

Mirrors and Fears: Humans in the Bestiary

by

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ABSTRACT

The medieval bestiary is often simply described as a moralized "encyclopedia of animals," however, these so-called "books of beasts" were made for humans, by humans, about humans. It is therefore surprising that one common pictorial subject of the bestiary has been left unexamined: humans. By viewing bestiary images through this lens, one may easily see man's underlying and unresolved struggle to maintain dominance over the beasts, and the Others projected onto them, thereby ensuring that "the (hu)man" remains a discrete definition.

This study begins as the bestiary does, with the Naming of the Animals. Illustrations of Adam as a king, bestowing names of his choosing upon tame beasts express a kind of nostalgia for a now-lost time when humanity was secure in their identity as non-animal. This security no longer exists in the postlapsarian world, nor in the bestiary images following these scenes.

In an attempt to maintain the illusion of dominion, many bestiary illuminations forego simple descriptive images in favor of gory hunting scenes. However, these conspicuous declarations of dominion only serve to highlight the fragility of the physical form, and even demonstrate the frailty of the human (male, Christian) identity. One such example is MS Bodley 764's boar illumination, in which the animal is killed at the hands of male hunters. This thesis unpacks this image of dominion in order to reveal the associated insecurities regarding race, gender, and species that lie beneath the surface. Subsequently, the study turns to the many bestiary images depicting human bodies brutally fragmented within the jaws of an animal. Anthropophagous bestiary animals often carry fears of the gender and ethnic Other; despite the bestiary's posturing of order and hierarchy, both the human body and identity are easily consumed and subsumed into the ever-present animal/Other. Just as in life, the human figures in the bestiary

struggle to establish unquestioned dominion, only to be constantly undercut by the abject. By using a psychoanalytic approach to the human bodies of the bestiary, this study will explore how this imagery reflects the ambiguous position and definition of the human.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Beanz, Bebe, Birdie, Big Kitty, Bubbles Bubbleinksi, Cleo, Dusty, Gary, Heidi, Inu, Kacey, Lucifer, Michiba-san, Mitzi, Mr. Jingles, Oscar, Peaches, Pepper, Percy, Puff Daddy, Shelby, Shiloh, Sparky, Spike, Tashi, Tookie, Tuska, et al
(including the parakeets, chickens, and fish).

In other words: to all the non-human animals with whom I shared my life.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the 12th century, Alain de Lille decreed "every creature of the world is a book or picture, and also a mirror for ourselves."¹ Within this framework medieval bestiaries were created as a didactic mirror for humans. Each entry in these heavily-illustrated encyclopedic works focuses on the characteristics and behaviors of a particular animal and, most importantly, how this information instructs humans to "live well" (*bene vivere*). It is not surprising that human dominance is an overarching theme of these anthropocentric books in light of the medieval belief that humanity's God-given dominance over animals is central to the definition of "the human." However, the premise of human dominion is both supported and undermined by an unexpected addition in bestiary illuminations: human figures.

Not only do human figures abound in the supposed "book of beasts," but a great deal of these human bodies are engaged in a violent encounter with an animal. For example, many bestiary illuminations forego simple descriptive images in favor of gory hunting scenes, in which the hunted animal is shown pierced and bleeding at the hands of male hunters. As recently argued by Karl Steel, this brute force was not seen as indicative of humanity's superior physical strength, but rather as an expression of "reason."² Medieval theologians and philosophers adhered to the definition of humanity presented by Saint Augustine, who argued that "... man is superior to animals by virtue of his reason, this is clear to all: animals can be domesticated and tamed by men, but men not at all by animals."³ If the domination of animals is the integral component in

¹ "Omnis mundi creature Quasi liber et pictura Nobis est et speculum." Trans. by Laura Hobgood-Oster, *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 76.

² Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Animals and Violence in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011).

³ Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, trans. David Moser (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 44.

defining the human, then a human *killing* an animal is an extreme assertion of "the human" as distinct and dominant. Within this framework, animals and humans were defined solely in relation to one another, stemming from a relationship based on domination which is routinely enacted through violence.⁴ As the Animal Studies Group has stated, "The killing of animals is a structural feature of all human-animal relations. It reflects human power over animals at its most extreme and yet also at its most commonplace."⁵ In order to create the distinction of "human" there must be "non-human;" the animal must be fully rejected and killed as Other.

Astonishingly, however, bestiary imagery also includes human figures brutally fragmented between the jaws of an animal - either as an agonized victim or a grotesquely rotting corpse. Violent animals and their human quarry haunt the medieval bestiary, just as they haunted the medieval landscape. Despite the bestiary's posturing of order and hierarchy, these images remind the viewer that theological claims of dominion do not survive the mastication of animal teeth. The illustrations of violently wounded and broken human bodies not only attest to the fragility of the physical form, but also demonstrate the frailty of human (male, Christian) identity. Anthropophagous bestiary animals are often associated with fears of the gender and ethnic Other; both the human body and identity are consumed and subsumed into the ever-present animal/Other.

The bestiary is a man-made object, one which might have easily depicted unchallenged human authority - and to some extent it does. Scenes such as Adam Naming the Animals, and even the manuscripts themselves, construct a façade of human dominion. Yet the animal refuses to play by the rules or maintain the boundaries. Just as in life, the human figures in the bestiary struggle to establish unquestioned dominion, only to be constantly undercut by the abject. By using a psychoanalytic approach to the

⁴ Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 35.

⁵ Animal Studies Group, *Killing Animals* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 4.

human bodies of 13th-century English bestiaries, I will explore how this gory imagery polishes and distorts the "mirror" of the bestiary as it reflects the ambiguous position and definition of the human.

The Book of Beasts

Animals were viewed not as fellow creatures, but rather as didactic materials to aid man in his quest for salvation. As Job explains, "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee: and the birds of the air, and they shall tell thee. Speak to the earth, and it shall answer thee: and the fishes of the sea shall tell. Who is ignorant that the hand of the Lord hath made all these things?" (JB 12:7-9)⁶ The bestiary acted as a kind of edifying mirror that reflected animal characteristics and illuminated God's instructions as to how one should (or should not) comport oneself as a good Christian. Or, in the words of Cynthia White, "a gloss on creation... to teach Scripture."⁷ The bestiary text stems mainly from classical and medieval hexaemeral literature and encyclopedias, resulting in a fascinating amalgam of moralizations, animal lore, theology, and natural science which is often replete with bold and delightful imagery.

Medieval bestiaries derive their text from two main sources: *Physiologus*-B and Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies*. The core source is *Physiologus*, an anonymous, late-antique compendium that served to "decode" nature into Christian teachings. Each entry for the twenty-five to fifty animals includes biblical quotations, physical and behavioral characteristics of the animal in question, and an allegorical explanation that ties the two together. It was likely written in Alexandria, and is largely responsible for the more "exotic" animals in the bestiary, such as the lion and hyena. It was significantly popular during the Middle Ages, with translations in Latin, Ethiopic, Arabic, Armenian, Syriac,

⁶ All Biblical quotes in this manuscript are from the Douay-Rheims English translation of the Vulgate, as published online at <http://www.latinvulgate.com>

⁷ Cynthia White, *From the Ark to the Pulpit: An Edition and translation of the "Transitional" Northumberland Bestiary* (Louvain-La-Neuve: Publications de L'Institut D'Études Médiévales: 2009), 8.

Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, Spanish, Italian, and Provençal.⁸ As a summation of ancient natural history, it still held considerable authority during the Middle Ages, evidenced by the bestiary's frequent inclusion of the phrase "Physiologus says..."

Isidore of Seville's *Etymologies* (c. 560-636), a secular text which catalogued non-Christian morals as revealed by etymologies, provided the second major source of bestiary information, and even the name "bestiary" itself from Book 12 "*Etymologiae: Bestiarum vocabulum*".⁹ The bestiary follows Isidore's arrangement of animals and adds a more encyclopedic tone.¹⁰ In addition, both Isidore and the bestiary text itself draw heavily on *Historia naturalis* (ca. 77 CE) by Pliny the Elder, who argued that man's divinely bestowed *ratio* (reason) allows him learn from animals, since "animals were instruments, even mediators, between man and the divinity in nature."¹¹ Other significant sources include Gaius Julius Solinus' *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* (3rd c. CE), Hrabanus Maurus' *De naturis rerum* (ca. 776-856 CE), St. Ambrose's *Hexaemeron* (4th c. CE) and the anonymous *De bestiis et aliis rebus* (ca. 842-846 CE). This list is by no means exhaustive; time, location, and context influenced further additions and deletions across the bestiary tradition.

The study of the ninety surviving bestiaries' textual compositions by M.R. James broke the manuscripts in four "families," which were later broken down into further groups by scholars such as Florence McCulloch, Wilma George, and W.B. Yapp.¹² For reasons unexplained, none of these scholars referenced the illustration styles or content while forming the various families. Most of the main manuscripts I will be analyzing, with two exceptions, which I will introduce below, come from the "second family" - the

⁸ Richard Barber, ed., *Bestiary: Being an English Version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford MS Bodley 764* (London: Folio Society, 1992), 9.

⁹ White, *Northumberland*, 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 9.

¹² M.R. James, *The Bestiary* (Oxford: Roxburghe Club, 1928); Florence McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960); Wilma George and W.B. Yapp, *Naming of the Beasts: Natural History in the Medieval Bestiary* (London: Duckworth, 1991).

largest and most celebrated of the four bestiary families. This family includes double the number of chapters (108 subjects) of early manuscripts and makes a strong attempt to address everyday human weaknesses.¹³ Most of my study pulls from the major luxury bestiaries of this family: the Aberdeen Bestiary, the Ashmole Bestiary, and Bodley 764. All major examples in my study come from England, the home of the vast majority of bestiaries, and were created within the early to mid-thirteenth century.

Of all surviving bestiary manuscripts, Aberdeen University Library 24 and Bodleian Library, Ashmole 1511 (known as the Aberdeen and Ashmole bestiary, respectively) are widely considered the most luxurious. The fine parchment seems literally to glow with burnished gold leaf on large, vibrant miniatures populated with elegant figures that typify early-thirteenth-century style English art.¹⁴ Although their patrons remain unknown, it is clear they were wealthy. Their miniatures appear extremely similar; it is likely they were both copied from a now-lost manuscript by artists of the same tradition, with the Aberdeen created around 1200 and the Ashmole produced in the following decade. Slightly farther away on the bestiary family tree, but only slightly less brilliant, is Bodleian Library MS Bodley 764 (ca. 1240-1250), whose details and patronage is addressed at length in Chapter 2.

Although my two other major examples are not second family bestiaries, they were created in England around the time of the previously mentioned manuscripts. Their iconography is notably different from the aforementioned bestiaries, and they therefore work as productive tools to 'read against' their more celebrated counterparts. Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 602 is a first family bestiary from the 2nd quarter of the thirteenth century. Although it lacks gold leaf, the illustrations are brightly colored and dynamic.

¹³ Aberdeen Bestiary Project, "The Families of Text," <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/what.hti#families>; Willene Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts: The Second Family Bestiary* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 23.

¹⁴ Clark, *Book of Beasts*, 68.

Moreover, the manuscript teems with images of violence between humans and animals. Another major bestiary for my study, J. Paul Getty Museum, MS. 100 (known as the "Northumberland Bestiary"), is a so-called "transitional" First family bestiary which provides several unabashedly sexual images, including a great deal of exposed human genitalia. Both of these manuscripts encourage a critique of the other bestiary images in this study.

From these five major bestiaries, and additional examples from supplementary manuscripts, I hope to provide insight into overarching attitudes and specific issues regarding various (species, gender, ethnic) Others in 13th century England. Unfortunately, the scope of this project does not allow for a wider consideration of all humans within the bestiary - of which there are many. This selection, however, provides an analysis of the bestiary "mirror" not as a reflection of nature, but as a reflection of human constructs and concerns.

A New Approach to Bestiary Scholarship

Despite the popularity of medieval bestiaries during the Middle Ages and the numerous surviving luxury bestiaries in the present day, serious scholarship on bestiaries is limited in quantity and narrow in approach. The first academic study of medieval bestiaries appeared in 1928 with M.R. James' facsimile of MS Ii 4. 26 with accompanying commentary on bestiaries in general entitled *The Bestiary: Being A Reproduction in Full of Ms. Ii 4. 26 in the University Library, Cambridge*. He embarked on a philological study that led to the controversial "families" of bestiaries still used to group and categorize these manuscripts today. He also insisted the bestiary lacked any literary or scientific merit and should merely be enjoyed as fanciful picture books.¹⁵ Even decades later serious scholarship on the bestiaries was lacking. T.H. White published the first English translation of a medieval bestiary in 1954, albeit with the exclusion of the

¹⁵ Ibid, 1.

Biblical exegeses he deemed uninteresting and unimportant. In 1960 Florence McCulloch published *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, a critical work in bestiary studies, which critiqued and improved James' bestiary families. She also warned curious scholars that bestiary studies are "a bottomless pit."¹⁶ It was not until the end of the twentieth century that bestiaries were again the subject of serious scholarly study. However, they continued to be analyzed from the realm of philology and codicology with little critical theory or art historical analysis.

Despite the early insistence that bestiaries were merely entertaining picture books, all previously mentioned sources focused on textual precedents, manuscript usage, and/or codicology rather than the numerous formal elements. Only two major books focus on bestiaries in art historical terms. Both are fairly recent. The first, *The Medieval Book of Beasts* (2006) by Willene B. Clark, brushes up against art history by providing a strictly formal analysis of all major second-family bestiaries. Clark does, however, highlight the dearth of art historical analysis in the vast majority of previous bestiary studies. Debra Hassig's important work *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, and Ideology* (1994) is the first and only work to focus on intersections between bestiary text and imagery. She performs iconographic and semiotic studies of bestiary illuminations in light of their cultural contexts. Each of the fourteen chapters focuses on one specific animal across twenty-eight 12th-14th century bestiaries.

Hassig's work on bestiaries remains unparalleled in its depth and breadth of research on bestiaries and their imagery. However, it is still rooted in the wider approach to animals in medieval art in general, which is centered on iconographic interpretations of specific allegorical animals. Efforts to decode animal-symbols is useful to a degree, particularly in medieval art, but this tactic slides over the general but fascinating and powerful category of "animal" as "non-human." Although bestiaries are often derided for

¹⁶ Ibid, 8.

being anthropocentric, the research is curiously indifferent to the many human figures. I intend to venture into new territory within the realm of bestiary studies by reversing the usual position of inquiry and focusing on human figures rather than animals. This topic must be addressed, as these figures are an integral component of bestiary ideology - both explicitly and implicitly.

CHAPTER 2

ADAM "GIVES THEIR NAMES, HIS NAMES, TO THE ANIMALS"

I would like to begin where the bestiary often begins -- with the naming of the animals. The majority of surviving bestiaries begin with an illumination of this scene, which generally follows a certain convention: Adam, clad in stately robes, stands before (and separate from) a rich variety of animals and names them to his desire. This not only illustrates Genesis 2:19-20, wherein God created the animals and "brought them to Adam to see what he would call them... And Adam called all the beasts by their names," but demonstrates the opening of the bestiary text itself: "Adam, as the first man, gave to all living beings a designation, calling each by a name which corresponded to the present order and according to their nature and function."¹⁷ However, this popular scene is extremely scarce in contexts outside of the bestiary during the Middle Ages. Why, then, is it repeated throughout the bestiary tradition?

I believe the answer lies in a running theme of all medieval human-animal discourse: dominion. Adam's naming of the animals is not only an act of dominion, but his *first* act of dominion. It is an act that becomes the foundation of human subjugation of animals in the Christian West, along with God's directive to subdue the Earth and have dominion over "every living thing that moveth upon the Earth." (Gen 1:28) More importantly, human dominion over animals was also used as *the* defining trait of the human. In Saint Augustine's work *Eighty-Three Different Questions* he asks "what proof is there that men are superior to animals?" His answer is simple and direct: "... man is superior to animals by virtue of his reason, this is clear to all: animals can be domesticated and tamed by men, but men not at all by animals."¹⁸ Augustine adhered to the common marker of "reason" - however, his evidence of reason is not, say, the ability

¹⁷ Barber, *Bestiary*, 19.

¹⁸ Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, 44.

to argue his humanity in the first place. Instead, reason is proven by the human ability to train, domesticate, and/or tame (in short: dominate) animals. Writing *On Free Choice of the Will*, he asserts "there is something that is present in our souls in virtue of which we are superior, which is lacking in their souls, thus allowing them to be subdued by us... what better name for that than 'reason'?"¹⁹ This concept was still present in the culture of medieval England, the producer of the vast majority of bestiaries. For example, the 12th century English natural philosopher Adelard of Bath justified human dominance over animals on the basis of "reason, by which he (man) excels the very brute animals so much that they are tamed by it."²⁰

Yet, when viewed in relation to the succeeding folios filled with gruesome human deaths at the paws and jaws of vicious animals, these scenes no longer seem like resolute reflections of dominion. Instead, they appear to be nostalgic longings for a now-lost moment when humankind had total control and, therefore, total security in our identity - a time when we were free from the abject, when we could resolutely declare "not me, not that."²¹ Thus the scenes are also an angry reminder of how the world *should* be – more specifically, who should be the active subject (man) and who should be passive object (women, animals, et al.). It becomes, in the words of Jeffrey Cohen, "a prehistory during which the subject could feel at home in his own body, at home in the world."²² However, as Cohen adds, "no place can ever be as certain, as paradisaal, or as full as the imaginary left behind."²³

Dominion and subjectivity in bestiaries also play out in interesting ways through the use of nudity. Looking for a modern definition of nudity, one may turn to Derrida

¹⁹ Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. by Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 15.

²⁰ Adelard of Bath, *Conversations with His Nephew: Questions on Natural Science*, ed. and trans. by Charles Burnett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 121.

²¹ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay On Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 2.

²² Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 7.

²³ *Ibid*, 9.

who remarked “nudity is nothing other than that passivity, the involuntary exhibition of the self.”²⁴ Margaret Miles, meanwhile, notes that nakedness in the Middle Ages was “the mark of powerlessness and passivity,” used as an artistic convention to denote captives, slaves, and the dead.²⁵ Medieval thought also inherited long-held beliefs in “natural” female passivity, echoing early ideas such as Aristotle's assertion that “the male stands for the effective and active, and the female... for the passive”²⁶ or Philo's claim that “the female gender is material, passive, corporeal... while the male is active, rational and incorporeal.”²⁷ The inversion of the active/male and passive/female was a constant threat to male sexuality and supremacy. “Passivity” is of further concern in the bestiary, where the animals are decidedly *not* passive in the postlapsarian world. Unlike Adam, humans are now unsure of their dominance and therefore no longer feel “at home” in the world.

The Ashmole Bestiary

The contrast and importance of active and passive is especially remarkable in the Ashmole Bestiary. This second family bestiary was created around the year 1210 CE and, like several other luxury bestiaries, includes a creation cycle immediately before the Naming scene.²⁸ This particular cycle includes the Creation of Eve (Fig. 1). Images of the Creation of Eve usually follow an easily identifiable iconography: Adam reclines on his side as Eve emerges from a slit in his chest, while God often assists by pulling her out. This bestiary, however, provides a unique reversal. Although the bodies are nude, there are no distinguishing genitalia to differentiate the two as male or female. It is unclear

²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 11.

²⁵ Margaret Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 81.

²⁶ Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* 1.20. Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/AriGene.html> Accessed October 31st 2013

²⁷ Philo, *Questiones et solutiones in Genesim* 1.8. Quoted in Miles, *Carnal Knowing*, 56.

²⁸ Clark, *Book of Beasts*, 239.

whether this ambiguity is the result of modesty or perhaps an argument for prelapsarian androgyny (with sexual difference resulting from the Fall). Regardless, Adam can only be identified by the wound on his side, where he recently forfeited a rib to acquire Eve. His side wound makes him more than just the first man, he is a pre-figure of Christ. This typology is emphasized as God points to the wound with elongated fingers. Eve, on the other hand, is not acknowledged by God nor given positive associations.



Figure 1. *Creation of Adam and Eve*. Bodlein Library, MS. Ashmole 1511, f7r.



Figure 2. *Creation of Adam and Eve*. Aberdeen University Library, Univ. Lib. MS 24, f3r.

This iconographic reversal is extremely rare, and therefore likely done to communicate a particular (misogynist) message. Within the construct of male/active and female/passive, it is telling that this Eve is presented as passively spread before the viewer, nude and asleep. Unlike, for example, the extremely similar figure in the Aberdeen Bestiary (Fig. 2), the Ashmole Eve's hand rests on her thigh, making no move to conceal her nudity. She is open and visible. This particular Eve appears as a precursor to Renaissance reclining nudes, such as Giorgioni's *Sleeping Venus*, where the female body is displayed for the gaze of the viewer, who is not threatened by any return gaze.

Adam's nudity, on the contrary, is tastefully concealed from the gaze by Eve's arresting form. He is engaged in an animated conversation with God. Adam, the more rational and God-like of the two humans, receives the special knowledge he will use in the subsequent folio to name the animals. He faces God and engages him in conversation, using his human prerogative of language. He is *active*. Eve turns away with closed eyes, physically excluded from their conversation and metaphorically excluded from the Word.

The next scene depicted in the Ashmole Bestiary is Adam Naming the Animals, which covers an entire page. Slightly more than half of all bestiary manuscripts within Wilma George and Brunson Yapp's extensive study include this scene, only two of which include an accurately nude Adam.²⁹ A clothed prelapsarian Adam is as rare outside of bestiaries as is the scene of Adam Naming the Animals. One non-bestiary example of an artistic representation of Adam Naming is in the 13th-century mosaic in the dome of San Marco in Venice. (Fig. 3). Adam is depicted accurately, and frontally, nude. He places one hand on the head of a lion and raises the other hand in a gesture of speaking -- presumably he is in the process of naming "the king of beasts." Yet he looks back to God for confirmation. God sits in majesty behind Adam, raising his hand as if he is approving the animals' names. Within this construction, Adam is merely a conduit for God's divine knowledge, not an active creator of names. A notably similar composition can be found in one of the two nude figures of Adam in the bestiary; the Naming scene in Gonville and Caius College MS 372/621 depicts a nude Adam (with hidden genitalia) before an array of animals (Fig. 4). He raises his hand in speech/naming, but looks back to a stately God for affirmation.

²⁹ George and Yapp, *The Naming of the Beasts*, 37. As noted by George and Yapp, the exclusion of Naming scenes from some bestiaries may, at least in some instances, be explained the result of lost folios or lost folios in the model that was copied. The official count of 40 surviving bestiaries includes incomplete manuscripts.



Figure 3. *Adam Names the Animals*. Basilica di San Marco, Venice, Italy.



Figure 4. *Adam Names the Animals*. Gonville and Caius College MS 372/621, f.2v.

Both of these images reflect Genesis, wherein God created the animals "and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them." (Gen 2:19) Derrida notes that God allows Adam to name, but remains close by: "He lets him indulge in the naming all by himself. But he is waiting around the corner, watching over this man alone with a

mixture of curiosity and authority. God observes: Adam is observed... he names under observation."³⁰ With the exception mentioned above, bestiaries argue for a stronger sense of human dominion by removing God from the picture and giving a clothed prelapsarian Adam full control. No longer merely a passive instrument of God, bestiary Adam becomes a secular king, prophet, and/or a prefigure of Christ.³¹ Human supremacy must be established before the bestiary presents its main focus: the similitude between humans and animals.

In the full-page miniature showing Adam Naming the Animals (Fig. 5) in the Ashmole Bestiary, Adam is separated from the animals, who are separated further into groups "according to its function in nature."³² The carefully organized animals bring to mind a comment made by Margaret Miles: "Patriarchal cultures, in spite of their many dissimilarities, share a common need to preserve male control that is thought of simply as 'order.'"³³ The richly colored animals face Adam, obediently awaiting their designation. They crowd their restricted space, creating a sense of abundance. This abundance is not unruly, however, as Adam is firmly in control. Enthroned like a king or Christ in majesty, Adam holds a scroll with the words "here Adam names the animals" in Latin.³⁴ The other hand is raised in the gesture of a preacher.³⁵ His long classical robes create a strong contrast to his nude form on the preceding folio. They are an important marker of his power, a visual distinction to the animals passively receiving their names.

³⁰ Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, 16.

³¹ For more see Xenia Muratova "Adam donne leur noms aux animaux' : L'iconographie de la scène dans l'art du Moyen Age: les manuscrits des bestiaires enluminés du XIIe et XIIIe siècles," *Studi Medievali* 18 (1977): 327-394.

³² Aberdeen Bestiary Project, Trans. by Morton Gauld and Colin McLaren, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/translat/5v.hti>

³³ Margaret Miles, *Carnal Knowing*, 167.

³⁴ "Hic dat domina bestiis Adam"

³⁵ Muratova, "Adam donne leurs noms aux animaux," 377.



Figure 5. *Adam Names the Animals*. Bodleian Library, MS. Ashmole 1511, 9r.

Adam's blue robe and red cloak mimic those worn by God in the Creation of Adam and Eve (Fig. 1). In fact Adam appears identical to the figure of God, lacking only the cruciform halo. This probably reflects the biblical (and bestiary) text that "God created man in his own image."³⁶ This passage not only differentiates man from the other animals (who were *not* made in God's image), but also plays an important ideological role in human dominion. As Thomas Aquinas explained:

"Man is said to be after the image of God, not as regards his body, but as regards that whereby he excels other animals. Hence, when it is said, 'Let us make man to our image and likeness,' it is added, 'And let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea.' Now man excels all animals by his reason and intelligence; hence it is according to his intelligence and reason, which are incorporeal, that man is said to be according to the image of God."³⁷

Human likeness to God is based solely on reason and intelligence, which allows dominion. However, it is difficult to depict this "incorporeal" quality. Therefore the artist makes Adam in the image of God quite literally, contributing to the theme of human dominion.

Adam's gesture in the Ashmole Bestiary scene indicates that he is in the process of carrying out his divine order to name. This is an important detail both for identifying the scene and identifying "the human." The first utterance to leave his mouth created yet another border: language. This image contains an underlying dichotomy, with human language (God and his Word, Adam and his spoken word) opposite to dumb beasts. The bestiary clarifies that "Adam gave them names, not in Greek or Latin, nor in any of the languages of the barbarian peoples, but in that language which was common to all

³⁶ Aberdeen Bestiary Project, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/translat/3r.hti>

³⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Kindle Edition.

peoples before the Flood."³⁸ In this way Adam not only possesses language, but one in which words reflect what things really are. The emphasis on the word sets the stage for the succeeding bestiary entries, which begin with animal name etymologies. The etymologies, however, are antediluvian and therefore impure; yet they are an attempt to return to Adam's pure truth through language. Adam's act of naming, as well as the bestiary's fascination with etymologies, simultaneously exemplify humanity's divinely given reason -- expressed through language -- and also determine subject (the human) and object (the thing to be named). Then, as now, language was a primary marker of humanity.

Spoken language was not enough - the ability for human language to be written down was also an important indicator of humanity. During the height of bestiary popularity and production, Thomas of Cantimpré wrote an encyclopedia of the natural world entitled *Liber de natura rerum*. This work, which subsequently influenced other writers including Bartholomaeus Anglicus and even Thomas's teacher Albertus Magnus, contains the following passage: "all voices are either distinct or indistinct: the human voice is distinct, and animal indistinct. A distinct voice is one that can be written, such as A or E; an indistinct voice is one that cannot be written, such as the moaning of the sick or the voices of birds and beasts."³⁹ Within bestiary images of Adam Naming the Animals, Adam is often holding a scroll of written words, as seen in the Ashmole illumination. The bestiary as a physical object holds power, as the act of *writing* the words gives them authority. This supremacy is echoed in its materiality -- the words of humanity's dominion are inscribed on the flesh of dead animals with a bird feather quill.

Language, the divider between human and animal, comes at a price: loneliness. Today we congratulate ourselves on our complex language while simultaneously

³⁸ Barber, *Bestiary*, 19.

³⁹ David Badke, "The Medieval Bestiary," www.bestiary.ca. Translation by Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 55.

attempting to teach chimpanzees sign language and decipher dolphin calls. The bestiary's text on Adam Naming the Animals is an extrapolation on Genesis 2:20, the passage that tells readers God decided "it is not good that man should be alone" and wishes to make Adam a "helper like himself." He presents the animals to Adam, who "called all the beasts by their names, and all the fowls of the air, and all the cattle of the field: but for Adam there was not found a helper like himself." (Gen 2:20). The animals were insufficient in easing man's loneliness, so God created Eve. Even though the bestiary is clearly drawing from Genesis, the Ashmole Bestiary (and the other similar examples) make an important change -- the Creation of Adam and Eve are depicted only a few folios before (f7r), yet here Eve is absent. The bestiary's odd conflation of both Genesis stories restricts Eve solely to the scene of her creation. Adam creates the names he gives, while Eve remains passively created. He is now "man *alone* and *before* woman who... gives their names, his names, to the animals."⁴⁰ Within the Ashmole Bestiary, Eve is never shown as anything other than a passive nude. In contrast, Adam is clothed as he denominates just as God is clothed as he creates. Adam cannot be actively naming *and* naked.

But why not? According to Genesis, "they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." (Gen 2:25) Adam is only clothed once he feels shame. As Derrida asks, "ashamed of what and before whom?" Adam is not facing the manuscript reader, but rather the animals, who face him in return. He is under their scrutiny as he imparts their names. In this way Adam's clothes actually undermine the control he is trying to project. His potential embarrassment acknowledges their gaze, making him perhaps feel like Derrida "when, caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal... I have trouble repressing a reflex of shame."⁴¹

⁴⁰ Derrida, *Animal*, 15.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 3-4.

Derrida then goes on to point out that "with the exception of man, no animal as ever thought to dress itself," adding "Man would be the only one to have invented a garment to cover his sex. He would be a man only to the extent that he was able to be naked, that is to say, to be ashamed." This makes clothing "inseparable from all the other figures of what is 'proper to man,' even if one talks about it less than speech or reason, the *logos*, history, laughing, mourning, burial, the gift, etc."⁴² In the case of a clothed prelapsarian Adam Naming the Animals, it seems as though the ideology of dominance is more important than faithfulness to the text. Adam must be separate from animals to be dominant. If he was nude and shameless under their gaze, he would be "naked as a beast."⁴³ And yet to acknowledge their gaze (and therefore cover himself up) is to give the animals the agency so vehemently denied. Adam's clothing becomes like many other protestations of dominion during the Middle Ages. By constantly arguing for human dominion over animals, these pronouncements merely highlighted the need to make such declarations.

The Northumberland Bestiary

J. Paul Getty MS 100 -- known as the Northumberland Bestiary -- is a particularly unique mid-thirteenth century bestiary. It begins with a fairly straight forward creation cycle, including the separation of the waters from the Earth, as well as the creation of trees, the sun, the moon, stars, birds, and fishes. These folios are followed by a striking image that, at first glance, seems to complete the cycle with Day 6, the creation of the beasts, Adam, and Eve (Fig. 6). Rather than visually separating the creation of animals from the creation of humans, as does the Ashmole Bestiary, this manuscript places both groups in one image with God between them. The animals, most of whom are in gendered pairs, are placed on the left side (sinister side). Completely nude figures of

⁴² Ibid, 5.

⁴³ Ibid, 4.

Adam and Eve are placed on the right with heads bowed in obedience as they are addressed by a clothed God. He hands Adam a scroll while raising his other hand in a gesture of speech or an indication towards the animals.



Figure 6. *Creation of Adam and Eve (?)*. J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 100, f3v.

Descriptions of this image highlight the ambiguity surrounding the subject matter. The official digital facsimile on the Getty website labels this image as "The Creation of the Animals, Adam, and Eve."⁴⁴ Bestiary scholars George and Yapp note that "God in the centre has presumably just created Eve as well as the reptiles and beasts."⁴⁵ It is unclear why they believe Adam is excused from this scene of creation. Ron Baxter

⁴⁴ White, *Northumberland*, 389. J. Paul Getty Museum, *The Northumberland Bestiary*, <http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=304109>.

⁴⁵ George and Yapp, *Name of the Beast*, 31.

captions the image "the creation of the animals and God blessing Adam and Eve."⁴⁶ Cynthia White moves beyond a simple label of "creation" and adds: "God points his right index finger as though assigning Adam and Even dominion over the animals, or, perhaps, admonishing them."⁴⁷ I believe the main focus of this multivalent image is the moment immediately *following* their creation (both in Genesis and the bestiary text) at which God instructs them "...replenish the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and all animals that move upon the earth."⁴⁸ More than likely, this is a scene of their creation, their dominion, and a foreshadowing to their fall (hence the cheeky monkey and their bowed heads). Regardless of which scene is actually depicted, it must be noted that most scholars are (politely?) silent on the *only* detailed rendering of the first parents' nudity in a bestiary.

The exception to this silence is George and Yapp, who describe only the Adam figure as "naked" and Eve as "beautiful but bashful."⁴⁹ However, she is naked as well and her gestures do not appear bashful at all. With one hand she seems to reach for the scroll intended for Adam, while the other is dangerously close to Adam's exposed penis. Adam restrains her by grasping her wrist and pushing her back with his elbow (or sinfully pulling her forward?). Even before the Fall, Adam had the position of power. As Augustine notes, "even before her sin, woman had been made to be ruled by her husband and to be submissive and subject to him."⁵⁰ She did not, however, stay submissive - and *this* Eve is not submissive either. She tries to obtain God's knowledge, which he imparts to the rational Adam, and Adam only. Yet, she cannot receive God's knowledge as she is ruled by pleasure-seeking behaviors, which is communicated with her other hand as it

⁴⁶ Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1998), 120.

⁴⁷ White, *Northumberland*, 389.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 55. See also Genesis 1:28.

⁴⁹ George and Yapp, *Naming of the Beasts*, 30.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* II.31, 32; ACW 42, 162-165. As cited in Miles, *Carnal Knowing*, 96.

gropes for Adam's genitals. Unlike the Ashmole Eve, this Eve is not passive. She is actively defiant and defiant in her activity. As punishment for this disobedience, all women "deserve to have her husband for a master" which Augustine describes as "a condition similar to that of slavery."⁵¹

Such a brazen depiction of genitalia on Adam and Eve is rare in art of this time, and even more so in bestiaries. In fact, this illumination is the *only* depiction of Adam's penis in a medieval bestiary. His unconcealed phallus declares him as resolutely and unambiguously male, and therefore ready to receive God's knowledge. Eve, meanwhile, turns her genitals away from the viewer, perhaps as an allusion to her role in the fall of humankind and ensuing shame. God's divine body is hidden beneath voluminous robes. In contrast, Adam and Eve's bodies are displayed in their very real humanity and corporeality.

The inclusion of copious pubic hair is also a detail unique to this bestiary.⁵² It is drawn similarly to the fur on the ape, who eats the tempting fruit while making eye contact with Adam and Eve. As Xenia Muratova notes, "the apple in its hands is an allusion to the Fall, which reminds man of his mortal sin just as he reaches the climax of his earthly life."⁵³ This piece of fruit is instrumental to their fall and the loss of their God-given dominion. The ape crosses its legs, simultaneously communicating its own awareness of its exposed genitals, and preventing Adam and Eve from viewing them. S/he prefaces their fall, and their subsequent animality. Their pubic hair, therefore, signifies both their humanity, making them less-than-divine, and their animality, making them as less-than-human; both denote their susceptibility to sin, and consequently their eventual fall.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² The Adam figure included in MS Harley 3244 also has a hint of pubic hair.

⁵³ Muratova, "Adam donne leurs noms," 377. "Une pomme dans ses mains est une allusion à la Chute, qui rappelle à l'homme le péché mortel juste au moment où il atteint le point culminant de sa vie terrestre."



Figure 7. *Adam Names the Animals*. J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 100, f5v.

The Northumberland Bestiary's depiction of Adam Naming the Animals is likewise unique within the bestiary tradition (Fig. 7). The animals are not confined to carefully drawn boxes or organized by "types," like those in the Ashmole Bestiary. Instead they are squeezed together within the space, often touching -- yet separated from Adam by a purposefully drawn thick line. The stroke of a pen places the wide range of animals -- from snails to lions, quadrupeds to birds, omnivores and carnivores -- into the category of "animal" and "Other."

In keeping with bestiary tradition, Adam is clothed in robes like a prophet or king. Eve and God are absent, but he is assisted by two crowned female figures. Although he is actively giving the animals their names, they are not passively or adoringly receiving their designation. Instead, they fail to acknowledge him. The docile creatures of the Ashmole bestiary are replaced with lively animals that intimidate, fight, and even eat one another. This carnivorousness runs counter to established ideology, bestiary tradition, and the Northumberland Bestiary text itself: "And God said, Behold, I have given you every seed-bearing plant upon the earth, and all trees... that they may be food for you, and all animals of the earth; and every bird of the sky and all beings that move on the earth... may have them to eat."⁵⁴ The ape from the Creation scene, still eating the forbidden fruit among the chaos, is the only figure to look out at the audience.

Much about this unique bestiary remains enigmatic, but perhaps this rampant disobedience can be attributed to Adam's relative passivity. He is no longer "man *alone*" who "gives their names, his names, to the animals."⁵⁵ Instead he is assisted by two (female) figures, identified as *Nous* and *Natura* from Book I of *De mundi universitate* by Bernardus Silvestris.⁵⁶ The book begins with *Natura* (Nature) asking *Nous* (often

⁵⁴ White, *Northumberland*, 55.

⁵⁵ Derrida, *Animal*, 15.

⁵⁶ Eric G. Millar, *A Thirteenth-Century Bestiary in the Library of Alnwick Castle* (Oxford: Roxburghe Club, 1958), 17.

translated as "Reason") to impose order on the chaos of the world.⁵⁷ In the bestiary scene, Adam alone is unable to impose order on the animals he must dominate. He should be unequivocally naming, yet his hand is not raised in speech. In fact, he timidly holds the divinely bestowed scroll, letting it fall beyond the animal/human border where it is pecked at by a magpie and a rooster. In this distinctive bestiary, Adam's clothing is not quite enough to give him full dominion.

It is not surprising that bestiaries begin with scenes of prelapsarian dominion, such as Adam Naming the Animals. The representation serves as a reminder, in the face of real and illustrated animal mouths, that we once had dominion. We *should* have dominion - if it were not for the Fall. In Saint Augustine's commentary on Genesis, he explains "[Adam and Eve's] bodies lost the privileged condition they had had... [and] became subject to disease and death, like the bodies of animals, and consequently subject to the same drive by which there is in animals a desire to copulate."⁵⁸ The demotion of humans to animals through the sin of lust had far reaching consequences in the bestiary, often expressed in strong connections between death and sexuality. Shameless bestiary beasts invert the divine order established before the Fall and consume those to whom they should submit. Animals repeat and echo Eve's dismissal of her assigned passive nature. The relationship between nudity and active/passive roles is twisted into the grotesque postlapsarian world both in the medieval lived reality and the bestiary manuscript.

A Bestial Bookend

Finally, as a kind of bookend, I will end this chapter where the bestiary often ends: the fire rocks. According to the textual description, fire rocks come in pairs, one

⁵⁷ Bernardus Silvestris, *Cosmographia*, trans. Winthrop Wetherbee (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 67-69.

⁵⁸ Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* 11.31, 32; ACW 42, 162-165. Miles, *Carnal Knowing*, 212.

male and one female. They live on opposite sides of "a certain mountain in the East."⁵⁹ When they physically come together, specifically "when the female approaches the male," both the rocks and surrounding landscape are consumed in flames.⁶⁰ The source of this tale may be the mineral pyrite, also known as "fool's gold," which catches fire if struck with certain materials.⁶¹ However, the rock-like quality or veracity of the fire stones was not the main interest of the bestiary authors; these entries were always placed among the animals (not the lapidary section), and almost always depict the stones as allegorical human men and women. Sometimes their bodies are clothed, but more often they are nude. Iconographically, most scenes depict the union of the two figures in a fiery landscape. Some also include a top register of the male and female with a mountain between them, suggesting their necessary separation.

Debra Hassig's rationale for calling the fire rocks entry "the major misogynist statement presented in the bestiaries" is not immediately obvious from the imagery alone.⁶² One must view these pictures in relation to the text, which warns "all you men of God who live that way of life, separate yourselves far from women, lest when you approach each other, a twin flame be enkindled in you that will consume all the goods that Christ has conferred upon you."⁶³ The author continues to caution the (presumably heterosexual male) readers to "fortify your hearts... lest the deceptive love of women take hold of you and show the works of demons."⁶⁴ This is not a characteristic of some women, but *all* women, as the descendants of Eve: "For the love of women, which has

⁵⁹ White, *Northumberland*, 125.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Debra Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 116.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 115.

⁶³ White, *Northumberland*, 125.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

been the cause of sin from the beginning, that is from Adam to the present day, rages uncontrolled in the sons of disobedience.”⁶⁵

Although the role of nudity in the firestone imagery is an obvious visual allegory of lust, it is also a strong connection to *original* lust, and original nudity - specifically Eve. An example of a visual parallel to the Fall can be found in MS Bodley 602 (Fig. 8). Two nude figures are placed in a landscape and separated by a tree. A bearded man gestures with two open hands as if speaking to the woman, who casts her eyes downward and points toward the tree. The iconography is strongly reminiscent of the "passing the buck" scene wherein Adam blames Eve for the first Transgression, who subsequently passes the responsibility on to the serpent. The green landscape could be interpreted as Eden, with the prominent tree in the center an allusion to the Tree of Knowledge. The only details differentiating this scene as "firestones" rather than the Fall is the inclusion of stylized flames and the exclusion of the serpent.



Figure 8. *Fire Rocks*. Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 602, f3v.

⁶⁵ Aberdeen Bestiary Project, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/translat/94r.hti>

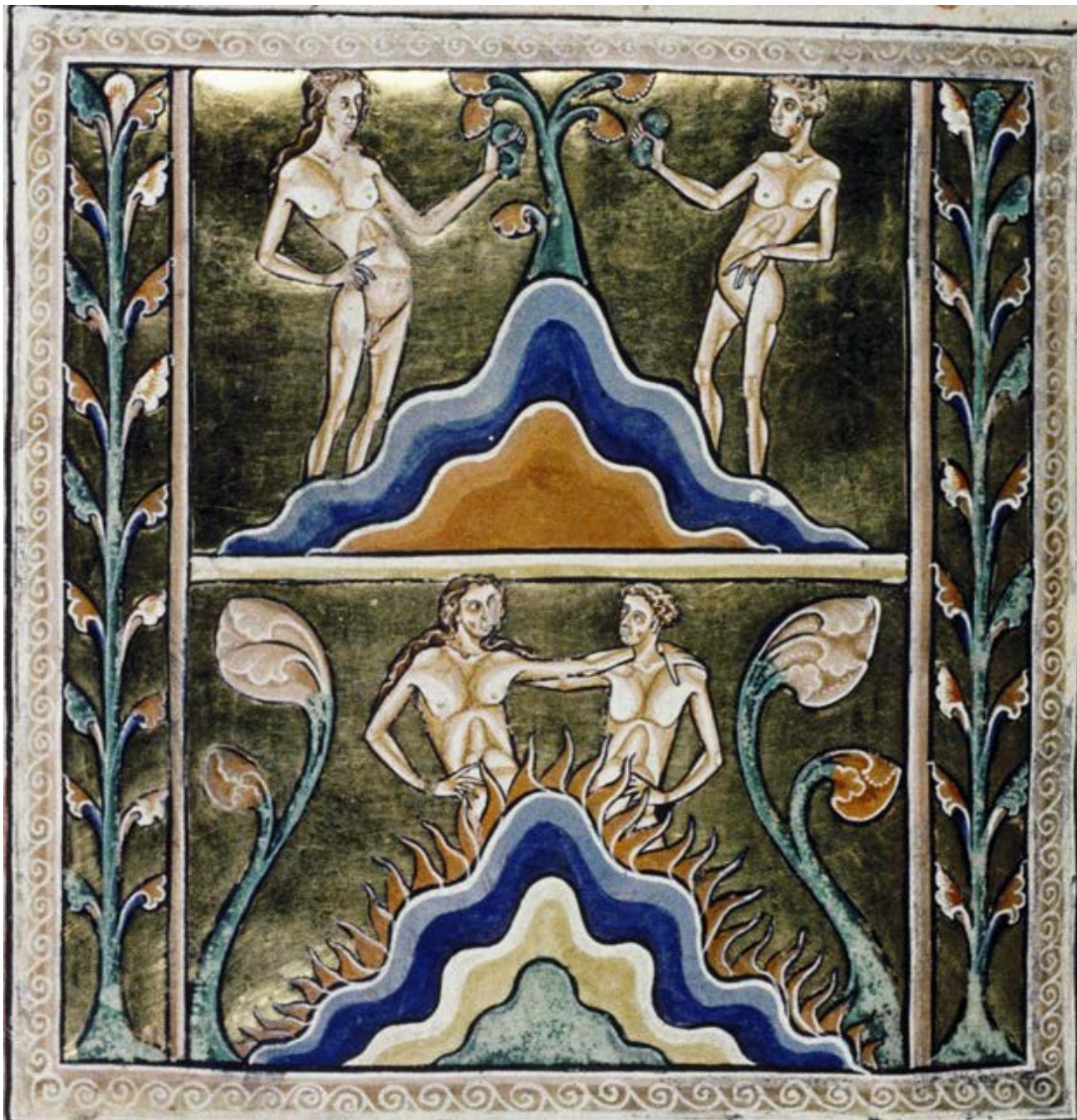


Figure 9. *Fire Rocks*. Bodleian Library, MS. Ashmole 1511, f103v.

The Ashmole Bestiary's entry for the Fire Rocks exemplifies another common allusion to the Fall (Fig. 9). The tale is broken into two registers. The top portion contains two nude figures separated by a tree which recalls the Tree of Knowledge. The stones in their hands can be read as the fire rocks they are meant to describe, or as the tree's tempting fruit. The lower register illuminates the outcome for either interpretation: the fire rocks burn the entire mountain, and the fallen Adam and Eve burn with fiery lust - or burn in hell *for* their fiery lust. The belief that lust was a

component of original sin is supported in bestiary text, which explains that Adam and Eve "who were in God's paradise before the Fall... did not know evil or the desire of concupiscence, nor sexual intercourse. But when the woman ate from the forbidden tree, she then seduced her husband so that he also ate."⁶⁶

Although the bodies are nude, very little revealed - which in itself is revealing. Adam's body is hairless, free of pubic hair and therefore free of bestial lust. His spread thighs frame his smooth and sexless pelvic region, almost highlighting his lack of the licentious appendage. Eve's genitals, however, are far more problematic. Her breasts are visually identical to Adam's, just as Adam and Eve's breasts were undifferentiated in the Creation of Eve scene discussed previously (Fig. 1). The female fire rock/Eve's pubic region has been scratched from the parchment, only leaving behind an indication of pubic hair. Surely something offensive must have existed to warrant the destruction; yet the censorship only heightens the titillation at what *may* have been depicted. Regardless of how explicitly drawn her genitals may have been, the remaining pubic hair is enough to communicate her bestial lustfulness. According to medieval medical treatises and popular opinion, pubic hair was indicative of "heat" and therefore lust.⁶⁷ Although this was a positive sign of virility and/or age in men, or even humanity in images of Christ, female pubic hair had negative associations. It indicated her excessive "animal" lust, although pubic hair is a uniquely human trait.⁶⁸ In the context of the Fall, Eve's visible

⁶⁶ White, *Northumberland*, 103. The Aberdeen Bestiary provides a slightly milder explanation: "before their sin, they did not know how to mate and had no understanding, of sin. But when the woman ate the fruit of the tree...then she became pregnant, and for that reason they left Paradise."

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/translat/10v.hti>

⁶⁷ Penny Howell Jolly, "Pubics and Privates: Body Hair in Late Medieval Art" in *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art*, ed. by Sherry Lindquist. (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2013), 185.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 186. I would like to note that markers of difference between animals and humans are constantly put forth in order to create a clear definable distinction - language, laughter, reason, etc. Pubic hair, however, never seems to be listed as the great divider.

pubic hair (and Adam's lack) is an indicator of her ultimate blame for (hu)mankind's fallen state.⁶⁹

At first glance it may seem peculiar to include rocks within a bestiary rather than a lapidary. However, the placement is quite fitting when the fire rocks are read as symbols of the Fall and lust in general. Lust was not only dangerous because it is a sin, but because it threatened the (constructed) distinction between "human" and "animal." Church fathers and medieval theologians repeatedly argued that "reason" differentiated man from brute beasts. However, reason crumbles in the throes of sexual passion. Clement of Alexandria affirmed "man became like the beasts when he came to practice sexual intercourse."⁷⁰ He also describes the sexual union of Adam and Eve as being like that of "irrational animals."⁷¹ Saint Augustine, meanwhile, believed sexual intercourse involves "total extinction of mental alertness; the intellectual sentries are...overwhelmed."⁷² In the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas clearly stated "in sexual intercourse man becomes like a brute animal."⁷³ Within this context, the lustful fire rocks, and by extension Adam, Eve, and humans, sink to the level of "brute animals" through lust, earning them a place among the other bestiary animals. This works as counterpoint to the opening scenes of Adam and Eve, whose sins destroyed (hu)man's dominion and brought humans to the level of animals.

The connection between nudity, sexuality, and animality is a recurring one throughout the bestiary. Those who were meant to be passive - namely women and animals - should not be shamelessly or aggressively nude. When they are, death is not far

⁶⁹ Ibid, 186-188.

⁷⁰ Clement. On Marriage," *Miscellanies*, Book III: 17.102, trans. Peter Kirby, *Early Christian Writings*, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/clement-stromata-book3-english.html>

⁷¹ Clement, "On Marriage," *Miscellanies*, Book III. As cited in Joyce Salisbury, *The Beast Within: The Animal in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 79.

⁷² Augustine, *City of God*, trans. H. Bettenson (Middlesex: Penguin Press, 1972), XIV, 16, 577.

⁷³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Kindle Edition.

behind. The bestiary becomes a grotesque parade of animals and women who reject their passive roles established in the beginning Creation and Naming scenes. As we shall see in Chapter 3, hyenas and their gaping orifices devour corpses, crocodiles expose and consume the human body and all its vulnerabilities, and sirens seduce men only to fragment the human body and identity. First, however, the bestiary reader is provided consoling reminder of a time when the human felt "at home" in the world.

CHAPTER 3

THE BESTIAL BOAR AND HUMAN HUNTERS OF BODLEY 764

Although the bestiary often opens with scenes establishing "the human" as a discrete definition based on divinely-bestowed dominion, the medieval bestiary and its contemporary readers existed in a postlapsarian world. Dominion was no longer a given, and being "human" was a status that must be obtained and maintained. Merely *naming* the now-unruly beasts was not enough to confidently declare humanity as dominant, and therefore secure. Instead, they turned to violence in order to bolster claims of dominion over animals and, by proxy, over any other threatening Others. One such example is folio 38v of Bodley 764, which illustrates a violent encounter among a boar, two men, and a dog. Medieval audiences could easily have identified the dying boar as a representation of "gluttonous" Jews, Welsh kings, noble adversaries in aristocratic hunts, and even real animals that continually threaten the constructed division between "animal" and "human." However, that which is self-evident does not require constant declarations -- it only serves to highlight anxieties. The bestiary's repeated assertion of dominion reveals the unavoidable weakness in its claim. By analyzing this image as it intersects with gender, ethnicity, class, and even species, I will polish the multiple facets of the "mirror" to clarify the ways it constructs identity and betrays insecurities.

Death, Dominion, and Domesticity

Killing an animal, the ultimate means of rejecting (and abjecting) the animal as Other, lay at the heart of human identity as a discrete definition in the medieval worldview of divinely-bestowed dominion. However, rejecting the animal Other was difficult both in life and in bestiary manuscripts. Bestiary animals were anthropomorphized and often portrayed as moral exemplars for humans, effectively destroying the all-important line between animal and human. The manuscript then

becomes a place of abjection, where, as Cohen explains, "everything thought to be 'ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable' is revealed as residing deep within the architecture of selfhood."⁷⁴ This reveals why the very existence of the bestiary itself is cause for fear. Any close observation of animals will reveal our shared characteristics (both real and imaginary) and deal a wounding blow to the distinction of "human." The bestiary takes it a step further by examining highly anthropomorphized animals as sources of moral exemplars and divine knowledge. Humans are meant to learn from brute beasts. And yet, as Erica Fudge notes, "by seeing the world like ourselves we reduce ourselves to the thing we desire not to be."⁷⁵ The bestiary animals are laden with undesirable characteristics -- such as the gluttony of the dog, the lustfulness of the boar -- when "gluttony" and "lust" are purely human constructs we abhor within ourselves.

Meanwhile, the animal was (and is) always present, always resisting domination and inspiring desire. The soaring of a hawk, the unrestrained howls of a hunting dog, the elegant speed of a galloping horse -- these, and others, are constant sources of envy. Julia Kristeva's description of the abject could easily apply to these ever-present, wild, envy-inducing creatures: "It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects..."⁷⁶ Rejection and abjection manifest into violence. Kristeva adds that the abject "disturbs identity, system, order. It does not respect positions, border, rules."⁷⁷ This definition not only applies potentially to all animals as they disregard the "law" of human dominion, but, as we shall see, the definition is especially pertinent to the pig.

⁷⁴ Cohen, *Of Giants*, 27.

⁷⁵ Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 6.

⁷⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 4.

Simultaneously, animal violence was regularly enacted upon vulnerable human bodies. Any medieval boar hunter was aware that human claims of superiority and dominion could be violated with the thrust of a tusk. Real and imaginary animals constantly disregarded God's declaration to humanity that "the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth..." Instead, beasts regularly highlighted the frailty of the human body and identity. An animal who has killed a human becomes abject, a gross reversal of ideological order. The animal's invariable boundary breaking results in the constant reiteration of human superiority and dominion - a superiority claimed through violence. The swift arc of a sword or the liberating release of an arrow: this violence engulfs our fears of being engulfed. It is therefore not surprising that medieval bestiaries are littered with scenes of hunted animals. Images like Bodley 764's hunted boar become an *objet petit a* – they express desire through the fantasy of dominion, where whole humans carry out the complete (but unattainable) rejection of the animal Other. It is only the lack of dominion that allow these fantasies to continue and, indeed, proliferate throughout the bestiary. In the words of Dino Felluga, "At the heart of desire is a misrecognition of fullness where there is really nothing but a screen for our own narcissistic projections."⁷⁸ The medieval viewer, however, would view these narcissistic projections as truthful reflections from animal-mirrors.

The need to maintain the fantasy of dominion, and therefore construct the "human," is especially imperative in regard to the pig, who held a peculiar place in the medieval hierarchy. According to the encyclopedic *On the Order of Things (De proprietatibus rerum)*, written by Bartholomeus Anglicus during the mid-13th century, some animal types are: "ordained to work, as horses, oxen, and camels, and other such: and some to bear wool for clothing of men, as sheep and other such, and some to be

⁷⁸ Dino Felluga, "Introductory Guide to Critical Theory - Lacan Module: On Desire," last modified January 31st, 2011, <http://www.purdue.edu/guidetotheory/psychoanalysis/lacandesire.html>

eaten, as swine and pigs..."⁷⁹ Other domestic animals provided materials other than meat (wool, milk, physical labor) -- they were multi-purpose during a time when an animal's purpose was its worth. The pig, however, was raised solely for butchering.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the term "domesticated" was uncomfortably difficult to apply to pigs. "*Domesticus*" means "of the household" - and yet even so-called "domesticated" pigs led semi-feral lives, spending a great deal of the year subsisting on forest pasturage when not confined to a sty.⁸¹

The 'wild' pig (boar) and the 'domesticated' pig shared far more than just a similar diet. In fact, during the Middle Ages there was little difference between the two, both in appearance and behavior. The Bodley 764 illustrations of the sow and boar are almost identical (save for their respective sexual characteristics), since both domesticated and 'wild' swine had tusks, bristles, long legs, and arched backs.⁸² In other words, both appeared much more like the wild boar of legends than the smooth pink Piglet of Winnie the Pooh. While Piglet is characterized by his timidity and fear, medieval pigs/boars were considered extremely dangerous and excessively violent animals. They were known for eating their own young, and, even more horrifying, eating human corpses they had disinterred or even killed themselves.⁸³ While this is in keeping with the perceived characteristic of porcine gluttony, it also demonstrates that pigs were indifferent to the restrictions and regulations of animal killing and meat eating imposed

⁷⁹ Stephen Batman, *Batman vpon Bartholome, his Book De Proprietatibus Rerum* (1582), fol. 333. Quoted in Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 95.

⁸⁰ Steel, *How To Make a Human*, 181.

⁸¹ Julie Hamilton and Richard Thomas, "Pannage, Pulses and Pigs: Isotopic and Zooarchaeological Evidence for Changing Pig Management Practices in Later Medieval England," *Medieval Archaeology* 56 (2012): 234-259.

⁸² The smooth pink pig one may consider a "domestic" pig was introduced to Europe via China in the 18th century. See H. Meyer, "What Did Pigs Look Like in the Middle Ages?" *Deutsche tierärztliche Wochenschrift* 113 (2006): 15-23.

⁸³ Steel, 183. For example, the 14th century *Norwich Book of Customs* records "boars, sows, and pigs before this time have gone and still go vagrant by day and night without a keeper in the said town, whereby divers persons and children have been hurt by boars, children killed and eaten, and others [when] buried exhumed, and other maimed..." W. Hudson and J.C. Tingey, trans. and eds., *The Records of the City of Norwich*, 2 vols. (Norwich: Jarrold, 1906-1910), 2:205-206, as cited in Dolly Jørgensen. "Running Amuck? Urban Swine Management in Late Medieval England." *Agricultural History* 87 (2013): 429-451.

by humans. This violence undermined the foundation upon which "humanity" as a definition was built. A pig that kills another animal (even his/her own piglet) exercises the human-defining prerogative of animal slaughter. A pig that kills a human turns the human victim into an animal -- perhaps even a pig. The medieval trials of homicidal swine did not raise the persecuted pigs to the level of humans but instead, as Karl Steel has noted, "return humans, humiliated by having been killed by domestic animals, to the status of having been murdered."⁸⁴

The line between wild and domestic pig was worryingly vague -- and yet the line between human and pig was just as ambiguous. Anatomical manuals, such as the twelfth century *Antatomia Porci*, noted the physical similarity, "although some animals, such as monkeys, are found to resemble ourselves in external form, there is none so like us internally as the pig."⁸⁵ This observation existed well outside of scientific or medical settings; Aristotle's observation of the anagrammatic possibilities of *porcus/corpus* was put to good use in the Middle Ages.⁸⁶ Even moral treatises mentioned the similarity, such as Peter the Chanter's moral guide for clergy, *Verbum Abbreviatum*, which states "the pig has much in common with humans in its body, as shown from the arrangement of its internal organs."⁸⁷ Today this similarity is exploited as heart surgeons replace human heart valves with those of pigs -- however, during the Middle Ages the anatomical similarities were cause for concern. As Karl Steel has observed, "...the pig's very likeness to humans further confirms the pig's status as the most animal of animals, precisely

⁸⁴ Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 184.

⁸⁵ George Washington Corner, *Anatomical Texts of the Earlier Middle Ages: A Study in the Transmission of Culture with a Revised Latin Text of the Anatomia Cophonis and Translations of Four Texts* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Institution, 1927), 51.

⁸⁶ Steel, *How To Make a Human*, 184. See Aristotle's *De Animalibus* I.16 and 17 or *De Partibus Animalium* III.12.

⁸⁷ Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina*, 205: 337D-338A (Paris: Migne, 1844-55), as cited and translated by Steel, *How To Make a Human*, 185.

because its likeness to humans demands that it be treated like a pig in order to be one."⁸⁸

To kill an animal, especially a pig, was to maintain one's humanity.



Figure 10. *Boar*. Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 764, f38v.

Bodley 764 and its Context

Rather than a simple portrait of a quintessential boar, Bodley 764 depicts a violent encounter between hunter and hunted. The boar has gored a hunting dog, and yet is gored himself by no less than two hunters (Fig. 10). This bestiary is not only considered one of the finest surviving bestiaries from the Middle Ages, it is also distinctive for its sheer number of hunting scenes, many of which are rendered in grisly detail.⁸⁹ The manuscript consists of 137 numbered leaves, with 135 framed and colorful miniatures which incorporate copious amounts of gold leaf. Stylistically, the painting

⁸⁸ Steel, *How To Make a Human*, 186.

⁸⁹ Christopher de Hamel "Introduction" in *Book of Beasts: A Facsimile of MS Bodley 764* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2008), 5.

resembles a group of manuscripts made in Salisbury between 1240-1260.⁹⁰ Many illustrations were likely modeled on those of MS Harley 4751, a luxury bestiary produced the decade before.⁹¹ Although the manuscripts share many visual elements, the illustrations of Bodley 764 are more detailed, energetic, and contain more human and animal figures. Willene Clark's exhaustive visual analysis of both manuscripts' illustrations is the only book that specifically comments on the boar image, noting: "a striking feature of both manuscripts, especially Bodley 764, is the degree to which the artists indulge in visual violence," citing the "gruesome" boar illustration as an example.⁹²

For this study, I shall focus on Bodley 764 not only because of the superior quality and higher detail of its illuminations, but also for its clearer historical and social context. Ownership, and perhaps patronage of Harley 4751 is ascribed to a lay-person based on several comments inscribed in the margins.⁹³ Specific details, however, remain unknown. Bodley 764's patronage is much more definitive: Ron Baxter identified four heraldic shields in the elephant entry image (Fig. 11) as the heraldry used by several Marcher lords of the mid 13th century. The pennant flown from the elephant's tower (Gules, a chevron argent) belonged to the lords of the manor and castle of Berkeley in Gloucestershire -- either Thomas de Berkeley (lord 1220-1243) or his son Maurice (1243-81). The coat of arms on the left of the tower (Or, a bend cotised gules) probably belonged to either the Mohun or Bohun family, and is subject to debate; however, the well-known arms on the right (Or, three chevronels gules) certainly belonged to the Clare family -- specifically Richard de Clare (lord 1230-1262).⁹⁴

⁹⁰ For a more in-depth study of Bodley 764's decorations, see Clark, *Book of Beasts*, 241.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 76.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 87. Clark makes a weak argument that the lay-owner was female because the margins include a cough-syrup recipe and "the mother usually functioned as physician and pharmacist, as well as teacher."

⁹⁴ Ron Baxter, "A Baronial Bestiary: Heraldic Evidence for the Patronage of MS Bodley 764," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 50 (1987): 198.

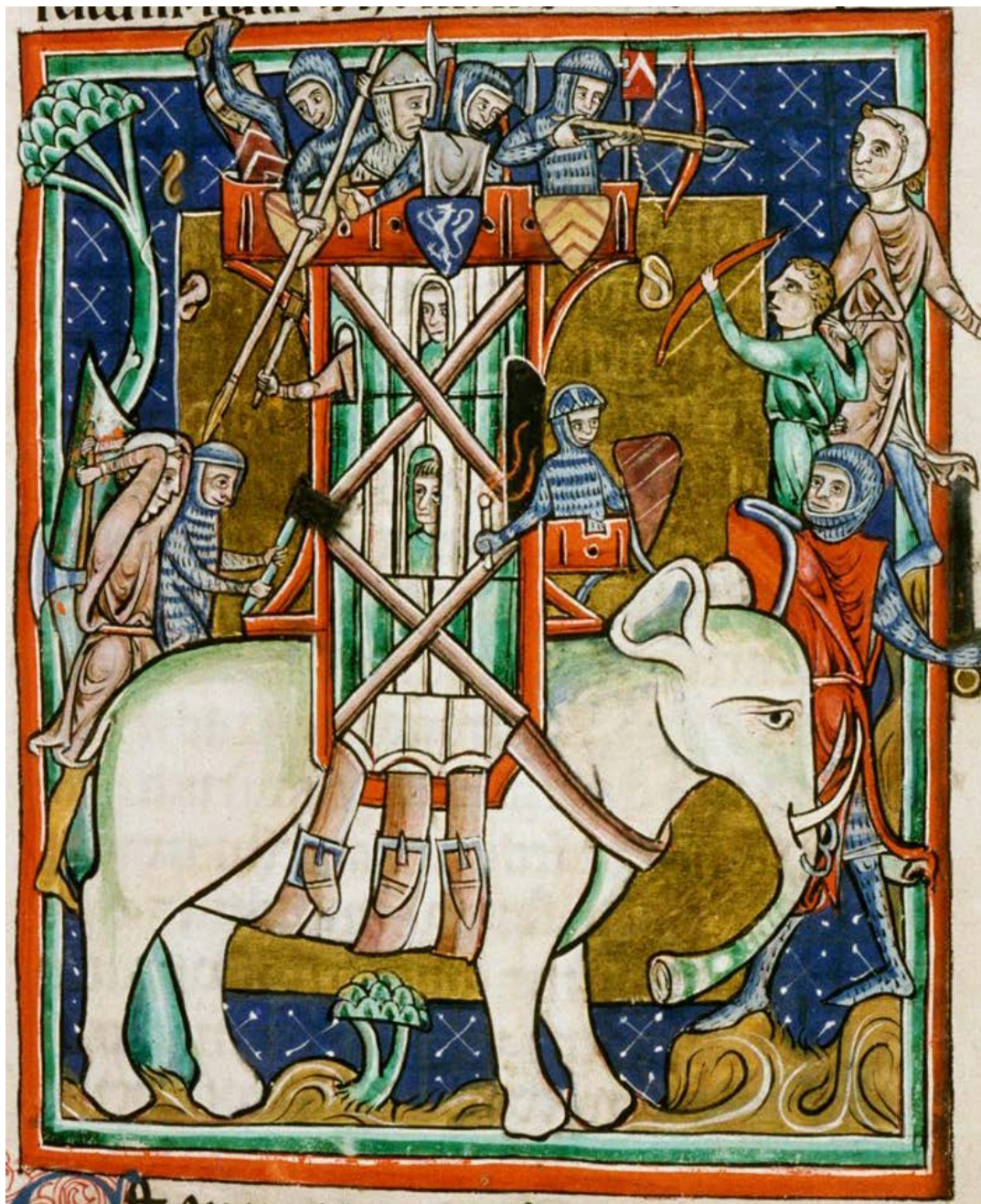


Figure 11. *Elephant*. Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 764, f12r.

Most conspicuous by nature of its position is the middle shield blazoned "Azure, a lion rampant argent." This coat of arms belonged to the Monhaut family who, like the Clares, Berkeleys, and Bohuns, were Marcher lords.⁹⁵ Bodley 764 has ties to Castle

⁹⁵ Monhaut is alternatively spelled Mohaut, Mahaut, and Montalt.

Rising, which was the principal estate in eastern England for the Monhaut family.⁹⁶ Their main seat, however, was castle Mold in Flintshire. In 1146, Robert de Monhaut, the "Black Steward," defeated the Welsh at Nantwich. The lordship of his son, also named Robert, was likewise dominated by fighting the Welsh, most notably in the great war with Llewelyn the Great (1198-99). His markedly ambitious heir, Roger (lord 1210-32), greatly increased the prestige and wealth of the family by taking possession of lands in Lincolnshire, making claims in Suffolk, and being appointed Commissioner in Staffordshire.⁹⁷ It was *his* heir, yet another Roger, whose lordship is relevant because it was during his reign that Bodley 764 was commissioned.

Although the records of Roger de Monhaut's life are limited to a few basic events, enough remains to reconstruct an interesting context. As we have seen, he came from a martial family occupied with dominating the Welsh. The leading genealogist John Burke notes that Roger de Monhaut was "one of the most potent feudal lords in the time of Henry III," and further describes him as "being constantly employed against the Welsh," noting that "his lands at Montalt were wrested from him by David, Prince of Wales, but restored in 1240."⁹⁸ The next few years were an eventful and fruitful time for Monhaut. His wife, Cecily d'Aubigny, came into her inheritance in 1243, through which the Monhauts were elevated to tenants-in-chief and Barons of the Kingdom.⁹⁹ Mathew of Paris's *Chronica Majora* notes the participation of Roger de Monhaut, Richard de Clare, "and other famous and powerful Marchers" in extinguishing the Welsh Uprising of

⁹⁶ de Hamel, "Introduction," 23. The name "Gaunte" is inscribed on the original pastedown in a Gothic script. This likely points to John of Gaunt, whose grandmother, Isabella of France, lived in Castle Rising for about 30 years and also eventually owned Monhaut's Cheylesmore manor house.

⁹⁷ Baxter, "Baronial Bestiary," 198.

⁹⁸ John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland, Enjoying Territorial Possessions or High Official Rank, but Uninvested With Heritable Honour, Volume II* (Bell and Bradfute, Edinburg: R. Bentley, 1835), 84. David ap Llywelyn died 4 years later when he fell to his death while trying to escape the Tower of London via a knotted sheet.

⁹⁹ Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users*, 198.

1244.¹⁰⁰ He died 18 June, 1260. His heir, yet another Roger, participated in the final and complete conquest of Wales which began when Dafydd ap Gruffudd attacked the Monhaut's castle Hawarden on Palm Sunday 1283.¹⁰¹

Most of the recorded events in Roger de Monhaut's life occurred in the early 1240s. It is likely that Bodley 764 was commissioned during this decade, perhaps to celebrate one or more of these events. Obviously Monhaut did not fight the Welsh from the back of an elephant; however, the newly appointed Baron *did* fight with his fellow Marcher lords (including Richard de Clare, whose banner flies with Monhaut's atop the elephant) in an illustrious battle -- something he may have wanted to commemorate. His elevation to Baron of the realm came to him via his wife, which may explain why this bestiary has the highest proportion of female animals, as well as several female human figures.¹⁰² I believe the few facts we know about his life -- his masculinity, militarism, newly attained social status, Marcher 'ethnicity' -- would surely alter his perception (if not commissioning) of the boar illustration. It is therefore worth viewing the image through various lenses which comprised Roger de Monhaut's identity.

A Man and His Boar

Considering Bodley 764's aristocratic context, the proliferation of hunting scenes in this bestiary is not surprising; hunting was a task important to chivalric ideals of masculine and aristocratic identity. The illustrations in general display a wide variety of classes: servants in pied livery blow horns, an aristocratic woman hunts with a sparrow hawk, a peasant man with a short tunic and coarse features operates a mill. Furthermore, the hunting imagery makes obvious the "conspicuous consumption of resources" of

¹⁰⁰ "...comes de Clare, comes de Herefort, Joahannes de Munemue, Rogerus de Muhaut, et alii marchisii potentes et praeclari." H. R. Luard, ed. *Matthaei Parisiensis Chronica Majora IV*, Rolls Series (1872-84), 358. As quoted in Baxter, "Baronial Bestiary," 199.

¹⁰¹ John Davies, *History of Wales* (London: Penguin Press, 1990), 158.

¹⁰² Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries*, 176.

aristocratic hunting *à force* and the aristocratic lifestyle in general.¹⁰³ Many of the figures extend beyond the picture plane, bursting with the ferocious energy of the hunt as teams of dogs pursue their prey, men blow horns, and archers loose arrows. The boar, in particular, was an important player in the spectacle of the 'noble' hunt. Killing a wild boar, considered the most dangerous and ferocious beast, greatly recommended one's strength and martial skill.¹⁰⁴ Medieval aristocratic hunters used specific rhetoric to construct a kind of noble battle: the combat between boar and hunter was called a "joust," the boar's tusks are his "weapons," and the hunter addresses the boar with an honorific title at the beginning of their battle by shouting "*Avant, mestre! Avant!*" (Come on sir! Forward!).¹⁰⁵ By elevating the boar from disgusting swine to a noble and courageous adversary, medieval noblemen elevated themselves.

Bodley 764's boar hunt recalls the numerous boar hunts in chivalric literature which were designed to showcase the hero's bravery and military prowess. Like the bestiary hunter in this image, the chivalric hero almost always slays the boar with a sword while on foot.¹⁰⁶ Hunting manuals declare this method the most noble and skillful, with Gaston Phoebus pronouncing "it is great mastery and a fine thing to know how to kill a boar with a sword."¹⁰⁷ Few (if any) medieval hunters *actually* employed this extremely dangerous tactic; instead they opted for long boar-spears specially designed for long-distance effectiveness. The practice and display of martial skill was at the forefront of aristocratic hunts - as one boar hunting manual explains, "hunting is a

¹⁰³ Susan Crane, "Ritual Aspects of the Hunt *à Force*," in *Engaging with Nature: Essays on the Natural World in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Barbara Hanawalt and Lisa Kiser (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 69.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Almond, *Medieval Hunting* (Thrupp: Sutton Publishing, 2003), 66.

¹⁰⁵ Gaston Phoebus, *Livre de chasse*, ed. Gunnar Tilander, *Cynegetica 18* (Kalshamn: Johanssons, 1971), "weapons" 91, "Avant, mestre" 232. John I of Portugal refers to the encounter between boar and hunter as a "joust" in his *Livro da montaria*, ed. Francisco M. Esteves Pereira (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1918), 300-301.

¹⁰⁶ Anne Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature* (Suffolk: Boydell, 1993), 82. The hero usually begins on horseback. However, much like the poor dog in this scene, the hero's horse is almost always killed by the ferocious boar in service to its master.

¹⁰⁷ Phoebus, *Livre de chasse*, 233-235. Quoted and translated in Crane, "Ritual Aspects," 69.

training for all types of fighting met within war."¹⁰⁸ As a man almost constantly at war in a land known for unceasing conflict, Roger de Monhuat had a vested interest in appearing militarily skilled. One who could kill a boar with a sword while under the beast was as skilled as the heroes of legend.



Figure 12. Sow. Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 764, f37v.

Hunting boars also addressed the hunter's sexual prowess. Pigs in general were considered excessively lustful, and boars in particular were associated with virility and aggressive male sexuality.¹⁰⁹ The folio immediately before the boar contains an entry for the sow (Fig. 12), who is depicted with five suckling piglets, and is covered in the same dark bristly hair. By positioning the almost identical image of the sow on the folio preceding the boar, the inclusion of the tusks and testicles would be conspicuous.

¹⁰⁸ John I Portugal, *Livro da montaria*, 27-28. All translations of this text belong to John Cummins, *The Art of Medieval Hunting: The Hound and the Hawk* (Edison: Castle Books, 2003).

¹⁰⁹ Cummins, *Medieval Hunting*, 107.

Sometimes the testicles were the first body part removed from the carcass, after which they were eaten by male hunters in order to enhance their virility.¹¹⁰

Aside from the act of consuming that which one wishes to emulate, the act of *hunting* boar itself was laden with sexual meaning. For example, the bestiary source and well-known poet Oppian describes the mating of boars as follows: "Unceasingly he roams in pursuit of the female and is greatly excited by the frenzy of desire... if she refuses intercourse and flees, straightway stirred by the hot and fiery goad of desire he either overcomes her and mates with her by force or he attacks her with his jaws and lays her dead in the dust."¹¹¹ An almost identical description could be given to the hunter, as he pursues his prey with a beating heart and a desire to penetrate with sword or arrow. In Oppian's description the male either mates with the female or kills her. There is a strikingly strong connection between sexuality and death -- lust and bloodlust, bedsport and bloodsport -- which continued on into the Middle Ages (and perhaps also to the present day). The connection is evident in the bestiary miniature: one hunter penetrates the boar with a long spear that creates a vaginal-shaped wound; the other hunter is positioned beneath the boar with his undergarments exposed while he thrusts a small knife (placed directly above his pelvis) into the conquered beast. The boar's perceived lustfulness is both condemned but desired, the "vortex of summons and repulsion" of abjection.¹¹²

Marches, Meanings, and Middles

The boar's bravery, ferocity, and sexual prowess were characteristics Roger de Monhaut would have wished to possess himself as an aristocratic man. However, analyzing this image not only through the lens of his gender, but also through his ethnicity as a Marcher reveals the fear (and abjection) of ethnic Others that haunted the

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 107-108.

¹¹¹ Oppian, *Cynegetica*, ed. and trans. A.W. Moir (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1928), 145.

¹¹² Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1.

carefully constructed cultural boundaries of the Middle Ages, particularly in the Roger de Monhaut's Welsh Marches. This was the wild and exotic military frontier between England and Wales, a land known for lawlessness and constant bloodshed. Like so many liminal spaces, the Marches were a site of melding cultures, fierce bigotry, and refuted (but ever-present) ambiguity. Geographically, the "Welsh Marches" was an ill-defined and constantly-contested border between Wales and England, caught between relentless colonial expansion and ferocious native resistance. The word March is related to the Old English word *mearc* and the Old French word *marche*, both meaning "boundary."¹¹³ Yet the Marchers broke the very boundary they were supposed to maintain. One of the leading scholars of the Welsh Marches, R.R. Davies, describes it as a place that "seems to disintegrate into plurality and defy the analytical categories of the historian."¹¹⁴ Much to the dismay and distrust of their neighbors, the Marches of the Middle Ages defied the analytical categories of their contemporaries as well.

The Marchers themselves were just as difficult to categorize as the Marches in which they lived. Following the conquest of 1066, the Marchers settled on the border of England and Wales where they quickly made territorial inroads through two means that later had major consequences. The first was their unprecedented and closely guarded liberties, including the ability to build castles and declare private warfare without royal approval.¹¹⁵ In fact, English common law was not administered and Marcher lords

¹¹³ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 80. *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "march," <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=march>. The connections between marching, as in moving feet in a measured rhythm, and borders may arise from practices of measuring and delineating spaces by marching.

¹¹⁴ R. R. Davies, *Lordship and Society in the March of Wales 1282-1400* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 8.

¹¹⁵ A.C. Reeves lists the full scope of Marcher power, aside from their right to wage war: "A Marcher lord could establish forests with forest laws, charter boroughs, purchase and alienate lands in the March, build castles without royal license, raise armies, collect a third of the plunder which his soldiers took in war, control weights and measures, establish markets and fairs and take the profits of tolls levied upon them. He also claimed the royal rights of wreck of the sea, royal fish (usually porpoise, whale, and sturgeon), treasure trove, forfeitures, and the escheat of the lands of traitors." *The Marcher Lords* (Dyfed: Christopher Davies (Publishers) Ltd., 1983), 15.

referred to themselves as "lords royal" and their powers as "regal jurisdiction."¹¹⁶ As one might suspect from this kind of language, the Marchers were unafraid to flaunt their power. For example, Roger de Monhaut's contemporary, the Marcher lord Walter Clifford, forced a royal messenger to eat a letter he received from the king, seal and all, because he was offended at the king's tone.¹¹⁷ A few years later, John Fitzalan responded to a royal writ by declaring that, as a Marcher, "he was obliged to do nothing at the king's mandate and nothing would he do."¹¹⁸ With their remarkable scope of power, the leading Marcher lords were the most powerful barons in the realm. Not surprisingly, the ostensibly law-abiding English lords despised the Marchers for their "arrogance" and unchecked power.¹¹⁹

The second conquest tactic employed by early Marcher lords was the use of strategic marriages with Welsh nobles. Although this is usually an effective strategy, especially in concert with military tactics, they were unable to conquer the obstinate Welsh as swiftly as they had hoped. The Welsh stubbornly refused to concede defeat or abandon their culture - the Marchers soon realized that, like Julia Kristeva's description of the abject, the Welsh "[lay] there quite close, but cannot be assimilated."¹²⁰ The longer the conquest took, the shriller the anti-Welsh invectives became. As expected, the English resorted to the popular trope of comparing disliked humans to animals. For example, John of Salisbury (c. 1115-1180) described the Welsh as "a raw and untamed race, living in the manner of beasts."¹²¹ The royalist account *Gesta Stephani* (c. 1151) describes Wales as a place that "breeds men of the animal type, naturally swift-footed,

¹¹⁶ R.R. Davies, "Kings, Lords and Liberties in the March of Wales, 1066-1272," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 29 (1979): 42.

¹¹⁷ Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. H.R. Luard, 95. This, as well as other tales of Marcher bravado, are recounted and analyzed at length in R.R. Davies, *Lordship and Society*.

¹¹⁸ R. W. Eyton, *Antiquities of Shropshire VII* (London: J.R. Smith, 1854-1860), 257.

¹¹⁹ R.R. Davies, *Lordship and Society*, 1.

¹²⁰ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1.

¹²¹ "gens enim rudis et indomita bestiali more uiuens." Letter 87, *Letters of John of Salisbury I*, translated in Cohen, *Hybridity*, 92.

accustomed to war, volatile, always breaking their word as in changing their abodes."¹²² The trope of bestial Welshman even appears in chivalric literature, such as Chretien de Troyes' *Li Contes del Grall* (The Story of the Grail), wherein an English knight remarks to the (Welsh) Perceval, "Sir, you must be aware that all Welshmen are by nature stupider than beasts in the field."¹²³ Gerald of Wales' travelogue *Itinerarium Cambriae* (Journey Through Wales) recounts a tale in which a Welshman plays off the bestial stereotype. While being forced to act as a guide for Norman knights he would stop occasionally to casually pluck a handful of grass and eat it with aplomb. The ruse fooled the knights, one of whom reported back to the English king that only the Welsh could make their home in Wales, "a bestial race of people, content to live like animals."¹²⁴

Making unfavorable comparisons between animals and the humans one wishes to degrade is a common and effective strategy. Cary Wolfe calls this strategy "discourse of animality," and points out that it is "irrespective of the issue of how nonhuman animals are treated" but instead "serve[s] as a crucial strategy in the oppression of humans by other humans."¹²⁵ Any twinges of guilt felt by the Marchers as they fought and killed their brethren were easily smothered under screeching diatribes of Welsh animality. However, this tactic had serious consequences. By the time of Roger de Monhaut, the animality of the Welsh had been well-established by a century of vicious propaganda-- and yet it is highly likely that his Marcher family, and therefore his own body, was hopelessly impure with Welsh blood. Like the other Marcher lords, he was hated by the Welsh as an oppressive and murderous Norman conqueror, and hated by the English as an unrestrained Welsh animal. Neither the English nor the Welsh recognized the

¹²² *Gesta Stephani* 1.8 as cited in Cohen, *Hybridity*, 92.

¹²³ As cited in Cohen, *Hybridity*, 93.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 91.

¹²⁵ Cary Wolfe, "Introduction," *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xx.

Marchers as a separate ethnicity, only as a dangerous "Other." As Cohen notes, "the Marchers not only inhabited a difficult middle; they embodied it."¹²⁶

I believe the Marcher's ambiguous self-identity and Welsh connections appear in Bodley 764. Textual evidence appears in the bestiary's unique inclusion of passages from the *Topographia Hibernica*, written by one of the most famous Marchers of all: Gerald of Wales (c. 1146-1223). He was a prolific author, devoting most of his writing to animals and personal chronicles. Like other Marchers, he was of mixed descent, tracing his roots to Norman warriors and Welsh royalty.¹²⁷ He experienced loneliness and alienation stemming from his mixed ethnicity, lamenting that "both peoples regard me as a stranger and one not their own."¹²⁸ When he was not bemoaning his ambiguous ethnic identity, he proudly described the Marchers as a superior amalgamation of its original parts, arguing "From the [Welsh] we get our courage, and from the [Normans] our skill in the use of arms. So we are equally brave and versed in arms because of our twofold character and noble ancestry on both sides."¹²⁹ We know of his shifting declarations and lingering anxieties because he wrote extensively on his own thoughts and experiences. As Cohen slyly notes, "Gerald's favorite topic was Gerald" -- however, this is because he was "caught between competing cultures... [he] wrote endlessly, obsessively, about himself and his turbulent world, about the agony of irresolvable difference in the wake of conquest."¹³⁰ He gives voice to the conflicts of his "twofold character" -- a conflict Roger de Monhaut likely felt himself. It seems fitting, then, that de Monhaut would know of Gerald's work and choose to include it in his luxurious bestiary.

¹²⁶ Cohen, *Hybridity*, 82.

¹²⁷ Robert Barlett, *Gerald of Wales, 1146-1223* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 13.

¹²⁸ Gerald's *Opera*, ed. J. S. Brewer, et al, as quoted in Barlett, *Gerald of Wales*, 17.

¹²⁹ *Expugnatio Hibernica* 1.9. Translated in Cohen, *Hybridity*, 82. Gerald writes this as though it was articulated by Robert fitzStephen (his uncle) - however this is most likely a literary device rather than a direct quote. Regardless, it certainly reflected Gerald's own views.

¹³⁰ Cohen, *Hybridity*, 76.

Visual traces of anxiety surrounding the Marcher's mixed-ethnicity may be observed in the boar illustration. The boar had strong ties to Welsh legends, which were introduced to the non-Welsh mainly through Geoffrey of Monmouth's popular *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136). This work included the Arthurian story *Culhwch ac Olwen*, which features the hunting (and killing) of two boars: Ysgithyrwyn the "Chief of Boars," and Twrch Trwyth, the enchanted and fearsome boar with deep roots in Celtic legend.¹³¹ More pertinent to my project is his chapter "*Prophetiae Merlini*" (Prophecies of Merlin), where he refers to King Arthur as "the Boar of Cornwall," predicting "the race that is oppressed shall prevail in the end, for it will resist the savagery of the invaders. The Boar of Cornwall shall bring relief from these invaders, for it will trample the necks beneath its feet."¹³² The Welsh were certainly oppressed after their defeat following the Welsh Uprising of 1211, and continued to lose power until the complete Edwardian conquest in 1282. The boar in the painting attempts to trample the invading hunter, and perhaps fulfill the prophecy--- instead his murderous intent is thwarted, just as the Welsh uprisings were thwarted. Roger de Monhaut and generations of Monhaut men before and after him, played a leading role in the oppression of the Welsh and the reversal of their most hoped-for prophecies. In the image, the hunter is trapped beneath the boar, and his victory is neither easy nor guaranteed. This intimate co-mingling of human and swine (English and Welsh?) bodies perhaps reflects Monhaut's own struggle with his hybrid identity. Marchers were regarded much like the pig - incredibly familiar yet resolutely Other, sometimes tame and sometimes wild, straddling categories and destroying boundaries.

¹³¹ Twrch Trwyth was a human who was turned into a boar for an unspecified "sin." He has poisonous bristles and the boar's characteristically fearsome mien. He also has a pair of scissors and a comb between his ears, which Arthur and his party are required to collect. For more on this, and boars in medieval literature in general, see Marcelle Thiébaux, "The Mouth of the Boar as a Symbol in Medieval Literature," *Romance Philology* 22 (1969): 281-299.

¹³² Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of England*, ed. and trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), 175.

Jews, Christians, and Pork

The more obvious ethnic associations for general medieval audiences were the long-standing links between swine and Jews. Bodley 764 includes a uniquely long entry for the sow and the boar, both of which were taken from Rabanus Maurus' anti-Semitic passages on swine in *De universo*. The bestiary text clearly states that sows signify "sinners, the unclean, and heretics," a woman who "thinks on carnal things," as well as the "luxurious liver." It also quotes Proverbs 11:22: "as a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion."¹³³ Swine in general are also called "filthy" and likened to "gluttonous men."¹³⁴ Jews, too, were widely described as unclean, wanton, and gluttonous by Christians.¹³⁵ However, both had to be tolerated to some degree; the shunned "usury" of the Jews kept the medieval financial system afloat, just as the shunned "gluttony" of the pig kept the humans fed through winter.

The boar entry discusses Jews more directly, but (unsympathetically) portrays them as victims of the boar, who represents "the fierceness of the rulers of this world." First the text compares the Lord to the boar of Psalm 80:13, "the boar out of the wood doth waste it" just as "he drove the Jewish people out of the boundaries of their homeland and scattered them."¹³⁶ The bestiary also compares the boar to Vespasian, "who appeared strong and cruel" to the Jews, and his son Titus, "who destroyed so many of the people... both the Jewish race and their city were devoured like the grass of the field. This vineyard (i.e. Jerusalem) had to be sized; its walls were seen to be thrown down."¹³⁷ These passages fit snugly within their historical framework. Fifty years before

¹³³ Barber, *Bestiary*, 84-86.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

¹³⁵ Fears of Jewish "gluttony" sprang from the anxieties surrounding the necessary and immense role Jews played in the English financial system. By the time Bodley 764 was commissioned, Jews controlled roughly one-third of all circulating coin in the English kingdom. See Robert C. Stacey, "The English Jews under Henry III," in *The Jews in Medieval Britain: Historical, Literary, and Archaeological Perspectives* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), 41.

¹³⁶ Barber, *Bestiary*, 87.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

the production of this manuscript, the Jews of York sought refuge in Clifford's Tower from an angry mob only to see the walls "thrown down" and the survivors brutally murdered in what came to be known as the York Pogrom of 1190.¹³⁸ Meanwhile, the description of Jews being driven out and "scattered" seems ominous in light of the Edict of Expulsion a few decades later, wherein all Jews were expelled from England and forced to relocate across Europe.¹³⁹

The theme of driving the Jews from their home has a strong parallel to aristocratic boar hunting practices, which centered on the highly ritualistic, glorified, and unnecessary "chase." If obtaining meat was the only goal, medieval hunters could have easily lured the boar into traps or pens and quickly dispatched them; Gaston Phoebus mentions these methods in *Livre de Chasse*, but adds "I speak of this against my will, for I should only teach how to take beasts nobly and gently."¹⁴⁰ Instead, aristocratic hunts began with huntsman locating the boar's den, followed by a chase that lasted "from sunrise to sunset."¹⁴¹ The meeting of the boar in the forest, as opposed to the domestic pig in the household pigpen, is significant. The bestiary text makes a tenuous but unwavering etymological connection between the Latin words "*aper*" (boar) and "*feritas*" (wildness), explaining that the boar "lives in wild places."¹⁴² Meanwhile, Marcher law declared that *all land* within the Marcher's domain that was not owned by the church belonged to the Marcher lord in question; it was part of his lordship, which referred to as "*dominium*," a word directly related to *dominus* (lord of the house) and *dominionem* (dominion).¹⁴³ However, medieval dominion did not allow for wild animals to have sanctuary in "wild places" -- all must be under their control, nothing is permitted

¹³⁸ Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries*, 148.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Gaston Phoebus, *Livre de chasse*, 250-51. "Mes de ce parle je mal volentiers, quar je ne devroye enseigner a prendre les bestes si n'est par nobesce et gentillesce"; translated by Crane, *Ritual Aspects*, 69.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 90. "Il guira bien de souleill levant jusques a souleill couchant." Translated by Crane, *Ritual Aspects*, 69.

¹⁴² Barber, "Baronial Bestiary," 87.

¹⁴³ A.C. Reeves, *Marcher Lords*, 58.

to remain wild. Boars may live in the forest, their "wild place," but they will be chased out of their illegal home at the lord's leisure. Jews were also allowed to live in their Jewry, a different kind of "wild place," but regularly massacred and expelled as a show of complete dominion. The notion of Jews and swine as something which must be "chased out" lingered long after Bodley 764 was produced; for example, in 1419 a London town ordinance was entered under the title "Of Jews, Lepers, and Swine that are to be removed from the City" -- despite the fact that Jews were driven out of the country a century and half before.¹⁴⁴

Roger de Monhaut would have been familiar with the constant anxiety that accompanies an uncertain, or even lost, home. As the lord of lands in a "frontier" zone, his home was constantly under threat. He even lost the seat of his power, Moldsdale, to a Welsh Prince and had to fight unflinchingly to recover it in 1240. Marcher lords had to contend with the fact that, at some point during their lives, their lands and castles would likely pass through the hands of the Welsh. In many ways, the land beneath their feet and the roof over their heads could shift at any moment. The Marchers, like the Jews, were practically exiles and aliens in the land of their birth -- a similarity that could only cause unease for Roger de Monhaut.

Another connection between swine and Jews appears in Bodley 764's entry for the sow. The image of the female pig and her suckling piglets has a strong visual parallel to images of the *Judensau*, or "Jewish Sow," developing in German-speaking areas at this time.¹⁴⁵ Early *Judensau* iconography transforms the quaint bestiary scene into anti-Semitic propaganda by replacing the piglets with Jews. From there the images became more and more grotesque, adding bestiality and the consumptions of feces. A famous

¹⁴⁴ Irven M. Resnick, *Marks of Distinction: Christian Perspectives of Jews in the High Middle Ages* (Washington: Catholic University of American Press, 2012), 153.

¹⁴⁵ Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and Its History* (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1974), 4.

15th-century woodcut of a *Judensau* (Fig. 13) may provide another insight into the miniature of the boar and perceptions of Jews: one of the banderoles reads "this is why we do not eat roast pork."¹⁴⁶ As discussed previously, killing an animal distinguished the human from the pantheon of beasts, especially in the case of the pig. Consuming meat serves to further this distinction since "meat" is animal, never human. However, by refusing to eat pork, Jews were neglecting their responsibility as human beings. This is in contrast to the (Christian) hunters in Bodley 764, who will celebrate the successful hunt by eating the boar's flesh. The consumption of pork serves as a means of bolstering community and identity - it distinguishes them as non-animal and non-Jew. It is telling, then, that the bestiary text describes the murdered Jews as "devoured," since Christians devoured both Jews and pigs since both are too close for comfort in their humanity.

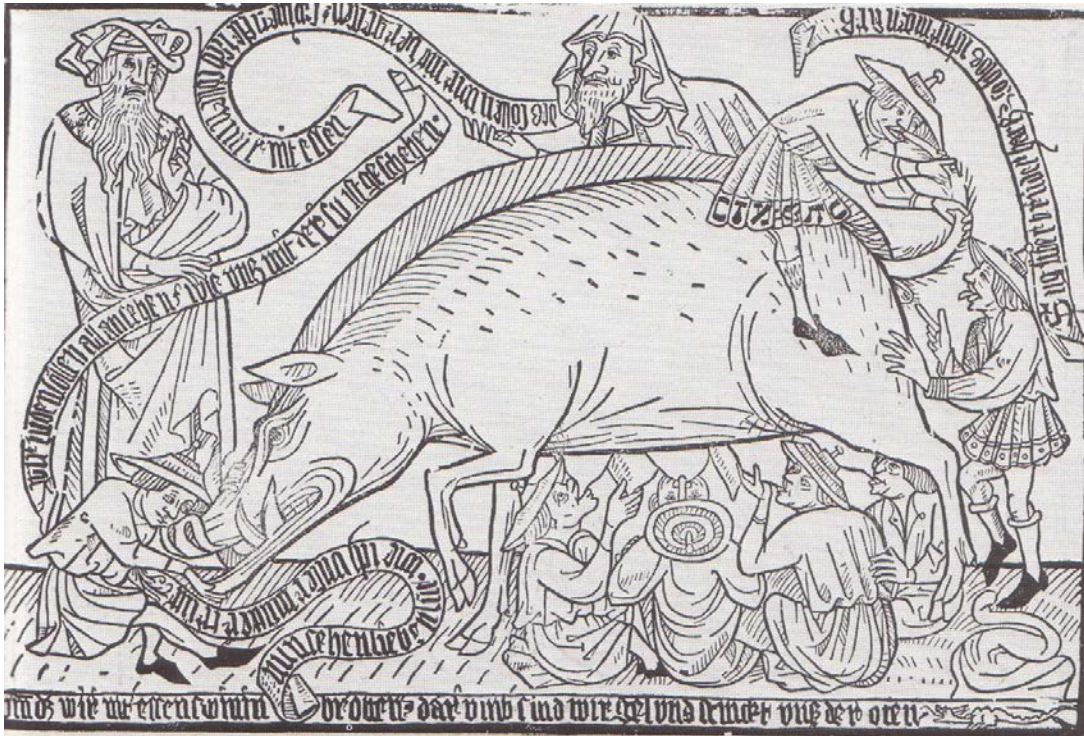


Figure 13. *Judensau*. Historisches Museum, Frankfurt am Main.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 35.

The Bodley 764 image of two hunters spearing a boar is more than just a “mirror” of actual human behavior. Instead, it is a screen for the projected narrative of dominion – over animals, women, Jews, Welsh, and over the messy chaos of life itself. Sinful desires and horrifying fears are turned outward, “Othered” onto a passive body - the boar - who is then brutally killed with its eerily human-sounding dying screams. The pig becomes the anti-human, the anti-Christian, the anti-male, the anti-self that is so similar and so destructive, it must be killed to be rendered unthreatening, to be appropriately (and securely) *dominated*.

Six hundred years after this image was produced, Upton Sinclair wrote the novel *The Jungle*. His unflinching portrayal of meat-packing factories led to government regulation of the industry. The main character, Jurgis, notes how the slaughtered pigs are "so very human in their protests;" and then "he had stood and watched the hog-killing, and thought how cruel and savage it was, and come away congratulating himself that he was not a hog."¹⁴⁷ Perhaps the medieval audience gazing upon this image felt the same.

¹⁴⁷ Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1905), 311.

CHAPTER 4

'FOOD FOR THE BEASTS'

In the last chapter I explored a hunting scene in which a fantasy of dominion only served simultaneously to shroud and highlight the underlying lack. These examples of Lacan's *objet petit a* contrast sharply with my final topic: the abject. This is encountered when one gets too close and the lack is revealed - when the Real collapses all meanings and the subject is lost. The "mirror" of the bestiary reflects this traumatic, but inescapable, experience by including a great deal of human bodies brutally fragmented and masticated within the jaws of animals. The illustrations of broken human bodies not only highlight the fragility of the physical form, but also demonstrate the frailty of human (that is, male, Christian) identity. Moreover, anthropophagous bestiary animals often carry fears of the gender and ethnic Other; both the human body and identity are consumed and subsumed into the ever-present animal/Other. Just as in life, the human figures in the bestiary struggle to establish unquestioned dominion, only to be constantly undercut by the abject.

Before proceeding, Julia Kristeva's description of the causes of abjection is worth quoting at length: "[that which] disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite... crime, because it draws attention to the fragility of the law, is abject, but premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge are even more so because they heighten the display of such fragility."¹⁴⁸ This definition might well describe the multitude of bestiary animals, whether they are predator or prey, real or fantastic. The bestiary itself creates identity, boundaries, and order which bolster the "law" of human dominion. However, to produce borders and laws is to produce trespassers and law-breakers. Therefore the bestiary concurrently creates and devastates the systems, order, and borders of

¹⁴⁸ Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror*, 1.

abjection. It exists, in the words of Kristeva, "on the fragile border (borderline cases) where identities (subject/object, etc.) do not exist or only barely so—double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject."¹⁴⁹

As discussed previously, abjection of the animal through violence lies at the heart of human identity. Moreover, the bestiary is a site of abjection, where the horrifying characteristics of the animals (gluttony, greed, lust, deceit, mortality, etcetera) are rejected, only to be found to be within the human self. This is especially terrifying when seen from the larger cultural framework wherein being human was not a given state, but a status that must be obtained and maintained. One could become bestial, or a beast, by merely engaging in certain sexual acts or eating certain foods. The horror produced by the all-too-human abjected animal results in violent images of human dominion peppered throughout the bestiary.

Killing animals, therefore, maintained the God-given "dominion" over animals and defined what it meant to be human. However, that begs the question: what about animals that killed humans? This occurred both in art and life. Dangerous animals and their human prey fill the medieval bestiary; deadly creatures inhabited the medieval landscape. Real corporeal danger lurked within and without people's homes -- naturally, they were afraid. This is in spite of God's declaration that "the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth..." (Gen 9:2). The fear even violates 11th-century ecclesiastical law which proclaimed, due to the fact that humans have dominion over animals, that animals should not have any advantages over humans and "therefore, people were to be feared by animals, not to fear them."¹⁵⁰ However, the terrifying fact remained: animals can easily devastate theological barriers with the swipe of a paw. The

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 207.

¹⁵⁰ Salisbury, *Beast Within*, 16.

bestiary animals associated with this violence are also those who are ambiguous, criminal, and, ultimately, abject.

On the Shore, On the Border

We turn first to two animals who inhabited the shoreline between water and land, a liminal space for liminal animals: the crocodile and ibis. The crocodile was one of the most fearsome and horrible animals in the bestiary. The text immediately describes the creature as "equally at home on land or in the water;" the author then notes that it is "armed with monstrous teeth and claws." This 'armor' keeps it safe from all enemies save for the *hydrus*, which infiltrates the crocodile's body only to burst from within its stomach. The bestiary also notes that "old women and faded whores" use crocodile dung to "anoint their faces and appear beautiful until their sweat washes it off."¹⁵¹ The characteristic most often illustrated and moralized, however, is its hypocrisy, as it kills any human it encounters, and then "eats him later, and always weeps over him."¹⁵²

Images of the lethal encounter between crocodile and human abound in medieval bestiaries. However, I would like to focus on the full-page miniature with two registers found in Bodley 764, folio 24r (Fig. 14). The upper image depicts a man battling a crocodile. The man grasps the crocodile by its ear and raises his axe to strike. The crocodile, in turn, bites the man's abdomen. This violent scene takes place on land. The scene below, however, depicts an almost identical image of the crocodile in water (presumably his/her described home, the Nile) with several fish in his/her grasp. The placement of the images underlines the text's immediate focus on the amphibious nature of the crocodile and the associated negative connotations. The connection between "despicable" animals and those that cross boundaries or reject easy categorization is a running theme throughout the bestiary. Also, by positioning the duplicate crocodile

¹⁵¹ Barber, *Bestiary*, 62.

¹⁵² White, *Northumberland*, 89.

figures in comparison to each other, the illuminator draws attention to a horrible reality: the human victim is scarcely different from the doomed fish below.



Figure 14. *Crocodile*. Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 764, f24r.

This single image would have been capable of inciting fear and horror, both of which are aroused with images of biting. It is especially disturbing to see the abdomen, the fleshiest and most vulnerable enclosure of essential organs, caught within the jaws of a beast. Just as the crocodile crosses the boundary between land-dwelling and water-

dwelling, it also crosses the boundary of the human. The physical boundary, the body, is broken and masticated within its gaping maw. The metaphysical boundary, wherein humans kill but are not killed, is exposed as utter fantasy. The easy replacement of a human man with a fish devastates the boundary between human and animal that had been theologically grounded on divinely bestowed dominion.

During the Middle Ages, the emotional and physical effects of things we see were recognized as powerful and unavoidable. The medieval theorist Roger Bacon believed vision "always experiences a feeling that is a kind of pain."¹⁵³ This pain would easily be felt by medieval viewers, as this image (like all images) would take on a life of its own in the viewer's mind. One can easily imagine the screams of the dying man, his cries replacing his God-given ability for language and turning him into animal prey. By biting the man's abdomen, the crocodile's mouth would fill up with blood, urine, excrement, gore -- the things preferably hidden or contained within the whole human body. This would be accompanied by the sound of crunching bones, tearing of flesh, and the sickening slop of entrails and blood. With a single chomp of the jaw, the body, the *human*, is revealed for what it is: merely an arrangement of flesh, bones, and viscera.

It would also be disturbing to the medieval viewer to see the human body treated as carrion. The prohibition of carrion during the Middle Ages was a strong one, defined and promulgated by penitentials and law. Carrion was defined as flesh polluted by animal violence, expressed in two general categories. Firstly, unlike Mosaic law, the penitentials were far more concerned with the animal's death than its species; one could not eat meat killed by another animal, or eaten by another animal.¹⁵⁴ A single bite taken by a non-human (especially scavengers such as wolves) rendered the meat unclean and revolting. Animals could pollute food by falling into it, defecating on it, even eating it (as

¹⁵³ Roger Bacon, *The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon*, trans. by R.B. Burke (New York: Russell and Russell, Inc., 1962), 445-446.

¹⁵⁴ Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 76.

long as it was not meat) -- and a simple sprinkling of holy water would cleanse the food.¹⁵⁵ Carrion, however, was beyond repair. This is due to the animal's encroachment onto the human monopoly on killing. To kill a human, moreover, was inexcusable and horrific. This brings us to the second theme in the types of carrion: the meat of any animal, especially swine, which had killed a human was considered carrion and inedible. This even extended to honey from bees that had stung a human to death.¹⁵⁶ The human body becomes the abhorred carrion, the unclean meat, consumed by an abhorred animal -- in this image, even the unclean Jew. The gross inversion would be horrifying to the medieval structure, and also horrifyingly familiar. How many plague corpses fed roaming dogs? How many fallen soldiers fed the crows?

Crows were not the only birds to consume humans. The ibis entry in the *Northumberland Bestiary* immediately begins by describing it as "unclean before all birds because it always feeds on rotting carcasses."¹⁵⁷ It is portrayed as a scavenger who searches the shore for "putrid or decayed" carcasses.¹⁵⁸ This feeding technique is to blame for its supposed inability to swim -- "nor does it try to learn, since it enjoys rotting carcasses."¹⁵⁹ The importance on the ibis' consumption, and enjoyment, of rotting remains is clearly emphasized. However, the decaying flesh is never described as specifically human. Often bestiary images depict the ibis eating dead fish and, occasionally, the body of an animal. One illumination in particular stands out, however: MS Bodley 764, folio 66r (Fig. 15). In this scene a mother ibis is feeding her young several eggs while gripping a dead snake with her feet. Between the snake and the nest, smuggled in almost as an afterthought, is a rotting human head. The teeth are bared in a grim smile, teeth which should be chewing flesh and asserting human dominion, and

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 83.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 81.

¹⁵⁷ White, *Northumberland*, 199.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

decayed flesh hangs off the skull. The perfect human, made in God's image, is distorted and disgusting. The head is also the seat of reason, and reason is at the crux of human definition; here the head is carrion, and not even the first choice of meat.



Figure 15. *Ibis*. Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 764, f66r.

An animal killing a human, such as the crocodile, is unacceptable in Christian doctrine, the medieval worldview, and the human psyche. However, images of the ibis consuming human flesh are far more disturbing. As Karl Steel has noted "anthropophagy confounds the distinction between human and other animal lives, between what can be murdered and what can only be slaughtered, by digesting what the regime of the human demands be interred within a grave."¹⁶⁰ The horror is reflected in the practice of medieval penance, in which anthropophagy was worse than murder, and only slightly less offensive than incest.¹⁶¹ This strong prohibition is "a defense not of humans, but of

¹⁶⁰ Steel, *How To Make a Human*, 124.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid*, 125.

the human itself."¹⁶² If human identity is founded on the inability to be dominated, how can that survive the mastication of animal teeth? In this space, the flesh of the human becomes indistinguishable from the flesh of base beasts.



Figure 16. *Crocodile*. J. Paul Getty Museum, MS 100, f49v.

Sex, Death, and Hyenas

Perhaps the most curious image of a bestiary crocodile is that in the Northumberland Bestiary (Fig. 16). The text recites the familiar characteristics, presenting a "bad" animal who hypocritically eats men and then weeps. The illustration, however, deviates somewhat from traditional iconography. The anthropophagy is not

¹⁶² Ibid, 124.

exceptional, but the exposure of the victim's penis and testicles is highly unusual. Equally remarkable are the inclusion of both female and male genitals on the crocodile. The text does not state, or even insinuate, that the crocodile is a hermaphrodite. To understand this strange image, one must turn to a seemingly unrelated animal: the hyena.

A monstrous and unclean beast, the bestiary hyena is often depicted as the grotesque consumer of humanity's rotting remains. This oft-repeated iconography seems peculiar in relation to the accompanying text, which contains only one or two mentions of the hyena's cadaver diet. Instead, the text quickly notes "its nature is that it is sometimes male, sometimes female, and it is therefore an unclean animal."¹⁶³ The entries focus on its "cunning" nature, including its ability to mimic human voices in order to lure unsuspecting victims to their death. The bestiary's allegory is unequivocal in its anti-Semitism, stating "the children of Israel are like this beast; at first they served the living God but later fell prey to riches and easy living and worshipped idols."¹⁶⁴ This also applies to "those among us who are slaves to luxury and greed, are like this brute, since they are neither men nor women, that is, neither faithful nor faithless, but are without doubt those of whom Solomon says: 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.'"¹⁶⁵

The overarching theme within these qualities is a rejection of clear definition. As a scavenger, it is neither predator nor prey. As a hermaphrodite, it is neither male nor female. As a voiced being, it is neither human nor animal. As a Jew, it is neither faithful nor faithless. The hyena challenged the dominion of humans; the "unstable" Jews challenged the stability of the Christian worldview; the double-sexed hermaphrodite challenged security in the gender binary. The hyena iconography's insistent inclusion of corpses, dual genitalia, and anthropophagy reveal deeper reactions to the abject.

¹⁶³ The Aberdeen Bestiary Project. <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/translat/11v.hti>

¹⁶⁴ Barber, *Bestiary*, 46.

¹⁶⁵ The Aberdeen Bestiary Project. <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/translat/12r.hti>

Even more so than the crocodile or ibis, the hyena's rejection of "identity, system, order" bring it frighteningly close to the Real. Perhaps it is unsurprising, therefore, that it is the bestial animal most closely associated with the corpse, "the utmost of abjection."¹⁶⁶ The bestiary text, always concerned with etymologies, explains that the word "cadaver is from *cadere*, to fall."¹⁶⁷ Julia Kristeva's description of death also makes this connection: "...refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live... until, from loss to loss, nothing remains in me and my entire body falls beyond the limit—*cadere*, cadaver."¹⁶⁸ A corpse may "fall" in that it can no longer stand. However, the corpse also 'falls' beyond the borders-- of life/death, human/meat, subject/object -- as Kristeva describes it, "the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything."¹⁶⁹ These images may have led the bestiary audience to ask, as Kristeva does, "how can I be without border?"¹⁷⁰

Human and animal nudity in bestiary hyena iconography plays an important role in decoding underlying anxieties, especially in regard to the nude human corpse. Although the bestiary text is fixated on Jews and avarice, the visual components almost always depict the hyena's anthropophagous scavenger diet. The Ashmole Bestiary, for example, portrays a hyena taking its first bite into a nude male corpse (Fig. 17). His contorted form twists at an impossible angle as he falls out of his sarcophagus. The corpse is displayed without benefit of a shroud, but it is uncertain if his genitals are visible. His penis, or lack thereof, is lost within his bloated and distorted body. Regardless, his spread thighs allow the hyena full visual and physical access to his genitals.

¹⁶⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.

¹⁶⁷ White, *Northumberland*, 343.

¹⁶⁸ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 3.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.



Figure 17. *Hyena*. Bodleian Library, MS. Ashmole 1511, f17v.

In medieval art, nudity was sometimes used to visually indicate that the subject is dead.¹⁷¹ On the surface this may appear as a simple visual device, or even a reflection of actual medieval burial practices.¹⁷² In this image, nudity is a reflection of the ultimate helplessness, the *passivity*, of the human body after death. Man is no longer the clothed Adam, sitting upright and observing the animals he names with certainty. Now his eyes are closed, he turns away and he is consumed within the mouth of the animal he is meant to govern. His unconcealed nudity is the final ignominy; he is unable to cover his sex from the ravenous hyena. The active male has become the passive corpse.

¹⁷¹ Miles, *Carnal Knowing*, 81.

¹⁷² Some peasant corpses were denied a shroud or coffin and simply dumped directly into the earth. Philippe Aries, *Images of Man and Death*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge: 1985), 19-23.

The man would be ashamed of his nudity if he was aware of it, but he is not. His ignorance of his nudity before the prying gaze of the hyena (and bestiary reader) is the ultimate passivity. He is denied shame; he is an object. The hyena, conversely, is nude. In fact, s/he may be *doubly* nude - it displays both male and female genitalia. Although the hyena's torso and hindquarters are rendered in profile view, both sets of genitalia are turned towards the viewer, offering a more detailed description. Perhaps the most appalling aspect of this image for the medieval viewer is not the meticulous rendering of the sex organs, but the hyena's blithe disregard of its own nudity. S/he is unashamed and actively dominating the prostrate human/object.

It is not unimportant that the cadaver is male. In fact, all bestiary corpses within hyena entries are men with the exception of one (which I will address below).¹⁷³ During the Middle Ages, male sexuality was founded on, in the words of Joyce Salisbury, "power and an *active* expression of desire" (emphasis mine).¹⁷⁴ The active/male necessitates and "completes" the passive/female. Medieval penitentials were quick to impose three years penance for committing heterosexual intercourse with the woman on top, as it was deemed "contrary to nature" to have the woman in the dominant position.¹⁷⁵

The Middle Ages also viewed carnivorousness as a sign of masculinity, neatly fitting into the dichotomy of active/passive.¹⁷⁶ The dominant carnivore (animal or human) remains whole as it turns other bodies into passive objects available to consume and subsume. In the Ashmole Bestiary, the nude male is prostrate with his legs spread like a woman, passively receiving the sexually aggressive hyena as it enters his body. His ambiguous genitalia contrasts sharply with the hyper-sexualized genitals of the violent beast. The

¹⁷³ This excludes the shrouded (genderless) corpse in British Library MS Royal 12.F.XIII, and the entry in British Library Add. MS 11283 in which the hyena has consumed all of the corpse except for a leg.

¹⁷⁴ Salisbury, *Beast Within*, 80.

¹⁷⁵ Jeffrey Richards, *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation: Minority Groups in the Middle Ages* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), 29.

¹⁷⁶ Kevin Drew Petty, "The Hyena, Gender, and MS Bodley 764," (MA Thesis, Arizona State University, 1994), 66.

man does not penetrate - *he* is penetrated by the enlarged teeth of the hyena. In one example of the bestiary of Guillaume le Clerc, Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, MS fr. 14969, f.30, the phallic arm of the cadaver is penetrating the hyena, but not of its own accord (Fig. 18). The hyena's mouth is more than a receptacle, it is an active consumer. Its penis, meanwhile, dips down to the closed eyes of yet another corpse. Hyena iconography within medieval bestiaries use nudity and sexuality to visually reinforce the fallen state of the (hu)man. No longer separate from beasts, man is literally, figuratively, and terrifyingly entwined with his former subjects.



Figure 18. *Hyena*. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 14969, f30v.

The Fall resulted in more than just anthropophagous animals like the hyena. Original Sin led to the rampant sin that haunted bestiary creators and consumers. The inclusion of nudity and genitalia in hyena illuminations such as the Ashmole Bestiary alludes to the sin of bestiality. Lust was seen as not only bestial, but the polar opposite of human-defining reason. Sexual intercourse with an animal, moreover, effectively erases philosophical and literal boundaries between human and animal bodies. Unsurprisingly, the worst possible scenario was to be the passive partner in a sexual encounter with an

animal.¹⁷⁷ Writing around the height of bestiary production in England, Thomas Aquinas declared "the most grievous is the sin of bestiality, because use of the due species is not deserved."¹⁷⁸ Less than a century earlier, the Monk of Evesham described the punishment for those who had engaged in bestial intercourse as "continually attacked by huge fiery monsters, horrible beyond description."¹⁷⁹ A similar description could be ascribed to the corpse in this illumination, tumbling from his tomb and falling down towards Hell, forever physically and sexually attacked by a horrible monster.

Dangerous lust could be felt for animals, but also for animal-like women. Gynephobia is easily expressed in the context of the hyena, wherein proscriptions against illustrations of female genitalia can be circumvented by placing them upon an animal. The gaping vagina of the Ashmole hyena mimics the hyena's swallowing mouth at the animal's opposite end (Fig. 17). Medieval associations between mouths and vaginas, stemming from the Indo-European trope of the *vagina dentata*, encourage associations between the hyena's gaping vagina and his/her toothed maw.¹⁸⁰ The bestiary hyena's ravenous (and exposed) orifices reveal the deep-seated fear of being consumed orally or vaginally, the male body and identity fragmented by woman/animal Other. In many ways, the hyena becomes the ultimate grotesque in the bestiary. Mikhail Bakhtin describes the grotesque body as enacting "sexual intercourse, death throes, and the act of birth"¹⁸¹ adding that "birth and death are the gaping jaws of the earth and the mother's open womb."¹⁸² Typical hyena images, with their blatant combination of sex, death, and

¹⁷⁷ Salisbury, *The Beast Within*, 99.

¹⁷⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Kindle Edition.

¹⁷⁹ As quoted in E. Gardiner, *Visions of Heaven and Hell Before Dante* (New York: Italica Press 1989), 210.

¹⁸⁰ See E. Jane Burns, "This Prick Which is Not One: How Women Talk Back in Old French Fabliaux," in *Feminist Approaches to the Body in Medieval Literature*, edited Linda Lomperis and Sarah Stanbury (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 188-212. Specifically her discussion of *vagina dentata* and "Jugement des cons," which includes a woman seductively (?) reassuring a potential suitor "I have large, long teeth, and my cunt has none."

¹⁸¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968), 352.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 329.

birth, easily contain Bakhtin's gaping jaws and open womb in an explicit manner denied to most other medieval imagery.



Figure 19. *Hyena*. British Library, Harley MS 4751, f10r.

In light of the unwavering focus on human male bodies (and their sexuality) within hyena illustrations, the one exception must be noted: British Library, MS Harley 4751 (Fig. 19). This unique illumination includes a sexless hyena who bites the pelvis of a nude female corpse, pulling her out of her tomb and revealing her breasts. She may recall the first female, Eve, whose name the bestiary translates as "life or calamity" because "she was the source of birth" and "she was the reason for dying."¹⁸³ The bestiary then notes that, just like the word cadaver, "the word *calamitas* (calamity) took its name from *cadere* (to fall)."¹⁸⁴ In this particular image, the hyena is consuming her pelvis first -- the pelvis, the creator of life and calamity, the site of expulsion of excrement and humanity.

¹⁸³ White, *Northumberland*, 59.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

But now this woman (Eve?) is no longer a woman but a cadaver, and her pelvis no longer expels: in the words of Julia Kristeva, "it is no longer I who expel, 'I' is expelled."¹⁸⁵

Although there are no gaping vaginas or enlarged penises, the Harley image still has a strong undercurrent of sexuality. Now, however, the focus is no longer on the hyena genitals, but the woman's. To understand this shift, one must turn to the bestiary text and its anti-Semitic rhetoric. During the 13th century, canon law decreed that Jewish people wear distinguishing dress (or badges) to prevent Christians from accidental sexual relations with Jews - specifically, to prevent the male Jew from "violating" a female Christian.¹⁸⁶ The fact that badges and special dress were required to differentiate them suggests Jews could indistinguishably mix among Christians, just as hyenas easily mimicked human voices. This bestiary does not depict a circumcised penis on the hyena (as does the Ashmole Bestiary), but the hyena itself looks strikingly like an ass - a symbol of the Jew.¹⁸⁷ The thought of a Jew physically entering a Christian female, with phallus or teeth, seeming to literally cross the boundary of the Christian body, would have been disturbing in the extreme. Sexual congress between the woman and the Jew/hyena may also be alluded to as the hyena pulls the woman out of the shroud, as if undressing her. At the time of this bestiary's inception, sexual relations between Christian women and Jewish men was considered "bestiality" and punishable by death for both parties.¹⁸⁸ This image reflects the complex interactions between sexuality and death, Jews and Christians, humans and animals.

Returning to the curious crocodile image at the beginning of the section (Fig. 16), we observe that this bestiary considered crocodiles to be similar to hyenas both in form and sinful nature. Their monstrous genitals reflect delight (or indifference?) in breaking

¹⁸⁵ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.

¹⁸⁶ Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries*, 152.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

all carefully created boundaries. This particular image takes it even further by blatantly rendering the corpse's penis - a rare detail in bestiaries and medieval art in general. The reason may be hinted at in the text, which describes the animal as "*armed* with huge teeth and claws" (emphasis mine) and reports "its skin is said to be so tough that even when struck by blows of hard stones, it is not damaged at all."¹⁸⁹ Animal body parts were seen as comparable to weapons and armor (and by extension, clothing) during the Middle Ages. For example, Thomas Aquinas mentions that animals have "horns and claws, which are the weapons of some animals, and toughness of hide and quantity of hair or feathers, which are the clothing of animals."¹⁹⁰ This, perhaps, lies at the heart of the conspicuous human and animal nudity within this image. The stripped human body is vulnerable, devoid of any weapons or armor. Its nakedness displays its corporeality, easily transformed into meat, passively overwhelmed. The vulnerable nude humans contrast with the powerful nude animal, uncovered and unashamed, naked but still deadly.

The crocodile presented in Cambridge University Library MS Ii.4.26 (Fig. 20) is similar to a bestiary hyena in shape and visual characteristics, but its (possibly dual) genitals are hidden from view. However, like the previous example, the penis of its human victim is exposed to the gaze of the viewer. The twisted corpse seems to fall downwards as the crocodile gnaws on his midsection, evoking the Ashmole hyena's victim (Fig. 20). The corpse's position inverts humanity's unique upright posture, which God bestowed on humanity as a reflection of their superiority and dominion. As the

¹⁸⁹ White, *Northumberland*, 89.

¹⁹⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Kindle Edition.

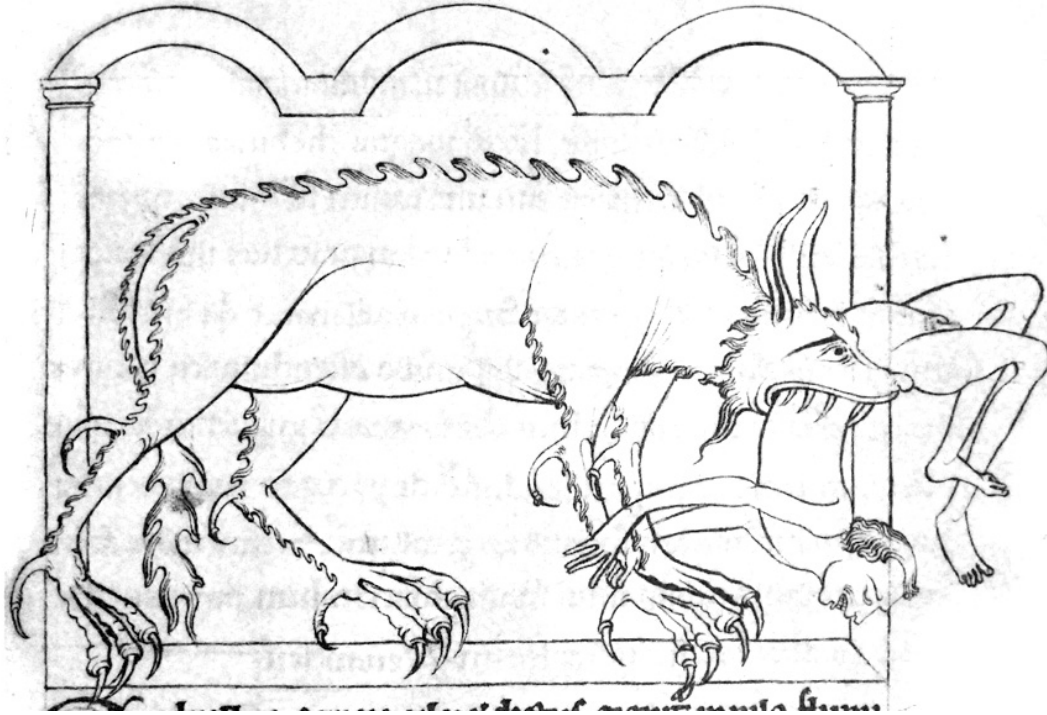


Figure 20. *Crocodile*. Cambridge University Library MS II.4.26, f15.

bestiary explains, man "is erect and looks to heaven that he may seek God, not that he may lean toward the ground, as herd animals do, which nature has made downward-facing and obedient to the belly."¹⁹¹ This was a popular medieval tradition stemming from classical sources such as Ovid, which the Northumberland Bestiary quotes directly.¹⁹² Even in modern times, the moment that early hominids became *homo erectus*, an upright ape, is largely considered the turning point in human evolution from "animal" to "human." For example, on the PBS Nova website's introduction to the topic, the author states "bipedalism has permitted us to multiply to a world population of over six billion, allowing us to assume a position of primacy over all other life on the planet" - a statement that echoes God's directive to have dominion and multiply.¹⁹³ The corpse in the Cambridge crocodile image, and the many other corpses in crocodile and hyena

¹⁹¹ White, *Northumberland*, 305.

¹⁹² "This is what the poet Ovid means when he says 'When other animals, face-down, look at the ground, / he gave man a face lifted up and bid him to see the sky and / to lift his erect countenance to the stars'" Ibid.

¹⁹³ Donald Johanson, "How Bipedalism Arose" <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/evolution/what-evidence-suggests.html> Accessed March 20th, 2014

bestiary imagery, are no longer the upright rational beings extolled by the bestiary. Instead, they are "downward-facing" and therefore "obedient," a power reversal that transforms the human into passive object to be consumed.

The dramatic downward motion of the bodies perhaps also references the sinners' descent into hell. This is supported by George Druce's argument that Hellmouth monsters are actually medieval visions of crocodiles.¹⁹⁴ He points out that bestiaries depict crocodiles with the same pointed ears, canine-like snout, and even hair of medieval Hellmouth imagery. Aleks Pluskowski, however, makes a strong case that the medieval Hellmouth's visual characteristics in Northern Europe were conceived on centuries of pagan apocalyptic imagery, such as the voracious mythical Norse wolf Fenrir.¹⁹⁵ I would argue that the relationship was somewhere between the two points of view - the crocodile, unknown to English illuminators, took on the lupine appearance of the Hellmouth, which itself is a stand-in for both real and mythical voracious animals.

Turning to the bestiary text, the reader can find another connection between the mouth of hell and the crocodile in the entry for the hydrus (or idrus). This animal is said to live on the Nile and is the enemy of the crocodile. It waits for the crocodile to fall asleep and then it slithers into its mouth, alive, only to burst through its stomach, killing it while remaining unharmed. The text clearly states "For this reason death and hell are symbolised by the crocodile," and then compares the hydrus to Christ during the Harrowing of Hell when he "descended into hell and, tearing open its inner parts, he led forth those who were unjustly held there."¹⁹⁶ The strongest visual evidence for this connection may be found in a French manuscript of Guillaume le Clerc's bestiary,

¹⁹⁴ George Druce, "The Symbolism of the Crocodile in the Middle Ages," *The Archaeological Journal* 66 (1909): 311-339.

¹⁹⁵ Aleks Pluskowski, "Apocalyptic Monsters: Animal Inspirations for the Iconography of Medieval North European Devourers," in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, edited by Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2003): 155-176.

¹⁹⁶ The Aberdeen Bestiary Project, <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary/translat/69r.hti>. Accessed March 15th 2013.

Bibliothèque Nationale de France fr. 14969 (Fig. 21). This manuscript illustrates not only the standard bestiary iconography, but includes allegorical illustrations as well. The crocodile entry includes an illustration of a hydrus emerging from a crocodile's side; above this an illumination of the Harrowing of Hell, depicting Christ saving nude souls from a gaping crocodile-like Hellmouth. The nudity of the souls echoes the crocodile's nude victims and perhaps reminds bestiary readers of their own vulnerability to sin and inescapable mortality.

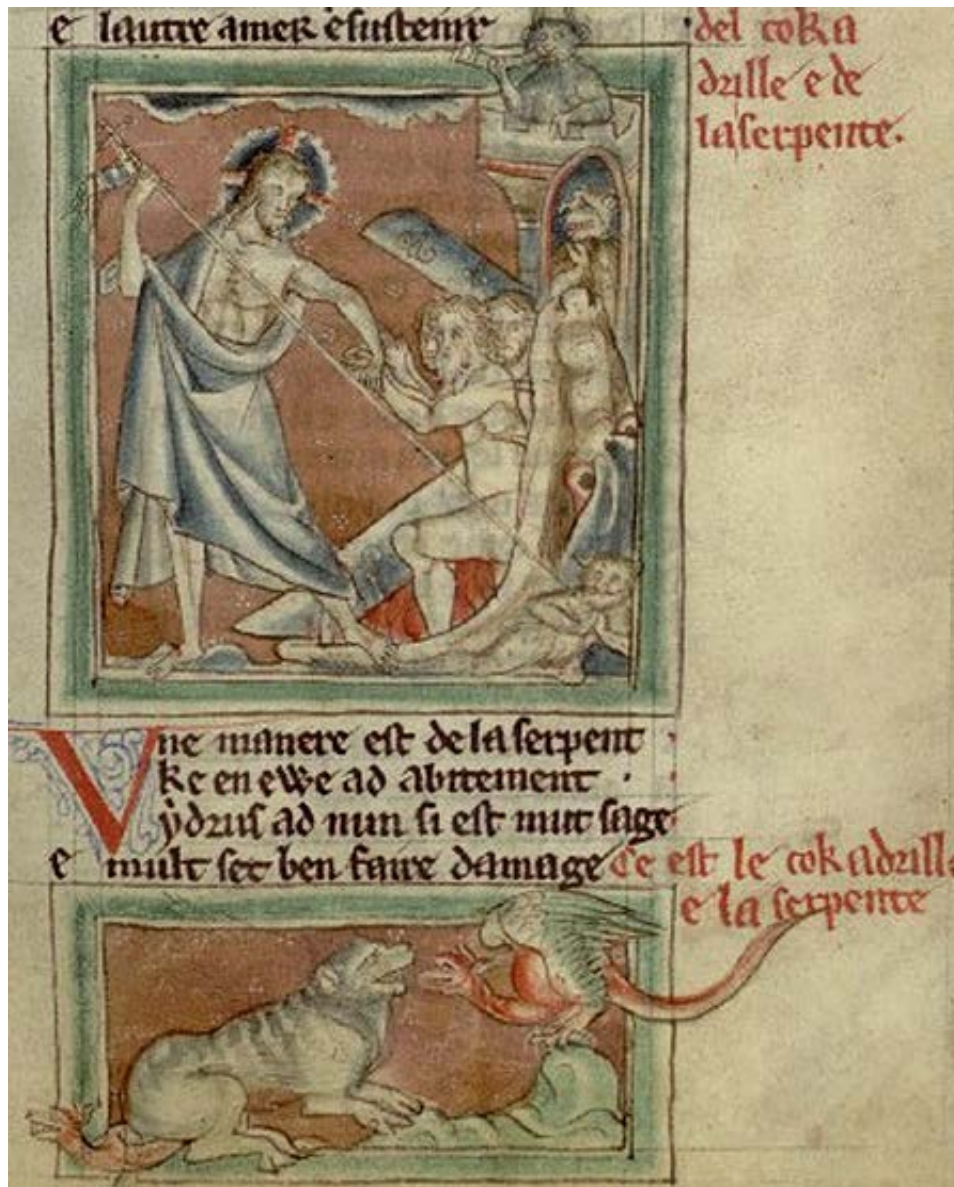


Figure 21. Crocodile. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 14969, f31v.



Figure 22. *Manticore*. Bodleian Library, Oxford; MS Bodley 764, f25r.

Monstrous Mouths

As the consumed human flesh recedes into an un-human object, the homicidal animal (perhaps given the new title "man-eating") becomes more human. It *must* become more human in order to save the human from being "slaughtered" like an animal. This surely plays into the anthropophagous characteristics attributed to all bestial hybrids and "monsters" containing human parts. One such example is the manticore: a creature with the body of a lion, the tail of a scorpion, and the head of a man. Moreover, he has three rows of razor-sharp teeth and "hungers for human flesh

most greedily."¹⁹⁷ The manticore's desire for human flesh is illustrated in Bodley 764 (Fig. 22), where a human leg startlingly juts out of the manticore mouth containing three carefully drawn rows of teeth. Like the crocodile, hyena, and ibis, the manticore crosses a series of boundaries. The human body and identity is fragmented -- one human body is reduced to a leg, another is grossly integrated into the body of a beast. The sharp claws or scorpion-like tail of the manticore were most likely responsible for the death of its human victim -- yet another example of a non-human crossing the boundary into human dominion. Cohen points out that the human identity is destroyed as "... the traumatized subject will be ingested, absorbed into that big Other seemingly beyond (but actually wholly within, because wholly created by) the symbolic order that it menaces."¹⁹⁸ The disgust and fear of being ingested is escalated by the human head of the manticore, which is committing one of the ultimate forms of boundary crossing: cannibalism.

Despite all human posturing of dominion and difference, the fact is human meat is just that: meat. Humans, like animals, die and their meat can easily be confused with the animal flesh. However, the biggest difference, according medieval writers, was that human flesh "is the best of meats, the most restorative, most delicious, and most desirable."¹⁹⁹ Anthropophagy is horrifying and enjoyable, taboo and yet capable of inducing intense pleasure. Therefore it is abjected, ascribed to animals and monsters in an attempt to "other" this powerful horror/attraction onto an Other. The demonization of Others through accusations of anthropophagy is merely a desperate attempt to cling to one's human identity – as Cohen notes, "cannibalism condenses a fear of losing the boundary that circumscribes identity and produces discrete subjects."²⁰⁰ If human

¹⁹⁷ White, *Northumberland*, 133.

¹⁹⁸ Cohen, *Of Giants*, 8.

¹⁹⁹ Steel, *How To Make a Human*, 119.

²⁰⁰ Cohen, *Of Giants*, 2.

identity is ripped apart in the masticating teeth of an animal, how could it possibly survive the human mouth?

Anthropophagy, cannibalism, and hybridity coalesce in the monstrous bodies of sirens and centaurs in the bestiary. These two creatures are not relegated to the "monstrous races" section included in some bestiaries, but are instead treated as animals. According to the bestiary text, sirens are human from the waist up; below their navel they are either fish, bird, or a combination of the two. They are described as "deadly creatures" who use their beautiful song to lull sailors to sleep, and then "as soon as they are fast asleep, the sirens attack them and devour their flesh."²⁰¹ Stemming from classical tradition, the siren was well-represented outside of the bestiary in literary and pictorial traditions, in which her attributes were often further embroidered. For example, the 13th century encyclopedia of Bartholomeus Anglicus includes an entry on sirens, which adds the tale of sirens who lure sailors to dry land, attempt to have sex with them, and eat them if they refuse.²⁰²

Predictably, the associated allegory focuses on sexual sins, warning men against sinful pleasures and directly referring to sirens as "prostitutes." Despite (and because of) the warnings against lust, the images almost always include frontal nudity. Debra Hassig notes that the siren "afforded the perfect opportunity for the representation of genitalia," adding "the renderings may be considered much more explicit in that they represent human(oid) female torsos rather than human genitals attached to or disengaged from a quadruped."²⁰³ Perhaps more than Adam's penis or the hyena's cavernous vagina, the siren's breasts were erotically pleasing while simultaneously, and explicitly, warning against the evils of erotic pleasure.

²⁰¹ Barber, *Bestiary*, 150.

²⁰² Bartholomeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum* II.97. Quoted in Debra Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries: Text, Image, Ideology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 105.

²⁰³ Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries*, 108-109.

In the original *Physiologus* manuscripts, sirens are grouped with "onocentaurs," creatures who are half man, half ass.²⁰⁴ Their visual iconography was eventually passed on to the bestiaries, but the textual description did not make the cut. The few bestiary passages that do address the (ono)centaurs describe them as "foolish and deceitful," a lascivious creature not unlike the siren.²⁰⁵ For both the centaur and the siren, nudity is used as a marker of their lust. For example, the enlarged genitals of the centaur in Sloane MS 278 (Fig. 23) are prominent reminders of his unabashed sexuality. He gallops through the text, using his animal body and engorged member to create a frame around the red-lettered word "onocentarus." He is not only shameless in his sexuality, he *revels* in it.



Figure 23. *Siren and Onocentaur*. British Library, Sloane MS 278, f47r.

²⁰⁴ Michael J. Curley, trans., *Physiologus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 23-24. "Centaur" is often used interchangeably with "onocentaur," although technically "centaur" referred to half men, half horse (also called hippocentaurs)

²⁰⁵ White, *Northumberland*, 77. See also Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries*, 113.

The hyena and other naked animals are excused, in a way, for their unashamed sexuality. In Genesis, shame separates the human from the animal. The prelapsarian hyena or crocodile (if there was one) did not eat of the forbidden fruit, and therefore never experienced shame. However unpleasant, shame is (believed to be) unique to humans. In that case, the human half of sirens and centaurs should be both reasonable and ashamed - yet it is neither. The animalistic members of the (rarely depicted) centaurs were confined to their animal half. Conversely, sirens were the more frequent and the more negative of the two, most likely because the exposed nudity of their *human* half. Female (human) nudity is less threatening when the nude body is a passive object for the gaze. Sirens, however, actively use their nakedness to pursue and seduce men, resulting in the destruction of male bodies and their assumed dominant sexuality.

During the Middle Ages, "human" was an unstable distinction that could be forfeited at any moment. Animality lurked behind every action and thought - as we've seen, something as simple as eating carrion could strip one of "humanity."²⁰⁶ Anxiety about bestial urges is evident in the half-human half-animal bodies of the sirens and centaurs, especially in Bodley 602 (Fig. 24). Three sirens populate the top register, playing instruments and singing - a motif inherited from antiquity.²⁰⁷ They are separated from the scene below by a strange horizontal bar, recalling perhaps the circumcised penises found on hyenas and figures meant to be Jews. Below the bare-breasted sirens, two centaurs cavort in a landscape. One has male genitalia, a head covering, and holds a scimitar. The other has long hair and one exposed female breast, making her a very rare "centauress."²⁰⁸ They each have one half of a dead (nude) man tied to their back. A

²⁰⁶ Salisbury, *Beast Within*, 80. Karl Steel, *How To Make a Human*, 67-91.

²⁰⁷ Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries*, 104.

²⁰⁸ The early Christian writer Aelian mentions the female onocentaur, which he calls "onokentaura." Paul G.P. Meyboom, *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina: Early Evidence of Egyptian Religion in Italy* (Leiden, New York, Koln: Brill, 1994), 111.

human figure pierces the centaurs chest, and another human has shot the centaress' chest with an arrow.



Figure 24. *Sirens and Centaurs*. Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 602, f10r.

In my reading of this image, it is not a warning against the dangerous sirens and centaurs, but rather a warning against *being* like the sirens and centaurs. This hinges mainly on the nude victim strapped to their animal bodies. His nudity may indicate death, but his exposed skin contrasts sharply with his clothed human counterparts. It may be that this man has shed his clothes and his humanity, choosing to abandon himself to animal pleasure. The ease with which he could do so opens a horrifying abyss

that must be rejected lest it swallows up "the human" as a distinct subject. This abyss is what Julia Kristeva might describe as "a weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me," especially terrifying as it is "a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me."²⁰⁹ The fragmentation of human identity is mimicked in the man's fragmented body.

The victim's position underneath the belly of the centaur places his genitals within close physical contact with the genitals of the centaur. To touch an animal so intimately, and with an "intimate" part of one's own anatomy, is a meaningful action that heightens the viewer's sense of disgust. As Walter Benjamin has noticed, "In an aversion to animals the predominant feeling is fear of being recognized by them through contact. The horror that stirs deep in man is an obscure awareness that in him something lives so akin to the animal that it might be recognized. All disgust is disgust at touching." He then adds " Even when the feeling is mastered, it is only by a drastic measure that oversteps its mark: the nauseous is violently engulfed..."²¹⁰ The centaurs, therefore, must be violently killed before they violently engulf "the human."

Finally, I would like to return to Julia Kristeva's definition of the abject. All the examples I have provided demonstrate various modes of disturbing "identity, system, order" and ignoring "borders, positions, rules." Any form of animal violence against humans, whether the perpetrator is a boar or a mantichore, is breaking the ultimate border of human identity. Although hybrids and monsters may be the most obvious form of "the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite," these same terms can be used to describe the hermaphrodite hyena or the amphibious crocodile. Kristeva believes "the fragility of the law" is even more obvious in the face of "cunning murder, hypocritical revenge" - 'cunning' and 'hypocritical' are the exact words the bestiary authors used to

²⁰⁹ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 2.

²¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (London: Harcourt, 1979), 50.

describe the hyena and crocodile. Despite the pervasive arguments for human supremacy within the bestiary, the eruption of the Real is so unavoidable and horrifying that it spilled out of the medieval mind onto the bestiary parchment. We are haunted by the animal, the always present Other. Alain de Lille, therefore, was correct - the bestiary truly is "a mirror for ourselves."

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

During the Middle Ages, people turned to animals to understand their world around them, and even themselves. I would (facetiously) argue that most members of my generation would instead turn to Google. When I asked the ubiquitous search engine to define “bestiary,” its answer revealed the larger view of bestiaries in modern scholarship: “a descriptive or anecdotal treatise on various real or mythical kinds of animals, esp. a medieval work with a moralizing tone.”²¹¹ This focus on “kinds of animals” completely ignores that these treatises were made for humans, by humans, about humans. All descriptions and anecdotes were carefully decoded and dissected for divine instructions as to how *humans* should conduct themselves. This thesis therefore works as a re-focusing of bestiary analysis onto humans, the most prominent animal in the manuscript.

But why has this topic been ignored? On the one hand, our ‘misviewing’ of bestiaries stems from our fundamentally different points of view. People in the Middle Ages lived in close proximity with animals in a way most modern first-world people cannot grasp. Modern encounters with animals would seem strange compared with the vast majority of human-animal interactions throughout history – we convert cattle to meet out of view, convert pets to human family members, and convert zoo animals into vague representations of “the wild.” Unlike the hyena’s victims, our human corpses are often carefully embalmed and safely stored in layers of concrete, safe from scavengers. Dangerous carnivores are carefully distant, and promptly killed if they venture too close. The visceral fear of animals is an unfamiliar feeling in the first world. Perhaps it is unsurprising, then, that scholars have overlooked the multitude of violent bestiary images as a theme worth dissecting.

²¹¹ Google search, “bestiary definition,” conducted on March 28th 2014.

On the other hand, I find it astonishing that bestiary scholarship is not more widespread, as its concerns and corresponding arguments permeate our culture and political discourse. I see the reflections of this medieval mirror in my everyday lived experience. The medieval bestiary's anxieties and reliance on “nature” (that is, an anthropocentric, patriarchal view of nature) as a source of truth and didactic examples of what is “proper” are alive and well today. For example, in May of 2013, political pundit Erick Erickson appeared on national television (*Lou Dobbs Tonight*) to bemoan a recent Pew Research study which found that women are the primary “breadwinners” in 40% of American households. He called anyone who supports a matriarchal household “anti-science,” then entreated the audience to “look at biology... look at the natural world,” where “the male typically is the dominant role. The female, it’s not antithesis, or it’s not competing...”²¹² The medieval bestiary is rife with unsubmitive women (e.g. Eve, hyenas) who upend the dominant-submissive structure – a cause for great consternation for medieval men and, almost a millennia later in a different form, Erick Erickson as well.

Like the medieval worries over Jewish hyenas, crocodiles, and pigs, modern American conversations regarding illegal immigration has resorted to a discourse of animality to cover up fears of ethnic Others and women. This is most obvious in discussions of “anchor babies,” such as Robert Duecaster’s suggestion we use tax dollars to investigate “whether illegal aliens have a preferred breeding season.”²¹³ The leader of an anti-immigration ballot initiative in California described the perceived threat as “invasion by birth canal,” calling to my mind the hyena’s threatening vaginal chasm. Senator Russell Pearce (R-AZ), the primary sponsor of the infamous bill SB1070 in my

²¹² Erick Erickson, Interview with Lou Dobbs, *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, Fox Business Network, May 29th, 2013.

²¹³ American Immigration Council’s Immigration Policy Center, “U.S. Latinos Slammed by Immigration Debate Gone Ugly,” <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/us-latinos-slammed-immigration-debate-gone-ugly>.

home state of Arizona, used the natural world to identify the culprit of this invasion, explaining through a widely-distributed email that "...we need to target the mother. Call it sexist, but that's the way nature made it."

Maybe this "medieval" practice of turning towards the natural world for answers is at the root of many dismissals of bestiaries as worthy of serious scholarship, including the human figures. Many people perceive our present society to be superior to that of the Middle Ages, as we have a more rational, ordered, and "scientific" understanding and comportment. The second sentence of Richard Barber's immensely popular bestiary translation warns the reader to "abandon the ideas on which modern science is founded" in order to "begin to understand" the bestiary.²¹⁴ However, cursory analysis reveals the close connections between the thinly veiled sexist, racist, and speciesist narratives of the bestiary and our own discourse. For example, bestiary etymological explanations and scenes of Adam Naming the Animals seem at odds with our scientific "binomial nomenclature" we ascribe to all members of our taxonomic tree. However, Carl Linnaeus, the creator of this naming system and "father" of modern taxonomy, was labeled a "second Adam" by his contemporaries -- a label he seemed all-too-willing to embrace.²¹⁵ Furthermore, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and all other patristic celebrators of man's *ratio* would surely approve of the scientific name we have given ourselves: *Homo sapiens*, meaning "wise/rational man."

Clearly, reason is still a defining feature of the human -- but now "reason" is attributed to science, not God. However, modern analysis of bestiaries reveals the underlying connections between the bigoted constructed worldviews of the past and our seemingly untouchable empirical science of the present. Like the abject animal of the

²¹⁴ Barber, *Bestiary*, 7.

²¹⁵ He went so far as to include a frontispiece for his 11th edition of *Systema naturae* (1760), depicting him in Eden, surrounded by animals in a blatantly Adamic fashion. Peter Harrison, "Linnaeus as a Second Adam? Taxonomy and the Religious Vocation," *Zygon* 44 (2009): 879-893.

Middle Ages, medieval bestiaries are now rejected as “bad science” or “naïve natural history” simply because they are too close to home. The human figures in particular are associated with some of the strongest expressions of fears and insecurities, many of which we still experience today. It is apparently best to ignore them and any associated implications, thereby erasing any connections to the present foundation of “the human.”

Donna Haraway's seminal work *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinventing of Nature* achieved a great deal in revealing the constructed and prejudiced roots of modern science; she seemed to break new ground as she reminded the reader “we polish an animal mirror to look for ourselves.”²¹⁶ Most readers, however, would not be aware that medieval theologians a millennium before argued the same thing. As I shared at the outset of this study, Alan de Lille (ca. 1116-1213) unequivocally stated “every creature of the world is a book or picture, and also a mirror for ourselves.” The medieval bestiary and modern bestiary scholarship also act as mirrors, reflecting the concerns and prejudices of the past, and those inheritances that continue to haunt us today.

²¹⁶ Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: the Reinventing of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 21.

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