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Monster Theory and the Book of Enoch: Angels and Giants as Chaos and Identity

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Abstract

The Book of Enoch is a non-canonical text that is often referenced in later Judeo-Christian apocalyptic texts and mythology. Enoch scholarship is limited to the past two centuries due to its status as a “lost” work; research has only recently begun. Most prior scholars focused their research on examining the text through the lens of form and historical criticism. They sought to define the genre, to contextualize the book, to determine its authorship, and simply to translate the text from various languages. Though research focused on the Watchers as literary devices in the historical narrative, this study proposes using monster theory to turn the discussion away from Watchers as simply narrative devices. It shifts the focus to their status as “monsters,” used as symbols to create chaos and to mark identity. Furthermore, it examines how this changes their relationship to humans and God in the text. This study determines that the Watchers are often representative of the blurred boundaries between what is good/familiar and bad/uncanny to the Hebrew community, whether that be in their appearance or actions.

Keywords

Enoch, monster theory, angels, narrative criticism, non-canonical

Disciplines

Biblical Studies | Christianity | Jewish Studies

Comments

Written for HIST 426: History and Highest Criticism

Monster Theory and the Book of Enoch: Angels and Giants as Chaos and Identity

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HIST 426: History and Highest Criticism

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I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.

The Book of Enoch is a non-canonical text that is often referenced in later Judeo-Christian apocalyptic texts and mythology. Enoch scholarship is limited to the past two centuries due to its status as a “lost” work; research has only recently begun. Most prior scholars focused their research on examining the text through the lens of form and historical criticism. They sought to define the genre, to contextualize the book, to determine its authorship, and simply to translate the text from various languages. Though research focused on the Watchers as literary devices in the historical narrative, this study proposes using monster theory to turn the discussion away from Watchers as simply narrative devices. It shifts the focus to their status as “monsters,” used as symbols to create chaos and to mark identity. Furthermore, it examines how this changes their relationship to humans and God in the text. This study determines that the Watchers are often representative of the blurred boundaries between what is good/familiar and bad/uncanny to the Hebrew community, whether that be in their appearance or actions.

Word Count: 7972

Introduction

The Book of Enoch is largely regarded as a non-canonical book of Judeo-Christian writings that concern apocalyptic revelations such as the plight of the Watchers, or fallen angels, on humanity, the coming of the Flood, and the judgment at the End Days. These sections of writings are then pieced together into five sections each with their own genres and story of focus. The five books consist of the Book of Watchers, the Book of Parables of Enoch, the Book of Luminaries, the Book of Dreams, and the Epistles of Enoch. All five books discuss the stories mentioned above, although to different degrees, along with other events that were presented to Enoch by the Watchers, the Archangels, or by God. Throughout this whole collection, special emphasis is placed on the presence of the several types of angels that Enoch encountered, as well as the Nephilim, half-angelic, half-human creatures, which serve as a point of contention in all these stories.

Previous scholarship on the Book of Enoch, as well as its parts, has overwhelmingly focused on placing the works in their historical contexts by dating the various texts, whether by carbon dating or historical records, and analyzing how these texts would have fit into the larger ancient Mediterranean world. Scholars such as Józef Milik and Richard Henry Charles have focused much of their research translating, interpreting, and dating, the Book of Enoch from extant copies available in Ge'ez, an ancient Ethiopian language, and from fragments in Greek, Aramaic, or Latin, found in the Dead Sea and Qumrân caves. George Nickelsburg released two commentaries on the Book of Enoch where he discusses both the historical context of Enoch, and the use of angels and creatures as literary symbols throughout the text. Other scholars such as

Anathea Portier-Young, Kevin Sullivan, John J. Collins, David P. Melvin, focus their research on angels and other creatures specifically, but their research centers on a narrative analysis where they analyze angels and other creatures as messengers for God's Word and Punishment.

Scant research has been done that takes a deeper dive into interpreting creatures in Enoch further than just their surface level purpose. While the scholars mentioned above have all analyzed their creatures in their historical contexts to other people's mythologies, their primary focus has been on historical criticism. For the purpose of this research, I will focus my own analysis of angels and creatures in Enoch using narrative criticism in conjunction with monster theory, a literary tool of which analyzes how creatures may be used to represent trauma, chaos, a marker of identification, and how monsters straddle the line between the familiar and uncanny, while also helping both humanity and God elevate themselves above an adversary.¹

Historiography

Despite the Book of Enoch being known for centuries, European scholars have only begun to analyze the text since translations came into circulation beginning in the 18th century. Of the copies that could be original translations, the only extant copy was available from Ethiopia, where all other versions were fragments written in Greek, Aramaic, Latin, and Coptic. Since then, Enoch has been translated into English and other modern languages in order to be studied. Of the research that has occurred, there are several ways in which these scholars can be divided. There are those who have focused on the Book as a whole, in creating translations, carbon dating the text, and commentating on what has been written by Enoch's authors and other

¹ Brandon R. Grafius, "Text and Terror: Monster Theory and the Hebrew Bible," *Currents in Biblical Research* 16, no. 1 (2017): 34.

scholars, and there are those who have focused more on the contents of Enoch, specifically how angels are used throughout the text. Scholars in both categories also place an emphasis on situating the Book of Enoch into its historical context, in order to understand how the world in which Enoch was written may have influenced its language and motifs.

Charles, an Irish theologian and professor, is considered one of the leading Western scholars for the Book of Enoch in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the book was first introduced to academia. He is most well-known for his translations of various apocalyptic Hebrew and Christian texts, such as the Book of Enoch, the Book of Jubilees, and the Apocalypse of Baruch. His translation of the Book of Enoch was published in 1912 and includes translated works from the Greek fragments. Charles' translation of Enoch is a dense version due to his extensive notes that remained in the published version of the text. His opening notes on the text do not begin with the text themselves, but with explaining to the reader where parts of each section come from and what one may consider studying in the future; for example, Charles notes how chapters in Enoch may have belonged to what is known as the Book of Noah.² The majority of his translated edition is overwhelmingly his commentary on the story, rather than the story as the focus, itself. When Charles discusses the presence of angels, whether that be the Watchers or the archangels, his notes simply interpret the text and provide context; he claims that the relationships between the angels and the "daughters of men" came from a story in Genesis, and could also be connect to an early myth of Persian origin.³ His translation reads more like a form analysis of the text, where Charles' attempt to find the origins of the stories and the writer far outweigh his deep analysis of the text. It can be said that his order of analysis places emphasis on

² R.H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 1.

³ Charles, *Enoch*, 14.

translating the text first, determining its historical context, and then interpreting the revelations Enoch received.

Milik is another important scholar in the field of ancient Hebrew texts. Both a Catholic priest and biblical scholar, Milik also researched and translated texts such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Book of Enoch. Famously, he is known for his discovery and carbon dating of Aramaic fragments of Enoch that he uncovered in Qumrân Cave 4; his discovery and translation of these fragments are often cited in the other works of literature that are used throughout this study. Of his discoveries in the Qumrân Cave, Milik found fragments of Enoch that are from the Book of Luminaries, the Book of Watchers, and the Book of Dreams. When he discusses angels and creatures in these fragments, it is simply in comparison to other translated works of Enoch that scholars had on hand; he does not do more with them besides describing what actions they took in Enoch's revelations or analyzing the use of language across the different translations found in the cave.⁴

Nickelsburg's commentary on Enoch not only raises and answers questions such as what Enoch's literary approach is, what the original language was, and how the book is connected to the greater Mediterranean world, but he also interprets the text of Enoch, similar to how Charles does in his own translation. Nickelsburg's commentary acts as a bridge between the scholars who focus on translations and those who focus on the narrative. Nickelsburg identifies angels as mediators, intercessors, and judicial opponents. As intercessors, Nickelsburg states that angels are "envisioned as a legal protagonist" and as "an 'umpire' or arbiter, a 'witness,' a 'mediator,' and a 'vindicator' or 'redeemer.'"⁵ Here, Nickelsburg focuses on how angels take on the role of interpreter between humanity and God, which is also addressed by David Melvin's "interpreting

⁴ Milik, *Qumrân Cave*, 141.

⁵ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 208-209.

angel motif.” Nickelsburg states that angels in Enoch are an “extension and formalization of similar figures” in Ezekiel and Zechariah, as well as emphasizing that without the presence of an interpreting angel, revelations would not be received since they are “the sole vehicle” of doing so.⁶ He identifies this characteristic to be the most common throughout Hebrew and Christian texts, including the Book of Enoch.

Scholars who focus their work more heavily on the narratives and symbols presented in the text tend to do so from a historical criticism standpoint. Most scholarly work on angels and other creatures in Judeo-Christian texts center around those in canonical pieces, meaning those included in the Torah and Bible. While methods of narrative and literary criticism are present in their work, previous research does not take a further look into what is beyond the surface. Melvin focuses his research on angels in prophetic and apocalyptic writing on their nature as interpreters between humans and God. Parallel to Nickelsburg identification of how angels function, Melvin claims that “the interpreting angel motif is part of a larger shift away from classical prophecy...the prophet was now a seer of visions and a recipient of interpretations and other forms of revelation from angels.”⁷ Melvin argues that writing angels as interpreters of God’s message makes them a polemic symbol in condemning the practice of divination.

The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions is a series of essays, with each essay focusing on three different eras: origins and biblical discussions of the Fallen Angels; the Second Temple developments; and reception in early Christianity and Early Judaism. Anthea Portier-Young argues that the author of Enoch drew inspiration from myths and traditions from Greece, Babylon, and local peoples. Portier-Young emphasizes that while Enoch’s authors drew

⁶ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of Enoch Chapters 1-36; 81-108* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 294-295.

⁷ David P. Melvin, *The Interpreting Angel Motif in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 175.

inspiration from other traditions, that did not stop them from flipping myths to make Enoch a polemic text. Portier-Young, in particular, states that Enoch's author did exactly this, so as to critique the Greeks who ruled over them, as well as the local cultic leaders who joined their forces.⁸ In this way, Portier-Young begins to touch upon what Brandon Grafius identifies as "monster theory." She identifies one of the cross overs in myths by identifying the Watchers as "Prometheus figures." Prometheus is the Greek Titan of fire who is said to have introduced fire to humanity in the form of knowledge and technology. The Watchers introduced to humanity military technologies, metallurgy, cosmetology, herbology, sorcery, and astronomy, as stated in Enoch, which were all valued in Greek and Babylonian traditions, according to Portier-Young.⁹ Creating this parallel, Portier-Young shows that the author of Enoch is recognizing the Greeks as outsiders to their community, who bring danger with their arrival. This use of the Watchers as symbols for enemies directly relates to the apocalyptic and polemic genre of the Book of Enoch as a whole. She returns to the discussion of monster theory in her book, *Apocalypse against the Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism*. In employing the identification of chaos in her discussion of the Book of Watchers, Portier-Young identifies the Nephilim as representative of non-Hellenistic cultures, while the Watchers are associated with Greek culture.¹⁰ Her argument relates the Nephilim and Watchers to the issue of chaos due to the giants threatening the so-called order that the Watchers represent.

Later in this same volume, Kevin Sullivan analyzes the Watchers in context to what would become known as demons and the development of Satan in Jewish traditions. He sees that the fall of the Watchers from heaven corresponds directly with the development of the good

⁸ Angela Kim Harkins, Kelley Coblenz and John C. Endres S.J., *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 39.

⁹ Harkins, *The Watchers*, 42.

¹⁰ Anthea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse Against the Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 14 and 20.

versus evil, black versus white motif that arises around God and the figure of Satan.¹¹ Once again, we have an analysis of the Watchers in their historical and cultural context, where they came from, Greece and Babylonian myths, and where they reappear, in New Testament writings such as Jude 1 and Hebrews 11:5. Similarly, Everett Ferguson explains how the Watchers are related to the development of demonology in Jewish culture. He claims that while evil spirits resided in the bodies of giants, the source of evil on earth was also considered to be from men themselves.¹² At this time in Jewish history, our modern understanding of demons had yet to be created, as seen with Sullivan's discussion. Ferguson does explain that demons were spiritual beings with human-like features, therefore, straddling the line between the known and the unknown, he does not take this argument deeper into consideration as seen in both monster theory's and Portier-Young's discussions of the Watchers representing the "other." While both Sullivan and Ferguson can draw parallels to these contemporaneous events, they do not provide more evidence on what the importance of viewing the Watchers as demons and evil spirits may have meant for early Jewish peoples.

Collins also identifies aspects of Enoch that come from previous cultural traditions. He notes that aspects of Enoch were taken from Mesopotamian myths, such as their own flood hero.¹³ He reveals, similar to others, the historical context of when and where Enoch was written, but he also argues how the Watchers are used as symbols of chaos: "the story suggests violence and lawlessness...the resolution of the ancient conflict generated by the Watchers emerges with the inevitability that guarantees a similar resolution to the conflicts of the Hellenistic age."¹⁴ He identifies the Watchers as agents of chaos in their corruption of humanity; in explaining the myth

¹¹ Harkins, *The Watchers*, 92.

¹² Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1933), 70.

¹³ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 46.

¹⁴ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 51.

as a way to ease people's tensions about current events, Collins is also identifying how Enoch is polemic in nature, despite its attempts to remove people from reality. Collins, like Portier-Young, began to touch upon monster theory in their analysis of the Watchers in Enoch; however, both authors' main arguments focused more heavily on historical criticism, as stated before, and determining where the author of Enoch would have drawn inspiration, whether it be other traditions or historical events. Both Collins and Portier-Young bring in aspects of monster theory in their discussions of the Watchers as agents of chaos and a means of crafting identity around the "other," although they do not expand this argument into the discussion of Grafius' understanding of monster theory.

Text and Synopsis

The Book of Enoch is a Judeo-Christian text comprising five separate stories, the Book of Watchers, the Book of Parables of Enoch, the Book of Luminaries, the Book of Dreams, and the Epistles of Enoch, attributed to and believed to have been written by the grandfather of Noah, or the seventh patriarch of the Bible, Enoch. These works are both canonical—texts that are considered to be given to Jews and Christians by God and a part of their teachings, and non-canonical—texts not recognized as a part of the dominant Jewish or Christian faiths.

According to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Book of Enoch is considered canonical and a part of their greater teachings because the only full extant (surviving) copy of these stories is written in Ge'ez, an ancient Ethiopian language. John Collins states in his book, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, that the, "the full corpus of 1 Enoch is only extant in Ethiopic...[and the] oldest fragments of the Book of Watchers are ascribed to the first half of the second

century...it is probable that both these works were extant in some form already in the third century B.C.E.” George Nickelsburg also suggests that Enoch was written in the third century B.C.E. and that it was most likely written in Galilee.¹⁵ The Book of Enoch, in addition to the canon accepted by other Jews and Christians, is still taught and preached as a part of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church due to the evidence that not only suggests this book was originally written in Ge’ez, but due to evidence that places these books in the historical time period that other works of the Bible were being written and produced. This is corroborated by Milik’s carbon dating of Aramaic fragments of the Book of Enoch in Qumrân Cave 4; here he states that there are aspects of Greek fragments that have been taken from the Ethiopic copy, and that by the second century onward, people in Greece knew it to be as it was in Ethiopia.¹⁶

Despite other fragments of the Book of Enoch found in the Qumrân Cave and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, copies that were written in Greek, Aramaic, Latin, and Coptic, the Ethiopic version that has been canonized for centuries continues to remain the oldest copy of the book that exists. Carbon analysis, such as Milik’s study, suggests that this Book of Enoch, whether it was written by Enoch himself or by another author, was written around the same time as Genesis, furthering its legacy as the oldest version of the text and verifying the Ethiopian Church’s stance on the book as Canon. Because of this, Ethiopian Christians continue to view the Book of Enoch as canon regardless of the larger Jewish and Christian ignorance of the text.

In comparison, while Europeans may have had access to these manuscripts, given that Enoch is referenced in several passages of the Bible, as seen in Gen 5:23-24, these works were considered non-canonical as early as the 4th century, and were considered “lost” in European

¹⁵ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: 1998), 43-44; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch I*, 119 and 170.

¹⁶ J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 19, 22 and 53.

scholarship until translations became available in the 18th and 19th centuries.¹⁷ For the majority of Jews and Christians, the Book of Enoch is considered a non-Canonical writing that is not considered a part of the Bible. Its status does not make it mythology or fake, it simply denotes it as a book that was written during the biblical period but was not included in the Bible or the larger Judeo-Christian faith.

What comes of these stories is a series of apocalyptic works which detail biblical information such as the origin of demons and Nephilim, the names of Archangels, why some angels fell from Heaven, and even debates the necessity of the Flood according to God's Will. While each section of Enoch has different stories to tell, the entirety of the Book of Enoch can be classified under the apocalyptic genre. As defined by James Bailey and Lyle Vander Broek in *Literary Forms in the New Testament*, apocalypse as a genre "is a broad literary category" and consists of works where the author has received visions from a "divine mediator," whether that be Jesus or an angel, in place of God.¹⁸ Furthermore, Collins states that "the form of the apocalypses involves a narrative framework that describes the manner of revelation... The constant element is the presence of an angel who interprets the visions or serves as a guide on the otherworldly journey." He also explains the importance of these supernatural beings due to their aid being the only method in which humans can interpret revelations.¹⁹

Enoch's status as an apocalyptic work can be attributed to many things. Nicolai Sinai discusses the so-called polemic nature of certain suras in the Quran. In understanding Sinai's definition of polemic, which refers to works that are specifically written to speak against other religions and cultures, we can determine that the larger genre of apocalypse may also fall under

¹⁷ Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 18.

¹⁸ James L. Bailey and Lyle D. Vander Broek, "Apocalypse: The Book of Revelations," in *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook* (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1992), 202.

¹⁹ Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5.

this category. One of the stories told in Enoch is the creation of Nephilim and the consequences that their existence has on humanity and their relationship with God. In Enoch, the creation and presence of the Nephilim go against the order that God has created. While this story does not explicitly state that those of Enoch's community should not have intercourse with strange outsiders, the message is implied in the narrative as a warning against submitting to other religions.

The Book of Watchers (Enoch 1-36), the first and earliest work of the five books of Enoch, tells the story of the angels, also known as the Watchers, who "fell" from heaven and created Nephilim, half-angel, half-human giants, with human women. This book also involves the narration of Enoch's travels through earth, Heaven, and the underworld with the Watchers, archangels, and God as guides. The Book of the Watchers begins with the author explaining that Enoch was such a good and righteous man, that he was taken up to heaven by God when it was his Time; his righteousness also saw him receive a "holy vision in the heavens," which the angels showed him.²⁰ In just two verses, we are already told that this book is one of apocalyptic nature, with Enoch receiving all knowledge from angels, as Bailey and Broek defined earlier in this study. In addition, the beginning of the Watchers retells the Great Flood that will eventually cleanse the Earth in the story of Noah's Ark.²¹

Of the rest of the Watchers, the majority details how these angels fell from Heaven, the knowledge they bestowed upon Enoch and human women, as well as their punishment at the hands of God. As described earlier, the Watchers are fallen angels due to their rejection of God's plan by taking human women as wives; however, their disobedience did not stop there, as they acted as a secondary serpent figure in teaching their wives "sorcery, incantations, and the

²⁰ Richard Laurence., *The Book of Enoch the Prophet: Translated from an Ethiopic MS. in the Bodleian Library* (London: Kagan Paul, Trench & CO., 1883), Enoch 1:1-2.

²¹ Enoch 1:6.

dividing of roots and trees,” and showing the rest of the world a plethora of military and mystic technology:

Taught men to make swords, knives, shields, breastplates, the fabrication of mirrors, and the workmanship of bracelets and ornaments, the use of paint, the beautifying of the eyebrows, the use of stones of every valuable and select kind, and all sorts of dyes, so that the world became altered.²²

God then tells Enoch himself to inform the Watchers of their misdoings and the punishments they shall receive in return—eternal damnation—where he acts as a mediator between the two parties. As a result, Enoch is granted a vision which sees him travel across Earth, the Heavens, and Sheol, a waiting place for the dead in the underworld, similar to that of Greek myth.

The Book of Parables, the second section of the Book of Enoch, is arguably the most studied section of this collection. In this section, Enoch received three parables that he would go on to teach to the rest of the world. The first parable reads as a retelling of the Book of Watchers, briefly recounting their sin of coming to earth and disrupting the natural order; here, he also recounts his various travels across the Earth, Heavens, and the underworld, under the guidance of the archangels.²³ The second parable describes the final judgment of those who sin and those who stand beside God and his dominion. Enoch claims that those who deny the name of God, “Heaven they shall not ascend, nor shall they come on the earth.”²⁴ Furthermore, chapter forty-six of Enoch also describes the “Son of Man,” who is said to have a head “like white wool” and whose “countenance was full of grace, like that of one of the holy angels.”²⁵ This description parallels that of another angel in Daniel 10 and Jesus in Revelation 1. This parable introducing the “son of man” in a section which then details the punishment of those who disobey God

²² Enoch 7:10; Enoch 8:1.

²³ Enoch 38:1; Enoch 39:1 and 4; Enoch 40:8-9.

²⁴ Enoch 45:1-2.

²⁵ Enoch 46:1.

connects the Book of Enoch back to its status as a work of the apocalyptic genre; it reinforces that Enoch is receiving a revelation of the future and verifies the covenant made between God and Abraham promising a savior. Finally, the third parable, like the last two, functions as a retelling of the Book of Watchers, with a particular focus on the coming of the Flood as one of the punishments for the sins of the Watchers and the sins of man. In chapter sixty-four, we see Noah speak to Enoch about the current state of the world. Here, Enoch tells Noah that “angels of punishment” were going to be sent to earth by God and “open all the mighty water under the earth” in order to cleanse the planet of sinners.²⁶

Given that the focus of my research is on the symbolic nature of “beasts” throughout the Book of Enoch, the following descriptions of the last three sections will be shortened summaries so that one may gain a general understanding of each part. While the Book of Watchers may be the primary focus of this, elements from the other sections will be taken into consideration, including the Book of Dreams due to its use of animals, and the Epistles due to the narrative difference in letters compared to revelations.

The Book of Luminaries, also known as the Astronomical Book, simply creates a solar calendar and dictates the number of days in a year, how many seasons there were, how many months were in those seasons, and how many days were in each month. For example, chapter seventy-seven explains how many days are in each month, and how “on stated months the moon has twenty-nine days. It also has a period of twenty-eight.”²⁷ This book was also carbon dated due to fragments found in the Qumrân Cave 4. The Book of Dreams in the fourth section of the Book of Enoch. While there are aspects of this section that have already been recounted earlier, such as the creation of fallen angels and Nephilim, as well as their punishment, the Book of

²⁶ Enoch 65:1-2.

²⁷ Enoch 77:10-11.

Dreams also details the history of the Israelites ending with the Maccabean Revolt, although scholars still debate this. Throughout this section, and particularly in Enoch's second dream, animals are used as symbols for humans and other beings that are players in each story, whether they be the protagonists or antagonists. Part of chapter eight-nine shows a vision given to Enoch, where we see the "Lord of the Sheep" be granted a large sword to fight "against all the beasts of the field to slay them," and receive "all the sealed books," which can both be interpreted as the story of Moses defeating Egypt and the receiving of the Commandments by Moses, respectively.²⁸

Finally, the last section of the Book of Enoch is the Epistles of Enoch, which are also known as letters. It is said that Enoch "wrote all this instruction of wisdom for every man of dignity, and every judge of the earth; for all my children who shall dwell upon earth, and for subsequent generations, conducting themselves uprightly and peaceably."²⁹ This section simply details the "wisdom" that Enoch gave to his family upon learning that he was nearing the end of his life. Throughout these letters, Enoch also addresses the revelations he received, detailing, once again, the story of the Watchers, the Flood, as well as a revelation about the end of times and the Final Judgment: "In that day shall the Most High rise up to execute the great judgment upon all sinners, and to commit the guardianship of all the righteous."³⁰ In this sense, Enoch is now acting as the messenger angel for the rest of his family, due to his new status since the Watchers' fall. While there may be repeating themes and stories in all five sections of the Book of Enoch, each section provides a different understanding of the same information, while at the same time, providing details and using symbols that were not present in other sections.

²⁸ Enoch 89:27 and 30.

²⁹ Enoch 91:1.

³⁰ Enoch 99:2.

Methods

With a majority of scholars focusing their research on translating Enoch and analyzing characters and their actions through historical criticism, much has still to be done with the analysis of Enoch through the lens of narrative criticism. As mentioned previously, Anthea Portier-Young, John J. Collins, and George W. E. Nickelsburg have provided research demonstrating how the fall of the Watchers and the Nephilim may have had origins in earlier traditions, as well as being motifs for the communities those traditions come from; in doing so, these three scholars have shown that Enoch functions as a polemic text within the larger apocalyptic genre.

Narrative criticism, according to Mark Powell, focuses on the study of biblical literature by using methods from the “secular” field of literary criticism, which focuses on whether a text has more than one author, what sources may have been used in its production, and whether the work has been edited in some way.³¹ This method was developed in part by scholars who wanted to expand beyond the limits of historical criticism in the field of New Testament studies. One of the methods narrative criticism employs is the analysis of text, with particular focus on its implied author rather than the actual author. Powell claims that the implied author is created once the reader reconstructs the text based on what they have read in the narrative itself.³² Analysis of implied authors allows us to reconstruct the point of view from which the story would have been written; this, in turn, demonstrates that viewing the Watchers and Nephilim as motifs for Greece and Babylon is more than just a simple narrative choice. Powell identifies what he calls the

³¹ Mark Allan Powell, “Narrative Criticism,” In *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1995), 239; Normal Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 6.

³² Powell, *Hearing the New Testament*, 240.

implied reader, who gives meaning to the text and allows for more than one meaning to be attributed to the story; having an implied reader also suggests that we as scholars need to recognize that the implied reader may already know things that are happening in the text. Most importantly, narrative criticism, in drawing upon literary criticism, looks at the chronology and frequency of events in the story, conflicts, characters and characterization, as well settings and symbolism in the text. Linda Pellico and Peggy Chinn's version of narrative criticism also identifies some literary devices one should focus on: telling, transcribing, analyzing, and reading.³³

Grafius explains that monster theory is not a method of reading the text, but that it provides categories in which we can understand *how* monstrous characters are used in the text. He argues that in biblical studies, the monster is usually understood to be representative of chaos, trauma, and a marker of identity.³⁴ Monsters are often employed in texts to reveal to the reader(s) something that makes them uncomfortable by blurring the lines between themselves and the supposed monster or enemy. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's study of the "uncanny," monsters, in all three categories mentioned above, are both familiar and unfamiliar to the reader, which leads to the uncomfortable nature they represent to opposing groups. As agents of chaos in biblical texts, monsters are never permanently defeated, resulting in a constant battle between chaos and God; as markers of trauma, monsters are often used to represent trauma that is too great to perceive in reality; finally, as markers of identity, monsters are used to create contrast between the uncanny other and an idealized self. In discussing chaos, Grafius refers to research that has identified the leviathan as such.³⁵ The leviathan, a sea serpent that appears in multiple books of

³³ Lina Honan Pellico and Peggy L. Chinn, "Narrative Criticism: A Systematic Approach to the Analysis of Story," *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 25, no. 1 (March 2005), 59-60.

³⁴ Grafius, "Text and Terror," 40.

³⁵ Grafius, "Text and Terror," 41.

the Bible and in mythology, is representative of chaos because of its reappearance as an adversary to God; this creature demonstrates the constant battle between good and evil, in its constant return in different biblical stories. Ryan Higgins also refers to leviathan when discussing monsters in text; the leviathan acts as both an adversary and pet to God—there is constant conflict between the two forces, constant chaos, but God also sees the leviathan as a servant.³⁶ The Flood itself is also referenced as an agent of chaos according to monster theory because it too falls into the category of uncanny, since it is both an act of God’s will and a force of nature that brings chaos to humans and the earth.³⁷ Monster theory is also employed when examining how humans can be portrayed in monstrous terms to act as a marker of identity. The description of the Egyptians in the bible as monstrous fits this definition, and then forces ancient Hebrews to create a separate identity for themselves because of the similarities between themselves and the monstrous other.

Higgins identifies another way that monsters have been used in biblical text, according to Grafius’ definitions for the use of monsters. Following Grafius’ understanding of chaos, Higgins points to the “beloved monster” trope as a recurring theme in the Bible. He states that monsters are “hybrid beings” that threaten humanity and their existence, relating to the discussion of the uncanny. Monsters, in the beloved monster trope, are a villain and threat to humans, but to God, could be considered family members, employees, and even a pet.³⁸

While those scholars reveal much about the context and origins of Enoch and its five sections, I suggest that an analysis of Enoch using monster theory to examine its narrative can provide a unique perspective on how the Watchers and Nephilim function as polemic symbols. A

³⁶ Ryan S. Higgins, “The Good, the God, and the Ugly: The Role of the Beloved Monster in the Ancient Near East and in the Hebrew Bible,” *A Journal of Bible and Theology* 74, no. 2 (2020), 14.

³⁷ Grafius, “Terror and Text,” 40.

³⁸ Higgins, “Text and Terror,” 135.

combination of narrative criticism and monster theory allows us to see that not only were the Watchers and Nephilim representative of outside communities, their presence as unknown and uncanny figures makes Enoch's characterization of them a warning to the larger Hebrew community; essentially, monster theory reveals to us that the author of Enoch has written creatures in this way in order to warn people away from intermingling with outsiders, dabbling in traditions that are not their own, and forgetting their covenant with God. In combining these two methods, narrative criticism and monster theory work to fill in the gaps that other scholars, studying the Book of Enoch and those applying monster theory to the biblical text have left behind.

Analysis

In Enoch, we see the Watchers immediately identified as having aspects of both Grafius' and Higgins' definitions of monster theory. The Watchers are initially referred to as angels and "the sons of heaven," and in doing so, the author of Enoch has established what we now know as monster theory in their narrative.³⁹ Here, the Watchers can now be considered family to God, as they are creatures that reside in heaven with him. With this, we can begin to build a basis in which the Watchers function as agents of chaos in their actions on earth.

The Watchers first begin to cross the plane into what is referred to as monstrous, in their abandonment of heaven for earth. They initially bring chaos in their refusal to adhere to God's boundaries of his creation in their want to engage with human women: "let us select for ourselves wives from the progeny of men, and let us beget children."⁴⁰ Furthermore, their

³⁹ Enoch 7:2.

⁴⁰ Enoch 7:2.

descent to earth also brings chaos as an everlasting force in the making of Nephilim with human women, and the knowledge that they gave to humanity: “sorcery, incantation, and the dividing of roots and trees...Azazel taught men to make swords, knives, breastplates...so that the world became altered.”⁴¹ These actions bring about chaos not just in their opposition to God plans, but also in their creation of blurred boundaries between what is supposed to be for heaven and what is supposed to be for earth—what is unfamiliar and what is familiar: “he [Azazyel] as taught every species of iniquity upon earth, and has disclosed to the world all the secret things which are done in the heavens.”⁴²

Portier-Young already recognized that the Watchers function similar to Prometheus in the Book of Watchers; however, the Watchers are also acting as another serpent figure, in revealing knowledge to humans that was not theirs to give nor humanity’s to receive. It can even be said that the serpent was not a separate entity from the Watchers at all, as the Book of Parables claims an angel named “Gadrel” was responsible for the seduction and temptation of Eve. If a Watcher was indeed the serpent from Genesis, then we could read the Watchers as returning in physical form to earth during the Final Judgment in the Book of Revelation, where John not only sees “the dragon and his angels,” but two beasts, one that emerges from the sea and the other that returns from a story in the Book of Daniel.⁴³

In the Book of Dreams, the Watchers are described as stars that fell from the heavens to earth to seek human women, who were described as cows. Enoch describes that he saw a single star fall from heaven who began to eat and feed amongst these cows, before many stars fell and took on “the manner of horses, and began to approach the young cows, all of whom became

⁴¹ Enoch 7:10-11; Enoch 8:1.

⁴² Enoch 9:5.

⁴³ Enoch 68:6-7; Revelation 12:7 and 9; Revelation 13:1.

pregnant.”⁴⁴ This is another instance where the Watchers are both familiar, in that they make themselves appear to be normal animals on earth, but unfamiliar, in that they are still heavenly beings and took the form of an animal different from that of a cow before mating with them. Here, the sexual acts between the Watchers and human women bring forth elephants, camels, and donkeys, which not only fall under the category of chaos in being representative of the Nephilim, but also in their creation of more chaos in bringing forth animals that had yet to exist in this narrative until this very instance. Realistically, we understand that these other animals existed before Watchers fell to earth, but in this story, the existence of these animals is uncanny due to their conception by two completely different beings. People reading or listening to this story be told, understand that elephants, camels, and donkeys cannot be created by a horse and a cow, but readers and listeners can understand that this action brings chaos and fundamentally different beings into something that was once familiar and ordered.

Despite God’s punishments for the Watchers, “cast him into darkness...destroy the children of fornication...shall they be taken away into the lowest depths of the fire in torments,” the effects of the Watchers’ actions remain present on earth.⁴⁵ The Watchers brought chaos to humanity in revealing forbidden knowledge. God did defeat this force of evil and chaos; however, just as the leviathan came back in other stories, the influence of the Watchers on humanity functions in this same way. Similar to how humanity is still tainted by original sin due to the temptation of Adam and Eve, humanity continued to use what the Watchers gave them even after their damnation; for example, humans continued to use swords and breastplates to wage war. Through this we can recognize how the Watchers in the Book of Enoch fit the definitions of both Grafius and Higgins’ monster theories. In accordance with Grafius, the

⁴⁴ Enoch 85:2-3 and 6.

⁴⁵ Enoch 10:6, 13, and 16.

Watchers are both familiar and unfamiliar, given that they are angelic beings, yet they align themselves with humans, and they represent a break in the borders between what is considered heavenly and what is considered earthly. According to Higgins, the Watchers in the Book of Enoch fulfill his “beloved monster” trope, because, like the leviathan, they have a familiar relationship with God besides that of a chaotic adversary—the leviathan as a pet, and the Watchers as his angels before their fall.

If we are to consider the Book of Enoch to be drawing inspiration from Greek and Babylonian myths, as suggested by Portier-Young, and being written while Greece and Babylon were powerful forces, with Greece eventually ruling over Babylon after their surrender to Alexander the Great in the third century B.C.E., then we can also begin to further analyze how the description of the Watchers may be working as markers of identity, more so than where Portier-Young and Collins ended their discussions.⁴⁶ An important part of identity building is creating an “other” which you can then contrast yourself and your culture too. According to Grafius, the creation of an “other,” can also be done in a “monstrous” way, dehumanizing the people that you want to keep separate from your own community. Establishing an “other” in the communities that one dislikes is certainly not a new concept. David Mattingly discusses this issue of identity in *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire*. In particular, Mattingly mentions that conflict between groups of people is what often leads to the strict differentiation between one group of people and the other: “the state building its sense of purpose and identity on its perceived distance and difference from the barbarian ‘other’ while indigenous societies are equally recorded in opposition to the colonial aggressor.”⁴⁷ Here, the distinction between civilization and the barbarians is easily made due to the depiction of the

⁴⁶ Henry W. F. Saggs, “Babylons” *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

⁴⁷ David J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 211.

“barbarian” as naked, with long beards, and torques around their necks. Similarly, Mary Douglas discusses how communities may create an “other” out of an outsider by examining certain behaviors that create differences between people. In “Deciphering a Meal,” Douglas identifies the three rules about meat in the Hebrew Bible and that if a person were to come into physical contact with a forbidden animal, as well as people who have sinned morally, they could not enter the temple.⁴⁸

Since Judaism and Christianity are both monotheistic religions, meaning their practitioners worship and believe in one God, Portier-Young and Collins connect the Watchers to Greece and Babylon help form the polemic aspects of Enoch’s apocalyptic genre. While both these authors establish that there is a connection between the Watchers and outside communities when compared to Enoch and the community it was written for, they only use historical criticism to analyze the Watchers as Greeks and Babylonians. With Grafius’ monster theory in mind, monsters work as markers of identity because they reveal how the implied reader is supposed to be interpreted by modern readers, assumes that the implied reader knows the political climate of the time, and helps create a divide between outsiders and one’s idealized self, based on communal or personal anxiety.

With Watchers introducing sorcery, herbology, blacksmithing, cosmetology, and other forbidden technologies to the Hebrew community, we are reading outsiders introducing knowledge that brought about chaos, war, oppression, and the downfall of humans at the time, due to humanity engaging with the Watchers. When Noah approaches Enoch about the current state of the world, Enoch did not reply that the Watchers were the only factor causing problems on earth; in fact, Enoch states that for “those who dwell on the earth, that they may be destroyed; for they know every secret of the angels, every oppressive and secret power of the devils, and

⁴⁸ Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” *Daedalus* 101, no. 1 (Winter, 1972), 75.

every power of those who commit sorcery.”⁴⁹ Since scholars have repeatedly shown that Enoch was written during a period of conflict and that it draws inspiration from other cultures, we can also assume that the polemic nature of this Book is not only warning people away from the sorcery and blasphemy that comes with intermingling with outsider communities, such as Portier-Young and Collins suggest, we can also see that the creation of the Nephilim to also fit under this category according to Grafius’ identification. As previously stated in the Book of Dreams, sexual relations between cows (human women) and horses (the Watchers) create elephants, camels, and donkeys, all of which represent the Nephilim. These Nephilim, much like their “fathers,” wreak havoc onto each other and on the earth. They then “began biting with their teeth, swallowing, and striking with their horns. They also began to devour the cows...they began to strike out and to swallow each other.”⁵⁰

In contrast, the story of Joseph, son of Jacob, in the book of Genesis shows Joseph being betrayed by those who are familiar to him, his own brothers, and cast into slavery for people who are unfamiliar to him, the Egyptians. During this time, Joseph would eventually be freed from enslavement due to his interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams and helping save Egypt from famine.⁵¹ In this instance, however, the Egyptians are not written as monsters to present chaos or markers of identity the way the Watchers are, since that is not the lesson of this story. The antagonists are Joseph’s brothers, who represent the various sins, jealousy and unfaithfulness, which Israel was succumbing to at this time. Joseph’s story is meant to tell readers that those who remain faithful to God and his plan will eventually prevail over sin and will return to God’s intended path; Joseph’s brothers were forgiven by him despite their transgressions.⁵² Joseph’s job

⁴⁹ Enoch 64:6.

⁵⁰ Enoch 85:7-8; Enoch 86:1.

⁵¹ Genesis 41:39-41.

⁵² Genesis 45:7-8.

in Egypt was to preserve the land and help save lives, not focus on the differences between himself and the Egyptians around him.

Enoch's tales do not show the Watchers as simple pieces in a specific narrative, as they are in the story of Jacob, Enoch tale's consistently show the Watchers are active players in corrupting humanity and ruining God's order. This is further emphasized when taking the historical research that has been done on Enoch. Joseph's story takes place *before* the Book of Exodus, a story where the Egyptians are framed as antagonists to Israel's protagonists, whereas Enoch is believed to have been written *during* a time that active threats were occurring around the Hebrew community, such as the overtaking of Babylon by the Greeks—a time when knowing one's enemy from oneself would be of importance.

In Enoch, we can see that the temptation of humans by the Watchers and the creation of the Nephilim caused humans to turn away from God's will and commit sins. In light of the fact that apocalyptic texts are often polemical, writings that interactions with outsiders that can blend in with the community as an inherently wrong action infers that Enoch could have been writing to keep the Hebrews contained and hidden from sin. If they, the Hebrews were to partake in sorcery, herbology, and blacksmithing, they become in league with those who commit those sins, leaving their devotion to the one true God and his covenant behind.

If we combine Douglas' belief that pork aversion may have played a role in allowing Hebrew communities to distinguish themselves from others, and Portier-Young's discussion that the Watchers are representative of Greece and Babylon, we can see that the story of the Fall of the Watchers acts as a manifesto against Greek and Babylonian peoples, emphasizing the importance of remaining righteous in comparison: "the children [Noah and his descendants] which are born to you [Enoch, the righteous] shall survive on the earth...when all mankind who

are on earth shall die, he shall be safe.”⁵³ The Watchers bring nothing but chaos and destruction, similar to how outsiders often brought oppression with them to Jewish communities; the Watchers are polemic because they represent a danger against a specific community. With Enoch’s author using monsters as motifs for people to understand what their own community and identity is, the author is allowing Hebrews to be more efficient in identifying sinners and outsiders when encountering people in the future.

Conclusion

The Book of Enoch and its traditions, while non-canonical to the majority of Jewish and Christian denominations, continued to influence biblical texts despite its contested status. In employing the apocalyptic genre, the author of Enoch created five different sections of a larger story that spoke against turning away from God and Enoch himself was received by archangels or by God himself. Throughout all five sections, creatures which are known as Watchers are repeatedly shown to have broken the order between heaven and earth, disguised themselves with images familiar to earth, created Nephilim, or giants, with human women. The Watchers' actions did not stop there, as they also taught humans various forbidden knowledge and technologies such as sorcery, herbology, how to create swords, breastplates, knives, shields, and a plethora of other activities which tempted the human race further into sin.

Because the Book of Enoch remained “lost” to Western academia until the colonial period, scholarship on these stories only began recently in the broader realm of Judeo-Christian studies. Because of this, the history of scholarship can be divided into two categories: (i) early scholars whose work focused on translating the text and placing the story in its historical context,

⁵³ Enoch 105:15.

such as Charles and Milik and (ii) scholars who began to examine the text itself, and see how the narrative is then also reflective of its historical period, such as Portier-Young and Collins.

Despite a relative balance of historical and narrative criticism, research that emphasizes Enochian traditions and myths tend to stop their study with their origins being in different, earlier traditions. Monster theory, therefore, allows us to look at this same issue from a unique perspective, and see more than just the parallels between Enoch and its contemporaneous counterparts. By employing Grafius and Higgins' classifications and identifications of monsters as narrative figures, it is revealed that monsters in the Book of Enoch do not simply function as God's adversaries. Monsters, or in this case, the Watchers and Nephilim, straddle the line between what is familiar and unfamiliar to both humans and God, while functioning as constant agents of chaos whose sins are never truly erased from humanity. Due to their actions, harming the Hebrew community, we can also read the Watchers and Nephilim as representatives of "other" communities that posed a danger to the Hebrews at the time.

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