

Teratophilia: An Inquiry into Monster Erotica and the Feminine Psyche*

by

Saraliza Anzaldua

National Taiwan University

Abstract:

Teratophilia, the erotic attraction to the monstrous, has been on the steady increase in Western media since the last century. Within the past few decades and due to the ease of disseminating online material anonymously, literature and art depicting the monstrous as erotic has burgeoned beyond the capacity for quantitative measures to properly calculate. Online literature, blogs, art, and ebooks have now added to the supply of monster erotica which was formerly restricted to oral tales, esoteric texts, and a scant few artistic depictions. Using a Jungian framework within the context of modern American society, this paper offers an explanation for the escalation in monster romance and why heterosexual female readers may prefer to fantasize about sexual relations with a monster rather than a human male. In a world of globalized media where the worst faces of patriarchal oppression can be streamed twenty-four hours a day, monster erotica offers an alternative sexual object and serves as a means for individuals to avoid cognitive dissonance evoked by the dichotomy of the aggressive masculine and the relenting feminine common in the traditional romance. The *Shadow*, i.e. the monster, acts as an intermediary between these two archetypes that can be at odds in a context where the masculine is viewed as a harbinger of suffering and oppression. By identifying with the protagonist who engages in sexual activity with a monster, readers cathartically engage with the masculine through the *Shadow* in her subconscious. This interaction is portrayed in a positive manner which differs significantly from past literature in which sexual engagements with the monster were depicted in a tragic or disastrous way. The struggle with the *Animus* finds

expression in contemporary monster erotica and utilizes it as a means of reconciliation within the psyche through these narratives. This paper analyzes the monster erotica trilogy *Ensnare: The Librarian's Lover* by Mac Flynn as a case study.

Keywords: Teratophilia, Jung, Erotica, Monster, Shadow, Anima, Animus, Archetype, *Ensnare*, Mac Flynn

§ Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the implications of teratophilia in contemporary monster erotica, and offer an explanation for its increasing proliferation in various media. The genre is characterized by its depiction of copulation between humans and monsters with the intent to sexually arouse the reader, and its increase in popular literature warrants analysis. Teratophilia is the erotic attraction to the monstrous, and though the monster has historically been an important figure in literature, recent portrayals suggest a new development in its sexual significance. Contemporary media tends to depict copulation with monsters in a positive manner, which diverges from the historically dominate theme of “sexually dangerous monsters” whose carnal appetites imply immorality and evil. In current monster erotica, monsters are welcomed as sexual partners because they are a source of positive affect, transformation, and even companionship. It’s this paper’s argument that monster erotica utilizes the symbol of the monster as a means to avoid cognitive dissonance evoked by traditional heterosexual pairings contextualized in a patriarchal structure – such as those idealized in the romance genre. In a globalized world, that particular relationship is becoming increasingly complicated with a female

autonomy that is resisting a broader, oppressive patriarchy; the extent and violations of which are being uncovered daily through online traffic. Teratophilic romance allows women to experiment emotionally and sexually through fantasy in ways not possible with human pairings, and offers explorations via the near limitless capacity of the imagination. For example, ovipositor narratives (stories in which a phallic monster, such as bugs or aliens, lays eggs inside a human) blur traditional gender boundaries by conflating the feminine (eggs) with the masculine (penis and ejaculate). In some stories, these monsters are indiscriminate in whom they impregnate and men are just as easily chosen as hosts.

Furthermore, as outsiders themselves monsters offer female readers understanding as a sympathetic Other. While traditional narratives usually offer redeeming qualities for a partner (such as charisma, intelligence, nurturing personality, wealth, physical appeal, etc.), the monster uses no such enticements. Even in cases of the “romantic monster”, the protagonist is always in danger of being destroyed or eaten alive. Instead, through sympathy the monster offers its partner (and the reader) empathy. An “us vs. the world/men” solace that suggests to the reader that she can find a home regardless of her exclusion from the world because of her status as female. From the erotic Kerrelyn Sparks’ *Love at Stake* series in which women joins forces with vampires against hunters who kill indiscriminately, to cartoon *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*’ April O’Neil who battles patriarchal ninja clans and self-righteous government organizations alongside her mutant, alien, and robot companions. In a broader sense, popular culture seems to be moving towards the monstrous as a haven from the world of men. Cliver Barker’s film *Nightbreed* (1990) features the protagonist Aaron Boone seeking out the city Midian where monsters live in an attempt to find salvation and redemption. Speaking of Barker’s narratives, K.A. Laity states “rather than seeking to destroy or overcome the monster, his narratives invite awe, respect, and

even love for the *unheimlich*, the monstrous” (250, emphasis original). Compared to the violent and dogmatic men in the film, the monsters invite sympathy from the audience against the bureaucratic machines of law enforcement that unknowingly harbor a serial killer. So much so, that Boone’s girlfriend would rather live among them (she eventually becomes a monster herself) than return to the human world without her partner who has become a monstrous resident of Midian.

Sexual monsters are nothing new. The fourteenth-century giant “abduct[ed] innocent women, and threaten[ed] these captives with sexual violation” (Cohen 110). Melusine bore monstrous children and warned about the dangers of miscegenation (d’Arras). Dracula inverted normal sexuality parasitically and spread death instead of reproducing life (Butler 107). But these early monsters differ from later depictions in the twentieth-century; the latter whose monstrosity seems to be equated with positive sexual attraction and transformation. For example, vampires have become “romantic, aristocratic, elegant and erudite aesthetes...who are always erotic...” (Grady 226). A significant amount of current vampiric media portrays human beings eagerly wishing for the “gift of immortality” and normalizing vampirism.¹ The *Twilight* series by Stephanie Meyer is one such narrative that has generated significant profit via its books, movies, and merchandise while enticing its audience with teratophilia. In an economic context, the rise of teratophilia has generated entrepreneurial companies hoping to profit from eroticism of the monstrous in the twenty-first century. Examples include sex toy companies who offer monster appendages such as Bad Dragon, Kudu Voodoo, and Primal Hardware; erotic publishers such as Riverdale Avenue Books and Cirlet Press; and 3D porn-animation studios such as Studio FOW

¹ Popular titles include: *The Vampire Chronicles* by Anne Rice, *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* series by Laurell K. Hamilton, *The Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer (later made into a movie series), *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* series by Charlene Harris (the basis for the HBO show *True Blood*), and *The Vampire Diaries* by L.J. Smith (also turned into a TV series).

and Lord Aardvark. More sociological research would need to be conducted in order to determine the statistical significance of this increase in “creature kink”, but it’s reasonable to conclude that is it sizeable enough for capitalistic purposes.²

Though monsters in popular literature have been increasing since the last century and have gained widespread academic focus, for the most part scholars have ignored the corresponding central role monsters play in recent erotic narratives.³ Monster erotica is available in traditional print, but contemporary depiction is mostly online through ebooks, blogs, or forums. The basic plot line of these stories follow an ordinary woman, who lacks something (such as confidence or a relationship) and through this lack nurses a hidden desire. A prompting event will lead her to a monster with whom she eventually has sex, and she subsequently acquires something after the encounter; such as sexual fulfillment or even a new body. These erotic stories range in length and may span over several volumes, but are usually between 10,000 to 30,000 words.

This genre usually contains elements associated with romantic novels, therefore suggesting a more complex narrative than that typically found in pornographic literature. In fact, reference librarian Kristin Ramsdell notes that as the romance genre has become increasingly explicit the distinctions between erotic and romantic genres have diminished (62). For example, while having sex with Frankenstein’s creature Emily notices “those troubled eyes” with a “glimmer of hope, a flicker of love” thereby suggesting an emotional connection and relational

² www.bad-dragon.com, www.kuduvoodoo.net, www.primalhardware.com, www.riverdaleavebooks.com, www.circlet.com, www.studiofow.com, and www.lordaardvark.com.

³ Popular trending titles: *Creatures Filled Me Up: Aggressive Monsters Keep On Pumping* (Hailey Cooper 2015), *Seduced by the Paranormal Tentacle* (Heather White 2014), *Princess to Pleasure Slave Adventure: The Dungeon of the Monster Breeder* (Amanda Clover 2015), *Hooked by the Merman* (Tallia Ravejoy 2014), *Mashing With Monsters: The Were-Shark* (Heather White 2014), *The Horny Minotaur* (Nikita King 2012), *Enslaved by the Beast* (Arianna Moon 2012), *My Stone Lover* (Ophelia Cox 2012), and *Forced by a Werewolf* (Deanna Cox 2012). 31 August 2015. Web search using terms “monster erotica” on www.amazon.com and www.goodreads.com.

quality beyond physicality (Burkhardt chapter 4). By the end of the erotica she has discovered a “kindred spirit in search of love” with whom she desired “to be with [it] wherever that road might lead” (Burkhardt chapter 4). However, while both romance and erotica may arouse the reader using similar literary tools, they do so to varying degrees and the priority of sexual activity differs. For the purpose of this paper, the term erotica is used to distinguish it from romantic literature as media that specifically engages the reader toward sexual desire as an end in itself and not merely part of a narrative towards romance. While these two genres are not exclusive, they differ in priorities. Additionally, like any other genre, monster erotica has numerous subgenres. From “romantic fluff” that barely hint at sexuality activity to “rape and violation” that purposely degrades/destroys the female. The focus of this paper is somewhere in the middle, what is termed “romantic erotica”, that depicts explicit sexual activity but does so within the framework of romance and uses traditional literary tools of that genre to propel the reader towards romantic/relational closure.

Because most monster erotica features female humans copulating with male monsters, this paper will only focus on the implications for female heterosexual readers who may identify with the protagonist. The significance of monster erotica for homosexual readership or for queer theory is not addressed. Furthermore, since narrators are typically female, the implications for male heterosexual readers is not analyzed. Though there is an increasingly sizeable genre of homosexual monster erotica, and there is certainly a male readership, more research is needed for these specific areas and it is beyond the scope of this paper. As a pioneering work attempting to analyze a previously un-researched topic, this paper represents the first step into a new field and therefore a more detailed investigation into other areas must come later. Nor does this paper

claim to give the only explanation for the increase of teratophilic media, merely one suggestion out of the possible many. Perhaps this paper will inspire other scholars to take up the topic.

Additionally, this paper is limited to romantic erotica in text and not the explicitly pornographic in visual media. Though both have similar qualities, there are noticeable differences as well.⁴ *Ensnare: The Librarian's Lover* (2014) by Mac Flynn has been chosen as the primary text because it is longer than most monster erotica (three volumes), thereby allowing a more detailed analysis of its subtleties. Additionally, the monster depicted in this erotica is completely non-humanoid and therefore circumvents problems which may arise from an investigation of humanoid monsters such as aliens. For example, modern vampires may be monsters but categorically they exist liminally between the monster and the human. John Stevenson in "A Vampire in the Mirror: The Sexuality of *Dracula*" argues that the vampire in Stoker's novel represents the threat of exogamy (139). But Dracula may only be so if he is able to reproduce with human women (through vampirism), which suggests he is not completely removed from the sphere of humanity if he is compatible with them. Additionally, monstrous though he may be, Dracula is still able to fool people and appear human enough to engage in human society which further complicates his distinction from the human race.

§ *The Romance Genre and its Complicated Context*

⁴ Monster visual pornography (videos, graphics, or illustrations) depicts female humans copulating with male monsters, but there is a significantly greater range of such depictions than in textual erotica. Some of the "softer" porn depicts nurturing relationships between the human and monster in which the female finds safety and satisfaction with the monster. For example, in the porn blog <http://thelittlemonsterlover.tumblr.com/>, illustrations portray an almost innocent boyfriend-girlfriend relationship between human and monster. However, "harder" monster porn depicts graphic violence, rape, brainwashing, and even torture. For example, in the hentai (Japanese animated pornography) film *Little Ballerina* (2012) by A Third Dimension, a ballerina is brutally raped by various monsters to the point of internal injury and then consumed – a genre called "Vore" that is characterized by consuming or being consumed.

Monster erotica has evolved within the context of online transmission, global media, and an increasing female autonomy that is becoming fiercer in its struggles against patriarchy. The last century has seen a push for voting rights, legal protection, and the autonomy of women with a predictable backlash from conservative opposition. The litany of attacks, ranging from the subversive to the outright violent, would be too colossal for this paper to address. Suffice it to say, women still do not enjoy the same legal protection as men in the United States according to the Constitution or its amendments. In a broader context, mass and social media has laid bare many grotesque injustices that would have previously gone unreported. Furthermore, they are now visually displayed for all the world to see through the use of smartphone cameras.

In the current climate of intensifying female demands that are being met with retaliation, eroticizing the monstrous may circumvent cognitive dissonance. For example, reading about a “rugged but kind cowboy” from a Harlequin novel may summon anxieties about female autonomy or remind the reader about potential masculine violence. Alternatively, reading about “a massive, throbbing cock” may seem ridiculous to a reader in a political climate where terrorism elides with masculinity. For some, *humanity* has lost its sexual affect or become problematic. The problem of eroticizing a species that is literally (through power structures) and symbolically (through language and culture) conflated with 50% of the population that is prone to violence/oppression seems insurmountable. Teratophilia offers an alternative, and allows readers the opportunity to engage the feminine elements of the psyche towards the masculine without relying on normative heterosexual relations. Though it may be masculine (in some cases), the monster is not human, and the problem of humanity eliding with the male is circumvented. Thereby, the female (*Anima*) is given latitude for objects of arousal and means of engagement.

The monster is often used as a moral commentary to expose the horrific nature of hidden perversion, and in many cases it seems to embody the ideal traits of humanity more than the human villain it critiques. For example, the Beast/Prince in Disney's retelling of *Beauty and the Beast* by Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve depicts a violent yet sympathetic character that is tamed by a beauty. A common romantic trope that unfairly places moralizing responsibility on the female. However, in contrast to the violent, arrogant, and misogynistic Gaston, the Beast seems not only empathic to Beauty's social exclusion but sincere in his compassion for her. Such a juxtaposition culminates in Beauty exclaiming to Gaston, "He's [the Beast] not a monster Gaston, you are!" Ironically, the monster becomes more appealing than a man in a context where the latter has become monstrous. The monster exists outside the world of politics and social convention, and can be source of power. In *Ginger Snaps* (2000), the teenaged Ginger is bitten by a werewolf and slowly transforms into a monster. As her strength and confidence grows, she transcends the limits of acceptable behavior for a young girl and vents her rage against repressive structures without fear of reprisal. Some media even portray the monster as a protector from men. Christine Feehan's novel *Dark Guardian* (2002) depicts the vampire Lucian saving police officer Jaxon, whom he develops a romantic attachment to, from a drug bust gone bad and an obsessed serial killer. As Ruth Anolik argues in her analysis of *The Winter's Tale* (1623) by Shakespeare, *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) by Ann Radcliffe, and *Linden Hills* (1985) by Gloria Naylor, the ultimate lesson to be gained from gothic narratives of monstrosity and relationships is that "it is the human male, not supernatural sprites and goblins, who is to be feared as the source of horror and death" (84). Instead of an object of fear and the cause of destruction as the monster has been traditionally depicted, men have taken up that mantle, and the monster has become the facilitator of transformation and an object of arousal. As an Other itself, the monster

can sympathize with the woman who is the inverted, monstrous form of man. In the monster, the woman finds a mirror with whom she can find validation and empathy.

Until recently, the majority of romantic and erotic literature featured traditional-heterosexual pairings. If a female reader wished to escape her mundane burdens and find emotional fulfillment in an idealized relationship, her options were restricted to established publishing companies such as HarperCollins and Harlequin. The internet has allowed a wider range of voices to escape official filters, and monster erotica has become a growing alternative. The romance, at its core, is a story about a woman and the development of a relationship. Erotica adds a sexual explicit nature to the storyline but stops short of the pornographic which has none of the evolving plot that allows readers to subjectively *feel* the story as it unfolds. Erotica therefore retains its literary elements while pornography abandons them altogether in favor of sexual gratification. Reading is usually an intensely private act involving an individual with her own imagination. Even more so, the reading of erotica involves the intimate act of sexual arousal and satisfaction. For women, this act can be subversive and transgressive because female sexuality is often obscured and overlaid with maternal imperatives, moralist constraints, and male oversight at the hands of controlling fathers, jealous partners, and worried politicians. Dr. Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance* (1991) documents the lengths some women go to self-indulge when faced with censure, including hiding their romance novels, getting a part-time job when partners object to the cost, or only reading when home alone. To read for the sake of pleasure alone, specifically the sexual pleasure and emotional fulfillment of a woman whose needs are not being met by her real relationships, is threatening to a patriarchy that has an invested interest in convincing her that a heterosexual marriage which produces children for her to rear is the answer to all her needs. This oppression manifests itself in a double bind, in which

women are told by American media that their worth is inherently tied to their sensuality while their families/churches tell them that such sexuality is inherently defective/dangerous. The only exception is that of a monogamous marriage that procreates. Even then, it doesn't forgive a woman's sexuality. It only makes it tolerable. Radway goes on to illustrate how women's ambiguous feelings about their sexuality manifest in desire mired in guilt and shame. She notes that the majority of romance novels in her sample depict "symbolic representations of the immature female psyche" (126). A phenomenon that occurs partly in reaction to a male danger that seeks to violate female autonomy (the protagonists usually avoid male company early in the narrative for this reason), and partly because these narratives affirm the idea that female sexuality can only be validated in the presence of a "loving marriage" by a man who awakens that sexuality.

Monsters, notably, do not marry. Nor do they demand monogamy or that a woman give up her career for the sake of childrearing. They don't care if the object of their affections is a virgin or if she is sexually experienced. While they are certainly dangerous, there are even teratophilic genres that focus specifically on violation and abuse, they don't pose the same existential danger that a human male partner does. Elizabeth Harlan in *Sexual or Supernatural: Threats in Radcliffe's "The Italian"* notes that a sexual assault is not merely a physical and emotional violation, it can also be a means to acquire property and dynastic commodities. Though she focuses on Victorian law, whereby a rape victim was often coerced into marrying her attacker who would then benefit from the crime by obtaining the woman's property and legal control over any progeny, this threat can be extended to any heterosexual relationship in a patriarchal culture. The woman is always at risk of violation through impregnation, whereby her body is literally seized and used as a commodity. Her existence is married to that of impregnator

via her progeny, and her life becomes precarious. She is now vulnerable to all manners of coercion and manipulation, from acquiescing to marriage in order to provide for her children to the stigma of double standards imposed upon all mothers. Her career may be forestalled, even if only temporarily. Her earnings must now be diverted to the care of children, and possibly to the father if she fails to retain custody. The passage of her name may be overwritten by that of the man, thereby endangering her legacy. Monsters pose no such threat. First because they are fantasy, and second because they are not bound by human behavior or psychology. They will not force a woman to marry because marriage is a human ritual. Nor will they demand that the offspring take their name because monsters often lack one. They will not harass a woman at work or humiliate her in front of colleagues because monsters don't hold stable jobs. While monsters and men both pose the threat of violence, only the latter pose the additional threats of emotional, social, and spiritual harm. Thus, as Harlan states, "an assault upon a woman's virtue and an attempt to control her sexuality (and thereby her property) are far more frightening than anything otherworldly" (106-107). In many Gothic tales, such as *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) by Ann Radcliffe, men are often revealed to be more monstrous than the supposed monsters that wait in the shadows. Oppression, rape, violence, and torture are just some of the common themes. But the monstrosity of a man is not just the aberration of an individual. Often, it is framed within the social structure that nurtures and perpetuates such violence. A patriarchy depends on the domination of outgroups, and men as instruments of that domination. When men fail to carry out those instructions, the system is in jeopardy. In a way, men too are jailed by such a system and face reprisal if they do not enforce the standards that have blessed them. Speaking of patriarchal oversight, Michael Ackerman writes:

The reason for such vigilant policing of masculinity, as legitimated by spousal and parental roles, rests on the fact that failure in either realm was a threat, both to social “order” and to the ontological foundation of masculine subjectivity (132).

In American society, this often takes the form of peer censorship. “What are you, a girl?” is a common refrain when men are deemed too feminine or have not displayed proper masculinity. Men are then caught in a borderland that demands they be “men” by Othering woman, yet maintain relationships with the very people they seek to other. Women too display an attitude of feminine ambivalence by loyally following their fathers, standing by their brothers, marrying men, and breeding sons, all of whom have the potential to threaten them with violence and control. In this context, the lines from Robert Browning’s *The Ring and the Book* (1868), in which Guido is judged for failing to control his wife and subsequently murdering her, seem especially poignant: “Yet here is the monster! Why, he’s a mere man – Born, bred and brought up in the usual way” (Browning 470).

§ *Jungian Psychology, Archetypes and Feminine Identity Monster Erotica*

Both women and men respond to erotica at higher levels when it utilizes subjective arousal. A study regarding gender differences in sexual arousal revealed that when participants engaged with the material subjectively (they could relate to the material), their levels of arousal increased; with women experiencing higher increases than men. (Carvalho 2013). This suggests that when the individual is subjectively involved in erotica, the impact of such material is greater physiologically and psychologically. For this reason, erotica with an evolving narrative and a

protagonist that the reader can identify with can have significant implications for the response of the reader. If the reader can identify with the text and subsequently respond physiologically, it stands to reason that there is some form of psychological mechanism at work. However, because it would be an immense undertaking to administer psychological tests and surveys to individual readers of monster erotica, a broader methodology is necessary. The archetypal theory of Carl Jung is the best framework in which to elucidate monster erotica's intricacies for the broader readership. While it may be impossible to state what the genre signifies for each reader, Jung's theory can help theorize what it may signify for readers in general and within a particular context.

The archetypal theory of the collective unconscious states that some figures are ubiquitous because they belong to the universal psyche of the human race. These figures, called archetypes, are primordial representations recognizable from person to person because they reside in the collective unconscious — the deepest layer of the unconscious universally shared by all human beings (Jung 3-5). For example, we all have some idea what characterizes a villain, and can recognize this figure in fictional representations because we are psychologically programmed to do so. The three primary archetypes in monster erotica are the *Shadow*, the *Anima*, and the *Animus*.

The *Shadow*, represented by the monster, embodies all that is hidden (Jung 18-21). However, it would be a misunderstanding to characterize the *Shadow* as merely the archetype of the taboo and the repressed. While it is true the *Shadow* contains a large amount of what is negatively repressed, it also houses positive aspects of the self which an individual may have rejected for various reasons. An individual might find his or her sexuality repulsive due to a traumatic event and have hidden it in the *Shadow*, but its repression doesn't make such sexuality

negative in and of itself. Therefore, the *Shadow* may contain things considered Other but it also contains elements which can be fundamental to the individual psyche and merely concealed in the subconscious.⁵ Rather than simply a collection of harmful psychological aspects removed from the conscious mind, the *Shadow* is a complex archetype which also holds elements necessary for the function and health of the psyche.

Part of the *Shadow*'s significance lies in its implications for other archetypes and the unity of the psyche. By addressing the *Shadow*, the reader gains access to the collective unconscious which may contain problematic archetypes for her particularly; archetypes which may be exerting negative influences on the conscious mind. For example, the child with an abusive father may feel uneasy when confronted with the portrayal of the *Father* archetype because it has become a negative symbol. The unbalanced parental archetype nurtures negative schema such as "All fathers are dangerous" and may foster a general mistrust of male authority figures. The positive aspects of the *Father* (such as support and protection) would therefore reside in the *Shadow* and by engaging the latter archetype, issues with the former archetype may be addressed. Therefore, the *Shadow* offers an opportunity of reconciliation and psychic transformation. In this manner, monster erotica through its use of the *Shadow* offers a means of psychological processing. In the words of Jung:

The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness.

This problem is exceedingly difficult, because it not only challenges the whole

⁵ When referring to the universal psyche among human beings, the word "unconscious" is used. When referring to a person's individual psyche, the word "subconscious" is used. Though both words essentially mean the part of the mind inaccessible to the conscious mind but still exerts influence, this paper uses the former as a general term applied to the human race and the latter to the particular psyche of one person.

man, but reminds him at the same time of his helplessness and ineffectuality (20-21).

The *Shadow* provides us with a “narrow door” through which a person gains access to problematic schema formed in response to negative events or beliefs (Jung 21). Uncomfortable though it may be, engaging the *Shadow* is therefore necessary for the psychological growth of an individual. By refusing to engage such schema in the subconscious, an individual “throws away the good which a bold but imprudent venture might bring” and risks psychological dysfunction by neglecting parts of her mind which form the basis of identity (Jung 19).

The *Anima*, represented by the female protagonist in monster erotica, is the embodiment of all that is feminine (Jung 25-28). It’s the *Anima* that undergoes transformation in the story via the character and engages in sexuality activity with the monster, i.e. the *Shadow*. The *Animus*, partially represented by the male monster and embodied by all male characters, embodies all that is masculine and is the mirror to the *Anima* (Jung 177). The *Anima* occupies the conscious mind of women and the unconscious mind of men, while the *Animus* occupies the conscious mind of men and the unconscious mind of women.

The *Animus* may seem threatening to female readers for a variety of reasons: personal trauma carried out by men, uneasiness with one’s own masculinity, or it may possibly be viewed as the embodiment of an oppressive patriarchy. In a Western context, women are becoming increasingly autonomous through financial independence and political representation. This freedom may create conflict with individual men and with a society that still adheres to traditional gender norms that expect women to be dependent, subservient, and acquiescent to men. Furthermore, women are inundated with news and images of male violence, regardless of

the fact that the majority of men are law abiding and non-violent. Statistically, though men make up roughly half of the population, in the United States they make up 99% of rape arrests, 88% of murder arrests, 87% of aggravated assault arrests, and 83% of arrests related to family violence (Kimmel 265). In turn, between a quarter to half of all American women have been sexually assaulted, and between 12% to 25% have been raped (Kimmel 278). Additionally, the U.S. has one of the highest rates of spousal abusive in the industrialized world with 85% of the victims being women (Kimmel 283). It may therefore be difficult to feel attraction to men when their representation is increasingly problematic; especially for victims of violence. Even for non-victims, such a representation brings to mind the socio-political confrontations between men and women. Analyzing the romance genre, Radway notes that typical romantic narratives may “inadvertently activate unconscious fears and resentment about current patriarchal arrangements” (157). Reminder about such arrangements become even more problematic when they prompt images of criminality, violence, and terrorism. Monsters can therefore offer an alternative to the *Animus* and allow female readers to experience arousal while circumventing such anxiety associated with men. Consequently, the *Shadow* becomes the object of desire by displacing the *Animus* in the narrative, and facilitating the arousal of the *Anima*. Such alternative erotic narratives may therefore be more appealing to women at odds with the *Animus*, yet tied to a masculine object of arousal psycho-physiologically. If a psyche must be constrained to a masculine object with the potential for violence, why not a monster that is only physically threatening? At least they eat men too, won't mansplain in meetings, and can understand what it feels like to be considered sub-human.

This hypothesis is strengthened by a study conducted by Vanderbilt University which revealed a significant gender difference in how men and women reacted to a typical patriarchal

narrative in erotica. Subjects read a passage describing the seduction of a virgin girl by an experienced man. Men “reported more sexual arousal, interest, and joy, and women reported more disgust” (Izard 468). A similar study by Eric Koukounas and Marita McCabe likewise reported higher disgust in women to eight erotic films depicting heterosexual vaginal intercourse and oral sex (1997). These findings are significant in that while women did report some arousal, they also reported substantial discomfort with the depicted material. This suggests that typical portrayals of human heterosexual activity entail complicated, mixed feelings. With the increased autonomy of women and the convenience of online publication, it’s possible that monster erotica has arisen as an expression of the female erotic imagination in response to the anxiety associated with typical heterosexual erotica. This may explain why many monster erotic stories tend to depict human males negatively, and male monsters positively or at least neutrally. *The Summoned* (2010) by Clint Collins portrays the male protagonist as overly controlling and apathetic to the desires of the female protagonist. The latter pursues a passionate relationship with a monster as a means of freedom and passion. *The Lake at Roopkund* (2010) by Andrew Searce depicts a subjugating husband who meets his death at the hands of his wife’s lesbian lover who summons a monster for impregnation; thereby adding an emasculating insult to the fatal injury.

There are two kinds of prevalent uses of the *Animus* in monster erotica. The first is the story which only contains a male monster and no other dominant male characters. In this instance, the *Animus* and the *Shadow* are united. The *Anima* therefore engages the *Animus* when she has sexual contact with the monster (*Shadow*). Ironically, the monster makes the *Animus* more acceptable to the feminine archetype. If the female reader is conflicted about the *Animus*, which make human male characters undesirable, the monster takes the place of the human male

and allows the reader to engage in arousal without psychological distress. It may be the case that a monster is preferable to a human male, especially if there are deep conflicts within the reader's psyche regarding the relationship between the *Animus* and the *Anima*. Sexual fantasies in general have the function "to help ourselves work through the impact of...trauma" and "shield us from something potentially dreadful" (Kahr 340). In this fashion, the monster (*Shadow*) is able to embody masculine attributes without presenting itself as a man, which may embody trauma and terror in extreme cases, or aggravating patriarchal arrangements in the least, to the female reader (*Anima*). She may therefore safely engage her erotic imagination while limiting potential anxiety.

The other depiction of the *Animus* separates it from the *Shadow*, in which case there is a monster and human male character(s). The *Animus* may be depicted positively in which case sex with the monster is just a transition to an eventual union between the *Anima* and the *Animus*. By doing so, the author provides the reader with a form of subconscious catharsis which culminates in a reconciliation of the *Anima* and the *Animus*, but only after the *Anima* has engaged with the *Shadow* (the monster) which houses the rejected parts of the *Animus*. If the *Animus* is depicted negatively, the *Anima* usually only has sexual contact with the monster which serves as a sanctuary from the threat of the *Animus*. Other narratives have both negative and positive depictions of the *Animus* through multiple characters. By splitting the *Animus*, the author romanticizes the masculine archetype and excludes any danger it might pose to the *Anima* by embodying such threats in minor characters that usually met a grisly fate commensurate with their flawed masculinity. Radway notes that romantic literature often uses minor characters as foils that are necessarily eradicated as abstract barriers to the union of the feminine and masculine: "With its secondary characters, then, the ideal romance sketches a faint picture of

male-female relationships characterized by suspicion and distrust in order to set off more effectively its later, finished portrait of the perfect union” (131).

Contemporary monster erotica depictions allow readers to experience arousal without anxiety and to engage the *Animus* through identification with the protagonist, thereby offering a means of psychological processing. When the *Anima* and *Animus* are at odds within a subconscious, it can cause psychological discomfort. All individuals possess an *Animus* and *Anima* to varying degrees, and to have them conflicting can create personal anxiety about an individual’s identity. The most extreme example would be a hyper-masculine man whose discomfort with the *Anima* prevents him from incorporating “feminine” attributes such as intimate emotional expression. The opposite example would be a hyper-feminine woman whose *Animus* resides in her *Shadow* and is unable to utilize “masculine” characteristics such as assertive confidence. Furthermore, a heterosexual woman who is unable to relate comfortably with the *Animus* may also be uncomfortable with its actual embodiment, i.e. men, and may be unable to find complete sexual fulfillment with either its literary or real manifestation. Therefore, rather than bringing destruction, the monster/*Shadow* offers psychological catharsis and the potential for psychic wholeness. Justin Everett discussing Cthulhu erotica notes:

The protagonist moves from innocence to experience, and usually returns wiser than when she departed...[she] moves from denial to acceptance. Once in the erotic setting, her sense of social norms, morality, gender, patriarchy and power may be challenged. As a result, she undergoes enlightenment or transformation... she is not only wiser, but fundamentally different in nature than when the story began (311).

Through a literary narrative, as the protagonist experiences a transformation on her journey, the reader may likewise experience a transformation via identification. Sex with a monster transforms in a way that bypasses many threats associated with sexual awakening by a human partner. The latter comes with a multitude of risks not present in copulation with a monster, i.e. emotional danger, relational abuse, biological infection, pregnancy, and complex social entanglements.⁶ Erotica featuring human males, even those with a female narrator, risks the problem of becoming entangled by the subversive paradigms of human society, i.e. male dominated society.

It's important to note that the categories of *Anima* and *Animus* are not necessarily mutually exclusive, nor are the ontological categories of feminine and masculine they represent. Aggression is not exclusive to the male, although it is typically thought of in masculine terms. Rather, they are useful schema to untangle the enigmatic world of the human mind and its underlying framework. Identity is not a static, one-dimensional concept. It is multi-faceted and dynamic, simultaneously relational and independent in a dialectical state of evolution. Framing the gendered aspects of the unconscious in terms of the *Anima* and *Animus* facilitates analytical discussion that could be hindered by its enigmatic enormity. It is merely the first step towards an investigation of aspects that, like the Ying and Yang, resist taxonomy by their nature that is constantly transforming from one into the other. Thus, by engaging the masculine the *Anima* engages with itself. Furthermore, the *Shadow* performs an intermediary function as a bridge between the two archetypes that allows the reader to move towards a female identity that is awakened (aware of her context), and autonomous (able to make choices in her best interest).

⁶ Although some subgenres focus explicitly on impregnation and monstrous birth, this is not characteristic of the broader genre.

Paradoxically, the move towards the monstrous is a move towards herself because it is an alternative to an identity strictly relational with the human male and all its baggage. Rather than seeking the traditional union lauded by mainstream romance and the wider culture, or according to Radway the mother, monster erotica seeks union with the self: the feminine with the feminine through the monstrous masculine outside the context of patriarchy and the maternal. A process that can't begin until that monstrosity takes a form acceptable enough for the *Anima* to engage in. The *Animus* must become an object through which the *Anima* can develop and mature in its identity. Whereas traditional "romance denies women the possibility of refusing that purely relational destiny and thus rejects their right to a single, self-contained existence," teratophilia offers an alternative counter-narrative through fantasy in which the reader can explore what it means to exist outside that relational destiny and the potential for sexual fulfillment (Radway 207).

It might be argued that human-centered erotica with female agency may perform the same function as monster erotica, and create a positive sexual experience apart from the anxieties associated with traditional erotica material. Manuela Mourão states a similar case in "The Representation of Female Desire in Early Modern Pornographic Texts, 1660-1745," and claims that early modern erotica challenged the authority of male pleasure by shifting emphasis to female pleasure (through explicit focus on the clitoris) and female agency (their ability to experience pleasure and their desire for pleasure) through female narration. She therefore suggests modern erotica can circumvent the debate about whether pornography is inherently damaging to female authority by encouraging the female narrator. There is some evidence to validate such a claim. Positive affective responses of women were greater towards female-produced erotica versus male-produced erotica and such experimental results have been

replicated (Peterson 881). However, even such narratives take place within a patriarchal framework and undermine female authority. Mourão's example in *Satyra Sotadica* (1660) depicts an inexperienced woman inducted into sexual pleasure by an older woman. While seemingly absent of difficulty by virtue of the absent male, such pleasure of the female subject is not completely autonomous because such pleasure takes place in preparation for the young woman's wedding night and her future sexual services as a wife (586-588). Therefore, the mere alteration of subject and object in literary human relationships doesn't necessarily allow the female audience to fully disentangle herself from the problematic frameworks that suggest a woman's precarious, even dangerous, position in a society where she faces the challenges of heterosexual relationships whether she chooses to engage sexually or not. All women, despite their sexual orientation or relationship status, must face the expectations placed on them as women by their male family members, friends, employers, and society in general. Furthermore, there is always the risk of rape and pregnancy. Indeed, psychological research in sexual behavior suggests that erotica is not an all positive or negative experience but rather both in which negative emotions (such as disgust, shame, and anger) can simultaneously arise alongside physical arousal (Staley 622). Therefore, erotica with female narration may empower female agency through subjectivity, but may still retain the problems of anxiety associated with an agency that exists in a patriarchal society.

Clinical researcher Dr. Brett Kahr suggests that sexual fantasies "sometimes rescue us from complete breakdown and loss of a sense of self" in what he calls an "equilibration of the self" (376). Analyzing the sexual fantasies of about 23,000 women and men, he concludes one of the key functions of sexual fantasies is their ability to provide a stabilizing force in the psyche.

Dr. Phyllis and Eberhard Kronhausen reiterate this aspect of fantasy in *A Study of the Sexual Imagination* (1969):

They [sexual fantasies] serve as safety valves for bottled-up sex feelings, strivings, and wishes that are socially unacceptable or directly antisocial... (xii).

The authors go on to elaborate how erotica arises from and reinforces desires that already exist (427).⁷ Monster erotica is spawned from and answers needs unfulfilled in human society, and therefore challenges existing structures. It's easy to imagine how female fantasies about someone other than a heterosexual male with whom she can procreate would be threatening to a patriarchal society. More so if the object is a monster, an affront to the man deemed the pinnacle of humanity and told by his society that he is highly desirable. Not only is the normative contract of human romantic relationship rejected, but a visibly ugly and dangerous object is preferred. The human world is unable to satisfy, so the reader searches elsewhere and by doing so highlights the problems that lead to that rejection. This tension is played out in the erotic short story *Little Red Riding Hood* (1965) by Annakarin Svedberg, in which Little Red Riding Hood sexually engages with the wolf – to the chagrin of the hunter. In a fit of rage, the hunter tries multiple times to kill the wolf in order to have the girl for himself. There is a possessive jealousy over the female body that plays out in the narrative, and a frustration against female desire that looks elsewhere than relationships deemed acceptable for women. In contrast to traditional

⁷ While I disagree with many of Dr. Kronhausens claims, such as the Freudian view that homosexuality is a symptom of conditioning/trauma or the sympathetic tone the authors use when discussing older men who engage with juveniles, their claim that sexual fantasy is more widespread than believed (thus arising from a crucial need) and has psychological benefits is an assertion that has been made by others in the field of psychology. I use this source because their familiarity with erotica as text is relevant to this essay.

romance narratives, it's interesting to think about how monster erotica reinforces the female audience's agency through the imagination, or perhaps even saves it, by offering an alternative that engages the equilibrium of the *Anima* and the *Animus* without relying exclusively on human relationships; thereby circumventing the possibility of negative emotional responses associated with traditional erotica. *Ensnare: The Librarian's Lover* (2014) is used to demonstrate this argument.

§ *Case Study – Ensnare: The Librarian's Lover (2014)*

Ensnare (2014) begins with the main character Leslie Faulkner introducing herself. She is a university student who works part-time at the school library and describes herself as a “wallflower extraordinaire”; a “mousy little thing with plain brown hair, plain brown eyes, and plain white skin from my hours working at the library”. More importantly, she states “I never knew passion, or even love...” (Flynn 1: ch. 1). Her depiction is a young, insecure woman who characterizes herself as extremely ordinary. Even perhaps beneath ordinary, since her extremely shy demeanor has prevented her from experiencing any type of relationship. Her lack is physical, mental, and social, which creates a desire to experience the things she deems beyond her reach. Speaking of her life, she states: “Stench was the definition of my life. Everything about it stank. I had my routine: get up, go to school, work at the library, go back to my room. Simple, boring routine. I wanted adventure, excitement, a boyfriend” (Flynn 1: ch. 1). Leslie, the *Anima*, at this stage in the narrative is depicted as virginal and uninteresting with a lack of sexual confidence. The *Anima* is unable to engage with the *Animus* because the former is intimidated by the latter, and

can only experience sexuality in the form of voyeurism by spying on her football player crush making out with other young women in the library.

The prompting event in this story is a mysterious book that the protagonist finds in the library's drop box. It's made out of animal (or perhaps human) skin and aside from the title "Darkness Residing in the Heart of Man," the book is blank. Such a title alludes to the *Shadow* through the word "darkness" and its place within the individual psyche by using the word "residing". The word "heart" is both symbolic of desire and the essence of personhood; significant because Leslie herself desires passion with another person (her *Animus*) which would make her identity whole. The core desire of the *Anima* could therefore be read as an inner wish for unity with its mirror *Animus* despite fear, and the title as an allusion to the path that takes the *Anima* through its own darkness, the *Shadow*, in order to acquire its desire. Additionally, the title refers to the danger of the *Animus* to the *Anima* because it is in the "man" where darkness resides and such darkness may overwhelm the agency of the *Anima* by completely consuming her. If the *Anima* is to fulfill her wish, she must journey through the darkness and overcome such dangers.

When handling the book, Leslie felt "a jolt spring" into her body and "the warmth of a raging fire" burn her body with "flames of a sensual need [she'd] never known". The book seduces her with new sensations and the message "Take me home" written inside (Flynn 1: ch. 3). Once awakened from a life of monotony through passion, Leslie is drawn to the book so strongly that she steals it from the library. She delights in her new possession which she describes as "all mine" and her "sole companion, my friend, my lover" (Flynn 1: ch. 4). Later that night, Leslie dreams a golden light emanated from the book and out of this "pool of

brilliance” emerged tentacles.⁸ Rather than the darkness typically associated with monsters, Leslie is enveloped in halo of light and warmth, and her “lethargic body ache[d] for more” (Flynn 1: ch. 4). Though the book-monster represents the *Shadow*, the archetype of the hidden, it is portrayed as illuminating. Light, typically associated with all things good and sacred, is used to convey the elucidation and wholeness which the *Shadow* can offer. In this instant, it offers Leslie that which she most desires and the opportunity to become a confident, sexualized woman. When the tentacles pinned her to the bed and removed her clothes, her fears were “quashed by the sensual glow from those golden tentacles”; “They understood [her] silent plea” and the tentacles brought her to orgasm (Flynn 1: ch. 4). The *Shadow* understood her secret desire to experience passion and break out of monotony, and acted accordingly even if her conscious mind had reservations. The *Shadow*, which is often depicted solely as a dark and violent archetype, offered Leslie a new life symbolized through light and warmth.

There are three sexual encounters with the monster, and each encounter subsequently transforms Leslie. The first change is mental. After the first encounter, which Leslie initially believes to be a dream, she awakes happy and refreshed. She feels confident and is filled with a “boldness that wanted to grasp the world and make it mine” (Flynn 2: ch. 1). The second encounter leads to a physical change. Her breasts and hips have become more voluptuous making it difficult to find clothes that fit (Flynn 2: ch. 5). In her words, she awoke with a body “women would kill to have” (Flynn 3: ch. 2). The second encounter is more vivid and forceful, and she is more awake. However, though she has the ability to move she was “at the whim of the demands of the tendrils” and “was in its control” (Flynn 2: ch. 4). Though reasonably she should

⁸ Tentacles and their association with the hidden seem to be a recurring theme in various Jungian dream analyses and archetypal narratives. From *Case Y* in Jung’s *The Psychological Aspects of Kore*: “...I see a black tentacle like that of an octopus groping towards me from underneath the sun. I step back in fright and plunge into the abyss” (Jung 196).

consider herself to be in danger while in the presence of a monster, her “body twitched and tingled, and begged for more”. While in its grasp, she felt sexual freedom and passion. Her orgasm “crashed down on [her] with such intensity that [she] was blinded by light” (Flynn 2: ch. 4). Again, light and not darkness, is associated with the monster, i.e. the *Shadow*. When the sexual encounter is over, Leslie saw the tentacles recede into the book, the cover close, and the light go out. The book, which she later discovered came from the library’s “apocryphal and black magic” section, symbolizes knowledge and enlightenment (Flynn 2: ch. 2). Books are a way to acquire information, and in many stories they are the means by which a character acquires forbidden or ancient knowledge.⁹ The book-monster reflects Leslie’s hidden self and potential transformation. It’s significant that in the story the closed book emits no light. Without a means to engage her *Shadow*, Leslie is unable to literally see the light.

The third sexual encounter leads to a fundamental transformation. Now wide awake in daylight, Leslie realizes the dreams were reality and struggles against the tentacles. But the intensity of the light increases and so do the ministrations of the tentacles. They arouse Leslie to a frenzy beyond fear, and when the tentacles momentarily stop she begs them to resume and “take [her]” (Flynn 3: ch. 1). She has come to a point in her journey in which there is no return to her previous state of ignorance or innocence, and only after giving her consent may she continue. She is now “awakened”. After this last encounter, while in the library’s basement she catches a glimpse of her shadow which has acquired tentacles of its own: “That’s when I realized the creature had done more than change my body. It had become part of me. I turned and fled from the shadows and mine, but I could feel it just behind me. Its arms stretched out for me,

⁹ Examples include Goethe’s *Faust*, *I Strahd*, *Memoirs of a Vampire* by P.N. Elrod, *The Master and the Pupil* by Joseph Jacobs, and the “Necronomicon” featured in multiple stories by H.P. Lovecraft. These and other stories depict grimoire-like books containing spells or ancient knowledge as a source of power through the information contained therein.

commanding me to stop, turn around, and give in to its lustful desires” (Flynn 3: ch. 4). From Leslie’s perspective, something had been added to her identity. However, the *Shadow*, already part of the *Anima*, merely gave back what the *Anima* had repressed – her ability to engage with the masculine *Animus* as an integrated and holistic psyche. Therefore, her identity became more complete when it regained the hidden pieces of itself. This is demonstrated in the story by the *Anima*’s ability to protect itself from the negative *Animus*.

Two bullies, who represent the negative aspects of the *Animus* that seek to dominate, control, and destroy the authority of the *Anima*, attempt to rape Leslie. These characters reflect the problems embodied by men in erotic stories previously discussed, such as the potential for violence. Fortunately, the transformation is now complete and the *Anima* has reincorporated the hidden aspects of itself. Her tentacles come to her aid and she states: “The thing seeped under their feet and climbed up their legs. The boys screamed and writhed, but the *shadows* held them tight to the floor. In a second the *shadows* swallowed them whole and strangled their cries” (Flynn 3: ch. 5, emphasis mine).¹⁰ The *Anima* has now incorporated once hidden parts of itself with the help of the *Shadow* and can defend itself against threats. Female readers who feel threatened by men, and various depictions of the *Animus*, may find comfort and strength in this narrative by identifying with the empowered *Anima* in the story.

Here, teratophilic narratives share something with traditional romance. Both attempt to obscure the seemingly ambiguous moral boundaries concerning rape. They simultaneously depict examples of clear violation, such as when the bullies violently attacked Leslie, with examples of subtle coercion, such as when Leslie was first seduced by the book-monster and

¹⁰ The protective power of the *Shadow* (represented by a monster) is a common theme in monster erotica. In *Mounted by a Monster: Under Her Bed* by Mina Shay, the protagonist Janey is protected by a monster who lives under her bed and harms anyone who threatens her in the slightest way — including a childhood bully and an overly critical professor.

thought she was dreaming. Because she was not fully awake, and therefore not able to fully consent, this falls within the category of non-consensual violation. But the overriding passion and pleasure she experienced during the episode seems to sanction such violation, and therefore forgive the assault. This trope plays out in traditional romance when the “hero” seduces and coerces the protagonist who latter falls in love with her attacker. Often, the female character will justify his actions by reasoning he loved her all along, and thereby give her approval of his behavior (and by extension this form of relational behavior in general). She also might doubt her own interpretation of the events, and assume she misinterpreted the situation. According to Radway, this rewriting “enables a woman to achieve a kind of mastery over her fear of rape because the fantasy evokes her fear and subsequently convinces her that rape is either an illusion or something that she can control easily” (214). While traditional romance performs this process by firmly establishing the hetero/rape-relationship within the context of love and marriage, teratophilia may justify the rape through the pleasure of the protagonist who then is unable to want any other kind of pleasure and subsequently submits to her monster captor. Other narratives deal with seductive violation by depicting the death of the human violators at the hands of the saving monster who is then portrayed in a more sympathetic light. A third category avoids the issue by illustrating that the monster is incapable of sentient thought. This is the case in *Ensnare* (2014). The book-monster responds to desires like an automata, and has no concept of coercion, violation, or malicious intent any more than a toaster does. When Leslie is finally awake and able to reason in volume 3 chapter 1, the monster senses her hesitation and stops. It is only when she says “take me” that the monster resumes sexual activity (Flynn 3: ch. 1). Responding to Leslie’s desires, the monster draws a line for the reader between seductive sexual activity and violent rape.

After the last transformation, Leslie is finally able to engage with positive *Animus* which is depicted by Professor Jonathan Veer – a professor of ancient history at her university. Upon first meeting him, he “took [her] breath and mental faculties away...” (Flynn 2: ch. 1). Before the transformation, she was reluctant to interact with him not only because of his position of authority, but because she was unable to be his equal mirror as a mature *Anima*. Still insecure and virginal, she describes the encounter as “a terrifying yet freeing feeling to be under the power, the control of someone else” (Flynn 2: ch. 5). She was unable to match him in power, and in its immature state the *Anima* risks harm in the hands of the *Animus*. To engage risks subjugation and possibly destruction. Undergoing transformation, she no longer feels afraid or submissive as she “pressed [her] lips against his”. When she kissed Professor Veer, a “thrill ran through [her] deeper than anything [she’d] experienced with the creature” (Flynn 3: ch3). Her journey with the *Shadow* had led Leslie to the *Animus*, and reminiscent of Aristophane’s tale, the two gendered archetypes now seek union with each other.¹¹ Though encounters with the monster have been fulfilling, she states: “[Jonathan] was real. This book was a creature, a thing of magic. It could hold me, but I couldn’t hold it. It could seduce me, but it couldn’t grow old with me. It could take me to new heights of pleasure, but part of the pleasure was giving back. I couldn’t give back with this thing” (Flynn 3: ch. 3). Though Leslie can engage with the *Shadow* and be transformed by it, she can’t merge with the *Shadow*. It occupies a lower and hidden realm of the psyche, the unconscious, while she as the *Anima* resides in the conscious realm. The two are separate and the interactions between them will always be terminal. But there is hope of finding companionship with the *Animus* through her interactions with the *Shadow* – after the *Anima* itself

¹¹ In Plato’s *Symposium*, Aristophane tells the story of a third sex which attempted to overthrow the Greek Gods. As punishment Zeus split each body in two, the masculine half and the feminine half, which were always seeking to reunite with one another.

has become whole. The *Animus* can provide Leslie with what undergirded her original wish for passion and what she really desired all along: “normal companionship and someone to talk to” (Flynn 3: ch. 4). While the *Animus* may namely occupy the subconscious of a woman, the *Anima* incorporates elements of its mirror through engagement. Thus, the *Animus* is brought to the conscious realm and out of the *Shadow*.

In the final chapter, the reader discovers Professor Veer first found the book and made a deal with the monster. He agreed to bind his soul with it, if in return the monster gave him his soulmate, which turned out to be Leslie. As a consequence, Professor Veer acquired tentacles. This merger of the monster and the man in the narrative is symbolic of eliding of the *Shadow* and the *Animus*. At odds with the *Anima*, the *Animus* becomes part of the *Shadow* and it is only through the latter that the masculine and feminine may engage. After his transformation, Professor Veer left the book for Leslie to find in the library and the rest the reader knows. Both the *Anima* and the *Animus* acquired parts of themselves through the *Shadow* (monster). In this way, the monster is a means of positive transformation and diverges from the historically dominate depictions of sexually threatening monsters who devour woman and must be destroyed by their men. Furthermore, the *Anima* was only able to unite with the *Animus* after first engaging with the *Shadow* and being transformed by it. Most monster erotica end with the union of the monster and the human female. *Ensnare* is particularly unique in its complex narrative and monster/human-human ending. By using it as a case study, analysis can deconstruct the complicated relationship between the three archetypes and demonstrate the evolution of the protagonist in more depth. The fact that Leslie ends up with Veer, a now monster-human, does not weaken the overall argument. In many narratives, the monster by the end of the erotica has illustrated human qualities and thereby become a human-monster. In all cases, it is the monstrous

object that draws the woman and with whom she desires to engage. Nor does the fact that Professor Veer is still male negate the fact that he has rejected his humanity for the sake of the *Anima*, and is now a monster. One that the Leslie finds non-threatening and fulfilling. In essence, teratophilia begins with a monster and ends with a monster.

It might be argued that a male authority selling his soul to a monster so that he may capture a young virgin is merely another patriarchal narrative. First, the power dynamics do not suggest that to be the case. Leslie is more powerful at the end of the story and doesn't remain a helpless virgin, nor is she confined to a submissive role. With her new powers, she is as powerful as Professor Veer and his equal – she can defend herself when threatened. The usual patriarchal dynamic is of a powerful man and a weak woman, which Leslie is not. Second, Leslie already had a desire for sexual awakening prior to finding the book-monster or meeting Professor Veer. The usual patriarchal narrative depicts a sexual ignorant young woman without desire who is then initiated into the dark mystery of sex by a desiring man. A typical example is Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1795), in which the young Antonia “knows not in what consists the difference of Man and Woman”, exhibits no sexual desire, and is completely unaware of the danger posed by her lusting priest Ambrosio (9). Furthermore, Leslie was not the primary target. Veer made a deal to find his soulmate who could have been anyone, and the usual predator-prey thread is absent from the story. While Veer makes a few appearances in the story prior to the penultimate meeting, it is Leslie who stalks and seeks him out. She moves the narrative forward and initiates action while Veer remains inactive. In order to prove coercion, it would have to be demonstrated that Veer pursued and harassed Leslie, she was violated against her will (either by him or the book-monster), or that she was unable to exercise her autonomy. None of which is illustrated in the *Ensnare* (2014). Lastly, Leslie and Veer only consummate their relationship after her

encounter with the monster when Leslie has already been sexually awakened. Veer is absent and has no part in her sexual adventures. In a typical hetero-romance narrative, this would be emasculating to the desiring, powerful male. However, Veer displays no anxiety or jealousy. Nor does he ever demonstrate resentment towards Leslie for her autonomy or sexuality that doesn't include him.

In the final scene, Professor Veer and Leslie have sex and a “blinding light filled [Leslie’s] vision” as “[their] tendrils whipped into the air and slid against each other” (Flynn 3: ch. 6). Similar to sex with the monster, the activity is characterized with light and tentacles. But there is a significant difference. The *Anima* and the *Animus* are able to partially merge with each other and this is depicted by Professor Veer’s proposal of marriage. Additionally, Leslie describes the union as an expression of her own soul further implying the mirror relationship between the *Anima* and the *Animus* (Flynn 3: ch. 6). The *Shadow* always remains in the subconscious, but it’s possible for the *Animus* to partially move into the conscious mind once the *Anima* has transformed and become strong enough to maintain its authority. For this to occur, the archetypes must partially elide and no longer be viewed as antithetical to one another. Most conscious psyches possess pieces of both archetypes in the conscious mind but the *Anima* will hold authority in women and the *Animus* in men. A balanced psyche is one in which both feminine and masculine attributes can be utilized for the psychological health of the individual. For female readers who are at odds with the *Animus*, monster erotica provides them with a means to safely engage the *Animus* and perhaps come to terms with it in their own way. For Leslie and Professor Veer, the monster “inside of [them]” allowed them “to live happily ever after” (Flynn 3: ch. 6).

For teratophiliacs and consumers of monster erotica, the monster is the happily ever after. *Ensnare* was chosen to elucidate the nuances of a psychological journey that takes the female reader through a dark sexual adventure towards a more autonomous identity outside patriarchal constraints. For the protagonist, her relationship with a monster satisfies her desires in ways not possible in traditional relationships – physically and emotionally/spiritually. It's possible female readers choose these stories for the same purpose. They subconsciously seek to engage disparate parts of their own psyche romantically/sexually, and find fulfillment without being reminded of the dangers posed in reality by men. The imagination offers an alternative, with the opportunity to satisfy problematic desires and navigate the labyrinth of the human mind in the safe environment of fantasy. If popular culture is a gauge, a substantial proportion of audiences are choosing it.

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