Abstract

Through the challenges of Donna Haraway and Giorgio Agamben to Michel Foucault’s theory of biopolitics I develop a conceptual frame for thinking about the sociological role of monsters in modern society. I argue that Foucault’s position on the concept of monsters submerges expressions of liminality and exclusion from western society which are based on the mistaken narrative of how static natural laws and dynamic socio-political laws define the individual. Underneath the contemporary iterations of inclusive abnormality and expressions of repressed human desires, monsters illuminate the contradictory ‘nature’ of such laws, and provide the form in which to debate who – or what – is allowed within the definition of a human individual and, therefore, within the human population.
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Chapter I: Between a rock and a hard place

What role do monsters play in modern western society? Creatures of the human mind, monsters are traditionally mythic embodiments of the ‘unnatural’ who function as warnings of impending risk. Described in haunting detail by Homer in The Odyssey, Scylla and Charybdis, shown in figure 1 at right, are classic examples. Dwelling in twin promontories flanking a narrow, rushing channel of the Mediterranean Sea, and through the imagery of their grotesquely human forms, these monstrous women signify the dangers of getting caught ‘between a rock and a hard place’. Scylla resides on one side of the channel, where her “twelve feet, all misshapen, and six necks, exceeding long, and on each one an awful head, and therein three rows of teeth, thick and

Figure 1. Heinrich, Füssli Johann. [1794-1796]. “Odysseus in Front of Scylla and Charybdis”
close” (Homer, 12.89-93) grasp into the sea for any living creature tossed against the jagged edges of the cliff she so closely resembles, while, across the channel, the “divine Charybdis sucks down the black water. Thrice a day she belches it forth, and thrice she sucks it down terribly. Mayest thou not be there when she sucks it down, for no one could save thee from ruin” (Homer, 12.104-108).

Such creatures as these populate one lineage of the origin myths of monsters in the western tradition. Monsters are semiotic figures, verbal and visual vessels in which to place multiple meanings intended to provide comprehensive understandings of complex issues; terrific figures that bring home, so to speak, through their disturbing humanity, the potential dangers that accost us. In ancient days, they warned us of a host of dangers: geographical hazards, the marvels of the supernatural, and human transgressions against religious edicts and natural laws. Speaking to us through danger, monsters have always been hybrid creatures and are more often than not imbued with human physiognomic, cognitive, and/or social characteristics: they are sexed, cross-bred combinations of human and other; they speak with human tongues and think with human brains; they are gendered, profoundly racialized, and either aspire to, or despise, human values, status, and norms.

Although the practice of embodying terrors in quasi-human form and projecting that imagery through a variety of media remains with us to this day, the signs and significance of monsters, both the figures and the warnings they denote, have shifted dramatically. That contemporary monsters are modern monsters, with roots in the western epistemological break with antiquity, is easy enough to see. Vampires and cyborgs are very different creatures than the sea-monsters and transformative nymphs of Homer, for example, and even the hazards they warn
us of have changed dramatically: Dracula and Frankenstein are the monstrous embodiments of
very different dangers than Scylla and Charybdis.

Modern monsters are composed of different categories of being and signify vastly
different morals or dangers from those of old. As such, they have garnered an entirely different
set of interpretations as to their roles and significance, and I engage with three specific
perspectives on the modern monster which begin with Michel Foucault’s biopolitical framework
for modern society. Foucault (2003a), in his project on biopolitics, argues that monsters have
become incorporated into the fold of modern humanity. No longer considered as warnings, or
portents, for potential dangers from the natural world or the supernatural, modern monsters
signify dangers which emerge solely from within humanity: dangers that well up from
individuals and groups from which we must protect ourselves and our society. According to
Foucault, monsters have become merely abnormal, and are fully enveloped within the field of
discipline and regulation.

Yet monsters have both persisted and proliferated within modernity, and Foucault’s
theory of biopolitics and his perspective on monsters have been challenged by both Donna
Haraway and Giorgio Agamben. Donna Haraway (1991; 1997), in her critique on the biopolitical
framework through the global culture of western science, argues that the biopolitical framework
does not accurately identify and explain the scientific process of defining the limits of modern
humanity. Haraway’s position is that monsters are significant in marking off the cross-bred outer
limits of what we define as human. As the complexity of the scientific and ‘natural’ boundaries
of humanity increase with the conflation of scientific knowledge and modern power, monsters
function as the limit within the laws and technologies of science and the state and she argues that
monsters become the border figures of modernity, the hybrid beings which belong neither within the human population nor without. Giorgio Agamben (1993; 2005), in his critique of the biopolitical through sovereign power and the state of exception, argues that the biopolitical framework does not accurately identify and explain the legal process of exclusion from modern society. He argues that the semiotic role of monsters is a dissimulation, or displacement, of all that is “uncanny and frightening” (1993: 137) in the “anthropogenesis” (2004: 79), or development, of ‘man’. Here, the classic semiotic displacement, or “lateral shift” (Barthes, 1973: 115) in significance, allows for the exclusion of the monstrous, as a marked human, from society. Those humans who are marked inhuman become figures of exclusion from the biopolitical field through legal categories of exception through the modern western state.

The focus of each of these scholars is specific to their perspective on the biopolitical ordering of modernity, and each positions the monster in a different spatial relationship to society: Foucault asserts that monsters have become incorporated into the human population, Haraway argues that monsters remain at the boundaries of humanity, and Agamben claims that the inhuman are excluded from humanity by the state. Both Haraway and Agamben begin their respective arguments with a critique of Foucault’s notion of the biopolitical field, and all of them are concerned with the evolving role and significance of the monster in the temporal shift to the modern.

The overall goal of this paper is to develop a conceptual frame for thinking about the sociological role of monsters in modern western society. Through Haraway and Agamben’s critiques of Foucault, I develop a conceptual frame which points to the limitations of Foucault’s insights into the biopolitical mode of power as well as his periodization and formulation of the
shift from ‘monstrosity’ to ‘abnormality’. Rather than merely categorizing and placing the individual perspectives of Foucault, Haraway, and Agamben on the monstrous as separate positions within the biopolitical framework of humanity, I examine the question of belonging that is central to this framework and ask how monsters come to signify and occupy such varying positions of belonging within modern western society. I argue that the monster’s role in modern western society is not a point, or position, within the spatial domain of humanity, either inside, at the boundaries, or outside. Instead, the modern monster is a semiotic-material mechanism, a symbolic figure, through which these various positions are determined.

This is a thoroughly sociological proposition, for the monster’s role in society is to provide a mechanism for the social production of the status and position of individuals and groups. This production of status and position happens within the biopolitical framework of modernity through the process of normalization which Foucault identifies as the mid-level operation between the organic objective of power and the techniques of discipline and regulation. It is through the process of normalization that individuals and groups are ordered within modern society by status in terms of civil and political personhood, and the modern monster is a mechanism through which this operation occurs. Foucault’s perspective on monsters is only part of the larger picture, and I argue that his take on the concept of monsters submerges the significance of monstrous expressions in contemporary western society which are evident at the border positions of increasing scientific complexity and which can be understood in terms of the exclusionary practices of western jurisprudence. Our contemporary fascination with monsters is more than our disciplined and regulated mania for our own abnormalities, it is one of the mechanisms through which we decide who belongs and who does not.
The proliferation of monstrous metaphors and depictions in contemporary society speaks to the necessity of understanding the nature and significance of monsters and the monstrous as a modern social phenomenon. As the modern monster is a mechanism through which human status and position is decided, the phenomenon is dependent upon coterminous changes that have occurred around what it means to be human in a modern world and thus some explication of the shifting elements of western society is necessary to understand the persistence and proliferation of monstrous. Foremost among these is the narrative of an epistemological break with antiquity.

*The knowledge and power of modernity*

The idea of progressively enfranchising more and more of the human population through scientific knowledge is specific to the modern period, and our current thinking on what it means to be human or monstrous is deeply imbedded within it. From a broad view, the channel of western modernity flows between the twinned promontories of knowledge and power: straitened, on one side, by the accumulation and refinement of scientific knowledge, and confined, on the other, by expansive political inclusion, modern history seemingly rushes between the two in a unified direction toward a progressively more ordered society. This perspective owes much to the enthusiastic purveyors of science and order in the 17th and 18th centuries, such as Francis Bacon who presented a well-known version of the ‘twinned promontories’ metaphor as the frontispiece of his 1620 *The Great Instauration*. This image depicts the epistemological break between the historical eras of ‘antiquity’ and ‘modernity’ which has since been identified by a host of 20th century scholars as a paradigm shift, or
revolution of thought, in western society which ushered in the birth of science, as we understand it today, and a nascent, enlightened, large-scale polity. Bacon’s frontispiece, shown in figure 2, shows two ships sailing out towards a vast horizon through the Pillars of Hercules, their fully extended rigging and wake testifying to the speed and strength of the directional wind and current, while the motto announces the promise of a new world of knowledge:

\textit{Multi pertransibunt et augebitur scientia} – many will pass through and knowledge will be the greater. Known through antiquity as the boundary posts of civilization and ostensibly labelled with the warning \textit{nec plus ultra} – nothing further beyond – the Pillars of Hercules accumulated meanings over years which shifted dramatically with European expansion into the Americas. From the boundary of the old world to the gateway of the new, the Pillars became

\footnote{As examples of this, see Kuhn’s (1996) \textit{The Structure of Scientific Revolution}, Shapin’s (1998) introduction to \textit{The Scientific Revolution}.}
imbued with the optimistic possibilities of expansion and Charles V had them incorporated into
the Spanish coat of arms, audaciously erasing the word *nec* in order to urge a forward moment: *plus ultra*, further beyond. The use of the Pillars of Hercules later by Bacon as a gateway to a
new scientific world spoke to the unfolding drama of European exploration. For 20th century
scholars looking back on the image it conveyed how scientific methodology sails forth to meet
global political expansion through the towering principles of knowledge and power in a new era
in history. This inexorable *moving forward* toward a modern world could be ordered through
reason and science.

The narrative of modernity speaks to an epistemological break with antiquity; the
monsters Scylla and Charybdis have been vanquished, the jagged cliffs and sucking whirlpools
tamed and transformed into smooth pillars and the channel made clear for ships and for a new
tradition of order, in which the progressive extension of law and the status of personhood is
conferred to increasing numbers of people through novel categories of knowledge and power.
Accordingly, and with the 20th century definition of the modern era in mind, much has been
written on the revolutionary advancement of science and the historical mechanism which enfolds
diverse peoples into the European socio-political system. Yet nowhere has the twinning of
knowledge and power been more closely examined than in the body of Michel Foucault’s work.

From *Madness and Civilization* (1961) to the posthumous publication of his *Lectures at the Collège de France* (ongoing) Foucault has traced the correlation between scientifically
generated knowledge and changing forms of political inclusion in the west, arguing that this
correlation has produced juridico-political techniques of discipline and organization through
which the human population is increasingly regulated – in short, a new order of things. Within
this narrative of modernity Foucault argues that the principle of a large-scale polity is constituted from a novel form of positive and productive power, biopower, and that the juridico-political techniques of governing, as the prevailing set of institutional operations within this new power-sphere, stem from scientifically gathered and refined knowledge. The net of forces operating through biopower are cast deep into the modern western world, and the sphere of influence is wide. In the field of the biopolitical, the human population is managed and maximized for the greater good of human life itself – the human race, or species.

It is important to note that this field is both inclusive and exclusive. Foucault (2003a: 48) claims that biopower itself is a “power that does not act by excluding but rather through a close and analytical inclusion of elements”, however, in the objective of this power, some must be excluded. The biopolitical field is a field of individual disciplinary techniques and population management techniques, and as such strives to include all individuals and groups who meet the prevailing requirements of personhood within the techniques of society and the state. The object of this management is to maximize, or optimize the population, and as such it guards against and excludes those who do not meet the prevailing requirements of personhood. Foucault (2003b: 242, 244-245) argues that the biopolitical is a “global” field, and that the last domain of biopolitics is the human species itself. The question that prevails within this theoretical framework is the question of who is perceived as human enough to be a member of the species, which groups are accorded the status of personhood and included in the biopolitical field.
The role of the state and the status of personhood

The idea of an expansive and productive form of power which generates disciplinary and regulatory techniques of governance is dependent upon the state as the arbiter of inclusion for the purpose of law and order. Personhood has always been an ontological category of humanity defined by inclusion in the social – as opposed to the merely biological category of human – and negotiating the boundary between the two remains with us from ancient times, like the monstrous figure. The characteristics of this boundary are social artefacts, manifestations of the philosophical and intellectual patterns of historical context, which emerge through the institutionalized practices of a society and are subject to change as that context changes. What does not change, however, is the need to define, articulate, and apply these artefacts and the need to negotiate which characteristics are accorded the status of personhood.

Aristotle’s distinction between political and natural life (bios and zoe) is the classic manifestation of this negotiation process within the context of his time, and it provides us with the long-standing distinction between the form of human as a biological category and the status of human as a social category (Woods, 1993; Windsor, 2002). In The Metaphysics (1034a6-8), Aristotle defines human beings as a proto-species – where similarity of kind is ensured through reproduction – yet differentiated by status, and above all, between those who live within the social polis and those who do not. This essentialist doctrine is further explicated in The Politics, were he defines the progression of reaching the status of bios through the necessary steps of forming a society: sexual reproduction, family, villages and communities, and, finally, the incorporation of multiple communities into a state, through which law and order prevails.
Those individuals or groups who do not belong to a state, regardless of their biological similarity to kind, do not meet the requirements of personhood and are not afforded the status and protection accordingly:

It follows that the state belongs to the class of objects which exist in nature and that man by nature is a political animal. Anyone who by his nature and not simply by ill-luck has no state is either too bad or too good, either subhuman or superhuman (Aristotle, The Politics, 1253a1-5).

The concept of human, then, is logically embroiled in the status of civic and political personhood: to be fully human an individual must not only meet the biological requirements of Aristotelian taxonomy of ‘man’ – be afforded the status of a mature, physiologically suitable, male – but also meet the juridico-political requirements of a state society.

We can trace this negotiation of the boundaries of personhood historically from the classical period of city states through to the early modern formulations on reason within the Westphalian system of nation states and subsequent colonial taxonomies of race within the global reach of the European state system\(^2\). In each of these examples, distinctions between human characteristics are defined, articulated, and applied within the social milieu of the species; the status of personhood is internalized and conferred on those who meet the criteria within prevailing boundaries: free men in the Greek polis, rational men in 17\(^{th}\) century Europe, and the colonizers of the 16\(^{th}\) to 19\(^{th}\) centuries of European empire. Those who do not meet those distinctions, of course, are relegated to the status of ‘other’ and are restricted and even eliminated from the state. The semiotic figure of the monster, shifting with the tide of modernity to embrace only human dangers to the social state, functions as a vividly embodied vessel in which the boundary characteristics of humanity are deposited, a visual chimera through which we decide –

\(^2\) See Barry Hindess (2005: 337-339) on the development of state societies through western history.
in the ever changing debate – who belongs in western society and who does not. The state, or those within it, is the arbiter of civic and political personhood, and the status of personhood is conferred onto those who meet the requirements of the state; this fact however, does not mean that this concept has remained static since the time of Aristotle.

The question of personhood, with the advent of modern zoological systems of taxonomy and a general consensus on the definition of *Homo sapiens*, shifted from the classical inquiry into the *level* of humanity – subhuman, human, or superhuman – to an inquiry into the *kind* of humanity. As Foucault (1990: 142) argues with the rise of the modern state, the juridico-political debates on the status of civic and political personhood rested upon scientifically defined and biologically determined phenotypic, legal, and social categories of humanity for the first time. Sex and race; criminal and citizen; English or Irish, propertied or not – these became the categories for conferring or denying the status and benefits of personhood, and the progressive quality of the modern has shifted these criterion even further. In this narrative, the primary function of the state remains similar to the Aristotelian definition of providing law and order, yet the modern state is wholly wrapped up in a particular kind of order: one that, on the surface, strives for the civil and political inclusion of all those who have the constituent elements of *Homo sapiens* through the application of scientifically accumulated knowledge for the protection of biological life itself.

Within the modern world, monsters gradually lose, not their link with the significance of what we commonly call the natural world, but their embodiment of environmental hazards, and become specific to the ordering of the human population. As Foucault has put it, monsters have become mere shadows of our selves, incorporated into the modern state through human
characteristics which must be examined, treated, regulated and disciplined rather than excluded from the state because they do not meet the level of humanity necessary for personhood within the modern.

The paradox of inclusion

But this narrative of modernity, flowing brightly through smooth pillars, contains a contradiction – a counter-current submerged beneath the weight of the surface, and it is with this paradox that we find more to the biopolitical story of monsters than the Foucauldian argument suggests. Just as Scylla and Charybdis are hidden in the dark recesses of promontories as the sources of danger and destruction, so the paradox of inclusion is concealed beneath the twin pillars of modernity as the source of exclusion and death. Within the human populations of modernity are those who, by either nature or ill-luck, are denied civic and political personhood. Hannah Arendt, in The Origins of Totalitarianism, eloquently defines this contradiction in writing on 20th century refugees and human rights:

The conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were still human. The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human (Arendt, 1976: 299).
The world, as Arendt (1976: 301) puts it, relies on the limitations of human artifice in the assumption that “we can produce equality through organization”. Those who are denied the status of personhood within the modern state, such as the WWII refugee woman depicted in Figure 3 at right, whatever their kind of humanity, find that they are as truly ‘between a rock and a hard place’ as any sailor who found himself caught between Scylla’s monstrous heads and Charybdis’ sucking mouth. Civic and political inclusion is not a matter where mere biological humanity is enough to warrant the careful governance of biopower. The inclusivity of biopolitics has a limit, and Foucault argues that this limit is in the defence of the larger population through the vehicle of racially defined characteristics.

In Society Must be Defended (2003b: 258), Foucault argues that “broadly speaking, racism justifies the death-function in the economy of biopower by appealing to the principle that the death of others makes one biologically stronger insofar as one is a member of a race or
population, insofar as one is an element in a unitary living plurality”. Foucault equates inclusion to the biopolitical field with racial subcategories of the species and ‘race’ becomes the primary vehicle through which civic and political personhood is decided. This very well may be, and state, or biological, racism is certainly a function of exclusion. However, I argue that the monster figure is one of the mechanisms through which biological and social characteristics of human beings are determined, including racialized characteristics. State racism may be the vehicle, but monsters are one of the mechanisms which make the vehicle work. Contrary to Foucault’s position that monsters become integrated into the level of humanity through the notion of abnormal individuals and thus wholly included within the biopolitical field, I argue that monsters are semiotic mechanisms through which different kinds of human beings are positioned within the biopolitical field, as either part of the human race, on the borders of that population, or excluded from the species. In keeping with the move to the biopolitical in the modern era, monsters are no longer figures signifying natural or supernatural hazards, they have become figures who signify the human who, by either nature or ill-luck, has become the sole monstrous hazard to one’s own species.

For Foucault, the limit of the inclusive power of the biopolitical does not consist solely of disciplining and normalizing the individuals within the population for the optimization of the life of the species. Rather, this limit is located within the arbitration process of deciding which characteristics of humanity are detrimental to the life of the species as such. This point becomes perceptible in the aporia between belonging and inclusion that is apparent in Foucault’s theoretical framework. When this gap is examined and defined as a distinction between belonging and inclusion, the contradiction within biopolitical inclusion becomes apparent and the parameters of the limit can be explored. I argue that these parameters are neither scientific
primarily, as Haraway suggests, or legal, as Agamben argues, but both at the same time and varying ways: the laws of ‘nature’ and ‘man’ order the notion of belonging, and only by dint of belonging can inclusion take place. The monstrous figure serves as the vehicle through which human characteristics are defined as natural or unnatural, lucky or unfortunate. The embodied human is positioned within the state society, not the monster.

Outline of the thesis

My position on the monstrous role in modern society begins from this question of the biopolitical limit within the paradox of inclusion. Chapter II explores the problem of this contradiction in some depth, beginning with a summary of the Foucauldian argument and identifying the aporia between belonging and inclusion, then continues with the distinction between the two and how belonging is problematized within the making of the set, or category of the human population to the exclusion of everything else. Both Haraway and Agamben begin their critiques of the biopolitical and their respective arguments on monsters with the paradox of inclusion and the notion of belonging. Haraway tackles the paradox of inclusion from a scientific perspective, while Agamben examines it from a legal-philosophical position; taken together, they form the backbone of a synthesized critique on the knowledge-power nexus that analyzes the Aristotelian notions of ‘nature’ and ‘ill-luck’ which is contained by the absence of personhood in light of modern scientific complexities and state techniques of governance.
Chapter III examines the role of monsters in the laws of both knowledge and power within the operation of normalization. Beginning with Foucault’s (2003: 55-6) assertion that “the notion of the monster is essentially a legal notion” and that it emerges within the “juridico-biological domain”, and questioning his gloss on “the laws of nature and man” as respectively static and dynamic, I argue that monsters, on the contrary, actually illustrate the changing nature of scientific laws and, through sovereign power, the static form of socio-political law. Whether ‘natural’ or ‘human’, law relies on the monstrous as a semiotic-material figure for negotiating the boundaries of its frames of reference. Foucault’s abnormal monster signifies iterations of inclusive abnormality and expressions of repressed human desires, Haraway’s transgenic monster is a recombinant being with multiple constitutive elements, and Agamben’s *homo sacer* is the monstrous human stripped of all political and human rights. Each figure of monstrosity is implicated in this negotiation process by either transgressing or defying the notion of similarity to kind. In this way, the purity laws of each come to be associated with the biopolitical control of individuals and populations.

The explication of monstrosity as abnormal, transgenic and sacred leads to Chapter IV and a short genealogy of transgenic monsters. I argue that the emergence of recombinant beings with multiple constitutive elements who have defied purity laws corresponds, or is parallel to, the genealogy of Foucault’s abnormal individual who has transgressed such laws. As the medico-judicial techniques of the 18th and 19th centuries gradually shifted the monstrous transgressions from *absolute*, or inhuman transgression, to *relative*, or abnormal transgression, so the medico-scientific techniques of that era gradually shifted the possibilities of transgenic beings which did not transgress, but defied, those laws, from the *supernatural*, or mythic laws to the *scientific*, or...
human laws. This hypothesis is tested through a brief analysis of two popular monsters of the time, the vampire and the cyborg, in their literary embodiments as Dracula and Frankenstein.

To conclude the chapter, I provide a summary of my argument that the Foucauldian take on the concept of monsters submerges expressions of liminality and exclusion from western society which are based on the mistaken narrative of static natural laws and dynamic socio-political laws defining the individual. Underneath the contemporary iterations of inclusive abnormality and expressions of repressed human desires, monsters illuminate the contradictory ‘nature’ of such laws, and provide a forum in which to debate who – or what – is allowed within the definition of a human individual and, therefore, within the human population.

In Chapter V I end by revisiting the vampire and cyborg as thoroughly modern monsters and argue that the shape and feel of these 19th century figures remain not only recognizable, but familiar. These figures are reiterated time and time again in the scope of the biopolitical as the scientific and legal boundaries change. As in the corruption of extra-national contagion and the abnormalities of the national population reflected in Bram Stoker’s Dracula, the vampire figure has been recycled as the blood-sucking Jew, the life-consuming AIDS victim, and the soulless refugee who wanders the earth, desperate to invade the state. From the scientifically engineered quasi-human and the hysterical manifestations of progressive European society reflected in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, the cyborg figure is constitutive of the futuristic fascist who was as “strong as Krupp steel” (Eksteins, 2000: 304), the fractured identity of cybernetic women, and the enemy combatant, stripped of his death-making prosthetics and howling in the wilderness of prolonged detention.
Chapter II: The paradox of inclusion

One cannot underestimate the conceptual importance of the distinction between belonging and inclusion.

Alain Badiou (2005: 82)

Within the human population are those who are denied personhood and suffer the consequences of being excluded from the ordering of society. Arendt’s (1979: 299) comment on the contradiction of inclusion within the modern age, that “the world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human”, owes nothing to the theory of biopolitics\(^3\), yet by the end of the Second World War this contradiction was impossible to miss. Encompassing not only the Holocaust – an example enough in itself – but also strategies of attrition such as the firestorm of Dresden, the siege of Stalingrad, and the London Blitz, as well as the subsequent mass exile from civil and political life, WWII starkly illuminated the constellation of exclusionary practices within modernity.

In a culture which identified itself with the progressive expansion of civil and political life, how did such practices thrive? For Arendt and many others the answer lay in the concept of totalitarianism, but what Foucault brought to the table, with the concepts of biopower and biopolitics, was not a political ideology adjusted as a theory of world power, but a theory of organic power practiced through politics. In situating modern history within the field of biopolitics Foucault did not solve the paradox of inclusion, but invested it in a framework of

\(^3\) See Agamben’s distinction between Arendt and Foucault in *Homo Sacer* (1998: 120).

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order from which an argument can be made for its origins. The inclusivity of the field of biopolitics has a limit, and I argue that this limit is found within the aporia between belonging and inclusion that is apparent in Foucault’s theoretical framework.

The modern world, Foucault says, is characterized by a specific, and novel, form of power in correlation with new techniques of governance through the accumulation, refinement, and application of scientific knowledge. Foucault’s (2003: 50) objective in this is to move away from what he calls the “composite notion” of power, in which he identifies three historical inadequacies for contemporary analyses. The first inadequacy is the “Hegelian horizon” of considering power “as an essentially negative mechanism of repression whose principle functions is to protect, preserve or reproduce the relations of production” (Foucault, 2003: 50). The second and third inadequacies he lists within this composite are the notions of power as a “superstructure” and power as an effect of ignorance – essentially, power as a top-down proposition where progression in knowledge is discounted, or unnecessary. These three notions, together, form a conception of power that “sees power impinging massively from the outside, as it were, with a continuous violence that some (always the same) exercise over others (what are also always the same” (Foucault, 2003: 50-51). This new power, Foucault argues, is not repressive and static, but productive and dynamic. A power in which the “processes of production” for the benefit of a particular social class becomes subsumed by a new set of principles through a new set of techniques that are applied, not from the top down, but throughout the body politic.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979: 135-169) argues that the principles on which these techniques of governance rest are generative and cumulative: the amplified surveillance
and discipline toward, and upon, individuals one finds in these techniques are designed explicitly for the purpose of producing “docile bodies” for the formation of a “disciplined mass”. Here, the generation of the individual as subject is specific to the cumulative, or “evolutive” (Foucault, 1979: 160), progress of the socio-political body as a whole. Biopower is an inclusive power, one that strives for the mass incorporation of individuals to the body politic. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault makes the claim that this body politic comprises no less than the human species itself, and that biopower brings about

Nothing less than the entry of life into history, that is, the entry of phenomena peculiar to the life of the human species into the order of knowledge and power, into the sphere of political techniques (1990: 141-142).

Foucault is not arguing, of course, that inclusion has reached critical mass, nor yet that this is an explicit goal of political regimes, but that, in the ‘west,’ we have reached the “threshold of modernity”, where

the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places is existence as a living being in question” (1990: 143).

In contrast to the time of Aristotle, we no longer conceptualize ‘man’ in terms of those individual living beings that have the capacity for political existence; we now have a larger category called life⁴, which includes the multiple, the population, and the species. Political existence is now the foundation upon which all life rests.

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⁴ “…the pattern of knowledge that has been familiar to us for a hundred and fifty years is not valid for a previous period...life itself did not exist. All that existed were living beings, which were viewed through a grid of knowledge constituted by natural history” (Foucault, 2006: 139) [Foucault’s emphasis].
This inclusive power is also progressive power, and doubly so. Not only does Foucault argue that the “entry of life into history” means the gradual inclusion of select types of individuals into the body politic as the power grows, but also that it is progressive in the socio-evolutionary sense, as the “life of the human species” is cemented in the idea of optimizing its potential. Biopower works to “incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it; a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them” (Foucault, 1990: 136). It is in terms of this trope of quasi-evolutionary progression that Foucault reasons away, or “justifies” (2003b: 258), the myriad examples of exclusion from society and the state through race. Before the crystallization of the biopolitical in the 19th century, he notes, regimes of power would never “visit such holocausts on their populations” (Foucault, 1990: 137) or fight such bloody wars with all the attendant destruction and collateral damage. Such attrition toward human individuals and groups is not waged for the judicial existence of political sovereignty, traced back to the days of antiquity, but for the “life and survival” of “the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population” (Foucault, 1990: 137).

This new purpose is further explicated in ‘Society Must be Defended’. “Whenever, in other words, there was a confrontation, a killing or the risk of death, the nineteenth century was quite literally obliged to think about them in the form of evolutionism” (Foucault, 2003b: 257). The human species is defined as “biopolitics’ last domain” in which control over the socio-

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5 “Basically, evolutionism in the broad sense – or in other words, not so much Darwin’s theory itself as a set, a bundle of notions (such as: the hierarchy of species that grow from a common evolutionary tree, the struggle for existence among species, the selection that eliminates the less fit) naturally became within a few years during the nineteenth century no simply a way of transcribing political discourse in scientific clothing, but a real way of thinking about the relations between colonization, the necessity for wars, criminality, the phenomenon on madness and mental illness, the history of societies with their different classes, and so on” (Foucault, 2003b: 256-257).
evolutionary field of human existence embraces “the relations between the human race, or human beings insofar as they are a species, insofar as they are living beings, and their environment, the milieu in which they live” (Foucault, 2003b: 244-245). This final frontier of biopolitics is mediated by the juridical process of normalization. Such normalization takes place not only through techniques of individual discipline, as argued in Discipline and Punish, in order to create the population, but also through techniques of group regularization, in order to “maintain an average, establish a sort of homeostasis, and compensate for variations within this general population and its aleatory field” (Foucault, 2003b: 245).

In order to optimize the human population, to bring it to its fullest state of ordered equilibrium, normalization is brought to bear upon individuals and the human population itself through the techniques of discipline and regulation. Those individuals and groups whose characteristics (within the field of human characteristics, dependent on the random chance of evolutionary population genetics) are seen as ‘variations within the general population’ which impede the optimization of that population – those who cannot, or will not, be disciplined or normalized – are expunged in defence of the larger society – the species Homo sapiens. Here, then, lies the paradox of inclusion and an indicator of the limit of the biopolitical: in the ordering objective to include the entire human race, or species, as a multiple, into the networks of modern power and governance, some must be excluded, expunged, or exterminated for the greater good of the population. Only those who belong for the purpose of optimization will be included, and the limit of the biopolitical lies in deciding who belongs and who does not.

It is important to note here that, in creating a theoretical framework for the ordering of modern history – the field of biopolitics – Foucault is not arguing that the decisions with regard
to inclusion the biopolitical field are made explicitly or consciously by political regimes of the state, but rather through the process of normalization within the net of power that makes up the biopolitical field: the techniques of discipline and regulation grow and evolve in correlation with the progression of knowledge which supports that power. The decisions that are made are diffuse, within the net, and the objective of biopower is organic. Foucault’s position is that, within this ordering, biopower is generative and cumulative, that the pattern of decisions taken within it shows a decided shift toward the preservation, maintenance, and optimization of life. The paradox of inclusion is that, this trend of preserving, maintaining, and optimizing the species is propelled by a multitude of decisions which destroy, neglect, and diminish it. In his analysis of this trend, however, he does not distinguish between decisions made for belonging and decisions made for inclusion.

In primitive mathematical terms, the distinction between ‘belonging’ and ‘inclusion’ can be summed up as the distinction between being a constitutive element of something ($\beta \in \alpha$) and being an object that is a subset, a part of the whole ($\beta \subset \alpha$), and a lack of distinction between the two can cause some very thorny problems in set theory and ontology (Badiou, 2005 81-89). The difference between being a constitutive element of a set and being a subset is based on differing criteria for each term within any given set. This can be readily seen if we think about a holiday gathering in the western, contemporary European tradition – one that is familiar to us and presented as dominant through a host of media at Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.

The set, in this case, would be all the people who are in the house for the Thanksgiving celebration. Depending on the criteria for belonging and inclusion, we can group those people in a number of different ways. If the criteria for belonging in this set happened to be ‘family’, then
only those whose constitutive elements matched those criteria would belong: Mom, Dad and the kids, Aunt Maddy and Uncle Tom, and Aunt Maddy’s seventeen year old son from her first marriage; everyone else in the house, such as Dad’s friend from work and the cook, would only be included in the set as part of the whole, but not constitutive of the family set. If the criteria for belonging in this set happened to be ‘biological kinship’ instead, then the constitutive members of the set change, for Mom, Dad, the kids, and Uncle Tom all share biological kinship – but Aunt Maddy and her son become merely included in the set along with Dad’s friend and the cook: they are a part of the whole, yet are not constitutive of it.

This lack of distinction, I think, is one of the central problems with Foucault’s reasoning on the paradox of inclusion, and it is one that must be briefly examined because, within the biopolitical field, only those whose characteristics meet the criteria of belonging to the human population are included. Following the logic of mathematical sets, and applying it to an interpretation of Foucault’s work, an individual within the human population – comprised of all the characteristics that are constitutive elements of the species – belongs to the species and, as such, is included within the biopolitical field as a subject. It is through the ever expanding techniques of discipline and regulation that the characteristics of individuals and groups are scrutinized and assessed, and through these techniques that characteristics which are not deemed elemental, such as a fiery temper, insanity or perversion are normalized for inclusion, and those characteristics which are antithetical to belonging, such as degenerate race, are excluded from

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6 These broad definitions of techniques of subjectification are not only external to the individual, but also internal, individuals are also engaged in vetting and assessing themselves. See Foucault’s The Hermeneutics of the Self.

7 Foucault’s genealogies, of course, take up the question of how and when such characteristics came to matter both more (in the sense that they are discovered, studied, treated, disciplined and/or normalized) and less (in the sense that they are not characteristics deemed elemental to the species) in the 19th century.
the biopolitical field. An individual human being is not fully included within the biopolitical unless she or he first meets the criteria of belonging.

How, then, is that criteria of belonging decided? Decision is the foundation upon which set theory – the ordering of the categories of beings and things – rests. However singular and disparate items are gathered into a multiple for ordering and presentation, there must be defined categories with specific criteria as grounds for that ordering (Badiou, 2005: 23-25). My argument is that even though the modern is a break with antiquity in many respects, the decisions about belonging and inclusion are based on the same grounds as those of Aristotle: our conceptions on nature and the state. The distinctions between characteristics of belonging change, and relations between knowledge and power may shift, however the basic categories in which the criteria are set for distinctions between belonging, inclusion and exclusion remain stable through time. An interesting analogy can be made here from the history of biology.

In the late 19th century a new organelle was identified within eukaryotic cells – the complex cells from which humans are made – that did not have the same elements as other organelles within this kind of cell: it had a double membrane and was isolated from the regular vesicular traffic within the cell. In 1963, this mitochondrion organelle was found to have its own set of DNA (mDNA), completely different from that of the cells in which it was situated, and this mDNA was passed on, through sexual reproduction of the larger organisms like humans, only through the egg, or maternal side (Alberts et. al, 1998: 449 – 452). Mitochondria are essential to the production of cellular ATP, and as such, are essential to the life of the cell. Yet do they ‘belong’ to the cell or are they merely included?
Based on the criteria defining for cell structure, it did not belong. Those criteria for cellular structure were grounded in the laws and *taxa* of cellular biology, such as chemical composition and similarity to kind. Only through the acceptance of a new theory\(^8\) of how such a separate entity could belong to, instead of merely being included in, eukaryotic cell structure was mitochondria conferred status as belonging to the cell. The characteristics of the cell changed, the criteria upon which those characteristics were judged within the laws and the *taxa* were adjusted through a shift in the consensus of knowledge, but the grounds, or categories, for that particular decision did not change: the decision was still based on the laws and *taxa* of cellular biology\(^9\).

It is here, in the paradox created by the lack of distinction between belonging and inclusion, where Haraway and Agamben’s respective critiques of Foucault begin. This paradox brings us back to Aristotle’s definition of the human, as an individual who must both meet the biological criteria and the socio-political criteria on the grounds of nature and ‘ill-luck’:

> It follows that the state belongs to the class of objects which exist in nature and that man by nature is a political animal. Anyone who by his nature and not simply by ill-luck has no state is either too bad or too good, either subhuman or superhuman (Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1253a1-5).

In the Aristotelian definition, the primary criterion is that ‘man’, by his very nature, is a political animal and naturally forms a state. Those individuals who, by nature or ill-luck, do not have a state are on a different level than humans: they are either sub- or super-human. Foucault’s oft-

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\(^8\) Endosymbiotic theory is an evolutionary theory in which the mitochondrion are engulfed by the eukaryotic cell and exist in a state of mutual symbiosis and the mitochondria become, in evolutionary time, constitutive of the cell (Margulis, 1981).

\(^9\) Lynn Margulis’ theory of endosymbiotic evolution has a fascinating history on its journey to acceptance in the biology community. See introduction to her book.
quoted pronouncement that the Aristotelian definition has been turned on its head is still quite
correct: the ‘living being’ of man has certainly been replaced by the ‘life of the species’ and our
very existence as living beings is dependent upon this conception of population and the political
application of techniques to optimize it. Individuals and groups are no longer vetted and
regulated through the absence of their individual humanity, but on the basis of their kind within
the human population. However, the grounds upon which the decision for belonging is made
remain the same: nature or ill-luck.

In Aristotle’s time, the notion of ‘man’ was conceived as a living being, as Foucault
never tires of telling us. The ordering of man in the universe was dependent on the methods of
natural history which formed relations between the individual ‘man’ and everything around
him. We can now easily see, at the outset, what some of the ‘natural’ impediments to
personhood were for such an individual: physical similarity to other individuals of his kind
would have been paramount, as would the determinacy of his sex and the developmental level of
maturity. The denial of civic and political personhood on the grounds of nature, could, as in
the instances of similarity of kind and sex, be deemed monstrous, such as a child who did not
meet the similarity requirements or women. Aristotle’s other category of exclusion, however,
needs a bit of translation from the knowledge methods of Aristotle’s time to our own.

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10 See The Order of Things: preface, chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7; The History of Sexuality, Society Must be Defended....

11 Citizens are male human beings who have reached the age of maturity and are distinguished from other
inhabitants of the community including resident aliens, slaves, and most ordinary workers; even children and
seniors are not unqualified citizens. See The Politics, III 1275b1-21.

12 Generation of Animals IV.3, 767 b
Ill-luck could not have meant impediments from natural causes: it could not mean, for example, an unlucky throw of the genetic dice with regard to phenotype or sex – for each living being was naturally what his or her embodiment signified and the concept of ‘chance’ within that was inconceivable. A female born from the union of a man and woman was naturally – when she reached her developmental maturity – a woman, not an unlucky being within the human population, and the denial of personhood was on the grounds of her sub-human, or monstrous, nature. Ill-luck referred to impediments to personhood through the state itself: for example, through the chance of juridical restrictions, such as slavery (which did not have racial, or ‘natural’, significance until the biopolitical age), inauspicious political alliances (an experience familiar to Aristotle), or the misfortune arising from displeasing the sovereign body. Impediments to personhood, whether they were the product of nature or the state, resulted in a range of exclusionary consequences, from a denial of civic and political engagement to exile and death.

The criteria within the categories of both nature and ill-luck have changed, of course, and the idea of luck, or random chance, has entered into the concept of human nature through the scientific laws of evolutionary population genetics – yet the grounds on which decisions are made, the categories of nature and the state, seem to have remained stable as the laws of ‘nature’ and ‘man’. It is these categories through which human characteristics are defined, articulated, and applied in order to negotiate which of these characteristics are accorded the status of

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13 Sovereignty, for Aristotle encompassed a number of different forms: oligarchy, tyranny, or democracy; see *The Politics* 1.7. It was through the displeasure of a democratic sovereign body that Socrates chose death over exile from the state, as told by Aristotle’s teacher, Plato, in the *Phaedo Dialogue*.
personhood. In their arguments on the biopolitical, both Haraway and Agamben are primarily concerned with the criteria of belonging to the human population through nature and ill-luck as the laws of nature and man.

Although apparently worlds apart in their disciplines, perspectives, and focus, Donna Haraway and Giorgio Agamben each question and analyze the laws and criteria by which individuals and groups are seen to impede the optimization of the human population and are denied the status of personhood. Agamben concentrates on the laws and criterion of ill-luck – those created by political practices and exigency – while Haraway concentrates on the laws and criterion of nature – as determined by science and other knowledge practices. Taken together, they form the backbone of a synthesized critique on the knowledge-power nexus that explores the laws of belonging and the role of the monstrous figure.

Nature for whom, where, and at what cost?

Donna Haraway writes that the idea of human uniqueness is central to modern western cultures, and that uniqueness is based on a hierarchal principle of domination, both within the species Homo sapiens and throughout the biological taxon. This assumption, she argues, is the basis of the “temporal modality” (1997: 11) of the biopolitical, brought about by the conflation of culture and science. In fact, the two are so interwoven that they have produced a global scientific culture in which it is impossible to untangle the principles of scientific thought and knowledge from the grasp of the cultural ideologies in which they have been woven. Science is
culture in the modern western world, and culture is science: the two produce and reproduce each other on every level of society. How we understand ‘nature’ – both human and other – within the knowledge base called the biological, or life sciences, is wholly wrapped up in the forces of our own political living through time. Her larger project seeks for an understanding and analysis of the “historical specificity and conditions of solidity of what counts as nature, for whom, where, and at what cost” (Haraway, 2004: 203).

For Haraway, the biopolitical field is old news; a ceaseless, spiralling cycle of intermixed knowledge and power which continually maps out hierarchal categories of inclusion and exclusion on biological bodies. In the biopolitical sphere of influence, she argues, bodies are articulated as resources which are ideologically constructed, mapped, signified, and allocated within the capitalist polity; they are subject to the biopolitical, and they emerge “at the intersection of biological research and writing, medical and other business practices, and technology” (Haraway, 1991: 201) through the principles of optimization and belonging. Haraway (1991: 150) argues that “Foucault’s biopolitics is a flaccid premonition” of the possibilities she sees within the “border wars” of the modern age. It is a first step in understanding the ordering of the modern, but lacking the complexity of biological discourse necessary to keep up with the rapid transformations to the boundaries of life inherent to this period.

The history of the globalization of planet Earth, coterminous with Foucault’s ‘biopolitical final domain’ of a species-wide net of power, is a “semiotic-material production of some forms of life rather than others”. Progressive circulations of technoscience craft the world in a net that is at once a heterogeneous and linked, scientific and social, offspring of the multilobed conflation
of knowledge and power in the west (Haraway, 1997: 12). Haraway (1997: 13) traces these origins through a bewildering array of examples, including the “immune system-like networking strategies for post-colonial global control” and “the apparatuses of hypercapitalist market traffic and flexible accumulation”. But her point is that these circulations are inhabited by a host of border figures – at once real and symbolic – that defy the criteria of the laws of nature and man. These figures are “shocked into being from the force of the implosion of the natural and the artificial, nature and culture, subject and object, machine and organic body, money and lives, narrative and reality” (Haraway, 1997: 14)

These border figures are monsters, and they become significant as the cross-bred outer limits of what we define as human. As the complexity of the scientific and ‘natural’ boundaries of humanity increases, monsters function as the limit within the technologies of humanity and nature. As Haraway asks:

> Who are my kin in this odd world of promising monsters, vampires, surrogates, living tools, and aliens? How are natural kinds identified in the realms of late twentieth century technoscience? What kinds of crosses and offspring count as legitimate and illegitimate, to whom and at what cost? (Haraway, 1997: 52).

Haraway’s border figures defy the laws and criteria that constitute Foucault’s species-wide net of power. They are at once semiotic and material, symbolic and real, human and artificial, resource and object. They are living and signifying on the boundaries of belonging.

Since the border figures within this global culture of science are “semiotic-material productions” (Haraway, 1997: 12) they exist at once as symbolic figures, embodied fictional beings, and humans who are marked with the monstrous whole of the sign.\(^{14}\) This ‘semiotic-

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\(^{14}\) this is an important distinction to note, for the same issue arises in Agamben’s work on the *homo sacer* figure, which is introduced in the following section, and Foucault’s monsters, which are introduced in Part II
material’ designation is integral to the role of monsters in our society. The symbolic figures of monsters are the vessels in which human characteristics are placed and debated through the normalizing process of defining which characteristics belong to the human species. Through that process, these figures take on a significance of their own and become recognizable and familiar forms. Patterns, or trends, within the debate on belonging can be traced to specific monstrous figures. These semiotic figures become ‘material’ when their significance is transferred onto human beings, who then become ‘marked’ with the monstrous and take on all of the symbolic weight of that monstrous pattern or trend. Haraway’s (1997: 52) border figures, those “promising monsters, vampires, surrogates, living tools, and aliens”, exist as both symbolic, significant figures of specific trends in the debate on human belonging, into which new characteristics can be placed as transformations to the boundaries of life occur, and as human beings who have been marked with that significance. These figures reside in, and on, the borders of the biopolitical field within modernity as symbols and as humans.

In contrast to the liminality of Haraway’s border figures, Giorgio Agamben’s figure of the *homo sacer* is explicitly positioned on the outside of modern life and included only through its exclusion from the field of biopolitics. The figure of bare life holds the status of monstrosity through its linguistic and semiotic ambivalence in western society at the zone of indistinction between human and inhuman where Agamben, in his earlier work, equates monstrosity with the semiotic dissolution, or lateral shift, of the uncanny and frightening. In *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* (1993) Agamben engages with the linguistic theory of sign and

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15 See Agamben’s *Homo Sacer*, pg. 11 “every limit concept is always the limit between two concepts”. Every set of items has a boundary between items that are included and those that are not, and those that are excluded (the limit) in the set are included through the very act of defining them as ‘everything else’. See Badiou’s *Being and Event*, pg. 23.
signified as posed by Saussure. Here Agamben argues that the metaphysics of negativity, upon which the western tradition of philosophy is founded, produces a language of division and articulations to which human beings and life have been condemned. The semiotic bar (/) between signifier and signified is the “original fracture of presence” and the “meaning of this bar or barrier is constantly left in shadow, thus hiding the abyss opened between signifier and signified” (Agamben, 1993, 136-137). This abyss, he argues, is the zone of indistinction where the “half feral, half human monster” of the Sphinx was plunged when Oedipus lifted the shadow on her riddle (Agamben, 1993, 137).

Agamben presents the *homo sacer* as the figure which is neither sacred to the gods, nor protected by the state (1998: 81-86); neither human nor inhuman (1999: 52-57); and neither animal nor human (2005: 79-81) and his ultimate example of bare life is the *Muselmann* of Auschwitz. According to Catherine Mills, in her critical introduction to Agamben’s work, the *Muselmann* figure does not simply “mark the limit beyond which the human is no longer human” but instead is “an indefinite being in whom (or indeed, in which) the distinction between humanity and nom-humanity, as well as the moral categories that attend the distinction, are brought to a crisis” (Mills, 2008: 88-89). Slavoj Žižek (2005), in his examination on human rights and revolution, notes that this figure of bare life “appears as pure horror, man "as such," deprived of all phenomenal qualifications, appears as an inhuman monster”.

The key to the figure of ‘bare life’, or *homo sacer*, in Agamben’s argument can be traced to his use of Carl Schmitt’s (1985) now ubiquitous dictum that “the sovereign is he who

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16 English translations of Agamben’s work variously render his term “nuda vita” as either “naked life” (as in Binetti & Cesarino’s translation of *Means without End*) or as “bare life” (as in Heller-Roazen’s translation of *Homo Sacer*).
With Schmitt’s political theory as his starting point, Agamben traces how sovereign power is applied in modern democracies through the executive act of creating spaces of exception within the legislative structure. Here, the legal status of politically adversarial individuals recedes to the point where their ontological status as human beings becomes void, and the symbolic vessel becomes the ‘marked’ human being.

The state of exception is the mechanism set in motion by the original actor, the sovereign. The goal of this mechanism is to identify certain individuals as a political threat, exempt them from the normal legal structure, and render them as bare life: to create the *hominis sacri*, who may be killed by anyone within the exception, but not sacrificed within the *nomos* of the law. It is through the legal status of the adversary, or threat, to the sovereign that the semiotic figure of *homo sacer* is filled with debatable characteristics of belonging, and subsequently, through the sovereign exception that individuals become ‘marked’, or imbued, with the whole significance of bare life in which their ontological status as human becomes void.

**The exception is always the rule**

Haraway’s border figures are indicative of her *a posteriori* position to Foucault – which takes his biopolitical framework as necessary but not sufficient – in which these figures mark the boundaries of belonging or exclusion with respect to modern state society. Agamben’s *hominis sacri*, however, are suggestive of his quarrel with the Foucauldian argument, for these figures are bare life, stripped of all political and human rights, and wholly outside the modern world within the biopolitical field. This quarrel is complex, for Agamben challenges both Foucault’s definition
of modern power as biopower and his subsequent reasoning on the practices of civil and political exclusion in defence of the larger society:

One of the essential characteristics of modern biopolitics (which will continue to increase in our century) is its constant need to redefine the threshold of life that distinguishes and separates what is inside from what is outside (Agamben 1998: 131).

Agamben proposes that the contemporary political condition reveals that neither the political status nor function of the legal exception is what it has seemed to be. The function of the exception is not to repair or strengthen the existing juridico-political order through the identification and elimination of political threats, rather, its function is to produce bare life as the biopolitical body, for all individuals within the species are potential homines sacri (Agamben, 1998: 6). This turns the biopolitical argument on its head, for the last domain of biopolitics, according to Agamben, is not generative and cumulative for the purpose of protecting life itself, but rather, it is sterile and divisive and the optimization of the species, through equilibrium and homeostasis, renders all life potentially dangerous to the larger society. All individuals are potentially marked with the significance of bare life as a threat or adversary to the state. Agamben is not arguing that the biopolitical field does not exist, but that Foucault’s chronology is wrong and that the source of the biopolitical is not a modern transformation to biopower, but the continuance of the ancient notion of sovereign power. The biopolitical has been with us for a very long time, and its momentum is not propelled by the force of life, but by the indistinction between life and law that is inherent in sovereign power.

Agamben begins his Homo Sacer trilogy with this critique of Michel Foucault’s concept of biopolitics, or the political administration of life. His critique is not limited to, but centers on, Foucault’s (1990: 139) claim that the sovereign right to expose its subjects to death has gradually been supplanted “in concrete terms, starting in the seventeenth century” by a modern power
which administers, rather than exposes, the life of political subjects through “the disciplines of
the body and the regulations of the population”. Agamben (1998: 6) argues that this genealogy of
political power and, specifically, the relations between sovereign power and biopolitics must be
corrected, or at least completed; yet in order to grasp Agamben’s stance, it is necessary to take a
closer look at Foucault’s reasoning.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault claims that the sovereign’s right to use the
exception gradually fades in explicitness through time under a new formulation of political
power. The right to exception derives from the explicit formulation of the “ancient *patria
potestas* that granted the father of the Roman family the right to “dispose” of the life of his
children and his slaves” and diminishes to the classical exceptional formulation of the
sovereign’s right to expose the lives of political adversaries to possible death at the hand of any
within the political sphere when the “sovereign’s very existence was in jeopardy” (Foucault,
1990: 135).

This right, in turn, is finally overcome with the techniques of discipline and organization
which transformed the system of power, at the threshold of modernity, into “a power bent on
generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impeding
them, making them submit, or destroying them” (Foucault, 1990: 136). The sovereign power has
given way to biopower, and Foucault is clear that this shift in power directly correlates to a
parallel shift in governance. Political acts are no longer determined by, and for, the protection of
the sovereign from jeopardy; but rather by, and for, the protection and survival of life itself: “for
the first time in history...biological existence was reflected in political existence” (Foucault,
1990: 137- 142).
Agamben’s critique of this genealogy is three-fold, and it is important to distinguish between the concepts of biopower and biopolitics in order to understand the subtlety of this critique. As Alison Ross (2008: 1-2) explains, Agamben’s criticism of Foucault is not merely a quarrel about chronological placements of knowledge-power relations. This criticism also addresses the problem that his argument is “not fully comprehensible when it is understood either as a distinctive feature of the modern period or as modernity’s prevailing set of institutional operations”. Foucault argues that biopower is the distinctive feature of the modern period, the power, as noted above, which is bent on generative tasks of growth and order. Biopolitics, on the other hand, refers to modernity’s prevailing set of institutional operations; the forces of governing that are subject to the will of power which has become the field of modernity. Foucault’s argument is that the modern emergence of biopower is directly correlated to the emergence of biopolitics, in which biological existence became reflected in political existence and in the indistinction between life and law. Agamben takes up the Foucauldian concept of biopolitics, correcting the chronological emergence of its operations and expanding the theoretical scope of indistinction while rejecting Foucault’s claim that biopower has superseded sovereign power as the prevailing political authority.

Though Agamben takes up Foucault’s concept of biopolitics, he moves away from his genealogical methodology and places biopolitics squarely within a paradigmatic rather than a historical analysis: “while Foucault’s genealogy rejects the search for origins and instead traces the emergence of particular configurations of relations of force, Agamben seeks to illuminate the “originary” relation of law to life” (Mills, 2008a: 60). He claims that the epistemological origins of the exceptional paradigm reside within the relationship between biopolitics and sovereignty,
where the “production of a biopolitical body is the original activity of sovereign power” (Agamben, 1995: 6).

Agamben revisits Aristotle’s distinction between *zoē* and *bios* in his attempt to trace the epistemological origins of the exceptional paradigm, as did Foucault in his genealogy of biopolitics, and argues that, instead of the Foucauldian shift to modernity, with its blurring of the distinction between life and law, the distinction between biological life and political life that Aristotle claims, and thus between life and law, is the disjunction through which the political administration of natural life became hidden, allowing for the production of the biopolitical subject: the monstrously marked bare life at the mercy of the sovereign decision.

**Belonging as a process**

Donna Haraway argues that, within the modern period with its global culture of science, what we conceive of as the boundaries of life have undergone a series of rapid transformations, and these transformations defy what we conceive of as the laws of nature. The technologies of this culture and its products have outstripped the rules of engagements, so to speak, and we are left to ask “who are our kin” – who belongs to the human population – now that so many characteristics of humanity elude the laws of our scientific culture. Conversely, Giorgio Agamben argues that, within the modern period and western jurisprudence, what we conceive of as the boundaries of life have become hidden through the paradigmatic state of exception and the indistinction between life and law, but can be revealed as very similar to those boundaries in
ancient law. The legal status of personhood remains caught in the “exceptional decision of the sovereign” body and we are left to ask ‘who is a hazard’ – who needs to be removed from the human population – when all of the characteristics of humanity continue to be subject to the will of the sovereign.

The organic series of decisions made within Foucault’s biopolitical field – who belongs, who is included, and who is excluded – with regard to defending the larger society from those who might impede its maintenance and growth are complex, and depend on the laws of nature and the state as the grounds upon which these decisions are made. The characteristics of humanity change (and in this period of history they change very rapidly), and the criteria may adjust or not – as the case may be – to a shift in consensus, but the basic categories in which we create these criteria remain stable as the laws of nature and man. In situating modern history within the field of biopolitics Foucault did not solve the paradox of inclusion, but invested it in a framework of order from which an argument can be made for its origins. However, Foucault’s ordering of modern history as a biopolitical field glosses the categories of law and, as such, makes no distinction between belonging and inclusion within the biopolitical.

When the distinction between belonging and inclusion is made, we find that, within the biopolitical order, an individual of the human population – comprised of all the characteristics that are constitutive elements of the species – belongs to the species and, as such, is included within the biopolitical as a subject. It is through the process of normalization and the ever expanding techniques of discipline and regulation that individuals and groups are scrutinized and assessed, and through these techniques that characteristics which are not deemed elemental, are
normalized. An individual human being, within the biopolitical is not included unless she or he first meets the criteria of belonging.

Both Haraway and Agamben take up the notion of belonging in this ordering framework, and argue that inclusion is neither an integral part of the generative and cumulative trend, or an objective of the biopolitical project, nor is it the primary position in the set (or multiple) of the human population. Haraway insists that hierarchal domination validated by science continues to be the objective of modernity, in which bodies belong as resources – subject to the biopolitical objective – and yet the production of resources has outstripped the laws which subject them and border figures are born. This argument parallels Agamben’s claim concerning the continuity of sovereignty as the ontological, originary, power, in which people belong as potential *hominès sacri* – subject to the political exigencies of exception. Through Haraway’s focus on the position of liminality within science and Agamben’s illumination of exclusion is through law, it is clear that inclusion in the biopolitical field is dependent upon the status of belonging.

Both Haraway and Agamben are concerned with the criteria which determine belonging to the human population, respectively defined through knowledge and power as modern scientific complexities and juridical techniques of governance, and the processes by which individuals are positioned within that population. Haraway argues that as the characteristics of humanity shift, semiotic-material monstrous figures emerge on the borders of the population, which at once act as the symbolic vessels in which such characteristics are placed for debate, signs denoting the hazards of scientific-cultural hybridity, as well as individuals who have been ‘marked’ as dangerous. Agamben argues that, regardless of how the characteristics of humanity shift, the figure of bare-life, or *homo sacer*, is positioned on the outside of the human population;
as the legal status of a politically adversarial individual recedes at the will of the sovereign, his ontological status as a human being becomes void through semiotic displacement, and the symbolic vessel becomes the ‘marked’ human being who can be killed by anyone within the field of the exception, but not sacrificed within the nomos of the law. Monstrous figures, then, are integral to the process of normalization for the vetting and assessing of individual human beings to determine their position of belonging, either inside, on the borders, or outside of the biopolitical field.

My primary concern, in this thesis, is with the role of the monster within that process of normalization. The monster functions as a mechanism within that mid-level between the organic objective of power and the techniques of discipline and regulation where the characteristics of humanity are defined, articulated, and applied within the social milieu of the species. It is here, within the process of normalization, that the semiotic-material monster is deployed as a mechanism for the debate on what characteristics are counted as human and which are not included in the biopolitical field, according to the global science culture, and based on the criteria for belonging within the laws of nature and man.
Chapter III: Monsters and the normalizing law

The process of normalization, within the biopolitical field, is the juridico-political mid level operation between the organic objective of power and the techniques of discipline and regulation. Here, the “final domain” (Foucault, 2003b: 244) of biopolitics is mediated by the laws of nature and the state. The society wide operation of normalization is juridico-political in the sense that ‘law’ operates through the forces of governance, that is, as a “general technique of the exercise of power that can be transferred to many different institutions and apparatuses” (Foucault, 2003a: 49). It is important to note that the process of normalization is not, specifically, the laws of a nation coupled to the prevailing political apparatus to be handed down through various social institutions, but rather it is “the other side of the juridical and political structures of representation and is the condition of their functioning and effectiveness” (Foucault, 2003a: 49).

The ‘other side of the juridical and political structures’ is a simultaneously “positive, technical and political conception of normalization” (Foucault, 2003a: 50) and can “only function thanks to the formation of a knowledge that is both its effect and also a condition of its exercise” (Foucault, 2003a: 52). It is not the laws of the nation that produce the norm, but the conflation of scientific knowledge and power, the laws of nature and the laws of the state, which produce the norm. The normalization process determines what ought to be, and adjudicates the relations of the species to itself and surroundings on the grounds of law, that is, by the criteria of biological laws and taxa, on the one hand, and western jurisprudence on the other. It is within this mid level operation where the characteristics of humanity are defined, articulated, and
applied within the social milieu of the species, and it is here, within the social process of normalization, that the monster plays its role in modern western society.

According to Foucault (2003: 55-56), monsters are “essentially a legal notion” since their very existence is a violation of the “juridico-biological domain”. Since they are “an extremely rare phenomenon” they make the limit, the point where “the law is overturned and the exception that is found only in the extreme cases” (Foucault, 2003: 56). It is through this legal trope, quite literally as ‘cases’ of law, that Foucault derives his position that the monstrous, as a rare phenomenon, has become incorporated into the abnormal within the juridico-biological domain. With reference to the process of normalization, where the relations of the human population to itself and the environment are determined by bio-juridical knowledge, Foucault draws upon numerous cases of European law in the 18th and 19th centuries as evidence for the medico-judicial techniques of governance which disciplined and regulated abnormal ‘traits’ displayed by individuals: in their time, these physiological, psychological and social traits were deemed monstrous.

In this chapter, I examine the role of monsters in the laws of nature and of the state. I attempt to add more depth to the Foucauldian argument by insisting that the role of monsters plays a larger part in the social process of normalization than Foucault expresses, and by investigating his gloss on “the laws of nature and man” in some detail as the bio-juridical domain. Monstrous figures are integral to the process of normalization which vets and assesses individual human beings and the decision of whether they belong either inside, on the borders, or outside of the biopolitical field. It is within the biopolitical perception of the bio-juridical domain
that the characteristics of human beings are debated and deemed to be normal or not. The criteria generated by knowledge and power are firmly grounded in the laws of nature and the state.

In *Abnormal* (2003), Foucault presents these laws as both static and dynamic respectively. The solid, pragmatic laws of evolutionary similarity-to-kind in the life science *taxa* are contrasted to the lively, ever-changing legal status within the medico-judicial techniques of governance. Together, these laws of nature and man gradually constrict the monstrous traits occasionally found within the human population, subjecting them to discipline and regulation and transforming them into human irregularities. On one side of Foucault’s position, there are unchanging and monolithic “rules governing natural species and distinction between natural species” (Foucault, 2003: 81); on the other, there is “the new technology of punitive power” (Foucault, 2003: 89), which brings active justice in an uninterrupted stream from the police, the lawyers, experts, judges, and wardens.

However, Donna Haraway (1997: 11; 1991: 7-12) has a different interpretation of the ‘rules governing natural species and distinction between natural species’. She argues that the conflation of culture and science is so absolute that it is impossible to untangle the principles of scientific thought and knowledge from the grasp of the cultural ideologies in which they have been woven. Biological laws are not static, and the rules governing the distinction between natural species frequently change; yet the idea of the purity of those laws remains due to that conflation. The two hands of law – nature and the state – are so tightly clasped that to differentiate between even the history of the biological and juridical laws on biological kinship and family, for example, would be a herculean task.
This idea of purity within static natural laws is conducive to the inclusive\textsuperscript{17} and progressive objective of Foucault’s concept of biopower, according to which the maintenance and optimization of the species is paramount. After all, having a set of static natural laws that define the species is very useful when the objective is to preserve and refine that species through a set of dynamic laws that discipline and regulate the behaviour of individuals within it. Following Haraway, I argue that monsters, on the contrary, actually illustrate the changing nature of scientific laws and the static form of socio-political law through sovereign power, and that these laws are tightly clasped. ‘Natural’ and ‘human’, law relies on the monstrous as the semiotic-material figure for negotiating the boundaries of their respective frames of reference. Foucault’s abnormal monsters signify iterations of inclusive abnormality and expressions of repressed human desires, just as Haraway’s transgenic monsters are recombinant beings with multiple constitutive elements, and Agamben’s \textit{homo sacer} is the monstrous human stripped of all political and human rights. Each is implicated in this negotiation process either by transgressing, defying, or acquiescing to, the notion of similarity to kind – or purity laws – associated with the biopolitical.

\textit{Unpacking the nature of the monster}

I begin with an explanation of Foucault’s incorporation of the semiotic-material monster figure into the biopolitical field through the process of normalization and perceived

\textsuperscript{17} “power that does not act by \textit{excluding} but rather through a close and analytical \textit{inclusion} of elements” (Foucault, 2003a: 48).
transgressions. I then consider how both Haraway and Agamben add depth to this argument by refuting his claim that the monster phenomenon is rare. The role that monsters play in our society has not diminished with the shift to the modern. If anything, it has increased, and the proliferation of such metaphors and depictions in contemporary society speaks to the paradox of belonging in a modern society and how we define and practice the art of being human.

Foucault argues that there has been a transition in how we define and practice the art of being human based on how we perceive transgressions of the laws of nature and man. Gone, he says, are the days of forming and maintaining our selves and communities within a field of exclusion; we now define and practice human subjectivity within a new interpretive and explanatory domain of inclusion. In *The History of Sexuality* (1990) Foucault describes this transition as the shift from sovereign power to biopower, where the sovereign’s right to expose its subjects to death has gradually been replaced by the collective right to administer life through disciplines of the body and the regulation of the population. In *Discipline and Punish* (1995) he takes great pains to describe the shifting definitions of what constitutes transgression against the laws of nature and man and the changing practices of punishment upon bodies and minds. In *Abnormal* (2003) he argues that this change in the economy of power and punitive systems directly correlate to a shift in how we perceive and define those who are hazardous to ourselves and our communities through those transgressions.

From perceiving an *absolute* transgression of the laws of nature and man, which is defined as *inhuman*, to perceiving a *relative* transgression of those laws, which is defined as *irregular*, we have given up the need for banishment and death in exchange for the generative and normalizing practices of management and correction: changes in the techniques of power “arise
from a transformation of the monster into the abnormal” (Foucault, 2003: 110). For Foucault (2003: 81), the monster figure signifies a boundary crossing “of the rules governing natural species and distinctions between natural species” and therefore charts a path through the western history of medico-legal jurisdictions as evidence that the intensity of these transgressions diminish in perception through time. This proposal, however, raises the following set of questions: if monsters have been transformed into abnormal humans, why does the western imagination continue to be fascinated with all things monster? Why does the monstrous figure retain such vitality and strength in western culture? To address these questions we must examine Foucault’s gloss on the “rules governing natural species and distinctions between natural species”.

Though we have plenty of ‘monsters’ in contemporary society, they no longer seem to signify absolute, or inhuman, transgressions; on the contrary, monsters provide for us a series of virtually embodied fantasy worlds in which we play out our ‘all-to-human’ irregularities. Vampires provide the thrill of sex and submission in a veritable storm of films, zombies project a surreal version of death in novels and scientific studies, and aliens suggest the repellent righteousness of ostracization. Foucault (2003: 60-61) argues that, beginning in the 19th century, the figure of the monster became nothing more than a “faded and diaphanous” constitutive element of the abnormal individual, a figure accessible to study, and imminently amenable to correction through regulation and discipline. Fantastical monsters of screen and text make sense, then, as projections of our own abnormalities.

When we look around at the proliferation of 21st century vampires and cyborgs, werewolves and Muppets, Foucault’s argument that such creatures have paled in comparison to what they
once were in the western imagination is convincing. As case studies of teenage delinquency and desire, portraits of criminal morality, mirrors reflecting the social gaze, and shades of repression, our contemporary monsters are true human subjects caught in a field of biopolitical examination and rehabilitation. The cyborgs which drown in existential angst, the vampires who ooze a relentless sexuality, the fluffy creatures who offer children therapeutic support and the grotesque menagerie of zombies can evoke unease and unsettlement as well as amusement and desire. But they are a far cry from the marvels signified by the Greek teratos and the warning, or portent, signified by the Latin monstrum from which they evolved. The monster Grendel was an aglæca, a being which the Old English noun relates to calamity, terror, distress and oppression, while the monster Grover is related to nothing more than a fuzzy blue projection of empathy and juvenile morality.

The monsters of old transgressed the laws of nature and man, starkly recognizable figures of impending evil and danger which only the power of exclusion and death could conquer. The monsters of our world, by contrast, pasty and shallow in significance, are the weak, sun-strained shadows of transgression cast by a configuration of a power that focuses on inclusion and life. From this perspective, as we watch children delight in such films as Where the Wild Things Are and teenagers swoon over the moody urban vampires in the Twilight series, monsters have been leached of their age-old powers of absolute transgression, their distinction of danger and death. They are comfortably ensconced within the realm of human surveillance and regulation and firmly restrained in the productive web of power.

Yet can we say that these examples constitute the sum total of our contemporary monsters? Can we argue that their distinction from humanity has dissolved to the point that they are fully
embroiled in the disciplinary process of developing and maintaining our humanity? Despite Foucault’s (2003: 86-89) insistence on a generative economy of modern power, the western imagination has not yet put paid to the perception of absolute transgression and its inevitable consequences. Indeed, the contemporary western imagination must grapple with an astonishing array of such transgressions as the complexity of social and scientific boundaries between human and non-human shift, erode, and intensify (Law, 1990: 7; Rose, 48). Donna Haraway (1991: 245; 1997: 11; 80; Schneider, 2005: 21) argues that this ever increasing complexity pushes the limits of Foucault’s biopolitical framework and forces us to confront the narratives of contemporary power in a “rapidly changing culture that remains obsessed with purity” in its laws of nature and man.

The issue here is not only the degree of transgression against rules governing natural species and the distinctions between natural species, but the very rules and distinctions themselves. Nikolas Rose (2007: 42) notes that Foucault’s position on the advent of a scientific philosophy of life deepened the “underlying organic laws” that determined the characteristics of living beings and the functions of reproduction. Yet these very laws that emerge during this period are continually breached within the new philosophical culture, or system of thought and order. Foucault’s inclusive population is increasingly put to the test by units of individuality that defy the purity laws of nature and ‘man’.

We can understand contemporary monsters as reflections of abnormal individuals which combine the distinctly non-human and the human characteristics when we recognize that the underlying organic laws of science are not static. The pale monsters of today that slide across the screen and rise from the page hide something beneath their reflection of human irregularity: they embody the limits of human classification and status. Foucault was not wrong, but
incomplete: there has been a transition in how we define and practice the art of being human, but this transition involves shifting components of what constitutes the category of human in the western imagination as well as the diminishing intensity of transgressions against that category.

Defining and practicing the art of being human has perhaps never been so complicated, and the semiotic-material figures of contemporary monsters do not signify only the absolute or relative transgressions of purity laws associated with sovereign and bio power. Monsters indicate the indistinction between life and law, and the transgenic and “category crossing” nature of being human in a “technoscientific westernized global culture” (Haraway, 1997: 79). This global scientific culture has emerged from the explosion of western sciences and technologies that have developed over the past two hundred years. The coupling of the disciplines of science and politics has produced “dense nodes of human and nonhuman actors that are brought into alliance” and the increasing complexity which such alliances bring to the category and status of the species Homo sapiens (Haraway, 1997: 49-51). Chronologically, this explosion corresponds to Foucault’s emergent biopolitics. Yet while Foucault engages with the politics of inclusion within this new culture by asking how the individual has been incorporated into the population of human beings defined by a static set of laws, Haraway engages with the politics of inclusion of this new culture by asking how we define humans as the parameters change:

Who are my kin in this odd world of promising monsters, vampires, surrogates, living tools, and aliens? How are natural kinds identified in the realms of late twentieth century technoscience? What kinds of crosses and offspring count as legitimate and illegitimate, to whom and at what cost? (Haraway, 1997: 52).

Within this emerging epistemological framework of technoscience and biopolitics, the social and scientific parameters of personhood change and the constitutive elements of what is defined
as human shift. We are what Haraway calls “transgenic”, and we negotiate the natural and cultural laws of what it means to be human or non-human through the figure of the monster.

At this moment in our global scientific culture, the term transgenic holds a very specific definition. The Genomic Science Program (genomics.energy.gov) of the US government defines transgenic as “an experimentally produced organism in which DNA has been artificially introduced and incorporated into the organism's germ line”. Here, the constitutive elements of life are genes, the fundamental physical and functional units of heredity which are encoded within DNA molecules to ensure the constitutive process of life. Genes ensure that each organism is similar in form and function to others of its kind and these similarities are passed to the offspring. When, however, the constitutive elements are mixed and matched, or recombined, through a change in the fundamental process, the purity of heredity is compromised; the laws of heredity, the process in which similarity is ensured, is no longer fundamental and the taxonomic chain is broken.

Transgenic, however, is a fluid term, not only in the sense that the prefix of ‘crossing over or beyond’ is dynamic, but also that the root of the word, gene, is not quite as static as it might seem. In the 18th century, Linnaeus was the first to begin what we know as the modern taxonomic system with the distinction between species and genera, where a number of similar species are grouped together in a higher order category (Campbell, 1999: 475), and the word ‘gene’ itself was derived in the early 20th century from the Greek genea, meaning generation, or race. As every high school biology text book reminds us, this word signifies the fundamental physical and functional unity of heredity. But it was coined decades before that actual unit was discovered and named and it is tied to the process of generating similarity of kind, of reproduction: to be generic is to be similar, with only minor differences. Yet Haraway argues
that this trope of similarity assumes a problematic argument based on tenuous western cultural narratives and unconvincing biological science:

History is erased, for other organisms as well as for humans, in the doctrine of types and intrinsic purposes, and a kind of timeless stasis in nature is piously narrated. The ancient, cobbled together, mixed-up history of living beings, whose long tradition of genetic exchange will be the envy of industry for a long time to come, gets short shrift (Haraway, 1997: 61).

Whether they are artificially or naturally produced, transgenic organisms defy the very organic laws of science and technology that created them: purity of type, inherence of purpose, and transgression of law. These organisms are an amalgamation of types through a ‘recombination’ of constitutive elements which are not generic, or similar. The difference between perceiving something as transgressive and perceiving something as transgenic shifts the focus from the limits and boundaries of what Foucault calls the “laws of nature and man” to the limits and boundaries of the constitutive elements of nature and man: the laws are a process which change as the elements change. Questions of personhood abound within the field of biology as we explore our relationships – individual, cellular, and genetic – to traditionally non-human factors, while the technological advances in cybernetics and artificial intelligence blur those relationships even further.

The alien invaders of our bodies and our nations may be viral DNA or hominid refugees; the prosthetic cyborg, part machine and part human that wreaks terror in its frustration at being excluded; the sucking vampire who consumes life or the material means to life. Each defies rather than transgresses the traditional laws of nature and man and we are left wondering how each alien being is similar or distinct from ourselves. Not only as abnormal individuals, “typically regular in their irregularity” (Foucault, 2003: 58), reflected by the contemporary monster, but also transgenic humans who ‘break the human bond’ by defying the laws of purity.
A transgenic being is not held strictly to the genetic level of biology, or even to the realm of science itself. The same classifications and laws of purity that govern biological distinction also shift the social distinctions of humanity. As well, contemporary humans are marked with transgenic and transgressive significance. Beings which move between traditional positions of similarity with others of its kind and of difference from that kind, contemporary humans, whether artificially or naturally produced, are also recombinant figures of multiple constitutive elements, a hybrid of trans-generic origins. Our reflective, transgenic monsters are a negotiation point for defining and practicing the art of being human without the assurance of similarity to our own kind. In the realm of global policy, social and legal institutions must wrestle with the implications of the growing number of individuals who are situated beyond the category of legal personhood and citizenship within nation states, while national and international organizations struggle with the legal and ethical demarcation of rights for those who ‘break the human bond’ as war criminals, enemy combatants or terrorists. We are continually left to ask: “where do these people belong?”

Defining and practicing the art of being human is a complex process, and the monster’s role within that process gives shape to the debate on who belongs and who does not. Across the ever-changing spectrum of human characteristics, monsters become semiotic bodies which provide the site of the process of normalization based on the laws of nature and the state. They defy narratives of biopolitical purity as hybrid border figures and transgress laws associated with sovereign and biopower. After the shift from humanity understood as ‘living beings’ to humanity as a ‘population’ to be disciplined and regulated, monsters become pale shadows of abnormality contained within the biopolitical field as marked, or abnormal, individuals.
But this is not the whole story: monsters are both semiotic and material; their role is both to provide a vessel for the articulations and adjudication of belonging and to provide signification for the ordering of individuals and groups inside, on the borders, and outside the biopolitical field. The process of marking human beings with monstrous significance is not restricted to inclusion within the biopolitical, for inclusion is only one position in the spatial field of belonging. Inside and at the borders of the biopolitical are figures marked with the monstrous, relative transgressors of the normalizing laws who are amenable to correction and refinement and the hybrid beings who defy those laws, yet there are also those who are marked for exclusion.

Giorgio Agamben claims that the pre-modern notion of absolute transgression against the laws of nature and man is contained in the figure of the *homo sacer*, as the point of indistinction between life and the law, and that this figure is neither sacred to the gods, nor protected by the state; neither human nor inhuman; and neither animal nor human. The monstrous significance of this figure is caught in the indistinction between life and law, and an individual who has been marked as *homo sacer* is included in the biopolitical only through his or her exclusion as a being who has absolutely transgressed the laws of nature and man. The legal status of the individual recedes to the point where their ontological status as a human being becomes void, and Agamben argues this point of indistinction begins with the notion of the ban, or exile.

Agamben argues that natural life, or *zoë*, has always been included in political life in a particular way. He uses the example of the “ban” – the exile of a person considered dangerous to the ruler or inhabitants from the community – as support for this proposition. Agamben develops the kernel of his argument from a detail in Jean-Luc Nancy’s (1993) brief exploration
Nancy argues that abandonment and banishment have two very specific consequences that have not changed throughout the history of these practices. The first is that “abandoned beings can be neither safeguarded nor betrayed” (Nancy, 1993: 41) in that they are afforded neither protection nor prestige; and the second is that the abandoned being “always abandons to the law”.

Abandonment is

“...a compulsion to appear absolutely under the law, under the law as such and in its totality. In the same way – it is the same thing – to be banished does not amount to coming under a provision of the law, but rather to come under the entirety of the law...the law of abandonment requires that the law be applied through its withdrawal [emphasis mine] (Nancy, 1993: 44).

The abandoned being is forced to submit to the law as it is applied through its withdrawal, and Agamben argues that this is the ontological status of bare life within the relation to sovereign power: neither natural life lived entirely outside of the law nor a political life lived wholly within the security of the law – neither \( \text{zo} \text{ë} \) nor \( \text{b}i\text{o} \) – but a new category of being that is accorded less protection and prestige than either of these conditions of humanity. Here, Agamben focuses on the figure of \( \text{homo sacer} \), the Roman “sacred man” who has been relegated to the status of bare life through the dictum that “it is not permitted to sacrifice this man, yet he who kills him will not be condemned for homicide” (Pompius Festus, quoted in Agamben, 1998: 71). It is this ontological status, and this dictum, through which Agamben supports the continuity of the relations between the sovereign and bare life within the state of exception.

The status of being both outside and inside the law, within a zone of indistinction, is illustrated by the monstrous figure of \( \text{homo sacer} \) in Agamben’s analysis of the mechanical relationship between the sovereign and bare life. However, Agamben also traces the paradigmatic relationship of this phenomenon to itself, and argues that the concepts of
sovereignty and exception are subject to the same condition of being, both inside and outside the law. Agamben argues that the state of exception, identified by Schmitt as the state in which the law is suspended by the sovereign, is a condition of abandonment, insofar as the law is in force without significance. The sovereign holds the same liminal status by being simultaneously within-the-law in his authority to decide the exception and outside-the-law in his power to proscribe it. The hidden logic of indistinction applies to all as the rule of engagement for the exceptional paradigm, and the marking of a human being as *homo sacer*, with monstrous significance, is the state of potentiality for all within the biopolitical.

The function of the exception is not to repair or strengthen the existing juridico-political order through the identification and elimination of political threats, but to produce bare life as the biopolitical body, for all individuals within the species are potential *hominis sacri* (Agamben, 1998: 6). Being marked as *homo sacer*, Agamben argues, is with us always in the threat of danger to the biopolitical. This turns the biopolitical argument on its head, for the last domain of biopolitics, according to Agamben, is not generative and cumulative for the purpose of protecting life itself, but rather, it is sterile and divisive insofar as the optimization of the species renders all life potentially dangerous to the larger society. The biopolitical, as the incorporation of *zoe* into *bios*, or the biological into politics, has been with us for a very long time, and its momentum is not propelled by the force of life, but by the indistinction between life and law and the notion of belonging. As monsters show us, however, the process of normalization clarifies the sovereign position within the modern biopolitical field. The power of sovereignty, as Foucault claims, is no longer placed at the head of the body politic and the threat to the sovereign state is no longer the threat to any one ruler or political regime: it is the threat to the social body, the human population itself.
The epistemological break with antiquity, as Agamben argues, is not complete, though not exactly as he expresses it. Personhood continues to be an ontological category of humanity defined by inclusion in the social, as opposed to the merely biological category of the human. Negotiating the boundaries of humanity on the grounds of what Aristotle calls ‘nature or ill-luck’, or the laws of nature and the state, remains, like the monstrous figure, with us from ancient times. Yet the dangers that monsters signify to us have shifted with the modern break from antiquity. Natural, supernatural, and human hazards have become specifically human threats to the population as a whole, and the notion of belonging has shifted from the level of humanity – subhuman, human, or superhuman – to individual’s or group’s position: within the regulated population, on the borders of it, or outside. Within this shift to the modern the investment of the sovereign right to exception –the sovereign right to decide the position of belonging - has shifted from the head of the body politic to the population itself within the modern biopolitical field.

Defining the threat to humanity is expressed on every level of society through the normalizing process of the biopolitical field of the western modern world, from the exceptional decision of the state to the internal subjectification of the individual. The sterility and divisiveness that Agamben sees within the arbitration process to establish individual positions of belonging is determined by the objective to preserve and optimize the population as a whole, on the basis of static purity laws concerning nature and dynamic purity laws concerning man. The role of the monster in modern society is within the juridical process of normalization which operates on all levels of the biopolitical modern state-society. As a semiotic-material figure, the monster provides a way of focusing the debate over the human characteristics of belonging. This figure denotes the series of significations which are then transcribed, or marked, onto individuals and groups as indicators of their position within their contemporary population.
As Foucault claims, monsters in antiquity were signs of complete transgression against the prevailing order of humanity: man as a living being is subject only to the laws of natural history and the sovereign body. In the shift to modernity with the rise of scientific knowledge and expansive political power, monsters have become indicative of degrees of transgression and defiance against the new order of humanity: the human population, the species itself, has become subject to the laws of developing evolutionary population genetics\textsuperscript{18} and the correction and regulation of new technologies of punitive power. Monsters illustrate the changing nature of scientific laws and, through a deeper analysis of sovereign power, the static form of socio-political law. These categories of law are thoroughly entangled with each other. Whether ‘natural’ or ‘human’, law relies on the monstrous as the semiotic-material figure for negotiating the boundaries of humanity which are the primary frame of reference for both. Foucault’s abnormal monster signifies iterations of inclusive abnormality and expressions of repressed human desires, Haraway’s transgenic monster is a recombinant being with multiple constitutive elements, and Agamben’s homo sacer is the monstrous human stripped of all political and human rights: all semiotic-material figurations which play an integral role in this process of determining belonging.

\textsuperscript{18} See Foucault’s \textit{The Order of Things} (ch. 5) and Haraway’s \textit{Modest_Witness} (ch. 6) on the history of the development of evolutionary theory coterminous with the shift to the modern.
Chapter IV: A genealogy of transgenic monsters

It should be clear by now that monsters exist as both symbolic, significant figures of specific trends in the debate on human belonging, into which new characteristics can be placed as transformations to the boundaries of life occur, and as human beings who have been marked with that significance. They are not simply positioned within the biopolitical field. Only when human beings are marked with monstrous significance do monsters have a place within the spatial ordering of modern society. The material side of these semiotic figures are indicated by Foucault’s assertion that monsters have become incorporated into the human population, Haraway’s argument that monsters remain at the boundaries of humanity, and Agamben’s claim that those marked by bare life are excluded from humanity by the state. Here I want to trace the monster’s role within the process of normalization, through sociological artefacts.

An artefact is something that is made (facere) with skill (ars) by humans. In a general sense, an artefact tends to be left over from a previous time, such as an object found in an archaeological site. Artefacts can be objects, texts or ideas, and there are a number of specific interactions with, and uses, for artefacts. Here my primary goal is to distinguish between using the object, text, or idea as a sociological artefact and a document. A document is “an object you read to find out what happened” while an artefact is “an object you study to learn about how things happen” (Lavender, CUNY History Department website) A sociological artefact, then, is an object, text, or idea that is studied to learn about how social processes, mechanisms, and interactions take place between various actors within a social milieu. The theory of monstrosity I have been developing here as a semiotic mechanism in the process of normalization and the
practice of positioning monstrously marked humans within the biopolitical field can be tested through sociological methods and analysis. I use sociological artefacts from the 18th and 19th centuries to trace the emergence of recombinant beings through the process of crystallization, the nucleation stages, of the biopolitical as evidence of this process.

I argue that that the emergence of recombinant beings with multiple constitutive elements who defy purity laws correspond, or is parallel to, Foucault’s genealogy of abnormal individual who transgress such laws. Foucault’s genealogy of monsters begins with the monsters of antiquity who where the absolute transgressors of the laws of nature and man, and these monsters were either, as we established earlier, either sub- or super-human, and as such belonged to the realm of myth. Only with the advent of scientific forms of knowledge did the monstrous become significant as a fully human hazard. Through scientific discoveries of foreign elements within the human organism, and experiments with combining those elements, the recombinant being took on many characteristics that were once explained in supernatural or mythic terms and began to defy, rather than completely transgress the laws of nature and man. As the medico-judicial techniques of the 18th and 19th centuries gradually shifted the monstrous transgressions from absolute, or inhuman, to relative, or abnormal transgression within the process of normalization, so the medico-scientific techniques of that time gradually shifted the possibilities of transgenic beings which did not transgress, but defied those laws, from the supernatural, or mythic to the scientific, or human.

I begin with a set of three 18th century publications on proto-scientific experiments which find or introduce non-human elements within the natural organization of the individual and the species by fellows of the Royal Society of London: Anthony van Leeuwenhoek’s late 17th century
discovery of bacteria incorporated into his physiology; the early 18th century introduction of vaccines to the human system by Emmanuel Timonius and John Woodward; and John Henry Winkler’s mid-century experiment on the introduction of electricity to the human organisation. These documents on the early experiments on the possibilities for combining human and other elements are sociological artefacts which speak to the changing discourse of scientific inquiries in the 18th century and are indicative of the gradual shift of transgenic beings which did not transgress, but defied, the purity laws from the supernatural, or mythic beings to the scientific, or human. In contrast to Foucault’s claim that medico-legal examiners of this time were primarily concerned with restricting, disciplining and regulating the abnormalities they were finding in their subjects for the betterment of ‘mankind’ though their advancements in knowledge, the medico-scientific scholars of the time were concerned with the progressive expansion of ‘mankind’ through their research.

By the end of the 18th century and the identification of the syphilis spirochete, *Treponema pallidum*, this belief in the possibilities of progressive biological science had become widespread through certain segments of European society, though, to others, the inherent optimism in this belief was mitigated by their subordinate role in its production. Indeed, this belief in the powers of life science to advance humanity through the identification and discovery of non-human elements within human physiology had grown so strong that the prospect of discovering the “nature of the principle of life” (Shelley, [1813] 2005: 356) was taken quite seriously.

From the perspective of the 21st century, we might expect to find attendant fears and uneasiness with regard to the non-human elements themselves. However, this uneasiness only appeared in the 19th century, when the intersection of applied science and marginalized
populations met in urban and population management techniques. Imagining van Leeuwenhoek’s (1714: 72) bacterial “animalcules” crawling through your mouth, the intentional introduction of smallpox pus into your blood, the terrifying instant of electrical shock, or the little bug syphilis invading your system through dirty sex can, in our time, offset a wholesale enthusiasm for the study of biology, yet in the 18th century it seemed to have been a matter for enthusiastic curiosity.

The identifications and discoveries of non-human elements were gradually becoming a boon to the population, yet, within the 19th century, the long-standing notions of the individuality of the organism and the purity of species “deepened” as Nikolas Rose notes, with the concerns of a rapidly transforming society. The emergence of foreign elements, benign or not, within the self and the population as a whole, was expressed through culturally defined feeling of trepidation or uneasiness that we associate with such transgenesis today. The question of how those fears translated into monstrous characteristics is an important one and helps us to decipher those emergent characteristics which constitute the human being, as an individual organism, within the processes of normalization.

Foucault claims that the 19th century consolidated biopolitics and the western transition from the rare phenomenon of inhuman ‘monsters’ to ‘abnormal’ human beings. Monsters became semiotic-material figures that were as common as grass, picked up for a penny19, and indicative of shifting concerns with human belonging in a rapidly transforming world. As the social and scientific parameters of personhood change, as the constitutive elements of what is defined as

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19 The 19th century “penny dreadful”: a small, cheap, pamphlet with fantastical and monstrous stories, such as Varney the Vampire.
human shift, the natural and cultural categories of what it means to be human or non-human are negotiated through the figure of the monster. Since the 19th century is characterized by shifts in social and scientific conceptions of personhood, it is also rife with modern monsters.

Two of the most prolific monstrous figures to emerge during this time, and those which are still familiar to us today, are the cyborg and the vampire. These fictional and imaginary figures are hybrid beings which are comprised of both human and inhuman characteristics and they take shape as the scientific inquiries into the transgenesis of the human organism are explored. Through a sociological analysis of the 19th century publications of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) I treat the cyborg and the vampire figures as monstrous figures in which the newly debatable characteristics of humanity were projected. These characteristics express the prevailing concerns about belonging and thus told the position of individuals and groups within society.

Foucault’s (2003: 91) timeline for the transition from monster to abnormal begins in the 17th and 18th centuries with the emergence of the notion of a human criminal nature, that is, the affiliation of crime with a natural pathology or aberration. Until that time: we can say that monstrosity as the natural manifestation of the unnatural brought with it an indication of criminality. At the level of the rules governing natural species and distinctions between natural species, the monstrous individual was always associated, if not systematically at least virtually, with a possible criminality (Foucault, 2003: 91).

Until around the 18th century, then, monsters were perceived as the absolute transgressors of law. They were thought to be born into a level of ordering which was beyond human, for it was their unnatural nature to transgress. However, this position was not reversible: a criminal act, or a transgressive event, did not automatically confer the status of monstrosity onto its perpetrator. In fact, Foucault argues, until the invention of scientific, industrial, and political technologies
during the 18th century, which laid the foundation for biopolitical techniques of power, it had never occurred to anyone to define a transgressive act as monstrous. The notion of a criminal, or monstrous, nature could only emerge when it became possible to defy the deepening purity laws of organic life, to commit a crime against nature and humanity.

The scientific, industrial, and political technologies of this time were also foundational to the possibilities of recombinant beings that defied the laws of similarity to one’s own kind20. Here, we see the emergence of examinations and discoveries about the nature of the human being. The research and discoveries within this inexhaustible stock of knowledge, according to Condorcet, an 18th century official of the French Academy of Sciences, was intended for the “improvement of the human species” with the ultimate goal of perfecting the nature of the species:

.... we could therefore already conclude that the perfectibility of man is unlimited, even though, up to now, we have only supposed him endowed with the same natural faculties and organization. What then would be the certainty and extent of our hopes if we could believe that these natural faculties themselves and this organization are also susceptible of improvement? This is the last question remaining for us to examine (Condorcet, [1794]).

In the 18th century quest for improvement, this research comprised a vast array of examinations into the ‘natural faculties and organizations’ of Homo sapiens and experiments for the discovery of non-human elements that were, or could become, constitutive of individual units of the species.

In Abnormal, Foucault (2003) focuses on the 18th century medico-legal examinations into the natural faculties of individuals and argues that the examiners concluded that new technologies of governance and normalization must be invented to regulate and discipline the

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20 It is important to note the distinction between the two different methods of defiance described here: the defiance of the criminal is by transgressing the categories of human and monsters which literally cross from one ontological category to another. The defiance of the recombinant being is transgenic – cross-bred and hybrid – since it is a combination of disparate elements.
abnormalities that they found in their subjects. The experiments, however, for the discovery of non-human elements within the natural organization of the individual and the human species were just as important, and new technologies of science and medicine were invented to contribute to this project for improvement.

**Bugs, pus, and bleeding at the nose**

A number of societies for the progression and advancement of scientific knowledge were formed during the 17th and 18th centuries, including Condorcet’s French Academy of Sciences, in which learned and “civic gentlemen” (Shapin, 1998: 134) convened, conversed, and published on the advancements in their scientific area of interest. At the time, these were far ranging efforts, for disciplinary categories were only beginning to emerge out of the classical holism of natural history and natural philosophy: Condorcet (1794) records that organizing such societies “will speed up the advances of those sciences”, and through a cooperative effort will afford “all that mineralogy, botany, zoology, meteorology can be expected to gain thereby”.

These new societies were distinct from the universities and signalled a rising collaboration with both the state and the larger society, a collaboration which the universities – developed within the Scholastic tradition – eschewed (Shapin, 1998: 133-135). Such societies also placed

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21 Distinguished as two broad areas of classical study, natural history was the study of natural and artificial effect; while natural philosophy was the study of nature’s causes (Shapin, 1998: 110-111).
a great deal of importance on the experiment as a means of discovery rather than on the theoretical formulations of the universities,22 Aside from the cooperative and civic minded objectives mentioned above, they made a distinction between the practices of personal belief and the production and consensus of knowledge which produced public forums for the dissemination of their findings as both experimental “performances” and publications (Shapin, 1998: 106-109).

These public forums, particularly the publications, provide evidence that early experiments which combined human and other elements were indicative of the gradual shift of transgenic beings from the supernatural, or mythic beings to the scientific, or human beings. The Royal Society of London began publication of its journal, Philosophical Transactions, in 1665, and today maintains a comprehensive internet archive of digital originals of its complete series. From this series, I examine three ‘letters’, as they were called, about the identification or introduction of foreign elements to the human physiological organization from the late 17th century to the mid 18th century.

Anthony van Leuwenhoek’s (1693: 646-649) late 17th century discovery of bacteria incorporated within his physiology was the beginning of this explosion of interest in foreign elements as part the human being, and he contributed a large number of letters to the Philosophical Transactions journal of the Royal Society of London pertaining to the identification of microscopic matter. One of his earliest contributions was “An Extract of a Letter from Mr. Anth. Van Leuwenhoek, Concerning Animalcules found on the Teeth; of the

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22 See Shapin’s Scientific Revolution (ch. 2) for a detailed analysis on the debate between experiment and theory in these societies.
Scaleyness of the Skin, &c.” (PT, 1693: 646). In this report, van Leuwenhoek expressed his delight in both the process of discovery, and the “animalcules” themselves:

I have often endeavoured to discover Animalcules in Spittle, but in vain: But examining a kind of gritty Matter from between my Teeth and mixing sometimes with Rain-water and sometimes with Spittle... I discovered therin with admiration a great number of very small ones moving (van Leuwenhoek, 1693: 646)

Van Leuwenhoek’s letter is specific about his purpose in sharing this new information with his peers, and his methodology, though odd to 21st century eyes, was thorough. After he examined the ‘gritty matter’ from his own teeth, he examined those of others – both those who drank wine and smoked tobacco, and those who did not; he sketched the variety of animalcules found under his microscope and described each variation and its particular movement patterns with careful metaphors; he measured and compared the weight, size, and composition of these varieties with other matter; and, he discovered that they could be killed with vinegar.

As seen in figure 4 shown on the next page, and in van Leuwenhoek’s expressed “admiration” and careful descriptions, it is important to note that these animalcules were not perceived by him as monstrous. The descriptive comparisons he makes are to larger animals such as eels and fish, and he describes the motions and behaviour of a particular variety as moving “swiftly by each other like Gnats playing in the air” (van Leuwenhoek, 1693: 646). This was no monstrous metaphor for terrible, albeit very small, beasts, nor was he communicating any fear or trepidation about these tiny animals, suspended by the “thousands in a drop” of spittle and living in the gritty matter between his teeth (van Leuwenhoek, 1693: 646).
Any uneasiness toward bacterial symbiosis with human organisms, which is so familiar to us today, was not apparent at the time of this discovery, nor did the form of the animalcules provoke any monstrous comparisons.

A decade later the letter from Emmanuel Timonius and John Woodward to the *Philosophical Transactions* describing early inoculation techniques in Turkey against small pox, again did not provide any monstrous descriptors or trepidation. There no trepidation or sense of monstrosity described with regard to the inoculation process itself, any more than among the Turks who had both practiced inoculation against small pox for years, and shared the process and with the Royal Society (Aronson and Newman, 2005: Brown University Exhibition website). Timonius was a resident physician in Constantinople who, with John Woodward as his co-author and
witness, provided, for the first time, the inoculation practices of the Middle East and Asia to a Western scientific audience:

The Writer of this ingenious Discourse observes, in the first place, that the Circassians, Georgians, and other Asiatics have introduced the Practice of procuring the Small-Pox by a sort of Inoculation., for about the space of forty years, among the Turks and others at Constantinople (Timonius & Woodward, 1713: 72) [author’s emphasis].

Woodward (1713: 72) expresses his initial prudence and caution for this innovative practice in the introduction of the letter, yet hastens to follow this with “the happy Success it has been found to have in thousands of Subjects for these eight years past” in persons of all ages, sexes, and “different Temperaments”, and even in the worst environmental and living conditions.

Here, the inoculation process is described in detail, as practiced in Constantinople and throughout the area, and although the recipe calls for “the Matter of the Pussules” to be taken from “some Boy, or young Lad, of a sound, healthy Temperament” the process is recorded without prejudice to race, nature, or monstrosity (Timonius & Woodward, 1713: 73). The first part of the process is to get the small-pox “matter” from the donor, in which the physician “with a needle pricks the Tubercles (chiefly those on the Shins and Hams) and press out the Matter coming from them into some convenient Vessel of Glass”. After a great deal of supplementary mechanics, the matter is presented to the recipient by making:

...several little Wounds with a Needle, in one, two or more places of the Skin, till some drops of Blood issuing out; one drop of the Matter is sufficient for each place prick’d...the custom is to run the Needle transverse, and rip up the Skin a little, that there may be a convenient dividing of the Part, and the mixing of the Matter with the Blood more easily perfom’d (Timonius & Woodward, 1713: 73).

Again, our contemporary imagination recoils at the idea of introducing the pus from a contagious person directly into our own bloodstream, as evidenced by the epidemic of fear surrounding all communicable infections during the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Yet, in the
early 18th century, this process is presented as a wonderful preventative and curative practice for
the alleviation of a disease that had been regarded as a curse, or a sign from the gods. Shortly
after the publication of this practice, of course, we know that Lady Mary Montague championed
the process of inoculation in the European nations, while Cotton Mathers did the same in
America. The process of injecting pus from a donor directly into the bloodstream of a recipient
did not change until Jenner’s vaccination techniques a century later (Aronson and Newman,
2005). Throughout the 18th century, the Turkish inoculation process against smallpox was
applied regularly, and the epidemiology of the disease “first left the richer classes, then it left the
villages, then the provincial towns, to centre itself in the capital” (Aronson and Newman, 2005).
The supernatural interpretations of this disease evaporated with the scientific process of
introducing pus from a diseased person into a healthy one: recombining not only two distinctly
separate human organisms, but also the foreign and evil element of smallpox.

The 18th century introduction of electricity to the human organization was also the
transformation of a supernatural element into a scientific one. This experimental concept was a
reconfiguration of the vitalist movement which reached its apex in the 17th century, in which the
theory of “spontaneous generation” supposed that life could be generated from forces outside
the usual methods of reproduction (MacDonald & Scherf, 2005: 20-22). With Galvani’s
identification of bioelectricity as the medium through which nerve cells passed signals to the
muscles in the early decades of the 18th century, those who subscribed to vitalism soon became
interested in the application of electricity to the human organism as a way to re-vitalize flagging
or ill persons, and the potential for creating life from an electrical charge was hotly debated
(Kirby, 1990: 331-333). However, the process of experimenting with the introduction of
electricity, formerly a force reserved for gods and dramatic meteorology, to the human
organization was difficult to manage, painful to observe and participate in, and ethically questionable for mid 18th century practitioners.

John Henry Winkler’s report to the Royal Society of London, in the mid-18th century, was a case in point, and must be quoted at length. Once Winkler had heard of this practice, which caused him “astonishment”, he tried the application of electricity on himself and his wife. Subsequently, he felt that he needed to tell the fellows at the Royal Society “something of what I’ve been doing” (Winkler, 1746: 211). Winkler first applied an electrical current to himself, an unspecified number of times, with the result that:

I found great Convulsions by it in my Body. It put my Blood into a great Agitation; so that I was afraid of an ardent Fever; and was obliged to use refrigerating Medicines. I felt a Heaviness in my Head, as if I had a Stone lying upon it. It gave me twice a Bleeding at my Nose, to which I am not inclined (Winkler, 1746: 211-212).

He then thought it incumbent to try the procedure on his wife, and applied a current to her a total of three times:

My Wife, who had only received the electrical Flash twice, found herself so weak after it that she could hardly walk. A Week after, she received only once the electrical Flash; a few Minutes after it she bled at the Nose (Winkler, 1746: 212).

After this, Winkler read in the Berlin newspaper that a similar experiment had been tried on a bird, which:

...had made it suffer great Pain thereby. I did not repeat this Experiment; for I think it wrong to give such Pain to living Creatures. I therefore take, instead of Men or Brutes, a Piece of Metal, and I put it upon a stand under the electrical Pipe, which Pipe propagates the electricity (Winkler, 1746: 212).

Here, the risks of introducing a foreign element to the human organism are well demonstrated, and the ethical quandary sufficiently resolved at least for a time.

Early experiments on the possibilities of combining human and other elements were indicative of the gradual shift of transgenic beings from the supernatural, or mythic beings to the scientific, or human, and the emerging recombinations of ‘man’ in conjunction with ‘other’ in the
18th century were certainly not of mythic proportions. Bugs in the teeth, pus in the blood, convulsions, and nosebleeds were very down-to-earth propositions. The absence of expressions of anxiety, horror, disgust, or fear to these early transgenic reports, in which foreign elements are identified or introduced into the human body, speaks to the shallow and tenuous hold that the narrative of purity of kind had during this period. The complete lack of monstrous metaphors and imagery does not mean that monsters were absent, or insignificant, during this period, but rather that they had yet to enter the scientific discourse on recombinance in any symbolic way23. As Donna Haraway (1997: 14) argues, the 19th century implosion of “the natural and the artificial, nature and culture, subject and object, machine and organic body, money and lives, narrative and reality” had yet to come.

During the 18th century it was becoming possible to defy the laws of nature as a recombinant being. The shallow narrative of purity within the cultural environment made expressions of distaste or anxiety irregular, or even absent, from such defiance. The dissemination of scientific knowledge, taken up with such enthusiasm by the scientific societies of this period, inspired learned and ‘civic’ gentlemen with great optimism toward both the progression of science and the human species. However the reluctance of an integral demographic of the population to embrace this concept through research and development is often forgotten: the research subjects and their families. M. Brazier argues that these research subjects of the 18th century were usually the most marginalized members of the western population:

Medical research has enriched our lives, and those of our ancestors. Yet such research routinely exploited the poor and the vulnerable. In delving back into history I should, I acknowledge,

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23 See Haraway’s *Modest_Witness* for an extended analysis of the emergence and propagation of monstrous metaphors in the life sciences from the 19th century on.
change my language. The surgeons of the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries did not conduct clinical trials as understood today. They experimented on their patients (Brazier, 2008: 180).

Charity hospitals, workhouses, and prisons were at their height in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, and provided ripe picking grounds for both medico-legal examinations, and the discovery and introduction of non-human elements into the human organization. While women, the poor, slaves, and colonial subjects were subsumed under the dominion of husband, public magistrate, master, and empire, those most likely to be motivated to ‘improve’ the species were most likely to be the husbands, city magistrates, masters, and colonial administrators themselves. The casual directions, given by Timonius and Woodward, for procuring “a Boy, or young Lad” as an inoculation donor with the right temperament and incubation period provides one example of this, and although Mr. Winkler experimented on himself, he also found a convenient subject in his wife, whose thoughts on the matter were not recorded. The fact that marginalized populations were the first to be associated with the transgenic human and the defiance of organic laws is integral to the interpretation of the contemporary figure of the monstrous.

This population acquired new dangerous characteristics in the transformation of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, and helped inspire the mania for abnormalities and reflective monsters as those who needed restrictions and regulations for the betterment of society and the population as a whole. The intersection of ‘marginalized’ populations with the scientific advancements in transgenic organisms is a breathtakingly large and fruitful area of study – but one that this thesis cannot do more than mention as a link in the argument.

Scientific knowledge, shared through public forums, was changing the perceptions not only what it meant to be human, but what it meant to be an individual organism. The possibilities of recombination and transgenesis, and the potential to defy nature through those recombinations
were happening at the same time that Foucault identifies for the incorporation of the monster into the abnormal individual. By the middle of the century, some improvements on, and for, the species could easily be seen and experienced through the dual processes of regulating and disciplining examined marginalized populations and with the discovery of basic non-human elements through experiments performed on the same demographic. The techniques of productive and inclusive power, developed for the relative transgressions of the emerging abnormal individual, changed the practices of medical, psychiatric, and penal institutions from retributive chaos to relatively rehabilitative and scientific order. However, the techniques of scientific replication, knowledge dissemination, and practical application changed the practices of urban and population management in the same time period.

The development of germ-theory and sanitation practices began to improve urban environments (Brazier, 2008: 180), while the isolation and control of venereal syphilis through the arsenic-based Salvarsan treatment relieved – to a degree – the negative impacts of urban epidemics, death rates, and draconian measures taken against marginalized women during the most aggressive public health campaigns (Parascandola, 2008: 122). These improvements drew the burgeoning middle classes to the realities of elementary transgenic advantages and rehabilitative techniques, and it soon became clear that the “recurring problem of the 19th century” was not only that of “discovering the core of monstrosity hidden behind little abnormalities, deviances, and irregularities” (Foucault, 2003: 56), but also of discovering its twin: the core of monstrosity hidden behind little bacteria, viruses, and man’s meddling with his own physiology.

As the social and scientific parameters of personhood change, as the constitutive elements of what is defined as human shift, we negotiate the natural and cultural categories of what it
means to be human or non-human through the semiotic figure of the monster. The 19th century is rife with the culminating shifts in social and scientific personhood developed through the past couple of centuries, and thus, it is rife with monsters. Foucault (2003: 58) characterizes this century as the definitive point of the transition from the absolute transgressions of monsters to the relative transgression of the abnormal individual who is (and this bears repeating) “typically regular in his irregularity”.

In the 19th century, monsters become pale shadows of their former selves as they are transformed into mere reflections of abnormal humans through the invention and normalization of a criminal, pathological, nature. But they also come to signify the recombinant elements of transgenic humans developed through the project to improve the species beyond the laws of organic life, and they expose the hidden indistinction between life and law that subsumes the monstrous within the entire population. It is because Foucault does not dwell on the monstrous component of 19th century abnormal individuals, but subsumes them within the normalized pathology of the population, and because he provides only a superficial gloss on the laws of nature and man, that his proposal for the changing parameters of humanity is incomplete. No two monsters are more authoritative mirrors of the culminating force of human change in the 19th century than the cyborg and the vampire. These figures give shape to the widespread concerns over the shifting ‘nature’ of humanity through the cluster of human and inhuman characteristics with which they are imbued.
Cyborgs and vampires

Two of the most prolific monstrous figures to emerge during this time, which are still familiar to us today are the cyborg and the vampire. Both the cyborg and the vampire find their genesis within the immense transformations in industrial, scientific, and political discourses of that reached their apex in the 19th century, and the parameters of personhood began to shift rapidly within those transformations. As Haraway claims, these figures are “shocked into being from the force of the implosion of the natural and the artificial, nature and culture, subject and object, machine and organic body, money and lives, narrative and reality” (Haraway, 1997: 14) which permeates the century.

Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and Bram Stoker’s Dracula are our most familiar artefacts of the emergence of these monsters. Shelley’s original 1818 novel was an instant success, due in part to its theme of recombinant biology at a time when increasing amounts of information on this emerging discipline were being passed on to the public; what had been considered fantastical, in so many areas of life, was quickly becoming, if not probable, then possible. Within five years, Frankenstein had gone through a second edition and had been adapted, twice, for the stage, and Shelley prepared yet a third edition for publication in 1831 (MacDonald & Scherf, 2005: 36). The characters and plot of this novel have never gone out of favour with the general, western public, and it would be folly to try and list all of the stage, film, comic, print, image, and musical adaptations of this work over time.

Stoker’s Dracula has a very similar history, beginning just over ninety years later. Again, the structure and characters of the story quickly caught the interest and imagination of the public,
and a “sixpenny” paperback edition, abridged by Stoker, was brought out within 5 years of the original publication – reflecting the ‘penny dreadfuls’ of *Varney the Vampire* and his ilk decades before (Byron, 2000: 27). Stage and screen adaptations followed, as well as adaptations for the entire spectrum of media available into the 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries; a number of adaptations have twinned the characters and plots, presenting them as foils, friends, or archenemies. These novels have also been exhaustively paired within many academic disciplines, for stylistic, political, social, thematic, documentary, and narrative comparison, and it is because of this sustained interest that I, too, bring them together in this analysis. Frankenstein and Dracula are excellent examples of semiotic-material monsters, in which the shifting characteristics of human belonging can be measured both in their original contexts and through time. It is through these monsters that the three primary positions of inside, on the border, or outside of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century biopolitical field are negotiated and marked.

Although the term ‘cyborg’ was not introduced into language until the mid 20\textsuperscript{th} century, this figure was arguably first portrayed in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* during the early decades of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Frankenstein is hardly the combination of man and machine which later came to characterize the cyborg, yet the very definition of a man-made, or augmented, life is derived from the scientific meddling of man in the realm of life. The plot of this novel revolves around the reminiscences of Victor Frankenstein. In a passion of experimentation, Victor creates a living, thinking, transgenic monster which he almost immediately rejects as repugnant. The bulk of the novel consists of a series of conflicts between Victor and his creation, for the monster wants attention and care from his creator while Victor wants nothing more that to undo what he has done. As a proto-cyborg, Victor Frankenstein’s monster began as an un-named and unloved creature constructed from equal parts of determined 19\textsuperscript{th} century weltanschauung,
biological human scrap, and the best technology to infuse electromagnetic vitality which money could buy. He – and though he is un-named, he is not un-gendered – is created in a fevered euphoria of invention by Victor Frankenstein: a young, cosmopolitan European man subject to ennui and who possesses a broad, classical education, wealth, a comfortable lifestyle, good prospects, and an itch for something better (1999: 63-71).

Frankenstein’s monster is a reminder of what happens when a European man of this period fritters away his youth in non-productive analysis of his own irregularities and the pathologies of those around him. Victor is given to fits of gloom and melancholia, his mother dies from a want of prudence and an over-developed sense of affection, his father is overcome with grief, his fiancé is given to over-analysis and knows him too well to inspire any feelings of desire on his part, and his primary instructor is a conceited, repulsive little man who leaves the task of explaining the romantic mysteries involved in 19th century science to a junior lecturer (1999: 71-77). From the perspective of Foucault’s process of normalization, these pathological classifications of human abnormality appear to be quite regular, though they possess submerged, monstrous natures which, in the case of Victor, can be unleashed into both criminal and cringing behaviour.

Frankenstein’s monster is, of course, a reflection of Frankenstein himself: hurt to the point of savagery by the disordered behaviour of his creator and of those around him, the monster unleashes a similar salvo of informed neglect, disappointment and criminally deviant behaviour. His rage is directed toward the one who had once nurtured him so carefully, just as Victor rebels against those who had previously taken such great care to nurture him. Yet the monster is also a figure into which Mary Shelley projects questions concerning what it means to be human,
and we see these questions reflected in Victor Frankenstein’s monster: the recombinant being who is created by man with the introduction of a foreign element. Shelley (quoted in MacDonald & Scherf, 2005: 19) herself recalled the origin of Frankenstein’s monster as a dream she had which was brought on by a conversation about “the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated”.

This “nature of the principle of life” was commonly tied to the vitalist study of electricity during the 18th and early 19th centuries – of which Shelley was familiar – when theories about producing vitality through scientific technology were hotly debated (MacDonald & Scherf, 2005: 17-24). Mary Shelley introduced the question of humanity into this debate: if life can be produced by science, could a human life be produced as well? *Frankenstein* is as much a novel about the boundaries of personhood – scientific and social – as it is about the abnormal human and its monstrous reflection. The position of Victor and his monster within the solidifying biopolitical order are presented in the novel as shifting. First Victor is depicted inside the norm, then outside as his experiment sours, then back in again as he expresses regret. The monster is first represented as beyond the scope of humanity, then on the borders as he develops his mental and social faculties. Through the character of Victor Frankenstein, Shelley creates the prototype of a transgenic monster which drowns in existential angst because he inhabits the categories of living and dead, organic and inorganic, human and non-human at once. Through his hybridity, he defies the laws of similarity to kind and reproduction. Then, as now, the reader of *Frankenstein* is left facing the question: where does this creature belong?

The question of legitimate humanity is taken up again later in the 19th century with the rising popular interest in vampires. Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel, *Dracula*, epitomizes this
question. The plot of Dracula is familiar to us, as the fight against an invading evil by a group of stalwart and ingenious individuals who come together for this singular purpose, each bringing his or her own special and unique attributes to the project. Like Victor Frankenstein and his monster, the two main characters, Jonathan Harker and Count Dracula can be analyzed in terms of Foucault’s abnormal individual and his monstrous component.

Jonathan’s transgressions against the laws of nature and man are certainly relative rather than absolute, and his irregularity is “typically regular”. The serious, young, British man who is working his way up in the world through good management and good patronage suffers from typical symptoms of his time including timidity, nervous prostration and sexual hysteria. The monstrous component of his character is reflected in the figure of the very foreign Count Dracula: also a social climber with management skills which are “19th century up-to-date with a vengeance” and Dracula retains the patronage of Harker himself. The count, however, embodies the criminal element lying submerged in Jonathan’s nature: powerful in his desire to better himself and his kind, Dracula is domineering, has nerves of steel, and will stop at nothing – even women beyond his social reach – to not only survive, but to survive in the modern world. Jonathan is immanently containable and correctable within the biopolitical sphere, and his monster is reflected in order to remind us how necessary that regulation and discipline is.

Yet this is not the only set of irregularities showcased by the novel: Jonathan Harker has an entourage; an ensemble cast which is reflected in those who surround the count. The upper class and socially inviolable Lucy is reflected in the sexually ravening vampire she becomes through Dracula’s ministrations; the good doctor Seward in his mad patient, Renfield; the modern British woman Mina in the effective, but antiquated and foreign, van Helsing; and the
masculine trio of Harker’s stalwart friends are reflected in the feminine trio of Dracula’s licentious coven. The constellation of vampires in Dracula reflect a host of human abnormalities, which, in themselves, are treatable through regulation and discipline and they also reflect defiance of social and scientific laws, which are not. The fear that these vampires incite in Harker and his entourage is not a fear of their own psychological irregularity reflected back to them, but a fear of invasion and contagion from an outside force. The process of vampiric contagion brought about by Dracula’s influence on Lucy, Renfield, and Mina express the growing concerns of influence from outside. Dracula is a foreign element with the power to infect the population.

The improvement of the species, so enthusiastically opined in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, through the potential recombination of elements comprising a human being, became balanced, in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, against fears that such meddling is not wholly under scientific control. The elementary examinations and experiments of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century grew in sophistication and technique, and the experiments, such as those with electricity, which introduced the individual monster from Frankenstein into the western imagination, were now introducing new contagious foreign elements. A long medical tradition of “miasmic explanations” was still at play in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century which helped make effects of contagion visible, such as the theory of putrefied molecules entering the lungs which transfers into the bloodstream (Eyler, 2001: 228), the theory of “diathesis” which indicates an inherited predisposition to a diseased state (Lucas, 1911: 5), and the theory of miscegenation, in which the purity of the white race is corrupted through tainted blood (Young, 1995: 142-142; Lucas, 1911: 30). However, the discovery of the syphilis spirochete and theories about how it passes into the bloodstream in the late 18\textsuperscript{th} century gave
rise to further discoveries of blood-borne, or inoculable, bacterium (Eyler, 2001: 228) understood as living organisms that invaded and corrupted the bloodline.

In 19th century Europe, the combined theories of purifications, heredity through diathesis or miscegenation and blood-borne bacterium swelled to a fever pitch with the cholera epidemics. Something was getting into human beings and killing them, and the scientific community remained unresolved as to the cause until the late 1860’s24 (Eyler, 2001: 230). In addition to the nascent epidemiological hypotheses on the source of the disease, at least three of the 19th century cholera outbreaks originated in the British colonial territories of Asia, and all of the epidemics spread through the movement of colonial goods and subjects (Frerichs; Aronson and Newman, 2005). The hypotheses of cholera contagion were multiple, and all rested on the foundation of foreign elements being introduced to the human individual and infecting others through the unhealthy environment of slum dwellers (Eyler, 2001: 228), the corruption of the hereditary process of reproduction (Lucas, 1911: 30), or living organisms that invaded the bloodstream (Eyler, 2001: 228).

Stoker’s novel, Dracula, incorporates all of these 19th century hypotheses in his characterization of a vampire epidemic through his human and monstrous characters. From the horrors of homoerotic urges to the polluting influence of foreigners; from imbecility to excessive emotionality; and from the defilement of purity to the contagion of blood – much has been written about the fin de siècle fears of degeneracy implicit within Stoker’s novel25. These fears can all be linked to the combined framework of a biopolitical discourse for the regulation

24 John Snow’s water-borne bacillus.

of the human population within an emerging scientific culture where the principles of scientific thought and knowledge were woven into prevailing cultural ideologies. Individuals who defy the deepening laws of science and society – transgenic humans – challenge the efficacy and veracity of those laws by introducing foreign elements into the human organism. Meanwhile the transgressions against those laws – the abnormalities of the human individual – came to be perceived as relative, rather than absolute, deviations from the correspondingly deepening norm of the human population. Again, as with Victor Frankenstein and his monster, the position of any of the characters within society is potentially subject to exclusion, for the hidden indistinction between life and law provide the suspense, the forward momentum, of the plot.

The vampires in *Dracula* are a reflection of both sides of the modern monster: figures in which the 19th century western imagination was able to perceive both the relative dangers to society from undisciplined individuals and to negotiate the continually increasing complexity of what, and who, could be defined as human and enfranchised with human status.
Chapter V: Monstrous expressions in the modern

Monsters in the western tradition have changed in many ways since Scylla and Charybdis dwelt in the rocky caves flanking the Mediterranean Sea. These creatures and their ilk were hybrid creations, at times the mythical embodiment of animal and supernatural, but more often than not they were crossbred imaginaries of human and other to warn of a host of dangers to humanity, from geographic hazards and the threat and marvel of the supernatural to human transgressions against the laws of the gods, nature, and man. Scylla and Charybdis warned of environmental dangers; Empusa, daughter of Hecate, was the manifestation of her mother’s anger as a fierce wind that would suck the life out of travellers; the Minotaur was Minos’ punishment for failing in his religious duties to Poseidon; and the Sirens, Gorgons, and witches such as Circe were warnings against the vagaries of women, the sub-human and monstrous form of man.

With the modern turn and changing methods of knowledge came a new configuration of monsters. In *Monsters and Philosophy* (2005), Wolfe identifies a new concern in the early modern period with nature ‘missing its target’ and producing non-viable forms, a concern in which metaphysical considerations of genus, form and essence, necessity and accident collide with emerging biological science, producing what one might call an ‘ontology of the biological world’ (Wolfe, 2005: 3). During the early modern period, monsters lost much of their mythic qualities and became, instead, anomalies in the debate on form and species which were expressed in the emerging scientific discourses, which Shapin (1998: 3) describes as “a diverse array
of cultural practices aimed at understanding, explaining, and controlling the natural world”. Some nascent scientists investigated what were considered the ‘non-viable’ forms, such as co-joined twins (Foucault, 2003a: 66-67; Bitbol-Hespériès, 2005: 17), while others concentrated on ordering the zoological taxa. Leibniz’s studies on various monsters such as talking dogs and unicorns in the *Protogaea* (1690) is a case in point, and Ariew (2005: 88) notes that “Leibniz expects these fringe phenomena to take their place among the natural curiosities catalogued as part of a hoped for empirical database intended as means toward the perfection of the sciences”.

As Shapin (1998: 4) insists, this specific method of knowledge did not emerge as a “coherent, universal, and efficacious set of procedures and principles” but as a set of cultural practices closely tied to the political, theological, and social practices of the time. The early modern period was beset with the emergent concerns of European expansion, political upheavals, and social unrest. Finding order in the world was becoming a primary concern. The changes in the perceptions of monsters did not occur only through the emergence of scientific knowledge, but through the political necessity of ordering the quickly expanding world and its elements on a larger scale. As Foucault identifies in his theory of biopolitics, the nexus of new forms of knowledge and power during this period gradually brought about a transformation in the conception of what it meant to be human as well. The Aristotelian notion of ‘man’ as a living being through the knowledge of natural history was shifting to the notion of man as an ordered multiple: a population, race, or species through the knowledge of science and the needs of power.
This early modern project of ordering organisms into a taxonomy of life rejected the classical and scholastic notions of Aristotelian essentialism and held a nominalist position, in which the idea of *kind* was fluid and open to change (Smith, 2005: 167). Organisms were approached, as Leibniz tried to approach the unicorn, as individuals to be ordered within the grand diversity of all things, not as fixed types in which similarity to kind is a constitutive essence, or element, passed down through reproduction. It was within this rejection of essentialism and position of nominalism that the 17th and 18th century naturalists searched out zoological anomalies and scientific societies conducted experiments on the potential of combined elements. In the rejection of ancient and scholastic forms of knowledge, scientific explanations and descriptions of the *mythic*, or *supernatural*, forms of life were sought. The notion of recombinant beings as beyond human knowledge, either cross-bred, hybrid, or symbiotic, was rejected in the enthusiasm for *scientific* explanation.

It is important to note that there are two forces at work during this period that effect the monster-human connection: on the one hand, there is the emergence of a new conception of man as a multiple, a population, or a race that must be ordered; while on the other, there is the emergence of a project to order all life into a comprehensible and knowable form. The monster, during this period, loses its mythic qualities and becomes the object of scientific study as both ‘nature’ gone awry, as in the case of co-joined twins, and as a potential scientifically ‘natural’ organism. However, this novel method of ordering living beings without consideration for their true essence, or constitutive elements, produced concerns with the notion of belonging, for, “in the absence of such a real essence, species membership can at most be conceived as a taxonomical, but not an
ontological matter” (Smith, 2005: 189). This was a deep concern for the time with regard to the newly conceived human multiple, or body politic, for the nominalist position toward ordering “threatened to give us only a world of individuals”. (Smith, 2005: 189) when a large scale, organized, and hierarchal polity was becoming integral to the emerging Westphalian system of nation states and the expanding colonial possessions.

It was not until the 18th century advent of systems of ‘biology’ that the nominalist position taken toward the taxonomical project subsided for a time, and ontology was re-introduced into the ordering of biological life through the idea of scientific, rather than supernatural, laws. Linnaeus published his hierarchal system of ordering the living world into kingdoms based on gradations of similarity, while Larmarck introduced the idea of inheritance through acquired traits (UCMP/Berkeley). Within the nascent discipline of biology the various laws on belonging were hotly debated, and it was well into the 19th century, after Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1858) that evolutionary theory settled on the idea of random traits of inheritance being selected through the use value such traits have in any given environment (Sober, 2000: 146-147). This law settled, to a degree, the ontological problem of belonging to a particular species through mutability over evolutionary, rather than historical, time.

The idea of belonging to a particular species, subspecies, population, or race was integral to the ordering of human society and scientific, rather than Aristotelian or Scholastic, forms of essentialism were emerging. The rapid transformation of modern
society in the 19th century brought with it a deepening of the underlying organic laws of purity to kind as new characteristics of human belonging were being defined and articulated. Monsters had become objects of scientific study in the 17th century, and through the course of the 18th and into the 19th centuries these studies had produced scientific definitions of these figures that reflected the idea of purity to kind. The hybridity of monsters, as recombinant or transgenic figures, was scientifically knowable and subject to experimentation and application to the human population, while the zoology of monsters, as potentially viable kinds of living beings, was discarded. “We have also what are called monstrosities” Darwin (2003: 59) notes in his chapter on variation in On the Origin of Species, “but they graduate into varieties. By a monstrosity I presume is meant some considerable deviation of structure, generally injurious, or not useful to the species”. These articulations of monstrosity bring the monster into the domain of science and establish these figures as either an imaginary construct, such as the unicorn, or as an injurious variation within a generic group. The combination of imagery and injury coincide to connect the figure of the monster to the ontological status of human belonging within the human population, the biopolitical field, in three primary positions.

First, monsters are connected to the borders of human belonging. The possibilities of recombination and transgenesis through scientific exploration and experiment, and the potential to defy the laws of nature and man through those recombinations, shifted the monster into the human world as a border figure. Hybrid, cross-bred, or symbiotic recombinations of human and other changed the perceptions of not only what it meant to be human, but what it meant to be an individual organism in a rapidly transforming society. As Haraway (1997: 14) argues, these
figures are “shocked into being from the force of the implosion of the natural and the artificial, nature and culture, subject and object, machine and organic body, money and lives, narrative and reality”. Secondly, monsters were incorporated into the wide field of variation within all species through the taxonomic adjustment to their status. As Foucault argues in Abnormal, monsters became incorporated into the biopolitical field through a shift in how transgressions against the laws of nature were perceived. No longer considered absolute transgressions, beyond the scope of knowing and the law, monstrous traits in human beings became perceived, in Darwin’s terms, as “generally injurious or not useful” to the individual human being and the species itself and thus subject to surveillance and correction. Thirdly, monsters had become connected to the exclusion of individuals and groups within the biopolitical field. Again, as Darwin so succinctly notes, monsters “graduate into varieties” and although they belong to the species from which they were born, they cannot be included if the degree of injury or threat to itself or the larger population is too high. Here we see the ancient figure of homo sacer caught up in the evolutionary conception of a human race, or species, for those who are perceived of as a threat to the population must be excluded, expunged, or exterminated.

The conflation of the ‘laws of nature and man’ throughout western history has undergone many transformations, and this thesis has touched upon a number of these instances in order to examine the connection between monsters and humans. As Haraway argues, it is impossible to untangle the principles of scientific thought and knowledge from the grasp of the cultural ideologies in which they have been woven, and the laws of science and western jurisprudence function as conditions of each other. Examining how these two categories of law interpret and inform each other in any detailed fashion is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, it is an integral part of the search for the modern monster. Monsters have become connected to the
spatial positionality of modern human belonging within the idea of a universal population, or species through the changing forms of law within the shift to modernity, and this connection is dependent upon the sociological role that monsters play in modern society. Monsters are a semiotic-material mechanism for the social production of status and position for individuals and groups.

Problems of taxonomy and status persistently arise in a society that oscillates between attentively disciplining its subjects and remorselessly excising those who are not its subjects. Who are the humans and who are not? Foucault’s account of biopolitics only responds to this question in a limited manner with reference to the techniques of inclusion and the notion of race as the primary vehicle for exclusion. However, if we merge his conception of the biopolitical with Haraway’s understanding of a global scientific culture, and designate this twinned field as being in a state of exception, as Agamben argues, we can begin to recognize the outlines of a modern society in which the characteristics of humanity are intricately bound up in our conception of the laws of nature and man and the positioning of individuals and groups in this field depend on these conceptions.

Whether a human being is positioned inside, on the borders, or excluded from the biopolitical field is wholly dependent on the criteria of personhood formed within the laws and *taxa* of the life sciences and western jurisprudence. Nature and the state are the categories of law in which the criteria for civic and political personhood are formed within the western tradition, from Aristotle’s conception of man as a living animal with the additional capacity for politics to Foucault’s studies of the primacy of the political over the living being of man.
These criteria order the field of characteristics. Characteristics which are perceived as belonging to the human species, as a political multiple, are constitutive elements and thus must be inherent to any individual or group within that set. Characteristics which are perceived as not necessary to personhood, yet are at times apparent, are included within that set and can be subject to discipline and regulation. Those characteristics which either absolutely transgress or defy the conception of what it means to be a person, at any given time, are excluded from the field. Monsters function as semiotic-material vessels in which the characteristics of humanity are defined, articulated and applied to the individuals and groups within the human species.

The symbolic figures of monsters are the vessels in which human characteristics are placed and debated through the normalizing process of defining which characteristics belong to the human species. Through that process, these figures take on a significance of their own and become recognizable and familiar forms. Patterns, or trends, within the debate on belonging can be traced to specific monstrous figures. These semiotic figures become ‘material’ when their significance is transferred onto human beings, who then become ‘marked’ with the monstrous and take on all of the symbolic weight of that monstrous pattern or trend.

Foucault’s position that the monster as become incorporated into the biopolitical field as a component of the abnormal individual submerges expressions of liminality and exclusion from western society, and this position is based on the mistaken narrative of static natural laws and dynamic socio-political laws defining the individual. Underneath the contemporary iterations of inclusive abnormality and expressions of repressed human desires, monsters illuminate the contradictory ‘nature’ of such laws, and provide the form in which to debate who – or what – is allowed within the definition of a human individual and, therefore, within the human population.
Two of the most prolific modern monsters, which are continually reiterated within the biopolitical field, are the vampire and the cyborg.

Both the cyborg and the vampire have been transformed multiple times in the course of their emergence in the 19th century through to the present. They reproduce the continually changing parameters of personhood and belonging within the biopolitical field and global scientific culture in a state of exception. The abnormal, hybrid and inhuman characteristics associated with the human population which modern monsters signify are continually changing, yet the shape and feel of these figures remain not only recognizable, but familiar. Mary Shelley created the proto-type of a quasi-human creature who is, in part, engineered by his own kind, who feels the angst of exclusion, and who is the reflection of the abnormalities of a regular man associated with scientific progress; Bram Stoker captured the fierce panic and terror of non-human corruption and defilement in his narrative of a close call with a vampire epidemic in which abnormalities of the human population are reflected in foreign invaders.

These figures become reiterated time and time again as the boundaries of transgenics and transgressions change. The blood-sucking Jew and the futuristic cyborg-man who is “as strong as Krupp steel” of the fascistic first half of the 20th century (Eksteins, 2000: 304) are iterations of the vampire and cyborg. In Society Must be Defended, Foucault (2003b: 258) argues that “the most murderous States are also, of necessity, the most racist” and his analysis of Nazism revolves around the evolutionary use of racism for both those who are excluded from, and included within the state of the Nazi regime26. Yet the monstrous figures which drove this racist

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26 “The destruction of other races was one aspect of the [Nazi] project, the other being to expose its own race to the absolute and universal threat of death” (Foucault, 2003b: 259).
agenda are easily identified not only through their racial characteristics, but also their transgressive and transgenic characteristics. At that moment in time, the vampiric Jew and the cyborg German were semiotic-material monsters in which the entire spectrum of debatable human characteristics were articulated, and these figures acted as mechanisms for the positioning of human beings within the Nazi State. In later years, and from outside the Nazi regime, Agamben’s ultimate example of the ‘inhuman’ *homo sacer* could only be described through an absence of monstrosity, for to call the *Musselmann* of Auschwitz a monster is to equate it with the racist monster of the vampiric Jew. Yet the *Musselman as homo sacer* is a monstrous figure, one that signifies not the specific racism of Nazi Germany, but the status of bare life, divested of all political and human rights.

The vampire, the cyborg, and the *homo sacer* are figures which emerge time and time again as the characteristics and criteria of civic and political personhood change in the modern world. The blood-sucking Jew transforms into the life-consuming and infecting AIDS patient, while the futuristic cyborg German is stripped of his component parts and reassembled as the fractured identity of cybernetic woman of the second half of the century (Haraway, 1991: 165; 155). The soulless refugee who wanders the earth, desperate to invade a nation state, and the enemy combatant, bristling with the machinery of death, are converted from vampire and cyborg to *hominis sacri*. The characteristics and significance of these figures are denatured and altered as the criteria for civic and political personhood shift, and the vampiric refugee and cyborg terrorist are reconfigured as their legal status within western jurisprudence recedes and they are abandoned to the wilderness of prolonged detention, left to die, or killed. These monster figures are familiar, reflective, images of the pathologies and parameters of modern society.
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