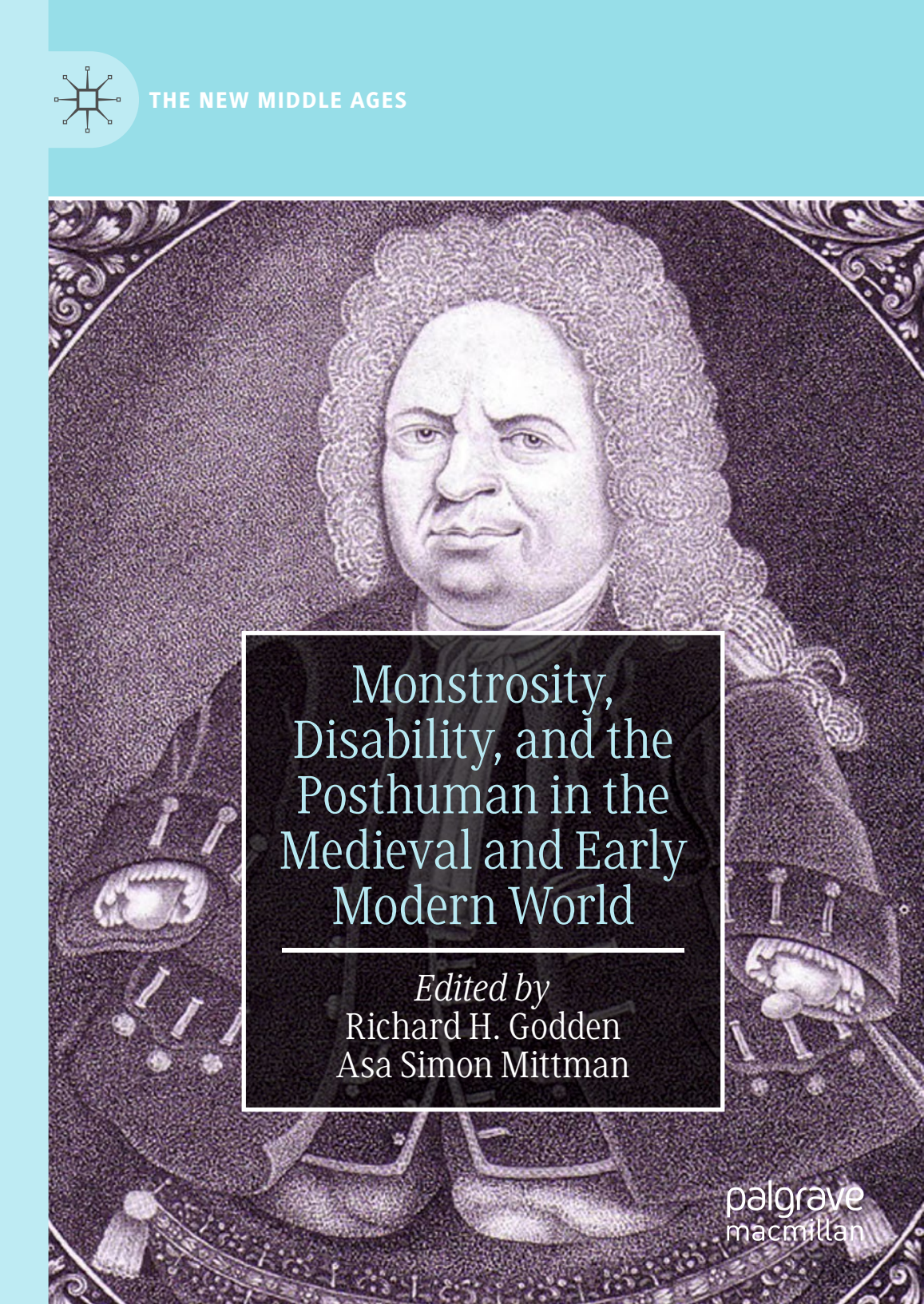
THE NEW MIDDLE AGES
Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World
Edited by
Richard H. Godden
Asa Simon Mittman
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Foreword: De/Coupling Monstrosity and Disability

This book began with a panel organized by Asa Simon Mittman and Rick Godden for the International Congress on Medieval Studies in 2015 entitled "De/Coupling Monstrosity and Disability," on which I served as a respondent. The panel, which featured presentations on medieval accounts of madness, cognitive and developmental impairments, and a "monstrous" birth, generated a lively and fruitful discussion of the promise and the danger that arise when monstrosity and disability are coupled in critical analyses. The presentations on the panel, as do the chapters collected here, demonstrate that bringing together the discourses of monstrosity and disability is crucial to highlighting the shared social processes by which embodied differences are produced and interpreted in certain historical moments. While monstrosity is not equivalent to disability—which the contributors to this collection make clear—the social construction of monsters certainly shares interrelating characteristics with the social construction of disability. Both monsters and people with disabilities "deviate" from a physical "norm" and often share bodily characteristics, as a monster may possess features resembling physical impairments and a person with a disability may be discursively framed in monstrous terms. Crossing both somatic and ontological borders, disabled bodies and monstrous bodies are liminal, calling into question notions of normalcy/deviancy, self/Other, and human/inhuman. In literature, both the disabled body and the monstrous body possess metaphorical weight—providing a tangibility to abstract concepts—and both can expose the anxieties that arise during the processes of disabling and monsterization (to borrow a

term from Jeffrey Cohen), be they aesthetic, narratival, or occurring between characters, or between the reader and text.[1]

As I was reading through the chapters of this collection, I was struck by the similar cultural work that the categories ability/disability and monstrous/human do. Both provoke questions of sameness and difference, the self and the Other. Both are figured as simultaneously intimate and strange. As the chapters here show, concepts of disability frame the presentation of the monstrous and vice versa. Like ability, monstrosity is a culturally fabricated narrative rooted in the body—not unlike other identity categories such as gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. As medieval scholars of monsters like Cohen have shown, the monster figure is "difference made flesh," demonstrating the desires, fears, and anxieties of a particular culture in a particular historical moment.[2] These desires, fears, and anxieties arise from the looking at and being seen by a body that challenges societal norms. The disabled body, too, is a body on display, as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson affirms, and it necessarily causes the viewer to question their own bodily integrity.[3]

Acknowledging these intersecting qualities illustrates the promise that can be produced by disabling monstrosity and monsterizing disability. However, when doing so, we also risk flattening both kinds of bodies, leaving out the nuanced ways in which each become textually intelligible or unintelligible; we risk using the bodies of others to legitimize scholarly critiques; and we risk silencing the ways in which some texts explicitly separate monstrosity and disability. The title of Asa and Rick's panel, which I have adopted for this preface, calls us to question whether we should integrate or further separate disability and monstrosity. Because of the intricate ties between the discursive production of disability and monstrosity, I hesitate to completely decouple the two. In fact, I think the coupling of disability and monstrosity in both Disability Studies and Monster Studies has the potential to revolutionize discussions of disability and monstrosity. But this must be a mindful, ethical coupling that acknowledges both the reality of embodiment and the effects of socio-cultural constructions of the body. Scholars must, as Bettina Bildhauer and Robert

[1] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture,* ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) 3–25, 9.

[2] Cohen, "Monster Culture," 7.

[3] See, for example, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Staring at the Other," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 25:4 (2005); and *Staring: How We Look* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Mills advise, avoid deploying the monstrous simply in a "normative, pathologizing sense," taking care to explain the ways in which we use the monstrous.[4] This is similar to the demand in Disability Studies for considerations of ability that critique the *processes* by which the disabled body comes to be viewed as different without pathologizing the body itself. Garland-Thomson, moreover, has cautioned against a desire to focus on the metaphoric quality of monstrous, hybrid, or other "textual figures of disability" at the expense of "confronting the social meanings ascribed to the particularities of embodiment." She affirms that analyses of such figures should "go beyond metaphor" to expose how "textual figures of disability both register and materialize social patterns of bias and exclusion based on ability norms that operate similarly to gender and racial systems," among others.[5] In coupling disability and monstrosity, scholars must be careful to insist on the material, lived experiences of people with disabilities while also acknowledging the theoretical connotations suggested by monsters. Indeed, bringing the two fields together might look something like Garland-Thomson's feminist disability perspective, which brings together Disability Studies and feminist theory in order to add considerations of disability to feminist investigations of the body and allow disability scholars to theorize ability in the ways that feminists have theorized gender and sex.[6] In the same way, Monster Studies and Disability Studies have much to teach one another: viewing the monster as a site of resistance and promise can guide disability scholars in locating and theorizing counter-narratives of disability, while considering disability can aid monster scholars in defining and theorizing "monster" as an identity category and, at the same time, compelling a focus on the ways in which the language of disability informs representations of monsters. Both fields must consider how we can make use of monstrosity and disability as a critical tool without compressing or silencing the experience of those with disabilities. A mindful approach to the monstrous and the disabled will, I

[4] Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills, eds., "Introduction: Conceptualizing the Monstrous," in *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 1–27, 22.

[5] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Feminist Disability Studies," *Signs* 30:2 (2005): 1557–87, 1565.

[6] Garland-Thomson, "Feminist Disability Studies," 1565. Vivan Sobchak makes a similar argument in "A Leg to Stand On: Prosthetics, Metaphor, and Materiality," in *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future*, ed. Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 17–41.

think, allow us to expose not only the cultural fictions that produce notions of the body, ability, monstrosity, but also highlight the very material experiences of one whose Otherness is embodied.

The chapters here position monstrosity and disability through what Godden and Mittman call "the empowering discourse of the posthuman."[7] Indeed, to study the ways in which monstrosity and ability are constructed and experienced is to study what it means to be human. Posthumanism reconsiders the human in connection to (not as separate from) the nonhuman, including animals, machines, systems, culture, and objects, and examines the material effects of changes to human embodiment such nonhuman phenomena produce. As Rosi Braidotti notes, posthumanism seeks to "break the fantasy of unity, totality, and oneness," a goal it shares with both Disability Studies and Monster Studies.[8] If we follow Scott DeShong in viewing "the human as a matter of ability," whether "potential or actual, expressed, implied or reflected," we find that "the notion of ability is [also] essential to the (post)human."[9] As Carey Wolfe adds, like posthumanism, "disability studies [… is] interested in rethinking questions of subjectivity, bodily experience, mental life, intersubjectivity, and the ethical and even political changes attendant on reopening those questions in light of new knowledge about the life experiences of […] those who are called […] the disabled," a line of rethinking also seen in studies of the monstrous.[10] Indeed, disability theorists in general and in medieval Disability Studies more specifically have turned to the posthuman in their examinations of disability. Julie Singer, for example, has recommended a "transhuman" view of medieval disability that uses the pliability of the posthuman body as a way to open up a broader category of bodies in terms of disability, which is particularly apt for a time period in which no concept or definition of disability existed.[11] A posthuman disability perspective that is careful to attend to bodily materiality, thus, illumines the disabling features of the monstrous and the ways in which monstrosity frames disability. Attending to the real disabled bodies that are attached to

[7] "Introduction: Monstrosity and Disability, and the Posthuman," 20.

[8] Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2013), 100.

[9] Scott DeShong, "On (Post)Human (Dis)Ability," *Subjectivity* 5:3 (2012): 265–75, 265, 269.

[10] Carey Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), xxix.

[11] Julie Singer, "Toward a Transhuman Model of Medieval Disability," *postmedieval* 1 (2010): 173–9.

the terms used to describe posthuman figures, such as the cyborg or monster, better historicizes and contextualizes their cultural use and brings attention to materiality and lived experience to posthuman considerations, which have been critiqued for eliding such concerns. A consideration of (dis)ability, thus, brings the body back into and through the posthuman interface of the human, the nonhuman, and the communal. Bringing disability and monstrosity into contact with the posthuman, moreover, exposes the ways in which disability and monstrosity produce themselves while simultaneously exposing the machinations of their production.

In its varied critical approaches to a diverse array of texts, this volume embraces the dangerous promise inherent in (de)coupling monstrosity and disability, demonstrating the multiple ways in which disability and monstrosity connect and depart in medieval and Early Modern literature and culture. In many ways, it reminds me of the mythological chimera, which John Lydgate explains as having the "Hed off a leoun […], / Wombe off goot, and tail serpentyne" and is variously presented in medieval art as having three heads and even possessing human-like features.[12] In a medieval logic puzzle, it is used to question the signifying power of discourse, existing simultaneously as nothing, everything, and something else.[13] Today, the term can describe humans that contain two sets of DNA and can occur in a variety of instances, such as when two zygotes exchange genetic material in utero, when fetal or maternal cells cross the placenta, or as a result of blood transfusion or organ transplantation; although chimerism often goes undiagnosed, it can lead to disabling conditions.[14] Donna Haraway, furthermore, has used the chimera as a synonym for the cyborg, a hybrid, boundary-crossing figure

[12] John Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen (Washington: Washington Carnegie Institution, 1923), l. 853–4.

[13] See, for example, Louise Nisbet Roberts, "A Chimera is a Chimera: A Medieval Tautology," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21:2 (1960): 273–8.

[14] See *Chimera's Children: Ethical, Philosophical, and Religious Perspectives on Human-Nonhuman Experimentation*, ed. Callum Mackellar and David Albert Jones (London: Continuum, 2012). Taylor Muhl, who has tetragametic chimerism as a result of absorbing a fraternal twin in the womb, describes her experiences with "autoimmune and health challenges" caused by her "two immune systems and two bloodstreams" in her blog post "My Story," *Taylor Muhl* (no date), http://www.taylormuhl.com/blog/?p=180 (accessed April 17, 2018).

she equates to people with disabilities who use assistive technology.[15] Although disability theorists have rightly critiqued the lack of engagement of the lived experience of disability in Haraway's theory, others have noted that it has the potential to challenge notions of normalcy and "to think through how to do cross-movement work within disability studies."[16] The chimera, existing as it does in its mixture of parts, places seemingly disparate elements together to create an entity that is at once coherent and incoherent. By combining parts of other wholes in order to create a new bodily coherence, the chimera combines and recombines known elements into unknown and seemingly infinite combinations, thus showing the possibility of the proliferation of multiple creatures that go beyond the human, animal, or monster. In its mixture of seemingly disparate components, the chimera thus transgresses any notion of stable boundaries and invites interpretation that goes beyond what is known. Likewise, in its examinations of a variety of medical, legal, historical, religious, and literary discourses from a range of critical lenses, *Embodied Difference* combines and recombines disability, monstrosity, and the posthuman in multiple ways in order to expose the chimeric possibilities latent in the (de)coupling of the disabled and the monstrous.

Oxford, OH, USA — Tory V. Pearman

[15] Donna Haraway asserts, "we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association, 1991), 150. She continues, "Perhaps paraplegics and other severely handicapped people can (and sometimes do) have the most intense experiences of complex hybridization with other communication devices" (178).

[16] Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), esp. 103–28, 117. See also, Donna Reeve, "Cyborgs, Cripples and iCrip: Reflections on the Contribution of Haraway to Disability Studies," in *Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions*, ed. Dan Goodley, Bill Hughes and Lennard J. Davis (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 91–111.

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We would like to thank Bonnie Wheeler for welcoming our book into her wonderful New Middle Ages series, and the rest of the editorial staff at Palgrave for their care shepherding this volume through the process.

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And finally, thanks to the extraordinary Matthias Buchinger, and the magic he made.

Praise for *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World*

"These essays give new directions and voices to the interrelated topics of monstrosity, disability, and the posthuman. Ranging widely across time and genre, from Grendel through dog-headed St. Christopher, to Montaigne and Webster, the writers both provoke and inform us on how (teratological not Plinean) monstrosity and disability from birth or accident were understood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. A compelling selection of visual images aids in understanding this intersection."

—John Block Friedman, *Professor Emeritus of English and Medieval Studies, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

"This excellent collection presents essays from a variety of disciplines and deploys a range of theoretical approaches as it explores the categories in its title. The contributors also exploit the frictions among the categories, not only to define their differences but also to demonstrate how—or whether—monstrosity and disability might meaningfully intersect in formulations of the posthuman. The nuanced treatments of the topics in this volume create remarkable and often unexpected synergies that will challenge and reward its readers."

—Edward Wheatley, *Professor of English, Loyola University Chicago*

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Kathleen Perry Long is Professor of French in the Department of Romance Studies at Cornell University. She is also the director of Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (FGSS). Her publications range from articles and books on hermaphrodites and theories of the monstrous to work on religious wars and on monster narratives from the early modern period to the present day. A translation of the satirical novel about the court of Henri de Valois, *L'Isle des hermaphrodites, nouvellement découverte* (*The Island of Hermaphrodites, Newly Discovered*), is in preparation.

Asa Simon Mittman is Professor and Chair of Art and Art History at California State University, Chico, and author of *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England* (2006), co-author with Susan Kim of *Inconceivable Beasts: The Wonders of the East in the Beowulf Manuscript* (2013, awarded a Millard Meiss Publication Grant from the College Art Association), and author and co-author of numerous articles and chapters on monstrosity and marginality in the Middle Ages, including pieces on Satan in the Junius 11 manuscript (*Gesta*, with Kim) and "race" in the Middle Ages (*postmedieval*). He edited the *Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (2012). Mittman's research has been supported by the College Art Association, the International Center of Medieval Art, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He edits book series with Boydell and Brill, and is the founding president of MEARCSTAPA and a founding member of the Material Collective.

Alan S. Montroso received his PhD in English from George Washington University in May 2019. His dissertation, "Subterranean Archives: Surfacing Resilience in the Middle Ages," excavates the stories of the buried and marginalized in medieval literature as these figures develop new powers and capacities through their imbrication within underground environs. He works as adjunct Assistant Professor of English at Northern Virginia Community College.

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Haylie Swenson is a PhD candidate at George Washington University in Washington, DC, where she studies animals, ecologies, and posthuman theories in conversation with medieval literature. Her article "Lions and Latour Litanies in The Sketchbook of Villard de Honnecourt" won the 2012 Michael Camille Essay Prize and was published in *postmedieval* in 2013.

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SECTION I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Embodied Difference: Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman

Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman

Nomen dictum quasi notamen, quod nobis vocabulo suo res notas efficiat. Nisi enim nomen scieris, cognitio rerum perit.
[The noun is thus named as if it were "notamen," because it makes things known to us. For unless you know a name, knowledge of a thing perishes.]
—Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, 1.7.1

The Middle Ages and Early Modern periods were, in their own ways, highly bookish eras. As C. S. Lewis writes in *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964), the Middle Ages had "an overwhelmingly bookish or clerkly character … In our own society most knowledge depends, in the last resort, on observation. But

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the Middle Ages depended on books."[1] The book most thoroughly trusted, consulted, and revered was the Bible, a book that is, itself, rather concerned with its own status as a written text, nowhere more so than in the opening to the Vulgate Gospel of John (1:1): "In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum" ["In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word"].[2] *Words matter*. The choices Medieval and Early Modern authors made, and the choices that we make, matter. They shape, shift, and frame any discourse they comprise.

The words we rely upon to describe the twin subjects of this book—"monstrosity" and "disability"—are particularly charged, since they do not merely characterize pre-existing phenomena, but instead they create the conceptual categories they simultaneously populate. Richard H. Godden and Jonathan Hsy's survey of recent literature on disability in the Middle Ages contains throughout its discussion a veritable thesaurus of terms. The bodies under discussion are described as having "physical difference … bodies that register as nonstandard or abnormal, miraculous or extraordinary, monstrous or deformed."[3] Medieval and Early Modern art and literatures are replete with images of non-normative bodies. Saints' lives valorize physical challenges, fabliaux render them metaphorical, medical texts pathologize them, and marginal images make them subjects of amusement. Divergent bodies are viewed as gifts from God, markers of sin, or manifestations of medical imbalances. In many cases throughout Western history, a figure marked by what Rosemarie Garland-Thomson has termed "the extraordinary body" is labeled a "monster."[4] Tory V. Pearman discusses normative Medieval perspectives that viewed such people as "deviant or dangerous" and the "social processes" that named and categorized them as "disabled" or "monstrous."[5] On one hand, we

[1] C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 5.

[2] *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 4th edition, ed. Bonifatius Fischer, Robert Weber and Roger Gryson (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).

[3] Richard H. Godden and Jonathan Hsy, "Analytical Survey: Encountering Disability in the Middle Ages," *New Medieval Literatures* 15 (2015): 313–339, 314.

[4] Godden and Hsy, "Analytical Survey," 320. See Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

[5] Godden and Hsy, "Analytical Survey," 321, quoting from Pearman, *Women and Disability in the Middle Ages*, 23–24.

read of "the lame, the deformed, and the misshapen."[6] On the other hand, we read of "marvelously unstable bodies,"[7] of the "exceptional."[8]

We can perform a similar exercise with usage of the terms to describe what Asa Simon Mittman has termed "monsters and the monstrous."[9] These beings are "disgusting," "heterogeneous,"[10] and "unreal,"[11] as inspiring "simultaneous repulsion and attraction," according to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen.[12] They are "abject,"[13] evoking "scorn and disgust,"[14] and induce "terror" because they are "horrible … hodgepodge in appearance or apparent construction," but are often seen as "mythical" or "imaginary," as "metaphors" and even "nonsense."[15] Frequent subjects of interest are size, skin color, excess and lack, sex, gender, hybridity, location, religion, and behavior,[16] and anxiety seems to be the most frequently discussed root cause and resulting effect of the monstrous, though this requires some scholarly dismissal of the great *fun* that so many monsters inspire.[17] The words we choose to describe phenomena not only influence our perceptions but also, at times, call these phenomena into being. Emile Mâle, a seminal figure in Medieval art history at the turn of the twentieth century, goes a bit further in a discussion of monsters:

> It occurred to no one, moreover, to verify the accuracy of stories in the Bestiary. In the Middle Ages the idea of a thing which a man framed for

[6] Godden and Hsy, "Analytical Survey," 320.

[7] Godden and Hsy, "Analytical Survey," 326, quoting from Christopher Baswell, "King Edward and the Cripple," in *Chaucer and the Challenges of Medievalism: Studies in Honor of Henry Ansgar Kelly,* ed. D. Minkova and T. Tinkle (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 2003): 15–28, 28.

[8] Godden and Hsy, "Analytical Survey," 330.

[9] Asa Simon Mittman, "Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster Studies," in *Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman, with Peter Dendle (London: Ashgate, 2012): 1–14, 1.

[10] Mittman, "Impact," 1.

[11] Mittman, "Impact," 4.

[12] Mittman, "Impact," 4, quoting Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 20.

[13] Mittman, "Impact," 8.

[14] Mittman, "Impact," 13.

[15] Mittman, "Impact," 5–6.

[16] Mittman, "Impact," 7–8.

[17] Karl Steel, "Medieval Monsters, Fun, and Delusions of Importance," *Medieval Karl* (January 20, 2014), http://medievalkarl.com/2014/01/20/medieval-monsters-fun-and-delusions-of-importance/ (accessed January 2015).

> himself was always more real to him than the actual thing itself, and we see why these mystical centuries had no conception of what men now call science. The study of things for their own sake held no meaning for the thoughtful man. How could it be otherwise when the universe was conceived as an utterance of the Word of which every created thing was a single word?[18]

That is, the underlying or pre-existing base reality of a phenomenon was, in the period, far less interesting, relevant, and significant than the words used to describe it, since the words were each shards of that first word that called the universe into being.[19]

The words we use to describe the divergent and non-normative bodies of the Middle Ages also prove to be particularly vexing because, as Irina Metzler has observed, in the Middle Ages, there was no conception of the disabled as it would accord with modern notions of embodied difference.[20] Instead of "disabled," Metzler names such figures "impaired," following the social model of disability that distinguishes "impairment" from a socially constructed sense of "disability." The disabled body, like the monstrous, is a "cultural body" that "incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy."[21] The social model (and later the cultural model) are both responding to and critiquing the medical model, whereby disability is pathologized, marked as something to be cured or eradicated. Similarly, Cohen's cultural reading of the monster rescues these abject figures from being simple objects of plot, waiting to be destroyed and defeated. Rather than distance the disabled or the monster as something evil or defective, Monster Studies and Disability Studies help us see how our construction of such categories implicate all of us and our fantasies of normality and

[18] Emile Mâle, *Religious Art in France, XIII century: A Study of Medieval Iconography and its Sources* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1913), 33. This text was first published in French as *L'art réligieux de XIIIe siècle en France: étude sur l'iconographie de moyen âge et sur ses sources d'inspiration* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1898).

[19] As Mittman and Susan M. Kim write, "the transmission, and sometimes even the origin of the monster is in text and image, even when the reception of the monster is as reality rather than representation or fiction." For further discussion, see Mittman and Kim, "Monstrous Iconography," *Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*, ed. Colum Hourihane (London: Routledge, 2017).

[20] Irina Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, C. 1100–1400* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

[21] Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, ed., *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 4.

wholeness. In looking for figures of the disabled and the deformed, then, scholars in Medieval Disability Studies have often fallen back on monstrosity as an overlapping or even equivalent category. When setting out her criteria for what counts as an impairment in the Middle Ages, for instance, Metzler includes "extreme deformations or monstrosities, for example, two heads, lack of mouth, twisted head, misplaced eyes, twisted feet."[22] Most significantly for a study of premodern Europe, we must necessarily look at the monstrous because that is where the disabled are often to be found.

Although the study of disability and the study of the monstrous have much in common, it is vital to note the divergent purposes of the two fields. As Kevin Stagg observes in his essay on monstrous births in the Early Modern period, Disability Studies and Monster Studies diverge primarily in their intent: discourses about disability treat it as a significant social category, on par with race, class, and gender, whereas those about the monster focus on anomaly and error, and the abjected body of the deviant.[23] Even so, despite noting similar categorical distinctions, Henri-Jacques Stiker cites several studies on the monstrous in his Medieval section of *A History of Disability* "since the notion of monster is necessarily related to that of disability."[24] But he goes on to caution that he "would emphatically underscore the deceptive character of any attempted merger of the two phenomena." In envisioning this collection, we have also been wary of the "deceptive character" of bringing these two discourses together—chiefly, the word "monster" always draws in its wake a host of ethical and moral evaluations, a freight of signifiers that also weigh down the disabled. If Medieval writers locate the monstrous size of giants in the sin of pride, they also read phenomena such as the loss of sight as divine punishment.

Recent work in both Medieval and Early Modern studies of the disabled, however, have sought not to collapse the category of the monstrous and the disabled, but instead have developed alliances between the two fields in order to better understand non-standard bodies of all sorts. Stagg, for example, observes that although recourse to Monster Studies can

[22] Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, 5.

[23] Kevin Stagg, "Representing Physical Difference: The Materiality of the Monstrous," in *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity: Bodies, Images, and Experiences*, ed. David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg (London: Routledge, 2006), 19–38, 20.

[24] Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 72.