

## THE HERO'S WELCOME; OR, THE LAMB AND THE SLAUGHTER

James Holdsworth

Parenthood, or at least what is perceived as *good* Parenthood, comes with the expectation or certain cognitive positions. You expect your child to survive, to thrive, to discover, to outgrow you, to depart, to settle, to outlive you. The delicate business, of course, is we must accept these things as sureties whilst at the same time working like mad in the time we have to make sure they happen, two opposed concepts generating a cognitive dissonance most doubtlessly find *familiar*.

Between these two ideas, one of certain success, and one of highly conditional success, we have a grey zone, a place we must not tarry long, for it is not the world of mortals. However, for us to be positioned correctly, we must navigate the grey zone, triangulate it, chart it, and reach our correct(ed) outcomes. A lot of busy work for the parental mind, to fight, accept and change reality all at the same time. Nothing meek to the *oikos*, we must seek and shriek lest the *chronos* turns bleak.

To aid us, we make a *prototype*; who works mechanically the same as our obligations. Who holds our essential positions, and for this prototype we conceive of every imaginable horror, setback and obstruction. A *hero*. The outcome of their journey must be certain, inevitable, victorious. We imagine them dealing with every circumstance and adversary. They demonstrate our own cartography and trajectory, with resonating struggles, all with the certainty of outcome.

Mortals never leave well enough alone. The hero's odyssey reflects all of ourselves, and we wonder at the Hero's victories coming at the cost of failure to others. The adversaries, the villains.

Does any parent avoid imagining themselves the villain? The monster? If you know any, call child services. Quickly, prototypes of our monstrous selves are generated. Narratives with very different outcomes unfurl, often with the same, albeit *horrific*, surety. Us playing the part of 'monster' allows us to place our children as 'Hero'. A comforting thought, even as it describes our 'undoing'.

These prototypes, pieces of a great parental playpen, are such a part of parenthood. Narratives generated, rendered, composed, correlated and curated in every media available during the Holocene.

Jess Taylor offers you an audience with a cast, no, a *stereolithography* of characters, avatars charted from the grey zone. Deeply personal, but with a determined resonance with collective experience. "I'm in this picture and I don't like it", yet "These awful winds, those primal fears, this pool of mud, that's why I'm here, Final Frontier". Here the lighthouse for long lost souls in the bosom of the figurehead; the very torch she carries indicative of the danger they succumbed to. There, the Medusa, all the more horrible for her attempts at accommodation; a banal act of grooming and self-care rendered murderous, gruesome and a regrettable displacement.

Setting the conditions of severance, motherly figures as both the sacrificed and as malevolent priestess. Mothers have rejection written in the role, the only question being how that might play out. A decaying self giving rise to more dead wood? Your sacrifice adequately shielding your young from future barbs? Mirrors warn us even this act of creative reflection carries risks of ego-driven devourment.

These overtly classical themes, paired with similarly evocative figurative sculptures belies the experience of being a present domestic feature as the artist creates. You are confronted by Medusa, ophiologically challenged though she may be, but you cannot imagine the elated "YEEEEEEEEEEEEAAAAAHHHH BOOOOOOOOOIIIIIIIIII" suddenly coming from behind Jess's Predator laptop, sending my coffee into the stratosphere, upon completion of Medusa's initial render.

HAAAAH WILL YOU LOOKIT DIS SHIT emanates from a manic grin, as the glowing screen is pivoted towards me and a fine mist of Lazzio Dark Ground permeates around us. Manmade horror beyond my comprehension, but not beyond hers. Benvenuto Cellini would spit: She's baaaaaaack, and no cutlery had to suffer, besides my teaspoon lodged in the ceiling.

Upon delivery of the first few works, the same manic grin manifests as packaging foam is stripped aside. Intricate appendages emerge from the depths, at first seeming small but then revealing greater and greater scale, like some Kraken. The Creator beams down on her fresh hellspawn. LOOKIT. LOOKIT MY LITTLE BABIES. YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL SWEETHEART. As more abominations surface, it's revealed not all survived the journey. In seconds, those that can be revived and those who are doomed are decided without qualms.

Attention! The model will be fragile and will likely be damaged enroute to its destination!

No Kidding. Print anyway.

