I, monster: queerness and the *Liber Monstrorum* in early medieval St Gall

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This article analyses a ninth-century copy of the Liber monstrorum *from St Gall in which the first monster, a 'human of both sexes', speaks in the first person. The scribe also put the* Liber monstrorum *into dialogue with Isidore of Seville's* Etymologiae*, in which Isidore argued that monsters were not 'contrary to nature'. Combined with an ambiguously gendered depiction of Christ added to the* Liber monstrorum *by a later user, this suggests that there were some in early medieval St Gall who saw being 'of both sexes' – which could be interpreted to reflect same-sex attraction, and/or non-binary, intersex, and trans identities – as natural, even potentially Christ-like.*

Introduction

In a ninth-century copy of the so-called *Liber monstrorum* ('Book of Monsters', a set of short descriptions of monstrous and/or marvellous creatures) from St Gall (Stiftsbibliothek 237, pp. 2–6), the first monster, a 'human of both sexes', speaks in the first person. It is the only monster – not only in this manuscript, but in the entire transmission of the *Liber monstrorum* – to do so, opening up an avenue for readers to see

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it as a rational interlocutor and possibly even identify with it. This copy of the *Liber monstrorum* was added to and explicitly references the *Etymologiae*, in which Isidore of Seville argued that monsters were not 'contrary to nature'. An ambiguously gendered depiction of the crucified Christ in the same manuscript suggests that a later user of the manuscript even explored the possibility that being 'of both sexes' could be not just natural, but Christ-like. Thus, while the monster is isolated as the only one to speak in the first person, its manuscript context suggests that those monks who behaved in ways that would lead to them being described as being 'of both sexes' might not have been.[1]

Before discussing the peculiarities of the St Gall *Liber monstrorum* (which are not limited to the use of the first person), it is necessary to understand this monster in its original context. Of course, calling the 'human of both sexes' a monster may seem like an anachronistic translation, as the Latin word *monstrum* can also refer to miracles, portents, or omens; anything so designated might be as marvellous as it is monstrous. However, the author of the *Liber monstrorum*, working between *c*.650 and 750 somewhere in the British Isles, announces in the prologue that they would describe those things 'that incite the greatest terror of fearfulness in humankind'.[2] Their use of the term, then, seems to be closer to the modern 'monster' than the Classical *monstrum*.

The author explicitly acknowledges that the existence of most of the terrifying creatures they are about to describe cannot be securely proven or disproven. Ostensibly unwillingly, they still delve into this murky issue, since otherwise it would be left to the fanciful reports in pre-Christian, pagan texts, and in the oral tradition.[3] Yet the *Liber monstrorum* is not only concerned with confirming the existence of particular monsters. The text can also be seen as an attempt to contain the unspeakable that lurks at the – conceptual and geographical – edges of an ordered, rational, Christian world. Viewed in this way, the *Liber monstrorum* can be understood as working to sublimate anxieties related to various Others by relegating them to the realm of the fictional, or at least the dubious.[4]

[1] The following abbreviations are used in this text: CCCM=Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis; CCSG=Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca; MGH=Monumenta Germaniae Historica; PL=Patrologia Latina.

[2] *Liber monstrorum (secolo IX): Introduzione, edizione critica, traduzione, note e commento*, prologue, ed. F. Porsia, Nuovo Medioevo 88, 2nd edn (Naples, 2012), p. 116: 'quae maximum formidinis terrorem humano generi incutiunt'. Translations are my own. On the dating and localization, see Porsia's introduction, pp. 93–7, and M. Lapidge, 'Beowulf, Aldhelm, the Liber Monstrorum and Wessex', *Studi Medievali* 23 (1982), pp. 151–91, at pp. 163–74.

[3] *Liber monstrorum*, prologue, ed. Porsia, pp. 116–18.

[4] B. McFadden, 'Authority and Discourse in the Liber Monstrorum', *Neophilologus* 89 (2005), pp. 473–93, at pp. 476–7; more generally: J.J. Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)', in A.S. Mittman and M. Hensel (eds), *Classic Readings on Monster Theory* (Leeds, 2018), pp. 61–76, at p. 61.

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Even if this was the intent of the author, though, recent work has stressed the necessity to see such 'monsters' as, for example, 'humans of both sexes', not just as symbols of a substitutable Other or an abstract reflection on the boundaries of the human. The lives of actual trans and intersex people were impacted by discourses that defined them as monstrous and/or marvellous.[5] In fact, the author of the *Liber monstrorum* claims to have met two monsters in person – a Black person, and the 'human of both sexes' at the centre of this study[6] – both of whom surely would have had opinions on being designated monsters. It would thus be a mistake to read the descriptions of these monsters as entirely metaphorical.

The remarks concerning the structure of the work in the prologues to the *Liber monstrorum* bring this into even clearer view. Both in the general prologue and in the prologue to the first book, the author announces that they will order the text from most to least human monsters, as well as from most to least believable. The general prologue ends with:

> And I will speak first of those which are in any way credible, and the following story let each judge for themselves, for through these monster-caves I shall paint a design of a mermaid or siren, so that [the text] may have a reasonable head, which is followed by many rough and scaly fables of various kinds.[7]

In Book I, the author describes monsters of humanoid shape, then mammalian monsters and water creatures (Book II), and lastly snakes, reptiles, and dragons (Book III). Thus, like a mermaid seen from top to bottom, the *Liber monstrorum* begins with something of at least human appearance, and ends with the fishy tales regarding sea monsters. In the prologue to the first book, the author again reminds readers of this structure: 'For first, at the beginning, speech bursts forth

[5] A.S. Mittman and S.M. Kim, 'Monsters and the Exotic in Early Medieval England', *Literature Compass* 6 (2009), pp. 332–48, at p. 333; N.G. Discenza and H. Estes, *Writing the World in Early Medieval England*, Cambridge Elements. England in the Medieval World (Cambridge, 2023), p. 46.

[6] *Liber monstrorum*, I.1, I.30, ed. Porsia, pp. 126, 192. On the presence of persons of African descent in the early medieval British Isles, see M. Rambaran-Olm, 'A Wrinkle in Medieval Time: Ironing out Issues Regarding Race, Temporality, and the Early English', *New Literary History* 52 (2021), pp. 385–406, at pp. 395–6, and P.E. Montgomery Ramírez, 'Colonial Representations of Race in Alternative Museums: The "African" of St Benet's, the "Arab" of Jorvik, and the "Black Viking"', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 27.9 (2021), pp. 937–52, at pp. 940–2.

[7] *Liber monstrorum*, prologue, ed. Porsia, p. 118: 'Et de his primum eloquar quae sunt aliquo modo credenda et sequentem historiam sibi unus quisque discernat, quod per haec antra monstrorum marinae puellae quandam formulam sirenae depingam, ut sit capite rationabili quod tantae diversorum generum hispidae squamosaeque sequuntur fabulae.'

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about those who are distinguished from the human race by a lesser separation.'[8] The readers of the *Liber monstrorum* would have expected that at least the first monsters described in the text would be actual inhabitants of the world that they and the author shared.

A queer monster at the beginning of the *Liber monstrorum*

While the three books are in fact ordered from most to least human, it is unclear how strictly the author adhered to their structural promises throughout the work. For instance, while fauns, sirens, and centaurs are described in Chapters 5 through 7 of the first book, this might not necessarily mean that the author saw them as somehow more human than the bearded ascetics of Chapter 18.[9] However, in the first chapter of the first book, the author makes explicit reference to the remarks in the prologues, suggesting that here, at least, the structure held:

> Regarding a human of both sexes. For I profess *at the beginning of this work* that *I have known* a certain human of both sexes, who, while they appeared in their own face and breast more male than female and they were believed to be a man by those who did not know, still loved female works and often deceived ignorant men in the manner of a whore. But it is said that this has *occurred often* in the human race.[10]

The author uses the word *homo* (human) to describe this being, and counts it among the *genus humanum* (human race), but this vocabulary is not unique: several kinds of monsters are referred to as 'a certain race of humans' (*quoddam humanum genus*),[11] while others are simply 'humans' (*homines*) with unusual characteristics.[12] Someone with two torsos and heads is even described as a 'human born of human parents'.[13] The author thus is willing to bestow at least provisional humanity on many 'monsters'. According to Brian McFadden, the ability to speak, rather than human appearance, is the deciding factor.[14]

[8] *Liber monstrorum*, prologue to Book I, ed. Porsia, p. 124: 'Primo namque de his sermo ad ortum prorumpit quae leviore discretu ab humano genere distant.'
[9] *Liber monstrorum*, ed. Porsia, pp. 134–42, 168.
[10] *Liber monstrorum*, ed. Porsia, p. 126: 'De utriusque sexus homine. *Me* enim quendam hominem *in primordio operis* utriusque sexus *cognovisse testor*, qui tamen ipsa facie plus et pectore virilis quam muliebris apparuit et vir a nescientibus putabatur; sed muliebria opera dilexit et ignaros virorum more meretricis decipiebat. Sed hoc *frequenter* apud humanum genus *contigisse* fertur.' My emphasis.
[11] E.g. *Liber monstrorum*, I.11, I.17, I.23, ed. Porsia, pp. 150, 166, 178.
[12] E.g. *Liber monstrorum*, I.20–1, I.24–5, ed. Porsia, pp. 172–4, 180–2.
[13] *Liber monstrorum*, I.8, ed. Porsia, p. 144: 'hom[o] [. . .] natum ab humanis parentibus'.
[14] McFadden, 'Authority and Discourse', p. 481.

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However, the first chapter is one of only two in which the author claims to have first-hand knowledge of the monster under consideration,[15] and the only chapter that references the frequent occurrence of its subject. The epistemological limitations raised in the prologue notwithstanding, the author seems to suggest that the existence of at least this one being is securely proven. In this first chapter, therefore, the author fulfils the promises made in the prologues, and begins with the most credible report. As the first monster considered, this being presumably also played an important role in the author's abstract conception of monstrosity.

There is some debate over what the author claims to have seen in this chapter. While it has been read as a muddled allusion to Augustine of Hippo's report of 'hermaphrodites'[16] – intersex persons in modern terms – John Boswell argued that the author was referring to a man who prefers to be penetrated by other men. The monster may look like a man, but since he 'loves female works' – being penetrated, according to this reading – he is not a real man. Wanting to penetrate a real man, incidentally, does not make the monster's sexual partners monstrous, or even remarkable. The author of the *Liber monstrorum* seems to have been influenced by the idea that, if there was a problem with sex acts between men, it was the deviation from the correct performance of masculinity inherent in being penetrated.[17]

More recently, it has been suggested that the monster in question was a trans person,[18] though the suggestion has, to my knowledge, not been fully developed. The chapter can be read both as referring to a trans man or a trans woman. In the latter reading, saying that she 'appeared in [her] own face and breast more male than female' could be understood as the author taking on a cissexist framework. The relative pronoun *qui*, like its referent *homo*, is grammatically masculine, which I have chosen to interpret as a generic masculine in the translation above, but may also point to the author ultimately viewing the subject of this chapter as male. Yet by the author's own admission, believing this person to be a man was a sign of ignorance; as will be discussed later, the St Gall scribe changed the pronoun to the feminine *quae*.

[15] See note 6.

[16] *Liber monstrorum*, ed. Porsia, p. 127, note 9.

[17] J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the 14th Century*, 35th anniversary edn (Chicago and London, 2015), pp. 184–5; see also D. Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature* (Oxford and New York, 2009), pp. 54–67.

[18] C. Monk, 'A Context for the Sexualization of Monsters in The Wonders of the East', *Anglo-Saxon England* 41 (2012), pp. 79–99, at pp. 97–8, note 66; E. Wade (@erik_kaars), post on X, 18 May 2021, 3:40 p.m., https://x.com/erik_kaars/status/1394649149954461699 [accessed 13 June 2024].

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Alternatively, the chapter may refer to a trans man whose ability to pass is acknowledged by the author, but whose identity is ultimately denied: his face and breast may look male – notably, the author makes no reference to anything below the belt – but only 'those who do not know' think him a man. It should be noted that this interpretation is compatible with Boswell's reading; preferring to be penetrated by men is not the sole purview of cis men. While the vocabulary stays within the confines of binary gender, the ambiguous way in which it is used could also suggest that the author was trying to describe someone outside of that binary. The chapter in question thus left open many possible interpretations. People who today might identify as intersex, bottoms, non-binary and/or trans may all have seen themselves reflected in the description of this monster.

Rather than as a failure of language, however, this lack of clarity should be interpreted as a deliberate rhetorical strategy. Anxiety surrounding the transgression of gender boundaries (including through 'incorrect' performance of sexuality) often was a major impetus for the creation of monsters,[19] and gender ambiguity was one important marker of monstrosity in the *Liber monstrorum* specifically; the fact that the monster under consideration is presented at the outset of the text provides a clear indication of this.[20] The author also reports on bearded women, and on humans of 'mixed sex' whose body is vertically divided in a 'male' and a 'female' half and who switch roles in procreation.[21] Unlike these two, however, the first monster considered in the *Liber monstrorum* appears and behaves outwardly like a 'normal' human. In this case, gender ambiguity alone constitutes monstrosity: the very fact that the language available to the author fails to properly sort this 'human of both sexes' into any particular gender is what makes it monstrous. As a being that exposes and slips through the cracks of gender categories, this monster is also definitionally queer.

[19] Cohen, 'Monster Culture', pp. 66–8.

[20] Discenza and Estes, *Writing the World*, pp. 45–6; A.S. Mittman and S.M. Kim, *Inconceivable Beasts: The Wonders of the East in the Beowulf Manuscript*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 433 (Tempe, 2013), pp. 25–6.

[21] *Liber monstrorum*, general prologue, I.19, I.22, ed. Porsia, pp. 118, 170, 176. In stark contrast to the humans 'of both sexes', those of 'mixed sex' are counted among the 'unbelievable things' (*incredibilibus*). They were first described by Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XVI.8, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, 2 vols, CCSL 47–8 (Turnhout, 1955), vol. 2, p. 508 and named *hermaphroditae* in Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.11, ed. W.M. Lindsey, *Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis* (Oxford, 1911). This would prove influential in the medieval iconography of 'hermaphrodites' (see e.g. Montecassino, Biblioteca dell'Abbazia 132, fol. 166, illustrating Hrabanus Maurus' *De rerum naturis*; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. 614, fol. 50v, illustrating *The Wonders of the East*), as opposed to the Classical depiction, in which the split would usually be along the horizontal axis ('female' breasts and 'male' genitalia).

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The transmission of the *Liber monstrorum* in Carolingian Europe

Although the *Liber monstrorum* is of insular origin,[22] it is only transmitted in manuscripts from continental Europe, all but one of which date to the ninth or tenth century.[23] In fact, three of the six known extant manuscripts (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, Gud. lat. 148; New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M 906; London, British Library, Royal 15 B. XIX) were produced in the late ninth or tenth century in or near Reims.[24] In addition to the attitudes of its insular author, which we have just considered, the *Liber monstrorum* should then also reveal those of the continental scribes who thought it worth copying.

Anna Dorofeeva argues that the Wolfenbüttel manuscript was an example of a new type of miscellany developed in the Carolingian era, in which grammatical and etymological treatises, exegetical texts, as well as mythographic and allegorical material, were combined with texts on phenomena in the natural world (like the *Physiologus* and the *Liber monstrorum*), so that the users of such manuscripts might develop a language that could access the deeper, Christian order of the world around them.[25] In the other two manuscripts from Reims, the *Liber* is combined respectively with the Phaedrian fables (New York MS) and with Persius' Satires and the so-called *Commentum Cornuti* on the same, as well as many shorter, mainly mythographic texts (London MS). This may be indicative of a similarly pedagogical *causa colligendi* as for the Wolfenbüttel manuscript.[26] At least in Reims, then, Carolingian scribes seem to have been mostly interested in the allegorical value of monsters.

It should be noted, however, that they may not always have intended for the *Liber monstrorum* to end up in the contexts in which it is now found, since they often transmitted it in small, independent codicological units. Folios 1–13 of Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Voss. lat. O. 60 (s. ix$^{2/4}$, Fleury), transmitting the *Liber monstrorum*,

[22] See note 2.

[23] On the transmission, see Á. Ibáñez Chacón, 'Un nuevo manuscrito del Liber monstrorum: Vat. Pal. lat. 1741', *Exemplaria Classica* 24 (2020), pp. 151–75.

[24] Wolfenbüttel MS: B. Bischoff, *Die südostdeutschen Schreibschulen und Bibliotheken in der Karolingerzeit*, 2 vols (Wiesbaden, 1960–80), vol. 2, pp. 176–7. New York MS: *idem*, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts (mit Ausnahme der wisigotischen)*, 4 vols (Wiesbaden, 1998–2017), vol. 2, p. 319, no. 3623. London MS: F. Duplessis, 'L'enseignement de la mythologie à Reims au Xe siècle. Analyse des "Fabulae de diuersis libris" (London, British Library, Royal 15 B XIX, f. 107r–110v)', *Polymnia* 5 (2020), pp. 81–125, at pp. 83–5.

[25] A. Dorofeeva, *Reading Nature in the Early Middle Ages: Writing, Language, and Creation in the Latin Physiologus, ca. 700–1000* (Leeds, 2023), especially pp. 119–21, 200–2.

[26] K.A. de Meyier, *Codices Vossiani Latini*, 4 vols (Leiden, 1973–85), vol. 3, pp. 108–12.

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are codicologically independent both from the rest of this manuscript, as well as from Vatican, BAV, Ott. lat. 259, folios 1–29, with which they were bound at an earlier point in their history.[27] The two quaternios of the New York manuscript containing the *Liber monstrorum* were a later addition to Phaedrus' *Fabulae*,[28] and folios 103–110 of the London manuscript, containing the *Liber monstrorum* and a short text concerning the labours of Hercules, were inserted into this manuscript only after the quires surrounding them had already been numbered.[29] The arguments regarding the transmission contexts must therefore be considered with a degree of uncertainty.

Notable features of the St Gall *Liber monstrorum*

The codex at the heart of this study also transmits the *Liber monstrorum* in an independent codicological unit: the main corpus of St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 237 (pp. 7–328) contains Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*. It was written in St Gall in the 830s and can probably be identified with an entry in the oldest St Gall booklist,[30] though that list makes no mention of the gathering of three single leaves (pp. 1–6) at the beginning of the manuscript, transmitting most of the first book of the *Liber monstrorum*.[31] These three leaves are also not counted in the otherwise continuous quire signatures; the first quaternio of the *Etymologiae* (pp. 7–22) is numbered 'I'.[32] However, they share the same layout as pp. 7–328 and were written by a contemporaneous hand, possibly even a scribe who also worked on the *Etymologiae*.[33]

In fact, while codicologically independent, this copy of the *Liber monstrorum* was clearly always intended to be bound up with, and read alongside, Isidore's *Etymologiae*. On three occasions, the scribe copied only the chapter heading with an added reference to the *Etymologiae* instead of replicating the text of their exemplar. For onocentaurs, they directed their readers to the end of the eleventh book of the *Etymologiae*: *De Onocen require in fine libri XI* ('Regarding

[27] M. Mostert, *The Library of Fleury. A Provisional List of Manuscripts*, Middeleeuwse studies en bronnen 3 (Hilversum, 1989), pp. 102–3, 255, nos. BF 357–8, 1327.
[28] Bischoff, *Katalog*, vol. 2, p. 319.
[29] Duplessis, 'L'enseignement', p. 84.
[30] E. Stein, 'Two Carolingian Redactions of Isidore's Etymologiae from St. Gallen', *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 56 (2021), pp. 298–376, at pp. 315, 320.
[31] A. Knock, 'The "Liber Monstrorum": An Unpublished Manuscript and Some Reconsiderations', *Scriptorium* 32 (1978), pp. 19–28, at p. 19.
[32] A. Bruckner, *Schreibschulen der Diözese Konstanz: St. Gallen 2*, Scriptoria medii aevi Helvetica 3 (Geneva, 1938), p. 85.
[33] E. Stein, personal communication.

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onocen[taurs], search at the end of the eleventh book').[34] As the scribe felt no need to specify the title of the work whose eleventh book their readers were supposed to consult, they clearly envisaged the *Liber monstrorum* as part of the same codex as the *Etymologiae*. Similarly, the chapter on cynocephali is abbreviated to the cryptic phrase *Chenocofoli* [sic] *inter illos*, which probably was meant to suggest that information on these beings could be found 'among those [pages]'.[35] Another likely reference to the *Etymologiae* can be found in I.19, which the scribe replaced by the statement that, 'regarding [people of] mixed sex, you will find [information] in this book' (*De commixto sexu in hoc libro invenies*). This is the above-mentioned chapter on humans vertically divided in a 'male' and 'female' half. As they, like the monster of I.1, are described as being 'of both sexes' (*utriusque sexus*) in the body of the chapter,[36] the scribe may have thought this a repetition and referred back to the beginning of the text. Still, since the headings distinguish between being 'of both sexes' (I.1) and 'of mixed sex' (I.19), it is more plausible that *hoc liber* again refers to the eleventh book of the *Etymologiae*, where the equivalent information to I.19 can be found.[37]

In the main corpus of the manuscript, several sections of the eleventh book of the *Etymologiae* are marked with *require*-signs in the margins.[38] They always appear next to chapters that either describe beings not in the *Liber monstrorum*,[39] or describe them in a way that disagrees with it.[40] It is tempting to see this as the work of the *Liber monstrorum* scribe marking the differences between the two texts. If this is the case, however, they did not work particularly thoroughly, and missed several chapters that also disagree.[41] Given that a large number of *require*'s can be found at many different points in the *Etymologiae*, those marking the

[34] *Liber monstrorum*, I.10, ed. Porsia, p. 148; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.39, ed. Lindsey.

[35] *Liber monstrorum*, I.16, ed. Porsia, p. 164; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.15, ed. Lindsey. Alternatively, *inter illos* might also mean that cynocephali could be found 'among those [beings]' – the *homines setosi* of the preceding chapter who, like the cynocephali, lived in India. This would nonetheless point to a connection with the *Etymologiae*, as the *Liber monstrorum*, unlike Isidore, is silent on the location of the cynocephali.

[36] *Liber monstorum*, I.1, I.19, ed Porsia, pp. 126, 170.

[37] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.11, ed. Lindsey.

[38] See St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 237, pp. 183–5.

[39] *Require*-sign and not in the *Liber monstrorum*: humans with lion's heads, those who have conjoined fingers, those who use giant lips for shade, Cerberus, the Arcadii, and witches (Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.9, XI.iii.11, XI.iii.18, XI.iii.33, XI.iv.1–2, ed. Lindsey).

[40] *Require*-sign and described differently in the *Liber monstrorum*: *Blemmyas* (called *Epifugis* in the *Liber monstrorum*), Gorgons, sirens, Scylla (*Liber monstrorum*, I.6, I.14, I.23, I.38, ed. Porsia, pp. 140, 160, 180, 210; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.17, XI.iii.29–30, XI.iii.32, ed. Lindsey).

[41] For example, Isidore's *Hippopodes* do not appear in the *Liber monstrorum*, and while he derives the fauns' name from *ficario* (fig merchant), the author of the *Liber monstrorum* derives it from their ability to speak (*fando*): *Liber monstrorum*, I.5, ed. Porsia, p. 136; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.22, XI.iii.25, ed. Lindsey. Neither chapter is marked.

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eleventh book may also have been independent of the *Liber monstrorum*.[42]

The scribe's decision to only replace three chapters with references to the *Etymologiae*, but not any other ones, is somewhat puzzling. Many other beings described by Isidore also appear in the *Liber monstrorum* without receiving a similar cross-reference.[43] As we shall see later, the scribe may have been more interested in referencing Isidore's general conception of monsters than their specific descriptions in the *Etymologiae*. In addition to the chapters on onocentaurs, cynocephali, and humans of mixed sex, they also skipped four more chapters, and abridged others,[44] without giving any indication of their cuts – and without following any obvious pattern. Two of the omitted chapters concern individual figures (Argos and Triton); the other two depict monstrous races (satyrs and antipodes).[45] The chapters on Hercules, pygmies, women who bear at the age of five and die at eight, and on Black people were abridged; notably the last one lost its reference to the author's first-hand experience.[46] While some of these omissions may of course already have been present in the scribe's exemplar, it should be noted that the St Gall *Liber monstrorum* is stematically closest to the only complete copy from the early Middle Ages (Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, Gud. lat. 148; one of the Reims manuscripts mentioned above).[47] As the bottom third of the last page of the relevant gathering (p. 6) remained empty, the scribe also does not seem to have made the cuts because they were running out of space. They thus remain somewhat mysterious.

A 'human of both sexes' in early medieval St Gall

The omissions are not the only noteworthy aspect of this copy of the *Liber monstrorum*. Skipping the prologues, it begins with the description of the 'human of both sexes' quoted above. However, where the text usually

[42] Stein, 'Two Carolingian Redactions', p. 331 notes that this manuscript does not display the more sophisticated marginal signs that St Gall scholars employed for textual criticism of the *Etymologiae* in other Isidore manuscripts, though the lost exemplar of Stiftsbibliothek 237 may have been used in this editorial project. At any rate, the *require*-signs at the end of Book XI were not part of this project.

[43] E.g. centaurs, sciapodes, or the giant Tityos (*Liber monstrorum*, I.7, I.17, I.47, ed. Porsia, p. 142, 166, 228; Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, X.iii.39, XI.iii.7, XI.iii.23, ed. Lindsey).

[44] Cf. the apparatus in *Liber monstrorum*, ed. Porsia, and Ibáñez Chacón, 'Un nuevo manuscrito', pp. 164–74. The St Gall copy also does not transmit the prologues and the epilogue to Book I.

[45] *Liber monstrorum*, I.39, I.46, I.52, I.53, ed. Porsia, pp. 212, 226, 238, 240.

[46] *Liber monstrorum*, I.12, I.23, I.27, I.30, ed. Porsia, pp. 154, 178, 186, 192; see also text referring to note 6, above. St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 237 also skips the second part of I.4, though this was probably not due to the scribe: at this point, a line and a half of text was erased. A later user marked the incompleteness with a *require*-sign.

[47] Ibáñez Chacón, 'Un nuevo manuscrito', p. 174.

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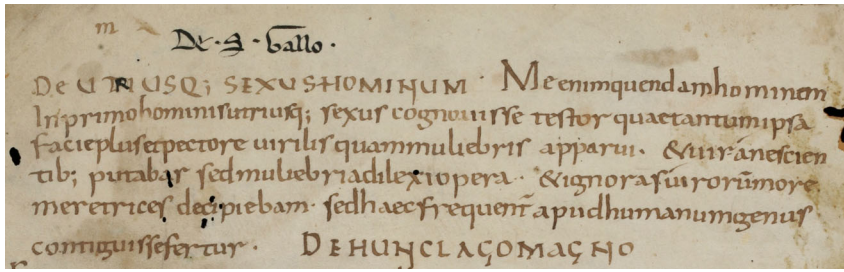

Figure 1 St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 237, p. 2 (detail), beginning of the *Liber monstrorum.* Available at: https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/0237/2 [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

switches from the first person of the scholar to the third person of the monster, the St Gall scribe continued in the first person, and the relevant subclause is introduced by the feminine relative pronoun *quae* instead of the (generically) masculine *qui*. Additionally, *in primordio operis* was changed to *in primo hominis*, *ignaros* to *ignoras*, and *meretricis* to *meretrices* (see Fig. 1; compare note 10 for the standard text).

Even though the Latin of this text is not up to Classical standards, these changes are unlikely to all have been the errors of an unlearned scribe. While flipping vowels (as in *ignoras*) or mixing up *-is* and *-es* are common enough mistakes[48] to which one would hesitate to ascribe too much meaning, the change in verb forms, at least, was almost certainly deliberate. The endings of the relevant verbs are too dissimilar to ascribe the change to unfamiliarity with the abbreviation system of the exemplar, and at no other point in the text does the scribe confuse first, second, and third person verb forms. Most importantly, a later corrector did not view any of the changes as mistakes: while the chapter heading was emended from *De utiusque sexus hominum* to *De utriusque sexus hominum*, the rest of the chapter was left unchanged.[49] Taking all changes as conscious choices for the moment does admittedly make for some grammatical awkwardness, but the chapter could be tentatively translated to the following:

> Regarding [someone] of both sexes of humans. For I profess at the beginning of humans [i.e. as the first of the humanoid monsters?]

[48] For example, in I.6 the scribe initially wrote *belue* (beasts) instead of *puelle* (girls); in I.14, they mistook *virginali* for *virginale*. These mistakes were later corrected to *pelue* and *virginali* respectively (cf. *Liber monstrorum*, ed. Porsia, pp. 140, 160).

[49] According to the critical apparatus in *Liber monstrorum*, ed. Porsia, p. 126, the corrector also changed *putabar* to *putabatur*. No such correction is found in the manuscript.

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> that I have known a certain human of both sexes, who [grammatically female] – I appeared in my own face and breast so much more male than female. And I was believed to be a man by those who did not know, yet I loved female works. And – you do not know it – I would deceive whores in the manner of men. But it is said that this has occurred often in the human race.[50]

If the ability to speak was in fact the criterion by which the author of the *Liber monstrorum* decided whether a monster could at the same time be considered human,[51] the St Gall scribe went further than the original author in making this monster human: not only is it able to, it *does* speak directly to the reader. Not only has it occurred often in a general sense, it is in the reader's immediate presence. In speaking through it, the scribe also seems to have signalled their personal identification with this being. While recent work in particular by trans historians has vastly expanded our methodological toolkit for queer and trans readings of medieval manuscripts,[52] in this case, even the most literal interpretation would indicate the presence of a person in mid-ninth-century St Gall whose gender and/or sexuality was non-normative. Given the ambivalence of the text, though, it still remains unclear in what way they would have considered themselves to be 'of both sexes'.

The chapter could be read as a shameful admission of the scribe's monstrosity. The change from *qui* to *quae* then might suggest a sense of isolation from the homosocially male community of monks in St Gall: in order to be able to be present in the community, the monster has to successfully deceive its male members, but is not truly one of them. However, one should not presuppose that those living non-normative gender expressions and/or sexualities in the Middle Ages felt only shame.[53] The change in grammatical gender may simply have communicated that the scribe identified as female, or expected others to ultimately identify them as such, without making a statement to their feelings about this.

[50] St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 237, p. 2: 'De ut[r]iusque sexus hominum. Me enim quendam hominem in primo hominis utriusque sexus cognovisse testor quae tantum ipsa facie plus et pectore virilis quam muliebris apparui. Et vir a nescientibus putabar sed muliebria dilexi opera. Et ignoras virorum more meretrices decipiebam. Sed haec frequenter apud humanum genus contiguisse fertur.' Compare note 10 for the standard text.

[51] See note 14.

[52] E.g. G.M.W. Bychowski, 'Trans Textuality: Dysphoria in the Depths of Medieval Skin', *postmedieval* 9 (2018), pp. 318–33; J.D. Sargan, 'What Could a Trans Book History Look Like? Toward Trans Codicology', *Criticism* 64 (2022), pp. 571–86.

[53] H. Rhodes, 'Premodern Pedagogies: Queer Medieval Materiality', *Quidditas* 42 (2021), pp. 238–45, at p. 239.

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Monsters: *(non) contra naturam*?

In fact, there are indications that the scribe would not have considered being 'of both sexes' as being exceedingly shameful. With the reference to Isidore's *Etymologiae*, they not only saved themselves from copying out a handful of lines. They also referred their readers to the abstract monster model that Isidore offers in the eleventh book of the *Etymologiae*. Isidore, echoing points made by Augustine in his *Civitas Dei*, states that monsters cannot be seen as being contrary to nature, since this would be tantamount to saying that they were contrary to the will of their omnipotent creator. Therefore, they are 'not contrary to nature, but contrary to what is known about nature'. Deriving the Latin word *monstrum* from *monstrare* (to show), he also argues that God uses these beings as omens to signify the future.[54] Thus, according to Isidore, monsters have their proper place within a rational, ordered, Christian world, even if this place is not always apparent to the limited minds of humans.

The author of the *Liber monstrorum* used both the *Civitas Dei* and the *Etymologiae* as sources for descriptions of specific monsters.[55] While McFadden argued that the author of the *Liber monstrorum* ultimately also agrees with Augustine's and Isidore's abstract conception of monstrosity, 'subtly inserting' the idea that 'monsters in fact reveal order in nature' in their work,[56] this agreement is certainly not immediately obvious. As mentioned above, the *Liber monstrorum* begins by stressing that monsters strike fear in the hearts of humankind,[57] thus placing more value on human reactions to monsters than Isidore does. In the prologue to Book I, the author also predicts their imminent extermination: as humankind spreads, they will soon have eradicated monsters even in the remotest parts of the world.[58] Within this framework, it is unclear if monsters have any place within Christian creation, at least long term. By skipping the prologues and referring to Isidore's explicitly 'natural' monster model, the St Gall scribe avoided this ambivalence.

Insisting that monsters were not contrary to nature is particularly noteworthy if I.1 was referring to a man who prefers to be penetrated by other men. This is not the only possible interpretation of this chapter, and even among later users of this manuscript, it may not have been the

[54] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.iii.1–3, ed. Lindsey.
[55] *Liber monstrorum*, ed. Porsia, introduction, p. 62.
[56] McFadden, 'Authority and Discourse', p. 489.
[57] *Liber monstrorum*, prologue, ed. Porsia, p. 116.
[58] *Liber monstrorum*, prologue to Book I, ed. Porsia, p. 124.

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prevailing one, as we shall see later. As discourses tying male–male sex to effeminacy seem not to have been particularly prevalent in Carolingian Europe,[59] the change from *qui* to *quae* – if it was deliberate – also seems to point in a different direction. Still, it is worthwhile thinking through the implications of this possible interpretation.

With the reference to Isidore, the St Gall scribe may then have been pushing back against the idea that sexual acts between men – as opposed to other forms of fornication – were a sin 'contrary to nature'. This, too, was not a universally held opinion in the Carolingian era: condemnations of male–male sex acts, like Charlemagne's angry outburst at the ubiquity of monastic sodomy in the *Capitulare missorum generale* (802), did not need to refer to its supposed unnaturalness.[60] Conversely, condemnations of unnatural sexual behaviours often also included illicit acts committed between those of different genders, or on one's own, as does Hincmar of Reims's definition of *sodomia*.[61] However, in the 820s – just before the creation of the St Gall *Liber monstrorum* – the idea that sex between men was particularly unnatural enjoyed a brief moment of popularity.

At that time, rumours were swirling that the monastic school of Reichenau was rife with sexual sins committed among its (male) attendees. An angel supposedly appeared to and harshly rebuked Reichenau's schoolmaster Wetti for not stopping this behaviour. According to Heito of Reichenau, who penned a report of Wetti's visions in 824/5, the angel devoted a large part of his appearance to the issue of sodomy, and twice emphasized that it was a particularly grave sin as it was 'contrary to nature'.[62] In 829, bishops gathered at a council in Paris stressed that sexual sins committed with other men (or with animals) were 'more grave and pernicious' because they were 'contrary to nature' and thus should be 'judged more harshly than

[59] Cf. R. Stone, *Morality and Masculinity in the Carolingian Empire*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series 81 (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 292–8. See also L.L. Coon, *Dark Age Bodies: Gender and Monastic Practice in the Early Medieval West*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, 2011), pp. 111–13 on the use of effeminizing language in commentaries on the *Regula Benedicti* – but notably not in the context of monks' sexual improprieties.

[60] *Capitulare missorum generale*, c. 17, ed. A. Boretius, MGH Capitularia 1.1 (Hanover, 1883), pp. 91–99, at pp. 94–5.

[61] G.W. Olsen, *Of Sodomites, Effeminates, Hermaphrodites, and Androgynes: Sodomy in the Age of Peter Damian*, Studies and Texts 176 (Toronto, 2011), pp. 33–41; R. Stone and C. West, *The Divorce of King Lothar and Queen Theutberga: Hincmar of Rheims's De Divortio*, Manchester Medieval Sources (Manchester, 2016), pp. 58–60.

[62] Heito of Reichenau, *Visio Wettini*, c. 19, 24, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Poetae 2 (Berlin, 1884), pp. 267–75, at pp. 273–4; A. Diem, 'Teaching Sodomy in a Carolingian Monastery: A Study of Walahfrid Strabo's and Heito's *Visio Wettini*', *German History* 34 (2016), pp. 385–401, at pp. 391–3.

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other [sins]'.[63] The question whether engaging in sex between men should be considered 'contrary to nature' was therefore anything but academic.

Shortly after Heito's prose version was finished, Walahfrid Strabo put the *Visio Wettini* in poetic metre. Albrecht Diem read his reworking as, in part, a deconstruction of Heito's conception of sodomy: for Walahfrid, sex between men was an individual issue, no more against nature than any other sexual impropriety.[64] Notably, St Gall was the only monastery to receive Heito's version of the *Visio* together with Walahfrid's from Reichenau.[65] The St Gall *Liber monstrorum*, too, can be interpreted as a reaction to Heito's anti-sodomitical tirade. The scribe, like Walahfrid, may not have argued that sex between men was acceptable monastic behaviour, but rather that it was, in Diem's words, 'merely a nuisance, obviously present, [but] kept sufficiently under control'.[66] Earlier in the eleventh book of the *Etymologiae*, Isidore in fact presents same-gender attraction for men as an obvious consequence of the absence of sexually available women[67] – as would have been the case in a male monastery. In its original context, his contention that being 'of both sexes' (or monstrous in any other way) was not 'contrary to nature' was a metaphysical argument rather than a moral one. It would, however, still have been helpful if the scribe wanted to remove the taint of the 'unnatural', and the commensurate harsher punishment, from this sin.

A Christ 'of both sexes' in early medieval St Gall

There are no indications that this version of the *Liber monstrorum* circulated beyond the enclosure of the monastery of St Gall. The scribe's audience, unlike Walahfrid's, thus lay within their own monastic community – and may not have encompassed the entirety of that community either. Nicolangelo D'Acunto recently emphasized the importance of informal, small, and, crucially, exclusive and

[63] *Concilium Parisiense a*. 829, c. 34, ed. A. Werminghoff, MGH Concilia 2.2 (Hanover and Leipzig, 1908), pp. 605–80, at pp. 634–5: '[G]ravius sceleratiusque in eum delinquit, quando contra naturam peccat. [. . .] Hoc namque peccatum sancti patres [. . .] acrius ceteris iudicandum decreverunt.' On the origin of this connection see E. Wade, 'The Beast with Two Backs: Bestiality, Sex Between Men, and Byzantine Theology in the *Paenitentiale Theodori*', *Journal of Medieval Worlds* 2 (2020), pp. 11–26.

[64] Diem, 'Teaching Sodomy', pp. 398–9.

[65] Diem, 'Teaching Sodomy', p. 394.

[66] Diem, 'Teaching Sodomy', p. 389.

[67] Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, XI.ii.19, ed. Lindsey; Olsen, *Of Sodomites*, pp. 398–9.

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Figure 2 St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 237, p. 1 (detail), incomplete depiction of the crucified Christ, surrounded by pen trials. Available at: https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/0237/1 [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

self-selecting groups engaged in 'horizontal learning' in St Gall;[68] in this case, there are concrete indications that this manuscript was of particular interest for those monks who, like the scribe, were interested in the idea of being 'of both sexes'.[69]

This becomes apparent on the first recto page of the gathering transmitting the *Liber monstrorum*, which was filled with doodles and pen trials by several hands. A map of the world fills the lower part of the page.[70] Both it and the *Liber monstrorum* chart the edges of the human world, so this combination of text and image is unsurprising. Above the map, someone drew the crucified Christ (Fig. 2). The figure seems unfinished: the legs and the right hand were not drawn, nor was the cross – thought the latter may have been intentional, as we shall see later. This work of art, too, can be interpreted as a visual rendering

[68] N. D'Acunto, 'Forms of Transmission of Knowledge at Saint Gall (Ninth to Eleventh Century)', in M. Long, T. Snijders and S. Vanderputten (eds), *Horizontal Learning in the High Middle Ages: Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Transfer in Religious Communities*, Knowledge Communities 7 (Baltimore, 2020), pp. 207–16. See also M. Long, '*Condiscipuli Sumus*: The Roots of Horizontal Learning in Monastic Culture' in the same volume, pp. 48–63, at p. 58, who points out that manuscript production was a prime opportunity for the formation of such groups.

[69] A limited audience opens up a further, admittedly speculative, possible implication of Boswell's reading of I.1: the suggestion that another monk read the *Liber monstrorum*, then, could have been equivalent to a handkerchief in the back pocket in 1970s San Francisco. To those in the know, it would have been a clear enough signal of sexual intent, all the while retaining plausible deniability.

[70] On this map, see B. Englisch, 'Die St. Galler Kartentradition des frühen Mittelalters: Strukturierte Weltsicht und kartographische Weltordnung in den Schemakarten des frühen Mittelalters (8.–10. Jahrhundert)', *Helvetia archaeologica* 47 (2016), pp. 45–124, at pp. 56–64.

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of some of the ideas in the *Liber monstrorum*. In fact, a hand roughly contemporaneous with the pen trials on p. 1 added the incipit of a prayer for the Feast of the Cross to the end of the *Liber monstrorum*, strengthening the assumption that it and the crucified Christ were interpreted in conjunction.[71]

The drawing is difficult to date exactly, but seems to be of earlier date than the pen trials surrounding it. They were written in a Caroline minuscule displaying many of the characteristics of St Gall's 'Golden Age' (*c*.850–920): G with a prominent lower bow extending below the next letter to the right, H with a strongly curved bow, E's with small heads, and a tail along the baseline for the I's and the last minim of the M's.[72] The pen trials, and thus the crucified Christ, might therefore be just a few decades younger than the text of the *Liber monstrorum*. However, given the conservatism of the St Gall scriptorium, we cannot discount the possibility that they were added in the later tenth or the eleventh century.[73]

How, then, does this crucified Christ take up the *Liber monstrorum*? Though nominally a male figure, it displays some notably feminine features. The face is hard to make out, but seems to have been drawn without a beard. Additionally, this Christ has what could be described as an hourglass figure, breasts, and a rather soft, rounded stomach. In fact, Albert Bruckner identified the drawing as a *Frauengestalt* (female figure) in his catalogue of St Gall manuscripts.[74] This ambiguously gendered Christ on p. 1, I suggest, reacted to the 'human of both sexes' on p. 2.

While Carolingian depictions of the crucified Christ were quite diverse,[75] I have been unable to locate a similarly ambiguous gender representation.[76] However, even more masculine representations of the

[71] St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 237, p. 6: 'Oremus: Deus, qui unigenti [*sic*] domini nostri'. Cf. *Le sacramentaire grégorien: ses principales formes d'après les plus anciens manuscrits*, ed. J. Deshusses, 3 vols (Fribourg, 1971–82), vol. 1, p. 271, no. 690.

[72] B. von Scarpatetti, 'Das St. Galler Scriptorium', in P. Ochsenbein (ed.), *Das Kloster St. Gallen im Mittelalter. Die kulturelle Blüte vom 8. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert* (Darmstadt, 1999), pp. 31–67, at pp. 52–5; A.A. Grotans, 'St. Gall Scripts', in F.T. Coulson and R.G. Babcock (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Latin Palaeography* (New York, 2020), pp. 202–12, at pp. 207–9. Compare for example St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 54 (*c*.900), which also uses uncial U's and S's as *litterae notabiliores* very similar to those in the pen trials.

[73] Grotans, 'St. Gall Scripts', pp. 209–10.

[74] Bruckner, *Schreibschulen*, p. 85.

[75] C. Chazelle, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ's Passion* (Cambridge, 2001); B.E. Kitzinger, *The Cross, the Gospels, and the Work of Art in the Carolingian Age* (Cambridge, 2019).

[76] The closest visual parallel might be Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 257 (s. ix^{ex}), fol. 12v, where the pectoral muscles of the beardless Christ look almost as soft and breast-like as in the St Gall manuscript, though the shape of the torso is much less curved. On this figure, see Kitzinger, *The Cross*, pp. 166–9, 173–5.

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crucified Christ were not necessarily understood to be unambiguously male. Felice Lifshitz argued that the nuns of Kitzingen were meant to identify a crucified, bearded figure in Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M.p.th.f. 69, fol. 7r, as the apostle Paul, as well as, crucially, their own (female) selves, all of whom were 'crucified in Christ' (Gal. II.20).[77] Lynda Coon highlighted the fecundity of the nipples of the bearded and barrel-chested crucified Christ in the 'Gellone Sacramentary' (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Latin 12048, fol. 143v) as evidence of the erosion of gendered boundaries in this representation.[78]

In the case of St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 237, the pen trials confirm that this figure did not evoke masculinity in the minds of the medieval users of the codex: on the left, Christ is bordered by the word *sancta* ('holy', grammatically female), and on the right, by the incipits of two liturgical chants addressing female figures (*Virgo Israhel revertere* and *Sancta Maria succurre miseris*). While none of the pen trials refer to Christ directly, it is notable that later users were inspired to use feminine language in such proximity to the ostensibly male Christ. Therefore, it seems reasonable to interpret the ambiguously gendered Christ-figure now introducing the *Liber monstrorum* as a 'human of both sexes' in a similar way to the monster in I.1 – though, as we shall see, the figure presupposes different interpretations of what it means to be 'of both sexes' than the homoerotic one explored in the section on the monsters' (un-)naturalness.

Being 'of both sexes' as *Imitatio Christi*?

Even if the monster was human enough to speak to the reader in the first person, the jump from this point to being 'of both sexes' as Christ-like is still in need of explanation. To this end, we might consider two possible inspirations in addition to the *Liber monstrorum* that could contextualize the artist's decision.

Asa Mittman and Susan Kim argued that 'the saint, like the monster, is both a hybrid creature and, as such, a kind of border-dweller',[79] and indeed, hagiographic texts could have been the bridge between the ambiguously gendered monster and Christ. Especially if the artist interpreted I.1 as referring to a trans man, it may have reminded them of the *vitae* of so-called *monachoparthenoi* ('monk-virgins'),[80] saints who

[77] F. Lifshitz, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia: A Study of Manuscript Transmission and Monastic Culture*, Fordham Series in Medieval Studies (New York, 2014), pp. 65–80.
[78] L.L. Coon, 'Gendering Dark Age Jesus', *Gender & History* 28 (2016), pp. 8–33, at p. 20.
[79] Mittman and Kim, 'Monsters and the Exotic', p. 344.
[80] On this designation see A.V. Ogden, *The Life of Saint Eufrosine in Old French Verse, with English Translation*, Texts and Translations 35 (New York, 2021), p. xxvii.

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are at first described as female, but transition to a male monastic identity. The *vitae* of the *monachoparthenoi* Eugenia/us, Pelagia/us, and possibly Euphrosyne/Smaragdus and Theodora/us were available in St Gall in the mid-ninth century, and presumably would have been read from on their feast days.[81] Like the 'human of both sexes', these saints dwell at the border between genders;[82] like the Christ-figure, they are (with one exception) assigned a female sex only at death, when their clothes are removed.[83] Following the example of the *monachoparthenoi*, then, the artist may have seen being 'of both sexes' as an avenue towards monastic sanctity, and thus as a version of *imitatio Christi*.

It is also possible to interpret this figure as a non-binary or intersex rather than a transmasculine Christ. As Leah DeVun has shown, there was always a sub-current in the Christian tradition that stressed the absence of binary sex in prelapsarian, as-yet-unsexed humanity and/or in the androgynous state in which humans would find themselves after the resurrection – and which Christ, having already been resurrected, had already reached. Sexual differentiation was thus seen as a sign of the fallen state of human beings.[84]

While this exegetical tradition was never dominant, it was certainly present in Carolingian Francia by the time the St Gall artist set to work. Around the year 800, the oldest extant copy of Dionysius Exiguus's sixth-century Latin translation of Gregory of Nyssa's *De hominis opificio* (*c.*378) was produced in Corbie.[85] According to Gregory, the bodies of both prelapsarian Adam and post-resurrection Christ were neither male nor female, but sexually indeterminate; Christians would have such a body after their own resurrection as

[81] P. Lehmann, *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz 1: Bistümer Konstanz und Chur* (Munich, 1918), pp. 78–9. The Euphrosyne and Theodora mentioned in St Gall's booklist may also be the martyrs of the same name. At least a summary of Euphrosyne's/Smaragdus's life was available in two late ninth-century martyrologies: St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 454 (p. 61) and 456 (p. 3).

[82] A.P. Scheil, 'Somatic Ambiguity and Masculine Desire in the Old English Life of Euphrosyne', *Exemplaria* 11 (1999), pp. 345–61; P.C. Miller, 'Is There a Harlot in This Text? Hagiography and the Grotesque', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33 (2003), pp. 419–35.

[83] See *Vita Pelagiae* (Réfection Latine B), c. 49, ed. C. Lévy, P. Petitmengin, J.-P. Rothschild and J.-Y. Tilliette, *Pelagie la pénitente. Métamorphoses d'une légende*, 2 vols (Paris, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 217–49, at p. 248; G.P. Maggioni, 'La "Vita sanctae Theodorae" (BHL 8070): la revisione imperfetta di una traduzione perfettibile', *Hagiographica* 7 (2000), pp. 201–68, at pp. 264–6; *Vita Euphrosynae* (Latin Translation B [BHL 2723]), c. 18–19, ed. P. Farmhouse Alberto, *The Anonymous Life of Saint Euphrosyne. A Study and Critical Edition of the Greek and Latin Redactions (Sixth–Twelfth Centuries)* (Florence, 2024), pp. 187–214, at pp. 211–13. The sole exception is *Vita Eugeniae*, ed. B. Mombritius, *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (Paris, 1910), vol. 2, pp. 391–7, at p. 395. Where multiple versions of the *vitae* were available, I cite those that are known to have been transmitted in or near St Gall.

[84] L. DeVun, 'Heavenly Hermaphrodites: Sexual Difference at the Beginning and End of Time', *postmedieval* 9 (2018), pp. 132–46.

[85] D. Ganz, *Corbie in the Carolingian Renaissance*, Beihefte der Francia 20 (Sigmaringen, 1990), p. 50.

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well.[86] The relevant passage was quoted by Hadoard of Corbie in a mid-ninth-century patristic florilegium.[87] In the 860s, John Scottus Eriugena translated the *Ambigua* of Maximus the Confessor (†662) from Greek to Latin, in which he expressed similar ideas to Gregory of Nyssa: prelapsarian humanity had been non-sexed, as it would be again once it was reconciled to God, just as there was no sexual differentiation in Christ.[88] Eriugena also re-translated Gregory's *De hominis opificio*.[89] In his own *magnum opus*, the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena quoted both Gregory and Maximus extensively and developed their ideas further.[90]

To be sure, these data points all originate in the West Frankish realm, but while there is no evidence that *De hominis opificio* or the *Ambigua* were available in ninth-century St Gall, Eriugena's *Periphyseon* was at least somewhat known.[91] The Christ-figure, then, could well have been inspired by this exegetical tradition, combining the description of a human 'of both sexes' with the idea of the abolition of a sexed binary in Christ. In fact, if the change of *in primordio operis* ('at the beginning of this work') to *in primo hominis* ('in the first of the humans') was deliberate,[92] the scribe may have already been alluding to the idea that Adam had been 'of both sexes' before the Fall. While the artist chose to depict the crucified rather than the resurrected Christ, this does not preclude the foregoing interpretation. In his poetry, Eriugena offers a view of the crucifixion in which, according to Celia Chazelle, 'past, present and future merge into a single moment of universal triumph'.

[86] Gregory of Nyssa, trans. Dionysius Exiguus, *De conditione hominis*, c. 17, ed. G.H. Forbes, *Sancti Patris Nostri Gregorii Nysseni, Basilii Magni Fratris, Quae Supersunt Omnia*, 2 vols (Burntisland, 1855–61), vol. 1, pp. 96–319, at pp. 195–209.

[87] Ganz, *Corbie*, p. 99.

[88] Maximus the Confessor, trans. John Scottus Eriugena, *Ambigua ad Iohannem*, ed. É. Jeauneau, CCSG 18 (Turnhout, 1988), at pp. 213–15; E. Brown Dewhurst, 'The Absence of Sexual Difference in the Theology of Maximus the Confessor', *Philosophy and Society* 32 (2021), pp. 204–25.

[89] Gregory of Nyssa, trans. John Scottus Eriugena, *De imagine*, c. 17, ed. G. Mandolino and C.O. Tommasi, CCCM 167 (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 69–165, at pp. 110–17.

[90] E.g. John Scottus Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, ed. É. Jeauneau, 5 vols, CCCM 161–5 (Turnhout, 1996–2003), vol. 4, pp. 74–9; vol. 5, pp. 49–53.

[91] St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 274 (s. ix) transmits a short excerpt from the *Periphyseon* on p. 4, and several glosses excerpted from it throughout the codex; see J. Marenbon, 'Glosses and Commentaries on the *Categories* and *De interpretatione* before Abelard', in J. Fried (ed.), *Dialektik und Rhetorik im frühen und hohen Mittelalter: Rezeption, Überlieferung und gesellschaftliche Wirkung antiker Gelehrsamkeit vornehmlich im 9. und 12. Jahrhundert*, Schriften des Historischen Kollegs 27 (Berlin and Boston, 2009), pp. 21–50, at pp. 25–9. However, the glosses may have been added after the ninth century: A.A. Grotans, 'Understanding the Scope of Knowledge in Early Medieval St Gall', in S. O'Sullivan and C. Arthur (eds), *Crafting Knowledge in the Early Medieval Book: Practices of Collecting and Concealing in the Latin West*, Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin 16 (Turnhout, 2023), pp. 39–89, at pp. 58–9. See also S. Meeder, *The Irish Scholarly Presence at St. Gall: Networks of Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages*, Studies in Early Medieval History (London and New York, 2018), pp. 48–51 on awareness of Eriugena's biblical scholarship in St. Gall.

[92] See above, text referring to notes 48–50.

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Regarding the pictorial programme of Hrabanus Maurus' figurative poem *In honorem sanctae crucis*, Chazelle also argued that portraying the crucified Christ without a cross served to lift him out of the 'temporal considerations' of the particular moment of the crucifixion.[93] The same applies to the crucified, but un-crossed St Gall Christ: the dying and the resurrected, gender-transcendent Christ were not mutually exclusive and could be present in the same image.

Gregory, Maximus, and Eriugena may have bristled at the St Gall artist's application of their theories: the idea of the absence of sex difference in humanity before the Fall and after the Eschaton could not readily be applied to a postlapsarian human being who was not Christ – especially a human being whom they themselves might have seen as monstrous, as ambiguously gendered rather than as transcending gender. Here, too, the definition of *monstrum* in the *Etymologiae* would have been helpful in countering the objection. If monsters were to be understood as God's way of revealing future designs for humanity, humans of both sexes (here understood as non-binary or intersex persons) could have been said to prefigure in this world the abolition and transcendence of binary sex that all humans would experience at the Eschaton.

Conclusions

The contexts in which most of the copies of the *Liber monstrorum* are transmitted suggest that, in Carolingian Europe, it was typically used to enhance the allegorical toolbox of its readers: the descriptions of monsters could serve as metaphors through which to understand the deeper meaning of certain phenomena within the created world. The scribe of the St Gall copy, on the other hand, transported the queer monster at the beginning of the work squarely out of the realm of the metaphorical and put it in direct discourse with their readers. In this version, the 'human of both sexes' was not only widespread and of human appearance, but also an apparently rational interlocutor speaking in the first person. In assuming the voice of the monster, the scribe seems to have signalled their own identification with it, though given the ambiguity of the text, it is still hard to say for what reason, exactly, they would have come to see themselves as being 'of both sexes'.

Several possible interpretations have been explored here. If being a man wanting to be penetrated by other men was what made one 'of both sexes', the reference to Isidore's 'natural' monster model in the main corpus of the manuscript may have been pushing back against the idea that male–male

[93] Chazelle, *The Crucified God*, pp. 118, 202. See also Coon, *Dark Age Bodies*, pp. 216–20.

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sex was contrary to nature. A later user of the manuscript seems to have gone with a different interpretation in depicting a crucified Christ 'of both sexes': this figure may have been modelled on hagiographical or exegetical templates that praised what today would be called transmasculine and intersex or non-binary identities respectively. Whether the artist, too, would have understood themselves to be 'of both sexes' (in any of these senses) is unclear, though certainly a possibility.

It is also important not to overstate the mutual exclusivity of these interpretations. The trans monk Smaragdus, whom I cited as one of the possible bridges between the monster and the Christ of both sexes, is the object of sexual desire by male monks unaware of his sex assigned at birth, paralleling the 'ignorant men' of I.1 of the *Liber monstrorum*,[94] a helpful reminder that the different axes of gendered non-normativity considered here are intertwined. Even if, for example, the scribe was trying to remove the stain of the unnatural from male–male sex, the change of pronoun from *qui* to *quae* in the text may still have been their way of anticipating that, if their body were visible under their habit, it would be read as female.

The manuscript St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 237, then, offers not just one more entry in the queer archive, suggesting the existence of one or two more people who lived non-normative sex lives and/or asserted diverse gender expressions in the early Middle Ages. The combination of text and Christ-figure points to its use by several different monks interested in the idea of being 'of both sexes'. Thus, the manuscript also offers some faint traces of the shared texts and visual codes that enabled their enactment of non-normative sexualities and/or genders. These texts and codes, in turn, can be said to have constituted part of the repertoire of a small 'community of practice'. Its members may not all have understood themselves to be 'of both sexes', or agreed on what exactly it would mean to be, but shared an interest in making it compatible with their monastic life.[95]

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[94] *Vita Euphrosynae*, ed. Farmhouse Alberto, pp. 174–5.

[95] On medieval queer communities (not necessarily tied to queer identities), see T. Wingard, 'The Trans Middle Ages: Incorporating Transgender and Intersex Studies into the History of Medieval Sexuality', *The English Historical Review* 138 (2023), pp. 933–51, at pp. 936–8; on communities of practice, see T. Snijders, 'Communal Learning and Communal Identities in Medieval Studies: Consensus, Conflict, and the Community of Practice', in *eadem*, Long and Vanderputten (eds), *Horizontal Learning in the High Middle Ages*, pp. 17–46, at pp. 39–45. Cf. also K. Henningsen, '"Calling [herself] Eleanor": Gender Labor and Becoming a Woman in the Rykener Case', *Medieval Feminist Forum* 55 (2019), pp. 249–66, at pp. 257–64 on the role of cis men and women around Eleanor Rykener in her ability to assert a transfeminine identity.

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