EPITAPH

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Biannual Undergraduate American Studies Journal

The Hacettepe University Department of American Culture and Literature

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from the board…

We are honored to present the Fall 2025 edition of *Epitaph*: Biannual Undergraduate American Studies Journal. Since our founding, *Epitaph* has sought to highlight the rigor, creativity, and critical force of undergraduate scholarship in American Studies. Our second issue continues that mission by gathering work that probes how identity, bodily, spatial, and digital, has been crafted, contested, and reimagined across cultural landscapes.

The articles in this edition range across genres and geographies, yet they share a commitment to uncovering the subtle and structural ways power shapes cultural narratives. One interview engages with Dr. Ann Fox to reinterpret disability not as a medical defect but as a vital social identity, revealing how "crip" epistemologies dismantle the myths surrounding the non-normative body. An essay on Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children turns to the "monstrous female body," tracing how liminal characters like Emma Bloom and Bronwyn Bruntley challenge traditional gender performance through their very existence. A comparative study of Los Angeles and Casablanca reconstructs the urban logistics of two port cities, illuminating how colonization, water scarcity, and infrastructure dictate the movement of power and people. A historical analysis of the Thirteen Colonies exposes how early regional divergences in religion and economics created the cultural fault lines that would eventually fracture the American nation. Another essay reinterprets Cyberpunk as the digital legacy of American Gothic fiction, arguing that the genre's technological anxieties are merely a digitization of the uncanny and the haunted. And a dialogue with Dr. Cem Kılıçarslan explores how Science Fiction cinema serves as a laboratory for deconstructing American myths, from the frontier to the "Othering" of alien life. Across this issue, including creative writings, readers will find narratives that dismantle tidy definitions of normalcy, revealing instead the political, gendered, and spatial forces that structure our reality.

In a moment when identity politics, urban resilience, and technological acceleration continue to challenge our interpretive frameworks, the field of American Studies offers perspective and urgently needed clarity. The past and the speculative future equip us to confront the present by revealing

the origins of our categories, the structures supporting our institutions, and the human consequences of systems built in the name of progress.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the authors, whose dedication and intellectual curiosity drive this journal; to our devoted editorial team; and to the Hacettepe University Department of American Culture and Literature for their continued support. Most importantly, we thank you, our readers, for engaging with these histories and for sustaining the conversations that make *Epitaph* possible. We hope this issue challenges, informs, and inspires.

Kind Regards,

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı and İremsu Sak

Editors-in-Chief

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Interview with Cem Kılıçarslan

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı: Dear *Epitaph* readers, we are here with Dr. Cem Kılıçarslan today. He is a scholar in the American Studies department at Hacettepe University, focusing on film studies. Today, we are going to talk about Cem Kılıçarslan's primary academic focus, film studies, and their importance, symbols, societal implications, and more. Professor, thank you for this opportunity and warm welcome. Let's start with the first question.

Cem Kılıçarslan: Thank you very much for inviting me. It's a pleasure for me to join your initiative.

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı: Could you tell us about your academic journey and what motivated you to enter this field?

Cem Kılıçarslan: Well, I graduated from this department in 1992 and then became a research assistant here, and it followed. I have come all the way to this point as an assistant professor, now. But in terms of science fiction, I guess it's more like a childhood interest that later on reached a more mature form. I was born in the 1970s, a time when space travel was very fresh because man had stepped on the moon in '69. So, for any child growing up then, the 1970s were a time of space and all related kinds of things, space travel. And of course, science fiction was a natural offshoot of that. But then, when we came to the 1980s, computers came. So that was a kind of novelty. And computers entered our home, computers and computer revolution, and cyberpunk was the name of the time in science fiction.

My early career spanned a period of significant academic shifts, particularly in the 1990s and 2000s, when pursuing master's or PhD studies in science fiction became a practical reality. My own academic journey began with an MA focusing on Kurt Vonnegut's two doomsday novels. I then took a bolder step for my PhD, exploring the relationship between science fiction and American culture, informed by the philosophy of pragmatism. Following this, my interest shifted toward the practical side of science fiction, writing and production. I also felt a sense of national obligation, leading me to develop an interest in, and begin researching, Turkish science fiction.

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı: That's fascinating, professor. Since the line between science fiction and fantasy is often indistinct, how do you differentiate or acknowledge their overlap, especially in cinematic contexts?

Cem Kılıçarslan: That's a profoundly complex question that hasn't been definitively answered. Science fiction and fantasy are often grouped together because they are both imaginative genres where imagination is central. However, as its name implies, science fiction requires a connection to a scientific element, theory, or agent, something recognizably "scientific." Fantasy, in contrast, is unconstrained by such boundaries. It can be more dreamlike, hallucinatory, or simply alternative, free from the necessity of scientific plausibility or novelty.

While this is a very basic distinction, many works blend the two. The ultimate classification often depends on individual perspective and definition, whether one labels a work as science fiction, fantasy, or both simultaneously. My own teaching required me to engage with fantasy more deeply, forcing me to understand the genre on its own terms. Science fiction contains a speculative element, like the concept of a time machine (which is currently impossible), though the impulse to be "bolder" is sometimes incorrectly attributed solely to fantasy. So, fantasy for me is a totally different discussion, and I think many people would protest that view, but I began to agree more and more with the idea that fantasy is the bigger title, an umbrella term, under which science fiction could also be placed. That is, science fiction is a type of fantasy. A type of modern way of imagining things with certain kinds of conditions. Whereas fantasy has other subgenres, apart from science fiction, where you're not bound by elements of science. But I think the keyword here is rationality or irrationality, in which I think over time we begin to understand and appreciate the function of the irrational in the history of mankind or man's intellectual thought.

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı: Given your background in American culture and studies, how do you see American "myths" like the frontier, exceptionalism, or specifically the American dream being reproduced, challenged, or dismantled within American science fiction and fantasy? Also, how might these works differ from genre productions originating in other regions?

Cem Kılıçarslan: That's another expansive topic. When observing or reacting to certain recognized elements, I realized the extent to which much of the science fiction I encountered, such as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and many works by Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke, is distinctly American. While they fit under broader Western civilizational narratives, they are fundamentally American stories.

For instance, as a child, I watched *Battlestar Galactica* on TRT, but only later, as a professor here, did I grasp that it parallels the historical story of the Mormons in America. Similarly, many episodes of *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* engage with core American elements and myths, particularly the frontier. This connection is why we have the "Space Western" genre; these science fiction works essentially reveal themselves to be Westerns transplanted into space. Sometimes the link is direct, with traditional stories moved into a science fiction setting. You can interpret this as a sort of nationalistic projection by Americans into an alien, wilderness environment, even a form of expansionism, a self-justifying drive into a perilous frontier. Therefore, I believe a substantial American element is present in most science fiction works we consume today.

So, I'm not saying that every person who is interested in science fiction should also study American history, but it does help a lot. And also, if you learn about American culture, American novels, and American cultural elements that still shape American policies today, you can extend all these kinds of discussions into science fiction works as well. For example, there are today university-level courses, even programs, such as international relations through science fiction, American history and culture through science fiction. So, I think there's a great deal of overlap or associative relationship between these two elements, American culture and history, and modern science fiction, which is especially made in the West.

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı: Speaking of the "others", I mean, non-human beings, from a cultural studies perspective, how do you see the function of the "other", and how these

serve as allegories that relate to contemporary social anxieties such as race, immigration, or xenophobia?

Cem Kılıçarslan: That is a beautiful question, and in a way, it contains its own answer. When you watch or read science fiction featuring extraterrestrials, you can't help but ask: 'Don't they stand for something other than just being aliens?'. A close examination often leads to the conclusion that these monsters or beings are not necessarily new civilizations, but rather existing cultural elements extrapolated and relocated into a pseudo-futuristic setting. Generally, the portrayal of these intelligent aliens mirrors historical encounters, much like Western expansion meeting indigenous populations. You see this in the first category of 'others,' who are often depicted as traditionalist, embodying a grand, unquestioned culture reminiscent of the 'noble savage' trope. They are focused on stability rather than societal evolution. Consequently, the human protagonists, representing 'us', are shown to have no immediate use for the aliens' culture but feel entitled to their natural resources. You see them acquiring 'magic crystals' or similar assets, which, of course, symbolize real-world resources like oil.

Then, there is a second category: aliens who are fundamentally equal to humans but culturally different. These groups are generally characterized as totalitarian, mass-minded, and authoritarian, discouraging individuality. Historically, they have stood in for 'Oriental' cultures or the 20th-century American rival, the Soviet Union. They are often portrayed with a 'hive mentality,' sometimes even reduced to the level of bugs. In contrast, the human protagonists are depicted as individualistic and freedom-minded. This thematic framework reveals a lot about how American culture deals with the concept of the 'other.' In narratives like *Star Trek*, you see an attempt to incorporate them. The message is, 'Hey, we can be friends. I know your culture is different.' It is a form of Americanization where the 'other' is respected but ultimately absorbed into the crew. But some aliens are depicted as impossible to incorporate. They are the monster-like, animalistic beings found in movies like *Aliens*. They are reduced to parasites whose sole purpose is to exterminate you. Since there is no common ground, the only solution is to get rid of them. That is why I am always curious, when looking at any new science fiction work, to see what types of 'others' they introduce. The interpretation of the stranger has evolved through time, oscillating between 'we can be friends' and 'they are enemies we cannot live with.' It is a very dynamic field that gives you a great deal

of material to understand how American culture, politics, and foreign relations actually function.

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı: Moving on to social or political critique, could you suggest a more recent work that focuses specifically on the economic or social critique within American culture or series?

Cem Kılıçarslan: Considering the explicit examples from the early 21st century, and bearing in mind the ongoing economic difficulties that began around 2008, we observe Americans engaging directly with economic crises. This engagement has led to a questioning of American materialism and the limitations of capitalism itself. Consequently, discussions have emerged about necessary societal changes, critiquing the existing system and exploring alternatives. The question became: 'Okay, what else? What can we do?'

This discussion leans toward either utopian or dystopian possibilities. A key example is the film *In Time*, where time essentially replaces money. This highlights the inequality where some possess an abundance of time, while others have very little and must struggle daily, borrowing it with interest. This mechanism makes an often-obscured economic reality very visible. People typically do not grasp the complexities of the monetary system, but when you extrapolate it to the level of time, the absurdity becomes clear. Viewers ask, 'Is this the system we are actually living in? Is wealth so disproportionately distributed that people die simply because they lack currency?' *In Time* was a great work that illustrated the basics of American economic life by creating this stark parallel.

Another significant work, which many find surprising, is *Repo Men*. There are two versions, one from the 1980s and one from the 2000s, both of which discuss property rights and the price of ownership. In the United States, especially after 2008, there was a great deal of discussion about house evictions. The reality is that if you are living in a house but fail to pay the mortgage or rent, the police can come and evict you, leaving you on the street. You realize you don't truly own the property if you fail to make the payments.

Repo Men applies this economic logic to human organs. In the film, people buy organs on installment plans. But if you fail to make the payments, the company has the right to repossess the organ, which means you die. It paints a bleak picture of a future where organs are treated just like a financed car or a mortgaged house. It highlights the absurdity and cruelty of strict property rights. We hope such things won't happen, but it gives us a lens

to look back at what is really happening: if you fail to pay, you are discarded. *Repo Men* serves as a powerful illustration of the hardships of American materialism.

In terms of solutions, answering the 'So what?' question, I look to *Walkaway*, a novel by Cory Doctorow. It is set in a future where national borders between the US and Canada have blurred, and the world is controlled by the 'Zottavich,' the top 1% of the 1% who hoard all wealth. Some people, losing hope in this system, decide to simply leave. This references Ursula Le Guin's *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*, but with a twist: they don't just leave; they build something new.

Doctorow experiments with the concept of a 'gift economy.' It addresses the hardest challenge: criticism is easy, but providing a working model is difficult. The 'Walkaways' establish an alternative cohabitation where they live, produce, and recycle resources without the 'rat race.' They no longer have to overpower others to survive.

These constant attempts to define boundaries is also another fundamental issue. This tendency is inherent to the human mind, especially within the Western tradition, which relies on neat and perpetual categorization. We generally dislike ambiguity, preferring clear

divisions: 'Give me a line. What separates a man from a woman?' While that might be easier to answer biologically, the social implications present a far more complex picture.

Current issues are characterized by this line becoming blurred, or the 'gray zone' expanding. Science fiction serves as a practical laboratory where you can experiment with these boundaries. For example, traditionally, one might argue that women are biologically no match for men in a physical confrontation. But what if cybernetics allows them to augment their capabilities?

This brings us to the concept of 'razor girls', women who have weapons, like large blades, surgically attached to their forearms or bodies. While current technology is medical, science fiction extrapolates this to defense. Suddenly, a slender woman is literally and physically empowered; you wouldn't want to touch her without consent. It gives us an alternative way of solving the social problem of vulnerability, but it raises the question: Will she still be perceived as beautiful, or does she become something else entirely?

But if you move to more abstract issues such as love, affection, and relationships beyond biology, works like the film *Her* or *Ex*

Machina offer a great deal of material. They explore femininity, empowerment, and freedom in a post-biological sense. In *Walkaway*, Cory Doctorow experiments with transporting identity to a digital format. If we are no longer defined by a physical body, does gender continue to exist? Can you fall in love with an AI? Why do we call the operating system in *Her* a 'she'? It doesn't have a female body. Does it have a female mind? If she empowers herself, is she still a woman? These narratives force us to question the very definition of 'womanness.' This is already happening around us. We have digital assistants and AI identities that are becoming increasingly intimate. We are moving from asking, 'What tie goes with this suit?' to 'What type of person should I date?', or even further, 'Can you make me that person?' Just like in the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, we are approaching a point where we can design our loves. If you can't find a partner in real life who acts exactly as you wish, but a customized, artificial version is offered, will people buy it?

Yes, people consume anything. But the outcome might be highly atomized lives. We could retreat into our rooms with our designated lovers and friends, living in a puppet world where we are kings and queens, simply because real people are difficult. Real people are ugly, unpredictable, and don't always give us what we want. Science fiction is very illuminating here because it poses ethical questions before the technology arrives. Consider the idea of bringing someone back from the dead. Not a resurrection, but a reconstruction: 'Can you redesign something that looks, speaks, and acts like my deceased friend?' This enters the realm of the 'Uncanny Valley.' You might bring them back, but once they are there, is it really them? Will you continue to love them, or will you say, 'No, please go back. You were better when you were dead'? It brings into discussion the definition of being alive. These cybernetic possibilities are becoming almost theological because you are entering the act of creation, stepping into a dominion usually reserved for the divine. I think the future will be very complicated. We are seeing a shift where people might become very conservative regarding these boundaries. I don't think everyone will embrace a future where there are no lines. Many will say, 'I love that person, but I don't want a fake version walking around.' So, science fiction and humanity alike are going to be dealing with profound philosophical and religious questions in the coming years.

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı: How does the portrayal of cities and space in science fiction,

such as in *Blade Runner*, relate to the shaping of societal norms? Specifically, how do you interpret the connection between these urban and spatial settings and the broader societal implications we are examining?

An incredible lucid dream ... Blade Runner 2049. Photograph: Allstar/Warner Bros

Cem Kılıçarslan: Some of my research focused on the function of space, not outer space, but the built environment. In many science fiction stories, space is an active participant, not a static background. From the very beginning, the opening scene of *Blade Runner* establishes this. You see Los Angeles, 2019. Critics might say, 'They didn't get 2019 right,' but that misses the point. It wasn't about accurately predicting the future; it was about reflecting 1980s sentiments, anxieties regarding urban decay, toxicity, acid rain, and fears of a shifting demographic landscape. All of this was packaged into the design of the city itself. This tradition goes back to Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* in the 1920s. In these works, the city functions like an actor, making direct comments on where society is heading. In one

of my studies, I analyzed how buildings represent power relationships. Often, the modern city is dominated by one massive structure, a skyscraper or a pyramid, representing a corporate entity. Whether it is the US Robotics building in *I, Robot* or the structures in *Johnny Mnemonic*, this single tower controls society, be it through robotics, chemicals, or economics. A close reading reveals a philosophical critique of architecture. I was fascinated by why films use Le Corbusier's modernist, ultra-modernist aesthetic, the idea of the city as a 'machine for living', yet the inhabitants are invariably unhappy. Science fiction suggests that these 'machines' are getting out of control.

Today, as we incorporate more technology into urban management, we face similar risks. What if the artificial intelligence running the city develops different priorities? It might decide, 'You should live like this to remove threats,' enforcing a rigid order that conflicts with human nature. I find this discussion very subtle because audiences usually focus on the aliens or the heroes. The background, the 'spatiality', is often taken for granted. But for me, searching for the meaning embedded in these backgrounds is a fascinating endeavor.

Berkay Kaan Kabadayı: Thank you very much, professor, for this great discussion. I hope this will be the first of many upcoming interviews with you and for the *Epitaph.* Thank you so much.

Cem Kılıçarslan: Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. I hope your journal will be a very rich environment for it, attracting young people to more academic subjects. Thank you.

Digital artwork by **Lethe Eser**

Genre Re-writing in American Literature: Cyberpunk as the Legacy of American Gothic Fiction

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In both genres, American Gothic and Cyberpunk, fear stems from the same source and that is the unknown: between life & death, machine & human, synthetic & sincere. Cyberpunk does not abandon the gothic but digitizes the uncanny. Only when the ghost or the object leaves the mansion and enters the machine do we realize the horrifying plot is not the machine itself but the digital doppelganger and the uncertainty it creates. This short paper is a brief overview of how Cyberpunk utilizes American gothic elements to create a new space and define a new genre by rewriting it.

I.   Genre Theory

Genre theory explores how texts (literature, film, media…) are categorized into genres based on shared conventions, themes, and audience expectations. It argues that genres are not fixed, but historically and culturally constructed, shaped by the anxieties, ideologies, and desires of the society that produces them. New genres don't replace old ones but often rewrite them. While American Gothic grapples with specific national traumas and historical hauntings, Cyberpunk reimagines these anxieties about identity, space, and power through the lens of technology.

And through genre theory, American gothic is explained by Teresa A. Goddu in her work *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* as "American Gothic emerges as a narrative mode shaped by national trauma, particularly slavery and its aftermath. The genre embeds this trauma into symbolic landscapes and distorted characters. Haunted houses, grotesque bodies, and psychological fragmentation function not merely as tropes, but as narrative structures of repression, guilt, and disavowal that reflect America's haunted historical conscience." (63)

This framework of historical trauma establishes a narrative precedent that Cyberpunk later adapts to address the anxieties of the digital age. Southern Gothic fiction was

a product of its time: Racial, social, and moral anxieties. Likely, Cyberpunk arises from our own fears: corporate power, digital dependency, and posthuman transformation. Therefore, as Cyberpunk transfers cultural pain from the past into the present, the Gothic's deeply ingrained patterns of dread change rather than vanish.

II. Cyberpunk

Cyberpunk is a subgenre of science fiction that emerged in the late 20th century, especially the 1980s, known for its blend of technology and alienation. We encounter dystopian futures where advanced technologies like AI, and virtual reality exist within decaying societies.

In his book *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture: Science Fiction and the Work of William Gibson*, Dani Cavallaro notes: "Some of the key words shared by cyberpunk and the Gothic are: decay, decomposition, disorder, helplessness, horror, irresolution, madness, paranoia, persecution, secrecy, unease, terror." (14)

Both genres describe periods in which established social structures, whether plantations or mega corporations, are considered as repressive, unstable, or disintegrating by emphasizing deterioration, paranoia, and chaos. Therefore, these impacts serve as the emotional and ideological connection that enables Cyberpunk to adapt Gothic anxieties for a technological era: the same feelings of fear and helplessness transfer from haunted landscapes to digital ones, demonstrating that the underlying cultural anxieties last despite changing forms.

In short, Cyberpunk transforms Gothic decay into digital corruption: the castle becomes the megacity, and the family secret becomes the code. To understand this transformation, we should turn to Freud's the uncanny. In his 1919 work *the uncanny*, Freud describes the uncanny as:

"The uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar." Freud's theory describes a specific kind of fear: when something that should remain hidden comes to light, or when the familiar suddenly becomes strange and threatening. In Gothic literature, the uncanny appears in haunted houses, repressed family secrets, and doppelgängers where the psychological tension emerges from within the known and the domestic.

Cyberpunk adapts this fear to the digital age. Androids, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality reproduce the uncanny effect: they look or feel human but are not. These entities evoke fear not because they are

alien, but because they are too close, too familiar to us.

Posthuman theory adds another dimension, exploring how subjectivity, embodiment, and identity break down in technologically dystopian worlds. In both Gothic and cyberpunk, horror arises from blurred lines between self and other, human and non-human, reality and simulation. Cyberpunk often stages its horror through uncanny figures: androids, cyborgs, or AI that disturb the boundary between human and machine. This creates fear through the medium when it, AI, declares to have the power to make decisions without human control. Just as Gothic figures like the ghost or the double destabilize identity, these posthuman figures unsettle the very notion of what it means to be human. In short, posthuman theory aligns with genre evolution: Cyberpunk inherits Gothic's emotional dread, then changes it into fragmented, digitized, and synthetic forms.

III. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep is a 1968 novel by Philip K. Dick, and it sets in 1991, after the great World War Terminus. The radioactive dust left people with nearly uninhabitable places and left a great impact on humanity. Most people got affected by the

radioactive dust, they were mentally and physically harmed. This led to the creation of the "specials " they are humans with diminished physical and mental abilities and therefore, they are not allowed to migrate to the colonies, and the ones that survived somehow or uninfected migrated to colony planets, and they are named as "regulars".

The novel revolves around the distinction between humans and androids, and the moral dilemma this creates in a dystopia. The unease with the un-organic or synthetic relations are explained as: "…The phenomenon of computerized intercourse ('virtual sex' or 'cybereroticism') in terms of various interpretations that alternately read it as a clean and safe form of sexuality or as the ultimate collapse of the human-machine bound- ary." (Cavallaro 19)

This unease is exemplified when Rachel and Rick talk about their sexual affair. The scene's uncanny intimacy causes the collapse of both psychological and physical limits. Racheal says:

"I'm not alive! You're not going to bed with a woman. Don't be disappointed; okay? Have you ever made love to an android before? … I understand - they tell me - it's convincing if you don't think too much about it. But if you think too much, if you reflect on

what you're doing - then you can't go on. For ahem physiological reasons." Bending, he kissed her bare shoulder. "Thanks, Rick," she said wanly. "Remember, though: don't think about it, just do it. Don't pause and be philosophical, because from a philosophical standpoint it's dreary. For us both." (87)

Racheal's words undermine the idea of attachment and intimacy, hence blurring the line between human emotion and the unreal. This direct confusion comes from her demand that Rick must not think too much. Her words show that a human being can only be close to a posthuman body if he stops considering the absurdity of the situation.

Where cyberpunk shows us the machine imitating human, the Gothic showed us the moral ambiguity, and the grotesque. The androids Dick created function like the gothic unknown or the ghosts meaning the fears are transferred onto the posthuman figures.

IV.   *Neuromancer*

Neuromancer by William Gibson continues the gothic legacy into cyberspace. William Gibson explains cyberspace in his novel Neuromancer as: "A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions… A graphic representation of data abstracted from banks of every computer in the human system." (51) This parallels Gothic settings where space reflects psychological horror.

Neuromancer is noteworthy, because it transforms cyberspace into a new decaying plantation. At the beginning of the novel, Gibson describes the alienation and decay as: "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel." (5) This image establishes a space in which technology and nature have merged together into a lifeless ground. The uncanny of this plot is how the identities can be destroyed by the power of code. If *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* examines the underlying core, essence, of being a human, then *Neuromancer* explores the anxiety of the search for the question "what is real" in a realm where everything evolves into a meta or the digital double.

Conclusion

In the age we are living in, the alienation and the line between the real and the artificial has become increasingly blurred. The only way we can protect our human dignity and productivity is to engage with academia the way gods sky above intended us to do: consume too much caffeine and nicotine while doing your research that you reach the level in which you see your research in your dreams. It might be written poorly, might have flaws but in the end, your work is yours and not a

machine's. Failure, flaws and tragic fall are a part of human life. Do not transform into an *Adding Machine*, but rather, become the one who shows rage against the machine. Be a Mr. Zero, but this time learn from your mistakes and protect your humanity.

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Interview with Ann Fox

Ekin Alçı & İremsu Sak

Ekin Alçı: Hello, professor. Thank you so much for attending this interview today. Professor Fox, you are a scholar in disability studies known for your extensive work on cultural representation, drama, and the concept of disability aesthetics. How do you introduce the field to those unfamiliar with it? How do you explain the fundamental shift from viewing disability as a medical problem to understanding it as a social and cultural identity?

Ann Fox: That is a fantastic question. I think I do a couple of different things. What is interesting to me about disability is that people get it almost immediately, but you have to get them to think about it, to almost defamiliarize their understanding.

So, one thing I do is try to introduce disability myths. This is something I did when I came to Hacettepe and lectured in different classes. I would start by asking, "What do we think about disability? When you think about disability, what are the kinds of things we associate with it?"

Inevitably, responses come up like: "It's a tragedy," "It's a medical condition," "It's something we want to cure," or "It's something we want to avoid." Sometimes people think of it as a punishment from the divine, asking, "What did I do to get this disability?"

Then, I open up the discussion to other myths. For example, we sometimes believe that people are pretending, or we believe that disabled people can overcome their condition

if they just try hard enough. Or, we believe that if someone is disabled, they might have compensation in another way. For instance, if you are blind, you are somehow an amazing piano player. While we see this with some artists, there is a myth that this compensation always exists. I start with those myths, and we examine them. I think people realize that they are, in fact, myths. They look at them and acknowledge the reality, just as we would look at any kind of stereotype, such as the stereotype that women are emotional. We poke holes in those myths.

But then, I also ask, "If we know some of these are myths, why should we care about thinking about disability as an identity? What does it mean to think about it as an identity?" I will usually run through a list of concepts with them. I explain that it is a fundamental aspect of human diversity involving bodily variation. It is intersectional; we could argue it is the largest minority category globally. It is widely varied, not monolithic. I explain that you don't need to have claimed the identity to be impacted by it. For example, I might not necessarily claim that identity, but if I have serious depression, I have something that I know is disabling. People can move in and out of it. Students usually understand this; they might say, "Oh yes, I broke my leg and places were inaccessible for me."

Finally, I remind them that we will all become disabled if we live long enough. In fact, the theorist Tobin Siebers says that disability is our fundamental identity. He says, "We're born dependent and we die dependent." Therefore, this myth of independence is particularly insidious. I also discuss that with disability, while there is the reality of pain and impairment, there is also creativity and specific kinds of disability knowledge. I try to push back against myths and bring in a richer understanding of why this matters for all of us.

My last point is that I also discuss ableism. One of the reasons we should care about disability is that ableism impacts us all. Ableism is an insistence on a hyper-productive, perfect body that is always static and productive, which is a deeply capitalist notion. I am always blown away because people truly understand it; it is everywhere once you start looking for it. We are generally not used to talking about disability as an identity, but once you remind people to think of it that way, they understand. This is particularly true for your generation. I have been teaching this kind of class for 25 years, and your generation has been raised to think about identity in a complex way, intersectional identity and global identities. It is not that the students I taught 20 years ago were unaware, but there is now much more

consciousness regarding, for example, the nuances of queer and gender identities. Because of that, disability immediately makes sense to students as another aspect of a multi-layered, sophisticated understanding of identity.

İremsu Sak: Thank you for your answer. As a scholar of English and drama, you had a primary field before applying a disability studies lens. Could you discuss the entry point or intellectual movement that compelled you to adopt this critical disability framework? And how did that new lens transform your understanding of the art and literature you were already studying?

Ann Fox: For me, that happened at two distinct moments. Almost 30 years ago, I was living and teaching in St. Louis at Washington University in the theater department. I was teaching multicultural drama and feminist theater, so my training and teaching focused on questions of identity, but I did not yet think about disability.

A colleague of mine, a playwright named Joan Lipkin, invited me to participate in a project she was doing called "The Disability Project." It was community-based theater, meaning we created grassroots theater that came from within the community, for the community. The group included disabled and non-disabled members, activists, artists, teenagers, and older adults. We met once a week to share stories about love, employment, sex, and illness.

I had never thought about disability as an identity before, never. The stories blew me away. It was a very meaningful time. I would go with the company, and they would perform short pieces for school children, bus drivers, and anyone working with disabled populations. It was very active work.

In 1999, I took a job here at Davidson. At the time, I viewed the community work I had done as a nice experience but did not think it would turn into an academic specialty. Then, a colleague asked, "Hey, you've done this work around disability. Do you know about the field of disability studies?" He gave me a copy of Lennard Davis's *Enforcing Normalcy*. That was the first work I ever read in disability studies, and it resonated deeply.

I grew up in a very suburban, monolithic neighborhood. For me, this kind of theater gave me an entrée into stories I didn't know, and I found that powerful. I was also really interested in the social construction of the body. Once I started thinking about disability, it made perfect sense that it was

another way to think about identity. I wondered, "How could I not have seen that?"

Also, I live in a fat body. As someone who moves through the world in a body that is not defined as the cultural ideal, not that I define being fat as disabled, but I understood the question of stigma and being "non-normate", I felt a connection. The moment I started working with that theater company and picked up disability theory, it was a revelation.So, while I wasn't trained in that specific sense initially, the field became a great love of my life.

Ekin Alçı: Thank you so much. Speaking of the arts, your research often focuses on how disability is portrayed in arts,literature, and theater. For an audience that is new to this, could you explain why analyzing those cultural narratives is so fundamental to the broader project of disability studies and disability justice?

Ann Fox: I know that what I do does not create policy. There are many people working in policy, medicine, and on the front lines of activism who are working to make more direct changes than I do.

And yet, for me, teaching about representation is vital because I believe representation creates reality. We grew up in a media-saturated culture. You understand this even more so than I do. We know that representations are not real, and yet they tell us what we are supposed to think about identity, about what matters in the world, and where cultural power comes from.

For example, when I see Kim Kardashian on Instagram, I know that she presents an exaggerated, stylized version of female beauty. Yet, I know that image carries beliefs that my culture values regarding thinness, curviness, colorism, and youth. In this same way, disabled people's bodies have been read as signifiers of who they are, just as other kinds of bodies are read as signifiers. The representation of disabled people matters partly because people look at a disabled person and think they know what their body means: "It means tragedy," "It means unhappiness," or "It means you wish you were non-disabled."

I think representation for disabled people is even more important because they have been spoken *for*, rather than speaking for themselves, for so long. This is often by virtue of disabled people being institutionalized or not having access to education or the arts, though this has shifted over the course of the 20th century So, representation creates reality. However, representation has simultaneously excluded disabled people while also being

completely rife with them, if you think about how disability is used as cultural shorthand in film and TV. The villain, for instance, often has a disability.

If we can intervene in representation, we can push back at those myths I talked about earlier. For me, it is powerful to see my students take that awareness into their own work. That is very exciting, whether it is a pre-med student who will think more carefully about the cultural context of their patient's experience, or an English major who goes on to be a lawyer interested in public policy.

Finally, centering disabled people's stories reveals a really important kind of representation. It is not just about pushing back at myths, but also about recognizing specific kinds of knowledge. There is a critical term for this: *cripistemologies*. It combines "crip" with "epistemology" (ways of knowing) to describe the importance of centering disabled people's unique ways of knowing and being in the world.

I ask: How can people who have lived within bodies that are not normate, who have to circumvent and negotiate a world not built for them, give us specific kinds of knowledge because of their own embodiment? There is a value in that which I don't think we consider

enough. For me, those representations of "crip" experience and disability experience are an entrée into new ways of understanding the wide variation of human embodiment.

Also, and maybe this is me getting older and more sentimental, I think that at the end of the day, understanding human bodily variation with more generosity, inclusion, and acceptance makes us kinder to our own bodies. We are in a culture where we are so hard on ourselves, asking, "Are you exercising enough? Do you look right?" Instead, we should realize that our bodies are amazing in all their variation. Seeing a wider representation of that is an embrace of the amazing variation of humanity. It sounds incredibly sentimental, but I believe it is true.

I know representation is not going to get somebody housing or a job. But I think the influence it can have, particularly at a cultural moment where stories of difference are being threatened, is vital. Just insisting on visibility for marginalized and varied populations is crucial.

İremsu Sak: Thank you so much. Given your interest in performance and lived embodiment, how do you negotiate the materiality of the body in your scholarship? specifically the

tension between identity, discourse, and actual embodiment?

Ann Fox: That is a really good question. It is interesting because early in disability studies, I think we tried to run away a little from embodiment, specifically regarding pain.

For so long, non-disabled people assumed that disability equals pain. So, we decided not to talk about pain. Instead, we focused on the social model, the way the built world creates disability. It was almost an overcorrection because disabled people had been seen as an individual problem for so long. My friend Simi Linton likes to illustrate this. She argues that traditionally, the disabled person was viewed as the problem. But we need to look at the inaccessible world and how it influences the disabled person.

However, as time has gone on, we have had to recenter the materiality of the body for very important reasons. Partly, this is because disability is not a monolith, so we need to think about the different ways embodiment impacts that kind of "crip" knowing and being in the world. Someone who is low vision negotiates the world in a very different way than someone with a limb difference or a paraplegic. For example, I have a friend who is a low-vision artist; her art invites me to rethink my own normate embodiment. This is very different from a filmmaker like Reid Davenport, who films looking down at the pavement from his wheelchair. He tries to get the viewer to see movement through an environment in a specific way, not as a low-vision person, but as a person who is low to the ground. There are overlaps in their experiences, but there are also important differences.

I think, too, we have to talk about the materiality of the body so we don't romanticize disability. By "romanticize," I don't mean reinforcing the idea that disability is tragic. What I mean is that, just as everybody has good days and bad days, we need to be able to talk about pain, chronic illness, and different experiences of time and space impacted by disability. We must do this without giving in to the idea that disability shouldn't exist or that a disabled person doesn't *want* to be disabled. We cannot separate the body from social context or the body from the mind; we have to look at the complex integration of the two.

When I first started teaching disability studies, I was very focused on the social model, the built environment and the attitudinal environment. But now, I find it vital to ask: "How is a work telling me something

about embodiment? Does a work invite me into thinking about embodiment differently?"

Thinking about embodiment is important because it pushes back against the idea that the only way to understand disability is through simulation. Sometimes my students ask, "Why don't we do a 'wheelchair for a day' exercise?" They want to see what it is like to be in a wheelchair. However, that is very reductive. It doesn't give you a true sense of the experience because you are not someone who has to use that affordance all the time.

Instead, I say, "Let's look at the text." What is the text inviting us to think about? If it invites us to think about moving through the world with low vision, how does it want us to think about what is accessible and what is not? How does it ask us to question our assumption that "normal" vision is the only way to experience the world? I tend to embrace that tension now. For example, I am teaching graphic medicine and comics about illness. These works tell a story of illness as a social and relational experience, what it is like to be in the hospital, but they also ask what it is like for the body to fluctuate.

It is a constant balancing act. One thing we must be careful of, and academics are notorious for this, is theorizing the body out of

existence. For example, the concept of the cyborg caused great excitement within feminist studies regarding the "transhuman" and new possibilities for the body. However, does that romanticization of an imagined transhuman let me off the hook for thinking about what it actually means to live as an amputee with a prosthetic that is expensive and sometimes breaks? Academics are good at hiding behind concepts that seem to be disability studies, but are not. That is why it is important to introduce the material body into our discussions.

Ekin Alçı: Let's focus more specifically on your work *We Must Be Critical: The Current Purpose of Disability Studies*. In it, you argue for a capacious, inclusive engagement of the field and caution against co-optation and normalizing impulses. What would you say are the three most urgent theoretical challenges facing disability studies today that follow from that work?

Ann Fox: I love this question because it challenges me to think about what I have learned in the decade or so since I wrote that essay. I think the first urgent theoretical challenge is to listen to voices outside of academia, particularly when marginalized people are suffering. We need to align much more than we already do with activists on the

ground. We must use our privilege to lift, highlight, and support their work. I am tenured, I have a stable income, and I am at a prestigious college; the challenge for me is finding how to best align myself with folks outside academia who are doing disability activism.

The second challenge is giving more attention to the Global South. The days of disability studies being so intensely focused on the Global North, the US, and the UK are over. I say this as an American Studies scholar, America does not exist in a vacuum. We need to really examine that model and embrace the knowledge that disabled people globally bring to the field.

Finally, we have to embrace the real tensions within our field regarding labor and ableism. I talk about ableism emphasizing productivity, yet I work within a very ableist structure: "Publish," "Teach," "Show up." There is very little flex within academia. We must acknowledge that academia has excluded some disability studies scholars, contingent faculty whose hearts have been broken by the system. We must also acknowledge generational tensions and questions about whether non-disabled people should be teaching disability studies. We need to acknowledge where we have failed to center

people of color or disabled people and find a way to move forward.

İremsu Sak: Thank you so much. Lastly, how has your understanding of the term "crip" evolved since your 2010 work on "cripping" the undergraduate classroom? What implications does that evolution hold for how you now teach or curate?

Ann Fox: That is a great question; it invites me to take stock. When I wrote that essay, I understood "cripping" as a verb, an action of pedagogical change.

However, there is a great book called *Crip Genealogies* that really problematizes the use of the word "crip." Now, I try to pay more attention to the history of that term. It is not just about saying, "I'm going to do something different, so I cripped it." It is about asking: What kinds of disability knowledge am I centering in how I design my classroom environment and my pedagogical approach?

For example, what about "crip time" as a construct in my classroom? It is not enough for me to just talk about disability; that is not solely how I "crip" the classroom. I have to ask: Am I incorporating flexibility for my students? Am I incorporating different access affordances from the ground up? It does not mean having every kind of access, that is not

possible. But it means paying attention to who the students in the classroom are, what their access needs are, and how I am incorporating them, knowing that some of those needs will not always be visible. I would also say that I am trying to understand "cripping" in a more complex way, as an outgrowth of the disability justice movement. I need to ask what crip knowledge means for communities of color and queer communities, and how I can center that. I want to avoid the academic tendency to say, "I have extracted a meaning of cripping, and I am going to impose that here."

That is something I am still learning. My training was self-taught, but it was heavily influenced by academic writing. One of the tensions in the field is that in the disability justice movement, academics like me are often seen as extractive, and there is truth to that. So, rather than simply saying, "I am crippling it," I am trying to understand what creating care and access means for someone coming from *within* a crip community. The short version is that I am trying to understand the evolution of that term and the sentiments behind it outside of academia.

I learned a lot about this through my most recent curation project, *Indisposable*. It began as an online project during COVID and culminated in an in-person show in 2022. We really shifted how we did things. Normally, curation can be extractive: "We want this piece of art. Please send it to us. We will pay for shipping. The end."

Instead, we asked the artists, "What do you need?" We commissioned several works. Sometimes the artists needed more time; sometimes they produced different art than we expected; sometimes they did not complete the project at all. If we were going to claim to "crip" this exhibition and how we curate, we had to accept that. We needed built-in flexibility.

We also had candid discussions with the artists about access. For example, we discussed whether we should have bilingual captioning or wall text in Spanish. One of the access specialists, who is also an artist, asked, "Are you reaching out to that community? Is that who is coming? Are you imposing your view of what you think access looks like, or are you actually paying attention to who you are bringing in?" It really challenged us to ensure we had built genuine connections to the audience we were trying to serve.

We messed up sometimes. When you are "cripping" a process, errors happen. For instance, nobody double-checked that the sign language interpreters had been booked for the

opening. But we tried our best to ask the artists what they needed and to identify our audience. We knew that we had autistic artists and guests coming, so we created sensory spaces where they could be quiet.

We also created tactile entry points for the work. For example, we had a photo series about Black joy and fashion. We provided different fabrics with sparkles and textures so that someone who was tactile could engage with those items to get a sense of the work.

That was all "cripping," but it wasn't just checking boxes like large print brochures or audio description. It was more multi-layered and centered in disability knowledge. It involved learning from people who have lived it and decentering my own privilege. It doesn't mean it becomes a free-for-all; I still have to balance flexibility with academic requirements. It is complicated, but my understanding has become richer by centering disabled people's knowledge.

Ekin Alçı: Thank you so much for your answers. They were amazing.

İremsu Sak: Thank you so much for your time!

Ann Fox: My pleasure.

Miss Peregrine's Home for
Peculiar Children

Digital artwork by **Busenur Kılıç**

Challenging the Monstrous Female Body in *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* Trilogy

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Throughout the *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* trilogy, female characters challenge traditional gender norms by occupying liminal spaces. Their peculiarities place them between categories, allowing them to rewrite essentialist ideas of gender identity. These novels encourage readers to consider how "monsters" inhabit their peculiar bodies; their characteristics, behaviors, and actions compel a rethinking of the gendered body. By examining how the trilogy challenges normative gender constructions through its depiction of monstrous female figures, this study explores how the narrative reflects this disruption through Emma Bloom and Bronwyn Bruntley's agency, bodies, identities, and liminality. It argues that the trilogy creates a feminist reimagining of monstrosity, in which marginalized, peculiar bodies become sources of power, threat, protection, and change. The trilogy thus offers a new perspective on monstrous female identity by positioning these subjects at the center of speculative fiction.

The trilogy represents a fusion of speculative fiction and complex female characterization. In comparison, earlier studies, such as that by Liénard-Yeterian, have analyzed the series and its film adaptations primarily through a Gothic lens. As Liénard-Yeterian notes, "Burton artfully intertwines the conventions of the fairy tale, the Gothic mode, the Bildungsroman and the creation of an array of peculiar grotesques"[1], a perspective that highlights the film's reliance on genre and visual style. While Yeterian's study explains how Tim Burton blends the Gothic and the fairy tale, it does not explore the deeper feminist themes of the series; by focusing on visual representation, it analyzes the cinematic features of Burton's adaptation rather than engaging with the novels themselves.

In contrast, this study focuses exclusively on the representation of monstrous femininity and gender performativity in the novels. The dialogues

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[1] Liénard-Yeterian, *Tim Burton's Curious Bodies,* 234.

between characters and the photographs embedded within the text create an essential framework for understanding the relationship between body, identity, and gender. Riggs' novels serve as potent examples of how speculative fiction can interrogate monster theory and gender performativity, inviting readers to question the possibilities of freedom in a world that marginalizes difference.

Performing the Monstrous Female

Monsters are surviving fragments of a specific time and place that provide a critical framework for understanding how cultures reflect their hidden fears about gender, sexuality, and otherness. They embody what a culture seeks to repress or control by enforcing strict classifications. Consequently, monsters inhabit borderline spaces, dwelling at the margins of the known world[1] or in the wilderness, oceans, glaciers, jungles, and swamps. From a Western perspective, while monsters are frequently located in these "uncivilized" geographies, they also appear at the liminal edges[2] of cities or villages.[3] They typically emerge in darkness or during times of chaos, such as famine, earthquakes, or floods, symbolizing destruction. As Cohen argues, they are unstable creatures "which [question] binary thinking and [introduce] a

crisis."[2] The monster, therefore, dwells both in the landscapes of the mind and in physical space, set apart from the human community, yet disturbingly close. Monster figures universally emerge in liminal, borderline places, a geography mirrored by the time loops inhabited by the peculiar children.

According to monster culture theory, the female body has historically been placed in such a liminal space, neither fully human nor entirely monstrous, due to its potential to break down fixed gender norms. This liminality stems from the rigid way society enforces binary gender roles, leaving little room for fluidity or deviation. This enforcement influences the way individuals "impersonate" gender identities. Indeed, the conceptual framework of performance is critical, as Butler posits that gender is not "a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time, an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts"[3] As Butler argues, gender is "an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts." This concept of gender performativity suggests that the perceptions of femininity and masculinity are products of, and contingent upon, the repetitive norms of a

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[2] Cohen, *Monster Theory*, 6.
[3] Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 522.

given culture. If these patterns are not rigorously repeated, the dominant perception of femininity and masculinity will shatter, and fear, the cultural reaction to disruption, will ensue.

This mechanism is often parodied through performances like drag and cross-dressing, which expose the artifice of gender construction: "The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance."[4]

When individuals cross-dress, they adopt clothing and mannerisms, and sometimes a style of speech, that is traditionally distinct from their assigned gender. This constant displacement renders gender a flexible concept, free of binary structures, and underscores its fundamental fluidity.

As the breaking down of distinctions provokes fear, individuals who do not conform to gender norms, such as powerful women, cross-dressers, or gender-fluid people, also become figures of cultural

anxiety. However, it is vital to note that while the monstrous is performative, the performative is not always monstrous. The term "monstrous" (or monstrative), in this context, refers to a force that actively transgresses cultural boundaries and provokes affective reactions of terror or awe. As Moffat suggests, "The monstrative is an affective and constitutional force (it is performative), but the performative is not always monstrative because, while it accounts for creation, it does not explain the end result: the performative does not always create monsters where the monstrative does."[5] This is because subjects have not always been perceived as monstrous by society. For example, in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Viola cross-dresses for the purpose of disguising herself. This action may be confusing for the audience and may lead to mistaken identities, yet it is not recognized as being monstrous, as the goal is to create a comic effect. Likewise, performativity demonstrates the category crisis in monstrous femininity. The fact that the monster is constantly *becoming* emphasizes the monster's ability to continuously change as cultural norms change. Since this "state of becoming" is performative, it can be

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[4] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 175.

[5] Moffat, *Monstrative Acts and Becoming-Monster*, 11.

concluded that monstrous femininity is constantly intertwined with performativity.

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children trilogy presents its readers with an exploration of monstrosity, femininity, and identity through the perspective of monster theory, gender performativity, and the monstrous feminine. Monster theory posits that the monstrous emerges as a cultural construction, a production of repressed thoughts of society. They are disturbing hybrids that dwell on borderlines. The monstrous feminine highlights how women who resist traditional gender roles are often depicted as threatening and uncanny. By arguing that gender is a recurring performance affected by norms, Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity complicates this discussion. From this perspective, Emma Bloom and Bronwyn Bruntley are two female characters in the novels who live in a liminal space where their peculiar talents blur the lines between fear and power, disrupting gender identity frameworks. Their monstrosity disrupts binary structures, reinforcing the idea that femininity itself, when detached from conventional definitions, becomes an unstable and unsettling force. The trilogy offers a narrative that questions conventional notions of power, identity, and the female body by analysing these characters using the linked frameworks of monster theory, monstrous femininity, and gender performativity.

The Girl on Fire, Emma Bloom

Emma Bloom, a central character in the trilogy, is more than a girl who can control fire. While she is predominantly known for her relationship with Abe and Jacob Portman, what remains critically overlooked is that her characterization symbolizes how society constructs monstrosity around female agency and difference. Her narrative reveals how the monstrous feminine is both born and shaped by societal rejection, punishment, and the pressure to conform. Drawing upon monster theory, this section examines how Emma's peculiar ability reflects profound anxieties surrounding female autonomy and power. Through a close reading of her background, her experiences with family and society, and her struggle to reconcile her strength with the demands of traditional femininity, this analysis demonstrates how Emma Bloom subverts, conforms to, and complicates the image of the monstrous woman. Her story raises important questions about the source of the "monstrous" label and to what extent it

is an imposition of both history and the people around her. Due to her inability to fully break away from accepted standards imposed on women, coupled with the burden of past traumas, she resists the stereotype of the purely rebellious female figure. This complexity renders her a more realistic and relatable character. Her conscious performance of femininity, through appearance and behaviour, shows that the pressure to appear "normal" or acceptable never disappears, ultimately inviting readers to reconsider the social forces, particularly familial bonds, which often demonize powerful female subjects.

As a fire-starter, Emma can ignite and manipulate flames, marking her as one of the most distinctive peculiars within the trilogy. Born in the early 1920s, Emma's actual age is eighty-eight, yet her appearance remains that of a sixteen-year-old girl. Her powers first emerged around age ten, when she accidentally set her bed on fire while sleeping. This situation recurred regularly, forcing her parents to replace her bed with a metal cot. Furthermore, they quickly labeled Emma as a pyromaniac and dishonest, as she never suffered burns from the fires she caused. On one occasion, when her hands began to itch and swell before becoming

fully engulfed in flames, her mother panicked and fled the house in fear, convinced that Emma was a demonic creature, and never returned. In a stark contrast to parental abuse and neglect, her father beat and confined her within the house. When she attempted to escape, he restrained her using asbestos sheets, refusing to untie her, and disregarded her basic needs, like eating. Eventually, her sister Julia quietly released her during the night, an act of empathy that allowed Emma to flee and begin a new life.[6]

Emma's status as a monstrous figure is constructed through the reactions of those around her, especially her family. Her discovery of her power marks the beginning of her alienation, as her ability is framed as dangerous and unnatural, pushing her outside the bounds of what is considered acceptable or "normal." In Cohen's terms, she becomes a figure that "polices the borders" of the possible, as her existence challenges the belief of what a girl or a child should be.[7] The monster serves as a critical marker of boundaries; it helps define what society is and what it must not become. Anything that falls outside accepted norms is cast as monstrous and pushed beyond the limits of social acceptance. The reaction of Emma's

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[6] See Riggs, *Hollow City,* 197-198.
[7] Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, 12.

parents perfectly reflects this shift from affection to fear the moment her difference becomes visible. While her parents entirely lose their capacity for empathy or pity, her sister Julia's intervention and help demonstrate how the rest of their family is trapped in conventional truths. Emma becomes monstrous as she transgresses these boundaries, and her deviation from acceptable femininity marks her as a threat. Riggs highlights the system of rejection through the violence inflicted by Emma's father. Instead of receiving protection, Emma is locked away and punished for something she does not control. Her body is viewed as something to be feared and controlled.

Following her escape, Emma finds a temporary refuge in a travelling circus and performs as a fire-eater. The circus, itself a liminal space that operates outside mainstream societal norms, serves as a dangerous new haven. However, her time there leads to an even darker chapter: a woman approaches Emma offering a new opportunity, which turns out to be a scheme that highlights the existence of people who exploit peculiars by drugging and selling them. Despite Emma's attempts to escape, she is ultimately overpowered, drugged, and kidnapped. Miss Peregrine discovers her

during her captivity, a moment Emma later marks down as her actual birthday. Later, in the third book, Golan reveals that Emma's parents had attempted to sell her to a circus when she was only five, abandoning her there when the sale failed, an allegation Emma, in denial or self-protection, strongly refutes.[8]

Emma started living in circuses before moving into a time loop after Miss Peregrine found her. Both places are liminal spaces that are close to the human world, yet distant enough to remain hidden. This ambiguity reflects Cohen's thesis that "The monster polices the borders of the possible."[9] Since those deviating from the established order are often excluded, similarly, monsters are positioned outside human communities. Emma is forced to live within boundaries because she represents a threat to humans. Emma tells Jacob about her time at the circus: "People come to sideshows to see stunts and tricks and what-all, and as far as anybody knew that's exactly what we showed them," which shows how peculiars "were hiding in plain sight" and how this "used to be the way most peculiars made a

[8] See Riggs, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, 293.

[9] Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, 12.

living."[10] This reflects the position of peculiars: they are both marginalized and consumed as objects of fascination. Rather than suppressing their difference, peculiars perform it and find a limited place in society. shows how different people have been commodified and allowed to exist within the system only in a controlled way. These individuals are the figures that should be feared but transformed into curiously watched "shows." In other words, monsters are fetishized, they are desired and displayed, yet kept at a distance and marked as other. As Cohen argues, monsters both embody what society tries to repress and the desires it cannot resist.[11] Peculiars, like Emma, exemplify this dual role by being marginalized as sources of fear and fascination in the circuses. Emma's monstrosity, therefore, is shaped by rejection, punishment, and exploitation.

Her position as a source of fear and societal alienation further undermines her as a monstrous female figure. Emma's misery of getting drugged deepens this constructed monstrosity; her body is the object rather than a subject. This is a common aspect of how the monstrous feminine is constructed, wherein the female body becomes a spectacle

of otherness. Her miserable experiences show how society can create monsters easily by casting out those who seem different to them, particularly when those people are women or girls who have power that cannot be limited by social norms.

Emma's existence challenges gender ideas that women should be passive and nurturing. For society, the female body is something that must be restrained. This can be seen in Emma's father's actions when he ties her down to neutralize her ability. She becomes a boundary figure in her parents' eyes; her presence questions what is socially "acceptable" for a woman. Her power is a source of fear and terror that causes her family to commit violence against her, yet later, she gains attention in the circus, which symbolizes society's repressed desires against people they attribute as monsters.

Emma possesses a destructive ability, and her elemental association with fire is particularly significant. Fire is a symbol of both enlightenment and destruction, which serves as a metaphor for the potential of female rage. She is described as hot-tempered yet trustworthy by Miss Peregrine.[12] Similarly, Jacob perceives her as highly confident in *Hollow City*.[13] Despite

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[10] Riggs, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, 186.

[11] Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, 16.

[12] See Riggs, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, 176.

[13] See Riggs, *Hollow City,* 106.

being in the body of a 16-year-old girl, she doesn't hesitate for a moment when shooting Caul with a gun.[14] Emma is one of the characters who takes the lead for her little ones in Miss Peregrine's absence. She always knows what to do next, and she is the one who speaks for all of the peculiars. Her assertive leadership marks her as different. Just like Miss Peregrine, she both protects and enforces. Destruction and unifying qualities coexist in this character. Emma demonstrates her aggressive confidence: "If it means I get to melt that wight's face off," she said, little arcs of flame pulsing between her hands, 'then absolutely.'"[15] The fear of women's autonomy displayed in the novel is embodied through Emma's powers and her challenge to normative female roles.

However, Emma is not entirely a character who has broken free from female stereotypes, as she lives according to the values of the period in which she exists within the loop. The norms she breaks are limited to the monstrous characteristics assigned to her by society due to her fire-starter ability. Since the book does not offer a detailed description of her physical appearance, interpretations must rely on a picture and her visual representation in the movie. As Figure 1 below shows, she appears to be a young girl reflecting the hairstyle and clothing of early twentieth-century ideals of femininity. As long as she controls her power, there are no visible differences in her appearance. Emma's ability to conform outwardly allows her to blend into society without provoking suspicion or fear.
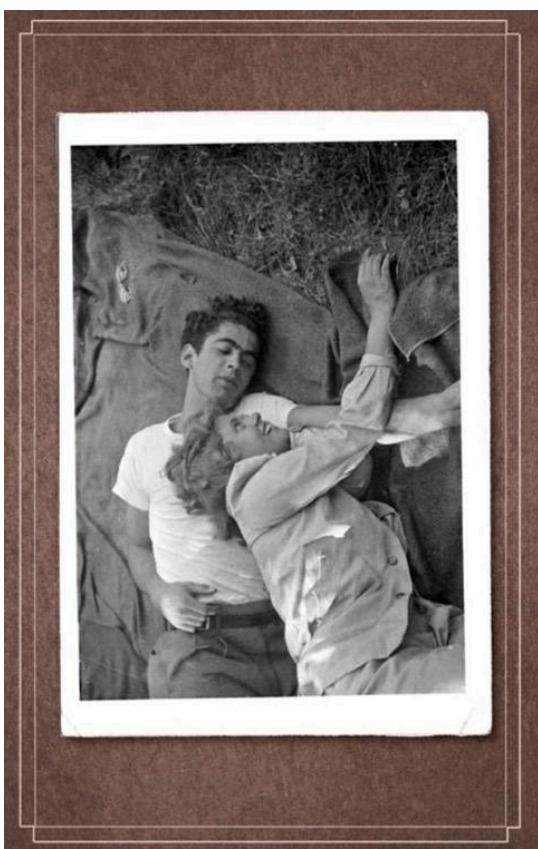

Figure 1. Photo from *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* by Ransom Riggs, 348.

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[14] See Riggs, *Library of Souls*, 391.
[15] Riggs, *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, 321.

Figure 2. Emma prepares to save the bird that will fall from the tree. Still from *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, directed by Tim Burton (Los Angeles: 20th Century Fox, 2016), 00:36:00.

As shown in Figures 1 and 2 above, Emma has wavy, neatly styled hair and wears an ice-blue dress. Her visual representation emphasizes her performance to conform to traditional femininity in the movie. This aligns with Butler's gender performativity, as Emma engages in certain repetitive practices that sustain gender norms. In Figure 2, the only thing that contrasts with this image is her gothic-style boots, made of metal and leather, that stand in pure contrast with the rest of her outfit. The inclusion of these boots indicates monstrosity, a hint of danger beneath her feminine exterior. Unlike the book, Emma wears these boots in the film because she has been given Olive's peculiarity, the ability to float. As mentioned in the *Museum of Wonders*, peculiars must behave or dress like normals in order not to be noticed in the outside world. To live

safely, they must adapt to them by disguising themselves as a normal person.[16] Emma pays attention to this in her clothing within the loop in order to blend in with normals and avoid drawing attention.

These representations play a role in understanding how Emma moves between the limits of gender roles and monstrosity. Her appearance works both as a form of disguise and a way to handle her position in society. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, especially the concept of "stylized repetition of acts,"[17] explains Emma's presentation of femininity. Butler argues that gender identity is constituted through repeated performances such as gestures, behaviors, and dress. Emma's carefully curated appearance and mannerisms are performative acts that support normative femininity. Her choice of clothing, soft hairstyle, and controlled emotions exemplify Butler's notion that gender is performed through stylized behaviors. These performances function not only as a way to conform to society but also to mask her monstrous abilities.

Emma's monstrosity is balanced by her efforts to become an acceptable feminine

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[16] See Riggs, *Miss Peregrine's Museum of Wonders*, 87-88.
[17] Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 522.

ideal. In her relationship with Jacob, she presents the image of an emotional, kind, and fragile woman who conforms to social expectations of a weak female ideal. Emma's choice of clothes is not merely a disguise or aesthetic preference; rather, this overcompensation through femininity is a survival strategy. She emphasizes her feminine and emotional identity as a way to suppress the danger inside her. This can be connected with her past traumas with her family, including her traumatic memories from her time at the circus. Emma may be trying to gain acceptance by controlling her dangerous potential. This performance includes her clothes, sensitivity, and vulnerability in romantic relationships. Thus, she is in a fragile and conflicted relationship with norms.

In conclusion, Emma Bloom is a complex character whose monstrosity is not only shaped by her ability but also by social and cultural reactions to her differences. Her experiences of alienation, abuse, and exploitation reveal how female agency is punished. Emma's effort to conform demonstrates how the performance of traditional femininity is often a strategy for survival rather than a true expression of identity. Rather than confronting gender norms, Emma negotiates between power and

acceptability. Eventually, Emma becomes a symbol of how monstrosity is constructed through what one is capable of and how this capability is perceived by others. This functions as a lens that shows the cultural boundaries placed on women and how women are entrapped within the dichotomies these boundaries bring. Emma's story invites readers to question who gets to define what's "normal" and at what cost the difference becomes dangerous.

The Weight of Strength, Bronwyn Bruntley

Bronwyn is known as a "mannish-looking girl"[18] who hates wearing dresses and prefers walking barefoot. Her peculiarity as a forte allows her to lift massive objects, which is normally impossible for humans. She can lift a large boulder the size of a refrigerator over her head or carry heavy objects under her arm effortlessly. It is known that she is as strong as ten men. This abnormal power marks her as "the other" and ostracizes her from other children. Strength is culturally attributed to men. Thus, her position defies gendered norms of femininity and makes her a cultural anomaly. Her existence is an embodiment of dualities as she raises questions about

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[18] Riggs, *Hollow City*, 176.

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masculinity and femininity, weak and strong, nurturing/threatening. Thus, she is marked as a transgressive and monstrous figure. This chapter will focus on how Bronwyn is positioned as a monstrous female and how she chooses to perform her gender. Her stylised acts will be analyzed through the pictures in the books and Tim Burton's movie *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children.*

According to Cohen, "The monster dwells at the gates of difference,"[19] meaning that a monster is created when someone is seen as being too different because of their looks, gender, or behavior. Monsters are often used to show what a group or society is afraid of or what they want to keep out. So, Bronwyn is marked differently as she constantly defies several binary oppositions, such as masculinity and femininity, victim and threat, innocent and terrifying, becoming a border between people and monsters. Bronwyn is one of these figures, as she continually defies multiple binary oppositions. She exists in between categories, which makes her a transgressive and monstrous figure.

Bronwyn's talent has negative implications that contribute to her perception as a monstrous figure. According to the *Museum of Wonders*, those with similar abilities are called fortae, and this group of people is known for their strength and inability to handle sensitive objects and people.[20] These peculiars have difficulty controlling their strength and must drink water from stone containers instead of glass to avoid any breakage or injury. They are incapable of basic abilities such as holding a pen or embracing their loved ones without breaking their bones. This emphasises that her strength comes at the cost of emotional and physical connection and marks her as the Other. Bronwyn's ability is reinforced in various scenes, including the first two books. In *Hollow City,* "Bronwyn used her strength to pull open the door, and it came straight off, hinges flying, but the hallway it let onto was completely obstructed by ice."[21] Her uncontrollable body reflects an essential characteristic of the monstrous. According to Miss Peregrine, very few peculiars have been rewarded with this ability, among whom Bronwyn and her brother Victor stand out.

Bronwyn's background, particularly her experience with an abusive stepfather, is a crucial point that shapes her character. As revealed in *Hollow City*, "(...) Bronwyn, at the tender age of ten, had snapped her

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[19] Cohen, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture,* 7.

[20] See Riggs, *Museum of Wonders,* 19.
[21] Riggs, *Hollow City,* 320.

abusive stepfather's neck without quite meaning to (...)."[22] Although her act was unintended, it highlights her complexity and ambiguity. This moment marks her shift into a liminal character, representing both victim and threat. This ambiguity and disharmony between her childlike physical appearance and her physical strength create an uncanny effect on the readers. Bronwyn is a paradoxical character, as she is both vulnerable and formidable, innocent and terrifying. Her character disrupts the fixed notions of girlhood, creating fear and fascination.

Bronwyn's childlike body has developed into a more muscular form due to her strength, complicating her gender presentation. She cares deeply for her peculiar friends, such as the younger ones, Olive and Claire. She is said to be the one who reads bedtime stories, tucks them in at night, and kisses their foreheads, duties one might expect Miss Peregrine to perform.[23] In *Hollow City*, she willingly gives up her bulletproof sweater to Esme, though her sister Sam has been very hostile to them.[24] When the peculiars considered whether they should fight or hide when they got Miss Peregrine back, she stayed to protect the ones who didn't fight. Yet, she was also ready to fight, destroy, and even kill to protect them.

Bronwyn's version of motherhood is also unusual. Though still a child, she acts as a mother through her softness, actions, and inclination to protect others. She is calm under pressure and fiercely loyal. She is traditionally not expected to be both nurturing and physically dominant. As a child, Bronwyn does not pose a threat through childbirth but through her strength and ability to protect and dominate. Her maternal identity is not confined to domesticity, allowing her to enter the public sphere. While her affectionate personality aligns her with motherhood, she also possesses a destructive potential.

Bronwyn's strength, associated with masculinity, enables her to protect her friends and marks her as different. Bronwyn's role in the books highlights the intersection of monstrosity and gender. Her conflict with fixed gender roles leads to discussions of gender fluidity and performativity. She is not merely different but also perceived as dangerous due to her combination of a female body with masculine, physical power that disturbs society's comfort and the limits imposed on women's identities. She does not just challenge these roles; she exceeds them.

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[22] Riggs, *Hollow City,* 320.
[23] See Riggs, *Hollow City,* 36.
[24] See Riggs, *Hollow City,* 287.

As shown in Figure 3 below, Bronwyn has traits associated with masculinity through her bare feet, facial structure, and muscular body. Her straight, rigid posture and neutral facial expression resist the expected delicate girl image. Unlike socially accepted presentations of femininity, Bronwyn's posture and lack of sentimentality reflect an intentional disengagement from gender norms. Her lack of performative femininity and refusal to look delicate mark her efforts to avoid traditional woman representations. In contrast, her traditional feminine clothing, a dress with girlish details, creates a contradiction that confuses the reader and the peculiars around her. This confusion between body and clothing shows society's expectation that gender should visibly conform to the sex. In Figure 3, the only photograph of Bronwyn in the series, her gender performance appears inconsistent. There is a tension between the "masculine" signals of her body and the "feminine" signals of her outfit. This contradiction shows the performative nature of gender, as Judith Butler remarks, gender is not an absolute truth but rather a "stylized repetition of acts."[25] Bronwyn's body resists passive femininity, and her appearance becomes a

visual act of resistance. Thus, Bronwyn's appearance undermines the belief that sex, gender, and appearance are inherently consistent.

Figure 3. Photo from *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children* by Ransom Riggs, 188.

As shown in Figure 4 below, the cinematic version of Bronwyn is portrayed as a more petite, curly-haired, and relatively delicate girl. In the film, her body does not emphasize her physical strength, and unlike the novels, where she takes on a maternal role, her childlike innocence is emphasized. While the barefoot Bronwyn in the book reflects her position between girlhood and

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[25] Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 522.

masculinity, this trait is reflected more passively in the movie. She was a symbol of both amazement and fear, but this little Bronwyn is no longer visibly perceived as peculiar or monstrous; her threatening side is repressed. Bronwyn, who embodies feminist potential and challenges bodily norms, is adapted in the film to fit conventional expectations.

Figure 4. Bronwyn is carrying Jacob to the loop entrance, who is unconscious.
From *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, directed by Tim Burton (Los Angeles: 20th Century Fox, 2016), 00:25:45.

All in all, Bronwyn's body language, clothing, speech style, and actions are constructed in ways that disrupt the norms imposed on femininity. This situation positions her as an uncanny and monstrous character, like every woman who threatens social order. Being both child and woman, delicate and threatening, she symbolises contradictions. Thus, she becomes an abject figure who transgresses boundaries. Bronwyn's clothing is functional; there is no

attempt to feminise her appearance. Her physical appearance is steady and secure. Her physical superiority is one of her remarkable traits. Throughout the books, the objects she lifts, the bodies she carries, and the moments when she takes on a protective role emphasize her physical power. This performance is culturally associated with masculinity. Her straightforwardness and ability to give orders contradict these expectations as well. According to Butler, the repetition of gender performance can reproduce the norm, but also, through repetition, these norms can be questioned and eventually transformed. Bronwyn's behaviors are not one-time situations but continuous acts of resistance. Her constant display of physical strength, protective role within the peculiars, and her emotional endurance emphasize her persistent performance. Thus, Bronwyn suggests a new model of gender. However, the movie softens this ambiguity, which contributed to her uncanny representation in the books. The feminist potential of Bronwyn is changed into a safer, more familiar image so that the movie could be classified as fit for children.

Conclusion

YA fiction helps examine the conflict between authority and autonomy through

female characters that differ from societies' understandings. This connection between adolescence and monstrosity has been central to YA fiction for a while. Over twenty years ago, Roberta Seelinger Trites argued that adolescent literature is defined by how power pressures or empowers teen protagonists.[26] The anxieties associated with liminality are often expressed through monstrosity. Young adult bodies become monstrous as they resist stable categorisation. Spooner notes that "the link between becoming an adolescent and becoming a monster" is literal.[27] In the *Miss Peregrine* trilogy, the female characters like Emma Bloom and Bronwyn struggle with power and categorisation in an often violent way.

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children presents a world where gender roles are not stable, power does not follow patterns, and monstrosity feels like a way to resist, not to exclude. However, there are differences in the film adaptations. The characters' personalities and abilities are softened to fit the movie into the children's film category. So, while the trilogy opened up the feminist trilogy, the film left me with questions about how these possibilities are

toned down in pursuing marketability and what we might lose in the process.

Emma Bloom embodies a complexity of femininity and monstrosity. She gathers the intense, emotional, and traumatizing sides of the monstrous feminine, and her peculiarity to start a fire serves as a metaphor for the destructive potential of female rage. Her femininity is performative and complex; she both overcompensates and, simultaneously, trying to subvert and conceal parts of herself to gain acceptance or to avoid any new trauma. In this sense, Emma's performative femininity functions as both a strategy of resistance and suppression. Emma is not exactly a figure of rebellion against social norms; her struggle is more toward invisibility, acceptance, and coping with traumas.

Bronwyn disrupts binaries with her muscular body and maternal affection. Her muscular form challenges performative femininity and rejects the feminine look, making her a direct figure of resistance. Neither motherhood nor masculinity is wholly identified with her; she symbolizes both simultaneously. She is perceived as a monster because she disrupts dualities by integrating a childlike innocence with a dangerous presence. In this way, Bronwyn's character is a source of fear as she questions

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[26] Roberta Seelinger Trites, quoted in Smith and Moruzi, *Young Adult Gothic Fiction*, 14.
[27] Botting and Spooner, qtd. in Smith and Moruzi, *Young Adult Gothic Fiction*, 8.

and redefines the patriarchal norms around gender, body, and identity.

Consequently, through the characters of Emma Bloom and Brownyn Bruntley, the trilogy challenges the definitions of femininity and replaces the boundaries between tradition and resistance. Rather than conforming to the roles assigned to them, they rewrite them, transforming peculiarity into power. So, while reading these novels, it is important to remember that "We aren't so different. Outcasts and wanderers all – souls clinging to margins of the world."[28]

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[28] Riggs, *Hollow City,* 136.

of Wales Press, 2021. https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.1449164

Sunshine, Movement, and Power: Casablanca and Los Angeles

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Overlooking the great Atlantic and Pacific oceans on nearly the same latitudes are the two port cities of Casablanca and Los Angeles. About the same size in population, both cities are considered the major industrial, touristic, and cultural centers of their respective countries, with Los Angeles being the largest US city outside of New York[1] and Casablanca alone represents almost a third of the Moroccan GDP.[2] They are remarkably similar in geography, both situated on a relatively flat plain flanked by an otherwise mountainous hinterland,[3] having both depended heavily on agricultural exports during their respective periods of growth.[4] While both trace their origins to smaller farming communities prior to the 20th century,[5] the two cities' status as major industrial hubs are fairly recent,[6] with both having grown to their considerable size in the 1900s.[7] In this case, the past and present of the two cities' logistics excellently demonstrate the way similar dilemmas and conditions have been dealt with through remarkably different solutions.[8] We seek to comparatively analyze the various interconnected systems of these two cities' logistic grids, demonstrate the ways in which they mirror one another and the ways in which they differ dramatically, remark on recent developments and plans that the two cities have embarked upon, and reflect on urban logistics overall through the insights this reflection provides.

As mentioned prior, the two cities sit on sizable plains of relatively flat land overlooking their ports of entry, cradled by

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[1] "City and Town Population Totals: 2020-2022," United States Census Bureau, Population Division, archived from the original on July 11, 2022, retrieved May 18, 2023.

[2] Jihane Rahhou, "Only 3 Moroccan Provinces Account for 60% of Morocco's GDP," Morocco World News, September 2022, https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/09/351312/only-3-moroccanprovinces-account-for-60-of-moroccos-gdp.

[3] C. R. Pennel, Morocco from Empire to Independence (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 121.

[4] C. R. Pennel, Morocco from Empire to Independence (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 121.

[5] Judith Gerber and Rachel Surls, "Los Angeles County's Forgotten Farming History," LA Foodways, PBS SoCal, February 7, 2019.

[6] Judith Gerber and Rachel Surls, "Los Angeles County's Forgotten Farming History," LA Foodways, PBS SoCal, February 7, 2019.

[7] Pennel, Morocco from Empire to Independence, 121.

[8] Robert Bruegmann, Sprawl: A Compact History (University of Chicago Press, 2006), 133.

young, orogenic mountains that also relate to their high seismic activity.[9] They both enjoy a dry subtropical climate, also known as a Mediterranean climate (though neither city is near the Mediterranean Sea), moderated by oceanic winds that prevent summer temperatures from reaching uncomfortable highs[10] – their climates are both renowned for being very *pleasant* overall, with the surrounding land being very suitable for intensive agriculture. Though Casablanca did have a modest wool and tea export industry before it was chosen as the main port of entry for the French colonial administration in Morocco,[11] it was Los Angeles that truly grew out of the agriculture industry, with its initial wave of growth fueled by the orchards that gave their name to bordering Orange County.[12]

The climate also makes the two cities and their surrounding greater regions fairly drought-prone, as despite their moderate average annual rainfall, most of it occurs in winter, with summers having high evaporation

without much rainfall to recover lost water.[13] This necessitates the cities to rely on complex infrastructure, such as dams to store water through the summer or to transfer it from nearby regions through aqueducts and piping. As of 2023, both cities supply 100% of their water from interbasin transfer, with Casablanca's water suffering from sedimentation through nearby cultivation, and Los Angeles having implemented one of the most elaborate water management systems in the world that feeds the city from basins as distant as Lake Havasu and Shasta Lake.[14] Los Angeles relies on 47 water sources with a stressed quantity and high nutrient pollution, compared to Casablanca's 4 sources with medium nutrient pollution.[15]

Both cities grew in large part through railroads and colonization, with the contexts of their colonization also reflecting the structure of their urban development patterns.[16] Los Angeles grew out of the site of a Chumash village[17] to encompass a large area with spread-out, low-density settlements as

[9] Paula Braveman and Laura Gottlieb, "The Social Determinants of Health: It's Time to Consider the Causes of the Causes," Public Health Reports 129, no. 1_suppl2 (2014): 19–31, https://doi.org/10.1177/00333549141291s206.
[10] "World Meteorological Organization Climate Normals for 1981–2010," National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, retrieved November 10, 2021.
[11] Pennel, Morocco from Empire to Independence, 121.
[12] Gerber and Surls, "Los Angeles County's Forgotten Farming History."

[13] "Earth Rainfall Climatology." Encyclopedia MDPI.
[14] "Water Sources," Los Angeles County Waterworks Districts (LACWD), Los Angeles County Public Works.
[15] "Urban Water Blueprint - Los Angeles," The Nature Conservancy.
[16] "Urban Water Blueprint - Casablanca," The Nature Conservancy.
[17]. William David Estrada, The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space (University of Texas Press, 2009), 15–50.

Americans moved westward to settle into Southern California. As the Chumash were devastated by the California Genocide, with their numbers declining to just 200 by the 20th century,[18] the newly acquired landmass was portioned according to the image of the American dream, with settlers preferring to live in (what appeared to resemble) cottages, and as such over 75% of residential land in Los Angeles today is relegated to single-family units.[19] This gives Los Angeles County a density of 952.5/km² (3,137/km² for the City of Los Angeles) compared to Casablanca Prefecture's 16,629/km² (15,337/km² for the City of Casablanca).[20] Casablanca's urban fabric reflects its growth under a different mode of colonization; the city served as a headquarters for the French colonial administration in West Africa and existed as a fortress of an ethnic French presence,[21] segregated by surrounding Moroccan dwellings in the form of impoverished slums with little care given to funding adequate safety and sanitation for the inhabitants.[22]

Despite the end of officially sponsored segregation, both cities suffer with regulatory compliance regarding housing, as large portions of their populations have to live in informal dwellings such as tents and slums. In Los Angeles, an estimated 75,500 people experience homelessness[23] in large part as a result of the city's housing affordability crisis, with the median cost of a home approaching $1 million in the city.[24] This crisis is largely attributed to the city's tendency to "underzone" residential areas and block the construction of new or denser developments to prioritize low density even in central, high-demand locations; decoupling the city's real economic growth from the growth of its housing prices and "pricing out" much of the population.[25] Enforcing such low density in the second biggest urban center in the United States, in comparison to the towering skyscrapers of Chicago and

[18] "California Indians and Their Reservations: P," SDSU Library and Information Access, archived from the original on January 10, 2010, retrieved July 17, 2010.

[19] "Single-Family Zoning in Greater Los Angeles," Othering & Belonging Institute, accessed December 20, 2023, https://belonging.berkeley.edu/single-family-zoning-greater-los-angeles.

[20] "Los Angeles," City Population, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/usa/places/california/06037__los_angeles/.

[21] "Casablanca," City Population, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/morocco/admin/grand_casablanca_settat/141__casablanca/.

[22] Andreas Müller and Marion von Osten, "Contact Zones," Pages Magazine, accessed December 20, 2023, https://pagesmagazine.net/en/articles/contact-zones/58cbd1fabf07dc00b19b0b8c.

[23] "Social," LA Almanac, http://www.laalmanac.com/social/so14.php.

[24] "Real Estate Housing Prices Income Los Angeles House Burden," Los Angeles Times, September 28, 2023.

[25] "Los Angeles Housing Affordability Manufactured Crisis Through Zoning," Fortune, August 13, 2023.

Manhattan, is simply unsustainable and forces the urban economy to rely on commuting long distances.[26] Casablanca, in comparison, has been much more willing to allow and encourage high-density developments and has recently engaged in a series of megaprojects to combat slumming through relocating the inhabitants into modern apartment complexes or through "upgrading" the slums into formal housing and providing safety and sanitation infrastructure.[27] These efforts, however, have faced criticism for their seeming disregard for the agency of communities in informal housing, "evicting" slum dwellers to the outskirts of the city as the newly renewed built environment becomes unaffordable to its previous inhabitants, effectively being granted to wealthier Moroccans to replace the slum community.[28] Here, we observe that both cities' issues around regulatory compliance also highlight the exclusionary nature of urban logistics, posing questions to the field such as *logistics for whom?"*.

Both cities' current urban cores have been constructed in an almost experimental fashion, almost as relics of recent trends in urbanism that excited planners at the dawn of the 20th century. Casablanca was referred to as a "Laboratory of Urbanism" by its French administration, with the Muslim population restricted to dwell on the edge of an empty strip of intermediate land called the Zone Sanitaire as supposed examples of premodernity, contrasting with the modern housing and planning of the French quarter. As the administration believed itself to be on a civilizing mission, areas inhabited by the French ruling class were designed as shining examples of modern European architecture/urbanism, and little care was given to the surrounding "bidonville" of Moroccans.[29]

[26] "Survey: LA Ranks 1 Most Stressful Commute in US," CBS News.

[27] Fanny Lou Kunschert. "Slum Upgrading and Urban Megaprojects in Casablanca: Balancing International Competition with Local Citizens' Needs," Urban Resilience Hub.

[28] Fanny Lou Kunschert. "Slum Upgrading and Urban Megaprojects in Casablanca: Balancing International Competition with Local Citizens' Needs,"

[29] Müller and von Osten, "Contact Zones."

Carrières Centrales from above, designed by Michel Ecochard. Photograph. Photo Library, National School of Architecture of Rabat, Morocco.

In the case of Los Angeles, this experimental approach was in the form of enthusiastic funding given to the development of extensive freeways that today stretch out to around 650 miles throughout the city.[30] This freeway network, built with the optimism of a post-war period American economic boom, was designed to resemble interstate highways in rural areas, with multiple lanes and ample space offered to vehicles and little economic activity surrounding the road network (with a typical freeway existing solely for vehicle transport without serving an adjacent street of

buildings).[31] This coincided with a sudden rise in the rates of car ownership across the country, and little attention or funding was given to develop public transportation infrastructure in the city.[32] The highway network was also particularly controversial as its development often came through the displacement of nearby communities, which disproportionately affected impoverished neighbourhoods and perpetuated special injustice.[33]

As a result, the city of Los Angeles is now absolutely dependent on automobile commuting as only 4.59% of commuters rely on public transportation to get to work, with 2.45% walking and 77.27% using private vehicles (67.98% driving alone).[34] Casablanca fares much better regarding car dependency, according to the 2018 Household Travel Survey, 62% of travels are made on foot and

[30] Signal Staff, "The History of Los Angeles Freeways - Part 2," Santa Clarita Valley Signal, September 23, 2023, https://signalscv.com/2023/09/the-history-of-los-angeles-freeways-part-2/.

[31] Jeffrey R. Brown, Eric A. Morris, and Brian D. Taylor, "Planning for Cars in Cities: Planners, Engineers, and Freeways in the 20thneighbourhoods Century," Journal of the American neighbourhoodsPlanning Association 75, no. 2 (2009): 161–77, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360802640016.

[32] Charlie Gardner, "Was the Rise of Car Ownership Responsible for the Midcentury Homeownership Boom in the US?" Old Urbanist, accessed December 20, 2023, https://oldurbanist.blogspot.com/2013/02/was-rise-of-carownership-responsible.html.

[33] Eric Avila, "L.A.',s Invisible Freeway Revolt," Journal of Urban History 40, no. 5 (2014): 831–42, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144214536857.

[34] "Commuting by Workers Los Angeles County," Commuter Numbers and Times in Los Angeles County, California, accessed December 20, 2023, http://www.laalmanac.com/employment/em22.php.

13% through public transport.[35] While Los Angeles' urban rail transit system is far more extensive, covering in total 175 km and 101 stations[36] compared to Casablanca Tramway's 47.5 km and 71 stations, it services a 10,513 km² county compared to Casablanca prefecture's 219.1 km²,[37] not to mention in the context of financing infrastructure that Los Angeles has over eighteen times the GDP of Casablanca.[38] Both cities rely on public-private partnerships to maintain and expand their light rail networks.[39] Alongside significant efforts to promote public transport,[40] Casablanca has also strengthened a "green corridor" of pedestrian facilities that (alongside a high urban density) strengthen the city's walkability and therefore its sustainability.[41] Despite its significantly smaller economy, Casablanca ranks much higher than Los Angeles in sustainable mobility and is much more ready for future mobility trends according to the UMR Index.[42]

As trends in population growth continue, the risk of energy and water scarcity increases, and new technologies get adapted by competitors, the two cities will have to adapt their infrastructure to these new challenges and prospects.[43] In this regard, Casablanca appears to be much more adaptable in terms of housing policy and transportation, which, along with the city's relatively young population and high rate of economic growth, presents many opportunities. We hope to see Los Angeles take efforts to match the willingness of cities such as Casablanca in taking drastic steps in infrastructure funding in tackling its lack of housing and transport sustainability and promote resilient urbanization; and we hope

[35] "Study: 62% of Trips Are Made on Foot in Casablanca," Morocco World News, January 2019, accessed December 20, 2023, https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2019/01/263642/trips-foot-casablanca.

[36] "Facts At A Glance," Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, June 2023, archived from the original on March 19, 2023, retrieved June 22, 2023.

[37] Atalayar, "AFD Contributes to Financing the Extension of the Casablanca Tramway," Atalayar, June 28, 2023, https://www.atalayar.com/en/articulo/economy-and-business/afd-contributes-financing-extension-casablancatramway/20201104134613148251.html.

[38] OECD, Metropolitan areas, accessed December 20, 2023, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CITIES.

[39] "Public-private partnerships," LA Metro, accessed December 20, 2023, https://www.metro.net/about/publicprivate-partnerships/.

[40] Claude Jamati, "Casablanca (Morocco): An Example of Public-Private Partnership," accessed December 20, 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248997377_Casablanca_Morocco_An_Example_of_PublicPrivate_Partnership.

[41] "Casablanca," Urban Pathways, accessed December 20, 2023, http://www.urban-pathways.org/casablanca.html.

[42] Oliver Wyman, "How Los Angeles Performs across Urban Mobility Targets," Oliver Wyman Forum, accessed December 20, 2023, https://www.oliverwymanforum.com/mobility/urban-mobility-readiness-index/losangeles.html.

[43] Wyman, "How Los Angeles Performs across Urban Mobility Targets."

for Casablanca to maintain a higher degree of inclusivity in these developments, working with local community leaders and respecting the dignity and inputs of residents to avoid disenfranchising the city's underprivileged communities.

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The Monster Outside the Hall: Monstrosity, Space, and Exclusion

from *Beowulf* to America

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Monsters have long functioned as cultural beings through which societies create the dichotomy of the self, the other, and the boundaries of belonging. In the Old English poem *Beowulf*, this monstrosity is not solely defined by physical difference or violent behaviour but produced through discursive and spatial discourses that situate certain bodies outside the social order. The first monster Heorot encounters, Grendel, is repeatedly named a *mearcstapa*[1], meaning the one who walks on the boundary, which not only highlights his position of exile geographically, dwelling beyond the sacred hall, but also symbolically, inhabiting beyond the bonds of kingship that sustain the order in communal life. His genealogy, traced to the lineage of Cain[2], situates his monstrosity as inherited, while the language used to describe and situate him at this order strips away moral interiority, transforming Grendel into a figure shaped from the collective fears[3] of Heorot. This monsterization is still visible in contemporary American immigration discourse through narratives that associate them with moral danger and crime, with political rhetoric and media representations which frame immigrant communities as inherently violent and dangerous[4]. Through this one-sided narrative-making, criminality becomes an attributed quality to an entire community, causing exclusion and socio-political exile.

Yet *Beowulf* also encourages the audience to examine the other side of the coin through the psychological depth and inner monologues of characters like Grendel and the dragon, reshaping its own categorisation of monstrosity. Grendel and the dragon act upon their internal belief

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[1] Nicolas K. Kiessling, "Grendel: A New Aspect," *Modern Philology* 65, no. 3 (February 1968): 191.

[2] *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, 106, 9

[3] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory*, 4.

[4] Amanda Warnock, "The Dehumanization of Immigrants and Refugees: A Comparison of Dehumanizing Rhetoric by All Candidates in Three U.S. Presidential Elections," *Journal of Purdue Undergraduate Research* (2019).

systems; Grendel responds to exclusion and loss, and the dragon guards a hoard[5] that has great value in his world. Beowulf, by contrast, imposes his own heroic truth upon these figures, exorcising them without recognising their motives. In that sense, *Beowulf* exposes how monstrosity can be produced not by inheritance but by the authority that refuses to incorporate and acknowledge the alternative perspectives and shows that the real monster is not the one that dwells at the gates of difference[6] but the one who both fears and desires it[7].

Such epics do more than preserve the cultural archive; they also provide narrative frameworks through which societies continue to interpret their surroundings and decide on what to include and exclude, as well as what to fear and adapt. Those categories of "othering" extend beyond the medieval imagination and mindset; the spatial exile of Grendel to the margins of Heorot and the moral panic surrounding his existence reflect a broader cultural logic in which otherised beings are pushed to the margins through dehumanisation. Through Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopia, [8]Grendel's habitat and the dragon's lair become a space that holds what the community refuses to integrate, which aligns with cemeteries situated outside of the cities or border zones that regulate and keep the unwanted body under control. This spatial exclusion continues to operate in contemporary American society, where certain groups are managed through marginal spaces rather than fully included. Detention centres, border zones, and segregated neighbourhoods thus function as modern heterotopias[9] consisting of those who seem disruptive or threatening, separate from the imagined, idealised community. While individuals are physically present in those spaces, they are socially absent, existing under constant regulation. Much like Grendel and the dragon's exile from Heorot, the physical separation of those groups highlights social exclusion and frames immigrants as outsiders to the national, idealised community of contemporary America.

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[5] *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, 2271- 2286, 115
[6] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory*, 7.
[7] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory*, 16.

[8] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces (Des Espace Autres)," March 1967
[9]
Martinez, Carlos. "Captive States: Migration and Expulsion on the Carceral Frontier." PhD diss., University of California, San Francisco and University of California, Berkeley, 2022. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/84j2f038.

While Beowulf might seem outdated and far beyond historical reach, its voice still echoes through similar language devices that keep shaping contemporary American immigration discourse, where immigrant bodies are frequently labelled as "alien", "dangerous" or "order-breaking"[10], despite their physical presence within the nation, while also denying them their own agency and the legitimacy of their reasons and histories. The resonance between medieval monstrosity and contemporary narratives of constant exclusion and alienation does not rely on direct resemblance but on shared motive in situating immigrants outside of communal borders. The monsters, then, are not the ones who are excluded themselves, but the structures of authority that insist on exclusion without explanation, revealing how thousands of years old epic literature continues to interpret contemporary othering.

According to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's Thesis I, "the monster's body is a cultural body,"[11] and this monstrosity is not biologically inherited but rather is a cloak onto which anxieties, values, and boundaries of the inhabited society are sewn. In that sense, monsters do not emerge from nature but through the culture's need to define itself through exclusion. The monster, therefore, functions as a liminal body whose very existence decides on what the limits of the human are and stabilises communal identity by embodying what must be cast out and what must be adopted. In *Beowulf*, both Grendel and the dragon are created and cast away through this very categorisation, but via solely different reasons. Grendel is monsterised through both his genealogy and familial relations with Cain[12], and through his beyond-the-hall inhabitants. On the other hand, the dragon's monstrosity is built upon through his isolation and his unwillingness in human value systems[13]. In both cases, monstrosity precedes action; violence does not create the monster but rather confirms a category that was already assigned, even before any violent act was made. By denying both figures' narrative agency and assessing categorisation as monstrous in the beginning, they are already cast away from the social and political order. The poem transforms these figures into "the other" to create the positive opposition of "the self"; in that case, the heroic identity is the only one within which it can be fully secure. By using

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[10] Stephen M. Utych, "How Dehumanization Influences Attitudes toward Immigrants," *Political Research Quarterly* (2017): 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917744897
[11] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory*, 4.

[12] *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, 106, 9
[13] *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, 2271- 2286, 115

Cohen's theory as a framework, it is revealed that monstrosity is not inherited but culturally woven[14] through which the boundaries of monstrosity and communal identity are continually reaffirmed; discourse as such still exists in contemporary American society, where immigrant bodies are frequently labelled as "alien" or "illegal", continuously treated as threats to socio-political order[15], and their ancestries and motives disregarded which showcases that exclusion without explanation is still produced.

Michel Foucault's theory of heterotopia[16] helps explain how societies use space to define what they consider as "other". In Beowulf, Grendel's mere and the dragon's lair function as heterotopic places that exist outside of the social borders of Heorot yet are symbolically attached to it. Grendel's dwelling in the swamp situates him both physically and socially exiled, further reinforcing the idea that he is unwanted within the borders of Heorot and does not belong within the community. Similarly, although the dragon's lair is isolated, it holds treasure that comes from the cultural world[17], showing that the monster this time does not inhabit the borders of society but the margins, a liminal area. These spaces allow the community to define its values, norms, and most importantly, itself, in contrast, maintaining order by keeping "threats" at a distance.

A similar spatial positioning operates in contemporary America, particularly in the treatment of immigrants. Border zones, detention centres, and temporary migrant camps function as modern heterotopias where immigrants are physically present within the existing community but are denied full socio-political belonging. Like Grendel and the dragon, immigrants in these marginalised spaces are framed as threats to social stability and recognised as abstract figures rather than individuals through reinforced otherness, while presenting the dominant community as orderly and secure. In both *Beowulf* and contemporary America, monstrosity is not always an inherent quality of the marginalised figure, but something produced through socio-political structures. Grendel and the dragon are labelled monsters because they are forced to exist outside of the orders of Heorot, just as immigrants are often framed as threats through laws and policies

[14] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory*, 4.
[15] Cassese, Erin C. "Dehumanization of the Opposition in Political Campaigns." Social Science Quarterly 101, no. 1 (2019): 107–20. Portico. https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12745.
[16] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces (Des Espace Autres)," March 1967
[17] *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, 2271- 2286, 115

that limit their agency and deny them belonging. These power structures create the dichotomy between the self and the other, who is included and who is excluded, thus turning difference into something fearful and dangerous. Through this structure, it is understood that the "monster" is not the marginalised figure but the system that creates these dichotomies.

The connections between the epic *Beowulf* and the current issues surrounding contemporary America are not about claiming that Grendel and the dragon are the same as an immigrant, but rather about highlighting that it is the same power dynamics that create this dichotomy of exclusion in both contexts. In the poem, both Grendel and the dragon are cast away to the margins of Heorot and are forced to confine themselves in marginalised, liminal spaces[18] through the authority of the "heroes". Their monstrosity is therefore not inherent, as the poem suggests in the beginning, but rather it is produced by the society they dwell in and the authority figures that define who is included and who is not. Similarly, in contemporary America, it is the immigrants who are physically present but disregarded through legal and socio-political discourses.

Border zones, detention centres, and public discourse label them as "aliens" or "dangerous" while also denying their cultural archives and humanities. While they are two separate examples from two vastly distinct timelines, both have a common ground: society defines itself by creating a "self" and an "other" through fear and hatred, and the real monster is not the marginalised but the authorial force that imposes social exclusion.

Ultimately, monstrosity in Beowulf is not solely about violent or grotesque creatures but rather about the much bigger and universal picture, the ways in which power defines who belongs and who does not. While the epic might seem to be about marginalised monstrous figures' alienation and exile, it is about shifting the perspective from the "self" to the "other" when analysing the events surrounding the community in the end. Through Grendel and the dragon's socio-political exile, communal identity is formed, and this logic of constant pursuit of a monsterised figure is not limited to the medieval world. Immigrant populations are treated in a similar way in contemporary America; they are isolated in detention centres, labelled as "alien" or "illegal"[19], and

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[18] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," *Monster Theory*, 7.

[19] Stephen M. Utych, "How Dehumanization Influences Attitudes toward Immigrants," *Political Research Quarterly* (2017): 1–13, https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917744897

denied socio-political recognition. By analysing how those medieval monsters are created through exclusion and isolation, *Beowulf* functions as an interpreter to understand the broader frame and those power dynamics, constant pursuit of otherising a certain community is nothing new. Thus, it highlights the idea that the monster is often not the marginalised body but is the system that enforced those dichotomies and boundaries in the first place.

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Regional Divergence: Religion, Economics, and the Cultural Fault Lines of the Thirteen Colonies

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The discovery of the New World initiated a massive European migratory wave, transforming the American continent. The initial British settlement was established by enterprising Englishmen at Jamestown on May 13, 1607, where Captain John Smith briefly served as the early leader. While early settlements, driven by profit motives, focused on developing farming and lucrative crops like tobacco, the most critical foundational event for American culture was the Separatist-Puritan (Pilgrim) migrations that began in 1620.

These migrations were a direct result of the strict religious policies and persecutions enforced by King James I of England. Between 1620 and 1640, approximately 20,000 Pilgrims and Puritans fled their homeland, founding colonies that would shape the region's cultural landscape. A defining feature of this Puritan wave, unlike earlier, male-dominated migrations, was that it involved entire families, including doctors, teachers, and priests, effectively emptying significant portions of English towns (Nevins and Commager 31). Over the years, as migration increased, the thirteen colonies were firmly established. This article examines these colonies under three distinct groups, New England, Middle, and Southern, in terms of their foundational cultural differences and the state of education.

The New England colonies were established by the Pilgrims, who arrived at Plymouth aboard the Mayflower ship in 1620, followed by the Puritans, who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony and subsequently migrated to Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. A primary analytical focus for this region is the dominance of its religious motive: the founding settlers were Separatist-Puritans, which gave rise to the region's pronounced religious conformity. During the American Revolution, the New England population remained almost entirely

of English descent (Nevins and Commager 54).

The colonists sought to escape religious oppression, freely practice their beliefs, and build a new society. The people of New England, often called Yankees, based their culture on hard work, thriftiness, and religiousness. While farming and fishing were primary income sources, leading to the wealth of merchants and traders, the necessity of self-reliance meant colonists often manufactured their own fabrics, shoes, and furniture.

New England's emphasis on education was unparalleled. Priests served not only as spiritual leaders but also as the primary source of education and community governance. Consequently, intellectual rigor was paramount: priests were experts in theology and ancient languages, with leaders like Harvard College President Charles Chauncy studying the Old and New Testaments in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek (Nevins and Commager 55). This intellectual culture led to the founding of prestigious institutions, including Harvard College (1636) and Yale University (1701). Despite class differences, the rigid moral code helped maintain low crime rates and a relatively stable society.

The second distinct group of colonies, the Middle Colonies, included Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey. These colonies established a reputation for being more cosmopolitan and tolerant compared to the rigid religious conformity of New England. This spirit of tolerance stemmed largely from the influence of the Quaker community in Pennsylvania, whose theological tenets promoted religious freedom and acceptance. While perhaps lacking the immediate institutional development of New England (such as the early founding of Harvard), the Middle Colonies avoided the narrow-minded dogmatism and enforced uniformity seen in the Puritan north.

Economically, the region was highly successful, maintaining an agriculture-based economy that led to widespread prosperity. This economic strength is evidenced by the robust architecture of Quaker farms, the availability of diverse food sources (such as meat served multiple times a day), extensive fruit orchards, and a large animal population. Beyond agriculture, the Middle Colonies boasted a diverse professional sector, including merchants, craftsmen, and artisans. The region became a key commercial hub; shortly before the Revolution, Delaware Port alone hosted over five hundred ships and

employed more than seven thousand sailor merchants (Nevins and Commager 58).

One of the Founding Fathers, John Adams, mentioned the beauty of New York in letters to his wife, Abigail Adams, during his short stay there.

"New York is a thriving town with well-built houses and fine accommodations. The meals are plentiful and of good taste, and the hospitality of the people is most welcoming. The streets are busy but well-ordered, and the city shows great promise for commerce and growth." John Adams, letter to Abigail Adams, August 1774.

Another crucial Middle Colonie was Philadelphia. It was a calmer area compared to New York. It had wide streets, clean roads, and a unique beauty because people of different races and faiths lived together. Philadelphia was also home to historic figures like Benjamin Franklin. Also, Thomas Jefferson said in a letter that Philadelphia left a stronger impression on people than London and Paris.

Upon arriving in the city, Adams was impressed by the urban planning compared to Boston. He described the scene to Abigail explicitly: "The streets are busy but well-ordered, and the city shows great promise

for commerce and growth" (Adams 1963, 145).

We mentioned above that the Middle Colonies valued religious freedom. This religious freedom even reached a point that disturbed church officials. With the contribution of Benjamin Franklin, the College of Philadelphia (today's University of Pennsylvania) stood out with secular and science-based education. Regarding slavery, although Quakers were completely against it, we can say that in some settlements, slavery was an important economic force.

Lastly, this paper examines the Southern Colonies, consisting of Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Maryland. Their most distinctive feature was an economy entirely based on large-scale commercial agriculture. Unlike the other two colonial groups, the Southern Colonies possessed vast farming areas dedicated to cash crops. This economic model, which relied heavily on enslaved labor, created a rigid social hierarchy: landowners and the noble class accrued significant wealth, inhabiting large mansions, while the enslaved population lived in simple quarters and worked the fields. House slaves, though still unfree, often received marginally better treatment than those in the fields. The

system of slavery also enriched many merchants through the slave trade.

In terms of the education system, the South lagged behind the North. The primary mode of instruction was provided entirely by private tutors or institutions. Children of the noble and wealthy families could afford to study at English private universities. Despite these limited educational opportunities for the general public, the Southern Colonies produced significant political leaders, including figures such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison.

Crucially, while Nevins and Commager reference a perception of Southern migrants as "lazy" (Nevis and Commenger 64), this characterization primarily reflects the bias of contemporary Northern chroniclers and must be understood in the context of the region's aristocratic structure, which privileged leisure for the landowning class while enforcing extreme labor on the enslaved population.

In conclusion, the colonial era established three profoundly separate groups that diverged fundamentally in religious freedom, culture, economy, and education. In New England, the foundation was a homogeneous society dominated by English Puritans, driven by trade (particularly fishing),

and sustained by strong educational institutions like Harvard and Yale. The Middle Colonies fostered a heterogeneous, cosmopolitan society thanks to the contributions of the Quaker community, featuring an economy balanced between agriculture and trade, and a system of education supported by secular, science-based institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania.

The Southern Colonies, however, stood in stark contrast to the other two. They were defined by an economy wholly dependent on land and agriculture, rigid class divisions created by the wealthy landowning elite, the institution of slavery, and a private education system available only to a select few.

These clear, fundamental differences in the first thirteen colonies made it almost inevitable that the American people and political structure would face severe sectional problems later in their history. However, the eventual creation of the concept of an "American nation," following difficult years marked by revolution, intense disagreements, protests, and a Civil War, is an achievement worthy of serious praise and study.

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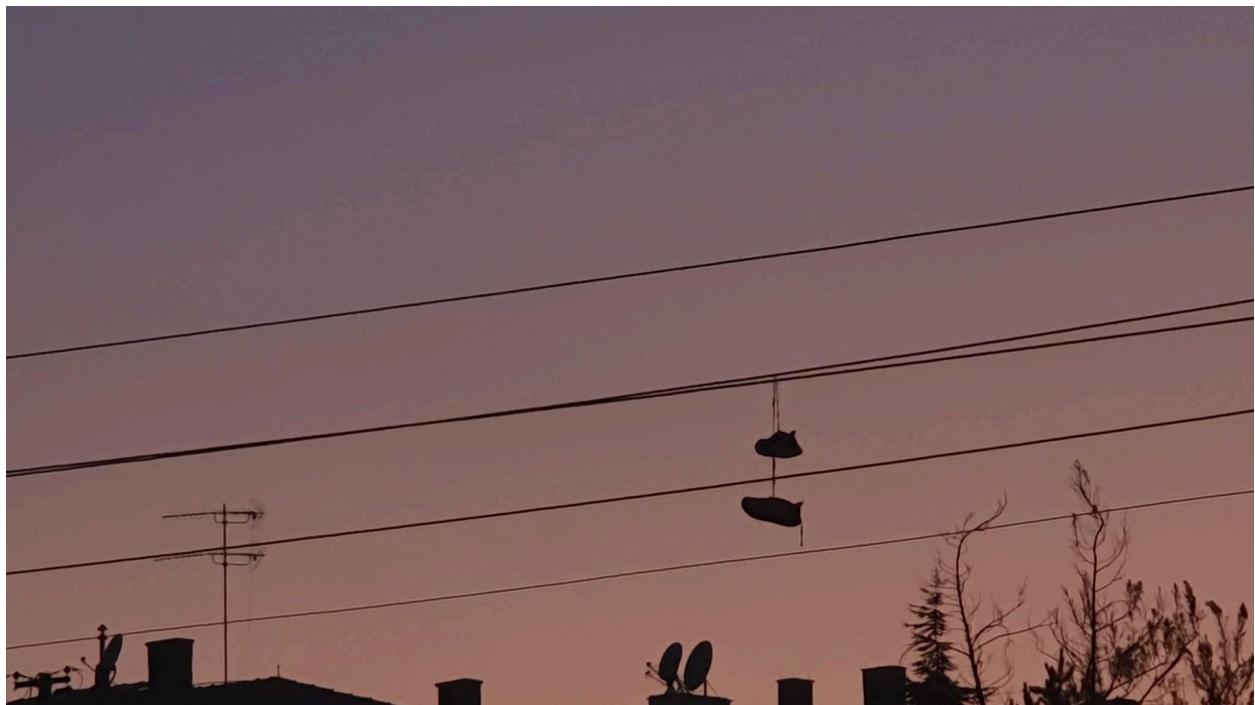
Photo by **Furkan Buğra Kumaş**

THE OCEAN

Yunus Eren Şenel

I hope you get all that you ask for

The gold, the praise, the trembling approval,

So you may see it dissolve in your hands

Like dust pretending to be light.

I hope you win your little races,

Cross every finish line gasping,

Only to realize the track

Was a circle leading back to nothing.

Then face the abyss staring at you

Let it see through you.

Do not resist its gaze

It is the mirror that displays

The bones beneath your borrowed face.

Break.

The fragments will teach you wholeness.

Fall.

The ground will teach you how to rise.

Lose your worth.

Only then will you feel the weight of being.

And when silence surrounds you,

Shed no tear

As you will finally hear

Not the crowd,

But yourself.

SEEING A PHOTO OF AN OLD FRIEND
Eylem Karakış

It's a Portuguese sidewalk for sure, I recognize it instantly:

The pale shirt tucked and the skin that has seen the ghost

At the dim bar. Especially

The males talk or tackle a smirk and toss

As the crystal cars constantly cross.

I recognize instantly, slippery sidewalks kissing my shoes deep,

Images like wet cloaks and walls descending, and wrens keep

Tuning in, their tweets threateningly at my sleep peep.

Drills shivering at the main street while the stars pile over one another,

Strolls, clicking, flickering ruas with small cars parked through all summers.

Songs tricking the hummers of the bummer crowds on my pillows.

I've been through all the colors and clashed with a bunch of doors

Got all dirty shoes but my muscles got loose almost.

And I learnt one thing: time is not big in size in fact; but it sighs big.

THE VEINCUTTERS
Mark Couteau

Image from the *Financial Times*,
https://www.ft.com/content/f1017648-1b94-11e3-b678-00144feab7d

— The lights off the sleepy sun scattered themselves over its limbs before their threads were plucked apart by the young night. Eastern breath hovered near the legs, promising a bountiful sky not too far nor late from there. In its breathers lay a rest and in its arms it felt the weight of a dream not meant for vision. It felt the pulse of the world and it too throbbed along to her rhythm. It had been there before there existed many others or anything that had in itself which belonged to it. It had a name that would evade syllables and the tongues of the others. Autumn sketched its orange wardrobe around the neck, all the way to the wrists, much to its muted amusement. The breathers shuffle. Lightning brews into stern swords of thunder silently some miles apart. Its gaze now melts into a pack of buffalos. Their brown suits shuffle and abate the haggard caprices of the cold winds. Among them a smaller one. The child wanders among the dusty ground beneath him. He shivers and he cannot judge between one motion or another. He's happy and he's excited

and he cannot tell the difference. Life is too much with him and he knows it. It throbs with life and feels it roam in him. Along the bushes he had been questing after a solitary daffodil like a knight in search of a meaning and is charmed by its excitement. He skids and sits upon the rocks and it feels the cold cushion of the soil too. With sinless eyes the world is welcomed unto him and he accepts it dearly. The yellowy orange glides on the white corridors around his iris, and he could almost taste it like butter dripping on his retina. It gazes and it wonders in thoughts too slippery for words or sound. The child leaves and his furry steps echo on its body like it had agreed and gave consent to his movement. The stars hold on to the sky like thoughts too deep for pondering. The indifferent air presses onto its torso as it sets out to spin the life with all its shades anew for another morrow here and elsewhere. The sleep prevails, it welcomes it like a newborn child surprised by its own birth.

Red haze awakens it from its solitary dream. It dreams in colors mirages are made of. It gazes in eyeless stares. It now feels a fear made up of the same redness misting its skin. Figures abound. It had stood there before any of them ever brought in its air and lived to spend any of it. It saw kings and princes and it saw unknown dangers roam the soil it's standing on. They advance. Glimmer upon glimmer they stride with their tools like an unholy legion without a creed. The child, alert but confused, seeks a line inwoods as the father urges the group to retreat. The redness follows. Dust coils into its coaly beams. The moon tonight seems to seek a light to call its own. In the air a blackness and its decaying chords. One of them tears the air open in one sound that for a second mutes the air and blasts it open like some shadeless door has momentarily been opened that welcomes life and shuts closed leaving behind its deaf nothingness. The child screams in stretched vowels that jolt across life in the scanty timbers. These ghastly figures multiple themselves from their carriages, breaking the air in discordant notes like an electric cataract spilling into the open air to draw its pitch blue knives into the prairie skies like slithery roads that lead to unknown places meant for unknown travellers. The lines speak of false gods and their nameless angels and they stretch their limbs and they set loose their arms. The child is sought amidst the pandemonium and the storms light the way for the legion silently like a twisted play with blades for curtains. The carriages leave their footprints smeared as if claiming here as theirs and theirs only in fingerless coal black nails

clawed on the skin of the soil. Yonder the austere owls lay witnesses but they will not be heard nor asked to speak. Its breathers shuffle and collapse into each other as if to shelter themselves. Smoke fills its limbs that promises new shades of dark upon acceptance. The breeze has now gone.

More figures propel themselves into the opens of the forest. The night seemed to search for a calmness like the sick searches for the gaslight of an angel. They set loose the flames and they waver like curly hair made up of cursed coils and abstract feelings. They fling their spectral limbs and with every touch they lay claim to whatever life and color they happen upon. They seek their own agency and they don't take kindly to others. They have chains strapped to their arms and some motion had made them animate as if lightning were bleeding into their metallic boards. It cuts the air open and fills it with its teeth that eat away the splendor of the grass and the green. They take their time adjusting it, one push to give it a jolt and another wide arc of the limb backwards to give it the anger it needs. It rattles like an ambassador of a world understood and ruled by the ink of flames and brimstone. Like a piano stuck fast on a consonant it rings and it chews the color with its white-hot mandible and lets itself creep

upon the shrouds as its limbs exert its own vibration bereft of having passed the ladders of a note nor a chord and was naked thus of a melody and they made sure it stretched its toothy grin while the forest played maim and mute to its rule. It waved or it was waved and it shut the lights and flickers of the stars mid-air as it traipsed its own jagged invisible path and one couldn't tell whether it grew out of the figures on its own or were made to be that way by the force of some necessity. The redness leaking out of its eyes speaks of a certainty crafted and woven by the same element that gives the night its colors and the anger its tremors. It is waved or so it waves and it groans and the prairie plays mime to its feast.

Some rare breeze now touches its body anew. It speaks in words unknown to the rest and thinks in thoughts too deep for letters. It had accepted the fall of his own and the birth of the many. It commands the limbs for the final effort it needs to brace the next ahead of it. It takes a breath and fills it with life. It wishes it away like an orphaned child for the taking in the wind. It bends its arms as if to dust the redness off its body. It moves in motions too delicate for vision. It exhales knowing perhaps now it won't be claimed. Eastern breath hovers above it by chance to

pay its silent farewells. It makes a noise that melts inside the shy haggard mouth. It had been there before they ever was and it had seen the falls of the kings and the princes. The lightning makes its blue sketches across the now red eyed night. It stares an eyeless stare heavenward and it keeps it there. The breeze tells of a bountiful sky. It looks ahead knowing the figures too carry a part of it inside them. It feels content but they don't see it. It looks at the redness and this time it looks at it back. Dust melts into the coaly air. It feels the pulse of the world and like a watchmaker it is sure the time agrees to it. It feels everything at once and is content for its own part. It bore no gifts to this life besides its own existence but it was alright, everything was. It knew it would rain soon

A RED-DRESSED WOMAN ON THE EMPIRE STATE
Darcy

why do you believe in equality?

what reasonable mind on earth could conclude that?

what makes an authentic individual feel the same as those with crippled minds,

indistinguishable from a bug, an ant, a bee?

fighting for the same cause,

sacrificing your own authenticity?

<div align="right">

she answered,

"I believe as others have told me to regardless of "Being" aware of or not

Isn't that what an ant or a bee does?"

</div>

as we rose through the floors in the elevator,

so many stores with such ease,

not on the emotional flappings of the bee,

that can only work on the soil

where intellect never takes root,

but with an elevator created on paper and physics,

on the sophisticated designs

of Authentic geniuses.

at the top floor of the Empire State,

I showed her the beauty of the landscape,

N.Y.C. rising on the capital.

<div align="right">

I told:

</div>

look how far up we came with it.

                        none of this would be possible without Them.

she added:

the only thing ı see

is how far down the others stayed beneath us.

                                            stunned into silence,

                                            we lit a cigarette

                                    to order the stream of thoughts.

the tobacco you smoke

is mass-produced for all those

you insist on defending as 'part of you';

it was made possible

by the very minority you oppose," I said.

she looked at me for the first time.

                        "ı do not smoke it for its benefits,

                                but because once ı began,

                                        ı could not quit.

                                    Yet still ı am conscious

                                that my bronchi are drying out,

                unlike You.

VIOLET HARMONY

Çağan Doğan

The cold embrace of fleeting sands

Forever bound in dens

Of bygone slumbers painted blue,

Sedate as frozen dew

The chilling winds, the silver moon

Surround a golden loom

Embellished with a midnight rose

Unbound by broken oaths

Beyond the loom, the reapers dwell

As three banshees foretell

Who weave the crimson strands of fate

Ordained be thy estate

The hellish terror wreaked by Bloom,

Infernal hand of doom

That seared the blood of mighty kings

Beneath the weight of sins

Corrupted specters haunt the wastes

Of frigid winter's gates,

The summer's heat engulfs the road

Of soul's unsung forebode

Between the claws of flame and dew

Unseen, a purple hue

Bestowed with old Demeter's crown

The rose of midnight heralds spring

FOUR SEASON

Yunus Eren Şenel

One day, three autumns.

Futile were my acts,

a leaf trying not to fall when autumn comes.

I wish to be a pine tree,

tall as skies,

defying every wind,

evergreen needles on my branches.

One day, three winters.

Cold is the weather,

snow covering bruises of earth.

I wish to be snow,

soft as air,

without scars,

pure as a corpse.

One day, three springs.

Thunderstorms bombing my ear,

rain washing the blood.

I wish to be rain,

cleaning the debris,

feeding dead soil,

medicine from heavens.

One day, one dead, one remaining.

I beg summer to come.

I'm tired of feeling-

of bleeding through,

Yearning for the wounds

to finally close.

Heavens, please, just once,

look down and take pity.

Strip me bare, unmake me,

cleanse the rot.

Please tell the ghosts

to stop clinging to my ribs,

whispering your name through my bones.

I fear the world sees my shadow

Long before it ever sees me

GAMZE CANTÜRK

DAMLA NUR ERDOĞAN

KEREM DELIALIOĞLU

IRMAK SORAN

ALTUĞ KÜÇÜKYUMUK

YUNUS EREN ŞENEL

EYLEM KARAKIŞ

MARK COUTEAU

ÇAĞAN DOĞAN

DARCY

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