This is the reviewed, corrected and author accepted manuscript of the book chapter:

Ingvil Hellstrand, Sara E. S. Orning, Aino-Kaisa Koistinen and Donna McCormack (2024): We Can't Settle for Normality: Towards Feminist Monster Studies. In Steven Rawle & Martin Hall (Eds.), *Monstrosity and Global Crisis in Transnational Film, Media and Literature* (pp. 1–17). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

We Can't Settle for Normality: Towards Feminist Monster Studies

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> "One cannot reasonably expect sameness out of so much difference" (Jemisin, 2015, 193)

The present, global moment arguably requires a shift in addressing issues concerning the "normal". We understand the normal not only as the general, the common, and the standard, but also as that which embodies social and cultural legitimacy, carrying the underhanded, invisible power that tells you that "what is normal is also right" (Hacking, 1990, 160). The COVID-19 pandemic propelled important debates about how a persistent rhetoric of "returning to normal" effectively shifts heightened awareness of different types and degrees of vulnerability and marginalisation to calls for "normality", belonging and familiarity, for example relating to social reproduction (Stevano, Ali and Jamieson, 2020) and accessibility (Cole, 2016; Goggin and Ellis, 2020; Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2022). In this chapter, we want to draw attention to how the very notion of normality always operates according to a perceived majority. As monster studies teaches us, the monster is historically and culturally positioned as opposite, outskirt, abnormal (Haraway, 1992; Cohen, 1996; Shildrick, 2022; Davies, 2016). But can the figure of the monster also help us to move beyond this established dichotomy between the familiar and the unknown? What is at stake for the relationality between normality and the monster as they are currently being imagined?

The aim of this chapter is to highlight how normality constitutes as well as trails/tails/ghosts/haunts the figure of the monster and the monstrous, and how it is connected to transnational structures of differentiation. Importantly,

however, the monster also represents change, as it potentially moves and shifts boundaries for belonging. Here, we draw on feminist, queer and decolonial perspectives to suggest that the monster is a moving, yet also "sticky", surface (Ahmed, 2004), that continuously both challenges and reinstates boundaries for the normal. In other words, what or who is considered monster/monstrous is not based on ontologically fixed categorisations but rather something that shifts between objects and bodies, between imaginaries and politics, as part of cultural circulation, and is therefore also open to change (Shildrick, 2022; Ahmed, 2004; Hellstrand, Koistinen and Orning, 2019). We introduce feminist monster studies as an analytical tool for exploring how questions of normality and difference, attachment and recognition are central to both feminist and monster studies and discuss how the monster is useful for reimagining collaboration and collectivity across transnational differences and divergences.

As has become our practice in the Monster Network, we also want to highlight the structures of citation that render invisible the labour that goes into thinking (Ahmed 2012; McCormack 2022). We learn from the work of many decolonial, anti-racist, queer, feminist and disabled thinkers, whose work is referenced throughout this piece. We also acknowledge that the act of writing is not an even process. This article stems from our ongoing discussions as a network on accessibility, inclusion, and exclusion, yet it was written largely by Hellstrand, whose intense labour resulted in this finished piece. McCormack brought us into the writing and informed the anger and upset about the ableist exclusions as governments, feminists and many others returned to "normal" as if the pandemic was over. However, McCormack remained absent in much of the writing due to ongoing, serious ill health. Orning, inspired by McCormack's attention to the ableism of this historical moment, but also being tied up in care work during the writing period, participated intermittently with forays into disability and crip theory, and especially what it can tell us about the normal and the transnational. Due to the precarious conditions of working in academia, such as the pressures related to temporary positions, Koistinen contributed to the process of writing and editing with a varying intensity. As an article about feminist monster studies we are trying to highlight how finished work is made possible, the varying ways in which labour is distributed unevenly, how lives are disrupted, as well as how collectives work as complex organisms.

Background: entanglements of the normal and the monstrous

Many things lock the monster into place – also normality. Normality is, indeed, a touchstone when we study how the monstrous operates on a social, cultural and historical level: it provides assumptions (silent, violent) about how boundaries operate and structure lives, bodies and aspirations. As such, it constitutes a powerful mechanism to define who gets to be seen as vulnerable, human and, as an extension, "saveable", while others become dispensable, monsterised. This notion of normality is arguably derived from the division of bodies into categories of being more or less useful after the rise of industrialisation, and closely tied to the rise of statistics as a tool for biopolitics and social governance (Davis, 1995; Cryle and Stephens, 2017). It also connects to notions of grievability and precarity as discussed by Judith Butler, who writes:

> The differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human: what counts as a livable life and a grievable death? (Butler, 2004, xiv-xv)

Inevitably, normality continues to be an unwieldy idea that wields very concrete power: it is a question of life and death.

Contrasted with normality, the monster is precisely an unruly entity that disturbs these mechanisms because it simultaneously escapes definition (Cohen, 1996, 6) *and* defines the boundaries for what constitutes a community (Haraway, 1992, 180), a liveable life and a grievable death (Butler, 2004). However, from feminist, queer, crip and decolonial perspectives, the monster does not necessarily secure escape "because it refuses easy categorization" (Cohen, 1996, 6). On the contrary, the monster has a long history of activating certain typologies and characteristics that are linked to xenophobia, racism, ableism, homo- and transphobia and sexism. Marginalised bodies, identities and voices are often relegated to the realm of the monstrous, in the sense that they are deemed 'abnormal', untruthful, or unreliable (Davies, 2016; Shildrick, 2022).

For us, the genealogies of the monster and making-monstrous are being reactualised by the present, global moment of "returning to the normal". The 'we' writing this chapter are an interdisciplinary group of researchers who have come to monster studies from feminist, queer, anticolonial, and disability and crip-related fields of study, where normality is a contested term and concept because of its ties to the idea of Universal Man: the white,

male, able-bodied, heterosexual norm that all are defined in relation to (de Beauvoir, 1983; Young, 1980; Lorde, 1984; Butler, 1990). These feminist critiques are also connected to decolonial analyses of the Eurocentric and imperial legacies of imposed normality through forced assimilation, (settler) colonialism and epistemic violence (Mohanty, 1984; McClintock, 1995; Smith, 1999; Wynter, 2003; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Finbog, 2021).

Feminist and critical race theorists have challenged the "normality" of anthropocentrism (Koistinen and Karkulehto, 2018), as a way of acknowledging the troublesome categories of Man and Mankind (Braidotti, 2013), foregrounding posthuman and ecofeminist relations between human and nonhuman beings rather than speciesist concerns that reiterate the supremacy of a specific kind of human (Adams and Gruen, 2014). Tensions between the allegedly normal and the monstrous are also linked intimately to (experiences of) exclusion and inclusion in disability theory (Davis, 1995; Garland-Thomson, 1996; Kafer, 2013; Eli, 2017). Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2005) connects this to a broader feminist and critical race analysis of uneven power relations: "Disability – similar to race and gender – is a system of representation that marks bodies as subordinate, rather than an essential property of bodies that supposedly have something wrong with them" (1557-1558).

Although there are important differences between feminist, queer, decolonial and disability studies, our starting point here is that they all have the monster in common. Through challenging the "normal", these theoretical perspectives in different ways acknowledge and critique marginalisation as part of the infrastructure of culture, society and embodiment. In addition, they focus on how socio-historical-cultural processes of meaning-making – and monster-making – relegate certain people, and nonhuman beings, to the bottom of the hierarchy. For us, tying together these critical perspectives on "normality" also serves to ground monster studies in transnational analyses of power and differences. Importantly, the monster is also a figure of storytelling, of cultural imageries and imaginations. For feminists, the long-term goal is, in fact, to change the world – i.e. to contest and undo harmful ways of exclusion and power asymmetries. This suggests that we need to be able to imagine the world – and the monster – otherwise (The Monster Network, 2021). As scholars with backgrounds in literary studies, cultural studies, and film and media studies, we are drawn to and moved by stories and imaginaries of the monster as a form of worlding (Haraway, 2016): a way to understand, challenge and, potentially change concepts and meanings that shape our world. In this, the monster can also be a hopeful figuration (Haraway, 1992; McCormack, 2015; Hellstrand, Henriksen, Koistinen, McCormack, and Orning, 2018).

In the rest of this chapter, we suggest that what is considered different, or Other, marginalised or monsterised, necessarily travels, moves and shifts within and across communities and groups (Orning, 2012; Orning, 2020; The Monster Network, 2021). As Donna Haraway puts it, "monsters in one setting set the norm in others" (Haraway, 1997, 38). We are also interested in how proximity to and connotations of the not quite normal sticks – often highly visibly, sometimes less so – to certain bodies more than others. We are therefore concerned with how the monster is a bodily, affective and political figure that can "move, stick and slide", to borrow the words of feminist, queer and critical race scholar Sara Ahmed (2004, 13). For us, this mutability of the monster and the ways it travels provides a starting point for thinking-with the monster through its interconnections with bodies, systems of power and governance and knowledge production. We foreground the genealogies from feminist, queer, disability and decolonial fields of study as a way of thinking-with the monster as a feminist method for critically exploring the troublesome relations between the familiar and the unknown, between "normality" and the monster. In the following, we make a case for how and why the normal and the monstrous are movable characteristics, hard to pin down with any lasting accuracy, and, as such, useful analytical tools for understanding mechanisms of monsterisation.

Monster travels

In our present moment of "returning to normal", we want to make note of the radical shift in what was considered normal, everyday practices for work, education and social gatherings during the lockdown stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, accessibility measures such as online meetings and teaching, which the disability community had long fought for but been repeatedly denied, were suddenly implemented when the non-disabled population also required it (Queer Disability Studies Network, 2022). However, in spite of how this pandemic "new normal" changed and shifted everything from work practices and forms of communication to everyday interactions and mobility, these accessibility measures are now dwindling as we write. This does not go unnoticed by the crip community, as the majority once more is closing the borders around what is considered normality. As Nicole Lee Schroeder remarks on Twitter, "access has snapped back like a rubber band" (Schroeder, 2022).

This example shows how understandings of the "normal" – or what counts as normal – are simultaneously flexible and boundary-making. Similar to the way the monster operates, it demonstrates how the dominant or the majority becomes the norm, resulting in discrimination and

mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. As a concept, it can be stretched to include something or someone, but also be reduced or tailored to exclude. In light of monster studies, we know that it is easier to exclude – and re-exclude – those whose "normality" is contested in the first place. As Margrit Shildrick (2002) points out, these structures of differentiation are inevitably entangled with normative knowledge regimes, embodiment, and social codes. She writes: "[t]he assumption is that if sovereign minds are housed in appropriate bodies, then those who are 'inappropriate/d others' cannot unproblematically inhabit the subject position" (51).

Writing about the "stickiness" of emotions, particularly those relating to fear, disgust and hate, Ahmed (2004) points to how the cultural circulation of affects and emotions works to attach these affects to someone or something. She argues that this is a form of stickiness that, in turn, can become "a quality of some surfaces, objects and signs" (89). Following Ahmed, we suggest that the monster is such a "sticky" surface that simultaneously makes visible and polices the boundaries for what is considered "normal" or "acceptable". Moreover, as the circulation of affects can also be said to "move between and within imaginaries, ideologies and normative standards" (Hellstrand, Koistinen, and Orning, 2019, 518), the monster is arguably also a sticky *imaginary*.

Inevitably, the stakes are high, as the stickiness of monsterised surfaces and imaginaries perpetuates structures of differentiation, yet at the same time allows for recognition of said differences. In this, the monster can also serve as a site of resistance or hope. As Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (2022), reacting with protest to the return to normal, put it on Twitter:

> The crip refusal to say thank you for crumbs is a really key disabled organizing strategy. I have seen over and over the anger/ confusion of the norms when we refuse to eat shit, and I am hopeful that my similar refusal to eat shit with a smile is carrying on the tradition.

For us, Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's words about strategies for disrupting normative structures and viewpoints are important, and resonate with feminist, queer and decolonial strategies: Speaking up, refusing to stay silent, refusing to comply can make things uncomfortable for those not on the margins. However, these mechanisms also demonstrate how the monster and the monstrous is activated and maintained: as a challenge to (comfortable for those with power) norms. Although we here explicitly align crip refusal strategies with the fields and movements of feminist, queer and decolonial thinking and practice, we do not mean to say that they are all the same – or that a movement working against injustice of one kind is always attuned to injustice of all kinds. Rather, we want to highlight the monster mechanisms

(Orning, 2020) that make such a connection possible. By monster mechanisms, we mean processes and structures of differentiation between what is deemed "normal" and what is not, and the boundary-making categories of belonging. These mechanisms are fuelled by fear of hybridity and boundaries crossings, and activated when familiar categories and socio-cultural norms appears threatened.

In a transnational perspective, for example, the inherent tensions between the Othered and the "normal" require an awareness of vulnerability and particular struggles for recognition for marginalised peoples and groups. We recognise that, from an intersectional perspective, different kinds of marginalisation and discrimination work together to produce complex minority experiences. However, the ways in which otherness and difference stick to certain bodies, practices, orientations, imaginaries, and knowledges risk producing universal(ised) difference, making it hard to see the particularities and relate to them. How can we recognise differences as relevant to ourselves, even if we haven't experienced it? And how can we acknowledge and respect said difference, even if it's not our experience?

Let's look at the concept of transnationality as an example. It is under critique from the field of crip theory because it, inevitably, is constructed and experienced with reference to specific border operations and understandings of "the nation", often in an embodied, colonial, global North understanding of the term. In their work to develop analytical tools for disability studies, Mel Chen, Alison Kafer, Eunjung Kim, and Julie Avril Minich (2023) suggest that it is not enough to simply look at "'flows' and 'undoing borders' without attending to how borders have participated in ideas about specific locations, as well as their tangled histories of transnational power struggles and interactions" (12). Take for instance the travels of Mary W. Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), where the globally (in)famous creature often is considered a universal figure of the monster, while in fact it embodies particular historical and cultural circumstances, with particular thinking about what makes us human and not. Here, the emblematic monster becomes an ontological monster, without its own name, just the Other, embodied and defined in relation to Dr. Frankenstein as his creature, property, and nemesis.

Interestingly, the making-ontological here is also a way of universalising the monster, generalising it, stripping it of its specificity (Hellstrand, 2016). As in our example of the crip community's reactions to the consequences of what a return to a universalised normal means, the lack of attention to the particular, the lived embodiment and social contexts is a driving force behind an undifferentiated and what we could call "ontologicalised" normal.

Importantly, these struggles also take place within the field of gender studies. As a field, gender and feminist studies is intimately entangled with queer, decolonial and disability studies, and teachings from other struggles are vital to its very existence. That said, gender and feminist studies also has a history of conflict and exclusion over what "fits" into a feminist goal, and what kinds of differences should be overcome. For example, historically, the recognition of Black, Chicana, and indigenous feminisms as particular struggles within feminism has been, and continues to be, debated (Lorde, 1984; Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga, 1981; Dankertsen, 2021; Knobblock and Kuokkanen, 2015). Similarly, disability has long been virtually ignored and often dismissed as a category valid to the analysis of gender (Kafer, 2013). And today, trans feminism has become a contested and highly exclusionary subject within certain parts of feminism. Again, our point is not to say that these struggles are the same, but that the mechanisms for access and recognition, or lack thereof, are linked to genealogies of marginalisation of unruly or abnormal bodies, imaginaries, and knowledges.

Onwards in this text, we articulate feminist monster studies as a way of continuously grappling with ongoing monster mechanisms: structures and norms for (re)making (and keeping) boundaries, belonging and marginalisation. Especially now, in this climate of returning to "normal", traversing boundaries of normative gender, sexuality, bodies, and humanity puts us in monstrous, marginal territory. It is precisely because the monster enables unruliness, imaginations and questionability in this terrain that we have chosen it as our thinking companion.

Re-entanglements, not dis-entanglements

The monster is a messy, unruly figure, and we don't know what kind of change or differences it will set in motion. However, it is precisely as a boundary figure that the monster can facilitate this kind of openness as something that travels, moves, sticks and slides to and through surfaces and imaginaries. The COVID-19 pandemic makes visible how certain kinships and relationships are deemed more "normal" than others, for example in the way that the nuclear family became the central unit for lockdown measures (Klitgård, 2024). Nevertheless, the discussions circulating around the virus and the actions needed in order to handle it brought about questions of human vulnerability. Who are the human beings that we wish to protect, and how? The war on Ukraine is another example of how vulnerability, too, is part of structures of differentiation, and its transnational implications: the Nordic countries, for example, have been more than happy to welcome

Ukrainian refugees fleeing from the ongoing war, whereas non-European refugees remain less welcome.

As our example of crip critique of the return to normal illustrates, the attention to vulnerability in the pandemic has brought out how this is frequently a question of *whose* vulnerability (Cole, 2016). Tensions in the wake of such questions also happen within feminism, for example in contemporary discussions around on-site conferences as needed and necessary for feminist community building, while at the same time exclusionary for those not able to travel, be it for health, financial or other reasons. Although we acknowledge that on-site meeting places and spaces are vital as communities and as collaborative, collective spaces, they can also be exclusionary spaces, as decolonial, queer and crip thinkers and activists have pointed out for a long time (Ahmed, 2012; Lorde, 1984; Mohanty, 1984; Schalk, 2022; Tuck and Yang, 2012) – not to mention the social and ecological problematics connected to travel that cannot be avoided with international on-site conferences.

As Piepzna-Samarasinha's "crip refusal" tells us, defending a "normal" because it suits the majority is a way of unseeing or forgetting the margins. It perpetuates the monster mechanisms of boundary-making without regard for the particularities of the situation, and leaves the responsibility of challenging or changing the boundary to the marginalised. In these times of "return", it seems many national and institutional systems are rigged for forgetting. But how can we find ways of taking action and speaking out against these monster mechanisms for structural differentiation that are so easily set in motion?

In their work on precarity, Butler (2004) connects marginalisation to questions of loss, mourning and grief. They argue that processing and experiencing loss and grief works under different conditions for those on the margins, whose mourning risks falling outside of normative structures for understanding and accommodating said loss: "what counts as a liveable life and a grievable death?" (xv). In their analysis, Butler refocuses loss and so-called national trauma to transnational structures of social (in)justice, and demonstrates how the wants and needs of the majority inadvertently marginalise those who fall outside of this normal. Following on from this, Butler asks whether insights from grief, loss and mourning can "lead to a normative reorientation for politics" (28). For us, Butler's insistence on the need for a reorientation contributes to our thinking-with Piepzna-Samarasinha's crip refusal: Can the insights from crip theory and activism reorient feminist politics today?

We say this again: our point is not to mine or extract crip organising strategies, but to learn from them and our own research in these fields. That

said, by wanting to use the insights from the crip community, we nevertheless risk doing exactly what we are trying to avoid. The majority of us writing this text are not disabled nor do we live with major chronic health challenges. However, some of us work in crip and disability studies, and some of us have serious health issues and chronic illnesses, as well as mental health issues. We bring these differences that are epistemological and experiential. We could make the feminist and activist tradition of solidarity and allyship into an argument here, but instead we are inspired by feminist scholar and activist akshay khanna who criticises the concept of solidarity because it clouds our understanding of recognition and responsibility:

> Actually, to me the language of solidarity is a bit problematic. I am opposed to the politics of solidarity because it assumes discontinuity between the struggles. The same applies to the idea of an 'ally'. It implies the possibility of imagining oneself outside a given problem. But there are deep continuities, whether we recognize them or not. The women's movement in Afghanistan has to be my movement as well, as long as I do not take on a position of appropriation and speak for that movement. So rather than being an ally or showing solidarity, I have to recognize myself as part of it. I have to figure out what I need to do in order to contribute to that, to be part of that movement. Solidarity is too easy a way of cutting ourselves from the responsibility but also from the possibility to act. (Saresma, Kyrölä, Koistinen and khanna, 2018, 44-45)

A similar thought is expressed by Sámi poet, writer, activist and artist Timimie Märak (2023): to individualise struggles is a hallmark of white feminism, with the result that some struggles attain hegemonic power in deciding what bodies and concerns count in the alleged feminist movement. One result of such thinking has been that Sámi feminist concerns with rights to land and water have been dismissed as irrelevant to mainstream feminism (Knobblock and Kuokkanen, 2015). To see struggles as connected means having a stake in the making-monster of others that demands an ethical engagement. For us, and for feminist monster studies, then, the challenge is to acknowledge, respect and recognise difference, without necessarily locking into place, without sticking it onto someone or something – or to ourselves, as its opposite.

Feminist and decolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) argues that belonging to the majority requires a recognition of one's own privilege. Writing about the epistemic violence that follows from defining and categorising something as "Other", also within already marginalised communities, she suggests to unlearn one's privilege: "seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject, [requires a] systematic unlearning" (91). For Spivak, the historically muted

subject is the subaltern woman, who is doubly marginalised by the universalising of Man and the colonised Other. Further, Sunaura Taylor (2014) connects the mechanisms behind the othering of both disabled people and nonhuman animals, foregrounding interdependence, where dependency should not be considered as something negative but a precondition of all life. Ultimately, she argues, "[t]he whole planet is interdependent" (113). Taylor suggests that we need to acknowledge differences in this interdependence: "[T]o understand another being who does not communicate in ways able-bodied/able-minded humans have historically valued, we must pay attention to individuals – learning from them so that we can recognize their agency and preferences" (110-111). In this, the monster is also about specifically feminist ethics, foregrounding attention to particular lived realities, vulnerabilities and relationalities rather than "universal" moral codes as foundational for our modes of being (Disprose, 1994; Tronto, 1993; Ahmed, 1998). Ahmed writes:

> Ethics becomes an issue that is internal to feminism itself, involving a recognition of the difference and otherness within feminist communities and self-reflexivity about the criteria used to make value judgements. The need to make decisions about values given *the absence of universalism leads to an ethics based on an engagement with an other that one cannot simply represent*. (Ahmed, 1998, 58; emphasis added)

To us, the monster can be a figuration for this kind of ethics: a figure for thinking with differences – kin to intersectionality, and key for activist struggles. When (or if) avoiding universalisation, the monster allows difference to be the common ground. For the monster and the monstrous, difference and diversity is normal(ity), insofar as the normal, given its problematic history, can ever be a useful definition or category to repurpose or reclaim.

In her *Broken Earth* trilogy (2015-2017), science fiction writer N.K. Jemisin problematises how "being different" can make you an outcast, and victim to institutional and social control and violence. Through the main character of the series, in the first part of the trilogy, *The Fifth Season* (2015), she articulates the costs of institutionalisation and structural regimes for bodies, knowledges, and practices: "One cannot reasonably expect sameness out of so much difference" (193). That said, Jemisin's storytelling also inspires hope: finding companionship as fellow outcasts, albeit for different reasons, enables the building of new communities across such differences. Although these new communities often require disentanglement from oppressors or universal norms for what counts as normal, human, or proper, they also require a willingness to revisit and

acknowledge differences within the marginalised community. Such re-entanglement of parallel struggles, while at the same time recognising what is not the same, is what the unruly and messy figure of the monster can facilitate. If left untamed, as in not squeezed into sameness, our conceptualisation of feminist monster studies highlights how the monster can serve as an ethical and political figuration for unruly differences.

Feminist monster studies

In this chapter, we have suggested feminist monster studies as a thinking tool for exploring tensions between what is considered (un)acceptable, and (un)stable or (dis)regarded bodies and knowledges. Importantly, this is not to "show" what is construed as monstrous or to lodge monstrous difference in certain bodies. Rather, we want to acknowledge how the monster reveals how machinations of structural difference are set in motion, maintained, and reproduced, at the same time as it challenges these very machinations (The Monster Network, 2021). As such, feminist monster studies is a way of reorienting feminist politics, as well as monster studies.

We suggest that feminist monster studies serve to conceptualise the genealogies of monster mechanisms from intersectional feminism and gender studies, queer, crip and decolonial theories and activisms, where what khanna calls "deep continuities" between struggles (Saresma, Kyrölä, Koistinen and khanna, 2018, 44-45) are recognised and respected. As our examples show, there is a diverse and multifaceted protest against settling for normality because the concept of normality operates exclusionary – it is a monster mechanism. Rather than policing the boundaries of the normal as something one can unproblematically return to, feminist monster studies is about operationalising the monster as a figure for thinking with difference/change. Perhaps the monster is what is needed in order to pay attention to the particular, embodied, contextual, and differences within groups – and species – not merely between? It is in the monster's natureculture that this will be messy and chaotic, but it can also open a much-needed space for dialogue and exchange.

Writing about the promises of monsters, Haraway (1992) suggests that the "task is to build more powerful collectives in dangerously unpromising times" (319). To expand this, we need to recognise our planetary interdependencies (bringing together human beings, nonhuman animals, ecosystems and habitats) and the ethical questions inherent in them (Taylor, 2014; Haraway, 2016). By using the pronoun 'we', we highlight the multiplicity and polyvocality of this monstrous endeavour, while recognising different responsibilities in these messy, planetary interdependencies.

The question, however, is not how the monster escapes, but how it is continuously stuck, moved and slid across – and gets locked into place. The unruliness of the monster may be daunting, but embracing difference as norm rather than clinging to normality is, in our research, a useful strategy for our times. As khanna articulates it: "[u]nruly politics is not a description of a new form of politics. It is about being able to see elements that were not earlier visible to traditional forms of analyses of politics" (Saresma, Kyrölä, Koistinen and khanna, 2018, 43). A similar tactic can be found in recent rearticulations of feminist ethics, for example María Puig de la Bellacasa's speculative ethics, where "ethics [is] about thick, impure involvement in a world where the question of how to care needs to be posed" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017, 6). We take these unruly politics and impure involvement as feminist monster methods to point out that the world and its structures of differentiation can be imagined otherwise. Our hope is that the monster continues to disrupt the purported return to normality in this global pandemic so that our crip, feminist, queer and decolonial communities may experience less exclusion and offer changes for living together in these challenging times.

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