

# The monster and the police

*Dexter* to Hobbes

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On 25 February 2002, Rafael Perez, a former officer of the LAPD's Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums unit (CRASH), appeared in court accused of various crimes: covering up a bank robbery, shooting and framing an innocent citizen, stealing and selling cocaine from evidence lockers, being a member of the Los Angeles gang called the Bloods, and murdering the rapper The Notorious B.I.G. In his statement to the court he pointed out that above the threshold of doors that lead to CRASH offices there are philosophical mottos such as 'Some rise by sin and some by virtue fall' and 'We intimidate those who intimidate others'. Perez commented: 'To those mottos, I offer this: "Whoever chases monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster himself."' The quotation from Nietzsche might appear unusual coming from the mouth of a former police officer, but it is far from uncommon: *Whoever Fights Monsters* is the title of one police memoir, in which Nietzsche's aphorism also appears as an epigraph. The appearance of the aphorism is a reflection of the extent to which police discourse is saturated with the idea of the monstrous: 'Catching Monsters', 'Fighting Monsters', mediating between 'monsters and men'.<sup>1</sup> What I want to suggest here is that we might want to consider the relationship between the monster and the police.\*

Take as a starting point the fictional monster that appears in the television series *Dexter*. The series is essentially about what might be called an ethical serial killer: a killer who kills people who deserve to be killed. The main character, Dexter, had a traumatic moment at an early age when he saw his mother brutally killed with a chainsaw by drug dealers. This bloody murder haunts him to the point where he is obsessed with blood, which gets turned into a 'positive', so to speak, by focusing his

anger on people who deserve to die: essentially, those murderers or rapists who have somehow escaped the criminal law, often on a minor legal technicality, and who are thus walking free. Not only does Dexter kill these people, but he does so in a brutal and bloody way, chopping them up and disposing of their bodies, and in the process sating his own need for blood. The first thing to note about this is that Dexter is framed by the series as some kind of monster. 'I know I'm a monster', he says when about to kill the character Prado (in Season 3). The trope of monstrosity appears in various forms: comments by other characters on the various monsters which murder and rape and destroy lives, such as in Season 2 when Dexter's partner Rita comments on a serial killer (known as the Bay Harbor Butcher, who is in fact Dexter), and says that it makes her angry 'that there's a monster out there', or in Series 4 when a police forensics expert comments on a woman who got away with murdering her husband that 'if she did it, there's a monster walking free'. But it is in Dexter's voice-over narrative in which his own monstrosity is clarified. He reminds us that 'monsters come in all shapes and sizes' (Season 4, Episode 4) and will often add some finesse to the observations made by others: 'I'm not the monster he wants me to be' (Season 1, Episode 4). The point comes up time and again: when Brother Sam comments that 'men can change', Dexter comments in voice-over: 'Men, maybe, but what about a monster?' (Season 6, Episode 2).

Dexter's monstrosity is also articulated through the primal moment of his (second) birth in the shipping container, where he witnessed the bloody murder of his mother. In Season 1 (Episode 7), when he revisits the shipyard container he comments that 'something nameless was born here'. The allusion is

\* This article is a version of a talk prepared for the conference on 'The Power of the Monstrous', Brunel University, 26–27 June 2014. I am grateful to the organizers Filippo Del Lucchese and Caroline Williams for the invitation and their permission to publish an early version of the paper.

to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which the monster has no name, and this 'Frankenstein theme' continues throughout. His adoptive father, who rescued Dexter from the scene of his mother's murder and who understands Dexter's need for blood and helps him channel it, says that the doctors who treated Dexter 'didn't even see the monster inside' (Season 2, Episode 4), and when the father enters into one of Dexter's killing scenes he recognizes that he has lost the ability to control the monster he helped create and so commits suicide. The same theme emerges in the final series when the psychoanalyst who first treated Dexter makes the same point: 'I helped create you'. Other characters who know Dexter make a similar point. Lila, his lover in one of the series, says to him that 'you make yourself a monster' (Season 2, Episode 2).

So Dexter is framed in the series as a monster. Left at that, there isn't much to concern us: another serial killer, another media construction in which the writers play on the fact that we use 'monstrous' to describe those creatures who defy moral codes and kill, another inhuman human, another candidate for the title of this year's 'Mr. Monster'.<sup>2</sup> However, one of the reasons Dexter can be so successful a serial killer (and thus monster) is because he works in the forensics team of the Miami Metro, specializing as a blood analyst. In other words, Dexter works within the police. He is not a police officer per se, though often masquerades as one, but like many serial killers he has a place within the general system of police power.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the fact that he is not a uniformed police officer as such alerts us to the wider concept of police power, to which I will be alluding below. Dexter is a monster born into the police power: his adoptive father, who helped 'create' him as a serial killer as he matured, was a police officer whose own history was of being restricted and frustrated by the rules under which the police must operate, which in turn feeds into his own willingness to teach Dexter a 'code' by which the latter can kill without guilt. And the fact that he is 'a very neat monster', as he describes himself in the very first episode of the first series (a point repeated in Series 2, Episode 10: 'For a very neat monster I'm making an awful mess'), comes in the form of aping police practice: the blood slides, the cataloguing, the perfectly organized set of weapons. When he goes about his killings he enacts key aspects of the police procedural: investigating a suspect, establishing the suspect's motive, finding clues, establishing guilt, hunting, capturing, questioning and punishing.

All of which is to say that what is interesting about Dexter is not that he is somehow stepping in to enforce some kind of natural law of justice or punishment (which is said by cultural analyses of Dexter to be the way in which he becomes somehow *our* monster).<sup>4</sup> Rather, his whole modus operandi is a systematization of the police enterprise itself.<sup>5</sup> He fights monsters, but has become one; a monster within the police power. The series *Dexter* is a reminder of the intimate and abiding connection between the monster and the police.

It is remarkable how frequently this connection between the monster and the police is overlooked in discussions of the power of the monstrous. What I want to suggest is that we cannot really grasp the idea of the monstrous without simultaneously considering the idea of the police. The common refrains about the monstrous tend to discuss its power in terms of the way communities are ordered, subjectivities are constituted, identities are bounded and societies are bordered: that monsters define the limits of civilization, are deeply connected to insecurity, indicate a breakdown in hierarchy and point to the unruliness of matter. What is often overlooked in such claims is that these are the very same issues that underpin the police problematic.<sup>6</sup> I want to suggest, therefore, that to grasp the power of the monstrous we might need to consider it in terms of the ubiquity of the police idea in bourgeois modernity.

### **'You have all these sayings to describe what you do'**

In a discussion about his actions with Hannah in the final series, Dexter tries to explain himself. He does not speak the language of revenge, or justice, or punishment, or law, but uses a particular phrase to which Hannah, a killer herself who understands his drives and perhaps who would also be said to share his monstrosity, responds: 'you have all these sayings to describe what you do'. What sayings are these? The specific one in their conversation is that Dexter has described his killings as merely 'taking out the trash' (Season 8, Episode 7). The comment harks back to a scene early in Season 1 (in Episode 3) when Dexter is disposing of the body of someone he has killed and who we are expected to believe really deserved to be killed: I'm 'taking out the garbage', he says. Later in the same series (in Episode 7) he comments that 'deep down, people will appreciate my work: taking out the trash.'

Dexter's description of his monstrous behaviour is obviously meant to reinforce his monstrosity: he is so

monstrous he can regard some other human beings as trash. 'Taking out the trash' and 'cleaning up' are familiar tropes among serial killers explaining their crimes: 'I were just cleaning up streets, our kid. Just cleaning up the streets', commented Peter Sutcliffe, the so-called 'Yorkshire Ripper' (a nickname given to him by the press; the name he gave himself was 'The Streetcleaner').<sup>7</sup> Yet we should also note that the idea of cleaning the streets and disposing of the garbage resonates throughout modern police discourse. Study after study has reported the extent to which the police regard themselves as having a 'mandate to keep the ... streets clean',<sup>8</sup> and ethnographies of police officers often comment on the extent to which police officers refer to their work as 'refuse collectors, sweeping up the human dross'.<sup>9</sup> 'The police view their position as marking the boundaries of the social order', notes Peter Manning. They seek to stand 'between the higher and lower, the sacred and the profane, the clean and the dirty'.<sup>10</sup> Constantly 'treading water in human waste',<sup>11</sup> the police see their task as keeping the streets clean from the filth of humanity. The 'clearing up' of crimes is associated with the 'cleaning up' of the streets. 'The idea that crimes can be *cleared up* reasserts a belief in a world where disorder can be brushed away to restore structural purity and where incongruity can be cleaned up to re-create a perfectly ordered universe.'<sup>12</sup> This is why the same ethnographies constantly note that police officers routinely speak of members of what they see as the criminal, dangerous and miserable classes as 'social dirt', 'slag', 'polluted' and 'scum'.<sup>13</sup> The dirt in question is connected to the fact that the same persons are regarded as 'refuse', 'waste' and 'garbage'. The police regard themselves as 'as a kind of uniformed garbage-men',<sup>14</sup> just like the monstrous serial killer but in the garb of the state: taking out the trash. (And if we take Foucault's reference to the figure of the 'villain-monster-madman' seriously enough we might add that people considered mad were once dealt with by being placed into 'loony-bins'.)

The easy interpretation here is that this is about disrespect. A longer historical view suggests something else. When modern police officers speak of cleaning up the moral filth and social dirt they are unknowingly holding on to and yet also twisting one of the original powers of police: street cleaning and refuse collection. Police once had the responsibility to ensure the streets were clean; virtually all the police theorists of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, from low-ranking camerlists to the high-ranking philosophers of state

power, listed garbage collection as one of the police functions. The reason they did so was because dirt and its associated matter such as rubbish are an *offence against order*. It is not lack of cleanliness itself that is the problem, but the fact that the lack of cleanliness undermines good order – 'I enjoy my work. It brings order to the chaos', says Dexter, a comment that applies to his work in the police and his work as a serial killer (Season 2, Episode 1). The removal of the dirt and the taking out of the trash is the reimposition of order, a re-placement of matter into an ordered system.<sup>15</sup>

From Dexter's reference to taking out the trash we have very quickly arrived at the central category of police power: order. From the late fifteenth century, political discourse in Europe centred very much on the concept of police, a term which denoted the legislative and administrative regulation of the internal life of a community to promote general welfare and the condition of good order. The idea behind it was encapsulated in phrases such as 'police and good order', 'good police and order' and 'well-ordered police state'. The instructions and activities considered necessary for good order were known as police ordinances and referred to the management and direction of the population by the state. That 'order' was the central police concept is evident in the heterogeneous range of affairs and minutia of social life that came under the police power. 'Matters of police are things of every instant, which usually amount to but little', notes Montesquieu, adding that 'the actions of the police are quick and the police is exerted over things that recur every day'. As such, police 'is perpetually busy with details'.<sup>16</sup> Such details reached from public security to public health ('medical police'); from poor relief to food adulteration; from the maintenance of roads, bridges and town buildings to expenses at christenings, weddings and funerals; from the performance of trades and occupations to the wearing of extravagant clothing; from morals and manners to the behaviour of servants towards their masters; and, of course, from street-cleaning to garbage collection. This is why police texts concern themselves with 'the general and common good of society'. As political administration, 'police' was nothing less than the fabrication of social order: 'by a wise police, the sovereign accustoms the people to order'.<sup>17</sup> Thus, despite the fact that this project shifts as policing developed in conjunction with the shifts in the nature of both state power and the development of capital (we can divide the history of police into three stages, with the first two



separated by the Thirty Years War and the third stage really coming into being with the 'new police' forces of the early nineteenth century), one can still find a consistency in the police function throughout these stages, rooted in the problem of (dis)order and as part of the 'science of governing men'.

I am making this point for reasons that are probably clear to anyone thinking about the power of the monstrous, but to spell it out: all of the key issues that occur in debates about monstrosity – insecurity and community, hierarchy and rule, class and power, subjectivity and identity, borders and boundaries – point to the problem of (dis)order posed by the monster. Now, the roots of this disorder might be said to lie in the key original frame of reference of the monster, namely natural history: 'the study of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature on monsters' treats them as 'aberrations in the natural order', say Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston, and others follow suit: 'the idea of the monstrous involves a disruption of the supposed orders of nature'.<sup>18</sup> But the use of 'monstrosity' to describe aberrations or disruptions in nature was very easily applied to aberrations or disruptions in the social order (the metaphor of the body politic looms large here, as we shall see) and far greater interest is now expressed what might be called social or political monsters. Yet one cannot talk about order without talking about the fact that (dis)order is the fundamental police problem.

To say that (dis)order is the fundamental police problem is to suggest that the key police concept is order rather than crime or law. The stress on the

socio-political dimensions of monstrosity tends to focus attention on law, often said to be the second frame of reference of the monster due to the fact that aberrations of nature were also thought to breach legal classifications.<sup>19</sup> This is why the criminal has played such a central role in the study of monstrosity, as Foucault has made clear. The penal justice system that was developed and refined with the consolidation of the bourgeois state would find monster after monster within the social body, a figure who had fallen outside the social pact and who was thereby associated with a possible criminality.<sup>20</sup> In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault comments that 'the criminal designated as the enemy of all, whom it is in the interest of all to track down, falls outside the pact, disqualifies himself as a citizen and emerges, bearing within him as it were, a wild fragment of nature'. This creature appears as a villain or monster or madman.<sup>21</sup> 'Every criminal could well be a monster', Foucault adds in lectures given at the time of writing *Discipline and Punish*, 'just as previously it was possible that the monster was a criminal.'<sup>22</sup> Pasquale Pasquino has extended this argument by suggesting that it is around the figure of *Homo criminalis* that criminology will emerge and about which penal theory will come to construct a whole knowledge and set of apparatuses, but that the ancestor of *Homo criminalis* is the monster.<sup>23</sup> The role of the serial killer as our archetypal social monster plays heavily on this connection, as my opening comments also suggest.

Yet this focus on the way that the individual who commits crimes comes to be regarded as monstrous

is somehow not enough. Why? Because it treats monstrosity as a 'challenge of law'<sup>24</sup> when in fact the basis of the original juridico-natural frame of reference was order rather than law. The twinning of 'law' and 'order' in the commonplace 'law-and-order' masks the fact that from the police perspective 'order' is the key concept; conversely, 'police' does *not* equal 'law'.

Note Montesquieu on the police again, repeating a point that appears in virtually all police theory of the time: 'it has regulations rather than laws', and so one must not confuse 'violations of the laws with the simple violation of the police'. Lest Montesquieu's comment appear out of date, note the following features of police powers vis-à-vis 'the law'.

First, police powers are almost always situated either fully in the executive or across executive and judiciary, never solely within the juridical realm. Second, the police have constantly extended the boundaries of 'legal' behaviour to the point where the law itself has been transformed, for example in Britain by change in the judges' rules by which the police operated, then through important judicial findings, and finally in new legislation. Hence, third, rather than police carrying out law as made by Parliament, Parliament has made laws which have legitimized existing police practice. 'Law reform' is often little more than a product and legitimation of police operational practices, with the law rewritten to suit the exercise of police power. Fourth, the police operate with a huge amount of discretion, which, far more than legal codes, shapes the way the police behave. The flexibility in the police concept we noted earlier offered a vagueness that historically left a great deal to police discretion, and this has never been removed. It runs from stopping and searching people on spurious grounds – 'moving quickly' and 'moving slowly' are both the basis for a stop – to violent assault and killing; we might even add acts of police discretion that have only recently come to light and that have been described by victims as 'rape by the state'.<sup>25</sup> The expansive nature of discretion has its foundation in the permissive structure of law and the powers given to the police to preserve order. In effect, and fifth, the police power has often simply ignored demands that something called the rule of law be followed. Indeed, research suggests that most officers believe that to fully impose the rule of law on police work would render it impossible, and senior police officers are on record saying that there is a 'moral justification for getting round the rules'.<sup>26</sup> All of this happens through a coordinated effort on the part of the police to legitimate their actions by persuading

judges, politicians and the public that what they are doing is necessary to curb crime and in the name of that most bourgeois of fetishes: security.

Looked at politically, then, we need to read police power through the lens of order rather than law. But then this might mean that looked at in terms of 'disorder' we need to read the power of the monstrous through the lens of police. It is the difficulty in categorizing the monster in the 'order of things' that makes the monster represent something far more challenging to the bourgeois imagination than mere illegality: disorder.

### **'Here I am, in the belly of the beast'**

In the series of lectures published as *Abnormal*, Foucault suggests that although every criminal could well be a monster, first among these as threat is the political criminal, the one who breaks the social pact and who, by being against society, is seemingly against nature. Foucault points out that although the political monster might in fact be the King or Queen or some other 'monstrous' sovereign, there is also the monster 'that breaks the social pact by revolt'.<sup>27</sup> This is the 'monster from below' to match the 'monster from above', and Foucault places it at the heart of the juridico-medical theme of the monstrosity.<sup>28</sup> Yet if we accept the revolt of the *monster from below* as more significant both politically and historically, as I think we must, then it is also surely the case that the revolt of this monster is at the heart of the police problem.

One might consider this in the light of the thinker who most obviously placed the concept of order at the heart of state power, who did so through an articulation of the problematic of security, and who did both these things by organizing his work around the famous monsters of Leviathan and Behemoth. To title works with the name of two biblical monsters was truly provocative, as Hobbes knew full well; not for nothing did he earn himself the nickname 'the Monster of Malmesbury'. But what do they mean, and why might they help us grasp the monster with the police?

The biblical creature Behemoth appears in the Bible in the Book of Job, just prior to the appearance of the beast called the Leviathan, which Hobbes uses to symbolize the stately creation that brings peace, security and order. Interpretations of Hobbes's use of 'Behemoth' for the title vary, but the dominant one is that Hobbes chose 'the odd name of *Behemoth*, which signifies in Hebrew language an Elephant, seeming to think that the civil dissensions of such a numerous and powerful people, as the English nation, might be

justly compared to the wild and formidable motions of that enormous animal when provoked.<sup>29</sup> Although Hobbes seems to be referring to the 'Long Parliament', the Behemoth comes to symbolize more generally the 'circular motion of the sovereign power through two usurpers'.<sup>30</sup> The two usurpers in question appear to be the disorderly anarchy of revolution and the lawlessness of rebellion. As Franz Neumann puts it, Behemoth 'depicts a non-state, a chaos, a situation of lawlessness, disorder, and anarchy'.<sup>31</sup>

Set against Behemoth is Leviathan. Whatever the two creatures are meant to signify in the Book of Job (an elephant or hippopotamus-like land monster on the one hand compared to a whale-like sea monster on the other), in the Hebrew tradition in general and the Old Testament as a whole 'Leviathan is the epitome of all the monsters of the sea, just as in the same tradition Behemoth is the epitome of all terrestrial monsters, and they are conceived of both as antagonists and as elemental opposites'.<sup>32</sup> More to the point, whatever the two creatures are meant to signify in either the Hebrew tradition or the Bible (and although Hobbes refers to the Book of Job when mentioning Leviathan he does not do so when mentioning Behemoth), it is clear that Hobbes employed the monstrous Leviathan as a symbol for the state of peace, security and order, and the monstrous Behemoth as a symbol for the state of civil war, rebellion and disorder, and offered the former as the only alternative to the latter. It would appear that one monster, an enormous security system known as the Leviathan state, exists in order to continuously hold down another monster, the revolutionary people understood as the Behemoth.<sup>33</sup> Stephen Holmes puts it succinctly: 'it takes one monster to subdue another'.<sup>34</sup> And yet this does not quite tell the whole story.

David Williams notes that 'Leviathan is the marine representative of a group of monsters whose chief significance is in their devouring activity.' The Leviathan swallows its victims whole, but does not destroy them. The victims 'go through the process of being devoured ... but without, in fact, being annihilated'.<sup>35</sup> This devouring points us to the image used as the frontispiece of *Leviathan*: the Sovereign incorporates his subjects by devouring them.<sup>36</sup> We are immediately reminded of the importance of the belly to the body politic: Hobbes's sometime employer Francis Bacon had commented in his essay 'On Sedition' that 'rebellions of the belly are the worst',<sup>37</sup> and Hobbes's Leviathan has to deal with 'wormes' (too many corporations), 'intestine disorder' (errors made

when instituting a Commonwealth), and Bulimia ('enlarging Dominion'). We might also be reminded of Bishop Bramhall's suggestion that Hobbes be allowed to set up a Leviathan-state among the American Indians, believing that 'if he should put his principles into practice as magisterially as he doth dictate them, his supposed subjects might chance to tear their Mortal God to pieces with their teeth and entomb his Sovereignty in their bowels'.<sup>38</sup> And maybe we are also reminded that in the *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society*, published the same year as *Leviathan*, Hobbes had suggested that 'all kings are to be reckoned amongst ravenous beasts'.<sup>39</sup> Whatever we are reminded of, the point is that it is not so much that one monster holds down or subdues the other, but that one monster *devours* the other and *preserves it inside the belly of the beast*. 'Here I am, in the belly of the beast', says Dexter one day in the office of the Miami Metro (Season 2, Episode 2).

Yet, as well as devouring the subjects, the image on the frontispiece of *Leviathan* also presents the individual subjects as forming the protective armour of the body politic. This is a beast whose body 'is made of rows of shields, shut up closely as with a seal', notes the Bible; 'one is so near to another that no air can come between them' (Job 41:15). The image therefore also presents Leviathan as an airless prison of the very kind that awaits those who are willing to seek the security offered by the sovereign.<sup>40</sup> The double meaning points us to the centrality of the prison system to modern state power: 'here we are, in the belly of the beast' is the comment made time and again by politically astute prisoners, and the Red Army Faction adopted as their prison nicknames the characters from *Moby-Dick* as a sign of their fight against the whale-like Leviathan-state that was devouring them.<sup>41</sup> But it also points us to the prison of security more generally.

The first point to be made, therefore, is that the police power instituted with the modern state might be thought of as a power to devour one and all, everything it encounters, including other monsters, subsuming them within its own force and keeping them within its security frame. (And we might ask in parenthesis: allowing them to emerge only as excrement, as shitty subjects?) The monster from below is also the monster within. Yet this also does not quite tell the whole story.

The reference to the monstrous Leviathan might appear to pre-empt a reference to Nietzsche's suggestion that the state is the coldest of all monsters. But, as Nietzsche adds, the state also lies about this. The

lie that creeps from its mouth is 'I, the state, am the people'.<sup>42</sup> And if there is one thing that 'the people' does not wish to imagine itself as, it is monstrous. Indeed, if Job's suffering, fear and insecurity in the Book of Job as a whole is meant by Hobbes to refer more or less to the condition of man in the state of nature, and if the implication is that this condition is overcome only by submission to the new mighty sovereign, then any 'monstrous' features of this new order really must be hidden away. The state's emergence alongside civil society and 'the people', and the state's administration of civil society and 'the people' in the name of order and security, require that the state appears to be above not only the beastly condition of the state of nature but also somehow *above all forms of monstrosity*. Any hint of the state's own monstrosity must therefore disappear from view.

So far must the state's monstrosity disappear from view that in Hobbes's account the monstrosity in question is barely hinted at in the first place. The Leviathan makes four appearances in Hobbes's text: in the introduction, in which it is understood as a huge artificial man, a huge artificial animal, and a huge machine; in chapter 17, where it is described as a 'Mortall God'; in chapter 28, where it is referred to in the discussion of the chapter in Job; and as an image on the frontispiece, which shows a huge person.<sup>43</sup> In none of these appearances is the key feature the Leviathan's monstrosity. Rather, its key feature is its *power*. The passage from the Book of Job at the top

of the image and repeated in chapter 28 makes this clear: 'upon earth there is nothing to compare with his power'. This is a point repeated by Hobbes at the end of the same chapter, where he reiterates the claim that there can be nothing greater than the Leviathan. And of the many points made about the Leviathan in the introduction the one stressed is that this creation turns out to be 'of greater stature and strength' than any other body or creature.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, among the various meanings that lexicographers and commentators had ascribed to 'Leviathan', Hobbes would have encountered definitions such as 'prince', 'king', 'association' and 'society'. A commentary on the Book of Job by Jacques Bolduc published in Lyon in 1619 and Paris in 1637 writes of 'liviath' now meaning 'crown', following its roots in 'joining together', making the link with the aquatic beast on the grounds that the beast's scales are close together, as a unity, and suggesting that 'leviathan' is now also a name for a collectivity of men.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, the point of the Leviathan is to appear not as an omnipotent monster, but as the omnipotent technology of an organizing power: as machine, as organic being, as mortal God. It ultimately does not really matter which of these forms the state takes, since what matters is that any hint of monstrosity is replaced by the far more neutral and far less threatening 'science of governing men'. The use of 'Leviathan' as the title of the book may well have been designed as a provocation,<sup>46</sup> and no doubt



Hobbes believed that his readers would quickly grasp the allusion to the biblical monster, but the hint at the monstrosity of Leviathan only serves to reveal the emergence of absolute authority as a technology of power for preserving the peace. The abiding concern of Hobbes is, at the end of the day, the problem of order, presented by Leviathan as an omnipotent technology *exercised in the name of security*, the supreme concept of bourgeois society: *the concept of police*.<sup>47</sup>

In this light we might tweak slightly a comment from Thomas Carlyle, one tweaked in turn by Carl Schmitt when he alludes to it in his commentary on Hobbes: Behemoth versus Leviathan is the world of rebellious anarchy versus the world of police.<sup>48</sup> Hobbes's account of the creation of the Leviathan rests heavily on the perpetual war of the state of nature within which the fear and insecurity, danger and disorder, will push people to seek the protection of the sovereign. But the transition from the state of war to submission to the Leviathan leaves open the possibility that the war continues in the form of internal rebellion. It continues, that is, in the form of revolutionary movements within the body politic: inside the belly of the beast. So the fundamental fear and insecurity which permeate the perpetual war of the state of nature are assumed to exist also in the condition of rebellion and revolt, which are 'but warre renewed' (as 'intestine' rather than 'foreign' war, as Hobbes puts it).<sup>49</sup> The sovereign is expected to offer security and protection from all such fears in exchange for obedience, for 'the end of Obedience is Protection'.<sup>50</sup> What is conjured up is, as Derrida puts it, an 'insurance policy [*police d'assurance*]' which basically entrusts to sovereignty the very powers of security and protection that will be called 'police'.<sup>51</sup> If we now read the fear of rebellion and civil war as a fear of the Behemoth, then what is being offered is in fact security from the monster, and the dialectical relationship that Derrida reads between 'the beast and the sovereign' might thus be reconsidered as a relationship between 'the monster and the police'. The security *offered* by the state displaces the monstrosity of the state and is turned towards the monstrosity of disorder. The monstrousness of the Leviathan is no longer the issue, for the state becomes instead a police operation against the monstrous Behemoth.

This is why it is more important to keep in sight the monstrosity of the Behemoth rather than the Leviathan. 'Behemoth' is the Hebrew plural form of a word meaning 'beast' but also signifies an 'aggregation of monsters'.<sup>52</sup> Behemoth is a plurality of forces and thus, in a sense, the beastly and multifaceted

multitude. To keep the Behemoth in sight is thus to hold on to the observation that in being devoured by the Leviathan the Behemoth continues to exist inside the police power, as the permanent enemy within. It is also to keep in sight the fact that as 'rebellion', 'revolution', 'civil war' and 'disorder', Behemoth is a monster with many heads.

In *The Many-Headed Hydra* Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker argue that the merchants, manufacturers, planters and officials of the dominant European states found in the multi-headed monster a key motif for the rebellious disorder of the lower classes. This motif worked alongside the understanding of the figure of Hercules.<sup>53</sup> Hercules was regarded as unifier of the territorial state by the Greeks, signified imperial ambition to the Romans, and was associated in general with a vast labour for the fabrication of order: draining swamps, developing agriculture, securing commerce and even keeping things clean (specifically, the Augean stables). The ruling class has long regarded its task of constructing a bourgeois order and instilling the discipline of wage labour among the unruly workers as 'Herculean'.<sup>54</sup> In 1649, for example, Antony Ascham noted in his *Of the Confusions and Revolutions of Governments* that 'Governours of men are like keepers of beasts; Every man as he is an Animal, participating halfe with the brute ... When an irregular passion breaks out in a state, an irrational beast hath broke out of his grate or cave, and puts the Keeper to a great deal of trouble.' This beastliness culminates in the monster of revolution, and Ascham's call was for a new Hercules, who was also known as an executioner, 'to tame Monsters or usurpers'.<sup>55</sup> The specific monster that Hercules was meant to tame or destroy was the many-headed hydra of Lerna. As Hobbes puts it, dealing with subjects is a task 'like that of Hercules with the Monster Hydra, which having many heads, for every one that was vanquished, there grew up three'.<sup>56</sup>

Linebaugh and Rediker show just how far the many-headed hydra was understood in terms of the rebellious and dangerous classes:

When the proletariat was rebellious and self-active, it was described as a monster, a many-headed hydra. Its heads included food rioters (Shakespeare); heretics (Thomas Edwards); army agitators (Thomas Fairfax); antinomians and independent women (Cotton Mather); maroons (Governor Mather); motley urban mobs (Peter Oliver); general strikers (J. Cunningham); rural barbarians of the commons (Thomas Malthus); aquatic labourers (Patrick Colquhoun); freethinkers (William Reid); and striking textile workers (Andrew Ure).



Nameless commentators added peasant rebels, Levellers, pirates and slave insurrectionists to the long list. Fearful of the energy, mobility and growth of social forces beyond their control, the writers, heresy hunters, generals, ministers, officials, population theorists, policemen, merchants, manufacturers and planters offered up their curses, which called down Herculean destruction upon the hydra's heads.<sup>57</sup>

It is in this context that we need to keep in sight the monstrosity of the Behemoth. In Hobbes's *Behemoth*, one part of the dialogue runs as follows:

B. You have read, that when Hercules fighting with the Hydra, had cut off any one of his many heads, there still arose two other heads in its place; and yet at last he cut them off all.

A. The story is told false. For Hercules at first did not cut off those heads, but bought them off; and afterwards, when he saw it did him no good, then he cut them off, and got the victory.<sup>58</sup>

The Herculean task of the capitalist ruling class has been to construct the new bourgeois order, and the myth of the many-headed monster simultaneously expressed the fear and justified the violence of the ruling class in carrying out this task.<sup>59</sup> Building such order and exercising violence against any force obstructing that process are the definition of police power. It is to conduct this Herculean task that Leviathan exists: a political machine of/for security and a political body of/for police to defeat the multi-headed enemy.

Yet the problem for the ruling class is that this struggle is never really over – the victory never really 'got', as Hobbes puts it – because despite buying off or cutting off the various heads as they appear, the monster lies within the body politic. This is why police discourse from the sixteenth century to the present has never stopped telling us of the permanent wars being fought against the enemy within: the disorderly, unruly, criminal, indecent, disobedient, disloyal, lawless and mindless, each of which morphs into the other, constantly changing shape in monstrous fashion, lining up with or brushing up alongside the killer, the regicide and the terrorist, and even performing the filthy trick of appearing to be human.<sup>60</sup> This multi-headed hydra is a creature the ruling class fears will devour it, and so the creature must itself be devoured; an uncontainable creature which must nevertheless somehow be contained. The need for the creature to be contained is why the concept of 'keeping' – in the sense of 'guarding' or 'holding' but also from 'the keep', referring to the

inner stronghold of a castle – is so important in *Leviathan*: keeping the subjects in obedience, keeping them from discontent, keeping them quiet, keeping them from rebellion, keeping them in space, keeping them in order and keeping them in awe, all rolled into the core principle of police theory: *keeping the peace*.<sup>61</sup> Leviathan is the police power of containment, keeping us safe and secure from our monsters, ourselves.

### **Remember the monsters? Remember the police**

In the final episode of the final series of *Dexter* there is a flashback scene to the moment of the birth of Dexter's son. Dexter is worrying about whether he will make a good father, and Deb reassures him that he will. 'You've always taken care of me', she says, especially when they were young: 'you made me feel so fucking safe'. In particular, she reminds him of her greatest fear during the night: 'Don't you remember the monsters?', she asks, and then reminds him that he made her feel secure by explaining that 'the monsters were just the shadows'. Deb's suggestion that Dexter protected her from the monsters is immediately undermined by Dexter's voice-over: 'you were so wrong Deb'. Wrong because there really are monsters and Dexter *is* one of them? Perhaps. But maybe she was right, in that this monster nonetheless did protect her and keep her safe and secure. This monster had more than a touch of the police power.

Security and protection are two of the most fundamental mechanisms that underpin the police power. But in security there is always insecurity and in protection there is always fear. One of the functions of the power of the monstrous is that it is crucial to the political construction of fear and insecurity. Circulating around and operating through the fears and insecurities of bourgeois modernity, the monster and the police come together. With the continual iteration of issues concerning order and disorder, security and identity, borders and boundaries, containment and excess, the discourses of monstrosity and police share a fundamental conceptual ground: a problem to be contained and a process of containment. It is for this very reason that all of the main themes in the discourse of monstrosity point to the police problematic.

That it does so is connected to the fact that capitalism teems with monsters. Aliens, fiends, vampires and zombies dominate the cultural scene; reports on scientific developments are frequently presented in terms of their potentially 'monstrous' implications;

and journalism resorts to describing as ‘monstrous’ a whole host of persons, from the paedophile to the serial killer to the despotic leader. More recently, it has been suggested that capitalism is itself monstrous. Yet, like everything else it lets loose in the world, capitalism has to manage its monsters.<sup>62</sup> It has to manage itself, its own monstrosity, and its own monster within. This is the monster that capitalism brings into being *through* the police power and that it must constantly manage *with* the police power. Bourgeois modernity gives us the monster and the police.

## Notes

1. Robert K. Ressler and Tom Shachtman, *Whoever Fights Monsters*, Simon & Schuster, London, 1992; David Bright, *Catching Monsters*, John Blake, London, 2003; Bob Long and Bob McLachlan, *Monsters and Men*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 2003. Also see Richard Tithecott, *Of Men and Monsters: Jeffrey Dahmer and the Construction of the Serial Killer*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1997, p. 179.
2. The serial killer David Berkowitz was known by the nickname ‘Son of Sam’, but this was in fact a name invented by the media and then adopted by Berkowitz. Prior to adopting it, Berkowitz called himself ‘Mr. Monster’ (Ressler and Shachtman, *Whoever Fights*, p. 84). In the light of the discussion we are about to have concerning Hobbes’s use of Behemoth, it is worth noting a letter from Berkowitz to the press, written in April 1977, where he says: ‘I am the “Son of Sam” ... I am the “Monster” ... the chubby Behemoth’ (cited in Jane Caputi, *The Age of Sex Crime*, Women’s Press, London, 1988, p. 39).
3. ‘Almost without exception they [serial killers] are always police buffs. They never could make the grade, so they do the next best thing. They may seek an occupation close to the periphery of law enforcement. It could be as a security guard, a private detective, or as a volunteer in a hospital where they would drive an ambulance’ (*The Federal Role in Investigation of Serial Violent Crime*, Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, 99th Congress, 2nd Session, 9 April and 21 May 1986, vol. 4, p. 20).
4. See, for example, Bella DePaulo, ed., *The Psychology of Dexter*, Benbella Books, Dallas TX, 2010; Douglas L. Howard, ed., *Dexter: Investigating Cutting Edge Television*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2010; Richard Greene, George A. Reisch and Rachel Robison-Greene, eds, *Dexter and Philosophy*, Open Court, Chicago, 2011; Bert Olivier, ‘When the “Law” No Longer Suffices: *Dexter*’, *South African Journal of Art History*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2012, pp. 52–67.
5. Adam Kotsko, *Why We Love Sociopaths: A Guide to Late Capitalist Television*, Zero Books, Winchester, 2012, p. 83.
6. For the themes of monstrosity, see Mark Neocleous, *The Monstrous and the Dead: Burke, Marx, Fascism*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2005. For the specific relation between ‘civilization’ and ‘police’, see Mark Neocleous, ‘The Police of Civilization’, *International Political Sociology*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2011, pp. 144–59.
7. Quotation cited in Gordon Burn, *Somebody’s Husband, Somebody’s Son: The Story of Peter Sutcliffe*, Faber & Faber, London, 1984, p. 334. The nickname appears in the one piece of genuine correspondence from Sutcliffe to the press, a poem sent to the Sheffield newspaper *The Star* taunting the police for being unable to catch him, which he signs off as ‘The Streetcleaner’ (Nicole Ward Jouve, ‘*The Streetcleaner: The Yorkshire Ripper Case on Trial*’, Marion Boyars, London, 1986, pp. 214–15).
8. Mike Brogden, *On the Mersey Beat: Policing Liverpool Between the Wars*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, p. 1.
9. Malcolm Young, *An Inside Job: Policing and Police Culture in Britain*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991, p. 141.
10. Peter K. Manning, *Police Work: The Social Organization of Policing*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 1977, p. 112.
11. Bright, *Catching Monsters*, p. 9.
12. Young, *An Inside Job*, p. 388.
13. Ibid.
14. Brogden, *Mersey Beat*, p. 1.
15. For this paragraph and the next, see Mark Neocleous, *The Fabrication of Social Order: A Critical Theory of Police Power*, Pluto, London, 2000.
16. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 517.
17. Emer De Vattel, *The Law of Nations* (1758), ed. Joseph Chitty, T. & J.W. Johnson, Philadelphia, 1853, p. 83.
18. Katharine Park and Lorraine J. Daston, ‘Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England’, *Past and Present* 92, 1981, pp. 20–54, p. 22; Andrew Gibson, *Towards a Postmodern Theory of Narrative*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1996, p. 237.
19. Georges Canguilhem, ‘Monstrosity and the Monstrous’, *Diogenes* 40, 1962, pp. 27–42, p. 31; Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974–1975*, trans. Graham Burchell, Verso, London, 2003, pp. 55, 63–4, 323.
20. Foucault, *Abnormal*, p. 81.
21. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), trans. Alan Sheridan, Penguin, London, 1977, p. 101.
22. Foucault, *Abnormal*, p. 82.
23. Pasquale Pasquino, ‘Criminology: The Birth of a Special Knowledge’, in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, eds, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Harvester Wheatsheaf, London, 1991, pp. 244–5.
24. Andrew N. Sharpe, *Foucault’s Monsters and the Challenge of Law*, Routledge, London, 2010. Sharpe mentions police once, in passing.
25. ‘Raped by the state’ is the term used by women activists in the environmental movement who have given birth to children whose fathers turn out to have been undercover police officers infiltrating the movement. The House of Commons report into this undercover policing found that there was a ‘strong framework of statutory regulation’ for such undercover actions and that ‘no authority is ever granted for an undercover officer to engage in a sexual relationship whilst deployed on an authorized police operation’. Yet the Committee adds that ‘when we asked him [the Metropolitan Police Commissioner] about it, he said that, while it would never be authorized, it “could almost be inevitable” that it would happen.’ One undercover police officer said it was ‘beyond belief’ that his superiors did not know that he was exercising his discretion in this way. (House of Commons, Home Affairs Committee, *Undercover Policing: Interim Report*, Thirteenth Report of Session 2012–13 (HC 837), HMSO, London, 1 March 2013, pp. 5–6.)
26. Sir Robert Mark. For the citation and a development of the other points in this paragraph, see Neocleous, *Fabrication*, ch. 5.
27. Foucault, *Abnormal*, p. 98.
28. Ibid., p. 101.
29. Frances Maseres, ‘Preface’, in Frances Maseres, ed., *Select Tracts Relating to the Civil Wars in England, in the Reign of King Charles the First*, vol. I, R. Bickerstaff, London, 1815, p. lxxviii.
30. Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth; or, The Long Parliament* (1668), ed. Ferdinand Tonnies, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1990, p. 204.
31. Franz Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of*

- National Socialism*, Victor Gollancz, London, 1942, p. 5.
32. David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature*, University of Exeter Press, Exeter, 1996, pp. 185–6.
  33. Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol* (1938), trans. George Schwab and Erna Hilfstein, Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 1996, p. 21. One should note Schmitt's purpose in using this point as a springboard for some straightforwardly Nazi propaganda.
  34. Stephen Holmes, 'Introduction' to Hobbes, *Behemoth*, p. ix.
  35. Williams, *Deformed*, pp. 186–7.
  36. Howard Jacobson, 'The Strange Case of the Hobbesian Man', *Representations* 63, 1998, pp. 1–12, p. 1.
  37. Francis Bacon, 'Of Seditious and Troubles' (1625), in *Essays*, Dent, London, 1972, p. 44.
  38. Cited in Jacobson, 'The Strange Case', p. 8.
  39. Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive: Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* (1651), in Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, Hackett, Indianapolis, 1991, p. 89.
  40. Jacobson, 'Strange Case', p. 9.
  41. Jack Henry Abbott, *Inside the Belly of the Beast: Letters from Prison*, Random House, New York, 1981, p. 37; Stefan Aust, *Baader–Meinhof: The Inside Story of the RAF* (1985), trans. Anthea Bell, Bodley Head, London, 2008, pp. xi, 192–5. The Weathermen once commented that 'we began life as Jonah ... inside the great whale that devours us all' (cited in Jeremy Varon, *Bringing the War Back Home: The Weather Underground, the Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2004, p. 177).
  42. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1969, p. 75.
  43. Mark Neocleous, *Imagining the State*, Open University Press, Maidenhead, 2003, p. 20.
  44. My argument here is reinforced by Hobbes's comment in response to Bishop Bramhall's criticisms of his work. 'Now this *Leviathan* he calleth "*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum*". Words not farre fetcht, nor more applicable to my *Leviathan*, than to any other writing that should offend him. For allowing him the word *Monstrum*, (because it seems he takes it for a monstrous great fish) he can neither say it is *informe*; for even they that approve not the doctrine, allow for the method' (*The Questions Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Chance* (1656), in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 5, ed. Sir William Molesworth, John Bohn, London, 1841, p. 24).
  45. John M. Steadman, 'Leviathan and Renaissance Etymology', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1967, pp. 575–6, p. 576. Also see Noel Malcolm, 'The Name and Nature of Leviathan: Political Symbolism and Biblical Exegesis', *Intellectual History Review*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2007, pp. 21–39, p. 34; Patricia Springborg, 'Hobbes and Schmitt on the Name and Nature of Leviathan Revisited', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 13, nos 2–3, 2010, pp. 297–315, p. 301.
  46. Patricia Springborg, 'Hobbes's Biblical Beasts: *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*', *Political Theory*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1995, pp. 353–75, p. 361; Robert E. Stillman, 'Hobbes's *Leviathan*: Monsters, Metaphors, and Magic', *English Literary History*, vol. 62, no. 4, 1995, pp. 791–819, p. 795.
  47. Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question' (1844), in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1975, p. 163.
  48. 'And in saying that, I am but saying in other words that we are in an epoch of anarchy. Anarchy plus a constable!' (Thomas Carlyle, 'Inaugural Address at Edinburgh', 2 April, 1866, in Thomas Carlyle, *Selected Essays*, T. Nelson, Edinburgh, n.d., p. 473. Schmitt's tweaking of this is at *Leviathan*, p. 22.
  49. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 219, 230.
  50. *Ibid.*, p. 153.
  51. Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1 (2001–03), trans. Geoffrey Bennington, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009, p. 42; and *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 2 (2001–03), trans. Geoffrey Bennington, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2011, p. 267.
  52. James Fitzjames Stephen, 'Hobbes's Minor Works', in *Horae Sabbaticae: Reprint of Articles Contributed to the Saturday Review, 2nd Series*, Macmillan, London, 1892, p. 39; Samuel I. Mintz, 'Leviathan as Metaphor', *Hobbes Studies* 2, 1989, pp. 3–9, p. 4.
  53. Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: The Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, Verso, London, 2000, pp. 2–3.
  54. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1* (1867), trans. B. Fowkes, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 549.
  55. Antony Ascham, *Of the Confusions and Revolutions of Governments*, London, 1649, pp. 49, 108.
  56. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 241.
  57. Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p. 329.
  58. Hobbes, *Behemoth*, p. 72.
  59. Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, p. 6.
  60. Neocleous, *Fabrication*, pp. 82, 92; Mark Neocleous, *War Power, Police Power*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2014, pp. 14, 74–82; Klaus Mladek, 'Exception Rules: Contemporary Political Theory and the Police', in Klaus Mladek, ed., *Police Forces: A Cultural History of an Institution*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2007, p. 227.
  61. Every item on this list of keepings could be applied to the process of kettling being perfected by the state to deal with protests. And apropos of my earlier point about police discretion and the law, note that kettling was originally introduced purely as a new police tactic, becoming 'legalized' after the event, so to speak. On the list of keepings, see Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pp. 82, 83, 88, 102, 117, 118, 120, 134, 150, 163, 239, 323–8, 367, 401.
  62. The problem with much of the recent work on capitalism as the monster is that it does not really deal with the ways in which monstrosity, and thus capitalism, is policed. In other words, as much as we might need a critical theory of capitalism to understand the power of monstrosity, so we also need a critical theory of police power to understand both capitalism and monstrosity. For such capitalist monstrosity, see Rob Latham, *Consuming Youth: Vampires, Cyborgs, and the Culture of Consumption*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002; Annalee Newitz, *Pretend We're Dead: Capitalist Monsters in American Pop Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2006; Chris Harman, *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx*, Bookmarks, London, 2009; David McNally, *Monsters of the Market: Zombies, Vampires and Global Capitalism*, Brill, Leiden, 2011.

The images from the Showtime TV series *Dexter* are from the Portuguese promo (p. 11) and the final episode (p. 14) of Season 5 (2010).