

# Anne Germanacos

## Courting Monsters

### Watching Monsters

**M**onsters are generally large and somehow grotesque—the look of them disgusts us. This was so with her, I must admit. I almost couldn't look, and would have preferred to keep my eyes on an object in the far distance. Instead, I clapped them on her and watched some other part of myself try to turn away.

She let her eyes go to a far point in the room and I was free to examine the way her flesh hung, the way her once-beautiful face was misshapen, her skin large-pored and pasty, her once-wild hair now sparse and dyed a hue bearing no resemblance to anything in nature. Watching monsters is a sad business; I looked away.

### Momentum

What did I hate during all those months? Why did the mention of that name put me on edge? I can say only this: that the act of making someone into a monster has its own momentum, start to finish.

### Euphoria

Isn't it a contrived euphoria to believe in the other person's evil?

The creation of monsters can be a lifelong distraction.

### Monster from Enemy

How does a monster differ from an enemy? An enemy speaks of competition between equals. With monsters, there's no equality. A monster is outlandish and has different-from-human qualities. Enemies exist; monsters don't. We invent monsters to let out parts of ourselves we find undigestible or, at the very least, unbecoming.

### Pitiful

In the liquid realm of dream, monsters come and go, turn seducer or hero. How many heroic, seductive qualities in any monster? And when the monster has been slain, how to control our tears, our pity?

### Some Famous Ones

Minotaur  
Scylla and Charybdis  
Sphinx  
Sirens  
Centaur

Monsters that disgust, seduce, kill, paralyze.

### Measurements

Are monsters merely what's familiar in an exaggerated form?

What are the precise dimensions of this particular monster?

Monsters are often fat, though there are thin monsters as well. Some of them are see-through, or mostly see-through—just a thick elementary vein visible through clear flesh.

The heft of monsters is a weight that holds us rapt through the day. Sometimes, I admit, there's just no living without them.

## **Cover-up**

While obviously large, huge even, are there qualities of smallness? Does she, for instance, hide something very small internally? A small heart? A thinness to some layers of fiber? Cells smaller than most? Everything visible is larger-than-life, conversation-stopping. It's only when she leaves the room that our mouths start moving again.

## **Relief**

Do we miss the monster or are we relieved that it's gone away?

There's an absorbent quality to monsters, like very thick paper towels.

## **Flattery**

Am I a figment in the monster's imagination? (Or do I flatter myself?)

## **Starving**

Monsters, almost without exception, are voracious.

So is she a monster or a human being? Is she a cannibal or merely hungry? Is she huge because she eats to get at the meaning of life? Does it eternally evade her? Is it monstrous to allow such emptiness to show?

Like her, I've become monstrous in my appetite: this game never ends.

## **Legendary**

If a monster is a person, then it can't be a monster. I guess I'm inventing her. With that enormous body, that insouciant method, she's become the stuff of legend.

## **Deciphering Monsters**

We want monsters cleared from the fields—these urban fields we till and water and harvest.

What part of any monster is animal? What part howls, bites, cursing in a language we can't decipher?

This isn't the first time I've known a monster: in fact, I can't think of a time when I've been without.

## **A City Monster**

Where do monsters sleep? In the old days, they lived on mountain tops, in caves, or at the bottom of the sea. This one occupies the city. Sometimes, even, she *is* the city. She's unnatural, awake with the dark, asleep with the sun.

Or is she just a poor fat thing with an excised husband and a scrawny, whiny daughter? A big girl with a sad story, a taste for grease and an inability to follow through?

## **Truth**

This monster could be turned person in a second, but something in me refuses to budge. This stubborn intolerance is monstrous. *I* am.

## **Pity**

Pity dilutes a monster. When it's gone, I'm able to remember the person she once was.

And what about *her* monsters (probably far more interesting than mine)?

## **Muddy Floors**

What do monsters do when we're not thinking about them?

Even as we speak, monsters are tracking mud across a clean floor. The truth, of course, is that the floor was never really as clean as we'd like to think it was.

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**Anne Germanacos'** work has appeared recently in *Santa Monica Review*, *Descant*, *Quarterly West*, *Blackbird*, *Salamander*, *Florida Review*, *Pindeldyboz*, *AGNI*-online and many others. She lives in San Francisco and on Crete.

"I grew up in San Francisco where no one had a porch and now, living in Greece, there are village squares, vineyards, olive groves, and graveyards, but no front porches. For me, a front porch is purely imagined. Maybe I hang out on that imagined front porch while thinking about stories and writing them."