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**ANALYSIS OF THE DEPICTION OF MONSTERS IN NETFLIX'S
*WEDNESDAY***

BA thesis

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ABSTRACT

Wednesday (2022) is an American television series that follows Wednesday Addams as she navigates a boarding school for monsters. The purpose of the thesis is to analyse the monsters as ideological tools and the internal hierarchy within their community.

The thesis is divided into the literature review and the empirical analysis. The former discusses previous research on monsters as ideological tools, their appearance and animalistic traits. The empirical analysis is divided similarly into the monsters in *Wednesday* as ideological tools, then their appearance and their animality to analyse the internal hierarchies of the community. The conclusion discusses the findings of the thesis.

Key words: *Wednesday*, monster, American television, monster theory

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INTRODUCTION

Wednesday is a television series that began airing on Netflix in 2022. Several episodes each season are directed by Tim Burton, a cult director of Gothic films. The story is set in modern-day Vermont, in the fictional town of Jericho and the nearby Nevermore Academy. The latter is a boarding school designed to be a safe haven exclusively for outcast students, a term used to describe a variety of mythological creatures, such as vampires or sirens and people with special abilities like psychics. The school's student body includes a wide array of outcasts and the school prides itself on accommodating each outcast's unique needs, such as providing werewolves with cages to keep them safe during their transformations. Outside of Nevermore Academy, outcasts are widely considered dangerous and are commonly discriminated against.

The titular character, Wednesday Addams, belongs to this group and is transferred to Nevermore from her old school after attempting to murder her human schoolmates in punishment for bullying her brother. After a failed attempt to leave Jericho, Wednesday finds herself wrapped up in a mystery concerning the deaths of her schoolmates and multiple Jericho residents at the hands of another outcast. Eventually, Wednesday discovers that the creature responsible for the murders is called a hyde and soon learns that her love interest, Tyler Galpin, is the monster.

A monster, as described by Huft (2022: 378-379), is a fictional creature created to represent the anxieties and traumas of the community that created it. The hyde is an original monster created for *Wednesday* and is inspired by Mr Hyde from the Robert Louis Stevenson novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. The similarities between the two stem from the hyde's dual nature, since it can transform at will between its human and monster forms. However, the hyde in *Wednesday* requires another person to unlock its shapeshifting capabilities, either through a traumatic event, hypnosis or chemical inducement, after which the

hyde will view them as its master and follow their orders. The hyde can rebel against and kill its master, though it will experience psychosis and eventually die without the master.

Tyler and his master, Marilyn Thornhill, are both eventually sent to mental health facilities, where they stay until the latter half of the second season. The season follows multiple plotlines, but the predominant one centres on the Galpin family: Tyler's hyde mother, Francoise Galpin, and her brother, Isaac Night. The three team up to erase Francoise's hyde abilities to save her life after the death of her master but are ultimately defeated by Wednesday. Tyler kills his mother and, with the help of another hyde, leaves Jericho in search of a community of other hydres to live with.

Previous research on this television series, as exemplified by the work of Mareike Jenner (2024) and Camille Bassett and Jason Gilmore (2025), focuses predominantly on the character of Wednesday Addams herself and her identity as a Latinx character rather than the broader outcast community. This may be due to the recency of *Wednesday* as a series, since the second season was released in the latter half of 2025. This thesis will endeavour to fill the gap in analysis pertaining to the monsters in the series.

Throughout the narrative of the television series, the outcasts symbolise marginalised groups and the discrimination against and exploitation of them is a prominent theme in both seasons. Outcasts are not treated equally within their own community, however, and certain types of outcasts are discriminated against by other outcasts. This creates an internal hierarchy in the community where acceptance is conditional. My aim is to analyse this hierarchy through the depiction of the hyde with the help of monster theory, which is a field of study that considers monsters as representations of cultural preoccupations and fears (Huft 2022: 373). Some of the key researchers whose works I will be utilising in this thesis are Jack Halberstam and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen.

The first part of the thesis will be devoted to an overview of monster theory, putting a particular emphasis on how monsters have been used to convey certain ideologies. The literature review will also discuss how contemporary monsters and their use as ideological tools have shifted from the demonisation of certain groups to sympathy for them. The second part of the thesis will provide an analysis of various types of outcasts in the television series with an emphasis on the hyde due to its status as an outsider among the outcast community. The objective of this part is to analyse how the outcasts are used as ideological tools and how an internal hierarchy is created through the depiction of various monsters in the series, predominantly analysing how their appearance and behaviour affect whether they are accepted by the community or demonised by it.

1. MONSTERS IN STORYTELLING

The objective of this literature review is to give an overview of prior research on the use of monsters in fiction and how these tools, developed for the study of fiction, can be adapted to the study of film and television. Prior research suggests that monsters serve as representations of a society's fear of deviation from the norm. This literature review will be split into a general overview of what a monster is in different narratives, how the monster is used as an ideological tool and how the monster is othered through its appearance and animality.

1.1 What is a Monster?

Scholars have a high degree of agreement on the basic concept of a monster across media, ranging from fiction to multimedia texts. Cohen (1996: 4) defines a monster as an embodiment of a specific moment in culture, one that encompasses a time, a feeling or a place. In other words, monsters change over time to reflect what a society views as anxiety-inducing or frightening (Bacon 2022: 22). Examples of this are provided by Huft (2019: 380), who shows

how nuclear holocaust is the inspiration for a monster in films such as *The Day After*, inspired by feelings of anxiety from the Cold War and clones in films like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* as embodiments of the fear of communist infiltration. The monster's body can be used to represent a wide range of differences, usually cultural, political, racial, economic and sexual (Cohen 1996: 7).

This definition connects two others offered by Huft and Halberstam, whose works emphasise different aspects. Huft (2022: 378-379) regards monsters as a glimpse into the preserved traumas of the society that created them, such as the connection between zombies and communism. As Huft (2022: 378) describes, zombies are usually grouped with body snatchers as monsters who replace the fundamental parts of a person while retaining their appearance. This alteration is linked to the Cold War-era fear of communism as an outside force sneaking into the bodies of someone's loved ones and turning them into controlled members of a larger evil group (Huft 2022: 378).

Halberstam, on the other hand, makes more complex claims regarding the monstrous and places greater emphasis on the monster's body. The monster embodies various sexual and racial threats to society in one body. For example, in Gothic writing, the monster symbolised what should be removed from society and authors of nineteenth-century Gothic works incorporated various traits of race, class, gender, and sexuality into the monster's body (Halberstam 1995: 3). Monsters are therefore "meaning machines" (Halberstam 1995: 21) that can represent traits, such as race and gender, all in one body, although those can be broken down into their individual traits, such as being a parasite or a host. In Gothic fiction, monsters are technologies that produce a stand-in for a negative identity, one that is inherently inhuman. Monsters are typically the antithesis of the human, which is usually defined as a white, middle-

class heterosexual male in mainstream culture (Halberstam 1995: 21-22). The monster, thus, is what is other to and threatening to the white middle-class male norm.

1.2. The monster as an ideological tool

As was shown above, monsters, by nature, are outsiders to the wider community due to their inability to fit into the pre-existing norms that society has set for itself. Monsters are not only excluded from the norm; they also generally refuse to fit into the normalised order of things (Cohen 1996: 6). Instead, monsters require a system that, instead of being built on binary opposites, common in today's society, embraces a variety of differences, accepts the failure to integrate into the norm, and a variety of responses to the monster (Cohen 1996: 7). For instance, a monster such as Dracula could be both a parasite and a host at the same time (Halberstam 1995: 22). Essentially, the monster seems to play on the fear of the unknown, and, as Cohen (1996: 12) adds, the monster is a warning against exploration of that unknown. Monsters like the dinosaurs in the *Jurassic Park* franchise encourage viewers to stave off their natural curiosity out of fear of confronting the hypothetical monster at the border of the space the ingroup is allowed to inhabit or out of fear of becoming one themselves to step beyond that space (Cohen 1996: 12).

However, the monster would not need to exist if the space outside of the constraints of the norm were not also alluring. Cohen (1996: 17) finds that the monster evokes envy due to the freedom it has from living outside societal norms. The monster helps build an escapist fantasy but becomes dangerous only when it threatens to deconstruct the way in which society categorises everything that lives within it (Cohen 1996: 17). For this reason, the monster often embodies minorities that do not fit into the ingroup.

Halberstam (1995: 3) notes that the monstrous body carries the traits of race, class, sexuality and gender. At least within the context of Gothic novels, the monster represents those who should be removed from society, according to the normative thinking of the period (Halberstam 1995: 3). Although Halberstam's scope is limited to Gothic literature, scholars who work on other genres seem to agree with this sentiment. For instance, Cohen (1996: 16) specifies that the monster and everything it represents are perceived as something that should be exiled or destroyed. The monstrous *other* is usually also cultural, political, and economic, but Cohen does not mention gender explicitly (Cohen 1996: 7). The act of labelling an outsider culture as monstrous justifies the discrimination against this group or even the culling of that group as an act of altruism (Cohen 1996: 7-8).

Instances of this can be seen throughout history in connection with the demonisation of the Jewish population. For example, there is a twelfth-century illustration, *Betrayal and Flagellation of Christ*, which depicts Jewish people as fanged, hook-nosed corpses to represent them as monstrous invaders who threaten the Christian community (Huft 2022: 374). Halberstam and Bacon, though the latter mentions it briefly, cite a Gothic-era example of the vampire. The vampire represents all the antisemitic stereotypes of the nineteenth century, repeating the physical traits of the twelfth-century illustration and adding others such as money and blood to emphasise the vampire's corruption and, by doing that, to turn all Jews into monsters (Halberstam 1995: 14; Bacon 2019: 23). Huft (2022: 380) does not discuss antisemitism in the representations of the vampire but instead mentions stigmatised sexual identities and disease. These examples show that monsters, with their inability to fit into the categorisation created by the ingroup, are often stand-ins for minorities that threaten to dismantle societal norms with their mere presence.

However, monsters are not simply external threats to the nation. Halberstam, among other researchers, also discusses the idea that the monster can also represent an inner self rather than an external outsider. A prime example in Halberstam and Bacon's texts is Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in the original novella by Robert Louis Stevenson. Halberstam (1995: 64) and Bacon (2019: 21) find that Mr Hyde is the inner self of Dr Jekyll, which is revealed after Dr Jekyll consumes his chemical concoction. Halberstam (1995: 67-68) finds that Hyde is a surface effect that occurs when Jekyll disappears or even a mask for Jekyll to hide behind. The two are not separate autonomous beings, but one inseparable self.

Bacon analyses how the film adaptations of the novella build upon the monster, even splitting Hyde from Jekyll and making him an autonomous entity. For instance, the 1920 film adaptation *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* constructed Hyde as an antisemitic representation of the Jewish population, contrasting him to Jekyll, who represented white society. Hyde is then made autonomous by beginning to act on his own, feeding off Jekyll until he kills the doctor (Bacon 2019: 22-23). Bacon (2019: 23) also notes that the use of murder to save Jekyll from being cast out of Heaven for committing suicide becomes a common trope in later versions of the story. Thus, by choosing to kill Jekyll, Hyde is presented as an autonomous entity in multiple adaptations. However, later adaptations eventually break free of the tropes established by the 1920 film and return to the concept of Hyde as Jekyll's inner self. Bacon (2019: 26-27) cites the 2009 BBC television series *Jekyll*, which depicts the Jekyll-Hyde duality as stemming from genetic programming that causes the Jekyll character, named Tom Jackman in this version, to not remember what he did as the alter ego. However, the series subverts the expectation that the monster emerges when the human crosses the boundary discussed by Cohen. Instead, it explores how the ingroup treats the monster as something they can use for their own benefit. The series' version of Hyde is an important part of Jackman, rather than an antagonistic force, symbolising

that the monster is no longer an evil force but a part of the individual's whole that defines them (Bacon 2019: 27). Therefore, society tries to frame Hyde as an external monster that has attached itself to Jekyll, similarly to modern monsters described by Huft (2022: 374), who invade the bodies of normal people. Ultimately, Hyde is merely a part of Jekyll's whole and a mask for him to disappear behind.

1.3. The monster's appearance and animality

As established in preceding subsections, the monster is predominantly made an outsider through its body. Cohen (1996: 4) finds that the body of the monster exists to be interpreted because it represents something other than itself and is constantly reborn. He goes on to state that the monster always escapes, only to return and threaten again because of its ability to change. Each time that change occurs, the message the monster's body delivers to the viewer also changes (Cohen 1996: 4-5). This is agreed upon by Halberstam (1995: 8), who finds that not only does the body change over time, but the individual traits that build up its monstrosity change as well. This is developed by Bacon (2019: 22), who posits that each new rendition of a monster builds upon the last while changing to fit what each generation needs. This can be seen in his analysis of the film adaptations of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, all of which develop the last iteration of the monster in terms of appearance. For instance, the rendition of Mr Hyde in the 1920 film *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has a goblin-like appearance with a large aquiline nose, which resembles Jewish caricatures. This version of Mr Hyde reflects the antisemitic views prevalent at the time. Another example is the 1932 film of the same name, which depicts Mr Hyde as a primitive ape-like being with large teeth and a noticeable slouch. This mimics racist depictions of black people common at the time (Bacon 2022: 23-24).

Halberstam and Bacon seem to disagree on the importance of Mr Hyde's appearance in the original novella. Bacon (2022: 22) asserts that not only does the text have no direct description of the monster, but also that his physical appearance is irrelevant when compared to his actions. Although Halberstam (1995: 57) agrees that Hyde's appearance is not clearly defined and that his actions are part of what makes him evil, he puts more focus on Hyde's body. Mr Hyde is despised by those around him because of his appearance, though they cannot describe what is so revolting about him. His deformity is part of his character (Halberstam 1995: 81). Hyde's appearance, therefore, seems not to be as superfluous as Bacon claims, but part of what renders him monstrous. This monstrosity, however, is made more obvious in the novella's adaptations, as shown above. The othering of monsters is enforced through their physical appearance, their difference inscribed in their skin.

Another manner in which difference is inscribed into the monster's being is through its connection to animals. Humanity has, in Western tradition, been given privileges over the rest of the animal kingdom due to its ability to exercise reason (Murga 2020: 92-93). Murga (2020: 91) states that this idea stemmed from Judeo-Christian tradition. Gonçalves (2022: 33) agrees with this, stating that the reason that animality in humans is viewed as a degeneration is because of Christianity, which is so deeply rooted in Western society that even those who do not believe in the religion view animality in such a way. However, Charles Darwin's theory of evolution raised doubts about human rationality, leading to the idea that any resemblance to animals, due to their connection to irrationality, was a sign of degeneration, mental instability or criminal intent. Gothic hybrid monsters then embodied these doubts and anxieties because they could not be called human or animal, thereby blurring the boundaries between the two. Within their stories, those monsters were destroyed to avoid the spread of animality to the rest of society. Before the destruction of these monsters, however, they needed to be classified as non-human

to justify the act, which was predominantly done through their animalistic appearance and behaviour (Murga 2020: 92-93).

For instance, Dracula was labelled non-human due to his physical resemblance to animals such as apes, canines and other carnivores due to his sharp teeth, hair-covered hands and sharp nails. This is then further emphasised due to Dracula's behaviour, identifying with wolves rather than humans (Murga 2020: 93-94). Similarly, the demon residing within Regan in *The Exorcist* also communicates its monstrosity through animality. However, this monstrosity is predominantly conveyed through animalistic behaviour rather than a physical resemblance, the demon possessing Regan to make noises such as barking, howling and oinking (Gonçalves 2022: 32).

The conclusion of both scholars, however, is that the acceptance of one's animality will improve one's life in these representations. In *The Exorcist*, the exorcist Karras challenges the demon to possess him so he can sacrifice himself to destroy the monster. The conclusion here is that, in their mission to rid themselves of the animalistic monster, the human finds themselves embracing their own animal instincts (Gonçalves 2022: 38). Gonçalves (2022: 39) states that embracing one's animality allows a person to fully experience their humanity as well. Murga comes to a similar conclusion as Gonçalves through the analysis of *Prince Alberic and the Snake Lady*. The story details the life of Prince Alberic, who, after being exiled by the Duke, is raised by the Snake Lady (Murga 2020: 97). As Murga (2020: 98-99) finds, Alberic became a cultured gentleman because he embraced and integrated animality into his human identity, finding a balance between culture and nature.

1.4. Contemporary Monsters

Representations of monsters have veered away from the traditional threatening outsider and instead taken on a more sympathetic role. As Weinstock (2020: 360) states, since fictional works like *Shrek* and the *Twilight* franchise, viewers have been encouraged to relate to and idolise the monstrous outsider while questioning the culture that would deem monsters as others based on their non-normative appearances or behaviours. Films such as *Shrek* and *Monsters Inc.* critique this line of thought by defining monstrosity in terms of a person's morals rather than their appearance or behaviour (Weinstock 2020: 360-361). For instance, the antagonists in both *Shrek 2* and *Shrek the Third*, Fairy Godmother and her narcissistic, vain son Charming, are conventionally attractive but morally bankrupt (Weinstock 2020: 362).

The television series *True Blood*, a story about vampires living among human society, adds to this subversion of expectations by, as stated by Smith (2013: 192), blurring the differences between vampires and humans, leading to the acknowledgement that both are equally capable of both moral and immoral actions. An instance of both sides being capable of exploiting others is brought up in the series in a debate between a vampire rights activist and a human: the argument about violent vampires is countered by the mention of slavery and nuclear weapons created by humans (Smith 2013: 202). The wide variety of monsters in the story, such as werewolves, fairies, and witches, makes it difficult to define the norm and thus what constitutes its opposite: monstrosity. Instead of critiquing those different from the established norm, *True Blood* targets those who do not tolerate difference (Smith 2013: 193). Weinstock (2020: 362) also states that *True Blood* addresses the idea that those who define others as monsters are themselves monsters.

Unlike traditional monsters whose similarities to minority groups were used to vilify them, the connection between contemporary monsters and minorities is used to symbolise the

discrimination against those minorities. *True Blood* discusses the topic of sexuality through vampirism, drawing on the vampire being a metaphor for dangerous, uncontrollable sexuality (Smith 2013: 203). The predominant connections between vampirism and homosexuality are the desire that vampires reveal themselves to the public, symbolising the act of coming out. This coming out then evokes a plethora of anti-vampire sentiments, including billboards reading “God hates fangs”, a direct parody of Christian homophobic phrases (Weinstock 2020: 362).

Another example of this connection is zombie media. Zombies, as explained by Hughes (2013: 248), have replaced vampires as monstrous antagonists due to the acceptance of vampires by human society. However, as pointed out by Bubnowska (2025: 380), making the zombie character a protagonist changes the story by making the undead victims of human oppressors. An example of such a story would be the 2008 film *Colin*, which features the titular zombie character experiencing discrimination at the hands of humans and other zombies. For instance, he witnesses a human man exploiting zombies to inflict violence on women (Bubnowska 2025: 380). In a similar fashion, Daniel Waters’s *Generation Dead*, a novel about American teenagers rising from the dead, also addresses discrimination against zombies as representations of the experiences of minorities at the hands of the human majority (Hughes 2013: 249). One of the small ways in which zombie discrimination is shown in the novel is the use of language to show prejudice against the undead population, referring to them as *zombies*, *dead heads* and *corpsicles* (Hughes 2013: 250).

Another franchise which features a deep connection between monstrosity and marginalised identities is the *X-Men* comic books and films, though the characters are never referred to as monsters, but mutants. In the *X-Men* mythos, mutants are considered a threat to human society, who need to hide due to the ostracism caused by their mutant identities. In the films, the main conflict is the Mutant Registration Act proposed by the government to forcibly

expose people's identities as mutants to the public. This legislation recalls legal definitions of minorities in the Western world (Overland 2016: 236). However, the discussion is much more concerned with the topic of passing, which Overland (2016: 236) defines as the act of being viewed as another identity and therefore gaining social acceptance. In the X-Men films, passing for human is presented as dangerous to the mainstream population since, as Overland (2016: 240) states, "as "mutant" is defined by opposition to "human," denying the possibility of a liminal space of acceptance." A mutant's ability to pass as human disrupts this status quo and means that mutants may gain social status equal to humans. This mirrors racial passing, which was similarly feared as minorities may gain power equal to white people, making the privilege their whiteness grants them less exclusive (Overland 2016: 240). Gauntlett (2008: 94) also acknowledges the connection between mutants and racial minorities, comparing the leader of the X-Men, Charles Xavier, and the series' antagonist, Magneto, to Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, respectively, with both being threatened by the character of Senator Kelly representing the side of anti-mutant humans.

However, Gauntlett's discussion is far more concerned with the connection between mutants and homosexuality. As Gauntlett (2008: 94) points out, Senator Kelly's campaign against mutant kind is similar to anti-gay rhetoric. A website set up by the film-makers, *Mutant Watch*, reinforces this interpretation by mimicking arguments presented by websites such as the *National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality* to call critical attention to them. For instance, the *Mutant Watch* website presents mutantism as a threat to traditional American families and classrooms, which are arguments that are seen in real anti-gay organisations (Gauntlett 2008: 95).

1.5. Conclusion

Scholars have noted that the monster captures a certain moment in a society's history which is anxiety-inducing or scary. Thus, the monster's body is typically used to represent a variety of political, racial, economic and sexual differences (Cohen 1996: 7), and the monsters' refusal to fit into the pre-existing norms of society is what makes them dangerous or demonised (Cohen 1996: 6). Monsters are often used as ideological tools to represent marginalised groups. For example, Jewish people were often framed as monsters in works such as film adaptations of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. In the film *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Hyde is framed as an antisemitic caricature, with a goblin-like appearance and a large nose (Bacon 2022: 24). This example also demonstrates that the othering of the monster is often done through its appearance, its difference inscribed in its skin. Within the original novella, even though Mr Hyde's appearance is vaguer than it is in the film adaptations, multiple characters still note hating him because of his deformed appearance (Halberstam 1995: 81). The monster is also rendered an outsider because of its connection to animality, with this belief stemming from Christian religion (Gonçalves 2022: 33). Humanity was thought to be superior to the rest of the animal kingdom due to their capability for rational thought, which was brought into question by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. This led to the idea that any resemblance to animals was a sign of degeneration and monsters of the time embodied this fear. Before being destroyed, those monsters were identified through their animalistic traits (Murgo 2020: 92-93). However, scholars such as Gonçalves (2022: 38) and Murgo (2020: 99) argue that embracing one's animality can lead to a better existence.

In more recent media texts, the definition of monstrosity is determined by a person's identity rather than their appearance or manners (Weinstock 2020: 360-361), allowing monsters to take on a more sympathetic role, as they are now on equal ground with humanity rather than

threatening outsiders. Furthermore, the connection between monsters and marginalised communities is used to bring awareness to the discrimination those groups face, instead of vilifying them, such as using the vampires in *True Blood* and the mutants in *X-Men* to symbolise race and sexuality-based differences. However, the research does not mention discrimination among monsters rather than what is levied at them by human society.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE DEPICTION OF OUTCASTS

The following section will analyse the depiction of monsters in *Wednesday* through the lens of monster theory, using scenes from the television series as examples of discrimination against outcasts. It will be split into sections focusing on their appearance, behaviour, and the outcast community as an allegory for marginalised identity. A particular focus will be put on hydes due to their status as outsiders among the outcast community and their roles as predominantly antagonistic characters. This character has also been chosen because it has been treated in previous research as an ambivalent figure.

2.1. The connection between outcasts and marginalised identity

A majority of the outcasts in *Wednesday* are established as a broad allegory for minorities in a similar manner to monsters in contemporary monster media like *Generation Dead* and *True Blood*, in which their connection to marginalised identity is established through the discrimination they face. In *Wednesday*, this discrimination is predominantly expressed through the harassment of outcasts by a group of human teenagers, but also outright by the outcasts themselves. The first instance of discrimination is when Wednesday Addams visits a coffee shop in Jericho and is confronted by a group of teenage boys. Upon seeing her through the window, they veer off their initial path through town to enter the coffee shop and speak to her. What is notable here is that one of the teenagers begins the interaction by saying: “What’s

a Nevermore freak doing out in the wild?” (*Wednesday*, S1E1). The tone of the interaction is immediately hostile, not only due to how they greet her, but also due to the manner in which they stand around her table to corner her. Their use of language indicates that the group targeted her based on her outcast status due to her wearing a Nevermore school uniform during her visit. Another notable detail about this is that, much like *Generation Dead* with its use of *zombie* and *corpse* as derogatory terminology for the undead (Hughes 2013: 250), the use of *freak* also acts as a slur against the outcast community. The use of this word in a derogatory context appears again when one of Wednesday’s schoolmates is confronted by the same group, who refer to him as a *freak* as well. This is also accompanied by an instance of physical harassment, in which the group attempts to force the student into a pillory before attacking Wednesday for intervening (*Wednesday*, S1E3). These two incidents indicate that outcasts are victims of various types of harassment on the basis of their outcast status, mirroring real-life discrimination of marginalised identity.

A more direct reference to outcasts being comparable to marginalised groups occurs when a student is giving Wednesday a description of Nevermore’s history: “Nevermore was founded in 1791 to educate people like us. Outcasts, freaks, monsters, fill in your favourite marginalised group here.” (*Wednesday*, S1E1). In this instance, outcasts are grouped with other marginalised identities. *Freaks* and *monsters* also appear here as synonyms for outcasts, and, considering how humans use the word *freak* in the following episodes, are derogatory terminology for outcasts. In fact, the term *outcast* serves to other the community from human society as well, although the term has been reclaimed to the point where it is the most used one in the series.

Discrimination against outcasts also occurs within the community, often expressed verbally. However, it is notable that the discrimination does not seem to imply an internal

hierarchy based on species. The second season features a character capable of becoming invisible who, upon being called psychotic for harassing both Wednesday and her werewolf roommate, responds: “Don’t get your fur balls in a snarl” (*Wednesday*, S2E2). This response targets the roommate’s werewolf identity and minimises her frustration as an overreaction unique to werewolves rather than a valid emotional response. Another instance of someone targeting an outcast’s identity stems from an interaction between a werewolf and a gorgon, the former dismissing the gorgon’s questions by stating: “Ignore him. Gorgons spend way too much time getting stoned.” (*Wednesday*, S1E1). The gorgon’s earlier inquiries are entirely dismissed by stating that all gorgons use narcotics. Both instances mimic the targeting of a minority’s identity as a way to demean them and minimise their opinions.

Another example of discrimination in the outcast community is the exploitation of sirens, whose ability to brainwash people with their voices is a recurring point of conflict in the series. The first example of this occurs during an event at Nevermore, during which a siren and her psychic ex-boyfriend have a confrontation regarding the latter’s affection towards Wednesday Addams. He tells her to use her mind control on him to make him forget about Wednesday, essentially wanting to weaponise her siren identity for his own benefit (*Wednesday*, S1E4). Another instance of siren exploitation is a recurring plot line during the second season, in which the new principal of the school threatens the same siren into using her abilities to gain more funds for the school by insinuating that she, as a scholarship student, would be expelled if the school does not make enough money (*Wednesday*, S2E1). This, much like the use of siren powers to forget about Wednesday, is another instance of a siren’s identity being exploited for the benefit of someone else. What is notable among all these examples of discrimination within Nevermore’s outcast population is that it invalidates the idea of an internal hierarchy based on species, since there is no pattern to who discriminates who. Most of the outcast population is on

an equal footing and everybody seems to be able to become a target of stigmatisation and exploitation.

The existence of the internal hierarchy among the broader outcast community, however, is proven by the discrimination against the hydes, who reside on the very bottom of the hierarchy. The hyde is often referred to by terms such as *monster* or *thing*, with the use of the former being especially prevalent throughout the first season due to the hyde's identity being the main mystery that Wednesday was attempting to solve. However, even after finding a book describing the hyde, Wednesday continues to refer to it by *monster*: "That means I'm not looking for one killer, but two. The monster and its master." (*Wednesday*, S1E7).

This continues into the second season, though the term is not used as often. For example, it is utilised when Wednesday confronts one of her teachers about her past relationship with a hyde, stating: "You fell in love with a monster" (*Wednesday*, S2E5). The use of *thing* when referring to the hyde first occurs when Wednesday and her schoolmates have cornered Tyler and are trying to make him transform to prove their theory about him being the hyde. One of them says: "How long until he morphs into that thing?" (*Wednesday*, S1E8). The term reappears in the second season when Wednesday asks her mother about her allyship with Tyler's hyde mother: "You just called that thing Françoise" (*Wednesday*, S2E5). The use of this terminology both distances hydes from the outcast community by refusing to refer to them as one of their own and also dehumanises them by likening them to a beast rather than a person.

Another way the outcast community isolates the hyde is by exiling them from outcast society. As mentioned before by Wednesday's schoolmate (*Wednesday*, S1E1), Nevermore functions as a safe haven to educate outcasts. However, hydes were banned from the school 30 years prior to the events of the first season, although the principal does not provide a reason for their permanent removal. Before this statement, she also mentions that hydes were too violent

and unpredictable to research properly (*Wednesday*, S1E7). Although the reason for their exile from Nevermore is left unanswered, it can be deduced that the school could not control their ability to transform at will the same way they could with other outcast types such as werewolves, whose cyclical transformation schedules meant that they only required cages to stay in during full moons as their only form of accommodation. Their ban from Nevermore resulted in hydes such as the Galpin family living among humans instead, further isolating them from the outcast community.

The hyde also differs in how it functions as an allegory for transgender identity instead of the broader marginalised identity that other outcasts represent. The hyde identity lies dormant within a person until it is awakened by an external trigger, acting as an inner self that is not accessible to the person before being unlocked. It mirrors the process of discovering one's gender identity. The hyde's ability to transform is also similar to Halberstam's (1995: 67-68) statement that in the original novella by Stevenson, Mr Hyde functions as a mask or disguise for Dr Jekyll rather than being an autonomous entity. In the case of the hyde, this disguise would mirror transitioning, aligning the outer appearance with the inner hyde.

The hyde also needs a support system. Hydes, after being awakened, are dependent on a master and experience rapid mental and physical deterioration if deprived of one (*Wednesday*, S2E5). This need for a master, however, can be replaced by a pack similar to that of werewolves (*Wednesday*, S2E8). This aspect of hydes mirrors the importance of an involved support system for those who identify with a different gender identity than the one they were born with and how the lack of that support system may negatively affect a person's life.

The opinions the hydes in the series have regarding their identities also mirror topics surrounding gender identity, such as accepting oneself and internalised transphobia. This is best exemplified by the contrast between Tyler and his mother, Francoise, who are at opposite ends

of the spectrum in accepting their status as hydes. Francoise views her hyde identity as a curse, wishing to remove it with the help of a machine her brother built, while Tyler sees his hyde identity as something that gives him a sense of freedom (*Wednesday*, S2E7). Francoise's disdain for her own hyde identity eventually leads her to force Tyler into the same machine despite his protests against the idea, hoping to save him from the hyde affliction (*Wednesday*, S2E8). This act mirrors the use of conversion therapy to force someone to conform to their sex assigned at birth instead of embracing their inner identity.

2.2. The appearance of outcasts

Outcasts are more likely to be accepted by the community if they can pass as human or resemble something familiar to human culture. As an example of how acceptance is removed when an outcast can no longer pass for human, *Wednesday*'s roommate, Enid Sinclair, is informed by her teacher that she is a variant of a werewolf referred to as an alpha or a werewolf capable of transforming at will. This new aspect of her identity is immediately deemed problematic because transforming under a full moon would trap her in her canine form permanently, causing her to be exiled from her family pack and killed by other werewolves as a form of self-policing (*Wednesday*, S2E6). This act of culling alpha werewolves indicates that losing the ability to pass as human results in outcasts to be demonised by their own community.

The similarity of an outcast's monstrous form to something a human viewer would recognise also ties into whether or not they are accepted by the community. The clearest example of this is the presence of shapeshifter-type outcasts in the series. There are four types of outcasts in the series that can change their appearance: the werewolf, the siren, the hyde and the shapeshifter. Among this group, the hyde's visual design is an outlier. The werewolf and siren resemble dogs and fish, while shapeshifters can only transform into other people. What sets the

hyde apart from the other examples is that it does not resemble an animal or person that a human viewer would be familiar with, since both of the current hydes share a quadrupedal humanoid appearance with longer front legs, grey skin and disproportionately large eyes (*Wednesday*, S2E5). Although the hyde resembles a human in broad strokes, its distorted features produce an uncanny effect.

The reaction of characters in the series also implies that the hyde's appearance is part of the reason why they are deemed outsiders to the outcast community. The repetitive use of the term *thing* to refer to the hyde indicates the speaker's inability to understand what the hyde is. For instance, when Wednesday's classmate says: "How long until he morphs into that thing?" when referring to Tyler (*Wednesday*, S1E8). This difference in appearance further emphasises the hyde's outsider status and reinforces the idea that the more accepted types of outcasts generally resemble concepts a human viewer would be comfortable with, therefore treating human values as the basis for how the community treats its members.

2.3. The animality of outcasts

As stated by Murga (2020: 93-94), the act of destroying a monster was justified by the identification of their animalistic features. A similar sentiment occurs in the series, where animalistic behaviour further cements the hyde as an outsider among the outcast community and emphasises the idea that human behaviour is the basis for acceptable conduct among outcasts. It is important to note that other types of outcasts, predominantly werewolves, also exhibit typically animalistic behaviour in their human forms. However, these behaviours are framed differently. Werewolves are shown to howl as a form of cheering and their scenes are framed as non-threatening and even comedic. For example, the second instance of the werewolves howling acts as a call-back to an earlier scene where Wednesday walked in and witnessed the pack

causing havoc in her room (*Wednesday*, S2E1). Both of these scenes are comedic in nature and indicate that the animalistic werewolves are meant to represent the behaviour of unruly teenagers rather than monsters. The act of howling can also be viewed in a similar vein to Murga's (2020: 98-99) discussion regarding Alberic and the Snake Lady, in which him embracing his animality permits him to develop into a gentleman. In this context, the act of embracing one's animalistic tendencies serves to strengthen the bond between werewolves by providing them with a communal activity such as howling.

The behaviour of the hyde, however, is framed differently than that of the werewolves as it is more akin to that of a caged animal rather than a group of unruly teenagers. The comparison between how Tyler behaves before he is revealed to be the hyde and afterwards is the key example of this. For instance, his first appearance shows him speaking at an average pace and with a tendency to stammer. What is also noticeable are the small facial expressions he makes, such as eyebrow movement and rapid blinking (*Wednesday*, S1E1). This is in direct contrast to his behaviour when Wednesday visits him in Willow Hill Psychiatric Hospital after he is revealed to be the hyde. In this scene, Tyler's body language and speaking voice are drastically different. The way he moves around his cell is far slower than it was before. His facial expressions have also become muted, his eyebrows are always slightly furrowed and he no longer blinks in response to Wednesday's dialogue. His speaking voice is also slower and he does not stammer anymore. While a majority of the scene displays him as calm and calculating, it ends with him bellowing after Wednesday leaves (*Wednesday*, S2E2).

These changes in his behaviour resemble those of a large predator staring somebody down. Tyler's behaviour, while more subtle than the aggressive animalistic behaviour of Regan from Gonçalves's (2022: 32) discussion of *The Exorcist*, still likens him to an animalistic monster. This contrasts with the animalistic behaviour of the werewolves, which characterises

them as unruly and energetic rather than dangerous or uncanny. The behaviour of certain outcasts, like werewolves, is accepted because it is a communal action that has the same function as cheering for humans and can be interpreted as a part of their culture, while the hyde's body language is more obviously animalistic in nature and is not tied to any cultural habits.

3. CONCLUSION

The objective of the thesis was to analyse the social hierarchy in the outcast community in *Wednesday* and how they are used as ideological tools. The analysis, in particular, focused on the hyde as an example of how the hierarchy demonises certain types of outcasts based on a number of factors. Previous research on the television series focused primarily on the protagonist, leaving a gap for the analysis of monsters.

The introduction provides a synopsis of the television series and a basic introduction to the show's original monster species, the hyde. The literature review provides an overview of the definition of a monster before focusing on how monsters function as ideological tools historically used to demonise marginalised identities in order to justify their discrimination. Monsters were also predominantly othered through their monstrous appearance and their connection to animality, which was used to identify them as non-human before exterminating them for the betterment of human society. Finally, the literature review addresses contemporary monsters and how the focus of stories involving them has shifted from demonising monsters to addressing the intolerance levied against them by wider society. Monsters, as representations of marginalised identity, now act as sympathetic characters meant to address the discrimination that marginalised people face. However, scholars do not mention the discrimination that

monsters may face at the hands of other monsters, predominantly focusing on how humanity oppresses them.

The empirical analysis of the thesis found that a majority of the outcast community in *Wednesday* acts as a broad allegory for marginalised identity rather than a specific group. This connection to marginalisation is expressed through the discrimination of outcasts by the human characters living in Jericho, utilising both verbal and physical methods to show prejudice against the outcast, such as the use of *freak* as a derogatory term. However, discrimination is also levied at outcasts by members of their own community, which is predominantly verbal and targeted at the person's species. What is notable is that this discrimination does not reveal an internal hierarchy among the outcasts at Nevermore based on species because there is not a pattern to who discriminates who.

The hyde, however, proves the existence of an internal hierarchy among the outcast community. The hyde is unanimously discriminated against by other outcasts, predominantly through the act of isolating them from the rest of the community and verbally othering them. Hydres are often referred to as *monsters* or *things* by other outcasts, an act which serves to dehumanise the hyde by referring to them as something other than a person. It also refuses them the outcast identity, distancing them from the rest of the community. Another manner by which the hyde is discriminated against is the exiling of the hyde by other outcasts. Hydres are unable to attend Nevermore, having been banned before the events of the series, resulting in hydres living among human society instead.

The hyde, unlike the other the outcasts which represent a broader allegory for marginalised identity, acts as an allegory for transgender identity because it has to be awakened, similarly to the discovery of one's own gender identity and its transformation mirroring transitioning from one gender to another. There is also a parallel in the internalised bigotry

certain hydes, such as Tyler's mother, experience and try to impose on others, and internalised transphobia. The hyde also requires a support system in the form of a master or a pack in order to survive, since they will start to deteriorate mentally and physically without one, mirroring the need for transgender individuals to have a support system.

Outcasts are more likely to be demonised and exiled if they become unable to pass for human, as shown by the existence of the alpha werewolf, whose possibly permanent canine transformation causes them to be hunted down and killed by other werewolves. The appearance of outcasts also matters in terms of whether it resembles something a human would recognise and find appealing. Three of the four main types of shapeshifters in the series (the werewolf, the siren and the shapeshifter) all resemble entities or animals immediately recognisable for humans. The hyde is an exception in the sense that their appearance is vaguely humanoid, but distorted enough to be uncanny. This uncanny appearance is pointed out by the characters as well, who refer to the hyde as a *thing* due to their inability to describe them.

An outcast's animality also emphasises which outcasts are othered. In this instance, the hyde and the werewolf are two species which display animalistic behaviour but the latter's animalistic howling is framed as harmless and even comedic, as a method by which werewolves bond with each other. In contrast, the hyde's body language, which is reminiscent of a predator, is framed as ominous and threatening because it is not tied to a cultural activity. This animalistic behaviour, then, furthers the othering of the hyde.

The research indicates that the monsters in *Wednesday*, with the exception of the hyde, are an allegory for broader marginalised identity. The hyde, however, mirrors transgender identity. There is an internal hierarchy among the monsters and the hyde occupies the bottom rung. There do not appear to be other hierarchies among the outcasts. The justification for the hyde's exile from the rest of outcast society is because of its physical attributes and its instinctual

animality. Future research could be done on this topic as *Wednesday* is an ongoing series that might take its representation in other directions.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Liso-Lizete Lemberg

Analysis of the Depiction of Monsters in Netflix's *Wednesday*

Koletiste kujutamine Netflix'i sarjas "Wednesday"

Bakalaureusetöö

2026

Lehekülgede arv: 31

Annotatsioon:

Bakalaureusetöö eesmärk on uurida kuidas Netflix'i telesarjas "Wednesday" kasutatakse koletisi ideoloogiliste tööriistadena ning uurida koletiste kogukonna sisest sotsiaalset hierarhiat. Töö jaguneb kirjanduse ülevaateks ja telesarja analüüsiks.

Sissejuhatus annab telesarja "Wednesday" süžee ülevaate, tutvustab bakalaureusetöö ülesehitust, koletiste teoreetilisi käsitusi ja pakub lühikese ülevaate eelnevalt tehtud uuringutest. Kirjanduse ülevaade annab ülevaate koletise definitsioonist, koletistest kui ideoloogilistest tööriistadest ning ka koletiste välimusest ning loomalistest omadustest.

Lõputöö empiiriline osa keskendub telesarjas kujutatud koletiste kasutust ideoloogiliste tööriistadena. Väidan, et enamus koletisi on laiema marginaliseeritud identiteedi allegooriad ning hyde omakorda kujutab transsoolist identiteeti. Lisaks näitan, et koletiste marginaliseeritud identiteeti väljendatakse läbi nende diskrimineerimise ja aktsepteerimise. Lõpuks, koletise loomalikud omadused on ka põhjus, miks teda demoniseeritakse.

Märksõnad:

ameerika television, koletis, "Wednesday", vähemuste kujutamine

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