

Allen Zhang  
Part 1s: Monstrosity List (final)  
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The following list covers a broad historical range of American and British texts, beginning with Renaissance treatments of monstrosity, moving through Gothic literary traditions in the nineteenth and twentieth century, and ending with contemporary figures of monstrosity, such as the vampire and the zombie. There are several difficulties with maintaining cohesion with such a list: in addition to transhistorical and transatlantic disparities, there is also the problem of mixing genre, since I move freely between fiction, non-fiction, drama, and poetry (although my list is largely comprised of either novels or essays).

In thinking about how to look at these texts as a single body, my first impulse is to adopt a method of historical materialism regarding monstrous bodies and the historically-contingent social ideologies they are embedded in. In other words, I would be reading each of the monstrous figures in the backdrop of what its production context construes as normality versus abnormality. This would be a simple way to describe a common thread of monstrosity as the threshold for the imagining normality while also accounting for transhistorical / transatlantic differences as relativist or progressive.

Under such a framework, my list would be roughly broken down into three historical periods with three different prevailing ideologies about monstrosity and normality. Broadly speaking, the first, beginning with the Renaissance period and lasting throughout the eighteenth century, treated physical monstrosity as a sign for deviance. Whether cast as deformed beggars or Swift's creatures in *Gulliver's Travels*, the monster signified the *other* of society as refracted through the lens of physiological normality. The next phase, beginning with Gothic traditions toward the end of the eighteenth century and stretching through to the mid-twentieth century, imagines monstrosity as a device that fails to signify. Between Burke's concept of the sublime, the unspeakable horror of Machen's *Great God Pan* and, later on, Lovecraft's representations of cosmic horror, the monster in this phase loses its signifying compass. Here, the horror the monster evokes is horrifying precisely because it reveals the impossibility of the distinction between normality and monstrosity. In the third phase, which I see beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (or even as early as the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with Hogg's "Confessions"), monsters look increasingly normal. With Crichton's depictions of androids in *Westworld* or Rice's vampire or Levin's Stepford wife, the monster remains a monster in pathology only, having lost its traditional function of signifying the other. This third phase is in some ways a radicalization of the second phase, since the monster no longer fails to signify, but rather, it signifies incorrectly (or from another perspective, it signifies uselessly, since it reveals the self rather than the other).<sup>1</sup>

However, while this periodizing framework is useful in getting all of the texts on the table at once, its limitations means that I also want to push back against it. For one, as I mentioned, such an approach is inherently progressivist and relativist, and I do not want

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<sup>1</sup> If postmodernism is a radicalization of modernism's great realization that realism does not always represent reality to suggest instead another level of removal that reality itself is unstable, then the difference I am drawing between the second and third phases of monstrosity might correspond to the paradigmatic shifts in literary modernism going into postmodernism. This is something I need to think through more carefully.

to simply chart the monster along a trajectory of historical development with no regard for contingency, not to mention proffer a lazy solution of matching the monster with its conditions of production (broadly speaking, pre-modernist, modernist, and postmodernist). To counterweigh my approach, I want to also look at this list structurally, around the idea of monstrosity as negative exemplarity.

In terms of classification, I argue that monsters are uniquely given the privilege of being both category and example. Specifically, looking at Bacon, I want to argue that for his classificatory ontology, knowledge discourse always develops dialectically between a knowledge category and the empirical examples that give it validity; when Bacon construes the category of monstrosity, the empirical impossibility of typifying the specific “deformed person” means that this dialectic is never complete.<sup>2</sup> Instead, the monster becomes the stand-in that validates its own category – a problem because it separates empiricism from exemplarity, giving root to a paradoxical dual conceptualization where on the one hand monsters are categorically monsters because they look like monsters, and on the other hand, where monsters look like monsters because they are categorically monsters. This isn’t a question of whether representation precedes or succeeds its idea, but rather, a question of what the monster looks like ontologically if the category of monstrosity is sustained by the differing iterations of not-normal.

By looking at the relationships between the three phases I outlined earlier under the lens of this structural framework of examining the monster as a negative example, I hope to stay away from the pitfalls of generalizing historical periodizations to instead come up with a more substantial conclusion about the shifts in concepts of monstrosity as they relate to what I am describing as negative exemplarity.

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<sup>2</sup> I have attached a small portion of a section I was working on about Bacon and exemplarity, which never made it into the article draft you had read earlier in the year. It is a few paragraphs that might more coherently explain some of the thoughts I am expressing here.

Primary texts (by date)

1. *Beowulf* (c. 800-1100)
2. Shakespeare, William. *Richard III* (c. 1592; drama)
3. Montaigne, Michel de. "On Cripples," "Of Physiognomy," and other selections from *Essays*. (c. 1570-1592; essay)
4. Bacon, Francis. "Of Deformity," "Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature," "Of Nature in Men," "Of Beauty," and other selections from *Essayes: Religious Meditations. Places of Perswasion and Disswasion. Seene and Allowed and Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (1612 and 1625; essay)
5. Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels* (1726; novel) and "The Lady's Dressing Room" (1732; poetry)
6. Pope, Alexander. *The Dunciad* (1728; poetry)
7. Hay, William. "Deformity: An Essay" (1754; essay)
8. Burke, Edmund. Selections from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. (1757; essay)
9. Scott, Sarah. *Millenium Hall* (1762; novel)
10. Aiken, John and Anna Laetitia Aikin. "On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror" and "On Romances." (1773; essay)
11. Radcliffe, Anne. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. (1794; novel) and "On the Supernatural in Poetry." (1826; essay)
12. Burney, Francis. *Camilla*. (1796; novel)
13. Lewis, Matthew. *The Monk*. (1796; novel)
14. Brown, Charles Brockden. *Wieland*. (1798; novel)
15. Hoffman, E. T. A. "The Sandman" (1816; short story)
16. Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. (1818; novel)
17. Hogg, James. *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824; novel)
18. Poe, Edgar Allen. "The Man That Was Used Up," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Ligeia," "Berenice" and other selections from *Tales of the Arabesque and Grotesque*. (1839; short story)

19. Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. (1847; novel)
20. Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. (1886; novella)
21. Wilde, Oscar. "The Birthday of the Infanta" (1888; short story) and *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1890; novel)
22. Machen, Arthur. *The Great God Pan*. (1890; novella)
23. Wells. H. G. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. (1896; novel)
24. Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. (1897; novel)
25. Perkins, Charlotte Perkins. "The Yellow Wallpaper." (1899; short story)
26. Lovecraft, H.P. "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (1926 / 1933; essay), "Dagon," "The Doom that Came to Sarnath," "The Terrible Old Man," "From Beyond," "Nyarlathotep," "The Outsider," "Herbert West – Reanimator," "The Unnamable," "The Call of Cthulhu," "Pickman's Model," "The Dunwich Horror," "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1919-1931; essay)
27. Matheson, Richard. *I am Legend* (1954; novel)
28. Levin, Ira. *The Stepford Wives*. (1973; novel)
29. Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire*. (1976; novel)
30. Dunn, Katherine. *Geek Love*. (1989; novel)
31. Palahniuk, Chuck. *Invisible Monsters* (1999; novel)
32. Sinha, Indra. *Animals People* (2008; novel)
33. Whitehead, Colson. *Zone One* (2011; novel)

Theory (by author)

1. Adams, Rachel. *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination*. (2001)
2. Canguilhem, Georges. *The Normal and the Pathological*. (1966 / 1991 trans)
3. Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Seven Theses" in *Monster Theory*. (1996)

4. Daston, Lorraine and Katherine Park. *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 115-1750* (1998)
5. Deutsch, Helen and Felicity Nussbaum. "Introduction" in "*Defects:*" *Engendering the Modern Body*. (1996)
6. Deutsch, Helen. Excerpts from *Resemblance and Disgrace*. (1996)
7. Fiedler, Leslie. *Freaks: Myths and Images of the Secret Self*. (1978)
8. Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny" (1919; essay)
9. Foucault, Michel and Arnold Davidson (ed). *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*. (2003)
10. Huet, Marie-Helene. *Monstrous Imagination*. (1993)
11. Hurley, Kelly. *Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the Fin de Siecle*. (2004)
12. Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. (1980)
13. Moretti, Franco. "Dialectic of Fear" in *Signs Taken for Wonders*. (1983)
14. Newitz, Annalee. *Pretend We're Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture*. (2006)
15. Sedgwick, Eve. *Coherence of Gothic Conventions*. (1986)
16. Steintrager, James. *Cruel Delight: Enlightenment Culture and the Inhuman*. (2004)
17. Thomson, Rosemarie Garland (ed.) "Introduction" in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*. (1996) and excerpts from *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Disability in American Culture and Literature* (1996)