

## Call for Papers

# Enmonsterisations in the Fantastic

Annual Symposium of the German Inklings Society

*“Epochs throw up the monsters they need.”*

— China Miéville, “Theses on Monsters”

Monsters are ubiquitous in the fantastic imaginary and come in all shapes and sizes. Narratively, they perform a variety of functions, serving for instance as obstacles or revelations. However, as both J.R.R. Tolkien, in his landmark essay “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics”, and China Miéville, in “Theses on Monsters”, remind us, monsters are “anything but a sad mistake” (Tolkien 16); they are never neutral. Because “[h]omo sapiens is a bringer-forth of monsters as reason’s dream”, they are culturally and symbolically revealing and “demand decoding” (Miéville). They serve as mirrors for our world, transgressors of the status quo, or punishments for those daring to wander off the path of normativity. Contemplating these cultural functions, Miéville introduces the verb “to enmonster” – a dynamic act of transformation whereby a figure or force is rendered monstrous. To “enmonster” is to signify, to mark, to disfigure, to other. It is, therefore, a socio-political act invested with power.

The Inklings themselves were deeply concerned with the monstrous. Tolkien’s orcs and Balrogs, Lewis’s demonic bureaucrats and hybrid beasts, Williams’s metaphysical powers – all participate in theological, moral, and existential discourses about monstrosity. Yet, as new adaptations of the Inklings’ work such as *Rings of Power* attest, they also anticipate more contemporary frameworks, such as those of othering, racialisation, queerness, and ideological projection. Beyond the Inklings, fantastical genres across literature, film, television, comics, and games offer fertile ground for analysing processes of enmonsterisation, from the posthuman mutations of vampires (*Dracula*, *V Wars*), the ‘villain origin story’ reappraised (*Wicked*, *Maleficent*), the monstrous-feminine (*Carmilla*, *The Witch*), alien threats (*Under the Skin*), rewritings and adaptations (*Frankissstein*, *Rings of Power*), monstrous nature (*Mythago Wood*, *Last of Us*) to new imaginations of (White) colonial monstrosity (*Get Out*) or experiencing enmonsterisation oneself (*Dungeons & Dragons*). Whether posthuman, more-than-human or nonhuman, the monster can be friend, enemy or kin and represent the abject (Finzsch), the revolutionary, the colonised, the deviant, or the divine. Enmonsterisation, then, is a process of cultural transformation and negotiation.

The 2026 conference of the German Inklings Society wants to take up Miéville’s claim that we experience the conjunction of certain monsters, as “[a]ll our moments are monstrous moments”, and investigate processes of enmonsterisation in the fantastic imaginary. We invite papers that treat monsters as “as a significant and rich field of social production rather than a mirage to be dispelled” (Cohen 11) and explore the theme of enmonsterisation in all fantastical genres. What does it mean to make a monster? Which narrative function do they serve within the stories that imagine them? What cultural work does the act of enmonsterisation perform? And how are these processes represented, resisted, or reimagined in fantastic texts?

We welcome papers that investigate the processes and functions of enmonsterisation that the fantastic employs; how it (de)constructs, complicates, and politicises its monsters. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Theorising enmonsterisation from Tolkien to Miéville and beyond
- Narrativisation, style, and aesthetics of enmonsterisation
- Monsters in the works of the Inklings: allegory, morality, metaphysics
- Monstrosity and world-building (ecology, politics, theology)
- Monstrosity and identity/alterity ('race', gender, sexuality, class, culture, and ethnicity)
- The monstrous-feminine
- Engagements with the enmonsterisation of queer/homosexual identities and its history
- The ethics of enmonsterisation
- Reclaiming the monster, countering enmonsterisation
- Contemporary retellings (rehabilitated villains, monstrous protagonists)
- Monstrous metamorphoses (transformation, mutation, hybridity)
- The posthuman and the monstrous body
- Enmonsterisation of nature
- Political uses of enmonsterisation
- Enmonsterisation and (Gothic) Marxism
- Enmonsterisation, Orientalism and Post-Colonialism
- Cinematic explorations and techniques of enmonsterisation

We invite proposals (300 to 500 words, in English or German) for papers (20 minutes) along with a brief biographical note (150 words) to be sent to [aylin-dilek.walder@tu-braunschweig.de](mailto:aylin-dilek.walder@tu-braunschweig.de) and [carsten.kullmann@ovgu.de](mailto:carsten.kullmann@ovgu.de). Please use the subject line "Inklings Symposium 2026".

**Deadline for proposals: 10 January 2026**

**Conference date: 26–28 June 2026**

**Location: TU Braunschweig**

Please note that the conference will be an in-person event. There will be no possibility of remote participation.

A limited travel and accommodation allowance will be available for speakers.

Selected papers will be considered for publication in the *Inklings Yearbook*.

## Works Cited

Cohen, Margaret. *Profane Illuminations: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution*. U of California P, 1993.

Finzsch, Norbert. *Abjekte Körper: Zur Kulturgeschichte der Monstrositäten*. Transcript, 2024.

Miéville, China. "Theses on Monsters." *Conjunctions*, vol. 59, Fall 2012.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Monsters and the Critics, and Other Essays*. Edited by Christopher Tolkien, HarperCollins, 1997.