

SCARY MONSTERS



Monstrosity, Masculinity
and Popular Music

Mark Duffett and Jon Hackett

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Jon Hackett

Introduction

Monstrosity has seldom been studied in relation to popular music. Yet myths, performances and discourses associated with it include 'monsters' more often than might be imagined. David Bowie's interest was evident in the title of his 1980 album, *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)*. Bowie was associated with an artistically productive flirtation with monstrosity: a performance that was, in part, about interrogating the biases through which we render particular identities as marginal. Dictionary definitions of the term 'monster' tend to talk about frightening, abnormal or imagined creatures, or inhumanly wicked people, though the boundaries between these different ideas are somewhat ambiguous. Precisely in their abject state, monsters can be objects of empathy or pity. Consider, for example, Bowie's almost messianic role as a human alien in *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (Roeg 1976), a film that critic Pauline Kael called a 'sex-role confusion fantasy' (1982, p. 361). Kael explained:

The wilted stranger can be said to represent everyone who feels misunderstood, everyone who feels sexually immature or 'different,' everyone who has lost his way, and so the film is a gigantic launching pad for anything that viewers want to drift to.

(Kael 1982, p. 361)

We can locate this artistic mission in the clichéd nonconformity of youth culture: if adolescence is a shared space where people grow up by exploring adult identity *through its performance*, flirtation with alterity can become a way to generate inclusivity for those with identities otherwise marginalized by the accepted norms of adult society. Dave Bowie's 'sex-role confusion fantasies' used the clichéd realm of rock'n'roll rebellion to play with an expanded acceptance of gender. After *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, his theatrical performance continued, for instance, in the deliberately challenging 1979 video for 'Boys Keep Swinging.' As the obituary for Bowie on the website *Famous Monsters of Filmland* (*David Bowie Departs This Plane* 2016) explained, 'Even with his movie star good looks,

he was an eccentric who, though embraced by the mainstream, was always an oddity, so he appealed to outsiders and oddballs. He got us, and we got him.' Bowie's artistic portrayal of monstrosity was central to that process. As Hawkins and Nielsen (2020, p. 194) recently suggested, monster aesthetics can be about 'being indifferent to difference'. Bowie appears now to have been ahead of his time, anticipating an era when gender is increasingly located as something self-ascribed and individually identified. That raises the question, is grappling with monstrosity always necessarily a 'bad' thing? Perhaps the answer to that depends on what society deems as acceptable, what kind of monstrosity we might mean.

In popular music studies, surprisingly little work draws on the term 'monster' or otherwise examines the subject. Part of the issue is that pop researchers investigate a constellation of associated objects. The field of pop research has multiple, related concerns, including music geographies, scenes and genres, industries and state policies, media, technologies, songs, recordings, live performance, musicianship, amateur musicians, musical instruments, music education, plus, of course, specific recording artists and their audiences. With each of these elements, practice, discourse and identity offer at least three prisms to consider the same foci. Examining music stars alone, we can research their recorded works, performances, celebrity images or implication in different social debates. Monstrosity can relate to almost any of those diverse academic concerns.

In the humanities, monstrosity has become an important, emerging strand of interdisciplinary scholarship. According to Asa Mittman (2012, p. 1), 'In the space of a few years, the study of monsters has moved from the absolute periphery – perhaps its logical starting point – to a much more central position in academics [*sic*].' Another reason to talk about monstrosity is that it allows us to explore the ways in which popular music texts, in the widest sense, negotiate identity. In relation to music culture, monsters raise issues about transgression, subjectivity, agency and community. Attention to them evokes both the spectre of projection – what monsters are called upon to represent – and wider cultural anxieties, reflecting commonly shared ideologies, fantasies and beliefs. As well as deriving from multiple sources – whether mythical, historical or cultural – since they often serve as the embodiment of difference from a putatively human self, monsters are often called upon to perform 'identity work'. Attention to individuals located by others as monsters can therefore say things about the operation of gender, identity, myth and meaning in popular culture. *Scary Monsters* traces how that process has happened across different times and contexts.

The aim of this book is not to label particular people as monsters – though certain individuals discussed here have been labelled as such – but rather, in part, to explore the *ways in which attributions of monstrosity can function*. By offering a series of in-depth case studies, especially ones that eschew some of the most hackneyed examples, this book aims to explore different aspects of the connection between music, gender and monstrosity. Its argument is that attention to monstrosity is a fruitful way to approach the study of masculinity in popular music culture.

Masculinity

Our case studies focus on *male* monsters, both fictitious and ‘real’, that have inhabited dark and occasionally fantastical moments in popular music history. Given the novelty of this analytical standpoint, it is helpful to survey the ways in which masculinity and monstrosity have been conceived in cultural and sociological terms, before focusing attention more acutely on popular music case studies in the rest of this book.

It is important from the outset to draw a distinction, albeit hazy, between maleness, male identity and masculinity. On one level there is the association, or otherwise, between a person’s physicality and their sex. On another level, are the forms of identification developed around the social attribution of a person as male. Classically, for the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, in the context of family life male maturation was associated with the Oedipus complex. In classical myth, Oedipus accidentally kills his father and marries his mother. According to gender researcher Leanne Franklin (2012, p. 76):

This ancient Greek myth gives its name to the psychoanalytic conflict Freud proposed which involves the attraction of boys to their mother which occurs at the phallic stage ... Once the boy understands how important his penis is, love for his mother becomes transformed into sexual desire and upon this transformation his father, formerly an ally, becomes a rival to his mother’s affection.

Girls, according to Freud, experience a parallel process: an Elektra complex that involves romantic bonding to their father. Although Freud’s gendered version of psychosexual maturation has been challenged, it did, nevertheless, dominate modern thinking about gender, particularly in the mid-twentieth century, and

therefore influence the ideas circulating about gender in popular culture. If some forms of male and female *behaviour* – whether functional or dysfunctional – might have their roots in the cradle of the family, we should distinguish a further level of activity. Central to this is Judith Butler's (1990/2006) famous notion that gender does not come *from* biology, but rather from social expectations created around male and female identity, and the tacit adoption of forms of behaviour associated with those expectations. Discussing Elvis fandom, Duffett (2001, p. 396) therefore offers a basic definition of masculinity:

Masculinity is the gender paradigm that continues to define most male behaviour in patriarchal society. Masculinity confers male self-esteem by reproducing male privilege. It naturalises gender as difference, and difference as hierarchy, creating shared notions of acceptable and ideal behaviour. Because women are apprehended as the weaker sex, the feminine becomes Othered as an object of scornful disdain and hidden fear. This fear of femininity also permits contempt for 'effeminate' behaviour in men. Masculinity is therefore not just a way to separate the sexes: homoerotic bonding and homosexuality have traditionally been weak and inadmissible forms of male behaviour. On the other hand, independence, rivalry, rationality and self-mastery are recognised as desirable traits since masculinity encourages individuals to compete for status and puts emphasis on defiant achievement (see Easthope 1990). Traditional masculinity turns sex into an arena for the competitive assertion of manhood. Women are reduced to objects of conquest and tokens of exchange.

Much of the sociological literature agrees that theorizing about masculinity has occurred in response to feminism, without whose influence such work might not have seen the light of day. A starting point for the analysis has been traced back to Kate Millett's (1970) study, *Sexual Politics*, in which 'patriarchy', a staple term of debate for second-wave feminism, is delineated. This word, whose etymology implies the 'rule of the father', has become a standard term to describe male-dominated society. Patriarchy has become a framework within which to think of masculinity as a dominant social and cultural norm, all the more powerful given its earlier epistemological invisibility.

Stephen Whitehead (2002) helpfully traces the development of sociological thinking about masculinity, from earlier functionalist and sex role theorizing, to later conceptions developing from the context of second-wave feminism. For Whitehead (2002, p. 88), patriarchy overstates the monolithic dominance of male power, given the advances obtained by women in recent decades. It might be further limited by implying an ahistorical structure that is immune to change and identical across cultures and societies.

A more recent and still important conception of masculinity was outlined by Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee in their influential 1985 article. While acknowledging that masculinity is plural and multiple, as well as being subject to change over time and space, the term 'hegemonic masculinity', which derives from Gramscian developments in Marxist theorizing, retains the link between masculinity and power. Connell's more recent work, *The Men and the Boys*, helpfully distinguishes between hegemonic and other masculinities, be they subordinated, marginalized or complicit in relation to the dominant form in any particular social formation (2000, p. 10).

Whitehead's own preference is to speak instead of 'masculinism' as a discourse: 'Masculinism is, then, the point at which dominant forms of masculinity and heterosexuality meet ideological dynamics, and in the process become reified and legitimized as privileged, unquestioned accounts of gender difference and reality' (2002, p. 96). Here Whitehead draws on post-structuralist theorizing, notably that of Foucault, which sees discourse as related to power; as well as being something that both disciplines bodies and enables self-fashioning or subject formation within certain historically contingent limitations. This is in keeping, too, with postmodernist conceptions of identity as a project; here we can make the link with Connell's assertion that we should see masculinity and femininity as 'gender projects' (Connell 2000, p. 28).

The notion of masculinity as a series of ongoing 'gender projects' begins to historicize our understanding of the performance of gender, and relate these patterns of behaviour to the social and economic demands of a changing series of times and places. One phenomenon that is often discussed in relation to these topics is an alleged 'crisis in masculinity', which is culturally diagnosed in part as a response to women's liberation and feminism, and in part as a response to structural shifts associated with business. Globalization – and the global restructuring of capital in late capitalism – leads to the outsourcing of manufacturing labour to the global south, as well as the deindustrialization of traditional manufacturing towns and cities in the global north. This has led in turn to a transition from traditional 'masculine' wage labour in manufacturing districts to allegedly 'feminised' service industries in their place. Feminism has supported an increased presence of women in both the general workplace, and more particularly in male-dominated professions, even though this project remains severely limited by the ongoing domination by men across many spheres. It has successfully contested and challenged social inequalities deriving from gender, plus representations and discourses in the wider culture or mass media that can be designated as sexist or misogynist. The decline of clearly identifiable

'male' roles or identities defined by physical labour in the public sphere, then, is sometimes held to result in a 'crisis' for males unable to adapt to new conditions of work and associated gender roles.

Any notion of a crisis, as thus formulated, is nonetheless open to question. As Whitehead (2002) argues, 'Men (particularly White, heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon men) control, directly or indirectly, most of the world's resources, capital, media, political parties and corporations. It is difficult to imagine this group in crisis' (p. 3). Men overwhelmingly still benefit from the economic and managerial advantages that accrue merely as a result of their gender privilege, a phenomenon that Connell (2000, p. 25) characterizes as the 'patriarchal dividend'. What we can say, however, is there is certainly an increased prevalence of *discourses* of masculinity in crisis (Whitehead 2002, p. 50), not only in relation to work and cultural representation, but also in relation to education and popular culture, among other spheres. In relation to popular culture, Whitehead (p. 49) singles out David Fincher's 1999 film *Fight Club* as an instance of a cultural product that was widely discussed in terms of this alleged crisis. More recently, perhaps, we might point to ongoing attention to masculinity in the cinemas of directors as disparate as Clint Eastwood, Kathryn Bigelow and Jacques Audiard. In contrast to the themes explored by these filmmakers, the less realist and more performative terrain of popular music has been characterized by a play with gender identity that, in a sense, has heralded, reflected upon and sought to solve the 'crisis' by making a wider range of gender identities acceptable among boys and men.

Carrigan, Connell and Lee (1985) popularized the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' as the dominant version pertaining to a particular culture, even if the majority of men fail to live up to this standard. Construing masculinity in hegemonic terms allows for historical variation, as well as a multiplicity of masculinities existing alongside each other in any given social formation. Connell outlines the prevailing hegemonic masculinity in the contemporary West, namely 'transnational business masculinity'. The notion is defined as 'the business executives who operate in global markets, and the political executives who interact (and in many contexts merge) with them' (2000, p. 51). This valorization of *middle class* forms of masculinity maximizes the benefit accruing from the patriarchal dividend. Transnational corporations have also used elite sportsmen in their marketing materials, bolstering and legitimizing their brands with a focus on older, traditional masculinity defined in terms of athleticism. Contemporary forms of masculinity thus gain their justification by subordinating

the virtues of previous forms, in this case to create a ‘corporate warrior’ ethos, which has, since Connell’s (2000) study, arguably been augmented or supplanted by a ‘geeky’ or ‘nerdish’ reformulation. As Anthony Easthope argues in his study of the ‘masculine myth’ in popular culture: ‘Masculinity tries to stay invisible by passing itself off as normal and universal. Words such as “man” and “mankind”, used to signify the human species, treat masculinity as if it covered everyone’ (Easthope 1990, p. 1). This idea of ‘passing off’ captures some of the *work* done by more dominant forms of masculinity, but it does not tell the whole story.

In recent years, research on masculinity has increasingly complicated or moved away from universal formulations (see, for example, Cornwall and Lindisfarne 2017), and in doing so relegated, challenged or modified notions of hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt 2018). Such research considers the specificity of actual masculinities as behaviours and attitudes that are constructed to be performed in *particular* locales or historical situations. Beyond more niche discussions on gendered practices, life cycle roles (such as fatherhood), male identities operating outside heteronormative contexts, racially specific or otherwise intersectional formulations, there has also been work on historically situated performances or embodiments of male identity (for instance, see Cornwall, Kariotis and Lindisfarne 2016, Surkis 2018 and Niva 2019). Many of these have referenced particular geographic locations (Hofman and Newman 2014) or institutional context (see Gilbert and Gilbert 2017).

Such studies define masculinities as historically changing, potentially fluid sets of behaviours that can function in positive or negative ways. Specific, ‘masculine’ behaviours can, for instance, facilitate, dominate, curtail, restrict or challenge those who identify as different. Researchers now say that specific gender projects make efforts to adjust male subjects to their changing roles in an increasingly technological society. Situated masculinities in the contemporary West, for instance, have therefore been constructed around reactionary anger at economic uncertainty and the associated abandoning of the working class (Kimmel 2017), taking a ‘tough’ approach to survival and resilience, performing residual or ‘nostalgic’ versions of prior manliness (Albrecht 2016), or achieving alpha status by masterfully exploiting digital technology for social or material benefits. A good example of work recently discussing one situated mode of masculinity is Salter and Blodgett’s edited volume *Toxic Geek Masculinity in Media* (2017), which addresses sexist practices, trolling and identity policing associated with the #Gamergate online controversy of the mid-2010s. As their research makes clear, particular social and historical contexts and their associated

ideological projects, not only encourage the adoption or practice of particular masculinities – the resulting formulation of gender also does cultural work, *at specific times and places in the real world*. What follows will draw on previous research, theorizing masculinities both broadly and specifically in relation to popular music, attempting to scrutinize the immediate, ‘default option’ *and* to attain sufficient distance in order to discuss what it assumes to be deviant or insignificant. We cannot discount the possibility that our own gender will at times mean that we do not succeed unambiguously in achieving this.

Monstrosity

We can now turn to the main term of analysis for this book. Studies of monsters and monstrosity frequently take etymology as their point of departure. Examples of these will appear throughout this study, but monsters are generally derived from Latin words such as *monere*, to warn; or *monstrum*, a warning or portent. Sometimes the link is made with another Latin word, *monstrare*, to show or demonstrate. From this, monsters are deemed to provide warning or cautionary tales; from their beginnings, then, they *make meaning*.

Although monstrosity has not formed a dominant paradigm in popular music studies, monsters have evidently been a concern for certain strains of cultural studies. The ways in which we construe monstrosity will depend in some part on the interpretive frameworks with which we approach it. In this section we will review briefly some of the main approaches from which monsters have been theorized. These various frameworks that follow are competing perspectives from which to interpret or account for this inherently semiotic – or sometimes symptomatic – aspect of monsters and monstrosity. Some might challenge these labels – in many cases, their concerns overlap – but the purpose here is to advance a typology to summarize various influential approaches to aid their exposition. Although this list should not be taken as exhaustive, we will consider folkloric–historical, epistemological–discursive, psychoanalytic/post-structuralist, identity-based, and, finally, realist–materialist approaches.

Folkloric–historical perspectives involve reviewing the cultural history of monstrous representations, often with a long timescale in mind. Such approaches survey the history of representations of monsters from the historical record, often contextualizing them via mythical or religious beliefs. Stephen T. Asma (2009)’s history of the subject begins with classical sources such as Alexander

the Great, Aristotle and Pliny the Elder; proceeds via the Bible and *Beowulf*; and through the early modern era, Enlightenment and the theory of evolution. Similarly, Alexa Wright (2013) begins with 'the Monstrous Races' on mediaeval maps and in travel journals; to modern-day serial killers. In each of these cases – and as a regular feature of such accounts – there is a historical 'secularisation' of monsters. Rather than examples of radical evil, supernatural or mythical difference, more recent cases, if not taken from popular culture, derive rather from psychiatry, or abnormal psychology or sociology.

Significant shifts in the conception of monsters are the focus of the 'epistemological–discursive' approaches of Georges Canguilhem and Michel Foucault. Canguilhem's work is not very well known in the English-speaking world, but his ideas on monstrosity have been referred to in various sources, including Wright (2013). His work is interesting because he focuses on the historical evolution of concepts, with a particular focus on the history of science.

One can see the development of conceptions of monsters according to the literature as a change from absolute to relative versions of monstrosity. That is, earlier monsters are mythical, demonic or supernatural entities; or perhaps the result of their intervention in human affairs, for instance, during conception. They are utterly different in kind from the human. Canguilhem by contrast focuses on monstrosity as relative, a particular tendency that departs from normal development, rather than different in kind. This allows him to characterize monstrosity as 'an arrest in development or as a fixation' (2008, p. 15).

Canguilhem's source texts are from the natural sciences. In the original words of one of the sources he references approvingly, the biologist Etienne Wolff (1948, p. 131), 'one might say that the explanation for monsters has taken a decisive step by returning into the framework of the laws of normal embryology'. It is clear from this that Canguilhem's focus is *teratology*, the biological study of monsters, a field where *monstruosité* might also be translated as 'abnormality' or perhaps 'deformity'. Nonetheless, most general treatments of monstrosity from mythical–historical or other perspectives include noted cases from medical history or phenomena such as circus freaks; the overlap between biological monsters and popular culture is therefore pertinent. Perhaps we can see an analogous 'secularisation' of the monster in Canguilhem's account, whereby 'freaks of nature' come to be seen as variants of normality, albeit arrested at a particular point of human or animal development. Where for Asma and Wright, the more recent monster is a psychiatric, psychopathological or sociopathological entity, Canguilhem notes that modern science sees abnormality also from

within human and animal (rather than supernatural) development. Elsewhere Canguilhem (1991, p. 278) further outlines the difference between ancient and modern conceptions: 'According to Aristotle, a monster is an error of nature which was "mistaken about matter."' A nineteenth-century scientist such as Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, by contrast, is able to define monstrosity as serious, harmful and 'very complex anomalies' (pp. 133–5). The implication is that as particular cases of abnormality, monsters are not radically evil or similarly based on differences in kind. They are, instead, on a scale.

Part of the reputation of Canguilhem in the English-speaking world derives from his influence on Michel Foucault. Indeed, according to Alain Badiou, Canguilhem is an 'invisible master' of Foucault (Badiou 2009, p. 119). Foucault himself is often referred to in discussions from an epistemological-discursive standpoint, especially for his lectures at the Collège de France in 1974–5, published in English under the title, *Abnormal*. These lectures outline the 'techniques of normalization' (Foucault 2003, p. 25) that accompany the secularization of the monster in modern times. Specifically, he traces three successive 'figures' in which abnormality is posited in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, namely the 'monster', the 'individual to be corrected' and the 'masturbator' (pp. 55–7). The monster itself is the result of 'a natural history organized essentially around the absolute and insurmountable distinctions between species, genus, and kingdoms, et cetera' (p. 62). The absolute and biological distinction of monsters is highlighted in this definition. The later figures of abnormality are human and relativized by comparison. Foucault (2003, p. 131) also mentions Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire as involved in this genealogy; however, his focus in the lectures is on the development of new medico-legal techniques and power during the period in question. One can note the inauspicious decline of the monster, radical and 'absolute' figure of alterity, to be replaced by the less glamorous figure of the furtive adolescent masturbator, as new techniques of power advance.

Recent sources from cultural studies have often taken psychoanalytic or post-structuralist approaches to monstrosity as a figure. Such accounts construe monsters in terms of the unconscious, language and liminality. If the monster is the embodiment of our 'worst fears' (Asma 2009), then this will be accounted for in relation to their significance for the unconscious and fantasy. From a post-structuralist perspective, rather than monsters occupying secure places in taxonomies or distinctions between or among beings, they are border-crossing entities *par excellence*.

Freud's own case studies authorize us to think about monsters, in the obvious sense in which these include a 'Rat Man' and a 'Wolf Man'. The schizoanalytic perspectives of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) rethink these case studies in less Oedipal, more de-territorializing fashion. More widely, the unconscious, as reservoir of repressed thoughts, seems to link with the 'worst fears' that monsters are stated to represent in Asma (2009) and many other surveys. In relation to popular culture, film studies have engaged with psychoanalysis fruitfully in order to interpret monsters on screen. Robin Wood's article 'The American Nightmare' (2003) uses the distinction between basic and surplus repression, derived from Freud, Marcuse and Horowitz. Basic repression in Wood's analysis seems analogous to what Laplanche and Leclaire (1972) term 'primary repression': that which inaugurates the unconscious as such. Surplus repression, for Wood, is 'specific to a particular culture' (p. 63) and so allows us to articulate repressed elements to specific social formations. His article suggests a typology of monsters in relation to the repressed elements they represent, identified along gender, class, race and ethnicity, and age terms. Other influential paradigms from film studies combine psychoanalytic and feminist ideas in order to analyse various types of monster. These often draw from the ideas of Julia Kristeva (1982) on the abject, such as in Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993). In this work, psychoanalytic ideas such as abjection and the archaic feminine are used to analyse a range of films, including those in the *Alien* series.

Other texts take a post-structuralist framework in order to consider monsters as figures. Here, J. J. Cohen's (1996) theses on 'Monster Culture' are emblematic. Cohen's definition of the monster, with its reference to textuality and the deferral of meaning, nods to Derrida's notion of *différance*: 'Like a letter on the page, the monster signifies something other than itself: it is always a displacement, always inhabits the gap between the time of upheaval that created it and the moment into which it is received, to be born again' (p. 4). For Cohen, the difference that monsters represent is often cultural, political or pertaining to racial, sexual or class identity. As with many sources arguing from etymology, monsters are *monitory* figures. Cohen argues that we can extract from them a hermeneutics: 'a method of reading cultures from the monsters they engender' (p. 3). We can find an analogous argument in Weiss (2004), who, once more, presents his ideas as a series of theses: 'In the *Thesaurus Artificiosae Memoriae* (1579), Cosmas Rossellius describes a memory theatre that contains an all-inclusive category, suggesting that *any* monster of *any* sort may be used to signify *any* thing whatsoever, through totally idiosyncratic associations' (p. 124). This, in effect,

is to argue that the monster is the ultimate *polysemic* text. In relation to popular music studies, Kobena Mercer's (1986) discussion of the image of Michael Jackson is seminal in this regard, as, following Roland Barthes (1957/2013), he notes that celebrity images can be aesthetic surfaces upon which a society writes its own preoccupations.

A related series of studies on monsters and monstrosity might be characterized as cultural–identity based. These sources often link the concerns of the folkloric–historical surveys, with precise examples taken from literature and folk sources, with an attention to identity that sometimes overlaps with the psychoanalytic and post-structuralist frameworks such as Cohen (1996), Creed (1993) or Wood (2003). Thus, although the sources he refers to are mostly philosophical rather than psychoanalytic, Richard Kearney (2003) argues: 'Whether it be gothic, surrealist or postmodern in genre, the monster continues to hold the subconscious in thrall. And for this reason, the monster remains a personification of our repressed Other' (p. 18). Other theorists consider the political implications of monsters, such as Evelleen Richards (1999), who argues: 'Monsters have always challenged the boundaries of human identity. Typically, they denote physically or morally deviant states of nature' (p. 377). Marie-Hélène Huet (1983 and 1991) analyses the relations between monstrosity and maternity, through a cultural and historicist analysis of philosophical and literary sources from French classicism to the *fin de siècle*. Alongside research by Creed (1993), it is clear that many of the classic studies of monstrosity have implications for the role of women in patriarchal society.

Finally, there have been a number of studies touching on monsters that we might characterize as realist–materialist. The 'realist–constructivist' strain of this work derives from research on the assumptions behind science and technology. To cite one of the best known, Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* has been cited in numerous considerations of monster theory and makes mention of monsters in its thesis. Latour's work is a radical questioning of the distinction between nature and culture in modernity. The latter, for Latour, brackets off hybrid objects ('monsters') that partake of both spheres:

By rendering mixtures unthinkable, by emptying, sweeping, cleaning and purifying the arena that is opened in the central space defined by their three sources of power, the moderns allowed the practice of mediation to recombine all possible monsters without letting them have any effect on the social fabric, or even any contact with it.

(Latour 1993, p. 70)

Instead, Latour calls for a 'Parliament of Things' (p. 142) that includes hybrid objects that straddle the nature–culture divide, constituted by networks that include human and non-human, organic and inorganic actors. Richards, whom we have already mentioned, comes to similar conclusions regarding the marginalization of monsters in relation to anatomy and evolutionary science:

In sociological terms, biological monsters were marginalized or disempowered in the process of stabilization of a new set of power relations within which it was advantageous to conceive biological and social evolution as generally slow, steady, gradual, and continuous. Where Owen had failed, the Darwinians succeeded in taming the unruly transcendental monster and its radical social implications.

(Richards 1999, p. 411)

Another important theorist from science and technology studies is Donna Haraway, famous, among other things, for her piece 'A Cyborg Manifesto' (1991), which productively recuperates one monster for feminist purposes. In another widely discussed article, Haraway echoes Latour in her assertion: 'In its scientific embodiments as well as in other forms, nature is made, but not entirely by humans; it is a co-construction among humans and non-humans' (Haraway 1992, p. 297). These co-constructions include beings conventionally marginalized as monsters. The rest of the article continues Haraway's interest in identity and politics, specifically what she terms 'inappropriate/d Others'.

The 'materialist' strain of monster theorizing often uses Marxist concepts to think the metaphorical potential of monsters to figure political-economic concepts. As we observe in later chapters, gothic imagery abounds in Marx's own work, in his discussion of the vampiric quality of capital over living labour and so on. David McNally's (2012) *Monsters of the Market* is a survey of such tropes from a Marxist perspective, updating analyses to the present day. Annalee Newitz (2006) also analyses the relations between monsters and capitalism, in relation to American popular culture. Another strain of this materialist strand is associated with the concept of hauntology – derived from the work of Jacques Derrida (1993/2006) and his own reading of Marx – developed in critical commentary on popular music by writers such as Simon Reynolds (2012) and Mark Fisher (2013, 2014). Here, logics of temporal disjuncture are used to figure political-economical aspects of labour and unrealised futures, something that has been linked to both aspects of recording technology – as well as untimely or discredited political ideas, both of which make ghostly returns in the chapters

that follow. It should be noted that the ‘realist–materialist’ studies that have just been enumerated are elsewhere characterized as ‘constructivist’ – though there is faith in objects and/or material processes, this is in tension with a focus on monsters, with ghosts and imaginary creatures bearing the same ontological status as ‘real’ and actual ones.

This typology has been offered as a way of ordering a disparate set of works that consider monstrosity from a number of perspectives. It will have been evident from the discussion that many of the studies straddle many of the categories enumerated; some would question our placing certain works in one category rather than another. There are edited collections on monstrosity that feature articles drawing on a number of these perspectives within the same volume (e.g. Hackett and Harrington 2018, 2019). Furthermore, if we take the post-structuralist idea that monsters are border-crossing entities seriously, then any typology is inherently open to question. The list of approaches has been offered here as a heuristic for purposes of exposition, rather than as a rigid classification.

Monstrous masculinities

To begin thinking about monstrosity in relation to masculinity, we can point to a relatively mythical conception of masculinity, elaborated by Sigmund Freud in his 1913 work, *Totem and Taboo* (Freud 1913/2001). This work, and in particular the myth of the father of the primal horde, has frequently been taken up by later writers on masculinity. Anthony Easthope (1990, pp. 19–23), for instance, analyses the canonical Western, *Red River* (Howard Hawks 1948) in order to elucidate the logic of Freud’s theory. Freud attributes the ‘primal horde’ myth to Darwin and employs it as a sort of thought experiment in order to explain some of the ‘phylogenetic’ aspects of the mind – our psychic inheritance from an evolutionary perspective as a species. It is advanced as a conjecture to illustrate the psychic mechanisms he has been identifying, derived largely from anthropology and traced from totemic cultures to the mental life of what Freud characterizes as modern civilization. In particular, this forms part of Freud’s theorizing of the genesis of the superego, the agency of conscience, guilt and religion.

Freud evokes a ‘primal horde’ or tribal civilization, in which a dominating father monopolizes access to all women. This is to the absolute exclusion of his sons, who are relegated resentfully to a band united in their hatred of the father and lack of access to love objects, including their mother. Freud theorizes that

this horde of brothers at some point unite and kill the father, later feasting on his remains. He traces this as the event that prefigures the totem meal identified in the anthropological accounts he had studied, involving a binge consumption of the totem animal that is otherwise taboo for the tribe. Freud observes that totemic feasts are followed by mourning for the loss of the animal killed 'by dread of a threatened retribution' (p. 201). As such, this foreshadows the existence of a separate agency of guilt, morality and conscience that Freud names the superego.

The myth of the primal father connects Oedipal issues (male competition in the family) to capitalism (male competition in society). It perhaps gains full development in the later elaboration of this text in Lacanian psychoanalysis. In the latter, the most familiar instance of the father in psychic life is the father as 'paternal metaphor', that is, as the transcendental signifier in the symbolic order of language and law. Where Freud's Oedipus complex was theorized apparently in more flesh-and-blood terms, the place of the father in Lacan's 'structuralist' elaboration of the theory is much rather in terms of linguistics and of the unconscious structured as a language. Where Freudian psychoanalysis elaborated the Oedipus complex in terms of a fantasy of the infant about a real threat of castration at the hands of the father, in Lacan the emphasis is more on an irreducible lack that is instituted on the infant's entry into the symbolic order of language and law.

Now, in Lacan's later thinking, the 'primal' father of the horde retains an existence in the psyche as the 'real' father outside the symbolic order. If the paternal metaphor of the symbolic order is structuring it *as being* absent, then the primal father returns as all-too-present when the symbolic father is in abeyance. This is why Slavoj Žižek can characterize the real father as 'the obscene, uncanny, shadowy double of "the Name of the Father" ... a kind of "master of enjoyment," a paternal figure which comes closest to what Kant called "radical evil,"' (Žižek 2001, p. 158). Furthermore, and crucially, the real father emerges at a time when the paternal metaphor is under attack or in decline. Žižek's particular example here is taken from American film noir. For Žižek, the obscene father allows us to make sense of this film genre; its weak, compromised male protagonists; and its deadly femmes fatales; in terms of a wider cultural crisis in masculinity. Although the primal father may appear primordial, Žižek characterizes it as 'a thoroughly *modern* entity' (2001, p. 159).

Now we can return to Connell's earlier formulation of hegemonic masculinities and supplement it with a psychoanalytic conception. Connell can be seen as conceiving of hegemonic masculinity in terms of a specific, situated

‘gender project’, one based on transnational business masculinity, propped up in marketing terms through the visual display of the bodies of elite sportsmen. Interestingly, Connell observes that the entrepreneurial masculinity has displaced its recent rival, ‘the rigid, control-oriented masculinity of military command, a variant of which is the military-style bureaucratic dictatorships of Stalinism’ (Connell 2000, p. 54). Although it may sound glib to state this in such bald terms, what else are the current leaders of the first and former second worlds – Trump and Putin – but two versions of this hegemonic masculinity personified?

Putin is the most straightforward case – a resurgence and revival of what Connell (2000) had understandably written off in 2000 – the oligarchic dictator modelled on Stalin (albeit with all reference to communism removed). Trump can now be characterized by us as a hybrid between Connell’s (2000) transnational business masculinity and Freud’s primal, obscene father. His oft-noted business acumen is arguably fused with the sadistic and libidinal impulses that the ‘civilised’ post-Oedipal Westerner must repress, but that Trump is allowed to indulge with no reservation (‘grab them by the pussy’ and all). Indeed, these two leaders are by now notoriously compatible with one another, leading to a rather obscene complicity of hegemonic masculinities, modern and primordial, aggressive and instinctual. To complete this scheme, the decline of the symbolic version of masculinity, the ‘name of the father’ or the law, can be linked to the widespread backlash against a straw-man construction of the ‘liberal elite’.

Popular music, gender, and monstrosity

Having discussed monstrosity and masculinity, we are now in a position to return to popular music. Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie’s classic 1978 article, ‘Rock and Sexuality’, is an early landmark on the subject. By reinforcing dominant norms regarding masculinity and femininity in the sphere of consumption, they said, popular music contributed to an individual and collective ‘sexualization of leisure’ (p. 395). More specifically, the two researchers consider the gendered nature and ‘patriarchal dividend’ inherent in rock music as a genre, taking this to operate through ‘*construction of sexuality*’ (1978/1990, p. 373; emphasis in original). In relation to this, we might consider the performance of specific, contextual masculinities in popular music through at least two associated lenses: *spaces* (of musical culture) and *texts* (or their performers, whose public identities are intertextual constructs).

In terms of spaces of performance, Frith and McRobbie (1978/1990) parallel the claims of Laura Mulvey's 1975 *Screen* article on the gendered nature of visual pleasure in narrative cinema, only they consider a musical genre: 'The music business is male-run; popular musicians, writers, creators, technicians, engineers, and producers are mostly men' (Frith and McRobbie, 1978/1990, p. 373). This claim was developed by Mavis Bayton (1998) in her work on the music industry. Concern for the gendering of spaces of musical culture – and, frequently, the associated sexism (or resistance to it) – was extended from there, across music education (Green 1997), music journalism (Davies 2001) and, notably, local music scenes.

We mention in this regard the pioneering studies of particular, regionally and genre-specific scenes, their practitioners and audiences. To mention just two, Sara Cohen's (1991) study of popular music culture in Liverpool and Barry Shank's (1994) monograph on the scene in Austin, Texas, each situate gendered practices of production and consumption with precision in relation to carefully delineated contexts. Such research has been paralleled by the rise of work examining dynamics in particular music genres. Matthew Bannister's (2006) study of masculinity and indie rock argues that genre is generalizable across multiple music scenes in different countries and continents, and can therefore be privileged over 'scene' as an analytical framework. Other researchers, such as Neil Nehring (1997) and Robin James (2015) have explored how particular music genres have been *appropriated* because they afford non-traditional expressions of gender identity which therefore broaden accented ideas of how each gender can behave. Marion Leonard's (2007) study of women playing indie rock notes, however: 'Indie music may be understood as offering an alternative articulation of masculinity rather than operating as a gender-neutral or pro-female category' (p. 48). Leonard's analysis extends the consideration of cultural spaces through examination of the ways in which studio, touring and press practices tend to marginalize the participation of female performers in these spheres; her study is well-supported through interviews with some notable as well as aspiring musicians in the genre. She therefore highlights specific musical spaces in which gender is performed and which serve as locales for endorsing and sometimes challenging normative gender constructions. Other examples of gatekeeping practices that might serve to exclude potential female musicians are considered by Mary Ann Clawson (1999 and 1999a) and Carey Sargent (2009), among others. Clawson's two articles track the ways in which male domination is enforced through recruitment of band members during adolescence, usually

along gendered lines; as well as relegation of female musicians to limited choices of instrument through the more recent vogue in certain forms of rock music for female bassists. In relation to the first of these questions, Clawson argues: 'Being a boy served, in these early years, as a form of social and cultural capital. Girls lacked access to an entitlement that seemed to be assumed by boys: the cultural authority to initiate band formation' (Clawson 1999, p. 111).

A concern for the gendering of specific locales is reflected by work on spaces fully devoted to music consumption as well as production. Several scholars have pointed to the traditional record shop as a prime example of a *masculinised space* in popular music. Will Straw (1997) explores record collecting as 'nerdish homosociality' (p. 15) that avoids the most obvious locations for the exercise of hegemonic masculinity, while simultaneously carving out a masculine space through exclusionary curatorial practices. This will likely operate differently according to musical genre concerned: contemporary R&B operates differently to, say, black metal. A more recent study by Matthew Bannister (2006) sees the record shop as central to indie rock in providing a locus for gatekeeping practices:

I suggest re-envisioning indie as a history of record collectors – the importance of rock tradition to indie, of male rock 'intellectuals' and secondhand record shops; a narrative suppressed because of the normative emphasis on rock as a folk discourse, spontaneous, instinctual, closely allied to a 'natural' masculinity. (Bannister 2006, pp. xxvi–xvii)

Straw's and Bannister's analyses bring out the fraught and often contradictory practices involved in indie's simultaneous *rejection* of some hegemonically masculine presentation (and self-presentation) styles, together with its *reproduction* of certain alternative yet still dominant styles enforced through cultural capital.

A second research trajectory to emerge from Frith and McRobbie's (1978/1990) seminal work considers popular music texts and their performers, and, in particular, the ways in which these *perform* gendered identities. Like the music itself, popular music studies have been part of a cultural movement that has reconsidered the nature of gender, helping to locate it as cultural rather than natural. Commercial music has, perhaps, lent itself to this because, while appearing to express authentic, one might even say bodily, identities and emotions – Barthes's (1977) classic notion of the 'grain of the voice' is an example – it is, at the same time, open to creative artistic and political projects,

technologies and modes of stage performance that serve to *denaturalize* gender. Musical performance is, furthermore, so wide-ranging that it is a place where different gender identities are exposed, expressed, negotiated or constructed. In this context, Frith and McRobbie's 1978 article discussed a genre of rock that embodied hegemonic, heteronormative masculinity, namely 'cock rock'. The latter was contrasted with 'teeny bop', which the authors identified with males performing softer, romantic masculinities primarily for a young female audience. These two styles represented different performances of masculinity that were 'predicated on sexual divisions in the appropriation of rock' (p. 375). For performers, gender roles could also be delimited by music in other ways: Frith and McRobbie (1978/1990) mention 'the singer-songwriter/folkie lady' (p. 377) and the 'ambivalent sexuality' or 'camp' of glam rock (p. 382).

Returning to Freud, 'cock rock' obviously has phallic connotations. If it is not too fanciful, we might consider the dubious appeal of Donald Trump as in some ways related to the apparently less sinister appeal of iconic rock or hip hop musicians. Whitehead (2002) identifies the nineteenth- and twentieth-century instances of transnational business masculinity:

He is the self-made man carved out in the image of Ford, Hurst, Hughes, Goldwyn, Carnegie, Rockefeller, Beaverbrook. His contemporaries are global entrepreneurs such as Bill Gates, Donald Trump, George Soros [*sic*], Richard Branson and Rupert Murdoch.

(Whitehead 2002, p. 122)

Whitehead (2002) then supplements this with a more recent list: 'However, unlike the singularly besuited (White) Rockefeller or Ford, contemporary global icons of (heterosexual) male potency are just as likely to include Ice T, Michael Jordan, David Beckham, Brad Pitt or Eminem' (Whitehead 2002, p. 122). Further credence to these parallels comes from Imani Perry, whose study of poetics and politics in hip hop notes that 'Donald Trump, Bill Gates, and Bill Clinton, White men who have played the game successfully, are often appreciated in depoliticized form as role models for street players in hip hop' (Perry 2004, p. 124). Given the prominence of their respective corporate brands, we might go back to earlier forms of popular music, such as rock, to consider such figures as Mick Jagger, Robert Plant and Ozzy Osbourne as further 'cock rock' candidates who fuse thrusting masculinity and business success.

One contention here might be that visibly successful male musicians in certain dominant musical forms, such as 1970s rock, or more recently hip hop, often

share this fusion of hegemonic entrepreneurial masculinity with the monopoly on enjoyment of the obscene father. Here we can allude again to Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie's claim, 'Cock rock performers are aggressive, dominating, and boastful, and they constantly seek to remind the audience of their prowess, their control' (1978/1990, p. 374). In hip hop the performer as not only monopolizing enjoyment, but also becoming a one-man corporation, is highlighted even further, with artists like Jay-Z ('Girls, Girls, Girls' and Rocawear), Dr. Dre (with his multi-million Beats headphone business) or 50 Cent (from 'P.I.M.P.' to his Formula 50 soft drink, to later forays into film production and other ventures).

'Cock rock' is not, however, the be-all and end-all of performances of masculinity in popular music. In reality, just like in the case of musical spaces such as scenes or collective genre cultures, the gendering of performance texts is a form of communication that is both specific and responsive to particular cultural contexts. A number of useful books on popular music have focus on this (con)textual performance of gender since Frith and McRobbie's (1978/1990) pioneering work. These include edited collections by Whiteley (1997), Jarman-Ivens (2007) and Lee (2018), as well as monographs by Hawkins (2009) and Auslander (2006) and White (2011). In recent years, queer studies have helped to reformulate approaches to gender identity, both in academia and in the commercial marketplace, leading gender theorists such as Jack Halberstam (2012) to take a deeper interest in pop performance.

It is to questions of gender performance in popular music texts that most of the trickle of work on popular music and monstrosity has, so far, spoken. Beyond occasional surveys of Halloween recordings and similar material (see Cooper 2006), existing discussions of monstrosity often talk about performers who have pushed accepted notions of gender or other boundaries. In recent years, inspired by artists such as Bowie and Jackson, a range of performers have continued to challenge the naturalization of gender and have been examined in relation to the idea of monstrosity. Seth Cosimini (2017), for example, has studied Nicki Minaj in this respect. When Lady Gaga emerged, she extended this playful engagement with monstrosity, labelling herself 'Mother Monster' to a community of 'Little Monsters' and in doing so, helping a diverse range of fans improve their self-esteem (see Corona 2011; Varriale 2012; Click, Lee and Willson Holladay 2013). In seeming contrast to the playful theatricality of pop, monstrosity has also been studied in other genres as a mode of *authenticating* gender. Niall Scott (2007), Stan Hawkins and Nina Nielsen (2020), for instance, have considered heavy metal. Questions around the meaning of hyper-masculine modes of rock