BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Luckhurst, Roger (2020) After Monster Theory? Gareth Edwards' 'Monsters'. Science Fiction Film and Television 13 (2), pp. 269-290. ISSN 1754-3770.

Downloaded from: https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/29395/

Usage Guidelines:
Please refer to usage guidelines at https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html or alternatively contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

After Monster Theory? Gareth Edwards' *Monsters*

This is an essay about hermeneutics and its limits, prompted by Gareth Edwards' *Monsters* (UK 2010). It suggests that the dominant Monster Theory, so superbly consolidated by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in 1996, has entered a crisis of interpretation in the twenty-first century as the climate emergency becomes steadily more visible and so more unavoidable in critical practice. Bruno Latour asked, soon after the turn of the century, whether 'critique' had run out of steam. The answer may well be yes – and oil and gas too. What if critique was blind to key elements of what Andreas Malm terms Fossil Capital? What other paths of reading or interpreting the contemporary monster might it be more useful to deploy?

Timothy Clark suggests the climate emergency induces 'derangements of scales', that have caused 'an implosion of intellectual competences' and an urgent need to reformulate critique. This is the world of Timothy Morton's 'hyperobjects', which interpenetrate and overdetermine micro- and macro-scales of connection, apprehension and interpretation. It is vast 'infrastructure space' that 'dictates the world's critical dimensions', but these have often been left invisible because they are too large to discern with old analytic methods (Easterling 19).

Can critique – acts of unmasking a hidden truth from beneath a deceptive textual surface – still master a world where objects have become recalcitrant things, existing in networks that defy human mastery? For Latour, the masterful subject of critique needs to be displaced in a world where it must 'share agency with other subjects that have also lost their autonomy' ('Agency', 5). Perhaps the 'hermeneutics of suspicion', fracking into the bedrock of texts, cannot continue its destructive tactics of excavation of meaning in the face of renewed questioning from figures such as Latour, Rita Felski, or that distinctively twenty-first century (non)philosophical movement named by Graham Harman as object-oriented ontology.

The philosopher Richard Kearney argued in 2003 that any reading of the monster needed to navigate beyond both romantic hermeneutics (which promised to render the monstrous other fully available to interpretation and appropriation into the same) or radical hermeneutics (which left gods and monsters entirely to their unassimilable otherness as an act of ethical refusal). Kearney argued instead for a diacritical hermeneutics that would seek to interpret the monster by 'tracing interconnections between the poles of sameness and strangeness', a hermeneutic of 'stitching and weaving' (10). But I contend that contemporary monsters don't just challenge this third way: they erupt from the scalar crisis that might well challenge hermeneutics *itself*.

In the recent collection, *Scale in Literature and Culture,* the editors suggest a need to 'focus on the politics of scale rather than on the inherent nature of given scales' (Clarke and

Wittenberg 13) – less simply a moving along the slide rule to bigger numbers, and more an interrogation of the instrument of measurement itself. Science fiction cinema has long had an icon for the crisis of scale: the gigantic monster. Since *Gojira* (Honda Japan 1954; reframed and recast as *Godzilla: King of the Monsters* (Japan/US 1956), the *kaiju* genre has 'clearly established a vocabulary – thematic, visual, and ideological – that would be consistently deployed' over nearly thirty Japanese films, and in countless cultural translations across the world (Tsutsui, *In Godzilla's Footsteps* 4). Twenty-first century science fiction cinema has hardly stopped producing *kaiju*-like monster films, from the revived cycle of Godzilla films in Japan, the *King Kong* remake (Jackson US 2005), South Korea's delirious *The Host* (Joon-Ho, Korea 2006), the trashing of New York in *Cloverfield* (Reeves 2008), the giant shark of *The Meg* (Turteltaub US 2018), and the two Hollywood revisions of *Godzilla* itself (Emmerich US 1998 and Edwards US 2014).

In 1996, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's 'Monster Theory (Seven Theses)' promised a new configuration of lines of critique to read these cultural artefacts. This text is now claimed to have 'inaugurated the field' of academic Monster Studies, and has been called its 'foundational' work (Mittman 2 and 4). But I want to argue that Cohen's monster theory belongs to a distinct critical and historical conjuncture and that it is not that we need simply to extend the same allegorical interpretations to a new theme, merely updating the repertory of meanings to include what might be called 'Monstrous Cli-fi' (Murray and Heumann) or the 'EcoGothic' (Hughes and Smith). The emergency, I propose, challenges hermeneutics *as such* and thus compels new modes of reading.

I

For eighty minutes, viewers only glimpse the monsters of *Monsters* in darkness, through degraded images of bodycam footage on TV news feeds, in crude graffiti, or children's cartoons. Finally, the big reveal arrives. As the protagonists wait for a military escort in the forecourt of a gas station in Texas, two of the gigantic creatures rear up over the canopy of the building, chittering like dolphins, keening like whales, writhing with tentacles like cephalopods, sparking with the quick-silver changes of colour like octopus or jellyfish. Only temporary assemblages or transient analogies can capture them. They are treated by the authorities as a disease to be violently contained by ground and air troops within an infected zone between America and Mexico, and they have wrecked cities and apparently killed thousands. In this scene, however, the two creatures meet to communicate, to embrace, possibly to mate or to transfer energy or information. Their intent is hooded, unknowable. They ignore the humans below, who hold their breath and stand in wonder for nearly three minutes of screen time before the monsters part company and shuffle off into the night. Shortly thereafter these irenic creatures are engaged by the full force of the American military.

In terms of scale and the question of interpretation, this scene conforms to classic eighteenth-century descriptions of the sublime, that intense excitation of the passions that exceeds the prim aesthetic containment of the beautiful by invoking vastness, overwhelming power, what Edmund Burke called the 'dread majesty' that mixes pleasure with pain (69). These creatures have been glimpsed in obscurity for much of the film, masking their size, tilting their vastness towards the infinite, amplifying their threat. This culminating scene is that flash of lightning that – since Longinus first theorized the sublime – reveals something akin to the face of God, tipping terror into awe.

This scene is also an instance of the meta-sublime, in the sense that the special effects of science fiction cinema have long been regarded as *double coded* or inherently ambivalent (Landon). The audience's reaction is as much about the formal and technical cinematic special effect as the narrative purpose of that effect. Special effects reside simultaneously inside and outside the narrative frame, a spectacular moment of the formal possibilities of film as such bursting through. Steve Neale's study of John Carpenter's *The Thing* examined the 'violently self-conscious moment' when a character sees the alien transform in front of his eyes. His response – 'You've gotta be fucking kidding!' – is at once intra- and extra-diegetic, an amazement at the special effect itself (161).

The first reception of *Monsters* on its release in 2010 was primarily focused on the technical breakthrough of the SFX, which had been designed by Edwards on his laptop, allowing him to fuse guerrilla-style low-budget shooting with a crew of only three people with usually high-budget, high-concept CGI SFX. In the press pack notes at the time of release, the producer Allan Niblo was quoted saying: 'What blew us away even more was not just that [Edwards] had come up with all these effects, but that he'd done it on his own laptop. There was no studio involved, no big post-production facility, it was just incredible.' If science fiction cinema is double coded by its own technical breakthroughs, *Monsters* broke the financial limits that had always restricted CGI to the Spielbergs and Camerons at the top of the foodchain, making CGI possible on lower budgets. Therefore, *Monsters* obeys Garrett Stewart's crisp formulation about science fiction film: 'movies about the future tend to be about the future of movies' (159).

This scene is also a properly Kantian instance of the scalar aesthetics of the sublime, in that it does not just rest with special affect or special effects, but compels in us an attempt to interpret the meaning of the gigantic monsters that Edwards puts on screen. The Burkean sublime concerns the 'terrible objects' that provoke passions that disable what Burke calls 'the disagreeable yoke of our reason' (Burke 25). Kant reworked the sublime in *The Critique of the Power of Judgement,* where the terror evoked by the 'colossal', the 'formless' and the 'monstrous' (136) is just the first stage in a process where the apparent failure to grasp the sublime object provokes the cognitive faculty to its greatest heights. That which is properly

sublime, Kant says, 'cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason, which, though no presentation is adequate to them is possible are provoked and called to mind precisely by their inadequacy, which does allow of sensible presentation' (129). Kant's sublime resides not in the object, as it had done in much eighteenth century philosophy (see Monk), but in the subjective apprehension and cognitive interpretation of the object. From the jaws of overwhelming sensory defeat, the victory of Enlightened reason. The sublime monster is the beginning of interpretation.

This is heady stuff for a creature feature like *Monsters,* a direct descendant of the 1950s B-movie Susan Sontag declared a genre of 'primitive gratifications', 'entirely devoid of social criticism, of even the most implicit kind' (213, 223). In the low-rent disaster film, the sublime topples routinely into the ridiculous (or the grotesque): *The Beast from 20 000 Fathoms* (Lourié, US 1953)*, The Blob* (Millgate, US 1958), *Godzilla versus King Kong* (Honda, Japan 1962). As Istvan Csicsery-Ronay has proposed, there is a dialectic in this monstrous imaginary of the expansive sublime – reaching intellectually outwards – and an intensive grotesque – collapsing inwards into physical horror. This schema helps locate SF texts along a generic but also a hermeneutic spectrum.

Kant's cognitive engagement in the face of the sublime underpins monster theory. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen introduced his edited collection *Monster Theory* with his essay 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', a manifesto for reading cultural constructions of the monstrous. Cohen's theses are a perfect snapshot of cultural theory in 1996, just after the eruption of Queer Theory and its scandalous, catachrestic hermeneutics but before the more earnest calculus of intersectionality bedded in. Cohen's essay appeared a year after Jack Halberstam's *Skin Shows,* in which Gothic novels are regarded as a 'technology of monstrosity' that 'produce the monster as a remarkably, mobile, permeable, and infinitely interpretable body' (21). Note the sublimity of that claim: *infinitely interpretable*. Halberstam proposed that 'multiple interpretations are embedded in the [Gothic] text and part of the experience of horror comes from the realization that meaning itself runs riot' (28). If the queered Gothic threatened to overwhelm our interpretive grasp, monster theory stepped in to inject a confidence into reading practice.

The monster, for Cohen, is always a cultural body (thesis 1), that is socially constructed, even if it is marked by a crisis of category that resists hierarchies or binaries (thesis 3). It stages difference as a dis-figuration of norms (thesis 4), although it also marks out and stands sentinel over borders 'that cannot – must not – be crossed' (thesis 5) (21-2). The monster establishes boundaries precisely to transgress them, suggesting revulsion or horror is always shadowed by a kind of desire (thesis 6). This broadly Foucauldian economy of transgression as 'a dynamic and limit that both restores and contests boundaries' was installed as the primary motor of the Gothic by Fred Botting in the same year (9). Since the

monster is always mobile, always on the threshold of becoming something else (thesis 7), this reinforces Cohen's key claim that the monster always escapes taxonomic fixity (thesis 2). So begins the long, possibly interminable hermeneutic labour of the critic. Unsurprisingly, then, for 1996, this monster theory is a theory monster that looks like a hybrid of Queer Theory bolted together with Deleuze and Guattari rhizomatic élan, mixed with Foucauldian transgression and a touch of deconstruction-gone-Gothic after Jacques Derrida's lectures on the *Spectres of Marx* delivered in 1993.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defined the exuberance of queer hermeneutics at this time as embracing 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements aren't made to signify monolithically' (8). The monstrous sublime already inherently produces an interpretive overload: to queer it, as Sedgwick and Halberstam do, multiplies this effect.

Cohen's unwritten eighth thesis might be that the instability installed at the core of monster theory means that it must always be transforming itself into the shape of the next dominant theory. Cohen's own work illustrates this. By 1999, in his study of giants and gigantism, the monster is no longer just a queered, deconstructive lever but is also now the destructive and lawless Father of Jouissance, a shift back to psychoanalysis that reflects the ascent of Slavoj Zizek's work. By 2013, right on time, Cohen's reflection on the monstrous zombie horde now speaks of ecophobia and the Anthropocene, a framework completely absent only a few years before. 'A grey ecology is an expanse of monsters', he proclaims (Cohen 'Grey' 272). Cohen's reflections in an afterword to a research companion in 2013, 'The Promise of Monsters', reconfirms his theses, with a further refresh from critical animal studies.

Despite the virtues of his own restless, constant movement forward, Cohen's monster culture essay has become a somewhat fixed tool-kit for genre critics. It is now invariably invoked in studies of the *kaiju* film, and in the couple of essays so far written on Gareth Edwards' *Monsters*. Monstrous scale compels the work of allegorical interpretation, but if this theory ends up merely evoking the monster's 'ambivalence as a symbol' – that Godzilla, for instance, 'means everything and nothing' (Tsutsui, *Godzilla on My Mind* 111) – then the labour of interpretation does not deepen an understanding but disperses into a kind of weak hermeneutic pluralism where anything goes.

As a challenge to this hermeneutic business-as-usual, Bruno Latour has argued that the pattern of sublime cognition has been disabled by the arrival of the Anthropocene. 'To feel sublime you needed to remain "distant" from what remained as spectacle … Bad luck: there is no place where you can hide yourselves; you are now fully "commensurable" with the physical forces that you have unleashed' ('Sharing Responsibility' 170). There is no depth of

vision, no surety in the rendering of scale, and thus a crisis of critique once we understand that we share only the same plane of the earthbound world, entangled with other agencies. The critic has been pulled back down to Earth, Latour suggests, and 'the subversion of scales of temporal and spatial frontiers defines the Terrestrial' (*Down to Earth,* 93). 'Things are gathered again', Latour warns in his essay 'Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?', meaning that the old 'critical barbarity' of confident hermeneutics that distributes objects and subjects, selves and others, risks missing the new kind of distributed pluriverse humans must understand they occupy. *Monsters* is closer to these kinds of contention than the monster theory that would capture and decode its monstrous figures. The film forces, I suggest, a Latourian recalibration of critical engagement.

II

Monsters is set in the near future, six years after the crash-landing of a space craft in Mexico. The crash brought back alien creatures that have unfathomable life cycles that seem to start out as fungal growths in the forest but end up and as gigantic tentacular forms that lumber across the landscape, undertaking seasonal migrations of obscure intent. The monsters are ostensibly contained in an Infected Zone where a pointless perpetual war is waged against them by an unclear mix of American and/or Mexican ground and air troops. CGI'd fighter planes scream across the sky, and rolling news shows bodycam footage of troops engaged in catastrophic firefights with the creatures. Towards the end of the film, we are shown the vast wall constructed by the American state to contain the monsters, a defensive structure that is inevitably overrun. The last scenes are set in a depopulated, post-catastrophic Galveston in Texas, a disaster zone that was filmed by Edwards amongst the wreckage left in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike when it swept through the Caribbean and into Texas in September 2008.

Unconventionally, this high-concept science-fictional scenario is merely the backdrop for the journey of two Americans through the infected zone. This is not a depiction of the alien invasion, as in, say, Steven Spielberg's remake of *War of the Worlds* (US 2005) or *Battle: Los Angeles* (Liebesman 2011). This is not an onset invasion film but a film about 'aftermath culture' (Chambers), living on six years after the event, in the post-traumatic wake of the apocalypse. Andrew Kaulder is a cynical male photojournalist (with a suitably Ballardian name) who is hoping to capture images of the elusive monsters, or at least lucrative shots for press agencies that document their fatal path through Mexico. He explains that shots of dead Mexican kids make much more money than live ones, and will go to any lengths to keep hold of his camera. Kaulder is deflected from his task by being ordered by his boss to escort Sam, the daughter of the media mogul, back to safety in America as the Zone shuts down for the monsters' migration season. Sam has abandoned her privileged life and gone rogue in the Zone, just prior to what is hinted is a marriage of convenience. The blooming romance of these protagonists as they travel across the zone mixes tinges of the *Heart of*

Darkness translated into Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (US 1979) with the Herzogian magical surrealism of *Fitzcarraldo* (W Germany 1982) or a freewheeling exotic Latin American road movie such as *Motorcycle Diaries* (Walter Salles, US/UK/Argentina 2004).

So what is this film *really* about? The hermeneut's question. It has ambitions to be more than a mere spectacle of sublime destruction, or the purely passional 'sense of wonder' that is sometimes claimed as the specific pleasure of science fiction (see Nicholls). Indeed, Edwards is often understood to be deliberately withholding the usual rhythms of spectacle embedded in the creature feature since at least *Gojira.* Instead, Edwards leaves the monster cloaked until the culminating scene, rather than overtly displayed in pulses of violent destruction. So, if monster theory demands the monster is a form of *allegoresis*, or writing otherwise*,* then the final sublime revelation of the monsters in Edwards film should propel us into Kantian overdrive.

The film apparently conforms not only to the standard aesthetic devices of the sublime, but surely also to the grid of possibilities thrown up by monster theory. The monsters in *Monsters* are chimera, allegorical beasts from the Medieval moral bestiary, such as the griffin, manticore, or the hydra. In more modern terms, they are what some biologists call 'boundary crawlers' that 'contest the boundary lines between entities we have been accustomed to take for granted' in their impossible fusions of fungus, dolphin, whale, octopus, or the species of fish that migrate to spawning grounds (Webster 5-6). Post-Enlightenment monsters are crises of Linnaean classification, the taxonomic system designed to eliminate the monstrous from natural history. Once scientific modernity establishes the order of things in taxonomic grids and morphologies, or in the Darwinian developmental tree of evolutionary branching from common ancestry, this, as Thomas Richards argues, cancels the 'forces of monstrosity' because everything now has a place in this classification matrix, making 'all monsters … our distant relatives' (48). Cryptozoological monsters nevertheless continue to appear after Linnaeus, recurring as the haunting doubles of the discursive ordering of nature. They re-enchant the world in the face of scientific disenchantment, because scientific taxonomy itself fosters new kinds of category crisis.

Since Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer coined the term 'Anthropocene' in the year 2000 as the marker of a new geological epoch, monsters have proliferated in the cultural imaginary. They rest in that interstitial zone between horror and promise, ecological catastrophe and adaptive, anti-essentialist survival. As the editors of the collection *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* declare: 'Monsters are useful figures with which to think the Anthropocene …. [since they] highlight symbiosis, the enfolding of bodies within bodies in evolution and every ecological niche' (Swanson 2-3). Monstrous gigantism is a way to figure the 'risky attachments' and 'tangled objects' that Bruno Latour suggests dominate the elision of nature and culture after we abandon their disastrous separation in modernity

(*Politics of Nature* 22). 'We shall always go from the mixed to the still more mixed, from the complicated to the still more complicated … we no longer expect from the future that it will emancipate us from all our attachments; on the contrary, we expect that it will attach us with tighter bonds to the more numerous *aliens* who have become fully-fledged members of the collective' (*Politics of Nature*, 191). Monsters are condensations of Timothy Morton's gooey, ungraspable *hyperobjects,* the 'menacing shadow' of vast, intricately interconnected ecologies that render human concepts 'no longer operational.' (Morton *Hyperobjects* 2 and 20). Donna Haraway has long embraced the 'promises of monsters', but also called for an embrace of the 'webbed, braided and tentacular living and dying in sympoietic multispecies string figures' that she insists on calling the Chthulucene (*Staying with the Trouble* 49).

There are hints that the alien others of *Monsters* reflect back obscurely responses to them with something perhaps like mirror empathy, responding violently to violence but otherwise passively, even lovingly, as in the culminating scene where the apparent embrace of these passing creatures follows the first and only embrace of Kaulder and his travelling companion Sam. Is the film meant to be a Derridean reflection on the violence of Western metaphysics – that to attempt to contain the other inside inflexible hierarchical boundaries only engenders their own undoing? Early in his career, Derrida spoke of something gestating inside the rigid structured hierarchies of structuralism emerging 'under the species of the non-species, in the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity' (292). Later, in *The Animal That Therefore I Am,* Derrida attempted to consider the absolute alterity of the animal, outside the violent inscriptions of man. In *Monsters,* Kaulder's awe in this final face-to-face encounter is finally unmediated: he stands in wonder without his objectifying camera, without thought for the money shot, moving from dominating gaze to something that Derrida might call 'hospitality.' But Derrida's account may still remain at too anthropocentric a scale for an era of ecocrisis, as Timothy Clark argues.

Let's get closer to the ground, as Latour encourages. Geopolitcally, these monsters rear up at one of the most fraught boundaries in the world. The US-Mexico border is one of the sites where the structural inequality between the global north and the south is the most overt. Obviously, this is where most readings of the film start. Indeed, an early review in the *New York Times* complained about the film's 'clunky immigration message' as too overt, as insufficiently allegorical (Catsoulis). *Monsters* has since been reassessed as prophetic of a Trumpian turn towards building of his 'beautiful' wall at the southern border. A news story on the BBC website asked in January 2017 in his first weeks in power 'Did This Sci-Fi Move Inspire Donald Trump's Mexican Wall?'[1] Trump's monsterization of Mexican immigrants in

---

[1] BBC Arts (26 January 2017), https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/4kDTBcGlYkQyD7yHX996GjJ/did-this-sci-fi-movie-inspire-donald-trump-s-mexican-wall Accessed 4 July 2019.

the Republican primary campaign continued in office, re-surfacing in key moments of the election cycle. It was extended in 2018 to demonise migrant caravans, stuffed with criminals from the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) gang and alleged to be funded by that monstrous Jew of alt-right conspiracies, George Soros. It was heading for the porous US border, tracked in its passage through Mexico from its origins in the 'shithole countries' of Central America.

Kirk Combe's recent essay on *Monsters* stays within this horizon of interpretation, reading the creatures as 'one big objective correlative for blowback', a film that depicts the effects of America's militaristic neoliberal aggression. 'Our violent monsterization of the global poor', Combe continues, 'produced only inescapable violence in return' (1012). Kaulder must undertake nothing less than a 'revolutionary overthrow' of his Western, neoliberal masculinity (1027), a possibility that only comes when American walls are breached and the invasion of the alien other erases both Kaulder's and the nation's defences. Transgression, abjection, sublime cognition, and self-transformation: a neat – possibly too neat – monster theory progression that also tidily reflects the liberal politics of the critic.

More interesting is the way in which Steffen Hantke's broadly similar account of *Monsters* starts to falter. Hantke at first welcomes *Monsters* because it 'expands the range of allegorical possibilities for the giant creature film' (25). Hantke upholds the central tenet of monster theory that the monster is an inexhaustible flexible metaphor. This is hermeneutic business as usual. Yet Hantke proposes that American cinema's twenty-first century creature features – from Peter Jackson's *King Kong,* via *Cloverfield* through *Battle: Los Angeles* and up to Edwards' *Godzilla* remake – have all to some extent failed because they connect poorly to the era's singular or dominant horizon of meaning: 9/11 and the subsequent 'war on terror.' They misfire, Hantke suggests, because the singular, irruptive, invasive monster is badly adapted to represent the 'times of perpetual emergency' (27), the unending, unfinishable grind of America's perpetual wars, 'the sheer inertial persistence of the system as a whole' (34). Godzilla and his progeny are fatally tied to a prior epoch of *punctual* nuclear or invasion threats, and after 9/11 they fall out of sync with the times. The normalisation of the aliens in *Monsters,* the post-apocalyptic everydayness of them, at least gestures at this new dispensation, despite the busted allegory, Hantke concludes.

In this argument, creature features fail to conform to a predetermined allegorical substrata that the viewer expects – even demands – to unearth. But what if *Monsters* wasn't ever allegorically 'about' 9/11 or the war on terror, or never simply so? What if the monsters didn't represent in the not-so-hidden depths of their source code invasive, vengeful blowback? To ask a more foundational question, what if the paradigm of depth hermeneutics, and the politics of identity and transgression that underpin monster theory established in the 1990s, missed where the film is at its most interesting?

The tool-kit of monster theory may end up abstracting readings at the *wrong level* and the *wrong scale,* if it uses a universalized geometry of transgression and a conventionalized set of markers of identity as its horizon of interpretation. This misses what is most interesting about *Monsters* – that it explores a very different and very contemporary logic of the border, conceived not as a *line* to be transgressed, a boundary crossed, a self that is punctured or menaced by a monstrous other, but as a *volume* that weirdly expands, enfolds and entwines identities in a wholly new way.

To be able to see this requires a theory that tracks close to the *surface* assemblages the film makes, the matrix of its associations and resonances that the film itself builds, rather than trying to detect any putative allegorical *depth* of filmic representation. This is what Heather Love calls 'close but not deep' reading; after Latour, it is to keep down to earth and follow that flat networks of associations that lead to the potential plurality of worlds or ontologies depicted in the film.

III

This post-hermeneutic argument requires a kind of dogged literalism, an attention to the surfaces of the mise-en-scène. The territory where the principal photography of *Monsters* was shot now really matters: Central America. The tiny crew worked mainly in Guatemala and Mexico (with some scenes shot in Belize, the former British colony). This is the migrant trail to El Norte, the North, a route known as the 'devil's highway' (Urrea). Indeed, Edwards has talked about the murderous presence of the cartels all around them as they shot the film (Val 16).

The train which starts at the border of Guatemala and snakes through Mexico, is the one ridden by migrants. They die in their tens of thousands as they cling to the roof and suffer accident, kidnap, assault and battery. The train is known as *La Bestia,* the beast. The journalist Oscar Martinez wrote an account of his journey along this 'death corridor', translated into English as *The Beast.* When he clambers on to the train, Martinez says: 'This is the Beast, the snake, the machine, the monster. These trains are full of legends and their history is soaked with blood. Some of the more superstitious migrants say that The Beast is the devil's invention' (53). No need for interpretation of this particular monster.

One of the crossings into El Norte that this beast heads for is Ciudad Juarez, just over the border from El Paso. In 1993, almost exactly coincident with the signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the population of Ciudad Juarez exploded with migrants seeking work. Amidst the rise of shanty towns (built from cardboard boxes from the new American factories), the city became associated with an epidemic of the rape, torture, murder and disappearance of migrant women, nearly 1500 over about fifteen years, although the precise number is unknown. A significant proportion of the women were

employed in the American-owned factories that NAFTA allowed to multiply in special economic zones to exploit lower wages on the Mexican side of the border. This 'feminicide' has prompted many cultural explorations, given the indifference or corruption of the authorities and their failure to solve most of the crimes (Driver and de Alba). These range from exploitative horror films, such as *Bordertown* (Nava, Mexico 2006), to Robert Bolano's magnificent memorial novel to the victims, *2666,* the central section of which documents the deaths of 108 of the women of the city.

After cartel wars erupted in Juarez over drug trafficking in 2009, at just about the time *Monsters* was wrapping, the city became the most deadly place in the world outside a warzone, with its gruesome display of executed bodies left in the streets or hanging from bridges. Mexico's descent into necropolitics has left it the 'country of mass graves' (Guillen et al). In Denis Villeneuve's thriller *Sicario* (UK 2015)*,* when the American special forces head across the border to the city in a military convoy, they are warned that they are entering 'The Beast'. The American gonzo journalist Charles Bowden published *Murder City*, and a photo-essay on Ciudad Juarez at the height of these interlinked explosions of violence. Kaulder's role in *Monsters,* and his moral turn away from the cynical capture of violence on his camera, is perhaps an echo of this debate about the ethics of the photoreportage of Juarez's desecrated female bodies. In text accompanying images of violence and death recorded by the city's photojournalists, Bowden called the city 'a huge ecotone of flesh and capital and guns' and thus 'the laboratory of our future' (48). Bowden said explicitly that he wanted to capture 'the monsters in our midst' (102).

The migrant trail leading to the border, in other words, is *already* Gothic, *already* science fictional: the laboratory of our future. In *Gore Capitalism*, the Mexican activist and writer Sayak Valencia suggests that the exchange at the border between Mexico and America is best understood as a vast necropolitical economy, where structural violence and systematic death is commercialized and spectacularized, and is based on the surplus value extracted from corpses. Gore capitalism is 'the price the Third World pays for adhering to the increasingly demanding logic of capitalism' (19). Valencia argues that this condition produces *endriago subjects,* using an old Spanish term from bestiaries for 'a monster, a cross between a man, a hydra, and a dragon' (131). These monstered subjects are a mark of 'the repudiation or derealisation of the individual' (133).

Valencia picks up the monster from Mary Louise Pratt's essay on the 'Return of the Monsters', where Pratt observes a Gothic bestiary emerging in contemporary Latin America, a world of blood-sucking *chupacabras* in Puerto Rico that feed off livestock, or the spectral fat-sucking *pishtacos* of the Andes that cause mysterious wasting diseases. To these celebrated folkloric examples, we might add the vampires of Guillermo del Toro's *Cronos* in Mexico (Mexico 1993) or the zombie apocalypse of Argentina's *Phase 7* (Goldbart, Argentina

2011). In Mexico, the twenty-first century has produced a whole array of new saints and devils, gods and monsters, not least the cult of Santa Muerte, the fusion of the Virgin Mary and the Grim Reaper, the fastest growing new religious movement of the twenty-first century (Chestnut).

These kinds of stories, Mary Louise Pratt suggests, 'are a very exact allegory of the disorganizing forces of a voracious and predatory neoliberalism' that comes from across the border. But she worries that categories like 'globalization' and 'neoliberalism' are at too large a scale and too crude to develop a nuanced reading. The new Latin American bestiary may be a mark of forces that emerge in *demodernized* 'zones of exclusion' where a catch-all symptomatic reading might not reach. These monsters, she concludes, are 'inscrutable agents of a future whose contours we don't know' (Pratt). The hermeneutic power of allegorical reading stumbles here, because it deals in abstractions rather than the concrete associations drawn from the local terrain.

Monster theory compels us to disarticulate the mosaic being of the monster, the better to master its hidden depths. The hermeneutics of suspicion can itself be akin to an act of murder, as in Fredric Jameson's graphic insistence that 'a whole historical ideology … must be drawn, massy and dripping, up into the light before the text can be considered to have been read' (245), as if interpretation were a form of Aztec sacrifice, cutting out the sacred heart (Margaret Thomas Crane has examined Jameson's sacrificial metaphor at depth in her thoughts on the surface and depth reading). But the vector of depth misses the surface network of the social discourses of Central America, Mexico and its borderlands, places in which *Monsters* is densely situated.

It is in this matrix that we can begin to worry at just how 'progressive' a film is that is so fully invested in the iconography of Mexico as the place of death. What Claudio Lomnitz calls Mexico's 'nationalization of an ironic intimacy with death' (20) was noted by Octavio Paz in 1950 in his essay on the Day of the Dead, where he claimed that 'our relations with death are intimate – more intimate, perhaps, than those of any other people' (51). Centuries of colonial history have left Mexico in an undead state of limbo – the premise of one of the founding texts of contemporary Mexican literature, Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Paramo* (1955). In the American imaginary, at least since the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s, Mexico has become the place of the worst imaginings, a monstrous Sadean hell, 'the United States' introjected "other"', as John Kraniauskas puts it (13). This has intensified in contemporary culture, from Villeneuve's *Sicario* or even liberal films about the inherently deathly business of border-crossing, such as *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Jones 2005) or *Desierto* (Cuaron 2015). In the TV series *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008-13), *Narcos* (Netflix, 2015-) or *Ozark* (Netflix, 2017-), the representation of the cartels is routinely one of exorbitant cruelty, violence and an implacable intrusion into the middle-class American home, the

imposition of a state of necropolitical 'bare life' on everyone it touches. The populism of Donald Trump about Mexican rapists or the menacing caravans of Central American migrants that head inexorably towards the US border nestles in a much wider cultural context. Following the law of degraded sequels, the films *Sicario 2: Soldado* (Sollima, UK 2018) and *Monsters: Dark Continent* (Green UK 2014) overtly elide the specific complexities of the US-Mexico border with an undifferentiated and resolutely dumb discourse of a 'war on terror.'

Steffen Hantke's account of *Monsters* suggests that part of the film's progressive politics is that, although it has two white American protagonists, 'neither one is in a position of privilege within the geographic zone they must cross' (30). Yet the one privilege they definitely do have is *still being alive* when they cross the border, since every Mexican who travels with them is either abandoned or killed. They have all been sacrificed before our two Americans sit atop a Mesoamerican pyramid to contemplate the American wall ahead of them. This privileged perch is the occasion for the banal comment from Kaulder that 'It's different looking at America from outside in', but he fails to think about the altar on which he and Sam sit, located at 'an apex of horror' (as Bataille calls it), where the priests presented the blood of their sacrificial victims to the sun (49). There are some attempts at inoculating the film against this deathly white privilege – Kaulder in the end decides not to photograph a Mexican girl killed in the confusion of an attack, for instance. But how far is *Monsters* immersed in the cultural imaginary of Mexico as the heart of darkness, a zone of monstrosity and death?

This is why it is important to return to the very end of the film, the scene of the sublime encounter with the monsters. This takes place over the border, beyond the wall, in Texas. The encounter is precisely *not* one of Gothic horror, boundary transgression, or invasion of the other. The border is *not* pierced, *not* invaded, *not* knocked down by an undead zombie horde, as we might expect from a post-9/11 apocalyptic template, the walls and wire fences always falling in every George Romero film since *Night of the Living Dead* (US 1968), every season of *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010-). Instead, the border posts have simply been abandoned, left unguarded, and the space beyond in Texas is emptied out, the American republic left *in absentia* – at least for a time. A battered Stars and Stripes flies over the ruins of Galveston. These scenes are an exemplary instance of the convergence of the constructedness of the Anthropocenic world and cinematic world-building, as noted by Jennifer Fay her study of cinema and the climate crisis, *Inhospitable World.* Edwards fuses them by digitally enhancing guerrilla filming in one of America's many actually existing climate catastrophe zones. We don't need to interpret these scenes, simply network the images into the ongoing disaster zone of the Texan coast.

This is where *Monsters* does lift itself out of deathly spectacle. It understands that the border is not a line to be transgressed, but a weird zone or semi-autonomous enclave that becomes a whole 'borderland ecosystem' over time (Rael 18). This is exactly what has happened at the US-Mexico border since a strip fifteen miles deep along the border was given special economic status in the early 1960s, expanded again after NAFTA in 1993. The border has moved from a notional line stretching invisibly between border markers first laid out in 1848 to become a complex security infrastructure, a semi-autonomous exclave, after the first fortified fences went up in 1990 around Tijuana. Since Operation Hold the Line at El Paso in 1993, Operation Safeguard at Nogales in 1994, and especially after the Secure Border Act of 2005, the border wall now extends over 650 miles – long before Trump's hysterical escalation of wall-building rhetoric (see Reece and Dear). This structure has failed to prevent migration, but has intensified the death rates associated with crossing, since it pushes people-trafficking to more deadly routes across the Sonora Desert, and forces the migrants into the deadly trade of gore capitalism.

The border is now a security zone over 150 miles wide, a massive corridor surveilled by the Border Patrol on the ground, overhead with drones and underground with radars looking for tunnels. It cuts across ecosystems, as the Secure Borders Act overrides the Wilderness Act, and it has cut off the sacred pathways of the Tohono O'odham tribe. The militarization of the border provided the conditions for the emergence of The Zetas, a cartel of former soldiers armed to the teeth and merciless controllers of the drug trade at the border. The United States decision to arm and train security forces in Mexico under President Calderon 'helped create monsters', Charles Thompson says in his travelogue, *Border Odyssey* (153). Again, a reading just needs to plot lines between the film and this network of references to the horrors of the border.

For most on the left this feverish activity of wall-building is all pointless symbolism, since, as Wendy Brown has argued, the security walls, built amidst contemporary flows of population and money around the world, are always 'an imago of sovereign state power in the face of its [own] undoing' (25). Rather than nationalistic strength, walls 'reveal a tremulousness, vulnerability, dubiousness, or instability at the core of what they aim to express' (24). The gigantic – but useless and abandoned – wall that Kaulder and Sam pass through unchallenged at the end of *Monsters* becomes what Wendy Brown terms 'an eerie monument to the impossibility of nation-state sovereignty today' (34).

Borderlines have become what Mezzarda and Neilson call *borderscapes,* dynamic volumes that are not fixed lines but 'an elusive and mobile geography' marked by an unpredictable 'elasticity of territory' (8). They exhibit the peculiar logic of 'exclaves', pockets of extra-legality or extra-statecraft, 'states of exception' that might suspend economic regulation, citizenship rights, or other elements of national and international law. There is no simple

line to transgress: the border becomes a dispersed or distributed zone, 'situated', as Étienne Balibar says, 'everywhere and nowhere' (78). This might be intended to extend state power (the powers of the US Border Patrol have been expanded over an increasing area), but these zones can also become decidedly *weird*, resistant to any rational determination or cartographic mapping. The 'Area X' of Jeff VanderMeer's Southern Reach trilogy of novels (the first filmed by Alex Garland as *Annihilation* in 2018) is just such an unmasterable 'alien zone' that appears in Florida, its logic and parameters constantly undoing any scientific or security state attempts to contain and master it, or even understand its scale. The 'weird realism' of Area X and its hybrid monsters are meant to disable confident allegorical interpretation too.

The monsters of *Monsters* are products not of monster theory transgression, but creatures fostered by the laboratory of the borderscape itself, that weird and unknowable volume. This is why they are represented as cephalopodic, tentacled things. The tentacular sublime favoured by horror fiction and film in the wake of H. P. Lovecraft's monstrous god Cthulhu has become the formless form of many contemporary monsters. This is because, as Peter Godfrey-Smith argues, the weird alterity of this class of animal was an 'evolutionary experiment' that developed independently of man and indeed all chordate life. It makes them 'the closest we will probably come to meeting an intelligent alien' (9). For Vilem Flusser, cephalopoda systematically other the mammalian: 'We are both banished from much of life's domain: it into the abyss, we onto the surfaces of the continents… As two exposed and threatened pseudopods of life, we are both forced to think – it as a voracious belly, we as something else. But as what? Perhaps this is for *it* to answer' (25). The tentacular represents what Steve Shaviro terms 'discognition', designating 'something that disrupts congition, exceeds the limits of cognition, but also subtends cognition' (10-11). No wonder Eugene Thacker called the last volume of his *Horror of Philosophy* trilogy, an investigation of modern horror's of 'enigmatic thought of the unknown' (Vol 1 8-9), *Tentacles Longer Than the Night.* The resistance to translation of the unthought into thought marks the limit of monster theory under the sign of the Anthropocene. This is not allegory but the place where allegory ceases to translate. It constantly pushes criticism back to the textual surface and its multiplied chains of association.

This last scene of *Monsters* is rich in its intertwined, tentacular resonances. The monsters seem indifferent to the human dynamics taking place below them, or else entwine with them in wholly other ways. They mess with the shape and scale of interpretation. But what else do we also miss if we are not looking at the full mise-en-scène of this moment? Searching for allegorical meanings ignores the very *ground* of the alien encounter. It takes place, of course, on the forecourt of a gas station. In Texas, ground zero of American petroculture, these tentacular monsters surely raise associations with the historical spectre of the early oil barons, often represented, as Standard Oil was in a famous 1904 cartoon, as

the strangling 'octopus' of monopoly capitalism. In his delirious theory-fiction *Cyclonopedia,* Reza Negerestani imagined oil as 'The Blob' (20), a subterranean monster that is 'the undercurrent of all narrations' (19) and that drives capitalism to 'absolute madness' (27). Yet, since the monsters entirely ignore the pumps at this gas station, perhaps they also enigmatically point *beyond* the 'oil ontology' that has underpinned Western modernity, with all its violent logics of possession, extraction, and consumption? (see Hitchcock). Since they seem to feed on electricity, are they the hybrid Prius of the post-millennial monster world?

What do the monsters keen about in such mournful tones? Is it mourning, or ecstasy? There is no sudden grasp of alien languages here, as there is in Villeneuve's film, *Arrival* (2016), where a narrative ellipsis suddenly allows the scientists to learn the alien language. In *Monsters,* there is a core of unreadibility about these creatures. They morph beyond the hermeneutic confidence inspired by the tool-kit of monster theory.

At the limits of thinkability, the size and scale of the cephalopod is always cloaked, surrounded by the myths of the kraken, the giant squid and the nautilus that have haunted human cultures for centuries. Donna Haraway's call for 'tentacular thinking' rewrites the castrating horror of the writhing Medusa of anthropocentric Western myth, invoking instead another kind of storytelling, webbed, braided, entwined, 'theory in the mud, as muddle' (31), 'surviving collaboratively in disturbance and collaboration' (37) Octopus, she claims, 'are good figures for the luring, beckoning, gorgeous, finite, dangerous precarities' (55) of the present crisis.

This gesture demonsters the monsters of *Monsters.* Hermeneutics look up at the sublime size of monsters to pull them back down to human scale. But this essay is an attempt to illustrate what it would mean not to follow a pre-determined monster theory, instead following the long and complex network of associations built up by the surface representations of the film. It is to follow Bruno Latour's injunction in 'Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?' that 'the critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles' (246), building long chains of association that might become appropriate to the new scales the current climate crisis demands.

Works Cited

Balibar, Etienne. 'What is a Border?' *Politics and the Other Scene.* Trans. C. Jones et al. London: Verso, 2002. 76-85.

Barr, Jason. *The Kaiju Film: A Critical Study of Cinema's Biggest Monsters.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2016.

Bataille, Georges. *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Vol. 1: Consumption.* Trans. R. Hurley. New York: Zone, 1988.

Botting, Fred. *Gothic.* London: Routledge, 1996.

Bowden, Charles. *Juárez: The Laboratory of Our Future.* NY: Aperture, 1998.

Bowden, Charles. *Murder City: Ciudad Juarez and the Global Economy's New Killing Fields.* New York: Bold Type, 2011.

Brown, Wendy. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty.* New York: Zone, 2014.

Burke, Edmund. *Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. J. Boulton Routledge: New York, 2008.

Catsoulis, Jeannette. 'Alien Invaders, Earthling Romance', *New York Times,* 28 Oct 2010. www.nytimes.com Accessed 4 July 2019.

Chambers, Ross. *Untimely Meditations: AIDS Writing, Testimonial and the Rhetoric of Haunting.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004.

Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Devoted to Death: Santa Muerte, The Skeleton Saint.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Clark, Timothy, 'Derangements of Scale". *Telemorphosis: Theory in the Era of Climate Change,* 1, https://quod.lib.umich.edu. Accessed 4 July 2019.

Clarke, M. Tavel and D. Wittenberg, eds. *Scale in Literature and Culture.* Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2017.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)'. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture,* ed. J. J. Cohen. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. 3-25.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome, 'Grey'. *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green,* ed. Cohen. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 270-89.

Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. 'Postscript: The Promise of Monsters'. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous.* London: Routledge, 2012. 449-64.

Combe, Kirk. 'Homeland Insecurity: Macho Globalization and Alien Blowback in *Monsters*'. *Journal of Popular Culture* 48: 5 (2015), 1010-29.

Crane, Margaret Thomas. 'Surface, Depth, and the Spatial Imaginary: A Cognitive Reading of *The Political Unconscious*', *Representations* 108 (2009), 76-97.

Csicsery-Ronay Jr., Istvan. 'On the Grotesque in Science Fiction'. *Science Fiction Studies* 29: 1 (2002), 71-99.

de Alba, Alicia Gaspar and Georgina Guzman, eds. *Making a Killing: Femicide, Free Trade and* La Frontera. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

Dear, Michael, *Why Walls Won't Work: Repairing the US-Mexico Divide.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Derrida, Jacques. 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', *Writing and Difference.* Trans. A. Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 278-94.

Driver, Alice. *More or Less Dead: Feminicide, Haunting, and the Ethics of Representation in Mexico.* Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2015.

Easterling, Keller. *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space.* London: Verso, 2016.

Fay, Jennifer. *Inhospitable World: Cinema in the Time of the Anthropocene.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Felski, Rita. 'Critique and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion'. *M/C Journal* 15: 1 (2012). http://journal.media-culture.org.au

Flusser, Vilem and Louis Bec. *Vampyroteuthis Infernalis: A Treatise.* Trans. V. Pakis Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Godfrey-Smith, Peter. *Other Minds: The Octopus and the Evolution of Intelligent Life.* London: Penguin, 2016.

Guillen, Alejandra, Margo Torres and Marcela Turati. '2000 Clandestine Graves: How a Decade of the Drug War Has Turned Mexico into a Burial Ground'. https://theintercept.com/2018/12/13/mexico-drug-war-mass-graves/ Accessed 4 July 2019.

Halberstam, Judith. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995.

Hantke, Steffen. 'The State of Emergency: Life Under Alien Occupancy in Gareth Edwards' *Monsters*', *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 41: 1 (2016), 25-38.

Haraway, Donna. 'The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate(d) Others. *Cultural Studies,* ed. L. Grossberg et al. New York: Routledge, 1992. 295-337.

Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

Harman, Graham. *Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything.* London: Penguin, 2018.

Hitchcock, Peter. 'Oil in an American Imaginary'. *New Formations* 69 (2010), 81-97.

Hughes, William and Andrew Smith, eds. *EcoGothic.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981.

Jones, Reece. *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move.* London: Verso, 2016.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgement,* trans. P. Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Kearney, Richard. *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (London: Routledge, 2003).

Kraniauskas, John. 'A Monument to the Unknown Worker: Robert Bolano's *2666* as Noir and an Installation'. *Mexico Noir: Rethinking the Dark in Contemporary Narrative, Film and Photography,* ed. Erica Segre (New York: Peter Lang, 2018). 1-19.

Landon, Brooks. *The Aesthetics of Ambivalence: Rethinking Science Fiction Film in the Age of Electronic (Re)production.* Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1992.

Latour, Bruno. *The Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.

Latour, Bruno. 'Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern", *Critical Inquiry* 30 (2004), 225-48.

Latour, Bruno. 'Sharing Responsibility: Farewell to the Sublime'. *Reset Modernity!,* ed. B. Latour and C. Leclerq. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016. 161-71.

Latour, Bruno. *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime.* Trans. C. Porter. Cambridge: Polity, 2018.

Lomnitz, Claudio. *Death and the Idea of Mexico.* New York: Zone, 2005.

Love, Heather. 'Close But Not Deep: Literary Ethics and the Descriptive Turn'. *New Literary History* 41 (2010), 371-91.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Trans. G. Bennington. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984.

Malm, Andreas. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming.* London: Verso, 2016.

Martinez, Oscar. *The Beast: Riding the Rails and Dodging Narcos on the Migrant Trail.* Trans. D. Ugaz and J. Washington. London: Verso, 2014.

Mezzarda, Sandro and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or, The Multiplication of Labor.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.

Mittman, Asa Simon. 'Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster Studies'. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous,* ed. A. Mittman and P. Dendle. Ashgate: Farnham, 2012. 1-14.

Monk, Samuel. *The Sublime: A Study in Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Century England.* New York: Modern Language Association, 1935.

Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World.* Minneapolis: University Minnesota Press, 2013.

Murray, Robin L. and Joseph K. Heumann. *Monstrous Nature: Environment and Horror on the Big Screen.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016.

Neale, Steve. '"You've Gotta Be Fucking Kidding": Knowledge, Belief and Judgment in Science Fiction'. *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Annette Kuhn. London: Verso, 1990. 160-8.

Nicholls, Peter and Cornel Robu. 'Sense of Wonder'. *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction.* http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/sense_of_wonder Accessed 4 July 2019.

Reza Negerestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (Melbourne: re: press, 2008.

Paz, Octavio. *The Labyrinth of Solitude: Life and Thought in Mexico.* Trans. L. Kemp. London, 1967.

Pratt, Mary Louise. 'Globalization, Demodernization, and the Return of the Monsters', 2002 keynote lecture. www.smashthisscreen.blogspot.com. Accessed 4 July 2019.

Radford, Benjamin. *Tracking the Chupacabra: The Vampire Beast in Fact, Fiction, and Folklore.* Albuquerque,: University of New Mexico Press, 2011.

Rael, Ronald. *Borderwall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the US-Mexico Boundary.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017.

Rajaram, Prem Kumar and Carl Grundy-Warr, eds. *Borderscapes: Hidden Geographies and Politics and Territory's Edge.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Richards, Thomas. *The Imperial Archive.* London: Verso, 1993.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Tendencies.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993.

Shaviro, Steven. *Discognition.* London: Repeater, 2015.

Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation and Other Essays.* London: Deutsch, 1987.

Stewart, Garrett. 'The "Videology" of Science Fiction'. *Shadows of the Magic Lamp: Fantasy and Science Fiction in Film,* G. Slusser and E. Rabkin, eds. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985. 159-207.

Swanson, Heather et al, "Bodies Tumbled into Bodies", *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Monsters of the Anthropocene,* ed. Anna Tsing et al. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017. 1-12.

Thacker, Eugene. *In the Dust of this Planet,* Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 1. Winchester: Zero Books, 2011.

Thacker, Eugene. *Tentacles Longer Than the Night,* Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 3. Winchester: Zero Books, 2015.

Thompson Jr., Charles. *Border Odyssey: Travels along the U.S./Mexico Divide.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015.

Tsutsui, William M and M. Ito. *In Godzilla's Footsteps: Japanese Pop Culture Icons on the Global Stage*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006.

Tsutsui, William, *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters.* Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2004.

Urrea, Luis Alberto. *The Devil's Highway: A True Story.* New York: Little, Brown, 2008.

Val, Mark Cotta. *Godzilla: The Art of Destruction.* London: Titan, 2014.

Valencia, Sayak. *Gore Capitalism,* trans. J. Pluecker. NY: Semiotext(e), 2018.

Webster, Andrew. 'Bio-Objects: Exploring the Boundaries of Life'. *Bio-Objects: Life in the 21st Century,* ed. N. Vermeulen, et al. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012. PAGE NOS.

Weismantel, Mary. *Cholas and Pishtacos: Stories of Race and Sex in the Andes.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.