Editorial Policy:

Articulate is published in the spring semester of each academic year and features student essays of literary and cultural criticism. Articulate will consider papers written by Denison undergraduates in any area of literary and cultural criticism and from any department or discipline.

Faculty members are encouraged to recommend particularly strong essays from their classes for publication in Articulate. As a special feature, Articulate publishes each year's winner of the Robert T. Wilson Award for Scholarly Writing.

During the review process, all information identifying the author is removed from the essay and the essays are read as anonymous works of writing. After all submissions have been read, the editorial board meets to discuss and choose the essays to be published. The identities of the authors are not revealed until all decisions have been made.

Call for Papers:

Submissions will be accepted throughout the academic year and should combine research with original insight. Submissions should not exceed fifteen typed, double-spaced pages, although essays of greater length which are of exceptionally high quality will be considered for publication. Please use MLA documentation.

Initial submissions should be in hard copy. Those writers selected for publication will be asked to submit an electronic manuscript of their work. Please submit your essay with a cover sheet including your name and Slayer box. The journal accepts submissions at any time during the academic year.

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Gardner's novel, published in 1971, postdates the major writings of Jacques Lacan, while it predates those of Julia Kristeva. In this essay, I attempt to situate Grendel between some of the major ideas of these two influential thinkers, while simultaneously using these ideas as the foundation for a discussion of language (and to a lesser extent, image) in the novel. In terms of modes of understanding, image and language come to represent two distinct realms: the imaginary order and the symbolic order. I first discuss Gardner's novel in relation to Lacan's work. Second, I consider the concept of the border as it relates to a Lacanian reading of the novel. Third, I further analyze the novel in terms of some of Kristeva's work. Finally, I consider Grendel's opposition to systems, whether linguistic or socio-political. As a mode of knowledge and power, how does language allow one to control who or what is deemed monstrous? Concomitantly, then, does language necessitate the creation of a monstrous-other? In considering this problem, I begin with the assumption that, since difference is inherent in a linguistic mode of understanding, language leads to social hierarchy. It goes without saying that the ramifications of this problem extend well beyond Gardner's novel.

L. Lacan's Mirror Stage and the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real Orders

Gardner's novel allows for a wide range of psychological and philosophical readings, from the Oedipal to the existential. A Lacanian reading of the text, however, works particularly well. Indeed, it is quite possible that Gardner had read and been influenced by Lacan's famous paper, "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience," presented in 1949, more than twenty years before Grendel was published. In this short paper, Lacan outlines the process by which a child moves from a pre-linguistic, pre-conscious state to one in which he or she has both acquired language and become self-conscious. Lacan describes this process as a movement from the imaginary order to the symbolic order, the transition being the mirror stage. There also exists a fourth element (a third order): the real order. The translator, Alan Sheridan, defines these terms more clearly than Lacan himself does. The imaginary order is "the world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined" (ix). In contrast, the symbolic order refers "not to icons, stylized figurations, but signifiers, in the sense developed by Saussure" (ix): "differential elements, in themselves without meaning, which acquire value only in their mutual relations" (ix). The real order "stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary, and remains foreclosed from the analytic experience, which is an experience of speech" (x). The imaginary order, or "what is prior to the assumption of the symbolic" (x), relates to the real order in that it is real in its "raw" state (x).

Finally, Sheridan points out that the "real" is not to be confused with reality, which is perfectly knowable: the subject of desire knows no more than that since for it reality is entirely phantasmatic (x). Thus, the real order is the constant, unchanging element in the series; it is "that which is lacking in the symbolic order, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped: the umbilical cord of the symbolic" (x). Sheridan suggests that language (the symbolic order) links the subject to the real order. Similarly, the image (the imaginary order) links the ego to the real order. In spite of these links, however, the ego and the subject are both separated from the real order, and are therefore defined by a lack, or desire.

The process by which Grendel leaves his mother's cave and discovers the world of men is quite similar to that developed by Lacan. Having acquired language, Grendel reflects upon his earlier mode of understanding, in what Lacan would decide to refer as the imaginary order. Grendel describes his mother's love for him: "She loved me, in some mysterious sense I understood without her speaking it. I was her creation. We were one thing" (17, italics mine). Here, understanding is achieved without speech; Grendel is still un-self-conscious, viewing himself as a part of his mother. Gradually, he grows aware of himself as a being separate from his mother. He learns of his separate identity from her glare: "When her strange eyes burned into me, it did not seem quite sure. I was intensely aware of where I sat, the volume of darkness I displaced, the shiny-smooth span of packed dirt between us, and the shocking separateness from me in my mama's eyes" (17). In seeing his mother's burning eyes, Grendel recognizes her as a separate being, thereby initiating a consciousness of self.

Grendel describes his new self-consciousness: "I observe myself, observing what I observe. It startles me. Then I am not that which observes! I am luck. Alack! No thread, no frailest hair between myself and the universal clutter! I listen to the underground river. I have never seen it—she is "taliking, taliking, spinning a skin" (29), a skin that will separate him from the
world at the same time that it allows him an understanding of it. This "skin" is, of course, language—or what Grendel calls "talking.

It is worth noting that Grendel describes his mother primarily in terms of her eyes. Although she lives in darkness, he tells us he "understood her". Grendel explains, "Of all the... creatures I know, in those days, only my mother really looked at me.—Stared at me as if to consume me, like a troll" (17). However, the other creatures in the cave also watch him: "on shelves or in hallways of my mother’s cave, large old shapes with smoldering eyes sat watching me" (16). Not only is the primary physical feature of Grendel's mother her burning eyes, but she is also bewitched—language—she neither speaks nor thinks. Grendel explains, "Not that she dissects and ponders the dusty mechanical bits..." (27). Instead of Grendel's mother, a bull appears in the waterfall; "Not that she thinks. I talked on, trying to smash through the walls of her..." (98). But Grendel's mother is not the only one who speaks. The monster enforces "the ties between men that keep a patriarchal society working" (13). Cohen continues, explaining how the monster serves "the ties between men that keep a patriarchal society functioning" (13) and "validate[s] a..." (13). The monster is emptied of its primitivism, its ability to "tease, torment [his] wits toward meaningful patterns that do not exist" (11). He exists neither in the imaginary order, nor in the symbolic order, but at the border of the two.

II. Policing the Border between the Imaginary Order and the Symbolic Order

In his essay "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," Cohen states that each monster is "a double narrative, two living stories: one that describes how the monster came to be and another, its testimony, detailing what cultural use the monster serves" (13). Cohen continues, explaining how the monster enforces "the ties between men that keep a patriarchal society functioning" (13) and "validate[s] a..." (13). The monster successfully polices the border because it "can no longer speak, only signify" (13). The monster is emptied of its previous identity and made to serve a normative function; its individual identity is replaced with a cultural one.

Cohen's novel, 'The Shaper,' is clearly folowed. Though communication between Grendel and humans is possible, the Shaper (Cohen's view of the Shaper) is used as a double narrative, two living stories: one that describes how the monster came to be and another, its testimony, detailing what cultural use the monster serves" (13). Cohen continues, explaining how the monster enforces "the ties between men that keep a patriarchal society functioning" (13) and "validate[s] a..." (13). The monster successfully polices the border because it "can no longer speak, only signify" (13). The monster is emptied of its previous identity and made to serve a normative function; its individual identity is replaced with a cultural one.

Gardner and his people. Even Grendel is seduced by the Shaper's convincing words:

"Even to me, incredibly, he had made it all seem true and very fine. Now a little, now more, a great roar began, an exhalation of breath that swelled to a rumble of voices and then to the howling and clapping and stomping of men gone mad on art. They would seize the ocean, the farthest stars, the deepest secret rivers in Hrothgar's name! (43)

The Shaper is in fact described as a sort of Anglo-Saxon version of Homer, "...a blind man... carrying a harp" (45). Curiously, Gardner's modern addition to the Beowulf epic fits this formula. Within Hrothgar's kingdom, religious rituals are seen as acts of showmanship; even the priests doubt the value of the rituals they perform. Gardner writes, "No one in the kingdom believes that the gods have life in them" (12S). Instead, people turn to the aesthetic ritual of storytelling performed by the Shaper. It is the Shaper's poetic (and propagandistic) reworking of the past—accompanied by harp—that genuinely interests Hrothgar's people. Even Grendel is seduced by the Shaper's convincing words:

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IV. Grendel as System-Destroyer

In her essay "Beowulf as Palimpsest," Ruth Waterhouse points out that, "The wide-ranging nature of the attack of such an Other upon individual and society and even upon the natural milieu... has been more and more narrowed in more recent monsters, but in Beowulf it is presented as being much more fundamentally against the structure of society and culture" (35). Thus, Grendel's attacks are not merely an act of violence, but "a threat to the whole fabric of society" (35). Waterhouse's comments apply to Gardner's novel as well. As Gardner portrays him, Grendel is opposed to "the structure of society and culture" at the same time that he is conscious of his need for this opposition to be sustained. Without it, he cannot define himself.

Grendel's opposition takes several forms. One of the most apparent is his mockery of religion; Waterhouse makes reference to Grendel as a monster "that perverts the central rite of Christianity with the eating of the body and blood of members of the [semi-Christianized] society" (34-35). In Gardner's novel, Grendel mocks Ork, an elder priest with poor vision, by becoming the voice of the "King of the Gods" (131) or "the Destroyer" (130), as he is known to the priests. Grendel manipulates the symbolic order by giving a voice to one of the gods; interestingly, only the priest who is unable to see falls for the ruse. This priest relies entirely on speech (that is, language), rather than image, for understanding. Thus, Grendel is able to use speech to manipulate the elderly priest's perception of the outside world.

For Grendel, what is truly monstrous is the "mechanical chaos" in which he lives: "Something is bound to come of all this. I cannot believe such monstrous energy of grief can lead to nothing" (123). Grendel knows that Hrothgar, with the aid of the Shaper, has wrought a system in which "the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process" (Foucault 224). This hierarchical system arises from the differential nature of language. Kristeva explains the origin of this differential mode of understanding: "The child's first so-called holophrastic enunciations include gesture, the object, and vocal emission... these enunciations separate an object from the subject and attribute to it a semiotic fragment, which thereby becomes a signifier" (40). This act "constitutes an attribution, which is to say, a positing of identity or difference, and... it represents the nucleus of judgment or proposition" (40). Thus, judgment—the attribution of value—is inherent in language. It is for this reason that Grendel is a rim-walker, occupying the border of the symbolic order, and opposing a system in which the mode of understanding itself leads to social hierarchy.

Works Cited


The last few years have revealed an explosion in American mainstream awareness about two rather peculiar and apparently unrelated phenomena. The first and most disquieting trend rising to the top of the American consciousness is the fact that more adolescents are being diagnosed with depression, being placed upon anti-depressants, and killing themselves than in previous decades. A plethora of studies, articles, and a hysterical mass-media trumpeting of doom states that we are now raising a generation of emotionally-crippled teenagers who seem peculiarly obsessed with their own sadness, and whose parents are increasingly concerned with the delicacy of their psyches. The other incident is the recent explosion of rock music sub-genre known as “emo-core” or, more succinctly, “emo.” The term emo is short for “emotional” and is most often used to describe a certain form of the genre that morphed its way into a profitable form of rock that seemed to be beginning approaching its zenith of popularity in an era that was becoming gradually aware of and obsessed with depression in its teenagers. I will first establish the evidence that perceptions of adolescent depression occurred alongside real statistical increases in adolescent suicide and consumption of anti-depressants. Given this climate, I will demonstrate that the entrance of emo into the market has been accompanied by a focus on who the music is for, namely adolescents in the throes of emotional pain. The exhaustion of every possible synonym for “sad” in conjunction with descriptions found in mainstream publications allows us to peer into the dining rooms of various media conglomerates, sharpening their knives in anticipation of yet another feast of consumption.

Reviews and articles galore all shunt the focus of the popular emo movement to towards a point where style and supposed substance indicated by emotional pain meet. A new trend is born, conveniently defined by cultural tastemakers, replete with directions on who it is for and what fashion it is associated with, and only fifteen years late this time.

It is all too easy to establish that there is at the very least a dramatically increased perception of the problem of depression in children and teenagers. The term “depression” itself has been applied to cover everything from depression in pop-punk bands singing about broken hearts to extremely inaccessible and obscure groups that included as essential components of their sound extreme loud-soft dynamics, theatre, shredding screaming, and compositions of ten to fifteen minutes long. Over the last few years, interestingly concurrent with the spate of articles regarding adolescent depression and medication, the term emo has grown in popularity and the bands it has been applied to have increased their viability as a commercial music form.

In its current form, emo is widely seen in popular culture as punk-influenced music with lyrics about being really sad or really angry, but in a sensitive way (Buch & Johnson 1). This is (still vague) categorization that I will be dealing with. It should come as no surprise, then, that this feelings-and-internalization-fixed form of the genre that morphed its way into a profitable form of rock that would begin approaching its zenith of popularity in an era that was becoming gradually aware of and obsessed with depression in its teenagers. I will first establish the evidence that perceptions of adolescent depression occurred alongside real statistical increases in adolescent suicide and consumption of anti-depressants. Given this climate, I will demonstrate that the entrance of emo into the market has been accompanied by a focus on who the music is for, namely adolescents in the throes of emotional pain. The exhaustion of every possible synonym for “sad” in conjunction with descriptions found in mainstream publications allows us to peer into the dining rooms of various media conglomerates, sharpening their knives in anticipation of yet another feast of consumption. Reviews and articles galore all shunt the focus of the popular emo movement to towards a point where style and supposed substance indicated by emotional pain meet. A new trend is born, conveniently defined by cultural tastemakers, replete with directions on who it is for and what fashion it is associated with, and only fifteen years late this time.

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emphases upon feelings of sadness and self-obsession, hallmarksof depression are obvious, and the division of kids into the beams of mediocrity being emitted from the underground.

Sanneh writes, "Como [as in Commotion] Over Emo [as in Emotion]." The September 19 (see Appendix A). In it, "Am I Emo?" fashion spread in its August 2002 issue (59). The smirk on the face of the mechanisms of mass culture, the נהנה to the sounds of America's best dressed fake out. So dance, dance, dance...
wear “Converse or Vans” for shoes, along with a plethora of other brand names conveniently side-barred: Lucky Brand jeans, Jansport backpacks, CK jeans, a Sony Discman, Doc Martens, and so on (176). It is eerily reminiscent of a decade prior, when fashion magnates declared grunge to be the new “it” style and tried incorporating flannel into three hundred dollar skirts. In both cases, the supposed articulated angst of a generation has been eventually packaged and sold as a clothing line. Since the genre was born from a non-commercial aesthetic, this appropriating of the music, history, and style has of course met with resistance, expressed in Sunny Day Real Estate’s “The Shark’s Own Private Fuck”:

Believing the fear that drives your greed
When you discover the empty place
A hollow world of instant pleasures
The way you were so disturbed
What’s your worth? What is it you heard?
Try to smile as they devour our youth.

Resistance, however, is past futile, until the next pop culture trend with marketplace potential comes along.

The burgeoning popularity of “emo” both as a popular music genre and as a fashion-based lifestyle is undeniable given its proliferation in the past few years. Similarly undeniable is the preponderance of evidence suggesting a rise in adolescent depression and asserting an increase in adolescent suicide and anti-depressant use. The coinciding time frames of increased mainstream perception of these trends would not suggest a correlation if it were not for the constant, unabashed advertising of “emo” as music for the emotionally downtrodden or authenticity obsessed. A barrage of articles, features, and reviews all triumphantly declared that the next big thing in rock had arrived, and that it was for kids that were “real” and “deep” and, yes, “depressed.” The self-obsession of most of the music and its trends would not suggest a correlation if it were not for the coinciding rise in adolescent depression and suicide, it is only discernible given its proliferation in the past few years. Similarly undeniable is the preponderance of evidence suggesting a rise in adolescent depression and asserting an increase in adolescent suicide and anti-depressant use. The coinciding time frames of increased mainstream perception of these trends would not suggest a correlation if it were not for the constant, unabashed advertising of “emo” as music for the emotionally downtrodden or authenticity obsessed. A barrage of articles, features, and reviews all triumphantly declared that the next big thing in rock had arrived, and that it was for kids that were “real” and “deep” and, yes, “depressed.” The self-obsession of most of the music and its trends would not suggest a correlation if it were not for the coinciding rise in adolescent depression and suicide, it is only discernible given its proliferation in the past few years.

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Resistance, however, is past futile, until the next pop culture trend with marketplace potential comes along.
The division between universalists and cultural relativists is a major issue in any human rights debate. This divide can impede rational discussion and encourage arguments over theory rather than the practical issues at hand. Universalists believe that human rights standards are identical for everyone and that the same standards should be applied to all people and observed by all authorities. Cultural relativists, on the other hand, believe that human rights must be mediated by the values of distinct cultures and that every culture should be able to define and follow its own notion of human rights. This division exists within the international women's rights lobby, embodied most obviously in the division between white, middle-class, Western academics and non-Western activists. The universalist theory has dominated the international women's rights lobby, with some Western activists even appearing unaware of the alternative theory. However, there is a strong opposition to universalism within the lobby. Cultural relativists argue that universalism is generally articulated by middle-class, heterosexual, Western women whose concerns do not represent the concerns of all women. Activists have been able to compromise on potentially divisive issues, such as the usefulness of rights-based language and the struggle between different kinds of rights. This cooperative spirit was based on reciprocal dialogue and discussion, which fostered well before preparations for the Vienna Conference began, starting during the UN Decade for Women.

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Creating Dialogue

As the preceding brief overview of the development of the international women’s rights movement indicates, active grassroots and regional organizations aided inter- and intra-cultural dialogue. The women’s lobby historically relied on grassroots organizations and was skilled at organizing at the local level (Friedman 24). A major strength of the international women’s movement was its reliance on strong local bases, without assistance from established non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or home governments, sometimes even in the face of active opposition (Bunch, "Organizing" 146). The global conferences during the UN Decade for Women allowed these local organizations to form networks, facilitating dialogue. This dialogue was crucial to narrowing the theoretical division between universalists and cultural relativists. Face-to-face communication was vital for building trust between the various groups. During these meetings, women from opposite theoretical positions talked together. Cultural relativists expressed their frustration that Western universalists dominated the human rights debate, that feminist critiques of the human rights framework were grounded in Western concerns, and that Western concerns did not resonate with the rest of the world (Kerr 167).

Instead of allowing this disagreement to fragment the movement, the international women’s lobby focused on reaching a mutual understanding through discussion and dialogue. In the women’s rights lobby, women who highlighted differences of opinion were seen as helping to identify previously unknown protests and perspectives, rather than as isolating members from each other (Farley 179). Openly confronting and respecting these differences actually made the movement stronger and more unified.

Although this development may seem fairly obvious at this point, it was a major step forward for the women’s rights lobby, one that few other human rights movements have been able to take. The activists within the women’s lobby made this step forward because they had to. Cultural relativists expressed their frustration that women’s rights have been able to work together. Working beyond the theoretical boundaries of separation, they are still able to recognize that they share common concerns—up to a point. Even when activists reach this point of separation, they are still able to recognize that they share common interests. This recognition made it easier for them to work together, since they concentrated on their similarities instead of their differences.

The international women’s lobby was united in its belief that current human rights law was insufficient. During preparations for the Vienna Conference, there was a nearly unanimous agreement within the women’s lobby that human rights had to be reinterpreted to protect women’s rights (Kerr 158) and that the only way to accomplish this goal was through a well-organized, coordinated, international women’s lobby (Bunch, "Organizing" 166). Although activists in the women’s rights lobby might have disagreed on which issues were most important or deserved more emphasis, they all believed that women’s issues needed more visibility, respect, and recognition.

Recognizing Common Issues

These active local and regional organizations, communicating together through established global networks, would have accomplished little if they had not identified a common ground to start from. Finding this common ground was important and difficult. When talking about women’s issues, it is important to avoid falling into the trap of essentialism—assuming that all women share identical concerns and experiences (Charlesworth, "What" 62). Women’s rights activists have widely varying concerns; for instance, Western women often focus on domestic violence and harassment, while African women tend to emphasize traditional practices that are harmful to women and Asian women focus on prostitution and trafficking.

Even though women have a range of experiences and concerns, there are some issues that are common to all women. ([Platonically and the devolution of women," writes Hilary Charlesworth, "although manifested differently within different societies, are almost universal" (62). Education, access to health care, property rights, and access to loans and grants concern all women, from developed and developing countries, North and South, universalist and cultural relativist. Recognizing these common issues gave the international women’s rights lobby a starting point.

Jeffrey Stout articulates the value of dialogue and recognition of common issues in his concept of “kinship.” "Kinship," writes Stout, "is a special kind of similarity, brought about by sharing a common history of development up to a certain point and then separating. [Kinship] engrails many close similarities in vocabulary, attitude, and reasoning that could turn out to be useful in adjudication" (218).

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A common complaint across the international women’s rights lobby was that because international human rights constructs were created and dominated by men, they tended to reflect men’s experiences and exclude women (Charlesworth, "Men’s Rights" 103). One such construct in international human rights law is the dichotomy between life’s public and private spheres. Most members of the women’s lobby agree that this distinction is dangerous for women. Women are almost universally relegated to the private sphere of the home and family, which is considered less valuable than the public sphere. Although exactly which activities are considered ‘public’ or ‘private’ vary from culture to culture, it is not the activity but rather which sex performs the activity that determines what the category (Charlesworth, "What" 69). While women can be victims of public or state-sponsored human rights violations, most violations of women’s human rights, including abuse, rape, and murder, take place in the private sphere, which is unprotected by international law (Charlesworth, "Men’s Rights" 107).

Further, feminist critics of international human rights law argue that the framers of the 1948 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights were, for the most part, privileged men who focused on the public sphere at the exclusion of the private sphere. These men protected public and political rights because these rights were, in their experience, what was most likely to be violated. They did not explicitly protect the private sphere since they had no fear of their rights being violated in this area (Bunch, "Transforming" 13). Before the Vienna Conference, international law operated almost exclusively in the public sphere.

All members of the women’s lobby agreed that the boundaries of international human rights law had to be extended to include the private sphere, or the subordination of women would continue (Charlesworth, "What" 71). Charlesworth argues that private violations of women’s human rights are not really private; they are part of the "structure of universal subordination of women" (107). International law encourages the protection of individuals from the state and tends to view the family as a unit in need of protection from the state, not as individuals who could potentially need to be protected from each other (Sullivan 126).

The recognition of common concerns was visible at the Vienna Conference in the women’s lobby’s choice to focus on violence against women. That recognition culminated in a statement affirming the importance of "working towards the elimination of violence against women in public and private life, and in all its forms, including those committed in the context of armed conflict or in the context of peacetime" (20). The international women’s lobby’s choice
to focus on this issue at Vienna not only made it more diffi-
cult for their opponents to argue against them — who, after all,
could counter any support violence against women? — but also made internal divisions much less likely.

**Compromising on Potentially Controversial Issues**

The international women’s rights lobby neutralized a potentially divisive issue, the debate over the uselessness of international human rights law. In the wider human rights debate, there is a major division between those who believe human rights laws are sufficient for ensuring the well-being of the world’s citizens and those who believe rights-based language alone is insufficient for the task. In preparing for the Vienna Conference, the women’s movement agreed that, as helpful as rights language is, its effectiveness is limited (Cook 4). Activists believed that rights language alone would not be sufficient to protect women’s human rights. They also agreed that present articulations of human rights law were insufficient to address women’s needs.

However, rights language offered some powerful advantages which the women’s lobby found appealing. Rights language is an established tool recognized as legitimate by many of the world’s authorities. Including women’s rights in the human rights frameworks puts the force of the established UN structure behind the international women’s rights lobby. Even if they offer inadequate protection, current articulations of human rights law give groups some measure of protection that is insufficient for women’s needs.

Although some analysts say that “women’s disadvantages are often based on structural injustice and winning a case in court will not change this” (Charlesworth quoted in Cook 5), activists believed that rights language alone was insufficient for protecting women’s human rights. In the preparations leading up to the Vienna Conference, the women’s movement agreed that, as helpful as rights language is, its effectiveness is limited (Cook 4). Activists believed that rights language alone would not be sufficient to protect women’s human rights. They also agreed that present articulations of human rights law were insufficient to address women’s needs.

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however, one person cannot observe herself and people like her and then use those observations to describe someone else (Lugones and Spelman 500).

To create this spirit of friendship, all the groups involved must be patient, open to new ideas, and willing to learn from each other. They must understand their commonalities, while respecting their differences. Western women face the added challenge of giving up some measure of their power. The authors caution them not to use their power to overwhelm marginalized groups with their education or require other groups to use dominant Western languages (Lugones and Spelman 505). Instead, Western women need to be unobtrusive and should use their influence to "provide space and time for other women to speak" (Lugones and Spelman 504). Western women's rights activists have an obligation to give up their traditional dominance, not out of any paternalistic guilt, but simply because this Western dominance "seriously harms" marginalized groups (Lugones and Spelman 499).

This theory is far from complete and is very much a work in progress; however, it seems that the international women's lobby is beginning to articulate such a new theory. The elements Lugones and Spelman describe—mutual respect, reciprocal dialogue, concern for the other's well-being, and recognition of common issues—are all apparent in the development of the international women's movement, in the preparations for the Vienna Conference, and at the conference itself. The groups and networks that were developed in preparation for the Vienna Conference are still active and focused on making sure women's human rights are a part of upcoming UN conferences (Friedman 31). As these groups continue to use international networks and discuss issues in search of a mutual consensus, they move closer to articulating an alternative theory of human rights.

Works Cited


Frankenstein and Frank from The Wasp Factory exist in a position of liminality. Iain MacKenzie, in his essay, "Limits, Liminality and the Present: Foucault's Ontology of Social Criticism," explains liminality as a period of transition when "the past has lost its grip and the future has not taken definite shape. Such times are those which problematise the existing moral and social structures...from the process of transition itself" (MacKenzie). Monsters serve as configurations of the liminal, as the liminal personae who cannot escape the experience of liminality, or marginality. As such, they have been separated from the existing social structure with no promise of aggregation, of unification into a new society (and it would take a "new society" to include uncategorized, i.e. monstrous, persons such as these). Thus, the liminal personae is considered "structurally invisible": "they are at once no longer classified and not yet classified" (MacKenzie). Victor Turner furthers the idea of the liminal to constitute a realm "of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise;" an arena "where we are dealing...with the essentially unstructured," and a time "associated with the unbounded, the infinite, the limitless" (Mac). Turner emphasizes the transitional element of liminality, marking it as both conceptually and physically unrealized. I will argue that liminal constructions are unrealized for one of two reasons: 1) we have not created a category to place the liminal in, or 2) we willfully refuse to categorize the liminal. Either way, they become monstrous formations, or as Jeffrey Cohen puts it, "disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bod- ies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration" (6). Cohen argues that because of the monster's "ontological liminality," the monster "notoriously appears at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematises the clash of extremes—as that 'which questions binary thinking and introduces a crisis'" (6).

In both Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and Iain Banks' The Wasp Factory, the monster's liminality helps to reveal the transcendental conceptions of sex, gender, and power. Both the Creature and Frank deal with the anxiety of their marginality by seeking to destroy the system that cre- ated them (and abandoned them) as well as the "perfect be- ings" who fit neatly into the ordered system. However, while the Creature in Frankenstein desires to be included into the dominant structure of being—into a categorized structure, Frank insists on resisting categories, and, as a reenslaved, disrup- ts the binaries of dominant society. Frank says, "But

I am still me; I am the same person, with the same memories and the same deeds done, the same (small) achievements, the same (apalling) crimes to my name" (182). Even though Frank finds out he is a girl, and not a castrated boy as he was led to believe by his father, he still defines himself as the uncategorized, inviting us to include him/her into the struc- ture of being; or rather, and more appropriately, to exclude us.

In this essay, I will use a gender analysis to explore the monster as the liminal Other. First, I will portray the Creature from Frankenstein as a sexless liminal personae whose despair is caused, in part, by society's inability to include it into the structure of being. Second, I will argue that Frank from The Wasp Factory, like the Creature, is a sexless monster of the not-fully-functional variety (castrated). When given the opportunity to become fully sexed (operational female), Frank refuses to throw away his/her identity as the "unsexed," which is part of who Frank is, part of Frank's history of liminality. Finally, I will argue that while Mary Shelley's Creature is a liminal monster that disrupts gender, its longing to be included into the bourgeois system of gender and class protects the author and her audience from any real or dangerous threat of destruction. Put simply, the Crea- ture is a monster who wants to reject its monstrosity, its power to destroy the way things are. Frank, on the other hand, accepts his liminal status, and unlike the Creature, is not head- over-heels in love with beautiful, perfect beings who define what it means to be normal. The key turning point for Frank is not when he is supposedly castrated at the beginning of the novel, but when Frank is told that [he] is actually a "nor- mal" female. It is Frank's rejection of femininity and em- brace of a female masculinity that keeps [her] outside of the situated gender categories. Frank is the more disruptive monster of the two novels. By accepting her monstrosity, she remains a continuing threat to everyone not in her posi- tion of liminality.

Shelley's Monster: The Creature Wants to Play, Too Cohen argues that the monster is "difference made flesh, come to dwell among us" (7). The difference for the Creature lies in the inability to classify it as anything human or natural. As a non-human, it is difficult to establish the creature's sex, even though it was constructed in the like- ness of a "male." Victor, the monster's creator, initially avoids referring to his creation's gender or sex. His first concep- tions of it are "a being of gigantic stature" and "a new
species" (58). We are led to ask, does this mean that the Creature simply has the features of a male, whose unsurpassed strength, gruff voice, and stature serve as an antithesis to "female"? Or does this mean that the Creature actually has a penis? Given the time Frankenstein was written (early 1800s), it can be speculated that terms such as "trans-sexual" or "hermaphroditic" were not in wide use. The binary structure of gender and sex of the time period is interdependent with the language of the time, which was centered on the he/she distinction. There were no other words other than "he" or "she," so it is not surprising that the Creature may be more like "he" or she, without fully being either. This sexual un-classification is the crux of the mystery of the Creature, and this is the mystery which makes such an aberration scary. Not only is the question of a penis key to the conceptualization of the imperfect Creature, it is a question Mary Shelley deliberately worked on in specific material practices, which helps form a rich "system of representations," that values money, property, and sensibility. It says, "where we are dealing...with..." (192) The Creature lost the bout before it stepped into the ring. The Creature's "don't worry, be happy" suicide speech to Walton was preceded by an infatuation with bourgeois life and resulted in a devotion to preserve that life for everybody else. The Creature's unquenchable thirst for destruction becomes quenched; his evil fire is doused, and he reverts back to the elite's system of values. Instantaneously after his transformation, he adopts a bourgeois conscience and declares that he will destroy himself: "'Fear not that I shall be the instrument of future mischief... Neither yours nor any man's death is needed to consume the secrets of my being, and accomplish that which must be done; but it requires my own. Do not think that I shall be slow to perform this sacrifice" (188). Mary Shelley created an indeterminate creature that the most perfect and able-bodied human could not even destroy. If every monster truly has a weak spot, then Shelley forgot to give one to the monster. Unlike Dracula, who cannot avoid the wooden stake, or the werewolf, who gets a steady diet of silver, the Creature seems to have no apparent vulnerabilities. Well, except for one. The Creature loves its creator too much. Of my creation and I was absolutely ignorant; but I know that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property... Oh, that I had for ever remained in my native wood, nor known or felt before the sensations of hunger with the tooth" (109). When the Creature loses its last hope of acquiring bread or money, he becomes a "monster" that will destroy itself. It is as if Shelley's own creation was getting out of hand, and she had to kill it off with a last-minute suicide. If we were to use the most up-to-date medical terminology of today, we could argue that Frank, at the end The Wasp Factory, is a polymorphously transsexual who suffered the castration of male genitals (which never existed) but whose lack thereof causes Frank to conceive of himself as unsexed, and thus cut off—or castrated—from a masculine society, which, in turn, causes him to live liminally outside of the structured order of things, an order that, because of its power to define and assign, still affects the way he perceives his own gender. Like the Creature, Frank is a castrated male—he is supposed to be a male but lacks the biology that normally distinguishes one as such. Since he can no longer engage in sexual reproduction, he is a castrated male whose masculinity was hyper-violent, aggressive, burly, etc., we now see Frank as having "female masculinity," a term Judith Halberstam evoked in 1998. Female masculinity characterizes women who do not "identify according to the logics and bodily tropes of femininity" (Wiegman 48). It is another way of saying that masculinity is separate from biological sex, and that they are not interdependent.

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the essentially unstructured” (MacKenzie). Any conceptions of gender or sex within the novel can never be fully realized, only revealed. In the end, Frank is the more dangerous monster, because she remains the liminal Other, a threat to all the categories of gender because she refuses to be defined by those categories. The Creature from Frankenstein is only a part-time threat. Not only does the Creature consistently struggle to define itself according to the values of a bourgeois system, it eventually submits its life to the system, thereby ending its reign as the liminal monster.

Works Cited


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