Andrew Guy

Critical Approach: Location and Psychological theory

Primary Source:

1. “Obsession.” *Star Trek: The Original Series.* Writ. Art Wallace. Dir. Ralph Senensky. Netflix, 2011. Streaming.

While on a routine planetary survey, the crew encounters a mysterious smoke entity that attacks the crew and drains their red blood cells. Kirk believes this is the same monster that attacked the crew of a ship he served on and becomes obsessed with destroying it because he blames himself for the death of his former captain. During his hunt, a young security officer fails to defend other crewmates, and similar to Kirk, blames himself. After putting the crew in serious danger, Kirk realizes his blind obsession, and along with the security officer, kills the smoke monster, and all ends well for the crew.

This episode is actually very similar mechanically to the presentation of a monster as in *The Devin in the Dark*. The smoke entity is presented as a stalking killer, with little notion but that of killing. Unlike the previous episode, however, the smoke cloud is totally malevolent when compared to the cave creature. The psychological dynamic comes into play mostly with Kirk’s regret, and how his obsession then plays onto a next generation figure. Similar to that of Dr. Frankenstein, Kirk is obsessed with killing the monster that he blames himself for unleashing on the world. But unlike Frankenstein, Kirk realizes that the blind obsession will only get others hurt. The end result is that same as that in Frankenstein, however.

1. “The Devil in the Dark.” *Star Trek: The Original Series.* Writ. Gene L. Coon. Dir. Joseph Pevney. Netflix, 2011. Streaming.

The Enterprise is called to a distant mining planet to investigate mysterious attacks on the workers there by a subterranean creature. After confronting the creature initially, it steals a unit that allows the mining colony to stay safely powered. With a time crunch before the power plant explodes, the crew of the Enterprise find the creature wounded; and, after mind melding with Spock, it is discovered the creature is the last of her species, but the mother of a new generation. She had attacked the miners because they had mistaken her eggs for useless stones. The miners and the creatures reach an agreement with the help of the Enterprise in which the creatures help the miners while the miners respect the creatures and their territory; also, the power is safely restored.

Much of the psychological tension in this episode stems from the atmosphere surrounding the caves. Generally, when the characters and the audience are supposed to be afraid, the character is all alone, the lighting is dark and full of contrast (which heightens awareness and emotion), and the camera tracks around the character as to give the sense that the creature could be stalking. These features enhance the location of the monster, as well as the location on a distant planet.

Secondary Sources

1. Cohen, Jeffery, ed. “Monster Culture: Seven Theses.” *Monster Theory: Reading culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. Pp. 3-20.

Jeffrey Cohen is a Professor of English and the Director of the Medieval and Early Modern Studies Institute at George Washington University in Washington, DC. Cohen structures his paper by taking a look at cultures from the monsters they create, an a little bit of vice versa. This analysis comes in the forms of seven theses: The monster is a cultural body, always escapes, is the bringer of chaos, resides in liminal space, acts as a border guard, represents our desires, and represents a certain understanding and knowledge.

Cohen’s piece will be particularly useful in his theses’ on the location of monsters, and how they represent our desires. Since I am performing an analysis on the psychological impact and implications of the monsters, Cohen’s look at the monster as a representation of repressed human urges and desires will be particularly helpful. Also, Cohen performs a great analysis on the location of the monsters, and will provide a lot of insight into how the monsters in the star trek episodes live in their far away worlds that humans keep entering.

2. Gilmore, David D. “How to Approach Monsters.” *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003. Print.

David Gilmore is a Professor of Anthropology at Stony Brook University. Gilmore’s analysis of monsters is focused primarily on psychological theory. He focuses on the human traits reflected in monster culture, often using Freud as a psychological backing. Monsters, according to Gilmore, have always been enormous, man-eating, pointlessly violent, sexually sadistic, and superhuman in power, combining our worst nightmares and our most urgent fantasies. Essentially, the analysis looks at how monsters are projections of the things human’s do not want, or object.

Mostly an analysis of historical monsters, Gilmore will mostly be useful in providing context and background reasoning, since it does not primarily focus on modern monsters. It will still remain a helpful article, as history is very important at understanding the future. Since Star Trek is set in the future, Gilmore’s analysis can be applied to understand our current time as the past to the timeline of Star Trek, an how monstrous images reflect current ideas and psychology, and the future of those.

3. Hurd, Denise. “The Monster Inside: 19th Century Racial Constructs in the 24th Century Mythos of Star Trek.” *Journal of Popular Culture* 31.1 (1997): 25-35. Print.

Much like Jones, Hurd analyzes the societal view impressed upon aliens and alien hybrids. She looks critically at Spock, B’elana Torrez, and other half human, half other characters. Most of the analysis takes place through racial analysis, but much of it is connected to themes of physical and societal monstrosity. Hurd looks at the inner struggle that hybrids face as a metaphor for humans struggling to control their darker desires and actions.

This will be a little more difficult in its application to my essay. Since it primarily focuses on racial theory, I will have to draw all the connections I can between racial theory and monstrosity. This includes what Hurd calls the “unfortunate mulatto,” and how mixed race people have historically been rejected from both their respective cultures and peoples, as Hurd reflects in the character in star trek. The greatest use that this will have to me is the analysis of Spock. In both the episodes I am analyzing, Spock plays a pivotal role, and analyzing how he is differentiated from the monsters of these episodes will provide a good catalyst. It might especially be good if I can create a counter-argument based of Spock’s representation and actions versus the monster’s.

4. Jones, Kevin. “Star Trek and the Intimate Alien.” *The Soul of Popular Culture*. Ed. Mary Kittelson. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court, 1998. 304-314. Print.

Kevin Jones is a licensed psychologist serving as an associate professor at Saint Mary’s University. In his article, Jones analyzes how the aliens of Star Trek can be thought of as projections of humanity’s unwanted and unrecognized qualities. He performs this analysis on Spock, Data, Worf, and the Borg through the lens of Jungian psychology and archetypes.

I personally found this article very dry and written very much for psychologists, by psychologists. But I did find parts of his analysis interesting, such as his look at how the aliens are our projections of unwanted traits onto a foreign body, I believe this was addressed in both Cohen and Gilmore and is a very useful way to look at any monster. Unfortunately, most of my use of this article will have to be totally secondary, because he used no examples that could directly tie into my primary sources. Since he did use star trek, though, I will still be able to find plenty of relevant support.

# 5. Ono, Kent A. "Dying Planet: Mars in Science and the Imagination/mesmerists, Monsters, and Machines: Science Fiction and the Cultures of Science in the Nineteenth Century/american Science Fiction Tv: Star Trek, Stargate, and Beyond (review)." American Literature. 80.3 (2008): 634-637. Print.

# Kent Ono is a Professor and Chair of the Department of Communications at the University of Utah. His book review focuses on three different titles that are all connected around the central themes of space, science fiction, and humanity. The book review, is in a sense, a syntheses between the three texts. He uses them as a catalyst to discuss technology’s perception throughout the times, starting approximately in the 1600’s and coming to present day. (and, of course, looking at what this implies about the future.)

# Though his reviews never strictly focuses on monsters, as none of the books he is reviewing relate much to monsters, Ono’s review will be most helpful in analyzing perceptions of technology. Particularly how technology allows the crew of the enterprise to reach out to these other worlds, I think at one point he even refers to a liminal space. Also, and I’m not sure if I will include this is how technology is personified in culture and what qualities of monstrosity of humanity are given to the technology.