

Evil and the Body of Antiochus IV Epiphanes:

Disability, Disgust and Tropes of Monstrosity in 2 Maccabees 9:1–12

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What however, is that type of evil . . . which is suited to arouse disgust?

Aurel Kolnai, *On Disgust*

The monster's body is a cultural body . . . a construct and projection.

Jeremy Cohen, *Monster Theory*

Disability, disgust and tropes of monstrosity are social constructions which are relative, fluid and context-dependent.¹ They are variously and flexibly employed cross-culturally to label, reject, and eliminate certain persons and/or actions as deviant, dangerous, or evil.² The association of disability with both supernatural and moral evil is of course a widespread trope in biblical traditions. Demonic influence or divine discontent are the oft-cited backstories of those physical bodies which are assumed to fall short of cultural norms or ideals. In such contexts, stigmatisation of bodily difference often expresses the power and interests of a dominant elite (cultic) group.³ In po-

¹ David Houk and Amos Kiewe confirm disability's character when they write, "Disability is not written in the stars – or on the body; rather disability is a construction, defined and negotiated by a culture at a given point in time. . . . To say this is not to deny the material fact of physical impairment; it is to affirm the fact that a physical impairment's meaning is never fixed or given" (Davis W. Houck and Amos Kiewe, *FDR's Body Politics: The Rhetoric of Disability* [College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003], 5–6). "Disgust" likewise "is never stable, never irrevocably fixed or certain" (Robert Wilson, *The Hydra's Tale: Imagining Disgust* [Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2002], xiv). All scriptural quotations in this essay are from the NRSV unless noted otherwise.

² Anthropological studies have revealed how cultural constructions of "evil" are also relative and fluid, so much so that some have appealed for the elimination of the term altogether. See David Parkin, ed., *The Anthropology of Evil* (New York: Blackwell, 1985).

³ On stigmatisation on account of bodily difference assumed to be the result of sin or divine punishment, see discussions in Saul Olyan, *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Louise Lawrence, *Sense and Stigma in the Gospels: Depictions of Sensory-Disabled Characters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

lemical contexts, metaphors of disability also abound as effective ideological weapons to both shame and immobilize the “evil” represented by an opponent. In such contexts “evil” is disqualified, deprived of agency, and rendered ineffective through the employment of disordered corporeal concepts.⁴ Disgust with its “unique aversive style”⁵ plays a substantive role in such strategies by using intense bodily sensations to reject and limit the power of (perceived) evil persons or things “to contaminate, infect or pollute by proximity, contact or ingestion.”⁶ In extreme cases, “monstrosity” – “some horrendous presence that explodes all . . . harmony, order, and ethical conduct”⁷ – is impressed onto such traditions. As the etymological root in the Latin *monstrare* meaning both “to show” and “to warn”⁸ indicates, the monstrous is used to counsel audiences about the threats posed to them by exaggerated, liminal, hybrid, and oft-times aberrant identities.

Through a hermeneutical lens structured on the intersections of disability, disgust, and tropes of monstrosity, here I will probe the discursive and bodily act of expelling evil through the narration of the body of a notorious villain of the Second Temple period, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, as it is told in 2 Macc 9:1–12. This narrative has long been seen to number among “death of tyrant type scenes” in which tormentors are brought to account for offending the divine,⁹ informing so-called “*de mortibus persecutorum* literature.”¹⁰ Rela-

⁴ On ascribing various disabilities to idols as a rhetorical tool to delegitimize them see Saul Olyan, “The Ascription of Physical Disability as a Stigmatizing Strategy in Biblical Iconic Polemics,” *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 9 (2009), 1–15; repr. in *Disability Studies and Biblical Literature* (eds. Candida Moss and Jeremy Schipper; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 89–102.

⁵ William Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 9.

⁶ Miller, *Anatomy*, 2.

⁷ On monsters and monstrosity see assorted entries in Asa Simon Mittman and Peter J. Dendle, eds., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2012). David Gilmore lists the following trans-cultural qualities frequently associated with the concept: aggression, excess, malevolence, repugnance, violence and atavism (David Gilmore, *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003]). See also Joseph Miller, *The Power of Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1988).

⁸ Alexa Wright, *Monstrosity: The Human Monster in Visual Culture* (London: Taurus, 2013), 3.

⁹ On this topos see Wesley Allen, *The Death of Herod: The Narrative and Theological Function of Retribution in Luke–Acts* (SBLDS 158; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 16; Thomas Africa, “Worms and the Death of Kings: A Cautionary Note on Disease and History,” *Classical Antiquity* 1:1 (1982): 1–17; David J. Ladouceur, “The Death of Herod the Great,” *CP* 76:1 (1981): 23–34. Also relevant in this regard is Arie W. Zwiep’s work on the death of Judas and its parallels to other deaths of wicked men: “The moral of these stories is clear: a wicked man deserves to die a wicked death, or even: a wicked man will die a wicked death. The gods/God will not let injustice prevail. A cruel death is in a sense

tively few commentators have, however, probed Antiochus's actual embodied performance here.¹¹ This is surprising given that 2 Macc 9 seems (in contrast to other narrations of Antiochus's death) intentionally to foreground bodily materiality¹² and invoke sensory stimuli¹³ to intrude as macabre spectacles from which the audience physically recoils. As will be seen, this passage ultimately vomits out Antiochus's liminal body and the ontological, ideological, and spatial crises it represents as an abhorrent, foul, and repugnant embodiment of evil.

A. Embodied Performances: Disability, Disgust and Tropes of Monstrosity

Performance studies submit that categories such as gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and disability are not "static fact[s] of a [pre-cultural] body" but rather purposefully enacted constructions and reconstructions. *Contra* theorists who have, following Mary Douglas's influential work,¹⁴ viewed the individual body as a neat reflection of a social body, recently the category of "lived bodies" has been employed to underscore embodiment's "hybrid ter-

an answer to the problem of theodicy" (Arie W. Zwiep, *Judas and the Choice of Matthias: A Study on Context and Concern of Acts 1:15–26* [WUNT 2.187, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004], 71).

¹⁰ Daniel Schwartz, *2 Maccabees: Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 351.

¹¹ One notable exception is the work of Alexandra Frisch. She probed a variety of narratives concerning the death of kings and their use of worm imagery, rotting flesh, and falling bowels to promote a disgust reaction in the audience. Whilst I came across her work late in the day of writing this article, it nonetheless is a standpoint with which I concur and from which I can draw inspiration. She contends, "Stories of disgusting disease channel the contemplation of earthly power into the most natural of areas – the human body. While God necessarily remains part of the picture, these stories demonstrate an alternative way to theorize power dynamics in this period. Namely, ultimate power stems not only from God's ability to punish, but also from how the people react to these punishments; God's power is mediated and extended through the people" (Alexandra Frisch, "Worms, Rotting Flesh, and Falling Bowels: The Power of Disgust in a Motif of Kingly Death in Early Jewish Literature." www.law.tau.ac.il/Heb/_Uploads/dbsAttachedFiles/Frisch.pdf [2011]). Charles Higgins's MA coursework which initiated a sensory reading of 2 Maccabees (University of Exeter, 2013) is another exception and has informed my thinking here.

¹² On the importance of the oft-neglected area of materiality of the body in biblical studies, see Francesca Stavrakopoulou, "Making Bodies: On Body Modification and Religious Materiality in the Hebrew Bible," *HeBAI* 2 (2013): 532–53.

¹³ The senses are another largely underplayed area in biblical studies. See Lawrence, *Sense*, 10–30.

¹⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966).

rain.” Bodies are “contingent formations of space, time and materiality . . . assemblages of practices, discourses, images, situational arrangements, and specific places and projects.”¹⁵ In this perspective, as Francesca Stavrakopoulou’s recent work on body modification and the Hebrew Bible indicates, the body is neither constant or unequivocally symbolic but rather “a discursively engaged social project”; “a site of performativity, manifesting and embodying cultural preferences and anxieties.”¹⁶

Disability when considered in this perspective is likewise not an “immutable, static [physical/mental] condition”¹⁷ but rather a powerful performance of social meaning. In biblical texts, those bodies rendered “other” to the idealised cultic norm – male, circumcised, fecund, able, and unblemished – are frequently sanctioned, stigmatised, and/or excluded. Saul Olyan contends that biblical literature variously employs binary discourses to “devalue disabled persons, and in some cases, restrict their social intercourse and their cultic opportunities, by casting them as “defective”, profaning of holiness, cursed, shamed, hated, polluting and — implicitly — ugly.”¹⁸ Disability and disease are also used in social discourse as a discursive vehicle for disorder, chaos, and a variety of social ills particularly in polemical contexts where these are often employed specifically to delegitimize opponents.¹⁹ Idols are portrayed as senseless (Ps 115:4–6; Jer 10:5) in contrast to the supra-able Yahweh,²⁰ and perceived opponents of biblical authors are frequently castigated as sensory disabled in some way (Isa 3:12; 9:16; Matt 3:16–26).²¹

If exclusionary practices and ideologies are often founded on the perception of bodily difference, then to cite one disability theorist, the reflex of “disgust is the bile carried in a discursive complex . . . [of] ableism.”²² Martha Nussbaum voices this connection too when she contends that disgust

¹⁵ Margaret Lock and Judith Farquhar, eds., *Beyond the Body Proper: Reading the Anthropology of Material Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 1.

¹⁶ Stavrakopoulou, “Making,” 552.

¹⁷ Paul Jaeger and Cynthia Ann Bowman, *Disability Matters: Legal and Pedagogical Issues of Disability in Education* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 20.

¹⁸ Olyan, *Disability*, 121.

¹⁹ See David Mitchell and Sandra Snyder’s work, which details how disabilities function as narrative “prosthetics” within literature (David Mitchell and Sandra Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000]); an able body “still largely masquerades as a non-identity, as the natural order of things” (Robert McCruer and Michael Berube, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* [Albany: New York University Press, 2006], 1).

²⁰ See Olyan, “Ascription,” 1–15.

²¹ See Lawrence, “Sense,” 31–56.

²² Bill Hughes, “Civilising Modernity and the Ontological Invalidation of Disabled People,” in *Disability and Social Theory: New Developments and Directions* (eds. Dan Goodley, Bill Hughes, and Lennard Davis; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 17–32, 21.

often empowers the procedure of “othering” by diminishing and degrading certain identity groups.²³ Disgust is a term which conjures up the visceral and primordial. *The Oxford English Dictionary* records its origins in the Latin *dis-* (“expressing reversal”) and *gustus* (“taste”). As a noun it denotes a sensory prompt and response: “a feeling of revulsion or strong disapproval aroused by something unpleasant or offensive”; as a verb it “cause[s] (someone) to feel revulsion or strong disapproval.”²⁴ Theorists in various disciplines have long tried to establish the character of disgust.²⁵ For Charles Darwin it was linked to oral ingestion; those beings who could discern putrid substances through sensory input had better chances of survival. For the social historian William Miller, accounting in part for the marked cross-cultural differences observed surrounding disgust-inducing phenomena, it is a multi-sensory phenomenon which goes beyond merely the mouth and taste: “It also involves – not just by extension but at its core – smell, touch, even at times sight and hearing. Above all, it is a moral and social sentiment . . . It ranks people and things in a kind of cosmic ordering.”²⁶ Psychologist Paul Rozin similarly acknowledges that disgust’s significant cultural and religious capital develop “from a system to protect the body from harm to a system to protect the soul from harm.”²⁷ Psychological anthropologist John Ingham concurs that it is not only part of an “emotional apparatus of defence” but also cross-culturally a powerful vehicle of morality and sociality with symbolic potential traversing realms such as “pollution, incest, and death.”²⁸ Whilst many of these thinkers seem to be implicitly assuming Cartesian dichotomies of body/soul and physical/moral (a distinction which also underlines Douglas’s emphasis on the

²³ Martha Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), and Martha Nussbaum, *From Disgust to Humanity: Sexual Orientation and Constitutional Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary* available online at www.oed.com.

²⁵ Thomas Kazen cites disgust triggers to include “food, body products, animals, sexual behaviours, contact with death or corpses, violations of the exterior envelope of the body (including gore and deformity), poor hygiene, interpersonal contamination (contact with unsavoury human beings) and certain moral offences.” He notes that whilst some have contended that this reflects a peculiarly Western model, others have recognised that at least some of these elements seem to be replicated cross-culturally and therefore could be linked to “cultural evolution and socialization” (Thomas Kazen, “Dirt and Disgust: Body and Morality in Biblical Purity Laws,” in *Perspectives on Purity and Purification in the Bible* (eds. Naphtali Meshel et al.; New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 43–64, 53).

²⁶ Miller, *Anatomy*, 2.

²⁷ Paul Rozin et al., “Disgust: Preadaptation and the Cultural Evolution of a Food Based Emotion,” in *Food Preferences and Taste: Continuity and Change* (ed. Helen M. Macbeth; New York: Berghahn Books, 1997), 65–82, 65.

²⁸ John M. Ingham, *Psychological Anthropology Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 33.

individual body/social body),²⁹ disgust actually destabilizes such dualisms. First, disgust is performing as a frontier, policing borders by identifying “the presence of a particular quality of the unethical, namely, the morally ‘putrid’ or ‘putrescent’” and, second, it is a violent expulsive (integrating, not separating, the physical and moral in its “rejection . . . or elimination”).³⁰ For this reason, Rozin saw “core disgust” comprised of “oral incorporation, offensiveness and contamination potency,”³¹ furnishing ideologies related to “animal-reminder/existential aspects of disgust” and thus “revulsion centred on stimuli that function as death/mortality reminders” such as gore, deformity, hygiene, death); meanwhile he saw “socio-moral disgust” as “revulsion centred on moral and social judgments.”³² Like disability, then, disgust “leaks” beyond neatly bounded physiological or sensory terrains into the arena of morality.

Disgust has received relatively little attention in biblical scholarship³³ despite an interesting psychoanalytic experiment by Robert Galatzer-Levy and Mayer Gruber, in which the Hebrew Bible was probed on disgust imagery.³⁴ They set out to challenge the theory that disgust was an effective response only to conceptual chaos rather than a response directly connected to a concrete physical or sensory experience, particularly related to food. Gruber draws on this earlier work in the entry on “Abomination” in *The Dictionary of Deities and Demons*, which speaks about texts which refer to deities and their cult objects as “disgusting objects.” Disgust is evoked to “repel Israelites, who might otherwise be tempted to worship prohibited deities. In the same way Leviticus 18 asserts that various types of sexual relations . . . are

²⁹ Douglas, *Purity*.

³⁰ Richard Beck, *Unclean: Meditations on Purity, Hospitality, and Mortality* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 26.

³¹ Kazen, “Perspectives,” 53.

³² Beck, *Unclean*, 19.

³³ Hugh Pyper uses “disgust” in his elucidation of “the biology of offence” through which he probes the offensiveness of Scripture (Hugh Pyper, *The Unchained Bible: Cultural Appropriations of Biblical Texts* [London: T&T Clark, 2012], esp. 17–31). Amy Kalmanofsky, in her reading of “terror” in Jeremiah, identifies disgust and fear as central elements of the horror genre. She submits that shame discourse echoes emotional responses to fear and disgust: by shaming the audience, Jeremiah’s prophetic call moves his listeners not only ideologically but also emotionally and physiologically to embrace his agenda (Amy Kalmanofsky, *Terror All around: The Rhetoric of Horror in the Book of Jeremiah* [New York: T&T Clark, 2008]).

³⁴ Robert M. Galatzer-Levy and Mayer Gruber, “What an Affect Means: A Quasi-Experiment about Disgust,” *Annual of Psychoanalysis* 20 (1992): 69–92; cited by Erin Runions, “From Disgust to Humor: Rahab’s Queer Affect,” in *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship* (eds. Teresa Hornby and Ken Stone; SemSt 67; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 45–74, 45.

so repulsive that they make even the personified land of Israel vomit.”³⁵ Illicit sexual practice is thus retched from the earth as rancid food is vomited from the body. A cursory look at biblical texts on the semantic range of “disgust” likewise reveals arrestingly physical and sensory responses and reprimands of perceived evil. The plagues of Exodus envision the destruction of the Nile’s fish stock and the river itself emitting a stink so nauseous that the Egyptians will be loathed/offended at drinking its water (Exod 7:18). Psalm 107:8 pictures the sinner’s sickness and afflictions as drawing near the gates of death and being loathed/disgusted (נִשְׁקָה) at food. Amos pictures the divine chastising the people for turning away from him by making the stench (שֶׁמֶט) of their camp intrude their nostrils (Amos 4:10). Isaiah warns that God’s punishment of evil will include the transformation of “sweet perfume” to a “rotten odour” (רֵיחַ) (Isa 3:24). Moab wallows in his own vomit (שֶׁמֶט) “because he magnified himself against Yahweh” (Jer 48:26) and God spits (ἐμέσαι) the lukewarm believer from his mouth (Rev 3:16).

Thomas Kazen’s psycho-biological work, which adopts insights from cognitive science and evolutionary biology as heuristic tools to interpret Pentateuchal legal collections, develops these sorts of links.³⁶ In an essay entitled “Dirt and Disgust: Body and Morality in Biblical Purity Laws,”³⁷ he probes the interrelation between modes of ritual and moral “impurity” and considers “the possibility of morality as well as purity originating with primary emotional bodily reactions.”³⁸ He hypothesises that priestly legal codes may have had their origin in “negative reactions to threatening stimuli” (though these of course are socially-conditioned in specific contexts) and “the emotion of disgust, primarily towards objectionable substances, and secondarily to states associated with such substances or behaviour evoke similar feelings.”³⁹ This embodied approach to purity laws in particular conceptualises regulations as contact-contagions, hence the various proscriptions surrounding the ingestion of certain life forms, sexual acts, and idolatrous worship. Disgust strategies identified include rejection, regulation, and permanent removal. Dealing as he is with textual material, Kazen also highlights the suggestive role of memory in literary evocations of disgust, for “disgust may be triggered by the mere thought of a number of situations, with neither taste, nor smell or touch actually being there.”⁴⁰

³⁵ Mayer Gruber, “Abomination,” *DDD* 2–3, 3.

³⁶ See Thomas Kazen, *Emotions in Biblical Law: A Cognitive Science Approach* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011); also Kazen, “Dirt,” 43–64.

³⁷ Kazen, “Dirt,” 43–64.

³⁸ Kazen, “Dirt,” 45. Martha Nussbaum’s work also looks at how emotions shape and influence social morality and customs (see Nussbaum, *Hiding*).

³⁹ Kazen, “Dirt,” 45.

⁴⁰ Kazen, “Dirt,” 53.

These ideological prompts also call to mind tropes of the monstrous – “portraits of scorn and disgust”⁴¹ – which have impacted in part discourses surrounding “othered” bodies. The monster is a manifestation of extreme difference from a norm – ideological, religious, cultural, racial or bodily – hence its recurrent associations with disease and disability.⁴² Like disability, of course, monstrosity is not an essential category: “In some cases the monster is all body, in others disembodied spirit. In some cases the monster is quite real in the conventional sense, even if amplified, and in others, clearly fictional or mythical.”⁴³ What is particularly significant given our present theme are the ways in which tropes of the monstrous often furnish performances of exclusion in social discourse. Other peoples, communities, and bodies can be transformed into beasts and monsters in order to display their malevolence. Pramod Nayar cites the biblical portrayal of the “the aboriginal inhabitants of Canaan, as giants”⁴⁴ in Numbers 13:33 as an example of such a trope.⁴⁵ Similar moves are also discernible in Ezekiel’s depiction of Pharaoh as an unwieldy monster (Ezek 29:3; 32:2). In the words of Timothy Beal, “This Pharonic sea monster is about to be turned into just one more filet of fish while God . . . revels in the blood and guts. In Ezekiel’s gory prophetic imagination to call a nation by the name of a chaos monster is to pronounce its death sentence.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ Asa Simon Mittman, “Introduction: The Impact of Monsters and Monster Studies,” in *Ashgate Research*, 1–16, 13.

⁴² Rosemarie Garland-Thomson writes, “Although the term has expanded to encompass all forms of social and corporeal aberration, monster originally described people with congenital impairments. As departures from the normatively human, monsters were seen as category violations, or grotesque hybrids” (Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory,” in *Feminist Disability Studies* [ed. Kim Hall; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011], 13–47, 13). Michelle Hanson also notes how from ancient times, the monstrous body was an object of terror and alarm. She cites Roman law, dating from the fifth century B.C.E, that a father would put to death a child “monster . . . a form different from that of members of the human race” (Michelle Hanson, “Monsters In Our Midst: An Examination of Human Monstrosity in Fiction and Film of the United States” (PhD diss., University of Nevada at Las Vegas, 2012); available online at <http://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2573&context=thesesdissertations>).

⁴³ Mittman “Introduction,” 9. See also Beck, *Unclean*, 93.

⁴⁴ Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 83.

⁴⁵ Psalm 74 likewise envisions Israel’s foes as chaos monsters who have “roared within your holy place” but trusts that the God who “crushed the heads of the Leviathan” will likewise overthrow them. Psalm 89 depicts the enemy as Rahab “crushed like a carcass” and Isa 51 recalls Yahweh’s triumph over monsters “in [the] hope of rousing God against a new monstrous enemy” (Timothy K. Beal, *Religion and Its Monsters* [New York: Routledge, 2002], 30).

⁴⁶ Beal, *Religion*, 31. Biblical portrayals of the monstrous are of course a part of a broader cultural landscape (ranging from Ugarit to Mesopotamia). Mark Smith’s work in

As a discursive project, the monstrous is quite hard to define concretely. Jeremy Cohen's model of so-called "monster culture" is an instructive heuristic tool in this respect.⁴⁷ He notes the following characteristics surrounding the performance of monstrosity, which I have abstracted into categories which relate to modes of hybrid and liminal embodiment across (a) ontological boundaries, (b) ideological boundaries, and (c) spatial boundaries.

(a) *Ontological Boundaries*

The monster is a harbinger of a category crisis: "a mixed category, the monster resists any classification built on hierarchy or merely binary opposition . . . a dangerous hybrid . . . a form suspended between forms."⁴⁸ Ontology signals proper distinctions between forms of being: animal/human; human/divine etc. It also foregrounds the boundary between being (life) and non-being (death).

(b) *Ideological Boundaries*

The monster's body is a cultural body: "an embodiment of a certain cultural moment" (intellectual, religious, sexual etc.).⁴⁹ *The monster dwells at the gates of difference:* "any kind of alterity can be inscribed across (constructed through) the monstrous body, but for the most part monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic [and] sexual."⁵⁰

(c) *Spatial Boundaries*

The monster polices the borders of the possible: "the monster prevents mobility: delimiting the social spaces through which private bodies may move."⁵¹ *Fear of the monster is a kind of desire:* "the monster is continually linked to forbidden practices, in order to normalize and enforce."⁵² Spatial boundaries

particular plots the continuum of "Gods" from anthropomorphic deities ("centre" and "benevolent") to barbarous monsters ("periphery" and "destructive"). See Mark Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴⁷ Jeffrey Cohen, *Monster Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). Two additional categories in Cohen's model, not explicitly employed here, are "the monster always escapes" and "the monster stands at the threshold of becoming."

⁴⁸ Cohen, *Monster*, 6–7.

⁴⁹ Cohen, *Monster*, 4.

⁵⁰ Cohen, *Monster*, 7.

⁵¹ Cohen, *Monster*, 12.

⁵² Cohen, *Monster*, 16.

encapsulate not only walls, borders, open spaces and the built environment but also cultural and political borders between peoples.⁵³

The specific intersections of disability, disgust and tropes of monstrosity in particular contexts, as will become clear, are multifaceted and complex. At a fundamental level, these elements index performances of “multiple marginalities.”⁵⁴ Frequently they coalesce in discourses which aim to subvert the power of “evil” persons, practices, nations, and regimes by evoking, through embodied performances and sensory means, an aversive and prohibitive reflex towards such in others. Those who contravene ontological, ideological, and spatial norms are expelled as aggressive, malevolent, and excessive “social threat[s] and danger[s].”⁵⁵ Unlike decorous discussions of vice or evil, disability, disgust, and monstrosity “force upon us the [materiality of the] body, nauseating sights and odours; suppuration, defecation . . . rot.”⁵⁶ It is to such repugnant sensory encounters that 2 Macc 9:1–12 invites its listeners.

B. Evil and the Body of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (2 Macc 9:1–12)

In this “lurid account,”⁵⁷ the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes and his wicked campaign to obliterate and eradicate Jewish religion, life, and people meet a grisly end. In Daniel Schwartz’s terms, the author, “enjoying himself immensely – settles the Jew’s account with Antiochus IV Epiphanes.”⁵⁸ A litany of horrors – violation of temple, imposition of forbidden foods, self-aggrandizement, blasphemy, and sadistic butchering of his resisters – is finally met in 2 Macc 9 with divine retribution. Following his humiliating “retreat in disorder” from Persia (9:1) and the news concerning Nicanor’s defeat (9:3), the narrative exhibits Antiochus’s fury and murderous intentions towards the Jews (9:4). Despite God torturously attacking his guts, Antiochus, enflamed “with rage,” commands that his chariot drives still faster, following which he is plunged headfirst from it, so much so that every member of his

⁵³ On the “spatial turn” in the humanities see Janet Ward, Marc Silberman, Karen E. Till, eds., *Walls, Borders, Boundaries: Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

⁵⁴ On the socio-cultural employment of this term, see Justyna Sempruch et al., *Multiple Marginalities: An Intercultural Dialogue on Gender in Education across Europe and Africa* (Konigstein: Helmer Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ Beck, *Unclean*, 93.

⁵⁶ Miller, *Anatomy*, 5.

⁵⁷ Carol Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 214.

⁵⁸ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 351.

body is tormented (9:7). Next his form is swarmed “with worms” (9:8) and in anguish his flesh decomposes. On account of his fetid odour, his army, and then he himself, is revolted by his body. Stinking and crushed, Antiochus capitulates with the words: “It is right to be subject to God; mortals should not think that they are equal to God” (9:12).

Larry Helyer has posited 2 Maccabees as a “pathetic history,” specifically crafted to move the reader emotionally:

One could justifiably label this work a romantic melodrama . . . on the one hand he milks the last drop of horror and compassion out of the story of the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons; on the other, he narrates the demise of Antiochus Epiphanes the arch-enemy with a slapstick humour worthy of the Three Stooges.⁵⁹

In chorus with Kazen’s work cited earlier, the narrative also, by evoking specific sensory prompts, seeks to move the audience to “corporealize dislike.”⁶⁰ Whilst much ink has been spilled trying to “diagnose” the actual medical condition which may have lain behind the symptoms catalogued here, including “perforation of the gut with peritonitis and subsequent abscess formation” only exacerbated by the fall, or as a result of internal injuries sustained in the fall – “the wounds, the bruises, became gangrenous, whole pieces fell off, and an intolerable stench developed”⁶¹ – what cannot be denied is how these symptoms endow the author with potent tools to invoke rejection of Antiochus’s rule and identity. It has long been recognised that there exists a marked figurative association between the body and politics and as such “the human [diseased/disabled] body has been frequently associated with political and social disorder.”⁶² Susan Sontag’s thesis that disease metaphors often conceive of the body invaded by an alien force makes clear the penchant for using disease and disability politically.⁶³ Antiochus’s “shameful retreat” (9:2) in “disorder” (ἀκόσμητος), which opens the chapter, introduces the crippling “politicization of corporeality,”⁶⁴ which will be developed therein.

⁵⁹ Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 159.

⁶⁰ Jim Drobnick, *The Smell Culture Reader* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 14.

⁶¹ Julius Preuss, *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, Reprint edition, 2004), 184.

⁶² Bryan Turner, “The Body in Western Society: Social Theory and its Perspectives,” in *Religion and the Body* (ed. Sarah Coakley; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 15–42, 18.

⁶³ Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and its Metaphors* (London: Penguin, 2013).

⁶⁴ Dan Todman, “Foreword,” in *Bodies in Conflict: Corporeality, Materiality, and Transformation* (eds. Paul Cornish and Nicholas Saunders; New York: Routledge, 2014), xv–xix, xvi.

I. Ontological Boundaries

Recalling Cohen's categorisations of the monstrous body as a locus of "category crisis,"⁶⁵ Jerry Truex's description of Antiochus in 2 Maccabees as "a career blasphemer, a *theomachos* [fighter of God] and a divine pretender"⁶⁶ hints at the sorts of hybridity and borders which structure the monstrosity presented here. The text repeatedly underscores the magnified hubris of a man whose name and nature undergirded his own propagandist identity as a God "made manifest." Superhuman arrogance (τὴν ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἀλαζονείαν) lay behind his conviction that he could "command the waves of the sea," "weigh the high mountains in a balance" (9:8) and "touch the stars of heaven" (9:10). Given that ancient cosmologies often considered astral elements to be composed of different material from the earth,⁶⁷ this latter statement could hint at Antiochus's own self-conceived transcendence of the human realm. In relation to the sea, Truex cites Goldstein's recognition of an allusion to Xerxes here, who likewise challenged divine order "by bridging the Hellespont and digging a central canal through Mount Athos,"⁶⁸ thus embodying, in Susan Cole's words, "a sacrilegious" and "impious liminality."⁶⁹ In short, there is a forced disruption of divine/human boundaries in Antiochus's body; a figure who wished to be "lauded in life as a 'god manifest'" here, with arrestingly stomach-churning images, ironically makes "the power of God manifest."⁷⁰

Boundaries of life and death also feature prominently in Antiochus's performances in this chapter, which centre not only on his seeping corpse-like form, but also his noxious stench. Antiochus's body "swarms with worms" and, while living, his flesh decays and rots away (9:9). In biblical traditions, worms frequently crawl over the dead (Isa 14:11; 66:24), and engulf the contemptible, wicked, and debased (Ps 22:6).⁷¹ The contamination reflexes associated with disgust, however, are perhaps most acutely brought into play in the chapter by references to Antiochus's intolerable odour (2 Macc 9:9, 12). Foul smells in the ancient world indicated both disease – hence Galen's in-

⁶⁵ Cohen, *Monster*, 12.

⁶⁶ Jerry D. Truex, "The Problem of Blasphemy: The Fourth Gospel and Early Jewish Understandings" (PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2001), 163.

⁶⁷ Terence Nichols, *Death and Afterlife: A Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 25.

⁶⁸ Truex, "Problem," 159.

⁶⁹ Susan Cole, *The Absent One: Mourning Ritual, Tragedy, and the Performance of Ambivalence* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 36.

⁷⁰ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 119.

⁷¹ In classical literature, villains' bodies are also creeping with worms. For discussion of these bodies, see J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Studies of the New Testament, Vol. 1: Glimpses of the Legal and Social Presuppositions of the Authors* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 26–27.

structions to physicians to use olfaction in diagnoses and treatments of disorders⁷² – and the pollution of death (Eccl 10:1; Isa 34:3).⁷³ Olfactory methods were therefore fitting metaphors by which one could “other” opponents,⁷⁴ and part of the procedures by which the ideologically “pure” could disassociate themselves from the “polluted.”⁷⁵ Underlining the severity of the disgust reflex here is the fact that it is not enemies but Antiochus’s own troops and he himself who are revolted at his smell (9:9, 12). This facilitates a direct contrast with the aroma of the martyr’s body in 2 Macc 7 who is burnt in a cauldron and from which “the smoke from the pan spread widely” (7:5). The audience is implicitly encouraged to construe this as a fragrant smoke of sacrifice indicative of life-affirming righteous worship (Gen 8:21; Exod 29:18; Num 28:6) and hence the arresting reverse of the stagnant whiff emanating from the flesh of the “undead” oppressor.

II. Ideological Boundaries

For Cohen the monstrous body is the manifestation of a specific cultural instance.⁷⁶ That instance for this author is in part the violent atrocities inflicted on Jewish bodies (forced eating of non-kosher food; brutalising torture) in enforced Hellenisation.⁷⁷ Ideological concerns are intensely stirred up by the announcement of Antiochus’s genocidal intent to “make Jerusalem a cemetery of Jews” (9:4).⁷⁸ Jewish sensibilities are powerfully invoked in this jarring scene of the colonisation of the holy city by decaying corpses, which, in Julia Kristeva’s words, constitutes “the utmost abjection.”⁷⁹ Deviant sexuality and idolatry may also be being implied here given Antiochus’s dedication of the temple to Olympian Zeus earlier in the book (2 Macc 6:2). Schwartz notes

⁷² Mark Smith, *Sensing the Past: Seeing, Hearing, Smelling, Tasting, and Touching in History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2007), 60.

⁷³ “YHWH made humanity smell sweet to the Lord’s nose and the Hebrew Bible is replete with references to scent, sacrifice and aroma’s relationship to knowledge and truth. . . Sin stank while the presence of the holy . . . emitted a sweet odor” (Smith, *Sensing*, 61). On olfaction and early Christianity, see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting Salvation: Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2006).

⁷⁴ Drobnik, *Smell*, 14.

⁷⁵ Winnifred Menninghaus, *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 1.

⁷⁶ Cohen, *Monster*, 4.

⁷⁷ See Martha Himmelfarb, “Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees,” *Poetics Today* 19 (1998): 19–40.

⁷⁸ This trope is also a punishment that Yahweh inflicts on his own city and his own people in a number of prophetic texts, e.g. Jer 7.

⁷⁹ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 45.

that πολυανδρεῖον, literally “place of many men,” could also be used of brothels.⁸⁰ The ideologies surrounding what Rozin termed “animal-reminder/existential aspects” and “socio-moral aspects” of disgust here therefore coalesce.

The cultural/ideological boundary between “Jewish/Hellenistic” is also magnified in this chapter to divine proportions: the power of God is pitted against the ineffectual power of Antiochus’s regime. The author introduces the “all-seeing” God (9:5) as a direct contrast to Antiochus’s increasingly debilitated and senseless perception. “All seeing” holds connotations of omniscience and divine justice;⁸¹ the latter may also harbour cultural associations surrounding the evil eye – “the ability to cause illness, misfortune or death”⁸² through the ocular organ – and posits “seeing” as a sense suffused with the energy to curse and maim. Stavrakopoulou cites Ancient West Asian evil eye beliefs and “motifs concerning the devouring of human flesh (Deut 28:54, 56; Qoh 4:4–8),”⁸³ which could provide an intriguing equivalence here with the rotting of Antiochus’s flesh under the eyes of this supra-able God.⁸⁴

With not only penetrating [in]sight but also consummate power, God goes on to inflict incurable tortures on his victim’s innards. Dean Deppe notes how internal tortures often paid witness to the horrors of a person’s life. He cites Jehoram’s “loathsome” death (2 Chr 21:18–19) as a parallel here.⁸⁵ Notably the conception of the innards as the seat of emotion may also have links to physiological responses to intense bodily and sensory prompts.⁸⁶ Second 2 Maccabees 9 explicitly links these tortures to the anguish inflicted on the “bowels (σπλάγχνα also denoting intestines and seat of emotions) of others” (2 Macc 9:6) and therefore stimulates comparisons between the tortures Antiochus meted out on his victims and the divine torture to which he himself is

⁸⁰ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 355, cites Philo, *On Flight* 153 as an example of this usage.

⁸¹ Rivka Ulmer, *The Evil Eye in the Bible and in Rabbinic Literature* (Hoboken: KTAV, 1994), 73.

⁸² Margo DeMello, *Faces Around the World: A Cultural Encyclopedia of the Human Face* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 87.

⁸³ See Stavrakopoulou, “Making,” 544.

⁸⁴ David Morgan’s work on sight as an anticipation and experience of touch are relevant here (David Morgan, *The Embodied Eye: Religious Visual Culture and the Social Life of Feeling* [Oakland: University of California Press, 2012]). On biblical application of the theory of “extramission” (sight as a form of touch), see also Dale Allison, “The Eye is the Lamp of the Body (Matthew 6:22–23=Luke 11:34–36),” *NTS* 33 (1987): 61–83.

⁸⁵ Dean Deppe, *All Roads Lead to the Text: Eight Methods of Inquiry into the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 165.

⁸⁶ “The speaker is expressing emotional disgust” (Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Temper Longman III, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* [Downers Grove: IVP, 1998], 425). Innards of course also have a particularly close relationship with divine power as divinatory tools in sacrificial animals.

now subject. It is worth recalling Elaine Scarry's seminal work on torture here, which denotes three features of the process:

First, pain is inflicted on the person in ever-intensified ways. Second, the pain, continually amplified within the person's body, is also amplified in the sense that it is objectified, made visible to those outside the person's body. Third, the objectified pain is denied as pain and is read as power, a translation made possible by the obsessive mediation of agency.⁸⁷

The ultimate aim of torture is, in Scarry's words, to transform "the objectified elements of pain into the insignia of power. . . into an emblem of the regime's strength."⁸⁸ It is significant then that whilst the divine tortures ultimately do "disable" and subjugate Antiochus's body and resolve, the tortures directed by Antiochus on seven brothers and their mother for their resistance to forced eating of pork (7:1) do not mediate his power, but rather also function as testimonies to divine strength. The brothers' bodies are variously whipped, disfigured, scalped, and burnt but they remain unshakeable in their conviction that God will restore their bodies in the resurrection and that their tormentor will have no share in that existence, instead enduring torturous agonies. Contra the pain being objectified and translated as the oppressor's agency, the one whose tongue is cut out ably speaks through his other brothers and his mother who collectively and triumphantly assert: "The Lord God is watching over us and in truth has compassion on us. . . ." (7:6). Anthea Portier-Young also underscores the sensory ability of the martyrs when she notes that all "resisted the destruction of language by speaking what they knew to be true"; all adamantly guarded bodily margins "refusing to ingest the pork that was offered and even forced into their mouths" and all retained their eyesight and insistence on "the provident gaze of God."⁸⁹

The mother's exhortation to her sons to die graciously in the knowledge of God "the Creator of the world" who "will in his mercy give life and breath back to you" (7:23) is received by Antiochus as an assault (ironically inflicted by a female) on his honour. The narrator reveals that Antiochus felt "he was being treated with contempt and he was suspicious of her reproachful tone" (7:24). This provokes consideration of ideological boundaries surrounding gender. Stephen Moore and Janice Capel Anderson's work on masculinity has relevance here. They identify "mastery of others – and/or of oneself" as the "definitive masculine trait in most of the Greek and Latin literary and phi-

⁸⁷ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 28.

⁸⁸ Scarry, *Body*, 56.

⁸⁹ Anthea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 214.

losophical texts that survive from antiquity.”⁹⁰ Thus, the outstanding composure and self-control shown by those tortured (including the mother) are indications of their masculinity. The author underscores this point by interjecting when narrating the mother’s speech that “she reinforced her woman’s (θηλυον) reasoning with a man’s (αρσενι) courage” (7.21). In stark contrast to this image of self-control, Antiochus’s act of torture is itself feminised – “characterised by excess”⁹¹ – as is his failure to manage his volatile and unruly passions. He is featured as being “transported with rage” (7:4) and as such ideologically associated with women, children and other weak bodies who “did not have a full role to play in the body politic.”⁹² Worse still, he is shown to be “breathing fire in his rage” (7:7). Schwartz highlights that “fire breathing” is a markedly vivid means to depict emotion and may reflect “folkloristic notions of dragons.”⁹³ Leviathan for instance was also said to breathe fire (Job 41:18–23). By casting Antiochus’s disposition in such chaotic and unruly terms, the author of 2 Maccabees is intentionally derogating (and monstrosifying) his character.

Craig Williams’s model of ancient masculinity/femininity also adds activity/passivity and hardness/softness to the aforementioned traits of moderation/excess and control/uncontrollability.⁹⁴ In terms of activity, the seven martyrs are characterised by a bold performative agency and defiance in the face of torture, offering commanding verbal ripostes to the physical violence. In contrast, Antiochus, when subject to divine torture, is characterised as passive and ineffectual. His physical form is characterised as soft and porous – when falling “hard” his delicate form is crushed (9:7) and he starts to leak “dangerous” bodily substances (9:8) – two well-known feminizing traits.⁹⁵ Ultimately in spite of his arrogance he is “brought down to earth and carried in a litter, making the power of God manifest to all” (9:8) and his only direct speech is his ultimate surrender to God and recognition of his own mortality (9:12).

III. Spatial Boundaries

⁹⁰ Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, “Taking It like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees” *JBL* 117 (1998): 249–73, 250.

⁹¹ Moore and Anderson, “Taking,” 254.

⁹² William Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 28.

⁹³ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 356.

⁹⁴ Craig Williams, *Roman Homosexuality: Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 139–40.

⁹⁵ “Unlike the male who is one/bounded, the female is multiple/unbounded”; “the weak, ignorant or feminine soul is like the weak, leaky feminine body” (Holt Parker, “Women in Medicine,” in *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World* [eds. Sharon James and Sheila Dillon; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012], 111).

Antiochus's chaotic retreat from the city of Persepolis and his thwarted journey from Ecbatana to Jerusalem – “to make [it] . . . a cemetery of Jews” (9:4) – spatially frame the narrative here. Throughout the bulk of the chapter, by implication, he traverses uninhabited, wild space and eventually, deserted by his troops and “by a most pitiable fate,” ends his life “among the mountains in a strange land” (9:28). Although assuming at the outset the power of imperial conquest and control of urban centres, his disordered recoil to marginal lands ultimately affirms his banishment as “subjugated” and “other.”

Spatial politics are of course informed by cultural traditions which attend to the production and reproduction of space and borders. Antiochus's own fleshly borderlands violated appropriate spatial separations laid down in Levitical law (foreign; uncircumcised; diseased; emitting bodily fluids etc.) which Douglas posited as the frontiers of purity and danger.⁹⁶ Moreover, internal/external limits also play an important role here, as the body whose confines have been breached literally leaks through the skin. Some cuts (like circumcision) marked the body as sacralised. Other modifications of the body through “disease or deformity, mutilation of the limbs or the senses”⁹⁷ provoked revulsion and loathing.⁹⁸ Whilst the divine striking of Antiochus is said to be “invisible” (9:5), the narrator nonetheless goes on to externalise his wounded internal organs and deathly corrosion to such an extent that they constitute a freakish exhibit for the audience (9:9). To intentionally employ an anachronistic term here, Antiochus's “necropolitics” – the “subjugation of life to the power of death”⁹⁹ – most violently implemented (but also resisted) in Eleazar and the seven martyr's deaths, are here totally inverted. God is established as the ultimate sovereign power with the right to determine who shall die and who shall fester as “living dead.”

The Jerusalem temple was central within the Jewish spatial universe as the touchstone of divine/human encounter. Antiochus's assault and desecration of this place – stealing holy vessels, covering the altar with “abominable offer-

⁹⁶ Douglas, *Purity*.

⁹⁷ Nicholas Vlahogiannis, “Disabling Bodies,” in *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity* (ed. Dominic Montserrat; London: Routledge, 1998), 13–36, 13.

⁹⁸ Thomas Cirillo notes that in the classical world in general and his study of Demosthenes in particular, “in the hierarchy of disgusting things a disease is high ranking, not only because the symptoms of many internal diseases involve the expulsion of bodily fluids, but also because a disease constitutes disgust-as-a-harm” (Thomas Cirillo, “Transferable Disgust in Demosthenes 54: Against Conon,” *Syllecta Classica* 20 [2009]: 1–30, here 17). He notes that those characters said to be overtaken by fever were often constructed as “disgust-as-a-harm to an individual body, a state, and, finally, to all of mankind.”

⁹⁹ Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15 (2003): 11–40, 39. See also Jin Haritaworn et. al., *Queer Necropolitics* (London: Routledge, 2014).

ings forbidden by the laws” and ultimately dedication to Olympian Zeus (2 Macc 6:1–11) – therefore constituted a contravention of monstrous proportions. For when the temple was compromised “the whole world was thrown out of kilter.”¹⁰⁰ In these actions not only did Antiochus transgress sacred space, he also “threatened to sever the link between heaven and earth,”¹⁰¹ thus interfering with divine order by scandalously assuming God’s privileges as his own. Daniel Schwartz significantly probes the vertical/horizontal dialectic further in his article “Why did Antiochus have to Fall?”¹⁰² Whilst this question is prompted by the narration of Antiochus’s physical fall from the chariot (9:7), Schwartz establishes cosmological overtones here also. He sees the author assimilating Antiochus’s fate to the King of Babylon’s fall from heaven in Isaiah 14. In Schwartz’s words, the “fall from a somewhat elevated platform was his way of achieving his goal as best as possible, just as v. 8 gave him the opportunity to allow Antiochus’s fall to match, tit for tat, his earlier ‘soaring.’”¹⁰³ Interestingly, the King of Babylon’s fall from heaven reaches its climax in corpse abuse, when his corpse is disinterred from its wormy grave to become “loathsome carrion” and trampled underfoot (Isa 14:11, 19). This trope plays a part in the insistence that this earthly king is not a god (immortal) but can and will die; hence the emphasis on the materiality of the corpse and thus, in Antiochus’s case, the corpse-like body. In short, both odious divine pretenders plummet physically as well as socially.

For Cohen, the monstrous is persistently related to realms of the prohibited “in order to normalize and enforce”¹⁰⁴ culturally accepted practices. Many commentators have noted that the crises faced in Maccabean traditions were as much intra-Jewish as Jewish/foreign: “It was conflict with other Jews who were mixing (with Greek thought as well as Greek women).”¹⁰⁵ Infringing boundaries of space, place, cult, and cosmos here, Antiochus’s figure functions as a physical, social and political warning to those who would do likewise. The “all-seeing” Lord God of Israel (9:5) ultimately asserts his supremacy, and the abominable (9:13), exaggerated, malevolent, murdering blas-

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Poneasa and Laurie Manhardt, *Come and See: Exile and Return: Tobit, Judith, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 and 2 Maccabees* (Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2013), 189.

¹⁰¹ Truex, “Problem,” 158.

¹⁰² Daniel Schwartz, “Why did Antiochus Have to Fall? (II Maccabees 9:7),” in *Heavenly Tablets: Interpretation, Identity and Tradition in Ancient Judaism* (eds. Lynn LiDonnici and Andrea Lieber; SJSJ 119, Leiden: Brill, 2007), 257–66.

¹⁰³ Schwartz, *Heavenly Tablets*, 264.

¹⁰⁴ Cohen, *Monster*, 16.

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Smith-Christopher “A Postcolonial Reading of Apocalyptic Literature,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (ed. John J. Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 180–200, 195. Interestingly Smith-Christopher references Cohen’s work on monster studies in its reading of hybrid beasts of Daniel, etc.

phemer (9:28) “comes to his senses” (9:12) and ultimately concedes his surrender and ruin.

C. The Repugnance of Evil

If one were asked to select from biblical traditions (a) a disabled character and (b) a monster, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, at least as described in 2 Macc 9:1–12, would not perhaps have sprung too easily to mind for either category.¹⁰⁶ Are not “disabled” characters the blind, the lame, the lepers, and other “deformed” figures lurking passively on the margins of biblical traditions? Are not “monsters” the stuff of apocalyptic imaginations: slippery serpents, seven-headed ocean dwellers, and contorted animal hybrids? Well, yes and no. What this discussion has shown is that neither of these categories is fixed or stable, neither are the bodies which each can be presumed to include. “Disabled” and “monster” are not “nouns” but rather “verbs,” denoting not the “persons” but rather the “actions” of bodily performances. The discursively constructed body therefore can be both strategically “disabled” and “monstered” in the service of eradicating the evil it is presumed to constitute. Cohen rightly noted that cultural or ideological difference was a powerful mechanism for such moves: “A political figure . . . is transformed like an unwilling participant in a science experiment by the appointed historians of a replacement regime.”¹⁰⁷

It has been established that Antiochus’s body (and indeed the bodies of the martyrs and God’s body) here are variously employed as sites in which “conflicting cultural impulses me[e]t and clash.”¹⁰⁸ The arrogant king, who dangerously flaunted ontological, ideological, and spatial boundaries, is “brought back to earth in a very real and excruciating way to understanding God’s power.”¹⁰⁹ The myriad evils that he is presumed to represent – hubris, self-aggrandisement, blasphemy, idolatry, terror, persecution – are in 2 Macc 9:1–12 freakishly paraded in his diseased, leaky, and fallen [de]formed body which is literally “inscribed [with] deviant morality.”¹¹⁰ Through specific indexing of sensory assaults, this text constructs for its audience a new mode

¹⁰⁶ His depiction elsewhere and his “afterlife” as a symbolic Antichrist is a whole other matter. See Frances Flannery-Dailey, “An Application of Mary Douglas’ Pollution Theories towards a Definition of ‘Monsters,’ Using the Case Example of Daniel 7” (2005) online article, available at <http://www.envirecon.com/FlanneryDailey2005.pdf>.

¹⁰⁷ Cohen, *Monster*, 8.

¹⁰⁸ Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, “The Problem of the Body for the People of the Book,” in *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective* (ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz; Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 17–46, 38.

¹⁰⁹ Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 351.

¹¹⁰ Cohen, *Monster*, 8.

of perception and encounter with this tyrant's body. For whilst, as Miller noted, "all emotions are launched by some perception; only disgust [in reacting to intense sensory and bodily offence] makes the process of perceiving the core of its enterprise."¹¹¹ Disgust, a bodily and emotional reflex "pregnant with death,"¹¹² induces something akin to a culturally plotted "biopolitical panic"¹¹³ and thus it serves as a powerful expulsive mechanism. The foul, intemperate, chaotic, oozing "undead" Antiochus, is by this means ultimately reclassified, rejected, and retched out by this text as a perilous embodiment of repugnant evil.

¹¹¹ Miller, *Anatomy*, 36.

¹¹² Aurel Kolnai, *On Disgust* (Chicago: Carus Publishing Company, 2004), 74.

¹¹³ Athena Athanasiou, "Anamneses of a Pestilent Infant: The Enigma of Monstrosity or Beyond Oedipus," in *Ethnographica Moralia: Experiments in Interpretive Anthropology* (eds. Neni Panourgía and George E. Marcus; New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 77–96, 85.