DIALOGUE
The Interdisciplinary Journal of Popular Culture and Pedagogy

Urasawa's Monster and the Aesthetics of Uncertainty

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the anime *Monster* (Urasawa, 2001) through the lens of *Aesthetic action* (Klinger, 2024) and ethical praxis. Set in a nostalgically rendered pre-accelerationist Europe, an era prior to the rapid economical and digital acceleration of society today, the anime cultivates an atmosphere of uncertainty that prompts viewers to engage in complex moral issues. By exploring the anime's aesthetic strategies, this analysis reveals how *Monster* functions as a political device, exposing the dark undercurrents of historical trauma and the systemic exclusion of marginalised groups. The essay argues that *Monster*'s deliberate cultivation of indeterminacy, particularly through its morally ambiguous characters and unresolved dilemmas, embodies a Determinate Performance of Indeterminacy (Klinger, 2024). This aesthetic action challenges viewers to confront the instability of truth and the fragility of human morality, ultimately fostering critical reflection on their assumptions and complicity in systems of harm. Through an analysis of *Monster*'s nostalgic setting, its portrayal of power dynamics, and its commitment to ethical complexity, the essay shows how the anime opens possibilities for viewer emancipation, empowering audiences to imagine new possibilities for social relations and justice. *Monster*'s unique ability arises from its evocative storytelling and thematic depth to inspire aesthetic actions and inter-actions.

Naoki Urasawa's *Monster* (2004) is an anime series that unfolds in 1990s Germany, shortly after the reunification of West and East Germany. The story centres on Dr. Kenzo Tenma, an excellent Japanese neurosurgeon working in a German hospital. Tenma's life changes when he chooses to save a young boy, Johan Liebert, instead of the city's mayor because Johan arrived at surgery first. That moral choice has unforeseen consequences: Johan later becomes a manipulative and terrifying figure, the 'monster' of the title. Tenma then embarks on a risky journey to stop Johan, grappling with the ethical implications of his past actions and the nature of evil. Set against the backdrop of post-reunification 1990's Germany, the anime evokes an atmosphere of lingering historical trauma and social unease. Operating within the genre of psychological thriller, *Monster* is characterised by its deliberate pacing, moral ambiguity, and focus on characters' experiences rather than on action-driven spectacle. This essay demonstrates *Monster*'s relevance to an analysis of uncertainty and aesthetic action. The anime's narrative structure, character portrayals, and evocative setting all contribute to a viewing experience that embodies a '*Determinate Performance of Indeterminacy*' (Klinger, 2024), inviting viewers to confront complex moral questions and the fragility of human certainty-key themes explored in this essay.

When stepping into the world of *Monster* (Urasawa, 2004), viewers are immediately immersed in an atmosphere that evokes a distinct yet elusive sense of nostalgia. This feeling is not tied to a specific, personal memory, but to a broader cultural memory of a pre-accelerationist Europe—a time before the digital age fully took hold, before the rapid globalisation which reshaped societies and economies. This essay argues that *Monster*, through its aesthetic of nostalgic uncertainty, performs a form of aesthetic action that can be understood as ethical praxis, prompting viewers to engage with complex moral issues, systemic violence, precarity, and the ongoing legacies of historical trauma, ultimately opening possibilities for viewer emancipation (see Images 1 and 2).

Image 1: Setting of the German countryside (Urasawa, 2004). **Image 2:** Dr Tenma and Dieter (Urasawa, 2004).

Monster's unique aesthetic strategies extend beyond mere visual style. By depicting 1990's Germany as a nation grappling with the lingering ghosts of totalitarianism and the unfolding and uncertain promises of a unified Europe, the anime invites viewers to engage in second-order observation, prompting reflection on their own moral assumptions and complicity in systems of harm. The following analysis will explore how *Monster*'s nostalgic setting, its portrayal of systemic exclusion, and its deliberate cultivation of uncertainty work together to create a viewing experience that is both unsettling and deeply engaging.

First, I examine how *Monster*'s nostalgic aesthetic operates as a political device, evoking a time before the hyper-digitised present while simultaneously exposing the dark undercurrents of historical trauma. Then, I analyse the anime's depiction of marginalised characters and the systemic forces that render their

lives precarious. Third, I explore how *Monster*'s cultivation of uncertainty, through techniques such as indeterminate character motivations and unresolved moral dilemmas, embodies Klinger's (2024) Aesthetic action concept of '*Determinate Performance of Indeterminacy*,' actively prompting viewers to confront the instability of truth and the fragility of human morality. Finally, I argue that *Monster*'s structure as an aesthetic action, has an emancipatory potential, empowering viewers to become co-creators of ethical meaning and to imagine new possibilities for social relations. Through these analyses, I aim to show how *Monster* transcends the conventions of the psychological thriller to become a powerful work of art that challenges us to critically inhabit the very uncertainties it portrays.

NOSTALGIA AS AESTHETIC AND POLITICAL DEVICE

Surprisingly released in 2004, this anime is often mistaken for an earlier production - a testament to its success in capturing the aesthetic of a bygone era. It is less a specific personal memory than a collective cultural memory of a pre-accelerationist Europe—a time before the digital age fully took hold, before the rapid globalisation that reshaped societies and economies. The anime achieves this nostalgic effect through a combination of visual and auditory cues that evoke a specific historical period and a particular way of life, from Tenma's use of a pager to Nina's conversations via emails as a chat medium. The presence of Eastern European folktales, Dieter's only toy— a black-and-white football—and the anime's muted colours, carefully composed yet often desaturated backgrounds, and use of silence punctuated by sparse, melancholic music create a setting where time appears suspended. This world is not just geographically European. It carries an emotional and political weight, reflecting the continent's ideological past. This nostalgia in *Monster* does not function as a sentimental longing for a personal past but as a collective aesthetic invocation of a time before the hyper-digitalised, hyper-globalised present.

Aesthetic action and transformative learning, while distinct frameworks, share a focus on change and re-evaluation of experiences. Klinger (2024) defines aesthetic action as the intentional disruption of fixed forms to create new possibilities through unsettling experiences. This "determinate performance of indeterminacy" is a guided yet open-ended exploration. Transformative learning, as described by Mezirow (2009), centres on critical reflection that shifts individual frames of reference—questioning assumptions and altering perspectives. This process, triggered by a "disorienting dilemma," necessitates a disturbance to established worldviews, mirroring aesthetic action's unsettling nature.

Both concepts emphasise that change requires disruption, and that agency plays a crucial role—active involvement is essential. A key similarity is that aesthetic action can potentially trigger transformative learning: the initial disruption inherent in aesthetic action creates space for individuals to re-evaluate their perspectives and actively engage with new experiences, driving change. Both frameworks extend beyond mere reflection, emphasising action as integral to embodying new values and achieving lasting experience-driven change.

Transformative learning emphasises critical reflection as a means of changing thought patterns, aligning with aesthetic action's exploration of possibilities. Both frameworks view learning as not just/merely internal or theoretical but as a transformation of the self in relation to the world—one that requires action within it. While separate, aesthetic action can be seen as initiating transformative learning journeys. Conversely, transformative learning methodologies can equip individuals to act more aesthetically, fostering disruptions that lead to embodied transformation. Ultimately, both theories underscore that disruption of expectations, guided by human agency, creates new spaces, potentials, perspectives, and realities.

The series unfolds in a 1990s Germany that keeps the atmospheric remnants of a divided past while confronting the ambiguities of a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape. More than a mere backdrop, the anime's setting operates as a political device, revealing the lingering undercurrents of historical trauma

beneath everyday life. The fall of the Berlin Wall—a material singularity in history that disrupted previous norms—is never explicitly shown in the story and barely touched on. Instead, the series subtly portrays the remnants of a rigid social hierarchy, where class distinctions and national identities remain clearly defined. By not explicitly depicting this event and instead focusing on its aftermath, *Monster* avoids sentimentality, compelling viewers to confront the less celebratory realities of reunification and integration. The series presents an ethical landscape shaped by the lingering ghosts of totalitarianism, post-Soviet instability, and the uncertain idealism of a unified Europe.

Monster invites its viewers to engage with a world where these historical remnants are not just part of the setting but active forces shaping individual lives. In this context, the anime depicts characters and institutions acting within the constraints of historical action while also showing these actions being repeated and repurposed. The police force, for instance, often operates within the constraints of Cold War-era divisions, lingering suspicions, and a bureaucratic structure resistant to change. Perhaps the most chilling illustration of the persistence of Nazism in *Monster* is the portrayal of groups who see Johan Liebert as a messianic figure—a new leader embodying their twisted ideals of a 'perfect human.' The *Red Rose Mansion arc* explicitly introduces characters who, while not directly labelled 'Nazis,' clearly adhere to far-right, ultranationalist ideologies. They are drawn to Johan's 'cold detachment and ruthlessness', interpreting these traits as signs of superiority and potential for enacting their vision of a purified society. This aspect of the narrative is deeply unsettling, suggesting that even decades after the defeat of Nazism, its ideological seeds can lie dormant, ready to be reawakened and embodied by new figureheads. Johan's disturbing allure highlights the enduring danger of fascist ideologies and their capacity to find resonance even in reformed societies. The shadow of Nazism still lingers, revealing that even a supposedly defeated ideology can persist beneath the surface of everyday life. 1990s Europe remains shaped by lingering ideological struggles, with *Monster* illustrating the persistence of Nazism, fascism, and the post-Soviet legacy of division. By first establishing, and then reinforcing, its ethical framework the anime suggests that the true '*Monster*s' are not the marginalised or vulnerable, but those who actively perpetuate systems of oppression and violence.

THE ETHICS OF SYSTEMIC EXCLUSION

A core thematic concern in *Monster* is the depiction of marginalised groups and the structural violence they are put through. The anime does not convey this through explicit disapproval but through the gradual realisation that entire groups of people—immigrants, sex workers, and criminals are part of social life and exposed to systemic precarity. Their precarity is not framed as an individual failing but as a byproduct of deeply ingrained systemic exclusions. *Monster* engages with this, Judith Butler's (2006) concept of precarity—the condition of social disposability— to highlight how certain characters remain at the margins of recognition. The anime does not rely on visual stereotypes to dehumanise these characters; instead, it exposes the systemic forces that render them vulnerable—what Judith Butler (2006) calls the 'ungrievable'. The relationship between the powerful and the marginalised can be analysed as a dyadic bond -- a role-based interaction between two actors, operating within a giver/taker dynamic. The hospital director, for example, embodies this dynamic through his hard-hearted disregard for the Turkish immigrant, denying medical care in favour of an affluent patient. His position of authority enables him to prioritise profit and social status over the immigrant's life. This dynamic reinforces a power imbalance in which the powerful take, while the marginalised are forced to sacrifice—even their lives. The immigrant's life is deemed expendable, ungrievable, not due to any inherent flaw, but because the healthcare system prioritises economic and political rationality over moral imperatives—a reality starkly illustrated in the anime (see Images 3 and 4).

Image 3: The operating scene of Johan (Urasawa, 2004). **Image 4:** Dieter, a prominent side-character (Urasawa, 2004).

The children of the 511 Kinderheim, the fictional institute of *Monster*, an orphanage conducting experiments on children, also showcase what can also be interpreted as a dyadic bond. Johan is chosen and transformed in a way that grants him power but strips him of his childlike innocence. This transformation creates a close bond between him and the orphanage director, a result of the deliberate, horrifying experiment at Kinderheim 511. In this experiment, children like Johan—those with "Aryan" traits of blonde hair and blue eyes—were specifically selected as ideal subjects for a twisted social engineering project aimed at creating a "superior" human being. Johan was transformed into a '*Monster*' through a combination of extreme trauma, psychological manipulation, and systematic indoctrination. This process instilled in him a nihilistic, power-obsessed worldview, reflects and amplifies the darkest elements of fascist ideology.

Precarity extends beyond specific incidents. The prostitutes, immigrants and unwanted children (see Image 4 and 5) serve as visual reminders of this precarity, not because they are visually distinct from other members of society, but because their presence disrupts any idealised version of the past that might be linked to historical action. These actions, in turn, recreate specific histories, reinforce societal norms, or simply "recreate" the illusion of normalcy. The viewer and the anime's other characters are led to see these people, who oppose the system. The anime dedicates significant screen time to exploring the lives of orphans, sex workers, refugees, outcasts, and former criminals, offering nuanced portraits that resist simplistic stereotypes, providing a "face" to those who often are denied it, throughout a complex set of events. By centring their experiences and perspectives, the anime amplifies their voices in a way that disrupts conventional social hierarchies. These individual stories illustrate different paths through the same history. The act of portraying itself becomes an aesthetic action on history, constructing a more inclusive and diverse historical narrative for all who take part in watching.

Image 5: Dieter and Kenzo Tenma (Urasawa, 2004).

One of *Monster's perhaps* best showcases is a path toward becoming 'Genus-Being'—to not be defined by their current state, but by their potential. However, this path is not without its challenges. For example, Dr. Tenma's moral dilemmas, characterised by an *'Aspectual Irresolution*' where there over and over again is no single 'correct' solution, mirroring the experiences of marginalised individuals. This irresolution is deliberate: the narrative uses such aesthetic actions to complicate moral choices.

AESTHETIC ACTION AND UNCERTAINTY

The power of *Monster* lies not only in its nostalgic setting and depiction of systemic exclusion but also in its deliberate cultivation of uncertainty, an approach that aligns with Klinger's (2024) concept of "aesthetic action." As previously discussed, Aesthetic Action (AA) is a structured act that disrupts norms to proactively create space for new possibilities. *Monster* embodies this by employing what can be described as a '*Determinate Performance of Indeterminacy*', a deliberate uncertainty. Through prolonged silences, conscious pacing, and unresolved moral dilemmas, the anime compels viewers to grapple with the instability of truth and human morality.

One of the primary ways *Monster* cultivates uncertainty is through its masterful use of moral ambiguity. Characters are rarely classified as simply "good" or "evil" but exist as complex individuals shaped by conflicting motivations and traumatic experiences. Neither the main characters, nor small roles can be described as simple. Johan Liebert serves as the prime example of this. His motivations remain deliberately vague, making it difficult to pinpoint the origins of his malevolence. This lack of clarity generates Indeterminacy: how can someone be so utterly devoid of morality? Johan represents a radical detachment from ethical constraints, embodying a kind of philosophical terror. His justifications, however obscure, range from nihilistic necessity to the simple assertion that "it must be done." In this way, Johan functions as a personification of unfettered capitalism, an entity that expands and consumes without clear reason yet continues because it is self-perpetuating (see Image 6).

Image 6: Johan Liebert (Urasawa, 2004). **Image 7**: Johan Libert (Urasawa, 2004)

Opposing Johan is the virtuous Dr Tenma, who is forced to make impossible choices, each with unforeseen consequences. *Monster* does not offer easy moral resolutions; instead, it complicates the notion of righteousness. Should one follow personal ethics or the law? Who truly holds the moral high ground? This tension creates what can be seen as a Form-as-Question, mirroring Johan's own rhetorical ambiguity. For example, just as Johan's actions pose the implicit question, Why must I destroy to create? The anime instead asks Tenma, Why must he save? And ultimately, Tenma to himself: Do I have to murder?

The relationship between Tenma and Johan can be interpreted through a Hegelian dialectic, or as Klinger (2024) could formulate as, continuous aesthetic actions, interactions where their actions continually reshape one another. Neither fully occupies the role of an autonomous agent; rather, they exist in a constant interplay, where each reaction prompts new ethical dilemmas. This ongoing process creates a state of Indeterminacy, leaving the viewer without a definitive answer who ultimately "wins" or what the right course of action should be. The anime's Determinate Performance of Indeterminacy ensures that even as Tenma tries to atone and pursue justice, Johan's presence remains an enigma. The series never provides a clear reason for Johan's actions, and this absence of explanation places the viewer in an active role in ethical interpretation. As Tenma struggles with his choices, so too does the audience, sharing in his moral unease. Adding to this sense of uncertainty, *Monster* frequently employs prolonged silences and deliberate pacing. Scenes often end not with resolution but with hesitation, creating suspense and an unsettling atmosphere. In its most powerful moments, the absence of sound amplifies the emotional weight, making the viewer feel as if something remains unresolved, not just within the story but within their own moral reflection. While moral ambiguity is not uncommon in anime and manga, *Monster* particularly utilises this technique through giving many sub-stories, minor characters and plots interactions and interconnections within the story, exemplified by Roberto's conflicted loyalty, Grimmer's past trauma and present actions, even minor characters making morally grey choices such as the chef in the restaurant that Nina Fortner works extra at, that used to be a hitman, and now is a loved chef, that stopped working with his job because of a "ordinary" moral realisation.

Monster challenges the audience through its Form-as-Question structure, prompting introspection: What is the stance of the viewer? Would they support Tenma's actions? Tenma's ethical decisions exemplify Praxis (Klinger, 2024), acting with critical awareness while continually reflecting on the consequences. Even when he learns how to use a weapon from a mercenary, he leaves that encounter having reconnected the man with the child of a woman he murdered. This small moment of transformation, amidst a world of uncertainty, encapsulates the anime's central aesthetic action. *Monster* is not simply about a cat-and-mouse chase between a doctor and a murderer. It is an exploration of ethical dilemmas, moral ambiguity, and the unsettling nature of free will. Through its aesthetic action, it refuses to provide easy answers, instead drawing viewers into a space where uncertainty itself becomes the medium for reflection and engagement.

SEEDS OF CREATION AND THE NATURE OF MONSTER

Urasawa's *Monster* grapples with the creation of a being seemingly devoid of empathy, a "*Monster*" born not of supernatural forces but of human choices. While Johan Liebert is not a being literally created ex nihilo, his monstrous potential is arguably crafted through the influence of societal structures and personal interactions. The original "seed" in *Monster* is the idea, the possibility of a "*Monster*" taking root in Johan's psyche. This seed blossoms from trauma, manipulation, and a distorted view of the world, ultimately manifesting in his capacity for unspeakable acts (Urasawa, 2004). A crucial element is that Johan is a child with extraordinary potential, and the interventions (both positive and negative) he experiences directly shape the trajectory of his life. The events surrounding Kinderheim 511, where children were subjected to social experimentation, and the influence of figures like Franz Bonaparta (Urasawa, 2004), who manipulated Johan with twisted narratives, serve as fertilisers for this monstrous seed, allowing it to flourish. As the series progresses, we see Johan actively cultivating this "*Monster*" within himself, mastering manipulation, and refining his destructive philosophies (see Images 7 and 8).

Image 8: Johan Liebert with Franz Bonaparta (Urasawa, 2004). **Image 9:** Dieter with Mr Hartmann (Urasawa, 2004).

Urasawa cites Mary Shelley's Frankenstein as an inspiration; it provides an interesting parallel through the theme of giving power, and the inhuman. Victor Frankenstein breathes life into his creation through a harnessing scientific innovation (Shelley, 2018). The "seed" of his creation is power itself, the power to usurp life, and the power to bend to inhuman. The creature's subsequent actions, driven by loneliness and rejection, force readers to confront the responsibility inherent in wielding such power. What the Creature learns through the story is that he is, in fact, no different from any other man who uses power to destroy the world. The creature seeks not to use the power that Frankenstein gave him, but to destroy it, to prove to the creator the errors of his ways. So, for him, he does not let the power that Frankenstein has created go, or to be used by Frankenstein to create more creatures like himself. He knows what will happen if it goes unchecked.

Similarly, the Golem as in Jewish folklore, formed from clay, represents a creation imbued with life by supernatural means (Molly, 2018). The "seed" of the Golem is the very earth from which it is formed, moulded by faith and purpose. That seed represents the idea of what a Golem is, with the Golem in these stories learning that it, too, is just a means to an end. Therefore, it can be said that the Golem, like Frankenstein, is an empty slate, used as a power of good or evil.

These narratives, together with *Monster*, reveal a fundamental unease about creation, and what can happen when the *Monster* that is created is in fact, humanity. The difference between Johan and the other two examples of creation, is that they all take something intrinsic out of the equation. In our present, the anxieties surrounding artificial intelligence echo these age-old tales. The fear that artificial intelligence is something that could surpass human control and cause harm, is a modern iteration of the anxieties found in Frankenstein, the Golem myth, and *Monster*. We fear creating something that, imbued with power, and capable of a ruthless logic, becomes a reflection of our own flaws and destructive potential. Because can something artificial embody the ambiguity of ethical and moral choices? Worries about artificial intelligence echo these old tales. We fear that, with growing power and lack of human moral limits, our creation mirrors our own worst traits and becomes uncontrollable. That the *Monster* we create is as bad as humanity, but without the ethical constraints of humanity, embodying a kind of philosophical terror. Yet, this is just fear of the unknown.

EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL THROUGH AESTHETIC ACTION

The preceding sections have established how *Monster* uses both a nostalgic setting and a carefully constructed aesthetic of indeterminacy to create a compelling viewing experience. What, then, is the reason

for this? It is in these details that the potential for viewer emancipation emerges. Just as the performer cannot say from a first-person perspective what they are doing while they are doing it, the observer cannot say what they are doing while they interact with it, the aesthetic action and indeterminacy provide space and create it. Tenma's ethical praxis offers viewers a model for navigating a world without easy answers: his actions create possibilities for connection and inspire viewers to imagine alternative social systems. This leads the viewer to recognise their shared Genus-Being, *that they can self-define collectively* via mutual recognition, as viewers of the anime, as they watch Tenma consistently choosing to act in ways that create new possibilities for connection and transformation, which *inspires a challenge to* conventional social hierarchies. This recognition can lead to collective self-definition and action. Even when he goes to a mercenary to learn how to use a weapon, he leaves that person with better relations to the child he cares for - the same child which the mercenary killed their mother. While *Monster* is a dark and often violent anime, the thread of human connection and empathy runs through it, offering a subtle counterpoint to the pervasive sense of uncertainty and systemic violence. Drawing on bell hooks' (2016) concept of love as a transformative force, we can see how *Monster,* even in its bleak portrayal of humanity, suggests that connection and compassion, as exemplified by Tenma's unwavering commitment to human life and Nina's journey towards healing, offer a potential form of resistance against the forces of dehumanisation and violence.

Over and over again, Tenma creates new possibilities through his actions, and because of this, and this is *the source of* the most aesthetic action through and through, as well as inspiration for the viewer, giving them the chance to think on a new system to act for and in. The more you give, the more "us" is made, the best that one can give, is something that is only made when they are around.

Finally, since *Monster* has provided numerous questions, but few easy ways out, you could argue that the anime, by challenging viewers to move beyond easy categorisation and embrace the messy realities of human existence, is trying to approach this '*Negative Infinity*', a rejection all existing terms or approaches and not just opposing them. It makes the viewer question what could be, and perhaps is, without being able to provide easy and correct answers. Ultimately, Tenma and *'aesthetic action'* inspire a sense of freedom from the constraints of moral degradation, aiming to empower viewers to fully engage with the world without predefined limits. That there is still much more that can be offered and seen.

CONCLUSION

This essay explores the anime adaptation of Naoki Urasawa's *Monster* (Urasawa, 2004) as a complex and compelling work of art that engages viewers on both an emotional and intellectual level. By examining *Monster*'s nostalgic setting, carefully constructed aesthetic of uncertainty, and nuanced portrayal of Dr. Kenzo Tenma's ethical journey, this essay has argued that *Monster* exemplifies aesthetic action (Klinger, 2024). These structured acts disrupt norms, proactively creating space for new possibilities and enabling ethical praxis. It is through this that the creator *leaves* room to give emancipation to the viewers' own beliefs, to transform the viewer through the experience and through interaction with the experience. *Monster* suggests that: '*There is certainly no one worthy of living any more than there is someone worthy of death... we all share the same mortal fate of passing.*' Ultimately, the series posits that 'you just have to remain human for as long as you can' (Winter, 2024).

It is in the ethical praxis of watching *Monster* as a *Genus-Being, humanity's capacity to self-define collectively (via mutual recognition, not nature)* (Klinger, 2024), that *Monster* can act as an '*aesthetic action*'. James Baldwin (1962) argued that artists have the responsibility to show others how to live, and Urasawa's *Monster* (2004) does just that by presenting a powerful vision of human existence. Its raw portrayal of moral ambiguity, systemic violence, and the lasting impact of history challenges viewers to confront the complexities of human nature and the importance of ethical reflection in an imperfect world.

Considering this analysis, we can ask: what pedagogical insights can we draw from analysing an anime like *Monster*?

By blending a pre-acceleration setting, nuanced character designs, and deliberate pacing, *Monster* creates an experience that is both unsettling and deeply engaging. The narrative forces viewers to stay in a state of uncertainty—what Klinger (2024) calls the "Determinate Performance of Indeterminacy." In doing so, the anime mirrors the disorienting dilemmas that Jack Mezirow describes in his theory of transformative learning.

Mezirow (2009) argues that transformative learning begins when individuals encounter experiences that challenge their deeply held assumptions, leading to critical reflection and a shift in perspective. *Monster* achieves this by refusing to provide clear answers. Instead, it compels viewers to grapple with moral ambiguity, systemic violence, and historical complexities—elements that force us to question our assumptions about power, creation, and responsibility.

Like Frankenstein's creature and the Golem, the characters and themes in *Monster* remind us that every act of creation—whether biological, technological, or ideological—carries both potential and peril. These narratives warn us that the power to create can also lead to unforeseen consequences if left unchecked. This reflection on the duality of creation challenges us to consider how to critically engage with complex, ambiguous issues.

So, drawing from Mezirow's (2009) ideas, *Monster* can be seen as a catalyst for transformative learning. It encourages us not to seek immediate resolutions but to engage in ongoing critical reflection—questioning established norms and exploring ethical alternatives. *Monster* achieves this by refusing to provide clear answers, and thus aesthetic actions establishing '*Determinate Performance of Indeterminacy*'.

So, what, then, are the pedagogical methods embedded in an essay about an anime? They lie in using popular culture as a meaning-bearer and a boundary object (Huvila et al. 2014), a shared reference point that enables discussion across different perspectives. By watching and reflecting together, we engage in a process of meaning-making, questioning how these narratives affect us and others. *Monster* serves as a tool for critical engagement, not only with its themes but with the structures that shape our understanding of history, morality, and uncertainty itself.

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Simon Lindblom's research explores creativity, uncertainty, and ethical action through design and art-based inquiry. Drawing on thinkers such as Florian Klinger, Katarina Taikon, James Baldwin, and bell hooks, Lindblom investigates how marginalised voices and aesthetic action can challenge dominant narratives and inspire societal transformation. Through the Future Focused Society (FFS!) initiative and Laboratoriet för konstnärlig forskning, Lindblom examines how creative practices engage complexity rather than resolve it.

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