# ‘One look and you recognize evil’: Lycan Terrorism, Monstrous Otherness, and the Banality of Evil in Benjamin Percy’s *Red Moon*

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# Abstract

Benjamin Percy’s novel *Red Moon* (2013) navigates the problem of the ‘monster’ in the context of post-9/11 representations of Islamist terrorism. Structured around a series of terrorist atrocities carried out by lycan extremists, Percy’s novel employs the werewolf as a figure of monstrous otherness in order to deconstruct the very processes of othering by which the monster is produced culturally and politically. Focusing on the distorted ethical justifications of the terrorists and on the roles of political opportunism and media manipulation in shaping US responses, the narrative allows both lycan terrorists and their political antagonists to emerge as more clown than monster. This article draws upon Hannah Arendt’s account of the banality of evil, and its development by more recent privation theorists, to situate *Red Moon* within contemporary popular and theoretical discourses of evil and to read the novel as an interrogation of the processes by which our modern political ‘monsters’ are created.

# I

Benjamin Percy’s 2013 novel *Red Moon* employs the figure of the werewolf as a means of interrogating political and popular responses to the threat of terrorist violence in post-9/11 America. Set in a fictionalised version of the contemporary USA in which a series of attacks by militant lycans (Percy’s werewolves) echo the real-world history of twenty-first century Islamist extremism, the novel examines not only the political contexts of terrorist violence, but also the culture of surveillance and stereotyping of Muslims that have persisted in US and European public discourse since the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon in 2001. Percy employs the trope of the werewolf’s metamorphic body as analogous to the ambiguous figure of the Islamist terrorist as constructed within Western political discourse and popular culture. Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin observe a tension in Western representations of Muslims after 9/11: symbols of Islamic religious and cultural identity, such as the wearing of a beard, headscarf or veil, remain signifiers of difference as constructed from the assumed ‘normative’ perspective of Western audiences, yet the Muslim terrorist is perceived as dangerous because of his or her ability to ‘perform’ Western identity and thus to pass unnoticed through the streets of New York or London.[[1]](#endnote-1) In *Red Moon*, Percy demonstrates the capacity of the werewolf to embody this paradoxical and contradictory ‘framing’ of Muslims. The lycans are visibly Other, defined by a physicality that conforms to familiar conventions of monstrosity, yet they are also invisible, their difference concealed by their human form.

*Red Moon* brings into view the processes of stereotyping and identity formation that since 9/11 have come to stand as justifications not only for surveillance and the restriction of legal rights for (some) citizens, but also for multiple forms of political violence.. The function of the stereotype in shaping responses to perceived and actual threats is illustrated when a woman caught up in a lycan attack draws a comparison between the werewolf and her emotionally manipulative and abusive husband:

She has never seen a lycan before, not outside of a magazine or television program, and what bothers her most are the teeth, too big for their mouths, arranged in bleeding grins. One look and you recognize evil. Unlike her husband – who might as well wear a mask – his ugliness hidden from the rest of the world. She wishes all danger was as obvious as this – a black cape, a third eye, a bleeding grin.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Underlying the superficial moralmessage of this scene – ‘we’ can be just as evil as ‘they’ are – is a more sophisticated analysis of the ways in which categories of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are constructed. The perceiver – portrayed sympathetically as a victim of both human and lycan violence – is unable to attribute to lycans the same moral and psychological complexity that she perceives in humans. She continues to regard humans as individuals with varied and sometimes contradictory emotional and moral qualities while defining lycans according to characteristics perceived as inherent to their group identity; their evil is recognisable in their appearance. Morey and Yaqin make a similar observation about Western representations of Muslims in post-9/11 drama:

Muslim characters, in contrast to their Western counterparts, are mediated to us via externals, by social circumstances and actions, *not* through any kind of emotional life we are invited to identify with. As in so much of the fiction and film about contemporary terrorism, the Americans, and to a lesser extent the British, are *psychologized* ... The Muslims are, in contrast, *pathologized*; they and their religious, social, and political systems are seen as inherently predisposed to violence, be it terrorism or brutal law enforcement.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Employing a narrative of lycan terrorist violence with clear allusions to the 9/11 attacks, Percy echoes and begins to interrogate Western stereotypes of terrorists, and of Muslims, as irredeemably – and sometimes monstrously – Other. Since 9/11, accounts of a clash of civilisations have become increasingly prominent in the West, supported by stereotypes of Islam both as incompatible with the secular value of reason and as orientated towards violence.[[4]](#endnote-4) Such stereotypes serve to mediate the shock of terrorist violence by perpetuating the notion that it is rooted in cultural and/or psychological difference. The psychologist Andrew Silke observes:

Many myths surround terrorists and terrorism, but surely one of the most widely held is that terrorists are crazed fanatics: psychopaths who are completely immune to the suffering of their victims and who always remain ruthlessly committed to their cause. Like many myths, this one is easy to believe yet is almost always completely untrue ... Extreme behaviour, of any sort, invites extreme speculation as to the individuals who carry it out. As a result, it has become dangerously easy for society to dismiss terrorists as deranged fanatics.[[5]](#endnote-5)

The werewolves of *Red Moon*, then, reflect two aspects of popular and political constructions of terrorists since 9/11: (1) that terrorists are psychologically abnormal and predisposed to violence; and (2) that Islam itself might constitute a form of cultural predisposition towards terrorism. Rather than naively repeating a formula of terrorist-as-monster, however, the novel examines and deconstructs processes of stereotyping, media manipulation and political expediency that both produce and are reinforced by the myth of the terrorist as monstrous Other. The novel shows that the victim’s assumption – ‘[o]ne look and you recognize evil’ (156) – is both understandable and dangerously naive: understandable, because the experience of terrorist violence reinforces the popular stereotype (and is often designed to do so); dangerous, because it obscures moral and psychological complexity and, by entrenching the narrative of a clash between irreconcilable civilisations, functions as a driver of further violence.

In the comments that follow, I want to suggest that the novel’s interrogation of the terrorist-as-monster trope situates it within the tradition of moral philosophy associated with Hannah Arendt’s account of the banality of evil. Arendt’s reading of the Holocaust rejects the concept of radical evil and instead locates the horrors of genocide in a multitude of bureaucratic decisions motivated both by political expediency and by a distorted and self-justifying ideology. On this reading, the Holocaust is perpetrated not by people seeking to do evil, but by people able to convince themselves that their actions serve a greater good. I will argue that *Red Moon* illustrates the applicability of Arendt’s moral and political philosophy to the context of the so-called ‘war on terror’. The novel examines the ways in which violence – whether committed by terrorists, vigilantes or the state – is motivated and justified (to its perpetrators) by the pursuit of political and ideological goals that are themselves sustained by stereotypes of the Other. Finally, I will argue that the novel’s insistence on reconciliation as the only creative resolution of conflict is similarly rooted in the broader tradition of Augustinian thought to which Arendt’s analysis belongs.

# II

In her report on the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann for his role in implementing the Nazis’ Final Solution, Arendt criticises the Jerusalem court for its overt attempts to portray the defendant as a monstrous embodiment of the Holocaust. Neither Eichmann’s guilt nor the scale of his crimes is ever in doubt for Arendt. Her critique is rather of the court’s portrayal of the defendant as a figure of radical evil; a portrayal that, in offering Eichmann as its object of vengeance, obscures the complicity of a far wider assortment of political, bureaucratic and ideological structures in the Nazis’ pursuit of genocide. ‘Despite all the efforts of the prosecution’, Arendt observes, ‘everybody could see that this man was not a “monster,” but it was difficult indeed not to suspect that he was a clown.’[[6]](#endnote-6) The Eichmann that emerges in Arendt’s account is a figure of horrifying pathos rather than monstrosity; a mass murderer whose evil resides in his deferral to the state of his own capacity for moral decision. Eichmann’s clownishness is witnessed both in his persistent use of self-justifying and often contradictory clichés and in his belief that his actions were justified and legalised by the political ideals and authority structures of the Third Reich. As John Milbank observes:

For Arendt, famously, the mass murderer Adolf Eichmann, on trial in Jerusalem, discloses not a pre-Satanic will to evil, nor a lust for horror, but instead ‘the banality of evil’, an incremental and pathetic inadequacy of motive which escalated imperceptibly into complicity with unimaginable wickedness … Thus the horror of Auschwitz, for Arendt, is not the revelation of evil perpetrated for its own sake, but rather a demonstration that even the most seemingly absolute evil tends to be carried out by people who imagine, albeit reluctantly, that they are fulfilling the goods of order, obedience, political stability and social peace.[[7]](#endnote-7)

In Arendt’s account, the atrocities of the Holocaust unfold as a series of bureaucratic decisions in service of an imagined social and political good. In the ‘grotesque silliness’ of this bureaucratic murder lies what Arendt terms ‘the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying *banality of evil*’.[[8]](#endnote-8)

*Red Moon* functions as an illustration of the ways in which the philosophical and moral logic of Arendt’s analysis might be applied to the political context of the USA post-9/11. Based upon persistent racial tensions between the US’s human and lycan populations, the novel references both real-world Islamist terrorism and the culture of surveillance and suspensions of due legal process that followed the 9/11 attacks. In a clear allusion to the events of 9/11, the novel opens with a terrorist atrocity in which all but one of the passengers on a US aircraft are murdered by a single lycan. The attack, orchestrated by a lycan extremist cell, provokes a rapid intensification of existing tensions and a series of undocumented arrests of suspected lycan political activists that in turn prompt further extremist violence. Percy depicts the escalating violence as the accumulated consequence of countless individual decisions: the US government’s previous support for the lycan insurgent who now leads the anti-American terrorist movement, a thinly-disguised allusion to Osama bin Laden; the willingness of lycan insurgents to justify murder in the name of political idealism; the reciprocal willingness of the state to justify acts of violence against and suspension of due legal processes for its lycan citizens (we might here recall Noam Chomsky’s observation that ‘it is traditional for states to call their own terrorism “counterterror”’); the political opportunism that allows a state Governor to become President on an anti-lycan platform.[[9]](#endnote-9) Individual actions acquire a destructive momentum that extends complicity with violence far beyond its immediate perpetrators.

Echoing rising nationalism and Islamophobia in the USA and Europe driven by the terrorist attacks on New York in 2001 and London in 2005, and anticipating the further impetus given to these shifts by the Paris attacks of 13 November 2015, *Red Moon* depicts a polarisation of identity politics in the US both as a response to lycan terrorism and as an ideological platform for further escalations of violence.[[10]](#endnote-10) As Betty Pfefferbaum points out, the targets of terrorist violence are not only its immediate victims, but also the audiences that experience the attack as a media spectacle.[[11]](#endnote-11) In *Red Moon*, one of the popular responses to both the fact and the spectacle of lycan violence is the bolstering of an anti-lycan nationalism that defines lycans both as non-American and as incapable of integration into US culture. The novel depicts this essentialist view of national identity as a psychological and ideological defence against the uncertainties of a changing and complex world. This reactionary nationalism is embodied in the novel by Max, the leader of a gang of anti-lycan vigilantes who call themselves the Americans. In a passage that continues the novel’s use of the werewolf as analogous to the paradoxical visibility and invisibility of the terrorist, Max expresses his desire for a world of clearly-defined moral and cultural binaries:

The world would be easier if everyone wore their true faces. That’s why he likes John Wayne movies. The villain wears a black hat; the good guy wears a white hat. You know where you stand. But anybody can be a lycan. Your neighbour, your cousin, your waiter, that girl giving you the eye at the post office. They fool you. They wear masks that hide how hairy they are on the inside. (434)

Max’s anti-lycan prejudice is a form of self-deception, shielding him from the complexities of reality by maintaining the illusion that any lycan can be assumed to be monstrous if only it can be identified. His rhetoric displays the processes of racial and cultural stereotyping with which the novel is concerned: the minority of lycan terrorists are seen as the norm, while the majority of lycans who live peacefully within US society (‘your cousin, your waiter, that girl giving you the eye’) are regarded as concealing their true monstrous nature. Though this perspective inevitably and dramatically overestimates the real threat, it nevertheless provides a form of ideological security by reducing cultural and psychological complexities to essentialist notions of identity.

Max’s nationalist rhetoric and essentialist version of identity politics serve as a justification for his own acts of anti-lycan aggression. The novel depicts Max as neither amoral nor innately violent: indeed, the Americans are actively charitable among human communities. Their violence stems not from amorality, but rather from a worldview that constructs anti-lycan action as a moral necessity. As is common among far-right organisations in the US and Europe, Max’s Americans see themselves as patriotic protectors of ‘their’ nation against an external threat, in spite of the reality that this perceived threat includes a large number of law-abiding US citizens. Their nationalist narrative rests upon two self-sustaining illusions: that US national identity belongs rightfully only to humans, regardless of the legal citizenship of many lycans, and that the essential nature of lycans is monstrous, regardless of how peaceful or integrated individual lycans might appear.

In her analysis of Eichmann’s trial, Arendt observes the defendant’s consistent ability to excuse or deny responsibility for his actions by employing a series of self-justifying and often contradictory clichés:

Whether writing his memoirs in Argentina or Jerusalem, whether speaking to the police examiner or to the court, what he said was always the same, expressed in the same words. The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of someone else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such.[[12]](#endnote-12)

The reactionary nationalism of Max’s gang similarly functions as a moral and ideological safeguard against the complexities of reality and thus brings into view the ways in which the stereotyping of a particular group on the basis of its culture, religion or ethnicity might function as such a safeguard – and as a justification for violence – in post-9/11 USA as it did in Germany in the 1930s and 40s. By calling themselves ‘the Americans’, Max’s gang invoke a discourse of authenticity rather than a defined set of shared cultural values: the ideological function of the name is to construct authentic identity as fixed and homogenous, and thus to distinguish between ‘real’ Americans and those to whom the rights and protections of US citizenship can be assumed not to apply. Max is educated and possesses undoubted rhetorical ability and leadership skills, yet he remains incapable of participating in genuine dialogue with voices from outside of his worldview. His words act to bulwark his own beliefs and his notion of authentic identity rather than to engage with alternative perspectives:

They talk about immigration. They talk about guns. They talk about the viability of Chase Williams as a presidential candidate. And when they talk, Max seems to end every sentence with ‘right?’ – in a prodding, corrective way – as if to make sure they share the same beliefs. (108)

Like Eichmann in Arendt’s account, Max emerges as more clown than monster, a figure of pathos despite – and because of – the destructiveness of his actions. The novel grants to Max the sympathy and psychological depth that he denies to his perceived enemies. This narrative sympathy is mediated through Patrick, the sole survivor of the lycan terrorist atrocity with which the novel opens and a temporary member of the Americans. Unlike Max himself, Patrick is able to situate Max’s racism in the context of rapid and disorientating social change:

The town looks less like itself every day. The town Max grew up in – that his father grew up in, and his grandfather before them both – is a new kind of creature that has condos in place of mills, roundabouts instead of intersections, white and Mexican and Asian and black and lycan. Everything is getting eaten up and spit out differently. Patrick sees for the first time how small Max is, how impossible his resistance to change. (195)

By giving voice to Max’s experiences of demographic and economic change and its threats to his sense of historical identity, the novel offers an alternative model of dialogue to the one constructed by Max and the Americans. Rather than using dialogue as a means of maintaining the boundary between ‘us’ and ‘them’, the novel functions as what Mark Knight calls a ‘hospitable’ space open to multiple competing perspectives including those of ‘dissenting and objectionable characters’.[[13]](#endnote-13) Without condoning Max’s racism, the novel invites us to listen to him and to understand him. In this way, Percy challenges reactionary nationalism and stereotyping not simply by resisting its specific narratives, but by offering an alternative model of dialogue and communication. By constructing the novel as a hospitable space, Percy models the use of words not as a safeguard against reality, but as a way of engaging with reality by hearing and seeking to understand the perspectives of others; in Arendt’s phrase, to ‘think from the standpoint of someone else’, even if this standpoint is one with which one continues to disagree.[[14]](#endnote-14)

# III

Max’s racism, then, is presented as a reassuring fiction. It offers a clear narrative of struggle between good and evil while shielding itself, ironically, from engagement with real moral responsibility by framing this struggle in terms of essentialist constructions of identity. Far from depicting Max as exceptional, however, Percy shows a similar kind of consoling fiction operating at all levels of US cultural and political life, as endemic to the American cultural mainstream as to the lycan terrorist cells. For the political opportunist Chase Williams – a struggling Governor who is able to build a successful presidential campaign by exploiting popular anti-lycan sentiment – lycan terrorism is (in the words of his chief political advisor) ‘a game changer’ (93). Chase wins the presidency on a platform of anti-lycan measures: increased surveillance, registering of lycans and, when a medical ‘cure’ for lycanism is developed, enforced vaccination.[[15]](#endnote-15) He is able to speak the language of ideological self-justification in service of the presumed ‘good’ of national security: ‘Our old way of worrying about who might be offended must be radically altered to account for keeping people safe ... The expense to some will be to the benefit of many’ (134). The denial of the full rights of citizenship to US lycans is justified by the appeal to national security, yet its inevitable effect is to embed the stereotype of lycans as objects of suspicion and thus to further reduce the space for co-existence.

As Chase’s victory in the presidential election is announced, Neal Desai, the scientist working on a vaccine for lycanism, confronts his own collusion with a nationwide fiction:

[E]very station played news of the election and no matter how many times he flipped the channel, he saw the same stupid smirk, heard the same celebratory speech. The idiot had been elected.

 This was good for Neal, good for his research – he knew that – but he could not help but feel like an accomplice in some fool’s magic act, part of the illusion everyone wanted to believe in. The American people had sent a message – that’s what the talking heads said. The American people wanted change. The American people wanted to feel safe. Chase Williams meant security and – (437)

At this moment, Neal’s reflections are cut short by a nuclear explosion as a lycan suicide attacker crashes an aircraft into a nuclear power station; the timing a less than subtle comment on the effectiveness of neo-conservative discourses of national security. *Red Moon* explores the irony of a situation in which both lycan terrorism and populist anti-lycan politics employ the same essentialist narrative of racial and cultural conflict to defer individual moral responsibility and to bypass moral and psychological complexity (their own and those of others). To adopt terminology that has become increasingly familiar since the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in 2015, the terrorists, Max’s far-right nationalists, and a reactionary and opportunist political discourse all seek to eliminate the ‘grey zone’ in which cultural identities are seen to be fluid and capable of interaction and accommodation. Narratives of essentialist identities and of a clash of civilisations function to polarise identities and create a conflict between clearly-defined extremes. The failure of actions taken by both sides in pursuit of a notional stability is thus inevitable because the actions themselves are predicated upon an inherently unstable fiction.

The same consoling fiction of necessary conflict as the only means of securing peace and stability is employed by the lycan terrorists. Jeremy Saber, a self-styled lycan revolutionary and a leading figure in the extremist movement, frames the narrative of conflict in terms that echo the narrative of heroic struggle employed by Max and the Americans:

‘We’re the revolution.’ He slips on a slick rock and catches himself with his hands and struggles to right himself. ‘We’re the leather-fringe revolutionaries fighting against the blood-coat British. We’re the blacks boycotting the buses in Montgomery. We’re the fist-pumping protesters who took over Tahir Square. This is grassroots democracy.’ (216-7)

For Jeremy, terrorist violence is justified as a struggle on behalf of an oppressed race. For Chase, state violence is justified by discourses of national security and political order. For Max, vigilante violence is justified by the need to preserve an authentic American identity and culture. In none of these instances does Percy depict violence as the result of consciously-chosen evil. Instead, violence is regarded by its perpetrators as a necessary action carried out in the pursuit of a greater good. By allowing each perpetrator the psychological complexity that they frequently refuse to see in each other, Percy is able to examine the consolations and ideological reassurances offered by stereotypes. Claire, a lycan student held briefly as a prisoner by Jeremy, is able to recognise the latter’s need for his own narrative of democratic, revolutionary heroism:

Claire realizes the illogic of what he’s saying ... just as she realizes the brokenhearted can create any sort of justification, can make sense out of no sense. His daughter died. His wife abandoned him. He wants to fill up the emptiness he feels. Claire can relate. (217)

*Red Moon*, then, refuses to view terrorists as psychologically abnormal. Jeremy is not incapable of empathy and he displays none of the characteristics of a psychopath; on the contrary, the novel is consistent both in showing his need to justify his use of violence as a moral necessity and in refusing to separate his extremist ideology from his personal experiences of marginalisation and loss. In this respect, the novel speaks in important ways to the cultural and political contexts of post-9/11 America. As Andrew Silke observes, ‘[w]hen terrorist violence erupts within our more placid world, we can struggle to gain an accurate grasp of where the perpetrators are coming from’ and ‘condemnation is so much easier than the search for open understanding’.[[16]](#endnote-16) Fiction cannot be a substitute for continued research into the psychology of terrorism. Yet *Red Moon* demonstrates the capacity of fiction to give voice to multiple perspectives, including those of violent extremists, and to deconstruct the stereotypes that continue to serve as ideological justifications for violence. Percy’s novel seeks to psychologise its characters and to understand the motivations of its violent extremists (including those who represent the state). By doing so, it presents an ideological and imaginative challenge to the populist politics of the stereotype that persist in current public discourse.

# IV

Jeremy, Max, and Chase, representatives respectively of extremist terrorism, far-right nationalism, and authoritarian state violence, are incapable of bringing about the conditions of personal, social, and political order that each of them seeks. The final events of *Red Moon* are played out against the war-ravaged backdrop of the Ghostlands, a near-uninhabitable landscape devastated by the nuclear explosion on the day of Chase’s election as President. In its closing scenes, the novel shifts its focus from the national and international scale of politics and terrorism to the personal relationship of Patrick Gamble and Claire Forrester. Patrick is the sole human survivor of the terrorist attack with which the novel began; Claire, a lycan, is the daughter of lycan moderates killed by police during a crackdown on suspected political activists. The developing romance between Patrick and Claire, a subplot through much of the novel, becomes the primary focus of its conclusion.

This shift of focus from national politics and extremist violence to the personal relationship between two relatively powerless individuals serves to situate the novel not only within the philosophical legacy of Arendt, but also within the wider Augustinian tradition to which Arendt’s view of evil belongs. For Augustine, being, in all its plenitude of infinite variety, is understood as the free gift of the creative God. Evil is parasitic upon this good gift; it is the privation of being and goodness.[[17]](#endnote-17) Augustine’s view of evil as privation provides a philosophical foundation for Arendt’s insistence that the Holocaust must be regarded as a crime against humanity. Charles Mathewes observes of Arendt that

[l]ike Augustine, she begins with the affirmation that we are love-oriented beings, whose loves are a primary clue to the real character of our existence and to the existence of the world we inhabit, and which seeks most fully to exegete and articulate the significance of those loves in a full and systematic manner.[[18]](#endnote-18)

For Arendt, genocide is a crime against humanity, and not only against its specific victims, because it seeks the reduction of human diversity and therefore diminishes the plenitude of human being universally. Privation theory understands the good in terms of human orientation towards relationship and union with difference. Conversely, evil distorts and misorients the human will away from the Other and toward an illusory self-sufficiency.

I read the conclusion of *Red Moon*, then, not as a departure from the novel’s political and philosophical concerns, but as integral to them. As the novel closes, Patrick has obtained the vaccine created by Neal Desai and Patrick’s father. He sees in it the possibility of a new beginning: it is a ‘cure for a sick world’, a ‘world [that] needs to move on, to heal’ (490). Yet it is a solution that the novel finally rejects. When Patrick discovers Chase Williams’s hypocrisy – Williams has concealed his own lycanism while orchestrating state violence against lycans – he chooses to keep the vaccine from the government and instead offers it only to Claire. Her refusal of the vaccine is framed explicitly as a decision to embody the union of difference:

She thinks for a long time, tugged one way and then the other, and then remembers some long-ago joke her father told her, about how even the best marriages are the result of overlooking the things you hate and focusing on the things you love. He said this just before dragging his wife, her mother, into an embrace and nuzzling her neck. It was and was not a joke. And when Claire looks inside herself now, past the fatigue, past the temptation and convenience of being fully human, she sees the two writhing forms at the heart of her, and she knows who she is and cannot betray that marriage. (527)

This marriage of difference is mirrored by Claire’s relationship with Patrick. Rejecting the vaccine for herself, Claire administers it to Patrick, who is newly infected by a lycan bite. They make a conscious choice that their relationship will be a union of human and lycan. In this final scene between the lovers, the novel depicts an agapeic love that seeks to unite itself with the Other without the negation of difference. There is no easy sentimentality in this ending: the war continues unabated as the novel concludes, and the relationship itself is motivated as much by the need to redeem their shared suffering as by romantic promise for the future. Claire first kisses Patrick’s open wound and only later his lips, a symbol of their mutual willingness to embrace and heal the pain of the other.

The novel’s conclusion therefore suggests that if there is any way out of the polarised version of identity politics that drive the conflict, it can lie only in this willingness to enter into communion with the Other in all of its difference. As the contemporary privation theorist John Milbank observes: ‘[t]he greatest atrocity requires all the more an access of hope, the greatest evil calls out all the more for an impossible forgiveness and reconciliation, else, quite simply, such evil *remains in force*’.[[19]](#endnote-19) The single union of human and lycan at the novel’s close, based on the need to give oneself to the Other not merely in spite of difference but because of it, will not in itself bring an end to the war that continues around it. Yet it remains an opening of hope, a rare glimpse in the novel of a healing unity that transcends the populist politics of stereotyping and of ideologically-motivated violence.

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1. # Notes

 Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2011). [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Benjamin Percy, *Red Moon* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013), p. 156. Further references are given parenthetically. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Morey and Yaqin, *Framing Muslims*, p. 156. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. On representations of Muslims as irrational, see Jo Carruthers, *England's Secular Scripture: Islamophobia and the Protestant Aesthetic* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), pp. 96-121. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Andrew Silke, ‘Becoming a Terrorist’, in Andrew Silke (ed.), *Terrorists, Victims and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and its Consequences* (Chichester: Wiley, 2003), pp. 29-53 (p. 29). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963; London: Penguin, 2006), p. 54. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 252. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Noam Chomsky, ‘Terrorism and Justice: Some Useful Truisms’, in Scott Poynting and David Whyte (eds.), *Counter-Terrorism and State Political Violence* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 69-84 (p. 70). [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. I am here using the term ‘Islamophobia’ to refer broadly to anti-Muslim and anti-Arab rhetoric and/or violence. For a more detailed consideration of the term, its history and its definitions, see Chris Allen, *Islamophobia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 3-22. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Betty Pfefferbaum, ‘Victims of Terrorism and the Media’, in Andrew Silke (ed.), *Terrorists, Victims and Society: Psychological Perspectives on Terrorism and its Consequences* (Chichester: Wiley, 2003), pp. 175-87. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Mark Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature* (London and New York: Continuum, 2009), pp. 83-8 (p. 85). [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. Though the novel predates by two years the beginning of Donald Trump's campaign for the US presidency, there are clear similarities between Chase Williams' anti-lycan platform and the anti-Muslim rhetoric employed by the Trump campaign, which proposed a ban on Muslims entering the US and invoked the possibility of a Muslim registry. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Silke, ‘Becoming a Terrorist’, p. 50. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. For a detailed analysis of the development of Augustine’s understanding of evil, see G. R. Evans, *Augustine on Evil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Charles Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 151. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Milbank, *Being Reconciled*, p. 55. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)