Journal of the History of Collections vol. 23 no. 2 (2011) pp. 267–281

Inventoried monsters

Dwarves and hirsutes at court

Touba Ghadessi

Inventories stand as records of ducal and regal possessions and offer glimpses into the politics of display associated with the households of rulers. In these inventories, the oscillation between object and subject is for monsters one that is particularly legible: dwarves were listed alongside typical attendants but were also classified as objects of curiosity; the names of hirsute subjects were written next to those of noble-men who received land, yet other inventories listed them as Christmas gifts. By 'inventorying' monsters, secretaries attempted to categorize them alongside normal subjects and objects and thus to regularize their existence within the established rigid parameters of court settings. As systems of conventions that integrated dissidence into a regulated frame, inventories imposed a classification scheme that, in fact, highlighted the liminal position of court monsters.

From 2 February 1581 to 15 December of that same year, several letters were written by Alberto Bolognetti (1538–85), papal legate to Venice, to the Medici Grand Duchess Bianca Cappello (1548–87). In these letters, Bolognetti enthusiastically described the perfect female dwarf he had found in Warsaw for the Grand Duchess; he described the dwarf as having wonderful proportions and as being very beautiful.[1] Bolognetti continued to write updates to Bianca Capello, letting her know that the dwarf was safe, but that the journey from Warsaw to Florence was taking longer than usual because she was often cold and needed to stop in order to keep warm. Bolognetti also mentioned that she was very obedient and that the Duchess would be very pleased with her once they arrived in Florence. The purpose of Bolognetti's letters was to reassure Bianca Capello that her gift would arrive intact, that this dwarf, this marginal individual, this 'monster' would retain all of its qualities of wonderment by the time of its delivery to the Florentine court. These letters exemplify the degree to which monsters such as dwarves were valued in early modern courts. And as valued objects/subjects of the court, their traces are found in inventories (for clarity of meaning, contemporary rather than present-day terminology is adopted throughout this paper).

To understand the centrality of inventories in the framing of monsters such as dwarves or hirsutes at court, it is essential to examine the growing interest in the anatomically unusual during the early modern period; the nascent scientific impulses used to categorize natural phenomena and collecting practices; and the court culture in which monsters lived and performed. By analyzing these contexts in which monsters and notions of monstrosity were prevalent, the importance of monsters at court and the implications of their traces in portraits and inventories become apparent. Indeed, monsters fell outside the course of nature and inventories allowed court rulers and scientists to re-impose normal order on to the subversive forms of the deformed monsters. Ironically, however, monsters existed at court because of their odd appearance and it is precisely this paradox that renders their classification problematic within strictly determined written categories. Furthermore, their liminal positions as neither objects nor fully independent subjects of the court complicate the variety of statuses they held in a highly structured environment.

Teratology

One of the most important characteristics of the discourse on monsters in the early modern period is the multiplicity of sources that touch upon the subject. The diversity of voices that invoke monsters makes the study of their visual representations, as well as their textual descriptions, a very complex and multifaceted

doi:10.1093/jhc/fhq031 Advance Access publication 30 November 2010

one. From medical inquiries, to theological discussions and popular curiosity, the interest in monsters grew and found resonance in popular *avvisi* (reports), official court portraits, and, notably, in documents and inventories. These textual records of ducal and regal possessions offer glimpses into the politics of display associated with the households of rulers. However, beyond providing evidence for the existence and location of particular objects, they also stand as traces of diplomatic exchanges and allow insights into early-modern human relations since they shed light on the various ways in which normative boundaries were questioned and traversed.

The question of 'monsters' engaged several fields of knowledge in the sixteenth century: medical traditions, theological disputes, myth and popular culture. As the pace of medical inquiries quickened during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – fuelled by first-hand anatomical observations – the other fields of knowledge mentioned above as defining the monstrous exerted less influence in published works.[2] As a result of the early modern medical interest in non-normative bodies, the causes of monstrousness were no longer understood solely as the results of the opposition between devilish and divine forces, or only as the product of sympathetic magic during pregnancy, as they had been previously. Increasingly, medical, and specifically anatomical explanations were used to shed light on the origins of physical deviance.

The early modern development of anatomical knowledge reached its peak in the middle of the sixteenth century: in 1543, Andreas Vesalius published the first edition of *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, a work that combined artistic originality with radical anatomical inquiries. A compendium, entitled the *Epitome* was published in tandem with the *Fabrica* and was meant to give an introduction and a topographical approach to the novice in medicine.[3] Vesalius emphasized direct observation and made this practice part of the curriculum of academic teaching, and finally challenged the hegemony of the Galenic tradition.[4] A student of Guinterius Andernacus (1505–74) and Jacobus Sylvius (1478–1555) in Paris in 1533, Vesalius began to perform actual dissections (breaking with tradition) and this allowed him to appreciate the numerous errors made by Galen and to challenge the textual basis of medieval medicine.[5] The *Fabrica* not only changed the ways science and anatomy were taught and learned, but it also provided a strong paradigm for anatomical illustrations that would last approximately 200 years.[6] In spite of these new paradigmatic investigative practices, however, Vesalius was still tied to the notion of an ideal normative body.

Concomitant with intellectual and scientific developments pertaining to an ideal human body, attention to anatomical irregularities grew from a marginal interest to a defined science. In fact, awareness of physical deviance was fed by the normative ideals promoted by Vesalius and adopted by his followers. By promoting his regulated standards of anatomy, Vesalius recreated the intellectual system that shaped the transmission of Galenic textual knowledge. [7] The Vesalian body thus became the new 'body of knowledge', and departures from its strict norms fuelled interest in anatomical deviance by creating a parallel scientific pursuit.

The enthusiasm for unusual bodies found a new articulation in early modern empirical inquiry. By classifying objects, scientists categorized the knowledge associated with each object and, consequently, emphasized the need for inventories as a way to maintain and inscribe that knowledge. Lists of extraordinary humans, animals, organic matters, and fantastic beings and stories were made throughout the sixteenth century, in attempts to catalogue the objects found in collections. While these lists were not typical inventories of possessions, they exemplified the impulse to mark by textual means the existence of certain objects in collections and in doing so noted the qualities that made these objects worthy of being possessed. Often, these lists existed in the form of a narrative, thus combining the purpose of an inventory with that of historical truth. In 1566, Pierre Boaistuau (*c.*1520–66), a celebrated French author and diplomat, published his *Histoires prodigieuses* in which he combined stories from Greek and Latin classical authors, imaginary biblical occurrences, and fantastic animals, with actual congenital phenomena.[8] Even though Boaistuau's organizational scheme came close to an actual classification, there was no direct attempt at clearly defining categories. He provided verbal and visual descriptions and an elaboration on the idea of the bizarre and the imaginary, but did not demonstrate a scientific causality for the existence of unusual beings. In addition, the title, the preface, the dedication and the entirety of the text were in French, rather than Latin. This choice may very well have indicated the type of audience that Boaistuau sought to target.

His book was dedicated to a scientific novice, the noble lord Jean Rieux, Seigneur d'Assérac, and the preface left no doubt as to the courtly pretensions of the text and the illustrations, through which he intended to flatter his patron:

> Your Highness, among all things that may be seen under the skies, nothing touches the human spirit more, nothing pleases the senses more, nothing horrifies more, nothing generates more admiration or terror to creatures than the monsters, prodigies and abominations in which we see the errors of nature . . . [9]

Shortly after the publication of *Les histoires prodigieuses*, Ambroise Paré (1510–90), surgeon to several kings of France, wrote and edited numerous editions of *Des monstres et prodiges*, first published in 1573. Though also written in the vernacular French, the first page of the twenty-fifth book established the more rigorous claims being made by the author. Paré was fully aware of the risks of using vernacular French to write a book on scientific or medical matters. In fact, in the preface, he insisted that his decision to write in French was a conscious one, meant to ennoble the practice of medicine by enriching it with the knowledge of things such as monsters.[10] In addition, unlike Boaistuau, whom he cited as a provider of some of his case-studies, Paré provided a definition of monsters and distinguished the various terms he used:

> Monsters are things that appear outside of the course of nature (and are most often signs of some misfortune to come) such as a child who is born with one arm only, another with two heads, and other limbs that are out of the ordinary. Prodigies are things that happen against nature, such as a woman giving birth to a snake, or to a dog, or to anything that goes against nature . . . The mutilated are the blind, one-eyed people, hunchbacks, lame people, or people having six fingers or toes, or less than five fingers or toes, or fingers and toes joined together, or arms that are too short, or noses that are set too deep like those with crooked noses, or lips that are big and reversed . . . or anything that goes against nature.[11]

The increase of published works dealing with medical cases in the sixteenth century signalled the rising interest of laymen and men of sciences in published accounts of various natural wonders.[12] Paré's many illustrations deal with various monsters, whose medical validity varied from conjoined twins to limbless individuals, and finally to imaginary hybrid creations.

Through the preface and through the remainder of the text, the reader is presented with case-studies, rather than mere examples. Paré's training as a barber-surgeon, his experience while practising on the field of battle, and his position as royal surgeon certainly determined his medical view of the body and its possible variances. Furthermore, after Henri II was involved in what would prove a fatal accident in a tournament on 30 June 1559, Paré met Vesalius who came to Paris in the hope that he could heal the dying king.[13] While *Des monstres et prodiges* is not considered a strict medical assessment of the pathologies that led to anatomical deformities, it was a step towards placing the discourse on monsters on a medical footing, since Paré addressed monsters not as afterthoughts of nature but as valid sources of medical knowledge.

One of the first early-modern authors to have provided a more strictly conceived scientific treatise on monsters was Fortunio Liceti (1577–1657) in 1616. Liceti, a physician from Padua, expressed his disbelief in monsters as portentous theological signs and insisted on their importance as living beings who expressed certain truths of nature through their unusual physical appearance.[14] Liceti saw monsters as beings whose deformities elicited the most wonder and the most admiration; he was thus not surprised that men were so intrigued by them and sought to understand their origins.[15] Liceti abandoned the idea of the monster as an ominous divine sign and rather justified its existence not as a mistake made by nature, but as a necessary variation in the face of adversity. His work demonstrates that in the course of the seventeenth century monsters began to be seen as variations of nature, as a contrast to the normative body described by Vesalius. The approach adopted by Liceti exemplifies the construction of notions such as the abnormal, the deviant, or the pathological.

Categories such as these that were defined by men and assigned to nature were taken up in more recent times by the French theorist Michel Foucault (1926–84) who attempted to explain how early-modern scientific discourse construed difference. In his project, Foucault explored the inception of monsters not as simple errors of nature, but rather as constructed ideals. According to this conceptual model, monsters became indispensable deviations. These deviations would in turn allow nature to preserve its continuum by allowing difference to exist not in *opposition*, but in *parallel* to its own course:

> The monster ensures in time, and for our theoretical knowledge, a continuity that, for our everyday experience, floods, volcanoes, and subsiding continents confuse space . . . On the basis of the power of the continuum held by nature, the

monster ensures the emergence of difference. This difference is still without law and without any well-defined structure; the monster is the root-stock specification, but it is only a sub-species itself in the stubbornly slow stream of history . . . Thus, against the background of the continuum, the monster provides an account, as though in caricature, of the genesis of differences . . .[16]

To return to the sixteenth century, the tension between monsters as medical objects of inquiry and monsters as theological warnings became more palpable. While its resolution – if resolution there needed to be – did not imply the foregoing of one idea for the other; it is the stated alteration of the balance between the two that often settled the conflict. Realdo Colombo (1510–59) explored the anatomical anomalies of otherwise normative human beings in the fifteenth book of *De re anatomica*, published posthumously in 1559.[17] Colombo inherited from Vesalius the chair of anatomy at the University of Padua; he taught the subject and was immersed in medical treatises during his explorations of anomalous bodies.[18] Unlike Paré, Lycosthenes, or Boaistuau, Colombo never mentioned monsters as portentous signs; rather than attacking those who had treated them as such, he purposefully omitted any reference to the prophetic dimension of monsters. One could thus infer that Colombo's treatise, by virtue of its deliberate exclusion, was one of the few early teratological treatises that dealt with monsters as pathological anomalies *only*.[19]

Ultimately, teratology represented a confluence of numerous intellectual inquiries, many of which were born of the original wonder felt in the presence of monsters, in front of their representations, or by reading texts linked to monsters. This wondrous feeling was explored and exploited during the early-modern period, as exemplified in collections of curiosities amassed by princely, regal, and scientific collectors alike.

Cataloguing monsters, displaying knowledge, rousing wonder

In the early modern period collecting was an activity that transcended its status as a princely or noble pursuit and became favoured by scholars and medical men alike. It is in fact the latter group who elaborated new categories that shaped early modern collections by intensifying their wondrous, curious, and scientific characteristics.[20] As for what things (or live beings) were considered adept at invoking wonder in a collection, several factors were considered. For the collection to be wondrous as a whole, the number of objects, their variety, and their method or organization were important. For single elements to belong to such a collection, they had to be particularly beautiful, rare, exotic, or possess occult powers.[21]

Monsters, who were seen as marvels, fit the requirements necessary to belong to a curiosity collection. Portraits of monsters stood at the crossroads between living and inert or artificial curiosities. Considered quasi-scientific illustrations of the physically deviant, they were found in collections such as that of Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522–1605): as one of the most eminent figures in Bologna, Aldrovandi gathered a personal collection of over 20,000 paintings, objects and plants, housed partly in a public studio and partly in a private museum at his home.[22] Establishing specific *tabulae* to organize his entire collection, Aldrovandi emphasized the different links between nature and knowledge in his writings as much as in the physical organization of his collection.[23] Additionally, in accordance with an Aristotelian system of thought, Aldrovandi stressed the importance of direct observation in order to better grasp the relationship between natural philosophy, medical knowledge, and sensory experience.[24] His interest in anatomical and pathological rarities comes as no surprise, since monstrous individuals allowed curious scientists to apply at once their medical, natural, and sensory knowledge. The woodcuts representing human or hybrid monsters were arranged in no specific order in his posthumously published *Monstrorum Historia* (1642); rather, the mixture of images seems quite arbitrary and possibly related to the enormous number of illustrations Aldrovandi commissioned during his lifetime.[25] For instance, the marine monsters precede the imaginary half-dog half-human conjoined twins and are directly followed by a monstrous child born in Ravenna in 1512. Similarly, dwarves appear at the beginning of the *Historia*, as well as much later in the book.

In addition to the ways in which Aldrovandi's *Monstrorum Historia* serves as an inventory of his knowledge of monsters, other inventories, such as one related to the Farnese gardens categorized dwarves, hirsute or deformed individuals as natural curiosities, a testament to the fact that monsters were seen as collectible objects. [26] On a different, but comparable level, accrual of textual sources relating to

monsters formed a part of collecting activities. The scientific authority of such texts was not meant to weigh against that of a printed treatise, since their goal, though not necessarily their audience, was different. These narrations banked on the emotional response of the reader in the same way that collections of curiosities did. Such textual sources ranged from casual descriptions given to a French soldier by his cousin, to an assortment of scientific letters addressed to the Dauphin of France.[27] In both of these cases, lengthy descriptions of monstrous births, filled with numerous graphic details recall the visual techniques employed in collections of curiosities or in treatises on monsters, while the text grounds the assumption of truth. In addition to the meticulous visual accounts, both letters gave locale, time references, and proper names when possible, so as to assert the validity of the story being related. For instance, in the aforementioned letter to a soldier, dated to 1649, the anonymous author mentions the city where the monster was born ('Mark'), how far this city was from Calais ('deux lieues'), the name of the father of the mother ('Quelin Soufré'), the date of her marriage and the origin of her husband ('mariée apres Pasques à un jeune Lorain'), the date when her contractions started and the day when they ended ('19 Fevrier' and '23 Fevrier'), and finally, the name of the surgeon who helped in the delivery ('Servais Cardon').[28] These extraneous details, repeated in several letters found in this gathering of epistolary correspondence, assured the reader of the validity of the event while enabling him to retrace the account, should he wish to do so.[29] By providing witnesses, authors insisted on the truth of their narrative.

Monsters at court

One of the milieux in which collecting flourished was court settings. However, not all anatomical anomalies were seen as equally fascinating or necessary; only certain varieties commanded higher currency in various courts throughout Europe, with one of the most prized categories of deformed individuals being dwarves. Because they embodied a microcosmic ideal of a ruling topos, they succeeded in holding many roles in early modern courts.[30] This is particularly apparent in the Florentine Medici court setting. In addition to Bianca Capello's example, dwarves also carried gifts and messages from courts to their satellites or to other independent courts. This tradition persisted and there are accounts of dwarves bearing presents or correspondence throughout the seventeenth century. For instance, on 8 September 1621, the Duchess of Mantua Caterina de' Medici Gonzaga (1593–1629) sent her dwarf Morgante back to Grand Duchess Maria Magdalena von Habsburg de' Medici (1589–1631) and apologized that he returned late. Caterina had retained Morgante in Mantua, planning to send unspecified gifts with him to the Medici court, but ultimately decided to wait for a safer way to deliver the presents and sent Morgante empty-handed.[31] The name chosen for Morgante and the ironic connotations attached to such a choice reflected a common practice. The mocking sarcasm in naming a dwarf 'Morgante' would have been obvious to anyone in and around the Medici court, since it was the name of a giant in Luigi Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* (1483). Interestingly, the whole letter pertains to the dwarf's situation. The mention of Morgante is neither an afterthought nor a last-minute addition. The centrality of this marginal individual in the correspondence of two prominent women attests to the increasingly common presence and participation of dwarves in courtly matters.

As court dwellers, dwarves dressed up in regal costumes and participated in elaborate ceremonies. For these instances, inventories provide us with valuable insight into the importance of the visual appearance of dwarves at court. Several entries in *guardarobe* or inventories of collections listing Medici possessions and letters to secretaries verify the sartorial importance accorded to the appearance of dwarves in the Medici court. Eleonora di Toledo (1522–62) ordered various garments between 1543 and 1547 for court dwarves Lodovico, Filippino and Gianmaria, including luxurious silk garments.[32] A letter from 1543 to the ducal major-domo mentions, less typically, leather garments for one of the dwarves.[33] Around the same time, the major-domo received a letter from a court administrator mentioning the need for black silk clothes and accessories meant for one of the dwarves.[34] Though most of the correspondence regarding dwarves' clothing was written to and from secretaries or, at best, Medici women, there is evidence of the men's knowledge of such garment matters. In 1565, Cosimo I (1519–74) wrote to authorize divers payments, including expenditure related to clothing for

the dwarf Gradasso which are eventually found listed in inventories.[35] By recording the expenditure made toward buying garments for dwarves and by writing to authorize payments for such garments, court dwellers and secretaries indirectly verbalized the central rationale behind the presence of monsters at court: they were court dwellers *because* of their physical appearance. Emphasizing the features (through dress) that allowed them to exist within the confines of a palazzo seemed only logical since it justified their presence at court. Today, it is through portraits and inventories that these traces are legible.

The close interaction of the dwarf with his or her master or mistress was highly noticeable and celebrated. The dwarf was present for most of the courtier's activities and thus garnered knowledge regarding the courtier's likes and dislikes, thoughts, and external relationships.[36] From gifts and acquisitions, dwarves transcended into the status of human beings. In fact, the daily proximity of these dwarves to their patrons created a unique personal relationship, which often lasted many years and traversed several countries.

Catherine de' Medici followed the tradition of surrounding herself with dwarves. After François I (1494–1547) and Pope Clement VII (1475–1534) decided that she was to be united with Henri d'Orléans (1519–59), future Henri II of France, the French court assessed all her possessions in an extensive *garde robe*. In this *garde robe*, a dwarf, Jehan de Nano, was listed as a '*vallet de chambre*'.[37] This inventory of goods continued through the years, and inevitably, Jehan de Nano appeared repeatedly as Catherine de' Medici's '*vallet de chambre*'.[38] Interestingly, Jehan's records were not separated from his other valet counterparts in the inventory of people and objects: sometimes he appeared at the end of the list, sometimes in the middle, sometimes closer to the front rank of the recorded valets. The only reference made to Jehan's physical deformity, and thus to his particular position at court, was through his suffix. Furthermore, the starting date of this inventory preceded Catherine's arrival in France; it is therefore likely that Jehan was in Rome with the bride-to-be and followed her to France after she married Henri in 1533. Not only did Jehan follow his mistress to France, but there is also evidence that he was well-cared for. The same inventory lists specific coats made for children; yet, this list is dated from 1532, before Catherine and Henri were even married.[39] The child-size garments may have been prepared for a dwarf, since no children would have been in Catherine's immediate care. And, again, no distinction is made between the dwarf's accoutrements and Catherine's various linens and dresses. This lack of separation and emphasis is notable since it stands in opposition to the belief that dwarves were a representation of the world turned upside down and thus attracted unusual attention. These records silently indicate that they were, in fact, a necessary and normal part of courtly spheres and, like other members of the court retinue, had their needs accommodated.

Further documents that include inventories point to a strong connection between the Queen of France and her dwarves. Dated to 1602, a record of succession based on her previous inventories establishes the bequests left from Catherine de' Medici Valois to various members of her family, her retinue, and court workers.[40] Again, without differentiation, the beneficiaries of her possessions are listed next to the amount of money or the belongings they are to receive. From the noblewoman Gabrielle de Rochechouart to Noel Rousseau, *ecuyer de cuisine* – courtly chef, the list of people is surprisingly homogenous in its written presentation. It is therefore not unexpected that a René Rondeau, *tailleur des nains* (tailor for the dwarves) is found between Suzanne Carron, *veuve de defunct* Pierre Godet, *luy vivant Paintre & Vallet de Chambre* (the widow of a painter and court attendant) and Mathurin Brossier, *Sommier du garde-manger* (a clerk who dealt with household provisions).[41] Undifferentiated from his court counterparts, the job of René Rondeau is disarming in its inventoried normality next to a court attendant and a food clerk.

In the same vein and in this same record of succession, a Damoiselle Jeanne Petit is listed as one of Catherine's direct attendants, again not separated from her counterparts at court and her miniature stature indicated only by the 'petit' following her name.[42] Again, the unique reaction that the dwarf's presence might have provoked at court is erased in the reality of inventoried goods linked to people. This cancellation, or rather expressed lack of emotional wonder might be closer to the actual quotidian interactions existing between the monsters and their masters.

These interactions were both visually and textually recorded and one of the most cited dwarves is Cosimo I de' Medici's favourite, Morgante (*c.*1530 – *c.*1584). In 1893 a historian first made the connection between an entry in a 1553 Medici inventory and a double-sided

portrait of a dwarf in the Uffizi.[43] This painting was in fact Agnolo Bronzino's (1503–72) double portrait of Morgante; executed toward the end of Bronzino's most productive years at Cosimo's court, this portrait formed part of the Grand Duke's programme to restore and redecorate his many residences.[44] While several court inventories associated dwarves with collectible objects by categorizing them as 'natural curiosities', the records dealing with Bronzino's *Morgante* differ in their classification and in fact emphasize the liminal place occupied by dwarves at court.

For instance, the aforementioned 1553 Medici inventory allows us to follow the placement of this double-sided painting in the Palazzo Vecchio. The portrait was placed in the Palazzo della Signoria, on a floor set above newly built rooms,[45] a space intended for guests and foreigners visiting the Grand Duke. Consequently the works placed in this room were meant to speak to and about Cosimo and the Medici family. The other works in the room were maps, a globe, paintings of the Madonna and Child, and diverse official portraits.[46] Why then would Morgante's portrait be included in this room? Cosimo may have wanted to place a portrait of his dwarf in this context simply to demonstrate his possessions or to display a visual joke, but I believe that he also could have made the painting stand for the court's particular practices and stand almost as a metonymic replacement for his distinctive court rule. In this room, Morgante was given a legible identity that linked him to the court and the court to him. There is little doubt that if Morgante had not been recognizable as an individual belonging to and partly defining the Medici court, Cosimo would have hesitated to place him in a room where his own identity was at stake.

The physical proximity of the dwarves to the family they served and the importance they held at court again is confirmed not only through architectural placement, but also through juxtapositions found in more inventories. A telling example is seen in an inventory dating from 1587. Within a category entitled *Quadri di pittura* or paintings, not surprisingly, a list includes a portrait of a dwarf recorded on the same page and in the same terms as portraits of Medici family members such as Cosimo il Vecchio or the Prince of Savoy. In fact, this portrait, catalogued simply as 'a portrait of a dwarf unadorned', stood between an entry recording the portrait of the Queen of France and the portrait of an anonymous man.[47] Once more, the lack of differentiation points to the ubiquitous presence of dwarves at court and the ways in which subsequent records echoed their seamless insertion into quotidian court life.

Dwarves' participation in courtly life also found resonance in the establishment of their juridical personhood, assessed here through records of payment, letters, and inventories. For instance, on 10 July 1535, Alessandro de' Medici asked for clemency for his imprisoned dwarf from the Duke of Mantua.[48] The fact that the dwarf was imprisoned speaks to his legal responsibility – and thus to the possibility of his juridical personhood – and Alessandro's request confirms the status of the dwarf as a member of his entourage, deserving of the same rights and graces. Similarly, a Medici secretary wrote to Cosimo I's state secretary to complain about the brutal manners of the captain of the Medici guard toward a member of the ducal retinue, a dwarf, presumably Morgante.[49]

More noteworthy is a 1555 legal testamentary document written by Cosimo I and giving Morgante a farm in the province of Arezzo.[50] Not only did Cosimo's bequest grant Morgante full legal status, but the mention of Morgante's wife and legitimate sons as heirs of his property confirmed the legal rights of dwarves to marry and have legally recognized children on whom they could confer property.[51] Morgante not only received property, clothes, and gifts, but he was also paid a retainer. An order of payment sent by Cosimo in 1573 requested that the charitable civic loan officers of the Florentine Monte di Pietà to pay Morgante ten *scudi*, every year or twice a year, probably as payment from the initial capital Cosimo had given them.[52] The recognition of Morgante's ability to handle a sum of money, and thus to be on a retainer is again a way to grant him full legal personhood. Morgante was not an exception, as we know that Sebastiano Biaviati and his sister Angelica Biaviati, the two dwarves who belonged to the Marchese Ferdinando Cospi in Bologna were both on salary.[53] While not exceptional, the case of dwarves being granted independence *via* their ability to receive and manage money is certainly notable as it highlights the dichotomy of the dwarf as possessed-object / legal-subject of the court.

Representing and writing monsters

Given this complication, it is no surprise to see the unresolved tension in portraits of Morgante, or of

Antonietta Gonsalus (*c.* 1588 – ?), a hirsute girl fitting into another category of popular monsters (Fig. 1). These monsters had to navigate courts because of, and in spite of their physical appearances, a contradiction not made easy by the strictly framed norms of court rules. Most courtiers set the stage for a created image of themselves that paralleled the ruler's image at court so as to confirm their congruence with the established order of regal authority.[54] The presence of monsters at court dictated that their visualization follow a similar (or at least a parallel) course to that of the other images produced at court. In those images, likeness was perhaps a secondary requirement, since idealized qualities following a set visual vocabulary of courtly power dictated identity. However, this balance was problematic for images of monsters: monstrous individuals had, by definition, unusual appearances. Their images needed to stress the accuracy of their physical features rather than to idealize their flawed visual manifestation, since it was precisely these flaws that allowed them to enter court spheres in the first place.

Fig. 1. Lavinia Fontana, *Portrait of Antonietta Gonsalus*, oil on canvas, 1595. Musée des Beaux-Arts du Château de Blois, Blois.

While idealization was not absent from these images, it was not expressed through the same visual rhetoric found in common portraits of courtiers. Bronzino's portrait of Morgante, for instance, reversed the standard vocabulary of power and self-presentation by highlighting the dichotomy between mimesis and idealization. Monsters enhanced the courtly masquerade by mocking it; yet, for their wit to have legible currency, this mockery had to use a common visual vocabulary. This vocabulary was primarily visible through their bodies, which their images emphasized. Bronzino here established a depiction based on an actual event in Morgante's life (a before and after the bird hunt), and he emphasized the actuality of the dwarf's body (the painting is life-size). However, many elements emphasized its typical courtly attributes: the landscape, the painterly work, the brushstroke, and the placement of this painting in the Palazzo Vecchio. The visual translation of Morgante's persona followed the same composite channels and negotiated the tense social hierarchy in which monsters participated by re-establishing a discourse of representation able to contain these contiguous meanings.

Similarly, Lavinia Fontana's portrait of Antonietta Gonsalus underscores the visual conflicts embedded in representing a sentient courtly monster. Antonietta was born in the court of Henri II of France and was the daughter of Petrus Gonsalus, a man plagued with hypertrichosis and originally from the Canary Islands. In an account-book related to the expenses of the court of Parma and dated to the reign of Ranuccio Farnese, an entry from May 1591 reads: 'Don Pietro Gonzales Selvaggio.'[55] This entry is the first official record of the title and the name given to the Tenerife-born man whose family became the most painted hirsutes in Europe. The conquest of Tenerife in 1495 marked the end of the Canary Islands' independence and the beginning of their political and territorial attachment to the Spanish kingdom. Like many native Guanches, Petrus Gonsalus's fate was to become a slave. Paradoxically, however, his odd appearance, which would have ostracized him in an independent society, saved his life for he was offered not as a common slave, but rather as a precious gift upon the conquerors' return to the mainland.[56] A couple of years after the conquest of Tenerife, the Venetian ambassador to Spain, Francesco Cappello, returned to the *Serenissima* with gifts and presents brought back from the Iberian peninsula. These presents included colourful parrots and a strange savage boy – Petrus Gonsalus – who could not speak any comprehensible language.[57] His arrival at the age of ten to the court of Henri II of France therefore occurred not as a direct Franco-Spanish connection, but via Venice. He was then transported from Venice to the French court in connection with other courtly diplomatic gifts bestowed on the future Henri II upon the death of his father, François I, on 31 March 1547.[58] In a letter of that date, Petrus Gonsalus is given a personality, as his language is noted and aspects of his character are recorded. The variance of his hair colour and the types of clothing he wears contribute to creating an identity for the boy who might have otherwise merely been recorded as a curious digression of nature, as an object to be possessed. While most inventories do not attribute human characteristics to the monsters they list, epistolary correspondence allows for such transgression, thus emphasizing the dialectics of object/subject inherent in the lives and records of court monsters.

For forty-four years, Petrus Gonsalus lived in Paris, as part of Henri II's court where he received military training and a literary education including Latin, which made him unusual, even among French courtiers.[59] During those years, Petrus Gonsalus married a glabrous – hairless, smooth-skinned – woman named Catherine, with whom he eventually had seven children.[60] Following the crowning of former Huguenot King Henri de Navarre as Henri IV, King of France, many religious disputes and armed conflicts arose. After the death of Henri II in 1559, Petrus Gonsalus stayed in court under the auspices of François II. However, once Catherine de' Medici Valois died and her Catholic son Henri III was assassinated, the Gonsalus family found itself without protection. Petrus Gonsalus, his wife Catherine, their son Enrico, and their daughters Maddalena, Francesca and Antonietta eventually found their way to Parma.

Though she was born a monster, Antonietta Gonsalus was the daughter of a hairless woman and of an educated and respected man whose title had been recorded officially as 'Don' only three years after her birth. The tension existing in showing a monstrous looking individual holding a written letter did not escape Lavinia Fontana. Antonietta's delicate gesture and her knowing gaze imply the possibility of literacy. Furthermore, the text of the letter stands as a token of

the girl's noble lineage as it states: 'Don Pietro, wild man, was brought from the Canary Islands to the Serenissime King of France, Henry. At the present time, he is at the court of the Serenissime Duke of Parma, where I used to be, Antonietta, and now I am with Dona Isabella Pallavicina, the Marchesa of Soragna.' In the absence of Antonietta's own words, Isabella Pallavicina, via Fontana's brush, established for her a dignified family tree.[61] Her letter neither affirms nor denies her position as a courtier

The flowers in Antonietta's hair emphasize her dual nature in a clear, yet subtle way. Two sets of flowers are visible: behind her right ear, a sprig of lilies-of-the-valley, on top of her head, a crown of flowers made of clover, snowdrops and a carnation.[62] The lily-of-the-valley stands as a symbol of humility because it blooms face down; as a symbol of purity because of its white colour and crisp scent; and particularly as a symbol of wilderness because it grows without needing care.[63] On the other hand, the crown of flowers on her head is an obvious attempt at showing civilized elegance. However, even though the flowers in her crown are carefully chosen to emphasize humility and femininity – particularly the small rose – all are common native species that grow in the wild. The vacillation between wild and delicate, humble and savage speaks loudly to the dichotomous position of Antonietta. A position further highlighted by the loudest unresolved visual tension in this portrait: the juxtaposition of a carefully detailed monstrous face with luxurious garments.[64]

Written sources confirm the purposeful inconsistency found in Fontana's portrait. Records show that the Gonsalus family was not only assigned a servant upon arriving in Parma in May of 1591 but was also given a subvention.[65] On the other hand, a Medici Christmas inventory dated to 1546 lists a box of fruit and animals made of sugar, two savage men, masks, glass animals, and cloth for socks and undergarments for a dwarf.[66] This inventory thus lists one type of monster (the hirsute subjects) as objects akin to glass animals given to Medici children. No rhetorical difference is noted between the ways in which the objects and the monsters are listed. The only potential humanizing difference is found in the way in which another type of monster (the dwarf) is clearly referred to as a subject since he needs garments.

After the death of Henri II in 1559, Petrus Gonsalus stayed at court under the auspices of François II. However, when the King died in 1560, it was Catherine de' Medici Valois who offered her protection as Regent of France to the family of monsters. Owning the Gonsalus family did not afford Catherine the same status as owning dwarves. While dwarves served as social indicators of status, hirsutes were neither civilized enough to be part of human societies, nor beastly enough to be entirely relegated to the animal world. But as European societies became more rigid in their structures, hirsute retainers acquired a Rousseauesque iconic status and civilized minds associated them with the longing for a simpler and untainted way of life.[67] Catherine's gesture to protect the Gonsalus family might not have harkened to a simpler way of life, but certainly referred to her husband's desire to educate and shelter the hirsute family. Through the kingships of her sons Charles IX and Henri III, and eventually through that of her son-in-law Henri IV, Catherine did not falter on her pledge to the Gonsalus family, and by extension to her late husband, in spite of the implication of savagery and foreignness associated with them.

Interestingly, Catherine's 1589 testament has no entry declaring what is to be left to the Gonsalus family. While it states that 2,000 *écus* be given to each of the dwarves, no entry is found for any of the Gonsaluses.[68] This omission complicates the juridical personhood attributed to the hirsute family. Dwarves' positions oscillated between that of subject/object, as is demonstrated in inventories where dwarves appear as either objects of curiosity or attendants, or in teratological treatises where they are treated as either humans or wonders. Because of their rarity, the legal position of the hirsutes was not as well-defined. Aldrovandi includes them in his book of monsters, in the first pages of a treatise that discusses, among others, mermaids and dragons. However, Lavinia Fontana paints the little Antonietta Gonsalus as she would any other human sitter. Her brother Enrico was given as a gift, thus an object, to Cardinal Farnese; yet upon his marriage to Girolama di Giacomo Cintura on 15 June 1602 in the church of Capodimonte, he was officially made part of the Farnese household through the dowry given by the Cardinal to the man's glabrous bride, and he was also allotted a piece of land bordering the Farnese estate in Capodimonte.[69]

As for the man who started this intricate liminal stand-off, legal documents attesting to the details of the life of Petrus Gonsalus at the court of Henri II only

press the issue further. For instance, a François de La Vacherie was the *gouverneur* and had the 'charge and governing authority of the Savage of the King our Lord'; he was authorized to give 50 *sous* per day for the 'food, governing, and expenses of the Savage'.[70] However, the title of the de la Vacherie as *gouverneur* problematizes the position of the hirsute at court: indeed, one could be a *gouverneur* to either animals or humans.

This unresolved dichotomy becomes even more complex after the death of Catherine. Until 1589, the Gonsalus family stayed in Paris. It is only then that records of their travels to Bologna, Parma, Ferrara and Rome appear. The legal assumption is thus that while the *Reine Mère* was alive, protection was guaranteed to the hairy monsters; once she passed away, their wellbeing was safe no more. They had to rely on their wondrous qualities as human-beasts to be bought or given as gifts to various courts, as their only means of survival. There was very little oscillation in their quotidian dealings until they could find their ways into suitably protective courts; once this was achieved, their human qualities could resurface. One could infer that it is precisely this situation Catherine sought to avoid for the Gonsaluses: by allowing them to remain in Paris, she allowed them to remain human.

The oscillation between object and subject for monsters is one that is particularly legible in inventories, in a sense documenting the visual tension found in their portraits. Foucault defined the notion of the 'human monster' as one that was essentially juridical; indeed, for Foucault, what defined the monster was the fact that he was, inherently, in violation of societal laws and in violation of natural laws as well.[71] In the images and inventories discussed in this article, the violence implied by Foucault though not erased, is highlighted in a more subtle manner.

While one can appreciate the potential discord lying in the combination of the lack of decorum and the human qualities that pervaded these depictions, the liminal position of monsters at court is best understood in the charged juxtaposition found in written records. Dwarves were listed alongside typical attendants and, in other inventories, were classified as objects of curiosity. Hirsutes' names were written next to those of noblemen who received land, yet other inventories listed them as Christmas gifts. The association between such living beings and inanimate objects shifts the common rhetoric of possession and questions the actual position of these monsters at court. Also, by 'inventorying' these monsters, secretaries attempted to classify and categorize them, a normalizing impulse applied to their representations, one that followed the scientific push for normative anatomy. Just as this normalizing impulse created an unresolved tension within the surface of the canvas, the drive to list monsters alongside 'normal' subjects and objects emphasized their dual position.

What was made visible in images of monsters and what the rigid records imply are in fact the end-results of the civilizing process that tamed the violence of the subversive monster. The images and the inventories served as systems of conventions that integrated dissidence into a regulated frame and were in fact violent in their imposition of a controlled aesthetic and rhetoric for monsters.[72] Neither wondrous objects lying still in a cabinet of curiosities, nor generic anonymous individuals roaming through high social spheres like other courtiers, monsters challenged both structures. Their portraits and their records highlighted the dichotomous position they held in both a factual sphere and its associated collective imaginary world.

Address for correspondence

Touba Ghadessi, Assistant Professor of Art History, Wheaton College – Art History, 26 East Main Street Watson 139, Norton, MA02766, USA.
fleming_touba@wheatonma.edu

Acknowledgements

This article has benefitted immensely from the patience and insightful editing of Lia Markey and Jessica Keating. I am very grateful for their incisive suggestions and comments.

Notes and references

1 Archivio di Stato di Forenze (hereafter ASF), Mediceo del Principato (hereafter MP) 5928, fol. 106, 2 February 1581 ['Finalmente hò trovato una nana, la qual di già hò qui in Varsovia, et è cosi ben proportionate che ui veramente levata questa della Regina, no hò mai veduta la più bella . . .']; fol. 187, 15 February 1581 ['. . . mi diede a cura di con durr'meco una Nana per servitio della H.V. Ser.ma er mandarla a Vienna al M.re Ambasciatore del Ser.mo Gran Duca Consorte di vra Ser.ta . . .']; MP 5929, fol.179, 6 August 1581 ['Per l'Antico mio desiderio et per l'obligo particularissimo, c'ho di servire a V.A. Ser.ma, non mancai sub. ch'io giunti in Cracovia di mettermi in prattica per trovar qualche nana degna di comparire . . . a lei . . .']; fol. 553, 15 December 1581 ['Con tutto che poi non m'occorresse andar in Lithuania, ne sia forse per occorrermi cosi presto aspettadoti qua il Re fra pochi giorni non ho pero mancato ne manco di procurer la Nana con ogni diligenza . . .']

2 See Andrea Carlino, 'Strani corpi. Come farsi une ragione dei mostri nel XVI secolo', in *Phantastische Lebensräume, Phantome und Phantasmen* (Marburg an der Lahn, 1997), pp. 143–59.

3 J. B. de C. M. Saunders and Charles D. O'Malley, *The Illustrations from the Works of Andreas Vesalius of Brussels* (New York, 1950), p. 204. For a detailed biography of Vesalius and his numerous productions and publications, see pp. 9–40. It is essential to note that, however great the significance of this publication may have been for subsequent approaches to the human body, anatomical treatises had existed prior to the publication of the *Fabrica* and ascribing absolute authority to Vesalius's text is restrictive. From the *Corpus hippocratum* circulated in Greece around 400 BC to later Hellenistic accounts of human dissections, to Galen's influential *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Human Body* (*c.* AD 175) and finally to Berengario da Carpi's work, anatomists had references upon which they could base and develop their own inquiries.

4 Saunders and O'Malley, op. cit. (note 3), pp. 40–41.

5 Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned. Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture* (London and New York, 1995), p. 195.

6 Julie V. Hansen and Suzanne Porter, *The Physician's Art. Representations of Art and Medicine* (Durham, 1999), p. 32.

7 Andrew Cunningham, *The Anatomical Renaissance. The Resurrection of the Anatomical Projects of the Ancients* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 88: 'Vesalius represents a further stage in the revival of Galen's anatomy in that he taught the world to see a different Galenic body; and he taught anatomists, physicians and philosophers to adopt a new ambition with respect to the Ancients of anatomy.'

8 Pierre Boaistuau. *Histoires prodigieuses* (Paris, 1566). Some of the chapter titles are as follows: 'Nabuchodonosor', 'Diables qui conçoivent', 'Monstre ayant ailes & les pieds d'oyseau engendré du temps du Pape Iule second & du Roy Louys douziesme', or 'Filles collées'.

9 Ibid, preface following the dedication: 'Monseigneur, entre toutes les choses qui se peuvent contempler soubs la concavité des cieux, il ne se voit rien qui plus efeuille l'esprit humain, qui ravisse plus les sens, qui plus espouvente, qui engendre plus grande admiration ou terreur aux creatures, que les monstres, prodiges & abomination, sequels nous voyons les erreures de nature ou seulement preposterées, renuersées, mutilées & tronquées, mais (qui plus est) nous y decouvrons le plus souvent un secret iugement & fleau de l'ire de Dieu, par l'object des choses qui se presentment lequel nous faict sentir la violence de sa iustice si aspre, que nous sommes contrains d'entrer en nous mesmes, frapper au marteau de nostre conscience, esplucher noz vices, & avoir en horreur nos meffaicts, specialement quand nous lisons aux histories, sacrées & prophanes, que quelquefois les Elemens on esté Heraulx, Trompettes, ministres & executeurs de la iustice de Dieu.' All the translations are by the author unless noted otherwise.

10 Though, on the other hand, writing a book in the vernacular would also widen the audience able to read Paré's work. Ambroise Paré, *Des monstres et prodiges* (Paris, 1585), 25^{e} livre, préface au lecteur, eij verso: 'Or disent-ils que je ne devoy escrire en François, & que par ce moyen la Medecine en seroit tenue à mespris: ce qui me semble le contraire: car ce que j'en ay faict, est plustost pour la magnifier & honorer.'

11 Ibid, p. 1020: 'Monstres sont des choses qui apparoissent outre le cours de Nature (&sont le plus souuent signes de quelques malheurs à advenir) comme un enfant qui naist avec un seul bras, un autre qui aura deux testes, & autres members outre l'ordinaire. Prodiges, ce sont des choses qui viennent du tout contre Nature, comme une femme qui enfentera un serpent, ou un chien, ou autre chose tout contre Nature . . . Les mutilez, ce sont aveugles, borgnes, bossus, boiteux, ou ayant six doigts a la main ou aux pieds, ou moins de cinq ou joincts ensembles, ou les bras trop courts, ou le nez trop enfoncé comme ont les camus, ou avoir les levres grosses et renversées . . . ou toute autre chose contre Nature.'

12 Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150–1750* (New York, 1999), p. 146.

13 I. Norwich, 'A consultation between Andreas Vesalius and Ambroise Paré at the deathbed of Henri II, King of France, 15 July 1559', *South African Medical Journal* 80 (1991), pp. 245–7.

14 Fortunio Liceti, *De monstrorum natura, caussis et differentiis – Libri Duo, Aeneis iconibus ornate et aucti* (Padua, 1634), preface: 'quoque unicuique alteri monstrantur.'

15 See Fortunio Liceti, *Description anatomique des Parties de la Femme qui servent à la Generation; avec un Traité des monstres, de leur Causes, de leur Nature, & de leur differences: Et une description anatomique de la disposition surprenante de quelques Parties Externes, & Internes de Deux Enfans Nés dans la Ville de Gand Capitale des Flandres le 28 Avril 1703 &c. &c., par Mons.r Jean Palfyn, Anatomist & Chirurgien de la Ville de Gand, Desquels ouvrages on peut considerer comme une Suite de l'Accouchement des Femmes par Mons.r Mauriceau* (Leiden, 1708). Interestingly, this French version pairs the cause of monsters with a treatise on female reproductive parts, thus accentuating the generative emphasis of the book. In the preface to Liceti's translation: 'Comme donc il n'y a rien de tout ce qui vit sous le Soleil, qui cause plus de surprise & d'admiration que les Monstres; Ce n'est pas sans raison que les hommes desirent si universellement de connoitre leur Essence.'

16 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things. An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1994), pp. 156–7.

17 Realdo Colombo, *De re anatomica – Libri* XV (Venice, 1559).

18 Robert J. Moes and C. D. O'Malley, 'Realdo Colombo: "On Those Things Rarely Found in Anatomy". An annotated translation from the *De Re Anatomica* (1559)', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 34:6 (1960), p. 508. Colombo replaced Vesalius temporarily as professor of surgery and anatomy on 19 January 1543 and permanently in 1544.

19 Though I here agree with Andrea Carlino's claim that Colombo's presentation of monsters as pathologies was a shift since it placed monsters in the realm of medicine, I also believe that the opposition between medicine and the wondrous was not as clear cut as Carlino may suggest. Therefore, I use the adverb 'only' very intentionally. The dissections that Colombo performed, particularly that of a hermaphrodite, turned his fifteenth book into more than a series of illustrated case-studies but made him and, by proxy, his readers witnesses to the anatomy of monstrous bodies. Colombo, op. cit. (note 17), p. 268.

20 Philipp Blom, *To Have and to Hold. An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting* (New York, 2002), pp. 15–16.

21 For a detailed account, various examples of such collections, and thoughts of collecting and collections in the early-modern period, see Daston and Park, op. cit. (note 12), chapters 1, 2, 4, and 7; Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature. Museums, Collecting,*

and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy (Berkeley,1994); Martin Kemp, '"Wrought by no artist's hand". The natural, the artificial, the exotic, and the scientific in some artifacts from the Renaissance', in Claire Farago (ed.), *Reframing the Renaissance. Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450–1650* (New Haven, 1995); Joy Kenseth (ed.), *The Age of the Marvelous (*Hanover, NH, 1991); Adalgisa Lugli, 'Inquiry as collection. The Athanasius Kircher Museum in Rome', *Res* 12 (1986), pp. 109–24; Krzysztof Pomian, *Collectors and Curiosities. Paris and Venice 1500–1800* (Cambridge, 1990); Valerio Rivosecchi, *Esotismo in Roma Barocca* (Rome, 1982); Ingrid D. Rowland, *The Ecstatic Journey. Athanasius Kircher in Baroque Rome* (Chicago, 2000); Julius von Schlosser, 'Italienische Kuriositätenkammern', in *Die Kunst- und Wunderkammern der Spätrenaissance* (Leipzig, 1908).

22 Giuseppe Olmi, 'Il collezionismo scientifico', in Raffella Simili (ed.), *Il teatro della natura di Ulisse Aldrovandi* (Bologna, 2001), p. 20.

23 Findlen, op. cit. (note 21), p. 60.

24 Ibid, p. 199. Also see Giuseppe Olmi, *Ulisse Aldrovandi. Scienza e natura nel secondo cinquecento* (Trento, 1976) and Sandra Pattaro Tugnoli, *La formazione scientifica e il 'Discorso naturale' di Ulisse Aldrovandi* (Trento, 1977).

25 Fredrika Jacobs, *The Living Image in Renaissance Art* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 140–41.

26 Tobia Aldini, naturalist and prefect of the Farnese gardens, includes humans among the other marvels of the Cardinal's court. Tobia Aldini, *Exactissima descriptio rariorum quarandarum plantarum quae continentur Romae in Horto Farnesiano* (Rome, 1625), p. 10, as cited in Roberto Zapperi, 'Arrigo le Velu, Pietro le Fou, Amon le Nain et autres bêtes: autour d'un tableau d'Agostino Carrache', *Annales. Économies – Sociétés – Civilisations* 40:2 (1985), pp. 310, 324 n. 11. Arrigo is referred to as 'mirabilia inte alia mirabilia'.

27 The first letter is found in *Recueil de Mélanges* in quattro (Paris, 1649), tome 50, separation 17. It is titled 'La naissance d'un monstre espouvantable, engendré d'une belle & jeune femme, native de Mark, à deux lieues de Calais, le vingt-troisième Fevrier 1649'. The second letter is part of the same *Recueil de Mélanges* in quattro, but is in tome 50, separation 20. It is titled 'Memoire concernant les arts et les sciences presenté às Monseigneur le Dauphin' and is dated 1 February 1672.

28 *Recueil de Mélanges*, op. cit. [1649] (note 27): '. . . je vous ferois icy la description de la naissance espouvantable d'un Monstre tres effroyable, arrivé à Mark, à deux lieues de Calais, & proche de nostre demeure . . . Sçachez-donc, cher Cousin, que la fille de Quelin Soufré, fut mariée apres Pasques à un jeune Lorain de nation, lequel faisoit icy l'homme prudent remply de sagesse . . . Sa femme ainsi demeurée seule fut saisie de mal le 19 Fevrier & par des cris espouvantable, rendoit bien tesmoignage que son corps souffroit grands douleurs. Elle fut dans ce tourment jusqu'au 23. Fevrier à midy: & avec l'ayde de Servais Cardon, Chirurgien, qui luy fit incision, elle se delivra d'un enfant.'

29 *Recueil de Mélanges*, op. cit. [1672] (note 27): 'Pour satisfaire la curiosité de ceux à qui vous avez parlé de cet enfant prodigieux, dont je vous ay déja écrit quelque chose, je vous en vais mander toutes les circonstances. Le 28 Septembre 1667. Nicole Vallée femme de Noël Marchand, demeurant à la Beausserie sur la Paroisse de la Chapelle Huon au Diocese du Mans, à un quart-de-lieuë de Courten-Vau, accoucha d'un garçon qui avoit en naissant une grabde chevelure blonde . . . Sa mere le voulut nourrir elle même, & l'éleva jusqu'à trois ans & demy environ; car il mourut le 21 Avril 1671 . . . Mr. Pousset Curé de la Chapelle Huon, le pere & la mere de l'enfan, & tous les voisins sont aussi bien que moy témoins de ce prodige.'

30 The court, as a social centre, restricted the individual freedom of courtiers; they had to adhere to written principles meant to emphasize the concept of *civiltà* and thus suppress behavioural aspects that did not fit within this normative regime. Most courtiers modelled their image of themselves on that of their ruler. The pressure of social conventions established by court etiquette incited courtiers to not only adopt rigid behavioural standards while at court, but also to emulate such dispositions in more private realms. While these written and spoken rules of performative actions were meant to assert and promote kingship through theatricality, display, and emulation, they also allowed for the subversion of authority through a similar, but inverted, vocabulary. This is precisely where monsters, such as dwarves, served as negative barometers and provided the visual and social contrast needed to counterpoint the self-presentation of courtiers.

31 ASF, MP 2952, Carteggio, Letteri della Duchessa di Mantova, 8 September 1621: 'Ritorna Morgante a servir V.A. Io l'ho trattenuto qui alcuni giorni pensando di valermene oer inviarle alcune cose, ma perchè non mi sono assicurata che fossero ben condotte me le sono ritenute per miglior occasione, et intanto ho voluto far fede a V.A. . . . . affunchè presso di lei resti scusato . . .'

32 ASF, MP, 1171, fol. 338, 18 April 1545: 'Anchora le calze, giubone, saione e stringhi si detono al nano, el quale ne molto alegrò . . . La S.ra duc.a mia S.ra [Eleonora di Toledo] m'à comandato che io hordinj in Pisa . . .'; MP 1170, fol. 262, 10 June 1543, Lorenzo Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio: 'Dice la S.ra mia Duchessa che la S.V. facci fare dua giubbonj di seta Bianca et dua para di calze bianche per Lodovico et Filippino nanj et che le mandi quanto prima può . . .'; MP 1173, fol. 204, 6 June 1547: 'nostra Signora Duchessa m'ha comandato che io scriva a V.S. che quella facci rivestire Gianmaria nano et che vengha le forme che sono in chamera del'Anna . . .'

33 ASF, MP 1, insert within fol. 4, undated, though the Medici Archives Project dates it around 9 March 1543, not signed: 'Al nano se tagliato i vestimenti di cuoio . . .'

34 ASF, MP 1170a, fol. 68, 16 August 1545: 'E' bisognia che la S.V. ci facci mandare 8 braccia di nastro di seta nera per la choda della S.ra Giulia e che ci sia domanj così da fare dua o 3 chamicie per Filippino . . .'

35 ASF, MP 225, fol. 24, 14 December 1565: 'et a pagare a più monasteri et ricamatori per I racmi della livrea del vestire et per il vestire di Gradasso et oro di canutiglio et parte di fattura di sue sarti . . .' Ed Goldberg directed me to the last three ASF documents regarding dwarves' sartorial importance. I am indebted to him for his generosity.

36 Tommaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale de tutte le professioni del mondo*, ed. Paolo Cherchi and Beatrice Collina (Turin, 1996), vol. II, p. 1306.

37 Bibliothèque nationale de France (hereafter BNF), Garde Robe (hereafter GR), Manuscrit français (hereafter MF) 2952 (215), n.a. 9189, dated 1530, fol. 15v.

38 BNF, GR, MF 2952 (215), n.a. 9189 continues with dates every year, and Jehan de Nano is found on pages 25v, 51r, 65r.

39 BNF, GR, MF 2952 (215), n.a. 9189, fol. 221r.

40 BNF, Nouvelles Acquisitions (hereafter NA), MF 1049.

41 BNF, NA, MF 1049, fol. 30r.

42 BNF, NA, MF 1049, fol. 29v.

43 Cosimo Conti, *La prima reggia di Cosimo I de'Medici nel Palazzo già della Signoria di Firenze* (Florence, 1893), p. 96.

44 Deborah Parker, *Bronzino. Renaissance Painter as Poet* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 9.

45 Conti, op. cit. (note 43), p. 96: 'terrazzino sopra il ricetto delle stanze nuove della Guardaroba.'

46 Ibid.

47 Guardaroba Medicea, Inventari generale, 132, dated 1587–1591, 124: 'un Ritratto in tela d'un nano senza ornamenti.'

48 Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga, 1086, 10 July 1535: 'Altre volta racoomandai a V.Ecca quell presento Francesco nano, incarcerato per la sua gran poverta e Io feci moso da Compassione come per essermi el poveretto affetionato, e raccomandatomi da persona a ch'io desidero far cosa grata per le qual cose di nuovo, son forzato raccomandarlo a V.Ec, promettendomi che cosi com'io son volonta coso che la si degni mostrarmi I quell ch'io possi server questo mio officio habbi I qualche parte aprofitarvi al Francesco et alle sue miserie. Baccio le man a V.E. raccomandomi sempre sella sua bona gra. Di Fi.'

49 ASF, MP 4, fol. 297, 13 June 1541. In addition to the issue between Pirro Colonna and Agnolo di Matteo Niccolini, Lorenzo Pagni also mentions the affront made to Lorenzo di Galeotto de'Medici and the offence perpetrated on the dwarf in exactly the same manner and using a similar tone: 'Mi son meravigliato assaj che Sua Eccellenza habbi hauto tanta patientia con questo signore et che habbi indugiato tanto a risentirsi delle insulentie sue, la una delle qualj fu non molti mesi doppo la arrivata di Sua Signoria qui, che hebbe ardire di dar di mano addosso a Lorenzo di Galeotto de'Medicj, che era sul terrazzino che è dinanzi alla camera dove Sua Eccellenza dava audientia nel Palazzo de'Medici, alla presentia d'una copia grande di cittadinj et di cortigianj et con superbissime parole cacciarlo di quell palazzo, minacciando di mettergli la spada ne'fianchi se non s'andava con Dio . . . Detto Signore [Pirro Colonna] . . . disse queste o similj parole verso il Nano di S. Ex.a che li era allato a veder' giocare, cioè: 'Egli è questo porcho del Nano che mi fa malo augurio', comandandadolj se li levasse dapresso . . . et multiplicando le parole tra l'uno et l'altro, il Signor Pyrro senza alcun rispetto di questo Ex.tie, le qualj, V.S. sa, quanto amino questo Nano, li dette un gran straffo . . .'

50 ASF, Pratica Segreta, 186, c. 126 v.: '*Cosmus Medicus Dei gratia Florentie dux*.'

51 ASF, Pratica Segreta, 186, c. 126 v.: 'et cum animadveremus ad debilem patrimonium tuum tueque parenne et quod ni tibi a nos sucurratur semper in pauvertate viveres et post vitam tuam parum vel nihil filis tuis relinqueres . . .'

52 ASF, MP 241, fol. 94, 6 March 1573: 'Ufitiali, Provveditore et Ministri del Monte della Pietà di Fiorenza. In virtù di questo mandato vi commettiamo che paghiate a ms. Thomaso de'Medici nostro tesoriere scudi . . . per più conti come appresso, cioè: . . . Scudi x per darli a Morgante Nano. . .'

53 Lorenzo Legati, *Museo Cospiano. Annesso a quello del famoso Ulisse Aldrovandi E donato alla sua Patria dall'Illustrissimo Signor Ferdinando Cospi Patrizio di Bologna e Senator, ecc.* (Bologna, 1677), p. 7, as cited in Zakiya Hanafi, *The Monster in the Machine. Magic, Medicine, and the Marvelous in the Time of the Scientific Revolution* (Durham, NC, 2000), p. 86.

54 Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (New York, 1983), p. 88.

55 Archivio di Stato di Parma, Mastri farnesiani, vol. 11, p. 250. The hirsute man is listed alongside other courtiers receiving a salary and thus is not separated from his 'normal' courtier counterparts other than by the 'Selvaggio' following his full name.

56 Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *The Canary Islands after the Conquest. The Making of a Colonial Society in the early Sixteenth Century* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 6, 37, and 40.

57 Geoffrey Symcox, Giovanna Rabitti, and Peter D. Diehl (eds.), *Italian Reports on America 1493–1522. Letters, Dispatches, and Papal Bulls. Repertorium Colombianum* x (Turnhout, 2001), pp. 91, 105, 107, 109–10, 111–12, 115–16.

58 In a letter dated 18 April 1547 to the Duke of Ferrara, Ercole II d'Este (1508–59), his ambassador Giulio Alvarotto described the gifts given to the future Henri II, including a 10 year-old boy covered in hair. Archivio di Stato di Modena, Archivio segreto estense, Cancelleria ducale, Sezione estero, Carteggio ambasciatori, Francia, b. 24: '. . . È stato donato al re un putto de circa X anni portato dalle Indie, molto bello, ma tutto piloso il volto et tutta la vita, come appunto si dipingono gl'humani silvatici. I pelli sonno longhi circa cinque dita. Sonna rari molto, tanto che si vedeno tutti i lineamenti deall fazza. Sonno di colore tané chiaro et molto sottili et fini più che'l pello di zebelino, et sanno de buon. Lui parla spagnuolo et va vestito come è l'ordinario d'ognuno. Però su per la vita ha il pello frusto. Non si chi l'habbi donato a Sua Maestà.' Roberto Zapperi's transcription corrects the previously published one by C. Occhipinti, which contained several mistakes. See Roberto Zapperi, *Il selvaggio gentiluomo. L'incredibile storia di Pedro Gonzalez e dei suoi figli* (Rome, 2005), p. 158.

59 Françoise Waquet, *Le latin ou l'empire d'un signe – xvie–xxe siècle* (Paris, 1998), p. 273.

60 Zapperi, op. cit. (note 58), p. 65. The names of the children were (in French): Madeleine, Paul, Henri, Françoise, Antoinette, Horace, and Ercole.

61 It is not too much of a stretch to assume familial ties between Antonietta and the Marchioness of Soragna since we know Odoardo Farnese actually adopted Enrico after the boy was sent to him as a gift.

62 I am grateful to Meghan Wilson Pennisi for identifying those flowers during a visit to the Musée du Château de Blois when we both had a chance to look closely at the portrait of Antonietta Gonsalus.

63 Lucia Impelluso, *Nature and Its Symbols,* trans. Stephen Sartarelli (Los Angeles, 2003), pp. 78–81, also for visual precedents.

64 Many portraits (such as the Ambras series in the Kunsthistorisches in Vienna or Joris Hoefnagel's *Ignis*) of the Gonsalus family represent them in front of cave-like settings, which prompts Christiane Hertel to argue that these settings, posed in contrast to the courtly clothing of the Gonsalus family, link them to a 'primitive' and 'hidden' place in nature. Because Hertel had not seen Lavinia Fontana's portrait of Antonietta before the publication of her 2001 article (personal letter from Christiane Hertel to Thierry Crépin-Leblond, 30 April 2002), she was not able to write on the specific sartorial and compositional elements of it or use them as comparison material. I also believe the lack of cave-like setting in Antonietta's portrait may be due to her holding a letter that speaks to her father's origins. See Christiane Hertel, 'Hairy

issues: portraits of Petrus Gonsalus and his family in Archduke Ferdinand II's *Kunstkammer* and their contexts', *Journal of the History of Collections* 13 (2001), pp. 1–22.

65 Information gathered by Roberto Zapperi from the Archivio di Stato di Parma, Mastri Farnesiani, vols. 11–16. As cited in Zapperi, op. cit. (note 58), p.167.

66 ASF, MP, 1172, I, 27. The list reads: 'Scatola di frutte e animali di zuccero. 2 homini salvatichi. Maschere. Animaletti di vetro. La drappa per calze e gippone, al nano.' Caroline Murphy generously shared this document with me and I am thankful to her.

67 Lynn Frier Kaufmann, *The Noble Savage. Satyrs and Satyr Families in Renaissance Art* (Ann Arbor, 1984), pp. 36–41.

68 MF, 3952, Testament de Catherine de Médicis, fol. 294r.

69 Archivio di Stato di Napoli, Archivio Farnesiano, 613 (II), cc. 932r and 936r; 614 (II), c. 1004, as cited in Zapperi, op. cit. (note 58), pp. 172 and 124. Letter dated 9 December 1605 from Enrico Gonsalus to Cardinal Odoardo Farnese regarding the future construction of a house on the terrain given to him by the Cardinal: 'Questa settimana proscima coprirò la mia casa si piace a iDio,' and a letter dated to 11 May 1608 where Enrico Gonsalus tells the Cardinal he now lives in his new home: 'quattro giorni sono ho cominciato a mangiare nella casa nova.'

70 Archives Nationales de Paris, Minutier Central, XIX, 184 and 187: 'charge et gouvernement du saulvaige du roy nostre sire' and 'nourriture, gouvernement, and despence du saulvaige.'

71 Michel Foucault, *Les anormaux. Cours au Collège de France (1974–1975)*, ed. François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana (Paris, 1999), p. 51: 'Le cadre de reference du monstre humain, bien entendu, est la loi. La notion de monstre est essentiellement un notion juridique – juridique bien sûr, au sens large du terme, puisque ce qui définit le monstre est le fait qu'il est, dans son existence même et dans sa forme, non seulement en violation des lois de la société, mais violations des lois de la nature.'

72 I am thankful that Marco Ruffini shared his thoughts with me on the politics of representation and classification of monsters at court, as well as their subsequent latent violence.