

BEASTS, HUMANS,  
AND TRANSHUMANS  
IN THE MIDDLE AGES  
AND THE RENAISSANCE

ARIZONA STUDIES IN THE MIDDLE AGES  
AND THE RENAISSANCE

VOLUME 45

*Founding Editor*

Robert E. Bjork

BEASTS, HUMANS,  
AND TRANSHUMANS  
IN THE MIDDLE AGES  
AND THE RENAISSANCE

*Edited by*  
J. EUGENE CLAY



BREPOLS

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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D/2020/0095/206

ISBN: 978-2-503-59063-9

e-ISBN: 978-2-503-59064-6

DOI: 10.1484/M.ASMAR-EB.5.120879

ISSN: 2034-5585

e-ISSN: 2294-8546

Printed on acid-free paper

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	vii
J. EUGENE CLAY	

### Part I Metamorphoses

Animal/Merlin/Demon	3
ROBERT S. STURGES	
Metamorphosis and Metempsychosis in Thomas Bradwardine's <i>De causa Dei</i>	23
EDIT ANNA LUKACS	
The Birds of Love: Doves, Pigeons and Owls in Nicolas Brizard's <i>Metamorphoses Amoris</i> (1556)	39
JOHN NASSICHUK	

### Part II Beasts and Humans

Beastly Boars and Human Hunters in MS Bodley 764	61
SUSAN ANDERSON	
Horsemanship and <i>Libros de Jineta</i> in Habsburg Spain	79
KATHRYN RENTON	

### Part III Beyond Humanity: Demons and Monsters

"If You Go Down to the Woods Today": William Rufus and the Noonday Demon	105
DAVID SCOTT-MACNAB	
Behold thy Beast of Hoof and Horn: Representations of the Devil in Illuminations of the Temptation of Christ, 1150–1400	121
AMANDA E. DOWNEY	

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A Monstrous Marriage: Grotesque Ornament in Late Renaissance ‘Cassoni’	137
RACHEL L. CHANTOS	
The Monsters of Paracelsus	151
THOMAS WILLARD	
Notes on Contributors	167

# INTRODUCTION

J. EUGENE CLAY

The chapters in this collection originated as presentations at the nineteenth annual conference of the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, which has consistently supported and stimulated excellent interdisciplinary research since its founding in 1981. While not conforming to any particular school of thought, these essays address two significant bodies of contemporary scholarship: (1) animal studies (the pluridisciplinary movement to re-examine history, art, ethics, and the “humanities” in light of our increasing knowledge of nonhuman animals) and (2) the broad reconsideration of human nature and its place in the cosmos, which includes both posthumanism (the critical engagement of traditional humanism) and transhumanism (a movement that seeks to transcend the human condition through applied reason). Grounded in original analyses of historical and literary sources and artworks, the articles in this volume provide a valuable perspective for these fields of inquiry, which are often focused on the future, the present, or the very recent past. At the same time, by engaging the questions raised by animal studies and posthumanist scholars, these authors have made original contributions to medieval and Renaissance studies. How did medieval and early modern thinkers distinguish humans and non-human animals? How did they understand the relationship between the “reasonable best mortal” (as Geoffrey Chaucer defined human being) and the other beasts?<sup>1</sup> How is human nature defined and what is its ultimate destiny?

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<sup>1</sup> *Chaucer’s Translation of Boethius’s “De Consolatione Philosophiae,”* ed. Richard Morris, Early English Text Society, Extra Series. Vol. 5. (London: Trübner, 1868), 27.

## Beasts, Humans, and Transhumans

Beasts, Humans, Transhumans. These three terms conjure up an evolutionary schema that seems quite modern. Only in 1859 did Charles Darwin (1809–1882) set forth the case for evolution by natural selection as an explanation for the variety and development of life on earth. More daringly, in 1871 he applied his theory to the origin of humanity in his *Descent of Man*. Since that time, paleontologists have amassed fossil evidence that allows scientists to trace the broad outlines of human evolution, from the appearance of the first hominins in the late Miocene to the emergence of *homo sapiens* roughly three hundred millennia ago. Biologists have added to this wealth of evidence by analyzing and comparing the human genetic code, preserved in the long strands of cellular deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA), with that of other species. The clear conclusion of these complex and technologically sophisticated investigations is that human beings have descended from other animals by natural evolution. Moreover, this natural process continues, so that someday in the far future, our own descendants will have gone beyond human limits and developed into a different species altogether. As the tenuous and temporary link between beasts and transhumans, humanity holds but a transient position in this scheme. Human beings may very well share the fate of the dinosaurs, which disappeared in a mass extinction even as their descendants (according to most paleontologists) became modern birds. Given enough time, *homo sapiens* must inevitably develop into something else.<sup>2</sup>

These modern conclusions, based on relatively recent science, have led some to embrace the idea of evolutionary progress—even the possibility of controlling and accelerating evolution. In 1957, nearly a century after Darwin’s epoch-breaking book, the biologist Julian Huxley coined the term “transhumanism” to describe a movement dedicated to the proposition that humanity as a species could transcend itself “by realizing new possibilities of and for . . . human nature.”<sup>3</sup> Over the subsequent six decades, transhumanists have imagined many perfected futures, where new technologies, including genetic manipulation and artificial intelligence, offer the possibility of unprecedented human agency over natural Darwinian processes.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection: Or, The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1859); Charles R. Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1871); Gareth Dyke and Gary W. Kaiser, eds., *Living Dinosaurs: The Evolutionary History of Modern Birds* (Wiley, Chichester, UK, 2011); Jean-Jacques Hublin et al., “New Fossils from Jebel Irhoud, Morocco, and the Pan-African Origin of Homo Sapiens,” *Nature* 546 (2017): 289–92; Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Kenneth L. Mossman, eds. *Building Better Humans: Refocusing the Debate on Transhumanism* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012); Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, eds., *Post-and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, (Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Julian Huxley, *New Bottles for New Wine, Essays* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), 17.



By splicing plant genes into embryos, for example, one might be able create an autotrophic human, capable of storing energy directly from sunlight. Perhaps humans will give up their fragile, earth-bound bodies altogether for more durable, potentially immortal, machines; in some imagined futures, people will upload their minds into powerful supercomputers. Or perhaps, as artificial intelligence improves, the computers themselves will be the future transhumans, our own species replaced by the works of our hands and brains.<sup>4</sup>

Transhumanism, however new it might seem, is a variant on a very old religious eschatology that envisions a perfected future for the human species. The transhumanists confess with the author of the first epistle of John *nondum apparuit quid erimus*: it is not yet clear what we will be (1 John 3:2).<sup>5</sup> While the Roman poet Ovid offers the possibility of (usually tragic) metamorphosis, the three great Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) all look forward to the bodily resurrection of the dead, an ultimate transfiguration that defies space and time. Philosophers from Philo of Alexandria (c. 15 BCE–50 CE) in the first century to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) in the fifteenth believed that the human condition is a transitional stage between brute and angel, temporal and eternal, matter and spirit, the limited and the infinite.

## Animal Studies and Posthumanism

The Darwinist vision of humanity as part of the animal kingdom has also nourished both the animal rights movement, as well as a broader reconsideration of the humanities and social sciences. In 1971, the Oxford philosophers John Harris and Roslind and Stanley Godlovitch published *Animals, Men and Morals*, a path-breaking study of the moral status of non-human animals. Four years later, another Oxford scholar, Peter Singer, published *Animal Liberation*, which marshalled all the tools of analytical philosophy in defense of animal rights. Revised and reissued in 1990, 2001, and 2009, *Animal Liberation* helped inspire critical animal studies in many disciplines, including history, art, literature, theology, and comparative religion.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> J. Benjamin Hurlbut and Hava Tirosh-Samuelson. *Perfecting Human Futures: Transhuman Visions and Technological Imaginations* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Biblical references are to the Vulgate; English translations are from the Douay-Rheims version, sometimes lightly edited.

<sup>6</sup> Roslind Godlovitch, Stanley Godlovitch, and John Harris, eds., *Animals, Men and Morals: An Enquiry into the Maltreatment of Non-Humans* (New York: Grove Press, 1971); Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*, rev. ed. (New York: Ecco, 2009); Animal Studies Group, *Killing Animals* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Dawne McCance, *Critical Animal Studies: An*

The rise of the animal rights movement coincided with the development of “posthumanism” — a reconsideration of humanism in light of French philosopher Michel Foucault’s “archaeology of knowledge.” Arguing that the concept of “man” (*homme*) was a “relatively recent invention” in European culture, Foucault famously predicted that, as paradigms of knowledge changed, “man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.”<sup>7</sup> In this provocative declaration, Foucault was not foretelling the literal end of humanity but rather the end of a particular notion of “man” as free and transcendent — an idea rooted in the works of the fifteenth-century Florentine *umanisti*, the Renaissance humanists, and Enlightenment *philosophes*. As Katherine Hayles explains, posthumanism signifies “the end of a certain conception of the human, a conception that may have applied, at best, to that fraction of humanity who had the wealth, power, and leisure to conceptualize themselves as autonomous beings exercising their will through individual agency and choice.”<sup>8</sup>

In contrast to the transhumanists, who embrace an ideology of extreme progress, posthumanist scholars, such as Eric Baratay, Donna Haraway, and Cary Wolfe, are generally more skeptical of the possibility of perfected futures. They question the anthropocentric foundations of humanism, its claims for human transcendence, and its insistence on the uniqueness of human rationality. Armed with the scientific findings of biology, ethology, genetics, and ecology — which show that humanity is intimately connected with nature and the animal kingdom — they cast doubt on the confident claim of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who has God tell Adam, “you, constrained by no limits, may determine your nature for yourself, according to your own free will (*Tu, nullis angustiis cohercitus, pro tuo arbitrio . . . tibi illam prefinies*).”<sup>9</sup> In a growing and impressive body of work, these researchers reconsider history “from the animal point of view” and demonstrate that the category of “animal” is also integral to understanding the nature and history of humanity.<sup>10</sup>

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*Introduction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013); Paul Waldau, *Animal Studies: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Linda Kalof, Seven Mattes, Amy Fitzgerald, comps. “Animal Studies Bibliography,” Animal Studies Program, Michigan State University, accessed 24 May 2017, <http://www.animalstudies.msu.edu/bibliography.php>.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Pantheon, 1971), 386.

<sup>8</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 286.

<sup>9</sup> Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man: A New Translation and Commentary*, ed. and trans. Francesco Borghesi, Michael Papio, and Massimo Riva (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 116–17.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Baratay, *Le point de vue animal, une autre version de l’histoire* (Paris: Seuil, 2001); Donna Jeanne Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species*,

Over the past two decades, scholars such as John Aberth, Richard Barber, Ron Baxter, Bruce Boehrer, Willene Clark, Susan Crane, Erica Fudge, Sarah Kay, Laura Hobgood-Oster, Karen Raber, Juliana Schiesari, Laurie Shannon, and Karl Steel (to name only a few) have greatly increased our understanding of the significance of animals and human-animal interactions in the middle ages and the Renaissance.<sup>11</sup> As their careful rereading of familiar sources and their analyses of new documents demonstrate, the questions raised by transhumanism, posthumanism, and animal studies are not entirely novel. Constantly confronted with animal reality (in ways that the contemporary urbanite is not), medieval and early modern philosophers, theologians, writers, and artists questioned whether animals possessed reason, argued over humanity's uniqueness, and envisioned an ordered hierarchy that linked all beings—beast, human, and transhuman—together. Both Christianity and the classical heritage that shaped the artists and intellectuals of the middle ages and the Renaissance offered a variety of ways of understanding this hierarchy and its interrelationships.

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*and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003); Cary Wolfe, *Zoologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> John Aberth, *An Environmental History of the Middle Ages: The Crucible of Nature* (London: Routledge, 2012); Richard Barber, ed., *Bestiary: Being an English Version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford MS* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1999); Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and Their Users in the Middle Ages* (Phoenix Mill, UK: Sutton Publishing, 1998); Bruce Boehrer, *Shakespeare among the Animals: Nature and Society in the Drama of Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Willene Clark, *A Medieval Book of Beasts: The Second Family Bestiary* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006); Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Erica Fudge, *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Sarah Kay, *Animal Skins and the Reading Self in Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Laura Hobgood-Oster, *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Karen Raber, *Animal Bodies, Renaissance Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); Catharine Randall, *The Wisdom of Animals: Creatureliness in Early Modern French Spirituality* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2014); Laurie Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal: Cosmopolity in Shakespearean Locales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Karl Steel, *How to Make a Human: Violence and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2011).

## The Biblical Heritage

Neither the Christian faith nor the Greek and Latin philosophers offered a consistent doctrine of human superiority over the beasts. The biblical authors clearly suggest two different visions of humanity and its relationship to the natural and supernatural worlds. On the one hand, humans are like beasts — made from earth, mortal, totally dependent upon God; on the other, humans are transcendent beings, only a little lower than the angels, uniquely made in the Creator's image, and entrusted with dominion over the earth. The writer of Ecclesiastes expresses the first point of view eloquently:

Dixi in corde meo de filiis hominum ut probaret eos Deus et ostenderet similes esse bestiis. Idcirco unus interitus est hominis et iumentorum et aequa utriusque condicio sicut moritur homo sic et illa moriuntur. Similiter spirant omnia et nihil habet homo iumento amplius. Cuncta subiacent vanitati et omnia pergunt ad unum locum. De terra facta sunt et in terram pariter revertentur. Quis novit si spiritus filiorum Adam ascendat sursum et si spiritus iumentorum descendat deorsum? (Eccles. 3:18–21)

I said in my heart concerning the sons of men, that God would prove them, and show them to be like beasts. Therefore the death of man, and of beasts is one, and the condition of them both is equal: as man dies, so they also die: all things breathe alike, and man has nothing more than beast: all things are subject to vanity. And all things go to one place: of earth they were made, and into earth they return together. Who knows if the spirit of the children of Adam ascend upward, and if the spirit of the beasts descends downward?

In their degradation after the fall, humans act like senseless beasts, *iumentis insipientibus* (Ps. 48:13, 21 Vulgate). Moreover, even as humans sometimes behave bestially, biblical animals can act as reasonable beings, putting their supposed superiors to shame. The cunning serpent convinced Eve to disobey God (Gen. 3:1–24). Balaam's ass spoke a word of prophecy to its master, who failed to fully heed the warning (Num. 22:30). Like humans, animals pray to the Almighty: "the roaring young lions seek their food from God (*catuli leonum rugientes ut rapiant et quaerant a Deo escam sibi*)" (Ps. 103:21, Vulgate). The entire animal kingdom — wild beasts, domesticated quadrupeds, reptiles, and flying birds (*bestiae et omnia iumenta, reptilia et aves volantes*) — worship their Creator and give him praise (Ps. 148:10). Divine messengers can take animal forms, as the prophet Ezekiel (1:10) discovered when he received a vision by the Chebar canal in Babylonia, and God himself in the fury of his judgment is lion, leopard, and she-bear (Hosea 13:7–8). Likewise, Christ is both lamb and lion (Rev. 5:5–6).

On the other hand, the Bible also holds that humanity is unique among all God's creatures. Only humans are made in God's image (an honor not accorded to the angels) and are given dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:26–28). (While the

historian Lynn White identified these anthropocentric verses as the “historical roots of our ecological crisis,” subsequent study of the history of their interpretation suggests a more nuanced view, in which humanity exercises stewardship as well as power over nature.<sup>12</sup> The patriarchs seal their covenants with elaborate animal sacrifices. As the Psalmist declared, God has made the human race a little lower than the *Elohim* — an ambiguous word that can be translated as the angels or as God himself (Ps. 8:6; cf. Heb. 2:7).<sup>13</sup> In the New Testament, the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, in which God uniquely took on human form and the Eternal Word became flesh, affirms the unique place of humanity in creation.

By affirming the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, Jewish and Christian scriptures also testify to the transformation of humanity at the end of time. This teaching, which runs completely counter to common experience, posed difficult paradoxes for theologians and artists who sought to probe or depict this mystery. As Caroline Walker Bynum showed in her classic study, medieval thinkers struggled to understand how the future glorious transfiguration of the human body would be able to preserve continuity with the individual person who had died.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, the Bible spoke of the resurrection as a complete and total transformation. The book of Daniel, the first canonical work to state the doctrine clearly, declared that the righteous “will shine as the brightness of the heavens . . . and as stars for all eternity (*fulgebunt quasi splendor firmament . . . quasi stellae in perpetuas aeternitates*)” (12:3). The Apostle Paul likewise emphasized the difference between the natural, weak, corruptible, earthly, physical, mortal body and the incorruptible, powerful, spiritual, heavenly, immortal, resurrected body. As Andrea Nightingale argues, the resurrected saints at the end of time are transhuman; in the words of Augustine, they shall be equal to the angels of God, replacing those who had joined Satan’s rebellion.<sup>15</sup> But this entire discourse raised troubling questions. In what sense was the resurrected body still human? How could it be connected with the individual who had died? What does the oxymoronic phrase “spiritual body” signify? Paul’s confident assertion that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (*caro*

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<sup>12</sup> Lynn White, Jr., “The Historic Root of Our Ecological Crisis,” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203–7; Jeremy Cohen, “*Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It*”: *The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>13</sup> The traditional translation “You have made him a little lower than the angels (*minuisti eum paulo minus ab angelis*)” became a bone of contention in the early sixteenth century. Desiderius Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Controversies*, ed. Guy Bedouelle (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 83: xvii–xxi, 1–108.

<sup>14</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Andrea Nightingale, *Once Out of Nature: Augustine on Time and the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). “For this is the promise to the saints at the resurrection, that they shall be equal to the angels of God (*Hoc enim promissum est resurgentibus sanctis, quod erunt aequales angelis dei*).” Augustine, *Enchiridion* 29.

*et sanguis regnum Dei possidere non possunt*) (1 Cor. 15:50) conflicted with Job's earlier affirmation, "in my flesh I will see God (*in carne mea videbo Deum*)" (Job 19:26). These questions pushed writers, theologians, and poets to explore the nature of humanity through stories of metamorphosis, as Robert Sturges, Edit Lukacs, and John Nassichuk show in their contributions to this volume.

Beyond beast and human, biblical monsters and demons demonstrate God's power and wrath. In Jerome's Latin rendering of Isaiah 34:14, horrible creatures occupy the devastated land of Edom: "The demons and onocentaurs will meet and the hairy wild men will cry to one another; there the lamia has lain down and found rest for itself (*occurrent daemonia onocentauris et pilosus clamabit alter ad alterum ibi cubavit lamia et invenit sibi requiem*)." The onocentaur (a hybrid being with a human head and torso and an asinine body), the pilosus (a hairy and lecherous wild man), and the lamia (a child-devouring demon) possess the deserted country that suffers under a divine curse.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, in the book of Job, the giant sea creature Leviathan is a visible sign of God's inscrutable omnipotence. Out of the whirlwind, God asks Job whether he can "draw out the leviathan with a hook or tie its tongue with a cord? (*an extrahere poteris leviathan hamo et fune ligabis linguam eius*)" (40:20 in the Vulgate). In Revelation, God again reveals his power by defeating and destroying Satan, the seven-headed dragon. Medieval artists and poets drew on these biblical images, as Amanda Downey and David Scott-Macnab illustrate in their essays in this collection.

In short, from the pessimistic observations of Ecclesiastes to Paul's ecstatic celebration of the future resurrection, biblical texts offered different ways of understanding the relationships of beasts, humans, monsters, demons, and angels. Artists and poets who focused on the sting of mortality, which we share with other members of the animal kingdom, could find biblical warrant to do so; those who sought to understand eschatological mysteries had to confront the paradoxes and strange metamorphoses contained in the scriptural canon.

### The Classical Heritage

The classical tradition was also not monolithic in its conception of the moral value of animals or the ultimate destiny of humanity. The pre-Socratic philosophers Pythagoras (c. 569–475 BCE), Empedocles (c. 490–430 BCE) and their followers

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<sup>16</sup> On these creatures, see Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De proprietatibus rerum: A Critical Text*, ed. M. C. Seymour et al., 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975–1988), 2:1231, 1235; Alanus de Insulis (Alain de Lille), *Liber in distinctionibus dictionum theologicarum in Patrologia Latina* 210 (Paris: Migne, 1855), col. 828A; Irven M. Resnick and Kenneth F. Kitchell, Jr., "The Sweepings of Lamia: Transformations of the Myths of Lilith and Lamia," in *Religion, Gender, and Culture in the Pre-Modern World*, ed. Alexandra Cuffel and Brian M. Britt (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 77–104.

believed in the cosmic communion of humanity with all other beings: “We have some fellowship not only with one another and with the Gods but also with the irrational animals. For there is one spirit which pervades, like a soul, the whole Universe, and which also makes us one with them.”<sup>17</sup> This fellowship implied both vegetarianism (for to slay animals and feed on their flesh was “unjust and impious, as destroying our kindred”) and metempsychosis, a doctrine so attractive and persistent that it was attacked by the Cappadocian fathers in the fourth century and the Oxford don Thomas Bradwardine a millennium later (see Edit Lukacs’s contribution to this volume). Influenced by Pythagorean thought, the Greek biographer Plutarch (45–120) not only advocated vegetarianism in his youth, but also defended the idea that nonhuman animals possessed both rationality and virtue. In his amusing dialogue *Gryllus* (*Grunter*), Plutarch expands on an episode in Homer’s *Odyssey*, where the witch Circe transforms Odysseus’s shipmates into beasts. In Plutarch’s retelling, Circe agrees to undo her enchantment if and only if Odysseus can convince the bewitched animals to return to their human form. Odysseus fails spectacularly. Citing several examples of animal courage, wisdom, temperance, and loyalty, the pig Gryllus refuses Odysseus’s entreaties and expresses his firm desire to retain his porcine shape.<sup>18</sup> Plutarch’s work later inspired the Renaissance writers Giovanni Battista Gelli (1498–1563), whose *Circe* (1549) included ten dialogues in which the hapless Ulysses sought to convince his bewitched comrades of human superiority, and Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592), who repeated many of Gryllus’s examples in his “Apology for Raimond Sebond” (1580).<sup>19</sup> Holding to the Platonic doctrine of the world-soul that tied all beings together (an idea in the *Timaeus*), the pagan Neoplatonists Plotinus (204–270) and his disciple Porphyry (c. 234–305) also defended the rationality of animals and advocated vegetarianism.<sup>20</sup>

For most of the medieval and early modern period, however, Pythagoras and Porphyry were minority voices from the classical heritage, which tended to give humanity a privileged place on a hierarchy below the gods but above the other animals. Aristotle’s dictum that “nature has made all the animals for the sake of men” probably more accurately reflected the views of most European Christians than

<sup>17</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Against Physicists, Against the Ethicists*, trans. R. G. Bury, Loeb Classical Library 311 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 68–69.

<sup>18</sup> Plutarch, *Moralia*, book 12, trans. Harold Cherniss and William C. Helmbold, Loeb Classical Library 406 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 492–533.

<sup>19</sup> Giovanni Battista Gelli, *La Circe* (Florence: Lorenzo Torrentino, 1549); Michel de Montaigne, “Apologie de Raimond Sebond,” *Essais de Michel seigneur de Montaigne*, 2 vols. (Bordeaux: Millanges, 1580), 2:147–394, chap. 12; George Boas, *The Happy Beast in French Thought of the Seventeenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1933).

<sup>20</sup> Porphyry, *On the Life of Plotinus and the Order of His Books*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, rev. ed. Loeb Classical Library 440 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 2; Porphyry, *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*, trans. Gillian Clark (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

any statement of Pythagoras.<sup>21</sup> In the first century, Philo of Alexandria concluded from his study of Genesis that “man is the boundary between mortal and immortal nature, . . . mortal in his body, immortal in his reason.”<sup>22</sup> Galen (c. 130–200), the pagan father of medicine, agreed: “Man stands between the gods and the animals, near the first on account of his intellectuality; with the second, because he is mortal. His pursuits should be such as to bring him nearer the former. If he succeeds, he accomplishes everlasting good; if he fails, he has at least the satisfaction of still being above the lower animals.”<sup>23</sup> Christian theologians adopted these ideas as they systematized their doctrines. Drawing on Aristotle, Basil of Caesarea drew a sharp distinction between the rational, immortal, human soul and animal souls, which are made from earth, have no pre-existence, and die with the body. Similarly, Nemesius, the fourth-century bishop of Emesa, proposed a middle position for humanity, which hovered between bestial mortality and divine immortality.<sup>24</sup> Implicit in these hierarchical conceptions was an ethical imperative to reach upwards toward the divine.

For additional information about plants, animals, and monsters, medieval and Renaissance thinkers often turned to classical encyclopedias, such as the *Natural History* of Pliny the Elder (23–79) and *On the Wonders of the World* of Gaius Julius Solinus (fl. c. 250), and medical textbooks, including the works of Sextus Placitus (fl. c. 370). The *Metamorphoses* of the Roman poet Ovid (43 BCE–17 CE) provided imaginative material for those who wished to probe the limits of the human condition, the mysteries of the resurrection, the relationship between humanity and the natural world, or even the tyranny of erotic love (see John Nassichuk’s essay below).

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<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, *Politics* I.3, 1256b21–23, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 264 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1944), 36–37. It is important to note, however, that the *Politics* was not translated into Latin until around 1250.

<sup>22</sup> Philo of Alexandria, *On the Account of the World’s Creation Given by Moses* 135, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, Loeb Classical Library 226 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 106–7.

<sup>23</sup> Galen, *Galenos: sull’ottima maniera d’insegnare esortazione alla medicina*, ed. and trans. Adelmo Barigazzi, *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum* 1, pt. 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1991), 132; “Galen’s *Exhortatio ad Artes Addiscendas* or ‘Exhortation to Study the Arts,’” trans. Joseph Walsh, MD, *Medical Life* 37 (1930): 507–29.

<sup>24</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 8.2 in *Patrologia Graeca* 29 (Paris: Migne, 1886), col. 168A; Basil of Caesarea, *Exegetic Homilies*, trans. A. G. Way (Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 119; Nemesius, *On the Nature of Man*, trans. R. W. Sharples and P. J. van der Eijk (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 42.



## Christian Syntheses

For the early middle ages, the most important classical philosopher was Plato. In the late fifth century, an unknown theologian writing under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite (St. Paul's Athenian convert mentioned in Acts 17:34), turned to Plato's school to develop a sweeping and influential framework for understanding human relationships with the rest of the created order and with the Creator himself. In a set of four treatises (*The Celestial Hierarchy*, *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, *The Mystical Theology*, and *The Divine Names*) and ten epistles, Pseudo-Dionysius synthesized the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and Proclus (412–485) with the Christian faith. Envisioning all of reality as the mysterious unfolding and manifestation of God, who was best approached apophatically, Pseudo-Dionysius offered one of the most profound and successful expressions of what the intellectual historian Arthur Lovejoy called the “great chain of being” — a grand hierarchy that linked all beings into an ordered whole.<sup>25</sup> The church and its sacraments reflected the celestial realities of the angelic hosts, who continually worshiped God and made him known in a Neoplatonic rhythm of procession and return. In this grand scheme, the ultimate goal of humanity, uniquely made in the image of God and a microcosm of the entire created order, was deification (*theosis*), “the attaining of likeness to God and union with him so far as is possible.”<sup>26</sup> This philosophy laid the foundation for the ninth-century humanism of the Irish theologian John Scottus Eriugena (c. 810–877), who translated Dionysius while teaching in the French court of Charles the Bald. For Eriugena, humanity, created in the image of God, shares in his mysterious and paradoxical nature. Like God, human nature defies logic:

Homo animal est, Homo animal non est. . . . in homine uniuersam creaturam contineri: Intelligit enim et ratiocinatur ut angelus, sentit et corpus administrat ut animal, ac per hoc omnis creatura in eo intelligitur. . . . hunc mundum uisibilem cum omnibus suis partibus, a summo usque deorsum, propter hominum esse factum.

Man is an animal; man is not an animal. . . . in man universal creation is contained. Man understands and reasons like an angel; he has sensation and governs his body like an animal; and hence all creation is understood in him. . . . this visible world, with all its parts, from top to bottom, was made for the sake of man.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964).

<sup>26</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 1.3, in *Patrologia Graeca* 3 (Paris: Migne, 1857), col. 376A; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Iohannis Scotti seu Erivgenae (John Scottus Eriugena), *Periphyseon, Liber Quartus*, ed. Eduard A. Jeuneau, Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Mediaevalis CLXIV (Turnhout:

In this synthesis, the communion of beings that had led Pythagoras and Porphyry to vegetarianism becomes the foundation of a philosophical system affirming human superiority above the created order. Unlike Basil, however, Eriugena concluded that animal souls are immortal. Because all creation is subsumed in humanity, the deification of humanity implies the deification of all beings, including the beasts.<sup>28</sup>

This Christian debate over the moral status of animal and their souls can also be traced in art, folk tales, and hagiographies. Demons in the form of wild animals sometimes threatened saintly ascetics, as they did Antony of Egypt.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes, however, animals could be faithful Christians or even saints themselves. The apocryphal *Acts of Paul* had the apostle baptize a lion at the latter's request; later, the two had a joyful reunion in the gladiatorial arena in Ephesus, where they were miraculously saved from death by a hailstorm.<sup>30</sup> In Orthodox iconography, St. Christopher was often portrayed as a Cynocephalus, a member of the dog-headed tribe described by Pliny.<sup>31</sup> Despite efforts by inquisitors to stamp it out, the cult of St. Guinefort, a martyred greyhound in the Dombes, north of Lyon, France, flourished from the thirteenth through the early twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, reversing the effects of the fall by their holy lives, many of the saints made friends with the birds and wild beasts: Jerome and Abbot Gerasimus befriended lions in Palestine, a giant fish led the Irish Brendan to Paradise, Francis of Assisi preached to the birds, and Sergius of Radonezh shared his food with a Russian bear.<sup>33</sup>

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Brepols, 2000), 17, 21, 25; John the Scot (John Scottus Eriugena), *Periphyseon: On the Division of Nature*, trans. Myra L. Uhlfelder (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), 220, 223, 227.

<sup>28</sup> Iohannis Scotti seu Erivgenae (John Scottus Eriugena), *Periphyseon, Liber Tertius*, ed. Eduard A. Jauneau, *Corpus Christianorum: Continuatio Medievalis CLXIII* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989), 168–72; John the Scot, *Periphyseon*, 204–5; Deirdre Carabine, *John Scottus Eriugena* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 97.

<sup>29</sup> Athanasius, *Vita S. Antonii* 9 in *Patrologia Graeca* 26 (Paris: Migne, 1857), col. 857A; Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus*, trans. Robert C. Gregg (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 38.

<sup>30</sup> M. Grant, *Early Christians and Animals* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 19.

<sup>31</sup> David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 34–36; Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 214–16, plate 24.

<sup>32</sup> Jean-Claude Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children since the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Martin Thom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

<sup>33</sup> George H. Williams, *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought: The Biblical Experience of the Desert in the History of Christianity and the Paradise Theme in the Theological Idea of the University* (Harper, 1962), 42; Jude S. Mackley, *Legend of St. Brendan: A Comparative Study of the Latin and Anglo-Norman Versions* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 110–14; Anna Welch, “Francis of Assisi, Sister Bird and Interpretations of the Founder in Thirteenth and Fourteenth-Century Sources,” in *Poverty and Devotion in Mendicant Cultures, 1200–1450*, ed. Constant J. Mews (New York: Routledge, 2016), 79–91; Epifanii, “Zhitie Sergiia Radonezhskogo,” in *Biblioteka literatury drevnei Rusi*, ed. D. S. Likhachev, vol. 6: *XIV-seredina XV veka* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1999), 305.

In these hagiographies, animals are important primarily for their symbolic value—divine clues to the meaning of the natural revelation—and thoughtful Christians eagerly tried to interpret the allegorical sense of the animals around them. The *Physiologus*, a Greek work written in the second or third century in Alexandria, was one of the earliest and most influential attempts to decipher the allegorical meaning of the beasts. In each of its chapters, which ranged in number from thirty-six to forty-nine, the *Physiologus* explained the theological significance of a particular animal, which was associated with a virtue, a vice, or a Christological doctrine. The lion, for example, was said to erase its tracks with its tail just as Christ had erased all traces of his Godhead when he entered the Virgin Mary's womb. Translated into Syriac, Armenian, Ethiopic, and Latin, the *Physiologus* became one of the standard sources for medieval bestiary, a genre that flourished especially from the eleventh through the fourteenth centuries. Often elaborately illuminated, the bestiaries also borrowed moralizing texts from the encyclopedic *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville (560–636), the *Hexaemeron* of Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397), and Solinus's *Wonders of the World*. The close and complementary relationship of image to text in the bestiaries make them especially valuable sources for cultural history, as Susan Anderson's analysis of the hidden meanings in a thirteenth-century English manuscript illustrates.<sup>34</sup>

The rediscovery of Aristotle, many of whose works were translated into Latin for the first time beginning in the late twelfth century, radically transformed medieval science and philosophy. Scholars in the high middle ages turned increasingly toward the questions of biology, ethology, generation, and reproduction that Aristotle and his commentators had raised. Working from Arabic texts, Michael Scot (c. 1175–1232) produced the first Latin edition of Aristotle's biological writings, which served as a major source for the *Liber de natura rerum* of Thomas de Cantimpré (1201–1272) and the *De animalibus* of Albertus Magnus (c. 1200–1280). William of Moerbeke (c. 1215–1286) completed a Latin translation directly from Greek manuscripts in the thirteenth century. Stimulated by these newly discovered works, thirteenth-century naturalists like Albertus turned from the allegorical meaning of natural phenomena to study nature directly. Albertus even made his own empirically verifiable observations, sometimes correcting the great peripatetic philosopher himself. Under Aristotle's influence theologians such as Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) began rethinking the transhuman world of demons and angels: were they bodiless spirits made of immaterial substances, as Aristotelian philosophy seemed to suggest? Or did they have ethereal bodies that allowed them to

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<sup>34</sup> Alan Scott, "The Date of the 'Physiologus,'" *Vigiliae Christianae*, 52, no. 4 (1998): 430–41; Baxter, *Bestiaries*, 28–82 and Frances McCulloch, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1962); Kseniia M. Muratova, *Srednevekovyi bestiarii* (Moscow: Isskustvo, 1984); Debra Hassig, ed., *The Mark of the Beast: The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life and Literature* (New York: Garland, 1999); Simona Cohen, *Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

participate in the natural world and in the Platonic procession from and to God, as the Areopagite seemed to teach? As Robert Sturges argues in this volume, the Merlin legends, with their tales of a demonic conception, challenged the emerging Aristotelian scholastic orthodoxy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>35</sup>

The high middle ages also witnessed the development of chivalry, celebrated especially in the Arthurian legends, where horsemanship served as the foundation for a code of conduct and way of life. For his success in battle and in the social order, the knight relied on his war steeds. Horsemanship served not only as a necessary military skill, but as evidence of nobility and worthiness to lead. As Juliana Schiesari has argued, the humanists of the fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance recognized and applauded this intricate relationship between human and horse, which helped to define human virtue.<sup>36</sup> Likewise debates over proper horsemanship reflected different conceptions of nobility in Habsburg Spain, as Kathryn Renton shows in her contribution to this volume.

The Renaissance and Reformation, as periods of violent religious change and eschatological expectation, also invited reflection on the monstrous and the demonic. Catholics and Protestants assimilated their enemies to the fantastic satanic beasts described in the Apocalypse. As the Reformers challenged old verities, such as the sacramental status of marriage, Italian artists expressed social anxieties by carving imaginative monsters into the wedding chests of young brides (see Rachel Chantos's essay below). But monsters also represented new knowledge, the discovery of new lands and new races, and the increase in learning that would precede the consummation of all things. As Thomas Willard demonstrates in his contribution to this volume, some Renaissance thinkers sought to understand, rather than to fear, the monsters that they encountered in the world.

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<sup>35</sup> Edward Grant, ed., *Source Book in Medieval Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 35–41; Aristotle, *De animalibus: Michael Scot's Arabic-Latin Translation, Part Three, Books XV–XIX, Generation of Animals* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Thomas Cantimpratensis (Thomas de Cantimpré) *Liber de natura rerum* (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1973), 3–4; Albertus Magnus *On Animals: A Medieval Summa Zoologica*, trans. Kenneth F. Kitchell, Jr., and Irven Michael Resnick, 2 vols. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Aristotle, *De progressu animalium: De motu animalium*, trans. William of Moerbeke; ed. P. de Leemans (Brussels: Turnhout, 2011); Isabelle Iribarren and Martin Lenz, eds., *Angels in Medieval Philosophical Inquiry: Their Function and Significance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Juliana Schiesari, "Rethinking Humanism: Animals and the Analogic Imagination in the Italian Renaissance," *Shakespeare Studies* 54 (2013): 54–63.

## Metamorphoses

This volume explores the relationships among beasts, humans, and transhumans in three sections, devoted to metamorphoses, human-animal interactions, and demons and monsters. The Merlin legends from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries offer a rich source for contemplating the nature of humanity, as Robert Sturges demonstrates in the first chapter, “Animal/Merlin/Demon.” Born of the union of a demon and a nun, Merlin moves freely across the boundaries between beast, human, and the supernatural. Operating in the interstices of these categories, the shapeshifting Merlin is sometimes stag, sometimes the Wild Man of the Woods, sometimes powerful sorcerer, and sometimes prophet. The earliest versions of the Merlin myth, the Welsh Myrddin lyrics, identify Myrddin/Merlin as a vatic exile among the animals, while the later work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, Robert de Boron, and the Old French *Roman de Silence* provide detailed accounts of Merlin’s demonic origins, his shapeshifting, and his transformation into the Wild Man. As Sturges points out, the authors of these medieval tales raise questions about the relationship between nature and nurture, the power of reason, and essence of humanity. The entire corpus challenges the strict distinctions that the thirteenth-century Scholastics made between human and beast as well as between human and demon. In the end, Merlin, like human nature itself, remains an undecidable mystery, which can be probed and questioned, but not resolved.

The possibility of metamorphosis from one type of body into another had important implications for Christian theology, as Edit Lukacs shows in her “Metamorphosis and Metempsychosis in Thomas Bradwardine’s *De causa Dei*.” Like Augustine before him, Bradwardine (c. 1300–1349), an Oxford scholar, pointed to the many classical examples of human transformation into animals (and vice versa) as evidence for the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection. If the witch Circe can turn Ulysses’s men into beasts (as Homer, Boethius, and Pliny all attest), then why cannot God, whose power is much greater than Circe’s, transform the dead into the living? Going beyond Augustine, who is primarily concerned with demonstrating divine supremacy, Bradwardine also emphasizes the power of human beings to change sex or become animals through magic, alchemy, and witchcraft; he notes the reality of such transformations by citing classical authorities as well as more recent history (such as the case of Merlin). While accepting a certain kind of metamorphosis, in which humans remain substantially human even while turning into beasts, Bradwardine emphatically rejected the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis, which would allow for the possibility of eternal life outside of Christ as the human soul moved from one animal body to another. By focusing on human power in his analysis of metamorphosis, Bradwardine begins to move theology toward an anthropocentric worldview.

Metamorphosis was not always a deadly serious subject: the Renaissance schoolmaster and Neo-Latin poet Nicolas Brizard (1520–1565) explored such transformations in his paean to the playful tyranny of love, as John Nassichuk reveals in

“The Birds of Love: Doves, Pigeons and Owls in Nicolas Brizard’s *Metamorphoses Amoris*.” Although only a humble Latin teacher, Brizard attracted the attention of prominent Valois court poets such as François Habert (1510–1561), who published a French version of Brizard’s *Metamorphoses of Love*. In his imitation of Ovid, Brizard abandoned both the universal moralizing of medieval bestiaries and the tradition of allegorical interpretation of the *Metamorphoses* that had developed in twelfth-century France. Instead, the Brizard produced a “discourse of wonder” that celebrated both the Latin language, to which he had devoted his professional life, and the vagaries of romance. Indeed, Brizard’s imitation has none of the tragic finality of the work of the Roman classical poet, since Ovid’s metamorphoses could not be reversed. Brizard’s Cupid, on the contrary, changes form at will and remains, for the most part, in control of his various shapes. Brizard’s work also served a pedagogical purpose; his poetry illustrated the etiologies and meanings of Greek and Latin words for his students. Rather than teach moral lessons, Brizard’s beasts hail learning, love, and language.

### Beasts and Humans

In “Beastly Boars and Human Hunters in MS Bodley 764,” Susan Anderson discovers a “narrative of dominance” in the finely crafted images that adorn this celebrated thirteenth-century bestiary. Probably commissioned by the Marcher Lord Roger Monhaut in the 1240s, during England’s long struggle to subdue Wales, this manuscript includes 135 miniatures. Anderson’s careful and sensitive reading of these images, which she seeks to place in the historical and social context of the England’s long struggle to subdue its Celtic neighbor, focuses on the boar, a polysemous symbol. Similar to the human being in its anatomy (as Peter Cantor had pointed out in the twelfth century), the boar roams in both town and forest, transgressing the boundaries of tame and wild, human and beast. In this bestiary of the borderlands, the boar becomes a powerful representation of the other, whether defined by religion (the Jew), ethnicity (the Welsh), or gender (women).

Excellent horsemanship was an integral part of the concept of nobility in Renaissance Spain, as Kathryn Renton shows in “Horsemanship and *Libros de Jineta* in Habsburg Spain.” A nobleman had to know how to ride *a la jineta*, a style characterized by short stirrups, which forced the rider to bend his legs and crouch down over the horse. This position was more suitable for the high speed demanded of light cavalry than the increasingly fashionable *a la brida* style, whose long stirrups allowed the rider to stay upright. In the sixteenth century, several authors bemoaned the decline of the martial *jineta* style and called for its revival; they dismissed the *la brida* style as the affectation of effete courtiers. But the authors of these *libros de jineta* vigorously debated the nature of both horsemanship and nobility—were these acquired virtues, attainable through education as Pedro Fernández

de Andrada believed? Or did the nobility of horse and rider depend primarily on their aristocratic lineage, as Bañuelos de la Cerda argued?

### Beyond Humanity: Demons And Monsters

David Scott-Macnab's illuminating essay on the death of William Rufus, "If You Go Down to the Woods Today: William Rufus and the Noonday Demon," focuses on the evocative power of well-chosen words. Killed (accidentally or willfully) by an arrow while hunting in the New Forest on 2 August 1100, William II Rufus suffered the harsh judgment of subsequent chroniclers, who condemned him as a depraved and unjust monarch. As Scott-Macnab's careful analysis shows, the Oxford archdeacon Walter Map (1140–1210) sharpened this condemnation with a rhetorically powerful allusion to the Vulgate's Psalm 90. Led astray by the "noonday demon" (which here signifies not the deadly sin of sloth, but Satan himself in the guise of an angel of light), William was struck down by "the arrow that flieth in the day." These biblical images, skillfully evoked with a few Latin phrases, conveyed the archdeacon's censure of an unrighteous king, known for his conflicts with the saintly Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109).

In "Behold Thy Beast of Hoof and Horn," Amanda Downey analyzes portrayals of Satan in medieval illuminations of Christ's temptation (Matt. 4:1–11, Luke 4:1–13) in thirteen devotional manuscripts (psalters, breviaries, and hours) of the late twelfth through the fourteenth centuries. Drawing upon bestiaries, teratology, theological works, and the classical tradition of natural history, these artists imaginatively combined different characteristics of animals and monsters to depict the chief enemy of humanity and offer guidance about how to overcome him.

Rachel Chantos argues in "Monstrous Marriage" that the ornamentation of Italian wedding chests (*cassoni*) in the early sixteenth century reflected early modern anxieties about marriage, whose status as a sacrament had been challenged by the Reformation. The strange creatures and bizarre metamorphoses depicted in these decorations also symbolized the estrangement of the bride's body, as she gave up her paternal family for her new life with her husband.

Indeed, for some hermetic scholars, growing knowledge about prodigies and marvels was an eschatological sign of the imminent end of time, as Thomas Willard demonstrates in this volume's final essay, "The Monsters of Paracelsus." Willard analyzes the posthumously published *De Nymphis* (1566) of the itinerant Swiss physician and philosopher Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493–1541), who adopted the pseudonym Paracelsus. Understanding all creation as part of a divine imagination, Paracelsus provided a systematic inquiry into monsters (*monstra*) and wonders (*magnalia*). In his encyclopedia of supernatural creatures, Paracelsus offered detailed descriptions of nymphs, sylphs, gnomes, salamanders, and other fabulous beings — mysteries that should be understood rather than feared. Living in expectation of the end of the world, when knowledge would increase (Dan. 12:4),

Paracelsus, anticipating contemporary transhumanists, looked beyond the limits of the human condition, even going so far as to give detailed instructions about how to create a homunculus.

Like Paracelsus, the authors of these essays show that the questions raised by posthumanists, transhumanists, and contemporary animal rights scholars have a long history. By bringing in medieval and Renaissance voices, this volume enriches and renews a continuing conversation about the nature and destiny of beasts, humans, and transhumanity. *Homo animal est, non est animal homo.*



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**ROBERT S. STURGES** is Professor of English at Arizona State University. He is the author of *Medieval Interpretation* (1991), *Chaucer's Pardoner and Gender Theory* (2000), *Dialogue and Deviance* (2005), and *The Circulation of Power in Medieval Biblical Drama* (2015), as well as many essays on medieval literature. He is also the editor and translator of *Aucassin and Nicolette* (2015).

**THOMAS WILLARD**, Professor of English at the University of Arizona, has published several essays in volumes of the series *Fundamental Issues in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period*, ed. Albrecht Classen, most recently in *Magic and Magicians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Time* (2017) and *Bodily and Spiritual Hygiene in Medieval and Early Modern Literature* (2017). He is a regular contributor to *Magill's Literary Annual* and a former editor of *Cauda Pavonis: Studies in Hermeticism*. He has edited the alchemical works of Jean d'Espagne for the English Renaissance Hermeticism series (1999) and is working on a critical biography of the alchemist Thomas Vaughan. Recent publications include essays in *Educating the Imagination: Northrop Frye, Past, Present, and Future* (2015) and in *Lux in Tenebris: The Visual and the Symbolic in Western Esotericism* (2017).