



## Afterword

### "The first child born into the world was born deformed": Disability Representations in These Times

We began *Narrative Prosthesis* with an intent to analyze the shifting coordinates of disability representation in literature. Our central thesis situated itself around a belief that our stories come replete with images of disability and yet we lack a coherent methodology for recognizing and reckoning with that fact. Our effort has been to provide a series of analyses of key moments in a literary tradition of disability narrative.

Likewise, we have sought to comprehend literature as a medium of significance to our contemporary thinking about disability. Stories may be the preserve of stereotypical portrayals and reductive metaphors, but our emphasis stresses interpretive approach over retrograde imagery. What we "see" in these texts is often dependent on our own orientation or demeanor toward disability. "Out" and politicized scholars encourage the development of reading practices that embrace, transform, and reckon with our inherited disability story lines—much as Byron, in *The Deformed Transformed*, refashioned disability in Shakespeare—as a matter of Renaissance "ploy" and "stratagem"—into a matter of cosmic, social, and personal identity.<sup>1</sup>

Since the act of signification involves an entrance into an ambiguous field of meaning-making, our challenge here is to articulate some possibilities for the analysis of disability as an historically bequeathed subjectivity. The hereditary code that structures this history is neither complete nor inherently malfunctioning. Up to this point, our readings have set out to establish the terms of a more varied position from which we may approach our own contemporary moment's discursive understanding of disability. Consequently, we would like to conclude with the disability figuration that infuses recent U.S. writing as a prelude to an argument for the politics of