MONSTER PARADOX: A *WIRKUNGSGESCHICHTE* OF BEHEMOTH
AND LEVIATHAN IN LIGHT OF MONSTER THEORY

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PART I

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCS Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture

ANET *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Edited by James B. Pritchard. 3rd ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969

ANEP *TheAncient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testamnt*. 2nd ed. Edited by James B. Pritchard. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994

ANF *Ante–Nicene Fathers*

AnOr Analecta Orientalia

AO *Der Alte Orient*

ABD *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992

BASOR *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*

BDB Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Brigs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*

BHS *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Edited by Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983

BZAW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

CAT *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places*. Edited by Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín. Münster: Ugarit–Verlag, 1995

CBET Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology

CBQ *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*

CBR *Currents in Biblical Research*

CCCM Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis. Turnhout: Brepols, 1969–

CCSL Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–

CDA *A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*. Edited by Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000

CT *Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the Bristish Museum*

CTA	*Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques*. A. Herdner.
CTH	*Catalogue des textes hittites*. Emmanuel Laroche. Paris: Klincksieck, 1971
DCH	*Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. Edited by David J. A. Clines. 9 vols. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2014
DDD	*Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*. Edited by Karel van der Torrn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst. Leiden: Brill, 1995. 2nd rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999
DJBA	*A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic Periods*. Edited by Michael Sokoloff. Bar Ilan University Press, 2002
DUL	*A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*. Edited by Gregorio del Olmo Lete, Joaquín Sanmartín, and Wilfred G.E. Watson. Leiden: Brill, 2015
EBR	*Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*. Edited by Hans-Josef Klauck et al. Berlin: de Gruyter 2009–
ESOO	*Sancti Patris Nostri Ephraem Syri Opera Omnia*. Edited by J. A. Assemani. Rome, 1737
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
GKC	*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited by Emil Kautzsch. Translated by Arther E. Cowley. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1910
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni Opera. Edited by Ekkehardus Mühlenberg. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
HALOT	*The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm. Translated and edited under the supervision of Mervyn E. J. Richardson. 4 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–1999
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*

IBHS	*An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*. Bruce K. Waltke and Michael O'Connor. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JE	*The Jewish Encyclopedia*. Edited by Isidore Singer. 12 vols. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1925
JEH	*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
KAR	*Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*. Edited by Erich Ebeling. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1919–1923
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KHC	Kurzer Hand–Commentar zum Alten Testament
KTU	*Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit*. Edited by Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín. Münster: Ugarit–Verlag, 2013. 3rd enl. ed. of *KTU: The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places*. Edited by Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín. Münster: Ugarit–Verlag, 1995 (= *CAT*)
LÄ	*Lexikon der Ägyptologie*. Edited by Wolfgang Helck, Eberhard Otto, and Wolfhart Westendorf. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1972
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Textament Studies
LW	*Luther's Works*, 55+ volumes. St. Louis & Philadelphia: Concordia & Fortress, 1955–
MSL	*Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon/Materials for the Sumerian Lexikon*. 17 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1937–2004
NAC	New American Commentary
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NPNF	*Nicene and Post–Nicene Fathers*

Or	*Orientalia* (*NS*)
OTP	*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985
PG	Patrologia Graeca [= *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*: Series Graeca]. Edited by Jacques–Paul Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886
PL	Patrologia Latina [= *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*: Series Latina]. Edited by Jacques–Paul Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864
PRU	*Le palais royal d'Ugarit*
PTA	Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
RGG	*Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Edited by Hans Dieter Betz, 4th ed. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998–2007
RIMA	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RIME	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo–Assyrian Period
SAT	Studien zum Altaegyptischen Totenbuch
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis et al. 8 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTS	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WA	*D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. 120+ volumes. Weimar: Bohlaus, 1883–
WAW	Writings from the Ancient World

WMANT   Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament

ZA   *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*

INTRODUCTION

Behemoth and Leviathan, a pair of exotic creatures featured in the divine speech in Job 40–41, have long been noted for their obscure nature. In fact, they have sparked a diverse range of interpretations over the course of history, not least in Jewish and Christian traditions. Interestingly, not only do Jewish and Christian receptions of the two beasts appear to follow differing interpretive trajectories, but they also reflect contrasting sentiments towards the creatures. While Jewish tradition by and large views them positively as the source of food preserved for the righteous Jews in the life to come, Christianity has mostly taken them to be negative symbols of the Devil/Satan and the epitome of evilness since early on. Even within Christian tradition, there have been divergent views on their theological significance: some see them as representations of chaos or evilness, whereas others view them as significations of the divine power and sovereignty. It is worth noting that the reception and use of Behemoth and Leviathan is not confined to the sphere of religion—the two Joban beasts have also been taken up in modern non-religious settings, especially as political symbols. Even today, their life has been going on in popular culture in a variety of cultural forms, not least in literature, film, and graphic representation. Why have these two creatures spawned such a multiplicity of receptions and interpretations throughout history? How should we account for the divergent ways people have come to perceive and use them as symbols of monstrosity? Can there be a way to articulate their existence and their trajectories in human history as a religio-cultural phenomenon?

While Behemoth and Leviathan have received much attention in biblical scholarship, the multivalent receptions of the Joban beasts are seldom studied in light of a theoretical framework. Through the lens of contemporary monster theory, this research aims to relate the receptions of Behemoth and Leviathan, and demonstrate how the tenets of monster theory can shed light on their receptions across religious traditions and social groups through history.

Specifically, this reception study seeks to articulate—in terms of monster theory—the implications of monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan along their reception trajectories. In exploring their historical use and impact as symbols of monstrosity, it examines how the two Joban creatures came to signify the notion of otherness in various interpretive communities, and how these receptions became an integral part of their identity construction in the respective historical and socio-political contexts.

The Mythic Behemoth and Leviathan

Before delving into the reception history of Behemoth and Leviathan, it is necessary to establish in the first place a view of the Joban creatures that is literarily and culturally grounded. Rather than discussing them in isolation in the Joban context, the nature of Behemoth and Leviathan has to be addressed and understood within the broader biblical tradition of monstrous entities, which shares the larger horizon of ancient Near Eastern cultural and literary traditions.

Along with two other sea monsters in the Hebrew tradition, namely, Rahab[1] and Tannin,[2] Leviathan has long been identified as a biblical manifestation of aquatic monsters[3] which are commonly used to represent forces of cosmic chaos in ancient Near Eastern

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[1] The figure of the biblical Rahab (רַהַב), which is usually related to the sea in the Hebrew Bible, may be traced to a Mesopotamian background through the Akkadian *rūbu/rubbu* (a derivative of the verb *ra'ābu(m)*, "tremble (with fear) or rage"), which refers to the overflowing of water. With the *Chaoskampf* motif, some scholars draw an analogy between Rahab and Tiamat in *Enūma Eliš*, where Marduk creates the cosmos by defeating the chaos monster. Other scholars attempt to relate Rahab's "helpers" in Job 9:13 to Tiamat's monstrous allies (who are referred to as "her helpers" in the myth), or to the aquatic monsters who support the sea god Yamm in Canaanite mythology.

[2] The Tannin (תַּנִּין), a lurking monstrous figure in the biblical tradition, is evidently identified as a kind of sea serpent with the Ugaritic *tunnanu* among biblical scholars. In the Ugaritic myths, the *tunnanu* is characterized as an enemy of the storm-god Baal and his consort Anat, along with other sea monsters defeated by Baal. Attested in Aramaic literature as תנן, this monster also turns up in magical texts. An inscribed Aramaic incantation bowl, for example, describes the noise of demons with the hissing sound of serpents (תנינא).

[3] Despite their different origins, Leviathan, Tannin and Rahab commonly belong to the sea (יָם) and are often associated with each other in the Hebrew Bible—especially in the context of divine battle with chaos. They are typically illustrated as aquatic monstrous beings (*liwyāṯān* and *tannîn,* Ps 74:13–14; Isa 27:1; *rahaḇ* and *tannîn,* Isa 51:9) that symbolize the chaotic power of the cosmic waters, rendering them in an image as mythical sea monsters.

mythology.[4] Indeed, as is typical in ancient Near Eastern literary traditions, not least those in

Western Asia and Egypt, primeval waters often carry mythic significations in the Hebrew

Bible as they represent chaotic forces.[5] While the mythological nature of Leviathan is

discernible in a few references in other parts of the Hebrew Bible (Job 3:8; Ps 74:13–14,

104:25–26; Isa 27:1), the Hebrew *liwyāṯān* (Leviathan) has been recognized as having

etymological connection with the Ugaritic *ltn*, a term for a mythological dragon in Ugaritic

literature. The mythic character of Leviathan as a sea-monster is all the more evident in Job

41 where it is extensively featured, most notably in its breathing of fire (41:10–13 [18–21]),

arousing fear among the gods (or mighty ones) (41:17 [25]), and disturbance to the waters of

the primordial abyss (41:22–24 [30–32]). Considering the larger ancient Near Eastern

mythological context, Leviathan is clearly a mythic marine monster which is closely related

to other aquatic monstrous forces in the biblical tradition.

Unlike Leviathan, Behemoth, the counterpart creature in the second divine speech, finds

no clear parallel—neither etymologically nor descriptively—in the literary-mythological

traditions of the ancient Near East. Despite the fact that the Hebrew term *behemoth* is

commonly used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to refer to "beasts" (literally the plural form

of *behemah* ("beast")), its pairing with Leviathan—a defined mythological figure—in the

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[4] Apart from the Ugaritic sea-monster Lotan/Litan—a recognized parallel of the biblical Leviathan, the latter is often associated with the Hittite sea-serpent Illuyanka and the Egyptian aquatic monster Apep. For the prehistory of Leviathan in the ancient Near East, see the discussion in Section 1.2.

[5] In the creation accounts of the ancient Near East, the primeval waters often carry mythological significance—the various cosmogonies share a notion that the world was created from chaotic cosmic waters. In echo with ancient cosmogonic myths, "sea" (יָם) // "river" (נָהָר) and "deep" (תְהוֹם) are often monstrified in the Hebrew Bible. Specifically, the three terms are used interchangeably for the cosmic waters surrounding the earth, which continually threaten the cosmos. The "sea" (יָם), which appears as a chaotic force that God subdues in the biblical tradition (e.g. Ps 74:13, 89:10 [9]; Jer 5:22; Job 26:12; Hab 3:8; Isa 50:2; Nah 1:4), finds its personified manifestation in Ugaritic myths in Yamm (*ym*), the enemy of Baal, who reflects the chaotic aspect of the primeval waters. In the Syro-Palestinian area, "sea" and "river" (נָהָר) are parallel concepts that the sea/river is viewed as dangerous chaotic waters, as reflected by the epithet of the said Ugaritc Yamm as "prince Sea, ruler River" (*zbl ym ṯpt nhr*). In fact, it is not uncommon for the two to be juxtaposed in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Hab 3:8; Nah 1:4). In the biblical tradition, while the use of "deep" (תְהוֹם) for the chaotic waters prior to creation is most evident in the creation account in Genesis 1, Ps 33:7 and Prov 8:27–29 also mention the need to restrain the primeval waters in the context of creation. Reflecting traces of mythological background, the primeval deep is at points personified in the biblical tradition (e.g. Gen 49:25; Deut 33:13; Ps 77:17 [16]); Hab 3:10), though it nowhere represents an independent hostile entity.

divine discourse, together with its perceived characterization as a monstrous figure,[6] make it all the more likely that Behemoth is also a mythic monstrous entity.[7] Furthermore, Behemoth is arguably featured as a mythological being in the Joban text with mythically-laden aspects, most palpably in the descriptions of it being made as a primordial creation (40:15, 19), receiving tribute from the mountains (40:20), and being unconcerned in a raging river (40:23).[8] The distinctness of Behemoth as a mythic being is also corroborated by the fact that the Hebrew grammatical forms referring to Behemoth in Job 40:15–23 are all masculine singular.[9] These observations prompt a majority of scholars to concur that the Hebrew term *behemoth* here is supposed to be the intensive plural of *behemah* ("beast"), which may be rendered the "Beast" par excellence.[10] Indeed, apart from the Masoretic Text (MT), a couple of textual witnesses including the Old Greek (OG), Vulgate (Vg.) and Peshitta (Syr.) suggest that Behemoth is received as a singular mythological being.[11] Represented as a primordial being (40:19) which is associated with a river (40:23), Behemoth is often taken to be a symbolization of the primordial chaos.

To sum up, while Leviathan finds its genealogy in ancient Near Eastern mythology, Behemoth represents more of a distinctive Hebrew category of mythic being. Either way, Behemoth and Leviathan in the discourse of Job 40–41 are best regarded as distinct mythic monstrous entities in nature.

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[6] The monstrous characterization of the creature is particularly palpable in Job 40:15–18, which describes Behemoth's monstrous physicality, that "his strength is in his loins, and his vigor is in the muscles of his abdomen. His appendage is firm like cedar; the sinews of his thighs are knit together. His limbs are bronze tubes, and his bones are like iron bars."

[7] In arguing for an extant monstrous pair in West Semitic tradition (that corresponds to the biblical Behemoth–Leviathan), Marvin Pope (2008) proposes that there seems to be a prototype of Behemoth (Ug. *'gl il 'tk*, "bullock of El," or "El's calf, Atik") in the Ugaritic mythological tradition, in which this creature is a companion of the sea serpent Litan (Ug. *ltn*), a counterpart of the biblical Leviathan.

[8] In particular, the terms "mountains" and "rivers" here are plausibly laid with mythological overtones.

[9] The plural term *behemoth* is typically treated as feminine singular elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, in which case it refers to "beasts" in a collective sense (Job 12:7; cf. Jer 12:4; Joel 2:20 [1:20]).

[10] As B. F. Batto, "Behemoth," *DDD*, 165 comments, "The figure suggested is a singular being of awesome proportions and possessing supernatural characteristics, hence the 'Beast' par excellence."

[11] The Vulgate and Peshitta transliterate the Hebrew term בהמות (Vg. Behemoth; Syr. ܒܗܡܘܬ) and take it to refer to a single animal. Despite the fact that the OG renders the word into a plural form, θηρία ("beasts"), the Greek word apparently refers to one single creature as indicated by the singular pronominal and verbal forms in the subsequent verses (OG–Job 40:16–24).

Monster Theory and the Joban Beasts

Having identified some mythic and monstrous aspects of the two Joban creatures, I would like to introduce contemporary monster theory[12] which, offering insights on what is commonly perceived as a "monster" across human cultures, can be a useful tool in approaching the study of Behemoth and Leviathan as monsters.

In defining a monster in the first place, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, a pioneering scholar of monster theory, advocates that monstrosity is a culturally relative concept. Rather than anyone/anything being inherently monstrous, Cohen suggests that monsters are defined and constructed from a particular perspective in a given context.[13] Precisely, monsters are constructed by humans in a particular culture to signify what they consider as ideas of otherness[14]—often in terms of the unknown, hostility, or dread.[15] As a cultural product, the monster therefore gives shape to the societal anxieties and fears held by that culture.[16] According to Timothy Beal, the monster often signifies otherness that invades one's sense of order and security—whether it be on a personal, social, or cosmic level.[17] In terms of

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[12] Brandon R. Grafius, "Text and Terror: Monster Theory and the Hebrew Bible," *CBR* 16 (2017): 37 succinctly points out that "Monster theory is not a method for reading, but more of a heuristic lens that focuses our attention on the monstrous characters of a narrative and provides some categories to aid in interpreting them." In terms of field of study, Grafius understands monster theory as straddling the fields of psychoanalysis and anthropology, whereas Mark R. Sneed, *Taming the Beast: A Reception History of Behemoth and Leviathan*, Studies of the Bible and Its Reception 12 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022), 13 considers it "a mixture of philosophy, anthropology, psychoanalysis, literary theory, and cultural studies."

[13] Accordingly, ideas of monstrosity and representation of monsters need to be examined within the intricate matrix of relations—social, cultural, and literary-historical—that produce them. See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3.

[14] Brandon R. Grafius, "Text and Terror: Monster Theory and the Hebrew Bible," *CBR* 16 (2017): 36; Maria Beville, *The Unnameable Monster in Literature and Film*, Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), 14.

[15] See Ruth Waterhouse, "*Beowulf* as Palimpsest," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 28; David D. Gilmore, *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 74.

[16] Cohen, "Monster Culture," in *Monster Theory*, 4; Beville, *The Unnameable Monster in Literature and Film*, 6.

[17] Timothy Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5.

monster theory, monsters are "paradoxical personifications of *otherness within sameness*."[18] Socio-psychologically speaking, the monster—as a human construct of otherness—is an embodiment of fear that enacts a projection (and thereby purging) of societal and cultural anxieties.[19]

In the case of Behemoth and Leviathan, as part of the cultural representation of the unknown and dreaded primordial chaos in the ancient Near East, the Joban creatures can also be understood as distinctive Hebrew constructs of otherness that give expression to the shared anxiety among people in ancient Israel. As representations of chaotic forces, Behemoth and Leviathan, along with other biblical monsters (e.g. Rahab, Tannin), signify potential threats to the order of the world in which the biblical authors (and their contemporary readers) found themselves.[20] This tension finds an echo in the so-called *Chaoskampf* motif,[21] which, as one of the "backstories" of the Hebrew Bible,[22] points to YHWH's continuing overcoming of the

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[18] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 4. According to Freud's psychoanalysis articulated in his *Das Unheimliche* (1919) (believed to be the roots of monster theory), the "uncanny" (*unheimlich*) actually emerges from a particular combination of the unfamiliar and the familiar, which harks back to what is known of old but is repressed in one's past. Based on this notion, Freud considers the monster as an "Other" insofar as it has been repressed—a "repressed otherness within the self."

[19] David Gilmore, *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1.

[20] As Chol-Gu Kang, *Behemot und Leviathan: Studien zu Komposition und Theologie von Hiob 38, 1–42, 6*, WMANT 149 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 166 concludes, "In sum, Behemoth and Leviathan symbolize the chaotic powers...in reference to the concerns of humans, above all, their history."

[21] First proposed by Herman Gunkel (1895), who refers to *Chaoskampf* as a mythic-combat theme that seems to have informed the biblical account regarding divine conflict with primordial chaos. He sees two general rubrics under this broad motif, one concerning God's defeat of a dragon (variously called Rahab, Leviathan, Behemoth, the sea-dragon (*tannin*)), and the other is related to God's subduing of the primordial sea. In particular, Gunkel traces the dragon traditions to the Babylonian mythological tradition, specifically in the creation epic *Enuma Eliš*. John Day (1985), on the other hand, argues that what have been identified as *Chaoskampf* texts in the Hebrew Bible actually reflect more of Canaanite heritage, namely, the Ugaritic material. Although it is still debatable regarding which tradition plays a larger role, it is clear that any treatment of the *Chaoskampf* motif in the Hebrew Bible will have to take into account both Canaanite and Mesopotamian influences. A more inclusive approach on this is demonstrated by the study of Frank Moore Cross (1997), who recognizes the particularities of the Babylonian, Canaanite, and Israelite *Chaoskampf* traditions while acknowledging that they share a common ancient Near Eastern phenomenon. For details, see Hermann Gunkel, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: A Religio-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*, trans. K. William Whitney (Biblical Resource Series; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of Israelite Religion* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1973).

[22] An idea borrowed from the book title of Gregory Mobley, *Return of the Chaos Monsters—and Other Backstories of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

chaos powers on behalf of his people, historically[23] and eschatologically[24]. The representation of divine confrontation with chaos in the biblical account certainly betrays the Israelites' uneasiness about threatened order and security in their perceived world. In terms of monster theory, these chaotic forces function as undesired otherness against which ancient Israelites define and affirm their selfness as the people of YHWH, who emerges victorious over all chaos.[25] In view of the larger biblical tradition and ancient Near Eastern milieu at large, Behemoth and Leviathan in the Joban context can be read as chaos monsters, that is, as constructs of otherness, which in turn enable us to reflect on how the Joban audience, namely, the post-exilic community,[26] perceived and struggled with the experience of chaos and disorientation in their historical context.

Given their perceived otherness, monsters are often thought to carry a level of supernatural aspects,[27] which readily connect them to the sphere of religion. Indeed,

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[23] Some *Chaoskampf* texts in the biblical tradition are apparently historicized that they come to represent God's victory over a historical enemy of Israel, most notably Egypt and Babylon. An obvious example can be found in Ezek 29:3–5 and 32:2–8, where the Egyptian Pharaoh is compared to a sea-dragon (*tannin*). For biblical treatment of the *Chaoskampf* motif, see the study of Day (1985), who particularly put forth the notion of "historicization of myth" in the biblical text. Cross (1973), on the other hand, tends rather to speak of "mythologization of history." On the relationship between history and myth, Safwat Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel*, FAT, 2/76 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 19 fairly comments that myth and history in the ancient Near Eastern worldview are not dichotomized but were rather "perceived in a complementary tension and a dialectic in which one informs the other."

[24] A few biblical texts (e.g. Isa 27:1; Dan 7) that involve the *Chaoskampf* tradition seem to have taken on eschatological dimensions that point to the final battle in which God will eliminate the chaos powers.

[25] According to monster theory, a monster often serves as a way for a social group to construct a picture that is the opposite of how they see themselves. As Stephen Asma observes, human societies throughout history have gone to portray monstrous others against whom we measure our own sense of identity. See Stephen Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural Histoy of Our Worst Fears* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19–50.

[26] A couple of textual clues suggest that the book of Job be dated to no earlier than the sixth century BCE. First, the references to "Chaldeans" (1:17) and "Sabaeans" (1:15) in the Prologue of the book reflect the socio-political realities in the region of southern Edom and northern Arabia around the middle of the sixth century. Besides, the figure of "the Adversary" with the definite article appears elsewhere in the Bible only in Zech 3:1–2, a text from the late sixth century BCE. In fact, the monotheistic form taken by the theological dualism in Job may be a result of Persian influence. Furthermore, the mention of "iron stylus" and "lead" in Job 19:23–24 might be an indicator of a Persian period date, as the use of lead inlay for inscription (exemplified by the Behistun inscription) is first attested in the Persian period. Lastly, the affinities between the book of Job and the book of Tobit (composed in the late third or early second century BCE) and those between Job and Deutero–Isaiah (scholars consensually date it to around the mid-sixth century BCE, probably before 539 BCE) seem to confirm a late date for Job, with the earliest in the Persian period. As concluded by Seow (2013, 45), "the book is most at home between the very late sixth and the first half of the fifth centuty and in Yehud." See also the comments of W. F. Albright on the dating of the book (the late sixth or early fifth century BCE) in his review of *Introduction to the Old Testament* by Robert H. Pfeiffer in *JBL* 61 (1942): 123–24.

[27] See Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, "Introduction: A Genealogy of Monster Theory," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 5–8.

etymologically speaking, the word "monster" plausibly originates in religious contexts in which monsters exist to disclose divine message. Precisely, the word "monster" is derived from the Latin *monstrum*, which medieval scholars relate to the verbs *monstrare* ("to show, reveal") and *monere* ("to warn, portend")[28]—both of which bespeak the portentous nature of the monster. As Stephen Asma explains, the *monstrum* for ancient people refers to a kind of omen, a divine portent that reveals the will or judgment of God or the gods.[29] An echo is also heard from Bettina Bildhaur and Robert Mills, who comment that "in the context of medieval Christianity, monstrosity equally provided a way of mediating the middle ground between human and divine."[30] It is worth noting that this sort of divine agency is also reflected in the function of Behemoth and Leviathan, which constitute the climax of the divine revelation in the Joban context. Just as the *monstrum* is "a message that breaks into this world from the realm of the divine,"[31] the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan, as part of the divine speech in the book of Job, somehow mediate the divine truth in their embodiment of otherness. In accord with medieval interpretation of the monster, Behemoth and Leviathan come to serve as agents of divine revelation with all their perceived monstrosity.[32]

As already hinted by its capacity to relay divine message, the monster is, according to monster theory, an ambivalent being of otherness that evokes fear and desire simultaneously. By highlighting the fact that monsters often point to "other worlds" (e.g. the afterlife,

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[28] Timothy Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 6–7.
[29] Asma, *On Monsters*, 13.
[30] Bettina Bildhaur and Robert Mills, "Introduction: Conceptualizing the Monstrous," in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhaur and Robert Mills (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 14.
[31] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 7.
[32] Indeed, this simultaneously monstrous-divine aspect is commonly perceivable in the representation of ancient Near Eastern monsters, who have long been closely associated with divinity. While some monsters simply take on aspects of the divine, other serve certain divine figures who assign them with responsibilities over natural phenomena. According to Joan Goodnick Westenholz (ed.), *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 14, these monsters serve as "agents and executors of the will of the gods" in the universe, as befits medieval interpretation of the *monstrum*. For a discussion on the role of monsters in ancient Mesopotamia, see Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Some Demons of Time and Their Functions in Mesopotamian Iconography," in *Die Welt der Götterbilder*, ed. Hermann Spieckermann and Brigitte Groneberg (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 376; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007).

spiritual domains, sublime existence[33], etc.), Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock explains from the

perspective of human psychology that fearsome monsters are paradoxically appealing with

their connection to what we deeply desire for as finite human beings.[34] In putting forth the

statement "*fear of the monster is really a kind of desire*" as his sixth thesis for monster theory,

Cohen asserts that monsters are irreducible otherness that terrify and fascinate at the same

time; the body of the monster brings to expression both human fear and desire.[35]

Such ambivalence is also palpable in the depictions and characterizations of the Joban

beasts in the book of Job, which David Bernat aptly describes as simultaneously eliciting

"shock and awe."[36] While both Behemoth and Leviathan possess tangibly fearsome features,

they are undoubtedly sublime creatures (40:19; 41:26 [34]) in the Joban context of divine

encounter, not least in terms of their physical spectacularity (e.g. 40:16–18; 41:4 [12], 7–9

[15–17]). In fact, Rudolph Otto, in *The Idea of the Holy* (*Das Heilige*, 1917)[37], characterizes

religious experience as an encounter with the *mysterium tremendum*, a mysterious Otherness

that elicits a vertigo-like combination of both fear and desire, repulsion and attraction.[38]

Based on Otto's idea, Beal proposes further that the monster—as an Other—can be

characterized as *monstrum tremendum*, something which is simultaneously awful and

awesome in the perception of the viewer.[39] Given the perceived ambivalence of Behemoth

and Leviathan with reference to the divine in the biblical tradition, the Joban creatures befit

monster theory which would unveil deeper implications that underlie their paradox as

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[33] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1998), 203 relates that it is the feeling of "Sublimity" the monster evokes in us that "gives us simultaneous pleasure and displeasure: it gives us pleasure by indicating the true, incomparable greatness of Sublimity, surpassing every possible phenomenal, empirical experience."

[34] Weinstock, "Introduction: A Genealogy of Monster Theory," 20.

[35] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory*, 16–17. Cf. Asma, *On Monsters*, 184; Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 2–3.

[36] David Bernat, "Biblical *Wasfs* Beyond Song of Songs," *JSOT* 28/3 (2004): 336.

[37] Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (2nd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1950).

[38] Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 28. Otto's essay has had tremendous influence on studies of horror as religious experience. See, e.g., S. L. Varnado, *Haunted Presence: The Numinous in Gothic Fiction* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1987).

[39] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 7–8.

sublime chaos monsters.

With this kind of ambivalence comes liminality—a defining characteristic of monsters which gives them the power to bridge (or to blur) various distinct species or identities. Being ambiguous in themselves, monsters escape categorical definition and constantly challenge the stability of presumed classificatory systems.[40] Monsters traverse boundaries; they even come to redefine ones that would induce new meanings and ramifications.[41] Frequently characterized by pronounced hybridity which is perceivably unnatural and eerie, the monster reveals itself in a dangerous, suspended form that defies classification and integration according to preexisting conceptual systems.[42] As David Gilmore comments, monsters come to "expose the radical permeability and artificiality of all our classificatory boundaries."[43] As boundary crossers, monsters often display representation of ambiguous species and "false resemblance" to other known creatures.[44] Indeed, categorical indeterminacy is arguably one of the most prominent characteristics of Behemoth and Leviathan in the biblical text. Though the two Joban beasts are often interpreted by modern commentators as the hippopotamus and the crocodile,[45] a close reading of the text would entail that they are evidently not featured as distinct animal species—even their compositions might have been modeled upon known creatures. Just as Asa Mittman theorizes that the terrifying power of the monster lies in its

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[40] Film critics C. J. Clover and V. Dika note that audience identification among the characters of hero, victim, and monster in a narrative is often blurred and shifting, which result in unstable categories and ambiguous sympathies. See C. J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 1992), 53–63; V. Dika, *Games of Terror:* Halloween, Friday the 13th*, and the Films of the Stalker Cycle* (Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 19–22.

[41] Regarding the meaning-potential of monsters, Bildhaur and Mills comment, "Monsters...are not meaningless but meaning-laden. The monstrous is constitutive, producing the contours of both bodies that matter...and, ostensibly, bodies that do not...Monstrosity also demarcates segments of space...and division of time." See Bildhaur and Mills, "Introduction: Conceptualizing the Monstrous," 2.

[42] In putting forth his third thesis, "*the monster is the harbinger of category crisis*," for monster theory, Cohen states that monsters tend to refuse to participate in the classificatory "order of things;" the monster always "escapes" as it refutes easy categorization. The unyielding hybridity of monsters, as he explains, manifests itself in its "externally incoherent bodies" that "resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration." See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 6.

[43] Gilmore, *Monsters*, 19.

[44] Marie Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[45] First proposed by Samuel Bochart (*Hierozoicon* 2 [1663], cols. 753–69) in the seventeenth century, the identifications of Behemoth and Leviathan with the hippopotamus and the crocodile respectively has gained popularity among scholars in the modern age.

unsettling of established cognitive categories and interpretive strategies, and defines the

monstrous as "that which creates a sense of vertigo, that which calls into question our

epistemological worldview,"[46] Behemoth and Leviathan—with all their mythic

character—are at best considered as in-between creatures, a "non-category" that falls into the

definition of a terrifying "monster." With the power to frustrate or even nullify our

epistemological strategies for making sense of the world, Behemoth and Leviathan can be

viewed as liminal monsters who, as Noël Carroll phrases it, are "not only physically

frightening, but also cognitively threatening."[47]

Read in the Joban context, the liminal nature of Behemoth and Leviathan enables the two

monsters to serve as a bridge between YHWH and Job in the last part of the book. In accord

with monster theory which advocates a blurred distinction between the monster and the

divine/hero in a narrative,[48] Behemoth and Leviathan—as liminal monstrous symbols—have

the capacity to signify both the divine and the protagonist in the divine speech. While their

perceived otherness comes to represent the divine as the wholly Other, their createdness and

monstrous bodies seem to invoke the bodily infliction and monstrous suffering of Job as a

mortal creature.[49] In fact, some scholars perceive their felt monstrosity as a mirror of Job's

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[46] Asa Simon Mittman, "Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster Studies," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman (Surrey, U.K.: Ashgate, 2013), 8.

[47] Noël Carroll, "The Nature of Horror," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1): 56. In another work, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (1990), Carroll avers that monsters are entities that pose threats and elicit feelings of disgust as a result of "impurity"—an idea introduced by Mary Douglas—which is associated with categorical ambiguity. See Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 43.

[48] Fluidity and ambiguity in the perception of identity is indeed one of the most insightful aspects that monster theory would bring to the understanding of a monster narrative, especially in ancient Near Eastern literary-mythological traditions. In an examination of various *Chaoskampf* myths from ancient Near Eastern cultures, Safwat Marzouk notes that there is a significant level of identity overlapping between the monster and hero, order and chaos, benevolent and destructive deities, etc. In *Enuma Elish*, for example, the monstrous Tiamat is usually thought of as the disruptor of the cosmos, but she is also the mother in the sense that the universe is created through her body. While Marduk is extolled as an awesome deity who ultimately brings peace and order to Babylon, he is also the one who wields floods, tempests, and a whirlwind—all of which are disruptors of the natural order. With the blurring of distinction of "type-figures," monster theory allows us to see how traditional, stereotyped identifications can be more complicated and ambiguous than it looks on the surface.

[49] Noting the theological implications of the beasts' embodiments, Mark R. Sneed, *Taming the Beast: A Reception History of Behemoth and Leviathan*, Studies of the Bible and Its Reception 12 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022), 87–88 remarks, "Job has been seeking God's presence all throughout the debate with the friends. While he does appear in the whirlwind, a personal element is needed, and that is where Behemoth and

character as a daring, rebellious sufferer.[50] As both God and Job can be identified with their signified otherness (albeit in different ways), the liminal Joban monsters become the perfect means to bring the two together towards the end of the narrative.

Even in a preliminary manner, the above remarks should suffice in qualifying the two Joban beasts as monsters, and showing how reading them as monsters can point us to some profound truths underlying their perceived monstrosity. Having related monster theory to Behemoth and Leviathan, I consider it apt to turn here to reflect on reception history as a discipline before engaging with their receptions.

Reception History as a Research Discipline

As opposed to traditional criticism in general, the reception study of Behemoth and Leviathan in this research is rooted in the broader scholarship of biblical reception history[51], a a substantially growing discipline within the field of biblical studies for the past decades.[52] It is essentially built on the premise that meanings are not confined to the texts themselves, but are produced in history and should be assessed in terms of reception. Instead of well-defined objects to be studied, meanings/interpretations of a text are regarded as relational rather than essential as they are generated in the ongoing, dynamic encounter between readers and the text(s). As part of the broader hermeneutic trend that marks the shift in emphasis from text-centered methodology[53] to reader-oriented approach[54], reception study is deemed by

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Leviathan come in. They are embodied like him. Job can actually see them, unlike God, at least in his imagination as they are described in such detail...Job has indeed encountered God in bodily form!"

[50] E.g. Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985); Samuel E. Balentine, *Job*, SHBC (Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys, 2006).

[51] As Timothy Beal, "Reception History and Beyond: Towards the Cultural History of Scriptures," *Biblical Interpretation* 19 (2011): 359 concisely encapsulates, "The reception history of the Bible is concerned, most basically, with the history of the reception of biblical texts, stories, images, and characters through the centuries in the form of citation, interpretation, reading, revision, adaptation, and influence."

[52] Biblical reception history has noticeably been gaining momentum as a promising field of study in biblical scholarship for the past few decades. Characterized by its capacity for pluralistic methodology, it has remarkably contributed to the promotion of cross-disciplinary conversation between biblical scholarship and other fields of study.

[53] Broadly speaking, this encompasses a variety of exegetical methods that seek to locate the meaning of

some as revolutionary in the field of biblical studies in its potential to explore diverse ways and possibilities of engaging the biblical material, ancient and modern.

The notion of what is commonly called "reception history" may find its philosophical root in the idea of *Wirkungsgeschichte* (often translated as "effective history") first propounded by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) in his *Truth and Method* (*Warheit und Methode*, 1960). As Gadamer affirms the historical situatedness of every human subject, he theorizes that whenever a human reads a text, he or she is always (and indeed inevitably) bringing his or her anticipations[55]—which Gadamer calls precisely as "prejudices" (*Vorurteile*)—that are in fact a prerequisite for any interpretation to be effected. He further conceives the picture of interpretation or understanding as "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*),[56] that is, the engagement of the interpreter's horizon with the horizon of the text with some necessary adaptation or rehabilitation of held prejudices.[57] With engagement being a central notion in his hermeneutics, Gadamer invites readers who come to interpretation to be aware of their own historical situatedness. In emphasizing the

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biblical texts in their historical situatedness (assuming that the meaning is embedded in the texts themselves), including the so-called historical-critical approaches (i.e. source criticism, form criticism, tradition criticism, redaction criticism, textual criticism) and literary-critical approaches (e.g. New Criticism, structuralism, narrative criticism, etc.).

[54] Rather than seeing the text alone as the meaning-carrier, reader-oriented approach embraces the role of the reader in dominating, or at least playing a part, in the process of meaning generation. Under the umbrella branch of reader-response criticism, it has spawned a great variety of interpretive strategies that affirm the role and importance of not only readers in general but also specific reader-groups in the enterprise of biblical interpretation.

[55] Gadamer's notion of anticipations go back to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), who sees that all our experience is imbued with meaning subjectively informed by a web of anticipations that form our horizons. See Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie der Intersubjektivität. Texte aus dem Nachlass* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).

[56] To Gadamer, "horizon" describes our situatedness in the world, and the act of understanding is possible only when one fuses his/her own horizon into the historical horizon. Regarding this fusion of horizons, he illustrates:

> When our historical consciousness places itself within historical horizons, this does not entail passing into alien worlds unconnected in any way with our own, but together they constitute the one great horizon that moves from within and, beyond the frontiers of the present, embraces the historical depths of our self-consciousness. It is, in fact, a single horizon that embraces everything contained in historical consciousness. (Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming [New York: Continuum, 1975], 271)

[57] As Gadamer's precursor, Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) uses the notion of "horizon" (Horizontes) to denote what a person knows, has experienced, or has learned. In terms of his existentialist philosophy, a person's horizon signfies one's own being, and acknowledgment of one's horizons—including his/her prejudices—is an active component of "coming-to-oneself" (*Jemeinigkeit*) that makes understanding possible. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco, Calif: HarperSanFrancisco, 1962).

involvement of human subjectivity in a work's "effective history," Gadamer's reception

theory is basically a challenge to the claim of historical objectivity which only concerns the

historical horizon of a given text as regards its interpretation.[58] As Beal comments,

Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte* is essentially "not a historical narrative[59] but a conception of

subjective history."[60]

Appropriating Gadamer's concept of "horizon" in his seminal *Toward an Aesthetic*

Reception (1978)[61], Hans Robert Jauss articulates literary history as a history of

hermeneutical fusions of horizons, which is itself a continually developing, dynamic process

of production and reception. According to Jauss, "literature and art only obtain a history that

has the character of a process when the succession of works is mediated not only through the

producing subject, but also through the consuming subject—through the interaction of author

and public."[62] Precisely, Jauss's reception theory seeks to mediate between, on the one hand,

viewing literature as historical product, and, on the other hand, treating it as trans-historical

aesthetic work whose meaning is found in the fusions of horizons by subsequent readers.[63]

The meaning of a piece of literature, therefore, does not essentially reside in the historical

situatedness of its production, but it also depends on the historical situatedness of readers in

an ongoing process of reception. Understanding reception as a process (rather than as a fact),

Jauss ascribes the potential meaning of a text neither to the text itself nor to the reader

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[58] Ulrich Luz, "The Contribution of Reception History to a Theology of the New Testament," in *The Nature of New Testament Theology: Essays in Honour of Robert Morgan*, ed. C. Rowland, C. M. Tuckett, and R. Morgan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 124–25.

[59] This is particularly in response to a common misconception of Gadamer's *Wirkungsgechichte* as "history of effects or impacts," which simply has something to do with offering historical narratives of the effects or impacts of biblical texts through time.

[60] Beal, "Reception History and Beyond," 369.

[61] Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982). See also Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

[62] Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, 15.

[63] In fact, what sparked Jauss's interest in literary reception was the relationship between literature and history, which was growingly compartmentalized in his time. One of his stated goals is to revive the study of literature by restoring the historical dimension to the discipline, as conveyed by his lecture's title, "Literary history as a provocation for literary scholarship." See Robert C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London/New Yourk: Methuen, 1984), 53–54.

inherently, but locates it in the dialectic relationship between the two.

The notion that reception is a process indeed finds an echo in the reading theory by Wolfgang Iser, who sees meaning induced in the act of reading as "an effect to be experienced," not an "object to be defined."[64] Focusing on the micro-mechanism of response (*Wirkung*), Iser regards the text as a configuration embedded with potential meaning(s) that must be actualized or concretized by the reader.[65] Specifically, he uses the concept of "wandering viewpoint"[66] to illustrate the potential multiplicity of meanings that are unformulated, but nevertheless imparted in the text. With the "wandering" imagery, Iser apparently affirms the reader's subjectivity in the way he or she is to concretize the meaning of a text under the guidance of the textual aspects.[67] In other words, the text by no means has a claim on absolute meaning exclusively bound by its own historical situatedness.[68] As articulated by Brook Thomas, while the text displays historically conditioned elements, it "registers and structures them in such a way as to make possible the readers' imaginative transformations and refashionings of them."[69] Considering the fact that reception is an event to be experienced—through which meanings are generated, it becomes necessary to attend not only to the historical contingency of the text but also that of the reader/interpreter, which comes to inform the latter's subjectivity.

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[64] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 10.

[65] Iser's notion of concretization of a text's meaning may find its precursor in Roman Ingarden's theory of cognition of the literary work, which refers to concretization as the reader's initiative to fill in a place of indeterminacy, often marked by what he terms "schematized aspects" in the text. See Roman Ingarden, *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, trans. Ruth Ann Crowly and Kenneth R. Olsen (Evanston, III.: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 50–53.

[66] Iser, *The Act of Reading*, 118. According to Iser, we are in an ongoing process of perceiving and evaluating the potential meanings in the act of reading. Continuously adjusting our expectations against our knowledge, we are actually "travelling through the text" with a wandering viewpoint that "unfolds the multiplicity of interconnecting perspectives."

[67] Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 42–43 notes that it is "the very subjectivity that characterizes the interpreter...Subjectivity is in fact the condition of all understanding."

[68] Viewing meaning as essentially residing in the text reflects the tendency of Foundationalism, which, according to F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "presumes that the meaning of texts is self-referential, essential, and independent of the subjectivity of the interpreter." See the discussion of F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, "Rethinking Historical Criticism," *Biblical Interpretation* 7 (1999): 241–45.

[69] Brook Thomas, "New Historicism," in *The New Historicism*, ed. Harold A. Veeser (London: Routledge, 1989), 210.

Regarding the subjective nature of biblical reception, Brennan Breed takes a more radical position in conceptualizing that the entire history of biblical texts—including its compositional stages—is reception history.[70] While reception historians typically anchor themselves to the so-called original text as the starting point and view what came later as receptions,[71] Breed challenges the legitimacy of this dividing line by revealing the constructed nature of known texts and contexts. For him, there is no such thing as the pristine, original text (*Urtext*) as is often assumed by historical critics; rather, biblical texts already existed in pluriformity from the very beginning.[72] Advocating a "non-essentialist ontology of biblical texts," Breed views biblical texts as processes from the onset of their history.[73] In a nutshell, biblical texts have no defined beginning that one can anchor as the starting point for their reception history; rather, the biblical texts that are known to us are already receptions of some sort of earlier texts or traditions.[74]

Not only does biblical reception hardly find an anchored beginning, but it apparently sees no end too—as long as there are readers who still or once again respond to the biblical

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[70] Brennan Breed, "Nomadology of the Bible," in *Biblical Reception*, eds. Cheryl Exum and David Clines (England: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012), 304.

[71] Following Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida, Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000) uses the term *Nachleben* ("afterlife") for post-biblical receptions. Cf. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in *Illuminations* (ed. Hannah Arendt; trans. Harry Zohn; New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1968), 69–82; Jacques Derrida, "Des tours des Babel," in vol. 1 of *Psyche: Inventions of the Other* (ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenburg; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 191–225.

[72] What became known as the *Urtext* theory was advocated by Paul de Lagarde (1863), who proposed that all manuscripts of MT went back to one single source, that is, the original form of the biblical text. With an opposing opinion, Paul Kahle (1915) claimed that the textual witnesses known to us did not originate in a single act of translation but developed from a textual plurality. See the discussion of Emanuel Tov, "The Interpretative Significance of a Fixed Text and Canon of the Hebrew and the Greek Bible," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø, vol. 1, *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 51–52.

[73] See Brennan W. Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 65–74. He particularly critiques those who attempt to stabilize the biblical text through a form of essentialism (realists/nominalists). Conversely, drawing on Gilles Deleuze's imagery, Breed suggests that the biblical text be studied as an "object-projectile," for which movement and variation constitutes a necessary quality (116–17).

[74] An echo of this is heard in the questioning of James Harding, "What is Reception History, and What Happens to You if You Do It?," in *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice*, ed. Emma England and William John Lyons (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 35, "But can a distinction...between the study of the texts in their original historical contexts and their subsequent history of reception actually be maintained? And why should the former be essentialized as the point of coherence for the discipline?"

material. Conceptually analogous to the notion of "wandering viewpoint" by Iser, Breed's "nomadic reception history" utilizes the imagery of a nomad—a wanderer who has no point of origin and destination—to characterize the "wandering" nature of biblical reception. In echo with the concept of concretization of meaning proposed by reader-response theorists, Breed pictures biblical reception in terms of actualization of meaning-potentialities in the biblical text through the ever-changing context. In this he draws on Gilles Deleuze's distinction of ideas between the "actual" and the "virtual,"[75] with the latter constituting an assemblage of multiplicity within which no hierarchized relations are assumed. Potentialities of meaning are therefore not judged or assessed according to a presumed hierarchy, but instead are juxtaposed, examined, and accounted for in terms of context. The task of the reception historian is, according to Breed, not quite a tracing of reception in relation to an origin, but rather a mapping of its wanderings in relation to contexts across history. As Breed summarizes, a reception study seeks to "demonstrate the diversity of capacities, organize them according to the immanent potentialities actualized by various individuals and communities over time, and rewrite our understanding of the biblical text."[76] Biblical reception history is, in this sense, analogous to an intricate network in which biblical texts, meanings and contexts form multiple yet interconnected roots and nodes, just like the idea of rhizomes—with no beginning and end—by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guatarri.[77]

Considering the dynamics involved in biblical reception, meaning or significance as embraced by particular readers or reader-community is best regarded as relational and non-essential.[78] The interpretive nature of meaning points us to the fact that there is no such

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[75] Instead of conceptualizing biblical meaning in the commonly used "possible/real" category, Gilles Deleuze advocates thinking of it in terms of the "actual" and "virtual," with the latter signifying the potentialities and capacities of the text as real. See Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (trans. Paul Patton; New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 212, 239–45.

[76] Breed, *Nomadic Text*, 141.

[77] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 1–25. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*" (25).

[78] Building on the theory of F. de Saussure, deconstructionist theorists (e.g. Jacques Derrida) relate the non-essential nature of meaning in terms of dynamics of signification. Given that there is no real distinction

thing as inherently-given meaning. As Sheldon Pollock reflects, "what a text means can never be anything but what the text has been taken to mean by the people who have read it."[79] He further comments that "every reading is evidence of human consciousness activated by the text in its search to make sense of it,"[80] and "making sense of texts is making sense of life."[81] In other words, how human readers come to interpret a text is a reflection of the various ways and perspectives they attempt to interpret the world in which they find themselves. Since all interpretations are "embodiments of human consciousness," judging them in terms of "authority/correctness" makes no sense given their real, historical existence[82]—not to mention the question of who arbitrates the criteria. There can be no such thing as an incorrect interpretation in an absolute sense. As Elizabeth Robar claims, "there is no systematic method that guarantees the 'proper' interpretation of a text."[83] Given its nature of embracing plurality and understanding, reception history as a discipline can enlarge our capacity for diversity and deepen our sympathy and respect for the ways other people have perceived their life and the world—especially those that are different from ours.

Mapping the Monsters' Trajectories with an Interpretive Focus

Having established the applicability of monster theory to the Joban beasts and the theoretical grounds of reception history as a discipline, it should become clear that while the latter legitimates all interpretations and receptions as part of a biblical reception history,[84] the

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between signifiers and signifieds (as the signified was once a signifier, and vice versa), meaning or significance, as a product of an interaction of signifiers, is necessarily multifaceted and in a state of flux, and hence, non-essential. For more on deconstruction theory, see Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: an Introduction* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

[79] Sheldon Pollock, "Philology in Three Dimensions," *Postmedieval* 5 (2014): 410.

[80] Pollock, "Philology in Three Dimensions," 407.

[81] Pollock, "Philology in Three Dimensions," 399.

[82] Pollock, "Philology in Three Dimensions," 406.

[83] Elizabeth Robar, "Linguistics, Philogy, and the Biblical Text," *Journal for Semitics* 29 (2) (2020): 20.

[84] C. L. Seow, "Reflections on the History of Consequences: The Case of Job," in *Method Matters: Essays on the Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David L. Peterson* (ed. Joel M. LeMon and Ken Harold Richards; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 563 coins reception history of the Bible as "history of consequences" to encompass the "impact and effects" of "all types of engagements of and encounters with the

former serves to provide an interpretive lens through which to analyze the reception of the category of monster—with Behemoth and Leviathan being the subject of my investigation.

As cultural representations of monstrosity, the biblical Behemoth and Leviathan have not only spawned a reservoir of interpretations that comes in the form of text, but they also have bred a kaleidoscopic spectrum of receptions in other material and cultural media throughout history. As is conceived by Beal, a biblical reception history is, in effect, a cultural history of biblical texts and traditions, which finds expression in a great variety of cultural products.[85] In emphasizing the cultural nature of biblical reception, Mieke Bal frames meanings and interpretations in terms of "culturally-coded signs" that are embedded in a piece of work.[86] In embracing the broadest possible definition of interpretation, this research would delve into the receptions of Behemoth and Leviathan in a number of cultural forms—including text, visual art, literature, film—and examines how these receptions addressed particular social groups in their socio-historical cultural contexts.

Given the socio-psychological insights it offers, monster theory is a good companion to a reception study of monsters like Behemoth and Leviathan. Rather than a presupposed set of procedures to be followed, monster theory is more of a heuristic lens through which one comes to assess the social implications of monstrosity as a culture-specific notion. Indeed, according to monster theory, the monster as "*otherness within the self*" often betrays some truths—even that which we tend to deny—about our human culture.[87] As the monster that a culture constructs somehow serves as a mirror of the culture itself, it makes sense for Cohen

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Bible."

[85] Beal, "Reception History and Beyond," 371 particularly advocates "conceiving of biblical texts, the Bible, and the biblical as discursive objects that are continually generated and regenerated within particular cultural contexts in relation to complex genealogies of meaning that are themselves culturally produced."

[86] Mieke Bal, "Reading Art?," in *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings* (ed. Griselda Pollock; New York: Routledge, 1996), 25–42. Bal's concept of "culturally-coded signs" may actually find an echo in Michel Foucault's notion of "historically-imprinted body," according to which ideas come to find expression in bodies and objects with historically-prescribed meanings. See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (ed. Donald F. Bouchard; trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon; Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1977), 76–100.

[87] Grafius, *Reading the Bible with Horror*, 30–31.

to note that reading the monster is actually learning about the culture to which it belongs.[88]

When informed by insights from monster theory, a reception history of the biblical monsters Behemoth and Leviathan would shed light on the socio-historical cultural concerns of various social groups—ranging from ancient Israelites to later interpreters, in addition to the implications of monstrosity behind each interpretative tradition.

Whereas a reception study of Behemoth and Leviathan aims to do a mapping of the Joban monsters "horizontally" (in terms of meaning across history), monster theory is an analytical tool that comes "vertically" to identify the interpretive drives (socio-historical, religio-theological, political-ideological, etc.) behind particular readings and receptions of the monsters. Rather than cataloging all available receptions (which is an impossible task), applying a theoretical framework to the reception study allows for the tracing of particular interpretive trends, as well as possible driving forces and factors that motivate those trends.[89] Taking into consideration both the multiplicity and contextual situatedness of receptions, the *Wirkungsgeschichtlich* study of Behemoth and Leviathan can ensure a comprehensive analysis with an interpretive focus, or, in Katherine Low's terms, "balance the general with the specific."[90]

As a final note, in mapping the trajectories of the Joban monsters, this reception study will be presented in a bipartite structure, with the first part focusing on the biblical tradition of Behemoth and Leviathan itself as first-grade reception, and the second part being committed to investigating post-biblical interpretations as second-grade reception.

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[88] Cohen, "Monster Culture," 3–4.

[89] Given the vast amount of material throughout history, biblical scholars usually, as Katherine Low points out, seek to understand the interpretive gaps, concerns, and ideas that have inspired post-biblical generations to interpret the text in the respective historical, socio-political and religious contexts. To achieve this purpose, scholars who engage in biblical reception history tend to use a secondary guiding principle, or methodological lens, to select, analyze, and organize relevant material. See Katherine Low, *The Bible, Gender, and Reception History: the Case of Job's Wife* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 12.

[90] This is indeed what Low (2013, 12) points out as the dilemma that a biblical scholar who works on a reception history often faces. As she notes, "One single volume of reception history might be able to catalog and describe all post-biblical interpretations of a biblical text, but it would lack depth to do so. On the other hand, to focus on one particular post-biblical interpretation of a biblical text might not allow for the kinds of comparative social, historical, and economic factors that can help put the interpretation in context."

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 1 kickstarts the Part I section by situating the biblical tradition of Behemoth and Leviathan in a broader historical time frame and cultural horizon. Specifically, this chapter examines the textual and iconographic attestations of primordial monsters and monstrous representation across the ancient Near East which are related to the Joban creatures. In so doing, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that the biblical Behemoth and Leviathan find their prehistory in earlier traditions in the ancient Near East. It also discusses how monster theory can inform the paradoxical nature of these ancient Near Eastern monsters—including Behemoth and Leviathan—as they signify both the divine and monstrous chaos in the respective traditions.

Having established a culturally grounded view of the Joban creatures, Chapter 2 is devoted to a close reading of the biblical text in Job 40–41 where Behemoth and Leviathan are featured extensively. With other biblical and extra-biblical material in view, this chapter will focus on explicating the monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan as revealed in the biblical account. With insights from monster theory, it seeks to examine how the representations of Behemoth and Leviathan as part of the divine speech in the book of Job convey the paradox of monstrous otherness that comes to blur the boundary between the monster, the divine, and humanity.

Chapter 3 attempts to spell out the implications of the monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan in the literary context of the book of Job from the perspective of post-exilic Israelites, the primary reader of the book. Methodologically speaking, the study is focused on three main themes, namely, the monster as representation of chaos, the monster as rhetoric of trauma, and the monster as a marker of social identity. Through the lens of monster theory with insights from trauma studies, this chapter probes into how the monstrosities signified by Behemoth and Leviathan in the book function as projected otherness that paradoxically

reflects the "selfness" of the Joban audience. In particular, the study will address the theological and socio-historical implications of the Joban monsters for the post-exilic Israelite community.

Chapter 4 opens the Part II section which is committed to post-biblical interpretations and receptions of Behemoth and Leviathan. Devoted to the study of Jewish material, this chapter explores the ways in which Behemoth and Leviathan are interpreted and received in post-biblical Jewish traditions. Apart from related texts from early Judaism, rabbinic literature and medieval Jewish work, iconographic representations of the two creatures from Hebrew manuscripts, synagogue decorations, and religious objects are also addressed. With the lens of monster theory, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how the Joban beasts come to be paradoxical monsters that are both fearsome and desirable in Jewish tradition, and how these monstrous creatures communicate messianic hope that addresses socio-historical cultural concerns of Jewish communities in an ongoing process of identity construction.

Chapter 5 is devoted to a study of post-biblical Christian interpretations and receptions of Behemoth and Leviathan. As in the case of Jewish reception, both textual and iconographic material are examined. Based on the reception of the ecclesiastical Greek Bible, early Christian traditions tend to reduce the Behemoth–Leviathan pair to one entity (Leviathan) that signifies the Devil/Satan and the epitome of evilness—only at a later time Behemoth began to be addressed as a monstrous entity along with Leviathan. In examining a number of Christian interpreters who came to explicate the theological implications of the Joban beasts, this chapter seeks to map out their reception history from early Christianity to the dawn of Enlightenment. The study concludes by relating how monster theory informs Christian receptions of the Joban monsters in terms of otherness, and Christian uses of them as embodiments of difference which are in effect reinforcers of sameness paradoxically.

As a concluding chapter for this research, Chapter 6 brings the period of investigation to the modern era, in which receptions of Behemoth and Leviathan are not confined to the

sphere of religion but they also leave traces in non-religious contexts, not least in cultural media such as visual art, literature, and film. In their capacity to take up more of political implications in the modern world, Behemoth and Leviathan have been manifesting themselves as malleable and multivalent symbols of monstrosity. This study is focused specifically on four pieces of modern work that have received attention in the reception scholarship of the Joban beasts, namely, Thomas Hobbes's political treatises *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*, William Blake's artistic portrayals of the two beasts, Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* (or *The Whale*), and the relatively recent Russian movie *Leviathan* (Andrey Zvyagintsev, 2014). With the lens of monster theory, the study seeks to investigate how the Joban monsters came to convey notions of otherness in the respective contexts, and how their receptions in modernity continue to reflect the paradox of monstrosity that is capable to bridge various identities.

CHAPTER 1

THE MONSTER AS THE DIVINE–DEMONIC PHANTOM:
THE PREHISTORY OF BEHEMOTH AND LEVIATHAN IN THE ANCIENT NEAR
EAST

This chapter attempts to relate the biblical Behemoth and Leviathan as part of the

broader cultural history in the ancient Near East. Through an examination of primordial

monsters and monstrous representations across ancient Near Eastern cultures—including

those of Egypt, Canaan, Anatolia, Mesopotamia—which are related to the Joban creatures, it

seeks to demonstrate that the biblical traditions of Behemoth and Leviathan, in all their

uniqueness, find their prehistory in their cultural antecedents in the region which were

commonly known to biblical writers. With monster theory as an interpretive lens, the study

also discusses how these ancient Near Eastern monsters—including Behemoth and

Leviathan—come to be ambivalent monstrous embodiments that signify both chaotic powers

and the divine in the respective traditions.

1.1   Cultural Manifestations of Behemoth in the Ancient Near East

1.1.1 Etymology of Behemoth

There seems to be no easy solution to the question about the etymological origin of the

Hebrew word *behemoth* (בְּהֵמוֹת). While some scholars identify Behemoth as a natural animal

by suggesting that the Hebrew term is a Hebraized form of an Egyptian compound word

pʾ–iḥ–mw, "ox of the water" (supposed to be rendered as *p–ehe–mou(t)* in Coptic), others, by

referring to certain Arabic dialects that designate the hippopotamus as "water ox," attempt to

justify the hypothesis of Behemoth being a hippopotamus.[91] However, these etymological

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[91] Ferdinand Hitzig, *Das Buch Hiob* (Leipzig/Heidelberg: C. F. Winter, 1874), 298–99; Bernhard Duhm, *Das Buch Hiob* (KHC; Tübingen: Mohr, 1897), 196; Gustav Hölscher, *Das Buch Hiob* (HAT; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1937), 99; Georg Fohrer, *Das Buch Hiob* (KAT, 16; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus/Gerd

proposals are not supported by sound linguistic and textual evidence so far. First of all, the

hypothetical words— *p ʾ–iḥ–mw / p–ehe–mou(t)* —exist neither in Egyptian nor in Coptic. In

addition, neither the combination of *p ʾ–iḥ–mw*, "that one, water ox," nor even that of *iḥ–mw*,

"water ox," is ever attested in Egyptian literature (except individual elements of the

hypothetical words).[92] Moreover, *db*, the common Egyptian term for the hippopotamus, does

not show any resemblance to the word Behemoth nor does it have anying to do with a water

ox.

Available linguistic and textual sources do not seem to support a direct linkage between

Behemoth and the hippopotamus. In fact, no extrabiblical references in the ancient Near East

have been found that relate directly to the figure of Behemoth (apart from later Jewish and

Christian literature which are clearly derived from the biblical tradition).[93] Even so, the

identification of Behemoth with the hippopotamus has persisted to this day, partly owing to

the modern reception of the Joban creature.[94]

There is also a tendency among modern scholars to draw a connection between

Behemoth and the hippopotamus in terms of Egyptian mythology,[95] in which the dual

chaotic symbols of the hippopotamus and the crocodile—perceived as the two incarnations of

the deity Seth in ancient Egypt[96]—are taken to correspond to the Behemoth–Leviathan pair in

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Mohn, 1963), 522; John Gray, *The Book of Job* (Text of the Hebrew Bible, 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 492. For a review of scholarship on this etymology, see Eberhard Ruprecht, "Das Nilpferd im Hiobbuch: Beobachtungen zu der sogennanten zweiten Gottesrede," *VT* 21 (1971): 217–18.

[92] Botterweck, "בְּהֵמָה *bᵉhēmāh;* בְּהֵמוֹת *bᵉhēmôth*," *TDOT*, 2:17.

[93] B. F. Batto, "Behemoth בהמות," *DDD*, 165.

[94] The identification of Behemoth with the hippopotamus based on naturalistic traits appears to gain popularity in the wake of Samuel Bochart (ca. 1599–1667 CE), who first put forth this proposal in his *Hierozoicon*, in the modern era. See Samuel Bochart, *Hierozoicon sive bipertitum opus de animalibus Sacrae Scripturae* (London: Roycroft, Martyn, and Allestry, 1663), 2:753–69.

[95] E.g. Othmar Keel, *Jahwes Entgegnung an Ijob: Eine Deutung von Ijob 38–41 vor dem Hintergrund der zeitgenössischen Bildkunst* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 127–41; E. Ruprecht, "Das Nilpferd im Hiobbuch: Beobachtungen zu der sogennanten zweiten Gottesrede," *VT* 30 (1980): 360–61; and Veronika Kubina, *Die Gottesreden im Buche Hiob: Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um die Einheit von Hiob 38,1–42,6* (Freiburg: Herder, 1979), 68–75;

[96] Specifically, the hippopotamus, which lives in the Nile, is a symbol of evil, chaos, hostile power, and enemy of the king in ancient Egypt. As an embodiment of evil other to the Pharaoh, the living Horus, the hippopotamus is often represented as an assumed manifestation of the hostile Seth, who also takes the crocodile as his another incarnation in Egyptian mythology. Iconographically, the hippopotamus and the crocodile are occasionally juxtaposed as a pair of monstrous forces that is being subdued by the Pharaoh (see, e.g., O. Keel, *Jahwes*

the biblical tradition.[97] But this proposal, appealing as it may sound, is problematic in that

the identification of Behemoth with the hippopotamus is largely based on the view that

Leviathan is arguably fashioned after the crocodile.[98] While the latter does not necessarily

entail the former, the identification of Leviathan with the crocodile remains a hypothesis to

serve as the grounds. In fact, there is apparently a sense of discord between the hippopotamus

and Behemoth as described in the biblical text, not least in the depiction of "its tail being firm

as cedar" (Job 40:17). Rather, the biblical account tends to characterize Behemoth in terms of

bovine quality (Job 40:15). Without reading the presupposed identification of Leviathan with

the Egyptian crocodile into the Behemoth discourse—in addition to considering the perceived

discrepancy between Behemoth and the hippopotamus, I am not considering here the

Egyptian hippopotamus as a critically established cultural manifestation of the biblical

Behemoth.

1.1.2 The Ugaritic Bovine Monsters

When read with Ugaritic literature, the biblical Behemoth is thought to be related to

some monstrous figures of bovine nature in Ugaritic mythological tradition. In particular,

named bovine monstrous species are mentioned along with the Ugaritic Leviathan (*Litan*) in

a passage of the myth of Baal. Given the geographical and linguistic proximity between the

Ugaritic and Hebrew literary traditions, the composition of biblical tradition often reflects

uses and influence of Ugaritic material in terms of language, motif, and mythology. In fact, a

number of mythological motifs or patterns have been recognized to be shared between the

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Entgegnung an Ijob. Eine Deutung von Ijob 38–41 vor dem Hintergrund der zeitgenössischen Bildkunst, FRLANT 121 [Göttingen 1978], 153).

[97] In accord with the mythological identifications, these scholars view the *Chaoskampf* motifs underlying Job 40:15–41:26 as being derived from the conflict between Horus and Seth in Egyptian mythology, as exemplified in the myth of "The Contest of Horus and Seth for the Rule" on the Papyrus Chester Beatty I from the Twentieth Dynasty (*ANET*, 14–17).

[98] Though some may argue that Leviathan described in Job 41 sufficiently resembles a natural crocodile, its mythological features (especially those fiery aspects in Job 41:10–13 [18–21]) are so conspicuous that one cannot treat it simply as a natural animal. In fact, even what are presumed to be a crocodile's characteristics in the text might be drawn from a number of known species which are more or less like a crocodile.

biblical and Ugaritic literature.[99] Considering the cultural and literary kinship, it is not far-fetched to posit that the monstrous figures in the two traditions are—without necessarily positing a direct borrowing or "prototype"—connected in some way.

In a portion of text on the third tablet of what is known as the Baal Cycle (*CAT* 1.3, III: 36–47), a number of mythological monstrous entities are cited as the goddess Anat boasts of having conquered the monsters who warred against Baal, the patron deity in Ugaritic tradition:

(tšu) . gh . w . tṣḫ . ik . mǵy . gpn . w	(She raises) her voice and shouts:
ugr	Why have Gapan and Ugar come?
mn . ib . ypʿ . l bʿl . ṣrt	What enemy rises against Baal,
l rkb . ʿrpt . l mḫšt . mdd	(what) adversary against the Cloud-Rider?
il ym . l klt . nhr . il . rbm	Did I not strike the beloved of El, Yamm?
l ištbm . tnn . ištmdḫ	Did I not finish Nahar, the great god?
mḫšt . bṯn . ʿqltn	Did I not muzzle the dragon and destroy it?
šlyṭ . d . šbʿt . rašm	I crushed the twisting serpent,
mḫšt . mdd ilm . ʾaršؚ	the tyrant with seven heads.
ṣmt . ʿgl . il . ʿtk	I crushed the beloved of El, Arish,
mḫšt . klbt . ilm . išt	I defeated the calf of El, Atik,
klt . bt . il . ḏbb . imؚtḫṣ . ksp	I crushed the bitch of El, Fire,
itrṯ . ḫrṣ	I finishd the daughter of El, Dubab,
	I fight (for) silver, I take possession of gold...[100]

Among the named monsters in the discourse, "the beloved of El, Arish" (*mdd ʾilm ʾarš*) and "the calf of El, Atik" (*ʿgl ʾil ʿtk*) are mentioned in lines 43–44. Given the parallelism

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[99] Frank Moore Cross (1973), for example, identifies what he calls "Divine Warrior myth" as a common mythic pattern that underlies the Ugaritic Baal cycle and the biblical *Chaoskampf* texts. As summarized by K. William Whitney (2006, 155), this mythic motif basically consists of four type-plots:

1. The Divine Warrior goes forth to battle against chaos;
2. Nature convulses (writhes) and languishes when the Warrior manifests his wrath;
3. The warrior-god returns to take up kingship among the gods and is enthroned on his mountain;
4. The Divine Warrior utters his voice from his temple, and Nature again responds. The heavens fertilize the earth, animals writhe in giving birth, and men and mountains whirl in dancing and festive glee.

John Day (1985), on the other hand, attributes the *Chaoskampf* motif reflected in several psalms (Ps 29, 65, 74, 89, 93, 104) to Canaanite influences. Specifically, he observes a parallel between the theme of YHWH's enthronement as king in these psalms and that of Baal's enthronement as the patron god in Ugaritic myths.

[100] The Ugaritic texts cited in this chapter are my own translations.

displayed in each stanza in this poetic unit (where the second half of the stanza corresponds more or less to the first), it is probable that these two epithets actually denote a single monstrous entity,[101] at least a distinct species, namely a calf or bullock of El. In the poetic context, this bovine monster is listed along with Yamm (the Sea), Nahar (the River), the dragon (*tnn*), the seven-headed serpent (supposedly *Litan* in light of *CAT* 1.5, I: 1–4)—each of which finds its counterpart in the biblical tradition.[102] Along with other listed conquered monsters, this bovine Arish/Atik constitutes a monstrous force that the deities (Baal/Anat) have to overcome in maintaining the stability of the cosmos—it can thus be considered as a chaos monster in the myth. It is worth noting that Atik/Arish is recounted in parallel with the seven-headed sea serpent (i.e. *Litan* = biblical Leviathan) in the text, which finds an echo in the pairing of the ox-like Behemoth (Job 40:15) and the sea monster Leviathan in Job 40–41.

Notably, this bovine monster appears in the last part of the Baal myth (*CAT* 1.6, VI: 51–53), in which Arish is associated with the sea together with the dragon:

b . ym . arš . w tnn	In the sea are Arish and the dragon;
ktr . w ḫss . yd	may Kothar-wa-Hasis expel (them),
ytr . ktr . w ḫss	may Kothar-wa-Hasis banish (them) away.

Given the featured domain of the sea, the text may, on the one hand, bespeak the close connection between Arish and Litan, a quintessential sea serpent in the myth. On the other hand, the vaguely aquatic nature of Arish is reminiscent of the biblical Behemoth, who is placed in a marsh and around the brook (Job 40:21–22) and inhabits a turbulent river (Job 40:23). The perceived monstrosity of this bovine figure as an undesirable other is conveyed in the text, where Arish is wishfully said to be cast out with the dragon (*tnn*)[103]—a lurking sea

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[101] Mary K. Wakemn, *God's Battle with the Monsters: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 111; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 80–82.

[102] While their attestations are scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible, all of these monstrous entities can be found in the single book of Job.

[103] The Tannin (תַּנִּין), a lurking monstrous figure in the biblical tradition, is evidently identified as a kind of sea

monster in the biblical tradition.[104] Though not being represented as a cast-out, Behemoth as

depicted in the biblical text is apparently a monstrous other, whose perceived monstrosity is

heightened when it is said to be unintimidated by the raging waters (Job 40:23).

Apart from the passages in the Baal Cycle, a fragmentary text of another Ugaritic myth

(*CAT* 1.12) hints at some connections between the biblical Behemoth and bovine monstrous

entities in the Ugaritic tradition. In this mythic text, the supreme deity El contrives a plot to

do away with Baal, his enemy, as he instructs two divine maids to go into the wilderness with

obstetrical equipment to give birth to some monstrous species with the epithets of "Eaters"

(*'aklm*) and "Destroyers" (*ʿqqm*).[105] More importantly, lines 25–33 reveal that these Ugaritic

monsters are of bovine nature:

ḫl . ld . 'aklm .	Writhe, give birth to the Eaters
tbrkk	—may they bless you,
wld . ʿqqm .	Give birth to the Destroyers,
'ilm . ypʿr . šmtẖm	—may El proclaim their names.
bhm . qrnm . km . ṯrm	On them are two horns like bulls,
wgbṯt . km . ibrm	and a hump like bullocks,
wbhm . pn . bʿl	And on them is the face of Baal.

What follows in this text suggests that these bovine monstrous entities constitute one of

the adversarial forces against Baal (and his sister Anat),[106] the heroic deity in the myth. After

killing the "Eaters" and "Destroyers," Baal is felled by some other bovine beings likely in a

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serpent with the Ugaritic *tunnanu* among biblical scholars. In the Ugaritic myths, the *tunnanu* is characterized as an enemy of the storm-god Baal and his consort Anat, along with other sea monsters defeated by Baal. Attested in Aramaic literature as תנן, this monster also turns up in magical texts. An inscribed Aramaic incantation bowl, for example, describes the noise of demons with the hissing sound of serpents (תנינא).

[104] The *tannîn* is known to be a kind of sea monster in the Hebrew Bible. Depending on context, *tannîn* can refer to a serpent (Exod 7:9, 10, 12; Deut 32:33; Isa 27:1; Ps 91:13), sea monster (Gen 1:21; Job 7:12; Isa 51:9; Ps 74:13; 148:7), crocodile (Ezek 29:3–6; 32:2–8), or dragon (Jer 51:34); and the place it inhabits ranges from the sea (Isa 27:1; cf. 51:9–10), lakes and rivers (Ezek 29:3; 32:2), water (Gen 1:21; Ps 74:13), and the netherworld (Ps 148:7).

[105] In another text (*CAT* 1.83), Anat is said to fight against these two monsters on behalf of Baal.

[106] It is unclear whether these bovine monstrous species/beings should be identified with the figure(s) of Arish/Atik in the Baal myth as some scholars suggested.

marshy region at the end of the text of *CAT* 1.12.[107] The marshy place where these bovine

creatures occupy again recalls the "reed marsh" (Job 40:21) in which Behemoth finds itself.

Just as these bovine monsters serve as tenacious enemies of the god Baal who strives to

maintain cosmic order and vitality, Behemoth embodies a monstrous other as a potent and

unyielding force which YHWH has to keep in check. As monstrous embodiments of power,

they both signify societal anxiety and fears about threats to the cosmic stability among

ancient people, specifically the Canaanites and Israelites.

Emerging as monstrous others though, both the Ugaritic bovine monsters and the biblical

Behemoth have some affinity with divinity paradoxically on a deeper reading. Clearly

represented as a monstrous entity in the myth, the bovine Arish/Atik is addressed as "the

beloved of El (the father-deity in the Ugaritic pantheon)" (*CAT* 1.3, III: 43). Some sense of

kinship is implied between the bovine monsters and the deity when the "Eaters" and

"Destroyers," who are featured with bovine quality ("horns like oxen," "humps like bullocks")

in the text of *CAT* 1.12, are said to bear "the face of Baal" (*pn b ʿl*) (line 33). The distinction

between monsters and deities is even more blurred in the myth of *CAT* 1.10: initially Baal

goes hunting for bulls in a grassland where the preys are abundant, but, ironically, Baal and

Anat end up siring bovine offspring which delights them. These textual clues suggest that the

relationship between the bovine monsters and the divine in the Ugaritic tradition is more

ambiguous than being simply that of "monster versus hero-god."

In an analogous manner, even Behemoth is depicted in tangibly monstrous terms in the

biblical text, it appears to signify the awe-inspiring power of the divine sovereign as "the

foremost of God's ways" (Job 40:19). As is the case with the blurred distinction between the

bovine monsters and the deities in Ugaritic myths, the relationship between Behemoth and

God/YHWH as revealed in the biblical account is perceivably ambivalent: Behemoth comes

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[107] In another mythic text (*CAT* 1.10), Baal goes hunting with his bow in a marshy area teemed with bovine
creatures.

to represent both the antithesis of and identification with God/YHWH simultaneously. The representations of bovine monsters in Ugaritic and biblical traditions attest to monster theory that monstrosity and divinity are often considered as intertwined rather than constrasting concepts.

1.1.3 Bovine Monsters in Ancient Mesopotamia

In view of the broader cultural history of the ancient Near East, the biblical Behemoth and the Ugaritic bovine monsters can actually be identified as part of a long mythological tradition of bovine creatures, which is exemplified by the figure of "Bull of Heaven" in the Sumero–Akkadian tradition.[108] In the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the "Bull of Heaven" is a bovine monster that is sent to kill Gilgamesh at the command of the goddess Ishtar in revenge for his insult at her sexual advances. As with typical monsters in the ancient Near East, the Bull appears as a monstrous other by its perceived hybridity.[109] Iconographically, it is often depicted more or less with wings, a human face, and the bulk of a bull's body.[110] Indeed, figures of human-faced bull (the so-called "bull-man" or "bison-man" who has a robust lower body and long muscular limbs) that may be modeled after this monster are well attested in Mesopotamian glyptic art (Fig. 1) since the third millennium BCE. In the forms of figurine and relief, they are typically portrayed as potent bovine creatures who are contesting with a

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[108] Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008), 320–22 proposes connections among the biblical Behemoth, Ugaritic bovine creatures, and Mesopotamian "Bull of Heaven," all of which being bovine to a certain degree.

[109] As reflected in a range of pictorial representation and mythical narratives, one of the most salient features of ancient Near Eastern mythical monsters is that they are hybrid creatures composed of animal forms. Many of these monsters incorporate one or more body parts of at least two distinct animal species, with more or less human features and attributes. Emphasizing the prevalency of hybrid monsters that appear to originate in the ancient Near East, Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton Library, 1952), 46 makes a note on "the composite animals invented by the folk imagination of the Orient." As a matter of fact, combinatory figures like the winged lions are widely attested in various sites across the ancient Near East. See Maria Beville, *The Unnameable Monster in Literature and Film*, Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), 25; Heinz A. Mode, *Fabulous Beasts and Demons* (London: Phaidon, 1975), 7; Noël Carroll, "Fantastic Biologies and the Structures o Horrific Imagery," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 139.

[110] Tallay Ornan, "Picture and Legend: The Case of Humbaba and the Bull of Heaven" [in Hebrew], *Eretz-Israel: Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Studies* 27 (2003): 18–32.

hero figure.[111]

Fig. 1. Lapis lazuli cylinder seal, Old Akkadian period, engraved with contest scene showing two bearded heroes in conflict with a human-headed bull and a bull respectively. British Museum, London, BM 121566d.

Like the biblical Behemoth and Ugaritic bovine monsters, the Mesopotamian "Bull of Heaven" embodies a sense of ambivalence in its relation to the divine realm. On the one hand, the Bull as a monster is a threat to humanity and is therefore slain by the hero figures Gilgamesh and Enkidu. On the other hand, it enjoys a favorable relationship with the goddess Ishtar: not only does Ishtar lead the Bull by a rope as with a beloved pet (*EG* VI:14–15), but she goes so far as to institute mourning over its dismembered corpse (*EG* VI:158–59). This perceived ambivalence is particularly illustrated in an iconography on a Neo-Babylonian cylinder seal, where the two hero figures (perhaps Gilgamesh and Enkidu) appear to strike the monstrous Bull in joint effort, with the goddess figure (Ishtar) attempting vainly to prevent the stabber (Gilgamesh) from killing it (Fig. 2).[112]

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[111] Cf., e.g., A. Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, Pls. 23–26; E. Porada and B. Buchanan, *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals*, 1948, I, Pls. IX–X [Nos. 53, 56, 57, 60] and XXII–XXVI.

[112] Joan Aruz and Ronald Wallenfels (eds.), *Art of the First Cities: The Third Millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus* (New York : Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003), 483.

Fig. 2. Chalcedony cylinder seal from Mesopotamia, Neo-Babylonian period (6th century BCE), depicting Gilgamesh and Enkidu killing the Bull of Heaven while Ishtar tries to prevent them. British Museum, London, BM 89435.

As is the case with the Bull of Heaven, the Mesopotamian bison-men are closely associated with divine figures in their monstrous appearances. On a cylinder seal from Nippur from the end of the third millennium BCE, two bison-men are shown to be flanking the sun-god (Sumerian: UTU; Akkadian: *Šamaš*), the god of order and justice;[113] the symbols of gate-posts in their hands signify their protection of the sun-god who passes that gateway daily.[114] Similarly, an orthostat relief from Tell Ḥalaf from the ninth century BCE shows two bison-men holding up a winged solar disk (a symbol of the sun-god) on both sides (Fig. 3).[115] In another orthostat unearthed from the same site, two bison-men are pictured as holding up a footstool upon which the winged sun-disk is positioned (Fig. 4).[116] As revealed in a cylinder seal dated from the Neo-Assyrian period, the bison-man serves as a quasi-divine protector of the sun-god as indicated by its logographic designation GUD.DUMU.^dUTU, "Bull, the son of the sun-god"—a figure regularly invoked as one of the divine witnesses in Mesopotamian

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[113] Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* (Rpt. [rev.]; London: The British Museum Press, 2005; first edition 1987), no. 765.
[114] Cf. Gudea Cylinder A, XXVI.3–5 (RIME 3/2, 85).
[115] Henri Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* (5th edition; New Haven, CT/London, UK: Yale University Press, 1996), 295–96, no. 345.
[116] Max von Oppenheim (et al.), *Tell Halaf III: Die Bildwerke* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1955), pl. 19A.

legal traditions. Embodying aspects of monstrosity, these bison-men are commonly
represented as quasi-divine protectors or attendants of the divine in Mesopotamian
iconography.[117]
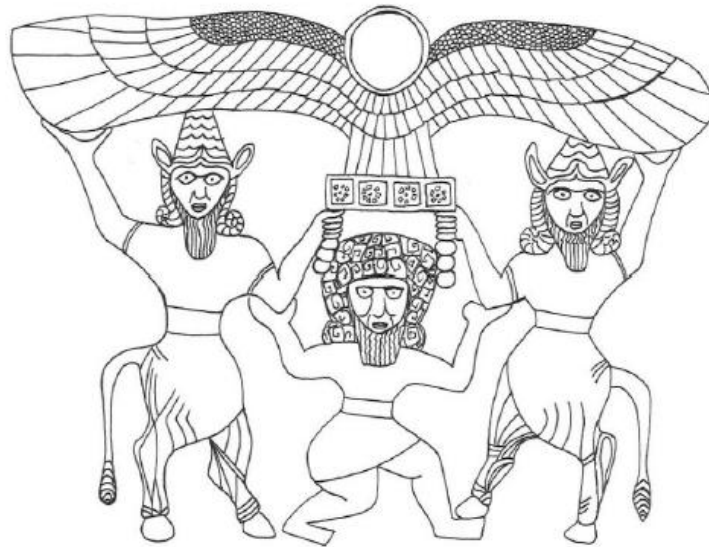
Fig. 3. Orthostat relief from Tel Ḥalaf, 9th century BCE, showing a human-figure and two bison-men holding up
a winged sun disk. National Museum, Aleppo. Drawing by Spivey K. from various photographs.

Fig. 4. Orthostat relief from Tel Ḥalaf, 9th century BCE, showing two bison-men holding the legs of a footstool
on which a winged solar disk is set. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Public domain image.

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[117] In a Neo-Assyrian ritual text, the making of two bison-men is prescribed as apotropaic images in order to
ward off evil and usher in justice. See Frans A. M. Wiggermann (ed.), *Mesopotamian Protective Sprits: The
Ritual Texts*, Cuneiform Monographs, no. 1 (Groningen: Styx & PP, 1992), 141.

When situated in the larger cultural context of the ancient Near East, the bovine Behemoth (and the Ugaritic bovine monsters) appears to belong to a longstanding tradition of bovine monsters across ancient Mesopotamia, which finds expression in the mythological figure of "Bull of Heaven" and various representations of bison-men. These bovine monsters—including Behemoth—in the ancient Near East commonly convey a sense of ambivalence in their quasi-divine nature as embodiments of monstrous others. With all their perceived monstrosity, they appear to share the genes of "beloved monsters"[118] and enjoy some affinity with the divine, which in turn blurs the distinction between the monster and the divine.

1.1.4 Bovine Attributes as Rhetoric of Sublime Potency

Plausibly inspired by texts and iconography in the ancient Near East, the strength of Behemoth as a bovine monstrous creature is emphasized in such a way as to communicate the notion of sublime potency. Specifically, the spectacularly potent body of Behemoth is featured in Job 40:16–18:

> [16] Here now, his strength is in his loins,
>   And his vigor in the muscles of his abdomen.
> [17] His appendage is firm as cedar,
>   The sinews of his thighs are tight-knit.
> [18] His limbs are bronze tubes;
>   His bones are like iron bars.

As C. L. Seow points out, the emphasis on the virility and strength of Behemoth in these verses appears to correspond to YHWH's challenge to Job's potency spelled out in Job 40:9–14, which contains descriptions that echo with the rhetoric of divine-royal potency in

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[118] An idea borrowed from Ryan S. Higgins, "The Good, the God, and the Ugly: The Role of the Beloved Monster in the Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible," *Interpretation* 74(2) (2020): 132–45.

Akkadian literature.[119] Irene Winter argues that the eroticized body of Behemoth in the Joban account represents royal potency which is widely attested in ancient Near Eastern texts and iconography.[120] The otherness of Behemoth, in this sense, lies in its sublime divine-royal potency that challenges Job to reflect on his own adequacy.

In terms of the cultural history of the ancient Near East, the Victory Stela of Narām-Sîn of Akkad from around 2250 BCE is one of the earliest exemplars that render divine potency through bovine features. In addition to the hefty size and virile body of Narām-Sîn on the stela,[121] the bull-horned helmet that the king is wearing demonstrates his god-like status and authority (Fig. 5)—since only gods wear helmets of this type in ancient Mesopotamian culture.[122] The monstrous helmet on the stela therefore signifies divine power and serves to depict Narām-Sîn as a potent god-king as he leads his army to military victory.
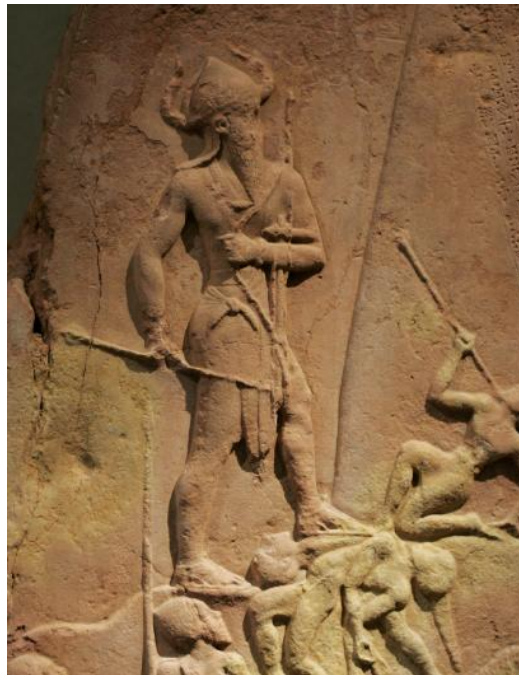
Fig. 5. Part of Victory Stele of Naram-Sin from Susa, ca. 2350–2200 BCE, showing King Naram-Sin with a bull-horned helmet standing over the corpses of his enemies (Lullubian). Louvre Museum, France, 010123450.

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[119] C. L. Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth" (unpublished manuscript), typescript, 229.
[120] Irene J. Winter, "Sex, Rhetoric, and the Public Monument: The Alluring Body of Naram-Sîn of Agade," in *On Art in the Ancient Near East* (3 vols.; Boston, MA/Leiden: Brill, 2010), 2:85–107 (orig. published in 1996).
[121] "Victory Stele of Naram-Sin" from Louvre Museum Official Website: https://www.louvre.fr/en.
[122] *World History Encyclopedia*, 1st ed., s.v. "Naram-Sin."

Across texts and iconography in ancient Mesopotamia, the political and military potency of male royal figures are frequently associated with bovine attributes in addition to their sturdy and muscular bodies. In the Sumerian corpus of the praise poems of Šulgi of Ur, king Šulgi, who boasts of his "head" (saĝ-bi-še$_3$) and "shoulders" (zag-še-ni-še$_3$, Šulgi A, 26–27), "vigor" (nam-šul-bi-ta) and "strength" (ne$_3$-ba, Šulgi A, 42), "muscles" (tur-gin$_7$, Šulgi B, 21), "manliness" (nam-ĝuruš, Šulgi B, 81), and "immense bodily strength" (usu gal-gal-la-me-en, Šulgi B, 119), likens himself to a "great wild bull" (am gal) and "bull of heaven" (gud an-na, Šulgi B, 84). Besides, he addresses his virility with bovine qualities such as "a wild bull of acknowledged strength" (am a$_2$ pad$_3$-da-me-en$_3$, Šulgi C, 1–2) with a "bull's roar" (gud-gin$_7$ gu$_3$, Šulgi C, 63). Likewise, in the poem of Self-praise of Šulgi, the king praises himself with bovine aspects as a "great bull with splendid limbs" (gud gal a$_2$ gu$_2$-nu) and a "bull-calf born in the cattle-pen of abundance" (amar tur$_3$ he$_2$-jal$_2$-la tud-da, Šulgi D, 1–3). The literary tradition of conveying royal potency with bovine attributes goes all the way into the Neo-Assyrian period, when Shalmanezer III boasts of squashing the enemy "in strength of virility like a wild bull" (*ina kiṣir zikrūtiya māssu kīma rīmi*, RIMA 3, 20.ii.52) as part of the Assyrian royal propaganda.

Apart from royal figures, bovine features are employed to signify the sublime potency of divine and semi-divine beings. In a Sumerian hymn, for instance, the god Ninurta, typically portrayed with muscular limbs in artistic renderings, is extolled as a "spectacular wild bull (am-u$_6$) with "massive limbs" (a$_2$-ur$_2$-zu mu-un-gur$_4$).[123] In the Sumerian poem *Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven*, the semi-divine Gilgamesh, a quintessential spectacle of potency, is repeatedly addressed as "wild bull" (Segment B, 7) who is the "man of battle" with "well-proportioned limbs" (Segment A, 1–4). These textual evidence demonstrates that

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[123] W. H. Ph. Römer, *Sumerische 'Königshymnen' der Isin-Zeit* (Documenta et monumenta Orientis antiqui 13; Leiden: Brill, 1965), 21, line 7.

bovine characteristics are often used as rhetorical devices to communicate divine-royal

potency in Mesopotamian literary tradition.

It is noteworthy that perceived potency of ancient Near Eastern figures is occasionally

represented in terms of sexual prowess in literary and iconographic traditions. In an

impression of a cylinder seal from ancient Mesopotamia, for example, the potency of two

"bison-men" is conveyed through their erected penis which signifies virility (Fig. 6).[124]

Fig. 6. Impression of a cylinder seal from Mesopotamia, showing a contest scene with several "bison-men." Princeton University Library, the Manuscripts Division's Stone Seal Collection, Garrett no. 4.

Indeed, aspects of virility are common elements in the representation of potency of

divine-royal figures. In particular, the Akkadian term *zikrūtu*, "virility," is taken up to connote

sexual potency of the Assyrian kings.[125] As a case in point, the powerful Assyrian ruler

Esarhaddon, typically depicted as a sturdy figure in Neo-Assyrian art,[126] is endowed with the

sexual potency of "strength, virility, fullness of chest" (*dunni zikrūti male irti*, RINAP 4,

1.ii.32) from the divine. The sexual prowess of divine figures is most evident in the Sumerian

creation myths dated from the second millennium BCE. Narrated in the myth "Enki and

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[124] As attested by ancient Near Eastern iconography, depiction of the beast as ithyphallic or having intercourse is a common device in suggesting virile potency. See, for instance, Briggs Buchanan, *Early Near Eastern Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection* (New Haven, CT/London, UK: Yale University Press, 1981), nos. 413, 417, 422, 423, 436, 515; Rainer M. Boehmer, *Die Entwicklung der Glyptik wärhrend der Akkad-Zeit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965), pls. 15–16; Edith Porada, *Mesopotamian Art in Cylinder Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library* (New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1947), no. 24.

[125] Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth," 231.

[126] Jutta Börker-Klähn, *Altvorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs* (Baghdader Forschungen 4; 2 volumes; Mainz: Zabern, 1982), 2, figs. 217–219.

Ninḫursag," the creation of the world is a result of the sexual activities of the deity Enki,[127] whose sexual prowess is echoed in another myth "Enki and the World Order," where Enki is said to bring about fertility and productiveness of the world in terms of sexual imagery.[128] In particular, Enki's divinity is emphasized by the bovine description of his virility: "He stood up full of lust like a rampant bull, lifted his penis, ejaculated and filled the Tigris...He was like a wild cow... By lifting his penis, he brought a bridal gift."[129] A counterpart figure is found in the Ugaritic tradition, in which the father-god El with the bovine epithet "bull" is presented as a virile divine character who sires deific offspring.[130] As for the biblical tradition, some scholars read sexual connotations in the description of Job 40:17, where the "appendage" (some render "tail") of Behemoth is depicted as "firm like cedar."[131] As a bovine monster, Behemoth's virility appears to reflect the ancient Near Eastern tradition that represents sublime potency in terms of bovine imageries and sexual prowess.

As attested by a range of textual and iconographic representations in the ancient Near East, bovine attributes have apparently taken on divine and royal implications in symbolizing sublime potency. While the distinction between monsters and deities is generally blurred in the ancient Near Eastern culture, perceived monstrosity appears to possess the capacity to evoke the divine/sublime in the region, not least in terms of extraordinary potency. From a review of the cultural manifestations of Behemoth in the ancient Near East, monstrosity and divinity never seem to be clearly distinguished in the course of its prehistory.

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[127] See "Enki and Ninhursag: A Paradise Myth," in *ANET*, 37–41; Samuel Noah Kramer and John Maier, *Myths of Enki, the Crafty God* (New York: Oxford, 1989), 22–30; Pascal Attinger, "Enki et Ninḫursaĝa," *ZA* 74 (1984): 1–52; Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Harps That Once...: Sumerian Poetry in Translation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 181–204.

[128] See Kramer and Maier, *Myths of Enki*, 38–56.

[129] "Enki and the world order: translation," *The Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*; available from https://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr113.htm (cited 6 Aug 2021). See also Kramer and Maier, *Myths of Enki*, 47–48.

[130] Narrated in the Ugaritic myth "The Birth of the Gracious Gods" (*CAT* 1.23). See Simon B. Parker et al. (eds.), *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry* (SBL Writings from the Ancient World; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 205–14.

[131] Scholars who read sexual connotations in Job 40:17 include Marvin Pope, John Hatley, Norman Habel, etc.

1.2 Cultural Manifestations of Leviathan in the Ancient Near East

1.2.1 Etymology of Leviathan

Leviathan (Hebrew: לִוְיָתָן (*liwyātān*)) is the name of a mythological sea serpent or dragon in the biblical tradition. Etymologically speaking, the Hebrew form *liwyāṯān* is derived from the root √*lwy* with the basic meaning of "to twist, bend, coil" (cf. Arabic: *lawiyā*)[132]—hence the name may be rendered "the twisting one," as befits the serpentine character of Leviathan. The derived form of the Hebrew לִוְיָה (*liwyâ*) means "wreath," so the Hebrew root may also be interpreted as "the wreath-like," "the circular."[133] This image is reminiscent of the great sea serpent in ancient Near Eastern mythological worldview, which is believed to be encircling the cosmos in the form of a wreath.[134] Leviathan may thus be pictured as a mythical snake-like being which forms a circle itself with its mouth perpetually biting its own tail. The Greeks address this imagery as *ouroboros*, meaning "tail devouring (one)," and this cosmic symbol gains popularity especially in later Jewish tradition.[135] Leviathan is attested in the Ugaritic language, a close Semitic relative of Hebrew, as *ltn*, which is presumed to be vocalized *lītānu*.[136]

Being a "sinuous" creature, Leviathan is polymorphous in the sense that it is inclined to twist and take on new forms of existence from one cultural tradition to another. The various attested forms of Leviathan across the ancient Near East—to be discussed as follows—embody a leading exemplar of a monstrous other who "always escapes." More importantly, commonly symbolizing chaos that would pose a threat to the cosmos, this serpentine monster—in its various cultural manifestations—often serves as a demonic foil for

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[132] Lipinski, "לִוְיָתָן *liwyāṯān*," *TDOT*, 7:504.
[133] C. Uehlinger, "Leviathan לויתן," *DDD*, 511.
[134] Marjo Korpel, "Leviathan: I. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," *EBR*, 292.
[135] Maria G. Lancellotti, *The Naassenes: A Gnostic Identity among Judaism, Christianity, Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Traditions* (Forschungen zur Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte 35; Muenster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), 37–50.
[136] *ltn* (*KTU* 1.5.I.1 = *CTA* 5.I.1) has traditionally been vocalized as *lōtān*, but it has been persuasively argued by J. A. Emerton (1982) that the correct rendering should be *lītān*. This vocalization presumes **liwyatan > *liyyatan > *līy(i)tan > *lītan*. Cf. John A. Emerton, "Leviathan and ltn: The Vocalization of the Ugaritic Word for the Dragon," *VT* 32 (1982): 327–31.

the divine/heroic figures who defeat them in the respective mythic narratives, which are themselves vehicles for communicating societal anxiety in a culture.

1.2.2 The Ugaritic Litan (Leviathan)

The Ugaritic Litan (*ltn*), recognized as the equivalent of *liwyātān* (לִוְיָתָן) in the Hebrew Bible,[137] is mostly considered the counterpart of the biblical Leviathan in the Canaanite mythological culture.[138] In the myth of Baal Cycle, Litan is one of the acolytes of Yamm who represents the power of the sea that constitutes a perpetual adversary of the gods Baal and Anat. Specifically, Litan is described as a twisting serpent or a seven-headed dragon who is overcome by Baal or Anat. In a passage (*CAT* 1.3, III: 37–47) where Anat claims to have defeated a number of monstrous enemies on behalf of Baal, the twisting serpent with seven heads is mentioned alongside other mythological creatures:

mn . ib . ypʿ . l bʿl . ṣrt	What enemy rises against Baal,
l rkb . ʿrpt . l mḫšt . mdd	(what) adversary against the Cloud-Rider?
il ym . l klt . nhr . il . rbm	Did I not strike the beloved of El, Yamm?
l ištbm . tnn . ištmd̮ẖ	Did I not finish Nahar, the great god?
mḫšt . bṯn . ʿqltn	Did I not muzzle the dragon and destroy it?[139]
šlyṭ . d . šbʿt . rašm	I crushed the twisting serpent,
	the tyrant with seven heads.

(*CAT* 1.3, III: 37–42)

This seven-headed, twisting serpent turns up again in the later part of the myth when Mot (the personified Death), another persistent enemy of Baal, comes to deliver a threatening message to Baal's messengers. The communique reveals that Litan is the seven-headed

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[137] J. A. Emerton, "Leviathan and Ltn: The Vocalization of the Ugaritic Word for Dragon," *VT* 32 (1982): 327–31.

[138] The term Leviathan occurs six times in the Hebrew Bible (Job 3:8; 40:25 [41:1]; Ps 74:14; 104:26; Isa 27:1 [twice]), all of which are in poetic passages.

[139] The Ugaritic text *PRU* 2.3.8–10 speaks of one of Anat's battles against the dragon (*tnn*):

tnn l-šbm tšt	She put the dragon in a muzzle
trks l-mrym lb[nn]	She bound him to the heights of Leba[non]

serpent which was slain by the god Baal (*CAT* 1.5, I: 1–4):

k tmḫṣ . ltn . bṯn . brḥ	When you smite Litan, the fleeing serpent,
tkly . bṯn . ʿqltn	(when) you finish the twisting serpent,
šlyṭ . d . šbʿt . rašm	the tyrant with seven heads,
ṯṯkḫ . ttrp . šmm	The heavens are undressed and slackened.

It is worth noting that commonalities between the Ugaritic Litan and the biblical Leviathan can be observed from this text. Most obviously, the designations of Litan as "the fleeing serpent" (*bṯn brḥ*) and "the twisting serpent" (*bṯn ʿqltn*) find a parallel in Isa 27:1, where Leviathan is characterized by the same pair of epithets (לִוְיָתָן נָחָשׁ...לִוְיָתָן נָחָשׁ בָּרֹחַ עֲקַלָּתוֹן).[140] Besides, the term "fleeing serpent" (נָחָשׁ בָּרִיחַ) is used in Job 26:12–13 to denote a mythological monstrous entity (assumed to be Leviathan by the Targum) that appears to be associated with the sea.[141] That Leviathan is an aquatic creature is also implied in Ps 104:25–26, where it is formed to dwell in the sea.[142] Importantly, the seven-headed image of Litan in the Ugaritic tradition[143] echoes with the plurality of "heads of Leviathan" (רָאשֵׁי לִוְיָתָן) in Ps 74:14.[144] In particular, Leviathan in the latter is addressed in parallel with the sea and

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[140] As part of the prophecies in Isa 24–27, Isa 27:1 presents the scenario of the eschatological defeat of Leviathan by YHWH, who will slay the monster for its punishment in the final apocalyptic battle:
> On that day YHWH will come to punish
> > with his fierce, great and powerful sword
> Leviathan, the slithery serpent,
> > Leviathan, the twisting serpent.
> > > He will kill the dragon in the sea.

While some scholars (e.g. C. Uehlinger, Gary V. Smith) see Leviathan here as a metaphor for a historical-political enemy of ancient Israel, others (e.g. Debra Scoggin Ballentine, John Day) emphasize the eschatological significance to which the portrayed vision points. In particular, John Day refers to this passage as an "eschatologization" of the *Chaoskampf* myth as it projects into the far future. See Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, NAC, 15B (Nashville: Abindon, 2009); Debra Scoggin Ballentine, *The Conflict Myth and the Biblical Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2015); John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[141] Job 26:12–13 pictures God's calming of the Sea, smiting of Rahab, and piercing of "the fleeing serpent," which the Targum reads "Leviathan" (לויתן).

[142] Psalm 104 is basically a doxology of the greatness of YHWH as the Creator. Specifically, the psalmist praises YHWH for his creation and his providence in the world. In the context that highlights the vastness of the sea and living things therein (v. 25–26), Leviathan turns up along the ships as a sea creature put there by YHWH—it even serves as YHWH's playmate (if one reads the possessive pronoun of לְשַׂחֶק־בּוֹ as referring to Leviathan). It appears that Leviathan as depicted in this passage is a mere aquatic creature that poses no threat to YHWH and the world.

[143] A figure of multi-headed snake appears in Ugaritic incantation texts as well.

[144] Psalm 74 is believed to be a lament over the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by a historical enemy of

sea monsters (תַּנִּינִים) in the previous line (i.e. Ps 74:13), reflecting the association between Litan, the dragon (*tnn*), and Yamm (the Sea) in the Ugaritic tradition.

Given the explicit correspondence, the biblical Leviathan finds its prehistory in the figure of the Ugaritic Litan in the Canaanite mythological tradition. As the Ugaritic tradition is adopted into the biblical account, the hero figure Baal, the Canaanite god, is shifted to YHWH, the God of the Hebrews.[145] In fact, the descriptions of how Baal overcomes his enemies in Ugaritic myths is analogous to the way YHWH subdues chaotic forces in the biblical texts. Just as Baal uses his mace (*CAT* 1.2, IV: 23) to crush his adversary including Litan (*CAT* 1.3, III: 38–45), YHWH is said to have used his sword (Isa 27:1; cf. Job 26:13) to crush the heads of Leviathan (Ps 74:14). As a monstrous other, both the Ugaritic Litan and the biblical Leviathan represent an adversarial character to be defeated by the deity. These hostile monsters certainly have sociological significance for the cultures to which they belong: in embodying chaotic powers, they come to signify societal insecurity about the order and stability of the world that might have been prevalent in ancient Canaan and Israel.

1.2.3 Serpentine Monsters in Ancient Mesopotamia

In view of the broader cultural history of the ancient Near East, the Ugaritic Litan and the biblical Leviathan can be viewed as late receptions of the seven-headed serpent in ancient Mesopotamia, a widely attested tradition in its cultural context. While late reflections of this

Israel, probably the Babylonians. Calling for God to intervene on behalf of Israel in this dire situation, the psalmist appeals to mythopoeic language in proclaiming God's creative act and salvific deeds in Israel's history that formed the latter's identity as his people. In particular, Ps 74:12–17 appears to blend the traditions of the creation and the exodus in speaking of God's power and victory over chaos forces, which are represented by the sea, the waters, and the sea-monsters therein. Specifically, God is declared to be the one who "split the sea (יָם)," "shattered the heads of the sea monsters (תַּנִּינִים)," and "crushed the heads of Leviathan" (v. 13–14). Casting God as a mighty warrior against these monstrous in primordial battle, the psalm affirms that he will deliver the people of Israel out of the hand of evil political powers they were facing, just like he redeemed their ancestors out of Egypt in the exodus.

[145] Given the close proximity in language and imagery, scholars tend to draw connections between God/YHWH in the Hebrew Bible and the deities in the Ugaritic counterpart. While the God (אֱלֹהִים/אֵל) of the Hebrews is often compared to the supreme, fatherly deity El in Ugaritic literature, the biblical image of YHWH as a divine warrior is thought to be drawn on the Ugaritic patron deity Baal, who is characterized as a combative storm-god in the myths. In particular, John Day (1985) associates the theme of YHWH's enthronement as king in several psalms (Ps 29, 65, 74, 89, 93, 104) with that of Baal's enthronement as the patron god in Ugaritic tradition.

tradition survive mostly in text form (as in Ugaritic and biblical literature), seven-headed monsters can be identified in both literary and iconographic representations in ancient Mesopotamia in the Early Dynastic Period III and in the Old Akkadian period (ca. 2500–2150 BCE).[146] Some scholars suggest that the "seven-tongued" serpent mentioned in the cuneiform lexical series ḪAR(or UR₅)–ra = *ḫubullu* (Tablet XIV, 17)[147] and the omen series Šumma ālu[148] may be synonymous with the "seven-headed" serpent.[149] Many engraved objects in the Sumerian culture also contain references to a seven-headed serpent. For instance, one Sumerian scepter pommel is decorated with a sculptured representation of a seven-headed serpent.[150] This serpentine monster is typically presented in Sumerian iconography as a hybrid quadruped: a creature that has the neck and head of a serpent, the body of a lion, wings or other leonine features.[151] Occasionally the Mesopotamian serpent is depicted with flames firing from its mouths and body,[152] a picture which is reminiscent of Leviathan's fiery aspects in Job 41:11–13 [19–21].

As in the biblical tradition where Leviathan is defeated by YHWH (Isa 27:1; Ps 74:14), depictions showing a seven-headed serpent being subdued by a hero or a divine figure are common in Mesopotamian texts and iconography from as early as the third millennium BCE.[153] One of the earliest attestations is found on a fragment of clay impression unearthed in the temple of Abu at Eshnunna (Tell Asmar) from the Early Dynastic Period III (Fig. 7).[154] In particular, the lower register of the fragment shows a kneeling figure who is holding two severed heads of possibly the seven-headed monster (whose other five heads remain intact to

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[146] *TDOT*, 7:507.

[147] B. Landsberger, *The Fauna of Ancient Mesopotamia*, 2: *Tablets XIV and XVIII. MSL*, VIII/2 (1962), 8.

[148] A. de Buck and A. H. Gardiner (eds.), *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, Oriental Institute Publications 40 (Chicago, 1924), pl. 23, K. 3674, 34 par. pl. 24, K. 6294, 5.

[149] *TDOT*, 7:507.

[150] Henri Frankfort, "Early Dynastic Sculptured Maceheads," *AnOr* 12 (1935): 107.

[151] E. D. van Buren, "The Dragon in Mesopotamia," *Or* 15 (1946): 1–45.

[152] Marjo Korpel and Johannes de Moor, "The Leviathan in the Ancient Near East," in *Playing with Leviathan: Interpretation and Reception of Monsters from the Biblical World*, ed. Koert van Bekkum, Jaap Dekker, Henk van de Kamp, and Eric Peels (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 13.

[153] *DDD*, 512.

[154] Henri Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region*, University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 72 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), plate no. 497.

the left of the hero figure).[155]
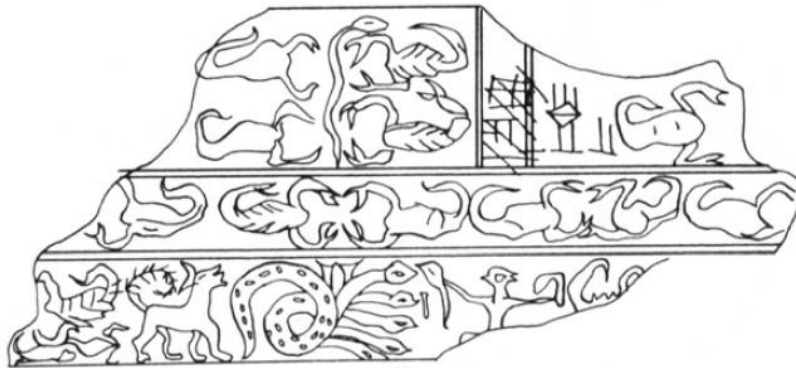
Fig. 7. Fragment of a clay impression from the temple of Abu at Eshnunna (Tell Asmar) dated to the the Early Dynastic Period III. Source: Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region*, pl. no. 497.

As a matter of fact, the slaying of a seven-headed serpent as a chaos monster is a prominent motif in Sumerian myths pertaining to the deity Ninurta (also known as Ninĝirsu).[156] According to the tradition of Sumerian poetry, the monstrous creature *muš-saĝ-imin* ("seven-headed serpent") is one of the traditional exploits of the warrior god Ninurta.[157] In the myths *Lugal-e* (*The Exploits of Ninurta*) and *An-gim* (*Ninurta's Return to Nippur*), Ninurta is said to have defeated a seven-headed serpent in a primordial battle.[158] In terms of iconography, this mythological motif is displayed in an incised ivory shell plaque unearthed in Mesopotamia from around 2500 BCE, which depicts a divine figure, probably the deity Ninurta, confronting a seven-headed monster with serpentine necks, heads, and a speckled body with flames rising from its back (Fig. 8).[159] Not only do all these recall the

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[155] *TDOT*, 7:507.

[156] Ballentine, *The Conflict Myth and the Biblical Tradition*, 27–28 notes the ideological use of this mythic motif surrounding th deity Ninurta in ancient Mesopotamia. Given that the god Ninurta represents kingship, the narrative of his victory over a chaos monster serves to legitimate human political institutions in the ancient world.

[157] Marjo Korpel, "Leviathan: I. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," *EBR*, 293.

[158] J. J. A. van Dijk, *Lugal ud me-lám-bi nir-Ĝál: Le récit épique et didactique des Travaux de Ninurta, du Déluge et de la Nouvelle Création* (2 vols; Leiden: Brill, 1983), 1. 133; Jerrold S. Cooper, *The Return of Ninurta to Nippur: An-gim dím-ma* (*AnOr* 52; Rome: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum, 1978), 1. 63.

[159] Donald P. Hansen, "The Fantastic World of Sumerian Art: Seal Impressions from Ancient Lagash," in *Monsters and Demons in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds: Papers Presented in Honor of Edith Porada* (Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern, 1987), 60–61, pl. XVI, fig. 29; Joan Goodnick Westenholz (ed.), *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004), 191, fig. 160.

biblical tradition of YHWH defeating Leviathan, but the Mesopotamian seven-headed monster also resonates with the representations of Leviathan, which is a serpentine (Isa 27:1; cf. Job 26:13) fire-breathing creature (Job 41:10–13 [18–21]) with allegedly multiple heads (Ps 74:14) and scales on the body (Job 41:7–9 [15–17]).

Fig. 8. Ivory shell plaque from southern Mesopotamia, ca. 2500–2400 BCE, showing a seven-headed monster with flames coming from its body being subjugated by a divine warrior (from Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Dragons, Monsters and Fabulous Beasts* [Jerusalem, 2004], 191, fig. 160).

Battle scenes between deities and a monstrous seven-headed serpent are also common in Mesopotamian iconography. A basin from the Old Akkadian period shows a god kneeling in front of a serpent, one of whose heads is slain while the other heads are still alive.[160] In an Old Akkadian cylinder seal from the temple of Abu IV at Eshnunna, a seven-headed monster is slain by two deities with spears (Fig. 9).[161] The monster has a serpentine body while having four legs with claws. The illustration shows that four heads of the monster drooped down dead, while forked tongues stick out from the upper three heads that are still alive. As the monstrous serpent is smitten from the front and back, torch-like flames can be seen emanating from its body, which again recalls the fiery aspects of Leviathan in Job 41:11–13

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[160] *ANEP*, 671.
[161] Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals*, no. 478 = *ANEP*, 671.

[19–21]. The image of deities smiting the monster with spears is also reminiscent of Isa 27:1 where YHWH is said to slay Leviathan with a sword.
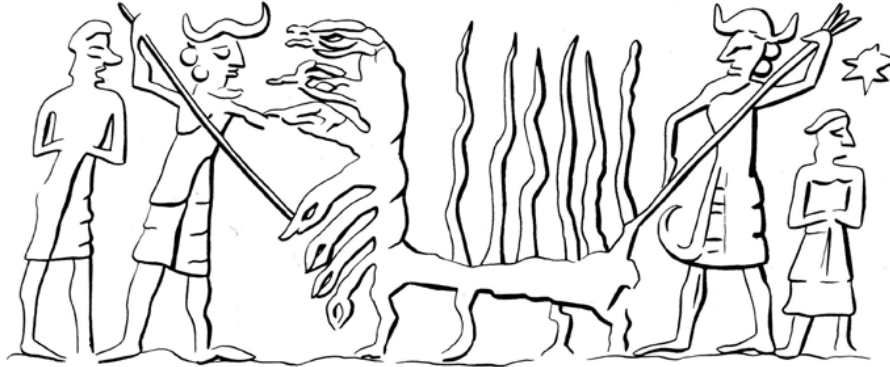
Fig. 9. Seal impression from Tell Asmar (Ešnunna) of Mesopotamia, ca. 2334–2197 BCE, showing two horned divine heroes assaulting a seven-headed monster with spears (from O. Keel, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament: Am Beispiel der Psalmen* [Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1972], 45, no. 52).

In the process of transmission of tradition, monstrous representation may undergo changes and adaptations as the tradition is passed on across time and cultures. This is discernible in the representation of serpentine monsters in the ancient Near East. In Mesopotamia, a range of iconographic evidence shows that serpentine monsters tend to be portrayed as single-headed monstrous entities in later periods;[162] multi-headed versions of the monster seem to fade away and are largely absent after the Old Babylonian period.[163] While the biblical Leviathan is featured with a single head in the book of Job (Job 40:31 [41:7]), Ps 74:13 may reflect a reception of an earlier tradition in its characterization of multiple heads for Leviathan.

In later period, warrior-gods and single-headed serpent-like monsters are often represented in battle scenes in known mythological figures. For example, a cylinder seal from the Neo-Assyrian period around 800 BCE shows a storm-god (Marduk) holding bundles of

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[162] In accord with this view, some scholars suggest that the seven-headed serpent mentioned in the Ugaritic texts belongs to the third millennium BCE.
[163] *TDOT*, 7:508.

lightnings as he runs over the body of a serpentine creature (Tiamat[164]), signifying his victory over the chaos monster (Fig. 10).[165] This image might find an echo in the biblical counterpart, in which YHWH is depicted as a storm-god calming the heavens with his wind as he pierces the fleeing serpent (presumably Leviathan) (Job 26:13). Notably, the body of the serpentine monster in the illustration is featured with binding scales, which recalls the description of Leviathan's scales in Job 41:7–9 [15–17]. A similar depiction of the mythological tradition is found on another Neo-Assyrian seal from the same period.[166]

Fig. 10. Cylinder seal from Mesopotamia, Neo-Assyrian period (ca. 900–750 BCE), depicting the victory of a storm-god (probably Marduk) over the forces of chaos (represented by the serpentine Tiamat). British Museum, BM 89589.

The motif of battle between a serpentine monster and a divine hero is also well attested in the Akkadian literary tradition. In the Akkadian text *KAR* 6, the divine warrior Nergal slays a *bašmu* whose serpentine nature is signified by the sign MUŠ (*KAR* 6, ii, 30). In particular, the association between this *bašmu* and the sea (*tāmtu*) is highlighted in the text:

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[164] In *Enūma Eliš*, the chaos monster Tiamat is a paradoxical monstrous embodiment in that she, appearing as a threat to the divine pantheon, is at the same time the mother of the gods—even of the supreme deity Marduk. In fact, the entire cosmos is created through the body of Tiamat upon Marduk's victory. With her monstrous body constituting the basis of the world, Tiamat, as a monstrous threat, becomes the source of the cosmic order paradoxically.

[165] Korpel and de Moor, "The Leviathan in the Ancient Near East," 10, fig. 1.7.

[166] Edith Porada (ed.), *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North America Collection, Volume 1, Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Bollingen Series 14; New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1948), no. 688; Collon, "The Iconography of Ninurta," 106–107, fig, 189.

ina tâmtim ibbani ^{MUŠ}*ba-[aš-mu]*, "the se[rpent] was created in the sea" (*KAR* 6, ii, 21).

Sharing the mythic theme of "battling against the serpent," the Akkadian Labbu Myth, "The Slaying of Labbu," or possibly *Kalbu*[167] Myth, casts the god Tišpak of Ešnunna as the divine hero (who is played by Nergal in earlier traditions) who fights against a sea-monster named Labbu[168] (*CT* 13.33–34).[169] In its serpentine character (as indicated by the sign MUŠ), the monstrosity of Labbu is palpably enhanced with a gigantic body size (i.e. fifty *bēru* ("miles") long). In terms of cultural influence, the Akkadian Labbu Myth appears to be the precursor of the Babylonian *Enūma Eliš*, in which *bašmu* is listed as one of the monsters that the watery Tiāmat (cognate of *tāmtu*) spawned.[170] Other attested designations for this monstrous figure in Mesopotamian tradition include *mušmaḫḫu* (Sumerian: muš.maḫ, "Great Serpent"), *mušḫuššu* (Sumerian: muš.ḫuš, "Fierce Serpent") (Fig. 11), and *ušumgallu* (Sumerian: ušum.gal, "Great Snake").[171] Often introduced as chaos monsters in the mythical narrative, these serpentine figures tend to be depicted as hybrid creatures (mostly a quadruped with serpentine neck(s) and head(s), with some bearing wings or leonine features) that threaten the cosmos by devouring the creatures therein (cf. *KAR* 6, ii, 26–29), making them all the more terrifying.

It is apparent that the biblical Leviathan has inherited the serpentine nature and its association with the waters from the Mesopotamian tradition of these chaos monsters. Yet, Leviathan also has its uniqueness in the Hebrew tradition. On the one hand, it is cast in an antagonistic mold as YHWH's defeated monster in some traditions (Isa 27:1; Ps 74:14; cf. Job 26:13). On the other hand, it appears to be a tame creature under YHWH's sovereignty in

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[167] Depending on the reading of the first character in the antagonist's name, which, always written as KAL, may be read as *Lab*, *Kal*, *Rib* and *Tan*.

[168] The Akkadian *labbu* usually means "lion." Wiggermann derives it from the verb *labābu*, "to rage," hence, "raging one." Following Wiggermann, Lewis renders the term as a "raging dragon."

[169] F. A. M. Wiggermann "Tišpak, His Seal, and the Dragon *mušḫuššu*," in *To the Euphrates and Beyond: Archaeological Studies in Honor of Maurits N. van Loon* (ed. O. M. C. Haex et. al.; Rotterdam: Balkerma, 1989), 117–33; Theodore J. Lewis, "CT 13.33–34 and Ezek 32: Lion–Dragon Myths," *JAOS* 116 (1996): 28–47.

[170] *Ee* I.34–44; II.19–30; III.24–31, 82–89.

[171] See W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Creation Myths* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 224–47.

others (Ps 104:26),[172] whereas the Mesopotamian serpentine monsters are mainly malevolent embodiments. In any case, the serpentine monster in the ancient Near East tends to play the role of a foil for the deities/heroes who, by defeating or domesticating it, sustain their status and power, and hence the world order.

Fig. 11. One of the *mušḫuššu* depicted on the Ištar gate from Al Hillah (Babylon), ca. 575 BCE. Pergamon Museum, Berlin. Photo by Allie Caulfield from Germany.

1.2.4 The Hittite Sea-Serpents

As is the case for other regions in the ancient Near East, Leviathan also manifests itself in the form of a sea-serpent in the Hittite mythological culture. In their earlierst attestations, primordial serpentine monsters are featured in old Anatolian myths in which they battle with a storm-god. In fragments of Hurro-Hittite myths that form part of the Kumarbi Cycle, the monstrous figure of Hedammu is featured as a sea-serpent that threatens the storm-god Teššub.[173] It is noteworthy that both Hedammu and Teššub are progeny of Kumarbi, rendering the monster and the deity in some familial relationship. In the mythic tales of

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[172] Mark R. Sneed, *Taming the Beast: A Reception History of Behemoth and Leviathan*, Studies of the Bible and Its Reception 12 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2022), 67–68 comments that "the psalmist in Ps 104 is intending to counter the notion found in Ps 74 that Leviathan is a threat to YHWH" as "Leviathan here is certainly no worthy foe but merely a pet God creates for himself."

[173] Its origin is recounted in The Song of Hedammu (*CTH* 348).

Illuyanka, Illuyanka ("Serpent") is said to reside with his offspring in the water abyss (A ii 15–20), revealing its aquatic nature as is typical of other mythical serpents in the ancient Near East. Though it once defeated the storm-god, the monstrous serpent was eventually killed by the same god with the help of his son or daughter (depending on the version of the myth) and a mortal being.[174]

In terms of Hittite iconography, a fragment of a limestone relief dated to around the ninth century BCE, attested from Malatya (Arslantepe) on the Upper Euphrates in Eastern Anatolia,[175] depicts a battle between two armed deities and a monstrous sea-serpent (Fig. 12). The sea serpent is assumed by some to be some version of Illuyanka in the old Anatolian myth as discussed.[176] It is worth noting that the aquatic serpent on the relief is illustrated with turbulent flames and bubbles, signifying its monstrosity that causes the sea to churn and boil. This image is reminiscent of the descriptions of Job 41:23–24 [31–32], where Leviathan "causes the deep to boil" and "generates a shimmering wake."
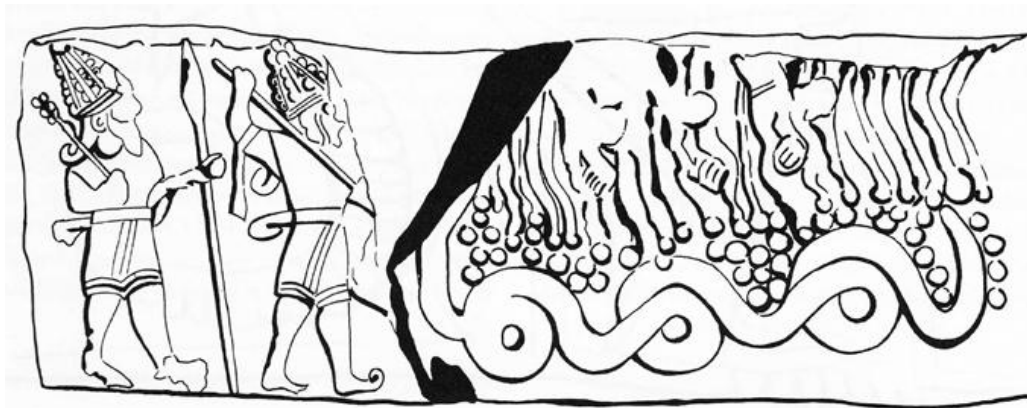
Fig. 12. Fragment of a limestone relief from Malatya (Arslantepe) in Eastern Anatolia, ca. the 9th century BCE, depicting a battle scene between two armed deities and a writhing sea monster (probably Iluyanka) (from Keel, *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament*, 44, no. 50).

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[174] Harry A. Hoffner, *Hittite Myths*, SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 10–14.

[175] Louis Delaporte, *Malatya: fouilles de la Mission archélogique française dirigées* (Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie de Stamboul 5; Paris: E. de Boccard, 1940), pl. 22, 2; Ekrem Akurgal, *The Art of the Hittite* (New York, NY: Abrams, 1962), fig. 104, bottom.

[176] *TDOT*, 7:508.

1.2.5 The Egyptian Apep

On the Egyptian side, Leviathan finds its cultural manifestation in the serpentine figure of Apep in the mythological tradition of ancient Egypt. Known as Apophis in Greek, Apep is a mythic aquatic serpent which was first attested in mortuary texts in Egypt towards the end of the third millennium BCE.[177] Like Leviathan who is associated with the netherworld in the Greek book of Job, Apep is believed to inhabit the underworld, lurking at the entrance of a gate called "Swallower of All" which is guarded by door-keepers ("Swallowers").[178] In some traditions the monstrous Apep is said to dwell in the dark watery abyss known in Egyptian as Nun, recalling the image of Leviathan sweeping through the deep waters (Job 41:23–24 [30–31]). Typically illustrated as a giant serpent in Egyptian art, Apep represents an embodiment of chaos which makes it an opponent of light and Ma'at (order/truth in Egyptian worldview). As a disrupter of order, the serpentine Apep was viewed as the arch-enemy of Re,[179] the sun-god who upholds Ma'at.

The figure of Apep becomes more prominent in the New Kingdom Egypt with the known mythological tradition of Re battling Apep. In the mythic narrative, Apep endeavors to thwart Re daily in his journey through darkness in order to prevent him from re-emerging in the eastern horizon.[180] Re and his helpers thus have to fight against Apep persistently in a day-to-day ritual of cosmic re-creation; as the sun-god travels across the dark, he manages to subdue the serpentine monster. To assist Re in his journey, ancient Egyptians practiced a number of rituals and incantations in their culture that were thought to ward off the power of

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[177] Erik Hornung and Andreas Brodbeck, "Apophis," in *LÄ* 1:350–52; John C. Darnell and Colleen M. Darnell, *The Ancient Egyptian Netherworld Books* (WAW; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2018), 10–15.

[178] Erik Hornung, "Black Holes Viewed from Within: Hell in Ancient Egyptian Thought," *Diogenes* 42 (1994): 133–56. Given its association with the netherworld, Apep itself is designated as "Swallower of Souls" in some texts.

[179] The antagonistic relation is explicitly expressed by Apep's title of "Enemy of Re."

[180] C. L. Seow, "The Leviathan Tradition in the Book of Job" (unpublished manuscript), typescript, 267.

Apep.[181]   It appears that this Egyptian mythological tradition of suppressing Apep by rituals

and incantations has inspired the black magic of invoking Leviathan in cursing the night in

Job 3:8.

The enmity of Apep against the deity is represented in another tradition as the primordial

sea in the form of a circular serpent chasing after its own tail (the *ouroboros*).[182]   In an

ancient illustration (Fig. 13), the circular serpent, which embodies the primordial sea,

encircles the youthful sun-god Re who stays aplomb with one of his foot stepped on the body

of the serpent. Another iconography stresses rather on the potential threat of Apep by

featuring it as a three-headed serpent that encircles the lifeless body of the sun-god (Fig. 14).

Just as the biblical Leviathan poses itself as the enemy of YHWH (Isa 27:1; Ps 74:14; Job

26:13), the Egyptian Apep constitutes a perpetual adversary of the deities in its culture.
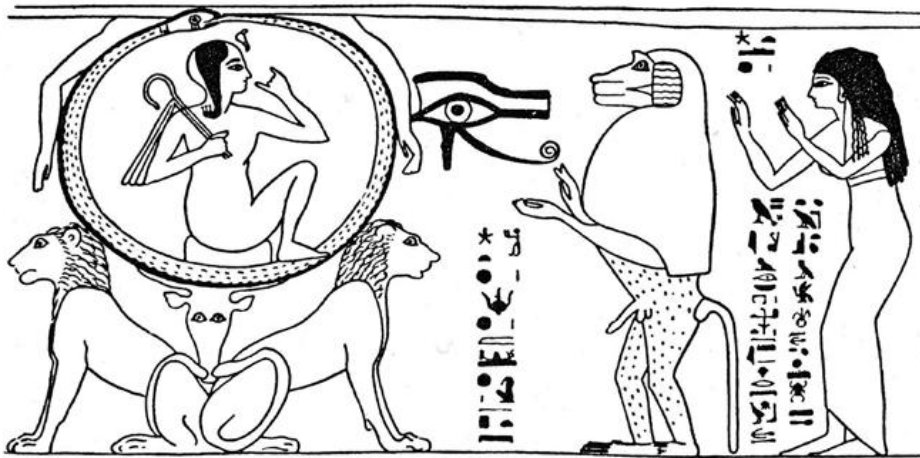
Fig. 13. Illustration in ancient Egypt showing the youthful sun-god being enclosed by a circular serpent who chases after its own tail (signifying the primordial sea) (from B.H. Stricker, *De grote zeeslang* [Leiden, 1953], 11, fig. a).

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[181]   See Donald B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 269; John A. Wilson, "Egyptian Myths, Tales, and Mortuary Texts," *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Third edition with supplement; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 6–7, 11–12; P. Kousoulis, *Magic and Religion as Performative Theological Unity: the Apotropaic Ritual of Overthrowing Apophis* (Ph.D. dissertation; University of Liverpool, 1999), chapters 3–5.
[182]   Korpel and de Moor, "The Leviathan in the Ancient Near East," 6.
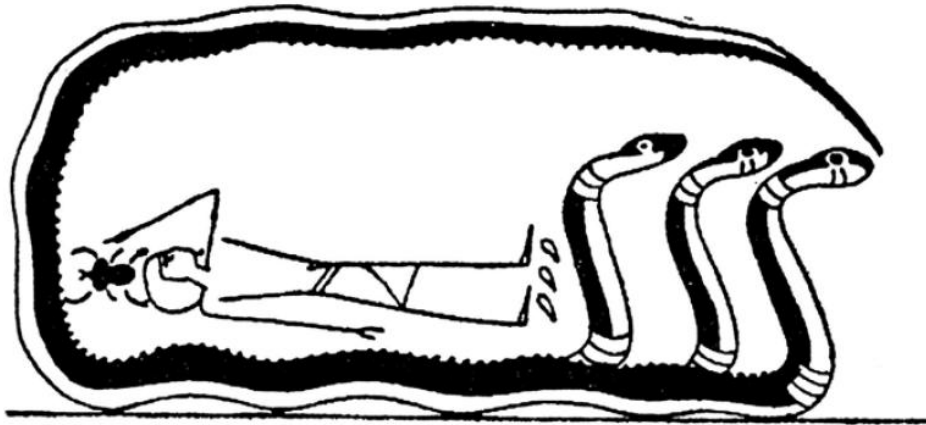
Fig. 14. Ancient Egyptian iconography depicting the three-headed serpent Apep who encircles the dead body of the sun-god (from Stricker, *De grote zeeslang*, 11, fig. c).
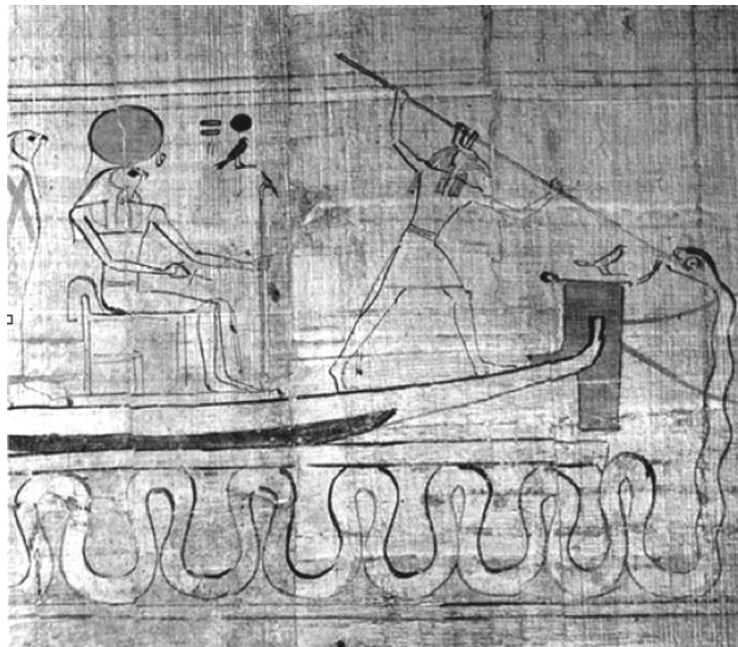
Fig. 15. Image in Heruben Papyrus, New Kingdom (1075–945 BCE), showing the deity Seth suppressing the serpentine Apep by thrusting his spear into its mouth. Museum of Cairo, Egypt.

Being an enemy to be defeated though, Apep—like other serpentine monsters in the ancient Near East—serves as a monstrous foil in Egyptian mythology for divine figures, most notably the sun-god Re and the storm-god Seth, his defender. In particular, Seth takes up the role of defending the sun-god Re by combating the serpentine Apep, which in turn help

maintain the cosmic order.[183] According to Spells 39 and 108 in the Book of the Dead, Seth

stirs up a storm at the western horizon and conquers the sea-serpent called "twisted" (Spell

39.52)[184]—a term that brings to mind the alias of "twisting serpent" for Leviathan (Isa 27:1)

(// Ugaritic Litan). The Papyrus of Heruben dated from the Twenty-first Dynasty (ca.

1075–945 BCE) also shows Seth (in a partly theriomorphic form) attacking the serpent Apep

on the solar-boat as he thrusts his lance into its mouth (Fig. 15).[185] By playing the role of a

subdued monster, Apep paradoxically comes to aggrandize the triumphant power of the

deities who are believed to be maintaining cosmic stability.

1.3   A Wrap-up with Monster Theory

Set in their cultural horizon, the Joban monsters—Behemoth and Leviathan—belong to

the broader family of mythic monsters in the ancient Near East which commonly have

something to do with the order of the cosmos. An investigation of the prehistory of Behemoth

and Leviathan has revealed their various cultural manifestations in the ancient Near East,

with Behemoth being recognized in other traditions as bovine monsters or bovine attributes,

whereas Leviathan appearing to traverse cultures in the form of a serpentine sea-monster with

various names. Given their mythical nature, these monstrous beings often display a sense of

liminality, rendering them highly ambivalent. In particular, these mythic monsters—in accord

with medieval interpretation of monsters (see Introduction)—are often associated in some

way with divinity: in some cases, they exist to be the enemy of the divine as chaotic forces; in

others, they are so intertwined with deities that they share some aspects of the divine.[186] With

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[183] See H. Te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion: A Study of His Role in Egyptian Mythology and Religion*
(Probleme de Ägyptologie 60; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 99–108.
[184] See Joris F. Borghouts, *Book of the Dead (39): From Shouting to Structure* (SAT 10; Wiesbaden
Harrassowitz, 2007).
[185] Alexandre Piankoff and Natacha Rambova, *Mythological Papyri* (Egyptian Religious Texts and
Representations 3; New York, NY: Bollingen Foundation, 1957), 75, fig. 54; Raymond O. Falkner and James
Allen, *Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead* (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble, 2005), 70–71.
[186] As a matter of fact, it appears that the domain of monsters and that of the divine are not as clearly
distinguished to people in the ancient Near East as it is to modern people. While we modern readers tend to
presume that monsters are evil and gods are good, the sharp distinction between "evil" monsters and "good"

the capacity to signify both chaotic powers and the divine, these ancient Near Eastern monsters appear to be divine-demonic phantoms.

As have been demonstrated, Behemoth may find its embodiments in the bovine monsters in Ugaritic and Mesopotamian traditions. It also reveals itself in terms of bovine attributes as rhetoric of divine-royal potency across the ancient Near East. A review of Behemoth's cultural antecedents shows that representations of these bovine monsters are constantly caught in the tension between monstrosity and divinity. Generally representing demonic monstrous forces (e.g. Ugaritic Arish/Atik; Mesopotamian Bull of Heaven) in the respective myths, bovine monsters (and bovine features) in the ancient Near East are hardly separated from the divine domain. As evident in textual records and iconography across the ancient Near East, not only was bovine monstrosity frequently used to convey aspects of divinity, but some bovine monsters are actually divine or semi-divine beings in themselves. As seen from the prehistory of Behemoth—with its paradoxical capacity to signify both demonic and divine aspects, ideas of monstrosity in the ancient Near East never seem to be clearly distinguished from those of divinity.

Appearing in the form of a sea-monster across cultural traditions, Leviathan as a divine-demonic signifier follows a different mode in its significations of the divine and chaotic powers. Typically manifested as a demonic serpentine creature, various cultural embodiments of Leviathan in the ancient Near East serve to personify chaos and evil forces as a monstrous other that needs to be subdued. As monster theory observes, monsters are often embodiments of societal anxiety and fears prevalent in a particular culture.[187] These

gods does not seem to apply to ancient Near Eastern monsters, demons, and deities. More often than not, monsters and demons in the ancient Near East are divine or semi-divine beings, created to function as part of a macro-hierarchy of relations of the deities. See, e.g., Frans A. M. Wiggermann, "Some Demons of Time and Their Functions in Mesopotamian Iconography," in *Die Welt der Götterbilder*, ed. Hermann Spieckermann and Brigitte Groneberg (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 376; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007); Joan Goodnick Westenholz (ed.), *Dragons, Monsters, and Fabulous Beasts* (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2004).

[187] David Gilmore, *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,

widely attested serpentine monsters in the ancient Near East seem to reflect a common cultural concern about chaos and cosmic instability across the region. By playing the role of a monster to be defeated, these aquatic monstrous serpents tend to serve in the mythic narrative as a foil for a divine character, especially a storm-god, as seen in the battles between Ninurta/Marduk and the serpentine monsters (Sumerian/Akkadian), Baal and Litan (Ugaritic), the storm-god and Illuyanka (Hittite), and Seth and Apep (Egyptian). Paradoxically, the capacity of these serpentine monsters to signify the divine lies rather in their conquered monstrosity, with which they come to aggrandize the power of the heroic deities in the respective myths.

1996), 4; Maria Beville, *The Unnameable Monster in Literature and Film*, Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), 6.

CHAPTER 2

THE MONSTER, THE DIVINE, AND HUMANITY:
THE REVEALED MONSTROSITY OF BEHEMOTH AND LEVIATHAN IN JOB 40–41

Having surveyed the broader ancient Near Eastern context where the biblical traditions

of Behemoth and Leviathan find their prehistory in various cultural manifestations, this

chapter is devoted to a close reading of Job 40–41 where the monstrous Behemoth and

Leviathan are featured extensively. In particular, the study will focus on the representation of

the monstrosity of the two Joban creatures in the biblical text, with other related biblical and

extra-biblical material in view. In the paradigm of monster theory, it seeks to examine how

the revealed monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan as part of the divine speech reflects the

paradox of monstrous otherness, which comes to blur the boundary between the monster, the

divine, and humanity (represented by Job).[188]

2.1   Reading Behemoth and Leviathan in the Divine Speech

In the context of the book of Job, the discourses on Behemoth and Leviathan belong to

part of YHWH's second speech (Job 40–41), following the first speech (Job 38–39) that lays

out the macro-design of the cosmos in response to Job's obscuring of divine counsel (עֵצָה)

(38:2). While divine wisdom is the motif of the first speech, YHWH's introductory remarks

(40:6–14) hint that the second speech in chapters 40–41 is centered around divine *mišpāṭ*

(מִשְׁפָּט; most render "justice")[189] (40:8)—which Job is accused of dismissing as he justifies

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[188] According to contemporary monster theory, monsters are characterized by liminality which enables them to
bridge the gap between various identities in a narrative. Emphasizing the bridging power of monsters, Bildhaur
and Mills (2003, 14) remark that "monstrosity equally provided a way of mediating the middle ground between
human and divine, once again both stressing and subverting the hierachical relation that exists between the two."
[189] Before the divine discourse, the term מִשְׁפָּט is used throughout the book in the juridical sense: "justice" (8:3;
9:19, 32; 32:9; 34:12, 17; 35:2; 36:17; 37:23), "judgment" (9:32; 14:3; 22:4; 29:14; 34:23), "case" (13:18; 23:4),
and "right" (27:2; 31:13; 34:4, 5, 6; 36:6). In particular, Job has called into question the divine *mišpāṭ* (9:19, 32)
while insisting that he holds fast to his "righteousness" (27:6), as quoted later by Elihu (34:5).

himself. C. L. Seow suggests that מִשְׁפָּט as the subject of YHWH's second speech is not so much about forensic justice,[190] as befits Job's complaints; rather, it points to a sense of jurisdiction over the cosmos,[191] the exercising of which belongs to the prerogative of divine sovereignty.[192] YHWH then follows to launch a rhetorical discourse (40:9–14) that in effect challenges Job to take on divine sovereignty, not least in humbling the proud and wicked. It is in this context that YHWH brings up the two monstrous creatures—Behemoth and Leviathan, which form the bulk part of the second divine speech.

As have been demonstrated earlier, Behemoth and Leviathan, as part of the cultural history of the ancient Near East, are best regarded as mythic monsters rather than simple natural animals.[193] As the subject matter changes from divine counsel in YHWH's first speech to divine jurisdiction in the second, the beings featured also progress from natural animals to the more "unnatural" or even supernatural, mythic creatures, namely, Behemoth and Leviathan.[194] In all their perceived otherness, the monstrous pair constitutes the climax of the divine speech which addresses Job's issues in the strongest terms. Here now YHWH

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[190] That is, in Martin Buber's terms, "retributive justice" from the perspective of human notion of justice, as opposed to the "distributive justice" of God, whose sovereign action is not bound by human sensibilities. See Martin Buber, *The Prophetic Faith*, trans. C. Witton-Davies (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1949 [orig. 1941]), 195.

[191] This sense of meaning is especially reflected in 1 Sam 8:9, in which the term מִשְׁפָּט is used to refer to a king's jurisdiction (cf. Isa 1:17, 23; Dan 9:12).

[192] C. L. Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth," 221; "The Leviathan Tradition in the Book of Job," 293. See also Sylvia H. Scholnick, "The Meaning of מִשְׁפָּט in the Book of Job," *JBL* 101 (1982): 521–29.

[193] In the wake of Samuel Bochart (1663), who identified Behemoth with the hippopotamus and Leviathan with the crocodile, some modern scholars have maintained a naturalistic reading of the Joban beasts. E.g. Robert Gordis, *The Book of Job: Commentary, New Translation, and Special Studies* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1978), 562–72 follows Bochart's identifications; G. R. Driver, "Mythical Monsters in the Old Testament," in *Studi orientalistici in onore di Giorgio Levi della Vida* (Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente, 1956), 1:234–349 identifies Behemoth with the crocodile and Leviathan with the whale; B. D. Eerdmans, *Studies in Job* (Leiden: Brill, 1939), 27–34 recognizes Leviathan as the dolphin; S. Spinner, "Die Verwendung der Synonymen im AT," *BZ* 23 (1935–36): 149 takes Leviathan to be tuna; B. Couroyer, "Qui est Béhémoth," *RB* 82 (1975): 418–443 sees Leviathan as the water buffalo. For a critical review of these suggestions, see John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 65–68, 76–79.

[194] A growing number of scholars tends to take Gunkel's position in identifying the Joban creatures as mythological monsters. E.g., N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job: A New Commentary* (Jerusalem: Kiryath Sepher, 1957), 556–75; Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008), 320–46; Mary K. Wakemn, *God's Battle with the Monsters: A Study in Biblical Imagery* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 62–68, 113–17; Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1985), 564–575.

turns Job's eyes to the first monstrous creature, Behemoth, which is featured in Job 40:15–23.

2.2 Behemoth, YHWH, and Job (Humanity)

Job 40:15 begins the discourse on Behemoth (and Leviathan) by introducing the createdness of the monster and its generally bovine character.

<u>Preamble: Here Comes the Monster (v. 15)</u>

> [15] Here now[195] is Behemoth, whom I created[196] with you;
> He eats grass like cattle.

There are two ambiguities in this opening line, with the first one lying in the title of Behemoth. As have been discussed (see Introduction), the seemingly plural noun Behemoth (בְּהֵמוֹת)[197] is best read as the so-called intensive plural or plural of majesty.[198] It signifies that Behemoth is not only a single entity, but also "the supreme beast," that is, the "Beast" par excellence.[199] This prevents Behemoth from being identified with any defined animals like those in the first speech of YHWH (Job 39), and hence it is itself an ambiguous title that adds to Behemoth's mythological character.

The second ambiguity has to do with the rendering of the prepositional phrase עִמָּךְ, "with you." Syntactically, the phrase possibly (and naturally) implies Job's presence when YHWH created Behemoth, with him either being a witness or a collaborator in the work of creation. Apparently Job was not there when YHWH created the world. But considering YHWH made

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[195] The Hebrew combination הִנֵּה־נָא, often translated as "Behold/Look," is best regarded as the presentation formula that logically connects the following with what is previously said (Lambdin 1971, 170–71; *IBHS* 24.7.a), and hence is translated here as "Here now."

[196] With the exception of the OG which omits here the relative clause אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי, "whom I made," all other textual witnesses are in line with the Hebrew.

[197] The form בְּהֵמוֹת is attested elsewhere in the book in 12:7 and 35:11 with reference to "beasts" as natural land animals.

[198] GKC, §124e, f.

[199] On the word "Behemoth," the MT (בְּהֵמוֹת) aligns with the Vg. (*Behemoth*) and Syr. (ܒܗܡܘܬ) that take it to refer to a single proper noun by transliterating the word. The OG (θηρία, "beasts" in singular sense) and Tg. (בעירא, "livestock") render it with more of a naturalistic sense, but they too treat the term as singular throughout the passage.

reference to the power of Job (i.e. his "saving hand") in the previous verse (40:14), it makes sense for YHWH to—for the purpose of irony—put Job in such an esteemed position here. Given that Job has been portrayed as a pathetic mortal sufferer through the book, it is an outright irony that Job is envisaged in such heroic images as "savior" or "creator." The declaration in verse 15 can also be read as YHWH's sarcastic expression of Job's pride—that Job might have believed that he indeed qualifies to be a "co-creator" with God in the creation project. As monster theory observes, the monster often possesses the capacity to bridge (or, in effect, to blur) presupposed identities. Being introduced as a monstrous other, Behemoth immediately comes to blur the supposed boundary between the divine and humanity.

Besides Job's identification with YHWH, the phrase "with you" may imply Job's commonality with Behemoth, which is actually a popular interpretation. As most Bible translators and commentators would have read, this phrase means that both Behemoth and Job are created by YHWH.[200] In this sense, YHWH is basically saying, "Behemoth is that kind of creature whom I created as I did with you." The emphasis is on the "createdness" that Job and Behemoth share—so Job is no different from Behemoth in his very nature. The earthly nature of Job is reinforced when he is paired with the bovine Behemoth who "eats grass like cattle." The implication here might be that humanity, as Job represents, plays only one part—which is not even necessarily a more significant part—in the creative work of God.

The word עִמָּךְ is therefore an ambiguous term in the sense that it may imply the identification of Job with YHWH or with Behemoth simultaneously. As the character of Job represents, humanity seems to be caught in the tension between the power of God as the creator, and the earthly nature—which humans share with Behemoth—as the created. Given the perceived ambiguity, the introduction of Behemoth as a monster already engenders a

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[200] This meaning is in fact reflected in a number of modern Bible translations including ASV ("I made as well as thee"), ESV ("I made as I made you"), NASB ("I made as well as you"), NIV ("I made along with you"), NRS ("I made just as I made you"), TNK ("I made as I did you"). A majority, if not all, of commentators adopt this view in their renderings of Job 40:15.

sense of ambivalence in the viewer.

Behemoth's Potency (vv. 16–18)

> [16] Here now, his strength is in his loins,
>   And his vigor in the muscles[201] of his abdomen.
> [17] His appendage is firm[202] as cedar;
>   The sinews of his thighs[203] are tight-knit[204].
> [18] His limbs are bronze tubes;
>   His bones are like iron bars.

Having introduced Behemoth as a bovine creature who "eats grass like cattle" in verse 15, verses 16–18 elaborate its bovine attributes with a focus on its virile strength and invincible body. The parallel terms כֹּחַ ("strength") and אוֹן ("vigor") in verse 16 are used in reference to the incomparable might of YHWH in Isa 40:26, who gives כֹּחַ and אוֹן to the weary ones (40:29). In other contexts, the word pair may suggest virility, stature, and power.[205] The כֹּחַ/אוֹן pair here corresponds to the parallel plural nouns עֲצָמִים ("limbs")[206] and גְּרָמָיו ("his bones")[207] in verse 18, which signify extraordinary strength by the analogy to metal: "His

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[201] The OG, Vg. and Tg. read "in the navel" for the MT בִּשְׁרִירֵי, probably based on the Hebrew noun שֹׁר (Ezek 16:4; Prov 3:8; Song 7:3). Attested by cognates in Aramaic and Arabic, the root šrr basically means "to be firm, strong," and so the noun form may mean "strong (things)," that is, "muscles."

[202] The Hebrew verb חפץ normally means "to desire, delight," but this sense of meaning is not attested in any extant witnesses. The OG (ἔστησεν), Vg. (constringit), and Syr. (ܐܩܦ) read it in the sense of erection, while the Tg. (כאיף) takes it to mean "to bend."

[203] The precise meaning of the Hebrew פַחֲדָו is obscure, as is reflected in the various ancient translations. The OG omits the word by rendering the line: "its nerves/sinews are joined together." Among other witnesses, there are two attested targumic renderings (Tg.¹: פחדוהי; Tg.²: שׁעבזוהי), both of which refer to "testicle," a meaning also reflected in the Vg. (testiculorum). The Syriac ܦܚܕܘܗܝ (Pesh.), likely meaning "his (lower) limbs" or "his buttocks" (SL, 1161), seems to reflect the Arabic fahid/fahd/fihd, which may generally refer to lower limb (thigh, leg) (Lane, 2348–49).

[204] The verbal root of the Hebrew יְשֹׂרָגוּ, שׁרג, appears one other time in Lam 1:14, בְּיָדוֹ יִשְׂתָּרְגוּ, "by his hand they are knit together." This root finds its Arabic cognate šaraja, "to interweave, entwine," which is used for laying of bricks tightly over one another (Lane, 1529).

[205] In Gen 49:3, for example, Jacob characterizes Reuben his firstborn his "strength" (כֹּחַ) and his "vigor" (אוֹן).

[206] עֲצָמִים, basically meaning "bones," may simply refer to the body in the Hebrew Bible (Amos 6:10; Qoh 11:5; Ps 6:3 [2]; 38:4 [33]), whereas in other instances it may refer more specifically to bones or limbs (Judg 19:29; Isa 58:11; 66:14; Jer 23:9; Ezek 24:4–5; Ps 31:11 [10]; 32:3). Given its analogy to "bronze tubes," the Tg. translates the term here as "limbs" (איברוהי).

[207] Known for its strength, iron is regarded mythologically in ancient Egypt as "the bones of Seth," a hostile god in Egyptian mythology. See Bernhard Lang, "Job xl 18 and the 'Bones of Seth'," VT 30 (1980): 360–61.

limbs are bronze tubes // his bones are like iron bars." By framing the description of Behemoth with terms that connote strength and power, bovine potency is emphasized as the signature characterization of this monster.

Given that sublime potency is often expressed in terms of sexual prowess in the ancient Near East (see Section 1.1.4), the potency of Behemoth is notably described with euphemism that contains sexual connotations. Apart from Behemoth's mighty "loins" (מָתְנַיִם)[208] and "his abdominal muscles" (שְׁרִירֵי בִטְנוֹ) (40:16) which convey a sense of sexual prowess that comes with its physical bodily strength, the description of its "appendage" (זָנָב)[209]—an euphemism for the penis—in verse 17 addresses the beast's potency with perceptible sexual connotations. As Seow points out, the root of the verb יַחְפֹּץ, √חפץ, normally meaning "delight in,"[210] often "carries the connotation of resolve, that is, firmness of attitude,"[211] in the Hebrew Bible.[212] In view of its subject זָנָב, the Joban poet seems to appeal to the use of the verb חפץ as a double entendre, signifying both meanings—"to be firm" (as the OG, Vg. and Syr. render) and "to delight." In signaling that the זָנָב euphemistically refers to an appendage that is related to desire, the Joban poet in effect alludes to the erect member of Behemoth which becomes "firm" when it "delights."[213] Moreover, the potency of Behemoth in terms of sexual prowess is virtually invincible when its "appendage" is likened to a cedar tree, a symbol of majestic power in the biblical tradition.[214] Further, the term פַחֲדָו ("his thighs") in 40:17b is

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[208] The word "loins" is often used in the Hebrew Bible as a metaphor for strength (Nah 2:2, Ps 69:24 [23], Deut 33:11).

[209] Many interpreters take זָנָב to refer to "tail" and understand the term to be a euphemism for the penis, as in Rabbinic Hebrew (Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 406). The cognate term in Arabic, however, may refer to any appendage that resembles a tail (Lane, 980). So the translation of "appendage" is preferred here.

[210] With its reference to pleasure in general, the verbal form of חפץ is taken up to allude to sexual pleasure in biblical poetry (Song 2:7; 3:5; 8:4).

[211] Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth," 226 cites the Syriac root *ḥpṭ*, which can imply resolve, persistence, constancy, corresponding to the Arabic *ḥafiẓa*, "to maintain, uphold, stay," which can be used of committed loyalty (Lane, 600–695). In light of these cognates, the Hebrew *ḥpṣ* can convey firmness of will and loyalty, as is reflected in 2 Sam 20:11, "whoever stands (חָפֵץ) by Joab."

[212] Cf. Judg 13:23; 1 Sam 2:25; 18:25; Isa 58:2; Mic 7:18; 1 Chr 28:9.

[213] Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth," 226.

[214] Cf. 2 Kgs 19:23; Isa 2:13; 37:24; Ezek 17:22, 31:3.

suggestive of virility that adds to Behemoth's potency.[215] All these depictions are in accord with the literary traditions in the ancient Near East, in which potency is often expressed in terms of sexual prowess.

Instead of a purely zoological description, 40:16–18 is rather skewed with a pronounced focus on the potency of Behemoth. As discussed in the previous chapter, bovine features and bull-like creatures are typically utilized as ideological vehicles that communicate divine or royal power in the ancient Near East. Sharing this rhetoric in the surrounding cultures, the potent Behemoth painted in these verses can be understood as a spectacle for divine power and sovereignty.[216] Emerging as a monster that sets it apart from ordinary human beings, the potent Behemoth seems to be identified with God here. While the identification of Job with YHWH/Behemoth is ambiguous in 40:15, God has taken up the ambiguity here in 40:16–18 inasmuch as God is somehow represented by the potent Behemoth. With the rhetoric of bovine monstrosity, the distinction between the divine and the monster is blurred.

Behemoth's Supremacy (vv. 19–20)

> [19] He is the first of the ways of God;
>   The creature that subjugates the dry land.
> [20] For the mountains bring him produce,
>   And all the wild animals play there.

Following verses 16–18 which stress on the perceived potency of Behemoth, verses 19–20 highlight the supremacy of this monster by means of mythological language characterized by agricultural and faunal dynamics. As in the case of חפץ, the term רֵאשִׁית in

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[215] Some suggest that the poetic line in v. 17b depicts the tight muscular lower limbs of the beast as it mates.
[216] Characterizing the segment of 40:16–18 as a *wasf*—a lyric poem meant to praise the statues of deities, David Bernat, "Biblical *Waṣf*s beyond Song of Songs," *JSOT* 28/3 (2004): 328–41 posits that the purpose of this ode is to aggrandize the divine power by a potent counter-image, though the text itself does not suggest Behemoth's hostility against YHWH. Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 249–50, on the other hand, sees that YHWH affirms his divine sovereignty through the expressed admiration for the sublime creature.

verse 19 also has double references—the "first" is both temporal ("first" in time, from the very beginning) and qualitative ("first" in rank, chief in significance)[217] at the same time. In the temporal sense, Behemoth is the first in order among the animals created on the fifth day (cf. Gen 1:24); whereas in a qualitative sense, the spectacular Behemoth is characterized as the foremost, exemplary creature among God's creation.[218] It is worth noting that this qualitative rendering of רֵאשִׁית is designated for the personified Wisdom in Prov 8:22. With the title of the "first of [God's] way," Wisdom is prioritized as YHWH's supreme creation. This affinity between Wisdom and Behemoth, who too is the "first of the ways of God," may bespeak some intertexual implications between them. Like the preeminent Wisdom in Proverbs, Behemoth can be seen as a supreme masterpiece of God who also carry divine truths.[219] Through an analogy with the divine Wisdom, the Joban poet reveals Behemoth's supremacy in creation and its identification with the divine.

Importantly, the identification of Behemoth as God's supreme creation challenges the creation theology in the book of Genesis, which places humanity as the crowning creation.[220] While humanity is said to bear the image of God in Genesis 1, Behemoth appears to be more preeminent than human beings in reflecting the majesty of the creator here. In placing Behemoth in a more prominent position, the Joban poet in effect subverts the traditional creation theology that celebrates the dignity of humanity as the culmination of God's creation.[221] Rather than acclaiming humans as the representative of God's dominion over the

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[217] The qualitative sense of the word can be found in Jer 49:35; Amos 6:6; Prov 3:9; Dan 11:41.

[218] Correspondingly, the Akkadian *rēštu* can also indicate primacy in a temporal or qualitative sense. In particular, the form *rēštu* is often used in reference to divine and royal preeminence. Shalmaneser I, for example, addresses himself as *iššakku rēštu*, "the foremost viceroy," of the deities (RIMA 1, A.O.77.1, 7–8). Similarly, Ashurnasirpal II claims to enjoy divinely-endowed primacy: "I am the foremost" (RIMA 1, A.O.101.1, 32–33; A.O.101.17, i.36–36).

[219] That Wisdom is opposed to "the proud" (גֵּאָה) and "pride" (גָּאוֹן) (Prov 8:13) echoes with YHWH's address of "the proud" and "pride" (40:10–13) in the preamble to the Behemoth discourse. Ironically, when Job previously urges his friends to "ask the *bĕhēmôt* that may teach" them divine mystery (12:7), now YHWH uses Behemoth as a didactic tool to reveal to Job some divine truth.

[220] As Melanie Köhlmoos, *Das Auge Gottes. Textstrategie im Hiobbuch*, FAT 25 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999) 321–54 notes, the divine discourse on Behemoth subverts the traditional understanding of the status of humanity among God's creation.

[221] In fact, subversion of the so-called high anthropology reflected in Genesis has already occurred in the first

earth, the Joban poet lays out the monstrous Behemoth as the portentate who manifests divine sovereignty. While Job, who represents humanity, has been challenged to reflect on his claimed status as the "first human" (הֲרִאישׁוֹן אָדָם) (15:7), YHWH challenges Job here even more with the claim that Behemoth is "the first, that is, the foremost of God's ways." The discourse on Behemoth has not only blurred the distinction between the divine and the monster, but it has also relativized the presumably esteemed role and status of humanity as God's creation.

The latter half of verse 19 continues to delineate the supremacy of Behemoth. In the MT, it is vocalized as הָעֹשׂוֹ יַגֵּשׁ חַרְבּוֹ, typically rendered "his creator brings near his sword." This image is often interpreted as Behemoth's creator (i.e., God) bringing near his sword in order to kill or to subdue the beast.[222] Some modern commentators interpret "his sword" otherwise as Behemoth's tusks or teeth, depending on which animal one pictures here.[223] However, given that "his creator/maker" is always vocalized as עֹשֵׂהוּ (instead of עֹשׂוֹ) in biblical Hebrew,[224] the consonantal form העשו may be better read as a passive participle, הֶעָשׂוֹ, "the one created," or more idiomatically, "the creature."[225] This reading finds support in the OG which renders πεποιημένον, "what is made."[226] The ancient writing יגש (without the diacritical dot on שׁ), rather than being read יַגֵּשׁ, may actually reflect יגשׂ (with שׂ being taken not as שׁ but as שׂ), assuming the root √נגשׂ, "to rule over, subjugate."[227] Accordingly, the word חרבו, traditionally interpreted as "his sword," may have been a hypercorrected form based on a tentatively original spelling חרבה (misinterpreted as חַרְבֹּה, "his sword"), which

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divine speech (Job 38–39), which barely mentions humankind throughout the discourse—even the only mention of human is a negative statement (38:26). While the second speech is said to subvert a dignified view of humanity in Genesis 1, the first speech challenges the anthropocentric theology reflected in Genesis 2–3.

[222] As reflected in the reading of Pope, Clines, Hatley, Habel.

[223] Samuel Rolles Driver and George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, The International Critical Commentary (1921; reprint, New York: Scribner, 1958), 328.

[224] As in Job 4:17; see also Isa 17:7; 27:11; 29:16; Hos 8:14; Prov 14:31; 17:5.

[225] Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth," 236–37.

[226] Presumably read הֶעָשׂוֹ, "what is made," an archaic form of the Qal passive participle of a *lamed–he* verb.

[227] This is in fact a reading proposed by Hermann Gunkel, who reads this line הֶעָשׂוּ יַגֵּשׁ חֲרָבוֹ, "the one created that should subjugate his dry land."

means "dry land" (חֲרָבָה).[228] Taken altogether, the latter half of verse 19 can be read הֶעָשׂוֹ יִגֹּשׁ חֲרָבָה, "the creature that subjugates the dry land." Having asserted the supremacy of Behemoth as the foremost creation in the first colon, the second bolsters the monster's preeminence further by articulating its ruling power over the land. Read this way, the picture here does not seem to fit the motif of *Chaoskampf* (which would read God slaying the beast as a chaos monster). Rather, the monstrous Behemoth enjoys a privileged, divinely-bestowed status in the created world of God. The statement in this verse also has implications for the status of humanity. In contrast to the creation theology in Gen 1:26–28 which presents humanity as an earthly representative of divine rulership, it is Behemoth here that enjoys the privilege of ruling over all the earth. In its identification with divine rulership, Behemoth in effect dethrones humanity as the presupposed supreme creation.

Verse 20 further concretizes Behemoth's subjugation over the earth by depicting how the inhabitants of the land fare under the sovereignty of Behemoth—"for the mountains bring him produce, and all the wild animals play there." Again, the Joban poet appeals to double entendres here for poetic purposes. בּוּל is understood to be a by-form of יְבוּל,[229] meaning "produce/yield of soil," but it can also be read as "tribute" in light of Akkadian evidence. Specifically, the double meaning can be traced to the Akkadian cognate *biltu* (cf. *wabālu*, "to bring;" *CDA*, 44a), which not only denotes yields of various kinds, but also their use as tributes. By the same token, while the Hebrew verb נשׂא generally refers to arboreal yield (Hag 2:19, Joel 2:22), most notably with the mountains as the subject (Ezek 17:23; 36:8; Ps 72:3), it can describe the tribute of gifts (2 Sam 8:2, 6) and the religious tribute of offerings (Ps 96:8 = 1 Chr. 16:29; Ezek 20:31). In fact, the verb נגשׂ in 40:19 may imply the paying of tribute (cf. OSArb. *ngš*), as in 2 Kgs 23:35 and Dan 11:20 where the word refers to the collection of tribute for a ruler. The image of the mountains bringing tribute to Behemoth

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[228] Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth," 238.
[229] One may also read this line in terms of haplography: כי בול > כי יבול.

substantiates the monster's supremacy on the earth as a potentate.

In fact, the imagery of the mountains bringing tribute is a common mythological rhetoric in ancient Near Eastern literature that signifies divine and royal sovereignty. In the *Erra Epic*, for instance, the god Erra, as "king of the entire world and creator of the universe" in the myth, asks his proxy Išum for tribute from the mountains: "You shall make the mountains bring (*tušaššu < našû*) their yield, the sea its tribute (*bilatšu*)" (*Erra Epic*, V.33). The mountains in the Ugaritic Baal myth are said to bring (*ybl*) their yield of precious metals—in recognition of his kingship—as tribute for the construction of Baal's palace (*CAT* 1.4.V.15–16). Using tribute from the mountains as a symbol of royal sovereignty is most evident in Neo-Assyrian royal propaganda. Besides Shalmanezer I who boasts of having imposed "heavy tribute of the mountain" on his vassals (RIMA 1, A.O.77.1, 44–45), Tukulti-Ninurta I mentioned the receipt of "the tribute of their lands and the produce of their mountains" (RIMA 1, A.O.78.5, 20–22; A.O.78.23, 33–34, 83–84). In collecting tribute from the mountains, Ashurnasirpal II claims to have "ruled all the mountains and received their tribute" (RIMA 2, A.O.101.26, 12–13). Apart from literary evidence, ancient iconography also attests to the motif of royal control of the mountains as a manifestation of kingly power. A wall display in the Northwest Palace in Nimrud, for example, depicts tributaries bringing tributes from that region.[230] The walls of Sargon's palaces in Khorsabad and Nineveh also include scenes of foreign tributaries conveying timber to the city, as well as depictions of the king hunting in a park that symbolizes the sacred mountains.[231] With this prevalent rhetoric that connotes divine-royal sovereignty in the ancient Near East, the imagery of the mountains bringing tribute (abundant yield) in verse 20 serves as an affirmation of the supremacy of Behemoth among God's creation.

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[230] British Museum, BM 124562; see also Allison K. Thomason, "Representation of North Syrian Landscape in Neo-Assyrian Art," *BASOR* 323 (2001): 74.

[231] Pauline Albenda, *The Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria* (Paris: Éditions Recherches sur les Civilisations, 1986), pls. 19 and 24 (tributaries), 21–23 (timber from the mountains), 85–89 (royal hunt in the park).

Not only do the mountains affirm the kingship of Behemoth by bringing it tribute, but the wild animals that inhabit these very mountains also testify to the peace and security warranted by the sovereignty of Behemoth (40:20b). Specifically, the ecological scene of "all the wild animals play" illustrates the carefree life enjoyed by the animal kingdom under the lordship of Behemoth. The root of the verb יְשַׂחֲקוּ, √שׂחק, mostly rendered "to laugh, play," suggests unconcerned looseness and insouciance under Behemoth's kingly control. While Behemoth appears to evoke fear that the mountains bring it tribute, it elicits delightfulness among the wildlife characterized by the animals' laughter at the same time. That Behemoth evokes fear and delight simultaneously conforms to monster theory, which observes that the monster is both terrifying and fascinating.[232]

It is worth noting that the "laughter" of the wild animals here echoes with the "laughter" of other natural creatures in YHWH's first speech, including the wild donkey that "laughs" at the tumult of the city (39:7), the ostrich that "laughs" at the horse and his riders (39:18), and the wild horse that "laughs" at fear while not dismayed (39:22). These laughters reflect that the animals are in a state of looseness. Like the wild creatures in the first speech who are unconcerned as they inhabit the world under YHWH's counsel, the wild animals in the second are equally unperturbed under the lordship of Behemoth. In this respect, Behemoth is comparable to YHWH in terms of sovereignty over creation as delineated in the first speech.

In Mesopotamian royal ideology, most notably Neo-Assyrian royal propaganda, the subjugation of wild animals is another widely used imagery that showcases divine-royal control of the cosmos. For example, in asserting his kingship, Ashurnasirpal II boasts of having captured all sorts of wild animals of the mountains and collected them in Nimrud as a spectacle (RIMA 2, A.O.101.2, 38). From Sargon II onwards, images of the royal garden, termed *kirimāhu* (derived from Sumerian – kiri₆: "garden, orchard," and maḫ: "majestic,

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[232] In particular, Beal (2002, 7–8) proposes that the monster can be characterized as an *monstrum tremendum*, something which is simultaneously awful and awesome in the perception of the viewer.

abundant"), are employed as an ideological device that signifies royal control of the cosmos.[233] Typically featured with a variety of exotic animals which comes under royal control, these royal gardens are believed to be an earthly reflex of divine sovereignty. Depictions of wild animals at ease under royal power are also found in the palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh.[234] Sharing the cultural horizon of the ancient Near East, the relaxed wild animals here probably have similar royal connotations as they point to the supremacy of Behemoth over all the earth.

On another note, the word שָׁם ("there") is loaded with mythological overtone in light of its implicit reference to the netherworld elsewhere in the book (1:21; 3:17). With reference to the netherworld, this "there"—together with the mythic mountains—represents the extremities of world, which in turn signifies Behemoth's universal supremacy.[235] The mythological implication of שׁם is substantiated by the OG which renders it ἐν τῷ ταρτάρῳ ("in Tartarus," the underworld in Greek mythology).[236] As Norman Habel remarks, "there" in verse 20 is deeply mysterious.[237] Hinting a mysterious abode for Behemoth, it adds to the monster's perceived otherness.

In short, Behemoth—as the foremost of God's creation—is represented as an earthly manifestation of divine sovereignty. The supremacy of Behemoth over natural creatures serves to mirror and reflect the greater, unsurpassable authority of YHWH. In a sense, Behemoth and God seem to morph into one another. It is as if in encountering this spectacular, potent, and supreme monstrous other, one encounters God as the wholly Other. A closer look at the characterization of Behemoth reveals a blurred distinction between the monstrous and the divine, which testifies to the paradox of the monster.

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[233] Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth," 242.
[234] Paul Collins et al., *Assyrian Palace Sculptures* (London, UK: The British Museum Press, 2008), 84–87.
[235] Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth," 241.
[236] Indeed, the OG's rendering of this verse is mythologically laden: ἐπελθὼν δὲ ἐπ᾽ ὄρος ἀκρότομον ἐποίησεν χαρμονὴν τετράποσιν ἐν τῷ ταρτάρῳ, "And having gone to a steep mountain, he causes joy to the quadrupeds in Tartarus."
[237] Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 567.

[21] Under the lotuses[238] he lies down,

 In the covert of a reed marsh.

[22] The lotuses cover him as his shade[239];

 The willows of the brook surround him.

[23] If the river rages, he is not in haste;

 He is confident, though the river rushes to his mouth.

While verses 19–20 zoom into the dry land which Behemoth reigns over, verses 21–23 change over to a marshy scene where the beast inhabits. These verses focus on a watery environment, which covers the "reed marsh" (קָנֶה וּבִצָּה), "brook" (נַחַל), and "river" (נָהָר/יַרְדֵּן). Behemoth is now pictured in a reed marsh—a liminal space between the dry land and the sea.

In fact, the marshland is considered a place of ambivalence in terms of power control in the Neo-Assyrian context, not least for the Assyrian rulers. Given the lush vegetation therein, it has an abundance of natural resources that constitute a source of tribute in Neo-Assyrian times.[240] As a natural habitat for many plants and natural resources, it provides for a rich source of construction material which favors political control. However, its unique landscape also makes it a perfect hiding site for refugees—most notably the rebels and fugitives who fled the Assyrian army—from their pursuers.[241] For example, a deposed Babylonian king named Marduk-apla-iddina probably fled and hid in the marsh, so Sennacherib had to order his troops "into the midst of marshes," where the enemy "hid among the reeds" in his first

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[238] The Hebrew צֶאֱלִים is found only here and in v. 22. With the exception of the OG which translates as "trees" (δένδρα), all the other witnesses (Tg., Vg., Syr.) take the word to mean "shade/shadow," probably due to the influence of the similar word צְלָלוֹ ("its shade") in v. 22. Citing the Arabic cognate ḍāl (Lane, 1816c), Ibn Janaḥ (*Book of Roots*, 597) and Albert Schultens (*Liber Jobi*, 2:1156–59) were among the first to suggest that the Hebrew term refers to a plant in the lotus family.

[239] The pronominal suffix with the word צֵל ("shade") can refer to the beneficiary of the subject (cf. Num 14:9; Ps 121:5), as is assumed here.

[240] J. R. Pournelle and J. Algaze, "Travels in Edin: Deltaic Resilience and Early Urbanism in Greater Mesopotamia," in *Preludes to Urbanism: The Late Chalcolithic of Mesopotamia*, ed. A. Mcmahon and H. Crawford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 7–12.

[241] Ariel M. Bagg, "The Unconquerable Country: The Babylonian Marshes in the Neo–Assyrian sources," *Water History* 12 (2020): 64–66.

campaign (704–702 BCE) (RINAP 3/1, 1.34–35; 3.5–6, 10; 111.1, 25–26, 34; RINAP 3/2, 213.34–35).[242] At the time of Sargon II, some Aramaean tribes fled to "a river which was difficult (to reach), and (among) the marshes (*qanê api*)" in fear of the Assyrian army.[243] It was also a hiding place for Šūzubu, "a Chaldean who lives in the marshes," who rebelled against Assyria with other fugitives and became king of Babylon later under the name of Mušēzib-Marduk (692–689 BCE) (RINAP 3/1, 22, iii, 52–54; RINAP 3/2, 46, 33). Apart from written sources, battle scenes depicted on the reliefs of Sennacherib's Southwest Palace in Nineveh also illustrate Chaldean fugitives hiding in a marshland, specifically in the covert of the reeds (Fig. 16) (cf. RINAP 3/1, 22.23).[244] While the natural resources of the marshland promise a tremendous economic value that favors Assyrian political control, its protecting landscape poses formidable military challenges for the Assyrian army which renders it politically ambivalent.
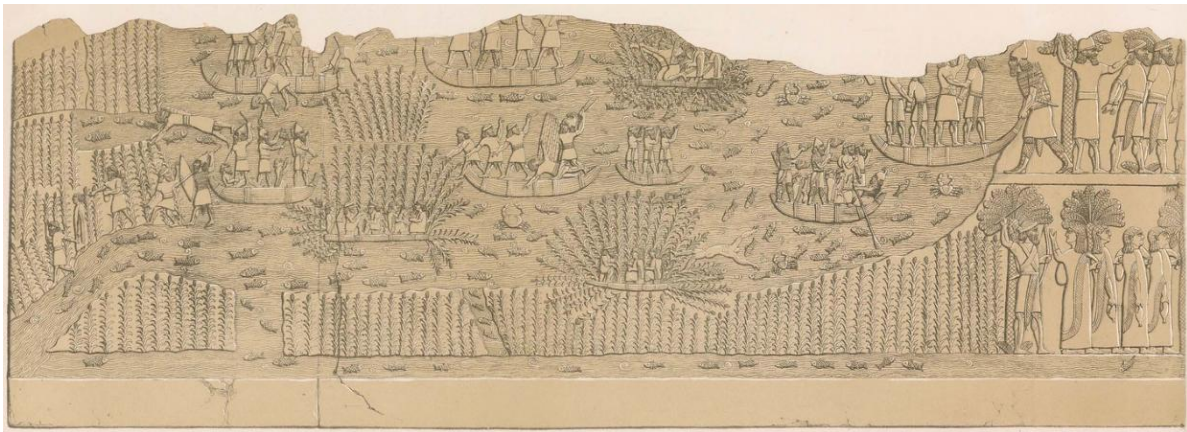
Fig. 16. Relief of the Assyrian Sennacherib's Southwest Palace in Nineveh (room XXVIII, slabs 2–4), ca. the 6th century BCE, depicting a battle in the marshes (from Layard A. H., *A Second Series of the Monuments of Nineveh* [London, 1853], pl. 25).

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[242] That the Babylonian king hid in the marshy place is also alluded to in the report about this campaign: "For five days they sought him out, but his (hiding) place could not be found" (RINAP 3/1, No. 1, 34 and RINAP 3/2, 213, 34).

[243] A. S. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad* (Cuvillier: Göttingen, 1994), 140, Ann 272–274.

[244] J. M. Russell, *Sennacherib's Palace without Rival at Nineveh* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 151.

In the cultural milieu of the ancient Near East, biblical authors—including the Joban poet—are probably informed of the ambivalent implications of the marshland in Neo-Assyrian times. Using words that convey a sense of "covering"—"under the lotuses" (תַּחַת־צֶאֱלִים), "in the covert" (בְּסֵתֶר), "covers him" (יְסֻכֶּהוּ), "his shades" (צֶלָלְוֹ), "surround him" (יְסֻבּוּהוּ)[245]—the Joban poet implies in verses 21–22 that this liminal space is a site of divine care and protection.[246] Just as the Assyrian marshland has provided for natural resources and protection, this marshy, liminal space in verses 21–22 can be read as a rhetorical imagery that signifies divine providence. As the foremost creature of God, Behemoth not only reflects the supremacy of the divine, but it is also well protected and secure under the loving care of God among surrounding lotuses and willows. Nevertheless, like the Assyrian marshland which was tricky and difficult to take control, Behemoth, who dwells in such a liminal space, is also beyond human control and domestication. Even the reed marsh signifies the imminent providence of God, the covert of the very same marsh points to the hidden aspect of Behemoth which signals God's unfathomable transcendence. The liminal marsh in verses 21–22 is therefore a representation of Behemoth's paradoxical nature: on the one hand, Behemoth points to God as the caring imminent provider; on the other hand, it reflects God as the wholly transcendent Other. The monstrosity of Behemoth resides in its liminality that signifies both the otherness and sameness of God—a deity who manifests as being both relatable and incomprehensible, imminent and transcendent, within and without.[247]

Behemoth is secure not just in the peaceful marshland, but it remains confident and unperturbed even in the midst of turbulent waters in verse 23—"If the river rages, he is not in

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[245] In 40:22, צֶאֱלִים is in assonance with צֶלָלְוֹ, as of יְסֻכֶּהוּ with יְסֻבּוּהוּ.

[246] In fact, these terms are often used as imagery for divine protection in Israelite hymnody: סֵתֶר, "covert" (Ps 27:5; 31:21 [20]; 32:7; 61:5 [4]; 81:8 [7]; 91:1; 119:114), סכך, "to cover, shelter" (Ps 5:12 [11]; 91:4; 140:8 [7]), צֵל, "shelter, shade, protection" (Isa 25:4; 51:16; Ps 17:8; 36:8 [7]; 63:8 [v]; 91:1;121:5), and סבב, "to surround" (Ps 32:7,10; 71:21).

[247] As Beal characterizes (2002, 4), "monsters are paradoxical personifications of otherness within sameness...they are threatening figures of anomaly within the well-established and accepted order of things." It is in this capacity that the monster can signify aspects of both imminence and transcendence, likeness and alienness.

haste; he is confident though the river[248] rushes to his mouth." This scenario constitutes the

climax of this unit (40:21–23) as well as the entire discourse on Behemoth. In particular, the

root of the verb יַעֲשֹׁק, √עשק, basically means "to oppress," which implies violence, pressure,

and overpowering force.[249] In the face of the river's "oppression," Behemoth remains

unfazed and "is not in haste" (לֹא יַחְפּוֹז).[250] More importantly, the verb יָגִיחַ recalls the equally

dramatic picture in 38:8 where the Sea is depicted as "bursting forth" (בְּגִיחוֹ) from the womb

(an imagery for birth); its verbal root גיח is also used for violent bursts/thrusts elsewhere in

the Hebrew Bible (Judg 20:33; Ezek 32:2; Mic 4:10). The point is the palpably stark contrast:

even though the "oppressing" and "violent" river poses an imminent threat by rushing to its

mouth, Behemoth is presented as being securely confident (בטח, the opposite of חפז, "in

haste") and unperturbed.[251] In a scene of threatening forces, the image of Behemoth as an

imperturbable monstrous other is accentuated.

Indeed, the monstrosity of Behemoth is illustrated in this concluding verse tangibly

through the chaotic waters. As a chaos monster, Behemoth is now represented in the chaos of

turbulent waters in the river. With the palpably intense language, the monstrosity of

Behemoth is substantiated by the "monstrosity" of the river. In fact, Behemoth as an

unperturbed beast in the raging river (נָהָר) is reminiscent of the monstrous figure of Judge

River (*ṯpṭ nhr*), an epithet of Yamm (the Sea), in the Ugaritic Baal myth. Monstrous as it is,

Behemoth appears, paradoxically, to represent the divine lordship over the chaos waters.

Specifically, Behemoth's confidence amidst the raging floods in verse 23 is suggestive of

divine control of the chaos forces and destructive powers, which resonates with the allusion

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[248] Nearly all occurrences of יַרְדֵּן in the Hebrew Bible in reference to the Jordan as a proper noun are used with the definite article. It is only here and in Ps 42:7 that the term appears indefinite, which may be a poetic expression for "river" in a general sense.

[249] The Hebrew verb עשק is used one other time earlier in the book, when Job accuses God of oppressive acts against him (10:3).

[250] In its biblical usages, the Hebrew verb חפז may mean, "to be in haste" (2 Sam 4:4; 2 Kgs 7:15; Ps 104:7; 116:11) or "to be in panic, alarm" (Deut 20:3; Pss 31:23; 48:6).

[251] In fact, Job would have known well the dangers of flooding waters when he compares the deceitful act of his companions to the "torrents of wadis" (6:15). In the subsequent context, Job also pictures caravans realizing of their misplaced confidence (בטח) when they venture into treacherous wadis (6:18–20).

to divine care and protection in verses 21–22. Indeed, the connection of the chaotic river to the Sea in 38:8 necessitates the identification of Behemoth with YHWH, who is portrayed in that context as constraining the chaotic sea at creation. Paradoxically, Behemoth can be recognized as an embodiment of otherness that signifies both monstrosity and divinity, rendering the two blurred if not indistinguishable at all.

2.3 Leviathan, YHWH, and Job (Humanity)

While 40:24 is viewed as part of the discourse on Behemoth by most interpreters,[252] given its rhetorical proximity to 40:25–31 [41:1–7], it makes more sense to consider it as the beginning verse for the discourse on Leviathan (40:24–41:26 [40:24–41:34]). Just like the discourse on Behemoth which starts with YHWH challenging Job's adequacy by a series of rhetorical questions (40:8–14), the unit on Leviathan begins by YHWH confronting Job with a string of rhetorical questions that challenge him to reflect on his potency in subduing the monstrous Leviathan (40:24–32 [40:24–41:8]).

Leviathan as Untameable Other (40:24–32 [40:24–41:8])

> [24] Will one take him by his eyes?
>> Will he be pierced in the nose[253] among the ensnared[254]?
> [25(1)] Will you drag Leviathan with a hook,
>> And cause his tongue to sink with a cord?
> [26(2)] Will you put a reed in his nose,
>> And pierce his jaw with a hook?
> [27(3)] Will he make many supplications to you?
>> Or will he speak to you softly[255]?
> [28(4)] Will he make a covenant with you?

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[252] Probably due to the fact that most Bible translations interpret the beginning of the Leviathan discourse to be at 40:25 [MT], where the word "Leviathan" (לִוְיָתָן) first appears in YHWH's second speech, and thereby marking it as the start of chapter 41.

[253] The Hebrew אַף ("nose") is taken to be adverbial accusative (*IBHS* 173.e) here.

[254] With מוקשים revocalized as מוּקָשִׁים ("the ensnared ones"), the preposition ב is taken to be the "*beth* of identity" (*IBHS* 11.4.5e) and is therefore rendered "among."

[255] Here I take the MT רַכּוֹת, "soft (words)" to be adverbial accusative, so "softly."

Will you take him as a perpetual servant?

29(5) Will you play with him as with a bird,

Or will you bind him for your girls?

30(6) Will the associates bargain over[256] him?

Will he be divided among the merchants[257]?

31(7) Will you fill his skin with harpoons,

Or his head with fishing spears?

32(8) Lay your hand upon him!

Think no more of the battle!

The challenge questions that YHWH poses to Job in this unit are focused on representing Leviathan as an untameable other in all senses of the term.[258] In each verse, Leviathan is illustrated to be exceedingly ludicrous in the human realm: the Joban poet develops the idea that Leviathan is far too powerful for Job and any human to subdue and domesticate. The series of rhetorical questions presupposes that it is impossible to contain Leviathan in the realm of humanity—the monster is an absolute other which is essentially out of this world.

The first three verses (40:24–26 [40:24–41:2]) in this unit attempt to deal with the impossibility of capturing Leviathan in a physical sense. Verse 24a questions the possibility of capturing the monster by injuring its eyes,[259] while the second colon portrays the hypothetical image of Leviathan being caught by its nose.[260] Although verse 24b is mostly rendered "(Can one) pierce him in the nose with snares?", the MT "with snares" (בְּמוֹקְשִׁים) does not seem to fit the context here since a snare, as David Clines points out, is normally not

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[256] The Hebrew verb כרה appears to have the sense of "bargain over" as it does in 6:27. Other witnesses translate it differently. The Vg. renders the verb as "cut to pieces" (concident) (perhaps derived from Hebrew כרה I, "to dig"), while the OG (ἐνσιτοῦνται) and Tg. (יעבדון שׁירותא) take it to mean "feeding upon" (assuming כרה III, "to give a feast;" cf. כֵּרֶה, "feast," 2 Kgs 6:23). Uniquely, the Syr. translates the word as "they assemble" (ܢܬܟܢܫܘܢ).

[257] MT כְּנַעֲנִים, literally "Canaanites" (so the rendering of Aq.).

[258] Edwin M. Good, *In Turns of Tempest: a Reading of Job, with a Translation* (Stanford University Press, 1990), 367 proposes that the Leviathan passage satirizes Job as a heroic god. Seow further articulates that the Joban poet "utilizes satire, employing humor, exaggeration, and irony to ridicule and expose Job's pretensions".

[259] v. 24a can mean "Will one take him while he is looking?", as reflected in the rendering of the OG, "in his eyes (in the sense of eyesight)" (ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ αὐτοῦ). 11QAramJob reads במטל עינוהי, "by covering/shading his eyes," thereby referring to the hunting method (i.e. to injure the eyes or blind the beast), which is in accord with the second line of the couplet.

[260] The biblical depiction might have drawn on an Egyptian hunting image, in which a favorite tactic was to pierce the nose of the beast to force it to breathe with the mouth, thereby inflicting a fatal blow.

used for piercing (נקב).[261] By revocalizing מוקשים as מוּקָשִׁים ("the ensnared ones") and reinterpreting ינקב as a niphal imperfect (rather than a qal imperfect), that is, יִנָּקֵב ("he is pierced"), the colon can be read as "Will he be pierced in the nose among the ensnared?" The point is that capturing Leviathan—as an untameable other—by its eyes and nose is a ridiculous idea to even think about.

The questions in verse 25 [1] challenge Job to imagine dragging Leviathan with a hook. The verb מְשֹׁךְ, basically "to pull along, drag," is sometimes used with a hostile connotation in the Hebrew Bible, as with the enemy (Judg 4:7) or with the vanquished (Ezek 32:20). Leviathan is imagined here to be led as a captive or a tamed creature, which recalls Yamm being dragged by Baal upon his defeat in the Ugaritc Baal myth (*CAT* 1.2, IV: 27). Considering the translations of 11QAramJob, which renders תחרז, "thread," and the Tg., which translates as תקדח, "perforate," for the MT תַּשְׁקִיעַ (literally "to sink"),[262] "cause his tongue to sink"[263] may mean threading a tongue with a line. Through this pair of rhetorical questions, the Joban poet is implying that it is nonsensical for a human to think of taming an untameable beast like Leviathan.

Alongside the said images, verse 26 [2] continues to imagine Leviathan as a captive. Specifically, placing a "reed" (אַגְמוֹן) in one's nostril (40:26a [41:2a]) and piercing one's jaw with a "hook" (חוֹחַ) (40:26b [41:2b]) are reminiscent of the ways that enemies were humiliated in the ancient world. For instance, a votive vase unearthed from ancient Uruk dated to the third millennium BCE shows a captive being led with a ring in his nose.[264] In a cylinder seal from the Ur III period, the deity Tišpak subdues a prisoner under his feet with a

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[261] David J. A. Clines, *Job 38–42*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 18B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 1157.

[262] These translations seem to take שקע, "to sink," to mean "to stick in, insert," a meaning known in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (*DJBA*, 1176).

[263] Evidence from iconographic scenes in ancient Egypt shows that a baited "hook" (חַכָּה), mostly associated with fishing (Isa 19:8; Hab 1:15), was often used with a "cord" (חֶבֶל) for hunting a crocodile. The pairing of these two may have inspired this biblical portrayal on the capture of Leviathan.

[264] Pierre Amiet, *Art of the Ancient Near East* (trans. J. Shepley and C. Choquet; New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1980 [French orig., 1977]), fig. 367.

hook in the nose (Fig. 17).[265] The so-called "Broken Obelisk" from ancient Nineveh in around eleventh century BCE also features prisoners who are held by rings in their noses.[266] As reflected in the stelae of Sargon II, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal, it is common in Neo-Assyrian royal propaganda for captives to be illustrated as being led by ropes, which are tied to their lips or jaws by rings.[267] In the Hebrew Bible, a similar imagery is found in Ezek 29:3–4 where YHWH is said to put hooks (חַחִים) in the jaws of the Egyptian Pharaoh, "the great Tannin," in the sight of YHWH. The hook (חַח) in the biblical text, which may also be used of "ring," that is, "nose-ring" (cf. Exod 35:22), is placed in the jaws or nose of the captives being led away (e.g. the Assyrian Sennacherib in 2 Kgs 19:28 = Isa 37:29; King Manasseh in 2 Chr 33:11; some prince figures in Ezek 19:4, 9, 38:4). In fact, images of monstrous figures being dragged by nose-ropes with the use of a hook or ring are well attested in mythological texts (e.g. *Ee* I, 72; IV, 117) and iconography (see, e.g., *ANEP*, no. 522, 526) across Mesopotamia. Given the ancient Near Eastern parallels, 40:24–26 [40:24–41:2] incongruously casts the monstrous Leviathan as a defeated enemy who is humiliated like a captive. The rhetorical questions render it preposterous should Job (and any human as an earthly being) envisage his capability of subduing the intimidating monster. From the onset of its appearance, Leviathan manifests itself as an untameable other to humans in its full monstrosity.

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[265] Tallay Ornan, "Who is Holding the Lead Rope? The Relief of the Broken Obelisk," *Iraq* 69 (2007): 66–67, fig. 6.

[266] John E. Curtis, "The Broken Obelisk," *Iraq* 69 (2007): 53–57, fig. 1–4.

[267] On Sargon II, see Pauline Albenda, *The Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria* (Paris: Éditions Recherches sur les Civilisations, 1986), pls. 75 and 82. On Esarhaddon, see Jutta Börker-Klähn, *Altvorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsrelief* (BagF 4; 2 vols.; Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1982), no. 219; On Ashurbanipal, see Maximilian Streck, *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Ninevehs* (VAB 7; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1916), 80, col. 9, l. 106.
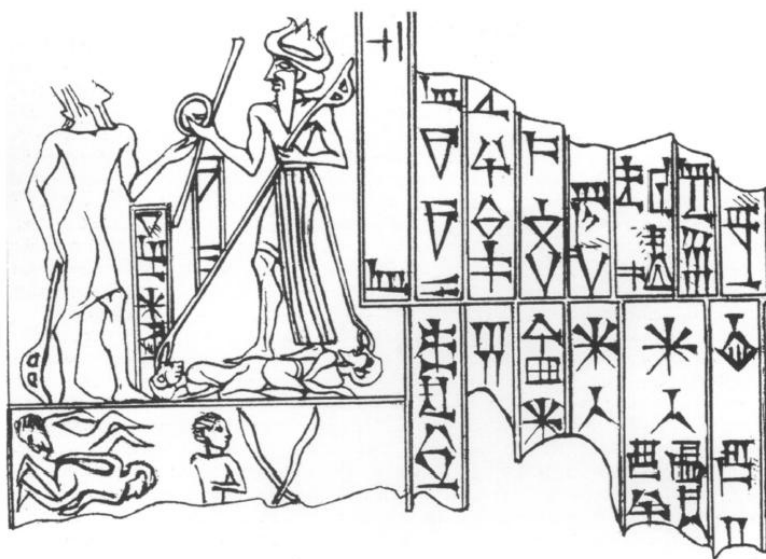
Fig. 17. Reconstructed cylinder seal impression from a certain Attaya, servant of Shu-iliya, ruler of Eshnunna, Ur III period (from Henry Frankfort *et al*, *The Gimilsin Temple and the Palace of the Rulers at Tell Asmar*, OIP43 [Chicago, 1940], fig. 100).

Following 40:24–26 [40:24–41:2] which stresses on the impossibility of capturing Leviathan physically, 40:27–29 [41:3–5] implies the beast's defiance against human domestication. As a trope in ancient Near Eastern literature, "making many supplications" (הֲיַרְבֶּה תַּחֲנוּנִים)[268] and "speaking softly" (יְדַבֵּר רַכּוֹת) (40:27 [41:3]) are images that typically characterize the defeated as they plead their victor for mercy and beg to be spared. In the Ugaritic Baal myth, for example, upon the intimidation of Mot's challenge, Baal pleads his adversary for mercy by speaking soft words (*CAT* 1.5.II.12). Also, in an Egyptian myth, the crocodile (as an embodiment of Seth) begs Horus for mercy by some sweet words.[269] Given Leviathan's unyielding monstrosity, it is unimaginable for it to submit to human domestication in such a vulnerable position. As an untameable monstrous other, there is no way for Leviathan to plead for mercy in such a posture. The association between the monster and a vanquished petitioner or vulnerable captive is thus a ludicrous satire, which serves to

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[268] The Hebrew term for "supplications" (תַּחֲנוּן) is often used in reference to pleas to God for mercy in the biblical tradition, especially in hymnic prayers (Ps 28:2, 6; 31:23 [22]; 86:6; 140:6–7 [7–8]; 143:1).

[269] Veronica Kubina, *Die Gottesreden in Buche Hiob: Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um die Einheit von Hiob 38:1–42:6,* FrThSt 115 (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 1979), 74.

substantiate the felt monstrosity of Leviathan.

The rhetorical questions in verse 28 [4] continue to hint at the defiance of Leviathan by drawing on language of perpetual vassalage. Specifically, the phrase "servant of eternity" (עבד עולם), which also appears in Deut 15:17 (cf. Exod 21:6) and 1 Sam 27:12, refers to a person who has renounced liberty permanently and therefore submitted to a treaty of surrender as a perpetual vassal.[270] In fact, such expression is common in ancient suzerainty covenants in which the vanquished—the vassal—sues for peaceful terms with the victor—the suzerain.[271] The language is also often utilized in ancient Near Eastern mythical narratives that involve the dynamics between the deities and chaos monsters. In one episode of the Ugaritic Baal Cycle, intimidated by Yamm's monstrous acolytes, the god El yields to hand over Baal to become his servant: *'bdk b'l y ymm / 'bdk b'l [nhr]m / bn dgn asrkm*, "Baal is your vassal, O Sea! Baal is your vassal, O [River]! The son of Dagan is your captive!" (*CAT* 1.2, I: 36–37). In another episode of the myth, Baal himself surrenders to Mot upon his threatening demand: *'bdk an w d 'lmk*, "I am your vassal, indeed, yours perpetually" (*CAT* 1.5, II: 12). Given that Leviathan is such an untameable monster, verses 28 [4] stresses that its monstrosity is defiant against any human domestification. In alluding to ancient Near Eastern vassalage language, the Joban poet means to satirize any human attempts that try to exercise lordship over the monstrous Leviathan.

An even more absurd image is portrayed in verse 29 [5], where YHWH challenges Job to imagine Leviathan as a bird on a leash that may serve to entertain girls. In particular, the OG renders v. 29b [5b] ἢ δήσεις αὐτὸν ὥσπερ στρουθίον παιδίῳ, "or (will you) bind it as a sparrow for a child," which seems to have incorporated both "sparrow" and "child" for the Hebrew לנערותיך.[272] As doves and sparrows were considered pets that were safe for children

[270] Clines, *Job 38–42*, 1194.
[271] John E. Hatley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 531.
[272] Explaining the variant reading of the Greek text, D. Winton Thomas, "Job xl 29b: Text and Translation," *VT* 14 (1964): 114–16 hypothesizes a Hebrew form נַעֲרָה for "sparrow," which he finds linguistic grounds in the

to play with in the ancient Near East, Leviathan, a fearsome chaos monster, is now ludicrously reduced to an object of amusement, even as a pet for little ones. It also recalls the iconographic representation of chaos monsters in the ancient Near East which are led by a rope, as if on a leash.[273] While the figure of Leviathan as a playmate (תְּשַׂחֶק־בּוֹ) is reminiscent of its image in Ps 104:26, where it is said to be created for sport (לְשַׂחֶק־בּוֹ) with other sea creatures, its hypothetical image as a pet animal is incongruent to its untamed nature as a monstrous other. Again, the imagined picture here is a satirical expression that points to the untameability of Leviathan, which makes Job (and humanity in general) realize their incompetence in the face of a monstrosity that is beyond human control.

In verses 30–31 [6–7], Leviathan is thought ironically as a commodity in the market. Just as the chaos monsters in ancient Near Eastern mythology are often dismembered,[274] the monstrous Leviathan is imagined to be divided among the merchants, which recalls the crushing of its heads and the disposal of its carcass as food for wildwife in Ps 74:13–14.[275] Based on the description of "bargaining over" (יִכְרוּ) and "dividing" (יֶחֱצוּהוּ) among the merchants (40:30 [41:6]), the size of Leviathan seems to be monstrously large for a single vendor to sell. Besides, the rhetorical questions in verse 31 [7] imply that Leviathan is invincible even in the face of "harpoons" (שֻׂכּוֹת) and "fishing spears" (צִלְצַל).[276] The OG renders צלצל as πλοίοις ἁλιέων, "ships of fishers" (presumably based on another צלצל "ship"), which substantites the enormity of Leviathan that even surpasses a ship. Far from being

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Arabic *nuġarat*, "sparrow" (cf. Lane, 2817b; *DCH*, 5:712b), thereby reading the line as "bind him as with your sparrows."

[273] For example, a leashed lion-griffin is featured on a cylinder seal as a bird pet who stands at the feet of the storm-god Adad. See D. Collon, *Near Eastern Seals*, Interpreting the Past (Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA/London, England: University of California Press/British Museum, 1990), no. 21.

[274] This moif is especially evident in Ugaritic mythology, where Mot is dismembered by Anat with his remains being scattered on earth thereafter (*CAT* 1.6.II.31-37). Scattering of Sea and River as dismembered monstrous forces are also mentioned in the myth (*CAT* 1.2.IV.28-30; 1.5.I.4-6; 1.83.13). Other parallels in ancient Near Eastern mythology include the dismemberment of the Babylonian Tiāmat and the Egyptian Apep, with the latter being commonly featured in iconography.

[275] The scene also recalls the disposal of the supposedly dismembered Tannin in Ezek 29:5 and 32:4–7.

[276] Both the terms for "harpoon" and "fishing spears" appear only here. While the former may be related to שֵׂךְ, "thorn" (Num 33:55), the latter is derived from the verb צלל, "quiver, whirr" (Isa. 18:1), which alludes to the whizzing sound of a spear in the air.

vulnerable to any physical attack and human exploitation, the otherness of Leviathan is dramatized in the scenarios described in verses 30–31 [6–7], which serve to extinguish any human hope of subduing and taking advantage of the monster.

After throwing a series of rhetorical questions that make Job contemplate on the untameability of Leviathan, YHWH delivers an admonition in 40:32 [41:8]: "Lay your hand upon it! Think no more of the battle!" Most commentators interpret the first line as a gesture in confronting Leviathan, and read the second line as "remember the battle, do not do it again!"[277] Nevertheless, the Hebrew idiom שׂים כף על, as Seow points out, often indicates a gesture of restraint and abeyance in the biblical tradition (cf. Judg 18:19; 2 Kgs 13:16; Mic 7:16; Job 21:5).[278] Indeed, a similar usage of this phrase is found in the book in 9:33, where the "setting of the hand" indicates an action of restraint (of an arbiter) among opposing parties. In contrast with the aggressive actions imagined in the previous verses, "lay your hand" appears to be a calm gesture that is suggestive of peaceful terms like truce. Read in this light, זְכֹר in the second colon may not be read as the imperative, but an infinitve with the injunction אל־תוסף; subsequently, the combination can be rendered "do not continue to think."[279] Given the mind-boggling monstrosity of Leviathan as an untameable other, YHWH advises Job against the thought of combating the monster. In effect, the admonition implies a definitive "no" to every single challenge question that YHWH raises in the previous lines.

To sum up for this unit, the series of rhetorical questions here feature Leviathan as a monstrous figure which is beyond human control and domestication. As an invincible monster, Leviathan exposes human inadequacy, vulnerability and crisis. The untameable nature of Leviathan prompts humans to acknowledge their mortality, not least their finitude.

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[277] Almost all modern English Bible translations render this line this way except the JPS Tanakh version (1985), which translates "And you will never think of battle again."
[278] Seow, "The Leviathan Tradition in the Book of Job," 281.
[279] Seow, "The Leviathan Tradition in the Book of Job," 281 reasons that one should expect ואל־תוסף rather than אל־תוסף should the line be rendered "remember the battle, do not add" (taking זְכֹר as an imperative).

As the very monster who "destabilizes the very category of the human,"[280] Leviathan embodies a monstrosity that reveals the limits of humanity and threatens human safety—nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible has this human incompetence been emphasized in such a poignant way. As a dangerous monstrous other, Leviathan thus prompts one to realize one's selfness paradoxically. Apart from challenging Job to reflect on his capability to tame the beast, and rethink his qualification as a human to domesticate Leviathan, Leviathan the monster compels all of us as humans to reflect on our responses to menace: whether to do "battle" with it, or to "lay our hand" (restraining) on it.

Given the human inadequacy, YHWH concludes by warning Job (and any human) against confronting its monstrosity. Following the rhetorical challenges, we may subsequently ask: if no human—not even the perfect man Job—can subdue the monster, who else can? In fact, the passage—in highlighting human limitations—seems to point to the fact that none other than the all-powerful God can deal with the monstrous. The divine admonishment at the end of the series serves as a bridge to the following unit (41:1–4 [9–12]), which highlights YHWH's relation with Leviathan.

Leviathan as Sublime Other (41:1–4 [9–12])

> [1(9)] Here now, expectation[281] of him proves false[282];
>> Even a mighty one[283] is thrown off at the sight of him.
> [2(10)] Indeed,[284] the cruel one[285]—surely he has roused him;[286]

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[280] Jennifer L. Koosed, "Humanity at Its Limits," in *The Bible and Posthumanism*, Semeia Studies 74, ed. Jennifer L. Koosed (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014), 3.

[281] The noun תּוֹחֶלֶת is used in reference to what one expects in the Hebrew Bible (Ps 39:8 [7]; Prov 10:28; 11:7; 13:12; Lam 3:18). In accord with the biblical usage, Aquila (Aq.) renders it as προσδοκία, "expectation."

[282] The Niphal form of כזב is attested one other time in Prov 30:6, where it means "to prove (oneself) a liar."

[283] The MT vocalizes אל as ʾel, "to/towards," which might actually have read ʾēl, "God," or the proper name "El," as attested by the Syr. (ܐܠܗܐ) and Symmachus (ὁ θεὸς).

[284] Most commentators take the initial לא to be the negative particle, and render the line more or less like "no one is so fierce..." But such meaning would presume אין אכזר instead of לא אכזר. Following Seow, I would prefer to take this לא to be the asseverative *lamed*, translated "indeed" (cf. לא in 1 Sam 14:30; 20:9; Lam 3:36–38); cf. Gisela Fuchs, *Mythos und Hiobdichtung: Aufnahme und Umdeutung altorientalischer Vorstellungen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993), 232.

[285] Most modern interpreters take the word אכזר, literally "cruel," to mean "fierce." Yet, this meaning is never

Who then is he who can stand before me[287]?

3(11) Who has confronted me that I should make whole[288]?

Under the whole heaven, he is mine.

4(12) I will not[289] silence his boasts[290]—

Word of his mighty deeds, and the grace[291] of his array.

In addition to being untameable, Leviathan is characterized as a sublime monstrous being in this unit.[292] Just as one cannot fathom the full extent of its power, the phrase "expectation of him proves false" (41:1a [9a]) conveys that the attributes of Leviathan and the impact that it brings are often beyond human expectations. This is corroborated by the picture in 41:1b [9b] that contrary to what one would expect, even "a mighty one" (אל)[293] would be thrown off at the mere sight of the terrifying creature. It is worth noting that this imagery is commonly seen in the *Chaoskampf* motif of ancient Near Eastern mythology. In the Mesopotamian *Enuma Eliš*, for instance, it is said that "he who beholds them (the monsters Tiamat created) shall perish abjectly."[294] When confronted by the monstrosity of Tiamat and her cohorts, even deities like the sky god Anu and his father Anshar are petrified with their faces down.[295] A similar depiction can also be found in the Ugaritic myth of Baal: when

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attested in Hebrew or its cognate languages.

[286] Rather than the MT יְעוּרֶנּוּ, Theod., Aq., and the Vg. seem to reflect the reading of Hebrew אֲעוּרֶנּוּ, "I will rouse him," probably an attempt to harmonize with the self-reference (1cs) of YHWH in this unit. It may also stem from the assumption that only God can rouse Leviathan.

[287] Many manuscripts and the Tg. read לְפָנָיו, "before him," instead of לְפָנַי, "before me," in this colon, reflecting the attempt to harmonize it with the third person pronominal suffix in the previous colon.

[288] The OG reading, "Who will resist me and remain safe?" (ἤ τίς ἀντιστήσεταί μοι καὶ ὑπομενεῖ), may reflect an understanding of the second verb (אשלם) as an Aramaism, according to which the aphel stem in Aramaic would account for the *aleph* that normally indicates the first person imperfect in Hebrew.

[289] Ketiv reads לֹא־אַחֲרִישׁ בַּדָּיו, which has the support of most ancient witnesses, whereas Qere has לוֹ־אַחֲרִישׁ בַּדָּיו, hence, "I will silence him (לוֹ), his boasts," assuming God's opposition to Leviathan.

[290] Read in context, the word בַּדָּיו should be rendered "his boasts" (BDB, 95a; *DCH*, 2:94a; בַּד IV in *HALOT*, 1:109b) rather than "his parts, members" as in 18:13. This sense of meaning is also reflected in 11:3 (cf. Isa 16:6, 44:25; Jer 48:30, 50:36).

[291] The term חִין is assumed to be a variant of חֵן, "grace" (i.e., a plene writing of the *sere*).

[292] As Bernat notes (2004, 334-41), we now have an ode of Leviathan in parallel with the ode to Behemoth.

[293] Generally referring to "god" though, אֵל may be used in reference to "godlike being"—a mighty being, angelic or human (41:25; cf. Exod 15:15; 2 Kgs 24:15; Ps 29:1, 89:7; Ezek 17:13; 31:11, 32:21), preferably translated as "a might one" here.

[294] Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2008), 337.

[295] *ANET*, 64, lines 86–91.

Yamm requests the divine assembly through his fierce messengers to hand over Baal, the gods, upon seeing the monsters, are said to be on their knees with their heads lowered.[296] Read against ancient Near Eastern mythology, Leviathan is represented here as a sublime monster that even god-like figures would be overwhelmed with fear in its presence. As a sublime other, it appears to subvert the typical expectations of humanity: rather than being a subdued monster, Leviathan seems to be identified with YHWH whose theophanic appearance is often accompanied by frightening phenomena.

The discourse on Leviathan moves on with more ambiguities in between the lines, and the distinction between Leviathan, the monster, and YHWH, the deity, appears to be increasingly blurred. While most interpreters take "the cruel one" (אכזר, mostly rendered "fierce" by modern commentators) in verse 2 [10] to refer to Job or anyone who might wish to battle against Leviathan,[297] Job actually uses this term in 30:21 to denote God as "the cruel one" (לְאַכְזָר), charging him with power abuse. In light of this, "the cruel one" in this line can be interpreted as YHWH accordingly. Given that YHWH should be ultimately responsible for the "rousing of Leviathan" (עֹרֵר לִוְיָתָן) in Job's initial speech (3:8), it makes sense to read YHWH as "the cruel one" who has "roused" the monstrous Leviathan here. In identifying himself as the rouser of Leviathan, YHWH in effect acknowledges Job's accusation that he really is the cruel one, who is as monstrous as Leviathan. The line between YHWH and Leviathan is hence blurred; the monster and the deity become indistinguishable.

The referents in the discourse are by no means disambiguated in the second half of this verse—"Who then is he who can stand before me?" As the address of YHWH shifts from a third-person reference ("he roused") in the first colon to a first-person self-reference ("before me") in the second, YHWH is in effect siding with the monstrous Leviathan. Specifically, "before me" (לְפָנַי) attests that it is YHWH who rouses Leviathan in the previous line. This

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[296] Marvin H. Pope, *El in the Ugaritic Texts*, VTS 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1955), 27.
[297] Seow, "The Leviathan Tradition in the Book of Job," 283.

challenge question implies that there is hardly anyone who can stand before YHWH, a deity who can incite even the monstrous Leviathan. In addition, "he/one" (הוּא), the subject of the verb "will stand" (יִתְיַצָּב), is also an ambiguous pronoun that has room for interpretation. On the one hand, it may refer to Job or anyone who dares to challenge YHWH; accordingly, "to stand before" is understood to be a posture of one's defiance.[298] On the other hand, "he/one" may refer to the third-person pronominal suffix "him" in the preceding line, namely, Leviathan who is roused by YHWH. In this case, Leviathan becomes the one who is taking a stand before YHWH, reflecting its subordination to the will of YHWH as his servant.[299] Accordingly, the text appears to align YHWH with the monstrous Leviathan, as if the two are one and the same. In any case, the discourse seems to portray Leviathan not so much as a threatening other, but an owned creature of YHWH himself. The perceived ambiguities in the text therefore need not be disambiguated; rather, they are just to the point—intended to blur the distinction between the divine and the monster.

Verse 3 [11] further spells out the lordship of YHWH over all creation and any principles that may govern divine activity. Divine retributive principle can be inferred from the root of אֲשַׁלֵּם ("I shall repay/make whole"), √שׁלם, which has appeared a couple of times in the book with God being the subject. Assuming that God would not pervert justice (8:3), Bildad asserts that God will restore/make whole (שִׁלַּם) Job's rightful habitation (8:6) if he is pure and upright. In 21:19, 31, Job's remarks imply that God is supposed to fulfill justice by repaying (יְשַׁלֵּם) the wicked for what they have done. Similarly, in appealing to the fact that God will comply with justice, Elihu contends that God will repay one (יְשַׁלֶּם־לוֹ) according to his/her deed (34:11). But he adds that one should not expect God to pay back (וִישַׁלְמֶנָּה) as one sees fit (34:33). In view of these previous occurrences of שׁלם in the book, the point in 41:3a [11a] is that YHWH is absolutely free in exercising "retribution" however he wishes. As a wholly

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[298] That the expression "stand before" (לפני התיצב) suggests antagonism is also found in Deut 9:2 and Josh 1:5.
[299] This is in accord with biblical texts where "stand before" signify subservience (Exod 8:16; 9:9:13; Josh 24:1; Sam 10:19).

Other, YHWH is not subject to any human expectations in how he works. Divine *mišpat* belongs to the prerogative of God, so not even divine recompense is bound by human notion of justice such as the principle of retribution. Since everything "under the heaven" belongs to YHWH—even "he" (הוּא) (i.e. Leviathan) is his (41:3b [11b]),[300] no one can lord over YHWH and claim that God owes him anything. If it is already ridiculous for a mortal human to attempt battling with Leviathan, it would be outright nonsense for one to take a stand against YHWH, who is far more powerful than the untameable monster. Posing himself as the divine sovereign over all creation, YHWH is essentially warning Job against any human attempts to domesticate God.

The Joban poet concludes this unit with YHWH affirming the boasts of Leviathan in 41:4 [12], "I will not silence his boasts—word of his mighty deeds, and the grace of his array." As a sublime being, Leviathan brags about his "mighty deeds" (גְּבוּרֹות), a term that is almost always used in reference to God in biblical traditions.[301] Indeed, the phrase "word of his mighty deeds" is reminiscent of a number of hymnic praises of divine power (e.g. Ps 71:16; 106:2; 145:4, 11–12; 150:2).[302] Together with YHWH's affirmation of its prowess, Leviathan's identification with the divine as a sublime being reaches a climax with the doxological language in use. The boundary between the monster and the deity is far from distinct. Moreover, Leviathan boasts about "his array" (עֶרְכֹּו), which can refer to its beautiful physical composition or its martial dispositions for combat.[303] The double references of the Hebrew point to Leviathan as a paradoxical embodiment of both beauty and threat; the term hints that Leviathan's body is both spectacular and monstrous, graceful and frightening. As a

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[300] Just as YHWH created Behemoth in 40:15, YHWH claims here to be the owner of Leviathan.

[301] Apart from its uses in Job 26:14, praises of God's mighty deeds constitute an essential element in psalmic doxology (e.g. Ps 20:7 [6]; 71:16; 106:2; 145:4, 12; 150:2). In the Qumran scrolls, the term גְּבוּרֹות is often associated with God's work of wonder (4QShirShabbd, frg. 1, col. 1. 2, 22; 4QShirShabbf, frg. 13, l. 5; 4QInstructionc, frg. 1, col. 1, l. 13, etc.).

[302] Hymnic praises of divine might are also common in Dead Sea Scrolls (so CD 13:8; 1QS 1:21; 10:16; 11:5; 1QM 3:5; 6:6, etc.).

[303] The Hebrew root ערך is often used in military contexts (so in Job 6:4; cf. Gen 14:8; Judg 20:20, 22, 30 33; 1 Sam 4:2; 17:2, 8, 21; 2 Sam 10:8–10, 17; Jer 6:23; 46:3; 50:14, 42; etc.). Notably, many nouns derived from the root ʿrk in the Arabic language are related to combat.

sublime monster, Leviathan has the potential to evoke delight and fear simultaneously. Marking the climax of divine identification with the monster, YHWH's direct commendation of Leviathan here bridges this unit to the next (41:5–24 [13–32])—a bulk part of the discourse which lays out the monstrous body and deeds of Leviathan in detail.

Perceived Monstrosity of Leviathan (41:5–24 [13–32])

5(13) Who has stripped off his outer garment?
    Who can penetrate his double-armour?
6(14) Who has opened the doors of his face?
    Around his teeth there is terror.
7(15) His back[304] is furrows of shields,
    Shut up as with a tight seal.
8(16) One is so near to another,
    That no air comes between them.
9(17) They are joined one to another,
    Interlocked and inseparable.
10(18) His sneezes flash forth light,
    His eyes are like the eyelids of dawn.
11(19) From his mouth go flaming torches;
    Sparks of fire leap forth.
12(20) Out of his nostrils comes out smoke,
    As from a boiling pot and rushes.
13(21) His breath set coals ablaze,
    And a flame comes out from his mouth.
14(22) In his neck lodges strength,
    And dismay[305] leaps[306] before him.
15(23) The folds of his flesh are joined together

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[304] The MT vocalizes גאוה as גַּאֲוָה, "its pride," which does not quite suit the context. *BHS* proposes an emended form גֵּוֹה "its back," which finds support in the renderings of 11QAramJob (גְבוֹֿ[ה]), Aq. (σῶμα αὐτοῦ), Vg. (corpus illius) as "his back" or "his body." The suggested emendation may also underlie the OG's translation (τὰ ἔγκατα αὐτοῦ, "its entrails"), though it seems to have mistaken גֵּו ("back") for גֵּו ("midst") (BDB, 156a).

[305] The word דְּאָבָה ("terror, dismay") is *hapax legomenon*, with the root דאב meaning "be dry, languish" (BDB, 178a; cf. Deut 28:65; Jer 31:12, 25).

[306] Two different readings are attested among the textual witnesses. The MT תָּדוּץ, "she leaps, dances," also in a general sense of "exult, rejoice," agrees with the Syr. (ܬܕܘܨ), whereas the OG τρέχει, "she runs," a reflection of תרוץ (instead of תדוץ), is followed by 11QAramJob (תרוט).

—firmly cast on him and immovable.

16(24) His heart is as hard as a stone,

Even as hard as a lower millstone.

17(25) When he rises up, the mighty ones[307] fear;

At his crashings they are bewildered.

18(26) As for one who reaches him, sword will not prevail;[308]

Nor spear, dart or javelin.

19(27) He regards iron as straw,

And bronze as rotten wood.

20(28) The arrow do not make him flee,

Sling-stones turn to stubble for him.

21(29) Clubs are reckoned as stubble;

And he laughs at the rattling of a javelin.

22(30) Beneath him are sharp potsherds;

He spreads a threshing-sledge on the mud.

23(31) He makes the deep to boil like a cauldron;

He makes the sea like a pot of ointment.

24(32) Behind him he leaves a pathway shine;

One might think the deep to be gray-haired[309].

To begin with, verses 5–9 [13–17] focus on the monstrosity of Leviathan in terms of its

impenetrable body. Like chaos monsters in ancient Near Eastern mythology which are often

clad with armors,[310] Leviathan is pictured here with an "outer garment" (לְבוּשׁ)[311] and a

"double-armor" (רִסְנוֹ) (v. 5 [13]) which signify its military competence. In particular, the

term for "double-armor" (רֶסֶן), probably read סִרְיֹן originally (which is metathesized to √רסן

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[307] Echoing with אל (ʾēl), "a might one," in v. 1 [9], the plural term אֵלִים may mean "the mighty ones" (so Aq. Symm., Syr., and Tg.), with the Vg. (angeli) referring to mighty divine beings. In terms of orthography, אֵלִים may also be a conservative spelling of אֵילִים, "rams" (as may be reflected in the OG θηρίοις τετράποσιν, "four-footed animals"), which is often used for heroes or military leaders.

[308] While almost all Bible translations and interpreters have, based on the Masoretic punctuation signs, taken חרב as the subject of משׂיגהו (hence "the sword that reaches him"), here I follow Seow's proposal in taking משׂיגהו to be nominative absolute (*IBHS* 4.7), with the subject being anyone who reaches Leviathan. This reading makes better sense in light of the previous line in which the monster's opponents are in view.

[309] For the MT לְשֵׂיבָה, the OG renders ὥσπερ αἰχμάλωτον, "as a captive," apparently reading לְשִׁבְיָה, whereas the Syr. (ܒܫܐ) assumes לְיַבָּשָׁה, "as dry land."

[310] In *Eluma Eliš*, for example, Tiāmat is said to have "clothed the fearsome *ušumgallu*-dragons with awesomeness, she made them bear auras like gods" (*Ee* II.23–24). A more striking parallel to Leviathan's armor is seen in the martial Marduk, who "was clad with an awesome cloak of armor, on his head he wore terrifying aura" (*Ee* IV.57–58).

[311] In the biblical tradition, the term לְבוּשׁ can refer to the clothing of warriors (2 Sam 20:8), kings (Esth 6:8–11; 8:15), or God (Isa 63:1–2; Dan 7:9).

later),[312] is derivative of a Hurrian word for a protective garb inlaid with metal scales on the outside.[313] With the interlocking pieces of armor over its body, Leviathan is a mighty warrior who is basically impenetrable. Apart from its protective attire, it is impossible to pierce through the body of Leviathan itself. With "his back which is furrows of shields, shut up as with a tight seal" (41:7 [15]),[314] as well as tight scales that not even air can penetrate (41:8–9 [16–17]), the body of Leviathan is completely impenetrable. Together with its aggressive, monstrous visage,[315] not least "his terrifying teeth" (שִׁנָּיו אֵימָה)[316] (41:6 [14]), Leviathan is presented as an invulnerable other who is martially ready.

While these depicted features may already sound unnatural to the human realm, the monstrosity of Leviathan is characterized further with mythological aspects in verses 10–13 [18–21]. With the heavy use of fiery images, Leviathan is represented as a supernatural fire-breathing monster through these verses. The fiery Leviathan is reminiscent of fiery monsters or fire-emanating dragons which are well attested in texts and iconography in the ancient Near East, not least from Mesopotamia and Western Asia.[317] More importantly, a couple of terms that describe the fiery Leviathan in this passage are associated with theophany in the biblical tradition: "light" (אוֹר)[318] (41:10 [18]), "flashes" (לַפִּידִים)[319], "fire"

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[312] It is reflected by the OG πτύξιν θώρακος αὐτοῦ ("fold of its breastplate"), probably assuming סִרְיֹנוֹ "its coat of mail, cuirass."

[313] This kind of double-layered armor was used by the Hurrians as early as the mid-second millennium BCE. See Richard F. S. Starr (ed.), *Nuzi* (2 Volumes. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1939), 1:475–80; II, pl. 126.

[314] For those who identify Leviathan with the crocodile, 41:7–9 [15–17] would arguably be one of the strongest textual support, as the depictions in these verses match the crocodile's back.

[315] One may also compare the designation of the Egyptian Apep as "Fierce of Face" (*nḥз ḥr*). See R. el-Sayed, "Nehaher," *Bulletin du centenaire,* BIFAOSupl 81 (Cairo: Institute Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1981), 119-40.

[316] In *Eluma Eliš*, the menacing dentition of Tiamat's monsters is repeatedly mentioned (Pope 2008, 339).

[317] Monstrous entities in ancient Near Eastern myths are occasionally characterized by fiery features. In the Ugaritic myth of Baal, for instance, the monstrous messengers of Yamm intimidate the divine assembly by their fiery appearance (*ANET*, 130). Indeed, among the monsters that Anat claims to have slain, there includes one called Fire (*išt*) (*CAT* 1.3, III: 42–43). In the Akkadian *Gilgamesh Epic*, the monstrous guardian Huwawa is characterized by fiery aspect, "his mouth is fire itself." A similar description is also found in the Babylonian *Eluma Eliš*, where fire blazes from the mouth of Marduk when he reveals his glory (*ANET*, 62). In terms of iconography, a few cylinder seals from Mesopotamia from the third millennium show dragon-like monsters emitting flames from its back or body (*ANEP*, no. 689, 691).

[318] Cf. Isa 60:1; Hos 6:5; Hab 3:4, 11; Ps 78:14; 89:15.

[319] Cf. Exod 20:18.

(אֵשׁ)[320] (41:11 [19]), "smoke" (עָשָׁן)[321] (41:12 [20]), "coal" (גֶּחָלִים)[322], and "flame" (לַהַב)[323] (41:13 [21]). In fact, the images of fire from the mouth (41:11 [19]), smoke from the nostrils (41:12 [20]), and kindling coals (41:13 [21]) are juxtaposed in a poetic discourse of theophany in 2 Sam 22:9 // Ps 18:8 [9]. Not only do these fiery aspects emphasize the perceived monstrosity of Leviathan as a mythological being, but their connections with theophany also associate the monstrous Leviathan with YHWH. Again, the divine and the monster appear to merge here, with the two hardly distinguishable from one another.

In echo with the monster's impenetrable outfit in verses 5–9 [13–17], verses 14–16 [22–24] elaborate on the invincibility of Leviathan whose essential body parts—neck (צַוָּאר)[324], folds of flesh (מַפְּלֵי בָשָׂר), heart (לֵב)—are as invulnerable as its exterior. It is worth noting that there is a progression in the body parts featured: the neck, the flesh, and the heart are progressively deeper in the body. In effect, the Joban poet emphasizes the invincibility of Leviathan in its entirety—from the outermost parts to the innermost entrails, even at the heart. In particular, the term דאבה in 41:14b [22b] is ambiguous. While most translate this *hapax legomenon* as "dismay" (interpreted from the verbal root דאב, meaning "be dry, languish"),[325] 11QAramJob renders עלימו, "vigor," probably assuming דְּבָאָה "strength," cognate with Ugaritic *dbat* (*DUL*, 260).[326] Regardless of the intended meaning, the apparently contrasting understandings of the word attest to the ambivalence engendered by Leviathan: in embodying both terror and beauty, the monster has the capacity to evoke dismay and pleasure simultaneously in its onlookers.

After all the physical checkups, verses 17–24 [25–32] depict the fully-armed Leviathan in a vivid battle scene as an unbeatable warrior. In verse 17 [25], Leviathan rises up to the

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[320] Cf. Exod 3:2; 24:17; Deut 4:24; Isa 30:30; 66:15.
[321] Cf. Isa 6:4.
[322] Cf. Ezek 10:2.
[323] Cf. Isa 30:30; 66:15; Joel 2:5.
[324] Reference of the "neck" as the seat of strength is also seen in 15:26.
[325] BDB, 178a; Clines, *Job 38–42*, 1167.
[326] Alternatively, one may assume that the translator interprets the Hebrew root דאב to mean youthful vigor, a meaning attested in the Arabic cognate, *daʾaba*, "to act with vigor" (Lane, 839–40).

battlefield and overpowers those around it with terror and dread. It triggers extreme fear and bewilderment, even among "the mighty ones" (אֵלִים)—a picture which echoes with 41:1 [9], "even a mighty one (אל) is thrown off at the sight of him." Similar scenes are prevalent in the *Chaoskampf* motif in ancient Near Eastern myths, in which the combativeness of chaos monsters often paralyze or overwhelm god-like figures with fear. In the battle scenes in *Enūma Eliš*, for example, when the chaos monster Tiāmat threatens to rise for battle, the god Ea "became numb with fear and sat motionless" (*Ee* II.6); the gods Anu and Anšar also "become numb with fear" after they learn of Tiāmat's martial acts (*Ee* II.106, 119). Monstrous as it is, textual clues suggest that the martial monster is comparable to the divine. Notably, שְׂאֵת ("rising/exaltation") occurs two other times earlier in the book (13:11; 31:23); in both contexts, the term refers to God's "majesty" with implications of terror and dread. As the military debut of Leviathan is featured with theophanic language, Leviathan the monster is identified with YHWH, the deity who is appellated "the God of Hosts" in the biblical tradition.[327] Rather unsettlingly, the overwhelming monstrosity of Leviathan seems to point to the even mightier YHWH/God who might appear monstrous at times.

As an invincible warrior, the invulnerability of Leviathan is showcased in the battle in verses 18–21 [26–29] in which a variety of weapons are utilized—sword, spear, dart, lance, iron, bronze, arrow, sling-stone, club, and javelin. Leviathan is barely rattled in the face of powerful human weapons—it is actually so unconcerned that it even "laughs" (יִשְׂחָק) at the rattling of the weapon (41:21 [29]). Not even strong metals (iron and bronze) and distant weapons (arrows and sling-stones) can threaten the powerful monster.[328] It is noteworthy that Leviathan's "laughing" here echoes with the "laughing" (שׂחק) of the animals featured earlier

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[327] References of the name יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת ("LORD of hosts") in the Hebrew Bible occur in, for example, 1 Sam 1:3, 11; 17:45; 2 Sam 6:18; 7:27; 1 Kgs 19:14; 2 Kgs 3:14; 1 Chr 11:9; Ps 24:10; 48:8; 80:4, 19; 84:3; Isa 1:24; 3:15; 5:16; 6:5; 9:19; 10:26; 14:22; Jer 9:15; 48:1; Hos 12:5; Amos 3:13; Mic 4:4; Nah 3:5; Hag 2:6; Zech 1:3; Mal 1:6; Hab 2:13; Zeph 2:9, etc.

[328] The description that arrows cannot "make him flee" (v. 20a [28a]) does not seem to fit one's expectation of "the fleeing/slithery serpent" (26:13b), an epithet of Leviathan (Isa 27:1).

in YHWH's first speech (Job 39–40).[329] While the wild animals "play (laughingly)" (שׂחק) in the presence of Behemoth (40:20), no one can "play (laughingly)" with Leviathan (40:29 [41:5]), who "laughs" ironically at the rattling of human weapons. As an invulnerable monstrous other, Leviathan is at ease with any threat and terror in the human realm which makes it appear all the more horrifying.

Even more, the felt monstrosity of Leviathan is heightened by its aggressive moves which bring about a palpably unsettling turbulence in 41:22–24 [30–32]. As it crawls on the swamp, the potsherd-like protrusion of his underside sweeps a threshing-sledge on the mud[330] (41:22 [30]). It continues to make its way across the sea, thereby disturbing the deep water[331] by causing it to boil (41:23 [31]) and leaving a shining[332] pathway (41:24 [32]). The monstrous Leviathan appears here to be connected to chaos, as this image is reminiscent of the chaos monsters in Daniel's vision which emerge from the turbulent sea (Dan 7:2). Moreover, its abode in "the deep" (תְּהוֹם) (41:24 [32]) points to the primordial abyss in Gen 1:2 where chaos prevails. In this regard, Leviathan seems to be characterized here as a primordial chaos monster who symbolizes monstrosity in all senses of the term. Just as the invulnerable monster makes all its terrifying impact when it first enters the battle scene (41:17 [25]), Leviathan now leaves the scene as a triumphant victor with all the horrifying ramifications induced by its felt monstrosity.

Leviathan as King (41:25–26 [33–34])

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[329] In Job 39, the wild ass laughs at the noise in the city (39:7); the ostrich laughs at the horse and its rider (39:18); the horse laughs at fear (39:22).

[330] Seow points out that "mud" (טִיט) can have cosmological significance in the biblical tradition. Notably, "mud" is mentioned in Ps 69:14–15 alongside "the depths of the waters" (מַעֲמַקֵּי־מָיִם) and the "deep" (מְצוּלָה), which are also in view in this Joban passage.

[331] Mythologically laden, the term מְצוּלָה is used for "the depths of the sea" (Ps 68:23 [22]; 69:3 [2]; Mic 7:19) and the "depths" of the netherworld (Ps 69:16 [15]; 88:7 [6]; Jon 2:4).

[332] It is noteworthy that the Hebrew יָאִיר ("he causes to shine"), with Leviathan being its subject here, is most often used with God as the subject in the Hebrew Bible (Num 6:25; Ezek 43:2; Ps 80:8, 20 [7, 19]; 118:27; 139:12).

25(33) There is none on earth like/to rule over him,

    The creature without fear.

26(34) He sees everything that is lofty;

    He is king over all that are proud[333].

The discourse on Leviathan is closed by verses 25–26 [33–34] which exalt the monstrous Leviathan as the king on earth. Verse 25 [33] starts off the climactic conclusion by stating the supremacy of Leviathan over all creation under heaven. Based on the double references of the root √משל, the word משלו allows for two ways of reading. The first has the basic meaning of "to be like, to compare" (*HALOT*, I משל). The line אֵין־עַל־עָפָר מָשְׁלוֹ may thus be read "There is none on earth like him" (so the OG, Vg.), implying that no one can match the supremacy of Leviathan. The expression finds an echo in the doxological declaration of "there is none like YHWH" in Ps 86:8 and Jer 10:6.[334] Besides, this phrase is reminiscent of the inauguration and praise for the hero deity which is typical in the *Chaoskampf* motif.[335] Read this way, the monstrous Leviathan is simulated to a supreme deity. On the other hand, משלו can connote rulership by taking the alternative meaning, "to rule, to exercise kingship" (*HALOT*, II משל). Accordingly, the line can be rendered "There is none on earth who rules over him" (so the Tg., Syr., Sym.), a picture which anticipates the declaration of "He is king" (הוּא מֶלֶךְ)[336] in the following verse. The imagery assumes the motif of royal sovereignty which harkens back to 40:24–32 [40:24–41:8], where Leviathan is represented as an other that is not subject to power control. Either way, both readings point to the supremacy of Leviathan. As Leviathan is exalted and even likened to represent the divine soverignty, the monster is virtually indistinguishable from the divine.

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[333] Hebrew בני־שחץ, literally "sons of pride." The ancient witnesses take the phrase to refer to fish or reptiles (OG πάντων τῶν ἐν τοῖς ὕδασιν, "of all those in the waters;" Tg. בני כוורי, "sons of fish," Syr. *rḥmʾ*, "reptiles;" 11QAramJob רחש, "creeping things"), apparently assuming שֶׁרֶץ ("swarming things") rather than שַׁחַץ ("pride").

[334] Indeed, YHWH's incomparability among gods is a prominent theme in the *Chaoskampf* texts which typically celebrates divine victory over chaos monsters or monstrous forces (e.g. Exod 15, Ps 89).

[335] Upon the defeat of the chaos monster in the end, the hero deity is typically praised and inaugurated as the supreme king. A quintessential example is found in *Enūma Eliš*, in which Marduk's victory over the chaos monster is unrivalled and whose command is supreme among the gods (*Ee* IV.6).

[336] A parallel is found in *Enūma Eliš* where Marduk is hailed as king (*Ee* IV.28).

Reinforcing its supremacy, 41:26 [34] depicts Leviathan as king who looks down from on high, which in turn relativizes the role and status of humanity. The juxtaposition of "lofty" (גָּבֹהַּ) and "proud" (שַׁחַץ) in this last couplet harkens back to YHWH's introductory remarks in 40:9–14, where Job is challenged to adorn himself with "pride and pomp (גָּבַהּ)" (40:10) and "look on everyone who is proud" (40:11–12). Nevertheless, it turns out that Job is unable to take on divine sovereignty, not least in humbling the proud. Paradoxically, it is the monstrous Leviathan who is acclaimed as king over all the proud and lofty. Here, the kingship of Leviathan echoes with the title of YHWH as king in the Psalms (Ps 10:16; 24:10; 29:10; 44:5 [4]; etc), bringing Leviathan's identification with YHWH to an ultimate climax. In affirming the kingship of Leviathan on earth, humanity is no longer regarded as the acme of creation—the creation theology presumed in Genesis is sidelined. Just as 40:15 relativizes the status of humanity by identifying the createdness of humans with Behemoth, 41:26 [34] dethrones the presupposed human role as the ruler of the earth by extolling Leviathan as king. Alongside Behemoth, Leviathan comes to challenge the stability of the ground on which humans view themselves. An encounter with the monstrous other ultimately compels one to rethink about oneself and redefine the limits of humanity.

2.4   A Wrap-up with Monster Theory

Befitting Cohen's statement "*the monster is the harbinger of category crisis*,"[337] Behemoth and Leviathan constitute monsters that refuse to participate in the classificatory order of things and refutes easy categorization. As liminal monstrous others, they come to challenge presupposed identities and hierarchical relations therein. Specifically, the Joban monsters appear in the divine speech in all their liminality which enable them to point to some reality about both the divine and humanity. Not only do they fill the in-between position

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[337] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 6.

between the two parties, but the monsters also come to subvert their presumed nature and roles at points. Paradoxically, the revealed monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan ultimately reveal the *unheimlich*[338] divine truth, which uncomfortably unsettle our understanding of the divine, humanity, and the world in which we find ourselves.

Given its ambivalent monstrosity, Behemoth constitutes an embodiment of otherness that reveals a blurred distinction between the monster and the divine. Introduced as a monstrous being (40:15–18), it is God's foremost creature who exercises sovereignty over the land (40:19). The ambivalence of Behemoth is also palpable in its capacity to evoke both fear and delight (40:20) as a sublime creature. Moreover, Behemoth inhabits a liminal space which signifies both the providence and incomprehensibility of God (40:21–22). Belonging to the chaos waters as a monster though, Behemoth seems to be identified with YHWH who lords over all chaos (40:23). In all its perceived otherness, Behemoth represents both monstrosity and divinity at the same time. Like Behemoth, Leviathan is a monstrous other which is somehow identified with the divine. The untameable Leviathan (40:24–41:32 [40:24–41:8]) serves as a symbol of monstrosity that points to the all-powerful God. As a sublime being (41:1–4 [9–12]), the monster evokes both beauty and terror, awe and fear (41:5–21 [13–29]). Taking the image of a chaos monster (41:22–24 [30–32]) though, Leviathan assumes the divine title of king (41:26 [34]), thereby representing YHWH's kingship on all the earth. As is the case with Behemoth, the distinction between Leviathan the monster and YHWH the deity is never well-defined—they seem to morph into one another, as if the two are in fact one.

In the Joban context, Behemoth and Leviathan are meant in all their perceived monstrosity to embody and signify divine power and sovereignty. In terms of monster theory, the two Joban monsters essentially point to the sublime experience, in which one comes to

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[338] Ernst Jentsch, "On the Psychology ofthe Uncanny," trans. R. Sellers, *Angelaki* 2.1 (1995): 7–16 articulates the connotation of *unheimlich*, literally "unhomely" (not of the home), as that which unsettles one as something strange and unfamiliar, and in turn engenders intellectual uncertainty, undecideability, and feelings of the uncanny in the responder.

sense something of the divine and encounter God as the wholly Other. Theologically speaking, the felt monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan comes to communicate the very fact that God is not domesticable and his acts are unbound by human expectations.

Not only does the distinction between the divine and the monster become blurred in the figures of Behemoth and Leviathan, but their monstrosity also relativizes and even marginalizes the position of humanity (represented by Job) as the creation of God. The discourse on the potency, supremacy, and liminality of Behemoth serves to challenge any assumptions of human primacy in God's creation. While humanity was once acclaimed as the supreme creation who rules over the land on behalf of God (cf. Genesis 1), it is Behemoth, "the foremost of God's ways," who now seems to be the earthly reflection of God's universal sovereignty. With Behemoth ruling over the earth, it appears that the monster—rather than human beings—belongs to a core part of this world. Beyond human grasp and control, monstrosity is uncannily part and parcel of our cosmos. Alongside Behemoth, the monstrous Leviathan serves to prompt humans to rethink their presupposed status as the supreme creation of God. As an invincible other, Leviathan reveals the limits and finitude of humanity in the face of threats and menace. While humans are assumed to exercise dominion over the creation, the revealed kingship of Leviathan over all the earth dethrones the supposedly honorable status of humanity. Just as the discourse on Behemoth seems to challenge the assumptions of human primacy in creation, the discourse on Leviathan comes to question the presupposed human power and supremacy over creation.

In the divine discourse, Behemoth and Leviathan are revealed to be taking a more prominent position in the world than human beings. As unsettling as it may sound, the Joban discourse implies that chaos and evilness (from a human perspective)—symbolized by the monstrosity of the Joban beasts—appear to be indispensable parts of this world. Instead of eradicating perceived wickedness altogether, YHWH as the divine ruler tends to keep chaos forces and evil powers in check. Speaking in the language of monster theory, the perpetual

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existence of monstrosity cannot be annihilated, but they can only be repressed.[339]

   While the Joban monsters appear to be more "deified," humanity is rendered less potent

and significant as once thought. With their "cognitively threatening"[340] monstrosity,

Behemoth and Leviathan come to break any grounds of human pride and problematize any

fantasies of human supremacy. With the revealed monstrosity of the two Joban creatures, the

grounds of the way we are supposed to perceive the divine, humanity, and our world are all

rendered uncomfortably shaky and precarious.

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[339] This aspect of monstrosity is built on Freud's notion of "uncanny," which to him is "nothing new or alien in reality, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression." According to Freud, monsters represent part of our psyche that has been partially overcome and left behind in our conscious mind. In other words, monsters are the product of anxiety as a result of incomplete repression. See Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 74; Robin Wood, "Foreword," in *Horror Film and Psychoanalysis: Freud's Worst Nightmare*, ed. S. J. Schneider (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), xiii-xviii.

[340] Noël Carroll, "The Nature of Horror," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1): 56.

CHAPTER 3

THE MONSTER AS OTHERNESS WITHIN THE SELF:
IMPLICATIONS OF BEHEMOTH AND LEVIATHAN FOR THE JOBAN AUDIENCE

Having examined the revealed monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan in the divine

speech, this chapter—widening the perspective further—attempts to spell out the implications

of their monstrosity in the literary context of the book of Job from the perspective of

post-exilic Israelites, the primary audience of the book. According to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen,

ideas of monstrosity are culture-specific and monsters give shape to culturally specific fears,

anxieties, or despair.[341] In terms of monster theory, the monster is a paradoxical embodiment

of "*otherness within the self*;"[342] the monstrous often reflects some reality of the community

which constructs it. Methodologically speaking, the study is focused on three main themes,

namely, the monster as representation of chaos, the monster as rhetoric of trauma, and the

monster as a marker of social identity.[343] In articulating the function of the Joban monsters in

the book, this chapter reflects on how their perceived otherness conveys theological

implications for post-exilic Israelite religion, as well as addresses socio-psychological

concerns of the post-trauma Judean community.

3.1   The Monstrous as Representation of Chaos

Since Hermann Gunkel identified the monsters in the Hebrew Bible as representation of

chaos in the *Chaoskampf* motif which is commonly shared across ancient Near Eastern

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[341] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 4.

[342] Built upon the notion of "the uncanny" (*das unheimliche*) by Sigmund Freud, a main tenet of monster theory suggests that even monsters represent what a culture manages to exclude from herself, the monstrous often points to an uncomfortable part of the community which constructs it. See Brandon R. Grafius, *Reading the Bible with Horror* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books/Fortress Press, 2020), 30–31.

[343] As summarized by Brandon R. Grafius, "Text and Terror: Monster Theory and the Hebrew Bible," *CBR* 16 (2017): 40–45, these are three themes upon which applications of monster theory to biblical studies have been centered.

mythology, Behemoth and Leviathan have been recognized as chaos monsters that constitute an adversarial force against God/YHWH.[344] While traditional *Chaoskampf* scholarship tends to read order and chaos as the basic pair of binary oppositions in a narrative,[345] contemporary monster theory questions the grounds and stability of such binary systems.[346] Given the liminal nature of monsters, identifications of the monster, hero, and victim are often less fixed than assumed, even blurred at times. In the new interpretive paradigm of monster theory, the figures of Job and YHWH in the Joban narrative are no longer the stereotyped victim and hero plainly. In fact, both Job and YHWH may find their identifications with the monstrous figures in the book—quintessentially with Behemoth and Leviathan, not least in terms of their association with chaos. Focused on the theme of chaos, this section seeks to spell out how the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan—as otherness within the self—come to signify both Job and YHWH as sort of "chaos monsters." In effect, the constructed otherness of the monsters points to the chaotic self of the post-exilic Israelite community.

3.1.1 Job as a Chaos Monster

Along with their affiliated monsters (i.e. Tannin, Rahab), Behemoth and Leviathan can be read as paradoxical embodiments of monstrous otherness within the self of Job. As a climactic part of the monstrous imageries employed throughout the book, it is noteworthy that the Joban poet seems to hint at some connections between these monstrous beings and Job the protagonist.

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[344] See the landmark work of Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1895). For more recent work, see Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

[345] See, for example, John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); B. F. Batto, *Slaying the Dragon: Mythmaking in the Biblical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); C. L. Crouch, *War and Ethics in the Ancient Near East: Military Violence in Light of Cosmology and History* (BZAW, 409; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009).

[346] Brandon R. Grafius, "Text and Terror: Monster Theory and the Hebrew Bible," *CBR* 16 (2017): 41; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 40.

Before the divine speeches in the last part of the book, there have been several references or allusions to Leviathan. Given that each instance of Leviathan's appearance is connected to Job in some way, the Joban poet seems to portray a paradoxical interplay between Job and the monstrous Leviathan.

First, featured in Job's very first speech in the book, Leviathan is debuted in Job 3 as a malevolent monstrous being. Following the suffering of Job laid out in the first two chapters, Job "curses" (קלל) over "his day" (יֹומֹו) (3:1), that is, his birth as inferred from the context. In wishing for darkness to eliminate his birth (3:2–7), Job resorts to those who are adept at rousing up Leviathan to curse the day of his birth: "Let those curse it who curse the day[347], who are skilled in rousing up Leviathan" (3:8). As Leviathan is invoked to bring about darkness and death[348]—the pre-creation state of chaos described in Gen 1:2, it takes the image of a chaos monster like those in the ancient Near Eastern culture. In his most chaotic moment in life, Job calls for the monstrous realm to reverse creation back to the abysmal chaos. As Job curses the day of his birth to be plunged back into pre-creation chaos, he is essentially identifying himself with Leviathan, the monster who represents primordial chaos against the order of creation and the creator God. In effect, Job is invoking the monstrous for the annihilation of his coming-into-existence, a scene aptly described by Michael Fishbane as an "un-creation account."[349] Through the use of the verb עור, "to rouse," which is used of urging divine intervention elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible,[350] the Joban poet emphasizes that what Job is doing here is to "undo" the creation, which is in itself a divine action. In

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[347] The MT reading יֹום, "day," is attested by all ancient witnesses. This reading makes senses given the fact that it is the "day" that is being cursed in the poem (3:3, 4, 5, 6). However, since the book was probably written in conservative orthography (i.e. without internal vowel markers), some have re-read the original consonantal form ים as יָם, "sea" (e.g. NRS), in light of the parallelism with Leviathan in the poetic line. Perhaps both readings are valid inasmuch as the word serves a poetic purpose of double references.

[348] As Elmer Smick, "Another look at the mythological elements in the book of Job," *Westminster Theological Journal* 40.2 (Spring 1978): 215 points out, Job's appeal to professional cursers to curse the day of his birth may reflects the mythological notion that an eclipse was caused by the chaos monster which comes to swallow the sun.

[349] Michael Fishbane, "Jeremiah IV 23–26 and Job III 3–13: A Rediscovered Use of the Creation Pattern," *VT* 21.1 (1971): 153–54.

[350] In particular, Isa 51:9–10 appeals to the "rousing of the arm of YHWH" which once combated the chaotic forces, namely, the sea-monsters Rahab and Tannin, the Sea, and the great deep.

conjuring up a chaos monster as part of a counter-cosmic malediction, Job has essentially embraced the monster as part of himself.

In fact, the literary context of Job 3 seems to corroborate Job as a chaos monster. As a case in point, the language of Job's imprecation is replete with connotations of chaos that characterize the undoing of God's creation. For example, Job's embittered proclamation of "let there be darkness" (יְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ) (3:4) is a literal reversal of God's cosmos-creating decree in Gen 1:3, "let there be light" (יְהִי אוֹר). Not only does "darkness" (חֹשֶׁךְ)—which points to the primordial chaos—pervade Job's lament (3:5, 9), but the term is also used as the opposite of "light" (אוֹר) throughout the book (12:22, 25; 17:12; 18:6, 18; 24:16; 26:10; 29:3; 38:19), which recalls the pre-creation state of utmost darkness (Gen 1:2–3). In addition, Job's curse is full of vocabularies pertaining to death, destruction, and breakdown of order. "Death-shadow" (צַלְמָוֶת) (3:5), literally made up of "darkness" and "death," is associated with destruction and terror in the biblical tradition.[351] "Gloominess" (כִּמְרִיר) and "cloud" (עֲנָנָה)[352] are seen as apocalyptic language that signifies catastrophe and cosmic breakdown. Furthermore, the verb "to take, seize" (לקח) (3:6) is frequently used in the Hebrew Bible in reference to a state of disorientation such as captivity[353] (and perishment in one case in Isa 53:8). Rather than being subdued, the chaos forces invoked here threaten to overrule the creation and throw it back into a state of chaos, where there is nothing but "barrenness" (3:7). While words of God in Genesis are cosmogonic, Job's speech in chapter 3 is, as Timothy Beal coins it, "chaogonic."[354] In summoning the chaos powers—those that are related to the monstrous Leviathan—to subvert the order of things and God's creation including himself, Job is in effect identifying himself with the chaos as a chaos monster. While Leviathan is introduced as

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[351] Cf. Amos 5:8; Job 24:17; Jer 13:16.
[352] In not a few instances, the prose form עָנָן serves as a symbol of gloom in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Ezek 30:3, 18, 32:7, 34:12; Zeph 1:15; Joel 2:2).
[353] Cf. Gen 14:11–12; 1 Sam 27:9, 30:16, 30:18, 30:19, 30:20; 1 Kgs 14:26, 14:26; 2 Kgs 18:32 = Isa 36:17; 2 Kgs 23:34 = 2 Chr 36:4, etc.
[354] Timothy Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 42.

a chaos monster, its embodiment of chaotic otherness points paradoxically to the very self of Job, whose great suffering has turned his world into chaos.

Apart from the explicit address in 3:8, Leviathan is alluded to in 7:12, where it appears to take on the image of a mythological sea monster which is subdued by YHWH. It is hinted there as the "sea monster" (תַּנִּין) when Job questions God satirically for mistreating him ("Am I the sea or the sea monster that you should put a watch over me?"). Indeed, one version of the Aramaic Targum reads the monstrous being here as Leviathan (לויתן) specifically.[355] Given the ambiguous nature of the monsters in the biblical tradition, Leviathan and Tannin might actually be different names for the same monster, at least of species not clearly distinguished in the Hebrew minds.[356] In any case, with his challenge to God in 7:12, Job impinges upon divine sovereignty and poses himself as a potential monstrous threat. In implying that God has treated him as if he were dangerous like the sea and the sea monster, Job identifies himself with the chaos forces which serve to symbolize his chaotic situation as a sufferer. As chaos and monstrosity within the self of Job become more apparent, the distinction between Job and the monster is shown to be blurred.

In echo with 7:12 where God is imagined to put a watch over Job,[357] the rhetorical question in 7:17 ("What is a human being, that you consider him so great that you set your mind on him?") alludes to a known doxological verse in the psalmic tradition (Ps 8:4), where God is praised as one who is mindful of human beings. While the verse in the psalm applauds God's loving care and providence for humanity, here Job phrases the close watch of God in

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[355] The Tg[2] reads this line: הכימא רבא דמתרגף לקיציא אנא אין לויתן דאיטאימוס לאתיחדא ארום תשוי עלי נטורא, "Am I like the great sea, which shakes violently at the appointed time, or Leviathan, which is ready to be seized, that you set a guard over me?"

[356] Their kinship may be reflected in two texts, where Tannin appears in parallel with Leviathan (Isa. 27:1; Ps. 74:13–14).

[357] The imagery of a "watch/guard" (מִשְׁמָר) employed in 7:12 echoes with another imagery in the book, namely, "to hedge/fence up" (שׂוך/סוך). The root is attested only four times in the Hebrew Bible, with three instances in the book of Job (1:10, 3:23, 38:8). Like מִשְׁמָר which is ambivalent in its reference to God's watch/guard, שׂוך/סוך is also a vocabulary of ambivalence with respect to God's action. While God is said to have "hedged around" Job in the sense of protection in 1:10, Job laments in 3:23 that God has "fenced in" one whose way is hidden, suggesting an oppressive confinement. More importantly, the word is used with implications of hostility in the theophanic speech in 38:8, where God is described as having "fenced up" the threatening sea—in echo with the image here that God put a watch over Job as if he is the sea monster.

the form of a rhetorical question that serves to bemoan his wretchedness. Read in the context

of Job's suffering, God's watchfulness becomes an irony: God's "remembering of" (זכר) and

"attention to" (פקד, literally "to visit") humans in Ps 8:4 are ironically understood as God's

"remembering of one's sins" and "visitation of punishment" from the perspective of Job

(7:20–21). Given the similar structure in the rhetorical questions in 7:12 and 7:17, Job figures

that suffering humans like himself are ironically comparable to the mythological enemies of

God. With the blurred distinction between Job and the chaos monster, he is no longer seen as

the esteemed creation of God.

In his identification with the chaos monsters, Job acknowledges God's all-conquering

power over the chaos forces. In a parody of a hymn that hails God's work as the Creator

(9:4–13), Job features God as one "who treads on the heights of the sea" (9:8). In picturing

the defeat of the helpers of the sea-monster Rahab who cower at God's feet (9:13), Job

recognizes that God will not withdraw his anger against any chaos forces. Just like how other

chaos monsters would end up when they battle against God (7:12; 9:13; 26:12–13), Job is

well aware that his challenge to God would incur the crushing down of God's wrath

(9:14–19). Read in context, Job's praise of God's invincible power and sovereignty in 9:4–13

in the form of doxology is indeed sarcastic, which in turn reinforces his identification with

the conquered monstrous forces.

Job's response to Bildad in Job 26 presents itself as another parody with anti-doxological

implications. In this elegant poem, God's power over mythic chaos monsters is shown to be

even more palpable. Apart from circumscribing the spread of the waters (26:10; cf. 38:8–11),

God churned up the sea by mighty power (26:12). In particular, 26:12–13 mentions God's

"smiting of Rahab" and his "piercing of the fleeing serpent," which the Tg. identifies as

Leviathan (לויתן),[358] probably based on Leviathan's epithet as "the fleeing serpent" in Isa

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[358] With a rather different interpretation from other witnesses, the Tg. has for this line: ברת ידיה לויתן דמתיל לחיויא
טריק, "His hand created Leviathan, which is like a biting serpent."

27:1. Given that Rahab and the fleeing serpent form a parallel in the stanza of 26:12–13, the fleeing serpent, that is, Leviathan, might be understood as one of the companions of Rahab in 9:13 who stooped under divine authority. In illustrating the defeat of these chaotic monstrous forces, Job in effect aggrandizes the all-conquering power of God against whom he stands no chance as a human. The point of Job is that if even these chaotic monstrous powers were no match for God, Job as a far weaker human is all the more defenseless in the face of divine violence. The representation of monstrous others thus becomes a means for Job to construct a sense of his "self" when he measures himself against the chaos monsters.

Echoing with Job's identification with the chaos monsters as discussed, linguistic cues in the discourse of Leviathan in Job 40:25–41:26 [41:1–34] appear to connect Job and Leviathan in some way, as if the two mirror each other. For example, the term "boast" (בַּד) in 41:4a [12a], "I will not silence his boasts" (לֹא־אַחֲרִישׁ בַּדָּיו), which is used in reference to Leviathan's self-aggrandizement, resonates with Zohar's accusation of Job who attempts to "silence men with his blusters" (בַּדֶּיךָ מְתִים יַחֲרִישׁוּ) (11:3). With similar wordings, YHWH's reference to Leviathan's bluster seems to allude to Job's own bluster. In fact, the destructive power of Job's fulminations may be as threatening as the fire-breathing mouth of Leviathan (41:11–13 [19–21]). Perhaps Job is even more monstrously boisterous than Leviathan that while YHWH will not silence Leviathan, he might speak against the unruly Job (11:5). Further, the imagery of threading Leviathan's tongue (40:25 [41:1]) seems to echo with Job's unyielding tirades throughout the book. As John Gammie suggests, the description of Leviathan serves as a didactic tool that holds up to Job a "caricature of his verbal defenses."[359] Speaking in the language of monster theory, the monstrosity of Leviathan seems to symbolize the repressed part of Job, whose inner chaos monster is unleashed when

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[359] John G. Gammie, "Behemoth and Leviathan: On the Didactic and Theological Significance of Job 40:15–41:26," in *Israelite Wisdom: Theological and Literary Essays in Honor of Samuel Terrien*, ed. John G. Gammie, Walter A. Brueggemann, W. Lee Humphreys, and James M. Ward (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 224.

his world collapses into chaos.

Job and Leviathan also appear to be linked by the term עָפָר ("dust/earth"), which is a major thematic term in the book of Job.[360] Apart from referring to himself in terms of dust at points (7:5, 30:19), Job's destiny is associated with dust throughout the dialogues (7:21; 10:9; 16:15; 17:16; 20:11; 42:6). It is noteworthy that the same term is associated with Leviathan as the discourse on the monster concludes in 41:25 [33], where YHWH proclaims Leviathan has no equal on the earth ("עָפָר").[361] As Norman Habel points out, the "dust/earth" in the Joban narrative does not seem to mean the earth or world in general, but it denotes mortality, the very aspect that defines one's createdness.[362] The term signifies that Leviathan is a mortal creature of YHWH (cf. 41:3 [11]), an aspect that Job shares as a human. By placing them in the same category, the Joban poet demonstrates the kinship between Job and Leviathan. In the end, the protagonist and the monster in the narrative appear to be of the same nature, which upholds the already blurred distinction between the two.

Besides Leviathan, textual cues suggest that Job is connected in some way to Behemoth, the other chaos monster featured in the divine speech (40:15–23). In common with Job's createdness, Behemoth is characterized as the creature of YHWH (40:15). The reference to Behemoth's "loins" (40:16), which signify the monster's virility, recalls YHWH's macho challenge to Job: "Gird up your loins like a man" (40:7). Also, the title of Behemoth as "the first/foremost of God's ways" (רֵאשִׁית דַּרְכֵי־אֵל) (40:19) is reminiscent of Eliphaz's challenge to Job in 15:7 if he was born as "the first human" (הֲרִאישׁוֹן אָדָם). Notably, the description of Behemoth's body in 40:17b, "the sinews of his thighs are tight-knit," is similar to how Job refers to his own body in 10:11b ("with bones and sinews you knit me together").

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[360] In the book of Job, עָפָר may variously refer to "dust" (2:12), the underworld or domain of death (7:21; 17:16), the surface of the earth (14:19; 39:14), or mortality (4:19).

[361] Despite the different phrasings, YHWH's proclamation of Leviathan's incomparability here, "There is none on earth like him," recalls YHWH's affirmation of Job as a perfect man, "There is none like him on earth" (1:8; 2:3).

[362] Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library Commentary (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1985), 574.

Nonetheless, the invincible body of Behemoth also reminds Job of the vulnerability of his human body which is susceptible to God's assault (10:8–10). Specifically, the characterization of Behemoth's body parts in 40:18, which are likened to bronze and iron, stands in stark contrast to Job's fragile human body, which is made neither of stones nor of bronze (6:12). Indeed, the manifest "strength" of Behemoth (40:16) might prompt Job to realize his lack of "strength" in confronting the "mighty" God (9:4, 19; 23:6), who has all manner of "strength" (26:12; 36:5, 22; 37:23; 39:11). In the face of this unconquerable monstrous other, Job is made to reflect on his fragility and recognize his real "self."

In a sense, Behemoth is to Job a paradoxical symbol of both otherness and selfness. In terms of invincibility, Behemoth represents the opposite otherness of the vulnerable Job. Still, Behemoth speaks to the selfness of Job in their common nature as the creation of God. Even Behemoth signifies the otherness of chaos forces (40:23), its unconcerned posture is directed to the selfness of Job by serving a didactic purpose for the suffering protagonist.[363] In contrast to Job who tosses in distress all night when "lying down" (7:4), Behemoth stays untroubled and secure as it "lies down" under the lotuses (40:21). As C. L. Seow comments, "the patient Behemoth shows up the impatient Job," who "responded to his adversity with impatient recriminations and insecurity," rendering him in stark contrast to Behemoth who is "not in haste" even in the face of chaotic turbulence.[364] As some commentators suggest, YHWH is probably using the exemplar of Behemoth—the foremost creature of God—to give Job a lesson on how he should respond to his tragic and chaotic happenings. Notwithstanding its image as a monstrous other, Behemoth paradoxically constitutes a didactic tool for the selfness of Job.

As symbols of chaos, Leviathan and Behemoth come to echo with the chaotic

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[363] Gammie, "Behemoth and Leviathan," 222 finds a reference to Behemoth in 12:7 and argues that the beast is cited by Job as one who could instruct the friends the ways of God. Now in Job 40, as Gammie contends, YHWH is using Behemoth as a didactic image to instruct Job himself.

[364] Seow, "The Spectacularity of Behemoth," 248–49.

conditions of Job the sufferer. On the one hand, the Joban monsters reflect Job's monstrous

suffering that has divested him of his normal self and plunged his entire world into abysmal

chaos. When suffering has turned his world upside down, Job identifies himself with the

chaos monsters. On the other hand, the defiance of Job against God throughout the discourses

renders him a monstrous threat against the divine sovereignty. As representation of chaos, the

Joban monsters offer a space of contemplation for chaotic experiences represented by Job's

suffering, in which the human self becomes more or less characterized by monstrosity.

3.1.2 YHWH as a Chaos Monster

In the commonly shared perspective of traditional *Chaoskampf* scholarship, God/YHWH

in the Hebrew Bible tends to be portrayed as battling against monstrous beings and the chaos

that they symbolize.[365] Informed by contemporary monster theory, however, the boundary

between the monster and the divine is often blurred if not indistinguishable. In fact, YHWH

appears to have taken on monstrous characterizations in the Joban narrative. YHWH is even

portrayed as a chaos monster at points with all the tangibly irrational and terrifying aspects.

Rather than a God who subdues chaos, YHWH's implicit identification with the two sublime

monsters—Behemoth and Leviathan—in the last part of the book seems to paint YHWH as a

deity who rouses chaos. As liminal embodiments, the Joban monsters come not only to reflect

Job's monstrosity, but they also serve to signify the monstrosity of YHWH in the Joban

narrative.

YHWH as a chaos monster is first hinted at in the literary-thematic development in Job

38–41. In terms of literary design, the divine speeches, in which Behemoth and Leviathan are

featured, are basically presented along the flow of a "reversed creation." In contrast to

creation accounts which typically begin with chaos (that gives way to order eventually), the

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[365] K. William Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism*, HSM 63 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 2.

divine speeches start with YHWH's orderly and well-arranged cosmic design in Job 38. As it moves to a zoological exhibit in Job 39, it appears to steer away from order by featuring wild animals beyond human control. The "(de)creation account" culminates in the domination of the chaos monsters—Behemoth and Leviathan—in the wildlands in the second speech (Job 40–41), which uneasily ends the divine discourse in a sense of chaos. Through the unfolding of a "reversed creation," YHWH seems to be revealed as a God of chaos, with the chaos monsters being the acme of the creation work.

While Job identifies with the chaos monsters in the dialogues earlier in the book, the table is turned when the divine starts the discourse in the last part of the book. When YHWH is finally roused to answer Job out of the whirlwind (Job 38:1), Job's identification as a monstrous threat against the created order of God is overriden by the divine identification with the chaos. As Timothy Beal phrases it, in the end YHWH "out-monsters" Job in all his perceived monstrosity.[366] Rather than a battler of chaos as the *Chaoskampf* motif would expect, the discourse of a "reversed creation" ultimately reveals YHWH as a God who accommodates chaos forces in the world. As the climax of divine revelation, YHWH identifies with the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan as his sublime creatures. As Beal concludes, "Job's identification with the monstrous against God leads ultimately to God's identification with the monstrous against Job."[367] When confronted by Job the chaos monster, YHWH responds by manifesting as an even more threatening and powerful chaos monster, disturbingly subverting one's expectations.

Indeed, YHWH's identification with monstrous chaos is already perceptible in the first speech. As the Creator, YHWH is ready to accommodate the chaotic waters—the Sea—as part of the cosmos. As YHWH marks out a limit for the primordial chaos to reside in (38:8–11), monstrous chaos is shown to be a constituent part of this world. Besides, as the

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[366] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 48.
[367] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 48.

Provider and an intimate caretaker, YHWH is portrayed as one who "clothes" the chaotic sea with clouds and darkness (38:9). In addition to implying chaos as part of the cosmos that YHWH created, the image of YHWH "diapering" the Sea conveys even a sense of intimacy between YHWH and the chaos forces, as if they are of a father-and-son relationship.[368] This association between YHWH and the primordial chaos is also implied in 38:16 ("Have you entered into the springs of the Sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep?"), where the Sea and the deep form a parallel that points to the primordial waters in Gen 1:2. In contrast to Job who was nowhere to be found at creation, this couplet emphasizes that YHWH was closely associated with the primordial chaos when he created the world. Perceptibly, divine identification with the monstrous is already hinted at in the first speech of YHWH.

As the divine speech progresses into its second part, Behemoth (40:15–23) and Leviathan (40:24–41:26 [34]), the two quintessential monstrous creatures, come to the fore. Despite their perceived monstrosity, they appear to gain divine favor paradoxically. In fact, the representation of the two monsters in this passage reflects their proximity to God/YHWH. For example, both Behemoth and Leviathan are featured as the supreme creation of God (40:15, 19; 41:25 [33]). In addition to Behemoth's potency (40:16–18) and supremacy (40:19–20), which signify divine sovereignty, its lush resting habitat (40:21–22) points to God's immanent care and providence. In the case of Leviathan, its untameable nature (40:24–32 [41:8]) signifies YHWH as the wholly Other who is undomesticated. While its monstrous invincibility (41:5–21 [13–29]) serves as a mirror of the incomparable power of God who is its very owner (41:2–3 [10–11]). Leviathan's triumphant posture over the waters and its kingship over the earth (41:22–26 [30–34]) point to God's sovereignty over all chaos forces and the entire creation. It seems that the revealed monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan ultimately unveil some unsettling aspects of their divine creator. In response to

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[368] The relation between God and the Sea here resembles that between El and Yamm, who is appellated "beloved of El" in the Ugaritic Baal myth.

Job's final indictment (Job 30) where he assumes YHWH as one who unleashes monstrous creatures for attack, the second divine speech dreadfully confirms that YHWH is indeed the owner of monsters, not least of Behemoth and Leviathan.

Indeed, a number of textual clues in the monster discourse seem to betray the monstrosity of YHWH, which reinforces his image as a chaos monster. In the discourse on Behemoth, the description that YHWH "made" (עשׂה) Behemoth (40:15) might remind Job of the ironic fact that YHWH is the one who "does (עשׂה)" great, marvelous things that humans cannot comprehend (5:9, 9:10, 37:5), including the unaccountable suffering of Job that turned his life into chaos. Just as YHWH has created Behemoth—a chaos monster—in the material world, YHWH has brought utmost chaos into Job's life, which in turn renders him a chaos monster. As the one who created all these chaos, YHWH is represented as the lord of chaos and hence the chaos monster par excellence.

In particular, YHWH's identification with Leviathan is most palpably evident in 41:1–3 [9–11]. In this passage, the subject shifts from the third-person pronoun ("him") in reference to Leviathan to the first-person pronoun ("I," "me") which is YHWH's self-reference. In other words, the challenge to take on Leviathan, a theme in the previous unit (40:24–32 [40:24–41:8]), is met here with the challenge of taking on YHWH:

> Here now, expectation of *him* proves false;
>> Even a mighty one is thrown off at the sight of *him*.
> Indeed, the cruel one, surely he has roused *him*;
>> Who then is he who can stand before *me*?
> Who has confronted *me* that I should make whole?
>> Under the whole heaven, he is *mine*. (41:l–3 [9–11])

As the subject in the text shifts from "him" (Leviathan) to "me" (YHWH), the distinction between the monstrous and the divine becomes blurred, as if the two are one and the same. In confronting Job who wishes to conjure up Leviathan in an attempt to undo his birth (Job

3)—as if the monstrous is at his disposal, YHWH declares in 41:3b [11b] ("Under the whole heaven, he is mine") that Leviathan belongs exclusively to himself. In laying claim to the ownership of Leviathan, the divine proclamation reveals YHWH's identification with Leviathan the chaos monster explicitly. As the divine and the monstrous coalesces, Job's identification with the chaos monster is taken over by that of YHWH.

Importantly, the verb "to stand before" (יִתְיַצָּב) in 41:2b [10b] ("Who then is he who can stand before me?") recalls the scene of the divine assembly at the beginning of the book where the divine beings came "to stand before" (לְהִתְיַצֵּב) YHWH (1:6; 2:1), notably with the Adversary (הַשָּׂטָן) being among them. Read in this light, the rhetorical question in 41:2b [10b] may imply that no one can stand before YHWH except Leviathan, who echoes with the Adversary in the divine assembly who was sent to inflict suffering on Job. In the hand of the Joban poet, the monstrosity of YHWH appears to be highlighted through the divine deployments of the Adversary and of Leviathan which frame the book.

Furthermore, the fiery terms used to describe Leviathan in 41:10–13 [18–21] are typically associated with YHWH's theophany in the biblical tradition: "light" (אוֹר) (41:10 [18]), "flashes" (לַפִּידִים), "fire" (אֵשׁ) (41:11 [19]), "smoke" (עָשָׁן) (41:12 [20]), "coal" (גֶּחָלִים), and "flame" (לַהַב) (41:13 [20]). Often accompanied by fire, YHWH's theophany tends to connote divine judgment in the biblical tradition. With these shared fiery aspects, the divinity of YHWH is now represented by the monstrosity of a dangerous chaos monster in the Joban context.

It is also worth noting that the text, at least the MT, suggests no hostility between YHWH and Leviathan. The phrase "eyelids[369] of the dawn" (עפעפי־שחר) in 41:10b [18b] has appeared in the context of 3:8–9, where Leviathan is summoned as a chaos monster. In cursing the night on which he was born, Job wishes that its twilight stars will not see the "eyelids of the

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[369] In commenting on the precise meaning of the term עפעפי, Seow (2013, 353–54) takes it to refer specifically to "eyes in their sockets." Clines also assumes the term as a reference to eyes rather than eyelids.

dawn." In that context, the phrase, which signifies a beautiful scene in which the sun emerges from the horizon, serves as a symbol of hope.[370] In contrast to Job who conjures up Leviathan in order to stamp out any hope, YHWH praises Leviathan by that very same phrase, an uncannily promising phrase indeed: its eyes are just like the rising sun! The expression in 41:10b [18b] is, therefore, a divine acclaim for the monstrous Leviathan. Perhaps YHWH so identifies with Leviathan that he cannot restrain from praising the chaos monster in the best possible terms. As Carol Newsom remarks, "there is little or no reference to enmity or hostility between God and these creatures. Instead, God describes them with evident admiration."[371]

In view of YHWH's identification with Leviathan, the chaos monster can be understood as a representation of a part of the divine who may not be so distinguishable from chaotic threat. Rather than reflecting a God who subdues chaos, Leviathan functions as a subversive spectacle in that it points to a God who rouses and even revels in chaos forces. The epiphany of Leviathan evokes a sense of divine paradox that in encountering the divine, one encounters the *unheimlich* chaos at the same time. As the divine takes on aspects of the chaos monster, encounter with the divine can become—unexpectedly—a dispiriting experience, just as one encounters chaos.

In identifying with the chaos monsters, YHWH reveals himself to be a free and sovereign God who cannot be domesticated, not even by human rationale of justice. In the Joban narrative, God has indeed appeared as an irrational deity whose actions do not seem to comply with traditional theology, not least that reflected in Proverbs. The seemingly irrational side of YHWH is represented in the book of Job as a chaos monster, who reflects the

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[370] As C. L. Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, Illuminations (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 353–54 comments, "the point is that darkness should prevail through the triumph of the awakened chaos monster (v. 8), so much so that the slightest glimpse of first light will not be possible."

[371] Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 249.

"cognitively threatening"[372] aspects of the divine. According to Rudolf Otto, a sense of mysterious Otherness (*mysterium tremendum*), which comes with the unfathomable nature of the divine, lies at the core of human experience of the divine.[373] In the face of a God who does not adhere to any recognizable rules, humans are said to encounter the unfamiliar side of God, which―beyond human cognitive capacity―can only be revealed in terms of monstrosity. As the ultimate figures of divine revelation, the presentation of Behemoth and Leviathan in the theophanic speeches reveals the mystery of the divine as a wholly Other, who is jarringly comparable to a chaos monster.

3.1.3 Socio-Religious Implications of Chaos for the Post-Exilic Community

Having spelled out the implications of Behemoth and Leviathan as representation of chaos in the Joban narrative, this section attempts to explore the socio-religious implications that the above readings would have had for the ancient Israelites, specifically, the post-exilic Israelite community, in their historical context.

Regarding the socio-historical circumstances of authorship, the book of Job was likely composed or at least finalized as a book no earlier than the sixth century BCE.[374] This is consistent with the post-exilic period for ancient Israel, who in a new era lived under the authority of the Persian empire. The Exile is apparently one of the most chaotic moments in

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[372] Noël Carroll, "The Nature of Horror," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46 (1): 56.

[373] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey, second ed. (New York: Oxford, 1950), 8–24.

[374] A couple of textual clues suggest that the book of Job be dated to no earlier than the sixth century BCE. First, the references to "Chaldeans" (1:17) and "Sabaeans" (1:15) in the Prologue of the book reflect the socio-political realities in the region of southern Edom and northern Arabia around the middle of the sixth century. Besides, the figure of "the Adversary" with the definite article appears elsewhere in the Bible only in Zech 3:1–2, a text from the late sixth century BCE. In fact, the monotheistic form taken by the theological dualism in Job may be a result of Persian influence. Furthermore, the mention of "iron stylus" and "lead" in Job 19:23–24 might be an indicator of a Persian period date, as the use of lead inlay for inscription (exemplified by the Behistun inscription) is first attested in the Persian period. Lastly, the affinities between the book of Job and the book of Tobit (composed in the late third or early second century BCE) and those between Job and Deutero–Isaiah (scholars consensually date it to around the mid-sixth century BCE, probably before 539 BCE) seem to confirm a late date for Job, with the earliest in the Persian period. As concluded by Seow (2013, 45), "the book is most at home between the very late sixth and the first half of the fifth centuty and in Yehud." See also the comments of W. F. Albright on the dating of the book (the late sixth or early fifth century BCE) in his review of *Introduction to the Old Testament* by Robert H. Pfeiffer in *JBL* 61 (1942): 123–24.

the history of Israel, whether it be in terms of geographical displacement, genealogical disruption, leadership reshuffling, or religious-theological crisis. Still, the post-exilic period is a critically formative (and transformative) period for ancient Israel. In addition to land resettlement, there was apparently a reconfiguration of Israel's religion and theology in the post-exilic era.[375] While the classical Israelite wisdom tradition—as exemplified by the book of Proverbs and the Deuteronomic History (and some of the Psalms)—supposes that wisdom or righteousness is the key to prosperity, scribal and priestly classes in the post-exilic period came to transform such tradition in a new context. In particular, they seek to (re)shape Israel's theological understandings on divine inscrutability, human vulnerability, and divine involvement in human predicaments.[376] By drawing on transcendental monotheism, a prominent theme of Deutero–Isaiah, the book of Job comes to reject the traditional Deuteronomic piety, which supposes one can count on a powerful but immanent God to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. As one of the means to help navigate the chaos in the national crisis, new biblical compositions, reflecting sort of "the new Wisdom,"[377] appeared to address the socio-religious need of the post-exilic community.

Given that the book of Job tells a suffering story, post-exilic Israelites, in reflecting on their own suffering story, may have used the Joban narrative to make sense of their catastrophic exilic experience. In light of this compositional context, the chaos monsters in the book of Job—including Behemoth and Leviathan—can be read as embodiments of chaos that echo with the post-exilic community who too were struggling with chaos. In the midst of national disorientation, the book can offer the post-exilic Israelite community a space for

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[375] For a collection of articles on the development of the idea of god in the Persian period, see Diana Vikander Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms*, CBET 13 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995). For possible influence of Persian religion on the monotheistic and universal tendencies of early Judaism, see, for example, George William Carter, *Zoroastrianism and Judaism* (Boston: Gorham, 1918).

[376] Seth Schwartz, "Beginnings," in *The Illustrated History of the Jewish People*, ed. Nicholas de Lange (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1997), 21–22.

[377] Bureaucratic piety as presumed in traditional wisdom literature—exemplified by the book of Proverbs and the Deuteronomic History—is subject to criticism in these new wisdom corpora, notably in the book of Job and the book of Qohelet.

theological reflection on the current covenantal relationship between God and Israel.

As previously discussed, Behemoth and Leviathan signify not only the monstrous other, but also the very self of Job as a chaos monster. Given the Israelites' identification with Job the sufferer, the ambiguous reading that merges Job and the monstrous would have had profound social implications for the post-exilic community: the perceived threat of chaos is not just an external reality that once happened, but it also becomes part of the collective consciousness that would have lasting impacts on the community. While the chaotic events experienced by the Judeans during the final years of Judah and in the aftermath of the deportation were felt physically and externally, the exilic experience was so devastating that it would continue to be destabilizing psychologically, socially, and theologically for the post-exilic Israelites. In relating to the figure of Job, "YHWH's servant" (1:8; 2:3; 42:7–8), who is identified with the chaos monsters, the Israelites, also called "YHWH's servant" in the biblical tradition, came to terms with their experienced moments of chaos and disorientation in their national history. In this regard, the post-exilic Israelites are identified with the chaotic self of the protagonist in the story of Job.

Apart from representing his chaotic, disoriented life as a sufferer, a monstrous reading of Job illustrates his unrelenting defiance against God, as if he has become a chaos monster. The latter is most palpable in Job's questioning of God's justice and his seemingly irrational acts. Having experienced the exilic disorientation, the post-exilic community might also come to reevaluate their perceived notions of belief regarding God. In questioning the theology spelled out in the normative biblical tradition, which presupposes divine justice and principle of retribution,[378] they could identify themselves with Job who challenges the divine in the narrative. Given that Job as a chaos monster appears to embody a voice of "heretics," which sounds out of tone with the so-called orthodox theology, the traditional theological assumptions are challenged and thrown into ambiguity. Just as Job's suffering seems to be a

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[378] As exemplified by the Deuteronomic theology and the wisdom tradition of Proverbs.

mismatch for him as "YHWH's servant," so too is the exilic experience unpalatable for Israel as "YHWH's servant." Notwithstanding the title that signals divine favor, "YHWH's servant"—both Job and Israel—is ironically punished and abandoned by God in their respective contexts. In the midst of historical, social, and theological challenges, the post-exilic community seems to find her voice in Job's unyielding questioning and rounds of debates throughout the discourses.

Besides a monstrous reading of Job, reading YHWH as a chaos monster in the Joban narrative also has profound theological implications for the post-exilic Israelite community. Appearing as the source of blessings to Job in the beginning of the story, YHWH comes to identify with the monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan at the end of the book. When read in their context, the post-exilic Israelites came to realize that YHWH is the ultimate cause behind all their circumstances—including the worst, chaotic experiences. With the experienced monstrosity of YHWH, assumptions of divine justice and retributive principle become problematic. The theological implications of chaos are particularly poignant to the post-exilic Judeans in the Persian context, where monotheism became the dominant premise of the Hebrew religion. Within the framework of biblical monotheism, both order and chaos, good and evil are ascribed to the very character of the single God.[379] In the new religious context in which there is no pronounced cosmic dualism of good versus evil, the chaos monsters in the book of Job—with Behemoth and Leviathan being the quintessential ones—emerge as a means of expressing the intertwining good and evil brought under the same sovereign God. In the *unheimlich* encounter with chaos that touches on the divine, the post-exilic community realizes a sense of uncertainty and cosmic horror with a "monstrous" deity. As implied in Job's retort in 2:10 ("Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"), chaos is no longer an antithesis of God to the post-exilic Israelites, but it is

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[379] As Seow, "The Leviathan Tradition in the Book of Job," 293 points out, "the biblical writers of the Persian period insisted there must be no dualistic view of God as one from whom only good comes. In the radical monotheism of the period, God is the creator of all."

subsumed under the divine sovereign who might appear as a chaos deity at times. The monstrous reading of YHWH thus shakes the core part of Israel's belief which assumes a basic binary opposition between God and chaos.

3.2 The Monstrous as Rhetoric of Trauma

3.2.1 Reading the Monster and Trauma Studies

By integrating monster reading with ideas from trauma studies, Behemoth and Leviathan can be read as rhetoric of trauma that enables readers to engage the book of Job from the perspective of the post-exilic community. According to trauma studies, trauma literature refers to texts that bear witness to a historical crisis or trauma.[380] As a testimony, trauma literature is characterized by literary features that signify perceived otherness, including: bizarre imagery and disturbing language that articulate the trauma; ambiguous timeframe and temporality, often accompanied by a blurred connection between the past and the present; continual repetition of the trauma as an ongoing reality throughout the narrative; as well as the constant tension and subsequent inability to fit the trauma in an ethical and explanatory framework.[381] In short, trauma literature primarily serves to communicate strangeness and confront readers with the notion of otherness. Since it tends to describe the indescribable and represent what cannot be represented, a sense of ambiguity and paradox is often discernible on the text level.

Speaking in the language of monster theory, trauma is in and of itself a paradox of "otherness within selfness." While trauma is triggered by external experiences of strangeness and monstrosity, these experiences involve intense bodily sensations and psychological impacts within a human.[382] Though trauma may be triggered by what happens out there in

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[380] S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 1.

[381] David Janzen, *The Violent Gift: Tauma's Subversion of the Deuteronomistic History's Narrative* (New York: T & T Clark International, 2012), 44.

[382] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, rev. ed. (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), 33 characterizes

the world, it affects one's inner being in terms of one's perception of the world and of oneself.[383] Trauma happened in the past, yet it keeps breaking in the present.[384] Trauma tries to articulate itself and speak itself out, yet trauma always struggles with the impossibility of the telling,[385] finding itself strange and ultimately leading to muteness and isolation. Trauma tries to fit in with a recognizable narrative pattern, yet trauma ends up subverting the logic, concepts or assumptions of the presupposed narrative.[386] Hence, trauma can be understood as a human experience of "otherness within the self." To convey a sense of utmost otherness, trauma literature often employs language of monstrosity as a rhetorical means to represent the voice of the traumatized. Read in this light, the felt monstrosity and the monstrous featured in the book of Job may serve as icons of trauma for the struggling Judean audience in the post-trauma times.

The following section will first study how the literary outlook of the book qualifies it to be treated as a composition of trauma literature. In incorporating insights from trauma reading, the study will then examine how monstrous language and images throughout the book—which culminate in the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan—serve to signify both the traumatized Job and the traumatizing YHWH. On the one hand, the monstrous images and descriptions of bodily sensations delineated throughout the discourses—together with their intense language of terror, violence, and loss—signify Job's loss of his "self" and feelings of strangeness that correspond to the traumatized post-exilic community. On the other hand, the perceived monstrosity of YHWH as a divine persecutor and the source of infliction as portrayed throughout the book serves as rhetoric that offers a theological understanding for the exilic trauma, which in turn provides counsel for the post-traumatic Judahite audience.

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traumatic events as generally involving "threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, evoke the responses of catastrophe."
[383] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 35–36.
[384] Janzen, *The Violent Gift*, 39.
[385] Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, 78–85.
[386] Janzen, *The Violent Gift*, 33–34, 42–45; Kali Tal, *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6.

3.2.2 Reading the Book of Job as Trauma Literature

When read as a corpus of trauma literature, the book of Job represents voices of trauma produced by a community that lived in the aftermath of the traumatic events and experience of the Exile. The Joban narrative, as literature of survival, gives witness to the national disorientation following the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE and the mass deportation thereafter. Through various literary devices, not least language of monstrosity and portrayed monstrous images, the book compels the post-exilic audience not only to encounter the strangeness of YHWH who drives their national history, but also to confront the trauma and relive the traumatic experience so that they may live through it. As the Joban narrative echoes with the voices of the traumatized by use of the monstrous, it serves as a resource that offers new theological understandings and pastoral-therapeutic counsel for the post-traumatic community.

Throughout the book of Job, the voice of Job the sufferer comes to represent the voice of the traumatized Israel in a collective sense. As the book of Job took shape and received its final form not long after if not during the time of the Exile, it is not hard for the post-exilic Israelite community to identify with the figure of Job, a suffering servant of YHWH in the Joban narrative. It is worth noting that the title of "the suffering servant" is known to be designated for Israel in the book of Deutero–Isaiah (Isa 40–55), a prophetic biblical corpus composed during the exilic period. With the shared title of identity, the exilic trauma of Israel is tied up with the trauma of Job. In their struggle to get over the national trauma, the post-exilic Israelite community has taken up the story of Job's suffering and restoration and related it to their suffering experience during the Exile.

As is typical in trauma literature, the Joban narrative is set in a rather ambiguous timeframe and setting. Typically, biblical narratives begin with a conventional introductory formula of "It came to pass that" (ויהי), which tends to be followed by a temporal clause that

presupposes a historical context.[387] Unlike this pattern, the book of Job begins with the

phrase "There was a man" (איש היה), which has nothing to do with any part of Israel's

meta-narrative. In this manner, the story seems to have become a timeless reality for the

post-exilic Israelite audience, pointing to the fact that the exilic trauma has taken on a

constantly haunting memory for the Israelite readers. Besides, terms that signal the spatiality

of the story sound exotic. Specifically, the phrase "in the land of Uz" in 1:1 places the story

in a foreign setting, which enhances the sense of otherness in the narrative. In fact,

spatiotemporal references throughout the book are rarely precise; they appear mostly

mythical, which are in and of themselves language of otherness. Given the ambiguity of time

and space, the voice of the traumatized Job in the narrative is not necessarily specific to the

figure of Job, but it can be universalized to any traumatized individual or community, not

least the post-exilic Israelites who come to be the first audience of the book.

Just as archaic, esoteric vocabularies are common in trauma literature, the linguistic

features of the Hebrew language employed throughout the book appear archaic which

definitely betrays a sense of otherness. Notably, the language of the book of Job is

characterized by a high concentration of conservatively spelled forms (i.e., those without the

expected internal vowel letters (*matres lectionis*)),[388] which are identified as archaic Hebrew

forms (no later than the preexilic period).[389] Given the textual grounds for a late dating of the

book as previously discussed, the conservative spelling may, as Seow suggests, not reflect

real archaism; rather, it seems to be archaistic pretensions.[390] As a matter of fact, the book

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[387] C. L. Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, Illuminations (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmands, 2013), 263 notes that the biblical books in the Deuteronomistic History are mostly introduced by ויהי (Josh 1:1; Judg 1:1; 1 Sam 1:1; 2 Sam 1:1). Besides, in each of the introductions to Ruth, Esther, and Ezekiel, ויהי is followed by a temporal clause that introduces a historical context (Ruth 1:1; Esth 1:1; Ezek 1:1). Finally, the book of Jonah is started by ויהי which is followed by a formula introducing the context and circumstances of the prophet.
[388] For a discussion of the book's language and orthography, see C. L. Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, Illuminations (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmands, 2013), 17–26; also C. L. Seow, "Orthography, Textual Criticism, and the Poetry of Job," *JBL* 130, no. 1 (2011): 63–85.
[389] Frank Moore Cross, Jr., and David Noel Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography: A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1952).
[390] Seow, *Job 1–21*, 20; Seow, "Orthography," 68.

contains an unusually large number of rare terms and vocabulary which may not even be attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. It looks like such orthographic conservatism of the book is deliberately employed for literary purpose—to enhance the flavor of otherness of the book as if it comes from a distant past. In other words, all these linguistic idiosyncrasies come to serve as literary affectations that communicate a sense of otherness which befits the nature of trauma literature. The reservoir of textual peculiarities in the book thus embodies the strangeness of the traumatic exilic experience that haunts the post-exilic community. In recounting a timeless suffering story over and over, the post-exilic Israelite community comes to review and reexperience the trauma of their national suffering in all its perceived otherness.

As an experience of otherness, trauma itself is hard for humans to comprehend and articulate. Given the difficulty if not impossibility in accounting for human suffering, the language in trauma literature often sounds ambiguous.[391] This anti-narrative nature of trauma is exemplified in the Joban narrative, which is a story about the exhaustion of wisdom in some sense. While Job's friends attempt to ground the trauma of Job in clear ethical moralities and retributive principles, all their words of wisdom turn to be worn out and rendered futile. Even post-traumatic communities attempt to overcome the suffering experience by fitting it into existing worldviews or ethical narratives, the explanatory framework and its underlying assumptions tend to be interrupted and challenged by the trauma itself.[392] When read as a piece of trauma literature, the book of Job corroborates findings from trauma studies that trauma and suffering are enigmatic—they essentially defy the framework of human understanding and language.

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[391] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 5; J. Harold Ellens and Wayne G. Rollins (eds.), *Psychology and the Bible: a New Way to Read the Scriptures* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2004), 223.
[392] Janzen, *The Violent Gift*, 59–60.

3.2.3 Monstrous Language as Rhetoric of Trauma

As a piece of trauma literature, the book of Job attempts to address the exilic trauma of Israel literarily through language of monstrosity. It conveys the indescribable trauma by the use of monstrous language and representations as rhetoric of trauma through the discourses. In particular, the monstrosities of Behemoth and Leviathan are used as rhetorical devices to convey the notion of trauma with their ambiguous implications. Specifically, under the theme of trauma, their characterizations with all perceived monstrosity come to signify both the traumatized Job and the traumatizing YHWH.

3.2.3.1   The Traumatized Job

As crowning embodiments of monstrosity in the Joban narrative, the monstrous representations of Behemoth and Leviathan come to take up rhetoric of trauma that signify the traumatic experience of Job. On reading monsters as trauma,[393] Grafius expounds that "monstrous imagery is employed when the author wishes to invoke a trauma so great as to be almost beyond imagination."[394] In fact, various terms and characterizations of the two monstrous creatures echo with their earlier occurences in the book where they are applied to the great trauma of Job. For example, the fact that YHWH "made" (עשׂה) both Behemoth and Job (40:15) recalls Job's realization that the God who "made" (עשׂה) him is also the one who destroyed him (10:8–9). The word פחד used in reference to Behemoth's "thigh" (BDB, II פַּחַד) (40:17) brings to mind the alternative meaning of the same consonantal word, namely "fear, dread" (BDB, I פַּחַד), which recurs throughout the discourses (3:25; 4:14; 13:11; 15:21; 22:10;

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[393] For the use of monster theory in exploring the expression of trauma within the Hebrew Bible, recent works include Brad Kelle's "Dealing with the Trauma of Defeat: The Rhetoric of the Devastation and Rejuvenation of Nature in Ezekiel," *JBL* 128 (2009): 469–90, and his commentary on Ezekiel, *Ezekiel: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*, New Beacon Bible Commentary (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2013). In his work, Kelle utilizes trauma theory and monster theory to explore the effects of this trauma on the human body. See also Amy Kalmanofsky, *Terror All Around: The Rhetoric of Horror in the Book of Jeremiah*, LHBOTS 390 (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), which reads the rhetoric of Jeremiah with a focus on the emotional responses of the biblical text to horror.

[394] Grafius, "Text and Terror," 42.

23:15; 31:23). The analogy of Behemoth's body to metal in 40:18 stands in stark contrast to 6:12, where Job reflects on his fragile body which is made neither of stone nor of metal. While Behemoth "lies down" (שׁכב) securely under the lotuses (40:21), Job "lies down" (שׁכב) full of tossings through the night (7:4)—otherwise he will "lie down" (שׁכב) in the dust which symbolizes death (7:21). Behemoth's habitation in a "hidden place" (סֵתֶר) (40:21) echoes with Job asking God to "hide" (סתר) him in Sheol, given his unbearable suffering (14:13). Furthermore, the unperturbed image of Behemoth in 40:23 stands in sharp contrast with the traumatized Job who is not at ease and has no rest (3:26). These textual references demonstrate that Behemoth's monstrously invincible body—as rhetoric of trauma—brings to mind Job's traumatized body throughout the discourses.

Similarly, a number of descriptions of Leviathan's monstrous body resonates with Job's lament over his traumatized body. For instance, the impenetrability of Leviathan's "skin" (עוֹר) (40:31 [41:7]) and "flesh" (בָּשָׂר) (41:15 [23]) evokes Job's traumatized body of which "skin" (עוֹר) and "flesh" (בָּשָׂר) are broken and rotten (7:5; 19:20, 26). That YHWH warns Job against "thinking of" (זכר) battling with the terrifying Leviathan (40:32 [41:8]) recalls Job's "thinking of" (זכר) his appalling situation that terrifies himself (21:6). Leviathan's boasts of "his array" (עֶרְכּוֹ) (41:4 [12]) with martial implications echo with Job's lament that God's terrors are "arrayed against him" (יַעַרְכוּנִי) (6:4). The "terror" (אֵימָה) around Leviathan's teeth (41:6 [14]) flashbacks to the "terror" (אֵימָה) that God inflicts on Job in 9:34 and 13:21. In contrast to Leviathan which has eyes "like the eyelids of the dawn" (41:10 [18]), Job bemoans that "his eye has grown dim from vexation" (17:17), and that "on his eyelids is shadow of death" (16:16). While Leviathan's "heart" (לֵב) is as hard as a stone (41:16 [24]), Job laments that God has made his "heart" (לֵב) faint (23:16). The depiction of Leviathan's body over "potsherds" (חֶרֶשׂ) and "mud" (41:22 [30]) is reminiscent of Job scraping his traumatized body with a "potsherd" (חֶרֶשׂ) in the "ashes" (2:8). The divine proclamation that nothing on the "dust" (עָפָר) is like Leviathan (41:25 [33]) appears to allude to Job's mortality as he refers

to himself by the imagery of "dust/ashes" throughout the discourses (7:21; 10:9; 16:15; 17:16; 30:19). Lastly, that Leviathan is said to be a creature without fear (41:25 [33]) is literally antithetical to Job who is constantly haunted by fear and dread (7:14; 31:34). As in the case of Behemoth, the monstrous body of Leviathan can be read as rhetoric of trauma that reminds Job of his traumatized body. In light of trauma reading, the monstrosities of Behemoth and Leviathan serve rhetorically to reflect the trauma of Job.

Indeed, intense language and horrifying imageries that signify the idea of monstrosity pervade the book, as is typical of trauma literature. Throughout the dialogues, they can be understood as rhetorical devices that point to Job's reception of the trauma. As a case in point, Job is plagued by monstrous fear and terror following God's monstrous assaults (6:4; 9:34; 10:1; 13:21, 26; 23:15–16; 30:15; 31:23). As if maltreated like a monster, Job describes himself as being tormented, crushed, shattered, and even having his entrails slashed open by YHWH (6:9; 7:17; 16:12–14; 19:2, 10). Moreover, Job feels like he has become the monstrous target of divine persecution (6:4, 7:20; 10:16; 13:15, 24–25; 14:20; 16:7–9, 12; 19:11–12, 21–22; 30:19–23), constantly beset with intense physiological arousal (7:5; 14:22; 16:16; 17:7; 19:20; 21:6; 30:17, 27, 30). With the use of death imagery (7:21; 10:21–22; 17:1, 13–16) and depictions of destruction (10:8; 12:23), Job is shown to be torn between life and death (7:15–16; 10:1, 18–19; 14:13). Even more, Job is haunted by nightmares and visions (7:3–4, 14) and often expresses his anguish and bitterness over his trauma (7:11; 27:2). When he becomes a stranger to all his acquaintences and even to himself (19:13–19), Job poignantly alludes to his loss of "self," only to be identified with the monstrous (3:8; 7:12; 9:13; 26:12–13; 30:29). Utilizing language of monstrosity, Job's response to the trauma is characterized by terror, violence, shame, and loss. When trauma has "monsterized" Job, he is no longer "himself." As Paul Schilder remarks, "to the depersonalized individual the world appears strange, peculiar, foreign, dream-like...They have become strangers to

themselves."[395]

Given its capacity to deprive one of his/her normal self,[396] trauma is dehumanizing in nature and can turn the traumatized into a monstrous other. In this light, monstrosity can be used as rhetoric to convey the dehumanizing impact of a traumatic experience. Before the Joban monsters come to reveal the dehumanized aspect of Job,[397] the literary presentation of the Prologue has already hinted at the process of dehumanizing in Job as he went through the traumatic suffering. When the Joban narrative begins, as opposed to other living creatures—sheep, camels, oxen, donkeys, Job's sons and daughters, his servants, and even his wife—who are all faceless and nameless, Job is the only named earthly character whose origin—the land of Uz—is clearly mentioned (1:1). Job is apparently living in his perfect "self" when the narrative first introduces him. As the story goes on, the heavenly duel between the Adversary and YHWH starts to turn Job into something other than his normal self. Not only does Job lose all his possessions (1:13–16), including his offspring (1:17–19), his body is also disfigured (2:7) to the extent that his three friends do not recognize him (2:12). Job even ends up being estranged by his own wife who tells him to die (i.e., not being a human anymore) (2:9). Over one night of intense trauma, Job is dehumanized—from a dignified human to a traumatized other who is but identified with the monstrous.

In addition to his traumatized body and social estrangement, Job's loss of "self" through the trauma is signified in terms of his ever-diminishing argumentative power through the discourses. Not only do Job's arguments against his friends appear shorter and shorter literally, but he sounds less and less engaging through the three cycles of dabates.[398] He even

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[395] Bessel A. van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 100.

[396] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 35–36.

[397] Rebecca Raphael, "Things Too Wonderful: A Disabled Reading of Job," *Perspectives in Religions Studies* 31 (2004): 415–421; See also Alec Basson, "Just Skin and Bones: The Longing for Wholeness of the Body in the Book of Job," *Vetus Testamentum* 58 (3) (2008): 287–299.

[398] In the first cycle (chapters 4–14), speeches are imbued with "debating" tone with carefully constructed arguments that responds to one another. Instead of responsive arguments, the second cycle (chapters 15–21) consists of charges and countercharges which are insistent and passionate. The third cycle (chapters 22–31) represents a "collapse" of response; it becomes chaotic when Job's words seem to contradict his previous

ends up giving no response to the speeches of Elihu (Job 32–37), the final human debater for Job's case. Job's voice is heard again after YHWH's first speech, but only to indicate that he will not speak anymore (40:4–5). In particular, the so-called Job's final confession in 42:1–6 is replete with ambiguity.[399] Perhaps Job is really confessing his inadequacy and expressing his surrender to YHWH, but his "surrender" can very well be simply a gesture of muting himself before YHWH's monstrosity—that is, the traumatized Job can no longer argue with the monstrous YHWH. In fact, Job's loss of "self" is manifested in his gradually disappearing voice through the discourses: from back-and-forth dialogues, to insistent monologues, to finally complete muteness and isolation. In terms of trauma studies, Job's eventual muteness may reflect what is called "emotional constriction," a post-traumatic symptom that reflects the numbing response of the ones who surrender. When a person is so traumatized that any form of resistance seems futile, he/she may go into a state of surrender, with the total shutdown of his/her self-defense mechanism. At this point the traumatized may feel that a part of him/herself has literally "died;" the traumatized experiences a total loss of "self." Read against the compositional context, the muteness of Job may signify the inability of the post-exilic community to make sense of the traumatic experience within the recognizable narrative of Israel. The haunting trauma remains to be something that cannot be understood or articulated. Drawing on the analogy of an ever-returning monster, trauma is lurking to be unresolved as an ongoing monstrous reality.

The trauma that Job has experienced indeed poses itself as a challenge to God's justice,

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speeches. He appears to seize his friends' views when he aligns with what Eliphaz has said (24:18–24). In this progression, Bildad's response becomes brief (25:2–6); Zophar even becomes silent. Unlike the formulaic phrase of "and So-and-So answered and said" in the previous speeches, this conversation ends by "Job again took up his taunt" (27:1) by which the poet introduces a further speech of Job. From chapter 27 onwards, Job no longer participates in the question-and-answer pattern in the dialogue.

[399] Specifically, almost every word in 42:6—the high point of Job's "confession"—allows for multiple renderings: מאס can mean "abhor," "reject," "refuse," "yield," "dissolve;" נחם can be translated as "regret," "repent," "comforted;" the conjunction particle ו can be taken to be "and" or "but;" and the preposition על may be rendered "upon," "above," or "concerning." Moreover, the expression עפר ואפר ("dust and ashes") can be literal or metaphorical. Taken together, the meaning of the line is by no means clear and explicit. Perhaps the textual ambiguity is just to the point: Job's confession is ambivalent—if it is a confession at all.

not least as that presupposed in the book of Deuteronomy. As a blameless and upright person (1:1) who should receive divine blessings, Job's body is ironically "inflicted with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the top of his head" (2:7), which is precisely how God will curse and punish the Israelites when they fail to obey God's commandment (Deut 28:35). Not only does the affliction render Job's body a monstrous state, the "unjust" suffering also turns his whole world upside down—the world has become to him monstrously unrecognizable. As noted by Beal, suffering not only depersonalizes a human, but it also breaks down one's perception of the world.[400] The breakdown of one's subjectivity amidst the suffering experience would trigger a total collapse of his/her entire universe.

Still, vivid monstrous language and imageries which literarily encode traumatic memories can be therapeutic means for a traumatized community to "relive" and hence live over the traumatic experience. According to Freud, traumatic reenactments are unconscious human attempts to gain control over a traumatic experience, in the hope that they would lead to mastery and resolution over the trauma.[401] In the case of Job, the literary repetition of monstrous imageries and depictions of destruction and deadly experience through the discourses would have the rhetorical effect of bringing the Joban audience to a point of feeling "dead." In effect, the book attempts to bring the traumatic survivors into contact with "death" over and over so that they may "live through" and get over the trauma. The repetitive reliving of the traumatic experience through the monstrous rhetoric in the book thus represents an instinctive attempt at healing. Paradoxically, representations of experienced monstrosity may help the post-traumatic community rebuild their "selfness" which, for Job's case, means the identity of the post-exilic Judeans.

When read as a piece of trauma literature, the book of Job displays the "monsterizing" trauma of Job which is characterized by terror, violence, shame and loss. In particular, the

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[400] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 36.
[401] Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 32.

trauma is communicated in the monstrous language and images throughout the book, which culminate in the quintessential monsters Behemoth and Leviathan. With represented monstrosity as rhetoric of trauma, the post-exilic Joban audience comes to relate to the traumatized protagonist and—through the voices of the traumatized—attempts to get over the haunting trauma.

3.2.3.2   *The Traumatizing YHWH*

In light of trauma reading, the perceived monstrosities of Behemoth and Leviathan can signify not only the traumatized Job, but also the traumatizing YHWH. As rhetoric of trauma, they point to the felt monstrosity of YHWH as the divine persecutor and the source of Job's suffering in the Joban narrative.

It is worth noting that a number of terms in the discourses of Behemoth and Leviathan have been used in association with YHWH's monstrous acts earlier in the book. While Behemoth is "covered" (סכך) by the lotuses and "surrounded" (סבב) by the willows (40:22), which signify security and divine protection, Job laments ironically of being "hedged in" (סוך, by-form of סכך) by God (3:23) and "surrounded" (סבב) by God's onslaughts (16:13; 19:10; 22:10). Besides, the term "oppresses" (עשׁק) (40:23) which describes the river where Behemoth is in recalls 10:3 when Job accuses God of acting violent ("Is it good for you (God) to oppress?"). In the discourse of Leviathan, YHWH's self-reference in rousing Leviathan as "the cruel one" (אַכְזָר) (41:2 [10]) corresponds to Job's allegation of God being "the cruel one" (אַכְזָר) (30:21). Leviathan's "array" (ערך) (41:4 [12]), which carries martial implications, echoes with the terrors of God that are "arrayed" (ערך) against Job (6:4). In addition, the acclaimed mighty strength of Leviathan (41:4 [12]) resonates with the oppressive strength of God which Job praises in a sarcastic tone (9:19). Not only does the "terror" (אֵימָה) around Leviathan's teeth (41:6 [14]) flashback to the "terror" (אֵימָה) that God inflicts on Job (9:34; 13:21), Leviathan's ghastly "teeth" (שֵׁן) (41:6 [14]) and glowing "eyes" (עַיִן) (41:10 [18])

recall Job's traumatic memories of God gnashing "his teeth" (שִׁנָּיו) at him and sharpening "his eyes" (עֵינָיו) against him (16:9). Moreover, the fire-breathing characteristic of Leviathan (41:11–13 [19–21]) is reminiscent of God's fire that consumes Job's livestock and servants calamitously (1:16). The image of Leviathan's seething "nostrils" and "breath" (41:12–13 [20–21]) appears to allude to God's "breath" and "nostrils" that consume the wicked (4:9). While Leviathan would not be intimidated by "arrows"—in fact, all sorts of weapons are rendered useless before the monster (41:18–21 [26–29]), Job is mocked as one who will flee from a weapon and an "arrow" (20:24), if only to be pierced by the "arrows" of God (6:4). All these textual cues suggest that Behemoth and Leviathan, as symbols of monstrosity, appear to point to the monstrosity of YHWH—the one who traumatized Job. They are in line with Job's accusations of God's cruelty and persecution throughout the dialogues.

Finally appearing to respond to Job's allegation, YHWH reveals through the monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan that he is indeed the monstrous persecutor behind the trauma of Job. It was YHWH who allowed the Adversary to test Job's piety in the first place. It was YHWH who inflicted the suffering on Job and destroyed all his possessions—even his children and servants—simply to defend against the Adversary's charge. It was YHWH who repaid Job's righteousness with curse, and his integrity with punishment. And it was YHWH who has traumatized Job, his very quintessential servant. Even Job sees God as one who mounts "breach upon breach" against him and rushes at him "like a warrior" (16:14). In the perspective of Job, he is regarded as "the adversary of God" (19:11), whose troops "build siege ramps against him and encamp around his tent" (19:12). As rhetoric of trauma, the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan come to reveal the traumatizing YHWH behind Job's suffering.

Having been unable to assimilate Job's traumatic experience by normative means thus far (traditional wisdom represented by Job's friends), the Joban poet eventually resorts to nothing but YHWH's sovereignty which is unbound by any presupposed concepts and principles. As

YHWH's sovereignty is beyond human rationality and the capacity of human language, it can only be expressed in terms of monstrosity. The distinction between the monster and the divine is thus blurred, making them indistinguishable. It turns out that language of monstrosity becomes the literary tool for communicating the inexplicable trauma and the unrepresentable divine who might inflict trauma on humans. In terms of literary arrangement, the monster discourses seem to represent the Joban poet's final attempt in "assimilating" Job's traumatic experience. As an anti-narrative, trauma is confronted here by monstrosity, which ultimately leads to muteness—instead of explanation.

As rhetoric of trauma, the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan come to represent the traumatized voices that challenge the notion of universal divine justice and even the very belief that God is good all the time. In signifying YHWH as the monstrous inflicter of trauma, they envision a morally subverted world in which the normative beliefs about God's retributive justice and divine omnibenevolence are rendered problematic. Thus, Behemoth and Leviathan possess a subversive capacity in questioning the normative theology presupposed in the biblical tradition. In all their perceived monstrosity, they express the doubts harbored by the traumatized on whether the exilic suffering is truly a punishment for disloyalty, and whether repentance has any effect at all on how God distributes salvation. As Brian Doak concludes, the "Joban monsters...attempt to teach their audience through trauma...where the monster marks a moment of historical change for a struggling community, pointing them toward a new future, away from traditional (doctrinal) modes of retribution thinking and into other, more 'counterintuitive' worlds."[402]

3.3   The Monstrous as a Marker of Social Identity

As have been discussed (see Section 3.1.3), the book of Job was probably finalized during the post-exilic period, specifically the sixth–fourth centuries BCE, when the

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[402] Brian Doak, "Monster Violence in the Book of Job," *Journal of Religion and Violence* 3, no. 2 (2015): 284.

restructured Judahite community was living under the authority of the Persian Empire. In the shadow of the Persian hegemony, the Judahite community found herself in the political tensions among competing regional groups, and thus had a dire need to (re)establish their social identity. When particular social groups construct their identity, the dichotomy of "other(s) versus self" is often taken up as an ideological strategy to define who belongs to the "Us" and who is excluded as the "Not-Us." Serving a social purpose, monsters are frequently employed as rhetorical devices in the process of identity formation.[403] Specifically, monsters and monstrous representations are frequently used to convey the notion of otherness, which serves as a measuring stick against which the "self" is defined.[404] In particular, the enemies of particular social groups are often turned into monstrous others, against whom one's own sense of identity is established.[405] Given that monsters are socio-cultural constructs that might function as a marker of social identity, the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan can be read as ciphers for the Empire in the historical context of the post-exilic Israelites, who were struggling to define their identity. This is in line with David Wolfers' opinion that to the post-exilic Judahite readers, the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan are rhetorical devices that embody the new conquerer and the prevailing culture,[406] namely, the Persian empire. Being rendered powerful, strange, and amoral in terms of monstrosity, this new hegemonic power with its political allies is referred to as the enemy of Israel in the post-exilic context.

In fact, several features of Behemoth echo with the characteristics of mighty historical enemies of Israel in the biblical tradition. For instance, the description of Behemoth "eating grass like an ox" (40:15) recalls the bestial behavior of Babylon's Nebuchadnezzar in Dan 4:25, 32; 5:21. The "erection" of Behemoth implied in 40:17 is reminiscent of the allusive reference to the phallic aggression of Israel's enemies in Ezek 16:26 (Egypt) and Ezek 23:3, 8,

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[403] Grafius, "Text and Terror," 44–45.
[404] Grafius, "Text and Terror," 45.
[405] S. Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (FAT, 2/76; Tübingen: Mohr Seibeck, 2015), 37.
[406] David Wolfers, "The Lord's Second Speech in the Book of Job," *Vetus Testamentum* 40(4) (1990): 499.

17, 21 (Egypt, Babylon). Besides, the juxtaposition of "bronze" (נְחוּשָׁה) and "iron" (בַּרְזֶל) in

reference to Behemoth's body parts in 40:18 resonates with the vision in Daniel 7, where the

fourth beast, a cipher for Israel's historical enemy, is characterized by "bronze" (Aram. נְחָשׁ)

and "iron" (Aram. פַּרְזֶל) (Dan 7:19). Importantly, "Behemoth" is used directly as a term to

signify the bestiality of Israel's enemy in Isa 30:6 ("oracle against the Behemoth/Beast (בהמות)

of the Negeb"), where Judah is warned against courting Egypt.[407] In terms of intertextuality,

the monstrous characterizations of Behemoth find an echo in the representations of hostile

empires elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

By the same token, the political connotations of Leviathan as a symbol of Israel's enemy

in the Joban discourse may be reflected in its occurrences elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, not

least in Isa 27:1[408] and Ps 74:14[409], where the term "Leviathan" is probably used in reference

to a historical enemy of Israel.[410] Precisely, given the persistent political-military tensions

among the powerhouses around Israel, the treaty langauge (40:27–28 [41:3–4]), war imagery

(40:32 [41:8]) and military scenarios (41:17–21 [25–29]) employed in the discourse of

Leviathan may be suggestive of the historical reality in which Israel as a struggling

community constantly found herself. The martial prowess of Leviathan described in the text

may also point to the hegemonic power with which Israel struggled to survive. Most notably,

the title of Leviathan as "king" (41:26 [34]) is plausibly an allusive reference to the Persian

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[407] In the same literary context, Egypt is referred to in Isa 30:7 as "Rahab," another known monster in the biblical tradition.

[408] Contemporary to the book of Job, Isaiah 27 is consensually dated to around the 6th or 5th century BCE, that is, the post-exilic Persian era. That YHWH's slaying of Leviathan (27:1) is accompanied by the restoration of the vineyard Israel (27:2) seems to imply that Leviathan serves as a metaphor for a historical-political enemy of Israel, plausibly the Persian empire given the post-exilic dating. Representing the power of evil in the history of Israel, the mythic chaos-figure of Leviathan is historicized as Israel's enemy in their committing iniquity and in their shedding of innocent blood.

[409] Psalm 74 is a lament spoken out of political and theological crisis, namely the desecration and destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the invading Babylonians in 587 BCE. In the context of national and cosmological disorientation, the psalmist calls for God to intervene on Israel's behalf against their enemies, who are cast as God's enemies. In Ps 74:14, the mythopoeic language about the many-headed Leviathan, whose multiple heads that God crushes in primordial battle, is historicized to represent evil political powers. With the imagery of the Exodus tradition, Leviathan possibly connotes Babylon here given the exilic dating for the psalm.

[410] The historicization of mythic traditions is also found in Isa. 51:9–10, where Rahab and Tannin are referenced as YHWH's enemies.

rulership that dominates the post-exilic Israelite community. Alongside Behemoth, Leviathan in the book of Job appears to betray political implications with respect to the post-exilic historical situations.

Even so, the two Joban monsters are characterized in the divine speech as manifesting themselves under the authority of YHWH, who can be viewed as the "zookeeper" of these monstrous beasts. Despite the hostile powers that threaten Israel's survival in the post-exilic context, the Joban poet asserts the authority of Israel's God in the discourses—grounded in the fact that YHWH is the Creator of all things. Even in the face of unrivaled monstrosity, YHWH is able to exercise supreme sovereignty by claiming ownership to the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan (40:15, 19; 41:2–3 [10–11], 25 [33]). By casting YHWH as the lord of these monsters, the Joban poet emphasizes the divine control over Israel's history and God's sovereignty over worldly empires. In showing the monsters' submission to the divine authority, the book of Job in effect nullifies the power claimed by the conquerors and hands it back over to YHWH—it is YHWH, not the Empire, who was responsible for Judah's defeat. By attributing Judah's disaster to YHWH alone, the Joban poet denies any historical-political powers over Israel. In this sense, Behemoth and Leviathan serve to signify the ultimate authority of YHWH. Given Israel's privileged status as people of YHWH, the Joban discourses serve to reshape their identity from the defeated to survivors who can continue to thrive under divine sovereignty. Serving as a marker of social identity, the Joban monsters paradoxically possess the capacity to provide counsel to the post-exilic community in the midst of historical-political vicissitudes.

As Safwat Marzouk demonstrates, the ways in which a community creates or represents the monsters are often indicative of her own identity.[411] In the post-exilic context in which the book of Job was composed, there were in the Judahite community societal anxiety and fears about losing her identity as a people. As the Israelites struggled to survive in the shadow

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[411] Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel*.

of the Persian empire, they had a dire need to construct their social identity. In establishing their "selfness," they came to render historical enemies and hostile powers as monstrous others, which serve as a measuring stick for defining their identity.[412] As "otherness within the self," Behemoth and Leviathan as the monstrous others paradoxically belie a vision of Israel's selfness which is anchored to being YHWH's people. Understood as a marker of social identity, the Joban monsters demonstrate how embodiments of otherness are actually the obverse of threatened selfness in a community.

3.4 A Wrap-up with Monster Theory

One of the key tenets of monster theory is that monsters are paradoxical personifications of otherness within the self.[413] Monsters simultaneously represent what are considered as undesirable others as well as the deepest parts of the self. Seemingly coming across as an other that has sneaked in, the monster often reveals uncomfortable truths about ourselves that we tend to repress. The uncanniness of the monster perhaps lies in the fact that it bears disturbing resemblance to our subjectivity. Indeed, the monster, as Slavoj Žižek contends, comes from deep within and is not external to human subjectivity; rather, it is part of humanity that is being projected onto the monster.[414] Appearing as a rejected other though, the monster is never reducible to a simple other: the monster is both beyond and within us. Even more uncannily, we sometimes need our monsters to bring to light the repressed part of our own reality—as Nietzsche puts it, "when you look into an abyss, the abyss looks back into you."

When applied to the Joban monsters, namely, Behemoth and Leviathan, monster theory

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[412] Functioning as an other that serves a social purpose, the monster would not be annihilated permanently; instead, it is allowed to exist—as monster theory states, the monster would at best be repressed.

[413] Timothy Beal, "Introduction to Religion and Its Monsters," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 297.

[414] Slavoj Žižek, "The Thing from Inner Space" (Sep. 1999), accessed July 5, 2021, https://www.lacan.com/zizekthing.htm.

comes to be a useful lens through which we can focus on not only the monsters themselves but also on what they signify about the ones who fashioned and read them—that is, the biblical authors and their contemporary readers. Specifically, this chapter has delved into the implications of the Joban monsters for the post-exilic Israelite audience under three themes, namely, the monster as representation of chaos, the monster as rhetoric of trauma, and the monster as a marker of social identity. With a focus on the signified "selfness" of the Joban audience, the study has spelled out the religio-theological, socio-psychological, and historical-political implications of the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan in the post-exilic context.

As representation of chaos, the Joban monsters, along with other monstrous beings in the book, can be read as signifying both Job and YHWH as chaos monsters, which in turn bears theological implications for the post-exilic Israelites in terms of chaos. While the Joban audience can identify with Job whose life is turned to chaos in their exilic experience which, too, is characterized by chaos, they can also find their voices in Job's monstrously defiant challenges to the normative theology (which presupposes retributive principles) and even God himself. Sharing the conviction that God is ultimately responsible for their national history—including the worst, chaotic part, the Joban audience comes to verify their God to be a chaos deity who, in identifying with his very monsters, reveals himself to be a god who rouses chaos instead of one who subdues it. Read this way, the Joban monsters carry profound and even subversive theological implications for religion of ancient Israel in the post-exilic era.

Read as rhetoric of trauma, the perceived monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan can be understood as part of the monstrous language employed in the book that serves to address socio-psychological needs of the Joban audience who experienced the traumatic exile. Indeed, the book of Job is shown to qualify to be a corpus of trauma literature considering its pervasive language that signifies a sense of otherness. As icons of trauma, the monstrous

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language and images throughout the discourses—with Behemoth and Leviathan constituting the climax—serve to signify both the traumatized Job and the traumatizing YHWH. On the one hand, they come to signify Job's loss of his "self" and feelings of strangeness that echo with the traumatized post-exilic community. On the other hand, the perceived monstrosity of YHWH as the source of infliction portrayed throughout the book takes on rhetoric of trauma, which represents the traumatized voices that address a divine inflictor. In speaking out the trauma in terms of perceived monstrosity, the Joban discourses which culminate in the two beasts offer a space for contemplation on the exilic trauma, which can in turn provide counsel for the post-traumatic Judahite audience.

Finally, the Joban monsters can serve as a marker of social identity in their capacity to signify a historical enemy of ancient Israel, specifically the hegemonic Persian empire in the post-exilic period. According to monster theory, monsters are frequently taken up by social groups as a means to define and consolidate their identity. Serving a political-ideological purpose, the enemy of a community is often turned into a monstrous other, against whom one's own sense of identity is measured. While the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan can be read as ciphers for the Empire as an enemy, they are characterized in the discourses as being under the sovereignty of YHWH, who is said to be the "zookeeper" of the monstrous forces. With these historical-political implications, the monster discourses in the book of Job possess the capacity to uphold the identity of the post-exilic community who continues to strive as YHWH's people in the face of hostile powers.

CHAPTER 4

THE MONSTER THAT EVOKES FEAR AND DELIGHT:
BEHEMOTH AND LEVIATHAN IN JEWISH TRADITIONS

Devoted to the study of Jewish material, this chapter aims to explore the ways in which

the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan are interpreted and received in post-biblical Jewish

traditions. Besides related texts from early Judaism, rabbinic literature and medieval Jewish

work, iconographic representations of the two Joban creatures from Hebrew manuscripts,

synagogue decorations, and religious objects are also discussed. In the paradigm of monster

theory, this chapter seeks to study how the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan in all their

otherworldliness come to be beneficent symbols that affirm the self-identity of Jews

paradoxically. It also explores how particular representations of these monstrous creatures

convey hope that addresses socio-historical cultural concerns of Jewish communities in an

ongoing process of identity construction.

4.1   The Cosmological Significance of Behemoth and Leviathan

From early on, Behemoth and Leviathan have been recognized in Jewish tradition as

cosmic mythic monsters. In particular, they are represented in the apocalyptic literature from

early Judaism as primordial creatures that God created (4 Ezra 6:49–52; 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4; 1

Enoch 60:7–10). Specifically, Behemoth and Leviathan were generally regarded among Jews

as two distinct monstrous creatures—one of the dry land (Behemoth) and the other of the sea

(Leviathan)—which were brought into existence on the fifth and sixth days of creation (cf.

Gen 1:20–22). In later rabbinic traditions, Behemoth is identified as a mythic ox (Hebrew

שׁור הבר or Aramaic תור בר), while Leviathan is mostly referred to as a gigantic fish. They are

often presented together with a mythological bird, Ziz (Tg.–Ps. 50:10–11; *Lev. Rab.* 22:10),

which is sometimes conflated with another mythic bird known as בר יוכני (*bar yokhani*) (*b. Bekh.* 57b; *Yoma* 80a; *Sukkah* 5b).[415] In the cosmology of Jewish tradition, these three constitute the primordial creatures of the dry land (Behemoth), the sea (Leviathan), and the sky (Ziz).

4.1.1 The Terrestrial Behemoth

4.1.1.1 Early Jewish Traditions

In early Jewish apocalyptic literature, Behemoth is presented as the counterpart of Leviathan, both of which were created in primordial times.[416] In particular, the primordial creation of Behemoth (and Leviathan) as part of the cosmos is recounted in 4 Ezra 6:49–52:[417]

> [6:49] Then you kept in existence two living creatures; the name of one you called Behemoth and the name of the other Leviathan. [50] And you separated one from the other, for the seventh part where the water had been gathered together could not hold them both. [51] And you gave Behemoth one of the parts which had been dried up on the third day, to live in it, where there are a thousand mountains...[418]

As inferred from the above account, Behemoth was originated in the primordial waters, from where it was separated to possess the dried-up part of the cosmos on the third day of creation. The watery origin of Behemoth here is reminiscent of the watery habitation of Behemoth described in Job 40:21–23. Not only does "a thousand mountains" in 6:51 recall

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[415] C. L. Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan" (unpublished manuscript), typescript, 322.

[416] The only exception to this when Behemoth is introduced alone is found in a piece of Second Temple literature, specifically the *Lives of the Prophets,* allegedly a Jewish work dated to the first century CE. In a passage featuring the prophet Daniel, Behemoth is said to be confronting Nebuchadnezzar: "Behemoth used to come upon him, and he would forget that he had been a man...Then the mind of a dumb animal would take possession of him." See C. C. Torrey, *The Lives of the Prophets: Greek Text and Translation* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1946), 39.

[417] Th book of 4 Ezra is generally dated to the post-70s period in the first century CE. In particular, M. E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 9–10 has convincingly dated the work to the latter part of the reign of Domitian (81–96 CE).

[418] Translations of passages from the Pseudepigrapha in this chapter are from James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City and New York: Doubleday, 1983).

the "mountains" (הרים) of Behemoth's habitat in Job 40:20, but it also resonates with Ps 50:10, where the term בהמות, the plural of "beast," is interpreted in Jewish tradition as the proper name Behemoth (hence the line can be rendered "Behemoth on a thousand mountains"). Apparently, Behemoth is understood to be a mythic beast in the tradition of 4 Ezra.

Another account that addresses the primordial origin of Behemoth (and Leviathan) and its implications is found in 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4–7:

> [29:4] And Behemoth will reveal itself from its place, and Leviathan will come from the sea, the two great monsters which I created on the fifth day of creation and which I shall have kept until that time. And they will be nourishment for all who are left. [5] The earth will also yield fruits ten thousandfold. And on one vine will be a thousand branches, and one branch will produce a thousand clusters, and one cluster will produce a thousand grapes, and one grape will produce a cor of wine. [6] And those who are hungry will enjoy themselves and they will, moreover, see marvels every day. [7] For winds will go out in front of me every morning to bring the fragrance of aromatic fruits and clouds at the end of the day to distill the dew of health.

In accord with 4 Ezra 6:49–52, Behemoth in this tradition appears to belong to the land as opposed to Leviathan who comes from the sea. It is worth noting that this text ascribes the creation of the two monsters to the fifth day—rather than the third day—of creation (29:4). Notably, the land from which Behemoth sprang into being is said to produce rich yields (29:5–7), which, together with Behemoth itself, will nourish "the souls of the righteous" at the end of times (29:4; 30:2). Since agricultural yields and productivity imply divine providence in Jewish traditions,[419] the coming-into-existence of Behemoth appears to symbolize divine provision and blessings for the Jewish readers. In its association with abundant yields for the end-time, Behemoth as a primordial beast can be seen as a pointer to

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[419] This notion probably finds root in the biblical tradition of divine blessings on the Promised Land, most notably spelled out in Deuteronomy 28:8–12: "YHWH will command blessings upon you in your barns and in all the undertakings of your hand: He will bless you in the land that YHWH your God is giving you...YHWH will make you abundant in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground in the land that YHWH swore to your fathers to give you. YHWH will open for you his abundant storehouse, the heavens, to give rain for your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow." (my own translation)

the messianic hope—for a time when the righteous (Jews) will be satiated and rewarded. Dated to the late first to early second century CE,[420] this apocalyptic work probably reflects the contextual concerns of its Jewish audience: upon the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Jews who lost their land would find hope in the messianic implications signified by the primordial Behemoth.

The origin of the mythic Behemoth is also recounted in the book of 1 Enoch, specifically in the Book of Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71).[421] In accounting for the habitat of the beast, 1 Enoch 60:7–8 reads:

> [60:7] On that day, two monsters will be parted... [8] ...a male called Behemoth, which holds his chest in an invisible desert whose name is Dundayn, east of the garden of Eden, wherein the elect and the righteous ones dwell, wherein my grandfather was taken, the seventh from Adam, the first man whom the Lord of the Spirits created.

According to this tradition, the land monster Behemoth is set to dwell in an immense desert called "Dundayn," east of Eden,[422] wherein Israel's first ancestors are believed to dwell. The invisibility of the desert and its association with Eden adds to the mythic nature of Behemoth. Given its paradisaic character, Eden becomes a symbol of divine blessings for "the elect and the righteous," that is, the people of God. In its proximity to where Israel's ancestors indwell, the primordial Behemoth comes to recall the collective belief in the election of Israel in Jewish consciousness. Composed in a chaotic moment in Jewish history (around the first century CE), this apocalyptic work came to address the socio-religious needs

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[420] Pierre Bogaert, *Apocalypse de Baruch: Introduction, Traduction du Syriaque et Commentaire* (Sources Chrétiennes 144–45; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1969), 1:294–95; Marjo Korpel and Johannes de Moor, "The Leviathan in the Ancient Near East," in *Playing with Leviathan: Interpretation and Reception of Monsters from the Biblical World*, ed. Koert van Bekkum, Jaap Dekker, Henk van de Kamp, and Eric Peels (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 3, n.3.

[421] While currently no firm consensus has been reached among scholars as to the dating of the Book of Parables, David W. Suter, *Tradition and Composition in the Parables of Enoch*, SBLDS 47 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars, 1977) suggests that there is a tendency to date the collection to between 50 BCE and 117 CE. See also Gabriele Boccaccini (ed.), *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2007).

[422] Emil G. Hirsch, "Leviathan and Behemoth," *JE* 8, 39 contends that the name "Dundayn" is a corruption of the word "Nod" (cf. Gen 4:16).

of the Jews in that time. While the promise of divine blessings on Israel seemed to be elusive in that era, the primordial Behemoth appears to reassure the Jewish people of their self-identity, who are believed to inherit divine blessings as the elect among the nations.

To sum up, early Judaism considers Behemoth as a primordial mythic monster which is allotted the dry land in the cosmos. Depending on tradition, it is represented in the mountains, on a productive land, or in the mythic Dundayn which is in proximity to the garden of Eden. Whichever the case, the representation of Behemoth as a land monster entails a cosmological significance that highlights the divine election and blessings, the very foundation for the identity of God's people.

4.1.1.2   Later Rabbinic Receptions

Built upon early traditions, the mythic nature of the primordial Behemoth is addressed in more detail in later rabbinic literature, often through the rhetoric of rabbinic discussion. In particular, the implications of the scriptural statement "Behemoth on a thousand mountains" are explored in *Pesiqta D'Rav Kahanna*[423] (*Pesiq. Rab Kah*. 6:1), a midrashic corpus:

> One beast I gave you but you were not able to attend to him. What is this? This is "Behemoth on a thousand mountains" (Ps 50:10). Rabbi Yohanan, Rabbi Šimʿon son of Laqiš, and our Rabbis – Rabbi Yohanan said, "One beast is lying on a thousand mountains. And a thousand mountains yield produce for him and he eats. What is the reason? 'For the mountains yield produce for him' (Job 40:20)." And Rabbi Šimʿon son of Laqiš said, "One beast is lying on a thousand montains. And a thousand mountains yield all kinds of food for the meal of the righteous in the world to come. What is the reason? 'And Sharon shall become a pasture for sheep, and the Valley of Achor a place for cattle to lie down' (Isa 65:10)." And our Rabbis said, "One beast is lying on a thousand mountains. And a thousand mountains yield beasts for him and he eats. What is the reason? 'And all the wild animals will be ground up there' (Job 40:20)."[424]

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[423] *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* is one of the earliest midrashim, with its provenance being dated probably from the fifth or sixth century CE in Israel.

[424] Unless otherwise specified, the rabbinic texts included in this chapter are my own translations.

In accord with the tradition of 4 Ezra 6:49–52, all the three rabbinic opinions here agree that Behemoth's mythic abode in "a thousand mountains" is derived from Ps 50:10. The beast's "lying on" (רבוצה על) the mountains may imply the monstrous size of Behemoth—that its body literally spreads over a thousand mountains substantiates its being as a mythic monster. Besides, all the three rabbinic positions appear to converge on understanding the "mountains" in Job 40:20 as implying productivity. To Rabbi Yohanan and "our Rabbis," the scriptural description "For the mountains yield produce for him, and all the wild animals are ground up[425] there" (Job 40:20) emphasizes the abundance of plants and cattle in the "mountains" which serve as food for the beast. The superproductivity of the "mountains" which Behemoth grazes upon is also referenced in another medieval midrash, *Pirqei DeRabbi Eliezer* (*Pirqê R. El.* 11.4)[426]:

> …Behemoth, who is lying on a thousand mountains. And every day he grazes a thousand mountains, and at night they grow on their own as if he had not touched them, as it is said, "For the mountains yield produce for him" (Job 40:20).

Notably, Rabbi Šim'on son of Laqiš discusses this productivity by pointing the great yield in the "mountains" to the meal of the righteous in the end of days. The mythic habitation of Behemoth in the mountains and the superproductivity of food therein are associated under the rubric of messianic hope, which finds its climactic expression in the banquet of the righteous. In echo with the tradition of 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4, the dwelling place of Behemoth is said to be the source of nourishment for the eschatological feast of the righteous; messianic foodstuffs for the righteous are produced in the mythic realm of the monster. Representing the ultimate reward for the righteous, the mountain yield signifies the self-identity of the Jewish readers who believe they are the blessed people of God.

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[425] The MT יְשַׂחֲקוּ ("they play"). However, the rabbis are reading יְשָׁחֲקוּ ("they are ground up") here.
[426] Traditionally considered to have been authored by Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus in the time period of the Mishnah (the first and second centuries CE), this work was likely edited in the eighth or ninth century.

Just as Behemoth is correlated to Eden in 1 Enoch 60:7–8, later rabbinic traditions further address the connection between the two. In expounding the beast's association with the Jordan (ירדן) in Job 40:23, the rabbis suggest that Behemoth drinks from the garden of Eden, from which the Jordan river flows (*Num. Rab.* 21:18; *Lev. Rab.* 22:10; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 16). In particular, a rabbinic discussion on Behemoth's drinking is recorded in *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 6:1:

> And where does he drink? Rabbi Yehošua' son of Lewi taught, saying, "Whatever the Jordan brings for six months he makes them one gulp. What is the reason? 'If the river rages, he is not in haste; he is confident, though the Jordan rushes to his mouth' (Job 40:23)." And our Rabbis said, "Whatever the Jordan brings for twelve months he makes them one gulp. What is the reason? 'He is confident though the Jordan rushes to his mouth' (Job 40:23)." But is there enough in it to wet [his] mouth? Rabbi Huna' in the name of Rabbi Yosi said, "There is not enough in it to wet [his] mouth." And where does he drink? Rabbi Šim'on son of Yohay taught, "'A river comes forth from Eden' (Gen 2:10), and its name is Yûbal. And from there he drinks, for it is said, 'By Yûbal he will spread forth his roots' (Jer 17:8)."

In describing the immense volume of water that the beast can take in, the above excerpt emphasizes the monstrous drinking capacity of Behemoth—it can drink what Jordan generates in six or twelve months in a single swallow, but even that is not enough to wet its mouth! In associating the place where Behemoth drinks with Eden and Yûbal (a mythic stream)[427], the rabbis apparently identify the beast as a mythic creature. As K. W. Whitney puts it, the progression from "Jordan–six months" to "Jordan–twelve months" to "Yûbal" is "a movement from a more mundane realm to a more fantastic one."[428] The characterization of Behemoth's drinking resonates with the aforementioned text of *Pirqê R. El.* 11.4, which features the monstrous appetite of the monster who grazes a thousand mountains daily.

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[427] An early attestation of the association of the *yûbal* in Jer 17:8 with Eden is found in a hymn from a scroll at Qumran (1QH 8:4–7). See William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah I: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Chapters 1–25* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 492.

[428] K. William Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth in Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Judaism*, HSM 63 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 104.

More importantly, the image of Behemoth drinking from Eden and Yûḇal connects the monster to a cosmic locale that signifies divine favor. As a mythic stream which flows from Eden, Yûḇal is thought to be the source of the waters of the earth, and hence it is a symbol of fertility and productivity. Just as Eden symbolizes divine blessings for the elect and righteous, Yûḇal comes to represent the thriving prosperity of God's people, who "will spread forth his roots" (Jer 17:8). Precisely, the subject "he" in Jer 17:8 denotes the blessed one "who trusts in the Lord" (Jer 17:7), which is consistent with the idea of "God's righteous people." Again, Behemoth's proximity to the divine locale recalls the self-identity of the Jews, the righteous people of God.

Emphasizing the monster's cosmological significance, a text from *Pirqê R. El.* 11:5 addresses the role of Behemoth in its drinking from the cosmologically significant Jordan:

> And the waters of the Jordan are to give him drink—that the waters of the Jordan surround the whole earth, the half above the earth and the half below the earth, as it is said, "though the Jordan rushes to his mouth" (Job 40:23).

The liminal nature of the Jordan is implied in this text. Constituting the cosmic waters above the earth, the Jordan is shown to be joined mythically to the subterranean waters, the cosmic deep below. While the waters above the earth connotes creative life-giving potentials, the waters below in the deep symbolizes chaos and destruction.[429] When Behemoth drinks at the Jordan, it essentially drinks at the boundary between the upper and lower cosmic domains—that is, between life and chaos. With its liminal position in the cosmos, the monstrous Behemoth serves to maintain cosmic stability and world order.

Given its mythic nature, Behemoth is no part of mundane reality. In all its perceived otherness, Behemoth is for Jews a liminal cosmic force that supports the order and stability of the (their) world. Specifically, Behemoth is associated with the motif of productivity on earth

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[429] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 113–14.

which points to the divine election and blessings for the righteous. As the Jewish community struggled with chaos and disorder in the wake of the 70 CE– catastrophe, this image of Behemoth reassures them of ultimate cosmic stability and affirms their identity as the righteous people of God. In the context of early centuries, Behemoth comes to be a symbol of hope to the Jewish people.

4.1.2 The Cosmic Leviathan

4.1.2.1   Early Jewish Traditions

In early Jewish apocalyptic literature, Leviathan is introduced as the counterpart of Behemoth in the primordial creation. Along with Behemoth, the origin of Leviathan as a cosmic monster is addressed in three texts, namely 4 Ezra 6:49–52, 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4 and 1 Enoch 60:7–10, 24. Specifically, Leviathan is ascribed to the watery domain or the sea at creation in 4 Ezra 6:49–52 and 2 Apoc. Bar 29:4:

4 Ezra 6:49–52

> [6:49] Then you kept in existence two living creatures; the name of one you called Behemoth and the name of the other Leviathan. [50] And you separated one from the other, for the seventh part where the water had been gathered together could not hold them both... [52] ...to Leviathan you have the seventh part, the watery part...

2 Apoc. Bar 29:4

> ...and Leviathan will come from the sea, the two great monsters which I created on the fifth day of creation...

1 Enoch 60:7–10 provides more details about the watery domain of Leviathan, who is featured as the female counterpart of a male Behemoth.[430] Upon the primordial separation of the two monsters, Leviathan is said to dwell in the watery depths of the cosmos:

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[430] While the grammatical gender of Behemoth and Leviathan are undetermined in 4 Ezra, both of them are marked as masculine singular in 2 Apoc. Bar.

^{60:7} On that day, two monsters will be parted—one monster, a female named Leviathan, in order to dwell in the abyss of the ocean over the fountains of water; ⁸ and (the other), a male called Behemoth... ⁹ Then I asked the second angel in order that he may show me (how) strong these monsters are, how they were separated on this day and were cast, the one into the abysses of the ocean, and the other into the dry desert. ¹⁰ And he said to me, "You, son of man, according (to the degree) to which it will be permitted, you will know the hidden things."

In this tradition, Leviathan is cast into the abyss of the ocean as a monstrous plug over the fountains of water. The "fountains of water" probably alludes to the "fountains of the deep" (מַעְיְנֹת תְּהוֹם) in Gen 7:11 which refers to the chaos of the primordial flood. Being placed at the very fringe of creation (i.e. the source of the deep water), Leviathan functions to hold down the chaotic waters with its body as a monstrous plug. Hence Leviathan was created to serve a cosmological purpose. Though being one of the "hidden things" to humans (60:10), Leviathan plays a central role in sustaining cosmic order and stability. In its role of maintaining the cosmos from collaspe, the monstrous Leviathan appears to align itself with God who created order out of chaos (cf. Gen 1:2).

While Leviathan is typically presented alongside Behemoth, Leviathan is featured on its own in two other apocalyptic works, namely the Apocalypse of Abraham (10:10, 21:4)[431] and Ladder of Jacob (6:11–13), in both of which the monster has a significant role in preserving world order. In the first text, Leviathan is first referenced in Apoc. Abr. 10:10 as part of the monologue of Abraham's angelic guide Iaoel (10:6–13), who comes to assure Abraham of cosmic stability:

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[431] The Apocalypse of Abraham is preserved only in an Old Slavonic version. Probably a Palestinian Jewish work originated in the first or second century CE, it was assumed to be composed in Aramaic or Hebrew and was later translated into Greek, ultimately finding its way into the corpus of Slavonic church literature (Whitney 2006, 59). See also G. H. Box, with J. I. Landsman, *The Apocalypse of Abraham: Edited, with a Translation from the Slavonic Text and Notes* (London: SPCK, 1919), xvi; R. Rubinkiewicz, "Apocalypse of Abraham," in vol. 1 of *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 683; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 180; Louis Ginzberg, "Abraham, Apocalypse of," *JE* 1:91–92; Rudolf Meyer, "Abraham-Apocalypse," *RGG*³ 1:72; Jacob Licht, "Abraham-Apocalypse," *EncJud.* 1:125.

Apoc. Abr. 10:6–13

> ^{10:6} For lo! I am sent to you to strengthen you and to bless you in the name of God, creator
> of heavenly and earthly things, who has loved you. ⁷ Be bold and hasten to him. ⁸ I am
> Iaoel and I was called so by him who causes those with me on the seventh expanse, on the
> firmament, to shake, a power through the medium of his ineffable name in me. ⁹ I am the
> one who has been charged according to his commandment, to restrain the threats of the
> living creatures of the cherubim against one another, and I teach those who carry the song
> through the medium of man's night of the seventh hour. ¹⁰ I am appointed to hold the
> Leviathans, because through me is subjugated the attack and menace of every reptile. ¹¹ I
> am ordered to loosen Hades and to destroy those who wondered at the dead. ¹² I am the
> one who ordered your father's house to be burned with him, for he honored the dead. ¹³ I
> am sent to you now to bless you and the land which he whom you have called the Eternal
> One has prepared for you.

According to this account, the angel Iaoel was sent by God to promise Abraham that the
Leviathans will be controlled: "I am appointed to hold the Leviathans, because through me is
subjugated the attack and menace of every reptile" (10:10). The plurality of the "Leviathans"
here is proabably derivative of Isa 27:1, where Leviathan is referred to as "Leviathan the
fleeing serpent" (לִוְיָתָן נָחָשׁ בָּרִחַ) and "Leviathan the twisting serpent" (לִוְיָתָן נָחָשׁ עֲקַלָּתוֹן).
Drawing on biblical traditions, early Jewish apocalyptic work tends to depict Leviathan as a
primordial monstrous creature which symbolizes chaos and disorder in creation.[432] In order
to keep the threatening chaotic powers in check, the Leviathans in this apocalyptic text are
said to be held in place so that cosmic order can be maintained.

The image and role of Leviathan as a cosmic monster is described in a more tangible way
in Apoc. Abr. 21:3–4. As part of Abraham's vision that spans chapters 19–21,[433] Leviathan is
envisioned as a menacing sea monster who literally lies under the world (21:4):

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[432] K. William Whitney, Jr., "Leviathan," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and
Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 2010), 885.
[433] In Apoc. Abr. 19–21, Abraham experiences a vision in which he remains in the seventh heaven and gazes
down through the successive veils of the heavenly firmaments. In particular, chapter 21 is an account of
Abraham's vision of the sea.

21:3 And (I saw) there the earth and its fruit, and its moving things and its things that had

souls, and its host of men and the impiety of their souls and their justification, and their

pursuit of their works and the abyss and its torments, and its lower depths and (the)

perdition in it. 4 And I saw there the sea and its islands, and its cattle and its fish, and

Leviathan and his realm and his bed and his lairs, and the world which lay upon him, and

his motions and the destruction he caused the world.

In echo with the description in 1 Enoch 60:7–10, Leviathan is set in the abyss here.

Placed in the lower cosmos, Leviathan comes to uphold the world which rests upon it (21:4).

Precariously, Leviathan's movements would trigger earthquakes which would in turn cause

destruction to the world. Given its destructive potentials, it is necessary for the appointed

angel—one that represents divine power—to hold Leviathan in place (10:10). As its

monstrous power is kept in check, Leviathan becomes, paradoxically, a contingent basis for

the stability and viability of the cosmos.

While Leviathan is held by a divine proxy in the Apocalypse of Abraham, the

monster—in the form of a sea-dragon—appears as the direct target of God's wrath in the

book of Ladder of Jacob, another Jewish apocalyptic work in the first century CE.[434]

Specifically, Leviathan as a hostile power against God is featured in 6:11–13:

> 6:11 Their land swarmed with reptiles and all sorts of deadly things. 12 There will be
> earthquakes and much destruction. 13 And the LORD will pour out his wrath against
> Leviathan the sea-dragon; he will kill the lawless Falkon[435] with the sword, because he
> will raise the wrath of the God of gods by his pride.

In the context of eschatological crisis, the text illustrates how the established order of the

world will be disrupted in the end of days before God's final judgment. With the escalation of

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[434] The extant text of the Ladder of Jacob, based on the account of Jacob's vision of the ladder at Bethel in Genesis 28, comes from the Explanatory Palaea of the Slavonic church and is preserved only in a Slavonic version. Dating the work to the first century CE, Lunt proposes that the text was transmitted through Byzantine circles where it was transmitted into Old Church Slavonic around the year 900, ultimately finding its way into the Palaia by the thirteenth or fourteenth century (Whitney 2006, 79). See H. G. Lunt, "Ladder of Jacob: A New Translation and Introduction," *OTP* 2, 401–11.

[435] According to Lunt, "Ladder of Jacob," 404, the name "Falkon" is probably a mistranscription of an original Hebrew epithet of Leviathan (ʿăqallāṯôn) that began in Greek and then developed in Old Church Slavonic, the language in which the extant text of the Ladder of Jacob is preserved.

chaotic forces, cosmic disruption manifests itself in the swarming reptiles, chthonic beings, and destructive earthquakes that ravage the land. In fact, scenes of the cataclysm laid out here are said to realize the destructive potentials of Leviathan in Apoc. Abr. 21:4, where the monster lies under the world as a cosmic threat. Read againt the historical context of the composition, Leviathan can be understood to embody the cosmic fear or angst that Jewish communities had towards the world in the early centuries. Still, the Jewish author projects that God will overpower this mythic monster and its associated chaos—God will ultimately rise to release his wrath on the monstrous Leviathan (6:13), presumably the source of these anti-powers. The projected divine victory over the chaos power—exemplified by Leviathan—thus signifies the hope for a new cosmic order in the end of days. The decisive divine triumph is probably derived from Isa 27:1, where God's conclusive defeat of Leviathan marks the watershed of a new eschatological order. To the Jewish readers who were confronted with chaos in the post-70s era, this apocalyptic text came to assure them of cosmic stability and hope for the future with God's final victory. Rather than simply embodying societal fear and anxiety among the Jews, Leviathan as a defeated monster serves to purge fear and despair which is prevalent in the Jewish community in that time.

In both the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Ladder of Jacob, the intervention of God (or a divine proxy) is highlighted as the only power that ultimately secures cosmic stability, which in turn conveys hope for God's people. In the Apocalypse of Abraham, Iaoel is not only sent to bless Abraham (10:6), but the angel also strengthens and blesses the "land" which God has prepared for Abraham (10:13). In identifying themselves as the descendants of Abraham, the Jewish people could very well relate to the "land" by the land of Israel—the very land that God promised to give Abraham. The apocalyptic vision of Abraham would have meant much to the Jewish readers in the first century, when they were no longer in the "land" following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The Jews in the post-biblical times were encouraged to hold on to their hope in God—just as Abraham was hoping for the promised

land. Whilst Abraham is strengthened to "be bold" and to "hasten to God" (10:7), the post-70s Jews were strengthened to keep a bold faith in God's promises in spite of the horror of Roman oppression.[436] Serving a similar purpose, the Ladder of Jacob, an apocalypse based on the vision of Jacob (another founding ancestor of Israel who bears God's promises), conveys a message of hope to the Jewish people in the post-70s era. In particular, the vision of Jacob is represented in an eschatological framework. The eschatological scenario in 6:11–13 is situated in the context of God's judgment of the nations and the subsequent vindication of Israel in end-times (5:16–6:3):

> 5:16 Know, Jacob, that your descendants shall be exiles in a strange land, and they will afflict them with slavery and inflict wounds on them every day. 17 But the LORD will judge the people for whom they slave. 6:1 And when the king arises, judgment too will come upon that place. 2 Then your seed, Israel, will go out of slavery to the nations who hold them by force, and they will be free from any rebuke of your enemies. 3 For this king is the head of all revenge and retaliation against those who have done evil to you, Israel, and the end of the age.

As envisioned in this text, the descendants of Jacob are oppressed in a foreign land where they found themselves as exiles, slaves, or even enemies to the neighboring nations. Notwithstanding the present predicaments, God will have mercy on his own people and will fight for their salvation as their king in the end of ages (6:1–10). Even God's people are oppressed in the midst of hostility and cosmic chaos (6:11–13), the eschatological crisis will give way to a new cosmic order in which God's people will be vindicated and their oppressors will be eliminated (6:14–15):

> 6:14 "And then your justice will be revealed, Jacob, and that of your children who are to be after you and who will walk in your justice. 15 And then your seed will sound the horn and all the kingdom of Edom will perish together with all the peoples of Moab," the people of God will receive their just reward while the oppressors will perish. In that new order, the

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[436] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 64.

descendants of Jacob will be vindicated and will find prosperity, and those who oppressed them shall perish.

Given that the Ladder of Jacob was written in the wake of Jerusalem's fall, the apocalyptic prophecy revealed in the text probably delivers hope to the Jews in that context, particularly the Diaspora Jews who consider themselves as exiles. In the aftermath of the national calamity, the apocalyptic literature of the Apocalypse of Abraham and Ladder of Jacob serves to address the socio-religious crisis of the Jews who were dispersed among the nations. As Leviathan functions to symbolize the chaos powers that beset the Jews, it plays a part in pointing to the consoling prophecy of the apocalyptic visions: despite the inevitable threat of chaos and destruction in inhabiting a world that lies upon the monstrous, the world will not be overcome as long as God's power holds the Leviathan(s) down. In sharing the prospect of God's promises with their ancestors Abraham and Jacob, the people of God can hold on to the messianic hope—God will eradicate all hostile powers and reward them as his people eventually. Monstrously threatening as it is, Leviathan serves as a literary agent that points to the messianic hope for the Jewish people in a dire historical situation. In all its otherwordly, mythic aspects, Leviathan comes to address the very existential concern of the Jews in this world paradoxically.

4.1.2.2   Rabbinic and Medieval Receptions

The rabbinic understanding of the cosmological implications of Leviathan is essentially derived from the Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible. By and large, rabbinic literature identifies Leviathan with the great sea monsters (תַּנִּינָם) created on the fifth day (Gen 1:21; cf. Isa 21:1 and Ps 74:13–14).[437] In particular, a portion of the Talmudic collection *Bava Batra* (*b. B. Bat.* 74b–75a) extensively features the nature and purpose of Leviathan as a primordial sea creature. In *b. B. Bat.* 74b, a discourse delivered in the name of Rab, an Amora from the early

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[437] Rachel Adelman, "Leviathan: II. Judaism," *EBR*, 295.

third century in Babylonia, speculates on the imagery of two Leviathans—one male and one female—based on the biblical descriptions of "Leviathan the slithery serpent" (לִוְיָתָן נָחָשׁ בָּרִחַ) and "Leviathan the twisting serpent" (לִוְיָתָן נָחָשׁ עֲקַלָּתוֹן) in Isa 27:1:

> For all which the Holy One (Blessed be He) created in his world, male and female he created them. Indeed Leviathan, the slithery serpent, and Leviathan, the twisting serpent, male and female he created them.

Built upon this view, later rabbinic traditions delve into the epithets of "the two Leviathans" in the Scripture to expound on their cosmological implications. On the one hand, the term בָּרִחַ ("fleeing, slithery") in Isa 27:1 comes, in the eyes of the rabbis, to represent Leviathan as a "bar, bolt" (בְּרִיחַ)[438] which constitutes the cosmic axis (*Axis Mundi*).[439] On the other hand, the term עֲקַלָּתוֹן ("twisting") is commonly understood as "circular,"[440] hence Leviathan is pictured as encircling the cosmos (*Circuitus Mundi*).[441] The circumferential Leviathan appears to be an *ouroboros* (from the Greek, meaning "tail devouring [one]"), a serpent that forms a circle by biting its own tail, thereby encircling the cosmos.[442] The concept of a pair of Leviathans is thus developed into two fundamental dimensions of the cosmos.

Since the Gaonic period (590–1050 CE), Leviathan began to be commonly illustrated as

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[438] The rabbinic text appears to read this epithet as a construct phrase, נָחָשׁ בָּרִיחַ, "serpent of [the] bar," a reading also known to medieval Jewish interpreters.

[439] Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan," 328.

[440] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 114–27.

[441] The Platonist philosopher Celsus, possibly of Egyptian origin, wrote in the late second century CE about a mystical-cosmological diagram of a gnostic sect known as Ophites (from Greek, "serpent"). It renders the cosmos a series of circles held together by a single outer-circle called Leviathan, who represented "the soul of the universe" (Cels. 6.24–38). According to Origen, the Ophite cosmology is based on Ps 104:26. In this model, Behemoth is placed "below the lowest circle," and Leviathan at the circumference and at its center (Cels. 6.25). Appearing on Aramaic magical bowls of Mesopotamian provenance, the symbol of the *ouroboros* continues to hold mythic associations for Mesopotamian Jews of the fourth–eighth centuries CE. In its association with the *ouroboros*, Leviathan was believed to possess magical powers.

[442] Maria G. Lancellotti, *The Naassenes: A Gnostic Identity among Judaism, Christianity, Classical and Ancient Near Eastern Traditions* (Forschungen zur Anthropologie und Religionsgeschichte 35; Muenster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2000), 37–50; Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 151–60.

Circuitus Mundi and *Axis Mundi* in Jewish tradition.[443] An early attestation of Leviathan as

Circuitus Mundi is found in a liturgical poem (*piyyūṭ*) dated to around late sixth to early

seventh century CE.[444] In the hand of the poet Eleazar be-Rabbi Qallir, Leviathan is

characterized by the description: "His tail, mightily gripped in his mouth, girds the Great Sea

like a ring" (זְנָבוֹ סָמוּכָה בְּפִיהוּ בְּחַיִל גָּדוֹל, מַסְבִּיב כְּטַבַּעַת הַיָּם הַגָּדוֹל) (ll. 76–77).[445] Here Leviathan is

featured as a cosmic *ouroboros*, a serpent that forms a circle around the ocean by biting its

own tail. In another midrash *ʿĂśeret Had-dibbĕrôt* (Hebrew: מדרש עשרת הדיברות) (or "Midrash

of the Ten Statements;" ca. tenth century CE), the world is said to be encircled (מוקף) by

Leviathan's fins.[446] Within the *Circuitus Mundi* tradition, medieval Jewish interpreters

speculate that the circle formed by Leviathan demarcates the heavens above (outside of its

encircling body) from the world below (encircled by its body).[447] As *Circuitus Mundi*,

Leviathan is placed at the outer reaches of the world while enveloping (thereby supporting)

the created world at the same time.

On another note, Leviathan is featured as *Axis Mundi* in a medieval midrash *Pirqei

DeRabbi Eliezer* (*Pirqê R. El.* 9:7) (ca. eighth century CE). As the literature describes the

creation of the cosmos, Leviathan is characterized as a sea serpent—created on the fifth

day—with its fins bracketing "the middle bar (בריח) of the earth":

> On the fifth day He spawned from the water Leviathan, the slithery serpent, and its
> dwelling is in the lowest waters; and between its two fins stands the middle bar of the earth.
> And all the great sea monsters in the sea are food for Leviathan...Every day it opens its
> mouth, and the great sea monster that come to be eaten that day flee, but it enters the
> mouth of Leviathan.

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[443] C. L. Seow, "Perspectives on a Pluriform Classic," in *Reading Other Peoples' Texts: Social Identity and the Reception of Authoritative Traditions*, ed. Ken Brown, Alison L. Joseph, and Brennan W. Breed (London, UK ;: T&T Clark, 2020), 193.

[444] Choon-Leong Seow, "Leviathan: V. Visual Arts," *EBR*, 301.

[445] T. Carmi (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 229.

[446] Adolph Jellinek (ed.), *Bet ha-Midrasch: Sammlungen Kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der älteren jüdischen Literatur* (6 vols.; 2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Bamberger et Vahrmann, 1938), 1:63; Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 117.

[447] Seow, "Leviathan: V. Visual Arts," 301.

As medieval Jewish interpreters tend to read the epithet of Leviathan in Isa 27:1, נָחָשׁ בָּרִֹחַ ("a slithery serpent"), as נָחָשׁ בְּרִיחַ ("a serpent of the bar"), Leviathan is figured to constitute a cosmic reality as "the middle bar of the earth" (הבריח התיכון של ארץ). As the universe is founded "between the fins" of Leviathan, the monster has essentially become the cosmic axis. This cosmic image of Leviathan finds an echo in the "Midrash on the Length of the World" (Hebrew: אורכו של עולם) (ca. ninth–tenth centuries CE), in which the world "stands upon a single fin of Leviathan."[448] As the fin of Leviathan sets the orientation of the world, the monster constitutes *Axis Mundi* around which the creation is established.[449] Being an otherworldly, mythic other, Leviathan is envisioned as the foundation of the world in rabbinic speculations.

The mythic Leviathan continues to be commonly understood as *Axis Mundi* in Jewish cosmology in late medieval period.[450] Rashi (1040–1105 CE), for example, takes בריח to mean "'straight' (פְּשׁוּת) like a bar" in his commentary on Isa 27:1. Commenting on the same verse, Ibn Ezra (1089–1164 CE) explains that Leviathan "is called בריח because he extends (מבריח) from end to end." He even terms the monster as "the hanger" (התלי)—*Axis Mundi* which the world is "hung" upon.[451] Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam, twelveth century CE),

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[448] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 116.

[449] Plausibly reflecting the same tradition, a reference to Leviathan's fins as the *Axis Mundi* is found in the medieval book of Zohar (literally "Splendor"), a foundational work for Jewish mysticism known as Kabbalah (13th century). In addressing the cosmological ramifications of the movement of Leviathan, a portion of the text reads, "Hence every seventy years the world trembles, because when the great monster raises its fins they all tremble in those rivers, and the whole world trembles, and the earth shakes, and they are all comprised in the great monster...Therefore we have taught that the whole world is dependent solely on its fins" (see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* [Oxford: OUP, 2003], 318). On Jewish mysticism, see Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1941).

[450] Influenced by Greek science and Islamic exegetical tradition, Saadiah ben Joseph (882–942 CE) deviates from the normative midrashic way of reading the Scripture, tending toward a naturalistic interpretation of biblical texts. In recognizing God's governance in nature as the main theme of the book of Job, Saadiah interprets Behemoth and Leviathan as natural animals—namely "one of the beasts" and the "coiled creature"—which manifest God's sovereignty as creator and humans' inability to challenge God. Similarly, Maimonides (1135–1204 CE), another great Jewish philosoper in the medieval ages, adopts a naturalistic way of reading the biblical descriptions of Leviathan. He advocates that the created nature is God's means to teach humans about divine rule and providence, and sees Leviathan as a hybrid creature that embodies "those that walk, those that swim, and those that fly"—specifically, the hybridity is thought to represent the various domains of the world.

[451] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 115.

another medieval rabbi, addresses the two Leviathans in a commentary on *b. B. Bat.* 74b. Specifically, he identifies לויתן נחש בריח as the male Leviathan that is "vertical like a bar" (זקוף כבריח) (as *Axis Mundi*), while designating לויתן נחש עקלתון as the female Leviathan that "surrounds the entire world" (מקיף כל העולם) (as *Circuitus Mundi*).[452] Leviathan's image as *Axis Mundi* is also testified by Rabbi David Kimhi (Radak, ca. late twelveth and early thirteenth century CE), who posits that the root ברח means "to span," alluding to the cosmic Leviathan that "spans from end of the sea to the other."[453]

Perceivably, the two cosmic Leviathans—*Circuitus Mundi* and *Axis Mundi*—form a pair of paradox in terms of their position in the cosmos. As *Circuitus Mundi*, Leviathan is said to be at the outer limits of the cosmic order. Yet, it simultaneously lies at the heart of the cosmos as *Axis Mundi*, constituting a solid foundation of the world. While the *Circuitus Mundi* tradition stresses on the monster's outlying, marginal position with reference to the inhabited world, the *Axis Mundi* tradition emphasizes the core and foundational role of Leviathan in the cosmos. Assuming the roles of both *Circuitus Mundi* and *Axis Mundi*, Leviathan(s) comes to represent the remoteness and nearness of the world simultaneously.

Indeed, the cosmological speculations about Leviathan as reflected in these traditions bespeak the ambivalent receptions of the monster among Jews. On the one hand, Leviathan, in its association with chaos powers (which is rooted in earlier traditions), represents intimidating, fearsome monstrosity that is best confined and kept out of the inhabited world. On the other hand, given the fact that Leviathan is God's primordial creature, its perceived monstrosity is regarded as part of the creation that has some cosmological significance under the sovereignty of God. In this sense, Leviathan is said to represent divine monstrosity .

The paradoxical tension between Leviathan's monstrosity and its beneficent role in creation is well illustrated in a late version (ca. ninth century CE) of the midrashic cycle

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[452] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 118.
[453] Seow, "Leviathan, V. Visual Arts," 301.

Pesiqta Rabbati (*Pesiq. Rab.* 48:3), where Leviathan is featured as playing a central role in maintaining cosmic stability in all its perceived monstrosity. Echoing with the tradition of 1 Enoch 60:7–10, the monstrous Leviathan is so powerful that its physical presence over the abyss acts as a plug that prevents the world from being flooded:

> Our Rabbis said, "Were it not that he lies over the deep and presses down upon it, it would come up and destroy the world and inundate it. But when he wishes to drink, he is not able to drink from the waters of Oceanus for they are salty. What does he do? He lifts up one of his fins and the deep comes up and he drinks it. After he drinks, he returns his fin to its place and he stops up the deep."[454]

Apart from using its monstrous body, Leviathan also comes to prevent the flooding of the world by drinking the deep waters, which come up from under its body. This image may find an echo in another tradition, where Leviathan, epitheted אֶבֶן שְׁתִיָּה ("stone of foundation"), is featured as an outcropping of the temple that God casts into the cosmic deep. Accordingly, the monstrous Leviathan constitutes a foundational stone that seals the primordial chaos waters (*b. Yoma* 54b; *Tg. Ps.–J.* on Exod 28:30; cf. *Pr. Man.* 3–4). Notably, the word שְׁתִיָּה appears to signify double references of "foundation" and "drinking"—as Leviathan "drinks" the waters of the abyss, it helps prevent cosmic flooding as a "foundation" of the world (*Pesiq. Rab.* Suppl. 1; cf. *b. B. Bat.* 74b; 3 Bar. 4:6). Again, Leviathan plays a cosmological role in maintaining the order of the created world.

It is noteworthy that in rabbinic traditions, Leviathan is commonly placed at a liminal space in cosmic geography. At the cosmic deep where the chaotic waters are transformed into life-giving waters on the earth, the monster is essentially on the borderline between the undifferentiated domain of chaos and the created world of order. While its perceived monstrosity indicates its destructive potentials, Leviathan as a cosmic *ouroboros*

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[454] The translation of this passage is taken from Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 111.

encompasses the ocean without which life is not possible.[455] Signifying the precariousness of the world, Leviathan is seen to be pivotal in sustaining cosmic order and stability paradoxically.

That the monstrous Leviathan comes to play its divinely-given role in maintaining the cosmos has profound historical and theological implications for the Jewish people. It essentially signifies that no chaotic power—whether in creation or in history[456]—can act as if it is free from the sovereignty of God the Creator. Given that even the monstrous Leviathan is playing its God-given cosmological function, not a hostile power on earth or in history is believed to be competent enough to overturn the order of the created world. Notwithstanding the pressing national calamity which seems to threaten their world order, the Jews can hold on to their steadfast faith in the one and the only one sovereign God.

4.2   From the Primordial Beasts to the Eschatological Feast

4.2.1 Urzeit and Endzeit

According to the apocalyptic literature from early Judaism (which represents a single tradition), God primordially separated Behemoth and Leviathan and preserved them for the eschatological moment in which the two monsters will serve as food for the righteous. In particular, the account of 4 Ezra 6:49–52—after describing the two monsters and their subsequent separation—concludes with the anticipatory statement "you have kept them (Behemoth and Leviathan) to be eaten by whom you wish, and when you wish" (6:52). Unquestionably, the phrase "whom you wish" refers to the righteous Jews in the end of days. The primordial separation and preservation of the monsters thus anticipate the promise of eschatological blessings (feast) for the faithful remnant of Israel.

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[455] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 113–14.
[456] Michael Mulder, "Leviathan on the Menu of the Messianic Meal: The Use of Various Images of Leviathan in Early Jewish Tradition," in *Playing with Leviathan: Interpretation and Reception of Monsters from the Biblical World*, ed. Koert van Bekkum, Jaap Dekker, Henk van de Kamp, and Eric Peels (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 129–30.

Indeed, Behemoth and Leviathan are implied as symbols of eschatological blessings in the literary context of the above Ezra's text. In the larger context of Ezra's third vision in 4 Ezra 6:38–54, the monsters are introduced among God's creative work in the six days of creation. It is worth noting that the passage is reminiscent of God's original creation in that it follows the basic outline of the biblical account in Genesis 1. As the apocalyptic text mimics the primordial days of creation, it seems to betray the author's wish for the restoration of the creation order in the end of times. Just as God created this world for the sake of his people (6:55), Behemoth and Leviathan—the masterpieces in God's creation—serve to symbolize God's eschatological blessings for the righteous (6:52). Put it another way, the messianic plan of God for his people is already under way at the time of creation, when he separated and preserved the two monsters for the righteous. Read in context, Behemoth and Leviathan are seen to embody messianic blessings as primordial creation, thereby linking up *Urzeit* and *Endzeit*.

The connection between the creation and the eschaton helps to make sense of the enigma in 4 Ezra 6:54–59, the passage that follows. While 6:54–55 highlights Israel's election and blessings as the natural culmination of God's creative activity, 6:55–59 portrays Israel's present crisis characterized by God's apparent inaction in the face of oppression:

> [6:55] All this I have spoken before you, O Lord, because you have said that it was for us that you created this world. [56] As for the other nations which have descended from Adam, you have said that they are nothing, and that they are like spittle, and you have compared their abundance to a drop from a bucket. [57] And now, O Lord, behold, these nations, which are reputed as nothing, domineer over us and devour us. [58] But we your people, whom you have called your first-born, only begotten, zealous for you, and most dear, have been given into their hands. [59] If the world has indeed been created for us, why do we not possess our world as an inheritance? How long will this be so?

This passage basically highlights the mismatch between the election of Israel and the

oppression that Israel received.[457] When read in the context of the fall of Jerusalem, which Jews regarded as "the navel of their inhabited world,"[458] Ezra's question for God in 6:59 represents the impatience of Israel in that dire situation: "How long do we have to watch the world not being ours, while you did create it for us?"[459] As God seems to be inactive over their national loss and existential crisis, the Jewish author communicates the frustration of the Jewish community in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple. In this light, God's preservation of Behemoth and Leviathan for eschatological use as the righteous' food comes to address the existential concern of Israel: despite the perceived chaos in the aftermath of the 70 CE– catastrophe, the monsters point to the blessings and rewards that God has planned for the people of God since the time of creation. The monsters thus become the symbol of hope for the post-biblical Jews, who were struggling with angst, despair, and existential issues.

2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4 echoes with 4 Ezra 6:49–52 in that after the primordial creation of Behemoth and Leviathan, God "have kept (them) until that time (messianic age). And they will be nourishment for all who are left." Also written in the period after 70 CE, the apocalypse asserts that God has preserved Behemoth and Leviathan so that in the messianic age, the two monsters will come forth from their respective localities—Behemoth from the land, and Leviathan from the sea—to serve as food for the righteous remnants. Again, the apocalyptic vision conveys hope and consolation for the people of God with the promise of eschatological feasting on the monsters.

Similarly, in the so-called "The Parables of Enoch" (or "The Similitudes of Enoch") (1 Enoch 37–71), references to the eschatological significance of Behemoth and Leviathan are made in the third revelatory discourses (chs. 58–69). As hinted in the introduction to the discourse in 58:1–2 ("...concerning the righteous and the elect: Blessed are you, righteous and

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[457] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 33.
[458] Oded Irshai, "The Making of the Diaspora," in *The Illustrated History of the Jewish People*, ed. Nicholas de Lange (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1997), 68.
[459] Mulder, "Leviathan on the Menu of the Messianic Meal," 120.

elect ones, for glorious is your portion"), the unit is themed around the destiny of the righteous in the end of times. In 1 Enoch 60 where Behemoth and Leviathan are mentioned, the literary context is one of final judgement which is replete with eschatological signs. Sharing the traditions of 4 Ezra 6:49–52 and 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4, this book affirms the eschatological purpose of these two monsters as nourishment for the righteous (1 Enoch. 60:24):

> And the angel of peace who was with me said to me, "These two monsters are prepared for the great day of the Lord (when) they shall turn into food."

In fact, the consumption of Behemoth and Leviathan in the end-day has been anticipated since their primordial separation (1 Enoch. 60:7–9), which can be read as an eschatological sign that points to that very purpose:[460]

> [7] On that day, two monsters will be parted—one monster, a female named Leviathan... [8] and (the other), a male called Behemoth... [9]...they were separated on this day and were cast, the one into the abysses of the ocean, and the other into the dry desert.

Notably, the timing of the "separation" of the monsters is ambiguous: while verse 9 asserts that the separation is a primordial event that has already occurred ("they were separated on this day"), the anticipatory phrase of "on that day, two monsters will be parted" in verse 7 seems to place the separation event in an eschatological perspective. Though the separation is supposedly a primordial event, the author of 1 Enoch appears to frame it in an eschatological context, thereby creating a tension between a primordial reading and an eschatological reading of the text.[461] As the beginning and the end of times are fused in the narrative, the separation of the monsters is pictured in a mythic setting and ambiguous timeframe as an eternal reality.

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[460] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 52.
[461] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 57.

The three pieces of Jewish apocalyptic literature (1 Ezra 6:49–52; 2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4; 1 Enoch 60:7–10, 24) above seem to reflect a common tradition on the reception of Behemoth and Leviathan: in each text, Behemoth and Leviathan are presented as primordial monsters which are separated and then preserved for eschatological use as food for the righteous. Composed sometime in a chaotic historical context, these apocalyptic work—which culminates in the eschatological reward for the righteous—would impart hope and courage to its Jewish readers. In a time when the Jews were confronted by the "monstrosity" of national disorientation, the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan come to point to the messianic reward which affirms the Jews as the righteous people of God. The monsters seem—at least to the Jews—not as frightening as they are supposed to be; rather, they become desirable blessings and rewards in Jewish tradition.

The notion of the "separation/preservation" of Behemoth and Leviathan in early apocalyptic literature is carried over to the rabbinic tradition, in which the rabbis ornament the narrative by adding more details to how God separates and preserves the two primordial monsters. While early Jewish traditions picture that God separates Behemoth and Leviathan primordially into different domains, rabbinic Judaism speculates that the primordial separations take place within each "species" of Behemoth and Leviathan. Following the separation event, "preservation" involves neutralization of the male and slaying and "storage" of the female for the eschatological feast when they both will serve as food for the righteous.[462] A detailed rabbinic discourse on this is illustrated in *b. B. Bat*. 74b, where both Behemoth and Leviathan are presumed to be created male and female:[463]

> For all which the Holy One (Blessed be He) created in his world, male and female he
> created them. Indeed Leviathan, the slithery serpent, and Leviathan, the twisting serpent,
> male and female he created them. But if they copulate with one another, they will destroy

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[462] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 132.
[463] With the exception of this text (ca. sixth century CE), the mate of Behemoth is hardly found in the rabbinic literature. Indeed, all later rabbinic discourses about the two beasts refer only to the mate of Leviathan (e.g., Tg. Ps.–J on Gen 1:21; *Midr Konen* [*BHM* 2:26] on the fifth day of creation, etc).

the whole world. What did the Holy One (Blessed be He) do? He castrated the male and killed the female and salted her for the righteous in the world to come, as it is said, "And he killed the *tannin* which is in the sea" (Isa 27:1). And also Behemoth on a thousand mountains, male and female he created them. But if they copulate with one another, they will destroy the whole world. What did the Holy One (Blessed be He) do? He castrated the male and chilled the female and kept her for the righteous in the world to come, as it is said, "Here now, his strength is in his loins" (Job 40:16). This is the male; "and his vigor is in the muscles of his abdomen" (Job 40:16). This is the female.

In order to prevent the monstrous pairs from begetting progeny which would put the world at stake, both Behemoth and Leviathan are separated from its mate at the time of creation (cf. *BerR* 7:4, *YalqShim* 12). In particular, the rabbinic speculation on the separation of the Leviathans is based on a combination of Isa 27:1, which hints at two Leviathans as the rabbis believe, and Job 40:30 [41:6], where Leviathan is said to be divided. Correspondingly, the rabbinic understanding of the separation of the Behemoths is derived from Job 40:16, which the rabbis claim refer to two Behemoths—one male and one female. To keep the Leviathans from copulation, God is said to have castrated the male Leviathan, slew the female and preserved her in salt in the primordial times.[464] In the case of the Behemoths, God castrated the male Behemoth and chilled the female counterpart in the storage primordially. With the female Leviathan preserved in salt and the female Behemoth put in the cooler, the present world is left with a male Behemoth and a male Leviathan as part of the order of creation.[465]

Notwithstanding the difference in details, early apocalyptic literature and later rabbinic receptions agree that the primordial Behemoth and Leviathan are created to be used eschatologically, specifically as nourishment for the righteous. In connecting *Urzeit* and

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[464] On the pair of male and female Leviathans, the Zohar offers an interesting exposition regarding the separation of the two Leviathans. Based on the observation that the *tanninim* (which is thought to refer to Leviathan and his mate) in Gen 1:21 is written defectively, the Kabbalistic interpreter reads the absence of a *yod* in the word as an indication of the male Leviathan being without the female (who has been slain). Contrary to rabbinic traditions that ascribe no morality to the monsters themselves, the monstrous pair in the Zohar system represents the "principalities of evil."

[465] Timothy Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 65.

Endzeit under the rubric of divine favor, the two monsters come to embody the messianic hope and blessings for the Jews, the very people of God.

4.2.2 The Final Combats of the Monstrous

Behemoth and Leviathan are illustrated in their full monstrosity as they fight in dramatic eschatological battles. Towards the consummation of the eschatological vision, rabbinic literature seems to point to an oral tradition in which the monsters are involved in some form of combat—as a preparatory spectacle—before their consumption by the righteous at the messianic banquet.[466] In particular, the celestial monstrous battles feature the monster (Leviathan) struggling with an angelic figure,[467] the combat between Behemoth and Leviathan which leads to their destruction, and God's eventual intervention which puts an end to the eschatological conflicts. In early apocalyptic traditions, the eschatological destiny of the monsters is framed as divine punishment (1 Enoch 60:24–25), which recalls the vision in Isa 27:1 of YHWH's punishment of Leviathan "on that day."

As a prologue to the final battle between Behemoth and Leviathan, several rabbinic texts depict an angelic character struggling to draw out Leviathan.[468] In *b. B. Bat.* 74b–75a, for example, R. Dimi features the attempt of the angel Gabriel in bringing forth the monster, based on the biblical descriptions in Job 40:

> When Rabbi Dimi came, he said in the name of Rabbi Jonathan: In the future, Gabriel is to make a hunt with Leviathan, as it is said, "Can you drag Leviathan with a hook, or thread his tongue with a cord?" (Job 40:25). But if not that the Holy One (Blessed be He) is his helper, he will not prevail over him, as it is said, "Let his maker bring near his sword" (Job

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[466] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 127–52.

[467] Among the texts where this scene is featured, the angelic characters involved in the struggle include Gabriel, Michael, and even an army of ministering angels. The monster being drawn out is mostly Leviathan. Some texts mention Behemoth along with Leviathan, but only briefly, if at all (cf. *Pesiq Raḇ Kah.*, supp. [Mandelbaum ed., 456, line 16]; the *piyyūṭ* by Eleazar be-Rabbi Qallir [Schirmann, 1971, lines 42–43]).

[468] On the theme of heavenly figures combating monsters, Irving Jacobs finds parallels between Rabbinic material and the *Chaoskampf* traditions in Western Asia and Mesopotamia. See Irving Jacobs, "Elements of Near-Eastern Mythology in Rabbinic Aggadah," *JJS* 28 (1975): 1–11.

40:19).

A passage from *Pesiq Rab Kah* (supplement 2; ca. fifth–sixth century CE), basically a pastiche of citations from the Behemoth–Leviathan discourse in Job 40–41, provides more descriptive details on the angelic struggle in drawing out Leviathan:

> "On account of his glory, he [God] brings forth defenders" (Job 41:7). Because he has heavenly glory, the Holy One (Blessed be He) says to the ministering angels, "Go down and make battle with him." Immediately they go down and make battle with him. Leviathan, however, lifts up his face and the ministering angels see it. They are shocked by his appearance and they flee, as it is said, "When he rises up, '*elim* are terrified" (Job 41:17) '*Elim* are none other than the ministering angels, as it is said, "For who in the heavens may be compared to the Lord; [who] among the *bene 'elim* may be likened to the Lord" (Ps 89:7)....The Holy One (Blessed be He) says to the angels, "Take swords and go down against him." Immediately they take swords and make battle against him, but it is no problem for him, as it is said, "The sword smites him. It does not smites him. It does not stay. He diverts the spear like body armor" (Job 41:18). As the spear rebounds from armor thus it flees from the skin of Leviathan. Iron is accounted by him as straw, as it is said, "He accounts iron as straw, bronze as rotten wood" (Job 41:20). They take up slingstones and fling them at him, but he looks upon them as chaff, as it is written, "Slingstones are turned to chaff against him; like chaff the lance of bronze" (Job 41:20–21).[469]

In this eschatological battle scene, the monstrosity of Leviathan manifests itself to the fullest: the monstrous Leviathan is so invincible that even divine angels are no match for it. The untameable monstrosity of Leviathan renders the angelic attempts in capturing the monster futile.

Apart form the angelic struggle with the monster, Behemoth and Leviathan are featured as engaging in a cosmic battle with each other as a spectacle for the righteous. Specifically, the battle scene—drawing on the biblical descriptions—is portrayed in the rabbinic corpora of *Pesiq. Rab Kah*. and *Midr. Tanhuma'*:

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[469] The translation of this passage is taken from Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 134.

Pesiq. Ra<u>b</u> Kah. suppl. 2; 2.4

> ...Behemoth and Leviathan...make war with each other, for it is written, "They come
> together, the one with the other; no space can come between them" (Job 41:8).
> In an instant Behemoth and Leviathan grab hold of one another, for it is said, "Each is
> glued to his brother" (Job 41:9). Once they are joined to each other, nothing can separate
> the one from the other, for it is said, "They hold on to each other and cannot be separated"
> (Job 41:9).[470]

Mi<u>dr</u>. Tanhuma', *šemini* 7

> The two of them will bitterly come together with each other, for it is said, "They will come
> together, the one with the other" (Job 41:8).[471]

The eschatological contest between the two wild-beasts is also described in dramatic
details in a Hebrew verse (*piyyūṭ*) by Eleazar be-Rabbi Qallir in the fifth or sixth century
CE.[472] Notably, the depictions of Behemoth and Leviathan grappling with each other are
based on the biblical discourses in Job 40–41. At the climax of the battle, Behemoth gores
with its horns, while Leviathan counters by the jabs of its fins (ll. 111–116):

> Now they press so close to each other,
> that air cannot pass between them.
> ...
> The horned Behemoth begins by thrusting with his horns,
> and Leviathan parries with the rows of shields on his back.
> Then his smoking fire flares up,
> catching hold of the fleece on Behemoth's loins.[473]

It is noteworthy that almost all the texts that narrate the battle between Behemoth and
Leviathan are dated to the Byzantine period (ca. fourth through seventh century CE), in

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[470] Bernard Mandelbaum (ed.), *Pesikta de Rav Kahana: According to an Oxford Manuscript, with Variants from all Known Manuscipts and Genizoth Fragments and Parallel Passages with Commentary and Introduction*, vol. 2 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 456, lines 16–20.
[471] Translation taken from Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 143.
[472] See Jefim Schirmann, "The Battle between Behemoth and Leviathan according to an Ancient Hebrew *Piyyūṭ*," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 4 (1971): 327–69.
[473] Carmi, *The Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, 231.

which the staged game of a "wild beast contest" was a popular form of entertainment.[474] In particular, Rabbi Judan son of Rabbi Šim'on comments in *Midr. Lev. Rab*. 13.3 that the wild contest between the beasts will serve as a spectacular part of the eschatological enjoyment which only the righteous can access:

> Rabbi Judan son of Rabbi Šim'on said, "Behemoth and the Leviathan are to be [beasts] of contests of the righteous in the world to come, and all who have not seen the contests of the nations of the world in this world will gain the privilege of seeing [them] in the world to come."

As inferred from the above text, this eschatological spectacle is God's reward to the Jewish people, who, on account of their Jewishness, barred themselves from participating in the wild-beast contests in the gentile world where they inhabited. In particular, the Jewish community in the Byzantine context commonly held that participation in the gentile culture would threaten their identity as Jewish people.[475] Any Jewish interest and involvement in the pagan games would be deemed as treason against their faith.[476] In response to the identity crisis in which they found themselves, the projected eschatological battle between Behemoth and Leviathan—as a spectacle specifically for the righteous—constitutes the messianic hope that affirms the identity of the Jews as the people of God. The eschatologically-staged beast contest, now between Behemoth and Leviathan, can serve as a polemic against Jewish participation in the games of this world, which in turn reaffirms their antagonism towards the gentile culture. The "righteous" Jews, who refused to be a part of the gentile spectacles in their lives, can look forward to this eschatological reward of an otherworldly spectacle. It is

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[474] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 146.

[475] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 146.

[476] Indeed, polemic against the pagan spectacles is discernible in the rabbinic literature of the time. In the Byzantine period, there were tensions between Jewish religious authorities and those Jews who found the gentile arena appealing. In particular, Jewish participation in these games brought about violent outbursts within the Byzantine empire in 423, 484, and 507 CE. See Andrew Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourch Crusade* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 28–31; M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule: A Political History of Palestine from the Bar Kohkba War to the Arab Conquest* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 251; Carl H. Kraeling, "The Jewish Community at Antioch," *JBL* 51 (1932): 159.

thus an identity-defining moment for them as the chosen ones in the world to come—only those who qualify as the people of God can have a seat in this big show.

Even in the face of their full-blown monstrosity, God is shown to be the one who exercises sovereign power over the monsters. While the angels cannot draw out Leviathan on their own, God alone is able to conquer and eliminate it for good. As already hinted in *b. B. Bat.* 74b–75a, the angelic effort in drawing forth Leviathan will only be possible with the "help" of God. The angelic failure and God's intervention in subduing the monster is addressed in most detail in *Mid̲r. 'Alpa' Be̲tot* (ca. ninth–tenth century CE):

> When the Holy One (Blessed be He) brings him from the midst of the great sea, he will capture him by means of envoys. When [he is] on his hook, he will draw down his tongue with a cord. For it is said (Job 40:25) "You will draw out Leviathan with a hook and with a cord you will draw down his tongue." Now, how will he get him? The Holy One (Blessed be He) has assigned Gabriel to bring him forth from the midst of the great sea. He will set hooks in his jaws and his tongue "you will draw down with a cord" of dense cloud 2000 parasangs wide, like unto the size of the great sea. For it is said "And his body was like Tarshish." His length is unsearchable and immeasurable. At that moment, as he draws him out and brings him forth, Leviathan will grow strong against Gabriel and he will be about to swallow him up until the Holy One (Blessed be He) stand beside him to help him. He will draw him from the midst of the great sea, which is the might deep, and he (God) will bring him before the righteous. He himself will slaughter him in their presence. For it is said (Job 40:19) "Let him who made him bring near his sword." When the righteous see that the Holy One (Blessed be He) stands and slaughters him himself, immediately they will open their mouths and rejoice before him. For it is said (Ps 95:1) "Come, let us sing to the Lord, let us rejoice to the God of our salvation."[477]

While the archangel Gabriel is unable to subdue the monster, the "Holy One" captured the monstrous Leviathan with mighty power. At a critical moment when the angel is about to be swallowed by Leviathan, God comes on the stage, draws forth the monster, and finally slays it as the divine victor. On the one hand, the failure of angelic intermediaries reflects the menacing monstrosity of Leviathan. On the other hand, it serves as a rhetorical means by

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[477] The translation of this passage is taken from Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 138.

which to aggrandize the all-powerful God—it is only with the "help" of the sovereign God that Leviathan is put under control. Divine control has come to the fore.

As the deployment of angelic intermediaries separates God from the mundane challenges of the struggle,[478] God is revealed as the true being of otherness in this otherworldly battle. In fact, in combating the monstrous Leviathan, it appears that God has taken on some monstrosity. Ironically, the monstrosity of Leviathan seems to be giving way to the monstrosity of God, who is now stepping into the scene with the sword. In accord with monster theory, the distinction between monsters and the divine is often blurred at close readings of a monstrous discourse. As Timothy Beal comments, "it takes a monster to kill a monster."[479] As God exercises ultimate control throughout the eschatological conflicts, the Jewish readers are encouraged to keep their eyes on the sovereign God despite their national calamity.

Indeed, a sense of God's ultimate control is palpable in the final battle between Behemoth and Leviathan, who, according to *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* Suppl. 2.4, actually fight against one another under the "signal" of God:

> What does the Holy One (Blessed be He) do? He signals Leviathan and he (Leviathan) smites Behemoth with [his fins] and slaughters him. And he signals Behemoth and he (Behemoth) smites Leviathan with his tail and kills him.[480]

In the poem of Qalliri, God is powerful enough to put an end to the battle between the monsters and butcher the beasts in preparation for the messianic banquet for the righteous (ll. 140–142):

> But between the two of them He (God) makes peace,
> to slaughter them, to butcher them, to put them to the ban.[481]

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[478] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 151.
[479] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 18.
[480] Mandelbaum, *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, 2:456, ll. 20–21.
[481] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 150.

Divine control is highlighted throughout the final battle between Behemoth and Leviathan, literally from beginning to end. God is the one who initiates the battle (through an angel); then God signals the two monsters to attack each other; and finally, God slaughters them (or makes them kill each other) and butchers them for food. In all, the divine victory over monstrous forces is definite, and it will surely prevail. The eschatological spectacle thus bespeaks the full control of the sovereign God, which serves to address the plight of the Jews who lost control over their own fate. Given the Byzantine dating of these texts, the perceived monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan comes to symbolize the historical monstrous forces against the Jewish community, specifically, the oppressive power of the Byzantine empire and the popular enmity against the Jews in that period.[482] Nevertheless, the fact that God is ultimately triumphant over the monstrous forces is reassuring: while the Jewish community may not see hope in this world, the table will be turned in the end of ages—the wicked will perish and the righteous will be rewarded. Serving as a foil for God's full control, the monstrous pair becomes a symbol of messianic hope for the struggling Jewish audience.

4.2.3 The Messianic Banquet of the Righteous

As a consummation of the eschatological vision, the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan will serve as food for God's faithful people in the messianic banquet, which is first revealed in early apocalyptic texts, namely, 4 Ezra, 2 Apoc. Bar., and 1 Enoch:

4 Ezra 6:52

  ... you have kept them to be eaten by whom you wish, and when you wish.

2 Apoc. Bar. 29:4

  ...which I shall have kept until that time. And they will be nourishment for all who are left.

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[482] Andrew Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 19–36; Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 148–49.

1 Enoch 60:24

> ...These two monsters are prepared for the great day of the Lord (when) they shall turn into food.

In later rabbinic traditions, the eschatological banquet becomes a prominent theme regarding the fate of Behemoth and Leviathan. To the aggadic writers of the Amoraic period (ca. 200–500 CE), feeding the righteous with the two monsters in "the world to come" (העולם הבא) has increasingly grasped literary interest.[483] Along with the motif of a deadly cosmic battle between Behemoth and Leviathan, rabbinic literature often features the flesh of the two monsters at the eschatological feast (*b. B. Bat*. 74b–75a; *Midr. Lev. Rab*. 13:3, 22:10; *Pirqê R. El*. 9; *Pesiq. Rab Kah*. suppl. 2). The idea that these monsters are to be served as food is probably derived from Ps 74:14, where Leviathan, upon being shattered by God, is said to be given "as food for the people of the desert" (מַאֲכָל לְעָם לְצִיִּים). From the perspective of Jewish interpreters, the enigmatic expression of לְעָם לְצִיִּים is traditionally understood to be a reference to the people of Israel.[484] As reflected in the Targumic rendering לעם בית ישראל ("to the people of the house of Israel") (Tg.–Ps 74:14), Leviathan is interpreted as food that is given to the people of Israel. Drawing on the biblical tradition, especially Job 40–41, the Talmudic text *b. B. Bat*. 75a puts this interpretation of Leviathan in an eschatological framework, in which the righteous consumes its flesh in the end-time banquet:

> Rabbah said: Rabbi Yohanan said, "In the future the Holy One (Blessed be He) will make a feast for the righteous from the flesh of Leviathan, as it is said 'Associates will feast upon him' (Job 40:30)." And is there no *kera* but a feast? As it is said, "And he prepared for them a great feast and they ate and drank" (2 Kgs 6:23). And are there no *haberim* but disciples of the sages? As it is said, "O you who dwell in the gardens, the companions listen to your voice. Cause me to hear!" As for the rest, they divide him and make him a

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[483] Mulder, "Leviathan on the Menu of the Messianic Meal," 123; Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 127.
[484] Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan," 323; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 22, n. 57.

commodity in the markets of Jerusalem, as it is said, "They will divide him among the merchants" (Job 40:30). And are there no *kena'anim* if not merchants? As it is said, "A merchant, in whose hand are deceitful balances; he loves to oppress" (Hos 12:8). Or if you will, say on the basis of that which: "Whose traders are princes, whose merchants are the honored of the earth" (Isa 23:8).

Here Rabbah, in the name of Rabbi Yohanan, addresses the messianic feast (*kērā*) in which the flesh of Leviathan will be dished up for the righteous. As reflected in this text, the rabbinic reception of Leviathan as part of the eschatological feast is mostly based on Job 40:30 [41:6], which the MT (Tiberian) vocalizes as יִכְרוּ עָלָיו חַבָּרִים יֶחֱצוּהוּ בֵּין כְּנַעֲנִים ("Will the associates haggle over him? Will he be divided among the merchants?"). In particular, the Targum translates יכרו עליו as יעבדון שירותא עלוהי ("they make a feast on him"), presumably deriving יכרו from another כרה, "to give a feast" (cf. כֵּרָה, "feast"; 2 Kgs 6:23). This interpretation is taken up by a number of medieval Jewish interpreters, such as Saadiah, Ibn Ezra, Ralbag, and Meyuḥas, as is reflected in their biblical commentaries.[485] With Job 40:30 [41:6] as a proof-text, Jewish tradition holds that God intends to use the flesh of Leviathan to prepare a messianic banquet for the righteous, that is, for the faithful Jews.

However, one issue that comes with the eschatological feast is, as is typical for Jews, the priestly concern of whether the flesh of the monsters is ritually clean for the righteous to consume. While Lev 7:24 stipulates that Israel is prohibited from eating any dead animal that has been torn by other animals (since killing an animal in any way that causes undue pain is unacceptable)[486], that Behemoth tears Leviathan apart with its horn and Leviathan pierces through Behemoth with its fins (*Midr. Lev. Rab.* 13.3; *Midr. Tanhuma'*, *šemini* 7) is ritually problematic. Apparently, the dead Leviathan is ritually unclean as a torn animal. Given that the fins of Leviathan are serrated like a saw (which would cause undue pain), the slain Behemoth would too become impure. Considering their uncleanness as a result of the

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[485] Seow, "Perspectives on a Pluriform Classic," 191.

[486] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 68.

monstrous battle, the monsters would be deemed inappropriate to be served at the messianic feast.

Given the concern that Behemoth and Leviathan may not fulfill *kosher* requirements, *Midr. Lev. Rab* 13.3[487] addresses the issue and attempts to resolve the problem of ritual uncleanness by suggesting a solution:

> The sages say, "Is this an acceptable slaughter? Are we not taught thus: for all who slaughter, they may slaughter by any means, and at any time, except with a reaper or a saw or anything with teeth because they cause pain?" Rabbi Avin son of Kahana said, "The Holy One (Blessed be He) says, 'A new Torah will come forth from me' (Isaiah 51:4), i.e. 'A novel interpretation of Torah will come forth from me.'"

By proposing that there will be "a new interpretation of the Torah" (חִדּוּשׁ תּוֹרָה)—based on the scriptural phrase "a new Torah" (תּוֹרָה חֲדָשָׁה)—in the age to come, Rabbi Avin son of Kahana resorts to a messianic solution to accommodate the seemingly irreducible conflict between the existing ritual law and the eschatological slaughter of the beasts. With a novel interpretation of the Torah in the eschaton, the monsters' tearing of each other will no longer be considered ritually unacceptable.

A similar interpretive strategy is seen in *Midr. Tanhuma'* (*šemini* 7), which implies that the eschatological meal would not be bound by the current ritual restrictions:

> The Holy One (Blessed be He) said to Israel, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not defile yourselves with an unclean beast or an unclean reptile.' Thus David says, 'As for God, his way is perfect; the word of YHWH is refined' (Ps 18:31), in order to refine his creations. He said to him, 'Rabbi, what does it matter to the Holy One (Blessed be He) if Israel eats what is not [properly] slaughtered, if Israel kills by piercing and eats, or slaughters at the neck or at the thigh?' You should know that this slaughter was not commanded but in order to refine Israel, for in the time to come he will make a feast for the righteous from Behemoth and Leviathan, and there will be no slaughter there.

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[487] An early (ca. fifth-, sixth- or seventh-century CE) Palestinian compilation of midrashic commentary based on select passages from Leviticus.

In addition to "absolving" Leviathan of the alleged uncleanness, its cleanliness as a *kosher* fish is affirmed in a Tannaitic text (*Sifra Shemini* 3:5):

> Rabbi Jose son of Durmasqit says: Leviathan is a clean fish, as it is said: "His back is furrows of shields" (Job 41:7) and "His underparts are sharp potsherds" (Job 41:22). "His back is furrows of shields," these are the scales; "His underparts are sharp potsherds," these are his fins.

Rabbi Jose son of Durmasqit considers Leviathan as a "clean fish" (דג טהור) by citing select descriptions from the book of Job. Precisely, the rabbi interprets אֲפִיקֵי מָגִנִּים in Job 41:7 [15] as an allusion to the scales of Leviathan (so the Targum renders פצידיא קליפוהי, "the grooves of his scales"). In addition, he takes תַּחְתָּיו חַדּוּדֵי חָרֶשׂ ("Beneath him are sharp potsherds") in 41:22 [30] as the fins of Leviathan. Being a fish with both scales and fins, Leviathan is then deemed ritually fit for the purpose of consumption. This interpretation resonates with *Midr. Lev. Rab.* 22:10, in which Leviathan is affirmed (along with Ziz and Behemoth)[488] as a clean species:

> Rabbi Menahem and Rabbi Bebai, and Rabbi Aha, and Rabbi Johanan in the name of Rabbi Jonathan said, "Instead of what I forbade you, I allowed you..." Instead of forbidden fish, Leviathan a clean fish. Instead forbidden birds, Ziz a clean bird...Instead of forbidden beasts, "Behemoth on a thousand mountains" (Ps 96:10).

Now Leviathan is approved as a clean food that can be served at the messianic banquet.[489] Even more, the eschatologically-slaughtered monsters are deemed as rewards for those who hold fast to the ritual laws in their lives. According to *Midr. Lev. Rab.* 13:3, those who refused to eat ritually unclean meat in this world will be able to taste it in a banquet in the world to come:

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[488] The triad of creatures that represent quintessential categories of edible flesh in the world serves as a symbol of plenary nature of the messianic banquet.

[489] This finds an echo in the rabbinic tale of Jonah (*Pirqê R. El.* 10), in which a rabbi speculates on Jonah's encounter with the swallowing fish, which is in turn devoured by Leviathan—the sea-monster that is eventually captured by Jonah to serve as food for the messianic banquet.

> Rabbi Berekya said in the name of Rabbi Yiṣḥaq: "The Holy One (Blessed be He) will make a feast for his righteous servants in the time to come, and all who did not eat carrion in this world will gain the privilege of seeing it in the world to come."

Simply put, the eschatological feast is framed as a recompense for the righteous. Just as those who refrain themselves from attending the Roman-Byzantine wild beast contests are promised with a far more spectacular monster battle in the world to come, so the righteous Jews who refuse to eat improperly slaughtered animals in this world will taste the torn beasts at the eschatological banquet.

On the flip side, the discourse appears to be implicitly polemical towards the Jews who accommodated to the surrounding gentile culture. In the Byzantine period (ca. fourth–sixth centuries CE), the Jewish community faced immense enmity in general. Besides anti-Jewish sentiments from Christian leaders and writers who launched vitriolic attack against Jews and Judaism, the Byzantine empire enacted a series of restrictive laws against Jews across the empire. In particular, the Code of Justinian (527–565 CE) was decreed to control the social and religious life of the Jewish communities,[490] who were considered second-class citizens with diminished right in the public sphere.[491] Not only did they face restrictions in using the Scripture in their service, but they were also prohibited from building new synagogues and celebrating the Passover before Easter.[492] As the Jews tried to find ways to thrive (or survive) amidst the social oppression, some of them acclimated to the prevailing culture and hence relaxed their religious obligations.[493] In this context, the writers of these rabbinic texts anticipate a future when God will reward those who remain faithful. By linking the observance of Jewish dietary laws to eschatological vindication, the text subtly conveys the

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[490] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 148.

[491] Ora Limor, "A Rejected People," in *The Illustrated History of the Jewish People*, 96.

[492] Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry*, 19–36; For more on religious restrictions on Jews in the Byzantine period, see Kraeling, "The Jewish Community at Antioch," 159–60.

[493] Whitney, *Two Strange Beasts*, 149. In fact, Emperors of the late sixth and early seventh centuries even endorsed forced conversion among the Jews within the empire, see *EncJud* s.v. "Byzantine Empire" by Andrew Sharf.

polemic against cultural accommodation in terms of profane consumption among Jews.

In spite of the tangible hostility in the gentile world, the eschatological significance of the monsters at the messianic banquet serves to symbolize God's care and protection for his righteous people. In particular, based on the Jewish understanding of Job 40:31 [41:7], התמלא בשׂכות עורו ובצלצל דגים ראשׁו (often rendered "Can you fill his skin with harpoons, or his head with fishing spears?"), it is commonly held that upon defeating the monsters, God will use the skin of Leviathan to build a shelter for the righteous to sit in. By interpreting בשׂכות as the homonym בסכות (with שׂ being read as ס), "in tabernacles," the midrashic writer takes the first colon as "Can you fill tabernacles with his skin?" (*b. B. Bat.* 75a). Not a few medieval commentators (e.g. Saadiah, Rashi, Berechiah ha-Naqdan) follow a similar rendering of the Targum on this verse: איפשר דתמלי במטללתא משכיה ("Is it possible that you should fill booths (with) his skin?"), where the Hebrew original שֵׂכּוֹת is presumably understood as a variant of סֻכּוֹת.[494] The Targum goes on to render the second colon as ובגגונא דנוניא רישׁיה, "And the shelter of the fish (with) his head," probably deriving the term צלצל (ṣilṣal) from √צלל, "shelter."[495] In fact, the idea of a shelter or tabernacle made of Leviathan's skin was popular among Jewish rabbis and exegetes. *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* Suppl. 2, for instance, features the shelters that are made of Leviathan's skin as having no gaps on them. Precisely, the term "shelter" is cited from Isa 4:6 where סֻכָּה, a reference to shade from the heat of the day, signifies divine care and protection.

Comprising the food and shelter for the righteous in the world to come, Behemoth and Leviathan have essentially become messianic symbols for Jewish people.[496] The rabbinic discourses on the monsters thus constitute a source of hope and comfort for the Jews who were at stake in this world. In a world where the Jewish community constantly struggled with

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[494] Seow, "Perspectives on a Pluriform Classic," 191.
[495] Other interpreters take צלצל not as "covering," but as "cymbal," which the righteous will bang to hawk Leviathan's head as a delicacy or to call on their associates to come and partake of the banquet (*Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* Suppl. 2).
[496] As Seow, "Perspectives on a Pluriform Classic," 194.

security and settlement, these texts inform them of a vision in which the righteous will be well-protected and nourished at the eschatological feast.

4.3 Representation of Behemoth and Leviathan in Jewish Iconography

As a symbol of messianic hope, the mythic pair of Behemoth and Leviathan constitutes one of the most prominent themes in Jewish iconography. Iconographic representation of the monsters was first attested in late antiquity, and it started to become popular in the medieval period, typically in the forms of Hebrew manuscript and synagogue decoration. Into the modern age, their representation has taken on a great variety of artistic renditions and used material, not least in tombstones, stained glass, mosaic compositions, paintings, and religious objects. As will be illustrated below, the persistent presence of Behemoth and Leviathan in Jewish iconography testifies to their socio-religious significance in imparting hope to Jewish communities and expressing their self-identity.

Dated to as early as the fifth-century or sixth-century, the three primordial beasts (Behemoth, Leviathan, and Ziz) in Jewish tradition were illustrated in a pavement of the Greco-Roman synagogue at Hammam-Lif in North Africa (Tunisia) (Fig. 18).
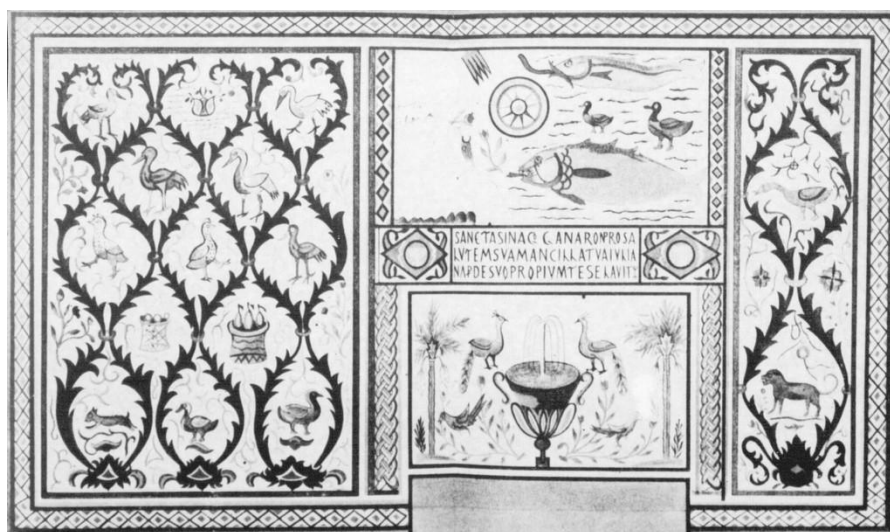
Fig. 18. Mosaic pavement from a synagogue at Hammam-Lif in North Africa, ca. 5th or 6th century, featuring the three primordial creatures in Jewish tradition. Brooklyn Museum, New York.

In the illustration, the bull is suggestive of Behemoth, and the large fishes represent Leviathan(s) which will be captured by a rope (pictured by the projections from the fishes' mouths) in the messianic age. Notably, the monsters are featured together with other symbols of messianic blessings, specifically the Tree of Life, the Stream of Life, and the land of flowers in the lower panel.

Among the most noted iconographic renderings of Behemoth and Leviathan in the medieval period is one from the *North French Hebrew Miscellany* in the thirteenth century. In one illustration (cat. no. 77), Behemoth is represented as a wild-ox which is poised to gore, while Leviathan is a huge fish characterized with sharp fins around it (Fig. 19).
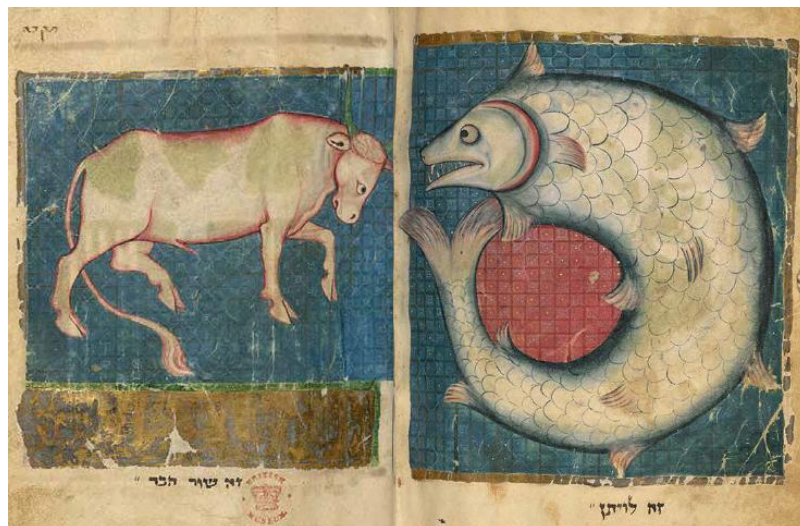
Fig. 19. Behemoth and Leviathan in the *North French Hebrew Miscellany*, cat. no. 77, fols. 518v–519, ca. 13th century.

The imagery is consistent with the textual traditions of the monsters being engaged in a deadly battle. It is worth noting that the iconography reflects the cosmological and eschatological implications of Leviathan in rabbinic tradition. While the portrayed ring-shape points to the *Circuitus Mundi* tradition which envisions Leviathan as encircling the world, the perfect circle it forms may signify the encapsulating aspect of the eschaton. Indeed, the artist seems to hint at the cosmological and eschatological significance of Leviathan with the

choice of colors in the iconography. The image of Leviathan being framed against the great sea (indicated by the blue backdrop)[497] recalls its cosmological role in maintaining cosmic stability. Not only does the red circle enclosed by Leviathan signify the inhabited world, but it also points to the consummation of eschatological redemption—since the red color is often used to signify messianic blessings in medieval manuscripts.[498]

The eschatological significance of the monsters is also communicated in a whole-page illustration in a German Bible from the Ambrosian Library, dated to the thirteenth century (ca. 1236–1238) (Fig. 20). In the top panel of the illustration, the three mythic beasts, namely, Behemoth (wild-ox), Leviathan (fish), and Ziz (bird), are placed in close proximity and are associated with symbols of messianic implications.

Fig. 20. *Feast of the Righteous* in the Ambrosian Bible from Germany, ca. mid-13th century. Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, Ms. B32inf., fol. 136.

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[497] Elizabeth A Eisenberg, "Cosmic Creatures: Animals in Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts," in *Book of Beasts: the Bestiary in the Medieval World*, ed. Elizabeth Morrison and Larisa Grollemond (Los Angeles: the J. Paul Getty Museum, 2019), 232.

[498] Eisenberg, "Cosmic Creatures," 233.

Like the representation in the *Miscellany*, Leviathan is illustrated as a ring-shaped fish against a blue background, which is the sea of the cosmos. Instead of a solid red circle, Leviathan is shown to encircle a void circle here with some irregular red shapes in it. Elizabeth Eisenberg suggests that these amoeboid shapes represent trees (just like the larger trees featured in the lower panel).[499] According to this interpretation, Leviathan can be seen as enclosing an area of microcosm with lush vegetation—a symbol of prosperity which reflects the artist's messianic visions of the world.[500] Visibly, Behemoth on the left is featured beside some red shapes. It is noteworthy that the red "trees" seem to be situated on a shade of vague green which resembles the landscape of a mountain. Other than reflecting the rabbinic reception of Behemoth inhabiting the mountains, the "mountain" in this iconography may specifically symbolize the Mount of Olives which in Jewish tradition carries profound eschatological implications: though the Divine Presence departed from the Mount of Olives, it will return there at the end-time when the people of God will be redeemed.[501] Viewed in this light, both Behemoth and Leviathan are associated with the messianic consummation. The messianic motif is most manifest in the scene of the Feast of the Righteous portrayed in the lower panel. Specifically, the righteous Jews, who wear crowns, are shown to surround a table presumably in anticipation of the messianic banquet—in which the three primordial beasts are served as food. Echoing with the textual traditions, the iconography reveals a commonly held eschatological perspective regarding the monsters among Jews.

Apart from messianic scenes, the so-called Combat Tradition in which Behemoth and Leviathan engage in a battle continues to be a popular iconographic theme, especially in western medieval Hebrew manuscripts. In an illuminated prayer book (Siddur) of Austrian

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[499] Eisenberg, "Cosmic Creatures," 233.
[500] Eisenberg, "Cosmic Creatures," 233.
[501] Barbara Drake Boehm and Melanie Holcomb (eds), *Jerusalem 1000–1400: Every People Under Heaven* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), 151–52.

provenance (ca. 1300), for example, Behemoth and Leviathan are represented as a wild-ox and a fish being locked in battle.[502] In another illustrated prayer book (Machzor) from Leipzig (ca. 1325), Behemoth, also depicted as an aggressive wild-ox, is shown to confront Leviathan, a fish with blade-like fins on its body (Fig. 21).

Fig. 21. Image in an Ashkenazi Machzor from Franconia, ca. 1325, showing Behemtoh and Leviathan engaged in battle (JTS)

While medieval iconography tends to center around the banquet or battling scenes, modern Jewish art focuses more on the encapsulating aspect of Leviathan. In particular, a plethora of iconography since the seventeenth century portrays Leviathan as a gigantic fish that encircles the walled city of Jerusalem.[503] One of which is a wall painting dated to the eighteenth century, in which Leviathan encloses a city by its huge body that forms the foundation for the city (Fig. 22). A modern illustration can be found in a wall decoration from the early twentieth century, in which the fishy Leviathan surrounds the Western Wall (כותל מערבי) which represents the city of Jerusalem (Fig. 23). Given that Jerusalem is a strong symbol of Jewish identity and carries profound messianic implications, the association of the city with Leviathan in contemporary Jewish art delivers a powerful message of messianic

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[502] Seow, "Leviathan, V. Visual Arts" 300.
[503] The iconographic representation may be inspired by rabbinic textual traditions (*b. B. Bat.* 75a; *Pirqê Masiaḥ*) in which the left of Leviathan's skin after the building of the *sukkot* will be "spread upon the walls of Jerusalem."

hope to modern Jews.

Fig. 22. Wall painting in a synagogue in Połaniec, ca. mid-18th century. Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland, 52762.

Fig. 23. Wall decoration from Jerusalem, ca. 1928. Gross Family Collection, Israel, 005.013.002.

Leviathan is also a popular icon in modern synagogue decorations, especially among Ashkenazi Jews.[504] It has frequently been represented in synagogues as a serpentine fish that forms a circle by biting its own tail. Representations of its kind can be found on the walls (Fig. 24) and ceilings (Fig. 25) or above the Torah ark (Fig. 26) of synagogues in Poland (Krasni, Dabrowa Tarnowska, Łańcut, Sandomierz, Niebylec), Ukraine (Pishchanka) and Lithuania (Valkininkai/Olkienik, Kedainiai, Rietavas). To the Jewish community, this image of a cosmic *ouroboros* has been a signification of eschatological encapsulation.

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[504] Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan," 331.

Fig. 24. A Leviathan in a synagogue (prayer hall) in Dąbrowa Tarnowska, Poland, ca. 1865 (restored 2012).

Fig. 25. A Leviathan on the ceiling of a synagogue in Łańcut – Bimah, Poland, ca. 1935.

Fig. 26. A Leviathan featured above the Torah ark in a synagogue in Niebylec, Poland, ca. 1906.

Leviathan finds its traces as well on a range of Ashkenazi monuments. On a tombstone in Ukraine (Banyliv), for instance, Leviathan is featured in the form of a cosmic *ouroboros* (Fig. 27) which, signifying messianic hope, points to the glorification of the righteous when they partake of the great banquet in the world to come.

Fig. 27. Tombstone of Menahem-Mendel son of Zeev in Banyliv, Ukraine, ca. 1906.

Leviathan is also commonly featured in Jewish folk art and religious objects, in which it continues to be represented as a cosmic *ouroboros*. On a Sabbath cloth from the nineteenth century, Leviathan is shown to encircle the cave of Machpelah (known as the Tomb of the Patriarchs) (Fig. 28)—again, its encapsulating body serves to signify the messianic hope for Israel. Indeed, the Jewish community often associates Leviathan with the Sabbath meal which regularly serves fish as a dish. Commonly believed among Jews that Sabbath meals offer a foretaste of the messianic feast,[505] the linkage between Leviathan and the Sabbath constitutes a reassuring messianic vision that imparts hope to the Jewish community.

Fig. 28. Sabbath cloth depicting Leviathan surrounding the central cave of Machpelah, ca. 19th century.

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[505] Seow, "Leviathan, V. Visual Arts" 302.

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A contemporary Romanian plaque, on which Leviathan is represented as a fish in the sea (Fig. 29), even explicitly communicates the Jewish belief in the beneficence of Leviathan. Specifically, the iconography includes a quote of a Hebrew closing prayer which is used at the end of the Sukkot Festival: "May it be your will, O Lord, our God and the God of our ancestors, that, just as I have stood up and dwelled in this Sukkah, so may I be pure in the coming year, to dwell in Sukkah (made) of the hide of Leviathan." The prayer reflects a desire to celebrate the Sukkot in the dwelling of this *sukkah*, which is made of the skin of Leviathan. It echoes with the Talmudic tradition in which Leviathan's skin is used by God to provide shade for the righteous at the messianic celebration.

Fig. 29. Plague featured with Leviathan and a Hebrew prayer from Timișoara, Romania, ca. 1997.

In all, artistic renderings of Behemoth and Leviathan in Jewish reception are manifest in a variety of cultural forms throughout history. In particular, a plethora of illustrations are themed around their cosmic role (particularly the image of Leviathan as cosmic *ouroboros*) and eschatological significance in the messianic age. Signifying messianic hope, Behemoth and Leviathan appear to be monstrous only in their physical qualities. Unlike other traditions (especially Christian tradition) which perceive their monstrosity negatively, Behemoth and Leviathan tend to be viewed in a positive light in Jewish tradition as symbols of messianic

hope and divine beneficence, which in turn upholds the Jewish identity across time and places.

4.4   A Wrap-up with Monster Theory

This chapter has examined the trajectory of receptions of Behemoth and Leviathan within Jewish tradition—in the forms of both text and iconography. They are, by and large, understood among Jews to be mythic monsters, whose otherworldliness bespeaks their perceived otherness. Yet, as have been demonstrated, their representations in Jewish tradition, not least in textual material, often reveal certain uneasiness that the Jewish authors held towards the world surrounding them. Placed in a liminal position in the cosmos, Behemoth and Leviathan signify the precariousness of the world which is constantly threatened by chaos powers. On the other hand, they are believed to be playing some roles in sustaining cosmic stability and world order. Reflecting real-life concerns of the Jewish writers in this very world, the two monsters are said to represent, as Timothy Beal frames it, "otherworldliness within the world."

Indeed, Behemoth and Leviathan as received in Jewish tradition exemplify what Jeffrey Jerome Cohen defines as monsters which give shape to culturally specific fears, desires, anxieties, and fantasies.[506] As shown in the Jewish receptions, Behemoth and Leviathan manifest themselves to be paradoxical monsters that evoke both fear and desire, anxiety and fantasy in their Jewish audience. While the cosmological significance of the monsters already implies a lurking presence of chaotic forces that threaten the inhabited world, the fact that the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan are preserved in the primordial times means that they have never been annihilated—they are simply repressed. Even though the rabbis have minimized the menace of the Behemoths and Leviathans to the world by having a member of

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[506] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 4.

each monster-pair slain, the existing monstrous members are still active and potentially destructive to the world.[507] Considering their potential threat to cosmic stability, living in a world where the monsters are part of the creation order would certainly feel more or less unsettling.

Despite the associated disquieting aspects, Behemoth and Leviathan paradoxically come to be symbols of hope among Jewish people inasmuch as they embody God's beneficence for his people. Apart from their divinely-given roles in somehow supporting the cosmos, Behemoth and Leviathan are envisioned in Jewish tradition in both textual records and iconography as nourishment for the righteous at the end of times, thereby offering a source of messianic hope to the Jewish community. In an eschatological framework, embodiments of monstrosity are turned to culinary delights which are essentially God's rewards for the faithful Jews. The fearsome monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan as displayed in the final battles ultimately gives way to a fantastic feast on the monsters which is exclusively for the righteous.

Jewish desire for an other-world is also discernible in the rabbis' dealing with the issue of cleanliness of Behemoth and Leviathan as messianic food. By some interpretive strategies, the Jewish authors come to normalize a supposedly prohibited practice (eating the ritually unclean monsters) in a socially-accepted imaginary space (a new world order). As Cohen articulates, "through the body of the monster fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space."[508] The monster's connection to the forbidden renders it all the more appealing as a temporary escape from real-life constraints.[509] Read in this light, the monsters Behemoth and Leviathan—with their signified otherworldly liberation—possess the capacity to evoke potent

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[507] Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters*, 64.
[508] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 17.
[509] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," 16–17.

escapist fantasies in the Jewish community.

Despite their perceived monstrosity, Behemoth and Leviathan points to the culmination of messianic vindication and blessings for the righteous people of God. While they are fearsome monsters in and of themselves, they come to serve as pointers to the eschatological rewards that would elicit awe-inspiring delightfulness in the Jewish readers. Signifying a reality where there is far more to see, taste, and enjoy than in this world, Behemoth and Leviathan are said to embody the desire and fantasy for an otherworldly recompense among Jewish people. Echoing with Slavoj Žižek's notion of the sublime, they constitute monsters that are capable to "give us pleasure by indicating the true, incomparable greatness of sublimity, surpassing every possible phenomenal, empirical experience."[510] Behemoth and Leviathan in Jewish tradition testify to the monster who is both terrifying and fascinating, as befits monster theory—the monster is always dangerously enticing.

Symbolizing God's blessings and rewards exclusively for the righteous Jews, the two strange beasts in all their otherworldliness come to affirm the self-identity of the Jewish community throughout history. Even the fate of Jews appears doomed in post-biblical times, the eschatoloigical visions associated with Behemoth and Leviathan recall and confirm their identity as the remnants of God's people. In accord with monster theory, Behemoth and Leviathan as embodiments of otherness paradoxically address the selfness of the Jewish people who utilize them. In the face of polemical circumstances in history, the Jewish receptions of these monstrous others function to help the Jews assert their ownness in the midst of enmity and hostile others.

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[510] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1998), 2003.

THE MONSTER AS OTHERNESS THAT ENFORCES SAMENESS:
CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATIONS OF THE LEVIATHAN–BEHEMOTH TRADITION

This chapter aims to examine the interpretive strategies and receptions of Leviathan and Behemoth within Christian tradition. Based on the Greek text of Job, early Christian interpreters tend to reduce the Behemoth–Leviathan pair to a single monstrous entity (the dragon Leviathan) that signifies the adversary of Christianity—only when Christian interpreters relied more on the Hebrew text since the medieval period did Behemoth and Leviathan begin to be viewed as two separate entities. Frequently symbolizing the Devil/Satan and the epitome of evilness in the framework of Christian theology, they were at times historicized and used as rhetoric of polemic against historical enemies of the Christian community. In examining a number of Christian interpreters who came to explicate the theological implications of the Joban beasts, this chapter seeks to map out the trajectory of their receptions from early Christianity to the dawn of Enlightenment. The study concludes by relating how monster theory informs Christian receptions of the Joban monsters in terms of otherness, as well as Christian uses of them as embodiments of difference which are in effect reinforcers of sameness paradoxically.

5.1   Reception of the Leviathan–Behemoth Motif in the Ecclesiastical Greek Bible

5.1.1 The OG Text of Job 40–41

The Old Greek (OG) text (or the more ambiguous term, "the Septuagint"[511]), along with

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[511] The term "Septuagint" has been used by scholars in three senses. In its broadest sense it refers to the Alexandrian canon, and included not only the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, but also the so-called deuterocanonical books. The term is also used to include the translation of the Hebrew canon into Greek, and might better be called the Old Greek (OG) to distinguish it from the third and original sense of the term, the translation of the Hebrew Torah into Greek in Alexandria in the first half of the third century BCE. To avoid ambiguity, more precise terms (e.g. the Old Greek [OG], the ecclesiastical Greek Bible, etc) are preferred over

its daughter translations (e.g. Old Latin texts), constitutes a major source of early Christian interpretation of Leviathan (bracketing Behemoth).[512] Specifically, the Christian understanding of the Leviathan–Behemoth motif is largely based on the monster discourse in chapters 40–41 of the Greek book of Job.

First and foremost, the OG reception of the Behemoth–Leviathan discourse differs from the Hebrew in that it tends to read the presupposed distinct entities of Behemoth and Leviathan as a unified monstrous creature. Specifically, Behemoth is bracketed with the entity of Leviathan (the dragon) in the Greek text. In MT–Job 40:15 where Behemoth first appears, the OG renders the Hebrew term בהמות as a common noun θηρία, "beasts." Despite being in plural form, the Greek word apparently refers to one single creature (the "Beast") as indicated by the singular pronominal and verbal forms in the subsequent verses (OG–Job 40:16–24). Read in context, it appears to be a generic reference that anticipates the "dragon/serpent" (δράκων) in 40:25 [41:1], the Greek rendering of the Hebrew לויתן for Leviathan. While the "Beast" (θηρία) is a generic reference to the monstrous creature, the "dragon/serpent" (δράκων) seems to indicate its specific name or species.[513]

As a matter of fact, throughout the discourse in Job 40–41, the Greek text has deviated from the presumed Hebrew original[514] several times in a way that corroborates its reception of Behemoth and Leviathan as a unified monstrous entity. A piece of salient evidence is seen

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the term "Septuagint" in this chapter.

[512] Choon-Leong Seow, "Leviathan: V. Visual Arts," *EBR*, 303.

[513] C. L. Seow, "Perspectives on a Pluriform Classic," 189.

[514] Given that the OG of the book of Job is a sixth shorter than the MT, it has been debated in scholarship on whether the existing Greek text is based on a now-lost Hebrew *Vorlage* which is shorter than the MT (as proposed by Edwin Hatch and Harry M. Orlinsky), or that it is a literary product of the Greek translator based on the *Vorlage* of the MT. The hypothesis of an originally shorter Hebrew version of Job is, however, difficult to sustain. Not only is there no attested evidence of a shorter version of Job, all textual witnesses appear to support the longer text of the MT. Besides, the omitted texts in the OG are, as Seow notes (see C. L. Seow, *Job 1–21: Interpretation and Commentary*, Illuminations [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013], 6–10), in most cases difficult to understand or theologically awkward in the Hebrew. It would be difficult to imagine that anyone would have expanded the text, thereby rendering it more difficult. Moreover, the omissions in the OG on the whole seem to reflect the translator's effort in making the text flow more smoothly (e.g. 7:8; 14:18–19). It seems more plausibly, therefore, that the underlying Hebrew text of the OG is similar in length and arrangement to the MT, if not identical to that we are having. In any case, the longer MT appears to reflect a more original textual tradition than the OG.

in the peculiar Greek renderings of 40:19 and 41:25. In 40:19b (which features Behemoth's monstrosity), while the Hebrew has presumably העשׂו יגשׁ חרבה, "the creature that subjugates the dry land" (see the discussion in Section 2.2), the OG renders it πεποιημένον ἐγκαταπαίζεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ, "(the beast) made to be mocked by angels." With similar wordings, the Hebrew העשׂו לבלי חת, "the creature without fear," in 41:25b [33b] (which characterizes Leviathan's monstrosity) is rendered in Greek πεποιημένον ἐγκαταπαίζεσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀγγέλων μου, "made to be mocked by my (YHWH's) angels." Given the nearly identical expressions, the Greek translator appears to presume Behemoth and Leviathan—supposedly distinct creatures in the Hebrew text—as a single monstrous entity. With the conflation of the two monster discourses, the "Beast" in 40:15 and the "dragon/serpent" in 40:25 [41:1] become simply two names of the same monster in the OG. The Greek reading of a unified monster is a precursor to later Christian subsumption of the two monsters under a single entity, which signifies the adversary of Christianity.

Furthermore, the Greek text deviates from the Hebrew in such a way that the unified monster in the OG appears to be associated with the mythic "Tartarus" (Τάρταρος) (40:20 and 41:24 [32]),[515] a term for the netherworld in Greek mythology. In 40:20b where the Hebrew has "and all the wild animals play there" (וכל חית השׂדה ישׂחקו שׁם), the OG reads "he (the beast) brought joy to the quadrupeds of Tartarus" (ἐποίησεν χαρμονὴν τετράποσιν ἐν τῷ ταρτάρῳ). Given that the term שׁם ("there") alludes to the netherworld elsewhere in the book (e.g., 1:21; 3:17, 19), the Greek translator has probably carried that interpretation over to the Hebrew adverb here. The association of the monster with the netherworld is also seen at the end of the discourse in the Greek text. In 41:24 [32] where the MT describes the after-effects of Leviathan's movement: "behind him he leaves a pathway shine // one might reckon the deep as hoary" (אחריו יאיר נתיב יחשׁב תהום לשׂיבה), the OG deviates in reading the verse as "and

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[515] The Greek texts of 40:20 and 41:24 [32] are unique among the textual witnesses in their reference to the netherworld by the mythic "Tartarus" (Τάρταρος).

(he regards) Tartarus of the abyss as a captive" (τὸν δὲ τάρταρον τῆς ἀβύσσου ὥσπερ

αἰχμάλωτον). Here the Greek translator appears to have interpreted the Hebrew אחריו

("behind him") as an allusion to Tartarus—a chaotic, murky recesses (in the netherworld)

inhabited by demons and the dead in Greek mythology.[516] The reference to Tartarus in both

OG–Job 40:20 and 41:24 [32]—designated for Behemoth and Leviathan respectively in the

Hebrew—corroborates the OG reception of the monstrous in the discourse as a unified

mythological entity.

To sum up, the Joban monster is perceived in the OG as a mythic dragon/serpent,

mocked by heavenly beings (40:19b; 41:25b [33b]) but welcomed by denizens of the

netherworld ("Tartarus") (40:20b), which adds to its demonic character. Not only does this

reception reflect the cosmic dualism in the Hellenistic context, but it is also congruent with

the Christian worldview which typically associates the Devil/Satan (often in the form of an

evil serpent) with the netherworld/hell. It is worth noting that the term ἄβυσσος ("abyss") in

OG–Job 41:23 is regularly used in the New Testament as a reference to the netherworld; it is

particularly used for "the beast" (Rev 11:7; 17:8) and "the dragon/the ancient serpent," that is,

the Devil and Satan (Rev 20:1–3) in the book of Revelation. Indeed, the representation of

"the abyss boiling like a cauldron" in medieval Christian iconography demonstrates the

typical association between the netherworld[517] and the Devil in Christian tradition. In the

Hellenistic context, these "Greek receptions" are easily appropriated by early Christian

interpreters in their discourses on the Devil/Satan, the enemy of Christianity.

5.1.2 The NT Book of Revelation

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[516] In Greek mythology, Tartarus serves as a prison for banished gods. Even so, it is regarded "as a captive" (apparently assuming לְשִׁבְיָה rather than the MT [Tiberian] לְשֵׁיבָה) by the beast in the OG, heightening the perceived monstrosity of the "beast."

[517] In medieval Christian iconography, a boiling cauldron, probably derived from 41:23 [31], often appears inside or near the hell-mouth; or, the hell-mouth is itself the cauldron. The fusion of the hell-mouth and the cauldron corroborates the idea that the abyss is like a boiling cauldron.

Based on the ecclesiastical Greek Bible, early Christian reception of the Leviathan–Behemoth tradition first found its expression in the New Testament in the book of Revelation. The evil dragon and the beasts featured in the book of Revelation are believed to be modeled after the Leviathan–Behemoth motif in the Hebrew Bible.[518] Indeed, early Christian interpreters were inclined to a mythical identification between the demonic monstrous figures in Revelation and Leviathan and Behemoth in earlier biblical traditions.[519]

Specifically, the monstrous figures in Revelation are represented most extensively in chapters 12–13 of the book, in which the powers of evil manifest themselves in the forms of three monstrous entities: "the great red dragon" (δράκων μέγας πυρρὸς) (12:3), "the beast coming up from the sea" (ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον) (13:1), and "the beast coming up from the earth" (θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς) (13:11). Notably, the terms "beast" (θηρίον) and "dragon" (δράκων) are reminiscent of the monstrous entity in OG–Job 40–41, which is referred to as "beast" (θηρία in a singular sense) (40:15) and "dragon" (δράκων) (40:25 [41:1]). In addition, the two beasts in Revelation 13—one from the sea and the other from the earth—form a monstrous pair which appears to correspond to the Leviathan–Behemoth tradition. The three monsters in Revelation thus seem to find their earlier forms in the figures of Leviathan and Behemoth in the Hebrew Bible: "the beast from the earth" is identified with Behemoth, whereas "the red dragon" and "the beast from the sea" recall Leviathan. In particular, the dragon and the sea beast are both featured in Revelation with "seven heads" (κεφαλὰς ἑπτα) (Rev 12:3; 13:1),[520] a trait that finds an echo in Leviathan which is characterized with multiple heads in Ps 74:14.[521]

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[518] B. F. Batto, "Behemoth בהמות," *DDD*, 166; Brennan Breed, "Behemoth," *EBR*, 3; Elmer B. Smick, *Job*, The Expositors Bible Commentary, vol. 4 (rev. Tremper Longman III; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 907.

[519] John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas (eds), *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 510.

[520] The "seven heads" of the dragon/beast are featured with "ten horns" on them, which seem to be derived from the description of a terrifying monster in Dan 7:7. In that tradition, the monster symbolizes a human power that stands against the kingship of God.

[521] The seven-headed monsters featured in the book of Revelation (Rev 12:3; 13:1; 17:1, 7, 9), as is the seven-headed dragon in early Christian writings (e.g. *Odes Sol.* 22:5; *Pistis Sophia* 66; *b. Qidd.* 29b), can be

It is worth noting that the book of Revelation refers to the great dragon twice with the epithet "the ancient serpent" (ὁ ὄφις ὁ ἀρχαῖος; 12:9; 20:2). This association can probably be derived from OG–Isa 27:1, where the dragon (Leviathan in MT) is recognized as ὄφιν φεύγοντα, "a fleeing snake," and ὄφιν σκολιὸν, "a crooked snake." It is further characterized in Rev 12:9 as "the one who leads the whole world astray," an epithet that harks back to the primordial Serpent in Genesis 3—the deceptive serpent in Eden who is regarded as the perpetual adversary of God. Upon its defeat in the eschatological battle, the great dragon in Relevation is said to be "thrown down to the earth" (12:7) in echo with the destined punishment of the dragon in OG–Isa 27:1. Besides, the dragon's fate of being "thrown into the Abyss (τὴν ἄβυσσον)" in Rev 20:2–3 recalls the locality of the dragon (Leviathan) in OG–Job 41:23–24 [31–32], where "he (the dragon) makes the Abyss (τὴν ἄβυσσον) boil like a caldron...and (regards) Tartarus of the Abyss (τῆς ἀβύσσου) as a captive." These textual correlations substantiate the theory that the dragon and the sea beast/the beast from the Abyss in Revelation are some form of reception of the Leviathan tradition.

Given that both the dragon in Revelation and the Hebrew chaos monsters are hostile against God, it would be natural for early Christians to identify the δράκων in the book of Revelation with the δράκων in earlier biblical traditions. In fact, the term δράκων has been frequently used in the ecclesiastical Greek Bible to denote adversarial mythical monsters that are eventually defeated by God—most notably Leviathan (e.g. Ps 74:14) and Tannin (the sea monster)[522] in the Hebrew Bible. The New Testament author seems to have taken over the Greek reinterpretation of Hebrew chaos monsters (as hostile powers against God) and reappropriated the term δράκων to indicate a "new" spiritual enemy, namely, the Devil/Satan (Rev 12:9). While the chaos monsters in the Hebrew tradition emerge as part of the cosmic

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traced back to the Ugaritic image of Litan (*ltn*) as "the tyrant with seven heads," which is believed to be a cultural antecedent of the biblical Leviathan (see the discussion in Section 1.2.2).

[522] In the Greek version of Ps 74:12–14, for example, both Leviathan and the "sea monster" (*tannin*) are translated into Greek as δράκων. Besides, OG–Isa 27:1 also translates both Leviathan and the "sea monster" (*tannin*), whom God will kill on a future day of judgment, as δράκων.

reality that belongs to God the Creator, the δράκων in the book of Revelation—in a new theological context—has taken on a personality of evil that sets it apart from the character of God. Unlike the case in the Hebrew Bible, monstrous forces and the divine are no longer intertwined in the New Testament; instead, given the marked cosmic dualism of good versus evil in the Christian worldview, Leviathan and other sea monsters in earlier biblical traditions are brought under a unified category and presented as an ultimate personification of evilness in the book of Revelation.

Given the heavy use of symbolism in the book of Revelation, the monsters therein are, on the one hand, signifiers of the Devil/Satan in the narrative of Chrisitan theology; on the other hand, their continuity with earlier biblical monsters (which often have political connotations) provides them with the capacity to symbolize the historical enemy of the people of God. In particular, Rev 13:1–2 characterizes the beast from the sea as "a beast...with ten horns...And the beast...was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as (the feet) of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion." The featuerd "ten horns" and the hybrid nature of the monster probably recall the composite beasts in Daniel's vision (Dan 7:3–8), which is replete with political implications in itself. In fact, political overtones are not uncommon in the Leviathan-related tradition in the Hebrew Bible, not least in Ezekiel 29, Psalm 74, and Isaiah 27, where Leviathan and its associates represent not only cosmic threats, but also the political enemies of God's people.[523] In light of the political symbolism of the monsters in the Hebrew Bible, the dragon/beasts in Revelation represent a "brand new" monstrous metaphor of a new world-empire which is hostile to the Johannine community at the time of the composition.[524] Considering the historical context of the book, the

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[523] In Ezek 29:3, the sea monster (Tannin), which is captured by the hooks of YHWH, is explicitly referenced as a personification of Pharaoh of Egypt. In Ps 74:13–14, the sea monsters (Tanninim) and Leviathan signify the tyrannical Babylon, and God's defeat of these monsters conveys a hope for God's triumph over the oppressor of Israel. Likewise, Leviathan in Isa 27:1, who will be slain by YHWH in the end-time, is a personification of the hostile Babylon who will be vanquished by God.

[524] Henk van de Kamp, "Leviathan and the Monsters in Revelation," in *Playing with Leviathan: Interpretation and Reception of Monsters from the Biblical World*, ed. Koert van Bekkum, Jaap Dekker, Henk van de Kamp,

monstrosity of the apocalyptic beasts is said to symbolize the contemporaneous Roman

hegemony, the source of persecution against Christian communities in the early centuries.[525]

As embodiments of the evil other, "Leviathan" and "Behemoth" in the book of

Revelation—in the forms of a dragon and the beast—come to represent the monstrosity of the

Roman Empire against which the Christian audience was struggling.

Theologically speaking, the dragon and the beasts in the book of Revelation are held as

the ultimate enemy of God and Christ (e.g. Rev 12:10; 13:6), who is symbolized by the Lamb

in Revelation 5. In opposing the Lamb, the monstrous others in Rev 13 appear as both an

imitation and a parody of their divine adversary.[526] In addition to the two horns on the beast

from the earth which resemble a lamb physically (13:11), the dragon and the beasts attempt to

emulate the Lamb (and hence God) in their power and honor. Specifically, in the face of the

resurrected Lamb who appears victorious with power and glory (5:12), the dragon and the

beasts strive to gain honor and authority for themselves over the world (13:1–2, 4, 7, 12).

While the Lamb is praised to have ransomed people from every tongue and nation by his

blood (5:9), the monstrous party also conquers the saints and asserts rulership on every

tongue and nation (13:7). As an antitype of the Lamb, these monstrous others put on power in

disguise by blurring the distinction between themselves and the divine, which in this respect

resonates with monster theory.

In spite of their attempts to feign power, the fate of these monsters in the book of

Revelation is shown to be doomed at the end-time (12:9; 17:8; 20:2–3). Notwithstanding their

overwhelming monstrosity, the biblical author asserts that power and glory belong solely to

God and the Lamb in the end of ages. Monstrous as they seem, they are still no match for

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and Eric Peels (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 173.

[525] In casting the hostile Roman empire as "Babylon the Great" (Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη) (Rev 17:5), the author of Revelation actually regards Rome as the height of all evil powers in a new era and becomes the personification of quintessential political oppressors in the Israelite history. See Van de Kamp, "Leviathan and the Monsters in Revelation," 173.

[526] Van de Kamp, "Leviathan and the Monsters in Revelation," 175.

God, the wholly Other. In the face of the Roman persecution in the late first century, the

eventual defeat of these monsters serves to reassure the Christian readers of the spiritual

reality in which God will ultimately conquer all hostile powers. With the use of defeated

monstrous others, the book of Revelation conveys hope and encouragement to the Christian

community who was struggling to persevere in faith in dire circumstances.

5.2   Post-Biblical Christian Receptions of the Leviathan–Behemoth Tradition

5.2.1 Receptions by Early Christian Writers

5.2.1.1   Allegorical Interpretations: The Devil and Its Manifestations

As discussed above, early Christians tend to identify the δράκων in OG–Job 40–41

(Leviathan in MT) with the δράκων in the book of Revelation in reference to the Devil, that is,

Satan (Rev 12:1–18; 20:1–10). Indeed, Christian writers in the period of early Christianity[527]

generally take the allegorical approach in reading this dragon-like or serpentine monster in

the Old Testament as the ultmate personification of evilness. In identifying the

dragon/serpent of OG–Isa 27:1 (Leviathan in MT) with Satan, Justin Martyr (ca. 100–165 CE)

and Irenaeus (ca. 120–202 CE) derive the Greek word Σατανᾶς (*Satanas* = Satan) from

Hebrew שׂטה, "to turn aside," and נָחָשׁ, "serpent" (*Haer.* 5.21.2; *Dial.* 103:5–6, 112:2), thereby

associating Satan with the "apostate serpent" (*Dial*. 103:5, PG 6, 77). Following this

interpretation, Christian exegetes in this period commonly represent the dragon (Leviathan)

as the Devil/Satan, including its perceived evilness and human manifestations.

Origen of Alexandria

Origen of Alexandria (ca. 184–254 CE) is one of the most influential theologians and

biblical scholars in early Christianity. Recognized as a representative figure of the

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[527] The period of early Christianity is generally thought by historians to span from the first century to the fourth
century, in which the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE) took place.

Alexandrian scholarship, Origen is renowned for his allegorical method of exegesis.[528] Based on the ecclesiastical Greek text of Job, Origen conflates Leviathan with Behemoth under the species of dragon in association with the netherworld (OG–Job 40:20, 25 [41:1]; 41:24 [32]), and interprets it as a signification of the Devil/Satan (cf. *Or.* 13.4; 26.5; *Princ.* 1.5.5; *Comm. John* 1.95–97; 20.182). As a consequence of Origen's influence, his allegorical interpretation of the Leviathan–Behemoth tradition dominates Christian receptions of the subject throughout the Patristic Period.[529]

By drawing on OG–Job 26:13 which features Leviathan as "the apostate dragon" (δράκοντα ἀποστάτην // Hebrew נָחָשׁ בָּרִיחַ, "slithery/fleeing serpent"), Origen accounts for the Devil as the fallen angel who rebelled against the Creator in the primal era.[530] He then interprets the description of the monstrous in OG–Job 40:19 ("the chief of the Lord's creation, made to be mocked by his angels") as the Devil's fall from celestial existence before the time of creation (cf. 41:25b [33b]).[531] Origen goes on to refer to the dragon in OG–Job 40:25 [41:1] as "the apostate, that is, a fugitive" (*Princ.* 1.5.5), an interpretation consistent with that of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. For Origen, the association between the dragon and the morning star is also an allusion to the fall of the Devil/Satan (*Princ.* 1.5.5–6). Specifically, in interpreting OG–Job 41:10b [18b] where the dragon's (Leviathan's) eyes are likened to "the morning star" (MT "the eyes of dawn"), Origen adduces OG–Isa 14:12–20 where "the morning star" (Latin: Lucifer, "light-bearing one") falls from heaven (Isa 14:12) into Hades (i.e. the netherworld) (Isa 14:15, 19).[532] With reference to OG–Job 40:20b, "he brought joy to the quadrupeds of Tartarus," Origen holds that the primordial event of the Devil falling

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[528] Joseph W. Trigg, "Origen," *ABD*, 5:46.

[529] Breed, "Behemoth," 4.

[530] Origen, "De Principiis," in *The Fathers of the Third Century*, ANF 4 (New York, 1904), 259.

[531] In contrast to his contemporaries who advocated the Devil's uncreated nature, Origen, in light of John 1:1, posits that Satan was the first being created with a body, and asserts that the "dragon deserved to be bound to matter and a body before all others because he fell from the pure life" (see Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel according to John, Books 1–10*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, FC 80 [Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1989], 53).

[532] Henri Crouzel, *Origen* (trans. A. S. Worrall; San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1989), 212–17 [French orig. 1985].

from heaven is welcomed by the denizens of the netherworld.[533]

Having identified the dragon in the book of Job with the Devil (cf. *Princ.* 2.8.3), Origen reads the references to Job in the monster discourse as the prefiguration of Christ. While the rhetorical questions in Job 40:25–31 [41:1–7]) appear to be directed at Job on the text level, Origen assumes the protagonist as implied to be a prefiguration of Christ, who solely has the ultimate power and authority to conquer the monster. In particular, Origen takes the scene in OG–Job 40:25a [41:1a] ("you will catch the dragon with a hook") theologcally as prefiguring the redemption of Christ, who will strike a blow against the Devil in the appointed time.[534] In accordance with God's plan that the beast is "created to be mocked by his angels" (OG–Job 40:19; 41:25b [33b]), Origen posits that the monster discourse in Job 40–41 serves to communicate the ultimate triumph of Christ over the "apostate dragon," that is, the Devil.

To bolster the Christological reading, Origen cites OG–Job 3:8 in which this very dragon (Leviathan in MT) is called τὸ μέγα κῆτος ("the great sea-monster"), a designation similar to the "sea-monster" (τοῦ κήτους) that swallowed Jonah (Matt 12:40)—an antetype of Christ as received in the New Testament (cf. PG 12, *Hom. Lev*. 8.495–496; PG 14, 1051, *Comm. Rom.* 5.10). In view of that swallowing sea-monster, Origen identifies the dragon in Job 3:8 as the spiritual enemy of Christ, that is, the Devil. Notably, "the great sea-monster" also connotes the monstrosity of death[535] in the theological perspective of Origen. Whereas the "sea-monster" swallowed Jonah, death swallowed Christ in crucifixion. Still, Christ fulfilled salvation and destroyed the power of death by setting free the captives in the netherworld (*Comm. Rom.* 5.10–12; cf. Eph 4:8).[536] Accordingly, Origen interprets the singular subject in

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[533] Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan."
[534] Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan."
[535] Isho'dad of Merv, an eastern Father in Syriac Christianity who lived during the ninth-century, derives the association of the Joban monster with death in the name of "Behemoth," which, for him, etymologically means "through it death," that is, death has entered among people through it (*Comm. Job* 40.15).
[536] Rufinus of Aquileia (ca. 345–410 CE), an admirer of Origen, cites Job 40:23–26 (40:23–41:2) in his commentary on the Apostles' Creed, specifically on the confession, *descendit ad infero*,"he descended into the netherworld" (*Symb.*, PL 21, 354–356, 363–364, 366). He explains that when Christ as a bait on "the hook of divinity" was swallowed by Leviathan, the Devil, Christ in fact descended into the netherworld (hell) so that he might free the captives and bring them out of darkness.

OG–Job 3:8b, "the one who is going to overpower the great sea-monster," as Christ, and hence he understands the line to be a prophecy that the Devil will eventually be defeated by Christ (*Or.* 13.8; *Hom. Lev.* 8.3.4; *Comm. John* 1.96; *Comm. Rom.* 5.10; *Princ.* 4.5).

Historically speaking, Origen's commentary on the dragon as the evil other reflects common Christian apologetic concerns of his times. As a case in point, in his exegesis of the dragon's descriptions, Origen reads the sexually suggestive language (Job 40:16–18) of the monster (Behemoth in MT) as a reference to the Devil's temptations to lust (PG 17, 100).[537] Apparently it betrays a negative perception of sexuality as sin, a view commonly shared in early Christian asceticism.[538] Besides, Origen appears to historicize the monstrous features of the dragon as rhetoric against contemporary heretics. In his comments on OG–Job 41:6a [14a], for example, Origen sees that the dragon shares the deceptive nature of contemporary heresy (as deployed by the Devil): "The dragon never shows his face, but by assuming a mask in order to deceive humankind, he takes advantage of it. The enemy has many masks and wears a mask of virtue for any vice" (*Frag. Job* 28.95; PTS, 53:353). Origen's polemic against his contemporary heretics, especially those of the Gnostic schools,[539] is most palpable in his comment on Job 41:11 [19]:

> All the impious teachers of immoral doctrines are properly the limbs of the dragon...The mouth of the dragon can be metaphorically interpreted as the main limb, because all the dangerous speeches come from it. "From his mouth go flaming torches." From it you hear the insulting speech under the guise of Christianity, the speech vilifying the Creator, or on the other hand that openly supports the theories of Marcion, Basilides and Valentinus.[540]

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[537] This view was followed by Athanasius, John Cassian, and many others through the medieval period (cf. T. Aquinas).

[538] Peter Feldmeier, *The Christian Tradition: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 113.

[539] As a matter of fact, Origen engaged in polemic against Celsus, a Greek philosopher and opponent of early Christianity, in his *Contra Celsum* (*Against Celsus*) (ca. 248), where he refers to a Gnostic teaching that Celsus uses in his polemic treatise. In one chapter, Origen attempts to expound on a cosmological schema which he attributes to the "Ophites," a Gnostic sect mentioned in contemporary Christian writings. Specifically, the Gnostic schema places Leviathan at the circumference of the terrestrial world, and Behemoth is imagined at its center. Being "the souls of all things," the biblical Leviathan and Behemoth are imagined in this Gnostic cosmology as the lord of the universe.

[540] Marcion, Basilides and Valentinus were the founders of three distinct Gnostic schools in the second century.

> Whenever they speak about the Founder of heaven and earth, whenever they assert that he does not exist and has no spiritual essence—there you will see flaming torches coming out of their mouths and sparks of fire leaping up. Therefore, let us preserve ourselves without deliberating those impious theories, so that those flaming torches may never burn us and sparks of fire may never touch us. (*Frag. Job* 28.114; PTS 53.361)

As Origen interprets the monstrous body and features of the dragon as human manifestations of the Devil (in the form of heresy), the Joban monster becomes a rhetorical device by means of which to polemicize against the heretical others, against whom the orthodox Christianity is defined and measured.

In short, Origen evidently understands the dragon (Leviathan) to be the Devil/Satan as the ultimate personification of otherness, including its perceived evilness and human manifestation (heresy), whom Christ has defeated by his crucifixion and resurrection (*Hom. Lev.* 8,3: GCS 7, 398). This essential interpretation of the Leviathan–Behemoth tradition is taken by many Christian interpreters to follow.

Athanasius of Alexandria

Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 295–373 CE), an ardent opponent of Arianism, also identifies the dragon (Leviathan) in the book of Job with the Devil in terms of its evilness. This is particularly tangible in his comments in *Vit. Ant.* 24.4–5, where he explicitly associates the Devil with "the dragon" with reference to OG–Job 40:24–26 and 41:10b–13 [18b–21b]. Further, Athanasius understands OG–Job 41:5b [13b] ("Who can enter within the fold of his breastplate?") as Christ's uncovering of the Devil's crafty spirit, pinpointing its evilness which would therefore not qualify it to be among "the saints" (*Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 3). In

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Marcion consistently asserted that the God of the Old Testament was a demiurge and quite different from the God of the New Testament. While interpretation of Basilides's thought is complicated by the lack of the source's homogeneity, some aspects of Basilides's thought are reported by Origen, from whom we learn that Basilides accepted the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Reflecting traces of Platonic influence, the doctrinal Valentinian system is, according to Valentinus' students, characterized by the divine Pleroma composed of 30 Aeons, with sin introduced by the last Aeon (Sophia) that brought about the degradation of the divine element in the world.

Athanasius' biographical work *Life of Antony*[541], a description of the monstrous dragon in OG–Job 40:16 is also cited as a reference to the evilness of the Devil: when the protagonist wrestles with the Devil in a spectacle, the Devil is said to turn to "the weapons upon his navel," possibly an allusion to the sin of sexuality.[542] Evidently, Athanasius reads aspects of evilness into the descriptions of the monster in Job 40–41.

Like Origen, Athanasius historicizes the perceived monstrosity of the dragon in the Bible and employs it as rhetoric of polemic against heresy, in his case Arianism.[543] Alluding to the dragon and the sea-monster in Rev 13:1–6, which in themselves are receptions of the dragon (Leviathan) in the Greek Bible, Athanasius first speaks of the Devil as "the prince of demons" who manifests its evilness by "speaking many grandiose things" (*Vit. Ant*. 24.4).[544] Then in his *History of the Arians*, Athanasius describes Emperor Constantius—a royal supporter of the heresies of the Arians—with similar rhetoric by characterizing him as one "who speaks words against the Most High" and "dared in his pride set himself up against the Most High" (*Hist. Arian*. 74.2–5).[545] The polemic is heightened when Athanasius terms the Emperor even as "the Antichrist."[546] Identifying the Emperor and his Arian allies as demons with the Devil, Athanasius views the heresies as nothing but evil entities, which are "like serpents and scorpions to be trodden by us Christians" (*Vit. Ant*. 29.4).

Following Origen, Athanasius adopts a Christological reading of the monster discourse in Job 40–41. Sharing the common view that Job is an antetype of Christ, Athanasius agrees

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[541] See SC 400 for the Greek text. For an introduction to this work, see James D. Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria* (The Bible in Ancient Christianity 2; Boston, MA/Leiden: Brill, 2004), 435–36.

[542] C. L. Seow, "Job in an Age of Controversy (I): Greek Interpreters" (unpublished manuscript), typescript, 308.

[543] In his Letter to the Bishops of Egypt and Libya (ca. 360 CE), Athanasius castigates the Arian heretics as agents of Satan. He also associates Satan with the "apostates" who was committed to persecuting the faithful (*Ep. fest*. 10.4).

[544] This characterization is drawn from the vision of Daniel 7, in which the monstrous horn "speaks great things against the Most High" (Dan 7:8, 25).

[545] A similar polemic is palpable in *Ep. Aeg. Lib*. 2, where Athanasius denounces one who declared his ascent into heavens to be like the Most High. See Sophie Cartwight, "Athanasius' '*Vita Antonii*' as Political Theology: The Call of Heavenly Citizenship," *JEH* 67 (2016): 251.

[546] Athanasius is said to be the first Christian writer who explicitly associates the dragon with the Antichrist (cf. *Vit. Ant*. 24.1–3).

that the rhetorical questions for Job in Job 40:25–31 [41:1–7] are meant to point to Christ's triumph over the dragon, that is, the Devil. Specifically, Athanasius ascribes the second person singular verb in OG–Job 40:25a [41:1a] ("Will you draw the dragon with a hook?") to Christ,[547] suggesting that this is what Christ was doing when he brought salvation in incarnation—the Savior is drawing the Devil with a hook. This image resonates with a portrayal in a *Homily on the Passion and the Cross* attributed to Athanasius, in which Christ is depicted as leading the dragon with himself being "on the hook of (his) humanity, fastened to the trophy of the cross."[548]

While the rhetorical question in OG–Job 40:29 [41:5] ("Will you play with it as with a bird, or tie it up like a sparrow for a child?") is intended to emphasize the untameable nature of the dragon, Athanasius reads in such a way that the monstrous is actually "tied by the Lord like a sparrow to be mocked by us"[549] (*Vit. Ant.* 24.5). Given that it is created to be mocked (OG–Job 40:19b; 41:25b [33b]), the Devil is now scorned by the incarnation of Christ, and hence it "is toyed with like a sparrow" (*Ep. Aeg. Lib.* 2). In spite of its threatening monstrosity, the Devil is amusingly tamed under the authority of Christ, the wholly Other. Assuming a Christological reading, Athanasius sees the rhetorical question as an assertion of Christ's power over the monster.

For both Origen and Athanasius, the dragon is taken to be a monstrous representation of the Devil. They also share the interpretive strategy of historicizing aspects of the monster as rhetoric of polemic against their contemporary heresies. While Origen makes use of the dragon in his polemic against the Gnostic sects, Athanasius adopts a similar approach against the Arian heretics in his context. The dragon essentially functioned in all its monstrosity as the evil other, against whom early Christianity strove to define her identity.

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[547] Seow, "Job in an Age of Controversy (I)," 308.

[548] PG 28, 240.18–24, cited by N. P. Constas, "The Last Temptation of Satan: Divine Deception in Greek Patristic Interpretations of the Passion Narrative," *HTR* 97 (2004): 153.

[549] Here Athanasius reads the "you" in this verse not only as Christ, but also as reference to the faithful who come to conquer the dragon with Christ.

<u>Didymus the Blind</u>

Also indebted to Origen's exegesis, Didymus the Blind (ca. 313–398 CE) reads the

monstrous dragon in the book of Job as an embodiment of the Devil.[550] More importantly, he

interprets the Joban discourse on the monster as a prophecy of Christ's defeat of the Devil.

Following Origen, Didymus interprets "the one who is going to overpower the great

sea-monster" (OG–Job 3:8) as the incarnate Christ, who will come to subdue the Devil

(*Comm. Job* 64.28–33).[551] In particular, he cites several biblical verses as proof-texts for this

prophetic reading, including OG–Ps 73:19 and 90:13, in which he interprets the

trampling/crushing of the dragon as an allusion to the defeat of the Devil, and Luke 10:19,

where the saints of Christ are said to be given the power to "tread upon serpents and

scorpions and and all the power of the enemy."

According to Didymus, what is commonly taken to be Job's uttered curse in Job 3:8

actually points to the victory of the incarnate Christ over the Devil. For him, therefore, this

line should be rendered a prayer for Christ's redemption and deliverance from the power of

the Devil.[552] Even the Devil is thought of as the ultimate cause of death accompanying the

fall (*JobT.* 62.14–32), it is destined to be ultimately defeated by Christ as prophesied in Job

3:8. On the grounds that "it was not fitting to defeat the Devil by unveiled divinity, but rather

by means of the incarnate Christ" (*JobT.* 64.28–33),[553] Didymus sees that Job 3:8

corroborates the incarnation as part of God's plan for the redemption of humanity from the

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[550] For Didymus' commentary on the book of Job, see Albert Henrichs (ed.), *Didymos der Blinde, Kommentar zu Hiob (Tura-Papyrus), I–II* (2 vols.; PTA 1, 2; Bonn: Habelt, 1968); Dieter Hagedorn, Ursula Hagedorn, and Ludwig Koenen (eds.), *Kommentar zu Hiob, III (Tura-Papyrus)* (PTA 3; Bonn: Habelt, 1968); *Kommentar zu Hiob (Tura-Papyrus), IV* (PTA 33.1; Bonn: Habelt, 1985).

[551] This is in accord with the view of Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339–397 CE), who reads Job as a prophet of "mysteries." In commenting on Job 3, Ambrose interprets Job's curse of "his day" as a prophecy that points to a day when Christ will bring about the resurrection, ushered in by his subduing of the sea-monster (3:8), that is, the Devil (*Exp.Lucam*, IV, 40).

[552] Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan."

[553] Undelying this exposition is an assumption that the Devil's malevolent deception would be overcome by God's benevolent deception, by which means God's redemption of humanity is carried out. See Constas, "The Last Temptation of Satan," 142–43.

curse of the Devil.[554]

The prophecy that the Devil (in the form of a dragon) will be defeated by Christ is also attested in the treatise *On the Trinity*, which is traditionally attributed to Didymus.[555] Precisely, in a discourse on the baptism of Christ in the Jordan, the description of the monstrous in OG–Job 40:23b ("he trusts that the Jordan will rush into his mouth")[556] is cited to illustrate a prophetic message that "the dragon that lives in its depths" will be annihilated (*Trin*. 2.12, 14; PG 39, 684, 697). Given the symbolism of the Jordan,[557] the dragon/sea-monster signifies the Devil which will be defeated by the incarnate Christ in his baptism (cf. Athanasius, *Vit. Ant*. 24.4–5; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 3.11–12). In other words, Christ's baptism in the Jordan signifies the divine victory over the Devil and its power embodied in the monstrous dragon.

Cyril of Jerusalem

Sharing the perspective of Origen and Didymus, Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 313–386 CE) understands the dragon in the book of Job as an allegory of Death. As Cyril expounds on the theological significance of Christ's victory over death in his *Catechetical Lectures*[558] on baptism, he highlights the association between the dragon in OG–Job 40:23 and the Jordan, in which Christ was baptized:

> Jesus sanctified Baptism by being Himself baptized...He was baptized, that He might give to
> them that are baptized a divine and excellent grace...thus Jesus was baptized, that thereby
> we again by our participation might receive both salvation and honor. According to Job,

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[554] See Duffy, "Tura Papyrus," 6–22.

[555] For a critical review of the authorial issues concerning *De Trinitate*, see Jonathan H. Douglas, *Trinity, Economy, and Scripture: Recovering Didymus the Blind* (Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplement 12; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2015), 20–69.

[556] Beginning with Origen in the 3rd century (*Princ*. 1.5.5, PG 11, 164; PG 14, 1051, *Comm. Rom*. 5.10.10), Christian interpreters widely held that Job 40:23 alludes to Christ's baptism in the Jordan.

[557] For many Christian interpreters, the river represents Leviathan, which is then identified with Satan and Death (so Gregory Thaumaturgus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the Great, John of Damascus).

[558] See W. K. Reischl and J. Rupp (eds.), *Cyrilli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia* (2 vols.; Munich: Lentner, 1848, 1860; rpt. Hildesheim: Olms, 1967).

there was in the waters the dragon that *devoureth up Jordan into his mouth*. Since, therefore, it was necessary to *break the heads of the dragon in pieces*. He went down and bound the strong one in the waters, that we might receive power to *tread upon serpents and scorpions*. The beast was great and terrible...The Life encountered him, that the mouth of Death might henceforth be stopped, and all we that are save might say, *O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* The sting of death is drawn by Baptism. For thou goest down into the water, bearing thy sins but the invocation of grace, having sealed thy soul, suffereth not the afterwards to be swallowed up by the terrible dragon, Having gone down died in sins, thou comest up quickened in righteousness. (*Cat.* 3:11–12)

In the above exposition, Cyril draws on reference to the monstrosity of the dragon (Behemoth in MT) in the book of Job and relates its presence in the Jordan to the power of Death. When Jesus went down to be baptized in the waters of the Jordan, he, the incarnate Christ, was entering into the maw of Death. In Cyril's theological reading, Jesus managed to bind the monstrous dragon in the waters and "drew the sting of death in victory" (1 Cor 15: 54–55). Like Didymus who holds the incarnation as part of God's salvation for humanity, Cyril sees Job 40:23 as a prooftext that points to God's redemption through the incarnate Christ. Having conquered the dragon and defeated the power of Death, Christ gave his followers the "power to tread upon serpents and scorpions" (Luke 10:19). In reading the Joban reference to the dragon in the Jordan as a foreshadowing of Christ's baptism in the same waters, Cyril essentially recapitulates the divine victory in Christian baptisms: as Christians enter the baptismal waters (which have been purified by the incarnate Christ), they also share in Christ's triumph over the monstrosity of Death as signified by the dragon.

Indeed, this interpretation of Cyril is reflected in the Eastern Orthodox traditions of baptism, notably in the form of liturgy and iconography. In several of the Byzantine Psalters (ca. ninth–twelfth century), for example, marginal illustrations of Ps 74:13–14 show that Christ's baptism in the Jordan is represented alongside two dragon-like monsters beneath the waters (Fig. 30).[559] Whereas the sea dragons embody the power of Death, the incarnate

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[559] Lois Drewer, "Leviathan, Behemoth and Ziz: A Christian Adaptation," *Journal of the Warburg and*

Christ is shown to be victorious over the watery monstrous forces through his baptism[560]—Christ has essentially conquered the monstrous Death for all who are baptized with him.

Fig. 30. Marginal Psalter (11th century) depicting the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan with two sea dragons in the water. Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore, MS W.733, fol. 34r.

Ephrem the Syrian

Ephrem the Syrian (ca. 306–373 CE), allegedly a leading Father of Syriac Christianity,[561] derived most of his reception of the Joban beasts from the Peshitta, in which Behemoth and Leviathan are two distinct monstrous entities. While he interprets Behemoth as a land animal (a dragon)[562] and Leviathan as an aquatic sea animal (*Comm. Job* 40.15; *ESOO* 2.18), he understands both Behemoth and Leviathan symbolically (or theologically) as embodiments of the Devil/Death (*ESOO* 2.18), as Christian interpreters in the East commonly do.[563]

Courtauld Institute 44 (1981): 155.

[560] In the Greek liturgy the prayer for the blessing of the baptismal water refers to the same idea: "Thou, Thou hast sanctified the waters of the Jordan by sending from on high Thy Holy Spirit, and Thou hast crushed the heads of the dragons hidden therein." See Drewer, "Leviathan, Behemoth and Ziz," 155.

[561] In terms of interpretive approach to Scripture, Ephrem is known for his attention to both a level of linear historicity and a level of symbolism in his exegesis.

[562] As a land creature, Behemoth tends to be interpreted as locusts by Syriac exegetes, including Jacob of Edessa (ca. 708), Dionysius Bar Ṣalibi (ca. 1171), and Gregory Bar Hebraeus (ca. 1286).

[563] Aphrahat, another Syriac exegete (4th century) known as "the Persian Sage," also reflects the allegorizing

As is the case with Origen and Athanasius, Ephrem assumes the monstrous as a symbol of Devil/Death, and considers Job as a type of Christ. Nonetheless, in his opinion, Job is qualitatively no match for Christ—Christ was able to conquer even Death, whereas the mortal Job cannot (*Nisibene Hymns*, 53.14).[564] Besides, Ephrem shares the view of Didymus and Cyril in interpreting Job 40:23–25 [41:1] as a pointer to the baptism of Christ in the Jordan (which signifies Christ's defeat of Death).[565] Following Cyril, Ephrem speaks, too, of how "in mystery and in truth" Christians participate in Christ's victory over the monstrosity of Death in their baptism: when Christians are baptized, they are essentially trampling upon Leviathan in the waters, and their souls are "snatched from its still aggrieved mouth" (*Hymns of Faith*, 82.10).[566] In fact, Ephrem posits that "the Devil, whose prodigious nature is described in these two beasts, is destined to be conquered by the power of Christ when the fullness of time will come" (*Comm. Job* 41.2–3). In this he envisions that when Christ reigns eternally at the end of times, the Devil—as a tamed monster—will be brought among the faithful in chains.[567]

Gregory of Nyssa

Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335–395 CE), one of the Cappadocian theologians, developed an iconic reception regarding the Joban monster: in order to catch the monstrous sea dragon (that is, the Devil), Christ is used as the bait on a fish-hook. Based on Job 40:25 [41:1], where the dragon is imagined to be captured, Gregory put forth this imagery of redemption in his homily *On the Three-Day Period between the Death and Resurrection of Christ*,[568] and his

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tendency in his exposition on the Joban beasts. In particular, he takes 40:14b (Syr. = MT 40:19b), ܒܪܝܬܗ ܕܐܠܗܐ, "(God) created him (Behemoth) that he might wage war" to refer to the Adversary (*Dem.* 6.17; cf. *T. Job* 27:1).
[564] Beck, *Carmina Nisibena. Zweite Teil,* 1:76 (Syriac), 2:12. ET: S. P. Brock and G. Kiraz, *Ephrem the Syrian: Selected Poems* (Early Christian Texts 2; Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2006): 161.
[565] C. L. Seow, "Job in an Age of Controversy (II): Syriac Sources" (unpublished manuscript), typescript, 309.
[566] Beck, *Sermones de Fide*, 1:253 (Syriac), 2:215; Brock and Kiraz, *Ephrem the Syrian*, 255.
[567] Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti (eds.), *Job*, ACCS: Old Testament (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 6:212.
[568] See Andreas Spira, "*De Descendus ad inferus* in Osterpredigt Gregors von Nyssa *De tradui spatio* (*De tridui*

Great Catechetical Oration, a handbook for catechists.[569]

In *On the Three-Day Period*, Gregory adduces OG–Job 40:25 [41:1] ("You shall catch the dragon with a hook") to explain that the monstrous dragon, which symbolizes the Devil, was caught and pierced with the hook of the Deity as it swallows "the bait of flesh"—the incarnate Christ.[570] The theological ground of this interpretation is addressed in his *Catechetical Oration* (*Cat. Or*. 24.29–36),[571] as Gregory accounts for the mediated nature of the encounter between the Devil and God:

> It was not in the nature of the hostile power to come in contact with the unmediated presence of God, or to undertake his unveiled manifestation, there, in order to secure that the ransom in our behalf might be easily accepted by him who required it, the Deity was hidden under the veil of our nature, that so, as with ravenous fish, the hook of the Deity might be gulped down along with the bait of flesh, and thus, life being introduced into the house of death, and light shining in darkness, that which is diametrically opposed to light and life might vanish; for it is not in the nature of darkness to remain when light is present, or death to exist when life is active." (*NPNF* 5, 494)

Given that "the Deity was hidden under the veil" of human nature as Gregory envisages here, it is not surprising that the divine would adopt "the hook of the Deity with the bait of flesh" as a tactic to catch the Devil—"a ravenous fish." (cf. *Cat. Or*. 26.4–10). It is worth noting that this divine plan takes up a form of benign deceit, whereby "the one who first deceived humanity with the bait of pleasure is himself deceived by the proffer of humanity" (*Cat. Or*. 26.31–38). As the deceiver (the Devil) of the first flesh (Adam) is now deceived by the incarnate flesh (Christ), justice is served for the purpose of redemption. Paradoxically, the divine appears to share the Devil's tactic at this point, though with contrasting purposes.

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spatio p. 280, 14–286, 12)," in *The Easter Sermons of Gregory of Nyssa, Translation and Commentary. Proceedings of the Fourth International Colloquium of Gregory of Nyssa. Cambridge, England: 11–15 September, 1978* (ed. A. Spira and C. Klock; Patristic Monograph Series 9; Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1981), 195–261.

[569] See Ekkehard Mühlenberg (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni. Oratio catechetica* (GNO 3/4; Leiden: Brill, 1996), reprinted as Grégoire de Nysse, *Discours Catéchétique* (trans. R. Winling; SC 453; Paris: Cerf, 2000).

[570] F. Müller (ed.), *Gregorii Nysseni opera dogmatica minora* (GNO 3/1; Leiden: Brill, 1958), 280–81, lines 13–16.

[571] Mühlenberg, *Grégoire de Nysse*, 254–64.

Like some early Christian interpreters (e.g. Origen, Athanasius), Gregory of Nyssa has used his reception of the dragon as a rhetorical means to polemicize against whom he regarded as the "other" in his context, specifically, the Arian heretics.[572] As the Arians denied the divinity of Jesus and claimed that he was only human,[573] they were acting like the Devil who confuses appearance with reality.[574] With their failure to recognize the incarnation as God's means to accomplish salvation, the Arians were theologically at fault to Gregory, who reiterates through the fishing analogy that the incarnation (signified by the bait of flesh) was part of God's plan to allure the Devil into the scheme.

Being compatible with the reception of Origen (*Or.* 13.4, 8; *Princ.* 4.5), Athanasius (*Vit. Ant.* 24.4–5), Cyril of Jerusalem (*Cat.* 3.11–12) and Didymus the Blind (*JobT.* 64.28–33)[575], this imagery became popular and was widely adopted by Christian interpreters in late antiquity, including Julian the Arian (ca. 331–363 CE) (*Comm. Job* 40:26–29 [41:2–4]), Amphilochius of Iconium (ca. 340–394 CE) (*Or.* 6, 238–258; 7, 166–171), Rufinus of Aquileia (ca. 340–410 CE) (*Symb.* 16; PL 21, 354–356, 363–364, 366),[576] Philipp the Presbyter (ca. 380–456 CE) (*Comm. Job* 40:25), and Olympiodorus (ca. 495–570 CE) (*Comm. Job* 40.25–26).

Philipp the Presbyter

In the *Commentary on Job* written by Philipp the Presbyter (ca. 380–456 CE), which is based on the translation of the Vulgate (a new Latin translation by Jerome), an iconographic reception of the monstrous Leviathan is shown on the page where the first verse of the book

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[572] Constas, "The Last Temptation," 143–54. According to Constas, who explicates the theological controversies in the fourth century, the fish-hook analogy was one of the rhetorical means Gregory used in polemicizing against the Arian heretics in that context.

[573] For the doctrines of Arianism, see *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, 2014 ed., s.v. "Arius – Arianism," by M. Simonetti.

[574] Seow, "Job in an Age of Controversy (I)," 324.

[575] Layton (*Didymus the Blind*, 6) posits a date in the 360s for Didymus' commentary of Job.

[576] In commenting on the statement "he descended into hell" in the Apostles' Creed, Rufinus of Aquileia adduces Job 40:23–26 [40:23–41:2] as scriptural reference to Christ's descent into death (i.e. hell).

(1:1) is discussed. In the illustration, the initial letter "*v*" (the first letter of the first word *vir*, "man," in the book) is represented as a fish-like monstrous creature that signifies Leviathan (Fig. 31). As it is pierced in its eye by a bearded man—a representation of Job, the iconography is in anticipation of Philipp's interpretation of Vg.–Job 40:19a (= MT 40:24a), which reads *in oculis eius quasi hamo capiet eum*, "in his eyes, as with a hook, he shall take him."[577] While the subject "he" may serve as an impersonal pronoun ("one"), Philipp interprets it as the incarnate Christ who would capture Leviathan with a hook. Within the exegetical tradition of Origen, Philipp takes Job as an antetype of Christ and regards Leviathan as the quintessential symbol of Christ's enemy, that is, the Devil.

Fig. 31. Job as the "man" who pierces Leviathan from a manuscript of Philipp the Presbyter's commentary on Job, ca. 8th century. Cambrai Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 470, fol. 2. Drawing by Spivey K. from various sources.

5.2.1.2   *Non-allegorical Interpretations: Natural but Exotic Beasts*

While a majority of early Christian interpreters treats the Joban monster(s) typologically as the Devil/Satan, a few interpreters in this period, such as John Chrysostom and Julian of Eclanum, were inclined to adopt a naturalistic reading of the monster discourse in Job

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[577] The Vg. deviates from the MT here in that the Hebrew reads בְּעֵינָיו יִקָּחֶנּוּ, "in his eye will you take him?"—with no mention of a hook.

40–41.[578] For these exegetes, the otherness of these monsters is often considered in terms of their reflection of the transcendant God, rather than the evilness of the Devil.

John Chrysostom

On interpreting the monsters in Job 40–41, John of Antioch (ca. 347–407 CE), posthumously dubbed Chrysostom ("Golden Mouth") because of his eloquence, advocates the Antiochene exegetical approach that prioritizes the literal and historical meaning of the biblical text.[579] Contrary to a number of interpreters who read the passage "according to a higher meaning" (*kata anagōgēn*) that entails an interpretation of the Devil, Chrysostom asserts, without denying the merit of the *anagōgē*, that one should prioritize the *historia* (that is, the contextual meaning) over the deeper meaning (SC 348, 40.5.3–10; PTS 35, 196.1–6).[580] Rather than taking "the beast" (Behemoth) and "the dragon" (Leviathan) as a single monster and allegorizing them as the Devil or Death, as the Alexandrian exegetes typically do, Chrysostom reads them as two natural creatures—one of the land and the other of the sea—as represented in the text.[581] Also, Chrysostom refuses to read the "the great sea monster" in OG–Job 3:8 as an allusion to the Devil; unlike Origen and Didymus, he does not see a need to associate the sea monster there with the dragon in Job 40–41—he takes Job's curse in this line simply as an expression of his grief and despair.[582] The Antiochene exegetical approach of Chrysostom is most manifest when he comments on OG–Job 40:20. Instead of ascribing mythological connotations to the biblical descriptions, Chrysostom

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[578] Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350–428 CE), a comtemporary theologian of John Chrysostom, represents an early skepticism about the mythological nature of the Joban beasts. An excerpt of his view on Behemoth is found from the writing of Isho'dad of Merv (9th century), who refers to Theodore as the "Interpreter": "The Interpreter calls it 'an imaginary dragon' that the author has poetically (or literarily) invented by himself." Though it is more apt to say that Theodore understands the Joban beasts as "literary" animals (rather than "natural" ones), his distancing from mythological connotations may be seen as a nascent sign of demythologizing the biblical monsters.

[579] See *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 1999 ed., s.v. "Chrysostom, John," by David G. Hunter.

[580] Seow, "Job in an Age of Controversy (I)," 336.

[581] See Dieter Hagedorn and Ursula Hagedorn (eds.), *Johannes Chrysostomos Kommentar zu Hiob* (PTS 35; Berlin/New York, NY: de Gruyter, 1990), 196.1–6.

[582] Seow, "Job in an Age of Controversy (I)," 336.

pictures the Joban monster (Behemoth) as a natural creature in the mountains:

> "And when he has gone up to a steep mountain, he causes joy to the quadrupeds in the deep." This means the wild animals have raised their heads only when this animal has withdrawn to the mountains. (*Comm. Job* 40:20; PTS 35:196)

In a theological reading, Chrysostom posits that even as natural creatures, the Joban beasts come to reflect the power and nature of the transcendent God. Specifically, he comments on OG–Job 40:20 that the beast's abode in a steep mountain serves to reveal the hidden depths of God's power and mystery.[583] The beast is thus created to communicate the otherness of the divine and hence inspire humans to fear God. This notion is most clearly addressed in the following commentary of Chrysostom:

> If [God] has created these two enormous beasts, he did so in order that you might know that he may create all of them according to their own type. But God does not do so because his creation is oriented to provide what is useful to you. Notice how these beasts observe their proper laws: they haunt that part of the sea which is no navigable. But one may ask, What is their use? We ignore what is the mysterious utility of these monsters, but, if we want to take the risk of an explanation, we may say that they lead toward the knowledge of God. In the same way, among the stars, some are more numerous, others less, some are larger, others smaller, likewise, about the savage beasts: if God had only made them large, you would say that he could not make them small; if he had only made them small, you would have said the contrary. Equally, if he had only created domestic animals, you would have said that he could not make savage ones. Great is the diversity which exists among the beings, among the beings within life, among those which have knowledge, among those which are gifted with reason, among those which are deprived of it. But, to what good, one will say, is it to create works ignored by us, as it is the case of these monsters that we do not know? But, those which navigate the sea know them, and they will speak of them to those who ignored them; those who have gone to the desert places are not ignorant about them. (*Comm. Job* 40:20; PTS 35:196)[584]

According to Chrysostom, therefore, the otherness of the exotic beasts featured in the

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[583] Hagedorn and Hagedorn, *Johannes Chrysostomos Kommentar zu Hiob*, 196.

[584] ACCS, 6:210; translated from Jean Chrysostom, *Commentaire sur Job*, vol.2, Chapters 15–42, Sources chrétiennes 348 (trans. Henri Sorlin and Louis Neyrand; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1988), 233.

book of Job is part of the creation design that points to the unfathomable power and knowledge of God, the wholly Other in every sense of the term.

Julian of Eclanum

Sharing the perspective of Chrysostom, Julian of Eclanum (ca. 386–455 CE), a distinguished leader of the Pelagians whose interpretation of Scripture is strongly influenced by the Antiochene school,[585] takes the monstrous entities in Job as exotic creatures that serve to edify humanity.[586] In particular, in his comments on Job 40:10 [Vg. = MT 40:15], Julian suggests that the beasts symbolize otherness and fulfill the edification purpose in three different ways:

> Through the creation of such a hateful and tremendous beast people are given three opportunities of edification. They can recognize that the power of the Creator did not only make those beasts that would have served human beings but also fashioned those who frighten them; they can understand the goodness of Providence, because it removed those beasts that would have been deadly from the midst [of humans] and placed them in the wilderness. There they can learn how severe he is against vices. These [beasts] that are troublesome to mortals according to their size and strength are also subject to his regulation (*Exp. Job* 40.10; CCL 88:104–5).

First, Julian proposes that the existence of these monstrous others—as frightening beasts—directs human attention to an undomesticated God. The creation of such hateful beasts shows that God, the Creator, did not just create for the benefits of humanity; in all their perceived otherness, the monsters reveal God as the ultimate Other whose work is beyond human comprehension. Secondly, the beasts serve to symbolize the immoral others of human vices; but still, God is willing to keep these monstrous out of human domains. In this light,

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[585] See *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity*, 2014 ed., s.v. "Julian of Eclanum," by V. Grossi.

[586] Julian of Eclanum, *Expositio Libri Job* (eds. M.–J. D'Hont/L. De Coninck; CCSL 88; Turnhout, 1977), 104–5. It is noteworthy that in his commentary on Job, Julian distinguishes two senses in the book. One is the literal sense which he prefers as is typical of the Antiochene tradition, whereas the deeper one is what he calls the *sensus subtilis*, which allows for a typological interpretation.

their monstrosity signifies to humanity the goodness of the divine providence paradoxically. Thirdly, monstrous as they are, the beasts are subject to God's control and regulation, thereby implying the unsurpassable power of God. In echo with the proposal of Chyrsostom, Julian emphasizes that the monstrous others in the world point to the otherness of God, who is the wholly Other.

5.2.1.3   Summation

It appears that early Christian interpreters predominantly follow the allegorical approach in reading the dragon/beasts in the book of Job. They tend to view the monster(s) as an embodiment of the Devil/Satan—the evil other in Christian theology, and interpret the featured monstrosity of the beast(s) as representation of perceived malice and evilness. The monstrous was also taken up by some as rhetoric of polemic against contemporary heresies. Notwithstanding the prevailing allegorical interpretations, a few Christian interpreters in the early centuries prefer reading Behemoth and Leviathan as natural animals that point to the power and sovereignty of God the Creator. The monsters are in this case "deified" in their capacity to reflect sublime aspects of the divine. While the monsters were mostly demonized in early Christianity as the diabolical other, the same monstrous bodies carry the potential to signify the divine Other paradoxically.

5.2.2 Receptions in the Medieval Period

5.2.2.1   The Monster as the Devil and Its Incarnate (the Antichrist)

The dominance of the allegorical exegetical approach (over literal-historical interpretation) in reading the Joban monsters has continued through the first millennium among Christians interpreters.[587] As Gregory the Great (ca. 540–604 CE) endorses the

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[587] As a precursor of Gregory the Great, Olympiodorus of Alexandria (ca. late fifth to early sixth century CE) emphasizes the need to seek deeper meanings beyond the literal-historical ones, anticipating a trending approach in the medieval period. Like earlier Alexandrian interpreters, Olympiodorus regards Job 3:8 as revealing a

allegorical and moral modes of biblical exegesis over the literal approach in his *Moralia in Iob*, a massive commentary of Job, this method of scriptural exposition has influenced much of West Christianity and, particularly, Christian exegesis on the book of Job. Throughout the medieval period, the Joban beasts are commonly regarded as allegorical representations of the Devil and the epitome of evilness. As is the case with earlier receptions, the monsters were at points historicized in the hand of medieval Christians as the Antichrist, a human manifestation of the Devil.

Gregory the Great and His Legacy

Gregory the Great, an influential figure of the medieval exegetical tradition, was particularly committed to explicating the allegorical meanings of the biblical text.[588] Hence, it is not surprising that he continues the trend of identifying the Joban monsters as allegories of the Devil in earlier Christian scholarship. As Susan Schreiner comments, "Gregory finds (throughout the book of Job) descriptions of the slyness, fury, and power of the Devil."[589] In particular, Gregory recognizes the traits of Behemoth and Leviathan as representations of the Antichrist, the incarnate of the Devil on earth (*Moral.* 32–34). Even the names of Behemoth and Leviathan are to him allegorical in the sense that they hint at the immorality of the monstrous (*Moral.* 33.30):

> Why is our enemy first called Behemoth, then Leviathan and finally is compared to a bird
> that God plays with in order to destroy it? Behemoth, as we have said, means "a huge beast,"
> a quadruped that eats grass like an ox. The Leviathan appears to be a serpent of the sea,

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prophecy, "for he is speaking about what is apparent (*aisthētou*), a sea-monster, but rather about the idea (*noētou*) of a dragon, the Devil" (*Comm. Job* 40.12–15). He also distinguishes between the literal meaning (*rhēton*) of the text and the intention (*dianoia*) underlying the text (*Comm. Job* 123.8–16). With a similar interpretive strategy, Olympiodorus seeks to read aspects of evilness in the descriptions of the monstrous body of the beast. Commenting on Job 41:14 [22], for instance, he remarks: "The souls that advance with a high neck (as is confirmed by Isaiah) are like the Devil's neck, because they have the power to deceive." (*Comm. Job* 41.13; PG 93:444)

[588] See *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 1999 ed., s.v. "Gregory I," by William G. Rusch.
[589] Susan E. Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 49.

because it is caught by hook. But now it takes on the guise of a bird, when God says, "Will you play with it as with a bird?" Let us see why it is called huge beast, dragon and bird. We can immediately understand the meaning of these names by examining the malice of his schemes. From heaven he descended on earth and cannot rise anymore on high as he has no aspiration to the hope of getting heavenly goods. Therefore, it is a quadruped deprived of reason because of the foolishness of its impure behavior, a dragon because of the malice through which it causes harm, a bird because of the agility of its spiritual nature.

Adopting the fishing analogy of Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the Great interprets the "hook" on Leviathan in Job 40:19–20 [Vg. = MT 40:24–25 (41:1)] as the "hook of Christ's incarnation." In accord with the Christological reading of earlier interpreters (Origen, Athanasius, Gregory of Nyssa, Philipp the Presbyster), Gregory pictures that "while the Devil caught in Him the bait of his body, he was pierced with the sharp point of His divinity" (*Moral.* 33.714–9.17).[590] With the triumph of the incarnation of Christ, the Devil as symbolized by Leviathan paradoxically plays a significant role in the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption.

Indeed, this atonement model of *Christus Victor*[591] has been gaining popularity in West Christianity throughout the medieval period. Its influence is most manifest in the work of Odo of Cluny (ca. 878–942 CE), Bruno of Segni (ca. 1045–1123 CE) and Honorious of Autun (ca. 1080–1140 CE). In particular, in Honorious' *Speculum Ecclesiae*, the fishing-for-Leviathan motif as an integral part of Christ's redemption (which is documented in Gregory's *Moralia in Iob*) is elaborated in the most intricate manner:

> Leviathan, a marine fish, is formed like a dragon...In this (the sea) the Devil, that is, Leviathan, floats around and devours a multitude of souls. But God, presiding in heaven, stretched out a hook into this sea, while he directed his Son to take Leviathan in this world. The line of this hook is the genealogy of Christ woven by the evangelists. The sting is the divinity of Christ, and the food its humanity. Moreover, the rod through which the line of a hook extends into the waves is the holy cross on which Christ is hanged to deceive the Devil.

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[590] Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found*, 50.
[591] See J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, vol. 1, The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 149–152.

While this Leviathan strives to tear the food of his flesh with the greedy tooth of death, he is pierced through by a hidden rack, and the crooked serpent is dragged out by the waves... (Honorius of Autun, *Speculum Ecclesiae*, Migne, P.L., 172, col. 937)

Fig. 32. Leviathan swallowing the bait of Christ as part of God's scheme of redemption. *Hortus Deliciarum*, folio 84r, Strasbourg, France, ca. 1170.

Notably, Honorious' description of the monstrous in relation to God/Christ is consistent with an iconographic representation in the contemporary *Hortus deliciarum* (folio 84r) (Fig. 32), an illuminated medieval manuscript (late twelfth century) compiled by Herrad of Landsberg at the Hohenburg Abbey in France (Alsace). In the illustration of Job 40:25–26 [41:1–2], the monstrous Leviathan is shown to be swallowing the bait of Christ—the crucified Christ on the cross—from the bottom. Appearing voracious though, the monster is actually being caught by the fisher God (in the person of Christ) (top-left), who holds the fishing-rod which comprises roundels of "patriarchs and prophets" that represent the

genealogy of Christ (Matt 1:2–16). The symbolism of the imagery is glossed in the inscriptions of the illumination, which reads "divinity sends a hook into the sea of the world" (top) and "(Leviathan as) a marine fish like a dragon and signifies the devil" (bottom right). Not only does the iconography harkens back to Gregory's exposition, but it also resonates with the earlier reception which pictures Christ's descending into the monstrosity of Death as part of God's salvific plan.

Another illustration of God fishing the Joban monster is found in a medieval manuscript (mid-thirteenth century) of Gregory's *Moralia* from a monastery in Austria (Herzogenburg) (Fig. 33). Here God is shown to be fishing for Leviathan from the arc of heaven (top), with the latter being caught in a fishing-line (bottom left). The figure of Job (bottom right) is featured as prophesying the salvific incarnation on earth,[592] which adds to the Christological implications of the Joban narrative. Notably, a hopeful message of resurrection that comes with the capturing of Leviathan (the Devil) is hinted by the image of a stump with a new sprout (middle), probably an allusion to Job 14:7–9.

Fig. 33. God fishing for Leviathan. Manuscript of Gregory's *Moralia* from Herzogenburg, MS 95, fol. 257v, Austria, ca. 1260. Drawing by Anna Harmon. Source: Seow, *Job 1–21*, 676.

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[592] Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan."

The bait-hook imagery (*Moral*. 33.612–26; CCSL 143:1680–1696) is also reflected in Alton Towers Triptych, an altarpiece originated in Germany around the mid-twelfth century that tells of the redemption of humankind.[593] In the lower register on the left wing (Fig. 34), God is again portrayed to be fishing Leviathan in the person of Christ (identified by the red halo), accompanied by the Latin caption: HAMVS QVOD PISCI FIT LEVIATHAN CARO XPI ("As the hook is to the fish, so is the flesh of Christ to Leviathan"). That Leviathan represents the Devil (or, by implication, Death) is corroborated by the corresponding type-scene on the bottom register of the central panel, which depicts Christ's final blow to the Devil in the netherworld.

Fig. 34. The lower register of the left wing of the Alton Towers triptych from Cologne, Germany, ca. 1150. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Metalwork Collection, acc. no. 4757–1858.

Referring to a human manifestation of the Devil, Gregory frequently associates

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[593] Roland Krischel, "Bilder, die klappen. Zur Kinetik religiöser Gemälde im spätmittelalterlichen Köln," *Wallraf–Richartz–Jahurbuch* 75 (2014): 51–130; M. Halbach, *Das Triptychon von Alton Towers im Victoria & Albert Museum* (MA thesis, University of Vienna, 2006); Peter Lasko, *Ars Sacra 800–1200* (2nd ed.; New Haven, CT/London, UK: Yale University Press, 1994; 1st ed., 1994), 227, color fig. 310.

Leviathan with the figure of "the Antichrist" in his commentary (*Moral.* 25.15.34; 29.7.14; 32.16.23; 34.4.6). For example, he sees the rhetorical questions about Leviathan in Job 41:4 [Vg. = MT 41:5 (13)] ("who will uncover the face of his garment? And who will enter into the midst of his mouth?) as alluding to the deceptive nature of the Antichrist—who can be penetrated by Christ alone (*Moral.* 33.24.44–45). Besides, Gregory reads the various parts of Leviathan as allegories of agents of the Antichrist. In particular, he suggests that the intimidating "circle of his teeth" (*gyrum dentium eius*) in 41:5b [Vg. = MT: 41:6b (14b)] symbolizes the iniquitous preachers (*Moral.* 33.27.47–48) of the Antichrist. Similarly, he interprets the flame-breathing mouth of Leviathan (41:10a [Vg. = MT: 41:11a (19a)] as an imagery for false prophecy (*Moral.* 33.35.59). Even the tight "scales" of Leviathan in 41:6–8 [Vg. = MT 41:7–9 (15–17)] are, to Gregory, taken up as rhetoric of polemic against the wicked ones, whom he believed were agents of the Antichrist:

> These scales of sinners are both hardened and joined together, so as not to be penetrated by any breath of life from the mouth of preachers...They are day by day the more easily separable from the knowledge of righteousness, the more they are not mutually separated from each other by any reproach. (*Moral*. 33.45–55; LF 31:606–7)

As Gregory's *Moralia* dominated the medieval exegesis of Job in the Latin West, his identification of the Joban beasts with the Antichrist was widely followed by the western tradition in the medieval age, not least from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries. In fact, it is not uncommon that the descriptions of the Joban monsters are cited in medieval discourses on the Antichrist, a common Christian polemic at the time. In *De ortu e tempore Antichristi*,[594] a parody of hagiography written by Adso the Abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Montier-en-Der in around 950 CE, the Antichrist is characterized as Christ's opposite (an anti-saint), within whom dwells the Devil who is "king over all the sons of pride"

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[594] See D. Verhelst (ed.), *Adso Dervensi: De ortu et tempore Antichristi: necnon et tractatus qui ab eo dependunt*, CCCM 45 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1976).

(Vg.–Job 41:25b = MT 41:26b [34b]).[595]

Adso's work then influenced the Bestiary of the *Liber Floridus*, an illustrated

encyclopedia compiled by Lambert of Saint Omer in early twelfth century in northern France.

In one of the illustrations, a caricature of the Devil in the apocalyptic image of the Antichrist

is shown to be riding the bovine Behemoth (Fig. 35). The association between Behemoth and

the Antichrist (the Devil) is substantiated by the caption at the top, which reads: DIABOL[US]

SEDENS SVP[ER] BE[H]EMOTH ORIENTIS BESTIAM SINGVLAREM ET SOLAM,

I[D EST] ANTIC[H]R[ISTU]M: "The Devil, sitting on Behemoth, the unique and

unrestricted beast of the East, which is the Antichrist."

Fig. 35. The Antichrist riding on Behemoth. *Liber Floridus*, ca. 1120. Ghent University Library, Belgium, MS 92, fol. 62r.

On the verso of the same page in this manuscript, the monstrosity of Leviathan is

featured with another representation of the Antichrist (Fig. 36). As described in the caption

which reads: ANTICHRIS(TVS) SEDENS SVPER LEVIATHAN SERPE(N)TEM

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[595] Richard K. Emmerson, "Antichrist as Anti-saint: The Significance of Abbott Adso's *Libellus de Antichristo*," *American Benedictine Review* 30 (1979): 175–90.

DIABOLU(M) SIGNA(N)T(M) BESTIA(M) CRUDELE(M) IN FINE, "The Antichrist

sitting on Leviathan, signifying the serpent of the Devil, the cruel beast of the last days,"

Leviathan is thought to symbolize the evilness of the Devil. The perceived monstrosity of

Leviathan is heightened by its terrifying-long teeth (Vg.–Job 41:5 [MT 41:6; ET 41:14]),

tightly-held scales (Vg.–Job 41:6–8 [MT 41:7–9; ET 41:15–17]), and flame-emitting mouth

(Vg.–Job 41:9–12 [MT 41:10–13; ET 41:18–21]) in the iconography, which are consistent

with the biblical descriptions. Notably, contrary to the Antichrist riding on Behemoth who is

portrayed as the fearsome-looking Devil, the Antichrist here is sitting enthroned on the back

of Leviathan as an attractive-looking king—crowned and holding a scepter in his right

hand.[596] Albert Derolez notes that as the evilness of this figure is not readily recognized

under the guise of his benign appearance, this Antichrist is perhaps even scarier.[597] In any

case, the monstrosity of both Behemoth and Leviathan is associated in the *Liber Floridus*

with the Antichrist, the enemy of the Christian community.

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[596] Jessie Poesch, "The Beasts from Job in the Liber Floridus Manucripts," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970): 43.
[597] Albert Derolez, *The Making and Meaning of the* Liber Floridus*: A Study of the Original Manuscript, Ghent, University Library, MS 92* (Turnholt: Brepols, 2015), 86–89, pl. 37.2 and 38.1; Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan."

Fig. 36. The Antichrist sitting upon Leviathan. *Liber Floridus*, ca. 1120. Ghent University Library, Belgium, MS 92, fol. 62v.

As symbols of hostility and illegitimacy, Behemoth and Leviathan were often taken up by medieval Christians in reference to whomever they regarded as the Antichrist at the time. In particular, some Christian writers used the monsters as ciphers for heterodoxy or particular historical figures who they thought was threatening the order of the world. The Christian apologist Paulus Albarus in the mid-ninth century, for example, associates Behemoth with the Islamic prophet Muhammad, the emir of Codova, as the Antichrist in the wake of the Muslim persecution of Christians in the region (*Indiculus* 26–35). Polemical uses of the Joban monsters as agents of the Antichrist are also attested in the Eastern Church, when Hugh Eteriano (ca. 1150–1180 CE) wrote against the Bogomils, a heretical Gnostic group in Constantinople, saying that "they have been sent to preach by Leviathan, that coiling serpent, and are forerunners of the Antichrist, contradicting the commandments of God by transforming themselves into angels of light, when in reality they are angels of Satan."[598] These examples should suffice to demonstrate how Behemoth and Leviathan served as monstrous symbols for historical enemies of Christianity in the medieval times, especially when Christian communities came to assert themselves in particular situations.

5.2.2.2   *Iconographic Motif of the Hellmouth*

In addition to references to the Devil and the Antichrist, Leviathan is commonly used in association with the motif of "the mouth of hell" in medieval Christian iconography in the Latin West. Specifically, the iconographic motif of the hellmouth, a portal of Hell, is typically represented by the gaping jaws of a reptilian or dragon-like monster (presumably

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[598] Jane Hamilton and Bernard Hamilton, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World c. 650–c. 1450*, Manchester Medieval Sources (Manchester: Pelgrave Macmillan, 1998), 236.

Leviathan).[599] The hellmouth motif is primarily drawn from the discourse on Leviathan in the new Latin (the Vulgate) translation of Job 41:4b–5a: *et in medium oris eius quis intrabit // portas vultus eius quis aperiet* ("And who can go into the midst of his mouth? Who can open the doors of his face?") (MT 41:5b–6a [13b–14a]), in which "the doors of his (Leviathan's) face" is interpreted as "the gates of hell" (cf. Job 38:17). Notably, the hellmouth is often depicted with monstrous features that are drawn from the discourse of Leviathan, such as terrifying teeth (Vg.–Job 41:5 [MT 41:6 (14)]), flame-emitting mouth and smoky nostril (Vg.–Job 41:10–11 [MT 41:11–12 (19–20)]), the Abyss as a boiling cauldron (Vg.–Job 41:22 [MT 41:23 (31)]), and captive imageries (Job 41:23a [MT 41:24a (32a)]). The biblical representation of the monstrosity of Leviathan—a prominent symbol for concepts like evil, chaos, and the anti-divine in the medieval age[600]—thus contributes to the hellmouth iconography. Given the increased focus on human sin and evilness in late medieval period, when art began to be employed as propagandistic medium, the image of a hellmouth became a popular motif for moralizing purposes in Christian tradition.[601]

One of the most prominent illustrations of the hellmouth in medieval art is found in the *Winchester Psalter* of the twelfth century (Fig. 37). In the image the entrance to hell is represented as the grotesque gaping mouth of a monster which may have modeled upon Leviathan or Behemoth (or a combination of the two).[602] It is worth noting that a collage of bodies are trapped in the monster's mouth (hellmouth)—in accord with the Christian narrative of the Last Judgment, in which the wicked and sinners will be damned to Inferno where they are consumed. In fact, a number of monstrous and devilish figures are shown to be torturing the bodies (sinners) with a staff inside the hellmouth. Paradoxically, an angelic

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[599] Seow, "Leviathan," 306.
[600] Anique de Kruijf, "A Glimpse of the Beast: Leviathan in Late Medeival and Early Modern Art," in *Playing with Leviathan*, 249.
[601] De Kruijf, "A Glimpse of the Beast," 250.
[602] Maria Beville, *The Unnameable Monster in Literature and Film*, Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), 42.

figure is portrayed as the gatekeeper outside the hellmouth on the left. As the angel inserts the

key into the lock of the portal with his/her right hand, he/she is essentially sealing the hell

entrance. Rather unsettlingly, the hellmouth seems to unleash its malevolence on the wicked

at the behest of the divine.

Fig. 37. Image of hell as a mouth swallowing a horde of people. *Winchester Psalter*, fol. 39, ca. 1150–60.

In a delicate portrait in the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves (Fig. 38),[603] a

manuscript originated in Netherlands (Utrecht) from the mid-fifteenth century, the

intimidating monstrosity of the hellmouth is enhanced by the representation of three gaping

mouths, with the lips of each monstrous mouth being unfolded by devilish figures. In

particular, the hellmouth is featured with a boiling cauldron (cf. Job 41:23 [31]) in the

smallest mouth, where the wicked souls are being boiled as part of the Last Judgment.

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[603] See Rob Dückers and R. Priem (eds.), *The Hours of Catherine of Cleves: Devotion, Demons and Daily Life in the Fifteenth Century* (Antwerpen, 2009), cat. no. 107.

Notably, there is below the frame at the lower margin a fourth mouth from which comes seven banderoles that name the seven great sins: *superbia, avaritia, ira, gula, acedia, luxuria*, and *invidia* (i.e. pride, greed, anger, gluttony, sloth, lust, and envy). As moralizing elements, these banderoles suggest that the monstrosity of the hellmouths—associated with the deadly iniquities—was meant to admonish the Christians in Catherine of Cleves to stay away from sin and evilness. On another note, while the monstrosity of the hellmouth by and large reflects elements in the Leviathan discourse (such as terrifying monstrous teeth and the cauldron imagery), it is fused with a castle structure which was commonly used to confine prisoners in the medieval times,[604] indicating the contextualization of the hellmouth motif.

Fig. 38. Portrait of the mouth of hell in the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves, ca. 1440. The Morgan Library

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[604] During the early and middle medieval times, prisoners were kept in the Gate Keep which was the most secure place of the medieval castle. However, medieval castle dungeons began to be built during the late medieval times and were mostly used to confine the prisoners due to various political and religious reasons. It was so especially when wars became increasingly common during the late medieval times, particularly after the 1200s.

Besides the association with the Last Judgment, the hellmouth is frequently featured in the medieval narrative of the Harrowing of Hell,[605] which portrays Christ's descent into hell with the purpose of granting salvation to the righteous (who had previously died). In the *Tiberius Psalter* from the eleventh century (Fig. 39), for example, the hellmouth is represented as a dragon-like monster in the bottom right. Even in the face of its perceived monstrosity, the resurrected Christ (the gigantic figure on the left) is victorious over death: still wrapped in linen cloth, Christ bows down and stretches out his hands to pick up men and women from hell; not only that, he manages to trample on the devil figures with his feet at the bottom.

Fig. 39. The Harrowing of Hell in the *Tiberius Psalter*, ca. 11th century. British Library, London, MS Cott. Tib.

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[605] Medieval Christians tend to relate the hellmouth motif/concept to Christ's descent into the netherworld. The identification of death with the netherworld in medieval Christian traditions can be traced back to Origen, who draws an analogy between Jonah's being in the belly of the sea-monster (Matt 12:40) and Christ's being in the netherworld (*Or.* 13.4).

C.VI, fol. 14r.

The hellmouth is also illustrated together with the motif of Christ in Limbo in the *Fitzwarin Psalter* from the fourteenth century (Fig. 40). Here the hellmouth is represented as a hybrid entity which comprises a building and the mouth of a monster (bottom right). The monstrosity of hell is conveyed not only by the huge jaws and frightening teeth of the monster which resonate with the Leviathan tradition (cf. Job 41:5–6 [13–14]), but also by the flames which radiate from the apertures of the devilish building. Again, notwithstanding the perceived monstrosity, the figure of Christ (bottom left), who is stepping on a chained devil that lies at the hell entrance, is more than able to overpower death and evil as he leads naked people out of the hellmouth.

Fig. 40. Christ in Limbo in the *Fitzwarin Psalter*, ca. 14th century. Bibliotheque nationale de France, Paris, MS lat. 765m, fol. 15r.

In all, the hellmouth—an imagery probably drawn from the Leviathan discourse in the

book of Job—has been a common motif in western Christian iconography in the medieval period, even well into the early modern period. Its illustration typically points to the eschatological judgment, when the wicked will be doomed and the righteous will be saved. In the framework of Christian narrative, the hellmouth with all its perceived monstrosity becomes a symbol of otherness that carries a great deal of moralizing power. On the other hand, its uses in the medieval motif of the Harrowing of Hell or Christ in Limbo serve a theological purpose: the conquered monstrosity of the hellmouth is a rhetorical means by which to exalt the power and authority of Christ over death and the Devil. The iconographic motif of the hellmouth thus have both moralizing and "theologizing" capacities, signifying something about human morality and divinity at the same time.

5.2.3 Receptions from Late Medieval to Early Modern Period

5.2.3.1   Late-Medieval Interpretive Trend: Allegories as Natural Beasts

Gregory the Great's predominately allegorical receptions of Behemoth and Leviathan remained virtually unchallenged in the Latin West through the medieval ages until the thirteenth century, when the work of Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274 CE) began a new interpretive trend. Without dismissing the figurative insights, Aquinas prioritizes the literal reading of the biblical text and interprets the Joban monsters as natural animals in his commentary on Job (*The Literal Exposition on Job*), written in around 1261–1264 CE.

<u>Thomas Aquinas and a New Norm</u>

Based on a naturalistic exegetical approach, Thomas Aquinas reads Behemoth and Leviathan as a huge elephant and a gigantic whale respectively. The monstrous size of these two animals certainly constitutes their perceived otherness. In particular, Aquinas interprets the primacy of Behemoth in Vg.–Job 40:14 (= MT 40:19) as a reference to its physical enormity, "(the elephant) holds a kind of primacy among the rest of the land

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animals...because of the magnitude of his body." Similarly, he reads the title of Leviathan as "king" in Vg.–Job 41:25 (= MT 41:26 [34]) in terms of its supreme magnitude, "great whales...have an accession of magnitude over every kind of animal."[606]

Still, as is typical of allegorical interpretations, Aquinas views the natural beasts as figurative representations of demonic power. Specifically, he understands the two beasts as corporeal forms (*figuras corporum*) of the Devil.[607] In this Aquinas sees that the traits of these natural beasts serve as metaphors that point to the traits of Satan that manifest themselves in human sin and evilness. In Vg.–Job 40:11–12 (= MT 40:16–17), for example, Aquinas takes the featured loins and belly of Behemoth to be symbols that signify sexual sins, whereas its tail and entangled sinews are to him allusions to those who are ensnared in lust.[608] It is worth noting that this interpretation harkens back to that of Origen, who first connected the bodily descriptions of Behemoth to human sexuality. The parallel in a millennium reflects the constant struggle of Christianity with sexuality, which may find its root in early Christian asceticism.

It is also noteworthy that Aquinas explicates the monstrosity of the Joban beasts as allegories in a paradoxical way. Specifically, he sees that the biblical descriptions of the two creatures signify both the divine power and the sin of human pride simultaneously. For instance, the piercing of Behemoth's nose in Vg.–Job 40:19 (= MT 40:24) is, for Aquinas, meant to emphasize the divine power: "Now by this passage is designated mystically the fact that Christ overcame the Devil, showing him a weak nature so that he might be caught by Him as if by a hook, and afterwards He exercised His power against him."[609] In treating Vg.–Job 40:20 (= MT 40:25 [41:1]) which features human incompetence in catching Leviathan, Aquinas comments: "no man can either draw the devil away from his malice or

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[606] Thomas Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on Job: A Scriptural Commentary Concerning Providence* (trans. Antony Damico; Classics in Religious Studies; Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 448.
[607] Aquinas, *The Literal Exposition on Job*, 447–55.
[608] Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found*, 451.
[609] Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found*, 454.

even tie him so that he may not proceed in his malice."[610] Addressing the impossibility of humans in subduing the beast with their own power, this verse is in Aquinas' opinion intended to address the spiritual sin of human pride. Given that the beasts can only be tamed by the power of God, Aquinas believes that the discourse of the monstrous in Job is essentially a call for humans' acknowledgement of the divine power.

In the late medieval period, Aquina's literal-yet-figurative exegetical approach introduces a new norm within Christian tradition regarding the reception of the Joban monsters. Following Aquinas, Nicholas of Lyra (ca. 1270–1349 CE) identifies Behemoth and Leviathan with the elephant and the whale while giving weight to their figural significance—as metaphors for demonic powers.[611] Even Albert the Great (ca. 1200–1280 CE), Aquinas' teacher, addresses both the natural aspects and allegorical value of these beasts in *Super Iob* (*On Job*), his commentary on Job composed in 1272–1274 CE. While Albert relates the natural traits of Behemoth and Leviathan by Aristotelian zoology, he maintains that these two exceptional creatures are metaphors of "physiological power that is natural and primitive in God's hands, but dangerous and unmanageable" at the disposal of humans.[612] Under the new norm set by Aquinas, the naturalisitic features of the Joban beasts are viewed as allegories that point to pernicious diabolical power in the world.[613]

5.2.3.2   *Receptions of the Beasts from the Reformation to the Enlightenment*

Entering into the early modern period, Christian receptions of the Joban beasts are mostly shaped and driven by contextual ecclesiastical and societal milieus, and, more broadly, prevailing philosophical or theological paradigms of thought of the time. While Protestant

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[610] Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found*, 455.
[611] Aaron Canty, "Nicholas of Lyra's Literal Commentary on Job," in *A Companion to Job in the Middle Ages* (ed. F. T. Harkins and A. Canty; Brill's Companions to the Christian Traditions 73; Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2017), 249–50.
[612] Stefano Perfetti, "Biblical Exegesis and the Aristotelean Naturalism: Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and the Animals off the Book of Job," *Aisthesis* 11 (2018): 93–94,
[613] Ruth Meyer, "A Passionate Dispute over Divine Providence: Albert the Great's Commentary on the Book of Job," in *A Companion to Job in the Middle Ages*, 220–22.

interpreters tend to read Behemoth and Leviathan in a literal sense as natural beasts—in opposition to the allegorical approach inherited in Catholic Christianity, particular receptions are subject to the influence of the sweeping Reformation, the rise of humanism (the Renaissance), and the emergent Enlightenment in the early modern age. In this section, the receptions of Martin Luther (ca. 1483–1546 CE), John Calvin (ca. 1509–1564 CE), and Samuel Bochart (ca. 1599–1667 CE) are selected to represent different interpretive impetuses in this period with respect to their historical and socio-cultural contexts.

Martin Luther and the Reformation

Regarding the Joban beasts, Martin Luther, a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation, follows the normative medieval tradition and interprets Leviathan and Behemoth as two different names for the Devil/Satan. In particular, Luther reads Leviathan in light of the longstanding fish-hook imagery of redemption (*LW* 22, 24), and reiterates that the rhetorical questions in Vg.–Job 40:19–25 (= MT 40:24–30 [40:24–41:6]) are centered around the deceptive victory of Christ's passion over the Devil.[614] In adducing Gregory's exposition (*Moral.* 33,7–17; CCSL 143B, 1684–1704), Luther maintains that Christ was once "subject to death yet overcoming death, so that in and through him death is swallowed up by life" (*LW* 26, 135–136).[615] With a Christological interpretation, Luther's reception of the monster discourse in Job is focused on Christ's defeat of the Devil through crucifixion, which affirms his *sola fide* (justification by faith alone) doctrine that Christ constitutes the only means of salvation. Considering his strong opposition to the Catholic Church of his time, which attributes salvific merits to human works,[616] Luther's interpretation of the Joban monsters

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[614] Michael Plathow, "Der geköderte 'Leviathan': Martin Luthers kreuzestheologische Metapher in der römisch-katholischen Theologie und ihre konfessionskunlich-ökumenische Bedeutung," *Lutherjahrbuch* 70 (2003): 126–48.

[615] Seow, "Two Trajectories in the History of Leviathan."

[616] As Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 77 remarks, "With regard to *sola fide*, a contrast is being made with Rome's doctrine that faith must be formed by love (*fides formata*). The Reformed and Lutheran churches said that Rome essentially required faith and works for justification."

can be understood to be part of his rhetoric of polemic against Catholicism.

As a matter of fact, the Joban monsters were often taken up by Luther in his polemical writings against the Catholic Church. Not only did he apply the term "Behemoth" to the Roman Catholic Church (as "the whole Behemoth" [*LW* 39, 124; 43, 269]) and the Pope (as "Behemoth" [*LW* 13, 30–31; 45, 85]), but he also used the term to demonize groups of opponents, specifically the persecutors of his followers, by calling them "Behemoth," as is reflected in a passage as follows:

> Equally well are they depicted in Job 40–41, where the same kind of people are called Behemoth...Behema means a single animal, but behemoth means a number of such animals, in other words, a race which has an animal mind, and does not allow the spirit of God in it...The Bible describes them [Behemoth] as having an eye like the red of dawn, for there is no measure to their cunning, and their skin is so tough that they only scoff at a stab or a sting." (Luther, *The Reformation Writings*, 1956, 2:232)[617]

In a similar way, the biblical descriptions of Leviathan's "scales" are used by Luther as a designation for the Roman Catholic Church (*LW* 21, 333–34) and the Pope's followers (*LW* 45, 85; *WA* 11, 378a). In commenting that "the monster's scales overlap, and leave no intervening space: for these people hold closely together, and the spirit of God cannot enter them" (Luther, *Reformation Writings*, 1956, 2:232),[618] Luther compares the tenaciousness of the scales of the Joban monster (Leviathan) to the obstinate defiance of Catholicism, the target enemy of the Protestant movement.

It is noteworthy that the reception of the Joban beasts as demonic allegories—along with their polemical use—is manifest not only in the Protestant camp headed by Luther, but it is also taken up in the counter polemic of the Catholic Church. Whereas Johannes Brenz (ca. 1499–1570 CE), a Lutheran theologian, follows Luther in reading Leviathan as the pernicious

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[617] Cited by Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes's Biblical Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth," *Political Theory* 23/7 (1995): 360.
[618] Springborg, "Hobbes's Biblical Beasts," 360.

powers of Satan,[619] Thomas Cajetan (ca. 1469–1534 CE), a Catholic cardinal known for his opposition to Reformation and the teachings of Luther, also considers the beasts as metaphors for perfidious diabolical forces that threaten the unity of the Church—which he implies the divisive Lutherans in his context.[620] On either side, the Joban monsters are demonized and then used in reference to the "other" of each camp.

With the rise of printers in the early sixteenth century, the Joban monsters—especially Leviathan which is typically represented in the form of the hellmouth—became common propagandistic symbols in visual arts. In particular, the monstrous symbols were often utilized by Protestants to disseminate their "new religion" against their "other," that is, Catholicism which they ridiculed as the "ancient faith."[621] In one print of Lucas Cranach the Younger (ca. 1515–1586 CE)[622] (Fig. 41), for instance, the monstrous mouth of Leviathan is featured as the hellmouth on the right of the illustration. The iconography substantiates a sense of antagonism in that it depicts a group of Catholic ecclesiasts, including the pope, bishops, cardinals, and monks—the quintessential enemy of the Protestant camp, being swallowed. To heighten the perceived condemnation, Luther, the central figure who is preaching on an elevated pulpit, is represented with his left hand downturned towards the chaos at the hellmouth, which signifies his utmost disapproval of the Catholic Church. In contrast, Luther's right hand points to the crucified Christ (left), who represents what the Protestants embrace as the sole foundation of faith. In stark contrast to the deadly fate of the Catholic leaders, the Protestants are identified with the worshippers below the crucified Christ who are commemorating his suffering and death with the Eucharist.

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[619] Johannes Brenz, *Hiob cum commentarijs Ioannis Brentij, iuxta pijs ac eruditis, ab ipso nuoper authore recognitus at[que] restitutus* (Hagenau: Johann Setzer, 1529), 276–86.

[620] Tomasso de Vio Cajetan, *In omnes authenticos Veteris Testamenti historiales librios et Job commentarii. Tomus II* (Lyon: Jacques & Pierre Prost, 1639 [orig. published 1535, posthumously]), 401–557.

[621] De Kruijf, "A Glimpse of the Beast," 268.

[622] Lucas Cranach is known for propagating the theology of Luther through the work of prints.

Fig. 41. Print image of Lucas Cranach depicting Luther preaching and Catholic ecclesiasts being hurled into the mouth of hell, ca. 1550. Kupferstich-Kabinett, Dresden. Photo: Herbert Boswank.

Fig. 42. Pope being delivered into the mouth of Leviathan in the Jena Codex, ca. 1500. Knihovna Narodniho Muzea, Prague, f.80r.

In one of the illuminations in the Jena Codex (also known as the Hussite Bible) from early sixteenth century (Fig. 42), the monstrosity of Leviathan's mouth is again employed to heighten the satirical polemic against the Pope. Together with other theological treatises and illustrations in the Codex that highlight the deviations of the Catholic Church from early Christianity,[623] the drawing illustrates an armoured figure who is sending the Pope into the lake of fire in the monstrous mouth. The polemic against the Pope is made even more palpable when he is bundled together with the Devil, the quintessential icon of evilness.

As commonly attested in Protestant writings and iconography, it becomes apparent that the Joban beasts, especially Leviathan (in the form of the hellmouth), come to be expedient figural representations of the evil other, which in turn serve the reformers' agenda of polemicizing against the Pope and the Catholic Church.[624]

John Calvin

John Calvin, a French theologian, pastor and reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation, is a Christian humanist interpreter who adopts a naturalistic reading of the Joban beasts. Following Aquinas, Calvin identifies Behemoth and Leviathan as the natural animals of the elephant and the whale that belong to this world. Taking the naturalisitic interpretation though, Calvin, as a sophisticated theologian, also reads the implications of the beasts theologically. In all their createdness, the awe-inspring monstrosity of the beasts are perceived by Calvin as a pointer to the transcendent, otherworldly aspects of the divinity paradoxically. In particular, he posits that Behemoth and Leviathan are "demonstrations of unfathomable divine power"[625] that pedagogically mirrors the incomprehensibility of God's providence.[626]

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[623] The illuminations depict, for example, the clergy's dissolute lifestyle, or criticize the selling of indulgencies.
[624] Cf. Rosemary Muir Wright, *Art and Antichrist in Medieval Europe* (Manchester, 1995), 170–177.
[625] Springborg, "Hobbes's Biblical Beasts," 359.
[626] Susan Schreiner, "Calvin as an Interpreter of Job," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. Mckim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 58–59.

Apparently Calvin's reception of the Joban beasts was influenced by the Protestant disposition toward the literal-historical method of exegesis. But his focus on nature in his biblical interpretation was also largely driven and shaped by contextual factors, most notably his personal experience of persecution and exile amidst the political and religious turmoil in his context.[627] In the face of a tremendous amount of suffering refugees and an afflicted church in his time, Calvin considered the book of Job as a valuable source of consolation to these sufferers as it addresses the divine providence in the world which is manifest in nature. While the undomesticated beasts reveal the inscrutable aspects of the divine, the fact that they pose no harm to humanity point to God's providential grace, which Calvin believes is both revealing and comforting to humans.[628] In Calvin's theological reading, Behemoth and Leviathan as a pair of natural animals become the mediating grounds between the divine and humanity, as befits medieval interpretation of the monster. In any case, Calvin's naturalistic reception of the Joban beasts is a precursor to their modern reception as demythologized natural animals in the age of Enlightenment, as exemplified in Samuel Bochart's identification of them.

Samuel Bochart's *Hierozoicon*

Along the trend of modern rationalism in which the Joban creatures tend to be interpreted in the paradigm of natural history, Samuel Bochart was the first to identify Behemoth and Leviathan as the hippopotamus and the crocodile[629] respectively in his *Hierozoicon*.[630] Read against its cultural milieu, Bochart's reception can be understood to be part of the humanistic aspirations of the time that eventually lead to the age of Enlightenment. As aptly summarized

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[627] Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found*, 6–7.
[628] Schreiner, "Calvin as an Interpreter of Job," 77.
[629] While it was Bochart who first identified Behemoth as the hippopotamus, he himself credited Beza and Deodatius for being the first to recognize Leviathan as the crocodile, an identification which he relied upon.
[630] The consensus for a naturalistic identification of Behemoth and Leviathan before Bochart was to see them as an elephant and a whale, as in the interpretation of Aquinas.

by Zur Shalev, "with the revival of ancient geography, exploration of the New World, and the emergence of print culture," there occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries an inspired fervor in biblical geography as well as humanistic methods in biblical exegesis.[631] In the "emerging culture of curiosity and science in early modern Europe,"[632] the enterprise of biblical interpretation began to place a new emphasis on biblical botany and zoology under the umbrella of biblical geography. In view of the broader cultural context, Bochart's *Hierozoicon*, as Mark R. Sneed notes, reflects the contemporary Protestant enthusiasm for pursuing the so-called sacred geography (*geographica sacra*), a new genre for Christian scholarship in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[633] In a sense, Bochart's Behemoth and Leviathan can be understood to be symbols of otherness that signify a new, promising intellectual world for modern Christians. Marking a rationalistic consummation, Bochart's proposal of the completely demythologized Behemoth and Leviathan was followed by many in the modern era,[634] even until today.

5.3   A Wrap-up with Monster Theory

This chapter has traced the trajectory of receptions of Behemoth and Leviathan within Christian tradition from the early centuries to the early modern age. The two Joban monsters are, by and large, embodiments of the Devil/Satan and the epitome of evilness in Christian understanding. In the framework of Christian theology, they represent the quintessential enemy that the Christian community attempts to ward off. Speaking in the language of monster theory, the beasts come to signify notions of otherness that would threaten one's sense of security about the perceived world order. The prevalent reception of the Joban

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[631] Zur Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds: Geography, Religion, and Scholarship, 1550–1700*, History of Science and Medicine Library 21: Scientific and Learned Cultures and their Institutions 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 5.
[632] Shalev, *Sacred Words and Worlds*, 13.
[633] Mark R. Sneed, *Taming the Beast: A Reception History of Behemoth and Leviathan*, Studies of the Bible and Its Reception 12 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2022), 199.
[634] Noel Malcolm, "The Name and Nature of Leviathan: Political Symbolism and Biblical Exegesis," *Intellectual History Review* 17/1 (2007): 29.

monsters as representation of the evil other in Christian communities reflect their anxiety of potential threats to what they embrace as the order of things and, most importantly, the order of God. It also reveals that the Christian community—in order to stay in line with God's order—seeks to distance themselves from sin and evilness that the monstrous embodiments symbolize.

In fact, in the paradigm of Christian theology, the discourse on the Devil/Satan as the evil other often serves to aggrandize the power and sovereignty of God, the wholly Other. This is also the case with Christian receptions of the dragon (Leviathan) as an embodiment of the Devil. An examination of Christian discourses on the dragon, especially those from the early centuries, has shown that the Joban monster as a signifier of the Devil/Death is mostly read through a Christological-soteriological lens. Specifically, the dragon as interpreted by the Patristic exegetes is destined to be defeated by the incarnate Christ, who came to fulfill God's salvation for humanity. With its role as a defeated spiritual enemy, the dragon (Leviathan) is said to play an integral part in the Christian atonement/redemption narrative. In its conquered monstrosity, the Joban monster as a symbol of the Devil/Death points to the unsurpassable power of God/Christ showcased in the divine plan of salvation.

Generally representing the Devil in an abstract sense, the Joban monsters were at points employed to refer to particular historical figures or social groups as human manifestations of the Antichrist, most notably in the form of heresy. According to monster theory, monstrosity is a socially constructed category that has often been used to define what socially accepted norms are and what lies beyond the acceptable domain.[635] As encapsulated in Cohen's fifth thesis, "*the monster polices the borders of the possible*," the constructed monster exists as an embodiment of difference[636] that demarcates a culture or a social group—whose borders are

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[635] Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, "Invisible Monsters: Vision, Horror, and Contemporary Culture," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 362; E. J. Ingebretsen, *At Stake: Monsters and the Rhetoric of Fear in Public Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

[636] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey

not to be trespassed—from others.[637] Understood in this light, Behemoth and Leviathan came to serve in Christian tradition as language of monstrosity that represents illegitimacy and the deviant which would otherwise threaten the held "normality" (in terms of doctrinal beliefs). Socio-psychologically speaking, they constitute monstrous embodiments by means of which the Christian Church demonizes the "others" and thereby alienate them in order to avert the risk of impurity, contamination, and loss of authority.[638] In excluding the perceived others from a well-defined domain (orthodoxy), the "sameness" (and hence "selfness") of the Christian community can be maintained.

The Christian desire to "exorcise" all evilness and wicked others is perhaps most palpably expressed in the medieval reception of Leviathan as the hellmouth and its associated moralizing motifs. While the widely attested iconography of the terrifying hellmouth may bespeak the universal human fear of being devoured alive,[639] its representation along with other Christian elements (e.g. the Last Judgment) in the medieval age betrays the deep anxiety of Christians about their final fate. As part of the eschatological vision—when the righteous will be saved and the wicked will be doomed, the hellmouth motif accounts for the angst among Christians of evilness from which they strive to distance themselves. In the context of medieval narratives of sin and salvation, Leviathan in the form of hellmouth thus serves as a symbol of monstrous otherness that enforces the "sameness/selfness" of Christians (as the redeemed, righteous people).

While the Joban monsters are predominantly interpreted as allegories for the Devil in the period covered here, a few early Christian interpreters and more since the modern period read them as natural animals whose monstrosity points to the transcendent God the Creator. Along

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Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 7; Maria Beville, *The Unnameable Monster in Literature and Film*, Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), 3.

[637] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory*, 13.

[638] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory*, 15–16.

[639] Aleks Pluskowski, "Apocalyptic Monsters: Animal Inspirations for the Iconography of Medieval North European Devourers," in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhaur and Robert Mills (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 161.

this line of reception, the beasts have taken up the role of a mediator of the divine, pointing to the otherness of divinity. As does the paradigmatic monster in monster theory, Behemoth and Leviathan possess the capacity to signify both the demonic and the divine with their perceived monstrosity. Even with such ambivalence, both the "demonizing" and "deifying" receptions of the monsters fit in with the established Christian worldview, in which God/Christ is extolled (which represents the triumph of Christians as well) and demonic powers are to be condemned. Ultimately, the otherness of the Joban monsters as interpreted in Christian tradition comes to enforce sameness within the Christian community—whose salvation God/Chirst has achieved upon having defeated the monstrous.

CHAPTER 6

THE MONSTER WITH A THOUSAND FACES:
LEVIATHAN AND BEHEMOTH IN THE MODERN WORLD

This chapter is devoted to the reception of Leviathan and Behemoth in the modern age since the seventeenth century. Though mostly employed in religious contexts in pre-modern times, the two beasts have taken on life, impact, and consequences in the modern world through diverse cultural forms, not least in literature, visual arts, and films. Without being bound to particular religious traditions, the Joban monsters appear to be changing faces and have become perceivably multivalent in their significations of otherness. For in-depth analysis, this study is focused on four pieces of modern work that have received attention in the reception scholarship of the Joban beasts—namely, Thomas Hobbes's political treatises *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*, William Blake's artistic portrayals of the two beasts, Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick* (or *The Whale*), and the relatively recent Russian movie *Leviathan* (Andrey Zvyagintsev, 2014). With the lens of monster theory, the study seeks to investigate how the biblical monsters come to communicate notions of otherness in the respective contexts, and how their receptions in the modern world continue to convey the paradox of monstrosity with their capacities to signify various identities.

6.1   The Monster in Modern Political Discourse: Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*

   6.1.1 Hobbes's Modern State (Leviathan) Theory

   Whereas Leviathan had mostly been used to symbolize the epitome of evilness within Christian tradition, Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679 CE) was the first to use the biblical term positively as the synonym for a commonwealth or state (Latin: *civitas*). Putting forth his modern political theory in *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes raises the necessity of establishing an

absolute political authority in a society—which he terms "Leviathan"—that is responsible for protecting the common good against any threatening individual will. In a nutshell, Hobbes's Leviathan is "an artificial machine for the enforcement of social rules and for the provision of security"[640] in a society.

As a central thesis of *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that the absolute political entity (Leviathan) as proposed would serve as a representative for a multitude of people under its governance.[641] Based on the assumption that the basic drives of individual humans would threaten societal stability and state order,[642] Hobbes posits that humans without a government will entail a "state of war," which means total disorder with "no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continued fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."[643] Further, Hobbes states that "where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice"[644]—what is left in this world is simply "war of everyone against everyone."[645] In order to achieve peace in the society, Hobbes advocates for some forms of bond or covenant between humans[646]—with negative consequences upon breaking the rules—that can oblige people to act in accordance with the common good.[647] For such covenants to be kept, Hobbes argues that some coercive force is necessary, which justifies the need for a political sovereign to uphold the commonwealth.[648]

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[640] Richard S. Peters, "Introduction," in *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*, ed. Michael Oakeshott (New York: Collier, 1962), 11.

[641] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*, ed. Michael Oakeshott (Collier Books; New York: Macmillan, 1962), 127–28.

[642] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 103 hypothesizes that the desire for power, as a basic drive of humanity, would inevitably lead human life and society into the chaos of complete anarchy.

[643] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 100.

[644] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 101.

[645] *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 1999 ed., s.v. "Philosophy of Nature: 2. Philosophies of Nature in Western Thought," by Enno Rudolph and Robert F. Brown.

[646] What Hobbes advocates here becomes one of the foundational tenets of "social contract theory," which, according to *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, is "the method of justifying political principles or arrangements by appeal to the agreement that would be made among suitably situated rational, free, and equal persons" (cited from the online entry of *SEP*: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hobbes-moral).

[647] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 105.

[648] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 113.

In articulating the sovereignty of the commonwealth, Hobbes compares the human governor of the state to the supreme Leviathan in Job 41, where the monster is described as having no equal and, most importantly, is called "King of the Proud":

> Hitherto I have set forth the nature of man, whose pride and other passions have compelled him to submit himself to government: together with the great power of his governor, whom I compared to *Leviathan*, taking that comparison out of the two last verses of the one-and-fortieth of Job; when God having set forth the great power of *Leviathan*, calleth him King of the Proud. *There is nothing*, saith he, *on earth, to be compared with him. He is made so as not be afraid. He seeth every high thing below him: and is king of all the children of pride.*[649]

Apparently it is in the featured kingship of Leviathan that Hobbes found grounds for the absolutism of his state theory. In addition to relating the descriptions of Leviathan (e.g. Vg.–Job 41:15–19 [= MT 41:16-20 (24–28)])[650] to the indifferent government, Hobbes employs the metaphor of "Artificiall Man" to illustrate that the commonwealth is actually a human artifice that incorporates individual constituents of a society. Specifically, he makes use of human body parts (e.g. joints, nerves) to symbolize the functionaries and agencies of the political body of this great Leviathan:

> For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE, in Latin CIVITAS, which is but an Artificiall Man...and in which the Sovereignty is an Artificiall Soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the magistrates, and other officers of judicature and execution, artificiall joynts; reward and punishment...are the nerves...Lastly, the pacts and covenants, by which the parts of this Body Politique were at first made, set together, and united, resemble that *Fiat*, or the *Let us make man*, pronounced by God in the Creation. (Hobbes XXXVII–XXXVIII)

This ("Artificiall Man") is more than Consent, or Concord; it is a real Unitie of them all [all

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[649] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 235–36.
[650] Hobbes finds the motif of the living automaton in the description of Leviathan: "His heart shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith's anvil, When he shall raise him up, the angels shall fear, and being affrighted shall purify themselves. When a sword shall lay at him, it shall not be able to hold, nor a spear, nor a breastplate. For he shall esteem iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The archer shall not put him to flight, the stones of the sling are to him like stubble" (Vg.–Job 41:15–19; Douay-Rheims).

individuals], in one and the same Person, made by Covenant of every man with every man.[651]

In Hobbes's political philosophy, the artificial unity of this political body of Leviathan is achieved through practices of covenant-making that involve the submission of individual wills among the human constituents.[652] In other words, it requires every individual—who naturally wars against each other—to entrust their personal power and will to the giant state of Leviathan, which is acknowledged as the sovereign representative. Speaking in the language of monster theory, the perceived "otherness" (as an externalized power) of this sovereign Leviathan represents a repressed part of the "selfness" (in the form of submitted wills and desires) of humanity. Paradoxically, while Hobbes's ideal is to restrain human natural desires from leading to monstrous wars, the theorized commonwealth is so absolutized that it is in itself a symbol of monstrosity (in terms of unlimited power), under the shadow of which particular voices or individualities would practically be held down, if not ruled out at all.

According to monster theory, contructions of monstrous otherness in a society are often projected embodiments of human fear and anxiety therein.[653] This aspect also holds true for Hobbes's Leviathan—though it is not a monster in a physcial sense. Precisely, the state of Leviathan—under the guise of a civilized outlook—is a human construct of otherness that is built upon the human fear of punishment and death.[654] Indeed, the political sovereign is warranted and legitimized exactly because fear causes people to yield their will to the state.

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[651] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 120.

[652] It is based on Hobbes's hypothesis of a law of nature that has ramifications of peace for the human society, when "a man be willing to lay down this right to all things and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself" (Hobbes 1962, 104). However, given the human tendency to pursue their right rather than to lay it down, this societal condition does not come naturally.

[653] Maria Beville, *The Unnameable Monster in Literature and Film*, Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), 6.

[654] Hobbes identifies the fear of death as another basic drive of humanity, such that humans commonly conform to the law out of fear of punishment. To Hobbes, therefore, it is human fears that constitute the basis for a commonwealth.

Represented as a sovereign that tolerates no rivals, Hobbes's Leviathan manifests itself as a hegemonic monster in the human society, setting out to secure order and peace in its domain with the authorized power. Paradoxically, the inner peace of the human society is achieved by means of violent imposition of wills, which is itself a form of monstrosity. As Timothy Beal frames it, "it takes a monster to kill a monster,"[655] in Hobbes's model it takes monstrous terror (in the form of political absolutism) to eliminate the monstrous terror (chaotic anarchy) that stems from the strife of human desire. Considering the historical context of Hobbes, his state (Leviathan) theory certainly reflects the societal concern of social chaos and anachy in that time.[656]

In addition to the metaphor of "Artificiall Man," the political Leviathan is also envisioned by Hobbes as the "Mortall God." While the idea of "Artificiall Man" emphasizes the incorporation of individual wills in a political body, the notion of "Mortall God" bespeaks the transcendence of this ruling polity over the populace:

> The only way to erect such a common power...is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, but plurality of voices, unto one will; which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person; and every one to own, and acknowledge himself to be author of whatsoever he that so beareth their person, shall act, or accuse to be acted, in those things which concern the common peace and safety; and therein to submit their wills, every one to his will, and their judgments, to his judgment...This done, the multitude so united in one person, is called a COMMONWEALTH, in Latin CIVITAS. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god, to which we owe under the immortal God, our peace and defence. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him, that by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all to peace at home...as he shall think expedient...[657]

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[655] Timothy Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 18.

[656] In terms of historical context, Hobbes wrote his *Leviathan* in the midst of drastic social changes and political turmoil during his eleven-year exile. In particular, he witnessed the chaotic anarchy in England in the English Civil War (1642–51 CE) as part of the political instability that pervades the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe.

[657] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 132.

While the originally mythic Leviathan in the biblical tradition is demythologized to a mere human reality by the concept of "Artificiall Man," it seems to be "deified" again by the notion of "Mortall God" which presents it as the human representation of God's authority. Given the weakness of human instincts,[658] humanity would need a mortal God—the commonwealth—to protect them from destruction. As Horst Bredekamp points out, Hobbes espouses that humanity "must create in this world a mortal God for herself to control her own lust for profit, fame and murder (Gewinn-, Ruhm- und Mordgelüste)…a power that understands how to suppress the human instinct for destruction. This power is the state, symbolized in the Leviathan."[659] Highlighting its constructed nature, Hobbes construes "Leviathan as a giant humanoid automation (humanoiden Riesenautomaten)."[660] Given the assumption that the commonwealth represents divine sovereignty, Hobbes maintains that it should be empowered absolutely.

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[658] In what Hobbes terms as "the fundamental law of nature," he states that every human has the natural disposition to fight over what one desires. As every person pursues things out of one's own desire, it would engender insecurity and competitveness in the society, which in turn entails war among humans.

[659] Horst Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan: Zur Politischen Ikonologie eines Monstrums," *TranState Working Papers*, no. 98 (Bremen: Sfb 597 „Staatlichkeit im Wandel", 2009), 29.

[660] Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan," 29.

Fig. 43. Frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651), by Abraham Bosse.

Hobbes's reappropriation of the biblical concept of Leviathan is well illustrated in the engraved frontispiece on the title page of his book (Fig. 43). In contrast to the monstrously threatening image in the Hebrew Bible, Leviathan is portrayed in this iconography as a giant prince-like figure who rises from the sea to the sky and looms over a settled countryside. Above his crown at the top inscribes a text which is taken from Vg.–Job 41:24 (= MT 41:25 [33]), *non est super terram potestas quae conparetur ei* ("There is no power on earth that can compare to it"). While Leviathan appears as a mighty sea-monster in Job, it is now reinterpreted as an unrivaled giant sovereign who strives up out of the water. In particular, the unchallengeable power and authority of Leviathan over the settlement are signified by the sword and crozier in his hands, which substantiate his image as the "Mortall God." Manifesting himself as the "Artificiall Man," the gigantic political body of Leviathan is composed of a multitude of small bodies of faceless people—which symbolizes the populace—under his rulership.

As inferred from this conception of Leviathan (as a commonwealth), it appears that Hobbes follows a less known etymological tradition of the Hebrew *liwyātān*, in which the Hebrew term is derived from the root √*lwy*, meaning "to join or unite"—rather than "to twist, bend, coil" as traditionally assumed (see Section 1.2.1). Noel Malcolm suggests that this etymological tradition can be traced back to Jerome, who relates the Hebrew word to the verbal stem *lawah* "to join" and takes it to mean "addition," "increase," or "excess."[661] This might in turn have contributed to the interpretive tradition shared by Francisco Ribera and Juan de Pineda (ca. late sixteenth century), according to which Leviathan can connote the "joining together of society."[662] The association with human society is finally concretized in

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[661] Noel Malcolm, "The Name and Nature of Leviathan: Political Symbolism and Biblical Exegesis," *Intellectual History Review* 17/1 (2007): 30.
[662] Noel Malcolm, "Some Features of the English *Leviathan*," in *Leviathan*, vol. 1: *Editorial Introduction* (ed.

Hobbes's political reception of Leviathan.

Contrary to the biblical tradition which tends to characterize Leviathan as a chaos monster, Hobbes regards Leviathan as not so much of satanic nature, but instead a highly esteemed and even essential institution for regulating human passions (that would otherwise lead to anarchic chaos). In this Hobbes has parted from the normative Christian reception that associates Leviathan negatively with the Devil, and transformed an originally monstrous creature to a humanoid living automation. The biblical Leviathan is no longer a chaos monster here, but the triumphal symbol of political order against social chaos. Given the new association of Leviathan, the commonwealth, with peace and order, Hobbes has essentially destigmatized the Joban monster.[663] In establishing a new political theory which legitimizes the power of modern state, Hobbes has adopted a traditionally monstrous symbol and transformed it into something positive and even heroic.

Indeed, in the historical-political context of Hobbes, his *Leviathan* has antagonistic implications for the ecclesiastical institutions and practices of his time which are based on the biblical narrative.[664] Specifically, it is a work of polemic which is directed in part against the contemporary Catholic Church. While the Church had long claimed authority over the public domain and secular power with its theocratic aspirations, Hobbes refers to the Church and its Christendom as "the kingdom of darkness" that would undermine commonwealths.[665] From

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id.; Oxford, 2012), 121–22.

[663] Following Hobbes, the Parisian Capuchin monk Jacques Boulduc (born about 1580 CE) formulates the human community in a way that Leviathan is a symmonym for the kings and rulers, in which the subjects come together as parts of their body: "Kings and rulers are called Leviathan, insofar each of them is the head of a mystical and coherent body made up of many different, joined-together limbs; This means that it is the main part on which the life and strength of all others depend." (see Jacques Boulduc, *Commentaria in librum Job* [Paris, 1637], 2:928). Turning the word into a general epithet for a king, Boulduc fully separates "Leviathan" from the long-held negative association with Satan.

[664] Patricia Springborg, "Hobbes's Biblical Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth," *Political Theory* 23/7 (1995): 353–75 argues that Hobbes's subversive use of the biblical image of Leviathan is itself a counter-reformative move against both Catholic and Protestant Christianity. From an exegetical point of view, Hobbes's adoption of the biblical monster as an allegory for his political thesis goes against the the Protestant exegetes, who were—in defining themselves against the Catholics—eschewing the practice of allegorical interpretation.

[665] Ad de Bruijne, "Modern Political Society as Leviathan: Interpretation and Application of Thomas Hobbes' Use of a Biblical Symbol," in *Playing with Leviathan: Interpretation and Reception of Monsters from the Biblical World*, ed. Koert van Bekkum, Jaap Dekker, Henk van de Kamp and Eric Peels (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 217.

the perspective of Hobbes, a transnational Church poses a foreign power to the state that would detract its authority and autonomy in governance. Given his conviction that appeal to the Pope would sow the seed of internal conflict, Hobbes castigates that the "superstitious Catholics" would do nothing good but bring about warfare in the state, which in turn threatens societal peace and order.[666] Having gone against the transnational doctrine of the Church by advocating for the privatization of religion,[667] Hobbes makes a case in his work that the Church should be subordinated to the authority of Leviathan (the commonwealth), which he believes is the perfect form of politics.[668] In asserting that the Mosaic regulations in the biblical tradition are normative only in the context of ancient Israel,[669] Hobbes was determined to sever the influence of the Church from secular politics and public affairs.

In order to prevent strife and warfare, the Church should, to Hobbes, no longer claim a divinely legitimized public authority that overrules the magistrate.[670] Rather, he insists that all religious beliefs and ideas, which are thought to stem from human anxiety, need to be regulated by a political sovereign.[671] Hobbes argues further that the rights of all individuals—regardless of their religious status and ecclesiastical position—should be placed under the sovereignty of the state. In assuming rulership over every individual in its domain, the commonwealth serves not only as the head of the state, but also that of the Church. As the state takes up authority over ecclesiastical affairs, Hobbes's Leviathan becomes an

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[666] Peters, "Introduction," 8.

[667] As Jeffrey L. Morrow, "*Leviathan* and the Swallowing of Scripture: The Politics behind Thomas Hobbes' Early Modern Biblical Criticism," *Christianity and Literature* 61/1 (2011): 44–45 comments, religion must, for Hobbes, be privatized in order to safeguard peace in the society, for "religious violence does not come from people *holding* various religious convictions, but rather, it comes from people *acting* on religious convictions."

[668] Morrow, "*Leviathan* and the Swallowing of Scripture," 37.

[669] De Bruijne, "Modern Political Society as Leviathan," 222. In a more positive sense, Hobbes considers the constellation of God's provisional earthly kingdom in Israel to be a guide for modern political reflection. Specifically, he argues that the Old Testament "demonstrates the Israelites had a sovereign kingdom much like the sovereign state" in his age (Morrow 2011, 42). In his political-theological discourse, Hobbes affirms that the state in its secular character can be God's instrument while warning against putting this on a par with God's eschatological kingdom.

[670] Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA, 2010),122–30.

[671] Sarah Mortimer, "Christianity and Civil Religion in Hobbes's *Leviathan*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Hobbes*, ed. Al P. Martinich and Kinch Hoekstra (Oxford University Press, 2016).

anti-Catholic symbol that polemicizes against papal power and religious propaganda. In rejecting any public influence of the Christian narrative and the Church, Hobbes essentially launches into a refutation of the whole Christian legacy in the Western world.

Hobbes's reception of Leviathan can be understood to be a modern struggle for social order against monstrous chaos in the political arena. His belief in political absolutism was presumably shaped by the lasting "Wars of Religion" in the seventeenth century, and his personal experience in the English Civil War (1642–51 CE), when he witnessed no sovereign in place to unite the society amidst the violent anarchy in England. The continuing wars of religion, especially the Thirty Years War (1618–48 CE), not only added to the political instability and social disorder, but they also promoted the spread of moral relativism among humanistic intellectuals and political leaders.[672] Hobbes's political theory of an absolute monarch—by consent and not by divine right—serves to address the contemporary societal need for individuals to be protected from each other. Read in light of this context, Hobbes's *Leviathan* was meant to be a remedy to the chaotic anarchy and moral degeneration which he thought is due in large part to the transnational Catholic Church of his day. In a sense, Hobbes's replacement of the Church with Leviathan as a quasi-divine polity represents a heterodox theology which promotes secular politics in place of intrusive religious authority.

6.1.2 Hobbes's Behemoth as an Enemy of Leviathan

Hobbes's reception of Behemoth, the other Joban monster, manifests itself in his last book on politics entitled *Behemoth*,[673] also known as *The Long Parliament*. Written in his advanced age, Hobbes completed this work—basically a criticism of the English Civil War—in around 1670 CE as a sequel to his famous political treatise *Leviathan*. While Behemoth and Leviathan are commonly understood to be parallel monsters in the biblical

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[672] Richard Tuck, *Hobbes* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 8.
[673] Full title—*Behemoth: The History of the Causes of the Civil Wars of England, and of the Counsels and Artifices by which They Were Carried on from the Year 1640 to the Year 1660*.

tradition, Hobbes's Behemoth is introduced as a counter-image of and, indeed, an adversary to Leviathan in the book. Specifically, the monstrosity of Behemoth was taken up to symbolize the Parliament, a major rebellious force against Leviathan, the state.[674] As Bredekamp sums up, "while (Hobbes's) Leviathan represents the state-protected sphere of peace, (his) Behemoth stands for rebellion and civil war."[675] Such antagonistic overtones may find expression in the iconography (originally by William Blake) of the title page of the edition by Stephen Holmes (1990), in which Behemoth and Leviathan are set to dwell in separate yet defined spheres (Fig. 44).[676]
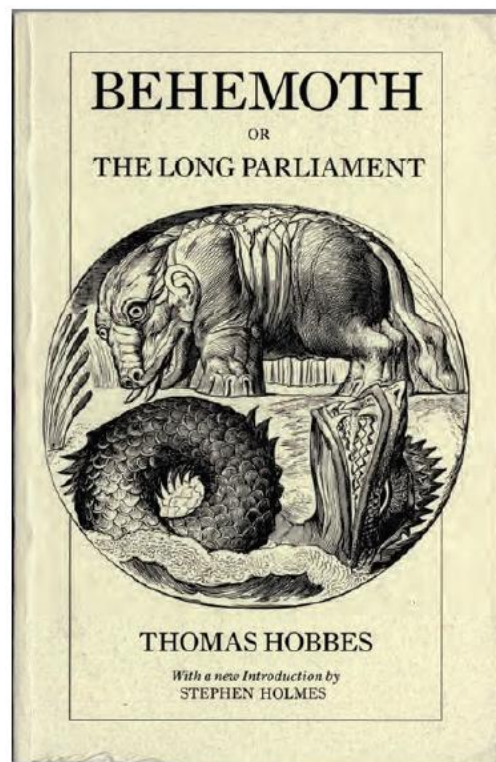
Fig. 44. Title page of Thomas Hobbes's *Behemoth* (Stephen Holmes' edition, 1990).

Contrary to the political ideal that Hobbes envisions in *Leviathan*, his *Behemoth* reveals how the Parliament constitutes a dangerous alternative to the state sovereign and the

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[674] Behemoth has often been used as a political symbol in the modern age, an exemplar of which is found in Franz Leopold Neumann, *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933–1944* (orig. 1942; reprint, 1983).
[675] Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan," 31.
[676] An iconography borrowed from William Blake's representation of the two Joban beasts (1805, 1825).

community it seeks to build. Through a dialogue form that engages with the history of the civil war, Hobbes expresses sorrow and disappointment with the turn of events in the years of warfare that led to the breakdown of the government of England. As the civil war deprived the world of order and peace that Hobbes envisions for the ideal society, the monstrous Behemoth is said to embody a sense of fear, angst, or despair harbored by the author towards the loss of security and authority (symbolized by Leviathan). In a chaotic historical era, the biblical symbols of Leviathan and Behemoth became literary-rhetorical means by which to convey the societal anxiety about the perceived threat to world order.

In the hand of Hobbes, the two Joban monsters in the biblical tradition are both demythologized and politicized into contemporary political symbols. Whereas Leviathan is transformed into a positive figure of hegemonic power (in the form of state government) that prevents war and chaos, it is confronted by the monstrosity of Behemoth which represents the Parliament and any rebellious forces that threaten the sovereign. Evidently Hobbes has reappropriated the biblical monsters in his theory for socio-political ends, which in turn reinforces his absolutist political position.

6.2   The Monster as Romantic Return of the Repressed[677]: Blake's Joban Beasts

William Blake (1757–1827 CE), an influential figure in the history of poetry and visual art of the Romantic period,[678] produced a range of art work that involves a heavy use of symbols,[679] including his illustrations of the biblical Behemoth and Leviathan. As a

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[677] An idea inspired by Mark R. Sneed's address of the Romantic perspectives on the beasts in his *Taming the Beast: A Reception History of Behemoth and Leviathan*, Studies of the Bible and Its Reception 12 (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2022).

[678] In opposition to the rational thinking of the Enlightenment, Romantics often seek what is called "*the Sublime* experiences," which, whether in nature or in art, inspire awe and reverence and an emotional understanding that transcends rational thought and words or language, and this in turn gives us a humbling sense of the wonder and majesty of the natural world. Speaking in a religious sense, the romantics were seeking a deity who may be reflected in the sublimity of nature.

[679] Typically recognized by modern scholars as a mystic or mythicist, Blake views nature as human-like and spirit-filled. Rejecting the Enlightenment's prioritization of reason over imagination, Blake is said to represent a "romantic" reaction to the enlightened thinkers, empiricist scientists and materialistic philosophers of his day.

romanticist, Blake was deeply religious in the sense that he felt a strong need to animate the nature with divine imagination, which he believes is inherent in the human mind.[680] He is said to embrace human imagination as "the body of God"[681] and "human existence itself."[682] Rather than considering the Bible as factual records or moral teachings, Blake sees it as a stimulant of imagination—which he terms "intellectual inspiration."[683] While the trending historical critical method tends to demythologize biblical images and discourses—including those of the Joban beasts, Blake was committed to remythologizing the "historicized" biblical material as a "romantic" response. Often cited as examples of modern reception in biblical scholarship, Blake's artwork allows a great deal of room for interpretation and reimagination. In particular, his paintings on Behemoth and Leviathan have constituted a valuable source of inspiration in the reception scholarship of the Joban beasts.

6.2.1 Blake's Vision of the Joban Beasts

Blake's reception of the Joban beasts may be speculated from his two pieces of artwork on Behemoth and Leviathan—one in watercolor (1805–10) and another in engraving (1825). In the watercolor version (Fig. 45), the monsters of Behemoth and Leviathan are represented in a round chamber in the lower part of the illustration, which is actually the cosmos. On the upper side (above the globe), God is pointing downwards (at the chamber) as a heavenly father who is accompanied by two angels on both sides forming an arch of clouds, whereas the human figures below God—Job, his wife, and his three friends (Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar)—are crouching under the celestial arch as they look at the monstrous chamber silently.

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[680] As Lee Damrosch, *Eternity's Sunrise: The Imaginative World of William Blake* (New Haven, Conn.: YUP, 2015), 234 comments, to Blake, "only a full, living incarnation of the divine within the everyday could render it bearable. Yet that divine spirit must also be fully human." In short, Blake believes that the divine constitutes the spiritual dimension of humanity, as "all deities reside in the human heart."
[681] William Butler Yeats, *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats* (BiblioBazaar, 2007), 85.
[682] Mona Wilson, *The Life of William Blake* (The Nonesuch Press, 1927), 167.
[683] Christopher Rowland, *Blake and the Bible* (New Haven: YUP, 2010), 3.
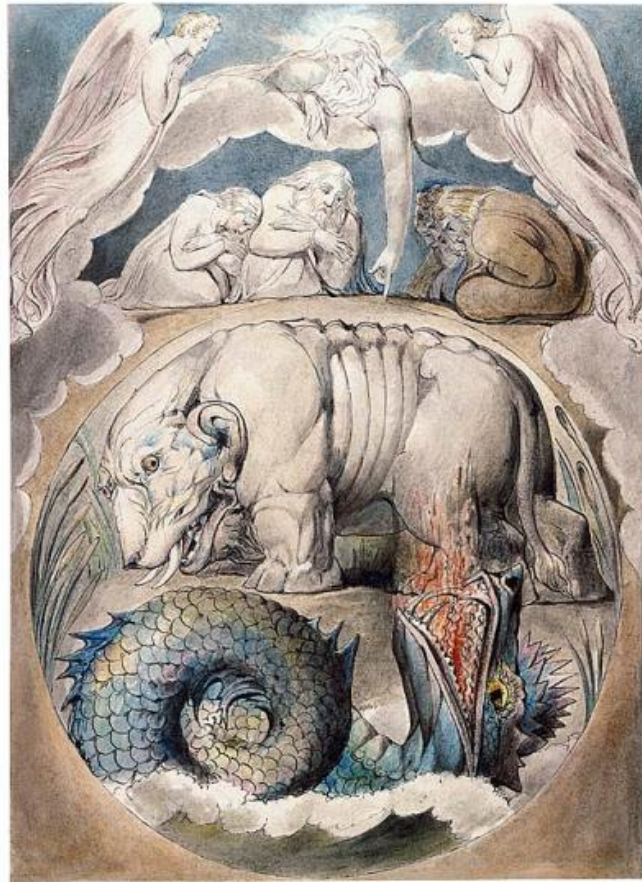
Fig. 45. William Blake, *Behemoth and Leviathan*, pen and ink with watercolor, ca. 1805–10. The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, acc. no. 2001.77.

In the upper portion of the round chamber, Behemoth is portrayed as a massive pachyderm on the land. The monster is, by and large, imagined in accordance with the biblical descriptions, expecially Job 40:15–17 where Behemoth is featured with a strong back, muscular belly, cedar-like tail, and braided leg tendons.[684] The vest-like wickerwork that spans its entire backbone from head to tail is possibly derived from Job 40:18, where Behemoth's bones are compared to metallic blocks that serve to signify the beast's extraordinary strength. Also, the intimidating pointed tusks of Behemoth in the portrayal recall "its swords" in Job 40:19, which some scholars understand to be a weapon of Behemoth. As for the landscape elements illustrated around the monstrous figure, including

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[684] Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan," 5.

the lotus branches that frame both sides of the creature, as well as the vague representations of grass, rock or tree formations under its belly, Bredekamp notes that they may serve to reflect the aquatic domain of Behemoth as described in Job 40:22–23.[685]

As the counterpart of Behemoth, Leviathan is represented in the lower part of the chamber as a fire-breathing serpentine dragon which is writhing in the sea. The perceived monstrosity of Leviathan as a giant aquatic monster in the painting is consistent with the biblical depictions in Job 41, most notably its fire-breathing mouth (41:11–13 [19–21]), terrifying jaws and teeth (41:5–6 [13–14]), the tightly-joined scales on its body (41:7–9 [15–17]), and the sharp spikes under its belly (41:22 [30]). Subtly, in accord with the descriptions in Job 41:23–24 [31–32], Blake's Leviathan appears to create some roaring of the sea with its unsettling movements.

Apparently Blake's iconographic representation was meant to invoke the recognized biblical tradition of the divine discourse in Job 40-41. In particular, echoing with the Joban context which concerns divine relevation with the monsters, God's pointing gesture in Blake's painting hints that the monsters in the chamber come to reveal something about the divine truth.

The paradoxical motif of divine revelation through the monsters is more explicitly conveyed in Blake's engraved version of the Joban beasts (Fig. 46). While this work is basically a replicate of the watercolor version, it is unique in that the illustration is framed with various inscriptions from the book of Job.[686] In particular, the top margin is captioned, "Can any understand the spreadings of the Clouds the noise of his Tabernacle" (Job 36:29), and the left margin, "Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud He scattereth the bright cloud also it is turned about by his counsels" (Job 37:11–12). The imagery of "clouds" in these captions conveys a sense of celestial reality which agrees with the motif of divine

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[685] Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan," 6.
[686] Iconographically, the frame is featured with two bearded, winged old men on the upper corners, whereas the lower corners are embraced by two eagles with open wings.

revelation.
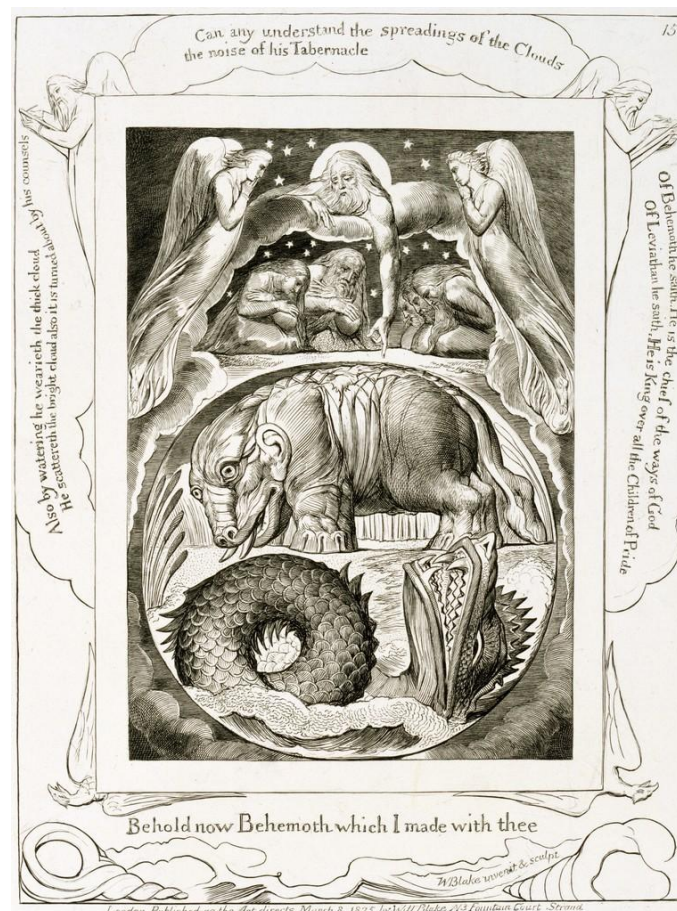
Fig. 46. William Blake, *Behemoth and Leviathan*, engraving, ca. 1825. Tate Gallery, London, ref. A00026.

The inscription at the bottom (which serves as the caption of the whole engraving) reads "Behold now Behemoth which I made with thee," a quote from Job 40:15 that begins the Behemoth–Leviathan discourse in Job 40–41. The line in effect invites the viewer to look to the monster, whose created monstrosity may point to some mystery of God. The revealing nature of the monsters is further implied in the inscription on the right, "Of Behemoth he saith. He is the chief of the ways of God; Of Leviathan he saith. He is King over all the Children of Pride," which is a combination of Job 40:19 and 41:26 [34]. The quoted biblical texts serve to encapsulate the cosmological and, indeed, theological significance of Behemoth and Leviathan as God's very creation.

Tantalizingly, Blake's romantic rendering of the Joban beasts has prompted many Blake scholars to speculate on his own reception of the monstrous behind the illustration. Berdekamp, for example, believes that Blake's Behemoth and Leviathan are, as is typical in Christian reception, embodiments of the power of Satan.[687] Specifically, based on the observation that Behemoth occupies the land and Leviathan fills the water, Berdekamp proposes that they point to the "two elementary principles of the fallen world," which are embodied by "the tyrants of the empires and the high priests of the Church" respectively.[688] Similarly, Northrup Frye concretizes Blake's Joban monsters as "the power of man that makes for tyranny rather than civilization."[689] Berdekamp's hypothesis also receives support from Katherine Low's comments that "as long as (Blake's) Leviathan and Behemoth wage war in the world, spiritual peace remains unlikely."[690] It is therefore not uncommon among Blake scholars that his Joban monsters were thought as references to satanic power in the world, specifically tyrant institutions as its earthly manifestations.

Still, there are other Blake specialists who prefer to take a more ambivalent perspective on Blake's representation of the Joban monsters. Christopher Rowland, for instance, notes that the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan in Blake's paintings are indeed constrained and encapsulated in a well-confined sphere.[691] Apart from symbolizing the womb of God's creation, the enclosed chamber, for Rowland, signifies God's ultimate control over the monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan—even they (especially Leviathan) appear mighty and undomesticated. As hinted by the inscriptions as discussed, the Joban monsters appear to represent the sublimity of God's creation and hence testify to the omnipotence of God, their Creator. Indeed, a positive appraisal of the monstrous creatures is discernible in the

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[687] Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan," 7.
[688] Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan," 9.
[689] Northrup Frye, "Blake's Readings of the Book of Job (1–2)," in *The Collected Works of Northrup Frye*, vol. 16, *Northrup Frye on Milton and Blake*, ed. Alvin A. Lee and Jean O'Grady (Toronto: UOTP, 2005), 377.
[690] Katherine Low, *The Bible, Gender, and Reception History: The Case of Job's Wife*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 172.
[691] Rowland, *Blake and the Bible*, 53–55.

illustration when the human characters seem to be looking in awe at the monsters in the direction of God's finger. Under the rubric of creation, Blake's illustration reflects more of harmony than discord—that each created species, whether humans or monsters, has its own designation in creation under the same sovereign God. Read in this light, Behemoth and Leviathan in Blake's vision are—rather than satanic embodiments—actually part of the divine economy in the world.

One of the implications in this reading is that perceived monstrosity in the world appears to be part of the fabric of the cosmos and even of the divine. Unsettlingly, the God that Blake envisions here is perhaps participating in, or at least being responsible for, the monstrous nature of these beasts.[692] As Gerald West comments, "the images and the text (in Blake's engraving) seem to be accepting of, rather than resistant to, the mystery of bounded power and violence."[693] While this reception presupposes a degree of ambiguity between the monstrous and the divine, it is in line with Blake's mystical worldview that is manifest in his "The Tyger" (1794), a poem which he composed prior to the paintings. In particular, the line "Did he (God) who made the Lamb make thee (the Tyger)?" communicates Blake's ambivalence about the fact that both the predator and the prey is made by the same God.[694] Read in light of his poem, Blake could have meant in the illustration that not only did God create on earth the more vulnerable and domesticated species (as the prey), but he has also made the monstrous creatures Behemoth and Leviathan (as the predator). For Blake, there seems to be paradoxical sides of the divine, such that God would accommodate satanic power and monstrous forces at his own disposal. The perceived ambivalence in Blake's representation of the Joban monsters attests to monster theory that the boundary between the

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[692] Romantic writers and artists were, in fact, the first to put forth the radical possibility of reading both God and humans as imperfect.

[693] Gerald West, "Behold now Behemoth, which I Made with Thee," from the website *The Visual Commentary on Scripture* (*VCS*): https://thevcs.org/behemoth-and-leviathan/behold-now-behemoth-which-i-made-with-thee.

[694] Lee Damrosch, *Eternity's Sunrise: The Imaginative World of William Blake* (New Haven, Conn.: YUP, 2015), 83.

monster and the divine is often more ambiguous than presumed.

In fact, the Joban beasts in the biblical tradition are shown to possess the capability as monsters to bridge the identities of the divine and humanity (see the discussion in Chapter 2). Apart from their capacity to signify the divine, Blake's Behemoth and Leviathan may, as noted by Frenchman Samuel Terrien, also come to reflect the reality of human beings—represented by the human characters in the illustration who are learning a lesson from the monsters. In particular, Terrien believes that the monstrosity of Blake's beasts can be read humanistically as symbols of human flaws and moral evil.[695] As a matter of fact, while Blake's pantheistic view of nature compels him to see divine aspects as part of humanity, he acknowledges at the same time that all humans have a beastly and evil side. According to Rowland, Blake views humans as being born inherently with both a godly and satanic nature.[696] Pointing to the dark side shared across humanity, the image of Blake's paintings, as Gerald West concludes, "invites the reader to recognize the kindred nature of the great beasts, the biblical human watchers, and contemporary (human) viewers."

6.2.2 Blake's Politicized Leviathan and Behemoth

It is worth noting that Blake has also featured the Joban monsters in two other watercolor paintings, in which the monstrous Leviathan and Behemoth are represented with contemporary political figures, namely, Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758–1805 CE), a British flag officer in the Royal Navy, and former British Prime Minister William Pitt (1759–1806 CE) respectively. Presented with political overtones, the biblical beasts are essentially politicized in the hand of Blake.

In the painting titled "The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan" (ca. 1805) (Fig. 47), Leviathan, pictured as a serpentine dragon, is winding around the figure of Nelson in a

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[695] Frenchman Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Towards a New Biblical Theology* (1978; reprint, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 215–17.

[696] Rowland, *Blake and the Bible*, 79.

counterclockwise direction from the top right. Not only is the monstrous Leviathan strangling a number of people with the entanglements of its body, but its dragon head on the right is also devouring a person voraciously with its mouth. As an unsparing predator, the monstrous launches savage attack on the people around Nelson, who represent the European nations that the British defeated during the Napoleonic War.[697]

Fig. 47. William Blake, *The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan*, tempera on canvas, ca. 1805. Tate Gallery, London, ref. N03006.

Notably, the figure of Nelson, who is almost naked and represented with a halo in the center, seems to be playing the role of a dragon-tamer in taking control of the monstrous body of Leviathan. In particular, he is manipulating a bundle of snakes in his right hand, with his left hand holding a ribbon that goes loosely around the monster's neck. With the heroic

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[697] Ben Pollitt, "Blake, The spiritual form of Nelson guiding Leviathan," from the website *Khan Academy*: https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/romanticism/romanticism-in-england/a/blake-the-spiritual-form-of-nelson-guiding-leviathan.

appearance of Nelson who—hailed as one of the founding heroes in the British national history—is exercising control over a terrifying and chaos-inducing serpent, Blake seems to be celebrating the British naval supremacy over the European nations in that historical context.

However, Blake's intended message through this iconography may have been more complicated than what is taken at face value. Indeed, given that Blake was a pacifist,[698] he might actually mean for the painting to be a critique, rather than an endorsement of the British imperial project. As some Blake experts have pointed out, the ribbon that is loosely tied around Leviathan's neck may mean a casual kind of guidance,[699] which signifies that the figure of Nelson is actually guiding Leviathan to find its prey. Read in this light, the British national hero is actually not subjugating a chaos monster; rather, he is disconcertingly siding with Leviathan as an ally. Blake's disapproval of the figure of Nelson, as Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin suggest, might be expressed implicitly in the nudity of the character which is a signature element of the classical art of ancient Greece and Rome—an Empire that Blake had always despised.[700] In addition, Blake's criticism of the "monstrosity" of Nelson may as well be communicated through the use of dark colors and claustrophobic treatment of space, which lends a nightmarish quality to the painting.[701] On the flip side, the contorted and agonized expressions of the defeated victims, who stand in stark contrast to the calm, dignified Nelson, may convey Blake's sympathy for the prey. Though it is extremely difficult to ascertain Blake's intentions behind his illustration, the artwork itself reflects enough oddities and tensions that render it tantalizingly ambiguous with much room for interpretation. The perceived ambiguity of the character in the painting attests to monster theory that it is not always easy to tell the hero and the monster apart.

In a counterpart portrait, titled "The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth" (ca. 1809)

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[698] Pollitt, "Blake, The spiritual form of Nelson guiding Leviathan."
[699] Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan," 10–11.
[700] Hermione de Almeida and George H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India*, British Art and Visual Culture since 1750 New Readings (Burlington: 2005), 279.
[701] Pollitt, "Blake, The spiritual form of Nelson guiding Leviathan."

(Fig. 48), the massive Behemoth (bottom-left) is headed by the former British Prime Minister William Pitt, who is featured with an even bigger and more splendid halo than that of Nelson in the previous iconography. As Behemoth rises out of a burning river below Pitt, the monstrous manifests its terror by swallowing a row of people with its gaping mouth. As is the case with Leviathan and Nelson, Behemoth appears to act under the authority of Pitt who, rather than weighing it down, is touching the monster sympathetically as he floats on it with his right toe. Just like Nelson is holding a ribbon in his hand, Pitt is holding a bridle rope in his right hand that reaches Behemoth's neck. Resembling Nelson's loose ribbon, Pitt's rope is untensioned and curved, so the terrifying monster is neither held back nor defeated. Rather, the monstrous Behemoth is set free by the royal figure. Corresponding to the relationship betwen Nelson and Leviathan, Pitt's release of Behemoth in the painting reflects that the supposed "hero" is indeed siding with the monstrous force.

Fig. 48. William Blake, *The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth*, tempera and gold on canvas, ca. 1809. Tate Gallery, London, ref. N01110.

It is noteworthy that Blake illustrated two giant muscular figures behind Pitt: whereas the figure on the left is holding a crescent sickle, the one on the right is bending over a plow. As Bredekamp aptly notes, the giant figures, especially the warlike plowman, are personifications of Pitt's war for colonial power against Britain's enemies and rival,[702] particularly Spain and France. Indeed, Blake himself describes Pitt in his exhibition (1809) as "that Angel who, pleased to perform the Almighty's orders, rides on the whirlwind, directing the storms of war. He is ordering the Reaper to reap the Vine of the Earth, and the Plowman to plow up the Cities and Towers,"[703] apparently with a negative tone concerning Pitt's expansionism and military campaigns. As Lee Damrosch comments, Blake's paintings are "covert attacks on Britain's counterrevolutionary war policies."[704] Together with the horrifying Behemoth, the aggressive giants signify the monstrosity of Pitt and the belligerence of the British empire under his leadership, which Blake disapproves implicitly.

While Blake scholars have, by and large, recognized the political implications of Leviathan and Behemoth in the two paintings in association with the combative Nelson and Pitt respectively,[705] some view the representations in more of a theological way—the Joban monsters are meant to signify the evilness of the political leaders, who pose themselves as the enemy of God. As Bredekamp remarks, "for Blake, Nelson and Pitt, as the figments of Leviathan and Behemoth, embody the empire as the power of Satan which God summons in order to show his enemies his own overwhelming power."[706] Read in a theologizing light,

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[702] Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan," 12.
[703] De Almeida and Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance*, 278.
[704] Lee Damrosch, *Eternity's Sunrise: The Imaginative World of William Blake* (New Haven, Conn.: YUP, 2015), 37.
[705] Even so, Blake specialists have not reached a consensus on the reception of Blake's politicized Leviathan and Behemoth. Paul Barlow, for example, takes a more ambivalent perspective and reads Nelson and Pitt, the political leaders illustrated in the paintings, as neither true heroes, nor villains, nor embodiments of both. To Barlow, monstrous reading is but a matter of perspective which depends largely on one's socio-political position. See Paul Barlow, "The Aryan Blake: Hinduism, Art and Revelation in William Blake's *Pitt* and *Nelson* Paintings," *Visual Culture in Britain* 12/3 (2011): 277–92.
[706] Horst Bredekamp, "Behemoth als Partner und Feind des Leviathan: Zur Politischen Ikonologie eines Monstrums," *TranState Working Papers*, no. 98 (Bremen: Sfb 597 „Staatlichkeit im Wandel", 2009), 11.

Blake's disapproval of the imperialism through the monsters becomes a form of political theology: in identifying with the biblical monsters, imperial expansionism and militarism see pride in their monstrosity only to be defeated by the sovereign God.

6.3 The Monster That Always Escapes: Melville's *Moby-Dick*

Moby-Dick (or *The Whale*, 1851)[707], a novel written by the American writer Herman Melville (1819–1891 CE), presents itself as another modern reception of the biblical Leviathan. Apart from its many allusions to the book of Job (especially the Leviathan discourse in the divine speech), the whales in the book, including the ever-escaping Moby Dick (the great white whale)—the nemesis of Captain Ahab, are referred to as Leviathan(s).[708] The identification can be traced back to the late medieval times when Leviathan was typically interpreted[709] as a whale.[710]

In the book, Leviathan is first alluded to at the beginning of the narrative when Father Mapple, a Calvinistic preacher, identifies the sea creature that swallowed Jonah[711] as a

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[707] The basic plot of the book is about the sailor Ishmael's narration of the voyage and whaling hunt undertaken by Ahab, captain of the whaling ship *Pequod*, and his crew. Precisely, Captain Ahab went on an obsessive pursuit for the monstrous whale Moby Dick, who bit off his leg previously.

[708] In this novel, Leviathan occurs about 80 times, where it always serves as a synonym for a/the whale.

[709] Especially by Christian writers.

[710] The longstanding tradition of interpreting Leviathan as a whale often surfaces in modern literature, such as John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667). As a biblical epic that tells the story of the Fall of Man, it describes the rebellion of Satan—in the person of Lucifer—against God and compares Leviathan with Satan's body. Leviathan is mentioned twice in the poem, with the first in the following lines:
    By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-Beast
    Leviathan, which God of all his works
    Created hugest that swim th'Ocean stream:
    Him haply slumbering on the Norway foam. (Book I, 192–204)
While the phrase 'Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam' may be an allusion to a whale, Milton's reference of Leviathan as a whale is more explicit in its second mention:
    And bended Dolphins play: part huge of bulk
    Wallowing unweidie, enourmous in their Gate
    Tempest the Ocean: there *Leviathan*
    Hugest of living Creatures, on the Deep
    Strecht like a Promonitorie sleeps or Swimmes
    And seems a moving Land, and at his Gilles
    Draws in, and at his Trunck sports out a Sea. (Book VII, 410–16)

[711] In describing the monstrous whale, Mapple cites a hymn titled "The Ribs and Terrors of the Whale" that follows the style of Jonah 2. The perceived monstrosity of the whale is in line with the balked experiences of the crew as they hunt for the whales through the narrative.

monstrous whale.[712] Melville's reception of Leviathan as a whale is most evident in chap. 81 of the novel, where he cites a number of quotations from the second divine speech in the book of Job—those that feature Leviathan—to describe Moby Dick, the great monstrous whale that always evades human capture:

'Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? Or his head with fish-spears? The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold, the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon: he esteemeth iron as straw; the arrow cannot make him flee, darts are counted as stubble; he laugheth at the shaking of a spear!' This the creature? This he? Oh! That unfulfilments should follow the prophets. For with the strength of a thousand thighs in his tail, he had run his head under the mountains of the sea, to hide himself from the *Pequod'*s fish spears! (1967, chap. 81)

The monstrosity of Moby Dick is comparable to that of Leviathan (Job 40:31 [41:7]; 41:18–21 [26–29]): even when Moby Dick is harpooned like Leviathan, it is able to defy the attack of all spears and regain its vitality promptly. Its image of "gliding at high noon through a dark blue sea, leaving a milky-way wake of creamy foam, all spangled with golden gleamings" (chap. 41)[713] also recalls the victorious posture of the monstrous Leviathan (Job 41:23–24 [31–32]). To enhance its perceived monstrosity, Melville appears to give the impression throughout the narrative that Moby Dick is ubiquitous—as a monster that always escapes and lurks for another attack, it can basically threaten the whaling ship anytime, anywhere. As the most evasive whale of all, Moby Dick is the quintessential embodiment of the devilishly invincible Leviathan.

Given Melville's identification of the whale with the Joban monster, the significance of

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[712] The identification of the great fish that swallows Jonah with Leviathan perhaps finds its root in a Jewish rabbinic tale, in which Jonah, being swallowed by the fish, travels into the depths where he finally confronts and captures Leviathan for the messianic banquet. The narrative can be found in an excerpt of *Pirqê R. El.* 10:
    Rabbi Tarphon said: That fish was specially appointed from the six days of Creation to swallow up Jonah, as it is said, "And the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah."...The fish said to Jonah, Dost thou not know that my day had arrived to be devoured in the midst of Leviathan's mouth? Jonah replied, Take me beside it, and I will deliver thee and myself from its mouth. It brought him next to Leviathan. (Jonah) said to Leviathan, On thy account have I descended to see thy abode in the sea, for, moreover, in the future will I descend and put a rope in thy tongue, and I will bring thee up and prepare thee for the great feast of the righteous. (*Pirqê R. El.* 10; Friedlander, 69–70)
[713] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; Or, The Whale*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press and the Newberry Library, 2001), 183.

chap. 32 ("Cetology") in the novel is comparable to that of the divine speech in the whirlwind in Job 40–41. As the chapter lays out Ishmael's discourse on the anatomy and science of whales and their kin, it recounts the protagonist's attempt in understanding the mystery of whales and the challenges surrounding the whale hunt. If the divine whirlwind speech on the awe-inspiring monstrosity in Job 40–41 was meant to remind Job of his inadequacy in comprehending the cosmos, the mind-blowing mystery pertaining to the whale serves a similar function as a revelation of divine power in creation which, as Pardes understands it, is a personal challenge to Ishmael's competence from God the Creator.[714]

Notwithstanding the elusive mystery, Ishmael expresses his determination in "capturing" (in the sense of "understanding") Leviathan—the whale. In this the protagonist references the rhetorical questions in the Joban discourse on Leviathan, particularly from Job 40:24–41:1 [40:24–41:9]:

> To grope down into the bottom of the sea after them, to have one's hands among the unspeakable foundations, ribs, and very pelvis of the world; this is a fearful thing. What am I that I should essay to hook the nose of this *Leviathan*! The awful tauntings in Job might well appal me. Will he (the *Leviathan*) make a covenant with thee? Behold the hope of him is vain! But I have swam through libraries and sailed through oceans; I have had to do with whales with these visible hands; I am in earnest; and I will try.[715]

In asserting that "I have had to do with whales with these visible hands," Ishmael is more than ready to undertake this "hunt" of the monstrous with all the knowledge and experiences that he has as a whaler. Specifically, Ishmael resolves to "draw out" the monstrous Leviathan—not with a hook but with a pen[716]—by delving into every aspect of the creature's anatomy. Whereas Captain Ahab tries to hunt for Moby Dick physically, Ishmael strives to chase after this Leviathan by grasping the science of it intellectually. In his defiant quest for

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[714] Llana Pardes, "Job's Leviathan: Between Melville and Alter," *Proof* 27 (2007): 244.
[715] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 136.
[716] Pardes, "Job's Leviathan," 244.

the monstrous, Ishmael manifests a recalcitrant personality that refuses to accept taught truth as the final note easily. Essentially, Ishmael is protesting against normative truth: in attempting to unveil the sublime Leviathan, he comes to confront the divine personally. In this sense, Ishmael is even more daring than Job, who appears to surrender upon the divine revelation.

Despite all its perceived monstrosity, Moby Dick inspires Ishmael to conduct an in-depth investigation of the "forbidden sights" of the whale, namely, the creature's very entrails. As Pardes frames it in romantic language, "Ishmael probes the limits of human imagination in peeking at what was declared to be beyond human sight altogether."[717] The epitome of monstrosity embodied in Melville's Leviathan serves as a pointer to the otherness of divine mystery which warrants the obsessive pursuit of Ishmael. Just as the Joban Leviathan represents both monstrosity and sublimity that points to the divine (see Section 2.3), the monstrous Moby Dick signifies the ever-alluring sublime which points to the mysterious divine realm.[718] In fact, while Moby Dick is palpably demonic with its portentous appearances, Captain Ahab associates it with aspects of divinity by calling it a god (chap. 134). Like Leviathan in the biblical tradition, Melville's Leviathan is—befitting monster theory—both terrifying and fascinating, evoking fear and desire simultaneously.[719]

Given Melville is a skeptical romantic,[720] Ishmael's obsessive quest for Moby Dick may represent the religious, truth-seeking journey of Melville himself. Recognized as a "blasphemous believer,"[721] Melville believes that the deity—if ever exists—is a mystery,[722]

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[717] Pardes, "Job's Leviathan," 244.

[718] Melville may have found inspirations from the book of Job, "a work whose power lies in its unparalleled capacity to probe the limits of the imagination, of faith, justice, power, sanity, nature, and of life itself" (Pardes 2007, 242).

[719] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beauty: And Other Pre-Revolutionary Writings*, ed. David Womersley (London: Penguin, 1998) emphasizes Ishmael's attraction to Leviathan (the whale) which is manifest in his detailed description of the creature's anatomy.

[720] Melville is said to have borrowed stylistic qualities from Renaissance Humanists (e.g., Thomas Browne, Robert Burton, etc.) who adopted skeptical attitudes towards religion. In fact, Ishmael in the novel reflects the epistemological uncertainty of Renaissance humanism.

[721] Melville's faith has been characterized by doubts. He was opposed to Christian dogmatism, and he was willing to take on a more universalistic perspective on religion. While he was raised as a Calvinist, he eventually

and hence he became "eager to try out Joban impatience in every imaginable realm"[723] in his

religious quest. But just as Moby Dick always evades the hunting crew in the narrative, the

mysterious divine remains to be a tantalizingly evasive reality to Melville. In the course of

approaching the divine Other, Melville (represented by Ishmael) is well aware of the limits of

his intellectual facility and poetic feat. The great Leviathan, as Ishmael claims in "Of the

Monstrous Pictures of Whales" (chap. 55), is "that one creature in the world which must

remain unpainted to the last."[724] As Pardes succinctly sums up, "Melville's aesthetic

hermeneutic position is ultimately a paradoxical one: he both challenges the divine rhetorical

questions and admits the validity of the divine portrait of Leviathan as ungraspable."[725] As is

commonly shared among Romantic artists, the ethos reflected in Melville's work attests to

human aspirations for the divine with the acknowledged epistemological inadequacy, a

paradox embodied in the "ever-escaping" reality of Moby Dick.

Given that the mysterious divine cannot be grasped, the sublimity of Moby Dick is said

to engender religious wonderment without the traditional dogmatic reassurance. Indeed, in

the face of the monstrosity of Moby Dick, Ishmael can but proclaim "doubts of all things

earthly, and intuitions of some things heavenly; this combination makes neither believer nor

infidel, but makes a man who regards them both with equal eye" (chap. 85)[726]. Essentially,

Melville advocates in the figure of Ishmael for "a very different concept of divine vision that

is based on a more fluid and playful crossing between the heavenly and earthly spheres."[727]

With an exegetical move that allows for epistemological uncertainty, Melville's reception of

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became a Unitarian. See Llana Pardes, *Melvilles's Bibles* (Berkley: University of Califormia Press, 2008), 11–12, 24.

[722] Melville was a romantic who, like Blake, tends to remythologize Scripture and focus on its mystical and religious-aesthetic aspects. Lawrence Buell, "*Moby-Dick* as Sacred Text," in *New Essays on Moby-Dick*, ed. Richard H. Brodhead (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 55–56 argues that Melville first demythologizes Scripture by historical criticism and then remythologizes it with romanticism.

[723] Pardes, "Job's Leviathan," 242.

[724] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 264.

[725] Pardes, "Job's Leviathan," 245.

[726] Melville, *Moby-Dick*, 280.

[727] Pardes, "Job's Leviathan," 249.

the divinity can be understood as a critique of authoritative and institutional modes of religion. Rather than adopting absolutist theological convictions,[728] Melville espouses religious skepticism which—in keeping with Romanticism—not only poses challenges to the normative religion but also questions "any stabilizing attempt of authoritative mastery"[729] of the divine.[730]

On a different note, apart from religious implications, Melville's *Moby Dick* also communicates profound socio-political criticisms of modernity for the contemporary world. This is especially palpable in chap. 94 ("The Squeeze of the Hand"), in which the gigantic Leviathan (whale) is caught, dissected, and sold as a commodity in one of America's biggest whaling industries. As Ishmael recounts in detail how the whaling crew processes spermaceti that is squeezed out of the whale, the body of Leviathan becomes a symbol of monstrosity that points to the dark side of the lucrative whaling industry, not least the dire working conditions, inhuman workload for the whaling crew (who represents the socially oppressed), and the exploitativeness of the ship owner. As a marketable commodity, Leviathan is now politicized as a symbol of human misery that serves to criticize the social oppression and economic injustice that were prevalent in the contemporary whaling workforce. As a microcosm of a society, the whaling industry in turn reflects the American Industrialism in the nineteenth century. As Pardes comments, "Leviathan has an ominous dimension not only as untamed Nature but also as a commodity in an untamed American industry, the nineteenth-century precursor of the globalized industries of today."[731] Paradoxically, it is the monstrous body of Leviathan as part of the nature that prompts ones to reflect on the monstrosity of the society in the human realm.

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[728] Based on the belief that normative religion offers only a manipulative use of divine terror in the name of God, Melville disapproves of authoritative or absolute religion.

[729] Eyal Peretz, *Literature, Disaster, and the Enigma of Power: A Reading of 'Moby-Dick'* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 45.

[730] Rather than a distinct absolute entity, Melville holds that the divine is mediating between the heavenly and earthly/human realms.

[731] Pardes, "Job's Leviathan," 249.

As a romantic reception of the biblical Leviathan, Melville's *Moby Dick* comes to provoke multivalent reflections on religion, social justice, and the modern industrialized culture with the use of a monstrous symbol. While the evasive Leviathan is suggestive of a religious sense of human inadequacy in comprehending the divine, the same monstrous body contains a politically prophetic voice that critiques the cultural monstrosity of the American whaling industry, which points to human obsession with expansionism and capitalism in the modern era at large.[732]

6.4   The Monster Returns as the Epitome of Evilness: Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan*

Leviathan (2014), a renowned Russian movie by Andrey Zvyagintsev (Fig. 49),[733] constitutes one of the most recent politicized receptions of the biblical Leviathan. As the film features the political and ecclesiastical malfeasance in the country of Russia that brought about social exploitation and injustice, the monstrosity of Leviathan is illustrated in a cinematic form as a symbol of the epitome of evilness. Specifically, it connotes the corruption and oppression of the Russian regime from the perspective of marginalized Russians.[734]   As the producer Alexander Rodnyansky remarked, "it (the movie) deals with some of the most important social issues of contemporary Russia while never becoming an artist's sermon or a public statement."[735]

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[732] By connecting Melville's biblical reception with his political criticisms, Llana Pardes, *Melvilles's Bibles* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008), 121 argues that Melville seems to be critiquing those who used the Bible to legitimize Manifest Destiny and slavery in the age of antebellum America.

[733] This film has received much honorary accolades and international recognition. In 2014, it won the Best Foreign Language Film award at the 72nd Golden Globe Awards, the Asia Pacific Screen Award for Best Feature Film, and the Best Film at the London Film Festival Awards. It was also nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film at the 87th Academy Awards.

[734] Given its negative tone towards the Russian polity, church, and society, the movie has received some criticism, especially from Russian critics.

[735] Cited from John Hopewell and Elsa Keslassy, "Berlin – Pyramide Intl. Rolls Out Pre-sales on 'Leviathan,' Russian Director Andrey Zvyagintsev's Follow-Up to 'Elena,'" *Variety* (17 February 2014), available from https://variety.com/2014/film/global/berlin-pyramide-intl-rolls-out-pre-sales-on-leviathan-russian-director-andrey-zvyagintsevs-follow-up-to-elena-1201108816.
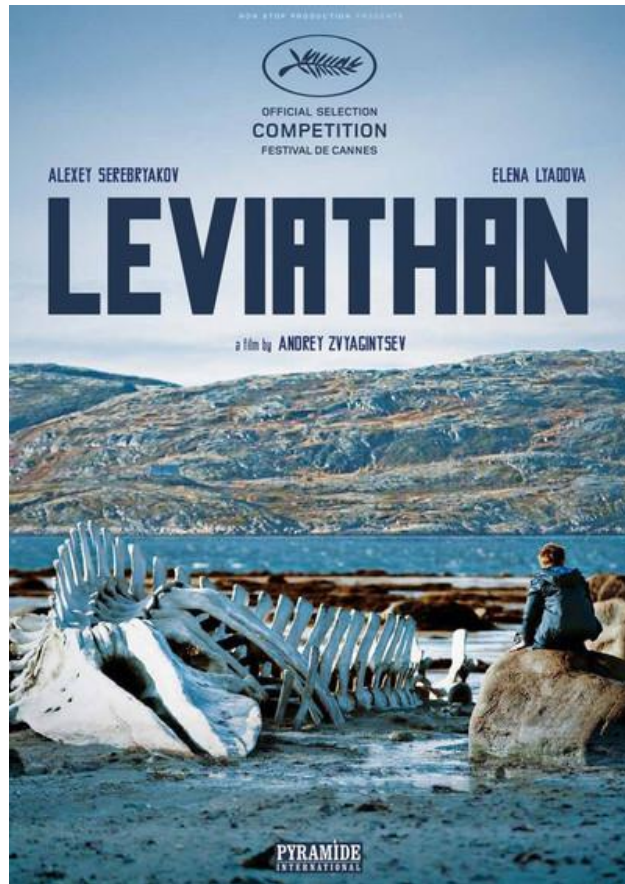
Fig. 49. An English release poster of the Russian film *Leviathan* by Andrey Zvyagintsev (2014).

In taking up the Leviathan motif, Zvyagintsev plotted a storyline which echoes with the theme of innocent suffering in the biblical narrative of Job. Inspired by a real incident,[736] the film narrates the tragic story of Kolya—the Job-like character, his second wife Lilya, and his teenage son Roma in the fictional Pribrezhny in northern Russia. As the corrupt town mayor colludes with an Orthodox bishop to expropriate the land of his house (in order to gift a bishop with a lavish church), Kolya becomes an innocent sufferer: not only does he lose his house (which is sadly torn down by bulldozers in the end), but he is also left with a broken family—his wife commits suicide following sexual infidelity, and his son looks for his own way at the edge of the community. In addition to all these, Kolya is falsely convicted of

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[736] According to Zvyagintsev, the film is based on the story of the American Marvin Heemeyer (1951–2004), who, as a car mechanic, came into conflict with the local authorities about the ownership of a strip of land. As he reacted to the wrongful judicial verdict, he drove into the town hall and the home of the former mayor with an armored bulldozer. In the end, he put an end to his life.

murdering his wife and is sentenced to a fifteen-year imprisonment. As in the Joban subtext, the movie *Leviathan* deals with the perennial human philosophical and theological enquiry of undeserved innocent suffering, but this time it is situated in the political and social context of modern Russia.

In the movie, Leviathan is a pervasive monstrous symbol for the evil partnership of state and church that exploits the lives of Kolya and his family. Throughout the story, the "monster" haunts by pointing to the avarice of those in power which, as Bob Becking notes, is among the most prominent themes in the movie.[737] This is most manifest when the mercenary bishop of the Russian Orthodox church colludes with the town mayor in chicanery to expropriate the land of Kolya's house.[738] Apparently, Leviathan serves in the movie as a symbol of monstrosity that signifies the greed of oppressive powers, which is in line with its interpretation as the epitome of evilness in Christian tradition.[739] As Leviathan is used in Hobbes's state theory as a symbol of polemic against the Church of his time, Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan* also reflects a poignant criticism of the church in contemporary Russia, in which religion is used as a political tool to consolidate power. But in contrast to Hobbes's Leviathan which symbolizes a model state that safeguards the society (see Section 6.1.1),[740] the power corruption portrayed in Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan* is, as Julia Vassilieva notes, "problematizing Hobbes's political vision and questioning the limits and excesses of power."[741]

As in the Joban narrative, the film tends to give an impression that God, if ever exists, remains silent and unconcerned about the prevalence of "Leviathan" in human society,

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[737] Bob Becking, "Leviathan at the Movies: Andrey Zvyagintsev's Film in Biblical Perspective," *Die Bibel in der Kunst/Bible in the Arts* 2 (2018): 12–13.

[738] Apart from this main plot, Becking also mentions the desire that drives Lilya to the welcoming arms of the advocate from Moscow, and the desire that brings Kolya to the bottom of his vodka bottles.

[739] In the medieval Christian tradition, the reception of Leviathan is typically associated with the evilness of the "seven deadly sins" (pride, greed, anger, gluttony, sloth, lust, and envy) which are linked to excessive desire or lust.

[740] Becking, "Leviathan at the Movies," 12 makes a remark that "the tradition that Hobbes' Leviathan contains a complaint against a meddlesome and interfering state is based on an incorrect interpretation of his work."

[741] Julia Vassilieva, "Russian Leviathan: Power, Landscape, Memory," *Film Criticism* 42/1 (2018). DOI: https://doi.org/10.3998/fc.13761232.0042.101.

specifically human machinations, corruption, and exploitation therein. In fact, the villains in the movie manage to carry out their plots unhindered, as if they are endorsed by God. Ironically, the villains prosper by means of chicanery in the end, whereas the family of Koyla—the innocent sufferer—is locked in a state of tragic chaos.[742] Although Koyla has received counsel that God would reward him back should he accept the tribulations like Job,[743] this promise is never realized in Kolya's life. In all these, God's position is ambiguous—it is doubtful if God would ever side with the innocent at all. Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan* thus portrays the experienced reality of humanity in which the moral vision of "good is rewarded with good, and evil with evil" does not hold true—it even appears to be subverted.

Zvyagintsev's movie reveals further that when religion is manipulated as a political weapon,[744] chances are that evilness would operate in the guise of godliness, rendering the latter deceptive. An exemplary scene of this is seen towards the end of the movie, when the corrupt bishop extols the virtues of God's truth in the guise of piety,[745] whereas the villain mayor, one of the bishop's audience, whispers to his little son that "God sees everything." Ironically, rather than the wretched protagonist, it is the villain characters who utter the name of God most of the time throughout the movie. With the ambivalent characterizations, the boundary between what is perceived as good and evil is largely blurred in the film, which would in turn question the held assumptions about religion and morality.

While Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan* points, by and large, to perceived evilness in the human

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[742] For example, Kolya is depicted with an indulgence in his vodka bottles, and his wife falls to the guilt of adultery.

[743] In his plight, Kolya meets a priest and and tries to ask why God is doing all these to him. The priest counsels him by quoting from the biblical book of Job that when Job accepted his fate, God rewarded him with a long and happy life.

[744] Reinier Sonneveld, "Incarnations of Death: Leviathan in the Movies," in *Playing with Leviathan: Interpretation and Reception of Monsters from the Biblical World*, ed. Koert van Bekkum, Jaap Dekker, Henk van de Kamp and Eric Peels (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 289.

[745] Ironically, the bishop urges his congregation in a sermon not to act with force or cunning but to put their trust in Christ. The perceived incongruity is even more palpable when the religious leader quotes Hobbes (a political absolutist), saying, "Freedom is knowing God's truth."

society, it is paradoxically represented as part of the magnificent nature in several scenes—in the form of whale skeletons that are deposited near the protagonist's house on the shore. The image is apparently based on the reception of Leviathan as a whale that can be traced back to the late medieval period (See Section 5.2.3.1). Paradoxically, in the context of human corruption in the film, the whale skeletons serve, as Vassilieva suggests, to direct one's attention to the beautiful nature in the world with all its hopeful prospects.[746] The presence of natural beauty signified by the remains of "Leviathan" seems to suggest that evil power is not in ultimate control. While Hobbes's Leviathan has absolute sovereignty over the society, Zvyagintsev's "Leviathan" (in the sense of evilness) is still subject to the power of nature (which points to the divine sovereign). Even living in the shadow of the "Leviathan" (corruption and evilness) in the human society, the marginalized can still find a glimpse of hope and comfort from the "Leviathan" (symbolized by the whale remains) in the nature.

6.5 A Wrap-up with Monster Theory

This chapter has examined several recognized pieces of modern reception of the Joban beasts, covering the forms of literature (Hobbes's, Melville's), visual art (Blake's), and film (Zvyagintsev's). Among the most remarkable aspects reflected in these receptions are the malleability and multivalency that the biblical Behemoth and Leviathan have taken up in the modern age. Not only have they been represented in a variety of cultural forms, but the beasts also come to serve as symbols of monstrosity that can be used to signify various realities in different contexts. Another notable facet demonstrated in these receptions is the political implications that Behemoth and Leviathan carry with respect to the author's ideology and culture. While the beasts revealed themselves as part of religious discourses in pre-modern times—especially in Jewish and Christian traditions, they have become highly politicized in the modern world and charged with the capacity to address contemporary socio-political

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[746] Vassilieva, "Russian Leviathan."

issues.

As embodiments of liminality, Behemoth and Leviathan in the age of modernity continue to occupy some sort of middle grounds that allow them to bridge various identities or realities, which commonly fall into the categories of chaos/evilness, divinity/sublimity, and humanity. While Hobbes's Leviathan and Behemoth are both symbols that represent human constructs (state government/parliament/church), his Leviathan as the Mortal God embodies a divine representative on earth, and Behemoth tends in his system to signify human evilness and chaotic potential. Blake's illustration of the Joban beasts is ambivalent enough in that they appear to represent restrained monstrosity at God's disposal that teaches humanity a lesson. His politicized Behemoth and Leviathan also come to reveal the monstrosity of the represented political figures and human empires at large. In the case of Melville's *Moby Dick*, Leviathan is employed to denote a quintessential symbol of monstrosity (the whale) in the world while pointing to some elusive reality of sublimity/divinity. Meanwhile, the monstrous Leviathan in the novel serves to symbolize the dark side of contemporary whale industry and human society at large. Finally, Zvyagintsev's movie makes use of the biblical symbol of Leviathan to convey a poignant fact that monstrosity in the sense of evilness seems to pervade the human society, with its influence being manifest even in the most sacred domain (religion). In the end it leaves an unanswered question for the viewer on whether monstrosity is indeed part of the nature, or, more uncannily, part of God himself.

As monster theory observes, the characterization and significations of the monster within a given culture often reflects the societal fears and anxieties of that culture. As a recurrent pattern of conditions shared by humanity, the monster can never be excommunicated altogether from the society but will keep returning in some new forms.[747] In a sense, constructed monsters can, as Stephen Asma notes, be understood as symbols of human

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[747] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory*, 4–6, 16, 20.

vulnerability and crisis.[748] They signify the human tendency to externalize what is considered as threat, menace, or enemy in order to keep them in check.[749] Robin Wood also points out that the real significance of monsters emerges in a period of cultural crisis and disintegration in the course of human history.[750] Where there is human vulnerability, crisis and enemy, where the monster endures as an inextricable part of human reality. The monster keeps coming back; nothing can be done, but one can only strive to keep it repressed. Psychologically speaking, the monster serves a social function as an embodiment of fear that enacts a purging of the held anxieties. Understood in this light, the Joban monsters with all their multifaceted faces in the modern world are not so much of strangers, but are projections of what humans fear and abhor amidst chaos, trials and adverse situations. As Becking concludes, "the long life of the Leviathan (and Behemoth) lasts until today because this monster offers an opportunity to give words to indistinct fears at times and could help in coping with the perennial problems of life." The life of the Joban monsters will go on as long as there are human fears and anxieties to overcome.

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[748] Stephen T. Asma, "Monsters and the Moral Imagination," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 290.
[749] Wood, "Introduction to the American Horror Film," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, 111.
[750] Wood, "Introduction to the American Horror Film," in *The Monster Theory Reader*, 121–22.

CONCLUSION

    This research project has engaged the reception history of Behemoth and Leviathan in the biblical tradition, which are featured most extensively in the last part of the book of Job. In view of the diversity and perpetuity of their receptions in history, this dissertation starts with the explorative questions: how should we account for the divergent ways people have come to receive and use them as symbols of monstrosity on some theoretical grounds? How should we articulate their existence and trajectories in human history as a religio-cultural phenomenon? Drawing on insights from contemporary monster theory, the study reveals that Behemoth and Leviathan are biblical images inasmuch as they belong to a human cultural phenomenon that represents the notion of otherness with all its ambivalent implications. Viewing the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of them as a cultural phenomenon rather than a discourse of biblical reception in a narrow sense allows us to engage it in the broader field of humanities, which in turn necessitates the use of cross-disciplinary methodologies in evaluating its psychological drives, cultural adaptations, and historical-social consequences. With the paradigm of monster theory—which is itself a blending of anthropology, psychoanalysis, philosophy and cultural studies, this study has attempted to offer not only a mere description of the history of interpretation of the Joban monsters, but also an interpretive understanding of their reception trajectories in human history.

    Serving as an interpretive lens, monster theory is most useful in teasing out the paradoxical implications of monsters and perceived monstrosity that are commonly observed across human cultures. Monsters are, according to monster theory, ambiguous, liminal constructs of otherness that enable them to signify and hence bridge various categories and identities. As such, monsters are often ambivalent in that they are simultaneously frightening and fascinating, evoking both fear and delight at the same time. More importantly, the monster—as human construct of otherness—is often revealing in the sense that it comes to

unveil something about the author and the community or culture that the author belongs to. In Timothy Beal's terms, the monster is a "paradoxical embodiment of otherness within the self," which points to some truth or reality—specifically the held fears, anxiety, despair, or fantasy—of those who construct, interpret and use the monstrous. Applying to the biblical monsters Behemoth and Leviathan, monster theory is shown to be a useful methodology in unfolding the paradoxical implications of their interpretations and receptions in the respective traditions, as summarized in the following.

Rather than being "original" monsters, Behemoth and Leviathan find their prehistory in the literary-mythological milieu of the ancient Near East—with Behemoth being recognized in the culture as bovine monsters or attributes, and Leviathan being identified in the form of a mythic serpentine sea-monster. In the paradigm of monster theory, the cultural antecedents of Behemoth and Leviathan in the region are shown to be divine-demonic phantoms in their capacity to signify both monstrous chaos and divinity. While bovine monsters and features in the ancient Near East are often represented in ways that render them intertwined with the divine domain, various cultural embodiments of Leviathan in the region signify the divine reality by playing a foil for a heroic deity in the respective mythic traditions. Understood as projected constructs of otherness, these monstrous manifestations related to Behemoth and Leviathan tend to reflect a common societal concern about chaos and cosmic instability shared across the ancient Near Eastern cultures.

Focusing on the biblical tradition per se, a close reading of the representations of Behemoth and Leviathan in Job 40–41 attests to the tenet of monster theory that monsters are liminal entities that can bridge or in effect blur various identities. With their perceived liminality, Behemoth and Leviathan point to some reality about the divine, humanity, and the world where humans inhabit. In the context of the climax of the divine speech, the Joban monsters come to challenge presupposed identities and subvert presumed hierarchical relations therein. On the one hand, their revealed monstrosity serves as a reflection of the

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divine sovereign as the wholly Other. On the other hand, their incomparable sublimity relativizes and even marginalizes humanity as the supposed culmination of creation. More poignantly, monstrosity in reference to chaos forces and evil powers appear to be part and parcel of the cosmos—the very reality of the world with which humans have to come to terms.

Read against the literary context of the book of Job, the implications of the monstrosity of Behemoth and Leviathan as "otherness within the self" are further spelled out in the perspective of ancient Israelite readers, specifically the post-exilic Judean audience, in a historically destabilizing yet formative period. In light of monster theory with insights from trauma studies, the devoted chapter on ancient Israelite reception has shown that the monstrous Behemoth and Leviathan can function as representation of chaos, rhetoric of trauma and marker of social identity that correspond to the historical-social and theological needs of the post-exilic community in that era. In the language of monster theory, the Joban monsters are understood to be Israelite constructs of otherness that mirrors the selfness of the Judahite community in terms of chaotic, traumatic and hegemonic others, which would in turn contribute to identity construction of post-exilic Israel.

The paradoxical ramifications of Behemoth and Leviathan are also well discernible in their post-biblical interpretations and receptions, most notably in Jewish and Christian traditions which differ starkly in their interpretive strategies and purposes. While Jewish tradition by and large views the Joban monsters positively as the source of food preserved for the righteous Jews in the life to come, Christianity has mostly taken them to be negative symbols of the Devil/Satan—including its human manifestations—and the epitome of evilness.

In Jewish traditions, starting from early apocalyptic Judaism, Behemoth and Leviathan have been received as quintessential monstrous embodiments of otherworldliness that paradoxically have some bearing on world order and cosmic stability, which reflect the

existential concerns harbored by the Jews in the wake of the national crisis in the first century. As attested by both later rabbinic literature and Jewish iconography, the two monsters have been serving in the Jewish community as symbols of messianic vindication and blessings for the faithful Jews, which in effect affirm and consolidate their self-identity as the chosen people of God. Along the Jewish reception trajectory, Behemoth and Leviathan constitute an exemplar of monstrous pair which is both fearsome and delightful, simultaneously conveying sentiments of insecurity and convictions of divine reassurance among the Jewish audience across time and locality.

As for early Christian tradition, which bases their reception of the Hebrew Bible on the Greek text of Septuagint, Behemoth and Leviathan have since early on been recognized as allegories of the Devil/Satan and its human manifestations, especially in the form of heresy. Representing the quintessential enemy, the Joban monsters signify notions of otherness in the paradigm of Christian theology that reflect fears and anxiety among Christians of potential threats to what they perceive as the order of things and, most importantly, the order of God. The reception of the monstrous pair as embodiment of illegitimacy also betrays a sense of insecurity that prompts the Christian community to alienate what would pose the risk of impurity and loss of authority, which is most tangibly felt in the hellmouth motif in the medieval period. Signifying demonic powers in general while affirming the divine sovereignty, the otherness of the Joban monsters as received in Christianity means ultimately to enforce sameness/selfness within the Christian community.

The research concludes by bringing the investigation of the reception of Behemoth and Leviathan to the modern age, where the two monsters manifest themselves in non-religious contexts and take on life in a variety of cultural forms. With a close examination on four sets of authored work, namely, Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*, William Blake's artwork of the two beasts, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, and the 2014 Russian movie *Leviathan* (by Andrey Zvyagintsev), Behemoth and Leviathan are shown to continue to

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convey notions of otherness which mirror the historical and social concerns of the author or the author's community in the modern world. As quintessential monsters, the Joban monsters in modernity also reflect the paradox of monstrosity in their capacity to signify various realities or identities, most notably in terms of chaos/evilness, divinity/sublimity, and humanity/human society.

This project has mapped out a *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Behemoth and Leviathan in light of monster theory from their prehistory in the ancient Near East to their cultural manifestations in the modern age. With each chapter highlighting particular aspects of "monster paradox," which are more discernible in some traditions than others, the mapping of the reception trajectories of the Joban beasts in this work should suffice to attest the founding tenet of monster theory, namely, that monsters as perceived in a culture or social group are often paradoxical embodiments of otherness. Along their cultural trajectories, Behemoth and Leviathan are, by and large, quintessential others in terms of perceived monstrosity and otherworldliness; yet, they are very worldly in the sense that they have constituted an indispensable part of our constructed reality—whether as conveyors of divinity (ANE Behemoths), nemeses of cosmic order (ANE Leviathans), signifiers of sublime hope (Jewish reception), enemies to be excluded (Christian reception), or pointers to utopian visions (modern reception). The persistence of their receptions in human history attests that we somehow need the monsters to exist for our own sake. As articulated by monster theory, the paradox of their significance in human society lies in the fact that they are not something external to humanity but are projected realities of human consciousness and subjectivity. As part of humanity that is being projected out, the lurking monster often feels both unfamiliar and familiar, alien and near, outside and inside, as is demonstrated in the receptions of the Joban monsters.

With all the perceived liminality, Behemoth and Leviathan as recognized monsters tend to possess the capacity to signify and hence bridge various identities or realities throughout

their cultural history, making them highly adaptable to different contexts and dedicated purposes. They have particularly been shown to be effective in serving as the mediating grounds between the divine/sublime, the demonic, and humanity, which render their identifications ambiguous and ambivalent in the respective discourses. The paradox of Behemoth and Leviathan as the received monsters is also manifest in their power—as symbols of otherness—to address societal anxiety and self-concerns of the receiving community, especially in times of crisis, insecurity, and disorientation.

Signifying human consciousness of threatening otherness, which is a constant reality for humanity, human receptions of monsters including those of Behemoth and Leviathan will likely recur and appear to see no end in history. In fact, monsters might be beneficent for humans in that they play imaginative foils that prompt us to rethink about our responses to menace. Upon returning, these monsters bring us self-knowledge by challenging us to reflect on the purposes and effects of our representation and use of them. They come to urge us to reevaluate the cultural assumptions behind our notion of otherness, our perception of difference, and our tolerance toward their expressions. On the positive side, our monsters help uncover our beliefs and values, reveal our aspirations for the good life, and allow us to rehearse real life crisis and tribulation in an imaginative space. Meanwhile, our monsters remind us of our own humanity with all the finitude and frailty. The paradoxical otherness signified by the perpetual monster testifies that we humans are always committed to something, whether it be belief, life, family, community, land, or ideology. As long as there are enemies or crises that threaten any of these, we will continue to invoke and make use of the monster—over and over again.

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