



The Monstrous Middle Ages

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The figure of the monster in medieval culture functions as a vehicle for a range of intellectual and spiritual inquiries, from questions of language and representation to issues of moral, theological, and cultural value. Monstrosity is bound up with questions of body image and deformity, nature and knowledge, hybridity and horror. To explore a culture's attitudes to the monstrous is to comprehend one of its most important symbolic tools.

The Monstrous Middle Ages looks at both the representation of literal monsters and the consumption and exploitation of monstrous metaphors in a wide variety of high and late-medieval cultural productions, from travel writings and mystical texts to sermons, manuscript illuminations and maps. Individual essays explore the ways in which monstrosity shaped the construction of gender and sexual identity, religious symbolism, and social prejudice in the Middle Ages.

Reading the Middle Ages through its monsters provides an opportunity to view medieval culture from fresh perspectives. *The Monstrous Middle Ages* will be essential reading for anyone interested in the concept of monstrosity and its significance for both medieval cultural production and contemporary critical practice.

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