

Edited by Diego Compagna, Stefanie Steinhart

Monsters, Monstrosities, and the Monstrous in Culture and Society

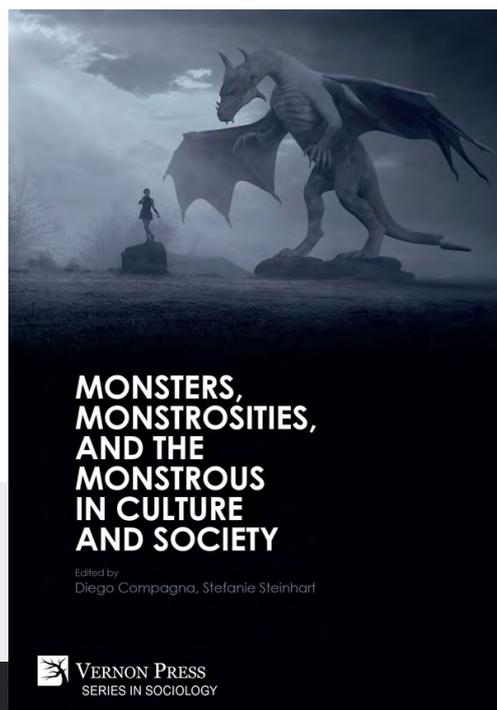
SERIES IN SOCIOLOGY

About the editor

Diego Compagna received his diploma (in social sciences) from the Freie Universität Berlin in 2000. After working for three years in the market research industry, he began working as a junior lecturer at the Institute for Sociology of the Universität Duisburg-Essen, where he earned his PhD (in social sciences) in 2012. He then worked for two years for the German Ministry of Education and Research and in 2015 took a position as postdoc/head of an interdisciplinary research group dedicated to the study of human-robot interaction at the Technische Universität Berlin. He is currently Professor and Senior Lecturer for Theories of Societal Transformation at the University of Applied Sciences in Munich (Germany). As a social scientist specializing in science and technology studies, he is generally interested in the study of the anthropological baseline of social theory and the development of alternative social actor models (e.g. cyborgs, social robots, avatars, etc.).

Stefanie Steinhart holds a Mag. phil. degree in Media and Communication Studies from the Alpen-Adria Universität Klagenfurt. Her diploma thesis dealt with cultural as well as gender stereotypes in the first two Underworld movies in the context of the subversion – containment dynamics of form. After achieving her diploma she continued studying the specific negative shapes of the Grotesque, the Absurd, the Surreal and the Uncanny as varying and critical deviations from socially established, one-dimensional norms.

Besides this interest in the connection between forms and social structures, health and medical issues play a crucial role in Steinhart's life and research. Her most recent research examines health and medical topics in relation to identity and power.



Summary

Existing research on monsters acknowledges the deep impact monsters have especially on Politics, Gender, Life Sciences, Aesthetics and Philosophy. From Sigmund Freud's essay 'The Uncanny' to Scott Poole's 'Monsters in America', previous studies offer detailed insights about uncanny and immoral monsters. However, our anthology wants to overcome these restrictions by bringing together multidisciplinary authors with very different approaches to monsters and setting up variety and increasing diversification of thought as 'guiding patterns'. Existing research hints that monsters are embedded in social and scientific exclusionary relationships but very seldom copes with them in detail. Erving Goffman's doesn't explicitly talk about monsters in his book 'Stigma', but his study is an exceptional case which shows that monsters are stigmatized by society because of their deviations from norms, but they can form groups with fellow monsters and develop techniques for handling their stigma. Our book is to be understood as a complement and a 'further development' of previous studies: The essays of our anthology pay attention to mechanisms of inequality and exclusion concerning specific historical and present monsters, based on their research materials within their specific frameworks, in order to 'create' engaging, constructive, critical and diverse approaches to monsters, even utopian visions of a future of societies shared by monsters. Our book proposes the usual view, that humans look in a horrified way at monsters, but adds that monsters can look in a critical and even likewise frightened way at the very societies which stigmatize them.

October 2019 | Hardback 236x160mm | 426 Pages | ISBN: 978-1-62273-536-5

SUBJECTS Sociology, Cultural Studies, Social & Cultural History

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