

Headless men and hungry monsters¹

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Medievalists, according to Caroline Bynum, must write about “what is other – radically terrifyingly, fascinatingly other.”² The fascination we feel in dealing with radically different cultures, and the attendant trepidation such encounters inspire, would not have been unfamiliar to the Anglo-Saxons. They, too, chose to dwell upon that which is “other,” often terrifyingly so. I am separated from my Anglo-Saxon Others by a chronological gap which cannot be crossed. They were separated from a number of theirs by equally insurmountable geographical stretches. For them, the Others were monstrous, not in the metaphorical way we now use the term, but in the most literal sense. They were not merely monstrous; they were actual monsters. The preface to an eleventh-century manuscript of the *Liber Monstrorum*, or *The Book of Monsters* explains that the text was written in response to a request for knowledge:³

You have asked about the hidden parts of the orb of the earth, and if so many races of monsters ought to be believed in which are shown in the hidden parts of the world, throughout the deserts and the islands of the ocean, and are sustained in the most distant mountains . . . and that I ought to describe the monstrous parts of humans and the most horrible wild animals and innumerable forms of beasts and the most dreadful types of dragons and serpents and vipers.⁴

Where did such monsters – or at least their legends – come from? The author of the *Liber Monstrorum* is justifiably skeptical about a number of the tales he has heard of monsters in far-off lands which “if it were possible to fly with wings, exploring, one might prove them to be fictions, despite so much talk.”⁵ If, that is, one were oneself monstrous, a hybrid bird-man, then one could disprove the existence of monsters. Still, the author begins his catalogue with a personally verified account, writing, “in the beginning of this work, I declare that I knew a certain man, who nevertheless appeared in the face and in the breast much more masculine than feminine . . . but he delighted in women’s work.”⁶ Here, the author tells us that he is relying on personal experience and his description, relatively commonplace by contemporary standards, gives us no reason to suspect otherwise. On the other hand, many of the monsters in this text and that are described and depicted elsewhere

were not likely to have been personally observed, regardless of the claims of their authors.⁷

If authors and illuminators were not writing from personal experience, where did they get their fabulous stories? The converted Anglo-Saxons considered holy Scripture to be the most reliable source of information, accurate in all of its details. Beginning with Genesis, the book of the Old Testament most often reproduced in Anglo-Saxon England, we read that “giants were on the earth in those days.”⁸ This verse is illustrated in the *Hexateuch*, a lavishly illuminated eleventh-century manuscript of the Old Testament.⁹



Here, these figures fill their half-page frame. They are logically the largest out of the thousands of figures in this massive volume, as if drawn to scale within the manuscript, but they are otherwise not particularly fearsome or monstrous.¹⁰ Quite to the contrary, they gesture to one another in a restrained manner as they seem to hold a polite conversation. Their manners of dress, hair and beard in no way distinguish them from

the rest of the biblical characters. There are numerous other references to giants and other monsters in the Old Testament, with Goliath as the most famous example.¹¹ While twenty-first-century readers might scoff at the notion of turning to the Bible for scientific information about the races of the Earth, this was still being done well into the nineteenth-century, when prolific essayist and novelist Charles Mackay wrote that Acts 17:26 (“God made of one blood all nations of the earth.”) was in common usage by “preachers, professional lecturers, salaried philanthropists, and weak-minded women . . . together with the philosophers and the strong-minded women . . . and all the multitude of theorists” in discussions of the human races.¹²

Giants also appear as a common Anglo-Saxon poetic trope. As part of a semi-mythical history, they were credited with having built the monumental stone structures which remained from prehistory and the Roman occupation of Britain.¹³ *The Ruin* describes one such building in its opening lines:¹⁴

Ʒræctlic is þer realltan; þýrðe gebræcon, burðrebe
burrot, þrotnað enta geþeorc.

Splendid is the rampart, broken by fate, the burg
burst apart, the work of giants crumbles.

This *enta geþeorc*, this work of giants, was considered to be too great to have been the product of human labor. The trope of work of giants served to distance the Anglo-Saxons from the entirely human past of Britain. Of course, all of the Christian and, indeed, Jewish and Moslem world would have had the Biblical texts which may have inspired some of these later accounts, and yet “there is something distinctly Anglo-Saxon about this fascination with giants conjoined to the formation of alienated, human identities.”¹⁵ In an Old English homily, giants were connected with two other traditions: Classical antiquity, kept alive through the monastic copying of texts, and Germanic religion, still very much alive in the living memories and belief even of long-converted groups. Biblically sanctioned giants are used by an Anglo-Saxon homilist as an explanation for the otherwise inexplicable worship of beings outside the Christian context:

The devil ruled men on earth, and he strove against
God and God’s people; and he raised himself over
all, so that the heathens said that the gods were
their heathen leaders; such a one was the giant
Hercules and Apollo, who left the glorious God;
Thor also and Odin, whom the heathens greatly
praise.¹⁶

Here, the divinity of Hercules and Thor, of Apollo and Odin is overwritten with monstrosity. Of course, the Germanic tradition had its own wealth of giants and other monsters, still a part of the active belief system of the Anglo-Saxons many centuries after Saint Augustine’s

missionary efforts. *Beowulf*, the greatest example of Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry, tells us that man-eating Grendel is not the only wild danger, but that there are also “monsters and elves, and orcs, and giants too,” (eotenar onð ylfe, onð orcnear, ppýlce gýgantar).¹⁷ We may be tempted to dismiss such accounts as ‘mere’ poetry, as a fictional reflection of imagination and whimsy rather than an indicator of practically held beliefs. Indeed, I think that it is very difficult to believe that such creatures were, for the Anglo-Saxons, “alien yet real,” and yet we must.¹⁸ We might wish to dismiss these creatures, along with Susan Kim, as nothing more than “literalised representations of their function as allegorical figures, or as signs.”¹⁹ However, while they might have been used within allegories, usage would only serve to indicate their supposed reality. Like the hedgehogs and beavers of the *Bestiaries*, certainly familiar to Anglo-Saxon readers, these marvels, these freaks and miracles of nature would have been, though more distant, nonetheless quite real. Jonathan Sumption elaborates:

If the majority [of medievals] . . . accepted the evidence for miracles, it was not because they were unduly credulous or irrational, still less because they cared nothing for the truth. It was rather because in assessing the evidence they applied criteria very different from those of [the Empiricists]. They may often have been misled by lying witnesses, but the fundamental cause of their error was that they considered a miracle to be a normal, though nonetheless remarkable, incident of life.²⁰

It is therefore not surprising that we find all three Anglo-Saxon versions of the *Marvels of the East* bound with other ‘factual’ matter, including works by Bede and Macrobius. They are simply included within the “corpus of factual literature about distant places.”²¹ “But,” Augustine notes, “it is not necessary to believe in all of the races of men, which are said to exist.”²² Still, even today there are many for whom this would seem to be within the realm of actual experience, as demonstrated by the endless eyewitness accounts still being reported of Bigfoot, the Yeti, aliens (which of course, take their name from the Latin for “stranger” or “foreigner”) and, of course, the same water-beast first seen by St. Columba in the sixth century.²³



We may be quick to dismiss those who report such sightings as quacks and nutcases, but that does not shake the conviction of contemporary ‘pilgrims’ who spend time and effort traveling to a cold lake in Scotland to see if the 1500-year-old monster is alive and well in the murk of Loch Ness.²⁴ As Jeffrey Cohen writes, regardless of the illogic of such situations, “uncannily . . . the monster lives.”²⁵

Returning to Anglo-Saxon sources, we can examine other less poetic texts to document the belief in monsters. Wooden rune-sticks, rare survivals given their perishable substance, were used for various magical rituals of protection and invocation by several Germanic groups.



These rune sticks were used for many purposes – practical, prayerful, invocatory and magical. One set contains “Christian prayers, Ave Marias, names of archangels, prayers for childbirth, some fifty *fiþarcs* [which are sets of the runic alphabet], [and] a charm against hostile creatures which reads, ‘I cut runes of help, I cut runes of protection, once against the elves, twice against the trolls, thrice against the ogres.’”²⁶ Such inscriptions are part of a larger Scandinavian context, in which runes “could save one from all sorts of perilous situations,” like battles or sea-voyages.²⁷ Even R. I. Page, who openly refers to himself as a “sceptical runologist”

assumes it probable that the Anglo-Saxons turned to runes for magical help “quite extensively.”²⁸ These runesticks were not used for the expression of poetic imagination, but for practical purposes, thus indicating real belief. Further, their call for protection suggests that this belief was strong enough to inspire fear. Finally, the structure of this particular protective charm implies a hierarchy within the monstrous world in which ogres are more dangerous than trolls, who in turn are more dangerous than elves. Further support for the practical belief in monsters comes from medical texts and charms which appear in a variety of contexts. While magical charms may be found in a number of works, perhaps their most interesting occurrence is in an eleventh-century manuscript of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*, the same fundamental text which contains the origin myths of the Anglo-Saxons and attempts to explain who the Anglo-Saxons were and where they had come from. In addition to more pedestrian cures for common ailments such as eyeaches, earaches and stomach-aches, this manuscript also contains a charm for protection against all fiends.²⁹ We also have several cures for *alfadde*, which is literally elf-disease, or nightmares inspired by the poisoned arrows of the elves.³⁰ These various examples serve to demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxons did have a genuine belief in monsters and the dangers associated with them. Likewise, they suggest that the poetic and the practical are not as far apart as modern ‘sensibility’ might lead us to believe.

The final source for monstrous inspiration was classical. Just as the homily I mentioned earlier groups Odin and Thor with Hercules and Apollo, so too the *Liber Monstrorum*, the *Book of Monsters*, forms a link between the monsters of *Beowulf*, the giants, elves and orcs, and the monsters of the *Marvels of the East*, which are my main subject, today. In this work, Classical and Germanic monsters are listed in free association with one another. A description of Colossus directly follows that for Beowulf’s uncle, King Hygelac of the Geats.³¹ In this context, both are made monstrous, enlarged into giants. No distinction is made to account for their origins. Both are *monstra* from unspecified historical moments, and both are memorialized; Hygelac’s bones are on display on an island in the Rhine and the Colossus, of course, was portrayed in a huge sculpture that, although long gone, remains “a work heard of throughout the whole orb of the earth.”³²

It must be recalled that, without the active scriptoria of the Middle Ages, we would have precious few Classical texts remaining, and the communities of monks who copied and preserved them read them, too.³³ One of the more popular texts dealing with monsters, the *Marvels of the East*, survives in three Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. This work is itself based on classical sources.³⁴ The three manuscripts were produced under differing circumstances over three centuries; yet all three share a

number of commonalities which merit a unified discussion. Secular subjects are rare in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, but this text exists in three illustrated versions of increasing lavishness: Two in the British Library and one in the Bodley at Oxford.³⁵ The earliest in date is the Vitellius manuscript, dated to the late-tenth century.³⁶ Following on the heels of Edgar's peaceful reign, the late-tenth century was dominated by the lengthy rule of Aethelred *Unraed*, whose moniker literally translates to "Good Advice the Ill-Advised."³⁷ While his thirty-seven years on the throne (979-1016) was one of the longest reigns in English history, Eric John refers to this period of renewed Viking invasions as "a reign of almost unremitting disaster."³⁸ Somewhere within this violent period of intense warfare, illuminators and scribes were at work on the tumultuous Vitellius manuscript, whose monsters overflow their boundaries as readily as the Vikings crossed theirs.

The Tiberius manuscript was produced in the first half of the eleventh century, another period of relative political instability. The beginning of the century saw the Viking conquests, and Cnut's death in 1035 left England "on the verge of chaos," which was, it seems, slimly and temporarily avoided.³⁹ In the thirty-one years between the death of Cnut and the Norman Conquest in 1066, Harold (1035-40), Harthacnut (1040-42) and Edward the Confessor (1042-66) all reigned, culminating in the famous squabble for succession which led to the Conquest. Sometime during this tumultuous period, the vigorous images of Tiberius were created.

The Bodley manuscript, the last in this trio of *Marvels*, was created on the far side of the Conquest, which may account for its designer's abandonment of the Old English version of the text. Dated fairly precisely to ca. 1120-1140, this manuscript is much smaller than the other two.⁴⁰

The similarities between Tiberius and Bodley are clear. Still, there are significant differences, most obviously that Bodley is tiny and Tiberius is quite large. Some of the changes may be attributed to this variation, alone. Nevertheless, Anglo-Saxon illuminators frequently altered images when producing copies. As Richard Gameson observes, "while absolute fidelity to the exemplar was the aim of the scribe, it was generally not that of the artist: at most his task was more like that of producing a paraphrase."⁴¹ Nonetheless, the images in these manuscripts seem to maintain a self-consciously rigid continuity from one manuscript to the next. The men with two faces on one head, for example, are extremely similar in Tiberius and Bodley.



Both illustrations follow the text by representing a man with two faces on one head, but they also share features not mentioned by the text. Their poses are almost identical, and each man holds in his right hand a horn with the wide end pointing inward and up. The text specifies that these men have "long noses," and indeed they do, but in both manuscripts, the rear-facing faces have longer, more pointed noses and the front-facing faces have broader noses. More significant, perhaps, is the similarity between this pair of images and the corresponding image in the Vitellius manuscript, which on the whole is less similar and is generally considered to be based on a different exemplar.⁴²



Here, we are again presented with a two-faced figure whose head and feet overlap the frame in which he is centered. Again, he holds the horn, facing inward, which is not mentioned in the text. Again, there is a line of dark hair running down the center of the head, separating one face from the other. And again, we even find that the left face bears a longer, sharper nose and the right face bears a large, broader nose. Is there any significance in these details? Perhaps, and perhaps not. Regardless, their accumulation indicates a desire to maintain continuity, to preserve ethnographic information through the centuries. These three images are all fairly literal representations of their texts, and yet within these confines, their designers had plenty of room for wide variation. Why, then, did they choose to preserve this visual continuity? This can hardly be dismissed as slavish copying, when then manuscripts differ in so many other significant ways; they are of vastly differing sizes; their texts are in different languages; and they are written in different scripts. I would therefore argue that, in some manner, these images represent lasting notions in Anglo-Saxon culture, that they were viewed as repositories of information which the creators of these manuscripts wished to preserve accurately.

The *Marvels* contain a series of descriptions from dog-headed and headless men to plants which produce precious stones. These accounts of various human and animal oddities are disconnected, discontinuous descriptions.⁴³ The format is an alteration from the original ancient Greece source, which couched this information within a narrative context. Here, extracted and essentialized, they become little ethnographical and zoological morsels, easily consumable individually or all together. The descriptions frequently contain information about the name, location, appearance and habits of the monsters. These passages tend to contain the same basic information for each Marvel: Name,

location, appearance and diet. This pattern, apparently quite appealing, continued to be used for discussions of “monstrous” races for a millennia, reappearing with great similarity in anthropological writing through the nineteenth century. Frederic Farrar provides an archetypal example in a discussion of Race: [Brace yourselves for this.]

Such are the tallow-colored Bosjesmen who, when not living on worms and pismires, are glad to squabble for the putrid carcase of the hyaena and the antelope; . . . the aborigines of Victoria, among whom new-born babes are, when convenient, killed and eaten by their parents and brothers; the Alforese of Ceram, who live in families in the trees; the Banaks, who wear lumps of fat meat ornamentally in the cartilage of the nose; . . . the pigmy Dokos, south of Abyssynia, whose nails are grown long, like vultures’ talons that they may dig up ants, and tear the skin of serpents, which they devour raw; the Veddahs of Ceylon, who have gutterals and grimaces instead of languages, who have no God, no notions of time or distance, no name for hours, days, and years, and who cannot count beyond five upon their fingers. Many tribes like these, in the lowest mud of barbarism, so far from having traditions or traces of preceding tribes, attribute their origin directly to lions (like the Sahos), to goats (like the Dangalis), or with contented unanimity to the ape, on whose deformed resemblance to themselves they look without any particle of horror and repugnance, as on a type to which they are assimilated by their own abject degradation, fierce squalor, and protuberant jaws.⁴⁴

In this remarkable and repellent passage, Farrar follows the format of the *Marvels* fairly closely, listing names, locations, appearances and diets, but little else. We may also note that the list descends from dietary to moral to religious failings. These races, for Farrar, go from bad to worse. The ‘Bosjesmen’ eat animals we do not, but this is hardly as gross a transgression as that of the ‘aborigines’ who eat their own children. This moral monstrosity eventually gives way to physical monstrosity, and so enter the familiar pygmies, staples of the medieval texts.⁴⁵ For the ‘modern anthropologist,’ the pygmies are not merely short people; rather, they approach the sort of hybridity common to the Anglo-Saxon’s monsters, bearing ‘vultures’ talons.⁴⁶ Still, even these part-animal, snake-eating marvels are not so horrifying for Farrar as the ‘Veddahs,’ who are utterly beyond the pale because they do not know God. These ‘Veddahs’ recall rather sharply the naked men from Connacht described by Gerald of Wales who “knew nothing of Christ nor had they heard anything of him.”⁴⁷ These physically normal people are for Farrar, as for Gerald, the most incomprehensible, the most appalling of all monstrosities. Farrar’s passage reads as if it were copied

directly out of the Gerald's *History and Topography of Ireland*. Farrar writes that these Veddahs have "no notions of time or distance, no name for hours, days, and years."⁴⁸ Gerald writes of the naked men that they did not know how the names "of the year, or the month, or of the week. They were as yet deeply ignorant of the designation of the names of the days of the week."⁴⁹ This resemblance is so strong that it is difficult to write it off as mere coincidence. Rather, it seems as if medieval discussions of monstrous races were direct inspirations for modern discussions of genuine human variety. Even more recently, in a 'scientific' discussion of human evolution, Raymond Dart describes our distant African ancestors, *Australopithecus Africanus*, as "carnivorous creatures that seized living quarries by violence, battered them to death, tore apart their broken bodies, dismembered them limb from limb, slaking their ravenous thirst with the hot blood of victims, and greedily devouring living writhing flesh."⁵⁰ We have no evidence whatsoever that suggests any of the habits of these proto-human individuals, so Dart is here allowing his imagination free rein, and in doing so, falls back on the old, familiar patterns. As is often the case, it is the Other within – in this case within our own human past and genetic composition – who receives the most vociferous condemnation. The paradigms established in the Anglo-Saxon period have proved enduring, perhaps more so than we might wish.

Having suggested where Anglo-Saxon monsters may have come from, I would like to see where they went. These creatures tend to be located far from the holy centers of Jerusalem and Rome. Instead, in Michael Gaudio's words, they appear in "infected zones, where all kinds of monstrosities are possible, and where a different man is born, an aberrant from the prototype who inhabits the center of things."⁵¹ This is particularly vital for the Anglo-Saxons who, unlike those living in Rome or even in Continental Europe, saw themselves as living at the edge of the world, in a liminal zone where such things, perhaps unthinkable elsewhere, seemed rather more likely. In his discussion of the monstrous races that appear in the manuscripts of the *Marvels of the East* and elsewhere, John Friedman finds a connection between location and physical appearance, writing that "the peoples introduced to the West by Ctesias, Megasthenes, and Pliny . . . both in themselves and in their geographic location . . . were creatures of the extreme."⁵² Indeed, he continues, their "traditional placement at the world's edges was closely related to their monstrousness."⁵³

I would now like to focus on a few key examples of the monsters of Africa which appear in the three Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of the *Marvels of the East*. Here, many of the monsters and monstrous men are clearly labeled, sometimes redundantly. For the dogheaded man in the Tiberius manuscript, for example, the text tells us

"similarly there *cynocephali* are born, whom we call *conopoenas*, having the manes of horses, the teeth of a wild boar, the head of a dog. His breath is fire."⁵⁴ This Latin text is followed by an Anglo-Saxon translation which informs the reader, "similarly there are healf hundingar (half-dogs) that are called *conopoenas*."⁵⁵ In total, then, this manuscript tells us that we may call these monsters *cynocephali*, *conopoenas* (twice) and healf hundingar. In his wonderfully embodied discussion of monsters, Michael Camille proposes the construction of "a canon of monsters . . . lists of the slimy, feathery, and scaly."⁵⁶ This effort, as Camille acknowledges, is one of nomination and therefore of control. Jacques Derrida elaborates by noting that "a monster is a species for which we do not have a name," created through either "composition or hybridization of already known species," just like these dog-headed men.⁵⁷ However, he continues, "as soon as one perceives a monster in a monster, one begins to domesticate it."⁵⁸ In this manner, words help us to comprehend the natural world.⁵⁹ For Michel Foucault, grouping individuals into categories with names is "a form of power which makes individuals subjects . . . subject to someone else by control and dependence."⁶⁰ The connection between naming and controlling would also have been familiar to any Anglo-Saxon who had read or listened to Genesis, in which Adam is given dominion over the animals through the process of naming them:

Then God led to there the beasts that he shaped of earth, and the birds of the air to Adam which, before, he had shaped to see how he would name them. Then each of the beasts which live, just as Adam named them, so they are named. And Adam called all of the animals by their names, and all the birds and all the wild beasts.⁶¹

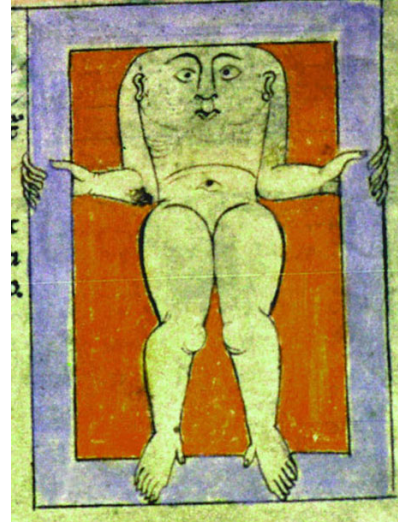
In the *Hexateuch*, the accompanying image shows God standing before Adam, gesturing to a selection of animals who seem to await eagerly their nomination.



If, indeed, to name is to control, then the Anglo-Saxon compiler of the Tiberius manuscript has done all he can to rein in the monstrous, fire-breathing *cynocephali*, or, perhaps I should say, the *conopoenas* or even the

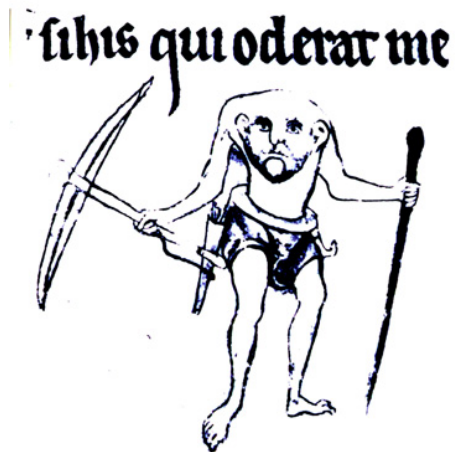
healþunðingar. For Juila Kristeva, defining the Other not only allows it to be controlled, but also to be “excluded, but in a strange fashion: not radically enough to allow for a secure differentiation between subject and object, and yet clear enough for a defensive *position* to be established.”⁶² That which is controlled and excluded is, for all intents and purposes, subjugated. In 1849, Benjamin Disraeli declared in England’s House of Commons, “race implies difference, difference implies superiority, and superiority leads to predominance.”⁶³ Disraeli’s desire for literal predominance over the ‘monstrous’ races of the world seems to resurrect the unspoken desires of the Anglo-Saxon designers who created the images for the *Marvels* manuscripts. Such subjugation, such control and exclusion would have been a powerful means of dealing with the more aggressive members of the *Marvels of the East*.

I would now like to confront a few of these monsters face to face, as they are embodied in the images of the *Marvels of the East*. In the three manuscripts, we find a curious headless man.



This race, although identified as “blemee” on the great Hereford world map, is not named in the Vitellius or Bodley manuscripts, or even in the Tiberius manuscript, which had provided multiple names for the dog-headed men.⁶⁴ They are, however, identified by location: “And there is another island in the Brixonte toward the south in which there are born men without heads.”⁶⁵ This is followed by a very cursory physical description of the *blemye*.⁶⁶ “They have eyes and a mouth in their chest. They are eight feet tall and in a similar manner eight feet wide.”⁶⁷

What was the appeal of such an odd creature? Why does he appear in *Marvels* and maps and even in the margins of unrelated texts?



Kristeva argues that abject objects, vile and wretched things evoke a “fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from them.”⁶⁸ In his detailed study of the powers of disgust, William Miller offers a similar observation:

Even as the disgusting repels, it rarely does so without also capturing our attention. It imposes itself upon us. We find it hard not to sneak a second look or, less voluntarily, we find our eyes doing “double-takes” at the very things that disgust us.⁶⁹

Disgust must always repel in some sense or it is not disgust. Repulsion, however, might bring in its train affects that work to move one closer again to what one just backed away from. These affects could range from curiosity, to fascination, to a desire to mingle. Repulsion can also raise resentment for having been repelled and a consequent desire to reclaim lost territory. And that too draws one forward again. . . . Something makes us look at the bloody auto accident, thrill to movies of horror, gore, and violence Is there no moral offensiveness that doesn't by some dark process elicit fascination, if in no other way than in the horror, wonderment, and befuddlement such depravity evokes?⁷⁰

Charles Baudelaire gives this notion poetic grace in his “A Carrion,” in which a rotting corpse by the side of the road on a hot day is “clamorous with foul ecstasy . . . Blooming with the richness of a flower.”⁷¹ This revolting image compels Baudelaire's gaze, as the *blemmye* arrests mine. But what might have rendered these curious, perhaps amusing images of headless men disgusting or abject to their medieval viewers? As Miller notes, while disgust takes the form of a bodily reaction, it can nonetheless be deeply rooted in a moral objection. Indeed, he links deformity, very much in evidence with our *blemmye*, with immorality. “Disgust,” he writes, “ranges more widely than we may wish, for it judges ugliness and deformity to be moral offenses. It knows no distinction between the moral and the aesthetic.”⁷²

We may wish to distance ourselves from this offensive notion, but medieval viewers would, by and large, have made no such effort, for they made a direct connection between deformity and sin. As Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe argues, the body in Anglo-Saxon England was consciously used as a legible sign for guilt, which was the end result of sin.⁷³ In his *History and Topography of Ireland*, Gerald of Wales deems deformities to be common in Ireland as a direct result of the character of its people:

Nor is it marvelous if nature produces such people, against the laws of nature, on account of an adulterous race, an incestuous race, a race of illegitimate birth and conception, a race outside of the law, foully ravishing nature herself with hateful and hostile craft.⁷⁴

An illuminated manuscript of this text even provides an image so that its readers may see a genuine crippled Irishman, whom they are then to personally condemn as wicked.⁷⁵



Although we could imagine particularly wicked, evil-looking deformed people without the image, this pictorial representation seems sympathetic enough, with the man gazing calmly, perhaps mournfully upward from his kneeling position. His right foot is wrenched painfully backward (recalling the *antipodes* of the *Marvels of the East*) and his left leg seems atrophied, withered from disuse. This is not a generalized image of moral failing, but a specific, well-observed depiction of genuine human deformity. And, in looking at this image, we are encouraged by Gerald to feel moral repulsion for this unfortunate figure. Gerald tells us that “it seems a deserving vengeance of God, that those who do not reflect on the same with the interior light of the mind ought to suffer, in being deprived of the favor of that light which is exterior and bodily.”⁷⁶

Like Gerald's semi-mythic Ireland, the *Marvels of the East* “is crammed with bodies transfigured and deformed.”⁷⁷ The *Marvels* were based on Greek texts, written in a context in which the ugly members of society were considered blameworthy for their state.⁷⁸ By examining Anglo-Saxon legal texts, we can see that body was, for

them, no general assemblage of parts, but a very precisely defined entity. In an Anglo-Saxon *Handbook for a Confessor*, for example, there are specific instructions for confessing sins “for skin and for flesh, and for bone and for sinew, and for veins and for gristle, and for tongue and for lips, and for gums and for teeth, and for hair and for marrow, and for anything soft or hard, wet or dry.”⁷⁹ Despite our modern biological understanding that the body is divided into musculature (flesh), bones and ligaments (bones and sinew) and the circulatory system (veins), it is nonetheless difficult to imagine one of these parts sinning, while the others remain uninvolved. But for the Anglo-Saxons, to speak generally of “sins of the flesh” was not adequate.

The result of conviction for a serious crime in Anglo-Saxon England was generally bodily mutilation. However, this was not necessarily done as a form of punishment, though of course it would serve as such. Rather, it was evidentiary. Guilt was manifest, visible and legible on the body, through mutilation.⁸⁰ As O’Keeffe writes, “to view those eyeless, noseless faces, those scalpsless heads, arms without hands, legs without feet is to read upon their bodies the legal exactment of punishment for crimes.”⁸¹ These bodies, for all of their deep-seated corporeality, were still texts to be read, sometimes quite literally. Two priests convicted of theft and adultery were actually branded on their foreheads with their crimes (i.e. “This is a profane adulterer.”).⁸² Here, we need no metaphors to convey the notion of a legible body.⁸³

Returning to the *blemmye*, I would argue that we are able to read in his most severe bodily mutilation, his decapitation, the mark of deep-seated moral failing.⁸⁴ The exact nature of his crime is not relevant, nor is its location to flesh, bone or gristle. In a society that would cut the nose from a thief, the appearance of a man whose head has been removed, not by a potentially fallible legal system but by the perfect God who formed him, would be the very definition of the disgusting.⁸⁵

Having declared the Anglo-Saxon *blemmye* morally abject, I would like to turn to the methods employed to contain them. As stated above, the *blemmye* is not named in any of the three *Marvels* texts.⁸⁶ A name could have provided an element of containment, of Derrida’s ‘domestication,’ without which these nameless creatures retain the full measure of their monstrosity.⁸⁷ For Friedman, this quality is manifested as a tension in the images and texts of the *Liber Monstrorum* and *Marvels*, a “demonic energy . . . about the monstrous races, making them ever ready to burst into the world of the western Europeans.”⁸⁸ On the Hereford *Mappamundi*, this energy is allowed greater rein.



While the majority of the monsters, including the *blemmye*, are neatly contained within their boxes at the southern edge of the world, a handful have broken out and are straying toward Europe. Just beyond the restraining boundary of the Nile we find a cloven-hoofed satyr, a centaur-like faun and a sphinx.⁸⁹



Half way across the map, at the eastern extreme, we find the fleet-footed *sciopod*, shading himself from the sun as he does in the *Marvels*.



Continuing counterclockwise around the map we find, not far to the east of England, a pair of cannibals known as *essedones* grimly undertaking to “eat the corpses of their parents in solemn feasting, thinking this better than letting them be consumed by worms.”⁹⁰



They sit on small rock piles, with the dismembered head and limbs of a dead parent between them as they commence their feast, which recalls Raymond Dart’s violent description of his cannibalistic *Australopithecus*, mentioned earlier.⁹¹ These figures are certainly revolting according to English norms of conduct, not merely eating human flesh, but the very flesh which produced them. The limbs seem freshly hacked and raw, as blood drips from their stumps. However, I believe that they would be in some sense disgusting even without these gory details. They would be offensive to the English simply by virtue of their location. As Miller observes, something perfectly harmless can easily become disgusting if it is out of place. In his example, borrowed

from Darwin, soup in a bowl can be perfectly appetizing, but the same soup, dripping through a man’s beard, is nauseating.⁹² This is hard to deny. It seems, based on the logical construction of the *Mappamundi* and *Marvels*, and of the divinely ordered world they represent, that the monstrous races have a proper place, which is far, far from England. The *essedones*, and the *sciopod* and sphinx, are disgusting in their transgression of boundaries, and the closer they come to the British Isles, the more alarming they become.

Like the wandering monsters on the Hereford *Mappamundi*, the *blemmyes* of the Tiberius and Bodley manuscripts seem quite ready to burst out of their frames and off of their pages, into the world of their readers. They grip their frames with long, highly prehensile fingers like prisoners in cells, but these bars are too far apart to restrain their giant bodies. Their feet have thumbs as well, turning them into extra hands with which they seem to grip the lower edge of their frames, poisoning them to spring forward. In Anglo-Saxon art, frames were flexible, allowing for movement back and forth between the image and the text block but also between the fictive space of the image and the real space of the reader.⁹³ The frame is also frequently absorbed into the plane of the image so that “the distinction between the space occupied by the image and the plane of the frame became virtually non-existent.”⁹⁴ It is this conflation that allows the *blemmye* not only to cross the frame, but to actively grip it in the process.

Exactly what moment is being depicted in this literal, ostensibly non-narrative image? In general, the monsters of the *Marvels* are shown enacting their most typical behaviors, like the animals in a modern zoological taxonomy. For example, the *homodubii* are described as follows: “In another region there are found people six feet tall. They have beards to the knee and hair to the heel. They are called *homodubii* and they eat raw fish.”⁹⁵ The Bodley image is as literal as it could be.



We see a man who is actually six of his own feet tall, with his beard touching his knee and his hair curving around his heel. And he is most certainly about to eat a raw fish. His name, *homodubii* may indicate “man of doubt,” which could explain the expression on his face as he attempts to eat whole and head-first a fish far too large for his mouth. The text provides a description and an action, and the illuminator illustrates both rigorously. On the other hand, the text for the *blemmye* does not provide any sort of action. It tells us where they live, what they look like (in the most general of terms) and how big they are. The action, therefore, was up to the illuminators to determine, and they have turned the *blemmyes* toward the reader, endowing them with a sense of forward motion. Perhaps they are poised tensely between their world, “south of the Brixontem River” in Africa, and England, the world of their readers. On the other hand, perhaps they are standing firmly in both places at once. According to Gameson, “by focusing on a turning point in a story, one image could illustrate the transition between two immediately consecutive moments.”⁹⁶ If this is the case, what is the ‘story’? Are the *blemmyes* coming into our space, and if so, what is their intent? If they are not, could they possibly harm us? Friedman has written that “one of the most important characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon [*Marvels*] texts and their illustrations is that the races are seen in some sort of relationship to the viewer.”⁹⁷ Proceeding through the tiny Bodley manuscript, just over four by five inches, we have the opportunity to observe a broad array of wondrous creatures, but we do so with a sense of security, as they, but for a single exception, never look back at us. This is particularly important for such a small manuscript, in that the lack of confrontation allows the reader to hold the manuscript fearlessly, right up to his nose to observe more carefully the small images and minuscule text. Indeed, some of the first sixteen monstrous races seem to go to great lengths to avoid any eye contact. The next twenty-one do likewise, most particularly the *pantoi* who not only avoid looking at us but are known to gather up their long ears and flee if approached by humans.⁹⁸



In the middle of this generally non-confrontational atmosphere, reading and looking with the manuscript held close before our eyes, we come across the single figure who gazes directly out at us: the *blemmye*. Of course, in each of the three *Marvels of the East* manuscripts, the context is somewhat different. They were made over the course of three centuries and yet in each of the *Marvels*, the *blemmye* is the first and only monster to gaze directly out of the page at his viewer. This is particularly noteworthy in an Anglo-Saxon context where few figures other than Christ ever make eye contact with the viewer. For example, in all two-hundred-and-thirty feet of the *Bayeux Tapestry*, there appear only three directly frontal figures.⁹⁹

How do headless men face us? The images of the *blemmyes* provide them with full faces in their chests. Turning to the textual descriptions of the *blemmyes*, however, we find that they only reference two facial features, the eyes and the mouth. In the Latin text of Tiberius, we are told that “they have eyes and a mouth in their chest,” and in the Anglo-Saxon text, “they have upon their breasts their eyes and mouth.”¹⁰⁰ In the texts, it is only the organs of sight and consumption which merit mention, two organs closely linked by their capacity to absorb natural phenomena. We do not generally speak of consuming smells, sounds or tactile sensations in the manner that we do speak of consuming images. Given this context, the headless man’s stare seems fraught with significance. He seems as interested in consuming our image as we are in consuming his.

However, in the images, the *blemmyes* are generously granted noses and ears, as well. As Susan Kim asserts,

“in representing the *absence* of the head, the illustrator has exactly *presented* the head. The representation of the monster’s *difference*, in the illustration, outlines its *sameness*, its recognizability not as a monster, but as a man.”¹⁰¹ I would further argue that this familiarity is a necessary component in the *blemmye*’s ability to disgust: If, as Miller notes, “our bodies and our souls are the prime generators of the disgusting,” then this estranged re-presentation of our own form would be more alarming, more loathsome and therefore more compelling, for a human reader.¹⁰² Recalling Frederic Farrar’s racist diatribe cited earlier, we can see that he is extremely disturbed that “many tribes like these, in the lowest mud of barbarism . . . attribute their origin . . . with contented unanimity to the ape, on whose deformed resemblance to themselves they look without any particle of horror and repugnance.”¹⁰³ Farrar cannot understand how any human could look on the ‘deformed resemblance’ of an ape without utter disgust.

As discussed earlier, physical deformity was read as a legible sign for guilt. Looking at the *blemmye* in the Bodley manuscript in an effort to deduce his moral failing, we may take note of his huge size (recall that he stands eight feet tall and eight feet wide), his oversized, grasping hands, and his location of his face in his chest and belly. He seems an embodiment of physicality, bereft of any intellect. In his seminal essay on human evolution, Alfred Wallace concludes that man is separated from the beasts by his “wonderfully developed brain, the organ of the mind, which now, even in his lowest examples, raises him far above the highest brutes.”¹⁰⁴ This brain makes possible not only “the art of making weapons, division of labor [and] anticipation of the future” but also the “restraint of the appetites,” which is so significantly missing in the *blemmye*.¹⁰⁵ Wallace speaks of the brain ‘raising’ man above his physical body. Mikhail Bakhtin describes the reverse-process: “degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal.”¹⁰⁶ The result of this process is a close relative of Miller’s disgust: the grotesque. Indeed, the *blemmyes* seem to be a literalization of this notion, as their heads, the seat of the spiritual, have sunk down into their fleshy bodies. The *blemmye* is a man who has become a purely physical body, a material entity, whose eyes in his chest are, to borrow from Leonard Da Vinci, windows only to the body. Like the knife-wounds and bullet-holes described by Miller, they are passages into the “muck” which forms our insides.¹⁰⁷ Lower down on his gut, the seat of materiality, he has a distinctly emphasized belly-button. Bearing in mind the connection between vision and consumption, this belly-button looks rather like a third eye.¹⁰⁸ This eye is literally located in the gut, where Miller locates the seat of disgust, equating sight with revolting appetite, and so the *blemmye*’s wide-eyed stare becomes an act of ocular consumption.¹⁰⁹ The viewer of this manuscript has, by the time he reaches the confrontational *blemmye*, already

read forty folios and filled his belly full of monsters through his metaphorical *ruminatio*, the metaphor through which reading was understood as a gastronomic process of mental chewing and digestion. Turning to the Tiberius manuscript, the *blemmye* may also be graced with an abdominal eye, now paler but larger, stretched to encompass his entire stomach. As these images confront us directly through eye-contact, they draw our attention to our own viewing process and then connect this process with consumption, in its literal and figurative senses. We are left to wonder if this *blemmye* is reciprocating, ruminating on us with his third belly-eye, digesting us as we digest him.¹¹⁰

If further support is needed for the connection between vision and consumption in the *Marvels of the East*, we can turn to two other images in the Tiberius manuscript.



In a much more narrative ‘marvel,’ we are told that the *donestre* address foreigners, using

the names of their parents and the names of their relatives, coaxing them with speech in order to deceive them and kill them. And when they have seized them, they kill them and eat them, and afterwards they seize the head of the same man which they have eaten and weep over it.¹¹¹

In Cohen’s insightful analysis, the victim is incorporated into the body of the *donestre*, becoming a constituent part

of this hybrid half-human creature and thereby commingling his flesh with that of his consumer. In this image, at the moment of physical consumption, the lower half of the *donestre's* head is transformed into a beast's muzzle.¹¹² Still, even in this moment of bestial ferocity, the *donestre* locks his consumptive gaze on the body he is currently ingesting. The *donestre* eats the entire body of his human meals, but leaves behind the head, over which he mourns, resulting from a strange moment of confusion between subject and object (he has just eaten himself, as he has now literally in-corporated the man's body by putting it into his own), or from the guilt which plagues him, now that he has returned to his more human physiognomy.

The earliest image we have of the *donestre*, that in Vitellius, is rather different from the later pair.



This image has garnered virtually no discussion beyond, and yet is a fascinating scene. We see the monster, looking somewhat duck-headed, holding a human foot, standing next to an alarmed woman. This would be intriguing enough on its own, but is ever so much more interesting once we realize that the limb being held by the *donestre* is actually the lower half of the woman's left leg, which is distinctly missing from her body. This is, quite understandably, why she looks so upset. She is confronted with her imminent literal consumption, piece by piece. This is a model of homophagia – of the eating of a human being – that is very different from those we see in Tiberius and Bodley, where the victim is eaten as a

whole unit, not in pieces torn off, like the drumsticks of a Thanksgiving turkey. The woman is, at the time her foot is consumed, very much alive and aware of the process but unable to escape. Of severed limbs, Miller notes, “there are few things that are more unnerving and disgust evoking than our partibility.”¹¹³ We are frightened and disgusted by the sight of the severed limbs of others. How much greater must be the horror of watching a semi-human monster consume one's own limbs, one by one? This is the situation presented by the illuminator of Vitellius, who challenges his audience to become aware of the ‘partibility’ of their own bodies. In this context, the crimson background of this gory image seems to intensify the violence within its frame.

This image, chronologically the earliest we are looking at today, seems rather closely connected to a visual detail on the Hereford world map, the latest work I am discussing. The *essedones*, the parent-eating cannibals mentioned above, resemble the Vitellius *donestre*. Both hold up unmistakably human limbs for consumption. They differ in that the *essedones* are entirely human, if not necessarily humane, and so, unlike the *donestre*, they do not have to eat humans to become human, as does the *donestre* of Tiberius. Rather, they begin as human as the parents who sired them and now constitute their grisly meal. In this image, the cannibals wear formless, sack-like robes which conceal their bodies entirely except their hands, feet and heads, significantly the very same portions of the dismembered parent which lie between them. By covering the rest of their bodies in this manner, the illuminator seems to be emphasizing the connection between consumer and consumed who are, most evidently, made of the same parts. We might ask whether the *donestre* and the *essedones* conjure fears of contamination or of consumption, but there really is little difference, as that which is eaten becomes incorporated into the body which eats; either way, the observer is at risk of becoming that which he detests, by way of contamination or incorporation.

Our interaction with the *blemmye*, more reciprocal than that of the man with the *donestre*, likewise serves to collapse the chasm between subject and object, between consumer and consumed and therefore between man and monster. If, as the old saying goes, ‘you are what you eat,’ then as consumers of, as ruminators on the marvelous races, we are as likely to ingest and incorporate their monstrosity as they are to absorb our humanity. And yet, it seems more likely that we will be degraded by this contact than that they will be elevated by it: As it has been elegantly phrased, “a teaspoon of sewage will spoil a barrel of wine, but a teaspoon of wine will do nothing for a barrel of sewage.”¹¹⁴

Facing the *blemmye* across the gutter of the Bodley manuscript is a very similar image of a creature who

crouches in his terribly confining frame to bite at the head of his human victim.



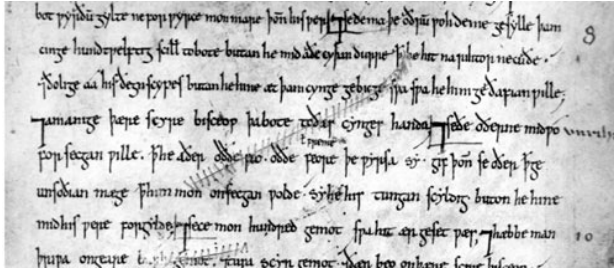
Unlike the *donestre*, these creatures, which the text informs us “we rightly call enemies,” quickly eat their captives: “For whomsoever they seize they quickly devour.”¹¹⁵ He grasps his victim around the chest and by the shoulder as he leans into him. The man in turn clasps the monster’s arm, not in any clear sign of rejection, but rather, in a gesture which might be mistaken for tenderness. Indeed, were it not for the gaping position of the monster’s toothless mouth, this might be mistaken for a scene of cross-species romance. Their mouths are drawing closer while the man looks up with his wide eye, into the gullet of the monster, down the path he knows he will soon traverse. Again, ocularity seems central. This is more an image of sight and of touch than of taste. This, perhaps, is logically explained by our inherent desire to identify with the human rather than with the homophagic monster. Sight is therefore our only link to the process of his – or our – consumption by the monster.

Returning to the *blemmye*, I would argue that, like the other monsters just discussed, his transgressive nature does not stop with his transitional location. For Camille, “the monster, being unstable, crosses boundaries between human and nonhuman, mingling the appropriate and inappropriate, showing itself in constantly novel and unexpected ways.”¹¹⁶ For Saint Augustine, too, the monsters existed to show themselves, as he proves linguistically, through a series of puns:

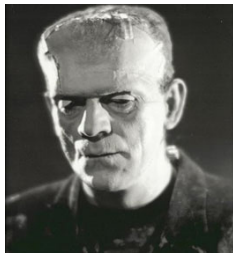
And to us the monsters, signs, portents, prodigies, as they are named, ought to demonstrate, ought to signify and portend, and prophesy that God is going to do with the bodies of men what he foretold he was able to do, with no difficulty to impede him, with no laws of nature dictating him.¹¹⁷

While Augustine connects *monstra* with *monstrare*, linguistically linking monsters with *demonstration*, Isidore instead connects it with *monere*, ‘to warn.’ Both imply the ability of God to use phenomena to prove his powers and to influence human affairs. If, indeed, the monstrous races were either “‘that which shows’ (Augustine) or ‘that which warns’ (Isidore), a morally and physically deformed creature arriving to demarcate the boundary beyond which lies the unintelligible, the inhuman,” then why are the *blemmyes* so resolutely proceeding across that boundary?¹¹⁸ These monsters, and many others, were not so much monstrous beasts as monstrous humans. They were able to bridge the divide between monstrosity and humanity, between Africa and Europe, because they have elements of both human and monster in their physical construction. Perhaps this is why the semi-human Grendel is a fascinating and enduring cultural icon, and the entirely bestial dragon who ultimately defeats Beowulf is barely recalled. If monsters like Grendel and the *blemmye* are, at least in part, human, then they may function to represent, in Scott Westrem’s words, the “dangerous element already lurking in the European social fabric.”¹¹⁹ In their liminal state of being, they could serve double-duty, embodying in monstrous flesh both the threat from without and the threat from within.

I would like now to focus on the construction of the monstrous bodies which appear in the *Marvels of the East* and the Hereford *Mappamundi*. Camille notes that “the monster is a material creature, a creation.”¹²⁰ But whose creation? Certainly, insofar as they are believed to exist literally at the other end of the world, they are God’s; on the other hand these painted images are human creations, medieval Frankensteins cobbled together out of various parts of various known creatures. Their hybridity is an essential component of both their monstrosity and their “continued popularity, usefulness, and appeal.”¹²¹ Indeed, the physical bodies of these monsters, the skin on which they are written and the inks in which they are painted, were no less violently hybrid in their constitution, occasionally quite readily recalling Frankenstein.



This leaf from a manuscript of Wulfstan's law codes is crudely stitched together, leaving a scar which, for modern viewers, brings to mind Boris Carloff, and which, for medieval viewers might have reflected the bodily punishments the manuscript describes.



Essentially, every manuscript may be seen as "a relic of bodily pain, desire, and death. We should not forget . . . that books were also produced from bodies."¹²² The vellum pages are the skins of animals, while the inks and colors often include human spittle and urine.¹²³ The bodily nature of manuscripts, somewhat foreign to modern readers raised with wood-pulp pages, was by no means unfamiliar to Anglo-Saxons, as we can see by examining one of the riddles of the *Exeter Book*:¹²⁴

A life-thief stole my world-strength,
 Ripped off my flesh and left me skin,
 Dipped me in water and drew me out,
 stretched me bare in the tight sun;
 The hard blade, clean steel, cut,
 Scraped – fingers folded, shaped me.
 Now the bird's once wind-stiff joy
 Darts often to the horn's dark rim,
 Sucks wood-stain, steps back again –
 With a quick scratch of power, tracks
 Black on my body, points trails.
 Shield-boards clothe me and stretch hide,
 A skin laced with gold. The bright song
 Of smiths glistens on me in filigree tones.
 Now decorative gold and crimson dye,
 Cloisoned jewels and a coat of glory
 Proclaim the world's protector far and wide -
 Let no fool fault these treasured claims.

This is, of course, an account of the construction of a manuscript which, estranged through the poetry of the riddler, reveals itself as it truly is, as the skin of a beast, ripped from its flesh, written with a bird's feather, dipped in a cow's horn. Each element is reanimated so that the vellum may speak of the violence enacted upon it and the

quill may suck and scratch. The emphasis in this poem is on the life of the parts, the animals from which the manuscript has been assembled and the violence of this process. Returning to the *blemmyes*, we find that their skin, so human in tone, is not a painted color, but simply the real skin of the which the page is made.

The monstrous races are composed of "unfailingly disturbing hybrid bodies."¹²⁵ However, these bodies contain no elements unknown in Anglo-Saxon England. Even the most outlandish of monsters is, when closely examined, no more than an assemblage of familiar bits and pieces, as we can see in the *lertice*, who has "ass's ears, sheep's wool and bird's feet."¹²⁶



These parts were not always fixed in their relations to one another, and so on occasion one race may, through literary or artistic alteration, become another.¹²⁷ This mutability, this hyper-hybridity, was an essential component of their monstrosity. The *cynocephalus*, for Cohen, is monstrous precisely "because of its hybridity. Human and canine affects freely play across its species-mingling flesh, marking it as alien. Miscegenation made corporeal, he has no secure place in a Christian identity structure generated around a technology of exclusion."¹²⁸



For Kristeva, the definition of the abject is that which “does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.”¹²⁹ The very text of the *Marvels* may be seen as hybrid in its nature. In Vitellius and Tiberius, the Anglo-Saxon texts are formed in Latin characters. The result is a written fusion of two linguistic systems. This hybridity is heightened by the retention of a few runic characters, used to convey sounds not found in Latin. For example, in the passage describing the *lertive* mentioned earlier, “*Donne*” begins with the runic ‘thorn,’ a letter indicating the dental spirant we approximate with ‘th’ in Modern English.

Certainly, the *cy노cephalus* with his dog head and human body and the classically inspired centaur with its human trunk and equine lower half are distinctly constructed, composite bodies.¹³⁰ But the *blemmyes* are not in possession of any parts other than human. Rather, they are missing a vital part – their heads.¹³¹ They are therefore not so much constructed bodies as they are deconstructed bodies, recalling the Anglo-Saxon law codes I mentioned. If, as O’Keeffe asserts, viewing dismembered and mutilated bodies is tantamount to seeing the sinful nature of the souls therein contained, how then are we to read the removal of the whole head?¹³² Certainly, the monster’s crimes must be weighty. Nevertheless, perhaps there is hope left for the headless *blemmye*. King Aethred’s legal code of 1008, compiled by the famous monastic reformer Wulfstan, is noteworthy as the first to suggest that punishment for crimes ought stop short of killing the convicts so that they might live long enough to save their souls.¹³³ This code, written not long before the first of the three Anglo-Saxon *Marvels of the East* manuscripts was created, turns punishment into a means to salvation. Another of Wulfstan’s codes elaborates as follows:

the culprits ought . . . be saved through various punishments, lest their souls, for which the Lord

himself suffered, be undone in eternal punishment. Some by chains and whips, others, however, ought to be bound by hunger and cold; let others, losing at the same time skin, hair and beard, suffer disgrace shamefully; others should be restrained still more sharply; that is, let them lose a body part, namely an eye or ear, a hand or foot, or some other member.¹³⁴

Such punishments were considered merciful alternatives to death, for “thus may one punish and also save the soul.”¹³⁵ In this context, since the *blemmyes* are still alive, there remains hope for their salvation. Perhaps it seems logical, then, to encounter an account of an attempt to convert them. A forged chronicle claiming to be by Saint Augustine of Hippo recounts his efforts in Ethiopia when he is reported to have preached to the *blemmyes* and cyclops.¹³⁶ While not explicitly stated in the text, it seems possible that, had Augustine been successful, the *blemmyes* might at the moment of their conversion have sprouted heads onto which their faces could then migrate. If they could be restored to God in spirit, they ought then be restored in body.

Of course, it is not only monsters who have their heads removed in Anglo-Saxon England. One other group seems particularly prone to this disorder, namely saints. There are a number of encephalaphor saints – that is, those saints depicted carrying their own head around – in the Anglo-Saxon canon, but a single example will suffice to connect monstrosity and sanctity. Ælfric translated into Old English an account of the martyrdom of Saint Edmund, King of East Anglia in the ninth century. Known for his holiness, Edmund was the unfortunate victim of a series of attacks by the Danes in 870. After having been captured and riddled with arrows that failed to kill him, Edmund was decapitated. His head was left in the woods by the Danes, when, the account relates:

A wolf was sent, through the guidance of God, to protect that head both day and night from the other animals. The people went searching and also calling out, just as the custom is among those who often go into the wood: “Where are you now, friend?” And the head answered them: “Here, here, here,” and called out the answer to them as often as any of them called out, until they came to it as a result of the calling. There lay the grey wolf who watched over that head, and had the head clasped between his two paws. The wolf was greedy and hungry, but because of God he dared not eat the head, but protected it against animals. The people were astonished at the wolf’s guardianship and carried home with them the holy head, thanking almighty God for all His miracles. The wolf followed along with the head as if he was tame, until they came to the settlement, and then the wolf turned back to the woods.¹³⁷

The saint is made headless, like the monsters, but his head is then protected by a ravenous wolf, an animal associated with violence and death through the trope of the Beasts of Battle.¹³⁸ Why do saints and monsters share this common ground? As Kristeva writes, “the abject is edged with the sublime.”¹³⁹ Literally, on the Hereford *Mappamundi*, the English are ‘edged’ with the monsters of Africa. This zone, which Kristeva might describe as “a land of oblivion that is constantly remembered,” is the realm of the abject, the disgusting.¹⁴⁰ If the monsters might be said to live “at civilization’s periphery,” this is also where the Anglo-Saxons found themselves, beyond the pale, in the margins of the world, surrounded by monsters.¹⁴¹

Gillian Overing and Clara Lees have observed that periods tend to define themselves through a process of “dependent differentiation,” defining themselves against others.¹⁴² This “definition by means of difference” was, they argue, particularly important for the Anglo-Saxons.¹⁴³ The Anglo-Saxons certainly formed extreme opinions about their new neighbors. From the earliest of their writings, we can note a vitriolic tone of disgust with regard to the native Britons whom Gildas, the earliest Anglo-Saxon historian, considered to be “ungratefully rebelling, stiff-necked and haughty, now against God, now against [their] own countrymen.”¹⁴⁴ He enumerates their “ancient errors,” “devilish monstrosities . . . numerous almost as those that plagued Egypt,” “the mountains and hills and rivers . . . on which, in those days, a blind people heaped divine honours,” and on, and on.¹⁴⁵ Gildas’s writings, to which Bede turned for information on the earliest days of Anglo-Saxon history, clearly convey a bitter disgust with all things British. The Venerable Bede similarly “emphasized the identity of the English people more intensively by the moral judgements that he passed upon the other peoples of the island when he reviewed ‘the whole state of Britain’ in his final chapter.”¹⁴⁶ For Miller, “our very core, our soul, is hemmed in by barriers of disgust.”¹⁴⁷ For Kristeva, our “lives are based on exclusion.”¹⁴⁸ To some degree, societies are defined by their disgust. It sets their boundaries. Gildas, in defining who the Anglo-Saxons

were, looked first and foremost to the Britons, in order to define who the Anglo-Saxons were *not*. Somehow, the ‘devilish monstrosities’ of the Britons were not disparate enough for Anglo-Saxon authors and illuminators. In their anxieties of self-definition, they invented and reproduced a whole host of monsters against which they might define their human identities. For Friedman, the monstrous races render their observer’s culture as central, as the norm from which they differ.¹⁴⁹ In this manner, as Camille writes, “the centre is . . . dependent upon the margins for its continued existence.”¹⁵⁰

Why did the Anglo-Saxons feel such a great need for disparate Others who would allow them to see themselves as paragons of normality? Why is it that England produced the only illustrated manuscripts of the *Marvels of the East* and produced not one by three codices. Perhaps, as has been suggested above, this was the result of their unique location, outside the boundaries of Europe, separated from the Continent by what Gildas calls “a vast and more or less uncrossable ring of sea.”¹⁵¹ This location, in the medieval Christian world-view, placed the Anglo-Saxons very far from the holiest and most sacred sites of the divinely ordered universe. In his discussion of the disgust felt for the lower classes of England in the modern era, Miller concludes that this sentiment has its origins not in the upper classes who, in the words of George Orwell, felt nothing more than “sniggering superiority,” but rather, in the middle classes who felt themselves to be much closer to the lower classes.¹⁵² This feeling led to an exaggerated disgust, a need to make the distinctions between middle and lower more stark than they were in reality. Perhaps the Anglo-Saxons, at the edge of the world, felt that they were too close to the monsters or the monstrous and thus they focused on these others with a greater intensity than is found in the more ‘central’ areas of the medieval world. While the monsters were often said to live “at civilization’s periphery,” this is likewise where the Anglo-Saxons found themselves, beyond the pale, in the margins of the world, surrounded by monsters.¹⁵³

Endnotes

1. This paper is an abridgment of the second chapter of my Ph.D. dissertation, *Living at the Edge of the World: Marginality and Monstrosity in Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts and Beyond*.
2. Caroline Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective," *Critical Inquiry*, 22 (1995), 31.
3. London, British Library, Royal MS 15. b. xix. This manuscript also contains a selection of texts by Bede. For a transcription of this text, see Franco Porsia, ed., *Liber Monstrorum* (Bari: Dedalo Libri, 1976).
4. Porsia, 126. (This translations, and all others unless otherwise noted, are my own.) Porsia provides a critical edition of the full Latin text with commentary and translation into Italian. The original passage is as follows: "De occulto orbis terrarum situ interrogasti et si tanta monstrorum essent genera credenda quanta in abditis mundi partibus per deserta et oceani insulas et in ultimorum montium latebris nutrita monstrantur . . . ut de monstruosis hominum partibus describerem et de ferarum horribilibus innumerisque bestiarum formis et draconum dirissimis serpentiumque ac viperarum generibus." Douglas Rolla Butturff also provides the full Latin text of the *Liber Monstrorum* with attendant discussion and an English translation in his dissertation, "The Monsters and the Scholar: An Edition and Critical Study of the Liber Monstrorum" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 1968). For the Anglo-Saxons, "the islands of the ocean" may have had particular resonance. Likewise, in Anglo-Saxon art and literature we may find a focus on the wilds of Britain as "the desert." (See Mittman, "Crossing Boundaries," unpublished essay)
5. Porsia, 126. "Quaedam tantum in ipsis mirabilibus vera esse creduntur, et sunt innumerabilia quae si quis ad exploranda pennis volare posset, et ita sermone tam [edita rumoroso sermone tam ficta] probaret." ("Only certain things in these miracles are to be believed true, and there are innumerable things which, if it were possible to fly with wings, exploring, one might prove to be seen as fictions, despite so much talk.")
6. Porsia, 136. The complete passage is as follows: "Me enim quendam hominem in primordio operis utriusque sexus cognovisse testor, qui tamen ipsa facie plus et pectore virilis quam mulierbris apparuit; et vir a nescientibus putabatur; sed muliebria opera dilexit, et ignaros vivorum more meretricis, decipiebat. Sed hoc frequenter apud humanum genus contigisse fertur."
7. See the introductions to the following for false travel claims: Gerald of Wales, *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. John O'Meara. (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1982) and Tamarah Kohanski, *The Book of John Mandeville: An Edition of the Pynson Text with Commentary on the Defective Version* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001).
8. London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.iv, f. 12v. "Ʒntar Ʒæron eac ƷƷylce oƷer eoƷþan on þam ƷaƷum." The Hexateuch is reproduced in a black-and-white facsimile. See C. R. Dodwell and Peter Clemoes, *The Old English Illustrated Hexateuch* (London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.iv.) (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1974). This passage is Genesis 6:4: "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." The Vulgate text on which the Anglo-Saxon translation was based is as follows: "Gigantes erant super terram in diebus illis." (Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 190, n. 31.)
9. London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.iv. This manuscript is unique in its prodigious number of illustrations—394 images on 156 folios. Although the manuscript also contains Latin and Anglo-Saxon glosses in a twelfth-century hand, the Hexateuch was probably produced in the eleventh century, in or near St. Augustine's, Canterbury. There are five other manuscripts containing the full text of the Hexateuch, but none of them is illustrated.
10. These giants do resemble cyclops, since they seem to each have only one eye. However, their eyes are not distinguishable from those of any of the other full-profile figures in this manuscript and so, while tempting, I feel this resemblance is incidental.
11. For a selection of Old Testament giants, see the following: Genesis 6:4, Numbers 13:33, Deuteronomy 2:11, 2:20, 3:11, 3:13, Joshua 12:4, 13:12, 15:8, 17:17, 18:16, 2 Samuel 21:16, 21:18, 21:20, 21:22, 1 Chronicles 20:4, 20:6, 20:8. Other monstrous creatures appear frequently in the Old and New Testaments, such as dragons and basilisks. For a selection of Old Testament dragons, see the following: Deuteronomy 32:33, Nehemiah 2:13, Job:30:29, Psalms 44:19, 74:13, 91:13, 148:7, Isaiah 13:22, 27:1, 34:13, 35:7, 43:20, 51:9, Jeremiah 9:11, 10:22, 14:6, 49:33, 51:34, 51:37, Ezekiel 29:3, Micah 1:8, Malachi 1:3. In his *Ecclesiastical History* (book III:23), Bede refers to the establishment of a monastery by Cedd as a fulfillment of Isaiah 35:7. "in cubilibus, in quibus prius dracones habitabant, oriretur uiror calami et iunci." ("in the nest, in which dragons were living first, there may arise grass, with reeds and rushes." (Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 286.)
12. Charles Mackay, "The Negro and the Negrophilists," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 99 (1866), (reprinted in Michael Biddiss, *Images of Race* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1979), 92. (For convenience, Biddiss's pagination will be used here and below.)
13. Cohen, 5. For further references to the "work of giants," see 8-9 (*The Wanderer* and *The Ruin*, both from Exeter Book). The phrase appears in *Beowulf* three times: Lines 1681, 2718 and 2775. We also find an account of the "chorea gigantes" ("giant's dance") in the *History and Topography of Ireland*, which recalls Stonehenge and other such megalithic constructions. (See Gerald of Wales, *Opera Vol. 5: Topographia Hibernica et Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. James Dimock. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867), 100.)
14. Richard Hammer, *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1970), 26.

15. Cohen, 18.

16. Cohen, 19. (Cohen's translation) The original text is as follows: "Se ðeopleſ man mīað on mīðbanearbe, and ſpa lange he mīð ongean go and goðer þeopaſ; and he ahefð hine ſýlſne oþer ealle, þa ðe hæðene men cþlōon, þæt goðar beon ſceolban on hæðene mīan; ſýlſc ſpa þæt Erculur ſe ent and Apollinur, þe hi mærne goð leton; Þop eac and Opðen, þe hæðene men heſiað ſpīðe."

17. George Jack, ed. *Beowulf: A Student Edition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 35, lines 112-113. These terms tend to be only vaguely understood. While they may appear in a number of texts, it is rare for them to be accompanied by any description, such as that provided for Grendel and his mother. *Eotenas* seems to imply both monsters and giants, and *orcneas* may be connected Orcðyrs, a hell-monster probably connected with Orcus, the Roman god of the Underworld and equivalent of the Greek Hades. (J. R. Clark Hill, ed., *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).)

18. Cohen, 1.

19. Susan Kim, "Man-Eating Monsters and Ants as Big as Dogs," *Mediaevalia Groningana*, XX, *Animals and the Symbolic in Medieval Art and Literature* (Gronigen: Egbert Forsten, 1997), 43.

20. Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Idea of Medieval Religion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 65.

21. Mary Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1988), 80. See also 57 and 72-73.

22. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, vol. v (London: William Heinmann, Ltd., 1965), 42. The original passage is as follows: "Sed omnia genera hominum, quae dicuntur esse, credere non est necesse." Still, Augustine informs us that he does believe in monsters. See Appendix I for full passage.

23. Ian Finlay, *Columba* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1979), 128.

24. *The Legend of Nessie* website, the most well organized of a dazzling array of options, provides a list of personal accounts of the creature from 1871-1998, as well as scientific data in the form of sonar charts. (@CARUS, *Legend of Nessie*. <<http://www.nessie.co.uk/>> (June 3, 2002).) The connection between the *Marvels* and modern tabloid newspapers has also been suggested by Mary Campbell, who contends that their closest analog is the *National Enquirer*.

25. Cohen, xiv. See also Mary Campbell, 74-5.

26. Ralph Elliott, *Runes: An Introduction* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 93.

27. Gale Owen-Crocker, *Rites and Religions of the Anglo-Saxons* (London: David and Charles, 1981), 59.

28. Page, 15, 114.

29. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41, 326. This manuscript is paginated, not foliated. This pagination is retained in Mildred Budny's excellent catalogue, and so I will follow suit. (Mildred Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon, and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: An Illustrated Catalogue* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), catalogue number 32.)

30. Karen Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 160-61. Here, Jolly cites a series of cures for *alfjadle* from the *Læchbook*, Book III.

31. Porsia, 138, 140: "Et fiunt monstra mirae magnitudinis ut rex Hyglacus, qui imperavit Getis et Fracis occisus est, quem equus a duodecimo aetatis anno portare non potuit; cuius ossa in Rheni fluminis insula, ubi in Oceanum prorumpit, reservata sunt, et de longinquo venientibus pro miraculo ostenduntur," and "Et ut Colosius qui mole vastissima monstrorum ad instar maritumorum cunctos homines excrevit, quem unda Thybridis vulneratum cooperire non valuit in quem se dolore marcescens moriturum iactavit et ab ipso usque ad Tyrheni maris terminum per XVIII milia passuum aquam tanto sanguine commixtam reddidisse fertur, ut totus fluuius de vulneribus eius manare videretur. Postquam Romani paene per totum orbem terrarum in auditum est hoc opus, exerunt statum vulcerissima magnitudinis, quae C et VIII pedes altitudinis habet et prope omnia Romanae urbis opera miro rumore praecellit."

32. Porsia, 140: "per totum orbem terrarum in auditum est hoc opus."

33. See M. L. W. Laistner, "Bede as a Classical and a Patristic Scholar," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fourth Series, 16 (1933).

34. The earliest known source for this set of monstrous races is Herodotus. The English versions descend from a version framed as a letter from Farasmanes to Emperor Hadrian, very loosely dated to some time between the second and sixth centuries. (Mary Campbell, 63 and Friedman, "Marvels," 320) For a very thorough and readable discussion of the wealth of sources involved in the survival and transmission of the *Marvels of the East*, see Rudolf Wittkower's seminal article, "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942).

35. John Friedman, "The Marvels-of-the-East Tradition in Anglo-Saxon Art," *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, XX, *Studies in Medieval Culture* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), 319, 338. Friedman provides a breakdown of the visual contents of these three manuscripts as follows: Vitellius has 29 illustrations, 15 of monstrous men. Tiberius has 38 illustrations, 18 of monstrous men. Bodley has 39 illustrations, 26 of monstrous men.

36. Elþieta Temple, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts 900-1066* (London: Harvey Miller,

- 1976), 72. This date remains in contention, and the body of literature on the subject is vast. See, for example, Colin Chase, *The Dating of Beowulf* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), Kevin Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1981), and Audrey Meaney, “Scyld Scefcing and the Dating of the Beowulf – Again.” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 71 (1989).
37. James Campbell, Eric John and Patrick Wormald, *The Anglo-Saxons* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 193.
38. Campbell, John and Wormald, 193.
39. Eric John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester University Press: New York, 1996), 159. See also Campbell, John and Wormald, 214.
40. John Friedman. “The Marvels-of-the-East Tradition,” 320. Get info on period. Missions to continent? Reason for smaller book?
41. Richard Gameson, *The Role of Art in the Late Anglo-Saxon Church* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 11.
42. John Friedman disagrees with the general trend, instead arguing that Tiberius is an “indirect copy” of Vitellius. (“Marvels,” 320) As sources and transmission are not my subject, I will not engage in this debate.
43. Mary Campbell, 57, 63.
44. Frederic Farrar, “Aptitudes of Races,” *Transactions of the Ethnological Society*, 5 (1867), (reprinted in Biddiss, 141-155), 146. The ellipsed phrases are as follows: “the leather-skinned Hottentot, whose hair grows in short tufts like a worn out shoe-brush, with spaces of scalp between; the degraded, gibbering Yamparico, whose food consists of vermin,” and “the forest tribes of Malacca; the wild people of Borneo, whom the Dayaks hunt as though they were monkeys; the hairy Ainos of Yesso, who annually pay tribute of fish and skin to the Japanese.”
45. For the passage on Pygmies from the *Liber Monstrorum*, see Porsia, 176: “Et quoddam invisum genus huminum in antris et concavis montium latebris nasci perhibetur, qui sunt statura cubitales et, ut testantur, adversum grues in tempore messis bellum coniungunt, ne eorum sata diripiant. Quos Graeci a cubito Pygmaeos vocant.”
46. The hybridity of the monsters of the *Marvels* will be discussed at length below.
47. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 171. The original passage is as follows: “Cumque ab ipsis quaererentur, an Christiani et baptizati fuissent, responderunt de Christo se nihil hactenus vel audisse vel scivisse.” (“When the question was put to them, if they were Christians and had been baptized, they responded that, until that moment, they knew nothing of Christ nor had they heard anything of him.”)
48. Farrar, 146.
49. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 171. The original passage is as follows: “Nec etiam de anno, vel mense, vel hebdomada quicquam. Quibus etiam nominibus dies septimanæ censerentur, penitus ignorabant.”
50. Raymond Dart, “The Predatory Transition from Ape to Man,” *International Anthropological and Linguistic Review*, 1:4 (1953), 209.
51. Michael Gaudio, “Matthew Paris and the Cartography of the Margins,” *Gesta*, 39:1 (2000), 50 and Piero Camporesi, *The Incurable Flesh: Bodily Mutilation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, trans. Tania Croft-Murray. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 79.
52. John Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 34.
53. Friedman, *Monstrous Races*, 37. Again, such notions were surprisingly long-lived. John William Jackson wrote in 1866, “the earth, at her different zones of latitude and longitude, or shall we say in other language, on her several areas, has specially characterised types, vegetable and animal, bestial and human. These specialities are obviously not accidental. They are transmissible and enduring, and far antedate all history . . . Nor are these distinctions simply physical and organic, they extend also to habits and capacities.” (John William Jackson, “Race in Legislation and Political Economy,” *Anthropological Review*, 4 (1866) (reprinted in Biddiss, 113-140), 122.)
54. Tiberius, f. 80r: “Similiter ibi nascuntur cenocephali quos nos conopoenas appellamus. habentes iubas equoru’. ap[er]rum dentes. canina capita. igne[m] & flamma[m] flantes. hic e[st] civitas vincina dives omnib[us] bonis plena. dext[er]iore parte ducit[ur] illa terra ab aegypto.” (“Similarly there cynocephali are born, whom we call conopoenas, having the manes of horses, the teeth of a wild boar, the head of a dog. His breath is fire and flame. There is a nearby city is rich in every good. The most right part is led to that land from Egypt.”)
55. Tiberius, f. 80r: “Eac ƿƿylce ƿær beoð cenðe healf hundinƿar ða ƿynðon hæcene conopoenar. hƿ habbað hoƿreƿ mana ƿ eoƿereƿ tuxar ƿ hunða heafu ƿ heora oƿuð bƿð ƿƿylce ƿƿƿerliƿ. ƿar lanð beoð neah ðæm burƿu’ ƿe beoð eallu’ ƿoƿlo ƿelu’ ƿeƿƿylleð ƿƿ on ƿa ƿuð healfre aegƿƿtƿna lanðer.” (“And similarly there is a race of half-dogs that are called conopoenas. They have a horse’s mane and a boar’s tusks and a dog’s head and their breath is like fire. This land is near the city which is filled with all the costly things of the world. This is in the south half of Egypt’s lands.”)
56. Michael Camille, “Rethinking the Canon: Prophets, Canons, and Promising Monsters,” *Art Bulletin*, 78:2 (1996), 200.
57. Jacques Derrida, *Points . . . : Interviews, 1974-1994*, trans. Peggy Kamuf. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 386.
58. Derrida, 386.

59. William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 164.
60. Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 420. Louis Althusser has also explored the connection of nomination and control: "That fact of calling you by your name, the fact of knowing, even if I do not know what it is, that you 'have' a name of your own, which means that you are recognized as a unique subject . . . This recognition only gives us the 'consciousness' of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition." (Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*. ed. John Hanhardt. (Layton: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1986), 86.)
61. *Hexateuch*, f. 6r. The original passage is as follows: "ƿoð ƿoðlice ƿelæbbe ða nȳtenu ðe he of eorðan ƿeƿceop. ƿ ðæpe lȳrce ƿuƿelaf to abame. ðæt he ƿone ƿceapode hu he hȳ ƿecȳgðe. Soðlice ælc libbenðe nȳten. ƿpa ƿpa abam hȳ ƿecȳgðe. ƿpa ȳf hȳf nama, ƿ abam ðaƿe namode ealle nȳtenu. heopa naman, ƿ ealle ƿuƿelaf ƿ ealla ƿilbeop."
62. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: And Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon Roudiez. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 7.
63. Biddiss, 16.
64. The Hereford *Mappamundi* reads "Blemee os et oculos habend in pectore." ("Blemmyes have a mouth and eyes in the chest.") William Latham Bevan and H. W. Phillott, *Medieval Geography: An Essay in Illustration of the Hereford Mappa Mundi*, (London: E. Stanford, 1873), 103. The text of Tiberius, f. 82, is as follows: "Est & alia insula in brixonte ad meridiem in qua nascuntur homines sine capitibus: qui in pectore habent oculos & os alti sicut sunt pedum octo & lati simili modo pedum octo." ("And there is another island in the Brixonte toward the south in which there are born men without heads; they have eyes and a mouth in their chest. They are eight feet tall and in a similar manner eight feet wide."), "ðonne is oðer ealand suð fra brixonte on þan beoð menn a laende butan heafdum. þa habbaþ on breostum heora eagan & muð hi sýndan eahta fota lange & eahta fota brade." ("Then there is another island south from the Brixontem river on which there are men [always] in the land without heads. They have upon their breasts their eyes and mouth. They are eight feet tall and eight feet broad.")
65. Tiberius, f. 82.
66. As medieval spelling for this term varies, I have adopted the modern anglicized version, "blemye(s)" throughout.
67. Tiberius, f. 82.
68. Kristeva, 2.
69. Miller, x.
70. Miller, 111-112.
71. Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. Allen Tate. (New York: New Directions, 1989), 38.
72. Miller, 21.
73. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Body and Law in Late Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England*, 27 (1998).
74. Gerald of Wales *Topographia Hibernica*, 181. The original passage is as follows: "Nec mirandum si de gente adultera, gente inceta, gente illegitime nata et copulata, gente exlage, arte invida et inuisa ipsem turpiter adulterante naturam, tales interdum contra naturam legem natura producat."
75. British Library, Royal 13. B. VIII, f. 30v.
76. Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, 182. The original passage is as follows: "Et digna Dei vindicta videtur, ut qui interiore mentis lumine ad ipsum non respiciunt, hi exterioris et corporeae lucis beneficio plerumque destituti."
77. Cohen, 1.
78. Miller, 200.
79. R. Fowler, "A Late Old English Handbook for the Use of a Confessor," *Anglia*, 83 (1965), 17-18. The full passage is as follows: "Ic anbette eal þæt ic æfre mið eagum ƿeƿeah to ƿurunge oððe to tælneƿfe, oððe mið earum to unrihte ƿehiðe, oððe mið minum muðe to unȳtce ƿecƿæð. Ic anbette þe ealles mineƿ lichamon ƿýnna, ƿor ƿel and ƿor ƿlærc, and ƿor ban and ƿor ƿinupan, and ƿor æððran and ƿor ƿriðlan, and ƿor tunƿan and ƿor ƿeleƿaf, and ƿor ƿoman and ƿor tæð, and ƿor ƿeax and ƿor meaph, and ƿor æhþæt hneƿceƿ oððe heapbeƿ, ƿæteƿ oððe ðriƿeƿ." (I confess all that I ever with my eyes saw with avarice or slander, or with my ears heard in vanity or with my mouth said in folly. I confess to you all the sins of my body, for skin and for flesh, and for bone and for sinew, and for veins and for gristle, and for tongue and for lips, and for gums and for teeth, and for hair and for marrow, and for anything soft or hard, wet or dry.)
80. O'Keeffe, 228.
81. O'Keeffe, 214-215.
82. O'Keeffe, 229: "hoc est profanus adulter"
83. For a later manifestation of this notion, see Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. In his "Inscriptions of the Law on the Body," Certeau writes, "the skin of the servant is the parchment on which the master's hand writes." (Michael Camille. "Glossing

the Flesh: Scopophilia and the Margins of the Medieval Book.” *The Margins of the Text*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997: 245-267, footnote 20) Trace Orig.

84. If we prefer to read his state as diseased rather than mutilated, we are still on sound footing for moral contempt. Michael Goodich notes that “physical disease such as leprosy could be regarded as the outward manifestation of inner sinfulness and likened to heresy in its pernicious effects. Such demonization led to the exclusion of lepers from civil society.” (Michael Goodich, ed., *Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 11.)

85. O’Keeffe, 215. O’Keeffe notes that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle mentions the mutilation of an innocent man, thereby allowing for the imperfection of human justice. (228)

86. It seems safe to assume that the original exemplar text was missing this designation.

87. Derrida, 386.

88. Friedman, 153.

89. On the *Mappamundi*, they are labeled *satirii*, *spinx*, *fauni*. The pluralization implies that these are not individuals, but colonies or countries of monsters, like those described in the *Marvels*.

90. P. D. A Harvey, *Mappa Mundi: The Hereford World Map* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 5.

91. See page 15 above.

92. Miller, 4.

93. British Library, Cotton Claudius B.v, the *Hexateuch*, f. 24v, a lively image of the Battle of Sodom and Gomorrah, provides a good example of interaction between image and text block. In the upper right hand corner, a spear-bearer whose head and arm overlap the frame, thrusts his slender spear through the word “burgun,” (“cities”). This image depicts the battle between Sodom and Gomorrah, and so, just as the cities are torn apart by the battle, so too, the very word “cities” is impaled.

94. Gameson, 152.

95. Bodley, f. 38v. “In alia regio[n]e nascunt[ur] homi[n]es stat[ur]a pedu[m] vi. barbas habente[s] usq[ue] ad genua coma[s] usq[ue] ad talo[s] q[ui] homodubii appellat[ur] & pisce[s] crudo[s] manducant.”

96. Gameson, 142.

97. Friedman, 144.

98. Bodley, f. 43r-44v and Tiberius 83v: “Ult[ra] hoc ad orientem nasciunt[ur] ho[mi]nes longi pedum xv. lati pedu[m] x; capud[caput] in Tib] magnu[m] & aures habentes tanqu[a]m vannu[m]. quaru[m] una[m] sibi nocte substernunt. de alia uo se cooperiunt; & tegunt se his aurib[us]. Levi aute[m] & candido corpore sunt quasi lacteo. ho[mi]nes cu[m] viderint; tollunt sibi aures & longe fugiu[n]t quasi putes eos volare.” (On the other side of this, to the east are born people fifteen feet tall and ten feet wide, they have big heads and ears like winnowing fans, of which they the sleep under one during the night. With the other they cover themselves entirely, and they protect themselves with these ears. And their bodies are light and white like milk. When the see people, they lift up their ears and they flee far off, so that you will suppose them the fly.)

99. These figures are King Harold and Archbishops Stigant and Odo.

100. Tiberius, f. 82. The text is as follows: “Est & alia insula in brixonte ad meridie’ in q’ nascuntur homines sine capitibu: qui i’ pectore habent oculos & os alti s’t[sunt] pedu’ viii & lati simili modo pedu’ viii.” (“And there is another island in the Brixonte toward the south in which there are born men without heads; they have eyes and a mouth in their chest. They are eight feet tall and in a similar manner eight feet wide.”), “ðonne is oðer ealand suð fra’ brixonte onþan beoð menn a laende butan heafdum. þa habbaþ on breostum heora eagan & muð hi sýndan eahta fota lange & eahta fota brade.” (“Then there is another island south from the Brixontem river on which there are men [always] in the land without heads. They have upon their breasts their eyes and mouth. They are eight feet tall and eight feet broad.”)

101. Susan Kim, “The Donestre and the Person of Both Sexes,” in *Naked Before God: The Unclothed Body in Anglo-Saxon England* (West Virginia University Press, 2003), 179.

102. Miller, 50.

103. Farrar, 146.

104. Alfred Wallace, “The Origin of Human Races and the Antiquity of Man, Deduced from the Theory of ‘Natural Selection,’” *Journal of the Anthropological Society*, 2 (1864) (reprinted in Biddiss, 37-54), 49.

105. Wallace, 49.

106. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 19.

107. Miller, 58.

108. The notion of the “navel” does play an important role in Medieval understandings of the universe. Jerusalem, the all-important focus of the divinely ordered world, was described as the “navel of the world” in Ezekiel 38:12: “ut diripias spolia et invadas praedam ut inferas manum tuam super eos qui deserti fuerant et postea restituti et super populum qui est congregatus ex gentibus qui possidere

coepit et esse habitator umbilici terrae,” This passage discusses Jerusalem as the navel of the world, in connection with a crusading attitude about retaking the land now inhabited by the monstrous Gog and Magog. For more on Jerusalem as the navel of the world, see Yvonne Friedman, “The City of the King of Kings: Jerusalem in the Crusader Period,” *The Centrality of Jerusalem: Historical Perspectives*, ed. M. Poorthuis and Ch. Safrai. (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996). For more on Gog and Magog, see Scott Westrem, “Against Gog and Magog,” *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1998).

109. Miller, 180.

110. Miller might connect this the the sense of disgust which can be conjured not only by look at someone found disgusting, but also being looked *at* by the offending person. (91)

111. Tiberius 83r-83v. The complete passage is as follows: “Itaq[ue] insula est in rubro mari in qua hominu genus est q[oud] apud nos appellat[ur] donestre q[u]is divine a captite usq[ue] adumbilicum quasi homines reliq[ua] corpore similitudine humana nationu[s] linguis loquentes cum alieni generis homine[m] viderint ipsius lingua appellabunt eum & parentu[s] eius & tognatoru[m] nomina blandientes sermone ut decipiant eos & p[er]dant. Cumq[ue] comprehenderint eos p[er]dunt eos & comedunt, & postea comprehendunt caput ipsius hominis quem commederunt & sup[er] ipsum plorant,” and “Þonne if gum ealant on ðærpe neaban fæ þær if mon cýnn þur mid ur doneftere zenemneb. Ða fýndon zereaxene fpa fpuhteraf fram ðon hearþe oð ðone nafelan. 7 je oðer bæf byð manneflice gelic 7 hi cannon eall mennife zereopð þon hi frember kýnner mann zereod næmnað hi hine 7 hir maƷar cuðra manna naman 7 mid learpicum porþu hine bef picað 7 hi onroþ 7 þæn æfter þan hi hine fpretað ealne butan hir hearþe þon firtað 7 pepað over ðam hearþe.” Also see Kim, “Man-Eating Monsters.” In her essay, Kim notes that speech is inherently human, citing Isidore, who writes, “pecus dicimus omne quod humana lingua et effigie caret.” (We call cattle all that lack human form and language.) (Kim’s translation, 39.)

112. Cohen, 2.

113. Miller, 27.

114. Paul Rozin and April Fallon, “A Perspective on Disgust,” *Psychological Review*, 94 (1987), 32.

115. Bodley f. 40v. The full passage is as follows: “Trans brixontem flum[en] ad oriente[m] nascuntur ho[m]i[n]es longi & magni. habentes femora & surra[s] xii pedu[m]. lat[er]a cu[m] pectore vii pedu[m]. colore nigro. quos hostes rite appellamus. Nam quoscu[m]q[ue] capiunt, cito comedunt,” and “BeƷonþan brixonte ðæra ea eaft ðanon beoð men acenbe lange 7 micle þa habbað fet 7 fceancan trefl fota lange fidan mid bpeortum feofan fota lange hi beoð fprearter hipef 7 hi fýndan hofter nembe. Luðlice fpa hþylcne mann fpa hi zepoð þonne fpretað hi hine.”

116. Camille, “Rethinking,” 200.

117. Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, vol. vii (London: William Heinmann, Ltd., 1965), 56-58. The original passage is as follows: “et monstra ostenta portenta prodigia nuncupantur, hoc monstrare debent, hoc ostendere vel praeostendere, hoc praedicere, quod facturus sit Deus quae de corporibus hominum se praenuntiavit esse facturum, nulla impendente difficultate, nulla praescribente lege naturae.” Cohen notes that Augustine is here following Cicero’s *De divinatione* (I.xlii.93), and that Isidore is following Varo’s *De lingua latina*. (note 5, 187)

118. Cohen, xiv. In his text, Cohen reverses the attributions of these quotations, but provides the correct citations in his footnote.

119. Westrem, 55. Westrem is here discussing Gog and Magog, who make an early appearance on an Anglo-Saxon map of the tenth century.

120. Camille, “Rethinking,” 200.

121. For Wittkower, monsters are inherently “compound beings.” (159) Cohen, xv.

122. Michael Camille, “Glossing the Flesh: Scopophilia and the Margins of the Medieval Book,” *The Margins of the Text* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 256.

123. Camille, “Glossing the Flesh,” 256.

124. Frederick Tupper, *The Riddles of the Exeter Book* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1910), 20. This graceful (if loose) translation is from Craig Williamson, *A Feast of Creatures: Anglo-Saxon Riddle-Songs* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 84.

125. Cohen, 28.

126. Tiberius 81v: Sunt & alia bestiolae in brixonte quae lertices apellatur aurib[us] asininis vellere ovino petib[us] ovum. (And there are other beasts in the Brixontem which we call *lertices*. They have the ears of asses, the wool of a sheep and the feet of a bird.) and Þonne fýndon on brixonte pilþeor þahattan lerticef hi habbað eoƷelef eapan 7 fceapef pulle 7 fuglef fet. (Then there are in Brixontem wild beasts that we call *lertices*. They have ass’s ears and sheep’s wool and bird’s feet.)

127. Friedman, 23-24.

128. Cohen, 134.

129. Kristeva, 4.

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130. In Vitellius (103r), Tiberius (f. 82v) and Bodley (42r), the centaurs are referred to as *homo dubii*, but their classical origin remains clear.
131. Tiberius, f. 82. “nascuntur homines sine capitibus: qui in pectore habent oculos & os alti sicut sunt pedes viii & lati simili modo pedes viii.” (“there are born men without heads”); “beoð menn a laende butan heafdum.” (“there are men in the land without heads”)
132. O’Keeffe, 214-215.
133. O’Keeffe, 216.
134. O’Keeffe, 216. (O’Keeffe’s translation) The original, from British Museum Cotton Nero A. i, f. 157r, is as follows: “Castigandi sunt enim rei diuersisque modis, arguendi et non statim necandi, sed per penas saluandi, ne anime pro quibus ipse dominus pasus [sic] est, in eterna pena dispareant. Alii unculis et flagris; alii autem fame uel frigore const[r]igendi sunt; alii quoque pellem, capillos et barbam simul perdentes turpiter obprobria sustineant; alii adhuc acrius const[r]ingantur, id est, membrum perdant, oculum uidelicet uel nasum, manum uel pedem seu aliud aliquid membrum.” This manuscript is reproduced by Henry Loyn, ed., *A Wulfstan Manuscript Containing Institutes, Laws, and Homilies*, British Museum Cotton Nero A. i., vol. 17 of *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1971).
135. O’Keeffe, 217. The original is as follows: “ƿpa man mæg ƿcýpan ƿ eac þære ƿaple beoƿgan.”
136. Friedman, 59-60.
137. Abbo of Fleury’s *Life of St. Edmund*, King of East Anglia before 870, here comes from the Anglo-Saxon version as it appears in Henry Sweet, *Sweet’s Anglo-Saxon Primer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 81-87. [retranslate – this trans. is from C. Cutler]
138. For a discussion of this theme, see Thomas Honegger, “Form and Function: The Beasts of Battle Revisited,” *English Studies*, 79:4 (1998). Honegger provides discussion of Ælfric’s eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon *Life of St. Edmund*, which he considers “a Christian variation on the Norse tradition,” in that the wolf does not eat the corpse but guards it. (290) See also Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in the Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of Berkeley Press, 2001), 244-246.
139. Kristeva, 11.
140. Kristeva, 8.
141. Cohen, 6.
142. Gillian Overing and Clara Lees, “Before History, Before Difference: Bodies, Metaphor, and the Church in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 11:2 (1998), 316.
143. Overing and Lees, 316.
144. Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom. (London: Phillimore, 1978), 17. (Winterbottom’s translation)
145. Gildas, 17. (Winterbottom’s translation)
146. H. E. J. Cowdrey, “Bede and the ‘English People,’” *Journal of Religious History*, 11 (1981), 505.
147. Miller, 250.
148. Kristeva, 6.
149. Friedman, 26.
150. Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 10.
151. Gildas, 16. (Winterbottom’s translation)
152. Miller, 239, quoting George Orwell’s *The Road to Wigan Pier*.
153. Cohen, 6.