#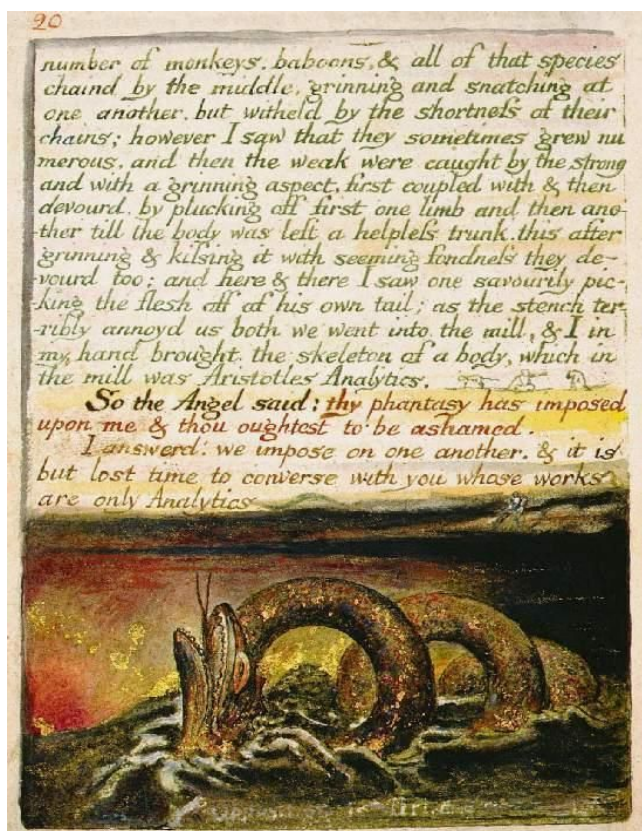 A Proliferation of Sea Monsters in Prints: Expressions of anxiety in the changing worlds of Early industrial Britain and Japan

Steve Wheeler

1734431

Author Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is entirely my own.

Steve Wheeler   18th August 2017

Contents

List of Images

(Title Image 1) Fig 1. William Blake; The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Plate 20; 1790; Image from The Fitzwilliam Museum digital archive http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/collections/prints/118220

Fig 2. William Blake; Illustrations from the Book of Job; 1826; Image from The Tate Modern digital collection http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/blake-behemoth-and-leviathan-a00026

Fig 3. William Blake; Tornado, Engraving after Henry Fuseli; 1795; from The Botanic Garden; Erasmus Darwin; image from The Metropolitan Museum of Art digital archive http://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/383666

(Title Image 2) Fig 4. Utagawa Kuniyoshi; Tamatori being pursued by a dragon; 1853-5; Image from ukiyo-e.org https://ukiyo-e.org/image/bm/AN00592118_001_l

Fig 5. Utagawa Kuniyoshi; Hanagami Danjō no jō Arakage fighting a giant salamander; 1834-5; Image from the Kuniyoshi Project http://www.kuniyoshiproject.com/Individual%20Warrior%20Prints%201834-1835%20(S1c).htm

Fig 6. Utagawa Kuniyoshi; Tamatori-Hime at the palace of the Dragon King; 1853;

Image from ukiyo-e.org https://ukiyo-e.org/image/chazen/1980_2692a-c

Acknowledgements

5

Chapter One: Introduction

Fear and Fascination

The human fascination with fear of the unknown has been documented in art and literature across civilisations for centuries. In every culture, this has manifested itself in the forms of creatures as bizarre as they are terrifying. Ever since the evolution of language, humans have invented and told stories about monsters to in some way explain or rationalise that which we cannot see, predict or explain. In this way, we feel as though we have somehow pinned these phenomena down in solid form, making the incomprehensible comprehensible. By giving our fears and anxieties a physical form such as that of a monster, we can render them visible on paper and in pencil, pen and paint. Thus we leave tangible evidence of their existence, giving us some semblance of control, however illusionary.

These physical forms can be inspired by the world around us or reflect aspects of our own humanity. Perhaps the most awe-inspiring of all of these are those forms associated with the ocean. The world's oceans are mysterious, dangerous, unpredictable and ever-changing. They are the biggest source of life, food, travel, trade and exploration across the globe. However, they can take away as often as they give and are the source of many natural disasters, including massive storms, tsunamis and floods which cause widespread destruction and devastation. The same waters that give the fisherman such a rich catch today might very well drown him tomorrow. It is not surprising, therefore, that the oceans and the monsters that dwell therein feature heavily in human narrative as symbolic representations of the uncontrolled and mysterious aspects of our existence.

Monster art in a time of transition

Monster art frequently becomes a vehicle of expression for the human mind, especially in times of duress. Art in general is sensitive to the moods of the society and the culture that produce it, and so it is hardly surprising that a period of great social, political and economic upheaval combined with technological development should precipitate a proliferation of monsters in the art of the society experiencing it.

When examining the art of monsters, I made an observation that such a proliferation could be seen in the art of two very separate countries, Britain and Japan. Furthermore, both these spikes in the popularity of monster art occurred during similar points of upheaval and transition in their histories.

From the latter half of the eighteenth century onwards, the spread of industrialisation across Europe and the rest of the world would disrupt social structures, traditions and a way of life for millions of people. In addition, political and economic instability caused Europe to become embroiled in the Napoleonic Wars twenty-two years of continental warfare which left Europe bankrupt and in disarray.[1]

While Britain itself escaped becoming an actual battlefield, the combination of conflict so near to home and the changes being brought about by the beginnings of industrialisation had a profound impact on British society. It gave rise to what is now known as the romantic movement a period of art and literature characterised by its emphasis on the darker and more dramatic aspects of human experience. In particular, the artists of this movement took their inspiration from myths and legends of European antiquity, producing works filled with a variety of strange and terrifying creatures.

Nearly a century later and on the other side of the world, Japan underwent a rapid and traumatic upheaval. The nineteenth century witnessed the aggressive expansion of the Western Imperial powers into Asia, making ever greater demands for trade concessions on those countries they had not already colonised. After the first Opium War of 1848, China was forced to open treaty ports to British trade, with the rest of the Colonial Powers swiftly following. Despite its proximity, Japan successfully remained closed to most Western trade for the first half of the nineteenth century, but outside pressure combined with domestic troubles threatened to make this position untenable. At the end of the Tokugawa period, Japan was facing famine, economic stagnation and an ever-more unstable Shogunate. In 1854, the arrival of Commodore Perry in Edo Bay would

---

[1]

Stuart Curran, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

herald Japan finally opening to the Western powers which would completely transform the country and bring an end to centuries of Shogunate rule.[2]

Just like in Britain, this troubled period was mirrored in the activities of Japan's cultural elite. Dramatic artwork that used mythical monsters and supernatural phenomena as its subject matter began to be produced by artists, who just like their British counterparts, developed a fascination with the extreme, strange and bizarre.

<u>Hypothesis</u>

For all that Japan and Britain are very different in terms of their history and culture; there are striking similarities in terms of how the sea monsters of their respective mythologies manifest in the visual art of both cultures, in response to the trauma and anxiety brought about by instability and upheaval in society. In both cases, during a period which heralded huge cultural, social and economic change, visual art featuring sea monsters became increasingly popular. When examining the historical context of such visual art, a number of points of similarity between Britain and Japan during these periods in their histories became apparent, despite the distance from each other in time and space.

In both countries, a combination of increasing urbanisation, commercialisation and socio-cultural transformation together with political instability both domestically and abroad led to a great deal of anxiety and fear among individuals and in society in general. The response of many, especially the educated classes, was to turn their gazes inwards, focusing on their own origins in order to understand and rationalise the events taking place around them.[3] This study of origins meant looking at not just written history and classical texts, but also superstitions, stories and myths that made up what became known as "folklore" and which was seen as the last vestiges of the "original society", slowly disappearing due to the effects of increasing urbanisation and

[2]

      Harold Bolitho, 'The Tempō Crisis', in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5 (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[3]

      H. W. Janson, Penelope J. E. Davies, and H. W. Janson, *Janson's History of Art: The Western Tradition*, 8th ed (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011).

commercialisation.[4] Combined with this introspection was an increasing fascination with the awesome power of nature, the irrational, the extreme and the exotic.[5] These two elements of interest in tradition and fascination with the extreme and exotic together produced a proliferation of sea monsters in the art of both countries.

The hypothesis of this paper is that art featuring sea monsters and other supernatural creatures is a phenomenon which appears in a society undergoing significant upheaval, change or trauma. Comparing the respective contexts of British and Japanese sea monster art, will show how similar circumstances produced art that, while very different in visual aesthetic, has a remarkable amount of features in common in terms of subject matter and context. Furthermore, examining the ways in which these monsters are depicted in visual art can tell us about how British and Japanese societies approached and dealt with the fear and anxiety surrounding issues such as loss of traditional social structures, political and economic instability and the rapid and unpredictable change this brought about.

Value of cross cultural studies and the interdisciplinary approach

With a subject like this, it is difficult to know where to start. Although this study is ultimately less about monsters themselves than the surrounding human context, it might still be a good idea to start with the monsters. In both the island nations of Britain and Japan, a plethora of strange creatures run riot across mythology, ranging from the truly horrifying to the divine. Many of these are associated with the bodies of water-strange fish and fish-like people inhabiting streams and lakes, mysterious and terrifying beasts glimpsed from the decks of ships - a reminder to those on board of the vast and unknowable dangers of the ocean.

Michael Dean Foster very eloquently describes the problem of studying mythical monsters, which is that they are walking paradoxes, existing between the seen and unseen and inhabiting boundary spaces. This makes them difficult to spot and identify, and they remain resistant to

---

[4]

  Robert A Georges and Michael Owen Jones, *Folkloristics: An Introduction* (Indiana University Press, 1995).

[5]

  Janson, Davies, and Janson, *Janson's History of Art*.

attempts at categorization.[6] Even in academic studies monsters appear across boundaries and along the intersections of many disciplines from literature to art, to history, archaeology, psychology and zoology. There is even a field of academia dedicated to their study the field of cryptozoology, and even it fails to contain them all or prevent them from wandering into other disciplines.

For this reason, despite only being a narrow snapshot into the world of monster art, this study will aim to look beyond the borders demarcating different academic disciplines and instead provide a more complex and nuanced perspective using an interdisciplinary approach.

This research will build upon existing scholarship in the fields of art history, mythology and anthropology. While there is already literature covering the depiction of monsters in both Japanese and British art, there is little that compares the two. Re-contextualising visual depictions of mythical monsters and comparing them to depictions elsewhere can give us a fresh perspective on these phenomena in visual art. This comparative study also has relevance to contemporary society, which despite being very different in nature, has a strikingly similar zeitgeist of fear and anxiety, characterised by rapid social change, economic and political instability, and is also experiencing a spike in the popularity of sea monsters across a wide range of artistic disciplines.

This study aims to fill a gap in modern scholarship, where there is a lack of this kind of contextual cross cultural study within art and art history. It is often the case that the arts of different countries find themselves constrained to a single geographical sphere, isolated from the rest of the world by strict boundaries that do not exist in reality. Freeing ourselves from such imagined boundaries can give us new insights into art and the people who created it.

Print art as a chosen medium

Prints, created using primarily engraving in Britain and woodblock printing in Japan as the medium through which to conduct this study. They were chosen because this form of visual art was an important part of the commercial printing industry in both countries, which expanded hugely as a result of the rise of an increasingly literate, urban population during the periods being examined.

6

Michael Dylan Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), http://0-site.ebrary.com.fama.us.es/lib/unisev/Doc?id=10675802.

Publications featuring illustrations became popular and the increased demand for them meant that prints became a sizeable portion of an artist's commissions. Therefore, they provide insights into the mind of the individual artist, but more importantly, as commercial works of art, they function as a reflection of the mind and moods of the public who consumed them.

The next five chapters of this study will proceed as follows: Chapter two will examine the literature concerning monsters in art within the fields of art history, anthropology and psychology and how the focus of discourse on monster art has moved from one field to another over the past three centuries. It will begin with the mid eighteenth century, when the first recognisably 'modern' academic studies of monsters appeared, and end with the most recent literature including an examination of how the rise of the internet age has enabled more and more lay people to contribute to monster research. Chapter three will outline the methodology for this study, based on the multidisciplinary theory outlined by Evelyn Payne Hatcher and the philosophy of phenomenology.

The following two chapters (four and five) will be dedicated to the contextualisation and comparison of the art. The political, economic, social and cultural contexts of Romantic era Britain and late Tokugawa era Japan will be introduced and established in chapter four, then the monster artworks themselves and the backgrounds of the artists that created them will be examined in chapter five. Following this will be a comparison of the artworks within their respective contexts, which will show how similar kinds of people in similar socio-cultural and economic circumstances produced art that featured similar subject matter. Finally chapter six will conclude by showing that the phenomenon of monster art is experienced across the world, appearing in societies that undergo similar underlying pressures regardless of social and cultural differences.

Chapter two: State of the field

This study is concerned with the phenomena of sea monsters in the print art of late eighteenth century Britain and mid nineteenth century Japan. It examines both the context in which this phenomenon appeared and how individual artists used the subject of sea monsters to comment on the reaction of their society to these circumstances.

11

Therefore, this literature review will be concerned with two issues: the main interpretations of sea monsters in visual art by scholars, and the main perspective concerning cultural comparison studies on art and mythology. Across a variety of disciplines there is plenty of literature concerning the interpretation of different mythical monsters in both British and Japanese art. There is also a variety of literature that addresses cross-cultural comparison methods and their relative merits and weaknesses. However, there is very little literature that combines an analysis of sea monsters in visual art with a cultural comparative approach, and it is this gap that this study will address.

Un-natural History: The encyclopaedic approach

This literature review will begin by examining the different encyclopaedic works featuring sea monsters from the regions of North West Europe and East Asia. These were often compiled by scholars from a variety of texts, works of art and oral tradition.[7] The mythology of sea monsters has always been fluid, moving across borders overseas and people travelled and traded back and forth.[8] Monsters seldom evolve in isolation, but it is possible to group similar creatures together by geographical region, which often occurred in these works. Encyclopaedic collections are significant because they represent some of the earliest formal academic studies of monsters in both literature and visual art. They provided the foundation for the developing studies of folklore by anthropologists of the nineteenth century, as well as the investigations of natural historians seeking to discover the truth behind the accounts of these strange creatures. Moreover, their rich illustrations and descriptions also made them a key source of inspiration and source material for artists as well.[9]

In Europe, one of the most well-known examples of these encyclopaedic works is that of Olaus Magnus (1490-1557), as part of his larger work *"Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus"*

---

[7]

'Olaus Magnus', *1911 Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1911, Wikisource; Michael Dylan Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), http://0-site.ebrary.com.fama.us.es/lib/unisev/Doc?id=10675802.

[8]

Chet Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps*, Paperback edition (London: The British Library, 2014).

[9]

R. Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861* (Hotei Pub., 1998), https://books.google.nl/books?id=tJUkAQAAMAAJ.

(History of the Northern Peoples).[10] In books 21 and 22 of this work, Magnus gives detailed descriptions of monsters from Scandinavian mythology including sea monsters. Magnus also produced another vital piece of work for researchers of sea monsters in European folklore, *Carta marina et descriptio septemtrionalium terrarum ac mirabilium (Nautical Chart and Description of the Northern Lands and Wonders.)*[11] This nine sheet map of North-west Europe, features many illustrations of sea monsters drawn from a combination of information from other sources and Magnus' own imagination.[12] Although only two versions of the map itself survive today, the multiple translations of Magnus' written work ensured its wide influence across Western Europe from the Renaissance onwards.[13] The sea monsters of the Carta Marina reappeared on other cartographical works over the next few centuries, remaining ubiquitous over the next few centuries to the point that when nineteenth century Dutch zoologist Anthonie Cornelius Oudemans (1858-1943) came to write his own treatise on the various eyewitness reports concerning sea monsters, it was to Magnus' writings that he turned first.[14]

In East Asia, Chinese scholars developed encyclopaedic works as an ordering of the natural world according to the values of Neo-Confucianism. In the early 1600s, this genre of literature gained popularity in Japan due to the rising literacy rates of the population and a variety of

---

10

Published in Latin in 1555, translated into Italian (1565), German (1567), English (1658) and Dutch (1665)

11

Published 1539

12

Chet Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps*, Paperback edition (London: The British Library, 2014).

13

'Olaus Magnus', *1911 Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1911, Wikisource; 'Olaus Magnus's Sea Serpent', *The Public Domain Review*, accessed 15 May 2017, /2014/02/05/olaus-magnuss-sea-serpent/.

14

'Olaus Magnus's Sea Serpent'; 'Olaus Magnus'; A. C. (Anthonie Cornelis) Oudemans, *The Great Sea-Serpent. An Historical and Critical Treatise. With the Reports of 187 Appearances...the Suppositions and Suggestions of Scientific and Non-Scientific Persons, and the Author's Conclusions. With 82 Illustrations* (Leiden : E. J. Brill; London, Luzac & co., 1892), http://archive.org/details/greatseaserpenth00oude.

encyclopaedic works recording Japan's flora and fauna appeared.[15] Inspired by these, Toriyama Sekien 鳥山 石燕 (1712-1788) created a series of four illustrated books known as *Gazu Hyakki Yagyō*画図百鬼夜行 "*The Illustrated Night Parade of a Hundred Demons.*"[16] Seiken's encyclopedias were a fusion of natural history, storytelling and comedic verse. He combined serious academic discourse with playful illustrations to create one of the earliest encyclopedias specifically devoted to supernatural phenomena.[17]

Seiken was an accomplished scholar and poet. He was also an artist trained in the Kano school of painting. His pupil, Utagawa Toyoharu 歌川 豊春 (1735-1814) went on to found the Utagawa school of painting from which the most famous monster artists came from.[18] Seiken's work not only inspired generations of artists; his detailed cataloguing and descriptions of monsters found around the Japanese archipelago would provide the basis of modern Japanese folklore studies.

These two encyclopaedic works take a natural history approach to a certain extent, observing and documenting the creatures from their respective regions. However, as artists as well as scholars, both also bring certain flair of their own imagination to their works, interpreting in their own way how they believed these creatures to appear. Thus the work of both Seiken and Magnus are regarded as much a source of monster artwork themselves as they are a source of information on monster lore.[19]

No such thing as Monsters: Folklore Studies and Natural History

---

[15]

Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai.*

[16]

Sekien Toriyama, Hiroko Yoda, and Matt Alt, *Japandemonium Illustrated: The Yokai Encyclopedias of Toriyama Sekien* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 2016).

[17]

Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai.*

[18]

Basil William Robinson and Kuniyoshi Utagawa, *Kuniyoshi: The Warrior-Prints* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982).

[19]

Michael Dylan Foster, *The Book of Yokai : Mysterious Creatures of Japanese Folklore* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), https://login.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/login?URL=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=875719&site=ehost-live; Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps.*

In the nineteenth century, European scholars of folklore paid increasing attention to works like those of Magnus and Seiken. Amid fears that the rise of industrialisation would lead to the extinction of ''traditional' folklore practices in Europe, scholars began to record and analyse these beliefs and practices more and more.[20] This focus mostly centred on oral traditions, such as stories, poems and songs and collecting them into anthologies, which evolved into the discipline known as folkloristics. The most well-known of these is the collection of German fairy tales published by the Brothers Grimm in 1812.[21] The academic interest in sorting through and preserving what was considered to be 'traditional folklore' became incorporated into a larger movement of nation building, and defining what made up the identity of a particular people.[22] Myths and their associated characters and creatures began to be associated with specific countries or people, rather than the more regional identity they had before.

In Japan, much like in Europe, discourse on folklore became caught up in a wave of nation-building until it became a keystone of the Japanese national identity. Scholars like Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858 –1919) and Yanagita Kunio 柳田 國男 (1875 –1962) having studied the newly emerging discipline of folkloristics in Western academia, were quick to apply the same methods in Japan, collecting and recording what they considered to be 'folk traditions' all over Japan.[23] Inoue himself is credited with being the first scholar to formalise the study of Japanese mythological creatures (for which he coined the term *yōkai* 妖怪*.)*[24] He named this new field of study *yokaigakku* 妖怪学区 and devoted himself to investigating and dispelling the mystery and superstition surrounding them.[25]

---

[20]

Robert A Georges and Michael Owen Jones, *Folkloristics: An Introduction* (Indiana University Press, 1995).

[21]

'Folk Literature - Proverbs, Riddles, and Charms', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 11 May 2017, https://www.britannica.com/art/folk-literature/Proverbs-riddles-and-charms.

[22]

Robert A Georges and Michael Owen Jones, *Folkloristics: An Introduction* (Indiana University Press, 1995); Jaan. Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology* (Baltimore [u.a.]: Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993).

[23]

Zília Papp, *Traditional Monster Imagery in Manga, Anime and Japanese Cinema* (Global Oriental, 2010).

[24]

Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai.*

[25]

The eradication of superstitious beliefs as a form of ignorance which had no place in modern society stemmed back in Europe to the Enlightenment era. Accounts of sea monsters and other creatures of folklore attracted the interest of various scientists and natural historians who were looking for a rational explanation for the many eyewitness accounts claiming to have seen them. Many suspected that these supposed 'sea monsters' were in fact some form of previously unidentified marine life which had, through stories distorted by superstition and ignorance, transformed into monsters.[26] An example of this is *The Great Sea Serpent* by Dutch zoologist Anthonie Oudemans. Drawing on sources such as Magnus' *Marina Carta*, Oudemans collected over three hundred stories and eyewitness accounts of sea serpents throughout the world.[27] Oudemans believed that these supposed 'sea serpents' sightings were in fact describing a species of marine mammal previously unknown to science.[28] In a similar vein, British Botanist Edward Newman (1801-1876) published studies in the *Zoologist* examining the similarities between various species of squid and cuttlefish and descriptions of the kraken, a giant, many-tentacled monster known for sinking ships. He concluded, along with naturalist Henry Lee (1826-1888) that the various accounts and sightings of kraken were in fact possible sightings of giant squid, which were mistaken for monsters due to the rarity with which they appeared at the surface of the ocean.[29]

Monster discourse of the nineteenth century then, could be mostly found in one of two academic fields. The first was that of the subset of anthropology- folklorists. Their main concern was the recording and preserving of monster sources as part of a greater folkloric tradition that was

[26]   Ibid.

[27]   Oudemans, *The Great Sea-Serpent. An Historical and Critical Treatise. With the Reports of 187 Appearances...the Suppositions and Suggestions of Scientific and Non-Scientific Persons, and the Author's Conclusions. With 82 Illustrations*.

[28]   A. C. (Anthonie Cornelis) Oudemans, *The Great Sea-Serpent. An Historical and Critical Treatise. With the Reports of 187 Appearances...the Suppositions and Suggestions of Scientific and Non-Scientific Persons, and the Author's Conclusions. With 82 Illustrations* (Leiden : E. J. Brill; London, Luzac & co., 1892), http://archive.org/details/greatseaserpenth00oude.

[29]   Henry. Lee, *Sea Monsters Unmasked.* ([S.l.]: COSIMO CLASSICS, 2014).

being constructed as part of the newly forming nation-states. The second field was that of the natural historians. The advances and discoveries made since the previous century fuelled a desire by many to discover the true nature of these so-called monsters, to sweep away the ignorance and superstition surrounding them and shine the light of scientific enquiry on them, thus revealing their true nature.

Around the World in Eighty Myths: Cross-cultural Studies

During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the study of mythical monsters was incorporated into the newly developing studies of anthropology and folkloristics. In Britain, scholars such as James Frazer (1854-1941), Edward B Tylor (1832-1917) and Andrew Lang (1844-1912) pioneered cultural comparative studies in mythology with the intent to gain a deeper understanding of the workings of human society and culture. Anthropology as a discipline was born out of European interest in the 'other' and how this other might be reflected in their own past. This inevitably invited scholars to make cross cultural comparisons when studying these 'other' societies. The subject of many of these comparison studies was the uncanny number of similarities between different mythologies across the world. The search for the reason behind these similarities led many to suppose that they had some universal origin. James Frazer, known as the father of anthropology, was one of the first scholars to lay out the theory of a universal mythology in *The Golden Bough,* which would remain influential in comparative studies during the twentieth century.[30]

In Japan, which was coerced into opening up to the West in 1954, a process began of rapid modernisation and westernisation which produced its own first generation of anthropologists Yanagita Kunio and Inoue Enryō. Inoue in particular is credited with bringing the term *yōkai* into common use as a term specifically referring to monsters of Japanese folklore.[31] At a time when traditional mythology and folklore were becoming a huge part of national identity, both Inoue and Kunio used encyclopaedic works like those of Toriyama Seiken to argue that Japanese folklore was

---

[30]

Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology*; Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

[31]

Foster, *The Book of Yokai : Mysterious Creatures of Japanese Folklore.*

17

unique in East Asia and that it had evolved for centuries in isolation from mainland Asia. This was in keeping with a greater line of thinking in nineteenth century Japan which sought to emphasise the difference between Japan, which had successfully modernised itself, and the rest of Asia, which had not.[32]

Similarly, Frazer and other anthropologists used their cross cultural comparisons to emphasise the similarities between so-called 'primitive cultures' and Britain's own 'traditional' folklore. More importantly, it was used to demonstrate that all civilisations existed on the same evolutionary timeline, and that the nations of Europe had advanced the furthest along it.[33] This was used as the argument to justify the continued dominion of the European empires over their colonies.

Joseph Campbell's (1904- 1987) comparative mythological study *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* has been one of the most influential comparative theories of the twentieth century. Campbell drew on both the psycho-analytical theories of Freud and Jung and the comparative studies of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. In it, Campbell outlines the concept of the original myth-the theory that all myths and their contents in all civilisations can be traced back to a single prototype myth.

In a similar vein, Seiki Keigo 関 敬吾 (1899-1990) was greatly inspired by the earlier work of Yanagita Kunio, but unlike Yanagita, he would conclude that Japanese folk-tales had some form of universal quality that gave them appeal across time and cultures. However, he did not subscribe to Campbell's theory of the proto-myth, but expressed a theory similar to that of anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-2009)- that it is some quality within the myths themselves that makes them so timeless.

Levi-Strauss was the founder of structural anthropology and one of the most important anthropologists of the twentieth century. Structural anthropology was based on a linguistics-type model and sought to simplify empirical data into comprehensible relations between units.[34] Unlike

---

[32]

William G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan: [Political, Economic and Social Change since 1850]*, 3. ed., ed (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000).

[33]

Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology*.

[34]

Campbell, Levi-Strauss did not believe in the universal myth and sought instead to identify what he referred to as the basic building blocks of myths, which he called "mythemes."[35] Twentieth century anthropology in the west then was dominated by two schools of theory. In the United States, Campbell's universal myth prevailed, while in Europe, scholars preferred the structural model of myth as formulated by Levi-Strauss.

By the 1980s, influenced by Edward Said's *Orientalism*, scholars became increasingly concerned with the Western and Eurocentric theories of past anthropologists, and sought to find new methods of cultural comparison. Scholarship like that of Jaan Puhvel's, which re-examines theories of comparative mythology has been vital to this process. He offers valuable criticism in particular on *The Golden Bough,* commenting not just on Frazer's inherent euro-centric bias, but also on the flaws in his methodology and how the same flawed method has been used over and over again by many other nineteenth century anthropologists.[36] Puhvel's work is not simply a critique of past literature, but also serves as a guide for future scholars to avoid basing their arguments on the same flawed methodology.

Hatcher's *Introduction to the Anthropology of Art* forms an important piece of literature for this study, as it expands on the necessity of taking a multidisciplinary approach to comparative studies of art in order to gain a more detailed picture of the artwork being compared.[37] Most importantly, Hatcher stresses the importance of establishing the context in which a particular artwork is produced when interpreting the subjects depicted within it.[38] This emphasis on the importance of context in comparative studies would become increasingly prominent in scholarship of the last few decades of the twentieth century.

---

[35] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1963).

[36] Ibid.

[37] Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology*.

[38] Evelyn Payne. Hatcher, *Art as Culture : An Introduction to the Anthropology of Art* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1999).

Ibid.

19

The Psychological Dimension

The field of psychology has since its advent held an interest in the depiction of monsters in art as a reflection of the mind, both of the individual and of society in general. This approach was pioneered by the work of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Jung [date.] Freud is known as the father of psychoanalysis and the modern field of psychiatry. His theories of the structure of the mind: the id, the ego and superego led scholars, especially anthropologists, to interpret art not just as an expression of cultural aesthetics, but as a window into the mind of the individual artist themselves. His 1919 lecture "The Uncanny" has formed one of the key pieces of literature used by scholars in discourse concerning the supernatural and monstrous in art.[39]

Freud's theories have as many supporters as they have critics. French-Hungarian ethnologist and psychoanalyst Georges Devereux (1908-1985) for example, expands on Freud's theory of art as an expression of repressed desires. He suggested that art functions as a form of safety valve for the expression of desires or thoughts which are considered taboo in the artist's society.[40]

Similarly, Morse Peckham in his work *Man's Rage for Chaos* also suggested that art is both an expression of an individual's internal psychological state, and also fulfils a critical social role in human civilisation. But unlike Devereux's theory of art as a social safety valve, Peckham instead argued that art functions as a form of play or rehearsal, a safe way of acting out disturbing or difficult situations, thus allowing the individual to better cope with them in real life.[41]

The other key theory in the psychoanalysis of art is that of the collective unconscious and universal symbolism, as put forward by Jung in "Man and His Symbols." It would be hard to

---

[39]

Freud, Sigmund. *"The'uncanny'.* Standard Edition (Vol. 17, pp. 218-256)." (1919).

[40]

Hatcher, Evelyn Payne. *Art as culture: An introduction to the anthropology of art*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999.

[41]

Peckham, Morse. "*Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behavior and the Arts (New York, 1967)*." *Originally published* (1965).

overstate the influence it has had on scholarship of the twentieth century, as it, along with Freudian analysis, has formed the bedrock of most modern interpretations of art. In the Jungian view, the unconscious uses archetypal symbols found in the human mind and combines them in ways that represent the individual's psychological state.[42] Compared with the Freudian perspective, Jungian scholars regard symbols as more fluid, variable and creatively used by the artist.

English anthropologist Gregory Bateson (1904-1980) suggested that art is a way of putting the conscious, analytical part of our brain in touch with the unconscious, primitive half. He explained that ordinarily, this is a difficult integration to make, but art facilitates it even though not all art is created with this intention.[43]

New Perspectives

The twenty-first century has already seen several significant works on monster art published. One of the most influential contemporary works concerning the evolution of monsters in Japanese art is Michael Dylan Foster's *Pandemonium and Parade*, which chronicles both how mythical monsters have featured in Japanese culture in the last two hundred years and the way in which academic scholarship concerning monsters has evolved over that time period. Foster's work has had such an impact in Western scholarship due to his extensive use of Japanese language sources and his comprehensive account of monster art from the late Edo period all the way through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, demonstrating how and where yokai imagery in contemporary Japanese culture came from. Much Japanese scholarship on yokai is untranslated and therefore relatively inaccessible to international researchers. Scholars like Foster are invaluable for the amount of Japanese scholarship they use in their research-however without the sources themselves, this can only ever be a second hand retelling. Zilia Pap builds on this research in her study *Traditional Monster Imagery in Japanese Cinema*, however unlike Foster her focus is narrower and

---

[42]

Jung, Carl Gustav. *Man and his symbols*. Laurel, 1964.

[43]

Hatcher, Evelyn Payne. *Art as culture: An introduction to the anthropology of art*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999.

primarily on the impact of Edo monster art on contemporary Japanese film. Her work nevertheless has contributed towards the small but quickly growing body of English language literature that draws directly on Japanese source material.

The twenty-first century has also seen a rise in the number of non-academics contributing to the field of monster art. This often takes place in the form of gathering information on online blogs, contributing to open source databases and self-publishing books such as that of Matthew Meyer, an artist who published a series of paintings of various yokai together with information about them collected from open source databases.[44] While the advent of the internet has facilitated the ability to produce and collect information on folkloric monsters, but the blending of academic and non-academic sources in open-source material can make it challenging to determine the accuracy of the information given.

Studying Japanese monsters in the West has always presented difficulties, as a great deal of the source material is in Japanese, thus posing a language barrier for many scholars. However, more and more key texts have been translated into English in the past two decades. One very recent example is a new translation of Toriyama Seiken's encyclopaedias, which were recently published in a single volume under the title *Japandemonium illustrated: The Yokai Encyclopaedias of Toriyama Seiken.*

Scholarship of mythical monsters has evolved over the past two hundred years through a variety of academic fields, moving around the arts and sciences as attitudes towards the supernatural changed. Starting with encyclopaedic collections, monsters were creatures of strangeness and mystery. Following the enlightenment and the advent of industrialisation, they became symbols of ignorance and superstition, a world that the modern age had left behind. They became preserved by anthropologists under the category of folklore as an invented tradition of the newly formed nation state. In the twentieth century, discussion of monsters became more introspective with the emerging field of psychoanalysis. Scholars now interpreted monsters as an outward manifestation of the

---

44

     Meyer, Matthew. "*The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons: a Field Guide to Japanese Yōkai,*(publisher unknown)." (2012).

inside of the human mind. Comparative anthropologists, extrapolating from a raft of similarities they had observed between the monster mythologies of different societies, theorised that in humanity's distant past there existed a single prototype story. They began a quest to find this elusive universal singularity from which all human stories, myths and ideas had sprung.

The end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first has seen a return of encyclopaedic collections with the rising public interest in monsters once more. However, the advent of the digital age has allowed both academics and laypeople alike to collect and share source material on monsters as never before, through the use of databases, blogs and self-published books. The digitisation of archived work, especially in Japan, has allowed for the translation of many older source materials into other languages, thus widening their potential readership and allowing more people to participate in the field of monster research. However, despite this new influx of scholarship, there remains a divide in the literature between academic disciplines and between academic and non-academic works. This thesis aims to bridge that gap with a methodology that incorporates both an artistic and scholarly approach, which will be explained in the next chapter.

Chapter three: Methodology and Context

This chapter will describe the key ideas that will form the methodology of this study. The approach used will be based on a multi-disciplinary technique as outlined by anthropologist Evelyn Payne Hatcher in her book 'Art as Culture: An Introduction to the Anthropology of Art', but will also use theory from the philosophical discipline of phenomenology. In addition, the author's own experience as an artist will form part of the analytical perspective of the study, which will be explained in more detail at the end of the chapter.

Hatcher's Approach

Hatcher's approach to the study of anthropology of art will form the main structure of the analysis. This approach is flexible, can incorporate ideas from a variety of disciplines and is concerned with the human condition in relation to art. As such, it is ideal as a structural framework for this study. Hatcher outlines an approach to cross cultural comparison studies which emphasises the importance of being aware of the context in which the artwork was produced. This is intended to avoid the common problem of looking at non-western art through a lens of western cultural and aesthetic values, which distorts the analysis.[45]

This study will compare print art from Britain and Japan at the same developmental point in their histories, when both countries had experienced intense and rapid urbanisation but had not yet developed into industrialised societies.[46] This will mean comparing art from slightly different time

---

[45]

Evelyn Payne. Hatcher, *Art as Culture : An Introduction to the Anthropology of Art* (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1999).

[46]

periods as the two countries have different developmental timelines - the latter decades of the eighteenth century (1770-1800) for Britain and the final decades of the Tokugawa period (1830-1860) for Japan.

One of the main difficulties when doing cross-cultural comparisons of art is the tendency among scholars to use Western definitions of art and apply them to non-Western cultures, thus distorting any comparison they wish to make.[47] When describing non-European art, it would be incorrect to use European styles as descriptors as doing so would imply a certain image and set of aesthetic standards to the artwork which it does not nor was ever intended to possess. There is also an unfortunate tendency in academia of assuming that there is some universal standard of aesthetics to which all artists must aspire.[48] Scholars must be wary of making that assumption as it is not necessarily true. However, if it is accepted that aesthetic sensibilities do not conform to some universal standard, this complicates a cross cultural comparison as the different aesthetic standards of the artists and cultures must be taken into account.

A solution presented by Hatcher is a more flexible concept of what constitutes art: one that can be interpreted and applied across different societies. In Hatcher's definition, art is comprised of three main components: aesthetics, craftsmanship and meaning. Aesthetics refers to those features of the work that make it pleasing (or displeasing) to the eye of the viewer. Craftsmanship refers to the process of creating the art and is comprised of three sub-categories: knowledge, effort and skill. Meaning is how the artwork is interpreted by both the maker and the viewer and where it fits into the wider context of the society that produced it.[49]

Peter Clark, D. M. Palliser, and M. J. Daunton, eds., *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Harold Bolitho, 'The Tempō Crisis', in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5 (Cambridge University Press, 1989).
[47]

Hatcher, *Art as Culture : An Introduction to the Anthropology of Art*, 1999.
[48]

Evelyn Payne. Hatcher, *Art as Culture : An Introduction to the Anthropology of Art* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1985).
[49]

Ibid.

In Hatcher's method for establishing the context in which an artwork is created, she asks a set of questions concerning the work.

Historical and geographical context
i. Where was the artwork made?
ii. When did the artist live?

Socio-cultural context
iii. Who was the artist and what was their role in their society?
iv. What was the cultural environment of the artist?
v. What visual forms had the artist been exposed to?
vi. What were the aesthetic standards of the artist's society?

Interpretation
vii. What is the nature of the visual language used?
viii.   What is the use and function of the artwork?

This study will answer these questions as they relate to the chosen time periods in Britain and Japan in order to establish the context in which the artwork will be interpreted.

Due to the complexity of interpreting meaning in art, Hatcher further breaks down meaning into six elements.
- Representation - the form of subject of the artwork.
- Symbolism - what the art represents beyond the immediate visual.
- Interpretation - what the art represents within a certain system of iconology.
- Metaphor - where some quality of the artwork is analogous to a human quality or experience.
- Social Context - the surrounding environment in which the work was produced and the role it plays within that.

- Ambiguity - this can operate on all levels of meaning and imbues the artwork with mystery or significance by deliberately conveying mixed messages or having multiple possible interpretations.

When analysing and comparing the sea monster art in this study, Hatcher's six sub-categories of meaning will be used as a framework to form the interpretation of the art.

<u>Phenomenology</u>

A study such as this, which is concerned with particular re-occurring phenomena in human existence, falls under the philosophical discipline known as 'Phenomenology.' Phenomenology is defined by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy as the following:

"The discipline of phenomenology may be defined initially as the study of structures of experience, or consciousness. Literally, phenomenology is the study of "phenomena": appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view. This field of philosophy is then to be distinguished from, and related to, the other main fields of philosophy: ontology (the study of being or what is), epistemology (the study of knowledge), logic (the study of valid reasoning), ethics (the study of right and wrong action), etc."[50]

Phenomenology, then, is the study of things as aspects of human experience. The experience or "phenomenon" that this study is concerned with is the phenomenon of sea monsters that occur in the art of a particular historical period as well as the human experience that produces such subjects in visual art. The creation of art can be defined as an experience in a phenomenological sense, as it involves both experiencing one's surroundings in a passive sense i.e. processing information from the environment via the senses, and in an active sense by using this information and interpreting it in a tangible form.[51]

---

[50]

David Woodruff Smith, 'Phenomenology', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/phenomenology/.p1

[51]

Ibid.

27

In classical phenomenology, three main distinct methods are practiced. The first is the description of phenomena from a first person perspective i.e. how we perceive it in our own experience. This is the method developed by philosophers Hussert and Merleau-Ponty. The second is the hermeneutic approach developed by Heidegger and his followers. This approach focuses on the interpretation of experiences through analysing the context in which the phenomena occurs. The third method, which is practiced by all phenomenologists to some extent, is the analysis of the form of the experience itself. This method is more usually concerned with the response of the brain to the experience.[52]

Of these three methods, the second one, i.e. Heidegger's hermeneutic approach will be used, as it is the context in which the creation of sea monster art occurs that is significant in this study. This method will be applied by outlining and describing the social, cultural and historical contexts in which the artworks being examined were created. The different contexts will then be compared for similarities between them which correlate to similarities in the artworks.

<u>The Artist Perspective</u>

For this thesis, the author will also be using their own experience as a practicing artist as part of the analytical perspective of the study. Being a creator of art as well as a scholar gives a unique insight into creative process from initial inspiration to final product. It combines an intuitive knowledge and understanding of how the process of artistic inspiration functions, together with an academic analysis of art in its historical context. This will provide the study with a different perspective, one that aims to take the minds and moods of the artists themselves into account as part of the analysis of the artwork.

---

[52] Ibid.

The following chapters will present the comparative analysis of Japan and Britain's sea monster art. Chapter four will begin by establishing the historical context of when the art was produced, before connecting it to the social and cultural environments of that period, to produce a full picture of the environment in which the phenomenon of sea monster art began to proliferate. By comparing the contexts within Britain and Japan, this study will show how the artists of both countries were exposed to similar political social and economic zeitgeist.

Chapter five will then turn to the artwork itself. Using Hatcher's six category breakdown of meaning, prints featuring sea monsters will be compared, going through each of the six categories of representation, symbolism, interpretation, metaphor, social context and ambiguity and comparing them in each work. Finally these artworks and the context in which they were produced will be used to demonstrate how the phenomenon of sea monsters in art is connected with a wider social and cultural 'mood' to which the artists that produce them are attuned.

Chapter four: Historical, social and cultural context

Georgian Britain and Tokugawa Japan

The second half of the eighteenth century in Europe was, to put it mildly, a troubled period in its history. It was marked by significant upheaval as old regimes were overthrown and new ones took their place. In the first half of the century, the Enlightenment thinkers heralded the arrival of a new age, where man was guided by rational thinking and logic, rather than backwards tradition and superstition.[53] However, this golden age never materialised and as the chaos started by French revolution spread across Europe, the Enlightenment with all that it promised was seen by many to have failed. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Napoleonic wars had raged for twenty-two years, leaving Europe largely battered and bankrupt with the exception of Britain.[54] Although Britain itself escaped becoming a battlefield, the strain of the wars and the destabilisation caused by the French revolution and Robespierre's reign of terror cast a dark shadow over the inhabitants of the British Isles.[55]

The effects of the events in Europe would permanently alter the political and cultural landscape of British society. The perceived failure of the enlightenment led to a deep disillusionment among many of Britain's cultural elite, prompting some to call for a return to traditional values as a remedy for the liberal enlightenment ideas that they perceived to be the cause of revolution and unrest in Europe.[56] Urban Britain, previously a more liberal cosmopolitan society, turned towards a more conservative and moralistic outlook, becoming less tolerant of outspoken and non-conformists individuals than before.[57]

[53]

     H. W. Janson, Penelope J. E. Davies, and H. W. Janson, *Janson's History of Art: The Western Tradition*, 8th ed (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011).

[54]

     Stuart Curran, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[55]

     Joanna Innes and Nicholas Rogers, 'Politics and Goverment 1700-1840', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Japan*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 529–74.

[56]

     Peter Clark and R.A. Houston, 'Culture and Leisure 1700-1840', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 575–614.

[57]

In Japan, the first half of the nineteenth century saw the beginning of the end for the Tokugawa shogunate. The *bafuku* government had become increasingly rigid and tradition-bound, unable to respond effectively to domestic problems and to the rising threat of Western colonialist expansion into Asia.[58] The class divisions first laid down in the seventeenth century were being increasingly challenged and blurred by a shifting of wealth to an increasingly wealthy, urban, middle class population of merchants and artisans. With a lack of institutional response, this newly affluent group found itself increasingly frustrated with the lack of opportunities available to them.

As the nineteenth century progressed, the ever present foreign presence threat became a growing crisis on Japan's doorstep. European powers had been expanding into non European territory with renewed fervour since the late eighteenth century and by 1800, a valuable trade network had been established in East Asia with China at the centre, expanding to include its neighbours.[59] The Opium War in 1848 and subsequent treaty port system imposed on China by Great Britain raised considerable alarm among Japan's metropolitan elite and contributed to the growing tension within the government over the increasing power of Western powers in the region.[60] The response of the *bafuku* was to impose ever harsher censorship laws on the country, as they strove to suppress or eradicate any discussion related to the West.[61] Combined with the continued stagnation of the economy at home and the growing crisis abroad, a feeling of anxiety and frustration towards the government grew within the urban elite.[62]

[58] Ibid.; Thomas Wright, *The Life of William Blake*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 2 vols (Burt Franklin, 1969).

[59] Harold Bolitho, 'The Tempō Crisis', in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5 (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[60] William G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan: [Political, Economic and Social Change since 1850]*, 3. ed., ed (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000).

[61] H.D. Harootunian, 'Late Tokugawa Culture and Thought', in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5 (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[62] Bolitho, 'The Tempō Crisis'.

Yoshitoshi Taiso and Shin'ichi Segi, *Yoshitoshi: The Splendid Decadent*, 1st ed (Tokyo ; New York : New York, N.Y: Kodansha International ; Distributed in the U.S. by Kodansha International/USA, through Harper & Row Publishers, 1985).

By 1750, London was the largest and most economically important city in Europe.[63] Like Edo, its population expanded enormously both as a result of the rising population and due to the influx of migrants to the capital from the surrounding countryside.[64] A flourishing service industry developed, with an economic influence expanding well beyond the boundaries of the city itself and into the other towns and villages in the area. This rise in demand for goods and services combined with improvements in roads and other forms of transportation gave a huge economic stimulus to the whole of South-East England.[65]

London played host to a vibrant urban culture and in the early seventeenth century was one of the centres of the enlightenment movement. Scholars, writers, scientists, artists and a raft of other intellectuals from not just Britain but around the continent met in London's coffee shops, clubs and private houses to exchange ideas and new discoveries. Achievements in science led to a new kind of philosophy as championed by Isaac Newton (1643-1727) and John Locke (1632-1704, who declared that reason and science had triumphed over magic and superstition and that a new golden age of science was imminent.[66] New archaeological discoveries, particularly the unearthing of Greek and Roman artefacts in the Mediterranean region, prompted a revival of interest by both scholars and artists in the ancient world.[67] This revival of interest inspired the movement known as neo-classicalism which swept through the arts and literature of not only Britain but all of Western Europe. It simultaneously glorified the aesthetics, philosophies and achievements of the ancient world whilst looking forward to the coming age of reason, when mankind would no longer have to

---

[63]

John Langton, 'Urban Growth and Economic Change c 1688-1841', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 453–90.

[64]

Langton, 'Urban Growth and Economic Change c 1688-1841'.

[65]

Langton, 'Urban Growth and Economic Change c 1688-1841'.

[66]

Janson, Davies, and Janson, *Janson's History of Art*.

[67]

Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (University of Chicago Press, 2001).

answer to rules, traditions and institutions that were ruled by ignorance and superstitious beliefs of the past.[68]

This golden age of enlightenment was not to last, however. In the second half of the century, the instability and violence of the French Revolution sent shock waves through London's intellectual and cultural elite.[69] It was the catalyst for a new school of thought in the worlds of art and literature: romanticism. While it grew out of neoclassicism, its followers believed that the principles of the enlightenment had failed and that logic and reason had given way to irrationality and chaos.[70] Accordingly, romanticism's features were the polar opposite to those of neoclassicism, emphasising the extreme, irrational and emotional.[71] Romanticism was for many an expression of disillusionment with the ideas of the enlightenment and a need to seek out a system of belief. The rising popularity of the authenticity of individual emotion and the value placed on individual genius over logic and reason led to the formation of a "cult of the individual."[72] It was a visceral, emotional response to death, violence and ugliness that by the 1790s had engulfed Europe.[73]

The two artistic and cultural movements of neoclassicism and romanticism have ,therefore, been described as two sides of the same enlightenment coin with one embracing enlightenment thought and the other rejecting it.[74] However, both continued to exist alongside each other, as can be seen by the many examples of art of the period containing elements of both styles as artists experimented with light, composition and subject matter.

---

[68]

Janson, Davies, and Janson, *Janson's History of Art*; Shiner, *The Invention of Art*.

[69]

Saree Makdisi, *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), https://login.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/login?URL=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=212665&site=ehost-live.

[70]

Janson, Davies, and Janson, *Janson's History of Art*.

[71]

Curran, *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*.

[72]

Janson, Davies, and Janson, *Janson's History of Art*.

[73]

Makdisi, *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s*.

[74]

Curran, *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*; Janson, Davies, and Janson, *Janson's History of Art*.

33

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Edo was experiencing a cultural boom as a result of urbanisation and its rapidly growing population. By 1800, it had surpassed one million inhabitants, making it one of the largest urban populations in the world[75] and it was the cultural and economic centre of Japan. Edo urban culture, referred to as c*hōnin bunka* 町人文化*,* was characterised by an interest in both the visual and performing arts.[76] A high literacy rate in the general population also contributed to the popularity of the novel in Edo and publishing houses flourished all across the city.[77] The Edo citizen's love of performance and entertainment also meant that Edo had a famously thriving nightlife.

In Japan, the years from the *Tenpō* 天保 through to the *Ansei* 安政 era (1830-1850) saw an intensification of domestic issues that had been brewing in the country since 1800; both social and economic. In the 1830s and 1840s, Japan's economic situation had declined considerably, due to a combination of famine, crop failure and inflation on top of extravagant overspending by shogun Tokugawa Ienari 徳川 家斉 (1773-1841.)[78] After his death in 1841, feudal reforms aimed at improving the country's strained economy were put into place by senior councillor Mizuno Tadakuni 水野 忠邦 (1794-1857) and were known as the *Tenpō Reforms*.[79] The Tenpō Reforms (1841-3) were the last and least successful of the three great Tokugawa period reforms.[80] Their aim was to build a power base around the great metropolitan centres, to reduce urban poverty and to control excessive displays of luxury and wealth.[81] These reforms were extensive and far reaching, affecting every part of Tokugawa society. Officials were appointed to enforce these laws

---

[75]

Bolitho, 'The Tempō Crisis'.

[76]

Harootunian, 'Late Tokugawa Culture and Thought'.

[77]

R. Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861* (Hotei Pub., 1998), https://books.google.nl/books?id=tJUkAQAAMAAJ.

[78]

Ibid.

[79]

Basil William Robinson and Kuniyoshi Utagawa, *Kuniyoshi: The Warrior-Prints* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982).

[80]

Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861*.

[81]

R. Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861* (Hotei Pub., 1998), https://books.google.nl/books?id=tJUkAQAAMAAJ; Harold Bolitho, 'The Tempō Crisis', in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5 (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

throughout the population. In the city of Edo, these reforms were so deeply unpopular with the townspeople that they openly stoned Mizuno's residence in protest.[82]

It is interesting to note that both London and Edo served as major economic centres for their respective countries, but gained this status in different ways. Unlike Edo, London sat at the centre of a vast international trade network incorporating Europe as well as Britain's overseas colonies. Edo did not have the same scale of international trade network, but its location as the seat of power, and the practice of continuously rotating the various *daimyō* and their households through the shogun's court provided a constant source of economic stimulus to the city.

<u>Cults of the Weird</u>

As the shadow of these troubled times grew long over London and Edo, a new popular trend began to emerge in both cities - a fascination for strange, frightening and supernatural phenomena. In London, this trend was closely connected to the romantic movement, the art of which began to feature increasingly strange and horrifying subject material. Jansen describes how the interest in the ancient world and its histories and mythologies, which began in the neoclassicism movement, took a dark turn as artists began to shift their focus from the heroic and virtuous to the dark and monstrous.[83]

> *"The longing for exotic experiences, of being transported mentally to a distant past, gradually became a prevailing sentiment in British art, surfacing in painting, architecture and landscape design. By the closing decades of the 18th century, exotic experience alone would not be sufficient; audiences would want to be awed or terrified, just as they do today when they go to see a horror film."*[84]

In these periods, Japan developed a fascination with strange, bizarre and thrilling phenomena, and especially with ghost tales. It is in many ways comparable to the occult craze that

---

[82]

    Bolitho, 'The Tempō Crisis'; Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861.*

[83]

    D. Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman*, A Harbinger Book (Stanford University Press, 1959), Léon Rosenthal, *Romanticism*, Art of Century Collection (New York: Parkstone International, 2008); Janson, Davies, and Janson, *Janson's History of Art.*

[84]

    Janson, Davies, and Janson, *Janson's History of Art.* pp798-799

swept through Britain decades earlier. There have been theories from scholars of both countries as to why such a craze developed - in Japan it has been suggested that this fascination was a means by which ordinary people alleviated the pressure of living under the strictly controlled Tokugawa regime. Not only that, but artists and writers would often utilize the characters and monsters of these stories in order to comment on, or criticise, current events without provoking the ire of the censors. London, while not having quite as harsh publishing censorships, still operated under the strictness and confines of British social mores, which led many individuals to find other outlets to alleviate the social and cultural pressure.

An interesting parallel between the British and Japanese obsession with the supernatural is how both cultures developed activities centred around the evocation of ghosts and demons. A popular Japanese parlour game, *Hyaku Monogatari Kaidankai* 百物語怪談会 *(one hundred ghost stories)* involved lighting a hundred lanterns at sundown and telling a hundred stories, extinguishing a lantern every time a story was told. Supposedly, when the last lantern was extinguished, the ghosts featured in the stories would then appear to the players. In Britain, the summoning of a spirit was done by way of a séance. This involved a group of people gathering around a table in the presence of a medium, and using their power to attempt to make contact with, or invoke the presence of a spirit. As with *hyaku monogatari*, this activity was not without risk, as the spirit invoked could potentially be malevolent or even violent, and rumours abounded of unwary players being cursed or even killed by the spirits they had dared to summon.

In both cases, the individuals participating were seeking out an experience of thrill and fear to induce an emotional high, whether they were expecting to encounter a supernatural phenomena or not. In both cultures then, there was an appetite for extreme emotional experiences combined with an interest in the supernatural which led to people actively seeking out ghosts, spirits and monsters in various aspects of life.

Such was the public appetite for stories of the supernatural that in the Bunsei era, a new genre of *kaidan* 怪談(ghost tales) was developed by professional *rakugoka*落語家 (storyteller) Hayashiya Shōzō from the ghost stories of *hyakku monogatari*.[85] Depictions of the supernatural creatures of

---

85

kaidan found their way into all parts of urban Edo culture, appearing in the performance repertoires of kabuki theatres, in paintings and prints, and on the accessories and clothes of the townspeople.[86]

The rise of commercial publishing

In Britain and Japan, the rising literacy rate in urban areas meant that in both countries there was a thriving commercial publishing industry, which was the source of commissions for printmakers and engravers in both societies.[87] The printed novel was hugely popular in Edo due to the high level of literacy amongst the urban *chōnin*. *Kusazoshi* (miscellaneous books) contained many genres of fiction, one of the most popular being *gokan* (playful compositions.) This particular genre evolved out of *kibyoshi* (small books named for their yellow covers.[88]) .These book were characterised by their easy readability and large numbers of illustrations (usually one on each page). This made them geared towards a juvenile or undemanding adult audience, thus netting them a wide readership - much larger than that of other genres, which required a much more literate readership.[89] With a wider consumer base, bestselling gokan could reach sales of 20,000, compared with the usual 1000 - 2000 of most other fiction genres.[90]

In London, the newspaper was the biggest product of the printing industry, providing as it did the most immediate source of information for the population. The decreased costs of printing led to not only a wide variety of news bulletins springing up around the city, but, similarly to Edo, it also facilitated the meteoric rise in popularity of the paperback novel.[91] Through both the late

[86] Stephen Addiss, Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, and Asia Society, eds., *Japanese Ghosts & Demons: Art of the Supernatural*, 1st ed (New York : Lawrence: G. Braziller ; Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1985).

[87] Ibid.

[88] Clark and Houston, 'Culture and Leisure 1700-1840'; Harootunian, 'Late Tokugawa Culture and Thought'.

[89] Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 279 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2006).

[90] Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861*.

[91] Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861*.

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, more and more book shops opened in both London and other major towns and cities around Britain, and like Japan's *gokan*, the paperback novel used easy language and generous numbers of illustrations to market itself to a wider potential readership.[92] Illustrations formed a vital component of *gokan* and paperbacks and were key to their popularity.[93] The huge number of publications made them a regular part of the work of many artists.

However, the publishing houses operated under strict censorship laws during most of the Edo period. Publications perceived to be critical of the shogunate regime or which documented recent or contemporary historical events were banned and the penalties for offenders could be severe.[94] However, this did not prevent artists and writers from finding creative ways to beat the censors, disguising their social and political commentary in the form of humorous stories featuring monster or animal caricatures.[95] As these publications, superficially at least, did not depict anything banned by the Shogun, the publishers could get away with selling them. Monster art as a covert form of social satire, therefore, became a popular art form among the urban population.[96]

The Tenpo reforms unleashed new censorship laws on the publishing industry. Already banned from depicting contemporary historical events and anything critical of the shogunate government, now artists and publishers were banned from creating overly luxurious prints. Kabuki actors and courtesans could no longer be illustrated and prints were restricted to a maximum of eight colour blocks. The maximum price of a print was frozen. Publishing houses now had to go through a newly

Peter Clark and R.A. Houston, 'Culture and Leisure 1700-1840', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 575–614.

[92]

Clark and Houston, 'Culture and Leisure 1700-1840'.

[93]

Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861*.

[94]

H.D. Harootunian, 'Late Tokugawa Culture and Thought', in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 5 (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[95]

Basil William Robinson and Kuniyoshi Utagawa, *Kuniyoshi: The Warrior-Prints* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982).

[96]

Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 279 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2006).

set up censorship house in order to have their publications approved. Those who defied the new edicts could be severely punished, and members of the *chōnin* class were especially targeted.[97]

Despite being two very different places at different times, it becomes clear that London and Edo had a number of features in common. They were capital cities of countries that were in the midst of a period of uneasy transition, brought about by the blurring of traditional social structures caused by the process of urbanisation, and resulting in the rise of a wealthy urban middle class. In addition, there was an increasing threat of conflict from abroad which brought further anxiety to the population. They were both major economic and cultural centres and were a hotbed of major art and cultural movements. Both had a booming publishing industry, allowing for literature and art to be disseminated to a wide readership.

Most importantly, in both cities, there was a distinct cultural trend towards the strange and supernatural which manifested in all the various forms of art and entertainment from games to theatrical performances to art and literature. In visual art especially, it combined with a resurging interest in the myths and legends of the past to produce a fascination with monsters that will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter.

[97]

Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861*.

Chapter Five: Analysis

In the previous chapter, it was established that the metropolitan centres of Edo and London played host to a thriving semi-commercial culture. This in turn meant they became centres of art, culture and entertainment, with large communities of artisans, writers and performers. These communities, especially the more culturally elite, were a part of a dense urban network that actively participated in the social and political aspects of daily urban life. They were, therefore, ideally placed to pick up the prevailing moods of their surrounding environment.[98] The commercial work they produced for the booming publishing industry also reflects to a certain extent the interests and the aesthetic sensibilities of the urban population, although this is offset to a greater or lesser degree by the personal sensibilities of the artists themselves.

From the colourful variety of prints featuring a range of monsters from both Tokugawa, Edo and Georgian, London, a few examples have been chosen to examine in more detail, taking into account the contextual backgrounds as described in the previous chapter. Comparing the prints within their respective contexts will show the ways in which the artist's sensitivity to a particular zeitgeist manifested in the work itself.

Apocalypse How: The Leviathan

The first set of monster prints to be examined are the work of British printmaker, engraver and writer, William Blake. Blake was born in London to a relatively wealthy middle class trader and was apprenticed as an adolescent to an engraver, having shown artistic talent at an early age, before he enrolled in the Royal Academy of Art.[99] He did not find himself well-suited to the academy however, and for the rest of his life would speak out against what he perceived as their

---

[98]

Clark and Houston, 'Culture and Leisure 1700-1840'.

[99]

Wright, *The Life of William Blake*; Mona Wilson, *The Life of William Blake*, 2nd ed. (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948).

blind devotion to reason at the expense of creativity and innovation.[100] Blake was by all accounts an intensely sensitive and spiritual man and his works showed a strong biblical influence, although he would reject the institution of the church itself.

Despite being a relatively solitary individual, Blake nevertheless was a part of a small group of like-minded artists and intellectuals who shared his own views, many of whom would later be recognised as major contributors to the romantic movement. Swiss painter Henry Fuseli (1741-1825) and sculptor John Flaxman (1755-1826) were close acquaintances with Blake and the exchange of ideas between them would influence the work of all three artists.[101]

As well as biblical scriptures, Blake drew inspiration from many classical Greek and Roman texts, such as the works of Roman poet Ovid and both his writing and prints frequently depict characters and motifs from these works.[102] He combined this with his own vivid imagination to produce dramatic scenes of an often violent and apocalyptic nature, featuring terrifying visions of monstrous beings amidst turbulent backgrounds. Despite his place in both art and literary history as one of the most important of the romantic artists and writers, Blake spent much of his life struggling in poverty and obscurity as his publications were met with lukewarm reception at best and outright ignored at worst.[103]

Figure 1 is an illustration from Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* one of Blake's earlier illustrated books. Typified by romantic era scholars as the voice of the backlash by the romanticists against the enlightenment principles, it is a fierce and passionate diatribe against what he saw as the evils of blind obedience and passive submission to the laws of reason.[104]

---

[100]

Wright, *The Life of William Blake*.

[101]

Thomas Wright, *The Life of William Blake*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 2 vols (Burt Franklin, 1969).

[102]

Ibid.

[103]

Mona Wilson, *The Life of William Blake*, 2nd ed. (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948).

[104]
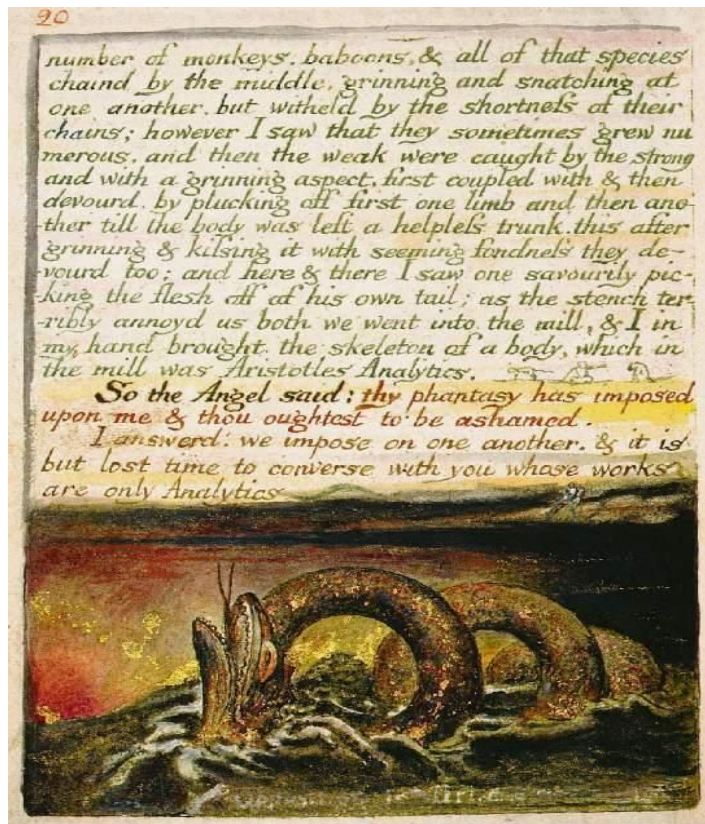
Wilson, *The Life of William Blake*.

Fig 1

Blake describes heaven as having been usurped by angels who were slaves to cold rationalism and who viewed hell's daemons, which stand as representatives of imagination, impulse and inspiration. In Blake's eyes, the angels were the true agents of evil, as they stood against the values that truly brought man closer to God.[105]

The vivid and emotional text is appropriately printed as an illuminated book on twenty-seven plates, accompanied by illustrations that are equal to the text in terms of their dynamism and dramatic subject matter. The twentieth plate features a huge sea serpent rising from a turbulent sea. Although the image itself is dark, the colours are intense from the red and yellow of the sky to the deep green of the serpent's coils. The colours and dramatic contrasts of light and shadow together with the monster's unnaturally large bulk and gaping mouth gives the whole scene a disturbing, apocalyptic feel which is reflected in the text that the picture illustrates.

> *But now, from between the black & white spiders, a cloud and fire burst and rolled thro' the*
> *deep black'ning all beneath, so that the nether deep grew black as a sea, & rolled with a*

---

[105] Wright, *The Life of William Blake*.

terrible noise; beneath us was nothing now to be seen but a black tempest, till looking east between the clouds & the waves, we saw a cataract of blood mixed with fire, and not many stones' throw from us appear'd and sunk again the scaly fold of a monstrous serpent; at last, to the east, distant about three degrees appear'd a fiery crest above the waves; slowly it reared like a ridge of golden rocks, till we discover'd two globes of crimson fire, from which the sea fled away in clouds of smoke; and now we saw, it was the head of Leviathan; his forehead was divided into streaks of green & purple like those on a tyger's forehead: soon we saw his mouth & red gills hang just above the raging foam tinging the black deep with beams of blood, advancing toward us with all the fury of a spiritual existence.[106]

The strange and horrifying leviathan described in this passage, rising up amid the chaos of the surrounding tempest, conveys a sense of helpless terror and a nameless dread in the face of an unstoppable force. Considering that Blake created *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* at the same time as the French Revolution and not long after the Gordon Riots in London[107], it is not hard to see a reflection of the instability of uncertainty permeating London society in the image of the leviathan.

---

[106]

William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790, p18
http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/collections/prints/118220.

[107]

Wilson, *The Life of William Blake*; Wright, *The Life of William Blake*.

43

Fig 2

Figure 2 is from a later work, his illustrated version of *The Book of Job.* It depicts two biblical monsters - Behemoth and Leviathan - circling each other as God explains to Job the power of His creation, with Behemoth representing power over the land and Leviathan over the sea. The Leviathan is depicted as a gigantic serpentine figure arising from a great wave, representing the power of the oceans. Similar to fig 1, the Leviathan here is also an awe-inspiring and terrifying beast, posed dramatically with its monstrous fire breathing head stretching up towards the land.

Figure 3 is an engraving after Fuseli, rather than a composition of Blake's own, although it is no less dramatic for that. Both Fuseli and Blake displayed similar themes in their work, made evident in this illustration which shares the same dynamic composition and dramatic themes as figures 1 and 2. The serpentine monster emerging from a wild and stormy sea is very much in evidence, this time fighting with a male figure- the Greek god Zeus. The image is frozen at a climactic moment in the fight the instant before Zeus strikes with a thunderbolt, a composition technique chosen to heighten the dramatic tension of the scene and create the impression of movement. Like in figure 1, Blake used heavy contrasts of dark and light to create a dark and

foreboding image, a grim reflection, perhaps of the chaos he witnessed both in his own city and in war-torn Europe.

Fig 3

<u>Aquatic Heroics: The Sea Dragon</u>

Utagawa Kunyoshi 歌川 國芳 (1797-1861) was an *ukiyo-e* 浮世絵 (woodblock print) artist and painter who was active during the final decades of the Tokugawa era. He was a self-proclaimed embodiment of '*Edokko*' (Child of Edo) of the spirit of the Edo period urban dweller and was celebrated during his lifetime for his prints of urban life in Edo as well as his illustrations of stories featuring heroes and monsters.

Kuniyoshi's early life was similar in many ways to that of William Blake. He too was born into an urban middle-class family and showed artistic talent from early childhood. Like Blake, he was began his training in adolescence, and entered the Utagawa studio in his teens, under the apprenticeship of Utagawa Toyokuni 歌川豊国 (1769-1825.)

It would appear that even in this early period, Kuniyoshi was known for having an outspoken and unorthodox personality, which led to a great deal of difficulty in his early career as he struggled to find commissions. However, Kuniyoshi would eventually turn his fortunes around with his first major commission in 1827, a series of illustrations entitled *Tsūzoku suikoden gōketsu hyakuhachinin no hitori* (One hundred and eight heroes of the water margin all told.)

Fig 4

They depicted the heroes of the Chinese tale *shuihu zhuan jp.suikoden* (Water Margin) which had become wildly popular in Edo during the last years of the Bunka period. This major commission would solidify Kuniyoshi's reputation as a maker of warrior prints.

This marked the beginning of a period of great artistic development, during which he experimented with new subject matter in his prints. During this period, Kuniyoshi developed a great deal of interest in the depiction of the supernatural in his work. This could be seen not only in his warrior prints but also in his experiments with other genres, such as *fūzokuga (pictures of manners and customs.)* As part of Edo's urban middle-class, Kuniyoshi was well-read in both classical Japanese and Chinese texts and would use both as inspiration in his work. Unusually for his time, Kuniyoshi experimented with western style painting techniques in his work. Teaching himself from western paintings and copperplate engravings obtained via Nagasaki, Kuniyoshi integrated western compositional and perspective techniques into his prints, adding an unusual twist to his work that drew both positive and negative criticism from his patrons.[108]

Figures 4 and 6 depict a scene from the fable of Tamatori-hime 玉取姫, a pearl diver who recovered a precious pearl from the underwater palace of the Dragon King for her husband Fujiwara no Fuhito. This tale was a favourite subject of Kuniyoshi's, who produced multiple prints illustrating it. In figure 4, Tamatori-Hime flees back to the shore with the pearl safely in her grasp, fending off the terrifying attendants of the Dragon King as they attempt to recover the pearl. When compared to Blake's work, there are a few similarities that become apparent. The settings all depict a stormy, churning sea out of which the monster rises, a great serpentine body with a monstrous head. The compositions are dramatic, frozen at the instant before an action to heighten the tension of the scene. And most importantly, the monsters depicted give the viewer the feeling of awe and terror, the sensation of being faced with a powerful and unstoppable force. This is even more apparent in figure six, where the scene has been expanded from a single panel into a triptych, giving Kuniyoshi the space to display the full terrifying power and force of the Dragon King's forces. In this, the full might and danger of not just the natural world but also the supernatural, are made apparent.

---

[108]

Robinson and Utagawa, *Kuniyoshi*; Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861.*

Fig 5

Figure 5 is another demonstration of this. One of Kuniyoshi's many hero prints, it depicts the samurai Hanagami Danjō no jō Arakage fighting a giant sea monster. Using a similar diagonal composition like that of figure 4, Kuniyoshi captures the moment Arakage stabs the creature, in the midst of a swirling torrent of water. This time however, the mood of the print is different, as the moment depicted is one of victory rather than of helpless fleeing terror. Whilst still unnatural and terrifying, the monster in this print is on the verge of being subdued.

It is clear then that Kuniyoshi, like Blake, was well versed in both the classics and contemporary literary works of his day. This makes sense considering that both artists came from similar social classes- that of educated, moderately wealthy urban tradesmen. What is interesting to note is how despite coming from separate literary canons, the creatures depicted have many features in common, from the scaly serpentine bodies with monstrous heads, to their unnaturally huge size. Despite the separation in geography and culture, the human imagination appears to gravitate towards certain forms which represent common human experiences of awe, anxiety and terror.

Fig 6

     While artists are often stereotyped as being social outcasts, both Britain and Japan there was a place in society for artists-provided the artist belonged to a certain class of the educated elite and was a member of a particular school or institution. Surprisingly (or perhaps unsurprisingly) the artists creating works of monsters were all perceived to be eccentric in personality and existed outside of their societal norm, where they often associated and collaborated with other personalities similar to theirs. Whether they were successful or unsuccessful in making a name for themselves seems to largely depend on the degree to which arts patrons of their societies tolerated this deviation from the norm. Both Kuniyoshi and Blake hit difficult periods in their careers during which they struggled to find commissions. However, Kuniyoshi would turn his fortunes around to become a celebrated artist during his lifetime, whilst Blake would spend much of his life struggling in relative obscurity.[109] The possible reasons for why two artists from similar backgrounds had very different fortunes in their careers are numerous, but the most likely one is that of individual temperament. Kuniyoshi, despite being known for his eccentricity, appeared to have more success with collaborating with writers and publishers to obtain commissions, where Blake seemed to find such partnerships with publishers a struggle.

---

[109]

    Schaap et al., *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861*; Wright, *The Life of William Blake*.

Despite socio-cultural differences, there was a similar underlying "mood" of unease with a changing world permeating these two societies that artists of the time were picking up on. On the surface and from a purely visual perspective, these monsters being compared only seem to have superficial features in common and it would be tempting to say they are completely unrelated. But when the art is examined more closely in their respective socio-historical contexts, an array of similarities become apparent that cannot simply be attributed to mere coincidence. Similar people, under similar circumstances, produced art containing similar subject matter which the society around them responded to, whether positively or negatively.

Chapter six: Conclusion

This study has compared sea monsters in British and Japanese art from the romantic period and late Edo period. Both of these periods appear within a similar time-frame to each other and more importantly, these artistic periods occur during a similar cultural zeitgeist in these two societies.

The artists lived in a period of political and economic instability, where traditional institutions were losing power and influence, and nearly a century of urbanisation had changed the cultural and economic face of the countries. Furthermore, the effects of urbanisation would bring about enormous change throughout society through the blurring of old social structures and creation of newly affluent classes which many social and cultural elites were beginning to anticipate.

In both countries, when the art produced in those periods is compared, a trend can be seen towards the unsettling, the weird and the uncanny. Artists in both countries turned increasingly to characters and creatures of myth, and in particular to monsters for their inspiration. Woodblock print artists like Utagawa Kuniyoshi and printmakers and engravers such as William Blake produced multiple works featuring sea monsters and other supernatural creatures.

Following Hatcher's method of cross cultural comparison, I have examined both the individual artists in question concerning their own personalities, as well as their place in their respective societies and the wider cultural context in which they lived and worked. Utagawa Kuniyoshi and William Blake were both career artists. They were both known for their eccentric personalities and for not following the established line of thinking in the societies they lived in. Both were well educated and could be said to belong to their respective societies' cultural elites. The most significant difference is that Kuniyoshi was a celebrated artist in his own lifetime and in his country, whereas Blake's works did not become well known until after his death, as Blake himself was something of a social pariah in his life.

The art that both produced was a reflection of what they observed in their societies during the pre-

industrial zeitgeist and in both, an interest in mythical monsters can be seen. Most significantly, these artists and their works are not outliers or stand-alone in their time, but follow a wider trend of a proliferation of monsters in the arts and literature across both societies.

The sea monsters, despite appearing quite different initially due to the stylistic differences in the artwork, actually contain a startling number of similarities. In both cases, the monsters are recognisable characters of mythology and folklore. The leviathan and the sea dragon are both featured in folk-tales literature and religious texts that would have been well known to the artists of the time. Furthermore, many sea monsters would have been in the cultural limelight due to the emerging discourse concerning mythology and folklore that was being debated among the cultural elite.

Another similarity is that the visual appearance of these creatures seems to have been designed by the artists based on marine life. This was likely influenced by the popularity of natural history in both countries and the increasing amount of literature documenting natural history that was becoming available. This would explain how two geographically and culturally distant countries with little contact at this point in history could produce sea monsters with many features in common.

Most important are the similarities in the way the sea monsters are depicted. Despite their passing resemblance to familiar animals, there is something unnatural, almost alien in their proportions. They are often huge and yet seem to appear from nowhere and without warning. Their appearance is frightening; they are often attacking people and ships with impunity. Often there is also some kind of divine connection - the monster was sent by, or controlled by a deity. However, sometimes the sea monsters appear because humans disobeyed some divine or natural order - by taking something from the ocean that should not have been taken, going out to sea on the wrong night, or sailing too far into unknown waters.

The connection with the supernatural, mysterious and unknown is not a coincidence. Monsters are away for a society and culture to manifest a sense of unease that appears with no concrete cause anxiety towards a situation which is unstable and a future which is uncertain. I hold

that Peckham's theory of art as an expression of cultural "mood" is correct. Both Britain and Japan were experiencing unrest and uncertainty and the proliferation of sea monsters across the various art forms pinned down and physically expressed this otherwise unquantifiable, but nonetheless very real sense of dread and unease. The fact that art of them was so popular and mass produced for consumption by the general public and cultural elites lends credence to this theory; that this was a mood that was felt throughout society and was not just a personal whim of the artist. Further evidence of this is demonstrated by how this art belonged to a wider cultural trend which expressed a fascination with monsters.

But monsters do not only belong in the art of the past. This thesis began because in this time, as both an artist and a scholar, the author noticed a contemporary trend once again towards monsters. Whether it is in online art stores or in book shops, in academic scholarship or popular culture, monsters and especially sea monsters are once again enjoying a spike in popularity. Reflecting on the current economic, social and political climate, one cannot help but notice similarities to the zeitgeist that this thesis discussed. This is once again a time of uncertainty and upheaval and once again, monsters have stepped into the cultural spotlight. Somehow it seems that beyond social and cultural differences, there is something in the human mind that seeks to express or seeks an expression of the anxiety we feel in the face of the unpredictable and the unknown.

The implications of this go beyond the scope of this study, but there is potential for a broader, global study of sea monsters as they appear across cultures and the roles they play within the arts and mythologies of these cultures . It would appear that the creation of mythical monsters is not restricted to a particular time or place but is a universal fact of human existence.

Bibliography

Addiss, Stephen, Helen Foresman Spencer Museum of Art, and Asia Society, eds. *Japanese Ghosts & Demons: Art of the Supernatural*. 1st ed. New York : Lawrence: G. Braziller ; Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1985.

Beasley, William G. *The Rise of Modern Japan: [Political, Economic and Social Change since 1850]*. 3. ed., Ed. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000.

Blake, William. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790. http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/collections/prints/118220.

Bolitho, Harold. 'The Tempō Crisis'. In *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 5. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Clark, Peter, and R.A. Houston. 'Culture and Leisure 1700-1840'. In *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 2:575–614. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Clark, Timothy, Kyōsai Kawanabe, and British Museum, eds. *Demon of Painting: The Art of Kawanabe Kyōsai ; [... an Exhibition Organised by the British Museum, the Kawanabe Kyōsai Memorial Museum and Asahi Shimbun ..., 1 December 1993 - 13 February 1994]*. London: British Museum Press, 1993.

Curran, Stuart, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Foster, Michael Dylan. *Pandemonium and Parade Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

———. *The Book of Yokai : Mysterious Creatures of Japanese Folklore*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015.

Franz, Marie-Luise von. *Archetypal Patterns in Fairy Tales*. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1997.

Freud, Sigmund. 'The'uncanny'. Standard Edition (Vol. 17, Pp. 218-256)', 1919.

Galitz, Author: Kathryn Calley. 'Romanticism | Essay | Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History | The Metropolitan Museum of Art'. *The Met's Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. Accessed 8 June 2017. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/roma/hd_roma.htm.

Georges, Robert A, and Michael Owen Jones. *Folkloristics: An Introduction*. Indiana University Press, 1995.

Harootunian, H.D. 'Late Tokugawa Culture and Thought'. In *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Vol. 5. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Hatcher, Evelyn Payne. *Art as Culture : An Introduction to the Anthropology of Art*. Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1985.

———. *Art as Culture : An Introduction to the Anthropology of Art*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1999.

Innes, Joanna, and Nicholas Rogers. 'Politics and Goverment 1700-1840'. In *The Cambridge Urban History of Japan*, 2:529–74. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Janson, H. W., Penelope J. E. Davies, and H. W. Janson. *Janson's History of Art: The Western Tradition*. 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2011.

Jung, Carl Gustav, and Marie-Luise von Franz. *Man and His Symbols*. Doubleday, 1964.

Kawamori, Hiroshi. 'Folktale Research after Yanagita: Development and Related Issues'. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 2003, 237–256.

Kern, Adam L. *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan*. Harvard East Asian Monographs 279. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2006.

Langton, John. 'Urban Growth and Economic Change c 1688-1841'. In *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 2:453–90. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Lee, Henry. *Sea Monsters Unmasked*. [S.l.]: COSIMO CLASSICS, 2014.

Levin, D. *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman*. A Harbinger Book. Stanford University Press, 1959.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 1963.

Makdisi, Saree. *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Meyer, Matthew. *The Night Parade of One Hundred Demons: A Field Guide to Japanese Yokai*, 2015.

Neu, Jerome. *The Cambridge Companion to Freud*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

'Olaus Magnus'. *1911 Encyclopædia Britannica*, 1911..

'Olaus Magnus's Sea Serpent'. *The Public Domain Review*. Accessed 15 May 2017. /2014/02/05/olaus-magnuss-sea-serpent/.

'On the History of Comparison in Folklore Studies'. Accessed 15 May 2017. http://www.hanko.uio.no/planses/Ulrika.html.

Oudemans, A. C. (Anthonie Cornelis). *The Great Sea-Serpent. An Historical and Critical Treatise. With the Reports of 187 Appearances...the Suppositions and Suggestions of Scientific and Non-Scientific Persons, and the Author's Conclusions. With 82 Illustrations*. Leiden : E. J. Brill; London, Luzac & co., 1892. http://archive.org/details/greatseaserpenth00oude.

Pannell, Sandra. 'Of Gods and Monsters'. *A World of Water: Rain, Rivers and Seas in Southeast Asian Histories*, 2007, 71.

Papp, Zília. *Traditional Monster Imagery in Manga, Anime and Japanese Cinema*. Global Oriental, 2010.

Peckham, Morse. 'Man's Rage for Chaos: Biology'. *Behaviour and the*, 1965.

Puhvel, Jaan. *Comparative Mythology*. Baltimore [u.a.]: Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993.

Robinson, Basil William, and Kuniyoshi Utagawa. *Kuniyoshi: The Warrior-Prints*. Oxford: Phaidon, 1982.

Rosenthal, Léon. *Romanticism*. Art of Century Collection. New York: Parkstone International, 2008.

Schaap, R., K. Utagawa, Van Gogh Museum, and Philadelphia Museum of Art. *Heroes & Ghosts: Japanese Prints by Kuniyoshi, 1797-1861*. Hotei Pub., 1998.

Schwarz, Leonard. 'London 1700-1840'. In *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 2:641–72. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Sharpe, Pamela. 'Population and Society 1700-1840'. In *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain*, 2:491–528. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Shiner, Larry. *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History*. University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Smith, David Woodruff. 'Phenomenology'. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/phenomenology/.

Taiso, Yoshitoshi, and Shin'ichi Segi. *Yoshitoshi: The Splendid Decadent*. 1st ed. Tokyo ; New York : New York, N.Y: Kodansha International ; Distributed in the U.S. by Kodansha International/USA, through Harper & Row Publishers, 1985.

'The William Blake Archive'. Accessed 11 May 2017. http://www.blakearchive.org/.

Toriyama, Sekien, Hiroko Yoda, and Matt Alt. *Japandemonium Illustrated: The Yokai Encyclopedias of Toriyama Sekien*. Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc, 2016.

Van Duzer, Chet. *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps*. Paperback edition. London: The British Library, 2014.

'Virtual Institute of Cryptozoology'. Accessed 15 August 2017. http://cryptozoo.pagesperso-orange.fr/personalia/oudemans.htm.

Wilson, Mona. *The Life of William Blake*. 2nd ed. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948.

Wright, Thomas. *The Life of William Blake*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Burt Franklin, 1969.

Yanagita, Kunio; Hagin Mayer, Fanny (translator). *Japanese Folk Tales.* Revised. Tokyo: Tokyo News Service, 1954.