

MONSTERS

**THE UNCANNY AND DREAD OF
DIFFERENCE**

OUTLINE

- » What Is A Monster?
- » The History of Monsters
- » Why Monsters?
- » The Uncanny
- » Difference

THE WORLD'S SHORTEST HORROR STORY

**“THE LAST MAN ON
EARTH SAT ALONE IN A
ROOM. THERE WAS A
KNOCK ON THE
DOOR...”**

Fredrick Brown, "Knock" (1948)

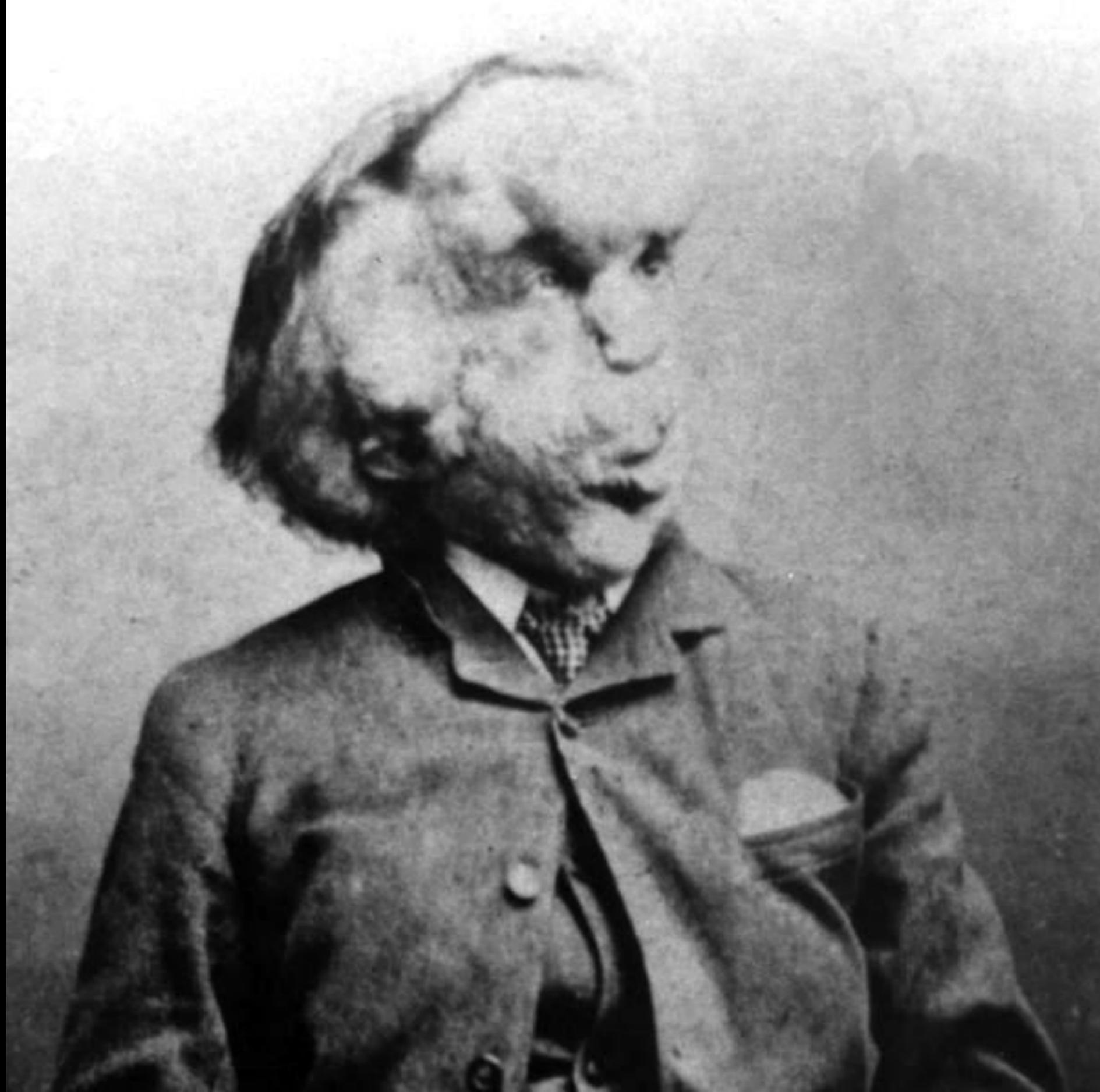
WHAT IS A MONSTER?











A HISTORY OF MONSTERS

ANCIENT GREEKS

- » Monsters occur when natural order is disrupted
- » Deformity occurs when a pregnant woman sees something that startles her

THE MIDDLE AGES

» Monsters came from God and the Devil, they were caused by stars and comets, they resulted from copulation with other species and from flaws in their parents' anatomies.

MODERN TIMES

“Something out of the common order of nature.”

Dr. Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language
(1755)

MODERN TIMES

“Originally: a mythical creature which is part animal and part human, or combines elements of two or more animal forms, and is frequently of great size and ferocious appearance. Later, more generally: any imaginary creature that is large, ugly, and frightening.”

Oxford English Dictionary

WHY MONSTERS?

WHY MONSTERS?

Fear

Repulsion

Attraction

Unmanageable

**MONSTERS EXPRESS
SOMETHING BEYOND OUR
IMMEDIATE CAPACITY TO
UNDERSTAND**

**THEY NAME AND VISUALIZE
FEARS, MAKING THE
UNMANAGEABLE MANAGEABLE**

WHAT DO MONSTERS MEAN?

- » Literal and symbolic
- » Express cultural categories
- » Manage contradictions

LITERAL/SYMBOLIC

- » The vampire will drink your blood and kill you
- » But it is also a symbol of fear/desire of penetration, impurity, and invasion from abroad

QUESTIONS CULTURAL CATEGORIES

» Is a zombie dead or alive?

» Is a werewolf human or wolf?

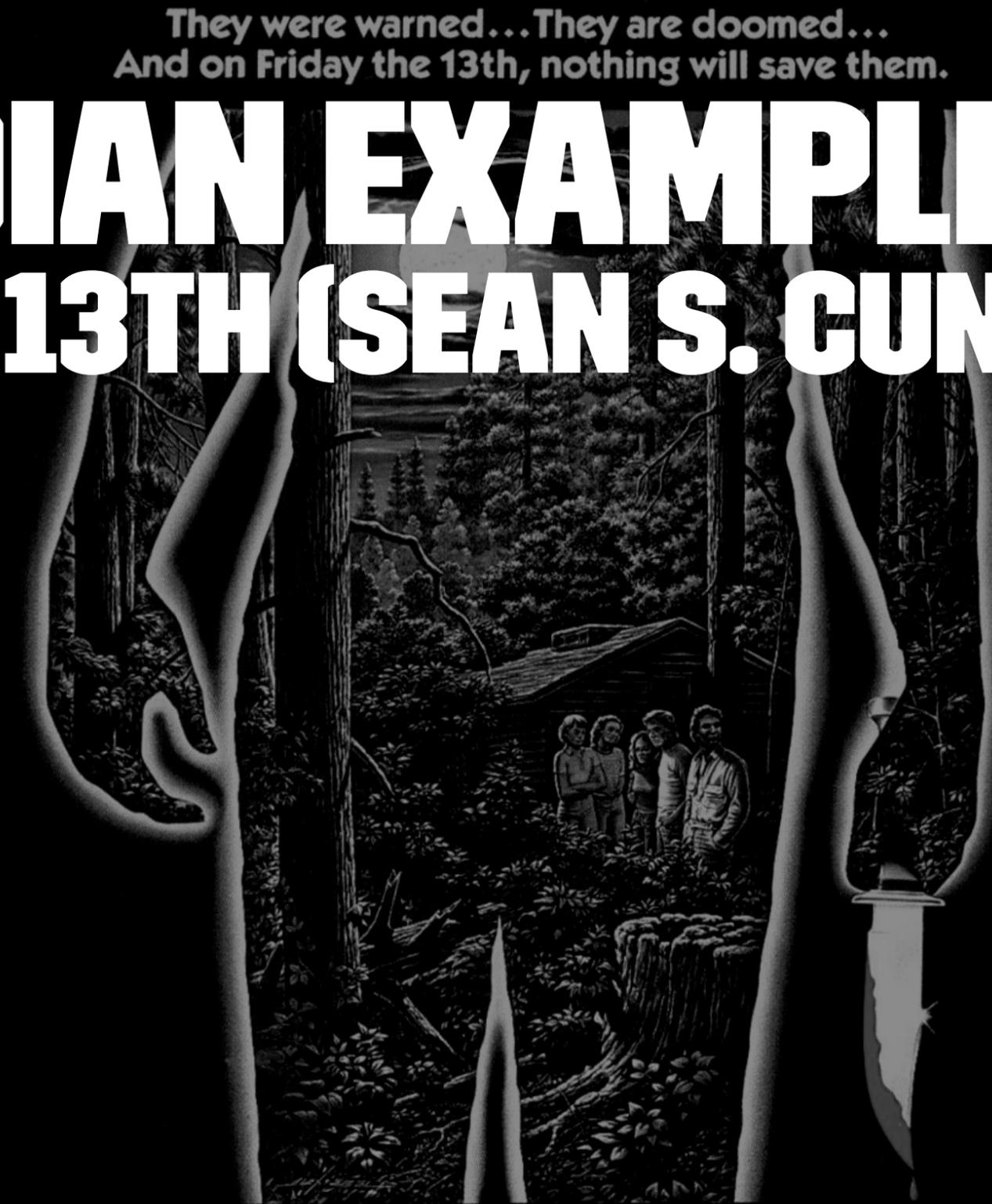
MANAGE CONTRADICTIONS

- » Many horror stories conclude with the monster being vanquished
- » This solves a cultural tension via narrative means

They were warned...They are doomed...
And on Friday the 13th, nothing will save them.

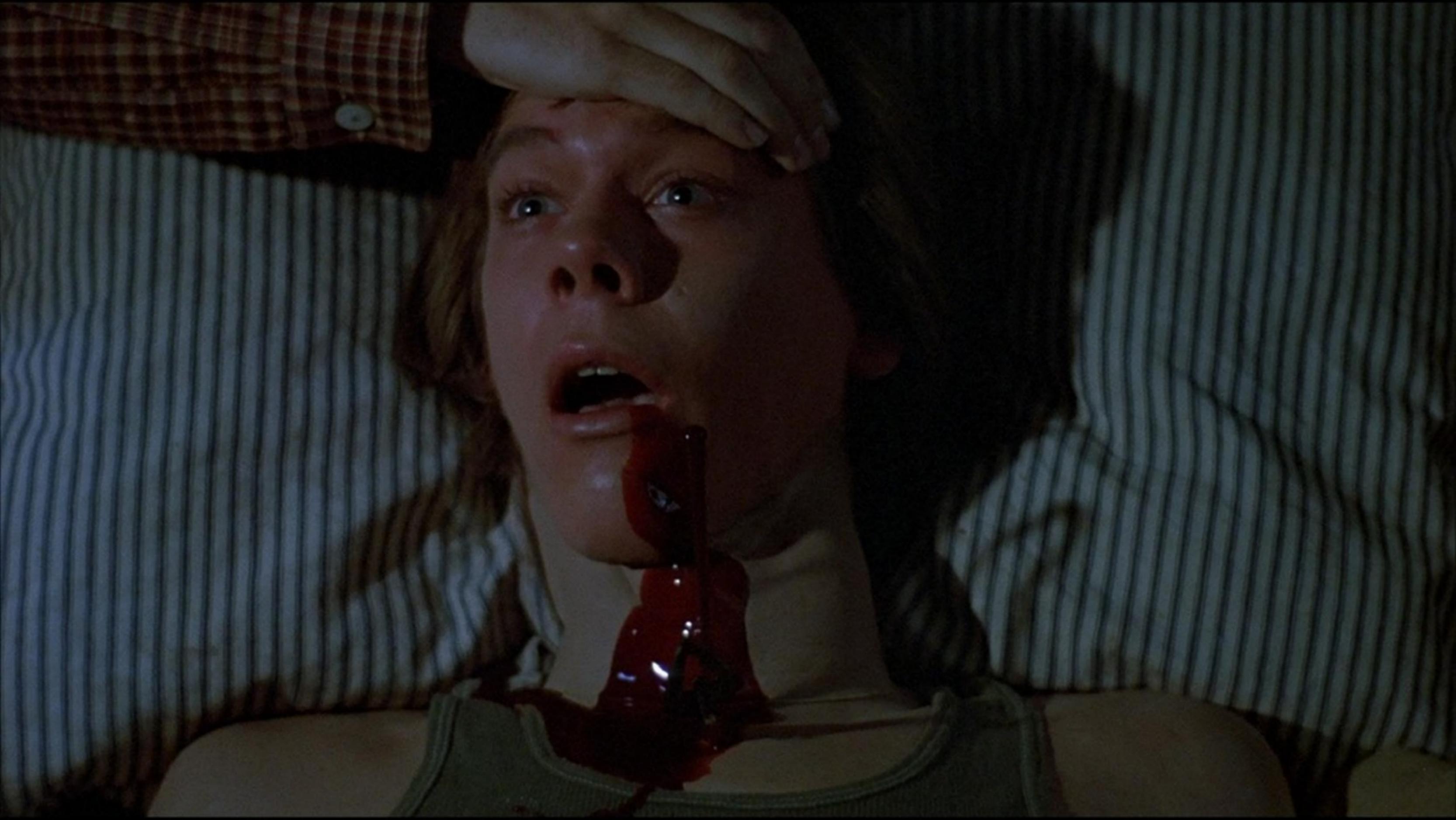
A FREUDIAN EXAMPLE

FRIDAY THE 13TH (SEAN S. CUNNINGHAM 1980)



FRIDAY THE 13TH

**A GROUP OF TEENAGERS GO TO
CAMP TO HAVE FUN. A FIRST
COUPLE HAS SEX AND WHAT
HAPPENS?**



**THE ONLY ONE WHO SURVIVES
IS ALICE, WHO DOES NOT HAVE
SEX DURING THE TRIP**

**THE SURVIVOR OF THE SLASHER CYCLE IS TERMED THE 'FINAL GIRL', BECAUSE IT
IS ALMOST ALWAYS A VIRTUOUS GIRL**

DON'T HAVE SEX, KIDS!

**TEEN PREGNANCY WAS ON THE
RISE, THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION
HAD TAKEN OFF, AND
CONSERVATIVE AMERICA WAS
WORRIED ABOUT THE CHILDREN**

**JASON (THE KILLER) MANAGES
THESE CONTRADICTIONS BY
ERADICATING THE KIDS WHO
HAVE SEX AND ALICE PROVIDES
A MORAL EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW**

**OBVIOUSLY, MOST VIEWERS
ROOT FOR JASON AND WATCH
THE MOVIES FOR THE BOOBS
(1980 WAS PRE-INTERNET)**

**WHAT THE FILM DOES IS TO TRIGGER THE
FEAR/DESIRE TEENAGERS GENERALLY HAVE
ABOUT SEX AND MANIFESTS IT IN A CLEAR-
CUT NARRATIVE**

UNCGANNY

FEAR AND FASCINATION

**THE UNCANNY IS BOTH FAMILIAR AND
UNFAMILIAR AT THE SAME TIME AND THIS
CATEGORY AMBIVALENCE IS WHAT
PRODUCES THE UNCANNY SENSATION**

HAUNTED HOUSES

**'IT WATCHES,' HE ADDED SUDDENLY.
'THE HOUSE. IT WATCHES EVERY MOVE
YOU MAKE.'**

Shirley Jackson, The Haunting of Hill House

**WHEN THEY WERE SILENT FOR A
MOMENT THE QUIET WEIGHT OF THE
HOUSE PRESSED DOWN FROM ALL
AROUND THEM.**

Shirley Jackson, The Haunting of Hill House

THE CATEGORY ERROR HERE IS THAT A HOUSE IS NOT ALIVE, AND IS MEANT TO BE A PLACE OF SAFETY. INSTEAD, THE HOUSE BECOMES A LIVE THING, A MONSTER.



**THE SAFE CLOWN BECOMING A
MONSTER IS ANOTHER
EXAMPLE OF THE UNCANNY**

**PENNYWISE IN STEPHEN
KING'S IT BECOMES A SYMBOL
OF THE TERRORS OF
CHILDHOOD, TERRORS THAT
CAN LITERALLY KILL YOU**

VAMPIRES



THE VAMPIRE FIGURE HAS OFTEN BEEN SEEN AS A SEXUAL METAPHOR WITH THE PENETRATING TEETH AND REPRODUCTIVE CAPABILITIES

» Early vampire stories (such as *The Vampyre* and *Carmilla*)

HIS FACE WAS A STRONG—A VERY STRONG—AQUILINE, WITH HIGH BRIDGE OF THE THIN NOSE AND PECULIARLY ARCHED NOSTRILS; WITH LOFTY DOMED FOREHEAD, AND HAIR GROWING SCANTILY ROUND THE TEMPLES BUT PROFUSELY ELSEWHERE. HIS EYEBROWS WERE VERY MASSIVE, ALMOST MEETING OVER THE NOSE, AND WITH BUSHY HAIR THAT SEEMED TO CURL IN ITS OWN PROFUSION. THE MOUTH, SO FAR AS I COULD SEE IT UNDER THE HEAVY MOUSTACHE, WAS FIXED AND RATHER CRUEL-LOOKING, WITH PECULIARLY SHARP WHITE TEETH; THESE PROTRUDED OVER THE LIPS, WHOSE REMARKABLE RUDDINESS SHOWED ASTONISHING VITALITY IN A MAN OF HIS YEARS. FOR THE REST, HIS EARS WERE PALE, AND AT THE TOPS EXTREMELY POINTED; THE CHIN WAS BROAD AND STRONG, AND THE CHEEKS FIRM THOUGH THIN. THE GENERAL EFFECT WAS ONE OF EXTRAORDINARY PALLOR.

-- Bram Stoker, Dracula









THE

LOST • BOYS









**VAMPIRES HELP US NAVIGATE
DESIRE AND HAVE EXPRESSED
ONE FORM OF DESIRE AND
ATTRACTION THROUGH THE
20TH CENTURY**

**VAMPIRES ALSO EXPRESS
WHAT WE FEAR, THE
TRANSGRESSION OF NATIONAL
BOUNDARIES, THE SEXUALITY
OF YOUTH, AND MORE**

DIFFERENCE

REPULSION AND EXCLUSION

MONSTERS ARE ALWAYS DIFFERENT FROM US

- » While this difference manifests physically, the real difference is cultural
- » We use monsters to express the difference to exclude it

ZOMBIES









ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS

a LUCIO FULCI film

TISA FARROW . IAN McCULLOCH . RICHARD JOHNSON
AL CLIVER . AURETTA GAY . OLGA KARLATOS

Story and Screenplay by ELISA BRIGANTI . Produced by UGO TUCCI and FABRIZIO DE ANGELIS for VARIETY FILM
Music by Fabio Frizzi and Giorgio Cascio . Colour by METRO COLOR . Directed by LUCIO FULCI









**ZOMBIES EXPRESS OUR
OTHERS**

**ZOMBIES EMBODY
WHAT IS ALIEN SO WE
CAN KILL THEM WITH NO
REMORSE**

**EVEN THAT WE CAN BE OTHER
TO OURSELVES**

SUMMARY

THANK YOU