NOTES

1. James Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, ed. Alexander Bain, Andrew Findlater, George Grote, and John Stuart Mill (London: Longmans, 1869), 337, editor's note 340 (emphases original). This and subsequent notes cited are identified as being written by John Stuart Mill.
2. John Stuart Mill, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy*, 5th ed. (London: Longmans, 1878), 262.
3. Editor's note, James Mill, *Analysis*, 340.
4. John Stuart Mill, *An Examination*, 262.
5. Nicholas Dames, *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction, 1810–1870* (New York: Oxford University Press), 24.
6. Samuel Butler, *Life and Habit* (London: A. C. Fifield), 134, 86.
7. Samuel Butler, *Unconscious Memory: A Comparison between the Theory of Dr. Ewald Hering and the "Philosophy of the Unconscious" of Dr. Edward Von Hartmann* (London: Longmans, 1890), 21.
8. Henry Maudsley, *Body and Mind: An Inquiry into their Connection and Mutual Influence* (London: Macmillan, 1870), 19, 21.
9. May Sinclair, *Mary Olivier: A Life* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2002), 333, 437.
10. Benjamin Morgan, "Scale, Resonance, Presence," *Victorian Studies* 59, no. 1 (2016): 109–12, 110.
11. Andrew H. Miller, "Response: Responsibility to the Present," *Victorian Studies* 59, no. 1 (2016): 122–26, 123.
12. May Sinclair, *A Defense of Idealism: Some Questions and Conclusions* (London: Macmillan, 1917), 104–05.

Monstrosity

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MONSTERS are always with us. Whatever obscure psychic needs and anxieties monsters address, monstrosity more obviously helps to define the manifold meanings we attach to the idea of the human: monstrosity is incarnated in those bodies and forces that delimit or threaten

or defy that norm. Thus in Shakespeare, as Chris Baldick points out, monstrosity serves to designate moral aberrations, of which the most important is ingratitude.[1] In science, meanwhile, monstrosity was long understood in morphological terms, in anomalies that instilled "radical fear," in Georges Canguilhem's phrase, because they capture the precariousness of mere biological continuity. The monster is "a living being whose value is to be a counter-point," underscoring that "the vital counter-value" to life is "not death but monstrosity."[2] A muted version of that discomfort may animate Henry James's famous dismissal of nineteenth-century novels as "loose, baggy monsters," in which amorphous structure betrayed an incoherence at once formal and ethical. Ironically, however, as monstrosity became transparent to scientific thought (Canguilhem points out) monsters increasingly found refuge in the realm of imagination. This furtive life has drawn particular attention to monstrosity in the nineteenth-century novel, which in turn has given broader currency to the topic within literary and cultural reflection of the past half century.

In the nineteenth century, monsters invaded the precincts of the domestic novel. Monstrosity had been lurking there all along, to be sure, but it was reanimated by the energies of an emergent feminist literary criticism. Most influentially, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) took up the mission that Virginia Woolf had announced for women writers, the need to kill the angel in the house, and found in the monster "the angel's necessary opposite and double," a potent, threatening vehicle for the suppressed rage lurking beneath the angel's outward serenity. The title gives pride of place to *Jane Eyre*, where even the saintly Miss Temple "has repressed her own share of madness and rage. . . . There is a potential monster beneath her angelic exterior."[3] Monstrosity had long been associated with political rebellion, in images of the mob as a "many-headed monster," an association revivified in conservative iconography of the monstrous revolutionary crowd. The feminine rage that critics discovered in Victorian domestic fiction, however, seemed all the more potent as it erupted from what had seemed a still point of refuge from such threats. In this light, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* became an especially resonant emblem of a manifold monstrosity. Although feminist critics pointed to the woman author's special investment in the trauma of a monstrous birth, Shelley's monster gained renewed prominence as it embodied a range of anti-social energies.

In light of *Frankenstein*, monstrosity could be seen as a central presence not only in the work of women writers but in nineteenth-century fiction

generally. Thus George Levine, in *The Realistic Imagination* (1981), an argument about "the monstrous" mapped before the publication of *Madwoman*, in effect generalized Gilbert and Gubar's stance, finding in *Frankenstein* a template of the constitutive tensions of novelistic realism. Levine observes that "the monster becomes those sexual, revolutionary, deterministic, or psychic energies that novelists and individual confront even as they try to avoid them."[4] Understood in such agonistic terms, monstrosity could be readily extended to cover a range of tensions within a literary text, elicited through a variety of critical approaches, particularly those derived from poststructuralist models. Thus Peter Brooks, for example, contended that monstrosity in *Frankenstein* resides "above all in the question of language": the text is "an indelible record of the monstrous, emblem of language's lack of transcendental reference."[5] Once the monster's manifold alterity had been discovered, *Jane Eyre* became arguably the single most suggestive touchstone for emergent, widely-diverse modes of reading nineteenth-century fiction, from Lacanian psychology to postcolonial analysis.

Of course this proliferation of meaning could seem unproductively self-reflexive, as Shelley's novel encouraged an ever-ingenious troping of an arresting motif. (The ur-exhibit of such critical resourcefulness may be the reception of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, where the monster has shown an uncanny power to figure everything.) But monstrosity gained a larger conceptual purchase by way of the work of Michel Foucault, whose influence began to be widely registered in Anglo-American criticism in the 1970s. "The sleep of reason produces monsters," Goya famously declared, but Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (*Histoire de la folie*, 1961) argued that the monstrous was needed to produce normative reason. The classical organization of madness, so powerfully attached to the dissolvent force of "unreason," turns madness into a form of monstrosity—and "monster," Foucault reminds us, derives from *montrer*: monsters are "beings or things to be shown," here to enforce the claims of reason.[6] Monstrosity thus comes to point beyond any particular text or literary tradition to become integral to dominant orders of discourse.

But while Foucault's early work offered little prospect of escape from those structures, for other critics monstrosity held a continuing allure as the mark of a radical singularity or discursive rupture, which suggested the potential for a liberatory politics. Thus Derrida, for example, declared that "the monster is a species for which we do not yet have a name"; hence "the future is necessarily monstrous," because otherwise "it would already be a predictable, calculable, and programmable tomorrow."[7] This sense of unformed potentiality may align monstrosity with

radical transformations of the present, as when Donna Haraway invokes the monster to preside over new visions of political and social possibility, "effects of connection, of embodiment, and of responsibility for an imagined elsewhere that we may yet learn to see and build here."[8] Here the monstrous birth is no longer a nightmare, but a (shadowy) dream of a transfigured world. For other critics, however, such open-endedness renews the power of the monster as a vehicle of collective anxiety. Monstrosity in this light, declare the editors of *Monster Culture in the Twenty-First Century*, is "a necessary condition of our existence in the twenty-first century."[9] But that claim might hold for any century. As we conjure up monsters both to enforce norms and to resist them, it seems the only thing that could dispel monstrosity would be the death of normativity itself.

Notes

1. Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-Century Writing* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 11–12.
2. Georges Canguilhem, *Knowledge of Life*, trans. Stephanos Geroulanos and Daniela Ginsburg (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 134, 135.
3. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 17, 249.
4. George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 25.
5. Peter Brooks, "Godlike Science/Unhallowed Arts: Language and Monstrosity in *Frankenstein*," *New Literary History* 9, no. 3 (1978): 591–605, 604.
6. Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1988), 70.
7. Jacques Derrida, *Points. . .: Interviews, 1974–1994* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 386–87.
8. Donna Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treicher (New York: Routledge, 1992), 295.
9. Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui, eds., *Monster Culture in the Twenty-First Century: A Reader* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 5.