

The Monstrous Encounter

by

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Abstract

This research project proposes that the monstrous encounter in art, film and story can signify the change from the understood to the unknown self, using the historical context and literary elements of *Little Red Riding Hood* as a framework. Within this framework three visual artists, Kiki Smith, Jazmina Cininas and Matthew Barney are investigated to demonstrate how the monstrous encounter signifies the change from the understood to the unknown self.

In order to use *Little Red Riding Hood* as a framework the historical context of the tale has been broken down into three periods, identified as the *original*, the *bourgeois* and the *contemporary*. In each period it is shown how the monstrous encounter signifies the change from the understood to the unknown self.

The research project draws on the work of Jack Zipes, *The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood* (1993) and *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (1983); Jon Elster, *The Multiple Self* (1985); Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous Feminine* (1993) and *Phallic Panic* (2005); and Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (1982). These key references are used to define important ideas and strengthen terminology specific to the project, such as self, monster and monstrous encounter, abjection and transformation.

As a result of using *Little Red Riding Hood* as a framework the majority of the research looks at the monstrous encounter almost exclusively in the form of lycanthropy, which lends itself most easily to concepts of metamorphoses and the divided self. The werewolf enjoys enormous popularity in many avenues of contemporary culture and there exists countless references to this particular genre of monstrous encounter. However, this is not a project about werewolves but an investigation of the monstrous encounter, whatever form it takes. Whether it is an internal event like the work of Matthew Barney or an external process as in Cininas's use of Angela Carter's contemporary Red Riding Hood, the monstrous encounter in art, film and story can be demonstrated to signify the change from the understood to the unknown self.

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