

The Infectious Monster:  
Borders and Contagion in *Yeti* and *Lágrimas en la lluvia*

Kiersty Lemon

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Dale Joseph Pratt, Chair  
Gregory Stallings  
James Remington Krause

Department of Spanish and Portuguese

Brigham Young University

July 2015

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## ABSTRACT

### The Infectious Monster: Borders and Contagion in *Yeti* and *Lágrimas en la lluvia*

Kiersty Lemon  
Department of Spanish and Portuguese, BYU  
Master of Arts

Monsters are disruptive characters, who cross boundaries and blend categories. They come in various kinds: Non-human monsters, such as Dracula, created-by-human monsters like Frankenstein, human monsters like Hitler, and more-than-human monsters such as the X-men. These monsters can either be dangerous or helpful to humanity. Dangerous monsters appear as infectious, viral forces, while helpful monsters are inoculative forces for positive change. In either case, they penetrate the borders set up between normatively separate categories. Critics and authors have long realized the connection between heroes and monsters, often portraying them as necessary to one another, as two sides of a single coin. However, this analogy is lacking, because it does not allow for the possibility that a single character can display varying degrees of both heroism and monstrosity. Mario Yerro and Bruna Husky present such characteristics in *Yeti* and *Lágrimas en la lluvia*, as evidenced by their physical appearance, their relations to scapegoats, the porosity of species and other boundaries, and the decisions they make in regards to the Other.

Keywords: monsters, heroes, others, monstrosity, heroism, science fiction, speculative fiction

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could never have completed this thesis without the help and support of my thesis chair, Dr. Dale Pratt, nor without the friendship and help of Rosa Montero and Fernando J. López del Oso. These two authors kindly agreed to speak with me, and have answered multiple questions via email and in person. Fernando gave me the gift of ten pages of notes with his own thoughts on monsters and heroes and the necessity of the Other as seen in his novel, and his insights have been invaluable, as have Rosa's. My conversations with them in the summer of 2014 helped me greatly when I finally sat down to write. I am especially grateful to my husband Jacob Lemon-Rogers for his love and support throughout this process, as well as to the rest of my family and friends. Neither could I have completed my studies without the friendship of my professors and my fellow graduate students in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Our subject librarian, David Wiseman, also provided valuable help and support. To everyone, thank you.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The word *genre* shares a common root with *gender* and *genus*; it is a broad term, a set of sets, which humans have used to classify many different things, from books and movies to species, and to humans themselves (OED). In “The Law of Genre,” Derrida discusses the possibility of separate and mixed genres. As he explains it, genre is a norm or a law, a metaphorical border: “Thus, as soon as genre announces itself, one must respect a norm, one must not cross a line of demarcation, one must not risk impurity, anomaly, or monstrosity” (Derrida “Genre” 57). Derrida then shows how the notion of genre deconstructs itself as an impermeable division. He shows that genres can in fact mix, suggesting that there is no such thing as a “pure” genre: “And suppose for a moment that it were impossible not to mix genres. What if there were, lodged within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity or a principle of contamination? And suppose the condition for the possibility of the law were the a priori of a counter-law, an axiom of impossibility that would confound its sense, order, and reason?” (Derrida “Genre” 57). The idea of unclear divisions and boundaries can extend far beyond literature to deal with the divisions humans have set up (or perhaps have accepted as already existing) between themselves and others. Joshua Lund’s comments on Derrida point towards this conclusion: “That principle of contamination, which governs the discriminatory effects of *genre*, is the same inner principle that enables the formulation of *genus*, a genus that we might here call the ‘Western intellectual tradition’” (Lund 18). Although in practice we accept these categories as preexisting and immovable, under scrutiny we observe the porosity of their boundaries, as Derrida has said.

The genre of Speculative Fiction has historically questioned and pushed the boundaries between literary genres. Spec Fic has also provided room to explore problems and potential

solutions in a fictional space. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay has provided insight into the importance of Spec Fic as a literary genre:

So it is that, encountering problems issuing from the social implications of science, and viewing dramatic technohistorical scenes in real life, we displace them into a virtual imaginary space, an alternate present or future that we can reflect on, where we can test our delight, anxiety, or grief, or simply play, without having to renounce our momentary sense of identity, social place, and the world.

We transform our experience into sf, if only for a moment. (5)

Besides providing a forum for problem solving, either via allegory or through a closer-to-reality setting, Speculative Fiction has embraced aliens, cyborgs, androids, robots, BEMs (bug-eyed monsters), mutants and other monstrous figures. Thanks to Spec Fic, we have long accepted such strangers as at least potential friends, and often as heroes. Janeen Webb writes: “Ever since Gilgamesh embraced his monster-brother Enkidu, literature has been speculatively exploring the problem of how to react sympathetically to monstrous protagonists” (6). Of course, some monsters still represent a danger to humans, but friendly monsters protect and aid us as we fight their more malevolent counterparts. Although the monster is not necessarily a genre, we can read it as if it were. The monster as genre creates porous boundaries between many categories.

Monsters exist as more than just Others. They mark and police boundaries and trespass borders. Just as they mark the edge of the normal, they also act as a virus, crossing over membranes and contaminating the otherwise separate categories by blending them together. The crossing of borders is a form of infection.

The issue of contagion is central in the two works of Spanish speculative fiction at hand: *Yeti* by Fernando J. López del Oso and *Lágrimas en la lluvia* by Rosa Montero. At first glance,

the two novels have little in common apart from their classification as Speculative Fiction, specifically Science Fiction. They could both be called thrillers, but *Yeti*, a Michael Crichton style adventure takes place in the present, while *Lágrimas en la lluvia*, an allegorical journey of discovery, takes place in 2109. However, taking a deeper look, the novels have more in common. They both deal with contagion, with monstrous trespass, and with the ethical questions of dealing with the Other. The characters within the novels, especially the respective protagonists, confront monstrosity in others and in themselves. Contemporary speculative fiction shows us the changing role of monsters in our world and our imaginary, while highlighting problems that humankind needs to resolve in its relationship with the world. Some might view contemporary heroism and monstrosity as a binary opposition; nonetheless, the boundaries prove impossible to defend for long. Any potential division between heroes and monsters remains porous, because a single individual can be both monstrous and heroic.

Both Mario and Bruna tend to view the Other with compassion while many of the other characters opt to reject it. These protagonists act ethically when dealing with the Other: they view people as ends in themselves rather than as a means to other ends. They recognize Others as fellow sentient beings while those around them only see the opportunity to gain political or monetary advantage by blaming a scapegoat or taking advantage of a weaker person. By highlighting the complicated nature of the dealings between the protagonists and their respective Others, both novels question the binary of heroism versus monstrosity and explore the self's need for the Other. Monsters are disruptive characters, who cross boundaries and blend categories. They come in various kinds: Non-human monsters, such as Dracula, created-by-human monsters like Frankenstein, human monsters like Hitler, and more-than-human monsters such as the X-men. These monsters can either be dangerous or helpful to humanity. Dangerous

monsters appear as infectious, viral forces, while helpful monsters are inoculative forces for positive change. In either case, they penetrate the borders set up between normatively separate categories. Critics and authors have long realized the connection between heroes and monsters, often portraying them as necessary to one another, as two sides of a single coin. However, this analogy is lacking, because it does not allow for the possibility that a single character can display varying degrees of both heroism and monstrosity. A better portrayal of the relationship between these qualities would be two parallel sliding scales. Mario Yerro and Bruna Husky each present such heroic and monstrous characteristics, as evidenced by their physical appearance, their relations to scapegoats, their crossing of species and other boundaries, the decisions they make in regards to the Other, and their personal codes of ethics.

### **Blood as Contagion and Cure**

In Chapter 2, I demonstrate how Mario Yerro of *Yeti* acts as a hero on behalf of the Others around him. He confronts monstrosity in himself and others in varying degrees and learns to deal with it, embracing and rejecting it as needed. Mario, a Spaniard living in present-day New York, works to protect wildlife around the globe. His story is a thriller, an adventure story about the search for the cure for the virus threatening humanity. Though human, Mario's atypical size and appearance make him stand out in relation to other humans. He often relates more with the animal world than he does to human society. The modern-day knight appears monstrous due to his size and his physical strength in comparison to his fellow humans, as well as in his affinity with the natural world rather than human society.

Mario embodies many aspects of the archetypal heroic figure, specifically the knights of King Arthur's court and the Grail Quest. As a knight in the modern world, he also projects a quixotic sense of honor. He cares about protecting humanity from the threats that arise, but he



also confronts the temptation to reject his fellow humans to protect the Other, thus expanding the definition of the chivalric code. At a critical point in the novel, Mario makes a cryptozoological discovery of a small, isolated tribe of *Homo erectus* in remote Sumatra. These Orang Pendek display physical monstrosity, compared to humans, but they do not present an inherent danger to humans, nor are they malicious without reason. They simply try to keep their border secure, only attacking when an outsider violates their boundaries. In fact, they avoid mixing with the outside world to protect themselves against what they perceive as monstrous or dangerous to themselves. In both his appearance and his affinity for the non-human world, Mario seems more like the Orang Pendek than the other humans. Contact between the Orang Pendek and *Homo sapiens* leads to a worldwide pandemic, but also to a reformulating of spatial boundaries and the elision of apparent species-boundaries.

As he pursues his quest to find a cure for the virus, Mario must decide where his priorities lie and how to best care for all the people affected by the pandemic. As I analyze his quest, I show how his physical appearance, his reaction to the idea of treating the Orang Pendek as scapegoat, and the relationships he builds with Others inform his heroic identity.

### **Memory as Poison and Remedy**

In Chapter 3, I analyze how Bruna Husky, the main character of *Lágrimas en la lluvia*, deals with her otherness and acts as a hero despite the treatment she and other androids receive. Her body, like Mario's, shapes her identity, her memories, and her actions. Bruna lives in 2109 Madrid, where she confronts a series of decisions about who to trust and how to work with the Others she encounters. Bruna appears in *Lágrimas* as an allegorical figure who pursues a quest to discover her own identity and place in the world. The novel's plot constitutes what might seem to be a typical detective story, but the solution to the mystery takes second place to Bruna's self-

discovery. Many of the people in her world consider her a monstrous figure, an alien in Richard Kearney's definition (67).<sup>1</sup> She experiences conflicted feelings towards humans, a mix of rage and jealousy and longing.

Physically, Bruna and the other androids appear monstrous. Their eyes have a vertical, almost feline, pupil, an outward sign of an inward monstrosity. Androids' bodies have been adapted to whatever task they were made to fulfill. For example, Bruna, as a combat replicant, is both taller and stronger than most humans. Also, because they cannot have children and they originate in factories, their origin is monstrously "unnatural." However, they do not inherently pose a threat to humans, any more than other humans do. Though she herself exists as an Other in madrileño society, Bruna Husky takes her place as the hero of her story. She therefore has a complicated relationship with the "normal" people who surround her. As a cyborg, Bruna certainly does not fit the traditional binary of heroism/monstrosity. I examine how her identity is informed by physical appearance, her rebellion against the scapegoating of the reps, the boundaries between species, and the choices she makes regarding those with whom she comes in contact in her search for truth.

Even though the two novels differ so widely, a few thematic convergences between the two books offer a provisional logic to guide this study. The remainder of this introduction is devoted to enunciating this logic, while detailed textual analysis follows in Chapters Two and Three.

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<sup>1</sup> "I take the term 'other' here, as frequently invoked by contemporary Continental theory, to refer to an alterity worthy of reverence and hospitality. I take the term 'alien', by contrast to refer to the experience of strangers associated with: (a) discrimination (as in certain immigration policies or acts of separating natives from foreigners); (b) suspicion (as in UFOs, extraterrestrials or other unwelcome invaders); and (c) scapegoating (as in xenophobic, racist or anti-Semitic practices)" (Kearney 67).

## Embodying Heroism and Monstrosity

Mario and Bruna, despite their monstrous characteristics, are each the heroes of their narratives. They embody the idea that monstrosity has close ties with heroism. Janeen Webb notes: “in speculative fiction, monsters are indeed necessary in that they generate an undeniable stimulus that provokes an heroic response” (21). The complex dichotomy of heroism and monstrosity, as we have already seen, extends beyond a simple binary relationship. “The Monster,” Webb asserts, “appears to be an essential part of the human condition” (21). Yet Webb’s view, that “the monster and the hero are two sides of the fictive coin” does not hold: *Yeti* and *Lágrimas en la lluvia* contain examples of more complex situations, and monstrosity and heroism blend more than the two faces of a coin which can only appear one at a time. A possible definition for heroism comes from Alejandro Gándara, a Spanish author, who makes a cameo appearance in *Lágrimas en la lluvia*.<sup>2</sup> Gándara explains that heroes are those who know how to suffer without fragmenting their identity: “la característica del héroe es la de la construcción de un carácter que nos haga capaces de saber morir, de ir en busca de la muerte para regresar a la vida y proyectar sobre ella todo lo aprendido. Eso es el filósofo. La filosofía en la antigua Grecia no era más que el viaje que se hace hacia la muerte y del que se regresa” (Sainz Borgo). The hero, then, has a character that allows him or her to confront death and return. Mario displays characteristics of heroism as he enters the jungles of Sumatra and faces death on multiple occasions. *Yeti* contains explicit references to Camelot and the chivalric ideals of Arthurian legend. Maurice Keen describes the duties of a knight as considered in the height of the chivalric code:

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<sup>2</sup> Rosa Montero often uses her friends’ names in her novels. Gándara appears as a coroner, a friend to Bruna and an important secondary character (*Lágrimas* 417).

[The knight's] first duty ... is to defend the faith of Christ against unbelievers, which will win him honour both in this world and the next ... He must also defend his temporal lord, and protect the weak, women, widows and orphans. He should exercise his body continually, by hunting wild beasts - the hart, the bear and the wolf - and by seeking jousts and tournaments. (Keen 9)

Though Lopez's references to Camelot in *Yeti* are more secular than religious, so was chivalry in general, tied to the ideals of knighthood and to Christian mythology rather than directly to a church. Some of the rituals of knighthood involved a church, but knightings could also be performed by anyone who was a knight, without the need for an altar or a church. The expected characteristics of a knight expanded at the beginning of the twelfth century. They included, according to Nigel Saul, "a range of qualities which softened and civilised the conduct of war. To the manly qualities of honour, courage and prowess were now added the humane ones of courtesy and magnanimity, mercy and generosity" (12). In *Yeti*, Mario's quest for the cure appears as a new version of the quest for the Holy Grail, in which Percival succeeded because of the pureness of his heart and his devotion to the ideals of the chivalric code. As an environmentalist, Mario is also open to finding new species of life. In *Lágrimas en la lluvia*, Bruna likewise plays the part of a hero, but as a noir detective rather than as a knight. She nonetheless exhibits a similar moral code to that of Mario, calling attention to injustice and concerning herself with the plight of the Other. Her role draws upon the tradition of noir detectives, who confront the murky areas between good and evil, searching for answers amid shades of gray. Unlike the classic chivalric knight, who must always remain clearly aligned with good, the noir detective exists in a liminal space. Mario and Bruna embody these tropes, but their characters extend beyond them as well.

## Monsters as Portents

In their heroic roles, Mario and Bruna face monsters which test them and push them to their limits. In these novels, as in many narratives, the reader can judge the heroes' strength by the villains they face. A well-written tale uses the challenges faced by the protagonist to show character development and strength of character. For example, Don Quixote knows he must fight giants and the like to truly be a knight, and as he creates his own narrative, he includes these elements. The heroes of the novels in this thesis also face and overcome great difficulties on their journeys. Perhaps human beings have long felt a fascination with monsters because we need obstacles to overcome. However, Dominique Lestel explores another possibility, that monsters fascinate us because of our own monstrous nature: "Human beings are redundant monsters, biological monsters that aspire to become cultural monsters. In addition, humans let their cultural monstrosity spill onto other biological monsters. As humans, we are not only monsters, but, moreover, vectors of monstrosity. Furthermore, we are also meta-monsters who produce and generate monsters" (Lestel 260). Since before the time of the Greeks, we have created narratives that center on the struggle between heroes and monsters, and that fascination has never entirely disappeared. In many early works, such as fairy tales or epics, the monsters and heroes usually distinguish themselves clearly. In classic tales, the monsters were the ones trying to kill the hero, and the hero tamed, destroyed or escaped them on his or her journey towards greatness. The tales of Perseus and Medusa, Beowulf and Grendel, and even Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf provide examples of this archetype. Those stories do not require us to sympathize with or relate to the monsters. In Early Modern Spanish literature, however, we see examples of complicated monsters in Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* and in Cervantes's *Don*

*Quixote*,<sup>3</sup> for instance. In many other works, we see a tendency to blur the lines between hero and monster, and to question assumptions about the Other and its place in the world. Lestel writes: “Human attraction to monsters is such that we could almost characterize *Homo sapiens* as ‘the species that loves monsters’. In fact, there is hardly a single human culture that finds itself indifferent to monsters; human culture either responds to monsters with fear or feeds on them joyously” (259). In much of contemporary literary criticism, we see monstrosity become synonymous with alterity or otherness. In this sense, it encompasses a range of characteristics and possibilities. The Monstrous can take many forms, physical, mental, visible or otherwise. The monstrous form shifts in conjunction with the current societal norms.

### **Monstrosity vs. Normality**

Monsters, as disruptive characters, deviate from that which society calls “natural.” Janeen Webb states that “One’s status as a monster, then, depends largely upon the degree of one’s deviation from the ‘normal’, as defined by the parameters of the text” (Webb 6). Monsters like Dracula pose a danger to humans. Dracula feeds off of humans and uses his blood to infect and turn them into creatures like himself, making him a perfect example of the border crossing we see in *Yeti* and *Lágrimas en la lluvia*. Nonetheless, speculative fiction boasts several forms of monsters, not all of whom are dangerous to humanity. Webb points out that:

The term monster covers a multitude of possibilities, but its usage suggests that literature concerns itself with three main categories: that of the imaginary animal (compounded of elements from human and/or any number of brute forms); that of the malformed or misshapen variants of recognizable life forms (whether human,

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<sup>3</sup> Don Quixote encounters monstrosity at nearly every turn, from the Dukes, the Curate and the Barber, and the other people who mistreat him to the windmill/giants and the other monstrous figures who exist solely in his imagination. He himself could be read as a monster, one who does not fit the norms of his society, who lives according to his own rules and writes his own life as he goes.

animal, or vegetable); and that of the person twisted (by such things as wickedness, cruelty or fanaticism) or otherwise damaged so that he partakes of the inhuman. (1)

Supernatural creatures or individuals can also be holy. They merely differ from the norm, and the definition of a monster can change depending on the established definition of normality. The word “monster” derives from the Latin “monstrum,” which means "divine omen, portent, sign; abnormal shape; monster, monstrosity," and which in turn derives from the verb MONERE, to warn or threaten (OED). In Spec Fic, monsters often mark the border between “us” and “them” by showing what we are not. Dracula, for example, is an Other due to his origin and his behavior. His non-Britishness and his capacity to turn humans into monsters like himself are his most frightening aspects. To counter his dangerous Otherness, the frightened group of protagonists turn to another Other: Van Helsing. Also not British, the foreigner Van Helsing becomes an ally. He acts as a friendly monstrous figure (Stoker 199). It takes an Other to counter an Other.

### **The Gaze of the Other**

Fragmentation, the gaze, and desire form a part of both novels. The way we look at Others and ourselves is key to our relationships with them. Tom Eyers summarizes Jacques Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage and expands it to the symbolic gaze:

Just as, at this early stage, the child is caught between the bodily reality of fragmentation and displacement and the relative fixity of scopic identification, so at a more abstract level the very first elements of symbolic placing point to the eventual, if only partial capitulation of the ego to the rupture of the unconscious.

(21)

As the child gazes into the mirror for the first time and experiences the confusion of seeing another “self” reflected there, he or she also finds confusion in seeing and recognizing other people. This confusion does not stop after childhood. It continues as humans grow into adulthood and learn to look at those around them as Others. Laura Mulvey’s foundational work “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” describes the experience of watching a film informed by Lacan’s discussion of the mirror stage. She writes:

Playing on the tension between film as controlling the dimension of time (editing, narrative) and film as controlling the dimension of space (changes in distance, editing), cinematic codes create a gaze, a world and an object, thereby producing an illusion cut to the measure of desire. (Mulvey 2192)

As a person sits in a dark theater, watching a better version of him or herself walking around on-screen, it is difficult not to experience misrecognition. Bruna Husky deals with metaphorical and literal images of herself and other androids cast onto the news screens, as well as with the system of holograms in her society. This literal and figurative view of herself in society recalls Lacan’s idea of the big Other, the systems which shape our worldview. Slavoj Žižek describes this Other as “a displacement of our most intimate feelings and attitudes onto some figure of the Other is at the very core of Lacan’s notion of the big Other [which] can affect not only feelings but also beliefs and knowledge - the Other can also believe and know for me” (27). Both Bruna and Mario must confront their societies’ point of view about them and about the Others they come into contact with. Mario also works with cameras, recording many of his findings, which are then edited and released to the world. The cameras that he and the rest of the expedition place by the traps serve as extra eyes, an extension of their gaze. Mario’s observations of the Orang Pendek can also be read as a scientific gaze, especially as he watches the village from the tree. This



relationship between subject and Other becomes deeper than the gaze described by Mulvey, as do the relationships Bruna develops.

### **The Other Side of the Boundary**

As Mario and Bruna each build relationships with their respective Others, they cross boundaries. The multifaceted use of the term monster then has often been a sign of the liminal, of borders, fluidity and change. Therefore, monsters both mark the boundary of the normal and break down the division between normal and not-normal, between us and them. Human beings define themselves by what they are not, just as we recognize the significance of a word by knowing what it does not mean. Laura Otis writes: “There is no natural match between a word and the thing it represents . . . Like our visual system, we create meaning only through the differences we perceive and the boundaries we believe are present” (2). The boundaries between self and Other are of particular importance in both *Yeti* and *Lágrimas en la lluvia*. Both Bruna and Mario observe and trespass these boundaries in their respective worlds. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* specifically refers to a binary between “us” and “them” as he examines the historic division between the East and the West. He maintains that the West has fashioned an exoticized image of the Orient to match its own ideas of what the East should be like. The similarity between the word exoticized and eroticized is key, because the process parallels the male gaze described by Mulvey. The West shaped the East through its gaze, to show what the West was not, to define its own identity by contrast. This was not just an ideological project but also a profit based venture. Both novels portray the hegemonic relations between powerful and powerless, similar to Said’s analysis of West’s relationship with East under Orientalism:

The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its

cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images off the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea personality, experience. Yet none of this Orient is merely imaginative. The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture. (Said 1991)

The powerful treat the powerless as exotic, useful, or profitable, but the powerless are not permitted a voice with which they can tell their own story. The public receive the story of the powerless through the filter of the powerful, as both novels portray.

Sometimes, the powerful portray the powerless as monsters, even as zombies, the Other imagined and feared by the normal. For example, the unexplored regions on maps were designated with the term “Here Be Monsters.” These “monsters” marked the edges of the known, safe regions of the world. The maps represented the control of civilization in an area mapped out and organized as part of Western knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Several maps appear in *Yeti*, where they represent the norms and the reach of civilization. Such norms may not even represent the majority of those who live with them. Both norms and monsters themselves are a mental construction to at least some degree. Patricia Monk calls attention to the necessity of the Other: “The psychological need for a representative ‘Not-I’ for the ‘I’ of humanity to measure itself against is, once defined by science ultimately what drives the creation of the science fiction Alien” (303). The creation or view of someone as an Other helps establish the boundaries of one’s own identity. At the same time, that boundary can prevent communication between self and Other, imposing unfortunate limits upon the self. As they expanded their empires Europeans “presumed that they had a right

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<sup>4</sup> The Portuguese term *sertão* was used in a similar way to mean the areas outside the control of Europe’s civilizing influence. “In the early uses of the word, the *sertão* signified not only unknown interior space but even more broadly non-European, uncivilized and even barbarous human presence (Nielson 8).

both to expand their boundaries and to exclude from their identities the new elements they had taken in” (Otis 5). This attitude of fear towards infectious foreign thought and custom prevented learning and growth. In both novels, the main characters face boundaries which also prevent their societies from growing in understanding due to their fear or ignorance of the Other. As monstrous figures themselves, they help cross those boundaries, causing cross-contamination: “The grotesque introduces mythic thought in a nonmythic context, ‘polluting’ the pure aspirations of reason with the fluctuating, mutagenic, class-defying world-picture of the sacred” (Csicsery-Ronay 187). Yet our protagonists do not pollute boundaries, they cross-pollinate ideas and thought that would otherwise never come into contact. Whether their societies consider new perspectives or remain closed-minded, these protagonists expand their personal worldview and escape the fear that blinds those around them.

### **Scapegoats**

Fear can have dangerous consequences, causing prejudice, anger, and eventually chaos. This chaos can be resolved, but often the blame for society’s fearfulness instead falls upon a scapegoat. Such scapegoats appear in both novels, and they are those whom others paint as monsters to take the blame for someone else’s actions or for society’s problems in general. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, in his article “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” describes the way the relationship between monsters and scapegoats:

René Girard has written at great length about the real violence these debasing representations enact, connecting monsterizing depiction with the phenomenon of the scapegoat. Monsters are never created *ex nihilo*, but through a process of fragmentation and recombination in which elements are extracted ‘from various

forms' (including--indeed, especially--marginalized social groups) and then assembled as the monster, 'which can then claim an independent identity'. (11)

When a community places its troubles upon a scapegoat, it transfers its collective sin or curse by an arbitrary assignation. Though the assignment is arbitrary, given that the entire group is guilty, the scapegoat often comes from among those deemed least important to society. The monster, as marker of boundary, forms the semi-porous membrane that permits communication between the inside and the outside of a community. The monster, like the scapegoat, is constructed as separate from society. Nonetheless, monsters and scapegoats both share a connection to society that the barbarian, who has no relationship with civilized people, does not. Zakiya Hanafi explains:

the barbarian was distinguished by making no sense, or nonsense, the monster, on the contrary was distinguished by making several senses: by providing an oppositional corporeal limit to human definition; by eroding the strong conceptual differentiation between man and beast, man and demon, or man and god, pointing to pollution, transgression, a breakdown in social order; and by bearing a sign of warning from the sacred. (Hanafi 6)

Girard explains this phenomenon in his work *Violence and the Sacred*. "All our sacrificial victims, whether chosen from [a marginalized category of humans], a fortiori, from the animal realm, are invariably distinguishable from the nonsacrificeable beings by one essential characteristic: between these victims and the community a crucial social link is missing, so they can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal. Their death does not automatically entail an act of vengeance" (13). The scapegoat must therefore be part of the community but also configured, in some way, as an outsider. The individual chosen as a scapegoat must be from the

edge of the community, bordering on the membrane that contains the society. However, he or she also represents the community as a whole, despite having no connection to any one member of the community. Historically, the desire to place blame on a scapegoat arises all too often in times of severe societal stress. Girard writes that “any community that has fallen prey to violence or has been stricken by some overwhelming catastrophe hurls itself blindly into the search for a scapegoat” (79). Violence in the community can be condensed and directed against the scapegoat, thus unifying the community fragmented by chaos. Such violence attempts to solidify the porous membrane into a more solid barrier. Nonetheless, the monsters that mark the border also keep it open.

*Yeti* and *Lágrimas en la lluvia* present both an erosion of boundaries and an attempt to enforce artificial norms by manipulating human nature. The complex character relationships in the two novels break down the boundary between heroism and monstrosity and between self and Other, following patterns of inoculation and infection. The bodily appearance of the characters, the treatment of Other as scapegoat, the porosity of boundaries, and the choices made in regards to the Other provide points of contacts between the two novels: a fresh perspective on genre boundaries and the monsters that both mark and cross them.

## Chapter 2: Blood as Contagion and Cure

In Fernando J. Lopez del Oso's *Yeti*, Mario Yerro seeks to protect the environment as the director of field projects for the Bioconservation Agency of the United Nations (BAUN). He becomes entangled in the search for a cure to a virus similar to Marburg and Ebola. In his quest for the cure, he, along with Dr. Eliana Colman and Albert Hehn, a hunter, must enter the Kerinci Seblat preserve in Indonesia, crossing international and local boundaries. They face the dangers of the forest itself along with the deadly mercenaries sent by the Corporation, a corporate conglomerate with controlling interests in multiple organizations, from oil companies to pharmaceuticals. Mario's quest takes him into the deepest part of the forest, where he encounters an undiscovered people, the Orang Pendek. Here he finds the source of the disease.

*Yeti* presents a wide variety of monsters: both infectious, dangerous forces, and inoculative, positive forces. Mario displays within himself varying degrees of heroism and monstrosity, as evidenced by his physical appearance, his relationship to scapegoats, his crossing of species and other boundaries, and the decisions he makes in regards to the Other.

### **A Modern Grail Knight**

Mario Yerro sees himself as one of a few knights protecting the natural parts of the earth from the human world. The novel portrays the BAUN as a type of Camelot, a force for biological stability in the midst of a chaotic and monstrous world. Both Mario and his boss, Daniel Stix, embrace this metaphor and refer often to Camelot. After a meeting in which they discuss the motivations of the anonymous tipster Casandra for sending a message about a threat to the Kerinci Seblat nature preserve, Mario remarks, "Creo que yo era el único que veía justificable todo aquello simplemente por el hecho de salvar la reserva. Y sinceramente creo que mi visión es la real. Y que lo otro está distorsionado" (López del Oso *Yeti* 120). This quixotic visión of the

world leads Mario to perform great feats as he travels the world in pursuit of his goals. Daniel shares this view, as we see when the narration shifts to his point of view.

[Daniel] Contempló sus ciento diez kilos de voluntad y determinación abatidos en apariencia por una crisis de ideales. Dudaba de los ideales que, precisamente, le habían llevado a alcanzar un lugar en el que podía cambiar las cosas de verdad. En el campo de batalla; sobre el terreno. Ese lugar en el que estaba era la BAUN, la Camelot que todavía, siempre, lucharía por preservar los lugares que guardaban la magia de Gaia. Y Mario era sin duda el mejor de sus caballeros: Gallahad, aquel con los ideales tan blancos como para ser capaz de alcanzar el Grial. (López del Oso *Yeti* 121)

As the director of the BAUN, Daniel deals with the more difficult political issues, which he dislikes, though he recognizes them as a necessary evil, and which the more idealistic Mario deplures. Daniel sees Mario as the purest and most capable of their organization, comparing him to Galahad, one of the Grail knights from later Arthurian legend. “Y Mario era sin duda el mejor de sus caballeros: Gallahad, aquel con los ideales tan blancos como para ser capaz de alcanzar el Grial” (López del Oso *Yeti* 121). Daniel himself takes on the role of King Arthur, giving advice and support to his knight although he cannot accompany him to the field of battle: “Seguimos peleando porque es lo que nos queda. Porque los guerreros somos nosotros, Mario. Y porque, como bien dices, y aunque los demás no lo sepan, realmente estamos en guerra: luchamos por nuestra supervivencia” (*Yeti* 121). The military metaphor of the BAUN as soldiers holding off those who would otherwise overrun the last sanctuaries of nature on the planet continues throughout the novel.

Of all the BAUN's associates, Yerro alone manages to remain unsullied by political dealings. The BAUN's code of ethics forms a barrier against those individuals and institutions without any such moral standard, though a porous one, especially when politics become involved. Commenting on Yerro's ethical ideals, Fernando J. López del Oso says,

Yerro se ve como uno de los únicos dispuestos a defender la reserva, y por lo tanto a ellos –recordemos que está en Sumatra para detener los planes de la UPECO-. Yerro es un caballero andante que siente lástima y enfado ante el mundo. Quiere salvar al Pendek de ese mundo depredador. (“Apuntes” 4; see also *Yeti* 283).

Mario's anger and pity become obvious through his words and actions within the novel. He holds himself apart from the rest of the human world, which he sees as a danger to the earth itself and to its other inhabitants. He deplores the outside world's indifference to the plight of the natural world in general and the Kerinci Seblat in particular. Without official support from any side, he bitterly complains to his friend Albert Hehn of the situation of their small expedition. “Fíjate qué expedición han montado para salvar uno de los lugares más extraordinarios del planeta. Qué despliegue. Estamos dos, acompañando a otra pobre empeñada en ser coherente consigo misma y seguir su propia pista, y a la que también han dejado sola” (López del Oso *Yeti* 196). Mario believes that most of the world has lost its way and has forgotten how to live in harmony with nature or with the moral obligation to care for the planet. Mario finds this monstrous and he fights against it as much as he can, in a quest to restore balance and establish protection for the earth and its creatures.

Mario, a modern-day Quixote, struggles to maintain his honor in a dishonorable world. Albert Hehn, one of Mario's close companions and a foil for his character, also thinks of his



friend this way: “Le vio salir con la frente alta, seguro e inquebrantable en su determinación, hablando del honor y de los principios. En estos tiempos. Un tipo excepcional. O un colosal Quijote, anacrónico y perdido” (López del Oso *Yeti* 196). Hehn admires Mario’s character, but he also sees his friend as naïve, and unwilling to do what is necessary to survive in the “real world.” Their friendship includes a mutual agreement to refrain from criticizing each other’s worldviews. When Hehn suggests that Mario accompany them in the poachers’ helicopter that will carry them to safety, Mario refuses, instead staying to discover what has become of the Orang Rimba. He explains, “Tengo que resolverlo. Además, dudo que nadie más se tome la molestia de hacerlo” (López del Oso *Yeti* 367). In addition to his ethical obligation to help those who cannot help themselves, Mario cannot enter a helicopter manned by the black marketeers with whom Hehn still has ties. The white knight cannot ride the black knight’s horse or use his weapons. If he did, he would be polluted and infected, and he would lose his status as an idealistic hero.

Mario struggles to maintain his integrity, his “coherencia,” to his ideals. Perched in the tree above the Orang Pendek village, Mario talks to himself, comparing himself to Percival, the original Grail Knight:

Y fijate, además, ni siquiera tienes que conformarte con ser un soldado corriente: eres un caballero de Camelot. Te lo dijo el propio Arturo, en su castillo. Y te lo repitió hace dos noches cuando te encomendó que buscaras el Grial por encima de cualquier cosa. Reconócelo: eso también te gusta. No es tan malo resignarse a dejar de ser Quijote sí lo que te espera es el papel de Perceval y la búsqueda del Santo Grial. (*Yeti* 286)

Here we see his struggle to reconcile his quixotic self, his desire to serve the entire world, with the need to find the remedy and save his own race. As he spends more time observing the village, he continues the internal debate. He wants to be the Grail Knight, wants to serve his king, and wants to bring back the cure, but at this point he believes that to do so, he would have to kidnap a child. Just as entering the black market helicopter would pollute his identity, so would this act. Finally, he tells himself that he cannot do it, determining that he has no right to take the Grail: “¿A quién sirve el Grial? Te lo voy a decir, Perceval, maldito imbécil. El Grial sirve al Rey del Grial. Y a su pueblo. Así que olvídate, y vete a la mierda. ... Resolved vosotros vuestros problemas. Porque el Grial se queda aquí” (*Yeti* 309). Mario’s sense of honor will not allow him to deliberately sacrifice one group of people, especially one he considers better than his own species, to save another. Although Mario wishes to be a hero by saving humanity, he considers it monstrous to reveal the existence of the Orang Pendek, thus subjecting them to the influence of the outside world.

### **Physical Appearance**

Although monstrosity takes many forms, it often first reveals itself through image. Physical appearance appears as an outward sign of a presumed inward monstrosity. For example, Mario himself first appears as part of the forest. Without more context, the reader easily interprets the nameless figure of the first two pages as the titular Yeti. The description certainly meets expectations, and the intimation of monstrosity and the suspension of disbelief help create the illusion:

Con cerca de dos metros de altura en posición erguida, no podía decirse que fuera bajo. Pero su enorme tórax y su desproporcionada espalda descompensaban su figura. Sus ojos inteligentes escrutaron la maleza. No veía nada más allá de lo

inmediato. Altos muros de vegetación lo envolvían, y allá arriba, las copas de los árboles se unían formando un dosel que cubría todo el bosque, haciendo que las sombras que lo rodeaban se confundieran unas con otras. Se detuvo por un momento y aguzó los oídos. (López del Oso *Yeti* 9)

López del Oso often plays with this sort of literary illusion, breaking the reader's expectations in an intriguing fashion before revealing what is actually happening (see also *Yeti* 124-125, 215, 218).

Multiple times throughout the narration, readers receive an incorrect first impression, leading them to reexamine their assumptions, just as Mario himself does. In Mario's initial presentation, the illusion falls apart as the narration continues. A few carefully chosen phrases bring Mario's image more fully into focus. "Se irguió por un instante, tiró de la cuerquita con la que arrastraba a la cabra que caminaba dócil detrás de él, y continuó avanzando hacia el claro. Un instante después comenzó a hablar por el micrófono inalámbrico que tenía prendido en la camisa, abierta de par en par. Se llamaba Yerro, Mario Yerro. Era el director de los proyectos de campo de la BAUN, y lo estaban grabando con una cámara" (López del Oso *Yeti* 10). In this paragraph, there is a 180° shift in the reader's understanding of the preceding scenes. With the appearance of the goat, a domesticated animal, the microphone and camera, representing human technology and a name, presented in James Bond fashion, Mario is finally recognizable as human. This scene exemplifies boundary crossing: Mario, a liminal figure, occupies the space between human and animal.

Mario's frequent depiction as a lion, with his long hair that forms his mane and his physical strength, recalls the lion as a heraldic symbol. In Western literary tradition, lions have

always symbolized strength, courage, goodness, and light.<sup>5</sup> When Doctor Colman encounters him for the first time, she makes this observation. “[A Eliana] Le pareció que sus músculos tenían más que ver con los de un león cazando en la sabana que con los de un deportista de gimnasio” (López del Oso *Yeti* 166). His attitude also contributes to the comparison. After his return from the adventure in China, he finds it difficult to adjust back to city life, especially because his injuries prevent him from enjoying as much physical activity as he is accustomed to: “Pero, con todo, daba vueltas por el apartamento como un león en una jaula, atrapado en la ciudad sin poder descargar del todo su frustración mientras suspiraba por horizontes más abiertos. Necesitaba urgentemente actividad física, salir a la montaña, por ejemplo” (*Yeti* 135). He not only feels trapped in the apartment but also in the city itself. This frustration appears violently when he and his bicycle encounter a careless driver (*Yeti* 104-105). Mario finds it difficult to recover his calm after this episode. In this and other everyday situations, he must think about what his strength might do to those around him. In various scenes, however, we see Mario unleash his full strength against those who have harmed others. Although Mario works to protect the natural world, he feels little charity towards those of his own species who take no thought for the well-being of others. He enjoys the moments in which he can ignore societal limits and use his full strength. When crossing the river towards the *Bosque Prohibido*, for example he stretches himself as much as he can: “Estaba disfrutando de esa sensación de potencia bruta que no tenía que reprimir pudorosamente por hallarse frente a los demás. Podía darle rienda suelta, cruzar la línea roja sólo por el placer de hacerlo” (López del Oso *Yeti* 258-259). When Mario finds himself in nature, he feels most at home.

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<sup>5</sup> See Aslan of C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*, Richard the Lionheart of England, Christ as the Lion of Israel, etc.

Mario has several opportunities to test his strength against equals. He frames the encounter with the blue tigress at the preserve in China in chivalric terms: “Una puesta en escena, como sí aquella fuera la única manera aceptable en la que ambos pudieran establecer contacto. Sí, tal vez había sido así. A fin de cuentas era ella la que lo había llamado para que fuera a rescatarla, así que ¿por qué iba a atacar a su caballero defensor?” (*Yeti* 25). As Mario places his confrontation with the tiger in the context of a performance, he engages with the tigress as an Other. Through performativity, the tigress and the Orang Pendek both reflect Mario’s being, becoming mirror-doubles but remaining Others whom he cannot understand fully: “Lacan’s point is that we need this recourse to performativity, to the symbolic engagement, precisely and only in so far as the other whom we confront is not only my mirror-double, someone like me, but also the elusive absolute Other who ultimately remains an unfathomable mystery” (Zizek 45). Mario’s battle with the *hombre pantera*, one of the warriors of the Orang Pendek, recalls the fight with the tigress. The two fight, evenly matched, until the *hombre pantera* uses a knife made from a tiger’s claw, dipped in guano (*Yeti* 320-321). The reader associates the king of the Orang Pendek with the tiger. He wears a tiger’s skin, face and jaws included, and a necklace of tiger claws (305). The repeated feline imagery associated with each of the characters (lion, panther, tiger) recalls again the use of chivalric heraldry displayed on the shields of different knights, proclaiming their identity though their faces would have been hidden by armor. Mario’s physical appearance, along with the association with the lion, gives him a strong affinity for the Orang Pendek.

When Mario encounters the Orang Pendek, he begins to classify them by his observations of physical appearance, with a scientific gaze: “Homínido. Porque no era un niño, no era un chico indígena con hipertriosis” (*Yeti* 251). Part of classification is determining what something

is not. The West, for example, defined itself negatively in relationship to the East. Mario continues by observing the qualities that the hominid does have:

Pero sí era humano. Era del género *Homo*, sin duda. Imposible otra cosa después de ver aquellos ojos, esa mirada inquisitiva, la expresión de extrañeza cuando contrajo el ceño y miró hacia donde él se ocultaba, intrigado. Tenía todo eso, y dos brazos, y dos piernas, y una cara humana, y unas proporciones normales, y caminaba perfectamente erecto. (251)

Mario then returns to note more differences, trying to find where the hominid fits in the *homo* family tree: “Pero ahí terminaban las similitudes. Había algo, algo más aparte del extraordinario vello que le cubría casi todo el cuerpo. Era una suma de pequeñas cosas que aún no había descifrado, pero que había hecho que la parte animal de su cerebro lo clasificase inmediatamente como perteneciente a otra especie” (*Yeti* 251). Mario’s observations place the hominid as like but unlike himself.

### **Scapegoats**

Just as Mario sees the first Orang Pendek he encounters as similar but different, so are scapegoats similar to the societies which place blame upon them. Different degrees of scapegoating occur in the novel. In moments of crisis, communities look for an outlet, for someone to take the blame. As Rene Girard notes,

All our sacrificial victims ... are invariably distinguishable from the nonsacrificeable beings by one essential characteristic: between these victims and the community a crucial social link is missing, so they can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal. Their death does not automatically entail an act of vengeance. (Girard 13)

López del Oso provides a typical case of scapegoating before exploring more metaphorically charged instances later in the novel. This model case takes place in the hospital in Jambi. When Eliana Colman arrives, the hospital is a pile of rubble and ashes, with the people who had been exposed to the virus burned then buried within. Any who tried to escape the fire were killed and thrown back in. When she asks a reporter who had done this, he answers,

Gente de aquí... de la ciudad. Al parecer, había rumores de que na plaga se estaba extendiendo. Había muerto gente en el hospital, de algo terrible. Se decía que era un castigo de Alá. Se rumoreaba que algunos más habían muerto de lo mismo o estaban enfermos en sus casas. También las han incendiado. Ha habido muchos disturbios esta noche. Incluso disparos. (*Yeti* 145)

Girard emphasizes that such moments of crisis and violence –of perceived divine punishment– in the community can be resolved with sacrifice of a member or members thereof:

The plague is what remains of the sacrificial crisis when it has been emptied of all violence. It calls to mind the passivity of the 'patient' in the modern world of medicine. Everyone is sick. Nobody owes anybody anything by way of recompense or atonement. (77)

The people of Jambi took matters into their own hands and destroyed those who were sick and any who came into contact with them, knowing and fearing the consequences if the contagion were to spread further. The patients and everyone else in the hospital died violently. After the violence, the community became safe, a true case of scapegoating because of the threat to the community: the virus, which could be prevented from spreading by the logical, if brutal, actions of the people of Jambi.

Dr. Joseph White, Dr. Colman's boss and the director of the Center of Epidemiological Studies, also faces a situation in which many people are afflicted with painful, even violent death. He therefore takes steps to find a suitable scapegoat. After giving Eliana authorization to travel to Indonesia, he revokes it, intending to place the blame squarely on her shoulders if they should fail to find a cure for the virus (*Yeti* 150-151). Fortunately for Doctor Colman, White, and the rest of the world, she and the rest of the expedition succeed in their quest for the antibodies and she returns triumphant to London. Once she returns, White attempts to take credit for her discovery, but Colman survives the situation relatively unscathed.

UPECO also requires a scapegoat to take the blame for the incidents in the Kerinci Seblat reserve. Piera Kernels, the director of UPECO, is not nearly as fortunate as Dr. Colman. Of course, Piera begins as a much less sympathetic character, depicted alternately as a wolf or a fox, and the reader rejoices at her downfall (*Yeti* 227, 234). She ordered the massacre of the Rimba, viewing the people as little more than rubbish, obstacles to be cleared out before her ambitions can move forward. She realizes that she is setting herself up as a scapegoat; if the project fails, she too will fall. "El problema, lo sabía bien, es que había apostado tan fuerte por el proyecto que su futuro personal estaba ligado indisolublemente al éxito del mismo" (*Yeti* 29). Her ambition motivates her to order the death of an entire population, preferring their death to her failure. The Rimba become victims, not scapegoats. They suffer for no reason other than her ambition. Piera sees the Rimba not as sacrificial victims but as obstacles to remove from her path. However, because the Rimba suffered unlawfully, someone does seek vengeance. The BAUN, represented by Mario, does everything possible to find justice, cutting through bureaucratic borders where necessary. Piera herself does suffer the fate of a scapegoat, along with Boonen, her own scapegoat. The narrator states that their deaths were deservedly ignominious: "No hubo en sus



muertes grandeza, ni exequias, ni siquiera flores. Nadie preguntó nada; nadie lloró. Murieron como lo que eran” (López del Oso *Yeti* 481). They are both killed after the news of the slaughter comes out, and no one seeks vengeance for their deaths. Piera had crossed a boundary that she had no right to cross, and she, along with the others involved, suffered the consequences of their despicable actions.

### **Porosity of Boundaries**

Boundaries, metaphorical or not, mark differences and control who or what has access to the areas they surround. For example, membranes, porous boundaries, work to control access to the cell they surround. A cell defends itself with antigens against foreign influences, while accepting beneficial influences. Human identity combines the characteristics of cells and neurons, as does the identity of a society. They both create a membrane around themselves, but also depend upon outside input: “Even though the identity of the cell depended on the distinction between inside and outside, the very function and existence of neurons depended on outside influences: on inputs from other cells and from the environment” (Otis 73). The novel contains many boundaries and boundary crossings of all types. First of all, we see the mercenaries push their way into the village of the Orang Rimba on the orders of Piera Kernels. They resemble a virus that penetrates the previously safe space of the reserve. “El poblado tenía la forma de un gran círculo partido por dos caminos, que daban a una especie de plaza o patio de tierra central. Por uno de ellos penetraron Smith y sus hombres” (López del Oso *Yeti* 51). The villagers’ huts form a circle, like the walls of a biological cell. When the mercenaries penetrate the border of the village, they infiltrate this safe space with a toxic influence. They bring death to the Rimba as surely as any plague introduced to a population without the protection of immunity. The mercenaries, disguised as soldiers and medical workers, tell the Rimba that they risk contracting

typhus if they stay. They lead them out of their village to a dry riverbed, where they share a meal, which becomes the Rimba's last supper, a twisted communion. The mercenaries then tell them they must apply a disinfectant. The Rimba line up in the riverbed, where they cannot escape when the mercenaries open fire with their flamethrowers, and later with guns (*Yeti* 54-59). As the mercenaries pursue the surviving Rimba deeper into the forest, they come in contact with the biological virus and carry it with them when they depart. The biological virus acts as an antibody for the nature preserve, fighting off what Mario sees as the infection of humanity.

The BAUN also plays the part of an antibody combatting the corruption and waste of the world. "En cierta manera ellos mismos y la BAUN eran algo así, una especie de corpúsculo resistente en medio de una sociedad destructiva y hostil" (*Yeti* 119). The building the BAUN is housed in is also significant. Not only does it look like a castle, recalling Camelot, it also used to house a hospital. "Cuando se contruyó, el edificio se utilizó primero como hospital, el Hospital Renwick para la viruela. Ahora, tras la restauración, tenía otro cartel en su entrada. Uno que ponía Bioconservation Agency of the United Nations" (López del Oso *Yeti* 33). Smallpox, a deadly virus, has been eradicated completely thanks to vaccinations. The hospital no longer had an enemy to fight, and was transformed into an institution to fight the larger virus of humanity's consumerism and materialism. The achievement of this apparently quixotic goal, destroying a virus, hints at the BAUN's chances of success in its goal to eradicate humanity's destructive habits.

The World Health Organization, where Doctor Colman combats more modern infections, serves as a foil for the BAUN. A one-way membrane protects the fourth level, where Colman works. "Ni que decir tenía que si entrabas como paciente en una sala de nivel cuatro de bioseguridad, lo más probable es que ya no salieras. Miró a los ocupantes de las cuatro camas a

través del cristal que comunicaba las habitaciones con el pasillo” (López del Oso *Yeti* 126). The glass of the window is also a membrane, like the biohazard suits that the doctors wear to protect themselves from the illnesses they combat. It allows them to see, but prevents the pathogens from passing through. Doctor Colman and her colleagues are also required to pass through security checks and chemical showers on each level of the building to access it (*Yeti* 127). These prevent the viruses from escaping and infecting others. Doctor Colman’s knowledge of infection and how viruses spread is yet another defense.

The vector of infection of the virus follows a similar pattern to other viruses. “Pensaba en eso, y en el corto tiempo de incubación que tenía el agente infeccioso. O mejor dicho, el virus, demonios, que aunque no lo tuvieran aislado todavía, eso olía a virus desde lejos. ... Así que o bien había ido él a un lugar donde [Peat] se había infectado, o bien se había visto aquí con un enfermo que lo había contagiado” (*Yeti* 131). The doctor knows that it must have a specific origin and that if she can find it, they have a better chance of finding a cure. The poison and the antidote in this case are one and the same,<sup>6</sup> both found on the other side of the taboo border of the *Bosque Prohibido*.

Doctor Colman and her colleagues know the possible consequences of the virus. “Porque si escapaba de control, un virus como aquel podía dejar el planeta patas arriba en cuestión de semanas” (*Yeti* 143). It would cut through national borders and devastate the world’s population. They trespass a different boundary in their attempts to find a cure, crossing species boundaries and inoculating various kinds of animals with the virus to see if any of them produce antibodies

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<sup>6</sup> “It is not surprising that the word *pharmakon* in classical Greek means both poison and the antidote for poison, both sickness and cure --in short, any substance capable of perpetrating a very good or very bad action, according to the circumstances and the dosage” (Girard 95).

(*Yeti* 148). Doctor Colman's quest for the cure leads her, Mario and Hehn across the boundaries of the reserve, the *Bosque Prohibido*, and the village of the Orang Pendek.

When Mario contracts the virus, he slips closer and closer towards the final border of death, experiencing levels of hallucinations on the way. Tumbling down the river becomes his last conscious memory before he slips into a coma. "La visión del río llevándose todo se hizo doble, y luego triple, hasta que se nubló, mientras Mario, impotente, comprendía que perdía la consciencia. Había cruzado todos los límites" (*Yeti* 385). Having crossed many other borders, Mario now approaches the boundary of death. The river becomes a type of River Styx, carrying the souls of the dead and dying towards their fate. Fortunately for Mario, help arrives before he crosses that final frontier.

After his recovery, thanks to the antibodies of the Orang Pendek King, Mario resolves to discover who caused the deaths of the Rimba. He and Pint, the NSA agent, act as virus. They make their way into the Petronas Towers and pass through the security measures with the help of Figtree, the BAUN's computer specialist. They make use of false identities to slip past the first checkpoints. When they reach floor eighty-nine, their cover story fails and they break through the glass barriers. They then have to fight the guards, who take the role part of antibodies, before gaining entrance to Boonen's office (*Yeti* 428-438). While he searches Boonen's computer, Pint attaches a flash drive containing a computer virus designed by Figtree:

era un virus que el bueno de Figtree había creado *ad hoc* para los amigos de la UPECO, tras tratar infructuosamente de penetrar en los sistemas de seguridad de su intranet. ... su función sí que estaba clara: horadar desde dentro un agujero en las barreras de seguridad para, una vez traspasadas, correr por la web hasta enlazar con el ordenador de papá Figtree y establecer con él un delgado hilo de

plata que conectase ambos ordenadores, y que, quien sabe, tal vez le permitiera también husmear en el resto de los equipos de la oficina. (*Yeti* 441)

This virus, much like the biological virus for which Eliana seeks the antidote, breaks through the interior borders of its host, allowing access. It also has the possibility of contaminating the other computers, much like the vector of the other virus.

Both viruses originate from trees: Figtree, and the white tree growing in the darkness of the Orang Pendek's cave. They also both cut through the protective membranes they encounter. Figtree, thanks to the opening he creates with his virus, is able to trace Casandra's message back to its origins in Istanbul (*Yeti* 454). The biological virus has a similarly devastating effect upon the human immune system. Doctor Robert Charles says, "Este virus pasa como una locomotora a toda velocidad por encima del sistema inmune. Los anticuerpos humanos y el resto de los que tenemos disponibles en el labo no son capaces de reconocerlo" (*Yeti* 150). When none of the antibodies they have available can bind to the virus, the situation becomes dire. The virus's treatment of the immune system and the mercenaries' treatment of the Orang Rimba share strong similarities. The Orang Pendek's taboo border is a stronger system, able to contend with the mercenaries, just as their blood contains antibodies for the virus itself. They choose to isolate themselves from the rest of the world, fearing and rejecting the unknown.

### **Moral Choice and Action**

For many characters in the story, the unfamiliar induces fear or rejection, especially when they are afraid to see themselves reflected in that Other. For Mario, the Other is not so much a monster as a being to be protected. He acts on his instinct to protect rather than closing himself off to the new experience.

It is the other within who is calling us to act on behalf of the other without. If one closes off the other's passing in and out of the self, condemning the subject to a cloistered ... ego then the other becomes so other as to remain utterly alienating - an absolutely separate alterity which torments, persecutes and ultimately paralyses. (Kearney 80)

The mercenaries, unlike Mario, have negative preconceived notions about both the Rimba and the Orang Pendek. They dehumanize them completely, calling them monkeys and treating them as altogether unimportant. Their slaughter of the Rimba village is made even worse, if possible, by their false actions beforehand. "En un principio los mercenarios se mantuvieron al margen, mientras Smith repasaba algunos asuntos con ellos. Después, cuando la comida estuvo lista, los rimba los invitaron. Comieron todos juntos" (*Yeti* 56). Sharing a meal is a communion, a sign of hospitality and fellowship, and the mercenaries accepted the offer of food without a second thought for what they were about to do to their victims. This perversion highlights their cruelty and disregard for others.

### **Mario's Dilemma**

Later, when Calley and Fairlane return to attack Mario and the others, they find themselves in the midst of their victims, released from their common grave by a flash flood. "Todo se conmovió y pareció bullir, y entonces sí, se abrieron las puertas del infierno, y del fondo removido salieron los muertos del averno a buscar a sus verdugos" (*Yeti* 383). The scene appears to come straight from a zombie film, with the dead rising up to pull the living down with them. "Del agua turbia y rojiza sobresalían cuerpos negros e hinchados con brazos agarrotados, que subían, y giraban, y se retorcían para volver a hundirse de nuevo y reaparecer al cabo de un instante, insuflados de una vida momentánea y terrorífica para celebrar su propio juicio final.

Eran decenas, cientos de pesadillas requemadas” (*Yeti* 383). The bodies of the Rimba gain new life, coming back to haunt their murderers. This River Styx carries everything before it, including the two mercenaries. How they have chosen to treat the Other has brought them to this point, and they find themselves helpless. The scene questions the line between reality and fantasy, with the Rimba acting as zombies or vengeful ghosts: they seem to be alive. “Uno de los muertos abrió los párpados y sus ojos giraron en las cuencas hasta encontrarse con los de Fairlane, y entonces sonrió con sus labios descompuestos, levantó un brazo y le aferró el cuello con la mano, tensándole la piel blanca mientras le hundía los dedos descarnados en la tráquea” (López del Oso *Yeti* 383-384). Finally the Orang Rimba have their justice and the mercenaries face the consequences of their choices.

Piera Kernels and Erich Skorzery, leaders of UPECO, focus on material gain, much like the mercenaries, only with greater ambition. Piera shows Erich a holographic model of Sumatra, with great detail, including her plans to destroy part of the Kerinci Seblat reserve to cultivate the poisonous *J. curcas* into biofuel, a venture motivated purely by profit. As Erich observes the model, he betrays his ambitions towards not just the island but also the rest of the world. “Pensó que podía abarcar la isla entera con sólo abrir los brazos, y la imagen tuvo tantos matices de realidad que hubo de contenerse para no reír de nuevo. Estaba acordándose de Chaplin imitando en aquella película al *Führer*, jugando con la bola del mundo. Qué cerca estaban de poder hacerlo realmente” (López del Oso *Yeti* 85). The imagery of playing with the world recalls the days of colonialism. Erich has built his own empire, the Corporation, representing a new wave of colonial power, based in an economic structure rather than a country. Erich enjoys the power that comes from his behind-the-scenes machinations. He treats the monetary gains as a means to his goal of power and influence. Both Erich and Piera see people as a means to an end, to be used or

disposed of as necessary, as pawns on a chessboard. The hegemony is no longer a question of West vs East but rather of powerful vs powerless. Piera's own fate as a scapegoat proves this. Both she and Boonen, an underling involved in the massacre of the Rimba end up dead under suspicious circumstances after they no longer serve a purpose in Erich's schemes. The choices Piera and Erich make are based on ambition, not on any sort of ethical code.

The post-colonial power struggle has two points of view. Sansul, an Orang Rimba, recognizes the problems of colonialism and rebels against them. He resents his background as a Rimba more than he celebrates it. He does not fully recognize the value of his own culture. He feels it holds him back from future progress, and he chooses to help the mercenaries find his own people. Describing the mercenaries, he says: "No son ellos los que vienen a mi país para decirnos lo que debemos hacer, o lo que no debemos. Eso lo hacen usted y los suyos, que sólo quieren que seamos cuidadores de un jardín para cuando les apetezca venir a pasear ... Pues entérese: aquí las cosas van a cambiar. Ellos traen el progreso, la plantación. Riqueza para mi país" (López del Oso *Yeti* 377). He believes in the economic possibilities for the future of his country and blames Mario and other scientists who he sees as holding Indonesia in the past. Unfortunately, his anger blinds him to the fact that the mercenaries simply represent a different type of post-colonial interference. "Si los entremetidos como usted no nos hubieran obligado a reasentar ahí a esos malditos kubus -dijo utilizando su propia lengua para llamarles salvajes-, no hubiéramos tenido que hacerlo así. Pero no, querían mantenernos anclados al pasado. Pues ahora podremos utilizar la riqueza de nuestro país, para mayor gloria de Alá" (López del Oso *Yeti* 378). Sansul's bitterness about his country's relationship to the post-colonial situation is palpable. He boasts of his choice to help the mercenaries find the village of the Rimba. He chooses to believe that the Rimba are still alive, simply dispersed through the forest. He refuses to accept that this is a lie



and that his people have been slaughtered. He betrays his people, but he does not realize to what extent. He dies at the hands of the mercenaries.

Mario views people as an end in themselves and acts accordingly. While the mercenaries dehumanize humans, Mario does the opposite, giving importance to every living creature, at least the ones he views as innocent. Nonetheless, he dislikes killing, preferring to knock his enemies unconscious. Hehn and Doctor Colman each have slightly different points of view. Dr. Colman puts human life first and foremost. “No me malinterprete. Por supuesto que me gustan [los animales], pero no me haga usted escoger entre un humano y un gibón” (*Yeti* 184). It frustrates her when Mario is slow to agree to capture the rarer species of gibbon. Hehn, on the other hand, puts his friends above other humans, and does the dirty work when needed, although his methods prove disagreeable to both Mario and Eliana. As he interrogates Calley and Fairlane the two remaining mercenaries, he tells them that he is just like them and proves it by slicing then tearing off Fairlane’s ear (*Yeti* 349-350). Nonetheless, the motives of the three companions resonate positively with the reader. They base their choices in loyalty and a desire to save lives.

Because Mario acts out of his concern for the individual, he truly wants to establish a meaningful connection with the Orang Pendek he encounters. He wants to experience new things despite their frightening appearance. For example, he eats a terrible smelling fruit after observing an Orang Pendek enjoying one. The unpleasant appearance and smell make another first impression that Mario must overcome to understand the truth. “¿Cómo podía gustarle eso? Olía a vómito de cerdo. Pero se lo comía gustoso. ... Entrecerró los ojos. Metió la lengua en la masa. Sólo la punta. No respiraba. Dejó que entrase en la boca y lo guardó ahí. Pero no podía quedarse indefinidamente así” (*Yeti* 269). Mario, ever the scientist, forces himself to test the fruit for himself, trying to discover why the Other enjoys it so much. He puts the fruit in his mouth,

without breathing at first. However, just as he follows the Orang Pendek deeper and deeper into the forest, he knows he cannot stop at this step. “Se obligó a respirar y a poner en movimiento los efluvios que aquello estaba liberando en su boca. Movi6 la lengua y lo palade6, qu6 asco, en aras de la ciencia” (*Yeti* 269). His first impression still affects his reaction to the presence of the fruit in his mouth until he lets himself experience the taste more fully: “Entonces relaj6 el gesto, movi6 un poco m6s la lengua, abri6 un poco m6s los ojos. Estaba delicioso. Era s6lo el olor, el primer olor. Pero sab6a tan suave y tan dulce como pl6tanos maduros con vainilla” (*Yeti* 269). After this first taste, he performs a final test: “Cogi6 un poco m6s y se lo meti6 en la boca sin regodearse en olerlo. Sonri6. No, no eran tan distintos. Ech6 a andar detr6s de 6l, para no perderlo” (L6pez del Oso *Yeti* 269). At this moment, Mario ceases to only examine the other clinically and puts himself in the Other’s shoes, tasting what the Other has eaten and ingesting it. This, more than his visual obligations, proves to him that he and the Other have a great deal in common. Sharing a meal is a communion, like the Rimba’s last supper with the mercenaries. Unlike the mercenaries, who perverted the hospitality of the Rimba by murdering them after sharing food, Mario participates sincerely, out of respect for the Orang Pendek as a fellow being, though he is still unsure of how close their biological connection is. When Mario makes contact with the Orang Pendek and his companion, the two react in fear despite Mario’s good intentions, but he persists in his efforts to connect with what he calls this new humanity.

Mario’s bases his choices in his code of ethics. He makes the difficult choice to not kidnap any of the Orang Pendek in search of the antibodies, though he knows this might doom his own species. “Hab6a actuado como lo hab6a hecho por coherencia con lo que cre6a justo para esa extraordinaria humanidad que hab6a encontrado, y porque hab6a l6neas rojas que no estaba dispuesto a cruzar” (L6pez del Oso *Yeti* 314). His moral code demands that he act as he does.

Mario's decision to leave the Orang Pendek in peace has far-reaching consequences, for him and for the world. "Es como si hubiese una recompense kármica al buen comportamiento, al menos respecto a la relación con el otro. Desde un punto de vista más amplio, los mercenarios y la UPECO son los representantes reales del mundo. Yerro es otra cosa, Yerro representa a la BAUN y a Camelot, pero no son representativos del mundo. Son un reservorio moral" (López del Oso "Apuntes" 6). The BAUN as Camelot, like the Orang Pendek village, plays a nearly unique role in the world. Its connection to the UN allows it to influence politics, while its independent status protects it from contamination. Thanks to Mario's moral commitment to protect the innocent, he is able to find the Grail *and* protect the Pendek. He chooses to protect the Orang Pendek king from the mercenaries, then carry him back to the camp, saving his life and finding the antibodies for the virus. He realizes that some will want to take advantage of the king for their own gain, and he asks both Daniel and Eliana to do all in their power to protect him. However, Erich Skorzery learns of his existence and makes the choice to request that Clive Genter, an unethical scientist under his control, bring the king to his lab for study.

Mario's final choice ensures that the Orang Pendek king can return to his people and ensures protection for the entire group. For this purpose, he and Hehn infiltrate Genter's lab, with Eliana's help. He reacts in horror to what he finds there. The king has been placed in a room that is a terrible simulacrum of a real forest, complete with tropical bird soundtrack, rainforest murals, and light system. Mario sees it as a sophisticated kind of zoo exhibit, and he wants to strangle whoever designed it (*Yeti* 492). It resembles a real forest, but remains uncannily different. To rescue the king, Mario trades places with him, then distracts Genter and Skorzery long enough for Eliana and Hehn to lead him out of the building (*Yeti* 496). In this scene, Mario again appears as a Yeti, recalling the reader's first impression of him at the beginning of the

novel. Genter and Skorzery are confused and frightened by his appearance, and they offer no real resistance when Pint appears with several other men to extract Mario (497). Mario and Hehn return the king to Sumatra. While they are there, Mario establishes a more permanent program to help protect the reserve.

It could be argued that no net positive came out of the pandemic. Nonetheless, Mario establishes the first of a new series of world conservation efforts in Sumatra and thwarts the destruction of the Kerinci Seblat. He and Daniel plan to continue their efforts, and Mario personally has been effected profoundly by his encounter with the Orang Pendek. His quixotic knightly identity and his moral code remain, even more firmly entrenched in his identity. Throughout the novel, Mario maintains his sincere concern for the well-being of the other. He gains knowledge of the vast world of cryptozoology, of the potential Others that await his discovery and protection. He makes key decisions about how to interact with the Other, which help him learn more about himself and his relationship with the world around him.<sup>7</sup>

As Mario crosses species and other boundaries, he also crosses the line between heroism and monstrosity, blending the two qualities. His more-than-average physical strength, his protection of unlawfully scapegoated people, his crossing of boundaries, his choice to connect

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<sup>7</sup> One shortcoming in this excellent novel about the necessity of the Other is the treatment of women characters. Eliana Colman, Antonella of BAUN, Piera Kernels, the woman with the tiger tattoo in Boonen's office, Blanca (Mario's ex-wife), and Eddie's mother are the only major women characters who appear in the novel. Paul Hunt mentions two women who gave him information, and Lucille, the receptionist at Genter's facility appears for one scene. Among them, they have an admirably wide range of roles and personalities, which is positive. However, each woman is the only woman in her circle of influence. Eliana, for example, never speaks to another woman besides Lucille, and none of the other women ever interact. Eliana appears independent and knowledgeable in her own field, but when she encounters Mario, the protagonist, she is overshadowed repeatedly by both Mario and Hehn. They show her an interesting mix of respect and dismissal. When she returns to her office, it is Robert Colson, her partner and fiancé, who saves the life of the Orang Pendek king, though they are equally matched in their training. Eliana takes a more passive role from that point on. These could be seen as small details in relation to the plot as a whole, but it is important to note, especially because the focus of this thesis is the place of the Other in society, and women have historically been Othered.

with the Other, and his ethical code lead him to act as he does. He sits on the boundary between the human and more-than-human monster, but his choices make him a hero.

### Chapter 3: Memory as Poison and Remedy

Rosa Montero's *Lágrimas en la lluvia* tells the story of Bruna Husky, an android private investigator living in 2159 Madrid, Spain. As a detective, she becomes involved in the investigation of the violent deaths of several fellow androids, or replicants. With help from her friends and associates, she uncovers a conspiracy to destroy the androids through scapegoating. The detective story provides a background for the tale of Bruna's own personal growth and the relationships she builds as she creates a family for herself.

*Lágrimas en la lluvia* presents heroes and monsters as two ends of a single spectrum. Like Mario, Bruna displays within herself varying degrees of heroism and monstrosity, as evidenced by her physical appearance, her relationship with scapegoaters and other scapegoats, her crossing of species and other boundaries, and the decisions she makes in her dealings with the Other.

#### **Heroism and monstrosity**

Bruna Husky, the hero<sup>8</sup> of the story, only receives such public recognition at the end of the novel. An android, she has been created by humans and knows she will live only ten years. As a combat replicant, she served two years in the military, after which, she became a detective. She works merely to survive; she has neither vocation nor idealism. As a detective, Bruna has power to enter and explore places out of reach of other people. Her liminality allows her to cross boundaries both as an investigator and as a monstrous figure. She experiences marginalization, yet by the end of the novel, society recognizes her as central to its existence. In society's view, she progresses from monster to hero throughout the plot, along with the other androids, whose persecution ceases to a large degree when their status as victims finally comes to light. Bruna, as

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<sup>8</sup> I prefer to avoid the term heroine, because it often connotes "hero's love interest" rather than "female hero."

hero, inoculates society and prepares the way for a healthy relationship between *tecnos* and *Homo sapiens*.

Rosa Montero's definition of monstrosity relates to the norms of society. Normal means "Constituting or conforming to a type or standard; regular, usual, typical; ordinary, conventional" (OED). In an interview, Montero states: "El monstruo es el que no se adapta a la normalidad. Lo que pasa es que a medida que vas creciendo, ¿quién no se ha sentido monstruo, no? pero a medida que vas creciendo, vas aprendiendo que la normalidad no existe". The normative "constitutes or serves as a norm or standard," a prescriptive view of the world (OED). However, many realize that the normal mainly exists in these prescriptive rules, which apply to a minority of the population, as Montero explains in an interview:

Nos enseñan la normalidad como lo normal fuera sinónimo de lo más abundante, de lo que más abunda. Pero en realidad, luego te das cuenta que lo normal no viene de lo más abundante sino de lo normativo, de la norma, de la ley, o sea que lo normal es como un marco legal, obligatorio, pero que en realidad no existe. No hay gente que sea así.

The myriad exceptions to these rules are monstrous because of their exceptionalism, but because they are so numerous, the contra-norm becomes the true norm, as Montero suggests: "Entonces, el monstruo es el normal, digamos. El divergente a esa norma es la norma". The multiplicity of monstrous figures in Montero's work in general and *Lágrimas en la lluvia* in particular arises out of this belief. Nearly all of the characters the reader meets in *Lágrimas* diverge from the supposed norms of society. Bruna sees these norms in the treatment Cata does not receive after her self-inflicted injury: because the replicants already have a short life expectancy, they are the lowest priority for health-care. She also sees the norms enacted in the streets, where anyone

visibly different risks assault. Throughout the novel, Bruna gathers a family made up of recognizably monstrous figures.

### **The Mismeasure of Bruna**

In Montero's 2109 Madrid, where appearance plays an important societal role, almost everyone participates in some form of voluntary body alteration. Young adults often receive plastic surgery as a coming-of-age present. For example, the young coroner whom Bruna interrogates about Cata's death has a generic face:

“Era un joven bajo y fofo y tenía uno de esos rostros en serie de la cirugía plástica barata, un modelo escogido por catálogo, el típico regalo de graduación de unos padres de economía modesta. De repente se habían puesto de moda los arreglos faciales y había media docena de caras que se repetían hasta la saciedad en miles de personas” (Montero *Lágrimas* 30-31).

Individuals can shape their own bodies, and external forces can act on them as well. Valo Nabokov, Myriam Chi's lover, has large breast implants. A combat rep like Bruna, Nabokov has taken advantage of body modification to enhance the small breasts she was created with.

“Las replicantes de combate tenían poco pecho porque era más operativo a la hora de luchar; pero Nabokov se había implantado unos enormes senos que llevaba muy levantados y muy desnudos, como una gran bandeja de carne bajo su rostro cuadrangular y pálido” (*Lágrimas* 102-103).

She has rebelled against the body she was originally given. Serra, the human supremacist lieutenant whom Bruna first approaches, has implanted silicon muscles. “Los bíceps de silicona subían y bajaban como pelotas de tenis bajo el blando pellejo de sus brazos” (*Lágrimas* 273). A



short man, he also has jaw implants to give himself a more masculine appearance.<sup>9</sup> The contrast between his body and the implants obviously intended to make him look stronger without the effort of building the muscle himself proves comical, especially as he interacts with Bruna-Annie, who uses her disguise to fit the norms of conventional feminine beauty.

Androids can only be distinguished from humans outwardly by their eyes, which have a catlike vertical pupil. When Bruna disguises herself as a human, she first inserts colored contacts to change her eyes. Throughout the novel, the eye serves as a synecdoche of the entire body and by extension the whole identity. Cata, who comes to Bruna's apartment, suffers under the implanted delusion of biological humanity. Bruna tells Cata that she can verify her species by looking at her eyes in a mirror: "¿A qué vienen esas estupideces? ¿Estás loca, o te lo haces? Tú también eres una replicante... Mírate al espejo... ¡Mírate a los ojos! Eres tan tecnohumana como yo" (Montero *Lágrimas* 14). Cata refuses to accept Bruna's argument and becomes even more agitated. When she tears her own eye out, declaring it an implant, it is as if she attempts to crush her techno identity and destroy any evidence of non-humanity. All of the other androids whose minds become infected with the false memories do the same. They tear out their eyes to erase difference between themselves and the humans they believe themselves to be.

Bruna ever remains conscious of her appearance. When disguised, she carefully includes even small details in her fictional profiles, such a favorite drink, characteristic mannerisms, styles of clothing, wigs, and contact lenses. When dressed in everyday clothing, she keeps her head shaved to leave her tattoo visible, and she dresses with some care. Like many soldiers and sailors of our day, Bruna received her tattoo during her time in the military. It traces a thin, continuous line from the top of her head to the bottom of her left foot and all the way back up. It

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<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, these examples focus on enhancing gendered body features.

vertically divides her body into two unequal parts, highlighting the fragmentation of her identity and the lack of balance in her life. “Bruna había comprobado que la línea que parecía cortar un tercio de la cabeza y que desaparecía ropa abajo producía un innegable impacto en los humanos. Además delataba su condición de rep combatiente: en la milicia casi todos se hacían elaborados tatuajes” (Montero *Lágrimas* 30). Bruna and other combat reps choose their tattoos to make themselves more intimidating, as Bruna notes in her daily interactions, an advantage on the battlefield. Nonetheless, for replicants and humans, tattooing and other body modifications provide a way for them to change their bodies on their own terms, to inscribe their identity and truly take possession of their bodies. Rosa Montero’s own tattoo functions this way. In an interview, she speaks passionately about the importance of tattoos in our own world and for her personally:

Esa es la sensación que tienes sobre el cuerpo, que no lo he escogido, además eso me enferma, me envejece, me mata, pero ahora lo voy a tatuar y ya eso sí te vas a morir, cuerpo asqueroso con esta lagartija que he puesto yo. Hay una voluntad para hacerlo tuyo. La dominación del cuerpo que te domina.

The control of her body plays an important part in Bruna’s life as well. The discomfort her appearance causes others forms part of Bruna’s view and creation of her own identity.<sup>10</sup> She wants to determine the way others look at her and interpret her, but it bothers her when people try to infer her identity from superficial observations. Even other replicants, such as Miriam Chi, judge Bruna by her appearance: “Shakespeare... Una cita muy culta para alguien como tú... Una detective...Una rep de combate...Una mujer con la cabeza rapada y un tatuaje que le parte la

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<sup>10</sup> “Personal and societal meaning making about tattoos comes from the interaction of a number of social forces: dominant ideologies for bodies and gender, social scripts for acceptable bodies and identities, technologies of tattooing, and the bodies and identities of individuals within a group or society” (Shapiro 34).

cara” (*Lágrimas* 62). Bruna resents these observations despite their accuracy and despite the fact that she has personally chosen two of the three elements Chi mentions. Of the three, only her identity as a combat rep remains beyond her control. Her memories also exist outside of her control, especially because she never lived many of the experiences she remembers. She resents this layer of false memories as well, and resents her psychoguide for trying to judge her identity based on them (*Lágrimas* 153). However, Bruna has chosen not to modify or erase her memories, although the technology exists, just as she has chosen not to modify her body beyond the tattoo.

In twenty-second century Madrid, tattoos, outward signs, have a different function when they are not chosen freely. The Labari use tattoos to classify and control people, especially those of lower castes, and to impose an identity upon them. Bruna learns that the androids whose minds have been infected with extra artificial memories have also been tattooed with the word *venganza* in Labari script. Both their bodies and minds have been metaphorically raped. As Bruna leaves her psychoguide’s office, she passes a tattoo shop and sets out to identify the origin of the tattoos. There she encounters Natvel, an apparently gender-shifting essentialist tattoo artist. For the essentialists, tattoos are far more than decorations:

Los esencialistas los consideraban sagrados, una representación externa del espíritu. Cada persona tenía que buscar cuál era su tatuaje, su diseño primordial, la traducción visual de su ser íntimo y secreto, y, una vez descubierto el dibujo exacto, debía grabárselo en la piel, como quien escribe los signos de su alma.

(*Lágrimas* 157)

Although Bruna is investigating the “vengeance” tattoos, Natvel assumes that Bruna has come for herself and reacts in horror when s/he sees Bruna’s tattoo. S/he declares that it cuts her in

half, that it does not match Bruna's essence; "Según ellos, [los esencialistas,] tatuarse una imagen equivocada suponía un desorden atroz y atraía un sinfín de desgracias; aplicar la figura precisa, por el contrario, serenaba y protegía al individuo e incluso curaba múltiples dolencias" (*Lágrimas* 157). Although Bruna feels more amusement than offense, she refuses to let Natvel tell her what s/he sees as her "true" tattoo.

Bruna sees Natvel's offer to reveal her true tattoo as yet another instance of an outside source trying to describe her inner being: "Demasiada gente que parecía saber lo que ella necesitaba o lo que ella era" (*Lágrimas* 162). After leaving the tattoo shop, Bruna realizes how tired she is of her life, of others trying to tell her who to be. "En ese momento decidió dejar al psicoguía. Dejar al psicoguía, dejar la bebida, dejar la vida desordenada, dejar la furia, dejar la angustia, dejar de ser rep. Soltó una carcajada corta y amarga que sonó como un estornudo" (*Lágrimas* 162). Bruna laughs at the impossibility to cease being a rep, and by extension the difficulty of leaving her other vices. The passage reflects Bruna's resignation to her life. However, the passage also signifies a true desire to change, perhaps to see herself as more than a replicant. At this moment in the novel, Bruna cynically accepts her lot in life, but the later events of the novel show that Bruna *can* change the way she views herself and her place in society.

Many of Bruna's circle of acquaintances also have some physical sign that distinguishes them from the rest of society. She admires Yiannis's ability to age. In an era which encourages the search for the fountain of visible youth, Yiannis chooses to keep his "natural" appearance as an old man:

Había poca gente que, como Yiannis, prescindiera por complete de los innumerables tratamientos que el Mercado ofrecía contra la vejez, desde la cirugía plástica o biónica a los rayos gamma o la terapia celular ... [a Yiannis] no le

gustaban los estragos de la vejez, pero le parecían aún más feos los arreglos artificiales, y Bruna le entendía muy bien. Lo que hubiera dado ella por poder envejecer. (*Lágrimas* 43)

Paul Lizard also declines to use anti-aging technology, and he chooses not to remove his body hair, a popular practice (*Lágrimas* 462). He, unlike most humans, has a close personal connection with a replicant, because he was raised by one: Maitena, who adopted him after his biological parents were arrested and sent to prison (*Lágrimas* 338). Lizard's situation is unusual because he works as a policeman when his parents were criminals. Mirari, a violinist and forger, works at a circus; Bruna envies her gift for music. Mirari's bionic arm distinguishes her from the other humans around her.

Mirari también... era [inolvidable]. No sólo por la prótesis retrofuturista sino también por su pálida piel, sus ojos negrísimos, su redonda cabeza nimbada por un pelo corto de blancura deslumbrante y tan tieso como si fuera alambre. ... Podría pensar que su trabajo en el circo no era más que una tapadera, pero lo cierto es que la música parecía apasionarle y tocaba bien el violín, siempre que no se le enganchara el brazo biónico. (*Lágrimas* 218)

Maio, an extraterrestrial refugee, has translucent green skin, which causes Bruna no little discomfort (*Lágrimas* 133). However, as she becomes better acquainted with him, she discovers his ability to connect with others. Oli, the bartender, also welcomes those around her. Her sign of difference is her dark skin color and the fact that she has an enormous, almost inhuman, body (*Lágrimas* 39). Natvel's body also reflects and shapes his/her identity. S/he alternates between male and female aspects:

Verdaderamente era imposible deducir su género sexual. Y no se trataba de que Natvel fuera un ser andrógino e indefinido, sino que más bien parecía ofrecer sucesivas imágenes cambiantes. De pronto resultaba evidente que era una mujer, y al instante siguiente no cabía la menor duda de que era un hombre. Bruna se preguntó si en realidad sería un mutante. Si ese deslizamiento de su identidad sexual habría sido causado por el desorden atómico de la teleportación. (Montero 161)

Mutants are common in Bruna's world due to the effects of interstellar teleportation. After two teleportations, an individual's body will likely suffer some sort of change. For instance, Bruna meets a woman in a bar with a third eye (*Lágrimas* 250). The woman has been cast out from the Labari society because of her mutation. The Labari see mutants as an abomination and use mutation as a sign of impurity. They believe that the pure will be protected from this curse, and thus they ignore the legal limits on teleportations per person (*Lágrimas* 251). The Labari seek isolation from physical and ideological impurities, attempting to keep their class boundaries impenetrable, partly through the use of tattoos to brand the lower classes. Bruna, unlike the Labari, surrounds herself with people whose bodies and behaviors mark them as atypical members of society, who do not conform to the norm.

### **Scapegoats**

Like the Labari mutant, the replicants in the novel suffer suspicion and scapegoating. In this dystopic world, the community naturally hungers for a scapegoat, for, as René Girard explains, "any community that has fallen prey to violence or has been stricken by some overwhelming catastrophe hurls itself blindly into the search for a scapegoat" (Girard 79). Again, a community that places its troubles upon a scapegoat then transfers its collective problems to

that scapegoat. The choice of scapegoat is arbitrary, given that the entire group is guilty, but the scapegoat often comes from among those deemed least important to society. The arbitrary nature of the choice does not prevent someone from manipulating society into choosing a particular group as a scapegoat, as Ainhó does from behind the scenes. The replicants prove to be ideal scapegoats due to their “unnatural” condition as children of humanity, uncannily like humans. They form part of society, thanks to the treaties, yet they also exist on the edges, as liminal, monstrous figures. The situation of the United States of Earth also proves ripe for scapegoating: the people suffer from a plague of poor food, drugs, pollution, economic injustice and government corruption. Bruna complains to Yiannis of these problems after she sees a mother and child cast out of the city because they cannot pay to live in the clean air (*Lágrimas* 209). Yiannis is optimistic about the possibilities for change, but Bruna disagrees, believing that she will not live to see improvement. In Bruna’s world, the replicants receive the blame of society, due to the propaganda of the human supremacists. Ainhó frames some of the replicants for murder as part of her plan to cause the scapegoating of all the replicants.

Bruna personally experiences the effects of the scapegoating as she carries on with her daily activities. Just before Bruna’s conversation with Yiannis about societal problems, she asks Oli to change the television channel away from supremacist rhetoric. A man confronts her, saying, “¿Te molesta saber que estamos hartos de aguantaros? ¿Que no vamos a dejar que sigáis abusando de nosotros? Y, además, ¿qué haces tú aquí? ¿No te has dado cuenta de que eres el único monstruo?” (*Lágrimas* 207). The drunk man continues talking, telling Bruna to leave the bar. She reacts cautiously, not answering, but weighing her options. Oli steps in and ejects the man from her bar, but society in general refuses to speak up in favor of the replicants. Later, while Bruna infiltrates the supremacist organization, the public news screens are projecting

specieist messages. “Sobre su cabeza, la pantalla pública estaba pasando atroces imágenes de androides de combate masacrando humanos. Eran viejas grabaciones de la guerra rep. ‘¿Vas a permitir que vuelva a suceder?’, repetía una cinta continua sobre la carnicería” (*Lágrimas* 286). Of course, these messages of suspicion remain tied to Ainhó’s desire for personal vengeance after the death of her son, killed by combat rep guards when he tried to break into a lab. She manipulates public opinion, making suspicion and prejudice look like truth. The news show invites the clearly biased supremacist, José Hericio, to speak on this sensitive issue, thus presenting only one side of the story (*Lágrimas* 97). This presentation of a single perspective sways public opinion heavily against the technohumans. Some prejudice already existed in some sectors of society, but become exacerbated by the politicking of the supremacists, who are in turn manipulated by Ainhó.

The archives which Yiannis helps maintain also suffer from the contagious influence of the propaganda. Lacunas and edits appear, and Yiannis recognizes them as falsifications. Yiannis functions as a monstrous figure. His biological mind functions as a more reliable source than the digital files. He attempts to correct the archives, but more and more errors creep in, filled with propaganda and prejudice: “Las alteraciones carecen de IDE (identificación electrónica; es decir, no se sabe quién las hizo, algo ya en sí mismo muy irregular), son totalmente falsas y todas constituyen una burda difamación de los tecnohumanos” (*Lágrimas* 346). This poisoning of the archives becomes an infection that Yiannis is powerless to fix by himself. Not only does Yiannis witness scapegoating in the archives, he becomes a scapegoat when he attempts to correct the problem. Acting as an inoculative force, Yiannis calls the attention of his superiors to the problem through official channels; however, they also suffer from the supremacist virus and it is too far advanced. They take his computer and erase his files, leaving Yiannis no proof other than



his own memories, which few will accept as true. Not only do they call Yiannis's sanity into question, they fire him (*Lágrimas* 390). They thus reject his healing influence for their monstrous infection. Without his job, Yiannis remains at loose ends and feels as if his life is over.

Nonetheless, he keeps his integrity and remains opposed to the blatant discrimination evident in the public news and the archives.

Although Bruna has already experienced prejudice and marginalization, she feels the intensified discrimination as a result of the scapegoating in many aspects of her life. Although she normally uses taxis with no problem as she travels around Madrid, she discovers that after the heavily-biased reporting, she cannot find a human taxi driver willing to carry her. She sees no replicant taxi drivers at all (*Lágrimas* 287). At the same time, she sees that few other reps have come out in public. Earlier, she also learns from Lizard that some of the facts about the dead androids have been concealed from the public: “¿Por qué callar algo que demuestra que los reps también son víctimas y no sólo furiosos asesinos?” (*Lágrimas* 146). This concealment concerns both Lizard and Bruna, because someone obviously wants the androids to take the full blame for their actions under the influence of the extra false memories. The human supremacists take advantage of the situation to improve their political standing, even hiring Ainhó as a sort of public relations expert to stir up public sentiment. The propaganda of the human supremacists makes the androids appear dangerous to humanity until the plot's unraveling. When the human news agencies portray the replicants as scapegoats, they treat them as infectious. One reporter says “Y lo que la gente se pregunta es, ¿qué está sucediendo con los tecnos? ¿Acaso están enfermos? ¿Hay una epidemia? ¿Puede ser contagiosa para los humanos?” (*Lágrimas* 97). These questions reflect the human fear of becoming like the replicants. Scapegoating becomes a way to isolate contagion and eject it from society.

The Labari, another group of speciesists, refuse to recognize any personhood in the replicants at all. When Bruna accompanies Paul Lizard to the Labari embassy, the priest who meets with them refuses to speak with her, treating her as a thing rather than a person. When they question him about the tattoos written in Labari script, he tells Paul that they are clearly an imitation. He adds that he does not care about the deaths of the replicants:

¿qué nos importa a nosotros que maten o no a esas cosas? No formaron parte del Principio y no cuentan. No existen. No tienen más entidad que la hebilla de tu zapato. Ya ves, nos parecen tan inapreciable se irrelevantes que incluso te hemos permitido introducir aquí, ¡aquí, en la embajada labárica!, a una de esas cosas. Y, por añadidura, hembra. (Montero *Lágrimas* 292)

Because the replicants are so far outside the norms of Labari culture,<sup>11</sup> they do not count as people within their society. In Labari discourse, Bruna becomes doubly Othered, as both a replicant and a woman.

### **Porous Boundaries**

In sharp contrast to the supremacist propaganda, Bruna's care for others crosses species boundaries: she helps those who cannot defend themselves, regardless of who they are. Bruna dislikes hurting others and avoids physical conflict when possible. When a young policeman, only twenty years old, pulls a gun on her, she overpowers him in reflexive self-defense. "Ha sido un acto reflejo al verte venir hacia mí con pistola de plasma. Estoy con los nervios de punta, eso puedes entenderlo. Nos estáis persiguiendo, nos estáis marginando, nos estáis odiando. Nos estáis matando. Pero fuisteis vosotros quienes nos construísteis" (*Lágrimas* 312). Both Bruna and the policeman weep, finding a connection in their anxiety and fear. In moments like these, we

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<sup>11</sup> The Labari priest insists upon being treated as "usted", creating yet another boundary between himself and Paul and Bruna (*Lágrimas* 289)

see that Bruna likely suffers post-traumatic stress disorder due to her combat experience.<sup>12</sup> Her apology to the policeman also reveals more about her character. She has no desire to hurt others, but she was designed as a weapon. Acting ethically when she was made to kill remains a dilemma. For example, when an assassin attacks her as she hides in the circus tent, she defends herself and kills him. In the aftermath, she laments her actions: “Bruna se vio a sí misma arrodillada con el cuerpo exangüe de su víctima apoyado en el regazo. Era como una imagen de *La Piedad*. Era la Piedad de los impíos. No lo sentía por el hombre, que era un asesino; lo sentía por ella, por su automatismo letal” (*Lágrimas* 431). The image calls to mind Michelangelo’s *Pieta*, with Jesus lying serenely in death across Mary’s lap: the ultimate representation of a scapegoat. Bruna has killed the man because he would have shot Maio if she did not (*Lágrimas* 436). She prefers to channel her energy into protecting people rather than harming them.

Bruna’s actions as an agent of contagion inoculate the society around her. Her job as a detective also allows her to cross boundaries that are closed to reps in particular and other people in general. Her ability to disguise herself as a human assists her here. Her skill in this regard indicates that she has experience prior to her disguise as Annie Heart in going where replicants were not welcome. Bruna-Annie successfully infiltrates the group of human supremacists with Mirari’s help.<sup>13</sup> She employs an identity and cover story to implant herself into the supremacist group in an analogous fashion to the false memories implanted into the replicants’ brains. This false story allows her to search for the truth. When Bruna takes on this new identity, she also adopts a different set of clothing, temporary body modifications, a wig, a new computer and ID

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<sup>12</sup> Bruna fearfully recalls Cata’s *mema*, designed to make her kill Bruna and rip out her eyes: “Volvió a sentir un escalofrío y notó que en su memoria se agolpaban antiguas escenas de violencia y de sangre, febriles retazos de su servicio bélico que normalmente conseguía bloquear. Cuatro años, tres meses y veinte días” (*Lágrimas* 155-156).

<sup>13</sup> Mirari functions as a foil for Yiannis. While his biological mind serves as a reliable backup for the digital files, Mirari can manipulate digital files to create new personalities and identities for her customers. Also, she is a cyborg while he has no body modifications.

card, as well as a hotel room in Annie's name. She also changes her face and her mannerisms. She adopts a heartless personality, her character laced with hatred towards the replicants. She plans to donate a large sum of money to the human supremacists. This attitude and the other items meld and overlap with Bruna's own personality to form a new identity. She also infiltrates other people's thoughts as she questions them. As a noir-style detective, Bruna finds herself free from the rules that bind Lizard as a police detective. Ainhó serves as a foil for Bruna, a pathogen to Bruna's antibody. Her disguise as RoyRoy and her insertion into Bruna's circle of influence parallels Bruna-Annie's infiltration of the supremacist group.

As with all humans, Bruna-Annie's self extends beyond her physical body. To ensure that Annie Heart's identity is authentic, the supremacists search her hotel room as well as check her wrist computer: "El lugarteniente cogió el aparato, le dio unas cuantas vueltas entre los dedos, lo apagó y lo volvió a encender. El móvil se reinició y la pantalla saludó a Annie Heart, mientras Bruna agradecía mentalmente el impecable trabajo de Mirari" (*Lágrimas* 284). Identity includes a physical component (a body or a representation thereof), a social context, and mental processes (See Shapiro 142). Bruna employs all of these as she creates her new identity. Andy Clark proposes the idea that humans are naturally adaptable to new technologies and in fact incorporate them into their own sense of identity, as Bruna does in her disguise: "The image of the physical body with which we so readily align our pains and pleasures is highly negotiable. It is a mental construct, open to continual renewal and reconfiguration" (Clark 61). The technology seen in the novel becomes an extension of an individual's mind, body and identity: personal wrist computers, holographic messages, automated home technology, and ID tags all form part of this larger identity, not just in Bruna's disguises, but for all the characters in their daily lives. When Yiannis calls to tell Bruna of Myriam Chi's murder, waking her with a holographic call, she

says, “¡No soporto que te metas así en mi casa!” (*Lágrimas* 95). She thus recognizes the projected hologram as Yiannis himself and treats the call the same way she would treat a physical intrusion. Bruna also recognizes a holographic image of Myriam Chi as the MRR leader herself: “Tú sonríes todo el tiempo” (*Lágrimas* 57). On both occasions, the relationship between body and identity remains fluid.

Memories have the same contagious, border-crossing properties as Bruna herself. Thoughts can affect the mind the same way that bacteria can infect blood: “Infectious foreign bacteria threatened to penetrate and destroy individual bodies, and it occurred to many physicians in the 1880s that infectious thoughts might destroy an individual mind in an analogous fashion” (Otis 6). Intangible memories and tangible blood work within these two novels to carry disease to the various victims. However, the memories of the androids in *Lágrimas en la lluvia* are encoded in *memas* inside their brains. In addition, with the technology of *Memofree*, memories become tangible, optional and easy to erase, making it possible for individuals to choose their own past (*Lágrimas* 355). Although many androids also choose to insert extra *memas* into their brains, when the victims have these false memories forcibly implanted into their minds, it functions as metaphorical rape, penetrating the boundaries of their autonomy without their permission. In this case, the vector of the infecting memories can be traced to a clear external origin. The false memories implanted in the victims induce a mental disorder, and later death. Lizard tells Bruna that “en estas *memas* sólo hay unas cuantas escenas que hacen creer a la víctima que es humana y que ha sido objeto de persecución por parte de los reps... de los tecnos.<sup>14</sup> Actos compulsivos que la víctima se ve obligada a cumplir. Algo semejante a los delirios psicóticos” (*Lágrimas* 146). The infection of the *memas* acts like a

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<sup>14</sup> Note that Lizard makes an effort to use the politically correct term, not out of hyper-politeness, but out of respect.

psychological disorder, causing the victims to act out of character. “Los implantes inducen una especie de psicosis programada y extremadamente violenta. El impacto es tan fuerte que les destroza el cerebro en pocas horas, aunque no sabemos si esa degeneración orgánica subsiguiente es algo buscado o un efecto secundario e indeseado del implante” (*Lágrimas* 146). In short, the *memas* turn the victims into suicide killers, leaving them unconscious of their actions, then killing them. Through their investigations, Bruna and Lizard discover that these *memas* are the product of Ainhó, who created them to add to the anti-rep sentiment. They infiltrate the thoughts of the androids in question, causing them to do things completely out of character.

Memories are both poison and cure, as Bruna discovers when she becomes contaminated with the extra false memories (see *Dissemination* 97-99). The *mema* used on her, unlike those inserted into the brains of the other reps, consists of salt which will dissolve without a trace, so that it will appear that she acted by her own choice. This metaphorical rape becomes even more insidious than the others, because it would have left no trace, no evidence to prove Bruna’s status as a victim. She does not even have the *venganza* tattoo to mark an outside interference. When Bruna wakes in a strange apartment, she somehow falsely recognizes it as her own, and she remembers that she has a son named Gummy, and that she must set off a gas bomb to save his life. These new memories are a porous membrane, allowing the memories Nopal wrote for her and her own lived experiences to seep through, yet the new memories impel Bruna to urgent action. She calls Paul Lizard, who recognizes that something is wrong (*Lágrimas* 410). He then calls Pablo Nopal to help Bruna recover her identity, crossing a boundary between legitimate police work and a more noir-style liminality. To regain her identity, Bruna must carefully recall and filter all of the memories, from the new false ones to her most painful experiences, both authentic and scripted for her by Nopal. She thus creates a new framework for her experiences.

With Nopal's help, Bruna searches through her first memories, the one she shares with the memorist. This first level of memory reminds her of her identity as an android. However, she still feels bound by the newly implanted memories of a son. One by one, this time without outside help, she recalls the new false memories of her non-existent son Gummy. In the process, she forces herself to recognize the memories as false, thus "killing" the child she never had in a metaphorical abortion, a reaction to her metaphorical rape. "La rep inclinó la cabeza y cerró los ojos. Y se dispuso a matar a Gummy" (*Lágrimas* 415). After completing this agonizing process, she moves onward and inward, finally confronting her most repressed memory: the pain of Merlin's death. "Pero Bruna siguió adelante, agónica, suicida, escarbando una y otra vez en la carne viva, hasta llegar al recuerdo final y reventarlo. Y allí abajo, en lo hondo, tras completar la muerte imaginaria de Gummy, la estaba esperando agazapada la muerte verdadera de Merlin. Bruna Husky estaba de regreso, toda entera" (*Lágrimas* 415-416). This turning point allows Bruna to feel a sense of wholeness, despite or perhaps because of her pain. Through the rest of the novel, Bruna concludes that she consists of all the moments, both good and bad, that she has lived and that she remembers (409). These remembered moments and her actions bring pain and healing at the same time. The memory of Gummy's face becomes the key to unraveling the mystery of Ainhó's identity, because Bruna discerns Gummy and his mother in a picture, and the mother's face matches RoyRoy's.

In addition to the porous boundaries of memory and body, represented by the *memas* and the influence of drugs on the mind, the novel also represents many instances of the blurring of species boundaries. First, Bruna's friendships with Yiannis, Maio, Mirari, Lizard, and Nopal, as well as Natvel and Oli, all cross the boundaries between technohuman and human, or alien. In addition, Bruna has a connection to Melba, the sole surviving polar bear, crossing the divide

between animal and technohuman. When she finally permits Natvel to tell her what s/he has seen as her essential tattoo, she already suspects it to be a bear.<sup>15</sup> She calls Natvel for the news while standing outside Melba's enclosure. The threatening holographic image delivered to Myriam Chi also shows a relationship between human and animal. It shows Chi being disemboweled, but upon closer examination results in a combination of two separate videos: one of Chi's speeches and the butchering of a pig (*Lágrimas* 142). When Bruna analyzes the two films, she discovers that the knife reflects the eye of a replicant. The analysis of the holograph forms a synecdoche of Bruna's search for truth, just as the eye represents identity. The analysis of identity and the search for the culprit both require Bruna to cross boundaries.

Bruna also seeks to overcome interpersonal boundaries as she desires closeness to those around her. At the beginning of the novel, she only calls one person friend: Yiannis. She discusses her lack of relationships with her psychoguide, as well; it causes her deep anguish (*Lágrimas* 154). Bruna's choice of recreational drugs provides insight into her emotional needs. Most of the time she drinks white wine. Other reps use artificial memories. Bruna prefers the temporary unconsciousness that white wine brings her.<sup>16</sup> As Annie Heart, she drinks vodka as part of her cover. The only other drug she uses, however, is oxytocin. When she meets the mutant at the bar, their drinks contain the highest legal limit of the drug (*Lágrimas* 249-250). The drug heightens her sensitivity to others and their emotions, effacing interpersonal boundaries. Her choice of this recreational drug becomes more interesting upon consideration of her loneliness; she chooses a drug that produces closeness to others, although she uses it infrequently. The night she sleeps with Maio, she also takes a *caramelo*, a pill form of the drug,

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<sup>15</sup> Her psychoguide, Nissen, used the metaphor of a bear when he explained to Bruna that not all mammals build close relationships with others. "Por ejemplo, los osos salvajes eran unos animales absolutamente solitarios durante toda su vida. Sólo se juntaba fugazmente para aparearse" (*Lágrimas* 154).

<sup>16</sup> In one instance, she completes a puzzle and does not realize it until she wakes and sees it finished (*Lágrimas* 402).



and deliberately seeks out a sexual encounter. The next morning, however, she finds the fact that she slept with him unsettling, to say the least. Kristy Eagar points out that this is one occasion that Bruna is grateful for a lack of memory:

Bruna is a character obsessed with the validity of her memories, with the relationship of her forged memories to her identity as a person. Yet, when confronted with her lack of memory regarding her real and intimate encounter with an alien, this unexpected turn of events is so catastrophically repulsive to her that her lack of memories of the event is a blessing. (Eagar 14)

In this as in other situations, she has drunk so much that she cannot remember the night before, erasing her memories for a short time. She has a varied sex life; when not in a serious relationship, she is open to exploring different partners. Nonetheless, “in this encounter with the alien other, she cannot allow herself to even think about the details of the act she has just engaged in” (Eagar 15). That Maio can then read her thoughts makes the situation that much more uncomfortable. Maio explains that they have such a close connection because their *kuammils* have touched. He describes the *kuammil* as an organ which requires care and feeding. The closest comparison he can give her is the human soul. Bruna introduces Maio to Mirari, and the two are able to form a close connection both as musicians and as lovers. Later, with Paul Lizard, Bruna finds a partner who attracts her both physically and spiritually. “Pero cuando el otro también le calentaba el corazón, como sucedía con Lizard, entonces el sexo se convertía en algo cavernoso y complicado, y el simple hecho de besarse era como empezar a caer dentro del otro. Empezar a perderse para siempre” (*Lágrimas* 461). The trust they have built by working together expands to include a sexual relationship.

## **Ethics and Actions**

The characters' choices and actions shape their identities, in addition to their relationships with the other characters. The characters grow in different ways depending on how they react to the situations they confront. As in *Yeti*, this novel contains examples of masterminds, pawns, traitors, and heroes. For example, Ainhó has made the choice to seek vengeance after the death of her son. According to the Cosmos ambassador, she was deeply wounded when her son was killed by combat droids who were guarding the lab he broke into. "Está patológicamente obsesionada por la muerte del hijo. Sólo vive para la venganza y eso a veces te lleva a cometer graves errores" (*Lágrimas* 453). She has allowed her loss to fill her with bitterness, which prompted her to find a scapegoat and turn her pain outward, inflicting pain on others as well. Like Piera Kernels and Erich Skorcery in *Yeti*, Ainhó does not view other people as valuable in and of themselves. Rather, she uses them to reach her own goals, then discards them. For example, when she visits Hericio, the supremacist leader, she tells him that she has been manipulating him: "Yo no he estado trabajando para ti, sino tú para mí. Eres mi obra, yo te he creado. Y no eres más que un peón dentro de un plan grandioso" (*Lágrimas* 383-384). Thus she takes complete credit for Hericio's identity as a supremacist leader. Like Nopal with Bruna's memories, she has scripted Hericio's part. Then, she injects Hericio with a neuromuscular paralyzing agent, which prevents him from moving or talking while she butchers him, intending to pin the blame on Bruna. As Ainhó uses the false memories to provide evidence for the scapegoating of the reps, she projects her pain outward and severs her connection from the Others around her, preventing herself from finding healing as Bruna does through her relationships. She and Bruna have both face the loss of a loved one, but their reactions are polar

opposites. Unlike Bruna, Ainhó clings to the memories of the past. Bruna represses her memories of Merlin, but eventually learns to accept them and find healing. Ainhó, on the other hand, becomes so obsessed with past events that she cannot move forward or find peace.

The supremacists always choose to remember differences and they disseminate that information as if it were the only truth. Like the mercenaries of *Yeti*, who refuse to see the Orang Rimba as people, the supremacists cut themselves off from any possible connection with those unlike them, blocking their opportunities to learn and grow. Hericio claims that the reps are an error, saying, “En realidad, casi me compadezco de ellos, hasta me dan pena, porque son unos monstruos que hemos creado los humanos. Son hijos de nuestra soberbia y de nuestra avaricia, pero eso no impide que sean monstruosos. Hay que acabar cuanto antes con esa aberración” (*Lágrimas* 100). This biased rhetoric treats the subject as if there were only one possible perspective and, like the discourse of the Labari, deprives the replicants of any personhood. Hericio’s stated compassion for the replicants reveals itself as a blatant lie when he makes no effort to understand the other points of view.

The android Habib, like Sansul of the Orang Rimba, chooses to betray his friends and his species for the promises he has received. Habib values the longevity that Ainhó and the Cosmos have given him more than his relationships with those around him. Bruna and Lizard learn from the Cosmos ambassador that Habib is seventeen years old, seven years older than all other replicants. The ambassador informs them that “Nosotros disponemos de los conocimientos científicos que hacen posible que viváis mucho más... Dos décadas o incluso tres” (*Lágrimas* 454). When he comes to kill Bruna, he tells her he is sorry, but that it was an impossible proposition to resist (*Lágrimas* 438). Habib’s choices, like Ainhó’s, contrast sharply with

Bruna's decisions and her moral code. She feels deep anguish due to her own short life but her loyalty to her principles and her friends comes first.

Like Mario, Bruna constantly chooses to help the Other, to fight on behalf of the underdog, and to care for those who have no one else. For example, she adopts Cata Cain's pet, Bartolo, an intelligent alien creature, left alone after Cata's death. Despite the creature's habit of eating Bruna's favorite belongings, she takes him in and cares for him (*Lágrimas* 172-176). She also refuses to let herself leave Maio alone on the streets, choosing to take him in instead and find him a home with Mirari (*Lágrimas* 306). In addition, she protects RoyRoy from the bullies who threaten her and takes her to safety in Oli's bar (*Lágrimas* 165). Although Bruna does not recognize this aspect of her own character, her kindness and protective instincts form a key part of her being. She exists as an android designed for combat, but she uses that nature to protect others. After Chi's death, when Valo Nabokov tries to fire her, Bruna's instinct is to go away. However, something inside of her will not allow her to leave the case alone: "E inmediatamente después se dijo: pero no puede ser, no quiero dejar el tema, tengo que aclarar lo que ha sucedido. Tengo que seguir investigando" (*Lágrimas* 104). Her own curiosity combined with a feeling of responsibility to finish what she has started pushes her to keep searching.

The individuals who form Bruna's family have, like her, chosen to overcome the popular prejudices of their society. Unlike Ainhó and the supremacists, they refuse to let public opinion limit their friendships. Yiannis has made the choice to befriend Bruna, which has affected both of their lives positively and profoundly. He also makes the choice to speak up about the discrimination he observes, which costs him his job but helps him maintain his integrity (*Lágrimas* 390). Bruna then makes the choice to bring Yiannis back from the dead, symbolically speaking, and to invite him to join her in her detective work (*Lágrimas* 473-474). She thus gives

his life purpose just as she has done for her. Lizard developed a love for Maitena, his android adoptive mother, as well as a positive view of replicants in general. Lizard's choice to include Bruna in the investigation and to treat her kindly confuses her, but she eventually learns to trust his sincerity. He cares for her when he invites her to his apartment, and makes a concerted effort to keep her safe (*Lágrimas* 340). The novel implies that he would have done much the same for anyone who was in danger. Oli, the mutant bartender, refuses to permit intolerance in her bar, and anyone is welcome there: "Oli nunca le hacía ascos a nadie, así fuera un tecno o un *bicho* o un mutante. Por eso su parroquia era instructivamente variada" (*Lágrimas* 39). Bruna meets Yiannis there often and she feels comfortable. Oli also acts and speaks straightforwardly: "Otra cosa que le gustaba a Bruna de la gorda Oli era que no se andaba con remilgados eufemismos. Siempre llamaba reps a los reps, y era mucho más amigable y respetuosa que los que no paraban de hablar de tecnohumanos" (Montero 40). In addition to being a mutant, Oli also belongs to another marginalized group: she is black. When Bruna brings RoyRoy to the bar after rescuing her from bullies, Oli learns of their attackers, one white and one black: "Ese negro de mierda... Debería acordarse de que hace siglo y medio nosotros éramos los linchados y los perseguidos. Pero los renegados son siempre los peores" (*Lágrimas* 166). Oli sees clearly the discrimination that occurs around her and she refuses to permit it in her establishment. On the day Bruna rescues RoyRoy, Oli refuses to let them pay for their food. Pablo Nopal, unlike the others, remains aloof from relationships in general, but he cares for Bruna. "Esa criatura, en fin, era más que una hija, más que una hermana, más que una amante" (*Lágrimas* 198). Thanks to these relationships, Bruna learns to open herself up and choose to trust at least a group of individuals. The relationships she builds also help her choose to live with the past rather than repressing it.

As Bruna builds new memories, she learns to accept the painful ones and heal herself with the positive ones. The relationships she creates will continue to help her form new memories, enabling her to find peace. She recognizes that the memories she holds in her mind can both poison and cure her, and that recognition allows her to move forward and seek healing. Bruna can choose between the poison and the remedy.

As Bruna crosses boundaries between species and other categories, she also crosses the line between heroism and monstrosity, blending the two qualities. Her status as an android, her great physical strength, his protection of the scapegoats she encounters, her boundary crossing, her choice to create a family of Others, and her ethical code all lead her to act as she does. Whereas Mario sits on the boundary between the human and more-than-human monster, Bruna sits between the created-by-human and the more-than-human monster. Like Mario, many things make Bruna a monster, but her ethical choices and actions make her a hero.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion

The border between monstrosity and heroism is porous, and Mario and Bruna both cross it frequently, blending the two categories together. They both penetrate the borders set up between normatively separate categories. Mario and Bruna are monsters who make heroic choices, to act ethically in their relationships with scapegoats and their treatment of the Other.

### **Knight and Noir**

Both *Yeti* and *Lágrimas en la lluvia* present the protagonists through the lens of established literary tropes. Mario exemplifies many of the characteristics of the knights of King Arthur's court. Bruna follows the tradition of Phillip Marlowe and other cynical noir detectives (See Zizek *Looking Awry* 62-63). However, each character transcends the tropes, becoming more than mere copies of the previous characters who play those roles in other tales.

Although Bruna and Mario represent different literary tropes, they share a similar concern for the Other. Like the knight, the noir detective holds to a code of ethics, though fewer restrictions bind the detective, leaving him or her free to work inside and outside the law. Notwithstanding this minor differences, both novels highlight the necessity of reaching beyond the self towards the Other. The concern for the well-being of the other reflects Levinas's philosophy "To discover in the I such an orientation is to identify the I and morality. The I before another is infinitely responsible" (Levinas 353). Neither Bruna nor Mario would have survived, much less succeeded without support from their respective groups of friends. Connecting with the Other requires Mario and Bruna to cross species, legal, social and other boundaries. Their liminal nature allows them to cross these barriers, creating relationships between previously separate worlds. They act as antibodies, inoculating their societies against prejudice and violence. As they cross borders, they transmit new ideas and possibilities.

Mario and Bruna each confront forces that both cause and cure contagion. Mario faces the Orang Pendek, their weapons and their blood. Like the foolish questers<sup>17</sup> of the tales who enter forbidden places carelessly and without respect, the mercenary who originally enters the forest suffers a fatal injury and brings the virus out with him. Mario, on the other hand, enters cautiously, respecting his surroundings, and performs a great deed by saving the life of the King. He receives a reward: the blood of the King with the necessary antibodies. Bruna, as a detective, faces a much different style of quest than Mario. The contagious force she combats consists of external suspicion as much as the internally inserted false memories. She and other replicants become infected by the *memas*, which override their autonomy, but their contagion only forms a part of Ainhó's larger plan. Bruna must decide whom to trust, from whom to accept help, and she faces betrayal by some of those she trusts. The two quests have a great deal in common, as they both deal with the danger of infection on a similarly threatening scale. If either quest should fail, Mario and Bruna's respective societies would fall.

### **The Fantastic Border**

As liminal figures, Mario and Bruna become metaphors for the genre of speculative fiction itself. Todorov, a key figure in theories of the fantastic,<sup>18</sup> states that "the fantastic permits us to cross certain frontiers that are inaccessible so long as we have no recourse to it" (158). He

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<sup>17</sup> Many narratives tell of the first and second questers who ignore warnings and intend to seize whatever their prize may be by force. They most often return home in shame or lose their lives. The third son, who listens to warnings and acts with kindness towards those he meets, receives the prize the others sought.

<sup>18</sup> Although Todorov's view of the fantastic remains more limited than the modern publishing genre of fantasy, it nonetheless provides an excellent lens through which to view these works. He views the fantastic as that which provokes a hesitation: "The reader and the hero, as we have seen, must decide if a certain event or phenomenon belongs to reality or to imagination, that is, must determine whether or not it is real. It is therefore the category of the real which has furnished a basis for our definition of the fantastic" (Todorov 167).



thus views the fantastic as a liminal genre. However, he also sees it as essential to the nature of literature itself:

on the one hand, it represents the quintessence of literature, insofar as the questioning of the limit between real and unreal, proper to all literature, is its explicit center. On the other hand, though, it is only a propaedeutics to literature: by combating the metaphysics of everyday language, it gives that language life; it must start from language, even if only to reject it. (Todorov 168)

Much like Bruna's tattoo, the fantastic remains outside the main body of literature but also reveals (or ought to reveal) its essence. Todorov's analysis of the fantastic as both central and liminal evokes Derrida's conclusion that genre cannot avoid mixing:

And suppose for a moment that it were impossible not to mix genres. What if there were, lodged within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity or a principle of contamination? And suppose the condition for the possibility of the law were the a priori of a counter-law, an axiom of impossibility that would confound its sense, order, and reason? ("Genre" 57)

Todorov appears to say that the fantastic does mix with other literary genres and that it is impossible not to do so. He writes, "Far from being a praise of the imaginary, then, the literature of the fantastic posits the majority of a text as belonging to reality -- or, more specifically, as provoked by reality, like a name given to a pre-existing thing" (168). Speculative fiction provides a way to cross the border into the fantastic, allowing readers to detach themselves from reality and at the same time consider real-world situations and problems in a safe environment. Spec Fic texts often appear to tell stories from some other world and time, yet they also discuss the present. Spec Fic interests Rosa Montero for this reason, as she explains in an interview:

“Claro, a mí lo que me interesa de la ciencia ficción es que es un género que te da unas posibilidades, una herramienta metafórica para hablar de la condición humana. A mí no me interesa hablar del siglo veintidós, lo que estoy hablando es del ser humano que es el mismo desde Pericles”. All literature in some way speaks about the human condition just as all literature broaches upon the fantastic. This relates back to Todorov’s point that the fantastic is central to literature.

Debate continues about the place of the fantastic in literature and speculative fiction as a genre. In a recent conversation, Neil Gaiman and Kazuo Ishiguro discuss speculative fiction’s acceptance in the literary world. Ishiguro asks,

Is it possible that what we think of as genre boundaries are things that have been invented fairly recently by the publishing industry? I can see there’s a case for saying there are certain patterns, and you can divide up stories according to these patterns, perhaps usefully. But I get worried when readers and writers take these boundaries too seriously, and think that something strange happens when you cross them, and that you should think very carefully before doing so.

(“Boundaries”)

Ishiguro sees the divisions between genre in much the way that Todorov and Derrida do. These categories exist, and can be useful, but they are far more porous than some would claim. Gaiman agrees, stating that “subject matter doesn’t determine genre” (“Boundaries”). He, like Ishiguro, sees genre as a publishing phenomenon.

[They] only start existing when there’s enough of them to form a sort of critical mass in a bookshop, and even that can go away. A bookstore worker in America was telling me that he’d worked in Borders when they decided to get rid of their

horror section, because people weren't coming into it. So his job was to take the novels and decide which ones were going to go and live in Science Fiction and Fantasy and which ones were going to Thrillers. ("Boundaries")

At stake in this thesis is the idea that monsters, as part of genre, can cross boundaries, either as inoculative or infectious forces. The two novels themselves exist as liminal works in the world of publishing, marketed as thrillers because speculative fiction does not sell well in Spain. Many places, not just Spain, consider Spec Fic a childish genre or merely trade fiction. Ishiguro states, "Parents will naturally discourage children once they get to a certain age from continuing with the fantasy element in their lives; schools will, too. It becomes taboo in the society at large" ("Boundaries"). Works of Spec Fic commonly cross into mainstream literature and vice versa, and taboos often become a theme in works of Spec Fic, as they do in *Yeti* and *Lágrimas en la lluvia*. The taboo around the *Bosque Prohibido* in *Yeti* as well as the prohibition of replicants on both Cosmos and Labari in *Lágrimas en la lluvia* provide excellent examples. Both Mario and Bruna have the ability to cross over these taboos and choose to reinforce them or break them down. In both cases, they must deal with enemies who are also capable of crossing boundaries, with severe consequences. They are all infectious, liminal, monstrous forces, but Mario and Bruna, along with their allies, use this attribute to inoculate their societies, while their enemies cause harm. Literature in general, and speculative fiction in particular, has the same monstrous ability.

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