



No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling, and Making Mock

Marina Warner

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No Go the Bogeyman considers the enduring presence and popularity of figures of male terror, establishing their origins in mythology and their current relation to ideas about sexuality and power, youth and age. Songs, stories, images, and films about frightening monsters have always been invented to allay the very terrors that our sleep of reason conjures up. Warner shows how these images and stories, while they may unfold along different lines - scaring, lulling, or making mock - have the strategic simultaneous purpose of both arousing and controlling the underlying fear. In analysis of material long overlooked by cultural critics, historians, and even psychologists, Warner revises our understanding of storytelling in our contemporary culture. She asks us to reconsider the unintended consequences of our age-old, outmoded notions about masculine identity and about racial stereotyping, and warns us of the dangerous, unthinking ways we perpetuate the bogeyman.

No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling, and Making Mock Details

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From Reader Review No Go the Bogeyman: Scaring, Lulling, and Making Mock for online ebook

Pierre Mare says

A compendium of the masculine archetypes of fear in culture. Useful if you are looking for an understanding of stories and how they can play out.

Yoruichi says

Not as good as From the Beast to the Blonde but very interesting. the title is a little misleading for several chapters are not really in the theme of bogeymen and scary figures.

Vasha7 says

No Go the Bogeyman is a disquisition on the emotion of fear, from a point of view at the intersection of psychology with folklore and mythology. I might almost have said it's psychoanalytic, but that would be misleading, since Warner is no fan of Freud -- she thinks his storytelling is much too limiting, too culturally blinkered. She does find something of value in some later psychoanalytic writers, such as Lacan, but picks and chooses among their ideas. Nonetheless, what else to call the practice of disinterring the hidden themes of stories, finding in them concerns with food and death, conflict between parents and children, etc.? This practice may predate Freud, but not by much.

What I find distinctive about Warner's approach is her concern with the cultural setting of stories, which does vary over time. I haven't read many other books of this sort which so clearly recognize that, although some psychological needs are universal, a lot depends on both the physical conditions of life and the culture which has developed over time. She is certainly very interested in the manifestations of her themes in the present day; it is appropriate that she spends a lot of time talking about other times and places, to show by contrast how things we might take for granted in fact are recent developments.

Warner's psychological approach also dictates that she discusses authored and anonymous texts, high, low, and oral art forms, all together. Again, she does not neglect to consider the social conditions under which her sources were produced when interpreting them. Since she does not want to neglect the experiences of that very large section of humanity whose words didn't get into print until very recently, folklore, lullabys, and other oral literature provide valuable sources, though not always easy to interpret.

Nonetheless, I found this a frustrating book. Its subject matter is sprawling, and although Warner tries her best to tie it all together (for instance, the last two chapters, about the relationship of racism and jokes, make reference to cannibalism and eating, subjects that recur throughout the book; they would otherwise seem more out of place than they do), the end result doesn't entirely cohere. The work is full of analyses and speckled with fine insights, but it's hard to say what the overall argument would be. Another, rather minor, flaw is that Warner unfortunately betrays her utter ignorance of biology and natural history whenever her discussion touches on them.

Marc Nash says

3.5 stars in actuality, but I'd rather veer on the 4 than the 3 because there is good stuff here, just you have to trawl through a lot to uncover it.

Divided into 3 parts, bogeyman, lulling and making mock, the book studies the cultural history of monsters/bogeymen based around our infantile/primitive fears round food (both hunger and the fear of being devoured/consumed) in the form of gross giants or cannibals. Then sections 2 & 3 look at how we defang these fears through lull(-aby) and taking the piss out of it. I thought the Lull section was the most interesting, probably as Warner herself says, because it is the least studied of the 3 so provided fresh insights. The bogeyman I found unfocused and overwhelmed by its research, I couldn't (as so often with these type of books bringing in some many different styles of cultural artefact evidence) really pick out the argument other than a repetition of the themes of giants, cannibalism and ogres. Section 3 also seemed quite narrow and yet diffuse at the same time, with a whole chapter on the humble banana's role in humour and subversion, only undercut in times of actual shortage of the foodstuff, all of which I felt was both obvious (could have been said in a paragraph not a whole chapter) and somewhat stretching the point of 'mock'. And yet within this section was also a valuable slant into the difference between laughing at someone and laughing with them, when Warner points out that authorities fear and persecute parodists and satirists when the audience are laughing with the comics, rather than comedy that just picks on unfortunate people who the audience laughs at as 'other' or 'victim' or 'outsider'.

A mixed bag, but if you're dedicated there are some useful ideas revealed here.

Kate says

Fascinating study into fear and the way it's handled throughout history, in myriad forms. The first two sections--scaring and lulling--are a little stronger than the third, making mock, but the whole thing is nonetheless fascinating.

Re-read as a writing reference.

Zan G says

An interesting look at monsters in a sort of social psychology context. It includes a lot of history and is interesting despite reading a bit like a text book.

Little Miss Esoteric says

5 stars. A great resource.

Sulis says

A great look at the things that go bump, and the way these primal fears are dealt with in story, song, and rhyme. There's a great section that deals almost entirely with the imagery of eating and stories of cannibalism. From there, Warner discusses lullabies, their function for both mother and child, and the numerous reasons so many traditional lullabies seem to be non-child-friendly, to modern ears. Then, on to tricksters and mocking in story and traditional celebrations. Fascinating, and a very readable scholarly book. Also, there are bananas.

!Tæmbu?u says

KOBOBOOKS

Deborah says

This is a re(read) but confirms how much I love this far-reaching compendium of the many ways we scare and soothe ourselves through our stories, songs, and lore. The section on lullabies alone is worth the read...

Norman Howe says

An exhausting study of the psychological background of the Boogie Man and other mythical entities. I cannot understand how such interesting characters can be made to seem so dull!

peaseblossom says

So, hrm, slightly more organized than From the Beast to the Blonde, but still mostly reads like: I did some research on these sources, let's cram them all into a book somehow. The section on fighting fear with humor, for example, was about Circe, giants, and bananas. So, yeah.

Rachel Remer says

Took me some time to finish this book. Apparently while I love fairy tales and learning about them I have significantly less attachment to the monsters of storytelling. There is a lot of good information in this book and I particularly liked the making mock section. Warners thoughts on fear and the varied human reactions to it were thought provoking. I learned a great deal and am glad I read it.

Lynley says

A non-fiction book written by a fiction writer makes for a good read.

Kirsten says

Why do we love being scared? What purpose does the bogeyman serve in our societies? This study of the bogeyman and other beasts who go bump in the night is fascinating, highly readable, and erudite.
