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# Introduction:
# Extraordinary, Ambiguous and Unsettling

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In the Pacific Northwest during the 1970s, regional sightings of Bigfoot (or Sasquatch) were the subject of news stories and informal speculation. Opinions ranged from dismissals of the monster as "just folklore" to a full embrace of cryptozoology, the study of mythical animals. In 2019, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) made its Bigfoot files from the 1970s available to the public.[1] The 22-page document follows a paper trail based on a request made by Peter Byrne, an Oregon resident and Bigfoot enthusiast. Byrne supplied the Bureau with an unidentified hair sample he had collected. When the results came back, the hairs "were determined to be from the deer family." Forty-three years later Peter Byrne dismissed the FBI findings. "I've interviewed far too many people with credible stories," he told a reporter from Portland's KGW news station. At 93, Byrne was still hiking the Oregon Coast Range in the hopes of catching a glimpse of the elusive creature[2]. I understand Bryne's doggedness. I too have interviewed numerous people, mostly citizens of Olympic Peninsula tribes, about their personal encounters with Bigfoot. People I know and trust shared frank, sincere and detailed accounts of encountering "Him" on rain-swept highways or along fishing trails (Murray 2019). Besides hearing some great stories, I learned this about monsters: the cultural

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[1]     "Bigfoot," The FBI Vault, Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed May 14, 2021.

[2]     Christine Pitawanich. "At 93 Oregon man still walks the woods in search of Bigfoot," KGW, Portland, OR, 2019, accessed May 12, 2021.

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work they perform is as important to denizens of the 21$^{st}$ century as it was to their ancestors. For one thing, monsters unsettle us through their "intolerable ambiguity," which in turn threatens human "understandings of the world, the self, and the relations between the two" (Weinstock 2020, 3).

As an investigator for the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry and deputy editor for that organization's journal, Benjamin Radford has untangled ambiguous and paranormal claims around the world for much of his professional career. It can be said that he knows a thing or two about monsters, not to mention ghosts and space aliens. He has investigated and debunked haunted theatres, mysterious crystal skulls and cryptid sightings, a category of mythical or unknown animal species that includes Bigfoot, the Loch Ness monster and others. In his book *Mysterious New Mexico: Miracles, Magic, and Monsters in the Land of Enchantment* (2014) Radford claims to have "solved" many paranormal mysteries by relying on academic research from multiple disciplines and through his own painstaking field investigations. Radford's scientific approach to exploring supernatural claims is to "provide background information … while guiding the reader through truths and myths about each topic" (2014, 3).

There is no doubt Radford's goal to expose misinformation and "fakelore" while encouraging more critical consumption of media content is both admirable and necessary in an era where rumors, conspiracy theories and mistruths spread widely across the Internet in a single day. More recently Radford and his colleagues at the *Skeptical Inquirer* are focused on pernicious forms of folklore like misinformation surrounding the Covid-19 vaccine and the spread of conspiracy theories by followers of QAnon[3]. At the same time, Radford's assumption, one that is shared by many, is that people mostly cling to paranormal beliefs because they are misinformed. So, when the scientifically minded present alternative explanations based on research, evidence and logical arguments, the public abandons the supernatural realm in favor of a more secular reality. The folklorist David Hufford (1982, 47) saw science's dominant role in defining truth as being mired in a "tradition of disbelief." In other words, Hufford stated, "What I know, I *know*, what you know you only believe." If people readily accepted their beliefs as misinformation in the face of facts, then scientists and paranormal investigators would not still be sparring over the authenticity of giant plaster cast footprints or the use of electronic voice phenomena as scientific evidence of ghosts. In my years of listening to people's accounts of Sasquatch sightings and ghostly hauntings, science has

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[3]     *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Vol. 45, No. 3, May/June 2021.

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rarely won the day.  While debunking spurious claims has its place, what intrigues me more are questions about the nature of belief, past and present. Rather than challenge the validity of paranormal claims, I along with other scholars across multiple fields now study *why* people believe as they do, *what* counts as acceptable evidence or proof and *how* their stories are rooted culturally and historically in local belief systems.

Certainly monsters, both ancient and modern, continue to stalk humanity around the globe where they are immersed in complex cultural and historical matrices. The word 'monster' is derived from the word *monstrum*, a Latin term that suggests they offer both warnings and revelations. To study where monsters dwell "at the threshold of becoming" (Cohen 1996, 20) is to journey into humanity's deepest lingering fears about an unknown that hints at both uncertainties and possibilities.  Myths about monsters that are anchored to various systems of sacrality may continue to carry weight for thousands of years because their content rings as truth for new generations of believers. Thus, stories about monsters from Sasquatch to the Devil occupy important roles because the terror aroused by their abjected forms also corroborates beliefs about extraordinary realms where humans may encounter the divine.

Monsters linger in the informal stories people share about them. They are cautionary tales resigned to the liminal spaces between nature and culture, life and death, the real and the intangible. At the same time, monsters possess the power to emerge from the margins in order to storm the heart of human existence; the family, the home, the village, the nation. Monsters serve numerous purposes, not the least of which is to complicate the borderlands between safety and danger, self and other. What then do scholars hope to achieve by studying monsters in the 21st century? What rhizomatic relationships hidden beneath the surface, connect monsters to each other and humans in unexpected ways? What can we learn from them? How do we establish common analytical ground? These are fair questions.

While curiosity about the nature of monsters dates back to ancient times, 20th century theorists like Sigmund Freud (the uncanny), Julia Kristeva (the abject) and Michel Foucault (power) were instrumental in building a framework that has provided scholars with tools for rendering monsters legible. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in 1996 added his own theoretical bridge so contemporary scholars from across multiple disciplines could engage with each other more productively. His foundational essay *Monster Culture (Seven Theses)* provides "a method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender" and marks the origins of contemporary Monster Studies (1996, 3). His larger point has been that we live in monstrous times and analyzing why this is so, is a serious subject that is worthy of scholarly time and attention. Scholars from across academia have answered the call so there has been, especially in the last two decades, a proliferation of edited monster compendiums, books, special editions and

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foundational articles (c.f. Stryker 1994; Asma 2009; Mittman and Dendle 2012; Musharbash and Presterudstuen 2014; Weinstock 2020). The following three examples illustrate the utility of monsters when social theory featuring them is applied to real world issues like gender diversity, media consumption, globalization and culture change. Each of these exposes the dark underbelly where monsters dwell.

Queer theorist Susan Stryker used the imagery of monsters to spawn a new interdisciplinary field, "trans monstrosities." Her oft-quoted essay *My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage* (1994) challenged trans people to reclaim and empower themselves with the abjective language that had been used by Western society to exclude them as unnatural, monstrous creatures. Stryker's essay exposed "in unnerving detail the anxious, fearful underside of the current cultural fascination with transgenderism" (1994, 245). Her reflection on the term 'monster' in this instance illustrates how they are "both abject and sacred" while their angry rampages emphasize how "defilement is a prerequisite for order" (Braham 2021, 38-39).

More recently, scholars are conducting research on virtual hauntings (Blank 2009) as well as technology's relationship to posthumanism (Smart and Smart 2017). Ghastly avatars like the Slender Man (Peck 2017), cyborgs (Haraway 1985) and space aliens (Bullard 2016) reveal we are not at home with the ways that the spectral, the uncanny and technology are enjoined. Cohen's insight that late modernity is characterized by an "ambient fear [that is] a kind of total fear that saturates" our daily lives has only become more apparent in the two and half decades since he published his work. We now add to his concerns fears about the intensifying role of social media and the merger of humans with their technologies. Perhaps this accounts for the Slender Man, a more recent monster that sprang from the Internet where his legend cycle was born to inhabit the imaginations of children and the actual places they frequent. Slender Man's eclipse of the boundary between the self and its avatars aligns with genuine parental fears about children's unrestrained use of technologies to access and merge with virtual worlds. Like Slender Man, the Internet itself is monstrous as it is defined by a kind of hybridity where danger lurks at the hinge of the virtual and the real.[4]

Capitalism and globalization narrow the gap between 'here' and 'there' by providing greater access to goods, services and commodities. At the same time the price of convenience is fear of real and imagined threats. The language of monstrosity reveals the unstable ground where self meets other by warning of the possible perils of invasion and contamination. The

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[4]    Ochs, Josh, 2018. "What is Slender Man?" A Guide for Parents, accessed May 12, 2021.

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continuing popularity of zombie books, comics, films and television shows reflects the very nature of those fears. What dangers loiter at the "gates of difference," ready to breach the integrity of bodily, geographic and social borders? It does not require a global pandemic to see how zombies and alien invasions have come to represent those fears. And it goes without saying that the capitalistic ruins of the Anthropocene are spaces 21st century humans share with monstrous non-humans and where they continue to confront the excesses of modernity (c.f. Tsing et al. 2017).

Contemporary monster theories have primarily been defined by Literary Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, History and Philosophy. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock's recent compendium *The Monster Theory Reader* (2020) assembles leading voices reflecting this interdisciplinary dominance in the emerging field. Contributors to the volume offer a wide range of writings about the biological, psychological, historical, literary and sociopolitical roles monsters have played. While many authors evoke topics of particular interest to ethnographers, we and our predecessors have tended to haunt rather than fully embrace interdisciplinary dialogues.

For anthropologists, monsters are nothing new. For decades ethnographers have shared accounts of them. This includes E. E. Evans-Pritchard's (1937) ground-breaking book about witchcraft and magic among the Azande, Marjorie Halpin and Michael Ames's (1980) hard look at Wild Man stories and sightings and Edith Turner's (1984) provocative essay about witnessing an evil spirit leave an individual in Zambia as they were undergoing an exorcism. Anthropologists (c.f. Goulet and Young 1984; Goulet and Miller 2007) have encouraged giving voice to the inexplicable, unseen and extraordinary experiences they and their interlocuters have encountered in the course of conducting field work.

In 2014, anthropologists Yasmine Musharbash and Geir Henning Presterudtuen published *Monster Anthropology in Australasia and Beyond* in order to "open a dialogue between anthropology and the other disciplines interested in monsters: literature studies, media studies, cultural studies, history, gender and sexuality studies, geography, architecture [and] philosophy" (Musharbash and Henning Presterudtuen 2014, 1). They observed that while anthropologists have generations of experience with monsters, the discipline had been slow to join the proliferation of scholars from the Humanities, who focus largely on monsters from Western literary traditions. Anthropologists, Musharbash argues, may counter that narrower range with diverse cross-cultural examples of how local monsters operate in "real" and different ways. Anthropologists with their comparative and cross-cultural approach to understanding culture change, are a necessary addition to these dialogues.

Monsters reveal epistemological and ontological fault lines within societies while hovering between opposing forces like right and wrong, life and death, decorum and anarchy and self

and other. At the same time, according to Margit Shildrick (2018, 170) they are not "simply a signifier of otherness, but an altogether more complex figure that calls to mind not so much the other per se, but the trace of the other in the self." It is little wonder humans' approach "their" monsters with trepidation *and* curiosity, they are as Jeffrey Cohen argues, "our children" (1996, 20). By holding up a mirror for humans to glimpse their frightening doppelgangers, monsters identify the disorder in order and as a result, restore harmony by revealing the dangers posed by imbalance and instability. As such, they have played significant roles as arbiters of how humans distinguish themselves from non-humans and the divine.

The first three articles in this special edition illustrate through their cross-cultural and comparative analyses the paradoxical meanings of monsters in diverse historical populations. Michael Harkin (this volume) explores how humans in two societies historically confronted the monster within as they paradoxically tacked between acceptable behavior and the seductive force of their darker impulses. Harkin compares the central role of "manlike monsters" within the *Beowulf* saga with the mythical cycles and Hamatsa (cannibal dance) ritual made famous by the Kwakwaka'wakw (Kwakiutl) peoples of the Northwest Coast. Like Beowulf and his monstrous and lonely adversary, Grendel, Northwest Coast peoples embraced a logic that obscured through ritualized activities the bright line between human society and its negation. The Hamatsa initiate, like the monster Grendel, retreated to the isolated edges of human society. Only through a series of rituals over several nights was the initiate finally transformed from a cannibalistic monster to a warrior now ready to take his rightful place. As the Spear-Danes and Hamatsa initiates came to understand, true horror it seems resided in how clearly humans saw their own potential to turn monstrous unless they successfully repressed their wild impulses.

Charles Nuckolls next offers a fine-grained analysis of automaticity as "a characteristic of the monstrous" through his historical comparison of the role goddesses from Hindu and Greek mythologies played in delivering "wild" or automatic justice for social transgressions. Ancient Greek and Hindu goddesses of vengeance shared two qualities. The first was the exacting of vicious punishments automatically and without thought. Second, among both ancient Greeks and Hindus sexual sin was connected with pollution or blood, and automatic justice. Each example provides insights into the different ways "processes of domestication" emerged within the rise of the Greek city-state and Hindu households and families.

Kathryn Hudson and John Henderson examine shared characteristics and dissimilarities between *tsitzimime,* monstrous supernatural forces derived from pre-Columbian Aztec beliefs, and their Mesoamerican ethnographic counterpart, *sisimite*. In each instance the

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monsters served to remind humans what they were not supposed to be. Both had wild, unkept appearances, ate their food raw and dwelled in locations marginal to human habitation like forests, ravines and mountaintops. The *tsitzimime* differed from the *sisimite* in that they were usually conceptualized as the "sisters" of the divine goddess mother Coatlicue. The *sisimite* on the other hand merged with Christian supernaturalism following the Spanish conquest. No longer were such spirits associated with Coatlicue but instead were "mostly male agents of the Christian devil." Despite their differences, their shared wild attributes limited dangerous forces and enforced acceptable social mores.

The "archives of the monstrous," to borrow Shildrick's evocative phrase (2018, 167), encourage an ethnohistorical reading of monsters as evidence of silenced pasts and competing worldviews. Indigenous oral traditions about monsters provide a "vehicle for telling history" as Thierry Veyrié argues. Alan McMillian and Ian Hutchinson (2002, 44) caution that oral traditions "may have multiple levels of meaning, rather than describing a single set of historic events." They are "cultural forms that organize perceptions about the world." At the same time, Nuu-chah-nulth stories of dancing mountain dwarfs that shake the earth suggest ways that Native peoples "used their cultural landscapes to maintain history and a sense of identity" (Ibid, 60). In a similar vein, Veyrié considers how a multi-episodic story shared in the late 19th century by Pete Snapp, the son of a White settler and Paiute mother, relates to Native American historical responses to settler colonialism. Snapp's stories of other-than-humans in the mythic past culminate in his promotion of what was at the time, the new Native American Church, and the use of Peyote in its rituals.

Stories of American Southern plantations or aboriginal burial grounds haunted by the ghosts of marginalized others underscore how racism, colonialism, violence and spirits are threaded together by a variety of history-making common to settler colonial nations like the U.S., Canada and Australia (c.f. Miles 2015; Boyd and Thrush 2011; Poole 2011; Gelder and Jacobs 1998). Ghost stories about 'others' have long been shared around camp fires and more recently as part of dark history tours (Miles 2015). Ian Puppe's research about "haunted recreation" in Ontario's Algonquian Provincial Park goes from friendly to frustrating and even alarming as he navigates between park bureaucracy and place-based supernatural accounts they discourage. His findings underscore how present-day social tensions emerge in the context of shared supernatural stories. Park officials responded negatively to his questions about a nearby haunted ghost town. When the author later accepted an invitation to share a beer and fireside stories with fellow visitors at another campsite, the session took a dark turn as he probed their story of a ghostly Algonquian man seen in the park. Ultimately, the author uses these episodes as a way to frame "identity formation associated with tourism and heritage management."

In the final article of this special edition, Jamie Saris weaves the past and present together by contextualizing Western "appetites," addiction and the monstrous in the period between the publication of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in 1897 and the release of George Romero's cult classic, *Night of the Living Dead* in 1968. Saris uses stories of vampires and zombies, monsters that consume humans and bleed them dry, to consider how capitalism and consumerism in tangent with new technologies gave rise to modernity's monstrous appetites. The author's claims broaden with examples connecting Western society's oversized appetites with addiction to substances from medications (Dracula and Bayer aspirin made their debut in the same year) to a dangerous reliance on hydrocarbons. The author applies classic economic theory to monsters in order to consider how present-day demand for goods and addiction to substances "structure multiple anxieties, critiques and sometimes even apocalyptic fears at different levels."

Yasmine Musharbash has identified three ways that anthropologists can contribute to the contemporary study of monsters. They can provide comparative studies linking ethnographic materials that now languish "in either geographic or analytical isolation"; break free of older paradigms that have discouraged dialogue between anthropological sub-areas, and finally, expand the anthropological study of spirits and monsters through interdisciplinary engagement (2014, 15-16). The contributors to this special edition demonstrate in thoughtful and provocative ways, how timely these challenges are.

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ETHNOLOGIA ACTUALIS
Vol. 21, No. 1/2021

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**Of Anthropophagy and Anthropology: Monsters and Men in *Beowulf* and Northwest Coast Myth and Ritual**

# Of Anthropophagy and Anthropology: Monsters and Men in *Beowulf* and Northwest Coast Myth and Ritual

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**ABSTRACT**

Monsters can be divided into two categories: human-like and non-human. Non-human monsters tend to be chthonic beings that are associated with the earth and natural forces. Humanoid monsters represent metaphorical transformations of humanity itself, and as such reveal basic cultural values, such as sociability, while displaying their opposite. Humanoid monsters are the more terrifying, precisely because we recognize ourselves in them, although in an uncanny refraction. In the epic poem *Beowulf* and in myth and ritual of the Kwakiutl and Heiltsuk cultures of the Northwest Coast, manlike monsters play a central role.

**KEY WORDS**: anthropology, anthropophagy, Beowulf, monsters, myth, Native Americans, Northwest Coast, ritual

### Human-like and Non-Human Monsters

At the very beginning of Anglo-Saxon literary culture, we see a pronounced dichotomy between two types of monster, which structures the poem itself (Tolkien 1983). Early on in *Beowulf*, the hero must drive away a human-like monster who as a member of the "clan of Cain" is cursed to live apart from humanity with only his mother; looking in at human society from the outside engenders in Grendel a desire to destroy all that he sees and yearns for (Heaney 2008). In his old age, Beowulf must fight a dragon. Both creatures present an

existential threat to society; beyond that, though, the natures of the two creatures are very different. The dragon lives inside a mountain, is dormant for centuries, sleeping on his hoard, and only very occasionally awakening to create havoc. Grendel, on the other hand, lives much as other humans, with the exception that he is denied the commensality and sociability of human society. It is reasonable, then, to think of the dragon as a chthonic being: it shares the space and temporality of the earth itself. It exists apart from humans gladly, and only when disturbed by human intrusions does it strike out. Its appearance is akin to a natural disaster, such as a volcanic eruption or earthquake. While dragons, as a motif stretching across northern Eurasia from Greenland to China, are certainly important in any general consideration of monsters, I would turn instead to Grendel, because it is here that we see the role of monsters at the heart of human conceptions of self and other.

Grendel is morphologically a human male. He lives with his mother in a reduced version of human society. His only distinctive physical feature is his "superhuman" strength. The author of *Beowulf* explains that this is part of the curse that God has placed on him as a member of the clan of Cain:

> *Grendel was the name of this grim demon*
>
> *haunting the marches, marauding around the heath*
>
> *and the desolate fens; he had dwelt for a time*
>
> *in misery among the banished monsters,*
>
> *Cain's clan, whom the Creator had outlawed*
>
> *and condemned as outcasts. For the killing of Abel*
>
> *Cain got no good from committing that murder*
>
> *because the Almighty made him anathema*
>
> *and out of the curse of his exile there sprang*
>
> *ogres and elves and evil phantoms*
>
> *and the giants too who strove with God*
>
> *time and again until He gave them their reward* (Heaney 2008, 9).

Grendel is in the same category as giants, elves, trolls, and all the other uncanny creatures inhabiting the northern medieval world. These all are examples of what I have elsewhere called, in reference to the "Plinian Races," metaphorical transformations of human nature

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(Harkin 2011).[1] In the case of Plinian Races, such as the Blemmyae and the Cyclops, these were morphological transformations of the human form (Friedman 2000; Jahoda 1999). Interestingly, in Grendel's case, it is primarily the moral and, if we can use this term in this context, "cultural" dimensions which are transformed. The curse of Cain has degraded these creatures: in some ways physically, as these monsters are considered ugly and are often deformed and giant, but it is clear from the passage above that the defining quality is moral and social (Friedman 2000, 85). They are "condemned as outcasts" and so stand apart from human society, looking in with anger and envy:

> *It harrowed him*
>
> *to hear the din of the loud banquet*
>
> *every day in the hall, the harp being struck*
>
> *and the clear song of a skilled poet*
>
> *telling with mastery of man's beginnings* (Heaney 2008, 9).

The banquet hall is a physical place from which Grendel is barred, but more than that, it is the epitome of the positive values of human society. For the Shield-Danes, the overarching values were solidarity and loyalty among the warriors and between them and their king. This was epitomized by the feasting, drinking, and gift giving that took place in the mead hall. It was this which particularly irritated Grendel, who was doomed to a life outside the glittering hall, except for when he could occupy it through force. Even then, he is denied the essence of the place: of course, there are no others with whom to share food, drink, and song, and the throne, the place from which the magic of the place originates, is withheld *from Grendel by God himself:*

> *He took over Heorot,*
>
> *haunted the glittering hall after dark,*

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[1]   I argue that the European perception of the indigenous peoples of the Americas in the 16th century was characterized by a principle of metaphorical substitution of features of human existence, both morphological and moral, as seen from the European perspective: in other words, monsterology. By the end of the 16th century, with the accounts by John White and Thomas Hariot, published by Theodor De Bry, this had been replaced by a metonymic anthropology.

DOI: 10.2478/eas-2021-0018

> *but the throne itself, the treasure-seat,*
>
> *he was kept from approaching; he was the Lord's outcast* (Heaney 2008, 13).

What can we say about Grendel *qua* monster? His physical prowess is terrifying certainly, but what is it that gives him so strongly the uncanny quality characteristic of all monsters? Why do we fear him (more, in *Beowulf* than the dragon which in fact kills the hero)? It is because he is recognizable as one of us, and yet lacks, and in fact negates, what is seen as the essential feature of humanity. In this case, it is the militaristic, masculine solidarity of the feasting hall that Grendel lacks. More than this, he is a cannibal, which is the precise inversion of the Spear-Danes' practice of commensality. Rather than eat *with* comrades, he consumes *them*. We suspect, as well, a second taboo is violated: that of incest with the mother (Earl 2010). As Lévi-Strauss would say, he is undervaluing ties of common humanity and overvaluing those of kinship! (Lévi-Strauss 1967). Sigmund Freud, in his essay on the uncanny (*"unheimlich"*) suggests that we are terrified by these monsters because they project our own repressed urges and simultaneous fear of punishment for those urges. The word *"heimlich"* itself reflects a troubling ambiguity; it can mean at once familiar and homelike, as well as hidden. The idea that what is hidden may be exposed carries with it an implicit anxiety. The modification of the word with the prefix un- heightens rather than resolves the ambiguity (Freud 1919).

Grendel is, then, the embodiment of all that the Shield-Danes find repugnant, but which in a Freudian reading represents repressed urges. The medieval and early modern world was full of such monsters, wild men who lived the woods without clothes or civilization, and who were almost universally considered cannibalistic.

Grendel is thus one of a long line of monsters, real and imagined, who live outside the social order and reflect inversions of its key features. These monsters are usually "loners," who perhaps live alone or with their mother, who not only kill but cannibalize or abuse the bodies sexually. Hannibal Lecter, Jeffrey Dahmer, and countless others are instantiations of the Grendel archetype. The horror they evoke comes from our recognition of ourselves in them, but devoid of that which we thought essential to our being. They are not unlike zombies who seem to be able to function without a working brain. This reflects a realistic understanding of what is, in fact, required for society as a whole to function: the repression of urges tending toward murder, cannibalism, and incest. On the collective level, society could not exist without such repression, as Freud argues in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Freud 1961). However, individuals may well transgress these taboos, producing in the rest of us feelings of disgust, horror, and fascination. Indeed, we can take this analysis a step further, as Charles Nuckolls has suggested. Rather than posit a singular and simple ethos of a culture, we should

be sensitive to the fact that within such an ethos is at base a contradiction. Culture is always paradoxical, resting often on contradictory values (as in the United States, between individualism and egalitarianism). Thus, as Freud suggested, the very conditions of life in society are ultimately unreconcilable. Monsters are a reflection of our awareness at some level of this paradox (Nuckolls 1998).

It must be said that while there are global qualities to these monsters (the incest taboo and taboo on cannibalism are virtually universal), there are decidedly cultural variants as well. Thus, in China, a society which places the highest value on children and family, a rash of mass killings at schools erupted in the mid-to-late 2000s. In the United States, where personal autonomy is valued above all, captivity and imprisonment are features of many of the most famous fictional and non-fictional mass murders. In the U.K., which places high value on social cooperation and regularity, spur-of-the-moment outbursts of violence, à la *Clockwork Orange* strike with particular horror and fascination. The point is, then, that the specific ethos of a society has its own particular negative image or refraction. This negative image in turn provides the archetype of the humanoid monster. Monsterology is thus closely related to (and, I would argue, gives rise to) anthropology proper. Monsters are a way of understanding the structure of a particular cultural and social system of organization, by pointing to that which it is precisely not.

Claude Lévi-Strauss made a similar point when it came to the mythology of Native North America (Lévi-Strauss 1983, 146-197) (interestingly, although dragons are wholly absent from north of Mexico – I suppose Quetzlcoatl of the Aztecs of Mesoamerica could be viewed as one – humanoid monsters are ubiquitous here). Thus Raven, a walking, flying id, is shown in a series of humorous stories to be utterly foolish, and to represent the opposite of the way people should behave; Raven is a slave to his sexual and gustatory pleasures, and things never end well for him. Children are told these stories complete with their sexual embellishments for didactic purposes; indeed, these stories, through the interaction of speaker and audience, recreate the totality of the moral universe in their telling (Hymes 2003, 85). Monsters such as Coyote and Raven (who is both humanoid and avian) find themselves in various sorts of tight spots, the result of transgressing essential cultural rules, most notably sexual and food taboos (Hymes 2003, 289). The audience understands that behavior outside the bounds of cultural norms is not only improper, but ultimately impossible.

### Northwest Coast Culture as Analogue to the World of *Beowulf*

Northwest Coast society (and here, I necessarily simplify and ignore considerable local variation) was a chiefly society, based on families and clans connected with particular

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hereditary chiefs. Everyone lived in large houses, with poorer relatives of the chief sleeping in the common areas of the big house. It was an oral culture, with a custom of storytelling that connected title-holders with specific territories and property, both material and symbolic. These rights and privileges were validated in public displays involving the giving away of great amounts of wealth, and feasting on salmon and other foods (what comes to be called the "potlatch" in the colonial period). The economy was based almost exclusively on fishing. Warfare was common, both to defend territory and to raid other tribes for wealth and to take slaves. Our mind turns easily from this to Viking raids, the moot, and feasting and give-aways in the Heorot hall. Not surprisingly, we find an ethos very similar to that of the Spear-Danes. The warrior ethic was pervasive; the quotation from _Beowulf_ could have easily been uttered by a Northwest Coast nobleman:

> _It is always better_
>
> _to avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning._
>
> _For every one of us, living in this world_
>
> _means waiting for our end. Let whoever can_
>
> _win glory before death. When a warrior is gone,_
>
> _that will be his best and only bulwark_ (Heaney 2008, 95).

Similarly, the emphasis on feasting and gift-giving was almost identical, down to the description of the wealth as "glittering." Copper was the essence of wealth for the Northwest Coast people; it played a role similar to gold in Beowulf, as a manifestation of inherent value but not yet a form of currency. Gift-giving was the essence of what it meant to be a chieftain in both societies; in _Beowulf_, Hrothgar the chieftain of the Shield-Danes contrasts Beowulf's generosity (and implicitly his own) with a stingy king:

> _Heremod was different,_
>
> _the way he behaved to Ecgwala's sons._
>
> _His rise in the world brought little joy_
>
> _to the Danish people, only death and destruction._
>
> _He vented his rage on men he caroused with,_
>
> _killed his own comrades, a pariah king_
>
> _who cut himself off from his own kind,_

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> *even though almighty God had made him*
>
> *eminent and powerful and marked him from the start*
>
> *for a happy life. But a change happened,*
>
> *he grew bloodthirsty, gave no more rings*
>
> *to honour the Danes* (Heaney 2008, 117).

To refuse to give away wealth is to overturn the very principle of chieftainship, and to void the ties with the people based on the redistribution of wealth. Thus Heremod is "a pariah king," a minor version of Grendel himself, who kills his own men. Similar stories in Northwest Coast mythology tell of chiefs who terrorize their own people and are thus not legitimate. It is worth pointing out here that the ending of *Beowulf*, with the hero dead after battling the dragon, is doubly gloomy: the Geats are doomed and the dragon treasure, rather than being distributed to the people as Beowulf had wished, is buried with him. To hoard wealth is to act as a monster rather than a human, and to negate the core value – in both the economic and moral sense – of human society (Robinson 1991).

In this densely forested land of islands and fiords, where human settlements constituted the merest interruption of the misty and dark (especially in winter) world, who existed beyond the light of the village, perhaps peering in with envy and hatred? The forest, along with other realms outside human control, notably the sea and uplands, was teeming with creatures that from our modern perspective would be considered supernatural. However, given the fact that the people of the Northwest Coast fully believed in these creatures, as the Danes and Anglo-Saxons no doubt believed in Grendel and the dragon, and acted accordingly, it makes sense to think of them as "other than human beings," in A. Irving Hallowell's turn of phrase (Hallowell 1955). Indeed, whenever one ventured from the relative safety of the village, one stood a chance of encountering such beings. Most Northwest Coast oral literature thus takes on aspects of the epic quest, since even the most prosaic journey, such as a trip to the mountains to hunt goats, took on a cosmic dimension. The hero leaves the human world for a separate and distinct world, organized not around humans but around other than human beings. Indeed, it is a separate space-time, what Bakhtin called a "chronotope," possessing the Einsteinian principles of relativity and space-time curving back on itself (Bakhtin 1981). Thus, it is not uncommon for a hero to venture into such a realm and return, Rip van Winkle-like, long after he set out, although his perception of time had the journey lasting only a matter of days.

A journey outside the village was always then a type of quest possessing a decidedly double-edged quality. Among the Heiltsuk stories were told of someone walking just outside the village, not far away at all, who came upon a hole in the ground. Out of curiosity, he ventured into the chthonian realm, never returning to the village, his remains reduced to a bare skeleton. As with the ancient Greeks, for the Northwest Coast peoples portals to other worlds were common across the landscape. The dangers, especially to the curious and ill-prepared, of venturing out from the village were obvious (as with the Danes, this reflected the political reality of the day, in which any foreign tribe, even one closely related, was a potential enemy). At the same time, human life was dependent upon such venturing out, minimally to obtain food and wood. Venturing out promised much greater rewards as well, to one who was lucky and worthy. As these worlds were full of dangerous other than human beings, they were filled as well with spiritual power that could be obtained by a questor. The more dangerous the being, the greater the potential power to be obtained. This power, called *nawalakw* by the Kwakiutl and Heiltsuk, was, when successfully brought back to the human realm, a source of prestige, wealth, and political power. It is similar to the Polynesian concept of *mana*, except that it always takes on a specific form, rather than being a generalizable quality of chiefs and nobles. *Nawalakw* is the essence of human sociability: it attracts wealth, as well as the respect and loyalty of comrades. Moreover, as a form of spiritual power, it prepares one to obtain further, more intense, forms of power. Thus, a chief's career followed a trajectory of obtaining first lesser and then greater forms of power (in post-myth times, this occurred through the inheritance and performance of ritual dances). The fact that the essential human value had to be obtained from a non-human, and even anti-human realm of being, demonstrates the profoundly dialectical quality of Northwest Coast thought.

Most striking of this dialectic turn of thought is the nature of other than human beings from which the greatest forms of *nawalakw* are obtained. These are possessed by two humanoid beings, which is to say monsters. In the Kwaiutl-Heiltsuk worldview, there exist altogether three humanoid beings outside the realm of human society. The first is inconsequential. It is the "Wild Man of the Woods," related to the cryptozoological Sasquatch, and possessing none of the cultural or material aspects of humanity. Thus, he lives alone in the woods, unclothed, lacking fire, reduced to foraging. He exhibits culture *degré zéro*, and is more the object of pity than fear. He nonetheless possesses a minor *nawalakw*. The two remaining figures are much more potent, and may be viewed as feminine and masculine transformations of the same principle. The female and lesser of these is Dzonokwa, often described as an ogress. She is characterized by two distinctive features: pendulous breasts and a mouth shaped like an O. The latter is her calling card, as she makes a hooting sound in the forest (much like the sound children will make, imitating apes and monkeys – it is a substitute for

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language, and an indication of its absence). Her pendulous breasts refer to her uncontrolled desire for children, and her illegitimate means of obtaining them. She is a sexual predator, existing outside the system of marriage rules and exchange. More commonly, though, she steals children, especially those who misbehave. She is thus a classic bogeyman, used to quiet fractious children, while teaching them the importance of behavior within cultural norms, for outside them exists only the chaos that she represents.

It is the final figure, the cannibal spirit, that represents the complete inversion of the Northwest Coast ethos. As with the Danes of *Beowulf*, the epitome of social life is feasting: sharing food among kindred and allies. This is seen as a sharing of land (chiefs owned productive salmon streams and other resources) and social identity. Feasting was so highly valued that on certain occasions it was considered appropriate to overeat to the point of vomiting (a tradition shared by the ancient Romans and modern celebrities). Like Grendel, the cannibal monster, *Hamatsa*, does not share food but takes the other for food. The spirit of the cannibal is a mythological creature known as Baxbakwalanusiwa, which Franz Boas translates as "cannibal at the north end of the world." He is encountered by a hunting party of brothers who are ascending a river valley up a mountain. In common with Nordic and Germanic peoples, the Northwest Coast people thought of the mountains as a spirit realm, most of whose denizens were malevolent towards humans (unlike the realm of the undersea world, which tended to be populated with more benign other than human beings). They are able to obtain the *nawalakw* from him, which they bring back to their village. It is the greatest of all the forms of *nawalakw* and provides the basis for the highest ranking dance in the Winter Ceremonial complex.

## The Winter Ceremonial: Admitting and Expelling Monsters

The Winter Ceremonial, as practiced by the Kwakiutl, Heiltsuk, and neighboring tribes in central British Columbia, was documented by Boas in the mid-1890s (Boas 1966). The essential idea is that in the winter months the world, shaped like a dinner plate, flipped over, so that the dark world of dangerous other than human beings took priority over the human world (itself ascendant in the summer months). This unleashed an array of forces anathema to human existence: famine, pestilence, sexual anarchy, death itself, but above all the cannibal spirit. These noxious spirits each informed a dance society, which performed its dance to an audience consisting of the entire village or, in some cases, only the men. These societies were secret sodalities, which recruited initiates based primarily on heredity. The process began with initiates being forcibly taken from the village (generally with their

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cooperation) and taken out to the woods for a period of days or weeks to learn the secrets and to practice performance of the dance. They then return to the village (with the *hamatsa* dance generally serving as a sort of grande finale to the Winter Ceremonial), where they make a performance of their penchant for human flesh. This included actual biting of arms, the eating of dogs (serving as a stand in for human flesh) and the simulated or real (sources differ) cannibalism of human corpses.

In many ways, the *hamatsa* represents an inversion not only of the ethos of Kwakiutl and Heiltsuk society but even of the Winter Ceremonial itself. Most dances of the Winter Ceremonial involved masks, and sometimes elaborate costumes involving moving parts, puppets, multple surfaces, and other visual elaboration on a theme. The *hamatsa* alone danced nude or nearly so, with only rings of red cedar bark fabric representing the cannibal spirit. Indeed, the performance itself is remarkably simple: the dance is not elaborate and rather than a song there is merely a shout.

In a culture that valued dramatic performance above all else, this is striking. However, it is explainable in terms of the overall structure of the Winter Ceremonial. Of the various beings (many of which we could call monsters) on display, the most powerful and terrifying is the human element at the heart of it. Being human, there is no need to dissemble with masks; the essence of the cannibal is within us.

The logic of the Winter Ceremonial rests on the dialectic between human society and its negation. It plays this out dramatically, with the negative power being given free reign at first, then gradually and eventually tamed. The domestication of this antithetical power is the ultimate point of the ceremonial, but it happens only in fits and starts. At first, the *hamatsa* is pure appetite. He is controlled by a handler, lest he run amok. Language is one aspect of this process. Coming from a non-linguistic existence, the *hamatsa* gradually re-learns human language. Ironically, this at first takes the limited form of only being able to recognize one word, which is a trigger-word for cannibalistic frenzy (it is usually a word for something common, such as « ant »). Members of the audience will intentionally utter the taboo word or more commonly a paraphrase so as to set the initiate off, and enjoy the result (a type of deep play in Clifford Geertz's terms).[2]

In addition to being refamiliarized with human language, the *hamatsa* initiate undergoes a physical transformation. Much like a hunter, who must purge his digestive tract of any traces

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[2]     Paraphrasis is also common in Norse as a means of referring to bears and other than human beings.

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of meat, lest the game animal will not allow itself to be killed, so too the *hamatsa* purges himself of remnants of human flesh. He fasts and vomits, using seawater as an emetic. Eventually he reaches a point at which he is capable of rejoining human society. Having endured the most powerful form of *nawalakw* represented in the Winter Ceremonial, he rejoins society at a place of privilege.

The Winter Ceremonial is in structure shamanic (with the Northwest Coast being very much within the arc of circumpolar shamanic cultures). An initiatory illness gives the shaman the power to overcome that illness and potentially all illness. Similarly, the Winter Ceremonial initiate is exposed to a very powerful *nawalakw* that is anathema to human society. The difference is, obviously, between the individual, bodily level at which the shaman operates, and the social level on which the initiate functions. Rather than becoming a healer (although the two were not mutually exclusive: shaman-*hamatsa*s were particularly feared for their power), the *hamatsa* takes up a chiefly or noble role in society. He is thus responsible for upholding the values and norms of which the cannibal monster represents the negation.

As the *hamatsa* dancer is tamed and reintegrated into society, he celebrates this with a feast and potlatch. Here we see clearly the dialectical relation between these two poles: cannibalism and commensality. This is not so much a ritual of renunciation – cannibalism is not thought to be a natural urge, unlike for native groups to the east, especially the Ojibwa – but rather a fundamental force to be overcome. As with any other seasonal ritual, such as those in agricultural societies, the triumph of light and life is of course only temporary. There is no final state, and indeed it would be a simplification of the subtlety of Northwest Coast thought to represent it this way.

Multiple perspectives are, indeed, what the Winter Ceremonial is primarily about. We see the two poles of the cannibal and chiefly charity, but we come to realize that these are two sides of the same coin. The chiefly feasts involve salmon, which must be killed and then eaten. But salmon is, in myth, itself human-like, and is associated especially with chiefs (who own salmon runs and of course give feasts of salmon). So from the perspective of the salmon people, who are organized into social groups identical to humans, the humans appear as cannibals. For them, this occurs in the summer months, when humans are fishing and storing salmon in for the winter. Such perspectivalism pervades Northwest Coast religious belief. The First Salmon ritual held in early summer is a means of addressing the problem of imbalance between the human and salmon worlds. By addressing the salmon with ritual words of respect, it is believed that the salmon agree to give themselves up (as they will be reborn if treated properly). However, the *hamatsa* also teaches us to be perhaps a little

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skeptical of such easy resolution of an existential dilemma. Culture is, as Nuckolls has said, a problem that cannot be solved.

## Didactic Monsters

What, then, can monsters teach us? Monsters can teach us different sorts of lessons depending on their type. I suspect that dragons are there to teach us about fate, the ultimate resistance of the natural world to human intention, and the inevitability of death. It is the dragon that destroys Beowulf in the end. Dragons also possess great treasure, as indeed all human wealth derives from the natural world.

However, manlike monsters teach us about ourselves, via a sort of dialectical anthropology. Through them we learn what it means to be a Dane/Geat/Anglo-Saxon/Heiltsuk/Kwakiutl – a human being. What this means is, first of all, a renunciation of alternative possibilities. Children are produced within regular and recognized marriage, not through incest, kidnapping, or rape. Hunger is satisfied via a complex ritual and technological system that involves prey and predator in reciprocal exchange, marked by ritual, not by taking the nearest person for food. Indeed, the essence of this cultural order entails the marking of difference as well as identity: the solidarity of the clan vs. sufficient distance for proper marriage, the species boundary that identifies food sources, ally vs. enemy, and so forth. Stories about monsters in these profoundly oral societies, in which philosophy and ethics, as well as history and politics, are loaded onto their oral literature, are about the world as it is, and why it must be that way.

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# Automated Monsters of Vengeance: Comparing Goddesses in Ancient Greece and Hindu India

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**ABSTRACT**

Monsters that act "automatically," without thought or conscious awareness, constitute a category whose primary exemplar in American culture is the zombie. However, automaticity can be found in other realizations of the monstrous, including in ancient Greece and contemporary India. This paper compares the two. In Greece, the beings known as Eryines hunt and attack people who are guilty of crimes against members of their own kin group. One of the best examples is Orestes, whom the Erinyes pursue relentlessly because he killed his own mother, Clytemnestra. On the southeastern coast of India, among members of the Jalari fishing caste, there is a spirit called Sati Polalmma, who, like the Erinyes, attacks those who have broken oaths made to kin, especially oaths that concern sexual fidelity. The Erinyes and Sati Polamma are chthonic beings, associated with the earth, and are said to predate the patriarchal order of male deities. The paper explores automatic action as a characteristic of one category of the monstrous.

**KEY WORDS**: automaticity, chthonic monsters, Greece, South India

*But ancient Violence longs to breed,*
*New Violence comes*
*when its fatal hour comes, the demon comes*
*to take her toll – no war, no fore, no prayer*
*can hinder the midnight Fury stamped*
*with parent Fury moving through the house*
(Aeschylus 2009: Agamemnon, 735-760).

### Introduction:  Monsters on Automatic Pilot

It is often held that to be a "monster," a being must terrorize other beings, leaving them no place to hide and at the mercy of the monster itself. The prototypic monster in American pubic culture – especially in the last decade or so – is the "zombie," a transformed human being now animated by only one imperative: To kill and consume. Zombies do not think, reason, or plan, nor do they possess any degree of conscious awareness. They are "set" on automatic. Perhaps automaticity deserves to be considered a characteristic of the monstrous. With this definition in mind, a comparison of Hindu South Asian and ancient Greek realizations of "the monster" becomes feasible. However, if one insists on incorporating "evil" into the definition, then the analysis must break down, for the simple reason that few beings in Hindu and Greek mythology are permanently or irredeemably evil. The demon king Ravana, for example, is the arch-villain who abducts Sita, wife of the god Rama (an incarnation of Vishnu), and takes her to his island stronghold of Lanka. With ten fearsome heads, Ravana is usually considered the embodiment of the wicked monster. But "evil" is not a term that can be applied, or rather, if Ravana is evil, it is only temporarily because, in the long run, he wishes to be good.

The story of Ravana goes like this: In the *Bhagavata Purana*, an ancient compendium of narratives focused on the god Krishna, Ravana and his brother, Kumbhakarna, were said to be reincarnations of Jaya and Vijaya, the gatekeepers at Vaikuntha, the heavenly abode of the god Vishnu. As gatekeepers they mistakenly refused entry to some holy monks – who, because of their powers and austerity, appeared as young children. For their insolence, the monks cursed Ravana and his brother to be expelled from Vaikuntha and born on Earth. They were given two choices: On the one hand, they could be born seven times as normal mortals and devotees of Vishnu. On the other hand, they could be reborn only three times as powerful and strong people, but as enemies of Vishnu. Eager to be back with the Lord sooner rather

than later, they choose the latter option, even though it meant becoming wicked. The story only makes sense if Ravana and his brother are basically good, and worthy of final redemption.

So, it makes sense to begin with a more tractable definition of the monstrous, with a focus on the tendency of monstrous beings to seek out and torment their victims, and to do so automatically – that is, because they must. Where does this form of the monstrous come from? Kinship has a lot to do with it. In both contemporary South India and ancient Greece, "a kind of wild justice," to use Bacon's expression, wreaks vengeance on transgressors of vital kinship norms. Justice is "wild" because it is embodied in autochthonous spirits, automated and unstoppable, that live outside the political dimensions of society. These beings are associated with the earth, and with a time that antedates the birth of the gods and the order they uphold. They are female, and recognized, in dream and public drama, by their loose and disheveled hair, their bulging eyes, and their association with blood sacrifice. The norms they protect are understood as fundamental to the primary relationships between parent and child; husband and wife; and siblings. But wild justice, uncontained, threatens the social system no matter how righteous it is, and so, to keep justice under control, primal vengeance must be "domesticated." In Aeschylus this happens by subordinating vengeful monsters to the rule of law and the political order represented by the democratic city-state of Athens. Avenging monsters in South India are treated differently: Once propitiated, they become tokens of family solidarity and its continuity through time.

Here we consider two cultures, separated by thousands of years and thousands of miles:  The Greek world of the fifth century B.C. and a Telugu-speaking fishing village on the southeastern coast of India. In the Athens of Aeschylus, vengeance as a kind of retributive justice undergoes partial replacement by the deliberative justice of the democratic polis. Autochthonous spirits associated with a society governed by kinship are subordinated to the Olympian gods and the emerging democratic nationalism of the city-state. In South India, by contrast, retributive justice assimilates itself over time, in each generation, to the ideal of family solidarity. Both can be viewed as processes of domestication, but whereas Greek vengeance becomes deliberative justice, South Indian vengeance is recycled within the household to become a genealogical symbol, an emblem of family continuity.

Charles W. NUCKOLLS

**Automated Monsters of Vengeance:  Comparing Goddesses in Ancient Greece and Hindu India**

### The Greek Erinyes: Monsters of Divine Retribution

In ancient Greek, avenging monsters were known as Erinyes, "the angry ones," pitiless pursuers of those who violate filial duties. Aeschylus describes them as "accursed virgins, the ancient hags from some bygone age whose presence neither god nor man nor best can bear" (Aeschylus 2009, 68-70). In fact, the Erinyes were considered a force so instinctive and primeval that the Greeks said of them, "Even dogs have their Erinyes" (Monaghan 1997, 222). Sacrifices to them consisted only of "natural" products, not produced by farming, and in the sacrifice the offerings were totally consumed. "There is no need for knife and alter, for my feasting shall be upon your living flesh, you, the victim fattened ready for my sacrifice" (Aeschylus 2009: The Eumenides, 304-305). Not surprisingly, given Greek gender notions, they are also female, and act the way women are thought to act – viscerally, without reflection or deliberation, and with extreme and unremitting violence. Their power is especially potent because they are unmarried. They thus lack the patriarchal containment that is supposed to insure female energy is properly controlled and directed. But this makes them even more diligent in enforcing kinship norms; in fact, since the rule of men is associated with communal debate and decision-making in Greek drama, the authority of the Erinyes assumed the terrible capacity to act automatically, without deliberation, in defense of ancient kinship norms the Greeks defined as natural or prior to social organization.

The Jalari counterpart to the Erinyes is Sati Polamma, a monstrous goddess (*ammavaru*) who afflicts those who have sworn false oaths in matters of sexual fidelity. The Jalaris are a fishing caste people who live in village on the eastern coast of India. Each act of oath-breaking brings into existence its own Sati Polamma, and there are families in the fishing village that have more than one, because more than one transgression has taken place. Like the Erinyes, Sati Polamma responds automatically and violently to breaches in the kinship norms, especially where sexual misconduct is concerned. Let us say a married woman makes an oath that she has not committed adultery. If she lied, Sati Polamma will attack her, and no amount of rationalization or self-justification will suffice to assuage the monster that attacks her or members of her family.

In the *Oresteia*, it is true that the Erinyes, translated as "Furies," relentlessly pursue Orestes in order to avenge his murder of Clytemnestra, his mother. The Furies cannot be mollified or dissuaded by force of argument, since they represent primal beings that in Greek thought existed before the development of reason. They are creatures of the earth and the underworld. According to Plato, "those who have wasted their lives in wickedness are led by the Erinyes to Erebus and Chaos through Tartarus, where there is a place for the impious, and the ceaseless water-fetching of the Danaids, the thirst of Tantalus, the entrails of Tityus eternally

devoured and regenerated, and the never-resting stone of Sisyphus, whose end of toil is always a new beginning." Their function is to punish violations of kinship norms without consideration of motivation or circumstance (Sidwell 1996). Violators are guilty of breaching the norms that govern social relationships.

Orestes is similarly afflicted, and defends himself in two ways. First, he calls attention to the motive behind his deed – he killed in order to avenge Clytemnestra's murder of his father, Agamemnon. Second, he names the god Apollo as the one who commanded him to take vengeance on his mother in the first place. Surely these were good enough reasons.  After all, of the four main characters (Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Orestes, Electra), Orestes is the only one who claims explicit divine sanction for transgressing kinship norms.  That is why the Chorus can call the murder of his mother "blameless" (Aeschylus 2009: The Eumenides, 830); in fact, the word they use is not murder, but *ate,* the term that denotes divine punishment, and they say "Justice guided his hand" (Aeschylus 2009: The Eumenides, 948-949). But the Furies are not susceptible to argument or evidence, and pursue Orestes until he finally seeks refuge in the temple of Athena and invokes her protection. There Orestes is put on trial before the Areopagus and Athena herself presides as judge. The two sides, Orestes and the Erinyes, present their cases, and the human jury votes. Orestes argues from reason and divine justification; his intent is pure, uncontaminated by the one emotion Greek drama invariably condemns most harshly – *hubris.* The Furies, on the other hand, are not at all concerned about these matters, but only with the unnatural death of a person at the hands of a relative (Aeschylus 2009: The Eumenides, 212, 421-427). They say, "For where is there such incentive to kill one's mother" (Aeschylus 2009: The Eumenides, 427)? The question comes down to choice between the emerging democratic ethos of modern Athens – with its stress on motivation and intention – and the older Homeric ethos of blood vengeance. The men of Athens are evenly split between exoneration and conviction. They are, as Helm points out, caught between the old and the new, "where the new has its allure but the old retains its claims" (Helm 2004, 50).

The remarkable shift in emphasis observed here involves not simply a substitution of a political institution for family vengeance in the administration of justice, important though that step is, but also allows for the consideration of motives in the judgment of guilt or innocence (Helm 2004, 51).

As ultimate arbiter, Athena, casts the deciding vote and frees Orestes, but not before compensating the Erinyes: Henceforth they will be known as the Eumenides, "the beneficent ones," and worshipped in a new shrine to be established in the city. In effect, the Furies are domesticated by making them subject to the will of men and the Olympian gods who

represent the city's emerging status as a nationalist democracy. That is not to say they relinquish their power to avenge offenses against kinship, but their power to do so is implicitly circumscribed by the deliberative councils of the city (Vernant 2000).

### Sati Polamma: The Hindu Goddess of Broken Oaths

Similar to the Erinyes is Sati Polamma, a Jalari goddess whose purpose is to afflict transgressors, especially those who have sworn false oaths in matters of sexual fidelity.  Like the Erinyes, Sati Polamma is worshipped in no temple; she is thought to exist prior to, and independently of, mainstream gods and goddesses; and she is associated with the earth. Once she attacks, she attaches herself to the transgressor and his or her descendants forever, and must be propitiated once a year with blood sacrifice. That might seem like a case of inherited guilt, making Sati Polamma similar to the Erinyes, since Orestes and his family bear the taint of sins committed by earlier generations. But Sati Polamma, once installed in a family's pantheon, becomes a protecting deity, and afflicts those of other households who fail in their kinship obligations to the first family. She is, as it were, something of a spiritual first-responder, known to attack automatically and violently the perpetrators of kinship misdeeds. Could this not be seen as kind of domestication of vengeance, not unlike what happens to the Erinyes when Athena accommodates them as protecting spirits of Athens?

Before considering this question, let us dwell for a moment on origins. In one sense, Sati Polamma has none, since no myth recounting her birth and kinship relations has ever been recorded. But here the matter quickly become complex. There is another goddess whose name is Sati, and she is not to be confused with her more widely known namesake, the goddess Sati who is the wife of the god Shiva. She is often conflated with Sati Polamma, the goddess of broken kinship oaths, and she is mother of all things, the female demiurge whose first act in the world she creates it to become hungry and lustful. She lays three eggs – an interesting fact in itself, given that she is not identified as an egg-laying being, like a chicken. And yet her elaborate epithets, recited every time she is propitiated, mention "wings" and the fact that she "crows" from the rooftops to announce her presence. In the Jalari account, her hunger drives her first to anger, and so she kicks one of the three eggs she has just produced. It breaks apart, and its pieces become the sky above and the ground below, and all the watery bits in between turn into the stars and planets. Then she pops the second egg into her mouth and eats it. The third egg, however, hatches on its own, and out of it emerge the *trimurti* ("three gods"), the famous Hindu triumvirate of Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu. Sati sees her three sons, and is immediately overcome by sexual desire. First she propositions Brahma,

who refuses her entreaties. She turns him into a stone. Then she approaches Shiva, and like his brother, he is turned into an inanimate object (a tree) when he refused his mother's sexual advances. Finally, there is Vishnu. He sees the fate that has befallen Brahma and Shiva, and so devises a ruse. He tells his mother he would be delighted to copulate with her, but only after she has taken a bath (after all, he says, she is still covered with pollution – *maila* – that accompanies childbirth). So she runs to the nearest body of water, to comply with his demand, but before she can actually reach it, the water is suddenly withdrawn. Vishnu has done this with a magic spell. She rushes back to him, in a state of ferocious anger, but once again her son stops her: "Mother," he says, "you must first give me all your magic formulae (*mantra*-s), and then I will lay with you." She complies, but as soon as Vishnu possesses her magic, he turns it on her and reduces her to a mound of ash. He then divides the ashes into four piles. From the first he constitutes the goddess (Sarasvati) who will be wife to Brahma. From the second he constructs Parvati, wife of Shiva. And from the third, he forms his own wife, the goddess Laksmi. Finally, with the fourth and last pile of ash, he refashions the mother, Sati. She exists again, but now merely as an ordinary woman, deprived of her power to do harm. She is "an old lady," who is meant to "sit by the hearth" and to accept whatever morsels of food her three new daughters-in-law decide to give her.

Is this Sati the same as the Sati Polamma who punishes oath-breakers? The answer is unclear. On the one hand, Jalaris distinguish between the creator goddess and the goddess who moves through the village "like a foul odor," punishing those who violate kinship norms. On the other hand, the two Satis are said to be the same, and both are described as derivative of the earth itself (*bhumi*). It is not unusual for Hindu deities to have multiple, even conflicting identities, so the Jalari account does not depart radically from tradition.  In this case, however, the conflation serves a purpose: to ground – quite literally – the power of the goddesses in the earth itself, from which they, the goddesses, come and to which they ultimately return. One is reminded of the wife of Rama, yet another goddess named Sati, who ultimately finds her marital dignity impugned so severely that she causes the earth to swallow her up, and she is seen no more. It is therefore not surprising that when Jalaris make kinship oaths, promising they did not commit infractions, they stamp the earth three times. That is what "activates" Sati Polamma, and causes her to attack the oath-breaker. In short, since Sati the creator and Sati Polamma the punisher are chthonic deities, the order they represent is "pre-cultural," based in the origin of all things, and they stand independent of the institutions Jalaris believe are special province of men (and only men) to fashion and control.

As to the avian metaphors that abound in descriptions of Sati Polamma, and of all Jalari goddesses, this is harder to explain. On the one hand, there is the well-known Hindu myth of the *hiranyagarba,* "the golden womb," represented as an egg in the classical *Puranas*, or

Hindu mythological compendia. In classical Hinduism, this egg is sometimes said to have given birth to Brahma, to whom otherwise goes the credit for creating the world. Elsewhere, the egg is described as rolling around and then breaking into halves, one half become the sky and the other becoming the earth. This obviously bears a similarity to the Jalari myth of the creator Sati and her three eggs. There is one critical difference, however.  The Puranic myths do not speculate on the source of the egg, or of the creature that gives rise to it. The Jalari account, on the other hand, foregrounds this question, and identifies the genetrix as a kind of bird that lays eggs. It is, perhaps, a matter of emphasis. Jalari religion in centered on the worship of female deities, and male deities, to the extent they exist at all, are viewed as purely ancillary beings with no power of their own. The egg, therefore, grounds the Jalari account in a non-human or pre-human reality, purely feminine in orientation, that must be activated to produce the reality of today. Male-dominated institutions, the story implies, are secondary and derivative, while the true power of creation remains fundamentally female.

### The Chicken and the Egg

Finally, in Jalari funerals, the chicken egg plays a special role. Every dead body is buried with an egg, usually placed on or near the shoulder. Men are buried face-up, and in a sitting position, with the egg on their right shoulder. Women are buried face-down, and prone, with the egg placed near the left shoulder. The egg, as we have seen, is a powerful symbol of creation and of re-creation. Its association with death, and with rebirth, should not surprise us. The chicken gives birth to the egg, say the Jalaris, and the egg gives birth to its own shell. Out of the shell, a kind of derivative mother, comes all of reality, including the principle male deities. The Jalaris say that in fact this makes the three gods the grandchildren, not the children, of the creator goddess. It is a somewhat tortured logic, but there is a sense to it. Because male children are often named after their maternal grandfathers, this means, in a sense, that the grandmother's husband has come back to life, making marital sexuality appropriate and predictable. When Sati propositions her three sons, therefore, she is not proposing incest with her own children, but rather she is proposing sex with her grandsons (who are incarnations of her own deceased husband). It is the cycle of departure and return, then, that the egg represents, and the association of egg-laying with a mother goddess who is chicken-like remains a potent source of analogies.

### Marital Infidelity in a South Indian Fishing Village

Now let us consider an example of Sati Polamma in action. A Jalari woman undertakes an adulterous affair, but denies it, and is then forced by her husband to swear an oath. She stamps the earth three times, and swears that she is innocent on pain of attack by the goddesses of broken promises, Sati Polamma. Later, the oath she has broken provokes the goddess Sati Polamma to wrath, and the woman (or a closely related family member) is attacked and made to suffer. She and her family consult a diviner, who reveals that the source of the attack is Sati Polamma, and that if the woman and her family wish to avoid more suffering, they must make a sacrifice to the goddess. The sacrifice is made and thereafter, every year (usually around the last week of December), the woman and her husband must sacrifice a chicken or a goat to the goddess. After they die, their children must continue the practice, and so must their grandchildren, if they are descendants in the male line.

Succession in the male line, however, is not the full story, even though it is the primary means of transferring the goddess between generations. It is also possible for a married woman to retain the Sati Polamma associated with her natal family. This is understood chiefly as a source of danger to the women of her husband's family, including her own daughters. The classic example, according to most Jalaris, is this: a young, pregnant woman happens to sit on the bed where her mother and father sleep. She then falls ill, and if remedial action is not taken, the pregnancy may result in a stillbirth.

It is not typical for the village as a whole to know when and where the sacrifices to Sati Polamma place, since husband and wife do their best to keep the ritual as secret as possible. After all, there is stigma associated with adultery and broken oaths, and most families do not want others to know such things have happened. Husband and wife generally make their ritual offerings to Sati Polamma at a location outside the village, either near the hill-top temple of Simhachalam or in downtown, in the large port city of Visakhapatnam, in close proximity to the temple of the goddess Ellamma. But as time goes by, and the first generation passes away, the sacrifice to Sati Polamma takes on more and more of the character of a household goddess ritual – an entirely public event, and one to which family and friends are invited. The sacrifice takes place on the beach, near the fishing village, and is announced by singing, dancing, and a fireworks display. No one refers to the misdeed that originally caused the "bad odor" to visit itself upon this family, although they do know about it. What, then, is the meaning of Sati Polamma at this point, and would it be fair to say it has changed?

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### The Domestication of Monsters

Sati Polamma is not a household goddess (*inti ammavaru*) in the conventional sense because of her association with sexual transgression and oath-breaking. She is more the type of monster described earlier, the type that attacks viciously and automatically. But the logic of the household eventually wins out, even over Sati Polamma. Whether goddess, or monster, or both, she is partly domesticated – that is, assimilated to the household pantheon of spirits, becoming "like them" in her role as upholder of family solidarity and continuity through time. Domestication, in other words, means subordination to the most important principles in South Indian kinship. She is only partly domesticated, however, since her association with sexual guilt and oath-breaking make her unique, difficult to appease or placate, and always in need of blood sacrifice. Even the families that propitiate her, openly and publicly, do not feel entirely comfortable identifying her as a household spirit. She remains in a category by herself, not unlike the Erinyes, which do not relinquish their role as agents of vengeance even after Athena installs them as city goddesses in a cave at the base of the Acropolis.

The Erinyes undergo domestication in a different way, by being made subservient to the polis itself. The city represents the triumph of deliberative over retributive justice, of the younger Olympian gods over the sprits of blood vengeance. It is the strength and stability of the city, not the family, that Aeschylus celebrates. From then on, according to Aeschylus, justice must pass through the democratic process of the Areopagus, and ultimately, the verdict must reflect the triumph of the polis over everything (Monaghan 2002). The *Oresteia's* main purpose may not have been Athenian nationalism, but it certainly served that objective, because in the end, the Furies becomes subject to the city-state and must stand as its defenders. There is nothing similar in the Jalari case, because there is no political objective to be reached or political pride to be celebrated. It is the not the village that wins out in the end, but the household unit, to whose generational continuity everything can be sacrificed. The Greeks of Homer's time would have understood this better than Aeschylus and his counterparts, for whom the family was already being subsumed in the larger conditions of the city-state. So far, there has been no Jalari Aeschylus to suggest that the domestication of Sati Polamma could serve some higher end only made possible by the introduction of democratic decision-making.

For this reason, the Jalari system would seem like a reversion to a much more primeval ethos, but this should not surprise us. There has been no change, as there was in fifth century Athens, to a partial replacement of kinship-governed politics with the politics of democracy. The South Indian village remains a society largely governed by the norms of patrilineal succession and cross-cousin marriage. And this is true despite that fact that India is changing, and the village itself has gone from being an isolated coastal hamlet to a suburb of the

expanding city of Visakhapatnam, one of the most important ports on the eastern coast. In the end, what we see is that the Furies are domesticated, but to different sociological ends – in the case of Athens, to that of the democratic polis, and in the South Indian village, to that of important kinship processes.

Sati Polamma and the Erinyes become domesticated monsters, but no less monsters for that reason, since both pursue their victims with unremitting speed and force. As we have seen, both are almost entirely "automated," in that their punishing acts occur without thought and deliberation, with no possibility of switching them off until their victims suffer great afflictions. Even then, once the victim propitiates them, Sati Polamma and the Erinyes do not leave; they remain as permanent adjuncts to the associated family's or city's pantheons. In ancient Greece, this make the Erinyes similar to another automated force of punishment, the *"miasma"*. Oedipus, in one account, is surrounded by *miasma*, but not pursued by the Erinyes for his unconscious commission of parricide and incest. In another account, however, *miasma* is not mentioned; instead Oedipus is attacked by the Erinyes, suggesting that, for all practical purposes, *miasma* and the Erinyes are closely related, if not identical. The point is that the Greeks had a number of different symbolic forms with which to imagine the operation of automatic justice. So, too, do the Jalaris of South India, since Sati Polamma is not alone but participates in a category of beings whose distinctive feature is that they cannot be fully placated. The monster, therefore, in both cultural contexts, is one whose depredations against the violators of kinship norms take place automatically and with the need for conscious deliberation.

## Final Thoughts: Pollution as an Attribute of the Monstrous

There is, finally, another quality the Greeks and Jalaris share, and that is association between automatic justice – represented in the Erinyes and Sati Polamma – and "pollution" (*maila* in Telugu, *miasma* in Greek). Pollution of this sort, in both cultures, is connected with blood, and with the unclean and the defiled. Blood is the ultimate source of defilement, and it is not surprising that avenging spirits should be attracted to blood, and even to be born of blood. For consider: through her menstrual blood the daughter-in-law of Jalari family is said to convey her natal family's Sati Polamma into the household of her mother-in-law. A symbol of marital fecundity becomes a pathway for the conveyance of sexual sin, or for its residue the form of a broken marital oath. The two are too closely related for any Jalari to tell them apart, and this is what makes all women intrinsically dangerous. Orestes, on the other hand, is pursued because the blood of his mother is still on his hands. The Erinyes find him by

smelling the blood and tracking it to its source. Once again, sin become the basis of affliction, but through the ritual process of sacrifice, the sin is turned into a source of power as the Erinyes undergo transformation into protective deities of the city of Athens.

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# A Monstrous Morality:
# *Tzitzimime* and their Relatives as Enforcers of Social Control

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**ABSTRACT**

The *tzitzimime* – as reflected in central Mexican ethnohistorical sources and precolumbian imagery – represent a diverse array of mostly female divinities associated with fertility. Under Spanish influence, they were re-conceptualized as malevolent, mostly male agents of the Christian devil. Related beings attested elsewhere, especially in the ethnography of eastern Mesoamerica, are distinctly monstrous. They are particularly salient in "wild" contexts, outside the realm of culture, and serve as enforcers of social norms. This paper traces the development of these creatures from their quasi-monstrous *tzitzimime* forbears and considers how they have been – and continue to be – conceptualized in relation to sociopolitical differences in their cultural contexts.

**KEY WORDS**: deities, ethnohistory, iconography, Mesoamerica, monsters

## Introduction

*Tzitzimime* (singular *tzitzimitl*) is most familiar as a label for dangerous and monstrous Aztec deities (see Figure 1) who will descend from the celestial realm to devour humanity at the next cyclical destruction of the universe (Boone 1999; Klein 2000). In fact, this view reflects

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the perspective of the Colonial period Spanish churchmen who presided over the demonization of the *tzitzimime* as much as it does pre-Columbian Aztec belief. Today, similarly monstrous and dangerous supernatural beings, often called *sisimite*, are widely believed to inhabit areas remote from human habitation, especially in the eastern regions of Mesoamerica (Costenla 1995; Dodds 2008, 92-97; Martínez and Mikulska 2016). Here we consider the nature of these beings and the beliefs and practices associated with them to assess the degree to which they can be understood in similar ways.



**Figure 1:** *Tzitzimitl*, Codex Tudela 46r
*(http://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Viewer?accion=41&Museo=&AMuseo=MAM&Ninv=70400&txt_id_imag
en=78&txt_rotar=0&txt_contraste=0&txt_zoom=10&cabecera=N&viewName=visorZoom).*

During pre-Columbian times, *tzitzimime* were not monstrous in conventional ways. Like other supernatural beings, they could be frightening and dangerous and sometimes inflicted harm, though they were not thought to be fundamentally wicked or cruel. They were also not of unusual size, malformed, or particularly ugly. Anatomically, most or all *tzitzimime* were not identical to ordinary human beings, but neither were they unnatural in the sense of being composite, hybrid beings that combined anatomical features of different species in ways analogous to creatures from Bronze Age Mesopotamia and Egypt (Wengrow 2014). All of that changed following the Spanish invasion. Under the influence of Christian views of the world and the supernatural, the malevolent qualities and monstrous physical features of

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*tzitzimime* intensified as their benign aspects faded or were transferred to Christian supernaturals.



**Figure 2:** *Tzitzimime* who died during childbirth (Cihuateteo), Codex Vaticanus B 78 (Seler, Eduard, ed., 1902, *Codex Vaticanus Nr. 3773 (Codex Vaticanus B): Eine altmexikanische Bilderschrift der Vatikanischen Bibliothek.* Berlin: Druck von Gebr. Unger).

### *Tzitzimime* in pre-Columbian Aztec Belief

According to central Mexican sources, – mostly early Colonial prose and pictorial documents, but also pre-Columbian imagery – *tzitzimime* include a diverse array of primarily female supernaturals. Some have negative associations such as disease and affliction, times of danger, and destruction; others have markedly positive connections with pregnancy, midwives, and healing. The most famous *tzitzimime* were women who died during childbirth (see Figure 2) and ascended to the sky, where they escorted the sun in his descent from noon to sunset. When the continuance of the sun's celestial progression was uncertain and the end of the universe might be imminent – as occurred on the occasion of a solar eclipse or the re-lighting of all fires at the end of each 52-year calendar cycle – *tzitzimime* could be expected to descend and bring death and destruction with them. The roles and associations of pre-Columbian *tzitzimime* are thus both malevolent and benign.

The number of names and epithets associated with *tzitzimime* (Table 1) is bewildering but two perspectives can help cut through this confusing nomenclature. The first is that *tzitzimitl* is not the name of a particular supernatural but instead designates a category to which a supernatural being may belong or a status that a supernatural can take on. The second relates to the ontology of the supernatural in Mesoamerica. Mesoamerican supernatural beings are

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not discrete, personified deities such as those that populate ancient Mediterranean pantheons. Rather, they are more like sets of supernatural forces and qualities that are context-specific and overlap with one another. Bundles that recur frequently were named, referred to, and depicted in ways that make them seem like stable, discrete personalities.

| **Table 1** |
|---|
| **a few names of supernaturals who belong to the *tzitzimime* category** |
| Coatlicue ("serpents her skirt") |
| |
| Huitzilopochtli ("hummingbird left") |
| |
| Cihuacoatl ("woman serpent") |
| Ilamatecuhtli ("old [female] lord") |
| Cihuateteo ("woman divinities") |
| Cihuapipiltin ("woman lords") |
| Maquiltonaleque ("five day/sun") |
| |
| Tlazolteotl ("filth divinity") and fertility complex |
| |
| Mictlacihuatl ("death woman") and death complex |
| |
| Tlaltecuhtli ("earth lord") and earth complex |

In the conventional view, page 36 of the Codex Borbonicus (see Figure 3) depicts one aspect of the deity Cihuacoatl – the one called Ilamatecuhtli – in its manifestation as a *tzitzimitl*. These terms are commonly understood as describing members of overlapping complexes of deities and their avatars – including Tlazolteotl, Mictlacihuatl, the Cihuateteo, and the Cihuapipiltin – that are associated with fertility, (transgressive) female sexuality, and death (Nicholson 1971, 420-422, 428; Hunt 1977, 100-102; see Table 1). However, it is more sensible to think of the image as a set of iconographic elements that refer to particular

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supernatural qualities that participate in multiple overlapping clusters. We focus here on three of the *tzitzimime* constellations:  Coatlicue, Cihuacoatl, and Huitzilopochtli.



**Figure 3:** Cihuacoatl as Ilametecuhtli, Borbonicus 36 (Hamy, E.-T., ed., 1899, *Codex Borbonicus: Manuscrit mexicain du Palais Bourbon.* Paris: Ernest Leroux).

Coatlicue (Serpents her Skirt) is best known for her mythic role as the divine mother of Huitzilopochtli (see Figure 4), who was the sun and also the embodiment of the identity of the Mexica, the dominant ethnic group in the Aztec empire. A colossal image of her (see Figure 5) that stands more than 2.5 meters tall was found in 1790 near the Great Temple of the Aztec capital city of Tenochtitlan. It has usually been interpreted as a straightforward, stand-alone portrait of Coatlicue because of the intertwined snakes that form the skirt and visually echo her name. As Elizabeth Boone (1999) has pointed out, however, a second

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sculpture found nearby is virtually identical except that the skirt consists of human hearts; additional fragments represent at least one more member of a set of comparable sculptures (see also Klein 2008). Colonial histories report that statues of *tzitzimime*, in their role as sustainers of the sky, were placed around representations of Huitzilopochtli atop the Great Temple pyramid. Coatlicue – and related bundles of features usually conceptualized as her "sisters" – would certainly qualify as sustainers of the sun, since they sacrificed themselves to set the sun in motion at the beginning of the current creation.



**Figure 4:** Coatlicue and newborn Huitzilopochtli, Florentine Codex, Book 3, Chapter 1, Folio 3v
(https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10614/view/1/7/).

The colossal Coatlicue (see Figure 5) is the only well-preserved member of the sculptural set. It has features – most notably claws for hands and feet, a necklace made of human hands and hearts, fanged faces at the joints, and distinctive wrist and leg bands – that clearly mark it as a *tzitzimitl*. The snakes that emerge from the neck to form the head, and from the wrists to form the hands, represent streams of blood that refer to the self-sacrifice that animated the

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sun. The calendar date carved on Coatlicue's back connects the image to the end of an earlier creation in which *tzitzimime* descended from the skies and devoured humanity. The visual emphasis on skirts formed by snakes and hearts echoes an emphasis in Colonial documents on the garments of the *tzitzimime*, especially their skirts. Cecelia Klein (2000) argues persuasively that these garments embodied the *tzitzimime* and their powers; they had magical, protective capacities and were wrapped around images and bundles of sacred objects. The skirts, along with the *tzitzimime* themselves, were also embodied in altar-like architectural features.



**Figure 5:** Coatlicue, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico.

The sculptural program of the Great Temple shrine, with monumental images of *tzitzimime* surrounding the statue of Huitzilopochtli, is usually interpreted as a materialization of the myth of Huitzilopochtli's birth (Sahagún 1978, Book 3, 1-5; Matos 1987, 198-205; Matos

1988, 135-145; Klein 2008, 229-231). In the story, Coatlicue – who was magically pregnant with Huitzilopochtli – retreated to the top of the hill Coatepec (represented by the temple pyramid). There the god was born, fully mature and armed, and defeated his sister Coyolxauhqui and their 400 (numberless) brothers who had come to kill her. Huitzilopochtli decapitated Coyolxauhqui and then threw her dismembered body down the slopes of Coatepec; a monumental relief image of Coyolxauhqui was set at the base of the stair of at least three of the successive enlargements of the Great Temple. The most obvious message of this narrative was the triumph of Huitzilopochtli, the embodiment of the identity and sovereignty of the Mexica and of their destiny to preside over the Aztec empire. The tableau can also be easily interpreted in terms of celestial metaphor – the sun daily puts to flight the moon (Coyolxauhqui) and the stars (the 400 brothers) – and is perfectly congruent with the *tzitzimime* identity of the principals and the complementarity of their behavior. Coatlicue and her sisters sacrificed themselves to set the sun in motion and then accompanied the sun in its daily descent from the zenith. Coyolxauhqui, the daughter of Coatlicue, was a sustainer of the sun in her *tzitzimitl* capacity but served as his adversary on other occasions, such as during solar eclipses when she and other nearby stars threatened to devour him. These interpretations are not mutually exclusive and it is likely that all were held simultaneously.



**Figure 6:** Acamapichtli as *tlatoani* (indicated by the blue scroll referring to the speaker title) and *cihuacoatl* ("woman serpent" marked by the snake body with a woman's head), Codex Mendoza, Folio 2r (https://codicemendoza.inah.gob.mx/index.php?lang=spanish).

The materialization of these relationships in the heart of the sacred precinct at the center of the empire would have reinforced the same complementarity that operated in the political domain and structured the relationship between the two most powerful political offices in the Aztec state: the *tlatoani* and the *cihuacoatl*. The *tlatoani*, or Speaker (see Figure 6), was the highest ranking and most powerful official of the Aztec state (Berdan 2014, 141-155). The *cihuacoatl,* or Woman Serpent, was almost as powerful (Klein 1988; Johansson 1998; Schroeder 2016); he served as prime minister for domestic affairs, finance, and administration; as chief judge; and as head of the council of lords that selected and advised the *tlatoani.* When the *tlatoani* was away on military campaigns, the *cihuacoatl* moved into the palace as acting ruler. Durán (1994, 231-232) describes Tlacaelel – the most famous incumbent of the *cihuacoatl* office – as the architect of the "flowery war," combat conducted by appointment to ensure that sufficient captured warriors were available to be sacrificed to nourish Huitzilopochtli.



**Figure 7:** Cihuacoatl, Codex Magliabecchiano, Folio 45r (1904, *Codex Magliabecchiano XIII. 3: Manuscrit mexicain post-Colombien de la Bibliothèque nationale de Florence*. Rome: Stabilimento Danesi).

The *tlatoani* was identified with Huitzilopochtli, the sun, who embodied the sovereignty of the state as well as Mexica identity. The office of *cihuacoatl* was named for a *tzitzimitl* (see Figure 7) associated with fertility, inversions of female sexuality, death, stars, and (indirectly via the fertility complex) the moon. Its political functions were complementary to those of the *tlatoani*, since the stellar and lunar connections of the deity complemented Huitzilopochtli's solar identity. The efficacy of the *cihuacoatl* in establishing a convenient source of the sacrificial victims needed to nourish Huitzilopochtli is also directly analogous to the sun-sustaining activities of Coatlicue and her *tzitzimime* relatives.

*Tzitzimime* were thus part of a "political cosmology" – a state-sanctioned view of the universe and of the roles of supernatural beings in it. Sometimes benign and sometimes malignant, *tzitzimime* embodied a balancing of dangerous forces within this official cosmology. Some of the harm they inflicted can be understood in relation to social control, as retribution for societal failure properly to nourish the sun. Some of their benefits include the supporting of the sun and, by extension, the perpetuation of Aztec people and society.



**Figure 8:** *Tzitzimimitl* as Lucifer, Codex Vaticanus A, Folio 2v (1900, *Il Manoscritto Messicano Vaticano 3738, detto il Codice Rios*, Rome: Stabilimento Danesi).

### Colonial Transformations of *Tzitzimime*

*Tzitzimime* were reconceptualized during the Colonial period (Klein 2000). Their political symbolism evaporated first as the contexts of political sovereignty where they were salient were steadily eliminated. They were also conflated with Christian supernaturals (see Figure

8); as a result of this process, *tzitzimime* became mostly male agents of the Christian devil and their malevolence and monstrousness were intensified. At least some of their benign qualities and actions were lost; others were transferred to various saints or to the Virgin Mary. An example can be found in Virgin of the Rosary in the highlands of Chiapas (Hunt 1977, 106).



**Figure 9:** *Tzitzimitl*, Codex Magliabecchiano, Folio 76r (1904, *Codex Magliabecchiano XIII. 3: Manuscrit mexicain post-Colombien de la Bibliothèque nationale de Florence*. Rome: Stabilimento Danesi).

In contemplating the new fire ritual that occurred at the end of each 52-year cycle, Bernardino de Sahagún (1953, Book 7, 27) – the Franciscan compiler of a mid-sixteenth century encyclopedic account of all things Aztec – emphasized anxiety that was driven by the possibility that the procedure might fail:

*And when it came to pass that night fell, all were frightened and filled with dread. Thus it was said: it was claimed that if fire could not be drawn, then [the sun] would be destroyed forever; all would be ended; there would evermore be night. Nevermore would the sun come forth. Night would prevail forever, and the demons of darkness would descend, to eat men.*

Reactions to a solar eclipse that took place during the reign of Ahuitzotl at the end of the fifteenth century are described in much the same way:

*And it came to pass in his time that the sun was eclipsed, at midday. For about five hours the darkness was overspread; the stars appeared. All were much terrified. It was said: 'The demons of darkness will descend; they will eat people*.' (Sahagún 1954, Book 8, 2).

Sahagún's extensive presentation of the voices of Nahua survivors of the Spanish invasion alongside his own synthesis makes the Florentine Codex more likely to reflect local belief than most Colonial period documents, but it is certainly not free of Spanish influence. Though *tzitzimime* still retained benign roles and associations – Alvarado Tezozomoc (1975, 451) reported late in the sixteenth century that *tzitzimime* held up the sky and brought the rains – the process of demonization under the tutelage of Spanish churchmen is already obvious in Sahagún's emphasis on the malevolent and especially in his substitution of "demons of darkness" for *tzitzimime*.
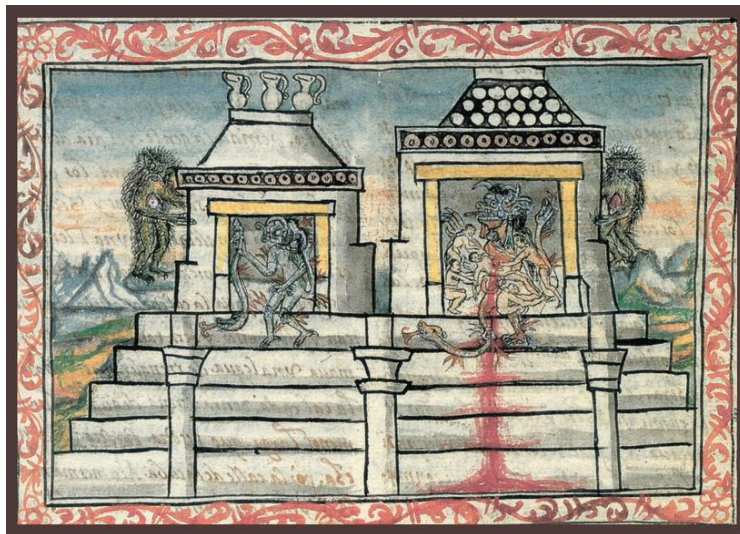


**Figure 10:** Main Temple, Tenochtitlan, Diego Durán, Historia de las Indias de Nueva España e islas de la tierra firme, Folio 131r (http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000169486&page=1).

Compared with pre-Columbian imagery, Colonial depictions of *tzitzimime* are striking for their threatening and monstrous countenances (see Figure 9). They appear with fleshless skulls and jaws and have open mouths with teeth bared. Claws are depicted in place of hands and feet, and they have tangled hair that conveys wildness. Often they are adorned with necklaces of human hands and hearts.

Durán's image of the Great Temple (see Figure 10) seems to reflect a further transformation. Two unclothed hairy figures with clawed hands and feet are shown flanking the shrines. The artist undoubtedly drew on European imagery of diabolical creatures, but these are surely the statues called *tzitzimime* that Durán's text (cit) says were set around Huitzilopochtli. Their position suggests the sustaining role that the text attributes to them. Their hairiness, lack of clothing, and apparent association with mountains seem to indicate wildness and an alienation from culture – features that are strongly reminiscent of the qualities of analogous ethnographic monsters.

The sumptuous feasts hosted by the lords of Tlaxcala, a culturally Aztec but politically independent state, point to another key feature of Colonial instantiations of *tzitzimime* that is shared with their ethnographic counterparts: social control. These feasts involved lavish gifts and extravagant servings of food and intoxicating drink that produced drunkenness and conflict along factional lines. John Pohl (1998) argues convincingly that the feasts were designed not only to create the obligations and indebtedness that structured a political system dependent on elite reciprocity but also to acknowledge and balance countervailing forces that threatened to rupture the system. Interacting with *tzitzimime*, and with the painted altars that embodied them, was central to the process of bolstering harmony by counterbalancing the dangerous forces. *Tzitzimime* were specially poised to maintain accord in the face of drunkenness, since among the 1600 offspring of the *tzitzimitl* genetrix were the supernatural patrons of *pulque*, the fermented drink served at these events.

The emphasis on wild hair in Colonial *tzitzimitl* imagery may signal another similarity with ethnographic monsters – the maintenance of social mores, especially in relation to sexual behavior and gender roles. Colonial period accounts emphasize the unkempt character of women who transgressed sexual norms (Arvey 1988, 182-184; Sigal 2011, 27). This is especially true of prostitutes (see Figure 11), who are often depicted with markedly wild hair. These representations are in sharp contrast with the neatly coiffed images of most women and, by extension, with the respectability associated with them.

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**Figure 11**: Prostitute, Florentine Codex, Book 10, Chapter 15, Folio 39v
(https://www.wdl.org/en/item/10621/view/1/82/).

### *Sisimite* in Mesoamerican Ethnography

Monstrous beings are very well attested in Mesoamerican ethnography, particularly in the belief systems of Maya and neighboring societies in eastern Mesoamerica (Hartman 1907, 144-146; Conzemius 1932, 168; Wisdom 1940, 406; Correa 1955, 68-69; Espino 1955, 53-54; Aplicano Mendieta 1967; Blaffer 1972; Laughlin 1977, 71-73, 355-356, 391-392; Chapman 1982, 195-200; Chapman 1985, 215-237; Carías et al. 1988, 137-138; Costenla 1995; Escobar 2000, 22; Dixon 2008; Dodds 2008, 92-97; Quesada 2014; Martínez and Mikulska 2016). Like their pre-Columbian counterparts, ethnographic monsters are known by a staggering array of names. There is significant variability in their forms and behavior but also considerable overlap. In these contexts, the supernatural is once again conceptualized in terms of multiple overlapping clusters of forces and qualities rather than discrete, personified beings.

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Some ethnographic monsters are called by names that are derived from or otherwise relate to Nahuatl *tzitzimitl*: *sisimite*, *sesimite*, *sisimique*, *chichimite*, *chichinite*, and *cihuatlpipil* (e.g., Hartman 1907, 144-146; Conzemius 1932, 168; Olivera 1969; Chapman 1982, 195-200; Chapman 1985, 215-237; Carías et al. 1988, 137-138; Costenla 1995; Escobar 2000, 22; Quesada 2014). Sometimes these names are taken from local Spanish dialects and used as alternatives to traditional indigenous names for the same supernaturals. Other terms, mostly indigenous in origin, are much more localized: *siguanaba* is used in Pipil-Chortí (Espino 1955, 51-54; Wisdom 1940, 406-407), *hitacay* occurs in Tol (Aplicano Mendieta 1967, 17-18), and *h7ik'al, Xpak'inte7* can be found in Tzotzil (Blaffer 1972; Hunt 1977, 105-106). There is disagreement, even among locals, about whether these labels refer to distinct beings. In one community in northern Nicaragua, they are variably described as ghosts – generically defined – and as specific supernatural entities with distinct personalities and motivation[1]. Despite this variability, shared physical features, characters, and behaviors clearly indicate that they can be treated as a single category which, for convenience, we call *sisimite*.

*Sisimite* are usually male but are also occasionally female. Although they are distinctly humanoid in form, *sisimite* have one or more unusual anatomical features and/or proportions. They are typically gigantic or unusually small in stature. Some of them have enormous penises, and many have reversed feet with formidable claws (Conzemius 1932, 168; Wisdom 1940, 406, Carías et al. 1988, 137; Costenla 1995). Some *sisimite* have wings or wing-like appendages attached to their feet or legs that enable them to fly; others are said to have tails (Olivera 1969).

*Sisimite* may embody inversions of normal sexuality. Among the Cuicatec in northeastern Oaxaca (Hunt 1977, 102-104), they appear to be female; however, that appearance is a ruse that allows them to entrap men inclined to transgress behavioral norms. A mouth-like hole in the back of the neck replaces the vagina so that the genitals are situated in upper back part of body instead of lower front. This front-back reversal suggests anal intercourse, as do reversed feet and identification of the vagina-equivalent in the neck as a mouth (since the anus is conceptualized as the mouth of the buttocks). Men who are tricked into having intercourse become pregnant and give birth to infants that resemble feces – the product of the anus. A man who recognizes the deception may put a (penis-like) lighted cigarette in the false vagina, producing pain rather than pleasure. The creature is then transformed into a snake that slithers

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[1] Based on the authors' fieldwork; the community is not identified here because many of its residents do not wish their beliefs to be made known to outsiders.

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away into the wild; its resemblance to a phallus is the definitive demonstration that the creature was not really female.

*Sisimite* are often covered with long, unkempt hair that takes the place of clothing; it is magically protective and is sometimes even impervious to bullets (Thompson 1930, 67; Laughlin 1977, 355-356). The hair may consist of poisonous caterpillars (Blaffer 1972, 105; Hunt 1977, 105-106). *Sisimite* are connected particularly with the wild and inhabit forests, ravines, and mountaintops, areas away from settlements. They lack many of the features of human culture, eating raw meat because their long hair is highly flammable and they are afraid to use fire (Thompson 1930, 67). *Sisimite* also exhibit other bizarre behaviors and often act in ways that transgress social norms. For example, they get up when most people go to bed, and they doze when others interact. They also enter buildings by leaping over walls instead of passing through doors, acquire sexual partners by kidnapping unwary humans rather than through any kind of interaction or courtship, and may even eat human flesh (Hunt 1977, 105-106; Laughlin 1977, 391-392; Costenla 1995; López 2002, Vol. 2, 161, 183). Through these transgressive actions, the *sisimite* also reinforce gender and sexual norms.

*Sisimite* are dangerous: death, kidnapping, and insanity are likely fates for the unfortunate individuals who encounter them. Some – like the Honduran *sipesipe*, which can be a good omen for planting in some situations – may exhibit benevolent behavior, and even *sisimite* who do inflict harm do not do so randomly. The people who need to fear *sisimite* are those who have violated local mores. *Sisimite* are very rarely encountered in daylight hours; drunks and transgressors of sexual norms, who are out when orderly people are at home, are the ones most likely to meet them. *Sisimite* attacks are also provoked by failure to conform to expected familial behaviors, especially as they relate to gender roles. Though normally avoiding areas of human habitation, *sisimite* may enter communities to steal the babies of women who have left them unsupervised (López 2002, Vol. 2, 184) or to kidnap inattentive cooks, who have fallen asleep by the fire or left food on the fire unattended.

In some ways, *sisimite* and cognate beings seem to be inversions of ancient *tzitzimime*. They are most often male, but sometimes female or apparently female. They inhabit remote earthly places rather than celestial realms and they are "wild," associated with contexts outside the domain of culture. They are clothed in magical hair, not magical textiles; they are also unkempt, unlike their pre-Columbian *tztitzimime* predecessors who tended to be well-groomed. *Tzitzimime* also contributed to social stability by tempering conflict. Devouring people on occasions of universal destruction can be seen as punishment for societal failures to fulfill the obligation to nourish the sun. *Tzitzimime* also had connections to norms of sexual behavior, though not in obvious roles as enforcers. *Sisimite* similarly maintain social mores

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in contemporary times, especially in relation to gender roles, drunkenness, and sexual transgression. They enforce norms by removing transgressors from society by killing them, driving them insane, or kidnapping them and forcing them to live in caves. This connection between *sisimite* and caves is not surprising since their *tzitzimime* predecessors were sometimes explicitly connected with caves and are associated more generally in Mesoamerican thought with ancestors – often linked to caves and cave-like spaces in Mesoamerican imagery and iconography – and renewal (Henderson and Hudson 2016; Pohl 1998).

The literature on *sisimite* often emphasizes questions concerning their historical connection with ancient *tzitzimime* and focused on the relationship of the two labels. However, the use of a term derived from the Nahuatl *tzitzimime* and the existence of a historical relationship between ethnographic monsters and pre-Columbian *tzitzimime* are separate issues. In Zinacantan and San Pedro Chenalhó, Chiapas, *h7ik'al* share the basic characteristics of *sisimite*, especially in relation to punishing transgressions of conventional gender roles and sexual norms. They are also conceptualized as adversaries of the sun (and the moon), bent on destroying human beings – the key roles of pre-Columbian *tzitzimime* (Blaffer 1972). Conversely, the *sisimite* label may sometimes reflect the use of the term by Nahua-speaking allies of Spanish invaders to refer to beings and practices that had several fortuitously similar central Mexican counterparts.

## Discussion

In pre-Columbian conceptualizations, *tzitzimime* were not monsters in the ordinary sense. They could be malevolent, but they were not fundamentally cruel or destructive. Like all Mesoamerican supernatural beings, *tzitzimime* were more like sets of supernatural forces that were salient on particular occasions than the discrete, personified deities of Mediterranean pantheons. Those constellations of supernatural features and forces that were often salient fortuitously resembled Spanish notions of deity. This perspective helps to make sense of the bewildering array of names, epithets, and characteristics attributed to *tzitzimime.* They are at once male and female, benevolent and dangerous, creative and destructive; they cause disease, but they also cure it. These contrasting qualities and their inherent duality fit with the fundamental role of *tzitzimime* in balancing powerful forces of contrasting character. As supernatural beings, *tzitzimime* could have unusual anatomical features, but they were not the hybrid monsters of the ancient Near East (Wengrow 2014), combining features of different species. Nor was their behavior exceedingly wicked or otherwise monstrous.

Following the Spanish invasion, *tzitzimime* were demonized, becoming progressively more monstrous in the Colonial imagination. Churchmen identified *tzitzimime* with the devil and his agents; they were simultaneously masculinized, and their more positive attributes were reassigned to saints of other church-sanctioned purveyors of good. Their ethnographic descendants and counterparts represent a continuation of this trajectory. They are anatomically monstrous, especially in terms of bodily proportions. Behaviorally, they are highly dangerous and often cause harm – not because of an evil character, but in their capacity as enforcers of social norms.

We are not yet in a position fully to resolve the historical issue of the relationships of pre-Columbian *tzitzimime* and ethnographic *sisimite*, but they undoubtedly have similar characters and comparable behaviors. They embody and balance dangerous forces, foster social stability and harmony, and punish the transgression of social mores. They fill these roles in quite different socio-political contexts. Ancient *tzitzimime* functioned within a "political cosmology," in relation to state-sanctioned views of the supernatural. Modern *sisimite* are part of a world in which those political contexts have been eliminated. The much closer involvement of *sisimite* with maintenance of norms may be a reflection of the transformed political contexts in which they operate.

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# Monsters, Disaster, and Organic Balance: Digesting History Through Oral Traditions[1]

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines "Coyote, Whirlwind, and Ravine," a long tale told in the Northern Paiute language by McDermitt storyteller Pete Snapp and recorded by folklorist Sven Liljeblad in the early 1960's. It weaves in traditional episodes of western Numic folklore to narrate the history of the Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone community as witnessed by an elder born shortly after the beginning of the colonization of this area of the Northwestern Great Basin in the western United States. This paper explores how the bodies of certain characters who emanate from landscape, mainly monsters, are tools for the narrative expression of social change, for the telling of history, and the expression of Indigenous spiritual frameworks. It places the experience of the Indigenous social body, embodied by Coyote, through the grinds of the ultra-material Ravine and confronts it to ethereal nefarious powers. Poetics of materiality applied to the body of Coyote operate a structural transformation. Mythical turmoil expresses social experiences and change in the colonial context, but also makes manifest the transformation of the social body that result in the contemporary form of the Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone community.

**KEY WORDS:** body, indigeneity, monsters, myth, Northern Paiute, oral history

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### Introduction

Monsters are striking because of salient features, physical traits of manifest uncanny register. What distinguishes monsters is that they are so particular, and so diverse in these differences that they can be listed in a taxonomy of the *bizarre* (Foster 2008). When thinking about these creatures, one pictures deformed human bodies – the monstrous – or creatures further away from humanity, radical monsters whose physical appearance only remotely reminds us of who we are (Mori 2012). To be sure, *monstre*, the old French origin of the word monster, means 'to show.' The monster is thus the one so particular that people cannot take their eyes off of them, and even more stereotypically, that they would point at with their finger.[2]

The Paiute-Shoshone people are much more polite than the French about this. For one thing, you do not say bad things about supernatural creatures in order not to upset them. These creatures are powerful, and no one can escape their wrath if they feel offended. They dwell in places, may it be a spring, a cliff, or a deserted home. People are careful when they speak of them, or when they approach them, to be respectful and mindful of their power and right to occupy those places. Some individuals may even be able to negotiate with them, pray, and obtain some power from them.

The politeness that my Paiute friends show to monsters, I fancy also somewhat applies to me as an alien and an anthropologist. As a stranger, Paiutes distinctively ignore my presence, but they nevertheless watch me, an anomaly in their social normality. What is being an anthropologist if it is not being one's social monster, a creature so particular, with its notebook and its questions, its efforts to behave and speak like one people – often with much difficulty and many errors – an oddity of nature, not a perfect ally, and not an enemy?

Paiute stories explain how things came to be the way that they are, and thus have a singular historical purpose, but also serve to represent the reality of things and peoples of the world, and how to behave in relation to them. Scholars have long debated the historical function in Native American verbal arts (Lowie 1915; Bahr 2001), often questioning it on the grounds of validity. More recent studies have challenged the denial of historical validity in myth, beginning with Jan Vansina's analytical monograph *Oral Tradition as History* (1985). In the same vein as Jason Jackson (2013), I would argue that Robert Lowie and others may have had too narrow a concept of history to be able to appreciate the mediated history common in

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[2] Paiutes do not point with the finger. People, especially women, commonly point with their lips to give a direction, but this does not target an individual other than to be the recipient of an offering.

Native myths. Alan McMillan and Ian Hutchinson (2002, 44) noted: "Oral traditions may have multiple levels of meaning, rather than describing a single set of historic events". Here I would like to explore how the bodies of certain characters, mainly monsters, are the grounds for the expression of social change, for the telling of history, and the expression of political ideology. I will explore the aesthetics of the body and how storytelling is a vehicle for telling and processing history as testified to in one unpublished tale by Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone storyteller Pete Snapp.

The literature on monsters is abundant. The more modest anthropological scholarship on monsters has sometimes been creative in finding a positionality that would authorize taking monsters seriously. Marjorie Halpin and Michael Ames (1980) for example edited a volume of investigations on humanlike monsters with an ironic yet evidence-based approach. Placing the human experience at the heart of anthropological research on monsters is indeed essential to reflect the diversity of ways with which monsters affect the lives of cultured individuals. In an introduction to another, more recent, edited volume on monsters, Yasmine Musharbash (2014, 1) stated: "Not only are our monsters *different*, but they are also *real* in different ways". Monsters are dwellers of our cultural worlds and hold in them unclear standing that make them powerful agents to questions our categories and unsettled our certitudes (Murray 2019). Monster narratives pertain to the expression of lived experience and as such are both unquestionable and difficult to decipher. I believe interpretive anthropology, the reconstruction of meaning from well fleshed cultural context and examination of self-representation within this context (Geertz 1973), can provide tools to unravel some of the levels of meaning supported by those narratives.

The tale that is the object of this paper was told on the Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Reservation by Pete Snapp, probably in the early 1960's. The community is named after a military post that was built on the Quinn River in 1866 after Lieutenant-Colonel Charles McDermitt, the officer in charge of the security of the area, was killed in an ambush during the Snake War as he was entering the valley. His name was given to the nearby military camp and later to the town of McDermitt, and to the Native reservation. A stagecoach line operated between Boise and the Nevada settlements on the Humboldt River, with a stop near then Camp McDermitt. In 1889, at a time when the Secretary of War was trying to abandon the old forts of the West, Fort McDermitt was transferred to the Secretary of Interior to be turned into an Indian reservation with a school for the Paiutes. These events defined Pete Snapp's life, himself the product of the early days of frontier society in the Quinn River Valley. His

father probably operated the Quinn River Station[3] on the stagecoach line in the 1860's and 1870's, but Pete Snapp was raised by his Paiute mother. He was thus culturally Paiute and was widely recognized as an outstanding storyteller who had inherited oral tradition from his mother's family. He was born around 1871-1872, during the early settlement of the region but also when Paiute life was irremediably changing.

In this tale, Pete Snapp weaves traditional mythical sequences of Numic folklore into a singular and complex story. Traditional Numic storytelling commonly requires an interlocutor who regularly plays the opposition, asking for a clarification, repeating an action or the name of a character, or even anticipating the next sequence. The active listener shows in doing so that the story does not fall on deaf ears (Liljeblad 1986, 650; Lowie 1924b, 309; Veyrié 2021, 226-228). Pete Snapp's son Allen played this role when this story was recorded at a date unknown. Sven Liljeblad and Allen Snapp listened back to the story between April and June 1963 and translated it into English. Liljeblad filled, for this tale only, five notebooks with the interlinear transcription and translation on the left page, and comments on the right page. Pete Snapp articulates in this story seven traditional episodes of Northern Paiute folklore. In addition to being narratively autonomous, sequences are delineated by an enduring change at the end, often followed by a brief discussion with the interlocutor, and Coyote speaking arrogantly at the beginning of the following sequence. I represent them here with paragraphs.[4]

### Commented Summary of "Coyote, Whirlwind, and Ravine" by Pete Snapp[5]

This tale proposes an oral chronicle of the Indigenous dwellers of the valley. It starts with Pete Snapp's declaration "There were those people who lived right here in this region"

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[3] The Quinn River Station was referred to as the McCobley and Snapp Station in a letter sent on February 6th 1867. In a letter dated October 7th 1870, Captain Wilson, Commanding Officer of Camp McDermit, reports demanding McCobley to vacate the Quinn River Station, and removed the troops guarding it.

[4] This tale deserves more than the brief summary I am about to make, and can be found in its entirety as Appendix D of my doctoral dissertation (Veyrié 2021, 444-545). I hope that by shedding light on this tale we are working toward giving justice to Pete Snapp and Sven Liljeblad's work and bring their manuscripts, which include many other stories, to publication.

[5] The tale was translated by Allen Snapp and Sven Liljeblad. University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), Special Collection 86-14, Box 25, MSS "Copy of texts in Northern Paiute" pp. 102-162, and the field notebooks 9-14. I would like to thank Jacqueline Sundstrand from the Special Collections for helping me dive into this

presenting the story as an account of aboriginal history, of a bygone age but anchored in a place centered around the teller. Allen Snapp then asked if Pete was referring to the Quinn River Valley in its English name: *kwiinorivəwaitɨmmaʔa?* (Quinn River *-wai* /arealis/ *-tɨ* /locative/ *-mmaʔa* /short distance demonstrative/ 'right here in the Quinn River area?'). The storyteller then confirms "They lived here," and adds, moving on, "and they did not like the whirlwind. 'The whirlwind is a bad one; since he often kills [people], let us send him away,' they said." The unspecified "they" refers, per the principle of indistinction that pervades Numic mythology (Veyrié 2021, 166), to the mythical people in which animal characters form a society analogous to the Paiute. Badger, reputed to be strong, is asked to take Whirlwind away.[6] He captures him in a bag and ties it solidly but as he heads off to the east with it, he finds Coyote on his way who inquires about the fantastic powers of Whirlwind. Coyote persuades Badger to let him peek into the bag, but Badger digs a hole in which to hide while Coyote opens it. Whirlwind gushes out and throws Coyote out far away in the east where he lands, dead. Pete Snapp then comments that this is how Whirlwind went to the east [of the Rocky Mountains, referring to the common phenomenon of tornadoes] but that people worry that it might return some day. If Pete Snapp confirmed that he was referring most immediately to the Quinn River Valley, "here" is extensible and can refer more generally to the Great Basin, as a culturally homogenous and geographically bounded space. This traditional Numic mythological episode also appears in an article by Paiute storyteller Judy Trejo (1974, 67-8), but historic Paiute leader Naches told a version in which Whirlwind is the result of Badger's excavations (Powell 1971, 220).

Coyote stays there dead until the next spring. Here Allen Snapp interjects in Paiute: "Was that the time when the crow woke him up?" Yes, replies Pete Snapp, confirming the beginning of a new episode. Crow was pecking Coyote's carcass and that woke him up, a transition also used by Trejo (1974, 68). Unappreciative of being brought back to life, Coyote scolds Crow telling him that when one sees a friend still sleeping at noon, one should let him sleep on account of the wild night he must have had. Coyote then goes and sleeps around

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[6]    Both Badger and Whirlwind are symbolically associated with mysterious harm. Badgers are said to be vulnerable to menstruating women (Veyrié 2021, 261). According to Naches Whirlwind are a manifestation of a wandering ghost (Powell 1971, 246), Captain Louey referred to them as the manifestation of wicked sorcerers (Marsden 1972, 27).

four times with the older sister of a sorority:[7] with the black ant sister first,[8] then with the wasp elder daughter, and with the scorpion older sister; and finally Coyote has an affair with porcupine. Each time his penis is bitten by his partners, resulting in gonorrhea (*kunuza*, most likely a borrowing from the English), and it worsens each time he has sex with a different partner. Between each intercourse, he removes and hides his swollen penis that gets found by the magpies who play with it. He gets the worst type of gonorrhea from Porcupine who whips his penis with its tail. "There [Coyote] brought [Gonorrhea] about." Trejo, in her account, also finds the origin of disease in Coyote's sexual freedom.[9]

The next episode stages Weasel who lost his younger brother while they were camping and eating deer. Desperate, he accuses and threatens everybody among the people[10]. The people decide to look for all the medicine men to find him, but the doctors fail in their attempt to locate Weasel's brother. Coyote volunteers to go with four medicine men to find Weasel's brother declaring that he is still alive in a ravine in which he got stuck after being caught by a deer head that tumbled down the hill.[11] They get closer, the medicine men walking separately in line, and the Troglodyte People come to Coyote who pretends to be old, blind,[12] and desiccated. They question him suspiciously, but they are unable to figure out his identity, although they suspect him to be Coyote. They offer him food and water to tempt the glutton to show his real face, but Coyote, having overheard them, controls himself. They then play a

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[7] The pattern of Coyote's sexual promiscuity often comes up in Numic folklore, including, without knowing, with his own daughters (Steward 1936, 381-382; Lowie 1909, 258-251).

[8] In the manuscript, Liljeblad did not translate *tuupigutsu* and *haʔinabi* (two of the few untranslated words in this manuscript). While I am unsure of the meaning of the first one (apparently compound between *tuupi* obsidian and *kutsu* cattle), the second one refers to small black ants according to Harold Able (Liljeblad, Fowler and Powell 2012, 46). My guess is that the first one also refers to a species of ants, obsidian then referring either to their black color or to the minerals these are habitually found nearby.

[9] Trejo expands on the character of *Itzaa waʔitsi* "Old man Coyote", the "the dirty old man", explaining that the moral of these stories is about being understanding and kind with the elderly regardless of their attitude (Trejo 1974, 69).

[10] This plot also comes up in three Shoshone tales (Lowie 1909, 254-261). In two of them, the giant is responsible for the abduction.

[11] In a *Kididikadɨ* tale, after hunting a deer, Weasel had his brother-in-law Skunk eat a hot stone and dropped him over the cliff (Kelly 1938, 435). Lowie published a longer version of the same tale narrating social chaos resulting out of Weasel's murder of his brother-in-law Skunk (1924a, 234-41). The rolling skull or rock is one of the most common mythical motives across North America.

[12] Coyote's blindness is a recurring theme of Northern Paiute folklore, although here Coyote is only pretending. More commonly, his blindness is the result of his juggling with his eyes and being stolen by birds (Lowie 1924a, 222; Kelly 1938, 418-419; Marsden 1923, 188-191). In this tale, the motif appears partially when the magpies play with his swollen penis.

throwing game with him. Coyote plays blind for a few throws, and declares complacently that the projectile deserves its fate, revealing that they are playing with Weasel's brother. Coyote spits in his hands and rubs them to prepare for his first good throw, and once he receives the projectile, sends it over the hill where the medicine men were waiting. Coyote then runs away and eventually transforms into a buffalo track to lose his pursuers. These innovative deceptions displayed by Coyote resulted in the creation of scolding and blindness for all people. Each episode of the story introduces a new people over whom Coyote triumphs, ultimately to the expense of everyone.

Pete Snapp then starts an episode relative to the canyons. As Coyote was jumping over a narrow canyon, he does not quite reach the other end and starts complaining arrogantly to his tapeworms about the way the canyon is, and how it should be different.[13] Coyote's five *Siwoʔa* [14] give him reasonable advice and allow to narratively offer Coyote's internal point of view: Coyote shares with them how infatuated with himself he is being in a leadership position, vanity being a recurring trait of character for Coyote. A whistling character with a feather on his head comes from a canyon, this character is often known as *Nɨmɨzoho*, the People-Masher, and the *Siwoʔa* tell Coyote to remove his skin to appear sick and abandoned, attracting the ogre's sympathy. The creature asks him what he wants to do, and they decide on a game of pounding each other's heads because Coyote is in no shape for any other game. The creature lets Coyote hit first, and once the monster blinks, Coyote then smashes his head telling him to let people die slowly, which results in people now declining rather than dying instantaneously.

Coyote then takes a break halfway up the hillside and remarks that he is the only leader of the place, prompting his *Siwoʔa*'s caution, that there is something worse coming. Coyote is teased by this reply and endeavors to investigate inside Ravine who he thinks might be his challenger. Coyote ties a willow to his side to keep the ravine's mouth open when he devours

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[13] As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Coyote commits a breach of Paiute ethics by complacently criticizing the ravine's distinctive features. A discussion of the Paiute code of conduct in places can be found in my dissertation (Veyrié 2021, 167-183).

[14] Liljeblad translates *siwoʔa* as tapeworms, perhaps a compound of *sii* 'intestines' - *woʔa* 'worm.' Paiute elder Dennis Smartt preferred to translate it as 'inner feeling' or 'intuition,' which shows the ambiguity of the word but also its definite positive symbolic value. Isabel Kelly (1938, 410-411) published a tale from Surprise Valley featuring *Nɨmɨzoho* and this helpful character as *siwaʔa*, translating it as 'intestinal worms.' Marsden (1972, 37-41) recorded a version where a similar character is referred to in English as 'intestinal mucus,' but the Paiute word is not in the published version. The literal identification of this mythical character as an intestinal parasite is thusly attested among some Wadatika, *Kididika*, and McDermitt Paiute families, but its figurative meaning and symbolic role is more generally that of an inner spirit, or intuition.

him. As he walks along, he feels that it gets darker and becomes blind. His youngest *Siwoʔa* informs him that he is swallowed and that he should stand still protected by his willow stick, and to go and feel for a breath. The *Siwoʔa* then tells him to follow the cold breath and to cut Ravine wide open using all his five knives, which explains why canyons now have edges and why roads can go through the bottom of them.[15]

In the next short episode, Coyote sat down to have a smoke and contemplate his leadership. Crickets came and Coyote fed on them. They suddenly fly away, and he decides to go in the opposite direction to inquire. He is warned by his *Siwoʔa* that the big bear who eats people is coming, so he transforms into a little weasel to scare him. As they are afraid of each other and cannot come to a fight, they decide to both vomit to figure out who is the strongest from what they ate last. They agree to close their eyes to vomit and open them at the same time, but Coyote cheats and exchanges his cricket for the scapula Bear had vomited. Bear who never eats crickets is too embarrassed to question the perplexing result, lets Coyote go, but he changes his mind and decides to go after Coyote who transforms in a pine squirrel. Bear does not give up and Coyote goes to an area with holes in the ground and transforms into a spring. Bear twists his ankle in a hole and gives up, and this explains why the bears act this way now. A version published by Kelly (1938, 421) portrays Coyote's challenge to Bear who had killed his son. Coyote convinces her to go in opposite directions, and kills her by surprise. Bear's chase after Coyote also appears in different versions (Lowie 1909a, 277).

Coyote brags again of his commanding authority despite his *Siwoʔa*'s repeated warnings. His *Siwoʔa* tell him about another dangerous enemy, a ghost who has an axe and a knife and lives in a cave on a hill.[16] They tell him to make an axe out of resin and to put some in his flesh, and they advise him to repeat anything Ghost does or says when he attacks him. When they meet, Coyote repeats Ghost's words, and they agree to be friends. Ghost takes Coyote deep in his cave and asks for some of his flesh. After serving him some resin, Coyote reciprocates the request and, without waiting for an answer, cuts Ghost's lungs and heart, helping himself. Ghost, furious, runs after Coyote who invents darkness and storms to escape, without success.

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[15] I only found one other version of Coyote opening the cave that had swallowed him by attacking one of its organs (Kelly 1938, 414). Two traditional motives can however be identified: Coyote's blindness (Lowie 1924a, 221-222) and his disruption of the magical cave (Kelly 1938, 378-382; Marsden 1923, 180-184).

[16] Ghost is not a common character in Numic folklore, which leads me to think that it could be a storytelling innovation. It is however a prevalent phenomenon that can explain sickness, or materialize in people's life (Lowie 1909a, 227).

Finally, he invents burnt branches where Ghost gets stuck.[17] Presented as his most dangerous opponent, Ghost reveals itself to be as deceptive as Coyote, asking if they could be friends when the action turns to Coyote's advantage. Coyote agrees to set him free only if they exchange their weapons. In a final betrayal, Ghost hits him but the resin axe explodes. Coyote then declares that Ghost should help cure people and as he has now lost his power,[18] that the powerful one is somewhere on the other side, that a greater power now comes from Peyote who will be the medicine man for the Indian people and it will spread over the world. Although this sequence may be original from the part of Pete Snapp, the dispelling of a ghost by command appears in several Shoshone accounts (Lowie 1909a, 299-301).

This tale ends with another intriguing event setting it in a multi-layered Native history: after the errands of Coyote looking for powerful doctors (*Puhagami*) able to solve the problems his people are having, the tale concludes with the arrival of Peyote, a greater medicine that can save the Indians. The arrival of Peyote in McDermitt was dated to be in 1935 by Omer Stewart who conducted fieldwork in the community when investigating Peyote history (Stewart 1987, 290). In other words, Pete Snapp was already an elder when Peyote arrived to save the people. This tale appears as a unique synthesis between traditional folklore and oral history, as seen by an individual who witnessed and embodies the drastic change that Native peoples had to face with the arrival of new dwellers. As a narrative unit, this long tale narrates the spiritual errancy of the people between the eastern exile of a powerful life-threatening dweller, Whirlwind, and a symbolic return when Peyote, a new source of curative power, comes from the east. Coyote, paradoxical underlying expression of the Paiute cultural ethos, was brought back to life in the east, and the twists and turns of the tale narrate his efforts to improve a degraded situation. The people's perceived need of cultural revitalization is at the core of this oral history.

## Materiality Poetics

This tale features two types of characters: animals and monsters. Animals, insects, and *Siwoʔa* are common characters, no more different from humans than they are different to each other (Descola 2013, 130). Monsters on the other hand are more radically different, and

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[17]    The motif of the obstacle flight is also recurring in North America. In it, a character tosses behind magical obstacles and traps for his pursuer.

[18]    The same power of disruption of ghosts from the part of the victim is related by Lowie (1909a, 227) as a recurring performative speech act to get rid of monsters.

DOI: 10.2478/eas-2021-0021

crucially in this story, they are outside of the social group: they live separate from the mythical animals and insects and can be unexpectedly deadly to them. Anthropologist Raymond Fogelson (1980, 147) more generally observed that monsters behave "anti-culturally," and as such, "embody the realm of nature rather than culture". This relevant distinction however is carried here with a perspectivist dimension: disease, deadfall, aging – the results of the interaction with monsters in this tale – reveal to be death imposed by the interaction with a third party alien to the social group in the same way as warfare, sorcery and crime result from interpersonal relations inside the wider social group. The apparently *natural* ways of dying are in fact *second degree cultural* ways of dying resulting from inappropriate interactions with indwellers (Veyrié 2021, 167-168).

The radical difference between the unmarked dwellers – animals of the social group are not physically distinct – and indwellers is characterized by physical particularities, and even further by their *sensitive qualities*, to borrow an expression of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1964, 9). The indwellers themselves can be classified on two extremes of sensitive qualities from the point of view of organic life: Whirlwind and Ghost on the one hand are characterized by their limited materiality and the Ravine people and Canyons on the other by their excessive materiality. The different material valences of these characters can be appreciated in terms of the devices they display: the harmful power of Whirlwind comes from sorcery, the alleged damage he creates by action in the distance, without physical contact. On the other hand, the Ravine people and the Canyon monster are expressions of landscape features, and the violence they exercise on the animal characters, may it be by using the young Weasel as the projectile of a ballgame or by pounding people like food, is marked by crude imagery. These extreme monstrous characters can also be the expression of two narrative tools of the storyteller: a logic of the implicit focusing on suspense and interpersonal expectations, and a logic of the concrete in which crudity is key to expressing organic change – or transformation.

The members of these pairs are arguably variations on a cultural paradigm. First, the materiality of the enemy pair Ravine people – Canyon monster, sometimes represented as *Nimizoho*, a giant cannibal carrying a mortar or a basket on his back that he uses to grind people (Liljeblad 1986, 654) is enhanced by their opposite characters, the friendly *Siwoʔa*, worms, that is to say skinless invertebrates, who, in another tale, inspire Coyote to make himself desensitized to bruising damage by tricking *Nimizoho* into pounding his empty hide (Kelly 1938, 410-411). The pounding of Coyote consists in treating him as the object of the cultural practice of cooking rather than the author of it, emphasizing an ultra-materialistic symbolic representation of the harm made to the people. The present story offers a variation on this action since the Canyon monster, the one who had the long feather on his head, is confident that the sick Coyote will not be able to hurt him, and accepts to be the first one to

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put his head on the rock to receive a blow. At any rate, the *Siwoʔa*, skinless invertebrates, inspire Coyote to protect himself from the imminent bruising damage that can be expected from the Canyon monster. The explicit equation by Pete Snapp between this Canyon monster and tuberculosis shows that the same inversion as in the tale recorded by Isabel Kelly – translated to disease – is effective here: instead of being the object of the disease (the head-pounding), Coyote is the author of it. These variations illustrate a four-way symbolic space with predation and disease as axes: the cook, the food, the sick, and the strong, roles alternatively distributed and redistributed to Coyote and the Canyon monster. Worms appear as an absolute opposite to all four functions, in the sense of rendering them null, or rather, a point of transformation, the center of the symbolic quadrant. The body of Coyote is the ground where transformation between these roles takes place, the result of a tension between self-consciousness and a mysterious inner voice that seem to constitute the wisdom of social interdependency, personified by a parasite who depends on the body of a host to survive. The scale model to think of the relationship between Indigenous people and places appears in the responsibility of the *Siwoʔa* to speak to his host Coyote and assist him with good thoughts; Paiute individuals have an ethical responsibility to talk to the natural world and ask for collective benefits, such as water, resources, social balance, or blessings, as McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone elder Herman Crutcher advocated in a speech (Veyrié 2021, 55-56).

The positions formally displayed in this quadrant are however not fixed, but in constant superposition and recomposition. The vertical axis ideally does not refer to an exploitative relationship, but to one based on reciprocity and trust. The horizontal axis represents body wellness with personal and social balance on the left, and salient materiality and selfishness on the right. The individual and social layers are mixed on this axis, and illness is most clearly expressed in its salient materiality. Old-time doctoring in North America emphasized the extraction of materialized illness from a patient body, in the form of a little object extracted by sucking the illness location (Park 1934, 105; Powell 1971, 245 on Paiute doctoring; Lévi-Strauss 1963, 186-205 on the efficiency of symbols). These two distinct axes are each clearly polarized, and they interact inside the body in mysterious ways of which inner feelings are a manifestation. Like when showing a point on a turning wheel, one is both alternatively and potentially always everywhere at the same time.

**Predator**

*One who asks for something*

**Healthy** ——————— *Siwoʔa* ——————— **Sick**

*Balanced organism*                              *Salient abnormality*

**Prey**

*One who has something to offer*

On the other end, whirlwinds are for Numic people the indication that something bad happened, often involving death (Lowie 1924b, 297; Hultkrantz 1986, 632). Whirlwind and Ghost, in their immateriality represent the invisible harm that can be caused, for example by sorcery and haunting. Ghost appears as an evil double of Coyote, sharing his deceptive tricks such as a friendship request to Coyote when he catches him, replicating his behavior and repeating the magic word. The insistence on the replication of their actions suggests treating them as alter egos, and while the physical presence of a ghost is undeniable in the story, the removal of his lungs and heart do not alter his functioning and he reveals himself to be unable to effectively hurt Coyote with Coyote's replicated weapon. The discrepancy between his morbid potential and his lack of effective power emphasizes how much of a psychological character Ghost, presented as the worst of all these rivals, is. Once Coyote declares that Ghost in fact has no power in a narrative performative speech act, Ghost simply disappears from the story, Coyote dispels his very existence. The harm that whirlwinds and ghosts can cause comes from speech: Paiutes do not talk about deceased people or about natural phenomena such as whirlwinds. One must respect mysterious creatures. The discrete dwellers should be

left alone, and Coyote is here again acting as a cultural counterexample when he wishes canyons should be different. A functional explanation of the scary tales about cliffs and canyons and other places is that they are told to children to keep them out of trouble, but it is also the expression of a Native ontology of places that should be respected because they are loaded with memory and history.

The power of these eerie ultra-material or non-material dwellers is expressed through a poetics of materiality that is the evocation of the empirical effects that they can have on peoples' bodies and minds, may it be caused by a fall, by being smashed or dismembered, or haunted, corrupted or cursed. In the story, much of the trouble comes from Weasel accusing everybody for the loss of his younger brother in the ravine and being a threat to the community. Beatrice Blyth Whiting (1950), in *Paiute Sorcery*, explored how accusations of sorcery served the purpose of social control among the Wadatika. Here, Weasel threatens the balance of the group because the loss of his brother prompts him to suspect everyone of having directly or indirectly participated in his disappearance. Personal loss thusly affects the social body as a whole and requires a spiritual intervention to either physically or symbolically fill the void of the absence. This tale stages monsters emanating from disturbed landscape features, natural phenomena becoming personifications of disaster as well as the social disruption that they create among animals, metaphors of Paiute society.

One of the forms that the social chaos takes is diseases. Here we should note that disintegration occurs on different scales: First the environmental scale with Whirlwind, Ravine sometimes called "the hole in the earth" in the story, the ever crumbling rimrock, and Ghost, the anomaly that is a wandering spirit. Then, disintegration on the social scale has the self-destructive Weasel, the inefficiency of the Indian medicine men, and Coyote as leader by default. Third is the scale of the organic body affected by different forms of disintegration: dismemberment, disease, parasite, and vomit. Let us note also that none of the latter are intrinsically connoted negatively, but on the contrary can be media for transformation and change, illness can be acceptable if it has a personal or social purpose. As Betty Crutcher commented (Veyrié 2021, 266-268), everything in the body has a purpose. Peyote thus appears as a cleanser, a way to expel the accumulated illnesses in the Indian body, metonymy of Indian society.

The insistence on the different diseases brought by Coyote is particularly striking: while Pete Snapp uses the tale to do a typology of gonorrhea affirming that there are seven types of it, tuberculosis (*passatiʔoipɨ*, literally skinny or dry disease) is the object of a note on the right page of one notebook commenting "There is no old time Indian doctor who can treat it. But you can run it out if you run as fast as you can, you work it out of your system. […] That is

the Indian way–the Whites have them pray–but it's not much the White doctors can do for you."[19] This side comment by Pete Snapp highlights the contemporaneous relevance of the tale and invites looking at this tale as oral history told through myth and as an effort of transformation. In combining myth and history, this tale sharply illustrates the double temporality of myth theorized by Lévi-Strauss (1955, 430): at the same time diachronic and synchronic. While Pete Snapp's reference to contemporaneous events allows the listener to place the tale in a suite of events, the use of mythical sequences reveals its everlasting quality, a character of eternal truth allowing to transcend the contingency of time. Let us now better identify the events Pete Snapp is story*telling*.

### Oral History Told Through Myth

Tuberculosis is not entirely new to the American continent but there is no doubt that Euro-American settlers, including the Spanish, the Anglo, the French and other early travelers and migrants brought new strains for which Native people had little immunization (Prat 2003). Similarly, sexually transmitted infections became more common among Native communities in historic times. While syphilis – not reliably distinguished from gonorrhea until the end of the 19th century – existed in aboriginal America, this perhaps was not a venereal disease (Powell and Cook 2005). Gonorrhea was probably brought to the Americas with European colonization, and the fact that Pete Snapp used a borrowing from English to name the disease suggests that the disease was unknown to the Paiutes until Europeans arrived. In this instance, we can see that storytelling can serve the purpose of sex education and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, and through the counterexample of Coyote, the promotion either of monogamous sex or abstinence. The emphasis on disease in this tale is not a negligible detail, organic wellness is one of the narrative threads of the story. The demography of the Native people of the Great Basin, including the Northern Paiutes, saw a sharp decline in the 1870's that reached its minimum in 1930 and slowly started increasing after that date (Leland 1986, 608). Apart from the Paiute-Bannock uprising of 1878, which gathered about 300 men, and the subsequent Yakima exile, Indian wars were over after 1870. This demographic decline was caused by diseases and other social issues, including depression at the social level. Sarah Winnemucca (1883, 48) wrote in 1883 that: "My people have been so unhappy for a long time they wish now to *disincrease*, instead of multiply". My

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[19]    86-14, Book 12, pp. 6 and 8.

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thesis here is that Pete Snapp in this tale performs Native history and strikingly depicts the Native social collapse, the spread of infectious diseases, high mortality rate that he witnessed most his life, and a turn to a new hope for the community. The arrival of the Peyote in 1934 coincides with a demographical shift reinforcing this medicine as representing renewal. This tale by Pete Snapp told a few years before his death works as a life story, rendering the changes he witnessed during his life through the art of traditional storytelling.

In representing physical decay and social decadence, Pete Snapp describes a collapsing world. The time of myth, explaining how the chaos became the order that we know today is thus epistemologically relevant to render the end of the old world and the beginning of a new Native world partly based on the old one. Another anthropological aspect of this myth is the loss of social structures in three main aspects: 1) Kinship, Coyote sleeps around, threatening the social balance of the Northern Paiute group focused on extended families; 2) Religion, Medicine Men have lost their power and they are not only unable to cure diseases but they are also helpless in facing sorcerers who cause dissension. This common statement, also reported by Willard Zerbe Park (1934, 98), is expressed in the story by Weasel who curses everyone and causes harm to the group because he has lost his younger brother, the Medicine Men being ineffective at solving the problem. The story of a sorcerer cursing everybody and threatening society after the death of his son appears also in an oral history account by Captain Louey from the neighboring Paiute band of the Wadatika (Marsden 1972, 48-49). In it, he said he witnessed the curse when he was a child and hundreds of people including his mother die by "bleeding from the nostrils." Pete Snapp's seminal Weasel episode could be a retelling of the same account of a tuberculosis epidemic caused by the arrival of new strains carried by white explorers and traders. The arrival of epidemics is interpreted as the act of sorcerers and the inability of medicine men to cure them causing disbelief in traditional medicine; 3) Politics, the tale is also striking by the absence of one crucial character of Numic folklore, which is Wolf. Wolf and Coyote are usually alter egos, the first one being a responsible leader and the second the power hungry disrupter. Ghost acts as one of Coyote's alter egos in this story, which can be a singular expression of morbid leadership. The broken promises of friendship from Ghost could suggest that he refers to Euro-Americans, but they are otherwise entirely absent of the tale. Wolf's absence is also partially compensated by the *Siwoʔa*, but they are internal to Coyote, one could say prisoner, and must witness his erratic behavior, powerless. The absence of leadership, or worse, Coyote's leadership, expresses the despair of the absence of a reliable leader in chaotic times. In these three ways, Pete Snapp's story is a Native perspective on the post-contact history of the Northern Paiutes of the Oregon-Nevada area.

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This tale also promotes the Native American Church as a revitalization movement. According to Omer Stewart, an anthropologist who started studying this movement only two years after it began in Northern Paiute country, "The purpose of the cult is to heal and to protect through the worship of God by means of peyote. […] Peyote serves as an intermediary [and is commonly referred to] as a 'medicine', a 'power', a 'protector', or a 'teacher'." Consumption of alcohol is prohibited for peyotists, and they are compelled to value love, hope, charity, ambition, and honesty. During the Peyote Ceremony, practitioners congregate in codified prayer meetings lasting all night during which participants undergo cleansing through consumption of the peyote, fanning, use of blessed water, and a communal meal (Stewart 1944, 64-5). The values of organic renewal performed during these ceremonies serve a social purpose in addition to a spiritual one. Northern Paiute communities have been victim of disease, alcohol, and drug epidemics and have been harmed by the loss of social structures. Corbett Mack, a *Tabooseedokado* Paiute elder interviewed by Michael Hittman, shared the same analysis as Pete Snapp that Peyote came to save the Paiutes from illnesses, but that in order to be powerful, it should not be mixed with any other drug or spiritual system (Hittman 1996, 201-5). The arrival of this new Indian medicine filled a need for healing and coincided with the rise of a new generation that had not known pre-reservation period but that was looking for practices that celebrated Indigenous identity and resilience. Harm, disease, and trauma, seen as materialized illnesses in one's body, can be expelled in the ceremony of the Peyote, the consumption of the cactus often causing vomiting later in the night. Once again scales are imbricated, and the individual body serves as a metonymy of society. The latter can be healed by curing the first.

The adoption of Peyote by Northern Paiutes was certainly not unanimous and prompted many reactions from enthusiasm to condemnation. Its relative success, among certain people in some communities, can in part be explained by its cultural relevance on three ideas preexisting in Paiute culture: 1) A similar organic aesthetics of healing is present in Paiute-Shoshone oral traditions and in the Native American Church. 2) Renewal through collective worship already existing in messianic movements such as the Ghost Dance, 3) The eagerness for new Indigenous medicines, most repeatedly expressed in Pete Snapp's story. On the other end, others resisted and condemned this new religion because it competed with strictly local spirituality based on the relationship to places and the power that they contained. Imported religions, even Indigenous ones, distracted people from the relationships they were expected to maintain with local powers: a tension between the rights of indwellers to be considered and the collective renewal through imported powers is prevalent in Pete Snapp's tale. In addition, as in the case of Oitsi's advocacy for the Dreamer movement, suspicion of witchcraft affected peyotists (Stewart 1944, 82), a pattern also alluded to by Pete Snapp when

he refers to Weasel's paranoid accusations. Even if the Native American Church in McDermitt started as a minority movement, the social cohesion it produced eventually became popular in much of the community. As in other communities where it was taken up, it brought social stability and personal benefits that ramified in McDermitt society at large.

### Organic Frameworks

Here I will briefly discuss the relevance of the Native American Church in the McDermitt community history. Although this article does not focus on Native spirituality, the arrival of Peyote is important from an ethnohistorical point of view, because it corresponded roughly with the formal constitution of the Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Indian Tribe in 1934. Omer Stewart synthesized the anthropological explanations of the success of Peyote in Native communities on the basis of two distinct reactions, the cultural compatibility theory, according to which Peyote was successful because it fit existing cultural expectations, and the cultural disintegration theory, according to which it was successful because it filled the space left by sociocultural disruption (Stewart 1944, 89-94). Certainly, Pete Snapp is most explicitly a proponent of the latter. Like in the case of Oren George's presentation of Temoke's words regarding the making of the Treaty of 1863 (Veyrié 2021, 45-48), we can see here that Pete Snapp condenses in his account both views of the controversial event of the arrival of Peyote, but in Pete Snapp's case he also made clear on which side of the controversy he stood by saying that Peyote was the only one who had power any more. However, I would like to defend here that the adoption of Peyote, like other Paiute religious movements, can be interpreted as the organic integration of a new element by the social body, a process that itself includes both disintegrative and accommodative dynamics. Anthony Wallace (1970) most famously described the revival movement led by the Seneca Handsome Lake under the organic framework of death and rebirth. By conceptualizing this Indigenous expression in organic terms, we may conceive that oral traditions can provide a vocabulary to contextualize, understand, and process social suffering (Geertz 1973, 105).

More recently, Daniel Swan proposed to use various approaches including the historical materialist theory – akin to Stewart's disintegration theory – to describe the adoption of the Big Moon variant of the Peyote religion by the Osage as "a gradual process of trial and revision in which a new sense of the social order and spiritual harmony was instituted" (Swan 1998, 67). Following Fogelson (1989, 134-135), Swan challenged the idea that the arrival of the Big Moon was a singular event, but rather a gradual community-based conceptualization of historical consciousness culminating in "a revolutionary, transformative movement" for

Osage society. This process is described by Swan as the result of the cohabitation between the Osage and the Quapaw between 1874 and 1889, resulting in the formal adoption of the Big Moon by the Osage in 1904-1906. In Nevada, although the Paiutes had heard about the spread of the Peyote in the 1920's (Stewart 1944, 69), and no doubt Indigenous travelers had been exposed to it prior to these dates, the Peyote religion arrived in Northern Paiute country from the east in the 1930's, and several roadmen started regular meetings.[20] In Pete Snapp's story, although the social disruptions preexisting the arrival of Peyote are described at length, Peyote is mentioned at the end as a solution, but without gradual community exposure. It appears as a providential person, certainly interpretable in historic terms, but as an agent capable of change and a brighter future for the community. The community deliberation of the need for a new, different medicine is however also at the heart of the story, in part similarly to the way it surfaces in Swan's discussion of the Osage, when the community discussed the roadman John Wilson: "They said that he was one of the most powerful men. He had more power than any of them" (Swan 1998, 62). Among the Osage as among the Paiutes, at least as can be interpreted in Pete Snapp's tale, the question of the community's adoption of the Peyote was deliberated in comparing the efficiency of the old and the new powers. In Pete Snapp's tale however, Peyote is himself the personified power, whereas in Swan's description the named roadman, John Wilson, mediates the relationship with the powerful medicine, but this could simply be imputable to the genre of myth.

Jason Baird Jackson traced the different reactions to Peyote to an existing divide between cosmologies of power in Indigenous societies between the High Plains and the Great Basin on the one hand, and the Southeast on the other. Specifically, traditional power in the Plains and Great Basin tends to be acquired from places – also to some extent at birth and death – whereas among the Yuchi in the Southeast, extensive study and apprenticeship with elders appears to be the way of acquiring power (Jackson 2004, 198-201). According to Jackson, Peyotism conformed more closely to Yuchi beliefs than other revitalization movements such as the Ghost Dance that relied on performing the visionary experiences of a chosen man. Among the Yuchi, Jackson presents the Native American Church as a practice that developed on already existing sociopolitical structures and spirituality rather than as a religious revolution. As corn farmers and given their experience of displacement in the 1830's, the Yuchi welcomed the arrival of a new medicine within their existing traditions. This opposite interpretation to Swan's relies on a cosmological divide between the Indigenous American

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[20]     Roadmen are religious service leaders in the ritual and social framework of the Native American Church.

DOI: 10.2478/eas-2021-0021

West and the Woodlands where the Native American Church was not a social revolution. The importance of the personified emanations of landscape as expression of power in Pete Snapp's tale, the disruption of these existing networks of relationships between the people and the indwellers, and the final declaration that a more powerful one has arrived to lead the people suggests that the Native American Church was a more fundamental challenge to Great Basin Indigenous belief systems than it was in the Southeast. However, this tale also emphasizes that an organic model of the sociopolitical body can ensure cultural continuity even through social disruption. Even if the Indigenous Great Basin has a deep relationship to places – bounded grounds and their social world – this relationship is also characterized by organic adaptation, symbiotic coexistence, and as such, a propensity to accept and enact change.

The argument that I support in my interpretation of this tale narrated by Pete Snapp is that the arrival of Peyote was a political and historical controversy for the Paiutes at McDermitt not unlike the Ghost Dance was for the Lakota in the Plains between Fall and Winter 1890 as described by Raymond DeMallie (1982). Namely, I argue that Pete Snapp presents in this tale a reading of the historical events he witnessed during his life through a resolutely Indigenous perspective, using a worldview "of the relationship between mankind and the natural world […] to understand these changes from the Lakota perspective" (DeMallie 1982, 390), but here applied to the Paiute. In this process, symbolic or interpretive anthropology is an important tool, because we need to conceptually reconstitute the different viewpoints expressed in the Native community without imposing expectations and concepts of Euro-American society.

As we saw, the spiritual and political dynamics present in this tale can be interpreted as a continuation of the ancient spiritual and sociopolitical Paiute paradigm according to which certain specialists or speakers can mediate the relationship between individuals and the social group, without however possessing authority outside of the bounded space in which they are trusted to guide activities. In a context in which the acquisition of curative power from relationships with indwellers occupying certain places had grown more uncertain because of the disruption on the land, the Native American Church constituted a way to continue spiritual mediation. The arrival of a new power however did not invalidate all the other preexisting spiritual entities, but provided them with new leadership: "You should help the person, who is a good medicine man, when he is healing somebody" says Coyote to Ghost.

The two approaches to understanding new religious movements mentioned by Omer Stewart – cultural compatibility and cultural disintegration – are compatible, because they allow for a view of social transformation, continuity through change. Sometimes an excessively

formalistic approach to cultural phenomena leads us to forget that social interactions are made of relationships, ways of relating, distinct and sometimes competing forces. In addition, the social group is not monolithic, and antagonistic dynamics coexist in any integrated system. Thus, to conceptualize the reaction of the Paiute to novelty, I promote the use of organic frameworks, diversified but interconnected autonomy of a sentient organism continuing through time by absorption and transformation. Such organic model may also apply to Great Basin sociopolitical structures (Veyrié 2021, 315-347).

### Conclusion

Pete Snapp's multi-episodic tale narrates a quest for remedy in a time of disorientation and loss of power. The disasters that it covers are the expression of historical events that affected the Paiute throughout the 19th century and into the 20th century even as it is also a mythical narrative about the formative period in Paiute cosmology. The tale also expresses an organic aesthetics of the material body in focusing on processes such as disease, pounding, dismemberment, vomiting, parasites, flaying, needling and more. They express the social torment of a collapsing world but also set the grounds for a renewed organic ideology that precisely uses organic mechanisms as cleansing and healing. In other words, as the bodies of this tale's characters represent society, the connection established between the body and society reveals reciprocal as the purification of the body allows to heal society.

Although I argue that this tale is rich in ethnohistorical content, it is also devoid of any clear reference to contact with white people. Perhaps, as Cailín Murray (2019, 63) argued in the case of the Wild Man narratives in the Pacific Northwest, the monsters of Pete Snapp's tale are boundary keepers, at the same time relational beings and expressions of a malaise in Indigenous space. But this absence is also is a reminder for us that Native people are not obsessed with the arrival of the white people, like we too often assume. Indigenous cultures are not defined in opposition to non-indigenous cultures. In this tale, it is expressed as a continuing and autonomous relation to land with the capacity of absorbing novelty. Cultural relativism, the axion of sociocultural anthropology since Franz Boas, demands the study of cultures in their own terms. It seems suited to characterize revitalization movements in the terms of organic frameworks since the Native individuals who describe them consistently use the aesthetics of organic life to model cultural change.

Pete Snapp uses myth as a synchronic device capable to process and support history. Monsters are metaphorical expressions of trauma in addition to be pedagogical devices of

warning. The polysemy, the thickness of oral tradition cannot be salvaged in its entirety, but it is our duty as anthropologists, especially if we are interested in the ethnohistorical approach, to restitute the complexity of oral history. *Parole* carries personal and collective structures: we never express as genuinely what haunts us as when using speech freely.

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# "With All The Ghosts that Haunt the Park...": Haunted Recreation in Brent (Ontario)

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## ABSTRACT

When I first visited Brent, the defunct logging village, now campgrounds in the northern reaches of Algonquin Provincial Park I went searching for ghost stories. Often described as a "ghost town," Brent has been occupied since the earliest days of logging in the Ottawa River/Kiji Sibi Valley and holds an important place in the oral history of the Park. The village was a place where many died after violent accidents during the timber rush of the eighteen-hundreds, where Algonquin Anishinaabe Peoples had camped and likely held a village of their own prior to colonization. Brent was once a bustling community, the former site of the Kish-Kaduk Lodge and an important railway stopover during the First World War. Further, Brent was home to the last year round resident of the Park. Mr. Adam Pitts, known to many local cottagers as the "Mayor" passed away in his home in 1998 one year after the railroad tracks were removed by the Canadian National Railway Company and the electricity was shut off. Now his cottage is a ruin some claim to be haunted by the Mayor's restless ghost. And there are other ghost stories I heard in Brent that haunt the edges of the colonial imagination, stalking unwary travellers as they meander through what they sometimes assume to be "pristine wilderness." Common patterns of self-apprehension and identity formation associated with tourism and heritage management in Algonquin Park are imbued with nationalist value through a prismatic complex of cultural appropriation, the denial of complicity in colonial violence, and the contingent obfuscation of Indigenous presence and persistence in the area, a process I call haunted recreation. Countering this complex is critical for working past the historical and intergenerational trauma associated with Canadian settler-colonialism and the contemporary inequities of Canadian society.

**KEY WORDS:** Algonquin Anishinaabe, Algonquin Park, ghost stories, haunted recreation, identity, indigenous peoples, nationalism, settler-colonialism

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**"With All The Ghosts that Haunt the Park...": Haunted Recreation in Brent (Ontario)**

### Introduction

On my first visit to Brent, I was unsure about what to expect from the campgrounds and former logging village in the northern area of Algonquin Park known for its isolation and eccentricities. Located along the Petawawa River on the north shore of Cedar Lake, Brent once sat on a railway line that carried people and commodities (such as wheat and timber) from Canada's furthest eastern and western reaches. Brent was used by Algonquin Anishinaabe as a hunting territory and hosted a small fishing village for hundreds of years prior to colonization of the area. In the mid-1800's during the height of the timber boom Brent was home to as many as 600 people and hosted dignitaries, celebrities and politicians at the famed Kish-Kaduk Lodge making the actual population of the area closer to one-thousand including those more "transient" visitors. Now Brent is an interior jump-off point for adventurous canoe enthusiasts, a seasonal cottage community and a quiet place for campers to escape the pace and pressures of the city and the more crowded Highway #60 corridor nearer to the province's larger population centres. As the plaques erected during my first stretch of fieldwork in 2012 attest, it is also known as a place to "step back in time." Until relatively recently it was common to find references to the "ghost town" of Brent even in the literature released by Ontario Parks, the governmental agency responsible for the administration and maintenance of the Park under the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. As far as the Park authorities knew, I was there to do research on history, nostalgia and memory. But my main interest was ghost stories as intersections of precisely these things (Gordon 1997), and as instantiations of personal experience that went beyond explanation; as ways of "talking back" against master-narratives, prying open some "room for manoeuvre" (Stewart 1996). And there are other ghost stories I heard in Brent that haunt the edges of the colonial imagination, stalking unwary travellers as they meander through what they sometimes assume to be "pristine wilderness." Common patterns of self-apprehension and identity formation associated with tourism and heritage management in Algonquin Park are imbued with nationalist value through a prismatic complex of cultural appropriation, the denial of complicity in colonial violence, and the contingent obfuscation of Indigenous presence and persistence in the area, a process I call haunted recreation. Countering this complex is critical for working past the historical and intergenerational trauma associated with Canadian settler-colonialism and the contemporary inequities of Canadian society.

Wandering around the village and taking in the sights of the small community, I immediately met a few of the most visible locals. Marie and her husband Jim Joyce were the campground "hosts," and they greeted everyone who came down the road as if they were old friends with the oftentimes baffling question "Are you lost?" The Outfitters' shop, a mix of museum and

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last-stop variety store in the bush, was operated by Jake Pigeon, a wizened man of at least sixty who gruffly nodded a hello to me, bare-chested from the behind the counter. His partner in the business Rob, a friendly, but tough looking, good-humored, dark-haired man of about forty-five, was also bare-chested most of the time and I soon learned that going shirtless was an option for men anywhere and anytime in Brent. Exploring the Outfitters' shop I found an array of pictures pinned to corkboards showing Jake and Rob's families, frolicking and fishing in the lake. Some pictures and newspaper clippings were of people from Brent's past, characters from the days of logging, or early rangers and important figures from the Park's celebrated history; Feminist Camp Operator Fanny Chase, Former Ontario Premiere Leslie Frost, and Algonquin Elders William and August Commanda. But a few others pictured less well-known figures. One of those was Adam Pitts, the last year-round resident of the village, a reclusive fiddler facetiously referred to by cottagers and locals as the "Mayor of Brent."

Jake told me where Mr. Pitts had lived for his whole life, in a house that was then falling to ruins just behind another larger cottage across the rail-bed from the shop. On the walk over I came across a pet cemetery which added a dimension of uncomfortable familiarity to the place wedged into an area between the cottages in a tall, uncut section of grasses and "weeds." Jake told me to feel free to explore. My notes from then quote him telling me to "ignore the fences," but I couldn't bring myself to cross them when I got to the building that had been Mr. Pitt's home. I had no desire at all to enter.

### Roses and Remembrance

The roses stretched out across the barbed wire and the thorns on the leggy vines seemed primed and ready to pierce the toughest of skin. A few small rosebuds began to let their internal scarlet peek through the slightly split leaves holding them back. The roses stood out against the background of more commonly found invasive domesticate species; the wild grape (Vitis spp.) and the deadly nightshade (Atropa belladonna). In the golden afternoon sunshine, I felt that the thorns and the barbs on the fence were nearly indistinguishable from one another, and the thought of getting caught and injured hours from emergency responders while climbing through made me wonder if Jake had told me to ignore the fences as a sort of test; would I climb them, risking injury in a reckless attempt to see what was inside of a ruin, or would I hear his words as a warning?

Jake told me that when Mr. Pitts passed away some people who claimed to be family showed up and began exploring the house for things that they could take. Apparently, they were so

convinced that the old man was stashing cash away that they knocked holes in the walls, ceiling, and floorboards. Weakening the structure, by the time I came upon the ruin the ceiling had fallen in and the floors were covered in holes and rotten debris. Jake said he didn't think there was anything there, but he said he thought the mayor had plenty of money, and he had always paid everyone who helped him out very kindly. He hinted that the money might be buried somewhere near the house, or further down the railway bed in a cache, perhaps testing me to see what my true motives were for asking such awkward questions. Rob joked that he was only there to find the treasure and he was waiting for Jake to give up the secret. Rob told me he sometimes wandered around the campgrounds sniffing for the scent of coal oil. He said that the mayor had used coal oil to repel animals and preserve foodstuffs, and covered almost everything he had in the stuff, including most of his clothes.

### Uneasy Encounters

After hearing the stories and visiting the ruins of Mr. Pitts cabin, I crossed paths with a trio of sturdy men while leaving the shop, cut from the same cloth as Rob, preparing for a few days of fishing and a few nights of drinking around the campfire, catching up with good friends. These trips are some of the most popular for visitors to the campgrounds, who often bring trailers and many of the amenities of home with them down the rough gravel logging road that links Brent to a section of the Trans-Canada Highway called Provincial Highway #17. These men towed a very nice twenty or so foot fishing boat behind a Recreational Vehicle that could easily sleep six adults of average size. These types of camping/fishing trips though often not considered to be "high end," cost a great deal with fuel, insurance, leases, maintenance, and other expenses adding up quickly. Adding in the additional expenses associated with guides and other costs these trips can cost thousands of dollars, though most weekend trippers and canoeists do their best to keep them under a few hundred. Trailers and boats are evidence of regular camping and angling and so show the willingness to spend thousands of dollars annually on what many consider to be leisure activities.

A demonstration of relative privilege, these trailers and trips are often described as "glamping," a neologism of camping and glamour focused less on the experience and more on the pageantry of style. Certainly not necessary for most, these trailers provide the comforts of a home, including beds, small kitchens, and washrooms. While those who camp in tents stay on mattresses and cots closer to the ground and less oriented towards comfort than on portability, these trailers sometimes include laundry and other appliances allowing the trailer to assume the role of a mobile cottage, and those who camp in them to stand out as unusually

clean compared to their fellows. Trailers do have the advantage of allowing much greater access to remote locations for those with mobility issues, yet, the environmental impact they embody is undeniably more intense than tents and ultra-light options such as hammocks. While not by any means a universal or homogenous description of these differences, tent campers more often find themselves sitting around the campfire in the evening watching the stars, those with trailers far more commonly retreat into the trailer in the evening to watch a movie or play a video game on an electronic device. Those campers who stay in trailers seem less focused on the immersive aspects of a camping trip far from home and more on maintaining a uniform level of comfort while exploiting the amenities the Park offers. The sacrifice being those experiences born from being less sheltered from one's surrounding environment, and of having to make do with fewer luxuries.

Animosities between the two groups of campers broadly writ are nothing new. Those who either prefer, or by cost are forced, to use tents often complain of the increased noise and numbers of campers that come with these trailers. Many who bring trailers with generators for electricity regularly play radios, run generators into the night, and use much larger vehicles to tow these trailers, leaving those who tent camp listening to the gas-powered machines overnight while those in the trailers enjoy air conditioning in the forest. Certainly, evidence of increasingly entrenched class divisions in Canada, these animosities have only intensified over recent years with the growing presence of trailers in the Parks, and the increased popularity of camping and other "stay-cations" (another popular neologism combining the notion of the vacation with a more local stay) under the context of the current pandemic situation brought on by Covid-19. During my research in Brent over the years of 2009-2012 I found that camp sites often went unoccupied, even over weekends, with the campgrounds regularly being at 40-70% capacity. Yet more recently it has become common to have to arrange a booking months in advance to secure a site for the desired period with the increased pressure on the parks system in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada.

The trio of men gave me suspicious looks as they passed me entering the outfitters shop. I felt uneasy but then thought about how strange it must seem that a man in his mid-thirties would be alone in the campgrounds with no watercraft. Cedar Lake is a known fishing hole, popular with locals from the North Bay region and stocked with a variety of game species annually. The first man nodded, and I returned the acknowledgement as I passed, heading back down the trail towards my campsite at the end of the campgrounds.

## Manufacturing Memorial

Later that day I spent some time exploring the railway bed. The tracks had been removed in 1997 and the electricity to the area was shut off at the same time, one year before Adam Pitts' death. I wandered past the Outfitters' shop towards the old cabins and back towards my campsite. I then noticed something that had slipped my attention while setting up camp. A large white cross made of metal pipes stood at the end of a path that led into some brush. It had not been visible from my campsite, though I was camped right beside it.

I later explored information about the area found on a small plaque and learned that the grave was said to contain as many as nine bodies from young men who had died during the timber drives of the early 1900's. This story participates in the official metanarrative describing the Park's justification and its' place in the national-cultural imaginary (Ivy 1998, 3) as a home of loggers, pioneers, and other so-called "true" Canadians, and which works to obfuscate the historical presence of Indigenous Peoples in the place, and to sanitize the story of their dispossession. But just after I left for my site a man arrived with two boys, aged perhaps 8 and 10 years old. He was about sixty years old in appearance, grey haired, and somewhat unkempt, even beyond being "bushed," as campers sometimes describe the exhausted and untidy appearance of a person who has recently emerged from the woods. While talking with the boys, his nephews, he said

"*There weren't no nine bodies in there... No. There's one though. He's my uncle. I know 'cause I buried him. This is all just memorial.*"

He called the man in the grave "Uncle Romeo," and the mention of the name drew strange reactions from the two boys, causing them to look at each other confusedly.

In a daydream flash I thought for a moment the two boys' reactions may have been due to the man's use of the name "Romeo." Maybe they had never heard it before and this name was new to them, an ancestor un-remembered? Or perhaps they were caught off guard because their uncle, the man speaking to them, was named Romeo, and was inferring that he himself was in the grave? I thought for a fleeting moment I had dreamed up the whole encounter, and that they had all been ghosts of past cottagers, campers, villagers. visitors to Brent, lost to memory, sauntering through my surreal afternoon visions. I never got a chance to ask them any questions, and they walked off on a path beyond the graves in a direction I had not yet explored. I never saw them again, though from the boy's clothes I later saw on the laundry line I was sure they were staying in the old box car home that sat near the former railway bed, and that had been converted generations before. It was covered with layers of peeling shingles and reinforced framing where the original timber rotted away, and much of

the insulation contained asbestos. The cottage had the same worn and rugged atmosphere of Pitts' though the roof had yet to cave in. It gave off the same aura of anachronistic timelessness the old man had when talking about the graves, of the outfitters' shop, and of the sign hanging to mark "Downtown Brent," an absurdity in such a quiet and often nearly vacant place.

### A Ghost Story

Later that evening I was sitting at the picnic bench on my campsite reading as the three men came by to check out the grave and to read the plaque that had been recently installed. They nodded a greeting on their way past, and when they returned one of the men spoke up and asked if I was alone. I said yes, and he asked if I "wanted to come by their site for a beer." I agreed, gathered my keys and camera, and followed them to a site deeper in the bush away from the clearing at the western end of the campgrounds where my site was located. While walking they told me that they were in Brent for an annual fishing trip they made together for roughly twenty years. They said they were "one man down" that year because the fourth member of their group had suffered a heart attack and was not willing to be so far from medical help.

The three had similar body shapes and sizes and were of roughly the same height, at about five foot ten and 220-240 lbs. Barrel-chested, and with large strong hands worn from hard work, the three looked as if they had been drinking for hours already by the evening. One had dark hair, thinning and short with a dark beard and moustache. Another had a ruddy sun-kissed complexion, bright blue eyes and wore a red baseball cap. He was the spokesperson for the group, speaking the most and laughing the loudest, he was the most outgoing and gregarious, but also most likely to argue and easiest to anger, member of the party. The last of the three wore glasses over his fading blue eyes, and the grey ponytail pulled back over his head was the same color as his long scraggly beard and unkempt moustache. He was quieter than the others, and spoke less often, smoking cigarettes most of the time, listening.

They already had a small fire going and the smoking man put some more logs on to stoke it while the man with the dark hair and beard went to the cooler tied down to the end of the trailer hitch. After pulling four cans out of the ice he handed out the beer and sat himself down on the picnic bench, demanding that I take one of the more comfortable lawn chairs they brought in with them.

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After I sat, one of the men looked at me and asked what I was doing in Brent. I told him I had come to do research on the history of the area, and the ways people remembered certain things and not others. They pressed me further and I admitted I became interested in Brent when I heard that it was known as a "ghost town." I explained the past Indigenous occupancy of the area, mentioned the land claim that had been first pursued by the Algonquin in 1982, and the ways that some guidebooks mentioned the Algonquin People as if they were gone, perhaps even "extinct." I told them that I felt this played into how people described the place as a ghost town, and that it interfered with the possibility of finding better ways to live together. I told them about the trouble I had in securing clearance to do research in the Park, and how the Park Biologist had told me that "my insinuation that Brent is haunted [was] unfounded and research framed in this manner will not be approved" (Puppe 2012, unpublished).

As explored by Tiya Miles (2015) in her work on the antebellum and post-slavery South and tourism to areas marked by tragedy and loss, social scientists and others explore the affective and intellectual dimensions of culturally constricted choices to memorialize and relate to various spaces in ways that demonstrate much of our tacit understandings and cultural upbringings. Miles work highlights the "dark" aspects of a post-slavery American national-cultural imaginary by analyzing various cases of would be hauntings and the stories that linger long after violent events when people visit as tourists and travellers, or work in and depend on these narratives to sustain lifestyles deeply entangled with these approaches to memory. Pointing out that many of these visitors seek "sanitized" versions of events which help them elide awareness of the most violent and grim happenings in these places, Miles describes the ways in which these stories work to shore up the metanarratives of the nation-state. But these most grim details are not always hidden or ignored, and perhaps, are more often directly sought in a culture wrought by overexposed visual cues, and hyper-exhibitionism. Similar to the descriptions of ghost tales told in the mining towns of Ontario's near north by Pamela Stern (2019), the story I soon heard made no effort to elide violence, and rather sought to elicit a particular response to the mention of violence counter-posed to the images of serenity that predominate representations of the Park.

We had a laugh about how "some folks can be so literal." But then the man in the red hat, who seemed less at ease with the conversation, tried to change the conversation. Jarred by the topic of Indigenous Peoples' continued and increasingly more visible presence in the area, he told me a story that he said his father had told him when he first visited Brent as a kid. It went something like this:

*"There used to be a lodge just a little further west along the railroad tracks in a place called*

*Government Park, about a fifteen minute walk away. It was called Kish-Kaduk. There was a room in the lodge that doubled as a dining room and a speakeasy where sometimes people would gather for libations.*

*One evening while his father was having some drinks with friends a man burst through the doors and exclaimed that he had just found a body down by the shore of the lake. They rushed outside to find a man dead from an apparent blow to the head. He was sprawled on the beach beside a broken paddle and there was a line in the sand where a canoe must have pushed off.*

*The man's father spoke up and said that he had seen two men arguing near that spot before he had come into the lodge. One of the two men who had been arguing came in shortly after him, but he didn't see his face. The tall, scruffy, dark haired stranger came in, ordered a drink and sat with his back to the room studying a map. He looked tired. The owner of the lodge asked him to describe the man again, and it became clearer that something ominous was happening. One of the man's father's friends corroborated his story about the argument on the beach, saying that he too had seen the men unloading their canoe and had heard some loud voices, but had entered just before his friend.*

*At this point the owner of the lodge became anxious, repeatedly asking the men to describe the man they had seen. He was tall, almost six feet, with dark hair, longer than most; almost grown past his shoulders. He wore a dark green jacket and dark pants, and he had a slight limp. The owner of the lodge went pale.*

*He said the he had not served anyone else after the man's father. No one had come in after the man's father, and there was no one at that table.*

*They rushed back inside and indeed found no one. Then the owner spoke again and told them that the man in question, the man who had likely killed his travelling companion, was someone he thought he recognized from their descriptions. The man the owner knew was a guide who took visitors to the Park on fishing trips. He was an "Indian," a man from the local Algonquin Nation.*

*But, the lodge owner said, it couldn't have been him that they saw, because, of course, he had been dead for at least ten years."*

When he finished the story, he paused and then drank the remaining half of his beer in a single draught. I think he was a little disappointed by my failure to be spooked and put off by my prodding questions. I wanted to clarify some details in the tale, but he seemed frustrated that I was not willing to accept the tale without interrogating it. Mostly he seemed angry that I wanted to question how he told the tale, and why he chose certain ways of saying

things. Why the word Indian and not the more commonly used and less controversial "native"? Had this "really happened" or was it "just a story"? How did his father come to be in Brent, and how long ago was this? I was sure the lodge had been closed long ago and wondered how the timeline of such a tale could work. But they turned the conversation around quickly and asked if I had any good stories to share.

They began asking me more about other stories I had heard, and I pointed out in passing that I was looking to find more helpful ways of talking to and about issues associated with settler-Indigenous relations. I said that I thought that there may be clues in ghost stories that could help us understand how we had come to where we are as a society and how we might do things differently. They began to press me, and the topic of land claims came up again, but this time in a more heated tone. I told them of the annual moose harvest held by the Algonquin that took place in the area, and how that provided food for a lot of families that would not otherwise have that kind of security.

At the time there was a news story about a blockade in Caledonia, and First Nations "protests" and the actions of land defenders in general had been making the news regularly that summer. I mentioned that I thought the Algonquin Nation's land claim, which encompassed a great deal of the Park, might be an opportunity, instead of a threat to the Park's existence. That the co-management of a conservation area had worked elsewhere and could work in Algonquin Park as well. The man in the red hat who had told the story stopped me mid-sentence and angrily blurted out "NOT UP HERE! Maybe you can find a way to do something different down there, but not up here. This is MY land."

Things got tense immediately. It became clear right away that though we were all nominally Canadian, I was outed as unpatriotic. They grew more restless and became more frustrated with me. I apologized and suggested that I should go. They agreed when I said I should go back to my campsite, and then the lead man stood up and said, "I'll walk you there."

I was nervous. I was alone in an isolated spot, and I had just found myself at odds with three men who were all much larger than me. I responded by saying that I was ok, but he insisted, saying that I didn't have a light. His two friends stood up from their seats and they all followed me back to my site, stopping a few paces away from the edge and standing in the middle of the road. The lead man again spoke up and said, "Sleep tight," before turning around and walking off with his pals into the darkness. My rest was uneasy at best that night, and I never really settled in to sleep.

### Reflections in Waves

Now, I have not been able to confirm that there was indeed a murder on the shores of Cedar Lake at that time. I may never be able to find out what happened there that night. The lodge is gone, a pile of ruins in the bush. Verification of what happened is unlikely. But I'm not sure that's the important thing to do with this tale and those like it: tales of the uncanny, the unspeakable, the unthinkable, and the monstrous. I am urged on by the suspicion that the importance of a tale is often less likely to be found in its content than in the context of its telling, the relationships affirmed, altered, and ended by such storytelling affairs.

Instead of questioning the men about the "truth" of the story, I took them at their word. Or at least instead of looking for a hidden meaning I trusted their interpretation of the events. I do think that something uncanny must have happened for this man's father to want to relate this tale to his young son, and to have done so in the same campgrounds years later suggests that he, like his father, felt an important connection to the place and a need to re-enact the initial telling. Perhaps he saw himself as an elder, a teacher, someone who could educate me about my proper relationship to the land as a settler, and to institute in me the same values he was raised with by celebrating the colonial control of the area. But what was most apparent in their demeanor and response to the unsettling threat I came to represent was that they felt deeply connected to the land through the idiom of possession, and that they felt protecting that possession was a mortal predicament. In this sense the ownership of place mimetically constructed through the practice of camping helped to construct an identity which required defense from the threat presented by a challenge to that authority over the land insinuated by the notion of sharing. Exposing the collusion between extractivism, colonialism and capitalist logics, their reactionary posture towards the ideal of communalism found in the idea of a co-managed conservation area demonstrated their embeddedness with the culture of possessive individualism and their willingness to do violence on behalf of the State. In no small way, the responses I received helped lay bare the pessimism of Canadian society towards the possibility of reconciliation between Indigenous and settler society, foreclosing any potential for an altered relationship to "the other," and insisting upon an always already "dead" future (Fisher 2008, 9); an authenticity of Canadian identity isomorphic with the imagination of a mythical past. Here, Mark Fisher's identification of Capitalist Realism coincides with the Canadian settler-colonial national-cultural imaginary to produce a cynical refusal of the potential for a relationship predicated on anything other than the destruction of the mythically constructed "Real Canadian"; to adulterate the phrase, it is easier to imagine the end of Canada than to imagine reconciliation (Fisher 2008, 9).

The murderer could be understood as an allegory for the current state of Canadian consciousness surrounding Indigenous-settler relations. In this instance the murderer represents the always already absent "Native," the presumed representative of a past that serves only to impede settler-colonial possession of the land, and the murder itself stands in for the potential overthrow of the current settler-colonial order, the potential end of the country. Here, the Indigenous Person as guide semantically connects Indigeneity and nature, but also serves to re-instantiate a construction of Indigeneity as present only in an unchanging authenticity resigned to the past. Further, following Coll Thrush (2011), the connection drawn between the "drunken Indian" and vice as punishable sin plays out in the attempt to justify the erasure of Indigenous presence found in the sudden and unexplained disappearance of the Indigenous man in the story. Here, participation in practices introduced by Euro-Canadian settlers is seen as metonymically nullifying one's claim to traditionalism and hence, to authentic Indigeneity. This in turn justifies in settler-colonial terms, the treatment of the now-formerly Indigenous Person as an "equal," a fellow laborer and a competitive theat.

The foundational act of primitive accumulation at the root of any capitalist effort takes place through the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples and their displacement from traditional lands, either physically or through the necromancy of private ownership and public property which transforms the commons into commodity, and the Indigenous Person into a proletarian laborer (Coulthard 2014). Under the contemporary neo-illiberal context this transformation is predicated on the notion of economic development in a cynically competitive mode of relation between nations. As demonstrated by Edward Goldsmith, "development is colonialism" insomuch as it requires the "modernization" of societies based on communal ownership and disposal of resources through the inculcation of possessive individualism and forced inclusion in the global economic order (Goldsmith 2001, 20). This pattern follows in the Park's creation and is further echoed in the official histories that recount loggers as para-heroic ancestors engaged in the subjugation of a threatening landscape, and which is simultaneously embodied in representations of Indigenous Peoples as doubly displaced; first, from the authenticity of an imagined past and second, from full inclusion in settler-colonial society because of their marked status as "Indian."

The anxiety provoked by the murder contained in the tale could serve to sublimate the threatening potential of a reinvigorated Indigenous presence on the land in the one telling the tale as well, offering some degree of explanation for the motives the camper with the red cap showed in retelling his father's grim tale. The presumption that colonial conquest is total and absolute seems premature when the recursive threat of First Nations "rising from the dead" is always shimmering on the edge of Canadian awareness, in the press, in the political domain, and sometimes, on the road during roadblocks and protests. Stories like this employ

the necromancy of the state in service of an intentionally produced anxiety relating to Indigenous presence. But here it becomes necessary to reckon with the effects of being embedded within the discursive tradition one seeks to analyze. As indicated by the work of Jonathan Spencer, cultural analysts always participate in and through the cultures they critique, explaining that we are inescapably "writing within" these previously congealed national-cultural imaginaries (Spencer et al. 1990). The dialectical tension produced within these situations drives culture in divergent trajectories, affecting the production of selves and self-consciousness in unpredictable ways, though often boundaries are erected to be conditionally transgressed prompting a further defense of the status quo. This is how haunted recreation in this circumstance first enacts an appropriation of Indigenous culture through the construction of a mythologized past, then employs the threat of return as a driving force behind the necessity of progress construed as change which instantiates a further distancing from the repercussions of the original act of dispossession, and further appropriation of Indigenous culture.

### Walls Built to Fall

The inability of Canadians to come to terms with the presence and persistence of Indigenous Peoples is a direct effect of the so-called "Garrison Mentality" first described by Gaile MacGregor in the Wacousta Syndrome (MacGregor 1995). Hiding behind tall walls and fortified cities, the hegemonic powers that governed political discourse for generations saw themselves as at odds with Indigenous Peoples. This retreat has become the de facto reaction of Canadians when challenged on the history of Canadian colonialism. The tale I was told metonymically instantiates Canadian resistance towards the notion of "reconciliation." It is a demonstration of the Wacousta Syndrome identified by MacGregor, but it is also a further example of Canadian settler-colonial erasure and violence. As Coll Thrush notes in his study of Seattle, dates and facts may be difficult to corroborate, "but [Indian ghosts] are not so much metaphors drawn from the imaginary of conquest as they are metonyms for the actual material processes by which that conquest" (Thrush 2011, 76) continues to take place. This perspective clarifies how haunting is primarily neither psychological nor spiritual, personal nor "place-based," but instead relational and vital as much as virtual; ghosts are *with* us in time. It also explains why I am less concerned with empirically verifying the events of the story than I am in understanding why he felt the desire to tell the probably apocryphal tale, and what the teller was trying to accomplish beyond intimidation. Of all the potential ways

to offer me his opinion, why this way, and why the effort to convince me that it was a story passed down by his father?

The man who told the story was quick to cut me off and had no time or place for consideration of what I proposed. I feel that this is in part at least because of the advice he received from his father, advice which was embedded within the tale. The argument his father claims to have witnessed swells with meaning. It brings up questions regarding the status of the waring in Canadian settler-colonial society and the use of violent representations as boundary markers delimiting the acceptable limits of acceptable behaviour, the "mentionables." Here bodily integrity coincides with the ethno-nationalist imaginary, and the notion of penetration by an internal alien takes on predictable gravity under a regime of patriarchal domination where admitting difference amounts to admitting pathological infection of the national body-politic; the ring of fascist white supremacy comes into full relief in this tonic effort to erase the infarction. A ghost story is a warning not to engage with these dead spirits, and not to acknowledge their presence as "equals" in the sense of being worthwhile of reasoning with. The dead exist beyond reason. They summon emotion, and transmit affective intensities that alter experience, regardless of whether they can be measured as present in the moment or not. But more, they threaten to subdue any eruption of risk with the same violence, deeming all mention of legitimacy a joust at one's integrity punishable with overt violence. These stories need not be factual to have very tangible effects in the world. These stories summon erased and subjugated histories employed in the naturalization of the nation-state and the hegemony of Canadian settler-colonial ethno-nationalism, fraught with tension inherent in the arrangement of a "métis" society as described by John Ralston Saul, bound by a nagging desire to ignore the fullness of Indigenous Peoples' contributions and sacrifice for a nation-state set on their disappearance (Saul 2008).

These counter-narratives "talk back" to the "master narrative" constructed by officially sanctioned "History" (Stewart 1995, 97). They pit memory and emotion against claims of truth and fact, exposing the discipline of history as a political endeavor, and staking their claim to some portion of their own historical narrative (Gordon 1997). The ghost story works to shore up the margins of a territory occupied, but not legally "settled" since the Robinson-Huron Tract which includes much of the Park was negotiated and signed by peoples other than the Algonquin. Bubbling up alongside the rising tides of a neo-nationalist identification of the authentic Canadian as "white" the politically charged history of the Park, considering emerging contradictory histories and historical claims, serves as a paradoxical reminder of the simultaneous de facto status of Canadian sovereignty and the entrenched recognition of Aboriginal Rights and Title in the constitution. This arrangement troubles the desire for ethno-national purity and offers the ever-present possibility of Indigenous resurgence and

territorial reclamation, conjuring Indigenous sovereignties from the mirage of a conquest accomplished. These conservative reactions to the ideas I spoke of in the conversation with these campers drew on the fears summoned by the conversations current at the time regarding the renewal of a nation-to-nation relationship. This relationship was notably floated by the Liberal Party of Canada in a savvy act piggybacking on the calls for a nation-to-nation relationship most prominently found in the popular imagery and music of the Indigenous musicians A Tribe Called Red.

Liberal calls for a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples predicated on calls for a nation-to-nation relationship drew on the activist discourse surrounding the defence of the land and the reclamation of culture associated with the Idle No More movement and in classic neoliberal fashion, reduced the concerns and voices of activists to a talking point ripe for appropriation and capitalization. In the wake of the election of Justin Trudeau to the leadership of the Federal Liberal Party the strategic shift towards a renewed interest in issues surrounding Indigenous-settler relations became clear with a pre-election micro-platform including a promise to address the decades old water quality issues affecting so many reserve communities in Canada. This shift in political language had stoked perennially elided conservative fears of Indigenous sovereignty and led to reinvigorated debate surrounding the need for greater economic opportunity, and perhaps the renegotiation of the Indian Act to allow houses on reserves to be owned privately, effectively reduplicating the efforts of the first Trudeau government's White Paper which sought to move away from the recognition of Indian Status entirely. Here rather than erasing the legal recognition of Status the government would encourage the private sale of reserve lands through transformation of houses into equity, and their use as collateral in loans that would inevitably often lead to default, foreclosure, and the passing of reserve lands into private hands. But the surge in attention towards Indigenous issues in Canada prior to the election of Justin Trudeau often redeployed the settler-colonial logic of paternalism and liberal individualism which simultaneously sought to "lift Indigenous Peoples out of poverty" while maintaining the relationship between the Crown and Indigenous Peoples which presumes settler dominance, as represented in the desire to reconcile "the pre-existence of aboriginal societies with the sovereignty of the Crown," while eliding that pre-existence as constituting Indigenous sovereignty (Asch 2014, 11). Indeed, during the summer of 2021 announcements of many unmarked graves on the sites of former concentration camps called Residential Schools throughout the country prompted greater attention but did little to help the shift away from the language of paternalism with many sympathetic Canadians voicing their concerns for "our" Indigenous Peoples online and in the media, expressing a subtly deployed notion of ownership over the generic "Indigenous Person," perpetuating the mythology of the white saviour.

### Haunted Recreation

Narrating their fear and hope through allegories, these three men told me in the ghost story of their connection to places that they know to be claimed by "others" and that could potentially become home to "other" ways of "doin'thangs" again. They held this fear at bay by displacing the reality of the threat into the past and thus sublimated the anxiety brought about by a less-than-conscious awareness associated with their participation in systems disenfranchising nearby neighbors they know are not doing any better than they are and the culpability of participating in the ongoing colonization of Algonquin territory. But also, of the "public secret" of the ongoing genocide against Indigenous Peoples in Canada (Taussig 1999). Translating their fear into an apparition of monstrous threat, these men summon demons and become the vessel for their voices, welcoming possession by arcane and ancient forces. For the old man in the cemetery, the authorities who dismiss his claim to the place by obfuscating his claim to belonging become distant boogeymen, eliding the continuity of his families' claims, and threatening his nephews' future inheritance. For Jake and Rob, The Mayor still roams his house, protecting the memory that was defiled by his families' actions. They hope for better for themselves, but expect the worst, and their grim humour embodies a form of narcotic resilience.

This is haunted recreation (Puppe 2012, unpublished); the recreation of selves and subjectivities which take place through immersive experiences in spaces marked by nostalgic longing, ruin, and the violence of "progress," genocide and obsolescence in the most quotidian contexts (Ivy 1998, 3; Stewart 1995). Haunted recreation brings together concerns with tourist studies in settler-colonial spaces imbued with memorial intensity and studies of labor and affect by examining how the work of imagining the nation is enacted even during our most leisurely moments, beyond "dark tourism" (Miles 2015) and the racist connotations of connecting darkness with the negative, while examining instead the productive capacities of the seemingly absent to affect and be affected by people on an intimate and informal scale.

The buried treasure that Rob joked about was there to lure others into their world, and into the bush, far from the cities and towns near the Park. That scent marked the history of the place, the railway bed itself, and the spot where I would later learn that a buried oil tank had split while being hoisted from the ground, staining the soil, leaving the water table compromised. But the Mayor called out for attention as well, not because he was caught in limbo, unable to rest, but because he summoned a kind of care that seemed to be vanishing in each mention of his effort, and his sacrifice. "Uncle Romeo," as the old man I met at the grave site had called his buried uncle, spoke a counter-narrative to the displacement of pain and effort spent caring for the village and the land which was washed away in the tide of

official records; nine bodies, drowned by a logjam broken lose, or one body, his ancestor… what if there are ten?

The story the old man told to his nephews was meant to intensify their connection to the place and to instantiate their personal and inherited connection to that spot. And the murder on the beach is meant to dissuade those who would falter in their claims to ownership of this place, or any other place they wrestled away from people thought of as different enough. It kills the possibility of a future together. But it is not a widely known story. I have only heard it from one man, who may well have made it up on the spot. I don't think that makes it less important, or less of an historical artifact. Rather, its ephemerality speaks to the intransigence of fear and the embodiment of a culturally conditioned response to a national threat; the story embodies conservative reactionary posturing and the mythologization of Indigeneity as the inverse of settler-colonial civilization and seeks to summon such fears in the listener by eliding the possibility of rational escape from the terror it transports.

My inability to corroborate the facts of the murder, to determine the date, or even if anyone has ever been killed there, demands something more than a search for simple and empirically verifiable truths. It demands of me to feel the possibility, and the looming potentiality, that each threat will be composed as mortal through a zero-sum calculation of a paradigmatically colonial capitalism. Combatting the Garrison Mentality of the Wacousta Syndrome and the socio-personal complex of haunted recreation is central to combatting the anaesthetized subjectivity of the Canadian settler-colonist and reviving the dream of reconciliation.

Haunted recreation allows settlers to spend great sums of money and time travelling hours from their homes to spend days and sometimes weeks in places that have been cleared of Indigenous presence, and reclaimed as "pristine," "natural," and "untouched," only to reaffirm the moral superiority of settler-colonial society through the presentation of protected area as signs of national virtue. These representations of idyll Canada are counterposed in news images and common conversations where Indigenous Peoples are manufactured to appear less able to protect the land. When the subject of the moose harvest arose, the response from one man was "huh, for how long?" And when the potential return of Indigenous stewardship came up in relation to the land claim the overt sentiment among the men was that Indigenous Peoples would allow the Park to fall into ruin. "Have you ever been to the reserve?"; an all-too-common refrain from conservative leaning rural and near-northern residents from my years of experience. The insinuation of course being that settlers would be immeasurably better and more conscientious stewards of the environment. That the same people responsible for building a railroad through the Park to log and mine, to trap and fish, and to extract the solace and peace of such seemingly untended places by building cottages,

lodges, cabins, and then letting them fall into disrepair and eventually allowing the toxic materials they are composed of return to the soils in a protected place, would unquestionably make for more rational guardians of the land.

## Conclusion

Disrupting the comfort gained through recreational practices unsettles Canadian historical claims and simultaneously exposes local counter-narratives as more or less aligned with ascendant forms of North American ethno-nationalism, xenophobia, and white supremacy. Attending to these stories as oral histories allows us to momentarily move past issues of verification, and to interrogate the politics underlying the telling of these tales as they emerge in contexts always inflected by national-cultural imaginaries (Ivy 1998, 3), fears and desires. Through the violence of haunted recreation, the land is cleared of all but the most lucrative signs of Indigeneity, which in turn become appropriated as signs of authentic Canadian culture; camping, fishing, hunting, and spending time on the waters, all lifestyle attributes of Indigenous societies oriented around sustainable relations with the land and its' resources, more properly understood through the idiom of kinship in Anishinaabe relational ontologies. The abdication of responsibility by settler-colonial society towards sustainable Treaty-based, nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous Peoples and the land stands as the ultimate failure of Canadian society. And it is the reconciliation with such failures to self-scrutinize the roots of our reactionary tendencies that holds the most promise moving forward, combatting the monstrous violence that undermines Indigenous sovereignty in Canada in the wake of neo-illiberal and neoconservative retreat.

A popular keepsake often purchased at the Algonquin Park Visitor Centre and Museum located along the Highway #60 corridor which runs through the southern end of the Park is a photobook called "Algonquin: The Park and Its People" (Standfield and Lundell 1993). It contains numerous images of emptied landscapes juxtaposed with portraits of important figures from the Park's past and present: rangers, wardens, farmers, loggers, and campers. But it too participates in the unfortunate pattern of eliding the presence, historical and contemporary, of the Algonquin Anishinaabe. On the first page a haunting image of a paddler silhouetted against a dimly lit lake and a dark forest is accompanied by a quote taken from an interview with a former Park Ranger named Jimmy Coughlin. Coughlin says, "With all the ghosts that haunt the Park, I wonder how many of them travel the canoe routes looking for the old ranger cabins" (Standfield and Lundell 1993, 2) I know that the Algonquin still walk and care for these forests and waters. I speak with them and witness their care for the

place. I am forced to wonder though, how many of these ghosts paddle the lakes and streams, and walk the woods, looking for signs of a world long passed, and how we might begin to hear those other voices to help them find their place in our collective memory, and our future.

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# Growing Appetites and Hungry Subjects: Addicts, the Undead, and the Long Arc of Theory in Western Social Science

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper explores the Western philosophical idea of "appetites" through the lens of "addiction." I begin with a brief ethnographic description of a woman whose subjectivity seems to emerge only in the play of her unmanageable desire for various pharmaceuticals. In other words, she is a self-described "addict." I then look at the relationships between addicts and the undead, especially vampires and zombies, who are seemingly enslaved to their appetites. This leads me to an analysis of the centrality of what I am calling "recursive need satisfaction" in much of Western (especially Anglophone and Francophone) Social Theory that, I argue, relies on a particular understanding of "appetite" in establishing the political-economic subjectivity that lies at the heart of market-oriented state. This same understanding also pushes this formation in a specific historical direction of increasing growth and organisational and technological complexity. As a globalised Western society in the last few decades has become ever more anxious of its place in the world, its impact on various interdependent systems, and the validity of the *grand récits* that served as its charter, such growth and complexity have emerged as objects of anxiety, even apocalyptic fear, and the terms "addict" and "addiction" have seemed ever more useful for modelling these concerns. I end with some reflections on how we use both zombies and addicts to think through some of the same issues of unchecked and damaging consumption.

**KEY WORDS:** addiction, appetite, crisis, social theory

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*In memory of Marshall Sahlins*

### Introduction

My postdoc and I met Anna [a pseudonym] in several times in 2009 during a project funded by a Local Drugs Task Force on changing patterns of drug use in a Dublin neighbourhood (O'Reilly and Saris 2010). At that time, Anna was 36 year-old 'in treatment' for opiate dependency. Originally from Britain, but resident for much of her life in Ireland (almost exclusively in Dublin), she had been on prescription benzodiazepines and SSRIs for agoraphobia and anxiety attacks since late childhood. She also started to use and abuse heroin in her early twenties. And, like most of the consultants in my work in this field, she would also use a variety of other substances, based on logics of both pleasure and amelioration of some of the stresses of living.

We met Anna at an in-patient treatment facility, after having gained permission to sit in on some of the group work that occurred in that setting. We found Anna to be a very good collaborator – intelligent, articulate and engaged. Although when (mostly) we finally began intensive work with this group, initially, Anna was absent, as she had had taken two overdoses of prescription pharmaceuticals within the one week between our first informal meetings and the beginning of group therapy. We later discovered that these were classified as suicide attempts by her therapeutic team. Nonetheless, while continuing to be reticent "in group", Anna was very relaxed in more one-to-one situations, even sharing with us some of her demo songs and poetry.

The traditional tack for ethnographic analyses at this point would be to better flesh out some of Anna's life-history and her social and political contexts, that is, assuming the who of Anna and discussing some of the whys of her (seemingly poor) choices. Anna, in other words, would be assumed to be at least a potentially stable discursive platform, that, all other things being equal, should be the author of her appetites rather than their victim. Indeed, it is this gross imbalance between Anna-as-potentially-rational-subject and Anna-being-consumed-by her-appetites that places her in various apparatus of knowledge-power, such as the criminal justice system, a treatment facility, or, indeed, a research project. On this basis, other factors, such as childhood trauma, structural violence, and gendered inequalities, would usually be invoked to "explain" such an unhappy outcome as entering a state of "addiction", never mind Anna considering the possibility of self-harm.

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I was struck by something else in our interactions with Anna, however – how conversant she was with the modern language of addiction and, more importantly, how thoroughly her embodied understandings of self were rooted out of the play of her (seemingly) uncontrolled and (apparently) self-disabling appetites. She had no trouble taking on the label "addict", and she discussed the recursive quality of her needs in very objectified terms.

*[The doctor had me on] Prozac and things like that. They put an awful lot of weight on me, which lowered my mood even more. I was putting on so much weight my doctor was convinced I was bulimic, so he trebled the dose [laughs], so I put on even more weight. There is proof now that [those medications can] cause suicidal ideation, so I think that was part of it, and I'm naturally an impulsive and compulsive person, so I used to just turn off; my conscious mind would just turn off, and I'd have just one thought in my mind: "go off and take pills [laughs].*

Anna is being treated for a combination of depression and anxiety, the commonest co-morbid diagnosis with "addiction", yet she is still taking heroin (when she can get it), despite being on methadone. She also consumes hash and illegally-gotten benzodiazepines regularly, while being told by her doctor to take something that (presumably) is dealing with the root cause of her exorbitant and prohibited appetites, that is, SSRIs to treat her depression. Meanwhile, both Anna and her doctor toy with a diagnosis of bulimia, another form of recursive and disabling hunger. All this because Anna is in quasi-coerced treatment as mandated by the Drug Courts with the threat of a custodial sentence over her if she fails to comply. The greatest irony of all it seems to me is how the appetites seem to have no focus here, or, better put, it is only in the play of uncontrolled appetites that something like a subject seems to emerge within this exchange, including (quite disturbingly from the point-of-view of anthropology as a humanistic discipline) an appetite for self-destruction.

### Productive Appetites

While Anna's subjectivity seems elusive, her body, specifically, its appetites, are over-produced, the wobbly flywheel of Anna's existence. These appetites have entangled Anna in at least two main state and market configurations, both of which are economically and theoretically productive. The first is the profitable circuit of prescription pharmaceuticals and treatment modalities (see Patryna, Lakoff and Kleinman 2006). Ironically, Anna has configured herself as "addicted" to one of the most successful examples of such drugs (Prozac). Despite the recent battering their reputation has endured of late (e.g. Healy 2004),

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the SSRIs are very widely prescribed for addictive behaviour, and Prozac itself is still a by-word in the industry for the almost perfect combination of perceived efficacy, novel marketing, and sheer profitability (see Saris 2011; Metzl 2003). Leaving to one side the ontological status of addiction for the moment, if the SSRIs are eventually tagged with this label (or the more ambiguous one of "dependency producing"), then they would be in a long line of psychotropic "wonder" drugs, such as Valium, to experience such a fall from grace (van de Geest 1996). Of course, Anna is also part of a second configuration of the state and the market, the circuit of illegal drugs, which implicates her in yet another profitable and globalised trading network, but one that the state has prohibited. This circuit connects Anna to primary producers as far afield as Afghanistan and South America and embeds her in an international production-distribution-consumption system that is almost breath-taking in its protean flexibility and occluded complexity.

In this sense, Anna's brain-body is a node connecting high-tech, professionally administered knowledge and techniques, global circuits of commodity production and consumption, classic exercises in sovereignty, such as guarding borders against contraband (with, it must be admitted, only indifferent success) and marking out the deviant from the normal citizen (and within the category of deviant, separating the salvageable from the unsalvageable). In her spare time, as it were, Anna also graciously contributes to another less salubrious (and arguably less respectable) circuit of knowledge production – my research and writing. Anna is, in short, a very busy woman precisely because of her hypertrophied appetites and the interests (economic, intellectual, and governmental) that have grown up around them.

Thus, if Anna appears to be the victim of her appetites, which in turn potentially victimize others if only through her support of some networks that are, at certain times, frankly anti-social, then it must also be granted that, through her appetites, Anna and her ilk keep a lot of the world going. To cater for them entire networks (not all of them legal), but some of them global in scope, have emerged. And, while Anna's psychiatrist, her addiction counsellors, her dealers and I will probably never meet in the same room, we are all strangely (and firmly) connected to one another through the profusion of her appetites.

## Unproductive Appetites

Anna's story came back to me a few years later when I was fortunate enough to have won a Senior Fellowship at the Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften (IFK). There a scholar of photography mentioned an exhibition she had attended the year before in

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2012 and in which she thought I might be interested. The gallery had featured a project by Roman Sakovich titled, Half. In this series of portraits, Sakovich photographed subjects in the studio "normally", then a second time using make-up to simulate the "ravages of drug abuse." Finally, he combined the pictures, in order to "explore the outsiders' superficial judgment of the same person before and after drug abuse." This technique results in temporally stereoscopic images, as if only half of Dorian Gray's picture were protected from the visual ravages of his sins (see Figures 1, 2).



**Figures 1 and 2:** https://www.romansakovich.co.uk/portfolio/half



I dug up Sakovich's work on the Arts website "Feature Shoot", where it had received mixed reviews over the intervening 18 months, with many critics in the Comments Section

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expressing discomfort with the use of what they called a "Zombie Aesthetic" to show the difference between the two "halves". Many of these, somewhat missing Sakovich's point, felt that this trivialized addiction as a serious medical condition, while others more or less praised the equation "addicts = zombies", as, to their mind, addicts seem to have descended to a lower state of being anyways, so they were "like zombies." Few critics pointed out that the genre of before-and-after photos of celebrities in their decline had long since established themselves as a staple of the Internet, such as this one of Gary Dourdan (formerly of the popular television franchinse Crime Scene Investigation) (see Figure 3).



**Figures 3:** Gary Dourdan (http://chucks-fun.blogspot.com/2016/03/addiction-it-does-body-bad-27-images.html)

Such photographs seem all but indistinguishable from the first two stages of Sakovich's work. The juxtaposition of such images tends to be connected to morality tales of erstwhile celebrities falling from the heights of fame and fortune (often under the influence of drugs), in the process receiving their comeuppance for being rich and high-living (and out-of-control) for at least some part of their lives (thus, a very unflattering police 'mug shot' is generally preferred for the "after" photo).

I had, of course, heard people in Dublin with whom I had been hanging out referred to as "zombies", even, occasionally as both humour and critique amongst themselves. It is certainly not a friendly term in the contexts in which I had recorded it, but it struck me as less rancorous and aggressive than "junkie" which contained for most of them a serious moral judgement. Nonetheless, I found myself thinking of Anna when I paged through Sakovich's

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work, and there I began, although I did not then know it at the time, a now oft-interrupted, multi-year think-through of why "zombies" and why now.

## Structure of the Argument

To explore these directions, I do the following. First, I examine the idea of appetite in Western orderings of being human, alongside the emergence of the modern understanding of addiction in a chronology that also includes certain artistic creations of creatures that are very hungry for us, that is, the undead, specifically vampires and zombies. While, in some sense, stories about such eldritch creatures are very old, their modern versions develop surprisingly in lock step with the emergence of addiction as a medical category and its subsequent expansion some decades later.[1] I then move from this overlap between pathologized appetites and their servicing by normalizing structures to an analysis of the centrality of what I am calling "recursive need satisfaction" in much of Western (especially Anglophone and Francophone) Social Theory since the Enlightenment, which, I argue, relies on a particular understanding of "appetite" (both borrowed and heavily modified from Classical sources) in establishing the political-economic subjectivity that lies at the heart of the market-oriented state. This same understanding also pushes this formation in a specific historical direction of increasing growth and developing organisational and technological complexity. However, as a globalised Western society in the last few decades has (ironically) become ever more uncertain of its place in the world, its impact on various interdependent systems, as well as the validity of the grands récits that served as its charter, such growth and complexity have emerged as objects of anxiety, even, occasionally, apocalyptic fear. Finally, as a way of marking out such anxieties, I come back to literary and artistic forms that embody uncontrolled appetites.

## Hungry Subjects

The "zombie" and the "addict", it seems to me, are connected through a cultural judgement of the ways that appetite and rationality work in the life of the subject. While theories of

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[1] This overlap has been fruitfully developed in some Cultural Studies work, such as Zieger 2008. See also the various contributors to Weinstock 2020 and Scott 2007.

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addiction are manifold – and the ontological status of the category is routinely elaborated, modified, or even denied – the basic understanding of both addiction and the addict is still widely agreed upon.[2]   Addiction is an embodied appetite for something whose consumption simply calls forth more of the same need, usually in increasing amounts, generally with damaging consequences for subjects (and their behavioral environments), who then become "addicts". As the late American comedian, Robin Williams, put it in one of his stand-up routines: "When I took cocaine, I felt like a new man, and the first thing that new man wanted was more cocaine!" The defining qualities of these appetites for the "addict" in both Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and International Classification of Diseases (ICD) boil down to powerlessness with respect to their control and unmanageability within the context of their lives (e.g. Goodman 1990)**.**

The last fifty years or so, of course, has also seen a veritable explosion of popular interest in, and professional knowledge about, addiction. This state has emerged as an object of moral panic, as a protean biopsychosocial medical category, and as a model of, and for, political-economic anxieties. We now acknowledge multiple (perhaps hundreds of) objects, desires, and activities that can emerge as "addictive" appetites for at least some subjects. Increasingly, we look to cutting edge neuroscience to "unravel" the complex biology of addiction, even as other scholars in other registers talk about addiction as a disease of the spirit as much as the brain/body. At the same time, we model an increasing number of global political anxieties (such as Climate Change) under this same rubric (e.g. our society's addiction to hydrocarbons becoming an existential danger to our way of life).[3] Thus, my initial observation is a simple one: all of these levels see a connection between addiction and appetite, and this connection

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[2]     In 1997, Alan Leshner, at that time Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) published a significant article, "Addiction is a Brain Disease, and It Matters," in *Science* (Leshner 1997). This work inaugurated a moment of increasing research funding, published outputs, and what we might call "translational" productions (see Nora Volkov´s videocast *Addiction: A Disease of Free Will*), announcing in more popular forums the conquest of "addiction" by increasingly sophisticated brain research and imaging techniques. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze this body of work, still less, to offer a final word on the ontological status of addiction. I merely note addiction's increasing force as a metaphor for social disruption and crises, its continuing ramifying applicability to individual psychosocial problems, and the persistent traces of the metaphysical (spirit, higher power and the like) in most published sources on the condition. In this work, I want to trace the force of which *addiction* presumably marks the loss of control, *i.e.*, appetite, as a means of understanding some of these issues.

[3]     One can quibble when this idea of a society being "addicted" to a substance became "common sense", but, in the case of the statement that "America is addicted to oil", one could do worse than point to George W. Bush's 2006 State of the Union Address where this assertion was made in a matter-of-fact way that caused little controversy in its reception (see Bumiller and Nagourney 2006).

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serves as a sort of operator to structure multiple anxieties, critiques, and sometimes even apocalyptic fears at different levels.



**Figure 4:** https://www.deviantart.com/gladiator656/art/Facebook-addiction-143022266

Nonetheless, through all the moral panics, the semantic space currently occupied by the terms addiction and addict remains stubbornly ambivalent. On the one hand, while we pity and censure the addict, and we fret about the social and economic costs of addiction, we are increasingly obsessed by the category and are willing, almost eager, to apply it ever more widely (e.g. Denizet-Lewis 2010). In the last few decades, for example, our concern has spawned entire research agendas, resulting in thousands of books and scores of scholarly journals. Indeed, so great has this archive become that it now supports specialized sub-disciplinary historians writing different versions of how all this came to be (for a very approachable instance of this genre, see Courtwright 2001). On the other hand, we also use addiction in a wryly humorous fashion to model devoted, even passionate, interest in recursive activities. Indeed, it has become one of the main ways of understanding the passionate dissolution of the ego into something larger, and it can serve as a sort of insider joke that we share amongst ourselves about iterative activities connected (especially) to

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leisure pursuits that we end up taking very seriously indeed.[4] In the last decade or so, for example, certain communication technologies that tend to dissolve the boundaries between work and play, public and private, and self and other, in a fashion, that we clearly enjoy, but with which we are not always wholly comfortable, have been readily modelled in this way.

### Appetite

If we accept provisionally that appetites and addiction are conceptually entangled with one another,[5] then perhaps bracketing the subject of addiction and focussing instead of the idea of appetite might be productive. Was I interacting with Anna's appetites a couple of years ago, a scientific voyeur of her demons, rather than a committed servant of a higher power trying to exorcise them? Can appetite be addressed outside of its subjects and objects? If so, is a historical ethnography of appetites possible, even useful?

These questions seem odd, but they improve upon acquaintance. A surprising number of "great thinkers", for example, have devoted loving attention to Appetite as such. Cicero, for instance, tells us appetitus impellit ad agendum [appetite impels [one] to action], centering appetites as fundamental to any discussion of life itself. In this respect, Cicero is heir to a long tradition in Western Philosophy, going back to Plato's tripartite psychology of man in The Republic and Aristotle's more binary understanding in The Nichomachean Ethics, that takes Appetite as a key to understanding both human life and society (see Lorenz 2006). In both Plato and Aristotle, appetite is the embodied source of, often irrational, desire that comes complete with a social version reflected in the desire humans have for admiration of their fellows (in Greek, the desire for kudos). These impulses move humans into interaction with

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[4] In Chapter 2 of *The Globalization of Addiction* (2008) Bruce Alexander tries to sub-script the various definitions of addiction with respect to compulsion and harm to subject and/or others. The term seems to resist such semantic parsing in real life. I argue in this paper that there is a theoretical infrastructure to such semantic complexity.

[5] At least the preliminary case for this entanglement can be seen in the history of the pharmaceutical treatment of "addiction". Dole and Nyswander (1967, 1976) ran the first clinical trials for methadone to treat "opiate addiction" and then published the seminal papers reporting their (partial) success in this regard as well as proposing a model of a "metabolic lesion" as underlying "addiction" as a medical condition. Very quickly, though, "real" rather than metaphorical hunger, that is excessive eating leading to obesity, became an object of much Big Pharma research interest in this topic. From the early 1980s, the "Holy Grail" of this work was the hope that there might be something "like Methadone" to deal with hunger as such (and therefore obesity). This produced a veritable tradition of research, genealogically connected to Dole's Lab at Rockefeller University (for a popular history, see Shell 2003; Saris 2008, 2011).

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the world and one another. The dialectic balance to appetite in this thinking is "Reason" which in both models is charged with the control of appetite, partly through sheer denial, but also, crucially, through the cultivation of an "appetitive desire" for "the Good" (Lorenz 2006, 2-24).[6]

It takes no great insight to see that modern consumer capitalism is also very much entangled with understandings of appetite. In most contexts, for example, we valorise the capacity of our appetites, and consider both the goods that we develop to satiate them as well as their evolving quantity and quality a mark of the "good" life? Where else can our understanding of economic growth be located if not in expanding the number of consumers, and increasing the quantity and quality, of their appetites and desires? In this sense, we can take appetite as at least a privileged concept, in not the actual motive force, of "development" in our own (more or less "Western" ways) of comprehending "History" and "Society" (see Figure 4).

It is telling, therefore, that within a short period of time around the beginning of the 20th century, a pathologizing of appetites in a novel term, addict, emerges alongside artistic creations who embody appetites that survive death in the form of undead beings who feed on humans. By the end of the 20th century, out of control appetite appears in a variety of apocalyptic scenarios in fact and fiction. I argue that these musings of out-of-control appetites can be read as a sort of skewed reflexivity – our own social formation looking at itself through a glass darkly, a means of reflecting on the development of (and, as importantly, some of the crises in) the grands récits of Western philosophy and Social Science.[7] In this way (pace arguments like Comaroff and Comaroff 2002; Stratton 2020) the undead, serve not just as a means of modelling the marginal in capitalist economies, such as economic migrants in the case of zombies, but as central axis to understanding how our social formation developed and currently functions.

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[6] The Greek word ἐπιθυμία (epithumos) can encompass ideas like hunger, desire, and craving, and it is often used negatively, as in lust. Most scholars of Plato seem to translate this word as "appetitive desire" which strikes me as unwieldy in English. I am using appetite in this sense, and while I focus on "hunger" in this work, I do not want to privilege unduly orality as such. I am indebted to the audience for my public lecture at *Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften* in January 2014 for encouraging me to clarify this point.

[7] Research on the social history of luxury has covered some of this same ground (e.g. Berg 2005; Berry 1994). Addiction as a result of the constitution and repression of pleasure has also been examined in a variety of Cultural Studies research (Sedgwick 1994; Zieger 2008).

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### Assemblages, the Undead and Addiction

There are two sets of dates that seem crucial in this discussion. The first is 1897 (counted twice), when two entities (partially immaterial to be sure, but with truth-effects in the world), were not so much created, as structured into their modern form. In that year, the German firm, Bayer, patents Aspirin,[8] solidifying a few trends in the late 19th century. First, this patent inaugurates the modern pharmaceutical industry in a social-political sense (Bayer had been producing drugs since the mid-nineteenth century). A year later, Bayer also patents Heroin. By the late 1890s, the very profitable field of market-driven cures for human ills had assumed much of its modern form of pharmaceutical companies, with in-house research labs and marketing departments, delivering "effective" drugs to the public on which they enjoy an enforceable, if time-limited, monopoly (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5:**
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/c/c1/Bayer_Aspirin_ad%2C_NYT%2C_February_19%2C_1917.jpg/105px-Bayer_Aspirin_ad%2C_NYT%2C_February_19%2C_1917.jpg

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[8] The first patent is taken out in Germany in 1897, which is subsequently rejected. The British patent is granted in 1898 and the US one in 1900. In 1898, of course, Bayer also patents Heroin.

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Of course, during that same period, corporate personhood is recognized in law in a series of landmark legal decisions, first in the US and then further afield. These two patented drugs also embody the ends of another trend, quite strong in North America, but present, too, in Europe, of regulating previously widely-available compounds into legal and illegal varieties (such as The Harrison Act in the US in 1914), while making certain professionals (i.e. allopathic doctors), the formal gate-keepers of the legal pharmaceuticals, all in the name of public safety. Now, of course, Aspirin is all but ubiquitous in everyone's medicine cabinet, while heroin is a persistent illegal "street drug", a scourge that has survived numerous attempts to eradicate it, yet still one that is still available to much of the world's population.

Also, in 1897, the Irish writer, Bram Stoker, publishes Dracula, creating the modern vampire. [9] To do so, Stoker smooths out a rich and complicated tapestry of traveler tales and European folklore about evil spirits with a taste for living humans into a modern literary depiction of a lone aristocratic undead *Übermensch,* with a specific hunger for blood. In the story, Dracula migrates from an obscure corner of Eastern Europe in search of redder pastures in Britain. The vampire proves a formidable foe for a collection of characters representing the best aspects (at least in Stoker's view) of Euro-American history and society – from the idealized Victorian womanhood embodied in Mina Harker to the religious devotion and metaphysical lore of the venerable Dutchman Abraham Van Helsing to the youthful energy (and impressive armoury) of the American Quincey Morris (see Figure 6). Deploying all the modern technological advantages they can lay their hands on – from dictaphones to portable type-writers to cross-continental train travel – this original Scooby Gang, first, drives Dracula back to his Transylvanian homeland, then defeats him on his own turf, to be sure with some loss (poor Quincey dies), but with only a ripple of notice in the broader society.

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[9]  There was an earlier bloom of vampire interest in Europe in the beginning of nineteenth century, such as Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) and its republishing in France in subsequent years. In Polidori's version, though, the vampyre gets the girl (and, indeed, gets away), and the protagonist suffers a nervous breakdown at his own impotence to prevent the death of his sister. It is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze the differences between Stoker's and Polidori's creations, but, while Ruthven, the vampyre, has some recognizable attributes, it is clear that Stoker's Dracula is the template for nearly all subsequent vampire stories.

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**Figure 6:** http://s2.favim.com/orig/28/bela-lugosi-dracula-subtitles-text-vampire-Favim.com-231645.gif

The next dates are separated by a decade. In 1958, JK Galbraith publishes The Affluent Society, in which he argues that an Economic Science based on scarcity is now obsolete and that consumption rather than production must be made central to modern economic thought. Crucially, he lays out a case that private wealth and consumption in the USA occurs at the expense of public spending and investment, and that this imbalance is both socially, environmentally, and economically perilous. Ten years later, in 1968, George Romero releases Night of the Living Dead, a story of corpses reanimated by that acme of technological modernity, a spacecraft returned to earth (see Figure 7). In the movie, these revived creatures (ironically only called ghouls in this movie) awake with an insatiable desire for human flesh. Their appetite nearly overwhelms everything that modern society has to throw at them. As the zombie franchise develops, moreover, it is clear that our society is really no match for this species of the undead – even when they are defeated, and something like order is restored, it is only at terrible cost. In the decade between Galbraith and Romero, the modern environmental movement is launched with the publication of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1962), inaugurating an historical moment when human consumption and technological virtuosity becomes a source of increasing anxiety (at least to some), predominantly in those places that are consuming the most resources in the most technologically sophisticated fashion.

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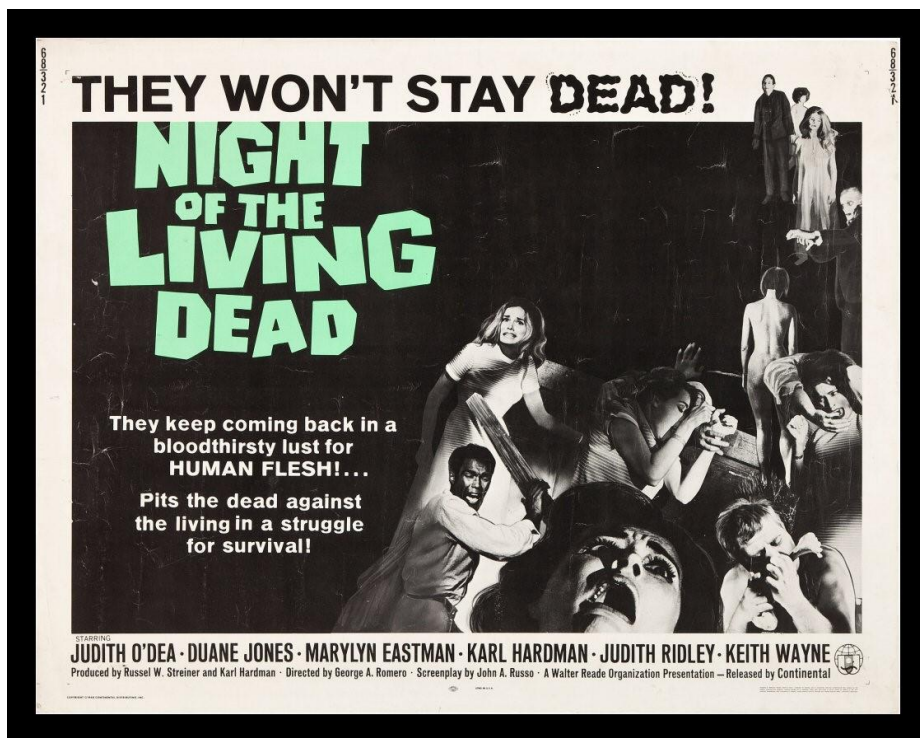Vol. 21, No. 1/2021

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**Figure 7:**
https://drnorth.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/night_of_the_living_dead_poster.jpg?h=119&w=150

## Addictive Subjects

In between our two sets of dates, a novel medical category, addiction, assumes its modern usage in English, and a new form of subjectivity emerging from out-of-control appetites – addict – is stabilised in English as a noun (it is only recognized as such by the Oxford English Dictionary in 1920). The prehistory of "addict" in English, as a participial adjective, as in "to be addict" and as an intransitive verb "to addict" (oneself),[10] is completely usurped and all

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[10]    Shakespeare (1599), for example, in Henry IV, Part II (Act 4, Scene 3) has Falstaff say: "If I had a thousand sons, the first humane principle I would teach them should be, to forswear thin potations and to addict themselves to sack." To addict (oneself), though, is clearly a conscious action.  After listing the martial virtues

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but forgotten. Ironically, "to be addict" once meant to pledge oneself consciously to a person or to a cause, seemingly one of the highest expressions of will (Saris 2013). Of course, addict as a noun now marks out a semantic territory where the will has been lost, perhaps even banished forever, but something that still looks and (sometimes) acts like a human subject remains. This discursive move inaugurates a convoluted medical-moral conversation involving fundamental questions of what it means to be human – ideas about freedom and pleasure, appetite and restraint, of proper brain function and morally mindful choice, of the connections between the metaphysical and the material, and the relationships between the individual and the society – a conversation that is still ongoing.

By the late 20$^{th}$ century, addiction is increasingly considered a serious condition – easy to find, protean in shape, and difficult to cure. It becomes serious business, with estimates of lost productivity to this condition now running into the tens of billions. It is also a source of considerable research funding – from work in cutting-edge neuroscience searching for deracinated "impulses" in the brain to clinical research (very often combining pharmacological, psychological, and spiritual eclecticism) through swathes of the social sciences interested in social and familial insults in the life history of people suffering from this condition, addicts and addiction are the object of intense scholarly scrutiny. My own research has in part been funded through such sources, and, consequently, I have had to produce work in terms, such as "addiction" and "treatment", even at times when it has been clear to me that these terms obscure as much as they reveal the lives of the people with whom I and my teams have interacted (Saris 2008, 2021). This framing of my work has itself been an object of some of my scholarly writing (e.g. Saris 2021). To put it as simply as possible: what has struck me in much of this research is the contradictions between the subjects with whom one is in dialogue in ethnographic work and the processes that have moved this individual into an apparatus of addiction and treatment, specifically when confronted with narratives that construct the subject through his or her subject position as "addict".

This is, of course, also the mirror that the addict holds up to the consumer in our current social formation – he or she possesses appetites to be catered for but of the wrong kind and/or in excessive quantity. Nonetheless, whether we like it or not, in the West, we have historically been quite proud of our (obscure and over-sized) appetites. To say that the Hegelian world historical process came to rest in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall because of a tropical

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that strong drink like the sherris (sic) and sack promotes in young men, the argument is (more or less), "Swear off the soft stuff and devote oneself to a real libation!", if you want to be a man.

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fruit is no doubt an exercise in gross simplification, but the old German Democratic Republic's obsession with the banana was legendary, so much so, that it became a ready resource for synecdoche and irony, what Friedrich (1989, 309) rightly calls "the politically explosive figures of speech". After Hungary and then the GDR began to issue exit visas in 1989, aphoristic stories of it being impossible for shops within a hundred km from the Border to keep bananas in stock began to circulate. The Cold War Triumphalism amongst (especially) American intellectuals in the wake of the collapse of Communism, such as Fukuyama's The End of History and the Last Man (1993), was built in crucial respects on the theoretical foundation of the superior capacity of the West (meaning the market-centred state) to both satisfy (and develop) appetites. In other words, the yearning for freedom and the yearning to consume was almost indistinguishable in the work of the proponents of an American-led globalization in the 1990s (see Friedman 2000, especially his novel suggestion that countries that adopted McDonald's did not go to war with one another).

## Western Social Theory as a Dialectic of Appetite

The economic collapse of 2008 and (too) slowly increasing awareness of environmental crises of the past few decades has somewhat blunted the optimism attending a globalized consumer economy, yet it takes little reading to reveal how central appetites have been to Western understandings of history and society as they are codified under the logic of the market-centred state. Indeed, it is the assumed imbalance between the appetites-within and the-means-of-satisfying-them-without that undergirds the curious assumption at the base of much of Western Social Science. This is that human beings are, fundamentally, asocial, perhaps even anti-social. In the mid-seventeenth century, Thomas Hobbes, provides the charter for this idea in his seminal work The Leviathan (1651) (see Figure 8). Hobbes, of course, writes at the cusp of the emergence of the modern nation-state in Europe in the wake of the devastation of the Thirty Years War and the subsequent Treaty of Westphalia (1648). At this time, as Foucault observes in several places in his oevre, the Christian guarantee of divine right begins to fade, and a notion of sovereignty takes its place, laying the groundwork for the idea of political-economy, as well as the sciences of intensification of this construct that Foucault labels governmentality. Hobbes goes further than simply establishing a science of "politics" and "economics", however – he develops a veritable creation story, a scary before-time of Society and History, based on his own musings and life history, a smattering of knowledge about the world that European expansion had opened up to him, alongside his readings of some Classical sources (see Sahlins 2008). In Hobbes's story, of course, the first

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and primary interaction that humans have with one another is bellum omnium contra omnes,[11] the war of all against all.



**Figure 8:** https://cdn-images-1.medium.com/max/1549/1%2AGGcpBD_PzmCFmV36dk_fBQ.jpeg

Even so, while War in the state of nature may be the first interaction that humans have with one another, it is decidedly not the starting point of Hobbes's analysis. The main curiosity of The Leviathan as text about political power is that the first several chapters have almost nothing to do with anything like a modern understanding of politics: through a modern lens of disciplinary expertise, they appear unabashedly psychological (grounded, ultimately, in his understanding of physiology). A theoretical human equality is posited on the basis of there being nothing in the mind of man before experience. This tabula rasa is then written on by empirical engagement with the world, understood as a veritable mugging of the individual mind/brain suffered at the hands of an always/already natural order though the pathways we

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[11]    There is a debate in the scholarship on Hobbes as to the nature of this state – in other words is it a thought experiment (something along the lines of his contemporary William Harvey was engaged in imagining the circulation of blood) or is it a rather bizarre history. There is no doubt that Hobbes sees the model of the individual in the State of Nature as theoretically prior to social interactions (otherwise the Leviathan loses its logical necessity), and, at times, he seems to further suggest the historical reality of this state through the odd references to what passes for the ethnographic record of the time, his reading of social breakdown in Classical sources, and his own sense of imperiled security (see Sahlins 2008).

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call sense. We are, therefore, limited in this sense of being at the mercy of the world. Sadly, Hobbes tells us that we are also suffering, as there are fewer good things than there are appetites chasing them. Thus, the Hobbsian individual is little more than a clockwork mechanism of appetites and capacities, with the former always exceeding their full satiation by the latter. This relationship impels the will to balance the equation as well as it is able (the ratio in rationality). Conceptual equality in our faculties then becomes rough political equivalence in the state of nature. In other words, without Law, no one is so strong as to guarantee his own security individually, nor is anyone so weak that a temporary alliance to deprive someone else of something good becomes inconceivable.

### Appetites and Reason

The genius of the Hobbsian model of the Individual lies in its alchemical fusion of the rational and the a-rational. Appetites are non-negotiable and non-reasonable but they are also the impulse that drives a very capable rationalising impulse into an unfriendly world – first to suffer in the state of nature but then to move humans into History through the Social Contract – still pretty miserable, but at least with Security, and with some Industry and Progress as increasingly effective salves. Any resting point in the need-satiation cycle, though, is temporary. Felicity, according to Hobbes, is the satisfaction of desires and appetites, but, as he puts it in Ch 11, Felicity is necessarily always transitory:

*[N]or can a man anymore live whose desires are at an end, than he whose senses and imaginations are at a stand. Felicity is a continual progress of the desire from one object to another; the attaining of the former, being still but the way to the latter [Leviathan Ch 11]*[12].

Thus, despite Progress (and what we would later come to call "economic growth" and "technological development"), felt scarcity remains the constant companion of human beings, and, thus, the social bonds between people always remain tenuous.

This model of appetite, partial and temporary satiation, and development/growth has been a stable assumption of disciplines concerned with political-economy for centuries in the wake of Hobbes. To put it bluntly, nearly all subsequent Anglophone Social Science did not need to rewrite the Leviathan's 'psychological' chapters anew because they largely stipulated to

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[12]    See also James 1997, 124-135 for an excellent discussion of Hobbes' understanding of desires and appetites.

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them. This formula of the security of persons and property provided by the Social Contract, allowing the fruits of industry to be realised, which then allows new needs to develop, which then can be (provisionally) met became the acme of political and economic reasoning. This understanding is solidified by the canonisation of Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations (1788) almost a century and a half after Hobbes, or at least the parts of this work that are remembered – the Invisible Hand of the Market is generated by, and generates, a rational optimum in a vast collection of individual exchanges in pursuit of maximizing marginal utility in the satisfaction of individual needs (appetites). In this reading, a certain kind of Practical Reason, in Sahlins' words (1976), then emerges as a preeminent driver of History.

The fetishization of this part of Smith's work, however, hides the important role that a-rational appetites as such played in the emerging sciences of political-economy. Only a few decades after Hobbes (and almost a century before the Wealth of Nations), two authors, John Cary[13] and Dudley North, both interested in what they start to call the science of "Political-Economy", with a special focus on the Growth of Wealth, both publish the same paragraph (North in 1691 and Cary in 1695) highlighting recursive need satisfaction as central not just to every facet of human interaction, but also to History as such.

*The main spur to Trade, or rather to Industry and Ingenuity, is the exorbitant Appetites of Men, which they will take pains to gratifie [sic], and so be disposed to work, when nothing else will incline them to it; for did Men content themselves with bare Necessaries, we should have a poor World. The Glutton works hard to purchase Delicacies, wherewith to gorge himself; the Gamester, for Money to venture at Play; the Miser, to hoard; and so others. Now in their pursuit of those Appetites, other Men less exorbitant are benefitted; and tho' it may be thought few profit by the Miser, yet it will be found otherwise, if we consider, that besides the humour of every Generation, to dissipate what another had collected, there is benefit from the very Person of a covetous Man; for if he labours with his own hands, his Labour is very beneficial to them who imploy [sic] him; if he doth not work, but profit by the Work of others, then those he sets on work have benefit by their being employed* (North 1691, 27).

Indeed, it was the invasive success of a European Civilization based on this iterative and expansive relationship between appetites, industry and development, that, according to other

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[13]    Reinhert (2011) in Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy follows the ways that Cary's work is translated throughout Europe as emerging European nation-states seek to understand and/or emulate Britain's emerging economic might.

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methodological individualists, such as Herbert Spencer, was the guarantor of its globally privileged position, on the one hand, as well as its internal hierarchies of class, race and gender, on the other. Some voices may have insisted that, after leaving the state of nature, the state/market configuration based on "unnatural" needs was creating an ever more an unequal and degenerate modernity (Rousseau), while others were inclined towards a more tragic relationship between industry and appetites because of the unmanageability of the appetites of growing populations (such as Malthus), but the spiral of recursive need satisfaction leading to more needs, leading to an inevitable historical process was not significantly challenged in Anglophone social theory until the modern environmental movement, and even then only incompletely. From this perspective, Appetites emerge as the driver of history and individual Reason as a harried handmaiden, whose Trojan efforts merely enable the continuing and ultimately a-rational expansion of appetites.

## Why Are We So Hungry?

It is especially telling that the subject of the appetites that drive the historical process for North – the glutton, the gambler, and the miser – are uncannily familiar to a capitalism based on consumption and lifestyle (gaming/gambling/non-productive risk-taking, unnecessary (even dangerous) consumption, and the persistent collection of stuff). They are forms of recursive consumption that do little but lead to the same kind of consumption. It would indeed be a poor world if we were content with life's necessities, but in the 300+ years since North, we have become increasingly suspicious, perhaps even anxious, about our persistent dissatisfaction with our own (apparent) abundance. Thus, the glutton, the gambler, and the miser also embody forms of consumption that are also icons of irrationality in our current way of thinking. Indeed, they all slipped easily into sub-categories of "addiction" in the late 20th century – food addict/eating disorder, gambling addict/disorder, and hoarder. At about the same time, addiction becomes a sort of metaphysical epidemic and the undead experience something of a regime change.

In retrospect, the relationship between the undead and the addict looks almost over-determined – and works such as Susanne Zieger's recent book, Inventing the Addict (2008), examining the vampire and the addict in the 19th century seems almost late in coming (see also Thiher 1973). What gets stressed in these cultural studies (and indeed many philosophical) texts, however, is an almost heroic notion of pleasure (see especially Sedgwick 1994), which, I think is only a partial explanation of our collective fascination with [out-of-control] consumption. A cursory reading of sources expressing anxiety about addiction or

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metaphorically extending the category to environmentally unsustainable consumption are largely silent on the pleasures of consumption. While our appetites can bring us pleasure, they need not necessarily do so, and, if the constituent persons in the golem that is The Leviathan are developing ever more refined appetites in ever increasing quantity, then we start to worry less about the fun that they might be having and more about what they will not (metaphorically at least) eventually consume.

This anxiety explains the metaphorically corrosive quality of addiction that has allowed it to emerge as both optic for, and diagnosis of, a variety of global ills, largely supplanting the use of cancer as the model of malignant growth and "out of control" ruptures in either the economy or the society. The addict, for example, is now understood as a privileged node connecting and amplifying dystopic global circuits in both a material and metaphorical sense – "black markets" for illegal drugs, the ownership and use of illicit weapons, and the accumulation of "dirty" money – meet and proliferate within the appetites of this body and its social activities. We speak of these situations as "breakdowns" as if we do not recognize such recursive consumption as the basis of our own lives and social formation. Yet, at the same time, we continue to increase the scope of that to which a subject can become "addicted" while widening the metaphorical uses of the category (see Denizet-Lewis 2010; for critique see Peele 1989, 2000).  In other words, as consumption has become ever more central to our lives and our social formation, its transformations have become ever more complex and the lines between its harmful and healthy expressions are ever more difficult to discern, while its out-of-control varieties become ever more terrifying. The anxieties even terrors of the modern environmental movement then are logically apocalyptic (in the original Greek sense of the word as an 'uncovering').

## Zombies Ascendant

Thus, with the advent of increasingly globalized consumer capitalism, the democratization of expansive appetite emerges as a source of anxiety in its own right.  Abundance becomes frightening precisely because it becomes ever more abundant, ever more alienating, and ever less satisfying. Seemingly, as fewer and fewer facets of our being escapes a connection with market-driven consumption, the more anxious we become about the relationships between our appetites, our means, and our ethical effects in the world. How easy it is then to turn the shiny shopping mall – one of America's (and then the rest of the world's) gleaming temples to the seeming defeat of scarcity and the re-visioning everyone as a consumer – into an

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apocalyptic wasteland populated by zombies in Romero's 1978 movie, Dawn of the Dead (Figure 9).



**Figure 9:** https://www.giornalettismo.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/sciagure-di-ogni-natale-4-170x90.jpg

Zombies, however, did not begin their folkloric careers either so scary or so apt as a critique consumer society. Ironically, zombies are actually rather dull in most of the properly folkloric stories that we have about them. For much of their history, work, specifically agricultural labor, was the defining feature of the zombiehood. For example, one of the ways that W. B. Seabrook's, in The Magic Island, evidences the presence of zombies is on the rather prosaic basis of hearing people working their gardens in the moonlight (Seabrook 1929, 94; see also Dendle 2007). Only a few years later, zombies make their big screen debut in Vincent Halperin's White Zombie (1932) starring (again) Bela Lugosi in a movie that (while successful enough as a film) was decidedly less profitable (never mind the influence on the popular imagination) than was Dracula. In these and other depictions, powerful Voodoo priests are the real malefactors, and they transform people into zombies less for occult reasons than for personal ones. Even in the odd lurid story involving Zombies sent to kill a priest's enemies, they clearly function as somewhat clumsy, cut-rate assassins, rather than as an occult terror as such (for a somewhat different reading, see Zieger 2013).

Hollywood then pretty much loses interest in this species of the undead for a few decades. George Romero's Night of the Living Dead makes zombies available to Art in two ways.

First, he produces the basic template for nearly all subsequent zombie narratives – an unspecified toxin or virus gets released (generally by either a government body or a mega-corporation which is portrayed as simultaneously evil and clumsy), usually affecting a limited number of people to begin with – but after that point, person-to-person contact spreads zombiehood, in the same way that sneezing on someone spreads the common cold. In this way, acmes of modernity (returning spacecraft to high-tech research) are recast as inherently threatening, and the Enlightenment confidence that increasing knowledge leads inevitably to better lives is directly challenged.

But, the real genius of George Romero flows from his second move, that is, from the profound transformation that he wreaks on the folkloric zombie collective. It is not widely appreciated that Romero is, in many respects, the Margaret Thatcher of Zombieland: overnight, he threw all the zombies out of work, turning them from pathetic and clumsy producers into wholly irrational and clumsy consumers. After Romero, zombies lose any productive function, and it is their massed hunger that becomes the primary source of the horror they invoke. After Night of the Living Dead, zombies were never going back to work their gardens, and the idea of collapse and apocalypse got a new, scary, decomposing face.

In other words, zombies became fit for horror only when they became unproductive and very hungry. In this they became like vampires: they feed on us. What makes zombies and vampires "good to think" resides precisely in how they are articulated to their respective hungers in an ontologically different way than we are connected to ours. To put it as bluntly as possible, the hungers of vampires and zombies have been liberated from the tyranny of the alimentary canal. Their appetites are stimulated, their mouths feed, and swallowing occurs, but with little or no evidence of the passing of what is consumed, save to stimulate the desire to feed again. Appetites, then, lead neither to excrement nor to adipose tissue, they simply, "frictionlessly" call forth more appetite. Nonetheless, the hungers of these species of the undead lead to different end-points. Vampires feed on humans in a recursive way to consciously extend a form of life-in-death. After Romero, on the other hand, zombies are simply hunger without consciousness, conscience, or very much purpose. They are more like embodied appetite than a body with an appetite. Indeed, the zombie is not usually written or depicted as even knowing it is hungry.

It is in this peculiar subjection of zombies to their hunger (in Butler's 1991 sense), however, that renders vampires and humans closer than either of them are to zombies. Both humans and vampires live in the symbolic order. This is what makes possible vampires' anxiety about being alienated from themselves, as their distress at their lack of a reflection in the mirror clearly shows. For humans, though, the emergence of Stoker's vampire template is still in the

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era of the flaneur – it was still possible to see one's reflection in the shop window full of commodities. Ironically, vampires know they are alienated (and are often troubled by this fact) because they are like us in most other respects – not just in the sense of forming social bonds with each other and with humans, but also in understanding and sharing that uniquely human capacity for symbolic thought. They can tell the difference between holy water and regular water – indeed arguably better than we can.[14] It is this symbolic faculty, however, that ultimately also makes vampires vulnerable. We can imagine beating vampires, and we almost always do.[15] Zombies, though, are not in the symbolic order. They did not understand their alienation as down-market producers, nor do they understand their alienation as insatiable consumers. They lack even the capacity for alienation, and we increasingly worry that we might be becoming like them. Thus, while the audience might be initially invited to consume "zombies" as Other – the hoi poloi of the undead that are locked into an endless cycle of meaningless repetitive consumption – the new iPhone in our pockets and our next mall visit tells us something rather different.

## Conclusion

It is not an accident that, after Romero's fixing of the modern Zombie narrative, we look upon earlier texts with fresh eyes. The famous passage of the middle-class family-in-a-bubble from Galbraith's Affluent Society, for example, reads eerily current to a culture that seems to almost continuously imagine its individual and social debilitation through out-of-control appetites (addictions), its collective self-destruction through environmental degradation

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[14] It is a shame that Leslie White in his essay, *The Symbol: the Origin and Basis for Human Behavior* (1940), did not capitalize on this connection. Human do not just have a unique capacity to understand the difference between Holy Water and regular water, they can also imagine monsters who share this peculiar ability and, for that precise reason, can be defeated by humans.

[15] It is telling that going back to Stoker, successful vampire combat is almost always a collective enterprise – usually with voluntarily agreed upon hierarchies and a sense of collective ownership of the project, in other words, something like a social contract. Indeed, in *Dracula*, this collective is expressly sealed with an oath pledging the individual lives of the oath-takers to the liberating of Mrs. Harker's soul from Dracula's baptism of blood. The fight against zombies, on the other hand, comes only after a social collapse and a return to the state of nature. Thus, in most zombie movies, the bonds between the survivors are tenuous, volatile, and the source of most of the dramatic conflict in the narrative. Similarly, the instructions on how to survive a zombie apocalypse encourage a sort of Robinson Crusoe self-sufficiency while there is still time to pull together the resources to survive the coming state of nature. It is not difficult to see a very similar sensibility in the so-called "Prepper Movement" in the United States.

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because of excessive consumption (climate change, the Anthropocene), and its fictional end in a democratic hunger liberated from death itself (a zombie apocalypse).

*The family which takes its mauve and cerise, air-conditioned, power-steered and power-braked automobile out for a tour passes through cities that are badly paved, made hideous by litter, blighted buildings, billboards and posts for wires that should long since have been put underground. They pass on into a countryside that has been rendered largely invisible by commercial art… They picnic on exquisitely packaged food from a portable icebox by a polluted stream and go on to spend the night at a park, which is a menace to public health and morals. Just before dozing off on an air mattress, beneath a nylon tent, amid the stench of decaying refuse, they may reflect vaguely on the curious unevenness of their blessings. Is this, indeed, the American genius?* (Galbraith 1958, 187)

Social and environmental degradation and individual consumption are intimately connected here.[16] Nature is increasingly obliterated and increasingly poisoned, by Culture (perhaps better, Economy-as-Culture), through increasing private consumption feeding ever more refined, ever greater, and ever more popular appetites, which also degrades the social bonds between people. What is lacking in this picture is only an objectifying of appetite itself – the desires and consumption inside the car and the desires and consumption of the (presumably) junkies and sex-fiends that are offending public morals in the park await a connection. In the half century since *Affluent Society* these have met, first, in an ever-ramifying understanding of addictive appetitive desires, then in an interest in a popular hunger amongst the undead, and, finally, in the metaphorical expansion of "addiction" to model vicious cycles of increased consumption and unsustainable social and environmental degradation.

In short, I believe that in our half-humorous and half-fearful imaginings of a zombie apocalypse and our more serious iteratively expanding discourse about addiction, we have come to the point of seeing a 'magic' in the commodity in a register distinctly derived from Anglophone social theory. This magic is different from the one that Marx found in the transmutation of use value into exchange value, but more dangerous to the idea of the "naturalness of the market" to this body of theory because of its hidden-in-plain-sight quality. In Anglophone Social Theory, "appetitive desire" is the first principle of the creation story of the state and the market (as well as their theoretical inter-relationships) and it is, perhaps, also, the sea of chaos into which the market-state will ultimately dissolve. The curious

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[16]    Richard Tucker (2000) also makes this connection between ever increasing consumption in the developed world leading to the destruction of tropical zones in the Global South.

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subjection of different artistic creations to appetite – appetite that survives death to feed on life – tracks in fiction an evolving and expanding medical-social category in real life, addiction, and an ever-expanding number of addicts who also hunger ceaselessly, supposedly without reckoning cost or consequence. Currently, zombies and addicts are both invited to this bizarre banquet of insatiable appetites and ever-expanding consumption. Our terror comes from a nagging feeling that we, too, might already also be at this gathering. Unfortunately, we currently seem to see little hope after this enforced feast, save an apocalyptic after-dinner floorshow or an uncertain individual recovery.

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**BOOK REVIEW**

# Trnavský Execír. Historická monografia špecifickej mestskej štvrte
# [Execír in Trnava. Historical Monograph of a Specific Urban District]

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Kopánka means in the Slovak language "a place where something is being dug from the ground". This urban toponym is connected with one of the districts of the city of Trnava, the so-called "Little Rome", as it is often nicknamed thanks to many churches spread all around the city centre together with its historical importance for the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church in the era of Ottoman invasion during the 16th and 17th centuries. However, this is not the history, which would the Kopánka district identify with. It was not until the 19th century when Trnava started to open its centre to people from the outskirts, so they could freely pass through the city walls and become more involved in the life of this ancient Hungarian royal city. Back then Kopánka could be characterized as a working-class district, where rather poor, sometimes even socially excluded people lived. In the late modern period, another name for Kopánka appeared – Execír, meaning "a place, where the army trains". Both names for this urban district of Trnava are included in the title of a new historical monograph dedicated to the history of "Kopánka – Execír" in Trnava and its inhabitants.

The authors, Martina Bocánová, Klaudia Mišovičová, Martin Priečko and Peter Sokolovič more or less follow the pattern used in the previous book about Kopánka, which was published in 2016. Unlike the first edition, the actual monograph is a work of four historians

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and ethnologists instead of the previous three. Moreover, Klaudia Mišovičová and Peter Sokolovič are new to the collective of authors, and their contributions significantly widen the range of information provided about Kopánka.

The first chapter written by Peter Sokolovič describes the historical development of Kopánka starting in prehistoric times and moving on towards the 20th century. Some of the major turning points in the development of the district are mentioned along with interesting details about the changing character of the social and economic milieu of Kopánka. As the main source of information, the author uses previous scholarly works about Kopánka (most importantly from Jozef Šimončič) and combines them with his archival research on Trnava's modern history. The chapter is thoroughly elaborated, however, the text contains some minor stylistic and linguistic errors. Perhaps there will be an opportunity to correct these several editorial mistakes in the future editions of the book.

The following chapter by Klaudia Mišovičová is dedicated to the process of the relocation of people from the Orava region to Trnava. The arrival of new inhabitants from Orava took place in the 1940s and the 1950s since the dam was being built in the territory of their villages, so they were forced to leave their homeland forever. By finding a new home in Kopánka the people from Orava have strongly contributed to the shaping of a new social structure within the district. The second chapter of the monograph shows a deep insight into the process of relocation suggesting its many social implications. Taking into account the overall focus of the text it would seem more logical to intertwine the chapter with the fourth chapter from Martina Bocánová, which is aimed at day-to-day life of Kopánka's inhabitants characterizing their social, economic and religious background.

The urban changes of the Kopánka district have been a research object of Martin Priečko, who based his chapter on detailed field research along with analysis of archival documents and old maps. Priečko's text is a gripping description of the urban development of Kopánka, including the explanation of the etymology of its name, which reflects the digging of clay for the production of clay bricks in the local brickyard. An included list of the street topography of "old Kopánka" at the end of the chapter is especially beneficial.

The fourth and final chapter by Martina Bocánová represents a vivid description of the life of Kopánka's inhabitants in the 19th and 20th centuries adding some very interesting details through the authentic informants' memories collected during the field research. Bocánová gradually covers all the key areas of the social life in Kopánka stressing the most important aspects which have shaped the lives of several generations of the inhabitants of the district. However, it is this chapter that might have been connected with the text of Klaudia Mišovičová, as both authors refer to similar topics (the arrival of the people from Orava).

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Every monograph focused on a specific district, village, town or even a region should not be just a scholarly work, it should be comprehensive to people living in the particular location. It should serve its purpose as a text for the locals, who will go through the pages over and over again searching for the mentions about the things and places they know or they have heard about from their family members. The book about Kopánka is exactly what would anyone interested in the district's history appreciate. It is full of old photographs and maps and most importantly, it tells the story of Kopánka in a way anybody can associate with. Kopánka – Execír in Trnava is a perfect example of a book from the people, who know how to write local history, for the people who are part of this history themselves.

### Reviewed Book

Bocánová Martina, Mišovičová Klaudia, Priečko Martin, Sokolovič Peter. 2021. *Trnavský Execír. Historická monografia špecifickej mestskej štvrte.* Bratislava: Národopisná spoločnosť Slovenska, 144 p.