

Cold War Fantasies: Testing the Limits of the Familial Body

Wonder Woman 1947-1967 was written by Robert Kanigher - the longest writing stint of any in her seventy year history. Kanigher revamped the character in 1958 to fit a more cosy post-Wertham storyline where she lived a fantasy existence on Paradise Island. The images, drawn mainly by Ross Andru and Mike Esposito softened Wonder Woman's image from a warrior woman to a teen romance heroine with a doe-eyes and full lips. Instead of warrior boots she wore Greek sandals tied up with straps around her legs. Kanigher also introduced more stories of life on Paradise Island and they must have been popular with readers because they featured in sixteen out of the twenty-three issues in this era. Also *Wonder Woman* appeared in the top thirty best selling comics with a readership of over 200,000.¹ The demands by readers for more of these stories in letters pages and within the storylines themselves, demonstrate they must have hailed, some aspects of readers' lives in Cold War America. Yet despite her popularity, this era is one of the most overlooked in Wonder Woman scholarship, possibly because the stories were regarded as fairytales told to a teenage female readership. Yet this era throws up some fascinating cultural paradoxes.

Wonder Woman posed a problem in 1950s and '60s because she challenged the perceived role of women as reliant on men in family life and the job market. As Diana Prince she was a career woman, her private life rarely shown. Arguably, Wonder Woman's domestic setting was Paradise Island where she learned dress making, played musical instruments and Amazon sports (although she admitted to being a poor cook). Here she also enjoyed adventures with her family battling mythic monsters. Wonder Woman's family consisted of her mother Hyppolita (Wonder Queen) and two siblings Wonder Girl, Wonder Tot. Yet Wonder Girl and Wonder Tot were not siblings in a traditional sense. They were, in fact, younger versions of herself, produced through a magic camera introduced in *Wonder Woman*

#124 (August 1961). The magic camera, a product of Amazon technology, recorded limitless footage of Wonder Woman growing up. Explained by Hyppolita as follows:

Hyppolita: These are shots of you as...Wonder Tot...walking down the steps of the palace! Now I'm going to run off shots of you as Wonder Girl in the same place, although in a different time, naturally!...I've added pictures of you and me...walking down those same steps! And spliced them all together so they run as one!

Wonder Woman: Thunderbolts of Jove, mother! It...looks as if the impossible is happening! As if the whole Wonder Woman family is together at the same time and the same place!" (3)

Through editing and splicing footage together at wonder speed and dubbing their voices in, Hyppolita and Wonder Woman were able to create adventures where she interacted with her younger selves. That these adventures were fantasy enacted within a fantasy space, Paradise Island², seemingly ignored the realities of the Cold War, then at its height. It might seem that they also ignored a sea change in the superhero genre with Marvel Comics revision of the superhero. However, this perception is mistaken on a number of points. Marvel comics revised superheroes so they reacted with real world events such as poverty, radiation poisoning, crime, and the perceived threat of communism. Yet in the early sixties, comics sales show that the most popular superhero comics were still DC Comics Superman and Batman.³ Marvel comics grew in popularity from 1965⁴. In the early sixties comedy, romance, uncanny tales and western comics were more popular than superhero comics. Paradise Island stories of genies, giants, mer-people and bird people were products of their time. However, *Wonder Woman* stories were fantasies, they replicated the schizophrenic Cold War *zeitgeist* in their depiction of monstrous and grotesque bodies. It could be argued that monstrous and fragmented fantasy bodies populating *Wonder Woman* stories reflected disquiet amongst American people at threats to family stability and the growing possibility of nuclear conflagration.

Monsters in fairytale and legend perform dual narratives: they reflect cultural concerns but also patrol the borders of the known world to preserve power structures. (Stewart 1993; Cohen 1998; (Warner)) For instance, the Cyclops signifies the foreign in Classical Greece because they represent the opposite of Greek democracy in their anarchic behaviour, not to mention extreme individualism and cannibalism.(Cohen) Just as monsters in Greek myths challenge the stability of cultural values, so the monsters in *Wonder Woman* pose a threat to home and family. In this era the family was the lynchpin of American culture, it maintained capitalism and the patriarchal status quo. Family members assumed essentialist gendered roles: the breadwinner father, the housewife mother and children. However, peoples' affluent lifestyles in the booming economic climate of the late fifties, were tempered by fears of nuclear holocaust. Like monsters and grotesque bodies in other fantasy genres of this era the monsters prowling Paradise Island function as reminders of Cold War realities.

To explore these ideas I first examine the cultural context of the stories' production. The grotesque body particularly that of the giant, is discussed in fantasy and superhero narratives. Grotesque bodies cannot be contained and are frequently represented through doubling and fragmentation. Theoretical and cultural issues are analysed in a case study featuring Multiple Man, a shape-shifting giant born of nuclear explosion, who appeared in *Wonder Woman* comics 1961-1963, three years when the comics achieved their best sales. Coincidentally also, Multiple Man featured in the first story with the magic eye camera. These three years were also the height of American fears over nuclear catastrophe. Multiple Man terrorised Paradise Island and returned over several stories, seemingly indestructible, to test the Wonder Family to its limits.

Comics and Cold War Hysteria

The late 1950s and early 1960s was a time of paradox politically, economically, culturally and sexually in America. No sooner was Hitler defeated than America perceived a new threat to its own power and world stability in Russia. Anti-communist propaganda displaced the enemy "out there" to "the enemy amongst us". Cold War culture in America raised fears of nuclear catastrophe tempered by the fear that waging a full scale nuclear war constituted too great a threat to life on earth. (Kuznick and Gilbert) It would be foolish to pursue an outright assault on the enemy nation for fear of retaliation on home soil. The conduct of war, therefore, changed after World War Two and powerful nations transposed their conflicts to third nations such as Vietnam or Korea supporting anti communist insurgency and indulging in covert warfare. Propaganda became a tool of this Cold War with a constant stream of rhetoric from both sides attempting to denounce their enemies' plans for world domination. In America this virtual ideological war translated into a fear and hatred of socialism and paranoia of the impending nuclear war. The McCarthy witch hunts and the mass media organised vitriolic attacks against communism and the enemies within, "Seeing the world through this dark, distorting lens and setting global and domestic policies to consider them fanciful as well as real threats was and is, then, the largest impact of the Cold War" (Kuznick and Gilbert 11).

The end of the fifties saw the greatest number of bomb shelters built in American backyards and "duck and dive" exercises carried out by American school children. This induced a contradiction in the ways children of this era were raised with fear and uncertainty on one hand and nurturing and permissive child rearing on the other (Tuttle). However, the apparent freedom of child rearing was countered by the constant rhetoric of danger in anti communist propaganda. Atomic bomb rhetoric suggested there was nowhere to hide from nuclear fallout, "primal fears of extinction cut across all political and ideological lines". (Boyer xvii) However, much of the anti communist rhetoric was based on deception by the

Russian Government. Khrushchev, the Russian leader, was the archetypal trickster, and he concealed the true extent of Russian weapons which amounted to only one-tenth of America stockpiles.(Barson and Heller) The Cold War, therefore, was a virtual war with no hand to hand combat, its basis in fantasy.

A side effect of Cold War paranoia was a return to conservative values with the family as its focus. Fears of communism and the destructive potential of atomic power in the Cold War encouraged the channelling of sexual energies into family life and conformity (May).The most crucial elements in family life, the parents, were regarded as both models for correct behaviour and deemed culpable for the problems faced by society and their offspring in later life. Women particularly had a difficult role as the moral focus of sexual discipline, "[female sexuality] had to promote both abstinence and promise gratification; it had to indicate its presence by absence" (Jancovich 117). However the introduction of the contraceptive pill in the early sixties, freeing women from the risks and shame of unwanted pregnancies destabilized the double standard. Women's' roles as housewife and mother were particularly difficult, they were encouraged to stay home as housewives and support their husbands and children as the center of their existence, a role Betty Frieden was to lament:

In the late fifties, a sociological phenomenon was suddenly remarked: a third of American women now worked, but most were no longer young and very few were pursuing careers...The suburban housewife...was the dream image of the young American women and the envy, it was said, of women all over the world...She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, her home. (Frieden 432)

Dramas, sitcoms and films represented motherhood as the only natural career choice for a woman. Conversely, fear of female power seemed all pervasive especially in the mother's poisonous effects on her male offspring. In *Generation of Vipers*, "momism" was condemned,

likening the errant mother to monstrous women of myth, Medusa and Proserpine, the Queen of Hell (Wylie). Magazines such as *Ladies Home Journal* condemned idleness and frivolity in women as it poisoned the next generation (Meyerowitz).

Fathers too were constrained to be the ideal role model for their male offspring. However, masculinity was in crisis. *Playboy* for instance ran a campaign against the feminisation of America, claiming that men were becoming soft and domesticated. Best-selling book, *The Decline of the American Male*, lamented the decline of American masculinity claiming the causes as the absent or workaholic father figure and over-dominant mother (Attwood, Leonard Jr and Miskin). This position was reflected in *Better Homes and Gardens* (1958), which advised fathers to be on their guard against the over dominant mother, "You have a horror of seeing your son a pantywaist, but he won't get red blood and self-reliance if you leave the whole job of making a he-man of him to his mother" (Kimmel 147).

The cultural constraints and ideologies of the Cold War had a great impact on comics production from the early 1950s. In a polemic against sex and violence in comics, *The Seduction of the Innocent*, psychologist, Dr Frederic Wertham, proposed Wonder Woman and other powerful women characters were terrifying to young boys and a bad influence on female readership. Comics companies responded with the Comics Code Authority (CCA), a self imposed set of regulations that limited salacious or violent content in comics and stories. At a stroke, comics' content was infantilised with stories founded upon family values and superheroes' crime-fighting activities shackled by the prohibition of excessive violence or sex. Superman and Batman suddenly developed families, girlfriends, best friends, pets and they had to negotiate the necessity for marriage with the needs of fighting crime. Like all bachelors in this period, male superheroes also had to demonstrate they were heterosexual by their desirability to women and a bachelor lifestyle. Their justification for bachelorhood was the fear of criminal retribution against their spouses. Wonder Woman, however, was a

problem. As a woman she should have been eager to marry and fulfil her female role. The justification that she could not marry until all evil was eradicated seemed weak. Her family was out of reach of criminal's intent on retribution. Furthermore, her mother, an Amazon queen, was able to take care of herself. She could not marry and become a housewife as this would end her crime-fighting career. Kanigher's solution was to provide a family for her on Paradise Island. However, as noted above, it was a family of doubles: herself and her two younger selves.

Doubled and Monstrous Bodies

Wonder Woman in the Cold War features evil and benign doubled bodies in Wonder Woman's earlier selves (the Impossible Family), robots, mutating rays, magic and parallel worlds. Body splitting, doubling and mutating are shown with little realistic explanation within fantasy and are central to the mode as noted by Jackson (1998) who regards body fragmentation as a desecration of a homogenous identity (82). Identity fragmentation especially of the protagonist challenges the integrity of the narrative as this character is often the point of contact between the reader and the story. It highlights the problems of representation because it shows the impossible as possible. Jackson proposes that fantasy sates our desire for the imaginary order (Lacan), a stage of life before the subject becomes inducted into society when they feel free to express their darkest desires, act without restriction and experience plenitude, "Fantasies try to *reverse* or rupture the process of ego formation which took place during the mirror stage, i.e. they attempt to re-enter the imaginary" (90).

Fragmentation and doubling fall into two main categories in superhero comics. The *alter ego* splits the superhero identity whereas monsters and villains address issues that superheroes lack. Arguably superhero narratives were founded upon this rupture of identity and a desire to re-enter the imaginary, for what else is the superhero but an expression of wish

fulfilment? Jerry Siegel, for instance, claims his idea for the Superman/ Clark Kent dual identities originated from a teenage boy's desire to appeal to girls. As Reynolds notes, the secret identity is a crucial component of the superhero genre from the first Superman story (Reynolds 13-4). Connecting the necessity of the secret identity to warriors in myth, Reynolds suggests the secret identity is a way of limiting the hero by taboo who must pay for their great powers. However, another reason for the *alter ego* is that it enabled the superhero/god to engage and empathise with the lives of ordinary people. In Moulton's original conception of Wonder Woman, Diana Prince as an efficient but dowdy military secretary presented a perfect foil for a powerful warrior woman. Where Wonder Woman was a glamorous maverick/vigilante figure, Diana Prince showed the possibilities for the ordinary woman's role in wartime.

Monsters also express the fragmented grotesque body in fantasy texts. They function as culture and the hero's 'other'. They also test the hero to demonstrate his heroism and superiority against obstacles⁵ (Frye). The root of 'monster' is from the Latin *monere* to advise or warn and *monstrum*, a warning. Their representation exposes cultural concerns. They test the power of the hero. They may also represent an aspect that the hero lacks. Monstrous bodies are aligned with the earth. In the act of becoming and this unfinished state, monstrous bodies refuse classification. The monster is the harbinger of a category crisis 'they are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structures' (Cohen 6). Thus, in their challenge to the classical body through fragmentation and disintegration and their existence between the fringes of the known and the unknown, monsters invite new ways of thinking about the world. They deny the certainty of 'either/or'. Instead, they suggest 'and/or' (Derrida).

The giant's body presents a particularly interesting aspect of many of these issues. For instance, Giants' bodies are often constructed through, "...infinity, exteriority, the public

and the overly natural" (Stewart 70). As such they are usually earth monsters. Stewart notes how giants are connected with landscape upon which they ascribe their existence through myths and legends. For instance, monuments such as Stonehenge or natural rock formations such as the Giant's Causeway are attributed to giants' battles or activities (Stewart 86). Giants also represent a specific type of fragmented body in its juxtaposition with the miniature because, "...the gigantic transforms the body into the miniature, especially pointing to the body's "toylike" and "insignificant" aspects" (Stewart 71).⁶

Fragmenting and Doubling in Paradise Island

The most popular monsters and grotesque bodies in the Paradise Island stories are in the double and the giant. These two types of fantasy bodies are identified in Wonder Woman's doubled identity and in the gigantic bodies of her antagonists. Of the former, Wonder Woman represented a doubled identity not, as noted above, with her secret identity as was typical in the superhero genre. Rather, Wonder Woman's identity was split between herself and her two earlier incarnations as Wonder Girl and Wonder Tot. Wonder Woman could not enjoy a traditional family life predicated upon the heterosexual male breadwinner because no man was allowed to set foot on Paradise Island. Her father, like all Amazon men, was killed in wars⁷. This situation would be common in a post WW2 America. To make up for her absent father, Hyppolita is presented as the exemplary mother, caring, wise and just - qualities that she also exhibits as a queen. Despite her regal responsibilities, Hyppolita is always represented as a "normal" mother with maternal concerns and fears. She is willing to sacrifice herself for her children who frequently claim she is the Wonder Woman.

Many foes are represented as monstrous and ugly for they represent a contrast to Wonder Woman. Where the monster is unfinished and grotesque, Wonder Woman can literally claim to be perfect as a Greek statue, even though in this story arc she had an absent father, at birth Aphrodite, like a fairy godmother, gave her the gift of beauty⁸. Monsters were

generally giants who featured in 90% of the stories.⁹ Stories featuring giants are organised around themes of the elements, fragmentation/duality and gender. They exist on the fringes of Wonder Woman's world in other dimensions, in the oceans, in the air. Giants are nearly always male, childish and tend to be argumentative, aggressive and stupid replicating their representation in fairytales (Prescott). They also frequently test Wonder Woman or her younger selves with earth or Paradise Island as the prize.

There were two types of testing tale: the hyperbolic exhibition and the antagonist's challenge¹⁰. The hyperbolic exhibition narrative demonstrated Wonder Woman's superior powers, intelligence and character in overcoming obstacles. These stories, expanded upon Wonder Woman's confirmation as a hero/ine "superior in *kind* both to their...and to the environment of other men, the hero is a divine being, and the story about...[her]...will be a myth" (Frye 33).¹¹ Often these stories featured Wonder Woman besting herself or a facsimile of herself. The antagonist's challenge features tests contrived by an opponent to defeat Wonder Woman and either take her place, rule the world or defeat the Amazons. For instance in "Wonder Girl in Giant Land", *Wonder Woman* #109 (October 1959), Wonder Girl travels to another dimension when she hitches a ride on a rocket. In this dimension giants challenge her to compete with them for the fate of the earth. The giant and Wonder Girl present binary oppositions of the gigantic and miniature, the brutish and the intelligent. So when she competes against a giant, to leap across a chasm she hitches a ride on his back. Comparison of Wonder Woman's body with that of her giant foes is also represented in the comic through comparison of Diana's classically perfect body with the grotesque body of the giant, fragmented by the comic page panels. In her challenge to the giants, we see only their hands, feet which seem monstrous compared with Wonder Girl. However, it is Wonder Girl who is able to resolve the giants' disputes in a mature manner.

In these trials Wonder Woman's victory is usually followed by her admonishment to the enemy to behave more peacefully. For instance, when Diana defeats Tooroo the space giant in "The Human Charm Bracelet!" (*Wonder Woman* #106, May, 1959), she tells his fellow giants, "Just because you are big, doesn't mean you can disregard the rights of those who are smaller than you! It is my command that you respect the rights of others and live in peace!" The space giants, cowed, respond, "You have taught us a lesson we shall never forget!" (16)

Multiple Man

Many of the issues discussed above can be identified in the Multiple Man story arc. Multiple Man, the Nuclear Man, was born of a nuclear explosion and could transform into anything he wished. Like many fantasy villains, Multiple Man was seemingly indestructible and survived being stranded in the past, frozen, hurled into outer space and melted. Multiple Man's story arc begins in the first magic-eye camera story, *Wonder Woman* #124 (August, 1961). The Wonder Family encounters a nuclear test explosion just off-shore of Paradise Island. They create a cyclone to disperse the fallout. However, they are unaware that a monster has been created in the heat of the nuclear explosion, "...a creature fashioned out of unknown elements...assuming multiple shapes..." (5) Multiple Man's aim is to destroy whatever stands in its way. It assumes the shape of a missile heading towards Paradise Island. No matter how many times the Amazons destroy Multiple Man it returns in a different form, its mantra comes in the form of the chant typical of the oral storytelling strategies of the fairytale, "Whatever I want - I take! Whatever stands in my way - perishes! Nothing can stop me-!" The only way Hyppolita can destroy the menace is to take it back in the past, to prehistory where she and her children defeat the creature.

In the second Multiple Man story, "The Return of Multiple Man!", *Wonder Woman* #129 (April 1962), Hyppolita receives yet more requests for another impossible story and this

time it begins with Multiple Man attacking a plane piloted by Steve Trevor. The Wonder family defeat it by creating a whirlwind which prompts Multiple Man to change into sand. The sand is gathered up but slips through their fingers before they can dispose of it. Multiple Man then transforms into an iceberg and then into a volcano. This time the Amazons create a vacuum through whirling around and funnelling the creature into outer space.

The third Multiple Man story, "Attack of the Human Iceberg!" in *Wonder Woman* #135 (January 1963¹²) begins when the Amazons are frozen by Multiple Man renamed, Nuclear Man the Nuclear Menace. Where the creature was silent or chanted in previous stories, in this tale he is more articulate, "It is you and your island...which will be destroyed, Amazons...so that I can make the world my plaything...without hindrance from you..." (3) In this story Wonder Woman invites a fictitious reader, Carol Sue, to join her on Paradise Island. The party, in honour of Carol Sue, is interrupted by an attack by Multiple Man. Multiple Man turns into a giant ball and crashes against the underside of Paradise Island producing an earthquake. He freezes the Amazons and grows to gigantic size. When the Wonder Family attack him they are frozen to his body. Wonder Woman escapes and melts Multiple Man with a volcano. However, the melting fragments of Multiple Man reform into a giant metal ball that crashes against the underside of Paradise Island creating an earthquake. The metal ball is catapulted into space by Wonder Tot where Multiple Man reforms into a meteor shower, raining fire on Paradise Island. Wonder Girl catches the firestorm in a giant ice cone, dissipating Multiple Man's body. However, again he reforms, this time into a giant clam which traps the Wonder family. Wonder Woman uses her magic lasso to entwine and crack the clam. The story ends with Wonder Woman enjoying Carol Sue's party.

A number of themes emerge from these stories that connect with fairytale narrative, such as giants and oral storytelling techniques.

Multiple Man narratives are similar in structure and storytelling to the fairytale. For instance in all of the stories, Kanigher uses the rule of three narrative and oral storytelling structure devices: three daughters, each more powerful, clever and strong than the last, three tests to be completed each more powerful and devilish than the last. Often the youngest, most vulnerable daughter proves the strongest. The Wonder Family competes against each other to outwit and destroy the nuclear menace, but they continuously rise to the tests he places on them. In this, Multiple Man can be likened to a sorcerer for he is relentless and cannot be destroyed. This story falls into the fairytale "transformation chase" in a tale such as *The Magician and his Apprentice*¹³ or the "obstacle chase" such as *The Giant Without a Heart*¹⁴ or "The Two Magicians". In these types of stories the pursued character changes shape to evade capture and often this is countered by the pursuer, so a mouse may be countered by a cat, until one finally gives up (Thompson)¹⁵. In the latter an evil giant or sorcerer can only be destroyed by discovering where he has hidden his heart or soul.

Multiple Man's body connotes fragmentation, the nebulous and the grotesque. As a shape-shifter, his body fluctuates between binary states, from the solid to the insubstantial, the hot to the cold, the giant to the miniature. He is born as an atom and, like the nuclear bomb, expands into a giant body. The dual nature of the giant as the binary opposite of the miniature is shown when comparing it with the Wonder Family, stuck to him like flies on flypaper. Like other giants in *Wonder Woman* of this era, he is impossible to contain within the comics panel as a unified entity. For instance, in "The Return of Multiple Man!" (#135) his body is broken up by the panels down the left hand side of the page. (4) This disrupts the reading of the page, the arrows between the panels enjoin the reader to read down rather than from left to right across the page.

Like giants in folklore and the grotesque body discussed above, Multiple Man is constructed around discourses of the elements and earth. Multiple Man's giant body is

reminiscent of the Classical Greek Titans, precursors and parents of the Greek Gods. The Titans are brutish and connected with the earth, nature and the infinity of the sky (Stewart). They represent the chaos that comes before the order and law installed by the Greek Pantheon, spear-headed by Zeus. As a shape-shifter, Multiple Man also defies classification. He is not just aligned with the earth - he is an elemental giant and can become part of the air, fire and ice. Multiple Man's body is transitory, ambiguous and intangible. His voice is "something *felt* like an icy wind blowing against one's face" (*Wonder Woman* #124 (Aug. 1961 7)) In his second transformation, as a molten menace, Multiple Man's voice "is felt rather than heard...a voice like the breath from a furnace" (*Wonder Woman* #129 (April 1962 11)). In his flame form he is dampened by asbestos and the lead that is produced from this smelting is fashioned into a bracelet by Hyppolita. Hyppolita takes the bracelet into the past when it takes over her mind and there, Multiple Man transforms into a Tyrannosaurus Rex, its voice "like steam hissing from a locomotive" (*Wonder Woman* #124 (Aug. 1961 21)).

Multiple Man's fluid body form and shape, like all grotesque creatures, is unfinished and abject. Multiple Man, as a shape shifter disrupts boundaries - he transforms and his identity is nebulous, denying the notion of homogeneity. For example, in "The Return of Multiple Man!" (*Wonder Woman* #129 (April 1962)) , he is drawn as amorphous mass with no outline. In this story, his body cannot be contained by the comics panel and he cannot speak, but rather grunts and growls. His body is also fluid, changing from wind to sand, to water and ice. He warns of the ubiquity of radiation. When the Wonder Family gathers up the sand forming his body, it trickles through their hands. In all these stories, Multiple Man, like the grotesque disrupts boundaries of body states, the possible and impossible life and death.

Conclusion

Wonder Woman's mythic roots are seminal to why monsters were represented through fairytale and myth. Shrinking and doubling connote an interior anxiety in the face of attack

from exterior forces: giants and aliens. Monstrosity and unruly bodies in these stories are reflected in B movie science fiction films such as *The Attack of the Fifty Foot Woman* and *The Incredible Shrinking Man*. These representations also show similar cultural influences in comics from DC Comics Superman family, to Marvel Comics with their atomic age superheroes such as *The Fantastic Four*, *The Hulk*, *Spiderman*. However, in Wonder Woman cultural anxieties over fragmented, splitting selves, are displaced from the alter ego, central to masculine heroes, into freakish and monstrous bodies that inhabit the frontiers of Wonder Woman's world.

Like all monsters, Multiple Man cannot die, a trace element remains, as Cohen notes "No monster tastes death but once" (5). The trace element is in the painting of a caveman showing the Wonder Family controlling the monster in *The Impossible Day!*" (*Wonder Woman* #124 (August 1961)). This image shows a trace of the monster but also blurs fact and fantasy for, the impossible day produced through the magic eye camera cannot possibly have happened. Yet the reality is recorded on wall paintings. Like all fantasy stories, as Jackson notes, one must accept the impossible and not seek logical explanations. The fantasy of the stories replicates the fantasy of the Cold War where nuclear weapons exist in the minds of people. Multiple Man tests the limits of the Wonder Family. They must be on constant alert should he reappear. Just as Multiple Man attacks the Wonder Family within an impossible fantasy world, so American families existing in a fantasy Cold War must be on constant alert. In reality children must learn to "duck and dive", families must build bomb shelters for a bomb that is never dropped and weapons must be stockpiled for a battle that will never happen.

(5063 words)

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¹Based on postal records of comics subscriptions, *Wonder Woman* 1961-63 was in the top 30 best selling US comics with a readership of 213,000-230,000, the era when these stories

appeared. Thereafter, when the tales were more concerned with her romantic relationship with Steve Trevor sales dropped out of the top 50 sales. By 1967 she did not appear at all in the top 100. (<http://www.comichron.com/>)

²Edgar Cayce, amongst other writers posited the Bermuda Triangle as the location of Atlantis and claimed that it would rise again in the 1960s. This raised peoples' interest in the myth. However, Cayce's pronouncements resulted from dreams and trances rather than empirical evidence and this tended to diminish the seriousness of his claims.

³This could apply to DC heroes in general in this era. For instance, Superman stories revolved around his relationships with Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen and the plots tended to concentrate upon trivia - protecting his secret identity or teaching his friends a lesson. Readers could also enjoy stories of Krypton, his home planet and homespun yarns of his life as a teenager in Smallville. However, unlike *Wonder Woman*, *Superman* and *Action Comics* were usually in the top three best selling comics. *Wonder Woman* frequently did not appear in the top thirty best sellers.

⁴According to postal sales, Spider-Man was the first Marvel superhero to enter the best selling list top twenty in 1966 at number 16.

(<http://www.comichron.com/yearlycomicssales/1960s/1966.html>)

⁵Indeed, in 1974 *Wonder Woman*, like Hercules, completed twelve labors to prove herself worthy of rejoining the Justice League of America.

⁶This was been noted as early the thirteenth century when Jacques de Vitry wrote “just as we consider Pygmies to be dwarves, so they consider us giants...And in the land of the Giants,

who are larger than we are, we would be considered dwarfs by them” (qtd. in Friedman 163-4).

⁷The introduction of a father, possibly Theno, in *Wonder Woman* #132 as Hyppolita's long lost love, into the post 1958 storyline is significant. Where Marston had suggested Wonder Woman as the product of asexual reproduction, the father's authority is reinstated in what must have been within this socio-cultural context, a transgressive family.

⁸Readers might also have been aware that in her previous incarnation, Wonder Woman was created as a clay statue and given life by Aphrodite.

⁹ Gigantic and shrinking bodies can be identified in other superhero comics of DC - for instance in Superman comics of this era, Superman sometimes has to deal with the manipulations of giants from the giant dimension and the effects of red kryptonite on his body and behaviour. In the Superman family, Jimmy Olsen and Lois Lane comics dwelt upon freakish body mutations, Jimmy Olsen, for instance becomes an elasti-lad or a giant or an animal/human hybrid. Many of these strange transformations were the result of Mort Weisinger's attempts to appeal to his youthful audiences. He often took the advice of children in focus groups when they suggested storylines. The mutating human body can also be attributed to fears of radioactive contamination.

¹⁰These are my classifications as I have been unable to find any reference to types of testing of heroes by monsters and Gods. The various ways that monsters test heroes would be an interesting essay in itself especially relating to the superhero genre.

¹¹Peter Coogan applies Frye's schema of the hero power of action within the narrative mode to the superhero genre concluding that "A super hero is a hero who is super or superior to other kinds of heroes...just as a super model is superior to other types of models..." (Coogan

49) However, given the diversity of heroic types and levels of power within the superhero genre, Frye's attempt to shoehorn all characters into one narrative mode is unworkable as a general model. In this case, I argue the narrative modes of fairytales and myth in Wonder Woman in this era would enable identification with the *mythos* comedy mode.

¹²There are other Multiple Man stories such as "The Kite of Doom!" *Wonder Woman* #138, (May 1963) but they replicate most of the points raised in earlier issues. For reasons of simplicity therefore, I have not included any Multiple Man stories after "The Attack of the Human Iceberg!".

¹³ Tale type 325.

¹⁴ Tale type 302.

¹⁵These two narrative classifications fall into Aarne and Thompson's classification 313. Aarne originally classified folktales by their structure and her work was adapted by Stith Thompson.