain, so too is Cal’s nature the inevitable result of his family genes. However, Cal’s narration of the love stories of his parents and grandparents adds a more human and personal aspect to the story, whereas the explanation of Grendel’s lineage provides an automatic condemnation of Grendel. The audience is forced to view his character as a monster because that is the author’s opinion. In *Middlesex*, there is no monstrosity associated with the story of Cal’s ancestry. The lives of his ancestors are like many other romance stories familiar to the audience, so the audience sympathizes with the characters since they exist on the same level. There is less separation between the lives of the monstrous race and a ‘normal’ one, and thus a boundary is lost. This initiates a shift in perspective, since the lowering of this boundary allows for a broader view of alterity.

Cal explains that his hermaphroditism is caused by a recessive gene that has been passed down from generation to generation, and shows itself more easily through family’s intermarrying. This scientific definition and classification is the same sort of method employed by Isidore of Seville. Isidore found reasons for monstrosity in natural science, just as in modern times there are genetic reasons for the existence of

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<sup>136</sup>Andy Orchard, ‘Liber Monstrorum’ (trans), *Pride and Prodigies*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), l. 1.19.

hermaphrodites. Dr. Luce, the specialist that Cal is referred to writes in his case study: 'Blood tests confirmed an XY [male] chromosomal status. In addition, blood tests revealed that the subject was suffering from 5-alpha-reductase deficiency syndrom.'<sup>137</sup> Cal puts this into his own words saying:

Arrayed in their regiments, my genes carry out their orders. All except two, a pair of miscreants - or revolutionaries, depending on your view - hiding out on chromosome number 5. Together, they siphon off an enzyme, which stops the production of a certain hormone, which complicates my life.<sup>138</sup>

Cal is describing his cells splitting while he is still inside his mother's womb. This is another form of achieving a more personal relationship with the audience, by forming a bond with the reader starting from birth. He is also using science to explain his condition, being as accurate as possible. This attention to detail is not inherent in older texts like *Liber Monstrorum*. Accuracy is important since the facts allow for understanding and the stifling of superstition or false assumptions. Isidore of Seville shared this intention when he used science to reveal the natural qualities of monsters. However, biology does not explain the societal factors involved in identifying alterity. In the scientific sense, Cal fits into a category of people with this same genetic disorder, but in a societal sense his identity is anything but clear, as we can see through his struggle to classify himself as male or female.

Despite all the factual science that explains hermaphroditism, society still has preconceived notions of alterity, and certain connotations with words that have become part of our culture. For instance, when Cal looks up the word hermaphrodite in the dictionary, he finds that a synonym for it is 'monster.' Cal describes the experience saying: 'Here was a book that contained the collected knowledge of the past while giving evidence of present social conditions...The synonym was official, authoritative; it was the verdict that the culture gave on a person like her. Monster.'<sup>139</sup> The fact that the words 'monster' and 'hermaphrodite' are connected in a book of objective knowledge such as the dictionary reveals how strong and ageless society's notion of alterity is. These negative connotations still exist in modern times. As well, we recognize that Cal has the same connotations of the word as the rest of the 'normal' people of society. As he reflects on his feelings, he starts seeing himself in association with Big Foot and the Loch Ness Monster. Cal has the same preconceptions about monsters as the dictionary, and society. Like any member of society, Cal does not want to admit that he is a form of alterity. This can be seen in the previous quote where he refers to himself in the third person, 'her.' This is a form of creating boundaries. By separating himself from himself he is denying his own alterity. All members of society do this in some way, separating themselves from the issue. Examples of this follow.

Cal's desire to be normal, or at least perceived as normal, comes up frequently in the novel. He is like any other person, a typical subject of society trying to fit in with the masses and be accepted as a regular girl. Since he has been raised as a girl for the first fourteen years of his life, Dr. Luce assumes his sexuality is completely female, and that he identifies only with females despite his ambiguous biological gender. Although he has the mannerisms of a girl, Cal is attracted to females, a fact that he does not admit to Dr. Luce. During interviews with Luce, Cal pretends to maintain a feminine identity. Cal knows he is different but wants to appear normal and be part of a defined, generic group. When Luce offers to 'correct' or 'finish' Cal's reproductive organs, he is offering to let Cal fit into a specific social category of male or female and be normal as opposed to abnormal. Cal soon realizes, though, that what society defines as normal is not achieved through alterations or pretending. The term 'normal' is not a fixed concept:

I had miscalculated with Luce. I thought after talking to me he would decide that I was normal and leave me alone. But I was beginning to understand something about normality.

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<sup>137</sup>Jeffrey Eugenides, *Middlesex*, (Toronto: Random House, 2003), p.435-36.

<sup>138</sup>Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p.16

<sup>139</sup>Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p.431

Normality wasn't normal. It couldn't be. If normality were normal, everyone would leave it alone. They could sit back and let normality manifest itself. But people - especially doctors - had doubts about normality. They weren't sure normality was up to the job. And so they felt inclined to give it a boost.<sup>140</sup>

The procedure that Luce is offering involves surgically altering Cal's genitals and changing his hormonal structure synthetically through injections, while also taking away Cal's ability to feel erotic stimulation. Luce is offering to make him a normal woman. The desire to 'correct' what nature has made wrong reflects the ancient view of 'purifying' through the death or exile of the hermaphrodite prodigy. However, this desire to keep a status of normalcy is futile. Looking through Cal's eyes, the audience recognizes Luce's monstrosity in trying to change Cal. Luce does not have the authority to decide what is normal or not. It is the need for categorization that leads him to this extreme. In order to have control of the diversity of the world, Luce needs to categorize Cal and define him clearly as male or female. Luce shows how society is uncomfortable with accepting someone else's alterity since it makes one realize one's own alterity. In trying to make everyone 'normal,' society is denying that diversity exists, that we all exist in a state of alterity towards each other. One person's idea of normal is another person's idea of abnormal.

An example of this concept can be seen when Cal runs away from home and becomes homeless in San Francisco. While sleeping in a wooded area, Cal is attacked by two homeless men. They strip him in order to rob him of all he has. However, when they see that he is a hermaphrodite, they immediately call him a freak and begin to beat him. Their reaction to his different biology is a way of overcompensating for their own alterity. These men are also the 'other' to society, since they live lives apart from the social norm; they do not have a house, car, or job. By reacting violently towards Cal, they are trying to reaffirm their own normalcy, taking the side of society against this freak of nature. This scene shows that the 'other' can take on many different forms, not only as physical alterity, but also social alterity.

Soon after this incident, Cal finds a job at an erotic show where people pay money to watch him swim in a pool. In doing this, Cal is living up to Pliny's view of hermaphrodites, as he is providing erotic entertainment for the 'normal' people in society. Although he is being admired and appreciated, he is also being objectified and creating a boundary between himself and the rest of society, as he only works by being numbed by drugs like marijuana. This shows that the experience is more of a negative one, since he is trying to avoid the reality of the situation. However, it proves that not only society but also the monster can build boundaries. Cal does this again later in life when he resists commitment with women out of fear of disapproval or abandonment. Cal is creating a boundary between himself and his 'others' in order to make a safe area for himself. Like the rest of society, he has trouble accepting the differences that exist in the world.

One thing remains constant throughout: the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' become blurred when we are forced to take on the monster's perspective. This perspective helps us realize that they too can create boundaries, they too wish to be accepted members of society despite their differences, and like us they struggle with understanding the diversity in the world. Simply put, they are us. It just takes obvious variants like hermaphrodites to help us discover the subtle fact that we are all forms of alterity to each other.

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<sup>140</sup>Eugenides, *Middlesex*, p.446